

EDITED BY

Alex Borucki

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# From the Galleons to the Highlands

Slave Trade Routes in  
the Spanish Americas

## From the Galleons to the Highlands



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*From the Galleons  
to the Highlands*

Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas



EDITED BY Alex Borucki, David Eltis,  
and David Wheat

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# Introduction

## Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America

ALEX BORUCKI, DAVID ELTIS, AND DAVID WHEAT



‡ WITHIN HALF A CENTURY OF COLUMBIAN CONTACT, THE MOST powerful state in Europe had taken over the two most powerful polities in the Americas: the Aztec and Inca Empires. From that point until at least 1810, Spanish America was the largest and most populated European imperial domain in the New World, stretching eventually from California to Buenos Aires. Both the earliest known and the last slave voyages to cross the Atlantic from Africa disembarked not very far from each other, in the Spanish colonies of Puerto Rico (1520) and Cuba (1867).<sup>1</sup> This continent-size group of colonies developed the first and, until the late eighteenth century, the largest free black population in the Americas. Spanish America was therefore the part of the Americas with the most enduring links with Africa. As the chapters in this collection show, there is a nationally bounded Spanish-language literature on black populations in the Spanish Americas, but this is not well known internationally. Multilingual research on this topic is still almost exclusively focused on nineteenth-century Cuba. The origins, composition, and demographic evolution of the black populations of the French, the British, and even the Portuguese Empires remain much better known than for the Spanish world. But given the importance of the latter, how odd that there is less awareness about the size, nature, and significance of the African connection with Spanish America, especially the Spanish role in the slave trade, than there is about any other branch of the transatlantic traffic.<sup>2</sup> The

contributions included in this volume are a first attempt at remedying this problem.

Parts of this introduction as well as the first chapter are updated versions of our article in the *American Historical Review*, which led to the organization of this book.<sup>3</sup> In January 2015, most of the contributors met at the annual American Historical Association conference for a fruitful three-session panel on the slave trade in the Spanish Americas. The final result is not quite as balanced as we would like—with two-thirds of the contributions addressing either Mexico and Central America during the “long” seventeenth century, on the one hand, and Cuba, on the other. There is clearly work still to be done on slave trafficking in Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, and more specifically with Cartagena and the Río de la Plata during the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, we hope that this volume complements recent works on the lives of Africans and their descendants in these colonies that demonstrate how and why enslaved litigants participated in Spanish American legal culture, and how African medical practitioners helped shape common knowledge about the human body and the environment, among other important works cited below.<sup>4</sup>

As nearly half of the more than two million captive Africans who arrived in the Spanish Empire landed in Cuba, our emphasis on the “faithful island” is not unreasonable. But Iberian vessels also transported tens of thousands of Africans to the Americas during the sixteenth century. The first peak of slave trading to the Spanish colonies took place during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), when captives who survived the transatlantic voyage were often subsequently forced to endure additional intra-American routes leading to Mexico City and Lima, among many other destinations. During this era, Cartagena de Indias became the largest single entry point into the Americas for Africans. Traditional depictions of the early Spanish Americas fail to acknowledge the demographic importance of these successive waves of enslaved Africans: for every three European immigrants arriving in the Spanish Americas between 1492 and 1640, there were close to five Africans.

We currently have more than enough evidence to justify a reevaluation of the scale, nature, and significance of the slave trade to Spanish America and to explore the implications of some of our findings for Atlantic history. Such a reassessment leads to a new appreciation of not only the African presence in the Spanish colonies but also—given the links between slavery and economic power prior to abolition—the status of the whole Spanish imperial project. Overall, more enslaved Africans permanently entered the Spanish Americas

than the entire British Caribbean, making Spanish America the most important political entity in the Americas after Brazil to receive slaves. We now believe that as many as 1.51 million enslaved Africans arrived in the Spanish Americas directly from Africa between 1520 and 1867. We further estimate that an additional 566,000 enslaved Africans were disembarked in the Spanish Americas from other European colonies in the New World, such as Jamaica and Brazil. Both the transatlantic and intra-American estimates in this volume will be revised as new data, including those shown in chapters 1, 8, and 9, are uncovered.<sup>5</sup>

Two-thirds of the more than two million enslaved Africans arriving in the Spanish Americas disembarked before 1810—prior to the era of large-scale sugar cultivation in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Even in Cuba, the size and significance of this island's slave-based economy was large and diverse well before 1789, which is a useful corrective to studies that have portrayed Cuba as an underdeveloped backwater prior to the sugar boom. This large inflow of captives during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries is indeed remarkable when we remember that the labor force sustaining the most valuable export of Spain's American colonies—silver—was largely Amerindian. In every other European empire in the Americas, by contrast, enslaved Africans and their descendants produced all significant exports until well into the nineteenth century. British military and industrial ascendancy in the eighteenth century and the meteoric rise and fall of Saint-Domingue have blinded scholars to the continued expansion of the Spanish colonies and their populations of African descent through to independence. Black populations had a key role in the growth of the Spanish Americas before 1800.

In addition to revealing the slave trade's importance for the colonization and development of the Spanish Americas, the chapters in this volume provide insight into the Spanish colonies' significance for the broader history of the transatlantic slave trade, and consequently, for Atlantic history. The history of the slave trade to Spanish America had implications for the whole Atlantic in the sense that it drew on *all* European branches of this traffic, and captives from *all* African regions engaged in this traffic landed in at least one of the many Spanish colonies. It was not only the metropolitan authorities of the different European powers who fought over and negotiated slave trade contracts but also, at the local level, officials and merchants. As Bianca Premo's recent work indicates, Africans and people of African descent—even, in some cases, the very subjects being trafficked—played a role in shaping Spanish and Spanish American law pertaining to slavery and the slave trade.<sup>6</sup>



All these groups helped to influence the transimperial trade flows of the New World.

For the first decades of the slave traffic, as for the last, the slave trade provides a previously overlooked means of gauging the economic strength of the Spanish Americas relative to that of other European empires. Spain's reliance on enslaved Africans in various sectors beginning in the early 1500s (in addition to coerced Amerindian labor) may help to explain the speed and scope of Spanish expansion across much of the Caribbean, in comparison to the relatively slow development of Portuguese colonization in Brazil during the same decades.<sup>7</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, the sugar sector of Cuba ensured that this island probably had a higher per capita output than the United States, as well as the first railroad network in Latin America.<sup>8</sup> But even in the eighteenth century, exports to Europe from the Spanish Americas had a far greater value than those from their British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese counterparts. In 1700, the total output of the non-Spanish Caribbean, more than 90 percent of which comprised sugar and sugar by-products, amounted to 1.7 million pounds sterling, or 7.6 million pesos.<sup>9</sup> In the Spanish possessions, by contrast, bullion production alone averaged eight million pesos annually from 1696 to 1700, an amount that made them more valuable to Spain than Brazil was to Portugal and than both mainland and Caribbean colonies were to the British. Seventy years later, the supremacy of the Spanish was only slightly eroded. The total annual value in pesos of French Caribbean output was 23.1 million, and of British, 16.2 million, whereas the Spanish Empire generated exports worth close to 31 million pesos—29.2 of which was bullion. Even if we include the thirteen mainland colonies in the British total, the Spanish Americas still come out well ahead—it is just that they no longer outproduced all their competitors combined.<sup>10</sup> The cession of Jamaica to Britain and Saint-Domingue to France apparently did not enable the British and French to catch up prior to the era of independence; Spanish America grew vigorously until at least 1800.<sup>11</sup> Alongside specie exports and population estimates, the slave trade can be used as an indicator of the continued dynamism of Spanish America in the Atlantic prior to 1800, and in Cuba specifically, to 1867. Economic divergence between the Spanish Americas and the United States began only in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

Indigenous peoples mined most of the silver that underpinned colonial exports, but the role of Africans has been poorly understood in an Atlantic world historiography that has emphasized export-oriented plantations. With the possible exception of nineteenth-century Cuba, the black Atlantic

is still defined in terms of links between Africa, on the one hand, and the English, French, and Lusophone worlds, on the other. From 1640 to the end of the eighteenth century, the Spanish Empire's links with Africa are seen as moribund, compared to the millions of Africans pouring into the non-Spanish Americas.<sup>13</sup> References to a "second Atlantic" have recently appeared, denoting the period dominated by northwestern Europe (England, France, and to a lesser extent the Netherlands) in contrast to the Iberian-led "first Atlantic."<sup>14</sup> Our research counters this view. The slave trade remained of central importance during all four centuries of Spanish colonialism in the New World. The slave trade was pivotal not just for the early colonization of the Spanish Americas, when varied regional economies emerged in both the highlands and lowlands, but also of key importance throughout the eighteenth century, when the Spanish Empire was transformed.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, it sustained the rise of export-oriented sugar and coffee plantations in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Moreover, two-thirds of transatlantic arrivals in the Spanish Empire arrived under the control of Spanish merchants. Scholars have yet to recognize the scale of both Spanish involvement in the organization of the slave trade and African involvement in the Spanish Americas.

So what were so many enslaved Africans and people of African descent doing in the Spanish colonies if they were not generating export revenues for Spanish American slave owners and investors back in Spain? Some, of course, *did* work producing agricultural, mining, and fishery exports. Production of cacao and pearls in Venezuela as well as hides in Cuba and the Río de la Plata depended heavily on slave labor. Half of all the gold exported from colonial Spanish America to the metropolis came from New Granada (Colombia), given that earlier discoveries in Hispaniola, Honduras, and Venezuela were soon exhausted—Africans and their descendants mined all these sites.<sup>16</sup> While Amerindians mined most of the silver, enslaved Africans performed multiple tasks in mining camps from Zacatecas to Potosí.<sup>17</sup> But the majority of enslaved black women, men, and children in Spanish colonies worked in many occupations outside the export sector. Spanish America had by far the largest urban centers in the New World. Mexico City, Guanajuato, Querétaro, Lima, Buenos Aires, and Havana were larger than New York, Boston, and Philadelphia by the turn of the eighteenth century, with the first two dwarfing all others throughout the colonial period.<sup>18</sup> In these and other Spanish American cities (and in even larger numbers of smaller towns and villages), everyday tasks that provided water, food, clothing, shelter, and

other basic services were typically performed by free and enslaved Africans or people of African descent.<sup>19</sup>

Enslaved people also produced many of the goods that were traded between Spanish colonies. They made textiles in the workshops of New Spain and Ecuador, as well as produced sugar near Veracruz and cacao, flour, tobacco, and hides in Venezuela, all for colonial markets.<sup>20</sup> Enslaved workers in coastal Peru produced wine, wheat, and sugar—essential to Spanish consumers and Spanish culture in the Andes. In Cartagena Province, slaves produced maize, pork, and manatee lard that were exported to the rest of the Caribbean.<sup>21</sup> The Jesuits, perhaps the largest corporate slave owners in the Americas (after the Catholic Church itself), relied almost exclusively on slave labor to work farms, cane lands, mines, vineyards, and textile mills, as well as ranches for cattle, sheep, and mules. The largest Jesuit estates were in coastal Ecuador, Peru, and Córdoba in modern Argentina, most of which supplied urban centers from Guayaquil to Potosí.<sup>22</sup> In these areas, enslaved people were concentrated near the coast partly because that was where the decline of the indigenous population had been most severe and partly because of the greater availability of arable land.<sup>23</sup> How did elites in the large cities—located in the highlands and to a lesser extent in the lowlands—pay for this produce? In some of them, silver was a large part of the answer, and here, too, Africans were involved, given that slaves minted the coins of Potosí that facilitated intercolonial trade in parts of South America.<sup>24</sup>

For a reader familiar with the British colonies and British Atlantic but unfamiliar with the economic structure of the Spanish colonial empire, one analogy that helps us illustrate the regional interdependence and application of slave labor in some areas of the Spanish Empire is provided by the British Americas—the Caribbean plus the thirteen mainland colonies. Caribbean sugar was the heart of the British system. Before 1800, the mainland produced only tobacco, rice, some indigo, and furs that could be sold in Europe, items that together never approached one-quarter of the value of sugar. Yet the British mainland colonies purchased large quantities of goods from Europe as their populations expanded and were able to do so because they sold produce and shipping services to the Caribbean. In the Spanish case, after the founding of Potosí in the mid-1500s, bullion may be viewed as the equivalent of British American sugar two centuries later; Spanish America's silver-producing highlands (as the source of a valuable transatlantic commodity) might be considered the counterpart of the British Caribbean; an indigenous labor force filled the role of imported slaves; and to the extent that they

traded with silver-rich highland areas, some Spanish American lowlands (Cartagena, Veracruz, coastal Peru and Ecuador, Venezuela, and the Río de la Plata, among other mainland regions) can be said to have resembled the British American mainland. Both the British mainland and the Spanish lowlands could export to Britain (tobacco, rice, and indigo) and to Spain (hides, gold, cacao, and pearls), respectively—albeit in the Spanish case, via one of a select few strategically located port cities such as Panama City, Cartagena, Veracruz, or Havana, and only then shipped to Spain.

But all these items combined could not come close to matching the value of sugar from the British Caribbean and silver from the Spanish highlands. This did not matter. Some lowland territories in Spanish America, particularly the major seaports, were as important to the highlands as the British American mainland was to the British Caribbean. Indeed, some Spanish lowland jurisdictions south of the equator exerted direct administrative authority over highland regions (Lima and, later, Buenos Aires). Perhaps some of the Spanish lowlands and much of the British mainland north of Virginia would have had little beyond subsistence agriculture without their connections, respectively, to the silver and sugar sectors. Some Spanish lowlands perhaps resembled the British North American mainland in that their ability to import enslaved people and transatlantic commodities may have hinged on their ability to sell their produce to other locations within their respective imperial systems. A great deal of commerce, including the slave trade, occurred between the Spanish lowlands and other imperial circuits as well. Yet Spanish intercolonial—and to a lesser extent transimperial—exchange and relations have attracted far less English-language scholarly attention than has trade between British colonies.<sup>25</sup> The central role of the Spanish internal colonial markets in Atlantic history is still largely ignored.

As with all macrohistorical comparisons, this one regarding the British and Spanish colonies and internal markets deserves several caveats. First, the major fleet ports (Cartagena-Portobelo, Veracruz, and Havana) were somewhat independent from the silver cycles and indeed channeled almost all Spanish transatlantic commerce (adding the Río de la Plata port complex intermittently) as long as they could. Beginning in the mid-1560s, Cartagena and Veracruz became major ports for the Indies fleets (for Cartagena, this role largely preceded its role as a major slaving port). Both Cartagena and Havana owed their existence to their positions within these transatlantic maritime economies. While some variations developed depending on the era, by the dawn of the seventeenth century, nearly all transatlantic trade was

supposed to be filtered through these selected ports. All transatlantic exports (including both lowland produce and highland silver) were to be exported from the Tierra Firme port complex (Cartagena and Nombre de Dios or Portobelo), Veracruz, and Havana on the Indies fleets. Transatlantic imports (including both European goods and enslaved Africans) were to be taken to specific ports: usually Cartagena, Veracruz, and sometimes Buenos Aires. Thus, for the vast majority of Spanish American lowland areas, direct connections with either Europe or Africa or silver-producing Spanish American highland areas were nonexistent in theory and infrequent in practice. Instead, a few major ports acted as intermediaries in a network of capillary coastal and inland trade and monopolized this position as long as possible. Most lowland areas traded cheap goods to each other or to major ports in exchange for other inexpensive goods, small-scale slave arrivals, and European merchandise like clothing.

Sugar and silver indeed served as the most dynamic industries in the British and Spanish Empires and drew other colonies within each of these imperial systems into their orbit. Particularly, sugar and silver production allowed the expansion of slavery throughout these empires beyond the British Caribbean and the Mexican and Peruvian mining sites. But while silver dominated Spanish American exports and indeed stimulated a large number of cottage industries across the colonies, production in the rest of the Spanish colonies was much more important. Millions of Amerindian, African, and mixed-ancestry free peasants who lived in the Spanish Americas generated a total production both of enormous value and impossible to measure. In other words, Spanish America was not as clearly a monoculture economy as was the British Americas, given that these internal markets outside of the circuits of silver are impossible to compare with the British colonies. Assuming that silver was everything and ignoring local production for local consumption leads to a skewed view of the scale of population and production in the Spanish colonies.<sup>26</sup>

Residents of colonial European settlements throughout the Americas were prepared to buy enslaved Africans prior to the early nineteenth century—if they could afford them.<sup>27</sup> Slave prices were lowest in Brazil and in the Caribbean (both islands and littoral), higher on the North American mainland, and higher still in Potosí—the source of silver that from the mid-sixteenth century tied together markets in Buenos Aires, Lima, and Cartagena and formed a key axis (in terms of value) of the early modern Atlantic economy. Transferences of funds from the royal treasury of Mexico to the



colonial administration in Cuba and Venezuela, as well as from Peru to Buenos Aires, made it easier to purchase slaves in the recipient areas during the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Enslaved Africans and people of African descent could be found in most Spanish American colonies. Where they were fewer in number—for example, in Paraguay or parts of Central America during the eighteenth century—it was usually an indication of relative poverty and lower levels of intercolonial commerce (the same could be said of Appalachia or rural New England during the same period).<sup>29</sup>

The breadth, diversity, and chronological expanse of the Spanish colonies make the slave trade to Spanish America very difficult to address. The subdivision of this field into national Spanish American historiographies makes the subject even more complex. Additionally, an immersion in the literature of the British, Luso-Brazilian, Dutch, and French slave trades is essential if we are to understand the Spanish traffic. While in recent years the historiographies of the transatlantic slave trade, on the one hand, and colonial Spanish America, on the other, have not seriously engaged with each other, perhaps this volume will stimulate more cross-fertilization. Scholarship on the slave trade is mostly Anglophone and Francophone and tends to foreground northwestern Europe, the North Atlantic, and the United States, including the non-Spanish Caribbean. More recently, scholars have moved the Lusophone world to center stage.<sup>30</sup> While many new studies of slavery and the peoples of African ancestry in Spanish America have appeared, these contributions still do not explain how the founder populations got there.<sup>31</sup> Until the publication of Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva's book in 2018, not a single monograph on the slave trade to Mexico had appeared since the partial treatment in Colin A. Palmer's work in 1976 (though recent scholarship demonstrates renewed interest in the slave traffic to, and within, the viceroyalty of New Spain).<sup>32</sup> For countries such as Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador, scholars have yet to fully exploit the abundant documentary sources on the connections with Africa.<sup>33</sup> And despite some significant advances, we still know far too little of the Africans shipped to other Spanish territories such as the Canary Islands,<sup>34</sup> or the Philippines,<sup>35</sup> or to Spain itself during and after the Iberian Union.<sup>36</sup>

In this introduction and in the first chapter, we have primarily focused on ports and broad regions from where enslaved people were embarked and disembarked. Sources from the Catholic Church, notarial records, censuses, court cases, and other colonial documents offer keys to understand the many meanings of African "nations" for Africans as well as for the bureaucrats and

priests writing down the files. Future scholarship will no doubt integrate the numerous local studies based on these sources with new slave trade data as they continue to appear, thus further refining and improving our knowledge of the experiences and origins of more than two million African women, men, and children who were taken to the Spanish Americas as slaves. The locally based but Atlantic-focused scholarship on Africans and their descendants in colonial Spanish America is expanding rapidly.<sup>37</sup> We need a coordinated effort to recover the stories of what is currently the least known large branch of the African diaspora in the Americas.

All of the chapters that follow engage, to some extent, in transimperial and transnational aspects, as the slave trade in the Spanish Americas commonly involved foreign traders—ranging from the earliest Iberian, Genoese, and German organizers of slaving voyages, to the intermittent presence of Portuguese, Dutch, and English slave traders in Spanish South America, to the very active participation of US slavers in the last and largely illegal traffic to Cuba. Historians of the Lusophone South Atlantic have long been aware that Portuguese slaving networks profited from the high demand for enslaved Africans in Spanish colonies in the Río de la Plata and the Caribbean. Even though this body of scholarship has not focused on the routes of African captives into the Spanish colonies, it provides useful models for historians interested in using Spanish-language sources.<sup>38</sup> Historians of the British Atlantic have identified ways in which the intracolonial British slave trade in North America and the Caribbean included the sale of captives to nearby Spanish colonies.<sup>39</sup> While much English-language scholarship has focused on the “entangled worlds” of the British and Spanish domains, there has been less systematic research on the interconnectedness of the Spanish and the Portuguese worlds. Yet, from the fifteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, the ties between the Iberian empires were often even stronger than those between the Spanish and the British colonies, at both upper and lower echelons of society; this was certainly true of the slave trade linking Portuguese hubs in western Africa to early Spanish America.<sup>40</sup> Although several chapters within this book address such transimperial processes, the collection primarily focuses on the organization of the traffic and on the lives of the captives along slave trade routes to and within Spanish America, with special attention given to patterns within specific regions and between different Spanish colonies. The focus here is on merchant communities in areas ranging from Veracruz to Montevideo and on the experiences of captives they trafficked.

Rather than portraying Spanish and Spanish American merchants and slave owners as passive customers who acquired enslaved Africans from foreign slave traders, this volume shows that Spanish agents in Europe and the Americas were actively engaged in slave trafficking during the first 150 years of the trade and were among the last to conduct transatlantic and intra-American slave voyages during the nineteenth century. Spanish and Spanish American merchants' active participation at many levels is obscured not only by histories of the slave trade that portray the Spanish Empire in a secondary role but also by national histories that with few exceptions (e.g., the nineteenth-century Cuba-Catalonia connection) portray the slave trade as having been perpetrated by foreigners. Local histories of countries and populations from Mexico to Venezuela and from Ecuador to Uruguay have yet to grapple with the legacy of this active participation in the slave trade. Spanish and Spanish American merchants and men of letters wrote a myriad of petitions, memorials, and tracts underscoring the urgent demand for African captives in the colonies, whose arrival would ostensibly ensure both stability and profits for members of certain socioeconomic sectors both in the colonies and in metropolitan Spain. Spanish and Spanish American men of letters were also among the first to write and act against this traffic. Nevertheless, after independence, the same elite sought to erase African descendants from representations of the new republics—a process that in some ways is still ongoing despite the activities of Afro-Latin American social and political organizations.

### Notes

1. The first African slaves probably arrived in 1501 from Seville, Spain, but not on a slave voyage in the usual sense. António de Almeida Mendes, "Foundations of the System," 63–94.
2. Nationally bounded works on slavery do exist but tend to say little about the African origins of captives. For broad overviews, see Rolando Mellafe, *La esclavitud en Hispanoamérica*; Leslie Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*; and Jean-Pierre Tardieu, *Le destin des noirs aux Indes de Castille*.
3. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade."
4. Michelle A. McKinley, *Fractional Freedoms*; and Pablo F. Gómez, *Experiential Caribbean*.
5. Readers should note that there are three databases currently available at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) on which several of the essays in this volume draw: the

Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (henceforth TSTD); the Intra-American Database (henceforth "I-Am"); and an estimates database (henceforth "estimates page").

6. Bianca Premo, *Enlightenment on Trial*, 191.
7. See, for example, Jalil Sued Badillo and Ángel López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 65–195; and Julio Damiani Cosimi, *Estratificación social, esclavos y naborías*.
8. Laird Bergad, *Comparative Histories of Slavery*, 18; David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, "Introduction," 1–6; David Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 235–36; and Stanley L. Engerman, Stephen Haber, and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, "Inequality, Institutions and Differential Paths of Growth," 108–34.
9. Calculated from David Eltis, "Slave Economies of the Caribbean," 110, 118. The Caribbean total does include the Spanish Antilles, though removing them would not change our assessment.
10. Eltis, "Slave Economies of the Caribbean," 110, 118. For bullion production and shipments, see John J. TePaske, *New World of Gold and Silver*, 315. For exchange rates, see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, 104, 106. For a similar argument on the importance of Spanish colonies, see Javier Cuenca-Esteban, "Statistics of Spain's Colonial Trade," 323–54.
11. Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, *Economic Development in the Americas*, 9–56. See page 10 on comparative GDP and page 45 on comparative populations.
12. For explanations stressing factor endowments, sustained growth, and relative equality in the United States and Canada vis-à-vis Latin America, see Stephen H. Haber, ed., *How Latin America Fell Behind*.
13. For Spanish echoes of this view, see Josep M. Fradera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, "Introduction," 1–12: "Spain was the first Atlantic empire to establish sugar plantations in the American colonies, but it was also the last to engage directly in the transatlantic slave trade" (1).
14. The terms "first" and "second" Atlantic appear in P. C. Emmer, "Dutch and the Making of the Second Atlantic System," 78. The late Elinor G. K. Melville argued that "the Spaniards remained primarily agro-pastoralists of the temperate highlands and latitudes; they avoided the humid tropical lowlands where possible," unlike the Portuguese in Brazil ("Land Use and the Transformation of the Environment," 125). More crudely, Robin Blackburn, in his widely read *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848*, contrasts the "vigour" of the English and French colonies with that of the Spanish where the creole elite outside the plantation sectors were "sunk in provincial torpor" (16–17).
15. Aaron Alejandro Olivas, "Global Politics of the Transatlantic Slave Trade." On the late colonial period, see Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*, chapter 2.
16. TePaske, *New World of Gold and Silver*, 30; and W. F. Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier*.

17. Kris Lane, "Africans and Natives in the Mines of Spanish America," 159–84, and *Colour of Paradise*, 67–69. For African and Andean interactions in coastal Peru, see Rachel Sarah O'Toole, *Bound Lives*.
18. Alan Knight, *Mexico*, 2:209.
19. James Lockhart, *Spanish Peru, 1532–1560*, 193–223; and Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, chapter 1.
20. Frank Trey Proctor III, "Afro-Mexican Slave Labor," 33–58.
21. María del Carmen Borrego Plá, *Cartagena de Indias*, 42–43, 63–66; and Antonino Vidal Ortega, *Cartagena de Indias*, 171, 179–80.
22. Nicholas P. Cushner, *Farm and Factory*, 135–38, *Lords of the Land*, and *Jesuit Ranches*. For patterns of consumption and slaves in Potosí, see Jane E. Mangan, *Trading Roles*.
23. Not all concentrations of modern black populations are easily explained. The Pacific Costa Chica has the most visible part of today's Afro-Mexican population, for reasons that remain unclear.
24. Despite African and Amerindian roles in mining and minting silver, even in Potosí itself, as Jane E. Mangan notes, "The economic practices of the majority non-elite population relied on credit, not pieces of silver, to fund life's expenses" (*Trading Roles*, 109).
25. Probably the exception is the debate about the (nonexistent) crisis of the seventeenth century in Spanish America, which was more a crisis of Atlantic trade than of production in the colonies. This debate underlines the significance of internal markets for the colonies rather than the export-oriented silver-based economy. See, among many others, P. J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society*; and Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite*.
26. We thank Xabier Lamikiz and Jeremy Basques for their comments on this comparison.
27. Thus, the Quebec intendant negotiated for cargo direct from Africa in 1716, but upon finding out the price, he decided to continue to make do with the thousands of *panis* (the Quebecois term for aboriginal slaves) in the colony instead. Robin Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, 7–9.
28. On this topic, see the exchange in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* sparked by Alejandra Irigoin and Regina Grafe, "Bargaining for Absolutism."
29. For references to slave trading in colonial Central America, see Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe, eds., *Blacks and Blackness*, 29, 35, 70, 132–33; and chapter 4, this volume.
30. Out of a total of thirty-seven articles, *The Slavery Reader*, edited by Gad Heuman and James Walvin, contains only two on Brazil and none on Spanish colonies. A second compendium ignores black experiences in mainland Spanish America but includes two articles on Cuba and one on Brazil (Laurent Dubois and Julius S. Scott, eds., *Origins of the Black Atlantic*).

31. The second edition of Herbert S. Klein and Ben Vinson III's *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* has raised the profile of slavery in Latin America but ignores the slave trade to Spanish colonies. *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives*, edited by Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson, includes chapters on factors influencing slave production in Africa but also passes over the topic. In *Africans to Spanish America*, edited by Sherwin Bryant, Rachel O'Toole, and Ben Vinson III, Leo Garofalo ("The Shape of a Diaspora") examines the arrival of people of African descent from the Iberian Peninsula, but the volume ignores the slave trade from Africa.
32. Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico*; Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God*. See also Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 108; David Wheat, "García Mendes Castelo Branco"; Joseph M. H. Clark, "Veracruz and the Caribbean"; and Norma Angélica Castillo Palma, "La trata negrera," 126–27.
33. See, however, Luz Adriana Maya Restrepo, *Brujería y la reconstrucción de identidades*; Sherwin K. Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*; and José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "No siendo lo mismo".
34. See, for example, Manuel Lobo Cabrera and Elisa Torres Santana, "La Palma y los mercados del África negra"; and Germán Santana Pérez, "El comercio hispano con Angola."
35. Pascale Girard, "Les Africains aux Philippines"; and Tatiana Seijas, "Portuguese Slave Trade."
36. See, for example, Aurelia Martín Casares and Margarita García Barranco, eds., *La esclavitud negroafricana*; and Arturo Morgado García, *Una metrópoli esclavista*.
37. For a colonial survey, see Rachel Sarah O'Toole, "As Historical Subjects." For a broad and interdisciplinary historiographical approach of the entire field to the present, see Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews, eds., *Afro-Latin American Studies*.
38. Among others, see Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *O trato dos viventes*; Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World*; and Mariana P. Candido, *An African Slaving Port*. For notable recent work that incorporates Spanish-language sources, see Kara D. Schultz, "Interwoven."
39. Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages*.
40. On British and Spanish intersections of empire, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, ed., *Entangled Empires*. For recent works on Spanish-Portuguese connections during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire*; and Tamar Herzog, *Frontiers of Possession*. There are larger Spanish and Portuguese language historiographies on Iberian conflicts and connections in the Río de la Plata, the circum-Caribbean, the Andes, and parts of Mesoamerica, among other global regions. On US slave traders and Cuba, see chapters 8 and 9, this volume, and authors cited there.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Size and Direction of the Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas

ALEX BORUCKI, DAVID ELTIS, AND DAVID WHEAT



‡ THE SURGE OF SCHOLARLY INTEREST THAT BEGAN TO MOVE NEW World slavery into the historiographical mainstream after the mid-twentieth century has largely bypassed the story of how Africans arrived in the Spanish Americas. What happened to them and their descendants in the aftermath of those initial traumatic disembarkations is somewhat better known, but it would be surprising if the scholarly output on black people in the Spanish Americas amounted to more than a small percentage of what is now available on their counterparts in the Anglophone Americas. There are first-class studies of specific regions (e.g., Mexico, Peru, the Spanish Caribbean, and the Río de la Plata) and a number of excellent syntheses and collected works that address selected Spanish American sites in a broader context including Brazil and Haiti but, until recently, very few works devoted to Africans and people of African descent in the Spanish New World as a whole since Leslie B. Rout's 1976 book.<sup>1</sup> As for an overview of the overall slave traffic into the Spanish colonies, the cupboard is even barer. Fragmentary studies based on a port or region exist, many of them decades old. But not even the launch of [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) a decade ago has triggered scholarly interest in reassessing this least known branch of the transatlantic slave trade, much less any attempt to meld it with intra-American inflows of Africans. In fact, our

reassessment of the Spanish slave trade draws on sources and applies techniques that have only recently become available and is the first to integrate research on the intra-American and transatlantic slave trades in the Spanish context, the former being of particular importance for the Spanish Americas. This chapter comprises a preliminary effort to recalibrate both trades to the Spanish colonies. It is written in the spirit of the Roslings' comment that "the world cannot be understood without numbers. But the world cannot be understood with numbers alone."<sup>2</sup> We begin with a presentation of our conclusions before explaining how we arrived at them and then spelling out some of their implications.

Figure 1.1 provides an overview of our new assessment. While the major Portuguese and British transatlantic slave trades rose and fell in a regular parabola from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, figure 1.1 shows the bimodal pattern of the traffic to Spanish America, with a first peak around 1620 and a second, higher peak in the nineteenth century. The U shape in between is emphatic. But the figure also adds information on intra-American voyages; that is, expeditions that transported enslaved Africans and people of African descent from the non-Spanish Caribbean and Brazil to the Spanish colonies. More than a quarter of the slaves arriving in Spanish America had departed from colonies of other European powers in the New World rather than directly from Africa. Figure 1.1 shows that the lowest point of the transatlantic Spanish trade's U trend was somewhat offset by the transimperial intra-American traffic from 1640 until its ending by 1820, during the era of Spanish American independence.

Cartagena, Veracruz, Buenos Aires, and Hispaniola received the majority of slave arrivals shown by the first peak in figure 1.1, with many captives then reexported to additional destinations, including Lima and Mexico City. By contrast, Cuba and Puerto Rico account for almost all of the second peak. Nevertheless, some regions, such as the Río de la Plata—today's Argentina and Uruguay—and to a lesser extent Venezuela, did experience this U-shaped trend. The Río de la Plata both absorbed slaves and was a major entrepôt, supplying Chile and Peru, whereas slaves arriving in Venezuela tended to remain there. In Mexico, the slave trade declined from the 1650s to the last recorded transatlantic slave arrival in 1735. Although vastly outnumbered by the viceroyalty's large Amerindian populations throughout the colonial period, there was nevertheless a vibrant and naturally growing population of African ancestry in Mexico City and Puebla during the seventeenth century.<sup>3</sup>



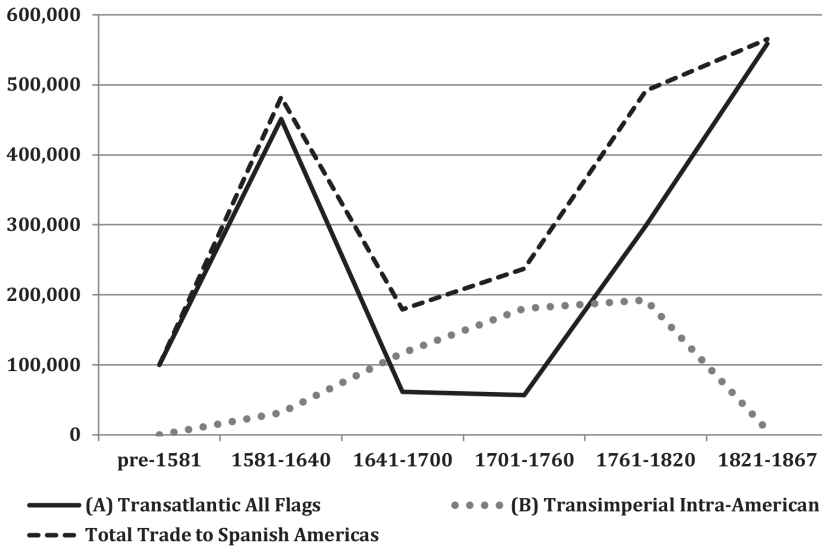


Figure 1.1. The slave trade to Spanish America. Source: Table 1.1, column 6 and row 8.

The dual-peak structure of the slave trade to Spanish America also points to two major cycles of demographic change related to African arrivals (Africanization) and the intermixing of indigenous peoples, Africans, and Europeans in the Americas (*mestizaje*). These cycles provide a chronological framework that helps to explain why identities in the Spanish colonies evolved differently from those in what became the United States. While some Spanish American colonies experienced a cycle of Africanization followed by *mestizaje* during the first slave trade peak, and others experienced the same during the second peak, some regions can be said to have experienced both. The relative weight of these two processes varied across the Spanish colonies. With the possible exception of New Orleans (itself a Spanish colony from 1769 until 1803), it is difficult to imagine any city in the early nineteenth-century United States in which people of mixed origins outnumbered those of either full European or African ancestry, as was the case in Venezuela in 1810. For the antebellum United States, it is equally difficult to visualize the almost complete disappearance of “black” as a category of identity in official records, subsumed by multiple *mestizo* labels, as in early independent

Mexico. Further, there was no equivalent in the United States of the diversity of African-based associations and religions that existed in urban centers in Spanish American regions such as Cuba and the Río de la Plata as late as the 1830s.

### Estimates, Patterns, and New Directions

How can we be sure that the broad trends shown in Figure 1.1 are correct? To explain the Spanish slave trade, we first have to define it. Two rather different concepts are possible—on the one hand, the traffic into Spanish possessions under all national flags, and on the other, the smaller and less significant slave trade carried out on Spanish vessels alone.<sup>4</sup> For anyone working with official documents of the early modern era, it must often appear that incompetence, smuggling, venal officials, and the hazards of everyday life undermine the reliability of state-generated data. For the slave trade, skepticism takes the form of doubt regarding whether every actual voyage could have left behind evidence, and whether the numbers of people on board such vessels are likely underreported. These problems loom large for the slave trade to Spanish America, notwithstanding the fact that the Spanish bureaucracy probably generated more documentation per imperial subject than any other empire before the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

On this issue of contraband, for the British, French, Dutch, and Luso-Brazilian slave trades, internal and external (to the state, that is) checks are possible for some periods, so that one might assess the probability that ships were omitted from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (henceforth TSTD).<sup>6</sup> Such checks are not yet possible for most of the Spanish transatlantic slave trade, but readers should keep in mind a broader perspective on the size and direction of the traffic into Spanish colonies. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the era in which Britain entered the transatlantic slave trade and solidified its presence in the Americas, observers in Jamaica indicated that slave prices were higher in the Spanish markets than in the British Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> And Joseph Massie, an acute observer of the English sugar business, pointed out in 1759 that in the previous thirty years, low slave prices had underpinned the success of the English plantations.<sup>8</sup> Contraband was significant, but it was not large enough to integrate the Spanish and British slave markets in the Caribbean to the extent that price differences reflected no more than the cost of sailing from one market to another. After

1790, by contrast, the captain of transatlantic slaving voyages typically checked slave prices in at least two of the major markets of Kingston, Havana, and Charleston (where by that time prices were similar) before deciding where to sell. The same voyage from Africa frequently showed up in more than one of these ports within the space of a month.

New archival data enable us to reassess key routes by which Africans entered the Spanish Americas, as well as to carry out a more refined inquiry into contraband. We are able to shed new light on two large branches of the slave trade to Spanish America: the transatlantic traffic for the period before the breakup of the Iberian Union in 1641 (when Portugal and its colonies were under Spanish Hapsburg rule) and the intra-American traffic that from 1661 to about 1800 became the Spanish Americas' major source of African slaves. While we offer little new information on nineteenth-century Cuba and Puerto Rico in this chapter, new figures on different aspects of the Cuban traffic are shown in chapters 8 and 9.

Table 1.1 provides a breakdown of slave arrivals across broad regions of the Americas, together with a separate column to the right that presents our estimates of captives carried on Spanish vessels alone. The non-Spanish data in columns 1 through 5 and column 7 are from the Slave Voyages website estimates page created in 2010, but the two Spanish columns—one for the Spanish Americas (column 6) and one for enslaved people transported under the Spanish flag (column 9)—are new. The Spanish figures previous to 1641 draw on new archival data and in addition incorporate a fresh approach to estimating the large illegal influx of slaves into Spain's colonies that occurred throughout the slave trade era. Table 1.1 shows that in the pre-1641 period, 529,800 captives arrived in the Spanish Americas from Africa. Thus, according to our calculations, almost 60 percent more Africans arrived in the New World than the 2010 Slave Voyages website estimates page displays. For the later period, too, new transatlantic voyages to Venezuela and the Río de la Plata have come to light.<sup>9</sup> For the whole period, we found that 14 percent more slaves entered the Spanish Americas directly from Africa than was previously thought.

Whereas the 2010 TSTD contained 998 voyages prior to 1641, we now have information on 1,843 transatlantic slave voyages to the Spanish Americas in this era. The new material permits us to construct robust lower-bound estimates of the size and direction of the first half century of the traffic. Iberian registration and port-departure records constitute our only source of information for many slaving voyages up to 1580. Thus, most volume estimates for

Table 1.1. Slaves Arriving in the Americas by Broad Region and Slaves Arriving under the Spanish Flag Direct from Africa, 1525–1867

	United States	British Caribbean	French Caribbean	Dutch Americas	Danish Americas	Spanish Americas	Brazil	Totals	Slaves Arriving under Spanish Flag
Pre-1581	0	0	0	0	0	84,900	4,100	89,000	84,900
1581–1640	100	100	0	0	0	444,900	261,400	706,500	222,500
1641–1700	15,000	308,000	38,700	124,200	18,100	61,700	523,000	1,088,700	21,700
1701–1760	188,900	807,000	393,700	162,700	20,500	56,800	1,084,600	2,714,200	300
1761–1820	184,200	1,173,200	640,500	154,300	62,300	298,900	1,696,600	4,210,000	133,600
1821–1867	500	11,000	47,300	3,500	8,100	558,800	1,269,400	1,898,600	563,100
Total	388,700	2,299,300	1,120,200	444,700	109,000	1,506,000	4,839,100	10,707,000	1,026,100
Adjustment for Intra-American Trade		-247,500	-19,000	-115,900	-47,800	+566,300	-136,100		
Total after Adjustment	388,700	2,051,800	1,101,200	328,800	61,200	2,072,300	4,703,000	10,707,000	

Source: <https://slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>, with “cells” changed to “disembarkations.” For column 6, see text, and for row 8, see Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Notes on the Estimates of the Intra-American Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas” and “IntraAmericanSpanAmer.xlsx,” both downloadable at <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/downloads>.

Note: The Spanish and British totals have been adjusted to reflect the changing status of Trinidad. On the estimates page of [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org), Trinidad is classed as part of the British Americas even though British occupation began only in 1797. Here, the 16,500 captives taken there before 1797 are reassigned to the Spanish Americas.

the years prior to 1581—including António de Almeida Mendes's estimates for those years and the estimates page on the Slave Voyages website based on his work—are heavily influenced by research on slave trade *licencias*, permits that were awarded by the Spanish Crown but did not necessarily result in slaving voyages.<sup>10</sup> Our data for this period, by contrast, consist primarily of slaving voyages that at least set out for Africa, and in most cases actually arrived in Spanish American ports.<sup>11</sup> Despite the different methodologies, the two approaches generate similar outcomes: 84,900 versus 82,000 slaves for 1526–1580. For the period 1581–1640, we currently have 583 more voyages than were shown in the original 2010 TSTD. While the work of Enriqueta Vila Vilar previously grounded our knowledge of the traffic during the Iberian Union, it now appears that her data account for less than half of all known arrivals for the years 1595–1640 alone.<sup>12</sup> More important than the additional voyages is the new methodology for estimating how many captives slave vessels carried when they arrived in the Americas.<sup>13</sup> The improved data indicate that the slave trade to the early Spanish Americas has been greatly underestimated.

As this suggests, the additional archival data permit us to take a new approach to the question of contraband, slaves landed in Spanish colonies outside the official record. Of the 1,843 voyages in our data set, 748, or about 40 percent, have no information on the number of slaves carried, leaving 1,095 for which we know at least one of three indicators of how many were on board. The first is the number that captains declared they had on board at the port of entry (800), the second is the number that the vessel was licensed to carry before the voyage began (721), and the third is the number that were actually carried (65). Voyages fell into this last group because they had become the subject of intense investigation by colonial authorities. Such inquiries generated sufficient data that we feel reasonably certain of knowing the actual number of slaves on board. For some voyages, we know two or all three of the indicators. On average, we found that vessels were licensed to carry 156 slaves, and that, unsurprisingly, captains declared they had 153 on board when they arrived in the Americas. By contrast, the mean of the sixty-four Iberian slave ships (the sixty-fifth was Dutch) for which we have data on actual slaves disembarked was 287, suggesting that vessels delivered 80 percent more slaves than their captains were permitted.<sup>14</sup>

A subset of these sixty-four voyages comprising sixty-one cases also contained information on either licensed or declared numbers of captives, and thus we were able to estimate a simple regression equation that allowed

us to predict actual numbers on board for the 1,030 individual voyages (1,095 less 65) for which the documents yield only licensed or declared numbers.<sup>15</sup> For the 748 voyages that lacked information of any kind on slaves, we assumed that on average they landed 287 slaves—the mean of our sample of actual disembarkations. For the pre-1581 period, these procedures point to 84,900 captives disembarking (from 299 voyages) in the Spanish Americas, with 444,900 (on 1,544 voyages) estimated to have arrived from 1581 to 1640. This total is only for slaves coming directly from Africa, but even so, it does not include several thousand Africans carried across the Atlantic from Spain in small groups on the Indies fleets before 1641. Nor does it include any of the 666 vessels that Huguette and Pierre Chauu identified as registered to depart from the Canary Islands for Spanish America before 1580, some of which likely carried slaves off from Africa on the way.<sup>16</sup> Finally, it includes only a few documented incursions of French, English, Dutch, and Portuguese slave ships during an era in which Spanish American colonists regularly engaged in *rescate* (illegal trade) with such intruders despite the risk of penalties.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while our total for pre-1641 is substantially greater than previous estimates, it is readily apparent why we describe it as “lower-bound.”

After 1640, slave arrivals to the Spanish Americas declined precipitously. Between 1642 and 1788, Spanish vessels brought in only 13,400 captives directly from Africa, compared to a non-Spanish transatlantic component accounting for 139,000 people, with the British alone carrying more than half.<sup>18</sup> But in this same period, over four times more captives entered the Spanish Americas from other parts of the Americas, an activity summarized in row 8 of table 1.1 based in part on the intra-American slave trade database at [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) (henceforth I-Am). Thus, soon after the collapse of the Iberian Union, Spanish merchants began to purchase captives from ports under the control of *all* European powers with a presence in the Americas, but especially the Dutch, Portuguese, and British. Sometimes this was under an *asiento*, or official contract, and sometimes not. The surviving record means that estimating these various streams of coerced migrants requires us to focus either on departures from major entrepôts such as Curaçao and Jamaica, or on arrivals at major Spanish American ports such as Cartagena. For the Río de la Plata during the whole period, the documentation is such that we can reconstruct an annual series of slave arrivals. For all other regions under Spanish control, however, we use both approaches. Before 1789, we focus on what the foreign entrepôts sent to the Spanish colonies; after

1789, data on inflows of captives into Spanish ports form the basis our estimates.<sup>19</sup>

For the Spanish colonies, the I-Am shows the intra-American slave trade had three major branches. The best known of these centered on Curaçao, the Caribbean island close to Venezuela that, from 1662 to 1728 and intermittently thereafter, functioned as an entrepôt through which captives on Dutch transatlantic ships reached Spanish colonies. A second branch of the intra-American slave traffic originated in Barbados and Jamaica, while a third, based in Brazil, delivered slaves to the Río de la Plata for more than two centuries until the 1830s alongside its better-known transatlantic counterpart. In addition to these three distinct streams of traffic, there was a fourth, multi-branched inflow of shorter duration that drew from a wide range of Caribbean islands, intensifying between 1790 and 1808, and focused mostly on Cuba, as the sugar boom got underway, and to a much lesser extent on Venezuela.

The outlines of the Dutch entrepôt trade in Curaçao have become much clearer recently.<sup>20</sup> Between 1658 and 1777 (but mostly between 1662 and 1728), Curaçao was a major source for slaves entering the Spanish Caribbean islands and mainland, including the Gulf of Mexico. This internal traffic was almost identical to that part of the Dutch transatlantic slave trade that disembarked slaves in the Dutch Caribbean, given that most *asentistas* (holders of an official asiento) at this period, whatever their nationality, resorted to Curaçao as they tried to meet their commitments to the Spanish.<sup>21</sup> Between 1658 and 1714, 63 percent of the Dutch slave traffic was directed to the Dutch Caribbean (largely to disembark slaves destined for Spanish colonies) or to Spanish America directly. Close to 116,000 slaves passed into Spanish America through Dutch hands.<sup>22</sup> If the Dutch were the first major suppliers of captives, the British were not far behind. Spanish merchants began buying slaves from the Company of Royal Adventurers to Africa (the precursor of the Royal African Company) in Jamaica and Barbados in the early 1660s and continued until at least 1801. As late as the 1820s, several thousand English-speaking slaves are reported to have been moved from British islands to Cuba, in this case by their owners. Overall, we estimate a total flow of 247,500 from British to Spanish jurisdictions.<sup>23</sup> The third major intra-American source for slaves, Brazil, focused almost entirely on the Río de la Plata and was anchored mainly in Rio de Janeiro. A handful of pre-1641 transatlantic slave voyages stopped first in Brazil (usually Pernambuco or Maranhão) before disembarking captives in Venezuela, Jamaica, Honduras, and Veracruz.

New data suggest that Hispaniola was a significant locus for unauthorized Brazilian-Caribbean shipping in the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> After the mid-1600s, however, slave ships from Brazil would not reach the Caribbean again until 1811. Slave traffic from Brazil to mainly the Río de la Plata (but including minor shipments to the Spanish Caribbean) brought 136,100 captives, as table 1.1 shows, which makes it larger than the Curaçao traffic.<sup>25</sup> In the pre-1790 era, slaves also arrived in Spanish colonies via the French and Danish islands.<sup>26</sup> After 1789, captives could be entered at most Spanish American ports without restriction, with the result that records of arrivals from both foreign New World colonies and Africa become more abundant and more reliable.<sup>27</sup>

The transatlantic slave trade introduced 1.51 million slaves into the Spanish Americas, and the intra-American traffic a further 0.57 million, for a total of 2.07 million Africans (after rounding). If the intra-American traffic is taken into account, the Spanish areas received 80 percent more slaves than did the French Americas and, most strikingly, more than the whole of the British Caribbean. Of even greater significance, however, is that in the colonial era in both the Spanish and the British imperial domains, many times more people came in from Africa than from Europe, a central demographic point that receives scant recognition in the literature on transatlantic migrations to Latin America. Future research may not add much to existing estimates of slave arrivals in the British and French Americas, but scholars of the Spanish Americas will likely increase our lower-bound estimates, as well as provide new details about the organization of the traffic and the experiences of Africans in the Spanish colonies.<sup>28</sup>

But can we say more than just “Africans”? What was the ultimate provenance of these two million captives? The broad pattern is one of heavy reliance on Upper Guinea and Angola through to the mid-seventeenth century, when the direct link with Africa prevailed, followed by a remarkable inflow of African peoples and cultures as the intra-American trading routes emerged. The founder generations in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Peru left overwhelmingly from northern Upper Guinea—“the Rivers of Guinea” feature strongly in the records, suggesting the coast of modern Guinea-Bissau.<sup>29</sup> Some of the first vessels bringing captives directly from elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa sailed from São Tomé and Príncipe in the 1520s, and other sixteenth-century voyages from these islands would follow, carrying captives from both Lower Guinea (probably eastern Nigeria) and West Central Africa. However, Upper Guinea remained the dominant source until the end of



the century. In the mid-1590s, vessels from what is now Angola supplied the majority of slaves in Veracruz, but in the much larger slaving port of Cartagena, Angola and Upper Guinea accounted for roughly equal shares from about 1590 until 1620. After 1620, close to seven out of ten slave ships arriving in both Cartagena and Veracruz came from Angola.<sup>30</sup> This pattern ended abruptly after 1640, when nearly all Spanish American ports lost their direct access to Portuguese slave trade entrepôts in Africa (with the exception of Buenos Aires, which retained some connections to Luanda).<sup>31</sup> During the following decades, the Spanish colonies would rely instead on Dutch and English slave traders. Both these slaving powers had a strong presence on the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin through to the early eighteenth century. Thereafter, from 1720 to 1790, almost all so-called *bozales*—newly arrived Africans who did not yet speak Spanish or practice Catholicism in ways that Spanish colonists could easily recognize—arrived via Jamaica, the African provenance of whose captives in this era is well established. It is likely that for 150 years after 1640, three out of four Africans arriving in the Spanish Americas left from the coast between Elmina in Ghana and the Cross River in Nigeria.<sup>32</sup> Today, no fewer than 716 languages are spoken in the hinterlands of this most densely populated part of sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>33</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, the African inflow into Mesoamerica diminished after 1640, though occasional arrivals in Mexico are recorded until 1735. Other Spanish-speaking regions relied on non-Spanish slave traders sailing from West Africa. When the Spanish direct trade reemerged—starting slowly in 1792 but growing rapidly after 1808—Spanish American colonies not only were able to restore links with Upper Guinea but drew on the whole range of slave markets from Senegambia in the north to Mozambique in the southeast (not least because most of their European rivals had pulled out). Cuba, especially, became the main Caribbean buyer of African slaves, and thus continued the pattern of extreme African diversity established earlier in the rest of the Spanish possessions. Taken together, the Spanish colonies had the most mixed African-descended population of any European empire in the Americas. Rio de Janeiro received 85 percent of its two million slaves from Luanda and Benguela; half of the large inflow into São Salvador de Bahia came from the Mina coast (the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin); a similar proportion of slaves from Saint-Domingue left from a region stretching just 250 miles north of the Congo River estuary. Of the major Spanish ports, only the Río de la Plata's dependence on Angola is comparable, and perhaps Veracruz from the 1590s to 1640.<sup>34</sup> Although the

relative importance of the slave trade from different areas of Africa to much of the circum-Caribbean changed drastically from one century to the next, over time this traffic drew from all African provenance zones except Mozambique.<sup>35</sup> Yoruba influence was certainly strong in nineteenth-century Cuba, but languages based on African elements in Spanish America survived in only the most remote locations and may be observed in fragmentary form in the rituals of modern African-based religions.<sup>36</sup> In Spanish America and Brazil during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, confraternities and mutual aid associations that were ostensibly based on African “national” identities in effect provided venues for social interaction and political organization; in these spaces, free and enslaved Africans enacted, contested, and reimagined African identities in multiple ways that could accentuate differences or, over time, dissolve them in syncretic fashion.<sup>37</sup>

The overall diversity of the Spanish Americas’ black populations was further increased by *mestizaje*, which sometimes developed in regions very close to places receiving new slave arrivals. By 1800, 30 percent of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires were of African ancestry, the large majority of whom had been born in Africa and were identified as “black” in official documents. However, eight hundred kilometers northwest, in the city of Córdoba at the core of modern Argentina, colonial census takers recorded the majority of the nonwhite population as *pardos*, an ambiguous term referring to people of mixed African, Amerindian, and European ancestry.<sup>38</sup> Late colonial Venezuela had a similar repertoire of colonial *casta* categories, from the recently arrived Africans on the coast to the long-established *pardos* inland.<sup>39</sup> Our findings suggest that after 1790, those toiling in the export sector were predominantly enslaved and African-born, whereas the mainly free populations of mixed ancestry labored in other sectors of the economy that were of less concern (and often less directly answerable) to imperial administrators. Those who found themselves on the fringes of Atlantic trade circuits oriented toward Europe may have experienced somewhat greater autonomy but few economic opportunities—which sometimes led them (or their descendants) to migrate to port cities in search of better prospects.<sup>40</sup>

### The Slave Trade Conducted by Spaniards and Spanish Americans

The slave trading activity on the part of the Spanish—as opposed to the introduction of slaves into the Spanish Americas—is harder to track than

that of any other national group of slave traders. The participation of Castile, and to a lesser extent Aragon, in the trade began nearly half a century before Christopher Columbus's landing in 1492. While the Portuguese are commonly credited with pioneering early modern European expansion along the coasts of Africa, it is often forgotten that they cooperated and competed with other European mariners and merchants, including the Spanish. During the mid- and late 1400s, Castilian ships sailed from Andalusia to Upper Guinea and even as far as the Mina coast.<sup>41</sup> Spanish voyages transported enslaved Africans to the Canary Islands from the late fifteenth century; throughout much of the sixteenth century and well into the 1600s, Iberian voyages departing from the Canaries embarked captives in the Cape Verde Islands or in one of several locations on the African mainland; some of these voyages then transported the enslaved Africans to Spanish American destinations.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, only vessels registered with Spain's House of Trade (most commonly in Seville) were allowed to transport enslaved Africans to ports in the Spanish Americas, at least in theory.<sup>43</sup> However, alleged emergency landings of unregistered ships that had departed from Portuguese territories were fairly common long before 1580, and the practice endured throughout the union of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns. For most of the Iberian Union, a series of Portuguese contractors successfully bid for monopoly rights on the administration of the slave trade to Spanish America. Slaving expeditions were generally organized by merchants in the Iberian Peninsula and in practice typically involved vessels, factors, owners, crews, and ports of call that could be considered either Spanish or Portuguese (or both).<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is not only difficult but also somewhat anachronistic to attempt to separate Spanish from Portuguese voyages for the 120 years prior to 1641, as we do here.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, there is the question of the modern equivalent of the nationality of the owner of the vessel or venture. How do we label the 1594 venture owned by Florentine investor Francesco Carletti and his father, Antonio, who first journeyed to Spain from Florence to obtain a license from the Spanish authorities and then fitted out their expedition before proceeding from Sanlúcar to the Cape Verde Islands, then to Cartagena, and from there to Peru with eighty-nine slaves? Their vessel certainly sailed under the sanction of Spanish authorities, as did many others undertaken by ship owners, crews, and investors who were not necessarily Spanish (though this voyage is counted as such here).<sup>46</sup>

A parallel situation with different roots existed at the end of the slave trade, when the Spanish again emerged as major carriers of slaves to their

colonies. The Bourbon reforms that liberalized trade meant that by the early 1790s, Spanish ports in the New World were effectively open to slave vessels of all nations. At the same time, the revolution in Saint-Domingue and the rising demand for plantation produce stemming from industrialization boosted Spanish American slavery and the slave trade itself. The initial beneficiaries were British and US slave traders, who from 1790 to 1807 together brought in seven out of every ten transatlantic captives landing in Spanish colonies. Merchants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo with transimperial networks stemming from their eighteenth-century links with Portuguese *Côlonia do Sacramento* became the first to revive Spanish transatlantic slaving. In the fifteen years after 1790, they introduced twice as many enslaved people direct from Africa into the Americas than did their Cuban-based counterparts.<sup>47</sup>

Not until the United States and the British largely withdrew from the traffic in 1808 did the Spanish come to dominate the slave trade to their remaining insular colonies. In the quarter century after 1810, after all the mainland Spanish American republics had abolished this traffic, Spanish traders brought 273,000 African captives into Cuba and Puerto Rico, out of an estimated total of 347,000 arrivals in the Spanish Americas from Africa.<sup>48</sup> In 1835, facing extended diplomatic and naval pressure from the British, Spain agreed to a treaty that allowed British cruisers to detain Spanish vessels suspected of slave trading activity even if they had no slaves on board. In response, most Spanish slave merchants registered their vessels under other flags, especially those of Portugal and the United States, neither of which had a major naval presence off West Africa. And when the British imposed similar terms on the Portuguese a few years later, some Cuban-bound Spanish slave ships began to sail without any registration papers. Overall, however, the pattern of the nationalities of those organizing the massive influx of Africans into the Spanish Americas is clear. After a transitional period lasting about a decade after 1807 that saw some Spanish merchants acting as fronts for US or British citizens, 80 percent of traders bringing slaves into Cuba were Cuban, and most of the rest were Spanish (especially Catalan).<sup>49</sup>

What was the nature of Spanish involvement in the transatlantic trade between 1640 and 1790? For the first twenty-two years of this period—until the establishment of the Grillo and Lomelín asiento in 1662—close to *de facto* free trade existed in the Spanish Americas, largely as a consequence of the crisis in Spanish Atlantic commerce.<sup>50</sup> The old licensing system collapsed, and while the Spanish managed at least fourteen transatlantic slaving

expeditions, sixty-six non-Spanish slave ships (mainly Portuguese and Dutch) entered Spanish American ports in the same period.<sup>51</sup> For the next twenty-eight years, to 1690, only twelve slaving vessels set out under the Spanish flag, mostly between 1677 and 1681, an average of less than one every two years.<sup>52</sup> By contrast, for the seventy-five years from 1691 to 1765, TSTD contains only two transatlantic Spanish voyages. But then, in the aftermath of the short British occupation of Havana (1762–1763), when the British disembarked 3,100 slaves in ten months, the Spanish Crown made determined efforts to revive their own transatlantic slave trading role.<sup>53</sup> They established the *Compañía Gaditana* and attempted to funnel all slaves destined for the islands and Caribbean mainland ports through Puerto Rico.<sup>54</sup> Nine company ships brought in an estimated three thousand slaves to San Juan between 1766 and 1769. The company was nevertheless a financial disaster.

Next, the Spanish Crown obtained the islands of Fernando Poo (now Bioko), Annobón, and Corisco and commercial rights to the mainland between the Niger and Ogoue Rivers in the Bight of Biafra from Portugal in the 1778 Treaty of El Pardo. Their attempt to establish slave trading bases there also resulted in bankruptcy and severe loss of life, with only a few slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata (mainly from Corisco Island, now part of Equatorial Guinea).<sup>55</sup> In 1784, the Spanish Crown contracted with the large Liverpool firm of Baker and Dawson to bring slaves to Venezuela and Cuba. In the late 1780s, the Crown also arranged for Spanish personnel to sail on Baker and Dawson vessels, subcontracted by the Royal Company of the Philippines, to carry slaves to the Río de la Plata. These personnel were expected to learn the trade and form a pool of skilled labor on which Spanish merchants would be able to draw to reestablish a strong presence in the transatlantic traffic. This, too, was unsuccessful. In the twenty years after the *Compañía Gaditana* shut down, only four Spanish slaving voyages show up in TSTD, as opposed to 2,000 British, 1,100 French, and 1,000 Portuguese.<sup>56</sup>

When we turn to the intra-American slave trade in this era, Spanish merchants were scarcely any more successful, at least in two of its main branches. Dutch merchants dominated the slave traffic through Curaçao (though Spanish slave traders were certainly involved) in the first of these, and the Portuguese played a similar role in the second—the traffic from Brazilian ports to the Río de la Plata from 1640 through to 1777 (when the Spanish conquered *Colônia do Sacramento*). Thereafter, Spanish American merchants came close to sharing the traffic equally with Luso-Brazilian slave traders.<sup>57</sup> Rio de Janeiro resumed its earlier position as the largest point of

transshipment to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, and the Río de la Plata briefly became the most important destination for slaves leaving Rio de Janeiro for all secondary markets (Rio de Janeiro also being a major slave entrepôt).<sup>58</sup> During the first half of the seventeenth century, Portuguese agents had played important roles in overland slave trading routes connecting Veracruz to markets in Puebla and Mexico City, and in the amphibious slave routes linking Cartagena to destinations such as Bogotá and Lima.<sup>59</sup> Yet these scenarios would have been impossible without extensive collaboration with Spanish and Spanish American merchants, officials, and slave owners, who would play even more prominent roles in the internal or intracolonial slave trades after the rupture of the Iberian Union and the concomitant withdrawal of the Portuguese.

In the British Caribbean—the largest intra-American slave market for Spanish American buyers—Spanish merchants were of greater significance. Both the Company of Royal Adventurers to Africa and its successor, the Royal African Company (RAC), usually refused to deliver slaves to Spanish colonies, though some English merchants operating outside the RAC's monopoly did carry slaves into Spanish ports.<sup>60</sup> But the RAC did sell captives to all comers from their factories in Kingston and Bridgetown, among whom were Spanish merchants as early as 1661, thus predating the Grillo and Lomelín asiento.<sup>61</sup> The traffic was significant enough that in 1680, the Jamaican legislature imposed a tax on slaves traded to foreign colonies.<sup>62</sup> The major Spanish figure here was Santiago Diego del Castillo, a native of Barcelona who eventually became an English subject. His official title from 1688 was “Commissioner-General for the Introduction of Negroes.”<sup>63</sup> In 1690, when war brought shortages of slaves and high prices in Jamaica, it was Castillo who organized expeditions from Kingston to Curaçao to relieve the situation—a Spanish slave trader serving the needs of English planters.<sup>64</sup>

After the mid-1690s, as English Caribbean slave entrepôts gradually became the dominant source for the nearby Spanish colonies, Spanish participation fell away. When first the Portuguese and then the French assumed the asiento between 1694 and 1713, they drew on English ports and Curaçao without using Spanish intermediaries. More important, a huge expansion of the English transatlantic trade began with the effective curtailment of the RAC monopoly in 1698.<sup>65</sup> The London, Bristol, and Liverpool slave traders who now entered the trade were much less inhibited than the RAC about smuggling into Spanish colonies. And for most of the 1713–1739 period, the South Sea Company could legally bring enslaved people into Spanish ports.

References to Spanish colonies are abundant in English sources after 1700, but most slave shippers were not Spanish. The Spanish seaborne slave trade, except for activity between Spanish ports in the Caribbean and the Pacific, became largely moribund for nearly a century. Even the twenty-two vessels recorded as bringing slaves from Africa into Cádiz after 1662 were Dutch or English.<sup>66</sup> While the Bourbon reforms signaled the gradual return of the Spanish to transatlantic slave trading, their immediate impact was to increase the Spanish presence in the intra-American trade rather than on the African coast. The years 1790–1810 saw the last great surge of slave arrivals into Spanish territory from other parts of the Americas (chiefly Rio de Janeiro, Jamaica, and the Danish West Indies), and one-quarter of Cuban arrivals were on Spanish vessels.<sup>67</sup>

We can develop a rough estimate of the Spanish slave trade direct from Africa following the same intervals that we used to reassess the inflow of captives into the Spanish Americas. For the earliest era, to 1580, we currently have records of 299 transatlantic vessels carrying an estimated 84,900 slaves. Despite considerable Portuguese participation, we assume these vessels were all “Spanish” because ships sailing to the Spanish colonies had to first register with Spanish authorities, departing from Seville or other authorized ports.<sup>68</sup> For 1580–1640, the Iberian Union era—given the impossibility of separating out Spanish from Portuguese vessels—we follow Mendes in dividing the number of slaves carried evenly between the two flags. The Spanish portion of this total is 222,500. For the third period, 1641–1789, TSTD shows fifty-eight Spanish slave voyages from Africa—forty-eight of them either in the forty years after the collapse of the Iberian Union or under the *Compañía Gadicana* in the late 1760s. Together they disembarked an estimated 16,000 enslaved Africans, or fewer than 150 captives per year. Even if the actual figure was double this number, the Spanish transatlantic traffic was operating at levels that seem trivial in comparison to the slave trades conducted by other western European states during the eighteenth century. In many years, not a single Spanish slave voyage set sail from Africa to the Americas.

This pattern changed drastically after 1789. From this point until 1867, there were only two years (occurring in wartime in 1805 and 1806) for which there is no record of the Spanish flag, or at least Spanish owners, in the transatlantic slave trade. Spanish ships disembarked nearly ten thousand slaves from Africa between 1790 and 1808, several times greater than the annual pre-1790 flow, but still only one-seventh of total transatlantic inflows into Spanish colonies. Despite the fact that revolution in the Río de la Plata



interrupted the regular inflow of slaves in 1812, Spanish deliveries of captives to the Americas increased from 1,100 in 1809 to over 35,000 in 1817, almost all of them taken to Cuba. Initially—say, prior to 1814—many of them arrived on ships that had Spanish papers but were actually owned or partly owned by citizens of the United States. But even before the 1820 piracy law that made slave trading a capital offense, direct US ownership had become unusual, and the Spanish flag accounted for more than 90 percent of the trade into the Spanish Americas in the second decade of the century.<sup>69</sup> It is hard to imagine anything approaching this expansion without US and British abolition of the slave trade.<sup>70</sup> In terms of estimated numbers of captives transported to the Americas, from 1816 to 1819, the Spanish traffic surpassed the previous peak of Spanish slaving, which took place two centuries earlier, during the early 1600s.

But there was further growth ahead. The Spanish Crown declared its Caribbean colonies closed to the slave trade in the aftermath of the Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1817, with the ban to take effect in 1820. The volume of arrivals declined sharply in the early 1820s. But the trade recovered to almost its former peak in the mid-1830s and the late 1850s, when slave ships sailing to Cuba (some of them steam powered) brought in a total of 563,100 Africans in the last forty-six years of the traffic. The flag of the ship meant little in this period of illegal slave trading, but it is unlikely that any vessel landed captives in Cuba in this period without partial Spanish ownership.

The final column of table 1.1 distributes these estimates across the same sixty-year intervals used for slave arrivals in the Spanish Americas. The U-shaped time profile of Spanish involvement is not drastically affected by the addition of the intra-Caribbean and Brazil-Río de la Plata trades shown in row 8. The effect is to flatten the U and make it somewhat more lopsided. Arrivals from foreign colonies in the Spanish Americas did not make up for the decline in the traffic direct from Africa between 1640 and 1790. And while flag and ownership data for the intra-American traffic are scarce, it is unlikely that the Spanish vessels carried as many as half the slaves brought in from those foreign ports. The time profile of Spanish involvement in the slave trade (transatlantic and intra-American combined) thus formed a deeper U than the one that tracks total slave arrivals (again on all carriers) into the Spanish Americas.

These patterns help account for the lack of awareness in the Spanish American literature of Spain's role in the transatlantic slave trade. The sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century slave trade to the Spanish colonies



is often viewed as something carried on exclusively by the Portuguese.<sup>71</sup> When the transatlantic slave trade was at its peak in the eighteenth century, Spanish involvement was negligible, and when this changed in the nineteenth century, the slave trade could be seen as something that Cubans did, even though some leading slave traders based in Havana after 1820—Pedro Martínez, Pedro Blanco, and Julián Zulueta—were Spanish by birth and conducted business in both Cuba and Spain.<sup>72</sup>

Spanish transatlantic slavers disembarked over one million captives in the Americas. Two-thirds of those captives embarked in the nineteenth century, more than half of them after 1820, or in other words, in contravention of Spanish commitments to stop the slave trade. Overall, Spanish ships carried four times more Africans than did their US counterparts. When the aggregate total is compared with the transatlantic slave trades of other empires, we can see that Spain ranks as the fourth-largest slave trading power overall—not far, in fact, from the third-place French. The Spanish share of the intra-American trade is approximately one-quarter according to the I-Am, making the Spanish the second most important carrier after the British.<sup>73</sup> For the first few decades and the last sixteen years of the transatlantic slave trade, Spain was, indeed, the only transatlantic slave trading empire. Unlike all their imperial competitors, the Spanish almost never delivered slaves to foreign territories. By contrast, the British, and the Dutch before them, sold slaves everywhere in the Americas and the French had only a small slave trade to Cuba in the nineteenth century, while Portuguese slave traders were everywhere outside the British and French Americas. An even more striking feature of the Spanish trade is that while the Spanish were the most compulsive producers of official documentation, they were also the most dependent on contraband; thus, theirs was the only trade that delivered the majority of its captives outside the limits of the law and official policy as these then stood.

### **African Slavery in the Making of the Spanish Empire**

Africans were among the very first arrivals to disembark in the Americas from the so-called Old World, but in 1492, no one could have anticipated a transatlantic slave trade from Africa as it would exist in the following centuries. In the early years of Spanish colonization, the Spanish may have carried more Amerindian slaves east than African slaves west, and the latter left not from Africa itself but rather from Spain (the first known slave voyage direct

from Africa did not disembark until 1519 or 1520, as noted in chapter 2). Furthermore, within the colonial Spanish Americas, each of the three major founder populations—Amerindians, sub-Saharan Africans, and Iberians—eventually came to be associated with different terms of labor. Beyond the circum-Caribbean and the Río de la Plata, forced indigenous labor extracted via the *encomienda* and *repartimiento* (or *mita*) systems sustained both private workshops and public works into the eighteenth century. Indigenous population densities combined with Spanish takeover of preexisting Amerindian imperial structures facilitated this process. Intermittent forced labor was not, however, enslavement. Slavery, a second labor regime, was, after the early decades, mostly reserved for Africans—the largest transoceanic immigrant group.<sup>74</sup> Not much is known about the terms of either migration or labor of the third group—Europeans. They were to be found among galley slaves and *forzados* (convict oarsmen) in sixteenth-century Havana, Santo Domingo, and Cartagena, but the Spanish shared the general European aversion to enslaving other Europeans (unless they were Moriscos, or Muslims).<sup>75</sup> Among the half-million arrivals from Spain before 1660, no evidence of indentured servants in the English sense of the term has surfaced, but to describe Spanish immigrants as “free labor” is hardly correct. Most were dependents or retainers, rather than soldiers, bureaucrats, or merchants, with obligations extending beyond provision of labor. If less challenging than enslaved Africans’ struggles to gain their freedom, the ultimate goal of Spanish migrants was similar in that they, too, hoped to establish their independence in the Americas and re-create as much of what was familiar from the Old World as possible.<sup>76</sup>

From an African perspective, for a century from around 1550 (and earlier in Hispaniola and perhaps Puerto Rico), several of Spain’s circum-Caribbean colonies would have been predominantly black long before the development of the export sugar complex. More Africans than Europeans arrived in this broad region, as well as along the Pacific coast from Panama to Lima, before 1600. From major seaports such as Cartagena or Havana to maroon communities including Bayano, West and West Central Africans exercised powerful influences on the formation of Caribbean cultures both in and around Spanish settlements during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>77</sup> After the mid-seventeenth century, however, Africans arriving in any Spanish colony were likely to find themselves in a minority, with the larger society usually comprising Amerindians, peninsular and criollo Spaniards, their mestizo progeny, and a growing native (creole) population of full and mixed African

ancestry. There were significant black populations in Mexico City and on the Mexican coasts, on the Pacific and Caribbean shores of Colombia, in coastal Ecuador and Peru, and in Caribbean Venezuela—regions where the Amerindian population had been largely decimated after contact. Nevertheless, captives arriving in Spanish America were dispersed over an immense geographic area, and their arrival occurred over a much longer time span than in any other group of American territories. These factors may have inhibited the emergence of both large and permanent regions of black demographic and cultural dominance during the three centuries of Spanish colonialism.

Other major implications for the histories of those born to African parents in the Spanish Americas follow from these new data. A positive rate of intrinsic natural growth for people of full and mixed African ancestry probably emerged in Mexico well before the United States—perhaps as early as 1650. Intrinsic natural growth rates were also positive for Afro-Cubans even at the height of the island's nineteenth-century sugar boom.<sup>78</sup> Diminishing slave arrivals were one of the factors behind Mexican *mestizaje*. People of mixed origins became more common than those of full African ancestry after 1700, just as free people of color outnumbered slaves as early as 1680 in some regions. By the early 1800s, when most Spanish American colonies began to loosen ties with Spain, two opposite but related processes had already been unfolding: first, the formation of African-descended populations in Mexico and elsewhere that hardly fit modern US understandings of “blackness” and “whiteness,” and second, the rise of slave arrivals in Cuba, Venezuela, and the Río de la Plata, renewing direct links with Africa. Coastal Peru, particularly Lima, saw a combination of the two patterns as Peru underwent centuries of *mestizaje* yet received new slave arrivals through the Río de la Plata in the late colonial era. As with Mexico, the large majority of Peru's population was of full and mixed Amerindian ancestry. Venezuela received a very significant flow of slave arrivals during its last thirty years as a colony. Yet, free *pardos*—people of mixed African, European, and Amerindian origin—formed the majority of the Venezuelan population by 1810. Growing majorities of people of mixed ancestry emerged before the Africanization process triggered by these revived African inflows. The long view suggests that population growth associated with *mestizaje* plus recovery from virgin soil epidemics of the early period enabled Spanish America to remain the most populous imperial domain until late in the colonial era.

Demographics provide no more than an outline of the African presence, however. In late eighteenth-century Cuba and the Río de la Plata, a surge of

African arrivals interacted with a growing free African and African-descended population living in Havana, Buenos Aires, and Montevideo. This encounter led to the expansion (and reshaping) of African-based associations and black urban culture.<sup>79</sup> Africans and their descendants formed black confraternities in cities from Mexico to Lima, under the umbrella of the Catholic Church, from the earliest times through to the eighteenth century. Documentation produced during the late eighteenth century indicates that far from being directly controlled by the church, *cabildos de nación* in Cuba and “African nations” in the Río de la Plata were often subjected to limited ecclesiastical oversight. The functions of *cabildos de nación* were in some ways similar to those of the older black confraternities (which likewise continued to evolve) and included the rituals of life (particularly funerals), socialization, and mutual support.<sup>80</sup> In West Africa, Oyo was a prominent kingdom prior to its early nineteenth-century collapse, and Sango was the principal god worshipped there. Adherents of socioreligious groupings such as Sango emerged in Havana, and the tensions between the founding members of the organization and the large numbers of new arrivals from Africa after 1817 can now be laid out in some detail.<sup>81</sup> The influences of African origins and the Catholic Church on these new associations are obvious, but so are many syncretic practices, the meaning of which remains a matter of scholarly debate. Black socialization and distinctive African-based cultural practices are at least very clear. Free and enslaved populations of African ancestry mingled in these associations, though the leaders were usually free blacks. Free people of color were essential, since they could own real estate (for example, the house of the association), they had more time to devote to group activities, and in Spanish America, they could represent black associations and defend them against colonial authorities. There is less evidence of black organizations, and indeed public celebrations such as the Day of Kings, in the British, Dutch, and French Americas, probably because urban environments were of relatively less importance there.

The impact of our new estimates extends far beyond demographics, and only a few of the many ramifications can be mentioned here. But the *mes-tizaje* phenomenon is of central importance in explaining why Spanish slavery and the slave trade have not received the scholarly attention that they warrant. Ultimately, our findings challenge scholars to not allow the large black populations in the modern United States and non-Spanish Caribbean to deflect their attentions from the massive presence of Africans in colonial Spanish Americas. Africans and Europeans together established nominally

Spanish settlements in the Caribbean as early as the 1490s, and with the devastating loss of indigenous populations over the following decades, increasingly constituted the region's demographic base.<sup>82</sup> At the end of the eighteenth century, 30 percent of the population of Buenos Aires—a city larger than New York in 1790—was of African descent, compared to 0.001 percent today. In addition to recent flows of voluntary migration, *mestizaje* and Africans' wide geographical dispersal over a period of 350 years have rendered their descendants largely invisible in many regions that were formerly Spanish American colonies. Yet many of their inhabitants are nonetheless the heirs to deep and complex histories in which Africans were of central importance.

### Notes

1. Leslie B. Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*. Recent studies that focus on the Spanish Americas include Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole, and Ben Vinson III, eds., *Africans to Spanish America*; Aurelia Martín Casares, ed., *Esclavitud, mestizaje y abolicionismo*; and José Antonio Piqueras, *La esclavitud española*. See also Jean-Pierre Tardieu, *De l'Afrique aux Amériques espagnoles*.
2. Hans Rosling, Anna Rosling Rönning, and Ola Rosling, *Factfulness*, 192.
3. Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God*, 39; and Tatiana Seijas and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, "Persistence of the Slave Market."
4. This chapter relies on the concept of "flags" and "national" (e.g., "Spanish," "Portuguese," etc.) slave trades in order to draw broad comparisons, but as noted below, we recognize that a framework based on modern nation-states is highly problematic for analysis of slave trafficking during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For further discussion of this issue, see chapter 2.
5. Thus, for Leslie Rout, "all efforts aimed at making an acceptable estimate of the Spanish American slave traffic [are] innately flawed." For Colin A. Palmer, tracking the British *asiento* (a slave trade contract) in the first half of the eighteenth century, "contraband traders . . . may have sold the Spaniards as many or even more slaves than their legal counterparts but this dimension of the trade . . . will forever be confined to the realm of scholarly speculation." Juan Bosco Amores describes an uncontrollable slave trade and extensive contraband in late eighteenth-century Cuba, where officials noted that the coastline was "almost all . . . open and unguarded." See Rout, *African Experience in Spanish America*, 66; Colin A. Palmer, "Company Trade," 40; and Juan Bosco Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 133. We thank Henry Lovejoy for drawing our attention to this last source.

6. See David Eltis and Paul F. Lachance, “Estimates of the Size and Direction of Transatlantic Slave Trade,” 2–3, at <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/downloads>, Estimates Datasets and Supplementary Documents, then click on “Methodology Essay.”
7. British National Archives (henceforth BNA) T70/17, f. 26, Walter Riding to RAC, July 27, 1691; William Noël Sainsbury et al., eds., *Calendar of State Papers*, 5:36, “Narrative of the buying and forfeiture of a shipload of negroes . . .” June 4, 1661; BNA T70/8, ff. 20, 23, 24, Charles Chaplin and William Parke, January 29, 1707; and BNA T70/8, f. 30, Peter Beckford and Lewis Galdy, January 16, 1708.
8. “British Sugar planters have all along had a considerable advantage over the French Sugar Planters; . . . the British traders . . . have not only supplied our . . . colonies with Sufficient Numbers of Negroes, at moderate prices, but have likewise been able to furnish several Thousands yearly, for the Spanish Colonies. . . . No People who trade in or to the West Indies, navigate so cheap, or carry any commodities in, to, or from the West Indies, for so little money as the English do.” Joseph Massie, *State of the British Sugar Colony Trade*, 22, 26. Modern research supports this viewpoint; see David Eltis and David Richardson, “Productivity in the Slave Trade.”
9. For arrivals direct from Africa into the Río de la Plata, 1641–1760, see <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/4yDITE24> with 10 percent added for unreported captives. For the later period, see Alex Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata” and “Trans-imperial History.”
10. António de Almeida Mendes, “Foundations of the System,” 63–94. The foundational study of sixteenth-century licenses is Lutgardo García Fuentes, “Licencias para la introducción de esclavos.”
11. For further discussion of the sixteenth-century slave trade—drawing on new research that was conducted after the present chapter was originally drafted—see chapter 2 of this volume.
12. Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed.
13. The additional information comes from sources in the Archivo General de Indias (henceforth AGI) not previously consulted as well as published sources. For the former, see Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Notes on the Estimates of the Intra-American Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas,” downloadable at <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/downloads>, “Estimates, Datasets and Supplementary Documents.” For the latter, see Raúl A. Molina, *Las primeras experiencias comerciales*; Eduardo Arcila Farías, *Hacienda y comercio de Venezuela*; Esteban Mira Caballos, “Las licencias de esclavos negros”; Elsa Gelpí Baíz, *Siglo en blanco*; Nikolaus Böttcher, “Negreros portugueses y la Inquisición”; and Rafael M. Pérez García and Manuel F. Fernández Chaves, “Sevilla y la trata negra atlántica.” The Chaunus’ multivolume work also provides Iberian port departure data for over four hundred slaving voyages, many of which can presently be

- matched with Spanish American port entry records. Huguette Chaunu and Pierre Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*. Our examination of AGI, Contratación 2898–2899, suggests that the Chaunus identified all vessels sailing to the Cape Verde Islands, the “Rivers of Guinea,” or some other African port en route to Spanish America as slavers. They consulted several *legajos* (files) in AGI-Contaduría, providing additional data for twenty-one voyages arriving in Nombre de Dios and one voyage arriving in Veracruz in the years 1549–1569.
14. These findings are consistent with Marc Eagle, “Chasing the *Avença*”; and Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far from Here’: The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640.” Ongoing research by Eagle, Schultz, and David Wheat should make it possible to refine these pre-1641 estimates in the future with increasing accuracy.
  15. Inspection of the resulting estimated values indicated some forty-seven anomalies for which further adjustment was required. For forty-eight cases, declared slaves in the historical record were equal to or less than forty. Almost all of these were identified as nonspecialist slave ships. For these, we set actual numbers equal to declared numbers. A further four cases turned out to have predicted values (calculated from the regression equations) lower than declared slaves. For these, too, we substituted declared values. The breakdown of the estimated 1,843 cases in the slave arrival column is as follows—65 with actual slaves reported, 52 with declared values, 979 with values predicted from registered slaves (via a simple regression), and 747 assigned a simple average of 287.
  16. Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, 2:416–19, 448–51, 466–71, 486–89, 498–503, 508–13, 522–27, 552–54, 564–70, 586–89; 3:38–43, 54–59, 72–74, 82–85, 102–7, 116–21, 132–35, 142–49, 154–61, 170–77, 184–87, 196–201, 252–57, 264–65.
  17. I. A. Wright, “Rescates”; Kenneth Andrews, *The Spanish Caribbean*; Alejandro de la Fuente, “Introducción al estudio de la trata en Cuba”; and Carlos Esteban Deive, *Tangomangos*.
  18. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database#tables>; view “flag” under column section.
  19. The eleven thousand intra-American slave trade voyages in I-Am at <https://slavevoyages.org/american/database> comprise a key resource for both approaches. Although incomplete, this source allow us to understand the broad direction and fluctuations of the flows into the Spanish Caribbean from foreign islands.
  20. Wim Klooster, “Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade”; Wim Klooster, “Slavenvaart op Spaanse kusten”; Han Jordaan, “The Curaçao Slave Market”; and Borucki, “Trans-imperial History.”
  21. After a few years of sailing to Africa for slaves, even the British South Sea Company, the largest slave trader after 1700, began buying their slaves in the Caribbean.

22. <https://slavevoyages/estimates/4Kq1IQG2>. Curaçao was the dominant Dutch distribution center before 1750, and Saint Eustatius thereafter. Ninety percent of the transatlantic arrivals at both islands were reexported with almost all the Curaçao departures taken to the Spanish Caribbean mainland. Saint Eustatius supplied mainly the French and British possessions, but the I-Am indicates a major shift to Cuba between 1775 and 1807 that saw over 40 percent of all I-Am captives disembarking on that one island (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/2YxzoIgl1>). Of the 148,700 captives disembarked in the Dutch Caribbean before 1790 (according to the estimates page), 115,900 are estimated to have reached Spanish colonies. For arrivals in the Dutch Caribbean, see <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/ohFB1CGb>. The total was then distributed across the Dutch colonies using ratios calculated from the I-Am (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/lvDbilw8>). Many Curaçao departures went to Venezuela. See Borucki, “Trans-imperial History.”
23. The Spanish bought one-third of captives brought to Jamaica and 15 percent of those going into Barbados between 1661 and 1667; calculated from BNA, T70/869. For 1668–1700, we estimate an annual average of one thousand based on departures from Jamaica and Barbados in the first eleven years of the eighteenth century—prior to the British asiento. The years 1668–1700 thus are not based on hard data but are broadly consistent with comments on the Spanish traffic made by RAC agents in Jamaica and Barbados referenced in Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, “Notes on the Estimates of the Intra-American Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas.” For annual reexports of slaves from Jamaica, 1701–1789, see Richard B. Sheridan, “Slave Demography in the British Caribbean,” 274. We use Sheridan’s preferred series, augmented with a series from Sheila Lambert, ed., *House of Commons Sessional Papers*, 67, 239, for two quinquennia. We add 10 percent to these figures to accommodate undocumented transactions. We do not know where all these captives were taken, but for a large sample of 2,012 voyages leaving Jamaica, 1701–1789, see <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/GDdL4123>. This sample allows us to distribute the Jamaican outbound series across the slave markets of the Caribbean. For the much smaller flows from other British islands—that together supplied less than 10 percent of the Jamaican total—we draw on the same source. For a fuller explanation see “IntraAmertoSpanAmer.xlsx” at <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/downloads>.
24. Marc Eagle, “Tiempos contrarios.”
25. Zacarías Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 62–65; Molina, *Las primeras experiencias comerciales*; and AGI-Charcas 123, sin número, “Certificazion de los esclavos que entraron en Bs Ayres desde el año de 97 asta el de 607,” Buenos Aires, June 12, 1682, and “Relazion de los negros de Guinea y otras partes que an entrado en Bs Ayres desde su fundazion asta el año de 1682,” Buenos Aires, June 12, 1682. Moutoukias and Molina did not consult these two AGI sources. These list slaves arriving from both Africa and Brazil; by attempting to



isolate the latter and by applying the ratio of estimated to declared slaves from the transatlantic traffic, we can obtain an estimate series. Between 1687 and 1777, the Portuguese ferried thousands of slaves from Brazil to their outpost of Colônia do Sacramento—across the Río de la Plata from Buenos Aires—from whence they were smuggled into Spanish territory. See Enrique M. Barba, “Sobre el contrabando.” For a transcribed copy of one of Barba’s sources, see Anonymous, “Discursos sobre el comercio legítimo de Buenos Aires con la España y el clandestino de la Colonia del Sacramento: De embarazarlo en ma mayor parte y poner a cubierto de enemigos aquella Provincia” (1766) in the Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, Buenos Aires. We thank Fabrício Prado for drawing our attention to this document. For 1777–1812, see Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata.” A few hundred more arrived thereafter as late as the 1830s. See *IntraAmertoSpanAmer.xlsx* for a detailed derivation of our estimates.

26. The French were more likely to buy slaves from the Dutch and English than to sell them to the Spanish given the dominance of Saint-Domingue. But during the American War of Independence, particularly toward the end, French planters could not get their sugar to Europe, and slave prices in Saint-Domingue declined temporarily as a result. Unspecified numbers moved to Cuba from 1777 to 1779, then seven thousand from 1781 to 1783, and nearly five thousand went to Venezuela. Borucki, “Trans-imperial History,” 49; Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 129, 134; and <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/19BYredE> (configure columns to show “Sterling cash price in Jamaica”). A doubling of the documented number allows for unrecorded inflows. From 1680 to 1789, the Danish islands (Saint Croix and Saint Thomas) received only 64,300 captives from Africa, and the great majority were put to work on sugar plantations, the value of whose output was only slightly behind that of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1770. Eltis, “Slave Economies of the Caribbean,” 113. Thus, Danish islands could not have supplied large numbers before that year. The I-Am database has 2,500 captives leaving Danish islands for Spanish colonies before 1790, with destinations centered on Cartagena before 1710 and Puerto Rico in the 1780s (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/qVxemqiQ>). We estimate six thousand taken to the Spanish colonies before 1790. For post-1790, see Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, “Colonial Trade.”
27. Only three Spanish colonies north of the Río de la Plata received slaves from ports in the Americas, 1790–1818: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela. We estimate that the first received 60,300, the second, 3,900, and the third, 10,000; see Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, “Notes on the Estimates of the Intra-American Slave Trade to Spanish Americas”; *IntraAmertoSpanAmer.xlsx*; and Borucki, “Trans-imperial History.” The combined total of 74,300 is distributed across American regions of departure using ratios calculated from the I-Am database. This procedure allows us to estimate that 25,300 came from the British

Caribbean, 1,900 from Saint Eustatius, 41,900 from the Danish islands, 2,500 from Saint-Domingue, and 2,700 from Brazil. After 1820, some English owners moved their slaves illegally to Spanish islands for which we allow 5,000. Such activity reportedly created an English-speaking enclave between Holguín and Gibara in Cuba in the 1820s. See Great Britain, Parliament, House of Lords, *Second Report from the Select Committee*; also BNA, Fo313/33, Richard Madden to James Stephen, Colonial Office, January 1, 1841; and BNA, Fo313/33, Attorney General to Foreign Office, December 2, 1841. A much smaller movement went from Anguilla and Tortola to Puerto Rico; see BNA, Fo84/186, George Grey to Palmerston, November 29, 1835; and BNA, Fo84/24, George Canning to Sir William A'Court, October 24, 1823. To the south, 1,536 captives were removed from Brazilian vessels by Argentine privateers during the Argentine-Brazilian War (1825–1828).

28. For the early Spanish Caribbean and Río de la Plata, see Eagle, “Tiempos contrarios”; and Kara D. Schultz, “Interwoven.” For seventeenth-century Mexico and Central America, see the work of Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva and Alejandro García Montón. For eighteenth-century Río de la Plata and Venezuela, see the ongoing work of Alex Borucki. And for late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Cuba, see Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, “Foundation and Growth,” chapter 2; and José Luis Belmonte Postigo, “Brazos para el azúcar.”
29. David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, chapter 1.
30. David Wheat, “First Great Waves.”
31. Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far From Here’: The Río de la Plata, Brazil, and Angola, 1580–1680,” 40–49.
32. See the decadal breakdowns of captives arriving in Jamaica, 1721–1790, at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/OsuvtTl3>.
33. See <http://www.ethnologue.com> for Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria. Most Africans were multilingual, and some languages were mutually intelligible, but cultural divisions within language groups could also be profound.
34. On Río de la Plata’s dependence on Angola, see Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata”; on Veracruz prior to 1640, see Wheat, “First Great Waves.”
35. One example of this diversity is that more people with Arabic/Islamic names arrived in Cuba than in Bahia. Daniel Domingues et al., “Transatlantic Muslim Diaspora.” On small numbers of enslaved “Mozambiques” in the Spanish Caribbean, see David Wheat, “Global Transit Points.”
36. Armin Schwegler, “*Chi ma nkongo*”; and John M. Lipski, “Review of Armin Schwegler.”
37. See, for example, Elizabeth W. Kiddy, “Ethnic and Racial Identity”; Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith*; Matt D. Childs, “Re-creating African Ethnic Identities”; and Jane G. Landers, “Catholic Conspirators?”
38. Erika Edwards, “Mestizaje, Córdoba’s Patria Chica.”
39. John Lombardi, *Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery*, 132.

40. For a closer look at these dynamics from the vantage point of free and enslaved Africans and people of African descent, see chapter 6 in this volume.
41. Florentino Pérez-Embid, *Los descubrimientos en el Atlántico*; Antonio Rumeu de Armas, *España en el África Atlántica*, 71–75, 101–4, 185–214; John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast*, 10–18; and George Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 136.
42. Manuel Lobo Cabrera, “Viajes canarios a Guinea”; Elisa Torres Santana, *El comercio de las Canarias*; and Germán Santana Pérez and Juan Manuel Santana Pérez, *La puerta afortunada*, 101–53.
43. For further discussion of this topic, see especially Germán Santana Pérez, “La Casa de Contratación.”
44. TSTD assigns national character to a voyage first on the basis of the country in which the ship was registered, and second—given that only one in five voyages have that information—the attribution of a national character by a contemporary observer. On the integrated nature of Iberian slaving networks to Spanish America prior to 1641, see Schultz, “Interwoven.”
45. For further discussion of the transnational collaboration underlying transatlantic merchant networks and slave trafficking prior to 1580, see chapter 2 of this volume.
46. Francesco Carletti, *My Voyage Around the World*, 3–33. For earlier asientos backed by Genoese investors, see Georges Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 150–77. It is likely that if we identified all the Italian-owned vessels in the early trade and grouped them together based on modern national borders, Italy would displace Denmark as the sixth-largest European slave trading nation. Prior to the eighteenth century, however, several Italian states were either closely tied to or directly ruled by Spain; see, for example, Thomas James Dandeleet and John A. Marino, eds., *Spain in Italy*.
47. Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire*; and Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata.”
48. <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/uodydR3x>.
49. Leonardo Marques, *United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*; and Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 125–63. For Catalan and other Spanish traders, Josep M. Fradera, “La participació catalana”; Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla and Lizbeth Chaviano Perez, eds., *Negreros y esclavos*; and María del Carmen Cózar and Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla, eds., *Cádiz y el tráfico de esclavos*.
50. The slave trade asiento awarded to the Genoese merchants Domingo Grillo and Ambrosio and Agustín Lomelín was the first such contract organized after Portugal’s renewed independence in 1640 and was responsible for the disembarkation of more than eighteen thousand enslaved Africans in Spanish American ports between 1663 and 1674. Though it lasted only eleven years, the Grillo and Lomelín asiento exemplifies Spain’s shift away from a reliance on Portuguese slaving networks based in Africa and the Atlantic Islands toward Dutch

and English networks that could provide captives from their own American slaving outposts such as Curaçao and Jamaica. See Marisa Vega Franco, *El tráfico de esclavos con América*.

51. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/PjQZxIws>.
52. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/17F63MVe>. British sources suggest that the Spanish transatlantic trade from Portuguese Guinea in the 1670s and early 1680s is underreported. BNA, T70/10, f. 1, Thomas Thurloes, Gambia, to Royal African Company, March 15, 1678; and BNA, T70/16, f. 50, Edwin Steede and Stephen Gascoigne, Barbados, to Royal African Company, April 11, 1683.
53. Elena A. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*.
54. Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Isla de Puerto Rico, 195–211*; and Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Compañía Gaditana de Negros*.
55. See BNA, Fo84/383, f. 262, internal memo dated February 26, 1841; and BNA, Fo84/299, ff. 19–25, Spanish documents.
56. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/yvk8xjyp>. The four disembarked fewer than five hundred captives.
57. Barba, “Sobre el contrabando”; and Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata.”
58. On the first known slaving expedition from Buenos Aires to Brazil, see Molina, *Las primeras experiencias comerciales*, 25. On the significance of the late eighteenth-century traffic to Río de la Plata for Brazilian internal markets, see Borucki, “Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata,” 91–94.
59. Linda Newson and Susie A. Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*; and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, “Portuguese *Encomenderos de Negros*.”
60. See BNA, T70/76, f. 46, Minutes of Court of Assistants (of the RAC), June 16, 1675: “That as to the proposition of transporting the Negroes in English ships & to deliver them . . . it is too great an hazard & trouble to the Company.” For the links between English “interlopers” and the slave trade to Spanish ports, see BNA, T70/10, f. 29, Hender Molesworth and Charles Penhallow to the RAC, September 20, 1682; and BNA, T70/10, f. 30, February 20, 1683. For non-RAC ships after 1698, see BNA, T70/5, f. 63, Dalby Thomas, October 22, 1709.
61. The first recorded instance was when the soon-to-be-dismissed Cromwellian governor of Jamaica bought 180 slaves from a Dutch ship and sold forty to a Quaker plantation owner and the rest to a Spanish merchant. See George Zook, *Company of Royal African Adventurers*, 79–80, 87–96; for journal entries about Spanish involvement, see BNA, T70/869, ff. 14, 38, 39, 50. See also Alejandro García Montón, “Génova y el Atlántico.”
62. Thus, the Spanish bought all the captives on the *Merchant Bonaventure* (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/yrbVCoTX>) for silver in 1683 in Kingston; BNA, T70/16, f. 69, Hender Molesworth and Charles Penhallow to RAC, October 20, 1683. For legislation, see Curtis Nettels, “England and the Spanish-American Trade.” The imperial government disallowed the tax, but the colonial

legislature periodically reinstated it over the course of the next century. It was thus not always collected.

63. He circulated between Cádiz, Jamaica, Barbados, Curaçao, Cartagena, and Veracruz in the 1680s and 1690s but was based in Jamaica for two decades from 1684, first as agent for Nicolas Porcio and for most of the 1690s as Porcio's asientista partner. He also had an extensive private business in slaves. F. J. Osborne, "James Castillo—Asiento Agent." We thank Adrian Finucane for drawing our attention to this source.
64. BNA, T70/169, "A Memoriall of what is desired by Don St. Iago del Castillo, Comisioner Generall for Introduction of Negroes into the Spanish," n.d., but c. 1687. BNA, T70/12, f. 84, Charles Penhallow and Walter Ruding to RAC, July 1, 1690; and BNA, T70/17, f. 51, Walter Ruding to RAC, February 2, 1692. The governor of Jamaica made him a naturalized English subject, and the English Crown gave him a knighthood.
65. For a new political interpretation of this expansion and the RAC's withdrawal from the traffic, see William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt*, 115–50, 159–72.
66. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/IJB9x8zN>. This link shows thirteen such vessels. For the other nine, see Ruud Paesie, "Overzicht van getraceerde lorren-draaiers," kindly supplied by the author. Victoria Gardner Sorsby, "British Trade with Spanish America," 282–420, lists the vessels carrying slaves to Spanish ports in the English asiento period, and these are almost all British.
67. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/wv5lvoaX>.
68. This in contrast to the practice on the estimates page (<https://slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>) where, following Mendes, the assumption is that half of the ships disembarking captives in Spanish America were Portuguese and half were Spanish.
69. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/pcOT5YZT>. For US ownership in the Cuban traffic, see Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, "Foundation and Growth," chapter 2.
70. This was especially true for the US decision. US vessels were responsible for half of transatlantic arrivals in Spanish territories in foreign bottoms between 1804 and 1807.
71. On the early Spanish slave trade as "only Portuguese," see Josep M. Fradera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, "Introduction," 2. See also Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed.; and Maria da Graça Mateus Ventura, *Negreiros portugueses*.
72. Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 148–50.
73. <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/uHimdVIc>.
74. Slave labor in the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spanish Caribbean, however, often entailed enslaved Africans performing labor that in Spain would have been undertaken by non-elite Iberians. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 14–15, 185–86, 256.

75. David Brion Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 28 and n. 36; and David Wheat, "Mediterranean Slavery."
76. Peter Boyd-Bowman, "Patterns of Spanish Emigration"; Magnus Morner, *Adventurers and Proletarians*; and James Lockhart and Enrique Otte, eds., *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies*.
77. See, for example, Luz Adriana Maya Restrepo, *Brujería y la reconstrucción de identidades*; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, *Cimarrones de Panamá*; and Pablo F. Gómez, *Experiential Caribbean*.
78. Frank Trey Proctor III, *Damned Notions of Liberty*, 22–25. This Afro-Mexican population was increasingly free, rather than enslaved, by the eighteenth century. See Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, 22–27. Jack Ericson Eblen defines intrinsic natural rates of change as "reflecting the characteristics of a closed population with a stable age structure." Jack Ericson Eblen, "On the Natural Increase of Slave Populations, 214, 245.
79. In addition to other studies cited above, see Philip A. Howard, *Changing History*; Matt D. Childs, "'Defects of Being a Black Creole,'" 209–45; Ivor L. Miller, *Voice of the Leopard*; Henry B. Lovejoy, *Prieto*; and Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*.
80. For more detailed discussion of the evolution of black *cofradías* and *cabildos / cabildos de nación* in colonial Cuba, see Landers, "Catholic Conspirators?"
81. Lovejoy, *Prieto*, 13–19, 78–122.
82. Among the people glossed here as "Europeans," some were in fact Euro-Americans of partial Amerindian descent who, within the space of a generation or two, may not have been viewed as (or identified as) Europeans. For more detailed discussion, see Ida Altman, "Marriage, Family, and Ethnicity."

## CHAPTER 2

# The Early Iberian Slave Trade to the Spanish Caribbean, 1500–1580

MARC EAGLE AND DAVID WHEAT



✦ THE SLAVE TRADE FROM AFRICA TO SPANISH AMERICA DURING THE sixteenth century remains one of the least known branches of the transatlantic trade, despite an abundance of archival sources and a substantial, albeit fragmented, historiography dating back to the works of José Antonio Saco and Georges Scelle.<sup>1</sup> Much of this work relies on peninsular sources; in particular, many scholars have analyzed the rents obtained by the Spanish Crown from royal grants or “licenses” authorizing individuals to acquire and transport slaves to Spanish America.<sup>2</sup> Another productive approach focuses on taxes paid by voyage backers as recorded by the Casa de la Contratación (House of Trade) in Seville.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the *registros* (voyage registration papers) and *despachos* (clearances for departure) created by House of Trade officials offer extensive information on vessels authorized to transport captives to the Americas, including their ostensible financial backers, crews, itineraries, and numbers of captives to be embarked.<sup>4</sup> By incorporating archival materials generated in Lisbon and Luso-African slaving hubs, other historians contextualize the trade to early Spanish America within a broader system spanning both Iberian empires.<sup>5</sup> By themselves, however, documents recorded in Iberian and African ports rarely confirm whether planned voyages followed their intended routes or were completed.

An alternate methodology draws on shipping records, judicial investigations, and other information produced in American ports after a slaving voyage's arrival.<sup>6</sup> Compared to predeparture data, this material offers a more accurate sense of the provenance, direction, and volume of the trade but is only available for a limited number of voyages. These analytical angles overlap considerably, and each can be further supplemented by notarial and insurance records, parish registers, and missionary reports, among other sources.

In addition to problems stemming from the source material, another issue we face in articulating the development of the early Iberian slave trade is that previous generations of scholars have largely assumed that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic slave trades were normative. As Rafael M. Pérez García observes, English-language scholarship's traditional focus on the final century of the transatlantic trade underestimates the complexity of its early phases and the range of information available for their study, leading to "a fundamentally unidirectional compression of the Atlantic trade and a lack of attention paid to the multiple ways that slavery has developed in different historical societies."<sup>7</sup> If the transatlantic slave trade is viewed primarily as a 350-year process that reached its apex during the late eighteenth century, the 1500s are usually considered significant only as a foundational stage.<sup>8</sup> However, the early trade's impact and importance within the context of the sixteenth-century Atlantic world deserves more detailed examination.

Approaching the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America from a sixteenth-century vantage point requires rethinking some basic categories such as "slave," "slave ship," and "slaving voyage." Although by 1530 its victims were almost exclusively sub-Saharan Africans, this trade grew out of existing forms of Iberian slave trafficking that included captives of even more diverse origins.<sup>9</sup> Despite the increasing frequency of specialized slaving voyages during the first half of the sixteenth century, previous slaving systems did not immediately disappear; a smaller stream of captives continued to be transported directly from Iberia to the Caribbean. Furthermore, there were multiple types of slaving voyages to Spanish America in this period, and especially during early decades, captives often arrived in relatively small numbers on vessels carrying mainly passengers and merchandise.

While the era prior to 1595 is usually just described as the "licenses" period, the organization of the sixteenth-century Spanish slave trade was fairly complex, featuring two main administrative systems—*asientos* (contracts) and *licenses*—that overlapped and evolved over the course of the century.



Likewise, the broad geographical scope of the trade makes it difficult to ascribe a single national origin to sixteenth-century slave ships or their crews, or to the commercial networks underpinning any given voyage, without obscuring the organization and operation of the trade at court, at sea, and in ports scattered around the Atlantic basin.

Attention to the multiple and sometimes contradictory sources generated at various stages of slaving voyages' planning and execution—from the concession of slaving licenses to captives' arrival in the Caribbean to the fate of the vessels that transported them—makes it possible to link localized studies and build a more comprehensive picture. The transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America evolved rapidly in the 1520s and 1530s, with increasing numbers of enslaved Africans transshipped to the Caribbean directly from the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé. By the close of the sixteenth century, these offshore slaving hubs were overshadowed by Cacheu and Luanda, but the framework for subsequent slave trafficking had been firmly established.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, Crown officials experimented with new ways to organize and control the delivery of slaves to Spanish America. For their part, financiers and traders found ways to maximize returns both within the limits of royal restrictions and by exploiting and evading mechanisms for royal control. Much larger numbers of captives were transported to the Spanish colonies during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), reaching unprecedented levels during the 1590s and afterward.<sup>11</sup> Yet the “Portuguese *asiento* period” of 1595–1640 was the direct result and continuation of an earlier process of negotiation, marked by diverse forms of slave trafficking and overlapping, multinational, and geographically wide-ranging commercial networks only partially controlled by the Spanish Crown.

### Slaves and Slave Ships

Scholarship on the early transatlantic slave trade has long been shaped by teleological assumptions that sixteenth-century mechanisms resembled those of later eras. In 1906, Georges Scelle defined the slave trade as “the transportation of blacks to America for non-personal and non-immediate use, and who had been purchased in order to [re]sell them to colonists” in the Americas.<sup>12</sup> Huguette and Pierre Chaunu drew a similarly broad distinction between “slave ships” and other vessels.<sup>13</sup> However, both Scelle and the Chaunus overlook significant numbers of enslaved people transported on

voyages that primarily carried merchandise or passengers. These foundational works helped create and reinforce the notion that the sixteenth-century traffic was essentially a lower-volume version of the later transatlantic trade, rather than an extension of earlier human trafficking to and within the Iberian world. Yet slavery had been important in cities like Lisbon, Seville, or Barcelona well before the end of the fifteenth century, and by the sixteenth century, mainland Iberia and maritime settlements such as the Canary Islands, the Cape Verde Islands, or São Tomé hosted substantial slave populations. These often included not only sub-Saharan Africans and their descendants but also people of North African and eastern Mediterranean origins, as well as Iberians of Muslim ancestry (Moriscos).<sup>14</sup>

Upper Guineans and West Central Africans comprised the vast majority of forced migrants transported across the sixteenth-century Atlantic in any direction, but the slaving networks that delivered them paralleled and overlapped with other long-distance slave routes. From the 1490s until the 1540s, Spanish American settlers commonly acquired enslaved Native Americans through capture or barter, often transporting them to distant markets for resale.<sup>15</sup> Some traders, such as the Basque merchant Juan de Urrutia, trafficked in both African and Amerindian slaves during the early 1500s.<sup>16</sup> Especially before the 1530s—but also afterward—the Crown granted permissions to transport slaves labeled *berberiscos*, *moriscos*, *moros*, or *blancos* from Iberian ports to the Americas.<sup>17</sup> Several enslaved people disembarked in Puerto Rico between 1516 and 1521 were described as “white,” “tawny-colored” (*loro*), “Moorish,” or “Berber”; all had sailed from Seville in the company of larger numbers of slaves listed as “black.”<sup>18</sup> Over the following decades, Iberian reliance on black slaves was amplified and normalized by the increasing availability of enslaved sub-Saharan Africans and by legislation designed to protect Amerindians and restrict the passage of Muslims and Moriscos to Spanish America. Inhabitants of the sixteenth-century Iberian world, however, continued to understand slavery as a more expansive phenomenon.

Iberian traditions of trade, barter, and ransom with communities in northwestern Africa represented one of the main paths by which enslaved black women, men, and children entered the Iberian world during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; the fledgling transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America may be viewed in part as an outgrowth of older trans-Saharan trade routes. From the 1440s to the 1540s, mariners from western Europe, the Canary Islands, and the Cape Verde Islands traveled to Arguim Island, a terminus of trans-Saharan networks off the coast of present-day

Mauritania, to purchase merchandise and captives from Muslim merchants.<sup>19</sup> At the height of this trade, during the 1520s and 1530s, every year approximately two thousand enslaved Africans were transported from the Portuguese fortress at Arguim to Portugal.<sup>20</sup> Tax records for ships arriving in Puerto Rico reveal that some of these captives were also transshipped to the Caribbean, representing the earliest known slaving voyages to sail directly from Africa to the Americas.<sup>21</sup> Some may have been transported by Francisco (or Fernando) de Rosa on the caravel *Santa María de la Luz*, which sailed from “Guinea” (possibly meaning Arguim), disembarking at least forty-four captives in San Juan in November 1520 and another ten near San Germán in early 1521.<sup>22</sup> Rosa returned to Puerto Rico in October 1521, this time specifically from “Arguim,” although whether he transported slaves then is unknown.<sup>23</sup> In May 1521, the caravel *San Miguel* disembarked at least seventy-nine captives from Arguim in San Juan. Its *maestre* (shipmaster) Martín de Urquiza and slave trade factor Francisco de Toro paid import taxes on behalf of voyage backers Juan Fernández de Castro and Gaspar Centurión.<sup>24</sup> Although they have never before been linked to specific slaving voyages, the latter individuals have been identified by several historians as associates of a Genoese company based in Seville that undertook to deliver four thousand captives to the Indies in 1519–1524 under the first large-scale slave trade grant awarded by the Spanish Crown in 1518, discussed below.<sup>25</sup>

Another major difference separating the sixteenth-century slave trade from that of later eras is that significant numbers of enslaved Africans were transported to the Caribbean on merchant ships leaving Seville, rather than on specialized “slave ships” sailing directly from Africa. As Spain’s main Atlantic port, Seville acted not only as an administrative center and port of departure for various types of maritime traffic but also as a hub for the reexportation of enslaved people to tertiary destinations.<sup>26</sup> Contemporaneous with early voyages from Luso-African ports to the Caribbean, vessels sailing from Seville to Puerto Rico in 1515, 1516, and 1518 disembarked small numbers of captives described as “*negros bozales*.”<sup>27</sup> During this period and throughout the 1500s, the exportation (or reexportation) of enslaved Africans and people of African descent from Seville to the Caribbean was roughly comparable to “market-scale dispersal” in the intra-American trade during later centuries, with vessels “typically carrying smaller numbers of captives alongside cargoes of goods.”<sup>28</sup> Sixteenth-century voyages from Seville to the Americas that transported wine, oil, textiles, foodstuffs, furniture, tools, mercury, and other commodities also ordinarily embarked passengers and

slaves.<sup>29</sup> Of 131 ships presently known to have disembarked at least 2,047 captives in Puerto Rico between 1514 and 1546, we have only been able to confirm the arrival of 5 vessels carrying more than 90 enslaved individuals. Another 5 ships brought 46–90 captives, and 12 brought 21–40 captives. The vast majority (105 ships) disembarked 19 slaves or less. Excluding 4 vessels with unspecified numbers of slaves, these ships averaged 16 captives each.<sup>30</sup>

In the sixteenth-century Iberian Atlantic, even ships that embarked hundreds of captives in Africa were usually not purpose-built “slave ships”; rather, they might make only one or two slaving voyages, carrying primarily goods and passengers on other trips, or on different legs of the same journey.<sup>31</sup> Larger vessels sometimes carried both significant numbers of enslaved Africans and sizeable amounts of merchandise. After leaving Sanlúcar and Cádiz in 1555 with more than two hundred *pipas* of wine, nine hundred *botijas* of olive oil, clothing, paper, wax, and other merchandise, the *urca* (hulk) *San Jorge* embarked 155 “black slaves” in Santiago de Cabo Verde. The ship continued to Puerto Rico, where additional merchandise was loaded (and some captives likely disembarked), before finally arriving in Veracruz, New Spain.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, the unusually large galleon *San Pedro*, accompanied by a smaller *zabra*, visited Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands while en route to the Indies in 1559. At Española, they were found to be carrying a wide variety of merchandise, and somewhere between sixty and 110 captives.<sup>33</sup> Vessels headed to Africa to load slaves for American ports might also embark small numbers of captives in Seville prior to departure. The *maestre* of the *Santa María de Ondas* (or *Ondís*), which was registered to transport 360 slaves to New Spain in 1561, planned to acquire at least 340 captives in the Cape Verdes but also agreed to embark fourteen slaves, as well as twenty-one adult passengers, in Seville.<sup>34</sup>

By the early 1530s, most captives taken to Spanish America departed from either Santiago de Cabo Verde or São Tomé on specialized slaving voyages.<sup>35</sup> Yet substantial numbers of enslaved people of African origin continued to arrive in the Caribbean on merchant ships from Seville, especially after Spain’s Atlantic convoy system was implemented in the early 1560s. Among the fleet of twenty-four vessels bound for “Tierra Firme” (Santa Marta, Cartagena de Indias, and Nombre de Dios) in 1562, all but two were registered to embark at least one captive prior to departing from Seville; the ships *La Piedad*, *San Andrés*, and *San Salvador* were to transport eighteen, eighteen, and thirty-three captives, respectively. In total, this single fleet was supposed to carry 173 captives, averaging roughly seven per vessel.<sup>36</sup> Over the following decades, Indies fleets ordinarily transported similar numbers of slaves, and the 1570 Tierra

Firme fleet disembarked at least 217 captives in Cartagena alone.<sup>37</sup> This pattern continued into the 1580s and probably beyond. Royal officials in Cartagena recorded 222 slaves disembarked from the Indies fleet in 1585, 34 in 1586, and 143 in 1589; in each case, unspecified numbers of additional captives were to be landed afterward in Nombre de Dios.<sup>38</sup> Although their primary cargoes were merchandise and passengers, Indies fleets were also slaving fleets.

In similar fashion, early voyages to the Caribbean from the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé occasionally transported smaller numbers of captives alongside passengers and merchandise. During the 1520s and 1530s, ships sailing from the Cape Verdes to Puerto Rico, Española, and Nombre de Dios commonly brought fifty captives or less.<sup>39</sup> The ship *Corpo Santo* arrived in Puerto Rico from São Tomé in 1524 with textiles, parrots, civet cats, and small quantities of sugar and cinnamon, in addition to eighteen enslaved “blacks from the island of Santo Tomé.”<sup>40</sup> The slave trade from Africa to the Caribbean intensified quickly during the late 1520s, with at least three voyages from São Tomé landing upward of 230 captives each in Española and/or Puerto Rico in 1527, 1529, and 1530.<sup>41</sup> Larger groups of captives also began to arrive from the Cape Verde Islands by the mid-1530s; by the 1540s, ships going from Seville to Santiago de Cabo Verde en route to the Americas were commonly registered to carry two hundred captives or more.<sup>42</sup> Yet even as the numbers of enslaved Africans embarked in Luso-African ports increased, the practice of carrying diverse commodities in addition to (or instead of) captives never disappeared entirely. In the Caribbean, maestres and captains of vessels that made alleged “emergency landings” (*arribadas*) were typically permitted to sell goods and captives, ostensibly to pay for repairs or wages, before departing for their registered destination. By the 1550s, attempts to take advantage of these exceptional permissions had become common, and the Crown made corresponding efforts to criminalize the introduction and sale of commodities brought on slave ships to Caribbean ports.<sup>43</sup> Even so, Caribbean officials usually remained sympathetic to local demand, and slaving voyages continued to carry ivory, wax, cotton, textiles, sugar, wine, or other merchandise until well into the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup>

### Asientos and Licenses

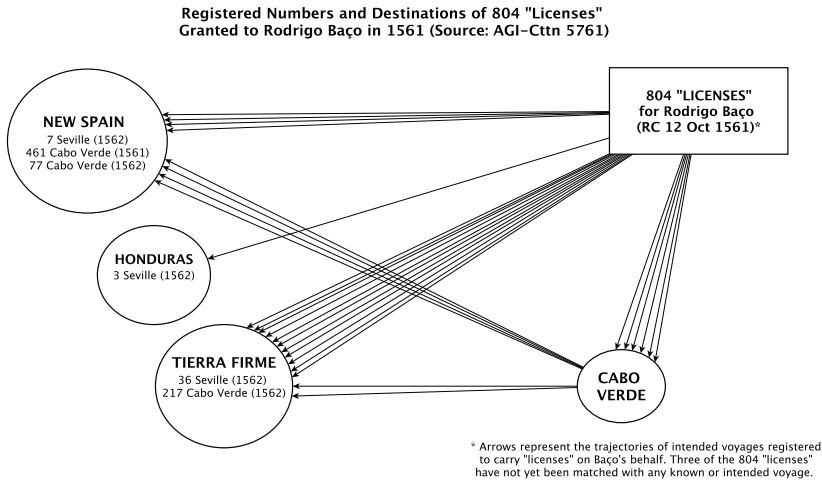
Between 1513 and 1580, the Spanish Crown used two main administrative strategies, at times concurrently, to direct the transport of sub-Saharan

Africans to the Indies. The first, royal grants of “licenses”—each “license” signified permission to transport one enslaved individual—were intended to allow the monarch to control the transport of slaves. The second, contracts with private individuals that were often called “asientos” (a general term for a contract with exclusive terms) provided a way for the Crown to farm out much of the responsibility.<sup>45</sup> There has been a substantial amount of debate over the definitions and genealogy of these mechanisms dating back to José Antonio Saco.<sup>46</sup> However, as our interest lies in understanding the practical effects of royal administration on slave trafficking and on the way it was recorded (or not), we prefer broad definitions of these terms, following sixteenth-century usage. Although 1595 is often characterized as the dividing line between the “licenses” and “asiento” periods—when major Portuguese merchants received monopoly rights to provide slaves to Spanish America—royal policy changed considerably before then.<sup>47</sup> These shifts were driven by the interplay between two opposing forces: on the one hand, the Crown’s desire to ensure revenue from licenses and a reliable supply of enslaved labor, and on the other, the profit motives of slave merchants and a wide array of opportunities for contraband.

While royal permission to transport slaves had been granted earlier, the evolution of slave licenses began around 1513, when the practice of tracking numbers of slaves and corresponding duties was clearly established.<sup>48</sup> Charles V’s concession of four thousand licenses for Laurent de Gorrevod, the governor of Bresse, in August 1518 marks the beginning of royal support for taking large numbers of captives directly from Africa to Spanish America and an early effort to encourage private merchants to organize the traffic using monopolistic rights.<sup>49</sup> Gorrevod (sometimes rendered Gouvenot) promptly sold the grant to a Genovese company that included the banker Adán de Vivaldi (or Vivaldo), Tomás and Domingo de Fornari (or Forné), and Gaspar Centurión, among others.<sup>50</sup> Their associate, a Burgalese merchant named Juan Fernández de Castro, received permission from the Portuguese Crown to purchase 4,300 slaves at Arguim. Although this grant resulted in the first captives known to have been shipped to the Caribbean directly from Africa—initially from Arguim and soon afterward from São Tomé—in the late 1510s and early 1520s, the grant yielded neither significant royal profits nor a steady supply of slave labor.<sup>51</sup> In 1528, the Spanish Crown made a more formal, restrictive monopoly contract (“asiento”) with members of the Welser banking family for another four thousand slaves over four years. Spanish residents overseas protested that captives were not being taken

everywhere they were needed, and that the “Germans” primarily brought enslaved Africans from São Tomé despite a demand for Upper Guineans. For their part, the Welsers claimed that other merchants were violating their rights by transporting slaves without permission, and that Caribbean residents were dissatisfied because Welser agents refused to allow them to purchase on credit.<sup>52</sup> After this *asiento*’s expiration in 1532, the Spanish Crown assumed greater control over the slave trade and more often granted slave licenses of varying sizes without monopoly rights, apart from some experiments with quasi-monopolies in 1552 and 1556.<sup>53</sup> However, the Crown continued to tinker with the system of procuring slaves up to 1580 and beyond by, for example, setting maximum prices for slaves in different regions or restricting the destinations of captives.<sup>54</sup>

By the 1520s, Seville was already the epicenter of an active market for the resale, consolidation, and use of slave licenses conceded by the Spanish Crown.<sup>55</sup> Licenses were canceled when the total number of captives specified in a grant had been either embarked on vessels departing from Iberian ports or registered to be loaded in an African or Luso-African waypoint on vessels en route to the Americas. Slave trade contractors or their agents (*hacedores*) assembled slaving voyages in Seville by matching ships and maestres with blocks of licenses, in agreement with one or more licensees or their delegates. For example, in 1561, maestre Diego Marin agreed to embark 461 captives in the Cape Verde Islands en route to Veracruz on behalf of Rodrigo Baço, who had been awarded a license grant of approximately eight hundred captives. Whereas these 461 “licenses” were to be transported by Diego Marin on a single voyage, the remaining “licenses” of Baço’s grant were assigned to at least twenty-one additional voyages departing from Seville the following year. Five of these vessels were registered to acquire captives in the Cape Verde Islands: three would then ostensibly sail onward to New Spain with seventy-seven captives between them, and two would continue to Tierra Firme with a combined total of 217 captives. Finally, at least forty-six “licenses” awarded to Baço were distributed in single-digit numbers among sixteen vessels registered to sail directly from Seville to New Spain, Honduras, and Tierra Firme.<sup>56</sup> The “license” system was further diversified in that unlike Diego Marin’s 1561 voyage, nearly all of these intended voyages were registered to transport multiple groups of captives pertaining to different license grants. Licensees found various ways to exploit the terms of royal permissions to their advantage by, for example, using licenses meant for personal, domestic slaves to acquire trade captives instead or by claiming new



*Figure 2.1.* Registered numbers and destinations of 804 "licenses" granted to Rodrigo Baço in 1561.

licenses for captives who died at sea.<sup>57</sup> Over time, royal grants specifically closed many of these loopholes.

While sixteenth-century slave licenses have been studied by numerous scholars, they still have important insights to offer, particularly when used in conjunction with other sources.<sup>58</sup> The books of the House of Trade, as well as sources such as judicial proceedings or royal letters, describe a wide variety of licenses. These include the customary two personal slaves available to Iberian emigrants to America, as well as permissions for functionaries like governors or bishops to carry ten or twelve enslaved attendants. They also include larger grants tied to projects to found new towns or build sugar mills and blocks of hundreds or thousands of licenses—sometimes as part of early *asientos*—that were intended to be sold off in smaller lots to subcontractors. Although a handful of licenses were exempt from all duties, the specific arrangements for payment of royal taxes in many of these licenses underscore the Crown's overriding interest in the revenue they represented. The problem remains that licenses recorded how the slave trade was intended to work from the Crown's perspective and are most reliable for understanding the



financial and administrative machinery operating in Iberia. Nonetheless, our knowledge of the early transatlantic slave trade stands to improve markedly by matching such records with available information on actual itineraries and voyage outcomes.

### Voyages in Atlantic Perspective

The routes that slave ships followed after departing peninsular Iberian ports were considerably more varied and complex than the master books of the House of Trade suggest. Slaving networks depended on the exchange of information, instructions, and credit in ports all around the Atlantic, with residents often playing active roles in organizing voyages and collaborating with merchants to redirect vessels' itineraries and captives' destinations. If peninsular records give the impression of centralized control over the slave trade, sources generated in overseas maritime entrepôts suggest otherwise. Even in Seville and Lisbon, metropolitan directives were filtered through local agendas. The frequently vague wording of royal licenses and cargo registries—allowing captives to be purchased in Castile, Portugal, the Cape Verde Islands, Upper Guinea, or “wherever you may prefer”—allowed merchants to determine the most convenient and profitable routes.<sup>59</sup>

The islands and archipelagos of the eastern Atlantic, crucial connection points for sixteenth-century slaving voyages, had their own internal circuits of trade and communication and differing forms and degrees of maritime connection to Iberia, the African mainland, and one another.<sup>60</sup> Each group of islands might be visited by slaving vessels en route to or returning from Spanish America. The Canaries were a particularly important waypoint for Iberian slaving voyages, and a place where unlicensed ventures to the African mainland to trade for captives were organized.<sup>61</sup> While sailing from the Caribbean toward Iberia, slave ships might likewise stop in the Azores or Madeira to make arrangements to hide part of the proceeds of slave sales, further complicating the simple routes depicted by departure records.<sup>62</sup>

The Cape Verde Islands, especially the island of Santiago, functioned as an even more vital hub for Iberian Atlantic slave trafficking.<sup>63</sup> Their residents traded extensively along the adjacent African mainland, from the Gambia River to Sierra Leone. When slaving voyages headed to Caribbean ports stopped in the Cape Verdes, they typically loaded captives who had been previously acquired by Cape Verdean traders on the Upper Guinea coast in

exchange for dyes, cloth, ivory, kola nuts, or other commodities brought from more distant markets within the same region.<sup>64</sup> Cape Verdean merchants' success in inserting themselves into various Upper Guinean trading circuits meant that even Iberian vessels planning to embark enslaved Africans on the coast might stop in the Cape Verde Islands beforehand to take on supplies and obtain information. Later sources provide a clearer glimpse of communication networks linking Santiago Island to the West African mainland. Upon departing from Cacheu in 1624, maestre Luis de Santamaria was entrusted with a "package of importance" and dozens of letters addressed to diverse individuals residing in the Cape Verdes, including the governor, merchants, spouses, and military and church officials.<sup>65</sup> Yet the islands' pivotal role in bridging Atlantic and regional maritime circuits had been established at least a century earlier. In 1548, for example, the joint holders of four hundred slave licenses claimed to have forwarded registros for those captives from Iberia to Santiago de Cabo Verde, along "with many other writings and instructions," which had subsequently been lost to a French warship.<sup>66</sup>

Most captives exported from the Cape Verde Islands were brought from the Upper Guinea coast (often glossed in Spanish sources as "the Rivers of Guinea"), and until the 1580s, slaving voyages arriving in Spanish America from the Cape Verdes consistently outnumbered those that had sailed directly from the Upper Guinea coast, or from any point on the African mainland. Ships from Arguim Island to the Caribbean may have initially outnumbered those from the Cape Verdes, but direct maritime traffic from Arguim faded very quickly.<sup>67</sup> The first slaving voyage presently known to have sailed directly from the "Rivers of Guinea" to the Americas arrived in Puerto Rico in 1532.<sup>68</sup> It may have been preceded by earlier voyages, and in the 1540s and 1550s, it was not uncommon for slave ships docking in Española or Puerto Rico to have departed from "Guinea" (1554), "the Rivers of Guinea" (1559), or the "River of San Domingos [e.g., the Cacheu River] which is in Guinea" (1545).<sup>69</sup> During the 1550s and 1560s, several vessels also sailed directly from Sierra Leone or "Magarabomba" (southern Sierra Leone) to the Caribbean; some had previously left the Canary Islands without proper metropolitan authorization.<sup>70</sup> Among slaving voyages known to have arrived in the Caribbean between the 1520s and the 1570s, however, vessels sailing from the Cape Verde Islands still comprised the majority of those for which African ports of departure are specified.<sup>71</sup> Only in the 1580s

would direct slave traffic from the Upper Guinean mainland to the Caribbean overtake that from the Cape Verde Islands.<sup>72</sup>

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea were arguably of comparable significance for the early slave trade to Spanish America, although scholarship on slavery and slave trafficking in São Tomé during the sixteenth century has mainly emphasized the island's role in transshipping captives to Elmina or its use of slave labor in sugar production as a prototype for plantation regimes in the Americas.<sup>73</sup> Yet social and economic life in São Tomé was also shaped by transatlantic slaving networks oriented toward the Caribbean. As early as the 1520s, vessels bound for Puerto Rico and Española purchased supplies from residents of São Tomé, including free people of color, while a small shipbuilding and repairing industry developed in neighboring Príncipe by the 1550s.<sup>74</sup> The earliest known slaving voyage from São Tomé to the Caribbean disembarked 137 captives in Puerto Rico in 1522.<sup>75</sup> Although ships from São Tomé arrived in the Caribbean less often than those from the Cape Verde Islands, during the late 1520s and very early 1530s, several voyages from São Tomé carried substantial numbers of slaves, even if others noted above transported relatively few captives. After landing six captives in Puerto Rico, the nao *Santa María de Begoña*, under maestre Polo d'Espindola, disembarked 257 enslaved Africans in Santo Domingo in June 1527.<sup>76</sup> Other voyages from São Tomé to Santo Domingo disembarked groups of 248, 231, and 187 captives in October 1529, July 1530, and April 1534, respectively.<sup>77</sup>

Roughly mirroring the traffic's shift away from the Cape Verde Islands and toward Cacheu, São Tomé's position as the premier South Atlantic slaving hub was drastically eroded and then eclipsed during the final two decades of the sixteenth century by voyages to the Caribbean from Luanda, Angola.<sup>78</sup> While there are almost no known voyages from Angola to Spanish America prior to the mid-1580s, São Tomé had imported captives from Angola as early as the 1550s (and perhaps earlier via the kingdom of Kongo), some of whom were re-exported to the Spanish Caribbean alongside enslaved Africans from the Lower Guinea coast. By the early 1580s—almost immediately after Luanda's founding—slaves were being transported from Luanda to Brazil in significant numbers.<sup>79</sup> The same pattern soon extended to the Caribbean; while in subsequent decades at least two dozen voyages sailed directly from São Tomé to Spanish American ports, São Tomé and Príncipe also served as staging grounds for slaving voyages to Arda and especially Angola.<sup>80</sup>

The Iberian slaving voyages passing through the Canaries, Cape Verdes, or São Tomé en route to the Caribbean illustrate the fundamentally international nature of the transatlantic slave trade during the sixteenth century. Ships were sometimes described as “Portuguese” or “Spanish,” but their financial backers—and their proprietors, in the case of vessels that were jointly owned—were frequently of multiple origins.<sup>81</sup> Slaving voyages to Spanish America were initially planned in accordance with partnerships, commercial agreements, and insurance arrangements drawn up not only in Seville or Madrid but also in Lisbon, Antwerp, or Burgos, among other locations.<sup>82</sup> While some voyages were associated with a nucleus of individuals from a specific place or family, very few merchant networks were exclusively Spanish or Portuguese or Genoese (or, for that matter, Andalusian, Burgalese, Catalan, or Galician). Crews, too, were typically of diverse origins. In 1587, prior to leaving Las Palmas de Gran Canaria ostensibly bound for the Rivers of Guinea and New Spain, the nao *La Concepción* carried mariners from peninsular Portugal (Lisbon, Oporto, Viana, Aveiro, Vila do Conde) and Spain (Triana, Alcalá de Henares, La Mancha, Ayamonte, Barcelona), as well as from Madeira, Terceira, “Afriqua,” and Brazil.<sup>83</sup> Also, since crew compositions could change in any port with the replacement of deceased or absent sailors, even vessels with a concentration of individuals from one region regularly included mariners from elsewhere.<sup>84</sup>

Certainly, Portuguese merchants and crews had the most important and durable influence over the transport of African captives to Spanish America up to 1640. Portugal’s claims to African territory and previous experience with the slave trade to Iberia meant that Portuguese participation was instrumental in establishing the transatlantic trade to Spanish America from the very beginning. Close connections between Spanish and Portuguese royal courts also gave individuals like Pedro de Alcáçova Carneiro, the secretary of the Portuguese king—and recipient of several hundred slave licenses in 1549 and 1552—privileged access to the Spanish slave trade.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, closer examination of Portuguese commercial networks reveals a diverse web of relationships. As noted above, slaving voyages from Arguim to Puerto Rico in 1519–1521 were orchestrated by a Genoese company with a Burgalese partner, all established in Seville, with authorization from both the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns. In Santo Domingo during the following decade, Portuguese factor Andrea Ferreira and the Welsers’ factor Sebastian Rens jointly relied on two agents to sort captives arriving on slave ships; one was Genoese merchant Esteban Justinian, previously factor in

Santo Domingo for the Gorrevod asiento acquired by Vivaldo and Forné.<sup>86</sup> While Italian and Spanish financiers handled much of the underwriting of the slave trade up to the 1550s, they still depended on Portuguese mariners and factors in various ports. When Portuguese merchants like Manuel Caldeira or Blas Ferreira began to play a larger role in the mid-sixteenth century, they did so by working together with existing commercial interests rather than suddenly supplanting them.<sup>87</sup> Rather than stark proto-national identities, the terms “Portuguese” and “Spanish” should be viewed within a broader transimperial context of “cooperative ventures between merchant groups whose state affiliation was disparate, and probably irrelevant.”<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, such “national” affiliations were not homogenous; some “Portuguese” investors in the slave trade made commercial arrangements in Oporto rather than Lisbon, while Portuguese factor Bento Vaez broke with Caldeira in the 1560s in order to increase his own economic clout in Seville.<sup>89</sup>

Transnational cooperation in various sixteenth-century maritime contexts, from the Algarve and Andalucía to the archipelagos of the eastern Atlantic and the Caribbean, is perhaps the clearest demonstration of how residents of Iberian settlements overseas took active roles in directing the flow of African captives, rather than merely reacting to royal policy.<sup>90</sup> Whether voiced by sixteenth-century writers or modern scholars, blanket statements about Portuguese dominance of Spain’s slave trade obscure complex personal and commercial connections that privileged expediency and economic advantage over national origin.<sup>91</sup> Even authorized slaving voyages involved communication with factors and other individuals in western Africa or one of the offshore slaving hubs, and registered captives were normally “consigned” to diverse people in American ports. Modifying its policies on an ad hoc basis in response to overseas residents’ demands, the Crown made periodic concessions, like permission to use royal income in Cuba to purchase slaves in 1531, or Cebrian de Caritate’s grant of two thousand slave licenses for Española in 1541, or another grant of five hundred licenses for the inhabitants of Cartagena in 1565.<sup>92</sup>

Some slaving voyages were even planned from Spanish America, rather than Iberia. After sailing from Puerto Rico to Spain and the Cape Verde Islands, the caravel *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios* returned to Guayama, Puerto Rico, in December 1552 with approximately seventy to ninety enslaved Africans, who were then taken over land to San Juan. The ship’s maestre, Domingos de Gaya, was Portuguese; its owner and captain was Amador González, a Spanish *vecino* (long-term resident and property owner, or head

of household) of San Juan. Although he was later accused of having transported slaves without a valid registro, González claimed that a 1551 royal grant of four hundred licenses for the vecinos of San Juan had authorized him to travel to Spain and then the Cape Verdes to purchase captives, using funds previous collected from those vecinos.<sup>93</sup>

While far more voyages were organized from Europe, records of the arrangements made in Seville, Lisbon, or Madrid often omitted the complicated trajectories of ships headed for African and American ports. Multiple actors with different motives—as well as unforeseen problems like storms or disease—shaped their itineraries, and scattered sources from the arrival side can help illuminate the routes these vessels followed. A great many slave voyages entered Spanish Caribbean ports as *arribadas*, unscheduled arrivals registered for a different destination, usually claiming an emergency like storm damage or lack of food and water. For at least a few years in the 1560s, *arribadas* of slave ships to Española might have exceeded registered arrivals.<sup>94</sup> The Spanish Crown was well aware that these special permissions offered an opportunity for contraband trade, but the nature of sailing in this era made allowing emergency arrivals necessary. By contrast, overseas residents and royal officials—including some who evidently participated extensively in contraband slave trafficking for their own enrichment—often regarded *arribadas* as a justifiable method of meeting local demand.<sup>95</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, *arribadas* offered another way for slave merchants and residents of Spanish America to make routes agreed upon at the time of departure more flexible and to avoid paying royal duties on some or all of the African captives who had survived the journey.

Vessels might also stop at multiple ports or modify plans as they entered local economic circuits, and such detours usually do not appear in predeparture records. Early slave ships sometimes visited both Puerto Rico and Española, while in later decades the relative proximity of Santa Marta, Cartagena, and Nombre de Dios allowed crews to learn about regional demand before selling some or all of the enslaved Africans they carried.<sup>96</sup> Smaller settlements where treasury officials were deputies, or simply less strict in enforcing royal restrictions, were frequently used as waypoints; by the 1560s, Ocoa on Española became a frequent landing place for vessels carrying African captives to New Spain, since it allowed them to bypass the scrutiny of officials in Santo Domingo.<sup>97</sup> While the general topic of contraband slave trading requires fuller treatment than we can provide here, methods of evading Crown controls and the numbers and destinations of sub-Saharan Africans entering

Spanish America continued to evolve up to 1580 and beyond. Generally, “illicit” slave entries cannot always be easily distinguished from licit ones, as they often relied on a loophole not yet closed by royal orders, involved collaboration with Crown officials, or else were retroactively legitimized by the monarch.<sup>98</sup>

In a few instances, we have clearer evidence of collusion between financiers, crew, and overseas officials to trade as many enslaved Africans as possible, either under cover of partial licenses or on entirely unauthorized voyages. In 1565, Gaspar de Arguijo, a wealthy merchant from Tenerife resident in Seville, instructed mariners heading to the “Rivers of Guinea” to “try if possible to bring the largest quantity of slaves you can. . . . On entering here [Spain] you will say that they come from Cabo Verde and that you bring slaves for señor Diego de Aguinaga and say that you don’t bring more than 60 or 70 slaves, until I come and bring news of what is to be done.”<sup>99</sup> Such direct information on practices for evading royal controls is very rare, but these instructions reinforce our awareness of the limitations of relying on Crown records alone. The routes of slaving vessels before, during, and after the time they carried enslaved sub-Saharan Africans were built on connections stretching across a wide and constantly changing Atlantic arena, from Antwerp to the Canaries to the Cape Verde Islands to Veracruz (to say nothing of Seville or Lisbon). These connections are crucial for understanding merchant networks, information flows, vessel itineraries, and slave arrivals up to 1580.



In summary, the evolution of the Iberian slave trade up to 1580 not only created a framework within which the later slave trade would operate but was also a fundamental part of the development of Spain’s overseas empire and reveals an elaborate and interrelated Atlantic world from an earlier point than is usually believed. It is evident that the sixteenth century was a period of complexity and dynamic change, and we still have much to learn about, such as the very earliest slaving voyages or the numbers of African captives arriving through illicit and undocumented arrangements. Due to the fragmentary nature of sixteenth-century sources, we may only ever be able to offer approximate answers. However, records connected to the slave trade between 1500 and 1580 offer a great deal of promise for enriching our knowledge of Africans’ roles in the shaping of the early Atlantic world.

The sixteenth-century Atlantic slave trade differed from the better-known eighteenth- and nineteenth-century trades in several important respects. Unlike other branches of the trade, Iberian slaving networks that delivered captives to the Spanish Caribbean originated as extensions of slavery within (and international slave trafficking oriented toward) southwestern Europe. Early slaving voyages from Seville to the Caribbean resembled early voyages from offshore Luso-African ports in that both often carried small numbers of captives in addition to merchandise. Although most enslaved Africans taken to the Americas after the mid-1520s arrived on specialized slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands or São Tomé, some of those vessels also carried captives embarked previously in Seville, and throughout the century, ships arriving in the Caribbean from Seville brought modest but not insignificant numbers of slaves along with passengers and commercial goods.

Like their eighteenth-century counterparts, slaving voyages to the early Spanish Caribbean often involved complex itineraries that linked ports and maritime circuits associated with disparate European imperial jurisdictions. However, although Spanish Caribbean ports themselves were significant zones of transimperial interaction during the sixteenth century, the non-Spanish sites that supported the slave trade to the Caribbean prior to 1580—for example, Arguim, São Tomé, and Santiago de Cabo Verde—were located in the eastern Atlantic rather than elsewhere in the Americas.<sup>100</sup> In terms of voyage itineraries, in other words, the transimperial slave trade to the sixteenth-century Caribbean was primarily a transatlantic, rather than an intra-American, phenomenon.<sup>101</sup> International collaboration within Europe was no less important to the organization and administration of the trade to Spanish America prior to 1580. The companies or merchant houses that matched license holders with shipmasters and placed agents in Iberian, Luso-African, and Spanish Caribbean ports were based in Seville or Lisbon or Antwerp but often consisted of multiple individuals from diverse regions within the Iberian Peninsula and beyond (including, for example, Genoa and Bavaria).

Despite a significant increase in the numbers of slaving voyages and captives disembarked during the Iberian Union, the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America from 1580 to 1640 was largely a continuation or expansion of the sixteenth-century trade. Rather than a sharply delineated “licenses” period followed by an “asiento” period, the Spanish Crown adjusted its strategies for organizing the trade throughout the 1500s, alternately administering the trade centrally or awarding contracts to external parties with greater



or lesser monopoly rights; at times, both strategies operated concurrently. What were perhaps the most significant changes to the structure of the transatlantic slave trade during the 1580s took place not in Europe but in Africa (the shift from offshore hubs to mainland ports) and the Americas (the rise of Cartagena or the refounding of Buenos Aires). These developments would have powerful influences on the volume and direction of the slave trade to Spanish America during the 1590s and the first few decades of the seventeenth century. But rather than creating entirely new slaving networks or African provenance zones, these changes built on the flexible, transnational system that already existed.

### Notes

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1. José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud*; Georges Scelle, *La traite négrière*.
2. Lutgardo García Fuentes, “Licencias para la introducción de esclavos”; Eufemio Lorenzo Sanz, *Comercio de España con América*, 2:578–83; and Rafael Donoso Anes, “Algunos aspectos relacionados.” For new insights into the uses of these licenses, see Rafael M. Pérez García and Manuel F. Fernández Chaves, “Sevilla y la trata negrera atlántica”; and Rafael M. Pérez García, “Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos.”
3. For analysis of Archivo General de Simancas, Consejo y Juntas de Hacienda 23–390, “Almoxo de los esclavos,” 1544–1550—a list of individuals authorized to acquire slaves, extracted from House of Trade records in 1551—see Modesto Ulloa, *La hacienda real de Castilla*, 300; Esteban Mira Caballos, “Las licencias de esclavos negros”; José Luís Cortés López, “1544–1550”; and Maria da Graça Mateus Ventura, *Negreiros portugueses*, 42, 53–72, 121–33.
4. In *Seville et l’Atlantique*, Huguette Chaunu and Pierre Chaunu provide annotated transcriptions of four *legajos*—Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Contratación (Ctn) 2898, 2899 (Libros 1 and 2), and 2900 (Libro 1)—that list ships departing or entering Seville between 1504 and 1650, with occasional references to other ports. Histories that draw on their work include Rolando Mel-lafe, *La esclavitud en Hispanoamérica*, 34, 58–60; Philip D. Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 24–25, 103–12; Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God*, 21, 26–27; Henri Lapeyre, “La trata de negros”; and Lorenzo Sanz, *Comercio de España con América*, 2:585–86.
5. Notable recent studies include Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, “Rotas Comerciais,” 17–123; António de Almeida Mendes, “Portugal e o tráfico de escravos”;

- Jorge Fonseca, *Escravos e senhores*, 162–90; and Arlindo Manuel Caldeira, *Escravos e traficantes*, 155–215.
6. Jalil Sued Badillo and Ángel López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 65–195.
  7. Rafael M. Pérez García, “Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos,” 825 (translation ours). See also Toby Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 283–84; and David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 24–25, 53–54.
  8. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD), <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>. See also António de Almeida Mendes, “Foundations of the System,” 63–94; and Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 433–61.
  9. Charles Verlinden, *Beginnings of Modern Colonization*, 34, 40, 49–51.
  10. For tentative volume and frequency estimates, see Marc Eagle, “Early Slave Trade.”
  11. Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed.; Germán Peralta Rivera, *Los mecanismos del comercio negrero*; and Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*.
  12. Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 126. Many captives arriving as personal domestic slaves were clearly intended for resale. On the exploitation of royal provisions for slaves for personal service, see Eagle, “Early Slave Trade.”
  13. Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, 1:63, 154–57, 162–63. The Chaunus’ designation of slaving voyages was ostensibly based on registration papers generated in Seville prior to departure. However, since they were unable to consult such records for years before 1584, their criteria for designating over one hundred vessels in earlier decades as slaving voyages remain unclear. Several other voyages registered for the Cape Verde Islands or São Tomé en route to Spanish America are not designated as slave ships. For ships carrying small numbers of captives, see Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, 2:270n7, 380n44.
  14. The literature on this topic is vast. Recent overviews include Aurelia Martín Casares and Margarita García Barranco, eds., *La esclavitud negroafricana*; Iván Armenteros Martínez, “La esclavitud en Barcelona; and William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*.
  15. See, for example, William L. Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*; and Nancy E. van Deusen, *Global Indios*.
  16. Like enslaved Africans, enslaved Amerindians were counted for taxation purposes as *piezas* (units); AGI-Contaduría (Ctdra) 1072, n. 1, r. 3, f. 447r. On Urrutia, see Julia Gómez Prieto, “Una familia vizcaína”; Heather Dalton, “‘Into speyne to selle for slavys,’” 103–4; and Erin Stone, “War and Rescate.”
  17. On Moriscos in Peru during the 1530s and 1540s, see Karoline P. Cook, *Forbidden Passages*, 47–50.
  18. AGI-Ctdra 1072, n. 1, r. 3, ff. 348r–354v, 395r–397v, 409r–412v; AGI-Patronato 175, r. 9, f. 152r; and Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 67, 70–72.

19. Captives acquired by Iberians in Arguim likely included Wolofs and others who may have had previous experience of the Muslim world; see Nehemia Levtzion, "Islam in the Bilad al-Sudan to 1800"; and Jean Boulègue, *Le Grand Jolof*, 88.
20. Mendes, "Portugal e o Tráfico de escravos," 20–21, 28–30; Pérez García and Fernández Chaves, "Sevilla y la trata negrera atlántica," 604n45. See also António de Almeida Mendes, "Eslavages et traites Ibériques," 444–61; Ivana Elbl, "Volume of the Early Atlantic Slave Trade"; and Caldeira, *Escravos e Traficantes*, 51–54.
21. This included "116 peças de las de Arguyn" in 1519 and 1520; AGI-Indiferente General (IG) 1382A, s/n (1527), f. 2v.
22. AGI-Patronato 175, r. 9, ff. 141r, 150r; and TSTD voyage 42987.
23. AGI-Ctdra 1073, n. 3, f. 139r.
24. AGI-Ctdra 1073, n. 3, f. 138r; and AGI-Patronato 175, r. 9, f. 152v.
25. Manuel F. Fernández Chaves and Rafael M. Pérez García, "La élite mercantil," 388–90. See also Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 152–53; Alfonso Franco Silva, *La esclavitud en Andalucía*, 55; and Mendes, "Foundations of the System," 65.
26. Pérez García and Fernández Chaves, "Sevilla y la trata negrera atlántica," 600–601; and Franco Silva, *La esclavitud en Andalucía*, 52–78.
27. AGI-Ctdra 1072, n. 1, r. 3, ff. 273r–280v, 327r–336r, 348r–354v, 359v–365v.
28. Gregory E. O'Malley and Alex Borucki, "Patterns in the Intercolonial Slave Trade," 319.
29. Sergio M. Rodríguez Lorenzo, "El contrato de pasaje."
30. For these voyages, our data set draws on AGI-Patronato 175, r. 9; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n. 2; AGI-Ctdra 1072, n. 1 (r. 1–3); AGI-Ctdra 1073, n. 2 (r. 2), n. 3, 5–6, 9; AGI-Justicia 7, n. 3; AGI-Justicia 991, n. 1 (r. 4); AGI-IG 1382, s/n; AGI-Santo Domingo (SD) 868, L. 2; AGI-SD 2280, L. 1–2; Aurelio Tanodi, *Documentos de la Real Hacienda de Puerto Rico*, 2:228, 287, 289, 321–22, 442–43; and Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 65–77, 98–99, 116.
31. Pérez García and Fernández Chaves, "Sevilla y la trata negrera atlántica," 614; and Pérez García, "Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos," 837.
32. AGI-Justicia 204, n. 2, r. 4, s/f. See also AGI-Cttm 2898, f. 189v; AGI-Ctdra 877, n. 1, pliego 12; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, 2:518–19, 527; and TSTD voyage 42503.
33. AGI-Justicia 35, n. 3.
34. AGI-Cttm 5761, ff. 9r–10r; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique*, 3:8–9; and Rodríguez Lorenzo, "El contrato de pasaje," 1528–29. Some captives embarked in Seville may have passed through the Cape Verdes twice: once en route to Seville and again on the way to the Caribbean.
35. Most but not all captives embarked in the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé had previously been brought from the African mainland. Among 150 trade

- captives disembarked from the vessel *Santa María de las Raizes* in Puerto Rico in 1541, “some” (*algunas*) were described as “*ladinas*” and “of the land” (e.g., São Tomé); AGI-Justicia 991, n. 1, r. 4, f. 48r. See also Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 125–26.
36. AGI-Ctnn 5761, ff. 11r–16v, 19r–24v, 28r–34r, 37r–44r, 48r–49r; and Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, 3:22–23, 29–31 (the Chaunus do not list any of these as slave vessels). See also Pérez García, “Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos,” 832–34; and Rodríguez Lorenzo, “El contrato de pasaje,” 1529–30.
37. AGI-Ctdra 1380, n. 1 (1570–1571), ff. 51v–52v.
38. AGI-Santa Fe (SF) 37, r. 6, n. 103a/b, ff. 1r–1v, 3v; and María del Carmen Borrego Plá, *Cartagena de Indias*, 58.
39. The ship *La Concepción*, maestre Alonso Diaz, arrived in Puerto Rico in 1527 with forty-six black slaves brought from the “island of Cabo Verde”; see AGI-Ctdra 1073, n. 5, ff. 193r, 259v–260r; AGI-SD 2280, L. 2, ff. 15v–16r; Tanodi, *Documentos de la Real Hacienda de Puerto Rico*, 2:228; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 75–76; and TSTD voyage 99027. Around the same time, maestre Cristóbal Sanchez took seventeen captives from the Cape Verde Islands to Cubagua and Española on a caravel owned by Juan de Urrutia; AGI-IG 421, L. 12, f. 277v. Another nineteen captives arrived in Nombre de Dios in 1531 on the ship *Sant Juan*, maestre Juan de Urrutia; Chaunu and Chaunu, *Séville et l’Atlantique*, 2:208–9; and AGI-Panamá 234, L. 5, ff. 111r, 197v.
40. AGI-Ctdra 1073, n. 2, r. 2.
41. See notes 76 and 77 below.
42. See, for example, AGI-Justicia 16, n. 1, r. 1. In a later suit over slave prices, Burgalese merchant Francisco de la Llana testified that he had brought 130 slaves from the Cape Verde Islands to the Caribbean around 1534 and that he had later arranged for “two or three” additional ships to deliver captives to Española. For the 1540s, see Ventura, *Negreiros portugueses*, 56.
43. AGI-Justicia 35, n. 3; and AGI-Justicia 104, ff. 5735r–5793v. As early as 1529, the Crown warned Española’s treasury officials about ships that stopped in the Canaries and acquired untaxed goods, passengers, and slaves; see AGI-SD 2280, L. 1, f. 8r.
44. For slaving voyages arriving in Cartagena from Upper Guinea with beeswax and/or ivory, see AGI-Justicia 1120, n. 1, r. 1, ff. 3r, 7v (1564); AGI-SF 73, n. 30d, ff. 2r–4r (1611); and AGI-SF 74, n. 6, f. 7r (1619). For slaving voyages from the Cape Verde Islands to Cartagena that transported wine (1594) or cotton fabric (1611), see AGI-Ctdra 1385, n. 2, ff. 16v, 50r–50v; and AGI-Ctdra 1388, pliegos 283–84. For a slaving voyage that unloaded sugar and cotton from São Tomé, see AGI-Ctdra 1398, n. 1, pliegos 109–10 (1629).
45. García Fuentes, “Licencias para la introducción de esclavos”; and Pérez García, “Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos.”

46. García Fuentes, "Licencias para la introducción de esclavos," 5–6. On distinctions between direct royal control and the Crown's reliance on contractors (*asentistas*) in other contexts, see I. A. A. Thompson, *War and Government in Habsburg Spain*.
47. See, for example, Cortés López, "1544–1550," 63.
48. Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 126; and Pérez García, "Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos," 828.
49. Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 140–61, 755; and Manuel F. Fernández Chaves and Rafael M. Pérez García, "La penetración económica," 207. As a member of Charles's inner circle of advisors who accompanied him to Spain and dominated the royal court in 1517–1520, Gorrevod has often been considered Flemish or Burgundian, though his origins may have been in Bresse; André Chagny, "Correspondance politique," iii, lix–lx, cvii–cxiii.
50. AGI-IG 420, L. 8, ff. 93r–93v, 331v–332r; L. 9, ff. 50r–53r; L. 10, ff. 301v–302v.
51. Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, "La élite mercantil," 388–90. Juan Fernández de Castro later complained that he had received merely seven hundred captives at Arguim and that approximately seven hundred others—allegedly in poor health—were acquired in São Tomé.
52. AGI-Justicia 1169, n. 4, r. 2; and AGI-Justicia 973, n. 1, r. 1.
53. Pérez García, "Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos," 831. On monopolistic grants up to 1532 as a distinct "sub-period" of royal policy, see Donoso Anes, "Algunos aspectos relacionados," 1098–100.
54. See, for example, AGI-Justicia 1154, n. 7, r. 1; and AGI-Cttm 5761, L. 1, ff. 32r–34r; L. 3, ff. 308r–311r.
55. AGI-Cttm 5760–5763 offer information on how slave license grants were used. On Andalusian elites' involvement in this market, see Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, "La élite mercantil."
56. AGI-Cttm 5761, L. 1, ff. 19–22v. Substantial numbers of slaves were still being embarked in Seville in smaller groups during the 1560s; for example, out of three hundred licenses granted to Bento Vaez in 1565, all but fifty-eight were used to load slaves on vessels there, rather than in the Cape Verde Islands. AGI-Cttm 5671, L. 1, ff. 149r–154v.
57. Eagle, "Early Slave Trade"; AGI-Justicia 825, n. 2, r. 1.
58. Cf. Pérez García, "Metodología para el análisis y cuantificación de la trata de esclavos," 829; and García Fuentes, "Licencias para la introducción de esclavos," 5.
59. This wording appears in most of the licenses in AGI-Cttm 5761. For similar phrasing in registros for later voyages associated with the Gomez Reinel asiento (1595–1601), see AGI, Escribanía de Cámara (Esc) 1012A, pieza 2, ff. 3r–112v.
60. See, for example, Alberto Vieira, *Portugal y las islas*; and Santana Pérez and Santana Pérez, *La puerta afortunada*.

61. A. Teixeira da Mota, "Viagens espanholas," 219–50; and Manuel Lobo Cabrera, "Viajes canarios a Guinea."
62. Gabriel de Avilez Rocha, "Azorean Connection."
63. Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, "Traite Nègrière"; and Pérez García and Fernández Chaves, "Sevilla y la trata negrera atlántica," 606–7.
64. Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 5, 248–52. See also George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 143–66, 179–80, 194; and Linda A. Newson, "Africans and Luso-Africans."
65. AGI-Esc 587C, pieza 17, ff. 101v–102v. See also AGI-Esc 2A, pieza 2, f. 497r (1575); and Toby Green, "Beyond an Imperial Atlantic," 101–4.
66. AGI-Justicia 830, n. 5, pieza 1. On European rivalries in the waters between the Cape Verdes and Upper Guinea—including a French threat to Portuguese shipping during the 1540s—see AGI-Justicia 856, n. 3, pieza 5; Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, "Actividade comercial"; and Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 205.
67. Our evidence of voyages from Arguim arriving in the Caribbean in 1519–1521 matches Fernández Chaves and Pérez García's observation that "these contracts functioned for little more than two years: between 1519 [and] 1521 the King of Portugal sold 1,420 slaves to Juan Fernández de Castro" (translation ours). Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, "La élite mercantil," 389.
68. AGI-SD 2280, L. 2, f. 15r; we are grateful to Ida Altman for sharing this reference. See also Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 116.
69. Elsa Gelpí Baíz, *Siglo en blanco*, 215, 232, 387n7, 393n10; TSTD voyage 42959 (1554); AGI-Justicia 36 n. 2, f. 138r (1559); and AGI-Justicia 1177, n. 6, ff. 5r–5v (1545). On Buguendo and Cacheu as sixteenth-century slaving ports, see also Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 152–65, 172–73, 215–18.
70. See, for example, AGI-Justicia 36, n. 2; AGI-Justicia 996, n. 2, r. 3; AGI-Justicia 997, n. 4, r. 1; and AGI-Justicia 1120, n. 1, r. 1. See also Stanko B. Vranich, "Gaspar de Arguijo," 293–302; and Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 239.
71. Our data set presently contains information on African ports of departure for ninety-six slaving voyages known to have arrived in the Caribbean prior to 1580. Of these voyages, sixty-one arrived from the Cape Verde Islands.
72. On the Cape Verde Islands' decline and the increasing importance of Cacheu during the 1580s–1590s, see K. David Patterson, "Epidemics, Famines, and Population"; Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers*, 226–44; Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 260–66; and Maria Manuel Ferraz Torrão, "Os portugueses."
73. John Vogt, "Early Sao Tome-Principe Slave Trade"; Maria Emília Madeira Santos, "Rotas atlânticas"; António de Almeida Mendes, "Les réseaux de la traite ibérique," 752–57; and Arlindo Manuel Caldeira, "Learning the Ropes in the Tropics," 49–51.
74. AGI-Justicia 7, n. 3; and AGI-Justicia 103A-B, ff. 3281r–3806r.

75. Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 74. Other studies have suggested later dates for the beginning of this trade; see Santos, “Rotas atlânticas,” 655; Robert Garfield, *History of São Tomé Island*, 50; and Filipa Ribeiro da Silva, “Slave Trade,” 147.
76. AGI-Justicia 7, n. 3; AGI-Ctdra 1050, n. 2, f. 408r; Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Corpo Cronológico, II, maço 133, n. 115; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 1:146; and TSTD voyage 46473.
77. AGI-Justicia 973, n. 1, r. 1, ff. 4r–9r, 15v–22v; and AGI-Ctdra 1050, n. 2, ff. 429r, 458r. For a reference to Portuguese sources that may provide further information on some of these voyages, see Mendes, “Foundations of the System,” 71.
78. For comparison with the Cape Verdes, see Ribeiro da Silva, “Slave Trade,” 147–48.
79. For nearly one hundred slaving voyages registered to load captives in Angola and São Tomé in 1579–1585, see Biblioteca da Ajuda 51-VI-54, n. 41, ff. 152r–159v; and Mendes, “Eslavages et traites,” 673–75. Although we do not know the outcome of most of these intended voyages, only one mentioned that captives would be transported to Spanish America (“Indias”), and only four paid appropriate taxes for passage to Spanish America; see entries 8, 9, 33, and 86. On “Angolas” reexported from São Tomé to the sixteenth-century Caribbean, see Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 73–81.
80. See, for example, Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 26, 242–79; and David Wheat, “First Great Waves.”
81. Contemporary artwork shows ships flying flags and banners, but references to “flags” are very rare in our sources and most commonly indicate standards flown on land. “Flags” were simply not used to categorize vessels in records of this time.
82. See, for example, the insurance policies for 1567–1569 in Archivo de la Diputación Provincial de Burgos, Consulado, Registro 99. See also Hilario Casado Alonso, “Los seguros marítimos.”
83. AGI-Cttm 2875, n. 3, r. 2, ff. 64v–66r; and TSTD voyage 29784.
84. On foreigners in Spain’s Indies fleets, see Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaina, *Spain’s Men of the Sea*, 54–62.
85. AGI-IG 424, L. 21, ff. 347r–348r; and AGI-Justicia 35, n. 3. The Carneiro family were also *donatários* (proprietary lords) of the island of Príncipe; see Vieira, *Portugal y las islas*, 212; and AGI-Justicia 103A-B.
86. AGI-Justicia 973, n. 1, r. 1, ff. 17r–17v; and AGI-Justicia 7, n. 3.
87. Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, “La penetración económica,” 206–16.
88. Christopher Ebert, “European Competition and Cooperation,” 57.
89. Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, “La penetración económica,” 216.
90. See, among others, Marcel Bataillon, “Santo Domingo ‘era Portugal,’” 115–17; Alberto Vieira, *O comércio inter-insular*; Fernando Serrano Mangas, *La*

- encrucijada portuguesa*, 37; Trevor P. Hall, trans. and ed., *Before Middle Passage*, 6–7, 179–224, 256–66; Javier Luis Álvarez Santos, “Los Portugueses en Tenerife”; and Germán Santana Pérez, “Acción española.”
91. See Brian Hamm, “Constructing and Contesting Portuguese Difference.”
  92. AGI-SD 1121, L. 1; AGI-SD 868, L. 2, f. 64r; and AGI-Cttm 5761, L. 1, ff. 167r–169v. Slave licenses awarded to Caritate also appear in AGI-IG 422–24; we thank Jane G. Landers for directing us to this source. See also Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 191–97; José Luis Cortés López, *Esclavo y colono*, 42–43; and Fernández Chaves and Pérez García, “La élite mercantil,” 407–9.
  93. AGI-Justicia 996, n. 2, r. 2; and Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 116–17.
  94. See AGI-SD 71, L. 2, ff. 236r–240v.
  95. Marc Eagle, “Tiempos contrarios”; María Cristina Navarrete Peláez, “De las ‘malas entradas’”; and Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola is not Very Far from Here’: The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640.” On royal officials’ alleged complicity in contraband slave trafficking in Puerto Rico and Española during the 1520s–1530s and 1560s, and in Cartagena de Indias during the 1570s, see AGI-SD 77, n. 72, ff. 667r–674v (1538); AGI-SD 71, L. 2, ff. 334r–337v, 385r–386v (1564–1565); and AGI-SF 72, n. 33 (1578–1579).
  96. AGI-Justicia 7, n. 3, ff. 14v–15v; and AGI-Justicia 862, n. 2, ff. 10r–12r.
  97. AGI-SD 71, L. 2, ff. 208r–208v, 271r–273v.
  98. For example, the ten captives taken to Puerto Rico by Rodrigo de Gibraleón, approved in 1533 after payment of outstanding duties; AGI-SD 2280, L. 1, ff. 155r–156r.
  99. AGI-Justicia 996, n. 2, r. 3, ff. 12r–15v. For further details, see Vranich, “Gaspar de Arguijo”; Sued Badillo and López Cantos, *Puerto Rico negro*, 116–17; Gelpí Baiz, *Siglo en blanco*, 217, 232, 393n21; Green, *Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*, 239; and TSTD voyage 41938.
  100. On interaction zones, see Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire*, 9–11, 109–13.
  101. See chapter 1 of this volume. On the intra-American trade, see also O’Malley and Borucki, “Patterns in the Intercolonial Slave Trade,” 322–32; and Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory*, 23–82.



## CHAPTER 3

# The Slave Trade to Colonial Mexico

Revising from Puebla de los Ángeles, 1590–1640

PABLO MIGUEL SIERRA SILVA



### Introduction

On September 20, 1629, the slave ship *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* disembarked over two hundred African captives onto the island-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa. Infirm and debilitated, the enslaved adults and children “were carried out of the ship, because in no manner could they stand on their feet.”<sup>1</sup> They had spent fifteen weeks aboard the slave ship. For these survivors of the Atlantic crossing, the maritime portion of the slaving voyage had come to an end. Within a few days they would be transported on rowboats to the port of Nueva Veracruz on the Mexican mainland, where they would rest for two weeks. Their journey was not over. At least three weeks of overland travel and hundreds of miles of country roads lay ahead for most of the enslaved. Coastal wetlands, semi-temperate forests, and rugged mountain ranges separated the newly arrived Africans from the largest urban centers in the viceroyalty of New Spain (colonial Mexico).

During the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, anywhere from 36,249 to 155,000 African captives were introduced into New Spain. Understandably, the imprecision of these figures has been a source of constant debate.<sup>2</sup> For the 1590–1640 period, the most recent estimate available by

way of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database records the disembarkation of 47,312 survivors.<sup>3</sup> Lost within these quantitative disputes is the fact that the experiences of enslaved Africans need not be quantified in order to be relevant.<sup>4</sup> Their experiences through the colonial landscape, however, do need to be acknowledged, mapped, or otherwise represented. This chapter attempts to do so by reconstructing, albeit imperfectly, the itinerary of African captives from the port to the central highlands by way of three slave routes.

Unfortunately, the loss of Veracruz's notarial archives has frustrated scholarly attempts to understand the transatlantic slave trade within New Spain. Only one volume of municipal documentation survives for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> In light of these limitations, the study of inland settlements, especially the city of Puebla de los Ángeles, may aid in recovering crucial information on how African captives experienced overland travel. Secondary settlements, such as Puebla, Orizaba, and Xalapa, exerted considerable influence on the development of the transatlantic slave trade within New Spain. Visualizing these spaces as inland ports or regional hubs decenters our infatuation with colonial capitals—most notably, Mexico City. Instead, smaller towns and cities come into relief not only as slave markets but also as spaces for rest and medical care for captives headed to the next settlement.

Throughout this chapter I analyze transportation contracts, municipal petitions, travelers' accounts, fraud investigations, and Inquisition files with two objectives. First, I attempt to describe Mexican trade routes from the port to the highlands in relation to the experiences of incoming captives. Between 170 and 250 miles of coastlands, rivers, forests, and mountains separated the port of entry from the highland slave markets. It was along these roads and in these inns and secondary settlements that incoming Africans first experienced Mesoamerican cuisine, flora, and fauna. Only two weeks after disembarkation, captives glimpsed Nahua, Totonac, and Popoloca people and their attire and heard their languages for the first time. Travel from the port also implies interacting with black port workers, mulatto innkeepers, African muleteers and field hands, and perhaps even maroons. The enslaved had to ascend the Sierra Madre Oriental on mules and endure altitude sickness, seasonal rains, or frostbite along its mountain passes before reaching cities with large Spanish populations. The bewildering complexity of these experiences (linguistic, physiological, cultural, etc.) was compounded by the constant fragmentation of the captive community as its members were sold or died along the slave route.

The chapter's second objective is to provide a more accurate understanding of slave transportation within New Spain between 1590 and 1640. In order to reach the highland cities, slave traders followed three main routes into the highlands. Traveling these roads required establishing different contacts, agents, and auxiliaries to assist with anywhere from two to five weeks of travel. The transportation of African youths up the mountains required local actors to engage with and facilitate the work of Lusophone slave traders unfamiliar with the sociopolitical and physical terrain. Based on archival research in Puebla, I argue that—although rarely acknowledged or documented—the business of selling African captives in New Spain ultimately hinged on securing mule trains. As the slave trade intensified during the early seventeenth century, demands for adequate lodging, food, and medical care also increased along the slave routes and altered the everyday practices of muleteers, innkeepers, and food vendors. By the early seventeenth century, these needs were best met along a slave route that connected the port of Nueva Veracruz with Xalapa, Puebla, and Mexico City.

### The Port of Entry

Reassessing the spatial dynamics of the slave trade within New Spain remains a daunting task due to an unfortunate lack of archival information on the port of entry.<sup>6</sup> Whereas notarial sources are readily available for most Central Mexican cities, the trail of transactions left by incoming ship captains at La Antigua and Nueva Veracruz is no longer available. References to port activity, however, do survive in metropolitan archives, Inquisition files, and notarial copies forwarded to other settlements. Enriqueta Vila Vilar's research on slaving voyages to Veracruz (and Spanish America), for instance, is largely based on the *Contaduría* and *Contratación* records that are today housed in Seville at the Archivo General de Indias (AGI).<sup>7</sup> This documentation offers important data on slave ships and their dates of arrival and departure but little on the experiences of Africans in the port itself.<sup>8</sup>

By contrast, visiting inspectors tasked with submitting reports on the behavior of local officials and the proper collection of entry taxes did produce important, if anecdotal, information on incoming captives.<sup>9</sup> Customs officials were supposed to inspect slave ships upon arrival in San Juan de Ulúa. Infirm captives were often treated at the hospital there and only subsequently transported to the mainland on rowboats (*chalupas*) manned by the fortress's

slaves.<sup>10</sup> However, slave traders and their local contacts often circumvented these practices in order to reduce their import fees and other taxes at the port. In a 1621 investigation, the inspector Pedro de Vergara Gaviria discovered that port officials had casually allowed a slave trader to disembark ninety incoming captives on a nearby island, the Isla de Cabezas.<sup>11</sup> These captives were not only denied medical care but also promptly classified as infants and children (“*bambos y muleques*”), which allowed the slave trader to pay less entry tax than for adults. Arrangements of this kind between slave traders and local officials were largely tolerated because local scribes, officials, and militia leaders operated more as “merchant-officials” than customs enforcers.<sup>12</sup> In other words, detailed reports on incoming Africans’ conditions were only produced when an outsider, such as Vergara Gaviria, attempted to disrupt the port’s well-established practices. As a result, there is still a great deal we do not know about the very first days an incoming African youth would experience along the Mexican coast.

Once on the Ulúa island, slave ship captains understood that much of their prospective sales on the mainland depended on their captives’ appearance, which could only be improved with better food and rest. For instance, in 1597, slave trader Francisco Rodríguez de Ledesma paid for the medical treatment of nine “Angola” captives in Ulúa.<sup>13</sup> The resident physician (*médico*) who treated them was likely part of the permanent staff assigned to the San Martín hospital.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1620s, the medical staff of the Hospital Real in Nueva Veracruz inspected arriving slave ships in Ulúa and produced registers of deceased and infirm captives.

Alternatively, slave traders also relied on *médicos* to certify the deaths of African captives aboard arriving ships. *Médicos* also helped slave traders reduce the import taxes to be paid for surviving slaves. This was precisely the case in 1629, when Licenciado Esteban de Campos inspected the hold of a slave ship, *La Concepción*, and found five deceased captives. He also made a register specifying that dozens of the surviving captives were severely sick.<sup>15</sup> The ship’s captain, Luis Gómez Arias, then used this medical inspection to argue that because 91 of his 212 captives were categorized as being on the verge of death (“*alma en boca*”), he would not pay entry taxes on them. Medical inspections “facilitated by the declaration of physicians and surgeons” could evidently be manipulated to advance slaving interests.<sup>16</sup> This was likely often the case due to the sheer duration of the slaving voyage to Nueva Veracruz.

A West Central African captive headed to Nueva Veracruz would spend approximately ten weeks within a given slave ship. However, the immense

distance between Luanda and Nueva Veracruz meant that a maritime voyage with unfavorable conditions could take up to fifteen weeks, as was the case with the *Concepción* in 1629.<sup>17</sup> By comparison, the Atlantic crossing from Luanda to Cartagena could be completed in seven weeks.<sup>18</sup> Evidently, slaving voyages from Cabo Verde and Upper Guinea took less time to complete, but fewer slaving vessels from those regions reached Mexico during the early seventeenth century. Slaving voyages to Nueva Veracruz were especially drawn out because traders often stopped in other Caribbean islands and ports—especially Jamaica and Santo Domingo—before reaching the Mexican mainland.<sup>19</sup> Intra-Caribbean voyages from Cartagena to Nueva Veracruz took three weeks and occasionally included a stop in Campeche.<sup>20</sup>

The captives' first two weeks on Mexican soil were largely spent in recovery within the Nueva Veracruz city limits. This extended stay had a number of purposes. First, it allowed slave traders to make the necessary fiscal arrangements with merchants, customs officials, and the factor for the slave trade. The stay in Nueva Veracruz was also necessary to organize the logistics of inland transportation. These two weeks in port allowed captives to recover from the debilitating journey and begin to acclimate to a new disease environment. Slavers knew that nutritious fruits were essential to combating "mal de Luanda" (scurvy) that afflicted their captives.<sup>21</sup> Fortunately, the prevalence of "citrus fruits . . . in the kitchen gardens within Veracruz, and on the lands around the town" allowed captives to receive crucial meals with vitamin C.<sup>22</sup> Infirm slaves also received small portions of chicken while recovering in the port, a safe choice for debilitated people.<sup>23</sup> A slave trader's 1634 ledger indicates that sick Africans in the port were fed chicken, mutton, and bread.<sup>24</sup> It is also likely that new African arrivals would have been fed some variety of seafood.<sup>25</sup>

Securing lodging for incoming captives would have been especially difficult since most slave ships arrived when the Spanish fleet was still in port. Most slaving vessels destined for Nueva Veracruz made port at the height of the rainy season from May through September, although some slave ships could arrive as late as November.<sup>26</sup> Joseph Clark notes that the fleet's overflow of passengers was so large "that it could spill into the interior, as sailors filled inns and guesthouses as far away as Xalapa and Puebla, even as they were legally required to stay in the port."<sup>27</sup> Lodging conditions for captives were likely better when the inbound fleet was delayed, as was the case in 1634.<sup>28</sup> In April of that year, the slave trader Jorge Nuñez Andrada found a warehouse (*almacén*) in which to house his captives, which cost him half a

peso per day.<sup>29</sup> Others were housed in Captain Marcos Suarez's private residence, while Nuñez Andrada was allowed to keep especially infirm captives in his own residence.

Whenever possible, port officials made a considerable number of slave purchases within the port itself, although data is very scarce for the 1590–1640 period. The population of the port was overwhelmingly enslaved and of African descent by 1570.<sup>30</sup> By the early 1620s, no fewer than sixty-three royal slaves manned the Ulúa fortress, and thousands more lived in Nueva Veracruz in the following decades.<sup>31</sup> A detailed case from a 1664 voyage suggests that many incoming Africans would have remained permanently in Nueva Veracruz to work as stevedores, domestic servants, bodyguards, wet nurses, and the like.<sup>32</sup> Influential figures, such as the city's governor, often purchased large groups of slaves at preferential prices in order to resell them later on in other locations.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, we lack information on the destinations of most Africans sold in the port during the early seventeenth century.

### The Slave Routes to Central Mexico

In light of the port's documentary limitations, the city of Puebla, some 170 miles to the east, presents an alternative scenario through which to study the slave trade. Undoubtedly, Mexico City represented the largest slave market in the highlands but was not ideally located to serve this purpose.<sup>34</sup> Plagued by recurrent flooding and 245 miles distant from the main port of entry, Mexico City emerged as a slave market in spite of its location. Three weeks of overland travel separated the capital from the port, but the rainy season could delay mule trains another two weeks.<sup>35</sup> By contrast, traveling to Puebla reduced any overland slaving voyage by a week or more. The city operated as a commercial node and slave market eighty miles closer to the Gulf coastline.

In the early 1530s, Puebla was explicitly planned as a commercial center and Spanish haven amid populous indigenous city-states. Incoming travelers needed a settlement for rest and commerce after overcoming the Sierra Madre Oriental, leading to Puebla's foundation on a plot of uninhabited land between the indigenous city-states of Cholula, Tlaxcala, and Tepeaca.<sup>36</sup> Puebla's founders negotiated a number of labor agreements with these native communities in exchange for rotating teams of workers.<sup>37</sup> Despite these arrangements, outright slavery did become rooted in Puebla early on through

the exploitation of men and women of African descent. The same conquistadors (Hernan Cortés, Alonso Valiente, etc.) who subjugated the indigenous polities of Central Mexico during the 1520s also invested in shipments of African captives during the next two to three decades.<sup>38</sup> In the mid-sixteenth century, most of the enslaved Africans taken to Puebla were drawn from the Senegambian region. For the remainder of the century, they would labor as domestics in elite households or as muleteers crisscrossing the indigenous countryside.<sup>39</sup> By 1595, approximately twenty thousand people lived in Puebla, including 2,500 enslaved blacks and mulattos “who live[d] serving the Spaniards.”<sup>40</sup> That the enslaved already constituted over 10 percent of the city’s population is all the more significant when considering that the slave trade from West Central Africa would intensify during the next four decades.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Philip III proscribed the use of indigenous workers in New Spain’s textile mills and sugar plantations, incentivizing colonists to buy into the transatlantic slave trade. In Puebla, the decree was ignored as unenforceable. At the time, the city was the viceroyalty’s leading textile producer with some thirty-five *obrajes* (textile mills) in operation. All together, no fewer than two thousand indigenous weavers, spinners, and other specialists labored in the city’s workshops circa 1600.<sup>41</sup> The inexpensive, but illegal, practice of locking native workers within these mills mitigated the importance of the early transatlantic slave trade to Puebla. Most *obrajes* were staffed by indigenous workers with enslaved Africans composing no more than 5 percent of all textile laborers.<sup>42</sup> However, in 1602, New Spain’s viceroy decided to enforce the royal decree banning indigenous *obraje* labor. In ordering the release of all indigenous textile workers (illegally retained or not), he also dictated that mill owners purchase “black slaves” to replace “*indios*” within four months.<sup>43</sup> This unprecedented measure effectively forced Puebla’s textile barons into the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>44</sup>

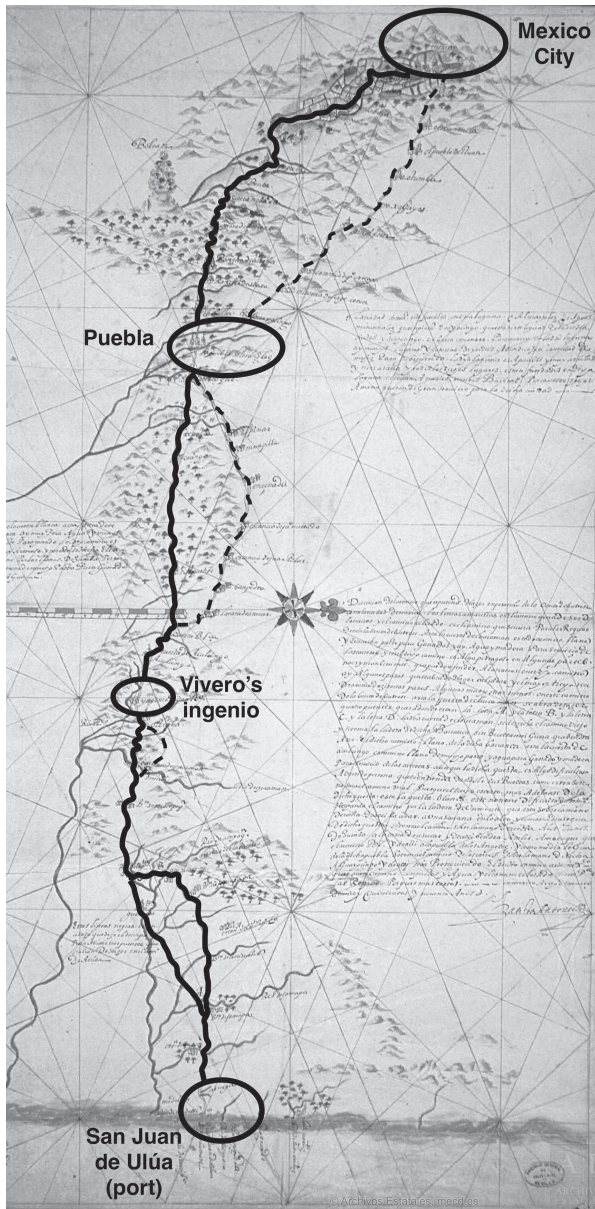
Although most *obraje* owners were opposed to purchasing large and expensive slave workforces, Luanda’s merchants supplied a growing Mexican demand for African captives by the early seventeenth century. With increasing attacks on the Mbundu populations of the Angolan interior, Lusophone merchants began shipping West Central Africans in large numbers to the Spanish circum-Caribbean in the mid-1590s.<sup>45</sup> New Spain would receive a disproportionate number of “Angolan” war captives during the next forty-five years, and many would be sold in Puebla.<sup>46</sup> The slaving networks that introduced these captives extended considerable lines of credit to Poblano

purchasers, even enabling middling members of society to become slaveholders.<sup>47</sup> The impact of these West Central Africans was considerable as they became the primary textile workforce in the city and indispensable elements of its convents and elite residences. For the purposes of this chapter, Puebla is especially important because of its extensive corpus of municipal and notarial documentation. Based on these sources, we can begin to understand how Africans in New Spain experienced the intense process of cultural, dietary, climactic, and linguistic acculturation known as “seasoning.” To do so, we turn to the routes followed into the highlands.

During the early seventeenth century, slave traders bound for the Central Mexican highlands transported their captives through three main routes. All three originated in Nueva Veracruz and circumvented the rugged mountains of the Sierra Madre Oriental.<sup>48</sup> The first, or northern, route connected the port to Mexico City by way of Xalapa. Slave traders rested their mules and captives at several traveler inns (*ventas*) alongside the royal highway. At least eight inns were in operation along the Xalapa road by 1580;<sup>49</sup> these spaces also provided opportunities for escape. For instance, in 1605, the slave trader Baltasar Amat lamented the fact that he had lost “seven pieces of black men and women, *bozal* slaves . . . between the Venta de la Rinconada and the Venta del Río.”<sup>50</sup> A growing number of free and enslaved women of African descent worked in these inns during the early and mid-seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> From Xalapa, the captives continued until the Perote hospital, then followed a westerly route through the plains of Apan before reaching the Valley of Mexico and the capital city.<sup>52</sup>

The second slave route into the highlands was directly linked to Puebla’s economic and demographic development during the late sixteenth century. Poblano merchants lobbied aggressively for the construction of a southern road that would allow them to bypass Mexico City entirely and gain direct access to the Gulf coastline by way of Orizaba. The southern road, as proposed by the engineer Bautista Antonelli in 1590, shortened the trek from the port to Puebla by eighty miles, which translated into considerable savings in transportation. (This route is shown on the cover of this volume, which reproduces Antonelli’s stunning map, and here as map 3.1.<sup>53</sup>) Mexico City’s merchant and political elite opposed the project, but as a wealthy, rapidly expanding urban center, Puebla provided a competing market that was simply too lucrative to ignore. In 1599, Poblano influence contributed to the controversial abandonment of Vieja Veracruz (La Antigua) and the foundation of Nueva Veracruz at the Ventas de Buitrón, several miles south.<sup>54</sup> The new





Map 3.1. Southern Mexico route with cities. Source: Courtesy Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte. Archivo General de Indias, MP-Mexico 39 [1590], "Discreción del camino que se pretende hazer empezando de la venta de Butrón hasta la Ciudad de México."

port was established directly across the water from San Juan de Ulúa. That same year, indigenous men from Cotaxtla, Quecholac, and Tecamachalco were ordered to construct the southern route as part of their service to the Crown. This indigenous coerced labor, then, paved the way for the arrival of African slaves.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, the construction of the Nueva Veracruz-Orizaba-Puebla road followed a commercial logic intended to expedite the transportation of flour, silver, and cattle. This investment should also be read within the emerging geography of slavery in the late 1590s. Merchants and sugar planters in Izúcar, Huehuetlán, and Chietla benefited from a new royal highway that consolidated their country roads and granted more reliable access to African field hands.<sup>56</sup> The southern route had the advantage of passing by the “ingenio de Orizaba,” the large sugar plantation owned by don Rodrigo Vivero. Antonelli marked Vivero’s estate as a requisite rest stop on his proposed route.<sup>57</sup> The planter would have benefited immensely from such an arrangement, since well over one hundred enslaved field hands worked on the estate.<sup>58</sup> Antonelli also had a more practical reason for designating this rest stop. “Many brooks and springs” could be found by Vivero’s residence, and fresh, potable water was indispensable for the captives and mule trains bound for the highlands.<sup>59</sup>

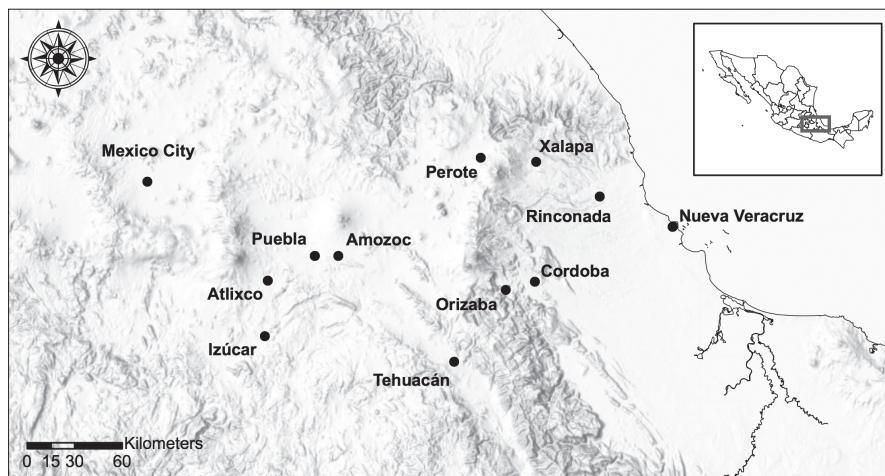
The southern route, however, presented serious logistical challenges due to its numerous river crossings (especially during the rainy season) and the threat of attack by maroons. Antonelli suggested constructing four bridges across the Jamapa and Atoyaque Rivers in order to properly complete the southern highway into the highlands. For slave traders, river crossings represented an additional threat to the survival of their captives (to say nothing of the always possible escape). Without proper bridges, river crossings became extremely dangerous during the rainy season.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, from the relative safety of Orizaba, mule trains carrying captives had to overcome the summits of Acultzingo rising over 7,800 feet in order to reach the highland plateau.<sup>61</sup> The road from Acultzingo to Puebla was far more direct than the northern route, but the last seventy-five miles went over sandy, dry roads with little water or pasture.<sup>62</sup>

To facilitate the ascent to Acultzingo, the architect demarcated two intertwining paths, one for coach travel and another for mule trains. Antonelli was interested in expediting commercial transportation, and here we must wonder to what degree he understood the demands of an emerging transatlantic slave trade. Slave traders in New Spain depended on mules

to transport African captives up the Sierra Madre Oriental. The debilitating maritime voyage precluded an overland ascent on foot, especially when the summits reached well over seven thousand feet in altitude. Mule trains were simply essential. However, even a well-constructed southern route could do little against the elements. In 1610, bishop Fray Alonso de la Mota y Escobar noted that the road through Acultzingo was “tolerable” as “all the coaches and mule trains pass by here,” although during the rainy season (May–September), “there are terrible stretches of mud.”<sup>63</sup> Yet perhaps more frightening than mud and landslides was the threat of an ambush at the hands of Gaspar Yanga’s maroons.

By 1608, Yanga’s men represented a real threat to commercial trade in and around Orizaba, leading New Spain’s viceroys to launch a series of punitive expeditions into the rugged mountain range. That year, Manuel Carrillo, the administrator of the slaving contract, was appointed by the Crown to negotiate the pacification of Yanga’s community.<sup>64</sup> That a Portuguese man and a known enemy of Seville’s merchant elite had been tasked with such a crucial task suggests that the profitability of the slave trade was being affected directly by the runaways’ raids.<sup>65</sup> It is probable that the maroons were also sabotaging incoming slave trains as they made their way from Orizaba to Puebla and vice versa. After all, African captives had no reason to aid their captors when attacked by Yanga’s followers. Unable to defeat the maroons militarily, the Spanish agreed to a treaty. Thus, the foundation of San Lorenzo de los Negros, Mexico’s first free black town, and Córdoba, a Spanish “frontier” settlement, in 1618 must be viewed as a pragmatic attempt to stabilize commerce to and from the region.<sup>66</sup>

The third slave route was a hybrid of sorts that satisfied the commercial considerations of slave traders with the topographical demands of travel through Central Mexico. It was more circuitous than the southern route but considerably more reliable. After rest in Nueva Veracruz, incoming slave traders followed the northern route to Xalapa and up to the Perote hospital. They then proceeded to the Venta de Cáceres bifurcation and decided whether to continue west to Mexico City or take a southwesterly path to Puebla (see map 3.1).<sup>67</sup> If Puebla was chosen as the first destination, slave traders could still reach the capital later on by traveling by way of Huexotzingo, Texmelucan, Río Frío, and Chalco.<sup>68</sup> Either way, the hybrid route allowed incoming slave traders to inform themselves of the political, economic, and climatic conditions they could expect in coming weeks and still profit from planters’ demands in Xalapa.<sup>69</sup>



Map 3.2. Southern slave route. Map by Tim O'Brien.

Xalapa emerged as an important area of sugarcane cultivation and a considerable slave market between 1590 and 1620.<sup>70</sup> Cognizant of the wealth that could be generated by producing sugar for highland populations, Poblanos soon became key investors in Xalapa and, by extension, in the transatlantic slave trade to the region. For instance, in 1590, a married couple from Puebla, Francisco Hernández de la Higuera and María Gómez, already owned thirty-two Africans on their estate located between Xalapa and the village of La Concepción.<sup>71</sup> The Higuera family would expand their investments in sugarcane and slavery with the Santísima Trinidad plantation.<sup>72</sup> By 1606, Santísima Trinidad held two hundred enslaved workers. Based on the records of the Xalapa notarial archive, other Puebla families also invested heavily in the slave trade.

The Orduña family, for instance, purchased no fewer than seventy-one African captives between 1607 and 1616 for the San Pedro Buenavista plantation.<sup>73</sup> Francisco de Orduña, the elder, resided in Puebla, while his son and namesake saw to the plantation's day-to-day operations in Xalapa.

Considerable slave purchases allowed the Orduñas to transform San Pedro Buenavista from a smaller sugar-producing operation (*trapiche*) to a plantation (*ingenio*). By 1611, one hundred enslaved adults and their twenty-five children worked alongside fifty male indigenous wage earners (*gañanes*)

and their thirty children. The expansion of Xalapa's sugar production during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries meant that many incoming captives would not reach the highland slave markets but remain on these estates as field hands, sugar masters, domestic servants, and the like. Many others would continue on the route to Puebla and Mexico City.

Poblanos also participated in the slave trade as mule-train owners (*dueños de recua*) and as muleteers (*arrieros*). Mule-train owners hired free muleteers for months of travel along difficult country roads and also purchased enslaved men to serve in the same capacity. In fact, almost half of all enslaved men sold in Puebla during the 1540s and 1550s were employed as *arrieros*.<sup>74</sup> By the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this meant that many slave trains would have been manned by free or enslaved men of African descent. With the intensification of the slave trade in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, more Poblanos ventured into the business of transporting African captives. Jerónimo de la Vega, a wealthy *dueño de recua*, bought, sold, and delivered African youths to Xalapa and Puebla.<sup>75</sup> To do so, he maintained several dozen mules that could carry captives into the highlands and return to the port with flour, hardtack, silver, or cochineal. Other Poblano muleteers, such as Baltazar Lorenzo, offered their services to Lusophone slaving agents based in Nueva Veracruz, Puebla, and Mexico City.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, the slaving routes from the coastal lowlands to the highlands were well established by the 1610s. Incoming slaving agents, innkeepers, mule-train owners, and muleteers all facilitated the logistics of slave transportation. Few documents describing the particularities of these routes and practices have survived. However, a rare extant contract between the *dueño de recua* Mateo Gallegos and Sebastian Vaez de Acevedo, a prominent Portuguese slave trader, provides valuable information on a slaving itinerary (see appendix). In 1621, Gallegos and his muleteers agreed to lead Vaez de Acevedo's 126 captives from Nueva Veracruz northward, along the coastline to La Antigua. They would then take the captives inland to Xalapa, where they would remain for two days, selling their captives to the local population. After this brief respite, Gallegos would continue on to Puebla, where the slave train would remain for at least three days before setting off for Mexico City.

In practice, slave traders, muleteers, and *dueños de recua* reacted to local conditions, and these could be commercial, political, or climactic. For instance, rather than continue on to Mexico City as specified in his contract, Gallegos handed off Vaez de Acevedo's captives to a third party in Puebla. Captain Manuel Mendes de los Reyes, another Portuguese slave trader and



an associate of Vaez de Acevedo, received the captives and paid Gallegos. As a result, the mule-train owner was no longer obligated to “register and declare said pieces of slaves before the Royal Justices of Mexico City.” The decision to end the overland trip in this way may have been a result of increased demand in Puebla or unusually tight surveillance (against unauthorized slave arrivals) in the capital. Both scenarios are plausible.<sup>77</sup> The larger point is that the Nueva Veracruz-Xalapa-Puebla route allowed slave traders and their associates to adequately react to local conditions.

In general, the hybrid route was the most frequented route for the transportation of African captives to Puebla because of its greater reliability during the rainy season (May–September). Despite the shorter distances offered by the southern route, flooding represented too much of a threat to reliable travel. By the early 1630s, the southern route was once again in need of dire repair as overloaded wagons (*carretas*) damaged the road to and from Orizaba.<sup>78</sup> Twenty years later, the overflowing Río Blanco rendered the areas around the Acultzingo Pass uninhabitable.<sup>79</sup> This was not the case along the Xalapa-Puebla road, which became the primary route for commercial travel and slave transportation. In sum, the seasonal arrival of slave ships, the weather patterns encountered in the mountains, and the greater reliability of a more circuitous road led most slave traders to follow the hybrid route into the highlands.

### Physical Conditions along the Slave Routes

Inbound Africans traveling through Central Mexico generally encountered less taxing conditions than their counterparts in the Isthmus of Panama and certainly experienced a shorter trek than captives on the Buenos Aires-Potosí route.<sup>80</sup> Overland travel through Xalapa was manageable in the sense that a more temperate climate awaited and citric and medicinal fruits could be easily found there.<sup>81</sup> Still, the sudden change in altitude and climate from Nueva Veracruz to the highlands presented a serious health risk to the enslaved (and their captors), especially during cold autumn and winter nights. Regardless of which route was taken, the trek from the port was a difficult one that required traversing the coastal wetlands, climbing through the dense, semi-temperate forests of the eastern Sierra Madre, and finally traversing the plateau of the central Mexican highlands.

Shortly after passing Xalapa, incoming captives experienced especially harsh conditions at the bluff known as Cofre de Perote (7,926 feet). According

to Bishop Mota y Escobar, “New Spain’s cold lands and temperatures begin [at Perote]. . . . It is the reason for which the hospital was founded at this site. Since those from Spain and the fleet come up from the port and the *tierra caliente*, it is quite common that they fall ill in this place more than others.”<sup>82</sup> The bishop failed to mention that those from Africa traveled the same route. Whether or not infirm slaves received treatment at the Perote hospital is beyond the scope of this study, but slavers and muleteers employed their own barbers to cure (or more likely, bleed) their captives along the ascent.<sup>83</sup> African barbers worked on Portuguese slave ships during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and were ubiquitous in Rio de Janeiro,<sup>84</sup> but the documentation consulted for this study does not reveal if this was the case for seventeenth-century Mexico. We can only state with certainty that barbers formed part of the local slave trains that traveled into the highlands (see appendix).

Local expertise mattered immensely when reaching extreme elevations with dense fog, sleet, and even snow. In a 1621 contract, the muleteer Mateo Gallegos included one blanket (per mule) “with which to cover the slaves” as part of his transportation services for Sebastian Vaez de Acevedo’s captives.<sup>85</sup> Wintry conditions could have fatal effects on new African arrivals, most of whom were only outfitted with rough sackcloths (*sayales*) purchased in the port.<sup>86</sup> Captives who entered the Mexican highlands during the late fall or early winter confronted much greater risk of frostbite and amputation. Gallegos understood these conditions and had purchased dozens of blankets beforehand.

Unfortunately, many of the enslaved simply did not survive the ascent into the highland’s disease environment. The major settlements of the highlands (Puebla, Tlaxcala, and Mexico City) were all located at 7,200 feet above sea level or higher. In this regard, the “seasoning” of captives in New Spain included exposure to shortness of breath and altitude sickness, to say nothing of smallpox. Puebla’s pharmacists (*boticarios*) profited from prescribing syrups and remedies of all kinds for incoming captives and captors. In 1602, the slave trader Juan Nuñez Bojorquez appealed to the Poblano Francisco Sánchez for a number of medicinal syrups. The Cartagena-Nueva Veracruz-Puebla trajectory had left the slave trader and his captives quite ill but the local pharmacist thirty-five pesos richer.<sup>87</sup> Nuñez Bojorquez would die shortly after arriving in the viceregal capital. A similar case took place in the fall of 1630, when after weeks of overland travel, five African youths and their slave trader died in Mexico City. Despite receiving medical care in a specialized infirmary, Manuel Monjolo, Francisco Angola, Catalina, Cristina, and

García passed away from “what appeared to be natural causes.”<sup>88</sup> But what exactly was a “natural” death for these deracinated captives?

At times, inbound slave traders preferred to leave infirm captives in Veracruz, expending a few more pesos on nutritious meals and medical expenses in hopes of recouping these costs several months later.<sup>89</sup> In 1597, slave trader Rodríguez de Ledesma left four sick captives in the port, continuing on to Puebla with his remaining twenty-six captives, where he would eventually be arrested and imprisoned by Inquisition officials on charges of Judaizing. Unfortunately, things did not go any better for the enslaved, who were then forced to continue on to the Inquisition headquarters in Mexico City by way of the frigid mountain pass, Río Frío, in December of that year. Only a week after arrival in Mexico City, an “Angolan” captive by the name of Juan died from a bad cough. Juan had been the leader (“*el negro capitanejo*”) of the small captive community that survived the voyage across the Atlantic, Caribbean, and the trek up the Sierra Madre Oriental. Many others encountered the same fate in the highlands, an important reminder that even after the maritime voyage, “African slaves fell prey to disease in the New World.”<sup>90</sup>

### Slave Trains and Mules

Clearly, the involuntary circulation of enslaved people from Nueva Veracruz to the highlands stimulated an economy that was far more than silver-based. The transatlantic slave trade and commerce in general was intimately linked to the question of transportation in a difficult, fragmented landscape. With the notable exception of Guillermina del Valle Pavón, historians of colonial Mexico have not quite grasped the importance of documenting these slave trains or understanding their economic implications.<sup>91</sup> The tens of thousands of African captives who entered the viceroyalty between 1590 and 1640 required mule transportation to reach their final destination. In turn, these contracts set in motion uncountable transactions for captives’ meals, lodging, clothing, medical care, and surveillance.

By the early seventeenth century, mule trains carrying anywhere from fifteen to 150 captives made their way through Mexican rest stops, villages, and cities along the slave routes. The data on slave transportation is fragmentary but illustrates the varying sizes of the mule trains used in this capacity. If, in 1597, Rodríguez de Ledesma transported twenty-six captives to Puebla, by 1605, a pair of Lisbonite slavers accompanied forty-three Africans into the



highlands.<sup>92</sup> The 1597 voyage required a dozen mules, while twenty would have been required for the 1605 contract. Especially large slave trains entered the cities of the highlands during the 1620s and 1630s.<sup>93</sup> In 1630, Bartolomé Lorenzo and Bartolomé de Aguilar transported eighty-one captives from Nueva Veracruz to Puebla.<sup>94</sup>

Nine years before, Mateo Gallegos delivered 143 captives to Puebla, which required no fewer than seventy mules.<sup>95</sup> The total number of animals was not specified in the contract, but Gallegos did note that he required an additional two mules for his assistants and another six mules to carry supplies. For all of this, he would receive 625 pesos for four weeks' work at a time when 100–120 pesos was considered an acceptable yearly salary.<sup>96</sup> Of course, some of this money went to the unnamed barber and guards that accompanied his retinue, but the financial incentive to partake in slave transportation is obvious.<sup>97</sup>

In addition, Gallegos would receive four enslaved children (muleques) as payment for his services.<sup>98</sup> In this regard, cash-strapped slave traders resorted to payments in African children for transportation services. These agreements were extremely profitable to mule-train owners, who stood to gain hundreds of pesos or a lifetime of service from each child acquired in this manner. Logically, many muleteers and mule-train owners along these routes directed their attention to the transportation of captives.<sup>99</sup> Mapping the movements of these men and their captives takes us to ever less obvious places. Communities traditionally associated with the trade in indigenous agricultural products (Amozoc, Tepeaca, Tecamachalco, etc.) now become settings for and participants in the transatlantic slave trade. Gallegos, for instance, was a neighbor of Cachula (modern-day Quecholac, Puebla), a small indigenous settlement that specialized in maize and agave cultivation.<sup>100</sup> By the early 1620s, Cachula served as a rest stop for mule trains en route to Puebla. Evidently, this specialization in transportation enabled men from Cachula to participate in the slave trade as well. In the same manner, the rural community of San Antonio Huatusco (located between Xalapa and Orizaba) became renowned for its mule breeding during the early colonial period.<sup>101</sup> Huatusco, then, was increasingly tied into the slave trade as muleteers and mule-train owners specialized in transporting African captives.

A crude calculation should suffice to demonstrate the importance of mule trains to the slaving networks that connected Mexico to the Atlantic. According to the 1621 contract discussed above, slave traders required one mule to transport every two full-grown captives. We do not have an acceptable understanding of how children (bambos and muleques) traveled in these slave trains.

Perhaps three per mule? Nor we do know how many enslaved Africans reached the cities of the highlands between 1590 and 1640. However, if thirty thousand captives reached the highlands during the period in question, their transportation would have required the use of ten to fifteen thousand mules.<sup>102</sup>

Of course, mules were the universal means of any sort of commercial transportation in Mexico throughout the colonial period and, as such, cannot be exclusively signaled as vehicles for slaving. What is undeniable, however, is that the fortunes of slave traders and colonial merchants were largely dependent on access to these beasts of burden.<sup>103</sup> For the same reason, Antonio Méndez Chillón, a slave trader and cacao importer based in Nueva Veracruz, controlled a network of inland muleteers and merchants.<sup>104</sup> As a result of these dynamics, African captives could often be acquired in exchange for mules. In 1618, Poblano Juan González and Rodrigo Martín purchased María, a twenty-five-year-old Angolan, for eleven mules and one hundred pesos from a Xalapa resident.<sup>105</sup> The previously mentioned Jerónimo de la Vega sold two “Angola” men and a married “Bran” couple to another mule-train owner based in Xalapa.<sup>106</sup> Twenty outfitted mules were included in the bill of purchase, in what was clearly the transfer of a mule train and its enslaved staff. These types of sales were commonly recorded in Puebla between 1590 and 1640.<sup>107</sup>

### The Puebla Slave Market

After two to three weeks of overland travel from Nueva Veracruz, mule trains loaded with enslaved Africans arrived in Puebla de los Ángeles. Captives entering the city were housed in private residences or traveler’s inns, such as the one run by Miguel Hernández in 1597. When Inquisition officials raided this particular inn in search of the suspected slave trader Francisco Rodríguez de Ledesma, they encountered twenty-six “Angolans,” both male and female, pent up in a single room.<sup>108</sup> Rooms such as these were used to confine incoming captives during the night, since daytime hours were spent on the slave market. Up until 1624, Puebla’s slave market was located in the public plaza, in front of the municipal palace where elite Spaniards held their *cabildo* meetings. The slaves of indebted colonial officials, deceased merchants, and Inquisition convicts were also offered up for auction here.

In essence, the Puebla slave market operated within the general market for beans, chile peppers, and agricultural produce of all kinds. The stores of the city’s leading merchants flanked the market, while the cathedral and the

municipal palace closed off the rectangular plaza. Understanding the spatial dynamics of the *plaza pública* and slave market is important. During the rainy season, crowds of people jostled for dry space, which could only be found in the crowded archways underneath the municipal palace. Captives, vendors, and the purchasing public competed for these areas, at times reaching the point of violence. In 1620, for instance, the locals threw the captives out into the rain and mistreated them, “beating them with sticks, all of which is done with great inhumanity,” complained Manuel González, an influential slaving agent.<sup>109</sup>

To prevent these kinds of disturbances, the slave market was relocated in 1624 to a smaller plaza next to the Franciscan convent and cemetery on the eastern fringe of the city.<sup>110</sup> This was a logical move considering that the roads from Xalapa and Orizaba met on the east end of the city. Don Luis de Córdoba, Puebla’s alderman, justified the relocation by alleging that newly arrived Africans “came sick with hidden diseases and other contagious ills which infect the [local] people.” Moreover, he argued, the numerous injustices committed by Africans against indigenous fruit and bread vendors could be avoided by separating the slave and food market.<sup>111</sup> (The alderman made no mention of the violent incidents under the archways that had occurred in 1620.)

During the 1620s and 1630s, eighty or more newly arrived Africans captives were available for sale on Puebla’s slave market on any given day. This number, of course, fluctuated depending on the number of slave ships that had disembarked in Nueva Veracruz four weeks before. In October 1620, seventy-eight Africans, considered to be the property of two Portuguese slavers, were being held in the Puebla slave market by a local official.<sup>112</sup> Five years before, a prominent sugar planter from Izúcar stated that he was content with a mass purchase of fifty “Arara” captives.<sup>113</sup> “Of their worth, value, and quality I am satisfied, because I chose them myself among many other *piezas*,” he declared.<sup>114</sup> Publicly inspected and prodded in the plaza, the enslaved entered the notarial record on a single leaf of paper. The inspection would have taken quite some time, especially for such a large lot. However, all that was recorded was a massive debt for eighteen thousand pesos and a sixteen-month payment plan. The fifty captives were bound for hard labor on a sugar plantation in Izúcar, some forty miles to the southwest of Puebla.

In this respect, it is clear that Puebla operated as a slaving node that redistributed African captives to a large swath of Central Mexico during the early seventeenth century. On average, 395 enslaved people (including newly arrived Africans and American-born people) were sold annually in the city between 1620 and 1639.<sup>115</sup> The scale of the local slave market can be partially

explained by outsiders' purchases. In late October 1635, the Jesuit College of Mexico City, for instance, purchased twenty-four incoming "Angola" slaves in Puebla.<sup>116</sup> Luis and Francisco Rebolledo, two planters from Las Amilpas, a sugar-producing area more often associated with the capital, also bought thirty-one Africans that same week.<sup>117</sup> The scale of these purchases suggests that especially influential slave owners in Mexico City were often willing to travel to Puebla rather than wait an additional week for the arrival of captives. For the enslaved, however, being sold to a resident of the capital meant that the seemingly endless overland journey continued along another country road and past another set of mountains.

### Conclusion

The weeks of overland travel across the coastal lowlands, up the Sierra Madre Oriental, and into the central highlands constituted important experiences for tens of thousands of African youths. Their enslavement acquired a new physicality along the country road, one that required adapting to the geographical and seasonal challenges of life in the highlands. For captives headed to Mexico City or Puebla, these new physical environments required overcoming altitude sickness, frostbite, and pulmonary diseases. Adequate clothing, proper meals, and medical care became essential to surviving these brisk conditions, and not all did. As a result, secondary settlements and travelers' inns were integral to completing slaving voyages deep into the Mexican interior.

Visualizing these spaces and their connecting roads resolves many questions regarding the transatlantic slave trade within New Spain. Most captives spent a month on the mainland between the moment of their arrival in Nueva Veracruz and their eventual sale in a highland market. This period of "seasoning" involved weeks of traveling along any one of the three established trade routes where they encountered innkeepers, physicians, and food vendors who essentially operated as slaving auxiliaries. These specific interactions deserve much greater study. In sum, incoming Lusophone slave traders could not have organized the transportation of African captives on their own and were especially dependent on the services of local slaving agents, muleteers, and *dueños de recuas*. Mule trains, then, became the key to delivering slaves to Xalapa, Puebla, Mexico City, and any other inland destination in New Spain. By the 1620s, the sight of a

mule train laden with African youths was commonplace and an integral element of the colonial landscape.

#### Appendix. Contract for the Transportation of 126 African Captives<sup>118</sup>

I, Mateo Gallegos, owner of my mule train, and neighbor of Cachula, say that I received from Señor Captain Sebastian Vaez de Azevedo, who came from Angola, one hundred and twenty-six pieces of slaves, one hundred one of them male and twenty-five of them females that I am obligated to take on my mule train to Mexico City by way of Xalapa, where I must stop for two days with said slaves. I must also stop with them in Puebla, where I must stay for three days and from there take them in my said mule train, as is said, to Mexico City, where I will hand them over to Captain Manuel Mendes de los Reis, who will pay me fees of twelve pesos for each mule. . . . I will not place more than two blacks on each of the said mules = I declare that among the said slaves there are sixteen small ones [*pequeños*] who will also go along with said mules, [Captain Mendes de los Reis] will only pay the transportation costs for twelve of these pieces and the other four will [travel for] free = And I declare that if I do not put the said slaves on old mules during the first day, which is from Nueva Veracruz to the city of Vieja Veracruz, and some mule kicks off some black slave or slaves onto the ground, I will be obligated to pay the damages received by any piece of slave = And I declare that I will take all the said pieces on mules every day from here to Mexico City and I will stop in the ordinary palaces and will place the said blacks under cover, and I will give for each mule a blanket with which to cover [*abrigar*] the slaves = And I declare that for two saddled mules that will carry the people who go with the said slaves, there will be a payment of twelve pesos for each, and for the Barber who goes on said mule train caring for the pieces, I will be paid six pesos for his person [services] = And I declare that for the six mules that carry the supplies I will be paid nothing because for this I will receive the *muleques* who are to travel on the mules with the slaves. And in order to satisfy [this agreement] I pledge my person, my goods, and my said mule train and its harnesses. And I signed it with my name in Nueva Veracruz on the thirteenth of September 1621. [Witnesses: ] Captain Fernando Dacosta and the Licenciado João Mendes de Carvalho.

In the city of the angels [Puebla] on the fifth day of the month of October of 1621, Captain Manuel Mendes de los Reyes appeared before me, the scribe,

and witnesses, and said that this was his name and [that he was] a resident of this city. And he said that Captain Sebastian Vaes de Acevedo handed over one hundred twenty-six pieces of slaves, one hundred one males and twenty-five females, to Mateo Gallegos, owner of his mule train and a neighbor of the town of Cachula, in order for these [slaves] to be handed over to [Vaez de Acevedo] in Mexico City. However, having arrived at [Puebla] with said pieces of slaves they concerted and agreed to transfer them here, as was done. For the transportation costs, he would give and pay Mateo Gallegos six hundred twenty-five pesos and five tomines of common gold. Therefore, recognizing the transfer of the said one hundred twenty-six pieces of slaves, I [Mendes de los Reyes] renounce the laws of delivery and their proof, and in debt to the said Mateo Gallegos . . . who also handed over another seventeen pieces that were consigned to Captain Andres de Acosta, I will not ask or demand anything on my account or by that of said Captain [de Acosta]. . . . And as the said Mateo Gallegos is obligated to register and declare said pieces of slaves before the Royal Justices of Mexico City and has not fulfilled this obligation by having delivered them in this city [Puebla], nothing will be asked or demanded of him. And if he were asked or demanded something, [de los Reyes] will come to his cause and pay what might be judged or sentenced against him . . . and then they said that the transportation costs of each piece of slave and two servants and the person of said Captain Manuel Mendes de los Reyes was four pesos three tomines each and, in this respect, amounted to six hundred twenty-five pesos and five tomines and they signed it . . . and then the parties said that although Captain Manuel Mendes de los Reyes confessed to having received all the pieces of slaves contained in this writ, the truth is that two of them died, one from *cámaras* [dysentery] on the road and the other of a sickness in this city . . . and they signed.

Manuel Mendes de los Reis  
Mateo Gallegos  
Before me, Alonso Corona  
public scribe

### Notes

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two anonymous reviewers for their help in improving different versions of this chapter.

1. Biblioteca Palafoxiana (hereafter BP), No. 19348, "Por Luis Gomez Arias, maestro del navio nombrado la Concepcion," f. 3r.
2. For the lower estimate, see António de Almeida Mendes, "Foundations of the System," 87. For the higher estimate, see Joseph M. H. Clark, "Veracruz and the Caribbean," 142. Clark's revisions align with Colin A. Palmer's figures in *Slaves of the White God*, 26–30.
3. Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD), <https://slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>. This figure, which is based on recorded arrivals to "New Spain" within the TSTD, should be considered a minimum, since many enslaved Africans entered Mexico on intra-Caribbean voyages from Cartagena, Santo Domingo, and Jamaica, which the database does not record. Entries from the Pacific port of Acapulco are also not included.
4. Sherwin K. Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*, 5, 18.
5. The single volume on the seventeenth century at the Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Veracruz holds no information on the slave trade to or from the port.
6. The port of Veracruz was moved numerous times during the early colonial period. The modern-day city of Veracruz was known as Nueva Veracruz after its establishment in 1599–1600. It was considered a more expedient place for commerce due to its location directly in front of San Juan de Ulúa. La Antigua (or Veracruz la Vieja) refers to the older settlement a few miles north. When specifying the activities of both ports (the new and old), I will simply refer to "Veracruz."
7. Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 2nd ed., 249–65; see cuadros 2 and 3.
8. This may soon change with Joseph M. H. Clark's rereading of AGI material and discovery of new documents on the Mexican port. His dissertation fills a considerable void in the historiography for the early to mid-colonial period. Clark, "Veracruz and the Caribbean."
9. Inquisition records are also helpful in this regard, although the focus of such documentation was rarely on the slave trade itself.
10. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), México 74, r. 2, n. 30, 1621/02/04 (no folio).
11. AGI-México 74, r. 2, n. 30, 1621/02/22 (no folio).
12. I borrow the "merchant-official" concept from Moutoukias's interchangeable understanding of Buenos Aires merchants and officials as *comerciantes-funcionarios* or *funcionarios-comerciantes*. Zacarías Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 18, 113–14.
13. Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGNM), Real Fisco de la Inquisición (hereafter Inquisición), vol. 10, exp. 6, f. 513r.
14. María Luisa Rodríguez-Sala, *Los cirujanos de hospitales*, 133. Fray Bernardino Álvarez established the hospital in 1569.

15. BP, No. 19348, "Por Luis Gomez Arias," ff. 3v-4r. The same physician inspected another slave ship in 1634; see AGI-Escribanía, 295A, leg. 1, no. 2, "Arivada de Jorje Nuñez de Andrada," ff. 252v-254r.
16. Pablo F. Gómez, *Experiential Caribbean*, 46-47.
17. BP, No. 19348, "Por Luis Gomez Arias."
18. Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 2nd ed., 148n69.
19. David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 97-99. Cartagena may have also been an important stopover for Mexico-bound captives; see Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico*, especially chapter 4.
20. AGI-Escribanía 295A, 845r-847v; AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 10, exp. 6, f. 207r.
21. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 99.
22. Alfred Siemens, *Favored Place*, 124-25.
23. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 10, exp. 6, ff. 513r-513v.
24. AGI-Escribanía, 295A, leg. 1, no. 2, "Arivada de Jorje Nuñez de Andrada," ff. 252v-254r. Whether incoming captives were fed some sort of cassava bread or maize tortillas remains to be seen. The former was more common in the slaving ports of northern South America. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, "Diets, Food Supplies, and the African Slave Trade," 522-24. After weeks or months on the Mexican mainland, African captives were also given atole to drink. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 367, exp. 11, "Borrador de ventas del capp<sup>n</sup> Ju<sup>o</sup> Nuñez Franco y los gastos que con ellos se hazen," ff. 492r-493v.
25. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, *Papeles de Nueva España*, 196-97. Turtles, snook, and other fish (*bobos* and *mojarras prietas*) were commonly eaten in the port, but whether such seafood was offered to incoming captives is unknown.
26. By analyzing the dates on which slave ship captains first sold captives in Puebla, it is possible to approximate their month of entry to Veracruz. Out of eighteen identified slave ship captains active in Puebla, fifteen would have arrived between the months of May and September.
27. Clark, "Veracruz and the Caribbean," 106.
28. AGI-México, 31, no. 23, "Carta del virrey marqués de Cerralbo." The fleet was expected to arrive in early April but still had not made port at the end of May.
29. AGI-Escribanía, 295A, leg. 1, no. 2, "Arivada de Jorje Nuñez de Andrada," ff. 252v-254r.
30. In 1570, six hundred enslaved blacks outnumbered the Spanish population by a 3-to-1 ratio, and this figure did not include free people of African descent. Clark, "Veracruz and the Caribbean," 151-52.
31. AGI-México, 74, r. 2, n. 30, (no folio) 1621/02/04. At least two thousand people of African descent lived in Nueva Veracruz during the early 1680s; see Peter Gerhard, "Un censo de la diócesis de Puebla."
32. AGI-Escribanía, 292A, leg. 2, ff. 19r-43v. Whether this pattern holds true for the 1590-1640 period remains to be seen. Other slaves would have accompanied



- their masters to Xalapa during the seasonal migration (late summer and early fall) from the port. Rachel Moore, *Forty Miles from the Sea*, 44–45.
33. AGI-Escribanía, 292A, leg. 2, ff. 19r–43v. A slave trader's ledger for a 1664 voyage indicates that of 267 captives sold in Nueva Veracruz, over two hundred were purchased by port residents. Governor Felipe de Estrada purchased twenty-five incoming captives at an average price of 251 pesos. These slaves could then be sold in Puebla for 398 pesos. For the Puebla market, see Archivo General de Notarías de Puebla (hereafter AGNP), Not. 4, Box 194, 1664 November, ff. 1166r–1169r.
  34. Lourdes Mondragón Barrios, *Esclavos africanos en la Ciudad de México*, 22–24, 28–39; María Elisa Velázquez, *Mujeres de origen africano*, 119–33; and Elizabeth Hernández and María Eugenia Silva, “La esclavitud negra,” 50–52.
  35. Ramón María Serrera, *Tráfico terrestre y red vial*, 27–28.
  36. Carlos Contreras Cruz and Miguel Ángel Cuenya, *Puebla de los Ángeles*, 15–25.
  37. Julia Hirschberg, “Alternative to Encomienda,” 244.
  38. Peter Boyd-Bowman, “Negro Slaves in Early Colonial Mexico,” 136–37.
  39. Boyd-Bowman, “Negro Slaves in Early Colonial Mexico,” 139–41.
  40. Archivo Histórico Nacional (Spain), Inquisición, L. 1049, ff. 54r–57v. For the growth of the Spanish population, see Ida Altman, *Transatlantic Ties*, 50–52.
  41. Carmen Viquiera and José I. Urquiola, *Los obrajes en la Nueva España*, 136–37.
  42. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 36, ff. 600r–603r. In 1590, for instance, Alonso Gómez, owner of Puebla's largest obraje, held 130 indigenous workers, male and female, but only six black men.
  43. Silvio Zavala, *Ordenanzas del trabajo*, 181–82.
  44. Puebla's *obrajeros* continued resisting Philip III's decree in municipal meetings during 1616 and onward; see Archivo Municipal de Puebla (hereafter AMP), *Actas de Cabildo*, vol. 15, ff. 111/110v–112/111v.
  45. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 70–71, 78–80. In this sense, the growing demand for African laborers in New Spain corresponded with the last stages of João Furtado de Mendonça's military expeditions along the Bengo River. These military incursions produced some fifteen thousand captives aboard eighty ships sent to Spanish America.
  46. Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 2nd ed., 173, 256–67; Nicolás Ngou-Mve, *El África bantú*, 130–47; and Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 78–81.
  47. Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, “Portuguese *Encomenderos de Negros*,” 226–32.
  48. A fourth, far less documented slave route connected the central highlands to the port of Campeche, a site of notorious contraband. For a Campeche-Puebla example, see AGNP, Not. 4, Box 124, 1625 March, ff. 555r–559v.
  49. William Rees, “Route Inertia,” 92. From La Antigua to Perote, slave traders could stop at La Rinconada, Venta del Río, Venta de Cerro Gordo, Venta de Lencero, Venta de Sedeno, Venta de Aguilar Bajo, Venta de la Hoja, and Ventas de las Vigas.

50. AGNP, Not. 3, Box 22, 1629r. Amat introduced at least three shipments of African captives to New Spain in 1601, 1605, and 1615. See AGI-Escribanía, 1012A-2, f. 76r; AGNP, Not. 3, 1605-08-19, ff. 1629r-1631r; and Ngou-Mve, *El África bantú*, 165.
51. Gilberto Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Historia de Jalapa*, 286-87, 329-30. María López, a free black innkeeper, operated the Venta de la Rinconada. María Núñez, also a free woman of African descent, ran the Venta del Río. Many thanks to David Wheat for this information.
52. Rees, "Route Inertia," 8, 14, 110, 149.
53. Rees, "Route Inertia," 108. For Antonelli's stunning map of the ascent, see AGI-MP-México, 39.
54. Guillermina del Valle Pavón, "Desarrollo de la economía mercantil," 38-42; and Rees, "Route Inertia," 119. The Veracruz-Orizaba-Puebla route was also beneficial to merchants based in Antequera (Oaxaca), Santiago de Guatemala, Soconusco, and other southern settlements. The considerable movement of silver, wheat, hardtack (*bizcocho*), and cochineal from the Puebla-Tlaxcala valley to the Veracruz coastlands in exchange for wine, olives, and other European luxury goods is well documented. Hundreds of thousands of sheep and goats also migrated from the highlands to the coast during the winter. See Siemens, *Favored Place*, 142-45.
55. Valle Pavón, "Desarrollo de la economía mercantil," 41n183.
56. Carlos Paredes Martínez, *El impacto de la conquista*, 61-62; Ursula Ewald, *Estudios sobre la hacienda colonial*, 108; and Horacio Crespo and Sergio Reyes Retana, *Historia del azúcar*, 50-52.
57. AGI-MP-México, 39, "Discreción del camino."
58. Patrick Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 63.
59. Fray Alonso de la Mota y Escobar, *Memoriales del Obispo*, 95-96.
60. AGI-Contratación, 516, n. 11. The swollen Río de la Cañas took the life of an overconfident muleteer and his steed as they transported a cargo of fruit to the port in 1615.
61. Rees, "Route Inertia," 8-9, 107-8. The planned route took a southwestern path from Veracruz to Orizaba on the southern end of the Sierra Madre Oriental. From Orizaba, the route carved a path into the highlands by way of Acultzingo, Acatzingo, Amozoc, and Tepeaca.
62. AGI-MP-México, 39, "Discreción del camino que se pretende Hazer"; and Rees, "Route Inertia," 108. Rees identifies the Acatzingo-Tepeaca-Puebla stretch as an especially arid area.
63. Mota y Escobar, *Memoriales del Obispo*, 95. From 1652 to 1654, the Acultzingo summit had been rendered uninhabitable due to the recurrent flooding of the Río Blanco and travelers' accounts from the last decades of the century described the road as impassable during the rainy season. See Rees, "Route Inertia," 171, 177.

64. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 283, exp. 26, ff. 186r–187v.
65. AGI-Contratación, leg. 5282, No. 7.
66. Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “San Lorenzo Cerralvo,” 62–66; Jane G. Landers, “Cimarrón and Citizen,” 133–35; and Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro*, 557–64. Both settlements still exist in the modern-day state of Veracruz, although San Lorenzo de los Negros was renamed Yanga, in honor of its legendary leader.
67. Valle Pavón, “Desarrollo de la economía mercantil,” 22; and Rees, “Route Inertia,” 88.
68. Luis Jaúregui, *Los transportes*, 34.
69. For instance, information on the floods that devastated Mexico City during the late 1620s would have been particularly pertinent to incoming slave traders.
70. Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Historia de Jalapa*, 148. At least nine sugar plantations were in operation within the Jalapa jurisdiction by 1620.
71. AGNP, Not. 3, Box 12, f. 675r. The Poblano couple financed these purchases and the construction of their plantation with a fourteen-thousand-peso loan extended by another Puebla *vecino* (long-term resident), Juan Mejía del Aguila. Thirty years later, the sugar planter would purchase eight Angolan captives in Puebla (with a nineteen-month credit line) for his Xalapa plantation. See AGNP, Not. 4, Box 101, f. 2621r.
72. Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 46–48; and Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Historia de Jalapa*, 225.
73. Gilberto Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Índice notarial*, 79, 208, 242. These transactions amounted to 28,190 pesos, a staggering amount of money for the early seventeenth century. For the development of the estate, see Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Historia de Jalapa*, 206–13.
74. Boyd-Bowman, “Negro Slaves in Early Colonial Mexico,” 136–39, 146. This muleteer-slave dynamic also held true in the Guatemalan setting, where trusted slaves were even authorized to purchase other captives through power of attorney, see Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans*, 68–73, 121–22.
75. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 59, 1605/07/21 (no folio); Box 99, f. 1540r; Box 100, f. 2059r; Box 150; and Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Índice notarial*, 45, 187, 189–90, 192, 203, 213.
76. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 367, exp. 11, ff. 492r–493v. In 1630, Lorenzo worked for Captain Rodrigo Serrano, an influential Portuguese slaving agent. By means of their dealings with prominent merchants and planters, men like Lorenzo could accumulate enough capital to purchase their own mules and become independent mule-train owners in their own right.
77. AGI-México, 74, r. 2, n. 30, “Ordenanças hechas por el Lic. Pedro de Vergara Gaviria.” In March 1621, Pedro de Vergara Gaviria tightened controls on the slave trade within New Spain after his visit to Nueva Veracruz. The inspector

- ordered that all muleteers transporting slaves appear before the local justices in “the city of the Angels [Puebla], Mexico and other parts” before delivering the captives to their owners and consignees. See notes 6 and 7.
78. Archivo Notarial de Orizaba (hereafter ANO), Cuaderno 1631–1635, exp. 2, f. 51r–51v.
  79. Rees, “Route Inertia,” 171, 176–77.
  80. Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*, 54–55; and Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 31.
  81. Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Historia de Jalapa*, 31.
  82. Mota y Escobar, *Memoriales del Obispo*, 36–37. For a similar assessment during the mid-seventeenth century, see Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, *Relación de las visitas eclesíásticas*, 77–78.
  83. AGNP, Not. 4, 1621 October, ff. 2335r–2336v. The muleteer Mateo Gallegos sub-contracted a barber, most likely as guard and bloodletter, in 1621: “for the Barber who goes on said mule train caring for the *piezas*, I will be paid six pesos for his person [services].”
  84. Mariza de Carvalho Soares, “African Barbeiros in Brazilian Slave Ports”; and Mariana P. Candido, “Different Slave Journeys,” 403–4.
  85. See appendix.
  86. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 10, exp. 6, f. 129r. The sayales were likely produced in Puebla’s textile mills and, increasingly, by enslaved workers. In January 1687, a slave trader admitted that ten of his captives had perished in Puebla because of the cold (“los frios los an mal tratado mucho”). AGI-Escribanía, 297C, leg. 3, no. 3, f. 4r–4v.
  87. Archivo Histórico Judicial de Puebla (hereafter AHJP), exp. 550, ff. 1r–3r. For local surgeons’ treatment of enslaved populations, see AHJP, exp. 1667/1140 and 851.
  88. We only know about their deaths because the Portuguese slave trader who transported them also died in Mexico City in the fall of 1630. See AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 279, exp. 17, ff. 363v–365v.
  89. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 10, exp. 6.
  90. Gómez, *Experiential Caribbean*, 45. In 1621, the muleteer Gallegos acknowledged that two of the captives he transported had died en route to Puebla. See appendix.
  91. Valle Pavón, “Desarrollo de la economía mercantil.”
  92. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 58, 1605/05/13 (no folio). This overland trip was financed by Poblanos Cristóbal Torres and Joseph de Trujillo, who loaned the Lusophones over one thousand pesos for their expenses.
  93. At the start of the trek from Nueva Veracruz, three hundred African captives made their way to the Venta de la Rinconada in 1669. At least 125 mules would have been needed to transport them. AGI-Contaduría, 893, n. 1, r. 3, ff. 5r–5v.
  94. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 138 (no folio) (1630/05/31).

95. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 103, 1621 October, ff. 2335r–2336v.
96. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 103, 1621 October, ff. 2335r–2336v. Based on extant debt contracts (*cartas de obligación*), free muleteers earned nine to ten pesos per month. See AGNP, Not. 4, Box 151, f. 999r; Not. 4, Box 188, f. 140r.
97. Delinquent muleteers could be forced to pay off a hundred-peso debt in textile mills; see Richard Boyer, “Juan Vásquez,” 434.
98. AGNP, Not. 4, 1621 October, ff. 2335r–2336v. The presence of large numbers of “Angolan” children aboard slave ships bound for Veracruz was tied to the development of “warfare between massed armies” in the Central African hinterland, which in turn led to attacks on noncombatants. For the prevalence of children aboard such vessels, see Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 95–99. For the case of West Central African children in Buenos Aires, see Kara D. Schultz, “‘The Kingdom of Angola Is Not Very Far from Here’: The Río de la Plata, Brazil, and Angola, 1580–1680,” 85–90.
99. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 138, 1630-05-31 (no folio). For the intricacies of arriero life for a later period, see Bernd Hausberger, “En el camino.”
100. J. Jorge Klor de Alva, “Martín Ocelotl,” 134.
101. For Huatusco’s relevance to Mexican commerce, see Valle Pavón, “Desarrollo de la economía mercantil,” 32. For the Bakongo experiences with equines, see Wyatt McGaffey, *Kongo Political Culture*, 102. For the West African case, see Roger M. Blench, “History of Donkeys,” 342.
102. TSTD shows 183 voyages that disembarked captives in Veracruz or New Spain between 1590 and 1640, and an additional 185 voyages that were not completed as intended or for which the outcome is presently unknown. Many voyages in the latter category were registered to sail to “New Spain” but may have ended up going to other ports instead. A “minimum” estimate focusing only on captives currently known to have been disembarked in Veracruz leaves 9,157 enslaved Africans, though many factors indicate that the actual numbers must have been considerably higher. As a “maximum” estimate, one might use the current imputed total number of captives arriving in Veracruz on those 183 voyages, which is 54,753 enslaved people. TSTD, <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/CsSGiZdP>.
103. The same could be said of sugar planters. In 1646, Jacinto Pérez Delgado, the owner of two plantations, asked the Mexican Inquisition for a forty-thousand-peso loan to purchase slaves, oxen, and mules. He claimed that “with the slaves that will enter to replace those that have died and with the oxen and mules that will be furnished . . . both *ingenios* will prosper and their fruits will be abundant.” Archivo Histórico Nacional (Spain), Inquisición, 4815, exp. 15, f. 21r.
104. García de León, *Tierra adentro*, 522–24. Méndez Chillón also appears in the Orizaba notarial archive selling incoming African captives to mule-train owners.
105. Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Índice notarial*, 279. As an African woman in her mid-twenties, María was valued at four hundred pesos. For other captive-mule

- transactions in early seventeenth-century Xalapa, see Bermúdez Gorrochotegui, *Índice notarial*, 101, 156.
106. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 99, f. 154or.
107. For a sample of slave purchases that include the transfer of mules, see AGNP, Not. 4, Box 36, 1590 September, f. 413r; Not. 3, Box 12, 1590 December, f. 1584v; Not. 3, Box 77, 1635 June, f. 1372r.
108. AGNM-Inquisición, vol. 10 exp. 6, ff. 507r–510r.
109. AMP, Reales Cédulas, vol. 9, f. 238r.
110. Guillermo Alberto Rodríguez Ortíz, “El lado afro de Puebla de los Ángeles,” 204–5.
111. AMP, Reales Cédulas, vol. 9, f. 238r.
112. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 101, ff. 2947r–2957r. In an effort to curb fraud throughout the vicerealty, Pedro de Vergara Gaviria, a powerful royal inspector, ordered Pedro de Carmona Tamariz, Puebla’s *depositario general* (custodian of sequestered properties), to hold Luis Mendes and Tomas Rodrigues’s remaining captives.
113. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 78, 1615 December (no folio). For a detailed analysis of this slaving voyage from Lower Guinea, see Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico*, especially chapter 4. This slaving voyage confirms Law’s claim that the Portuguese developed a “regular and substantial trade with Allada” by 1602. Robin Law, *Slave Coast of West Africa*, 118–21.
114. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 78, 1615 December (no folio).
115. AGNP Notarial Database, 1620–1640 bills of slave purchase. In 1620, 373 slaves were sold in Puebla. Five years later, 311 people were sold. Puebla’s slave market would peak with sales for 440 slaves in 1630 and 456 in 1635.
116. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 152, 1635 October, 1725r.
117. AGNP, Not. 4, Box 152, 1635 October, 1701r.
118. AGNP, Not. 4, 1621 October, f. 2335r–2336v. Translation by the author.

## CHAPTER 4

# West Central Africans in the Province of Guatemala, 1605–1655

PAUL LOKKEN



‡ ON MARCH 25, 1622, A YOUNG BOY OF AROUND EIGHT YEARS OF AGE named Simón was put up for auction in the central square of the Honduran port of Trujillo. For the fifth time in six days, an auctioneer known as Mateo *negro*—one of five individuals identified as “black” to serve as *pregonero*, or town crier, in Trujillo in the course of the judicial proceeding that documents the event—sought a purchaser for the *muleque* Simón. Acting on the authority of the investigating judge, Gregorio de la Cueva, Mateo reportedly attempted for more than an hour to obtain a higher price for the young boy than the two hundred tostones offered the previous day by a *vecino* (property owner and long-term resident) of the city, Francisco Mexía Tobar. Although “the better part of the city’s *vecinos* were gathered together in the plaza” as the auction proceeded, no one stepped forward to improve on Mexía Tobar’s offer, and it was ultimately accepted. The two hundred tostones exchanged for Simón were immediately transferred to Gaspar Soler de Arguijo to cover expenses he had incurred in his role as *depositario* (custodian of sequestered properties) charged with looking after the large group of Africans with whom the young boy had disembarked at the port some ten months earlier until their fate was determined. Accomplishing the latter task was the objective of Cueva’s investigation, on orders from Licenciado don Juan de Ibarra,

an *oidor* (judge) on the Audiencia of Mexico who was then engaged in conducting a *visita*, or formal inspection, of the neighboring Audiencia that held court in Santiago de Guatemala, and under whose jurisdiction the Province of Honduras fell.<sup>1</sup>

The involuntary migrants with whom Simón had traveled across the Atlantic Ocean on board the *Nuestra Señora del Socorro* from Luanda to Trujillo, possibly with stops along the way at Pernambuco and Jamaica, had apparently numbered no fewer than 450 at the time of their embarkation on the coast of West Central Africa and at least 394 on arrival to the Caribbean coast of Central America in May 1621.<sup>2</sup> Testimony collected the following December in the wake of the main investor's unexplained murder suggests that just under three hundred then remained in the Trujillo area, three-quarters of them belonging to the estate of the murdered slave trader, Domingo Simón de Acuña; most of the others were considered the property of either the vessel's owner, Cosme Gonzales, or a passenger named Manuel Rodríguez who was said to have fraudulently impersonated the absent Benito López de la Rosa, officially listed as the shipmaster (*maestre de registro*).<sup>3</sup> Deaths from disease were in part responsible for successive reductions in the number of Africans reported, and more occurred during the early months of 1622, with *sarampión* (measles), *viruelas* (smallpox), and *tabardete* (typhus) all mentioned as agents of mortality.<sup>4</sup> Sales, often under legally dubious circumstances since the Audiencia in Santiago had yet to declare on the legal status of a voyage officially destined for Veracruz prior to its *arribada* (alleged emergency landing) in Trujillo, had also contributed to the decline in numbers of captives present in and around the Honduran port. For at least five individuals, these sales included reembarkation on another sea-going journey, this time to Havana, along with other Africans who had arrived on a different vessel.<sup>5</sup>

In mid-1622, many if not all of the Africans from the *Nuestra Señora del Socorro* who still remained in Trujillo were transported to Santiago where they began to be sold on orders of a majority of the *oidores* sitting on the Audiencia there, apparently at less than half the prevailing market rates, over the protests of colleagues and those from the vessel with most to lose. Among the latter was Simón Gómez, nephew of Domingo Simón and "escribano de registro" (person officially designated as ship notary prior to departure) on the voyage from Angola. Gómez claimed ownership of a significant portion of the Africans assigned to his uncle's estate and eventually spent several years in prison for failure to pay *derechos* (duties) owed to the royal treasury.<sup>6</sup>



The charges and countercharges aired in a number of related documents reveal a complicated, factional struggle involving both royal officials and slave traders over the proceeds to be realized from the sale of hundreds of human beings. One conclusion that can be drawn with a high degree of certainty is that this case involved more than twice as many Africans as the 182 who were officially reported. In the significant discrepancy between official and actual numbers, as well as the West Central African origins of the involuntary migrants, the case reflects larger features of the transatlantic slave trade to Spanish America as a whole during the early seventeenth century.

It is useful to consider this evidence for the unapproved arrival on a single voyage of several hundred coerced African migrants to Trujillo—which was not a designated port for their introduction into Spanish America at that time—in light of the recent conclusion that an estimate of 530,000 enslaved Africans arriving in Spanish America prior to 1641, despite being “substantially greater than previous estimates,” nonetheless remains “lower-bound.”<sup>7</sup> Even if the number of individuals carried to Central America’s Caribbean coast aboard the *Nuestra Señora del Socorro* was double the average brought on a dozen or so similar voyages arriving without permission in either Trujillo, Puerto de Caballos (today’s Puerto Cortés), or Santo Tomás de Castilla between 1607 and 1623, the introduction in a period of sixteen years of close to three thousand Africans at a minimum into one of the more peripheral areas of the Spanish Empire is indicative of the broader nature and significance of forced African migration during that era.<sup>8</sup> That the *Nuestra Señora del Socorro* was carrying well over twice the number of slaves declared in port means it easily exceeded the average surplus Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat have estimated for the pre-1641 trade to Spanish America of 80 percent more people than a given ship was either licensed to carry or declared in the port of entry. Applying their operation in the six Central American instances where a relevant number is known produces an average very close to the 287 arrivals the authors suggest, on the basis of all voyages to Spanish America for which sufficient information is available, as an average for other voyages lacking such information. A doubling of the resulting Central American total gives a figure for arrivals of close to 3,500 in the years specified above, although uncertainty regarding the precise number and nature of the other six or so voyages reaching Central America warrants some caution.<sup>9</sup>

In the work that follows, I employ information concerning just over 1,700 enslaved individuals of African ancestry identified by name and other

personal characteristics in slave sales, inventories, wills, and similar records held in the Archivo General de Centro América (AGCA) in Guatemala City as a means of enhancing our understanding of this phase of the forced migration of African laborers, including intra-American links, as manifested in Central America. The documentation consulted was produced in the territory of the modern republics of Guatemala and El Salvador—the mid-colonial Province of Guatemala located within the larger Audiencia of the same name—between 1596 and 1655, with African birth assumed for 554 youths and adults identified by such terms or phrases as “*biafara*,” “*de tierra angola*,” “*de casta anchico*,” or “*de nación congo*.” The evidence cited clearly establishes West Central Africa as the key point of origin for involuntary migration to this region during the first half of the seventeenth century, mirroring the pattern associated throughout the era with Veracruz, the prescribed destination for many of the ships unloading human cargoes in Central America, and with Cartagena as well after 1620.<sup>10</sup> The significance of temporal context is revealed in evidence for a modest emigration of African-born individuals from the Province of Guatemala in the 1650s, thirty years after the peak of arrivals from West Central Africa.

### The Historical Context in the Late Sixteenth Century

At the close of the sixteenth century, the small enslaved population of Santiago de Guatemala (now Antigua) and its surrounding territory was rooted for the most part in Senegambia or, more broadly, the region known to scholars as Upper Guinea.<sup>11</sup> Evidence for recent arrivals to the Province of Guatemala from this or any other African region during the closing decades of the century is scarce, however. Frequent requests to the Crown for more slaves for Honduran mines met with no success; a 1595 letter indicated that no slave ship had arrived for a very long time, while the first direct evidence for an end to this situation dates from twelve years later.<sup>12</sup> One possible example of coerced migration to the region during the late sixteenth century involves a certain Domingo “from Bran country,” named in the record of a transaction conducted in Santiago on June 8, 1596, between the widow Inés de Sierra and her father, Blas Hidalgo de Sierra. Given the description of Domingo as being “entre boçal y ladino,” he had apparently not lived long enough in an Iberian-dominated environment to have acquired the level of linguistic or broader cultural proficiency commonly associated with a fully “ladino” slave of

African birth and thus is unlikely to have been forcibly removed from West Africa more than a year or two earlier.<sup>13</sup>

The presence of the occasional individual like Domingo aside,<sup>14</sup> the vast majority of the enslaved population living in and around Santiago during the closing years of the sixteenth century were most likely to have been either American-born or long-term residents. Ten of thirteen slaves named in a record of property passing from Alvaro de Paz to his son Diego in 1598 were identified as *mulatos* or *mulatas*: two young women, Catalina and Luisa, and eight children said to be between the ages of three months and eight years. And while one or more of the three “blacks” named in the inventory may have migrated involuntarily from Africa, notably Isabel, identified as fifty-five years of age, or Pedro, “very old and infirm,” none was so described.<sup>15</sup> In any case, in this household, the majority of the enslaved were children with at least one recent ancestor of probable non-African origins. Catalina and Luisa, each the mother of two of the children listed, were likely of mixed origins themselves.

The ranks of free people of African ancestry were also expanding rapidly. Christopher Lutz indicates that the number of people who were subject to pay tribute may have doubled in Santiago between 1581 and 1593.<sup>16</sup> While some of these individuals would have been *indios laboríos* (originally *naborías*), urban household servants or other members of the small proportion of Guatemala’s native majority whose links to a particular, tribute-paying indigenous village had been severed, the rest were free blacks and mulattoes, who were also in theory subject to this form of tribute.<sup>17</sup> Members of the latter group are encountered in the documentation in a variety of social circumstances. When Diego de los Reyes, originally from Santo Domingo, made his will in Ciudad Vieja just outside Santiago in 1596, his creditors included the *morena* (“brown woman”) Catalina Fernández, described as a vecina of the town. Among those indebted to Reyes were the free mulattoes Juan Fernández, another vecino of Ciudad Vieja, a *platero* (silversmith) named Melchor, and Alonso Montesinos, the mayordomo (head employee) of an *estancia* (farm) belonging to don Diego de Herrera. Two enslaved men also turned up in the list of individuals owing money or goods to Reyes: the “black man” Francisco de Villanueva, owned by Juan Méndez, and the “mulatto” Bartolo, property of Juan Rodríguez Navarro.<sup>18</sup> In the will immediately following Reyes’s in the notarial records, a slave named Juan Paredes is identified as a creditor of the testator, Diego Ortiz, who acknowledged owing Paredes ten tostones.<sup>19</sup> Descendants of the largely West African

migrants brought in chains to the area a generation or two earlier, in other words, not only formed an integral part of these two testators' social world but occupied a diverse array of statuses within it.<sup>20</sup>

Even some Senegambia-born residents of colonial Guatemala had achieved freedom and a certain degree of social prominence by this time. Pedro Jolofo, who rose to the position of manager of his owner's mule trains while enslaved, was by 1597 apparently not only free but also the owner of two *caballerías* (roughly 210 acres) of land in the Valle de las Vacas, site of modern Guatemala City, as well as a "hermano y fundador" (founding member) of the *cofradía* (confraternity) of Our Lady of the Rosary of the Morenos in Santiago.<sup>21</sup> Jolofo's case was unusual although not unique; Herrera provides evidence for ownership of property as early as the 1550s by free blacks and mulattoes and even a few slaves.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Jolofo's career formed part of a transformation suggested long ago by Severo Martínez Peláez: the decline of African slavery following a sixteenth-century moment of forced African migration to Guatemala and the resultant, rapid ascent toward "middling" social status of people of African origins, especially the growing number of free individuals. Although vague on precise timing, Martínez Peláez implied that imports of African labor occurred only during the brief period between the suppression of indigenous slavery and the large-scale organization of the repartimiento as a replacement mechanism for securing native labor; in other words, between the 1540s and the 1580s.<sup>23</sup> But ongoing losses in the indigenous population,<sup>24</sup> growing demand for labor from an expanding sector of commercial agriculture, and a large-scale organizational effort by the Spanish Crown in concert with Portuguese merchants to increase the supply of African workers to mainland Spanish America all combined to complicate this narrative. As the sixteenth century drew to a close, the Province of Guatemala was in fact on the verge of experiencing its largest wave of involuntary African arrivals, most or nearly all of whom were West Central Africans.

### West Central African Arrivals in the Early Seventeenth Century

In 1605, several young men and women "from Angola country" were sold in Santiago de Guatemala. On February 8, María from Angola, estimated to be about twenty years old and the mother of a nine-month-old girl of the same name, became the property of the widow Ana Calvo. Previously, María had

belonged to at least two other local residents. She was sold to Calvo by Licenciado Alvaro Gómez de Abaunza, who was just departing his post as oidor in Santiago for a more prestigious position on the Audiencia in Mexico City. The oidor, in turn, had purchased María, probably not long before, from Lorenzo de Borrallo, a *labrador* (farmer) in the valley of Mixco (on the northwestern outskirts of modern Guatemala City).<sup>25</sup>

María was not the only young mother from a far-off land to be the subject of a transaction in Santiago that week. The previous day, Domingo Rodríguez had purchased another African carrying the same name, in this case a woman of some twenty-five years of age described as a “bozal de tierra bañol” (or Bañon), along with her infant daughter, Melchora.<sup>26</sup> This María was evidently one of the small number of Senegambians to endure forced migration to Santiago and its environs in the early seventeenth century.

María Angola, on the other hand, had come to a region that within two decades would be the place of residence for hundreds if not thousands of individuals transported from her homeland or neighboring areas of West Central Africa. Two weeks prior to the sales mentioned above, her former owner Lorenzo de Borrallo had sold a certain Francisco “de casta angico [Anchico]” to the same Domingo Rodríguez who later purchased María Bañon. Francisco was apparently a native of the Teke (or Tio) kingdom, located in inland West Central Africa on the northeastern border of the kingdom of Kongo.<sup>27</sup> Other young West Central Africans, all identified like María as natives of “Angola country,” to Kongo’s south, were named in the records of transactions conducted in the city over the months that followed: Beatriz in March 1605, Simón in April, Mateo in May, Diego in June, yet another María in October, and a second Mateo in November.<sup>28</sup>

By what process did these individuals, all of whom save Simón were estimated to be between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, end up in Santiago?<sup>29</sup> In three cases, direct evidence beyond ascribed Angolan origins suggests the individuals involved were brought first to Cartagena de Indias before being moved northwest to Central America. The clearest evidence for this particular journey is a declaration made by García Rodríguez, said to be a resident of the *villa* of La Trinidad de Sonsonate, today the city of Sonsonate in western El Salvador. According to the declaration, Rodríguez had brought the first enslaved man named Mateo along “with other slaves of mine from the kingdom of Angola to the city of Cartagena and to these provinces.”<sup>30</sup> A similar migration experience is likely in the case of Diego, sold to a merchant by Martín Cruzate for 650 tostones and identified as “one of four

slaves included in a legal guarantee from royal officials in Cartagena.”<sup>31</sup> Beatriz, meanwhile, may have journeyed northward to Santiago via Nicaragua. Jácome López Corzo, who purchased Mateo from García Rodríguez, had acquired Beatriz two months earlier from a vecino of León.<sup>32</sup>

At least some of the West Central Africans who found themselves in Santiago in 1605 were already conversant to one degree or another with Iberian cultural practices. Both Francisco the Anchico and García Rodríguez’s Mateo were labeled “entre bozal y ladino,” while none of the others was identified, like María Bañon, as a *bozal*. Extended exposure to Portuguese-inflected Christian influence prior to departure from West Central Africa itself is one possible explanation for their non-bozal designation.<sup>33</sup> Given that very few ships carrying slaves from Angola are presently known to have docked in Cartagena between 1601 and 1605, it is also likely that their respective transatlantic journeys into American bondage had commenced several years earlier, perhaps involving more than one stop along the way to Honduras, and thence Santiago, in a greater Caribbean region that was emerging as a “crossroads of truly global nature” during the early seventeenth century.<sup>34</sup>

The Cartagena-Santiago journeys experienced by at least some of the “Angolas” sold in Santiago in 1605 may have involved the introduction into Central America of only a few people at a time rather than dozens or more aboard a dedicated slaving vessel, although Rodríguez’s presumably seaborne transfer of slaves onward from Cartagena, mentioned above, may constitute evidence for the arrival of at least one such ship in the period 1595–1607. The renewal of large-scale introduction by sea of African labor is manifested far more clearly in a 1607 report by Alonso Criado de Castilla, then president of the Audiencia of Guatemala, concerning the arrival in Trujillo of the caravel *Nuestra Señora de Buen Viaje* with captain Antonio Pinto, the slave trader Héctor Méndez (or Heitor Mendes), and at least 150 Africans on board. The Audiencia’s collection and remittance to Madrid of more than 14,000 of just over 17,786 tostones Méndez owed in derechos and customs duties suggests that his entire human cargo was disembarked in Trujillo and sold either there or inland.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, no further information has come to light regarding either the origins or ultimate destinations of these particular “piezas de esclavos” (“units of slaves”), as they are denominated in the document.

Nevertheless, evidence from Santiago indicates that the presence there of West Central Africans, mostly young men, continued to grow after 1605, implying an increasing inflow of new arrivals whether as a result of seaborne

arrivals to Central America's Caribbean coast or overland movement from either New Spain or points south.<sup>36</sup> In 1606, Luis and Diego, both "from Angola country" and roughly twenty-two and twenty years of age, respectively, were identified in separate sales as former property of the master potter Gaspar de Encinas, in Luis's case, and the barber Juan de Prado, in Diego's.<sup>37</sup> In 1608, at least five young men identified as "Angolas" and an eighteen-year-old woman of the same origins named María changed hands in the city. One of the young men was Sebastián, roughly twenty-two, purchased from Bartolomé Calvo for one thousand tostones by Graviel Aguado, a merchant from Antequera, Oaxaca, who was evidently engaged in overland trade. Another was Andrés, about twenty, whom Aguado apparently brought from Oaxaca before trading him to Juan de Arredondo in exchange for Francisco, a Mandinga man of about the same age.<sup>38</sup>

The commerce conducted by Aguado reveals the status of Santiago as a crossroads as much as a final destination for the West Central Africans who experienced transportation to Central America in the first years of the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the enterprises most likely to employ the labor of young "Angolas" like Sebastián and Andrés were located in the countryside, with sugar plantations increasingly prominent among them. When Juan Gonzales Donis (sometimes de Anís) purchased an Anchico man named Pedro from Baltasar Manzano in Santiago in March 1609, he probably intended to dispatch his newly acquired worker to the *ingenio de azúcar* (sugar estate) he had been developing for over a decade near Lake Amatitlán, just south of modern Guatemala City. He already employed some sixty slaves on this plantation to which dozens of West Central Africans like Pedro would eventually be brought as the enslaved workforce more than tripled in size over the following twenty years.<sup>40</sup>

Labor-starved sugar and indigo producers like Gonzales Donis surely welcomed the influx of West Central Africans into Guatemala during the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>41</sup> Persistent decline in native population numbers, coupled with the Crown's increasingly insistent campaign to restrict the use of indigenous workers in plantation-style agriculture, evidently provided a ready market for Portuguese slave traders like Héctor Méndez who were beginning to see Central America as a place to do business.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the precise number of Africans brought to Santiago during the first few years of the century, it does not appear to have come close to fulfilling the demand for imported labor. In 1609, members of Santiago's cabildo requested delivery of another two thousand African workers to the region.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed, increasing demand for enslaved labor from sugar and indigo producers evidently drove its price up sharply in Santiago between 1605 and 1610. The average paid for twelve apparently healthy individuals of ages sixteen to twenty-five sold in the city in 1605 was roughly 734 tostones. In only five cases did the price exceed seven hundred tostones, with the highest sum paid being 950 tostones for María Bañon, and she was sold together with her infant daughter Melchora.<sup>44</sup> Five years later, the average paid for eight healthy individuals aged seventeen to thirty was 988 tostones.<sup>45</sup> Five of the eight brought prices of one thousand tostones or more, with two valued at 1,200 tostones each: Antón “de tierra angola” and a criolla woman named Juana sold—like María Bañon earlier—together with her infant daughter.<sup>46</sup> Upward pressure on prices is suggested even more clearly in a case from the southeastern end of the Province of Guatemala near San Miguel, in what is now eastern El Salvador. In 1610, a group of six Africans employed in mining there—five men and one woman—initially sold for 830 tostones each. The seller subsequently withheld the captives, however, claiming that their true value was no less than 1,300 tostones each and more than 1,500 in the case of their *capitán*, Juan “of the Angola nation.”<sup>47</sup> Prices moderated significantly thereafter, owing no doubt to the arrival of around a dozen slave ships between 1610 and 1623, followed by an economic downturn after 1630. “Angolas,” the vast majority of African-born individuals sold, brought six hundred tostones each in 1617 and roughly 650 tostones’ worth of indigo each in 1624 when sold in lots of ten to twenty-two “*piezas*”—higher average prices, as might be expected, than in Cartagena, while evidently well below those in more remote Lima. When sold individually, their average value of nine hundred tostones in 1617 fell to around seven hundred tostones between the mid-1620s and mid-1650s.<sup>48</sup>

Aside from local factors such as a boom in commercial agriculture and ongoing decline in indigenous population numbers, the unprecedented influx of involuntary West Central African migration to the Province of Guatemala between 1610 and 1630 also owed to the increasing focus of Portuguese slave traders on West Central Africa following their establishment at Luanda in 1575. This development was intensified by the Spanish Crown’s post-1595 arrangement of large-scale contracts with Portuguese *asentistas* (asiento holders), formally subject to rule by Spain’s King Philip II after his acquisition of the Portuguese Crown in 1580, in an effort to increase the supply of African laborers to its American realms. Hundreds if not thousands of young men and women torn from Kongo or the “kingdoms of Angola” made the



journey first by sea to Trujillo, Santo Tomás de Castilla, or Puerto de Caballos and then by land across Central America to Santiago de Guatemala, often to be sold there to sugar and indigo producers or to be employed on *estancias* and *hatos* (open-range ranches).<sup>49</sup> The impact in northwestern Central America of this involuntary migration is revealed in part in Lutz's assessment that, adjusting for gaps in the evidentiary record, the number of marital unions in Santiago involving at least one enslaved person defined as black probably represented about 15 percent of all marriages between 1600 and 1619, declining slowly but steadily to around 11 percent of the total in the 1650s. Although the data as Lutz reports them do not make clear what proportion of the "black" slaves who appear were African-born, it was likely substantial.<sup>50</sup>

### West Central Africans in the Province of Guatemala

As stated earlier, personal information available on 1,709 enslaved people of African origins who are identified individually in the records dating from the years 1596 to 1655 indicates that at least 554, or some 32 percent of the total, were born in Africa.<sup>51</sup> Some double counting is likely as names like Juan and María appear dozens of times in the records, and there are a number of cases where additional identifying features that might clearly distinguish two individuals possessing the same name are unavailable or insufficient to make a distinction with full confidence. African birth is also not always incontestable, but even in the absence of any indication of recent arrival, the sales of many individuals in Santiago use labels that strongly imply that they were African-born. And while the data remain more impressionistic than statistically robust, they leave no doubt that hundreds and perhaps thousands of West Central Africans were present in the Province of Guatemala during the first half of the seventeenth century, with the region deeply engaged in the significant wave of forced African migration to mainland Spanish America that characterized the era.

Table 4.1 pulls together currently available data on the origins of African-born people in the Province of Guatemala between 1596 and 1655. The most notable feature of the information collected is the preponderance of African-born individuals who are identified as "Angolas" or otherwise associated with West Central Africa. As table 4.1 indicates, a total of 255 men and boys and 134 women and girls are thus identified, together representing about

Table 4.1. Ethnolinguistic Identifications of Africans in the Province of Guatemala, 1596–1655

Identifier	Male	Female	Total
Angola <sup>a</sup>	255	134	389
Congo	34	13	47
Bran	13	6	19
Anchico	14	2	16
Biafara	8	1	9
Ndongo	6	3	9
Bañon	5	2	7
Matamba	2	2	4
Batanba	3	0	3
Mandinga	3	0	3
Other <sup>b</sup>	42	6	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>554</b>

Source: See note 51.

a. May include one Anchico, one San Tomé, and one “criolla de Trujillo” based on identifications of individuals sold in Huehuetlán, Soconusco, in December 1617 who appear to have been included in a lot of twenty-two slaves sold together a few weeks earlier in Santiago. Individuals labeled on the basis of more than one category, such as “Pedro Batanba de nación angola,” are included in the Angola category only. Secondary categories that appear together with a designation as “angola” include Batanba, Benbo, Cachinda, de Cacú, Caguanga, Chiquase, Guaime, Lamba, Machín, Moxinda, Moxoncho, Quinbocinga, Quitama, Quitanga, Vanco, and Viscaíno. Any individual who was identified only on the basis of one of these secondary categories and not also explicitly as “angola” is included under “Other.”

b. Bamba, Calambo, Malemba, Mosangue/Mosungue, Mozambique (two each); Buila, Caculo, Cacundo, Lamba, Mondongo, Moxoncho, Quinanga, Quirimba, Quizama (one each); Balanta, Berbesí, Cazanga, Jolofo (one each); two Arará, two São Tomé (one “natural de San Tomé” and one “de nación San Tomé”), one Jala, and one Terranova; includes eight designated as “bozal recién venido de Guinea,” six simply as “bozal,” and one as “recién venido de Guinea.”\* The remaining four were labeled “de Colinga,” “de Guinea,” “entre bozal y ladino,” and Viscaíno.†

\* At least eight of the nine individuals said to be “recién venido de Guinea” were sold by slave traders who had proceeded from Angola. The phrase was also applied to some slaves who were explicitly designated as “Angola” in origin, demonstrating that “Guinea” was not always understood narrowly to imply the region of Upper Guinea. Cf. Wheat, “First Great Waves,” 11, n35; and Fuente, Havana, 38–39.

† Sandoval mentions “Biojoes Bizcaínos,” but an individual defined as “angola vizcaíno” appears in the same inventory in which the “vizcaíno” included here is listed. See Sandoval, *Un tratado sobre la esclavitud*, 138; and AGCA, A1, leg. 536, exp. 9039, ff. 296v–302 (Bel-trán).

70 percent of all African-born slaves named in the records consulted. The most common labels for individuals attributed West Central African origins are, in 157 cases, simply “angola,” as in “Pedro negro angola,” and in 134 cases, as being “de tierra angola” or “de tierra de angola.” Seventy-two others are labeled as either “de nación angola” or “angola de nación,” and nine more as “de casta angola,” with the remaining seventeen said to have come from the “kingdom” or “kingdoms” of Angola, or simply from Angola.

The West Central African contingent of the African-born group is significantly enlarged with the inclusion of nearly one hundred other individuals associated with the kingdom of Kongo, in forty-seven cases, or, in forty-nine others, with a number of additional West Central African ethnicities or polities such as Anchico, Ndonggo, Matamba, and Malemba. Overall, and omitting the “unknown” category, no fewer than 485 of 535 African-born individuals are defined in one or another way as West Central African in origin. Viewed over time, the proportion climbs steadily through the first half of the seventeenth century. Breaking the figures down by decade of first appearance of an enslaved individual in the records (and most appear only once), the proportion of the total made up by West Central Africans prior to 1610 rises during each of the following three decades—when the spike in slave ships proceeding from Angola to Central America’s Caribbean ports occurred—to comprise almost all of the arrivals between 1640 and 1655. At the same time, the average ages ascribed to the West Central Africans appearing in the documents rises significantly between 1605 and 1655. In records dating from 1605 to 1619, sixty-eight of eighty-nine such individuals who were ascribed ages were said to be under twenty-five (76 percent), with just four said to be over age thirty. For the period 1640–1655, by contrast, nineteen of seventy-five West Central Africans with an age listed, or just 25 percent of the total, were identified as being under twenty-five, while forty-one, or 55 percent, were ascribed an age of at least thirty.

As is to be expected, the minority of Senegambians and other West Africans appearing in these records, including their total numbers and origins, are disproportionately concentrated in documents produced during the century’s opening decades. But a few do turn up in unexpected circumstances, somewhat complicating the neatness of the trends outlined above. No member of the largest West African category to appear, the Bran, would have been younger than forty in 1630, at least not those who are ascribed an age in the records. But five young men who had evidently come from nearby regions of West Africa do turn up thereafter: Luis Bañon, about twenty in 1630, Tomás

“de tierra biafara,” roughly twenty in 1636, and, two years later, Juan and Manuel “de nación biafara,” about twenty-four and eighteen, respectively, and Lucas “of the Jolof nation,” roughly twenty.<sup>52</sup> The manner of their arrival in the region, whether by sea or overland, is unknown, although evidence for frequent transport of slaves by mule train between Santiago and Antequera and Puebla to the north in New Spain suggests a likely possibility.

### Internal Routes

Despite the arrivals of slave ships to Trujillo in 1639 and 1641 and some clandestine Dutch slave trading activity following the collapse of the *asiento* system, overland transport was the basis for what appears to have been, strikingly enough, a modest reversal in the flow of trafficking of West Central Africans around midcentury, taking more *out of* rather than into the Province of Guatemala even as the average age of African-born people advanced.<sup>53</sup> Records of midcentury slave sales in Santiago suggest that demand from merchants intent on transporting slaves to other parts of Spanish America spiked there in the early 1650s. Of a total of 145 individuals sold in Santiago between 1650 and 1655 in the documentation consulted for this study,<sup>54</sup> at least fifty-two appear to have been leaving the Province of Guatemala altogether, including fifteen of the twenty-nine West Central Africans identified. A total of twenty-four out of fifty-two slaves were purchased by either Captain Pantaleón Luis Barreros (or Riberos) or his cousin Cosme Luis Varero (or Barreros), apparently for transport to Peru. One-third of these were African-born: six “Angolas,” Sebastián Congo, and Isabel Matamba. Among the “Angolas” were Sebastián’s spouse, Gracia, and Alejandro’s, Isabel, with the latter couple’s two criollo children, Lucas, eight, and María, three, also included in the transactions. These family units, at least at this stage of their odyssey, survived intact the brutality of economic exchange involving human property, perhaps benefiting from the protections mandated if not always enforced under Spanish slave law.<sup>55</sup>

Other transactions that also appear to have involved the forced migration of West Central Africans out of the Province of Guatemala toward the south included several purchases made by a resident of the Nicaraguan port of Realejo, Captain Manuel López Prieto, who bought nine slaves including four “Angolas” and two criollo children of Inés, one of two “Angola” women purchased.<sup>56</sup> Two vecinos of nearby León each bought a slave as well, one being

Juan “de nación matamba.”<sup>57</sup> Transactions of a similar nature but involving only criollo slaves included the transfer of one slave apiece to three vecinos of Lima and a vecino of Callao, and the purchases of six criollos by a vecino of Panama named Captain Lucas Gómez Castillo.<sup>58</sup> At least five other slaves including two “Angolas” appear to have been heading north instead to New Spain: three men and one woman with the Puebla-based mule-train owner Gregorio de la Serna—who was already buying slaves in Santiago as of 1648—and Mateo Angola, sold in Santiago by de la Serna to don Joseph de la Torre, a vecino of Puebla.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, Pedro del Río, a vecino of Havana, purchased one criollo for himself and a second for a compatriot.<sup>60</sup> Several other purchasers identified in the records as resident in the city rather than vecinos of it, but with no additional information available on their specific ties to other places, may also have intended to transport slaves out of the region.

A rare document from the seventeenth century held in El Salvador’s national archives illuminates the overland traffic in slaves heading southeast to the port of Realejo and thence, perhaps, to points beyond by sea during the early 1650s. The record of an investigation pursued in the village of Atiquizaya, in what is now western El Salvador, into the death of a muleteer named Diego Trexo de Parada in December 1653 indicates the mule train was transporting five enslaved people to Realejo, although none appear to have been African-born. Among those who claimed ownership, Marcos Guerra also turns up twice among the slave buyers who appear in the AGCA records discussed above. Guerra had purchased Marta “de nación Lamba” in 1647, and then, in late October 1653, just a few weeks prior to the departure of Trexo’s mule train from Santiago, the “negra criolla” Francisca, about twenty-three years of age, and her two-year-old *mulatilla* daughter, Ursula. Two individuals of the same names are listed in the inventory produced during the investigation into Trexo’s death, although the Francisca who appears there, and who was noted to be shackled at the ankles, was said to be thirty to forty years old, while the Ursula referred to is identified as a “negrita de teta” (black, female, nursing infant) and not explicitly associated with Francisca. In his attempts to recover her from the prison in the villa of La Trinidad to which she had been consigned during the judicial process, Guerra identified Francisca as a *cimarrona* (run-away slave), for which reason, he said, he had been transporting her in shackles. While neither the outcome of the case nor the slaves’ ultimate fate is clarified in the document, it allows us a further glimpse into the circumstances affecting the experiences of enslaved Africans that were created by Santiago’s links to a Pacific coast slave trading network.<sup>61</sup>

As observed earlier in the chapter, Santiago had long been a crossroads of sorts for slave traders, including those intending to move human property out of the province altogether. For example, most if not all of the twenty-two West Central African adults who were sold along with two infants in 1617 in the largest single transaction yet uncovered for that city were transported immediately to Huehuetlán in Soconusco (in what is today Chiapas, Mexico) for resale.<sup>62</sup> But at least in the decades immediately preceding and following that sale, most recently arrived West Central Africans appear to have been purchased by residents of the Province of Guatemala. In 1624, for instance, the large-scale indigo grower Sancho de Carranza y Medinilla and his brothers bought at least thirty-one newly arrived migrants from Angola, all of whom were purchased from the transatlantic slave trader Duarte Gómez de Chávez in the space of a few weeks for employment on property located directly south of Santiago near the Pacific coast.<sup>63</sup> A quarter century later, however, West Central Africans were apparently more likely to be departing from than arriving in the province, probably due to demand elsewhere in combination with local economic weakness and the gradual expansion of a free population of mostly mixed origins as potential laborers at the same time that indigenous population decline was finally beginning to be reversed. Lutz suggests on the basis of Santiago's baptismal records that "small numbers of adult bozales continued to be bought and sold" there in the latter decades of the seventeenth century, but they were now entering a society where enslaved people of mixed origins described as "mulatos" were beginning to outnumber those defined as "black," African-born or not.<sup>64</sup> Perhaps above all, the dramatic, post-1641 decline in transatlantic slave trading to Spanish America as a whole<sup>65</sup> helped ensure that the days when several slaving vessels per decade might each transport hundreds of coerced migrants directly from West Central Africa to an economically peripheral and largely indigenous region of Spanish-ruled territory were over.

### Notes

1. Archivo General de Centro América (hereafter AGCA), A1 (4), legajo 273, expediente 2850, "Autos fechos por el S.<sup>or</sup> g<sup>o</sup> rruiz de la cueba Juez de Comiss.<sup>on</sup> Del señor liçençiado don J<sup>o</sup> de ybarra del Consejo De su mag.<sup>d</sup> su oydor de la rreal audiencia de la çiudad de mexico y vis.<sup>or</sup> general de la de guatt.<sup>a</sup> en Razon de los bienes y armazon de negros De el Capitan dgõ simon de acuña Difunto"; see

- especially folios 70v–71v, 82r, 88r–89v. One tostón equaled four reales, with two per each “peso de a ocho reales.”
2. AGCA, A1 (4), leg. 273, exp. 2850, ff. 12v, 23r; and AGCA, A1, leg. 1683, exp. 10,338, ff. 245v–248r, “Libro de los pleitos y negocios de Justicia desta Real Audiencia de Guatemala, Comensa el Año 1602 hasta él de 1640.” My thanks to Rodolfo Hernández Méndez for bringing the latter source to my attention. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD), <https://slavevoyages.org>, voyage 42808.
  3. AGCA, A1 (4), leg. 273, exp. 2850, ff. 10r–18v.
  4. AGCA, A1 (4), leg. 273, exp. 2850, ff. 4v, 24v, 78r–78v, 86r–86v, 92r; and AGCA, A1, leg. 5356, exp. 45,251, ff. 6v, 11v, 17v–18v, 21v–22v. “Autos contra Simon Gomez por lo que adeuda de reales derechos en la introduccion que hizo de unos esclavos.”
  5. AGCA, A1 (4), leg. 273, exp. 2850, ff. 22v, 24r–25r, 97v–98v; 99v–100r; and AGCA, A1, leg. 5356, exp. 45,251, ff. 31r–35r.
  6. AGCA, A1, leg. 1683, exp. 10,338, ff. 182v, 185v–186r; and AGCA, A1, leg. 5356, exp. 45,251, ff. 36r–50r.
  7. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 442.
  8. On the years around 1620 as the pre-1800 peak of transatlantic slave trading to Spanish America as a whole, see Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 436–37.
  9. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 440–42. For discussion in greater depth of voyages arriving in Central America, see Paul Lokken, “From the ‘Kingdoms of Angola,’” 183–92.
  10. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 446; David Wheat, “Afro-Portuguese Maritime World,” 104–9, appendices A and B; Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 147–56; Nicolás Ngou-Mve, *El África bantú*, 172–73; and Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 148–52 and appendices, cuadros 2–4 (unpaginated). Yucatan also received Africans allegedly en route to Veracruz, including forty-seven brought to Campeche in 1599. See Ngou-Mve, *El África bantú*, 151–52; and Matthew Restall, *Black Middle*, 18–19.
  11. Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans*, 113. The ethnic labels of fifty-five of eighty-three individuals identified as African-born in Herrera’s sample of 249 slaves sold in Santiago between 1544 and 1587 are associated with Upper Guinea.
  12. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI)-Guatemala 49, n. 58, image 2, Gonzalo Rodríguez and Francisco Romero of the Caja Real in Comayagua to Crown, April 29, 1585; AGI-Guatemala 49, n. 61, im. 2, Francisco Romero and Gregorio Santiago of the Caja Real in Comayagua to Crown, July 14, 1589; AGI-Guatemala 49, n. 62, im. 3, Gregorio Santiago of the Caja Real of Comayagua to

- Crown, May 9, 1591; AGI-Guatemala 49, n. 63, ims. 1–2, Francisco Romero to Crown, February 26, 1595; AGI-Guatemala 10, r. 23, n. 176, im. 4, Dr. Morillo de la Cerda to Crown (1596?); and AGI-Guatemala 12, r. 4, n. 46, im. 27, Audiencia President Alonso Criado de Castilla to Crown, May 15, 1607. AGI documents consulted online through Portal de Archivos Españoles at pares.mcu.es.
13. AGCA, A1, leg. 810, ff. 92r–92v (incomplete protocolo of Sebastián Gudiel), slave sale, June 8, 1596, Santiago de Guatemala. Because Domingo was sold with an acknowledged *tacha*, or flaw, his physical description is unusually detailed. He was noted to be tall and beardless with an inflamed leg resulting from an old sore (*llaga*).
  14. Evidence from Salvadoran property inventories produced in the early 1620s also suggests occasional late sixteenth-century arrivals: an “Angola” man from Quizama said to be sixty, a Mozambique man of around fifty, and a Congo man and two Biafara men said to be in their forties. See AGCA, A1 (3), leg. 380, exp. 4251 (1620), f. 204v, “Libro y cuenta de La hazienda de san Lucas [Usulután]”; and AGCA, A1, leg. 1241 (1622), ff. 187r–187v (protocolo of Alonso Rodríguez), censo.
  15. AGCA, A1, leg. 1241, ff. 232v–233r (Rodríguez), copy of “Bienes que se dan a Diego de Paz para deudas y funeral,” July 30, 1598, in 1620 *censo* dispute. Diego’s father, Alvaro de Paz, purchased Isabel “portuguesa” in 1575, perhaps the woman named here who was thus possibly Iberian- or even Cape Verdean-born. See Juan José Falla, *Extractos de escrituras públicas*, 260.
  16. Christopher H. Lutz, *Santiago*, 253–54.
  17. Libro 7, título quinto, leyes primera (1574) y tercera (1577), in *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, 2:285–85v; and Lutz, *Santiago*, 253.
  18. AGCA, A1, leg. 810, ff. 93r–96r (Gudiel), will, May 7, 1596. “Moreno/a” (“brown”) often appears in place of “negro/a” as a racial descriptor for free “blacks,” presumably because of the latter term’s frequent deployment to signify “slave.”
  19. AGCA, A1, leg. 810, f. 97r (Gudiel), will, July 14, 1596.
  20. As neither Reyes nor Ortiz was classified by origin, they were presumably recognized as *españoles*.
  21. AGCA, A1, leg. 810, ff. 145r–147v (Gudiel), will, November 2, 1597, Santiago; and Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans*, 121–22. Herrera says Jolofo remained a slave, perhaps because of a substantial debt to his former owner’s heirs that related to his purchase of freedom.
  22. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans*, 115, 130–31.
  23. Severo Martínez Peláez, *La patria del criollo*, 275. On the emergence of the repartimiento as “a major supplier of labor after the epidemics of the 1570s,” see Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 208.
  24. On Martínez Peláez’s inattention to indigenous demographic decline, see W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz, eds., “Introduction,” xxx.



25. AGCA, A1, leg.431, exp.10,433, ff. 27r–28v; or, in pencil, ff. 95r–96v (protocolo of Cristóbal de Aceituno), slave sale, February 8, 1605.
26. AGCA, A1, leg. 431, exp. 10,432, ff. 25v–26v/penciled ff. 93v–94v (Aceituno), slave sale, February 7, 1605.
27. AGCA, A1, leg. 431, exp. 10,459, ff. 35v–38r/penciled ff. 145v–148r (Aceituno), slave sale, February 7, 1605; Linda M. Heywood, “Slavery and Its Transformation,” 13–14; Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*, 54, 128; and J. D. LaFleur, ed. and trans., *Pieter van den Broecke’s Journal*, 90n1, 100n1.
28. AGCA, A1, leg. 433, ff. 38v–45r, 54v, 224v–226r, 236r–238v (Aceituno), slave sales, March 11, May 11, October 17, and November 5, 1605; AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 61r–61v (Gudiel), slave sale, June 2, 1605; and AGCA, A1, leg. 433, penciled ff. 135r–138r (Aceituno), *pleito*, April 16, 1605. Two other African-born individuals who appear in the 1605 records consulted—Francisco “of the Bran nation” and the forty-five-year-old Catalina “from Congo country”—do not seem to have been recent arrivals. See AGCA, A1, leg. 431, exp. 10,458, ff. 34r–35v/penciled ff. 144r–145v (Aceituno), slave sale, February 7, 1605; and AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 32r–33r (Gudiel), will, February 8, 1605.
29. Simón’s age is not provided in the record of the lawsuit in which he is named. Ages are generally entered into the record explicitly as approximations with such phrases as “poco más o menos” or “será de edad de.”
30. AGCA, A1, leg. 433, penciled ff. 236r–238v (Aceituno), slave sale, May 11, 1605.
31. AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 61r–61v (Gudiel), slave sale, June 2, 1605.
32. AGCA, A1, leg. 433, penciled f. 54v (Aceituno), Slave sale, March 11, 1605.
33. John Thornton, “Religious and Ceremonial Life,” 83–87.
34. Quotation from Wheat, “Afro-Portuguese Maritime World,” 51–52. Appendix B in the same work provides data showing nearly 9,500 West Central Africans arriving in Cartagena between 1595 and 1601, with an eight-year gap thereafter in evidence for further such arrivals. On the likelihood of a few arrivals in the interval, see David Wheat, “First Great Waves,” 14.
35. AGI-Guatemala, 12, r. 4, n. 46, im. 27, Criado de Castilla to Crown, May 15, 1607; see also TSTD voyage 42838. On the arrival at Trujillo in July 1610 of a second caravel operating on the account of Méndez, this one definitely arriving from Angola and carrying a minimum of 199 captives, see Lokken, “From the ‘Kingdoms of Angola,’” 189–90.
36. Ngou-Mve suggests the number of arrivals to Veracruz rose quite dramatically in 1605 to a level greater than twice the official figure. See Ngou-Mve, *El África bantú*, 122–24.
37. AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 102r–103r (Gudiel), slave sales, March 25, 1606; and AGCA, A1, leg. 433, penciled f. 476v (Aceituno), slave sale, November 13, 1606. Luis was sold for 875 tostones, Diego for 950 tostones. It is possible Diego was the eighteen-year-old of the same name sold earlier in June 1605. If so, the increase of three

- hundred tostones in his price, nearly a 50 percent rise in a year and a half, may have indicated the acquisition of a skill. But see below on prices.
38. AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 89r–190r, 198r–199r (Gudiel), slave sales, January 26 and February 26, 1608; and AGCA, A1, leg. 355, exps. 7308–7310, sequential ff. 219v–221r, 282v–284r, 292v–294r, 302r–303r (protocolos of Francisco de Vega), slave sales, January 31, March 28, April 9 and 11, 1608. Three of the six sold were labeled “de tierra angola” and the other three as “de casta angola.”
  39. On Santiago as a “regional center for the African slave trade” from the mid-sixteenth century, see Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans*, 116–17.
  40. AGCA, A1, leg. 1483, stamped ff. 224r–225v, censo redemption, February 25, 1609; and AGCA, A1, leg. 1483, stamped ff. 301r–302r (Vega), slave sale, March 29, 1609. Of nearly two hundred enslaved individuals residing on the ingenio de Anís in 1630, at least seventy were West Central Africans. As about half of the latter were said to be at least forty years of age, it is likely some were already present among the 1609 workforce. See AGCA, A1, leg. 536, ff. 296v–302r (protocolo of Juan Beltrán), inventory, February 18, 1630; and Paul Lokken, “Angolans in Amatitlán,” 30–31, 34–35. A useful recent survey of the history of Guatemalan ingenios and trapiches is unfortunately misleading in regard to this inventory and in some other respects. See Regina Wagner, *Historia del azúcar*, especially 33–37, 55–56, 68.
  41. In April 1611, the incipient sugar baron purchased María “of the Angola casta” for 850 tostones from a “cargador de Angola” named Ximon, or Simón, Rodríguez (variants of this name are associated with four voyages from the early 1620s included in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database>). The record of María’s sale illuminates in striking fashion the human costs of the trade in which Rodríguez was engaged. Two individuals changed hands: María, about twenty, and her month-old daughter Ana, a *mulatilla* (“little mulata”). The purchaser promised to ensure Ana’s care in anticipation of the day when Rodríguez, who freed her, returned. María, it seems safe to say, had borne the slave trader’s child, whose destiny he controlled. See AGCA, A1, leg. 355, exp. 7316, ff. 139v–141r (Vega), slave sale, April 10, 1611.
  42. Orders requiring that African or other workers be substituted for indigenous labor in various tasks include decrees of November 24, 1601, AGCA, A1, leg. 4576, exp. 39,529, ff. 45v–50r; November 24, 1602, AGCA, A1, leg. 1514, ff. 33r–34r; and May 26, 1609, AGCA, A1, leg. 1514, f. 67r.
  43. AGI-Guatemala, 42, n. 12, f. 3r, “Instruzion que la Ziudad de Santiago de los caualleros de la Provincia de Guathemala ynvia a don carlos vasq.z de coronado Procurador general de la dicha ciudad para que ante Su mag.d en el R.L consejo de las Indias La presente y pida le haga md,” April 6, 1609. W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz have recently concluded that the indigenous population nadir “was likely reached . . . a quarter of the way through the

seventeenth century, after which the situation stabilized.” For the Province of Guatemala as a whole, including what is now El Salvador, their method for determining an aggregate population figure for tribute-paying indigenous communities in the mid-1620s suggests a total of just under 181,000. By comparison, a few thousand Africans, at most, would have constituted a small minority of the overall population, underscoring the economic significance Spaniards attributed to African labor. See W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz with Wendy Kramer and William R. Swezey, “*Strange Lands and Different Peoples*,” 224, 227–28.

44. AGCA, A1, leg. 431, exp. 10,432, ff. 25v–28v/penciled ff. 93v–96v; exp. 10,459, ff. 35v–38r/penciled ff. 145v–148; exp. 10,466, ff. 50r–52r (Aceituno), slave sales, February 7 (2), February 8, March 3, 1605; AGCA, A1, leg. 433, ff. 25v–27r, 38v–45r, 54v, 224v–226r, 236r–238v, 346v–348r (Aceituno), slave sales, March 11, May 11, September 9, October 17, November 5 and 14, 1605; and AGCA, A1, leg. 811, ff. 61r–61v, 83r–85r (Gudiel), slave sales, June 2, October 17, 1605. On premiums paid in Cartagena and Havana for slaves from Upper Guinea over those from Angola, see Wheat, “First Great Waves,” 19; Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 151–52; and Alejandro de la Fuente with the collaboration of César García del Pino and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, *Havana and the Atlantic*, 151. The Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval provided a contemporary perspective on the discount for “Angolas y Congos,” suggesting they were “*pusilánimes*” (pusillanimous) and “*huidores*” (runaways); Alonso de Sandoval, *Un tratado sobre la esclavitud*, 139.
45. AGCA, A1, leg. 355, exp. 7312, ff. 385v–386v, 406v–408r; exp. 7313, ff. 88v–90r, 113v–115r, 117r–118r; exp. 7314, ff. 327v–330r, 345r–345v, 366v–368r (Vega), slave sales, February [?], March 4 and 6, August 7 and 30, September 23, October 19, December 5, 1610.
46. The sale of Antón was revoked four days after it took place; AGCA, A1, leg. 355, exp. 7312, ff. 126v–127r (Vega).
47. AGCA, A1 (3), leg. 47, exp. 490 (copy of protocolo of Bartolomé Alonso Xirón), slave sale, September 19, 1610.
48. Of fifty-three adult “Angolas” sold in the lots of ten or more mentioned, just eight were women. On prices elsewhere, see Wheat, “First Great Waves,” 19; Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 46, 151–52; and Frederick P. Bowser, *African Slave in Colonial Peru*, appendix B. On the post-1630 economic downturn, see MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, especially 310.
49. AGCA, A1 (3), leg. 380, exp. 4253, unmarked ff. 7r, 9r, 24r (1621), mortual of Bartolomé de Quintanilla, Apastepeque; and Lokken, “From the ‘Kingdoms of Angola,’” 197–200.
50. See Lutz, *Santiago*, figures on 176–78 and adjusted totals on 87. For discussion of marriage in relation to African-born slaves residing on rural plantations during this period, see Lokken, “Angolans in Amatitlán,” 32–35.

51. A file listing each of the 1,709 individuals along with the sources of evidence is available upon request from the author.
52. AGCA, A1, leg. 536, exp. 9039, ff. 296v–302 (Beltrán); AGCA, A1, leg. 759, f. 217r (protocolo of Pedro de Estrada), slave sale, September 27, 1636; AGCA, A1, leg. 1126, f. 47v (protocolo of Marcos de Ledesma), inventory, January 3, 1638. Russell Lohse's evidence for the Islamic identity expressed by a certain Manuel "de tierra jolof" in Costa Rica raises intriguing questions about Lucas's experience among Iberian Christians. See Russell Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 54–55, 61. Lohse also provides an insightful discussion of the problems inherent in assuming the ethnic or geography-based West (or other) African labels assigned to slaves corresponded directly to their actual identities (an issue of long-standing debate in the scholarship); see Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 53–62.
53. AGCA, A1, leg. 1559, exp. 10,203, ff. 35r–37v, 93r–95v (1641–1642); AGCA, A1, leg. 1519, exp. 10,074, ff. 90r–90v (1662); and Francisco de Paula García Peláez, *Memorias*, 2:28.
54. Two other slaves appearing in these 1650–1655 sales were sold on Guatemala's Pacific coast.
55. AGCA, A1, leg. 847, exp. 9340, 4a. sección, mayo y junio, ff. 41v–42r (protocolo of Gaspar de Gallegos), slave sale, July 9, 1650; AGCA, A1, leg. 848, exp. 9341, 1a. sección, enero, ff. 43r–43v, 3a. sección, enero y febrero 2, ff. 13r–14r, 50r–51r; 4a. sección, febrero y marzo, ff. 7r–8r, 31r–31v, 35r–35v, 37r–37v; 5a. sección, marzo y abril, ff. 2r–2v, 7r–8v, 26r–26v, 36r–36v, 48v–49r, 50v–51r; 6a. sección, abril y mayo, ff. 13r–13v (Gallegos), slave sales, January 24, February 17 and 28, March 3, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 29, and 31, April 5, 8, and 13, 1653; and AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 5a. sección, octubre hasta diciembre, ff. 80r–82r (Gallegos), slave sales (3), December 24, 1654. See also AGCA, A1, leg. 848, exp. 9341, 4a. sección, febrero y marzo, ff. 32r–32v, 38r–39r (Gallegos), obligation, March 3, 1653, and poder, March 14, 1653. Pantaleón Luis formed a company with Francisco Juárez (or Pérez) Romero, mentioned in one sale, and was clearly also working together with his cousin Cosme. For healthy skepticism regarding the efficacy of Iberian protection for legal marriages between slaves, if based on evidence from circumstances he notes to be somewhat unusual, see Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 188–90. The exceedingly skewed sex ratios evident in this chapter's tables reveal the sheer demographic obstacles presented in Guatemala to conjugal unions, formal or not, involving African-born men and women.
56. AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 3a. sección, marzo y abril, ff. 33v–35r; 4a. sección, mayo junio y julio, ff. 10r–11r, 14r–15r, 19v–20r, 21r–21v, 33r–34v, 38v–39v (Gallegos), slave sales, April 12, May 30, June 1, 8, 16, and 26, 1654.
57. AGCA, A1, leg. 847, exp. 9340, 3a. sección, marzo abril mayo, ff. 13v–14r (Gallegos), slave sale, April 20, 1650; and AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 2a. sección, marzo, ff. 31v–32v (Gallegos), slave sale, March 22, 1654.

58. AGCA, A1, leg. 848, exp. 9341, 1a. sección, enero, ff. 10v–11v; 6a. sección, abril y mayo, ff. 47r–47v, 8a. sección, mayo y junio y julio, ff. 6r–7v, 17v–18r; 11a. sección, ff. 17r–17v (Gallegos), slave sales, January 4, May 12, June 26 and 30, July 4, and October 27, 1653; and AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 3a. sección, marzo y abril, ff. 10r–10v; 4a. sección, mayo junio y julio, ff. 1r–1v; 5a. sección, octubre hasta diciembre, ff. 47v–48r, 61r–61v (Gallegos), slave sales, March 31, May 19, December 16–17, 1654. In one instance, Gómez's activity was facilitated by Fernando de Cuéllar, a transatlantic slave trader then present in Santiago who had accompanied Lorenzo Andrés Gramajo on the 1641 voyage of the *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios y San Lorenzo* to Trujillo, via which at least seventy-six "Angolas" were apparently introduced into the province through San Miguel. Cosme Gonzales, owner in 1621 of the *Nuestra Señora del Socorro*, served twenty years later as depositario in Trujillo for the "Angolas" brought by Gramajo and Cuéllar while a criminal case for treating with pirates unfolded against them. See AGCA, A1, leg. 1559, exp. 10,203, ff. 35r–37v, 93r–95v.
59. AGCA, A1, leg. 846, ff. 27r–28r, 125r–127v (Gallegos), slave sales, February 7 and 10, 1648; AGCA, A1, leg. 847, exp. 9340, 2a. sección, enero, ff. 16r–17r (Gallegos), slave sale, January 17, 1650; AGCA, A1, leg. 848, exp. 9341, 2a. sección, enero y febrero, ff. 35v–36r, 37r–37v; 3a. sección, enero y febrero 2, ff. 33r–33v (Gallegos), slave sales, February 4 and 12, 1653; and AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 2a. sección, marzo, ff. 42r–42v (Gallegos), slave sale, March 23, 1654. De la Serna also conveyed slaves belonging to others north for sale in Puebla from time to time. See AGCA, A1, leg. 1483, ff. 50v–52r (protocolo of Juan de Medina), poder, August 12, 1651.
60. AGCA, A1, leg. 848, exp. 9341, 12a. sección, noviembre y diciembre, ff. 9r–9v (Gallegos), slave sale, November 15, 1653; AGCA, A1, leg. 845, primera sección, ff. 22v–23v (Gallegos), slave sale, December 30, 1653. Del Río is the only one of the traders mentioned who also turns up in these records transporting a slave to Guatemala, again on behalf of another vecino of his home city. See AGCA, A1, leg. 849, 5a. sección, octubre hasta diciembre, ff. 58v–59v (Gallegos), slave sale, December 15, 1654.
61. Archivo General de la Nación, San Salvador, Fondo Colonial, leg. 1, exp. 2 (the document is listed in the catalog as caja 7, expediente 1, BD 4035).
62. Lokken, "From the 'Kingdoms of Angola,'" 185.
63. Lokken, "From the 'Kingdoms of Angola,'" 199.
64. Lutz, *Santiago*, 86, 89–90.
65. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 440, 442–43.



## CHAPTER 5

# Slave Trading in Antequera and Interregional Slave Traffic in New Spain, 1680–1710

SABRINA SMITH



‡ AS A YOUNG AFRICAN-BORN SLAVE, ANTONIO MARTÍNEZ'S JOURNEY to Antequera (present-day Oaxaca City, Mexico) in 1703 took him from Mozambique through the Indian Ocean trade to Manila, in the Philippines, and onward to a port in Acapulco, New Spain. Another resident of Antequera named Miguel de la Flor was a creole slave with an Angolan mother and a father from Galicia, Spain. As a creole *mulato*, Miguel interacted with merchants and ecclesiastical officials in a manner that redefined the meaning of enslavement in this colonial city. Antonio and Miguel are just two examples of the many slave imports whose lives emphasize the complexity of the slave trade to Antequera. Enslaved people described as creole and *bozal* (unacculturated) reached Antequera from various locations including East, West, and West Central Africa, Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and Europe.<sup>1</sup> Antonio's arrival to the Valley of Oaxaca also suggests that the demand for slave labor continued in Antequera during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, despite a large and diverse population of indigenous peoples surrounding the city and prevailing Spanish colonial labor systems. Thus, colonial changes such as a declining native population and slow economic growth in the region led to an increase in slave importation to Oaxaca during this period. While some African arrivals such as Antonio Martínez were

African-born, the vast majority of slaves in Antequera were born in the Americas, like Miguel de la Flor. Moreover, these creole slaves in Antequera arrived from several cities in Mesoamerica and were often the black or mulato descendants of African-born slaves. This chapter reassesses the volume, routes, and origins of slave arrivals to Antequera between 1680 and 1710. It suggests that interregional and intercolonial trades of black and mulato slaves continued alongside the importation of African-born slaves via transatlantic routes but in larger numbers and with more variation than previously known. This chapter complements the other chapters on New Spain by focusing on the enslaved population within the colony rather than on the movement of people between coastal and interior areas, which provides us with a fuller understanding of the interactions between African-born and African-descent populations in New Spain.

As a small city in southern New Spain, Antequera's slave population represented the local effects of broader imperial changes in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Antequera was established in 1529 as an administrative and commercial center whose trade routes connected Veracruz, Mexico City, and Puebla with points further south, such as Chiapas, Guatemala, Peru, and New Spain's Pacific coast.<sup>3</sup> While the geographic position of Antequera made it a nexus for interregional trade, it was still relatively distant from key ports in Veracruz and Acapulco.<sup>4</sup> During the second half of the seventeenth century, Antequera's economy and population continued to grow, and by 1699, free and enslaved people of African descent represented about a quarter of the city's overall population of approximately six thousand inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Changes in the city's economy and population increased the need for slave labor in Oaxaca's sugar mills, haciendas, shops of artisans, and in the homes of Antequera's elite.

The scholarly literature on the African diaspora in Spanish America has examined the slave trade, the institution of slavery, and the subjectivities and agency of slaves living under Spanish colonialism, typically focusing either on urban centers, such as Antequera, or within the context of the plantation complex. There is also an emergent body of work that suggests the utility of a full-scale reevaluation of the size and implications of the slave trade within New Spain, as internal economies were central for the overall Mexican economy.<sup>6</sup> Tatiana Seijas and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva's analysis of Central Mexico demonstrates that while slave traffic to New Spain diminished after 1640, scholars have underestimated the number of African slave arrivals to the region in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, few scholars



have considered the subsequent rise in creole, or American-born, slave traffic during this period.<sup>8</sup> In other words, any comprehensive measure of the slave trade to New Spain after 1640 must consider the interregional extensions of the transatlantic and intercolonial slave trades that persisted after the separation of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns.

To better understand the nature of the slave trade to Oaxaca, I analyze notarial records from Antequera.<sup>9</sup> These sources primarily consist of bills of slave sale, wills, and payment obligations processed in the city between 1680 and 1710, when slave sales were abundant in this region. The notarial records list slaves' names, ages, *calidades*, (i.e., qualities, related to racial descriptions), origins, and values, hence providing a comprehensive view of the slave population in Antequera. Through my analysis of these materials, I suggest that the interregional and intercolonial slave traffic supplied more captives to the city than the transatlantic slave trade. The comparatively lower total of slave imports from Africa was mainly a consequence of imperial changes in the mid-seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the forced migration of slaves to Oaxaca and their experiences in this colonial setting demonstrate that Antequera was indeed part of the very significant interregional movements that shaped the African diaspora in colonial Spanish America.

While the transatlantic slave trade to New Spain peaked during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Antequera's population and commerce had remained relatively unchanged during that time, suggesting that the region had little involvement in the slave trade before the 1650s. Following Antequera's first founding in 1526, only fifty Spanish families lived in the city and were surrounded by an overwhelming Indian majority.<sup>10</sup> A few wealthy Spaniards owned *estancias* and sugar mills in the city's environs, but these were often small-scale operations oriented to sell sugar and other agricultural products in the colony and involved few slaves.<sup>11</sup> During the early colonial period, Spanish merchants began to capitalize on silver mining in the region, but there was little need for slaves because Spaniards relied heavily on Indian labor.<sup>12</sup> However, the import of enslaved Africans to the Valley of Oaxaca increased along with an upsurge in the Spanish population. John Chance reports the presence of 150 slaves and 350 Spanish *vecinos* (permanent residents or heads of household) in Antequera by 1569.<sup>13</sup> Most slaves purchased and sold in Antequera between the 1580s and 1640s were black and either African-born or creole, with enslaved men bought and sold more frequently than enslaved women. Rather than relying on creole slaves, during this period both Spanish merchants and Indian *caciques* in the Mixteca

region appear to have preferred enslaved Africans imported from Congo, Angola, and in one unusual case, even from Cairo.<sup>14</sup> These African-born slaves often arrived from Puebla, which demonstrates Puebla's participation in the interregional slave trade during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>15</sup> Creole slaves were often born in Antequera, or they arrived from nearby cabeceras such as Yanhuitlán and Teposcolula.<sup>16</sup> In brief, Spanish merchants imported limited numbers of slaves from both nearby and distant regions in the colonial period prior to 1650.

Despite its fluctuating economy and population, Antequera expanded in size during the first half of the seventeenth century to become the third largest city in New Spain. The city's overall populace tripled as the native population began to recover slightly and the *casta* group grew with each generation.<sup>17</sup> Antequera's overall population included two thousand inhabitants in 1626 and increased by one thousand over the following seventeen years. By the tail end of the seventeenth century, the city's population reached six thousand inhabitants.<sup>18</sup> This moderate growth shaped the region's commerce and trade. As Spaniards acquired more land for commercial agriculture and livestock raising, and especially as silver mining and the cochineal trade increased, Antequera's economy expanded.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the city remained a way station for the transport of valuable goods like Guatemalan indigo and cacao en route to Mexico City and Veracruz, which implies that enslaved men and women arrived in Antequera along with these Guatemalan products.<sup>20</sup>

By the 1680s, African slave imports to New Spain were already on a drastic decline, and the free and enslaved creole population steadily increased in many urban centers.<sup>21</sup> This shift in the slave trade and the growth of the colony's African-descent population was largely due to the separation of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns, which prevented Portuguese merchants from operating in New Spain and transporting slaves in Portuguese ships to the colony. This imperial shift alone, however, does not explain the slow trickle of African slaves to the colony between 1680 and the 1730s; a series of *asientos* facilitated Spain's continued participation in the slave trade during this period in response to ongoing demand for African slave labor in New Spain.<sup>22</sup>

In some ways, slave traffic to Antequera reflected the broader diaspora to other slave societies in Spanish America. The Spanish Crown negotiated *asientos* with individuals and/or private slave companies and specified the number of potential imports to a colony over a specified period. *Asentistas*

(asiento holders) then authorized and dispatched ships from Lisbon and Seville, for instance, to ports in West and West Central Africa, where African captives were purchased and later shipped across the Atlantic to Spanish American ports.<sup>23</sup> Some captives in Antequera who arrived from West African ports were labeled as “Biafara” in the historical record. Other individuals described as “Congo” and “Angola” embarked at the port of Luanda or other regions in West Central Africa. Factors at Spanish American ports, in turn, resold African captives, and these recent arrivals were then transported to local sugar mills in Veracruz or to large urban centers such as Mexico City, Puebla, and Antequera.

Although many different participants and practices were involved in the importation of African-born and creole slaves to Oaxaca during the 1680s and 1690s, Spanish merchants and slave traders continued to control the traffic of slaves to this region.<sup>24</sup> Domingo Terán de los Ríos, the “factor diputado del consulado de Sevilla,” worked closely with Juan Martín Camuñas to bring in at least sixty African captives from a port in Congo to Antequera.<sup>25</sup> A Veracruzán factor named Juan de la Carra sold Congolese slaves to Oaxacan merchants, hacienda owners, and ecclesiastical officials.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, the factors Francisco de Mora, Juan Ruiz de Madrid, and Manuel Luis de Fonseca sold Angolan slaves to Antequera’s elite at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database provides a few examples of irregular and contraband slave traffic to the colony; however, none of its currently listed voyages appear to be directly linked to the ones above.<sup>28</sup>

By the early eighteenth century, however, a shift occurred in the slave trade to New Spain. Portuguese traders of the Company of Guinea reentered the region’s slave market, and British participation in the slave trade to New Spain began as well. As Portuguese asiento administrators and factors of the Company of Guinea, Damian Pereira de Araujo and Lucas de Acosta were based in Veracruz to monitor slave arrivals and sales to merchants in other areas of the colony. These factors sold several enslaved African men and women to merchants in Oaxaca.<sup>29</sup> By the 1720s, Juan de las Puentes of the South Sea Company and Fabrique Bastie and Guillermo Leo of the royal asiento of Great Britain also sold a number of slaves to Antequera’s elites.<sup>30</sup> Thus, control of the slave trade shifted from the Portuguese to the British and the French during the early eighteenth century.<sup>31</sup> These changes in the trade occurred throughout Spanish American slave markets.<sup>32</sup>

The delivery of fifty-three slaves to Antequera in February 1682 reveals the complexity and irregular nature of interregional slave traffic between the

1680s and early 1700s. On January 30, 1681, Juan Martín Camuñas purchased fifty-three enslaved Africans in Veracruz with the intent that he and Juan Ruiz de la Madrid would resell them in Oaxaca. Camuñas facilitated the sale of these captives on behalf of their owner, Cádiz resident and asiento holder Juan Barroso del Pozo.<sup>33</sup> This “armazón de esclavos” (shipload of slaves) included forty-one men and nine women of various ages, two slaves in poor health, and an additional captive who was in critical condition.<sup>34</sup> Camuñas most likely started the resale of the enslaved men and women in Antequera; in the first three months of 1682, he sold nine slaves to various residents in the city. The purchasers included clerics and the wives or widowers of elite Spanish merchants and colonial officials. For instance, Joseph de Henestrosa, the corregidor of Antequera, purchased two slaves, and doña Josepha Coronel bought one female slave for 410 pesos.<sup>35</sup> Juan Ruiz de la Madrid began selling enslaved Africans in February 1682; by April and May of that year, he concentrated on selling several slaves to *tratantes* (traders), to landowners in Puebla and nearby Teposcolula, and to sugar plantation owners. Madrid’s decision to target property owners in nearby and distant cities and cabeceras suggests that he probably struggled to quickly sell the remaining slaves in Antequera. At the same time, his actions demonstrate that while Spanish elites occupied domestic slaves in the city, there was a greater demand for plantation labor in the outskirts of Antequera. This example shows that while the transport of fifty-three slaves to Antequera might suggest a consistent trade between Veracruz and Oaxaca, slave traffic to this region was complex and irregular.

Members of the Oaxacan elite and Spanish colonial officials purchased most of the fifty-three African captives. Pedro de Guendulain purchased fourteen slaves, and Rodrigo Ortiz de la Cerda bought seven in May 1682. At the time, Guendulain held various titles in the Holy Inquisition. He also owned large estates throughout the Valley of Oaxaca, including a hacienda east of Antequera, a sugar plantation southeast of the city of Nejapa, and another plantation in Teotitlán del Camino, which was located at the northern edge of Oaxaca. Similarly, Ortiz owned a sugar plantation in Nejapa, which perhaps explains why Guendulain and Ortiz purchased more captives than any of the other buyers who appear in this sample of slave sales. Guendulain, Ortiz, and four other buyers combined purchased a total of twenty-four of the fifty-three slaves in Zimatlán, a town site with a strong Dominican presence that was situated in the southern edge of the Valley of Oaxaca.<sup>36</sup>

Members of the religious orders purchased and owned far larger numbers of enslaved men, women, and children than any other group residing in the

Valley of Oaxaca. Religious orders such as the Dominicans and Franciscans had maintained a strong presence in the region since the early colonial period. The Catholic Church grew steadily during the late sixteenth century as it acquired lands in the Valley of Oaxaca through donations, *capellanías*, and gifts.<sup>37</sup> The religious orders primarily used their properties for cattle raising, and to a lesser degree, for the production of sugar.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the Jesuit monastery and college owned a small wheat farm, several cattle ranches, a mill, and a few sugar plantations in rural areas of the valley. They relied on slaves to work their lands and produce sugar on their plantations. The Jesuits also owned a hacienda named Nuestra Señora del Rosario, which was located southwest of Antequera. This hacienda had approximately fifty-five enslaved people who were purchased or inherited in the latter half of the seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup>

The Dominican monastery of Santo Domingo owned the largest number of urban and rural properties in the entire region, and the Dominicans relied heavily on slave labor to tend to their properties. For example, the Dominican monasteries owned four cattle ranches en route to the coast in Tehuantepec, several farms, a couple of mills in the Valley of Oaxaca, and various properties in Antequera.<sup>40</sup> Based on my sample of slave sales, friar Juan de Saavedra purchased five enslaved men and women and sold fifteen individuals between 1680 and 1710. Likewise, the nunnery Santa Catalina de Sena bought and sold nine enslaved people during this period.<sup>41</sup> Although these monasteries purchased fewer slaves than they sold, members of these religious orders had undoubtedly obtained these enslaved individuals at an earlier point in the seventeenth century.

In addition to the fifty-three African captives who were sold in the Valley of Oaxaca, an ongoing traffic of enslaved people continued during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and it was largely facilitated by wealthy Oaxacan merchants and families. Prominent Oaxacan families such as the Guendulains, Bohorquezes, and Espinas bought and sold some slaves during the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>42</sup> For instance, between 1682 and 1710, members of the Guendulain family bought twenty-six slaves, and sold only four.<sup>43</sup> Likewise, men and women of the Bohorquez family purchased seven slaves between the late 1680s and 1707.<sup>44</sup> Traveling merchants often transported slaves to Oaxaca while carrying valuable goods from other areas of New Spain to Antequera. In other instances, wealthy merchants and religious officials contracted individuals to sell their slaves in other parts of the colony. And royal officials such as Agustín de Soto, Antonio Gaistarro,

and Juan de Pascua O'Brien of the Santa Cruzada also sold many slaves during the 1730s.<sup>45</sup> For the most part, these colonial officials sold slaves who were black or mulato creoles born in areas surrounding Antequera. Similar to internal slave trades to other parts of New Spain, slave traffic to Oaxaca was multifaceted, involving varying numbers of slaves and a wide range of individuals at multiple levels of local society.

Notarial records from Antequera show that local merchants sold slaves through bills of sale, powers of attorney, wills, and public auction. The types of buyers suggest the kind of labor that creole and African-born slaves provided in Oaxaca. Namely, Oaxacan buyers of slaves included secular and ecclesiastical officials, merchants, professionals, hacendados, and women.<sup>46</sup> While secular and ecclesiastical officials often assigned slaves to manual labor projects including building the city's cathedral, merchants primarily deployed slaves in nearby haciendas and sugar mills.<sup>47</sup> Eighteenth-century apprentice contracts also suggest that Oaxacan professionals employed slaves in their guilds as skilled laborers.<sup>48</sup> In addition to these different occupations, the wills and testaments of married and widower women indicate that creole and African-born slaves carried out basic domestic tasks as personal servants, cooks, and wet nurses.<sup>49</sup>

To summarize, the slave trade to this region involved many different participants including high- and low-level Spanish merchants, religious officials, colonial authorities, and Portuguese and British slave traders. Administrators of *asientos*, factors, and wealthy merchants occasionally even sold large numbers of slaves to Oaxacan residents, but for the most part, slave sales were smaller transactions between two independent parties. Like other slave societies, the Catholic Church was one of the primary purchasers of slaves in the colonial period. The case study of Antequera shows that an interregional slave traffic existed during the era of the transatlantic slave trade and continued after the decrease in transatlantic arrivals. This continuation of interregional slave traffic included a shift from importing African-born slaves to trading black and mulato slaves who were born in other parts of New Spain and Guatemala.

Despite the decline of the transatlantic slave trade after the 1640s, a smaller number of African slaves continued to arrive in New Spain through the first third of the eighteenth century. Some of these individuals arrived from West Central Africa, while others were reexported from other Spanish American ports or were conveyed from elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> In the case of Antequera, African arrivals disembarked in Veracruz from ports in Congo and

Angola, and likely elsewhere. Creole slaves arrived from nearby Mesoamerican regions such as Mexico City, Puebla, Santiago de Guatemala, Veracruz, and Chiapas.

Notarial records labeled slaves as “criollo” or “bozal” and, in the case of African-born slaves, notaries also provided the labels “de nación” Congo, Mozambique, Angola, and Luanda. Through the mid-seventeenth century, African captives had been shipped to Spanish America from Upper Guinea, Angola, and to a lesser extent, São Tomé and Lower Guinea. After the 1640s and through the end of the eighteenth century, most enslaved Africans arriving in Spanish America were transported from coasts between present-day Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>51</sup> Of a sample of 1,038 slave sales processed in Oaxaca, only 570 documents labeled slaves as born in Africa or the Americas.<sup>52</sup> From this subsample of 570 slaves, 258 people were labeled as African-born, of which the overwhelming majority arrived from an unspecified African region; only 110 slaves were labeled with a specific African origin or ethnicity.<sup>53</sup> More specifically, 48 percent of these 110 African captives arrived from Angola, whereas those listed as Congolese made up 30 percent. Smaller numbers of enslaved Africans were labeled as Mandinga, Bran, Arará, and Casta Rosada.<sup>54</sup> In other words, most African slaves in Antequera came from West Central Africa.<sup>55</sup> These findings show that African-born slaves, usually described as being from Congo or Angola, were present in Oaxaca during the years 1680–1710, but that they only made up a comparatively small minority of the overall slave population in Antequera.<sup>56</sup>

One example of these transactions was the sale of an African slave who arrived in Antequera through a Portuguese trading company in the early eighteenth century. Luis Berdugo Santa Cruz purchased Tereza Josepha, a twenty-three-year-old black slave, from Martín de Borda in 1712. Borda had previously purchased Tereza in Veracruz from administrators of the Portuguese Company of Guinea in 1701.<sup>57</sup> Although the bill of sale does not specify Tereza’s status as an African-born or creole slave, Tereza probably arrived from Africa because she was highly valued at 412 pesos and had been purchased from the Company of Guinea in Veracruz.

The transpacific trade to this region was smaller than the Atlantic counterpart, but it still represented yet another avenue for merchants to acquire African slaves through the Manila galleon. Antonio Martínez purchased a black slave from Antonio del Pozo in Antequera in 1703. The bill of sale indicates that Francisco de Padilla Navarro, a resident of Manila, brought the black slave named Antonio to a port in Ciudad de los Reyes

(present-day Acapulco) at an earlier date. The document also notes that Antonio was from Mozambique and that he was transported through the Indian Ocean trade to Manila.<sup>58</sup> Antonio's long and grueling journey may represent the sheer desperation of lowly slave merchants, but it also shows New Spain's integration into the transpacific slave trade.<sup>59</sup> The background to this slave sale includes multiple traders and transactions involving personal debt. Francisco de Padilla Navarro, the Manila merchant who transported Antonio across the Pacific Ocean, owed 350 pesos to del Pozo for daily sustenance during his stay in Acapulco. Since he was unable to repay del Pozo, Padilla Navarro traded his African slave to clear his debt and so that the slave could be resold at a higher price. Although Padilla Navarro did not possess the bill of sale for his slave Antonio, he assured del Pozo that he had purchased the African captive from a cleric named Cristóbal Carballo and that a bill of sale had been processed before the public notary Francisco Pullol in Manila on November 8, 1698.<sup>60</sup>

This series of transactions involving one African captive from Mozambique demonstrates how the transpacific trade between Manila and Acapulco extended to Antequera. In the case of Antonio, the financial troubles of common merchants and traders reveal yet another extension of the slave trade to include Indian Ocean trade routes. The involvement of religious officials on the other side of the Pacific Ocean illustrates the church's ongoing involvement in the institution of slavery, across multiple slave societies. The transaction in Acapulco underscores the nature of these processes in southern New Spain. Merchants sold and traded slaves to pay off debt, and the enslaved were often used as collateral for other contracts in Antequera, and thus slaves formed part of larger merchants' transactions that involved the commerce of goods and bills of exchange. Antonio's story also sheds light on the lived, human experiences of slavery and the slave trade. After his enslavement in Africa, in five years Antonio was coerced into slavery in Manila, shipped across the Pacific Ocean, traded to Antonio del Pozo in Acapulco, and then sold to Antonio Martínez in Antequera.<sup>61</sup>

Along with the enslavement of Africans, creole slaves arrived in Antequera from various locations in Spanish America and the Caribbean. Bills of sale, wills, and property inventories from 1680 to 1710 either labeled slaves as criollos or noted the former slave owners' residences, confirming that most slaves in Antequera were indeed born in the Americas.<sup>62</sup> From the subsample of 570 enslaved people, 312 individuals were identified as creoles, including 83 creole slaves for whom no other geographical origins are specified. Of the



229 remaining creole slaves, only 52 people, or 23 percent of the local creole slave population, was born in Antequera, and the rest of the creole population came from other areas in Mesoamerica.<sup>63</sup> The largest number of slaves came from Veracruz, but in many cases, their background—meaning creole or African-born—is unclear. Secondary to arrivals from Veracruz were slaves purchased from residents in Mexico City, Puebla, and Santiago de Guatemala. The subsample of creole slaves includes fourteen people from Mexico City, eleven from Guatemala, and ten from Puebla. Interregional commercial networks between Antequera and these urban centers illuminate this city's relationship to other cities in and around the colony. For instance, high- and low-level merchants transported valuable goods such as Guatemalan indigo and cacao, along with enslaved people, from Guatemala to Antequera. The Oaxacan elite often relied on daily sustenance from surrounding areas and purchased more valuable products from Mexico City, Puebla, and Santiago de Guatemala. For this reason, very few slaves came from nearby towns such as Teposcolula, Villa Alta, and Miahuatlán.

These slave sales shed light on the slave population in Antequera and reveal several important aspects about the interregional slave trade to this region. First, it reflects patterns of the slave trade to larger urban centers such as Santiago de Guatemala and Puebla. By the 1680s and 1690s, slave traffic to Guatemala spilled over to Antequera, creating a trade route of both goods such as indigo and enslaved creoles who were possibly the descendants of African-born arrivals in the previous decades of the seventeenth century. These creole slaves generally were mulato and potentially maintained a different connection to their African-born counterparts and to the broader African diaspora. Second, Puebla's proximity to Mexico City and Veracruz clarifies the diversity of slaves who arrived in Antequera from this city. On the one hand, Puebla's proximity to the port of Veracruz meant that the city imported an abundance of Angolan slaves.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Puebla's closeness to Mexico City suggests that merchants in Puebla had access to a diverse slave population of both recent African arrivals and creole slaves born in the viceregal capital. Thus, for African captives arriving in Veracruz, the slave trade route determined and defined the origins and destinations of enslaved Africans in New Spain.

The comparable number of slave arrivals from Guatemala and Puebla illustrate various strategies for acquiring slaves in Oaxaca. These slave sales also represent the ongoing connections between Mexico City, Puebla, Guatemala, and Antequera. In 1689, for example, a Spanish admiral and resident

of Antequera named Isidoro de Atondo y Antillón hired Bricio Prato to sell a slave on his behalf. At the time, Isidoro had owned a creole “mulata prieta” (dark-skinned mulata) named Andrea, whom he purchased just three years prior from a merchant in Mexico City. As a merchant and muleteer, Bricio Prato was involved in the interregional slave trade, and when the Spanish admiral requested his help, Bricio Prato was on the verge of beginning yet another trip to Soconusco, most likely to collect cacao.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, a merchant from Puebla named Juan de Lecanduri contracted Antonio Ramírez de Aguilar to sell his slave in Antequera. Juan de Lecanduri had owned a black slave named Juan Barranco while living in Puebla for ten years, but in 1701, he issued a power of attorney to Antonio Ramírez so that he would sell Barranco in Antequera.<sup>66</sup> These slave sales highlight the different ways in which slave owners acquired and resold their slaves: some merchants owned and used their slaves for decades, while others contracted the enslaved to be resold in different cities along Mesoamerican roads that connected Mexico City, Puebla, Antequera, and Guatemala.

While many enslaved creoles arrived from several cities in New Spain, fewer came from Chiapas.<sup>67</sup> Rodrigo de la Chica sold two married slaves in Antequera on behalf of Pedro López de Atocha in September 1689. The two black slaves named Lucas de la Cruz and Melchora de los Reyes were sold to Ambrocio del Real for six hundred pesos. Even though the bill of sale did not specify whether Lucas and Melchora were creole or African-born slaves, the document stated that Rodrigo purchased the two slaves from ecclesiastical officials in Santo Domingo, in Chiapa de la Real, just two months before this transaction was processed in Antequera.<sup>68</sup> There are various reasons for the quick turnaround in slave sales, including transport or quality of labor, but to be sure, Lucas and Melchora were brought to Antequera from Chiapas.

Some colonial institutions acquired slaves through donation. On December 29, 1687, Micaela de las Fuentes, a widow and resident of Antequera,<sup>69</sup> donated a fifty-five-year-old slave to the confraternity named Santísimo Sacramento de la Santa Iglesia Catedral in Antequera. The donated slave was Juan de Segura, a creole mulato whom Micaela’s late husband originally purchased from a merchant in Guatemala.<sup>70</sup> Micaela’s actions suggest that merchants from Antequera who traveled to or traded goods in Guatemala must have found some benefit in purchasing enslaved people there. Thus, the slave trade from Guatemala to Antequera developed from the trade of other goods, as illustrated through these one-time and person-to-person transactions that occurred along this commercial route. Micaela’s donation exemplifies the

constant demand for slaves in Antequera and shows just one of the varied ways in which the ecclesiastical community procured slaves.<sup>71</sup>

Micaela's practice of donating slaves suggests that she must have owned a plethora of captives. Just two weeks prior to donating Juan de Segura, Micaela donated many goods, including a four-year-old "mulata blanca," to a thirteen-year-old orphan girl who was living in her home.<sup>72</sup> Like many other enslaved people, this female slave was born and raised in Micaela's home.<sup>73</sup> And in 1694, Micaela sold another black creole slave named Juan Francisco to a local priest. Juan Francisco was only ten years old, and he was also born and raised in Micaela's home.<sup>74</sup> Micaela freed yet another black female slave in that same year. Like the other slaves, twenty-year-old Manuela was born and raised in Micaela's home, and she was the daughter of another slave named Geronimo de las Fuentes. Geronimo purchased his daughter's freedom with the four hundred pesos he earned while working on Micaela's sugar plantation.<sup>75</sup> In short, at least five different individuals appear in the historical record as enslaved and freed by Micaela de las Fuentes.

Micaela's involvement in the sugar industry explains why she was able to donate several enslaved people in less than a decade.<sup>76</sup> Her behavior, though, suggests yet another component of slavery in Oaxaca. While wealthy residents and merchants based in Antequera most likely purchased enslaved creoles and Africans as domestic labor, hacienda owners potentially increased the slave population through reproduction as well. In several cases, residents in Antequera with haciendas and sugar mills in the outskirts of the city held wills and property inventories including at least five to ten slaves who were born in their properties.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the slave trade in this region included a wide variety of participants and strategies for obtaining slaves.

Fewer creole and African slaves arrived in Antequera from the Caribbean. Less than five creole slaves, such as a black slave name named Magdalena, arrived in Antequera from Puerto Rico through Veracruz ports in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Likewise, two enslaved African laborers arrived from Cuba during the same period. One of these individuals was a Mandinga slave named Francisco who was purchased in Havana in June 1692 by a traveling Oaxacan merchant. Francisco was resold in Antequera approximately six months later. These findings bring attention to the scope of transatlantic, intercolonial, and interregional slave traffic. At the macro level, the transatlantic slave trade to New Spain had drastically diminished after the mid-seventeenth century. And yet, small numbers of African captives continued to arrive in the colony, potentially as a form of contraband or

legally under the *asientos* of Juan Barroso del Pozo and Nicolás Porcio.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, intra-Caribbean traffic that led to disembarkation in Veracruz overlapped transatlantic traffic with the conveyance of creole and African slaves to Veracruz from the British, French, Dutch, and Spanish Caribbean. The history of the slave trade to Antequera thus evidences this shift and the continued supply of enslaved creoles and Africans, even in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

Finally, the case study of Martín Peláez emphasizes the far-reaching commercial ties that Oaxacan merchants maintained with other areas in Spanish America. Martín was living in Antequera in the 1690s, but he was originally from Lima, Peru. His mother was also from Lima, and his father was born in Seville. While Martín's family remained in Lima, he migrated to Antequera, and in writing his will, Martín noted that he owned several slaves. He had owned a black creole slave named Agustín, another black creole slave from Guatemala, and a third black slave who he purchased in Portobelo.<sup>79</sup> As one example of the diverse slave population in Antequera, Martín's slaves were born in the city or imported from locations as far south as Lima. As Martín traveled from Peru to Antequera, he purchased captives in Portobelo and Guatemala. He most likely bought additional slaves who he sold before writing his will, and thus he profited from slave trading in mainland Spanish America.

Thus, the constant influx of creole and African-born slaves to Antequera supports the notion that internal slave traffic continued alongside and even replaced the declining, but significant, transatlantic slave trade. The traffic of African captives and creole slaves involved a wide range of participants and irregular patterns of trading. At times, slave merchants in Veracruz forged ties with traders in Seville, Lisbon, West Central Africa, and Manila and in turn imported African-born slaves to Antequera. On other occasions, however, fractured trading networks facilitated new connections between different factors who dealt with the various European traders at the port of Veracruz. Adding to this complexity is the fact that some *asiento* holders brought their representatives who were often family members. Some recent African arrivals were likely a form of contraband, but others arrived under the *asiento* system. Internal slave trading networks were complicated too. Factors and merchants based in Veracruz frequently sold recent arrivals to merchants in Mexico City, and those merchants resold the same enslaved people to Oaxacan merchants. Veracruz slave merchants also sold African captives directly to Spanish elites in Antequera. The most common type of

slave sale, however, occurred between Oaxacan merchants and merchants from Guatemala, Puebla, Mexico City, or Veracruz. Again, the frequency and continuity of these transactions suggest that an internal slave trade in New Spain was still thriving in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

### Conclusion

This chapter deepens our understanding of slave traffic in New Spain. My findings demonstrate that in spite of the predominance of indigenous labor systems in the seventeenth century, merchants in Spanish colonial cities still relied on slave labor. The forced migration of African captives and the ongoing reliance on creole slaves in the late seventeenth century is evidence that Antequera was indeed part of the African diaspora in Spanish America. This city was a nexus for trade that connected southern New Spain with the vice-regal capital and ports along both coasts. African-born and American-born slaves were imported along with other valuable commodities such as indigo, cacao, and cochineal. This influx of enslaved people was more scaled-down in comparison to other areas of Spanish America, but the fact remains that creole and African-born slaves steadily arrived from ports in Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean, and from other cities in the Americas. As the transatlantic slave trade waned, the regional slave market in Oaxaca adapted and evolved into a complex system of slave sales, donations, and overland trafficking. This reevaluation of the transatlantic, intercolonial, and interregional slave trades thus solidifies Oaxaca's role in internal routes of commerce in New Spain and the broader diaspora to Spanish America.

### Notes

I would like to thank editors Alex Borucki, David Wheat, and David Eltis for commenting on earlier versions of this essay. Their edits and suggestions were very valuable.

1. The terms "creole" and "*bozal*" are used to show the classifications that appear in the historical record. The category of "criollo," or creole, was used for individuals born in the Americas. The derogatory term "bozal" was often used to refer to African-born slaves who were considered as non-aculturated to Hispanic society. I recognize that this category is problematic because it naturalizes European classification systems that obscure and deny African

perspectives. For this reason, I prefer to use the terms “enslaved Africans,” “forced laborers,” or “African captives” to refer to slaves who came from Africa.

2. Antequera’s administration and organization mirrored that of other Spanish colonial cities, but its size, population, and location near trunk lines of trade create a unique setting for examining slavery in Spanish America. The social and economic landscape of Antequera was also different from other regions in the colony. Like Mexico City and Puebla, Antequera was surrounded by a number of different indigenous groups, but the city experienced little economic growth in the early colonial period because Antequera did not produce wealth comparable to silver-producing regions, textile mills of Puebla, or sugar plantations in Veracruz.
3. John Chance, *Race and Class*, 53.
4. See Tatiana Seijas and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, “Persistence of the Slave Market.” Puebla was a major hub for overland slave trafficking in the early colonial period. Thousands of enslaved Africans were transported directly to Puebla following their arrival at the port in Veracruz.
5. Chance, *Race and Class*, 73; and José Antonio Gay, *Historia de Oaxaca*, Vol. 2, 220, 221, 354, 356. Chance estimated that Antequera’s overall populace included three thousand inhabitants in 1660, but the nineteenth-century historian José Antonio Gay found that the population had doubled to six thousand inhabitants by 1699.
6. See Seijas and Sierra Silva, “Persistence of the Slave Market”; and Frank Trey Proctor III, “African Diasporic Ethnicity in Mexico City to 1650.”
7. Seijas and Sierra Silva, “Persistence of the Slave Market,” 308.
8. Seijas and Sierra Silva, “Persistence of the Slave Market,” 308.
9. “Oaxaca” refers to the areas surrounding Antequera in the Valley of Oaxaca.
10. Chance, *Race and Class*, 31.
11. See Chance, *Race and Class*, 56; and William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*, 117. With the exception of landholdings in the Marquesado, most land use was meant for grazing cattle and producing agricultural products for local consumption. There was little economic and capitalistic activity in Antequera and its environs prior to the 1550s.
12. In the early colonial period, Spaniards relied heavily on the encomienda and repartimiento labor systems in the Valley of Oaxaca.
13. Chance, *Race and Class*, 52–53.
14. Archivo Histórico Judicial de Oaxaca (hereafter AHJO), Protocolos, leg. 1, exp. 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15. See the Archivo Histórico de Notarías de Oaxaca (hereafter AHNO) for examples of slave sales and manumission records processed in Antequera’s neighboring cabeceras of Teposcolula and Yanhuitlán. I rely on these records because nearly all notarial sources in Antequera dated prior to the 1680s were burned in an archival fire in 2006. This sample of

twenty-one slave sales reveals that greater numbers of enslaved men were purchased in comparison to enslaved women. These Congolese, Angolan, and Mandinga individuals were most likely earlier arrivals in Veracruz, sold to merchants in Mexico City and Puebla, and later resold to merchants in Antequera in the 1590s and early 1600s. In the mid-sixteenth century, several domestic slaves were also escorted to Antequera with travel licenses from Cádiz (Archivo General de Indias [hereafter AGI], Indiferente 1963, L. 9, f. 62; Indiferente 422, L. 16, f. 73; L. 22, f. 437r; L. 16, ff. 104v–105r; Indiferente 1952, L. 3, f. 9). This was potentially the case with individuals like Sulinam, alias Juan Fantoni, and his wife, Aiza, who were owned by a resident of Cádiz who was located in Teposcolula in 1615. Sulinam and Aiza were labeled as “de nación Jurcona del Gran Cairo” and had been purchased from the Duke of Florence at an earlier time (AHJO, Protocolos, leg. 1, exp. 10.11). The final makeup of this small sample includes the enslaved who were born in the Valley of Oaxaca and sold in Teposcolula, Antequera, and Yanhuitlán, suggesting that reproduction was also a means of increasing the enslaved population in this region.

15. See Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva’s contribution to this volume.
16. See AHJO, bills of sale processed between 1580 and 1650. However, I primarily rely on records from the AHNO for its abundance of slave sales during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The AHJO has some notarial records for early colonial Antequera but lacks documentation for the mid-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
17. Chance, *Race and Class*, 126. The city’s social structure became more clearly defined to include the commonly used colonial categories of *español*, *indio*, *negro*, *mestizo*, and *mulato* and the less commonly used terms of *castizo*, *morisco*, *lobo*, *coyote*, and *chino*.
18. Lolita G. Brockington, *Leverage of Labor*, 14.
19. *Grana cochinitilla*, or cochineal, was a valuable red dye that indigenous peasants produced in cactus groves in Oaxaca. Next to silver, cochineal was the most valuable commodity exported from New Spain. This product was consumed widely in Europe, and its production boosted the region’s economy and attracted a diverse workforce to Antequera and the Valley of Oaxaca.
20. Chance, *Race and Class*, 111. See also Paul Lokken’s chapter in this volume.
21. General population growth in New Spain’s larger cities also occurred because of an increase in miscegenation and recovery of the indigenous population.
22. Ana María Rodríguez Blázquez, “Penetración portuguesa,” 50–51.
23. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 18–21.
24. Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 2nd ed., 116–18. The Portuguese were no longer in control of slave traffic to New Spain after 1640, but some Portuguese representatives did facilitate the trade in Veracruz in the first half of the seventeenth century. The Portuguese factors and encomenderos Francisco López, Antonio Vázquez de Acevedo, Francisco Méndez, and Francisco

- Texoso, for example, furthered the slave trade from the port of Veracruz to merchants and traders in Mexico City. Few factors and slave traders appear in early seventeenth-century Oaxacan records, and thus it is difficult to determine whether the Portuguese dominated interregional slave traffic to Antequera.
25. See AHNO, Protocolos Notariales (PN), Francisco de Quero, vol. 417, various slave sales processed in 1681–1682.
  26. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vol. 144, f. 341; vol. 145, f. 101; vol. 146, f. 458; vol. 147, ff. 334, 338, and 496 for a few examples of transactions that Juan de la Carra completed with Oaxacan residents.
  27. See AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 425, various slave sales processed in 1699–1700.
  28. Johannes Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 41–42; Josep M. Delgado Ribas, “Slave Trade”; and Hugh Thomas, *Slave Trade*. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD) lists four voyages under Juan Barroso del Pozo that departed from Seville between 1679 and 1682, ostensibly destined for either Cartagena or Caracas (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/5LHHKM7k>, accessed June 2, 2019). It is not yet known whether any of these voyages actually embarked captives in Africa, or if they ever reached the Americas. But among these vessels, one listed in the database as SS *Trinidad e São Antonio* departed from Seville in 1681 bound for an unspecified African port and then for an unspecified port of disembarkation in the Spanish circum-Caribbean; if it did ultimately disembark 153 African captives (as imputed by TSTD), the sixty Congolese slaves could have arrived on this ship. At the same time, scholars have established that the Cádiz-based traders Juan Barroso del Pozo and Nicolás Porcio hardly controlled the trade, because it was dominated by the Royal African Company and the West India Company in the early 1680s. In short, it seems more likely that the sixty Congolese slaves arrived from trading posts in Barbados, Jamaica, or Curaçao.
  29. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vols. 153–63. See the bills of sale processed by Diego Benaias in 1700–1711.
  30. See AHNO, PN, Joseph de Arauxo and Joseph Manuel Alvarez de Aragon, bills of sale processed between 1713 and 1738.
  31. French merchants were also involved in the slave trade in Veracruz and other commerce in other cities in New Spain, including Antequera.
  32. See the introduction to this volume by the editors, Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat. They note that between 1641 and 1789, Spanish vessels brought 23,500 slaves to Spanish America, whereas the British imported over 64,000 African-born slaves to this region. After the 1640s, Spanish merchants purchased African slaves from various ports controlled by Dutch, Portuguese, and British traders.
  33. Delgado Ribas, “Slave Trade,” 25. See also discussion of Juan Barroso de Pozo above.



34. AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 417, ff. 18v–20v.
35. AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 417, ff. 18v–20v.
36. AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 417, ff. 3–128; vol. 418, ff. 2–39.
37. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*, 168–69. *Capellanías* were grants to individual clerics or church groups that helped support certain religious ceremonies.
38. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*, 171.
39. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vol. 153, f. 164.
40. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*, 174.
41. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vol. 146, f. 184; vol. 148, f. 158; vol. 157, f. 253; Diego Diaz Romero, vol. 200, f. 205; vol. 204, f. 134v; vol. 207, f. 70.
42. Juan de Guendulain was a royal official of the Santa Cruzada, but several of his descendants were wealthy merchants in Oaxaca.
43. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vol. 149, f. 188; vol. 150, f. 100v; vol. 152, f. 47v; vol. 153, f. 543; vol. 156, f. 225v; Francisco de Quero, vol. 417, f. 125.
44. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaias, vol. 147, f. 438; vol. 148, f. 492; vol. 149, f. 203; vol. 159, f. 12; Diego Diaz Romero, vol. 191, f. 105.
45. See AHNO, PN, Joseph Manuel Alvarez de Aragón, vols. 40–56; Manuel Francisco de Rueda, vols. 488–93; Joseph de Arauxo, vols. 115–20; Diego Benaias, vols. 153–64.
46. See AHNO, PN, bills of sale processed between 1680 and 1730. Hacienda owners often held multiple secular and religious colonial positions, and they developed commercial activity as well.
47. Archivo Histórico de la Arquidiócesis de Oaxaca, *Libro de la fábrica de la catedral de Oaxaca, 1584–1604*, 52r–52v. Enslaved people helped indigenous laborers build the city's cathedral during the first phase of construction in the mid-sixteenth century.
48. AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 437, ff. 149 and 309; vol. 419, f. 105.
49. As evidenced from listings in the 1792 Antequera census. See also María Elisa Velázquez, *Mujeres de origen africano*.
50. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 437.
51. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 446.
52. These findings are based on my analysis of 1,038 slave sales processed in Oaxaca between 1680 and 1710. In nearly all of these cases, the enslaved people arrived in Veracruz and were resold in Oaxaca. I trace their point of origin based on the location of their previous sale. In the case of African-born slaves, I base their origin according to how notaries labeled them. My sample of 1,038 individuals includes 468 enslaved people lacking reference to any point of origin. I suspect that these 468 people were born in or around Antequera because there is no indication of a prior sale in another location.
53. Of 258 African-born slaves in the archival record, only 110 people were labeled with a specific origin such as Congo, Angola, or Luanda.

54. Sixteen African arrivals included small numbers of slaves (one to two) labeled as Bran, Mina, Casta Arara, Casta Rosada, Mandinga, and Casta Cafre.
55. The base was West Central Africa, as this was a general pattern of traffic in the early to mid-seventeenth century. Still, there was a small minority of recent arrivals from Southeast and West Africa. It is likely that Dutch slave traffic of the late seventeenth century had little impact on Oaxaca because most of the Dutch arrivals came from Loango and Bight of Benin, which rarely appear in my sample of African arrivals. It is probable that my sample included enslaved people disembarked from Portuguese voyages in Veracruz between the 1640s and 1660s. TSTD lists fifteen slaving voyages that departed from Seville between 1640 and 1670 intending to deliver African captives to New Spain (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/SgflwjFi>, accessed June 9, 2019). Only one of these voyages is known to have been completed; it embarked Africans in Luanda and arrived in Veracruz in 1640. Among the others, at least eight voyages intended to embark slaves in Senegambia, while at least four ships planned to load captives in West Central Africa. For the following decades, there are only three recorded arrivals in 1681, 1686, and 1705, all under Dutch or French control (<https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/vUb1aRDK>, accessed June 9, 2019).
56. African-born slaves made up 11 percent of the entire sample of 1,038 enslaved people in Antequera during this period of study.
57. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 164, f. 139v. See “Dos bandos relativos al asiento de la real compañía francesa (1704)” in *Reales asientos y licencias para la introducción de esclavos negros*. This sale in Veracruz coincides with the French asiento, which began in 1701.
58. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 156, f. 455.
59. Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*, 74. Transpacific trade to Acapulco occurred between the 1560s and early 1700s and included the arrival of over eight thousand individuals to New Spain and Peru. The Manila galleon operated like the transatlantic slave trade in that it functioned under the asiento system before it opened up to individual traders and eventually became a monopoly system. Transpacific trade involved the transportation of enslaved people from various locations including the Spanish Philippines, East Africa, Portuguese India, and the Muslim sultanates of Southeast Asia. Upon arrival at the port of Acapulco, the enslaved were categorized as either “blacks” or “chinos” (general term for those from the Pacific) before they were resold and transported to other parts of New Spain and, namely, to Mexico City.
60. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 156, f. 456.
61. Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico*, 104–6. It is likely that this African captive arrived in Acapulco under a Portuguese asiento. The transpacific slave trade was a particularly contentious issue because between 1696 and 1701, the Portuguese took various measures to strengthen their control over the slave trade across the Pacific.

62. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vols. 142–64, bills of sale; Diego Diaz Romero, vols. 164–82, bills of sale. In many cases, bills of sale for this period did not specify bozal or creole status. Rather, the slave's calidad was included as negro, mulato, etc. In these cases, I considered these slaves as creoles, and I only report slaves as African-born when the term "bozal" or an African ethnicity is listed.
63. This number included enslaved people who were most likely born in Antequera and sold for the first time or adults who were resold in Antequera with a bill of sale stating that their previous owner used them for labor in Antequera.
64. See Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico*.
65. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 146, f. 115. Soconusco was the province on Guatemala and Mexico's Pacific coast. The cacao boom began in Soconusco in the sixteenth century.
66. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 156, f. 411v.
67. Chiapas operated under the kingdom of Guatemala during this period.
68. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 146, ff. 408–410.
69. Her deceased spouse was named Francisco Martínez.
70. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 144, f. 401.
71. It was common for Spanish elites who lacked inheritors to bequeath their property to the church. This was one of the many ways in which this institution collected and acquired great wealth in real estate, land ownership, and enslaved people in New Spain.
72. It was also common for Spanish elites to bequeath goods and property to personal servants, especially when elites lacked any inheritors.
73. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 144, f. 387.
74. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 149, f. 375.
75. AHNO, PN, Diego Benaías, vol. 149, f. 471.
76. Micaela's ability to donate young and old slaves suggests that she had a substantial number of slaves and that she was financially stable.
77. Of the fifty-two creole slaves from Antequera, eighteen individuals were born in the home of their slaveholder.
78. See Postma, *Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*.
79. AHNO, PN, Francisco de Quero, vol. 429, f. 29.



## CHAPTER 6

# Securing Subjecthood

## Free and Enslaved Economies within the Pacific Slave Trade

RACHEL SARAH O'TOOLE



‡ FROM THE SHORES OF THE CARIBBEAN TO THE VAST PACIFIC COASTS, free and enslaved men and women connected the Atlantic with the Andes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On both sides of the Panamanian peninsula, free and enslaved men of color, manning militias and garrisons, guarded the Atlantic galleons and watched over the Pacific fleets.<sup>1</sup> As muleteers, porters, and guides, these men transported silver, wine, and grains that sustained local populations and connected the region to global trade networks, while captive Africans and creoles, destined for Andean and Central American markets, employed their skills to survive torrid waterways and build new communities.<sup>2</sup> Mariners on both sides of the isthmus, whether free or enslaved, labored on the ships carrying goods and people along the coasts while enslaved and free women working on ships and in ports fed and clothed those carried and crewing.<sup>3</sup> This chapter emphasizes how enslaved and free people of color joined with Spanish creole merchants and indigenous mariners to propel the dynamic Pacific slave trade of the seventeenth century. In the years following the withdrawal of the Portuguese *asentistas* (asiento holders) in the 1640s, free men and women of African descent enabled and benefited from the rich diversity of Panamanian commerce.

This chapter draws attention to the dynamic Pacific economies that connected the Andean region to the viceroyalty of New Spain as well as integrated Asian and Atlantic markets. Undoubtedly, the slave trade was a central economic motor, as Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat note that, especially in the period following the Portuguese withdrawal from the Spanish licensed slave trade in the 1640s, there was a surge in transimperial intra-American commerce in captive people.<sup>4</sup> One of the participating economies included the Andean region with its dynamic trade in silver, textiles, and foodstuffs that fueled commerce through the Panamanian isthmus.<sup>5</sup> A focus on the seventeenth-century regional economies, however, requires attention to on-the-ground processes, since colonial economies were a part of global markets, reflecting how local markets integrated large-scale to small-scale investments.<sup>6</sup> As a result, this chapter locates the commerce in slaves within a mid-colonial economy characterized by contraband, colonial mercantilism, and traders who trafficked simultaneously in many types of goods.<sup>7</sup> The local focus on the Pacific regional trade between the northern Peruvian coast and the Panamanian isthmus highlights how enslaved, but particularly free, men and women of African ancestry staffed and supported the military defenses and urban economies that drove the Pacific slave trade.

What follows emphasizes the contributions of free African-descent people to the regional Pacific economies of the seventeenth century while recognizing their limitations. Clearly, African and African-descent mariners, laborers, and vendors contributed to military and economic successes of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Panamanian Spanish colony.<sup>8</sup> Spanish merchants and colonial authorities, however, denied or took for granted the labor and the skills of Africans with their descendants.<sup>9</sup> As a result, colonial chroniclers, viceregal officials, and municipal notaries did not record the expertise or the adaptations of men or women of color. More pointedly, since the notarial records of Panama have been destroyed, evidence of free people of color participating in regional trade along the isthmus is not readily available.<sup>10</sup> I examine the vigorous commerce in captives and goods connecting the Panamanian isthmus to the Peruvian northern coast, where the notarial records are abundant, to reveal how free people of color fueled the transimperial intra-American slave trades of the colonial Americas. The commercial success and political activity of free people of color resulted from their small-scale social and economic exchange, to underline the centrality of regional economies in the seventeenth century. At the same time, free people of color were denied access to the capital and

credit necessary to engage in the most lucrative aspects of the Pacific trade. Still, Africans and their descendants accumulated the wealth and the reputational networks to achieve financial security and to articulate their positions as political subjects of the Spanish Crown.

### Skills and Strategies of the Free and the Enslaved

Free and enslaved people provided labor and skills to sustain the slave trade connecting the Atlantic and the circum-Caribbean with the Pacific Americas, making an invaluable contribution to the active seventeenth-century regional economy. The city of Panama with its port of Perico on the Pacific coast of the Central American isthmus was a hub of the Andean Pacific trade. Even though Lima held the title of administrative capital where the viceroy, the Inquisition tribunal, and the Audiencia presided, Panama was the economic capital of the region and a center of credit, debt, and market exchanges fueled by the slave trade. In the marketplaces and along the trade routes, muleteers and vendors transported and sold the flour, cloth, and sugar central to the booming regional economies of the Pacific and the Caribbean. In particular, enslaved and free laborers of the Panamanian isthmus connected the Caribbean and transatlantic slave trade to the Pacific coastal markets that extended south into the Andes and Chile and north onto the Mexican Pacific coast.

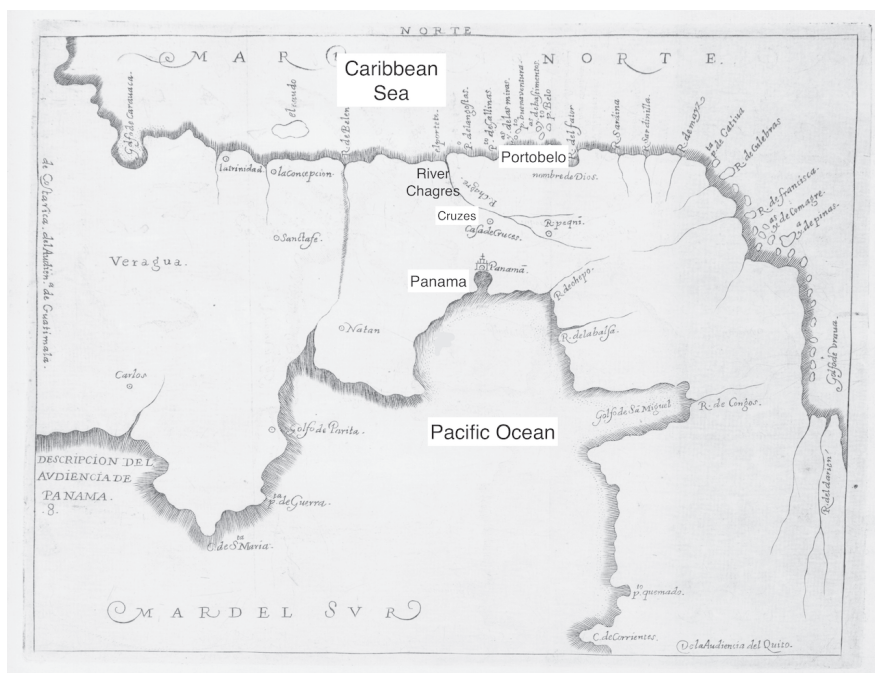
In Cartagena and the surrounding regions, enslaved and free laborers proved critical to the success of the trade between the Caribbean and the Pacific. Following the Portuguese withdrawal from the Crown *asiento* in the 1640s until 1662, when a new contract was awarded to the Genovese traders Domingo Grillo and Ambrosio and Agustín Lomelín, traders purchased captives, textiles, and other goods from merchants along the circum-Caribbean coast.<sup>11</sup> When the Dutch gained control of the official slave trade in the 1670s and 1680s, shifting to Portuguese (1696–1701), French (1701–1710), and then English control (into the 1740s), the official ports included Cartagena.<sup>12</sup> There, captives recuperated either from their transatlantic ordeal or sometimes from traveling from Caribbean islands such as Curaçao and Jamaica before their forced journey to Portobelo and Panama.<sup>13</sup> Enslaved laborers worked on estates throughout the region to grow the food to feed captives. In the warehouses of the slave trading agents, merchants paid free *morenas* (women of color), such as Dominga Nuñez who worked as a cook,

while Juana Ortiz (possibly a free woman of color) was paid for her nursing skills.<sup>14</sup> Though women were rarely mentioned in the account books dominated by the cost of maize, yucca, meat, and other foodstuffs purchased for captives in transit, their labor was hardly inconsequential. Slave traders made attempts to replicate African diets, requiring the labor of those who would have been familiar with the preparation.<sup>15</sup> Skilled caretakers would have needed to be able to communicate with a range of West and West Central Africans arriving in Cartagena in the mid-seventeenth century as well as diagnose and treat all types of contagious diseases that spread throughout the captive population.<sup>16</sup> The survival of captive people depended on the proficiency of enslaved and free laborers of African descent.

Free and enslaved men were critical to the transportation of captive people and goods from Cartagena and the Caribbean port of Portobelo across the Panamanian isthmus. Agents and merchants sold captives in Cartagena, who would be forced to travel inland into what is today Colombia, or be sold again to those traders who trafficked to Panama and beyond.<sup>17</sup> Enslaved and free men worked as *bogueros* (oarsmen) and muleteers, transporting captives across the treacherous Panamanian isthmus.<sup>18</sup> As experts in river navigation and able to negotiate with resident fugitive communities, these transport specialists were key contributors to the regional trade.<sup>19</sup> Enslaved men conducted mule trains on the trail leading out of Panama to the Chagres River, crossing numerous ravines, six leagues to the settlement of Cruces.<sup>20</sup> There, enslaved muleteers such as Baltasar Biafara waited for mule trains, or barges and dugouts carrying goods from the fleet at Portobelo.<sup>21</sup> Given the shoals, rapids, winding channels, abrupt ledges, and other dangers of the riverine journey, Panamanian traders relied on the skill of their enslaved laborers who they mentioned only in passing.<sup>22</sup> In addition, enslaved men repaired and maintained the roads that were easily covered by tropical vegetation and washed out by the torrential rains.<sup>23</sup> Hardly incidental, the knowledge and expertise of free and enslaved people ensured that all trade continued across the Panamanian isthmus.

Free men of color serving in the resident militias protected the slave trade, as well as the commerce in luxury goods, silver, and foodstuffs conducted through the port of Portobelo to the city of Panama. Though the Crown organized galleons to accompany the official trade into the Spanish Americas, with the supervising oversight of the Seville merchants, licensed slave traders (in addition to their contraband counterparts) traveled apart from the flota in the Caribbean with their armed ships.<sup>24</sup> As a result, merchants and agents





**Map 6.1.** Panama. Map by Antonio de Herrera (1601). Source: Antonio de Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas i tierra firme del mar oceano* (Madrid, 1730), fold-out map, 30. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

of the slave trade, like other maritime traders, depended on their crews to protect captives and merchandise from the notorious pirates of the Caribbean and the Pacific.<sup>25</sup> In Portobelo, a militia of free black men defended the Caribbean port. Soldiers such as *mulato* Vicente Mendez, who achieved the rank of *capitán* of the free *pardo* militia, fought against indigenous communities aligned with the English.<sup>26</sup> Militia companies of free African and African-descent men (described as *morenos*, *pardos*, and *mulatos*) served the city of Panama, building fortifications and digging trenches as well as standing guard day and night.<sup>27</sup> Their ability to defend the city was critical to regional commerce including fighting against fugitive slaves.<sup>28</sup> As *moreno* militia leader Lucas Gutiérrez explained to the governors of Panama and

Cartagena, the service of the free men of color during enemy attacks did and could continue to “sustain and help the quiet and defense of this Province.”<sup>29</sup> Peace, clearly, ensured prosperity.

Free and enslaved men were essential to ensuring the continual passage of goods and people across the Panamanian isthmus. After the Portuguese *asentistas* withdrew in the 1640s and the official Spanish *flota* began to decline in midcentury, the commerce through Panama in captives continued, and diversified. In Cartagena and throughout Panama, established merchants, local traders, and the independent owners who were in charge of the Portuguese *asiento*'s distribution into the Spanish American interior continued regional trade in slaves, including the Province of Guatemala as discussed by Paul Lokken in this volume.<sup>30</sup> The break in the official slave trade in the 1640s and the withdrawal of the Portuguese monopoly appears to have opened up the regional slave trade as the Dutch, French, and English gained control of the slave trade into Cartagena and Panama.<sup>31</sup> These merchants relied on local fugitive and free men of color as guides to cross the Panamanian isthmus and to accompany captives.<sup>32</sup> The official correspondence with the Spanish Crown makes explicit a range of unofficial transactions. In the mid-seventeenth century, free *morenos* Joseph Cano and Lucas Gutiérrez petitioned for, and won, the Panamanian Audiencia's contract to maintain the roads between Panama and Portobelo, as well as those that led to and from the Chagres River.<sup>33</sup> Critical to the route that Crown officials employed to transport Peruvian silver to the Caribbean *flota*, but also the constant trade in captives and goods that crossed the isthmus, the free men had achieved a lucrative position. They were paid fifty pesos per year, and the Crown also owed Lucas Gutiérrez 6,963 pesos for his personal investments in the roads.<sup>34</sup> With this debt in his favor, Gutiérrez petitioned the Crown for additional rewards including a promotion in the local militia. By sustaining the infrastructure so critical to the trade across the Panamanian isthmus, free men of color such as Gutiérrez could accumulate capital, advance their official status, and participate in relatively undocumented trade.

Men and women of the African diaspora sustained the city of Panama, and they knew their value. Enslaved laborers worked on farms growing corn, rice, and other foodstuffs as well as tended ranches surrounding the city.<sup>35</sup> Without their labor, the critical Pacific port could simply not function, as the governor lamented the city's demise when, in 1675, English pirates absconded to Jamaica with all the urban enslaved. The colonial official also complained that the city's free people of color had abandoned “the service of the

Spanish,” suggesting that Africans and their descendants, regardless of status, had joined the English or seized on the disruption to stop working.<sup>36</sup> Enslaved and free people were highly aware of their valuable positions in the city of Panama. By the late sixteenth century, free people of color owned farms in the surrounding region and brought their produce to the city for sale.<sup>37</sup> In 1609, city officials complained that these free communities of African descent lived “with scandalous liberty” in the surrounding ravines and mountains, refusing to hear Mass or attend confession and associating with fugitives.<sup>38</sup> As colonial officials had warned the Crown during previous crises, without Africans and their descendants, inhabitants of Panama could not survive. Indigenous people in the region would not work or be settled; therefore, there was “no one to work the land or cultivate the orchards, or feed or watch the cattle or fish.”<sup>39</sup> Throughout the Panamanian isthmus, fugitive slaves bartered their military skills and transportation expertise to extract recognition of sovereignty from the Spanish Crown.<sup>40</sup> Could free people of color withhold their agricultural labor and their products if colonial officials did not recognize their commercial independence?

Additionally, free people of African descent facilitated the maritime trade through their seafaring skills. Panamanian merchants sold captives northward into Central America and the Pacific coast of Mexico, as explored by Sabrina Smith’s chapter in this volume. In the seventeenth century, however, the markets to the south were more lucrative given the high demand of Peru’s coastal sugar estates and vineyards and the urban economies of the teeming viceregal city, Lima.<sup>41</sup> Agents and merchants relied on the small commercial ships of the Pacific to transport captives from Panama’s port of Perico to markets in Guayaquil, Paita, or Piura as well as Trujillo before reaching Callao, Lima’s port.<sup>42</sup> Vessels plying the Pacific waters would carry one or two enslaved people for sale, or a large number, such as eighty people, in a dedicated *partida*.<sup>43</sup> The crews of these ships included Africans and their descendants, such as enslaved man Lorenzo Agustín, a criollo who worked as a *grumete* (or crewman) in a ship sailing between Perico and Callao.<sup>44</sup> Once free, he earned a monthly wage of fifteen pesos, presumably like the other African-descent sailors in Panama.<sup>45</sup> Along with enslaved mariners, free and enslaved people provided skilled labor that included navigating the treacherous coasts and ascertaining the best times to sail from Panama to the various Pacific ports.<sup>46</sup> Skilled workers included Feliciano de Ozerin, a free *morena* and *vecina* (a municipal citizen) of Trujillo on Peru’s northern coast, who contracted to work as a cook and a washerwoman for ten pesos a month.

According to the notarized agreement, the ship would depart from Trujillo's port of Huanchaco, sail to Perico, and then back southward to Callao. Ozerin would feed the crew and any captives and care for their illnesses as well as "all of the rest that is ordered and is wished."<sup>47</sup> Her skills and those of many other Africans and their descendants, free and enslaved, would prove critical to the commercial success of the Pacific trade.

In the city of Panama, enslaved laborers asserted their economic independence and employed their wages to claim their freedom. The urban population relied on African and African-descent laborers to bring wood for fuel and fresh water into the city that eventually would be walled-in within a defensible peninsula.<sup>48</sup> Enslaved women worked as domestic servants, but also as *ganaderas*, or independent vendors, and *jornaleras*, or contract laborers, who lived separately from their owners.<sup>49</sup> Enslaved and free women washed clothes while men, working as water carriers, could earn the price of manumission with the sale of half-*real botijas* (jugs).<sup>50</sup> Their work proved to be critical since, as the Panamanian Audiencia pointed out in 1646, the slave trade had ceased (due to the Portuguese withdrawal from the *asiento*), an epidemic had depleted the population, and most tellingly, "vagrant" mulatos and mestizos refused to work.<sup>51</sup> In a market that favored laborers, enslaved people certainly had the capability to strategically insist they live apart from their owners, demand an increase to their wage, or negotiate documentation of a manumission agreement. Merchants and authorities of Panama, therefore, relied not just on Africans and their descendants as laborers but understood that enslaved and free people could exercise some agency regarding when, where, and how they worked.

Whether enslaved or free, men of African descent employed the demand for their skills to move throughout the seventeenth-century Pacific world. Francisco Balanta and another African man were transported from Panama to the Chicama Valley on the Peruvian coast where they "served as" slaves.<sup>52</sup> While Panama's Mercedarian convent claimed ownership, their skills in responsibly transporting flour made them valuable to local slaveholders and allowed the two men to blur the lines between free and enslaved status. With their skilled labor, African-descent men claimed autonomy. In 1685, Joan Pablo identified himself as a free black man of Panama when he contracted to work for a year in Trujillo as a mason in exchange for one hundred pesos.<sup>53</sup> Such autonomy could bring charges that these free men were fugitives, as in the case of Pascual de Castro. To defend himself, Castro identified himself as a free *moreno* in 1679 and explained he had moved among the cities of Lima,

Trujillo, and Panama working as a mason.<sup>54</sup> Given that pirates had recently destroyed the city of Panama, as well as the need for his skills in the booming economies in Peru, Castro's argument was plausible. Clients would not have questioned his status and even testified that he was free, explaining how he had apprenticed at age twelve in Lima's San Lázaro neighborhood, maintained contracts with *vecinos* (reputable municipal citizens) in Panama, and there supported a wife and household. Thus, as African-descent men seized on the possibilities of the Pacific economy, they pushed aside the distinctions between enslaved and free. Enslaved and free people profited from the dynamic regional exchanges that included a trade in slaves while also developing significant independence based on their abilities to capitalize on the commercial value of their skills as well as labor.

### Financing the Regional Trade

The Pacific regional economy and the high capital outlay necessary to participate in the slave trade also presented limitations to free people of color. Given that a recently arrived African captive cost between 175 and three hundred pesos, free people of color certainly were capable of amassing the necessary capital to purchase and to sell individual slaves in Panama or in Trujillo.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, men who were reputedly Spanish or creole traveled from the Peruvian northern coast to Panama to purchase a number of captives for resale at an increased price in Trujillo.<sup>56</sup> Buyers purchased enslaved people, as was the case for most large transactions in the mid-colonial economy, with an initial down payment (usually half of the purchase price) and a credit agreement to pay the rest of the debt within a year or two.<sup>57</sup> As a result, those who engaged in the Pacific slave trade, as well as the commerce in other merchandise, were usually people who could obtain credit from mercantile networks, ecclesiastical institutions (such as convents), and powerful merchants—in other words, those who were predominantly Spaniards, creoles, or with the public reputation of being of European descent.<sup>58</sup> As an example of the relationship between credit, debt, and race, Capitán Francisco Hurtado Salvatierra, a native of Extremadura and a merchant trafficking in slaves and Spanish goods, placed two of his daughters in Trujillo's only convent, one son in the Augustinian convent, and another in the Mercedarian. In exchange for his accompanying donations, Hurtado Salvatierra would have been eligible for considerable loans from these ecclesiastical institutions to purchase

enslaved people.<sup>59</sup> Even if free people of color who labored as artisans and merchants amassed sizeable cash wealth, people of reputational European descent could access and manipulate the credit arrangements necessary for a sustained trade in large numbers of captives.

Marginalization in the Pacific slave trade implied a sidelining in the accompanying commerce. The Panamanian climate did not support an extensive cultivation of wheat or wine, critical ingredients in Spanish diets.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the *asiento* companies exchanged, bartered, and entered into credit arrangements for flour, wheat, and other goods from the Pacific coast.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, by trading in commodities such as sugar but primarily wheat and flour, Peruvian northern coastal *hacendados* managed debt exchanges that translated into substantial profits.<sup>62</sup> Renters and owners of smaller coastal estates, Spanish as well as creoles, sent enslaved and free laborers with their yearly harvests to the northern coastal ports of Paita, Cherepe, Malabrigo, and Huanchaco to be loaded on private frigates and *chinchorros* (sailing boats) that sailed to agents in Panama.<sup>63</sup> As the landholders expanded and diversified their properties, and also increased the size of their debts, they were able to trade their flour for slaves and goods in the isthmus city.<sup>64</sup> By the 1690s, the most powerful were able to have slaves sent from the isthmus to work on their estates.<sup>65</sup> Like Lima's merchants, northern Peruvian landholders had the capital and the credit to directly participate in the Panamanian region's slave markets.

In addition, the wealthiest landholders from Trujillo were able to directly access transatlantic commerce. Don Domingo de Cartavio, a very powerful Galician sugar *hacendado* in Trujillo, had slaves (such as Manuel of "casta angola") purchased for him in Portobelo's *feria* from Spanish merchants and European *asentistas*.<sup>66</sup> Indicating how elite reputation accompanied access to credit, Spanish and creole landholders and merchants based in Peru could directly import African captives from the Caribbean or Panama into the Pacific markets. In effect, they translated their Pacific Andean product into transatlantic cargo, as evidenced by Francisco Antonio de Leca, Trujillo's creole *regidor* and owner of the Licapa estate in the Chicama Valley, describing the exchange rate of one hundred fanegas of flour for two enslaved black men from Panama.<sup>67</sup> The exchange of goods for people was a central mechanism of the Pacific slave trade and during the seventeenth century was monopolized by Spanish-descent landholders.

Further underlining the exclusive nature of Pacific commerce, Spaniards and creoles built their financial power from their kinship connections.

Lower-status Spaniards and creoles traveled between the Peruvian northern coast and Panama, taking the risks that the treacherous voyages entailed, such as death and dying without an heir.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, doña María de Castillos, a property holder in Trujillo and perhaps a *pulpera* (shopkeeper), appears to have suffered these consequences, having been widowed three times. As a “poor, woman alone,” she attempted in 1687 to collect debts from merchants in Panama owed to her third husband.<sup>69</sup> As many scholars have emphasized for the early modern Atlantic world, the key to economic—and political—power was generative kinship.<sup>70</sup> Spaniards, creoles, and those with these European racial reputations married into key regional families in order to establish access to credit, to consolidate property holdings, and to build substantial public honor.<sup>71</sup> For example, Joan Losano Saldana, a native of Cádiz and a Trujillo vecino, married doña Juana Tinoco de Paredes, the daughter of Panama’s magistrate, and appears to have conducted a lucrative trade in slaves and goods from Panama to Lima and into the highlands of Cajamarca well into the 1640s.<sup>72</sup> The Tinoco family remained significant merchants in the Pacific trade. By the 1660s, the family (based in Trujillo) traded sugar and wheat from its nearby Chicama Valley estates and cattle from its highland ranches with assistance from a brother and an uncle who were Panamanian vecinos (as well as a mother and grandmother who had returned to Castile).<sup>73</sup> The Tinocos, like other elite families, relied on their kin to secure their transactions, employing a brother-in-law or a son as an agent in Panama.<sup>74</sup> Without kinship ties, trading arrangements could falter. Diego Fernández Duran, a native of Extremadura and capitán of the Spanish infantry in Trujillo, complained that he had entrusted his *cajero* (agent) in Panama, don Alonso de Aguilar, with four thousand pesos to purchase slaves. Not a relative, Aguilar had left for Spain without returning the funds to the Trujillo merchant and hacendado.<sup>75</sup> Thus, marrying into landed or merchant families in order to generate wealth was a critical strategy of colonial regional elites whose economic interests included the slave trade.

Spaniards and creoles (or those who passed as such) were able to gain access to and create credit in order to take advantage of Pacific commerce. Trujillo vecinos such as Antonio Blanco were able to send substantial sums, such as nine hundred pesos, via a proxy to purchase a recently arrived African boy and a Panamanian criolla woman.<sup>76</sup> Elite women who were unable to travel conducted lucrative business arrangements, including trafficking in captives, from their homes.<sup>77</sup> These and other Spaniards and creoles understood how the market functioned. The prices of surviving



captives increased along the route, given the high demand for slaves in Quito, Lima, and on the sugar estates and vineyards of coastal Peru.<sup>78</sup> As a result, a number of Trujillo vecinos such as Capitán don Joseph de Espinosa, Capitán don Juan de Zevallos, and Capitán Francisco de Murrieta explained that they transported partidas of slaves from Panama to be sold along the northern Peruvian coast.<sup>79</sup> During the seventeenth century, the independent nature of the seventeenth-century Panamanian slave trade, combined with the dependency of local Spanish elites on the labor and skills of Africans and their descendants, translated a limited financial participation of free people of color. Free people of African descent, despite their prominent role in enabling this Pacific regional commerce, were excluded from its most substantial profits.

### Freedom within the Pacific Economy

The northern Andes, extending from the gold mines of Poyapán to the vineyards of Moquegua, including the bustling port of Guayaquil as well as the wheat estates of the Trujillo valleys, were deeply embedded in a seventeenth-century global economy. Andean silver flowed not only across the Atlantic but moved up the Pacific coast to cross into Asia, with Eastern goods to return. Multiple slave trading merchants, with and without Crown licenses, sold captives from West Central Africa, Senegambia, the Gold Coast, and the Bight of Benin into the Andean Pacific, as well as textiles and other goods. Overall, free people of color were excluded from the credit arrangements of the Pacific large-scale traffic of slaves. Nonetheless, in the seventeenth century, free people of color deepened the transactions between regional and global markets in the Andean Pacific while establishing themselves as critical political actors.

Though excluded from the large commercial investments required in the seventeenth-century regional trade, free people of color contributed to the commerce that sustained the slave trade across the isthmus and along the Pacific coast. In the 1670s and 1680s, from the northern Peruvian city of Trujillo, Juan Dávila, a free man of color and a regional merchant specializing in textiles and clothing, purchased captives from Pacific slave traders who were connected to Panama's *asentistas*.<sup>80</sup> Likewise, Cristobal Cortés—a free man of color, a merchant, and a militiaman—in 1688 purchased a recently arrived African woman from the traders who brought



captives to the Peruvian coast from Panama.<sup>81</sup> Women of color in Panama were also capable of assembling the necessary funds to purchase and sell captives, as the Real Audiencia officials reported that Luisa Biafara, a free morena woman, died in 1641 with a net worth of over three hundred pesos.<sup>82</sup> Without the Panamanian notarial records, it is difficult to know how many free people of color owned slaves in the Pacific city, but surely Joan de Reales, a free moreno whose enslaved man Bartolomé worked in the construction of Panama's colonial government buildings in 1582, and Gerónima Núñez, a free black woman and owner of Catalina Conga, were not alone.<sup>83</sup> Clearly, free men and women of color bought and sold enslaved laborers as strategic investments and part of their overall financial strategy.

People of color who moved between the Pacific regional markets and the cosmopolitan port of Panama engaged in trade as part of their personal economies. Trujillo's *alcalde ordinario* reported that Alonso Maldonado, a zambo of Panama, was a thief and superstitious, but his real crime may have been his uncertain status as either enslaved or free. Reading the regional case conscious of how Spanish American colonial courts criminalized African-descent men reveals a mobile trade network. Maldonado appears to have been a middleman, selling or pawning goods—such as a cotton bedspread, a hat, and a bridle—from Panama to local trading women in Trujillo (identified as mestiza and zamba).<sup>84</sup> Indeed, enslaved and free mariners traded along their journeys, including free men of color who commanded the coastal frigates along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts.<sup>85</sup> As Cecelia López, a free morena widow and resident of Callao, explained in 1685, her husband had been the boatswain on a ship coming from Panama to Lima's port. In addition to his personal goods, he had been transporting wooden furniture, silverwork, and textiles.<sup>86</sup> Sebastián de Medina, a master tailor in Trujillo, had pawned his scissors to an enslaved man in Panama but first made him a shirt of cloth from Rouen.<sup>87</sup> While composing his will in Trujillo, Medina appears to have traveled to Panama and considered the exchange and resulting commercial tie worthy of notation. The vibrant intracolonial trade of the later seventeenth century, therefore, was integral to the financial strategies of free and enslaved people of African descent who, in turn, were critical to the colonial economies and global trade.

Successful women of color who established *pulperias* and conducted a brisk commerce in Trujillo included those who built trade networks that spanned the Pacific coast. Lorenza Hernández, a free mulata vecina of Trujillo, engaged in the regional commerce, evidenced in her 1645 debt to a ship

captain leaving from Huanchaco to Panama's port of Perico.<sup>88</sup> Relocating from Panama to Peru's northern coast meant that free people of color extended their commercial ties. Melchora de los Reyes, a free morena criolla of Panama and daughter of Juan Biafra and Lucia *conga*, outlined her continuing ties to her native city in her 1656 will. Without descendants, she named as heir a Trujillo vecino merchant, underlining her close ties with other merchants with whom she maintained connections of debt and gifts.<sup>89</sup> In the case of María de Segura, her close attachments to the Castilian native and Trujillo merchant, the *alférez* Joseph de Segura, allowed her family to employ his Huanchaco warehouses to expand their businesses.<sup>90</sup> With direct access to the wholesale supply in the port, María de Segura and her family could more readily control the prices in their Trujillo retail establishment. Free people of color, therefore, made the regional trade move along the Pacific routes.

Additionally, the Pacific trade conducted by free men and women of African descent indicated their reach into the Atlantic. Slave trade vessels carried goods officially, or traders smuggled them into the porous Caribbean coast and across the Panamanian isthmus.<sup>91</sup> Regardless, merchants, hacendados, and pulperos purchased "Castilian *ropa*" such as a "shirt of green wool" in Panama to exchange along the Pacific trade networks from Guayaquil to Lima (and surely beyond).<sup>92</sup> The wide provenance of the cloth and clothing mirrored those who traded with Spanish Americans, as the "Castilian" or "pan-European" merchandise (including wax and wine) went hand-in-hand with the seventeenth-century slave trade.<sup>93</sup> Connected to these trading networks, those such as Joan de Ventura Cavero, a free mulato, entrusted Castilian cloth to a Trujillo vecino leaving for Lima in 1658.<sup>94</sup> As a free laborer and recognized son of a prominent Spanish hacendado, Cavero had been overseeing the transport of Chicama Valley sugar to Panama, where he would most likely purchase captives traded from the Atlantic. Likewise, merchant Juan Dávila, a freed man, sold a variety of goods from his store in Trujillo including Castilian baize, English textiles, Brittany cloth, Granada taffeta, doublets from Cambria and Funcia, Flemish thread, Venetian belts, and ribbon and stockings from Naples.<sup>95</sup> Traded alongside African captives, the imported cloth was an extension of the Atlantic slave trade's reach into the Pacific.<sup>96</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century Dávila, a son of African slaves who had freed himself, was a powerful merchant in Trujillo who did not risk the voyage to Panama but enjoyed the profits of the trade, one that was wrapped in the commerce of slaves.

With their profits from the commerce between Trujillo and Panama, people of African descent invested in the manumission of themselves and their family members. Inés, a free black criolla living in Panama, had gained her freedom after giving birth to a son who had been sold to cleric in Trujillo. Undeterred by the distance, she sent an eight-year-old *mina* captive as payment for the freedom of her now twenty-year-old mulato son, Nicolás.<sup>97</sup> Likewise, Laureana García, a free morena vecina of Panama, sent 870 pesos with an intermediary to free her son in Trujillo.<sup>98</sup> Juana and Francisca, criolla black women, gained written promises of manumission from their owner that included serving an owner in Panama to gain their freedom.<sup>99</sup> African-descent soldiers on the Panamanian isthmus employed their salaries to purchase freedom for themselves or family members.<sup>100</sup> Enslaved and free people, therefore, distributed the cost of manumission among themselves through the trade networks of the Pacific.

Free people of color were essential to local commerce that included the regional slave trade. In Trujillo, free women such as a *chichera* Juana Pardo (a woman who made and sold corn beer at her own tavern), a *pulpera* named Agustina de Bracamonte, petty trader María de Herrera, and merchant woman María de Segura, as well as an unnamed cloistered free morena, purchased slaves who had been sold from Panama to Trujillo.<sup>101</sup> Since the notarial records of Panama have been destroyed, however, similar evidence of free people of color participating in the slave trade throughout the isthmus is not available. Still, the documentation from Trujillo amplifies the information from Panama where free people in the isthmus city certainly participated in the slave trade. For example, María de Solís de Zúñiga, a single *cuarterona* vecina from Panama, registered her sale of María, a “casta angola” enslaved woman, brought from Panama.<sup>102</sup> Working as *pulperas* in Panama, free women of color such as mulatas Francisca Mala and Elena de San Juan would have lent and borrowed, including what was necessary to make a down payment on an enslaved laborer.<sup>103</sup> From these commercial successes, free women of color named themselves as *vecinas*, indicating not only their prosperity and property ownership but also their status as married women of reputation and honor.<sup>104</sup> From their economic success, free women of color claimed a position in the public sphere of colonial Panama and the Andean Pacific.

Free men of color in Panama were publicly prominent, moving from commercial success to recognizable official positions. As remarkable artisans, Panamanian men of African descent could amass significant capital because of

their skill and the necessity of their work as carpenters, woodworkers, and blacksmiths in the tropical city prone to earthquakes and pirate attacks.<sup>105</sup> Free men, working as tailors, tanners, silversmiths, and farriers throughout the city, could also earn enough to establish independent households.<sup>106</sup> Bernardo Valdés, a black creole of Panama and a shoemaker, came from a long-standing family of free people of color including his father, a militia sergeant, and his grandmother, whose house and *solar* (urban lot) he had inherited.<sup>107</sup> Free men of color also could earn substantial wages as expert shipbuilders throughout the Caribbean and Pacific coasts where their skill in choosing the wood, designing and constructing ships, and directing crews was legion—and crucial for the regional trade as well as the Pacific and Atlantic commerce, including the slave trade.<sup>108</sup> With economic success came political positions. As early as 1577, free people of color in Panama were governed by an *alguacil* of the blacks, a leader recognized or appointed by colonial authorities.<sup>109</sup> In Panama, from at least the 1610s onward, men of African descent worked in notarial offices—positions that were hypothetically reserved for those who could prove a purity of Old Christian or Iberian descent.<sup>110</sup> As notaries, men of color included themselves in Panama's lower colonial bureaucracy as capable, educated, and reputable *vecinos*.<sup>111</sup> With their commercial success, free men of color established a corporate body of Africans and their descendants in the city at the center of regional trade.

Serving in Panama's militias proved critical for Africans and their descendants to advance economically and also gain public recognition. The Panamanian region, given the dangers of pirates and fugitives to official trade and its critical role in connecting the Caribbean and Atlantic with the Pacific, presented constant opportunities for advancement.<sup>112</sup> In 1652, Gaspar de los Reyes petitioned and was promoted from a soldier to the *capitán* of Portobelo's free *moreno* militia. In this capacity, he explained that his excellent service included improving Santiago's fortifications, placing sentinels in key locations against English attacks, and evacuating the people from the fort that guarded the Caribbean mouth of the Chagres River during a Dutch attack. In exchange, he petitioned for an increase in salary to that equal to a musketeer at Portobelo's San Felipe fort.<sup>113</sup> Other men of color had held the position, a fact that circulated among militiamen whose service took them to posts throughout the Spanish world of the Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic.<sup>114</sup> Reyes, like other men of color, recognized how to leverage his military service and loyalty into monetary awards, but also the

titled positions of the local militia.<sup>115</sup> For free men, military service signaled a way to claim subject positions within Spanish colonial society.

Free men of color, however, continued to secure their subject positions through their economic contributions. For example, Lucas Gutiérrez had parleyed his labor into a militia position, initially serving the Crown as well as regional officials and merchants by securing the roads between Panama and Portobelo. Once appointed to the Panama and Cartagena *moreno* militia companies, Gutiérrez explained that his loyal service included the dangerous work of guarding the fleet galleons during the treacherous Bahamian crossing and fighting pirates in the Spanish port of Cádiz.<sup>116</sup> In his testimony, Gutiérrez (with his legal representative) rightfully elaborated on his abilities to loyally serve the Crown, thus underlining his place as a Spanish colonial subject. His experiences included a range of economic capabilities that had made him a leader and caused his authority to be officially recognized by Spanish colonial authorities. Acknowledging a similar combination of economic and political leadership, Pedro de Meneses y Rivas, a free creole *moreno*, was awarded the captaincy of the free *Morenos de Guinea* infantry in Panama in 1692. According to his petition, he had earned the position by serving for sixteen years, leading enslaved and free militiamen to “reduce” the “diverse nations of Indians” in the region.<sup>117</sup> A contributing factor in his favor was that Meneses y Rivas had financed the military *entradas* and would also pay the salaries of the infantry, from three to four hundred men, under his command. As a result of their financial abilities, free men of color, and military men like Lucas Gutiérrez, were critical functionaries in the Panamanian region. Integrated into the dual economic projects of trade and defense that were equally required to sustain the Crown’s interests, free men of color constantly proved their worth as reputational subjects.

### Conclusion

The seventeenth-century Pacific slave trade was part of an extensive colonial economy, connecting the Andean interior with the Atlantic and Pacific worlds and trading networks into Guatemala and Mexico, as discussed in the chapters by Paul Lokken and Sabrina Smith in this volume. Along the Pacific coastal corridor, merchants sent tobacco, *aguardiente*, sugar, wheat, flour, soap, and wines southward to Lima and Chile along with captive men and

women of African descent.<sup>118</sup> Muleteers transported tobacco from Chachapoyas, cattle from Huamachuco, and textiles from Quito and Cuenca down from the highlands to the coast to be sold into the Pacific markets.<sup>119</sup> Cacao and wood from Guayaquil supplied Panama, a city that relied on the northern Central American regions for other foodstuffs and mules to transport goods as well as the coveted Peruvian silver across the isthmus.<sup>120</sup> Panama connected Pacific economies with the Atlantic world, as the Caribbean ports became sites to trade dyewood, indigo, and cacao for slaves and European textiles.<sup>121</sup> The isthmus city was also the conduit for Asian goods from Manila and the Mexican ports of Acapulco, including Chinese silks, satin, and taffeta.<sup>122</sup> Hardly separate economies, the Atlantic and the Pacific converged in the Pacific Andes during the early modern period.

The dynamic economy simultaneously produced and reproduced the livelihoods and statuses of free men and women of color. Men and women of European descent dominated the financial exchanges founded in the reputational and racial hierarchies of seventeenth-century credit arrangements of commodity trading that included the mid-colonial slave trade into the Spanish Americas. Nonetheless, free and enslaved men and women of color provided the skills and knowledge that made the Pacific trade function. Trading could bring financial gain and a way to purchase a means out of manual labor into commercial and artisanal occupations. In these positions as merchants, militiamen, and skilled workers, men and women of African descent secured their statuses as free people, especially free men, who could claim the honor and the reputation of loyal vassals. Moving from slavery to freedom, therefore, was not only a legal or a financial transition but a claim to a status that would secure subjecthood within the Pacific economies.

## Notes

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2. Tardieu, *Cimarrones de Panamá*, 31, 33.

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5. Frederick P. Bowser, *African Slave in Colonial Peru*, 54; Sherwin K. Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*, 50; and Rachel Sarah O'Toole, *Bound Lives*, 25–26.
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7. María Christina Navarrete Peláez, "De las 'malas entradas,'" 161, 171; Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca, "El comercio de Costa Rica," 72, 80; and Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Aspectos sociales en América colonial*, 121.
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10. Silvia Espelt-Bombín, "Notaries of Color," 50.
11. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 449; Felipe Gaitán-Ammann, "Besieged Genoese," 37; Navarrete Peláez, "De las 'malas entradas,'" 170, 171; and Jorge Palacios Preciado, *La trata de negros*, 26, 30.
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16. Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 147; and Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 138.
17. Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 136; and Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*, 55.
18. "Descripción de Panamá," 168, 171; and Carol Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (1577), 447.
19. Tardieu, *Cimarrones de Panamá*, 31, 33, 38.
20. Roland Dennis Hussey, "Spanish Colonial Trails in Panama," 60.
21. Archivo Arzobispal de Lima (hereafter AAL), Apelaciones de Panamá, leg. 1, exp. 10 (1638/1640), 9, 10; Hussey, "Spanish Colonial Trails in Panama," 69–70; and "Descripción de Panamá," 168, 171.
22. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, 5, quotes Serrano y Sanz, "El Archivo de Indias," 445–75; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, 440, from AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (29 de agosto de 15??).
23. Mena García, *La ciudad en un cruce*, 208.
24. Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 134.
25. For evidence of pirates, and their notoriety on the Pacific coasts, see Archivo Regional de La Libertad (hereafter ARL), Protocolos, Espino y Alvarado, Carta de poder de Martín de Vicuña (1684), 329. For reports of the English sack of Panama in 1671, see *Relación de los socorros*.

26. Alfredo Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 881; and Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y descripción*, 286.
27. *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias*, título quinto, ley xi, 286v; Rina Cáceres, *Negros, mulatos*, 99; Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 188; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (1577), 450, 451.
28. "Descripción de Panamá," 202, 205; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (1577), 454.
29. AGI-Panamá, leg. 239, L. 18, "Real Cédula al gobernador y capitán de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, a instancias de Lucas Gutiérrez, para que observe la que se dio en 31 de marzo de 1658 en que se le mandaba socorrer a los morenos y mulatos libre, cuando tengan que server en ocasiones de Guerra" (1662), 264v; AGI-Panamá, leg. 230, L. 5, "Real Cédula al gobernador y capitán general de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, para que guarde y cumpla la de 31 de marzo de 1658 por la que se ordenaba socorrer a los morenos y mulatos libres que sirvan en ocasiones de peligro de enemigos" (1662), 342v-343.
30. For a discussion of the autonomous workings of the Portuguese asiento in Cartagena, see Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 118, 128.
31. Guzmán Navarro, *La trata esclavista*, 15; and Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 436, 437.
32. Alonso de Andrade, *Varones ilustres en santidad*, 769; and AGI-Contaduría, Asientos de negros con diferentes compañías y particulares, leg. 261, no. 2, "Traslado de los cinco testimonios los tres de las cabezas de esclavos que el assto a yntrodusido por Puerto Belo—Y los dos de los negros que sean muerto en Portobelo y Panama y en el camino de una ciudad a otra" (1668), 50. See Bowser, *African Slave in Colonial Peru*, 63, for a similar arrangement in the 1630s.
33. AGI-Panamá, leg. 238, L. 17, "Real Cédula al Conde de Salvatierra, virrey del Perú, ordenando que cuando se reúna con el presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá para tratar de la situación de Portobelo, según tiene ordenado por cédula de 15 de marzo de 1656, vea la oferta que ha hecho Lucas Gutiérrez, moreno libre natural de Cartagena y vecino de Panamá, de reparar el camino de dicha ciudad a Portobelo y Casa de Cruces por siete mil pesos anuales, y time la resolución que convenga" (1658), 381v.
34. AGI-Panamá, leg. 239, L. 19, "Real Cédula al presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, para que conforme a lo que se ordenó en la que se inserta de 20 de octubre de 1663, haga que se pague a Lucas Gutiérrez, moreno libre, lo que se le debe del arreglo de los caminos de Panamá a Portobelo" (1664), 32.
35. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (20 de agosto 9de 15??)], 440; "Descripción de Panamá," 168; and Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 138.



36. AGI-Panamá, leg. 240, L. 20, "Real Cédula a Alonso de Mercado Villacorta, gobernador y capitán general de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, ordenando dé licencia a los vecinos de aquella ciudad, para que puedan ir a rescatar los esclavos que se llevó el enemigo a Jamaica cuando la invadió, bajo las condiciones que se expresan" (1675), 233v–234.
37. Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 438; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 30 (3 de enero de 1573), 353.
38. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (15 de febrero de 1609), 489.
39. AGI-Panamá, leg. 238, L. 16, "Real Cédula al presidente y oidores de la Audiencia de Panamá, para que informen sobre la petición que ha hecho aquella ciudad de que se remedie la falta de negros esclavos reduciendo a los mulatos y mestizos vagabundos y a los muchos indios que están sublevados en la provincial de Veragua" (1646), 78v.
40. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 55.
41. AGI-Indiferente, leg. 2830, "Petición Alonso de Arcos en nombre de el thesorero don Sebastián de la Cueva y don Agustín Grillo podatarios de don Domingo Grillo en la Cabeça que los comissarios del Consulado siguen contra mis partes sobre la conducción de los negros" (1673), 116; O'Toole, *Bound Lives*, 10–11; Bowser, *African Slave in Colonial Peru*, 55; and Demetrio Ramos Pérez, *Trigo Chileno*, 14.
42. AGI-Indiferente, Asiento de Negros: Cartas, Ordenes, leg. 2797, "Carta, testimonio remitio mi theniente en el Puerto de Payta del Real Despacho" (1699), 1v; Jean-Pierre Tardieu, "Compra de esclavos," 276; O'Toole, *Bound Lives*, 43; and Cristina Ana Mazzeo de Vivó, "Esclavitud y acumulación mercantil," 157.
43. Diego de Córdoba Salinas, *Vida Virtudes*, 30.
44. Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Real Audiencia, Causas civiles, leg. 214, cuadro 808 (1674), 70; AGI-Lima, leg. 86, no. 65, "Da cuenta del estado en que oy se halla aquel Reyno y quanto aumentar" (1687), 1v; and Lawrence A. Clayton, "Trade and Navigation," 12.
45. AGN, Real Audiencia, Causas civiles, leg. 214, cuadro 808 (1674), 12; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 448, 451.
46. For the optimal navigation times along the Peruvian coast, see Pedro de Cieza de León, *Travels of Pedro de Cieza de León*, 19; and Woodrow Wilson Borah, *Early Colonial Trade*, 29, 30.
47. ARLL, Protocolos, Ortiz de Peralta, leg. 190, "Concierto" (1666), 588v.
48. Tardieu, *Cimarrones de Panamá*, 111.
49. AAL, Apelaciones de Panamá, leg. 7. exp. 3 (1703), 7v, 8v; Alfredo Castellero Calvo, *Arquitectura, urbanismo*, 197; Cáceres, *Negros, mulatos*, 23, 88; Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 298, 852, 874; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 450, 453.
50. Mena García, *La ciudad en un cruce*, 57–58.
51. AGI-Panamá, leg. 16 (1646), 78v.

52. ARRL, Cabildo, Ordinarias, leg. 20, exp. 437, "Demanda de fray Antonio de Mendoza, procurador del Convento de Trujillo del Orden real de Redentares de nuestra señora de las Mercedes con Sebastián García, Labrador en el valle de Chicama, sobre entrega y devolución de dos negros pertenecientes al convento de Panamá, traídos con fraude y engaño a la ciudad de Trujillo de dha ciudad" (1653), 2.
53. ARRL, Protocolos, Espino de Alvarado, leg. 149, "Carta de concierto" (1685), 231v.
54. ARRL, Corregimiento, Ordinarias, leg. 202, exp. 1406, "Expediente seguido por el alférez Bartolomé Leal, soldado del presidio del Callao, en virtud de la orden del Lic. Francisco López, presbítero; sobre entrega del negro Pascual de Castro, esclavo de su parte, para llevarselo" (1677), 5, 7v, 8.
55. Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 223.
56. ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 91, "Carta de libertad" (1652), 213; ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 88, "Carta de libertad" (1672), 504; ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 105, "Venta de negra" (1690), 13; and ARRL, Protocolos, San Román, leg. 214, "Carta de libertad" (1700), 97v.
57. Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 226.
58. Suárez, *Desafíos transatlánticos*, 8, 23, 29, 39, 72.
59. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 105, "Testamento de Cap. Francisco Hurtado Salvatierra" (1691), 227v, 228, 230v.
60. For the lack of wheat as well as wine in Panama, see Diego de Ocaña, *Un viaje fascinante*, 29; and Rebecca Earle, *Body of the Conquistador*, 67, 71.
61. For evidence of asentistas selling flour along with slaves, see AGI-Indiferente, leg. 2830, Autos contra Domingo Grillo y Ambrosio Lomelín, "Petton Alonso de Arcos en nombre del thesorero don Sebastián de la Cueva y don Agustín Grillo podattarios de don Domingo Grillo en la Cabeza que los comissarios del Consulado siguen contra mis partes sobre la conducción de los negros," 17.
62. In the 1650s, northern coastal landholders were inhibited by their inability to take their product directly to the markets in Panama and often undersold by colonial authorities with access to credit and the ability to contract the ships. AGI-Lima, leg. 168, "Algunos vecinos de aquella ciudad 20 de ste. quejense por menor de las vejaciones que han recibido, y reciben de don Jacinto Latras Corregidor de la dha ciudad de Trujillo" (1651), 2, 2v.
63. ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 146, "Testamento de Martín de Carabajal" (1645), 790, 792, 792v; ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 145, "Testamento de Luis de Berlte" (1642), 267v; ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 146, "Testamento de Diego de Mesa Moedano" (1645), 861; ARRL, Protocolos, García, leg. 164, "Testamento de Pablo de la Benita" (1659), 347, 348v; Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y descripción*, 393; Boleslao Lewin, ed., *Descripción del Virreinato del Perú*, 25; and Antonio de la Calancha, *Crónica moralizada*, 4:1923.

64. Susan Ramírez, *Provincial Patriarchs*, 117; and ARRL, Protocolos, Viera Gutiérrez, leg. 256, “Testamento de Toribio de la Vina” (1648), 63v.
65. ARRL, Protocolos, Salinas. leg. 241, “Carta de arrendamiento de la hacienda Llamipe Santa Rosa” (1693), 20v; and ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 109, “Testamento de Capitán don García de Bracamonte Davila” (1699), 305v.
66. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 102, “Testamento de Don Domingo de Cartavio” (1685).
67. ARRL, Protocolos, Espino de Alvarado, leg. 149, “Testamento de Francisco Antonio de Leca” (1684), 115v.
68. When the merchant Joseph de Segura (a native of Rioja) departed for Panama in 1657, he and his wife (a native of Seville) took the precaution of notarizing her right to legally record his will in case he died in the journey. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortés. leg. 97, “Poder para testar de Joseph de Segura y Petronila Gonzalez” (1657), 85o.
69. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 130, “Testamento de doña María de Castillos” (1687), 139v, 14o.
70. Kenneth Andrien, *Crisis and Decline*, 197; Jane E. Mangan, *Transatlantic Obligations*, 102; Ida Altman, *Transatlantic Ties*, 91; and Kris Lane, *Quito 1599*, 159.
71. Ann Twinam, *Public Lives, Private Secrets*, 33. For example, don Martín de Aranda, a native of Extremadura, married creole doña Ana de Castro and then purchased considerable highland estates in Huamachuco, probably due to her family connections. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 104, “Testamento de don Martín de Aranda” (1684).
72. ARRL, Protocolos, Paz, leg. 205, “Testamento de Joan Losano Saldana” (1645), 267–274.
73. AGI-Lima, leg. 170, “Al ror lizado Oteros. Señora. Don Alvaro Tinoco de Cavero vecino de la ciudad de Trujillo” (1666), 7v, 11v.
74. Alférez Alonso Benites Nino, a native of Huamachuco, traveled to Panama in order to trade slaves, flour, and textiles but also sent his brother-in-law at other times. ARRL, Protocolos, Espino de Alvarado, leg. 158, “Testamento de alférez Alonso Benites Nino” (1699), 435. Doña Inés Hurtado de Peñalosa, a hacendada, sent one of her sons to Panama to sell the estate’s flour. ARRL, Protocolos, García, leg. 166, “Testamento de doña Inés Hurtado de Pena Losa” (1660), 522. Northern Peruvian landholders and merchants also called on friends, with whom they wove intricate financial arrangements of dependency, such as don Martín de Aranda, who held a mortgage on the house of a Panamanian vecino. With this friend of forty years, Aranda maintained extensive trade debts. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 104, “Testamento de don Martín de Aranda” (1684).
75. ARRL, Protocolos, Ortiz de Peralta, leg. 189, “Testamento de Diego Nuñez Duran” (1665), 238.

76. ARRL, Corregimiento, Ordinarias, leg. 195, exp. 1300, "Autos seguidos por Antonio Blanco, vecino de Trujillo, contra Simón Dominguez de Amaya, albacea y tenedor de bienes de Marcos Pérez; sobre pago de veinte botijas de salitre y devolución de una negrita esclava" (1658), 1.
77. Doña Cathalina Guerrero, a resident of Trujillo, originally from the more northern city of Piura, also trafficked in enslaved people. In 1692, she declared that a Trujillo vecino had mortgaged three slaves to her and claimed an additional *arara* woman who had been brought from Panama. ARRL, Protocolos, Salinas, leg. 240, "Testamento doña Cathalina Guerrero" (1692), 191, 192v. Doña Catalina Bezerra Berdugo, a native of Extremadura, explained in her final testament that she wished her executor to track down a slave stolen from her in Panama as well as collect three hundred pesos of his wages owed in his absence. ARRL, Protocolos, Rentero, leg. 208, "Testamento de doña Catalina Bezerra Berdugo" (1679), 145v.
78. AGI-Indiferente, leg. 2830, Autos contra Domingo Grillo y Ambrosio Lomelín (1673), 17; Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*, 57; Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 456; Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 213; and Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y comercio de esclavos*, 1st ed., 223–24.
79. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 117, "Carta de poder" (1707), 71; ARRL, Protocolos, Ortiz de Peralta, leg. 196, "Venta de un negro" (1672), 203; and ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 104, "Venta de negra" (1688), 182.
80. ARRL, Protocolos, Ortiz de Peralta, leg. 196, "Venta de negra" (1672), 115v; ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 90, "Venta de esclavo" (1675), 285v; and ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 102, "Venta de un negro" (1686), 723.
81. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 104, "Carta de libertad" (1688), 184.
82. AGI-Contratación, Autos de bienes de difuntos, leg. 403, n. 1, r. 4, "De Luisa Biafara, morena y libre, difunta en Panamá" (1641), 2v.
83. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Contaduría, leg. 1459 (1582, 1589), 416, 435.
84. ARRL, Cabildo, Criminales, leg. 82, exp. 1439, "Expediente seguido por el Comisario General don Juan de Herrera Balvedre Alcalde Ordinario de Trujillo contra Alonso Maldonado zambo sobre haber cometido algunos hurtos" (1697), 1, 1v, 3.
85. Thomas Gage, *Thomas Gage's Travels in the New World*, 315, 327; and Solórzano Fonseca, "El comercio de Costa Rica," 80.
86. ARRL, Protocolos, Espino de Alvarado, leg. 149, "Entrega de bienes" (1685), 350.
87. ARRL, Protocolos, Salinas, leg. 233, "Testamento de Sebastián de Herrera" (1673), 789.
88. ARRL, Protocolos, Viera Gutiérrez, leg. 253, "Carta de pago" (1645), 401.
89. ARRL, Protocolos, Viera Gutiérrez, leg. 259, "Testamento de Melchora de los Reyes" (1656), 183, 184.
90. Rachel Sarah O'Toole, "Bonds of Kinship," 8.

91. Navarrete Peláez, “De las ‘malas entradas,’” 161, 171; and AGI-Contaduría. leg. 261, no. 10, “Asiento tomado con Antonio García Principal y don Sebastián Silveo, su abonador, con un cedula perteneciente, a dho asiento” (1674), 2. For a discussion of cloth found in the warehouses of Grillo and Lomelín in Panama, see Gaitán-Ammann, “Besieged Genoese,” 37.
92. ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 145, “Testamento de Capitan Pedro de Herrera Salazar” (1642), 207v; ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 102, “Carta de testamento de Francisco Sanches Cortés” (1685), 137v; ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 102, “Testamento de don Domingo de Cartavio” (1685); and ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 105, “Testamento de Capitán Antonio de Soto” (1691), 372v.
93. Lane, *Quito 1599*, 155.
94. ARRL, Protocolos, Viera Gutierrez, leg. 260, “Carta de poder” (1658), 108v.
95. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 100, “Inventario de Juan Dávila” (1700), 278v; ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 100, “Inventario de Juan Dávila” (1700), 293, 294, 294v; ARRL, Cortijo Quero, leg. 100, “Inventario de Juan Dávila” (1700), 457; and ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 110, “Inventario de Juan Dávila” (1700), 390v.
96. Palacios Preciado, *La trata de Negros*, 53.
97. ARRL, Protocolos, Espino de Alvarado, leg. 161, “Carta de libertad” (1707), 672v.
98. ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 143, “Baltasar Péres en nombre de Laureana García,” 352.
99. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, leg. 101, “Testamento del don Manuel de Quiñones Osorio” (1682), 236.
100. AGI-Panamá, leg. 230, L. 4, “Real Cédula a Juan Bitrián de Beamonte y Navarra, gobernador y capitán general de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, avisándole cómo se ordena a Jerónimo de Ojeda, gobernador de la isla de Santa Catalina, que los siete mil seiscientos doce pesos y cuatro reales, procedentes de venta de esclavos y libertad de mulatos, que están en la caja real de aquella isla, los emplee en pagar a la gente de aquel presidio” (1651), 121. For an earlier case of the ex-cimarron Pedro Yalonga, see Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 2.
101. ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 84, “Testamento de Juana Pardo” (1677), 330; ARRL, Protocolos, Ortiz de Peralta, leg. 194, “Venta de negra” (1670), 424; ARRL, Protocolos, San Román, leg. 211, “Venta de una negra” (1694), 541; ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 92, “Venta de negra” (1680), 184; and ARRL, Protocolos, Álvarez, leg. 90, “Venta” (1674), 85.
102. ARRL, Protocolos, Salinas, leg. 236, “Transacción y concierto” (1681), 184, 186v.
103. Castellero Calvo, *Arquitectura, urbanismo*, 72; Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 848; and Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 451.

104. AAL, Apelaciones de Panamá, leg. 1, exp. 10 (1638/1640), 9v; AAL, Apelaciones de Panamá, leg. 7, exp. 3 (1703), 5, 8; and Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 205.
105. Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 193; see Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 448, 450, 451; and "Descripción de Panamá," 171. For more about free artisans in urban colonial Costa Rica, see Cáceres, *Negros, mulatos*, 4, 92.
106. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 448, 450, 451.
107. ARRL, Protocolos, Cortijo Quero, "Carta de poder" (1704), 446.
108. For shipbuilders and other woodworkers in Veragua (Panama), see Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y descripción*, 288; in Nombre de Dios (Panama), see Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (29 de agosto de 15??), 440; and in Guayaquil, see Lawrence A. Clayton, *Los astilleros*, 26–29.
109. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 40 (1577), 448.
110. Espelt-Bombín, "Notaries of Color," 55.
111. Espelt-Bombín, "Notaries of Color," 46; and Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 2.
112. Castellero Calvo, *Sociedad, economía*, 188, 296–97.
113. AGI, Panamá, leg. 239, L. 18, "Real Cédula por la que se confirma a Gaspar de los Reyes su nombramiento como capitán de la Compañía de Morenos Libres de Portobelo, y el sueldo de mosquetero que le señaló el gobernador Pedro Carrillo, en virtud de los méritos que se describen" (1662), 292v–294.
114. For evidence of another free moreno holding the San Felipe musketeer position, see AGI-Panamá, leg. 239, L. 19, "Real Cédula a Fernando de la Riva Agüero, gobernador y capitán general de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, a instancias de Juan de Valladolid Mogollón, moreno libre, para que, si le constan ser ciertos los méritos que alega, le dé la plaza de mosquetero que pide" (1664), 34.
115. Jopling, *Indios y negros*, cites AGI-Panamá, leg. 1 (27 de noviembre de 1576), 428.
116. AGI-Panamá, leg. 239, L. 19, "Real Cédula Juan Pérez de Guzmán, gobernador y capitán general de Tierra Firme y presidente de la Audiencia de Panamá, en recomendación de Lucas Gutiérrez, moreno libre" (1664), 113–113v.
117. AGI-Panamá, leg. 241, L. 24, "Real Provisión concediendo patente de capitán de Infantería de Morenos Libres de Panamá a Pedro de Meneses y Rivas, moreno criollo libre de dicha ciudad, que ha ofrecido levantar la citada compañía a su costa" (1692), 25v–26v.
118. Modesto Rubiños y Andrade, "Noticia previa," 324.
119. ARRL, Protocolos, Escobar, leg. 145, "Testamento de Lic. Don Luis de Paz" (1642), 367v; Exquemelin, *History of the Buccaneers*, 59; AGN, Compañía de Jesús, Colegio de Trujillo, Contabilidad, Cuentas de colegio, leg. 86 (1685), 89; ADL, Arriola, Causas civiles, leg. 1, "Inventario" (1642), 48; Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca, "Las relaciones comerciales," 103; Paul Rizo-Patron Boylan and

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- Cristóbal Alijovin de Losada, "La elite nobiliaria," 260; and Lane, *Quito 1599*, 181.
120. Clayton, *Los astilleros*, 6; and Solórzano Fonseca, "El comercio de Costa Rica," 72, 76, 86, 92.
121. Aaron Alejandro Olivas, "Global Politics of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 90, 99; Jonathan Israel, *Dutch Republic*, 944; and David Hancock, "Atlantic Trade," 328.
122. Solórzano Fonseca, "El comercio de Costa Rica," 100; Lane, *Quito 1599*, 159; Oswald Sales Colín, "El movimiento," 104, 115; and Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giraldez, "Silk for Silver," 62, 63.





CHAPTER 7

## From Asiento to Spanish Networks

Slave Trading in the Río de la Plata, 1700–1810

ALEX BORUCKI



‡ THE RÍO DE LA PLATA REGION IN WHAT IS TODAY ARGENTINA, URUGUAY, and Paraguay has a long but neglected history of slave trading, given that the ports of Buenos Aires and Montevideo not only employed the work of enslaved Africans but also became entrepôts for the supply of captives heading to Potosí, Peru, and Chile. In 1585, just five years after the permanent foundation of Buenos Aires, the *cabildo* requested permission from the Spanish Crown to introduce slaves from Angola into Peru. The first Spanish inhabitants of Buenos Aires already knew about Angola even though Portuguese Luanda was just a decade old. Also in 1585, the bishop of Córdoba del Tucumán—in today’s Argentina—organized a venture to open trade between Buenos Aires and Brazil. Spanish ships arrived in São Vicente, Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro in 1586 but fell victim to an English privateer on their return. Portuguese and Spanish survivors nevertheless made it back to Buenos Aires in March 1587, along with sixty enslaved Africans previously embarked in Brazil. Most of these captives were subsequently sold in Peru. While some Luso-Spanish slave trading connection existed prior to this vignette even during the first and unsuccessful foundation of Buenos Aires in 1536, the initiative of the bishop usually is considered to have established a

continuous maritime slave trade to the Río de la Plata. Two and a half centuries later, in 1835, the last transatlantic slave voyage direct from Angola arrived in the Río de la Plata, in Montevideo, the capital of today's Uruguay.<sup>1</sup>

The Río de la Plata region had the most enduring connections to slave trafficking in the mainland Spanish colonies. The significance of slave trading for Buenos Aires was most evident during its foundational period (1580–1640), when the economy of this port depended on this traffic, and then again during the late colonial era (1776–1812), when local merchants developed a direct—albeit short-lived—trade with Africa. Throughout the colonial period, the slave trade was the most important link of the Río de la Plata with commercial circuits outside of the Spanish Atlantic. Thus, as foreign traders brought enslaved Africans to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, they also connected this region with Portuguese, Dutch, French, English, and even US commercial domains. Of all these transimperial networks, the Luso-Spanish trading partnership proved the most central and enduring. The Portuguese were essential for the slave traffic during the Iberian Union (1580–1640), creating the Portuguese enclave of Colônia do Sacramento (hereafter simply Colonia) that operated as a slave trade hub across from Buenos Aires between 1680 and 1777, and, later, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador had key roles during the peak years of the late colonial traffic. The *rioplatense* slave traders of Buenos Aires and Montevideo launched their own slave voyages in the late eighteenth century—a rare feature for the mainland Spanish American colonies—largely because of these Luso-Spanish networks. With the exception of a handful of ships sailing out of Cartagena and Veracruz, no other mainland Spanish colony dispatched slave voyages direct to Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Demand for coerced labor from the vineyards, ranches, mining camps, and towns of greater Peru and Chile explain this long and intense history of rioplatense slave trading. Enslaved Africans not only were one of the most important items of commerce between the Río de la Plata and the inland and Pacific regions but also the workers who fed Buenos Aires and Montevideo and who performed most urban crafts, from carpentry to tailoring and from shoemaking to baking. Slaves also produced the regional export commodity of greatest value (cattle hides) and the most promising late colonial industry (jerked beef).<sup>3</sup>

This chapter examines the shifts of transatlantic connections and concurrent changes of the slave routes in eighteenth-century Río de la Plata. Direct and continuous traffic between Buenos Aires and Africa almost disappeared with the ending of the Iberian Union in 1640. It revived in the eighteenth

century: first, almost exclusively at the hands of foreign traders and smugglers (French and English contracts), and then, by the end of the century, through increasingly direct Spanish slave trading with Africa. Throughout the entire century, Luso-Brazilian coastal traffic was a key source for rio-platense slave markets.

### **Prologue: Portuguese and Dutch Trade after the Iberian Union**

Before heading into the eighteenth century, it is necessary to briefly outline how the breaking of the Iberian Union in 1640 rearranged the slave routes leading to both the foundation of Portuguese Colonia and the French and English *asientos*, or slave trade contracts.<sup>4</sup> For the second half of the seventeenth century, historian Zacarías Moutoukias points out both the predominance of Dutch slave trading and changing patterns of Portuguese traffic.<sup>5</sup> After peace between Spain and the Netherlands in 1648, Dutch ships traded both merchandise and slaves in Buenos Aires through commercial circuits linking this city with Amsterdam, Lisbon, and Seville. While the peace treaty prohibited Dutch commerce with Spanish colonies, it contained a clause allowing Spanish colonial authorities to aid Dutch ships undergoing distress at sea. This exception became a subterfuge by which many Dutch ships docked in Buenos Aires.

The switch from Portuguese to Dutch predominance of the slave traffic to Buenos Aires was not complete after 1640, as some Portuguese ships continued to show up in this port, almost all illegally.<sup>6</sup> While the Portuguese vessels arriving before 1640 were mostly small shipments departing from Brazil, those disembarking in the 1650s and 1660s were large vessels sailing direct from Angola. Thus, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD) shows thirteen Portuguese ships sailing between Africa and Buenos Aires from 1655 to 1663, before the foundation of Colonia (1680). Most of these ships arrived in the 1650s, before the peak of Dutch slave arrivals in the 1660s. Thereafter, there is no record of Portuguese trade up to 1668, when small shipments from Brazil, instead of from Africa, began to reappear, carrying sugar and tobacco as well as slaves.<sup>7</sup> The merchants of Buenos Aires found this small-scale coastal trade, much of it in the aftermath of Colonia's appearance, easier to handle than the large shipments direct from Africa.

As this change in the Portuguese slave trade to Buenos Aires took place, the Dutch traffic to this region diminished abruptly. Moutoukias suggests

that the growth of Dutch Caribbean plantations from the early 1660s on, which attracted Dutch slavers, cut the link with the Río de la Plata.<sup>8</sup> These were also the years of the Domingo Grillo and Ambrosio and Agustín Lomelín slave contract (1663–1674), when Dutch slave arrivals became legal in the Spanish colonies from Venezuela to Veracruz, then the main regions of disembarkation for slaves arriving first in Dutch Curaçao. Perhaps the disappearance of Dutch slavers from the waters of Buenos Aires was due to both the growth of Dutch slave colonies and also the fact that the Spanish Caribbean and Mexico now offered more attractive markets.<sup>9</sup>

Dutch commercial withdrawal left the Portuguese of Colonia as the sole slave traders in the Río de la Plata during the last two decades of the seventeenth century. Other non-Spanish merchants approached this region, but without engaging in slave trade. French and English vessels at this time carried goods almost always without slaves to Buenos Aires.<sup>10</sup> Sporadic French and English ships also traded in Colonia in the 1680s, but without threatening the predominance of the commercial route Lisbon-Rio de Janeiro-Colonia.<sup>11</sup> The French and the English rapidly grasped the significance of the commerce in slaves, the traffic that foreigners could conduct with more ease than the Spanish in these colonies. One of the first French representations of the Río de la Plata, published in a large map of the Americas by the French cartographer Nicolas de Fer in 1698, underlines slave trading as the main activity of this region. Figure 7.1 shows the down-right corner of the map, depicting the disembarkation of African captives. The legend explains that both Portuguese and Spanish subjects conducted this traffic, which implies that the image portrayed slave trading between Buenos Aires and Colonia. While the French *Compagnie du Sénégal* sent four slave ships to Cartagena in 1697–1698, just at the time this map was published, a record of seventeenth-century French slave arrivals in Buenos Aires has yet to surface.<sup>12</sup>

In the second half of the seventeenth century, Spanish policy apparently accepted the role of the metropolis as just intermediary in the commerce of the northern European merchants, mostly French, to the Spanish American colonies. The Spanish trade with the colonies allowed foreign merchant houses to operate in Cádiz, the gateway of Spanish America. Thus, metropolitan Spain was an intermediary in these commercial circuits. This context helps to explain the agreement between the Crown and foreign merchants for the slave trade contracts. In addition, contraband was part of the routine, as it was for all trade of foreign merchants in the Spanish colonies.

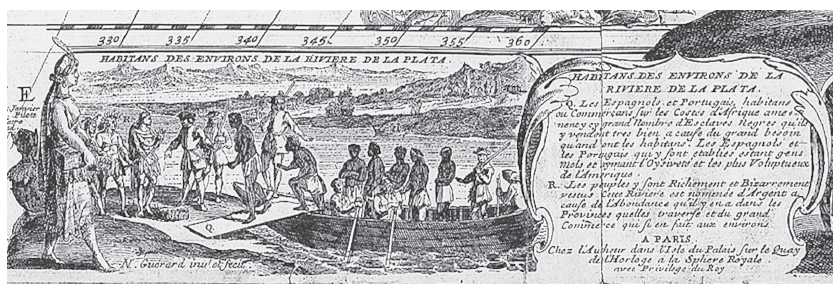


Figure 7.1. Section of a French map of the Americas, 1698, by Nicolas de Fer. Source: Nicolas de Fer, *L'Amérique divisée selon l'étendue de ses principales parties: Et dont les points principaux sont placez sur les observations de Messieurs de l'Académie Royale des Sciences*, 1698 (published 1739). Library and Archives Canada, [http://data2.archives.ca/e/e286/e007140490\\_s1-v8.jpg](http://data2.archives.ca/e/e286/e007140490_s1-v8.jpg).

In the French case, commerce with the Spanish colonies was also connected with territorial ambition, given that French presence in Spanish trading routes sometimes was accompanied by threats of French military actions in the colonies in order to cut the Spanish metropolis's role in the intermediation of French trade in the Spanish colonies.<sup>13</sup> As French merchants in Cádiz controlled most of the Spanish commerce, French proposals emerged to invade Buenos Aires after the Portuguese founded Colonia. One plan envisioned direct trade with Peru by invading Buenos Aires and thus bypassing Cádiz and Colonia.<sup>14</sup> In the late 1680s, the French ambassador in Lisbon offered to coordinate actions with the Portuguese in order to control the trade with Buenos Aires.<sup>15</sup> In late seventeenth-century Río de la Plata, merchant strategies overlapped with imperial policies of territorial expansion just as legal and illegal trade were closely entangled. Thus, this encroachment of the Spanish American slave trade by northern European merchants should be examined in combination with territorial ambitions.<sup>16</sup>

### The French and English Asientos

By the early eighteenth century, the French could trade in the Spanish Americas in three ways, according to historian Fernando Jumar.<sup>17</sup> First, French

merchants living in Seville and Cádiz sent goods to the Spanish colonies on the same basis as their Spanish counterparts. Second, they accessed the Spanish Americas by using special licenses, granted by treaty such as the “asiento,” which allowed direct contact between French ports and Buenos Aires.<sup>18</sup> Third, they employed Portuguese networks via Lisbon and Colonia to access Buenos Aires at least up to 1704. Among all options, only the slave contract, the *asiento*, provided a permanent and predictable link between French and Spanish American ports. This is why obtaining the *asiento* became so central to French and English policy not only for enabling the sale of slaves but also trading merchandise and silver, as well as obtaining intelligence about Spanish defenses and natural resources.<sup>19</sup>

The French *asiento* was the first contract that established Buenos Aires as a legal slave port after the emergence of the more monopolistic slave contracts in the 1660s. This legal access for slave commerce also facilitated illegal trade in merchandise. While previous northern European slave trading operations focused on the Spanish circum-Caribbean, almost half of all direct slave arrivals of the French *asiento* disembarked in Buenos Aires: nineteen out of the forty-four ships. If we were to include intra-American slave voyages in this comparison, then the Spanish circum-Caribbean numbers would no doubt come out even further ahead—as the Venezuelan case suggests.<sup>20</sup> Given that the French *asiento* coincided with the War of Spanish Succession, the strong British naval presence in the Caribbean probably helped divert the French trade to the South Atlantic where British interference was less likely.

The French *asiento* emerged naturally out of earlier commercial exchanges. Aaron Alejandro Olivas shows that the early networks of Spanish officials and French merchants established alliances during the French *asiento* in New Spain and Peru, where local elites were entangled in metropolitan factional politics of trade and war. Jumar points out that Agustín de Robles, governor of the Río de la Plata in 1690–1700, later facilitated French trade in his capacity as captain general of the Canary Islands in the early 1700s.<sup>21</sup> Robles sent letters to the governor of the Río de la Plata on French ships, which stopped in the Canary Islands en route to Buenos Aires. These letters encouraged the governor to grant port entrance to French ships. In fact, French vessels were admitted in Buenos Aires *ex post facto* under the pretext of being part of the *asiento*.<sup>22</sup> Several layers of contraband coexisted in these operations, both within and outside of French contract.

The Treaty of Utrecht, which brought the War of Spanish Succession to an end, also reshaped these slave routes. The treaty granted the slave trade

contract to the British, thus initiating the English asiento under the South Sea Company. The impact was not immediate. Jumar points out that French vessels continued to arrive in Buenos Aires up to 1715.<sup>23</sup> And the TSTD shows the last French asiento ship landing captives as late as 1718.<sup>24</sup> However, the most important competitor for the newly established English trade in Buenos Aires, for both captives and merchandise, was neighboring Portuguese Colonia.

The South Sea Company slave trading operations in the Río de la Plata (1713–1739) have received much more scholarly attention than the French asiento. Further studies may examine how public and private interests overlapped with metropolitan and colonial strategies connecting London, Madrid, and Buenos Aires. In London, the rise of the South Sea Company points to interwoven public and private interests linking the Crown, the British navy, the company, and the shareholders.<sup>25</sup> In Madrid, after the beginning of the English asiento, Spanish policies of the following fifty years focused on withdrawing the commercial concessions given to the British, which precipitated the midcentury Anglo-Spanish wars.<sup>26</sup> In Buenos Aires, the English asiento brought Atlantic commerce more fully to the region by establishing stronger, predictable, and more continuous connections to northern Europe than the French were able to bring about. For instance, merchants and other Spaniards living in Buenos Aires were able to travel on English ships to British ports as well as to send silver outside the Spanish system.<sup>27</sup>

Traditionally, scholars point out that the profits of the South Sea Company derived from the commerce and smuggling of goods rather than slave trading; the company's reports to the Spanish Crown consistently stressed the unprofitability of slave trading to win additional concessions from the Spanish. Historian Helen Paul argues that the slaving operations of the company were economically efficient, rather than the disaster described in the debates over the financial crisis called the South Sea Bubble in which the company was center stage.<sup>28</sup> Most of the Spanish-language scholarship on the English asiento in Buenos Aires focuses on contraband of goods rather than slaves. For instance, when the asiento ship *Seahorse* shipwrecked near the bay of Montevideo on its way to London in 1720, the Spanish recovered seventy-five thousand silver pesos, none of which was authorized.<sup>29</sup> Buenos Aires was far from any British settlement, unlike the Caribbean ports, which meant that the only way to embark contraband on slave vessels arriving direct from Africa was for the asiento ships to call into Portuguese Colonia, where other British vessels left merchandise intended for Buenos Aires. The



Anglo-Portuguese alliance in the Río de la Plata constitutes an additional transimperial connection to take into account with hubs in Rio de Janeiro, Lisbon, and London. New studies may refine how the traffic in slaves and goods were related in Buenos Aires. Certainly, these two trades should not be studied in isolation from each other given that same merchants participated in both. Scholars should examine the complete picture of circulation of credit, merchandise, and captives across imperial borders.

Buenos Aires increased its position as a stopover between the Atlantic and the Pacific during the English *asiento*, given that most of the captives were sent from there to Lima and Chile. Only one-quarter of the slaves arriving in Buenos Aires during 1722–1728 remained in the city.<sup>30</sup> A couple of documents on this internal route shed light on the logistics of this traffic as well on the slave experience. One describes the dispute between the *asiento* representatives in Buenos Aires and a Spaniard who had conducted captives on their behalf to Potosí in 1731.<sup>31</sup> More research on the intra-American traffic from the Río de la Plata is required, and especially on the Anglo-Portuguese link in Colonia, a town to which we now turn.<sup>32</sup>

### Colônia do Sacramento, 1680–1777

While many sources provide evidence about the number and origins of captives brought to Buenos Aires under the French and English contracts, the most complicated part of estimating the size and direction of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata is the traffic from Portuguese Colonia. The Spanish only recorded confiscated contraband, and quantitative reports of any kind are mostly missing from Portuguese sources. It is at least clear that more slaves came into Colonia from other Brazilian ports than direct from Africa, given that only four transatlantic slave voyages, so far, are recorded as arriving in Colonia in this era—all in 1748–1749. A combination of narrative descriptions, legal cases arising from contraband, and parish records allows for an approximate estimate of the volume and origins of captive Africans crossing the river from Colonia to Buenos Aires.

Slave trading was conducted from the very foundation of Colonia. Even the slaves of the first Portuguese inhabitants of Colonia were sold to the Spaniards. In 1680, a Spanish soldier mentioned that a Portuguese captain had offered him sixteen captives for sale. But while the first Portuguese authorities reported the selling of slaves to Buenos Aires, they offered no



quantification beyond an estimate made by the Portuguese governor in 1691 that the trade was worth twenty thousand silver pesos annually.<sup>33</sup> Historian Paulo César Possamai states that the years of Cristovao Orneais de Abreu as governor of Colonia (1683–1690) formed a period of intense contraband with Buenos Aires. However, sources are mostly silent about its extent.<sup>34</sup>

While the British asiento competed with the slave trade from Colonia to Buenos Aires, the English and Portuguese cooperated to ensure that Colonia would have a steady supply of British merchandise. Asiento slave ships often embarked commodities at this port, and in addition, British slave captains sometimes requested the mediation of the Portuguese governor when they found themselves in trouble with Spanish authorities. For them, Colonia was their only safe haven. In other words, British and Portuguese merchants and officials collaborated, not always without tension, in pursuit of their own interests. However, Possamai suggests that the best years for the Portuguese slave trade to Buenos Aires were those such as 1732, when no English ship put in an appearance.<sup>35</sup> In 1728, the governor of Rio de Janeiro, Luís Vaía Monteiro, complained about the lack of liquidity or silver in this city stemming from the slow pace of business in Colonia. Diminishing traffic between Colonia and Buenos Aires was the explanation for this lack of silver remittances to Rio, given that 1728 was the last year of the second phase of the British asiento (1722–1728), during which the slave trade via Colonia was at a low ebb.<sup>36</sup> War between Spain and Britain suspended the asiento in 1718–1722 and again in 1728.<sup>37</sup> Asiento officials living in Buenos Aires commonly complained to Spanish authorities about contraband from Colonia in the 1730s. Historian Victoria Sorsby shows that slave arrivals in Buenos Aires diminished in the 1730s compared to previous decades, which she explains by the rising Portuguese contraband.<sup>38</sup> Data from Colonia's baptism records, discussed next, suggest that slave births increased in Colonia after the end of the asiento in 1739, which illustrates an inverse relationship between the asiento, on the one hand, and slave arrivals via Colonia, on the other.

Parish records from Colonia lend further indications on the flow of the traffic and the origins of captives. Historian Fábio Kühn notes that slave baptisms rose from around twenty per year early in the 1730s (with the exception of 1735–1737 during the Spanish siege) to more than fifty in the 1750s. He also finds increasingly specific African-based labels of identity (ethnonyms), which indicate a continuous and growing traffic. Half of the slave mothers appearing in baptism records were from West Central Africa, particularly Angola. Most captives undergoing the slave route to Colonia had initially

departed from Benguela and Luanda en route to Rio de Janeiro, where the merchants who controlled this circuit lived. Captives were then sailed forcibly south toward Colonia, from where the Portuguese sold them to the Spaniards. The other half of the slave mothers were Minas and native-born Brazilians. While Mina origin points to slaves departing initially from the Gold Coast or the Bight of Benin to Salvador in order to be reembarcked to Colonia, sometimes via Salvador as well, the increasing presence of captives born in Brazil indicates the growing slave population native to Colonia and to other parts of Brazil.<sup>39</sup> Overall, baptism records suggest two peaks in the inflow: the 1740s after the end of the British *asiento* in 1739 and the 1750s.<sup>40</sup>

The analysis of *comisos* (confiscated contraband) from Colonia recorded by the Spanish in Buenos Aires reveals a timeline similar to that in the Colonia's parish records. Historians Fernando Jumar and Isabel Parades show 330 recently arrived slaves seized during decade of the 1750s and 385 in the 1760s.<sup>41</sup> As these historians note, while Spanish repression of this commerce increased during the period 1740–1770, contraband subsisted alongside regular trade and was conducted by the same people who led legal commerce. The commonality of contraband was such that a 1766 anonymous Spanish informant recommended that the Crown create a new company in order to purchase slaves directly from Colonia.<sup>42</sup> Thus, this plan wanted to bring this traffic to full legality in order to add this source of revenue to the royal coffers. This was not the first suggestion about “normalizing” the Portuguese slave trade to Buenos Aires. While at war with Britain in 1740, the governor of the Río de la Plata suggested the Spanish Crown annually grant the Portuguese four to six ships for trade between Brazil and Buenos Aires in exchange for the definitive Portuguese withdrawal from Colonia, a town that helped both British military operations and Portuguese contraband.<sup>43</sup> War and the expiration of the *asiento* made this an attractive option for the Spanish governor of Buenos Aires.

The stabilization and predictability that the foundation of Colonia brought to Luso-Spanish commerce may have encouraged some Portuguese merchants there to trade directly with Africa instead of depending solely on slave shipments from Brazil. Historian Fabrício Prado notes that the Portuguese Manoel Pereira do Lago, who lived in Colonia, obtained a royal license to send a ship from Rio de Janeiro to Angola in order to embark captives for Colonia.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps the transatlantic slave voyages of 1748–1749 were the result of this initiative, which emerged after a continuous decade of regular trade between Colonia and Buenos Aires without British competition. However,

direct trade to Africa was an outlier, given that most sources suggest that the Colonia slave traffic was coastal, connecting this port to Rio de Janeiro and Salvador.

The most informed estimate of the annual volume of the slave trade between Colonia and Buenos Aires was produced in 1766, when an anonymous Spanish informant wrote a long and detailed report for the Spanish Crown on legal and illegal traffic in the Río de la Plata.<sup>45</sup> He testified that on average, six hundred slaves were sent from Colonia to Buenos Aires annually: four hundred were distributed across Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Tucumán, and Paraguay together, while the remaining two hundred went to Chile, Potosí, and Peru.<sup>46</sup> If we estimate an average of six hundred captives arriving each year of peace between the Portuguese and the Spanish (1681–1705, 1716–1735, 1737–1762, and 1764–1777), we reach an overall total estimate of 47,400 captives arriving in Buenos Aires via Colonia during the existence of this Portuguese town.

This estimate of six hundred slaves per year is consistent with the scale of the maritime traffic in Colonia as well as with other records. TSTD shows that 1,388 enslaved Africans were disembarked in Colonia direct from Luanda in 1749, making it clear that the port infrastructure of Colonia as well as the local merchants could handle more than double the annual estimate of six hundred captives.<sup>47</sup> In 1745, a provisional governor of Colonia created a tax on slaves sold to the Spaniards, which shows 435 captives trafficked that year.<sup>48</sup> Of course, some Portuguese eluded this briefly imposed new tax. Kühn estimates that 10 percent of the 7,400 slaves arriving annually to Rio de Janeiro between 1735 and 1752 were redirected to Colonia. If we follow this estimate, at least 740 captives arrived in Colonia yearly.<sup>49</sup> Our estimate of six hundred slaves annually arriving in Colonia stands in between the exceptionally high transatlantic total (nearly 1,400) of 1749 and the low volume (nearly 450) illustrated by Portuguese tax records and in line with other sources. The 1766 anonymous Spanish informant noted that comisos accounted for 5 percent of the total traffic.<sup>50</sup> The aforementioned data on confiscated slaves for the 1750s and 1760s (between three hundred and four hundred captives each decade, which roughly constitutes 5 percent of six thousand) lends credibility to the estimate of nearly six thousand slaves being sold each decade from Colonia to Buenos Aires between 1740 and 1770.<sup>51</sup> Apart from this continuous flow of captive Africans via Colonia, Spaniards living both in the Iberian Peninsula and the Río de la Plata attempted to bring additional slaves direct from Africa during midcentury.

### Midcentury Spanish Sallies into the Slave Trade

The ending of the British *asiento* led authorities and merchants in the Iberian Peninsula and the Río de la Plata to focus on the direct slave trade from Africa in Spanish vessels. From the 1740s, the Spanish attempted a few direct slave trading initiatives, but before 1790, they were unsuccessful. Only three Spanish merchants acted intermittently in this traffic between 1740 and 1777, a testament to the dominance of the intra-American traffic coming in via Colonia. After the removal of the Portuguese, Spanish policy linked slave trading with commercial and imperial expansion in this region as never before. The unsuccessful Spanish takeover of the islands of Fernando Poo and Annobon in the Gulf of Guinea in 1778 and the slave trading activities of the Spanish Royal Company of the Philippines (Real Compañía de Filipinas) in 1788 illustrate this shift.

Many Spanish merchants who lived in the Iberian Peninsula applied to the Crown for licenses to send slaves (as well as merchandise and soldiers given the government's need for troop transports) to Buenos Aires from 1741 to 1780.<sup>52</sup> A flurry of petitions only produced three contracts that led to seven slave voyages—none of them purchasing captives direct from African merchants. Instead, they relied on traders from other European nations in the African coast. A Spanish merchant living in Buenos Aires and one of the founders of Montevideo, Francisco de Alzaibar was among the first petitioners, an initiative that shows the early interest of the rioplatense elites. However, it was the peninsular-based Tomás Navarro who secured the first contract in 1741.<sup>53</sup> This *asiento* stipulated that slave ship captains should be Spaniards and the crew either Spanish or from neutral nations—a clause intended to strengthen the merchant marine given the prevalence of war with Britain. Navarro sent two French ships with French captains from Nantes to Buenos Aires in 1743, without stopping in Spain. While Navarro was born in Cádiz, it is possible that this was the same Tomás Navarro who had acted as middleman for the British *asiento* in Buenos Aires by selling captives to Upper Peru. Thus, he may well have had earlier experience of the slave trade in the Río de la Plata.<sup>54</sup>

In the early 1750s, Ramon Palacio acted as a front man for another contract whose main sponsor was the merchant of Cádiz Manuel Diaz de Saravia. They dispatched three voyages: one conducted by an English slave ship and crew, another by Palacio himself as captain with a partially English crew, and the third conducted on an English ship nationalized Spanish in Cádiz.

A failed fourth slave venture sent from Cádiz to Africa shows how this commercial circuit operated. In 1755, the Spanish vessel *Santa Bárbara* arrived in São Tomé, from where she was intended to sail to Malembo to meet the English ship *Tortola*. The English vessel would transfer the slaves to the *Santa Bárbara*. However, the Spanish ship never made it to Malembo. Instead, given that most of the crew became ill in São Tomé, they mutinied and forced the captain to continue to Buenos Aires without the rendezvous.<sup>55</sup> This same transference of captives from English to Spanish slavers in ports such as Mayumba and Malembo probably occurred on all the Palacio-Díaz de Saravia slave voyages, as well as on the two voyages that Francisco de Mendinueta, another Spanish merchant, organized.<sup>56</sup> In 1758, Mendinueta obtained an asiento that obliged him to transport across the Atlantic three thousand tons in goods in ten years, five hundred Spanish troops, and three thousand slaves.<sup>57</sup> However, he managed only two slave voyages, which brought fewer than six hundred captives to Buenos Aires.<sup>58</sup> This arrangement shows that the slave trade was part of larger contracts between these Spanish merchants and the Crown.

Differences in slave prices may explain the poor returns of all these mid-century slave trading initiatives. The aforementioned 1766 Spanish anonymous informant asserted that slaves arriving direct from Africa such as those brought by Mendinueta were sold for three hundred pesos in Buenos Aires, while captives sent from Colonia were sold for two hundred pesos on average.<sup>59</sup> Most of the slaves of the ship *San Fernando* from the contract of Palacio, and the two slave shipments of Mendinueta, were sold in Peru and Potosí rather than in Buenos Aires, probably for this reason.<sup>60</sup> While these merchants may have suffered some losses, note that slave trading was just one of the activities they engaged in. They had to commit to slave trading as well as to sailing Spanish troops across the Atlantic in order to obtain licenses for the more predictable returns from wholesale trade.

The Spanish conquest of Colonia in 1777 meant the removal of the main competition to direct transatlantic Spanish slave trade in this region. The aftermath of the Spanish dislodgement of this Portuguese enclave in the Río de la Plata saw the Crown envisioning a Spanish foothold in Africa for developing the slave trade. In the Treaty of El Pardo (1778), Portugal ceded the islands of Fernando Poo (now Bioko) and Annobon, in the Gulf of Guinea, to Spain, giving the Spanish a slave trading hub in West Africa. A secret clause in the treaty (establishing their limits in South America after the surrender of Colonia) gave the Spanish special port rights in São Tomé and Île Príncipe, which the Spanish

needed to secure the occupation of Fernando Poo and Annobon. The treaty also granted free trade in slaves for the Spanish in São Tomé and Île Príncipe, with the expectation that Spanish merchants would buy slaves in these Portuguese islands and carry them to the Río de la Plata.<sup>61</sup>

These plans for Luso-Spanish trade and cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea never developed, as the expedition to conquer the islands was a disaster for Spain. This mission departed from Montevideo in 1778 since these islands were to be under the jurisdiction of the newly created viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata whose capital was Buenos Aires.<sup>62</sup> Lack of cooperation from the Portuguese of São Tomé, disease, high mortality, and resistance from the inhabitants of Fernando Poo and Annobon led the Spanish to withdraw to Montevideo—via Salvador—in 1783. Only two dozen survivors arrived back from the initial complement of nearly two hundred men. Yet, they also brought slaves from the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>63</sup> After this disaster, the Spanish would not take possession of these islands until the mid-nineteenth century.

One further metropolitan initiative to promote a Spanish transatlantic slave trade to the Río de la Plata occurred in the 1780s.<sup>64</sup> The main mandate of the Royal Company of the Philippines was commerce between Spain and the Philippines, but the Spanish Crown also charged this company with the task of increasing all transoceanic trade linking the metropolis and the colonies. Since its inception in 1785, the company entertained the idea of establishing Fernando Poo as a hub for slave shipments among other slave trade schemes. For instance, in June 1786, the company's directors discussed a plan to buy slaves in Rio de Janeiro and exchange them for silver in Buenos Aires, a key commodity in Asia. The company also received offers from Dutch and French slave traders. While the Crown suggested that the company should reassert Spanish sovereignty in the islands of the Gulf of Guinea, the company never ventured directly to Africa.

The Royal Company of the Philippines in turn arranged for a British firm, Baker and Dawson, to carry out slave expeditions to the Río de la Plata. This Liverpool-based firm was already operating in Venezuela and Cuba, and this new contract seemed simply to extend its previous agreements to the Southern Hemisphere. Spanish agents sailed from Great Britain to the Bight of Biafra in Baker and Dawson's vessels complete with an English crew and flying the British flag. After embarking slaves, the vessels reached the Río de la Plata, where they hoisted Spanish colors and disembarked the captives in Montevideo. There, the ships were loaded with hides and returned to England. The Crown viewed the outcome of the Royal Company of the Philippines sally into the

slave trade as disastrous given the high mortality (only 58 percent of slaves survived both passage and disembarkation) and high African slave prices. As had happened with the previous mid-eighteenth-century Spanish slaving initiatives in the region, most of the captives were reshipped to Lima rather than sold in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.<sup>65</sup>

The slave trade initiative of the Royal Company of the Philippines was more than “comercio de ensayo,” a test on how to connect Spanish markets, because the company also received direct subsidies from royal treasuries. The company took two hundred thousand pesos from the royal coffers in Lima in 1787 and again one million pesos from Buenos Aires in the two following years, as “advance[s] for trade” in slaves.<sup>66</sup> The company used these funds to pay salaries in Asia and to cover losses. Thus, this slave trading venture was a way to legitimate the extraction of silver in the Americas for the company’s operations in Asia. All of this required royal orders to the treasuries in South America, which exemplify the intense overlapping of public and private interests at the metropolitan level. This intersection was already visible when analyzing the British *asiento*. But the success of British overseas trade, including slave traffic, also depended on imperial and naval force, as the actions of the British navy secured British lines of trade and areas of commercial exchange overseas. For the Spanish slavers, the lack of substantive presence of the Spanish navy off the African coast frustrated the attack on Fernando Poo as well the attempt to establish direct slave trading operations on the African coast.

Monarchy, commercial interests, and slave trading intersected as Spanish King Charles III forwarded many petitions seeking the *asiento* to the directors of the Royal Company of the Philippines in the 1780s.<sup>67</sup> The monarch expected financial profits from this traffic, as he owned shares in the company. But he also envisioned benefits for the empire by seeking the integration of a South Atlantic system linking Spanish slave factories in the Gulf of Guinea with slave markets in the Río de la Plata, from where silver would be shipped to the Philippines. Thus, Spanish merchants and the Crown, rather than foreign middlemen, would receive the benefits of trade.

### **Late Colonial Rioplatense Traffic: Liberalization, Contraband, and Political Economy**

As neither Spanish merchants nor chartered companies proved efficient in delivering captives to the Río de la Plata or to any other Spanish colony direct

from Africa, the Crown opened the Caribbean colonies and surrounding mainland to slavers of all nations in 1789, extending this measure to the Río de la Plata in 1791. This last period of slave arrivals in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, up to the revolution for independence, was dominated by the traffic from Brazil rather than by the direct trade from Africa. After the liberalization of the slave trade, merchants of both Buenos Aires and Montevideo engaged in continuous slave trading with Brazil, from which they also developed direct trade with Mozambique, and to a lesser extent, other African regions.<sup>68</sup> Thus, effective Spanish South Atlantic initiatives to carry on slave trading emerged from the Río de la Plata rather than from Madrid. Just as slave arrivals into this region increased to a historical peak of seventy thousand captives during the viceregal era, both metropolitan and colonial elites increasingly expressed a new discourse of economic progress based on slave trade and slavery when referring to the Río de la Plata.

While I have examined the volume and direction of the slave trade to late colonial Río de la Plata elsewhere, new research reveals an increasing gap between legal commerce and contraband. The merchant guild of Buenos Aires (Consulado de Comercio) began a new tax called “nueva avería” to cover expenses of war in December of 1800, which specifically included slaves.<sup>69</sup> From 1801 to 1808, records of avería show 9,996 captives arriving in Buenos Aires. However, data produced by port authorities show nearly fourteen thousand slaves arriving solely in Buenos Aires in the same period. While port officials reported to higher authorities on ships and their contents, slave traders paid the avería tax to the consulado after selling captives rather than during disembarkation. Merchants apparently avoided paying this tax on some four thousand slaves in Buenos Aires. Moreover, it is likely that merchants did not pay any tax on slaves in Montevideo after 1791—apart from the typical *alcabala* (sales tax). The most important slave trader of the Río de la Plata, Tomás Antonio Romero, probably never payed avería, given that he was being pursued by the Crown in 1809 for back taxes, just as the slave trade—and the colonial regime—in Buenos Aires was coming to an end.<sup>70</sup> The avería records not only shed light on the complicated definition of what was “contraband” but also on how contraband was very close to legal trade, given that the main slave traders were also involved in illicit operations.<sup>71</sup>

This growing slave trade changed the face of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, as cattle ranchers and merchants envisioned a political economy based on slavery and slave trading in their petitions to the Crown. In the earlier



period, it was Spanish merchants living in the Iberian Peninsula that stressed the importance of slavery in the colonies as they petitioned for the coveted *asiento*. But in the late colonial period, it was the merchants and cattle ranchers from Montevideo and Buenos Aires rather than from the peninsula who became the most fervent advocates of slavery in the colonies. Thus, the most important judicial conflict over colonial commerce in this region pitted colonial slave traders against merchants of the traditional trade of commodities with Cádiz. The latter group complained that slave traders could export hides at a preferential rate.<sup>72</sup> In the defense of slave traders, the guild of cattle ranchers of Montevideo (*Gremio de Hacendados*) expressed to the Crown that the future of the countryside depended on slavery.<sup>73</sup>

The ranchers of Montevideo compared the benefits of free and slave labor for the repopulation of the Banda Oriental (now Uruguay). They stated that the royal treasury had paid two million pesos for the expenses of transporting 326 families from Spain to the Banda Oriental from 1778 to 1784, yet from the standpoint of meeting the ranchers' labor needs, these migrants were useless.<sup>74</sup> The ranchers estimated that with that same money, the Crown could have brought 11,764 enslaved Africans, forming 5,882 families to populate the province and generate a labor supply far more easily adaptable to ranching than Spanish free migrants. Of course, these plans lacked knowledge of the gender imbalance and mortality among African slave arrivals at the time. Ranchers stated that enslaved women and their children would be useful as shepherds for sheep and spinning wool. They envisioned that enslaved children would begin serving in haciendas by the age of five by tending to minor tasks.<sup>75</sup> They praised enslaved overseers, who were considered better than free overseers because they "grew attached" to the land.<sup>76</sup> While free laborers came and went, slaves could not leave and sometimes even started families. Cattle ranchers saw the labor of slaves born in the ranch as superior to that of slaves bought from the outside, and, in turn, superior to the work of free laborers.

The cattle ranchers of Montevideo also celebrated the benefits of slavery in connection with Amerindians and the geopolitics of Upper Peru. In the Banda Oriental, these ranchers believed that the importation of slaves would serve to occupy lands otherwise under the control of Amerindian semi-nomadic groups. They also envisioned the substitution of Amerindian forced labor in Potosí, the infamous *mita*, with captive Africans. They argued that miners treated Indians poorly precisely because these workers were not property. Mine owners would treat slaves better than they treated Indians,

they argued, because they would not want to lose money. The Crown also would benefit if Amerindians no longer served in the mita, as they would stay attached to their communities, from where the Crown would receive increasing tribute. Freed from the mita, Indians would be “pacified,” an idea that resonated in the decade after the Andean rebellions of the 1780s—the most important challenge to Spanish colonialism prior to the wars of independence. Thus, this plan projected that the full application of slave labor to mining would free Indians from mita, add tribute to the Crown, and improve the treatment of slaves in comparison to Indians in Potosí.<sup>77</sup> This was not the first time that such arguments appeared in writing. The proposal to import enslaved Africans in Mexico in 1787 by Juan Ignacio Cosyaga suggested that the consistent application of slave labor to textile workshops, or *obrajes*, would benefit the Amerindian population for similar reasons. With some modification, this language can be traced back to the sixteenth-century defense of Indians by Bartolomé de las Casas.<sup>78</sup>

The common theme across the centuries was in effect the linking of the arrival of captives to the expansion of empire, economic benefits for both colonists and the metropolis, and also to improved conditions for Amerindians. One of these plans even tried to marry the emergence of antislavery positions with the alleged “good treatment” that slaves received in the Spanish Americas. Jorge Escobedo, a former holder of royal appointments in 1790s Peru, produced a lengthy defense of the application of slavery to colonies from Montevideo to Peru in a petition for a license to import slaves on behalf of the count of Premio Real from Lima in 1798.<sup>79</sup> Escobedo began with a note on the, by then, rising tension between philosophy and the legality of slavery based on natural freedom. He then immediately laid out the geographical breadth and diverse application of slavery in southern South America and how a slave trade was essential to increase production and overall commerce. He envisioned the emergence very quickly of a self-reproducing slave population that would make the continuance of the traffic unnecessary. Escobedo was well aware of the heated debate surrounding the slave trade in the North Atlantic, as indeed was the Crown.<sup>80</sup> In his view, Spanish “good treatment” would lead to the development of a massive locally born slave population that would make the transatlantic slave trade redundant. This language turned the slave trade into a momentary but necessary evil to expand economic benefits for the metropolis and colonies. This argumentation continued in the Río de la Plata up to mid-nineteenth century, when those defending the continuance of the slave trade as a “necessary evil”—even after independence—appropriated some

aspects of abolitionist ideologies by asserting that ultimately “good treatment” and manumission would set slaves free.<sup>81</sup> In the long run, it is possible to argue that gradual abolitionist measures also served to allow the persistence of the slave trade and slavery for additional generations of Africans and their descendants.

### Conclusion

The centrality of transimperial connections becomes evident from this overview of the eighteenth-century slave trade in the Río de la Plata. Buenos Aires and Montevideo transitioned from terminals of foreign slave routes to commercial centers fitting slave vessels sailing direct to Africa. During the French and English *asientos*, transimperial networks at the metropolitan level connecting the courts of Madrid, London, and Paris determined the links between diverse areas of slave embarkation in Africa, where the French and English operated, with Buenos Aires. In fact, Buenos Aires became an extension of the French and English slave trading markets in the early eighteenth century. This explains how English and French slavers were able to maintain the Buenos Aires route as a branch of their own slave trafficking, while their interests included trade and contraband of goods, acquiring silver, collecting intelligence, and planning their own colonial expansion. Colonia, which operated as a Portuguese enclave in the Spanish Río de la Plata, was the most important example of this transimperial network involving both metropolitan and local interests. The Spanish lacked access to Africa as well as significant naval support, and this accounts for the failures of mid- to late eighteenth-century Spanish Iberian-centered slave trading initiatives. Direct-to-Africa slave trade initiatives carried out by *rioplatense* slavers were partially successful because they entered the larger South Atlantic through Luso-Spanish networks, which allowed them direct traffic with Mozambique and, to a lesser extent, Angola. Across mainland Spanish America, only *rioplatense* slavers achieved this direct trade from 1790 to 1810 because they were able to conduct commerce within the Portuguese South Atlantic.

The revolution in the early nineteenth century brought not only independence but a sudden drop in the volume of slave trading across the entire region. Though some African slaves continued to arrive up to the 1830s, formal prohibition of this traffic and free-womb laws established by the revolutionary government of Buenos Aires in 1813 slowed down the spread

of slavery in both urban and rural economies. War loosened the bonds of social deference, and the increasing significance of liberty and equality for the emergent national identities in this region eventually led to the abolition of slavery at midcentury. Just when the Río de la Plata had all the ingredients to metastasize slavery across the social structure to a much greater extent than was apparent in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the anti-colonial and civil wars brought a political economy based on slavery to a virtual halt.

### Notes

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1. Raúl A. Molina, *Las primeras experiencias comerciales*, 25–36. For the earliest era, see Kara D. Schultz, “The Kingdom of Angola is not Very Far from Here: The South Atlantic Slave Port of Buenos Aires, 1585–1640.” For the 1830s, see Alex Borucki, “African Colonists.”
2. Alex Borucki, “Trans-imperial History.” For Cartagena and the early Caribbean, see David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, and his contribution in this volume with Marc Eagle.
3. Juan C. Garavaglia, “Economic Role of Slavery”; see additional titles in note 76 on slavery and cattle ranching in the Río de la Plata. On jerked beef, see Andrew Sluyter, *Black Ranching Frontiers*.
4. For the second half of the seventeenth century, Zacarías Moutoukias and Fernando Jumar provide the best overview of the Atlantic commerce of Buenos Aires. Zacarías Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*; and Fernando Jumar, “Le commerce atlantique.” See also David Freeman, *A Silver River in a Silver World*.
5. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 102, 132, 152.
6. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 119.
7. TSTD does not record ships sailing within the Americas. For a database on intra-American slave voyages, see the Intra-American Slave Trade Database at <https://slavevoyages.org/american/database>.
8. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 132.
9. Borucki, “Trans-imperial History.” Dutch trade of merchandise in Buenos Aires, without slaves, only completely disappeared from the Río de la Plata in 1683. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 26–30.

10. Moutoukias records the arrival of seven French ships and twelve English vessels in Buenos Aires from 1650 to 1698. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 128. The only exceptions are the French privateer that captured the last Dutch slaver arriving in this region in 1677, which subsequently sold the slaves in Buenos Aires, TSTD voyage #98829 (*Santa Luben* 1677), and two English slave vessels, the *Lark* (#98821 in 1662) and the *Lealtad* or *Loyalty* (possibly #21036 in 1684).
11. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 159.
12. For these ships in Cartagena, see TSTD voyages #33624, #33625, #33627, #33626.
13. Moutoukias, *Contrabando y control colonial*, 123–24.
14. Fernando Jumar, “Le commerce français,” 312; Georges Scelle, *La traite négrière*, 2:110; and “Anonymous description of Spanish South America to encourage French seizure of the Spanish Indies,” c. 1680s, University of California Los Angeles, Young Research Library, Special Collections, Box 12, Folder “BN Paris, Clarambault 1016 (2),” ff. 500–520.
15. Jumar, “Le commerce français,” 321.
16. These late seventeenth-century slave trading and plans for expansion in the Americas were not the only precursors of the French and English slave contracts in the Spanish colonies. Across the Atlantic, the late seventeenth-century wars between the Dutch, French, and English on West African slave trading posts also were intended to secure points of embarkation for captives to be sent to the Americas, where the main slave market was the Spanish colonies prior to the development of British and French plantation complexes.
17. Jumar, “Le commerce français,” 310.
18. Late seventeenth-century asientos such as the Grillo and Lomelín contract, as well as the later and briefer Portuguese asiento, left aside Buenos Aires, which encouraged Dutch and Portuguese contraband.
19. For the asiento and its effects, particularly in England and its colonies, see Adrian Finucane, *Temptations of Trade*; and Katherine Murphy, “Collecting Slave Traders.”
20. During the French contract in Venezuela, some slaves arrived from Curaçao. Borucki, “Trans-imperial History,” 37.
21. Jumar, “Le commerce français,” 324; and Aaron Alejandro Olivas, “Global Politics of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.”
22. Elena Studer, *La trata de negros*, 125–26.
23. Jumar, “Le commerce français,” 320.
24. TSTD voyage #32037 (*Subtile* 1718).
25. Helen Paul, *South Sea Bubble*. For larger consequences, see Finucane, *Temptations of Trade*; and Murphy, “Collecting Slave Traders.”
26. Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 140.
27. Studer, *La trata de negros*, 198.

28. Helen Paul, "The South Sea Company's Slaving Activities."
29. Studer, *La trata de negros*, 217. On the accounting procedures of the asiento, see Rafael Donoso Anes, *El asiento de esclavos*. On corruption in Buenos Aires, see Lucio B. Mir, *Ladrones de guante blanco*.
30. Studer, *La trata de negros*, 211.
31. "Autos originales que han seguido los Directores del Real Asiento de la Gran Bretaña . . ." 1731, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Buenos Aires 591; and "Calculo del costo que por razon de [daños] y transporte tiene un negro comprado en Montevideo . . ." n/d, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Gen Mss File, 25. I thank Fabrício Prado for pointing out this document to me.
32. An excellent beginning is the biographical approach of Finucane, *Temptations of Trade*, 34–39, 60–76, 118–19. Most of those who have written about the Anglo-Portuguese connections are Brazilian historians cited below.
33. Paulo César Possamai, "O tráfico de escravos," 1–3.
34. Paulo César Possamai, *A vida quotidiana*, 342.
35. Possamai, *A vida quotidiana*, 396.
36. Corsino Medeiros dos Santos, *O tráfico de escravos*, 61. Medeiros dos Santos shows additional evidence of the importance of Spanish silver for coinage within Brazil. Medeiros dos Santos, *O tráfico de escravos*, 63–67.
37. Yet under the British asiento, and even under Spanish siege such as in 1735, the Portuguese managed to send some silver to Rio de Janeiro. Records show 134 patacas of silver sent in 1735, the year that the Spanish siege of 1735–1737 started. Possamai, *A vida quotidiana*, 376.
38. Victoria Sorsby, "British Trade with Spanish America," 185, 274.
39. In the 1760s, 211 slaves entered Colonia from Salvador. We assume that Salvador sent a continuous but smaller volume of slave Africans to Colonia than Rio de Janeiro, as happened later during the traffic to late colonial Buenos Aires and Montevideo. On the 1760s, see Alexandre Ribeiro, "O tráfico atlântico de escravos," 108.
40. Fábio Kühn, "Os comerciantes da Colônia."
41. Fernando Jumar and Isabel Paredes, "El comercio intraregional."
42. See Enrique M. Barba, "Sobre el contrabando," for the transcribed copy of the document: Anonymous, "Discursos sobre el Comercio Legitimo de Buenos Aires con la España y el Clandestino de la Colonia del Sacramento: De Embarazarlo en la mayor parte y poner a cubierto de enemigos aquella Provincia" (1766). Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, Buenos Aires. I thank Fabrício Prado for bringing this document to my attention.
43. British naval forces sometimes helped preserve Colonia as Portuguese. AGI-Buenos Aires 534, Governor Miguel de Salcedo to the Crown, June 18, 1740.
44. Fabrício Prado, *Colônia do Sacramento*, 179–80.
45. Barba, "Sobre el contrabando."

46. Barba, "Sobre el contrabando," 45 of the transcribed document.
47. TSTD voyages #8826, #8829, #8844.
48. Kühn, "Os comerciantes da Colônia," 16.
49. Fábio Kühn, "Conexões negreiras," 126.
50. Barba, "Sobre el contrabando," 45.
51. Jumar and Paredes, "El comercio intraregional."
52. See some slave trader petitions sent to the head of the Casa de Contratación, Julián de Arriaga, such as AGI-Buenos Aires 591, "Dn Manuel Diaz de Saravia," 1758, and "Muy Señor Mio, Dn Juan Joseph de Vega," 1754.
53. Studer, *La trata de negros*, 255; and AGI-Contratación 2897, records on the ships *Salomon* and *San José*.
54. Donoso Anes, *El asiento de esclavos*, 777; and Jumar, "Le commerce français," 388.
55. The English ship *Tortola* eventually brought the slaves to the British Caribbean instead. AGI-Buenos Aires 591, "3. Buenos Aires Año 1758"; and TSTD voyage #77658 (*Tortola* 1755).
56. Mendinueta was another associate of Diaz de Saravia. Studer, *La Trata de negros*, 256–57; Jumar, "Le commerce français," 393–94; and AGI-Buenos Aires 591.
57. AGI-Buenos Aires 591, "3. Buenos Aires Año 1755" and "4. Buenos Aires. Año 1763."
58. TSTD voyages #44004 (*San Pedro* 1759) and # 44005 (*San Juan Evangelista* 1761).
59. Barba, "Sobre el contrabando," 69–70 of the transcribed document.
60. AGI-Buenos Aires 591, "Potosi, año 1756." See also Studer, *La trata de negros*, 257.
61. Dolores García Cantús, "Fernando Poo," 37.
62. Some of the military officers in charge had previously participated in the conquest of Colonia. Dolores García Cantús, "Fernando Poo," 51.
63. The ship *San Pedro el Sueco* (TSTD voyage #96071) brought thirty-six slaves in 1779, and the ship *Santiago* (TSTD voyage #96074) brought twenty-four captives in 1783.
64. AGI-Filipinas 991, "Colección de Acuerdos de la Junta de Gobierno de la Real Compañía de Filipinas acerca de proveer de Negros a la America Meridional," 1785. See additional proposals and records of board members' meetings in AGI-Filipinas 984.
65. The agent of the company in Buenos Aires, Martín de Sarratea, requested that the Crown waive the royal levies due on these slave arrivals, which was granted. María Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo Spínola, *La Real Compañía de Filipinas*, 224–25.
66. AGI-Filipinas 986, 13, "Memoria de las primeras operaciones de la Real Compañía de Filipinas y su estado actual," 1787. See also AGI-Filipinas 987, "Buenos Aires, 11-3-1789. N° 122." I thank Ana Frega for pointing me to this.

67. AGI-Indiferente 2821B, "RC impresa del 15 de octubre de 1765 a favor de Lorenzo Aristegui para proveer de negros a las Indias."
68. Alex Borucki, "Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata."
69. Borucki, "Slave Trade to the Río de la Plata." Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires, Sala IX, 4-8-4, Averías, 1800-1808. On the use of avería records to analyze the larger commerce, see Antonio Ibarra, "Mercado global." This tax was imposed on 4 percent of the value of the maritime imports and 2 percent of value of exports.
70. Germán Tjarks, *El consulado de Buenos Aires*, 255, 395-96, 400.
71. The most comprehensive work on Romero is Raúl Galmarini, *Los negocios del poder*. On José Milá de la Roca, a significant slave trader of Montevideo, see Maximiliano Camarda, "De comerciante exitoso." On Diego de Agüero, another merchant who eventually conducted slave trade voyages, see Mariano Martín Schlez, "¿Esclavistas versus monopolistas?"
72. Susan Socolow, *Merchants of Buenos Aires*, 126.
73. "Los diputados del Gremio de haz.dos de la Campaña," 1794. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de Historia, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. 12, 160.
74. "Los diputados del Gremio de haz.dos de la Campaña," 1794. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de Historia, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. 12, 169v.
75. "Los diputados del Gremio de haz.dos de la Campaña," 1794. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de Historia, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. 12, 171v.
76. Catholic Congregations, such as the Bethlehemites, owned the largest cattle ranches in late colonial Río de la Plata, where free and slave labor were combined. Slaves commonly worked as overseers. Carlos Mayo, "Patricio de Belén"; and Jorge Gelman, "Sobre esclavos, peones, gauchos y campesinos."
77. "Los diputados del Gremio de haz.dos de la Campaña," 1794. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de Historia, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. 12, 178.
78. AGI-Indiferente 2821, "Memorial de Juan Ignacio Cosyaga," Campeche, 1787. On how the conceptualizations of "Indianness" and "blackness" were represented in relationship to each other and in terms of political economy by Spanish authorities, see Rachel Sarah O'Toole, *Bound Lives*.
79. AGI-Indiferente 2827, 129-31, "Expediente relativo a las gracias concedidas al Conde de Premio Real," 1798.
80. A typical British abolitionist leaflet showing the ship *Brooks* can be found in the same archival box in Seville as the proposals of slave traders of the late 1780s. This means that Spanish metropolitan authorities were aware of the debates about the traffic in Britain. AGI-Indiferente 2821, "Descripción del navío Brooks harto conocido."
81. Alex Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico*, 55-118.



## CHAPTER 8

# The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade

## New Data, New Paradigms

DAVID ELTIS AND JORGE FELIPE-GONZALEZ



‡ WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERY MUCH A PRELIMINARY ATTEMPT TO ASSESS the overall inflow of peoples of African descent into Cuba over 355 years. There are three major initiatives currently underway that have shaped parts of this chapter. One is continuing research in Seville's Archivo General de Indias on the pre-1570 era. The second is the recent launch of the Intra-American Slave Trade Database (henceforth I-Am) with 11,400 voyages prepared by Alex Borucki and Gregory E. O'Malley as part of the revised [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) (hereafter *Slave Voyages*). Third is the work of teams led by María del Carmen Barcia in Cuba and Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla in Spain on ship movements into and out of, initially, Santiago (from 1760) and, eventually, Havana and other Cuban ports. There are still gaps to be filled, especially on the illegal phase of the slave trade after 1820. Nevertheless, the broad contours of the movement of Africans to Cuba are becoming clearer. A report as well as some discussion of implications are already feasible. One obvious point is that Cuba was one of the first markets for African enslaved people in the Americas to open and was certainly the last to close. In between, it sustained the longest continuous slave traffic in the Atlantic world (in terms of transatlantic and intra-American traffic together) and underpinned the late but rapid growth to prominence of what

by the mid-nineteenth century had become the largest sugar-producing region in the world. Because 90 percent of this growth occurred after 1800, documentation for this traffic is superior to what is available for most other branches of coerced migration in the Atlantic and Caribbean—despite the illegal nature of the business in its final decades.

For the Spanish Americas as a whole, recent work by David Wheat and Marc Eagle has revised our understanding of the significance of the early slave trade to the Americas. Wheat's main argument is that Africans have been written out of the early history of Spanish America despite their central role in resettlement and repopulation in the aftermath of indigenous population decline. Though coerced into moving to the Americas, Africans and their descendants filled a wide range of occupations and had a major presence in every community, rural and urban, in the Spanish American lowlands and West Indian islands. Africans did indeed work on estates producing sugar, but these had little in common with the English, French, and Dutch Caribbean plantation complexes that emerged after the mid-seventeenth century. Historians have not so much ignored the pre-plantation era of especially Cuba, but rather have been overwhelmed by the vast scale and surviving documentation of sugar cultivation in the later Caribbean. What evolved in the first century and a half after Columbian contact was in no sense the foundation of the sugar plantation complex, but rather constituted a completely different social and economic structure. By the early seventeenth century, large free populations of African descent in major cities, and the rural areas that provisioned them, have led Wheat to describe blacks as "surrogate settlers." Enslaved and free blacks, mostly "Latinized" and living in both the familiar towns (*pueblos*) and surrounding rural areas (*partidos*) as the Spanish expanded settlement, had quickly come to form the majority of the nonindigenous population of the early Spanish Americas. As chapter 1 of this volume shows, the post-1640 decline of the traffic into the Spanish Americas was the first part of a pronounced U-shaped time profile in coerced migration that has no parallel in any other major American slave-importing region. In a sense, the vast inflow of Africans to Spanish-speaking areas after 1789 constituted a re-Africanization of parts of the Iberian American population.<sup>1</sup>

Support for this position is provided by a quick comparison of our revised estimates of African arrivals to the whole of the Spanish Americas with the numbers of migrants leaving Spain over the period down to 1640. Forty years ago, careful work by Peter Boyd-Bowman and Magnus Morner resulted in

estimates of departures from Spain of 437,000 emigrants, overwhelmingly European. After allowing for return migration of approximately 20 percent, this suggests a net migration of 350,000. For Africans, we might safely assume zero return migration, and so we can compare the 350,000 figure directly to the recent revisions of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) since the Slave Voyages website was launched in 2008. The last six years have seen major additions of new voyages data for the years 1555–1640. As explained in chapter 1 and the introduction, the great majority of people arriving in Spanish America from the Old World were African rather than European prior to 1641. This, at a time when only a small share of those Africans had direct roles in the extraction and subsequent production of what was the most valuable export from the Americas between 1492 and 1790—precious metals.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, and through to the early 1860s, the African majority among arrivals only increased.

What follows is a reassessment of the Cuban share of this inflow of African peoples that constitutes a first attempt in the literature at a quinquennial series of captives disembarking in Cuban ports for the whole era of the slave trade. In addition, as table 8.1 shows, the new sources described above allow us to separate out transatlantic from intra-American arrivals—again for the first time. Discussion of this new series is set against the backdrop of the long-term evolution of the island and takes into account the well-known milestones of Cuban history.<sup>3</sup>

We begin with the years between the early sixteenth century and the British occupation of Havana in 1762. According to Alexander von Humboldt, “probably” sixty thousand enslaved people arrived in Cuba, a figure that was affirmed by José Antonio Saco and has gained wide acceptance by Cuban historians. However, it is most unlikely that von Humboldt and his Cuban collaborators had access to documented evidence of this figure. Here, we briefly review the development of early post-contact Cuban society and economy and construct an alternative and somewhat lower estimate of fifty-three thousand, most of whom disembarked in the half century before the British took Havana.

For the first phase of the period—prior to 1641—the Cuban role in the “Spanish-African occupation” of the early Americas, to use Wheat’s terminology, was initially small. Until the 1540s, the Caribbean islands were the major source of American imports coming into Seville. Hispaniola yielded gold from Cibao, developed an early sugar sector that sent a thousand tons a year to Spain alone, and, from the Spanish perspective, remained the most important of the

*Table 8.1.* Estimates of Enslaved Peoples Arriving in Cuba, 1511–1866, Direct from Africa and from Elsewhere in the Americas

	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
1696–1700	0	42	42

	Arrivals from Africa	Arrivals from Elsewhere	Total Arrivals
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	3359	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	823,204	159,978	983,002

Sources: See text (p. 209) and “Cuban Slave Arrivals” spreadsheet available from the authors.

Antilles for two centuries after 1492. Cuban sugar production was of some importance between 1590 and 1670, surpassing Hispaniola's peak output, but did not survive Brazilian and British competition. Sugar was never the main crop in any part of the early Spanish Caribbean. Instead, a mixed economy thrived, yielding hides, leaf tobacco, snuff, cocoa, and logwood as well as sugar. Within a few decades of 1540, the region assumed the role of servicing, provisioning, and defending the mining heartlands of the Spanish Empire now located on the mainland—a role that continued into the nineteenth century. Havana, Cartagena, and, later, Buenos Aires were strategically critical to the shipping of gold and silver to the Old World, but so were Veracruz, Portobello, and Panama City; yet only the first of these two groups evolved into major colonial cities. After 1570, Havana outpaced them all. As late as 1800, it was the pre-eminent port city of the whole Americas whether measured by population, volume of shipping, value of trade, or size of hinterland—the latter extending to the southern coast and forty miles east and west of the city center. Before 1600, it had become the major hub for the assembly of fleets from within the empire prior to the transatlantic crossing. In the late sixteenth century, the outbound flotas also called at Havana. As with other Spanish Caribbean port cities such as San Juan and Santo Domingo, the hinterland enabled and sustained urban life and encouraged settlement.<sup>4</sup>

But the fleets that carried the specie east offered a further stimulus to settlement. Sixteenth-century transoceanic trade focused overwhelmingly on high-value products such as precious metals, spices, and luxury textiles. The first voyages from Europe to Asia comprised competition for the transcontinental silk and spices route. Human cargo, too, had very high value. Assuming a life-span for a captive of ten years from the date of arrival means that a ship arriving in Cartagena de Indias with three hundred captives, for example, was worth the equivalent of 1.1 million days of human labor—the value of each day enhanced by the land-abundant environment into which the captives were disembarked. Yet the highest ratio of value to space of any transatlantic cargo was undoubtedly silver and gold. These were precious metals occupying little cubic capacity that ensured relatively low freight rates for other eastbound commodities that, by themselves, could not have absorbed transatlantic freight costs and still found a market in Europe.<sup>5</sup> The produce of the Americas such as hides, tobacco, cocoa, logwood, and low-quality sugar could never have been sold in the Europe of the 1500s without, in effect, piggybacking on the gold and silver carried by the Flota de Indias.

By the end of the sixteenth century, however, it had become feasible to ship good-quality sugar as a stand-alone commodity from Brazil to Portugal, but the distance was shorter and the earliest shipments may well have been on Portuguese vessels returning with valuable cargo from India to Lisbon. Certainly, transatlantic voyages carrying nothing but tobacco and hides were a seventeenth-century phenomenon. And mainland demand for Caribbean island produce stemmed from mining activity in the Spanish highlands. Thus, all early Spanish Caribbean agricultural settlements producing for markets—whether located in local strategic ports, Europe, or in the far-off colonial mining regions—were ultimately dependent on Potosí and the silver-producing regions north of Mexico City. This was so even though the bulk of the enslaved labor force and free people of African descent in the Caribbean had little direct connection to the production and export of specie.

After 1540, the major market for African captives shifted from the Caribbean islands to the mainland. For most of the next century, Cartagena was the dominant entry point in the Americas for African peoples. Even during the rise of the early Cuban sugar sector, Africans disembarking from transatlantic vessels rarely exceeded more than a few hundred a year. Table 8.2, based on a combination of the most recent version of the TSTD and the estimates page of *Slave Voyages*, shows the broad regional distribution of inflows of captives direct from Africa prior to 1641. It demonstrates that four out of every five arrivals went to the mainland Spanish circum-Caribbean, and the estimated 11,400 going to Cuba in column 3 was the smallest inflow of any to the major Antilles.<sup>6</sup>

The intra-American column of table 8.1 reflects the rise and fall of sugar production on neighboring Hispaniola. This peaked in the third quarter of the sixteenth century and then went into sharp decline. As decline set in, an interisland traffic developed that significantly augmented the Cuban labor force. In the early years, especially after 1520 as the Spanish conquest of the mainland proceeded, out-migration from Cuba (to the mainland) would have at least offset in-migration. But later in the century (after 1560), as produce exports expanded and the port of Havana began to grow, the transatlantic traffic to Cuba revived, as no doubt did in-migration from other parts of the Spanish world including Hispaniola. For the last decade of the sixteenth century, when transatlantic arrivals to Cuba were close to their pre-1641 peak, Alejandro de la Fuente has identified sources that suggest almost

40 percent of the African captives coming into Havana came from other parts of the Spanish Americas or, in a few cases, from Spain itself.<sup>7</sup>

Consistent with the above discussion, the intra-American series in table 8.1 assumes that, pre-1560, net arrivals in Cuba from the intra-American slave trade were zero or even negative, as Europeans and Africans (some of the latter survivors of the transatlantic trade) moved on to richer prospects on the mainland. For the eighty years after 1560, the intra-American trend line draws on Fuente's close analysis of the 1590s in that it assumes the three-to-two ratio for transatlantic to intra-American arrivals in the 1590s remained constant. The final column provides total disembarkations. Compared to all other settled parts of the early Spanish Americas, a total inflow of 15,650 between 1500 and 1640 appears modest. The peaks of the bimodal time profile occur before 1530 and in the late 1500s, with the decline from the first no doubt indicating the competition for captives from the rapidly emerging mainland market for enslaved labor, while the second peak reflects the early (and rapid) development of Havana as the major port of the Indies.

Fluctuations in Cuban agricultural exports cannot explain the slave trade patterns in table 8.1. Produce exports remained modest. *Ingenios* (sugar plantations) in the Havana area in the early seventeenth century were so small that gang labor could not have been possible even if it had been conceivable. The technology and work environment had more in common with contemporary southern Spain than with the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> Probably fewer than one in ten of the island's enslaved population worked on ingenios even when sugar production reached its pre-1641 peak. Cuban exports of tobacco, hides, and cocoa to Seville were each worth more than sugar between 1560 and 1699, though the value of monetized indigenous crops and foodstuffs sent to the circum-Caribbean mainland, especially tobacco and sugar, could well have exceeded the combined total of all transatlantic exports.<sup>9</sup> Very few data on the early intra-American commodity trade have survived, but much of the circum-Caribbean mainland region had a resource base similar to that of Cuba, and thus the basis for intra-Caribbean commercial exchange was not very strong. By 1600, the distinguishing feature of the island was shipbuilding and its attendant crafts and supplies.<sup>10</sup>

Demographic data for early Cuba are likewise scarce. There are no counts for the complete island until 1774, and certainly no information on vital rates.<sup>11</sup> Given the range of produce exports, the small scale of the production



units (except for the *hatos*—large areas set aside for free roaming cattle—and some *estancias*), and the focus on catering to shipping,<sup>12</sup> we can agree with Wheat that Afro-Cubans filled a wide range of occupations. If we add to these factors a high-protein diet based on abundant cattle and pigs, then one would expect a positive rate of natural increase to have emerged within a few decades of the first arrivals from Africa. Between 1578 and 1610, almost half the captives sold in Havana were female, though as noted below, this is probably a poor indicator of overall sex ratios in the island as a whole. Wheat suggests just over five thousand people of African descent living in the ports of Havana and Santiago de Cuba together (including their hinterlands) in the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> These two regions would certainly have accounted for the great majority of the island's black population.

For the period after 1641, there is a further survey for Havana taken in 1691 that suggests, at first glance at least, that not a great deal had changed in the previous eighty years. The 1691 count for Havana indicates just 3,596 “Negros” and “Negras” and 8,412 “Blancos” and “Blancas” for a city total of 11,940—this at a time when Havana's share of the Cuba's total population was at its historic peak.<sup>14</sup> Following Wheat's argument for the earlier period, it is highly probable that the true count of people of African descent was much greater than 3,596. Wheat states that the white total undoubtedly included many free coloreds, particularly women.<sup>15</sup> So the 1605–1610 and 1691 numbers are not strictly comparable—quite apart from the fact that the definition of “Havana” may not have remained the same: Wheat's estimate includes “rural slaves,” whereas the 1691 count does not. Given that Cuba was still largely unsettled and Havana very much a garrison city, data from the port of Havana may not be much of a guide for the rest of Cuba. Thus, there were about five males for every female reported in 1691, with the males per hundred females at 630 for blacks, higher than for the 460 for whites, a pattern we might expect if, as seems likely, free colored women were included in the white count.

Such a sex imbalance would have made a positive rate of natural population growth for blacks virtually impossible despite relatively abundant food supplies and the minor role of sugar in the economy. Mainly male migrants (both black and white), colonial officials, and replenishment of military personnel would have helped sustain the population. But as table 8.2 shows for the slave traffic, new arrivals, whether free persons from Europe or enslaved from Africa, went to mainland destinations, not Cuba. The latter offered nothing to counter the silver producing centers of New Spain and Peru, gold

*Table 8.2.* Regional Estimates of Africans Entering Spanish American Regions Direct from Africa and Iberia, 1500–1641

Hispaniola	Puerto Rico	Cuba	Trinidad	Jamaica	Spanish Circum-Caribbean	Río de la Plata	Total
45,118	18,931	11,366	528	3,504	458,109	30,500	568,055

Source: See the spreadsheet “Cuban Slave Arrivals” available from the authors.

Note: The categories “Spanish Americas,” “Americas,” and “Spanish Caribbean, port unspecified,” comprising about 20 percent of the data, were assigned in proportion to specific regions.

in the Choco belt of New Granada, and some gold and pearls in Venezuela. Even in terms of ranching, Venezuela appeared to offer more than Cuba.

Almost all the slave trade into the Spanish Americas in the post-1640 era originated in the Dutch and British Caribbean, as well as in Brazil, rather than Africa, but this traffic, too, largely bypassed Cuba. For the period between 1641 and 1700, the I-Am contains records of 305 slave ship voyages trading within the Americas (Spanish and non-Spanish together). Of these, 124 carried slaves to Spanish circum-Caribbean ports, mainly from Curaçao, Barbados, and Jamaica, and only two to Cuba. Other indications from Dutch and British sources reinforce this pattern. Cubans typically exchanged Cuban produce for enslaved people, and in the Dutch case, almost all such produce entered the Amsterdam import records. Wim Klooster’s summaries of these indicate no Cuban sugar and only modest quantities of Cuban tobacco between 1701 and 1755. Even Amsterdam’s hides came primarily from Venezuela.<sup>16</sup> The British islands supplied even more captives to the Spanish Caribbean and circum-Caribbean than did the Dutch between 1640 and 1700, but Cuba itself gets scarcely a mention in the extensive English correspondence on trading with the Spanish in the Caribbean, whether one examines the British National Archives’ Colonial Office (Co1) or the Royal African Company records in the Treasury series (T70).<sup>17</sup> These six decades saw a precipitous decline in the slave traffic to the whole of the Spanish Americas in line with the drop in specie exports, and there was little incentive for Cuban slave owners to sell or move their human property to the

mainland. But with little in the way of Cuban commodity exports between 1640 and 1700, inflows of captives to the island would also have been trivial. Table 8.1 allows for a net inflow of only five hundred from the intra-American trade in these sixty years along with 335 arrivals direct from Africa on two transatlantic voyages.<sup>18</sup>

The inflow of captives into Cuba from other parts of the Americas increased after 1700. Table 8.1 shows a gradual increase in contrast to the continuing stagnation in the transatlantic arrivals. Average annual arrivals increased from two hundred a year in the first decade to a little over one thousand by the mid-eighteenth century. The series on the intra-American traffic—accounting for 90 percent of the African influx—is derived from three sources. One is chapter 1 of the present volume, which estimates arrivals into Spanish America as a whole. A second is the I-Am, which contains records of 3,605 intra-American slave trading voyages between 1701 and 1760, 944 of which carried captives into the Spanish Americas. Ratios derived from the I-Am allow us to distribute the overall estimates across the Spanish possessions to derive an annual series for each major region or island. For 1701–1740, this procedure results in an estimate of 15,100 coming into Cuba from elsewhere in the Caribbean. From 1739, when the British *asiento* (signed on May 1, 1713) came to an end, we call on a third source. In the 1740s, the Catalanian-based Real Compañía del Comercio de la Habana disembarked an average of 815 captives a year, most of whom would have come from Jamaica.<sup>19</sup> For 1740–1760, this suggests a total of 17,400, and the I-Am database provides us with annual ratios to distribute this figure across twenty-one individual years. Adding the resulting intra-American totals for 1701–1760 to the occasional disembarkation direct from Africa yields 39,500 arrivals, or an average of 650 a year—less than 10 percent of the total slave trade into all Spanish America. From 1700, British islands became virtually the only source for Cuban slave buyers—whether legally imported via the *asiento* or not, and whether the *asiento* was in French or in British hands.<sup>20</sup> The South Sea Company introduced 8,146 captives between 1715 and 1739, but this does not include the French numbers or *indultos* (illegally imported enslaved people who were “pardoned,” or made legal, though not, of course, freed) and others brought in without the company’s knowledge.

The increase in the Cuban slave trade between 1700 and 1760 appears substantial. From the vantage point of 1762, the previous six decades had seen the arrival of 70 percent of total disembarkations since 1500. Prices of slaves in Havana fell by more than half.<sup>21</sup> But from the perspective of the post-1800

period or the hundreds of thousands of arrivals in contemporary Saint-Domingue and Jamaica, Cuba, it seems, was changing after 1700 but not dramatically so. A peasantry with some African origins may have emerged in other parts of the Spanish Americas, but there is not much evidence of it in Cuba in the surviving scraps of demographic information. The main function of the island continued to be servicing the port of Havana, which in this period became the largest port city in North America. Sugar output for consumption within the Spanish Empire no doubt increased as the mainland population expanded, and specie continued to hold its place as the most valuable export from the New World to the Old. Nevertheless, Franklin W. Knight's attempt to ground the transformation to a plantation society in pre-1760 Cuba is not supported by what we know of African arrivals after the disintegration of the Iberian Union in 1640.<sup>22</sup> The years 1701–1761 comprised the only period in the history of the forced migration of Africans to Cuba when the volume of the intra-American trade was greatly in excess of its transatlantic counterpart. Except for the interval during and immediately after the British occupation of Havana discussed next, this pattern held for the whole of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, at the risk of merely repeating the message of the older historiography, it does indeed appear that the fall of the largest port in the Americas to British forces did matter to the development of the island—perhaps more even than the Bourbon reforms a quarter century later. Indeed, without the first, perhaps the second would not have happened when it did. The influx of enslaved people in the ten-month occupation was not as large as some historians have posited. Slow eighteenth-century communications ensured that only seven transatlantic slave ships made it to Havana in this period, carrying a total of 2,500 captives.<sup>23</sup> The critical change came after the British left but was nevertheless the result of the occupation. The new captain general, the Conde de Ricla, reduced taxes on sugar, eliminated those on slaves, and instructed colonial officials to tolerate the arrival of slaves on foreign ships as part of a policy aimed at bringing the Cuban creole elite back into the imperial fold—a quarter century prior to the Bourbon liberalization of the slave trade in 1789. Two more British transatlantic slavers were permitted to bring in a further 957 in the fall of 1763, and in the following sixteen months—to April 1765—3,100 captives disembarked from ten voyages from Africa, all under the British flag. Meanwhile, a British slave factor, C. Coppinger, probably from Kingston, who had remained behind when the British left, worked closely with the Real Compañía de

Comercio. Between 1763 and 1766, the Havana Company, in a joint venture with British traders, imported 4,957 slaves into Cuba.<sup>24</sup> Some of these were from the aforementioned transatlantic vessels, but some were from other Caribbean islands. Table 8.1 shows 10,377 arriving in Cuba between 1761 and 1765, two-thirds direct from Africa and one-third from other Caribbean islands. This was more than double the average of the 1750s decade and four times the quinquennial average for 1701–1750, but it is not quite the large step-up that some historians claim. Hubert H. S. Aimes stated that 10,700 Africans arrived during the British occupation alone.<sup>25</sup>

Import restrictions were reimposed in 1766, as transatlantic inflows declined drastically until the later 1780s. The surge in the intra-American traffic that filled the resulting gap was directly related to the *asiento* granted to the *Compañía Gaditana de Negros*. The company was at first given a monopoly to bring Africans to Puerto Rico, and from there British vessels were allowed to carry them to other Spanish ports. The quick failure of this strategy led the Spanish Crown to permit a direct trade between the British and Spanish Caribbean possessions. In four years, between 1766 and 1770, this traffic brought 9,418 captives to Cuba—7,716 in Havana and 1,702 in Santiago de Cuba. According to Juan Bosco Amores, between 1766 and 1779, the Spanish firm introduced 23,700 captives into the island. From the British handover down to 1790, an estimated fifty thousand Africans arrived in Cuba from other parts of the Caribbean, including fourteen thousand from Saint-Domingue between 1779 and 1782, when war in the Atlantic shut down much of French transoceanic commerce.<sup>26</sup> This was highest volume of enslaved persons arriving in Cuba since Spanish occupation in the early sixteenth century, and very few came in from transatlantic sources. The combined transatlantic and intra-American influx of 74,720 Africans between 1762 and 1790 constituted Cuba's first sustained access to an African enslaved labor force. As table 8.1 demonstrates, a British occupation of only a few months initiated a century-long inflow of captives that was ended only by the suppression of the transatlantic slave trade in the 1860s. In striking contrast to pre-1762 data shown in table 8.1, quinquennial totals never fell below ten thousand, and 96 percent of the total African inflow into Cuba disembarked in this era.

The demographic impact of this surge in the late eighteenth century remains difficult to assess. There is a single reference to the size of the Cuban enslaved population a few years before British occupation—28,760 out of a total of 170,000 people in 1755—but no clue is provided as to the original

source.<sup>27</sup> All we can say is that compared with the 1691 report for Havana's "Negros" and "Negras," 28,760 seems high. Only thirty thousand Africans arrived between 1700 and 1755, and the negative implications of the imbalanced sex ratios of 1691 for subsequent population growth are clear enough. In the absence of any information on life cycles, of course, many scenarios are possible over a time span of sixty-four years.

The first Padrón General of what Douglas Inglis calls the "proto-statistical" era was the Marqués de la Torre count of 1774—midway through the initial mass inflow of coerced migrants. It reports 96,254 whites, 30,615 free blacks, and 44,473 slaves.<sup>28</sup> Since 1755, approximately thirty-one thousand Africans had arrived in the island. A second Padrón General followed in 1778, but unlike its immediate predecessor, this one provided breakdowns at the municipal level and of economic units—ingenios, hatos, corrales, potreros, sitios, and estancias. Such detail shows two Cubas—the west focused on Havana, and the eastern half stretching from Santa Clara to Baracoa, where in Inglis's words, "Given the Spanish penchant for urban living and the reliance of this less commercial end of the island upon its own production, the villas and cities were probably concentrations from which residents each day sallied forth into the fields."<sup>29</sup> But in terms of agriculture, both halves demonstrated considerable diversity. There is no evidence in the 1778 census of the dominance of sugar. The new series indicates an inflow of forty thousand Africans between the British occupation (1762) and the end of 1778, but the census of that year suggests that all of them must have been put to work on a wide range of crops and port servicing activities rather than sugar. Inglis is also able to derive an enslaved persons-per-household ratio for the whole island for 1774 and 1778, as well as for major jurisdictions within Cuba. At 1.5 per household in 1774, and 1.75 in 1778, Cuba had a similar ratio to North Carolina in 1790—far below that of every other colony in the US southern states and Caribbean. Neither census provides evidence of either latifundia or high concentrations of enslaved persons anywhere in Cuba. Thus, in the early years of the expansion of the slave trade to Cuba, there was no correlation between the arrival of Africans and the production of sugar. To put this conclusion differently, it was not a shortage of labor that held back the emergence of the sugar complex.

The major shift occurred after 1778. Between 1778 and 1792, the Cuban population increased by almost 60 percent, or 2.6 percent per annum, an increase that cannot be explained by natural population growth. Of the three major groups counted, the white population grew at only 1.8 percent

per annum, but even at this rate, there was likely significant immigration in this period. The most dramatic changes, however, occurred within the African-descended group. The enslaved population almost doubled from forty-four thousand to eighty-four thousand. This was the period comparable to Barbados between 1640 and 1660, Demerara and Trinidad between 1796 and 1805, and the Windward Islands ceded to Britain after 1763. A significant base of workers (usually enslaved, but in the Barbados case, white indentured) along with the estates on which they worked was transformed in ten or fifteen years by an influx of thousands of enslaved people per year. In the British islands, almost all captives came direct from Africa. For Cuba, however, it was a combined inflow of captives from Africa and from other ports in the Americas, and it amounted to 65,500 people from 1775 to the end of 1792, some of them with previous experience of sugar growing on Saint-Domingue. The shift to a freer trade in African captives gathered pace in the 1780s.<sup>30</sup> The number of Cuban-based merchants applying for slave trade contracts increased dramatically, many of whom were allowed by the authorities to sell their licenses to foreign merchants. In 1786, the Liverpool firm of Baker and Dawson won the right to import slaves to Cuba directly. The agent in Havana was Felipe Allwood, an owner of the Jamaican firm Ludlow and Allwood, which had had a major role selling captives to the *Compañía General de Negros*.<sup>31</sup>

Two extraordinary features single out the Cuban transformation from these other areas. First, the free colored population increased almost as rapidly as the slave population—3.3 percent per annum as opposed to 3.7 percent. It was almost a case of one additional free black for each additional captive. No other slave society in the Americas undergoing a shift to sugar monoculture saw manumissions rise almost in step with purchases of enslaved people as that shift happened. Unlike enslaved and white Cubans, the bulk of this growth could not have stemmed from either natural population growth or immigration. It could only have come about as a result of a system of self-paid manumission termed *coartación* that was peculiar to the Spanish Atlantic. Such an institution was poorly suited to the needs of a plantation elite. As we might expect, access to self-purchase as well as the degree of freedom from the former master were both eroded in nineteenth-century Cuba.<sup>32</sup> But apparently in the 1778–1792 period, the norms of a pre-plantation society remained in full force and, as von Humboldt noted, “Nowhere in the world where slavery reigns are manumissions as frequent.”<sup>33</sup>

But the most striking demographic feature to emerge from the scattered data on early Cuba—one that also separates it from all other Old World settlements in the Americas—is the time trend in the sex ratio. For over 250 years after Diego Velázquez de Cuellar landed at Baracoa in 1511, Cuba's population maintained an extraordinarily high ratio of males to females in towns and partidos alike, as well as across all categories of race and civil status.<sup>34</sup> In 1774, the island ratio was still 141, though falling to 131 by 1778 and to 114 by 1792. Such a pattern was common to every overseas European frontier settlement, and indeed continued to be so in the territories gradually incorporated into the United States as the land frontier moved west before closing in the late nineteenth century. But in every other non-plantation environment, the ratio moved to rough equality within a few decades as the base population increased and immigration became of smaller relative significance. In Cuba, however, this was not the case. Despite the absence of sugar as a central crop, and because, perhaps, of the importance of the military, Cuba's sex ratio remained high through to the 1790s. The large African inflow after 1761 may actually have had the initial effect of lowering the sex ratio of the general population, given the relatively large number of females carried from Africa.

The pattern of African arrivals after 1790 is much better documented—at least until 1820—and is taken up in more detail in the next chapter. After more than a century and a half receiving most of its *bozales* via other places in the Americas, Cuba turned increasingly to the transatlantic slave trade, especially after 1800. Between 1790 and 1820, at least 311,000 captives arrived in the island, four-fifths of them direct from Africa. Beginning with Santiago in the 1760s, smaller vessels based in the Cuban out-ports began to participate in the African market, and they accounted for 19 percent of the total traffic in these thirty-one years. Several vessels from Brazil landed captives in Cuba in the 1810s and 1820s, but there was little interisland traffic after 1808. During the illegal phase, after 1820, slave ship owners and slave prices simply adjusted to the attempts of the British to shut down the trade. In other words, the suppressive measures came to be treated as an additional transportation cost. Thus, slave prices in Africa fell, and those in Cuba increased as the transportation cost wedge widened. The slave traders coped by adopting new maritime technologies such as faster sailing ships—some built in the United States—through to steam vessels built entirely in Britain, the country, ironically, at the head of international efforts to suppress the business.<sup>35</sup> Whereas an average of ten thousand captives per annum came into Cuba



between 1790 and 1820, after the trade became illegal, that average rose to 11,800 for 1821–1866. It is even possible that the later average is biased downward in the sense that further records of illegal voyages will still come to light.<sup>36</sup> But perhaps the relevant question is how many would have disembarked in Cuba if no attempts had been made to restrict the traffic—to which the answer is, no doubt, many more again.<sup>37</sup>

Although the literature on the nineteenth-century slave trade focuses heavily on the ineffectiveness of attempts to shut down the transatlantic slave trade—and the success of Cubans in evading such efforts—table 8.1 suggests a more nuanced view is required. The peak of the Cuban traffic occurred *before* the Spanish trade became illegal in 1820. The Anglo-Spanish treaty that came into effect that year initially cut the volume of the trade by more than half, and while 1836–1840 saw it almost return to its pre-1821 peak, subsequent suppression initiatives—British resort to using their own domestic courts to adjudicate slave ships in 1840s and American and Cuban involvement in suppression in the 1860s—are also clearly reflected in the data in table 8.1.

Overall, during the slave trade era, approximately 980,000 Africans disembarked in Cuba, 82 percent of whom were brought direct from Africa. They were drawn from a wide range of African coastal regions but, as table 8.3 shows, some patterns can be identified. The table covers only the years after 1651 because we have no basis for tracking the African origins of people arriving before that year from other parts of the Caribbean. The intra-American traffic predominated before 1760, and this essentially meant that Jamaica was the major transshipment point and remained dominant until 1793. After 1760, Saint-Domingue, the Danish islands, and, between 1815 and 1830, Bahia also became sources of enslaved people. African coastal origins of the transatlantic traffic for each of these regions are known and can be merged with the data on the direct trade to Cuba from Africa available on the estimates page of the Slave Voyages website. Table 8.3 shows the results of such a merge. The major effects of the procedure are to raise the importance of the Gold Coast in the early period and to raise slightly the profile of the Bight of Benin—both at the expense of the Bight of Biafra and West Central Africa (though the latter effect is quite small). Even after this adjustment, West Central Africa and the Bight of Biafra remain the source of over half of all arrivals, while Senegambia, which had been the prime source of the first ten thousand Africans to come to Cuba (but where the slave trade had largely closed by 1820), is underrepresented by comparison with the sources of the slave trade overall.

*Table 8.3.* African Regional Origins of All Captives Brought to Cuba (Transatlantic and Intra-American Traffic) by Quarter Century, 1651–1867

	Senegambia	Sierra Leone	Windward Coast	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West Central Africa	South-east Africa	Total
1651–1675	0	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	200
1676–1700	0	0	0	0	100	0	100	0	200
1701–1725	1,000	300	0	4,700	2,600	100	1,000	100	10,000
1726–1750	400	300	200	5,400	1,100	4,500	3,900	0	15,900
1751–1775	1,300	1,100	4,000	12,000	3,100	12,400	8,100	0	41,900
1776–1800	3,500	12,700	1,600	32,200	12,300	26,100	29,400	6,400	124,200
1801–1825	10,600	29,400	9,700	15,400	31,800	56,000	85,000	17,900	255,900
1826–1850	8,100	45,800	2,800	3,000	60,600	123,900	44,700	33,800	322,700
1851–1875	0	4,200	0	0	26,300	0	114,200	19,200	163,900
<b>Total</b>	25,100	93,300	18,300	72,500	137,800	222,900	286,200	77,400	933,800
<b>Row %</b>	2.7	10.0	2.0	7.8	14.8	23.9	30.6	8.3	100.0

Source: <http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/GSEEx9MJ>; “Cuban African Origins” spreadsheet available from the authors. These update Oscar Grandio Moráquez, “The African Origins of Slaves Arriving in Cuba, 1789–1865.”

It is highly likely that the Igbo formed the largest single African ethnolinguistic group to come to Cuba. Nevertheless, adding the African origins of the intra-American traffic to the transatlantic mix makes the heterogeneity of the Afro-Cuban population even more striking. After 1600, at no point in the Cuban branch of Atlantic forced migration did any single African region or ethnolinguistic group predominate. In addition, given the relatively late

onset of Yoruba movements to Cuba, we are still left with the puzzle that there could have been very few Yoruba speakers in Cuba. Henry B. Lovejoy has identified fifteen cabildos in Havana between 1819 and 1835. Ten were Carabali—the majority of whose members would have been Igbo; only one was Lucumí—and not all members of that cabildo were Yoruba. Lovejoy estimates that only 5 percent of the black population in 1827 could speak Yoruba.<sup>38</sup> For every Yoruba brought to the island, there must have been several Igbos. If we were to ignore the data and simply read the literature on Afro-Cubans, we might get the impression that the reverse was true, although recent work by Adriana Chira, Aisnara Perera Diaz, and María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes on Santiago is beginning to bring the “Carabali” into focus.<sup>39</sup>

Finally, we should locate the Cuban slave trade in the broader Atlantic picture. Laird Bergad has plotted the almost simultaneous meteoric rise and fall of the three major nineteenth-century plantation crops in the Americas—sugar, coffee, and cotton—in, respectively, Cuba, southeastern Brazil, and the US South, a development that, puzzlingly in the light of slavery’s historic continuity and ubiquity, is increasingly referred to as the “second slavery.” Only the first two of these regions depended heavily on the trans-oceanic slave trade, and the continuation of this past the mid-nineteenth century in part accounts for the notoriety of both Iberian systems. The preceding pages have argued that the Cuban slave plantation system lasted little more than a century, but it nevertheless pulled between two and three times more Africans across the Atlantic than did its US counterpart—and, if we date the US system back to tobacco in the 1660s, in only half the time. And yet by the 1850s, the US South had become massively larger than all other slave systems in the Americas whether contemporary or past.

If, as late as 1800, Spanish American exports, bolstered by specie, remained more valuable than those of the rest of the Americas combined, the change thereafter was very rapid indeed. Just fifty years later, US cotton output was worth three times the combined value of sugar and coffee in Brazil and Cuba. Cuba was always very much the junior member of this last trio of slave powers in the Americas. By 1860, its slave population was less than one-tenth that of the United States and slightly more than one-quarter the size of Brazil’s.<sup>40</sup> Intellectually, European serfdom was discredited by the end of the eighteenth century. The US South, by contrast, had launched a vigorous and partly successful ideological justification of slavery in the antebellum era that had no parallel in Brazil and Cuba. So dominant was the US system that the

Civil War in effect spelled out the eventual end of slavery everywhere, not just the United States. If the Confederacy had survived that conflict, it is still possible that Carlos Manuel de Céspedes would have declared war on Spain in 1868, but would he, at the same time, have freed his slaves? And would the Cortes have passed the Moret law two years later? Neither event seems at all likely to have happened in a counterfactual world.

### Notes

1. David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*.
2. John J. TePaske, *New World of Gold and Silver*; and Rossana Barragán Romano, "Potosí's Silver and the Global World of Trade."
3. For previous overviews, see Manuel Moreno Fragnals, "Africa in Cuba: A Quantitative Analysis," 188 (has 1,012,066 arrivals; Juan Perez de la Riva, "¿Cuántos africanos fueron traídos a Cuba?" 8 (has 816,378).
4. See Genaro Rodríguez Morel, "Sugar Economy"; Alejandro de la Fuente, "Sugar and Slavery"; Alejandro de la Fuente with the collaboration of César García del Pino and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, *Havana and the Atlantic*, epilogue; and Allan J. Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century," 13–39.
5. For the parallel case of shipments of gold from Africa reducing the price of slaves in the New World, see David Eltis, Frank D. Lewis, and Kimberley McIntyre, "Accounting for the Traffic in Africans."
6. For the development of these estimates, see chapter 1 of this volume.
7. Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic*, 38–40.
8. Fuente, "Sugar and Slavery," 135. See Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment*, 131–60, for the later evolution of sugar plantation work routines.
9. On the cultivation of tobacco in this early period, see Enrique López Mesa, *Tabaco, mito y esclavos*, 5–32; and José Rivero Muñiz, *Tabaco*.
10. Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic*, chapter 5.
11. Jacobo de la Pezuela, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de la isla de Cuba*, 4:238–39.
12. "In contrast to many port cities, which prospered while serving the needs of their surrounding productive areas, in the case of Havana, it was the port town that made an agriculturally rich hinterland" (Fuente, *Havana and the Atlantic*, 117).
13. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, table 15.
14. Gordon Douglas Inglis, "Historical Demography," 89–91. Inglis persuasively sets to one side Angel Rosenblat's estimate of fifteen thousand slaves in 1570 ("Historical Demography," 81).
15. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, appendix 1.

16. Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches*, 192, 230–31; and Wim Klooster, “Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade,” 213–17.
17. For example, just as English Jamaica was establishing its plantation base, Thomas Modyford, governor from 1664–1670, wrote, “Most of our privateers are turned merchants trading with the Indians for hides, tallow, turtle shells & Logwood, others to Cuba for Hogs and beefe with which this Island is well furnished” (November 30, 1669, Co1/24, f. 166). For English slave trading with the larger Spanish Empire in this era, see Gregory E. O’Malley, *Final Passages*, 139–70.
18. TSTD voyages #9699 and #41218.
19. Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire*, 55.
20. For the French asiento, see Colin A. Palmer, “Company Trade.” See also Mercedes García Rodríguez, *Entre haciendas y plantaciones*. British South Sea Company records show two voyages from Cartagena to Cuba, but these were carrying “refuse” slaves whom the Spanish had rejected in Kingston and whom the British were then able to sell in minor markets such as Cuba. Another 430 arrived from Barbados (British Library, Add. Ms., 25563, July 30, 1718, 66).
21. Stein and Stein, *Apogee of Empire*, 55.
22. Franklin W. Knight, “Slavery and the Transformation of Society in Cuba.”
23. Our count of 2,500 closely aligns with the 2,727 captives that Captain General Conde de Ricla specified as having been introduced by the British in a letter written on November 18, 1763 (Ricla to Arriaga, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (henceforth, ANC), Gobierno Superior Civil, 452/18574). Hugh Thomas in *Cuba* (50) posited “around 4,000.” Pablo Tornero Tinajero in *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales* (35) calculated 3,262 as the total. The Thomas and Tornero numbers are consistent with those of the captain general and Slave Voyages if we recognize that Thomas and Tornero include intra-American arrivals while the latter two sources report only those coming in direct from Africa. The Slave Voyages data for these years is close to complete.
24. José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud*, 1:320. For the royal order authorizing Coppinger’s activities, see ANC, Reales Cédulas y Ordenes, 3/218.
25. For 1761–1765 transatlantic arrivals, see <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/t8VQXOq7>; I-Am arrivals are at <https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/FijbDW8o>; and Hubert H. S. Aimes, *History of Slavery in Cuba*, 33. The Aimes figure—which is not sourced—seems extremely unlikely even though cited by many subsequent scholars. It is possible that Aimes counted those delivered as a result of the British occupation.
26. Juan Bosco Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 127, 129, 134; and Alex Borucki, David Eltis, David Wheat, “Notes on the Estimates of the Intra-American Slave Trade to the Spanish Americas” (<https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/downloads>, then go to “Estimates Datasets and Supplementary Documents”).

27. B. Huber, *Aperçu statistique de l'île de Cuba*, 228–29.
28. Inglis, “Historical Demography,” 99. Inglis describes the “proto-statistical era” as the age that saw “the initiation of statistical gathering by civil and church authorities” (“Historical Demography,” 7).
29. Inglis, “Historical Demography,” 124.
30. James F. King, “Evolution of the Free Slave Trade Principle,” 34–56.
31. Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 132–36; and Antonio del Valle Hernández, “Nota sobre la introducción de negros bozales en la Isla de Cuba y estado actual de la distribución de las gentes de color, libres y esclavos en ella,” in *Documentos de que hasta ahora*, 119.
32. Claudia Varela, “Price of Coartación.”
33. Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Island of Cuba*, 79.
34. Inglis, “Historical Demography,” 140–45, 183.
35. For the twenty-three steam-powered slave ship voyages, see <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/9zTLTFNr>. Ironically, three of these were on vessels built in Liverpool, the leading European slave trading port prior to British abolition.
36. However, users of [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) should note that the estimates page does make substantial allowances for those voyages—evidence for which has yet to emerge.
37. For estimates of the impact of suppression, see David Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 125–202.
38. Henry B. Lovejoy, *Prieto*, 82.
39. Note that while the Igbo population both within and outside of Africa is growing, in 1995, UNESCO nevertheless declared the language to be endangered. See the comments of one member of the Igbo diaspora at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p03s8wpf>. It is inconceivable that the Yoruba language could ever be so categorized. For recent work on Igbos in Cuba, see Adriana Chira, “Uneasy Intimacies”; and Aisnara Perera Diaz and María de los Ángeles Meriño Fuentes, *El cabildo carabalí*.
40. Brazilian data are for 1872.

CHAPTER 9

Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba,  
1790–1820

JORGE FELIPE-GONZALEZ



‡ THIS CHAPTER FOCUSES ON THE FOUNDATIONAL MOMENT OF THE Cuban-based slave trade between 1790, when the Spanish king liberalized the slave trade to his possessions, and 1820, when Spain abolished that commerce. It traces the historiographical origins of what we know today about the arrival of slaves to Cuba in that period. Based on a hitherto unexplored set of Cuban sources, the chapter reassesses those previous estimates and adds new knowledge on ports of origins of the ships, their exact date of arrival, and other information. These additions make it possible to differentiate for the first time transatlantic from intra-American traffic and to establish exactly when the former took over from the latter. More important, it explains why the volume of the slave trade and the regions on which it drew (in both Africa and the Americas) varied over time and how these fluctuations were shaped by international events beyond Cuban control. Revolution and armed conflict determined which nations would participate in the slave trade to Cuba in these years, and through this, the origins of that slave trade. But paradoxically, the international arena also enabled the emergence of an authentically Cuban-based slave trade to the island that survived long after the traffic became illegal.

There are strong reasons why the figures for the Cuban slave trade for these years matter. Between 1790 and 1820, Cuba transitioned from being a marginal importer of slaves to becoming 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. Yet by the 1820s, Cuban-owned ships had become common along the African coast. Thus, by the end of the legal era of the Spanish slave trade in 1820, Cuban merchants had established slave trading outposts in various African regions. A key to understanding the foundation, expansion, and survival of the Atlantic slave trade into the second half of the nineteenth century lies in these thirty years.

### **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 the political and economic debates that these official data stimulated. 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 Cuba. 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 (table 9.1, columns 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).<sup>1</sup>

Von 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 and was able to consult 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 (table 9.1, column E). Von Humboldt



concluded that 225,574 slaves had disembarked in Havana between 1790 and 1820. 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. Von Humboldt concluded that around 281,574 African captives might have disembarked in Cuba in those thirty years.<sup>2</sup>

Following von Humboldt's path, in 1832, José Antonio Saco published 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 von Humboldt except for the years of 1819 and 1820. Saco's list has two thousand fewer arrivals for the year 1819 and almost thirteen thousand more for 1820 (table 9.1, column F). It is now clear that von 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 (table 9.1, column D).<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to Saco, 236,578 captives arrived in Havana between 1790 and 1820. He added to this number about sixty thousand to allow for illicit importations, customs omissions, and disembarkations in Cuban ports other than Havana to arrive at a total of 296,578 (table 9.1, column F).<sup>4</sup>

Until the second half of the twentieth century, historians have used mostly Saco's and von Humboldt's estimates.<sup>5</sup> The first attempts to reappraise those nineteenth-century canonical texts came from a new generation of economic and quantitative historians. A conspicuous example in the Cuban historiography is the monograph *El ingenio* (1964) by Manuel Moreno Fraginals. Although Fraginal's Marxist text is a sophisticated longitudinal analysis of the global market for sugar—especially its financial and technological aspects—the author does not subject the slave trade to the same type of 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 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.<sup>6</sup>

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. Both used new archival sources from the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Spain: monthly customs returns of the slave ships

Table 9.1. Slaves Disembarked in Cuba by Author and New Assessment, 1790–1820

Years	A 1802 REAL CONSULADO <sup>A</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)	B 1809 REAL CON- SULADO <sup>B</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)	C 1813 REAL CONSULADO <sup>C</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)	D 1832 CAPTAIN GENERAL <sup>D</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)	E 1826 VON HUMBOLDT <sup>E</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)
1790	2,534				2,534
1791	8,198	8,438			8,498
1792	8,528	9,128			8,528
1793	3,767				3,777
1794	4,164				4,164
1795	5,832				5,832
1796	5,711				5,711
1797	4,552				4,552
1798	2,001				2,001
1799	4,949				4,919
1800	4,145				4,145
1801	1,659				1,659
1802	9,407	13,832			13,832
1803		9,571			9,671
1804		8,923	8,641		8,923
1805		4,923	4,999		4,999
1806		4,395	4,410		4,395
1807		2,505	2,555		2,565
1808		1,607	1,607		1,607
1809			1,162		1,162
1810			6,672		6,672
1811			6,349	6,349	6,349
1812			6,081	6,081	6,081
1813			4,770	4,770	4,770
1814				4,321	4,321
1815				9,111	9,111
1816				17,833	17,737
1817				25,841	25,841
1818				19,902	19,902
1819				15,147	17,194
1820				17,147	4,122
					225,574 + 56,000 for all other Cuban ports
					Total 281,574

F 1832 SACO <sup>F</sup> (HAVA- VANA ONLY)	G 1979 PÉREZ DE LA RIVA <sup>G</sup> (CUBA)	H 1975 KLEIN <sup>H</sup> (HAVANA ONLY)	I NEW ASSESSMENT <sup>I</sup> (CUBA)
2,534	3,177	4,797*	6,618
8,498	10,622	8,498	11,090
8,528	10,670	8,538	11,124
3,777	4,721	2,807*	4,995
4,164	5,205	4,012*	5,049
5,832	7,290	5,902	7,409
5,711	7,139	4,007*	*5,711
4,552	6,824	4,440*	5,183
2,001	2,501	1,782*	2,891
4,949	6,148	4,497*	4,999
4,145	5,181	2,01*8	4,709
1,659	2,073	1,659*	2,622
13,832	18,290	13,785	15,998
9,671	12,089	9,665	10,935
8,923	11,164	8,641	9,510
4,999	6,248	4,991*	5,263
4,395	5,493	3,932*	4,932
2,565	3,206	2,569	5,385
1,607	2,009	1,013*	1,674
1,162	1,452	988*	1,538
6,672	8,340	6,672	7,824
6,349	7,939	5,749*	9,667
6,081	7,601	3,134*	6,735
4,770	5,962	2,827*	5,837
4,321	5,401	1,780*	4,814
9,111	12,289	6,783*	11,475
17,733	23,671	17,533	23,046
25,841	28,301	23,929*	34,944
19,902	24,576	14,498*	25,949
15,147	18,436	1,356*	25,181
17,147	21,110	536*	28,608
236,578 + 60,000 for all other Cuban ports		183,338 (For Cuba as a whole, Klein accepted von Humboldt's figures)	
Total 296,578	Total 295,128	Total 281,574	Total 311,715

Sources: See notes.

Note: Asterisk indicates years with missing data where estimates are based on José Antonio Saco's data.

- a. "El Prior y Cónsules de la Habana representan contra la gracia exclusive 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." Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Intendencia de Hacienda, leg. 919, exp. 8.
- b. "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, leg. 74, exp. 2836.
- c. "Estado de importación de Bozales, 1814." BNC, Colección de Manuscritos Cubanos, Bachiller y Morales, t. 78, no. 46.
- d. "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.
- e. Alexander von Humboldt, *Island of Cuba* (1856), 218-19.
- f. José Antonio Saco, "Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil," 70.
- g. Juan Pérez de la Riva, *El monto de la inmigración*, 102.
- h. Herbert S. Klein, "Cuban Slave Trade," 67-89.
- i. *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.

arriving mostly in Havana between 1790 and 1820.<sup>7</sup> Klein transcribed, processed, and made these lists publicly available. For the first time, historians had access to records containing details of daily arrivals of slave ships in Cuba. These records contain details for every ship that disembarked slaves in the capital of Cuba including the name of the vessel, rig, captain, national flag, and the number of slaves divided by sex and age categories.<sup>8</sup> They enabled a voyage-by-voyage assessment of the traffic. Nevertheless, the sources have significant gaps. They provided no information on the port of departure of the ship and gave no hint of the owners and consignees of the human cargo. Moreover, they contain information mostly for Havana and provide dates that contain the month of arrival but not the day.

The lack of data on ports of embarkation was a daunting 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 transatlantic while the rest were assumed to be intra-American.<sup>9</sup> For many cases, such methodology was not reliable. 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.<sup>10</sup> Klein's data showed that 183,338 slaves arrived in Havana between 1790 and 1820 (table 9.1, column H), but for the island as a whole—and in view of his missing data—Klein accepted von Humboldt's figure.

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 brought to Cuba by combining archival sources, Saco's 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 the island. These were the highest numbers presented by any historian up to that time (table 9.1, column G).<sup>11</sup>

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 containing 27,233 slave ship voyages. In 2008, an expanded online version was released as part of [www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org) (henceforth *Slave Voyages*), which at the time of going to press has 36,002 recorded slave voyages (henceforth *TSTD*). The data on Cuba from the period between 1790 and 1820 came mainly from Klein but incorporated new entries from the work of Manuel Barcia, Oscar Grandío, Marial Iglesias, Ada Ferrer, Jay Coughtry, Jean Mettas, Serge Daget, José Luciano Franco, and others. Yet there were still voyages missing even from this database, and many voyages that were included lacked information on the identity of owners, exact departure and arrival dates, 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

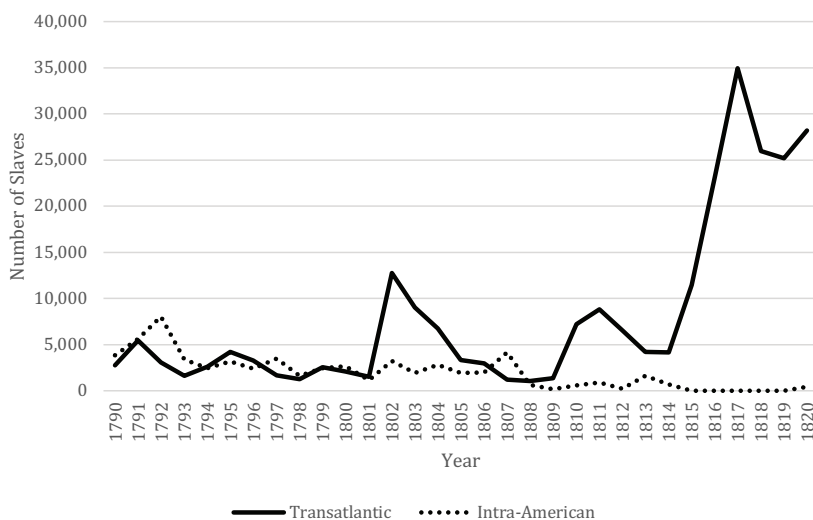
voyage-by-voyage record of slave arrivals in Cuba between 1790 and 1820.<sup>12</sup> Some of the new sources include data from Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad, Matanzas, and Puerto Príncipe that were absent from TSTD.<sup>13</sup> Daily entry of ships into and departures from Cuban ports were compared with Klein's AGI data. Allowance was made for minor variations in spelling and differences in the date of arrival and 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](http://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. 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.<sup>14</sup>

All this new information makes it possible to derive a new aggregate total for Havana alone from 1790 to 1820 of 260,478—thirty thousand more than what Saco reported for the same period. Saco and von 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 of disembarkations in Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Trinidad, and Puerto Príncipe, with 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.<sup>15</sup> 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 are 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 Cuba comes to 311,715 slaves (table 9.1, column I). These totals will increase once the missing data are found.

### The Cuban Slave Trade, 1790–1820: An Overview

Two main distinctive features of the Cuban slave trade between 1790 and 1820 were the diversity of embarkation ports and carriers. During these thirty years, hundreds of thousands of slaves came to Cuba from every major African slave trading region and from 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.

As figure 9.1 shows, 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 (table 9.2). However, the intra-American slave trade to Cuba was mostly a pre-1808 phenomenon given that 45 percent of all captives arrived via that traffic before 1808 and only 2.4 percent after that year.



*Figure 9.1.* Transatlantic and intra-American slave voyages to Cuba, 1790–1820.

Source: Table 9.2 and author's database, available upon request.

**Table 9.2.** Transatlantic/Intra-American Voyages: Slaves Disembarked in Cuba, 1790–1820

Year	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
<b>Total</b>	<b>250,197</b>	<b>61,518</b>

Sources: *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; and *Miscelánea de Libros*, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.



The year 1808 was a turning point not only for the distribution of arrivals between intra-American and transatlantic but also for the nationality of the carriers. Overall, 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. Very few transatlantic voyages occurred under the Spanish flag prior to 1808. However, in the intra-American traffic in that period, Spanish/Cuban ships led the way followed by the United States and Denmark, the most important sources being located in the Danish islands of Saint Thomas and Saint Croix, rather than Jamaica—the primary pre-1790 source. All ports in the Americas that supplied slaves to Cuba were entrepôts, and we can assume that the captives they dispatched had only recently arrived from Africa. Most, indeed, had crossed the Atlantic on British vessels. 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 in the trading centers on the African coast. However, behind these figures on ports of origins and the nationality of the slave ships lie dramatic events in the international arena, including major wars. The raw numbers also conceal the strategies used by slave traders such as the formal adoption of foreign flags in a time of war and the misreporting of ports of embarkations. One method of disentangling these factors is to view the Cuban slave trade through the lens of the changing international scene.

Most slaves arrived in Cuba directly from Africa, but identifying specific African ports, or even regions of origin, is a challenging task. Transatlantic voyages are identified 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 (1,700) follow. But 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 broad 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 instead on the estimates page of *Slave 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, Southeast Africa, Senegambia, the Bight of Benin, and the Windward Coast.<sup>16</sup>

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 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.

To understand the interplay between ports of embarkations and nationality of the slave ships, we need to explore patterns within six time periods, each defined by major international events. The first is 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 for twenty-two years (1815–1820). We also need to recognize that British dominance is vital in understanding the annual fluctuations of the slave market in the island. Each time 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.

### **From Liberalization to the Onset of the Anglo-Spanish War: 1790–1796**

In 1789, 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. In the immediate aftermath of liberalization, traders from many nations began doing business on the island.

However, in August 1791, a revolution began in the prosperous colony of Saint-Domingue, a French possession that by the last quarter of the eighteenth century had become the world's leading producer of tropical produce. 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 conflicts 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).<sup>17</sup> This seven-year number almost matches the total who had arrived in Cuba in the three decades preceding 1790, so the growth of the Cuban slave trade was indeed rapid. Of the combined figure, Spanish vessels accounted for 30 percent of arrivals, British, 28 percent, US, 26 percent, and French, 10 percent, with the Danes, Dutch, Swedish, and Portuguese sharing the remainder. Although Spain was the leading carrier, Great Britain was, in reality, the most critical source given that during the 1790s, Spanish vessels obtained 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 transhipped to Cuba.<sup>18</sup> This pattern is fundamental to understanding fluctuations in slave arrivals to Cuba during the Anglo-Spanish wars. Each time hostilities broke out between Spain and England, the total number of slaves imported to Cuba dropped, and with Cuban merchants excluded from markets in the British West Indies, the intra-American trade could not compensate for the drop in transatlantic arrivals.

We know the African region of embarkation for around three-quarters of the slaves coming directly from Africa in this first period. 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> The relative importance of the significant carriers thus accounts for the relative importance of the African regional origins of Cuban transatlantic arrivals.

In the case of the intra-American route, we have information for the origins of 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 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 almost all these ports were entrepôts connected to different African regions of embarkation.

Who carried all these enslaved people? The US flag appeared everywhere in the intra-American branch of the 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. The United States obtained captives from 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. The United States took slaves to Cuba from twenty different ports. Nevertheless, the leading carrier in the intra-American route was not the United States, but rather Spain. Between 1790 and 1796, Spanish vessels 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 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 Cuba. 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 decided to sail to Havana, where he sold the 292 remaining slaves.<sup>22</sup> 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. In March 1793, French supply of captives ended when France and Spain went to war. Spanish traders now returned mainly to Jamaica and Dominica for their slaves, while some others ventured to Trinidad, the Bahamas, Saint Eustatius, and Saint Thomas. French vessels reappeared briefly in Cuban ports after 1802, followed by another gap down to the 1820s.

### The Anglo-Spanish War: 1797–1801

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 Cuba or any other Spanish possession. The consequences for Cuba were multiple. First, the total numbers of imported captives dropped sharply and would remain low until the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. Second, the US flag partly occupied the space left by the British. Third, Spanish vessels disappeared from the traffic entirely. Finally, because of the changes triggered by wars between the major slave trading nations, ports of origin and 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 fewer 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 were on Danish ships. Indeed, according to historian Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, the number of Danish vessels carrying slaves to Cuba between 1790 and 1807 was “as great as the total number of Danish ships which, during the whole eighteenth century, sailed the triangular trade.”<sup>23</sup> Green-Pedersen points out that most of the owners of the expeditions sailing from Saint Thomas and Saint Croix to Cuba were not Danish citizens.<sup>24</sup> 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 US and British slave merchants had established themselves there.<sup>25</sup> Sixty percent of all the slaves who arrived in the Danish West Indies (14,552) from Africa came on British ships.<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup> Swedish vessels always had British or American ownership.

The removal of England from the Cuban slave trade generated a shift in the African region of embarkation of the slaves. For these years, the information about African origins is particularly limited. We only know with certainty the origins of 1,500 captives, a mere 15 percent of the transatlantic branch. These limited data suggest that the Gold Coast replaced West Central Africa as the leading African source of captives, probably because US 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.<sup>28</sup>

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 onto 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, 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.”<sup>29</sup>

In sum, the 1790s was a decade of profound transformation 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 their own business and sought to purchase slaves in Africa without having to rely on intermediaries. But the first generation of Cuban slavers from the 1790s was not yet ready to make serious inroads into the transatlantic slave trade. Nevertheless, they sought a way to find a spot in the business by training captains, creating insurance companies, forming commercial associations, or purchasing ships. In the end, only a 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 from Africa.

### **The Anglo-Spanish Peace: 1802–1804**

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 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 US flag accounted for a further 10,283; Denmark, 6,681; Spain, 2,785; and Sweden, 560, but as in previous periods, US 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 US 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.<sup>30</sup> 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 the enslaved. 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.

A significant realignment of the Cuban slave trade took place in 1804 when the South Carolina legislature reopened the transatlantic slave trade. Charleston became the epicenter of the human trafficking on the North American mainland. As shown below, the increasing importance of the Lowcountry in the slave trade in the North Atlantic would have lasting consequences for Cuba.

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 gave Cuban merchants the opportunity 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.

### **The Second Anglo-Spanish War and the Abolition of the Slave Trade: 1805–1808**

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 US 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.”<sup>31</sup> One consequence of the reopening 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. Consequently, 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.<sup>32</sup> The impact on Cuba would be profound, since as Eltis points out, “Cuba, in fact, received almost as many slaves from US vessels as did Charleston before 1820 and certainly more than any British Caribbean market, including Jamaica and Barbados.”<sup>33</sup>

In the transatlantic business, US dominance reemerged as US merchants 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.<sup>34</sup>

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.

What were the consequences for the Cuban slave trade of the reopening of Charleston? 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 banned this commerce. By the time US and British abolition of the slave trade occurred, Havana already had financial, commercial, and political institutions, as well as legislation, in place to support a “Spanish” Atlantic slave trade.

#### **The Transition to a Cuban-Owned Atlantic Slave Trade: 1809–1814**

The most evident 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. 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. The Cuban trend was even more marked than the wider North Atlantic pattern, with a decline from 5,400 in 1807 to just 1,700 in 1808 and then 1,500 in 1809. It was not until 1810 that the traffic began to recover.<sup>35</sup>

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 Cuba. 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 US flagged in 1808, compared to only three out of fourteen in the 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?

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 US slave traders and covered American ownership of many expeditions with Spanish documents. As US 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.”<sup>36</sup>

But sometime between 1808 and 1814, Cubans assumed genuine ownership roles in transatlantic ventures—a process no doubt aided by the US 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 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. As table 9.2 shows, 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. 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 midyear.

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 such as Cuesta Manzanal and Brothers and Pedro Oliver and Cia established connections with merchants in Brazil. 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.

### The Growth of the Cuban-Based Atlantic Slave Trade: 1815–1820

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 who arrived in Brazil in the same year, despite the fact that Brazil was many times the size of Cuba.<sup>37</sup>

All these captives were disembarked from Spanish ships, the great 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 direct from Africa amounting to almost six thousand, 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.<sup>38</sup> 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 interesting 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.<sup>39</sup>

In the years after 1815, a Cuban-based transatlantic slave trade had emerged. 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 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, “By 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 very much the exception.”<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

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 us 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 the 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, we can see the connections between changes in the international arena and the dramatic shifts in the supply of enslaved labor to the island that was soon to be the producer of half the world's sugar.

### Notes

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1. Antonio del Valle Hernandez, “Nota sobre la introducción de negros bozales en la Isla de Cuba y estado actual de la distribución de las gentes de color, libres y esclavos en ella,” in *Documentos de que hasta ahora*, 119. Valle Hernandez pointed out that between 1789 and 1810, 110,136 slaves had disembarked in Havana. Robert Francis Jameson, *Letters from the Havana*, 36. Jameson, the British judge for the newly established Mixed Commission Court in Havana, published a pro-abolition pamphlet in which he estimated that between 1789 and 1819, Cuba had imported about 286,000 captives.
2. Alexander von Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba* (1856), 218–19.
3. Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23, “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.”
4. José Antonio Saco, “Análisis de una obra sobre el Brasil,” 2:70.
5. Three examples of renowned historians using Saco's and von Humboldt's data were Hubert H. S. Aimes, *History of Slavery in Cuba*, 269; Fernando Ortiz, *Hampa afrocubana*, 87; and Philip D. Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 39–41. José Luciano Franco, who wrote the only monograph in Spanish on the Cuban slave trade, reproduced Saco's number in *Comercio clandestino de esclavos*.
6. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio*, 323.
7. David R. Murray, “Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba”; and Herbert S. Klein, “North American Competition.”

8. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, leg. 2207.
9. Herbert S. Klein, "Cuban Slave Trade in a Period of Transition."
10. Twenty-two years are missing some monthly data: 1790, 1793, 1794, 1796–1800, 1805, 1806, 1808, 1811–1815, and 1817–1820.
11. Juan Pérez de la Riva, *¿Cuántos africanos fueron traídos a Cuba?*, 12–13; and Juan Pérez de la Riva, *El monto de la inmigración forzada*, 102.
12. 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, 494-18690; 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.
13. ANC, Protocolos de Marina, 1790–1820; and Miscelánea de Libros, 1115, 1950, 1986, 2486, 2516, 2519, 2524, 2787, 3506, 3518, 6797, 6816.
14. Data 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.
15. ANC, Intendencia de Hacienda, 1052-23, "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."
16. See Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/TD84vvHS>.
17. TSTD 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. Discrepancies with both TSTD and I-Am databases on Slave Voyages are also apparent for other periods examined here but will eventually be eliminated as the site is adjusted to reflect my findings.
18. TSTD, <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/Plxw7791>, to which is added the I-Am arrivals from Slave Voyages at <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/7UQiADVJ>.
19. These figures are more complete than those of the Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/ZGWUjg4B>, which has the Gold Coast as the main regional origin of slaves carried to Cuba in these years.
20. Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/ZGWUjg4B>, and then, on the tables tab, set rows = flags, and columns = African regions.

21. *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, August 5, 1792. The brig *Cometa* had departed to Africa from Havana in March 1792. *Papel Periódico de la Habana*, March 1, 1792.
22. Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, 9.
23. Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 94.
24. Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade," 103.
25. Svend Erik Green-Pedersen, "History of the Danish Negro Slave Trade," 20.
26. Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/CZSp7Wil>.
27. Ernst Ekman, "Sweden, the Slave Trade and Slavery," 224.
28. TSTD, <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/P2UM8tEi>.
29. Sherry Johnson, "The Rise and Fall of Creole Participation," 66.
30. These figures do not match the estimates on Slave Voyages for reasons explained in note 19; see Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/oWUyeYj2>.
31. David Eltis, "U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade," 363.
32. David Eltis and David Richardson, "New Assessment of the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 28.
33. Eltis, "U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade," 370.
34. TSTD, <https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/uve68si5>.
35. For the aggregate trend, 1806–1814, see TSTD, <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/IoWaFAie>. For the Cuban trend, see table 9.2.
36. Thomas Hart Benton, *Abridgment of the Debates of Congress*, 252.
37. Compare the entry for 1817 in table 9.2 with arrivals at major Brazilian ports (Southeastern Brazil is effectively Rio de Janeiro in this period) in the Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/ArGvfj4L> after adjusting the rows in the table to "individual years."
38. Estimates page at <http://slavevoyages.org/estimates/G2A3Y6AS>.
39. *Colección legislativa de España*, 226–30.
40. David Eltis, *Economic Growth*, 55.



CHAPTER 10

# Routes into Eighteenth-Century Cuban Slavery

African Diaspora and Geopolitics

ELENA SCHNEIDER



‡ IN THE CENTURY OR SO BEFORE CUBA'S SUGAR BOOM IN THE 1790S, Africans and African-descended peoples arrived on the island through a variety of different routes. In reconstructing their journeys, this chapter aims to recover the experiences of a subset of the many individuals caught within the circuits of the slave trade and to demonstrate their ties not only to Africa but also to other areas of the Americas. This case study of the slave trade to Cuba during the long eighteenth century will look familiar to scholars of other American regions that relied more heavily on intra-American than on transatlantic slave trading. During the 150 years after the end of the Portuguese *asiento*, or monopoly contract, in 1640, and before Spain's declaration of "free trade in slaves" in 1789, most new arrivals in Cuba's population of African descent came via British, French, Dutch, and Danish slave traders and smugglers. Sometimes this commerce occurred through the Crown-sanctioned *asiento* and sometimes through channels of contraband and wartime regional trade. Given these characteristics, the slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba presents challenges and opportunities that hold broader implications for our understanding of the African diaspora and geopolitics in the Atlantic world.

Although smaller in volume than its nineteenth-century counterpart, the slave trade to Cuba before the declaration of “free trade in slaves” in 1789 was significantly larger than historians previously thought.<sup>1</sup> Even current estimates are likely to grow as more research is done and more effective ways are found to assess regional Caribbean trade as well as contraband, especially on the southern coast of the island and in Oriente Province. The existence of this larger slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba before its sugar boom affirms the growing scholarly consensus that during every stage of Spanish presence on the island of Cuba, the colonial project was built on the backs of free and enslaved Africans.<sup>2</sup>

A reevaluation of the size and shape of the slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba has implications for our understanding of Cuba’s demographic strength, economic output, purchasing power, and broader political economy before the sugar boom. It also revises interpretations of the boom itself. As recent scholarship has shown, the takeoff of the 1790s was underwritten by a longer-term transition, which saw steady capital accumulation and growing numbers of enslaved Africans arriving in Cuba during the decades prior.<sup>3</sup> Growth in the slave trade had enabled the expansion of a diversified economy that included sugar, as well as coffee, tobacco, ranching, and services; capital accumulation via this diversified economy financed the later sugar boom.

Closer attention to the slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba also has implications for the social and cultural geography of the African diaspora. As a consequence of the slave routes leading to the island during that era, its African populations were connected not only to Africa but also to other zones of European colonialism in the Americas.<sup>4</sup> Many African and African-descended peoples arriving in eighteenth-century Cuba had previously lived in non-Hispanic colonies, sometimes long enough to learn their languages. In order to better understand their experiences, we need to look backward along these routes of arrival. Africans and their descendants created black social networks across and between Caribbean islands that necessarily change how we conceive of Cuba’s communities of African descent. The case of eighteenth-century Cuba reinforces the need for models that are even more dynamic than the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TSTD) or Paul Gilroy’s more Anglophone Black Atlantic, models that can better capture the fluid and interconnected nature of America’s African diaspora.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba has implications for our understanding of broader political and economic landscapes. The

island's earliest and most powerful relations with non-Hispanic colonies in and around the Caribbean—and especially the Anglo-American system—predated the takeoff of the sugar economy and occurred within the context of intra-American slave trading. Cuba's merchant elites used the slave trade to forge ties with other American colonies, thus building a dynamic, diversified, and interdependent economy that allowed them to evade and gain leverage against political authorities in Spain. Via these slaving circuits, Cuba's eighteenth-century economy developed a symbiotic relationship not only with other Spanish colonies but also with their British, French, Dutch, and Danish neighbors, despite the Spanish Crown's prohibitions on interimperial trade.

What follows is a reconstruction of the multiplicity of routes of African arrival in Cuba—through the *asiento*, privateering, contraband, maritime marronage, and the disruptions of imperial warfare. These varied routes of arrival themselves demand study, beyond any contribution to revised slave trade volume estimates. By putting a variety of archival and published sources in conversation with recent research on the commercial records of the trade, this chapter seeks to reveal something of the identities, experiences, and cultural knowledge of arrivals and the web of connections between the island and its neighbors built under the auspices of the slave trade. The sale of enslaved Africans in Cuba and the circulation of the goods they produced played a key role in the development of multiple European colonialisms throughout the hemisphere. Historians have argued that the engines that drove early globalization and the first hemispheric relations in the Americas were the desire for free trade, the search for markets, and shared anticolonial sentiments. And yet before all that, and alongside it, the prime mover of the system was always the business of buying and selling Africans.<sup>6</sup>

### Routes of Arrival

The slave trade to Cuba had more longevity than the trade to any other region of the Americas, lasting from 1511 to perhaps as late as 1863;<sup>7</sup> however, most scholarship on it has focused on its dramatic takeoff after Spain's declaration of "free trade in slaves" in 1789, which helped to spark Cuba's sugar boom. In part, this is a question of volume. During the thirty-year period between 1790 and 1820, more than three hundred thousand Africans were brought to Cuba and sold as slaves. In the previous 250 years, by contrast, less

than half that many Africans were traded to Cuba.<sup>8</sup> In the nineteenth century, Cuba became the world's leading sugar producer and imported upward of seven hundred thousand enslaved African laborers.<sup>9</sup> According to the historiography, African arrivals to the Spanish Caribbean dropped off after the end of the Portuguese *asiento* in 1640. Other chapters in this volume argue that the slave trade to Spanish America in general followed a U-shaped curve, with heights during the union of the two crowns and then again (this time to Cuba in particular) during the period after 1789, during what has been described as a "re-Africanization" process.<sup>10</sup> By contrast with later periods of peak transatlantic slave trading, there has thus far been relatively little study of the slave trade to Cuba across the long eighteenth century, during what has been called the bottom of the "U."<sup>11</sup>

Another reason for the greater attention to the slave trade during the nineteenth century is that the vast majority of the scholarship on colonial Cuba focuses on that era. Within the framework of Cuban national history, the period before 1790 and indeed the entire "era of the *asientos*" represent the backstory to what has traditionally been seen as the main story, the take-off of sugar plantation slavery in the final decade of the eighteenth century. Within the framework of Caribbean history, eighteenth-century Cuba seems to inhabit a space largely outside the most important trends of the era—the sugar boom in the British and French Caribbean, the rise of plantation slavery, and the growth of global capitalism.<sup>12</sup> And yet by focusing only on the period of the takeoff of industrial production of sugar, we miss the human history that came before. Whether intentionally or not, we also reproduce a capitalist system that ascribed relative value to lives based on their commodity or productive value in the global economy.

As it has developed thus far, scholarship on the African slave trade to Cuba has shared the same initial emphases as TSTD: a focus on questions of scale and on the transatlantic passages connecting Africa and its cultures and peoples to the Americas. As noted in previous chapters in this volume, this emphasis has been of limited utility for a period of intensive intra-American trading and has resulted in an undercounting of arrivals in areas that were more likely to be endpoints of intra-American rather than transatlantic slaving voyages.<sup>13</sup> For example, TSTD shows only 26,064 enslaved African arrivals in Cuba between 1526 and 1788, while for many decades now, scholars of Cuba working in Spanish and Cuban archives have been estimating fifty thousand African arrivals between 1763 and 1789 alone.<sup>14</sup>

Tracing the slave trade to Cuba before the era of the sugar boom—in other words, prior to the period in which transatlantic slave trading predominated—presents archival challenges that require a different methodology. Entry and exit logs for slave ships in the port of Havana have not been located for most of this period and may not survive.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a large percentage of the trade was contraband and thus hard to quantify. Examination of the commercial records of non-Hispanic traders—not just British but also French, Dutch, and Danish—would help to expand our knowledge of the trade to Cuba, but there is still much more we need to know about a time when the slave trade was so often indirect and clandestine.<sup>16</sup> Re-creating the varied routes of African arrival is essential to understanding the history of the island before its sugar boom and the dynamic, diversified economy that was able to transform itself when the opportunity arose in the final decade of the century. A deeper understanding of the multiple ways Africans and people of African descent arrived in Cuba can also help guide future efforts to evaluate the volume, nature, and impacts of the trade both within Cuba and beyond its shores. Yet interpreting this history requires making sense not only of commercial and shipping data that describes the volume of the trade but also local sources addressing *de facto* regional practices that were sometimes sanctioned by Spanish law but often were not.

As is well known among specialists, until 1789, much of the slave trade to Spanish America operated under *asiento* monopolies the Crown granted to international financiers or merchant houses who arranged for Spanish American ports to receive a specified number of enslaved Africans annually. In the eighteenth century, the most familiar and largest were the French *asiento*, held by *La Compagnie Royale de Guinée* (1701–1713), and the British *asiento*, held by the South Sea Company (1715–1739).<sup>17</sup> Lesser known *asientos* include Spanish contracts granted to the *Real Compañía Gaditana* in 1765 and the *Real Compañía de Filipinas* in 1785, as well as a second British *asiento* for Cuba issued to the large Liverpool firm of Baker and Dawson in 1784.<sup>18</sup> The official end of the *asiento* system in 1789 combined with the multiple impacts of the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 are thought to have catalyzed Cuba's sugar boom and the dramatic escalation of African slave trading to the island.

In general, the restrictions and inefficiencies of the *asiento* system have been blamed for the failure of the sugar industry in Cuba to rival its neighbors in Jamaica and Saint-Domingue before the Spanish Crown liberalized the slave trade in 1789. Promoters of the sugar industry in Cuba, such as the

influential creole lawyer and lobbyist at court Francisco de Arango y Parreño, perpetuated this view. Arango y Parreño blamed the *asientos* of the Royal Havana Company, the British firm Baker and Dawson, and the Real Compañía de Filipinas for retarding the growth of Cuba's economy by failing to meet the island's demand for enslaved Africans.<sup>19</sup> Ongoing complaints about the *asiento* fed the sense that the slave trade to Cuba was relatively dormant during this period. It is important to remember, though, that Arango y Parreño's criticisms of the restrictions of the system were retrospective and shaped by his own opposition to trade monopolies during the era of "free trade in slaves." A close reading of sources in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville and the Archivo Nacional de Cuba in Havana reveals multiple routes of African arrival even under the *asiento* system.

The slave trade to Cuba during the era of the *asientos* was less monolithic and restrictive and more variegated and multipathway than it may appear. One of the reasons for the historical undercounting of African arrivals in Cuba during the eighteenth century may be a misunderstanding of the nature of the *asientos*. Alongside *asientos* the Spanish Crown issued to the merchant companies mentioned above, there were also lesser-known private *asientos* the captain general of Cuba granted to wealthy residents who petitioned for them. Under this Crown-sanctioned policy, the captain general gave small-scale licenses to property owners who wished to sail to a non-Hispanic colony and purchase enough enslaved Africans to expand or replenish the workforce on their own *hacienda* (ranch or estate). Property owners in Cuba might also receive permission to bring hundreds of additional captives to sell on the open market in order to help finance their trip. The practice developed during periods in which the French *asiento* failed to meet local demand and was especially popular after the end of the British *asiento*. In effect, many elites in Cuba took advantage of this custom to send ships directly to Kingston, Jamaica, to purchase enslaved Africans, engage in contraband on the side, and establish connections with merchants there. This practice was relatively common, and it was standard for either one Havana *vecino* (resident) or several who had pooled their resources for the journey to purchase several hundred enslaved Africans in Jamaica at a time. These private *asientos* were just one of several ways merchants and landholders in Cuba found ways to expand their own slave trading.<sup>20</sup>

The Royal Havana Company—majority held by Havana-based merchants—also managed to secure an *asiento* for the slave trade to Cuba after the 1739 outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear between Britain and Spain,

which ruptured the British South Sea Company asiento.<sup>21</sup> In response to the scarcity of laborers caused by the interruption of war, the Spanish Crown licensed the company to import 1,100 “*piezas de indias*” over two years.<sup>22</sup> Enslaved Africans were supposed to be brought into Puerto Rico by friendly or neutral powers, such as the French or Dutch, and then transshipped to Havana. The idea was thus to bar foreign (non-Hispanic) merchants, with their spies and contraband goods, from critical Cuban ports such as Havana and to meet burgeoning demand in Cuba without trading with the British enemy.<sup>23</sup>

As Royal Havana Company records reveal, its directors used the asiento to import far more enslaved Africans, mostly directly from British traders, than their contract permitted. During the War of Jenkins’ Ear, they stationed an agent in Kingston to arrange shipments of enslaved Africans and foodstuffs for Cuba. Ex post facto, the Crown more than doubled the number of enslaved Africans the company was allowed to import, but the Royal Havana Company had already surpassed that number.<sup>24</sup> The Royal Havana Company’s commissioner in Kingston did such brisk business with British merchants that according to company records, 3,508 enslaved Africans were imported to Havana and its surroundings between February 1743 and April 1747. The arrival of four more slave ships by October 1747 revises the total upward to 4,484 enslaved Africans, calculated at around 3,600 *piezas*.<sup>25</sup> Some of the early vessels hailed from Curaçao, Martinique, and Saint Eustatius, but over 90 percent—4,116 enslaved persons—had embarked for Cuba from Jamaica.<sup>26</sup> By 1751, the Royal Havana Company had introduced more than 50 percent more enslaved Africans in Cuba over a ten-year period than the South Sea Company had introduced in the ten years prior.<sup>27</sup> These figures are significantly larger than the numbers historians have previously claimed were brought to Havana under the royal monopoly company (the number of enslaved Africans arriving in Havana during these four years is only slightly less than previous slave trade volume estimates for the entire period from 1740 to 1760).<sup>28</sup> Indeed, company records indicate that it made a significant profit in the trade.<sup>29</sup>

Parsing the intricacies of how a variety of asientos operated in practice will likely lead us to raise the number of African arrivals in Cuba. However, the asientos and licenses only reveal a small part of the story—the legal, Crown-regulated and -sanctioned portion. Perhaps as many Africans reached Cuba through the intra-American routes of contraband, privateering, and maritime marronage—all activities that are difficult to quantify,

though clearly evident in Spanish and Cuban archives. All of these practices were accentuated by the imperial war and rivalry endemic in the eighteenth-century Caribbean.

As during all eras of the slave trade to Cuba, it is likely that a majority of people were ferried to the island on smugglers' ships. The search for more enslaved Africans to purchase was the most powerful impetus to Cuban contraband, which grew in tandem with the activities of non-Hispanic merchants in a region once claimed exclusively (among European powers) by Spain. In the eighteenth century, the most active smuggling routes for human trafficking connected Cuba to Jamaica, Saint-Domingue, and Curaçao. The economy of Oriente, Cuba's eastern province, and Cuatro Villas, in the center of the island, depended heavily on contraband trade. In 1785, one government official estimated that more than half of Oriente's produce departed the island through contraband channels to Saint-Domingue, and the majority of the production of Cuatro Villas left for Jamaica via the town of Trinidad.<sup>30</sup> Though contraband was most rampant in Oriente Province and the center of the island, it also took place in Havana, even in broad daylight. In a telling example, one enslaved woman born in Jamaica described how she was smuggled into the port of Havana to be sold, without any duties being paid, in full view of government officials.<sup>31</sup>

In response to this situation, the Spanish government in Cuba granted pardons (*indultos*) every couple of years for all the enslaved Africans illegally introduced onto the island of Cuba via contraband. In exchange for payment of duties after the fact, local officials branded these enslaved Africans with the mark of the Spanish Crown and pronounced them legalized possessions of their owners.<sup>32</sup> This practice provided tax revenue for the Crown and a pragmatic quasi-solution for a situation that had slipped beyond its control, in which its own officers were complicit. The practice of branding men, women, and children upon the payment of import duties physically manifested on black bodies the Spanish state's struggle to regulate their routes of arrival. Retroactively, it also legitimized the property rights of owners.<sup>33</sup>

The frequent outbreak of war across the eighteenth century shaped the contours of Cuba's slave trade and may have actually increased the number of Africans arriving on the island. During wartime, disruptions to transatlantic commerce provided other opportunities for individuals in Cuba to purchase slaves directly from neighboring colonies, even those of Spain's enemies. During times of war, the port of Havana could be more open to the ships of other European powers, even its enemies, than during times of



peace. As we have seen, the War of Jenkins' Ear allowed the Royal Havana Company to commission British slave ships to sail human cargo into Havana's harbor. During the next major war and the British occupation of Havana in 1762–1763, British traders brought 3,500 enslaved Africans to sell to Havana vecinos.<sup>34</sup> The American War of Independence (1775–1783), in turn, was a period of rapid increase in trade and human trafficking between Cuba and British North America and the new United States. During that war, Spanish subjects in Cuba were permitted by royal order to import slaves from any neutral country. As Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez's contribution to this volume points out, it also facilitated neutral trade with France. Cumulatively, the series of wars leading up to and including the Haitian Revolution accelerated the intra-American slave trade and brought tens of thousands of people of African descent into Cuba.

During these imperial wars, privateering also brought many people of African descent into Cuba. Santiago de Cuba, Havana, and Trinidad were busy privateering bases, and the *guardacostas* (coast guard) patrolled the island's southern coast in search of foreign ships. During just two years of the War of Jenkins' Ear, between 1739 and 1741, Spanish privateers reportedly seized 316 ships heading to or sailing from British American ports.<sup>35</sup> Many of these ships were manned by sailors of African descent or carried enslaved Africans below decks. Upon capture, ships were transported into Cuba's ports, and these individuals were usually sold or ransomed into slavery.<sup>36</sup>

Privateering records from the War of Jenkins' Ear and other eighteenth-century conflicts have yet to be assessed systematically, but as one remarkable memoir suggests, they likely contain further information about African arrivals. The account of Briton Hammon, an enslaved man from Massachusetts, is the first known slave narrative published in British North America. Hammon wrote of his experience of being captured at sea during the War of Jenkins' Ear and brought to Havana, where he was ransomed by the governor and held as a slave for nine years, between 1748 and 1757. Ultimately, he escaped the island of Cuba and returned to Boston to tell and even publish his tale, but other men with similar fates remained on the island and became a permanent part of Cuba's population of African descent.<sup>37</sup> Hammon's narrative illuminates the kinds of circulations through the interlocking worlds of contraband, privateering, and slave trading that could bring a North American-born man of African descent into Cuban slavery. As his story indicates, it is important to look widely for sources

about the many ways people of African descent arrived on the island of Cuba, within and beyond the confines of slave traders' and merchants' account books.<sup>38</sup>

Maritime marronage presented another route of arrival for Africans and people of African descent in Cuba. Like privateering, this mode of arrival is not normally taken into account when assessing the origins of Cuba's population of African descent. Instead, the emphasis is usually exclusively on the slave trade. And yet across the eighteenth century, as many as several hundred people of African descent arrived from non-Hispanic colonies in boats under their own control. This Spanish policy of granting asylum to slaves who fled rival Protestant colonies was another outgrowth of increasing imperial competition in the Greater Caribbean region that evolved during the eighteenth century. Through the practice of maritime marronage, enslaved Africans in Jamaica stole small sea craft and escaped to Cuba, where they claimed the desire to convert to Catholicism in return for their freedom. Some of these individuals were manumitted upon their arrival in Cuba, according to royal proclamation, but others were captured or made royal slaves. Although their numbers were not large, they too form part of the sector of Cuba's population of African descent with significant experience in the American colonies of Spain's rivals. Some individuals had only spent a few months in such locations, but given the knowledge required to make these voyages, it seems likely that many others had lived there for a lifetime.<sup>39</sup>

Through these various routes of arrival, eighteenth-century Cuba received more Africans before its sugar boom than we have yet to take fully into account. Slave owners in Cuba exploited the presence of subjects of their Crown's European rivals to purchase the enslaved Africans they desired to populate their island and grow and develop the economy. The ruptures and dislocations of wartime also led to interimperial slave trading and the circulation of more people of African descent into Cuba. These men, women, and children intermingled with preexisting communities of African descent on the island and together laid down the foundations of nineteenth-century society and culture. They also played a variety of roles in Cuba's eighteenth-century economy, which was larger, more productive, and more interdependent with the Atlantic system than an earlier generation of scholars thought. The next portion of this chapter will consider the impacts in social and cultural terms, followed by political and economic ones, both on and off the island.

### Social and Cultural Geographies

A greater knowledge of both the numbers and routes of African arrival in pre-sugar-boom Cuba alters our understanding of the demographics and geographies of Cuba's population of African descent. Taking into account the contours of the routes of African arrival in Cuba leads us to think differently about the social and cultural origins of Cuba's population of African descent in the eighteenth century. To understand this population requires complicating our notion of what "creolization" looked like. Cuba's population of African descent included people born in Africa, Cuba, and other areas of the Americas, where they had exposure to a variety of European and African cultures in diaspora. At the same time, Cuba's African population in the eighteenth century also had exceptionally diverse origins in Africa, after three centuries of a slave trade that at various times had brought people from multiple regions of West, West Central, and Southeast Africa. Evidence suggests that the island's supposed "re-Africanization" (as discussed in broad demographic terms in this book's first chapter) likely began prior to the 1780s (as this chapter argues). From social and cultural standpoints, African cultures maintained a vibrant life in urban centers such as Havana throughout the eighteenth century, even when the direct transatlantic slave trade from Africa to Cuba was weak or nonexistent.<sup>40</sup>

Thus far, research into Cuba's population of African descent has focused on periods before 1640 and especially on the years after 1789. Although very few slave ships are presently known to have arrived in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Cuba, Alejandro de la Fuente identified forty-one distinct nations among the ethnic labels used to describe a selection of 1,456 Africans listed in notarial protocols and parish registers.<sup>41</sup> Most scholarship on the slave trade to Cuba, which picks up with the sugar boom in the 1790s, describes a similarly striking variety of African peoples and cultures.<sup>42</sup> Whereas Fuente's survey drew on local sources, Oscar Grandío Moráquez used slave ship voyage data to identify forty-four different African ports that sent an estimated 225,000 captives to Cuba's slave market between 1790 and 1865.<sup>43</sup> If populations of African descent in the Spanish Americas as a whole became more creolized and less directly connected to Africa during the intervening period, this played out in different fashions in different regions, as noted in chapter 1. A drop-off in the transatlantic slave trade by no means indicates that slavery, slave trafficking, or African cultures lost their local salience in Cuba.<sup>44</sup>

A variety of archival sources beyond those documenting commercial aspects of the trade confirm the significant presence of African peoples in Cuba during the decades leading up to 1789. African languages, for instance, were clearly spoken in eighteenth-century Cuba. In the 1770s, the commander supervising royal slaves in the maintenance and construction of Havana's fortifications found it necessary to employ an interpreter identified as "a native of Guinea."<sup>45</sup> African vocabularies also continued to inflect Cuban Spanish. One of the first descriptions of the variety of Spanish spoken in Cuba, written in 1795 by a creole friar named José María Peñalver, refers not only to Africanized *castellano* (Castilian language) spoken by blacks in Cuba but also African words that had been incorporated into Cuba's Spanish and were commonly used by whites—such as "*funche*" (cornmeal porridge), "*fufú*" (mashed plantains), and "*quimbombó*" (okra). Peñalver included these words along with Amerindian terms such as "*cacao*" (cacao), "*hamaca*" (hammock), and "*plátano*" (plantain) in order to make a case for the necessity of compiling a provincial dictionary reflective of the Spanish spoken on the island, which was shaped by multiple Amerindian and African influences over the previous three centuries.<sup>46</sup>

Other contemporary observers confirm this sense of the deep imprint of African cultures on eighteenth-century Cuba. Writing in 1757, the creole lawyer Nicolás de Ribera described *bozales* (Africans) in Cuba as belonging to fifteen or twenty different nations, hailing from zones of origin that ranged widely across West and West Central Africa.<sup>47</sup> Despite his status as an elite man of Spanish descent who spent the final years of his life at the court in Spain, Ribera was clearly aware of the diverse origins of Cuba's African population. Further confirming the visibility and variety of African cultures and languages in Havana, in 1755, the bishop of Cuba recorded the presence in Havana of twenty-one *cabildos de nación*, or mutual aid societies, affiliated with particular African nations. According to Bishop Morell's account, Havana's twenty-one *cabildos* in 1755 were associated with ten different African nations: *carabalí* (5), *mina* (3), *lucumí* (2), *arará* (2), *congo* (2), *mondongo* (2), *gangá* (2), *mandingo* (1), *luango* (1), and *popó* (1).<sup>48</sup>

These sources describing African cultural institutions in Havana loosely correspond to what we know about ports of slave embarkation in Africa at the time. While we cannot take these numbers of *cabildos* of each African nation as proportional to the percentage of the population of each group, they do reflect the likely prominence of *carabalí* in Havana's eighteenth-century population of African descent. Though individuals identified as

“congos” (from West Central Africa) predominated over the entire course of the trade,<sup>49</sup> the presence of five *carabalí* *cabildos* in Havana at midcentury is not surprising. The British slave traders from Bristol and Liverpool who dominated the trade to Cuba in the eighteenth century had a large stake in the transatlantic traffic from the port of Calabar, or the Cross Rivers region of present-day Nigeria.<sup>50</sup> Notarial and baptismal records from Havana confirm the prominence of individuals belonging to these African nations in Cuba at the time, as well as many others.<sup>51</sup>

As noted above, local sources also indicate that Cuba’s African and African-descended population was more connected to other sites in the eighteenth-century Americas than we may have thought. As a result of the routes of the slave trade to Cuba during this era, individuals disembarked there were more likely than at later moments to be either creoles or people with some experience, connections, or cultural knowledge acquired in regions of the Americas controlled by non-Hispanic powers. Testifying to the cosmopolitan, multilingual nature of the African diaspora in eighteenth-century Cuba, individuals identified as “negros franceses” and “negros ingleses” are prevalent in archival sources from the era. Hammon’s extraordinary narrative gives a sense of how seamlessly these individuals were potentially able to integrate themselves into Cuba’s diversified labor market. He describes living “very well” for a time, hiring himself out for jobs in Havana’s bustling urban economy.<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to speculate about the way that creoles like Hammon were able to leverage their skills and experience acquired in other American societies, thus enjoying better prospects than enslaved Africans who were newly arrived in the Americas.

Individuals arriving in Cuba through circuits of privateering or maritime marronage were likely to be creoles or have significant life experience in a non-Hispanic colony. But those who came through the circuits of the slave trade may also have had significant exposure to life elsewhere in the Americas. In his study of Jamaica as a transit hub for the eighteenth-century intercolonial slave trade, Gregory E. O’Malley has shown how slave ships arriving from Africa for the South Sea Company regularly stopped off in Kingston for several months before continuing on with their human cargo designated for the *asiento* trade to Spanish America. While such a short stopover might not have provided much of an introduction to Jamaica’s culture and society, other enslaved Africans who had been in Kingston longer were slipped into the holds of these slave ships in port to replace those who had died in transit or were deemed not healthy enough for sale.<sup>53</sup> In addition, those individuals

who arrived in Cuba through smuggling routes had often gone through an extended convalescence in Jamaica, in order to recover from the Middle Passage; some were potentially being sold after having lived in Jamaica for part or all of their lives. Smugglers on the south coast of Cuba, underserved by the island's *asiento* trades, often proved eager to purchase these men, women, and children arriving not so directly from Africa.

Historians of Africa have pointed out that processes of creolization among enslaved Africans in the Americas began not during transatlantic voyages but in Africa; for example, during journeys captives made to the coast before boarding slave ships, or in coastal barracoons, and in some regions perhaps even before they were enslaved.<sup>54</sup> As we get a better sense of the extended journeys of Africans in the Americas, sometimes lasting more than a generation, we can see how similar processes took place after the initial transatlantic passage and before arrival in destinations such as Cuba. Cultural exchange and much debated processes of creolization occurred not only on journeys *to* the Americas but also on extended passages *between* American societies.

Tellingly, ethnic labels used to refer to people of African descent in Cuba reflect the interaction of African and colonial European cultural markers. In his classic study *Los negros esclavos*, Fernando Ortiz lists among the ethnic labels applied to enslaved and free blacks in Cuba "*ingré*." By way of explanation, he notes that "los carabali ingré" formed a *cabildo de nación* in Havana, and he speculates that the label derived from "caravalí inglés" (English Caravalí).<sup>55</sup> Reflecting a similar pattern, a 1767 inventory of the enslaved Africans on two Jesuit sugar plantations outside Havana used such ethnic labels as "lucumi martinica" and "carabali martinica" (meaning, *lucumí* and *carabalí* from the French island of Martinique), as well as "zape de antigua" and "mina de antigua" (meaning individuals associated with or embarked on slave ships in Sierra Leone [*zape*] and the Gold Coast [*mina*] who had also lived in the British colony of Antigua).<sup>56</sup> In this case, imperial warfare had served as the conduit bringing these people to Cuba. The Jesuit priest Thomas Butler had purchased these enslaved individuals from British occupying forces in 1763, during their short rule over Havana. Butler bought them at a discount from the British commander Lord Albemarle, who had purchased them in Antigua and British-occupied Martinique in order to assist the expeditionary forces that invaded Havana. However, even five years later, they were being identified by crosshatched labels, reflecting the interaction between African and American identifiers and experiences.

Though more suggestive than comprehensive, such evidence demonstrates the multilingual, hybridized, and interconnected nature of the Americas' African diaspora. If Cuba's direct connections to Africa were stronger during the very late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a much larger percentage of African arrivals in Cuba during the eighteenth century came ashore with life experience and cultural knowledge from other zones of the Americas, in addition to African cultures and languages. To better understand their experiences, we need to interpolate transatlantic and intra-American journeys. Coming to terms with this lived reality gives us a more accurate view of Cuba's cultural DNA as well as of the people who populated the island and developed its economy before the sugar boom. Knowing that neighboring populations of African descent were networked with each other also changes how we think about responses of people of African descent in Cuba to major events that occurred in the eighteenth-century Caribbean. News of the maroon wars in Jamaica or the revolution in Saint-Domingue arrived in communities that had experience of and connections to these neighboring islands.<sup>57</sup> A negro inglés in Havana or a lucumí francés in Santiago de Cuba could have had a particularly well-informed and/or personal reaction to such events. Further research and imagination are needed to reconstruct this distinctive eighteenth-century world.

### Political and Economic Landscapes

A fuller engagement with the complexity of slave routes into eighteenth-century Cuba provides new understandings of both the life histories of the people traded as slaves and the commercial relationships of those who purchased them. To a certain extent, Africans and African-descended peoples' networks mirrored those of the men of commerce who bought and sold them. Indeed, Cuba's first, most powerful relations with foreign colonies and especially the Anglo-American system were driven by the island's ongoing demand for enslaved Africans. The slave trade became a mechanism through which elites in Cuba—not exclusively but especially elites—brokered relations with other parts of the Americas, a sign of the fracturing of the island's most powerful political and economic relations. Effectively, Cuba's merchants and landholders were creating free trade through the avenues of the slave trade.

The slave trade to eighteenth-century Cuba provided an engine that built trade networks and drove development both on and off the island throughout a broader Atlantic system. Spain's overseas territories never constituted a closed imperial system, but the dynamic of its foreign trade changed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The volume of contraband and transimperial trade intensified with the French and especially British acquisition of the *asiento* and the growing presence of the British merchants at Jamaica, French at Saint-Domingue, Dutch at Curaçao and Saint Eustatius, and Danish at Saint Thomas, Saint John, and Saint Croix. The *asiento* and contraband trade in slaves enabled whites in Cuba to open up a flow of commodities and enslaved Africans with foreign merchants despite the *de jure* trade monopolies of Spanish colonialism. These trading relationships with non-Hispanic territories sustained the island's economic and demographic growth across the century. The *asientos* provided an additional means to boost Cuban exports and to enable the island's producers to participate in a broader and more lucrative economic system, beyond the legal strictures of Spanish colonialism.

Together the history of undercounting African arrivals in Cuba during this period and the assumption that slaves arrived either directly from Africa or not at all have contributed to the mischaracterization of the size and strength of Cuba's economy and its relationship with the Atlantic system. The diversified economy of eighteenth-century Cuba circulated tobacco, hides, lumber, sugar, and livestock throughout the Atlantic world. Its capital city of Havana was the third-most populous in the Americas—fifty thousand at midcentury—and could not feed itself or find sufficient labor for its industries without this foreign trade.<sup>58</sup> Havana's busy service economy and naval shipyard drew in supplies and personnel, and its large silver reserves made commerce there especially attractive. Indeed, eighteenth-century Cuba's economic growth and military strength would not have been possible without a large population of African descent, arriving on the island by a variety of means and working in a range of industries. Cuba's boom of sugar and slavery in the 1790s could not have occurred without a preexisting slave-powered economy that produced sufficient capital to invest in enslaved Africans, land, and machinery.<sup>59</sup>

The *asiento* system facilitated Cuba's multifaceted trade with foreign colonies. The French and British *asientos* provided the means for the circulation of goods produced in Cuba into foreign markets. These patterns of transimperial trade were long-standing before Spain began taking piecemeal steps



to liberalize the trade in goods and persons in the 1760s and the decades that followed, and they allowed for the economic growth that facilitated Cuba's sugar boom. During the period of the French *asiento* (1701–1713), La Compagnie Royale de Guinée often traded enslaved Africans in Cuba for tobacco, and the metropolitan market in Paris enjoyed access to popular “Havana snuff” and Cuban tobacco leaf. The British South Sea Company factors, in turn, purchased tobacco and hides, which they exported from the island to Jamaica, London, Amsterdam, and Hamburg. Shortly before the War of Jenkins' Ear, they sent a large shipment of Havana snuff to agents in Amsterdam who sold it all at public auction. So much Havana snuff was making its way through various routes off the island and into northern European markets that the price in Amsterdam had dropped almost by half.<sup>60</sup> In fact, the South Sea Company worried that the quantity of contraband trade going on alongside the trade in slaves in Havana was so great as to invoke the Spanish monarch's ire at the violation of the trade monopoly and could endanger the entire agreement with the rest of Spanish America.<sup>61</sup>

Residents of Cuba—including smugglers, Royal Havana Company agents, and large landholders—sailed directly to nearby non-Hispanic colonies themselves to purchase the workers, goods, and provisions they needed. Hector Feliciano Ramos's study of British contraband in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico from 1748 to 1778 found that the phenomenon of Spanish ships sailing directly into British American ports to transact openly in contraband was more common from Cuba than any other part of Spanish America.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in Governor Edward Trelawny's report on the state of the island of Jamaica for 1752, he commented that Spaniards from Cuba “of various appearances” brought large amounts of silver with them to trade, and that they consumed in total an estimated £100,000 worth of manufactures and salt provisions. An anonymous report to the Spanish Crown from 1763 pointed out that it was not hard to find nineteen or twenty ships from Cuba docked in Kingston at any given time.<sup>63</sup>

An added incentive for these intra-American slave trading voyages for residents of Cuba was that trade with British America shielded capital accumulation from Spanish taxation and enforcement. Across the eighteenth century, Havana elites used the *asiento* factors, as well as trade contacts they made in Kingston, to remit silver and jewels back to Spain, often via London. Doing so had the dual benefit of avoiding the royal *quinto* tax and concealing from Spanish authorities the earnings they were making in extralegal regional trade.<sup>64</sup> Networks forged through the slave trade enriched both

residents of the Spanish Caribbean and the colonial projects of their British and British American neighbors in ways that are untraceable in Spanish archives.

The slave trade was an especially powerful bond not only cementing relations between Cuba and Jamaica but also between Cuba and British North America. The *asiento* included a provision for the trade in flour, which could be imported into Cuba from other regions of the Americas on vessels that were not necessarily slave ships. Through this concession, merchants in Cuba used the *asiento* to build trade networks with North American cities that possessed large flourmills, such as New York and Philadelphia. The 1760s and 1770s have often been viewed as the first moments that British North Americans legally entered into trade with Cuba,<sup>65</sup> but Anglo-American merchants had previously contracted with the South Sea Company and the Royal Havana Company to sail to Cuba with barrels of flour. It is no accident that during the American Revolution, Cuba provided a crucial link between Spain and the thirteen colonies, and a Cuban slave trader named Juan de Miralles served as the first Spanish spy and later emissary to the Continental Congress. The dynamics of the slave trade and the associated flour trade meant that Cuba's most prominent slave trader at the time already had contacts in Philadelphia when he first reached the city in 1778. The war he witnessed firsthand would deepen trade relations between the thirteen colonies and Cuba that had first been established in the context of the slave trade.<sup>66</sup>

After the exit of the United States from the British Empire, Cuba began to take the place of Britain's West Indian colonies as a regional market for North American goods. As early as the summer of 1789, a group of wealthy Havana vecinos petitioned Captain General Salvador José de Muro, Marquis of Someruelos, for permission to send their children to the United States to study languages and science.<sup>67</sup> While it is important not to telescope forward these early relationships between the island's elite and the new nation to their north, this evidence suggests that these relationships originated with the slave trade, rather than with the sugar economy. Given this prior history, the opening of the slave trade to Cuba that occurred in 1789 might be viewed more accurately as an expansion of long-standing practices, rather than as an entirely new departure from them. During the first ten years of the free trade in slaves, US ships predominated among non-Hispanic slave ships arriving in Cuba, followed by British ones. Both Spanish/Cuban and US ships carried relatively small numbers of enslaved Africans per vessel, in a redistributive, often intra-Caribbean trade that was mixed with a trade in

foodstuffs and other kinds of commerce.<sup>68</sup> This development was not a rupture with prior practices but the rendering as legal—and consequently more legible in Cuban archives—of prior trading routes and their expansion. The proclamation of free trade in slaves in 1789 made the slave trade the first and only “free trade” permitted in Spanish Empire. But long before then, merchants and elites in Cuba had exploited the slave trade and the openings around it for multiple types of direct commerce, spurring economic growth and interdependence throughout the region.

### Conclusion

The routes of the slave trade to Cuba took very different shapes and forms at different moments in the island’s past. These variations produced a constantly evolving community of African descent and a fluid network of connections between different nodes in the Atlantic system. Though new configurations in the nineteenth century may have statistically overwhelmed those that came before them, those prior generations were important bedrocks of the society and economy that made later iterations possible. To a certain extent, the historiographical focus thus far on nineteenth-century Cuba may have obscured our understanding of earlier eras, but in truth, there is still so much more we need to know about all eras, from the earliest sixteenth-century voyages through the clandestine slave trade into the 1860s.<sup>69</sup>

Because the trade so often shifted course, its study requires a flexible strategy to adapt to the particularities of distinct time periods and the cooperation of a range of experts working in numerous archives on a variety of records. Within shipping records and other sources of quantitative data about the slave trade, we can also find qualitative evidence about the experiences of the enslaved and the impacts of this commerce on the development of individual colonies and broader Atlantic networks.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, descriptive sources from surprising archives can also provide insight into the nature of the trade. As we keep striving to improve our understanding of the routes of African arrival in the Americas, it is necessary to continue putting diverse types of sources into conversation with one another.

As I have argued, Cuba’s African diaspora of the eighteenth century unfolded both African and American journeys, knowledges, languages, and experiences. This understanding should potentially reshape how we think

about Africans and people of African descent in Cuba and their responses to hemispheric events.<sup>71</sup> In addition, it should also push us to reconsider some of our narratives of increasing communication, exchange, and interconnection in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Cuba's first, most powerful relations with non-Hispanic colonies—and especially with the Anglo-American system—were driven by the island's insatiable demand for enslaved Africans. Though more research remains to be done, it is already evident that the routes through which individuals traveled in the Americas were more complex and varied than we once thought. This shared history of slave trading is more than just transatlantic. It also crisscrossed national, hemispheric, and imperial units, and it will require cooperation between scholars of many different regions to understand the broadest scope of its implications and meanings.

### Notes

I would like to thank David Wheat and Alex Borucki for their very helpful comments on this piece, as well as David Eltis and Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez for sharing their findings.

1. See table 8.1, this volume. Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez's estimate of 108,000 Africans arriving in Cuba between 1701 and 1790 combines transatlantic and intra-American slave trading. Prior estimates have been piecemeal and often disagree with each other: Alexander von Humboldt estimated the importation of "probably 60,000" Africans between 1521 and 1763 and 24,875 between 1763 and 1790, for a total of 84,875 over all the centuries before 1790; see Alexander von Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba* (2001), 138. Hubert H. S. Aimes and José Antonio Saco followed Humboldt's figure of 60,000 arrivals before 1763 but instead cite 41,604 for the period 1763 to 1789. To come up with this number for the period 1763 to 1789, von Humboldt used a faulty calculation that the British brought 10,700 enslaved Africans in 1762–1763, during the British occupation of Havana; see José Antonio Saco, *Colección de papeles científicos*, 1:164; and Hubert H. S. Aimes, *History of Slavery in Cuba*, 36–37. Other historians have added more contraband arrivals, but none have raised the totals dramatically or attempted a comprehensive review.
2. This argument has been made in two recent books about seventeenth-century Spanish America: Sherwin K. Bryant, *Rivers of Gold*; and David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*.
3. Historians disagree about the timing of the sugar boom in Cuba, but the most recent scholarship now points to multiple and overlapping origins, both

temporally and geographically. Most agree that the 1790s marked the most dramatic takeoff. See José Antonio Piqueras, *Las Antillas*; Mercedes García Rodríguez, *La aventura de fundar ingenios*; Mercedes García Rodríguez, *Entre haciendas y plantaciones*; Pablo Tornero Tinajero, *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales*; and Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio*. Authors who have argued for the earlier origins of Cuba's sugar boom, in the 1740s and 1750s, include Franklin W. Knight (*Slave Society in Cuba* and "Origins of Wealth and the Sugar Revolution in Cuba") and John Robert McNeill (*Atlantic Empires of France and Spain*).

4. As Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez note in this volume, less than 20 percent of enslaved people arriving in Cuba between 1701 and 1790 sailed directly from Africa (see table 8.1).
5. Paul Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*.
6. For earlier work that makes a similar argument, see Barbara L. Solow, "Introduction" and "Slavery and Colonialism" in *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, 1–42.
7. The team of researchers Grupo de Estudios de Esclavitud en Cuba, directed by María del Carmen Barcia and working at the Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), has found evidence of an illegal slave disembarkation in Cuba from as late as 1863. See María del Carmen Barcia, "Los años sesenta."
8. See chapter 9 by Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, table 9.2.
9. See the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (hereafter TSTD), <http://www.slavevoyages.org>, estimates for arrivals in Cuba, 1800–1866.
10. See the introduction and chapters 1 and 8 of this volume.
11. For a study that covers the entire chronology of the trade to Cuba, see José Luciano Franco, *Comercio clandestino de negros*. For studies that focus on the period beginning with the declaration of free trade in slaves in 1789, see Herbert S. Klein, "North American Competition"; Laird W. Bergad, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *Cuban Slave Market*; José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "Brazos para el azúcar," 445–67; and José Luis Belmonte Postigo, *Ser esclavo en Santiago*, 119–84.
12. Due to the scarcity of research on the period before 1763, even distinguished scholars of Cuba have shared the assumption that Havana at mid-eighteenth century was "under-populated," "sluggish," and "closed in on itself and closed out of the world." Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba*, 25, 27, 38–48; Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 30; and Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba*, 3.
13. See chapter 1 of this volume, and the Intra-American Slave Trade Database project directed by Alex Borucki and Gregory E. O'Malley, which received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
14. TSTD estimates for arrivals in Cuba, 1511–1789. Over the period 1763–1789, competing figures for slaves imports into Cuba have been proposed, but they range from the 30,874 of von Humboldt (also used by Aimes) to the more than

- fifty thousand cited by Levi Marrero and Francisco Pérez Guzman. See Juan Bosco Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 158.
15. Port tax records have been consulted for the period 1600–1650; see Isabelo Macias Dominguez, *Cuba en la primera mitad*, 517–629.
  16. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, “Atlantic History and the Slave Trade,” 443–44; Wim Klooster, “Curaçao and the Caribbean Transit Trade,” 203–18; and Gregory E. O’Malley, *Final Passages*, 351–81.
  17. Mercedes García Rodríguez, “El monto de la trata.” On the South Sea Company asiento, see Mercedes García Rodríguez, *Los ingleses en el tráfico e introducción de esclavos*; Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit*, 197–234; O’Malley, *Final Passages*, 219–65; Abigail L. Swingen, *Competing Visions of Empire*, 172–95; and Adrian Finucane, *Temptations of Trade*.
  18. *Real cédula de erección de la Compañía de Filipinas*. On the Compañía Gaditana, see Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Compañía Gaditana de Negros*. Baker and Dawson were also selling enslaved Africans to Venezuela and the Río de la Plata under different contracts. See Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers*.
  19. Francisco de Arango y Parreño, “Discurso sobre la agricultura de La Habana,” 147, 149, 160.
  20. The granting of private asientos was a long-standing practice sanctioned by the Crown in 1751. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Santo Domingo (SD) 2209, Cádiz, December 11, 1753, Julián de Arriaga to the Marqués de la Ensenada; and Elena A. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, chapter 2.
  21. Montserrat Gárate Ojanguren, *Comercio ultramarino y la ilustración*.
  22. Slave importations in the late colonial Spanish Empire were counted not by individual enslaved persons, but by what were called “piezas de indias,” or “pieces of the Indies.” According to this system, a person between the ages of sixteen or eighteen and thirty-five equaled one pieza, two youths between the ages of twelve or fourteen and sixteen or eighteen equaled one pieza, and three children between the ages of six and twelve or fourteen were counted together as two piezas. These calculations mattered for taxation and pricing, and they varied according to gender and physical condition of the enslaved person. Enrique López Mesa, “La trata negrera.” For analysis of this term, see Pablo F. Gómez, *Experiential Caribbean*.
  23. AGI-SD 2208, Madrid, December 31, 1740, “La Junta formada sobre arvitrios en Indias para el actual armamento”; Madrid, March 15, 1741, “Memorial aprobado en 29 marzo de 1741, en Retiro, por Joseph de la Quintana, en lo qual cedió por Don Martín de Ulibarrí y Gamboa.”
  24. Raised to 2,400 piezas. AGI-Ultramar 986. See also AGI-SD 2209B, por vía reservada.
  25. The 3,508 Africans were counted as 2,813  $\frac{2}{3}$  piezas and the 4,484 Africans as around 3,600 piezas.

26. Though Gregory E. O'Malley has found a certain degree of drop-off in Jamaica's slave trading to Spanish America during the War of Jenkins' Ear, other sources indicate an increase in interisland slave trading. The National Archive at Kew (hereafter TNA), Colonial Office papers (CO) 137.25, f. 87, "Jamaica: Account of Negroes Imported and Exported between the 1st day of July 1739 and 1 July 1749." The total for this period is cited as 69,140 enslaved Africans, 54,463 of whom were sold to the island's planters and 14,677 reexported after duties were paid in Jamaica. For the years 1743–1747, 36,731 Africans were brought into Jamaica, with 27,816 remaining and 8,915 finding themselves put to sea again to be sold elsewhere. O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 296, 361, 364.
27. AGI-Ultramar 986, no. 2, "Compañía de La Havana, sobre piezas de negros que se han introducido." Other company records affirm that the Royal Havana Company brought in more enslaved Africans, even just in the first ten years, than the South Sea Company asiento. AGI-Ultramar 986, no. 2, "Resumen de negros introducidos en la Habana desde 1741–1751."
28. Hugh Thomas argues that over the entire period from 1740 to 1760, only five thousand slaves were brought into Havana legally, with at most another five thousand illegally; see Hugh Thomas, *Cuba*, 31–51. That seems unlikely given the figures for just 1743–1747. Thomas's source is likely Hubert H. S. Aimes, who has the same number, citing José Antonio Saco. See Aimes, *History of Slavery in Cuba*, 23. The only manuscript source I have found for this number is Biblioteca Nacional Madrid, Mss. 14,613/23, which states that the Royal Havana Company brought in 4,986 slaves. However, this document is dated July 20, 1811. It in turn mentions another unnamed historian as the source of the number, which does not match company records.
29. The Royal Havana Company made the considerable profit of 112,242 pesos from the trade. López Mesa, "La trata negrera," 153.
30. AGI-SD 2018, Ignacio de Murgia, in Amores, *Cuba en la época de Ezpeleta*, 188–89. On contraband slave trading in Cuba, see Franco, *Comercio clandestino de esclavos*.
31. López Mesa, "La trata negrera," 148–58.
32. For "indultos de negros de ilícita introducción," see, for example, AGI-SD 2209. They were often issued as a sign of good faith upon the swearing in of a new governor. For indultos, see also ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil.
33. Historians have discussed these practices in the Río de la Plata and New Spain. See Fabrício Prado, *Edge of Empire*; and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, *Urban Slavery in Colonial Mexico*.
34. For the most thorough analysis of slave sales in the notarial protocols in the ANC during the British occupation of Havana, see Enrique López Mesa, "Acerca de la introducción de esclavos." López Mesa estimates 3,200 enslaved Africans sold, which I have rounded up slightly here. His estimate includes those enslaved Africans sold by the British agent Kennion and others sold

- clandestinely by members of the expedition or other merchants. Other scholars of Cuban slavery who agree with Enrique López Mesa's estimate include Tornero Tinajero, *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales*, 35. On the controversy around slave sales in occupied Havana, see Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, chapter 4.
35. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, chapter 2; and Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic Empires*, 32. Between 1739 and 1741, Spanish privateers seized 329 British merchant ships. *A List of Merchant Ships Taken by the Spaniards* [n.p., 1742]; O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 250, 261. On an earlier era of Spanish corsairs based in Cuba, see Francisco Castillo Meléndez, *La defensa de la isla de Cuba*.
  36. Franco, *Comercio clandestino de esclavos*, 40.
  37. ANC, Asuntos Políticos, Orden 100.
  38. Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings*.
  39. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*; Linda M. Rupert, "Marronage, Manumission, and Maritime Trade"; and José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "No siendo lo mismo." See also Mark Lentz, "Black Belizeans and Fugitive Mayas." For a classic study of this dynamic, see Jane G. Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*.
  40. Here I borrow the argument and language of the following: Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury, "Introduction"; and James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa*, 116.
  41. While these labels are famously inexact, applied to individuals by slave traders and scribes, the great variety of African peoples identified suggests a strong demographic presence and varied cultural origins of African peoples in early colonial Cuba. Alejandro de la Fuente, "Denominaciones étnicas." In his study of the baptismal registers of Havana 1590–1600, David Wheat identified the use of fifteen different African ethnic labels associated with regions spanning from Upper Guinea to West Central Africa. Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, appendix 4, 295.
  42. Fernando Ortiz, *Los negros esclavos*; Franco, *Comercio clandestino de esclavos*; Belmonte Postigo, *Ser esclavo en Santiago de Cuba*; Oscar Grandío Moráquez, "African Origins of Slaves Arriving in Cuba," 176–201; and Bergad, Iglesias García, and Carmen Barcia, *Cuban Slave Market*.
  43. Grandío Moráquez, "African Origins of Slaves Arriving in Cuba," 188.
  44. See Tatiana Seijas and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, "Persistence of the Slave Market."
  45. AGI-Contratación 5523, no. 2, f. 136r. See also Francisco Pérez Guzmán, "Modo de vida de esclavos"; and Evelyn Powell Jennings, "War as the 'Forcing House of Change.'"
  46. Fray José María Peñalver, "Memoria que promueve la edición de un Diccionario provincial," 37.
  47. Nicolás de Ribera, *Descripción de la isla de Cuba*, 102.
  48. AGI-SD 515, no. 51, Havana, December 6, 1755.



49. Grandío Moráquez, "African Origins of Slaves Arriving in Cuba," 184.
50. Of the sixty-three transatlantic slave trading voyages to Cuba recorded in TSTD for the period 1700–1788, fifty-three were made by British slave traders, accounting for 87 percent of disembarked African slaves in Cuba during that period.
51. Thousands of baptismal, marriage, and burial records of Africans and people of African descent in eighteenth-century Havana and Matanzas can be consulted at the Slave Societies Digital Archive ([www.slavesocieties.org](http://www.slavesocieties.org)).
52. Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings*, 10.
53. O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 229–42.
54. See, for example, Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles*. For a critique of "creolization" and "transculturation" models as largely ignoring African histories altogether, see Paul E. Lovejoy, "Identifying Enslaved Africans in the African Diaspora."
55. Ortiz, *Los negros esclavos*, 50.
56. AGI-Cuba 1098, Jesuit inventory.
57. On the outward reverberations of the news of the Haitian Revolution, see Julius S. Scott, *Common Wind*; Julius S. Scott, "Negroes in Foreign Bottoms"; Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; and Ada Ferrer, "Speaking of Haiti," 223–47.
58. Cuba's first census was not conducted until 1774, so there are competing estimates for the city's population at mid-eighteenth century. For this estimate, which was performed by Bishop Morell in 1754–1757 and includes the *extramuros* (outside city wall) neighborhoods of Guadalupe, Regla, and Jesús del Monte, see AGI-SD 534, La visita del Obispo Morell, f. 55r–56r; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba*, 47–48. See also estimates of forty to fifty thousand in McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain*, 35–39; and AGI-SD 1587, Declaración de Juan Ignacio de Madariaga, April 14, 1763.
59. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, chapter 2; and Allan J. Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century."
60. For the export of snuff, see TNA CO 111.200, Campbell vs. Orts, Exhibit E, Muilman and Sons to John Bland Jr., Amsterdam, September 14, 1764; William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan (hereafter CL), Shelburne Papers, vol. 43, f. 275; and Arthur S. Aiton, "Asiento Treaty as Reflected in the Papers of Lord Shelburne," 173. On Cuba's tobacco industry at this time, see Enrique López Mesa, *Tabaco, mito y esclavos*.
61. CL, Shelburne Papers, vol. 43, ff. 279–83. See also Finucane, *Temptations of Trade*.
62. Hector R. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés*, 166.
63. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés*, 174; and Archivo General de Simancas, Hacienda 2342, Intendencia de la Habana, 1764–1799.
64. British sources from the 1760s and 1770s refer to this practice of remittances as established and ongoing. BL Add. Mss. 38,339, ff. 225–27, in Allan Christelow,

- “Contraband Trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main,” 331; TNA CO 137.68, Jamaica, April 11, 1773, Tract on the Spanish Trade, in a letter from Lieutenant Governor Dallings; CL, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, Memorandum on the Spanish Trade, f. 12–18; and Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés*, 204.
65. James A. Lewis, “Nueva España y los esfuerzos.” For links between Cuba and, in particular, Philadelphia, forged through the flour trade in the 1760s and 1770s, see also Linda Salvucci, “Atlantic Intersections”; Sherry Johnson, “El Niño, Environmental Crisis, and the Emergence of Alternative Markets”; and Sherry Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba*.
66. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, chapter 6; Helen Matzke McCadden, “Juan de Miralles and the American Revolution”; Nikolaus Böttcher, “Juan de Miralles”; and María E. Rodríguez Vicente, “El comercio cubano y la guerra de emancipación norteamericana.”
67. AGI-SD 1157, ff. 368–71, 1799 Oct 3, “Consulta de consejo referente a la solicitud de varios padres sobre que sus hijos vayan a instruirse al N. de America.”
68. AGI-SD 2207; and Herbert S. Klein, “North American Competition.” See Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez’s analysis of Klein’s research and his overview of the complexities of the trade to Cuba in the 1790s in his chapter in this volume.
69. For the clandestine period of the trade in the nineteenth century, see the ongoing, collaborative project headed by Marial Iglesias Utset and Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez at Harvard University’s Hutchins Center. For earlier period of the slave trade to the Caribbean, see ongoing work by David Wheat and Marc Eagle, as well as their chapter in this volume.
70. For a reminder of the dangers of an excessive focus on quantification, see Stephanie Smallwood, “Politics of the Archive”; and Jennifer L. Morgan, “The Most Excruciating Torment.”
71. For useful works that examine this dynamic in Cuba during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*; Scott, *Common Wind*; Jane G. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 138–74; and Rebecca J. Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers*, 49–64.

## CHAPTER 11

# Early Spanish Antislavery and the Abolition of the Slave Trade to Spanish America

EMILY BERQUIST SOULE



‡ THE SPANISH FIRST IMPORTED BLACK SLAVES TO THEIR AMERICAN empire in the early decades of the sixteenth century, and African slaves were widely present in urban and rural areas throughout the colonial period, but in terms of imperial finance, slavery in the Spanish Atlantic was never as politically and economically significant as it was in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century. As the sugar economy boomed in the Spanish Caribbean, slave imports expanded exponentially, and profits from Spain's last American colonies became all the more essential to the increasingly imperiled finances of the Spanish Crown.<sup>1</sup> Yet nearby on the Spanish American mainland, the politics of slavery unfolded differently. The wars of independence in the 1810s and 1820s brought calls for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade as the new nations imagined how to effectively incorporate and control their racially heterogeneous populations. Starting with piecemeal legislation that gradually curtailed the import of additional slaves and introduced free womb laws, new nations from Chile to Bolivia implemented a gradual end to slavery that was finalized later in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

In Cuba and Puerto Rico, the opposite happened, and much of this had to do with geography. Cuba is about fifty miles from Haiti, where African slaves and their free descendants mounted a successful war against colonialism and

slavery from 1791 to 1804. As Ada Ferrer's *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* has shown, after slaves and free people of color destroyed Saint-Domingue's plantation infrastructure and French colonial slave owners fled in fear for their lives, Cuban planters found themselves conveniently positioned to fill the holes in the global sugar market. Profits from both sugar and coffee skyrocketed—as did the number of slaves imported.<sup>3</sup> Then, in 1807, Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula and unseated the Spanish king. With sovereignty at home in question, elites on the Spanish American mainland soon began to discuss the possibility of separating from the mother country. But in Cuba and Puerto Rico, the reaction was different—there, the Spanish American wars for independence engendered not rebellion from Spain but allegiance to it. Led by powerful slaveholding lobbyists like Francisco de Arango y Parreño, elites of the Spanish Caribbean fought bitterly to control the wealth generated by the economy of slavery. They feared that without the strong arm of Spanish colonial administration, it might be impossible to ensure sufficient supplies of slaves would arrive from Africa, and it could also become more difficult to control the slaves already on the islands. Therefore, while Chile, Venezuela, and the rest of continental Spanish America took slow and steady steps to abolish the trade and slavery itself, slavery became more entrenched in the Spanish Caribbean. Over five hundred thousand slaves were imported to Spain's last remaining American colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico from 1821 to 1867.<sup>4</sup> In Cuba, planters valued slavery so deeply that they even briefly contemplated annexation to the slaveholding states of the US South in order to protect their interests. Ultimately, this proved unnecessary, as Spain gave increasing financial assistance to its Caribbean colonies, so vigorously bolstering their economies that by 1870, Cuba generated no less than 40 percent of the cane sugar consumed around the world.<sup>5</sup> The slave plantations of the Spanish Caribbean continued to generate spectacular profits until the late nineteenth century, when a combination of activism by the Spanish Abolitionist Society (established 1865), slave rebellion, wars against Spanish colonialism, and gradual antislavery laws promulgated in Spain coalesced into the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico in 1873 and Cuba in 1886.<sup>6</sup> This is the most publicly recognized face of antislavery and abolition in the Spanish Empire—but it is not the only one.

In fact, the antislavery movement, the abolition of the slave trade, and the end of slavery itself are part of a deeper Hispanic historical tradition running throughout the colonial period on both sides of the Spanish Atlantic. In the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a select few religious men wrote publicly against the slave trade—and in one case, even slavery itself. Their works demonstrate the strange intimacy between Catholicism and antislavery in the Hispanic world, a relationship that was convoluted and contradictory but provided a unique venue to advocate on behalf of the slaves. While public antislavery discourse was effectively silenced for much of the eighteenth century, liberal intellectuals like Isidoro Antillón and José Blanco White renewed public debate about the legality of slavery and the slave trade in early nineteenth-century Spain. During the Napoleonic Wars, these questions moved into the popular political arena for the first time during the Spanish Cortes of 1810–1812, and abolitionist measures were even considered for inclusion in the Spanish constitution of 1812. Ultimately, none of these advances for slaves and their descendants moved beyond debate and discussion. The slave trade to Spanish America would only be outlawed after great international pressure and a resulting series of Spanish-British accords. But if we listen closely to the voices of antislavery in the Spanish Empire, we find a homegrown movement against the slave trade that had deep roots in Catholic belief and was fostered by antislavery and abolitionist advocates on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>7</sup> Although their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, taken together, they comprise a significant antislavery and abolitionist movement based on both sides of the Spanish Atlantic, one that drew inspiration from Catholic thought, Spanish political tradition, and the work of foreign abolitionists.

### The Catholic Roots of Antislavery in the Spanish Atlantic World

As one of the top slave-owning institutions in colonial Spanish America, the Spanish Catholic Church was deeply entangled in slavery, both on its many agricultural estates and in churches and other religious institutions where slaves served priests and nuns, maintained chapels, and were even given as gifts to members of the religious orders.<sup>8</sup> Clerics also received special permission to import and hold individual slaves for their personal service, which they did willingly and without comment. Such arrangements were not particular to the church's representatives in Spanish America—as late as the eighteenth century, popes traveled at sea with galley slaves.<sup>9</sup> But in the Spanish Empire, the church had little choice but to support the Crown's position on slavery. Even if the Catholic Church had wished to

speak out against the Atlantic slave trade—something that, as an institution, it failed to do until modern times—it would have been effectively impossible to do so in the Spanish Empire.<sup>10</sup> This was largely due to the special arrangement between the Catholic Church and Spanish Crown known as the “patronato real” (royal patronage), by which Rome granted the Spanish Crown an unprecedented degree of control over the church in Spanish America in return for promoting Catholicism around the world. The patronato real created an intermingled relationship of power sharing that characterized Spanish colonial rule—and meant that the church hierarchy had very little room to question imperial policies.<sup>11</sup> In terms of slavery and the slave trade, the stakes were especially high. Although fifteenth-century international treaties and papal accords had officially banned Spain from directly capturing slaves in Africa, the Spanish Crown nevertheless enjoyed multiple taxes and duties on slave imports that generated an important source of income from the estimated 2,072,000 slaves brought to Spanish America from 1520 to 1810 (the majority of whom were landed and taxed according to official protocol).<sup>12</sup>

Yet paradoxically, despite the church’s ideological allegiance to the Spanish monarchs and its deep involvement in slave labor, the earliest public critiques of slavery and the slave trade in colonial Spanish America came from within its cathedrals, churches, and palaces. In keeping with the special relationship between church and crown, most approached the matter obliquely, questioning the legality of particular aspects of the trade, or arguing that the capture and sale of slaves was illegal under certain circumstances. Nevertheless, these Catholic activists and thinkers were some of the very first to publicly speak out against the slave trade and slavery itself. In 1560, Alonso de Montúfar, archbishop of Mexico (1551–1572), wrote to King Felipe II to point out the moral paradox of granting freedom to indigenous Americans while enslaving black Africans. “We do not know what reason there is that the blacks would be slaves more than the Indians,” he questioned, “because they, according to what they say, receive the Holy Spirit and do not make war against the Christians.”<sup>13</sup> Two years later, Dominican friar Domingo de Soto argued that slaves’ forced conversions to Catholicism were invalid; therefore, the Spanish claim that enslavement benefited the souls of the Africans was also unsound.<sup>14</sup>

Dominican Tomás de Mercado also considered the legal parameters of slavery and the slave trade in *Suma de tratos y contratos* (1569), a study of trade and contracts in the Portuguese Empire. In a chapter dedicated to the

Portuguese slave trade in Cabo Verde, he decried certain aspects of the process of taking captives in Africa: employing “a thousand tricks,” he argued, robbery and rape among them, the Spanish roped the Africans into slavery before loading them onto dilapidated vessels, most of which had a “smell so bad it could kill you. . . . It is a marvel,” he concluded, that more than 20 percent of the newly enslaved survived the Middle Passage.<sup>15</sup> Mercado also warned that buyers who did not know the origins of their slaves risked mortal sin if they were to purchase individuals who had been illegally captured and sold—something that was, of course, very difficult to ascertain.<sup>16</sup> But in spite of these criticisms, “Mercado was . . . [ultimately] concerned with establishing what the moral grounds for enslavement might be,” as one scholar put it.<sup>17</sup> The Dominican argued that “to capture, or sell blacks, or whatever other people, is a legal business, and a right of people . . . and there are enough reasons and causes where one can be justly captured and sold.”<sup>18</sup> War captives and criminals, for instance, were legally eligible for enslavement. More disturbingly, Mercado also found it legal for parents to sell their own children into slavery: “Parents in their extreme necessity have the natural ability of selling their children for their help. Because the son is a thing that belongs to the father, and receives from him his being and life,” he concluded.<sup>19</sup> He finished his meditation on the legality of slavery with the convoluted admonition that “as with everything else, each one must consult his confessor.”<sup>20</sup>

However, the most widely recognized early Spanish American activist on behalf of African slaves is Alonso de Sandoval, a Spanish Jesuit who lived and worked in Cartagena from 1605 to 1652. Like Soto and Mercado, Sandoval never questioned the legality of slavery itself—instead, he concerned himself with exposing how Spanish Americans mistreated the bodies and the souls of African captives. He immortalized his efforts to ameliorate the despicable conditions that newly arrived slaves faced in his 1627 tract *De instauranda Aethiopum salute* (How to Restore the Salvation of the Blacks), which emphasized how to care for slaves after their arrival in America, as well as how to properly baptize and evangelize them.<sup>21</sup> Sandoval’s work has become an essential source for studying the seventeenth-century slave trade to Spanish America, but it never once advocates for the abolition of slavery or the slave trade. In fact, with the notable exception of Montúfar in 1560, none of these men ventured to critique the institutions of the slave traffic or slavery itself—they simply accepted it as an uncomfortable but necessary part of the social fabric of Spanish America.

These tentative early antislavery arguments had little recognizable effect, and slavery continued to expand in Spanish America. From 1641 to 1700, the transatlantic and inter-American slave trade brought approximately two hundred thousand slaves to the region.<sup>22</sup> Within the circum-Caribbean, the Spanish, British, French, and Dutch fostered a growing slave trade supporting increasingly profitable plantation agriculture. Although the island of Cuba was not yet home to the large-scale plantation model that would characterize what Dale Tomich and others have termed “the second slavery,” slaves were quite common in Cuba in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>23</sup> Alejandro de la Fuente has found that the majority of slaves worked in urban locales where their owners hired them out as day laborers. Outside the city centers, they were most often employed on small *estancia* estates located nearby. So-called royal slaves, owned by the Spanish Crown and often used in building and operating Crown projects, also comprised a significant portion of Cuba’s population in the early and middle colonial period.<sup>24</sup>

This was the Cuba where in June 1681, a ship originating from Cartagena docked in Havana with two Capuchin friars aboard. Francisco José de Jaca (originally from Aragón) and his French companion Epifanio Moirans had met during their prior assignments in western Venezuela, where they had already been reprimanded for public statements against slavery.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, almost immediately after their relocation to Havana, Jaca began preaching publicly against black slavery, declaring that slave owners did not hold legitimate title to their African slaves, whom they should immediately liberate and compensate for their unpaid labor. Both men authored manuscripts detailing their positions, Jaca completing his lengthy *Resolución sobre la libertad de los negros* (Resolution about the Freedom of the Slaves) in 1681, and Moirans finishing the *Justa defensa de la libertad natural de los esclavos* (Just Defense of the Natural Freedom of Slaves) the following year. Moirans’s text repackaged and polished the original arguments of Jaca. These manuscripts stand as the first known antislavery writings in the Spanish Empire—and possibly in the rest of the Atlantic as well. In his contribution on “Abolition and Antislavery” in *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, John Stauffer asserts that “the world’s first undisputed abolitionist document is a Quaker petition against slavery published by the Germantown, Pennsylvania Friends in 1688.” However, this was written seven years after Jaca penned his defense of the slaves and six years after Moirans’s derivative work—both of which circulated widely in royal and ecclesiastical circles in Spain and Rome.<sup>26</sup>



Both Jaca and Moirans decried the tradition of claiming slaves were captured in “just war” waged by Portuguese traders against African infidels, or by African villages amongst each other—an argument the Iberians had conveniently employed since the earliest days of their African slave trade in the fifteenth century. In fact, Jaca argued, these “wars” were shams, mounted for the express purpose of capturing slaves. Like Mercado, he questioned whether those who purchased slaves could truly know if the origins of their enslavement were legal. In the end, he concluded “these blacks and their ancestors are free not only in their Christian state, but also in their state of being gentiles.”<sup>27</sup>

In addition to such logical arguments against the injustice of slavery and the slave trade, Jaca also dedicated much of his work to discussing the wrongs of slavery and the slave trade in terms clearly designed to tug at the readers’ heartstrings. In one particularly poignant passage, he told of “the suckling boys and girls who . . . are brought to these lands and carried to others like dogs, cats, and sheep, condemned to the noose of slavery, without any guilt other than that of original sin.”<sup>28</sup> He also conveyed slaves’ stories about their devastating capture in Africa. The slave traders would scoop up children, the slaves told him, and then tie them to trees. “From there,” he continued with their stories, “they go to collect the mothers, who leaving the other children flee as fast as they can with those who are attached to their breasts, and they do not stop until they embrace one another.” The slave traders would then “attack them tyrannically, with punishments, clubs, whips, [and] blows,” before finally enslaving the entire family.<sup>29</sup> Like the abolitionists who would carry on his discourse against slavery in the nineteenth-century Spanish Empire and the broader Atlantic world, Jaca focused on the disastrous consequences of the slave trade for African and slave families. The very relationship that stood at the center of all families—that between a mother and her baby, or a mother and her child—was capitalized on by slave traders, who from there went on to destroy whatever they could of the previous lives of their victims.

Though both Jaca’s and Moirans’s writings circulated only in manuscript form until their publication in the twentieth century, the two Capuchins soon became infamous because they took the rare step of matching their antislavery discourse to actions on the ground. They refused to absolve the confessed sins of Cuba’s slave owners until they promised to free and compensate their slaves. After Havana’s church leaders repeatedly admonished them to stop threatening the social order that was so integral to Cuban

society—warnings that they did not heed—Jaca and Moirans were excommunicated and imprisoned in a monastery.<sup>30</sup> In 1682, they were ordered back to Spain, but they claimed that as Capuchin friars, they answered only to the pope and the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, a Capuchin institution established Rome in 1622 to oversee missionary work beyond Europe.<sup>31</sup>

In March 1685, Jaca and Moirans were released from their prison in Valladolid so they could travel to Rome and have their case heard by the Propaganda cardinals. Jaca spoke first about the cruelties the Indians endured in America, which the cardinals promised the papal envoy in Madrid would work to combat. Next, the two men asked the cardinals to declare that purchasing slaves was a sin, that African slavery was unlawful, and that all slaves should be freed and compensated. After a public hearing, the cardinals decided the matter of African slavery was outside their jurisdiction, and they passed it on to the Holy Office of the Inquisition.<sup>32</sup> In March 1686, the Holy Office gave its response: men were not permitted to capture, buy, sell, or resell black slaves; those who purchased slaves were morally responsible to ascertain whether those individuals had been rightfully enslaved; and all black slaves unjustly captured should be set free and compensated. However, this expansive rhetoric overlooks the fact that the Inquisition had no actual authority over slave purchases or treatment. It was a strong pronouncement against slavery and the slave trade, but it was, essentially, a dead letter.<sup>33</sup> In the end, the Inquisition and the papacy had no jurisdiction over how sovereign empires managed slaves. In their eyes, Jaca and Moirans's battle remained essentially a Cuban matter—and one from which the embattled Capuchins emerged as the losing party. Slavery continued unchecked throughout the Atlantic world, and as the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reign of the Hapsburgs gave way to Bourbon succession to the Spanish throne in the eighteenth century, slavery would become even more entrenched in the economic and political program of imperial rule. In examining the agenda for slavery and the slave trade in the era of Bourbon reforms, Elena A. Schneider has argued that during this period, "there emerged a new understanding that African slavery and the slave trade were essential to the wealth of nations" and that "this was coupled with the new conviction that slave-based economies required a different political economy than Spain had pursued until then."<sup>34</sup>

But for a brief and mostly forgotten moment in the summer of 1685, this was not a foregone conclusion. On July 5 of that year, Carlos II and his ministers commanded that the Council of the Indies conduct an inquiry about

the status of slavery in America. They wanted to know about the importance of slaves to America, as well as “what harm would come” if slavery were to be abolished. The council was also instructed to compile existing theological and secular texts that treated the legality of the slave trade. Their first frantic response to this inquiry arrived on the king’s desk in an unprecedented twenty-four hours. They promised to compile a full report on the matter as requested, but they also took care to point out that the slave trade had been part of the Indies “since . . . [they] were discovered” and that the *asiento* contracts by which individuals and merchants imported slaves were both “necessary and unavoidable.” Black slaves were responsible, the councilors reminded the king, “for the labor of the land, estates, and factories . . . [and] without it, it would be impossible to maintain the Indies.”<sup>35</sup>

A little over six weeks later, the Council of the Indies had its complete response ready for Carlos II. Unsurprisingly, the ministers continued to insist that slavery was “absolutely necessary,” largely because of the “lack of Indians.” Slaves were essential, they argued, for daily operations and maintenance at agricultural estates and cattle ranches. “The principle estates of the Spanish,” they argued, particularly those for sugar, cattle, and grapes, “are all maintained by slaves.” They were quite clear about the possible consequences of the eradication of slave labor in America’s fields and sugar refineries: “There will not be enough food to maintain human life,” they baldly admonished. They concluded that not only was slavery legal in most cases—including “just war” and the ironic-sounding “probably just war” as well—but Africans enslaved by Europeans actually benefited, the councilors argued, because they “are freed from . . . barbarism . . . and taught in Our Holy Catholic Faith.” The ministers listed the scholars, from Juan Solórzano to José de Veitia, who had confirmed the legality of the slave trade, and reminded the king and his ministers that “they have always held it necessary to bring black slaves to the Indies, even in the earliest time of their discovery and damnation.”<sup>36</sup>

Although the king’s inquiry to the council had not mentioned Jaca and Moirans or the controversy that they had engendered in Havana, Madrid, Rome, and beyond, the Council of the Indies itself directly linked the inquiry and resulting reports to the “two Capuchins [who] preached in Havana, wanting to convince everyone that black slavery was unjust.” The response from the locals, they argued, caused such “a great commotion that there were fears of a riot.” The unrest that might result if the supply of slaves were cut off, they argued, would be “very risky for the peace of those kingdoms.”

Furthermore, they reminded the king of the “great sum” of profits he stood to lose if the slave trade were outlawed. They pointed out that “no prohibition would be enough for them to stop being brought, because the need for them is inexhaustible.”<sup>37</sup> It is unlikely that from Madrid in 1685 they had any sense of just how true their words would prove to be.

### Antislavery and Abolition in the Liberal Nineteenth Century

However cautious and circumscribed it was, the public critique of the slave trade that took place in early colonial Spanish America would not be repeated during the eighteenth-century rule of the Spanish Bourbon kings. In fact, any suggestion of antislavery sentiment would have stood in direct opposition to the Spanish Crown’s increasing economic interest in slavery. In an absolutist regime, such an agenda precluded public debate about, or even questioning of, slavery and the slave trade. These controls only grew stricter after the death of Carlos III in 1788, when the successive chief royal ministers José Moñino, Count of Floridablanca; Pedro Pablo Abarco, Count of Aranda; and Manuel Godoy viewed revolutionary events across the Pyrenees in France with suspicion that transformed into fear, prompting a renewed effort of government control over public life and the press. There was no room for public antislavery or abolitionist sentiment in such an environment, but in 1807, that began to change when Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula. By 1808, Carlos IV had been unseated and Napoleon’s brother Joseph installed on the throne. Under Spanish legal tradition, in the king’s absence, sovereignty reverted to the people, who would rule in a series of representative bodies collectively known as the Spanish Cortes. The Cortes of 1810–1812 have been widely recognized as “truly a modern national assembly” with far-reaching liberal goals that included freedom of the press, the end of Indian tribute, and widespread enfranchisement.<sup>38</sup> This political aperture in exile created an intellectual opening in the public sphere, and for the first time, liberal Spanish intellectuals were able to speak out publicly against the slave trade and against slavery itself.

In 1811, inspired by antislavery discussions at the Cortes, a young intellectual named Isidoro Antillón published his *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud de los negros* (Dissertation on the Origin of Black Slavery), a discourse that he had first given in 1802 to his colleagues at the Santa Barbara Royal Academy of Spanish Law in Madrid.<sup>39</sup> In the preface for the 1811

edition, Antillón described his work as “advocating for the liberty of the slaves and for the inalienable rights of man.” The speech began with a history of the slave trade from its origins in Africa to its current state as an “infamous traffic, a blot and indelible stain on European culture.” Antillón was unafraid to indict the Spanish and Portuguese for propagating African slavery—even asserting that until the eighteenth century, the Iberians were the main perpetrators of the trade in African slaves. Throughout his speech, he liberally quoted and referenced other abolitionists, including British activists Mungo Park and Thomas Clarkson and French abolitionists Abbé Gregoire and Jacques Brissot.<sup>40</sup>

Like his better-studied British abolitionist colleagues, Antillón knew that appealing to the sentiments of his listeners (and later, his readers) was key to convincing them that “Europe should without delay embrace the idea of freedom for the black slaves.”<sup>41</sup> In horrifyingly vivid language, he detailed how slave traffickers drove their human captives to the coast like cattle, tying the arms of some so tightly behind their backs as to cause permanent injuries, and enclosing others in a wooden collar with “two holes that receive a metal nail which passes through the nape of the neck . . . [so that] the smallest movement that the slave makes is . . . almost enough to suffocate him.”<sup>42</sup> He quoted from interviews with an anonymous slave ship captain in order to describe the “night of tears and desperation” the slaves endured before being boarded onto the slave ship that would carry them across the Atlantic. The captain vividly described “the last night they will pass on the ground on which they were born,” before the fateful morning when many, convinced they would be eaten by the slavers who had an insatiable appetite for black flesh, “believed they were in their last moments.”<sup>43</sup> Antillón also reasoned with his audience that, ultimately, there was no essential variance between black human beings and white ones. “There is not a noticeable difference between the mind of a black and curly head, than that of a white and smooth head,” he offered. In fact, he argued, “the capacity of the blacks can be extended to everything, and they only need teaching and liberty.”<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the *Disertación*, Antillón took care to gain the approval of his audience by slowly building toward his final radical proposal for the full abolition of slavery. He first introduced the need for amelioration, or gradually improving the conditions of life under slavery. It was in the best interest of slave owners, Antillón reasoned, “to conserve their slaves” and “make the yoke of slavery more gentle.” But all methods to improve the “sad condition” of the slaves were only a last resort “in case such ignominious slavery

survives.” He argued that ultimately, the Spanish must “reject black slavery; it is an obligation of governments to destroy it and a duty of philosophers to proclaim its annihilation with vehemence.”<sup>45</sup> In its place, he offered two alternate modes of securing labor and commerce. First, he optimistically proposed that the millions of Indian vassals in Spanish America could easily be “encouraged towards activity and cultivation by the sweetness and humanity with which they are treated.” With a peculiarly myopic zero-sum approach, he argued that their work could “replace the labor of slave hands brought from the center of Africa.”<sup>46</sup> Alternately, he also suggested that instead of purchasing *people* from Africa, the Spanish could buy *goods* cultivated there by free Africans living near Europeans. The Spanish could form settlements on the Angolan coast, he argued, which “would give us the same productions as the Americas, without the bitterness of owing them to the sweat of slaves.” From these settlements, they could trade directly with the Africans, who would produce commodity products like sugar, tobacco, and chocolate on their own lands in Africa, and then sell them to the Europeans who would now transport goods, not people, across the Atlantic.<sup>47</sup>

Antillón closed his speech with three central propositions that summarized his views. First, “the governments of Europe should in justice give liberty to the black slaves of America,” he argued. Second, “the time and circumstances in which [liberty] should be given, and the preliminaries that should precede the concession of such a just privilege, must be arranged through the wisdom of the governments.” Having governments handle abolition, he reasoned, would prevent what had happened in the former French colony of Haiti, which he characterized as rife with “civil wars between the blacks themselves” and “scenes of ferocity and spilling of blood in fertile but cursed fields.” Antillón’s final proposal reassured his audience that “our colonies can prosper and produce the same items, even if we remove the guilt of this shameful slavery.” Ultimately, he concluded “the traffic . . . of slaves is not only opposed to the purity and liberalism of the feelings of the Spanish people, but also to the spirit of [the Catholic] religion.”<sup>48</sup>

Although the *Disertación* was Antillón’s only known lengthy public discourse against the slave trade, he continued to write and publish academic works and political commentaries throughout his career, particularly when he was employed as an editor at the *Semanario Patriótico* (Weekly Patriot), established in 1809 under the oversight of Spanish poet and liberal activist Manuel Quintana. Antillón was joined at the paper by another young liberal, José María Blanco y Crespo, more commonly known by his self-chosen

redundantly Anglicized name, José Blanco White. An iconoclast from the start, Blanco White had begun his working life in Spain as an ordained Catholic priest—a religion he would later reject in favor of British-style evangelical Christianity. After renouncing the priesthood, he entered the world of liberal politics, but here too he soon became disillusioned, accusing Antillón and his colleagues at the *Semanario* of pandering to government interests. In 1810, he relocated to Great Britain, where he continued his work as a journalist and a proponent of liberal political ideologies.<sup>49</sup>

In London, Blanco White rebuilt his career with the help of powerful allies: Lord and Lady Holland and Richard Wellesley (son of Henry Wellesley, Britain's foreign secretary to Spain), who would be instrumental in the eventual passage of Spanish agreements to end the slave trade. Holland and the British Foreign Office wanted a Spanish-language periodical to publicize their antislavery platform but did not wish to raise suspicion with obvious involvement therein, so they left it up to Blanco White to secure a meager monthly advance to cover the expenses of publication. The men also agreed the self-exiled Spaniard would execute all the work on each issue: research, writing, editing, and even proofreading.<sup>50</sup> At first it seemed that *El Español* might fall on deaf ears—a Spanish-language publication had no natural readership in an English-speaking country. But the British Foreign Office carried copies to Spain when possible, and more importantly, the more stable political environment in England (which was, of course, not living under an invading army from France) meant news from Spain *and* its overseas territories could travel freely in Britain, and from there, abroad.<sup>51</sup>

While Blanco White performed this essential duty of sharing information among the disconnected parts of the rapidly disintegrating Spanish Empire, he also sought to disseminate liberal political views including, of course, writings against the slave trade.<sup>52</sup> In 1811, he published translated excerpts from William Wilberforce's *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1806), and in 1813, he penned an original editorial regarding the "Abolition of Slavery." In it, he praised antislavery and abolitionist discussions in the Spanish Cortes and encouraged legal measures against the trade in slaves. Unlike Antillón, who called for abolition of the trade followed by state-managed abolition of slavery itself, Blanco White focused his efforts on first ending the slave trade. With the source of new slaves cut off, he reasoned, slave owners "would have to conserve [their slaves], treating them with more care." Slavery itself should be abolished only gradually, due to "the moral incapacity of the slaves to receive freedom suddenly and all at once," as well as the need to

preserve the colonies' great landed estates and their lucrative profits.<sup>53</sup> To enact a gradual abolition of slavery, Blanco White recommended that children of slaves be born free and properly educated, that slave owners allow slaves to work "for themselves" on two days per week (instead of the customary one day), and that the Cortes set a moderate and attainable price for self-purchase.<sup>54</sup> This was, of course, a plan for slave trade abolition that would one day lead to the end of slavery as an institution. Such a gradualist plan was not particular to Blanco White—it was also the strategy of William Wilberforce and the early British abolitionists, who first lobbied for the abolition of the *trade*, not slavery itself.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the British abolitionists—and Blanco White as well—worked toward abolition of the trade in Spain and its empire. Britain had abolished the slave trade within its own territories in 1807, and British abolitionists then turned to the international arena. Portugal and Spain were the largest traders in slaves by the early nineteenth century, and they were also beholden to the British for supporting their resistance against invading French forces. This was, in British purview, a convenient opportunity to push the anti-slave trade agenda elsewhere in Europe. Wilberforce also spotted an opportune moment to translate and publish the entire text of his *Letter* in Spanish, and he found an ideal candidate for the work in Blanco White, who had already published large portions of it in *El Español*.<sup>56</sup> Blanco White readily agreed, but realizing that the work was "too little to Spanish taste," he set about translating and enhancing Wilberforce's tract with a new work that he called *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos* (Sketch of the Slave Trade).<sup>57</sup>

The resulting text, which appeared in 1814, had two parts. The first was a straightforward Spanish translation of Wilberforce's work. But the second portion featured Blanco White's original writings, including a focused rebuttal to Cuban planter turned lobbyist Francisco de Arango y Parreño's *Representación de la Ciudad de Habana a las Cortes* (Report from the City of Havana to the Cortes; 1811). This was perhaps the single most important proslavery document of the period in the Spanish world—it was largely credited with defeating antislavery discussion in the Cortes and for excising matters of slavery and the slave trade from the Spanish constitution of 1812.<sup>58</sup> In the first chapter, "The Slave Trade Considered According to the Laws of Human Morality," his rebuttal to Arango y Parreño's powerful text, Blanco White discredited the main arguments of the Cuban proslavery lobby: while they argued that most slaves purchased in Africa had already been enslaved there and were simply exchanging one master for another, he said that very few



captives bought in Africa had already been enslaved. Arango y Parreño claimed that slaves in Spanish America enjoyed “better” living conditions than those held in Africa by other Africans; but Blanco White pointed out that in Africa, slaves could not be sold to a different master unless they were being punished for a crime; that slaves and their masters “live and eat together”; and that despite the social hierarchy of captivity, African slave masters are “looked at by their slaves as [a] father.”<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, Blanco White confirmed that it was against “natural justice” for men to give up their own liberty; that the “misery and pain” of the slave trade was against all moral standards; that slave traffickers were responsible for the deaths engendered by internecine wars in Africa, as well as the deaths caused by the Middle Passage; and that European traders had set African civilization back “three hundred years,” a situation that could not be corrected until no further Europeans traveled to Africa to capture slaves. Finally, he argued that “just as they are culpable for all the misery, death, and crimes that the traffic causes . . . [the traffickers] are also [guilty] of the evils that the children and descendants of these slaves” will suffer throughout their lives.<sup>60</sup>

The *Bosquejo*'s next original chapter, “On the Traffic in Slaves Considered According to Politics,” offered practical reasons why Cuban planters and elites would benefit from ending the importation of new slaves. Here Blanco White pointed out the “enormous” population of color in Cuba's cities and this group's frightening propensity to rebel against enslavement. “Havana has in [Haiti] an example of what the threat is,” he confirmed. Stopping the trade would help the numbers of Africans on the island to stabilize, lessening the chance of rebellion. Furthermore, he reasoned that if planters could not rely on new shipments of slaves to replenish those who died, planters seeking to acquire slaves for agricultural labor would pay high prices to purchase domestic servants currently employed in urban settings. The need for workers in cities paired with the lack of available slaves for purchase would mean elites would have to pay salaried workers to execute many tasks. The prospect of free, salaried work would in turn entice free people of color to work.<sup>61</sup>

However, it was in the third chapter, “The Trade in Slaves Considered According to Christianity,” where Blanco White offered the most original of his arguments based on Hispanic tradition. After cautioning that “religion does not command that governments are obligated . . . to give immediate and unrestricted liberty to their slaves,”<sup>62</sup> he began to detail how the slave trade and Catholicism were essentially incompatible. First, he painted the trade as a business that essentially “profanes the morality of Christ.” In

Blanco White's opinion, Catholic scholars who claimed it was a Christian's duty to wage holy war on pagans and infidels were relying on what he termed "books from the centuries of ignorance" that propagated that outdated notion linking religion and slavery. The slave trade did not spread Christian values around the globe, Blanco White insisted—instead, it "closes the entry to the light of revelation in Africa, and extends vice and corruption throughout all of America." Ending the trade, he argued, would result in better treatment of existing slaves, preparing the way for a future that could involve gradual abolition.<sup>63</sup>

Although their antislavery and abolitionist positions put both Blanco White and Antillón on the outside of mainstream liberal politics in the early nineteenth-century Spanish Empire, their work to end the slave trade, ameliorate the life conditions of slaves, and even end the institution of slavery itself is nevertheless important. Both men grounded their arguments against the captivity of African people in the rhetoric of freedom and individuality that was at the center of early nineteenth-century liberal political discourse. Blanco White in particular has been recognized as an instrumental figure in the "fight for liberty within and outside of Spain."<sup>64</sup> In one of his final publications, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara made a convincing case that Blanco White drew inspiration for his antislavery rhetoric from his own family's experience with captivity (his brother Fernando was captured by the French in Madrid in 1808 and held as a prisoner of war for five years). This allowed Blanco White, Schmidt-Nowara argues, to make an antislavery appeal that would have particular resonance with peninsular Spaniards: he likened "the plight of African captives with the experience of Spaniards under French rule."<sup>65</sup> Despite this emotionally charged connection, Schmidt-Nowara concluded that the political impact of Blanco White's *Bosquejo* in Spain was "probably slight."<sup>66</sup> The door to discussion had been opened, but the path to abolition was not yet clear.

### The "End" of the Slave Trade to Spanish America

While Antillón and Blanco White promoted antislavery and abolition within public discourse, the future of the trade and slavery itself were also the subject of fierce debate in the Spanish Cortes of 1810–1812 (and similarly, outlawing the trade was often one of the first actions of the new republican governments in Spanish America). It is important to recall that during these

years, political leaders from both sides of the Atlantic collaborated to envision a new iteration of a united Spanish Empire—although they hotly disputed the details thereof. The fate of America's slaves and free people of color was a central point of contention—one that came into question as early as September 25, 1810, when the representative José Mejía Llequerica of New Granada proposed that Spanish America be allotted parliamentary representatives based on a formula of one deputy for each fifty thousand free inhabitants, regardless of their race. This suggestion immediately caused alarm among the Spanish deputies, who recognized that counting free people of color would result in a numerical advantage for American representatives. Despite Mejía Llequerica's impassioned plea that "slaves are too men, and some day policy, justice, and the Christian religion will show us how they should be considered," in the end, representation was based only on the population of whites, Indians, and mestizos—those whom the delegates reasoned had origins in Spain and the Spanish territories, of which Africa was not a part.<sup>67</sup>

With the matter of race and representation settled, however uncomfortably, the delegates moved into negotiating and drafting the text of the new constitution for Spain and Spanish America. Manuel Quintana—the same Quintana who had introduced Antillón and Blanco White—brought the issue of slaves and slavery to the table as early as January 9, 1811. He proposed the Cortes "banish forever even the memory of slavery" and that African slaves in America should be given a representative in the Cortes, a European who would speak on their behalf.<sup>68</sup> Several months later, on March 26, 1811, José Miguel Guridi y Alcocer, a deputy from Tlaxcala, proposed a radical eight-point plan arguing that slavery should "be entirely abolished." His suggestions included that children born to slave mothers be immediately freed, that slaves be paid salaries in accordance with their skills and experience, and that slaves be guaranteed the chance to purchase their freedom from their masters. To soften these measures, he offered that slaves should continue to work for their current owners until they were officially freed.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the response from proslavery interests in the Cortes, and above all the Cuban lobby, was swift and irate.<sup>70</sup> They opposed any further public discussion of abolition. Ferrer has shown how as close neighbors to Haiti, the Cubans were well aware how French abolitionist discourse had circulated on the island, fueling revolutionary sentiment among the slaves and people of color. The Cubans also knew that the *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes Generales y Extraordinarias*, which circulated freely in America and on their

island, would report on any such discussions in the Spanish Cortes, and they feared similar consequences.<sup>71</sup>

With Guridi's radical proposal tabled, Spanish deputy Agustín Argüelles set forth a more moderate bill on April 2, 1811, that would abolish the slave trade, a business that he characterized as "not only opposed to the purity and liberality of the feelings of the Spanish nation, but also to the spirit of religion." He argued that abolishing the trade would encourage slave owners to treat their existing slaves better, so as to preserve them and encourage their reproduction. He also warned that Spain should seize the opportunity to abolish the traffic on its own terms, before the British forced the end of the trade on them.<sup>72</sup> Mejía Llequerica defended Argüelles's proposal, adding that it was in the best interest of Americans to stop the trade immediately, as the slave population had rapidly grown to a "precarious number" that easily topped the white, mestizo, and indigenous population of Spanish America.<sup>73</sup> Mejía Llequerica then recommended the matter be moved into a secret commission specially selected to deal with trade abolition, because a small group of deputies would be better able to succeed with such a complex proposal. Unfortunately, Mejía Llequerica could not foresee that one of those selected for the commission was none other than Cuban delegate Andrés Jáuregui, who like his fellow Cubans, was intensely dedicated to preserving slavery and the slave trade at all costs.<sup>74</sup> Although records of their discussions have not been discovered, the commission effectively tabled the measures by simply failing to decide one way or the other.

Even though the bills proposing the abolition of slavery and the slave trade were stalled, there was still the matter of how the new Spanish constitution would treat slaves and free people of African descent. Debate on the draft of the constitution began in August 1811, and by early September, the deputies were actively debating whether the constitution would recognize free people of African descent as citizens of the newly imagined Spanish nation. By February 1812, they had their answer: while Spanish American, mestizo, and Indian men were granted the same rights as peninsular Spaniards, slaves and free people of color were excluded from citizenship. However, Article 22 of the constitution declared that for men of African origin, "the door of virtue and merit to becoming citizens remains open" to those who had distinguished themselves in military service or in business. Ultimately, the Spanish constitution of 1812's failed liberal promise to slaves and people of African descent was aligned with other European laws and constitutions of the era.<sup>75</sup>

Despite their best efforts, the early Catholic antislavery advocates, the nineteenth-century liberal intellectuals, and the constitutional delegates to the Spanish Cortes were unable to effect any real change in Spanish policy toward slavery and the slave trade. As the dream of a united Spanish Empire disintegrated, many of the Cortes deputies renounced their ties to peninsular leaders and returned home to fight for the independence of their *patrias* (homelands). Public discussion about the fate of the slaves was largely subsumed by the tumultuous politics of the period, both on the peninsula and in Spanish America. In the end, Mejía Llequerica's prediction about the British targeting the Spanish slave trade proved to be correct. Led by Henry Wellesley, who served as Britain's ambassador to Spain from 1811 to 1822, the British continued to pressure the Spanish to stop the trade within their dominions. By 1814, Wellesley was able to negotiate a Spanish treaty, saying Spanish traders would only sell slaves within their own territory. But the terms were soon broken.

Meanwhile, on the peninsula, Ferdinand VII was restored to the Spanish throne in 1814. By 1817, he had agreed to officially "end" Spain's involvement with the slave trade, an agreement reached largely due to the increasingly bad outlook for Spain in the Spanish American wars of independence. In return for promising to halt the slave trade north of the equator almost immediately, the Spanish Crown received £400,000 in compensation. It also retained the rights to continue trafficking in human flesh south of the equator until May 30, 1820.<sup>76</sup> During these three years, the Spanish still managed to equip 250 slave trade voyages that introduced no fewer than 66,425 new slaves to Spanish America (and likely also brought many more through contraband channels). In the treaty that "ended" the slave trade to the Spanish territories, Ferdinand also took pains to immortalize the Spanish Crown's position: slavery had existed in Africa long before the Europeans arrived, he noted. Instead of being a blight, the transatlantic slave trade had introduced civilization to Africa, bringing the Africans "the incomparable benefit of being instructed in the knowledge of the True God."<sup>77</sup> Although Antillón, Mejía Llequerica, and the other advocates of abolition in the Spanish Empire left no record of their thoughts on the treaty, they might very well have recognized it for what it was—a hollow capitulation to foreign antislavery pressure that had at its base not a desire to curtail slavery but an increasingly futile wish to hold together Spain and what was left of Spanish America. When one by one the mainland colonies won their independence, they began to slowly dismantle slavery within the borders of their new nations.<sup>78</sup> Soon, what had

once been the greatest empire of early modern times was reduced largely to Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.<sup>79</sup> Spain promised to end the slave trade in those territories as well by 1820. But the spectacular growth of slavery and sugar in the nineteenth-century Spanish Caribbean tells an altogether different story.

### Notes

1. Most historians date the invigorated importance of slavery and Cuba in the Spanish Empire to the mid-eighteenth century, particularly after the British invasion and occupation of Havana 1762–1763 and the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763. For example, see Elena A. Schneider, "African Slavery and Spanish Empire."
2. Chile abolished the slave trade in 1811 and implemented a free womb law that same year. After achieving independence in 1818, it abolished all slavery in 1823. The Central American republics chose instead to implement abolition of the trade and slavery itself all at once in 1824. Mexico outlawed the trade in 1824, and slavery itself just five years later. Uruguay outlawed the slave trade and instituted a free womb law in 1825, but waited until 1842 to end slavery altogether. Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela outlawed the trade and made children born to slave mothers free in 1821. The final abolition of slavery came later: Ecuador in 1851, Colombia in 1852, and Peru and Venezuela in 1854. Argentina declared an end to the slave trade in its borders in 1813 and implemented a free womb law that year as well. Final abolition came forty years later, in 1853. Bolivia implemented a free womb law in 1831, prior to abolishing the trade in 1840. Slavery was outlawed altogether in Bolivia in 1861. Paraguay abolished the trade and declared all children born to slave mothers free simultaneously in 1842, and finally ended all slavery in 1869. For a useful introduction to the politics of abolition in the wars of independence, see George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000*, chapter 2.
3. Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*. See also David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*.
4. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 440.
5. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery*, 4.
6. See Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Slavery, Freedom, and Abolition*, 146–59.
7. The historical scholarship on Hispanic antislavery is beginning to address this often overlooked early antislavery activity. Before his untimely death in 2014, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara's scholarship was moving in this direction, as have studies by Spanish historian Josep M. Fradera and a select but growing group of other scholars working in English and in Spanish. See Josep M.

- Fradera and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, eds., *Slavery and Antislavery in Spain's Atlantic Empire*, especially the contributions by Ada Ferrer, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, and Josep M. Fradera. Also see Emily Berquist, "Early Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the Spanish Atlantic World"; and Alejandro E. Gómez, "Socio-Racial Sensibilities."
8. Nicholas P. Cushner, *Lords of the Land*, 89–96; and Jean-Pierre Tardieu, *Los negros y la iglesia*, 123–39.
  9. On galley slaves employed by the papacy, see Adrian Hastings, *Church in Africa*, 125; and Salvatore Bono, "Achat d'esclaves turcs."
  10. The Catholic Church's official position that "slavery is morally legitimate provided that the master's title of ownership is valid and provided that the slave is properly looked after and cared for, both materially and spiritually" was not overturned until Vatican II in 1965. John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 10.
  11. On the patronato real, see Nancy Farriss, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico*, 15–30; and W. Eugene Sheils, *King and Church*, 4–18.
  12. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat estimate there were 1,506,000 enslaved Africans brought directly to the Americas from 1520 to 1810, and that another 566,000 were imported to Spanish America from elsewhere in the New World. Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 434. While tens of thousands of these slaves were landed without authorization (and were therefore not subject to taxation), the Crown nevertheless enjoyed substantial windfall from those slaves imported under the income-generating asiento contracts by which merchants or foreign trading companies paid for exclusive rights to manage the slave trade to the Spanish Empire for a set number of years. These profits quickly became so substantial that they were designated as a *renta* (official source of royal revenue), just like silver profits or customs duties. Asientos were also used as special annuities, or *juros*, whereby wealthy financiers loaned money to the Crown in exchange for permission to trade in slaves. Furthermore, the Spanish Crown paid in asiento contracts for *secuestros*, or forced seizures of silver remittances—an increasingly important aspect of royal finance as the colonial period went on. The Spanish Crown manipulated the slave trade so handily that the political and fiscal well-being of the empire cannot be understood without taking into account the profits from the legal slave trade to Spanish America. On the imperial finances of the slave trade, see Enriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de Esclavos*, 1st ed.; Reyes Fernández Duran, *La corona española y el tráfico de negros*; Manuel Lucena Salmoral, *Regulación de la esclavitud negra*; Georges Scelle, "Slave-Trade in the Spanish Colonies of America"; and Stanley J. Stein and Barbara Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*.
  13. Alonso de Montúfar, "Carta al rey, del arzobispo de México, sobre la esclavitud de los negros," Mexico, June 30, 1560. In Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, ed.,

- Epistolario de Nueva España*, 53–55. Montúfar's antislavery views are only sparsely studied in the secondary literature. Also see Lucena Salmoral, *Regulación de la esclavitud negra*; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "La postura de la iglesia"; and José-Andrés Gallego and Jesús María García Añoveros, *La iglesia y la esclavitud de los negros*, 32. For more general work on Montúfar, see Magnus Lundberg, *Unification and Conflict*.
14. In his 1562 work *De iustitia et iure*, de Soto clarified that slaves who were "freely" sold were legitimate. On de Soto, see Tardieu, *Los negros y la iglesia*, 63–64.
  15. Tomás de Mercado, *Suma de tratos y contratos*, chapter 20.
  16. Mercado, *Suma de tratos y contratos*, 275–82.
  17. David G. Sweet, "Black Robes and 'Black Destiny,'" 92.
  18. Mercado, *Suma de tratos y contratos*, 369.
  19. Mercado, *Suma de tratos y contratos*, 372.
  20. Mercado, *Suma de tratos y contratos*, 385
  21. The most important recent contributions to the scholarship on Sandoval are Nicole von Germeten's English translation of his work, *Treatise on Slavery*; and Luz Adriana Maya Restrepo, *Brujería y reconstrucción de identidades*, which relies heavily on a detailed analysis of Sandoval to discuss African spiritual practices and Catholic evangelization campaigns in seventeenth-century New Granada. Also essential is Margaret M. Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation in Colonial Cartagena de Indias*. See also Frederick P. Bowser, *African Slave in Colonial Peru*, especially chapter 9; Enriqueta Vila Vilar, "La evangelización del esclavo negro"; Tardieu, *Los negros y la iglesia*, especially 93–100; and Vila Vilar, "La postura de la iglesia."
  22. The vast majority of these slaves originated from locations in the Americas, especially Dutch Curaçao, British Barbados and Jamaica, and Portuguese Brazil. See Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade," 437, 443.
  23. See the work of Dale Tomich for the concept of "the second slavery," particularly Dale Tomich and Michael Zeuske, eds., "Second Slavery."
  24. For an excellent overview of slavery in sixteenth-century Cuba, see Alejandro de la Fuente with the collaboration of César García del Pino and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, *Havana and the Atlantic*, 147–85. On royal slaves in Cuba, see María Elena Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre*.
  25. For Francisco de Jaca and his career of agitating against slavery, see John M. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions of Negro Emancipation"; and Ildefonso Gutierrez Azopardo, "Los franciscanos y los negros."
  26. See John Stauffer, "Abolition and Antislavery," 559.
  27. "Gentile" was an early modern term that signified a people who had not yet been introduced to Christianity. It is less demeaning than "heretic," or "infidel," both of which indicated that the people in question had met with



- Christians and decided to actively reject their religious traditions. Francisco José de Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad de los negros*, 51.
28. Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad de los negros*, 15.
  29. Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad de los negros*, 18.
  30. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions of Negro Emancipation," 200.
  31. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions of Negro Emancipation," 200.
  32. The Inquisition was, of course, a religious court that dealt with church matters but in fact, as Alejandro Cañeque has shown, the Holy Office "always claimed dual jurisdiction [of secular and ecclesiastical power], because they represented both pope and king." Alejandro Cañeque, *King's Living Image*, 106.
  33. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions of Negro Emancipation," 200.
  34. Schneider, "African Slavery and Spanish Empire," 5.
  35. "Oficio del Consejo de Indias a Carlos II," Madrid, July 6, 1685, in Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad*, 339–41.
  36. "Oficio del Consejo de Indias a Carlos II," Madrid, August 21, 1685, in Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad*, 349–54.
  37. Jaca, *Resolución sobre la libertad*, 349–54.
  38. Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *Independence of Spanish America*, 82.
  39. A favored student of Gaspar Jovellanos (one of the leading thinkers and political advisors of the Spanish Enlightenment), Antillón was involved in many of the most important intellectual institutions of early nineteenth-century Spain. In 1800, at a mere twenty-one years of age, he won a professorship in geography at Madrid's famous *Semanario de Nobles*. Later in his life, he would be elected on multiple terms to serve as a deputy to the Spanish Cortes, and in 1809, he was chosen to become director of the Archive of the Indies in Seville. See Cristine Benavides, "Isidoro de Antillón y la abolición de la esclavitud"; and Agustín Hernando, *Perfil de un geógrafo*.
  40. Isidoro Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 10.
  41. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 78.
  42. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 32.
  43. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 34.
  44. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 103.
  45. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 53.
  46. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 64.
  47. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 54. In many areas of West Africa, by the mid-nineteenth century, Europeans prevented from a legitimate trade in slaves had begun to participate in a licit—but of course still exploitive—trade in agricultural and commercial products cultivated by free Africans on African soil. The "commercial transition," as historians of Africa frequently refer to it, most notably involved the trade in palm oil, which was more coveted as European industrialization and urbanization grew. In her study of Lagos, Kristin Mann argues that for nineteenth-century Europeans,

- the idea of abolishing the slave trade worldwide was closely linked to palm oil. Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 11. See also Robin Law, *Ouidah*; and David Northrup, *Trade without Rulers*.
48. Antillón, *Disertación sobre el origen de la esclavitud*, 105.
  49. Juan Goytisolo, *Blanco White*, 66. Goytisolo also accredits Blanco White's abolitionist sentiment to his repeated readings of José Cadalso's novel *Cartas Marruecas* (1789), which criticized the slave trade. Also see Lisa Surwillo, *Monsters by Trade*.
  50. Martin Murphy, *Blanco White*, 63–65.
  51. Antonio Garnica, "Blanco White, un periodista exiliado," 41.
  52. Joselyn Almeida has argued, in fact, that because of this ability to disseminate antislavery thought, "Blanco's influence over the larger sphere of abolitionist debate in the Americas was not inconsiderable." Joselyn M. Almeida, "Joseph (José) Blanco White's *Bosquexo del comercio en esclavos*, article 3.
  53. The goal of ending the slave trade of foreign nations but preserving slaveholder interests at home was also the objective of the British Foreign Office Slave Trade Department at this time. See Keith Hamilton, "Zealots and Helots."
  54. José Blanco White, "Abolición de la esclavitud."
  55. African slavery would not be outlawed in the British Caribbean until 1833.
  56. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, "Wilberforce Spanished," 159.
  57. In English, the title reads "Sketch of the Slave Trade, and Reflections about This Traffic considered according to Morals, Politics, and Christianity." José Maria Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*.
  58. For Arango y Parreño, see Francisco de Arango y Parreño, *Obras*; Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*; David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce*; and Dale Tomich, "Wealth of Empire."
  59. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 141. The Cuban lobby argued that the Greeks and Romans had practiced slavery, but Blanco White replied this argument was "weak," because Greeks and Romans practiced slavery differently, forcing prisoners of war—most of whom were of the same skin color—into labor. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 145.
  60. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 148.
  61. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 149–71.
  62. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 176–77.
  63. Blanco White, *Bosquejo del comercio de esclavos*, 173–84. It is interesting to note that in the *Bosquejo*, Blanco White does not set himself forward as an advocate of abolition of slavery itself—he appears to have backpedaled from his stance, favoring gradual abolition that was published in his earlier editorial in *El Español*.
  64. Manuel Moreno Alonso, *Divina libertad*, 206. Mónica Ricketts has argued that his scholarship was at the center of Spanish liberalism on both sides of the Atlantic, as he promoted a vision of a "universalizing movement that included

- peninsulares and Americans, and fought with an indignant tone against repression." Mónica Ricketts, "José María Blanco White," 376.
65. Schmidt-Nowara, "Wilberforce Spanished," 162.
  66. Schmidt-Nowara, "Wilberforce Spanished," 170.
  67. James F. King, "Colored Castes and American Representation," 41–42.
  68. "Número 105: Sesión del día de 9 de Enero de 1811," in *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, 327.
  69. "Proposiciones del Sr. D. José Miguel Gurdi Alcocér, leídas en sesion pública de 26 de Marzo de 1811," in *Documentos de que hasta ahora*, 87–89.
  70. Manuel Chust Calero, "De esclavos, encomenderos y mitayos," 189.
  71. Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror*, see particularly chapter 5 on the Haitian efforts to spread abolitionist discourse; and *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, 276–82.
  72. "Número 185: Sesión del Día 2 de Abril de 1811," in *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, 812.
  73. *Diario de sesiones de las Cortes Generales*, 812. It should also be noted that Blanco White would make these same points (common arguments in favor of trade abolition, amelioration, and the gradual abolition of slavery) in 1811 and again in 1814.
  74. Marie Laurie Rieu-Millan, *Los diputados americanos*, 169.
  75. Rodríguez O., *Independence of Spanish America*, 92. The failure of the Spanish Cortes and constitution of 1812 to address the status of people of African descent stands in stark contrast to the racially inclusive independence movements that developed in the southern Caribbean in the same period, as detailed in Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia*.
  76. For the equator as a dividing line in the Spanish–British treaty to end the slave trade, see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce*, 63–70; and Surwillo, *Monsters by Trade*, 4.
  77. "Real Cedula Circular a Indias Expedida por el Rey Fernando VII Sobre Prohibición de la Trata Negrera en los Dominios Españoles, 19 de Diciembre de 1817," in Sergio Antonio Mosquero, ed., *La gente negra en la legislación colonial*, 68–72.
  78. An assessment of this process is far beyond the scope of this chapter. More work is needed in this area, but for an overview, see Andrews, *Afro-Latin America*, chapters 2 and 3.
  79. While these were the most significant colonial possessions, in 1820 Spain still retained the Balearic and Canary Islands and several outposts in North Africa (Ceuta, Melilla, Peñon de Vélez, and Peñon de Alhucemas), as well as Fernando Pó and Annobón in the Bight of Biafra. Later in the nineteenth century, Spain would acquire the Islas Chafarinas, adjacent to the Moroccan coast (1847), Ifní (between Morocco and the Atlantic coast) in 1860, and the Province of Spanish Sahara, established in 1885. See the succinct introduction provided in Anthony S. Reyner, *Spain in Africa*.



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