

FOUNDATION AND GROWTH OF THE CUBAN-BASED TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE
TRADE, 1790-1820

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

History—Doctor of Philosophy

2019

ABSTRACT

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This dissertation discusses the creation and expansion of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trading infrastructure at the turn of the nineteenth century. Since the beginning of the conquest of the Americas, foreigners such as the Portuguese, Dutch, British, and Americans controlled the provision of captives to the Spanish colonies under a Spanish state-controlled system known as *Asientos*. Such dependency was challenged in the 1790s when a combination of international events, favorable colonial legislation, and a restructuring of the colonial economy turned Cuba into an expanding sugar plantation economy based on African forced labor. By the 1820s, in just three decades, Cuban merchants had effectively overcome that external dependency by setting up the conditions for trading slaves on the African coast. This thesis argues that foreign slavers trading in the island since the 1790s were pivotal in training the first generation of Cuban slave ship captains, providing a slave merchant fleet to Cubans, and introducing Cuban merchants to African slave trading networks. In order to illustrate the establishment of Cuban operations in Africa, this dissertation focuses on the creation of a slave trading corridor between Havana and Rio Pongo, Guinea-Conakry. Cuban merchants, I argue, reached the region known as Rio Pongo as a result of the U.S. slave traders who moved their operations to Cuba after 1808. The expansion of the slave trade in Rio Pongo to supply the expanding Cuban demand had also an impact on that coastal African society.

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This thesis is dedicated to Daysi, Librada, and Ofelia.
Thanks for everything

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of a journey that started fifteen years ago when my college and former professor of History of Philosophy at the University of Havana, Marial Iglesias Utset, took me to the archive for the first time. To this day, Marial remains as my dear mentor and a source of inspiration, support, and friendship. Thanks for all these years of collaboration and camaraderie. Back in Cuba, I received the support, encouragement, and mentorship of scholars such as Maria del Carmen Barcia, Maria de los Angeles Meriño, Aisnara Perera, Oilda Hevia, and Berta Álvarez. I am indebted to Emma Christopher for our long and enjoyable academic conversations, joint work, and friendship. I thank Manuel Barcia for his insights on the Cuban slave trade and personal support. In 2014, I was accepted into the Ph.D. program at Michigan State University, a joyful event that was possible thanks to the help of many friends and colleagues. I am indebted to my dear Gwendolyn M. Hall who hosted me for several months, introduced me to many of the members of the community of scholars working on the slave trade, and made possible for me to reach the History Department at Michigan State University. Thanks to Walter Hawthorne for trusting me, supporting my career at so many levels, and introducing me to the field of African history. When I started researching on the Cuban slave trade, I would have never thought I would be working with David Eltis or let alone coauthoring chapters and organizing new projects with him. Thanks, David for such a privilege and all your constant support and friendship. I also want to highlight the assistance of Suzan Eltis for carefully reading each chapter of this thesis and giving me essential pieces of advice. Thanks, Kathryn Lankford, and Andrew Barsom, dear friends, for spending your valuable time in proofreading this thesis. My warmest acknowledgment to David Wheat and Seila Estrecha. Thanks for opening the doors

of your house and your support in a moment of need. I would also like to show my gratitude to Gregory O'Malley, Alex Borucki, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Ada Ferrer, Jane Landers, Bruce Mouser, and Leonardo Marques. Over the years, I have received the support of several institutions such as the Department of History at Michigan State University, the Fundación Fernando Ortiz, the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, the Cuban Heritage Collection, the Lydia Cabrera fellowship, and the International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World.

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INTRODUCTION

In the nineteenth century, the Spanish colony of Cuba became the leading producer of sugar in the world and the largest importer of enslaved Africans in the North Atlantic. Recent estimates are that between 1500 and 1866 around 980,000 slaves disembarked in the island, of which 87 percent arrived after 1790.¹ By comparison, the total number of captives imported into the North America mainland was close to 400,000 individuals, approximately half the number that arrived in Cuba in just a fraction of the nineteenth century. Although this numbers are by itself illustrative of the important role played by Cuba in the nineteenth century transatlantic slave trade, they do not sufficiently allow us to grasp the profound effect that the trade in slaves had on the lives of people on the island, Africa, and elsewhere. By itself, these numbers do not explain the conditions that made possible the expansion of the Cuban slave trade either. Far-reaching socio-economic transformations in Cuba, the Atlantic world, and Africa created the conditions for the sharp increase in slave imports into Cuba. Thus, only a qualitative methodology can explain the transformation.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, when the transatlantic slave trade was at its historical peak, the provision of slaves to the Spanish colonies was mostly controlled by foreign traders. The Spanish empire, unlike most European powers, did not own African slave trade outposts in Sub-Saharan Africa. Cuba, as well as other Spanish colonies, lacked officers and sailors knowledgeable on the transatlantic slave trade. Commercial networks between Cuban and merchants in Africa were absent. The island did not have enough marketable goods for trading slaves. Colonial legislation did not favor a transatlantic trade in slaves. Cuban did not have in place a slave trading financial or commercial infrastructure nor the

¹ Appendix 1.

incentive to build it. Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, Spanish authorities discussed and adopted largely fruitless measures to out-compete foreign suppliers of slaves, reduce government control, and build what contemporaries called a “national” branch of the transatlantic slave trade. It was not until after the Spanish king liberalized the importation of slaves in 1789, and other major events took place such as the slave revolution in Saint-Domingue that conditions became favorable for a national branch of the slave trade to emerge. The longstanding Spanish project of taking control of the acquisition and transportation of enslaved Africans materialized in the colony of Cuba in just thirty years. In 1820, when Spain banned this commerce, Cuba had developed a distinct transatlantic slave trading business. Cuban merchants owned a slaving fleet which sailed to Africa regularly. Experienced sailors, captains, and pilots from all over the Atlantic World were in Havana, waiting for the next ship to go to Africa. Cuban merchants had slave trade outposts or “factories” along the African coast. Strikingly, the island developed and expanded its transatlantic slave trading infrastructure when the human trade was not only illegal but considered by most powerful western governments as immoral.

When I started researching this topic in 2011, my goal was to understand how Cuba became an active transatlantic slave trade organizational center. The main questions driving this dissertation were ones that was not able to find an answer in any scholarship on Cuba or the transatlantic slave trade at large: How did this transformation happen? How did Cuban merchants set up the infrastructure to conduct commercial operations in Africa? How did they acquire expertise on the transatlantic slave trade? How and where did they buy slave ships? How were sailors and captains trained? How did merchants from Cuba build the necessary financial and economic organizations to trade slaves? Moreover, how did Cubans set up

commercial networks and slave trading outposts along the African coast? To these questions, I added others over time. What socio-economic and political conditions within particular slaving regions in Africa did account for the creation of trading networks with Cuba? Moreover, did the expansion of the Cuban plantation economy and the increasing demand for forced labor have any effect on those African slaving ports trading with the island?

To fully comprehend the amalgamation of factors that made possible the emergence of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade, I approach the subject from two interrelated perspectives: from the “top-down” and the “bottom-up.” The top-down approach refers to transformations controlled, directed, or led by the head of the socio-political hierarchy, in this case, the Spanish colonial or imperial government. Thus, from a “top-down” approach, I reconstruct the specifics of how, after 1790, colonial and metropolitan authorities in conjunction with the Cuban elite built the legislative, political, and institutional framework in which Cuban slave traders operated for the ensuing decades.

Between 1790 and 1820, the Spanish government passed several pieces of liberal pro-slave trade economic legislation. Colonial and metropolitan elites created institutions and organizations oriented toward the trade in slaves. They debated and implemented projects to build a national branch of the transatlantic slave trade. I describe, list, and analyze these laws, institutions, and projects against the backdrop of larger global transformations such as the Haitian Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the U.S. and British abolition laws. However, such political, institutional, and legislative measures are by themselves insufficient in explaining how Cuban merchants reached slaving markets along the African coast. A “top-down” approach does not explain what steps were taken on the ground to reach the African coast and trade in slaves.

In this dissertation, the “bottom-up” approach does not equate with the historiographical and theoretical perspective also known as “history from below” widely applied to social history and subaltern studies. Instead, I use the term as a heuristic, methodological, and a descriptive tool to understand, analyze, and reconstruct ordinary and daily steps taken on the ground by Cuban merchants to trade slaves in Africa. Based on multiple case studies, reconstructed from a micro-historical lens, I examine how routine, daily commercial activities, interplayed with the “top-down” political, legal, institutional, and international framework. My goal is to explain the foundation of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade by examining its smallest parts and looking at everyday person to person interactions. When putting together, these ordinary subunits explain the creation of a larger Cuban slave-trading infrastructure. This micro-historical lens reveals, in the words of Giovanni Levi, “factors previously unobserved.”² While the wide lens allows me to explore the larger geopolitical landscape, the micro lens helps me to look closely at how individuals were both transformed by and transformed broad geopolitical shifts. From this perspective, the scope, content, and methodology discussed in the following pages belong to the growing field of Atlantic micro-history.

Historian Lara Putnam identifies some aspects linking Atlantic history and micro-history. Both fields, she argues, focus on proving “the existence of connections heretofore denied” such as connections between popular and scholarly knowledge or between regions such as Angola and Brazil. Micro-history and Atlantic History rely on the use of the prosopographical approach of specific individuals or cohorts that moved across the Atlantic.

² Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," 97.

Finally, Atlantic history have always relied on micro-history to establish specific and interacting spatial frames of reference.³

More specifically, regarding transatlantic connections and the use of the prosopographic methodology, I reconstruct how Cuban merchants established partnerships with foreign slave traders, created commercial associations, purchased slave ships, trained slave captains and officers, acquired marketable goods to trade slaves, and established trading networks in Africa within the favorable pro-slave trading legal and institutional framework created by the colonial government. I also explore what conditions within Africa favored the emergence of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade. Finally, I analyze how the expansion of the slave demand from Cuba influenced changes in some African slaving markets. Historical transformations on one side of the Atlantic influenced changes on the other.

Throughout the dissertation, I develop six theses. First, I argue that Cuban merchants tapped into the transatlantic slave trading system and establish trading operations along the African coast by partnering with foreign slavers. After the 1789's deregulation of the slave trade hundreds of slavers from various nationalities started bringing slaves to Cuba, either directly from Africa or other regions in the Americas. Cubans established a variety of forms of partnerships with those foreign traders—captains, financiers, and ship owners. Overseas merchants, with years of accumulated experience in the transatlantic slave trade, familiarized, trained, taught, and connected Cubans to the system. Foreign slave traders introduced merchants operating from Cuba to African slaving markets.

Second, I argue that, in order to determine how and where Cuban merchants

³ Lara Putnam, "To Study the Fragments/Whole: Microhistory and the Atlantic World," 616.

established their first contacts along the African coast, it is essential to reconstruct, on a case-by-case basis, the African regions where those foreign “mentors” had long traded slaves. The specific African slaving markets where Cubans went for the first time, depended on the nationality and trading networks possessed by their foreign partners and mentors. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Africa’s slave markets were divided by regions and ports of American and European spheres of influence.⁴ Thus, there was a correlation between the nationalities of foreign traders and their African slave trading markets. The diversity of African slaving regions that Cubans reached at the turn of the nineteenth century, I argue, was linked to the national variety of foreign slavers that partnered with Cuban merchants. This dissertation introduces some examples of how Cubans established commerce in specific slave markets in Senegal, Upper Guinea, the Bight of Biafra, and West Central Africa resulting of the partnership with French, American, and Portuguese slavers. However, detailing the broad range of African regions trading with Cuba and the networks supporting it, surpasses this dissertation capability. Instead, I focus on a particular African region where Cubans operated and the networks that allowed it to exist. I illustrate how Cubans established slave trading operations in the region of Rio Pongo in today’s Guinea-Conakry. I argued that this was possible because of the partnership established between the U.S. and Cuban slave traders since the 1790s. In other words, Americans introduced Cubans to the slave trade in Rio Pongo.

Third, I argue that the British and American abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in

⁴ For instance, between 1750 and 1800, Denmark, was strong in the Gold Coast, in particular in Christiansborg; France had greater operations in West Central Africa with Malembo in the forefront; while England traded mostly in the Bight of Biafra, specifically in Bonny. Such distribution changed over time due to major events such as the French and Haitian revolutions and the associated wars which temporarily shut down the French trade. *Voyages*. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=KSEakNz6> (Consulted, March 20, 2019).

1808 spawned a relocation of slave traders across the North Atlantic which led to a more rapid insertion of Cuban merchants into the transatlantic slave trading system. To demonstrate this thesis, I focus on three central regions: The United States, Cuba, and Upper Guinea. After 1808, several North American merchants, in order to continue trading slaves, transferred their operations to Cuba where that commerce was thriving, tax-free, and would not be banned until 1820. By relocating, North Americans, with decades of involvement in the transatlantic slave trade as owners, captains, sailors, and investors, transferred their African slave trading networks to Cuban merchants. Joint ventures with American slavers allowed Cubans to inherit trading partnerships in some Africa regions. To illustrate the point, I focus on the case of Rio Pongo. After 1808, Cuban merchants continued and expanded the decades-long trading networks Americans had in Rio Pongo. The abolition of the transatlantic slave trade not only reconfigured slave trading routes in the Americas but also within Upper Guinea. In Western Africa, slave traders moved from traditional markets such as Goree, Bunce Island or the Ile de Los to more inaccessible geographies to avoid the prosecution of the abolitionist British Royal Navy from Freetown. Rio Pongo, as well as other regions such as Nunez, Sherbro, Sestos, or Gallinas, emerged as thriving slave-trading markets. Since the end of the eighteenth century, a community of North Americans traders settled in Rio Pongo. They founded villages named after Boston, Charleston, and South Carolina. From Pongo they sent slaves to Havana. There were also cases of slave traders from Rio Pongo who moved to the United States and Cuba. The result of all these relocations, I argue, made possible the creation of a new slave-trading circuit between Havana and Rio Pongo. Cuban merchants incorporate this networks to their daily commercial operations.

Fourth, I argue that historical transformations in the socio-political environment within

Rio Pongo are crucial to explain the establishment of a slave trading route with Cuba. The transference of commercial networks within the Americas is not a satisfactory answer. Long-term ethnic migrations in Upper Guinea created the social conditions that enabled the establishment of a slave trading corridor between interior markets and the coastal region of Rio Pongo. In the Upper Guinean hinterland, the establishment, consolidation, and expansion of the theocratic Islamic Fula kingdom of Futa Jallon in the second half of the eighteenth century, created a stable slave market. The commercial route between Futa Jallon and Rio Pongo consolidated through political and religious alliances between the Fula in the interior and the Susu and Baga on the coastal Rio Pongo. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Rio Pongo was a well-known slave market in Upper Guinea. European and American traders settled in Rio Pongo to take advantage of it. After 1808, the establishment of Freetown as a British colony one hundred miles south of Pongo had two contradictory effects. On the one hand, it incentivized the expansion of the new slave trading market in Rio Pongo since some traders moved to the region to hide continue trading slaves without British interference. On the other hand, the frequent raids from Freetown to that region and the constant chasing of slave ships in the region threatened slave-trading activities. The most important point is that the simultaneous expansion of the plantation economy in Cuba coalesced with the growth of the slave market in Rio Pongo in a mutually beneficial relationship. Two Atlantic region became deeply intertwined.

Fifth, I argue that the increasing demand for slaves in Cuba altered some elements of the socio-political life in Rio Pongo. The European and American slave traders who settled in Rio Pongo established family ties with their African landlords. They became socially and politically influential in a region where the political power was decentralized. By competing

with each other, the merchant newcomers and their allied landlords catalyzed internal conflicts in the region producing more political fragmentation. The increasing power of the merchant community stimulated conflicts between the inhabitants of Rio Pongo, mostly Susus and Bagas, with the Fula from Futa Jallon, who were concerned with the loss of power of the Pongo subordinated African landlords. In addition, the frequent presence of Spanish slave ships from Havana caught the attention of the British authorities from Freetown. The British expanded political control over Pongo disguised under the abolitionist campaign.

My final argument stems from a dataset I assembled from archival documents and newspapers concerning the arrival and departure of slave ships in Cuba between 1790 and 1820. This dataset of about 2,200 slave voyages contains critical variables for studying the slave trade such as date of departure and arrival, captain's and ships' name, the nationality of the ships, number of slaves disembarked, and the owners and consignees of the human cargoes. The aggregate led to a substantial increase on current estimates on the Cuban slave trade. The data produced more than quantitative results. It allowed differentiating for the first time intra-American from transatlantic slaving voyages. It is also possible now to better understand periodical fluctuations in the number of slaves imported, the nationality of the carriers, and the regions and ports of embarkation. Those three variables, I argue, changed in tandem with transformations in the international arena. The prevalence of one flag over others in the Cuban slave trade, for instance, had direct implications in from where the slaves embarked, and, as a result, the ethnicities of the captives arriving in the island.

This dissertation is centered on three Atlantic axes—Cuba, the United States, and Upper Guinea. They are geographically distant, but after 1790 they comprised one space, one world that stretched across the Atlantic. They were integrated to such an extent that social,

economic, and political changes in one, directly impacted changes in the others. Merchants in these places knew one another. They communicated regularly; they had interpersonal relationships. That is a story that can only be understood using a combination of macro and microlenses for analysis. It is a story of quotidian, seemingly mundane interactions that significantly affect history, but is also a story of great events changing the life of people. This dissertation tells that story.

Historiography

The historiography on the emergence and expansion of the Cuban sugar plantation economy has successfully pointing out the economic, political, international and, in general, structural factors that made possible the expansion of a slave society and the slave trade. Authors such as Hubert Aimes, Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Franklin Knight, Roland T. Ely, María del Carmen Barcia, Fe Iglesias, Laird W. Bergard, Herbert Klein, and Pablo Tornero have, from different theoretical and methodological perspectives, dived deep into the structural factors responsible for the expansion of the Cuban plantation economy.⁵ The importation of forced labor on the island, all they argue, increased in tandem with the expansion of the sugar economy. What has mainly remained unanswered, however, is how Cuban merchants built from scratch a transatlantic slave trading system. Existing historiography, in other words, has failed to address the micro-social factors that made it possible for Cubans to reach the African coast. This dissertation fills this unexplored

⁵ Hubert H.S Aimes, “A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511-1868.” Manuel Moreno Fraginals, “El Ingenio Complejo económico-social cubano del azúcar.” Franklin W Knight, “Slave Society in Cuba: During the Nineteenth Century.” Roland T Ely, “Cuando Reinaba Su Majestad El Azúcar: Estudio Histórico-Sociológico de una Tragedia Latinoamericana: El Monocultivo en Cuba: Origen y Evolución del Proceso.” María Del Carmen Barcia, “Burguesía Esclavista y Abolición.” Fe Iglesias, “Del Ingenio al Central.” Laird W Bergard, Fe Iglesias, and Maria del Carmen Barcia, “The Cuban Slave Market 1790-1880.” Herbert S Klein, “Slavery in the Americas: A Comparative Study of Virginia and Cuba.” Pablo Tornero Tinajero, “Crecimiento Económico y Transformaciones Sociales: Esclavos, Hacendados y Comerciantes en la Cuba Colonial (1760-1840).”

historiographical terrain.

Despite the high number of enslaved Africans disembarked in Cuba, few texts account for a comprehensive history of this subject. José Antonio Saco wrote the earliest in the second half of the eighteenth century. Saco, born in 1797, witnessed first-hand the expansion of the Cuban slave trade. By the 1830s, he was opposed to the importation of captives, not only for economic reasons but, mostly, because he was concerned with the “dangers” of the “Africanization” of Cuba. Saco’s text became a seminal source on the Cuban slave trade. His assessment of the numbers of slaves arriving in Cuba is, until today, the “gold standard.”⁶ In the twentieth century, the first big-picture monograph was “Los Negros Esclavos” by Fernando Ortiz. More than a history of the Cuban slave trade, Ortiz’ book reads like a series of vignettes of specific phases of that commerce.⁷ In the 1970s, historian Herbert Klein made a groundbreaking contribution to the field based on a set of unexplored customs records from Havana. His findings, however, remained mostly descriptive and quantitative.⁸ In the 1980s, two authors wrote new interpretations of the Cuban slave trade: José Luciano Franco, and David Murray. Franco’s “Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos,” is built upon Cuban archival sources. The book focuses mostly on the political, economic, and institutional infrastructure that supported, challenged, and made possible the expansion of the Cuban slave trade.⁹ Murray’s *Odious Commerce*, on the other hand, accounts for the international tensions between Cuba and the British abolitionist government from data from the FO 42 at the National Archives in London.¹⁰ Since then, there has not been any attempt to write a

⁶ José Antonio Saco, “Historia de la Esclavitud,” La Habana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2006.

⁷ Fernando Ortiz, “Los Negros Esclavos,” Havana; Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1987.

⁸ Herbert S. Klein, “The Cuban Slave Trade in a Period of 1790-1843,” 67-89.

⁹ José Luciano Franco, *Comercio Clandestino De Esclavos*. La Habana: Ciencias Sociales, 1996.

¹⁰ David R Murray, “Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade,” Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

comprehensive history of the Cuban slave trade.

The scholarship on the Cuba plantation economy and the slave trade in particular is crucial for reconstructing the “top-down” or legislative, institutional, political, and international slave trading framework. However, the existing scholarship does not account for everyday actions taken by merchants on the ground to establish a Cuban branch of the transatlantic slave trade. In other words, the scholarship has been fruitful in explaining the reasons why the Cuban slave trade took off but not how it happened. The “bottom-up” approach is missing. Furthermore, the authors mentioned above did not pay any attention to what could be broadly defined as the “African factor.” Africa, clearly, is mentioned in every scholarship on the Cuban slave trade, but it remains as a vague notion, as a distant slave market and blurry geography. Africa is not a protagonist in the narrative in any meaningful way. When it is mentioned, as in Ortiz’ “Los Negros Esclavos” or Franco’s “Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos,” it acquires the form of exotic pictures of African “mongos” or traders. Thus, the historiography has failed to demonstrate how socio-economic and political events within specific African slaving regions was deciding in the foundation and expansion of the Cuban transatlantic slave trade. This dissertation is the first exploring the subject.

That said, it would be inaccurate to argue that there is a complete lack of scholarship on the micro-social factors explaining the foundation of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade, or that no author at all has included the “African factor” in their analysis. More recently, some historians have pointed out to the lacunae. Leonardo Marques has explored the role played by U.S. merchants in the Cuban slave trade. Marques, following Jay Coughtry’s path, found specific connections between American and Cuban slave traders, particularly between

merchants from Havana and Rhode Island during the 1790s.¹¹ He points out that after 1808, American merchants relocated their operations to Cuba and Brazil in order to avoid U.S. abolitionist laws. Such a strategy, he argues, helped to extend the U.S. slave trade to years of illegality. Without access to Cuban archival sources, Marques was not able to advance his argument from a Cuban standpoint or to explain how the relocation of American slavers helped Cubans to set up their own slave branch of the transatlantic slave trading business and reached the African coast.¹² Other contemporary historians have pointed out the U.S. engagement in the Cuban slave trade, but mostly to explain the expansion of capitalism or from a comparative perspective.¹³

José Guadalupe Ortega is one of the few examples of a historian concerned with how Cubans set up a transatlantic slave trading infrastructure. Ortega argues that, between 1790 and 1820, Cuban traders, protected by favorable legislation, found ways to trade slaves by themselves. He rightly points out that Americans were pivotal for the foundation of the Cuban slave trade. “Cuban slave merchants,” according to Guadalupe Ortega, “expanded their knowledge of the slave trade by manipulating existing North Atlantic commercial and financial networks.”¹⁴ Since Ortega’s research focused on what he called “the sugar plantation complex,” he did not develop further his argument on the specifics of the Cuban slave trade. His analytical framework, although enlightening, lacked demonstrative details presented in

¹¹ Before Marques, Jay Coughtry explored the slave trading connection between Rhode Island and Cuba in the 1790s. Jay Coughtry, “The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807.” Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.

¹² Leonardo Marques, “Slave Trading in a New World: The Strategies of North American Slave Traders in the Age of Abolition.” *Journal of the Early Republic* 32, no. 2 (2012): 233-60.

¹³ Stephen Chambers, “No God but Gain. The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine & the Making of the United States,” New York: VERSO Books, 2017. Dale Torston Graden, “Disease, Resistance, and Lies: The Demise of the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Brazil and Cuba,” Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2014.

¹⁴ José Guadalupe Ortega, “Cuban Merchants, Slave Trade Knowledge, and the Atlantic World, 1790s-1820s,” *CLAHHR Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 15, no. 3 (2003), 228.

any systematic way. Africa is not mentioned in his dissertation. Neither he explores the strategies used by Cuban merchants for establishing trading partnerships in individual African slaving markets.

Historian Edgardo Pérez Morales agrees with previous scholarships that for most of the modern times Spain had to rely on Portuguese, British, and French slave traders for the supply of captives to the Spanish territories. By the turn of the nineteenth century, he says, Spanish “aspiring slave traders” set up “the institutional, legal, business, and maritime practices of the slave trade between Africa and the Americas.”¹⁵ In his 2017 article, “Tricks of the Slave Trade,” Pérez Morales set to answer “how did Spanish merchants and investors with no direct experience in the slave trade manage to become successful outfitters of Atlantic-scope slaving expeditions? What was the role of maritime workers in this process? In what ways did British-led abolition and suppression alter the logistics of the trade?” To answer these research problems Pérez Morales pays attention to the “small-scale dynamics,” a concept borrowed from historian Rebecca Scott that highlight the importance of studying the interactions between micro and macro historical process.¹⁶ Pérez Morales effectively recognizes a scholarly lacunae in the historiography pertaining the factors that made possible a Spanish transatlantic slave trade. His questions and methodology of combining small and large historical dynamics are aligned with the scope of this dissertation. Pérez Morales’ archival sources were mostly two reports written by two commercial firms in 1809. These records, although rich in details, are insufficient to explain the origins of the Cuban-based transatlantic

¹⁵ Edgardo Pérez Morales, “Tricks of the Slave Trade. Cuba and the Small-Scale Dynamics of the Spanish Transatlantic Trade in Human Beings,” 2.

¹⁶ Rebecca Scott “Small-Scale Dynamics of Large-Scale Processes,” 472-79. Pérez Morales focuses on specific investors, vessels, and local contexts.

slave trade.¹⁷ That said, these sources help him to point out the slave trading learning process undertaken by Cuban slavers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Also, it is important to highlight that Pérez Morales focuses on the important slave trading connection between Cuba and Rio Pongo by using a description of a voyage that took place in 1830 in the slave ship *La Gaceta*.¹⁸ But, once again, a single archival source does not account for the creation of the slave trading corridors between Cuba and the Pongo region.

In the past decade, historians mostly from Spain have paid more attention to the role played by their country at large and some provinces more than others in fomenting the transatlantic slave trade. José Antonio Piqueras presented the big picture of this commerce in his 2011 book “La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico.” This text does not account for the intimacies of the growth of the Spanish slave trade after the 1790s nor it explains any connection with Africa. In 2017, historians Martín Rodrigo and Lizbeth Chaviano edited a coauthored book on the role played by Catalonia and, more specifically, Barcelona in the expansion of the institution of slavery and the slave trade from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.¹⁹ There, historians such as Joseph Delgado, Martín Rodrigo, José Miguel Sanjuan, and Michael Zeuske explore the networks created among Catalans slave traders at the turn of the nineteenth century to take advantage of the lucrative and emerging business of the Cuban slave trade. The creation and expansion of existing slave trading networks is one of the threads across my dissertation. Thus, that scholarship offers insights on

¹⁷ “Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta Manzanal y Hermano referentes al Comercio de Negros, November 23, 1809,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836. “Informe de Don Francisco Hernández y Don Magin Tarafa sobre el comercio de negros su fecha 7 de febrero de 1810,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836. Both reports are analyzed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

¹⁸ Estrada, R.B., “Geografía. Relación de un viaje a las islas de Cabo Verde, y algunos puntos del y Río Pongo.” Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Colección Cubana, Manuscritos, Bachiller, No. 417.

¹⁹ Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla and Lizbeth Chaviano Pérez (eds.), “Negros y esclavos. Barcelona y la esclavitud atlántica, (siglos XVI-XIX).

preexisting networks created in Spain which is mostly missing on my dissertation. Similarly, a coauthored book coedited in 2018 by María del Carmen Cózar and Martín Rodrigo discusses the role of Cádiz in the transatlantic slave trade.²⁰ Some of the subjects in the book pertain to the role of British traders in the Cuban slave trade by José Piqueras and Emma D. Vidal, the first public abolitionist discussion in the Courts of Cádiz by Enriqueta Vilar, and the participation of merchants from Cádiz in the illegal slave trade (1817-1866) by Martín Rodrigo and Lizbeth Chaviano. It should be highlighted that both of the last books mentioned are helpful to understand commercial slaving networks between slavers living in the Spanish metropole and the colony of Cuba. However, Africa is, once again, excluded from the narrative.

One exception, when it comes to including Africa in the narrative of the Cuban slave trade and slavery at large, is Manuel Barcia. In “The Atlantic Human Trafficking Network of the Zangroniz Family,” Manuel Barcia explores a case study of a slave trading clan, the Zangroniz. Barcia demonstrates how this family started their slave trading operations in Cuba after 1808, how they connected with Africa, and the strategies they used for surviving in the slave trade during the years of illegality. Barcia points out that the Zangroniz were able to connect their operations in Whydah through commercial networks previously established with Brazilian and French slave traders.²¹ His methodology of cross-checking Atlantic sources and following the careers of slave merchants is a compass for this dissertation.

A remarkable and unique reconstruction of the operations of Spanish slave traders in

²⁰ María del Carmen Cózar and Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, “Cádiz y el tráfico de esclavos. De la legalidad a la clandestinidad.”

²¹ Manuel Barcia, “Fully Capable of Any Iniquity’: The Atlantic Human Trafficking Network of the Zangroniz Family.” *The Americas: A Quarterly Review of Latin American History* 73, no. 03 (2016): 303-24.

Africa is the 2015 monograph “Traficants d’ánimes. Els negrers espanyols a l’Àfrica” by Gustau Nerín. This is the only text accounting for the commercial activities of those Spanish subjects who settled in a variety of African slaving ports from Cape Verde to Mozambique with the sole purpose of trading slaves. Nerín’s historical reconstruction based on British and Spanish archival documents is unrivaled in terms of details. His scholarship is also exceptional in connecting commercial operations taking place in Africa with Cuba and Spain. In addition, Nerín’s details on the activities of Spanish traders Pongo informed part of this dissertation.

The historiography on the slave trade in Upper Guinea and, more specifically, in Pongo was fundamental for my research. In the case of Upper Guinea in general, there is a robust historiographical tradition on the slave trade.²² Walter Rodney, George Brooks, Boubacar Barry, and Paul Lovejoy are some of the classic examples.²³ They agree in different degrees with the older abolitionist argument that the transatlantic slave trade influenced, created, or accelerated socio-political transformations in those regions engaged in the human trade. The

²² These are some samples of the scholarship about the effects of the transatlantic slave trade on Africa: J. S. Hogendorn, “The economic costs of West African participation in the Atlantic slave trade: a preliminary sampling for the eighteenth century”, in Gemery and Hogendorn (ed.), *Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, New York, 1979, 143-61. J Inikori, ed., “Forced Migrations: The impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies,” London: Hutchinson, 1982. Paul Lovejoy, “The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on Africa: A review of the Literature.” *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 3 (1989): 365-94. David Henige, “Measuring the immeasurable: The Atlantic Slave Trade, West African Population and the Pyrrhonian critic”, *The Journal of African History* 28, no 2 (1986), 295-313. David Richardson, “Slave exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: new estimates of volume and distribution,” *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 01 (1989): 1-22. Martin Klein, “The impact of the Atlantic slave trade on the societies of the Western Sudan,” *Social Science History* 14, no 2, (1990): 231-253. Patrick Manning, “Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades,” Cambridge University Press, 1990.

²³ Walter Rodney, “A History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545 to 1800,” Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970. “African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave-Trade,” *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 03 (1966): 431-443. George E Brooks, “Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century,” Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003. Boubacar Barry, “Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Paul E Lovejoy, “Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa,” Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

expansion of the transatlantic slave trade was accompanied by an increase in political, religious, and ethnic wars. It produced institutional instability in some cases, and in others favored the creation of new states. The need for slaves resulted in a hardening of customary laws and the strengthening of the merchant class in coastal slave trading regions.

Walter Rodney posited the argument that the Atlantic export of captives enlarged the institution of slavery within Africa. He did not, however, convincingly acknowledge the importance of forced labor before the European arrival.²⁴ Some other historiographical arguments are entirely applicable to Rio Pongo's case. Paul Lovejoy, for instance, argues that the Atlantic slave trade did not create slavery in Upper Guinea, but it reinforced it to unprecedented levels.²⁵ The Atlantic slave trade, other authors argue, changed the political life in many African communities. The "predatory state thesis" by Martin Klein is a classic example: "The slave trade was the way the state reproduces itself."²⁶ The expansion of the transatlantic slave trade increased political instability and warfare. This thesis, as shown in Chapter 4, is particularly valid for the slave trading state of Futa Jallon and its connection with Rio Pongo.²⁷

This dissertation incorporates those arguments on the effects of the transatlantic slave trade in Upper Guinea, adding Cuba to the picture as a source of those effects. By the nineteenth century, Cuba took the position of the United States and the West Indies as the leading destination for enslaved Africans leaving slaving ports in Upper Guinea such as Rio

²⁴ Walter Rodney, "African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave-Trade", *The Journal of African History* 7, no 3 (1966): 431-443.

²⁵ Paul Lovejoy, "Transformations in Slavery."

²⁶ Martin Klein, "The Impact of the Atlantic Slave Trade on the Societies of the Western Sudan", *Social Science History* 14, no 2 (Summer, 1990): 231-253.

²⁷ Other historians have challenged Klein's thesis. In decentralized societies, the Atlantic influence did not generate new political structures. Andrew Hubbell, "Patronage and Predation: A social history of colonial chieftaincies in a chiefless region-Souroudougou 1850-1946," *Journal of African History* 42, no 1 (2001): 49-65. Walter Hawthorne, "Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves: Transformations along the Guinea Bissau Coast 1400-1900," Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003 and from the same author "Nourishing a Stateless Society during the Slave Trade: The Rise of Balanta Paddy-Rice Production in Guinea-Bissau," *The Journal of African History* 42, no 1 (2001): 1-24.

Nunez, Rio Pongo, Sherbro, Gallinas, and Cape Mount. The expansion of the Cuban demand increased the “production” of slaves in those African ports. As a result, there was an upsurge in internal conflicts, and political instability in those regions as the case of Rio Pongo demonstrates.²⁸

Scholarship on “the Atlantic slave trade” often approaches it as a series of purely economic transactions. This is misleading reasons since there was no just one type of “Atlantic slave trade.” Rather, from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries the Atlantic was characterized by many slave trades, many routes, and many actors. To be sure, each slave trade existed because the slave trading was profitable and legal for most of the period and was profitable and accepted by authorities in some places toward the end of the period. However, each trade was independent of the next. Each depended on very personal relationships between individuals. Ships most often plied the same routes. Captains had close personal relationships with financiers in Europe and the Americas, buyers in American ports, and sellers in African ports. They had close personal relationships with Eurafican, African, American, and European merchants who lived on the African coast. Moreover, these merchants had close personal relationships with powerful African leaders. These relationships were depended on economic transactions—the trade of goods or human beings. But they also depended on trust. They were long term. They were often familial. And they were often perpetuated by women on both sides of the ocean who were central to kinship ties between men. Those George Brooks has dubbed “strangers” were not part of the equation. “Strangers”—outsiders—did not trade on the Rio Pongo. “Strangers” traded only if they were

²⁸ More on the subject see: Philip Misevich, “On the Frontier of “Freedom:” Abolition and the Transformation of Atlantic Commerce in Southern Sierra Leone, 1790s to 1860s.”

known, if they were introduced to and integrated into kingroups and trading networks, what we might classify as syndicates, by insiders.

Bruce Mouser produced almost everything we know in the Anglo-speaking historiography about the history of Rio Pongo. The slave trade occupied a prominent place in Mouser's narrative since the region owes its expansion to that commerce. He explores how the increase in the production of slaves led to conflicts in the region. This dissertation incorporates Mouser's findings. However, what Mouser lacks is the Atlantic connection with the Americas.²⁹ Pongo's nineteenth-century Atlantic history cannot be fully understood without adding Cuba to the analysis. Some transformations that took place in Rio Pongo which Mouser rightly attribute to the slave trade are, therefore, a side effect of the expansion of the sugar plantation economy and the subsequent increasing slave demand from Cuba.

The field of Atlantic History, when used cautiously, allows looking at the Cuban transatlantic slave trade from simultaneous vantage points. I said cautiously following James Sweet idea that the Atlantic episteme is a recycling of the "old-style colonial and imperial histories in a framework that continues to privilege the European-American nexus."³⁰ The Atlantic approach questions traditional hierarchies of analysis such as the focus on the nation-state, or strictly Euro/Afro-centric approaches. By using an Atlantic lens, connections previously unnoticed emerged. The transatlantic slave trade was a dynamic commerce between different active regions where merchants, political rulers, and slaves with individual names and ethnicities were protagonists. Some examples of Atlantic history applied to Upper Guinea are Walter

²⁹ During his last years of research, he was beginning to develop the Atlantic angle in Rio Pongo.

³⁰ James Sweet, "Domingo Alvares, African Healing, and the intellectual History of the Atlantic World," Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Hawthorne, David Wheat, and Toby Green.³¹ Hawthorne and Wheat reconstructed the historical line of communications, trade, and several types of exchanges that existed between regions and people across the Atlantic. Although their regions of analysis and periods differ from this dissertation, their scholarship has been a methodological compass in including Africa in the narrative of the Cuban slave trade.

Sources

The transatlantic slave trade was a transnational, cross-regional, and multicultural commercial activity. A nuanced and accurate depiction of this commerce would be incomplete without consulting historical sources from different national archives. Nowadays, the increasing number of digital projects on the slave trade such as databases and digitized records, make it possible for historians to reconstruct and visualize unnoticed Atlantic connections without leaving their desks. Yet, there is a long way to go in terms of digitization or access to archival documents. In Cuba, for example, archival documents are barely digitized and accessing them physically is challenging due to that country's peculiar political institutions. However, Cuban records by themselves are insufficient to understand the Cuban transatlantic commerce in Africans. A distinctive mark of this dissertation is the combination of a wide range of archival sources from different countries. Over eight years of research, I worked on archival collections from Cuba, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well the extensive historiography concerning the Spanish, Cuba, precolonial Upper Guinean, and American internal, intercolonial, and the transatlantic slave trade.

³¹ Walter Hawthorne, "From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1830," Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Wheat, David, "Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean: 1570-1640," Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Green, Toby, "The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1598," Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Of all the topics discussed in this dissertation, the reconstruction of the institutional, legislative, and political framework in which Cuban merchants set up a transatlantic slave trading business, or the “top-down” approach, is the less innovative. Many of the slave trading legislation and institutions have been published by authors mentioned above such as Moreno Fraginals, Franco, and Tornero. However, some pieces were missing, and the analysis was not placed against the Atlantic backdrop or connected to commercial adventures on the ground. I consulted every piece of legislation passed between 1790 and 1820 relative to the slave trade, scattered across Cuban archives. A significant historiographical contribution was the review of the monthly proceedings of the Cuban merchant guild known as the Real Consulado and Junta de Fomento, available today. Not surprisingly, they often discussed how to boost the introduction of African slaves and reach the African coast. Some of the discussion at the Real Consulado resulted in correspondence with Spanish imperial and colonial authorities. These sources were fundamental to reconstruct the framework in which the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trading infrastructure was built.

The sources and methods to reconstruct from the “bottom-up” how Cuban merchants tapped into existing transatlantic slave trading networks are different. What follows is an entirely new methodological approach in the historiography of the Cuban slave trade. I draw heavily on court records, mostly from the Commercial Court of Havana at the Cuban National Archive, which adjudicated bankruptcies, lawsuits, financial crimes, or frauds. Since these records contain the names of merchants, they allow for a reconstruction of transatlantic commercial networks. I focus on specific case-studies and follow the careers of individual traders. For the years after 1808, when Cuban merchants started trading in Africa, I incorporated British archival sources. The British Vice-Admiralty Courts in Freetown and the

West Indies condemned dozens of Spanish slave ships. The documents confiscated on board, as well the proceedings of the trial are in The National Archives in London (FO 72, and FO 315). I was able to find documents from the same slave ships in Cuban and British archives. Cross-checking such records were pivotal to reconstructing transatlantic networks.

The theme on the creation and expansion of commercial operations between Rio Pongo and Cuba is built upon an even broader range of sources. I consulted records from the Vice-Admiralty Court and Havana's Commercial Court regarding slave ships captured in Rio Pongo. Such records include correspondence exchanged between Cuban and Rio Pongo merchants. I also consulted records produced by the members of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who settled in Rio Pongo after 1808. The CMS mission in Rio Pongo produced thousands of letters, accounts, and diaries, today available in the Special Collection at the University of Birmingham, the U.K. These records have rich descriptions of internal socio-political dynamics in Rio Pongo, the transatlantic slave trade, and the community of traders in the river. On the other hand, I consulted the documents produced by the British authorities in Freetown (CO 267). They contain letters, accounts, summaries of political disputes, legal cases, descriptions of the slave trade, the attempts to curtail that commerce and the increasing expansion of Spanish slave ships from Cuba. The result is a clear-cut picture of the interplay of transatlantic forces that created, shaped, and expanded the slave trading corridor between Cuban and Rio Pongo.

Finally, based on a separate set of sources, my dissertation also reassesses the estimates of the size of the Cuban slave trade between 1790 and 1820. I extracted daily data from Cuban newspapers and customs records on the departure and arrival of slave ships in the island. I created a dataset of around 2,200 slave ships arriving in Cuba which resulted in new

quantitative and qualitative findings. The data is now publicly available in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, *Voyages*, and the Intra-American Slave Trade Database, *Final Passages*.

Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 1 has three main goals. First, it illustrates the unique features of the Spanish slave trade, and Cuba by extension, from the 1500s until 1790. It explores its state-run monopolistic character and the constant dependence on foreign traders. Second, it illustrates different attempts, discussed in the eighteenth century, to deregulate that trade and to develop an independent Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade. The second section of this chapter extends from 1789, when the Spanish king deregulated importation of Africans in his colonies, until 1808. It explores laws, institutions, and projects discussed and put into effect to increase the introduction of Africans and to reach the African coast. Within this political and institutional framework, Cuban merchants organized their own transatlantic slave trading business as explained in the following chapter.

Chapter 2 describes how Cuban merchants inserted themselves into the transatlantic slave trade. First, it explores pioneer Cuban slave trading ventures to Africa. Commercial networks developed with foreign slavers made possible such expeditions. Particular attention is paid to the fact that these first Cuban voyages reached specific African regions such as Senegambia, West Central Africa, and Upper Guinea because of existing networks with foreign traders such as French, Portuguese, and Americans. This chapter also reviews models of partnerships created between Cuban merchants and their foreign counterparts such as the consignment system, maritime insurances, legal representation, and co-investments. For the years after 1808, this chapter details the changes that occurred in the north-Atlantic such as the relocation of foreign merchants to the island. Using a variety of case studies this chapter shows

how, by collaborating with foreigners, Cubans acquired trading networks in Africa and trained slave ship captains. Finally, it introduces the challenging conditions posited by the abolitionist movement.

Chapter 3 details the operational mechanisms of the Cuban branch of the transatlantic slave trade. From hundreds of documents produced by dozens of Cuban slaving ventures, this chapter reconstructs what would have been a typical Cuban-owned transatlantic slaving expedition. It illustrates every step from the moment a commercial company or group of merchants invested capital in the voyage until the ship returned to Havana with Africans aboard. It also shows possible outcomes that were less common, such as shipwrecks, captures, rebellions, or fires on board. The goal of this chapter is to help the readers to envisage what was involved in conducting a Cuban-based transatlantic expedition.

The first section of Chapter 4 demonstrates that between 1790 and 1808, the United States traded slaves with both, Rio Pongo, and Cuba. Internal conditions in Rio Pongo such as the expansion of the community of traders and the consolidation of the kingdom of Futa Jallon in the interior made possible the expansion of slaving operations in the 1790s. After 1808, Rio Pongo's connection with the United States was redirected to Cuba. This chapter illustrates that process. By 1814, Cubans had more independent participation in the slave trade in Rio Pongo. Another important aspect tackled in this chapter is how the expansion of the slave trade in Pongo had several socio-political effects in the region. This chapter ends detailing how the slave trading circuit Pongo-Havana operated through to the legal end of the Spanish slave trade in 1820.

Chapter 5 reassesses the estimates of slaves in Cuba. It shows a substantial increase in what historians know about the number of slaves imported into the island. The new data allow separating the slaves arriving directly from Africa from those coming in from neighboring

territories (intra-American). Third, it identifies the causes of fluctuations of slave importations over time. Their African origins, as well as their numbers, depended on geopolitical shifts in the Atlantic world, including war. The chapter allows a better understanding of the origins of the slaves disembarked in Cuba.

CHAPTER 1

Reaching the African Coast, a Centennial Project, 1500-1808

For most of its imperial history, Spain depended on foreign merchants, commercial companies, and carriers to transport enslaved African to its colonies. It was not after the prohibition of the slave trade by England and the United States in 1808 that Spanish-flagged slave ships, mostly from Cuba, became frequent visitors off the African coast. This chapter explores major trends and features of the Spanish involvement in the slave trade since the beginning of the colonization of the Americas until 1790, and analyses the international, economic, and socio-political conditions that, between 1790 and 1808, favored the creation of the framework in which Cuban merchants established their transatlantic branch of the slave trade.

The first section of this chapter, *Historical Background (1500-1790)*, introduces significant characteristics, trends, and changes that, for almost three centuries, characterized the Spanish slave trade at large and Cuba in particular. Since this period does not constitute the core of this dissertation and is rather an introduction to a long-term historical context, this first section is made mostly of secondary sources, scientific literature, historical pamphlets, and, in less degree, archival material from Spanish archives. Three main goals inform this section. First, I illustrate how and why, for most of these years, Spain depended on foreign slave carriers and merchants for the provision of African captives to its colonies. It was this centennial lack of active participation in the transatlantic slave trade that explains why, at the turn of the nineteenth century, neither Spain nor its colonies had in place an infrastructure to transport slaves from Africa.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, some voices rose up to end that Spanish dependence by taking control of the slave trade and commercing along African coast without intermediaries. Their first goal was to debunk the monopolistic slave trading system hold by the state. The second was to create an infrastructure to take control of this commerce in people. My point is that the Spanish ambition of trading slaves directly in Africa predates the surge of Cuba as the place where, after 1808, such project materialized. Thus, I examine some of the projects, strategies, and actions that Spanish politicians as well merchants and planters in the colonies discussed and implemented to develop a national branch of the transatlantic slave trade and to subject this commerce to the newly created theory of the free market. By the 1750s, a narrative partially inspired by mercantilist doctrines was born in the Spanish empire equating patriotism with economic expansion and, by extension, a self-sufficient provision of slaves. Building a national branch of the transatlantic slave was diluted into a patriotic rhetoric. That narrative conflating patriotism and the slave trade strengthened at the turn of the nineteenth century leaving longlasting consequences in Cuba's socio-political history. This first section also reassesses the number of Africans brought into Cuba between 1500 and 1790 based on new data that have come to light in the past decade. The goal is to introduce some patterns and fluctuations regarding slave providers, regions of embarkation, and the total numbers of slaves disembarked. In sum, this section aims to introduce the historical context that explains why trading directly in Africa under the Spanish flag was a long-term aspiration among members of the metropolitan and colonial elite way before the king passed the 1789 law deregulating the slave trade.

The second section of this chapter, *Slave Trading Infrastructure, 1790-1808*, explains how the Cuban colonial government in conjunction with planters and merchants laid out the legal and institutional conditions for the creation of a slave trading infrastructure. This section is based

on archival documents produced by the colonial state, other semipolitical institutions in Cuba, and writings from contemporaries. Previous historians such as Saco, Franco, Moreno, Tornero, and Murray, have outlined the international, legal, and political conditions that favored the expansion of the Cuban slave trade. In this dissertation such laws, institutions, and projects are presented as the top down frameworks in which Cuban slave traders, on the ground, expanded their operations and reached the African coast.

I reconstruct and analyze slave trading institutions that emerged between 1790 and 1808 such as commercial associations, insurance companies, and the merchant guild known as the Real Consulado. While addressing legislation and institutions, I consider some of the proposals raised mostly in the halls of the Real Consulado between 1794 and 1808, aimed at encouraging Spanish subjects to travel to Africa in search of slaves. The goal of this chapter is to describe the legal and institutional conditions that favored Cuban-based merchants in trading slaves. The business itself and how Cuban merchants on the ground made the best of such conditions are central topics to the following chapter.

Historical Background, 1500-1790

Adventurers from the Iberian Peninsula were the first Europeans to explore the Atlantic coast of Africa. By the 1440s, Lusitanian ships had reached as far as south of the Mina coast.¹ Over time, Spain was unable to keep up with the Portuguese competition.² One crucial cause for Spain's withdrawal from operating in Sub-Saharan Africa was the signing of two international

¹ For the first years of Spanish involvement on the African trade see: Florentino Pérez Embid, "Los descubrimientos en el Atlántico y la rivalidad castellano-portuguesa hasta el tratado de Tordesillas," Sevilla, 1948.

² Note that Spain how we know it today did not emerge until 1492.

agreements: the Treaty of Alcáçovas (1479) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494).³ According to Elena Studer, since the Treaty of Alcáçovas, where Portugal claimed the regions south of the Spanish-owned Canary Islands, “Spaniards were excluded from the slave trade.”⁴ The Treaty of Tordesillas enacted by Pope Alejandro VI divided the world between Portugal and Spain. Territories 270 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands belonged to Spain, and Portuguese colonization was limited to the east of the archipelago. Africa fell under Portuguese influence. Both treaties excluded Spain from the African slave trade for centuries. Nevertheless, Spanish efforts on the conquest of the Americas and the Portuguese competition in the African trade might was more decisive than the signing of international treaties.

Unable to send direct expeditions to Africa and lacking settlements south of the Sahara, Spain regulated the introduction of slaves to its colonies through a monopolistic system of contracts known, first as *Licencias* (1493-1595), and later as *Asientos* (1595-1789). Those parties interested in transporting slaves to the New World had to apply for a Spanish royal authorization. If granted, the government decided not only the number of slaves, but also their gender and ethnicity, requirements that changed over time significantly.⁵ *Licencias* and *Asientos* shifted from Genovese, German, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English hands in tandem with transformations in diplomatic alliances. “From the very beginning,” in words of historian David Murray, “the Africa slave trade to Spanish America, had a certain distinct and lasting

³ The Treaty of Alcáçovas ended the war over the succession to the Castilian throne. Portugal granted possession of the Canary Islands to the Catholic Monarchs while retaining control over the commercial settlements on the Gulf of Guinea, Cape Verde, Madeira, and the Azores. Malyn Newitt, “A History of the Portuguese Overseas Expansion 1400–1668,” 37-38.

⁴ Elena Studer, “La Trata de Negros en el Rio de la Plata durante el siglo XVIII,” 45. Cortes López, José Luis, “Los orígenes de la esclavitud negra en España,” 93-94.

⁵ Andrea Weindl, “The Asiento de Negros and International Law,” 230.

characteristic. Foreigners controlled it.”⁶ This assertion--the absence of Spaniards in the African slave trade--as recent research has shown, is valid only for the years after 1640.⁷

Most historians divided the first two centuries of the Spanish slave trade to the Americas into two eras, from the earliest moments of colonization in the Americas until the beginning of the Iberian Union (1580), and the sixty years of Spanish control over Portugal (1580-1640). From the outset of slave importation, between 1500 and 1580, there was a steady growth in the supply of enslaved Africans to the Spanish possessions, which greatly accelerated after Lisbon became a vassal of Madrid. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, estimate that around 84,900 slaves were carried into the Spanish colonies by 1581.⁸ These authors argue that all 299 voyages arriving in the Circum-Caribbean during those years were Spanish vessels, a definition based on their national flag.⁹ If they were Spanish-flagged or Spanish-owned vessels is still a matter of debate. However, such estimates seemed to contradict other sections of the same article where the authors state that the slave trade carried on Spanish slave vessels was quite small.¹⁰ They also clarified a very relevant point which challenges any division of the slave trade by nationality for this period. It is, they say, “somewhat anachronistic to attempt to separate Spanish from Portuguese voyages for the years before 1641, particularly during the Iberian Union.”¹¹ The evidence supports the claim that Spanish subjects were engaged in slave trading operations in

⁶ David Murray, “Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade,” 3.

⁷ Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Spanish Slave Trade to Spanish America,” 433-461. Wheat, David, “Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640.”

⁸ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 440.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 438.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 448.

Africa before 1580. That year, as a result of the Iberian Union, “the final stage in the transfer of slave trade control to the Portuguese” took place.¹²

Before 1580, Cuba had a minimal share of the slaves transported to Hispanic America. Of the 84,900 Africans carried to the Spanish colonies by 1581, only 6,900, or eight percent of them, disembarked in Cuba (Appendix A, Figure 1).¹³ The meager importation of African slaves to the island mirrored its economic development in the early years of colonization. During the first half of the sixteenth century, the exploitation of Cuba’s minor gold resources and the decline of the indigenous population prompted the introduction of African captives. However, arrivals of free and enslaved alike fell in the aftermath of the discovery of abundant gold and silver deposits in Central and South-America. Migration to the mainland left Cuba with a smaller population at mid-century. Population growth resumed after the 1561’ Royal decree requiring all ships heading to Spain from the Americas to assemble in the port of Havana before starting their Atlantic voyage. The West Indies Fleet boosted the economy in the hinterland of the capital city. Not surprisingly, the importation of African captives accelerated, mostly in Havana, during the 1560s (Appendix 1, Figure1).

During the period known as the Iberian Union, 1580-1640, Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat estimate that around 444,900 African captives disembarked in the Spanish Americas --an increase of 424 percent over the previous period. Around half of the captives, the authors argue, arrived in Spanish slave ships.¹⁴ Regardless of the exact numbers of Spanish-owned slaving expeditions and despite being in the shadow of Portugal, it is clear that Spanish vessels had some

¹² Joseph M Delgado Ribas, “The Slave Trade in the Spanish Empire (1501-1808). In Fradera, Joseph and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain’s Atlantic Empire*, 19.

¹³ David Eltis and Jorge Felipe, “The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade: New Data, New Paradigms,” Table 2-1 (forthcoming).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

form of direct participation in the Atlantic slave trade until the first half of the seventeenth century. However, by the end of the Iberian Union, major Spanish engagement in this commerce disappeared, and it would not be restored until after 1808. In historian David Wheat’s words:

The extensive transatlantic slaving networks that flourished during the era of the Iberian Union, connecting Spanish Caribbean settlements to Portuguese outposts and Luso-African societies along the coast and rivers of western Africa, virtually vanished or were directed elsewhere altogether after Portugal’s renewed independence in 1640.¹⁵

Of the 444,900 Africans disembarked in Spanish-America between 1581 and 1640, 8,800, or just two percent of the total, disembarked in Cuba (Appendix A, Figure 1). By the end of the seventeenth century, the economy in Cuba, besides the fleet system, was not oriented to the export market. Although tobacco and livestock comprised the leading sectors since the seventeenth century, dozens of sugar mills emerged in the hinterland of Havana.¹⁶ Cuba, however, remained a society in which slavery did not play a significant economic role.

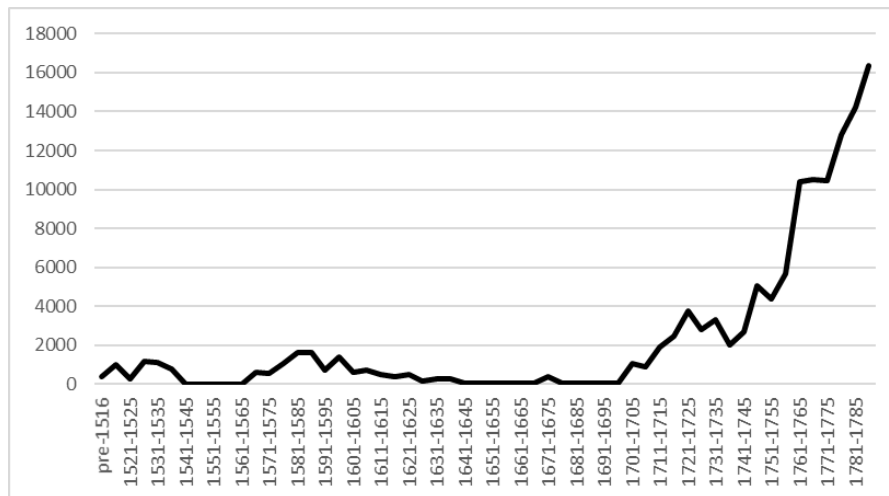


Figure 1: Slaves Disembarked in Cuba, 1500-1785. Eltis, David and Jorge Felipe, “The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade: New Data, New Paradigms,” Table 2.1 (forthcoming).

¹⁵ David Wheat, “Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640,” p. 262.

¹⁶ Alejandro de la Fuente found that in 1603 around thirty sugar mills existed in the city. Alejandro de la Fuente “Los Ingenios de Azúcar en La Habana del siglo XVII (1640-1700). Estructura y Mano de Obra,” 37.

Between 1641 and 1700, around 61,700 captives disembarked in the Spanish Americas. A few other things changed. Between 1500 and 1640, most of the slaves that had arrived in the Americas came directly from Africa, first from the Upper Guinea region and, after the 1590s, from Angola in West Central Africa.¹⁷ After 1640, Portuguese subjects were excluded from any Spanish slave trading license or *Asiento* over the ensuing decades. Without the leading European carrier of African captives in the Atlantic world, slave arrivals in Spanish America declined precipitously. Dutch and British took control of the provision of the slaves to Hispanic America, mostly to the Circum-Caribbean region. Thus, the intra-American or intercolonial slave trade replaced the transatlantic route. The Dutch colony of Curaçao, British Jamaica, and Barbados became the epicenters of the Spanish slave trade in the Circum-Caribbean region. Genovese merchants Domingo Grillo and Ambrosio Lomelin were granted the *Asiento* in 1662 to transport slaves to the Spanish colonies from the Dutch and British possessions in the Caribbean.¹⁸ By so doing, the Crown had legalized the existing contraband in slaves from the islands of Curaçao, Jamaica, and Barbados.¹⁹

Dissenting voices in Spain claimed that this monopolistic foreign-controlled trading scheme harmed Spanish national interests. Some argued that the admission of Protestant foreigners into the Spanish economy endangered the religious convictions of settlers in the overseas possessions. Others argued that the introduction of slaves was often used by the Dutch and British, as well by Spanish settlers, as a pretext for smuggling goods in Spanish America. Still, others asserted that the “asentistas” never complied with the original contracts and the

¹⁷ David Wheat, (Op. Cit.), 16-17.

¹⁸ M. Vega Franco, “El tráfico de esclavos con América (Asientos de Grillo y Lomelin, 1663-1674),” 10-11.

¹⁹ For the Curacao trade see: Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches. Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795*. Leiden, KITLV Press, 1998. During the *Asiento* of Grillo y Lomelin (1663-1674), at least 552 slaves disembarked in Havana. M. Vega Franco, “El Tráfico de esclavos con América. El Asiento de Grillo y Lomelin,” 1984.

prices of their human cargoes were too high. Spain wanted to take over the Atlantic slave trade business, but the transnational nature of this type of trade was in direct contradiction to official monopolistic and mercantilist policies. This Gordian knot would not be cut until 1789.

According to historian George Scelle, this was the dilemma in the Spanish slave trade during three centuries.

How would it be possible to provide slaves to the colonies without breaking the Spanish monopoly over its colonial commerce? How could foreigners be asked to allow access to their agencies without admitting them to the American colonies? How would they obtain for them labor which was indispensable to develop their domain beyond the seas without granting to the economic and political compensations that they would not fail to claim?²⁰

Madrid tried to find a Spanish or national replacements for the Dutch and the British. In 1676, the King granted the *Asiento* to a group of Spanish merchants connected to the Consulado of Seville. In theory, the slaves would come directly from Africa rather than from foreign colonies such as Curaçao or Jamaica.²¹ The project was, however, unrealistic. Spain had no slave trade outposts in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Portuguese would not agree to sell slaves at their African “factories” without getting in return authorization to import their goods into the Spanish colonies. The *Asiento* encountered strong opposition from other Seville merchants, from settlers in the Americas, and influential Dutch merchants in Madrid. Furthermore, this *Asiento* “was no more than a cover-up for much more far-reaching operations combining legal and illegal slave trading and large-scale good smuggling, with the Dutch baner Baltasar Coymans as the main beneficiary.”²² In 1685, Balthazar Coymans received the first formal *Asiento* to transport slaves

²⁰ George Scelle, “The Slave Trade in the Spanish Colonies of America: The Assiento,” 618.

²¹ For a complete list of the *Asientos* see: Marley, David (ed.), “Reales Asientos y licencias para la introducción de esclavos negros a la América Española.”

²² Joseph Delgado Ribas, (Op. Cit.),25

to Havana, Portobelo, Cartagena, and Veracruz.²³ His contract, however, ended abruptly in 1687 amidst accusations of heresy. Coyman's *Asiento* further demonstrates the profound Spanish dependence on foreign slave traders, and it prompted another attempt to integrate Spaniards into the slave trade.

In 1692, Bernardo F. Marin de Guzman, from Caracas, became the first creole or Spanish born subject in the Americas to receive an *Asiento*.²⁴ He arranged to acquire the captives directly in Africa on Spanish ships. Once again, the requirements of the *Asiento* were not met. Marin was murdered in 1695. However, even if he had been able to start his business, Marin was just an agent of the Portuguese Company of Cacheu. After Marin's failure, Spain turned to big commercial firms for slaves. This scheme—involving *Asientos* awarded to businesses—characterized the legal framework for the Spanish slave trade during the eighteenth century.

In 1695, the Spanish government granted the *Asiento* to the *Portuguese Company of Cacheu*.²⁵ Fifty-five years after Portugal's independence, Spain was thus once more relying on Portuguese traders.²⁶ This contract had one feature that made it different from previous contracts. It was the first time the Spanish king approved the *Asiento* to a foreign state-sponsored company. This new model led to international complications since both the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs were now shareholders of a slave-trading contract.

²³ Coymans was the head of the branch of the Dutch West Indian Company in Cadiz. Wright, Irene A, "The Coymans Asiento (1685-1689)," 22. Antonio Sorhegui D'Mares and Alejandro de la Fuente, "La organización de la sociedad criolla." *La Colonia, evolución socioeconómica y formación nacional desde los orígenes a 1867*, 140. Between 1685 and 1689, he introduced around one thousand slaves to Havana.

²⁴ Elena Studer, (Op. Cit.), 79.

²⁵ The Company of Cacheu was established in 1676. For the operations of the Company in Africa see Walter Hawthorne, "Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves. Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900, 72-77.

²⁶ Elena Studer, (Op. Cit.) 81.

The Spanish slave trade in the second half of the seventeenth century was modest while in Cuba almost disappeared. Between 1641 and 1700, Spanish America imported around 61,700 slaves.²⁷ Of these, 840 came to Cuba (Appendix A, Figure 1). After the separation of the Iberian crowns, numbers of Africans imported to Cuba fell drastically with no functional *Asiento* until Grillo and Lomelin (1663-1674) and then Coymans in 1684. In 1691 a “padron” or census from the city Havana counted a population of 11,940 inhabitants, 3,569 of whom were “negros” and “negras.”²⁸ Historian Levi Marrero counted around seventy sugar mills in 1692.²⁹ The tremendous demographic transformation in Cuba was still to come.

In 1700, King Charles II of Spain died leaving Philip V, the grandson of Luis XIV, as his successor. The royal succession came with the transfer of the *Asiento* from Portuguese to French hands. It would be the first time that the provision of slaves was part of a diplomatic agreement.³⁰ The French *Compagnie de Guinee et de l'Assiente* (1701-1713) would now supply forty-two thousand slaves for ten years, but it was never able to fulfill the quota. Instead, between 1703 and 1713, the company introduced 19,269 slaves into the Spanish colonies. Of these, only 2,046 went to Cuba (Appendix A, Figure 1).³¹

When Philip V became King of Spain, he did not renounce his right to the French throne which meant that Spain and France could potentially be unified as a single empire. England opposed such disruption of the European political equilibrium and declared war against the family pact in 1701. In 1713, the War of the Spanish Succession ended with the Treaties of

²⁷ Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, (Op. Cit.) 440.

²⁸ Inglis Gordon Douglas, “The Historical Demography of Colonial Cuba, 1492-1870,” 88-91.

²⁹ Levi Marrero Ariles, “Cuba Economía y Sociedad,” v. 4, 30.

³⁰ Weindl, Andrea (Op. Cit.), 240.

³¹ Colin Palmer, “The Company Trade and the Numerical Distribution of Slaves to Spanish America, 1703-1739,” in Paul E. Lovejoy (ed.) *Africans in Bondage. Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*, 37.

Utrecht, Rastatt, and Baden. European nations accepted Philip V as the legitimate Spanish king after he renounced to the French throne. Also, the *British South Sea Company* was granted the *Asiento* to carry 144,000 slaves to the Spanish colonies in thirty years.

Relying on British merchants was irksome to Madrid. An uneasy relationship between Spain and England, characterized by frequent wars, was unsettled further by the barely disguised smuggling of merchandise under cover of the *Asiento*. Furthermore, the *South Sea Company* did not fulfill its quota of slaves. The Company's finances were in crisis and it had the opposition of merchant groups in London and Jamaica. Its properties were confiscated on several occasions as a result of the Anglo-Spanish wars (1718-1720, 1727-1729, and 1739-1748). Spanish buyers found slave prices too high and the supply irregular. During its active period of operations (1715-1739), the British company introduced in the Spanish colonies around 69,800 slaves, of which Cuba received 7,400 (Appendix A, Figure 1).³²

The Spanish crown tried other avenues for captives. During the War of Jenkin's Ear against England, the Spanish government authorized the *Real Compañía de Comercio de la Habana* (1740-1765), Havana's Royal Company of Commerce, to monopolize almost every commercial operation in the island including the importation of slaves.³³ Between 1743 and 1747, the company introduced 3,263 captives in Cuba.³⁴ Although the monopoly was another attempt to place the slave trade in Spanish hands, it quickly became no more than another vehicle for British slave traders as the *Real Compañía* sent vessels to Jamaica to acquire the captives.

³² Ibid., p. 41

³³ For the operations of the *Real Compañía de Comercio de la Habana* see: Monserrat Garate Ojanguren, "Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración. La Real Compañía de Comercio de la Habana." Enrique López Mesa, "La Trata Negrera en el puerto de la Habana a mediados del siglo XVIII," 20.

³⁴ Pablo Tornero Tinajero, "Crecimiento Económico Y Transformaciones Sociales: Esclavos, Hacendados Y Comerciantes En La Cuba Colonial (1760-1840)," 34.

The dependence on the British, a nation in frequent conflicts with Spain, catalyzed the desires among the Spanish elite to find a self-sufficient path for the provision of slaves.

By the second half of the eighteenth, a set of different and even contradictory political and economic ideas were fused with the rhetoric promoting the transatlantic slave trade. The European transition from mercantilism to economic liberalism spurred the public discourse that the slave trade, as a form of commerce, should be subjected to few government restrictions. Trading slaves without binding monopolies or *Asientos* was a reaffirmation of freedom, prosperity, and a guaranteed path to economic success. Economic expansion was understood as a patriotic necessity for survival. If forced labor was the key for socio-economic development in the colonies, it follows that finding ways to optimize the importation of Africans was a patriotic task. There was another layer. Since Great Britain was both, the leading provider of captives to the Spanish colonies and the most remarkable enemy of Spain, developing a national path to bring slaves from Africa was a nationalistic adventure.

Spanish officials, intellectuals, planters, and merchants started to openly criticize the British role in the provision of forced labor and the *Asientos* system. In 1749, Bernardo José de Urrutia, the mayor of Havana, argued in a pamphlet that “the provision of negroes is from a political standpoint of immense importance for our island.” Urrutia considered the monopoly to be damaging for prices, amount, and quality of the slaves carried to the Americas. The cause, he said, was the British monopoly. Urrutia was correct. “In 1714-19 and 1733 *asiento* slaves sold in Havana at an average price of £56, whereas prices in nearby Jamaica were in the £20 to £25 range.”³⁵ The problem, according to Urrutia, was not only prices but also insufficient numbers of

³⁵ David Eltis, “Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 35.

Africans. Cuba, Urrutia estimated, needed to import at least 1,200 slaves a year - 800 for Havana and 400 for Santiago.³⁶ British supplies did not meet the demand. The author proposed that the *Real Compañía*, for which he was an agent, should oversee slave imports in Cuba. Spanish economist Bernardo de Ulloa followed Urrutia's lead, but he went even further with his ideas. Ulloa wrote that subjects of his Catholic Majesty should head directly for places in Africa where there were no other European "factories."³⁷ Spanish intellectuals started picturing Spain as a colonial empire with vessels traveling regularly to Africa to transport enslaved Africans to work for the greater glory of the Catholic monarchs.

Others Spanish officers wrote on how to improve the importation of slaves in Cuba. Either in 1755 or 1756, Nicolas Joseph de Rivera submitted a report to King Charles III about the socio-economic situation of Cuba. As a physiocrat, Rivera was convinced that agricultural development was the central pillar of the wealth of a nation. He argued for measures to increase the population, whether European or African, to work on the land. "It does not matter if the inhabitants of Cuba are white or black if they work hard and are faithful. The authorization to acquire slaves from Africa is the only one that can be used to fill the island with large towns in a short time."³⁸ Rivera was in favor of free trade. Because "our navigation cannot go to buy them in Africa," any foreign nation at peace with Spain should provide Cuba with slaves without restriction.³⁹ The taxes for the introduction of Africans in the Americas, he claimed, should be eliminated. The competition among merchants would lower the prices of the slaves and improve their quality. Urrutia anticipated the change from economic mercantilism to liberalism.

³⁶ Bernardo Joseph Urrutia y Matos, "Cuba: Fomento de la Isla de Cuba," 6.

³⁷ Bernardo Ulloa, "Restablecimiento de las Fabricas y Comercio Español," 41.

³⁸ Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, "Nicolás Joseph de Ribera," 219.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 214.

The interest in slave trading reforms was part of broader changes in Europe. In Cuba's case, it was also the result of specific economic changes. Between 1701 and 1760, Spanish America imported 56,800 slaves.⁴⁰ Of these, 23,600 or 42 percent disembarked in Cuba. Compared to the previous period, the difference is striking. The first peak in the Cuban slave trade took place after 1713 when the *Asiento* fell into the hands of the *South Sea Company*. The first significant decline in slave arrivals coincided with the end of this official British monopoly in 1739 (Appendix A, Figure 1). Wars between England and Spain affected the forced movement of Africans across the Atlantic. The massive rise in sugar production in the British West Indies in the second half of the eighteenth century generated huge inflows of slaves, of which Cuba accounted for just a part. In 1749, the mayor of Havana, Bernardo de Urrutia calculated that there were sixty-two active sugar mills and twenty-two under construction. Ten years later, in 1759, the numbers had risen to eighty-eight.⁴¹ The British occupation of Havana accelerated these socio-economic transformations in the western part of the island.

For eleven months, between August 1762 and July 1763, the British occupied Havana. The deep anti-British stance among people the Cuban elite faded away when the Britons introduced what planters wanted the most: slaves. The British brought around 3,200 Africans to Cuba.⁴² The British occupation established deep roots in the psyche of the Cuban "saccharocracy," a term used by Moreno Fraginals to describe the planter class, as a period of

⁴⁰ Borucki, Et. Al. (Op. Cit.), 440.

⁴¹ Bernardo Joseph Urrutia y Matos, "Cuba: Fomento de la Isla de Cuba," 6. "Libro que comprende la producción y contribución del 5% de los ingenios habaneros entre 1759 y 1762," ANC, Miscelánea de Expedientes, 2646.

⁴² There is a debate on the numbers of slaves introduced in Havana during the British occupation. A letter written by the Captain General Conde de Ricla states that the British imported to Havana 2,727 captives. According to Hubert Aimes, the occupants introduced 10, 700 slaves. Hugh Thomas refers -based on Spanish sources- around 4,000. Moreno Fraginals and Mercedes Garcia followed these figures in their scholarships. Pablo Tornero calculated the numbers to 3,262. "Ricla to Arriaga, November 18, 1763," ANC. Gobierno Superior Civil, 452-18574. Hubert Aimes, "A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511-1868," 33. Hugh Thomas, "Cuba, the Pursuit of Freedom," 50. Pablo Tornero Tinajero, (Op. Cit.), 35. Mercedes García, "Entre haciendas y plantaciones," 283.

commercial expansion and the beginning of Cuba's awakening. After the British withdrew, the liberal door on the importation of slaves was hardly shuttered. The powers of the *Real Compañía de la Habana* over the Cuban slave trade were restored and, between 1763 and 1765, in joint ventures with British traders, the company imported 4,957 slaves into Cuba altogether.⁴³ This trend continued until the end of the century.

After the British occupation, Cuba accelerated its transition from a society with slaves to a slave society.⁴⁴ The hinterland of Havana underwent significant agricultural changes with sugar production coming to the fore. The lands devoted to sugarcane expanded from around 10,600 acres in 1762 to more than 165,800 in 1792.⁴⁵ The numbers of *ingenios* increased from 88 in 1759, to 229 in 1792, and average production capacity per sugarmills increased by 25 percent, from 48 tons in 1763, to 60 tons in 1792.⁴⁶ Between 1760 and 1763 a yearly average of 13,000 boxes of sugar left Havana compared to 50,000 boxes from 1770 to 1778, 80,000 between 1778 and 1796, and 135,000 between 1796 and 1800.⁴⁷ The increase in forced labor enabled this expansion in production. Between 1760 and 1790, 70,900 enslaved Africans disembarked in Cuba, a sharp increase compared to previous years. Transformations within the Spanish empire made this possible.

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish monarch Charles III (1759-1788) and later his son Charles IV (1788-1808), implemented a series of liberal administrative, political, fiscal, and commercial reforms.⁴⁸ After several petitions emanating from Cuban

⁴³ José Antonio Saco, "Historia de la Esclavitud," 267.

⁴⁴ Franklin W Knight, "Slave Society in Cuba: During the Nineteenth Century," 3-47

⁴⁵ Laird W. Bergard, Fe Iglesias, and Maria del Carmen Barcia, "The Cuban Slave Market 1790-1880," 25

⁴⁶ Laird W. Bergard, Fe Iglesias, and María del Carmen Barcia, (Op. Cit.), 25.

⁴⁷ David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 2.

⁴⁸ For the Bourbons reforms see: Allan J. Kuethe, "The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

merchants and planters, the slave trading monopoly held by the *Real Compañía de Comercio* was eliminated. In 1765, the commercial monopoly of Cádiz disappeared after Havana, and other Caribbean cities were authorized to trade directly with eight Spanish ports. The intercolonial trade was also liberalized. The first Hispano-American *Intendencia de Hacienda*, a sort of department of treasury with higher powers, was founded in Havana in 1765. That institution would be in charge of collecting taxes, conducting audits, and prosecuting those defrauding the treasury.⁴⁹ The head of the *Intendencia*, the intendant, played a pivotal role in stimulating the Cuban slave trade. The 1778 Law of Free Commerce allowed much more liberal trade between Spain and its colonies.⁵⁰

The European shift from mercantilism to liberalism, slowly embraced by the Bourbon monarchy, opened a door for public discussion of the importance of easing barriers to the importation of Africans in the colonies. “It can be stated as an absolute principle,” wrote General O’Reilly to the government in 1764, “that the prosperity of the Island depends mainly on the importation of African slaves.”⁵¹ In 1768, the Spanish engineer Agustín Crame wrote in his “Discurso Político sobre el Fomento de la Isla de Cuba:”

The best means of all for the introduction of negroes in Cuba is to get them by ourselves on the Africa coast. Although I doubt the success of both, the establishment and the sustainability of this commerce, it would be convenient for this city [Havana] to undertake some attempts to encourage traders and protect them in this particular endeavor. It would be an important step.⁵²

⁴⁹ See: Juan Bosco Amores, “La Intendencia de Ejército y Hacienda de Cuba: origen y primera organización (1765-1775),” Instituto de Investigaciones de Historia del Derecho, 1997.

⁵⁰ Javier Alvarado Planas, “La Administración De Cuba En Los Siglos XVIII Y XIX,” 148.

⁵¹ David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 5.

⁵² Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Colección “Santo Domingo,” 1157. In: Mercedes García Rodríguez, “Entre haciendas y plantaciones. Orígenes de la manufactura azucarera en la Habana,” 286.

In his 1762 “Reflexiones sobre comercio español a Indias” addressed to the government, the Spanish politician Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes likewise wrote on the detrimental effects of the slave trade monopoly. He called the British *Asiento* as “the most intolerable oppression ever suffered by the Spanish nation.” Campomanes proposed free commerce and the acquisition of Spanish “factories” in Africa. One of the Canary Islands, he suggested, could be used as an African hub for slave traders from any nation in peace with Spain.⁵³ The projects sketched by O’Reilly and Campomanes were far from being materialized. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish monarchy tried, without success, to sponsor projects to trade slaves in Africa.

After the *Asiento* of the *South Sea Company*’s officially ended in 1750, Madrid was determined to curtail dependency on England. In 1765, the Spanish commercial firm *Real Compañía Gaditana de Negros* received the *Asiento*. According to historian Jose Luciano Franco, the Spanish company gained this *Asiento* because the new administration of Charles III “tried to concentrate in Spanish hands the slave trade monopoly.”⁵⁴ One clause of the contract specified that the shareholders must purchase slaves “directly” in Goree, Senegal and Cape Verde, before carrying them to Puerto Rico from where they would be distributed among the Hispanic possessions.⁵⁵ The shareholders were allowed to carry the enslaved on foreign vessels due to the “lack of Spanish experience in this commerce” and the absence of Spanish slave trade outposts in Africa.

The Company tried to acquire slaves in Africa, but their first venture failed. On May 3, 1766, the Spanish frigate *La Venganza* sailed from Cadiz to Upper Guinea. Historian Bibiano

⁵³ Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, “Reflexiones sobre el Comercio Español a Indias,” 335.

⁵⁴ José Luciano Franco, “*Comercio clandestino de esclavos*,” 71.

⁵⁵ Bibiano Ramírez, “*La Compañía Gaditana de Negros*,” 39.

described this event as “extraordinary” because Spanish “slave trading companies or private contractors had always engaged in this commerce through French, Portuguese or English, intermediaries, who were, for the most part, the owners of all slave-trading factories.”⁵⁶ The *Venganza* returned to Havana with fewer slaves than agreed. Purchasing the slaves in African coastal regions under French, Portuguese, and British influence, the company’s shareholders argued, turned out to be challenging. The prices set for the Spanish traders were unfairly high and the quality of the captives poor. Despite these daunting circumstances, the company sent out yet another Spanish slave ship in 1769. The frigate *Fortuna* was accompanied by a French vessel for the Spanish crew to learn “the way other slave-trading nations did this business.”⁵⁷ This experiment, too, was unsuccessful. After these failures, the Company arranged every expedition from Nantes under the French flag or from Liverpool under British colors.⁵⁸ In the end, the British once again became responsible for stocking the Spanish ships. Spain was still incapable of competing with established slave-trading nations.

The *Real Compañía Gadicana de Negros* did manage to provide thousands of slaves to the Americas. Havana was their primary destination port. The first four years of the company’s tenure were more successful than its next ventures. Between 1766 and 1771, it introduced 12,503 slaves, 9,418 of whom disembarked in Cuba - 7,716 in Havana and 1,702 in Santiago de Cuba.⁵⁹ During the second period of their *Asiento* between 1771 and 1773, on the other hand, Havana only received 355 slaves in two different embarkations.⁶⁰ The decline of the Company was

⁵⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 162.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 174.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 176.

evident to the shareholders, the buyers in Cuba, and the Spanish authorities, triggering another bout of demands from Cubans to the courts in Madrid.

The failures of the company reinforced the case for the liberalization of the importation of slaves to Cuba. After the first bankruptcy of the *Real Compania Gaditana de Negros*, the Council of Havana requested to import slaves directly from Africa and foreign colonies.⁶¹ “What the Cuban planters really wanted,” according to Murray, “was permission to trade directly with the British West Indies instead of being forced to purchase slaves through the agent of the monopoly holders.”⁶² The Spanish king rejected the request.⁶³ Instead, Madrid issued a Royal Order in 1773 authorizing Lorenzo de Aristegui, Francisco Aguirre, and the Marquis of Casa Enrile to take control of the failing *Compañía Gaditana de Negros*. The company headquarters moved from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Havana. Slave ships were permitted to come directly to the island which was good news for Cuban planters always complaining about the high prices of slaves. Most human cargoes arrived via British merchants from Jamaica and Barbados. In 1779, the slave trading Spanish company was disbanded despite the attempts of the crown to save it. In total, between 1766 and 1779, the Spanish *Asiento* had introduced 28,000 African slaves to Cuba.⁶⁴

One more attempt to Hispanicize the slave trade occurred. In 1778 the Treaty of El Pardo between Portugal and Spain ignited new hopes among Spanish merchants for direct trading in Africa. Portugal had ceded to Spain two islands in the Bight of Biafra, Annobón and Fernando Po (Bioko). The thirteenth clause of the treaty envisioned Fernando Po as the center for future

⁶¹ One of the reasons was the British Free Port Act of 1766, renewed in 1774. Allan Christelow, “Contraband Trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main and the Free Port Act of 1766.” 309-343.

⁶² David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 5.

⁶³ ANC. Gobierno Superior Civil, 456-18581, letter 338.

⁶⁴ Gloria García, (Op. Cit.), 141.

Spanish slave trading operations. The African settlement, the clauses said, would allow Spain “to get rid of contracts and damaging asientos.”⁶⁵ Not coincidentally, in the same year, Charles III passed the “Reglamento y Aranceles Reales para el Comercio Libre de España e Indias” which opened up thirteen Spanish ports to trade with twenty-seven in the Americas.⁶⁶ The Spanish monarch issued several instructions to promote the Spanish slave trade in the recently acquired islands of Fernando Po and Annobón. According to Franco, a group of Havana merchants imagined the acquisition of Fernando Po as “the opportunity to seize the slave-trading monopoly.”⁶⁷ The city council of Havana sent representatives to Madrid carrying detailed plans to put together a Cuban-based slaving commercial company to trade slaves in Fernando Po.⁶⁸ In November, the Captain General of Cuba sent instructions to various towns in the interior of the island to join forces to organize expeditions to Africa. The city councils of Santiago de Cuba, Holguín, Sancti Spiritus, and Trinidad held meetings to secure financing for some expeditions.⁶⁹ However, in 1780, the Spanish troops abandoned Fernando Po because of its hostile environment - weather, diseases, native resistance, and international pressures. Another of the projects to develop a “national” Atlantic slave trade had failed.

The Anglo-Spanish war (1779-1783) opened new possibilities for aspiring Cuban slave traders. England, an enemy nation but the major provider of slaves to the Americas, could not trade in Cuba or any Spanish colonies. The lack of that provider prompted a wave of slave trade deregulations. In 1779, commerce between Cuba and neutral powers was allowed. A royal order dated January 25, 1780, permitted merchants from Cuba and other Spanish possessions to

⁶⁵ Dolores García Cantús, “Fernando Poo: Una aventura colonial española en el África Occidental (1778-1900),” 7-8.

⁶⁶ Reglamento y aranceles reales para el comercio libre de España a Indias. Madrid, Imprenta de Pedro Marín, 1778.

⁶⁷ José Luciano Franco, (Op. Cit.) p. 79.

⁶⁸ Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring, “De cómo y por quiénes se hacía la trata de negros en el año de 1778,” 418-431.

⁶⁹ Records for each of these meetings are available at: AGI, Collection “Papeles de Cuba” For Santiago de Cuba Leg. 1297, tira 4, Holguín Leg. 129, tira 5; Sancti Spiritus and Trinidad AGI, “Cuba”, Leg 1258, tira 3.

acquire slaves in French colonies on board Spanish, neutral, or allied vessels.⁷⁰ In 1781, the government granted several slave-trading licenses to members of the aristocracy of Havana such as Miguel Antonio de Herrera, the Marquise widow of Cárdenas de Monte Hermoso, and Francisco Javier Matienzo.⁷¹ It was the first time that Cuban traders had received such concessions. However, in 1785, authorities rescinded Miguel Antonio de Herrera's license after they discovered he was acquiring the slaves from British companies.⁷² Between 1781 and 1785, around 12,000 slaves arrived legally in Cuba, a considerable number of them on board French and Spanish vessels from neighboring Saint-Domingue.

By the 1780s the principle that the slave trade should be practiced freely became part of mainstream ideology as the increasing number of projects and petitions regarding the subject show. In 1781, Bernardo de Yriarte, one of the Councilors of the Indies, called for the liberalization of the slave trade, and the creation of a self-sufficient Spanish slave fleet in a project presented to the government. "Our experience," the document says, "has taught us not to rely on companies or *asientos*."⁷³ Yriarte suggested the stationing of a Spanish fleet on the coast of Africa. Also, in 1781, the Spanish government received a report highlighting that the Spanish did not possess the "necessary knowledge for this business which can be only obtained with practice, they also lack ships, sailors, and the appropriated produce for the trade on the Guinea coast."⁷⁴ The poor Spanish slave trading infrastructure was evident in the 1780s. A French slave merchant commented about the Spanish slave trade in the following terms:

⁷⁰ ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 2-114. See David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 8.

⁷¹ Ibid, 40.

⁷² "Troncoso to Gálvez, Havana, August 6, 1785," AGI, Santo Domingo, 1242.

⁷³ David Murray, (Op. Cit.), p. 8.

⁷⁴ "Informe de Luis Rey. S. Lorenzo, 12 de octubre de 1781," AGI. Indiferente General, 2820. In: Tornero Tinajero, Pablo, (Op. Cit.), 40.

They [Spaniards] do not have the necessary knowledge for this trade, which is achieved only with practice, they currently lack ships, sailors, insurance, and their own genres for the trade on the coasts of Guinea.⁷⁵

In 1786, *The Royal Philippine Company* received an *Asiento* to provide slaves to the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata. According to the official petition for the *Asiento*, its expeditions would require the “supervision” of established slave-trading nations. The petition suggested placing on each foreign slave ship at least two young Spaniards to learn about the business and train them for future Spanish-owned expeditions. Cuban authorities would adopt this learning strategy after 1790.⁷⁶ *The Royal Philippine Company* began its operations in 1787. For two years, it carried slaves to Montevideo and other ports in South America originally provided by the British. The British intermediary for *The Royal Philippine Company* was the Liverpool firm of Baker & Dawson, the primary provider of slaves to the Spanish colonies between 1784 and 1789.⁷⁷ In 1786, Baker & Dawson were allowed to transport slaves to Cuba. Their agent in Havana was Felipe Allwood, a former shareholder of the Jamaican firm Ludlow & Allwood. Between 1786 and 1789, the British firm introduced to Cuba around 5,233 slaves.⁷⁸

In 1788, Philip Alwood asked for a renewal of the *Asiento* of Baker & Dawson, but the government refused. Thus, Cuban-based merchants realized they would soon be able to

⁷⁵ Pablo Tornero Tinajero, (Op. Cit.), 40.

⁷⁶ “Colección de Noticias instructivas de prácticas y especulación para el Comercio de negros con presencia de los puntos del oficio de los señores directores de la Real Compañía de Filipina de 7 de febrero de 1786.” Archivo de Diputación Foral de Vizcaya, Ultramar 1, No. 28, in Azcona, Manuel, “El Comercio de Negros en tiempos de Carlos III (1786),” 79-91.

⁷⁷ Dawson entered the trade about 1775; and as captain of the *Mentor* in 1778 he seized the French East Indiaman, the *Carnatic*. Reputed to be the “richest prize ever taken and brought safe into port by a Liverpool adventurer,” the *Carnatic*, carrying a box of diamonds of great value, was worth £135,000. Captain Dawson married the daughter of Peter Baker, the *Mentor*’s owner, forming the house of Baker and Dawson, shipbuilders and slave merchants. For a number of years John Dawson did business through means of the partnership, and then apparently went on his own. In 1788–89 Baker sold shares in four ships they owned together to his son-in-law, presumably in the process of dissolving the partnership. James A. Rawley, Stephen D. Behrendt, “The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History, Revised Edition,” 186.

⁷⁸ AGI., Indiferente General, 2824. See also: Mercedes García, (Op. Cit.), p. 287. According to Francisco del Valle Hernandez the number are slightly higher: 5,786. Francisco Arango y Parreño, “Obras,” v. 2, 163.

participate in the slave trade. To get ready, two agents of Havana merchants traveled to Manchester and Liverpool to learn the basics of human trafficking and the most modern sugar production technologies. While in Liverpool, the epicenter of the slave trade of the era, they examined slave ships, learned about prices of the slaves, trade goods, and the type of commerce practiced on different regions in Africa. They even tried to hire captains and surgeons for future expeditions.⁷⁹

On February 6, 1789, the Cuban Francisco de Arango y Parreño, the general agent of the City Council of Havana in Madrid, submitted to the government his “Primer Papel Sobre el Comercio de Negros” (First Report on the Negro Trade) to ask the Spanish crown to liberalize the slave trade in the Spanish colonies. The agriculture of the island, he explained, could find a “fountain of men on the western coasts of Africa.” Other nations, he said, have been there to practice this “miserable trade,” and only Spain had refrained from doing so. For the time being, “we depend on foreigners, but the best way to have fair prices is by giving them absolute freedom for selling their cargoes.”⁸⁰ A few months later, Arango’s petition became a law.

For three centuries, the Spanish slave trade had some patterns. It continued under government control. It was managed by foreigners who changed their nationality in tandem with global transformations. Spaniards had no slave trade outposts in Africa, nor any experience in trading slaves across the Atlantic, or infrastructure in place to practice such commerce. By the second half of the eighteenth century, during the transition from economic mercantilist to liberalism, the external dependency and the monopolistic character of the Spanish slave trade became the target of multiple criticisms by officials, merchants, and planters. A new narrative was born proclaiming that achieving a self-sufficient provision of slaves was a patriotic duty.

⁷⁹ José Antonio Saco, (Op. Cit.), 300.

⁸⁰ Francisco de Arango y Parreño, (Op. Cit.), 117-121.

Proposals emerged to eliminate the *Asiento* system, to boost a self-sufficient Spanish slave trade, and to replace the slave trade monopoly by free competition. In 1789, a Royal decision abolished the state monopoly and the system of *Asientos*. However, the lack of expertise and infrastructure remained a challenge. The following section analyzes the institutional and legal steps taken in Cuba to facilitate the introduction of African captives and to develop a national branch of the transatlantic slave trade.

Slave Trading Infrastructure: Legislations, Institutions, and Discussions, 1790-1808

Between 1790 and 1808, the Spanish government passed dozens of laws to encourage the introduction of enslaved Africans and the development of a Cuban-based branch of the transatlantic slave trade. Concurrently with this legislation, political and economic institutions emerged, and projects were discussed aiming at the same slave trading purposes. This section analyzes, chronologically, each significant piece of pro-slave trade legislation adopted, institutions that emerged, and projects that were discussed between 1790 and 1808. I also explore some of the debates that took place among Cuban merchants, planters, and colonial officers over strategies to take control of the provision of Africans on the island. Such discussions offer some insights into the mindset of Cuban merchants and planters promoting, justifying, and expanding the transatlantic slave trade at a moment when the western world redefined the contours and meanings of freedom and slavery.

The 1789 Royal decree “granting freedom for the negro trade” effectively changed three centuries of the monopolistic system of licenses and *Asientos*. The law intended to “stimulate agriculture in the provinces of Caracas and the islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico.” Any subject of Spain, residing in the peninsula or the Americas, was allowed to buy Africans in any place where there was a market. Slave merchants could export from Cuba, “free

of all contributions” goods needed for the slave trade. “To serve as an incentive to this type of trade,” aimed at stimulating a national slave trade, the public treasury would pay four pesos to those Spanish subjects bringing slaves of “good quality” from Africa. The Royal Order required that one-third of the human cargo had to be female. Although national vessels should be of “moderate” size, it clarifies, those belonging to foreign merchants could not exceed three hundred tons. The order further limited foreign merchants. Foreigners could import captives to Hispanic America for only for two years. Their vessels had to leave the Spanish ports after twenty-four hours. Only the port of Havana was open to them while others such as Santiago de Cuba were open only for “nationals.” Foreigners were required to have Spanish agents conducting the sale of the human cargo known as the consignees. The government left the pricing of slaves open to free competition.⁸¹ The Royal decree was expected to run for only two years. During the next decade, however, new laws relaxed remaining limitations.

The Royal Order from 1789 immediately impacted the Cuban slave trade. The British, who had been the traditional providers, had to face new competitors. Americans, French, Danish, Dutch, and even some German slave ships started arriving in Cuba with human cargoes. Thus, the origin or embarkation regions of the Africans also changed since the new carriers transported slaves from anywhere in Africa and the Caribbean. In other words, the Cuban slave trade was profoundly diversified in terms of carriers and regions of embarkation. Without experience, networks, or technologies for this type of transatlantic commerce, Cuban participation in the slave trade was confined to the intra-American human trade. The first experimental Cuban expedition to Africa did not happen until 1792, and it had few followers. Cubans could not

⁸¹ Manuel Lucena Salmoral, “Regulación de la esclavitud negra de América Española (1503-1886): Documentos para su estudio,” 246-248.

compete with established international slave traders. In addition, the laws ended benefiting more those who were more competitive. Historian David Murray points the conflict out in the following terms: “However, great the desire of the Spanish authorities to diminish the colonists’ dependence on foreign slave traders, the effect of the *cédulas* was to increase it.”⁸²

The restrictions imposed on foreign slave traders regarding the size of their ships, their periods of allowed stay in Cuba, and the enforcement to hire Spanish agents reflected old anxieties among Spanish authorities. In previous years, British traders had smuggled goods in the Spanish possessions disguised under the authorization to bring slaves. Authorities also feared the spreading of potentially dangerous ideas such as Republicanism or Protestantism. However, for an economy that relied on foreign traders to acquire forced labor, such concerns were deemed as secondary and restrictions were gradually lifted. There was a tension publicly discussed on the island. Foreign slave traders were the competitors for any plan of creating a Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade, but they were also the lifeline for the continued supply of forced labor.

In January 1790, a new law lifted more barriers for national and foreigners by ending the royal monopoly on Cuba’s mahogany and cedar if these were intended the trade in slaves. Spaniards had to contribute to the treasury with six percent of the products they exported and imported if related to slave trading activities.⁸³ In February 1791, the 1789’s two-year term granted to foreign merchants to introduce slaves in Havana was extended for two more years.⁸⁴ On March 8, another piece of legislation allowed for bigger foreign ships to bring slaves to Cuba. Their permitted capacity increased from 300 to 500 tons.⁸⁵

⁸² David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 13.

⁸³ “Aclaraciones a la Real Cedula sobre la libertad del comercio de esclavos,” ANC, Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, 26-17.

⁸⁴ “Prorroga a la entrada de negros por extranjeros,” ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédulas 1791-1792. 10 A.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Opinions in Havana and Madrid were divided over the issue of slave trade liberalization. One camp called for a return to the old monopoly system or contracts, and the other group demanded to expand free trade laws. Those in favor of returning to the era of the *Asientos* were the merchants connected to the last holders of the *Asiento*, the Liverpool commercial firm of Baker & Dawson and, more specifically, its Havana agent, Felipe Alwood. They claimed that better priced and higher quality Africans had arrived in Cuba during the contract with the British company than in the two years after 1789. Liberalizers, on the other hand, were unified and emboldened by their new roles as the sales agents of human cargoes carried by foreign slave traders and as owners of slave ships in the intra-American trade. Francisco de Arango y Parreño was their most prominent voice. In May 1791, Arango presented a plan to the colonial government to further liberalize the slave trade.⁸⁶

Arango agreed with the monopolistic argument that the new free trade regime produced a temporary increase in slave prices compared to previous years. The solution to get more captives at better rates was not giving control of the Cuban slave trade, as in the past, to some individuals or companies. Instead, he argued for expanding the spectrum of existing laws allowing for more reduction of taxes and more privilege for foreign slave providers. Slavers, Arango recognized, preferred to go to those ports where there was a higher demand for slaves such as Jamaica. Havana could not compete with other foreign colonies in the Caribbean because “its agriculture is inferior, and, by far, the poorest of all.” What waited for foreigners in Havana, Arango added, was “unknown people, with a very different language, where they can confuse the good man, the well-off, with the miserable and the deceiver.” He found that the causes of mistrust against Cubans lay in the many limitations imposed on foreign traders in Spanish colonial ports.

⁸⁶ “Representación manifestando las ventajas de una absoluta libertad en la introducción de negros y solicitando se amplíe a ocho la prorroga concedida por dos años,” Arango y Parreño, Francisco, (Op. Cit.), 131-137.

Arranging financial credits, joint investments, and building business trust could not be accomplished if foreign slavers could only stay for a limited period in the city. Thus, Arango suggested extending the stay of foreign merchants in the city and allowing them to freely choose their sale agents, even if they were not Spaniards.⁸⁷

To build confidence among foreign merchants in Havana and speed sales, Arango recommended the government to support the establishment of a Cuban slave-trading firm to sell human cargoes carried by foreign slavers. Arango asked the King to extend the authorization for foreign merchants to trade in Cuba to six or eight more years. However, the ultimate solution, according to Arango, was the development of a nationally organized transatlantic slave trade. The state, he said, should stimulate Spanish expeditions to Africa. Cubans could learn from foreign slave traders to train future slave traffickers from the island.⁸⁸

Arango's suggestion of creating a consignment company was discussed a few months later. In 1792, twelve merchants from Havana sent a petition to the Cuban governor Luis de las Casas to establish the "Compañía de Consignación Pasiva de Negros Bozales" (Negro Consignment Company). The Company would sell slaves brought in by foreigners lacking "agents and trustworthy consignees in the city." The government referred to the project as an "effective and opportune method" to encourage the entry of forced labor in Cuba, and as a means to remove "all recourse of pretexts" that foreigners tend to avail themselves of to stay for longer periods in Havana. Twelve shareholders would fund the company with an initial stock of three hundred thousand pesos.⁸⁹ Owners of expeditions could freely sell their cargoes to any

⁸⁷ "Representación manifestando las ventajas de una absoluta libertad en la introducción de negros y solicitando se amplíe a ocho la prorroga concedida por dos años," Francisco Arango y Parreño, (Op. Cit.), v.1, 131-137.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ The twelve merchants involved in the creation of the company were: Lorenzo de Quintana, Francisco del Corral, J.M. López, Bonifacio González Larrinaga, José Andrés de Ceballos, Juan J. Patrón, Gabriel Raimundo de Azcárate, Hermanos Lozaga, J.A. de Arregui, Sebastián de Lasa, Felipe Fernández de Silva, and Cristóbal de Arozarena. "El Prior y Cónsules de la Habana a Miguel Cayetano Soler," Havana, October 29, 1802, AGL., Santo Domingo, 2195.

individual, whether he was a member of the company or not. The company would operate for six years.⁹⁰ According to the official version, the company was as an attempt to regularize the slave business in Havana and to force foreign merchants to play by the rules set by the colonial state.

The project appeared in the newspaper on April 1, 1792. A few weeks later, the same newspaper printed an anonymous article made by opponents. The controversy was part of the old conflict between those calling for free trade without restrictions and those in favor of some forms of control or monopoly. Those opposing the “Compañía” anticipated that a monopoly of twelve merchants would not solve trust problems between foreigners and nationals. The Company, they said, wanted “to cover everything” which “is always horrifying because it is against freedom.” If the shareholders used this capital to encourage direct traffic with Africa, the project would be “laudable,” but the company was taking business away from other potential intermediaries.⁹¹ Those merchants who would not be part of the scheme had good reasons to be worried. Despite the opposition, the company was approved by the Spanish Majesty on July 20, 1792, highly recommended by Cuban governor Luis de las Casas. The company failed; a free and competitive slave trade had already evolved. Many foreigners had reliable contacts in Havana to manage their cargoes. Furthermore, Spaniards involved in the intra-American slave trade did not require representation in their home port.

Despite all the legislation and the Cuban lobby in Madrid, the future of unrestricted slave trade was still not clear. On August 6, 1791, the King granted a license to Ramón López Doriga, a merchant of Santander, to organize an expedition from Africa to Havana and Puerto Rico. Doriga gained several exemptions from export duties for slave trade merchandise, giving him a

⁹⁰ “Noticias de la Nueva Compañía de comercio establecida para la consignación pasiva de negros bozales con la autoridad y aprobación del gobierno y capitanía general de la Habana,” *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, April 1, 1792

⁹¹ “Reflexiones sobre el establecimiento de la nueva compañía de comercio para la consignación pasiva de negros bozales en la Habana,” *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, April 30, 1792.

preferential status. Furthermore, his slave ship could carry “an English supercargo, familiar with where to find the best slaves.” Half the crew and at least two surgeons could also be of British origin. Spanish apprentices would be on board to be trained as slave traders. Only the captain must be Spanish.⁹² While the text of this contract was phrased as an attempt to stimulate a national slave trade, Cubans read it as a return to the monopolistic era. Opposition to Doriga’s licenses was so loud that the project never materialized.

Doriga’s concession resulted from the longstanding hostility of Spanish authorities against the growing role of foreign merchants in the colonies. Francisco de Arango y Parreño tried hard to allay the apprehensions among colonial authorities in order to keep the slaves flowing into Cuba in foreign ships. “These people,” Arango wrote to the King on August 9, 1791, referring to foreign slave traders, are “the apostles of debauchery.” They do not have in their heads,

“anything other than what their ships bring. These hearts of stone, these inhuman men who revile humanity and who are debased to the point of making a miserable trade of their brothers, of other men, are not the ones we should fear. Their stupidity and greed have chained the faculties of their souls.” “They do not pledge loyalty to any flag, and money is their only guide.”⁹³

Ironically, when Arango depicted such an image of the slave traders, he meant officers and sailors on board slave vessels, but not the owners of slaving expeditions or the architects of the Cuban plantation economy like himself. We could think of the actions of Cuban slavers in the late eighteenth century as morally acceptable to contemporaries. However, Arango, the quintessential creator of the ideological narrative of the Cuban slave society, had no qualms admitting that the enslavement and trafficking of other human beings were morally dubious

⁹² ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédulas, 1791-1792. 10 A.

⁹³ “Oficio acompañado copia de la representación sobre la introducción de negros y corroborándola con razones muy sólidas,” Arango y Parreño, Francisco. (Op. Cit.), 138-139.

activities. Not surprisingly, he did not see himself morally crippled, but only as a victim of the ruthless economic laws setting the rules of the game.

By late summer of 1791, a slave rebellion that broke out in Saint-Domingue. The French sugar industry, the most important in the world, collapsed. Instead, Cuban sugar production expanded. The news of the rebellion in the French colony reached Madrid in November 1791. Francisco de Arango Parreño tried to calm the anxieties that a revolution on a nearby island generated among Spanish authorities. He was concerned that, as a result of the social upheaval in Saint-Domingue, the Spanish government could interfere with the importation of enslaved Africans in Cuba. The slave rebellion, Arango said, should be seen not only with “compassion,” but also “with political eyes.”⁹⁴ “The age of our happiness has arrived,” wrote Arango in his famous “Discurso sobre la Agricultura en la Habana y los Medios de Fomentarla.”⁹⁵ Happiness for him was Cuba becoming the leading producer of sugar in the world and a “fountain” of slaves pouring into the island. He would live long enough to be publicly horrified with what he had wished for. Nonetheless, merchants knew at their core that there was always the possibility that Cuba could turn into St. Domingue. Such anxiety defined decades of tensions between slavery and a particular vision of economic prosperity based on forced labor.⁹⁶

With such an incentive to the Cuban economy, not surprisingly, more laws were passed making it easier to trade slaves. It was becoming increasingly apparent that a functioning slave trade could not exist without liberalizing other branches of the economy as well. On November 24, 1791, a new Royal decree renewed the slave trade liberalization measure. Foreigners could

⁹⁴ “Representación hecha a su majestad con motivo de la sublevación de esclavos en los dominios franceses de la isla de Santo Domingo,” Arango y Parreño, Francisco, (Op. Cit.), v. 1, 140-143.

⁹⁵ “Discurso sobre la Agricultura en la Habana y los medios de Fomentarla, Arango Parreño, Francisco, (Op. Cit.), v. 1, 144-198.

⁹⁶ An excellent monograph on the effects of the Haitian revolution in the social mentality of Cuban planters, merchants, and authorities can be seen in Ada Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror. Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

continue to bring slaves to authorized Spanish ports for six more years. Additionally, the government removed the six percent tax on exports of produce for the slave trade. Cuban produce carried off by foreign slave traders could now be sold at any other intermediate port. The new Royal Order allowed foreign merchants to remain in Havana for eight days instead of twenty-four hours. Where previous legislation favored the entrance of females, the new law removed stipulations about gender. Forcing traders to bring a certain number of women was seen as a harmful interference in the free market. The November 1791 Royal Order also opened the Cuban ports of Nuevitas, Batabanó, and Trinidad to the traffic.⁹⁷ Last, it set up timetables for voyages traveling to foreign colonies. They had to return in no more than four months. However, if they went to Africa, the allowed length of the voyage was unlimited.⁹⁸

On November 22, 1792, the Spanish metropole granted more agricultural and commercial duty exceptions. Under the new disposition, the exportation of cotton, coffee, indigo, and cane liquor was made duty free for ten years. These products could also be carried to any foreign port at peace with Spain in Europe. This law was particularly useful when Spaniards needed to purchase foreign products for their future African expeditions. The Royal Order fulfilled another

⁹⁷ On March 23, 1794, the Cuban port of Manzanillo was included in the list of ports into which Spanish vessels could introduce slaves from foreign colonies. "Real Orden habilitando al puerto de manzanillo para el comercio de negros," ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, No. 11.

⁹⁸ "Real Cédula reformando la libertad de comercio de negros otorgada a los virreinos de Santa Fe y Buenos Aires, Capitanía de Caracas y Antillas Mayores," Manuel Lucena Salmoral, (Op. Cit.), 1164-1167. Covered by the new law of 1791, Spanish merchants often exported products from Cuba to other colonies under the justification that they would be used to buy slaves. Upon return, customs authorities realized that those ships were returning in ballast. Ship captains always claimed they did not find any good quality Africans, that the prices were too high, or just that some unexpected incident took place. The fraud was evident. As a result, the government passed a new law in 1792 specifying that if the ship returned without slaves or farming tools, the owner should pay back taxes for the products exported from Cuba. "Real orden relativa al caso en que los buques negreros retornen sin esclavos," ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas 1791-1792, 10 A.

wish of Havana's merchants by extending the term that foreigners could remain in port from a week to forty days.⁹⁹

On January 24, 1793, a Royal Order authorized Spanish merchants to depart to Africa from any European or American ports at peace with Spain.¹⁰⁰ Every product embarked for this traffic became tax-free, and every foreign-built vessel purchased by Spanish subjects could be introduced in Havana without taxation.¹⁰¹ Only one limitation remained. Half of the crew on slave ships as well the captain had to be Spanish. The main problem with this requirement was that there was a dearth of Spanish captains with experience of the Atlantic slave trade. Thus, within a month, a new Royal Order called colonial authorities to overlook the employment of foreign slave traders as captains of Spanish slave ships due to "the limited practical knowledge that Spaniards have on this important branch of commerce."¹⁰² This authorization created a loophole in the Spanish legislation that would allow many foreign slave merchants to use Spanish papers for their expeditions. It was a mutually beneficial exchange. Cuban sailors would learn about the Atlantic slave trading business on board foreign expeditions, mentored by foreign captains as explained in later chapters.

In August 1794, a powerful hurricane severely affected Havana. The ships docked at the harbor were so damaged that historian Sherry Johnson argued that the natural catastrophe reduced the participation of Spanish vessels in the slave trade for many years to come.¹⁰³ The

⁹⁹ "Real Orden concediendo varias gracias a la agricultura y comercio," ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas 1791-1792, 10 A.

¹⁰⁰ "Real Orden nombrando oidor a D. Sebastián de Lasa por haber emprendido y concluido una expedición a la costa de África en cuatro meses, November 23, 1792," ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 4-39.

¹⁰¹ "Real Orden de S.M. para fomentar el comercio directo de negros en la costa de África entre los comerciantes españoles, January 24, 1793," ANC, Libro de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, 11. Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

¹⁰² "Real Orden sobre contrata de marineros y oficiales extranjeros a busques negreros y franquicias a D. Sebastián de Lasa, February 20, 1793," BNC., Colección Cubana, Manuscritos, Bachiller y Morales, v. 79, 20.

¹⁰³ Sherry Johnson, "The Rise and Fall of Creole Participation in the Cuban Slave Trade, 1789-1796," 52-75.

emergency convinced colonial authorities to allow Spanish subjects to buy or charter foreign ships for the slave trade without government charges and to import barrel hoops and staves free of duty.¹⁰⁴ The situation of the Spanish fleet was so alarming that the government passed a law just to remind its subjects that they could export silver duty-free if destined to buy merchant ships.¹⁰⁵ Also, in January 1797, Spanish and foreign slave ships were exempted from paying the *Morro* lighthouse tax.¹⁰⁶ At this point, there were few official obstacles left for slave traders.

In the meantime, other projects focused on strategies to improve skills training in the transatlantic slave trade. Between March 1794 and February 1795, Francisco de Arango and his friend Ignacio de Montalvo journeyed to Portugal, England, Barbados, and Jamaica to study the latest technologies for sugar production and the Atlantic slave trade.¹⁰⁷ Arango returned to Cuba convinced that the island needed to improve its technical capabilities in sugar production. He became even more convinced that Spanish merchants should develop a domestically based Atlantic slave trade and, for that purpose, he proposed the creation of political and educational institutions to promote these goals.¹⁰⁸

The most important slave-trading institution created in Cuba in the nineteenth century was the *Real Consulado de Agricultura y Comercio*. Founded in Havana on April 4, 1794, the Real Consulado became the leading institution for the development of the plantation society

¹⁰⁴ “Real Orden suprimiendo el derecho de extranjería para buques comprados en el extranjero, December 14, 1794,” ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, No. 11, 1793-1794.

¹⁰⁵ “Real Orden concediendo libertad de derechos para extracción de dinero destinado a la compra de buques, October 21, 1796,” ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, No.12, 1795-1796, f. 573.

¹⁰⁶ “Real Orden eximiendo del pago de impuesto de la linterna del morro a los buques negreros extranjeros, January 14, 1797, ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, No. 13, 1797-1798, f. 7.

¹⁰⁷ “Expediente relativo a las noticias adquiridas por el síndico de este cuerpo Francisco de Arango y Parreño, en Inglaterra y Jamaica sobre refinerías de azúcar,” 1795, ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil, 92-3924

¹⁰⁸ Maria Dolores Gonzalez-Ripoll Navarro, “Dos Viajes, una intención: Francisco Arango y Alejandro Olivan en Europa y las Antillas azucareras (1794 y 1829),” 85-102.

Cuban.¹⁰⁹ This sort of merchant guild was a mediator between the colonial government and the planter and merchant class.¹¹⁰ Its membership comprised the most prominent names of the Cuban elite at the time. From the outset, the slave trade had a very prominent position on the economic agenda of the Real Consulado. On August 1, 1795, just four months after its founding, the board met with fifty well-known merchants and planters in attendance to discuss how to boost the Cuban slave trade. Francisco de Arango lectured on his recent trip to Europe and the Caribbean and the current situation of the slave trade in the Americas and Europe. The two nations currently involved in the slave trade, he said, England and Portugal, “carried about two-thirds of the negroes that are extracted annually from Africa.”¹¹¹ England, “the only slave trading nation providing us with slaves,” was now engaged in abolishing this commerce, which threatened the “fate of the Antilles.” The abolitionist campaign, however, was a positive shift for Cuba. “Although European governments wanted to renounce the Negro trade, the commerce in Guinea will not stop.” These discussions in the British Parliament, he said, should be regarded “with joy rather than with suspicion” because it will open the doors to the rise of the Spanish-based transatlantic slave trade.¹¹² Time proved him right. The other major slave-trading nation, Portugal, Arango said, was forbidden by their laws to bring slaves to Cuba or any foreign colony. He suggested trying to convince the king of Portugal to allow his subjects to provide slaves for Cuba.¹¹³ However, Arango recommended that the “safest and most effective means” for the

¹⁰⁹ Maria Dolores González-Ripoll Navarro, “Cuba, La Isla De Los Ensayos: Cultura Y Sociedad (1790-1815),” 185. The system of Consulados emerged in Spain and the Americas between the 1780s and 1790s as part of the reformist initiatives of the Bourbon monarchy. Consulados emerged in Caracas and Guatemala (1793), Buenos Aires (1794), Veracruz, Guadalajara, Cartagena de Indias (1795), and Montevideo (1812).

¹¹⁰ Salvador Arregui Martínez-Moya, “La Fundación del Real Consulado de la Habana (1794),” 44.

¹¹¹ “Sesión de la Junta de Fomento sobre el progreso experimentado en el comercio de negros,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 161, 23.

¹¹² “Libro de Acuerdo de la Junta de Fomento, 10 de abril de 1795-27 de junio de 1796,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 161, 23-25.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

survival of the Cuban slave trade was establishing direct commerce to Africa. Such enterprise, he said, could not be conducted by a single individual or commercial house. “In imitation of the British,” a major domestic commercial firm should be sponsored by the state. The shares of such a firm would be divided among the wealthiest merchants in Havana. Some of those attending the meeting suggested bringing experts to discuss ideas “to develop the Cuban Atlantic slave trade.”¹¹⁴ Sebastian de Lasa, who organized a transatlantic slaving expedition in 1792 becoming “the first in this city to undertake the direct trade in Africa,” was invited to testified in the next meeting.

In December 1795, Sebastian de Lasa promised the Real Consulado to write a public report “on the practical and economic organization of the expeditions to Africa.”¹¹⁵ During a session of the Real Consulado in June 1796, Francisco de Arango described Lasas’ report as an “important service to the homeland,” which would liberate the island from “dependency on foreign nations.” If a single merchant such as Lasa had been successful, Arango added, it would be possible for others to follow his lead.¹¹⁶ In the report, Lasa suggested that to develop this “lucrative” type of commerce a major slave trading company should be created. Lasa called it the “Sociedad Habanera del África” (Havana’s African Society).

The society would be willing to promote by any means possible the direct trade of slaves in Africa without harming the free introduction of negroes. One should not think of undertaking this trade by a single house or private individual because it was natural that the first experiments would be very expensive, and they could ruin the individuals who undertake it alone. In imitation of the English, [the company] should be formed by association or voluntary subscriptions distributed among many to ensure sufficient funds to sustain it in its first steps.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ “Libro de Acuerdo de la Junta de Fomento, 1795-1796.” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento. 161, 23-25.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69-71.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ “Informe del Real Consulado, Havana, June 23, 1796,” AGL., Santo Domingo, 2195.

Although some merchants doubted that raising such capital was possible, they agreed that any attempt to develop this national trade was a worthy project. The intendant Pablo Valiente and the Trustee of the Real Consulado, Francisco de Arango, oversaw the drafting of the project.¹¹⁸ However, merchants did not contribute to the commercial firm as expected, and, as a result, the Havana's African Society never materialized.

Another similar failed project was discussed a few years later. On December 15, 1802, a group of Cuban merchants and planters met to discuss the creation of what they called "The African Company." Four merchants headed by Tomás de la Cruz Muñoz, a renowned slave trader in Havana and trustee of the Real Consulado, presented the project. Its goal was to promote commerce in Africa "with national funds." Francisco de Arango highlighted the "public utility of the company," the most notable of them being "to reduce and perhaps even prevent the export of capital" by foreigners. Havana would be free of "foreign dependence." The materialization of the project would show the king that merchants in Havana "prefer national over foreign networks." The Company would express to the entire nation "our willingness to seek slaves by our own means and to counteract monopolistic intentions." After Arango's words, it was not surprising that he received the "unanimous applause" of the audience. The project was considered a "useful enterprise," "noble," and "urgent" by those attending the meeting. The first share of the company would be paid with the funds of the Real Consulado.¹¹⁹

The African Company would purchase a "floating slave factory" consisting of a large ship anchored off the coast of Africa. The merchandise would be deposited there for the exchange of slaves. Some smaller packet vessels would maintain regular communication with

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ "Libro de acuerdo del Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento 1802- 1803." ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento. 165, 289-291.

London and Havana to keep the investors up to date. The experiment could also serve as a method of teaching Cubans about the slave trade in Africa.¹²⁰ As with all previous initiatives, the Company, never prospered. The Spanish government did not have a settlement off the African coast suitable for such commercial outpost. The islands of Fernando Poo and Annobón, although belonging to Spain, were not occupied. Further, before even dreaming of establishing “factories” in Africa, Spanish needed to have a fleet of slave ships which they did not yet possess and some commercial networks on African slaving ports.

Although some commercial organizations like the *Negro Consignment Company* and the *African Company* failed, others turned out to be very useful in other ways. When the King passed the 1789 law, Havana lacked maritime insurance facilities, a requirement for a risky business such as the slave trade. The only insurer serving Cuban needs was in La Coruña, Galicia.¹²¹ Although the Spanish company had an agent in Havana, the merchant and slave trader Mariano Carbó, it was not a reliable source of protection. Reimbursements were slow and costly with distance often serving as an excuse to delay payments. To solve this, Cuban merchants proposed the creation of a maritime insurance company in Havana. The merchant Pedro Diago presented the project to the colonial authorities on September 6, 1794.¹²²

According to Diago, it was a “painful thing to see that people from the Peninsula (Spain) come here to take our profits (...) when they could remain among us who possess the funds, knowledge, and sufficient means to direct them.”¹²³ The company stock would amount to 800,000 pesos divided into 160 shares of \$ 5,000 each. The initial project would run for three

¹²⁰ “Expediente relativo a la formación de una compañía nacional para emprender el comercio directo de esclavos de la costa de África,” ANC. Asuntos Políticos, 106-9. “Consulado to Soler, May 8th, 1804,” AGI., Indiferente General, 2827.

¹²¹ “Calendario Manual y Guía de Forasteros de la Isla de Cuba para el Año de 1795,” 70-72.

¹²² “Expediente sobre la importancia de sostener en esta plaza la compañía de seguros marítimos,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 72-2790.

¹²³ Ibid.

years, at which time the shareholders could renew their commitment. In December, dozens of merchants and landowners signed the initial proposal of Diago. The list included the most prominent merchants, sugar planters, local authorities, and the members of the Spanish and Creole aristocracy.¹²⁴ On December 2, 1796, the first *Compañía de Seguros Marítimos de la Habana* opened for business.

The company insured several slave trading expeditions fitted in Havana during the last years of the eighteenth century, but by 1799 it was bankrupt. The French Revolutionary Wars resulted in the capture of several Cuban ships. In 1800 and under the same name, a new maritime company emerged. It had a capital stock of 2,300,000 pesos, divided into 460 shares of five thousand pesos each that were bought by 168 landowners and merchants. The directors were Messrs. Felipe Fernández de Silva and Miguel de Arambarri. The company was supposed to last for six years from April 1st, 1802.¹²⁵ The company records, currently preserved in Cuban archives, have been a critical source for this dissertation.

Another institution created at this time was the Nautical School. As commerce on the island increased, it was imperative to develop a merchant fleet with trained officers and pilots. The Marquis of Real Socorro outlined the project on November 10, 1796. Pilots, according to the author, are the soul of any ship. However, there are few “national pilots with sufficient skill and

¹²⁴ Pedro Juan de Erice, Bonifacio González Larrinaga, Bernabé Martínez de Pinillos, Lorenzo Guimara, José López, Fernando Rodríguez Berenguer, Messrs. Gamera, y Zavalera, Miguel Peñalver, Mr. Marquis Cárdenas de Monte Hermoso, Juan Bautista Suríz, José Crespo, Marquis Casa Peñalver, Miguel de Cárdenas, Nicolás Calvo, José Ricardo O’Farrill, Carlos Gestona, Countess of Jaruco, Juan Calvo de la Puerta, Count of Junta, María de Loreto, Francisco María Velasco, Pedro Regalado Pedroso, Ignacio Pedroso, Agustín Valdez, Pablo Serra, Mariano Carbó, Joaquín Garro, Márquez Jústiz de Santa Ana, Gabriel Raymundo de Azcárate, Juan Abad Valdéz y Navarrete, Count of Lagunillas, Gregorio Carrillo y Villar, Gonzalo Herrera, Sebastián de Lasa, Tomás de Jaura, Tomás de la Cruz Muñoz, Victorino Sandoval, Francisco González del Valle, Juan Francisco Oliden y Arriola, Martín Aróstegui, Martín de Aróstegui y Herrera, Nicolás Peñalver, Marquis of Prado Ameno, Pedro de la Cuesta y Manzanal, Cristóbal Crusset, Antonio Español, Miguel Valiente, José de Armenteros y Guzmán, José Francisco de Veitia, Count of Casa Bareto, Vicente Risel, Count of Casa Bayona, Francisco Chacón y O’Farrill, José Miguel de Herrera, Domingo de la Parra, Buenaventura Po, Felipe Fernández de Silva, Meessrs. Rivera and Sons from Coruña, Francisco Seguí, and Pedro Diago.

¹²⁵ “Aurora. Correo Político Económico de la Havana,” April 10, 1802, No. 110.

expertise.” In order to boost Spanish seamanship, it was essential to create a school for sailors that would enroll “many young people from honest families.” The school would be free and funded by the Real Consulado. Becoming a professional pilot would take two years. During the first year, students would learn Arithmetic, Geometry, and Trigonometry as applied to navigation. During the second year, students would learn the practice of seafaring, astronomy, measurement of longitude and latitude, the use of the most modern navigational instruments, geography, winds and sea currents, and the most convenient seasons to sail. Then, they would sail under the tutorship of an experienced captain. Finally, students had to pass a test, at which point they could be called upon to serve in the Spanish Royal Navy. It was not until 1812 that the school opened - in the seaside neighborhood of Regla, near the harbor of Havana.¹²⁶ In its classrooms many future officers of slave ships took lessons, and it would endure into the illegal era of the traffic.

In 1797, the six years authorization to import slaves without restrictions was about to expire. A group of merchants in Havana, led by Arango y Parreño, requested Madrid an extension of the 1791’ Royal Order. The petition detailed the challenges faced by Cuban slave merchants. Britain, the document says, has been the most important provider of slaves to Cuba since 1789, but war with that nation since 1796 had put an end to this trade. Portuguese subjects were not allowed to carry slaves to any foreign colony. Dutch, Swedish, and Danish merchants could not provide the number of captives Cuba needed. Finally, the United States had banned the slave trade to non-US ports since 1794. However, as the document states “this nation [the US] has, nevertheless, been the one that has provided us during these years of wars, almost

¹²⁶ “Expediente No. 105 sobre establecer en esta ciudad un instituto de ciencias naturales. Proyecto de una Escuela de Náutica,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 179-8213.

exclusively, with the negroes we have received.”¹²⁷ The petition asked for removing the constraint on the size of vessels, lifting the four-month limit for Spanish vessels in the intra-American slave commerce, lifting the ban on the exportation of tobacco leaves for the trade in Africa, and allowing the import of a broader range of machinery and agricultural tools without customs duty.¹²⁸ On April 12, 1798, the King authorized a free trade in slaves for two further years under the same terms as that of the 1791 order.¹²⁹ In June, another Royal Order extended the period for four more years.¹³⁰

The undesirable effects of increasingly broad economic deregulations became a matter of concern among colonial authorities. One of them was the outflow of cash in silver from the island. On March 18, 1801, the board of the Real Consulado met to discuss the implications exporting silver in exchange of African slaves. In 1799, silver worth 276,476 pesos had left Cuba, and the next year this had risen to 822,532 pesos.¹³¹ Opinions were divided between those who supported the ban on extracting silver, at least for a short period and those who believed there should be no restrictions whatsoever. The first group argued that the alarming escalation of prices on everyday items was more damaging for the country than the lack of forced labor. The counter-argument, as we might expect was the impact of such restrictions on slave arrivals. Foreign slave traders, opponents argued, did not want Cuban products in return for their human cargoes; they needed cash to pay the crew once they arrived in Havana. Despite the opposition of Arango y Parreño, the government temporarily banned silver exports.¹³²

¹²⁷ “Instancia solicitando prorrogar por seis años más la real cedula de 24 de noviembre de 1791,” BNC, Sala Cubana. Colección Manuscritos, Bachiller y Morales, v. 79, No. 53.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ “Real Cedula Prorrogando el comercio libre de negros por dos años más,” Lucena Salmoral, Manuel, (Op. Cit.), 1192

¹³⁰ “Real Orden prorrogando el comercio negrero por cuatro años,” June 1, 1798, ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédula, No. 13, 365.

¹³¹ ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento. 72-2791.

¹³² *Ibid.*

In December 1801, the order giving foreign slave traders access to Cuba was, once again, about to expire. The ship carrying the official notice of the Peace of Amiens with England was also the bearer of an order to suspend slave trading with foreigners.¹³³ The Captain-General, the Marquis of Someruelos, concurred with local merchants that the mandate of the King would be ignored for the time being.¹³⁴ The Intendente de Hacienda sent a letter to the King on February 13, 1802, requesting an extension for four more years for foreigners to bring slaves to Cuba. The months passed, and no definite answers arrived.¹³⁵ Planters, merchants, and colonial authorities in Cuba drafted several documents praising what they considered to be the enormous progress resulting from the introduction of slaves'

The free introduction of African negroes has placed this country as one of the sugar islands of the Americas, with a harvest of 240,000 boxes of sugar of 4 quintals each [400 kg]. However, this is not the only advantage derived from that provision. Havana has gained other jobs. Coffee, a new branch of agriculture has been born. Slave's arms have set in motion the industry of the city; they have created great capital enriched families and increased the population, consumption, and internal and external trade in a prodigious progression.¹³⁶

The city council of Havana joined the voices of merchants and planters. In October 1802, a report of one of its meetings read: "Let the negroes come. It is the only way to cultivate the land and for the population to grow. Commerce, industry and everything else acquires life and take new shape as Havana has done after ten years."¹³⁷

That year of 1802, when Cubans were asking for a renewal of the slave trade legislation, the island was experiencing a historical peak in the introduction of slaves. The Treaty of Amiens

¹³³ A copy of the text of the Treaty of Amiens arrived in Havana through D. Sebastián de Lasa who "acquired it via a slave ship from Senegal." *La Aurora. Correo Político, Económico de la Havana*, June 2, 1802.

¹³⁴ Ramiro Guerra, "Manual de Historia de Cuba," 211.

¹³⁵ ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 919-8.

¹³⁶ "Manifiesto a los Hacendados y Comerciantes, Havana, 1802," AGI., Indiferente General, 2823.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

had brought peace between England and Spain. British vessels, the primary providers of Africans once more dominated the island's slave trade. However, Cuban merchants, too, were increasing the number of experimental transatlantic slaving ventures. All that the Cuban elite considered to be progress was threatened if the government did not continue to allow the free introduction of slaves. In June, the law expired, but the expected renewal had not arrived. Instead, in September, an unforeseen decision came from Madrid. The King had issued a Royal Order on July 15, 1802, granting a special authorization to the Marquis of Colomilla to introduce six thousand slaves from the coast of Guinea on foreign vessels. Cubans interpreted the license granted to Colomilla as an intention to return to the monopoly on the slave trade.

Cuban merchants notified the government in October 1802 that this concession was a return to the time when not everyone could participate freely in the slave trade. As in earlier debates, those in favor of keeping the trade open to foreign merchants justified it by claiming it improved Spanish commerce. They also asked for the support of the state to establish slave trade outposts in Africa and asked that the Royal Navy protect them. Instead of closing the doors to foreign traders, they argued, it was better to let Spanish nationals "learn under the tutelage of slave trading nations flying the Spanish flag and with Spanish capital until we can organize these expeditions ourselves." In order to shelter foreign slave ships under the Spanish flag, Spanish consuls, especially those in the U.S., could issue the required documentation such as Royal passports. Foreigners, they added, could "use our flag" to get around the increasingly restrictive legislation on the slave trade especially during periods of war. While this document was on its way to His Majesty, Cuban authorities agreed to continue the free introduction of Africans.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Ibid.

To add to the anxieties of Cuban slave traders, a further Royal Order, of December 20, 1802, granted special permission to Domingo de Cobarrús & Co. from Malaga, to introduce 15,000 enslaved Africans in the Spanish colonies on foreign ships. Havana would receive 6,000 of these.¹³⁹ On August 8, 1803, yet another contract was granted to Benito Patrón, to introduce 10,000 slaves in Havana. For each slave, he had to bring five barrels of flour from the United States of America, paying the relevant duties for this merchandise.¹⁴⁰ These measures constituted another blow to Cuban merchant hopes of continuing in the slave trade.

After many exchanges between Madrid and Havana, on April 22, 1804, the long-awaited Royal Order was passed.¹⁴¹ The new legislation extended the free commerce in slaves to twelve years for Spaniards and six for foreigners. Foreigners were still required to leave the island within forty days. A new clause specified that the slaves had to be *bozales*--brought directly from Africa--to exclude the importation of slaves from other parts in the Caribbean who might be contaminated with revolutionary ideas from Saint-Domingue or Jamaica.¹⁴² With the passing of the Royal Order in 1804, the regulatory framework of the Cuban slave trade was set for years to come.

When the 1804 Royal Order was passed, international relationships among European powers had deteriorated impacting all commercial activities on the Atlantic and the Caribbean. In 1804, the second Anglo-Spanish war began and, as a result, the transatlantic commerce in slaves

¹³⁹ “Real Orden concediendo permiso a D. Domingo de Cobarrus para introducir en las colonias españolas 15,000 negros bozales, ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédula, no. 15, 1802-1803

¹⁴⁰ “Real Orden concediendo permiso a D. Benito Patrón para que introduzca 10,000 negros bozales,” August 8, 1803, ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédula, no. 16, 1803-1804, f. 351.

¹⁴¹ A part of the Exchange between Madrid and Havana: “Captain General Someruelos to Soler, November 17, 1802 which includes “Representación de la Ciudad de la Habana,” Nov., 5, 1802 and “Acta de una Junta en la Habana,” October 28, 1802. Intendad of Havana to Soler, oct. 29, 1802. AGI, Indiferente General, 2826. “Memoria sobre la necesidad de restablecer el Comercio de Negros, Aranjuez, April 15, 1803,” in Expediente sobre el tráfico de negros, AGI., Indiferente General, Leg. 2827.

¹⁴² “Real Orden reservada prorrogando el libre comercio de esclavos,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 73-2810.

declined. As chapter five shows, while in 1803, 11,000 Africans disembarked in Cuban shores, by 1805, the numbers declined to 5,200. Without the British, Americans took over the Cuban slave trade right at the moment when South Carolina had legalized the transatlantic slave trade. As a result, slaves started pouring to Havana mostly from Charleston. When the British war with Spain ended in 1808, it was not legal for English vessels to carry slaves across the Atlantic. Spain, on the other hand, was occupied by Napoleon, increasing the political instability of the colonies in the Americas.

In 1808, England and the United States, the two most important providers of African captives in Cuba, banned the transatlantic slave trade. More than ever, if Cubans wanted to keep their profitable but destructive economic model working, they had to take control of the provision of slaves. A national branch of the transatlantic slave trade became an imperative necessity. Merchants in Cuba had legal support from colonial authorities. Most importantly, since the 1790s, they had been taking steps on the ground to set up a transatlantic slaving business. Merchants in Cuba, as the next chapter show, took advantage of the frequent interaction with foreign slavers by training captains, establishing joint ventures, purchasing ships, and acquiring trading networks along the African coast.

In 1808, Francisco de Arango wrote a report for the “superior government” on the economic and commercial advances made on the island and some persisting challenges. Although significant progress has been made, he said, there was still a long way to go regarding the reduction of taxes and even to lift prohibitions for the importation of foreign merchandise as well the export of national products. Particular attention he paid to the production of sugar which remained, he said, as a costly endeavor:

Coffee could lose the advantage that today has over cocoa and tea; sugar, which is at peace and perpetual society with those three competitors, has in the human taste much

more acceptance and it will increase its sweet empire to infinity if we manage, as I hope, to make it less expensive.¹⁴³

Since the sixteenth century and until 1808, foreign merchants controlled the introduction of enslaved Africans in the Spanish colonies. The government regulated the slave trade by a state monopolistic system known as *Asientos* consisting of individual contracts signed between the Spanish king and individual merchants or companies. The *Asientos* were granted mostly to the Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British. More than ever, the damaging consequences of the state monopoly and foreign dependence were exposed. In Madrid and the colonies voices were raised asking for deregulating the slave trade, and boosting the development of a “national” branch of such commerce. Several transatlantic slave trading experiments were conducted and discussed but all failed. After two centuries without any experience, slave trading outposts, and commercial networks in Africa, Spain was not in conditions to compete with British, French, or Portuguese slave traders. Thus, during the eighteenth century, the British remained as the unrivaled providers of slaves to Cuba.

The British, however, had to face competitors when the Spanish king eliminated in 1789 the system of *Asientos* and allowed free markets laws to regulate the introduction of slaves to his colonies. Danish, American, French, and even German slave ships started arriving in Cuba with slaves. The government passed dozens of laws lifting barriers for the slave trade and any other commercial activity related to it. Slave trading institutions were established and several projects discussed on how to better improve the participation of Cubans in the transatlantic slave trade. However, there was an inescapable contradiction in the slave trading laws. By allowing foreigners to bring slaves without taxes, Cubans, with an undeveloped slave trading

¹⁴³ Francisco Arango y Parreño, “Obras,” 494.

infrastructure, were unable to compete; their direct involvement in the business was restricted to the minor intra-American slave trade which also disappeared after 1794. That said, the combination of laws, institutions, and international conditions created a framework in which Cubans paved the road for future transatlantic ventures. After 1808, when British and American citizens were banned from transporting slaves across the Atlantic, Cubans made use of the experience, knowledge, and commercial networks they had been acquiring over the years, as the following chapter shows.

CHAPTER 2

Emergence, Consolidation, and Growth of the Cuban-based Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1790-1820

By 1808, the Spanish empire had eliminated most of the legal obstacles on the slave trade. Fiscal restrictions on the import and export of commodities as well the entry of slaves had been lifted, and economic, political, and financial institutions established to increase the growth of African forced labor. Within these favorable conditions for the trade in slaves Cuban-based merchants inserted themselves into the well-established and centenary business model of the transatlantic slave trade. This chapter reconstructs how Cuban traders set up the conditions on the ground to make that transformation possible. While the previous chapter deals mostly with political and legal aspects, this one explores Cuban traders' day to day activities that led to the establishment of slaving operations in Africa. The main argument of this chapter is that foreign traders introduced Cuban merchants to critical elements of the transatlantic slave trading business model.

The chapter is divided into three main chronological sections. First, I focus on the years between 1790 and 1808, when foreigners controlled the provision of slaves to the island. Second, I analyze the period between 1808 and 1815, between the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade by England and the U.S. and the Congress of Vienna, when Cuban-based merchants changed their strategy to take control of the transportation of captives from Africa. Finally, I focus on the years between 1815 and 1820, when the already fully independent Cuban-based Atlantic slave trade faced the challenges posed by impending formal Spanish abolition of the traffic.

For the years between 1790 and 1808, I illustrate how Cuban merchants took advantage of the preponderance of foreigners in the transportation of enslaved Africans to the island. Through various forms of commercial engagement with these foreigners, Cuban merchants built transatlantic slave trading networks acquired expertise and set up the material conditions for future Atlantic enterprises. In the 1790s, the most active participation of Cuban merchants in the slave trade was mostly confined to working as consignees or sales agents for foreign expeditions and organizing minor slave voyages to neighboring territories in the Caribbean. Both practices meant building networks in other latitudes and gaining expertise. Cubans also organized a few exploratory voyages to Africa. I explore in detail some of these expeditions to reveal how such voyages, although advertised as “national,” had active participation of foreign slavers. The study of such cases reveals the intricate networks and operational mechanisms of the Cuban slave trade during its foundational years. I illustrate other forms of Cuban participation in the slave trade such as the most common role of Cuban merchants acting as figureheads of foreign commercial operations in Cuba to skirt Spanish laws, the establishment of joint ventures, and insuring foreign adventures. Between 1790 and 1808, Cuban sailors were trained aboard foreign ships to become the future captains of Cuban slave ships. Each of these activities paved the ground for the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade to take off.

The second section of this chapter, 1808-1815, analyzes the immediate impact of the British and U.S. abolition laws and in particular the relocation of slave trading operations in the Atlantic world after 1808. I analyze how Cuban merchants, in conjunction with their counterparts from other nations, developed new strategies to expand slaving operations. After 1808, merchants from nations where the slave trade had been banned such as the United States, England, and France moved their operations to Cuba and started using faux Spanish papers to

organize expeditions to Africa. On such expeditions many future Cuban maritime officers began their career as slave traders. These years were pivotal for Cuban merchants to establish trading partnerships along the African coast. The African regions where the first Cuban trading operations traded slaves depended on the nationality and networks possessed by the foreigner that introduce them. This chapter shows some case studies illustrating this subject.

By the time of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Spanish flag became so common off the African coast, that it was apparent that a new national branch of this commerce had emerged. The last section of this chapter details how the Cuban transatlantic slave trade prepared for the imminent Spanish abolition and the challenges posited by the existing British abolitionism. In 1817, when England and Spain sign the abolition treaty, it became clear that the days for legal human trafficking were numbered. The Cuban elite discussed strategies to increase the importation of slaves in the short term, but also, in the long-term, to continue doing so under conditions of illegality.

It was challenging to reconstruct how Cuban merchants set up a transatlantic slave trading business on the ground, through actions taken in the realm of everyday practices. Unlike enacting laws or founding new institutions, ordinary commercial activities fall in the private sphere. The bulk of the documents produced by such commercial operations only became public, meaning accessible by the state, in those instances of legal scrutiny or, partially, for taxes purposes or legal procedures. Thus, just a small fraction of the documents produced by slave traders are accessible today in public archives in Cuba, Spain, the U.K. and the U.S. However, these sources are rich enough in information to offer insights on the intimacies of this business of buying, transporting, and selling human beings. This chapter is built on records resulting from a variety of sources such as legal cases, documents confiscated on board slave ships by the British

Vice-Admiralty Court in Freetown, and some other institutional documents such as customs records or official reports.

Foreign Slave Traders and the Foundation of the Cuban-based Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1790-1808.

Sebastian de Lasa: The Intimacies of the First Cuban Transatlantic Slave Trading Voyage

On August 5, 1792, a brigantine carrying 227 enslaved Africans from Senegambia anchored at one of the docks in the harbor of Havana.¹ The unloading of human cargo from slave ships was familiar in the city. In 1792 alone, one hundred and thirty vessels delivered ten thousand captives to Havana.² The Spanish colony of Cuba, with an expanding sugar and coffee plantation economy, was eager for forced labor. Local planters and merchants enthusiastically awaited each vessel stocked with enslaved Africans. However, the enthusiasm aroused by the *Cometa* was unlike previous arrivals. The *Papel Periodico de la Havana* advertised the arrival as “the first Spanish vessel that had made use of the royal grace.”³ In other words, it was the first successful transatlantic slave trading expedition undertaken by a Cuban-based merchant and, indeed, the realization of a longstanding Spanish project.

The owner of the ship, Sebastian de Lasa, became a local celebrity of a sort. Authorities often referred to him in official documents as a patriot, a role model, and an expert on the Atlantic slave trade. The most influential men in Havana welcomed him to their homes and social gatherings. He gave lectures on his experiences as a pioneer slave trader and received several awards. Don Francisco de Arango y Parreño recommended Lasa to the highest colonial

¹ *Voyages* ID: 13251.

² Jorge Felipe Gonzalez, “Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba (1790-1820),” in Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat (eds.) “*From the Galleon to the Highlands*,” University of New Mexico Press, (forthcoming, 2020). See Chapter 5.

³ “Papel Periódico de la Habana,” August 5, 1792. *Voyages* ID: 13251.

authorities as an example to be emulated by other merchants in the island. The Captain-General of Cuba, Don Luis de Las Casa, addressed an enthusiastic letter to the Spanish king Charles IV commending the “tenacity” of Lasa, who had raised, he said, the flag of Spain in a business “practiced only by foreigners:”

The service that Lasa has done to the State and the national commerce -De Las Casas pointed out- will be a milestone in the annals of our commerce. This direct type of business, so ignored and feared by the Spaniards just as it is known and loved by foreigners, has provided an incalculable advantage to agriculture, navigation, and trade. (...) Lasa’s action is clear evidence of the benefits that the nation can extract from this direct type of business; the same kind of profits than foreigners make. (...) The navigation and shipbuilding are stimulated, and products find markets which gives new impulses to agriculture able to draw on supplies of cheap labor; population and consumption in the Americas expand together. The national commerce will grow as expeditions to Africa multiply.⁴

The Spanish King Charles IV issued a Royal Order appointing Lasa as “Oidor” and provided him with several tax exemptions for future investments in the slave trade.⁵ The elite from Havana—the local aristocracy, dozens of high ranking churchmen, counts and marquises, and the enlightened men of the Real Consulado--elevated Lasa, a slave trader, to the position of a patriot. Yet, Lasa, like every other slaver in Cuba in the 1790s, would not have been able to send a ship to Africa without the aid of foreigners who provided years of expertise and networks in the trade. The captain and the crew of Lasa’s voyages, his vessels, insurance, and part of the investment, originated in territories outside the control of the Spanish monarchy.

Lasa’s commercial operations allow us to understand how Cubans were able to organize the first slave trading voyages to Africa and how Cuban merchants established trading

⁴ “Nota del Consejo de Indias a Instancia remitida por el Gobernador de la Habana,” Havana, June 28, 1792, AGI, Indiferente General, 2823.

⁵ “Real Orden nombrando oidor a D. Sebastián de Lasa por haber emprendido y concluido una expedición a la costa de África en cuatro meses,” ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 4-39. An “Oidor” was a judge of the Royal Audiencias and Cancillerías.

partnerships in Africa by tapping into existing transatlantic slave trading networks. The praises he received, on the other hand, gives some hints about the mindset of the Cuban planter and merchant class respecting the trade in humans. Lasa's trajectory is a perfect case to illustrate the critical role that slave traders from other nations played at the beginning of the Cuban slave trade.

Sebastian de Lasa e Irala was born in 1762 in the village of Zumárraga, in the Basque province of Guipúzcoa. His impoverished small town did not fit his ambitions and, in the early 1780s, Lasa migrated to Havana where he married in 1786 Maria de las Mercedes Rivas y Lopez-Barroso.⁶ They had ten children before his wife died in 1821. Lasa lived until 1842, passing at the age of 80 when the Cuban participation in the transatlantic slave trade that he helped to create was, though illegal, at its peak.⁷ It is not clear if Lasa was already involved in the commerce of human beings before he migrated to Havana or if he became a slave trader after spending some years in Cuba. Although the latter seems correct, he might well have known about the profitability of the business back in his homeland because in the eighteenth-century other Basques were engaged in that commerce.⁸ When Lasa was born, there was a renowned Spanish slave trading company founded by people from Lasa's native province, Guipúzcoa.⁹ Some Basques were also shareholders of Havana's *Royal Company of Commerce*, which, as mentioned in the first chapter, was trading slaves to Cuba by the 1740s.¹⁰ In addition, Lasa migrated to Cuba in a time when Basque people held positions of power and prestige in Havana.

⁶ For the Basque migration to the Americas see: José Manuel Azcona Pastor, "Possible Paradises: Basque Emigration to Latin America," Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2004.

⁷ Francisco Javier Santa Cruz y Mallón, "Historia de Familias Cubanas," v 2, 249.

⁸ J.A. Aspiazu Elorza, "Esclavos y traficantes: historias ocultas del país vasco," 24.

⁹ The Guipuzcoan Company of Caracas was created in 1728 to bring slaves to Venezuela. Alex Borucki, "Trans-Imperial History in the Making of the Slave Trade to Venezuela, 1526-1811," 38-39.

¹⁰ Some of them were Martin de Aróstegui, Manuel de Aramburu, Bernardo de Urrutia y Luis de Basave, in L. García Fuentes, "Los vascos en la Carrera de Indias," 44.

The Captain-General of the island himself, Don Luis de las Casas, was born in the Basque town of Sopuerta. Basque merchants' networks facilitated Lasa's insertion into the world of the Cuban slave trade and related business activities. However, the critical factor in understanding why Lasa moved to Havana in the first place lies in the opportunities opened up by economic transformations at the end of the eighteenth century.

When this first generation of Basque migrants settled there, they unsuspectingly joined a commercial and technological revolution, with sugar as its heart, that would soon turn the island into one of the largest and most prosperous colonies in the Atlantic world.¹¹

One trading opportunity particularly beneficial for Lasa, was the revolution in Saint-Domingue which triggered a relocation of French slave traders to Cuba. Lasa tapped into these French networks, which partially explains, as the following pages show, why his first expeditions went to Senegambia and West Central Africa.

The French were active and productive participants in the transatlantic slave trade in the immediate years before the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue. In 1790 alone, around 95,700 African slaves forcibly crossed the Atlantic. About half of them (51,460) were carried on French vessels. The colony of Saint-Domingue received 47,630 captives of the total transported by the French.¹² No other region in the New World received as many slaves that year, not even much larger territories such as Brazil. The slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue radically changed the scope, routes, and numbers of the French slave trade. After August 1791, many French slave ships came into Havana and Santiago de Cuba instead of St. Domingue. They brought Africans and news from the events happening in Saint-Domingue, but also decades of experience in the

¹¹ Manuel Barcia, "Fully Capable of Any Iniquity:" The Atlantic Human Trafficking Network of the Zangroniz Family," 309.

¹² *Voyages* <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/7amohw2k> (Consulted, January 22, 2019).

transatlantic slave trade.¹³ Cuba became the new home for thousands of French refugees who brought to Cuba experience, skills, and commercial networks they had developed through decades of working under a successful plantation regime and a transatlantic slave trade business model. Among the French refugees were owners of slave ships, captains, and sailors. Lasa benefited from this redirection of French slavers by creating partnerships with the newcomers. Lasa inherited the slave-trading expertise and networks that had been essential to the French slave trade for decades.

Lasa met Antonio de Laporte, the captain of the *Cometa* as a result of these connections. Laporte was from a family of active French slave traders, and together with his brother, Augustin, they got involved in the slave trade in the Caribbean since the 1790s, especially in Saint-Domingue.¹⁴ After the upheaval in the French colony, Antonio de Laporte moved his slaving operations to Cuba. In 1791, the French captain arrived in Havana from Jamaica on the *Cometa* under Spanish colors bringing carrying forty-six slaves. The consignee of the expedition was Sebastian de Lasa.¹⁵ It is not clear if Lasa was the owner of the ship at that point or just the sales agent for the cargo. After the voyage from Jamaica, Sebastian de Lasa and Laporte organized another voyage to Africa which became the first recorded Spanish-owned transatlantic voyage from Cuba.

¹³ Ada Ferrer, (Op. Cit., 58)

¹⁴ Parliamentary Papers, 1836 (005) Class A “Correspondence with the British commissioners, at Sierra Leone, the Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Surinam, relating to the slave trade. 1835,” 92. Thanks to Marial Iglesias for providing this insight about the relationship of the Laportes.

Antonio’s brother, Agustin, anchored in the port of Havana in February 1792 on board the French Frigate “Della” carrying 208 slaves from Africa. *Voyages* ID: 13175. A captain with a similar surname and probably related to the afore mentioned traders, Jean Delaporte, arrived in Saint-Domingue on two occasions, first on the vessels *Furel* (1787) from Senegambia, and then on the *Cerf* (1790) from Upper Guinea. It is worth noting that the rench word cerf is usually short for cerf-volant, which in Spanish means “cometa.” It is highly likely therefore that the vessel Cerf became the Cometa when Lasa acquired it.

¹⁵ “Papel Periodico de la Habana,” April 17, 1791.

After the triumphant arrival of the *Cometa*, Lasa organized another slaving venture. This time, the Basque merchant hired a different French captain, Pierre La Croix Dufresne. Like Laporte, Dufresne had redirected his slave trading operations to Havana after the slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue. In Havana, Dufresne met Lasa.¹⁶ In August 1793, Lasa wrote to the Governor of Cuba asking that Dufresne, a foreigner, be allowed to captain his new venture expedition. The fact that he had to ask permission for Dufresne but not for Laporte indicates either that the latter had naturalized as Spaniard or that authorities turned a blind eye. After Lasa's petition, the King signed the secret instruction directing the Cuban authorities to allow foreign captains to command Spanish ships going to Africa.¹⁷

In 1794, Lasa sent Dufresne to purchase a vessel in Baltimore, a frequent port of call for Cuban ship buyers, and from there to Liverpool to buy another slave ship more suitable for a bigger slaving enterprise. The individual to contact in Liverpool for purchasing and insuring the vessel was Fermín Tastet (1748-1832), a very influential Spanish banker who had been living in England for several decades.¹⁸ Since the 1780s, Tastet, also Basque by birth, had financed Spanish commercial companies involved in the slave trade such as the *Guipuzcoan Company of Caracas* and the *Royal Philippine Company*.¹⁹

¹⁶ In March 1793 he carried ninety-nine slaves from Saint-Domingue on the *Cometa*. ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, 2516.

¹⁷ "Real Orden sobre contrata de marineros y oficiales extranjeros a busques negreros y franquicias a D. Sebastián de Lasa, February 20, 1793," BNC., Colección Cubana, Manuscritos, Bachiller y Morales, v. 79, 20.

¹⁸ "D. Sebastián de Lasa sobre acreditar el apresamiento de la fragata Guipúzcoa, su capitán D. Pedro Lacroix en la costa de Angola por una fragata corsaria francesa." ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 255- 2. *Voyages* ID: 81686. Part of the documents produced by Fermin Tastet are in the Museo Zumalacarregui en Guipúzcoa.

¹⁹ British Library, Add. MSS 38,416, 114-117. His wealth was such that he was a partner to Nathaniel Rothschild in the late eighteenth century. In the 1820s, Tastet was Spanish ambassador to Russia. Ruano Álvaro Aragón, "La Guerra de la Convención y la separación de Guipúzcoa, y los comerciantes vasco-franceses y bearneses," 167-229.

Tastet sold to captain Dufresne the three-year-old vessel *Gasgayne* which had been a slave ship since its construction in 1791.²⁰ “This frigate,” Tastet wrote to Lasa, “is one of the most famous of this port, almost new, lined with copper and provided with all the necessary African accouterments.”²¹ The consul of Spain in Liverpool registered the vessel as Spanish property under the new name of *Guipúzcoa* (aka) *Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu*, a remembrance of Lasa’s native land and the virgin venerated in Guipúzcoa and reputed to protect sailors. Fermin Tastet & Co. insured the vessel. On September 15, 1794, the *Guipúzcoa* sailed from Liverpool to Angola.²² “We will sail it as we can,” Fermín Tastet wrote to Lasa, “because in the current circumstances it will not be possible to find many Spanish sailors.”²³

In November 1794, after a short stop in Loango, the *Guipúzcoa* anchored in Malembo, Angola. The African destination was not a coincidence, but rather reflective of the patterns of the late eighteenth-century French slave trade. Between 1775 and 1792, of the 134 slave ships that embarked slaves in Loango and Malembo, 131 were French and near all of them were heading to Saint-Domingue.²⁴ When Dufresne, like many other French slavers, redirected his operations to Cuba, he carried with him their African contacts in customary ports of embarkation for French slavers.

By the time the *Guipúzcoa* reached West Central Africa, Spain was at war with France, a circumstance that decided the fate of the expedition. In April 1795, while the *Guipúzcoa* was

²⁰ *Voyages* ID: 81558.

²¹ “D. Sebastián de Lasa sobre acreditar el apresamiento de la fragata Guipúzcoa, su capitán D. Pedro Lacroix en la costa de Angola por una fragata corsaria francesa.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 255- 2.

²² See policy in: Elizabeth Donnan, “Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America,” v. 2, 623-624.

²³ “D. Sebastián de Lasa sobre acreditar el apresamiento de la fragata Guipúzcoa, su capitán D. Pedro Lacroix en la costa de Angola por una fragata corsaria francesa.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 255-2. *Voyages* ID: 81686.

²⁴ *Voyages* <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/vGNSStz13> (Consulted, January 3, 2019). After the Haitian revolution, the outbreak of war, and the subsequent demise of the French slave trade, the French were replaced by British and Americans and, after 1808, by Portuguese slavers.

trading in Malembo, a French brig was spotted on the horizon. Unlike the French vessels that in the 1790s used to trade slaves in the region, the brig *Assemblée Nationale* had different intentions. It was part of a squadron that the revolutionary French government had sent to Africa to capture ships belonging to enemies of France and to attack European trade posts.²⁵ The *Assemblée Nationale* found several ships, some of them were British, a few Americans, and the *Guipúzcoa*, known in the African port as *La Española* since it was the only slaver of that nationality in the region. The Spanish ship had 300 slaves on board when the French seized it.

The captors “chained [captain Dufresne] with two iron bars by the chest and the thigh” and liberated the slaves following the decree abolishing the slave trade recently adopted by the National Assembly.²⁶ Unfortunately, we do not know what happened with the French captain and the rest of the crew after the capture of the ship. He might have returned to the Americas in another slave ship after imprisonment in Goree as was the custom for other slavers in such circumstances. He, less likely, could have returned to France, or he just died on African soil.²⁷

During the following years, Lasa continued working successfully in the slave trade. His trading networks with French traders remained key to his commercial operations. In 1799, he linked up with Santa María y Cuesta, a wealthy Cuban-based merchant, and with Pierre Thomas Denis, a banker from Nantes. Another French-born merchant partnering with Lasa was Stephen

²⁵ Before reaching Malembo, the French squadron had burned down Freetown.

²⁶“D. Sebastián de Lasa sobre acreditar el apresamiento de la fragata Guipúzcoa, su capitán D. Pedro Lacroix en la costa de Angola por una fragata corsaria francesa.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 255- 2.

²⁷ The *Guipúzcoa* was not the only ship that Lasa lost to the French. In June 1795, a French privateer captured his brig *Nuestra Señora de Regla* aka *Mus* and carried it to Saint-Domingue. The captain of the captured vessel, Hermenegildo de Oyarzabaleta, was kept as a prisoner in the unstable French colony until the Spanish ship *San Gabriel* rescued and transported the crew to Cuba in July 1795. “D. Sebastián de Lasa sobre acreditar el apresamiento del bergantín Nuestra Señora de la Merced (a) el Mus, su capitán D. Hermenegildo de Oyarzabaleta. ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 25510.

Girard, a wealthy banker from Philadelphia.²⁸ By the turn of the nineteenth century, Lasa founded the commercial firm Lasa & Iriarte.²⁹ Lasa and his partners became owners of transatlantic slave trading expeditions after 1808.

Since Lasa was a pioneer in the transatlantic slave trade from Cuba, his story helps us to understand the beginning of a type of commerce that became so common in the island after 1808. First, Lasa's slave trading career owes its success to the coalescence of international events, such as the revolution in Saint-Domingue, the European wars, and transformation within Cuba, such as the establishment of a favorable slave trading legislative and institutional infrastructure. Lasa very well exemplifies the critical role played by foreign slavers trading in Cuba in the 1790s. The richness of the archival documents on Lasa's operations enables us to understand the correlation between the nationality and the networks held by foreign slavers on African slaving markets where Cubans sent their first transatlantic expeditions. Since Lasa tapped into French networks, he was introduced to French regions of influence in Africa. As the following section shows, other Cuban slavers established partnerships with slavers from other nations which in turn forged connections with other African regions.

Luis Beltran Gonet: Training Captains and Building Networks

In his well-known book "El Ingenio," Manuel Moreno Fraginals wrote, mistakenly, that the first successful Cuban expedition to the African coast took place in September 1798. "Finally," -Moreno said- "the national slave trader had been born, which ultimately would

²⁸ Jesús Bohórquez, "La confianza como eetórica, el estatus como práctica: comerciantes estadounidenses y relaciones de agencia en el Caribe español (1798-1822).", 19.

²⁹ The Manuscripts Division from the William L. Clemens Library at the University Michigan has the papers written by Philadelphia merchant Stephen Girard including correspondence with Sebastian de Lasa. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/clementsms/umich-wcl-M-4375gir?view=text> (Consulted, March 30, 2019).

devour his creators.”³⁰ By “creators” Moreno meant the foreign slavers who instructed Cubans in the intricacies of the business. Moreno was referring to the arrival of the brigantine *Neptuno* which carried 123 slaves to Havana from Senegal. When the ship anchored in the city, the Real Consulado congratulated its owner, the Galician Luis Beltrán Gonet:

The governing board of the Royal Consulate on September 19, 1798, presided over by Mr. D. José Ricardo O’Farrill: On the occasion of the happy arrival in this port of a cargo of 123 negroes from Senegal, to the account of D. Luis Beltrán Gonet, the aforementioned Mr. *Síndico* suggested, and it was agreed, to communicate to the above-mentioned merchant the esteem that his duties deserve from this city. We invite him to state and ask for any help or exemptions he needs for the future achievement of his enterprises under the understanding that this institution (the Real Consulado) is ready to support and endorse whatever is required for the benefit of Lasa’s private enterprises or the promotion of this branch of commerce (slave trade) in general.³¹

It is unclear why the Real Consulado celebrated Luis Beltrán Gonet in particular, given that since the *Cometa* in 1792, four other Spanish slave ships had anchored in Cuba from Africa.³² What is apparent, however, is that the praises Gonet received were similar to those sent to Lasa. The rhetoric conflating nationalism with the trade in human beings rejoiced itself with another hero. However, Gonet, like Lasa before him, would not have been able to reach the African coast without foreign assistance. Gonet’s first expeditions were commanded by Americans, the ships purchased in the United States, and using foreign a flag. The slaving operation undertook by Gonet also illustrates how the first generation of Cuban merchants reached Africa. Gonet tapped into different transatlantic slave trading networks different from Lasa and, consequently, he reached other African slave markets. The documents produced by

³⁰ Manuel Moreno Friginals, “El Ingenio. Complejo económico-social cubano del azúcar,” v. 1, 47.

³¹ “Apoyo y protección ofrecidos por el Real Consulado a D. Luis Beltrán Gonet en sus expediciones negreras,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 72-2778.

³² *Voyages*. <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/4P7ePsRR> (Consulted, March 29, 2019).

Gonet's expeditions allow to understand in detail how the first generation of Cuban slave trading captains and sailors was trained in this business.

At the beginning of 1795, Gonet hired William Montgomery, a native of Ireland but a citizen of the United States, to captain a transatlantic slave trading expeditions. The fact that Gonet established a partnership with this American resulted from the changing geopolitics of the Atlantic world in the 1790s. Since 1793, the Franco-Spanish war meant French vessels were excluded from Cuban ports. American and British slavers fiercely competed for the Cuban slave market until 1796 when the Anglo-Spanish hostilities temporarily eliminated the British. Montgomery was one of the many American slave traders operating in Cuba in the 1790s. In 1793, for instance, he traveled from Baltimore to Havana on the schooner *Hanna and Sally* with thirty-eight Africans.³³ In 1794, Montgomery made two trips to Cuba from Jamaica on board of the *Bonita*, the same vessel employed by Gonet for the transatlantic journey.³⁴

In 1794, Gonet purchased the *Bonita*. Instead of registering the vessel as Spanish, he decided to retain the American flag and papers to avoid a potential French capture. The United States was neutral during the French revolutionary wars, and their vessels were thus protected from European interference. Gonet installed a Spanish supercargo from Cadiz, Jose Briñas, with the explicit goal of learning the slave trading business.

Since the 1760s, as shown in chapter one, numerous official documents suggested placing Cuban sailors of foreign slave ships to learn on the business. More than basic seamanship was required for the transatlantic slave trade. Aspiring Cuban slavers needed to learn how to use the oceanic and winds currents to reach specific ports in Africa. They had to establish the right trading contacts, learn the basics of other languages, manners, and under what terms to conduct

³³ ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, 2516.

³⁴ Ibid.

the purchase of slaves. They had to know what type of merchandise was in demand, how to bargain, and how to deal with the bureaucracy of every slaving port. They need to gain experience on how to keep the captives alive during the middle passage while holding them under tight control. Established slave-trading nations such as Portugal, the U.S., England, and France, with more than a century trading slaves had not only the expertise but also a system in place to pass down slave trading knowledge from one generation of captains to the next. Historian Jay Coughtry shows how such knowledge was passed from the British to Americans in Rhode Island. In Cuba, instead, foreign slavers were the only option available for the first generation of Cuban slave captains, pilots, and supercargoes to acquire such expertise.

On April 20, 1795, after a two-month journey from Liverpool, the *Bonita* arrived at Charles Island in the Gambia River. The vessel followed a familiar path for Anglo-Saxon slavers. By 1795, British and American ships dominated the Gambian slave trade. The *Bonita* arrived at the mouth of the river Gambia just two months before the explorer Mungo Park began his visit.³⁵ The *Bonita* anchored off Jillifre, a town near James Island, formerly the site of a British fort. Since the British had abandoned the region in 1783, only a few English traders remained in the river. One of them, John Laidley met with the crew of the *Bonita* in May 1795 and later assisted the Mungo Park expedition. Before going up the river, Montgomery recalled paying duty to the same ruler that Mungo Park dealt with - the king of Barra, a state on the north bank of the river.³⁶ The *Bonita* then continued up the Gambia, described by Park as “deep and muddy, the banks being covered with thickets of mangrove, and the whole of the adjacent

³⁵ By combining documents from the Cuban National Archive such as the testimonies of the captain and part of the crew with the descriptions of the Gambia written by Mungo Park, it is possible to obtain a vivid description of the places where the *Bonita* traded slaves.

³⁶ Mungo Park, “Travels in the Interior of Africa,” 15.

country flat and swampy.”³⁷ On May 13, 1795, the vessel anchored in Pisania, “a small village in the King of Yany’s dominions, established as a factory for trade, and inhabited solely by British subjects and their black servants.”³⁸ In Pisania, Montgomery bought forty-four slaves from John Laidley and seventy more at nearby trading outposts. “The price of a slave varies according to the state of the market, Park recalled, but in general a young and healthy male is worth from eighteen to twenty pounds.”³⁹

When the *Bonita* was back at Jiliffre with 113 slaves on board and ready to sail back to Havana, the French privateer *Renommée* showed up in the mouth of the river. Let us remember that the *Bonita* was registered as an American vessel. However, this circumstance did not stop the French captor from seizing the ship as suspicious. José Briñas, the Spanish supercargo, went on shore afraid of being captured by the French and proceeded to Pisania under the protection of John Laidley.⁴⁰ The *Renommée* carried the *Bonita* to the island of Goree for adjudication by a French prize tribunal. The crew and officials stated in court that the ship was American (because of the flag and registration), but that the human cargo belonged to Gonet, a Spaniard. After a lengthy legal process, the Court returned the vessel to Montgomery, but the slaves were released from their bondage following the National Assembly decision of 1794 abolishing slavery. In July 1795, the *Bonita* returned to the Gambia looking for the Spanish supercargo Jose Briñas. By September 1795, the *Bonita* arrived in Havana in ballast.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid, 16.

³⁸ Ibid, 17.

³⁹ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁰ It is likely that Briñas met Mungo Park who arrived in that town three months later.

⁴¹ “Luis Beltrán Gonet para tratar ciertos puntos sobre la expedición que ha verificado a la costa de África contra D. Pedro Diago y Mariano Carbó en cobros de seguros en distintos buques.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 41-2. “D. Luis Beltrán Gonet contra D. Mariano Carbó en cobro de perjuicios y entorno de cierta cantidad de pesos.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 41-1. *Voyages* ID: 40728.

Gonet thereupon organized a new expedition on the same ship. Unlike the previous voyage, he registered the schooner as Spanish but under the new name of *San José y Nuestra Señora del Carmen*.⁴² The captain this time was Jose Briñas, the former supercargo placed on the ship in the previous voyage to learn on the trade.⁴³ Gonet considered Briñas to be now ready to command the vessel. On October 28, 1795, the former *Bonita* sailed from Havana to Africa. We lack further information about this voyage, but we can assume that Briñas took the ship to the Gambia where he had established contacts on his previous visit, not least because he visited the region yet again on a third voyage in June 1796.⁴⁴ Briñas not only had learned how to command a slave ship, but he had also established African connections in the same spot to which Montgomery had introduced him.

While Briñas was trading in the Gambia in 1796, a war broke out between Spain and England. Thus, he seeks refuge in Gorée, the same place where a French tribunal had prosecuted his vessel a year earlier. However, at that time, France was an ally of the Spanish - and Gorée was a haven for Spanish vessels. While waiting in Gorée, the wind of a storm pushed the vessel against the reefs destroying the ship. Briñas was forced to sell the wreckage and buy a new vessel to return to Havana. For five-thousand pesos, the Spanish captain bought the Liverpool-made British frigate *Manchester* which had been captured by the French few days earlier.⁴⁵ Briñas's misfortunes continued. When the *Manchester* was close to Cuban waters, a British privateer attacked the vessel. After some resistance from the crew, the captain surrendered. Not

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Montgomery had launched a lawsuit against Gonet for late payments becoming, for Gonet, persona non grata.

⁴⁴ "Diligencias promovidas por D. Luis Beltrán Gonet contra José de Briñas sobre pesos." ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 201-18.

⁴⁵ Voyages ID: 82430, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/82430/variables> (Consulted, Dec. 13, 2017)

only was England at war with Spain, but the ship had initially been British property. Briñas and the crew returned to Cuba empty-handed in a small boat.⁴⁶

It was only after all these adventures that Gonet undertook the voyage that Cuban historian Moreno Friginals mistook as the first Spanish expedition to Africa in 1798.⁴⁷ In 1800, Luis Beltran Gonet went bankrupt. Authorities arrested him for debts to the public treasury. The man once celebrated by the Real Consulado was in jail awaiting sentencing. While in prison, he wrote a letter to the authorities asking to be moved to a different location since he had contracted yellow fever.

The lack of ventilation, Gonet said, and the heat experienced during the present season (summer) makes me fear of contracting a deadly disease. It does not seem right to be locked in a place that can be very well compared with the gloomy night of death. Humanity should be practiced toward any man as criminal as he could be.⁴⁸

Any slave on one of Gonet's slave ships could have written these words. In the end, Gonet, running high fevers and retaining urine, was sent home to his wife Gertrudis Martin and three children to recover.

Sebastián de Lasa and Luis Beltrán Gonet were not the only Spanish slave traders lauded by the colonial authorities and the highest merchant circles of Havana for their African ventures. At the beginning of 1802, Francisco Ignacio de Azcárate, a renowned merchant in Havana,

⁴⁶ José Briñas continued his career as a captain of slave ships although it was clear that the business was not working out well for him. On May 16, 1813, many years after his bad experience in Goree, the Cadiz officer commanded a voyage to the Upper Guinean port of Ile Plantains on board the schooner *Dolores*. By then the British had abolished the slave trade in their possessions and were attempting to enforce their domestic parliamentary decision on every nation via the deployment of a few ships from the Royal Navy on the African coast. Briñas was unfortunate enough to be seized by a British cruiser. In August 1813, the *Dolores* was condemned by the Vice-Admiralty Court of Freetown. It had on board 152 slaves sold originally to the ship by the Euro-African trader from Sherbro, William Caulker. Isidro Inglada, the owner of the *Dolores*, claimed the insurance later in Havana. *Voyages* ID: 7518, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497.

⁴⁷ "Don Luis Beltrán Gonet para aclarar ciertos puntos sobre la expedición que ha verificado a la costa de África contra D. Pedro Diago y Mariano Carbó en cobro de dinero de distintos buques," ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, Leg. 41, Exp. 12

⁴⁸ "Testimonio del expediente promovido por D. Luis Beltrán Gonet sobre que se le pase de la cárcel vieja donde se halla arrestado a la nueva y que se proceda a la censura jurídica de su quiebra," ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 77-14.

purchased a vessel in La Guaira, Venezuela, through his agent José María de Ormazabal.⁴⁹ The schooner *Dolores* aka *Cambio* sailed from la Guaira loaded with cocoa beans consigned to Fernando Matías Ruiz in Cádiz. On September 29, 1802, the vessel departed from Cádiz to the African coast. It returned to Cuba on the first days of December with 122 slaves embarked in Goree, eighty-seven males, and thirty-five females.⁵⁰ The board of the Real Consulado congratulated Azcárate for his successful expedition. The Real Consulado asked Azcárate for his insights into this new type of commerce.⁵¹ Azcárate showed the accounts of the expeditions to demonstrate how he had organized the voyage financially and the profits that Spaniards could expect from such an enterprise. The total cost of the voyage, from its departure to the arrival in Cuba, was 16,268 pesos. The sale of the eighty-seven-male slave at 300 pesos each and the thirty-five females at 260 pesos resulted in a gain of around 35,000 pesos. It produced a profit of seventy-five percent. This expedition -the Junta de Fomento concluded- “demonstrates that the Spanish nationals must embrace the direct trade to Africa. This trade is crucial for our development.”⁵² The case of the schooner *Dolores* was reported to the king as “confirming and justifying in practice previous petitions we have sent to the crown regarding the negro trade carried on by your subjects.”⁵³

Yet by 1800, very few Spanish-owned slaving expeditions had visited the African coast. They were so exceptional that colonial authorities considered them worthy of the Spanish king’s attention. However, these first experiments so praised by the authorities and the Cuban elite as truly national enterprises had a great deal of foreign involvement. The mentoring and partnership

⁴⁹ Azcárate, like Sebastian de Lasa was from Guipúzcoa in the Basque country, Spain.

⁵⁰ “Felicitación de la Junta de Fomento a la expedición de la goleta Dolores que de Cádiz fue a África y condujo al puerto de la Habana 122 esclavos de Gorea,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 73-2802. “Libros de Acuerdos de la Junta de Fomento,” Book 165, 273.

⁵¹ “Libros de Acuerdos de la Junta de Fomento,” ANC, Book 165, 273.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

with foreign slave traders were still crucial for Cubans to reach African slave markets. These partnerships had a broader scope.

The Consignment System: A Type of Partnerships Between Cuban and Foreign Slavers

Cuban-based transatlantic expeditions were not the norm for the years before 1808. There were other more common forms of international partnerships. Routine day-to-day business transactions may have been too ordinary and uninteresting to be even mentioned in the halls of the Real Consulado, or to be described in letters to the King, but they were nevertheless essential to the emergence of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade. They were vital for Cubans to strengthening bonds of trusts with foreign merchants, creating new types of partnerships, and expanding operations in other Atlantic ports. The most prevalent type of commercial operation between Cuban merchants and slavers from other countries was the system of consignments.

Commercial firms located overseas required to have agents appointed in Havana to receive cargoes and oversee sales. These sale agents were known as the consignees. According to Spanish laws, they had to be subjects of Spain. Since the law limited the timeframe that a foreign ship could be on the island, the assistance of locals was indispensable. Usually, captains or supercargoes arrived in Cuba with instructions drafted in advance by the owners identifying the consignee. In other cases, captains or supercargoes had the freedom to choose a sale agent. To become a consignee of a slave cargo, a Cuban merchant had to gain the trust of both the owners of the expedition and the officers of the vessel.⁵⁴ Once a foreign slave ship arrived in Havana, the name of the vessel and the name of the consignee(s) of the cargoes were published in the

⁵⁴ A well-informed take on this issue is Jesús Bohorquez, "La confianza como retórica, el estatus como práctica: comerciantes estadounidenses y relaciones de agencia en el Caribe español (1798-1822)." 7-40.

newspaper (Appendix B). Hundreds of consignees operated in Havana, however, some of them such as Simón Poey, were particularly productive.

In the late 1700s, a French family from the city of Oloron-Saint-Marie in the region of Bearn, south-western France, migrated to Havana. Juan Poey and his wife, Marie Lacasse, had three children, one of them under the name of Simón Poey.⁵⁵ During the mid-1790s, Simón became one of the most renowned slave traders in Havana. He started working for Philip Alwood, the former agent of the Liverpool firm Baker & Dawson and last holder of the Spanish *Asiento*.⁵⁶ Simón could not have found a better mentor in Havana. Alwood was, until the beginning of the Anglo-Spanish war in 1796, part of a robust network of traders and the chief consignee of slaving expeditions arriving in Cuba.⁵⁷ By 1795, Poey had replaced Allwood as the main consignee of Liverpool slave traders. Between 1798 and 1803, the first period for which we have consistent data on consignees of foreign slave ships, Poey sold around 3,700 slaves in Havana (Appendix B). The ships he received came from the Danish colonies of Saint Croix and Saint Thomas with the odd one from the French colony of Saint Barthelemy. Twenty-one of them were Danish-flagged, a distribution reflective of the international context. As the British withdrew from the Cuban slave trade in 1796 because of hostilities, American and Danish vessels replaced them, and Saint Thomas or Saint Croix became the primary source of slaves. However, the Danish flag was very much a cover for American and British traders. Thus, Poey's clientele comprised mostly of British and American merchants.

One example of how the system of consignment worked is the American brig *Nancy* which anchored in Havana in August 1796 from Kingston with five slaves and other

⁵⁵ Francisco Javier Santa Cruz y Mallón, "Historia de Familias Cubanas," 231.

⁵⁶ María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes and Aisnara Perera Díaz, "Del tráfico a la libertad: el caso de los africanos de la fragata Dos Hermanos en Cuba, (1795-1837)," 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

merchandise consigned to Poey. The captain of the ship, the Rhode Islander Thomas Cottrell, carried a letter to Poey signed by Messrs. Donaldson, Thomas Forbes & Co., a Jamaican firm.⁵⁸

The letter instructed Poey to send the *Nancy* back to New York City loaded with molasses consigned to the ship's owner, Isaac Ridley. On September 12, 1796, the *Nancy* sailed from Havana to the United States. Ridley was pleased with the high quality of the molasses and requested more. He asked Poey to look out for any ship departing from Havana to Manhattan and load it with more molasses as soon as possible. One month later, Ridley wrote again to Poey notifying him that the prices of molasses were high in NYC; that it was a perfect moment to send that product from Havana. The *Nancy*, Ridley said, "will depart next week to North Carolina, and from there to Jamaica, and it will continue to Havana at your consignment."⁵⁹ Such correspondence is critical to understanding the relationship between consignees and consigners. Letters were the principal vehicle of communication and revealed the dynamism of transnational commercial ties.⁶⁰

In December 1796, the brigantine *Nancy* left New York City once again bound for Wilmington, North Carolina. It carried salt and rum consigned to the commercial firm of Potts & Gibbs. After selling the cargo in Wilmington, the *Nancy* took on board, wooden staves for sugar barrels, potatoes, and rice. In February 1797, the vessel departed to Jamaica consigned to Kingston's merchant Peter MacGill. In Kingston, the *Nancy* was replenished with fifty "bocoys" of molasses, some wooden staves, and seven slaves. The ship sailed again for Havana - the cargo consigned to Simón Poey.

⁵⁸ "D. Simón Poey sobre que el capitán del bergantín Nancy Thomas Cottrell dé ciertas declaraciones". A.N.C. Tribunal de Comercio. Leg. 345, Exp. 6.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ On letters and ways of how social scientists have analyzed them see: Gabriella del Lungo Camiciotti, "Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern Culture: An Introduction," 17-35. I. K. Steele, "The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: Exploration of Communication and Community," Oxford University Press, 1986.

The arrival of vessels on which Africans comprised a small share of the cargo's total value was typical of the intra-American slave trade in Cuba. After studying the operations of the brigantine *Nancy*, one cannot avoid wondering about the relative importance of slaves to commodities in Cuba's foreign trade. It is a meaningful question since the *Nancy* was not at all an isolated case. Were the slaves just a cover for the most foreign trading operations? The frequent arrival of a small number of captives in Havana from other islands was often just a cover for the introduction of other products into Spanish possessions. "American merchants," according to historian Jose Guadalupe Ortega, "adopted a similar commercial pattern, selling shipments of flour in Havana with four or five slaves imported from the nearby Dutch islands to circumvent the Spanish ban on direct trade with its colonies."⁶¹ Slaves played a secondary role. Historian José Luciano Franco explained it well.

Merchants bought in Saint Thomas, Kingston, and, sometimes, in Nassau eight or ten slaves and they came to Santiago de Cuba, Manzanillo or Havana with Danish, British, and American merchandise exempted of taxes and *alcabalas*.⁶²

In 1802, at the end of the Anglo-Spanish war when investment in the slave trade began to expand once more, Simón Poey established a commercial firm under the name of Simón Poey & Cia with his brother Juan Andrés Poey and Juan Francisco Sanguily.⁶³ In 1803 alone, this company served as the consignee of eighteen vessels carrying 2,384 slaves to Havana (Appendix B). Of those vessels, six arrived directly from Africa: four from Liverpool, one from North American vessel, and one from France. We have information on the ports of embarkation for just one of these, the frigate *John* which arrived from Bonny.⁶⁴ The intra-American voyages, on the other hand, all came from the Danish colony of Saint-Thomas.

⁶¹ Guadalupe Ortega, Jose, "Cuban Merchants, Slave Trade Knowledge, and the Atlantic World, 1790s-1820s," 235.

⁶² Franco, José Luciano, "Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos," 104.

⁶³ "Revista de Jurisprudencia y de Administración," 441.

⁶⁴ *Voyages* ID, 82040.

Poey's slaving operations continued even after he died in Cadiz in July of 1803. His wife, Juana Josefa de Aloy y Rivera, together with the slave merchant and friend of the family, Francisco Hernández, took control of the business. They created a firm under the name of Poey's Widow & Co. in January of 1804. Between 1804 and 1808, this company received 1,644 slaves on board twenty ships.⁶⁵ All were US-flagged vessels except for a few Danish exceptions. Therefore, during the 1790s and until his death, Simon Poey built a robust slave-trading network with British and America merchants which underpinned his success.

The American schooner *Blackney* provides another example of how the partnerships between foreign owners of expeditions and their consignees worked. In 1799, the ship arrived in Havana harbor carrying forty-eight slaves from Africa.⁶⁶ At the end of March 1799, captain Miles Stoddard loaded the *Blackney* in Bristol with tobacco from Virginia and rum from New England. Before departing to Africa, the owners of the vessel, John Bourne and Jacob Babbit delivered the instructions for the expedition. Stoddard, once in Africa, had to sell the cargo as "advantageously" as he could and to leave Africa before the beginning of the rainy season. The "packages" would be carried to Havana and delivered to the merchant Pedro Lauradó or, in his absence, to David Nagle. The ship would return to Newport loaded with sugar. The vessel would

⁶⁵ "Incidente de la testamentaria de Simón Poey y Francisco Sanguily promovido por D. Salvador Martiartu sobre lo que le debe Juana de Aloy viuda del primero y albacea del segundo reconozca ciertas cuentas, 1807," ANC, Escribanía de Varios, 18-265.

⁶⁶ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 72-2783. *Voyages* ID, 36694. The *Blackney* was built in Somerset, Massachusetts in 1794 and sold to Bristol merchants John Bourne, and Jacob Babbit for \$1,050. The 43-tons vessel had two masts. Its dimensions were fifty-two feet and nine inches long, and fifteen feet and five inches width. The hold of the vessel measured six feet and two inches. It was a square stern schooner, without a figure on the bow. There are no records of the African embarkation port, but some clues suggest that the ship went to Senegambia. The length of the voyage, four months from Bristol to Africa to Havana, was standard for ships trading in that African region. The size of the ship was typical of vessels trading in Senegambia and Upper Guinea, always smaller than those going to more southerly regions. Finally, the *Blackney* had purchased in 1796, forty-seven slaves in Gorée. Thus, it is likely that in its second voyage in 1798 as well as its third that ended in Havana in 1799, the schooner was coming from the same slaving territory. Small and fast, it was the ideal ship for a short trip. "Juan Line como socio de la Compañía de Hernández contra Pedro Lauradó en cobro de pesos procedente de cierto buque cargado de negros." ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 267-17.

conduct a type of triangular trade. Expeditions were consigned to Pedro Lauradó. For every African sold, Lauradó received five percent of the proceeds. Every male in good health and optimal physical shape cost 425 pesos and females 325.⁶⁷

As seen, between 1790 and 1808, the most common partnership between Cuban merchants and the foreign slave traders was the system of consignments. Traders from the island sold human cargoes from foreign-flagged embarkations. Such system strengthened and, in many cases, created trading partnerships that were critical for the foundational years of the Cuban slave trade. It was typical for the first generation of Cuban merchants who organized transatlantic slave trading expeditions to start their career as consignees. For some, the consignment system was the beginning of the journey that ended in Africa.

The Takeoff of the Cuban-based Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1808-1815

Slave Trading Strategies in the Aftermath of US and British Abolition

In October 1809, the Captain-General of Cuba, Marquis of Someruelos, called for a meeting with the board of the Real Consulado and the most important colonial authorities. The purpose was to discuss the future of the Cuban slave trade under the new and challenging international environment created by the abolition laws.⁶⁸ Francisco de Arango y Parreño delivered the introductory remarks.

In recent years, the trading system of such branch has been completely disrupted. The English and French who were the ones who made it in big numbers, have abolished it entirely. Americans have executed the same and Danes, likewise. Therefore, there is no other aid for this branch of trade than the foreigners giving to our traders their knowledge and funds. All our attention must be directed to that end.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “Expediente del Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento sobre solicitud de prorrogas al comercio negrero por parte de los extranjeros,” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The Intendente de Hacienda, in agreement with Arango and the board of the Real Consulado, invited merchants that had already organized expeditions to Africa to deliver a lecture and draft a set of instructions on how to get into the African trade. In November 1809, Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal presented a paper to the board of the Real Consulado titled “Observations by the Company of Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers on the Negro Trade.”⁷⁰ Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers were one of the few successful commercial houses with a long involvement in organizing both intra-American and transatlantic expeditions.⁷¹

In the late 1790s, the Cuesta y Manzanal family partnered with another major merchant in Havana, Juan de Santa Maria to create the firm Santa Maria y Cuesta which, according to Alexander von Humboldt, “was one of the biggest commercial houses in the Americas.”⁷² The Cuestas, not surprisingly, started their slave-trading operations as consignee of foreign carriers. The partial data we have for the years between 1798 and 1807, informs us that the Cuestas worked as sale agents for thirty-nine different expeditions that carried to Cuba at least 2,600 Africans. When the British abolition was announced, the Cuestas had enough experience and contacts to become successful Atlantic slave traders.

Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal’s report was a self-celebratory description of his slaving achievements and a request for more deregulation in other branches of commerce. The document described some of the expeditions he fitted out during 1809. The details reinforced yet again the two main arguments already presented in this chapter. First, that Cuban captains gained experience

⁷⁰ “Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta y Manzanal y Hermanos referentes al comercio de negros, November 23, 1809,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

⁷¹ The brothers Pedro (1768-1833) and Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal (1778-1847) were born in the Val of San Lorenzo in the province of Leon, Spain. In the last years of the eighteenth century, they moved to Havana with another brother, Tirso. Their goal was to profit from the opening of the Spanish ports for commerce. Francisco Javier Santa Cruz y Mallon, “Historia de Familias Cubanas,” v 3, 24.

⁷² Alexander Von Humboldt, “Political Essay on the Island of Cuba, A critical edition,” 35.

on foreign slave ships, and, second, that partnership with foreign traders opened up access to Africa for Cubans. Cuesta y Manzanal's linked with Portuguese/Brazilian merchants who had established commerce on the coast of Angola.

In the report, Cuesta y Manzanal described how he dispatched the brig *Guillermo* to London loaded with sugar and 16,000 pesos in silver. The captain was instructed to acquire information on how to undertake the slave trade on the African coast. This knowledge "would serve you in the future as a guide for the firm for future businesses."⁷³ In London, Cuesta y Manzanal purchased the U.S. frigate *Margarita* and renamed it the *Ciudad de Zaragoza*. It sailed to Loango on September 11, 1809, carrying 54,000 pesos and a range of merchandise. Cuesta y Manzanal put on board three young Spaniards, Joaquin Cones (the son of the secretary of the Intendant), Bernardo Lasigües, and Bernardo Palacios, to learn how to trade in Africa. The *Ciudad de Zaragoza*, captained by Bernardo Rapalo, arrived in Havana on June 27, 1810, with 270 slaves on board.⁷⁴ Cuesta y Manzanal classified this expedition as entirely Spanish:

Before these expeditions, others have gone to the coast of Africa, and although they left with the Spanish flag, neither their captains nor crews were Spaniards. Many of them have not returned, nor have their funds been all national. Therefore, it can be properly said that this [the *Ciudad de Zaragoza*] has been the first that has sailed with ship, crew and Spanish captain.⁷⁵

On November 4, 1809, Cuesta y Manzanal in a joint venture with the firm Vidal Sirvent y Canellas & Brothers sent the frigate *Junta Central*, to the region between Calabar and Angola. Instructions were delivered to Esteban Famadas, the captain and first pilot; Juan Ainciburu, the master of the expedition; and Antonio Ruedas, the supercargo. The greater part of these was pro

⁷³ "Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta y Manzanal y Hermanos referentes al comercio de negros, November 23, 1809," ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

⁷⁴ *Voyage ID*: 14519.

⁷⁵ "Aguilar a Saavedra, Havana, October 17, 1809," AGI, Indiferente General, 1691.

forma –that the frigate must travel to a previously agreed region in Africa directly unless there was an emergency, avoid contact with the enemy, and any smoking or use a candle without the glass lantern below deck.⁷⁶ However, the instructions had a further clause underlining a common strategy used by Cuban traders to ensure their future. Cuesta y Manzanal hired Juan Ainciburu as the director of the expedition, the instructions said, because of his “well known and noticeable intelligence” on the African trade. Antonio Ruedas, the supercargo, was instructed to follow Ainciburu’s orders “to acquire knowledge which he [Ruedas] did not have on this trade.” The document described the required education of the Cuban captain and sailors and warrants quoting in full:

The national commerce has no notion of this business, and it has never employed young Spaniards to acquire the knowledge of this very important trade to our colonial system, our merchant navy, and the individual good. We send on the aforementioned frigate the supercargo Mr. Antonio Ruedas and Mr. José de Opiso to learn with the utmost thoroughness from the expert and director of this expedition, Mr. Juan Ainciburu, how to acquire the negroes; the way to achieve it with more gain; the goods more typical for the exchange or consumption among the Ethiopians in those coasts; the most suitable seasons and port for the trade; and finally to teach them the most accurate ideas of this traffic, so that in the future they could carry out the same tasks. The interested parties implore Ainciburu, trusting in his abilities and desires to please us, that he will impress these young people via theory and practice with the knowledge and lights necessary for the performance of subsequent enterprises.⁷⁷

The *Junta Central* returned to Cuba on October 31, 1810, carrying 333 slaves on board.⁷⁸

The expedition was a success not only in the number of Africans carried but also because it was a training ground for Antonio Ruedas and Jose de Opiso. Ruedas continued his carrier as a slave ship captain working for Cuesta y Manzanal. He commanded the *Junta Central* on its way to

⁷⁶ “Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta y Manzanal y Hermanos referentes al comercio de negros, November 23, 1809,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

⁷⁷ Ibid. An analysis of Cuesta y Manzanal’s document: Edgardo Perez Morales, “Tricks of the Slave Trade. Cuba and the Small-Scale Dynamics of the Spanish Transatlantic Trade in Human Beings,” 2-18.

⁷⁸ *Voyages*, ID: 14534.

Africa, Angola in July 1813 disembarking 265 slaves in Havana.⁷⁹ Opiso commanded an unsuccessful expedition to Africa which left Cuba on July 3, 1813. His schooner *Fenix*, owned by Antonio Escoto, was captured by the British and condemned in the Vice-Admiralty Court of Freetown.⁸⁰

During the following years, the brothers Cuesta y Manzanal became extraordinarily successful slave traders. Between 1810 and 1820, the company organized forty-three expeditions to Africa that resulted in the disembarkation of 11,477 slaves in Cuba (Appendix B). Their most frequented African regions of embarkation were the Bight of Biafra and West Central Africa. Unlike Cuban traders who operated on Senegambia or Upper Guinea, the vessels from Cuesta y Manzanal were bigger, their voyages lasted longer, and they delivered more slaves to the Havana market. How did they establish commercial partnerships in that African region so distant from Cuba? The explanation lies in their links to Portuguese and Brazilian traders.

After 1811, an upsurge of vessels from Bahia and Pernambuco arrived in Cuba. The Portuguese flag had become rare in the Cuban slave trade since the end of the seventeenth century. However, after the Court of Braganza moved to Brazil at the end of 1807 when the Napoleonic troops occupied Portugal, Brazilian ports opened to foreign traders. The Brazilian slave trade, centered on Brazil for more than two centuries, extended its reach to Cuba. The arrival of Portuguese and Brazilian traders to Cuba helped to expand the scope of the operations of Cubans in Africa. Cuesta y Manzanal seized the opportunity to strengthen trading ties in regions in Africa where Brazilians were strong. Take the case of captain José Joaquín Meyrelles

⁷⁹ ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, Book 6816.

⁸⁰ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

who partnered with Cuesta y Manzanal and was comfortable in navigating both the north and south Atlantic oceans.

Meyrelles was born in 1776 in Olivenza, a Portuguese town that was invaded and occupied by Spain in 1801. As a result, he became a Spanish subject before moving to the Rio de la Plata. Like many other individuals living in that southern Spanish possession, Meyrelles had close trading connections with Brazil. These Brazilian links enabled him to join the slave trade and to develop his operations with West Central Africa. Between 1803 and 1814, Meyrelles went to Africa at least ten times and sold his captives in both Montevideo and Brazil.⁸¹ In 1809, he purchased the brig *Manuela*, a ship that under its previous name, *Escolástica*, was also engaged in the slave trade with Cuba.⁸²

In one of its voyages, in March 1812, the Portuguese frigate *Manuela* arrived in Havana from Cabinda with 528 slaves.⁸³ The ship and its skilled captain attracted the attention of Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal. Three months later, in June, Santiago de la Cuesta bought the *Manuela* for 12,000 pesos and hired Meyrelles to command a slave expedition to Africa. In October 1812, the *Manuela* left Havana to Montevideo loaded with a cargo of rum, sugar, coffee, and wax. Because the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata was fighting for its independence, the vessel anchored in Rio de Janeiro instead. After being insured in Brazil, in February 1813, the ship sailed to Bonny where it arrived around one month later. The vessel spent fifty days trading slaves. In April 1813, the *Manuela* returned to the Americas loaded with 750 Africans and a crew of 48 sailors. Under the claim that the ship was in distress, Meyrelles stopped in Pernambuco for few weeks. On June 4th, the *Manuela* departed to Havana intending to stop

⁸¹ *Voyages* IDs: 19280, 96111, 41808.

⁸² In January 1803, the *Escolástica* had disembarked 369 slaves in the Rio de la Plata. *Voyages* ID: 96086.

⁸³ ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, Book, 6816.

briefly in Puerto Rico, but it was intercepted by the British sloop *Mosquito* and transported to the island of Tortola to be prosecuted for engaging on the slave trade. It had on board 508 ill slaves of the 750 embarked in Bonny. Meyrelles and part of the crew were also sick at their arrival to Tortola.

My health, Meyrelles wrote, which I thought would improve on landing, has, on the contrary, become increasingly worse. I have not spent a single day without fever, inconvenience, weariness, and other symptoms which deprive me of all pleasure. The physicians say that the malady originated from a problem I have on the liver, very perceivable on my complexion, which is becoming green. The first pilot, Cruz, is in the same state, as well the surgeon, boatswain, carpenter, and some seamen.⁸⁴

In July 1814, Meyrelles died of what seemed to be liver failure. The Vice-Admiralty court of Tortola condemned the *Manuela* and its cargo under the claim that the Spanish flag was covering Portuguese ownership. The slaves were in a dreadful state at the time of the capture. Another 136 Africans would die in Tortola.⁸⁵ Although Meyrelles died, the corridor he helped to create between Bonny and Cuba with Cuesta y Manzanal survived.

Cuesta y Manzanal was not the only firm involved in the Portuguese/Brazilian slave trade with West Central Africa. Between 1811 and 1814, twelve slave ships arrived in Cuba from Bahía Todos los Santos. The links between origins, owners in Havana, and captains of the vessel suggest a secure trading network. Of the twelve slave ships, six were either owned by or consigned to Pedro Oliver & Co., with a further four linked to Cuesta Manzanal & Bros. The company of Pedro Oliver received slaves from Bahia on three occasions, one on the schooner *Nueva Ana* captained by Francisco Gurriaga, and two on the Brig *Union* commanded by José

⁸⁴ TBNA, HCA 42/467/825.

⁸⁵ "Tenth Report of the Directors of the African Institutions, 1816," 47-8.

Castello. These vessels had stopped in Bahía on their way to Cuba from Africa. They followed a path which was similar to that of the *Manuela*.⁸⁶

The Fraudulent Use of the Spanish Flag & Abolitionist Challenges

After 1808, the role of foreigners in the Cuban business did not disappear; it simply changed. There were still some countries that permitted slave trading after 1808 such as Portugal/Brazil, France, and Sweden. They continued carrying captives to Cuba.⁸⁷ There were also foreign slave ships arriving in Cuba in violation of their own laws. Americans, British or French traders were able to switch flags and evade capture in wartime. The practice continued between 1808 and 1815, especially for Americans. A captain would find a nominal owner on the island and transfer the ownership of the expedition to that person. This internationally organized fraud helped Cuban-based merchants achieve their goal of developing a national transatlantic slave trade.

Much of the subterfuge became known because of the naval campaign led by the British to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. After 1808, the British employed their Vice-Admiralty Courts located in Atlantic ports such as Tortola, Nassau, or Freetown to condemn ships illicitly engaged in the human trade. Between 1808 and 1815, the judges of these courts condemned

⁸⁶ In 1814, Francisco Gurriaga carried 110 captives to Havana using the same vessel he had employed coming from Bahía. The owner of the expedition was again Pedro Oliver & Co. In September 1814, Gurriaga departed to Bahia de Todos los Santos on board the *Nueva Ana*. His goal was to acquire provisions to continue to Africa. After a successful expedition, he delivered to Pedro Oliver eighty-eight slaves in December 1814. Gurriaga sailed again in April 1815 from Havana on board the schooner *General Apodaca*. We know more details about this voyage because of an event that happened to Gurriaga while he was in Africa. On June 25, 1815, the *General Apodaca* was in Sestos River when a British vessel approached in a menacing manner. That day, early in the morning, a naval fight broke out between the Spanish and the English vessel. On three occasions the British tried to board the Spanish ship unsuccessfully and after few hours they abandoned the fight. In a “heroic” manner, the *General Apodaca* arrived at Havana in December with 273 slaves. Once again, Gurriaga departed to Africa on January 20, 1816 on board the schooner *Merced*, but there is no record of the ship disembarking slaves in Havana. *Voyages* ID: 14612, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506. *Voyages* ID: 14644, ANC, Ibid. *Voyages* ID 42071, ANC, Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 5.

hundreds of slave ships regardless of their nationality (Appendix C). In the case of Spanish ships captured overseas, these courts consistently found that Americans had been fraudulently using the Spanish flag to continue in this commerce.⁸⁸

One example of Americans using false papers was the brig *Albert* which, in August 1809, sailed from Charleston to Africa. The captain declared to the American authorities that the destination was Havana. Instead, the owners, Freeman Wing and Archibald McWilliam, sent the vessel to Madeira to procure Portuguese papers and to proceed to the African coast. Unable to reach its destination, the ship anchored in Grand Canary where the vessel was formally transferred to a Spanish subject, José Navarro, under the new name of *Lucia*. Freeman and Archibald now became supercargoes of the vessels accompanied by an American crew and four Spaniards who joined in Grand Canary. In March 1810, the ship was captured heading to Havana with 129 slaves on board and condemned in the Vice-Admiralty Court in Freetown.⁸⁹ It was clear that Navarro was acting as the figurehead of American property.

In another case, the schooner *Cirila* which left Havana to Africa in May 1810 captained by Manuel de los Reyes. The real decision makers in the expeditions were the first pilot and supercargo Philip Topham, and the second pilot Benjamin Bradford, both Americans. While anchored off Gorée in July, before even loading any slaves on board, the British privateer corvette *Dart* captured the ship and carried it to Freetown. The *Cirila* was condemned in September by the Vice-Admiralty Court because “it was partially or in its totality the property of one or many citizens of the United States or a subject of his British Majesty” and “it sailed false

⁸⁸ On the role of the Royal Navy see: Peter Grindal, “Opposing the Slavers, The Royal Navy’s Campaign against the Atlantic Slave Trade,” London, I.B. Taurus, 2016.

⁸⁹ “Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institution,” 45-50. *Voyages* ID: 7585.

and fraudulently under a neutral flag (...) to avoid the laws of the United States of America and England.⁹⁰

Cases like those were too familiar. In April 1811, the Vice-Admiralty Court of the Bahamas condemned the brig *Atrevido* captured with 219 slaves on board. The ship had sailed from Charleston to the Spanish possession of Amelia Island under its original name of *Carolina*. William Broadfoot, the owner, sold his ship for a nominal sum of 6,000 dollars to receive Spanish papers. Another vessel, the brig *Carlota Teresa*, was captured with 279 slaves from Loango on its way to Havana. The Vice-Admiralty Court of New Providence determined that the nominal owner, the Cuban merchant Francisco Antonio de Comas, was just a front for the real proprietors, Zachary Atkins from Massachusetts, John Fawn from Norfolk, and Thomas Martin & Co. from Charleston.⁹¹ These three cases were not exceptional. “Of the fifty or so Cuban-bound slave ships captured by the British Navy between 1808 and 1817, according to David Eltis, all but two came from British or American ports or had fraudulent Spanish papers covering British or U.S. equity.”⁹²

There is no doubt that the abolitionists were on the right side of history. However, in legal terms, the Royal Navy and the Vice-Admiralty Courts seized and condemned Spanish slave ships that, in many cases, were not violating any national or international law. Spanish vessels could legally trade in Africa according to their domestic legislation, and the British had no right of interference over the Spanish slave trade until after 1817 when Spaniards could not trade North of the Equatorial line. The British judges usually found some reason to condemn Spanish vessels even if it were spurious; for example, that there were members of the crew that were not

⁹⁰ “Caso de la Goleta Cirila,” ANC. Junta de Fomento, 86-3497. TBNA, HCA 49/97.

⁹¹ Ibid, 50-55.

⁹² David Eltis, “Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 54.

Spaniards, or that the vessels were bought in the U.S. or just that the captain had, in the past, different citizenship.

On December 1, 1810, a group of merchants sent the first of many complaints to the colonial government regarding British depredations.⁹³ They argued against the arbitrary nature of what the Vice-Admiralty Courts were doing with Spanish-owned vessels. On February 24, 1811, the Real Consulado sent a report to Madrid criticizing the British pressure against the emerging Spanish slave trade and labeling it as a mixture of philanthropy and selfishness.⁹⁴ Cubans made use of nationalist rhetoric to delegitimize the British efforts to abolish the slave trade. The nationalist rationale which had fed the frenzy at the arrival of the first Spanish expedition from Africa also informed the anti-British stance. The language presenting Spain as the victim of the “perfidious Albion” permeated every document protesting the abolitionist campaign. Continuing the trade in slaves was not only an economic decision, according to the Cuban and Spanish narrative, it was also a patriotic necessity.

Just for one moment, there was one instance of abolitionism within Spain in the early nineteenth century. Since 1808, the Iberian Peninsula had been occupied by the Napoleonic troops. Those groups loyal to Ferdinand VII constituted a separate and provisional form of government alternative to Joseph Bonaparte, called the *Juntas*. Pushed south by the French troops, the *Juntas* transferred their power to a more representative political system known as the

⁹³ “Representación de comerciantes de la Habana a la Junta de Fomento por la condena de barcos negreros en Sierra Leone,” BNC, Colección Cubana, Manuscritos Morales, V. 79, No. 17. The document was signed by the renowned slavers: José Queralt, Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers, Mariano de Jáuregui, Vidal Sirvent & Canellas, Felipe de Silva (Director of the Maritime Insurance Company of Havana), Francisco Ferrer-José Marcial Ochani, José García Álvarez, Miguel Gómez de las Bárcenas, Pedro de Echeverría, Francisco María de la Cuesta, Francisco Antonio de Comas, and Francisco Lecuona.

⁹⁴ “Representación del Consulado de la Habana sobre las últimas ocurrencias habidas en el comercio de negros,” February 24, 1811, AGS, Estado, 8277.

Cortes which claimed the sovereignty of the Spanish nation. The Cortes called for members of the colonial elite to represent the Spanish overseas possessions in Cadiz.

In March 1811, a deputy from New Spain, Miguel Guridi y Alcocer, supported by the Spanish liberal Agustín Argüelles, presented in the Cortes of Madrid a motion against the slave trade.⁹⁵ The reaction among the planter and merchant class in Havana was, according to a historian, “hysterical.”⁹⁶ Voices were claiming in Cuba that if the Cortes passed the law abolishing the slave trade, the island not only would fight for its independence, but it would later join the U.S. as a territory.⁹⁷ The city council of Havana, the Real Consulado, and the Sociedad Económica together submitted a very long *representación* to the Cortes drafted by Francisco de Arango y Parreño.

The document comprised the same pro-slave trade, profit-maximizing sentiments typical of the Arango of the 1790s. However, some topics from the text could be highlighted. First, Arango was one of the intellectuals nurturing the myth that the slave trade in Cuba was caused by the Spanish government and not by private initiatives in the colonies. From its outset, this dissertation has shown plenty of evidence that the merchants and planters from Cuba were the ones pushing the monarchy to protect and foment the slave trade and not the other way around. However, this myth that Spain was responsible for the introduction of slaves in Cuba was a core belief of thousands of people fighting for Cuban independence in the war that started in 1868. A second myth was that Spanish legislation ensured a milder form of slavery than its British

⁹⁵ The anti-slave trade motion can be read in: “Diario de las discusiones y actas de las Cortes, Cádiz, Impr. Real, 1811-1813], v. 4, 439. For an analysis of what happened in the Cortes in Madrid: Murray, David, “Odious Commerce, Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade, 32-3. Corwin, Arthur F., “Spain and the Abolition of Slavery in Cuba, 1817-1886,” 22-24. A new approach on the Spanish anti-abolitionist rhetoric: Jesús Sanjurjo, “Comerciar con la sangre de nuestros hermanos: Early Abolitionist Discourses in Spain’s Empire.” Bulletin of Latin American Research, 2017.

⁹⁶ David Murray, (Op. Cit.), 33.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

counterpart. Any description of Cuban sugar plantations, the life in the barracoons, and the high mortality rate would establish the opposite. Finally, the most cynical of all the myths was that Africans were better off in the Americas than in Africa.⁹⁸ A document redacted in 1814 by the Real Consulado, during the negotiations held during the Congress of Vienna, candidly explained why slaves were better off in Cuba:

We buy the work of the Africans and, in exchange, we provide them with all the natural consolations that our religion and civic education have to offer. We make them useful men, skillful artisans, fathers, and husbands. They will be free in the future, and in short generations, they will identify and integrate with the white race.⁹⁹

Between 1808 and 1815, the Cuban-based Atlantic slave trade took off. The principal cause was the abolition laws passed by England and the United States which put Cubans in the position of having to go to Africa themselves to acquire captives. It also helped that many recalcitrant American and British slave traders who did not want to give up their infamous business moved their operations to Cuba. This relocation took the form of foreign merchants, mostly Americans, using the Spanish flag to cover their expeditions. Aboard such expedition often traveled Spanish officers whom both sustained the fraud and also learned the slave trade. Thus, by 1815, several Spanish officers had been trained in this type of commerce, and the operations of Cubans had extended to Africa. Simultaneously, Cubans had to face multiple challenges posed by the British campaign to abolish the slave trade and the frequent capture of their ships.

⁹⁸ Francisco de Arango y Parreño, "Representación de la ciudad de la Habana a las Cortes, el 20 de julio de 1811," *Obras*, v. 2, 19-95. The signers of the document were Casimiro de la Madrid; Andrés de Zayas; Agustín de Ibarra; The director of the Sociedad Patriótica; Earl of Santa María de Loreto; Francisco de Arango; Earl of Casa Montalvo; Earl of O'Reilly; Earl of Cárdenas de Monte Hermoso; Earl of Casa Bayona; Ciriaco de Arango; José María Escobar; José María de Xenos; Luis Ignacio Caballero; Joaquín de Herrera; Luis Hidalgo Gato; Francisco de Isla. Dr. Tomás Romay; Rafael González; Francisco Hernández; Juan José de Iguarán; Gonzalo de Herrera; José Melchor Valdés; José Nicolás Arrátez Peralta.

⁹⁹ "Manifestación del Consulado de la Habana sobre lo pactado en el Congreso de Viena respecto al tráfico de negros," August 16, 1814, BNC, Colección Cubana, Manuscritos, Fondo Bachiller y Morales, V.78, No. 45.

The Last Years of Legality of the Cuban Slave Trade, 1815-1820

In the Treaty of Paris in 1814, the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was recognized as a principle by most nations including Spain. It was ratified in Vienna in 1815. It was not clear when or how Spain would implement its commitment, but it was expected to happen soon. British statesmen such as Wellington and Castlereagh, supported by activists led by William Wilberforce, continued pushing Madrid to prohibit the trade in African people.¹⁰⁰ Francisco de Arango y Parreño, who was at the time member of the Council of Indias wrote, “the slave trade is about to fall.”¹⁰¹ The Cubans slave trading machine oiled its cogs and accelerated its speed as much as it could. Cuban merchants on the ground took steps to guarantee the future of their operations

Laws and institutions in Cuba were set up to minimize the effects of the abolition. In April 1816, the Royal Order from 1804 which had authorized Spanish slavers to introduce captives in the colonies for twelve years, was about to expire. Colonial authorities, directly invested in the continuation of the Cuba slave trade, sent several missives to Madrid requesting an extension for this commerce. Without an official answer, the Captain-General on the island decided to maintain the *status quo*. Two Royal Orders arrived from Madrid in June and September of 1816 approving the Cuban authorities’ decisions in the matter.¹⁰² Finally, on February 24, 1817, Ferdinand VII granted Cuban planters and merchants the right to continue the slave trade under the same terms as the Royal Order of 1804.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ For the intricacies of British diplomatic pressure on Spain to abolish the slave trade see: David Murray, “Odious Commerce,” 50-71

¹⁰¹ “Francisco de Arango y Parreño to the Real Consulado in Havana, November 26, 1815,” AGI, Indiferente General, 2827.

¹⁰² “Real Orden prorrogando provisionalmente el tráfico negrero,” June 6, 1816, ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, No. 1, 1815-1816, f. 515. “Real Orden ratificando la prórroga del comercio negrero,” September 2, 1816, ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédulas, no. 21, 1815-1816, 588.

¹⁰³ “Real Orden sobre que continúe sin novedad el tráfico negrero,” February 24, 1817, ANC, Libros de Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, no. 22, 1817-1818, 151.

However, all those directly invested in the slave trade knew that the expiration date for the slave trade was imminent. They started to get ready for the inevitable on different fronts. Slavers in Havana fitted out as many expeditions as they could which made the year of 1817 the peak of the Cuban slave trade. They prepared to continue in this commerce when it was no longer legal. The port of Matanzas, which had developed because of the sugar production in its hinterland,, was authorized in March 1817, to send slave ships directly to Africa without having to stop in Havana.¹⁰⁴ In September the government allowed foreign gunpowder destined for the African trade to enter Havana.¹⁰⁵

The Spanish concern for the health of the Cuban slave trade took a diplomatic turn right after the Congress of Vienna. As told, between 1808 and 1815, dozens of Spanish-flagged slave ships were captured by British cruisers and condemned at the Vice-Admiralty Court in Freetown. During the international negotiations to abolish the slave trade, the British guaranteed to pay compensation for Spanish ships “unfairly” forfeited. A Royal Order from March 1816 asked the Real Consulado for a list of all the seized Spanish ships with the number of slaves they had on board and the value of the lost.¹⁰⁶ After discussions, the *Diario del Gobierno de la Habana* printed a call for all those merchants whose properties were lost to present their papers to the government.¹⁰⁷ Spain, indeed, received £ 400,000 that never was restored to the Cuban merchants.

The most pressing concern, however, was how to increase the slave population. One option discussed was encouraging positive natural growth. The introduction of African enslaved

¹⁰⁴ “Real Orden sobre despachar barcos negreros desde el puerto de Matanzas,” March 8, 1817, ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédulas, no. 22, 1817-1818, 169.

¹⁰⁵ “Sobre introducción de pólvora extranjera para las expediciones negreras,” September 9, 1817, ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 110-4.

¹⁰⁶ ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 110-73.

¹⁰⁷ “Diario del Gobierno de la Habana,” Friday, July 19, 1816.

females had been a matter of discussion since the first royal order from 1789 which had required every incoming slave ship to have three-quarters of its complement of slaves to be female.

Planters considered it was more profitable to import men and balancing sexes disappeared from the law. Arango expressed the reasons in the following terms:

A pregnant and bearing woman slave is useless for many months, and during this long period of inaction, her food should be more abundant and of better quality. This deprivation of work, this increase in the cost of the mother comes out of the owner's pocket. From him also comes the long and the most sterile expenses for the newborn. To this, we should add risks to the lives of mothers and sons. Everything constitutes an outlay of so much consideration for the owner. The negro born at home costs more at the time he can work than one at the same age purchased in a public fair.¹⁰⁸

Cuban slavers openly rejected any legislation enforcing the importation of females. They considered it to be an interference in the slave free market. The lack of females in the Cuban slave trade reflected the preferences of the planters in Cuba, the type of captives purchased by foreign carriers, and supply conditions in most slave markets in Africa. The leading destination of Cuban bozales was sugar plantations. Planters asserted that females were not suited for this type of work. The prices of women were always lower than men. Take the case of the Swedish schooner *Active*, which brought in 136 Africans in October 1804, had to leave Havana with eighty females for which it could not find buyers.¹⁰⁹

By 1815, the circumstances were different. Planters faced an imminent ban on slave arrivals. Some groups discussed the need for importing more females and developing breeding camps for the slaves. Antonio del Valle Hernández considered being crucial to foment “the proportional introduction of males and females.”¹¹⁰ In January 1817, Madrid recommended to

¹⁰⁸ Arango y Parreño, *Obras*, v.2, 31.

¹⁰⁹ “Rafael Gómez Roubaud a C. Soler,” Havana, January 2, 1805, AGI, Santo Domingo, 1686.

¹¹⁰ AGI, *Indiferente General*, 1702, Havana, February 10, 1815, Antonio del Valle Hernández.

colonial authorities the acquisition of females and the promotion of marriages among the slaves.¹¹¹ The colonial government agreed that a third part of the slave ship cargo should be females. Such laws were never enforced.

In 1817, Spain was in crisis. Its overseas possessions were moving quickly towards independence; the annual deficit was staggering; the British were pressuring Ferdinand VII to take a definitive decision to abolish the slave trade. On September 23, Madrid signed a treaty abolishing the slave trade. Spanish slavers were banned from trading north of the equator which extended to the whole African coast after May 30, 1820. A five-month extension was granted for those vessels that could not make the deadline. Cruisers from the British Royal Navy could detain any Spanish vessel violating this agreement if it had slaves on board. Two Mixed Commission Courts would be established in British and Spanish territories, one in Freetown, and the other in Havana, to prosecute captured slave ships.¹¹² Africans on board these vessels would become apprentices until they, according to the treaty, could be incorporated into the society.

The international treaty was enshrined into domestic Spanish law by a Royal Order signed in Madrid on December 19, 1817. Those violating the prohibition would face confiscation of their properties and ten years imprisonment in the Philippine Islands. The narrative of the treaty reveals the self-deceptions of the colonial state and explains not only how Spain became a slave-trading nation but also the great benefits the traffic had for the Africans:

The inability of the Indians to engage in various useful but painful work, as a result of no knowledge of the comforts of life and the very short progress that the civil society had made between them, demanded more robust and active arms for the benefit of the mines and the cultivation of the lands. These decisions (*the licenses to bring slaves*) did not create slavery; it took advantage of the one that already existed by the barbarism of the Africans to save their prisoners from death and alleviate their sad condition. Far from being harmful

¹¹¹ “Real Orden sobre entrada de hembras ante el fin del comercio negrero,” January 11, 1817, BNC, Colección Manuscritos, Morales, v .78, 56-72.

¹¹² Manuel Lucena Salmoral, “Leyes para esclavos. El ordenamiento jurídico sobre la condición, tratamiento, defensa y represión de los esclavos en las colonias de la América Española,” 1213-1217.

to the African negroes transported to America, it gave them not only the incomparable benefits of being instructed on the knowledge of the true God and the only Religion, with which the Supreme Being wants to be worshiped by his creatures, but also all the advantages that civilization brings, without being subjected to a harder life than they had while being free in their own country. (...) Despite the good that resulted to the inhabitants of Africa from being transported to enlightened countries, it is no longer so urgent and exclusive since an enlightened nation (*England*) has taken upon itself the glorious enterprise of civilizing them on their soil.¹¹³

Cuban planters were convinced that the Spanish treaty abolishing the Atlantic slave trade was never an independent decision by the monarch, but the result of British pressures. England was organizing an international plot in alliance with Portugal, they said, to take down the prosperity of Cuba. Once again, nationalism and the agenda of the slave trade had come together. After 1817, resistance to this treaty “was seen as a patriotic duty.”¹¹⁴

A Royal Order passed by the king on January 14, 1818, instructed merchants to take advantage of the remaining time to obtain slaves, scarcely indicative of the abolitionist intentions of the government.¹¹⁵ The order confirmed that no change would be made in the duty exemptions enjoyed by the slavers. To guarantee the future reproduction of the captives, the government ordered that three parts of the human cargoes should be female. This last provision was also honored in the breach.

Cubans were desperate. They tried to convince the government to extend the period of the treaty in the interests of increasing the number of females. They also argued that those embarkations that embarked to the north of the equatorial line before the official publication of the treaty in Havana needed more time to return home.¹¹⁶ The King issued a Royal Order

¹¹³ “Real Cédula prohibiendo el tráfico de esclavos con África a los vasallos españoles y americanos, Madrid, December 19, 1817,” ANC, Reales Ordenes y Cédulas, 54-81.

¹¹⁴ Murray, David, “Odious Commerce,” 71.

¹¹⁵ “Real Orden sobre aprovechar el tiempo que resta del comercio negrero,” January 14, 1818, BNC. Colección Manuscritos, Morales, v. 78, no. 91

¹¹⁶ “Petición del consulado de la Habana para prorrogar la cesación del tráfico al norte del Ecuador a las naves en alta mar y sobre traer hembras africanas,” BNC, Manuscritos, Morales, v. 78, no. 90

rejecting these claims.¹¹⁷ Cubans argued they would be at a disadvantage compared to Portugal and Brazil for whom the slave trade remained open. Their argument reached a high level of cynicism,

under the sole aspect of healthy philanthropy, we would like the Africans themselves to have a voice and be able to say to the cabinets of Europe if, in case of continuing the slave trade, they would prefer to be slaves from Portugal or Spain? If they could expect better treatment from one nation than the other? If they want to be carried to Brazil better than to the Island of Cuba?¹¹⁸

The list of complaints from Cubans was too long, repetitive, and cynical to require further exposition. Nothing could alter the fact that after May 1820, it would become illegal for Spanish slave traders to continue their nefarious business. For those who wanted to keep bringing Africans to Cuba, the time had arrived to execute a plan to operate an illegal slave trade. Slave traders knew that, in the end, the colonial government would do almost nothing to enforce the new legislation seriously. In 1819, Henry Theo Kilbee, a man trusted by the British Ambassador to Spain, Henry Wellesley, arrived in Havana as the Mixed Commissioner judge and his Spanish counterpart, Alejandro Ramirez, was appointed by Royal Order on January 22, 1819.¹¹⁹ In Freetown, another Mixed Commission would adjudicate Spanish vessels that continued trading slaves north of the equator.

A Note on Periodizing Waves of Cuban Slave Traders, 1790-1820

I divide the evolving role of Cuban-based merchants in the slave trade between 1790 and 1820 into three main stages or waves. First, I take into consideration the degree of dependence

¹¹⁷ “Real Órden sobre solicitud de prorrogar el comercio negrero para entrada de hembras bozales,” BNC, Manuscritos, Morales, v. 78, no. 117.

¹¹⁸ “Representación del Consulado de la Habana sobre el tratado entre Portugal-Brasil e Inglaterra para la abolición del tráfico negrero comparado con el firmado por España, October 21, 1818.” BNC, Manuscritos, Morales, v. 78, no. 110

¹¹⁹ ANC, Libros de Reales Órdenes y Cédula, no. 23, 1819, 89.

that Cuban merchants had on foreigner for the provision of slaves. In other words, the role of Cuban-based merchants as consignee or owners of Intra-American slaving expeditions. Second, the amount of capital that Cuban merchants invested in the transatlantic slave trade. Third, the number of slaves imported to the island on Cuban-owned expeditions and its increase over time.

The first wave of Cuban slavers extends from 1790 until 1802, from the opening of the Cuban slave trade by the Spanish government to the beginning of the Anglo-Spanish peace after the Treaty of Amiens. During the 1790s, with the only exception of the house of Santa María & Cuesta, the most typical form of Cuban engagement in the slave trade was through individual investments and short lasting unofficial commercial associations rather than stable commercial companies. There was no need for large business ventures since, as shown across this chapter, the Cuban participation in the Atlantic slave trade was new, marginal, dependent, restricted, and experimental. Acting as the sale agents for foreign expeditions did not require a vast amount of capital. Except for a few examples, Cubans did not send expeditions to Africa until after 1808. The Cuban role in owning slaving expeditions was confined to small cargos from neighboring territories in the Caribbean. As explained, the few attempts to organize mercantile associations such as the “Compañía de Consignación Pasiva de Negros Bozales” or “The African Company” failed. There was no real need or satisfactory circumstances for these companies to exist.

The Treaty of Amiens (March 1802) was a dividing moment between the first and the second wave of Cuban slave traders. The figures of slave importation skyrocketed from 2,600 Africans in 1802 to 16,000 in 1803. This exponential growth was accompanied by the incorporation of more Cuban investors in the business and the expansion of slave trading associations on the island. New merchants’ names, both as owners, and as consignees, showed up in local newspapers and official documents. Although still in small numbers, Cuban

organized more expeditions to Africa. The most important commercial associations that emerged at this time was the house of Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers which survived the end of the legal slave trade in 1820 - importing 12,400 Africans. Other commercial companies founded after 1802 were Hernández & Co., Iriarte & Lasa, Madan, Nephews & Sons, Poey & Co., and Zabaleta & Echevarría. Compared with future enterprises, these were still modest ventures.

The third wave of Cuban slavers emerged after 1815. It was evident for merchants at the time that the slave trade had become a fundamental piece for the expanding plantation economy in the island and that it was about to be forbidden. Growing labor demand increased the prices of human cargoes. However, organizing large and frequent slaving voyages required a vast amount of capital. Financial collaboration among merchants became an economic necessity. The number of slave trading companies that emerged after 1815 was unprecedented in Cuban history. The new firms in this era included Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co, Disdier & Morphy, Inglada & Co., Miró Pié & Cia., Oliver & Co, Pie & Co, Zangroniz Brothers & Co., Campin, Dominguez & Co, Grey, Fernandez & Brothers, and some others. Most of these companies continued trading after 1820, during the years of illegality. The creation of commercial firms was a distinctive feature of the years when the Cuban-owned Atlantic slave trade consolidated.

Between 1790 and 1820, Cuba experienced major economic transformations enabled by an exponential increase in the importation of African forced labor. A colony that had relied on foreigners for more than two centuries to acquire captives had become, by the 1820s, the most critical slave trading base in the North-Atlantic. In merely thirty years, Cuban merchants, planters, and colonial authorities, working together, set up the infrastructure of the Cuban trade. Slave ships were purchased; captains and pilots were trained; commercial firms were constituted; insurance companies began operations; Spanish ships now often traveled to Africa from Havana;

Merchants from Cuba financed slave trade outposts in Africa. For all this to happen, Cubans drew on the experience, networks, and resources that other slave-trading nations had developed for more than a century. In the years between 1790 and 1808 Cubans relied on foreign traders. These were years of learning. Cuban-based merchants functioned as consignee of foreign voyages, sent smaller vessels to neighboring territories in the Caribbean, and a few pioneering expeditions to Africa.

These continuous interactions- allowed people in the island not only to learn the mechanism of the business itself but also to established trading networks that would define the first years of operations of the Cuban-based Atlantic slave trade. After 1808, when England and the U.S. abandoned this traffic, Cubans engaged directly and massively with Africa. Initially, slavers from other nations used Cubans to continue their business but, over time, people from the island took control of that commerce. Despite the pressures to abolish the slave trade led by England, Cuban commerce in Africa increased. It would continue after the abolition in 1820. The next chapter explains how the slave trade operated during the last years of the legality of this commerce (1815-1820) by using the case of a hypothetical and successful slave voyage reconstructed from a variety of archival sources.

CHAPTER 3

From Departure to Arrival: Cuban-based Transatlantic Slaving Expeditions, 1810-1820

The transatlantic slave trade organized from Cuba was more than a sum of individual merchants or expeditions bound to Africa. It was a well-functioning machine formed by many interconnected social, economic, and political cogs. This chapter sets out to describe such machine through an archetypical slaving expedition. From fragmented evidence of dozens of slaving ventures, I reconstruct what would have been the typical elements of a Cuban-owned slaving expedition from the moment a commercial company or group of merchants invested capital in the voyage until the ship returned to Havana with Africans on board. I also review the sometimes unexpected possible outcomes.

Until 1820, transporting enslaved Africans to Cuba was lawful. For that same reason, most slaving expeditions produced a variety of historical records now accessible in public archives. Cuban merchants frequently went to notaries to register their investments, and to courts to settle disputes arising from their businesses. The colonial government issued passports for each voyage, captains and crew signed legal contracts. Expedition owners wrote down lists of merchandise intended for the African trade. Insurance companies had no qualms about revealing the nature of the business they protected. In records, ship captains listed their cargo for what it was, slaves. After 1820 they used euphemisms such as “packages” or “bultos.” Newspapers announced departures and arrivals of slave ships. Logbooks were transparent about the voyage’s intentions and routes. Owners delivered instructions to be followed by captains and supercargoes. Custom authorities recorded slave ships docking in Cuba and inspected the health of Africans before the sale. Traders from Africa, Europe, and the Americas exchanged correspondence with their Cuban counterparts, documentation that could become evidence in a

court of law particularly after 1808 when the British Navy captured many slave ships which the Vice-Admiralty Courts in Freetown and the British West Indies later condemned.

Such records constitute just scattered pieces, fragmentary evidence of large commercial enterprises. When all the bits are put together, the resulting picture reveals the intimacies, complexities, and operational behind these slaving expeditions. Each documentary piece left behind by a slaving expedition, when assembled in the form of an archetypical case, allows us to understand better the small but many essential steps that made possible for the Cuban slave trade to function.

Organizing the Slaving Voyage

Early in the morning on December 30, 1815, four men, Clemente Ichazo de Carricaburu, Juan Echeberte de Carricaburu, Joaquín de Arrieta, and Antonio Marcial Martínez arrived at the notary of the Real Consulado in Havana to establish a commercial slaving company. They named it the *House of Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co.* and it was expected to run for three years starting on January 1, 1816 (Figure 2).¹²⁰

The head of the business, Clemente Ichazo, started his career as a human trafficker at the turn of the nineteenth century. Like many of his fellow slave merchants, Ichazo took off by selling slaves carried to Havana by foreign traders. He acted as consignee of Danish and American ships that embarked in Saint Thomas, Saint Croix, and Saint Barthélemy.¹²¹ After 1808, drawing on the commercial networks developed over the years, he set up his own Atlantic

¹²⁰“D. Juan Carricaburu, apoderado de D. Clemente Ichazo de Carricaburu, sobre que los socios de la casa extinguida, conocida con el título de Carricaburu, Arrieta y Compañía rindan cuentas.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 89-2.

¹²¹ Incomplete archival records show that Ichazo sold at least 1,800 captives in Cuba before 1808. The first known case involving Ichazo as the sale agents of foreign expeditions was the U.S. sloop *Rachel* which, in 1800, disembarked sixty-four slaves in Havana carried off from Danish Saint Thomas. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 72-2794. ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, 2519. *Papel Periodico de la Habana*, August, 17, 1810.

transatlantic slave trading business.¹²² The *Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co.* was a typical case of transatlantic slave trading commercial companies at this time. During earlier decades, slave trading operations were conducted mostly by individual merchants or short-lived partnerships as shown in the previous chapter.

Large commercial companies such as *Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co.* were the most visible face of the Cuban slave trade. They had high levels of productivity, were resourceful, and dispatched large and frequent expeditions to Africa. Notaries registered their names; newspapers and merchant guides in Havana advertised them; official documents often mentioned them. However, there were other short-term, more unstable, and less productive slave trading associations that should not be overlooked. Individual traders often created temporary partnerships for single expeditions. Such companies tended to target African regions such as Upper Guinea or Senegambia that were closer to Cuba and where slave markets were sparse, and investments and vessels were smaller. In many cases, these short-lasting trading companies did not even own a ship but chartered vessels from third parties. That was the case of the brothers Lázaro and Cristóbal Puig who did not have enough capital for an African venture. They partnered with Tomás Sanz and José Ferrer, minor names in the rank of Cuban merchants, who owned the brig *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* (aka) *Fama*. The shareholders agreed to distribute the expenses of

¹²² The capital stock of the company was set at 22,000 pesos. Ichazo was the main shareholder contributing 13,000 pesos followed by Arrieta (5,000), Echeberte (2,000), and Martínez (2,000). Echeberte, Ichazo's cousin, would oversee the state of the business abroad, including acquiring trade goods, while Arrieta would direct the business within Spain. The associates agreed not to sign deals such as lending or borrowing money on behalf of the company without consulting the others. Each year the head of the Company, Ichazo, could withdraw up to 4,000 pesos for personal use and the other associates could extract no more than 2,000 pesos. It was forbidden for the shareholders to take part "in any kind of businesses that might be harmful to the society, especially those that are or appear to be presumably clandestine." They leased an office in Havana to conduct their operations. The company, however, did not last the stipulated three years. In 1818, after internal conflicts among the shareholders and few unsuccessful voyages, the company dissolved. D. Juan Carricaburu, apoderado de D. Clemente Ichazo de Carricaburu, sobre que los socios de la casa extinguida, conocida con el título de Carricaburu, Arrieta y Compañía rindan cuentas." ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 89-2.

the voyages equally.¹²³ On March 3, 1815, the vessel *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, captained by José Leyrán, sailed to Africa and, later in July 1815, disembarked 103 slaves in Havana.¹²⁴ The shareholders distributed the profit and dissolved the partnership.

Nombre	Fecha	De	Por	Nombre	Fecha	De	Por
Juan Hernandez	32.2.18	29100.64	312	Juan Hernandez	6.10.18	605.24	354.0
Juan Pantoja	9.4		91	Juan Pantoja	100.54	100.54	
Juan Antonio Bando	31.11.18	3114.4		Juan Antonio Bando	15	15	
Juan Montoliu y Juan Solis	120.1	180		Juan Montoliu y Juan Solis	22.0	22.0	
Juan Antonio Bando	20.1	850.4		Juan Antonio Bando	1014.5	1014.5	
Martin Lopez	120		100	Martin Lopez	21921.74	2591.74	120.0
Matthias & von Wismar	22.2	95.3		Matthias & von Wismar	101.46	101.46	
Juan Santiago Bando	20.4		29.4	Juan Santiago Bando	472	472	
Benito Juan Bando	207	207		Benito Juan Bando	21.0	21.0	1.3
Bernardo Lopez	70		70	Bernardo Lopez	570	570	
Walter Garcia	14.1.18	632.7	7.0.3	Walter Garcia	11792.54	11792.54	
Carlos Hernandez de Sotomayor	22.4		22.4	Carlos Hernandez de Sotomayor	155.5	155.5	
Juan & Pantoja	11.0.0	11.0.0		Juan & Pantoja	13700.7	13700.7	
Juan Antonio	1089.54		1089.54	Juan Antonio			
Juan Sordani de Bustamante	22.0		22.0	Juan Sordani de Bustamante			
Pablo Ruiz y Comas	822		822	Pablo Ruiz y Comas			
Juan Antonio	100		100	Juan Antonio			
Martin Antonio	177.7		177.7	Martin Antonio			
Juan Solis Sordani	69	69		Juan Solis Sordani			
Walter P. de Espinosa	22		22	Walter P. de Espinosa			
Juan Antonio	183	183		Juan Antonio			
Francisco Carr	187.4	187.4		Francisco Carr			
Juan Antonio	37.4		37.4	Juan Antonio			
Juan Antonio Bando	141.6		464.6	Juan Antonio Bando			
Martin Antonio y Bando	60	60		Martin Antonio y Bando			
Manuel Nolasco	270		370	Manuel Nolasco			
Francisco Carr	142.7		122.7	Francisco Carr			
Francisco Carr	20.6	20.6		Francisco Carr			
Francisco Carr	501.24			Francisco Carr			
Francisco Carr	91.64	91.64		Francisco Carr			
Juan Antonio	182.14	182.14		Juan Antonio			
Juan Antonio	182.14		41.1	Juan Antonio			
Juan Antonio	21.4	209.14	41.1	Juan Antonio			
Juan Antonio	21.4		21.4	Juan Antonio			

Figure 2: Account Statements from the Slaving Firm Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co. (1818). Documents like these were often presented in Court by the shareholders of dissolving companies. They have lists of all the individuals with whom the firm conducted business. It is an excellent source for understanding the networks supporting the Cuban business. “D. Juan Carricaburu, apoderado de D. Clemente Ichazo de Carricaburu, sobre que los socios de la casa extinguida, conocida con el título de Carricaburu, Arrieta y Compañía rindan cuentas.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 89-2.

¹²³ “D. José Ferrer, D. Tomás Sanz y D. Lázaro Puig con D. Francisco Puig y Massó sobre cierta comisión que este pretende por la venta de unos negros bozales,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 180-14.

¹²⁴ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, *Voyages* ID: 42024.

Frequently, co-investors were from other countries. One of the main challenges posited for historians studying the nineteenth-century Atlantic slave trade is to distinctly separate and catalog the financial role that merchants from different Atlantic regions played in Cuban businesses. It is challenging to differentiate investors from owners, financiers, or lenders since many of the legs from a single expedition were set in different Atlantic regions. Documents from Cuban archives are filled with names of investors from Atlantic ports such as New York City, Baltimore, Rio de Janeiro, London, Nantes, Rio Pongo, Cape Lopez, Loango, or Whydah.¹²⁵ In hundreds of legal cases that ended up in Cuban courts such as bankruptcy proceedings, fraud, mismanagement or just unsuccessful expeditions, foreign financial backers were often mentioned. The collection “Tribunal de Comercio” in the Cuban National Archive has thousands of papers which could allow for a thorough investigation of this topic. Exploring each of these transatlantic connections goes beyond the capabilities of this dissertation.

With financing in place either in the form of a commercial company or a short-term co-investment, the next step was to buy or charter a ship. A group of deciding factors such as destination, price, size, rig, age, place of construction, the demand in the market, and international circumstances determined the choice of vessel. Rigs varied widely, but Cuban slavers preferred schooners.¹²⁶ Of a sample of 487 vessels arriving on the island between 1815 and 1820, 257 were schooners/goletas, 141 brigs/brigantine/bergantines, and 33 frigates/fragatas.¹²⁷ Schooners were ideal for mercantile operations requiring speed and maneuverability. A typical schooner had only two masts, the foremast being shorter than the

¹²⁵ As John Harris shows, this practice of Cuban slave traders drawing on foreign capital, in this case American, lasted until the end of the Cuban slave trade in the 1860s. John A. E. Harris, "Circuits of Wealth, Circuits of Sorrow: Financing the Illegal Transatlantic Slave Trade in the Age of Suppression, 1850–66." 409–29.

¹²⁶ Herbert S. Klein “The Cuban Slave Trade in a Period of 1790-1843,” 76.

¹²⁷ *Voyages* <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/oOEHV6jm> (Consulted, November 23, 2018).

mainmast, with gaff-rigged sails of trapezoid shape. Usually built in New England, speed and capacity made them the most reliable option for avoiding British capture. Brigantines had two square-rigged masts. They offered less capacity than a schooner but were more agile. It was more common to see them off the Upper Guinea coast. Frigates, the third choice of Cuban slave traders, were initially conceived as a combat ship. They were used extensively in the wars of independence of the thirteen colonies and during the Napoleonic Wars. Other smaller vessels such as sloops and “guairos” were employed mostly in the coastal trade and the intra-Caribbean traffic.

The intended destination of the voyage and the number of slaves expected to be transported were also decisive factors for choosing a vessel. Slavers could predict how many slaves they would carry based on the intended African port of embarkation. Vessels heading towards Senegambia or Upper Guinea had smaller tonnage than those traveling to West Central or Southeast Africa. In Senegambia and Upper Guinea, the dangers of British capture were higher, and the slave markets were smaller and scattered than in southern regions. A voyage to West Central Africa was longer, around three months to reach the coast, but more slaves were available. Southeast Africa was even further away. Only large companies could venture into these regions. These points are made clear by the African regional breakdown of tonnage and slaves carried between 1815 and 1820. A slave ship from Havana going to Senegambia had an average of 99 tonnages and carried, according to *Voyages*, around 175 slaves, although the median was lower, while ships sailing to Southeast Africa averaged 223 tons and carried double this number (See Table 1).¹²⁸

¹²⁸ For average standardize tonnage see: *Voyages* <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/NAdc8P8j> (Consulted, January 15, 2018) For average number of embarked slaves see: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/ejkPaIEj>. (Accessed, January 12, 2019). Take the comparison between the frigate *Ciudad de Zaragoza* and the schooner *Paloma*. In July 1809, Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal purchased at 17,000 pesos the *Ciudad de Zaragoza*, an

	Senegambia	Sierra Leone/Upper Guinea	Windward Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West Central Africa	Southeast Africa
Average Standardize Tonnage	99	97	101	72	193	223	265
Average Number of Slaves Embarked	175	241.3	215.8	297.7	286.6	286.1	348.2

Table 1: Breakdown of slave ships’ tonnages and slaves aboard between 1815 and 1820. Table created from data taken from Voyages. <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=fdk4P10g> (Consulted, March 2, 2019). Note that these results are estimates from only 19 voyages from Africa to Cuba for which there are data available

Acquiring any vessel required access to ship markets. Havana’s shipyard, once one of the most important in the Americas, had been in complete decay since the first half of the eighteenth century. By the turn of the nineteenth century, New England had become the primary source for Cubans to purchase ships.¹²⁹ As the annual registers from the notary of the marina in Havana indicate, after 1808 there was an upsurge of merchants “naturalizing” or registering former American owned vessels as Spanish properties.

Cuban slave merchants sent their agents to the United States to buy the ships, or the vessels were purchased directly in Havana. In the first case, take the case of Havana’s trader John Govel,

1800’s Massachusetts-built vessel of 200 tons. The ship sailed to Loango in September 1809 captained by Bernardo Rapallo and returned to Havana with 270 slaves on June 1810. (ANC, Protocolos de Marina, Book 26, v. 2, 1809, f. 1530. *Voyages* ID: 14519). The schooner *Paloma*, on the other hand, traveled to a smaller African market, the region of Gallinas in today southern Sierra Leone. The owners Francisco Hernandez and Santa Maria de Loreto paid 4,000 pesos for the ship, and it was half the size than the *Ciudad de Zaragoza*. The British Royal Navy captured it intending to buy between ninety and one hundred captives (ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497, Protocolos de Marina, Book 28, 1811, 219, *Voyages* ID: 7653).

¹²⁹ During the last years of the eighteenth century, the United States experienced unprecedented growth in its shipping industry and mercantile operations in general. The expansion of the United States shipping industry resulted from cheap lumber such as the White Oak, improvements in technology, and the deregulation of legal constraints for the manufacturing of vessels. The rapid growth of the whaling industry also helped. And after the U.S. abolition of the slave trade in 1808, part of the large slave fleet that had provided South Carolina with slaves since 1804 was transferred to Cuba. Leonardo Marques, “The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867,” 109.

an American naturalized as Spaniard, who hired William Von Harten to buy in Baltimore a ship for a slaving expedition. In November 1816, Von Harten bought the schooner *Breeze* of 114 tons for 6,000 pesos and renamed it as the *Segunda Tentativa*. When bought in the U.S., only Spanish consuls could provide passports and a registration. Baltimore's consul, Pablo Chacón, issued the *Segunda Tentativa* with a Spanish passport at the end of 1816 to travel to Fernandina Island or Saint Augustine, both in the Spanish possession of Florida and from there to Africa. The ship left Saint Augustine for Africa in early 1817 captained by Sebastian Aguirre with "a foreign crew since there were no national sailors."¹³⁰ Spanish consuls violated U.S. laws by granting papers to Spanish expeditions bounded for the African coast. The Spanish government in Madrid and the colonial authorities in Havana were aware of the fraud.

Another place for purchasing a ship was right in Havana. Local newspapers often announced the sale of mostly American vessels. Historians could find a trove of information in Cuban newspapers on the auctions of foreign embarkations. These announcements were on the last page of the papers on a section called *remates* (Figure 3).

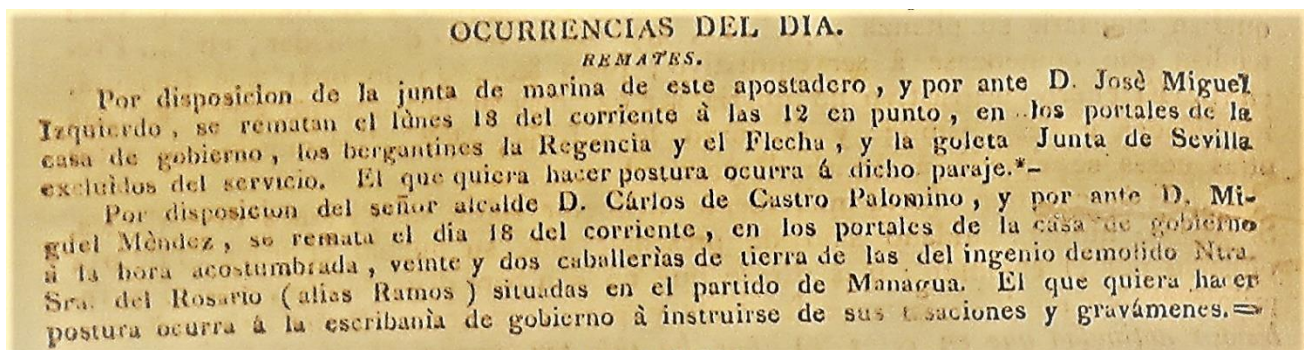


Figure 3: Newspaper Announcement, Ship Sale, 1814.

By disposition of the Marine board of this apostadero (naval station) and in front of Mr. José Miguel Izquierdo, there will be auctioned on Monday 18th of this month at 12 o'clock in the

¹³⁰ National Archives at Atlanta (NAA), Slaves of the *Tentativa/Elton* for U.S. vs *Tentativa*, 1816, Box 22-23. The vessel arrived in Havana in mid-1817 with 186 slaves on board and in a second voyage carrying 86 captives. For first Voyage see: *Voyages* ID: 39014. For second Voyage: *Diario del Gobierno de la Habana*, April 8, 1817.

doorways of Government House the brigs Regencia and the Flecha, and the schooner Junta de Sevilla excluded of service (tax exempted). Whoever wants to make a bid must go to that place. Diario del Gobierno de la Habana, Domingo, July 17, 1814.

Purchasing a vessel, either in Havana or foreign markets, required the advice of knowledgeable individuals. Investors knew a great deal about the financial, commercial, or trading aspects of the slave trade, but most knew nothing of seamanship. They had to hire consultants on this subject. Those experts were usually the same people who would command the ship such as captains or supercargoes. Havana had a pool of such experts in the matter. The town of Regla, located at a short distance from the center of the city and just across the harbor, became an important center of maritime expertise (Figure 4). Since the late seventeenth century, Regla had been a settlement for fishers and sailors of both African and European descent. The name of the town comes from Our Lady of Regla, a depiction of the Virgin Mary which is identified in Cuba as Yemayá, the Yoruba goddess of the seas and protector of sailors. As commercial operations of Havana expanded in the second half of the eighteenth century, the people of Regla began to sign up for both naval and mercantile expeditions. The once impoverished town of Regla became a repository for officers, captains, supercargoes, pilots, and sailors. The maritime culture was so ingrained that, as shown in the first chapter, the town was chosen for the construction of the first Cuban Nautical School. Any merchant interested in hiring personnel for a slaving expedition would go to Regla first. As an example, one of the town's inhabitants, captain Santiago Caso-Valdes, was hired in 1814 by Isidro Inglada for an African voyage. Caso had a long record as a slaving captain.¹³¹ His first task was to inspect the schooner

¹³¹ In December 1810, the Cuban merchant Antonio Frias hired Santiago Caso-Valdes for an Atlantic expedition on board the slaver *Carlos* (aka) *Bonny*, a ship of 205 tons that had costed 25,000 pesos. The vessel left from Havana on February of 1811 and returned in October from Bonny with 401 Africans. (ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506. *Voyages* ID: 14569). Years later, Caso-Valdes recalled how after his arrival, he quit the command of the *Carlos* and bought a brig that he called *Minerva*. He sailed to Cadiz with sugar and coffee in January of 1812. Upon his arrival in Spain, the vessel was taken up by the Spanish government at Cadiz, and was employed for twelve months in transporting arms, ammunition, and accoutrements to fight Napoleon. After the official discharge of the ship in

that Inglada was planning to buy. The *Fabiana*, after Caso's approval, was purchased in July 1814.

A few slave merchants had the expertise to know what vessel was more suitable for a particular slaving expedition. Those with experience started their careers as sailors, later as officers, and finally as investors. Juan Jorge Peoli was one of the successful slave captains who follow that path. He brought in at least 1,750 slaves on five different African voyages (Appendix B).¹³² In 1818, Peoli's name showed up not as a captain but as the owner of the schooner *Primera* which carried to Havana ninety-nine slaves.¹³³ The Peolis, Morans, and others started their career as sailors, thus, they did not need help to purchase slave ships. However, most merchants need assistance since they the capital but not the expertise.

December of 1812, Caso-Valdes took a cargo consisting of paper, oil, olives, and other produce to Havana on the *Minerva*. While Caso-Valdés was taking a break from his slaving activities, Antonio Frías sent the *Carlos* to Africa in November 1812. For this voyage, the captain was Antonio Andreu who arrived on June 1813 with 326 slaves, from the Bight of Biafra. (*Voyages* ID: 14601, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506). After his arrival on the *Carlos*, captain Antonio Andreu was hired by Juan Madrazo to command the schooner *Dolores* which arrived in Havana on November 2, 1814. It had on board 162 slaves. (*Voyages* ID: 14618, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506). Once in Havana, the slave merchant Antonio Frias hired Caso-Valdes to command an expedition to Africa on the *Carlos*, the same brig he had previously captained. (TBNA, HCA, 42/394/263). The *Carlos*, left Havana in September of 1813 bound, once again, for the Bight of Biafra. In Bonny, the vessel loaded 508 slaves and sailed back to Cuba on January 23, 1814. Two months later, close to the island, the ship was captured by the British navy and condemned by the Vice-Admiralty Court of Antigua. When the *Carlos* was captured by the British, it had on board 443 slaves. Sixty-five African had died during the middle passage. Another forty-one would die before the *Carlos* was finally adjudicated. The judges claimed that an American citizen owned the slaver. The accusations were not true. The sole owner of the expedition was Antonio Frias, a well-known merchant from Havana. (ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497. "African Institution, Thirteenth Report," 73. TBNA, HCA, 42/394/263. The failed experience with the *Carlos*, however, did not stop captain Caso Valdés from continuing to trade slaves. After losing the vessel, Caso returned to Havana and negotiated with Isidro Inglada another voyage.

¹³² *Voyages* <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/0J9T2GgZ> (Accessed, December 15, 2018).

¹³³ *Diario del Gobierno de la Habana*, August 11, 1818. *Voyages* ID: 14854

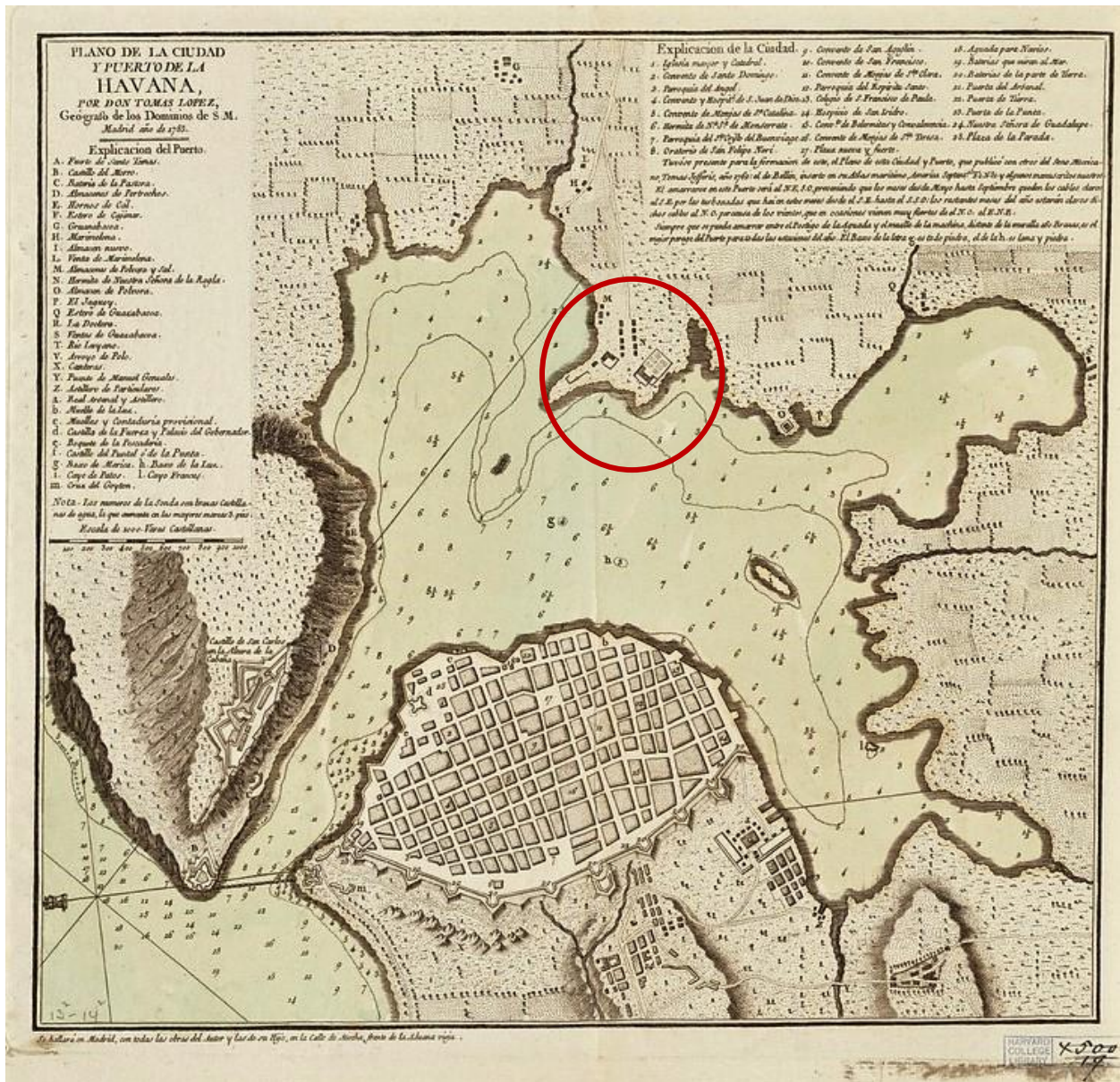


Figure 4: Map of Havana, 1785. See the town of Regla encircled. By Tomás López de Vega Machuca, 1785. Harvard Map Collection Online, <https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu/scanned-maps/catalog/44-990111484690203941> (Consulted, March 20, 2019)

After choosing the ship and setting prices, the legal transfer from one owner to another followed the same routine. The seller and the buyer signed a notary-endorsed document certifying the sale. Ships registers contain similar information. Details of previous owners and prices are declared. Thus, when merchant Gaspar Hernández sold the schooner *Fabiana* to Isidro

Inglada in 1814, Hernández disclosed that the ship had previously belonged to the British merchant John King who previously purchased it in 1813 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The property title also described the characteristics of the vessels, the price, and tax liabilities. “I sell it,” Hernández declared, “with all its masts, sails, anchors, cables, launches, boats, rigs, rudder, bowsprit, logbooks, war equipment, and any other tools it has on board.”¹³⁴ The price of the *Fabiana* was set in 9,000 pesos paid in cash by Inglada to Hernández. The former *Fabiana* was renamed as the *Restauradora*.¹³⁵

Naming a vessel was a private decision taken by owners. Some vessels were named after family members with prevailing female patronymics. Others were called after saints who might ensure the success of the expedition. As in the Brazilian trade at this time, preference for names from classical antiquity emerged. Political opportunism was expressed with names such as *Junta de Sevilla*, *Fernando VII*, or *Restauradora*, and nostalgia with names of hometowns - *Zaragoza*, *Guipúzcoa*, or *Barcelona*. Reflecting moral values at odds with our modern age, the most interesting of slave ship patronymics were *Esperanza* (*Hope*), *Libertad* (*Freedom*), or *Amable Socorro* (*Kind Help*). The chosen name would be painted (and repainted after changing ownership) on the side of the hull.

Few ships at any time were built as dedicated slavers. Regular merchant vessels did need some modification, but Inglada did not have to do that since his recently purchased *Fabiana*, now *Restauradora*, had carried slaves. Other buyers, however, had to take their ships to Regla where skilled carpenters and blacksmiths made modifications. In some cases, these modifications

¹³⁴ ANC, Protocolos de Marina. Libro 34, Year 1814 No 34, 908-910.

¹³⁵ Ibid. The number of vessels registered in the Notary of Marina in Havana increased exponentially every year after 1815. By the 1820s, Cuban-based merchants had a remarkable fleet of slave ships. The Cuban National Archive currently has a yearly collection of books from the 1760s until the late nineteenth century produced by the Notary of Marina. This collection has the record of every ship purchased and registered in Havana. They contain routinely other data such as muster rolls, salary, age, and nationality of every sailor. These books also have insurance certificates, passports, and instructions for the officers on the ship.

could be completed en route to Africa in Cape Verde, Sao Tome, or Canary Island, or some cases even in the United States prior to departure. Holds were modified to harvest people and made secure against revolts. They were also adapted to provide some sanitary standards. To increase storage capacity, carpenters built platforms on the lower deck. A large wooden grate was set on the main deck allowing the circulation of air. Below deck, wooden walls separated women from men. Women's compartments were close to crew quarters, allowing easy access to women for sexual exploitation. Keeping women separate from men may also have decreased the likelihood of slave rebellions. A passageway in between both quarters allowed sailors to patrol, feed, and let the slaves out when it was time for forced exercise and fresh air.¹³⁶

While the ship was readying for departure from Havana, the owners dealt with the required paperwork for the voyage. There was a routine procedure known as the “habilitación del buque” or registration which consisted of an application for a Royal Passport. The Notary of Marina oversaw this administrative step. The legal procedure started with a simple request from the owner:

Mr. Isidro Inglada, from the commerce of this city (July 12, 1814);
After purchasing from Mr. Gaspar Hernández the Spanish schooner *Fabiana*, I am organizing an expedition to the African coast for the trade in negroes “bozales.” I assigned the command of the ship to the pilot Mr. Santiago Caso Valdés, who, to undertake this voyage, requires a Royal passport with which the said ship will sail under the name of *Restauradora*.¹³⁷

The collection “Escribanía de Marinas” at the Cuban National Archive, holds hundreds of these Royal Passports. Samples of them are also found in the British National Archives in London.¹³⁸ Passports were a single page printed documents with empty spaces to be filled by

¹³⁶ For a recent study of slave ships design see: Nicholas Redburn, and David Eltis, “Visualizing the Middle Passage: The Brooks and the Reality of Ship Crowding in the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 1-32.

¹³⁷ ANC, Protocolos de Marina, book 34, 1814, no 34, 910.

¹³⁸ TBNA, HCA 42

hand. They state the name of the captain, the rig and name of the vessel, tonnage, port of departure, merchandise carried on board, destination, returning port, name of the owner, and, finally, the date when the document was issued (Figure 5).

Contracts with the crew comprised a further essential legal document. These agreements elucidated the responsibilities of both parties, owners, and employees, and specified wages and earnings from the cargo by the rank and experience of the crew members, the length of the voyage, the number of African slaves to be transported, and, of course, the current demand for sailors. Captains usually received a monthly salary and percentage of the sale, and they could purchase some number of slaves on each voyage. Thus, in July 1816, Cuban merchant Domingo Sánchez signed a contract with Carlos Blanco to serve as the captain of the schooner *Emilia* (also known as *La Suficiente*). Blanco was to receive five percent of the sales of the captives and a monthly wage of 100 pesos, an average payment for that time.¹³⁹ The largest expeditions to Africa had on board up to three pilots. The first pilot earned around eighty pesos, the second seventy, and the third around sixty pesos a month, though in most cases there was only one pilot. Captain and owner together hired pilots, boatswain, and other officers.

¹³⁹ “D. Manuel González con D. Domingo Sánchez y D. Miguel Zevallos sobre abono de soldadas,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 199-28.

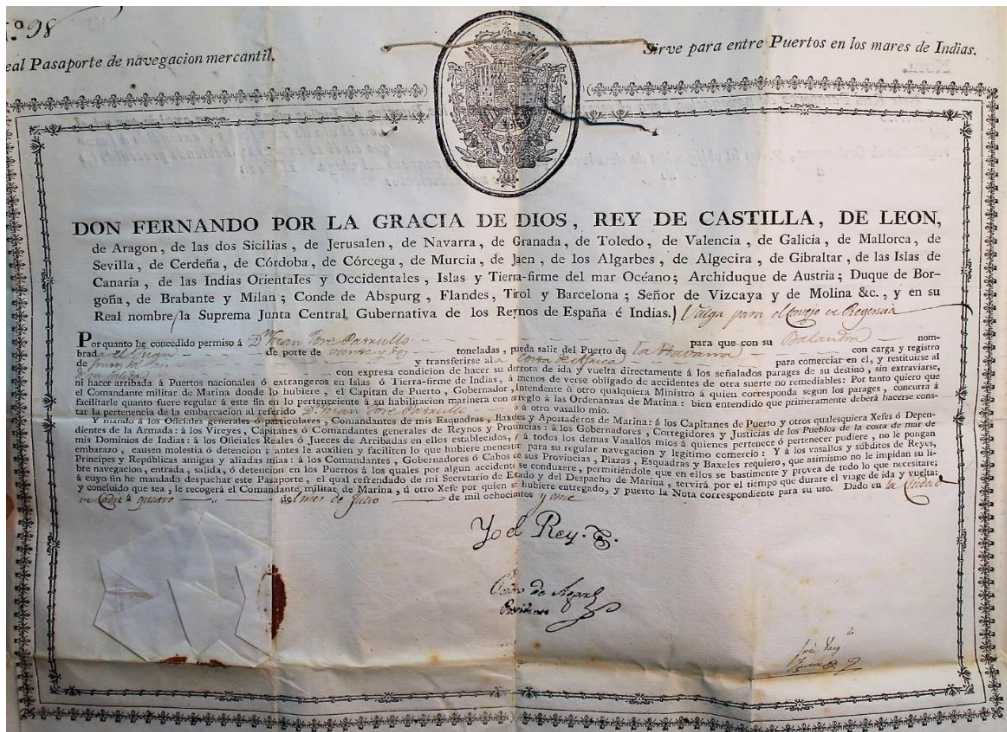


Figure 5: Royal Passport for the sloop Juan, Juan Jose Patrullo captain, to travel to Africa from Havana, TBNA, HCA, 42/445/680. Voyages ID: 7578

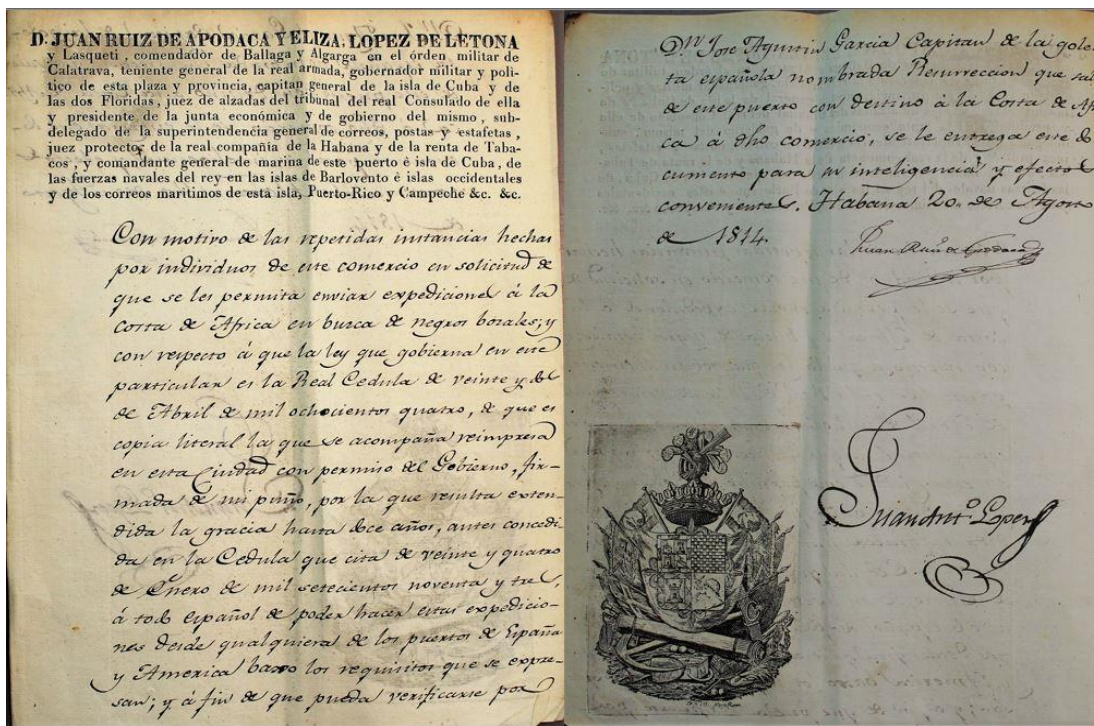


Figure 6: Royal authorization to Mr. José Agustín García to sail to Africa on board the schooner Resurrección (1814), TBNA, HCA, 42/491

Two other key personnel were the supercargoes and boatswains. Supercargoes were charged with negotiations on the African coast and were hired by owners alone since they were critical to the success of expeditions. More than the captain of the ship, the supercargo had the contacts with the African factories. Boatswains were hired by the captain and oversaw the logistics on the ship and managed the crew and the slaves. In February 1818, the Count of Santa Maria Loreto together with Francisco Hernández organized an expedition to the Upper Guinea region. The schooner *Paloma* had on board Juan Erbello as its boatswain. The agreement signed between the owners and Erbello specified a monthly salary of 40 pesos and the right to one slave free of freight and subsistence. Erbello was instructed to brand his captive with a hot iron to guard against substitution should the branded slaves die en route.¹⁴⁰ When human cargoes belonged to different investors who received a certain number of slaves in return, Africans were branded with a hot iron before embarking the ship. The rationale behind it was to label who owned the slave or slaves in case some died during the middle passage. When the expedition had just one owner, the captives were spared from that painful practice.

Sailors usually came from the lower social strata and were of multinational and multiracial origins. Danes, Germans, Americans, and Portuguese formed the first wave of sailors on Havana slave ships. However, a larger share of sailors native from or settled in Cuba appears after 1815, as well as both free blacks and slaves. An example of the Hispanic character of the crew was the schooner *Nueva Ana*. The vessel left for Africa on March 23, 1817, never to return.¹⁴¹ Twenty-five men formed the crew, and, as shown in Table 2, they were from a variety of Spanish provinces.

¹⁴⁰ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497. Protocolos de Marina, Book 28, 1811, 219, *Voyages* ID: 7653

¹⁴¹ ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, *Voyages* ID: 46918.

Position	Name	Origin	Position	Name	Origin
Captain and First Pilot	Manuel Roig	Cataluña	Sailors	Antonio Font	Cataluña
Second Pilot	Eliás Anglada	Cataluña		Fernando Martínez	Granada
Master	Juan Santa Añorga	Vizcaya		Francisco Sánchez	Vizcaya
Boatswain	Juan Reynes	Mallorca		José Domingo	Andalucía
Storekeeper	Mariano Lagunas	Andalucía	Cabin Boys	Julián Comas	Cataluña
Cook	Pablo Castañe	Cataluña		Juan López	Mallorca
Sailors	Bartolomé Montané	Mallorca		José Ramón	Cataluña
	Angel Boyosa	Mallorca		Mateo Pérez	Vizcaya
	Francisco Veles	Vizcaya		Antonio Gutiérrez	Andalucía
	Francisco Ximénez	Andalucía		Miguel Viña	Asturias
	Manuel Africano	Maracaibo		Gregorio Sabana	Galicia
	Manuel Antonio	Galicia			
	José Gasa	Guayaquil			
	Fernando Sabana	Galicia			

Table 2: Crew members, schooner *Nueva Ana*, 1817. ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, *Voyages* ID 46918.

The following case exemplifies an average salary of each member of the crew during the years before the Spanish abolition. In 1817, *Messrs. Carricaburu, Arrieta & Co.* recruited captain Marcelino Morán for a slave voyage on the schooner *Segunda Josefa*. Marcelino was from a family of experienced captains and slave ship owners.¹⁴² He hired thirty-three crew, including a guardian or custodian at forty pesos a month, a carpenter for sixty, a storekeeper fifty, and the cook who received forty. Each sailor thirty-five pesos per month and the cabin boys

¹⁴² The slave trade, as we know, was often a family business. Brothers and fathers worked together organizing voyages or commanding ships to Africa. Blas, Marcelino, Miguel, and Francisco were brothers. Miguel captained at least five expeditions on the schooner *Amistad* between 1813 and 1818 (*Voyages* IDs: 42009, 14622, 14656, 14742, and 14844). Francisco Morán was the co-investor in one of Miguel's voyage (*Voyages* ID: 42009). Marcelino had traveled to Africa on one occasion on the brig *Alerta* and returned with 336 slaves. Blas Morán was a shareholder of the operation, and his name appears in Cuban records as the owner. *Voyages* ID: 14734, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

Role	Name	Wages (monthly) and Extras
Captain	Buenaventura Taxonera	\$80.00 plus five percent of the final profits of the expedition
First Pilot	Zenon Bernabeu	\$100.00 and two pesos for each “head of negro entering the barracoon.”
Second Pilot	Zenon Gelpi	\$80.00 and two pesos for each “head of negro entering the barracoon.”
Surgeon	José Mariano Cortes	\$50.00 and one peso for each “head of negro entering the barracoon.”
Boatswain	Antonio Pérez	\$60.00 and one peso for each ditto
Guardian	Domingo Canó	\$50.00
Carpenter	José Antonio Vila	\$60.00 and eight ounces extra at the end of the expedition.
Storekeeper	Vicente Iriarte	\$45.00
Cook	Francisco Pitaluga	\$48.00
Cabin Boys	Jose Taxonero and Jose Olasagasto, Jose Maria Albrisa, Jose Carbo, Pablo Calzada, Antonio Sivero, Carlos Villamitrar, Magin Sandras, Salvador Bozal, Pedro Valero, Juan Soler, Francisco Rivero, Miguel Vivas, Mateo Gomez, Juan Perez, Francisco Gadell, Jose Rey, Jose Garrigo, Pedro Serra, Francisco Garrigo, Clemente Gonzalez, Jose Vila, Martin Oliver, Lorenzo Rodes, Miguel Blaguer	\$25.00 each
Sailors	Domingo Lopez, Simon Silvestra, Francisco Garcia, Justo Ortiz, Ramon Frias, Juan Robet, Andres Martinez, Juan Alvarez, Jose de Castro, Agustin Armagel, Mateo Francisco, Aurelio Acosta, Diego Canto, Jose Padilla, Francisco Gonzalez, Juan Jerido, Juan de los Santos, Manuel Diaz, Feliz Guizan, Pedro Jorges, Geronimo Berenguer, Jose Gonzalez, Jose Hario, Telmo Ferrer, Juan Esteban, Jose Antonio Vita, Jose Peres, and Manuel Fernandez.	\$30.00 each
Page	Felipe Calvo	\$15.00

Table 3: Monthly wage of the members of the crew, frigate *Juno*. “Testimonio del expediente promovido por D. Miguel Bonilla del comercio de la Habana, dueño de la fragata española Juno su capitán D. Buenaventura Taxonera sobre las averías que experimentó con motivo del combate que tuvo con un corsario insurgente y su arribo por este motivo a la Bahía de todos los Santos donde la reparó,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 31-16.

thirty pesos each. The contract was certified at the Notaries of Marina in Cuba.¹⁴³ A further example comes from the frigate *Juno* bound to Zanzibar in 1818 as shown in Table 3.¹⁴⁴

Contracts between owners and the crew include revealing details on slaving voyages organized from Cuba. For example, in the contract of the *Segunda Josefa*, the captain was instructed to provide a cup of coffee to each sailor in the morning and the afternoon during the journey to Africa but a lower dosage while returning to Cuba in case of water shortage. Every group of eight men had the right to a half bottle of schnapps daily although this could be increased “in certain circumstances.” However, officers had to be careful to avoid drunkenness on board. Once in Africa, the instructions said, the sailors should empty and clean below deck to get ready to “store” slaves. In case there was not enough room, some of the captives could sleep on the deck, with the sick to be put “in a better place.” The fifth clause of the contract required the crew to “take care of the negroes with the greatest care without mistreating them or mixing with the females for the best order of the expedition.” Finally, it was forbidden for sailors to disembark on the African coast or any other place without the captain’s authorization.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ “Diego Díaz de la Rocha, piloto que fue del bergantín goleta Segunda Josefa contra la Casa de Carricaburu, Arrieta y Compañía sobre sueldos.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 182-3. The Cuban National Archive preserves muster rolls of slave ships leaving Havana. Other documents such as the contract between the captain and the crew are also available, as are the owners’ instructions to the captain.

¹⁴⁴ *Voyages* ID: 41368

¹⁴⁵ “Diego Díaz de la Rocha, piloto que fue del bergantín goleta Segunda Josefa contra la Casa de Carricaburu, Arrieta y Compañía sobre sueldos.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 182-3.

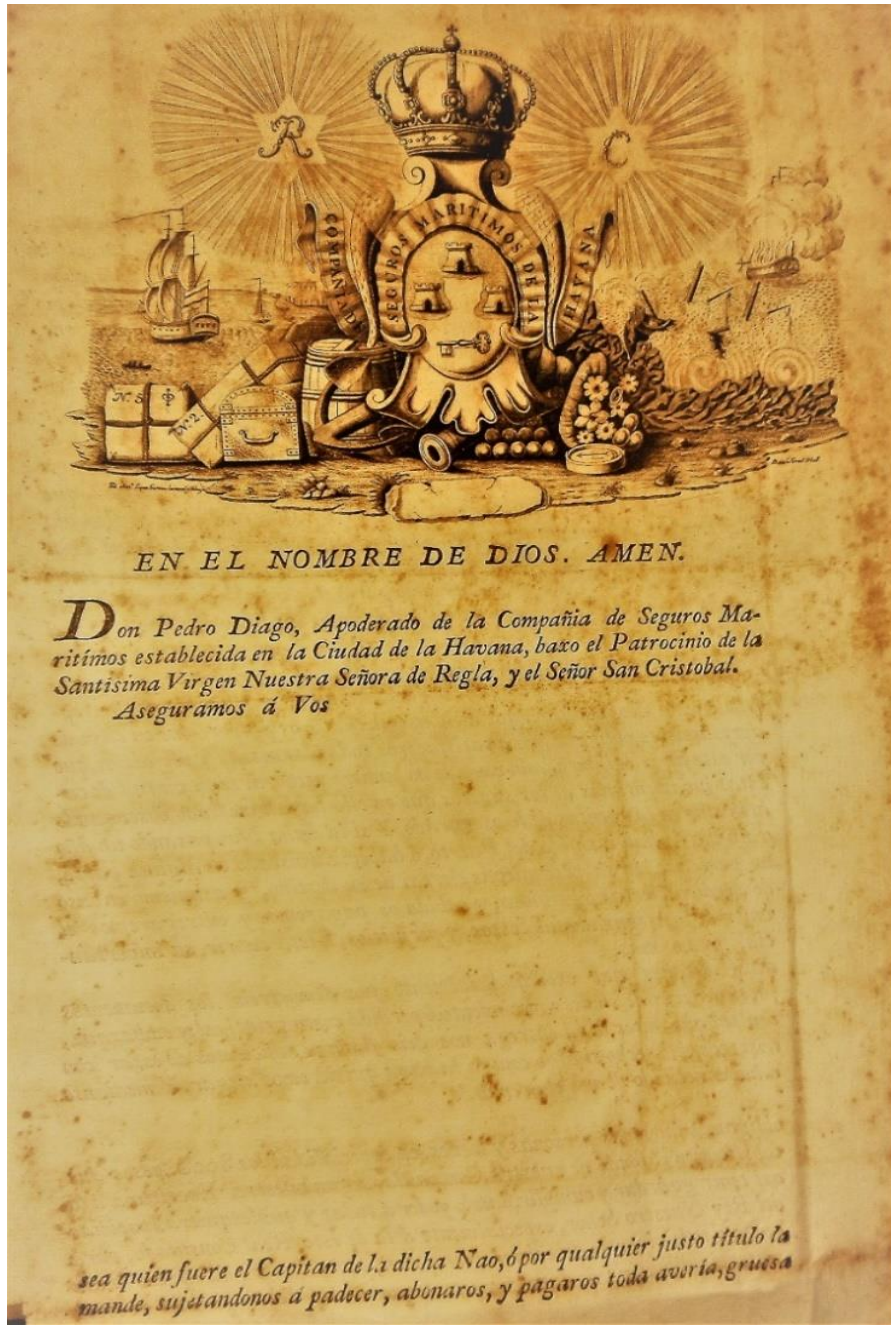


Figure 7: Form used by the Maritime Insurance Company of Havana. “Sobre la importancia de sostener en esta plaza la compañía de seguros.” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 72-2790.

Another paperwork formalized by the owners of the slaving expedition was to purchase maritime insurance. Many policies are still extant in a variety of Cuban archives (Figure 7).¹⁴⁶ Although the Maritime Insurance Company of Havana changed its name and shareholders over time, the standard insurance certificate that the company issued changed little. Policies insured against any fatalities resulting from natural calamities, fire, or detention by enemies. If disaster struck - shipwrecks, fire, capture, or damages from combat - owners had to present proofs in support of claims and establish that the owner or the captain was not at fault. The captain himself had to submit a "protesta," a sort of claim or statement detailing the events. Such claims had to be endorsed by eyewitnesses - usually the rest of the officers and crew. If the ship was captured and confiscated by the British, for instance, the captain had to show to the insurance company evidence of the conviction signed by British officials. If the insurance company rejected a claim, as happened often, disputes played out in Court. The *Tribunal de Comercio* at the Cuban National Archive contains records of these proceedings. These are valuable sources not only for studies on the slave trade but for all types of business. Moreover, after 1808, American citizens litigated their illegal slave-trading operations here rather than the US since trading slaves in Cuba was still legal. Thus, the *Tribunal de Comercio* papers could also be used to study the illegal U.S. slave trade.

While the owners finished the paperwork for the expedition, they also had to assemble merchandise to trade for slaves and provisions for the voyage. Finding trade goods in Cuba was challenging. Cubans traded all along the African coast, from Senegal to Southeast Africa, and the African demand for merchandise varied from one region to another. Standard items such as

¹⁴⁶ ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, Protocolos de Marina, Junta de Fomento. As shown in chapter one, until the late eighteenth-century Cubans relied on a Spanish maritime insurance company located at Coruña, Spain or on insurance companies in London or Bristol. The creation of the Maritime Insurance Company of Havana in 1795 removed the need to go overseas for this service.

spirits, textiles, tobacco, gunpowder, or weapons made up any cargo, but slave traders had to take into consideration such as types of alcoholic beverages, origins of the tobacco leaves, characteristics of the weapons, and design of the textiles. Highly centralized polities such as those in the Bight of Benin and West Central Africa had different demands from those in stateless regions in Upper Guinea and the Bight of Biafra.¹⁴⁷ Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzanal explained to the merchant guild in Havana in 1810 how important it was to choose what to bring to Africa carefully. Aspiring Cuban slave traders should know, according to Cuesta y Manzanal, that the African demand changed from region to region and that Havana merchants found it difficult to load a ship with merchandise for specific African regions.

There was, he said, a “shortage of supplies, and the few products available in Cuba suitable for consumption and the trade in negroes were too expensive.”¹⁴⁸ Such scarcity meant that some Cubans merchants pressed the colonial government to lower customs duties on imports as shown in previous chapters. They also asked the government to permit Cubans to obtain trade goods in foreign ports tax-free. It was clear that what Cuba produced was not enough for this particular commerce. Cuesta y Manzanal listed in his report the products carried to Africa by the vessels Junta Central. Most of them were imported from overseas (Table 4, Figure 8).¹⁴⁹ A few years later, the necessity of importing goods to Cuba to carry them to Africa had not substantially changed.

¹⁴⁷ David Eltis and Lawrence C. Jennings, “Trade between Western Africa and the Atlantic World in the Pre-Colonial Era.” *The American Historical Review* 93, no. 4 (1988): 936-959.

¹⁴⁸ “Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta y Manzanal y Hermanos referentes al Comercio de Negros,” November 23, 1809, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Products for the Trade		
407 pieces of blue fabric	24 crimson sunshades	198 dozen of knives
53 pieces of red handkerchief from India	88 cottoned-crimson sunshades	20 dozen razors
390 pieces of cotton blue-striped fabric	60 dozen smoking pipes	124 arroba of iron sheets
300 pieces of Zarazas (colorful thin cotton fabric)	47 pieces of loincloth	100 iron bars
300 pieces of tinted Guineas (a type of cloth often carried in slave ships)	One box of pieces of assorted pieces of glasses	2,774 gallons of sugarcane <i>aguardiente</i>
200 iron cooking pots	40 dozen of small mirrors	200 <i>frasqueras vacías de las Ginebra</i>
210 blankets	48 hundredweight of gunpowder	300 small empty barrels for sixteenth bottles
34 pieces of cleaning cloth	315 blades	Some trinkets
2,000 stoned for rifles	a barrel of incense and a box of medicine for the negroes	13 arrobas of ammunition
Eight boxes with bowls, dishes, and assorted pitchers		36 dozen wooden spoons
Products for the care of the slaves		
2 barrels of vinegar	100 hundredweight of crackers	Two-half pipes of vinegar
	1,329 arrobas of <i>menestra</i> mostly rice and chickpeas	

Table 4: Merchandise carried to Africa by the frigate *Junta Central* (1810). “Observaciones de la Compañía de Cuesta y Manzanal y Hermanos referentes al Comercio de Negros,” November 23, 1809, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

Remedio en la goleta Iris que salio de Charlestown en 3 de Julio de 1816

	Reos	Queros
12 Barriles de carne	730	420
6 Sacos de Cafe	78 5	354
10 Libras de Chocolate	35	324
3 Estuches de azucar quebrado	201	204
3 Garrafas de guineto	16 4	
4 Piezas de lona	100	200
1 Cirabuzon	4	
4 Cajas	4 6	
5 Lecheros o lecheras	6 2	
2 Patejos	32	
Libros, papel y plumas	15 4	
53 Gallinas	16 2	
Muecas	8 6	
1 Termómetro	6	
95 Barriles de tabaco con 98810 lib. a mano porcin	6922 7/8	22100
1 Caja con 20 pias zamoras de 28 y 1425 x a 20/100	32 4	670
4 Alodios hornos, harina a 47/8 p barrel	14	
1000 Pias de taller	27 4	
2 Hachas	3	
	2078 3	22150

Figure 8: Merchandise carried to Gallinas on the schooner *Iris* “Jacobco Faber vs Martin Zabala,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 187-6.

But not everything came from third countries. Cuba produced sugar-based alcoholic beverages such as rum and schnapps. Tobacco was cultivated on the island; the main problem was that the government had an absolute monopoly over the selling of this commodity. It took much lobbying to break the Royal monopoly over this staple. Gunpowder and silver could also be acquired in Cuba. However, as shown in Chapter 1, there was a long struggle with the colonial authorities before these items could be exported.

Vessels also required products for use during the voyage. The crew and the slaves needed water, food, medicines, alcohol, coffee, and not perishable food. Cooking implements such as boilers were needed. Havana had developed a maritime service economy in the late sixteenth century which expanded in step with the slave trade. Butchers, bakers, winemakers, dressmakers,

lumberjacks, and a variety of store owners gained from every slaving expedition leaving the city. Stevedores and lightermen profited from every ship anchored in Havana harbor.

Loading the vessel started well before departure. Sailors assembled firewood to be used for lighting, heating, and cooking. Freshwater was stored adequately in big metallic bowls and wooden barrels. Sugar, salt, oil, spices, crackers, bread, cured meats, sausages, wines, rice, butter, medicines, rum, and brandy would be part of the diet of those on board. Essential items for the slaves such as vinegar to avoid scurvy, trousers, loincloths, medicines were added to the cargo. Instruments of controlling such as shackles, collars, whips, and others were also necessary. Cuban slave ships were loaded with the various type of weapons both for sale and defense. After 1808, when the risks of capture increased, and because of the constant wars, slave ships were registered as privateers serving the Spanish monarchy.

Shortages of trade goods in Havana meant that slave ships often called at other ports before crossing the Atlantic. It was a triangle commerce of a sort. Ships left Havana with molasses and other sugar cane derivatives and sold the cargo in some American cities, such as Charleston, Wilmington, Baltimore, or Bristol. There, they acquired what was needed for Africa. There is plenty of evidence in Cuban archives of this type of trading circuit which lasted until the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰

Once loaded and before departing Havana, owners wrote down instructions for captains, pilots, and supercargoes. These documents provide insight into the networks supporting the Cuban slave trade and the internal organization of the voyage (Figure 9). They often named the consignees of the cargoes in other ports in the U.S. and Africa. They explain how the

¹⁵⁰ On January 23, 1813, Antonio Escoto, the owner of the Brig *Fénix*, signed a set of instructions delivered to captain José Cabezas. The ship, Escoto said, had to first stop in Charleston to sell a cargo of molasses and aguardiente to the consignee Mr. William Young. Cabezas was instructed to use the proceeds to buy cloth, tobacco, and gunpowder. TBNA, High Court of the Admiralty, HCA, 42/488/98.

merchandise was to be sold, at what prices, and under what conditions. They clarified if any credit sale was allowed or if any other form of payment besides cash was permitted. They also described how slaves were to be treated during the middle passage, and how the crew should behave on the high seas. Instructions delivered by Pedro Oliver & Co. in October 1815 to Captain Juan Bautista Añorga of the *Nueva Ana*, ordered the vessel to leave Havana in convoy with the brig *Dolores*, Captain José Carbonell to avoid attacks from privateers from the emerging Latin-American republics.¹⁵¹ The *Nueva Ana* was instructed to sail to the Malagueta Coast, a region between Cape Mesurado and Cape Palmas and there to purchase 200 slaves. If a British naval vessel approached, the ship was to abandon the mission and return to Havana. Once in Africa, the instructions specify,

Keep in mind, when trading the negroes, to inspect them thoroughly. That they [the traders] do not sell you any slave that is weak, blind, gammy, mute, broken, or other imperfection which the human body may have because of the great demerit that there is for those of that type here [Havana's slave market]. We also warn you that, if possible, do not buy any slave that is under ten or twelve years, both females and males, because the very little value they have here; keeping in mind that only a quarter of the total cargo must be females and they should be young, not older than twenty years.¹⁵²

On its return voyage, the crew was instructed to take good care of the slaves by keeping “perfect hygiene” and feeding them well. Every eight or twelve days, the document specifies, the captives should be shaved and cleaned. The rooms for the slaves below deck were to be disinfected every day to “remove the bad smell.” The food had to be distributed with “particular care.”¹⁵³ As owners knew, these were difficult years for the slave trade. Officers were to fight off

¹⁵¹ Records did not show when the *Nueva Ana* sailed to Africa, but we can infer it from the departure of the *Dolores* which left on May 30, 1815. For the schooner *Dolores*, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, *Voyages* ID: 14630.

¹⁵² “Revista Bimestre Cubana de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País,” v. 71, 1956, 181-184.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

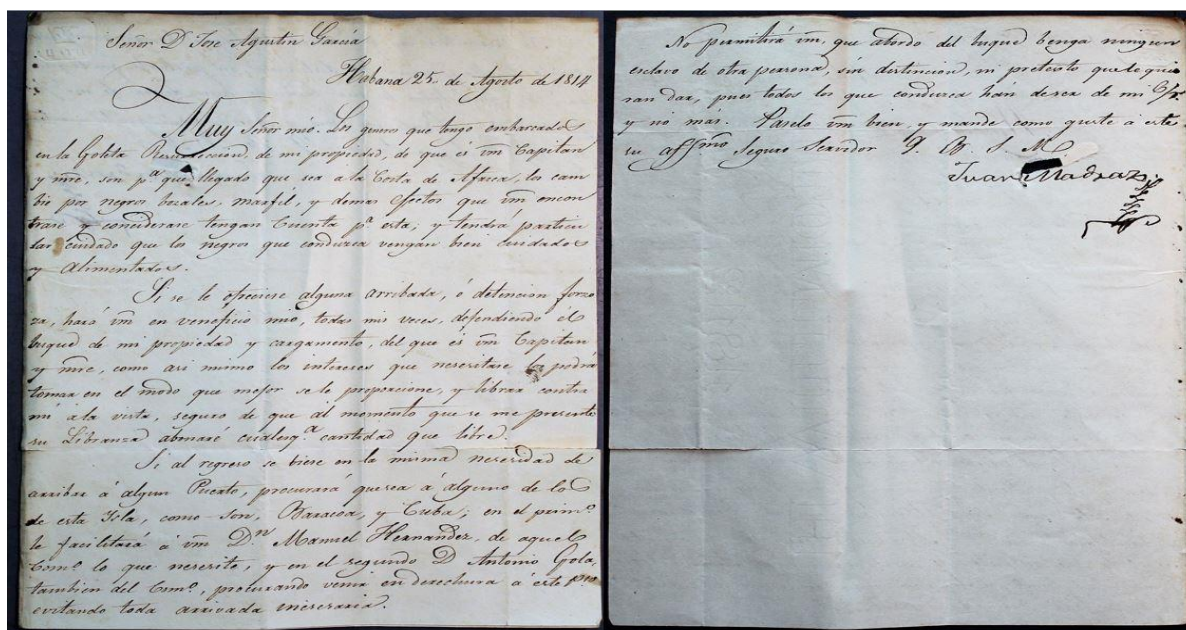


Figure 9: Letters of instructions given to captain José Agustín García of the schooner Resurrección, by the owner Juan Madrazo. TBNA, HCA, 42/491.

Havana, August 25, 1814

Mr. D. José Agustín García

Dear Sir,

The merchandise that I have embarked on the schooner of my property Resurrección, of which you are captain and master, is for when you arrive at the African coast. Trade them for Negroes bozales, ivory, and other effects that you consider having a good market in this city. You will take care that the negroes you carry are well cared for and fed.

If you faced a forced landing or detention, for my own good, you would defend the ship all the time and the cargo of which you are captain and master. You can take any credit you need on my behalf on the way, resting assured that that at the time you present me with the notes, I will pay for what amount they were issued for.

If on returning, you had the same need to stop at any other port, try to ensure it is one on this island, such as Baracoa and (Santiago de) Cuba. On the first one, you will be assisted in what you need by Mr. Manuel Hernández, from that city and on the second by Mr. Antonio Gola, also from that city. However, you will try to come straight to this port, avoiding any unnecessary port of call.

You will not allow any slave of any other person to come aboard the ship, without distinction or any pretext they wish to give you since all those you carry must be my property and not from anyone else.

Be well and order as you like this, your affectionate and sure server.

Kissing your hand – Juan Madrazo

attacks and the crew should be rewarded for successful resistance. If the British detained the vessel and carried the *Nueva Ana* into Jamaica, officers should contact Messrs. Bogles & Co. or Buenaventura Galzerán y Ortiz who would take care of the Vice-Admiralty Court proceedings. Finally, if the ship suffered any damage, they should stop in Puerto Rico and contact Miguel Torrents & Co. “We will celebrate a happy journey, the document concluded, and may God bring all of you back with the most prosperous health.”¹⁵⁴ After everything was set up, it was time for departure.

Havana’s newspapers advertised departure of ships. These announcements contained the vessel’s name, rig, captain, owners, destination, date of departure, and, in some cases, merchandise transported to Africa (Figure 8). A careful study of each of these entries was pivotal to the dataset that supports the last chapter of this dissertation.

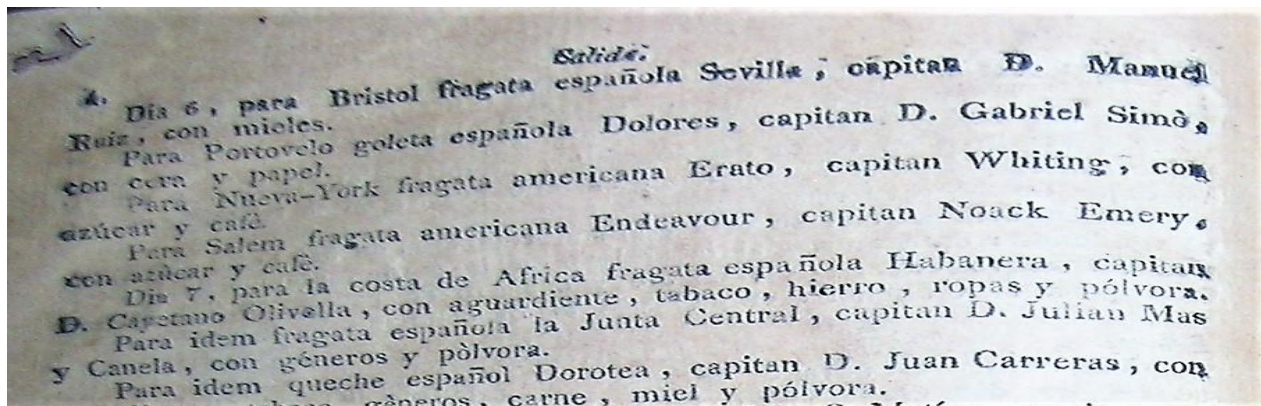


Figure 10: Announcements of slave ships departures from Havana, April 1811. Diario de la Habana, Wednesday, April 10, 1811.

“On April 7, heading to the African coast the Spanish frigate *Habanera*, captain D. Cayetano Olivella, carrying on board *aguardiente*, tobacco, rum, iron, cloth, and gunpowder.”

“On April 7, heading to the African coast the Spanish frigate *Junta Central*, captain D. Julian Mas y Canela, with goods and gunpowder.”

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

“When the slave ship was ready” a Spanish author of a well-researched novel stated, “a cannon shot was fired, the anchor was lifted, and if there was no wind, some boats towed the vessel out of the harbor.”¹⁵⁵ While leaving the city behind, the captain or one of the pilots opened the logbook and wrote the first words signaling the beginning of the journey. The schooner *Dolores*, captained by José Briñas and owned by Isidro Inglada, left Havana on May 1813 bound to Upper Guinea and the second pilot wrote,

Journal of Navigation that I, the second pilot of the schooner named *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, captain and first pilot Jose Briñas carry in the name of God and our patron the Virgen de los Dolores. We left Havana on May 16, 1813, bound for the coast of Africa for the negro trade. On May 16 at five thirty in the morning, we started to lift anchors. At seven o'clock, we started to leave the port [Havana], towing the ship because of the slight wind. At eight-fifteen after exiting the harbor, winds improved.¹⁵⁶

The Voyage

Crossing the Atlantic from Cuba to Africa was a long and monotonous voyage that could last between three weeks to four months depending on the destination. The British National Archives has a collection of dozens of logbooks from Spanish slave ships confiscated by vice-admiralty courts from Freetown and the West Indies (Figure 11). These books were often printed in New York, but sometimes they were just a common notebook showing the routine aboard the vessel.¹⁵⁷ Three times a day, at sunrise, noon, and at sunset, the captain or first pilot annotated the cardinal position of the vessel¹⁵⁸ Other events were also registered in logbooks such as weather

¹⁵⁵Pio Baroja, “Los Pilotos de Altura, 112.

¹⁵⁶ TBNA, HCA, 42/475. A British cruiser captured the vessel off Plantain Islands. It was carried to Freetown and condemned in September 1813. *Voyages* ID: 7518, ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506/3497.

¹⁵⁷ Beside the logbook, officers usually brought with them other U.S. printed books, sometimes handwritten manuals, explaining the basics of how the position of the stars could be used to calculate locations using sextants. It is probable that both books, navigational instruments such as sextants were purchased in New England.

¹⁵⁸ Since each slave ship logbook contains the daily cardinal position of the vessel, they are an ideal source for a digital project tracking in details the movement of each of these vessels across the Atlantic. Spanish vessels captured by the British Royal Navy were going or coming from anywhere between Senegal and Southeast Africa.

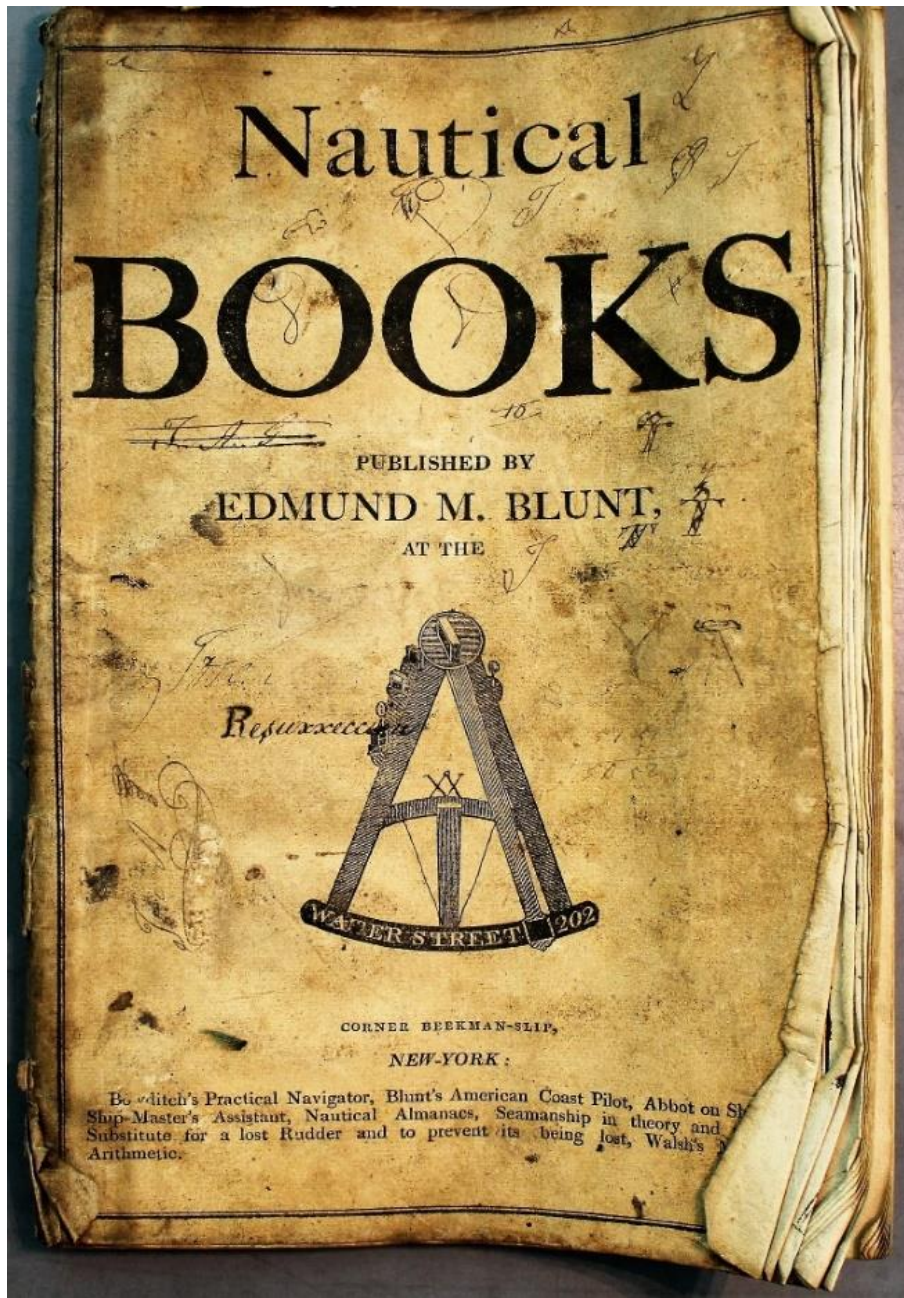


Figure 11: Logbook of the Spanish schooner Resurreccion, captain Francisco Font y Puig. TBNA, HCA 42/491.

conditions tides, death, and sickness of crew members. They also registered when a barrel of water or food container was opened, a foreign or strange ship was spotted on the horizon, or something was malfunctioning on the vessel. Captains also described daily chores performed by sailors on the ship (Figure 12). The deck was cleaned regularly. Sailors gave regular maintenance to sails, masts, rigging, and cox. Other mariners, meanwhile, fished to supplement the salted meats or dried food transported on board.

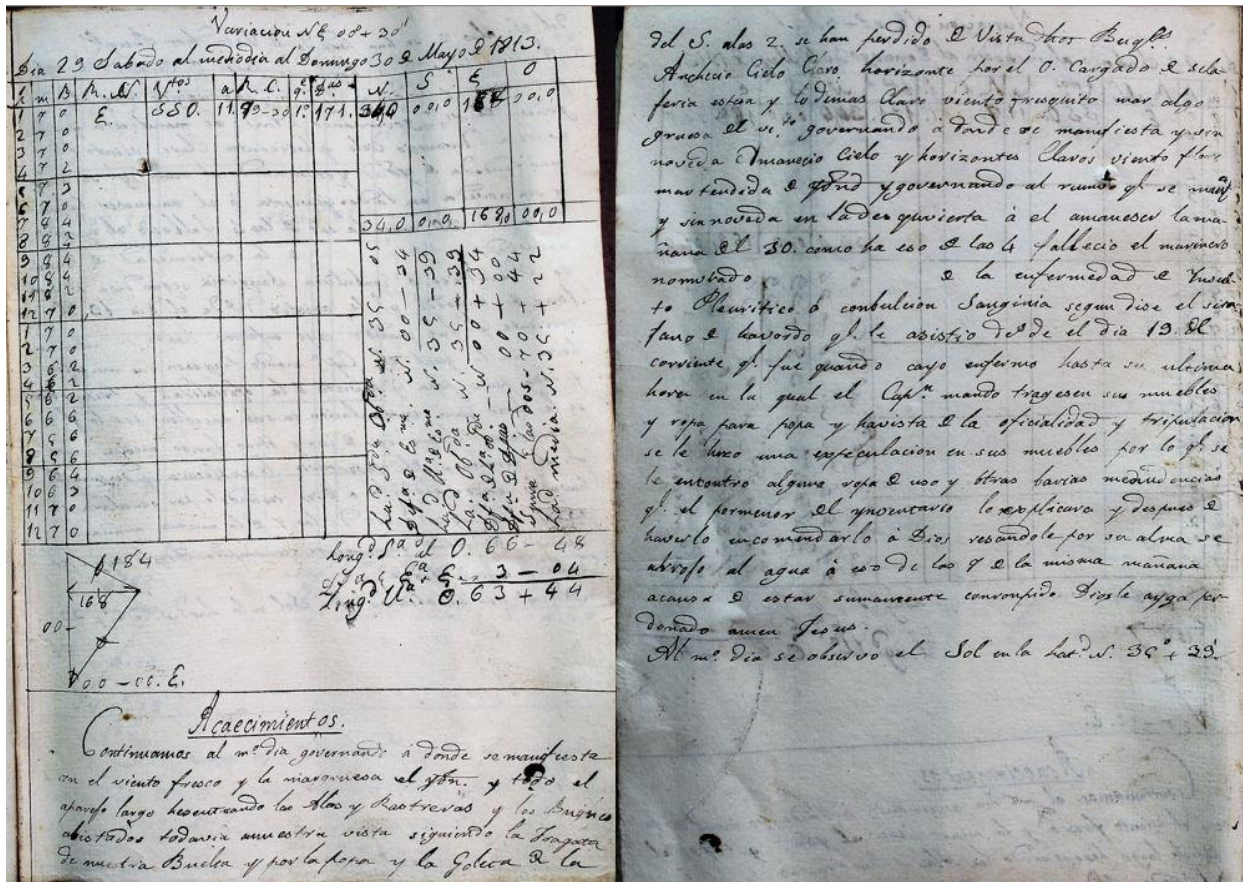


Figure 12: Entry on the logbook from the schooner *Nuestra Señora del Carmen* on its way to Africa (1813). “*Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, Papers*” TBNA, HCA, 42/475/899. Voyages ID: 7518. The Vice-Admiralty Court condemned this vessel in Freetown. It had 154 slaves

Events of the Day, May 30, 1813- Schooner Dolores

It dawned with a cloudless sky on the horizon. Loose wind and rough sea are ruling our course. No new event on the deck. At dawn on the morning of the 30th, at around four o'clock, the sailor named [blank] died of pleuritic arrest (insulto pleurítico) or blood convulsion (convulsión sanguínea) according to the surgeon on board who assisted him since the nineteenth, the day

when he fell ill, until his last hour. The captain commanded to bring his belongings and clothes to the deck. In front of the officers and crew, a sale was performed on his belongings. Some clothes and other miscellaneous items were found as well as other details that the catalog explains. After having entrusted him to God and praying for his soul, he was thrown into the waters around 9 o'clock in the morning since his body was extremely decomposed. God forgive him. Amen Jesus

The cook and his assistants prepared meals every day. Coffee was brewed, and alcoholic beverages distributed. At night, oil lanterns covered by glass illuminated the deck where guardians took turns to guard the vessel. In the crow's nest, a watchman scanned the horizon. At night, before bed, the crew found ways to keep themselves entertained. Those who could write, such as captains and pilots, composed letters to their wives and loved ones. Among the documents captured by the British aboard Spanish ships, it is possible to find drawings and poems written by captains and first pilots.

African islands were the preferred first stop for Spanish slave ships. The islands of Príncipe and São Tomé, Cape Verde, Tenerife, or Gorée became a hub for slave ships heading towards or leaving the African coast. The schooner *Dolores*, for example, made its first stop at Madeira Island where it acquired fresh water, food, and added to its cargo of trade goods.¹⁵⁹ African islands offered repair options as well a pool of “prácticos” or guides and additional crew if required. It was also common for slave ships to change their flags in places such as Madeira and acquired faux papers to avoid British captures.¹⁶⁰

Slave ships did not always reach their destination. Vessels shipwrecked, caught fire, were captured or experienced slave revolts.¹⁶¹ In October 1815, the Spanish frigate *Jerusalén* had a dramatic experience in 1815 on its way to Africa when it was driven on to reefs near the Old

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Switching flags was widespread in the years after 1808 as shown in earlier chapters.

¹⁶¹ For a list of some of the slave ships shipwrecks in the 19th century see: Pérez López Alessandro and Mónica Pavía Pérez, “Malhechores de la Mar. Corsarios, Piratas, Negreros, Raqueros y Contrabandistas,” 241-294.

Bahamas Channel, four days after leaving Havana. The vessel began flooding. The desperate sailors took to the water pumps, but the ship became disabled five miles from land. Wreckers or seamen whose profession it was to plunder or, for a fee, assist the sailors approached the vessel. By this time, the ship was off Key Largo, on the southern tip of Florida, in terrible conditions. Abandoning it was the only option. The merchandise was unloaded, the rigging and sails dismantled, and other valuables moved to the boats. On June 17, the remains of the *Jerusalem* was burned. The survivors, assisted by the wreckers, went to New Providence, in the Bahamas.¹⁶² In a sense, the crew of the *Jerusalén* was lucky. The shipwreck occurred near inhabited land near Cuba.

Some vessels wrecked off the coast of Africa. In March 1817, the polacre *San Francisco de Paula*, captained by José Agustín Conill, dropped down the river Calabar with 301 slaves on board on its return to Havana. Conill, the captain, had hired a local pilot, a *práctico*, who positioned two men on top of each of the horizontally mounted chain-wales, wooden planks located on both sides of the starboards, the part of the ship where the shrouds or cables were tied to secure the masts. When the ship was navigating shallows, men situated on top of those pieces assess it for depth with long sticks. The vessel nevertheless foundered on the bar, leaving it stranded between the current of the river and ocean waves. The captain and officers abandoned the ship to look for assistance leaving behind 301 slaves and some sailors. Fortunately for them, there were other Spanish ships in the vicinity. The survivors spent the night on board the Havana ship *Non Plus Ultra* captained by José Samá anchored upstream.¹⁶³ Next morning, five boats with the crew of the *San Francisco* returned to the stricken polacre only to find that it had

¹⁶² “Naufregio de la fragata Jerusalén,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 260-15.

¹⁶³ The *Non Plus Ultra* arrived at Havana on June 6, 1817 with 310 slaves. Its owner was the later renowned slaver Pablo Samá. *Voyages* ID: 14765

vanished along with its 301 slaves, and several sailors.¹⁶⁴ The fate of the *San Francisco* remained a mystery.

Once the ship arrived at the African coast a new range of problems unfolded. The trading experience in Africa is taken up in the following chapter where aspects such as negotiation on the coast, diseases, slaving caravans, rebellions, British prosecutions, and others are explained in detail. However, some elements regarding the experience of the ship must be pointed out in advance.

Disease and deaths in Africa were more common than shipwrecks. Delays on the African coast made both more likely. In December 1810, after a two-month journey from Havana, the crew of the schooner *Zaragozano* captained by Juan Norberto Dolz spotted the African coast. They had arrived at Saint Louis in Senegal from where, after provisioning, they sailed to the island of Gorée, a former French possession, currently under British control. The *Zaragozano* then sailed further south, and, during January, they touched the shores of Rio Pongo, Freetown, Plantain Island, Sherbro, and York Island. By the beginning of February, the crew was very ill, and the vessel still had few slaves aboard. Five sailors died, and the captain was in critical conditions. The crew went off the ship and remain on York Island to improve their health while buying slaves. Six weeks later, the crew of the *Zaragozano* was still at York Island, sick and dying, when, not coincidentally, a slave revolt began. The Africans temporarily overcame their weakened guards. Twenty slaves eventually jumped overboard, fifteen of whom drowned.¹⁶⁵ Those who reached the shore were recaptured by men commanded by the infamous Sherbro Afro-European slave trader James Cleveland. Among the prisoners was the leader of the

¹⁶⁴ “Juan Antonio Conill, Capitán de la Polacra San Francisco de Paula sobre un cargamento de negros.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 134-3.

¹⁶⁵ “Protesta del Capitán Dolz del Bergantín Zaragozano, septiembre, 1810,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497.

rebellion who was tied to the mast of the vessel. While a sailor was flogging him, the captain Dolz asked the bleeding man why he persuaded the others to rise. “Because,” he replied, “I was kept in irons.” The captain asked the rebel what he would have done in case of succeeding, “kill you, run the vessel ashore, and escape,” he answered.¹⁶⁶ Months later, the captain recounted the story to the courts in Havana. If there were any empathy among the listeners, it was for the white sailors.

Shipwrecks, sickness, and rebellions were not the only risks faced by slave traders; they were also subjected to captures on the sea by the British or other foreign national privateers. The *Zaragozano*, for example, was captured by the British days later after the slave rebellion. Captain Dolz told the judges in Havana that the British “freed the leaders of the riot and told them that they were not slaves anymore.” “These negroes,” Dolz said, “became very insolent toward the crew of the brig. As a result, they raised their hands against one sailor who hit them back with a stick.”¹⁶⁷ The British officers thereupon chained the Spanish crew and placed them in the slave deck below. The *Zaragozano* was carried to Freetown. In July 1810, the Vice-Admiralty Court condemned the ship as American property and for conducting the slave trade in British possessions.¹⁶⁸

Between 1808 and 1820, Spanish slave ships were not only threatened by the now abolitionist British Royal Navy. Latin-American and Haitian privateers also took a toll on the Cuban slave fleet. Some of the newly independent Latin-American republics issued privateering

¹⁶⁶ “Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institutions, 1812,” 108.

¹⁶⁷ “Protesta del Capitán Dolz del Bergantín Zaragozano, septiembre, 1810,” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497.

¹⁶⁸ The captors accused Dolz of being a citizen of the United States, which he vehemently denied. During the trial, it became clear that the *Zaragozano* was built in New York and sailed to Havana in 1809 under the name of Saint Bride. On board, there was a British surgeon, “Mr. Rees.” Rees was planning to go to Africa, but he needed Spanish papers and a Spanish captain to conduct this operation. The property of the vessel was transferred first to a Spanish merchant, Jose Castelles, and later to Juan Norberto Dolz. The meager price of the transaction raised suspicions in the British Court. The slave ship was renamed as the *Zaragozano* in Havana. Dolz, on the other hand, had never been in Africa, but he had the guidance of Mr. Rees who was “hired” as the surgeon in the vessel.

licenses to merchants aimed at capturing Spanish merchant ships. One victim was the *Segunda Josefa*, captained by Marcelino Morán, which sailed from Havana in 1817 bound for the “Guinea coast.”¹⁶⁹ The ship loaded 314 captives in the Bight of Biafra. On February 3, 1818, north of the Tiburon Peninsula near Haiti, on its way to Cuba, the *Segunda Josefa* was attacked by a Colombian privateer captained by Renato Beluche (1780-1860), a native of New Orleans.¹⁷⁰

Seeing his superior force, - the captain of the *Josefa*, Marcelino Morán, recalled- it was thought proper by common consent to strike our flag in order to avoid the atrocities which this class of pirates usually commit. A prize crew came on board and put my crew in irons in the hold. The crew of the *General Arismendi* numbered 144 men, most of them black and mulattoes.¹⁷¹

The *Josefa Segunda* and the *General Arismendi* sailed together along the southern coast of Cuba where they sold part of the slaves. In April, the vessel anchored on La Balize near the mouth of the Mississippi River where U.S. authorities took possession and launched a successful prosecution in the Eastern District Court of Louisiana for violating the slave trade abolition act, a decision subsequently upheld in the US Supreme Court.¹⁷² A second example was the frigate *Juno*. Owned by Miguel Bonilla and captained by Buenaventura Taxonera, the vessel sailed from Havana to Zanzibar in mid-1818.¹⁷³ Often, Cuban slave ships heading to West Central or Southeast Africa, stopped first in Brazil. In September 1818, as it sailed south, the *Juno* was attacked by two privateers from Buenos Aires who initially showed British colors.

¹⁶⁹ *Voyages* ID: 41571.

¹⁷⁰ During the early nineteenth century, and after the acquisition of Louisiana by the United States, Beluche partnered with the Laffite brothers. Latin-American independence and the character of Simón Bolívar attracted the attention of Beluche who became one of the favorite admirals of Bolívar. After 1813, Beluche started working for the Venezuelan revolutionaries. He commanded the privateer *Arismendi*, and his primary targets were Spanish merchant vessels. See: Jane Lucas De Grummond, “Renato Beluche, smuggler, privateer, and patriot, 1780-1860,” 161-162

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² The *Segunda Josefa*, Carricaburu et al. claimants. “Condensed Report Cases in the Supreme Court of the United States,” Philadelphia: Desilver, June, and Thomas, 1833, v. 4, 672-681.

¹⁷³ “Testimonio del expediente promovido por D. Miguel Bonilla del comercio de la Habana, dueño de la fragata española *Juno* su capitán D. Buenaventura Taxonera sobre las averías que experimentó con motivo del combate que tuvo con un corsario insurgente y su arribo por este motivo a la Bahía de todos los Santos donde la reparó,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 31-16.

After a short fight, the *Juno* managed to seek refuge in Bahia de Todos los Santos. After repairs, it headed for Angola and later to its destination in Havana with 290 slaves on board.¹⁷⁴

As historian José Luciano Franco pointed out, Spanish slave ships were also at risk from the Haitian navy. In February 1811, a Haitian privateer captured the brig *Nueva Ana*, captain José María Peoli, and took it into Gonaives. The 205 slaves on board were freed, and the ship was afterward released.¹⁷⁵ Eight years later the Haitian corvette *Wilberforce* seized the Spanish brig *Yuyu* (aka) *Dos Unidos* and carried it to Port-au-Prince. Again, Haitian authorities liberated the slaves. Despite diplomatic pressure from Spain, the freed captives never entered Cuba.¹⁷⁶ Of course, archival sources could give the impression that tragedies such as shipwrecks, rebellions, or captures were more common than they were - exceptional cases produced more paper trails than an uneventful slaving expedition.

Once the slaves were loaded in Africa, and the ship departed to Havana, the level of security on the ship increased noticeably. Cuban records do not contain much information on the internal dynamics of the ship during the so-called middle passage. It is the case that Cuban slave vessels followed patterns observed on carriers from other nations. The chief difference with carriers related to the circumstance that Cubans were new to the business and for that reason, as the following pages show, it experienced higher mortality rates.

Back in Havana

At the end of the middle passage, newspapers would report the arrival of a slave ship. With minor variations, these announcements followed the same format (Figure 13). The day of arrival,

¹⁷⁴ *Voyages* ID: 41368

¹⁷⁵ José Luciano, Franco, "Comercio clandestino de esclavos," 154.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 155-156. *Voyages* ID: 46920.

provenance, length of the voyage, nationality, the name and rig of the vessel, the captain, the consignee, and the type of cargo were detailed, including the number of captives.

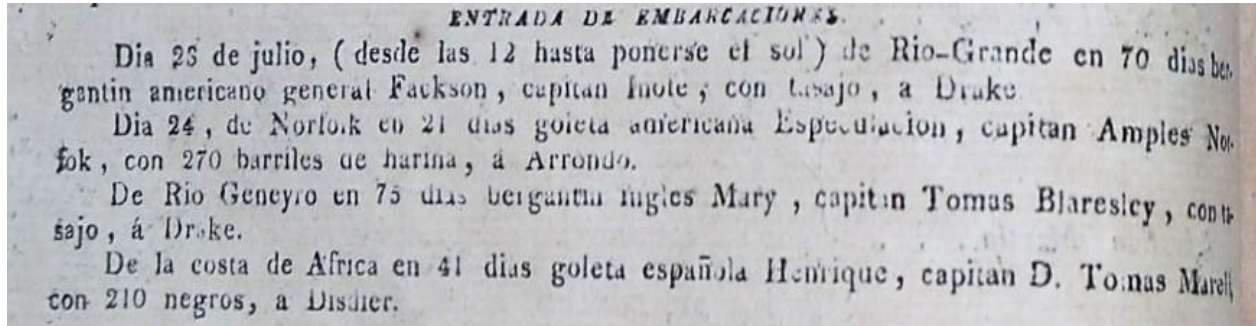


Figure 13: Announcement arrival of embarkations. *Noticioso*, diario del comercio. July 20, 1816. No. 1041

[July 24, 1816] *From Africa in 41 days, the Spanish schooner Henrique, captain D. Tomás Marell with 210 negroes, for Disdier.*¹⁷⁷

Obviously, not all the slaves that left Africa survived the middle passage. In fact, Cuban slave ships had extremely high mortality rates. Lack of experience in the business, greed for forced labor, and the anxieties generated by an upcoming abolition led Cubans to over-fill their ships. A report presented to the Real Consulado by physician Tomás Romay in 1811 illustrates this point. Romay, considered by Cubans as their founder of medical science, worked part of his life as a sanitary inspector of slave ships in the harbor of Havana. His report expressed the author's horror with the dreadful conditions on slave ships arriving at Havana. "[I]n the name of humanity, religion and anything that can penetrate a sensitive heart, reform the abuses which degrade and debase a nation that prides itself on being pious and Christian," he wrote.¹⁷⁸ This document lays out the human cost of the Cuban drive to get slaves.

¹⁷⁷ "Noticioso, diario del comercio." July 20, 1816, no. 1041.

¹⁷⁸ "Expediente relativo a la salud y conservación de los negros en la travesía de la costa de África a este puerto, 1811-1816" ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 150-7409.

On May 19, 1811, Romay inspected the frigate *Brillante Rosa*, captained by Miguel Nuñez and owned by Mariano de Jáuregui which anchored in Havana with a cargo of 330 Africans.¹⁷⁹ Romay informed the Real Consulado, “regretfully” he said, that during the journey from Angola to Havana, in just fifty-two days of navigation, 130 captives died. This is the equivalent of two or three people dying daily during the middle passage. The ship was 230 tons which means that it loaded about two slaves per tons. There was neither a surgeon nor medical supplies on board. Two months later Romay inspected the Spanish brig *Consejero*, commanded by Juan Martin Lanz and owned by Miguel Gómez de las Bárcenas, which arrived with 153 slaves from Loango.¹⁸⁰ Fifty-four slaves died during the fifty-eight days of the middle passage, a rate of near one slave every day. But not only Africans lost their lives. The original captain, the supercargo, and three sailors never made it to Havana. The *Consejero* was 122 tons. It carried around two people per tons. Like the *Brillante Rosa*, it lacked a surgeon and medicine. In order to make the point that the mortality rate on Spanish slave ships was unusually high, Romay compared these two cases with the Portuguese brig *Buen Amigo* which arrived at Havana on July 1, 1811, from Bahia de Todos los Santos. The ship lost just one African during the journey. The captain, Jose Pereira, explained the low mortality as a result of good hygiene, forcing the slaves to exercise and partake of fresh air and proper food and water. We could add the centuries of experience in the slaving business that Brazilians and Portuguese had built up. Romay’s report concludes that it was better for the slaves to remain in their “savages” homelands, he said, than to experience an unnecessary death on the high seas.

If Argüelles and Alcócer knew about such despicable facts, with what vehemence and justice, would they speak against this barbarous commerce? They would ask if the protection of the agriculture of this island, the prosperity of some individuals, is preferable to the life of a single man? What are the real advantages that these unfortunates [the

¹⁷⁹ ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, 6816. *Voyages* ID: 14556.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. *Voyages* ID 14561.

slaves] acquire with slavery if they are ripped apart from their homes to be buried in the abyss of the sea? Is it not less harmful to live wandering in the jungles, without domicile, without property, without laws or religion, than to die because of the impunity of some men who do not recognize another right than their own and sordid interests?¹⁸¹

Romay requested the Real Consulado to implement a regulating law like the British Dolben's Act of 1788 which tied the number of slaves that slave ships could carry to tonnage. Not only should the ratio of tons per individual be regulated, he said, but Spanish vessels should carry a surgeon and medicines. "They (the slavers) know very well that these are men. Although negroes and slaves, they must be provided with all the help that humanity demands and our laws rule."¹⁸² Romay's humanitarian perspective did not sit well among the members of the Real Consulado. For the Cuban elite, any regulation of the slave trade was unacceptable. Nevertheless, the members of the Real Consulado endorsed some vague promises aiming to improve the situation on slave ships. They also agreed that the best way to fix the problem was to "enlighten the sailors" because "such *accidents* are born more from ignorance and inexperience than depraved intentions." The main concern amongst merchants and planters was that the British were increasing their pressure on the Spanish government to abolish the human trade.

The high mortality rate on Cuban vessels continued. On March 1814, the Real Consulado met again to debate the sanitary conditions on slave ships. The triggering factor this time was the arrival to the port of Havana on March 15, 1814, of the frigate *Amistad*, captained by Blas Morán and owned by Isidro Inglada.¹⁸³ The vessel had 188 Africans remaining from the original cargo

¹⁸¹ "Expediente relativo a la salud y conservación de los negros en la travesía de la costa de África a este puerto, 1811-1816" ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 150-7409. Romay was referring to the abolitionist debate that took place in the Spanish Courts in 1812, mentioned in chapter two, presented by the representatives Argüelles and Alcócer. This debate generated strong opposition among the Cuban elite. See Chapter 2.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, No. 6816. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506. *Voyages* ID: 42034.

of 688. Five hundred people had died during the middle passage.¹⁸⁴ Three Africans per ton were packed into the hold. The scandalous mortality did not go unnoticed.

On February 9, 1815, a proposal was drafted in the Real Consulado for “the good care of the slaves” to be followed by captains and the crew on slave ships. Every vessel, the document prescribed, should have a physician on board, and could not transport more than three slaves for every two tons. The white crew “should not engage” with the female slaves. If food ran short during the journey, the captain would be penalized upon his return. For any ship coming from Mozambique with a mortality rate below ten percent, the captain would receive two pesos prize for each captive. The owners of the expedition, however, had to make this award. Captains and officers who mistreated either sailors or slaves would be punished according to the nature of their crime.¹⁸⁵ The Real Consulado discussed these regulations in August 1815, but in the context of the pressure against the traffic after the Congress of Vienna, they did not become law:

After some discussions, the board of the Real Consulado agreed that it was not feasible to prescribe regulations or restrictions that could discourage African trading companies at a time when they have over their heads the scourge of English persecution. A commission would be appointed with the task of examining this matter, particularly, regarding the best ways to improve the sanitation on board these vessels.¹⁸⁶

Manuel Botiño and Juan José de Iriarte, both with financial interests on the slave trade, were appointed to study the matter. The Real Consulado and Cuban authorities, however, repeatedly postponed further discussion until the Spanish slave trade became illegal. After 1820, conditions became even worse.

¹⁸⁴ Informe del regidor D. León Ruiz de Azua sobre conservación de los africanos en la travesía atlántica. “Expediente relativo a la salud y conservación de los negros en la travesía de la costa de África a este puerto, 1811-1816” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 150-7409.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

What had a more substantial impact on minimizing the abuses and mismanagement on the ships was not any government decision, but rather profit-maximization and the fear of a rebellion. In practical terms, when the number of dead Africans during the middle passage surpassed what owners considered a reasonable amount -whatever that means- the captain and the crew were accountable for the losses. If there were any reasons for the owners to believe that the loss of lives resulted from lack of care or deliberate neglect, a court case would result. Thus in the winter of 1814, the schooner *Restauradora* anchored in Bonny in the Bight of Biafra where it loaded 310 Africans. During the middle passage, everyone got sick. Bloody diarrheas, vomit, and high fevers showed up among both slaves and crew. Contaminated water or food made everyone on board acutely ill. The captain Santiago Caso Valdés was one of the many who did survive the return journey. Caso-Valdés was succeeded by the first pilot, a man from Asturias called Manuel Prendes. The middle passages took forty-two days. Every day, dead bodies were thrown overboard. Moreover, the ship was driven off course by privateers and docked in Santiago de Cuba, rather than Havana carrying 258 slaves.¹⁸⁷ Fifty-two human lives were lost among the Africans.

Those deaths did not sit well with the owners of the expedition. One of the investors, Francisco de Paula Moreno, sued the officers requesting an investigation to establish;

If the death of the fifty-two slaves resulted from the lack of food or the necessary aid for the conservation of the negroes. If they were carried in unhealthy conditions. If they were treated as humanity required. If the captain and supercargo observed some abandonment regarding the subsistence of the slaves. If it contributed to the misfortune the bad conditions on the vessel or if it was the effect of an epidemic, natural death, or other reasons.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. *Voyages* ID: 42099.

¹⁸⁸ “Francisco de Paula Moreno sobre justificar la muerte de 52 negros de la dotación que contenía el cargamento de la Goleta *Restauradora* procedente de la Costa de África.” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 287-4.

The captain and part of the crew of the *Restauradora* testified that what happened to them did not result from mismanagement, but was rather God's will, a position accepted by the court. The primary owner of the expedition, Isidro Inglada, received no compensation from insurers since Spanish legislation at that moment prohibited such insurance. In sum, it was greed, not humanitarianism that was likely to reduce mortality on board slave ships. The pressure from expedition owners and the interests that captains and officers had invested in the human cargo was the main incentive to keep slaves alive.

Once the ship was on one of the decks of Havana a sanitary inspection was conducted by colonial officers. Epidemics were frequent in Cuba mostly because of the unsanitary conditions of cities like Havana. However, the slave trade came to be associated with yellow fever in particular. Once the ship anchored, the inspector and his assistant boarded the vessel and checked the conditions of the slaves. If the slaves were sick, they could not be unloaded. The ship was effectively quarantined. Cuban archives have several examples of reports written by health inspectors. In December 1815, for example, the schooner *Suficiente*, captain Manuel Martín, arrived in Baracoa, a coastal city located in the north-east of the island. Antonio Estenoz, the Governor of Baracoa, Luis de Arrue, the Navy Commander, Manuel Martín, one of the city council members, and the surgeon Fernando José de Campos, visited the vessel. Baracoa was rarely visited by slave ships. Therefore, the arrival of one of them stirred excitement, curiosity, and a potential source of income which explained why high officials took the matter into their hands. The ninety-nine Africans on board “were inspected by the surgeon Campos who found them all healthy and without any signs of infection.”¹⁸⁹ For this service, captain Martín had to pay forty-eight pesos to the authorities.

¹⁸⁹ “D. Manuel González con D. Domingo Sánchez y D. Miguel Zevallos sobre abono de soldadas” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 199-28.

The next step was the vaccination of the slaves on board against smallpox. This vaccine was a quite recent development since Edward Jenner had only recently developed the procedure.¹⁹⁰ It was Tomás Romay himself who in 1804 introduced the vaccine against smallpox in Cuba. A short report was written for every case as shown in the following sample from the city of Matanzas.

I certify that of the three hundred and eight negroes carried to this port from the Coast of Africa on the Spanish brig *La Anita*, consigned to D. Joaquin Madan, two hundred and fifty have been vaccinated. Matanzas, August 6, 1819.¹⁹¹

The unloading of the slaves began once the health conditions of the cargo were cleared up. The captives were conducted to barracoons located on the other side of the old walls surrounding colonial Havana. Originally built in 1781 as barracks for Spanish soldiers, their transformation into warehouses for Africans (or barracoons) began during the time of the *Asiento* granted to the Liverpool firm Baker & Dawson, the official supplier of Africans to Cuba after 1784.¹⁹² These structures, “around forty uncouth buildings made of uncoated timber and thatched roofs,” belonged to the colonial state who leased them to individual merchants.¹⁹³ During the early nineteenth century, the prices of leasing a single warehouse fluctuated between twenty and forty pesos a month. Each of the barracoons, thirty in total, harbored between 100 and 130 Africans. Africans were kept in these places for a week for recovery and until sale arrangements

¹⁹⁰ People suffering from smallpox had recognizable symptoms. Those infected developed first fever and vomiting. The mouth developed sores, and the skin grew a rash that quickly turned into blisters, fluid-filled bumps with a dent in the center. Survivors could see the bumps scab over and leaving scars that lasted forever. Small-pox was one of the most feared diseases in the early nineteenth century followed by yellow fever, syphilis, and cholera.

¹⁹¹“Certificaciones del Fiscal de Medicina de la Ciudad de Matanzas, Don Manuel Calvar, haciendo constar que fueron vacunados 1491 negros bozales de los 2 264 traídos en distintos barcos, consignados a diferentes personas,” AHPM, Gobierno Provincial, Esclavos, Negros Bozales, 21-12

¹⁹² María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes and Aisnara Perera Diaz, “Del tráfico a la libertad, el caso de los africanos de la fragata dos hermanos en Cuba, (1795-1837),” 55.

¹⁹³ Fernando Ortiz “Los Negros Esclavos,” 166.

could be finalized. Barracoons were overcrowded, dirty, overheated, and a source of diseases. A

Dr. J.L.F Madrid in 1817 stated;

A few days ago, I was walking, looking the growing luxury and prosperity of this country, resulting of the agriculture and free trade, when, accidentally, I had to enter one of the barracoons located nearby, where it was presented to me a vastly different spectacle. I saw many dying negroes naked and spread out on wooden planks, many of them reduced to skin and bones, and inhaling an intolerable stench.¹⁹⁴

Doctor Madrid recalled asking the overseers what the diseases of the slaves were. “A kind of dysentery,” Dr. Madrid was told. The Africans were being treated with oranges, milk, and common water “from the ditch.” Clearly, in most cases, these “remedies” did not prevent death. The suffering of those experiencing dysentery, as described by Dr. Madrid, was horrendous. The disease started with a lack of appetite, followed by nausea, vomiting, and yellowish or green loose bowels with mucus. Symptoms also included intense throat and stomach pain, fever, dry skin, and constant thirst. Victims could barely urinate. During the second stage of the disease, excrement left the body accompanied by blood—sometimes just blood. The smell was “on occasions intolerable.” The tongue turned white with yellowish rounded crusts. The sphincter stopped working.

Those negroes who reached this stage had a strange and distinguishable gesture and character on their physiognomy. When the malady has lasted a considerable amount of time, all the muscles emaciate, and they become a skeleton. Their configuration is entirely distinguishable. They can barely stand on their feet reject the food, and fancy drinks with aguardiente. Some of them complain little or do not complain at all and appear in a state of tranquility. Others feel cruel pains and give sorrowful cries. In the end, the prostration is absolute; the pulse is feeble and frequent. They urinate and evacuate in bed, sometimes only blood. Then the hiccups come. They go cold like marble and die.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ J.L.F. de Madrid, “Memoria sobre la disentería en general y en particular sobre la disentería en los barracones,” 381.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

We now know that viruses, bacterias, and parasited were killing these men and women. However, the biological factor does not fully account for the social circumstances that brought sickness and premature death to these people. Forced mass transportation, overcrowded spaces, heat, lack of fresh water and food, terrible sanitary, and unbearable stress conditions were the most visible causes. Dr. Madrid knew that the diseases he witnessed in the barracoons of Havana was the exponential increase of the importations of Africans without the development of proper infrastructure. However, despite all the visible evidence, Dr. Madrid considered that being enslaved in Cuba was better than remaining in Africa. The “negro masters” in Africa, Dr. Madrid argued, mistreated the captives even more than their new white owners. “There is nothing worse in this world,” he said, “than being the slave of a barbarian.” It was self-evident for Madrid that barbarians were not the white owners living in sumptuous palaces in Havana, such as Poey or Cuesta y Manzanal, nor the captains of overcrowded slave ships. After some scholastic and rhetorical digressions, Dr. Madrid made clear his pro-slave trade argument,

Who ignores the powerful influence that the violent sufferings of the soul have on our body? The beasts..., the beasts themselves, vividly suffer when they are separated from their herd. Civilized men acquire, because of the comforts of religion and the lights of philosophy, a spiritual strength that often makes them superior to their suffering. However, savages surrender to the impulses of nature; their pain consumes their vigor, and they capitulate under the weight of misfortune¹⁹⁶

By contemporary moral standards in Havana, Dr. Madrid was an honorable man. He seemed to be genuinely concerned about the treatment of the Africans in the barracoons and suggested improvement of their conditions. He even prescribed a diet based on “African food,” less milk, and more fruits. However, for other contemporary ethical standards emanating from what Cubans considered civilized nations such as England or part of the United States, Madrid

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

was just one of the many people in Cuba supporting and justifying the growth of the slave trade in the island at any cost.

Amazingly, after enslavement in Africa, the waiting period on the coast before being shipped, the middle passage, and the life inside the barracoons in Havana, most slaves survived and made it to the interior of the island. From the barracoons, the slaves were transported to the markets in Havana. Any place could be transformed into a temporary slave market. The most common option was to sell them on the doors of the barracoons. Sometimes, the captives were put for public auction in porches or doorways in colonial houses belonging to the owner or the principal shareholder of the expedition. Local newspapers advertised the sale of the slaves. These announcements are valuable sources. They specify place and day for the sale, the number of the slaves to be sold, name and rig of the ship that transported them, captain, and owner's name, and, in some cases, the "nations" of the captives.

Today, Tuesday 25 of the current month [February 1817], at the usual time, at the barracoon number six, will be held the sale of 486 excellent negroes "Bozales" of both sexes from the nations carabali, ibos, isuamas, briches, and lucumies transported from the African coast on the frigate *Amistad*, captain Miguel Moran, and Isidro Inglada owner.¹⁹⁷ Today, Monday 3 of the current month [March 1817], at the usual time, at the barracoon number five, it will be open the sale of 391 excellent negroes of both sexes from the nations congos reales transported to this city from the port of Ambris on the African coast on the Spanish brigantine-schooner *Bella Dolores*, its captain D. Ramon Mesa and consigned to Messrs. Disdier & Morphy.¹⁹⁸

The prices and conditions of slaves just arrived from Africa (esclavos de armazón or bozales) were different from those born in the island (creoles), or of those Africans who had been enough time in Cuba that they spoke Spanish (ladinos). Creoles had higher prices in the market since they were more assimilated, spoke Spanish, and possessed some skills valuable in the island. There is also no evidence that, in the case of newly arrived slaves (Bozales or negros

¹⁹⁷ Diario del Gobierno de la Habana, February 25, 1817.

¹⁹⁸ Diario del Gobierno de la Habana, March 3, 1817.

de nacion), the “nation” or African origin of the captives played a crucial role in prices despite the known fact that buyers preferred some ethnicities over others.¹⁹⁹ Of course, factors such as gender, age group, and physical conditions determined the price of the slaves.²⁰⁰

Regarding age categories, the “bozales” were divided into three main groups (Figure 14). Between the ages of six and fourteen, they were referred to as *muleques* or *mulecas*. Those between the ages of fourteen and eighteen were called *mulecones* or *muleconas*. Adults over 18 were named *piezas*.²⁰¹ Within these age groups, captives were divided into boys, girls, men, and women. A healthy man was more expensive than his female counterpart, and boys cost more than girls. By 1814, African slaves recently disembarked in Havana had an average price between 330 and 380 pesos.²⁰² By the end of the legal trade in 1820, a single captive could cost up to 500 pesos.²⁰³

Slaves sales document can be found in the hundreds in the Cuban National Archive. They consisted of printed forms with empty fields to be filled by the seller (Figure 15). The name of the notary to whom it was addressed headed the document. After the transaction, the owner had to go to that notary to legalize the acquisition. These printed forms also had blank fields for the name of the buyer, the name of the slave ship, the captain, and the price. The owner(s) of the expedition signed at the bottom of the paper as shown in Figure 15.

¹⁹⁹ Nation is a term used in different slave societies in the Americas to denote a combination of geographical and ethnic origin. Most cases, there was no correlation between the actual ethnic group of the slaves and the nation attributed to them by the slavers.

²⁰⁰ For slave prices see: Laird W. Bergard, Fe Iglesias, and Maria del Carmen Barcia. “The Cuban Slave Market 1790-1880.” Cambridge University Press, 1995. Laird W. Bergard, “Slave Prices in Cuba, 1840-1875.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1987): 631-55. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Herbert S. Klein, and Stanley L. Engerman. “The Level and Structure of Slave Prices on Cuban Plantations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Some Comparative Perspectives.” *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 5 (1983): 1201-218.

²⁰¹ Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba during the nineteenth century*, 63.

²⁰² “La Compañía de Iriarte y Lasa de este comercio promoviendo cierta información de los precios de los negros en 1814,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 260-5/

²⁰³ Hubert H.S. Aimes, “A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511-1868,” 267.

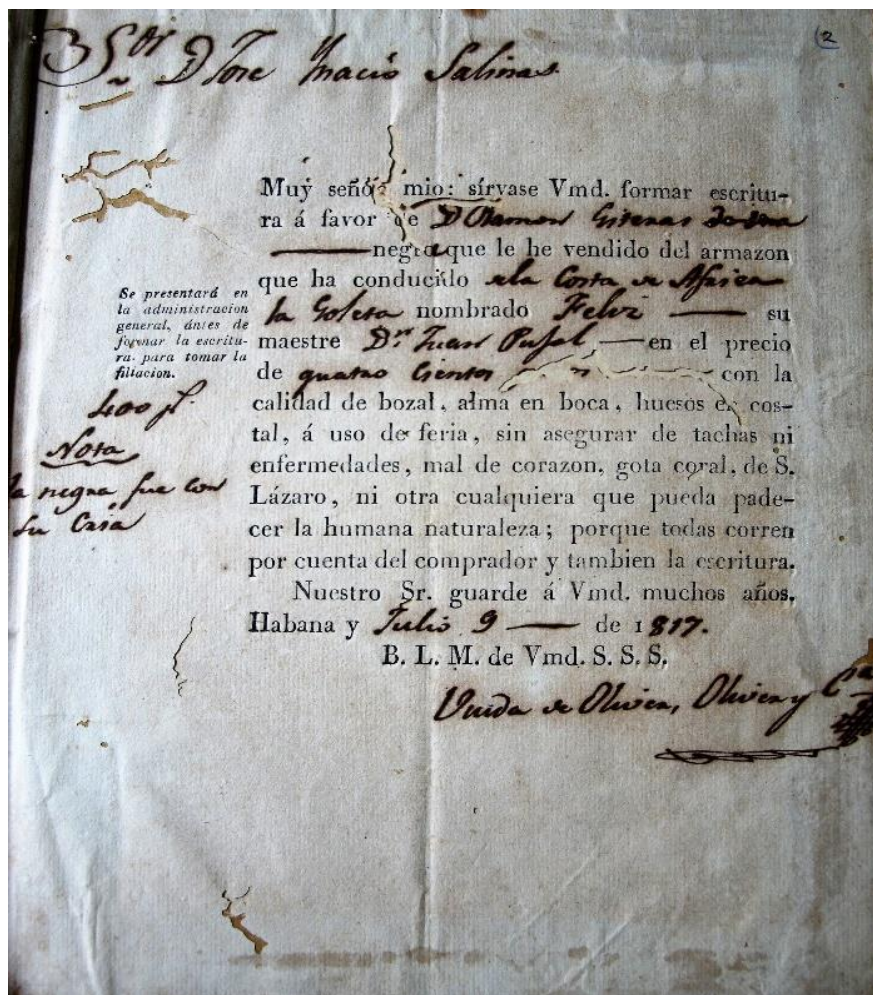


Figure 15: Slave Sale Document to D. Ramon Guiteras, AHPM, Negros Bozales, 20- 51^a.

Mr. D. Cayetano Pontón

Dear Sir;

Please, sign this deed in favor of *Mr. Rafael de Bretus* regarding a Negro that I sold him from the expedition carried to this port by the Spanish brig *Nuestra Señora del Carmen*, its captain *Pedro Marty Mola*, for the price of three hundred and seventy pesos, under the quality of bozal, as bones in a sack, soul in mouth (*alma en boca, huesos en costal*), at market use, without ensuring defects or diseases, heart diseases, epilepsy (*gota coral*), leprosy (*de San Lazaro*), or any other that human nature may suffer, because they all run on behalf of the buyer, and also the writing. Our Lord Save you, Havana, August 16, 1815

Kissing your Hand. Your most attentive servant.

By the power granted by my brother, Mr. Francisco. Lázaro Puig y Masó.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ “D. José Farres, D. Tomás Sanz y D. Lázaro Puig con D. Francisco Puig y Masó sobre cierta comisión que este pretende por la venta de unos negros bozales,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 180-14.

African slaves had different fates in the island. Urban tradesmen and professionals purchased the luckier ones. They worked as domestic employees, craftsman, construction workers, carriage drivers, shoemakers, cooks, etc. Their lives are more traceable than those of their rural counterparts. Historians have produced substantial historiography on urban slavery. Such captives had greater possibilities of obtaining their freedom, living longer, building a family, and reconstructing a semblance of their earlier lives in Africa.

For those carried to the hinterland of the island's ports, life was uncertain. The leading destination for them was the hundreds of plantations of sugar scattered in the interior of Cuba. Crammed in barracoons, accompanied by many other African men from a variety of regions, languages, and religions, their life must have been close to unbearable. Those who died were replaced by more slaves recently separated from their homeland. Before 1820, it was cheaper to exploit them as much as possible than reducing their working time since replacing them was more affordable. The abolition of the slave trade and the subsequent increasing in price somehow forced the owners to increase the care of the slaves.

Once the slaves were sold, owners calculated the profits of the slaving voyage. Rarely is this type of documents available in Cuban archives. They were private records that reached the government records only in the event of a legal dispute. The most common cause of disputes was squabbled among shareholders over suspected fraud. In legal cases, personal business accountings were released for the legal process. Court records yield what we know of the accounts of an expedition. The frigate *Atalanta*, captain Juan Jorge Peoli, arrived in Cuba on January 5, 1821, with 613 slaves from Africa.²⁰⁵ Fifty-three of the captives died during the

²⁰⁵ ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, Leg. 207, Exp. 32. *Voyages* ID: 125

middle passage. The owner of the slaving expedition, Francisco de Bengochea, made a profit of 208,584 pesos.

Expenses	
<i>Price of the frigate</i>	\$ 12,000
<i>Cargo for Africa</i>	\$ 40,832.4 ½
<i>Salaries to the crew</i>	\$ 4,233.5
<i>habilitación del buque</i>	\$ 12,929.3 ½
<i>Rancho (provisions for consumption on the voyage)</i>	\$ 8,138.3
TOTAL	\$ 78,134
Revenue	
<i>Sale of 613 slaves</i>	\$ 256,156
<i>Surplus money to return</i>	\$2,092
<i>Sale of the vessel</i>	\$12,000
TOTAL	\$270,248
To be deducted:	
<i>Extras paid to the crew, maintenance of the negroes, royal taxes, extra to the captain and gratuity to the crew</i>	\$ 48,855 ½
<i>For <u>my</u> [Captain] five percent commission on the \$256,156 sale of the negroes</i>	\$12,807
Money earned: \$ 208,584 4 ½	

Table 5: Accounts of the Frigate *Atalanta*, 1821. “Costo total de los gastos de la fragata *Atalanta*.” Archivo de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana, Fondo Esclavitud, 508-18.

Peoli earned \$130,450 or 63 percent of the original investment. The high profits of slaving expeditions explain why a ship captured by the Royal Navy or a maritime loss could be easily recovered by just one successful expedition. However successful or not, every time an expedition was concluded, a new one was being set up.

As this chapter has described, for all these gears of the Cuban slave trade machine to work efficiently, many small steps had to be routinely taken. Every voyage had to engage with administrative, bureaucratic, political, economic, financial, and international details.

Reconstructing an ordinary Cuban transatlantic slave trading expedition is a challenging task since the information is fragmentary. However, by using records produced by dozens of voyages, it is possible to extract key pieces of the whole. These topics have never been examined in systemically by the scholars of the Cuban slave trade. After 1815, the Cuban-based Atlantic slave has reached maturity. Dozens of commercial companies emerged with the main purpose of organizing expeditions to Africa. The Cuban slaving fleet was growing in numbers and in size of its vessels. Every year, more captain and sea officers were trained in this type of business. Trading networks between Cubans and African merchants expanded. Furthermore, the first Cuban slave trade outposts were established. The Cuban experience in Africa is the content of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Rio Pongo and Cuba: The Growth of a Slave-Trading Network, 1790-1820

In Memoriam: Bruce L. Mouser

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the expanding transatlantic slave trade from Rio Pongo was dominated off and on by Portuguese, British and North American slave carriers. The North American mainland and the West Indies were the main destination of the captives embarked in Rio Pongo. After 1808, Cuba and Rio Pongo became deeply connected and the island became the main destination of the slaves. This transformation resulted from a transference of networks to Cuba of foreign merchants who previously had dominated trade on Pongo. North Americans, in particular, linked Cuban merchants with specific slaving markets along the Upper Guinea coast such as Rio Pongo itself. By combining an Atlantic and African perspective, this chapter reconstructs the creation and expansion of a slave trading corridor between Cuba and Rio Pongo.

Central to my analysis is interpersonal relationships among North American, British, Cuban, and African traders. This chapter explores that process of integration between two slave trading markets and its people. It examines how named individuals—Europeans, North Americans, and Euroafricans—made Cubans a part of long-established trade syndicates. The chapter pushes scholarship past the study of “the Atlantic slave trade” as a series of economic transactions by exploring how a new slave trade was created by transforming a different and long-existing slave trade.

The first section of this chapter, *Preconditions (1790-1808)*, explores critical aspects explaining the ensuing creation of a slave-trading corridor between Cuba and Rio Pongo. I analyze the decades-long U.S. slave trade with both, Pongo and Havana before 1808. These

earlier American slave-trading networks are fundamental to understanding the emergence of a new slave-trading circuit between Cuba and Rio Pongo after the passage of the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves in 1808. The nature of the U.S. Atlantic slave trade and its rearrangement after 1808, however, does not entirely explain the establishment of the new slave-trading route between Havana and Rio Pongo. Internal conditions in Pongo itself were also crucial. Thus, I explore internal factors in Rio Pongo accounting for the gradual expansion of the region's Atlantic commerce in slaves, and the following link with Cuba after U.S. withdrawal in 1808. These include its geography, socio-ethnic composition, the expansion of trade and the trading community in the 1790s, the relationship between African landlords and foreign strangers, the role of slave traders in domestic socio-political affairs, and the historical relationship between Pongo and Futa Jallon. Since Futa Jallon was the leading provider of slaves to Rio Pongo from the interior, a study of its socio-economic and political transformations is fundamental to understanding the expansion of the Pongo slave market in the 1790s. Finally, I consider the effects on the Atlantic slave trade of the establishment of the British abolitionist settlement of Freetown which pushed slaving operations both north and south of Sierra Leone. Rio Pongo, about one hundred miles north of Freetown, was one of the regions to which the slave trade shifted.

The second section of this chapter, *Relocations (1808-1813)*, details how the U.S. abolition in 1808 resulted in a transfer of American slaving operations in Pongo to Cuba. To illustrate the re-alignment of the U.S.-Pongo circuit, I trace the commercial operations of individual slavers involved. This section not only describes U.S. traders moving back and forth between Cuba, the United States, and Rio Pongo but also the journeys of slave traders from Rio

Pongo to Havana. I pay particular attention to socio-political developments in Rio Pongo between 1808 and 1815, such as the conflicting relationship with Futa Jallon and Freetown.

The last section, *Expansion (1814-1820)*, explores the mechanisms of the Havana-Rio Pongo trading route. The increasing presence of Cuban slave ships in Pongo, the frequent exchange of communication between Cuban traders and their Pongo counterparts, and the settlement of agents from Pongo in Havana and vice versa illustrate the consolidation of this route.

Preconditions

The U.S. Slave Trade with Upper Guinea and Cuba, 1790-1808

During colonial times, the transportation of slaves to the North American mainland was mostly in the hands of commercial firms based in London, Bristol, and Liverpool.¹ After the proclamation of independence, North Americans, deprived of their traditional providers of forced labor, developed their own branch of the transatlantic slave trade. The United States, as a nation, accounted for most of slave arrivals. During the 1790s, the U.S. slave trade expanded even though every state had in place various laws banning such commerce.² Rhode Island is a remarkable—and the most studied—case of the “nationalization” and growth experienced by the U.S. slave trade.

Jay Coughtry estimated that between 1709 and 1807 vessels from Newport, Bristol, Providence, Warren, and other minor Rhode Island ports brought into the North-American

¹ For an analysis on the British intra-colonial voyages to colonial North America see Gregory E. O'Malley, “Final Passages. The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807.”

² For a list on the legislation enacted by each state and by the Federal Government see: W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Suppression of the African Slave Trade,” Appendix B, 230. For a concise summary and new estimates on the U.S. slave trade see: David Eltis, “The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644-1867: An Assessment.”

mainland 106,544 enslaved Africans in total.³ Forty-five percent of them, or around 47,500 people, arrived on board U.S.-flagged vessels after 1785. More recent estimates have raised the post-1785 figures to 78,000 Africans.⁴ Several factors account for the expansion of Rhode Island slave-trading operations. First, the U.S. developed a robust and very competitive merchant fleet boosted by the late eighteenth-century expansion of the whaling industry.⁵ Second, in 1784 the first Rhode Islander maritime insurance company was founded in Newport, replacing London firms as policy writers.⁶ Third, New England produced a type of rum, in high demand on parts of the African coast. Fourth, Rhode Islanders inherited colonial-era British trading networks in Africa. Firms, merchants, captains, and networks in Africa after 1785 were the same that had provided captives during colonial times. Fifth, the plantation economy in the South expanded and, with it, the need for slave labor. Finally, in the 1790s, new slave markets opened in the Caribbean, the most important of which was Cuba. In the case of the D'Wolf family: "Of the 10,000 slaves introduced by D'Wolf's vessels," according to Leonardo Marques, "5,588 were disembarked in Cuba."⁷

Between 1790 and 1808, Cuba became the leading foreign market for U.S. slavers. By allowing any foreigners to bring captives to the island, the 1789 Spanish Royal Order opened Cuban ports for U.S. slave ships. Geopolitical developments also favored the American competitiveness in the Cuban slave market. The French withdrew from the transatlantic slave

³ Jay Coughtry, "The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807," 26.

⁴ Leonardo Marques, "The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867," 22

⁵ Lance E. Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and T.D. Hutchins, "Call me Ishmael, not Domingo Floresta: The Rise and Fall of the American Whaling Industry." *Research in Economic History*, 13 (1991): 191-233. "The successful entrance of the U.S. merchant fleet in the slave trade, Leonardo Marques argues, was also due to its faster, cheaper, and smaller vessels, which carried fewer captives per voyage than other nations." Leonardo Marques, "The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776-1867," 16.

⁶ For the insurance business in Rhode Island see: Peter J. Coleman, "The Transformation of Rhode Island, 1790-1860," 208-212.

⁷ Leonardo Marques, *Ibid.*, 30.

trade in the aftermath of the collapse of Saint-Domingue. Portuguese, for legal reasons, did not bring in significant numbers of slaves to Cuba until after 1811. Britain, the major U.S. competitor, was excluded from the Cuban market during both Anglo-Spanish wars. The European and Napoleonic conflicts ushered in a period known as the “neutral trade” which resulted in the United States becoming the most important supplier of slaves to Cuba.⁸

Rhode Island’s slave trading reign within the U.S. was surpassed after 1803 due to the re-legalization of the transatlantic slave trade in South Carolina. Historians have discussed the reasons compelling Charleston to reopen the slave trade.⁹ Pertinent for this chapter is that the growth of Charleston resulted in a realignment of U.S. slave trading patterns in Africa. While Rhode Island received its slaves mostly from the Gold Coast, South Carolina imported them from West-Central Africa, Senegambia, and Upper Guinea.¹⁰ U.S. slave-trading routes and networks changed after 1803, with Upper Guinea gaining in importance.

The reopening of Charleston does not fully explain the U.S. slave-trading connections with Upper Guinea. That connection, as well with Senegambia, predates the reopening of Charleston, as David Eltis explains for the whole history of the U.S. slave trade:

The region just north of the Congo River supplied one-quarter of the captives arriving in North America, with the Bight of Biafra supplying approximately a further one-sixth. But the striking pattern is the preponderance of slaves from Upper Guinea over the whole period of the traffic (...) two out of five U.S. arrivals set out from Upper Guinea. Indeed, the only other region of the Americas that drew its largest source of slaves from Upper Guinea was Amazonia in Brazil. Like in the United States, Amazonia, too, was a marginal market for transatlantic slave ships, accounting for about 1.5 percent of the

⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁹ Patrick S. Brady, “The Slave Trade and Sectionalism in South Carolina, 1787-1808.” Handelsman Jed Shugerman, “The Louisiana Purchase and South Carolina’s Reopening of the Slave Trade in 1803.”

¹⁰ For the role of the Gold Coast on Rhode Island’s slave trade before 1803 see: <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=eDzy7fYU> (Consulted, February 22, 2019). For the origins of the slaves carried to South Carolina between 1803 and 1808 see: <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=eDzy7fYU> (Consulted, February 22, 2019).

total slave trade. Marginal markets in Africa supplied marginal markets in the Americas.¹¹

For various reasons, Upper Guinea has played a role in the history of the U.S. slave trade. Some historians have argued that the expansion of rice cultivation in the Lowcountry during the 1720s was both the cause and result of the importation of slaves from Upper Guinea. Historians still debate whether the development of rice plantations in the Lowcountry can be attributed to a selective importation of skilled rice farmers from the rice-growing regions along the Upper Guinea coast.¹² However, other factors were more important than planter preference for slaves from specific African ethnic groups.

First and most importantly, Senegambia and Upper Guinea are the closest regions in Africa to the United States. The ocean and wind currents in the North Atlantic facilitated navigation between Senegambia, Upper Guinea, and the United States. Upper Guinea was, like the U.S. itself, a marginal slave market in the Atlantic trade compared to others, such as Brazil, the British West Indies, or West-Central Africa. The marginal status of this trade matched well

¹¹ David Eltis, "The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644-1867," p. 357.

¹² Peter Wood was the first historian arguing that the experience brought by African rice farmers to North-America was vital for the development of the rice industry in South Carolina. Daniel Littlefield added to the debate that the slaves from Senegambia were key in bringing rice cultivation techniques to the Lowcountry. The argument that the African captives from Senegambia and Upper Guinea were responsible for the rice industry development in South Carolina known as the "black rice" thesis was pushed even further by Judith Carney who argued that slaves used their skills to negotiate the conditions of their bondage. Historian Edda Fields-Black followed Littlefield and Carney's argument adding more African context to the discussion. In 2010, the "Black Rice thesis" generated a fierce debate among historians who either refuted, supported, or had a middle ground. For those against Carney's argument see David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson. For an example of a historian siding with the Black Rice thesis see Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. A middle ground called "Brown Rice" thesis is represented by Walter Hawthorne. Peter H. Wood, 1974. "Black majority; Negroes in colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion," 56. Daniel C. Littlefield, "Rice and slaves: ethnicity and the slave trade in colonial South Carolina," 8. Judith Ann Carney, "Black rice: the African origins of rice cultivation in the Americas," 78. Edda L. Fields-Black, "Deep roots rice farmers in West Africa and the African diaspora." David Eltis, Philip Morgan, and David Richardson, "Agency and Diaspora in Atlantic History. Reassessing the African Contribution to Rice Cultivation in the Americas," 1335. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, "Africa and Africans in the African Diaspora: The Uses of Relational Databases," 141. Walter Hawthorne, "From 'Black Rice' to 'Brown': Rethinking the History of Rice in the seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Atlantic."

with the smaller numbers of slaves available in Upper Guinea and the more limited financial capabilities of the early U.S. slave traders. Finally, British networks between the U.S. and Upper Guinea survived the American Revolution.¹³

Within the region of Upper Guinea, Rio Pongo was the leading slave market for slaves disembarked in Charleston before 1808. Between 1803 and 1808, Charleston received 9,600 slaves from ports along the Upper Guinea coast. Of them, around 5,000 came from Pongo.¹⁴ If we add to this picture that between 1804 and 1808, Charleston became the primary provider of slaves to Cuba, it is not hard to conclude that many slaves from Pongo ended in the Spanish island.¹⁵ Such connections between Rio Pongo and Cuba would survive and expand after the U.S. abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. From the Rio Pongo perspective, North-America was particularly important, given that 67.5 percent of the slaves embarked in Pongo (7,400) between 1803 and 1808, headed to Charleston, and only 27 percent to the British West Indies.¹⁶ The second most important question to answer is what factors within Rio Pongo explain the expansion of its slave trading operations and its relative importance in the slave trade to the United States?

Rio Pongo and the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1790-1808¹⁷

Pongo's geographical conditions were optimal for Atlantic slave trading in the post-1808 era. Rio Pongo is a broad name for the combined estuary of seven short rivers flowing to the

¹³ W. Robert Higgins, "Charles Town Merchants and Factors Dealing in the External Negro Trade 1735-1775." 205-217. The case of Henry Laurens and Richard Oswald in Bance Island is well-studied link between Sierra Leone and the Lowcountry that survived the American revolution.

¹⁴ Voyages <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=eDzy7fYU> (Consulted, March 3, 2019).

¹⁵ For the importance of Charleston in the Cuban slave trade between 1804 and 1808 see chapter 2.

¹⁶ Voyages <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=KSEakNz6> (Consulted, February 27, 2019).

¹⁷ This chapter would not have been possible without the extensive scholarship of Bruce Mouser, the specialist *par excellence* on the history of Rio Pongo. My major addition to Mouser's work consists in introducing the Cuban slave trade in the analysis. Second, this chapter owes to Marial Iglesias Utset with whom I reconstructed over many years the trading networks between Rio Pongo and Cuba.

Atlantic coast. Characterized by mud and sand bars, the river mouths stretch across a 25-mile expanse of the Atlantic coast in what is today Guinea Conakry. The longest tributary of Rio Pongo is the Fatala river, also known as Pongo, which originates on the Futa Jallon plateau. The landscape between the water source in Futa Jallon and the Atlantic outlet is initially hilly, with elevation decreasing rapidly as the river descends to the coastal plain. The river carries significant amounts of silt from the highlands which make the river valley suitable for the cultivation of rice, yam, cassava, and other crops. Near the ocean, the shores of Rio Pongo are comprised of mangrove forests and wetlands and broken by numerous islands and creeks. Such topography was ideal for slave ships seeking to hide from enemies, especially from the British navy after 1808. The rainy season lasts from April to September; the remaining months were the slave trading season (Figures 16-19).¹⁸

Socially, Upper Guinea at large is known for the migrations, displacements, and assimilations of its diverse ethnolinguistic groups.¹⁹ A critical transformation in the human composition of Upper Guinea happened in the first half of the thirteenth century, when the Susu people, a splinter fraction of the Mande ethnolinguistic group, migrated en masse to the south and south-west of Futa Jallon after the collapse of the empire of Ghana.²⁰ When the Susu reached Futa Jallon, they forced the indigenous residents of the plateau—the Bagas, Limbas, and Landumas—to move coastward. The Bagas moved southwest settling in Rio Nuñez and Rio

¹⁸ Bruce Mouser, “in the Nunez and Pongo River, 1790-1865,” 1-4.

¹⁹ The oldest habitants in the region from south to north were the Djolas (southern Gambia), Banhuns (between Gambia and Cacheau), Casangas (Casamanced River), Papels and Balantas (from Cacheau to Geba), Beafadas (Bolama Islands), Bijagos (islands outside the estuary of Geba), Bulloms, Kissis, and Krims (between Cape Verga and Cape Mount), and Limbas (Sierra Leone estuary). For the Senegambia ethnic groups see: Boubacar Barry, “Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade,” 17-25. For a detailed study on the Balantas, Papels, and Bijagos see Walter Hawthorne, “Planting Rice Harvesting Slaves. Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400-1900.” For the ethnic groups in Upper Guinea at the time of the European arrival see, David Wheat, “Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640,” 20-67. For the ethnic composition of the regions of Rio Nunez and Rio Pongo see: Bruce Mouser, “Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo River, 1790-1865,” 1-48.

²⁰ Walter Rodney, “Jihad and Social Revolution in Futa Djallon in the Eighteenth Century,” 269.

Pongo.²¹ Those Bagas who remained in Futa Jallon assimilated into the Susu culture and, along with other ethnic groups, were known as the Djalonke or Yalunka people, “the inhabitants of the Jallon.”²²

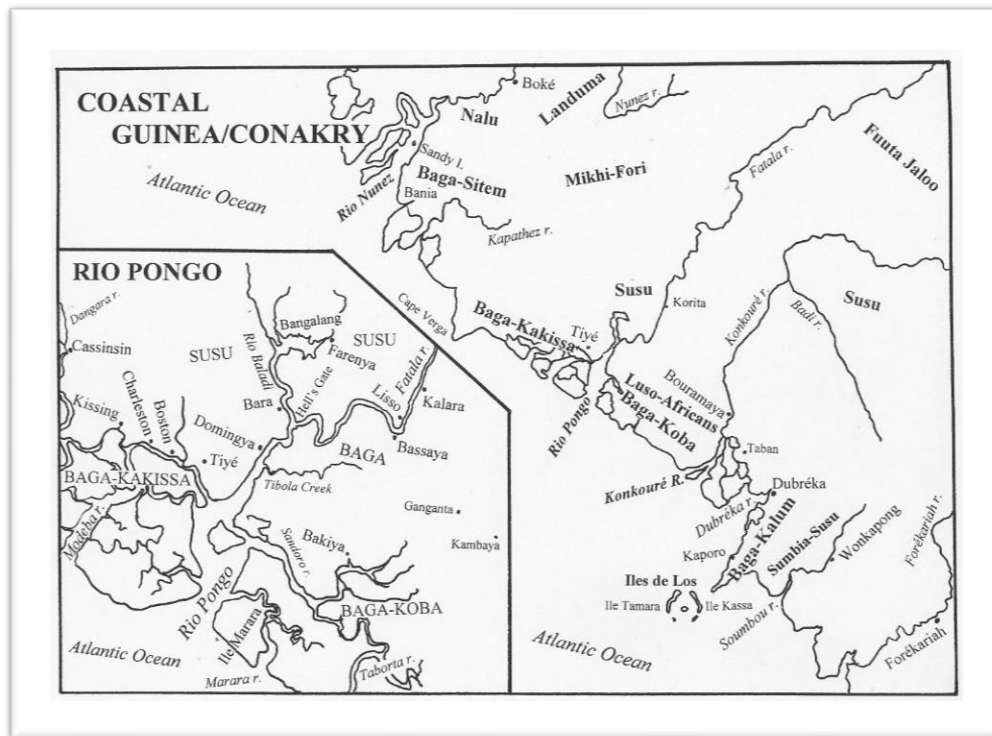


Figure 16: Rio Pongo and Coastal Guinea Conakry, Map by Bruce L. Mouser. Mouser, Bruce L. “The Rio Pongo Crisis of 1820 and the Search for a Strategy for the Anti-Slavery Squadron off West Africa.” 150.

²¹ Bruce L. Mouser, “Who and Where Were the Baga? European Perceptions from 1793 to 1821,” 337–364.

²² Walter Rodney, “A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545 to 1800,” 11.



Figure 17: The Mouth of Rio Pongo (1858). Mouths of the River Pongas, surveyed by Cmdr. E. Belcher, 1830. TBNA, FO 925/830

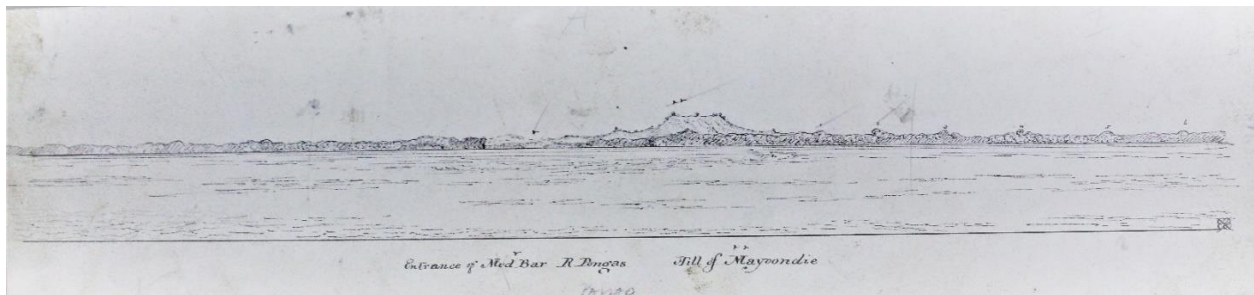


Figure 18: Entrance of Mud Bar, Rio Pongo, (1852). "Africa, W Coast: Guinea: Cape Verga and Rio Nunez, vicinity," TBNA, ADM 344/932.



Figure 20: Sand Bar, Rio Pongo, from 5 Miles (1852). “Africa, W Coast: Guinea: Cape Verga and Rio Nunez, vicinity,” TBNA, ADM 344/932.

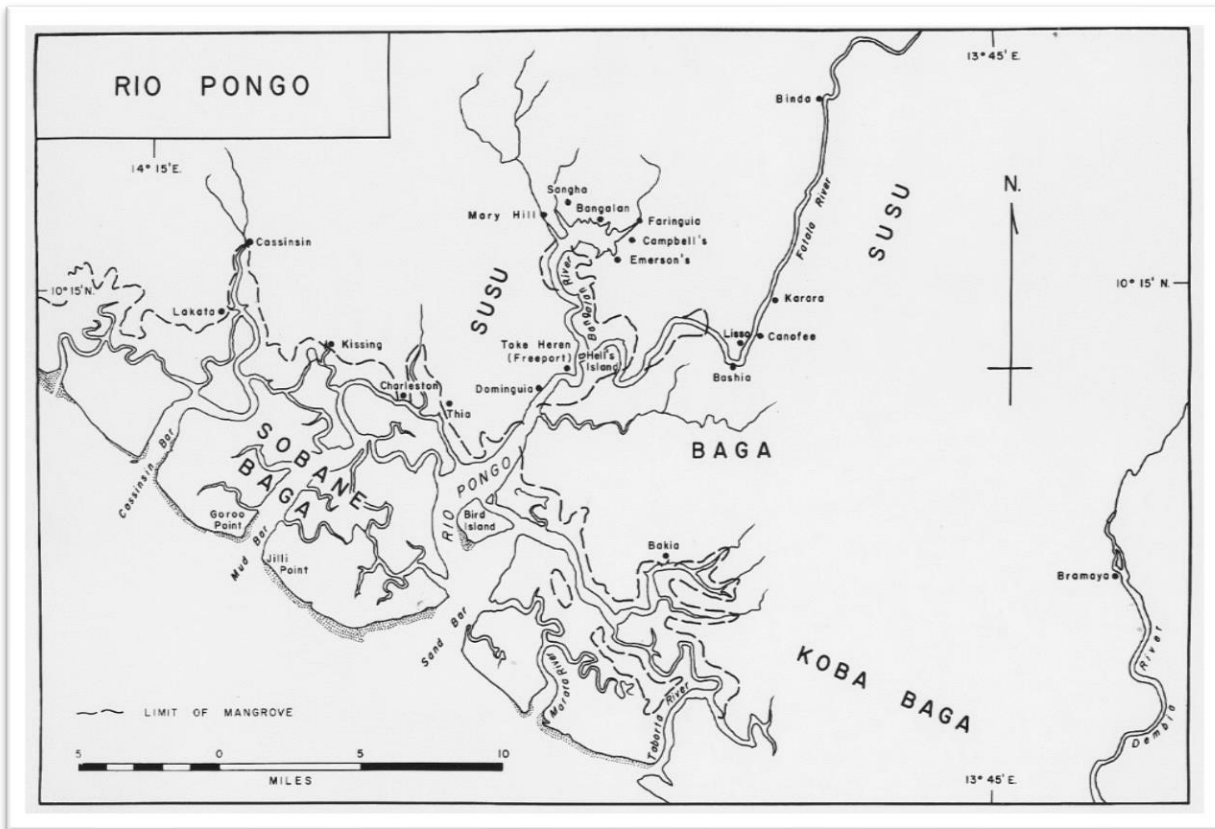


Figure 19: Ethno-linguistic groups Rio Pongo (1808). Map created by Bruce Mouser, “Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo Rivers,” Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1971. 16

A second slow migration occurred in the late fifteenth century when Fula pastoralists began arriving at the Futa Jallon plateau. As a result, some Susus migrated from Futa Jallon to Rio Pongo, where they held positions of power over the Bagas already living in the river.²³ Over

²³ Bruce Mouser, “Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo River, 1790-1865,” 5-24.

time, a commercial route was established between Futa Jallon and Pongo. Fula merchants from Futa Jallon carried to Pongo iron bars, weapons, clothing, dyestuffs, and cattle in exchange for salt, rice, and sea products. With the rise of the European slave trade in the sixteenth century, the trade between Pongo and the interior increased. In the late sixteenth century, Andre Alvarez de Almada described caravans of Djalonke and Susu merchants trading with Rio Pongo.²⁴

By the seventeenth century, there were groups of Muslim merchants and teachers from Messina in present-day Mali, and Senegal living in Futa Jallon. They established schools, mosques, markets, and practiced as respected doctors. From their arrival, Muslim Fula proselytized among the agriculturalist Jalonkes and non-Muslim, pastoralist Fula. At first, this Muslim population was subordinate to the Jalonkes' landlords. Over time, however, they gained power in the region. The Fula grew and expanded their settlements across the plateau. Part of the reason for the consolidation of the Fula in Futa Jallon was the expansion of merchant caravans to the coast to satisfy the increasing European demand for slaves. Commerce in slaves, livestock, and other products reached the coast via Fula merchants. Thus, Muslim Fula merchants increased their wealth and gained power in their communities. Still, they were under the political control of the Jalonkes, who were having trouble collecting taxes and governing the land. Around the 1720s, the Muslim Fula from Timbo began a series of religious Jihads. According to Winston McGowan, "the main aim apparently was to overthrow the Jalonke overlords and to force them to accept Muslim Fula rule."²⁵ By 1726, the Muslim leader Karamoko Alfa was able to unify a territory comprising about half of the Futa Jallon plateau. The theocracy of Futa Jallon was born. In the ensuing years, it became the most powerful political entity in Upper Guinea.

²⁴ Andres Alvarez de Almada, "Brief treatise on the Rivers of Guinea, c. 1594," 14.

²⁵ Winston Franklin McGowan, "The development of European relations with Futa Jallon and the foundation of French colonial rule 1794-1897," 26.

The Alimani (Al Iman or teacher) Karamoko Alfa of Timbo reigned over Futa Jallon until his death in 1751. His successor was a renowned military leader by the name of Ibrahim Sori, not from the founding Alfa family. The death of Sori in 1784 unleashed a succession of political conflicts that lasted for five decades. Both sides, the descendants of Alfa and Sori, claimed their right to rule over Futa Jallon. The two families agreed on a weak compromise by which the Alfaya and the Soriya dynasties would alternate in power. This method of succession was formalized in the 1840s when the period of alternating power was reduced to two years. The kingdom of Futa Jallon kept expanding during the 1800s eventually reaching the coast.

In 1794, according to McGowan, Futa Jallon was by far the largest state in the hinterland of the Upper Guinea Coast. It was, however, not easy to define its boundaries with precision, for the northern and western frontiers, in particular, were continually shifting as the Fulas kept pushing Jalonkes toward the Upper Gambia and the coast. Although the boundaries had not yet reached the edge of the massif in any direction, all the neighboring countries were subject to direct Fula military expeditions.²⁶

While the kingdom of Futa Jallon coalesced, Bagas and Susus were the two main ethnic groups occupying Rio Pongo (Figure 20).²⁷ The Bagas were politically subordinated to the Susu, and both were tributary to Futa Jallon. While in the Bagas' case, villages were the primary political unit, with chieftaincies governing under the consent of the elders, the Susu had two main paramount chieftaincies in the towns of Bangalan and Dominguia. Crucial for politics was the secret society known as Simo.²⁸ Significant administrative and judicial issues were decided by a gathering of chiefs, called "palaver," a customary practice across the Upper Guinea region. Rice, kola, and salt were the main staples produced and traded with Futa Jallon in the interior. The fact that Rio Pongo was not a centralized political region under the control of a single state,

²⁶ Ibid., 47.

²⁷ Bruce Mouser, "Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo River, 1790-1865," 15.

²⁸ Ibid., 15-20.

partially explains the vast political influence gained by foreign merchants in the area as well as the variety of internal conflicts among rulers that grew in tandem with the slave trade.

Besides Bagas and Susus, Europeans and Euro-Africans were the other distinctive social group settled in Rio Pongo. Although demographically a minority, they held great power because of their commercial networks. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach Senegambia and Upper Guinea in the late 1400s. From their initial settlements in the islands of Cape Verde, Luso traders and their Afro-Portuguese descendants settled along the coast, earning the name of *Lançados*—those who “threw” themselves onto Africa.²⁹ The newcomers forged kinship ties with African landlords by engaging in relationships with women in those communities.³⁰ George Brooks defined this process of accommodation and assimilation between “landlords and strangers,” as a form of social contract predating the Atlantic slave trade.³¹ The “strangers,” in exchange for protection of themselves and properties, paid annual tributes and offered resources to the landlords during times of war.³² Over time, the “strangers” and their descendants became active members of the communities. Culturally speaking, the Euro-Africans were situated between their African communities and their European ancestors. They performed middleman functions for European merchants and African chiefs. Over time, the Portuguese monopoly in

²⁹ For the role of these first European traders in Upper Guinea see: Walter Rodney, “Portuguese attempts at monopoly on the Upper Guinea Coast, 1580-1650,” 307-22.

³⁰ Walter Hawthorne, “Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves,” 59.

³¹ George E. Brooks, “Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society, and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630,” Boulder: Westview Press, 1993. George E. Brooks, “Eurafricans in Western Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century,” 44-56.

³² Bruce Mouser describes how strangers were admitted in Pongo: “Upon their arrival each trader, following the patterns previously established with the *Lançados*, sought the permission of a chief to build or purchase a factory. The chief to whom he made the request called a conference of the chiefs who might be the most affected as well as his paramount-chief. Together, they reached a specific custom and granted the stranger permission to move freely among a number of villages. Established practice requires the trader to entertain the chiefs at his own expense at a *dantica* or “exposition of purposes. These festivities, which solemnized the landlord-stranger contract, generally lasted several days, and included gifts of rum, tobacco, and gunpowder to the chiefs and paramount-chiefs of the district. Bruce Mouser, “Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo River, 1790-1865,” 25.

Upper Guinea was broken. French, Dutch, and British traders settled from Senegal to Cape Mount, in present-day Liberia.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, the Royal Adventurers of England, then the Royal African Company were the leading traders in Sherbro, Bance Island, and the Sierra Leone estuary.³³ From Bance Island, British merchants had frequent communication and commercial exchange with Rio Pongo. Some of these traders settled in Rio leaving behind a community of influential Euro-Africans traders. British traders and their descendants would be responsible for connecting Rio Pongo with the United States.

John Ormond Sr. (1750-1791) was the most notorious British slave trader in Rio Pongo in the late eighteenth century. Ormond sailed from Liverpool, England, to West Africa as a cabin boy. He settled first in Rio Nunez and later moved to Bashia, a village in Rio Pongo, where he married the daughters of several Susu and Baga chiefs. One of his children, John Ormond Jr., was sent to England for education, as was typical for the offspring of British slave traders along the African coast.³⁴ In 1791, John Ormond Sr. died. His son returned to Pongo from London in 1805 to run his father's slave-trading business.³⁵ Ormond Jr. would become the most powerful slaver in the region until his death in the 1830s. He became the most important ally of Cuban merchants in their nascent Atlantic slave-trading adventures.

By the 1790s, U.S. citizens became part of the community of slave traders in Rio Pongo. A notorious example was Benjamin Curtis (1774-c1820), an Afro-American from Boston who moved to Rio Pongo in the early 1790s.³⁶ Curtis started working in Pongo as the assistant of Mr.

³³ Fyfe, Christopher, "A History of Sierra Leone," 4.

³⁴ Theodore Canot, "Adventures of an African Slaver," 76-77.

³⁵ Bruce Mouser, "Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo Rivers, 1790-1865," 25.

³⁶ Bruce Mouser, "Trade, Coasters, and Conflicts in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808," 50.

Gaffery, another American citizen engaged in the slave trade.³⁷ Curtis named his “factory” after his hometown, *Boston*. It was not the only slave trade outpost in Rio Pongo named after an American locale. In the trading center of Bangara, there were two “factories,” *Charleston* and *South Carolina*, both administered by American traders.³⁸ In 1796, Zachary Macaulay, the governor in Sierra Leone, observed that “during the last years, the number of American slave traders on the coast has increased to an unprecedented degree.”³⁹

While the community of British and Americans expanded in the Pongo area, the abolitionist movement was achieving ever-growing influence in London. In 1788, Granville Sharp succeeded in creating a Christian abolitionist settlement in Sierra Leone.⁴⁰ The first challenge for Freetown as the settlement came to be called, was economic survival. Officers of the Sierra Leone Company conceived of a trade route between Freetown and Timbo, Futa Jallon’s capital, thus by-passing Rio Pongo, and bringing Futa Jallon’s coastal trade south to Freetown. In 1794, the Sierra Leone Company dispatched James Watt, a former planter from Dominica, to Timbo to negotiate a commercial agreement.⁴¹ The Alimani Sadu of Timbo recommended, through his ambassador in Freetown, that Sierra Leone should instead trade with Futa Jallon through the existing trade route to Rio Pongo.⁴² By the spring of 1795, the British agreed with chief Cumba Bali Damba, “the Susu chief of Dominguia and recognized King of the

³⁷ Bruce Mouser, “American Colony on the Rio Pongo,” 21.

³⁸ Another U.S. citizen living in Rio Pongo was William Skelton (1780-1804), Bruce Mouser, “Trade, Coasters, and Conflicts in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808,” 52.

³⁹ James McMillin, “The Final Victims: Foreign Slave Trade to North America, 1783-1810,” 44.

⁴⁰ Christopher Fyfe, “A History of Sierra Leone,” 23.

⁴¹ For a diary of James Watt expedition see: Bruce Mouser, (ed.), “Journal of James Watt: expedition to Timbo, capital of the Fula Empire in 1794,” African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1994.

⁴² This project, however, had to be postponed. In 1794, France, at war against England, burned down Freetown. On the 28 of September, a French fleet took possession, and in five days destroyed all the company buildings, and plundered all their properties. Christopher Fyfe, “A History of Sierra Leone,” 59. TBNA, Council, Oct. 1794, CO 270/3. TBNA, Council, May 5, 1794, CO 270/2.

Rio Pongo,” to rent a piece of land to establish the slave trade outpost.⁴³ It would be known as *Freeport*, and, as its name suggests, would only host what was known as “legitimate commerce.”

Traders in Rio Pongo were not satisfied with Bali’s deal of allowing abolitionist strangers to settle in the river. Richard Buckle, the commercial agent from Freetown in Pongo, informed his superiors in May 1795, that “during my short absence from the river, the factors had jointly been using every means to misinterpret us using presents of rum among the lower class to stir them up to do mischiefs.”⁴⁴ A few months later, in September, the situation worsened;

Most of the traders in the River -according to Buckle- were up in arms against the Factory and wished to have the people and all the Sierra Leone Company’s property destroyed. They have attempted to bribe my landlord, and they endeavored to incense the natives to make war on the Factory. They carried the matter so far as to call a Palaver which lasted three or four days. The names of them are as follows, Mr. Ferrie, Mr. Skelton, Mr. Irving, Mr. Curtis. These are the head men in this dirty business.⁴⁵

In 1802, Freeport was abandoned. It had been opposed by all the major slave traders in the region and was not producing enough revenues for the landlord Cumba Bali. In addition, the administrators of Freeport did not follow local rules on how to perform business in the region, maintain payment of “taxes” due, or behave according to local customs with their landlords.⁴⁶ Besides, Freetown itself was in crisis. European wars interrupted commerce with the rest of the Atlantic, and wars of successions and an internal revolt in 1796 in Futa Jallon interrupted trade with the interior. But the British did not abandon their intention of diverting commerce from Rio Pongo to Freetown.

⁴³ Bruce Mouser, “Trade, Coasters, and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808,” 50. TBNA, Council, May 5, 1795, CO 270/3. Cumba Bali moved his residence to Thia in 1797.

⁴⁴ TBNA, Council, May 19, 1795, CO 270/3.

⁴⁵ TBNA, Council, September 1, 1795, CO 270/3. Notice the name of Americans involved in the conspiracy.

⁴⁶ Bruce Mouser, “Trade and Politics in the Nunez and Pongo Rivers, 1790-1865,” 62-73.

With support from England, Freetown gained in strength, and a subtler strategy emerged to submit Pongo's residents to Freetown's *modus vivendi*. In 1808, the Church Missionary Society established a school in Bashia, Rio Pongo, with the support of several merchants and African chiefs. The mission was welcomed as an educational opportunity for the children of merchants and chiefs in the area.⁴⁷ Instructions in English and arithmetic were advantageous for commerce in the region. However, the Pongo mission was heavily but secretly engaged in fighting the slave trade. Missionaries became Freetown's spies within the Rio Pongo region, and both merchants and chiefs took notice.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the slave trade in Rio Pongo expanded. Steady supplies of slaves continued from the interior region of Futa Jallon; Susu and Baga rulers were profiting from the human trade, and the region was attracting European and U.S. merchants. Moreover, the community of traders in Pongo was aware that the most critical slave markets in the Americas, the U.S., and the West Indies, were about to close. They also knew that Cuba was a rapidly growing market for African captives. A major re-alignment began. More U.S. traders joined the slave trading community in Pongo and started trading with Cuba; others moved from Pongo to the United States. Several others started doing business directly in Havana. These shifts provided opportunities for Cubans to join the Rio Pongo slave trade. The final catalyst was the enforced abolition of the Atlantic slave trade in the U.S. and England beginning in 1808.

Cuba, Rio Pongo, and the United States, 1808-1813. The Relocation of Slave Trading Networks

In 1808, the American slave trader Jacob Faber sailed from Charleston to Cuba aboard the *General Reding*. Faber had conducted business in Cuba before. The purpose of the voyage

⁴⁷ Ibid., 83-86.

was to register the vessel as the property of a Spanish nominal owner and sail it to Africa. The British were aware of this American strategy to sustain their involvement in the slave trade. As the “Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institution” explains:⁴⁸

(The Spanish color) covers not only American but also (there are many reasons to believe) a considerable number of vessels actually British property. The American master and crew generally continue on board after the formal transfer, and two foreigners, under the denomination of captain and supercargo, are added to the ship. It frequently happens this nominal captain is some poor lad who has never been at sea before, but whose services to carry the papers can be had cheap. The object of these Spanish Americans is to fill Cuba, Florida, Louisiana and the Southern deserts of North America with slaves.⁴⁹

In Havana, the Spanish merchant Antonio Frias agreed to function as Faber’s figurehead. Through Frias, Faber bought the *General Reding* and registered it at a state notary as Spanish property but under the same name.⁵⁰ The second step was hiring a Spanish subject as the captain of the ship. The chosen individual was Joaquim Dos Santos, who was a Portuguese-born and Spanish-naturalized seaman. On the instructions given to Santos for the voyage, Frias explicitly said that Faber would be the master of the vessel. The rest of the crew were mostly North Americans.⁵¹ The ship sailed to Rio Pongo in mid-1808.

For a brief period at the end of 1808, the abolitionists believed that the laws passed by England and the U.S. would be effective and that soon the Atlantic slave trade would end. They had reason to be optimistic. In 1807, about 98,000 slaves left the African coast; in 1808, the

⁴⁸ The African Institution was founded in 1807 to promote abolitionist ideas and, more specifically, to help the consolidation of the British settlement of Freetown. They produced annual summaries of their activities which are a trove of information for historians interested in the precolonial history of the Upper Guinea region.

⁴⁹ “Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institution,” 86.

⁵⁰ Frías migrated from El Hierro in Canary Island to Cuba with his parents in the late eighteenth century. Very soon, he engaged in slave-trading operations, first as the consignee of foreign expeditions, and later as the owner of Spanish slave ships. There is evidence that Frias imported to Cuba at least 8,390 slaves. Jaruco, “Familias Cubanas,” v. 2, 145.

⁵¹ “D. Antonio de Frías contra D. Joaquín Dos Santos Méndez y Manuel Larrazabal sobre negros,” ANC, “Tribunal de Comercio,” 442-15.

trade decreased to 39,200, and in 1809 it dropped to 37,200.⁵² The slave trade in Rio Pongo almost ended after 1808 since its two main markets, Charleston and the British West Indies were no longer accepted the importation of enslaved individuals. However, as a missionary observed, the trade in slaves from Rio Pongo did not die in 1809.

After an interval of fourteen months, during which no slave vessel had visited the Rio Pongas, which, previous to the abolition, had held a distinguished place as a slave port, one arrived at the beginning of the year of 1809, to the great grief and horror of the missionaries. The captain of the slaver was a Spaniard, and the supercargo an Englishman. She was laden with rum and tobacco, which the captain sold at a very high price for slaves. This quite raised the spirits of the traders, as they flattered themselves with the speedy arrival of more vessels. The Soosoos also, but especially the chiefs, expressed great delight at the prospect of the return of slave ships.⁵³

One of the Spanish-flagged ships that made its way to Pongo 1809 was the *General Reding*. When the ship arrived in September, it began taking on water. Santos and Faber decided to repair it in Dominguia, the most populated village and Susu commercial center on the northern bank of the Pongo.⁵⁴ There, the *General Reding* was condemned. Captain Dos Santos and the rest of the crew had to face the perturbing reality of waiting for the next slave ship from Havana. After a few weeks stranded in Dominguia, the sailors started getting anxious.⁵⁵ It was well known that the rate of survival for white “visitors” to the Upper Guinea coast was low. On the other hand, Rio Pongo was already a destination for slave ships coming from Havana, and it was the high season for the slave trade.

⁵²*Voyages* <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=eDzy7fYU> (Consulted, March 1, 2019)

⁵³ Walker, Samuel A., “Missions in Western Africa, among the Soosoos, Bulloms, &c,” 233.

⁵⁴ Dominguia was founded in the mid-eighteenth century by the Susu leader Domin Kate of the Damba clan, hence the name of Dominguia. By the early nineteenth century, Dominguia was one of the Susu chieftaincies in the region and the residence of Chief Uli Kati. Bruce Mouser, “Trade, Coasters, and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808,” 73.

⁵⁵ “D. Antonio de Frías contra D. Joaquín Dos Santos Méndez y Manuel Larrazabal sobre negros,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 442-15.

According to later testimony, Faber left the rest of the crew behind and went to his “factory” or trading post in Sangha on the shores of the Bangalan river, a region under Ormond’s control in one of the branches of Rio Pongo, where he remained until 1815. Jacob Faber was not alone. His younger brother, Paul, accompanied him. Decades later, in the late 1840s, during one of his trips to Havana, Paul Faber met with the American painter Jonathan S. Jenkins to whom he confessed how he ended up in Pongo. The artist wrote in his diary about what he heard from Faber:

In the hotel where I lived, I met many persons of different nations and character, some of whom were slavers. The most prominent of these was a man named Paul Febre [sic], a native from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. His father was a Lutheran clergyman in the village of Chambersburg, and his elder brother was a seafaring man. This brother [Jacob] was much older than Paul, and in his many adventures by sea and land had set up a slave-depot on the river Ponga, in Africa. He visited the United States, and took back with him his brother Paul, then only twelve years of age. When Paul was eighteenth years old, his brother died and left him all his properties, including the slave factory. At the time of this bequest, Paul had been fully initiated into all the mysteries of this horrible traffic, and he became a very extensive slave-dealer and made frequent journeys to Cuba.⁵⁶

In October 1809, the Spanish schooner *Nuestra Señora de Loreto* from Havana and commanded by captain Manuel Larrazábal, anchored in Pongo. Larrazábal agreed to transport the crew of the *General Reding* back to Cuba. Captain Joaquim Dos Santos sold the General Reding’s cargo of slaves to captain Larrazábal to pay the ticket to Cuba. Jacob Faber, on the other hand, remained “in a trade outpost to collect negroes and goods from Africa,” as members of the crew later declared.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ “The Century: Illustrated Monthly Magazine,” New York, 56: 944. Thanks to Marial Iglesias for providing this reference.

⁵⁷ “D. Antonio de Frías contra D. Joaquín Dos Santos Méndez y Manuel Larrazabal sobre negros,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 442-15.

In December 1809, *Nuestra Señora de Loreto* arrived in Havana from Pongo after forty-two days of navigation. It had on board a cargo of 321 slaves and the surviving members of the *General Reding*.⁵⁸ Antonio Frias, the nominal owner of *General Reding*, sued captains Dos Santos and Larrazábal for selling the slaves that, Frias said, belonged to him. During the trial, Larrazábal revealed the true nature of Frías business with Faber;

The time will come I will reveal that, in fact, Frias' commerce is no other than concealing foreign properties against the spirit of the "Ley de Indias," which prohibits and even condemns with the death penalty this type of transaction (...). Frias had no more participation in the voyage than being a hidden figurehead of the properties of Faber, who could not, by himself, do that business using the flag of his own nation.⁵⁹

Antonio Frías lost his case, but he did not experience any trouble for the fraud. Using the Spanish flag was normalized, and many colonial officials facilitated the practice. Jacob Faber, on the other hand, continued sending slaves to Havana from his trading outpost in Pongo. His commercial operations in the United States, Cuba, and Rio Pongo became the typical pattern in the aftermath of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

By 1809, when Jacob Faber disembarked in Pongo, the region had become the main target of the abolitionist government of Freetown. The British were still struggling to create direct trade with Futa Jallon, and the slave trade in Pongo was an obstacle to this goal. Trading caravans from Timbo preferred to continue conducting operations through Pongo where, unlike Sierra Leone, a long-established and flourishing market allowed the sale of slaves. The language used in the writings of Freetown officers reflects the animosity toward the trading community in Rio Pongo with an often-interwoven thread of abolitionist feelings and economic rationale. Freetown was in a precarious position. The British could not attack Pongo directly since they did

⁵⁸ *El Aviso*, Dec. 12, 1809. *Voyages* ID: 14530.

⁵⁹ "D. Antonio de Frías contra D. Joaquín Dos Santos Méndez y Manuel Larrazabal sobre negros."

not have the resources to do so. Furthermore, a direct invasion would be understood by the community of African chiefs in Pongo as a violation of their sovereignty, and this could complicate potential negotiations with Timbo. Freetown colonial authorities needed an excuse for a more aggressive stance against their neighbors. That excuse came in the form of a slave ship.

On August 26, 1809, Freetown's newspaper, the *African Herald*, announced the capture in Pongo of the Swedish slave ship *Penel* from St. Barthelemy.⁶⁰ During the court proceedings, evidence surfaced showing that an allegedly-British subject living in Pongo, Samuel Samo, had sold eighteen slaves to the *Penel*. Authorities in Freetown knew that there were Englishmen in the Pongo trade: the missionaries had been informing them about the issue. The British case against Samuel Samo gained notoriety over the next two years, and it would become the British justification for intervening in Rio Pongo.

Samuel Samo was 39 at the time the *Penel* was captured. At eighteen, he settled in Suriname from where, in 1795, he moved to the U.S. In 1797, Samo settled on the in the Rio Pongo region on a river named Charleston. He did so at a time when internal conflicts in Futa Jallon and the wars between the Fula and the Susu resulted in an abundance of captives who were sold south to the coast.⁶¹ From his factory, Samo sent slaves to the United States in partnership with traders from South Carolina, Spanish Florida, and Cuba. In 1809, he founded what Bruce Mouser called the "trading syndicate of the Rio Pongo," a coalition of slave traders which included among its members the Faber brothers. Bruce Mouser described the goals of the "syndicate" in the following terms:

⁶⁰ *African Herald*, August 26, 1809.

⁶¹ "The Trials of the Slave Traders," 21.

In November 1809, Samo and four other traders from the Iles de Los and the Rio Pongo met and developed a plan to continue and improve the marketing of slaves along this section of the coast. They formed a syndicate that would regulate who could participate in the Pongo and Iles de Los marketplace, implement an allotment or quota system for supplying slaves to shippers, and regularize prices, all actions that would speed up the loading and shipping process and remove cutthroat competition in the coastal marketplace.⁶²

A few factors catalyzed the campaign against Samo after the evidence gathered from the *Penel's* case. First, in 1811, the British government had passed the "Slave Trade Felony Act" which increased the penalty for trading slaves from just a fine to fourteen years in prison. The second decisive factor was the appointment of Charles Maxwell as the governor of Sierra Leone (1811-1815). Governor Maxwell, an active abolitionist, had an aggressive stance against slavers in the rivers surrounding Sierra Leone.

Immediately after taking the position of governor of Freetown, Maxwell received reports of several slave ships trading in Rio Pongo. Maxwell ordered the sloop *George* to go in the river. Previously, British vessels had patrolled the mouth of Rio Pongo, but they did not dare to chase ships into the interior. HMS *George* was the first to take that risk, changing "the previous British policy of surveillance and seizure of slavers on the high-seas to one of direct intervention on the coast." One of the missionaries living in Pongo, Melchior Renner, stated that, after the intrusion of the *George*, the paramount Susu chief from Thia, Uli Kati, reacted to the British military aggression and, supported by his son-in-law Thomas Curtis, captured the *George* and its crew.⁶³ The British prisoners were held in Samuel Samo's factory, a mile from Kati's town. In response, in September 1811, Maxwell sent *HMS Tigress* to rescue his men.⁶⁴ Chief Kati and thirteen of

⁶² Bruce Mouser, "The Trial of Samuel Samo and the Trading syndicates of the Rio Pongo, 1797-1812," 424.

⁶³ "Renner to Secretary, October 30, 1811," CMS, CAI/E2/105.

⁶⁴ HM *Tigress* had captured between March and April 1810 two slave ships off the Rio Pongo, the brig *Rayo*, and the schooner *Lucia* (aka *Albert*), both under Spanish flags but undoubtedly American property. Grindal, Peter, "Opposing the Slavers," 115. *Voyages* ID: *Rayo* (7588), *Lucia* (7585).

his people boarded the *Tigress* to negotiate with the British. After the *palavers*, Chief Kati, facing a potential British attack, blamed the white dealers, such as Faber, Samo and other members of the trade syndicate, for the events. The *George* was later released, but its departure was delayed by damage from a strong tornado.⁶⁵

Just months later, Maxwell captured Samuel Samo who was trading slaves in the Iles de Los. The prisoner pleaded not guilty at his trial in June 1812. The case was published and debated in England. Samo was the first person judged under the Slave Trade Felony Act passed the previous year. However, what was really at stake in Samo's trial was the future relationship between Freetown and its neighboring slave trading territories. Would Rio Pongo fall under British control as a part of Britain's larger policy of slave trade suppression? Prosecutors presented the case in grandiloquent terms:

It is not, it was said at the bench, merely the interest of an individual, a village, a city, a country, or a single kingdom, which this case is calculated to effect; but it embraces the essential concerns of one quarter of the globe we inhabit, and involves the security and morals, the happiness and liberty, of millions yet to live.⁶⁶

The papers left behind by Samos' case are revealing of the networks of Americans, Cubans, and Pongo slave traders at this time. The prosecutors focused on the *Eagle*, a slaver that arrived in Pongo in early September of 1811 and embarked slaves from Samo and others. The owner of the *Eagle* was John Fraser, a Scottish merchant with residence in Florida. Fraser knew Samo very well.⁶⁷ From 1796 to 1803, they ran in partnership the slave trading factory "Charleston" in Pongo.⁶⁸ When the South Carolina legislature re-opened the transatlantic slave

⁶⁵ "*Tigress* log, 18-27.09,1811," TBNA, ADM 51/2904.

⁶⁶ "The Trials of the Slave Traders," 13.

⁶⁷ Daniel Shafer, "Family Ties that Bind. Anglo-African slave traders in Africa and Florida, John Fraser and his descendants," 779.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 778.

trade in 1803, Fraser moved to the United States leaving his partner in charge of the business. In 1810, following the U.S. abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, he moved to San Agustín (Saint Augustine), in Spanish Florida. From Spanish Florida, Fraser continued trading slaves from Pongo in joint ventures with his Spanish associate, Fernando de la Maza Arredondo who had been living in Florida since 1784.⁶⁹ Arredondo, according to historian Jane Landers, was “the head of the Havana-based company Arredondo & Son, became one of the primary links in the slave trade to Charleston, Saint Augustine and Havana and, like others, he flouted the British and U.S. embargoes.”⁷⁰ Both Arredondo and Fraser traded slaves from Rio Pongo to both Florida and Havana. One of their vessels, the *Aguila*—the same *Eagle* in discussion during Samo’s trial—sailed from Amelia Island, Florida, to Havana where, in January 1811, it disembarked 152 slaves before heading again to Pongo to be loaded by Samo.⁷¹

During the investigation, Samuel Samo’s clerk declared under oath that he saw his boss loading another slave ship, the schooner *Luisa*.⁷² The eighty-ton *Luisa*, Agustín Viamonte captain, sailed from Havana for Rio Pongo in August 1811, with two pilots and ten other sailors aboard. There, Viamonte bought 162 slaves from Samo, Faber, and Ormond, and returned to Havana in January 1812. Close to its destination, the vessel was captured, and all its documents then subjected to the scrutiny of a prize court. Two pieces of evidence convinced the British that it was American. First, a U.S. citizen, Mr. John Baily, had sold the ship to the Havana merchant, D. José Manuel de Lobio, in January of 1811. Baily’s ship, the *Rainbow*, became the *Luisa*. Second, the supercargo of the vessel, John Caruth, was a native of Malden, Massachusetts. The

⁶⁹ Sherry Johnson, "The Spanish St. Augustine Community, 1784-1795: A Reevaluation." 41.

⁷⁰ Jane Landers, “Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions,” 206.

⁷¹ *Voyages* ID 14544, ANC, Miscelánea de Libros, 6816.

⁷² ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497. *Voyages* ID: 46924.

papers made clear that Caruth, and not the Spanish captain Viamonte, owned the expedition. Caruth's slave-trading career was very similar to Jacob Faber's.

John Caruth had been deeply involved in the U.S.-Cuba-Rio Pongo traffic before 1808. His ships sailed from Charleston to Africa and then either sailed directly to Havana or returned first to Charleston and then sailed to Cuba with part of his cargo. Prices decided the preferred market. After 1808, Caruth focused on the trade between Florida, Havana, and Pongo. John Caruth and Jacob Faber were personally acquainted.⁷³

Convicting Samuel Samo proved tricky. He was not British but Dutch and the Slave Trade Felony Act only applied to British subjects within British territories. Rio Pongo and the Iles de Los were not legally or *de facto* under British control. To overcome legal constraints, Robert Thorpe, Chief Justice in Freetown, negotiated with the Susu chief Uli Kati, to subject his European and American "guests" in Pongo to British law. The agreement was intended to allow Freetown authorities to claim that Rio Pongo was under British jurisdiction.⁷⁴ To lend credence to this claim, the British endorsed the fiction that Kati was the "King of the Soosoo nation." After Samo was found guilty, Thorpe encouraged Pongo chiefs to petition for Samo's pardon officially. Several rulers sent letters to Freetown, some of them written in Arabic "upon the condition that Samo should be discharged."⁷⁵ A royal pardon was granted, and Samo was released, but in writing the letters, the Pongo chiefs had, in effect, taken a step toward recognizing British jurisdiction in their lands. During the following years, the British aggression

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Christopher Fyfe, "A History of Sierra Leone," 120.

⁷⁵ "The Trials of the Slave Traders," 36-37.

in Pongo grew in tandem with the increasing number of Cuban and American slave traders on the river. The British, however, were not the only threat faced in Pongo.

October 14, 1812 was described by Renner as “a day of great confusion and terror to many in this country. The voice of war sounded through towns and villages.”⁷⁶ Groups of Fula warriors from Futa Jallon, Renner was informed, were approaching. After several towns were burned and dozens of people killed, a joint army of Baga and Susu forced the Fula to retreat. Because the attack occurred during a moment of peace between the Susu and the Fula, the reason behind it was a mystery. The Susu and Baga called a *palaver* to discuss future military and political strategies. They also built a shrine to gain spiritual protection against the invaders. Wenzel described the religious ceremony;

A devil’s house was built in my neighborhood, a small house for the devil, they call it, or rather a house for the deceased spirits of their relations in order to inquire them in critical circumstances of their country or families. The ceremony, as I understood is this: After the small house is built, the headman with the people who are assembled got in it. A bullock is generally killed or some fowls. The meat is boiled and plenty of rice too, which is carried to the devil’s house. The headman who, superstitiously is believed, can only speak with the devil and understand his meaning, explains it to the people. Then the headman takes a Kohlah (a fruit like a European chestnut) and breaks it asunder in the joint and throws it to the ground before the devil, and according as the two pieces fall either the joints upwards or the round parts upward, he says, thou art a good devil. After this, he cast the liver of the killed animals before the spirit or devil that he may eat it. The headmen chew then a kohlah, and when chewed small he spits it also before the devil (sometimes a man is given to the devil as a sacrifice, who is buried alive under the devil’s house). Here the headman tells the people whether they are successful or not. The headman and all the people eat and feast together on the ground tearing the meat either with their teeth or hands and dipping their hands into cold water before they take rice with their hands. After they have eaten, they settle their affairs. Shooting and dancing are through the whole night until they are tired and then they go home.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ “Renner to Secretary, Bashia, December 24, 1812,” CMS, CAI/E3/39.

⁷⁷ “Wenzel to Secretary, Sierra Leone, June 14, 1813,” CMS, CAI/E3/82.

During the *palaver* that followed the religious ceremony, some voices were raised accusing the “white men” and especially the missionaries of “spoiling the country.” Others accused John Ormond of being the cause of the Fula invasions.⁷⁸ John Ormond, indeed, had forged political alliances with Fula chiefs from Futa Jallon. The missionaries were asked to “defend” the country by selling guns and powder to the people and buying local husk rice. Melchior Renner accepted the request. In December, Kati sent a letter to the Alimani of Futa Jallon, Abdulkadur, asking for an explanation for the attacks. The answer was unequivocal but suspicious:

That he gave no orders for such an excursion, that he knew nothing of it, and that he thinks it must have been occasioned through some private offense, which the people of the injured place may have given to the Foolah people.⁷⁹

Susu authorities did not believe Abdulkadur’s account and, in retaliation, shut down the commercial path between Pongo and Timbo. For the authorities in Futa Jallon, the decision was risky since Rio Pongo was an important outlet for their Atlantic commerce. The Fula, in response, started gathering an army to reopen the route by force. It was evident, the residents of Pongo thought, that a war was coming. Reverend Wenzel described the affairs in Pongo in December 1812:

The country was alarmed again with the rumor of war against the Foolahs. Traders sent to the settlements for their children and carried away their goods out of the factories. The Susoos running about for powder, guns, balls, and other war instruments in order to meet the enemy and they actually went to the borders of their country to prevent the invasion.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ “Wilhelm to Secretary, Bashia, December 26, 1812,” CMS, CAI/E3/40.

⁸⁰ “Wenzel to Secretary, Sierra Leone, June 14, 1813,” CMS, CAI/E3/82

For several months, the commercial path between Futa Jallon and Pongo remained closed. There were isolated Fula raids in a couple of Susu towns which resulted in deaths, kidnapping, and plundering. By May 1813, a big *palaver* was called “with all the Susoos, Baggas, Mandingas, and other neighboring nations in a town called Sundeia.”⁸¹ They agreed to launch a joint attack on the Fula. Right after the meeting, the Fula sent an ambassador to request terms of peace. As a result, commercial relationships were reestablished between Futa Jallon and Rio Pongo.

The political tension in the river did not stop slave trading even though, trade from Timbo was halted. According to a missionary, at least 1,000 people were sold between November 1812, and June 1813. “The slave vessels,” Reverend Denzel wrote, “come into the river, deliver their cargo, and in the space of 24 hours, they have the vessel full of slaves, and be off again.”⁸² One of the Spanish ships trading in the river at that time was the schooner *Nueva Constitución* in November 1812.

The *Nueva Constitución* had sailed from Havana for Rio Pongo on July 21, 1812, captained by Bartolomé Marcelino Mestre, but was captured before escaping. The British hired Susu interpreters to interrogate the slaves on board to know who had sold them. Names of the slave merchants involved surfaced. A Susu captive claimed that Zebulon Miller, a Connecticut native who had lived in both Charleston and Pongo, sold him along with other 28 slaves.⁸³ It was not the first time that Miller’s name surfaced at the Vice-Admiralty Court in Freetown. In March 1810, the Spanish schooner *Doris* was captured and conducted to Freetown, and although the ship had Spanish papers and a Spanish captain, the person in charge of the expedition was the

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ TBN, HCA 42/474/896

supercargo, Miller. The expedition was intended for Amelia Island, Florida, where John Fraser would have taken delivery.⁸⁴

More illustrative of the connections between Cuba, the U.S., and Pongo is the career of Bartolomé Marcelino Mestre, the Spanish captain of both the *Doris* and the *Nueva Constitución*. After the *Doris* was captured, Mestre returned to Havana from where he embarked on numerous expeditions to Pongo and other slave trading centers in Upper Guinea, before returning to Cuba and Florida.⁸⁵ At the end of 1811, Mestre was hired by John Fraser and Francisco de la Maza Arredondo to travel again to Pongo for slaves. This time, the chosen vessel was the *Eagle*, which had been at the center of the case against Samuel Samo. After one successful slaving voyage on the *Eagle*, Mestre embarked on another journey to Rio Pongo aboard the afore-mentioned *Nueva Constitución*.

Not only were the names of Miller and Mestre mentioned by the captives during the legal case, other key actors from the trading circuit between Havana, Florida, and Pongo also surfaced. Samuel Samo and Charles Hickson, both of them Fraser's agents in Pongo, sold four boys to the slave ship. Malcolm Brodie sold two slaves to the vessel. Samuel Gale, a native from Charleston who moved to Rio Pongo and traded with Havana after 1808, sold one boy. Jacob Faber, too, sold a boy to the vessel. The *Nueva Constitución* was condemned as American property, sailing under false Spanish colors. Some of the merchants who sold the slaves in Rio Pongo were British. Furthermore, the court argued, Rio Pongo was under British jurisdiction due to the

⁸⁴ "Sixth Report of the African Institutions," 56. Jane Landers, "Slavery in the Spanish Caribbean and the Failure of Abolition," 357.

⁸⁵ *Casualidad* (1811) Voyages ID, 40751. *Águila* (1811) Voyages ID: 14544, *Casualidad* (1812), Voyages ID 14557, *Nueva Constitucion* (1812) Voyage ID 7579. *Rosa* (1815) Voyage ID 7562, *Economía*, (1817), *Maria Josefa* (1817), *Maria Josefa* (1818), ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

agreement between Chief Kati and Maxwell during Samo's trial.⁸⁶ Authorities in Sierra Leone would use this in the coming years as the primary justification for further British attacks.

In October 1813, Freetown's governor Charles Maxwell was alerted to a group of Spanish ships from Havana purchasing slaves from John Ormond. Commander William Appleton of the colonial schooner HMS *Princess Charlotte* was ordered to go to Rio Pongo and capture the ships. One of the missionaries stationed in Pongo, Reverend Renner, recalled the moment of "confusion" when the British ship arrived in the river and attacked the traders. After the *Princess Charlotte* left the river, "vengeance and destruction were threatened to the missionaries," Renner reported to his superiors.⁸⁷ The relationship between Freetown and Rio Pongo was about to worsen.

The post-1808 changes in the slave trade routes of the North Atlantic were profound. On the American side, the abolition law prompted a relocation of slave traders to regions where they could continue trading slaves safely. The Spanish colonies of Cuba, and Florida became the center of operations for recalcitrant slave merchants. Americans also moved to Africa as the case of Rio Pongo shows. After 1808, the African captives from Rio Pongo that had previously gone to Charleston now started coming to Havana. On the West African side, the establishment of Freetown as the official headquarters of the abolitionist movement pushed some slave traders to the Rio Pongo. Despite British pressure and disputes in the Rio Pongo hinterland, the transatlantic human trafficking did not diminish. The new transatlantic slave trading route between Rio Pongo and Havana, although initially run by Americans, was gradually taken over

⁸⁶ TBNA, HCA 42/474/896.

⁸⁷ "Renner to Secretary," November 5, 1813, CMS, CAI/E3/99.

by Cuban merchants. As was the case for the Cuban slave trade in general, in the years after 1814/1815, merchants from Cuba became critical protagonists of the slave trade in Pongo.

Consolidation, 1814-1820

By 1814, Cuban merchants took a more decisive role in organizing slaving expeditions to Rio Pongo which became the leading destination in Upper Guinea for Spanish slave ships until the growth of Gallinas in the 1820s.⁸⁸ Antonio Escoto was one of the Cuban merchants who tapped into the Cuba-Pongo route. By the end of 1812, he was conducting business directly with John Ormond. Escoto not only sent his ships from Havana to Ormond's factories but the two co-invested in slaving expeditions. The schooner *Isabela*, Félix Pujadas captain, was one such venture. It left Havana in August 1813 with a Spanish crew.⁸⁹ The voyage to Africa took four months because the ship sailed via the U.S. to load trade goods. In November 1813, the *Isabela* arrived in a Pongo in a moment when the community of slave traders in Rio Pongo and the authorities in Freetown were having a tense relationship.

In November 1813, Charles Maxwell sent a cruiser to attack the slave factories in Pongo. H.M.S. *Favourite* targeted the establishments of Ormond in Bangalan, where some Spanish slave ships from Havana were anchored. One of them was the *Isabela* which was able to hide from the

⁸⁸ <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=KSEakNz6> (Consulted, March 2, 2019)

⁸⁹ The captain of the vessel was Felix Pujadas, an experienced Spaniard who, as with many of his compatriots, began his slave trading career with Americans. The connections between Pujadas and American merchants became known after a failed expedition in 1812. The brig *Carlota Teresa* left Havana to Norfolk, Virginia, at the end of 1811 captained by Esteban Famadas. The second captain of the ship was Felix Pujadas. In Norfolk, Pujadas assumed the direction of the vessel and, in that position, he signed a slave trading contract with the commercial house Armistead & Kelly. The goal was to deliver slaves in Cuba. The vessel, however, was seized by HMS *Thais* in Loango Bay in August 1812 and condemned a month later in Sierra Leone for "being American property and seized in the Slave Trade violating the laws of the United States of America and the Laws of Nations and nature." 78 slaves were on board of whom 40 were children under 12 years. "D. Félix Pujadas, capitán y maestre que fue del Bergantín Carlota contra D. Francisco Olivella sobre sueldos, 1813", ANC, Real Consulado, 443-16. *Voyages* ID 7666. Peter Grindal, "Opposing the Slavers," 157.

British cruiser. Renner described how the British vessel “battered Ormond’s factory for eight hours together; went down and burnt four of the largest slave factories.” However, he noted that “the business is not yet settled, there are still four or five factories unburnt.”⁹⁰ The *Favourite* abandoned Pongo without capturing any slave ships. The attack, however, was a clear sign that Freetown was closely monitoring their activities.

The *Isabela* had to hide for weeks, so long that more than half of the crew died from fevers. Of the fifteen men embarked in Havana, only seven remained alive. Captain Pujadas decided to hire African sailors (termed *grumetes*) to sail the ship back to Cuba, a common practice along the African coast.⁹¹ At the beginning of January 1814 and without any other recorded incidence, the *Isabela* sailed from Pongo to Havana carrying near 150 slaves. After a week of navigation, in the middle of the night, the African sailors unlocked and opened the hatches leading to below deck. The prisoners emerged to fight for their freedom. The Africans, according to a later statement taken in Havana, “stabbed and killed in all possible ways all the white individuals on the ship, leaving no one alive.”⁹² Later, one of the rebels proudly described to a Spanish slave captain how he “hunted Captain Pujadas in his chamber with a harpoon” and, once wounded, “took him out from the top hatch and beat him to death.” In the meantime, others “killed the supercargo gashing him with a piece of wood” while “another stabbed the pilot to

⁹⁰ “Renner to Secretary, Nov. 5, 1815,” CMS/99/122/99

⁹¹ For the subject of black sailors and their role on slaving expeditions see Dale T. Graden, “Interpreters, Translators, and the Spoken Word in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Trade to Brazil and Cuba”, 393-419. Edmund Abaka, “Black Sailors”, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Passage*, 61-64. Emma Christopher, “Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807.”

⁹² Statement of Jacob Faber in “Antonio Escoto sobre justificar el número de negros con que arribó a Río Pongo en el África la goleta de su propiedad nombrada La Isabela,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 504-32.

death, and so on all the sailors.”⁹³ The rebels, commanded by the free African sailors, took the *Isabela* back to Rio Pongo.⁹⁴

The violent episode did not have a happy end. The mutineers were not welcomed in Pongo as heroes. Instead, the free African sailors, the ones who initiated the rebellion, returned the slaves to John Ormond, the same merchant who sold them to the Spanish captain Pujadas in the first place. Missionary Melchor Renner described the arrival of the *Isabela* in the following terms;

[the vessel] came in after three weeks having killed every soul of the white people at sea, seven in number. The slaves pleaded that they did not want to go to the white man’s country, that made them kill the whites on board. The grummetts brought the vessel back (...) A slave trader told me himself that the grummetts’ necks ought to be stretched because they did not inform the white people of the design.⁹⁵

Ormond took the slaves and, according to testimony from Jacob Faber, intended to return them to their “legitimate” owner in Havana, Antonio Escoto.⁹⁶ Ormond, however, did not have the resources to detain or feed them. The British were planning a new attack on Pongo, and the logistical situation in the river had worsened since the last British raid destroyed his “factory.” Ormond accordingly distributed the slaves across various locations. He sent eighteen of the

⁹³ “Statement of Juan Jorge Peoli in “Relación histórica jurada de los acontecimientos del Bergantín Goleta Laura Ana procedente de la Habana para la Costa de África su Capitán y primer piloto D. Juan Peoli y su sobrecargo D. José Sánchez de Agreda” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 9797.

⁹⁴ Historical evidence of the high incidence of rebellions on slave ships is abundant. At least ten percent of the expeditions suffered some form of insurrection on board, especially during the first days of the voyage. Rebellions were much more frequent on slave ships coming from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and the Windward Coast, as it was the case of the *Isabela*. Even though only 12 percent of slaves in the transatlantic trade came from those regions, 40 percent of the documented rebellions occurred there. David Richardson, “Shipboard Revolts, African Authority and the Transatlantic Slave Trade”, en: Sylviane A. Diouf, *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, Ohio University Press, 2003.

⁹⁵ “Rev. Renner to Secretary”, CMS, CAI/E3/116.

⁹⁶ “Relación histórica jurada de los acontecimientos del Bergantín Goleta Laura Ana procedente de la Habana para la Costa de África su Capitán y primer piloto D. Juan Peoli y su sobrecargo D. José Sánchez de Agreda” ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-9797.

rebels to the Susu chief Uli Kati; the African sailors took around fifteen as payment for delivering the slaves to Pongo; one of Ormonds' wives, Geni, received several; while still others were sent to the hands of the Euro-African trader John Pearce in the river Nunez, north of Pongo. Ormond was able to keep forty of the former mutineers.⁹⁷ During the following months, a confluence of events changed the destiny of the slaves of the *Isabela*, the future of the trading community in Pongo, and the configuration of the slave trade between Havana and Upper Guinea.

In early February 1814, Governor Maxwell ordered *HMS Princess Charlotte* and the *Doris* to attack the factories owned by slave traders in Rio Pongo. The sailors on the British ships were mostly Africans who had been previously freed from slave ships and pressed into British naval service. *Princess Charlotte* reached Rio Pongo on February 16, and two days later attacked Bangalan, the headquarters of Ormond's operations. Reverend Wilhelm described the event:

On the 18th, we heard much firing day and night. The English gun-boats were gone up the other branch of the Rio Pongas to destroy Ormond's factory and several others and had met with resistance, but the slave traders were soon compelled to flee into the bush, their places being totally destroyed.⁹⁸

On the shores of Ormond's trade outpost in Bangalan, *HMS Princess Charlotte* found the carcass of an abandoned slave ship stranded among the mangroves, "without sails, cables, papers, or any person or thing, and the vessel was being totally abandoned and derelict."⁹⁹ Those were the remains of the *Isabela*. The British cruisers then burned down the slave trade outposts of other renowned traders in Pongo such as Samuel Gale, Malcolm Brody, Samuel Perry, George Cook, and Jacob and Paul Faber. According to Bruce Mouser, around "twelve factories were

⁹⁷"Rev. Renner to Secretary", CMS, CAI/E3/116.

⁹⁸ "Rev. Wilhem to Secretary," CMS, CAI/E3/117.

⁹⁹ TBNA, HCA, 42/524.

destroyed with nearly three hundred slaves sent to Freetown.”¹⁰⁰ Among the captives rescued by the British in Rio Pongo were some of the slaves who had revolted on the *Isabela*. However, as described above, John Ormond had sent some slaves from the *Isabela* north to Rio Nunez. The British decided to rescue them.

Nunez and Rio Pongo had many similarities. They shared the same topography of mangroves and small rivers. The population of Nunez included Bagas and a Susu minority, as well as Landumas. Nunez was also a coastal outlet for the slave caravans coming from Futa Jallon. Nunez, as well as Pongo, had been under British surveillance, and Nunez, too, had transitioned from a slave market serving primarily American and British slave ships to a frequent destination for Havana-based slavers.

The leading trader in Rio Nunez was John Pearce (1775-1818) the son of a North American man and a Nalu woman. Pearce learned the business in the factory of John Ormond Sr. in Rio Pongo. Upon Ormond Sr.’s death, Pearce moved to Río Nunez and settled in the town of Kacundy, where he became the most powerful slave trader in the area. Some of his children studied in the missionary school in Bashia, Pongo. When Pearce saw the growing Cuban market, he sent his son Molly to Matanzas, Cuba, in 1811 to study Spanish.¹⁰¹

The *Princess Charlotte* sailed to Nunez at the end of February 1814 to capture other Spanish slave ships.¹⁰² When Commander William Appleton of HMS *Princess Charlotte* arrived at Nunez, he found three Spanish slave ships there, *Teresa*, *Marques de Someruelos*, and *Laura*

¹⁰⁰ Bruce Mouser, “American Colony on the Rio Pongo,” 68.

¹⁰¹ Bruce Mouser, “American Colony on the Rio Pongo”, 17. TBNA, “Maxwell to Secretary, Nov. 25, 1812” CO 267/34/24.

¹⁰² Joseph Marryat, “More Thoughts still on the state of the West India Colonies, and the proceedings of the African institution: with observations on the speech of James Stephen, Esq. at the Annual Meeting of that Society, held on the 26th of March 1817,” 105.

Ana. All were captured and condemned in the Vice-Admiralty Court in Freetown. The captain of one of them, the *Laura Ana*, Juan Jorge Peoli, resisted the British captors without success. An argument between Peoli and the British commander shows the interconnection between suppression of the slave trade and British imperial views of Africa.

You are arrested -Appleton told Peoli- at an English port and by an English individual who is that gentlemen there, he said while pointing out to the king [John Pearce]. I entirely ignore that Nunez river is an English possession -Peoli replied- and I do not see here the flag of that nation. Gross ignorance! -Appleton said. The whole universe knows that from Senegal to Loango everything belongs to Great Britain.¹⁰³

Appleton was of course incorrect. Except for Sierra Leone and a few forts, England had at that time neither *de juris* nor *de facto*, control over any part of the African coast. What Appleton circumstantially had, was the advantage of his naval force and the support of John Pearce, who gathered more than 500 men to force the surrender of the Spanish schooner *Laura Ana*. Pearce handed over the slaves from the *Isabela* who were placed aboard the seized vessel and taken to Freetown. Months later in Havana, Peoli described how he was chained, humiliated, and mistreated while the former *Isabela's* mutineers remained free on the ship. The white Spanish sailors had to listen to the Africans' detailed descriptions of how they killed the crew of the *Isabela*.

Those negroes -Peoli said-, known to be murderers, were left unchained and they were advised through interpreters that in case they noticed some movement from our part against the free negroes who were navigating the ship to Sierra Leone, they could kill us because we were the one who trafficked slaves and took away the freedom that they would enjoy in Sierra Leone.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ "Relación histórica jurada de los acontecimientos del Bergantín Goleta *Laura Ana* procedente de la Habana para la Costa de África su Capitán y primer piloto D. Juan Peoli y su sobre cargo D. José Sánchez de Agreda" en: ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-9797.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

The British raids from February 1814 were temporarily successful in stopping the slave trade in Rio Pongo. Slave factories were destroyed, several ships captured, and Freetown gained more control over Pongo chieftaincies. Some slave traders moved to Havana where they could wait until the situation in Pongo improved. An inquiry by Viscount Castlereagh stated that “the expedition of 1814 crushed the trade in Rio Pongas for two years, but many of the Rio Pongas traders have settled in the Havannah.”¹⁰⁵ One of Pongo traders fleeing the region to Havana was Ormond’s cousin, John Tillinghast. Another, as it will be shown below, was Jacob Faber himself. A legal case in Havana from 1815 shows that even John Ormond moved temporarily to the island.

The interruption of the slave trade in Pongo did not last. Conditions improved for traders in the following year. The European peace after 1815 meant that the Royal Navy was both smaller and could no longer exercise belligerent rights of searching foreign shipping. On top of that, the slave demand from Cuba increased. From 1814 to 1815 slave voyages between Cuba and Africa doubled and then reached an all-time high in 1817. Renner described how the “evil practice” of the slave trade reemerged in Rio Pongo.

“In my letter of June 28th (1814), I mentioned that no vessel had been in this river for twelve months. Now the first has made its appearance again. Last week a vessel carried off, in a few days, above two hundred slaves (...) For the last twelve months, during which there was no slave-dealing in the river, the thought naturally occurred: “Good Wilberforce and his friends, though not known by the Natives, have in that space of time, given peace and quietness to these sons of Africa, they clothed the naked, they fed the hungry: that is, the people became industrious, spinning and weaving their own cloth, eating their rice to the full, no famine in any quarter, no town or individual intoxicated by pernicious liquors exchanged for the blood of man, which, of course, produce peace and

¹⁰⁵ Parliamentary Papers, Papers Relating to the Slave Trade, 1819, 006, v. 18, 23.

quietness everywhere. Now the old evil revives, the new rice is sold for rum, laziness is the consequence, and disorder reigns all over the country.”¹⁰⁶

One of the vessels that revived the slave trade in Rio Pongo in 1815 was the Spanish schooner *Junta de Sevilla*. On June 13, 1815, the vessel left Havana for Rio Pongo captained by Jose Carbonell.¹⁰⁷ The owner of the expedition was the Cuban-based merchant Juan Madrazo and the supercargo the Charlestonian Samuel Gale who, as previously mentioned, owned a slave trade outpost in Rio Pongo, but had left the region after the British raids of 1814. Samuel Gale sailed the *Junta de Sevilla* to the “factories” of his colleague John Ormond in Bangalan. The missionaries noticed the arrival of the slave ship:

On the 20th of August, an American slave trader called Mr. Gale came into this river with a vessel bringing tobacco and gunpowder in exchange of which he carried off 220 slaves the 25th ditto. Such a man ventures any hazard to smuggle in their infamous traffic.¹⁰⁸

In September 1815, the *Junta de Sevilla* returned to Havana with 199 slaves. On the ship, two passengers were fleeing Pongo: Jacob Faber, and the British slaver William Turner. Jacob Faber did not leave his commercial operations in Rio Pongo unattended. His brother, Paul, and his African wives and children remained in Pongo taking care of the family business. Faber’s plan was not to withdraw from the slave trade but rather to extend it to Gallinas, south of Freetown.

The arrival of the *Junta de Sevilla* resulted in an exceptional legal case in the Commercial Court of Havana. Ten of the 199 captives carried by the ship were part of the cargo of the *Isabela*. They were the unlucky few never rescued by the British. Back in January 1814, John Ormond had delivered part of the captives to one of his wives, Geni. Later, Geni sold them to the

¹⁰⁶ “Extract of a letter dated BASHIA, Rio Ponga, August 28, 1815, relative to the Spanish slave trade” in *Tenth Report of the Directors of the African Institutions*, 50. See original letter at CMS, CAI/E4/37.

¹⁰⁷ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

¹⁰⁸ “Wilhelm to Secretary,” CMS, CAI/E4/38.

trader Styles Lightburn. After one year in captivity in Pongo, these people were sold to Samuel Gale of the *Junta de Sevilla*. Antonio Escoto, the owner of the *Isabela* sued the owner for the return of his slaves. Escoto also wished to question Jacob Faber, the only witness of what had happened to the *Isabela* after its return to Pongo without the white crew. Escoto was convinced that John Ormond was behind the rebellion. Escoto's assumption was plausible since, as shown, the African sailors planned the insurrection before sailing to Havana. Convinced of this, Escoto also sued John Ormond.¹⁰⁹

John Ormond was represented by his agent in Havana Daniel Botefeur, a German-born medical surgeon, polyglot, and slave trader. In the 1790s, he settled in Bance Island working for John Tilley, the best known British merchant there.¹¹⁰ Over time, Botefeur established a factory at Mary Hill, in the Bangalan branch of the Rio Pongo.¹¹¹ Like many other Europeans seeking a fortune in Upper Guinea, Botefeur married daughters of Susu rulers and had several offspring who enrolled in the Church Missionary Society's school in Bashia.¹¹² Botefeur was trading in Charleston from at least 1806. That year, *The Maryland Gazette* reported him as one of the survivors of a shipwreck of a vessel sailing from the port.¹¹³ His Cuban business dates back to at least 1809.¹¹⁴ In March 1811, Captain Edward H. Columbine, the British governor of Sierra Leone, wrote on his diary;

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Botefeur, apoderado de Juan Ormond, contra Antonio Escoto por cuentas mercantiles", 1816. ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 32-15.

¹¹⁰ Michael Zeuske, "Cosmopolitas del Atlántico esclavista: los africanos Daniel Boetefeur y su esclavo de confianza Robin Botefeur en Cuba," 131.

¹¹¹ In 1802, the Freetown government signed a contract with him to provide 400 head of cattle from Pongo Bruce Mouser, "A Slaving Voyage to Africa and Jamaica. The Log of the Sandown, 1793-1794," 46. Bruce Mouser, "Trade and Politics," 75. Corry, Joseph, "Observations upon the windward coast of Africa," 92. "Rev. L. Butscher's Journal, entry for March 19, 1807," C.M.S. CAI/EI.

¹¹² Bruce Mouser, "Trade and Politics," 112.

¹¹³ "The Maryland Gazette," September 4, 1806.

¹¹⁴ While waiting for trial, Botefeur tried to regain ownership of Fenda a twelve years old girl that he had sent to Freetown in 1806 to take care of his Afro-European daughter Maria Botefeur. Daniel Botefeur had secret negotiation

During my absence, six natives had arrived in a ship's boat, having escaped from that notorious villain & slave-dealer Botefeur; a German who has a sort of factory in the R. Pongo. He also has a brig on the Coast (which we have been in quest of), but he has eluded our search by hiding her in some of the innumerable branches of the Pongo & other rivers. Lately, he has moved her near to Bissao, where he means to ship his wretched victims & proceed to the Havanna. Slaves in the usual course of barbarity being scarce, owing to the appearance which I have had the happiness of inflicting on the dealers; Botefeur to supply the deficiency, has thought proper to put all his domestic slaves into the chain, (a villainy which even African law does not admit) & amongst others was conveying these six young men to his brig. But they ran when the two white men in the boat near the Nunez & brought her hither. Allowing the white men to escape. I shall certainly afford the protection of the colony to these poor fellows.¹¹⁵

In 1812, Botefeur married Maria Sacramento Romay in Havana, and together they had six children. Without giving up his Pongo interests he purchased a coffee plantation in Matanzas, Cuba, joint-owned with the American merchant John S. Latting.¹¹⁶ With such credentials, it is not surprising that John Ormond chose his personal friend Botefeur to represent him in court.

During the proceedings, Botefeur accused Escoto of owing Ormond money from joint-ventures such as the *Isabela*, but also in ventures by the *Fenix*, *Dorotea*, *Dos Amigos*, and *Fabiana*. Trapped by the accounts presented by Botefeur, Escoto resorted to blasting Ormond as

with Freetown's governor Thomas P. Thompson (1808-1810) who had the "fixed intention to restore the girl in a clandestine manner." According to an earlier governor, William Dawes, there was a "great intimacy" between governor Thompson and Mr. Botefeur. "Statement respecting Mr. Sawes accompanying Mr. Edmonds to Fort Thornton," Oct. 25, 1809, TBNA, CO 267/27. Thanks to Marial Iglesias for providing this reference: "Sierra Leone Gazette," September 22, 1821. It is possible that the *Casualidad* (Voyages ID 14501), arrived in Havana with 186 slaves. Its owner was Magín Tarafa. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

¹¹⁵ "Journal of Captain Edward H. Columbine," University of Illinois at Chicago Special Collections, Sierra Leone Collection MSSL__69, box 3, folder 12. Taken from *Black Central Europe*: <https://blackcentraleurope.com/sources/1750-1850/daniel-botefeur-a-german-slave-trader-1811/> (Consulted, March 12, 2019). In 1812 missionary Melchor Renner referred to him as a "well-known and ghostly slave trader, who has two children in the settlement without regarding his (African) children, not caring for their clothing and maintenance." "Renner to Secretary, June 8, 1812," CMS, CAI/E3/8.

¹¹⁶ "Testamentaria de D. Daniel Botefeur," ANC, Escribanía Luis Blanco, 405-4. "Inventario de Da. Maria Sacramento Romay, viuda de D. Daniel Botefeur," Escribanía Brezmes, 114-1.

“a colored man who lives in those regions, in the deserted heart of Africa without recognizing any authority or being subject to any power.”¹¹⁷ Botefeur’s reply was sharp:

It is necessary for the tribunal to know that [Ormond] was in this city [Havana] long before granting me legal power. He was introduced everywhere. He visited Escoto’s home where he was cheered and invited to eat, taking a seat next to Escoto and his family. The investments of Ormond and Tillinghast, his cousin, are the largest that Escoto has ever managed in his businesses. Ormond, far from having harmed Escoto in the expeditions to Africa, has provided him with many services. He defended Escoto’s ships. Ormond even lost a factory burned by the British while protecting with weapons Escoto’s vessel which the British wanted to take away from the river. This had ...earned him Escoto’s esteem until the moment when Ormond asked for his money and came to this city to collect it.¹¹⁸

There is no information about the outcome of this case since the parties settled the issue extra-judicially. However, it is known that Escoto did not collect any compensation from the *Isabela*. However, Escoto did manage a small “victory” of sorts. He complained that, on the documents produced during the case, John Ormond’s name was always accompanied by the prefix “Don,” which in colonial Cuba could be used only to refer to white people. The court ruled to strike from the legal record each instance of the title of “Don” used in reference to Ormond:

Scratch the distinctive term of Don which has been given to Ormond by Botefeur, by ignoring he was black. This serves as a warning for that person when attending a Spanish court again. The caste of the individual he represents must be said in order to avoid confusions.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ “Daniel Botefeur, apoderado de Juan Ormond, contra Antonio Escoto por cuentas mercantiles”, 1816. ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 32-15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

During the following decades, John Ormond continued to supply slaves to Cuba in collaboration with Daniel Botefeuf. The partnership between these two slavers became an integral part of the Cuban transatlantic links. On May 6, 1816, Botefeuf sent the brig *Regla* from Havana to Pongo under captain Antonio Echevarría, who returned with 169 slaves purchased from Ormond.¹²⁰ On January 12, 1817, the brig *Esperanza*, also owned by Daniel Botefeuf and captained by José Soler sailed from Havana to Rio Pongo.¹²¹ The vessel's supercargo was none other than John Ormond himself.¹²² Those were difficult times in Pongo given that the British navy had imposed a blockade on the river in the same month.¹²³ In early February, the British once again burned factories, including Ormond's, in Bangalan, where several Fula merchants were killed, severing the relationship between Timbo and Freetown.¹²⁴ The British colonial schooner *Prince Regent* captured the *Esperanza* in Rio Nuñez before it could take on any slaves. The Vice-Admiralty Court condemned the ship in April 1817.¹²⁵ The slaves intended for the *Esperanza* remained in the hands of John Ormond. Botefeuf knew about the loss of his ship via a letter sent by Ormond on a separate slave vessel. The German surgeon sent another ship to recover his property.

Botefeuf's schooner *Nueva María* departed Havana June 9, 1817, captained by José Mejías. The consignees of the vessel in Rio Pongo were John Ormond and Samuel Gale, who had returned to Pongo when slave trading conditions improved. The ship arrived in Pongo in early August. Back in Havana, captain Mejias delivered a letter to Botefeuf from Ormond where

¹²⁰ "Bartolomé Chavarri contra Daniel Botefeuf sobre pesos," ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 104-23. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506. *Voyages* ID 14707

¹²¹ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

¹²² "Bartolomé Chavarri contra Daniel Botefeuf sobre pesos," ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 104-23. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506.

¹²³ Bruce Mouser, "American Colony in Rio Pongo," 84.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Peter Grindal, "Opposing the Slavers," 769.

the second explained that it was difficult to return the slaves since many of them had died, others run away, and retaining the remainder was costly.

I do not know what will happen to us. This country [Rio Pongo] is in a deplorable situation; there is nothing but hunger. I do not know how many of the slaves will remain alive when you send for them. I beg you to provide me with some help as soon as possible. I will endure here as long as I can, and I will protect your interests favorably. Once a vessel shows up, I will depart with your remaining slaves. I do not doubt that captain Brooks has given you notice of the disastrous state of this country after you left. Accept my respects and your family, always being at your service, your humble servant, John Ormond, Rio Pongo, August 16, 1817.¹²⁶

After 1815, the political landscape in the river deteriorated. In 1816, chief Uli Kati, named by the British as the “King of the Sossoo,” died. As a consequence, the river was divided into political factions, one led by William Fernandez, a descendant of Portuguese Lançados, who controlled the Fatala and Bangalan rivers, and another by the Curtis and Kati lineage who controlled the right bank.¹²⁷ Ormond, the Fabers, and Lightburn controlled the upper river in alliance with the Fula. Rulers in Futa Jallon were concerned about the fact that merchants in Rio Pongo were gaining power at the expense of their African landlords.

¹²⁶ ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3497.

¹²⁷ Bruce Mouser, “American Colony on the Rio Pongo,” p. 86.



Figure 21: Branding of woman slave in Rio Pongo. Canot, Theodore, “Twenty Years of an African Slaver,” 103.

Ormond sent Botefeur 162 slaves on the *Nueva Maria* —“first quality of men, women, and children of both sexes”—on August 26, 1817, before departing Rio Nuñez.¹²⁸ The slaves were branded with a pin in their ears. Italian slaver Theodore Canot, who lived in Rio Pongo in the 1820s, described the practice, (Figure 21):

Two days before embarkation, the head of every male and female is neatly shaved; and, if the cargo belongs to several owners, each man’s brand is impressed on the body of his respective negro. This operation is performed with pieces of silver wire, or small irons fashioned into the merchant’s initials, heated just hot enough to blister without burning

¹²⁸ Ibid.

the skin. When the entire cargo is the venture of but one proprietor, the branding is always dispensed with.¹²⁹

On October 4, 1817, the *Nueva Maria* disembarked 320 slaves in Havana.¹³⁰ For its next voyage, Daniel Botefeuf hired José Costarramonte as captain. Costarramonte had previously commanded the 175 tons schooner *Triunvirato*, another Botefeuf vessel that sailed to Rio Pongo from Baltimore.¹³¹ The Spanish consul in Baltimore, Pablo Chacón, provided captain Costarramonte all the papers needed for the expedition to Africa. Days later, consul Chacón sent a letter to the authorities in Havana requesting that in future cases of ships bounded for that “projected site” -the word Africa was never mentioned- “and in order to avoid hereafter any occurrence that could cause me great damage the Spanish ambassador in Washington, he should be the one instructing the orders.”¹³² The *Triunvirato* was captured and condemned at Freetown on February 4, 1817.¹³³ When Costarramonte arrived in Pongo in February 1818, there were other Spanish ships present.¹³⁴ Two, the schooners *Isabel* and *Bella Muchachita*, belonged to the Matanzas house of Disdier & Morphy. While the *Isabel*, captained by the American William Burk, managed to disembark 146 slaves in Matanzas, the *Bella Muchachita* ran aground on a sand bar while avoiding a British cruiser. The vessel was lost and its crew returned to Cuba on the *Nueva Maria* in June 1818 along with 309 slaves.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Theodore Canot, “Twenty Years as a Slaver,” 102.

¹³⁰ *Voyages* ID: 14797.

¹³¹ *Voyages* ID: 7609.

¹³² “Comunicación del cónsul de España al intendente de hacienda llamando la atención sobre las dificultades legales en aquel puerto para adquirir buques para ciertas expediciones y la necesidad de cursar las órdenes por conducto del ministro de Washington,” Baltimore, October 15, 1816, ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 134-74

¹³³ *Voyages* ID: 7609. A list of the African names of the slaves captured on the *Triunvirato* can be consulted on the site “Liberated Africans,” <https://liberatedafricans.org/event.php?kid=11-10-93334&index=0> (Consulted, February 22, 2019).

¹³⁴ *Voyages* ID: 14843. “Bartolomé Chavarri contra Daniel Botefeuf sobre pesos,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 104-23.

¹³⁵ “Bartolomé Chavarri contra Daniel Botefeuf sobre pesos,” ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 104-23. “La Casa de Disdier y Murphy sobre justificar la pérdida de la Goleta Bella Muchachita en la Costa de África.” Tribunal de Comercio, 159-3.

The commercial partnership between Daniel Botefeur and John Ormond is just one thread of the slave trading web between Rio Pongo and Havana. In 1820, after the Spanish abolition of the Atlantic slave trade came into force, slaves continued arriving in Havana from Pongo. According to *Voyages*, at least 4,100 captives from Rio Pongo embarked to Cuba from 1820 to 1845, when the last known ship from Pongo, *Mariana*, reached the island with 240 slaves.¹³⁶

By 1818, the British had extended their control over the river. MacCarthy, the governor of Freetown, negotiated the acquisition of the Iles de Los, a group of islands around 43 miles from the sandbar entrance to the Rio Pongo which facilitated observation of the movement of slave ships in the area. By the 1820s, it was clear that the future of the slave trade in Pongo was compromised. In April 1820, *HMS Thistle* entered Rio Pongo, and members of the crew were killed by warriors commanded by the slave trader Thomas Gaffery Curtis, the son of the American Benjamin Curtis. In response, Freetown sent in an expedition of five war vessels and 300 men who destroyed five towns and killed dozens of residents.¹³⁷ Governor MacCarthy's goal was to force the economy in Pongo to rely on "legitimate" commerce. Indeed, many traders gave up the transatlantic slave trade. "By 1820," according to Bruce Mouser, "the commerce in Pongo was mixed, with some older traders continuing to buy and sell slaves and others trading solely in products."¹³⁸ In the case of "legitimate" commerce, coffee became the main staple in the region, and, slaves previously destined for Cuba, were employed for its cultivation.

John Ormond continued trading slaves with Cuba during the remaining years of his life. On several occasions, he traveled to Havana. In 1834, old, alcoholic, and mentally unstable, Ormond shot himself. "Age and drunkenness had made sad inroads on his constitution and looks

¹³⁶ <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#searchId=eDzy7fYU> (Consulted, March 3, 2019). *Mariana, Voyages* ID: 3509.

¹³⁷ Mouser, Bruce, "The Rio Pongo Crisis," p. 155-156.

¹³⁸ Mouser, Bruce, "The Rio Pongo Crisis of 1820," p. 149.

during the last half year,” Captain Canot wrote of Ormond right before his suicide. “His fretful irritability sometimes amounted almost madness.”¹³⁹ Two years after his death, Ormond’s fourteen-year-old son, John Ormond III, traveled on a slave ship, the *Preciosa*, to Matanzas to continue his father’s business; the ship was captured by the British. Ormond III denied knowing there were slaves on the ship and claimed his only purpose in going to Havana was to learn Spanish. The British did not believe him.¹⁴⁰

Jacob Faber was hired in 1816 by a group of three Spanish-Creole merchants to administer a factory in Gallinas, a coastal entrepôt in the south of Sierra Leone. Back in Africa, over the next three years, Jacob Faber sent around 3,000 slaves to Cuba. When Faber left Gallinas, a young Spanish captain from Havana named Pedro Blanco succeeded him. Blanco became one of the most notorious slave traders of the nineteenth century. In 1839, Blanco dispatched the slaves who later seized control of the schooner *Amistad* before being emancipated by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Until the late 1780s, Rio Pongo was not an important slave market in Upper Guinea. The increase in the production of slaves in the region resulted from a combination of external and internal events. Overall, the slave market expanded in the Americas in the second half of the eighteenth century. Rio Pongo became a favored destination for British and American slave trading voyages. English-speaking traders settled in Rio Pongo joining the existing community of merchants, including the descendants of Portuguese Lançados. Within Pongo, a long history of migrations in Upper Guinea had set the conditions to create trading networks in the form of

¹³⁹ Canot, Theodore, “Adventures of an African Slaver,” p. 223.

¹⁴⁰ Class A. Correspondence with the British commissioners, at Sierra Leone, the Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Surinam, relating to the slave trade, 1836, House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers Online.1837 (001), pp. 160 y 164

commercial caravans between the interior and the coast. More specifically, the Susu and Baga people from Pongo traded with the Fula from Futa Jallon, an Islamic kingdom that consolidated and also expanded in the second half of the eighteenth century. The expansion of the slave trade increased the number of caravans moving from the interior to the coast.

After British abolition of the slave trade, Rio Pongo rose in importance as a slave market. One reason was the relocation of slave traders and their operations from the Sierra Leone estuary, now a British abolitionist colony, north to Rio Pongo. On the other side of the Atlantic, the trading circuit that for years had linked Rio Pongo to the United States was redirected to Cuba. Rio Pongo became, between 1808 and 1820, the most crucial port in Upper Guinea for the Cuban slave market. Cuban plantations increased demand at the same time that Futa Jallon increased the supply to the coast. The growth of Rio Pongo's slave trade caught the attention of the British, who wanted to take control over the region and to redirect commerce from Futa Jallon to Freetown. British attacks on Pongo and the Spanish slave ships operating there were frequent during the years between 1808 and 1820. Although Rio Pongo continued sending slaves to the Americas until the 1840s, trade in the region gradually shifted to "legitimate" commerce and fell under British control.

CHAPTER 5

Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba (1790-1820)

This chapter focuses on some quantitative and qualitative facets of the foundational period of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade between 1790 and 1820. Based on a hitherto unexplored set of Cuban archival sources and historical newspapers, this chapter reassesses existing historiographical estimates of the number of enslaved Africans disembarked in Cuba. The result is a substantial increase in the total number of slaves carried to the island in that period. The following pages also add new information on facets of slaving voyages departing and arriving in Cuba such as broad regions or specific ports of embarkation, exact dates of departure and arrival, captains' and owners' full names, and nationalities or flags of the carriers.

The analysis of the data allows fresh conclusions to be drawn on the behavior of the Cuban slave trade. Knowledge on regions and ports of embarkation make it possible to differentiate for the first time transatlantic from intra-American traffic and to establish precisely when the former took over from the latter. It makes possible to visualize chronological fluctuations in the volume of the slave trade, regions on which it drew (in both Africa and the Americas), and the nationality of the carriers. It is clear now that these fluctuations were shaped by international events beyond Cuban control shaped these fluctuations. Revolutions, armed conflicts, and changes in international political alliances determined which nations would participate in the slave trade to Cuba in these years, and through this, the embarkation regions of the slaves in both in Africa and in the Americas. The new data also helps to determine how changes in the international arena enabled the emergence of Cuba as a center of operations for the transatlantic slave trade in the North Atlantic.

There are strong reasons why the figures for the Cuban slave trade for these years matter. A key for understanding the foundation, expansion, and survival of the Atlantic slave trade into the second half of the nineteenth century lies in these thirty years. As shown in previous chapters, between 1790 and 1820, Cuba transitioned from a marginal importer of slaves to the leading destination of Africans in the North Atlantic. During these years, merchants in Cuba stopped relying on foreign traders for the supply of forced labor and organized their own transatlantic expeditions. During the 1790s, the arrival of Spanish-flagged vessels to Africa was rare. Instead, by the 1820s, Cuban-owned ships were standard along the African coast. By the end of the legal era of the Spanish slave trade in 1820, Cuban merchants had established slave trade outposts in various African regions.

The Cuban Slave Trade, 1790-1820: Historiography and a Reassessment

The first records quantifying the number of slaves imported into Cuba resulted from routine bureaucratic activities within the Spanish colonial state and political and economic debates. Cuban colonial institutions such as the Intendencia de Hacienda and, later, the Real Consulado kept records of the daily entry of ships carrying slaves to Havana. Merchants and local authorities often used these data to track economic progress on the island and to validate their arguments for keeping the slave trade open and tax-free. These records, which are still accessible in Cuban and Spanish archives, have been essential for historians analyzing the importation of slaves into Cuba between 1790 and 1820 (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col. A-D). The first public data on slave imports were published in nineteenth-century pamphlets and books by authors such as Antonio del Valle Hernandez (1814), Robert Francis Jameson (1821), and Alexander von Humboldt (1827).¹

¹ Antonio del Valle Hernández, “Documentos que hasta el presente componen el expediente que principiaron las cortes extraordinarias sobre el tráfico y esclavitud de los negros,” 119. Valle Hernández pointed out that between

Humboldt's "The Island of Cuba" was the first to print a complete list of the annual importation of slaves in Havana between 1790 and 1820. In 1800 and 1804, the Prussian explorer visited Cuba, where his prestige, wealth, and erudition granted him access to Havana's highest economic and political circles. He was assisted by colonial authorities, merchants, and planters who granted him access to a variety of official documents not available to the public. The book, aimed at demonstrating the evil dimensions of slavery in Cuba, drew on the custom-house returns from Havana for assessing the number of African imported in Cuba between 1790 and 1820 (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col. E). Humboldt concluded that 225,574 slaves had disembarked in Havana in those years. Although he did not have access to data from the rest of the island, he estimated that fifty-six thousand additional slaves could be imputed as arriving at other Cuban ports. In sum, Humboldt concluded that around 281,574 African captives might have disembarked in Cuba in those thirty years.²

Following Humboldt's path, José Antonio Saco published in 1832 his "Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil" containing a list of the slaves disembarked in Havana between 1790 and 1821. The figures are about the same as those of Humboldt except for the years 1819 and 1820. Saco's list has two thousand fewer arrivals for the year 1819 and almost thirteen thousand more for 1820 (Appendix D, Tab 1, Col F). It is now clear that Humboldt mistakenly used the 1821 figures for the year 1820. A document created in 1832 by the colonial administration in Cuba confirms the accuracy of the final two years of Saco's estimates (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col. D).³ Thus, according

1789 and 1810, 110,136 slaves had disembarked in Havana. Robert Francis Jameson, "Letters from the Havana, During the Years 1820," 36. Jameson, the British judge for the Mixed Commission Court in Havana, published a pro-abolition pamphlet in which he estimated that between 1789 and 1819, Cuba imported about 286,000 captives.

² Alexander von Humboldt, "The Island of Cuba," 218-219.

³ "Expediente formado para recoger y remitir al Sr. Capitán General las noticias que S.E. pide de los esclavos que han entrado en toda la Isla desde el año 1811 hasta la extinción del tráfico de negros y desde el año de 1764 hasta el de 1810 inclusivas. 1832," ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23.

to Saco, 236,578 captives arrived in Havana between 1790 and 1820. He added to this number about sixty thousand to allow for illegal importations, customs omissions, and disembarkations in other Cuban ports to arrive at a total of about 290,000 (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col. F).⁴

Until the second half of the twentieth century, historians have used mostly Saco's and Humboldt's estimates.⁵ The first attempts to reappraise those nineteenth-century canonical texts came from a new generation of economic and quantitative historians. An outstanding example in the Cuban historiography is the monograph "The Sugarmill" (1964) by Manuel Moreno Fraginals. Although Fraginal's Marxist text is a sophisticated longitudinal analysis of the global market for sugar and its financial and technological basis, the author does not subject the slave to a rigorous scrutiny. The only systematically organized list of arrivals presented by Fraginals is for the years between 1809 and 1820 (144,518 slaves). Unlike his predecessors, Moreno included archival data from other Cuban ports such as Matanzas, Santiago, and Trinidad. However, his estimates are puzzling. Between 1809 and 1814, Moreno presents lower figures than Saco, which do not match with other primary sources. By contrast, for the period between 1815 and 1819, Moreno's numbers are closer to Saco's summary.⁶

Meanwhile, in 1971 David R Murray's "Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790-1867" and Herbert S. Klein's "North American Competition and the Characteristics of the African Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790 to 1794" tapped a set of unexplored sources from the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Spain which harbors the monthly customs returns of the slave ships arriving in

⁴ José Antonio Saco, "Colección de Papeles científicos, históricos, políticos y de otros ramos sobre la Isla de Cuba," vol. 2, 70.

⁵ Three examples of renowned historians using Sacos and Humboldt's data were: Hubert H.S. Aimes, "History of Slavery in Cuba," 269; Fernando Ortiz, "Hampa afrocubana," 87; and Philip Curtin, "Atlantic Slave Trade, A Census," 39-41.

⁶ Manuel Moreno Fraginals, "El ingenio," 323.

Havana between 1790 and 1820.⁷ Klein transcribed, processed, and made publicly available these lists. For the first time, historians had access to records containing details of daily arrivals of slave ships in Cuba, name of the vessel, rig, captain, national flag, and the number of slaves divided by sex and age categories.⁸ The data enabled a periodical voyage-by-voyage assessment of the traffic. Nevertheless, the sources have significant gaps. They provided no information on ports of departure, owners and consignees of the human cargo, and exact date of arrival in Cuba. Moreover, they contain information only for Havana and around twenty-two years of the total are incomplete.

The lack of data on ports of embarkation was a daunting historiographical challenge for anyone interested in understanding the Cuban slave trade. With no access to information on the actual origin of the expeditions, Klein separated transatlantic from intra-American voyages based on the numbers of slaves carried on board. Based on patterns in the slave trade from other regions in the Americas, Klein estimated that any vessel with more than one hundred captives should be considered as transatlantic while the rest were intra-American.⁹ For many cases, such methodology was not a reliable benchmark. Regarding the total number of slaves transported to Cuba, when Klein published his research in 1975, he included a table comparing his findings with the data from Saco. Klein followed Saco's annual figures to fill existing gaps in the Spanish primary sources -- around twenty-two years of the total are incomplete.¹⁰ Klein concluded that 183,338 slaves arrived in the port of Havana between 1790 and 1820 (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col H).

Cuban, as opposed to Spanish, sources came back to center stage in 1979, when historian Juan Pérez de la Riva computed the number of slaves by combining archival sources, Saco's

⁷ David R. Murray, "Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba," 131-149; Herbert S. Klein, "North American Competition," 86-102.

⁸ "Registro de entrada de negros," AGI, Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, 2207.

⁹ Herbert S. Klein, "The Cuban Slave Trade in a Period of Transition," 67-89.

¹⁰ Twenty-two years are missing monthly data: 1790, 1793, 1794, 1796-1800, 1805, 1806, 1808, 1811-1815, and 1817-1820.

figures, and demographic estimates from colonial censuses. Pérez de la Riva provided a complete annual list of slave arrivals that incorporates not only Havana but also Santiago de Cuba. He concluded that between 1790 and 1820, 295,128 captives disembarked on Cuban shores.¹¹ These were the highest numbers presented by any historian up to that time (Appendix D, Table 1, Column G).

Pérez de la Riva's sources, however, were not included in a major new initiative in the field at the end of the last century. In 1999, a group of scholars, including Klein, launched the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database in a CD-ROM format (*Voyages*) containing 27,233 slave ship voyages. In 2008, the online version was released as www.slavevoyages.org (hereafter *Voyages*), which in its latest update (2019) has 36,002 recorded slave voyages.¹² The data on Cuba from the period between 1790 and 1820 comes mainly from Klein but incorporated new entries from the work of Manuel Barcia, Oscar Grandío, Marial Iglesias, Jose L. Belmonte, Ada Ferrer, Jay Coughtry, Jean Mettas, Serge Daget, José Luciano Franco, and others. Yet there were still many voyages missing from this database and many voyages that were included lacked information on the identity of the owners, exact departure and arrival dates, slave's embarkation ports, and virtually any data from ports outside Havana.

Fuller exploitation of Cuban sources –Cuban newspapers, and the records of major colonial institutions in Cuba such as the Junta de Fomento, Gobierno Superior Civil, and Intendencia de Hacienda– now makes it possible to fill in many of the gaps discussed above and to present a close to final voyage-by-voyage record of slave arrivals in Cuba between 1790 and 1820.¹³ Some of the

¹¹ Juan Pérez de la Riva, ¿Cuántos africanos fueron traídos a Cuba?," 12-13; Juan Pérez de la Riva, "El monto de la inmigración forzada," 102.

¹² Slave Voyages. <https://slavevoyages.org/> (consulted, March 20, 2019).

¹³ The database draws on a range of primary sources, including the newspapers *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, *El Aviso*, *Diario de la Habana*, and *Diario del Gobierno de la Habana* and the following sources held at the ANC Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506; Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-

new sources include data from Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad, Matanzas, and Puerto Príncipe that were absent from *Voyages*.¹⁴ Daily entry of ships into and departures from Cuban ports were compared with Klein's data. Allowance was made for minor variations in spelling and differences in the date of arrival or the number of slaves. The new data, comprising around three hundred new entries and supplementary information for several hundred existing voyages, have been added to www.slavevoyages over the last two years. Thus, for most voyages, we now know when vessels cleared out from the island as well as the specific day of arrival, the full name of the captain, the duration of the voyage in days, the ports of origin, and the consignee of the cargo in Havana. It has also been possible to identify slave ships that left Cuba for Africa and never returned either because of shipwreck, capture (whether at the hands of pirates, privateers, or the anti-slave trade patrols), or because they disembarked their captives in other ports. Most importantly, most of the monthly gaps in Klein's AGI data are now filled. For the seven years for which some months are missing in Klein, the aggregated data and the annual series presented below follow Klein's practice of incorporating Saco's annualized data.¹⁵

All this new information makes it possible to derive a new aggregate total between 1790 and 1820 for Havana alone of 260,478— thirty thousand more than what Saco reported for the same period. Saco and Humboldt both estimated that about sixty thousand captives should be added to the Havana figures to allow for arrivals at other ports on the island, illegal entries, and mistakes in the customs office. However, the Cuban National Archive has yielded some records

18690; Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23; Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820; and Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

¹⁴ ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820; and Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

¹⁵Data are still missing for a few months in 1796, 1805, 1808, 1809, 1812, 1819, and 1820 in the Havana returns. Specifically, entries between April and December are missing for the year 1805. For 1809, there is no information between January and March and incomplete data for the rest of the year. For 1812, information is lacking for April and from August to December. Between January and July 1819, voyage data are scarce. Finally, 1820 has no data at all for January and some voyages are missing for the rest of the year.

of disembarkations in Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Trinidad, and Puerto Príncipe, the lists for each containing the full date of arrival, the name of the captain and the ship, the ports of origin, the number of slaves carried, and in many cases the consignee of the cargo.¹⁶ The Santiago return is the most comprehensive, spanning 1764-1823, but not all the years are complete. Monthly data for every year between 1797 and 1820 is missing altogether. Despite the lacunae, the new data enable much more precise estimates to be made than has hitherto been possible. The total number of slaves disembarked in Santiago, Trinidad, Matanzas, and Puerto Príncipe is 51,237. In sum, the new aggregate total for Havana alone comes to 311,715 slaves (Appendix D, Tab. 1, Col. I). Such statistics will increase once the missing data become known.

The Cuban Slave Trade: A Statistical Overview (1790-1820)

Two main distinctive features of the Cuban slave trade between 1790 and 1820 were the diversity of embarkation ports and the nationality of the carriers. During these thirty years, hundreds of thousands of slaves came to Cuba from every major African slave-trading region and forty ports in the Americas. Each slave-trading nation did business on the island. Britain, France, the United States, Portugal, Denmark, Netherland, and even some German states transported slaves to the Spanish Caribbean. No other region in the Americas could match Cuba in the diversity of its national suppliers and captive origins.

Of the 311,715 captives that arrived in Cuba between 1790 and 1820, around 250,197, or four out of five came directly from Africa. The remaining 20 percent, or 61,518 captives, disembarked in Cuba from neighboring territories via the intra-American slave trade (Appendix D, Tab 2). However, the intra-American slave trade to Cuba was mostly a pre-1808 phenomenon

¹⁶ “Expediente formado para recoger y remitir al Sr. Capitán General las noticias que S.E. pide de los esclavos que han entrado en toda la Isla desde el año 1811 hasta la extinción del tráfico de negros y desde el año de 1764 hasta el de 1810 inclusivas. 1832,” ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23.

given that 45 percent of all captives arrived via that traffic before 1808, but only 2.4 percent after that year (Figure 22).

Overall, between 1790 and 1820, Spain was the dominant national carrier (181,161) followed by the United States (51,975), Britain (30,085), Denmark (16,152), France (14,192), and Portugal (8,225), with other minor providers such as Sweden, Netherland, and Prussia comprising the remainder (Appendix D, Tab. 3). It is important to clarify that, in reality, the predominance of the Spanish flag on the Cuban slave trade only existed first between 1790 and 1794 in the form of intra-American commerce, and after 1808 as transatlantic voyages. After 1808, the great diversity of flags that had characterized the earlier period was replaced by a majority Spanish component, and only then did a significant Cuban involvement emerge both in the transatlantic traffic and on the African coast.

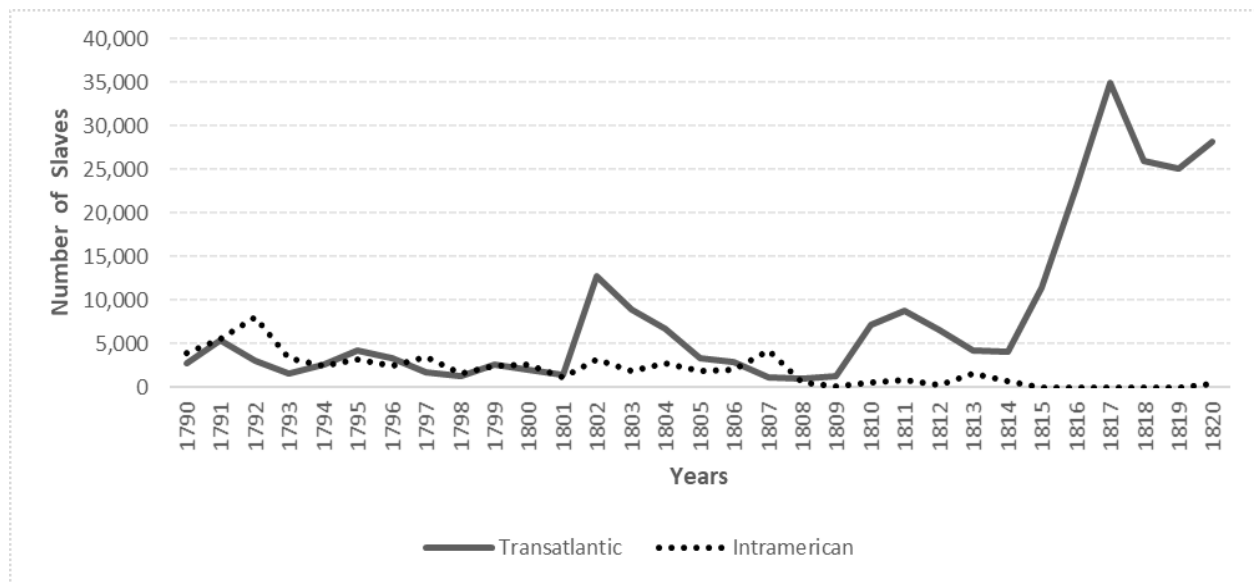


Figure 22: Transatlantic and Intra-American Voyages to Cuba (1790-1820). Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

Although between 1790 and 1820, most slaves arrived in Cuba directly from Africa, identifying specific African ports, or even regions of origin is a challenging task. Transatlantic voyages are mentioned in the primary sources mostly as coming from the “African coast.” A few are listed from “Guinea Coast,” “Gold Coast,” or “Windward Coast,” and a smaller number again from specific ports. In fact, only one-quarter of the 250,197 slaves who arrived directly from Africa between 1790 and 1820 can be linked to even a broad region. For these, the Bight of Biafra appears as the leading source with 19,000 slaves. West Central Africa (17,000), the Gold Coast (7,800), Southeast Africa (4,000), Senegambia (3,600), the Bight of Benin (2,600), and the Windward Coast (1,711) follow (Appendix D, Figure 1). For unknown reasons, Cuban sources overrepresented some African regions over others. Thus, the small embarkation point of Cape Lopez in the Bight of Biafra is identified as being the most important single source of Cuban slaves and is the only reason the Bight of Biafra heads the list of large regions. In reality, Cape Lopez was too small to account for so many slaves, and Biafra was probably not the major regional source of slaves carried to Cuba. We rely here on the estimates page of *Voyages*, which shows that between 1790 and 1820, West Central Africa was the most important African region of embarkation followed by the Bight of Biafra, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, South-east Africa, Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, and the Windward Coast.¹⁷

Archival sources for identifying intra-American ports of embarkation are more reliable. They identify the exact origin of all but 3 percent of the 61,500 arrivals. The British West Indies occupied the first place, mostly Jamaica, with 19,900 slaves, followed by the Danish colonies of

¹⁷ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/ugG1D1em> (consulted October 21, 2018)

Saint Thomas and Saint Croix (17,042), the United States (mostly Charleston) (8,273), Saint-Domingue and other French islands, (6,098), and twenty other minor ports (Appendix D, Tab. 4).

However, these figures regarding ports of origins and the nationality of the slave ships hide significant trends. They do not show the dramatically changing patterns in slave trading resulting from international wars. The records also mask the strategies used by slave traders such as the formal adoption of foreign flags in a time of war and the falsification of ports of embarkations. An efficient method to start disentangling these factors is to view the Cuban slave trade through the lens of the changing international arena. To understand the interplay between ports of embarkations and nationality of the slave ships, we need to explore patterns within six time periods based on the international context. These are, first, from the liberalization of the slave trade in Cuba until the beginning of the Anglo-Spanish war (1790-1796); second, the first Anglo-Spanish War (1797-1801); third, the two years after the Treaty of Amiens (1802-1804); fourth, the second Anglo-Spanish War (1805-1808); fifth the transition to a Cuban-owned Atlantic slave trade in the last phase of the Napoleonic wars (1809-1814); and finally, the rapid growth of the Cuban-based Atlantic slave trade during the first sustained period of peace in in twenty-two years (1815-1820) (Figures 23-24).

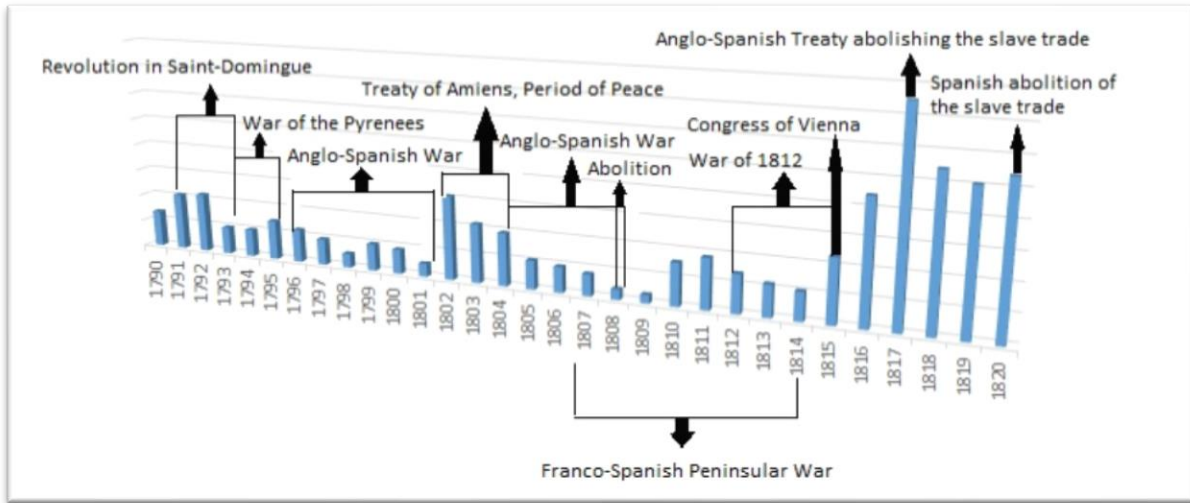


Figure 23: The Cuban Slave Trade and International Events, 1790-1820. (Appendix D)

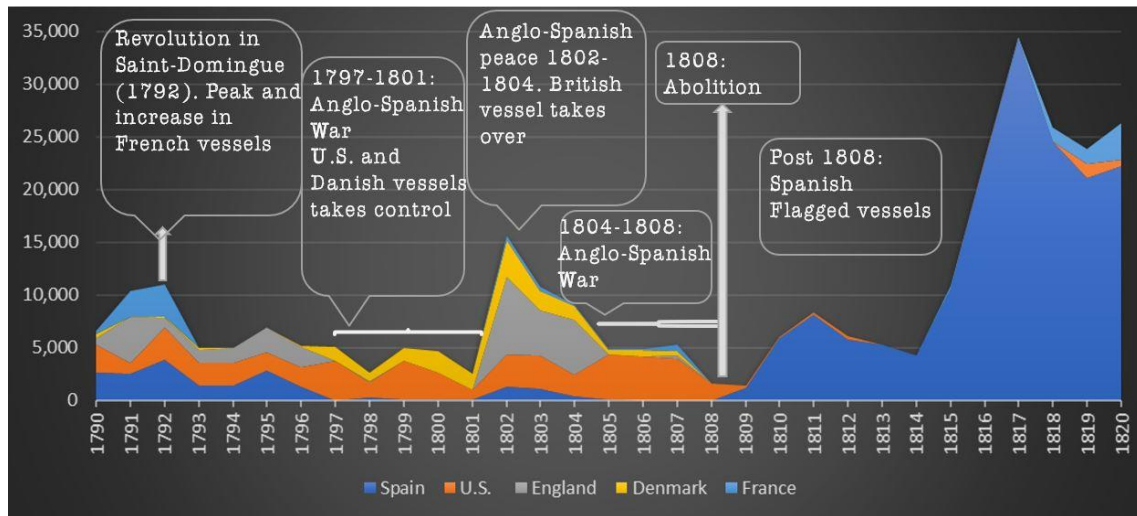


Figure 24: Fluctuations in the Nationality of Major Slave Carriers and International Events, 1790-1820. Appendix D.

1790-1796: From Liberalization to the Onset of the Anglo-Spanish War

In 1789, when the Spanish king passed a royal order allowing any traders regardless of nationality to bring slaves to Cuba, the only exceptions were traffickers from nations that Spain was at war with. Right away, traders from many nations began doing business on the island. Two

years later, in 1792, a revolution began in the prosperous French colony of Saint-Domingue which, by the last years of the eighteenth century, had become the world's leading sugar producer. The British Caribbean was the first beneficiary of the collapse of Saint-Domingue output, but Cuba eventually took the place of both. The expansion of sugar and coffee plantations in the hinterland of Havana required African captives. An external factor, however, interrupted the flow of enslaved human beings to Cuba. The French Revolution (1789) submerged Europe in a series of wars that did not end until 1815. The first conflict of this new era in which Spain was involved that had consequences in the Caribbean was the War of the Pyrenees (1793-1795) against France. The War of the Pyrenees was followed by the Anglo-Spanish War between Spain and England (1796-1802). These two wars shaped the slave trade to Cuba.

Between 1790 and 1796, fifty-two thousand slaves disembarked on Cuban shores. More arrived via the intra-American trade (twenty-nine thousand) than the transatlantic route (twenty-three thousand).¹⁸ This seven-year number almost matches the total arriving in Cuba for the three decades preceding 1790, so the growth of the Cuban slave trade was indeed rapid. Spanish vessels accounted for the 31 percent of arrivals, U.S. (25 percent), British (24 percent), and French (11 percent), along with the Danes, Dutch, Swedish and Portuguese accounting for the remainder. Although the United States was the leading carrier of slaves, Great Britain was, in reality, the most critical supplier. During the 1790s, Spanish vessels carried most of their captives from British Jamaica. Also, the British were responsible for most of the slaves transported from Africa to the Danish colonies and subsequently transshipped to Cuba.¹⁹ This pattern is fundamental to understanding fluctuations in slave arrivals to Cuba during the Anglo-Spanish wars. Each time

¹⁸ *Voyages* accounts for 23,530 slaves disembarked from Africa in Cuba. The small difference with our data is explained by some voyages being mistakenly identified as transatlantic when in fact they were intra-Caribbean. Small discrepancies with *Voyages* will be eventually adjusted to eliminate these discrepancies.

¹⁹ *Voyages* Database <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/XBFxrEY7> (Consulted, October 21, 2018)

Spain went to war with England, the total number of slaves imported to Cuba dropped. Moreover, because the British brought most of their captives directly from Africa, it was the transatlantic route that contracted during periods of war while the intra-American traffic increased. The Cuban merchant's dependency on the slave markets in the British West Indies also explains fluctuations in Spanish participation in the intra-American slave trade, given the importance of Jamaican slave markets to Cuba.

There is data for embarkation regions for around three-quarters of the slaves coming directly from Africa. Thirty-one percent came from West Central Africa, 18 percent from the Bight of Biafra, 16 percent from the Gold Coast, and 15 percent from the Bight of Benin. The rest came from Southeast Africa, 11 percent, with 5 percent each from Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast.²⁰ This distribution was mainly shaped by the nationalities of the slave ships given that European nations traded in some African regions more than others. In the 1790s, the United States traded mostly in the Gold Coast, Great Britain had a substantial presence in the Bight of Biafra, and the British and French together dominated West Central Africa north of the Congo.²¹ The relative importance of the significant carriers thus accounts for the relative importance of the African geographical origins of Cuban transatlantic arrivals.

In the case of the intra-American route, there is information for 27,317 captives or 94 percent of the total. Jamaica tops the list with 52 percent (14,400 slaves), with Saint-Domingue following with 17 percent (4,657) - all the latter arriving between the onset of the Haitian

²⁰ These figures do not match with the transatlantic slave trade. The *Estimates* section in *Voyages* situates the Gold Coast as the main regional origin of the slaves carried to Cuba. It might be the case that this is caused by the overwhelming details contained in the sources used by historian Jay Coughtry who studied the slave trade between Rhode Island and the Gold Coast. On the other hand, Cuban sources do not account for African ports of embarkations. Rhode Islanders carried many slaves to Cuba, but the British were even more important in the trade and they carried the Africans mostly from West Central Africa. Voyages Database, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/fKexhH1b> (consulted October 21, 2018)

²¹ Voyages Database, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/aBWd5TAO> (consulted, October 20, 2018)

Revolution and the start of the Franco-Spanish War (1791-1793). The Danish colony of Saint Thomas supplied 1,900 and the Dutch possession of Saint Eustatius 1,340. The remainder originated in twenty-four minor ports. The African origins of the slaves resulting from the intra-American trade are more challenging to track because these ports were entrepôts connected to among them or to different African regions of embarkation.

The Haitian Revolution triggered an influx of 5,600 captives from Saint-Domingue between 1791 and 1793, many of whom were on transatlantic ships that had stopped in Saint-Domingue expecting to find a market and then sailed on to Cuba. Temporarily, the French became the second leading source of slaves until the beginning of the War of Pyrenees in 1793 when French vessels were denied access to Spanish possessions. French participation peaked in the year 1792, when they accounted for 39 percent of all captives arriving in Havana. Historian Ada Ferrer referred to one of the first such cases. The slave vessel *Deux Soeurs* captained by Louis Huet de Relia arrived in Cap-Français on August 9, 1791, from the Bight of Benin with 346 captives on board. The rebellion in Saint-Domingue started while the ship was anchored in the harbor. The captain sailed to Havana, where he sold the 292 remaining slaves.²² During the next two years, other vessels followed this path. Other traders responded similarly to the Saint-Domingue crisis. Spain, England, and the United States briefly redirected their slave-trading operations to the French colony to acquire slaves. However, the Spanish flag was the primary beneficiary. After the revolution, Jamaica, the traditional supplier of Cuban slaves, faced competition with the now unstable French colony. By March 1793, French supply of captives ended when France and Spain went to war. Spanish traders now went to Jamaica and Dominica for their slaves while some others

²² Adad Ferrer, "Freedom's Mirror," 9.

ventured to Trinidad, the Bahamas, Saint Eustatius, and Saint Thomas. French vessels re-appeared briefly in Cuban ports after 1802, followed by another gap down to the 1820s.

The Spanish flag, the leading carrier of slaves to Cuba between 1790 and 1796, transported around fifteen thousand slaves from other areas in the Caribbean, two-thirds from Jamaica, and a further 12 percent from Saint-Domingue after August 1791. Ships from Cuba also went to Dominica, Trinidad, Bahamas, Saint Eustatius, and Saint Thomas. The first successful Cuban expedition to Africa was in 1792, but very few followed. Nevertheless, Cuban participation in the intra-Caribbean slave trade and the experience gained from acting on behalf of foreign slave merchants as consignees or sales agents did provide a base of sorts for future Cuban transatlantic ventures. The U.S. flag, the second leading carrier of slaves to Cuba, appeared everywhere in the intra-American branch of the Cuban slave trade, mostly because of the country's neutral status during the European wars and its growing slave trading operations during the last decades of the eighteenth century. U.S. vessels carried captives to Cuba twenty-two different ports being the most important the Danish possessions of Saint Thomas and Saint Croix (1,588), Jamaica (1,237), and ports in the United States such as Charleston and Baltimore.

1797-1801: The Anglo-Spanish War

In August 1796, Spain signed the Treaty of San Ildefonso, that established a Franco-Spanish alliance. Britain, the enemy of France, was now at war with Spain. One result of the Anglo-Spanish War (1796-1802) was that British vessels no longer had access to Cuban shores or any other Spanish possession. The consequences for Cuba were multiple. First, the total numbers of imported captives in Havana dropped sharply and would remain low until the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. Second, the U.S. flag occupied the space left by the British. Third, Spanish ships disappeared entirely as a slave's carrier. Finally, because of the changes triggered by wars between

the nations carrying captives, ports of origin and the slave-trading routes were once more realigned in both the intra-American and transatlantic slave trades.

Between 1797 and 1801, 20,404 captives disembarked in Cuba, significantly less than during the previous years of peace with England. Of these, 11,360 arrived directly from Caribbean territories (56 percent), while the rest, 9,040 (44 percent) came from Africa. The United States carried 12,205 slaves, or about 60 percent of the overall total. Most of the rest of the captives arrived on Danish ships. According to historian Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, the number of Danish vessels carrying slaves to Cuba between 1790 and 1807 is “as great as the total number of Danish ships which, during the whole eighteenth century, sailed the triangular trade.”²³ Green-Pedersen points out that most of the owners of the expeditions sailing from Saint Thomas and Saint Croix to Cuba were not Danish-born citizens.²⁴ The real proprietors of these vessels were either American citizens or British subjects. Saint Thomas had been a free slave-trading port since 1785, and U.S. and British slave merchants established themselves there.²⁵ Sixty percent of all the slaves who arrived in the Danish West Indies (14,552) from Africa came on British ships.²⁶ In other words, the British, despite the war, continued to provide slaves to Cuba indirectly. The minor inflow of captives into Cuba under the Swedish flag - just 443 slaves – was a variant of the Danish case. Except for one ship that arrived from Saint Barthélemy, all came directly from Africa. Ernst Ekman pointed out that the slave trade “was never legally done under the Swedish flag.”²⁷ Swedish vessels always had British or American ownership.

²³ Svend E Green-Pedersen, “Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag,” 94.

²⁴ Svend E Green-Pedersen, “Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag,” 94.

²⁵ Svend E Green-Pedersen, “The History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade,” 20.

²⁶ Voyages, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/TnNdwYPI> (Consulted October 21, 2018)

²⁷ Ernst Ekman, “Sweden, the Slave Trade and Slavery,” 224.

The removal of England from the Cuban slave trade generated a shift in the African region of embarkation of the slaves. For these years, information about African origins is particularly limited. We only know with certainty the origins of 1,700 captives, a mere 16 percent of the transatlantic branch. These limited data suggest that the Gold Coast replaced West Central Africa as the leading African source of captive, probably because U.S. vessels had partially replaced the British in the Cuban trade. We can also speculate that, given the Rhode Islander ownership of most American expeditions at the end of the eighteenth century, the Gold Coast share might be even higher given the long New England connection with that African region.²⁸

The picture of the intra-American slave trade between 1797 and 1802 is much more complete than for the transatlantic branch of the traffic. We have reliable data on the origin of 8,988 slaves brought to Cuba which is 79 percent of the total intra-American influx into the island. The Anglo-Spanish War produced a change in the source of slaves in the Caribbean as well as in Africa. Jamaica, which had supplied about 8,500 slaves to Cuba between 1790 and 1796, sent only 624 in this era. Its role was taken by the Danish islands of Saint Thomas and Saint Croix that together exported to Cuba 7,144 captives comprising 80 percent of all the intra-American importations. The lowest annual total of slaves coming into Cuba coincided with the British occupation of the Danish islands in 1801.

All this activity begs the question of why the Spanish flag disappeared from the slave trade after 1796. The Anglo-Spanish War was the chief factor. As pointed out, the central market for Cuban-based vessels was Jamaica, now closed to Spanish ships. War inhibited all commerce in the Caribbean. Britain blockaded the island of Cuba, and English privateers and the Royal Navy captured merchant shipping of all types. Historians have ignored the fact that Spanish merchants,

²⁸ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/gbWa03hM> (consulted 15 December 2016).

too, used neutral flags to avoid capture. Another cause of the decline of Spanish ships in the Cuban slave trade, according to historian Sherry Johnson, was a hurricane that “struck the habanero shipping industry in 1794.”²⁹

The 1790s was a decade of profound transformations in Cuba. Sugar plantations expanded, accompanied by increasing demand in African forced labor. New legislation was passed every year to facilitate the importation of slaves. Not only Spanish subjects but also foreigners could bring captives to Cuba with few restrictions. Slavers from many nations but in particular Americans and the British benefited from the growing slave demand on the island. Cubans, however, wanted to take over this business and sought to purchase slaves in Africa without having to rely on intermediaries. However, the first generation of Cuban slavers from the 1790s was not yet ready to make serious inroads into the transatlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, they made the first steps to find space into the business by training captains, creating insurance companies, forming commercial associations, or purchasing ships. Few Cuban expeditions may have made it to Africa, and it would take more than a decade for Cubans to fulfill Francisco de Arango y Parreño’s project of having the port of Havana filled with Spanish slave ships loaded with chained humans from Africa.

1802-1804: The Anglo-Spanish Peace

The Treaty of Amiens, signed on March 25, 1802, reestablished a two-year peace between Spain and England. The British once more took control of the slave trade to Cuba, and as a result, the number of slaves increased sharply. In just two years, 36,400 slaves arrived on Cuban shores. The difference compared with the previous period is striking. In 1801, Cuba received about 2,600 slaves, while in 1802, numbers jumped to 16,000. This last figure would not be surpassed until

²⁹ Sherry Johnson, “The Rise and Fall of Creole Participation in the Cuban Slave Trade, 1789-1796,” 66.

1816. Four out of five (28,500) of the overall total came directly from Africa, with the remainder from other ports in the Americas. Britain alone introduced 16,740 captives into Cuba - almost half of the total. The U.S. flag accounted for a further 10,283; Denmark 6,681; Spain 2,785; and Sweden 560, but as in previous periods, U.S. citizens were responsible for many Danish-flagged voyages

African coastal origins once more shifted in line with the flag of the carriers. During the previous war, most slaves imported to Cuba came on U.S. vessels, and, as a result, the Rhode Island-Gold Coast-Havana triangle was the distinctive pattern of transatlantic ventures to the island in this period. After the Treaty of Amiens, American vessels continued trading this route, but now British competition ensured a broader range of provenance zones. About one-third came from the Bight of Biafra, where the British had a near-monopoly, one-quarter from the Gold Coast and about one-fifth from West Central Africa. Bonny, Calabar, and New Calabar in the Bight of Biafra, and the Congo River and Loango in West-Central Africa headed the list of embarkation ports, followed by Cape Coast Castle on the Gold Coast. Though now much less significant in size, the flags and routes of the intra-American traffic did not change substantially. The three major carriers continued to be the United States, Denmark, and Spain, respectively. Saint Thomas and Saint Croix, once again under Danish control, accounted for the majority of slaves. Saint Thomas alone supplied around half of the intercolonial slave trade to Cuba, mostly on American vessels. Jamaica supplied Cuba with around 1,400 captives, followed by several hundred from a new source –the Bahamas.

By the end of the Anglo-Spanish peace, the Cuban slave trade had reached a historic peak. Although Cuban planters continued their reliance on British and American carriers for the provision of slaves, the upswing in the volume of the traffic allowed Cuban merchants to train

more professionals in the business. Spanish sailors enrolled in foreign expeditions, and over time, some became the officers of a Cuban-based slave trading fleet still some years in the future. The vast number of slaves arriving in Cuba also encouraged the creation of bigger and wealthier commercial firms on the island. Joint ventures by Cubans and foreign traders expanded, and Spanish flagged transatlantic expeditions gradually became more frequent.

1805-1808: The Second Anglo-Spanish War and the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

A second war between England and Spain broke out in 1804. The numbers of slaves imported to Cuba again dropped by half. Between 1805 and 1808, 17,200 captives disembarked on the island. Just over half came directly from Africa, with the remainder from the Americas. The U.S. flag once more replaced that of its British competitor. Overall, two-thirds disembarked from US vessels, with the flags of Denmark, France, Prussia, and Sweden far behind. The nascent Spanish slave trade almost disappeared. The reopening of the port of Charleston to the transatlantic traffic meant that in just four years (1804-1807), Americans imported one-quarter of the total number of slaves entering the United States over the whole era of the slave trade (109,500 captives). “No other country involved in the traffic,” David Eltis has argued, “generated a pattern remotely like this one.”³⁰ One consequence of the re-opening of Charleston was that the organizational center of the slave trade in the United States shifted from Rhode Island to South Carolina. Traditional slave trading families such as the D’Wolfs had to face new competitors. In consequence, the Gold Coast, favored by Rhode Island traders, declined in importance relative to the Upper Guinea Coast and West Central Africa with more connections with the Lowcountry.³¹ The impact in Cuba would be profound, since as Eltis points out, “Cuba, in fact, received almost

³⁰ David Eltis, “U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 363.

³¹ David Eltis and David Richardson, “New Assessment of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,” in *Extending the frontiers. Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*,” 28.

as many slaves from US vessels as did Charleston before 1820 and certainly more than any British Caribbean market, including Jamaica and Barbados.”³²

U.S. ships accounted for 90 percent of the arrivals direct from Africa. We know the African region of embarkation for just under one-third of this influx. The data indicate a further shift in African origins. West Central Africa now accounted for 30 percent of disembarkation, followed by 28 percent from Sierra Leone and 14 percent from Southeast Africa. The Bight of Biafra fell away in step with British withdrawal from Cuban ports, and the decline of the Gold Coast as an area of embarkation was associated with the reopening of Charleston and the relocation of trading networks from Rhode Island to South Carolina.³³

For the intra-American traffic, we know the port of embarkation of 87 percent of arrivals between 1805 and 1808. Half came from the United States, 22 percent from the Danish Islands, and others from Bahamas and Jamaica. The incorporation of mainland North America as a leading center of embarkation, with Charleston as the primary departure point, was the most striking novel feature of the Cuban slave trade in these years. In 1807 alone, of the 5,385 slaves that disembarked in Cuba, 3,319, or 62 percent, were reported as coming from Charleston.

As the previous chapter had shown, the tight connection between merchants from Charleston and Havana would play a fundamental role in linking the emerging Cuban-based slave trade with African slave markets, most importantly, those on the Upper Guinea coast. Some of the Charlestonian traders used Cuba as a means of continuing the trade in slaves after the United States Congress banned this commerce. By the time U.S. and British abolition of the slave trade occurred,

³² David Eltis, “U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 370.

³³ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/bD7p81Os> (consulted September 25, 2017).

Havana already had financial, commercial, and political institutions, as well as legislation in place to support a “Spanish” Atlantic slave trade.

1808-1814: The Transition to a Cuban-Owned Atlantic Slave Trade

The most obvious consequence of the abolition of the British and US branch of the transatlantic slave trade was a sharp decline in captives shipped from Africa to the Americas in general. In 1807, 97,035 slaves disembarked in the New World. In the next two years, the total importation of slaves fell by more than a half, to 37,555 in 1808 and 35,329 in 1809.³⁴ It was not until 1810 that the volume of the traffic began to recover. The contrast was less dramatic in the South Atlantic, controlled mostly by Brazilian and Portuguese slavers for whom trading slaves remained legal.³⁵ The Cuban trend was even more dramatic than the North Atlantic pattern, with a decline from 5,400 in 1807 to just 1,700 in 1808 and then 1,500 in 1809.

The abolition laws of 1808 reconfigured the sources of slaves arriving in Cuba. During 1807, 95 percent of the five-thousand slaves introduced in Cuba embarked in other American regions, such as Charleston. By 1809, all arrivals were coming directly from Africa. In the transition year of 1808, the traffic was evenly split between the two routes. For the first three months of 1808, Charleston was the only source, but it could be the case that these ships did not reach the United States before abolition took effect in January 1808 and therefore diverted to Havana. In the following year, however, only two vessels arrived from other places in the Americas: one from Saint Barthélemy and another from Bahia de Todos los Santos, Brazil. Accompanying this shift was a major change in the nationality of the vessels. All vessels bringing slaves to Cuba were U.S.-flagged in 1808, compared to only three out of fourteen in the

³⁴ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/ewjxEdCL> (Consulted October 22, 2018).

³⁵ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/C2kQbpt0> (Consulted, October 22, 2018).

following year, and one out of forty-seven in 1810. Suddenly, by 1810, the Spanish flag was flying over three-quarters of the traffic, and a further 15 percent were Portuguese. How did such a dramatic transition occur in a colony that just a few years earlier could not sustain a transatlantic slave trade infrastructure? Why, suddenly, did the Cuban slave trade become Spanish?

As previous chapter has shown, part of the explanation is that many Americans moved their operations to Cuba, as well as to other parts in the Atlantic World. Cubans established joint-ventures with U.S. slave traders and covered American ownership of many expeditions with Spanish documents. As President James Madison wrote in December 1810, “Among the commercial abuses still committed under the American flag and leaving in force my former reference to that subject; it appears that American citizens are instrumental in carrying on a traffic in enslaved Africans, equally in violation of the laws of humanity, and in defiance of those of their own country.”³⁶

But some time between 1808 and 1814, Cubans assumed genuine ownership roles in transatlantic ventures – a process no doubt aided by the U.S. Embargo Act of 1807 followed by the War of 1812, which left Cuban merchants alone in the North Atlantic slave trade. Without the United States and England, Cubans had no other option but to increase their role in the direct trade to Africa. This does not mean that after 1815 foreigners pulled out of the Cuban slave trade. Instead, they gradually assumed indirect roles - lenders of capital, and sellers of slave ships. Ownership became Cuban. The Cuban slave trade nevertheless continued to decline between 1811 and 1814 - from 9,600 in 1811 to 6,700 in 1812, 5,800 in 1813, and 4,800 in 1814.

³⁶ James Richardson, “A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents,” v.1, 487

It was not until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 that growth returned, with an increase to 11,500 slaves even as general hostilities in the Atlantic continued to mid-year.

Although close to 90 percent of all arrivals in these eight years came directly from Africa, the sources reveal embarkation regions for just 7 percent of the total, distributed almost equally between the Bight of Biafra and West Central Africa. The much smaller intra-American traffic in this period is better documented. Between 1811 and 1814, around 150 slave ships anchored in Cuban ports. Fifteen of these arrived from Brazil – twelve, containing 2,200 captives, from Bahia alone. The arrival of the Portuguese royal court at Rio de Janeiro in 1808 – ironically under British protection – opened up Brazil’s ports to foreign trade. At the same time, abolition had a much smaller immediate impact on the South than on the North Atlantic slave trade, so that Brazilian slaves were more readily available. Perhaps because of this, commercial houses in Havana such as Cuesta Manzanal and Brothers, and Pedro Oliver and Co. established connections with merchants in Brazil. Both these Havana companies also outfitted large slaving ventures direct to Africa. It can be reasonably assumed that such Brazilian connections introduced Cubans to West Central African sources of slaves.

1815-1820: The Growth of the Cuban-Based Transatlantic Slave Trade

In the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna, it was evident that Spain sought to abolish the slave trade in response to British pressures. Cuban-based merchants raced to introduce as many slaves as possible in anticipation. In addition, the end of the Napoleonic Wars reduced the risks of capture across the Atlantic world, and wars, as we have seen, always had a strong shaping influence on the flow of slaves to Cuba. It was thus not surprising that the Cuban slave trade reached unprecedented heights after 1814. In just six years, between 1815 and 1820, Cuba imported 149,200 slaves, more than the sum total brought to Cuba in all the centuries before

1790. In the single year 1817, Cuba imported thirty-five thousand captives, a number comparable to the forty-eight thousand that arrived in Brazil in the same year, even though Brazil was many times the size of Cuba.³⁷

All these captives were disembarked from Spanish ships, the vast majority on ventures organized by Cuban merchants. At the end of this period, however, just prior to official abolition of the Spanish slave trade, there was an upswing of arrivals on French vessels sailing directly from Africa amounting to almost six thousand in total comprising about one-fifth of the total French slave trade in these years. As this suggests the end of the Napoleonic Wars facilitated French merchants' engagement in the slave trade, as well as that of their Cuban counterparts, despite the French Crown's nominal acceptance of abolition at the Congress of Vienna.³⁸ The case of the schooner *La Nueva Amable*, intercepted by the British in April 1816 with 366 slaves, revealed French subjects also using Iberian colors as a cover for their illegal operations, but the reluctance of the French government to enforce abolition prior to 1830 probably meant that this was not a widespread practice. One noticeable feature of French involvement in the Cuban trade was that almost half the captives carried to the island under the French flag disembarked in ports outside Havana. This raises the possibility that they were selling at least some slaves to French-speaking planters who had escaped to Cuba during the Saint-Domingue revolution.³⁹

Unlike years preceding 1815, it can be said with some confidence of a Cuban Atlantic slave trade. Vessels condemned by the vice-admiralty court in Freetown show a higher ratio of Spanish ownership, crew, and financing than in previous years. Further, we know that in this

³⁷ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/WupFGD6t> (Consulted, October 22, 2018).

³⁸ *Voyages*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/0KnGBCXw> (Consulted, October 22, 2018)

³⁹ "Colección Legislativa de España. Sentencias del Consejo de Estado, Año de 1861," 226-230.

period, Cuban-based traders had already established the first “factories” on the African coast, as well as trading networks with African or Euro-American traders settled in Africa. Although the Cuban slave trade remained heavily transnational in the years to come, the merchants from Cuba became the main protagonists and decision makers. As Eltis comments “bBy the time the trade to Cuba became illegal at the end of 1820, both Cuban and British sources indicate that non-Spanish involvement in the trade had become the exception very much.”⁴⁰

This chapter has reassessed the size, direction, and organization of the slave trade to Cuba between 1790 and 1820. New archival documentation has enabled higher estimates than those presented by previous studies. Once missing data are collected, these numbers should rise somewhat. These archival findings have made it possible to complete the picture of the Cuban slave trade by adding the date of departure, owners, consignee, and ports of origins of the slaves arriving on the island. Knowing the ports of embarkation of the slaves allows for the first time to differentiate transatlantic from intra-American voyages. Finally, we now have information on vessels that carried captives to minor Cuban ports such as Santiago, Trinidad, and Matanzas.

By focusing on the number of captives disembarked, the nationalities of the carriers (including the often nominal flags of the slave vessels), and the regions and ports of embarkation, it is possible to show not only that these variables were interconnected, but that they fluctuated in response to the tumultuous transformations in the Atlantic world in this period. This approach allows us to separate transatlantic from the intra-American slave trades to Cuba as the rapid expansion of the sugar economy was occurring - a vital stepping-stone to establishing the broad African regions from which the enslaved labor force of the island was drawn. For the first time,

⁴⁰ David Eltis, “Economic Growth,” 55.

we can see the connections between changes in the international arena and the dramatic shifts in the supply of enslaved labor to what was soon to be the producer of half the world's sugar.

CONCLUSION

By the late fifteenth century, international treaties had formally excluded Spain from any commerce in Africa. The Spanish government established a monopolistic system of contracts between the king and merchants or companies known as *Asientos* to guarantee the supply of enslaved Africans to the Americas. The Spanish administration retained control over the carriers, number, ethnicities, and gender of the slaves. Though some Spanish subjects engaged in carrying Africans to the Americas, either directly from Spain or from the African coast, up to the 1640s, the almost three-century trend was that captives arrived in Spanish possessions on foreign-flagged ships.

The Portuguese remained as the holders of the *Asientos* until the end of the Spanish occupation in 1640. Dutch and British commercial houses, which had been smuggling captives in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean for years, filled the vacuum left by the Portuguese. By the end of the seventeenth century, Dutch slave ships supplied the Spanish colonies. Officials in Madrid pointed out that foreign carriers could be damaging in political and economic terms. The Dutch as well the British had different religions, political ideas, and were a source of smuggling into the Spanish colonies. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the system of *Asientos* became much more than an economic practice; it turned into a major diplomatic issue. The peace treaties signed after the War of Spanish Succession (1713), stipulated that British vessels would take over the slave monopoly held by the French. Thus, for most of the eighteenth century, the British controlled how many, from where, and how often slaves were disembarked in the Spanish Americas.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, dissenting voices in Madrid and the colonies sought to get rid of the British intermediaries and the system of *Asientos* at large and to

develop a national branch of the transatlantic slave trade. This was the time when liberal economic doctrines were taking root in Europe at the expense of what was considered the old fashioned mercantilism. The Bourbonic monarchy was reducing the participation of the state in the private sector. The demand for slaves in the colonies was increasing in tandem with the expansion of agricultural and commercial activities. However, Spain excluded for more than a century from any trade in Africa, did not have conditions in place to engage directly in the transatlantic slave trade. Spain did not have slave trade outposts or even commercial networks anywhere along the African coast. There were not Spanish merchants, captains, or sailors of any kind with expertise on the transatlantic slave trade. There were no economic or financial slave trading institutions or associations. Besides, the colonial legislation clung to the monopolistic system of *Asientos*, was a real obstacle for the development of any national branch of the transatlantic slave trade.

Creating a self-sufficient, unrestricted, and reliable Spanish branch of the transatlantic slave trade was a matter of discussion in Madrid and the colonies. Planters, merchants, and officials created a narrative equating a deregulated and self-sufficient importation of slaves with patriotism. Dismantling the system of *Asientos* and liberalizing the economy was understood as the recipe for prosperity. Boosting the development of colonial production, finances, and exports were seen as more than a material, grey, lucrative, and impersonal activity; economic growth was promoted as a service to the country, as a patriotic endeavor. Since the increase in production was based on forced labor, a key piece in the narrative equating economic development and patriotism was the expansion of slavery and, consequently, the slave trade. Thus, building a national transatlantic slave trade was a patriotic act. This seemingly odd conflation of economic freedom with servitude would last in Cuba for most of the nineteenth. It

became a tool to cherish the first experimental transatlantic slaving expeditions in the 1790s and to oppose British abolitionism after 1808.

The Spanish government attempted to stimulate a national branch of the transatlantic slave trade by giving the *Asientos* to Spanish companies. Such was the case of the “Real Compañía Gaditana de Negros” in 1765, which sent the Spanish frigate *Venganza* from Spain to Upper Guinea and from there to Cuba. After failing to deliver the expected results, the company had to obtain their slaves in the British West Indies. The Spanish then acquired Fernando Po (Bioko) in 1778 which triggered hopes among colonial merchants of a safe spot for Spaniards to trade slaves in Africa. However, this initiative too was a case of expectations not meeting reality. Aspirations of liberalizing and taking control of the slave trade remained latent.

In 1789, the Spanish king deregulated the slave trade for nationals and foreigners. Several Atlantic events coalesced to change the course of the history of Cuba and the Spanish slave trade at large. The economic demise of Saint-Domingue turned Cuba into a full-fledged plantation economy. Between 1790 and 1808, the Spanish metropole passed dozens of laws, each loosening restrictions on the slave trade. Taxes were reduced or removed altogether. Restriction for the importation of merchandise or technologies were lifted. Constraints imposed on the participation of foreigners in the Cuban slave trade were significantly reduced. Two goals drove these measures: to increase the number of Africans carried to Cuba and to boost the national participation in this commerce. Intentions and results, however, were at odds.

After 1789, Danish, Dutch, German, American, and French slavers joined the traditional British merchants in supplying slaves to Cuba. The laws encouraging freer competition worked. They worked so well that the less competitive Spanish fleet remained excluded from participating actively in the transatlantic slave trade. Without experience, commercial networks,

marketable goods, slave ships, expertise, or trading outposts in Africa, Cubans could not compete with the newcomers. They were constrained to the minor intra-American slave trade and to act as consignees or sale agents of foreign carriers. The Cuban elite struggled for almost two decades with the dilemma on how to invigorate the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade without limiting the participation of foreign competitors. Only the European and Napoleonic Wars limited direct access of foreigners to Cuban markets. These wars determined fluctuations on how many slaves arrived on the island, their carriers, and regions of embarkation either in Africa or in the Americas.

Cuban planters, merchants, and officers endlessly discussed projects on how to establish trade in Africa. They proposed the creation of the “Havana’s African Society” in 1796 and the “African Society” in 1802. Neither project progressed beyond the planning stage. Other measures were more effective, such as the establishment of a Maritime Insurance Company in Havana, the creation of the Real Consulado, and the establishment of a Nautical School. While laws were passed, institutions founded, and projects discussed, Cuban merchants slowly increased their involvement in the traffic. They took advantage of the favorable legislative, the international conditions, and the political frame to set up a slave trading infrastructure. Cuban merchants’ everyday commercial activities on the ground made it possible for Cuba to become a transatlantic slave trading epicenter in the north Atlantic. This dissertation has shown how this happened.

In 1792, a Basque merchant living in Havana, Sebastian de Lasa, sent the first successful transatlantic slaving expedition from Cuba. The excitement extended beyond the Cuban merchant community so that even the Spanish king praised the arrival of the ship with slaves from Senegal. Others followed Lasa’s path, but Cuban-based slave expeditions remained the

exception until 1808. Also, although they were announced in Cuban newspapers as “nationals,” these experimental expeditions had massive foreign participation that took various forms. By establishing trading networks with foreign slavers, Cuban merchants paved the ground for a “national” transatlantic slave trade to take off. In the 1790s, Spanish sale agents or consignees of human cargoes brought by foreigners developed ties and enduring commercial networks with the providers. Cubans also acted as figureheads for foreign investors aiming to lease or buy barracoons, houses, plantations, and commercial establishments in and around Havana. Assisted by Cubans, foreigners falsely assumed the Spanish flag, especially during wars. Spanish subjects signed documents claiming to be the owners of foreign expeditions. Foreigners also insured slaving voyages in Havana.

Over time, this dissertation has argued, such interactions resulted in Cuban merchants acquiring slave trading expertise, technology, and commercial networks from foreign slave traders. From Danish, British, American, and French captains and supercargoes, Cuban merchants learned about specific African markets, the community of traders living there, and many details on how to trade slaves. The first generation of Spanish slave ship captains was trained on foreign vessels. Foreigners commanded the first Cuban-owned transatlantic slaving expeditions, Spanish apprentice officers and sailors on board learned the intricacies of their craft. They became familiar with the Atlantic ocean and wind currents, learned how to treat the slaves on board, and to cope with the hazards of this peculiar commerce. Furthermore, the Spanish apprentices were introduced to a vast community of traders along the African coast. There is evidence that after visiting one slaving port aboard a foreign-commanded expedition, a former apprentice went back to the same place as the captain of a Spanish ship. Transatlantic relationships had been forged.

This dissertation has shown that, in order to determine precisely where Cuban merchants established trading networks along the African coast, it is necessary to reconstruct ventures on a case-by-case basis. Identifying the pioneer slave traders on the island has enabled me to locate the transatlantic links into which they tapped. Since there was a correlation between the nationality of the slave trader and their African region of operations, it is also essential to determine the nationalities of the foreign traders who had been introducing Cubans to specific African ports. When can it be said that Cubans took over the slave trade to the island?

In 1808, England and the United States made the transatlantic slave trade illegal. Both countries had been, for decades, the primary suppliers of slaves to Cuba. In their absence, merchants on the island gradually took over the import of enslaved Africans. First, many American slave traders did not give up their business. Instead, they moved their operations to Cuba. In Havana, they found Spanish subjects to register their ships nominally as Spanish property and sail them to Africa. For a few years after the abolition, the use of faux Spanish papers was a common strategy. Indeed, after 1808, the number of American ships registered as purchased by Havana's merchants skyrocketed. It was the beginning of the creation of a Spanish slaving merchant fleet. Over time, Cubans took control of ships and each step of this commerce. By the times of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the number of slave ships leaving Cuba for Africa not only increased but also became predominantly and genuinely owned by Cubans. This dissertation has detailed how the transition took place.

One example of how the post-1808 relocation of American merchants shaped the destiny of the Cuban slave trade was the creation of a slave trading route between Rio Pongo and Havana. The United States received a relatively high number of slaves from the Upper Guinea coast. Rio Pongo was one of the many slaving ports in Upper Guinea where Americans inherited

trading networks from the British. By the 1790s, there was a community of American citizens living in Rio Pongo sending slaves to the Americas. This link expanded after the reopening of the transatlantic slave trade in Charleston in 1803, the immediate effect of which was that Cuba imported most of its captives from Charleston. Thus, it is not very hard to conclude that Pongo was the origin of many captives arriving in Havana even before the U.S. abolition.

On the African side, this dissertation has argued that changing conditions within Rio Pongo's hinterland were central to the establishment and rapid expansion of the Havana-Rio Pongo slave trading route. As in the case of the U.S. and Cuba, the roots of Rio Pongo's slaving operations predated the nineteenth century. This dissertation paid particular attention to the internal conditions in Rio Pongo. First, long-term human migrations shaped the social composition of the region. The Baga and Susu were displaced from Futa Jallon plateau and coexisted in Rio Pongo by the early eighteenth century. Together, they traded with the multiethnic hinterland region of Futa Jallon. The founding and growth of the centralized theocratic state of Futa Jallon in the second half of the eighteenth century increased the number of slaves transported to Rio Pongo. Futa Jallon became the major Atlantic outlet for caravans going to that Atlantic outlet. Second, the expansion of Futa Jallon coincided with the last years of the British transatlantic slave trade. After the creation of Freetown in 1808 as the epicenter of the British efforts to suppress the slave trade, many slave traders moved from Bunce Island to the Rio Pongo, located 100 miles north of Freetown. Some Americans also moved to Rio Pongo and began trading with Cuba. As the demand and the community of traders in Rio Pongo grew, more slaves arrived from Futa Jallon. Atlantic and African transformation thus coalesced. It was in this context that Cubans tapped into the flourishing Rio Pongo's slave market. What started as a slaving route controlled by Americans, gradually became a major link for the community of

merchants in Havana. Even African merchants visited the Cuban capital. The Havana-Rio Pongo trade route was controlled by Spanish merchants and carried on Spanish ships until the 1840s.

Some aspects of the socio-political and economic life within Rio Pongo were influenced by the growth of the Cuban slave trade. Cuba was the leading market for slaves leaving Pogo. Thus, the slave trade in Rio Pongo increased after 1808 in tandem with the insatiable Cuban demand. This influenced other changes. The community of traders in Pongo expanded. Frequent competition among those merchants to load Spanish slave ships amplified divisions, tensions, and confrontations. African landlords, in a region without a centralized political entity, got involved in the disputes, which resulted in even more political fragmentation. The British from Freetown, on the other hand, used these conflicts to advance their agenda of abolishing the slave trade and expanding political control on neighboring territories. Because of the expansion of the slave trade, the British attacked Pongo several times, and with every attack, Africans lost power. It is still unknown how the increase of the slave trade with Cuba modified some commercial patterns in the internal market of Futa Jallon. Warfare in Futa Jallon might have increased to supply the demanding Cuban market.

The creation of a trading circuit between Rio Pongo and Havana is just one example of the many transatlantic ties Cubans forged along the African coast in the nineteenth century. This dissertation has presented a tenable methodological path for historians interested in the origins of the Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade. The methodology comprises first, the reconstruction of commercial networks as the primary path for understanding how Cubans started trading slaves in Africa. These networks help us to visualize the structure supporting the Cuban slave trade. Second, Cubans reached different regions on the African coast through connections with foreign traders. The role of Americans in introducing Cubans to Rio Pongo is just one example

developed in details. The methodological path this dissertation establishes, the relocation and transference of Rio Pongo's commercial networks from the U.S. to Cuba, could be used as a model to explain the creation of other trans-Atlantic connections between Cuba and other ports in West and East Africa carried on by traders from other nations such as England, France, Portugal or Brazil. Third, there was a relocation of slave-trading networks after 1808 that catalyzed the insertion of Cubans in the African trade. Fourth, studying the socio-political and economic eco-system in those African slaving ports where Cubans arrived, is essential to understand the operating mechanisms of the system. The conditions that made possible for Cuban merchants to trade in Rio Pongo diverged noticeably from the conditions in Malembo. Thus a case-by-case study is required. Finally, in order to understand the continuation and expansion of the Cuban slave trade during the rest of the nineteenth century, historians have to address how changes in the Atlantic rearranged links extending from the interior of Africa to Cuba.

Most histories of the Cuban slave trade do not mention Africa in any meaningful way. That continent remains in the Cuban historiography as a mythical, unknown, and distant geography. Somehow, it seems as if the Manichaean abolitionist discourse or, even worst, the slave trading mindset survived its time. This dissertation is a call to stop referring to Africa as a cohesive, organic, or homogenous region of slave embarkations. Slaves were carried from specific regions and ports, from distinctive geographies, from particular regions, from places with precise socio-political dynamics. Cubans established commercial operations in dozens of slaving markets stretching from Senegal to Mozambique. They traded with concrete people, living under very distinguishable historical circumstances that changed significantly over time.

Cuban and African merchants created transatlantic partnerships with the sole goal of enslaving others, the victims of the system.

The victims also had names, languages, ethnicities, and distinctive features. They were more than just “Africans.” Although this dissertation does not tackle the life experience of the enslaved, it opens a path to explore the specific origins of the slaves disembarked in Cuba by reconstructing transatlantic slaving networks and routes. The reconstruction of slaving networks had significant implications. It is possible, by combining records of slave ships arrival, the “Liberated Africans” lists produced by the Vice-Admiralty and Mixed Commissions Courts which contain the ethnic origins of the slaves, and the baptismal records from Havana, to know more about the captives coming from Pongo. We can gain a better understanding of the social effect that ethnic groups from Upper Guinea had on the island. These new explorations could reveal other previously unnoticed components of the Afro-Cuban culture.

EPILOGUE

The Cuban Slave Trade in the Longue Durée

In 1926, the two-leaf, mahogany door of the mansion located on the fashionable Paseo Avenue in Havana opened for the first time. Some spectators congregated outside to catch a glimpse at the wonders on the inside. The house was the talk of the growing bourgeois neighborhood of Vedado. The most renowned architects in Cuba, Evelio Govantes and Felix Cabarrocas, conceived the eclectic style of the house. The façade resembled Florentine palaces, while the interiors combined art deco, neoclassic, and Egyptian motifs. After passing through the mahogany doors, the view of the foyer was astonishing. The double staircases, illuminated by stunning handmade Murano glass-lamps, were made of Carrara marble, while the railings were silver laminate. Fine sand from the Nile River coated the walls. A polished Languedoc marble floor combined symmetric shapes in grey and red. A stained-glass window crafted by the famous French glassmaker Rene Jules Lalique adorned the wall facing the main entrance. Three doors, all of them made of Cuban mahogany, led to the library, the dining-room, and the living-room. Art deco bronzed chandeliers from France illuminated each room. The interior designers Andre Domin and Marcel Genevriere ensured that the house had the most exquisite of the latest Parisienne styles. Jean-Claude Nicolas Forestiere designed the gardens. Indeed, the breathtaking mansion was just one small example of the growing wealth of the Cuban bourgeoisie during the first decades of the twentieth century. The house was built in honor of Catalina de Lasa.

Catalina was born in the city of Matanzas in 1874, during the first war of independence in Cuba. While in exile in 1898, she married Luis Estevez Abreu, the only son of the later first vice president of the Republic of Cuba, Luis Estevez, and Marta Abreu, a millionaire and philanthropist, in Tampa, Florida. Catalina was considered one of the most beautiful women in

Havana if we judge her by winning some, albeit biased, beauty contests organized by a magazine for the elite. On one occasion, at a party, she met the tremendously wealthy planter and owner of sugar factories, Juan Pedro Baró. They started an affair that quickly became public. In order to hide it from the public eyes, the couple spent much of their time in hotels or one of Pedro's *centrales*.¹ In 1912, Emil Fuchs, a famous British painter, and friend of Queen Victoria, made a portrait of Catalina, "one of the loveliest ladies in this land," he said.² Catalina's husband, aware of her infidelities, ordered her arrest for bigamy.

Catalina and Pedro Baró ran away first to Paris, then later to Rome, to obtain a papal blessing and annulment of Catalina's marriage. However, regardless of the pope's decision, there was no civil divorce law in Cuba. Luckily, Catalina was related to the president of the island, Mario Garcia Menocal, and some speculated that she brought the case to his office. In 1917, Menocal passed the Law of Divorce, and Catalina was the second woman to make use of the new legislation. A few months later, she married Pedro Baró. However, Cuban high society in Havana rejected the couple. For a few years, they moved between New York and Paris. During this time in the early 1920s, Pedro also secretly ordered the construction of a mansion in Havana. The goal was not only to surprise Catalina but also to show off to everyone the success of their romantic rebellion. The magnificence of the house would help society to forget the whole affair, Pedro thought. In 1926 the house opened its door for the first time.

Unfortunately, Catalina did not get to enjoy the mansion for many years. In November 1930, she died in Paris, attended by the best doctors who were unable to find what was wrong with her. Pedro ordered the construction of a pantheon in the main avenue of the cemetery in

¹ Big sugar factory.

² *The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer*, March 9, 1912, 163.

Havana where he expected her remains to rest in peace. It was as majestic as the mansion Catalina occupied in life. The chapel was built of Bergamo marble in an Art Deco style. Rene Lalique designed the glass doors using a model that he had displayed in a competition in Paris in 1925. The chapel's apse was a half dome decorated with stained glass made by Lalique. In the interior, there was a yellowish red rose made from glass based on a hybrid of a Cuban and a Hungarian flower that Pedro ordered a gift to her wife. When Pedro died, ten years after Catalina, his vertical marble grave was placed standing behind his lover's horizontal grave as though protecting her. However, neither Baró's spirit nor the night shift of the custodians in the cemetery prevented a 2016 burglary of the chapel. The graves were broken with hammers and the bodies stolen. The desecration was not made public. By 2016, the graves of Catalina and Pedro were just the remnants of a living society that had been ransacked sixty years ago.

In 1962, Nina Pedro, the last inhabitant of the house and one of the granddaughters of Pedro Baró, abandoned Cuba forever. She was part of thousands of wealthy people leaving a country they no longer recognized. Three years before Nina fled the country, a group of young, bearded revolutionaries took control of the island after a five-year civil war to expel a bloody dictator and restore democracy. Democracy, however, was never reinstated and the country quickly moved to a totalitarian model of governance copied from the Soviet Union. There was no space for Nina in this new proletarian Cuba and even less for what her house symbolized.

The keys of the mansion ended up in the hands of one of the many bureaucrats ordered by the new revolutionary government to trace and catalog the properties of the families who had abandoned Cuba. Those who left were labeled "traitors." The original furniture of the grand house, the decoration, the paintings, the lamps, the carpets, and the tapestries "mysteriously" disappeared. The building was kept intact, unlike many other mansions that ended in ruins or

were divided into multifamily quarters. In 1970, the bourgeois mansion was transformed into the Cuban-Soviet Friendship Institute. The decision was symbolic, showing that the government wanted to erase everything represented by the house. What the cinematographer Luis Buñuel called “The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie” was replaced by the stoic but no less ideological socialist realism. People that otherwise would have been barred from even reaching the porch of the house were now its administrators. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cuban government renamed the place as the Association of Peoples’ Friendship. To this day, anyone can visit the mansion to have a drink in a poorly stocked bar on the patio, rent a room for parties, or pay one dollar to take pictures of the place. The gardens inspired by Forestier are now partially covered by a stage where Cuban musicians play salsa, reggaetón, or other Cuban rhythms.

The love story of Catalina Lasa and Pedro Baró, the exquisite finish of the mansion, the Carrara marble, the impeccable work of Lalique, the design of Govantes & Cabarrocas, the gardens by Forestiere, and the luxuriously and eccentric grave are the products of a story of social class that had their roots more than a century before. Catalina and Pedro shared an unspoken heritage that, although they were not directly responsible for, they profited from. Pedro was the son of José Baró Blanxard, one of the most renowned slave traders in the second half of the nineteenth century and a wealthy sugar planter owning hundreds of African captives. Catalina even descended from an ancient “pedigree.” She was the great grand-daughter of Sebastian de Lasa, the man praised by the King as a patriot for organizing the first successful transatlantic slave trade expedition from Cuba in 1792.³ Although the Lasas were not as rich in

³ Sebastián de Lasa married Maria de las Mercedes Rivas y López-Barroso. They had ten children before his wife died in 1821. Sebastian de Lasa died to 80 years old in 1842. One of the sons of the couple, Jose Maria de Lasa y Rivas married with Rita Barberia y Olayzola and they had seven kids. One of them, Jose Miguel de Lasa y Barberia, married with Maria Luisa del Rio and the couple were the parents of Catalina and her seven siblings.

the twentieth century as they used to be, Catalina and her siblings inherited status and a set of social networks that made possible their partnerships with other wealthy people and to attend the fanciest social events in Havana.

Catalina's family story was not rare for many of the wealthier members of the Cuban elite at the turn of the twentieth century. It is not difficult to find archival evidence of the profit produced by African labor in a country that owes its expansion to the production of sugar cane cut by slaves. The descendants of Cuban slave traders became beauty pageant stars, respectable doctors, lawyers, politicians, artists, professors, and dilettantes. To erase the past of forced labor, death, and violence, to make it potentially less socially divisive, the history of Cuba that was written after 1902 as a post-colonial narrative had few pages reserved for slavery and the slave trade. If there was someone accountable, then it was the Spanish, Cubans wrote. That black past was forcibly submerged into silence and misconceptions. When voices rose by the descendants of the victims during the "Armed Uprising of the Independents of Color" in 1912, the "savages," how the government called them, were massacred en masse.

Cuba, however, experienced an unplanned and radical "reparations" for slavery. It began in 1959 when Fidel Castro took power. The government confiscated the properties of the descendant of sugar producers, slave traders, and many others, the vast majority, that had nothing to do with sugar or with a slave past. The rich were forced to leave the country to build a new version of Cuba in Miami. The descendants of those who built their fortune on the shoulders of the slaves had lost. Justice, some could say, had been served. However, the cost that the whole nation paid in terms of racial injustice was both high and destructive.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Estimates of enslaved peoples arriving in Cuba, 1511-1866 direct from Africa and from elsewhere in the Americas

Years	Arrivals from Africa	Arrivals from elsewhere	Total Arrivals
pre-1516	370	0	370
1516-1520	1017	0	1,017
1521-1525	261	0	261
1526-1530	1161	0	1,161
1531-1535	1115	0	1,115
1536-1540	748	0	748
1541-1545	0	0	0
1546-1550	0	0	0
1551-1555	0	0	0
1556-1560	0	0	0
1561-1565	0	0	0
1566-1570	368	235	603
1571-1575	328	210	538
1576-1580	634	405	1,039
1581-1585	993	635	1,628
1586-1590	1000	639	1,639
1591-1595	429	274	703
1596-1600	849	543	1,392
1601-1605	373	238	611
1606-1610	449	287	736
1611-1615	304	194	498
1616-1620	236	151	387
1621-1625	286	183	469
1626-1630	112	72	184
1631-1635	159	102	261
1636-1640	174	111	285
1641-1645	0	42	42
1646-1650	0	42	42
1651-1655	0	42	42
1656-1660	0	42	42
1661-1665	0	42	42
1666-1670	0	42	42
1671-1675	336	42	378
1676-1680	0	42	42
1681-1685	0	42	42
1686-1690	0	42	42
1691-1695	0	42	42
1696-1700	0	42	42

1701-1705	623	410	1,033
1706-1710	0	885	885
1711-1715	259	1,631	1,890
1716-1720	280	2,163	2,443
1721-1725	1,256	2,503	3,759
1726-1730	303	2,501	2,804
1731-1735	298	3,011	3,309
1736-1740	52	1,962	2,014
1741-1745	139	2,565	2,704
1746-1750	198	4,829	5,027
1751-1755	0	4,352	4,352
1756-1760	0	5,663	5,663
1761-1765	6,739	3,638	10,377
1766-1770	1,086	9,418	10,504
1771-1775	0	10,443	10,443
1776-1780	0	12,794	12,794
1781-1785	2,733	11,503	14,236
1786-1790	9,095	7,270	16,365
1791-1795	17,008	22,659	39,667
1796-1800	10,845	12,648	23,493
1801-1805	33,316	11,012	44,328
1806-1810	13,793	7,560	21,353
1811-1815	35,169	3,359	38,528
1816-1820	137,312	416	137,728
1821-1825	59,161	5,000	64,161
1826-1830	77,221	5,000	82,221
1831-1835	82,065	0	82,065
1836-1840	104,114	0	104,114
1841-1845	39,637	0	39,637
1846-1850	14,672	0	14,672
1851-1855	49,421	0	49,421
1856-1860	77,402	0	77,402
1861-1865	36,403	0	36,403
1866-1870	722	0	722
1511-1870	813,519	164,610	979,736

Eltis, David and Jorge Felipe, “The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade: New Data, New Paradigms” in Eltis, David and Alex Borucki (eds.) *From the Galleon to the Highlands*. The University of New Mexico Press, (forthcoming, 2020)

APPENDIX B

Consignees and Owners of Slave Cargoes Disembarked in Cuba (1790-1820)

1790-1808- Consignees Cuban Slave Trade

Consignee's name	Years 1790-1808	Total of slaves
Amorrosta, Enrique	1803	171
Alfairán, Francisco	1793	133
Alwood, Felipe	1795, 1800	904
Azcácarate, Francisco Ignacio	1799, 1803, 1804	768
Baldasa	1807	158
Carreras	1807	80
Castillo, José	1793, 1794	54
Cabanillas, Antonio	1794, 1795	60
Cabanillas, José	1793	171
Cabanillas, Miguel	1794	21
Celis	1794, 1795	19
Chávez, Lázaro	1803	485
Collins, John	1802, 1804	757
Comas, Francisco Antonio	1805	1,094
Cosido, Antonio	1793, 1794, 1795	880
Crucet, Félix	1804	640
Cuesta, Juan Luis	1802, 1803	294
Cuesta, Pedro	1803	8
Cuesta, Santiago	1799, 1800, 1807	1,061
Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers	1801	619
Delgado, Gabriel	1793, 1794	132
Delgado, Saul	1793	6
Dianales, Martín	1793	90
Drake, Santiago	1805, 1806, 1807	2,971
Durán, Cristóbal	1805, 1806	284
Erice, Pedro	1803	820
Fernández, Antonio	1794	6
Frías, Antonio	1803	16
García, Mauricio	1805, 1807	105
Gato, José	1803, 1804	438
Gimbal, Tomás	1799, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1807	683
Gómez, José	1806, 1807	245
Gómez de la Torre, Rafael	1804	90
González, Alamac	1803	2
González, Benito	1795, 1798	51
Gutiérrez, José	1804	17
Guriola, Simón	1793	6
Hernández, Francisco	1799, 1800, 1802, 1803, 1805, 1808	780

Hernández & Cia.	1800, 1802, 1803	1,635
Ichazo, Clemente	1800, 1806	884
Iriarte & Lasa	1805, 1806	13
Jáuregui, Mariano	1803, 1804	896
Kingsley, Zephaniah	1802	250
La Torre	1804, 1805	281
Lauradó, Pedro	1799, 1800	8
Lasa, Sebastián	1800, 1803	555
Lemaur, Francisco	1806	6
López, Andrés	1795	23
Madan, Nephews & Sons	1803, 1806	99
Martiartu, Salvador	1806	34
Martín, Manuel	1785	380
Martínez	1807	217
Martínez, Agustín	1793, 1794, 1795	599
Martínez, Manuel	1794	109
Melis, Manuel	1793	54
Mendive (Mendibe)	1807	185
Montero, Francisco	1804	19
Mota	1795, 1800	349
Nagle, David	1798, 1799, 1800, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806	2,080
Naranjo, José	1793	153
Naranjo, Miguel	1793	21
Nebares	1805	131
Nieto, Antonio	1793, 1794	84
Obina, Francisco	1795	122
Ordaz, Tomás	1794	62
Padilla (Pardillo), Blas	1793	37
Pérez, Julián	1793, 1794, 1795	152
Pérez de Urria, Francisco	1803	6
Pérez de Urria, Joaquín	1802, 1803, 1804, 1807	2,703
Pinillos	1805	20
Pluma	1807	180
Poey, Simón	1798, 1799, 1800, 1803	1,359
Poey & Co.	1803	2,384
Porceli, Antonio	1794	14
Prats, Santiago	1805	159
Quiroga, Manuel	1793	17
Ramírez, Pedro María	1806	64
Reynolds, John	1806	67
Ríos, Ventura	1793, 1795	156
Rivero	1799	13
Ronquillo	1807	2
Rodríguez, Agustín	1800, 1805	583
Rodríguez, Domingo	1793, 1794	77
Ruíz, Juan	1793	159
Saez, José Pedro	1803	132

Santa María & Cuesta	1798, 1800	631
Salamanca, José María	1793, 1795	41
Serra, Pablo	1803, 1804	16
Sierra, Ramón	1793, 1794, 1795	317
Silvestre, José	1793	306
Soto, Bernardo	1800	83
Texeira, Valeriano	1795	411
Torres, Basilio	1793	666
Trujillo, Miguel	1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806	567
Urria, Joaquín	1804, 1805	174
Vellido (Bellido), Cristóbal	1793, 1794, 1795	1,141
Vento, Miguel	1793	49
Vidal, Francisco	1793	30
Viñales, Martín	1793, 1794	385
Widow of Poey & Hernández	1803, 1806	1,811
Zabaleta & Echevarrías	1803	74
Zevada, Gregorio	1795	49

No information on consignees for the years 1790-1793, 1796, 1797, 1801

1808-1820- Owners Cuban-based Atlantic Slave Trade

Name	Years	Number of slaves
Acosta, Juan Luis	1819	296
Acosta, Manuel	1813, 1814	161
Acosta y Royo	1818	354
Alomá, Ramón	1813	239
Andreu, Jaime	1815, 1817, 1819	1,049
Antonio Nadro & Cia.	1817	150
Arredondo, José Ignacio	1816	336
Azopardo, Miguel	1820	454
Bárceñas, Miguel	1814	76
Bengochea, Francisco	1812, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820	4,051
Benigno Muñoz, Alonso	1814, 1815	365
Bermudez de Castro, Antonio	1820	162
Blas Fuente y Alejandro de Endura	1810	114
Bonilla, Miguel	1817, 1819	508
Botefeur, Daniel	1817, 1818	1,026
Bruzón, Antonio	1812	58
Bulnes, José	1816	217
Caballero, Juan Bautista	1817	111
Cabrales, Juan Nepomuceno	1814	325
Campin Domínguez & Cia.	1816	212

Campo, José Rubio	1818	275
Carrera, José	1817	539
Carro, Juan Antonio	1814	97
Carricaburu, Pedro	1810, 1817	718
Carricaburu, Arrieta & Cia	1816, 1819, 1820	1,705
Chauviteau, Juan José	1817, 1818	449
Clemente e Ichazo	1810	199
Collazo, Bernardo	1818	87
Colomé, Francisco	1818	118
Cordero, Francisco Antonio	1820	344
Coma, Francisco Antonio*	1809, 1810, 1811, 1812	973
Cruz, Juan	1819	689
Cuesta, Francisco María*	1817	106
Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers	1810, 1812, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820	11,747
Cuesta Manzanal & Toso	1819, 1820	853
Disdier & Morphy	1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1819	1,717
Drake, Santiago*	1809, 1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814	2,268
Durán, Cristóbal	1820	362
Entralgo, Manuel	1816, 1819	985
Entralgo & Cia.	1817	1,442
Escoto, Antonio	1812, 1813, 1816	1,255
Estalella y Coll, José	1817	295
Fernández, José	1817	210
Frías, Antonio*	1810, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1815, 1816, 1819, 1820	8,378
Fuente, Tomás	1818	83
García Álvarez, José	1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816	1,685
Giralt, Pedro	1815	119
Gobel, Juan	1817	898
Gómez, Joaquín	1818, 1819, 1820	1,436
Gómez de las Bárcenas, Miguel	1811, 1813, 1815	884
Grey, Fernández & Brothers	1819, 1820	1,140
Hernández de Braza, Antonio	1813, 1818, 1820	726
Hernández, Francisco*	1809, 1810, 1811, 1812	3,759
Hernández, Gaspar	1811, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818	2,590
Hernández, Martín	1816, 1817	662
Ichazo, Clemente*	1809, 1810, 1811	1,357
Inglada, Isidro	1815, 1816, 1817, 1818, 1820	3,712
Inglada & Cia.	1812, 1814	389
Iriarte & Lasa*	1810	113
Leyseca, Francisco	1816, 1817, 1818	1,271
Lovio, José Manuel	1816	319
Jaura y Soler, Romás	1818	163
Jáuregui, Mariano*	1811	330

Lombillo, Gabriel	1813, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1819, 1820	4,651
López, Pedro	1817	70
Madan, Nephews & Sons*	1810, 1811, 1812,	830
Madrazo, Juan	1811, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1819	3,518
Manuel Entralgo & Cia.	1818, 1820	1,284
Mariano Copins & Cia.	1817	262
Martiartu, Salvador*	1809, 1810, 1819	1,181
Martínez, Luis	1818	150
Matías de Aceval, José	1812, 1814	826
Marzal, Antonio	1817	215
Miró, Pié & Cia.	1816, 1817, 1818, 1819, 1820	4,546
Morán, Blas	1810, 1811, 1812	1,493
Morán, Francisco	1813, 1819	767
Mora, Francisco Moreno	1819	134
Moreno, Francisco de Paula	1819	289
Nagle, David*	1811, 1816	442
Navarro, Ramón	1811	66
Nepomuceno, Juan	1815	334
O Farrill & Bastian	1818, 1819	307
Olivella, Francisco Lorenzo	1812, 1813, 1816	760
Oliver (Pedro) & Cia.	1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1817, 1818	3,040
Ortega, Juan	1815	173
Palma, Agustín	1818	250
Pelegrín, Marques & Cia.	1820	340
Peoly, Juan Jorge	1818	344
Pérez, José Antonio	1818	610
Pérez, Juan	1818, 1820, 538	260
Puche	1816	288
Pie & Cia.	1819	268
Reynolds, John*	1810	134
Reynolds & Cia.	1820	470
Ricard, Escardo & Cia.	1817	776
Ruiz, Juan*	1809	14
Ruiz Gómez, Miguel	1816	50
Samá, Pablo	1816, 1818, 1819	1,948
Sanchez, Domingo	1817	95
Sandoval, Victorino	1820	420
Serra, Pablo*	1812, 1815, 1817, 1818, 1820	2,581
Sierra, Fernando Antonio	1811	96
Soler, José	1815, 1820	510
Soto, Bernardo*	1809	40
Tarafa, Magín	1810, 1817	742
Torre, Francisco	1817	211
Queralto, Raymundo José	1809	106
Valenzuela, Pedro	1812	22
Vidal Sirvent & Canellas	1810, 1812	1,012
Vidal, Lorenzo	1810	156

Vilardebó y Ferrer, Jaime	1816, 1817, 1819	1,806
Vildóstegui, Matías	1818, 1819	623
Widow of Morán	1813	214
Xiques, Lorenzo	1818	254
Zangroniz, José	1814, 1817, 1820	3,670
Zangroniz, Brothers & Cia.	1818	610
Zavala, Martín	1817, 1818	2,707

Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

APPENDIX C

Spanish-Flagged Ships Condemned by the Vice-Admiralty (1808-1818) and Mixed Commission Courts (1818-1820)

ID	Date and place of conviction	Place of capture	Name of the ship	Captain	Date of departure	Place of departure	owner	Slav . No
752 1	1809/11 Freetown	Off Freetown	Sch. Cuba (aka) Mariana		1809			114 ¹
758 6	1810/03/24 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sloop Rayo	Achevel, José Anselmo	1809			129 ²
	1810/04/03 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Lucía					N/A ³
755 4	1810/04/04 Freetown	Off Sierra Leone	Sch. Doris	Miller, Zebulon	1809/11/01	Charleston	Fraser, Charles	59 ⁴
755 6	1810/04/10 Freetown	Off Freetown	Sch. Mariana	Semanati	1810			186 ⁵
469 26	1810/05/17 Freetown	Cape Three Points	Brig Ana	Ruíz, Ramón	1809/11/08	Havana	Queralta, Raymun do José y Carbonel I Molla	N/A ⁶
755 1	1810/06/02 Freetown	York Island	Brig. Zaragozano	Dolz, Juan Norberto	1809/10/26	Havana		118 ⁷
755 3	1810/08 Freetown	Off Freetown	Sch. Santiago	Serrano, Antonio	1810/02/19			57 ⁸
758 4	1810/08 Freetown	Isles de Los	Sch. Pez Volador	Guanaben s, Juan Bautista/ Manuel Uribeond o	1809/12/16	Havana		82 ⁹
145 68	1810/08/30 Freetown		Brig San Carlos	Echavarrí a, Antonio		Havana	Frias, Antonio Carricab uru, Pedro	N/A ¹⁰
765 8	1810/09/17 Freetown	Goree	Brig Hermosa Rita	Montani, Ramón	1810/04/06	Havana	Comas, Francisc o	77 ¹¹
758 3	1810/09/10 Freetown	Off Badagry	Sch. Marqués de Romana	Villalta	1810	Liverpool		101 ¹²
755 0	1810/10 Freetown	Off Sierra Leone	Sch. Los Dos Amigos		1810	Bristol		N/A ¹³
154 9	1810/10 Freetown	Off Sierra Leone	Emprendedora		1810	Charleston		N/A ¹⁴
754 5	1810/11 Freetown	Rio Nunez	Frig. Vivilia	Rodríguez, Jerónimo	1810	Cadiz	Martiartu , Salvador	N/A ¹⁵

7630	1810/12/15 Freetown	River Gambia	Frig. María Dolores	Backhouse, Thomas	03/1810 1810/04/02	Havana/ Amalia Island	Maza Arredondo, Fernando	N/A ¹⁶
7657	1810/12/17 Freetown	Goree	Sch. Cirila	Reyes, Manuel	1810/05/12	Havana	Madan, Martin	N/A ¹⁷
	1811/01/14 Freetown	Mid-Atlantic	Brig. Arrogancia Castellana	Munro		Bristol	D'Wolf	N/A ¹⁸
41574	1811/01 Freetown		Brig. Habanera	Olivera, Cayetano	1811/04/11	Havana		98 ¹⁹
	1811/03 Bahamas	Bahamas	Atrevido (a) Carolina	Leon, Ponce	1810/07/20	Charleston	Broadfoot, William	204 ²⁰
	1811/03 Barbados	Off Bermuda	Brig. Empresa	Viamonte , Agustín	1811/03/18	Havana	Llovio, José	N/A ²¹
	1811/03/15 Halifax	Madeira Islands	Sloop Merced	Echevarría, Juan	1810/07/17	Philadelphia	Francisco de Ajuria, Francisco de Bengochea and Diego de Unzaga	N/A ²²
7951	1811/03/25 Antigua	West Indies	Brig San José y Animas	Aprisa, Juan Villas	1810/04	Havana	Arque, Francisco, Madan, Ezequiel (Madan, Sobrinos & Sons)	217 ²³
7624	1811/05/17 Freetown	Cape Verde Islands	Frig. Gerona	Carranza, Manuel	1811/04/09	Havana	Tato, Francisco	N/A ²⁴
7653	1811/06/25 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Paloma	Yelechy, Antonio	1811/01/27	Havana/ Norfolk	Hernández, Francisco and Francisco de Peñalver, Count of Santa Maria de Loreto	N/A ²⁵
7692	1811/06/26 Freetown	Gambia	Sch. Nuestra Sra. de los Dolores (aka) Casilda	Landa, José María	1811/02/24	Trinidad de Cuba	Garmendia, Domingo	112 ²⁶
7571	1812/02/24 Freetown	River Gambia	Sch. Pepe	Castillo	1811/10/18	Havana	Layseca, Francisco	73 ²⁷

421 59	1812/04 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Sagunto	Savater, Joaquín	1812/04	Havana	Martiaru , Salvador	N/A 28
469 22	1812 Freetown		Sch. Esperanza	Hita, Francisco	1812/03/25	Havana	Madan, Joaquín	N/A 29
469 24	1812 Barbados	Rio Pongo	Sch. Luisa (a) Rainbow	Viamonte , Agustín	1811/08/19	Havana	Madan, Joaquín	200 30
766 2	1812/06/12 Freetown	Cape Mesurado	Sch. Centinela	Arambill ote, Diego	1812/03/26	Havana	Madan, Joaquín	100 31
	1812/08/14 Freetown	Loango	Sch. Carlota					40 ³²
757 9	1812/11 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sloop Nueva Constitución	Mestre, Bartolom e	1812/03/21	Havana	Castillo, N	50 ³³
755 9	1813/06/04 Freetown	Cape Mount	Brig Fénix	Cabezas, José	1813/01/23	Havana	Escoto, Antonio	213 34
757 8	1813/06/07	Off Freetown	Sloop Juan (a) Pantujo	Patrullo	1812/01/26	Havana	Martínez, Luis	N/A 35
751 8	1813/11/09 Freetown	Ile Plantains	Sch. Dolores	Briñas, José	1813/05/16	Havana	Inglada, Isidro	154 36
795 2	1813/11 Antigua	West Indies	Sch. Dos de Mayo	Núñez, Diego	1813/06/08	Havana	García Alvarez, José	56 ³⁷
753 6	1814/02 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Isabela	Pujadas, Felix	1813/01/23	Havana	Escoto, Antonio	64 ³⁸
753 3	1814/02 Freetown	Rio Nunez	Sch. Laura Ana	Peoli, Juan Jorge	1814/01/10	Havana	Escoto, Antonio	N/A 39
769 4	1814/03/05 Antigua	West Indies (Bonny)	Brig Carlos (a) El Bonny	Caso Valdés, Santiago	1813/09/03	Havana	Frías, Antonio	400 40
	1814/03/15 Tortola	West Indies	Sch. Concha (Gambia)	Valdés, Melchor García, José		Havana	Santiago de la Cuesta y Manzana l	N/A 41
753 5	1814/03/28 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. San José (a) Marqués de Somersuelos	Botel, Juan	1813/01	Havana	Escoto, Antonio	98 ⁴²
753 4	1814/04/25 Freetown	Rio Nunez	Sch. Teresa	Castellan os, José	1814/01/20	Havana	Marqués of Casa Peñalver	N/A 43
752 3	1814/06 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Maria Josefa	Asimonte , Manuel	04/1814	Havana	García Alvarez, José	70 ⁴⁴
	1814/06/23 Antigua	West Indies	Sch. Josefa					278 45
	1814/07/07 Freetown	Cape Mount	Bombarda Nuestra Sra. de la Bella	Selma, José	1814/04/17	Cadiz	Arque, Francisc o	66 ⁴⁶
751 0	1814/06/01 Freetown	Windward Coast, near Fernando Po	Sch. Gertrudis (a) La Preciosa	Torne, José	1814/03	Cadiz	Lopez, Miguel	477 47

41855	1814/06/30 Freetown	West Indies	Frig. Manuela	Meyrelles, José Joaquín	1812	Havana/Rio de Janeiro	Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers	500 ⁴⁸
42178	1814/09/28 Freetown	Goree	Brig. San José (a) Union	García, José	1814/04/12	Havana	Zangroniz, Juan José	260 ⁴⁹
7680	1814/08 Freetown	West Indies	Frig. Venus Habanera	Souza Texeira, José	1812/07	Havana/Rio de Janeiro	Acebal, Matías	413 ⁵⁰
42186	1814/09 Freetown	River Gambia	Venganza	Marques, Mariano	1814/03/14	Havana	Zangroniz, Juan José	43 ⁵¹
7524	1814/10/11 Freetown	Cape Mount	Brig. Dolores (a) Volador	Mestre, Francisco	1814/05/23	Havana	Sama, Pablo	120 ⁵²
7532	1814/11 Freetown	Cape Mount	Sch. Resurrección	García, José	1814/08/27	Havana	Madrazo, Juan	400 ⁵³
41816	1814/12/01 Tortola	West Indies	Sch. Candelaria	García, Francisco Sandrino, Juan (supercargo)	1814/04/15	Havana		172 ⁵⁴
7525	1814/12/08 Freetown	Cape Mount	Sch. Golondrina	Alfaro, Francisco	1814/06/21	Santiago de Cuba	Zagarra & Co.	144 ⁵⁵
41853	1815/02/20 Tortola	West Indies	Brig Atrevido	Castellano, Joaquín	1814/08/04	Havana	Carrera, José	297 ⁵⁶
7514	1815/03/25 Freetown	Old Calabar	Paquete Intrépida	Pol, Francisco	1814/11/24	Terragona/Rio de Janeiro	Magro, Salvador	245 ⁵⁷
7513	1815/03/25 Freetown	Duke Town	Sch. Nuestra Sra. Del Carmen	Onofrio, Viada		Rio de Janeiro	Viade, Onofre	120 ⁵⁸
7512	1815/03/25 Freetown	Duke Town	Sch. Catalina	Mollán, José Antonio	1814/12/07	Santiago de Cuba	Milla, Michel	N/A ⁵⁹
7621	1815/05/03 Freetown	River Gabon	Sch. Diligente	Alfonso, Vicente	1815/01/16	Havana	Hernández, Gaspar	29 ⁶⁰
7562	1816/01/29 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Rosa	Mestre, Bartolomé	11/1815	Havana	García Alvarez, José	270 ⁶¹
	1816/02/14 Freetown	Off Freetown	Sch. Guadalupe	Billo, Lorenzo	1815/09/21	Havana	Madrazo, Juan	190 ⁶²
7564	1816/02/14 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Brig Rayo	Fernández, Vicente Manuel	1815/11/25	Havana	Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers	N/A ⁶³
7565	1816/03/03 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Eugenia	Pérez, Joaquín Ignacio	1815/10/23	Havana	Bengochea, Francisco	108 ⁶⁴

7566	1816/03/03 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Brillante Juana	Herrera, José Antonio	1815/11/07	Havana	Soler, José	49 ⁶⁵
7588	1816/05/13 Freetown	Off Freetown	Sch. Nueva Amable	Francisco Muñoz	1815/11/05	Santiago de Cuba	Bory, Magin Casamayor, Prudencio	388 ⁶⁶
	1816 Freetown		Sch. Flor de Mayo	Torres, Juan B.	1816/05/26	Havana	Madrazo, Juan	N/A ⁶⁷
42202		St. Helena	Sch. Ana Maria	Solary, Luis	1816/02/11	Havana	Frias, Antonio	N/A ⁶⁸
7589	1816/05/13 Freetown	Ascension Island	Sch. Dolores	Carbonell, José	1815/10/24	Havana	Messrs. Pie y Cia	249 ⁶⁹
7696	1816/05/21 Freetown	River Gambia	Sch. Nuestra Sra. del Carmen	Fariñas, Juan Antonio	1816/03/13	Havana	Farinas, Juan Antonio	N/A ⁷⁰
7592	1816/05/23 Freetown	River Gambia	Sch. Nuestra Sra. de los Desamparados (a) León de Oro	Fenellas, Domingo Francisco	1815/02/30	Havana	Bengochea, Francisco	N/A ⁷¹
7594	1816/05/25 Freetown	Gallinas	Brig Nueva Paz	Seguro, Francisco	1816/02/07	Havana	Garcia Alvarez, José	108 ⁷²
7672	1816/07/27 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Laberinto (a) Pitirre	Peña, Antonio	1816/05/31	Matanzas	Madan, Joaquín – Manuel	28
42153			Sch. Feliz Restauracion	Garay, Genaro	1816/10/17	Havana	Escoto, Antonio	N/A ⁷³
7596	1816 Freetown		Sch. Tentativa	Cabeza, José	1816/03/24	Havana	Muñoz, Alonso Benigno	N/A ⁷⁴
46914	1816 Freetown	Popo	Sch. Carmen	Rodriguez de los Santos, Manuel	1816/03/05	Puerto Rico	Cuesta Manzanal & Brothers	N/A ⁷⁵
7522	1816/09/16 Freetown	Bight of Biafra	Brig San Joaquín	Riso, Pedro	1816/09/16	Matanzas	Madam, Joaquín	39 ⁷⁶
7604	1816/11/25 Freetown	Cameroon	Brig Triunfante	Azaola, Francisco	1816/04/20	Havana	Fernandez, José	535 ⁷⁷
7609	1817/03/05 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Triunvirato (aka) Dorset	Costaura mon, Ramon	1816/10/03	Baltimore	Martorell, Domingo	274 ⁷⁸
7608	1817/03/19 Freetown	Gambia	Sch. Barcelonesa	Guanabens, Juan Bautista	1816/11/08	Havana	Giral, Pedro	N/A ⁷⁹
	1817/04/18 Freetown	Rio Nunez	Brig Esperanza	Soler, José	1817/01/13	Charleston	Botefeuf, Daniel	N/A ⁸⁰
7613	1817/12/07 Freetown	Rio Pongo/Nunez	Sch. San Juan Nepomuceno	Fernández, Fernando	1817			269 ⁸¹

509 4	1817/12/27 Freetown	Princes Island	Sch. Segunda Concha	García, Joaquín Agustin	1816/12/20	Havana	Cuesta Manzana l y Hnos	217 82
147 38	1818/01/15 Freetown	Off Quitta Fort	Brig Descubridor	Gaona, Gabriel	1817/07/12	Havana	Madrazo, Juan	233 83
	1818/01/31 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Bella Muchachita		1817	Matanzas	Disdier & Morphy	130 84
509 5	1818/05/15 Freetown	Off Cape Three POints	Pailebot Josefa		1818/02/23	Puerto Rico		31 ⁸⁵
	1819/03/25 Freetown	Prince Islands	Princesa		1818			6 ⁸⁶
231 4	1819/08/10 Freetown	Little Bassa	Sch. Nuestra Sra. de Regla	Manzano, Santiago	1819/08/10	Havana	Benítez, Diego	1 ⁸⁷
231 5	1819/09/18 Freetown	Cape Palmas	Sch. Fabiana	García, Juan	1819/06/04	Havana	Nuñez, José	13 ⁸⁸
231 8	1819/09/30 Freetown	River Costa	Sch. Juanita	Diaz de la Roca, Diego	1819/07/27	Havana	Macias, Domingo	N/A 89
231 7	1819/10/26 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Cintra	Dupuoy, Juan		Bristol	Joaquín, Antonio/ Dorley, James	26
231 6	1819/12/10 Freetown	Little Bassa	Sch. Esperanza	Puix, Peddro Martin	1819/08/23	Puerto Rico	Arazame ndi, José Xavia	40 ⁹⁰
231 9	1819/12/10 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Nuestra Sra. de las Nieves	López, Francisco	1819/06	Havana		122 91
	1819/12/11 Freetown	Bella Dora	Sch. Bella Dora	Discomb		Havana	Discomb	122 92
232 0	1820/01/20 Freetown	Rio Pongo	Sch. Francisco	Oñez, Francisco	1819	Matanzas	Madden & Simpson	69 ⁹³
273 0	1820/01/30 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. Anne Marie	Partlon		Matanzas		N/A 94
	1820/01/30 Freetown	Gallinas	Sch. El Carmen					N/A 95
232 1	1820/03/02 Freetown	Off Trade Town, Grand Bassa	Sch. Gazetta	Carbó, Mariano	1819/11	Santiago de Cuba	Gola, Antonio	82 ⁹⁶
232 2	1820/10/16 Freetown	Little Cape Mount River	Sch. Nuestra Sra. de Montserrat	Urioste, Isidro	1819/11/01	Havana		84 ⁹⁷

¹ TBNA, HCA 49/97; HCA 37/1.

² Grindal, 764, TBNA, HCA, 49/97.

³ Grindal, 764.

⁴ Grindal, 764, TBNA, HCA, 49/101; African Institutions, 6th Report, 56-57.

⁵ Grindal, 764; TBNA, HCA, 49/101; African Institutions 8th Report, 72.

⁶ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF 86/3497.

⁷ ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101; African Institutions, 6th Report, p. 109, 8th Report, 71.

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- ⁸ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101; African Institutions 8th Report, 72; PP,1813-14, XII:327.
- ⁹ Grindal, 764; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101; African Institutions 8th Report, 70.
- ¹⁰ ANC, JF, 86-3506.
- ¹¹ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97; ANC, ML, 2524.
- ¹² Grindal 764, TBNA, HCA 49/97. African Institutions 8th Report, 70.
- ¹³ Grindal, 764, TBNA, HCA, 49/97.
- ¹⁴ TBNA, HCA, 49/97.
- ¹⁵ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506, GSC 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101; African Institutions 8th Report, 71.
- ¹⁶ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97; African Institutions 8th Report, 72.
- ¹⁷ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97; African Institutions 8th Report, 72.
- ¹⁸ Grindal, 131.
- ¹⁹ ANC, JF, 86/3506.
- ²⁰ Grindal, 765; African Institutions 8th Report, p. 75; African Institutions 6th Report, p. 50-53.
- ²¹ Grindal 765; ANC, ML, 2524.
- ²² Franco, José Luciano, “Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos,” pp. 141-142.
- ²³ Grindal, 764; ANC, JF, 86-3506; TBNA, HCA 42/501/1125.
- ²⁴ ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97.
- ²⁵ Grindal, 765; ANC, JF, 86/3497.
- ²⁶ Grindal, 765, Franco, José Luciano, “Comercio Clandestino de Esclavos,” p. 146.
- ²⁷ Grindal, 765; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97; African Institutions 8th Report, p. 69.
- ²⁸ ANC, JF 86/3506, GSC, 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/97, HCA 42/485/964.
- ²⁹ ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 42/406/385.
- ³⁰ ANC, JF 86/3506, ML, 2524.
- ³¹ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101.
- ³² Grindal, 766; HCA 49/97, HCA 49/101.
- ³³ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, HCA 42/445/680; African Institutions 8th Report, 70, 13th Report, 72-77.
- ³⁴ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101; African Institutions 8th Report, 69.
- ³⁵ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97; African Institutions 8th Report, 69.
- ³⁶ ANC, JF 86/3506; HCA 49/97, HCA 49/101, HCA 42/475/899; African Institutions, 13th Report, 69.
- ³⁷ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ³⁸ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; HCA 49/97, 49/101.
- ³⁹ Grindal p. 766; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101, 42/406/385; African Institutions, 12th Report, 163.
- ⁴⁰ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; African Institutions, 13th Report, 73; TBNA, HCA 42/394/263.
- ⁴¹ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁴² Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101.
- ⁴³ Grindal, 766; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101.
- ⁴⁴ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, 49/101, 42/468.
- ⁴⁵ Grindal, 767.
- ⁴⁶ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, 42/475/900.
- ⁴⁷ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/97, HCA 42/421/502; African Institutions, 13th Report, 72.
- ⁴⁸ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA, 42/467/825; African Institutions, 10th Report, 48.
- ⁴⁹ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506, TC 494/18690, GSC, 494-18690.
- ⁵⁰ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; African Institutions, 13th Report, 72.
- ⁵¹ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506, TC 494/18690, 346/7.
- ⁵² Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506; HCA 49/101, HCA 49/97, HCA 42/400/325.
- ⁵³ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506, GSC 494-18690; HCA 49/101, 49/97.
- ⁵⁴ ANC, JF 86-3506.
- ⁵⁵ Grindal, 767; ANC, JF 86/3506, TBNA, HCA 49/101, 49/97.
- ⁵⁶ Grindal, 769; ANC, JF 86/3506,
- ⁵⁷ TBNA, HCA 49/97, HCA 37/3, HCA 49/101, HCA 42/445/684; GRJ,26/11/1814: Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro; PP 1818 (20).
- ⁵⁸ Grindal, 767, P 1818 (20) p. 20; TBNA, HCA 49/101, HCA 49/97.
- ⁵⁹ Grindal, 767; ANC, IH 278/20; PP, 1818 (20); TBNA, HCA 49/101, HCA 49/97.

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- ⁶⁰ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101, HCA 49/97, HCA 42/400/323; PP, 1818 (20) p. 1.
- ⁶¹ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506, GSC, 494-18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101; African Institutions, 12th Report, 161.
- ⁶² Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁶³ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁶⁴ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506, ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁶⁵ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁶⁶ Grindal, 768; TBNA, CO 267/42; Competencias y sentencias, año 1858-1890, 226-230.
- ⁶⁷ ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁶⁸ ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁶⁹ Grindal, 768; TBNA, HCA 49/101; ANC, GSC, 494/18690, TC 32/10.
- ⁷⁰ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506, TC 32/10, GSC, 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁷¹ ANC, GSC 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁷² Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506, GSC 494/18690, TC 32-10; TBNA, HCA 49/101; African Institutions, 12th Report, 161.
- ⁷³ ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁷⁴ ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁷⁵ ANC, JF 86/3506, TC 32/10, GSC 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁷⁶ ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101, 49/97, 37/1, HCA 308/1.
- ⁷⁷ Grindal, 768; ANC, JF 86/3506, TC, 32/10, GSC 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁷⁸ ANC, TC, 32-10; GSC, 494/18690; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁷⁹ ANC, JF 86/3506; TBNA, HCA 49/101.
- ⁸⁰ Grindal, 769; ANC, JF 86/3506, TC, 32-10; GSC, 494/18690.
- ⁸¹ Grindal, 769, TBNA, HCA, 49/101.
- ⁸² Grindal, 769; ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁸³ Grindal, 769; ANC, JF 86/3506.
- ⁸⁴ Grindal, 769, ANC, Tribunal de Comercio, 159/3.
- ⁸⁵ Grindal, 769. TBNA, ADM 1/2719.
- ⁸⁶ Grindal, 769.
- ⁸⁷ Grindal, 769; PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18; TBNA FO84/3, Gregory,19.12.30.
- ⁸⁸ Grindal, 769; TBNA, FO 84/3 Gregory 19.10.10.
- ⁸⁹ Grindal, 769; PP 1822 (127) p. 3; TBNA FO84/3, Gregory,19.12.30.
- ⁹⁰ Grindal, 769; PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18; FO315/71/4; FO84/3, Gregory, 19.12.30.
- ⁹¹ Grindal, 769; PP, 1830, X:122; TBNA, FO84/4, Gregory,20.01.08.
- ⁹² PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18.
- ⁹³ Grindal, 769; PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18; TBNA FO 84/84.
- ⁹⁴ Grindal, 769; PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18.
- ⁹⁵ Grindal, 769; PP 1821 (366) 2 p. 18.
- ⁹⁶ Grindal, 770, PP,1830, X:122; TBNA FO84/4, Gregory,20.03.20.
- ⁹⁷ Grindal, 770, TBNA, FO84/4, Gregory to Sec ,20.11.06.

APPENDIX D

The Cuban Slave Trade, 1790-1820: A Reassessment

Table 1: Slaves Disembarked in Havana: Previous Authors and new Assessment, 1790-1820

Years	A 1802 Real Consulado ¹	B 1809 Real Consulado ²	C 1813 Real Consulado ³	D 1832 Captain General ⁴	E 1826 Humboldt ⁵	F 1832 Saco ⁶	G 1979 Pérez de la Riva ⁷	H 1975 Klein ⁸	I New Data ⁹
1790	2,534				2,534	2,534	3,177	*4,797	6,618
1791	8,198	8,438			8,498	8,498	10,622	8,498	11,090
1792	8,528	9,128			8,528	8,528	10,670	8,538	11,124
1793	3,767				3,777	3,777	4,721	*2,807	4,995
1794	4,164				4,164	4,164	5,205	*4,012	5,049
1795	5,832				5,832	5,832	7,290	5,902	7,409
1796	5,711				5,711	5,711	7,139	*4,007	*5,711
1797	4,552				4,552	4,552	6,824	*4,440	5,183
1798	2,001				2,001	2,001	2,501	*1,782	2,891
1799	4,949				4,919	4,949	6,148	*4,497	4,999
1800	4,145				4,145	4,145	5,181	*2,018	4,709
1801	1,659				1,659	1,659	2,073	*1,659	2,622
1802	9,407	13,832			13,832	13,832	18,290	13,785	15,998
1803		9,571			9,671	9,671	12,089	9,665	10,935
1804		8,923	8,641		8,923	8,923	11,164	8,641	9,510
1805		4,923	4,999		4,999	4,999	6,248	*4,991	5,263
1806		4,395	4,410		4,395	4,395	5,493	*3,932	4,932
1807		2,505	2,555		2,565	2,565	3,206	2,569	5,385
1808		1,607	1,607		1,607	1,607	2,009	*1,013	1,674
1809			1,162		1,162	1,162	1,452	988	1,538
1810			6,672		6,672	6,672	8,340	6,672	7,824
1811			6,349	6,349	6,349	6,349	7,939	*5,749	9,667
1812			6,081	6,081	6,081	6,081	7,601	*3,134	6,735
1813			4,770	4,770	4,770	4,770	5,962	*2,827	5,837
1814				4,321	4,321	4,321	5,401	*1,780	4,814
1815				9,111	9,111	9,111	12,289	*6,783	11,475
1816				17,833	17,737	17,733	23,671	17,533	23,046
1817				25,841	25,841	25,841	28,301	*23,929	34,944
1818				19,902	19,902	19,902	24,576	*14,498	25,949
1819				15,147	17,194	15,147	18,436	*1,356	25,181
1820				17,147	4,122	17,147	21,110	*536	28,608
					225,574	236,578	295,128	183,338	311,715

Notes: Asterisk indicates years with missing data where estimates are based on Saco's data.

Table 2: Intramerican/Transatlantic Voyages. Slaves Disembarked in Cuba 1790-1808 based on author's dataset.

Years	Transatlantic	Intra-American
1790	2,754	3,864
1791	5,475	5,615
1792	3,089	8,035
1793	1,603	3,392
1794	2,622	2,427
1795	4,219	3,190
1796	3,300	2,411
1797	1,675	3,508
1798	1,254	1,637
1799	2,543	2,456
1800	2,073	2,636
1801	1,495	1,127
1802	12,752	3,246
1803	9,008	1,927
1804	6,724	2,786
1805	3,337	1,926
1806	2,941	1,991
1807	1,203	4,182
1808	1,055	619
1809	1,360	178
1810	7,234	590
1811	8,799	868
1812	6,520	215
1813	4,233	1,604
1814	4,142	672
1815	11,475	0
1816	23,046	0
1817	34,944	0
1818	25,949	0
1819	25,181	0
1820	28,192	416
Total	250,197	61,518

Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos

de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

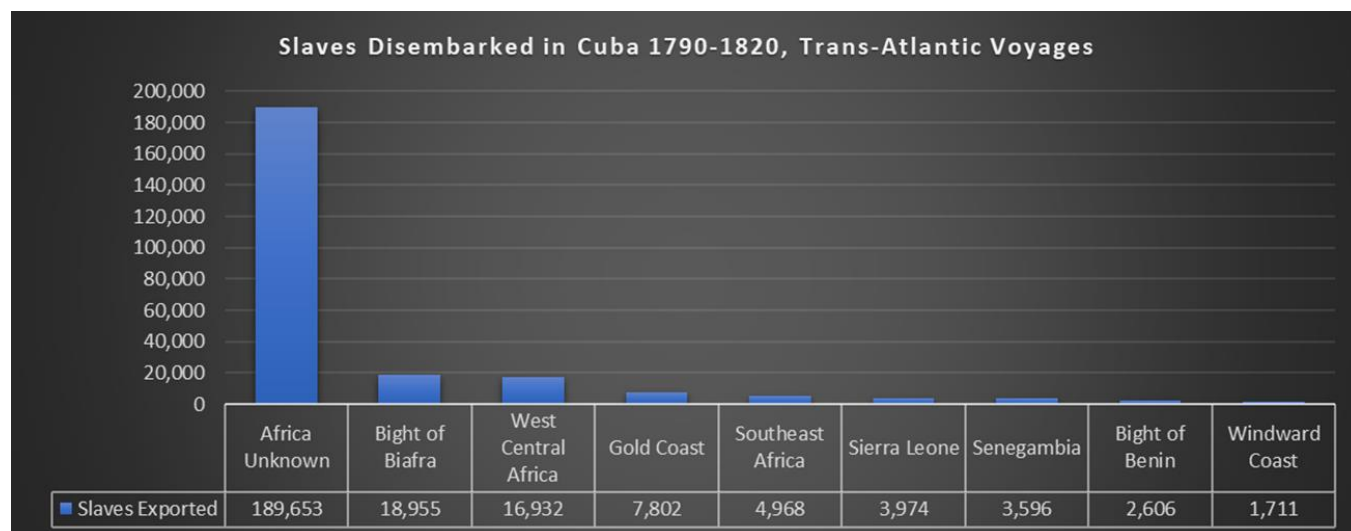
Table 3: Slaves Disembarked in Cuba by National Carriers, 1790-1820

Year	Spain	U.S.	Eng.	Denmark	France	Portugal	Sweden	Netherland	Prussia, Bremen, Hamburg	Unk now n
1790	2,643	2,685	574	431	285					
1791	2,530	1,026	4,444		2,408	292		390		
1792	3,919	3,004	938	80	3,066			117		
1793	1,396	2,160	1,232	168				39		
1794	1,454	2,087	1,414	89				5		
1795	2,878	1,666	2,406	26		339	94			
1796	1,294	1,857	1,951	128						481
1797		3,726		1,359			98			
1798	287	1,452	136	815			185			16
1799	147	3,586		1,266						
1800	108	2,510		2,054			37			
1801	55	931		1,513			123			
1802	1,307	3,066	7,338	3,496	430		250			111
1803	1,090	3,205	4,287	1,778	458		57		117 (H)	
1804	388	2,099	5,115	1,407	63		253		177 8 (B)	
1805	82	4,263		467	81		146		212 12 (B)	
1806	9	4,135		639	85	64				
1807		4,019	250	436	545					
1808		1,674								
1809	1,228	226					84			
1810	5,949	103				1,595	177			
1811	8,140	234				1,083	210			
1812	5,807	300				628				
1813	5,350					487				

1814	4,329					485				
1815	10,585				320	509	61			
1816	22,966	80								
1817	34,287				192	465				
1818	24,552				1,317	80				
1819	21,136	1,285			1,438	986	336			
1820	22,245	596			3,504	1,212	624	427		
Total	186,161	51,975	30,085	16,152	14,192	8,225	2,735	978	389	608

Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

Figure 1: African Regions of Embarkation, 1790-1820.



Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

Table 4: Intra-American Regions of Embarkation, 1790-1820.

Region of Embarkation	Place of Embarkation	Number of slaves
United States of America	Charleston	7,495
	Baltimore	578
	Virginia	59
	Rhode Island	57
	Louisiana/ New Orleans	19
	Connecticut	22
	New York	17
	Philadelphia	26
	TOTAL	8,273
British West Indies	Jamaica	16,869
	Providence Island	1,072
	Dominica	1,104
	Trinidad	215
	Antigua	162
	Grenada	142
	Bahamas	120
	Tortola	101
	Barbados	79
	Saint Vincent	49
	Saint Kitts	30
	TOTAL	19,943
	French West Indies	Saint-Domingue
Guadeloupe		395
Saint Barthelemy		565
Martinique		481
TOTAL	6,098	
Danish West Indies	Saint Thomas	12,962
	Saint Croix	4,080
	TOTAL	17,042
Dutch West Indies	Saint Eustatius	1,336
	Curaçao	328
	Saint Marteen	52
	Suriname	97
	San Nicolaas	2
	TOTAL	1,815
Portuguese Colonies	Brazil/Rio do Janeiro	266
	Bahja de Todos los Santos	2,402
	Pernambuco	565
	TOTAL	3,233
Spanish Colonies	Colombia/ Riohacha, San Andres	220
	Santo Domingo	153
	Puerto Rico	87
	Nueva Barcelona/Venezuela	38
	Maracaibo	106
	Amelia Island	222
	TOTAL	848
	UNKNOWN Inter-American Ports of Embarkation	4,266

¹ “El Prior y Cónsules de la Habana representan contra la gracia exclusiva concedida al Marqués de la Colonilla para la introducción de seis mil Negros en este Puerto y solicitan varias gracias para alentar el comercio directo al África por Nacionales.” ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 919-8.

² “Expediente del Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento sobre solicitud de prórroga al comercio negrero por parte de los extranjeros.” ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento, 74-2836.

³ “Estado de importación de Bozales, 1814.” BNC, Colección de Manuscritos Cubanos, Bachiller y Morales, v. 78, no. 46.

⁴ “Expediente formado para recoger y remitir al Sr. Capitán General las noticias que S.E. pide de los esclavos que han entrado en toda la Isla desde el año 1811 hasta la extinción del tráfico de negros y desde el año de 1764 hasta el de 1810 inclusivas, 1832.” ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23.

⁵ Humboldt, Alexander Von, “The Island of Cuba,” 218-219.

⁶ Saco, “Colección de Papeles científicos, históricos, políticos y de otros ramos sobre la Isla de Cuba,” v. 2, 70.

⁷ Pérez de la Riva, “El monto de la inmigración forzada en el siglo XIX,” 102.

⁸ Klein, Herbert, “The Cuban Slave Trade in a Period of 1790-1843,” 67-89.

⁹ Papel Periódico de la Habana, El Aviso, Diario de la Habana, and Diario del Gobierno de la Habana. ANC, Junta de Fomento, 86-3506, 72-2773, 72-2774, 72-2783, 72-2794, 86-3479, 86-3506 Gobierno Superior Civil, 494-18690. Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790-1820. Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.

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