

The Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV:
African Diaspora in the Spanish Atlantic World, 1791-1818

By

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To Jor

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Introduction

His Majesty has approved all the measures your lordship has taken...use all necessary and suitable means, and with the greatest speed, efficiency, and secrecy, win over and gain the alliance of the Negros and mulatto brigands.

*Win over Jean-François.*¹

These orders from King Carlos IV in 1793 cemented the alliance offer between Spain and a group of black insurgent slaves led by free black generals Jean-François Papillon and Georges Biassou during the early years of the Haitian revolution.² Faced with declining revenues and a loss of military control, Spain looked forward to using the black troops as a way to regain the Saint Domingue colony. The black troops accepted aid from Spain to continue their fight against the French colonists on Saint Domingue.³ It proved to be a mutually beneficial partnership, and the soldiers became officially titled the Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV.

¹ Pedro de Acuña to Joaquín García, February 22 and March 26, 1793, AGS, SGU, leg. 7161

² The historiography on the Haitian Revolution is extensive. For general purposes, it is best to begin with the following: Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Concise History of the Haitian Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powdered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, *The Americas in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (University of Tennessee Press, 1990); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 2004); *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books [1938], 1963).

³ David Geggus was one of the first to put together the archival sources on the Black Auxiliary Troops, particularly the communication between Santo Domingo Governor García and other Spanish military and civil officials; Jane Landers examined Georges Biassou in Spanish Florida in her 1999 book *Black Society* and has since added extensively to his biography; Jorge Victoria Ojeda compiled a recent monograph on the Black Auxiliary Troops with primary source material. David Geggus, "The Exile of the 1791 Slave Leaders: Spain's Resettlement of Its Black Auxiliary Troops" *Journal of Haitian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002); Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*; Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, *Blacks in the New World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Jorge Victoria Ojeda, *Las Tropas Auxiliares De Carlos Iv: De Saint-Domingue Al Mundo Hispano*, *América* (Alicante: Universitat Jaume I, 2011).

These Black Auxiliaries managed to navigate the spaces in-between empires, and tracing their history allows us to better understand the ways in which subaltern groups can use political and military instability to advance their position. I argue that the Auxiliaries' experience in the Saint Domingue rebellion, negotiating with the French and Spanish officials, turned them into diplomats, well versed in the legal and civil structures of the Spanish empire. I analyze the Auxiliaries' experience in trying to maintain a cohesive unit while in exile by deploying their military service to Spain. In particular I argue that the Auxiliaries exercised a degree of autonomy and negotiating power over their own lives and played an active role in fixing contested imperial boundaries.

By the eighteenth-century Spain was in decline, and rising European nations were quick to fight for the remnants of its empire. Spain held valuable, but vulnerable colonies; its ground troops were mismanaged and weak, and its naval troops were little better. In 1791, when tensions on the French colony of Saint Domingue finally erupted into slave rebellion, Spain reacted. The uprising threatened its slave societies on neighboring Santo Domingo and Cuba, and Spain feared the new political and social ideas emerging from the developing French Revolution. Amidst this, in 1793 Spain made a fateful decision to arm and ally with a group of free black and slave insurgents. The Spanish hoped that an alliance with the rebels would facilitate an eventual reconquest of Hispaniola, the Caribbean's richest sugar colony.⁴ For their services, the Black Auxiliaries received salaries, military honors, and the promises of land and freedom. But the French Revolutionary Wars left Spain with many defeats. The French had seized large regions of Spanish land, and in return for their country, Spain agreed to give up their claim to Hispaniola. When Spain signed the 1795 Treaty of Basle with the French Republic, they relinquished rights

⁴ In 1665 French colonization was officially recognized on the western half of Hispaniola, and the French colony was named Saint Domingue. The eastern portion remained under Spanish control and was called Santo Domingo.

to Santo Domingo, and all Spanish citizens, including the Black Auxiliaries, were ordered to leave the island.⁵

The Black Auxiliaries under the command of Jean-François were ordered to various port towns along the Spanish Empire's periphery. Some were destined for Spain's port city of Cádiz; some settled in St. Augustine in Spanish Florida, and some took the shortest journey across the Caribbean Sea to the Central American coast. The largest of these, commanded by Marshal Juan Santiago, landed in Trujillo, Honduras in the Kingdom of Guatemala. The decision to employ armed black rebels from Saint Domingue in Central America stoked apprehensions within the local Spanish government, however the Black Auxiliaries were critical to the defense of the province when foreign powers, such as Great Britain, threatened Spanish territory. Additionally, the Trujillo settlement was surrounded by competing groups of Miskitu Indians, largely allied to the enemy British in the north, but willing to play the imperial powers against each other. Settling the battle tested black troops in the midst of this important trading center on a Spanish port town was crucial for Spain's defense against encroaching British settlements, naval attacks, and contraband trade.

However, it was not only the Spanish government who benefitted from the alliance. It was a mutually dependent partnership. In certain conditions, most notably during times of political and military flux, Africans and African descendants were able to exploit their circumstances to gain leverage within slave systems. These exploitations manifested in various ways, particularly in cultural and societal shifts for the black community whereby they traded one system for another in terms favorable to their group. This is apparent in the Black Auxiliary Troops' arguably vertical social movement from the subjugated environment on revolutionary

⁵ The Treaty of Basle signaled the end of the War of the First Coalition as part of the French Revolutionary Wars; John Huxtable Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Saint Domingue to the more autonomous and better socially, culturally, and politically situated atmosphere within Honduras and Nicaragua. Using political diplomacy learned during their negotiations with the Spanish, French, and British on Saint Domingue, the black community forced the hand of the Spanish crown to accommodate their requests.

In Central America the Spanish and the Black Auxiliary leaders disputed over recognition of their rank and pay. However, the black troops were well informed on their royal prerogatives and understood how to manipulate the system in order to demand their own privileges such as higher pay, rank and land holdings. My dissertation argues that the Black Auxiliaries used their military service and their familiarity with the Atlantic World's political instability to negotiate for freedoms, rights and autonomy, both in Saint Domingue and then later in peripheral zones in Spanish America.

This dissertation makes a series of critical interventions in fields of the Black Atlantic, African Diaspora, Spanish Borderlands, and the Haitian Revolution. By examining the spaces in between colonial powers and revolutionary slaves, I am able to expose the cracks in the slave systems under imperial control. With good cause, scholarship on the Black Atlantic especially in the revolutionary era is heavily weighted towards slave systems and slave experiences. Paul Gilroy's 1993 book *The Black Atlantic* attempted to reverse the idea of an innocent and progressive Western modernity.⁶ Although Gilroy's work spoke to an intellectual current, he has been cited in many disciplines for exciting a new cross-cultural and especially Atlantic perspective. This historiography was well needed for Anglo Atlantic slave studies, however scholars of the Haitian Revolution have been preaching this evolution ever since C.L.R. James compared the black

⁶ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

rebels to the French revolutionary Jacobins.⁷ Today the Black Atlantic is finally starting to engage with the Spanish Atlantic, which has traditionally incorporated the historiography of slave studies and African Diaspora into its field.⁸

My dissertation is indebted to the countless scholars who have painstakingly detailed the political, social, military, and economic history of the Haitian Revolution, beginning of course with *The Black Jacobins*, an account which is still the first stop for all historians of this rebellion. James' somewhat Marxist account was pioneering work and has led to a number of other interpretations on the Haitian Revolution as a whole. Laurent Dubois' popular account *Avengers of the New World* is perhaps the most readable of all scholarly texts, however many look to Carolyn Fick, David Geggus, John Garrigus, and Dubois' other work in order to work through the archival nitty gritty.⁹ These are just a few of the scholars working on the Haitian Revolution today, but with few exceptions, all limit their work primarily to the French archival records. Only a few scholars step outside the national boundary to look at the Spanish documents which are of immense significance. David Geggus' chapter on the auxiliary leaders had helped guide my own work, and Jane Lander's work on Georges Biassou in St. Augustine, Florida has provided a theoretical and methodological pattern by which I can better understand the group under Juan Santiago in Trujillo, Honduras. My focus on the Black Auxiliaries in Central America will not

⁷ Vincent Brown's groundbreaking article for social death theorists also directed Anglo Black Atlantic scholars to Spanish Black Atlantic historiography. Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009).

⁸ Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas*, Rethinking the Americas (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Laurent Dubois and Julius Sherrard Scott, *Origins of the Black Atlantic, Rewriting Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁹ Philippe R. Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence, 1801-1804*, Atlantic Crossings (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011); Malick W. Ghachem, *The Old Regime and the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti Comprehending a View of the Principal Transactions in the Revolution of Saint Domingo: With Its Ancient and Modern State* ([London]: James Cundee, 1805); M.R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 1995).

only help track the specific history of this community, it will also help increase our understanding of the Spanish significance in the Haitian Revolution.

One distinguishing characteristic for the African Diaspora in colonial Latin America is “the degree to which the black experience was defined not just by slavery but by freedom.”¹⁰ There was a wide variety of roles available to the many African descendants in eighteenth century Latin America. Slavery was obviously a majority system for blacks in the Spanish world, but it was escapable in a few ways. Military service was one of these and scholars throughout the Spanish Atlantic examine the vagaries of the royal legal structures and how they were enacted in local systems.¹¹ While negotiating with the royalist French, Jean-François made sure to continually stress his allegiance to “god and the king,” reiterating his communities’ monarchical tendencies. When he switched to Spanish allegiance, this rhetoric helped cement their political loyalties to the king rather than the republican politics which Spain feared.

¹⁰ On the African experience in Latin America, see Rina Cáceres, "On the Frontiers of the African Diaspora in Central America: The African Origins of San Fernando De Omoa," in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and David Vincent Trotman (London; New York: Continuum, 2003); Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe, "Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place," (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Paul Lokken, "Marriage as Slave Emancipation in 17th Century Guatemala," *The Americas* 58, no. 2 (2001); Matthew Restall and Jane Landers, "The African Experience in Early Spanish America. [Introduction]," *ibid.* 57(2000); Matthew Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America," *ibid.*; Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall, *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); on blacks in the urban Atlantic, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury, *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, Early Modern Americas (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Herbert S. Klein and Ben Vinson, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole, and Ben Vinson, *Africans to Spanish America: Expanding the Diaspora*, New Black Studies Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Vinson and Restall, *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*; Ben Vinson, "Introduction: African (Black) Diaspora History, Latin American History," *The Americas* 63, no. 1 (2006); Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio De Janeiro* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); quote from Ben Vinson, "The Black Experience in Colonial Latin America," (Oxford Bibliographies Online: Latin American Studies).

¹¹ Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001); Evelyn P. Jennings, "Paths to Freedom: Imperial Defense and Manumission in Havana, 1762-1800," in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, ed. Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2009); Jane Landers, "Transforming Bondsmen into Vassals: Arming Slaves in Colonial Spanish America," in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2006); Laurent Dubois, "Citizen Soldiers: Emancipation and Military Service in the Revolutionary French Caribbean," *ibid.*

The Black Auxiliary Troops represent a crucial experience for analysis of a heterogeneous group of African descendants in late eighteenth century Caribbean and Latin America, although difficulties arise when trying to classify the Black Auxiliary Troops under specific identity structures. Those who were born on the French colony understood the slave system and plantation culture, but they were not all plantation slaves. Like Jean-François, some were free black maroons escaped from an urban slave experience. Similarly, the Auxiliaries did not identify as French. They often claimed their allegiance to General Jean-François, which suggests a community identity based on close family networks. In many ways, their group identity mirrors Alida Metcalf's go-betweens during Brazilian colonization who used physical, intellectual, political, and cultural practices to negotiate their terms of interaction. Yanna Yannakakis' indigenous intermediaries explain how individuals located in a middle ground between the colonial authority and a local community could navigate these sides in order to best produce their desired identity. The Black Auxiliaries also existed in a middle ground. Their experience and observations were invaluable to the controlling party, but their Saint Domingue experience and their legal and political negotiations with the crown gave them power over their controllers.¹²

This middle ground in between cultures, peoples and empires has since given way to a more nuanced view of the porous and multidirectional connections of imperial boundaries. Spanish Borderlands history in Latin American geographies has greatly benefitted from these political and cultural entanglements in the African-indigenous experience.¹³ While the extensive

¹² Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being in-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹³ The borderlands history is extensive. For general introductions, see Daniel H. Usner, *American Indians in the Lower Mississippi Valley: Social and Economic Histories*, Indians of the Southeast (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples

Borderlands historiography is useful for providing Spanish-Anglo contact points, the newer work incorporating indigenous-African relationships (especially Black Seminoles) examines the ways in which Afro-Latin groups who tend to congregate in borderland zones used their community cohesion to navigate the social, political, religious, military, and economic perimeters set in place by Atlantic powers.¹⁴ In similar ways to the Black Auxiliaries, these groups (such as the Miskitu Indians) used their knowledge of the Atlantic empires' territorial conflicts to carve out space for themselves in the political and social contact zones. Their status as powerful third parties with fluctuating alliances made them useful to the British and Spanish along the borderlands of the Atlantic coasts.¹⁵ These zones of interconnection, including troop movement, trade movement, and the transfer of ideas, have become one of the defining characteristics of Atlantic World history.

in between in North American History," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (1999); Andrew R. L. Cayton, Fredrika J. Teute, and Omohundro Institute of Early American History & Culture., *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Robert H. Jackson, *New Views of Borderlands History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); David Weber, "Turner, the Boltonians, and the Borderlands," *American Historical Review* 91(1986); Daniel Usner, "Borderlands," in *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).; for extensive bibliography, see Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007).

¹⁴ On the Black Seminoles, see Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*; "Black Frontier Settlements in Spanish Colonial Florida," *OAH Magazine of History* 3, no. 2 (1988); "Black Community and Culture in the Southeastern Borderlands," *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 1 (1998); Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Alcione M. Amos, and Thomas P. Senter, *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-Seeking People* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996); Rebecca Bateman, *Africans and Indians: A Comparative Study of the Black Carib and Black Seminole*, ed. Norman E. Whitten and Arlene Torres (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ On the African-indigenous in Latin America, see Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009); Juliet Hooker, "Race and the Space of Citizenship: The Mosquito Coast and the Place of Blackness and Indigeneity in Nicaragua," in *Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place*, ed. Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Karl H. Offen, "The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu: The Colonial Origins and Geography of Intra-Miskitu Differentiation in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras," *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 2 (2002); Karl Offen, "A Place between Empires: Africans and Afro-Amerindians in Colonial Mosquitia," in *Africans in the Americas: Making Lives in a New World, 1675-1825* (University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados: Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, March 14-16, 2013).

Ira Berlin's 2000 work *Many Thousands Gone* turned to the cultural brokers of the Atlantic World's African population and found that many were indeed much more than mere mediators. These individuals moved fluidly with "knowledge and experience," and Berlin termed them Atlantic Creoles for their "linguistic dexterity, cultural plasticity, and social agility." They were in a strategic position for bargaining with European traders but their middling position also made them vulnerable to be ostracized, scapegoated, enslaved and attacked. What was most unique in Berlin's Atlantic Creoles (as opposed to Metcalf's go-betweens) was his aggressive argument for African-American agency. Berlin's Atlantic Creoles "drew upon the traditional skills of middlemen and cultural brokers" and found their place as sailors, interpreters, merchants and artisans.¹⁶

Black Atlantic scholars use Atlantic Creoles to examine intermediaries existing alongside or in the middle of two or more worlds. Jane Landers's 2010 book *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* successfully charted the cultural intermediaries across not just Spanish boundaries, but also along English, French, African and Native American political boundaries. The empires' military wars in the Age of Revolutions created quickly shifting atmospheres of political currents and Landers demonstrated how Atlantic Creoles "were often critical to the balance of power and soon became adept at interpreting political events and manipulating them, when possible, to achieve freedom." These Atlantic Creoles were much more than just middlemen, and very rarely did they occupy neutral mediator roles. They were "extraordinarily mobil, both geographically and socially" and their primary goals were to find openings and exploit the moment to free themselves. Overall, the experiences of all such middle groups are based on interconnected relations of power, methods of communication, and very precise roles as individuals within larger

¹⁶ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

Atlantic World systems, and my dissertation uses these analyses of middlemen and Atlantic Creoles in order to better understand the brokering strategies from the Black Auxiliaries.¹⁷

Once the Black Auxiliaries dispersed throughout the Spanish Atlantic Empire, they encountered new forms of government and local culture which tested their community strength and organization. Juan Santiago's group was sent to the coastal Honduras region in the midst of indigenous Maya to the north and Miskitu Indians to the south and west. While Spanish or Afro-Latin families predominantly populated the Spanish towns, the mountains surrounding the coastal forts were dominated by indigenous communities, some friendly and some not so friendly. Writing the history of a cohesive community that moves into an indigenous space is well-covered ground for a number of Early American historians. Claudio Saunt and Andrew Frank explore the importance of racial intermarriage among the Creeks and African American partners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Tiya Miles uses the rebranded biography methodology to examine a new perspective on the American story, a family history of Shoe Boots, a famed Cherokee warrior and successful farmer, and Doll, an African slave he acquired in the late 1790s. Miles uses this family history to illuminate the intersection of race, gender, class, and nation; the family is the barometer for society, reflecting its social atmosphere and change.¹⁸

While much of my project relies on official archival sources, my dissertation is primarily concerned with the history of the Black Auxiliaries who did not tend to leave large volumes of material on their motivations, philosophies, and activities. Therefore, I rely on the methodological approach of resistant reading in order to move beyond the dominant political or

¹⁷ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*.

¹⁸ Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*, American Crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Andrew Frank, *Creeks & Southerners: Biculturalism on the Early American Frontier*, Indians of the Southeast (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

cultural narrative and challenge the face value representation of the text. More commonly termed reading against the grain, resistant reading is useful for scholars who wish to scrutinize groups who do not traditionally write for themselves but are often written about from a competing group. The dominant vision tends to project distorted truths or manufactured histories onto these subaltern groups. A resistant reading of the text helps reconstruct the covert history of these groups and repattern the overt history of the dominant group.

Resistant reading for subaltern communities is usually more accessible than analysis of individuals. Community structure and network analysis allow us to assume theoretical models than can help round out the picture of these groups that tend to hide in the narrative. Anthony Cohen's model of community as a relational experience is uniquely suited to analysis of the Black Auxiliaries. Cohen suggested that we can better understand a community if it is in opposition to another.¹⁹ The Black Auxiliaries were continually in opposition to various other community structures such as the French colonial planters, Spanish officials, and local military commanders. We know a lot about these more overt communities which make it easier to imagine ways in which the Auxiliaries navigated the relationships. These oppositional communities help to define the network of the Black Auxiliaries, but they do not constrain them into a single box. Adaptation defines the Black Auxiliaries, and while it might make them difficult to label, we should be excited to try and understand such a dynamic group.

The strongest ties of community are found within social networks in family, church, work, neighborhood and civic parameters.²⁰ The Black Auxiliary community begins on Saint Domingue under their military identity, however once on Spanish soil they begin to branch out into other identities such as landowners, priests, heads of families, as well as military

¹⁹ Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Key Ideas (London; New York: Routledge, (1985) 2007).

²⁰ G. Clare Wenger, "A Comparison of Urban and Rural Support Networks," *Ageing and Society* 15 (1995).

commanders. The Black Auxiliaries can be thought of as one example useful for analysis under network theory defined as the social construct between a group of individuals and their relationships to one another.²¹ These relationships, or ties, exist along a broad dimension of types. For instance, communication ties relate who talks to whom, while formal ties look at who reports to whom. There are also ties in affective areas (marriage) or material and work (military or slavery) proximity (townships or forts) or cognitive (name dropping). Networks are often multiplex, meaning individuals share more than one type of tie and commonly with varying strengths. For instance, strong ties between family members might also include weak ties of geographic proximity. Katz observed that “strong ties are particularly valuable when an individual seeks socioeconomic support...[while] weak ties are more valuable when individuals are seeking diverse or unique information from someone outside their regular frequent contacts.”²²

One way to think of the multiplex ties between the Black Auxiliaries is to consider the relationship between Jean-François and Biassou. For instance, when it suited them, they promoted the strength of their communicative and formal ties by advocating similar interests for the peace commissions in 1791 or the Spanish alliance in 1793. However once personal rivalry

²¹ Nancy Katz et al., "Network Theory and Small Groups," *Small Group Research* 35, no. 3 (2004).; See also, Nihad M. Farooq, *New World Networks*, vol. 21: 2, Letters (Vanderbilt University: Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, 2013); Charles Kadushin, *Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); For network analysis and early America, see Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); on the British Atlantic, see Lorena Walsh, "Community Networks in Early Chesapeake," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Lois Green Carr, et al. (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988); David Hancock, "The Trouble with Networks: Managing the Scots' Early-Modern Madeira Trade," *Business History Review* 79(Autumn 2005); on the Spanish Atlantic, see Yannakakis, *The Art of Being in-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*; on the French Atlantic, see R. Darrell Meadows, "Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809," *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (2000); on the Mosquito Coast, see M. D. Olien, "Micro/Macro-Level Linkages: Regional Political Structures on the Mosquito Coast, 1845-1864," *Ethnohistory* 34, no. 3 (1987); and on the broader Atlantic economic and network analysis, see David Hancock, "The Triumphs of Mercury: Connection and Control in the Emerging Atlantic Economy," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

²² Katz et al., "Network Theory and Small Groups," 309.

began to dissolve their formal ties, many other relationships, even though still strong (materiality, work, proximity), began to suffer. The Jean-François/Biassou network was effective on Saint Domingue, although once it began to break down due to the leaders' relationship problems it needed to be altered so that the fuller Black Auxiliary network did not suffer. Thus in some ways it might have been prudent for the 1795 Treaty of Basle to have come about when it did. The network could not fully sustain itself with the disintegration of the leadership, therefore a proximity weakening proved the most effective way for the ties to remain politically strong without the necessity for individual or personal strength.

Just as network theory is a useful tool to explain the ties between the Black Auxiliaries in terms of their community strengths and weaknesses, so also prosopographical research can help illustrate the collective and communal characteristics of historical groups whose individual biographies are largely untraceable. Prosopography relies heavily on data sets of summary details. For instance, in the "Legacies of British Slave-Ownership" database, the framework includes summary details such as colony and parish; estates and owners; slave claims, names, numbers, awardees; enslaved names; compensation; etc. Since these datasets often contain large amounts of material, prosopographical is usually best conducted within a consortium. For instance, the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database is constantly being updated by a number of scholars, and the information available is heavily mined in various social science arenas.

Although my work on the Black Auxiliaries makes use of prosopographical theories, my datasets are only just now emerging. It will take many more years to put together a strong database on the Auxiliary troops. Currently, the most easily accessible materials are the census records from the Spanish period, 1796 and onward. These include individuals described by surname and linked through family groups. In some cases they also include ethnicity, labor skills

and ages. One particular census includes the recorded wishes of each family head when asked to give his choice for the immediate future in the Spanish hinterlands. Additional materials include the birth, marriage, death, and godparentage records from the Spanish ecclesiastical records found in the Mormon family search database. This information on the Black Auxiliaries is mingled among the records with other townspeople and thus will take an extensive data mining project to put them into a useable order. Second, to round out the history of the Black Auxiliary community, one must look to their time on Saint Domingue. Studies on the Haitian Revolution have given us a wealth of information on the whys, hows, and wheres of the revolution, and at times these histories have delved closely into the specifics of slave statistics and the slave trade.²³ However it would be extremely useful to look closely at records on plantations in the northern region, specifically those around Cap Français, to discover any census data on the plantation slaves, urban slaves, maroon settlements, and free black communities. Finally, if one were to succeed in discovering particular biographical data from the plantation sets, it could help illuminate the linkages to slave ships and ports of embarkation and debarkation. With any luck, one might discover West African affiliations in ancestry and community. These latter goals are far in the future however. What remains for the present are continued examinations on the biographies of the Black Auxiliary leaders who show up most often in the Spanish records.

One of the more recent historiographical turns within the Black Atlantic has been the focus on biography and autobiography of colonial era African descended people.²⁴ Biography in the mid-century tended to focus on political statesmen, economic tradesmen, and military

²³ David Geggus, "Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records," *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 1 (1989); "Slave Society in the Sugar Plantation Zones of Saint Domingue and the Revolution of 1791–93," *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies* 20, no. 2 (1999).

²⁴ Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, *Biography and the Black Atlantic*, Early Modern Americas (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

leaders, however now scholars of the Black Atlantic are reflecting on the opportunities and limitations of the slave and free black communities.²⁵ Methodological challenges are numerous, but scholars are managing to piece together remarkably detailed and evocative histories recreating the lives of previously unknown people. Of course, the reconstruction process is not easy as historians are only able to typically recover fragments of a life, “a surviving shard or two” which is meant to stand in for a whole experience.

Application of these challenges towards an examination on the life of Jean-François can help us work through some of the difficulties in piecing together his character. For instance, the black leaders’ continual application of the slave system, while at the same time operating at the head of a garrison of ex-slaves fighting for their freedom, smacks modern readers of hypocrisy and deceit. Additionally, readers will often express astonishment at Jean-François’ willingness to submit his own troops back into French slavery and the plantation system. To maneuver around these contradictions, I suggest that we consider Jean-François in two ways. First, we should take into account the historical context of the late eighteenth century wherein abolitionist rhetoric often suggested a restructuring of the system, not wholesale demolition and destruction of the slave system itself. Second, I argue that it is not necessary for Jean-François to be only one thing or to present a unified personality to the world. People are complex and capable of compartmentalizing various irreconcilable arenas in their life.²⁶

In Lisa Lindsay’s edited volume, Joseph Miller reflects on the power of biography, suggesting that while traditional historical work can tend toward “broad generalizations and

²⁵ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*; For Equiano, see Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); A new biography database is available, Paul Lovejoy et al., "Slave Biographies: The Atlantic Database Network," ed. Michigan State University (slavebiographies.org).

²⁶ Consider Thomas Jefferson who managed to argue against slavery while owning slaves. Some scholars choose to wrestle with Jefferson’s character suggesting either compartmentalization, self-deceit, a political point of view versus a personal view, etc. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

grand preconceptions,” biography reminds us “that even seemingly vast, impersonal processes such as slave trading and commercialization were *experienced*.”²⁷ To put your reader into the process of a life is to reveal the contexts, decisions, and complexities behind that life. It suggests that the individual is not a generic model, and most likely made poor and confusing decisions. The outcome of a biographical construct can help remind us to avoid reduction, move beyond the static appraisal of an historical construct, and look instead to the strategies of the individual.

Finally, a brief word on racial designations is in order. Any scholarship wrestling with the Black Atlantic will quickly encounter the difficulties of using racial designations (white, black, mulatto) as categories. The term mulatto however, is misleading, as it could register anyone of mixed African and European descent.²⁸ While the contemporary communities inclined towards describing free black elites as mulatto, in reality anyone of any social category, free or enslaved, theoretically could be mulatto. Therefore, the point of labeling someone a mulatto could denote a racial category, but it could also explain and define social status. The term mulatto exposed a bias depending on how they used it, thus muddying the waters even more. For instance, at one point Gros runs across an African descendant named Aubert; Gros labels him mulatto but there is no indication whether this racial or social category is accurate. The more telling explanation is that Gros liked Aubert, calling him “a most excellent mulattoe,” which was a way of setting him apart from the “negroes” or slaves that Gros was scared of.

There are very few easy ways to remove oneself from the racial categorization arguments except to try and shed some light on the contemporary experience and then move on.²⁹

²⁷ Joseph Miller, "A Historical Appreciation of the Biographical Turn," in *Biography and the Black Atlantic*, ed. Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), italics in original.

²⁸ Paul Lokken, "Transforming Mulatto Identity in Colonial Guatemala and El Salvador," *History and Social Sciences Faculty Journal Articles* (2004); Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 5-6.

²⁹ Haitian Revolution history is particularly fraught with hazards if we do not keep in mind the socially and politically diverse communities that made up the various antagonists in the rebellion. Enslaved communities of

Therefore, using Laurent Dubois' example as my guide, albeit in translation,³⁰ I avoid using the term mulatto which racializes a complex social and economic reality. Instead I will use the term "free black" to describe anyone of African descent who is not legally enslaved. If the sources specifically label an individual as a mulatto, I will make that distinction and then return to the term free black for analysis. Regarding the enslaved community, usually the records denote these individuals as "negroes" by which they mean slave, not black as it is in the English. For this categorization, I will term them slaves, if so recorded by the documents. Finally, within military regimental descriptions in order to distinguish the "mulattoes" as opposed to the "negroes" as happens so often in the white accounts, I characterize the first group the free black leaders and the other group the black troops since often the free blacks made up the officer lists while the slaves were generally soldiers.

This project is a historical work drawing primarily material from a number of different archival sources in Spanish and English records. The majority of my records are from three archival institutions: the Archivo General de las Indias (AGI) in Sevilla, Spain, the Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) in Simancas, Spain, and the Archivo General de CentroAmerica (AGCA) in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The AGI records are primarily civil and state records; they include correspondence written between the ministers of Spain and the governors of Santo Domingo and Havana. These records generally stick to the official correspondence between the politicians, but since Santo Domingo Governor Joaquín García also acted as Jean-François' military commander, at times these documents contain information on the troop movements,

African descent often rebelled against the planter elite, although not exclusively. Free African descendants were enormously diverse, and they were just as likely to join with the slaves and fight against the planters or do the opposite.

³⁰ Dubois opts for *gens de couleur*, which he translates as "free people of color" or "free-coloreds." Since most of my records come from the Spanish, I will not venture into the French designations. Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 6.

army conditions, and negotiation tactics. The AGS primarily provides information on these military maneuvers and the “Top Secret” correspondence of military commanders. These documents relate the particulars of battles, the trade and treaty negotiations, and any slave or runaway concerns which often occur between Empires. The AGCA records are local documents on the state of the *audiencia* of Guatemala which included the states of Honduras and Nicaragua. At times there are petitions made by the Black Auxiliaries to the civil leadership in Guatemala City and between the local regiment commanders of Trujillo and other townships regarding the Black Auxiliary community. There is one surviving letter between Jean-François and Juan Santiago which illustrate their methods of negotiation and community cohesion. The Spanish judiciously recorded entry and exit of community groups into their territory. Census records and military payment schedules document population numbers, but also gender, economic status, occupations, family memberships including slaves, and occasional entries which quote the wishes of the individual.

Unfortunately the Catholic archdiocese records for Central America are closed to outside researchers, however the Mormon Church’s Family Records are duplicates of the ecclesiastical registers, and they contain extensive data on census and god-parentage in the late colonial period. Registers state the legal status of the individuals as slave or free and also designate their color as black, *pardos*, or *morenos*. In the case of the Black Auxiliaries, the Spanish government often labeled them under the Black Auxiliary designation, but also described them as “Negros Franceses” or French Blacks. These are distinct social classifications as well as a racial ones, and I have tracked this designation in the civil records of the AGCA to at least 1818, the eve of Latin American independence. The ecclesiastical records often can lead to understand the social networks that bind individuals to specific communities. For instance, children born in Trujillo

Honduras with a French name could suggest that the family still identifies with their Saint Domingue background. Even if the name is a Spanish version, for instance Juan Francisco instead of Jean-François, it suggests a direct link to the leader of the Black Auxiliary community. In a few cases under the AGCA census records the Black Auxiliaries are referred to by names which also describe their general ethnic grouping or their port of embarkation in Africa, such as “Senegal.”³¹

To contextualize the Atlantic history of the Black Auxiliaries, I examine their interactions with the British settlers and navy in British Honduras (Belize). English sources from the British National Archives (BNA) and the British Library (BL) contain documents pertaining to the war effort, including missives from the British 5th West India Regiment and petitions to the Queen concerning military resistance and settlement defense. Likewise, the national archive in Belize at Belmopan (BARS) contains information concerned with superintendency and command of the English troops, licensed trade with Spanish colonies, and accommodation of troops. The maps, plans, barracks drawings and blueprints explain the British plans for military attack against the Spanish fort in Trujillo, Honduras. I examine these accommodations and maneuvers against the Spanish records to uncover manipulations or misrepresentations in official reports on military attacks.

In two final archival sources I make use of a single manuscript within collections from the Newberry Library and the Bibliothèque Municipale de Roen. The Newberry Library hosts an extensive compendium of Latin American history, most of it found within the Ayer collection. I examine Ayer MS 1034, a letter from Juan de Araoz to Juan de Lángara in Havana in 1797. This letter explains a bloodless naval encounter between the British and the Spanish over the

³¹ AGCA, A2/120/2265 f. 41v.

island of Roatán with Black Auxiliary troops and indigenous Black Caribs among the fighting forces. The last comes from the Rouen archive in the French Bibliothèque Minicipale de Roen (BM). Manuscript Leber 5847 is titled “Récit du massacre arrivé au Fort Dauphin le 7 juillet 1794” and gives us a French royalist colonist’s perspective on the Fort Dauphin massacre committed by Jean-François’ black troops. I am extremely indebted to Frances Kolb for her translation of this document.

In addition to archival sources, I also use contemporary published narratives, primarily captivity narratives, to examine the lived experience of both whites and blacks on the Saint Domingue island during the revolution. For instance, a 1792 English version of Monsieur Gabriel le Gros’ memoirs as a prisoner during the Haitian Revolution is particularly useful for my project since Gros was a secretary to Jean-François, one of the leaders of the Black Auxiliary Troops. Other published narratives include the document readers compiled by Jeremy Popkin and David Geggus. Popkin’s documents focus heavily on white French perspectives, especially in the southern region of Saint Domingue. Geggus chose to include documents from a more free black and slave experience. Along with traditional archival sources and narratives, my project also uses newspaper articles from British and American papers so as to get a sense of the international perspective regarding the Saint Domingue rebellion.

Chapter 1

Enlightenment and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century Spanish Atlantic

“Men are born free and remain free and equal in rights”

Spain in the Enlightenment

So begins one of the masterpieces culminated from the texts of enlightenment ideal. Enlightenment thought spread quickly throughout northern Europe and England through the text of Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, belatedly arriving in the kingdom of Spain. Until recently, scholars considered this delayed arrival as evidence that enlightenment ideas in Spain were “meekly derivative and imitative of foreign models.”¹ They would point to the French and American Revolution as natural consequences of enlightenment ideals, however recent scholarship for the Spanish Atlantic is now showing the independence movement as part of this “age of democratic revolutions” and thus should be considered as an enlightenment inspired outcome. Gabriel Paquette highlights the evidence for such claims in Spanish colonies such as New Granada, where creoles in 1794 were arrested for having in their possession the Constitution of Philadelphia, or the 1797 conspiracy in La Guaira which appealed to ideals of equality and liberty. Republicans in eighteenth century Spanish America are traditionally called precursors to the independence movement and influenced by enlightenment thinkers. But Spain's republicans in the colonies did not often find sympathetic treatment from the metropole. During the American war for independence, the Spanish crown worried that word would get back to the Spanish colonies of the assistance to the colonial's fight against the British king and it could spark similar rebellions. Later on, Spanish historians “blamed the French Revolution and its ‘contagion

¹ Gabriel Paquette, "The Dissolution of the Spanish Atlantic Monarchy," *Historical Journal* 52, no. 1 (2009).

of ideas' for Spain's demise," lamenting the 'ruinous consequences' of Encyclopedism. And yet, enlightenment ideas came to the peninsula, carried across by foreign travelers, spread through universities, and co-opted in the court by politicians seeking to use these new ideas for Spanish hegemony. The Spanish crown sought to accrue political power into a more centralized state, and one of the results were the mid-century Bourbon Reforms.²

Here we see the popular dichotomy of the 'two Spains': one, steeped in tradition and its peninsular rule, the other a "nefarious counterpart, inspired by sinister foreign influences." Recent work has not entirely dissolved the theory of the two Spains, however it has created more complexity in the structures. The medieval Spain of tradition and rule is shown to have been heavily influenced by enlightenment idealism while the 'foreign influences' of proto-republicans are now better seen as developing "within and in support of the established order, not outside and against it."³

Where does this leave us on the matter of Spanish enlightenment in the eighteenth century? For one thing, we should be clear that enlightenment thought did not leave the *peninsulares* untouched. In many ways, a shift towards scientism and reasoned politics was a particular boon for the Hapsburg crown. Faced with declining revenues from centuries of mismanagement, the Spanish crown sought new ways to structure the realm and looked to innovators in the foreign communities as inspiration for change.

² The comprehensive introduction to Enlightenment and the Bourbon Reforms is the Stein trilogy, Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles Iii, 1759-1789* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); B.H. Stein and S.J. Stein, *Edge of Crisis: War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789-1808* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); S.J. Stein and B.H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); see also David J. Weber, *Bárbaros: Spaniards and Their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, Western Americana Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); John Huxtable Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); J. Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

³ Paquette, "The Dissolution of the Spanish Atlantic Monarchy," 193, 108fn.

By the end of the seventeenth century, Spain was in need of massive reform. Centuries of economic and political mismanagement had left Spain constantly teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. Its debts had mounted and its imperial rivals, empowered by their own colonies, were steadily encroaching on Spain's territory in the Americas. Spain's military had been neglected so that by 1700 it had effectively slipped from the ranks of the great powers. When the Habsburg ruler Charles II died without an heir and the French Bourbon dynasty assumed control of the crown, what followed was a century long effort to reform the massive colonial system. The Bourbon Reforms instituted a series of drastic changes throughout the system and transformed the political and economic reality of Spanish ministry in the colonies.

The political structure shifted towards the Spanish center, reducing (somewhat ineffectively) the power centers of the colonial *audiencias*. Ministers in Cadiz reined in their *autodores* in the colonies, and everyone scrutinized the treasury records. Economically, Spain was used to mining their colonies in the Americas, shipping the goods to Spain and then immediately moving those goods into other neighboring European countries. The illicit and illegal trade that circumvented this arduous process was vast, and Spain lost millions of dollars through piracy and contraband trade. The Reforms attempted to stem this flow and considered rewriting the trade agreements so that Spain could take a bigger cut from their mining operations instead of losing all of the income on the sea.

Bourbon Reforms and O'Reilly's *Reglamentos*

The first half of the century aimed at improving Spain's economic and political structure, although these reforms were generally considered ineffective. When King Charles III gained the

throne in 1759, he expanded the reform program, especially in the Caribbean.⁴ Considered a progressive ruler influenced by the French enlightenment, Charles III replaced the Habsburg administrative system with the French intendant system. Madrid halted the advances that *Criollos* had made in the local bureaucracy and returned power to the *peninsulares*. Tax collection was more efficient under the intendancy and the "Decree of Free Trade" allowed Spanish ports in the Americas to trade directly with each other instead of restricting trade to the four legal colonial ports. While historians agree that the Bourbon Reforms represent a century-long effort to reform and renovate the Spanish empire, it is still hotly debated to what extent these Reforms actually established tighter political, economic and administrative control.

One accepted revision involves the Reforms' reorganization of the Spanish military. For centuries Spain had used their slaves to supplement their military regulars⁵ and had extensive legal and military traditions of arming blacks and encouraging resettlement of fugitive slaves.⁶ It was not extraordinary for Spanish military regulars to include captured Saracen slaves from the *Reconquista* era, and this legal tradition (not legal code) evolved into the colonization era.⁷ The creation of the militias were founded upon two tenants: first, self-defense was an obligation of medieval Castilian law, and second, Castilian subjects were obligated to respond to a call-to-arms for the king. This second obligation extended to agents of the crown, and eventually, the practice of these two laws formed the loose formal requirement of militias. Since the militias were not a

⁴ On Bourbon Reforms and Latin America, see Aline Helg, *Liberty & Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Renée Souldre-LaFrance, *Región e Imperio: El Tolima Grande y Las Reformas Borbónicas En El Siglo XVIII*, Colección Espiral (Bogotá, D.C.: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2004).

⁵ Christopher Leslie Brown, Philip D. Morgan, and Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery Resistance and Abolition., *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); William D. Phillips, *Slavery from Roman Times to the Early Transatlantic Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

⁶ Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Lyle N. McAlister, *The "Fuero Militar" in New Spain, 1764-1800* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974); Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁷ Paul E. Hoffman, *The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean, 1535-1585: Precedent, Patrimonialism, and Royal Parsimony* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

legal code, and since payment and service were difficult to come by, the Spanish officials drew their numbers from outside groups, including slaves. Specific legal rights had been set up for slaves under King Alfonso's thirteenth century law, the *Siete Partidas*, which included ways in which enslaved people might become free⁸. The Catholic legal code gave slaves legitimate pathways to liberty, and eventually one of these paths was set up through military service. As Jane Landers points out, "One route to freedom was via meritorious service to the state, and this came to include armed military service in defense of the Spanish Crown."⁹

During the conquest years in the Americas, Spain included slaves among the military expeditions to help the conquistadors. Used both as soldiers and laborers, Spanish slaves accompanied the Spanish military and settlement groups. Paul Hoffman notes that the "use of blacks as auxiliaries to the white militias is recorded for Havana (1555), Puerto Rico (1557), Cartagena (1560, 1572), and Santo Domingo (1583)."¹⁰ Defense of the colonies were of tantamount importance once the English and Dutch corsairs began to threaten the Spanish Indies. The crown legal tradition for militias became codified in a *cédula* of October 7, 1540. The Spanish crown obligated the West Indies colonies to defend themselves, however the financial strain was placed on the backs of the colonists. This tended to limit the effectiveness of the militias which required men equal to the corsairs. Difficulties with the lack of funds, weapons, discipline, and leadership were overcome through administrative means. But the lack of able bodied and willing men was hard to produce. The crown began to look elsewhere for troops. These sixteenth century additions were assembled from blacks, Indians, and transients, although by the mid eighteenth century, troop fortification was primarily African descended.

⁸ S.P. Scott and S.J. Robert I. Burns, *Las Siete Partidas, Volume 4: Family, Commerce, and the Sea: The Worlds of Women and Merchants, Partidas IV and V* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), xxiv.

⁹ Jane Landers, "Transforming Bondsmen into Vassals: Arming Slaves in Colonial Spanish America," in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2006), 120.

¹⁰ Hoffman, *The Spanish Crown and the Defense of the Caribbean, 1535-1585: Precedent, Patrimonialism, and Royal Parsimony*.

Slaves in the Spanish military were commonplace, from the Saracen Moors of the thirteenth century through the enslaved West Africans of the eighteenth. And yet, centuries of the unregulated military tradition had birthed a hodgepodge of formal military legislation. It was not until Alejandro O'Reilly's 1764 *Reglamento*, inspired during the years of the Bourbon Reforms, that black militias became formally recognized as part of the regular Spanish military.¹¹ Unfortunately, it would take the near decimation of Spain's colonial seats of power during the Seven Years' War to spur the reorganization of their military.

Spain's Entrance in the Seven Years War

Spain formally entered the Seven Years' War in 1762 after signing the French Family Compact.¹² Spain's entrance to the war was meant to assist her survival as a colonial power, however Great Britain succeeded in gaining many of Spain's most valuable seats of power in the Americas, including Spanish Florida, some Caribbean islands in the West Indies, Senegal in West Africa, and most of Spain's Caribbean fleet. Most notably, Great Britain captured Havana and Western Cuba in 1762 during the war and ruled there for a very influential two years, but returned the capital to Spain at the Treaty of Paris.¹³ To compensate their ally, France ceded

¹¹ Bibiano Torres Ramirez, *Alejandro O'reilly En Las Indias* (Sevilla: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, Escuela de estudios hispano-americanos, 1969); for military aspects of the Bourbon Reforms, see A.J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753-1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (University of Tennessee Press, 1986); C.I. Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico: 1760-1810* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977).

¹² For the British theatre, see Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); A.J. O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Incorporated, 2000); for British in Spanish Florida, see Bernard Bailyn and Barbara DeWolfe, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, Distributed by Random House, 1986); regarding postwar Cuba, see Sherry Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753-1815: Crown, Military, and Society*; for Peru, see Leon G. Campbell, *The Military and Society in Colonial Peru, 1750-1810*, Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society Vol. 123 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978).

¹³ Havana under the British, see Elena Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: Slavery, War, and Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (Omohundro Institute/UNC Press, in progress); Havana monopoly, see Allan Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century," in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, ed. Franklin W.

Louisiana to Spain by the Treaty of Fontainebleau in 1762. Spain's loss during the Seven Years War convinced the Madrid counselors that more colonial reform, including better collection of taxes, was necessary for its financial and military supremacy. It clearly demonstrated British naval superiority, and highlighted the weakness of the Spanish defenses.

Plans for further reform began almost immediately following the Seven Years' War. After the Treaty of Paris, Spanish colonial interests were devastated. The Spanish loss of their crown jewel, Havana, to the British, shook Madrid to its core. Spain's naval defenses, though augmented ambitiously during the early part of the Seven Years' War, still did not match the might of the British. Charles III's counselors emphasized military reforms as the foremost necessity, although to revamp those organizations, extensive treasury gains were first needed. These economic reforms emphasized the development of the American colonies, and attempted to make the American system more independent of the royal treasury.

The Havana "defeat opened the way for a profound rethinking of imperial strategy and policy."¹⁴ Once Spain retrieved Havana from the British in exchange for Florida as part of the concessions at the Treaty of Paris, administrators around the Spanish empire took a very close look at the military regulations. Charles III commissioned *visitas-generals*, or inspection agents, to visit the Americas and make recommendations on the reform process. One of these adjudicators was Alejandro O'Reilly, a Dublin born soldier in the Spanish regular army. He would later serve as governor of Louisiana, captain-general of Cadiz, and inspector-general of the Spanish armed forces. O'Reilly and his subordinates, Augustín Crame and Manuel Craywinckel, noted that Cuba's economy depended on the "*situados*" sent from other locales. It also lacked an efficient

Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba*.

¹⁴ Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century;" on Havana in the colonial era, see Alejandro de la Fuente, César García del Pino, and Bernardo Iglesias Delgado, *Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

judicial system and was crippled by the restricted commerce under the Spanish exclusivist policies. “O’Reilly’s major recommendations went to the heart of Spain’s transatlantic system: dispense with expensive peninsular intermediaries, authorize Cuban planters to buy directly from foreign slave depots in the Caribbean, open Cuban ports to direct exchanges with Spanish ports, and lower Cuban customs duties.”¹⁵ In other words, O’Reilly suggested extensive liberalizing reforms.

As a military commander in charge of reforming one of the most important ports in the Spanish empire, O’Reilly naturally looked first to the military formations in Havana. Serious deficiencies to Havana’s defenses were well known to local inhabitants but were ignored or unfinanced by the crown. A local tax tried to shore up the crumbling city wall, but Havana’s defensive fort, Morro Castle, was not fortified with a regular army to walk its walls. Likewise, the regular army was woefully neglected and staffed by undesirable characters. O’Reilly dismissed the handicapped and criminals, keeping only those able-bodied men who were then given new quarters and uniforms. After he completed his military reorganization of the standing army, he proceeded to reorganize the Cuban militia, including the creation of free blacks militia battalions. The resulting reform, known now as O’Reilly’s *Reglamento*, would become the first official recognition of blacks within the Spanish army.¹⁶

The *Reglamento para las milicias de infantería y caballería de la Isla de Cuba*, Chapter one, Article one of the Real Cedula of January 19, 1769, stated, “The militias rule of the island of Cuba is composed hereinafter of five infantry battalions, known by the first two as Volunteer Infantry Regiment of Havana, and the remaining three in Cuba and Bayamo, Puerto del Principe and the four cities. Two battalions of [free-colored] pardos-libres: the first with name of Free Pardos of

¹⁵ Stein and Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759-1789*.

¹⁶ A. Ortiz, *Eighteenth-Century Reforms in the Caribbean: Miguel De Muesas, Governor of Puerto Rico, 1769-76* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983).

Havana, and the second of Free Pardos of Cuba and Bayamo, and one battalion of Free Morenos with the name of the Battalion of Free Morenos of Havana."¹⁷ These militia troops were also given uniforms, salaries, and ranks. While much of this existed previously in Spanish military culture,¹⁸ O'Reilly's *Reglamento* was the first moment it became codified into Spain's regulations.

O'Reilly's *Reglamento* resulted in a more autonomous colonial military that depended heavily on local support and personnel. O'Reilly suggested the colonies help finance their own military, enough to sustain them without metropolitan contributions. The local taxes were raised to finance the military salary and defensive fortifications. Additionally, local *Criollos* and *Morenos* were trained in order to more effectively incorporate the "native population into the burden of defense."¹⁹

O'Reilly's sweeping reforms to improve the fortifications, training, practices, and troop organizations, were quickly approved by the Spanish Crown, and he was soon sent to Puerto Rico to assess the state of the defenses of that colony. He took a complete census of the island and recommended numerous reforms, including the instilling of strict military discipline in the local troops. He insisted that the men serving the defense of the realm receive their pay regularly and directly, rather than indirectly from their commanding officers, a long-standing practice that had led to abuses. "The Spanish military reforms in Puerto Rico, initiated by O'Reilly in 1765 and continued by Muesas in 1769, were based on three degrees: the *Reglamento para la Tropa Veterana de Puerto Rico*, the *Reglamento para las Noticias de Puerto Rico*, and the *Instrucción al Gobernador de Puerto*

¹⁷ *Reglamento Para Las Milicias De Infanteria y Caballeria De La Isla De Cuba: Aprobado Por S.M. y Mandado Que Se Observen Inviolablemente Todos Sus Articulos, Por Real Cédula Expedida En El Pardo á 19 De Enero De 1769; y Que Debe Observarse En Todo Lo Adaptable á Las Tropas De Milicias Del Reyno Del Perú, En Consequencia De Real Orden. Va Al Fin Añadida Una Real Declaracion Sobre Puntos Esenciales De Este Reglamento (1793)*, (Madrid: Por J. de San Martín, 1769; reprinted: Habana: Imprenta de D. Blas de los Olivos, 1777; Lima: [s.n.], 1779), 2-3.

¹⁸ *Eighteenth-Century Reforms in the Caribbean: Miguel De Muesas, Governor of Puerto Rico, 1769-76*, 123.

¹⁹ Kuethe, "Havana in the Eighteenth Century," 24.

Rico. [Just as in Cuba,] these new military regulations [called for] the improved discipline of the Spanish and native troops [and] were accompanied by a detailed plan for the reconstruction of the fortifications in San Juan.”²⁰ Likewise, after his reorganization acts in Havana and Puerto Rico, he traveled to Louisiana with 2,056 regular forces of which included eighty free *pardos* and eighty free *moreno* militia units from Havana. There, he created "La Compagnie des Mulâtres et Nègres Libres de cette colonie de la Louisianne" which included thirty-four men of color.²¹ Just as in the Havana and Puerto Rico units, O'Reilly created "lists of free black males who could be called into military service."²² Although O'Reilly is today known as the father of the Puerto Rican militia, he implemented these structures throughout the whole of the Spanish empire in the Americas.

Even though Spain put a large amount of money into the O'Reilly reforms, some historians question the “efficacy in accomplishing their primary goal - that of defending the empire from foreign aggression.”²³ For examples, there is some contention that O'Reilly's free black militias did not contain significant numbers to be considered truly organized. For instance, some scholars dismiss the Peruvian “militarization” as both a “failure” and having “never [taken] place” due to the failure of the militia to contain and suppress the Tupac Amarú rebellion.²⁴ Kim Hanger suggests in the case of New Orleans, “[p]erhaps French colonials objected to organizing and arming libres-they had previously decried such efforts-and O'Reilly decided not to push his reforms too far and fast.”²⁵ That noted, it is clear that the military reforms in Puerto Rico enacted extraordinary changes, and for smaller changes, we should consider the case of free

²⁰ Ortiz, *Eighteenth-Century Reforms in the Caribbean: Miguel De Mueasas, Governor of Puerto Rico, 1769-76*, 119.

²¹ Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 118.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Ortiz, *Eighteenth-Century Reforms in the Caribbean: Miguel De Mueasas, Governor of Puerto Rico, 1769-76*, 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803*, 118.

pardo, Pedro Simón, who was appointed the captain and commander of the free *pardo* and *moreno* militia in New Orleans over any white commander.²⁶ Just as in the *commercio libre* reforms, the military reforms were successful in some parts of Spanish America and were rejected or outright failed in other parts.²⁷

Black Troops in the Revolutionary Atlantic

Throughout the eighteenth century, especially following O'Reilly's *Reglamentos*, "white colonists increasingly found militia duty an intolerable burden, while free men of color were recognized as the most competent and least expensive defense force available."²⁸ When the American Revolution broke out in 1776, Spain saw a chance to make up for their catastrophic losses incurred in the previous decade and used her newly codified militia groups with some regularity.

While Spain's contribution to the American Revolution is no longer unknown to British and American scholars, the exact nature of her involvement and the significance of her contributions are still debated.²⁹ What is generally agreed upon is that two periods of Spanish activity existed during the American Revolution. From 1775-1779, Spain operated under the guise of official neutrality, but contributed a substantial amount of money through indirect routes. It was only in

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For instance, the commercial indigo system in Guatemala was controlled by native and Spanish merchants under a powerful monopoly which effectively blocked Bourbon attempts at regulation. See, Robinson A. Herrera, *Natives, Europeans, and Africans in Sixteenth-Century Santiago De Guatemala* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Paul Lokken, "Marriage as Slave Emancipation in 17th Century Guatemala," *The Americas* 58, no. 2 (2001); Troy S. Floyd, "The Guatemalan Merchants, the Government, and the Provincianos, 1750-1800," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 41, no. 1 (1961).

²⁸ John Garrigus, "Catalyst or Catastrophe? Saint-Domingue's Free Men of Color and the Battle of Savannah, 1779-1782," *Revista/Review Interamericana* 22, no. 1-2 (1992), 110.

²⁹ For comprehensive analysis on Spain in the American Revolution, see Thomas E. Chavez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); for Spanish intelligence and the influence of policy, see Enrique Fernandez y Fernandez, *Spain's Contribution to the Independence of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Embassy of Spain, 2000).

the latter part of the war, from 1779-1783, that Spain officially joined an alliance with France and the period of hostility occurred. The alliance with France through the Bourbon Family Compact was fueled in part by their opposition to Great Britain's increasing strength, although Spain did not go so far as to make a formal alliance with the American revolutionaries. In fact, Spain went to great lengths to try and conceal the North American aid from their Spanish colonists, making sure that supply shipments were made from French ports. Under their cover of neutrality, Spain attempted to play the field. Chief among their interests was the return of Gibraltar. A Spanish letter to the American commissioner in March 1777 states, "the fate of the colonies interests us very much, and we shall do for them everything that circumstances permit,"³⁰ however Spain simultaneously attempted to act as mediator between France and Great Britain and suggested as compensation for this act, Spain would receive Gibraltar. Great Britain refused, and Spain joined France in the battle for American independence. Nevertheless, in 1779 Spain became an active participant (though still not an official ally of the American colonies) in the American Revolution.

Regardless of Spain's official support of the American colonies, they continually provided financial aid. When shipping materials, naval stores, or foodstuffs, often the supplies came from the Spanish Caribbean colonies.³¹ However, as the battles spilled down into South Carolina, Spain's shipping triangle between Savannah, Havana, and Santo Domingo became disrupted, and Spain needed to protect its interests. Overt military assistance from Spanish regulars entered the colonial fight, and often these military regulars included militia regiments made of free men of color.

³⁰ Fernandez y Fernandez, *Spain's Contribution to the Independence of the United States*, 4.

³¹ In October 1775, two Spanish ships sailing from Central America called at Charleston, SC and sold gunpowder and supplies to a local rebel leader. When the British government formally protested, one of the ships' captains was put on trial, to maintain the appearance of neutrality, but was later acquitted; see, BNA SP 78/297/62.

For instance, shortly following the official entrance of Spain against England in the war, a series of military operations directed by the governor of Louisiana, Bernard de Gálvez, were conducted against the British province in West Florida.³² But Spanish Florida was no stranger to black involvement in military affairs.³³ Jane Landers shows how even from early inception as a colony, Spain's African slaves helped with settlement, land cultivation, and ultimately defense against the English traders and Creek Indians. The black troops under Spanish authority acted in their own interests as well as the crowns. St. Augustine boasted a black militia force as early as the seventeenth century. And when O'Reilly's *Reglamento* was enacted it incorporated these traditional cultural structures into the new political reality. In 1763 Spain traded Florida to great Britain in exchange for the return of Havana. English expansionists aggressively recruited colonists to move into the vacated Spanish towns, vying for land control with the incipient Seminole nation. During the American Revolution, Governor Gálvez made use of the auxiliary black forces from Spanish West Florida (particularly those from St. Augustine) to help drive out the British from their territory.

Gálvez began his campaign against the English Fort Manchac in 1779, about a hundred and fifty miles from New Orleans. Leading a force of men made up of regulars, "60 militiamen, 80 free blacks and mulattoes," Gálvez marched up the Mississippi river gaining additional troops along the way, "reinforced on the way by 600 men of every condition and color."³⁴ In order "to guard against surprises, the colored men and the Indians were ordered to keep ahead of the main body of the troops, at a distance of about three quarters of a mile, and closely to reconnoitre the woods."³⁵ Using the black troops and Indians as scouts reflected the ways in which auxiliary

³² See Bernardo de Gálvez' instruction manual, Bernardo de Gálvez and Donald E. Worcester, *Instructions for Governing the Interior Provinces of New Spain, 1786* (Berkeley [Calif.]: Quivira Society, 1951).

³³ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 27.

³⁴ C. Gayarré, *History of Louisiana: The Spanish Domination* (Redfield, 1854), 126.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

forces were used by both the Spanish and the English, supplementing the regular forces. After taking the forts at Manchac and later at Panmure near Natchez, Gálvez sent the bulk of his militia and supplemental forces back to New Orleans. Gálvez remarked that the conduct of the black troops was “exceedingly useful,” praising them for their generosity and valor and comparing them favorably to whites.³⁶ Eventually, after helping to win battles at Baton Rouge, Mobile, and Pensacola, the Spanish crown awarded medals of distinction and service to a number of *pardo* and *moreno* officers, and the king conferred an annual pension of 240 pesos on the *moreno* commander, Simón Calpha.³⁷

Meanwhile, Great Britain also made use of its African population in the colonies to supplement their military regulars. Although the English mimicked the Spanish playbook and supplemented their troops with free blacks and slaves, the black experience in the British militia was quite dissimilar to the Spanish. Enslaved Africans in British North America employed many tactics to help their struggle to cross from bondage to freedom. Black resistance to bondage in the British Atlantic did not spring unannounced into the revolutionary era. Years of rebellion characterized African defiance of British rule.³⁸ However, just as war catapults inroads into medicine, weaponry, economics, and politics, so also were massive gains to be made using the American independence war for their road to freedom, and they used whatever means available to them.

³⁶ “No merecen menos elogio las compañías de negros y mulatos libres que siempre estuvieron ocupados en las abanzadas, falsos ataques y descubiertas, escopetándose con el enemigo, y portándose en todas ocasiones con tanto valor y generosidad como los blancos. - Sup. á la *Gazeta de Madrid*, 14 de Enero de 1780.” Quoted in Gayarré, *History of Louisiana*, 131.

³⁷ Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places: Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803*, 121.

³⁸ Two pre-American Revolution examples include the 1712 New York Slave Revolt and the 1739 Stono Rebellion; see Peter Charles Hoffer, *Cry Liberty: The Great Stono River Slave Rebellion of 1739*, *New Narratives in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ira Berlin and Leslie M. Harris, *Slavery in New York* (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2005).

Even though British manumission practices were changing rapidly in London, abolition legislation did not follow into the British colonies. However blacks were well aware of the conversations happening across the ocean. Likewise, the Spanish legal system for slavery provided some form of legitimate precedent for an avenue to freedom, and British slaves were aware of the political and legal maneuvers available to Spanish slaves. For instance, in 1773 blacks in Boston petitioned for release from slavery citing the Spanish legal construct of *coartación* - slaves' right to purchase their freedom. Capitalizing on the cries for "Liberty! Liberty!" that were making their way through the British colonies, Boston blacks remarked that even though the Spanish did not have "those sublime ideas of freedom that English men have, [they] are conscious that they have no right to all the services of their fellow-men, we mean the Africans."³⁹ In an astute summation of both the political fervor for freedom from Great Britain, as well as an understanding to capitalize on the British pride of place over Spain, these Boston slaves attempted to use revolutionary rhetoric to advance their road to freedom. Northern colonies saw an increase in freedom and emancipation suits, which if not exactly successful, at least spurred debate in the legislature for abolishing slavery.

Likewise in the southern colonies, the dissatisfaction of British rule produced some disquieting connections to cries of liberty for both whites and blacks. When blacks met in Virginia in 1774 to elect a leader "who was to conduct them...when the English troops should arrive" James Madison suggested the slaves were "foolish" to believe that "revolting to [the

³⁹ Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944); see, Peter Bestes and Other Slaves Petition for Freedom (April 20, 1773), in *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* vol. 1 (New York: Citadel Press, 1951), 7-8. Leaflet in the collection of the New York Historical Society library; full quote, "Even the Spaniards, who have not those sublime ideas of freedom that English men have, are conscious that they have no right to all the service of their fellow-men, we mean the Africans, whom they have purchased with their money; therefore they allow them one day in a week to work for them-selve[s], to enable them to earn money to purchase the residue of their time, which they have a right to demand in such portions as they are able to pay for (a due appraisment of their services being first made, which always stands at the purchase money)."

British]” would bring rewards of their freedom.⁴⁰ In fact, this is precisely what happened, at least insofar as offers of freedom were made. Generally known today as the Black Loyalists, these black militia groups made up an assortment of forces within the British regiments. The Royalist black militia arguably began with Lord Dunmore’s proclamation in 1775 which promised to free black and white bondsmen who came to fight with the British. Dunmore’s British colonial military unit was named the Ethiopian Regiment and immediately doubled his own force of soldiers with the rebel slaves. While Lord Dunmore’s Ethiopian Regiment was not overly successful in terms of military advances, the black regiment in British service provided a symbol of hope for Africans in bondage. Dunmore’s regiment quickly disbanded due to losses and sickness, however many black troops joined another African American military unit titled Clinton’s Black Pioneers. They retained the Ethiopian Regiment motto on their uniforms, “Liberty to Slaves.” Likewise, a runaway slave going by the name of Tye (later, Titus Cornelius) enlisted in the Ethiopian Regiment and later led several successful raids as a loyalist guerilla commander called Colonel Tye.⁴¹ Other regiments included the Jersey Shore Volunteers, the King’s American Dragoons, the Jamaica Rangers, and the Mosquito Shore Volunteers. Ira Berlin showed how the English conscripted black troops in the American Revolution and under the king’s colors, “black slave soldiers helped repulse every Spanish and Indian attack on the colony.”⁴² Although it was customary to offer enlisted slaves the reward of freedom, Berlin noted that in the Carolinas “only a handful of slaves won their freedom through military service, and the English never formally

⁴⁰ *The Papers of James Madison: 16 March 1751–16 December 1779*. vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1:129-130.

⁴¹ For info on the Ethiopian Regiment, the Black Pioneers, and Colonel Tye see, Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); see also, Gary Nash, “The African Americans’ Revolution,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution*, ed. Jane and Edward G. Gray Kamensky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴² Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 66-67; Brown, Morgan, and Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery Resistance and Abolition, *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, 2.

incorporated black men into a regularly constituted militia as did the Spanish.”⁴³ In all cases, using the ploy of freedom as their siren call, England promised free blacks and slaves wages and freedom, respectively, to join up and fight for the King. Many did. Others, however, fought with the rebel colonialists.

Unlike the King’s army which held an arguably more believable promise of freedom, the Continental army provided more equivocal promises. The outbreak of armed conflict between Great Britain and the American colonies required immediate mustering of large militias. American interests had long been using blacks in their military regulars, also promising freedom and wages. However, these promises were often ignored. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress resolved “that an army of 30,000 men be immediately raised” from volunteers. The Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia voted to raise six companies of riflemen. But neither of these statutes defined race or color criteria. As a result, blacks, mostly free African Americans, initially joined the Continental militia. However, not all colonies were comfortable with mixed race companies. For instance, while New Hampshire pledged allegiance to the “United American Colonies,” it excluded “Lunaticks, Idiots and Negroes” from the militia requirement. The Second Continental Congress quickly ratified its integrated army and forbade officers from further enlisting “any Deserter from the Ministerial Army, (or) any Stroller, Negro, or Vagabond.”⁴⁴ Still, the colonies were far from structured and cohesive in their policies. The militias often followed the whim of their state, and it required Lord Dunmore’s proclamation to recruit rebel-owned slaves to the Royalist side that finally caused Congress to approve a new policy allowing blacks to enlist. Still, however, the states were very aware of the contradiction in

⁴³ Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*; Brown, Morgan, and Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery Resistance and Abolition, *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age*, 12.

⁴⁴ Robert Selig, "African-Americans in the Continental Army and the State Militias During the American War of Independence," (Reflections of the American Revolution, Museum of the American Revolution: amrevmuseum.org/reflections).

allowing slaves to fight for liberty, and they reticently approved the new order, with the proviso that “the free Negroes who have served faithfully in the Army at Cambridge may be re-inlisted therein but no other.” One tragedy of the American Revolution was that this freedom was not honored, perhaps due to the British loss, but primarily due to the reluctance of American plantation owners who were horrified to see their labor disintegrate.

Meanwhile, on the eastern coast of North America, French officials from Saint Domingue supplied auxiliary forces to help the Continental Army in the 1779 siege on the British fort in Savannah.⁴⁵ The *Chasseurs Volontaires de Saint Domingue* was a volunteer regiment made up of ten companies of light infantry (chasseurs) enlisted from *gens de couleur* (free men of color). With an estimated 545 men it was the largest unit of men of African descent to fight in the American Revolution. For six weeks in September and October the *Chasseurs Volontaires* fought with the Continental Army, making up a tenth of the allied forces. John Gariggus’ research on this militia force noted that many of the *Chasseurs Volontaires* were pressured into service based on patron-client pressure, official calls to French patriotism, rejection of racial stereotypes, and fatalism. Highlighting the separation between rhetoric and practice, D’Estaing, the French commander, “ordered that ‘the people of color...be treated at all times like the whites...they aspire to the same honor, they will exhibit the same bravery.’”⁴⁶ However, the official list of the black militia force identified them as incapable “of being employed for [anything] more than trench work.”⁴⁷ Despite this classification which suggests trench work to be mere labor and drudgery, it proved to be a more bloody campaign than implied. One *Chasseur* died and seven were injured defending

⁴⁵ Claude Adrien, "The Forgotten Heroes of Savannah," *Americas* 30 (1978).

⁴⁶ Garrigus, "Catalyst or Catastrophe? Saint-Domingue's Free Men of Color and the Battle of Savannah, 1779-1782," 119.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

the trenches against the British incursion. The British were entrenched and as the winter weather approached, d'Estaing's fleet abandoned the siege and sailed for other destinations.

John Garrigus is careful to note that no documentary evidence exists listing the unit members.⁴⁸ However André Rigaud and Henry Christophe claim to have been part of the militia. Although there is no definitive way to confirm military member linkages from the *Chasseurs Volontaires* and the Haitian Revolution, these claims made by key rebel leaders show that the historical memory remained for decades, and drifted into the cultural language of blacks in saint Domingue.

Networks in the Black Atlantic

By the end of the North American war for independence, millions of people were displaced from their homes, not least of which were blacks in the military. Their experience in the military, both in the regulars and in militias, on ships and in labor groups, had given an entire generation a new outlook on the world. Benjamin Quarles wrote, "the Negro's role in the Revolution can best be understood by realizing that his major loyalty was not to place nor to a people but to a principle. Insofar as he had freedom of choice, he was likely to join the side that made him the quickest and best offer in terms of those 'unalienable rights' of which Mr. Jefferson had spoken."⁴⁹ For the black troops who had served in the various empire's armies, the war itself and the subsequent restructuring put them in contact with a number of new experiences and ideas.

⁴⁸ Ibid; John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue*, The Americas in the Early Modern Atlantic World (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Laurent Dubois, "Two Revolutions in the Atlantic World: Connections between the American Revolution and the Haitian Revolution," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

⁴⁹ Benjamin Quarles and Institute of Early American History and Culture (Williamsburg Va.), *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1961), xxvii.

The displacement of thousands caused massive reorganization once the war was over.⁵⁰ The British found many of their promises of freedom to the Black Loyalists were difficult to navigate, and they finally helped to transport a number of blacks to London, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and eventually to Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, the war did not lead to emancipation for those black troops who fought for the Continental Army. The southern planters' successfully negotiated to remove all rights and pathways to freedom for the southern slaves, and this treacherous maneuver would eventually lead to massive restructuring of the country. For Gálvez's black troops in Spanish Louisiana, military accolades won during their battles against the British helped many black troops gain prominence in the community. Alternately in the French system, many of the *Chasseurs Volontaires* were resentful of the way they had been treated after the Savannah siege. Those that weren't killed or captured were sent to various other ports in the French empire without any date for their return home. Since a large portion of the *Chasseurs Volontaires* were forced volunteers, the compulsory enlistment into the French army for an unknown length of time came as a shock. One white French captain even went so far as to blame the "manner in which the Volontaires were recruited," suggesting that the "misery" and "harshness of their treatment" and the "lack of precision with which they were discharged" contributed to the lack of recruits for the *Chasseurs Volontaires*.⁵¹ Those that did manage to return home to Saint Domingue likely spread word of their experience in the French militia, and if the French captain is accurate, some likened it to enslavement.

The returning black troops, whatever their varied experience, all encountered one thing in common. The communication of their experiences were relayed to family, friends, and their

⁵⁰ Julius Sherrard Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, 1986), 9.

⁵¹ Garrigus, "Catalyst or Catastrophe? Saint-Domingue's Free Men of Color and the Battle of Savannah, 1779-1782," 122-123.

immediate community. This common wind swept across linguistic, geographic, and imperial boundaries. The invisible and complex underground “which the 'mariners, renegades, and castaways' of the Caribbean created to protect themselves in the face of planter consolidation - is crucial to understanding how news, ideas, and social excitement travelled in the electric political environment of the late eighteenth century.”⁵² The ideas of revolution are spread in many ways, but one way is through the communication of soldiers and sailors, reliving the war experiences and recounting stories of their lives outside of the community. These soldiers came home and were put back to work on their old masters’ plantations or within the town centers in artisan markets. They told their wives, children, grandchildren and communities about their time in the war. They talked about fighting the whites or the Indians. They spoke about their medals they were awarded. They discussed the ways they were mistreated. Word got out about the broken promises and outright lies. Marketplaces and port harbors were traditional communication zones. For instance, sailors in Cap Français traditionally set up stands along the wharves on Sundays and holidays to barter and trade with all comers, including slaves. This so-called 'white-market,' almost as old as the city itself, survived several attempts to close it down. This extensive contact between slaves, free blacks, and sailors occurred not only in Saint Domingue, but also throughout the heavily trafficked ports of the larger Atlantic. Despite the lack of documentation proving that key leaders in the Haitian Revolution were members of the *Chasseurs Volontaires*, it is likely that many of these men recounted their experiences to their family members and social networks.

The potential impact of the experiment with black militias during the American Revolution would sweep across the Atlantic currents. The newly independent American colonists

⁵² Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution," 10; the quoted phrase is borrowed from C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways; the Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (New York: University Press of New England, 1953).

would have to deal with their broken promises and the results would split the nation in half. Similarly, the *Chasseurs Volontaires*' poor experience with the French would likely remain part of the cultural memory in Saint Domingue. It certainly did nothing to improve French/African relations on the slave colony. Spain likely benefitted the most from their black militia experience. Having the extensive legal and military customs in place, as well as a different social and racial tradition for slavery, proved advantageous. Spain's black militias prove largely successful in their official capacity, and Spain would not hesitate to use them again.



Map 2. Saint Domingue

Chapter 2

Rise of the Black Auxiliary Troops:

Jean-François Papillon on Saint Domingue, 1791-1793

This chapter examines the rise of a particular military leader, Jean-François, who led the armies of the northern plains against the French planters in the Grande Riviere region and who would eventually be known as the leader of the Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV.¹ Jean-François' secretary, Monsieur Gros, recorded much of the early days of the insurrection, and it is through Gros' memoirs that this project captures some of the daily activities and decisions of Jean-François. Gros and Thibal, another colonial memoirist captured by Jean-François' army, depict the leader as humane and intelligent, although aspects of his military character give the impression of a merciless leader. Characterizations of historical figures' personalities are always difficult, however it may be the case here that Jean-François presented whichever disposition needed based on the situation he was in. In front of his French captives, he was known as a humane savior who rescued them from the terrors of Jeannot. When in battle, he presented the ruthlessness that was expected from the slaves as they massacred the French at Ouanaminthe. And for the Spanish, he made sure his correspondence for peace included the language of royalism and slavery so as to better fit into their imperial system.

This chapter illustrates the complexities and vagaries of the early rebellion, and it tries to make sense of the negotiation tactics of Jean-François, a free man, in charge of an army of

¹ There is some discrepancy between Jean-François and Biassou as to who was the "real" leader. Scholars also are conflicted. Jane Landers shows convincing evidence for Biassou as the head general, while Carolyn Fick prefers Jean-François. See Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 112.

rebellious slaves. Ultimately, this chapter argues that Jean-François was a pragmatic man in charge of a volatile situation. Any misstep against the French commissioners would bring the full force of the French army upon their backs, and any blunder with the slaves would result in rebellion against the black leaders and possibly his own arrest and execution. He traveled a narrow line, and his ultimate decisions to negotiate for peace with the French commissioners would land him a reputation as a betrayer in some historians' books.² But in his own words, he never claimed to fight for the liberty of all slaves.³ We should take a judicious view towards his choices. The political narrative of the early revolution did not immediately demand full abolition, that language did not enter into the rebellion until 1793 at the earliest. By that point, Jean-François had allied with the Spanish, an imperial nation entrenched in the slave system economy. By 1793, Jean-François had achieved legal recognition of freedom for himself, his family, and his officers. The later ideology of the Haitian Revolution and abolition did not ever enter into his political or ideological negotiations.

Haitian Revolution Overview

To best explain the rise of the black auxiliary troops and their leader, Jean-François Papillon, we must first begin by setting the stage with the Saint Domingue rebellion (ultimately the Haitian Revolution) in its formative years of 1790-1791. It is best to understand the rebellion as initially comprised of two very distinct groups - the white French colonial planters on one side and the free blacks and slaves on the other. Eventually, revolutionary France would send troops to the island, and both Spain and England would try to influence the outcome using financial incentives. However, in 1789, France's National Assembly had approved the Declaration of the

² Beauburn Ardouin, *Études Sur L'histoire D'haiti; Suivies De La Vie Du Général J.-M. Borgella*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry et Magdeleine, 1853), 1:63; Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 305, fn125.

³ See this chapter, pgs 79-80.

Rights of Man, but said nothing about application for the colonies. Representatives of the white planters and the free blacks (*gens de couleur*) of Saint-Domingue residing in Paris formed separate political clubs to advocate for their respective interests. By 1790, Port au Prince was in political and social disintegration. Royal officials were fleeing the colony, garrisons were in mutiny and riots and lynchings had erupted. Councils and assemblies were convened, adjourned, and abandoned. The white planters of the western province called for a colony-wide assembly to meet in late March. Article IX of that assembly call made it clear that free people of color were not welcome as equals. The white planters wrote:

Just as has always been the case, Mulattos, Negroes, and other free people of color, will not be eligible to vote in the parish assemblies; but they can submit their questions to the selected deputies in each parish, and thus presenting them to the Colonial Assembly; they may, alternatively, apply to the same assembly through a single representative or patron whom they will choose from among white citizens. – Article IX

As soon as it became clear that none of the pre-existing colonial assemblies would allow free people of color to vote in the newly authorized local elections, a merchant living in Paris named Vincent Ogé, a free person of color, returned to Saint-Domingue to try and galvanize the colony to follow the National Assembly's lead. In October 1790, Vincent Ogé returned to the northern province and addressed the Colonial Assembly. Perhaps because he had just returned from Paris, witnessing those revolutionary changes in the National Assembly, he thought that similar action could occur in the colonial politic. Referencing the March 28th decree which gave rights to all free citizens, Ogé proposed that the Colonial Assembly adopt the same measures for all free-blacks in the province.⁴ His address fell on enemy ears, and Ogé decided to respond with

⁴ Ogé to the Assembly of the North Province, 29 October 1790 in David Patrick Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014), 63.

force.⁵ He organized an armed rebellion in the northern province in 1790, but the uprising was quickly and brutally suppressed. Ogé and his co-revolutionary Jean-Baptiste Chavanne were publicly executed on the wheel in Cap Français in February 1791. Word of Ogé and Chavanne's brutal execution reached French soil and created a backlash of horror aimed against the planters.⁶

Ogé's rebellion, even though it was suppressed, was a galvanizing time for slaves in the northern province. In May 1791, the French National Assembly decreed civil rights to free people of color born to free parents. In practice, this enfranchised only a few hundred people. Still, the May decree was used later in the year as the standard by which other freedoms would follow for other free people of color. Even though this decree was limited to a few people, the Saint Domingue white planters considered it an unacceptable affront and intervention in their local affairs.

The May 1791 decree to grant citizenship to certain free blacks with the correct lineage was never officially sent to the colonies. But word of something leaked out. Slaves in the southern province in Saint Domingue heard a different decree, one that was entirely fictive. They heard that Louis XVI had granted all slaves their freedom for three days a week. This rumor circulated Saint Domingue quickly and took on mythic proportions in the Caribbean for decades.⁷

⁵ Despite his importance, John Garrigus is the one scholar that has looked closely at Ogé; John D. Garrigus, "Vincent Ogé 'Jeune' (1757-91): Social Class and Free Colored Mobilization on the Eve of the Haitian Revolution," *The Americas* 68, no. 1 (2011).

⁶ In 1791, Claude Milscent, a French journalist and Saint Domingue planter turned abolitionist, published his account on the Saint Domingue uprisings. Milscent mentioned that the largest band was formed under the leadership of the negro named Francis who was very intelligent, and led the largest companies because of his courage. His band murdered several white French and Spanish and pillaged homes. Other uprisings like these had been going on throughout the region, though none have become as famous as Ogé. Alexandra Tolin Schultz, "The Créole Patriote: The Journalism of Claude Milscent," *Atlantic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2014); Claude Louis Michel Milscent de Mussé, "Sur Les Troubles De Saint-Domingue," (Paris 1791).

⁷ Janet L. Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015), 151, fn46.

Word of Ogé's rebellion had swept through the northern province quickly, and even though his revolt was over, some seeds of discontent remained and flourished. It helped spur some slaves into leaving their owners and seeking out old companions. Charlotte Poulard, a Fulani house slave belonging to Madame Papillon at Le Cap, escaped in March 1791 and joined up with Jean-François.⁸ She could pass for creole since she “dresses like a free black woman” and “has a pass and claims to be free.” She had been moving through the provinces on the run from her owner who had put out a reward of 2 *portugaises* [\$16 U.S.] with the promise of “more if it is demanded.”⁹ Charlotte was not Jean-François' wife, but in September 1791 after the August revolts had bought them territory, celebrating rebel slaves led by French clergyman Father Cachetan “solemnly crowned the Negro Jean-François and the Negress Charlotte king and queen of the Africans, and leaders of the revolt” on their fortified camp in the Galliffet plantation.¹⁰

Six months after Ogé's execution, in August 1791, the rebellion historically began. Two significant events are said to have triggered the revolts. First, an August 14th meeting of slave leaders at the Lenormand plantation where the rebellion is said to have been planned and organized. Second, the famous voodoo ceremony on the night of August 21st or 22nd in the forest of Bois Caïman, or “Alligator Wood,” supposedly on the mountain of Morne Rouge. At this event were also free blacks Georges Biassou, Jeannot Bullet, and Jean-François Papillon who would all become revolutionary leaders. Toussaint Louverture, the better known rebel leader of the Haitian Revolution, was still on the Bréda plantation while this ceremony took place.

⁸ The Fulani are a West African people. Although widely dispersed today, they are one of the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Africa. In the eighteenth century, the Fulani were concentrated near the mouth of the Niger River, but in the latter century they went to war with the Bornu Empire. Charlotte was most likely part of the wave of captives sold to European traders as a result of this war.

⁹ Runaway Advertisements, *Gazette de Saint-Domingue*, 6 Aug 1791 in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 35.

¹⁰ Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 33.

Meanwhile, on August 23rd a northern province planter was in Bordeaux speaking before the Chamber of Commerce, and he warned them that the May decree would lead to “a massacre of the white population.”¹¹ News of the rebellion would not reach French soil until mid-October.

The history of the Haitian Revolution has been recounted a number of times by scholars. As we know, violence initiating the slave uprising occurred first in Bois Caiman in late summer 1791 in the Petite-Anse in northern Saint Domingue. The uprising began on the night of August 21/22 in the Choiseul plantation where a group of black slaves and free blacks were led by the maroon slave leader and vodou priest Dutty Boukman.¹² From the group leaders of the revolution would emerge, one of whom was Jean-François Papillon (later surnamed Petecou). His compatriots included Georges Biassou from the Bredá plantation.

Jean-François Papillon was a creole born in 1765, about 5’ 10” in height and slim, “quite good looking” despite “a long scar under the chin” and slave brandings on his chest - on the right side Mr. M. and below that RB. Jean-François’ owner was Mr. Papillon, Jr., a merchant at Cap Français, however Jean-François had run away from Papillon in 1787 and existed as a maroon until the 1791 uprising.¹³ Jean-François, as he is commonly referred, began his leadership in the northern province of Saint Domingue near Cap Français at the head of a group of free blacks and slaves. His troops numbered in the thousands, although no formal census has ever emerged for the troop-count of the insurgent forces. Early in the rebellion, Jean-François communicated with the Spanish across the border in the north, and they often exchanged goods such as soap

¹¹ J. Brard, *Discours Prononcé Au Commerce De Bordeaux Assemblée* (Bordeaux, 23 August 1791).

¹² *Vodou* is a creolized religion forged by descendents of Dahomean, Kongo, Yoruba, and other African ethnic groups who had been enslaved and brought to colonial Saint-Domingue and then Christianized by Roman Catholic missionaries. Spellings differ from Haitian Vodou to Louisiana Vodoun. The Americanized “voodoo” is generally regarded to be a stereotypically racialized portrayal often found in the media.

¹³ Runaway Advertisements, *Affiches Américaines*, Feuille du Cap-François, 3 Nov. 1787 in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 35.

and tobacco for munitions, mules, and silver.¹⁴ By 1793, the Spanish made a formal alliance with Jean-François and Biassou, giving their battalions the formal title The Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV.¹⁵

The prisoner, Gabriel le Gros, after having been in Jean-François' presence for the winter of 1791, penned this description of his appearance and character:

This Commander in Chief over the African army, was always well dressed. His present habit consisted of a coat of a handsome grey cloth, with yellow facings, enriched with a star. He wore the Cross of St. Louis, with the red ribbon; and had also twelve bodyguards, with shoulder-belts fully ornamented with fleurs-de-lis. He was beloved by all the free people, and by the best of those, who were slaves. His command was respected, and there was the utmost subordination in his army.

The Cross of St. Louis (a predecessor to the modern Legion of Honor) was intended as a reward for exceptional officers in the French military, but it gradually came to be an award that most officers would receive during their career. On January 1, 1791, during the French Revolution, a decree changed the name to *décoration militaire*. It was subsequently withdrawn on October 15, 1792.¹⁶ Gros' comments on Jean-François' appearance are commonly reiterated by other scholars. Jane Landers notes that Biassou often called Jean-François a "dandy" and the Spanish were more inclined to negotiate with Jean-François over the more brash Biassou.¹⁷ Gros' effusive remarks on the discipline within the ranks of Jean-François' army should be read with a certain

¹⁴ The testimony of Marie Jeanne Jouette says that "as far as munitions were concerned, she had heard that the brigands got them from the Spanish, that she had seen them come to offer various goods, such as soap, tobacco, and other things in exchange for mules, silver." Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 158.

¹⁵ The history of the Black Auxiliaries in Saint Domingue has been recounted by a few historians including Jane Landers and David Geggus. Geggus does the preliminary work of connecting Jean-François to other leaders in the rebellion. Landers focuses on Georges Biassou however her analysis of the co-leader includes a lot of attention to Jean-François, "the dandy," which is easily compared against Biassou's rougher personality. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions; Black Society in Spanish Florida*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); David Geggus, "The Exile of the 1791 Slave Leaders: Spain's Resettlement of Its Black Auxiliary Troops" *Journal of Haitian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002).

¹⁶ Martha Mel Stumberg Edmunds, *Piety and Politics: Imaging Divine Kingship in Louis XIV's Chapel at Versailles*, University of Delaware Press Studies in 17th- and 18th- Century Art and Culture (Newark, DE; London: University of Delaware Press; Associated University Presses, 2002); News, *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (London, England), Wednesday, October 15, 1794, Issue 18825.

¹⁷ Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, 209-220.

degree of skepticism. Throughout the memoirs, Gros commented upon his fear of the slaves who were always grumbling about Jean-François' "secret" deals with the French.

Later in Gros' memoirs, he commented on "the promise of John Francis, and his well known humanity."¹⁸ Gros' racial judgments were never too far from his exposition of the rebel group, and his examination of Jean-François was no different. He wrote, "His reflections carried with them a degree of good sense, a fund of humanity, and a ray of genius, far superior to any sentiment, that might have been expected from his kind."¹⁹ We might imagine Gros saying, Jean-François was intelligent for a black man. Later in the memoirs, Gros said that Jean-François was "accused of possessing too much lenity, of being excessively devoted to pleasure, which caused him to neglect affairs of the highest importance."²⁰ In some scholarship where Jean-François appears, scholars will point out that he was "a man of humanity in spite of his arrogance, and [he] possess[ed] a sense of common decency"²¹ and leave the analysis at that. Jane Landers argues that Jean-François' character endeared him to the Spanish who were more comfortable dealing with a black insurgent who acted like a nobleman. However, one lower ranked Spanish officer was horrified by the black commanders' actions, complaining that Biassou "has set himself up as a monarch" and Jean-François is his "subordinate," called "his admiral."²² As one might imagine, French commanders and citizens on the opposing side of Jean-François' army often commented on his brutal tactics in war, especially following the massacre at Fort Dauphin. This was not just wartime propaganda vilifying an opposing side either. Correspondence between Jean-François and Spanish commanders include remarks on his decapitation of a French

¹⁸ Gros, *An Historick Recital, of the Different Occurrences in the Camps of Grande-Revriere, Dondon, Sainte-Suzanne, and Others, from the 26th of October, 1791, to the 24th of December, of the Same Year: By M. Gros, Attorney Syndic of Valiere, Taken Prisoner by Johnny*, (Baltimore: Samuel & John Adams, in Gay-Street., 1792), 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 57.

²¹ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 113.

²² Brigadier Matías de Armona to Governor García, 20 and 30 August, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 6855, in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 110.

commander. And David Geggus argues that Jean-François had rival rebel officer Jeannot killed because he was threatened by him. Ultimately what emerges is a portrayal of Jean-François as a multilayered, complex, and compartmentalized picture. He was a pragmatic man willing to present any image of himself to those who demanded it, and yet his final allegiance was to himself, his family, and his community.

A Royalist Conspiracy?

Contemporary whites on both sides of the Atlantic tended to believe that the Haitian Revolution was a royalist conspiracy, and that the black slaves could never pull off such a grand and supposedly organized revolution. Contemporary elites blamed the slave rebellion on a conspiracy set in place by French royalists intent on reinstating the king's authority. Current scholars discount this theory based on little evidence, however the contemporary colonists embroiled in the revolution had a hard time believing that the black rebels could organize such an uprising.²³ They tended to blame royalist conspirators, the Spanish and British, and members from the *Société des amis des Noirs* (Society of the Friends of the Blacks). Gabriel le Gros was just such an individual.²⁴

Gros was a scribe in northern Saint Domingue who was captured early during the rebellion and subsequently became Jean-François' secretary. He was originally employed as a chief magistrate in Vallière, a mountainous coffee-growing region near the border with Spanish

²³ The exception to this is Madison Smartt Bell, *Toussaint Louverture: A Biography*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007) who credits the royalist conspiracy claim.

²⁴ Gros, *An Historick Recital, of the Different Occurrences in the Camps of Grande-Reviere, Dondon, Sainte-Suzanne, and Others, from the 26th of October, 1791, to the 24th of December, of the Same Year: By M. Gros, Attorney Syndic of Valiere, Taken Prisoner by Johnny*; In the *Canadienne Review*, Girard calls him Jérôme Gros. Popkin goes to great lengths to explain that we still do not know Gros' full name, however Geggus calls him Gabriel le Gros but does not provide a citation for the given name.

Santo Domingo.²⁵ Gros published his memoirs, titled *An Historick Recital, of the Different Occurrences in the Camps of Grande-Reviere, Dondon, Sainte-Suzanne, and others, from the 26th of October, 1791, to the 24th of December, of the same year: By M. Gros, attorney syndic of Valiere, taken Prisoner by Johnny*. Gros' text was published in Saint Domingue in July 1792.²⁶ It was reprinted in France in early 1793 in French and translated into English and reprinted in Baltimore where white Saint Domingue refugees had fled. The American translation included an appendix on the events of October 26, 1791, the day of Gros' capture, and it also gave an account of the events leading up to the Haitian Revolution as well as a summary of events after his release. David Geggus calls Gros' account "a mixture of valuable and misleading observations," and Jeremy Popkin calls it a powerful history "enhanced by the sober, factual tone of his writing."²⁷ There is a lot to be said for both analyses; Gros is certainly writing a captivity narrative and so his information is at times distorted by his place in the camp. And yet he was also writing in order to indict the white colonial authorities he held responsible for the insurrection in the first place. Thus his memoirs were meant to be as accurate and precise as possible.

Gros' *Historick Recital* was written from the perspective of a French revolutionary patriot. His memoirs suggest that the cause for the Haitian Revolution fell on the shoulders of French royalists, namely Saint Domingue Governor General Blanchelande, military commander Colonel Rouvray, and the Vallière volunteer unit Captain Pinchon. He argued continually that the rebellion was a type of conspiratorial tactic to return France to monarchy. "[O]ur ruin could

²⁵ Vallière was "a mountainous and thinly populated coffee-growing region southeast of Cap Français and close to the border of Spanish Santo Domingo; according to the well-known account by Moreau de Saint-Méry, the parish, established only in 1773, had a population of 160 whites, 160 free people of color, and 2000 slaves. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 106, fn10.

²⁶ My quotations from Gros' text come from the English 1793 version. I have modernized the spelling and grammar when applicable, and any poorly phrased sentences have been modified with brackets so as to maintain the integrity of the transcription.

²⁷ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*; Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*.

be owed to nothing else, than a stroke of the counter-revolutionary aristocrats.”²⁸ Gros’ recital of the events began first with enthusiasm at Rouvray’s tactical response, commending Gros’ company for their “spirit and energy” against the “vagabonds.”²⁹ However, Gros soon expressed dismay that Blanchelande did not follow Gros’ suggestion that they form an armed force in the “eastern quarter, as had been done in the western,” and surround the rebels.³⁰ As the memoir continues, Gros increasingly blamed Blanchelande for turning “a deaf ear to our solicitations” to send men to guard the mountain passes.³¹ Gros says that he pointed out to Blanchelande the “welfare of five hundred millions [sic]” depended upon this defense. This estimate of half a billion people suggests that either Gros was purposefully over-estimating the colonies’ citizenry, or he thinks the entire French empire will be lost if Saint Domingue is lost.³² Gros sees in this first year of the rebellion the seeds of France’s loss.

As a tactical viewpoint, it is unlikely that Gros was correct in his assessment of a royalist conspiracy. It seems more likely that the colonial authorities were not acting as conspiratorial royalists bent on weakening the republican forces to provide a resurgence of the king’s military return. Instead, as Popkins says “Captain Pichon may have been guilty of poor judgment in dispersing his limited forces, but the mistakes for which Gros blames him hardly constitute proof of conspiratorial intentions.”³³ This assessment could be widened to include Blanchelande and Rouvray, who were perhaps overwhelmed by the insurgents and unequal to the task of defending a double front. In fact, by 1793 Blanchelande had recovered from his inattention to the

²⁸ Gros, *An Historick Recital, of the Different Occurrences in the Camps of Grande-Revriere, Dondon, Sainte-Suzanne, and Others, from the 26th of October, 1791, to the 24th of December, of the Same Year: By M. Gros, Attorney Syndic of Valiere, Taken Prisoner by Johnny*, 24.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

³¹ *Ibid*, 6.

³² As a reminder, Gros wrote the HR in July 1792 with an English translation written in early 1793. Gros would have had plenty of time to reformulate his ideas on the consequences of the early rebellion years, thus his “Five Hundred Millions” comment could have come as a reflection.

³³ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 107.

mountains and “sent white troops and a regiment of free-coloreds commanded by Rigaud against the insurgents.”³⁴ His defense failed however, and he “watched in horror as the head of one of his officers...was lifted on a pike above the insurgent camp.”³⁵ Whatever the truth, whether conspiracy or overwhelmed by tactical losses, Blanchelande paid the ultimate price when he was guillotined on April 15, 1793. Likewise, Rouvray was not the ineffectual leader Gros makes him out to be. A veteran of the Seven Years’ War and an officer in d’Estaing’s 1779 battles in Savannah, Rouvray was acquainted with war and with fighting alongside free blacks. His tactics were sound, and his politics included enlisting the services of the free people of color. As early as 1785, “the marquis de Rouvray noted that these men were vital allies in a slave colony that was like a ‘besieged city,’ whose inhabitants were walking on ‘barrels of powder’ that might explode at any time.”³⁶ Rouvray continually campaigned for rights to be granted to the free blacks and traveled to France to again entreat the Republican government to accept the people of color. Rouvray was not a Republican. Gros, however, was a Republican and his blame of the supposed conspiratorial royalists may have turned into blame against the tactics of Rouvray. It is easy to see how Gros’ politics, which completely disagreed with Rouvray’s, could influence his remembrance of the early revolutionary events.

One caveat to analysis of Gros’ memoirs should be the difficulties inherent in evaluating captivity narratives. Gros was a white French colonial clerk who was captured by the black insurgents in Cap Français. He was interrogated, psychologically manipulated, and tortured repeatedly over a number of weeks. He watched his friends die horrible deaths at the hand of one of the most infamous Haitian Revolutionaries, Jeannot, a man so reviled he was ultimately put to death by his compatriot, Jean-François. Finally, Gros was told to ally with his enemies. Other

³⁴ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 139.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 139.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 67, fn16.

French captives in his group joined the militia alongside the black rebels and began to fight against their friends. Gros, however, saw an opportunity to ally with the black troops and yet refrain from directly taking up arms against French colonists. He became Jean-François' secretary. This trajectory is of considerable importance when evaluating the historicity of Gros' text.³⁷

Within the *Historick Recital*, on a march from one camp to another Gros encountered a free black named Aubert who Gros called "a most excellent mulattoe."³⁸ They strike up a conversation about the causes of the revolution, and Aubert shared with Gros his own ideas about why the blacks rebelled. Judging from Aubert's phrases, it appears that he did not wholly agree with the rebellion. At the very least, he was ashamed at the unrestrained bloodshed. Overall however, Aubert explained to Gros that the mulattos came up with a plot for revolution and all others were expected to join up. Gros hears an entirely different explanation, and with some reaffirmation to us about the power of a person's stubbornness, Gros concluded that his royalist conspiracy was affirmed, even after listening to Aubert's comments.

Gros opened his conversation with Aubert by demanding to know the causes for which the blacks have rebelled: "What could have been your reason for waging a war, as cruelly vindictive, against us, as destructive to the interest of the mother country, and which in the end will be ruinous to yourselves?"³⁹ A modern reader might be struck by the callous naivety of this French colonialist, someone who witnessed everyday the inhumanity of the Saint Domingue

³⁷ Captivity narratives are notoriously difficult to interpret. Christopher Castiglia examined narratives from white women captured by Native Americans and found that they had a tendency towards "ambivalence about identity." Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst*, Women in Culture and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

³⁸ Gros exclaims in his narrative: "My Dear Aubert! (Circumstances required this amicable Expression)." This explanation suggests that Gros is aware that he is writing to a French audience who would be taken aback by a prisoner colonist addressing a black guard in such a manner. It might also suggest that Gros was playing the part of friend to Aubert, or he originally treated Aubert as a friend and then amended his remembrance for the French audience. Whatever the case, this parenthetical again showcases the difficulty in analyzing captivity narratives. Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 26.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

sugar plantations which were known as the most brutal in the entire Caribbean. How was it that Gros did not see the injustices of the slave system, especially when confronted by actual rebellion from those very slaves, and not immediately imagine that it was due to their living conditions? Whatever his narrow-mindedness, Gros' immediate accusation considered the causes to be first, the royalist conspiracy and second, the Spanish. Never did Gros consider the institution of slavery itself or the fact that the king's promises (however false they might be) were broken by the colonists. In fact, Gros suggested to Aubert that the black mutiny will not go well with France, and their "atrocities" will be punished by the king. Again, Gros believed that the ultimate reason for the uprising was to put the king back on the throne.⁴⁰ Finally, Gros let his disgust with the Spanish shine through. "Of what moment, will it ever be to you, your intimate alliance with the Spaniards? and of what importance will be the form, if the reception is not valid, from the passes you obtain from this jealous and superstitious nation? From whom, hold you, your commissions?"⁴¹ Gros saw the advantage Spain received by using the black forces as allies, but he argued that as soon as France won, Spain would drop the alliance and leave the black troops to the mercies of France.

Finally Gros allowed Aubert to respond. Aubert said, "Our colour, says he, have yielded to vast excess; however, they are not all alike guilty; and amongst those who are culpable, there are different degrees of crimes."⁴² We should understand that Aubert spoke only of the mulattos, not the slaves, and he wanted to apologize for the criminality of some of their actions.

Furthermore, Aubert cautioned Gros to never speak with a mulatto "in the presence of negroes," suggesting that there was a deep racial, cultural, and political rift between the mulattos and the

⁴⁰ "A Day will come without Doubt, when France warned of all our Misfortunes, and their Causes, will blaze forth with Indignation, and subjugate the Authors of our Calamities, to a formidable Responsibility. Of what Signification, I ask you, will your opprobrious Epithets be, that you dealt to us for having formed ourselves into Popular Bodies, destroyed the Clergy, and above all, for having dethroned the King?" Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 25.

⁴¹ Ibid, 25.

⁴² Ibid, 26.

slaves which could cause Gros harm if he were to breach.⁴³ This division of classes falls squarely in line with what we have learned from scholars regarding the makeup of the revolutionary bands. In the northern plains, Jean-François' garrison was led by free blacks and yet the slaves also exercised their own revolutionary authority. Gros was intimately fearful of the slave troops, and Carolyn Fick illustrates the distinct experiences by which the free black leaders experienced events as opposed to that of the slaves. For instance, upon the death of Boukman, the camp went into deep mourning.⁴⁴ The free black rebel leaders ordered a solemn service to be held in Boukman's honor, but the slave troops had a more visceral reaction and demanded immediate retribution. They wished to assassinate every white prisoner in the camp in order to atone for the death of the first rebel leader, Boukman. The slaves were eventually persuaded to not kill the whites, and instead they turned to speeches on their bravery in the battlefield and derision towards the white cowardice.⁴⁵

Aubert then explained to Gros that there were three classes of revolutionaries: the first class who are "evil-minded" and can be exemplified by the "hardened followers of Oge;" the second class are the "less daring mulattoes" who wanted the "effects of a revolution;" and the third class who were a "well-designing people" but "entirely ignorant of the plot" and were "surprised" by the rapid progress of the "disaster."⁴⁶ This last group joined with the rebellion but were continually trying to separate themselves from it. Not once did he mention the French Revolution, the king, or the Spanish. His entire response recalled the divisions within the free black community, some of whom wanted a rebellion and some of whom did not. But the implication here is that they planned it themselves. It is unclear by Gros' memoirs if Aubert was

⁴³ Ibid, 27; Here I keep to the term mulatto as used by Gros in order to signify the difference Gros sees between Aubert and slaves.

⁴⁴ Geggus claims that Jean-François ordered the death of Boukman but it was not carried out. Jeannot's execution was. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 264, fn14.

⁴⁵ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 34; Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 113-114.

⁴⁶ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 26-27.

merely telling Gros what he wanted to hear, but the end result was that Aubert convinced Gros of his “openness and candour.”

Despite Aubert’s statements to the contrary, inexplicably Gros determined with conviction that the French royalists were to be blamed for the insurrection. Even Spain got a pass, since “it was evident to me, that the government of Sainte-Domingo, was neither the direct inciter to, nor the first principle of this business; but minutely attending to all that passed within and without the colony, without giving up the hope of a counter-revolution, but even wishing to favour it, it thought, by thus concealing itself behind the curtain, to play a principal part in so tragical a scene.”⁴⁷ Gros may not blame Spain directly for the insurrection (that he places squarely on the Aristocrats), but he certainly saw in Spain the hope of reclaiming the island for themselves.

Finally, reasons for the insurrection’s timing are hard to come by. Ogé’s rebellion is generally considered to have failed because he did not welcome the slaves into his revolt. The August rebellion was far more successful, and it seems to have drawn from all quarters. The creole elites led the planning, but the slaves were by far the most numerous and carried out most of the attacks. Gros decided that it was “evident” that “the slaves had been excited to revolt by the mulattoes, and that they had been instigated to it, by the nature of our government.”⁴⁸ He means that the king’s promises to the slaves of a three day weekend had helped to instigate their rebellion. There was a report from the Limbé council in the northern region following the slave insurrection planning meeting at Lenormand plantation. The whites captured François, a slave of Monsieur Chapotin, who had been a maroon for about a year and participated in the fire-setting on the night of August 17/18. François told the town council that “the king had granted

⁴⁷ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 23.

[us] three days a week” and that the “National Assembly were to send troops to uphold our rights.”⁴⁹ François was under the impression that the king’s troops were on their way to Saint Domingue to help establish the National Assembly’s rules over the insurrectionist colonial assembly. The slaves were of two minds - some wanted to wait for the king’s troops and then help them in their attacks against the colonials; some of the “hotheads” insisted they “should start the war against the whites before the arrival of these troops” since they would be “fighting for the cause and the interests of the king.” The Limbé town council remarked that François’ “plot” was known to all the colony’s slaves and their object was to burn and pillage “everything” and to destroy “the entire race of white people.”⁵⁰ Additionally, Gros said that the “destruction of the clergy” by the Revolution helped to incite the slaves.⁵¹ Other scholars suggest similar reasons for the instigation of rebellion as well as some notions on the rights of man, however most slaves used the rhetoric of loyalty to the church and the king. Even Gros looked at revolutionary politics for a reason, blaming the “counter-revolutionary aristocrats” for setting up a conspiracy with the blacks in order to help restore the French king to power.⁵² Gros was misled in this respect, but it is not hard to understand why.

Autumn 1791

Gros’ volunteer unit in Grande Riviere on the Cardineaux Estate was attacked by Jeannot’s troops in August 1791, and they were made captives. He was kept in a “gallery” of a house which was overseen by a Negro named Commander Sans-Souci.⁵³ He noted that Madame Dusailly’s was the “government seat of the revolters,” of which the commander was a “Negro

⁴⁹ New York Public Library, Fisher Collection, 8:5 in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 78.

⁵⁰ New York Public Library, Fisher Collection, 8:5 in *ibid*, 78.

⁵¹ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 24.

⁵² *Ibid*, 24.

⁵³ I believe Sans Souci might be the same Souci who will later belong to Juan Santiago’s troops in Trujillo, Honduras.

slave [named Mirbaud] belonging to the estate of Armand.” This commander helped Gros by “mitigat[ing] our misfortunes when he could.”⁵⁴ Gros’ constant references to commanders shows just how difficult it was to differentiate between the real leaders like Jean-François and lesser unit leaders like these aforementioned. Gros refers to multiple commanders in the *Historick Recital*, and the assumption of military rank is a difficulty that comes up in the Spanish record as well. Spanish military officers constantly ranted about how the black leaders would choose a military rank and expect to be called a commander. However, they were also extremely sensitive about the respect given based on these assumed titles, therefore the Spanish made every effort to always refer to them by their military rank.

One day after their captivity, Jeannot (called Johnny by Gros) arrived at the camp and paid the captives a visit so as to boast of his exploits. Jeannot told them that Mr. Pinchon, Gros’ volunteer unit Captain, had informed him of their [Gros’ unit] numbers, the condition of their camp, and “the desertion of the detachment of mulattoes,” a militia unit that had been assigned to Gros’ village. Jeannot then informed the captive colonists that the mulatto detachment had double-crossed the French and that the desertion had been pre-arranged.⁵⁵ This may be the first remark in the *Historick Recital* in which Gros described the political manipulations and military schemes by which the insurgent blacks won battles. It speaks to the strategies of Jeannot, and other leaders, who understood not only the practical tactical advantage of producing double-agents, but it also speaks to Jeannot’s understanding for the psychological advantage by flaunting these double agents to his captives. This use of psychological warfare can be seen as a counter-argument to the patriot-colonists who claimed that the black insurgency must have been orchestrated and commanded by French royalists, as they claimed the black leaders could not

⁵⁴ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, Ch 6, 124; It is unclear whether Gros meant Sans Souci or Mirbaud.

⁵⁵ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 19.

possibly have the “capacity for organizing themselves.”⁵⁶ This argument was prevalent in the early years of the revolution, spurred on in fact by a document written in June 1792 (now housed in the Archives Nationales) in which the compiler mined Gros’ document for every instance in which the rebels communicated with the Spanish and with people of color, conveniently discarding all instances which demonstrated autonomy.⁵⁷

On the second day of Gros’ captivity, Jeannot began to torture two men every twenty-four hours for his amusement and for information. Gros and his compatriot, Antoine, were chosen in the first round. Antoine was taken up first and put on a ladder, whipped three hundred times and then scrubbed with gun-powder which was then “exploded by an application of red-hot pokers fabricated prettily for this intent.”⁵⁸ Antoine was then thrown back into the captive gallery, and Gros would have been up next for treatment. However, Gros had been pardoned by some unknown commander “at the Monthelon Plantation.”⁵⁹ Instead of torturing and killing him, Jeannot merely interrogated Gros assuring him that he was “safe.”⁶⁰ The next few days Gros and his companions experienced brutal torture by Jeannot. One morning, there was “a great stir on the [plain]. A numerous body of horse[s] were galloping [toward] the house...”⁶¹ Gros assumed it was some new horror which “would have instantly been the cause of our massacre,” however “quite a different event occurred.”⁶² Jean-François rode into the camp and immediately arrested Jeannot, took him back to Dondon where he was shot the same day.⁶³

Certainly the romantic notion is to assume that Jean-François executed Jeannot for his base and

⁵⁶ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 113.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 113, fn19.

⁵⁸ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 20.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 22-23.

⁶² *Ibid*, 23.

⁶³ “Quite a different Event occurred - John Francis, known by a more human Conduct, and Commander in Chief, irritated at the Cruelties of Johnny, had him taken, and conducted to Dondon, where he was shot the same Day. He came to visit us, and told us of the Chastisement Johnny had met with: He promised us our Pardon, and whatever Succour we had need of.” *Ibid*, 23.

brutal methods, however some scholars suggest that Jeannot was too successful a leader and Jean-François felt threatened.⁶⁴ This could be the case since we do not have any evidence suggesting the contrary, however there has been much written about the character and personality of Jean-François as a diplomat, dandy, and negotiator. He certainly had little qualms about killing enemy combatants, in one case a French commander. But very little in his manner suggests the type of person to execute another leader because of a rivalry, especially considering Biassou and Jean-François experienced a much more antagonistic competition and Jean-François did not kill Biassou.

This sudden arrival of Jean-François suggests that not every black rebel in Jeannot's battalion was comfortable with his vicious maneuvers. It could be that whomever "saved" Gros on his first day of captivity may in fact have been one of the informants who sent word to Jean-François about Jeannot's behavior. In any case, Jean-François' arrival signified the salvation of Gros. After Jean-François saved Gros and others from Jeannot, he promised them "pardon, and whatever succour" they needed. However, in a testament to the unruly nature of the black troops' chain of command, the white captives were chained up again. "Although [Jean-François'] intention and orders were, to leave us free masters of our time, we were degraded again by irons."⁶⁵ Gros mentions Aubert who "complained to Michaud of it" and helped unchain them yet again.⁶⁶ That afternoon another free black named Fayette who commanded the Dondon quarter asked Gros et. al. if they would like to go with him. Since Fayette promised him "the mildest treatment" the Frenchmen agreed, although it is somewhat perplexing that they would join with Fayette since other black militia had promised them the same compassion, and then turned the tables with torture and death. It is likely that they had little choice.

⁶⁴ Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 73.

⁶⁵ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 23; This is the same Aubert who Gros speaks to about the causes of the revolution.

Winter 1791

Gros arrived at Dondon in November 1791. He and the remaining French captives met John Lewis, the slave of Commander LaCombe (killed at Cadouche) who entertained them with his stories of Paris where “he has spend some years.”⁶⁷ They also met Father Bienvenu, the Curate of Marmelade, who had been made a prisoner with the same treatment under Jeannot and had been saved by Jean-François. This curate features prominently in the *Historick Recital* as a sympathetic person to Gros’ condition as well as an advisor to Jean-François. Father Bienvenu openly advocated for peace. In fact, his introduction to Gros included an explanation of how he nearly died at Jeannot’s hands because of his testimony to the rebel leader on his barbarity and the “scattered carcasses of the unhappy citizens of Dondon massacred by [Jeannot’s] order.”⁶⁸ Father Bienvenu was part of Jean-François’ retinue during the early months of the insurrection; in the following years, Father José Vásquez would become Jean-François’ most trusted advisor.

Sunday, November 7 at 8am, Gros and Fr. Bienvenu walked towards the Government House where they saw “a Serjeant Mayor of a Spanish regiment” which was “upon the frontiers.”⁶⁹ The Sergeant Major was accompanied by three Fusiliers who brought with them “two large barrels of gun-powder... of near three hundred weight.”⁷⁰ Marie Jeanne Jouette, who was taken prisoner in the northern province in 1791, testified to Sonthonax two years later of her experience in the camps. She said “as far as munitions were concerned, she had heard that the

⁶⁷ Ibid, 29.

⁶⁸ Popkin has a footnote which says that Le Clerc claimed to have interviewed Father Bienvenu in 1792. The priest said that Gros was mistaken in his account regarding Bienvenu’s intervention with Jeannot regarding the whites - in fact, Bienvenu states that Jeannot was too drunk to listen to him. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 133.

⁶⁹ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 32.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 32; The rebels did not receive all of their ammunition from the Spanish; sometimes they would gain supplies from their attacks on the French forts. Gros notes that the forty Kegs of powder, ten pounds each, was “a Part of what John Francis got by his Expedition against Ouanaminthe.” ibid, 36.

brigands got them from the Spanish, that she had seen them come to offer various goods, such as soap, tobacco, and other things in exchange for mules, silver.”⁷¹ Gros commented that “this envoy had been preceded by many others, nor was he the last.”⁷² Gros then exhorted his readers to accuse the Spanish government for making alliances with criminals. In 1793 the Spanish made an alliance with Jean-François and Biassou, formalizing the union between the black rebels and Spain, which was based nearly entirely on the exchange of guns and medals for the land they won. These comments by Gros and Jouette make it clear that the black commanders were receiving large amounts of ammunition from Spanish Santo Domingo from the very earliest moments of the rebellion.

Gros and Father Bienvenu were at the Government House when the Spanish arrived to meet and eat breakfast with the black chiefs. Jean-François was not part of this assembly since he was stationed back at the camp, presumably nearer Grand Rivière. The conversation was in Spanish, so presumable Father Bienvenu translated since his parish, Marmelade, was on the Spanish border. Gros heard their whole conversation which is also intriguing since he was still technically a prisoner although he notes on a few occasions how the commander at Dondon gave him full freedom. Gros writes:

They [the Spanish] began immediately by informing themselves of the posture of kings; told them, the supposed news of France; and after encouraging them to persevere in their revolt, these wretches began to prate to them about the French Revolution. To have heard them, one would have imagined, it had entirely depended upon their power to have avenged the degraded royalty, and restored matters to their pristine state. They paint us as being a nation, that has lost the dignity of men, from the acknowledgment of no King, who are exempt from any notion of a deity, guilty of horrid crimes, and meriting the sternest rigour. They add - that they clearly foresee, before the end of December, we shall subscribe, merely from our extreme lack of forces, to all they should exact from us. The Spaniards soon afterwards left them, and casting an eye towards us, they asked,

⁷¹ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 158.

⁷² Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 36.

‘Whether we were staunch.’ In taking their leave, they promised these miscreants, fresh supplies.⁷³

This extended passage is worth quoting at length because it introduces the coming Spanish alliance with the black leaders. The Spanish took pains to remain officially unaffiliated regarding the insurrection in Saint Domingue. The Royal Order of November 17, 1791 directed the Governor of Santo Domingo Joaquin García to observe “perfect neutrality.”⁷⁴ It was not yet clear if the black revolts would peter out like many previous slave rebellions, nor was it clear how the internal politics from the French Revolution would influence the French political and military response on the colony. However, Spain sensed an opportunity to retake the island of Hispaniola, and García made sure to unofficially ally with the black revolutions near their northern border.⁷⁵ The Spanish supplied Jean-François with ammunition, powder, but most important, royalist rhetoric. The language of the French Revolution and its degradation of the king helped give Jean-François a common ground with the Spanish, and Jean-François would use this language to speak with the French royalists later when he tried to sue for peace. Additionally, the Spanish intimated that the war would only last through December since Saint Domingue did not have a large military force. Gros was thoroughly disgusted by the Spaniards’ remarks on the French Revolution, however it shows that a key component of the Haitian Revolution’s momentum was caught up in the rhetoric of the revolutionary ethos. Louis the XVI’s rumored three-day-week decree had permeated the slave quarters, and the Spanish and black leaders used this to provoke the insurrection against the planters who were arguing against such a decree.

⁷³ Ibid, 32-33.

⁷⁴ García to Conde de Lerena, February 22, 1792, in AGI, SD, leg. 1029; See also ANC, CCG, leg. 42, exp. 7; Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge Univ Press, 2014), 87.

⁷⁵ García to Conde de Lerena, February 22, 1792, in AGI, SD, leg. 1029; See also ANC, CCG, leg. 42, exp. 7; *ibid*, 87.

The following day was November 8th, and Gros remarked that the “chiefs of the banditti” decided to attack Marmelade since they now had the ammunition supplied from the Spanish.⁷⁶ One can only imagine how Father Bienvenu felt upon hearing these orders. On the 9th, after mustering their forces including two prisoners from Sans-Souci used for moving the guns, the black army moved out. They returned the following night at ten o’clock without having fired a shot. On November 12th, Gros spoke with Father Bienvenu and “the mulattoe Riquet, who styled himself Brigadier of the King’s armies, and Knight of the Order of Saint Louis.”⁷⁷ Gros and the curate tried to influence Riquet. Their goals are not clear, although they seem to be politically motivated. Gros marked this moment as the first time he realized he may have some power and influence with the free blacks. A few days later, Gros would come up with the idea to present himself to Jean-François as his secretary, and from that position he would attempt to influence the black leaders in their conversations with the French planters.

On November 14th, after the news of Boukman’s death had reached the camp, Gros described his terror at the possible repercussions that might be headed their way. “About midnight of the 15th, the governor of the town of Dondon, a free mulattoe, came to awake and order us to depart immediately to the camp, where John Francis was.”⁷⁸ Gros feared that this sudden departure meant their death, and the “only token of confidence we had, was, in the promise of John Francis, and his well known humanity.”⁷⁹

En route to Grande Riviere, the ten black Dragoons (cavalry regiment) who conducted the Frenchmen to the camp explained that Jean-François was not going to kill them. They had received intelligence that the Cape army was considering an attack on the Tannerie (Tan-Yard),

⁷⁶ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 33; Marmelade is approximately five miles east from Dondon.

⁷⁷ Here is another example of a free black soldier decorating himself with the St. Louis Cross. Edmunds, *Piety and Politics: Imaging Divine Kingship in Louis XIV's Chapel at Versailles*.

⁷⁸ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 35.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 35.

and Jean-François wanted Gros and the others to assist the black troops with the cannon and to “put them in order.”⁸⁰ In other words, the white colonists would be used as trench labor in much the same way that black troops had been used by the French and British in previous wars such as the American Revolution.⁸¹ On November 16th at 2:00 am, the prisoner contingent and their guards arrived at the camp where they were immediately taken to meet Jean-François. He “received us with kindness. He explained to us his reasons for sending for us down; and gave us some shoes, and other wearing apparel. This was, indeed, a present; but however, we were susceptible of no pleasure from it, for that was embittered by the mournful prospect of the service they were about to require of us, and the impossibility of our refusal.”⁸² Gros’ captivity and their imprisonment conditions are continually remarked upon. His entire hope was to be rescued or exchanged for other prisoners, however they knew they would be put to use in aiding the rebel troops against their fellow colonial militia.

Gros remarked that even though this news of survival was “restorative,” it was a “shock to sensibility” for the elite citizens and family-men to “be compelled to turn their arms against their equals, their friends, their parents.”⁸³ Gros explained that any form of “deception with these villains, was impracticable: They watched us so narrowly, that upon the least suspicion, they would not have hesitated, to have massacred us.”⁸⁴ Again, even though Gros is writing these as his memoirs, the inclusion of this justification seems to be more for his audience (as well as himself) as a tenor of rationalization for taking up arms against France. Gros argued that “death, would have been preferable,” and that they “expected that some extraordinary event would take

⁸⁰ Ibid, 35.

⁸¹ Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves and the American Revolution*, 1st U.S. ed. (New York: Ecco, 2006).

⁸² Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 36. Note - If they left at midnight and arrived at 2 and their gait was in a “painful march,” the two-hour trek suggests the camp was at most six miles from Dondon. This assumes a three mph stride.

⁸³ Ibid, 35.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 36.

place, which really did.”⁸⁵ The comment on death does not seem accurate as none of the colonists took their own lives. And the “extraordinary event” appears to have only been an opportunity for Gros to remove himself from the battlefield, not for the other colonists.

This “event” became the turning point for Gros and to some extent, for Jean-François as well. Gros maneuvered himself into a position as Jean-François’ secretary, arguing in his memoirs that “it was more suitable to my education.”⁸⁶ Gros did not have “the least tincture of the soldier’s profession” and had “devised a thousand different projects to withdraw” himself from the service.⁸⁷ When he decided to present himself as a secretary to Jean-François, there were still some hurdles to overcome. The first in his estimation was “my colour” as it immediately cast suspicion on his motives.⁸⁸ The second complication was that he had been captured while wielding arms against the rebels. He was quite clearly an enemy combatant. This latter point flies in the face of Gros’ indication that he was not in any way familiar with the profession of a soldier. It does suggest however that Gros was uncomfortable with soldiering, and he had rather act in a familiar field as a clerk. To be clear, many colonists were tired of “acting as soldiers” and were waiting for France to send troops.⁸⁹ What is interesting however is that Gros considered his actions as Jean-François’ secretary categorically different than a soldier’s war effort against France.

The armament of a white company within the black battalion must have created a significant psychological dismemberment within the French colonists’ mindset. They must have been relieved to be out from under the vicious yoke of Jeannot, and yet their salvation came at

⁸⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 36; Note that Laurent Dubois’ language says that “Gros was recruited to be Jean-François’ secretary,” Dubois, *Avengers*, 123. This passive voice suggests that someone recruited Gros, but according to Gros’ wording in the English version of his memoirs, he maneuvered himself into the position.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 36.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁹ *Maryland Gazette*, 1791, MSA SC 2731 (OCLC 9259642).

the price of turning their arms against their friends and family. In terms of captivity, the colonists had little choice in the matter, however Gros attempted to navigate his way into a more suitable appointment. Even though it could be argued that a military strategist's secretary has somewhat more authority over the battle maneuvers, Gros convinced himself that a clerkship was more amenable a task and would help him to not "turn [his] arms against [his] equals, [his] friends, [and his] parents."⁹⁰ There is no way to know the psychological turmoil that conflicted Gros into creating this position for himself, and yet we can suppose that many of his compatriots were horrified by his actions, deeming him a type of turn-coat.

Gros needed to insinuate himself into Jean-François' confidence. To do so, he began by "accost[ing] Despres, a free Mulattoe, Armourer of Fort Dauphin, Aid-de-Camp, and one, who was entrusted with the whole of his [Jean-François'] confidence."⁹¹ Gros barely knew Despres, however he approached him with the suggestion that he could be "serviceable to John Francis" in a specific way.⁹² Despres immediately accepted Gros' help with writing, and told him to stand by and they would discuss the matter more thoroughly at a later time. Gros had taken the first step towards inserting himself into the confidence of the black leader. He would use this confidence to attempt to secure a moment for his escape; he would also use this confidence to influence Jean-François into close communication with the French planters and Colonial Assembly commissioners.

Meanwhile, the afternoon of the 15th the curate of Grande Riviere arrived at the camp which threw the captured colonists into panic since they assumed the priest was there to confess them before their execution. Their agitation was for nothing since the curate was there to "pay

⁹⁰ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 35.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 37.

⁹² Fick records that Biassou suspected Despres of collaboration with the whites and had him killed on December 23, 1791; Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 112.

his court to the Generals.”⁹³ Gros’ aside regarding the priest was written in order to express to his readers the constant state of panic and fear that the prisoners lived in. However, the comment on the curate brings up an interesting presumption, which is that some French Catholic clergy had allied themselves to the black revolutionaries. Not only had he allied himself to them, but he journeyed through a war zone to “pay his court.” In some cases this was because their imprisonment put them into close proximity with the rebels. In other cases, it was in order to advocate for the lives of their parishioners. And in at least one particular case with the Spanish priest Father Vásquez, it was a complete alliance with the revolutionaries. Jesuit priests gained a reputation for complicity, acts of rebellion, and marronage, which was primarily aimed at their abhorrence to the grossly inhumane acts of certain masters and overseers.⁹⁴ For instance, in the mid-eighteenth century, Jesuit priests in Le Cap were reproached by the council for keeping “too close a contact with the slaves.”⁹⁵ Father Boutin, a curate to the slaves, presided over a religious burial for a slave woman who was hanged on a charge of poisoning. In another case, Father Duquesnoy offered absolution to Assam, a young slave woman from the Sieur Deseuttres plantation, when she was questioned regarding her accomplices to a poisoning charge. Other Jesuits went further with their friendship by “offering protection and asylum for maroons.”⁹⁶ Officially, the Catholic church worked with the white planters and the colonial government. Unofficially however, many priests who had ministered with the slave communities over the years found themselves functioning as intermediaries between the black rebels and the planters, as spiritual advisors to the rebels, and as information couriers from the black leaders to the Catholic Spanish across the border.

⁹³ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 37.

⁹⁴ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 65.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 65.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 65; On the attitudes and activities of the Jesuits in Saint Domingue, at times resembling a form of passive resistance, and especially on the question of marronage, see Gabriel Debien, *Les Esclaves Aux Antilles Françaises, Xviii-Xviiiè Siècles* (Basse-Terre: Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974), 282-87, 295.

By mid November, the war weary soldiers and their leaders were tired. Many of the original insurgent leaders had died. Jean-Baptiste Cap was captured and broken on the wheel by the French colonial militia. Boukman was killed during battle, decapitated, his body burned in front of the black troops, and his head displayed on a pike in the main plaza of Le Cap. The French had put bounties on the leaders' heads, and at least in Boukman's case, the money promised too difficult to resist. Meanwhile, soldiers from France were every day expected. Everyone involved assumed that their arrival would mean certain destruction for the black insurgents. Similar difficulties news awaited the black rebels on the political front. The May decree, which had granted limited rights to free blacks, was revoked on September 24, 1791, when the National Assembly named three commissioners to restore order to Saint Domingue. Until the commissioners arrived however, all political power was in the hands of the colonial assemblies who immediately moved to rescind any rights allotted to the free blacks. In light of these military and political maneuvers, Generals Jean-François and Biassou decided now was the time to petition for peace.⁹⁷

Peace Commission

In winter of 1791 the fighting in the northern province came to a halt. Word had arrived that French royal troops were expected to land in Saint Domingue in order to stop the rebellion. Jean-François was worried that these trained troops would decimate his rebel troops, so in November, Jean-François sent a deputation to Lieutenant-Colonel Tousard, an officer in the Cap François regiment. This deputation was kept secret from the full camp, and it was meant to strategize conditions of pardon and amnesty for the officers. The Colonial Assembly ignored the first deputation, however word started to filter back to the troops that Jean-François was

⁹⁷ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 124.

negotiating peace with the whites. In December, both Jean-François and Biassou doubled down on the Colonial Assembly, sending a second deputation to the planters which bypassed any involvement with Tousard. This time the Colonial Assembly responded, and Jean-François elected to go before them and argue their cause. The commission negotiations were partially successful in that Biassou and Jean-François exchanged Gros and the rest of the prisoners for their wives and family members. On the terms of amnesty and peace however, no agreements were reached and the war recommenced almost immediately.

November Deputation

France's new constitution had created a constitutional monarchy which proclaimed the Revolution over, and the National Assembly decreed general amnesty for "acts of revolution" which extended to the colonies. The act forgave any rebels who "returned to order."⁹⁸ Jean-François knew about this decree and coupled with the rumor of the quickly advancing royal army, he decided to try and negotiate a peace commission with the Colonial Assembly.

Gros, in his attempts to ingratiate himself to Jean-François and prove himself a necessary and useful clerk to the General, decided to sit in on a certain meeting between the leaders, free black commanders, and priests.⁹⁹ On November 17th, Gros overheard this comment: "Here we are they said, at the end of November: The forces, expected from France, cannot now be long before they arrive; and it will be much to our advantage, to offer some accommodation to the whites, to avert greater evils; for it is to be feared, they will grind us even to dust."¹⁰⁰ These remarks were made by Father Le Blanc, and apparently the sentiments were shared by the rest. While the remark of fear for the French arrival certainly sounds like something a republican

⁹⁸ Ibid, 125.

⁹⁹ Among the group were these men, Le Blanc, Father Cator and his son, Viard, Poisson, De Launai, Yvon the free black, Le Maire, and the Mulattoe of Sainte-Susanne; Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 39.

prisoner might conveniently insert into his memoirs, the comments correspond to other scholar's reports that in November/December of 1791 the black insurgents in the northern plains had halted their attacks in preparation for the French fleet arrival.

This gathering of officials would be the moment Gros needed to prove himself a capable clerk and discrete confidant for Jean-François. That evening, Father Le Blanc and Despres approached Gros with the suggestion that he help them write the peace accord to the whites. Gros was happy to accept, and his "deed" (life) was transferred into their care. The Abbé de la Haye, Curé of Dondon, was one of the priests within this secret meeting.¹⁰¹ De la Haye "had been present at a meeting, to which he had been invited by Jean-François' aides" and "this meeting had been held to draw up a memorandum to the whites, proposing conditions under which the slaves and the freedmen who were with them would lay down their arms."¹⁰² De la Haye "added that there were four white captives at the council, one of whom drew up the memorandum, which was then copied by the curé of Marmelade, who was a prisoner at the time, and that the deponent [de la Haye] suggested sending the memorandum to the colonial assembly sitting at Le Cap."¹⁰³ The men worked for a few days on the language of the deputation to Colonial Assembly via Tousard. Gros noted that "secrecy was indispensably necessary to its completion," because the "negroes who were naturally suspicious and bloody minded, should be kept in the dark."¹⁰⁴ Regardless of Gros' value judgment, it was clear that the commission for peace from Jean-François was not shared with the full camp.

¹⁰¹ A year later in December 1792, civil commissioner Sonthonax interrogated the priest hoping to discover evidence that he had plotted with the rebels. De la Haye told Sonthonax that his collusion with the generals, specifically Biassou, was coerced, however there are a number of letters between the two which suggest his relations with Biassou were not forced. See Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, Ch 7.

¹⁰² From the Archives nationales, D XXV 5, d. 53, interrogation of 1 December 1793 [sic] (copy). Popkin notes that although the transcript of the interrogation is dated December 1793, the subject matter predates the events of mid-1793 (slave emancipation), and therefore the date should read December 1792; *ibid*, Ch 7.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ Gros, *An Historic Recital*, 40.

Jean-François' secret negotiations began by sending a group to meet with Tousard at Le Cap. Gros helped craft this first letter, and a copy of its argument is found in a correspondence from Tousard to Rouvray on November 27, 1791.¹⁰⁵ Tousard received the delegation in his camp sometime between November 17th and 27th and he was "astonished" that they brought with them the arrangement for "a general peace."¹⁰⁶ Tousard seemed to be surprised that the rebels would ask for peace, although he noted that four days previous he had negotiated with other free blacks regarding "an agreement that is very reasonable" in that "they ask only for what the laws of the National Assembly, sanctioned by the king, will grant them."¹⁰⁷ It is not exactly clear how this agreement is different from Jean-François' deputation, however Tousard remarked that he doubts that "the General Assembly [Colonial Assembly] will accept the brigands' proposals."¹⁰⁸ Tousard noted that the Generals Jean-François and Biassou "blame Jeannot for all the crimes and state that Jean-François and Biassou, far from being guilty, deserve to be rewarded."¹⁰⁹ Tousard was unimpressed with their reasoning, but told Rouvray to "judge for yourself the effect that will have."¹¹⁰ The implication here is that the Colonial Assembly will not agree with all the blame being put upon Jeannot, and the generals' accusations will only serve to inflame the planters.

Jean-François' deputation requested four terms. First, "a full and complete pardon for all the officer corps and the legal registration of their freedom." Second, "a general amnesty for all the slaves." Third, "freedom for the leaders to withdraw to wherever they wish, in a foreign

¹⁰⁵ Anne-Luis Tousard to Laurent-François de Rouvray, Wilmington, DE, 27 Nov. 1791, Acc. 874, Hagley Library, in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 86-87.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 86.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 87.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 87.

country if they choose to leave.” Fourth, “the full enjoyment of the effects in their possession.”¹¹¹ Jean-François’ plan to end the insurrection had amnesty foremost on the agenda. The plan demanded that all fifty leaders and several hundred officers would be freed if not freemen already and the insurgent masses would be granted amnesty from the punishment of participation in a revolution. In return, the black leaders “would end the war and bring them [the slaves] back to their plantations,” but once back at work, certain punishments would be prohibited.¹¹² This meant that common corporal punishments like the the whip and the *cachot* (narrow prison cells) would be illegal. Threatening the planters that if these proposals were refused, “a horrible carnage” might ensue, including the deaths of “the white prisoners and white women,” imagery which brought to mind the terror of Jeannot.¹¹³ Ultimately, Jean-François’ initial forays into commission peace talks did not lead anywhere except to set the stage for another round the following month.

Part of the cavalcade sent to speak with Tousard included one house slave named Joseph who had belonged to a colonist named Piette Joseph Fondeviolle, owner of a plantation near Ouanaminthe. When Jean-François sent the deputation to speak with Tousard, Joseph was with the group. Others in the group were Cator, Tabois, and Chavannes, and they were escorted by twelve blacks, both slaves and freedmen. Fondeviolle had escaped from his plantation and was camped “at the brickyards of Creon and Dorlic at Vieux Bourg at the entry of Gredoches, a mere two leagues from Fort Dauphin.”¹¹⁴ When Fondeviolle saw the deputation ride by, he was incensed that Joseph was “astride my favorite horse, and I had to go on foot.”¹¹⁵ He went and complained to Tousard, saying “it was cruel not to be allowed to reclaim one’s property” and if

¹¹¹ Ibid, 87.

¹¹² Ibid, 87.

¹¹³ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 115; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 126, fn27.

¹¹⁴ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 175.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 175.

Joseph rode by again, Fondeviolle would “take a shot at him.”¹¹⁶ Tousard “angrily forbade” Fondeviolle to do any of these things and ordered him under arrest.¹¹⁷ This narrative suggests a few things regarding the early insurrection. First, it reinforces the timeline and individuals involved in the first deputation as written by Gros. Second, we get a glimpse of a hostile plantation owner who was reprimanded by Tousard, suggesting that Tousard did not want an angry slave owner thwarting any plans at reconciliation with the rebels. If this was the case, it also suggests that Tousard had very real aims at restoring peace between the planters and the black generals.

Interim

We should remember that at this point in the revolution, only three months have passed. The black rebels have, somewhat improbably, won nearly every major battle and held the important ground. But at what cost? The slave deaths against the planter colonists were high, and Jean-François thought that French royalist troops were descending on the colony to put down the insurrection. He believed as soon as the royal army arrived, the motley slave gangs were finished. Jean-François and Biassou were the only remaining leaders in the northern plain at this point and something needed to be done. But what? Toussaint was still not the political figure we know he will become, and so the responsibility fell to Jean-François and Biassou. Their decision to craft a commission of peace by returning the slave troops to the plantations is met today by derision from strict abolitionists, but we must remember that at this point in the rebellion, abolition of slavery was still not a demand. At the very least, the slaves wanted their three free days, war, and “*bout a blancs*,” an end to the whites.”¹¹⁸ They certainly would have resisted a return to the

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 175.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 175.

¹¹⁸ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 116.

plantation, no matter what the planter's promised the black leaders, however we can only assume the slaves wanted war which meant they were willing to die at the hands of the army. Jean-François knew the slaves would resist the plantation return, which is why he stipulated the need for his leadership along with the backing of the royalist armies to "successfully pursue those who refused."¹¹⁹

At this point in the historical narrative, some scholars point to Jean-François as an "opportunist" and "one who shamelessly betrayed the cause of his people."¹²⁰ Geggus remarks that "Jean-François and, especially, Biassou sold women, children, and 'some adult blacks described as troublemakers'" to the Spanish.¹²¹ Fick writes in her primary narrative, "[t]o charge Jean-François with the deliberate and cold-blooded betrayal of his people at this stage in the revolution, however, may perhaps be too premature a judgment," and yet, her phrasing suggests precisely that.¹²² This is said in response to his negotiations with the commissioners and the black leaders' promise to return the slaves to the plantations in return for their amnesty. While we can never know what Jean-François or Biassou would have done since these talks eventually broke down, it seems somewhat uncritically derogatory to condemn these black leaders as opportunists and turncoats. In subsequent years, Jean-François' allegiance with the Spanish will win him and his officers a number of concessions, including freedom, amnesty, salaries, and military titles. These prizes are not the results of a double-crosser. They might just be the actions of a pragmatic man.

¹¹⁹ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 127.

¹²⁰ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 305, fn125.

¹²¹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 125, fn50; See Laveaux to Convention Nationale, 1 vendemiaire an III (quote), ANOM, CC9A/9; Ardouin, *Etudes*, 2:87-88; Monte y Tejada, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, 4:141.

¹²² Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 115.

There is no easy answer to the character of Jean-François, but we can suppose that he was more of a diplomat and less of a war-hawk. At one point in Gros' narrative, he cornered Jean-François and asked him the purpose of the revolution. Jean-François answered:

“I did not institute myself a general of the negroes: Those, who had the power of conferring the title, have invested me with it. In taking up arms, I never pretended to fight for the general liberty of the country, which, I know, to be merely chimerical, as by the danger there would be in obtaining for this uncivilized set of beings, a right, which, would be infinitely more dangerous to them, and which, would indubitably draw along with it, the annihilation of the colony; and it is further my opinion, that, if the proprietors had been on their estates, the revolution would never have taken place.”¹²³

Gros' journal notes are more concise, but they state somewhat similar concerns: Jean-François answers “that they have not taken up arms to obtain a liberty which, even if the whites chose to grant it, would be for them nothing more than a fatal and venomous [sic] gift, but at least they hoped for an amelioration of their condition.”¹²⁴ Jean-François sets himself against the slave community, suggesting first that he does not consider himself part of their group, and second neither does he align to their interests. Essentially he says that the black troops chose him as their leader, but he never had any aims to fight for their liberty. In fact, he anticipates U.S. Southern antebellum pro-slavery rhetoric by arguing that a general liberty would be dangerous for the slaves and for Saint Domingue itself.

The point here is to understand Jean-François' actions in terms of those political and social ideas that were accessible to him at the time. His limited intellectual options were based on the social and class-based categories of the time which always distinguished between white, free black, and slave. Jean-François considered himself a free black since his maroon status in 1787 psychologically removed his status of slavery. He no longer saw himself as a slave, and he did not

¹²³ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 42-43.

¹²⁴ Ibid; Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 114; See also, Journal rédigé par M. Gros. Entry for November 17, 1791, AN, DXXV 46, 439 in Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 43.

advocate on their behalf. He can be explained as one who self-maximizes. If we label him a turncoat, this implies a solidarity to the slave troops that did not actually exist.¹²⁵ In fact, Dubois points out that European abolitionists “pursued the goal of reforming slavery rather than dismantling it,” suggesting that Jean-François was following the tenants of the western abolitionists’ sentiments.¹²⁶ This might be affording Jean-François a sentiment that he did not actually hold. There is no hard evidence to suggest that he favored any hard abolitionist efforts except for general calls for amnesty for the black troops in his employ.

Real class differences existed among the enslaved, not to mention the polarity between the slave groups and free blacks, mulattos, quadroons, etc. Free black’s revolutionary goals were almost primarily concerned with the rights of subjecthood - voting, property, titles, inheritance. Slaves’ goals were more basic; they wanted to destroy the plantation and its owners. Therefore, to insert the slaves’ goals onto the shoulders of a free black is to misunderstand the motives of the revolution. Jean-François’ self-interest can be diffused somewhat if we consider his conditions to the French commissioners - amnesty for all slaves involved in the revolution, as well as the amelioration of corporal punishments for slaves on plantations. These orders suggest a general concern for their well-being, but not outside of the boundaries of slavery. The curious thing is that he does not push for the three free days per week which all slaves had considered as their king-given right. Ultimately, class and racial differences existed in extreme polarity, especially within the close-knit quarters of slave system colonies. Those who were in the middle, poor whites and free blacks, often made the most of their hierarchy inasmuch as they had the most to gain and the most to lose.

¹²⁵ My thanks to David Lafavor for helping me work through this language.

¹²⁶ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 128.

December Deputation

In December, the rebel commanders tried again to broach a peace commission with the Colonial Assembly. Their written requests remain similar to those of Jean-François' deputation from November, however the number of freedom requests for the officers lowered. In order to advance their cause, Jean-François and Biassou insisted that they were in a similar position as the whites, both as "unfortunate victims" at the hands of the rebellious slaves.¹²⁷ They suggested that the planters had "only a vague idea of the nature of the revolution," and that an order to return to the plantations was both "impossible and dangerous."¹²⁸ Regardless of the questionable strategy in calling the white planters uninformed and ignorant, the black generals were essentially correct.

The planters' obstinacy demonstrated an inability to accept the situation at hand; the rebels had won the right to political negotiation and the planter's refusal to accept the outcome solidified the war which was to come. The French commissioners on the other hand were more disposed to negotiate with the black leaders and tried to salvage the negotiations. At this point however Jean-François and Biassou were irritated with the planter assembly, and Jean-François stressed the hundred thousand men in arms which was "eighty percent of the population" of the north. The black commanders declared they were "entirely dependent on the general will" of the troops which were defined by the "multitude of Negroes from Africa" many of whom were "accustomed to warfare in their native countries" which the whites "have certainly heard reports about."¹²⁹ If the planters and commissioners had any expectation of subduing the insurgent troops and bringing them back to the plantations, Jean-François and Biassou made it clear that it would only be with the leadership of the black generals. The commissioners could join with Jean-

¹²⁷ Dxxv/1/1, document no. 6, Archives Nationales in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 88.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 88.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 88; John K. Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993).

François and Biassou, grant their amnesty requests, and Saint Domingue as a new colony would be “reborn from its ashes.”¹³⁰

Jean-François and Biassou played the diplomacy game well, presenting themselves as the reasonable party while the insurgent slaves were more radical. Gros certainly believed this moral and mental separation; he had noted many times his fear of the “rage of the negroes.”¹³¹ The French planter assembly, however, did not make this distinction. They refused to parlay with the “rebel negros,” which suggested two things. First, the planters still considered themselves masters, even over the free blacks who had never been enslaved, reinforcing the original free black rebellion stemming from the 1790 assembly wherein the colonial planters’ refused to acknowledge the political vote of the free blacks. Second, the planter assembly refused to consider the social distinction between the slaves and the free blacks. Regardless, the French commissioners who met with the peace commission did not have the authority to sign anything. Even if they had, signing a peace accord would have been to acknowledge the rebellion as a political break, whereas French colonials were adamant that a slave uprising was a criminal offense and should not be met with diplomacy.

Despite the rebel commanders’ initial optimism, the commission talks were not productive. They began poorly when “a planter accompanying the commissioners stepped forward and struck the resplendent leader as if he were a misbehaving slave.”¹³² The French planter assembly categorically refused any diplomacy with Jean-François and Biassou which did not involve the black rebels first surrendering and returning to the plantations. Additionally, some commissioners disagreed with the general amnesty decree, arguing that “acts of revolution”

¹³⁰ Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 89; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 127.

¹³¹ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 40.

¹³² Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 127; This quote makes it seem like the planter slapped Jean-François across the face, however it is unlikely that Jean-François attended the first deputation’s meeting.

were political acts and the actions of the black revolutionaries were instead criminal acts and “must be considered differently.”¹³³ This racial rancor disguised as political semantics set the commission talks on a bad foot. This could have ended negotiations permanently, however one of the commissioners stepped forward and arranged for the exchange of prisoners, including Jean-François’ wife who had been imprisoned in Le Cap.¹³⁴ The second round of negotiations were far more difficult, involving slavery reform, amnesty, and “liberties” demanded by the rebels.

Back at the negotiating table, Gros had high expectations that the peace commission would be accepted and the war would conclude by the year’s end. He received two letters, one which was from Mr. Tousard to Cator which read: “I have perused, Sir, the address of which you were bearer, accompanied by Messrs. Tabois and Chavanne, and which contains nothing, but what is highly acceptable. I am certain, that the Colonial Assembly will grant the whole of it.”¹³⁵ This letter suggested to Gros, and to others, that Tousard was in agreement with the requests from Jean-François and Biassou. The messengers delivered the letter to Jean-François who “felt extremely satisfied with it” and therefore began to send orders to his camps to stand down and not attack the whites.¹³⁶ They called Biassou to make him aware of the letter. Biassou also sent out his orders “that no Invasion should be committed in the Quarter under his Protection.”¹³⁷ However, Dubois records Tousard’s additional statements: “Do not believe that the whites, and especially the members of an assembly of representatives from the colony, would lower themselves so far as to receive conditions dictated and demanded of them by their rebel

¹³³ Ibid, 125.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 125.

¹³⁵ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 45.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 46.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 46.

slaves.”¹³⁸ Here it seems very clear that Tousard is warning Jean-François that their negotiations will not work, insofar as the men on the other side of the table refuse to arbitrate. Perhaps Gros was not aware of Tousard’s additional words to the black leaders for he makes no mention of them in his memoirs.

The negotiations dragged out for Gros who was not at the commissioners’ table nor in the assembly room. He remained at Prieur Camp with Jean-François waiting for word of the talks’ conclusion. In the meantime, he commented upon Jean-François’ continuing relationship with the Spanish. He wrote, “Frequently, John Francis, during the transaction of our important negotiation, would say in our presence, that he could not enter into such or such a determination, without consulting those, to whom he was so exceedingly indebted; and we had always reason to imagine, those to whom such deference was due, were within the Spanish limits.”¹³⁹ Jean-François used the military and political negotiating tactics and relied on the Spanish as benefactors. It is important to remember that many of the black leaders were operating outside of any formal education, military structure, salaries, or reinforcements. The backing of the Spanish could provide all of these things, and Jean-François was very well aware of the necessity for an alliance with an economic and military power.

The exchange regarding the Spanish serves to illustrate the dual nature of Gros’ influence over Jean-François. To read Gros’ memoirs uncritically, one might imagine him exerting heavy influence in the push for peace and prisoner exchange. This may have been the case in some respects, however the evidence appears that Jean-François considered outside advisors more strongly than he considered Gros. First, Biassou was nearly always consulted on matters of troop movement and the very important peace commissions. Second, Jean-François deferred to the

¹³⁸ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 126.

¹³⁹ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 48.

Spanish in nearly all important decisions, probably because of their political and tactical advice, but also possibly he knew that the Spanish controlled the money. Gros hated the Spanish, however his influence with Jean-François did not extend far enough to dissuade the general from conspiring with them.

Together with Jean-François' aid-de-camp Despres, Gros "exerted our most zealous endeavors to induce John Francis to assent to the conditions, which, the Colonial Assembly should dictate." In past scholarly records, Jean-François has been accused of allowing the French commissioners to dictate the terms of surrender. Gros seems to suggest that he had a large amount of influence over Jean-François' negotiating process, stating "with pleasure I perceived, the ground we were every day gaining." And yet, Gros was very adamant that Jean-François was at all times besieged by other advisors, "we had to stem a torrent of persons, who had their private ends to answer by the destruction of our influence. All the chiefs, that were subject to servitude, thwarted our operations; and though they were not in the secret, still they shrewdly suspected it."¹⁴⁰ Gros may have inflated his own importance in Jean-François' esteem, however many in the "multitude" of the camps knew that Gros helped to facilitate communication with the French planters and they resented it. Gros spoke often about the threats made against him and the other secretaries in on the "secret" of peace.¹⁴¹

The rebels had every right to suspect Gros. His memoirs make it clear that his first obligation was to secure his own release. He was not interested at all in the chiefs' amnesty requirements nor especially the slaves' vengeance plots. Gros did everything possible to steer Jean-François into negotiations with the planters. Neither Gros nor the rebel commanders succeeded in securing peace, mainly because the planters would not give any ground. It seems

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 48.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 48; Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 128.

that the obstinacy of the planters was felt by both the black rebels as well as the commissioners, with one commenting that an opportunity was lost here and soon the region would devolve into war.¹⁴²

Tousard's Attacks

While the dispatches were going back and forth between the camps and Fort Dauphin regarding the peace commission, Lieutenant-Colonel Tousard “contrary to orders he had received...had attacked the camps of Arien, and Gilles-Henri.”¹⁴³ Gros was horrified to hear of the assaults by the Cap Français regiment, not least because it spoiled his hopes for peace and freedom. He had been quite sure that the “Negro General wished for peace, and no one more than Biassou,” and these attacks would destroy the peace commissions.¹⁴⁴ Jean-François, Biassou, and Candi had been punishing any transgressions against the white camps, and Candi even executed some men who burned or destroyed anything in the mountains or the plains. Thus, to have enforced such strict measures against their own men and then to hear of the assaults committed against peace by Tousard was certainly a blow to their authority, pride, and trust. Coupled with the distrust against Gros and their knowledge of the peace accords attempted with the French, the black troops “openly deserted their camps.”¹⁴⁵

Once general knowledge of Tousard's attacks became more widely known, Jean-François and Biassou met with the “principal free chiefs” to set up strict patrols in order to mitigate the possibility of insurrection by the black troops against the free black chiefs. Gros writes, “[The negroes] now manifested against them [the mulattoes] the most sinister intentions, inasmuch as

¹⁴² Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*, 126.

¹⁴³ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 51.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

declaring, that our destruction should follow their's [sic]."¹⁴⁶ The generals discussed many tactics by which they could reign in the murderous multitude, including using force or strategy. Some did not believe the troops would be able "to adhere to their Engagements" and suggested calling their bluff. One bizarre approach suggested they should dress someone up as the comte d'Artois, the younger brother of Louis XVI, and parade this actor through Le Cap in order to demand the slaves disarm and immediately return to the plantations. The language of this brainstorming session is remarkable:

Engage the Assembly to array a citizen of the Cape in all the insignia of royalty, and to proclaim throughout the island, the arrival of the Count D'Artois; afterwards, to advance a part of the army towards the Tan-Yard, where the whole of the Negroes should assemble; then, in the name of the king and the Count D'Artois, they should be ordered to lay down their arms, and return to their duty, which they, without the least hesitation, would instantaneously comply with."¹⁴⁷

Gros gave this as an example to "unveil the mystery of our revolution."¹⁴⁸ It shows to what lengths the commanders took when discussing their options. It also served to finally admit that the slaves would never return to the plantations, or as Gros put it, "the reduction of the slaves to their duty would be an impracticable undertaking to the chiefs."¹⁴⁹

Sensing little to lose, and with Jean-François' approval, Gros decided to write to Tousard personally in order "to save the valuable remains of the northern province."¹⁵⁰ Gros became disillusioned with Tousard when the return letter did not give him the answer he wanted. Tousard wrote back that Gros was on his own, and the fate of Saint Domingue was worth more than their release from captivity. Gros was incensed, writing that it proved to be "one of those thoughtless, vague, ill-concerted productions, which would have been sufficient to have destroyed

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 54.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 54.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 54.

us.”¹⁵¹ In fact, Gros was so worried about Tousard’s response that Cator, one of the free black chiefs, destroyed the letter before it could fall into the wrong hands or Jean-François read it. Tousard kept a copy of the letter in his logbook however. He wrote: “I am very sorry to learn that so many unfortunates are in the hands of the brigands, [but] you know that the common safety is the highest law and, however barbarous it may seem to you, that of a few individuals cannot be given any consideration when weighed against the fate of all the Antilles, threatened by this revolt.”¹⁵² Tousard’s letter made it clear that the fate of a few white captives were very little valued in the grand scheme of France’s most prosperous slave colony.

Meanwhile, information from Fort Dauphin returned the rumor that Tousard had never actually delivered certain letters from Jean-François and Biassou to the Assembly. This, coupled with the previous month’s unkept promises, proved to everyone that Tousard was untrustworthy. Still, Gros pressed for Jean-François to continue their peace appeals to the Assembly, omitting the influence of Tousard. Gros suggested that the commanders make absolutely clear the number of chiefs they were requesting for amnesty because they “might experience many difficulties from the major state” if the request was for “an unlimited demand.”¹⁵³ Additionally, Gros again suggested that Jean-François stress the “loyalty and clemency” to the Colonial Assembly, because since the September 24th decree, this assembly was the “mistress of their fate.”¹⁵⁴ Jean-François took Gros’ counsel under advisement but said that “he could not determine without the advice of Biassou.”¹⁵⁵ There has been much written on the leadership confrontations between Jean-

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 55.

¹⁵² Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 114.

¹⁵³ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 56.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 56.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 56.

François and Biassou.¹⁵⁶ Based on Gros' memoirs, it seems as though Jean-François, if not deferred to Biassou, at least considered his counsel as an equal.

While Gros appeared to be doing his best to function as a secretary to Jean-François, still his primary concern was to be freed. Often, Gros wrote about how Jean-François “entrust[ed] his concerns to my management,” and he wanted to send Gros to the Colonial Assembly in order to advocate for their interests.¹⁵⁷ However, Despres realized that if Gros was part of the deputation, he would never return back to the rebel camp. Despres “had art enough...to recall [Jean-François'] orders.”¹⁵⁸ When the second deputation was sent to the Colonial Assembly, Gros took one of them aside privately and asked that they “mention us to the Commissioners, that they might demand us from the Generals.”¹⁵⁹ Gros seemed to be comfortable as secretary to Jean-François, but he still desired freedom.

Jean-François' reasons for desiring peace were, most predominantly, the welfare of his family. Initially, Jean-François demanded liberty for more than three hundred of his fellow officers. Gros attempted to reduce this number, and with the advocacy of Toussaint the number was reduced to fifty.¹⁶⁰ Gros again took pains to point to the humanity of Jean-François within his memoirs, saying: “this Chief was never born for the perpetration of crimes.”¹⁶¹ Even though at this point Jean-François seemed to primarily want his family's safety, still the demands from all of the other chiefs were clamoring in his ears.

Second Deputation's partial success

¹⁵⁶ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 57.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 57.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 58.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 57.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 58; one wonders if Gros felt differently after hearing about the Fort Dauphin massacre in 1794.

As soon as the second deputation left to discuss the terms with the Colonial Assembly, Gros found himself “leaning against the doorposts” discussing with Jean-François the difficulties that were to come.¹⁶² Jean François said, “I am not ignorant of my being most strictly interrogated. I have much to say; and as you well know the impossibility of my recollecting every thing before the commissioners, whose presence, may perhaps, awe me, I would wish to remedy the inconvenience, by arranging my ideas on paper, and no person is so proper as yourself to assist me in the undertaking. We will, therefore, form ourselves in a private cabinet, and you shall write me a memorandum, which, I will frequently look at.”¹⁶³ Before this project could begin, however, word came back that the second deputation had succeeded in negotiating some terms, one which included the exchange of prisoners. Gros, therefore, took pains to disregard this memo “as it was a subject that might tend to prolong my captivity.”¹⁶⁴

When the deputation returned to Grande Riviere, “the generals were much gratified by the success of the mission,” but now they calculated whether it was in their best interest to give an interview to the Colonial Assembly.¹⁶⁵ Before the group could conclude their discussion, one of the black soldiers, Raynal, who had been part of the deputation, read out loud the act of the Colonial Assembly which appeared to refuse them all terms and conditions for peace. This letter outraged Biassou who suspected the white prisoners of having somehow orchestrated this nonacceptance from the Assembly, and he accused them of “secretly dictating [the] conduct” of the generals and relaying that back to the Assembly.¹⁶⁶ In response, Biassou demanded the prisoners be shot on site, and he went so far as to place them on the line before “Toussaint, of

¹⁶² Ibid, 58.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 59.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 59.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 62.

Breda, Biassou's aid de camp, braving all danger, attempted to save" the Frenchmen.¹⁶⁷

Toussaint told Biassou that the prisoners could not be executed without a court martial, and Biassou agreed to have them all reimprisoned. The next day, Biassou released Gros and the other prisoners, saying that his anger against Raynal (for not handing the letter to him personally to read) was taken out on the whites. Additionally, the commission had accepted the prisoner exchange terms and the whites would be released into the Colonial Assembly's hands at St. Michael's Estate.

One problem remained, and that was to decide which general would accompany the prisoners and speak before the Colonial Assembly. Gros remarked it was at this moment that "a kind of rivalry now arose between him [Biassou] and John Francis."¹⁶⁸ It appeared from Gros' writings that this was the first moment in which Biassou and Jean-François began to compete for supremacy, however this competition was quite apparent from the Spanish sources, especially from Biassou's perspective.¹⁶⁹ The two generals worked it out to the great relief of everyone who "imagined, that serious consequences would have attended the difference, as the character of Biassou gave us reason to dread it."¹⁷⁰ Jean-François, "as Generalissimo, had the preference."¹⁷¹ Gros was pleased with this outcome since he felt much more comfortable with Jean-François than the mercurial Biassou.

The prisoner exchange was meant to occur the following day, however something happened to delay it. Gros and his peers were prepared with their wagons and luggage when "all of a sudden, John Francis, who had determined to take us with him, yielding to the solicitations

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 62.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Aranjuez to García, March 1, 1794, and García to Aranjuez, January 26, 1794, AGS, SGU, leg. 7159, exp. 14.

¹⁷⁰ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 63.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 63.

of some of the chiefs, revoked the order, and deferred it till the next day.”¹⁷² Gros was frantic and tried to influence Jean-François to leave as he had planned, but he was silenced. The following morning at ten o’clock the party finally set out, but the group halted upon hearing a rumor that whites at the Tannerie were organizing an advance party. Biassou rode up with “about 7 or 800 Dragoons” and escorted Jean-François “a considerable distance on the plain” but after seeing nothing on the field he left the party and returned to Grande Riviere.¹⁷³ That evening the party made camp, and yet again a “plot...to strangle [Gros]” was supposedly hatched among the troops.¹⁷⁴ Nothing came of it and the next morning a smaller group of “150 Dragoons, chiefly men of color or free negroes” along with the camp commanders departed for the march to Le Cap. Finally, the party entered the Tannerie and were attacked by local slaves. There was not a white regiment preparing an assault; instead there was an assembly of slaves who “attack[ed] us, with their sabres, swearing, that our heads alone should be sent on to the Cape.”¹⁷⁵ The Tannerie slaves were unhappy with the free blacks’ negotiations of peace with the white Colonial Assembly.

As Jean-François’ party marched through the Tannerie, the slaves were “cursing the peace and their Generals,”¹⁷⁶ but Gros commended the firmness of their escort as being the saving grace to their lives, and eventually the party made their way on. Gros’ narrative often remarks how little the slaves and free-blacks got along. In Gros’ estimation, the slaves were blood-thirsty and would not stop their war efforts. He wrote, “We were now convinced of this grand truth, that the negroes will never return to their duty, but by compulsion, or a partial

¹⁷² Ibid, 64.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 65.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 65.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 65.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 65.

destruction of them.”¹⁷⁷ Jean-François never managed to win over the slaves to his side, however he did manage to pacify them and keep them in check long enough for the commission negotiations to conclude. Fick has argued that the free blacks were never in charge of the insurrection, especially in the northern plains, however the evidence show that this was most certainly not the case.¹⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the negotiations did not succeed in anything beyond a prisoner exchange. Jean-François and Biassou got their families back, while Gros and his peers “enjoyed the sweet consolation of beholding and embracing brothers and friends.”¹⁷⁹ Gros’ captivity came to an end, he reunited with his wife, and ultimately left Saint Domingue to return to Paris. Jean-François and the rest of the rebel troops, after the break-down of the peace talks, returned to their fortified camps and planned for renewed attacks.

1792

Ouanaminthe

The collapse of the December commission talks led to increased attacks from both parties. In October of 1791, the eastern regions of Grande Rivière and Dondon had been captured by the rebels. By November, Fort Daulphin and Ouanaminthe near the Spanish border were added to the winnings. Ouanaminthe (known as Juana Méndez by the Spanish) was the closest French fort to the major Spanish outpost Dajabón. Ouanaminthe had been seized by free black commander Jean-Baptiste Marc under the command of Jean-François. The second in command was César. Together, the two were known for their duplicity and “brilliant maneuvering” as they had “feigned desertion from the rebels and allied themselves with

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 66.

¹⁷⁸ Fick suggested that the mulatto leadership was in name only; Geggus showed otherwise. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*.

¹⁷⁹ Gros, *An Historick Recital*, 66; Jeremy Popkin lists the prisoners from a document in the Archives nationales (D XXV 46, d. 439): Caurelet, Dugos, Decormes, Grasse, Legros, Moulieul, Larroque, Mme Pichon, Mme Gaillot. Popkin notes that “Legros” presumably is Gros.

government forces under de Touzard [Tousard].”¹⁸⁰ Tousard trusted the black rebels and allowed them complete control and all military armaments that they required for three months. Tousard credited Cézair with saving the district from “brigands” and promised him a “handsome recompense for his services.”¹⁸¹ With the collapse of the December accords, Cézair and Jean-Baptiste Marc revealed their true allegiance to the insurrection. Cézair, having hidden three cannons in the sugar cane fields, fled to Dondon and rejoined his comrades on the attack against Marmelade. Jean-Baptiste Marc turned on the Ouinaminthe garrison and retook it under the rebels authority.¹⁸²

During the fall and winter of 1791, Dr. Thibal, a medical doctor and plantation owner at Sainte-Suzanne near the Spanish border in the northeastern province, was captured in the battles near his home. Thibal’s son was executed, but the doctor escaped for a few months, moving among the rebels and offering aid.¹⁸³ On January 11, 1792, Dr. Thibal was invited to attend a meeting that Biassou had arranged regarding the question of freeing the white prisoners. The meeting did not take place, but was used as a pretext to capture Thibal and four others, who were all held prisoner. On January 15th at the Delpech camp near Vallière, Thibal and the other prisoners were brought before a war council and sentenced to death. In a similar situation to Gros, Thibal was taken to be executed first: “On my way to the scaffold...I saw the executioner

¹⁸⁰ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 111.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 112.

¹⁸² Ibid, 111-112; AN, DXXV 20, 198, *Memoire fait par un habitant d'Ouinaminthe*; “Military successes against the French and taking Juana Mendez. Fol. 469,” AGS, SGU, leg. 7150, exp. 45.

¹⁸³ Thibal, “Récit historique du Citoyen Thibal, Médecin et habitant de la paroisse Sainte-Suzanne, détenu prisonnier, par les brigands, depuis 16 mois” in *Récit historique sur les événements: qui se sont succédés dans les camps de la Grande-Revrière, du Dondon, de Ste.-Suzanne et autres, depuis le 26 octobre 1791 jusqu'au 24 decembre de la même année* (Chez Parent, Au Cap-François: 1793); See the 1793 Cap Français edition of Gros’ memoir *Récit historique*, Thibal’s account is on pp. 63-80, it is transcribed in part in Popkin’s document collection in Ch. 7; Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*.

with a naked blade in his hand.”¹⁸⁴ Thibal’s description of his march to the platform is frightening. He counts down the steps, “30 paces away,” when suddenly a “citizen of color named Joseph Bivet” came running towards him exclaiming: “Don’t worry, M. Thibal, come, follow me, I’m taking you to a safe place, everything is finished, we have gotten you pardoned, take heart.”¹⁸⁵ Bivet was part of Jean-François’ officer corps, and in 1796 he will be a Colonel in the Black Auxiliary Troops in Honduras under the command of Marshal Juan Santiago.¹⁸⁶ At this point in the troop command, Bivet was probably still considered a leader, but he had not yet received any formal title.

Dr. Thibal’s captivity and his encounter with Jean-François mirror Gros’ captivity exchange, as well as another prisoner named named Fauconnet who credited Jean-François and a black officer named Grégoire. Thibal accused Fauconnet of abandoning him in order to secure his own escape, but Fauconnet wisely does not mention this in his own account.¹⁸⁷ In any regard, the commonality of the prisoner rescues suggest that Jean-François was disposed towards saving the lives of the whites and perhaps putting them to use as bargaining chips. For instance, when Thibal was presented to Jean-François, he was “welcomed very civilly, was sorry for us, and promised to ameliorate our situation by doing all that was in his power for us.”¹⁸⁸ He also asked Thibal “not to refuse to aid the sick and the wounded in the nearby camps.”¹⁸⁹ Thibal was treated very well for a prisoner, being furnished with “four pounds of meat a day” and guarded by six men at the Fauconnet plantation where they resided in captivity.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁴ Thibal’s mention of the war council suggests that Toussaint’s suggestion about a court-martial (made in Gros’ account) was eventually adopted as common practice. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 164.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 165.

¹⁸⁶ AGCA, A2, Leg 120, Fol. 2265 12-16v.

¹⁸⁷ A document at the end of the Cap Français edition of Gros is Fauconnet’s account titled “Déclaration du Citoyen Fauconnet, faite à la municipalité le 16 juin 1792, pp. 81-83 in Gros.

¹⁸⁸ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 166.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 166; See also Popkin, Chapter 14 on Descourtilz and the particular need of doctors in the insurgent camps.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 166.

Thibal's captivity at Fauconnet's plantation lasted three months wherein he repeatedly tried to escape. He was never successful, however by March or April of 1792, Thibal was transferred to Jean-François' headquarters in Ouanaminthe. Now that he was closer to the Spanish border, Thibal hoped his escape would be successful. It was not, however his proximity to Jean-François gives us some idea of the conversations ongoing in the camp. For instance, Thibal recalls "a number of high-ranking officers [who were] assembled at the general's [Jean-François] on the day after my arrival in Ouanaminthe." They were speaking about the "start of the insurrection."¹⁹¹ Thibal remembers Jean-François saying:

"I was ordered to Le Cap on the 21st of August; I went there at night by way of Petite Anse. There I received the powers the king had prepared for me and the orders I was to carry out. I came back by night, again by way of Petite Anse, and the next day I started the performance of the tragedy that has not yet reached its conclusion."¹⁹²

Jeremy Popkin notes that contemporaries during the rebellion (such as Gros) were under the impression that royalist conspirators had orchestrated the revolution. He argues that Thibal's comments here suggest that Jean-François and other leaders "confess that they had been in collusion with royalist government officials."¹⁹³ Perhaps there are more concrete notations in the full memoirs. Thibal may have assumed these orders came from the royalists, however he does not say so in this quote. At the most, it says that Thibal interpreted Jean-François to have been given orders by a higher commander, which we might assume to be either Boukman or Biassou.

Thibal only remained in Ouanaminthe on the Spanish border for a few months until July 1792 when Jean-François decided to transfer him further inland. In that time however, Thibal spoke to Jean-François, asking him why he didn't burn Petite Anse and Ouanaminthe in the same manner as he had burned the plains and mountains. Jean-François responded that "he had

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 166.

¹⁹² Ibid, 166.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 166.

orders to set fires only on the first days of the insurrection, that the blacks had gone on setting them, in spite of the orders to the contrary that he had given.”¹⁹⁴ This speaks to the hierarchy that Jean-François was under during the early months of the insurrection, possibly to Boukman or Biassou.

On April 4, 1792, the French National Assembly voted to grant full civil and political rights to all free blacks, but these rights were not extended to the slaves. Saint Domingue was in a desperate situation, and even though most planter whites opposed the decree, there was little open resistance from the colonists. The slaves were “furious” however, and “pitilessly harassed the men of color and free blacks of both sexes,” according to Abbé de la Haye who was the confidant of Biassou.¹⁹⁵ The April 4th decree would eventually lead to a confrontation in Cap Français between the white “patriots” and the white officials under command of the civil commissioners Léger-Félicité Sonthonax and Etienne Polverel. The free people of color, including Jean-François and Biassou, sided with Sonthonax and Polverel.

Belair letter to French Commissioners

By July 1792, Jean-François and Biassou had joined with another leader named Gabriel Aimé Belair.¹⁹⁶ These three sent a letter to the Colonial Assembly and the commissioners, Saint-Léger, Mirbeck, and Roume, reminding the French of their oaths and that they had “formally sworn” on the Declaration of the Rights of Man.¹⁹⁷ The letter opens by censuring the French,

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 167.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 163.

¹⁹⁶ This letter was originally published in two places in 1793 France: royalist colonel Cambefort’s justification memoire, *Quatrième partie du Mémoire justificatif, de Joseph-Paul-Augustin Cambefort, colonel du régiment du Cap* (Paris, 1793, pp 4-11, and in an antislavery journal by Claude Milscent, *Créole patriote*, February 9, 1793. In 1997, Nathalie Piquionne reprinted the letter in French in its original style followed by her modernization transcription, Nathalie Piquionne, "Lettre De Jean-François, Biassou Et Belair, Juillet 1792," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, no. 311 (1998); Nick Nesbitt, *Toussaint Louverture: The Haitian Revolution* (London, UK: Verso, 2008), 5-8.

¹⁹⁷ Piquionne, "Lettre De Jean-François, Biassou Et Belair, Juillet 1792."

accusing the “Gentlemen” of making the blacks “victims of your greed and avarice” and under whose “barbaric whipping” the French “accumulated treasures.”¹⁹⁸ They condemned the French for treating “men like you” as horses and considering them “the least” in the “eyes of humanity” whose only crime was “being under you.”¹⁹⁹ These words are more than a rebuke; they condemn the moral depravity of the French planters saying “our life depended upon your whims.”²⁰⁰

In 1791, Gros claimed that Jean-François had called the black slaves an “uncivilized set of beings,” and the 1791 depositions had not challenged the system of slavery, it claimed that the whites and free blacks actually shared a common interest “opposed to that of the mass of insurgents.”²⁰¹ But in this 1792 letter, the generals acknowledge that their color (“we are black, it is true”) separates them from the whites and links them to the black slaves. In the same sentence they claim “we are as free as you” and “it is only by your greed and ignorance” that the slaves are “held in bondage.” The tone of condemnation now incorporates a denouncement of slavery, declaring that the insurgents were “within their rights” to resist slavery since based on the Declaration, “men are born free and equal in rights” and their “natural rights were liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.” The generals made it clear to the French that they were defying their own laws and beliefs by continuing their hostility to the freedom from the April 4th decree.

Jean-François, Biassou, and Belair suggested an alternative to the French planters and commissioners; they would lay down their arms if two major demands were met, “general liberty for all men retained in slavery” and a “general amnesty for the past.” If followed, the leaders would see that the slaves returned to work on the plantations as laborers who received a yearly salary. In a shrewd acknowledgement of political forces, the generals required that these articles

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 111, 109.

of peace be presented to the French king and the National Assembly, and that the articles be notarized by the Spanish government.²⁰² As before, nothing came from this peace proposal, nor is it clear if they received any response. However it displays the expanding objectives of the generals for full amnesty for all blacks, not just free blacks. It also demonstrates their escalation in abolitionist rhetoric, obviously influenced by the Rights of Man but also shaped and governed by the decrees from May 15th and April 4th.

David Geggus has challenged the authenticity of this letter, objecting that “the language of the text has a suspiciously inauthentic look. Its combination of sophisticated vocabulary and rhetoric with simplistic errors of spelling and grammar makes it unlike any other surviving text from this milieu.”²⁰³ Geggus suggests the letter was forged by the Abbé de la Haye, the Dondon priest, in order to put the blame for the insurrection on the French republicans. Jeremy Popkin challenges this interpretation, saying that the spelling and grammar are similar to other letters from Jean-François and Biassou, and the content of the letter is similar to the previous demands from the 1791 letters.²⁰⁴ Grammar and syntax aside, the letter’s use of the French Revolution rhetoric does seem out of place for Jean-François and Biassou who previously had used strong royalist language. And its appeal to the Rights of Man is heavy on abolitionist language which certainly seems a quick jump for Jean-François and Biassou who had been negotiating within the slave system. However, even though the letter condemns slavery, it still allows for the slaves to return to the plantation system, albeit with wages.

²⁰² This letter signs off: “That gentlemen demand of men who are their peers, here is their final resolution. They are determined to live free or die...signed Biassou, Jean-François, and Belair.”

²⁰³ David Geggus, "Print Culture and the Haitian Revolution: The Written and the Spoken Word," in *Liberty, Egalité, Independencia: Print Culture and Enlightenment, and Revolution in the Americas, 1776-1838* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 2007).

²⁰⁴ Jeremy D. Popkin, *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 50.

Although challenges to its authenticity are valid, the truth of this letter might be multiplex. We know that Jean-François was not opposed to playing the field in order to secure his rights. Previous letters had all been sent to royalist commissioners and Jean-François' language had echoed their own church and king ideology. This letter, sent to republican commissioners, could just as easily have echoed their republican language. The Belair letter could be one more facet in the façade of Jean-François' negotiation tactics.

Monarchical disintegration in France

Meanwhile in Europe, the French monarchy was under extreme stress. The Austrian war had been declared in April and was a military disaster for France. The Legislative Assembly was hopelessly deadlocked against the king, and Lafayette's June 16th letter to the Assembly recommending the suppression of anarchists helped widen the breach between the Estates. By mid-July the National Guardsmen from the provinces, in Paris to ostensibly celebrate the July 14th holiday, began to petition for the king's dethronement. The Brunswick Manifesto, attempting to intimidate anyone who threatened Louis XVI and his family, spread through the Parisian streets on the same day (August 1st) that news of the Austrian and Prussian armies invading French soil reached the people. On August 10th, a mob of people approached the Tuileries Palace and prepared to attack. Sensing the disillusionment of his National guardsmen, the king and his family fled the Tuileries for the safety of the Legislative Assembly. Only then did the attack on the Tuileries commence, with the insurgents and National Guards fighting the Swiss Guards who were massacred. Thus occurred the overthrow of France's monarchy, ushering in a new politic of popular movement and the radicalized revolution.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Mignet and John Boyd Thacher Collection (Library of Congress), *History of the French Revolution, from 1789 to 1814*, The European Library (London: David Bogue, 1846); F. A. Aulard and Bernard Miall, *The French Revolution, a Political History, 1789-1804*, 4 vols. (London: T. F. Unwin, Leipsic, 1910); William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the*

The colony of Saint Domingue followed news from the metropole with interest, however the planter elite continually resisted any abolitionist tendencies dictated by the National Assembly decrees. Therefore, when new civil commissioners Sonthonax and Polverel arrived in Le Cap armed with authoritative republican power to enforce the April 4th decree, the planters balked. Backed by the anticipated French army, Sonthonax and Polverel reasserted metropole control in the colony by closing down the Colonial Assembly and deporting the royalist officers. This political offensive helped set up the military campaign against the black rebels, and in late winter 1792 the French mounted a military offensive that pushed the rebels back.²⁰⁶

September 1792

Jean-François continued to send letters to the French king through the Spanish intermediaries, however increasingly it seemed as though his true audience was the Spanish king. In September 1792, France finally landed the long anticipated royal troops, a military unit of about 6,000 men. Jean-François used the priest Vásquez to convey yet another letter to the Spanish commander, Andrés de Heredia, and through him to García, the Spanish king, and finally the French king.²⁰⁷ Vásquez, a mulatto, was a substantial intermediary and confidant for Jean-François. Often contemporaries commented on the attitude that Jean-François took with the priest, “humbly kiss[ing] his hand, when he came near him.”²⁰⁸ Jean-François wrote letters to Vásquez asking for a blessing and closing with the language of good friend and servant.²⁰⁹

French Revolution, 2nd ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

²⁰⁶ Robert Louis Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic* (Rutherford, London: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Associated University Presses, 1985).

²⁰⁷ See Heredia to García, September 12, 1792, attached to García to Marqués de Bajamar, September 25, 1792, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 18.

²⁰⁸ Report by Paul Cadusch, and “Examinations taken before the Council of the Môle respecting the massacre at Fort Dauphin” in BNA, London, CO 137/93, 182, 236-237, in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 115.

²⁰⁹ AGS, SGU, leg. 7158, exp. 30. and leg. 7151, exp. 11.

Unlike the August letter signed with Belair which was sent to the French Colonial Assembly, this letter carried by Vázquez to the Spanish was less heavy handed with abolitionist rhetoric. The signatories asked that the Spanish negotiations be kept quiet because “the slaves would not understand.” Second, the black generals agreed to return the slaves to the plantations as free people with wages, however “gradually by rigor and force” so that they could be made again “to know the yoke of slavery.” The stipulation of disarming remained the same in that slaves would keep their arms until they were settled back on the plantations.²¹⁰

These requirements seemed similar in scope and yet subtly different in tone. The reassertion of slavery, especially the language that slaves could be forced back under the yoke, seemed to fly in the face of the Belair note which stressed the rights of man and the abhorrence of enslavement. Similarly, voicing again their loyalty to the French king and their request for Spain’s “opinion and sponsorship” seems to be a tactic to showcase their monarchical tendencies, especially in light of the republican fear that was seeping over the French borders. Overall, Jean-François’ September letter to the French seems more directed to the Spanish as a means by which they could represent themselves as possible Spanish subjects.

By this point the black generals were skeptical of any peace commission coming to fruition, so even while sending these formal concords to the French king, they were also readying for additional military maneuvers. Days after sending the letter with Vázquez to the Spanish governor Joaquín García, Jean-François’ troops attacked Ouanaminthe, killed the commander and many of the French troops, burned the grounds, and made away with the rifles, four cannons, and four barrels of powder. Jean-François wrote to the Spanish commander, Andrés de Heredia, about his victory:

²¹⁰ See Heredia to García, September 12, 1792, attached to García to Marqués de Bajamar, September 25, 1792, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 18; Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 88-89.

The honor of the present [letter] is to greet you very humbly and inform you that last night we took a camp of Whites in which we killed many and burned their fields. As good proof I send you the gola of the commander of the camp, whose head I have here. I ask you to return it to me once you have seen it. I close wishing good health to you as well as to the Reverend Father [Vásquez], to whom I ask you to convey my most humble debts.”²¹¹

The “humanity” of Jean-François espoused by Gros and others is squarely at odds with these words bragging about the decapitated officer at his feet. Alarming, Ida Ferrer wonders if the “gola” which Jean-François sent to de Heredia could mean the gullet or esophagus, however it seems more likely that he just sent part of the commander’s armored collar or breastplate.²¹²

Jean-François’ troops, stationed in Ouanaminthe just a few months, were overrun by the new French troops on November 9th. These were commanded by General Rochambeau who was at the head of 1300 infantry and cavalry in two divisions.²¹³ The commander of the fixed regiment of Santo Domingo was Don Gaspar de Casasola who marched out to meet them. Joaquin Garcia, Governor of Santo Domingo, wrote to the Conde del Campo de Alange regarding the loss of Ouanaminthe.²¹⁴ The French commander attacked about four o’clock in the afternoon, and by five p.m. they were in the woods near the national pavilion. Garcia said the population blamed the “weak defenses of the blacks” whom, when faced with the “sabers in hand of the cavalry,” fled leaving their cannons behind.²¹⁵ Garcia praised Spanish commander Casasola from the Dajabón border who “took all military precautions, reinforced the abandoned

²¹¹ Juan Francisco to Andrés de Heredia, September 30, 1792, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, and García to Pedro Acuña, October 1, 1792, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157; *ibid*, 89.

²¹² *Ibid*, 90.

²¹³ Garcia to the Conde del Campo de Alange, “Ataque de los negros al fuerte Juana Méndez,” November 18, 1792 in AGS, SGU, leg. 7158, exp. 3.

²¹⁴ Conde del Campo de Alange is the peerage Carlos III granted in 1761 to Ambrosio José de Negrete and Ampuero in the Badajoz region.

²¹⁵ García to Conde del Campo de Alange, Santo Domingo, November 18, 1792, AGS, SGU, leg. 7158, exp. 3, f. 1v.

positions...and sent orders to all commanders to march forward on his command.”²¹⁶ The battle was very much one-sided, and Casasola surrendered soon after. Rochambeau was “accompanied by the Mayor of the French colony, Mr Pouget,” and together they suggested to Casasola an alliance between their regions as long as Casasola would send the black slaves back to their respective owners. Garcia told the Conde that Casasola agreed to consider the French offer, however he did not know how many blacks were actually “negros cimarrones” and would therefore be impossible to return.²¹⁷

1793

The Revolution on French soil had reached a tipping point. On January 21st in the Place de la Révolution, France’s monarchy was abolished with the execution of their king, Louis XVI. Following this event, the Spanish and Portuguese quickly declared war on France while Great Britain and the Dutch soon followed. The Atlantic empires sensed France’s internal discord, and they hastened to snatch up territories as quickly as possible. This military threat was only exacerbated by the political dismemberment France had achieved by executing their monarch. Other royalist regimes looked on France’s republican ideology with horror. In Saint Domingue, French colonial officials and elite residents feared for their home country, and blamed the republicans for destroying any hope of retaliation against the insurrectionist blacks. With the monarchy destroyed, who would command the king’s armies? Sonthonax attempted to take up the mantle, but he was met with disdain by members of the royalist troops who refused to fight under a republican.

²¹⁶ García to Conde del Campo de Alange, Santo Domingo, November 18, 1792, AGS, SGU, leg. 7158, exp. 3, f. 2r.

²¹⁷ García to Conde del Campo de Alange, Santo Domingo, November 18, 1792, AGS, SGU, leg. 7158, exp. 3, f. 3v.

Thus a civil war began on Saint Domingue following Louis' march to the guillotine. Following the French retaking of Ouanaminthe, Sonthonax tried to push further into the mountains to overrun the black rebel troops in the northern plain. However, for disputed reasons, Sonthonax abruptly ended his offensive against the north and focused elsewhere.²¹⁸ It is suspected that the white French regiment in Ouanaminthe laid down their arms and walked off the job, but there is no hard evidence for this. Or perhaps Sonthonax's abolitionist ideology was superseding the old monarchical demands for a slave society.²¹⁹ With the French Revolution's execution of the king in January, republican ideology was quickly turning to republican terror. The French empire was crumbling, and Sonthonax saw that the only way to keep the colony was to cease the fighting against the black rebels.

Because of the disintegrating political situation in Revolutionary France and rippling effects throughout the colonies, by February 1793 Jean-François and Biassou had nearly decided to fully embrace the Spanish and sign a formal alliance with them. With the reduction of military force by Sonthonax, Jean-François was given some breathing room and time to reflect. He must have concluded that the black troops could not win against the might of the French cavalry and infantry. Additionally, Jean-François must have realized a coup had taken place. The royalist Colonial Assembly which the black leaders had attempted to negotiate with in 1791 had now been superseded by republican officials. An entirely new colonial structure was about to come into place (barring a civil war), and any relationships built up during the previous administration were now defunct. Finally, the disintegration of France's monarchy meant that Jean-François' church and king rhetoric was no longer valid. Having done away with one and quickly doing

²¹⁸ Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 98.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, 102.

away with the other meant that the negotiation tactics based on a common foundation of regal loyalty was done.

The unrest caused by the French Revolution opened up a bidding war between France and Spain for the support of the black troops.²²⁰ Following the execution of France's monarch, the king of Spain approved a measure in February to change from a position of neutrality on Saint Domingue to an offensive position.²²¹

Spain's offer to the black insurgents, even though they had supported the slave uprising from its beginning, formally ended its position of neutrality and began an official alliance with Jean-François and the black troops. Pedro de Acuña, the Spanish Minister of State, wrote to Governor García in February 1793 that "His Majesty wills that, at the time you receive this present dispatch, by when war will probably have been declared on this nation, you use all necessary and suitable means, and with the greatest speed, efficiency, and secrecy, to win over and gain the alliance of the Negro and mulatto brigands, as well as royalists discontented with the new government established by the French nation."²²² Spain saw an opening to gain the allegiance not only with the black troops, but also to exploit the discontent from the French royalists whose king had just been guillotined. Their ultimate goal was to pursue the recolonization of the island of Hispaniola and to bring it "back under our rule."²²³ In order to regain their old colony, Spain was willing to go to great lengths.

Additionally, de Acuña authorized García to "win over Jean-François" and the other black leaders.²²⁴ Their allegiance was "necessary" in order to fight against the republican colonial troops. In order to do so, de Acuña permitted García to "promise them the royal protection of

²²⁰ Ibid, 105.

²²¹ García to Pedro de Acuña, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161; *ibid*, 106.

²²² García to Pedro de Acuña, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161; *ibid*, 106.

²²³ García to Pedro de Acuña, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161; *ibid*, 106.

²²⁴ García to Pedro de Acuña, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161; *ibid*, 106.

His Majesty, assuring both to Negros and mulattoes, in His Majesty's name, from the present time forward and forever: freedom, exemptions, favors, and privileges like those of his own subjects, and to all of them you will promise advantageous settlement on the lands of either the French or Spanish part [of the island] or maintain them on those they have already acquired."²²⁵ It seemed as though Jean-François' constant letters and deputations had finally borne fruit. The Spanish granted freedom to all black troops, whether slave or free black. Even though the Spanish had been supplying the black troops with arms and munitions, this additional promise of land and privileges was a way to sweeten the pot. And finally, the "royal protection" in "His Majesty's name" was something that would go a long way to legitimizing the black troops' prestige. This contract contained powerful words, and Jean-François would never forget them. Neither would the black troops under him ever let the Spanish forget these rich promises.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the complexities of the early rebellion years in Saint Domingue from 1791 to 1793. It used sources from the Spanish governors and ministers to their military commanders in order to explore Spain's official role of neutrality while the revolution was beginning. Employing captivity narratives from the French colonials who were incarcerated in Jean-François' camps, I illustrated a range of subjects on the northern plains of Saint Domingue. Monsieur Gros helped to present the formative months of Jean-François' campaign and the first deputations of peace sent to the French planters and Colonial Assembly. Illustrating Jean-François' character and personality, I explored Gros' remarks on Jean-François' humanity along with Thibal's sense of Jean-François' civility. The memoirs of these captured white colonials presented a particular image of the black leader which was complicated by the impression of

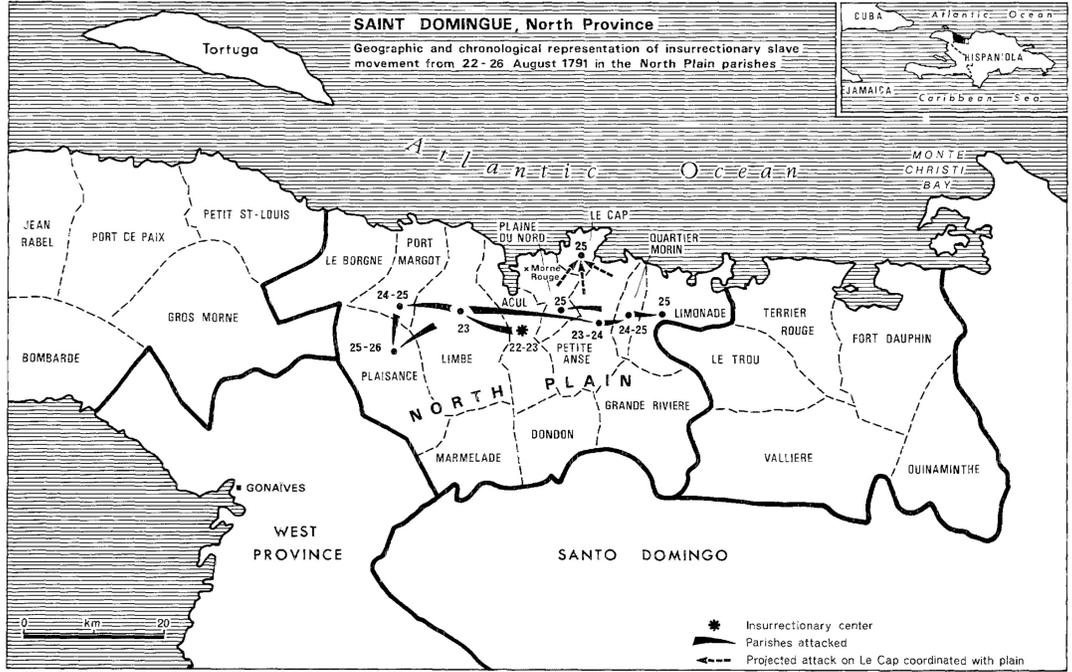
²²⁵ García to Pedro de Acuña, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS,SGU, leg. 7161; *ibid*, 106.

Jean-François as a merciless military commander. Geggus argued that Jean-François executed Jeannot because he was threatened by the ruthless leader's popularity. Jean-François himself wrote to the Spanish commander regarding the decapitated French officer after the Ouanaminthe battle. And in 1794, we will be confronted with Jean-François' most brutal wartime extravagance yet, the massacre at Fort Dauphin. Ultimately what emerges is a portrayal of Jean-François as a pragmatic man willing to present the image required to whomever demands.

Jean-François was a leader in charge of an disunited group, slaves and free blacks, with various demands and desires for their revolutionary aims. Their decision to sue for peace with the French Colonial Assembly and hand over the slaves to return to the plantation was a risky one. They attempted to keep it quiet, but word leaked to the slaves who were incensed that their leaders would return them to slavery. However, the rumors of an imminent French army ready to slaughter the black troops was always present. Jean-François and Biassou had no way of knowing when these infantry and cavalry would arrive, neither were they sure they could keep tight control over the slaves. The tightrope these black leaders walked regarding slavery and abolition would land them reputations as betrayers of their people. However I argued that these provisos along with the historical context of European abolitionist rhetoric which did not yet demand full abolition should provide us a more politic view regarding Jean-François' position on slavery.

Finally, given the overthrow of royalist France and the immediate declaration of war by Spain, Jean-François' diplomacy with the Spanish in Santo Domingo produced immediate results. His many letters to the French king required an acknowledgment of freedom for himself and the other leaders and amnesty for all blacks involved in the revolution. There were some vacillations regarding the question of slavery and whether the leaders would support a return to

the plantation system. Ultimately, however, the black leaders' peace rhetoric that was meant for the French king was transferred to the Spanish. After the arrival of Sonthonax and the French troops, the black leaders sent letters via the Spanish and their rhetoric subtly remarked on their royalist ideology and their attestation of the slavery system. Following Louis XVI's execution and the declaration of war against republican France, Spanish King Carlos seized the moment to take back the island. He authorized his ministers to offer the black troops "all necessary help" in order to secure their allegiance as military allies. In so doing, the black troops gained freedom, land, military honors, and the prestige that came with a formal and official allegiance to the Spanish throne. From here on out, they would be known as the Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV, and they would never let Spain forget its promises.



Map 3. Saint Domingue, North Province (from C. Fick)

Chapter 3

Black Auxiliary Troops and the Spanish, 1793-1795

Introduction

In February 1792, Santo Domingo Governor Joaquín García finally received orders from King Carlos IV laying out their course of action regarding the Saint Domingue uprising. The Royal Order of November 17, 1791 arrived in Santo Domingo with traditional Spanish orders. Wait and observe. The king commanded that García observe “perfect neutrality” because at the moment the troubles in Saint Domingue appeared to be internal. However, if groups formed of “malefactors or pirates or of blacks against whites to destroy them or to commit atrocities or robberies, [Spanish authorities should] offer aid to the persecuted according to the rules of humanity, giving them provisions, arms, and munitions to the extent possible.”¹ Spain was officially neutral during the French Revolution, but much like their actions during the American war of independence, Spain kept their options open by supplying weapons and money. The goal on Saint Domingue was to take advantage of the turmoil caused by the slave insurrection and possibly regain control over the island.

King Carlos’ directions to García were welcome instructions, although maddeningly late and ambiguous. The royal order was postmarked November 1791, which was seven months into the slave rebellion. While García waited for official orders, he was also under the impression that superior French forces were imminent and everyday expected on the French colony. The rumor of thousands of French infantry and cavalry continually swept through the colony, and it helped

¹ García to Conde de Lerena, February 22, 1792, in AGI, SD, leg. 1029; See also ANC, CCG, leg. 42, exp. 7; Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge Univ Press, 2014), 87.

promote the deputation peace talks between Jean-François and the Colonial Assembly. For García however, arrival of thousands of French infantry would threaten his eastern border with Saint Domingue where the black rebels continually sought refuge. He wondered if “the precepts of humanity” required that the Spanish offer them asylum, or should he force them back from the border.²

The royal response, though delayed and unclear, at least provided García with some direction regarding his actions towards the blacks on the border. He decided to open up trade to the insurgents, and an exchange of goods and communication quickly sprang up on the border town of Dajabón with the Spanish priest José Vásquez acting as intermediary. For their part, the black insurgent leaders, most often Jean-François and Biassou, were happy to have the Spanish unofficially on their side. The trade between their camps and Dajabón included mules, silver, arms, and slaves, and the royalist politics from the Spanish were familiar to free black leader Jean-François. In the early revolutionary years, Jean-François did not seem inclined to court subjecthood with the Spanish, however as the political situation worsened in France and in Saint Domingue, it increasingly became more appealing.

Therefore, this chapter argues that by 1793, there existed a mutually beneficial partnership between Spain and the black rebels led by Jean-François and Biassou (and Toussaint for a time.) Spanish officials were eager to take advantage of their military prowess and use them to retake the island. The black leaders were initially committed to gaining freedom and amnesty for themselves, but once the Spanish offered them this and more, their goal was to maintain this allegiance and preserve the promises of land, titles, salary, and freedom. Once under the Spanish alliance however, various internal disputes and betrayals (including Toussaint’s *volte face* and Jean-

² Ibid, 87-88.

François' horrific Fort Dauphin massacre) would lead to serious tensions within the Black Auxiliary/Spanish relationship. These tensions would carry over into the negotiations between Jean-François and Spanish leadership regarding their resettlement plans following the 1795 Treaty of Basle. Ultimately, however, Jean-François' knowledge of the legal power of the 1793 alliance would help him negotiate with Havana governor Las Casas and result in a diplomatic agreement on the Black Auxiliary Troops resettlement throughout the Spanish empire.

1793

In January the French Revolutionaries executed their king and the world empires reacted with bloodlust. Spain declared war on France, and quickly their policy of neutrality in Saint Domingue changed to a strategy for winning back the island.

Jean-François, Biassou, and Toussaint were now in a better negotiating position with the Spanish who wanted their military assistance. The black leaders rejected the French commissioners at Le Cap even though they had campaigned for a peace commission with them for the previous two years. Their rejection included the royalist language which Revolutionary France had just discarded: "We have lost the king of France but we are dear to him of Spain who constantly shows us reward and assistance. We therefore cannot recognize you until you have enthroned a king."³ This contingent remark was in word only because their actions were leading them ever closer to the Spanish. García was hesitant to give them everything they wanted however. He wrote to Madrid informing them that the black leaders were proposing allegiance

³ Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 69; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 157-160; Robin Blackburn, "The Black Jacobins and New World Slavery," in *C.L.R. James: His Intellectual Legacies*, ed. Selwyn Reginald Cudjoe and William E. Cain (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 81-97.

on the “‘impossible’ terms of being fully equipped by the Spanish.”⁴ García was not inclined to give into the leaders’ demands and he held them off until official word came from Madrid. Still, he told Madrid that their proposal was “worth considering” since the French were also angling for their allegiance. If the Spanish did not take them, the French would and García’s troop count was not heavy enough to battle both.

In February, the king’s minister Pedro de Acuña sent word to García that he had finally been given official sanction to employ the armed black rebels. The instructions required García to “win over Jean-François, Hyacinthe, and the other leaders,” meaning the generals had not yet completely turned over their allegiance to the Spanish.⁵ Along with granting them “all necessary help...freedom, exemptions, favors, and privileges” they were also promised “advantageous settlements” and protection “in His Majesty’s name.”⁶ Jean-François and Biassou would sign their accord with the Spanish in May, but for the time being everything was kept secret.⁷ De Acuña made sure that García used “loyal and discrete envoys” who would “employ cunning and secrecy” for this plan so that no resistance would have a chance of springing up. He was speaking of the French commissioners who were also negotiating with Jean-François and Biassou, however there were serious misgivings by the slave troops regarding any accession to peace with a slave holding society.

By April, the Archbishop of Santo Domingo had sent word back to de Acuña informing him how he planned to negotiate with Jean-François. The Archbishop was not pleased with the new arrangements; it appears as though he did not trust Jean-François, nor did he approve of the

⁴ García to Conde del Campo de Alange, March 25, 1793, in AGI, SD, leg. 956, in David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). 285; García’s letter was sent before he received the letter from de Acuña (dated February 22) which instructed him to give the leaders everything.

⁵ De Acuña to García, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161 in *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014), 106.

⁶ De Acuña to García, February 22 and March 26, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161 in *ibid*, 106.

⁷ Jean-François started signing his letters as Grand Admiral.

character of the black troops who had consistently abandoned their stations. However he promised to send along the new instructions to the Dajabón vicar and hope that these new instructions “would have a well-founded effect.”⁸ He too saw the political expediency of maintaining friendship with the black insurgents, writing “if they are our friends, as they are, they can cheat us fourfold, but if ill-intentioned, they can hurt us a hundredfold.”⁹ His hesitancy was not imagined, as García estimated Jean-François’ troops at 6,650 men of which he assumed only 50 were not fugitives from slavery.¹⁰

On May 6, 1793, negotiations between the black generals and the Spanish concluded. Father Vásquez presided over the oaths which were taken in the name of the Spanish king and his soldiers. Jean-François sent a letter to the Archbishop, transmitting his oath of loyalty.¹¹ Jean-François, Biassou, and Toussaint Breda (not yet Louverture) all declared “in a rhetorical flourish that they would ‘rather be slaves of the Spaniards than free with the French.’”¹² The black rebels were now officially titled the Black Auxiliary Troops of King Carlos IV.

⁸ Archbishop Portillo of Santo Domingo to de Acuña, April 24, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 22, d. 343.

⁹ Archbishop Portillo to de Acuña, June 24, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 22.

¹⁰ Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 90; García to Acuña, June 11, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157.

¹¹ Jean-François to Archbishop Portillo, May 28, 1793, AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 22, f. 368.

¹² Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 71; See also Captain General Joaquín García to the Duque de Alcudia, December 12, 1795, cited in Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, *Cesión de Santo Domingo a Francia: Correspondencia de Godoy, García, Roume, Hedouville, Louverture, Rigaud y Otros, 1795-1802*, Archivo General De La Nación Publicaciones (Ciudad Trujillo: Impresora Dominicana, 1958), 46–48; David Geggus, "Slavery, War and Revolution in the Greater Caribbean," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1–50.



Figure 1. Pillage of Cap Français, 1793

The slave rebellion had already damaged the French colony and showed little signs of lessening. In June 1793, that insurrection was further augmented by a civil war that erupted in Cap Français between the royalist planters and the newly arrived republican administrators.¹³ The politics of mainland France had finally reached the shores of its colonial holding, and Saint Domingue was in a state of further disintegration. Sonthonax's arrival the previous winter had signaled to the royalist and patriot subjects that French imperial rule was in flux, and in May the royalist-appointed governor François Thomas Galbaud du Fort (Galbaud) appeared in Saint Domingue to set things straight. Unfortunately, Galbaud chose to confront Sonthonax and

¹³ David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 128.

Polverel. He seized Poverel's son as a hostage and attacked Le Cap. Sonthonax seized Galbaud and imprisoned him aboard a ship, surrounded by sailors intent on freeing him and fighting the insurrectionist republicans. Sonthonax used the military threat to increase his own forces and made a sizable alliance with the blacks by issuing an emancipation decree for Le Cap. June 21st, 1793, Sonthonax declared that any insurgent slave who wished to fight for the new French Republic would be granted freedom. Sonthonax's emancipation decree was not sanctioned by the new National Assembly, however it was acknowledged in the colony as a legitimate edict and the republican forces swelled with "new men" as they took the oath, stripping "off the signs of royalism" and donning "the tricolor ribbon."¹⁴ Poverel pronounced their freedom outright and enrolled them in the Legion of Equality. In early July, the freedom decree was extended to wives and children, those present and in the future. French Saint Domingue was beginning the first stages of abolition.

Scholars often remark on the curious interlude of Toussaint who elected to remain with the Spanish even following this June emancipation decree. There is no clear consensus for why Toussaint chose allegiance with a Spanish system in slavery, especially since he had only signed the Spanish oath about six weeks previous. However, Jean-François and Biassou never showed any inclination to leave their alliance under King Carlos, although they did continue to negotiate for a more secure position.

The Black Auxiliaries had been granted lands in "either French or Spanish" parts of the island, and Jean-François and Biassou were eager to settle this ambiguity. One freed slave named Jean Guyambois was from Cul-de-Sac in south Saint Domingue which shared a border with Spanish Santo Domingo. Guyambois and his brother François communicated with Jean-

¹⁴ Ibid, 130.

François and Biassou regarding an ambitious plan for peace and domination. Guyambois desired to rule Saint Domingue as a triumvirate, and he asked Jean-François and Biassou to stand with him as co-leaders of the island. His plan involved Spain ceding some territory; universal freedom being established; Guyambois becoming military leader and enforcing the property distribution; and debts from the black receiving this property would function as the co-leaders' salaries. No blood would be shed. Remarkably the whites in the Artibonite valley approved the plan, and Guyambois convened an assembly meeting at Petite-Rivière. Polverel learned of the plan late, and he quickly had the Guyambois brothers arrested and the plan officially revoked. But word of emancipation had spread, and on August 29th Sonthonax proclaimed the abolition of all slavery in the north.¹⁵

Sonthonax's decree of emancipation

Sonthonax's emancipation proclamation in the north was echoed by Polverel's less radical announcement in the west. In rhetoric, it sounded like full abolition, but in practice, it was more like serfdom and kept the slaves attached to the large plantations. Sonthonax's speech of August 29 began heavy handed, repeating the opening salvoes of the now legendary Declaration of the Rights of Man: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. There you have it, citizens: the Gospel of France."¹⁶ Sonthonax invoked the rhetoric of the French Revolution arguing that only kings are "happy amidst slaves" speaking directly to the Spanish offers made to the Black Auxiliaries.¹⁷

¹⁵ Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 161.

¹⁶ Sonthonax, Proclamation au nom de la République [Cap Français, 1793], 1-6, in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 107.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 107.

The republican rhetoric, “everyone is free and everyone works,” carried with it a heavy caveat to the cries for freedom that the slaves shouted. Sonthonax made his offer of emancipation come with a pecuniary price. In exchange for “defend[ing] the interests of the Republic against kings” (meaning fight against the French royalists and Spain), the slaves must have “the courage to want to be a people.”¹⁸ This courage, according to Sonthonax’s decree, would be manifested by their work. And that work would come directly from the plantation.

Article two of Sonthonax’s decree stated: “all Negroes and people of mixed blood currently enslaved are declared free and will enjoy all rights pertaining to French citizenship.”¹⁹ The rights of a citizen were limited, of course. Article nine required that “slaves currently attached to the plantations of their former masters will be obliged to remain there and to work the land.”²⁰ Article eleven made clear that “former agricultural slaves will be hired for one year, during which time they will not be able to change plantations without the permission of a magistrate.”²¹ Thus, the plantation system would continue and the work requirements were not much changed, although the slave was now termed a cultivator.

Articles twelve and fourteen through eighteen addressed the notions of payment. A plantation owner would receive a third of the share of revenue, with another third reserved for capital improvements, and the final third was to be split among all the laborers. The slave drivers, now called foremen, would receive their cut from the laborer’s third. The slaves (cultivators) would take their shares in decreasing percentages based on gender and age.²²

¹⁸ Ibid, 107-108.

¹⁹ Ibid, 108.

²⁰ Ibid, 108.

²¹ Ibid, 108.

²² Ibid, 108.

Finally, regarding the rallying cry for the original cause of the rebellion - the three day weekend. Article twenty-nine stated that “Cultivators cannot be made to work on Sundays,” and they would be given “two hours per day” to work their own plots of land for family provisions.²³ A one day weekend is a far cry from a three day weekend, and at the end of a day laboring on a sugar plantation, just to come home at dusk and put in two more hours plowing your field is certainly not a comfortable deal.

While the rhetoric of Sonthonax’s decrees certainly sounded good, these articles make it appear as though serfdom was not very different to slavery in terms of labor and time. The salaries were small, although more than the nothing they were receiving before. But in terms of a psychological and emotional change, perhaps the offers of a feudal system suggested to slaves one way out of the enslaved social position.

Spanish response to the Black Auxiliaries

Still, not everyone was convinced by Sonthonax’s decree. Plenty of slaves looked to the Spanish alliance with Jean-François and Biassou and decided to take their chances with the royalist system, regardless of its position on slavery. The Spanish commanders, on the other hand, were not entirely pleased with García’s offer to the Black Auxiliaries. Even though Spain had a long tradition of arming black militia and making agreements with maroon settlements, Jean-François’ troops were a particularly daring enterprise. For one thing, there were thousands of black troops. Even with the minimal arms and ammunitions, the ex-slave troops were able to make large demands on their benefactors precisely because they commanded a majority force.

²³ Ibid, 108.

The Spanish commanders were not entirely pleased to work alongside the black troops, although they seemed to be happy to let them lead the charges and draw fire. One Spanish commander addressed his officers on the appropriate way to use their new allies. He suggested that they be considered “skirmishers and not as line-of-battle troops.”²⁴ The Black Auxiliaries, those under Jean-François at least, had a tendency to take towns by surprise and use fire on the plains. They did not fight under traditional battle lines like the regular army was used to.²⁵ Even though the Spanish commander looked down on his black allies, his orders were to “follow the example” of Black Auxiliaries and “force our enemy to surrender by spreading hunger, anarchy, confusion, and disorder.”²⁶ The regular army was ordered to “back up our allies” and keep them supplied with weapons and ammunition so that they might take most of the burden upon themselves.²⁷

It is not entirely clear how invested the Black Auxiliaries’ were in Guyambois’ plan of the triumvirate rule, however during the latter months of 1793 they continued to win positions for the Spanish, like Gonaïves, Gros-Morne, Plaisance, Acul, Limbé, Port-Margot, Borgne, Petit-Saint-Louis and Terre-Neuve, although many of these victories belonged to Toussaint.²⁸ Father Vásquez wrote from Dajabón, “if divine Providence had not favored us with the blacks [allies], we would have been victims of the fury of the savage masses.”²⁹

Unfortunately the alliance between Jean-François and Biassou was becoming more and more strained. It reached a breaking point in September when Biassou “repeatedly attacked

²⁴ Ibid, 109.

²⁵ Ouanaminthe was originally taken by burning the outer plains.

²⁶ Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 109.

²⁷ Ibid, 109.

²⁸ Beauburn Ardouin, *Études Sur L'histoire D'haïti; Suivies De La Vie Du Général J.-M. Borgella*, 11 vols. (Paris: Dezobry et Magdeleine, 1853), 2:328-329.

²⁹ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 73; See, Father Josef Vásquez to the Vicar of Santiago, December 12, 1793, AGI, Estado 11, doc. 98.

Jean-François as ‘vain’ and his presumptions to leadership as ‘absurd.’”³⁰ Biassou was offended that Jean-François remained only within the Ouanaminthe camp and did not attack elsewhere, while “thousands” had surrendered to Biassou. He added, “There is no an obligation that he [Jean-François] does not owe me.”³¹

The French took advantage of this instability and reconquered the Tannerie fort which had been occupied by Jean-François’ troops. The Spanish were upset that the discord between the black generals had led to military losses, and Brigadier Matías Armona was appointed the mediator between the two. They all met in Dondon and came to an agreement in late November. Jean-François wrote to the priest Vázquez telling him about the agreement they had reached.³² By winter, the Black Auxiliaries were achieving victories for Spain once again, especially the conquest of Port Margot in early 1794 which earned them several military accolades from the Spanish king.³³

The end of 1793 was an auspicious time for the Black Auxiliaries. They had reached a lucrative agreement with the Spanish, and Spain was happy to honor their alliance because the troops were winning them land. The Spanish goal to reconquer the island looked feasible. But global politics intruded on the goals of the colonials and Black Auxiliaries. Sonthonax’s emancipation decree arrived in Revolutionary France, which ratified it in Paris on February 4, 1794 and spread it to the entire French empire. The coming year would prove difficult for the Black Auxiliaries’ efforts, and Spain’s colonial reunification goals would be tested.

³⁰ Ibid, 75; See, Jorge Biassou (from San Miguel) to Captain General Joaquín García, August 24, 1793, AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 6.

³¹ Ibid, 75; See, Jorge Biassou (from San Miguel) to Captain General Joaquín García, July 15, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 7; August 23, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 8; August 24, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 6; September 25, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 13; Captain General Joaquín García to Jorge Biassou, October 29, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 15.

³² Jean-François to Vázquez, November 17, 1793, AGS, SGU leg. 7157, exp. 22, f. 466.

³³ Jorge Victoria Ojeda, *Las Tropas Auxiliares De Carlos Iv: De Saint-Domingue Al Mundo Hispano*, America (Alicante: Universitat Jaume I, 2011).

On May 8, García finally attempted a major offensive push into colonial Saint Domingue. Up till then, the Spanish military had not advanced very far into the Saint Domingue colony, preferring instead to defend their border and rely on the black generals to win land. The Spanish military on the island probably numbered around 3,500, but they were rife with disease.³⁴ Even after nearly a year from the declaration of war, the Spanish had achieved very little for themselves. Most of the victories were won by the black rebels. In fact the Spanish forces found themselves relying on British troops for supplies and military support when their slaves rebelled in the Spanish region. By March the Spanish forces were overrun with fever, and the rainy season was set to begin, bringing with it more disease. Still, in May García felt they were ready to push heavily into French territory. Unlucky in timing, this was also the moment that Toussaint was to choose for his *volte face*, betrayal, of Spain. García was about to lose his most aggressive general to the French.

The Spanish offer of freedom in their May 1793 alliance meant that Jean-François, Biassou, Toussaint, and their men at arms had little reason to reconsider the French. However, once Sonthonax's emancipation decree became legal doctrine, some of the subordinate officers wavered in their allegiance. Toussaint is the most well-known of these, and his *volte face* in May broke the back of the Black Auxiliaries' offensive. However, there were other officers who transferred their allegiance to the republican French, often using some complicated mental maneuvers to justify their political allegiance.

For instance, Barthélemy, the Limbé parish black leader, had joined the French republicans after Sonthonax's decree, but he was in communication with some of the black

³⁴ Geggus refutes Ott's figure of 14,000, calling it "illusory." Thomas O. Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 79; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 131.

troops from Jean-François and Biassou's army, specifically Thomas a brigadier and former slave driver. Thomas sent a letter to Barthélemy asking him to consider joining the Spanish since they were both royalists. Barthélemy responded, rejecting the invitation based on the issue of freedom for all. He wrote, "we have always been fighting to enjoy a right we were not born with and to throw off the horrible yoke."³⁵ Like the insurrectionist slaves in Jean-François' army, Barthélemy's primary goal was freedom from slavery, although he wanted it under the French king. Barthélemy was under the impression that the republicans would eventually cede power back to the monarchy with Louis XVII. Thus, while Barthélemy still proclaimed to be a royalist, his decision to ally with republican France reads as a form of extreme subjecthood. Rather than abandon the monarchy in its time of distress, he chose to remain in order to prove himself a stalwart loyal subject to the king. Eventually Thomas would leave the Spanish and join with Barthélemy in Toussaint's army.³⁶

Toussaint's *volte face*

If Barthélemy's political hoop-jumping makes little sense, it is even harder to figure out the motivations for Toussaint. His *volte face* which occurred in May appears to some scholars to have been a long time coming. However, Toussaint seemed to have not only struggled with his decision to leave the Spanish, but he also spent a lot of time courting both the French and the British in secret in a search for the best possible place for himself. Geggus writes, "whether motivated by idealism or ambition, Toussaint's *volte face* was therefore tortuous, cautious, and

³⁵ Citizen Barthélemy to Citizen Thomas, October 24, 1793, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 111.

³⁶ The two would be executed in 1799 by Toussaint under suspicions of espionage.

protracted, and it was not a single-handed initiative.”³⁷ Regardless of his inner turmoil or outward political machinations, Toussaint’s break with the Spanish devastated their military campaign against the French and nearly ruined their plans for retaking the island. He had been their most victorious black general. Jean-François and Biassou contained nowhere near the military foresight of Toussaint, who had won most of the Spanish victories up to that point. On May 6, 1794, he turned that ferocity against the Spanish forces and began attacking the Black Auxiliaries, surprising and defeating the forces at San Rafael (across the border in Santo Domingo).³⁸

Toussaint’s *volte face* was not as clear as some historians have made it out to be. He continued to write to the “Spanish far into the fall, assuring them of his continued loyalty and of his innocence of what his undisciplined subordinates were doing. The Spaniards were not exactly taken in but went along with the deception, hoping for a reconciliation.”³⁹ On May 11 however, García suddenly abandoned his offensive. A week later, García authorized Jean-François to free whatever slaves he liked, in an attempt to retain some of the black troops who were streaming over the lines into Toussaint’s army. García knew that Toussaint’s departure had signaled a turn in the tide for Spanish ambitions, however he was unsure about Toussaint’s motivations and wanted to personally interview him before deciding.⁴⁰ García ordered his officers to remain

³⁷ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 18.

³⁸ Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 76; See also, AGS, SGU, leg. 7161, exp. 15, f. 148, 150, “confrontation between Jean-François and Toussaint in San Rafael.”

³⁹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 135.

⁴⁰ BNA, PRO, WO 1/59, f. 321; García to Campo de Alange, May 17, 1794, AGS, SGU, leg. 7159; Monte y Tejada, *Historia de Santo Domingo*, 4:212-215.

vigilant with Toussaint, to “neither trust him nor reveal [their] distrust,” and then do everything in their power to “retain the services of those still-loyal black auxiliaries.”⁴¹

On May 18, Toussaint officially declared in a letter to Laveaux his intentions to switch sides, claiming that the Spanish refusal to abolish slavery had “caused us to fight each other in order to diminish our numbers and to overwhelm the remainder with chains.”⁴² However the rest of that month and into June, his actions on the Spanish were mainly defensive. Another commander, Villatte, held nearly the entire northern plain for the French republic, and it was Villatte who was often pitted against Jean-François along the road to Le Cap. García’s decision to retreat was probably due as much to the Villatte attacks as it was to the *volte face* of Toussaint.

On July 3, Toussaint attacked Jean-François’ camp with devastating effects.⁴³ García called Toussaint, “a creole black full of maxims, who knows how to keep his hand hidden.” And the Archbishop of Santo Domingo called him “infamous.”⁴⁴ The results were catastrophic for Jean-François’ reputation, and in response he made the decision to attack in one of the most bloody and costly maneuvers of his military history, the massacre at Fort Dauphin. This retaliation would cost him in esteem with the Spanish, who no longer fully trusted his military corps.

The Spanish tread a very narrow line by appealing simultaneously to the Black Auxiliaries’ with offers of freedom and the French planters willing to take oaths of loyalty to the Spanish. A Spanish officer tried to instruct his officers on how best to approach the difficulty. The regular army was instructed to back up Jean-François’ troops as they sacked the French

⁴¹ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 119; García to de Alange, July 5, 1794, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7159, and August 6, 1794, in AGS, SGU, leg. 7161.

⁴² Ott, *The Haitian Revolution, 1789-1804*, 84.

⁴³ AGS, SGU, Leg. 7161, exp. 15, f. 149.

⁴⁴ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 271, fn116; Portillo to Llaguno, August 16, 1794, AGI, SD 1031.

republicans, but the army was ordered that “you need to stress that they should not kill, burn, or rob on the plantations belonging to those who have joined our side and wish to recognize our king.”⁴⁵ The black troops felt little compunction about burning plantations, and in fact often sought out their old masters in order to burn their fields and destroy their livelihoods (and lives). Spain’s attempt to court both sides, insurgent slaves and royalist planters, meant that the army and Jean-François was constantly attempting to field their carnage into appropriate venues. There would come a moment on July 7 when this particular thread would break, and the carnage would spill over into a horrific massacre.

Fort Dauphin massacre

On July 7, 1794, at Fort Dauphin (Bayajá in Spanish),⁴⁶ Jean-François’ attacked the citizens of that town and massacred 742 colonists.⁴⁷ The French citizens had fled to the fort from across Saint Dominuge and some had even returned from the United States after having fled during the early revolution years. When the town was taken over by Spanish land and naval forces in January 1794, the French citizens agreed to accept the subjugation as long as the Spanish promised to protect their lives and the “political rights of the men of color, [their] brothers.”⁴⁸ The Spanish offer of protection produced an influx of people arriving from the

⁴⁵ *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*, 109.

⁴⁶ Spanish documents also record Fort Dauphin as Fuerte Delfin or Bahiaja.

⁴⁷ My analysis of the Fort Dauphin massacre uses Leber 5847 from Rouen in the French biblioteque nationale. I am grateful to Frances Kolb for her translation assistance. BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847 “Récit du massacre arrivé au Fort Dauphin le 7 juillet 1794,” 65 pages; For another primary source see Document 53 in Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*.

⁴⁸ Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below*, 110.

surrounding countryside. In just two days in February, at least 204 people were entered into the town ledger arriving from the nearby town of Yaquesi.⁴⁹

The author of *Mon Odyssée*, one of the refugees arriving in Fort Dauphin in 1794 after having left twelve months previous, reviewed his circumstances, the surroundings, and the individuals in the fort.⁵⁰ His group was deposited upon the shore, and there he observed “the soldiers, thin, dirty, and ragged.” The refugees were told to stand among the troops “by an old officer who carried a parasol in place of a sword.” Moving slowly, since the “Spanish are never in haste,” he had time to look over their surroundings.

He wrote, “What was my surprise, O God! when I beheld that this horde of Negroes, who had brought steel and fire to our unfortunate country, had become allies of the King of Spain!” The author remarked upon the blacks’ “bizarre accoutrements” in their clothing: “some wore the upper portion of magnificent costumes, with neither pants nor stockings, while some had on cassocks or petticoats. I could not help smiling despite my rage at their carnival-like and grotesque clothing.”

A royalist French colonist recorded his observations of the massacre in a document held in the Rouen archives in France.⁵¹ As this colonist remembered, the causes of the Saint Domingue revolution stem directly from the metropole, its “corrupt licentiousness” and the “whirlwind” of changes brought by the republicans.⁵² However, this colonist accused the Spanish for the destruction of the colony, indicting that government for “furnishing the brigands who

⁴⁹ On the Spanish victory in January, see Ardouin, *Études Sur L'histoire D'haïti; Suivies De La Vie Du Général J.-M. Borgella*, 2:82-87.

⁵⁰ See “*Mon Odyssée*,” bk. 2, p. 47, in Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 254-269.

⁵¹ “*Récit du massacre arrivé au Fort Dauphin le 7 juillet 1794*,” BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847.

⁵² BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p. 2.

ravage” Saint Domingue, providing them “arms, ammunition, supplies, provisions of all sort.”⁵³ Outfitting the black rebels was solely in a “desire” to “ruin” the colony, since everyone knew that Saint Domingue was the “greatest rival” of neighboring Cuba.⁵⁴

Thus according to this French colonist, it was the greed of the Spanish which was heavily to blame for the massacre in Fort Dauphin. Despite the bloodless naval victory wherein the Fort Dauphin residents turned over their town to Spanish rule, the royalist citizens were horrified at taking orders from “unbearable commissaires civils and gens de couleur.” “Too insidious!” they cried. Even worse was the command that they “submit ourselves to Jean-François, this chief of our rebellious slaves.”⁵⁵ And the icing on the cake of despair was their knowledge that the Spanish victory meant yet another difficulty in the “re-establishment of the affairs of our unfortunate monarch.”⁵⁶

The French agreed to Spanish authority in Fort Dauphin following the January 1794 overthrow (attack might be too strong) as long as two conditions were followed. The royalist colonist described the first condition as a life and property stipulation where “the moveable and immoveable properties...will be preserved.”⁵⁷ The second condition demanded “that the troops of Jean-François will not enter the town armed.”⁵⁸ These royalist conditions are unlike those recorded by Ferrer in her analysis of the massacre, those sounding more like the agreements from a republican assembly. Regardless, the conditions were not followed, as the royalist colonist accused García of “abolish[ing] the laws and the French tribunals” requiring that “in the space of six months, justice be rendered in Spain,” meaning that all government actions would be

⁵³ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.2v.

⁵⁴ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.2v.

⁵⁵ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.3v.

⁵⁶ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.3v.

⁵⁷ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.4v.

⁵⁸ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.4v.

transferred to Madrid.⁵⁹ The people complained; they wrote memoirs; they demanded the preservation of French laws, tribunals, and offices.⁶⁰ They demanded their arms be returned, but those “same arms had been given to the mulattoes and to the brigands who [eventually] killed us with them.”⁶¹ Finally, the colonists realized all of the promises had been a ruse.⁶²

According to the colonist, the sacking of Fort Dauphin was merely a strategy by which García could become rich. In association with Fr. Vásquez and another Basque priest named Sanches, García “under the name of Jean-François” governed the town “despotically” and was the true chief “of all this savage and devouring horde.”⁶³ The three “Triumverate” (meaning García, Vásquez, and Sanches) each shared the surplus salaries which arrived each month from the king. Additionally, García allowed Jean-François the “privilege to sell for profit all the blacks whom he should take captive under the republic.”⁶⁴ According to the colonist Jean-François did not receive money for these slaves; he only received “promises of friendship” especially when the purchaser was Casacalvo, the major general of the Spanish army, whom the colonist described as “a greedy man as much as haughty” and who had “the greatest profit of our spoils.”⁶⁵

An aside within the memoir remarked upon the planter mentality and the sale of blacks. For instance, the colonist was under the impression that some of the slaves were “seduced by the promise of liberty.”⁶⁶ The white masters “removed” them even though he believed they might have still faithfully served their masters and were “less dangerous” than the brigands.⁶⁷ Some of these slaves were sold “at the vile price of thirty or forty *gourdes*” to the Spanish officers, however

⁵⁹ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.5.

⁶⁰ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.5v.

⁶¹ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.5v.

⁶² BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.6.

⁶³ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.7v.

⁶⁴ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.7v.

⁶⁵ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.8.

⁶⁶ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.8v.

⁶⁷ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.8v.

the “greed was misled” since the governor of Havana “feared to receive these dangerous subjects, and they were returned to Fort Dauphin, and from there transported to Santo Domingo to work as *forçats* (forced labor) in the public works.”⁶⁸

The buildup of refugees, both black and white, in Fort Dauphin meant a cauldron of mixed political, military, and social ideas. García had originally authorized letters of freedom be given to any black soldier willing to fight for the king, however as more men came into the camp, the colonist reported that he had stopped this practice. However, since Jean-François exercised very little real control over these additional black troops (ostensibly slaves, not free blacks), he authorized “dispatches of letters of liberty to all, his soldiers following a formula [which] García no longer had to sign.”⁶⁹

Animosity existed between the whites and blacks as well, since the Spanish had invited the French colonists to fight with them against the republican forces. Many ex-slaves in Jean-François’ army were alarmed and angry at the arrival of former plantation owners, whom they were expected to fight alongside. Guillaume Thomas Dufresne, another white colonist, wrote, “Their arrival aroused complaints among the blacks, who thought they had seen the last of their masters... They reproached Jean-François, their leader, for abandoning them; they reproached him for colluding with the Spanish in recalling their masters and sending them [blacks] back to work.”⁷⁰

Finally, it seemed as though the division between the free blacks and slaves was starting to widen. The royalist colonist remarked how the people of color were tired of being mistreated by

⁶⁸ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.8v.

⁶⁹ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.12v.

⁷⁰ G[uillaume] Th[om]as Dufresne, “Considérations politiques sur la Révolution des colonies françaises maid particulièrement sur celle de Saint Domingue, par Gme. Th.as Dufresne colon de cette isle” (1805), Bibliothèque nationale, MS n.a.f. 4372 in Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 253.

the Spanish (and the French) who looked on them as “suspect subjects.”⁷¹ There was talk of the “hate against their old masters” and also “against the Spanish” who wished to return them “to the yoke” of slavery.⁷² There was even talk against Jean-François, whom they remarked was “too weak and too well paid” to be able to effectively defend them.⁷³

With all of these fractures detonating through the fort, something was bound to happen. And on the morning of July 7, Jean-François’ army gathered at the entrance of the town; all were armed and those with horses were mounted. Without difficulty, about seven to eight hundred armed troops entered the town.⁷⁴ They were in violation of official Spanish military orders, however Jean-François had permission from the priest Vásquez who in turn said he had permission from García to let them enter. García had used Fort Dauphin as his headquarters for months, but incriminatingly, he left the town three days previous claiming illness and relocated with his retinue to a farm about twenty miles away.⁷⁵ Other Spanish officers likewise left the town, the “native, Juan Sanchez, left with the public funds,” leaving Casasola in charge, an officer “both old and stupid” according to the *Mon Odyssée* author.⁷⁶

Seemingly with official sanction, Spanish commander Gaspar Casasola did not act against the formation of the Black Auxiliaries and the additional troops. *Mon Odyssée* wrote that “the black auxiliary army of Spain [was] marching in file towards the big square.”⁷⁷ More damning, he records that “the regular troops, in battle array before their barracks, received them with full honors, notwithstanding the fact that it was agreed in a treaty that they would never be

⁷¹ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.14.

⁷² BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.14.

⁷³ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.14.

⁷⁴ Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 120-122.

⁷⁵ Leonart to García, September 10, 1794, in AGI, Cuba, leg. 170A; Correspondence between Toussaint and Raimundo Salazar, Captain Thomas Brisbane, and Antonio Santacilia, BNA, CO 137/93.

⁷⁶ See “*Mon Odyssée*,” bk. 2, p. 47, in Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 255.

⁷⁷ See “*Mon Odyssée*,” bk. 2, p. 47, in *ibid*, 255-256.

allowed to enter the city.”⁷⁸ Ada Ferrer and others note that Jean-François demanded from Casasola that all French in the town be evacuated within the hour, and that Casasola had no choice but to accept Jean-François’ demands, even though he asked for more time to organize the evacuation. Jean-François refused and signaled to his men to attack. And so they did, attacking and killing 742 French and Spanish men.⁷⁹

Mon Odyssée remembered the spectacle of Jean-François’ orders with more chilling recall: “the chief looked about him, and then mounting a large rock, with a wild look and sonorous voice, he addressed his disheveled brutes.” Jean-François’ orders, “word for word” came in Creole: “Listen all of you who have fought together with me; do you remember what I told you in the wood?” “Yes, yes, General,” responded the Negroes, all the while preparing their arms. “Well then,” he said, “get going all of you! Slay every one, slaughter each of them as you would a hog; listen to no cries of mercy!”⁸⁰ Mon Odyssée then recounts his experience on July 7 as he ran from the first musketry only to be knocked unconscious in the street. He recovered some hours later and dragged himself to the Spanish barracks, asking for help or a sword so that he might defend himself, but “They were deaf to all my entreaties.”⁸¹ He escaped through the streets again, and discovered a hiding place in house under a bed. From this vantage point, he observed two men killed and a woman nearly raped. Finally, as evening set in, the Frenchman was finally discovered and dragged into the street to be killed. A patrol of black troops arrived upon the execution scene and “the leader rushed up, extricated me, and dispelled the assassins, forbidding them in the General’s name to harm anyone, but giving orders to put in prison all

⁷⁸ See “Mon Odyssée,” bk. 2, p. 47, in *ibid*, 255-256.

⁷⁹ The author of *Mon Odyssée* speculated on the fate of the white Frenchwomen killed in the massacre. The number was relatively low, compared to the 700 plus men. See “Mon Odyssée,” bk. 2, p. 47, in *ibid*, 253.

⁸⁰ See “Mon Odyssée,” bk. 2, p. 23, in *ibid*, 256.

⁸¹ See “Mon Odyssée,” bk. 2, p. 23, in *ibid*, 257.

those who had escaped massacre.”⁸² The royalist colonist remarked also on the evening orders from Jean-François, who “satisfied with blood...ordered that it would be no more.”⁸³ Similar to *Mon Odyssée*, the colonist remarked that some of the “brigands eluded this order and many unfortunates were killed in the night.”⁸⁴

The following day, those whites who had been imprisoned were released and permitted to either return to their homes or were given passes to leave the town. Most of the colonists took the passes and walked to nearby Mole St. Nicholas where they were taken in by the English. Word of the massacre quickly spread throughout the colony and the international community. García’s reputation was nearly destroyed. The Spanish ambassador in London blamed García directly, accusing him of placing “all his trust” in the black general and having no power except that which was backed up by Jean-François. He accused García of unofficially sanctioning the massacre by leaving the town only three days previous. Jean-François’ conspiracy theory did not gain much traction outside of the immediate circles. Certainly not with the international community which looked on this massacre as yet another example of the bloodthirsty slaves in rebellion.

Every type of conspiracy, agenda, and misinformation swirled throughout the Atlantic media sphere as individuals and governments tried to understand what had happened in the fort.⁸⁵ One of the first notices of the massacre appeared in the *Star*, a London paper, which related just the barest of facts: “it appears now...that the insurgents have again become

⁸² See “*Mon Odyssée*,” bk. 2, p. 23, in *ibid*, 260.

⁸³ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.17.

⁸⁴ BM, Rouen, MS Leber 5847, p.17.

⁸⁵ Up to this point, news from Fort Dauphin had been primarily about the “black carts” which carried away the victims of the fever which ravaged the towns. “News,” *Morning Herald*, London, England, Saturday, October 11, 1794, Issue 4860.

paramount in that vicinity, and massacred the major part of the inhabitants.”⁸⁶ By the October posts, news of the massacre and speculation as to its reasons were flooding all shores. One Englishman residing in Kingston surmised that the Spanish had conspired to massacre as many Frenchmen as they could, which is why they put out the word that Fort Dauphin was a safe haven in order to entice the refugees who had fled to North America back to the colony.⁸⁷ Nearly all of the international commentators blamed the Spanish, admonishing them for arming rebellious blacks and pursuing a course of events which could have only one end.

In response, the Spanish described the attacks as indiscriminate, but point out that the troops first freed all of the imprisoned men of color and then targeted only the rural police officers. Still, the majority of those killed were white residents with little connection to the armed insurrection. Cries of “Long live Spain!” said to have been yelled by the black troops were recorded by every memoirist.

Jean-François related a different account of the events, declaring there existed a collaboration between the white French residents and Toussaint’s republican troops. He claimed they plotted against the Spanish, and he had arrested spies which carried messages crediting this conspiracy. The massacre was not his fault, he said. His men misunderstood their orders, and he had lost control over them. The looting was actually done by the Spanish, he claimed. And ultimately, even though the massacre was regrettable, the conspiracy was confirmed and he had saved the Spanish from a greater tragedy from Toussaint’s forces. Jean-François tried to blame Biassou for the massacre; however it is clear from every Spanish correspondent source as well as

⁸⁶ “News,” *Star*, London, England, Thursday, October 2, 1794, Issue 1910.

⁸⁷ “News,” *London Chronicle*, London, England, October 14, 1794 - October 16, 1794, Issue 5962.

the memoirs of the French colonists and the British military from St. Mole who wrote to their commanders, Jean-François was the general in charge of the massacre.⁸⁸

Scholars have yet to draw a clear consensus as to the reasons for the massacre. Ada Ferrer suggests that the July 7 massacre “must be understood within the context of Spanish policy in the Haitian Revolution.”⁸⁹ Spain’s decrees of freedom for the Black Auxiliaries met a contentious wall when French colonists were offered security and property, and the collision course could only have even ended in disaster. David Geggus remarks that by 1794 the Spanish and the Black Auxiliaries were spent.⁹⁰ They had lost nearly half of their territory, and they were “smarting from defeat” from Toussaint in San Rafael. Unofficially they appear to have changed tactics; instead of trying to win the island back for Spain, they were instead “stripping the sugar estates” and sending back the slaves and equipment to Cuba.⁹¹ Perhaps in light of this defeatist attitude, a moral disintegration of the troops was not wholly unexpected.

Another argument may be that Jean-François still did not have full control over the black troops within his army. With García’s exchange of freedom for those who fought against the republicans, many new men were turning up in Jean-François’ army. We know that he never really controlled the ex-slaves under his command, and now there was an influx of new faces with the perception that they were there to kill the French revolutionaries. In fact, no one ever disputed the difficulties that Jean-François had in controlling his men. The royalist colonist commented that many “brigands” continued to kill whites into the evening even after Jean-François’ orders to cease. *Mon Odyssée* was rescued by a black commander who berated his troops and “forbidding them in the General’s name to harm anyone,” meaning he had the

⁸⁸ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*, 76.

⁸⁹ Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 122.

⁹⁰ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 19.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 19.

authority of Jean-François' orders which needed immediate supervision so that the troops would be obedient. News of Jean-François' lack of control over his troops reached even as far as London, where a M. Petilon, Commander of the Galliot *P. Aimable Francoise*, remarked "it was impossible for the Spaniards, and even Jean Francois himself, to restrain" the ex-slaves.⁹²

Natural Disasters

The treasury was always at the forefront of the crown's concern. The 1793 declaration of war brought the question of troop provisioning to a crisis. Knowledge of the importance of well-fed troops was a hard won lesson learned from the past forty years of action. When García made an alliance with the Black Auxiliaries, Spain also ordered reinforcement troops from various other Caribbean colonies to the war effort in Saint Domingue. Provisions for these regiments fell on the respective garrisons, but the depletion of Havana's treasury became acute.⁹³

In the summer of 1793, Carlos IV authorized neutral commerce to reopen the trade routes in the Caribbean. Meanwhile, the Spanish consul in Philadelphia, Diego de Gardoqui, issued a request of debt repayment left over from the American Revolution, however he ordered that the government could pay in provisions. Immediately American ships began to sail into the Spanish ports laden with cargoes of flour, meat, and vegetable.⁹⁴ A year later the supply networks from the Americans to the Spanish had nearly collapsed. Enemy ships and pirates prowled the waters off the coasts of Hispaniola, attacking merchant vessels and stealing the cargo. Southern waters proved a little more stable, and Santo Domingo sent agents to Curaçao for fresh food

⁹² News, *Star*, London, England, Tuesday, October 14, 1794, Issue 1920.

⁹³ Sherry Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 176.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 177.

supplies. Interestingly enough, the military units still had “an abundance of munitions” probably due to their habit of sacking towns without firing a shot.⁹⁵

As if money and food concerns were not difficult enough, the Saint Domingue countryside was rife with disease and fever. The two Cuban regiments who had arrived in Santo Domingo in 1793 had lost 30 officers and 800 soldiers by 1794.⁹⁶ By the end of May after García’s defeat at Yaguessi and retreat to Fort Dauphin (Bayajá), the physicians in the region “struggled to care for over 600 patients who were sick with *calenturas*.”⁹⁷

Finally, it seemed as though the very winds were against them. As summer turned to fall, the hurricane season struck with a vengeance. On August 27, the storm entered the southwestern part of the island, destroying sixty-four private vessels, twelve boats of the admiralty, and an “infinite number” of launches. The number of schooner, sloops, frigates, and brigantines that sustained extensive damage was considerable.⁹⁸ The August hurricane destroyed the vessels upon which García depended to feed the Auxiliaries and the Cuban regiments. The hurricane’s landfall in Louisiana destroyed any supplementary provisions, and both regions looked to Charleston for emergency assistance.

The hurricane season mingled with the numerous corsair attacks meant that Madrid received news of both the provisional shortfalls at the same time that they heard official news about the Fort Dauphin massacre. Consequently, the crown decided to try a number of changes. Regarding the natural disasters, Carlos IV authorized all measures be taken to help the troops, even though presumably the physicians were already doing as much as they could. A new distribution port was established in Fort Dauphin so that provisions could go directly to the

⁹⁵ Ibid, 181.

⁹⁶ Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 84.

⁹⁷ Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution*, 183.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 185.

troops and not have to travel overland from Santo Domingo. And in a personnel change, the crown named Sebastián Calvo, the Marqués de Casa Calvo, the new governor of Fort Dauphin and commander of the army against the republicans. García remained the Santo Domingo governor, but he was removed as the de facto military commander in the north. García returned to Santo Domingo and remained there until the 1795 departure, and Casa Calvo (a veteran) took over command.

1795

For the Black Auxiliaries, the significance of Fort Dauphin, other than the massacre itself, was its impact on their relationship with the Spanish. “From that moment on, not only did the Spaniards realize that the black auxiliaries were dangerous, but they also prevented them from taking part in any other important campaign in the future, so that such abuses would not occur again.”⁹⁹ Even though the Spanish may have mistrusted the Black Auxiliaries, Ada Ferrer notes that in 1795 (and 1811), “black dock workers in Havana would buy, borrow, and trade printed images (*estampas*) of black leaders such as Jean-François, Toussaint Louverture, and Henri Christophe.”¹⁰⁰ Still, Madrid was not in a position to lose any allies, and orders directly from the crown directed García to “do everything to win [his] friendship” but recognize that Toussaint was now considered an enemy of Spain.¹⁰¹

The second half of 1794 was difficult militarily for the Spanish. Toussaint’s forces grew from 4,000 to 10,000 men and he gained two cavalry regiments. A sizable maroon contingent also joined his army under the command of Dieudonné. To put this into perspective, in early

⁹⁹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 176.

¹⁰⁰ Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution*, 56.

¹⁰¹ Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution*, 187.

January Jean-François' troops numbered 6,097 spread over his many companies: Fort Dauphin received two brigades (before the massacre) of 878 men; Saint Susanne had 1,317 troops; Grande Riviere held 2,004 soldiers; and Limonade had 934 with the rest spread out over the northern region.¹⁰² It is expected that Toussaint's army grew as Jean-François' shrank, the rebel slaves who wanted to fight fled from the Spanish to Toussaint. Republican general Laveaux won many victories in the north aided by some independent black troops from Gros Morne. And Villatte from Le Cap continued to face off against Jean-François and the Spanish in the northeastern region.¹⁰³

In early 1795 Garcia wrote to Cuba asking for help. He declared that their old auxiliaries had now been declared enemies and were attacking San Rafael and San Miguel and were soon to march on Hincha, all within the Spanish border. Francisco Montalvo, a commander of the third Havana battalion, also wrote that he had requested reinforcements, but de Alange replied that the black troops were of such magnitude that not all the relief in Spain, nor especially with the "current business in Europe" could help them on the island.¹⁰⁴ The situation was becoming dire for García since from the beginning of their alliance in 1793, and in fact with the illicit trade previous, the Spanish had been supplying the Auxiliaries with all food, clothing, weapons, and ammunition. García noted that the situation at this stage was chaotic and they were existing only by the "whims of chance."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Victoria Ojeda, *Las Tropas Auxiliares De Carlos Iv: De Saint-Domingue Al Mundo Hispano*, 86; Ojeda cites AGS, SGU, leg. 7157, exp. 58, f. 298, Recapitulation de tous les compaignes de l'armée du general Jean François, 1794. El documento señala como "compañias" a los diferentes grupos de las fuerzas de Juan Francisco; Ojeda uses a curious citation since 7157 stops at expediente 23.

¹⁰³ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776-1848* (London; New York: Verso, 1988), 228.

¹⁰⁴ State Council, February 13, 1795, AGS, SGU, leg. 6853, exp. 19, f. 96.

¹⁰⁵ Victoria Ojeda, *Las Tropas Auxiliares De Carlos Iv: De Saint-Domingue Al Mundo Hispano*, 90.

Treaty of Basle

The Spanish war effort on the continent was faring little better. The war was popular with the people, but a military disaster. In the summer of 1794, the French armies invaded the Basque district taking Bilbao, San Sebastián, and the Catalonia region, winning Figueras. The Catalonian province was particularly susceptible to the revolutionary propaganda spread by the French, and Godoy feared that a republican conspiracy could threaten the whole region. Ceding defeat and hoping to stave off any additional advance into Spain, Godoy brokered a peace treaty with France on July 1795. Terms from the Treaty of Basle ceded Spanish Santo Domingo to France, and all Spanish citizens were ordered to evacuate the island. Godoy felt little compunction about sacrificing Spanish Santo Domingo believing that the cost of maintaining the colony outweighed any results that García may be able to squeeze out of the insurrection. Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and Florida were more valued colonies than Spanish Santo Domingo. Even during the peace negotiations at the end of the American Revolution, Spain had tried to unload its oldest colony on either England or France with neither expressing any interest.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, the political situation on Santo Domingo was not providing any assurances to Madrid. Relations were strained between the old governor García and the new, Casa Calvo. García was back in the capital city, but still dictating orders to Casa Calvo who was ostensibly in charge of the war effort. The death toll on the Cuban regiments was substantial, Havana lost more than half of their troops and Santiago de Cuba and Louisiana lost more than 300 men each. The remaining troops were ravaged by fever. So when news from Madrid arrived that Carlos IV had surrendered to the French, Casa Calvo readied his remaining troops to sail back to Havana. García had other ideas and demanded that Casa Calvo bring the regiments to the

¹⁰⁶ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 176.

capital city. With full awareness of his insubordination, Casa Calvo put his sick regiments aboard Aristizábal's ships in Fort Dauphin and sent them home to Havana. García was then left with just the regular troops and the Auxiliaries for defense of his colony.

Up to the very end of their time on Saint Domingue, Jean-François seems to have tried to continue to win over territory in the north. For instance, two days before the peace treaty was signed, Jean-François communicated to Vásquez who was in Dondon that he was preparing to attack Marmalade. This seems to be the last communication between the two on Saint Domingue.¹⁰⁷

Departure Negotiations

Cuba's governor, Luis de Las Casas, panicked when he heard that Governor García was planning on sending the Black Auxiliary Troops to his capital city. He complained to Minister Godoy in Madrid: "General (so called) Jean-François has filled the inhabitants of the city and the island with terror."¹⁰⁸ Las Casas exclaimed that his white subjects were alarmed at the prospect of the Black Auxiliaries' arrival, and the colonists were all imagining "his slaves will rebel and the colony will be totally destroyed the moment these individuals arrive."¹⁰⁹ The fear was not imagined,¹¹⁰ and Las Casas foresaw the "vivid effect" that the triumphant black "heroes of a revolution" would have on the population. Especially when that population was "composed primarily of people of color oppressed by a smaller number of whites." It appears that, despite his position as the governor of a slave system, Las Casas understood at its most basic level the

¹⁰⁷ Victoria Ojeda, *Las Tropas Auxiliares De Carlos Iv: De Saint-Domingue Al Mundo Hispano*, 97.

¹⁰⁸ Luis de Las Casas to Príncipe de la Pas (Godoy), "Gobernador Habana sobre General Juan Francisco," December 16, 1795, AGI, Estado 5B, exp. 176, f. 116; See also Geggus, *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History*. 186-187; Geggus translates part of this sentence "as he calls himself;" the spanish is "asi lo denomina."

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 186.

¹¹⁰ Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

problems inherent in the colony. We might contrast this with Gros' insistence on the royalist conspiracy as a cause of rebellion, even when personally confronted and imprisoned by those men who in fact started it.

When Santo Domingo's Spanish citizens were ordered to evacuate under the directive of the Basle peace treaty, Madrid made no mention about the Black Auxiliary troops. Geggus says this was either a "careless oversight" or "a problem the ministers were happy to leave in the hands of someone else."¹¹¹ It is hard to make any clarity as to intention. Casa Calvo and Las Casas were in constant communication because of the war effort, and even as late as December 31st, the eve of the Black Auxiliaries' departure, Casa Calvo wrote from Fort Dauphin (Bajayá) giving introductions to the incoming Black Auxiliaries. In his letter, Casa Calvo introduced Teniente General/General in Chief Juan Francisco and Field Marshal Benjamin, but he also sent along an accompanying schedule which listed all the members of Jean-François' officers and the number of troops and family members (707 individuals) that Las Casas could expect in Havana. On the imperial end, Godoy had been receiving the panicked missives from Las Casas regarding the Black Auxiliaries impending arrival in Cuba. The crown's decision to make no mention of their departure smacks of hesitation and a reluctance to make a commitment.

During the negotiations between Casa Calvo and Las Casas, other military groups had also been making overtures to the Black Auxiliaries attempting to win them over. The northern region of Saint Domingue was in free fall, and anyone in power was attempting to consolidate as much land and resources as he could muster. The Black Auxiliaries were a formidable force, both militarily and psychologically, and many powers were courting them. Villatte, the free black

¹¹¹ David Geggus' analysis of the Saint Domingue evacuation still remains the best investigation of Spain and Cuba's reaction to the Black Auxiliaries' arrival. The following section draws from his work in Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 181.

commander of Cap Français who had been Jean-François' main antagonist (other than Toussaint), discretely approached Fr. Vásquez at Fort Dauphin who in turn informed García.¹¹² Villatte wanted a “counterweight” to Toussaint’s growing power in the republican controlled northern region. Villatte sought to mitigate the power of French governor Étienne Laveaux who was asserting his authority over Villatte. Toussaint tried to win back Jean-François.¹¹³ The British were also in the game, trying to add the Black Auxiliaries to their own developing black militia corps. Field Marshall Benjamin expressed some interest in the British, and Geggus notes that Biassou “tried on the red jacket the British sent,” but ultimately the leaders decided against the white-officered regiments.¹¹⁴ Negotiations with these additional powers did not produce new alliances, but they certainly helped “strengthen the black troops’ bargaining position” with Havana.¹¹⁵

Jean-François’ negotiations with Havana continued in earnest, and “the black officers’ reaction was that the whole army should be embarked; they should retain their ranks and pay and should be given land to farm and form a village. They would become a reserve army of soldier-farmers.”¹¹⁶ García reinserted himself into the conversation with Las Casas, telling him that the king had promised the Black Auxiliaries land on either Spanish or French soil and they must honor that promise. García noted the Isle of Pines which was both uninhabited and also originally intended to house prisoners of war. Perhaps, he suggested, this would be a good piece of land for the black troops. By December 1795, García, Casa Calvo, and Las Casas finally came to an agreement that they would send the Black Auxiliaries to Trinidad (although the Isle of

¹¹² Demorizi, *Cesión De Santo Domingo a Francia: Correspondencia De Godoy, García, Roume, Hedouville, Louverture, Rigaud Y Otros, 1795-1802*, 51-52.

¹¹³ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 181.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 181.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 181.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 181; AGI, Estado 5A, exp. 36.

Pines was also considered), with only a brief stop in Havana for instructions and provisions. Jean-François' Black Auxiliary Troops and their families had been put on four ships in Fort Dauphin at Christmas, they set sail for Havana on January 1, and on January 9 they arrived. "According to Casa Calvo, who haplessly sought to restrict departures to officers, they numbered 707 persons: 91 officers, 240 soldiers, 284 women, and 92 children. As García claimed that the black army had 191 officers in December, presumably at least half were left behind, unless the numbers had been inflated to hide graft."¹¹⁷ Biassou's troops (24 soldiers) departed from Ocoa in southern Santo Domingo and arrived in Havana on January 7.¹¹⁸ At the troops Havana arrival, Las Casas again wrote to Godoy with the information that the auxiliaries had arrived and that he and Casa Calvo had decided to send Jean-François and his troops to Trinidad.¹¹⁹

Once the Black Auxiliaries' were out of his hands, Casa Calvo finally let loose his true feelings on the alliance and sent to Las Casas a letter which vented his frustrations over the past two years. His letter is worth reprinting here, although it can also be found in David Geggus' chapter:

[Alliance with the blacks] cost us our self-respect and mine in particular... [I have been] obliged to alternate with a black who, although called general, remained confined within the limitations created by his birth and the nature of slavery... For the sake of peace, I have suffered there to grow up between them and us a perfect equality and reciprocity...which are in some measure shameful and harmful [and, now the war is over, must cease. So must] their jobs, or at least the military ranks they have arbitrarily conferred on themselves, the toleration of which has contributed to that harmful equality and even caused them to think themselves superior to us... Although they paint themselves in different colors, they are the same men who, at the start of the insurrection, killed their masters, raped their mistresses, and destroyed anyone owning property."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 181.

¹¹⁸ Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions; Black Society in Spanish Florida*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

¹¹⁹ Las Casas to Príncipe de la Pas, January 10, 1796, AGI, Estado 5A, exp. 23.

¹²⁰ AGS, SGU, leg. 7161, exp. 24; AGI, Estado 5A, exp. 23.

Although we might interpret Casa Calvo's frustrations as a purely prejudicial anger based on the racial makeup of the Black Auxiliaries, it might be more accurate to assume that he was upset with the actions of the troops during war, the killing, raping, and burning. And although he referenced the limitations of birth, Casa Calvo's anger was more that of a military commander forced to cooperate with people who only "arbitrarily conferred" the titles on themselves. Casa Calvo's newly unfettered opinions on the Black Auxiliaries' past, present, and future give us a particularly succinct exposition on the prejudices, threats, and difficulties that the troops would find in the Spanish empire. The local and regional Spanish governors where these Black Auxiliary Troops would eventually live all expressed the same fears, although their fears were more grounded in the fear of the spread of French republican rhetoric. They either were not informed or they did not believe in the royalist oaths taken by the Black Auxiliaries.

Finally in February, Madrid responded with directives. Above all else, they ordered that the Black Auxiliaries should not be allowed to land in Havana. Godoy chastised García saying that he had "foolishly foreclosed their options."¹²¹ The ministers would have preferred the Black Auxiliaries be abandoned on Santo Domingo as a problem for the French to deal with, with the legal grounds that the troops "had not demonstrated due obedience to the king." The ministers agreed to "a modest pension," but above all no Black Auxiliaries could be sent to another Spanish colony (especially Havana) nor, most distressing, should they come to Spain itself.¹²² Letters from Madrid came too late for any action to be taken following their instructions. They were dated in February 1796, which means they probably did not arrive in Havana until April at the earliest. By that point, the Black Auxiliaries had already arrived in Cuba's capital city.

¹²¹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. 181; AGI, Estado 5A, exp. 176.

¹²² *Ibid*, 181.

Estado de la Plana mayor del Ejército auxiliar en esta Isla de S.^{ta} Domingo, con expresion de los Empleos de que se componia aquella y se transporta al Puerto de la Slavana con el numero de oficiales, Tropas, Mujeres y Niños que se expresan.

Clases	Nombres	Número	Clases	Nombres	Número	
General en jefe	el Ten ^{te} Gen ^l Juan Fran ^{co}	1		Suma del frente	34	
Maximé de Campo	Benjamin	1	Coroneles	Doncebray	1	
Inspector	Clean Jaque	1			Salcedo	1
Comandante General	Bernardino	1			Com ^{de} de fuertes reputados como Coronelos	37
Ten ^{te} de Rey	Agapito	1		Sargentos Mayores	2	
Intendente	Embricio Nôari	1		Cabitanes	15	
Ayudant de Campo del General	Lejandre	1		Alfombrados	4	
	Marable	1		Subtenientes	5	
	Nasana	1		Prestes	1	
Secret del Gen ^l	Delie	1		Plana mayor y oficiales	33	
Brigadieres	Serô	1		Tropas	240	
	Gil	1		Mujeres	284	
	Vaul Mercuse	1		Niños	92	
	Suma	34		Suma total	707	

Mayaga 23 de Diciembre de 1793 = El Marques de Casa Calbo.



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Figure 2. Black Auxiliary officer and troop census, December 1795

Havana

Even though Las Casas had accepted the Black Auxiliaries into Cuba, he was still not happy about the situation. Jean-François' triumphant arrival would cut a very attractive figure to the slaves in Cuba who were beginning to speak amongst themselves on acts of revolt.¹²³ He wrote: "[Jean-François'] name resounds in the ears of the populace like an unconquerable hero, a redeemer of slaves...at a time when the voice of freedom resounds everywhere and the seeds of rebellion are sprouting."¹²⁴ Therefore, as the black troops readied to embark on the sea, Las Casas and the Havana council decided that when the soldiers arrived, they should be sent on to either the Isle of Pines; the frontier in Spanish Florida; Cádiz (letters from Madrid still had not arrived); or perhaps the Canary Islands.¹²⁵

Biassou arrived in Havana first and immediately chose Spanish Florida; they "sailed for St. Augustine on January 13."¹²⁶ Biassou's soldiers were content to retire to the military fort in the town of St. Augustine, however Jean-François proved to be a bit more difficult. His group was considerably larger than Biassou's and included family groups which requested farmable land. They had also increased in number since Casa Calvo's census. Jean-François' Black Auxiliary Troops were now 780 members: 70 officers, 282 troops, 334 women, and 94 children.¹²⁷ The biggest difference between the December census in Fort Dauphin and the January census in Havana is the nearly twenty fewer officers and fifty more women. Jean-François' troops now leaned heavily towards whole family groups.

¹²³ Geggus, "Slavery, War and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-1798."

¹²⁴ Luis de Las Casas to Príncipe de la Paz (Godoy), December 16, 1795, AGI, Estado 5B, exp. 176, f. 116, "Gobernador Habana sobre General Juan Francisco."

¹²⁵ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 183; Las Casas to Príncipe de la Paz, December 16, 1795, AGI, Estado 5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, 183; See also Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*; *Black Society in Spanish Florida*.

¹²⁷ AGI, Estado 5, exp. 28, enclosure 4; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 183.

Las Casas and Jean-François did not negotiate amicably. Jean-François originally agreed to go to Trinidad, and from there to Spain with the other Black Auxiliary leaders. However the negotiations between he and Las Casas broke down quickly. Las Casas would not let the Black Auxiliaries disembark the ships in Havana. His fear of revolutionary insurrection was palpable, and he looked to contain it within the harbor. Jean-François was incensed and invoked his relationships with the Santo Domingo Spanish officials, demanding that Father Vásquez arrive in Havana. Barring that, he would take the four ships back to Fort Dauphin and try his luck with the British who had offered them assistance.

Las Casas called his bluff and suggested that he should, in fact, return to Saint Domingue. Jean-François changed tactics, demanding an audience with García and orders from Carlos IV himself. Jean-François' strategy of claiming allegiance to the governor and the king had worked before, and he tried it again with Las Casas. Unfortunately for Jean-François, the previous officials had all been subordinate to García and thus had no recourse to challenge Jean-François' orders. Las Casas was arguably higher in rank than García (Havana was an extremely important port city, while Santo Domingo had not managed to remain in power), and Las Casas could counter Jean-François' provocations.

The end results were that Jean-François' Black Auxiliary Troops were split up into five different groups. 136 (or 142) were sent to Spain with Jean-François; 144 went to Trinidad; 115 went to Campeche in the Yucatán; and 307 (308) went to the Trujillo fort settlement in Honduras. After six months of delays because of weather and a lack of ships, another 86 (87) were sent to Panama on August 23.¹²⁸ David Geggus has given a brief overview of each of these groups, and Jane Landers gave us an extensive history on Biassou's group in St. Augustine. My

¹²⁸ Ibid, 184; The discrepancy in number is due to various censuses.

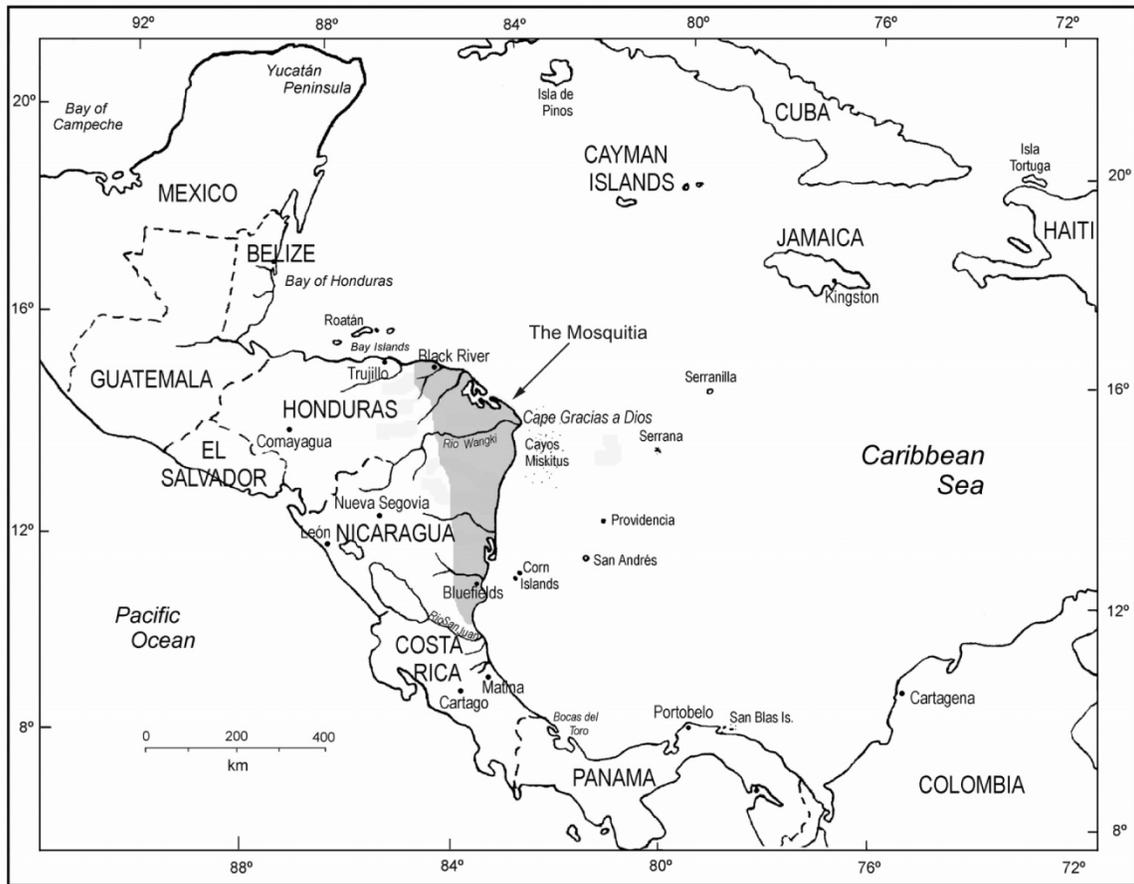
research leaves behind Jean-François and I turn my attention to the Honduran contingent. I follow the Black Auxiliary Troops under Marshal Jean-Jaques (Juan Santiago), the second ranked officer in Jean-François' army, as they journey across the Caribbean Sea and into their new country on the coast of Central America.

Conclusion

This chapter argued the 1793 Spanish agreement with the Black Auxiliary Troops created a very clear and official sanction of authority, relationship, and response between the two military regiments. Spanish officials were eager to take maximum advantage of their military prowess and use them to retake the island, however they found that the black troops were not only “maddeningly independent,” but they could also at times be unrestrained and unreliable. Toussaint's *volte face* shook the confidence of the Spanish ministers and García was instructed to tread lightly with Jean-François so as not to lose him as well. When Sonthonax issued his emancipation proclamation, despite its feudal properties, the race to retain black troops' allegiance created tensions throughout the northern plain. Military disasters, republican/royalist confrontations, and the Toussaint's *volte face* led to a particularly fraught July in 1794 when suddenly the Black Auxiliary/Spanish alliance would be severely tested.

The Fort Dauphin massacre has still not been completely explained as to causes and faults, however its outcome is incontrovertible. Jean-François' massacre of 743 people within the Spanish protected town made his relationship with the Spanish tense. However, most of the imperial and international blame was laid at the feet of the Spanish, particularly Governor García. Jean-François may not have lost much of his authority and provisional assistance, but he certainly lost respect and esteem from other Spanish commanders including the newly assigned

war commander Casa Calvo. This coupled with the in-fighting between Jean-François and Biassou meant that by the Treaty of Basle in 1795, when the Spanish were exiled from the island, the local commanders were not eager to take on the Black Auxiliary leaders and their rebellious troops and families. This contentious relationship, never truly amicable to begin with but more so a relationship of necessity on the Spanish side, meant that Havana governor Las Casas refused to house the black troops and argued vociferously with Jean-François as to their promised settlement. Jean-François, however, knew the power of his agreement with Carlos IV and used it to the best of his ability. The Spanish were legally required to provide the Black Auxiliaries with the terms of their 1793 alliance. And so a diplomatic solution was eventually reached, with the nearly eight hundred Auxiliary community members being split into five groups and sent to various ports within the Spanish empire although still retaining their salaries, military titles, and settlement rights.



Map 4. Central America and the Western Caribbean

Chapter 4
Atlantic Central America
and the Africanization of the Mosquito Coast

Introduction

On March 19, 1796, the Black Auxiliary Troops and their families arrived in Trujillo, Honduras. Their journey had been arduous, and following their long stay in the port of Havana, surely they would have wanted to exit the boat and settle down into their new home. But what would this new country be like? The communication between Jean-François and the Spanish government was merely to settle salaries owed, military honors and land placement. While he argued for exile to the major cities like Havana or Cadiz, Jean-François did not want his men separated, but in the end, he had little choice in the matter. While he sailed off to Cadiz with his retinue, the remainder of the Black Auxiliary Troops were shipped to various other ports on the Spanish frontier. Marshall Jean-Jacques (known in Spanish records as Juan Santiago) was now the leader of the 309 men, women and children who travelled to Trujillo on the northern border of the Mosquito Coast.

What kind of environment were they walking into? This chapter will examine the wider geographic space of the Central American Atlantic Coast as the Black Auxiliary Troops found it. By the eighteenth century the Mosquito Coast was under Spanish jurisdiction, but in actuality the Spanish “exercised a fragile sovereignty”.¹ The Atlantic coast had long been a borderland, nominally part of the Spanish Empire but effectively ruled by the Miskitu Indians, an Afro-indigenous force that occupied the coastal zones from southern Nicaragua up through northern

¹ Nicholas Rogers, "Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 26, no. 3 (2002), 117.

Honduras.² The weak governance on the Atlantic allowed the Miskitu Indians to flourish and the European buccaneers and English settlers to exploit the void left by the Spanish who were focused on the capital further inland. Bounded on the east by the sea, and the west by the mountains, Miskitu Indians ranged the inland and coastal waterways. They remained a formidable military, political and economic force along the coast, terrorizing the Spanish and other indigenous inhabitants. Their alliances with the English proved mutually beneficial; the English settlers received protection from the Spanish, and the Miskitu Indians received tribute and payment for their services. In many ways, they were the true rulers of the Atlantic Central American basin.

Historiography

For complicated reasons, at times tinged with racist denial, until recently most scholars of Central America had focused on the city centers, choosing to examine either the early colonial structure or processes of nation building following the independence of 1821. The inclination to focus on national identities based only upon Spanish and Indian heritage tends to create a sanitized history of mestizo or mixed-race history walling off Central America from the greater Atlantic Revolutionary turmoil and the legacy of the African Diaspora.³ When race and ethnicity do enter the analysis, the Maya population has arguably received priority. With few exceptions, when examining the deep and wide discourse on Latin America, specifically in Central America, it is quite possible to discuss “Latin American history without referencing blackness or the

² Consultation with John Thornton has led me to follow the anthropologists’ designation of “Miskitu” when writing the individuals of the Mosquito Coast. The trend began in 1932 with Eduard Conzemius in his Smithsonian Institute funded ethnographical research into the Miskitu and Sumu Indians. Eduard Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua*, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 106 (Washington: U.S. Govt. print office, 1932); Troy Floyd suggests we follow the anthropologists’ suggestion for writing Miskitu Indian while using the Mosquito Coast or the Mosquito Shore for the geography; Troy S. Floyd, *The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967).

³ Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe, "Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place," (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

African Diaspora.”⁴ In more recent years, this historiographical trend has begun to shift. In 2000, the journal *The Americas* devoted a full issue to various publications on “The African Experience in Early Spanish America,” highlighting the importance of African Diaspora studies in Latin America.⁵ Historians like Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall have devoted their scholarship to uncovering the racialized spheres of Africans, indigenous and the Spanish in the military and militia groups in Mexico.⁶ Rina Cáceres Gómez explores the changing condition of the black population in Costa Rica in the seventeenth century, while Mariza de Carvalho Soares illustrates the religious connections between slavery and blacks in Rio de Janeiro.⁷ Gwendolyn Hall’s Louisiana study linked the Afro-Creole experience under French rule with the Spanish dominion that existed in the eighteenth-century.⁸ The goal for my study will be to situate the condition of the Black Auxiliary Troops within these discourses of the black experience in late colonial Central America. For that to happen, we must be clear about why the historiographical trend for Latin American colonial studies has separated analyses of the city center, in modern day Guatemala City, against the region’s periphery, namely the Atlantic coast.

Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, when Hernando Cortés first set foot on what would become known as the Spanish American mainland, the Spanish conquistadors always moved inland. Their goals were conquest of civilizations in order to procure gold and other

⁴ Ben Vinson, "Introduction: African (Black) Diaspora History, Latin American History," *The Americas* 63, no. 1 (2006), 3; It is important to note that this dearth of the African Diaspora scholarship in Latin America does not include the rich and vibrant school of comparative slavery studies.

⁵ "Front Matter," *The Americas* 57, no. 2 (2000).

⁶ Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall, *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times*, Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001); Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

⁷ Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio De Janeiro* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Rina Cáceres, *Negros, Mulatos, Esclavos Y Libertos En La Costa Rica Del Siglo XVII*, Pub./Instituto Panamericano De Geografía E Historia (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2000); "On the Frontiers of the African Diaspora in Central America: The African Origins of San Fernando De Omoa," in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and David Vincent Trotman (London; New York: Continuum, 2003).

⁸ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

precious metals. Cortés immediately journeyed north into the Aztec Empire, and his lieutenant Alvarado moved south into Guatemala. Spain began to conquer and colonize the Pacific coast in Central and South America, leaving the Atlantic coast unsettled and still nominally ruled by the Maya. Following the precedent of their Spanish ancestors, most economic and political activity in Central America (or the Kingdom of Guatemala) began in the city center, originally in Santiago de los Caballeros but moved to thirty kilometers southwest to Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción (Guatemala City) in 1776 following a massive earthquake. The political epicenter shaped not only the economic and cultural formation of Central America, wherein most of the money flowed outward from this central spot. But the epicenter would also shape the historiography in years to come, whereby scholars would focus their efforts on the city as the epicenter for ideas and movements shaping colonialism, the Bourbon Reforms, and the eventual shift to nationalism. In many cases, the region's periphery along the Atlantic coast would be left behind.

Africanization of the Mosquito Shore

When the Black Auxiliary Troops landed on the shores of Spanish Central America, some argue that they were moving from a highly sophisticated Caribbean hub of economic, political and social import, into a periphery of forgotten regional ineptitude.⁹ However, this is only true if you compare the Spanish fort of Trujillo, Honduras to the cities of Saint Domingue and Havana. If we consider Spanish Central America from an entirely different viewpoint, if we look at the Central American Atlantic coast as the geographic center and a space with its own political and cultural significance, then we can explore the ramifications of the intrusion of these Black Auxiliaries in an entirely different light.

⁹ Miles Wortman in 1975 called Guatemala a "backwater colony," and in 2001 David Geggus followed suit, calling Trujillo a "backwater" and a cultural dead zone. Miles Wortman, "Bourbon Reforms in Central America: 1750-1786," *The Americas* 32, no. 2 (1975); David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 186.

The Central American Atlantic coast has a long and complex history, much of which is centered on the indigenous inhabitants of the area. Long before Cortés and Alvarado showed up in Mesoamerica, the indigenous people had marked out their own spheres of influence. In particular, the Miskitu Indians inhabited the coastal areas from northern Honduras through southern Nicaragua and into Panama.

The Miskitu Indians have been called a “colonial tribe,” disorganized and incompetent, more or less brought into political existence by the English.¹⁰ This caricature is rooted in British imperialism; however, new research has shown the Miskitu Indians as a hierarchical, militarily aggressive society.¹¹ This more complex view hearkens back to a specific moment in time wherein a group of mutinous African slaves shipwrecked on the shores of Cabo Gracias á Dios, in Nicaragua, and were incorporated into the Miskitu Kingdom, first as slaves and then soon after, as kings. I call this incorporation the Africanization of the Mosquito Shore, and the importance of this transformation lies in its relationship to the upheaval of the world during the Atlantic Slave Trade. This Africanization can be seen as an indirect counter-story to the dominant history we hear about the Early Modern Era, whereby the Atlantic Slave Trade is often shown as the first global emergence for the origins and rise of capitalism, dominated by Europeans and hinged on a racialized separation of white and black. I suggest a counter argument, not as a challenge to the dogma of the Atlantic Slave Trade, but rather a more

¹⁰ Floyd, *The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*; Robert A. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism: The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras, 1600-1914: A Case Study in British Informal Empire* (London: Dickinson University Press, 1989); Mary W. Helms, "The Cultural Ecology of a Colonial Tribe," *Ethnology* 8, no. 1 (1969).

¹¹ Philip A. Dennis and Michael D. Olien, "Kingship among the Miskito," *American Ethnologist* 11, no. 4 (1984); C. García, *Etnogénesis, Hibridación Y Consolidación De La Identidad Del Pueblo Miskitu* (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007); Karl H. Offen, "The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu: The Colonial Origins and Geography of Intra-Miskitu Differentiation in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras," *Ethnohistory* 49, no. 2 (2002); "British Logwood Extraction from the Mosquitia: The Origin of a Myth," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (2000); Karl Offen, "A Place between Empires: Africans and Afro-Amerindians in Colonial Mosquitia," in *Africans in the Americas: Making Lives in a New World, 1675-1825* (University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados: Omohundro Institute for Early American History and Culture, March 14-16, 2013); Eugenia Ibarra Rocas, *Del Arco Y La Flecha a Las Armas De Fuego: Los Indios Mosquitos Y La Historia Centroamericana 1633-1786* (Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio, Costa Rica: Editorial UCR, 2011).

focused microstudy on a region where this dominant history did not in fact take place, a region where a group of African slaves managed to incorporate into the indigenous society, and become kings and players on the international stage during the Revolutionary Era.

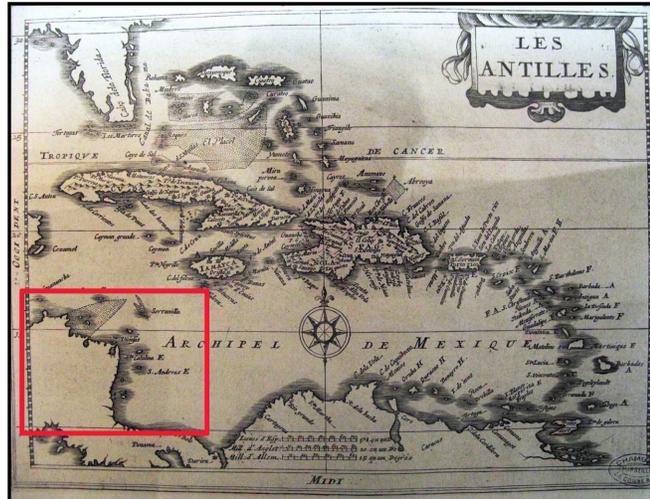
1494

The Treaty at Tordesillas in 1494 legally put the lands of the New World off limits for any nations other than Spain and Portugal. Although largely successful, still a bitter struggle for the new lands commenced. A century later, the British had established pernicious footholds in the West Indies. In 1625, as part of the Thirty Years' War, England fought Spain over the Americas, and London looked kindly on any direct attack which would weaken Spain.¹² The British navy was directed to attack Spanish shipping and ports in the Caribbean; one of these voyages resulted in the British discovery of Providence and Henrietta (San Andrés) Islands, lying one hundred miles off the Mosquito Coast.

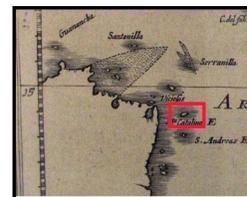
As we will see, the Anglo-Spanish War allowed a group of African slaves to escape their enslaved status and become incorporated with the Miskitu Indians of Central America. It is also this war which will provide a context and a means of military advancement for the Miskitu Indians, first through the introduction and incorporation of the shipwrecked slaves and secondly through the ongoing global war between the Spanish and the British. The Miskitu will grow more aggressive militarily and politically, challenging first the might of their enemies, the Spanish, but soon demanding tribute and taxes from even the settlements of the British, their historic allies.

¹² The Anglo-Spanish War (1625-1630) formed part of the Thirty Years' War. For more on the Anglo-Spanish War, see, John Huxtable Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996). For more on the Thirty Years' War, see, Peter H. Wilson, *The Thirty Years War: Europe's Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

Providence Island



Providence Island
(aka St. Catalina)



Map 5. Providence Island

Providence Island began as a British experiment for Puritan settlers to make a new home for themselves. In 1629, Captain Phillip Bell, Governor of Bermuda, left his post in Bermuda and came to this new island with other members of the newly formed Providence Island Company and in 1630 attempted trade with the Spanish under the armistice of the Treaty of Madrid. King James II authorized a charter that granted the Company to occupy unclaimed lands, meaning those not held by the Spanish.¹³ These Puritan settlers intended the island to be a model for the Puritan colony, however they were also “planting a colony in the heart of the Spanish empire,” therefore military men were also included in the advance settlement.¹⁴ The British colonists expanded, moving to other islands, including Roatán island, and eventually occupied the coast at

¹³ The Charter grant is found at the British Library, Sloane MS 973, Enlarged grant to the Providence Island Company, 1631.

¹⁴ Karen Kupperman, "A Puritan Colony in the Tropics: Providence Island, 1630–1641," in *Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Ralph Bennett (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 240.

Cabo Gracias á Dios and Bluefields.¹⁵ Because the Puritans settled Providence Island before the armistice, Spain challenged the legality of their settlement, and as a result, the Spanish repeatedly attacked the English. It soon became a haven for privateers who were accepted by the Puritans as a means to curtail the Spanish. As early as 1633, the Providence Island Company backers made sure to import slaves among their settlers. The Company wrote to its governor, “If 20 or 40 Negros could be possessed...They might be very usefull for Publicke work” but, “not so many that too great a number may as yet be dangerous in the Island.”¹⁶ By 1636 around 150 Africans worked the crops on Providence Island, and already 36 had run away. And by 1641 when the Spanish captured the island, Heywood and Thornton argue that it had a population of 381 Africans (not including the 50 that were killed following a failed conspiracy),¹⁷ although other sources put the African number around as high as 1600.¹⁸

The Spanish sailed into Providence Island in May 1641 with the aim of capturing the settlement and seizing their guns and silver. Many English had long been fearful of the coming Spanish, and so had already dispersed to various other settlements in the Indies, including the Mosquito Coast and Roatán in the Bay of Campeche.¹⁹ The attack was successful and the Spanish quickly took possession of the island. The Providence Island Puritan settlers and their slaves boarded the ships and fled the island. Once on board the ship, presumably the settlers’ destination was either Jamaica or Barbados, protected from the attacking Spanish. However,

¹⁵ Floyd, *The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia*, though written in the 1960s, Floyd’s work on the English occupation of the Mosquito coast is still the definitive text today.

¹⁶ Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32. Quote from BNA, PRO CO 124/1 Book of Entries of the Governor and Company of Adventurers for the Plantation of the Island of Providence, fol. 47v, Letter to Captain Bell, April 1633.

¹⁷ Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32. Heywood and Thornton cite Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 172, and mention an earlier Spanish report which put the numbers of Africans on the island at 1600.

¹⁸ Offen, "A Place between Empires: Africans and Afro-Amerindians in Colonial Mosquitia," 4.

¹⁹ Jon Latimer, *Buccaneers of the Caribbean: How Piracy Forged an Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009).

once on the open sea, the slaves mutinied against the Puritans and the ships' crew. The famous buccaneer, Alexander Exquemelin, records the mutiny as such: a group of Africans on board a ship staged a rebellion and "killed the captain and mariners, with design to return to their country. But through their ignorance in marinery, they stranded their vessel hereabouts."²⁰

Contact History

Prior to the arrival of the shipwrecked Africans, there had already been a long history of contact between the West Indies and Central America which had introduced Africans and Europeans to the coastline. Heywood and Thornton cite a "captured slave ship just off of Trujillo" which was "operating under a Providence Island Company marque" and most assuredly "following an established practice."²¹ Despite this prolonged contact, due to Miskitu oral tradition, it is now commonly accepted that at least one of these fleeing Puritan ships was the

²⁰ A. O. Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America: A Firsthand Account of Life with the Caribbean Pirates Captain Henry Morgan, Francis Lolonois, and Pierra La Grande* (St. Petersburg, Fla.: Red and Black Publishers, 2009), 250; "Through the frequent converse and familiarity these Indians have with the Pirate they sometimes go to sea with them, and remain among them for whole years, without returning home. Whence it comes that many of them can speak English, and French, and some of the Pirates their Indian language... This island [Island De los Pinos] contains about thirty leagues in circumference, more or less. It is governed after the form of a little commonwealth, they having no king nor sovereign prince among them. Neither do they entertain any friendship or correspondence with other neighbouring islands, much less with the Spaniards. They are in all but a small nation, whose number does not exceed sixteen or seventeen hundred persons. They have among them some few negros, who serve them in quality of slaves. These happened to arrive there, swimming, after shipwreck made upon that coast. For being bound for Terra Firma, in a ship that carried them to be sold in those parts, they killed the captain and mariners, with design to return to their country. But through their ignorance in marinery, they stranded their vessel hereabouts" (250); See also, Thomas Young, *Narrative of a Residence on the Mosquito Shore, During the Years 1839, 1840, & 1841* (London: Smith, Elder and co., 1842); Orlando W. Roberts and Edward Irving, *Narrative of Voyages and Excursions on the East Coast and in the Interior of Central America; Describing a Journey up the River San Juan, and Passage across the Lake of Nicaragua to the City of Leon* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press [1827], 1965); Courtenay de Kalb, "Nicaragua: Studies on the Mosquito Shore in 1892," *Bulletin American Geographical Society* XXV, no. 2 (1893); Additionally, Captain George Henderson, a British traveler to the Mosquito Coast, wrote in 1809 that the shipwrecked Africans were Samba people from West Africa and came over on a Dutch ship. Courtenay de Kalb further states that the Africans came from the Samba Island at the mouth of the Cassiri River in Senegambia.

²¹ Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*, 31.

mutinous ship of slaves that drifted onto Cabo and brought a large group of Africans into the midst of the Miskitu Indians.²²

Based on Eduard Conzemius' 1932 ethnographical study, scholars have defined the Miskitu Indians as a subgroup of the Sumu Indians who originally hailed from South America.²³ Using linguistic evidence gathered by German linguist Walter Lehmann in 1910, Conzemius shows that the Sumu oral tradition points towards a common ancestor and is recorded as follows:

a human umbilical cord, and from which were born the tribal ancestors, a Great Father (Mat-sahana "he who begot us") and a Great Mother (Itwana or Itoki). The Miskito and the Sumu are the descendants of these two primal ancestors.²⁴

Conzemius remarked "[i]t is very probable that the Miskito were originally a subtribe of the Sumu, and that they have become greatly modified in the course of the centuries through intermarriage with Negroes, Europeans, and other Indian tribes," and he suggested that the Miskitu Indians were a "hybrid tribe."²⁵

Despite the many loaded implications of labeling the Miskitu a "hybrid" group, scholars today are clear on their assessment that the Miskitu Indians at Cabo Gracias á Dios after 1641 were comprised of both the indigenous Miskitu and the shipwrecked African slaves. Even though the Miskitu claim this origin story in their oral history, this romanticized notion of first contact

²² A brand new paper, not yet published, by John Thornton suggests that there were in fact two shipwrecks, one on Cabo Gracias á Dios and another in southern Nicaragua just north of the San Juan River. Conclusions and quotes used with author's permission; John Thornton, "The Zambos and the Emergence of the Miskitu Kingdom, 1641-1740," in *Africans in the Americas: Slaves and the Atlantic Wars* (Boston University, 2005).

²³ Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua*, 8-14.

²⁴ Lehmann's linguistic evidence points toward a common origin. It was recorded in 1904 at Alami-kafiban (Rio Prinsapolca) from a Sumu named Frederick, by the Rev. G. R. Heath, a Moravian missionary, who resided many years on the Mosquito Coast. The latter communicated it to Lehmann, who published it in 1910 (b:717-718). This version was later reproduced by Joyce (9-10) and by Alexander (185-186); Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey*, 16; Walter Lehmann and J. Eric S. Thompson, *Results of a Scientific Expedition in Central America and Mexico, 1907-1909* (Cambridge, Mass.: [s.n.], 1940); Thomas Athol Joyce, *Central American and West Indian Archaeology; Being an Introduction to Archaeology of the States of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and the West Indies* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1973); Hartley Burr Alexander, *Latin-American [Mythology]*, *The Mythology of All Races* (Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1920).

²⁵ Conzemius, *Ethnographical Survey of the Miskito and Sumu Indians of Honduras and Nicaragua*, 17.

with Africans does not take into account the almost certain additional inclusion of other African and also European blood into the Miskitu Kingdom. For instance, the Mosquito Shore was a haven for pirates and privateers who used the sandy shoals and rocky shallow inlets as egress points by which they could raid the Spanish ships. The friendly relationship between the Miskitu and the English adventurers resulted in “Miskito sailors routinely [being] found aboard English privateers” and wintering pirates taking on Miskitu women as their wives for the season.²⁶

Likewise, there is some speculation that the Dutch adventurer, William Blauvelt, who after the collapse of the Providence Island venture in 1641, travelled to the Mosquito Shore where he and his compatriots lived for another twenty years, “aiding and abetting the plundering of Spanish treasure trains from Peru to Panama.”²⁷ The modern day Bluefields in Nicaragua is said to have been Blauvelt’s original settlement. Other inhabitants include a small group of English settlers at Cabo Gracias á Dios who had also quickly encountered the local Indians, and set about to trade for tortoise shell and sarsaparilla root, offering in return European clothing, cattle, hogs, and most devastatingly, rum and firearms. Finally, maroons escaped from transport ships along the coastline or mining operations inland would also likely have made their way into the Miskitu Kingdom and away from the prying eyes of the Spanish in the cities.²⁸ In any case, sometime around the early to mid-seventeenth century they became known in the sources as the Miskitu-Zambo Indians, referencing their Afro-Indigenous heritage.²⁹ Often, early ethnographers refer to

²⁶ Rogers, "Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast," 120.

²⁷ Ibid, 119.

²⁸ Ibarra Rojas has sought more than most others to contextualize the arrival and impact of the Africans, see Rocas, *Del Arco Y La Flecha a Las Armas De Fuego: Los Indios Mosquitos Y La Historia Centroamericana 1633-1786*, 14-22; "La Complimentariedad Cultural En El Surgimiento De Los Grupos Zambos Del Capo Gracias a Dios, En La Mosquitia, Durante Los Seculos Xvii y Xviii," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 26 (2007), 108-109; Thornton, "The Zambos and the Emergence of the Miskitu Kingdom, 1641-1740," fn40.

²⁹ Zambo is an amalgamation of Sambo, used interchangeably in the sources, to designate the Africanness of the Miskitu Indians. The Miskitu-Zambos should be considered of Afro-indigenous heritage, while the Miskitu are considered of strictly native heritage. This strict ethnic boundary is being called into question, and scholars are beginning to look at the Miskitu-Zambo vs. Miskitu divide more closely.

the Indians in the northern coast as Miskito-Zambos or just Zambos, and the Indians in the south are named Miskito following their indigenous heritage.

In 1699 an English buccaneer known only as M.W. wrote the first European description of the Miskitu Kingdom. In his chronicle, he recorded their physical appearance as “a dark yellow or brown complexion, having long black lank hair, excepting the *Mullattoes*, whose black hair curls; and their bodies are nearer to the colour of negroes, from whose mixture with the *Indians* they first sprung, occasion'd 50 years [1649] since by a Guiney merchant ship which was driven to leeward, having lost her way, and perish'd on this coast.”³⁰ This is the first ethnographic source documenting the incorporation of the Africans into the Miskitu Indians. Although it is based solely on physical appearance, scholars generally consider M.W.’s record to be evidence of African incorporation. Exquemelin’s 1678 publication calculates the Miskitu Indians around fifteen hundred to seventeen hundred persons with “some few negroes, who serve them in quality of slaves;” however, it could be that Exquemelin only calculated those persons inhabiting the Island de los Pinos [also called Isla de Guanaja] which is north of Trujillo and due east of Sandy Bay island.³¹

When considering the origin of these Africans, M.W. records one man who lives “On the other side . . . one *Garret a Guiney* negroe (who escap'd thither from a *Guiney* ship that was lost 60 years since [1639]) with several Mullattoes, and people of another mix'd breed with him.”³² This “Guiney ship” presumably is not the same ship of the fleeing Puritans from Providence, although scholars have had a hard time reconciling the various source histories. Especially since a 1711

³⁰ M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, Some Now First Printed from Original Manuscripts, Others Now First Published in English*, ed. Awnsham Churchill and Jean Barbot (London: Walthoe, 1732), 293.

³¹ Columbus also landed on the "high island" which was called "Guanaja by the natives, the Admiral naming it the Island of Pines on account of many such trees there," in Carl Ortwin Sauer, *The Early Spanish Main* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 123; Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America: A Firsthand Account of Life with the Caribbean Pirates Captain Henry Morgan, Francis Lolonois, and Pierra La Grande*, 123.

³² M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," 289.

report from the Bishop of Nicaragua Benito Garret y Arlovi to the King of Spain records the Miskitu oral tradition dating a shipwreck in 1650 captained by the Portuguese Lorenzo Gramalxo as the original wreck that brought the Africans to the Comayagua province. The Bishop based his information from missionaries near Segovia and Chontales, who reported what the indigenous people said, and he even interviewed Juan Ramón, an old African who presumably had lived during the shipwrecked time.³³

The true origins of the African population of the Miskitu Indians are something of a complex mystery that scholars have been trying to uncover for years. Historian John Thornton has parsed the chronicles of the buccaneers and the archival records, on both British and Spanish sides, and may have discovered a more accurate history. In terms of origins of the Miskitu-Zambo Indians, Thornton suggests that “in fact, the Zambo population of the Miskitu Kingdom probably originated not from one but from two shipwrecks, at either end of the Miskitu domain. Although the seventeenth century witnesses described so far spoke only of a shipwreck near Cape Gracias a Dios, Spanish records point strongly to a second group of Zambos living far to the south, and thus at the opposite end of the Miskitu Kingdom.” Thornton’s groundbreaking analysis on the Miskitu Indians argues that through the oral tradition of the Miskitu’s origin myth, these two shipwrecks have merged into a single unit.

For instance, superintendent Robert Hodgson who arrived on the coast in 1740, heard from the Zambos themselves that their ancestors derived from “two Ship loads of Negroes cast away about 90 years ago at the Cape [Gracias a Dios] and intermarry’d with the Indians.”³⁴

³³ Manuel M. de ed Peralta, *Costa Rica Y Costa De Mosquitos: Documentos Para La Historia De La Jurisdicción Territorial De Costa Rica Y Colombia, Publicados* (Paris [Acabóse de imprimir para la Legación de Costa Rica], 1898), 57, 121.

³⁴ TNA CO 323/11, f. 67, Hodgson to the Board of Trade, “containing a distinct account of the Mosquito Shoar...” 3 April 1744. Hodgson came to the shore in 1740, see Robert Hodgson to Governor Trelawney, 8 April 1740, in E. G. Squier, *The States of Central America: Their Geography, Topography, Climate, Population, Resources, Productions, Commerce, Political Organization, Aborigines, Etc., Etc., Comprising Chapters on Honduras, San Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Belize, the Bay Islands, the Mosquito Shore, and the Honduras Inter-Oceanic Railway* (New York: Harper & brothers, 1858), 744-746.

Hodgson's son, also named Robert, who succeeded him as Superintendent of the Mosquito Shore, wrote his own description of the origin of the Zambos in 1757. Unlike his father, however, Robert Hodgson Junior described the wreck of two English ships that were "cast away some years ago to the Southward of Nicaragua," where they made their way northward, eventually after "several Battles" they were given land and wives, linking the origin of the Zambos to the southern wreck.³⁵ As Potthast has suggested, the two shipwrecks had gradually merged into one story which variously described the wreck as taking place in the north or in the south, in the tradition of the Miskitu themselves.³⁶ Thornton's paper suggests that if this dual shipwreck theory is accurate it could help explain the inconsistencies between the timeline and geographical separation of African groups within the Miskitu of the north and south. It further supports the oral traditions of the Miskitu stating that the ship that ran aground in 1641 was of English origin. Finally, Thornton suggests that if we posit two shipwrecks in the Miskitu Kingdom instead of just one, we can better understand the civil war that happens a few generations later between the Miskitu of the north and the Miskitu of the south. We know a relationship existed between the English and the Miskitu Indians. What we don't know is how exactly it began. Since the Miskitu were firmly describing the origin of the wrecks as English (as early as the start of the eighteenth century, in fact) this may help explain the ease with which they forged an alliance with the English.

³⁵ [Robert Hodgson, Jr], "The First Account of the State of that Part of America called the Mosquito Coast in the year 1757," TNA CO 123/1, f. 74v; See also Eliga H. Gould, "Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 3 (2007).

³⁶ See Potthast, *Mosquitoküste*, p. 64 for the merging of tradition.

Arrival of the British

The British began courting the Miskitu kings early in their arrival in the West Indies.

Hans Sloane gives us the Miskitu line of succession, beginning with “The King,” then “The Prince” or Oldman in about 1660, and then Jeremy I in 1687.³⁷ M.W. writes,

“This old king [Jeremy I], as they call him, esteems himself as a subject to the king of *England*, and can speak some *English*, which he learn'd at Jamaica when the duke of *Albemarle* was governor there, to whom he went to pay a visit, and afforded much diversion to the duke. He says, That his father *Oldman*, king of the *Mosquetomen*, was carry'd over to England soon after the conquest of *Jamaica*, and there receiv'd from his brother king a crown and commission, which the present *Old Jeremy* still keeps safely by him, which is but a lac'd hat, and a ridiculous piece of writing, purporting, *That he should kindly use and relieve such straggling Englishmen as should chance to come that way, with plantains, fish, and turtle.* And indeed they are extremely courteous to all Englishmen, esteeming themselves to be such, altho' some Jamaica-men have very much abused them.”

This “lac'd hat” and the “ridiculous piece of writing,” though mocked by the British traveler M.W., were strong enough political gifts to tie the Miskitu Indians to the British Crown for centuries. Indeed, by the reign of Jeremy I, the Miskitu Indians felt themselves to be firmly allied to the British. Robert White, a late 18th century Bayman and the magistrates' London agent, recorded this account of the ceremony tying the Miskitu Indians to Great Britain.

“In his time, the Governor of Jamaica sent to him, at his [Jeremy I's] request, a select number of officers, in order to receive from him the cession of the dominion of his country, and of himself, his chiefs, and people, to the crown of Great Britain. This he performed in the most public manner, at Sandy Bay on the Mosquito Shore, where he then resided; for, with the accord and consent of his chiefs and people, he ordered the English colours to be hoisted on a standard erected there for that purpose; and having cut from the soil a turf of earth, he placed it in a mahogany box or case, and delivered it to the English officers, as a

³⁷ Dennis and Olien, "Kingship among the Miskito."; M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)"; Hans Sloane, Benjamin Motte, and Jay I. Kislak Collection (Library of Congress), *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica: With the Natural History of the Herbs and Trees, Four-Footed Beasts, Fishes, Birds, Insects, Reptiles, &C of the Last of Those Islands: To Which Is Prefix'd an Introduction, Wherein Is an Account of the Inhabitants, Air, Waters, Diseases, Trade, &C. Of That Place, with Some Relations Concerning the Neighbouring Continent, and Islands of America: Illustrated with Figures of the Things Describ'd, Which Have Not Been Heretofore Engraved, in Large Copper-Plates as Big as the Life*, 2 vols. (London: Printed by B.M. for the author, 1707).

perpetual token of the sovereignty and protection of his country being ceded to and conferred upon the crown of Great Britain; whereupon a public act or instrument in writing was drawn up, declarative of the whole of this transaction; which, after being duly executed, he delivered to the said English officers, to be carried by them along with the said box of turf to the Governor of Jamaica, as an everlasting memorial and witness of the cession so voluntarily and cordially made by him, his chiefs and people, of themselves and country to the crown of Great Britain.³⁸

Fearing expulsion from the Atlantic Central American coast, Robert White penned this chronicle in 1789 following Britain's catastrophic loss on the American continent. In order to legitimize the British settlement in the Bay of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore and to show that they had been legally settled in the area for more than a century, he was attempting to get the British Crown to recognize that it had made a treaty with the Miskitu Indians long before the American Revolution. Therefore the British settlers, as well as the Miskitu Indians, deserved similar rights as British citizens. So, his accounts of the formal treaty making between the Miskitu King Jeremy I and the British governor of Jamaica may have been slightly embellished in terms of how the British recognize treaty making – with ceremony, tokens of sovereignty, and a formal parchment – however, it should still be known that the Miskitu Kingdom was allied with Great Britain at least as far back as 1667, and in some cases even earlier.

For much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Miskitu Indians' fortunes were linked with those of the British, with whom they shared an intense animosity towards the Spanish.³⁹ Historians and ethnographers suggest various reasons for this antipathy. Some of the arguments include an enmity based on the Spaniards' religious proselytizing and a working partnership with the English buccaneers and their search for gold. Nicolas Rogers suggests the initial animosity occurred because of proselytizing. The first Spanish entrance into the Americas

³⁸ Robert White, *The Case of His Majesty's Subjects Having Property in and Lately Established Upon the Mosquito Shore in America. Most Humbly Submitted to the King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council, the Lords and Commons in Parliament, and the Nation of Great Britain at Large 1789* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1789), 6-7.

³⁹ Rogers, "Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast."

happened with the conquistadors and the religious orders. Of the latter, it was the Franciscans who interacted most closely with the native inhabitants of the New World. Fray Bartolome de las Casas is perhaps the most well known of these men, as his first hand viewing of the atrocity of Indian slavery caused him to reverse his position on that practice, and pen a number of religious and legal treatises against the slavery of Indians in the Americas. On the Central American coast however, the Indians knew nothing of las Casas. Their only interaction with the Spanish was through enslavement caused by the traders who came into the islands searching for the so-called “man-eating” Caribs.⁴⁰ The Spanish slaving vessels often carried members of the Franciscan order to the shores, depositing them among the native tribes in order for their religious instruction into the Catholic faith. The Miskitu Indians were not inclined to be converted nor enslaved. M.W. writes, “The Mosquito-men, about 60 years past, murder’d above 50 Spaniards, amongst whom were several friars who liv’d amongst them, some near *Cape Grace a Dios*.”⁴¹ Ethnographer Eduard Conzemius argues that the murders occurred because of the friars’ attempt to spread the gospel. In fact, even by the mid-eighteenth century, this mistrust of Spanish missionaries had not eroded. Superintendent Hodgson replied to Guatemalan President Vasquez that he was always “glad to see any Gentleman at Black River who made the Propagation of the Gospel his Profession...” However, because the Miskitu-Zambos would undoubtedly rebel at finding Spanish missionaries in their territory, it was “almost certain the Consequence would be Death to any such pious Gentleman in spite of all I could do to prevent it.”⁴²

The religious instruction of the incoming Spanish are nearly opposite that of the English corsairs who inhabited the Bay of Honduras since around 1633. These pirates and privateers

⁴⁰ Eduard Conzemius, "Ethnographical Notes on the Black Carib (Garif)," *American Anthropologist* 30, no. 2 (1928).

⁴¹ M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," 286.

⁴² Heredia to Trelawny, June 23, 1750, BNA, CO 137/59, f. 43; Heredia to Hodgson, June 22, 1750, BNA, SP 94/250, f. 204; William Shuman Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787" (University of London, 1969), 59.

carried no religious orders on board their ships, and often colluded with the native inhabitants in order to sack the Spanish merchant boats. M.W. remarks upon the “English privateering people still lurking in those parts to escape from justice, who were with Capt. Wright and Capt. Lane when he first return'd from robbing the Spaniards on the South-sea side.”⁴³ The environment of the Mosquito Shore also helped propel the alliance between the native Miskitu Indians and the tough and hard living corsairs. Geographer Karl Offen describes the rugged mountain terrain of the Mosquito Shore which “help separate the region from more fertile and populous lands to the west, and its coastal expanse is guarded by unforgiving shoals, strong tides, and shallow and shifting sand bars.”⁴⁴ This landscape and the unforgiving environment made the Mosquito Shore an ideal setting not only for those involved in illegal activities but also those “escaping [from] and entangled by the effects of empire.”⁴⁵

⁴³ M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," 291.

⁴⁴ Offen, "A Place between Empires: Africans and Afro-Amerindians in Colonial Mosquitia," 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.



Map 6. Mosquitia

Trujillo, Honduras lies on the extreme northern edge of what became known as the Mosquito Coast. Exact geographic markers of the Miskitu territory have long been politicized. Geographer Courtenay de Kalb notes that “The Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua has, during a period of more than two centuries, been brought into frequent notice through the efforts of Great Britain to acquire control over it, originally for the purpose of obtaining a foothold in Central America, whereby she might weaken the power of Spain, and later for the purpose of

maintaining control of the route for an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua.”⁴⁶ The Miskitu Indians occupied at least the “fifteenth degrees of north latitude, a distance of about two hundred miles.”⁴⁷ But the Spanish crown was more interested in the British settlers who had allied with the Miskitu Indians and settled more fully along the coast. By the 1786 Convention of London, following the English settlers’ resistance of the Treaty of Paris, Spain and England had formally recognized the Mosquito Coast as “a string of small British settlements extending from sixty miles east of Trujillo in what is now Honduras along some 550 miles of coast to Cape Gracias á Dios, and then south and east to Nicaragua’s San Juan River.”⁴⁸

This Convention formally recognized the Mosquito Coast as it pertained to the English settlers, however it should be made clear that the Miskitu Indians who had lived along this coastal area for centuries previous were not bound by the Anglo-Spanish territorial agreement. The Miskitu Indians’ territory, Mosquitia, was an altogether different geographic and political territory than the Mosquito Coast, which was more of an English construct designed to mark the boundaries of English settlements among the Spanish Central American coast. Within Mosquitia was the Miskitu Kingdom, “an incipient African Amerindian polity that overlapped in space but was independent from the British superintendency.”⁴⁹

The small town of Black River, founded by William Pitt (a distant relative of British statesman William Pitt the Elder) in 1732 near Cape Cameron some 80 miles east of the Spanish frontier town of Trujillo, became the Mosquito Shore’s administrative center. It was a major,

⁴⁶ Courtenay de Kalb, "A Bibliography of the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua," *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York* 26, no. 1 (1894): 16.

⁴⁷ Samuel A. Bard and Jay I. Kislak Collection (Library of Congress), *Waikna, or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855); Samuel Baird is a pseudonym for Ephraim George Squier.

⁴⁸ "Convention between His Britannick Majesty and the King of Spain. Signed at London, the 14th of July, 1786," in Clive Parry, ed., *The Consolidated Treaty Series*, vol 50, (Dobbs Ferry: 1969) p. 47; The Convention of London is also known as the Anglo-Spanish Convention. It was signed on 14 July 1786 and negotiated more fully the status of the British settlements on the Mosquito Coast.

⁴⁹ Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe, "Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place," (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 93.

frustrating irritant to Spanish colonial administrators when, after 1740, Jamaican governors encouraged Pitt to develop his settlement into an entrepôt for contraband trade and a staging area for attacks on Spain's Central American possessions.⁵⁰

Unlike British Honduras, which was settled with British privateers and logmen as early as 1642 and had driven the coastal Maya into the surrounding elevated countryside, the Mosquito Coast was continually peopled by the Miskitu Indians.⁵¹ The Zambo and the Tawira Miskitu established different relations with the British, the Spanish, neighboring Indians, and regional economies during the second half of the eighteenth century—a historical development inseparable from their distinct settlement geographies.⁵² The concentration of British settlers at Black River and their unique desire to establish a formal colony based on plantation agriculture, resource extraction, and peaceful trade with the Spanish encouraged the Zambo of the north coast to orient their activities to the west and inculcated the Zambo with a particular notion of Anglo culture. Likewise, evidence also suggests that north coast settlers considered the Zambo more loyal than the Tawira to their interests. In contrast, British settlers on the south coast were often not of English or Protestant heritage, flaunted their independence from the British superintendent at Black River, and maintained direct ties to merchants in Jamaica and St. Andrews (San Andrés). Those south coast settlers allied with the Tawira and encouraged them to

⁵⁰ Taylor E. Mack, "Contraband Trade through Trujillo, Honduras, 1720s-1782," *Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers*, no. 24 (1998).

⁵¹ Following the integration of shipwrecked Africans near Cape Gracias a Dios in 1641, contemporaneous observers referred to two Miskitu-speaking peoples: "mulattoes," later termed Sambo Miskitu, and "natives," whom Karl Offen, ethnologist, designated with the Miskitu word tawira, or, straight hair. British and Spanish authors meticulously recorded this rhetorical duality in their correspondence, yet the Miskitu also inscribed their distinction in treaties and letters throughout the colonial period. In 1739, for example, representatives of the two Miskitu groups signed one treaty as "the Mosquito Nation both Samboes and Indians" and another in 1780 as "the two tribes of Miskito Indians." In fact, ethnohistorical sources through the late nineteenth century—almost without exception—distinguished between the two Miskitu groups. "Proceedings at a General Congress Held at Tebuppy the 1st Oct 1780 by Colvill Cairns and James Thomson, by Order of General Stephen Kemble and Chiefs of the Two Tribes of the Miskito Indians," *Public Record Office (Hereafter PRO)*, London, CO 137/79, 165.

⁵² Tawira means "straight hair" suggesting a fully indigenous Miskitu Indian instead of an Afro-Indian Miskitu, designated by Karl Offen in Offen, "The Sambo and Tawira Miskitu: The Colonial Origins and Geography of Intra-Miskitu Differentiation in Eastern Nicaragua and Honduras," 320.

capture the neighboring Ulwa, Kukra, and Rama and sell them for slaves. In contrast, those settlers allied with the small Zambo colony at Pearl Lagoon relied heavily on the Kukra to transport goods to the Spanish in Chontales and Matagalpa and sought to end Tawira slaving.

Throughout the superintendency, more than 60 percent of all British settlers and their African slaves, as well as numerous free people of color, resided at Black River. Black River lay at the western edge of the general's district, and no Miskitu or free Amerindians resided there on a permanent basis. The economic activities of these settlers focused on the extraction of natural resources, such as mahogany and sarsaparilla, raising cattle, attempting to cultivate export crops, such as sugar and cotton, and conducting illicit trade with the Spanish via Sonaguera and Trujillo.⁵³

Although the Mosquito Shore never attained official colonial status, by 1787 it contained approximately 2,600 British subjects scattered among a dozen small settlements on a 550-mile strip running east along the Honduran coast to Cape Gracias a Dios, and then south and east to Nicaragua's San Juan River.

Miskitu – English – Spanish

Sometime around the turn of the eighteenth century we see an emergence of Miskitu-Zambo power and aggressiveness. This can be traced to a split or civil war which occurred in the Miskito Kingdom. Thornton argues that the Indian communities came under command by the Zambos through a series of cultural transformations including manumission and intermarriage, language learning and war experience.

⁵³ William J. Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore, 1749–1787" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1969); Frank Griffith Dawson, "William Pitt's Settlement at Black River on the Mosquito Shore: A Challenge to Spain in Central America, 1732-87," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1983).

For instance, the Miskitu had been waging wars for years on other indigenous tribes in the Americas prior to the arrival of the Europeans, and they often captured slaves during their raids. When the Providence Island Africans landed on their shore, the Miskitu considered them as outsiders, and treated them as they would a captured war slave. But, this slavery was nothing like the slavery of the English. For the Miskitu, manumission was possible, and integration into society was expected. Which is why we read these words from a French pirate, observing that while “they have today many Negroes as slaves,” he added, “there are also a good many free ones, who have been given their freedom by their masters upon their deaths.”⁵⁴ Likewise, by 1688 (nearly fifty years after the shipwreck), another French pirate, Raveneau de Lussan, provides more evidence of the role of slavery as an integrative mechanism. Lussan wrote that the region had been “inhabited for a long time by these Mulastres and Negres, both men and women” suggesting that extensive intermarriage had taken place since the shipboard rebellion. Obviously, in that time a significant enough number of the children of these unions had grown to adulthood to appear to be the majority of the population. And a century later, when Englishmen, like superintendent Robert Hodgson arrived on the coast in 1740, he heard from the Miskitu themselves that their ancestors derived from “two Ship loads of Negroes cast away about 90 years ago at the Cape [Gracias a Dios] and intermarry’d with the Indians.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Thornton, 19; See Exquemelin, *The Buccaneers of America: A Firsthand Account of Life with the Caribbean Pirates Captain Henry Morgan, Francis Lolonois, and Pierra La Grande*; Thornton has compared the Dutch, French and Spanish versions of Exquemelin and found them lacking. His note is as follows: “The French translation, naming the author Alexandre Olivier Oexmelin, *Histoire des aventuriers que se sont signalez dans les Indes* (2 vols., Paris, 1688, the 1686 edition is identical [modern Spanish translation of the French text, (Ciudad Trujillo, 1953)], barely follows the Dutch original and contains substantially new material, probably introduced by the editor Jean de Frontignière, from an unnamed source, which I have dubbed the “French Pirate” from the mention (p. 190), unique to the French edition, of Exquemelin writing, “we arrived at Cap de Gracias a Dios, accompanied by a French adventurer who was with us.” This supposition is supported by the fact that Frontignière clearly did add, unacknowledged, information from another source into the text, at pp. 193-194 and 200-201 which is virtually identical to José de Acosta, *Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias* (Seville, 1608), Book 5, caps. 8 and 21 (from Mexican sources and irrelevant to this region).”

⁵⁵ Sieur Lussan de Raveneau, *Journal d’un voyage fait `a la mer du Sud avec les filibustiers d’Amerique...* (Paris, 1690), 265.

Angolan heritage

Meanwhile, research from Thornton and Heywood argues that there is a discernible pattern in the mid 1600s slave trade to Spanish America, and particularly to Central America, where most slaves were shipped from the Portuguese colony of Angola. This supports the argument of a common language and war experience due to their Angolan heritage. They suggest that sources from the late 1640s and early 1650s show that Africans spoke Kimbundu (the language of Angola) as their primary language. Thornton argues that “studies of notarial records from Guatemala and elsewhere in Central America show over 80 per cent of the slaves throughout the region in the mid-seventeenth century were Angolan.⁵⁶ The Angolan presence in Central America was sufficiently pronounced that the Franciscan priest Francisco Vázquez, in giving an account of the languages spoken in the province of “Honduras or Taguzgalpa,” more or less exactly where the shipwreck took place, included the language “of Angola” as the only African language among them.⁵⁷ This could mean, as Thornton argues it, that the shipwrecked slaves from Providence Island were most likely Angolan in ethnicity and spoke a common dialect. We know from other sources that Angolan slaves are sold as far inland as the city center, Santiago, Guatemala, however it is unclear if these slaves are sold at the port in Trujillo.⁵⁸

If we accept that the shipwrecked slaves were part of the Angolan Wave, as Thornton suggests, then kinship ties and a common culture would have rooted their heritage along with the

⁵⁶ Paul Lokken, “Angolans in Amititlán: Sugar, African Migrants and *Gente Ladina* in Colonial Guatemala,” in Lowell Gundmunsen and Justin Wolfe, eds. *Blacks and Blackness in Central America* (Durham, NC, 2010), 28-31. The percentage is derived from statistics of sugar plantations containing 89 African born slaves in the 1620s and 30s.

⁵⁷ Francisco de Vázquez, *Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo nombre de Jesus de Guatemala* (2nd edition, ed. Lázaro Lamadrid, 4 volumes, Guatemala, 1944) 4: 81. Talguzgalpa is not to be confused with Tegucigalpa, the city in Honduras; Thornton, 13.

⁵⁸ “Duarte de Melo, the captain named in the 1612 and 1616 voyages included in the link, sells Angolans in Santiago de Guatemala in 1617-1618 and is still hanging around, or has returned there, a couple of years later. In the TASTDB records his port of disembarkation is identified as Veracruz in one case and Cartagena in the other, with “Spanish Central America” identified as the general region of disembarkation both times. No indication in the database, however, that he ever actually goes to what we call Central America because, as I noted before, that evidence is in the AGCA and not, apparently, in the AGI at all. Even Vila Vilar’s discussion of smuggling contains nothing on arrivals either to Trujillo or to Santo Tomás de Castilla, let alone elsewhere in C.A.,” private correspondence with Murdo MacLeod on 13 May 2010.

common Kimbundu dialect, or even their common struggle in slavery on Providence Island and an assumed knowledge of English. Also, as part of the Angolan Wave, they would have come from a country at war, and many would have had military experience since we know that the primary mode of enslavement in Africa was through the civil war waged in the Kingdom of Kongo.⁵⁹ Not only would the Angolans come with military experience but the shipwreck brought a single surge of a significant number of people to one place.⁶⁰ In the lightly populated region of the Miskitu's, however, even an extra 100-125 people would be a significant augmentation of the population. The sudden addition of 70 new fighting men, for example, would represent something in the vicinity of a 20% increase in the number of fighting men, and might easily allow that group to have greater success than usual over its opponents.⁶¹ This success would result in the capture of larger numbers of enemies, and a commensurate increase in the size of the capturing community, which could create an upward spiral of population leading to more success and a greater population. It is at least plausible that shipwrecked African slaves were a solid group, if not through Angolan dialect and kinship, then at least through their shared struggle on Providence Island during their twelve years of slavery.

Thornton argues that the Zambos-Miskitos begin to build a more warlike and hierarchical social structure. Two generations after the shipwreck on Cabo Gracias á Dios, the Zambos are nearly fully integrated into the Miskitu Kingdom and their requirements of the

⁵⁹ John K. Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4, no. 2 (1993); Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*.

⁶⁰ Concentration was important because even though the earliest witnesses agreed that the survivors of the shipwreck were culturally assimilated into the Miskitu, their geographic concentration from the beginning would set their district apart politically. In M. W.'s geography of Miskitu country at the end of the seventeenth century, he presented the settlement pattern as composed of clusters in the charge of prominent men, surrounded with wives, children and slaves. M. W. also spoke of "captains of families" as he often styled the leaders of settlement clusters captains, however since M.W. came from a hierarchical ship-board culture, it may be just that he renamed leaders as Captains and Chiefs.

⁶¹ Demographics analyzed by Thornton, "The Zambos and the Emergence of the Miskitu Kingdom, 1641-1740," 16-17; M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," 287-93.

neighboring English and indigenous communities grow.⁶² Slave integration becomes slave trading and maroon hunts. Slave incorporation follow successful war raids changes to tribute requirements and marks of vassalage. And as their alliances with the English solidified, the Zambo-Miskitu elite built revenue streams by allowing English settlers to come to Zambo-Miskitu territory and establish slave plantations, using for the most part imported African slaves. Often these slaves were imported from Jamaica, likely the West Indian island on which the original shipwrecked slaves began. As superiors to the English in terms of knowledge of the land, coastline, weather and planting patterns, and guarantors of their security, both against Spanish intrusion and against slave rebellion or flight, the Zambo-Miskitu could profit by having the plantations in their midst and extracting protection fees from the English settlers.

As early as 1711 (only seventy years after the Cabo Gracias á Dios shipwreck if we follow the oral tradition), Nathaniel Uring, an English ship captain was wrecked at Gracias a Dios in November, but moved to the Black River area soon afterward, into an area which had had mixed settlements of Zambos and Miskitu in 1699, according to M. W.'s report.⁶³ Like his predecessors, Uring reported that the "Mulattoes" of Gracias a Dios derived from "a ship with negroes" that was "by accident cast away on the coast, and those who escaped drowning mixed with the native Moscheto people, who intermarried with them and begot a race of Mulattoes."⁶⁴ But in Uring's time the indigenous people at Black River perceived these "Mulattoes" as "new Upstarts" who "were got into the Government and behaved with such pride and insolence" that

⁶² For instance, beginning in 1699, the Miskito seem to have started long distance raiding against Spanish territory, commencing with an attack on Nuestra Señora de los Dolores on the Patuca River on 17 August 1699 when "a hundred Sambo mulatos and infidel Indians" raided the town, looted it and took two priests prisoners. Long distance raiding was not the norm for the Miskito Indians, but within thirty years, under leadership of Zambo-Miskito kings, their raids would lengthen. Spanish sources notes that the Zambo-Miskito exacted such large "tributes of cattle and other things" on the Paya Indians that they had to raid Spanish possessions to avoid their families "being carried away and sold into slavery."

⁶³ M.W., "The Mosquito Indian and His Golden River (Written in or About 1699)," 286.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the indigenous people broke with them and withdrew westward.⁶⁵ When Uring visited the coast, the whole region was controlled by a person called Captain Hobby who was “of that race” (of “Mulattoes”) whose mother, a “Negroe” was still living, supporting the idea that the western reaches of the area were now in the political hands (if not the demographic ones) of the Zambo component.⁶⁶ Precisely what happened between 1688, when Raveneau de Lussan described the still dependent survivors building a new life along the Wanks River, and 1711 is unclear, but there had certainly been a change.

Miskito-Zambo

John Thornton’s new research which relies on the theory of two shipwrecks, and therefore two competing Miskito-Zambo nations, one in the western inland and one along the eastern coast, suggests a civil war in the early eighteenth century which further split the already disparate Miskitu Kingdom. Spanish sources describe a rebellion and civil war within the Miskitu Kingdom in the northwest and in the far south. In the south along the Nicaragua-Costa Rica borderland, they describe a long series of raids and negotiations that stretched from 1713 to 1720 between the Spanish and an “Indio Mestizo” (probably mixed English and indigenous) leader named Aníbel who served a king named Bernabé.⁶⁷ Aníbel’s efforts to make peace and form an alliance with Spain were thwarted, according to his account, by Zambos based in Punta Gorda, more or less exactly where the southern shipwreck had taken place in 1641. Just as the disgruntled Miskitu of the Black River told Uring the Zambos were “upstarts,” Aníbel called

⁶⁵ Nathaniel Uring, *The Voyages and Travels of Captain Nathaniel Uring* (London, 1726), 227.

⁶⁶ Uring, *Voyages and Travels*, 227. If she was from the original shipwreck and was 10 years old in 1652 when the wreck took place, she would have been 59 in 1711 when she met Uring.

⁶⁷ This was most likely an English-Miskitu union, since captives held by the Miskitu around 1708 called the three principal leaders of the area “Indios Mestizos” by virtue of having English fathers “Fragmentos de autos hechos con motivos de la sublevacion de los Indios Talamancas...” 1709-1712, in *Coleccion de documentos sobre la historia de Costa Rica* (Barcelona, 1907), 9: 81 (these acts were taken in 1709 and referred to captivities in perhaps 1707 or 1708); Notes from John Thornton.

these Zambos “rebels” (*lebantados*) and they spoiled his peace overtures to the Spanish by raiding their settlements.⁶⁸

Often, early ethnographers refer to the Indians in the northern coast as Miskito-Zambos or just Zambos, and the Indians in the south are named Miskito following their indigenous heritage. This naming has had the effect of dividing the warlike Miskito-Zambo of the north from their less aggressive cousins to the south. It is not clear why or even if the northern dwelling Miskito Indians were more violent than the southerners, although it could be postulated that since the English retained a strong alliance with the northern Miskito, the Spanish caught the brunt of the attacks from this quarter and therefore considered them more warlike. Thornton suggests that the Miskito power struggle took place mainly in the south, although he does not suggest if this could have led to less attacks on Spanish property.

In any case, the Miskito-Zambo retained “an inveterate abhorrence” of the Spanish, “by reciting, at their public council and meetings, examples of the horrid cruelty practised upon their brethren of the continent.”⁶⁹ The Spanish, for their part, were frightened and in awe of the viciousness of the Miskito Indians. In the early eighteenth century, the President of the Audiencia of Guatemala, Pedro de Ribera, was forced to finally raise two companies of soldiers for defense against the Miskito Indians. The “miserable inhabitants” of Guatemala, who were “weary of the oppression and fear engendered by the tyranny” of the Miskito Indians, longed for relief. Ribera predicted that unless the Mosquitos were exterminated, their increasing numbers and territorial expansion would soon make them “inextinguishable.”⁷⁰ The Spanish did not help matters of diplomacy either. They refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the king of the Miskito

⁶⁸ Thornton, “The Zambos and the Emergence of the Miskito Kingdom, 1641-1740,” 19.

⁶⁹ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774); Rogers, “Caribbean Borderland: Empire, Ethnicity, and the Exotic on the Mosquito Coast.”

⁷⁰ Sorsby, “The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787,” 12; AGI, Guatemala 303, Ribera to Philip V, 10 September 1738.

Kingdom, and when King Edward I of the Miskitu Indians set forth a treaty of peace and commerce with the Spanish, Spain called the attempt "ridiculous and despicable," adding that Spain must put a stop to "the outrages and insults that [the Mosquitos] commit, protected by the English who live in Virginia and in Jamaica."⁷¹ On 8 July 1739, the Consejo de las Indias expressed its outrage at the "audacity of the Mosquitos in naming a King and pretending that Your Majesty would recognize him as such in a treaty of peace and commerce."⁷² Furthermore, "Such unspeakable and insolent effrontery was not born in them alone;" the Indians were "allied and addicted" to the English, creating a grave problem that demanded "an immediate and radical remedy."⁷³ The Consejo admitted that the British settlers on the Mosquito Coast might be outlaws rather than representatives of the English government, but "how many islands of America does the crown now lack because in the beginning their occupation was only by outlaws and pirates?"⁷⁴ To encourage the settlement of the Honduras coast, which was "deserted for fear of the frequent enemy invasions," and to stimulate trade between Campeche and Havana, which had been "entirely suspended" because of the English and Mosquitos, the Consejo recommended that forts be constructed in Truxillo and Matina.⁷⁵ An offensive should be conducted against the enemy, with President Ribera in command of the operations and the viceroy of Mexico responsible for constructing the necessary vessels. Finally, the Consejo suggested that Spain's envoy in London should avoid representing Spanish complaints to the English court. Their pleas would be ignored, or if the two nations became "declared enemies, which can happen," England

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid; AGS, Estado 8133, folder 8a, Report on the Mosquito Coast, anon., 8 December 1775; AGI, Guatemala 665, Edward to Ribera, 20 September 1736; Fiscal's opinion, 22 May 1739; Manuel M. de Peralta, *Costa Rica Y Costa De Mosquitos* (Paris: Acabóse de implimir para la Legación de Costa Rica, 1898), 98, Consejo report, 8 July 1739.

⁷³ Peralta, *Costa Rica Y Costa De Mosquitos*.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

would probably take advantage of the Englishmen living on the Spanish Main by promoting acts of aggression against Spanish communities.⁷⁶

British on the Mosquito Shore

The War of Jenkin's Ear was the eventual fallout of these two nations, and proved that once again, they became "declared enemies."⁷⁷ Spain was reluctantly willing to supply England with logwood, but it could not condone the Anglo-Miskito relationship or allow British merchandise to enter her colonies. On 19 July 1739, a directive was issued to all English naval commanders in the West Indies ordering them to "commit all Sorts of Hostilities against the Spaniards." This order came as a result of Spain's refusal to pay 95,000 *reales* in reparations, to which the empire had agreed, for the continued activity of the *guardacostas*, and because of the boundary problem over Carolina and Florida. A fortnight later, Benjamin Keene was informed of King George II's decision to open hostilities and ordered to return home; on 20 August, the English issued a declaration of reprisals against Spain. Ten days later, King Philip V took the Consejo's advice and ordered that immediate operations be undertaken "to dislodge and exterminate these Indians [The Mosquitos] and the English and other foreigners who sustain them." England declared war on 19 October 1739; Spain followed a month later.

The Mosquito Shore was an important periphery consideration in British military planning throughout the war; use of the Miskito Indians was considered on each of the abortive English

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Spain demanded England relinquish all settlements made in Spanish territory since the Treaty of 1670, listing by name the island of Providence, St. Catherine, Port Royal, St. Andrew, the "Fat Virgins alias Panistrón," and the Turtle Islands, however inexplicably did not mention the Mosquito Shore and British Honduras (Belize). Anglo-Spanish discussions in London were primarily on the reparations demanded by England for unjust seizures of English merchantmen. In Madrid the two main issues discussed were Georgia and logwood, although British Ambassador to Madrid Benjamin Keene was unaware that logwood had become subordinate in Spanish thinking to the problem of the Miskito Indians, their friendship with the English, and the consequent invasions and clandestine trade in middle America. Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787," 14; Philip Woodfine and Royal Historical Society (Great Britain), *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History, New Series (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), 27-28.

invasions of the Spanish Main during the conflict. The Shore afforded an impregnable base of operations and a supply of aggressive Indian allies. In spite of these advantages, schemes involving the Miskitus were seldom rationally planned or executed. The Indians were scheduled to participate in the invasion of Panama in 1742, but the campaign was so poorly coordinated that it began, and failed, before the Miskitus reached the rendezvous. Nevertheless, the English inflicted more damage on the Spanish during the war in guerrilla fighting conducted from the Shore than in all other campaigns combined.⁷⁸

Even before the war, Governor Edward Trelawny of Jamaica had decided to establish a semi-military government on the Mosquito Shore, a country that would be a valuable commercial entrepot and a "place of refreshment" for the Baymen driven from Belize by the Spanish or by the rains.⁷⁹ To establish and to command this frontier outpost, Trelawny selected Robert Hodgson, a young lieutenant who had come to his attention while serving with Trelawny's son as a subaltern in the 49th regiment of foot in Jamaica. "A discreet Man," according to the governor, "sympathetic to the needs of the Indians, and yet Courageous," Hodgson was to bring government to the Shore, although the establishment of a true colony would have to wait until the willingness and ability of the white settlers to live under civil authority were determined.⁸⁰ Hodgson received his final orders to proceed to the Shore on 17 February 1740, shortly after news of the declaration of war reached Jamaica. He was to assemble the Englishmen for defensive purposes, to pledge England's protection to the Miskitus, and to assure King Edward that he would not usurp his prerogatives. The Miskitus were to be organized for military campaigns, but Hodgson was advised to "bend and sway to the humours of the

⁷⁸ George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729-1783*, Imperial Studies (London: published for the Royal Commonwealth Society, by Longmans, 1965).

⁷⁹ Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787," 18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Indians," to turn them as best he could to his desires, but to have "no humour, no whim, no conceit, no favourable fancy, to which every thing must be bent..."⁸¹

Soon after his arrival at Edward's home in Sandy Bay on April 8, 1740, Hodgson met with the king, Governor Britain, and most of the other principal Miskitu chiefs.

I proceeded to explain to them that, as they had long acknowledged themselves of Great Britain, the Governor of Jamaica had sent me to take possession of their country in his Majesty's name; then asked if they had anything to object. They answered [after the chiefs had consulted among themselves for two weeks] they had nothing to say against it, but were very glad I had come for that purpose; so I immediately set up the standard, and reducing what I had said into articles, I asked them, both jointly and separately, if they approved and would abide by them. They unanimously declared they would.⁸²

The articles composed by Hodgson and accepted by the chiefs formed a comprehensive Treaty of Friendship and Military Alliance.⁸³ A gun was fired as each article was read to the Indians, and then the ceremony ended with a ritual "cutting up a turf" and an exchange of vows to defend the country.⁸⁴ Hodgson conducted the Treaty signing with "so much ceremony, for, as I had no certain information whether the country was ever taken possession of before, of ever claimed otherwise than by sending them down commissions, I thought the more voluntary and clear the cession was the better."⁸⁵ Either Hodgson did not know about the 1660 oral treaty between King Jeremy I and the British representative which produced a "lac'd hat" and the "ridiculous piece of writing," or he did not consider it sufficient ceremony to claim a nation. In

⁸¹ Ibid; AGI, governor Britain, "a sensible old man", ruled the Indians south of Sandy Bay; King Edward, very young and still "not much observed" by his people, ruled the guard of Zambos between Sandy Bay and Cape Gracias a Dios; and General Hobby governed the second guard of Zambos west to Black River. Sorsby claims each office was hereditary, however Thornton argues that the offices must have been won through a power struggle or civil war which overthrew an indigenous king and replaced him with a Zambo, (Thornton, "The Zambos and the Emergence of the Miskitu Kingdom, 1641-1740," 19.

⁸² Bard and Jay I. Kislak Collection (Library of Congress), *Waikna, or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*, 635.

⁸³ See Appendix 1. Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787," 19-20; Sorsby does not provide a citation for his transcription of the Treaty, although it has been said to reside in British National Archives, CO 123/3, fols 185-188.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Bard and Jay I. Kislak Collection (Library of Congress), *Waikna, or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*, 636.

any case, this Treaty is the first ceremonially formal alliance produced between the Miskito and the English.

The dependence of the English Shoremen on their Miskito Indian allies was several times demonstrated during the first half of the eighteenth century. Although British governors would often point to the Miskito allies as subservient, often the British were in as much danger from the Indians as they were the Spanish. Not even two months following the signing of the Treaty, Hodgson writes a letter to Jamaica which suggests the true commanders of the coast were not in fact, the British. Hodgson gives a general report of his ongoing expedition in the Mosquito Shore, and asks for some blank commissions so that he might appoint some new Miskito admirals and generals, and most tellingly, he implores the governor to send him some men as a guard, for he adds, “my life is in more danger from these Indians than from the Spaniards.”⁸⁶ Likewise, John Thornton writes of the power hierarchy in the Mosquito Shore that one of the Miskito leaders, Aníbel, had entered into negotiations with the Spanish and ultimately accepted titles from them. Aníbel regarded the Zambos as rebels, and for a brief time his Miskito nation were allied with the Spanish. It is entirely possible that during this alliance, some English were in danger from the Miskito. However, the Spanish contribution to the alliance was meager, they had few firearms and offered lances instead; ultimately Aníbel planned to continue trading with Jamaica since they alone could offer him arms.⁸⁷

Offen's Four Waves

Karl Offen, one of the leading historical geographers who specializes in the Mosquito Coast, has posited four distinct periods of African settlement into Mosquitia. First arrival originates with the Providence Island Puritan settlement and the capsized slave ship (or ships) of

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Thornton, 19.

1641. The second wave is the "New African Settlement" from 1700-1730, wherein non-Mosquito African descendants were incorporated along the Atlantic Coast through captive exchange and trade with Jamaicans. The third wave of Africanization to Mosquitia occurred following the permanent English settlement on Black River in the 1730s, wherein a group of English logwood cutters and their slaves fled a Spanish raid on British Honduras (Belize) and the Bay of Honduras. Finally, in the 1770s, American Loyalists and their slaves arrived in Mosquitia with the aim of reproducing the large sugar plantations found elsewhere in the Caribbean islands. The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore dissolved in 1786 with the forced evacuation of English settlers and their slaves (many of whom relocated to Jamaica). However, throughout this one hundred and forty year period, recently arrived Africans, Afro-Indians and their descendants heavily populated the surrounding Mosquitia area along the Atlantic Coast.⁸⁸ In all cases, the influx of black slaves, free blacks and maroons into the Mosquito Coast influenced the Africanization of the area. Often, English slaves would escape to either a Spanish fort or to the Miskito Indians. Spanish and English sources speak of the constant struggle to keep their slaves within the settlements or they negotiate for their return. It is less clear from the sources about the slave flight to the Miskito Indians, however we can surmise that it occurred just as often. In any case, the settlement black population in both English and Spanish communities were well aware of the surrounding Afro-indigenous Miskito Indians, and both European governments were constantly at odds to figure out how best to deal with them, not least because of the ever present threat posed to their trade and the slave population.

Offen's research suggests that the slave system of the Black River settlement was unlike the slave systems of the West Indies islands, and he implies that the Black River slave system was more permissive for slaves to make their own way. He argues "the necessities of the place created

⁸⁸ Offen, "A Place between Empires: Africans and Afro-Amerindians in Colonial Mosquitia."

the context in which African peoples stretched the boundaries of their confinement and maximized their opportunities for autonomy within an accommodating system of subjugation.”⁸⁹ This argument is based first on the “safe harbor” principle. The Miskito Indians protected Black River, but its sandbars are also extremely dangerous. Difficulty navigating the sandbars protected the area from seaborne attack but also hindered commerce except by loading and unloading at sea, an extremely risky act which required skilled labor. Therefore, wealthy settlers relied on skilled labor (slaves and indentured workers) to move their goods from sea to settlement and back. Offen argues “with the potential to lose a fortune crossing a sand bar property owners must have taken steps to ensure their cargos were in trusted hands.”⁹⁰ Secondly, Offen suggests that “slaves had significant power to influence the terms of their captivity.”⁹¹ This relies in part on a document from the Mosquito Shore’s last superintendent, Scotsman James Lawrie. Black River slaves often came from Jamaica when that island was getting rid of their “worthless” slaves or those wanted for “Crimes.”⁹² Lawrie details that once the alleged Jamaican criminals arrived in Black River, they settled down and “the Change of food, cloathing, and the Treatment they met with were all so different and favorable from what they had left, that they seldom failed to turn out well and became a quite different People.”⁹³ Lawrie’s views on slavery at Black River are, as Offen points out, romantic. But most important to Offen’s argument is the document from Black River residents in 1770 wherein they detail a possible rebellion of their slaves due in part to the “turbulent disposition” of William Pitt’s slaves following Pitt’s death. Why the settler’s feared for their safety was unclear, however it seemed they did fear that the slaves would leave Black River and join up with the Miskito Indians as “It's more than probable that a prospect of Liberty may

⁸⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 8.

⁹¹ Ibid, 9.

⁹² Offen quotes Lawrie in, [James Lawrie], Remarks Regarding the Mosquito Shore, and particularly treatment of Negroes, from its founding to evacuation, ca. 1800, NAS, GD461/101.

⁹³ Ibid.

Induce many of our Slaves to Join with the Disaffected, some of the Negros having already made proposals to the Indian Chiefs of joining them (this was discovered the other day by Capt. Morgan an Indian Chief [who told] Capt. Garrison an Englishman.”⁹⁴ The two documents, Lawrie and the 1770 Black River residents document, taken together can point towards a somewhat permissive slave system where a peripheral geography and an estranged and dangerous environment could create a type of “lesser” enslaved status for the Black River slaves. However, we must be careful not to conflate the experiences of the free blacks and the Afro-Indians of the Miskitu Kingdom with the enslaved Africans among the Black River population. While it may be the case that Africans in Black River could maximize their opportunities for autonomy, much work still remains to be done on the slaves of that region in order to discover just how much negotiating power they wielded based on their skills, based on the peripheral zone of Black River and based on their proximity to the autonomous Miskitu Indians. In any case, we can be sure that the slaves of Black River were more than aware of the Miskito-Zambos in the surrounding countryside, and there are numerous source documents between the commanders of the Spanish forts in Trujillo and Omoa and the English forts in the north at British Honduras or the settlement at Black River, detailing English slave flight to the Spanish or to the Miskitus.⁹⁵

Conclusion

By the eighteenth century, Spain ruled the Atlantic Central American coast in name only. The Mosquito Coast was ruled by the Miskitu Indians and their English allies. Throughout the transformative period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Miskitu Indians grew into a formidable military, political and economic force along the coast. Through their early adventures with buccaneers and intrepid settlers, the English enjoyed a long-standing

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Document sources from the AGCA.

relationship of trade and alliance with the Miskitu Indians, but every now and then, an enterprising Miskitu Indian would attempt a truce with the Spanish.

The Spanish government, even as far back as the early 1700s, realized their new formidable enemy in the Miskitu Indians. Guatemalan presidents introduced new Spanish battalions into the eastern coast to eradicate the aggressive Miskitu, however the Spanish often suffered from problems of insolvency and poor mercantilism. The Bourbon Reforms of the late eighteenth century helped alleviate some of the financial hemorrhaging of the Spanish crown, however their military might was often not up to the task. The Miskitu Indians were fully entrenched in the Atlantic coast of Central America and their alliance with the English often gave the Spanish government in Guatemala a difficult time. Spain was desperate to move troops into defensible positions to maintain her colonies, and while they had hesitations at incorporating the Black Auxiliary Troops from the rebellion in Saint Domingue, it is clear that Spain was willing to involve all forms of militias as stopgaps against the encroaching English. While it may be laughable to consider now an English Central America, this goal was certain within reach for certain enterprising and ambitious gentlemen. Governor Trewlawny of Jamaica, when considering the alliance of the Miskito Indians, wrote to Hodgson,

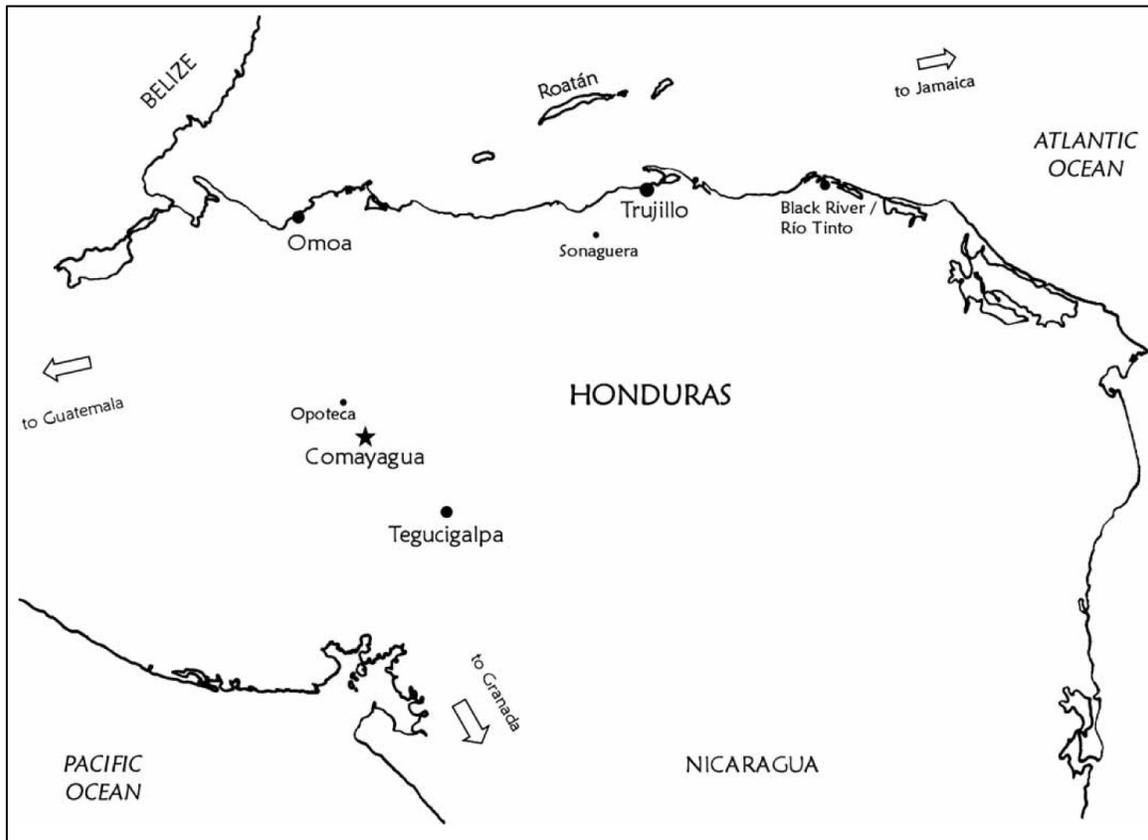
“I should imagine we might induce, by the offer of liberty, the neighbouring Indians to revolt, & indeed I do not think it Romantick in the least to expect that we might, by supporting the Indians a little, spread the revolt from one part to another, till it should be general over the Indies, & drive the Spaniards entirely out or cut them off.⁹⁶

The eighteenth century was a time of great political and military upheaval. Great Britain's success in the Seven Year's War gave way to the American Revolution; Spain was struggling to maintain her vast empire and slowly losing pieces along the way. Both countries battled for every inch of space, and the alliance or the destruction of the formidable fighting force of the Miskito

⁹⁶ Sorsby, "The British Superintendency of the Mosquito Shore: 1749-1787," 19.

Indians could arguable sway the colonial status on Central America. Indeed, the British had been encroaching for centuries, and the Spanish were at times frantic, at times careless, to remove them.

Is it any wonder then, that at the gross loss of Spanish Santo Domingo (an island held in Spanish dominion since the first Columbus conquest) during the first years of the Haitian Revolution, that Spain would look at this large group of Black Auxiliary Troops and wonder how best to use them? Despite the militarily assertive and politically expedient community of the Africanized Miskitu Indians, we should not automatically assume a hostile environment in Spanish Central America for the entering Black Auxiliary Troops based solely on their race. The question remains however, whether the troops entered a hostile environment based on their political allegiance with the Spanish, or if they entered a hostile environment based on the political atmosphere coming out of the Haitian Revolution. Even as correspondence flew and general proclamations were pronounced about the dangers of harboring blacks from the revolution, still, Spain needed military help. Madrid would have weighed the danger of a slave insurrection against the near century of Miskitu raids and attacks, and found that the pendulum swung in favor of incorporating the Black Auxiliaries into the Spanish Central American Atlantic.



Map 7. Coast of Honduras

Chapter 5

Trujillo, Honduras: Arrival, Attack, Defense, 1796-1797

This chapter builds upon the dissertations' larger argument that the Black Auxiliaries used their military service and their familiarity with the political instability to negotiate for freedoms, rights and autonomy, both in Saint Domingue and then later to the periphery zones of Spanish America. This chapter continues the argument of learned diplomacy and system manipulation and shows how the Black Auxiliaries transferred this knowledge and experience into their new homeland, encountering new groups unfamiliar with their specific Saint Domingue experience but still aware of the Spanish legal and military system. I explain this process through two microstudies: first upon the Black Auxiliaries' arrival into the port town of Trujillo, Honduras, next during their role of the British Siege of Trujillo and in the Black Carib situation with Roatán Island. It was among these groups of Spanish officials, British antagonists and indigenous communities that the Black Auxiliaries learned to play the role of cultural brokers and intermediaries.

On March 19, 1796, the Black Auxiliaries landed in the Trujillo port community and immediately began to negotiate for their promised wages and lifestyle. The Guatemalan ministers were not inclined to honor the promises made back in Havana and earlier on Saint Domingue, so they appointed a public prosecutor to make recommendations on how to best deal with the influx of these revolutionary soldiers and their families. When the recommendations came back unfavorable to Juan Santiago and the rest of the Auxiliary leaders, they travelled to Guatemala City to plead their case before the judiciary. They were successful and returned back to Trujillo with promises for their salaries and titles.

Once back in Trujillo, the Black Auxiliaries had a chance to prove their worth to the Spanish regular militia already stationed at the fort, as well as to the *audiencia* ministers back in Guatemala City. In April 1797, the Black Carib war on St. Vincent against the British had spilled over into Spanish territory. A British ship, returning from its time on St. Vincent, attacked the fort at Trujillo and briefly overtook the town. When the Black Auxiliaries helped resist and defeat Captain Barrett and the British sacking of Trujillo, the Spanish recognized their military prowess and awarded the Auxiliaries higher pay and medals. It gained them much in the way of political capital and negotiating rights with the Spanish government.

Finally, Great Britain did not know where to house the defeated Caribs, and Spain decided to accept them into the Bay of Honduras. The decision was hasty and there were a number of miscalculations, enough so that the bulk of the Black Caribs ended up on the island of Roatán. Again, the Black Auxiliary Troops showed their usefulness by accompanying the Spanish landing party to Roatán headed by Juan José Rosí y Rubí and helped convince the Black Caribs to relocate to Trujillo.

Arrival

Trujillo, Honduras seemed to be an ideal setting for the Black Auxiliaries, at least from a Spanish imperial point of view. The surrounding Miskitu Indians enjoyed hassling the Spanish settlements on the outskirts of Omoa and Trujillo, and the British settlers in the north were never content with remaining on their side of the boundary. Spain looked forward to increasing their defensive and offensive might with an influx of soldiers fresh from the Saint Domingue rebellion. Likewise, Trujillo and Omoa inhabitants had been pestering the Guatemalan municipal authorities for years to send them some slaves who could also act as militia and schooner pilots

among the mangrove shoals.¹ Spain thought they had the complete package when they decided to use Trujillo as one of the resettlement zones.

The Black Auxiliaries and their families, led by Marshall Juan Santiago (Jean-Jaques), must have been happy to make port. They had left Fort Dauphin in the northern province of Saint Domingue on January 1, 1796, docked in the harbor at Havana eight days later on January 9th and spent the next month stuck on the ship while Jean-François negotiated their resettlement. Finally, on February 19th, the groups left for their various ports. When Juan Santiago's group of 310 men, women, and children finally docked in Trujillo, Honduras on March 19, they had been on the ship for seventy-five days.² Four babies had been born on the voyage from Havana to Trujillo. They were ready to settle into their new lives under the provisions and promises they expected from Jean-François's negotiations in Havana.

As discussed in the previous chapter, depending on one's perspective, Trujillo was either a small but respected trading and military town, or it was a backwater periphery. For the men and women who had lived in one of the richest colonies in the French empire (and perhaps the world), and coming from the harbor of Havana, Trujillo must have looked like a disappointing rural town. Trujillo was a poor garrison within an even poorer province. The town was primarily made up of wooden public buildings and more shacks than houses. When organizing lodgings for the new arrivals, the Spanish commander initially housed the officer's families in the jail and placed the others in the militia's barracks. The Spanish official at Trujillo were not eager to honor any previous promises to the black militia, but he found them "very civilized but also very proud because of their distinguished record."³ The Spanish commander thought it would be a

¹ Rafael Leiva Vivas, *Tráfico De Esclavos Negros a Honduras*, 1a ed., vol. 2 (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 1982), 144-145.

² AGCA A2/120/2265/12-16v.

³ David Geggus, "The Exile of the 1791 Slave Leaders: Spain's Resettlement of Its Black Auxiliary Troops," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2002).

good idea to separate the leaders from the rest of the group, “so their pride might be gradually worn down.”⁴ Comments like these regarding the Black Auxiliaries’ personalities were common, harkening back to Jean-François’ swagger and military dress on the island. It seems as though the lieutenants had adopted the personality of their general.

Community Structure

Marshal Juan Santiago was the second highest rank in the Black Auxiliary Troops under Jean-François.⁵ When Santiago’s community docked in Trujillo, they numbered 310 people. They had grown by four babies born on the voyage from Havana.⁶ There were a total of thirty-six family groups, the largest of which contained twenty-seven individuals. There were a total of forty-one officers, seventy-four soldiers, one hundred twenty-one women, and seventy four children.⁷

Juan Santiago’s family structure included his wife Magdalene, his sons Captain Romé (with his consort Polin) and Adrien (consort Pridans), his daughter Garmen with her three children (Margarita, Calix, and Yusten), and Polin “attached” to the family presumably as a servant or slave, for a total of eleven people.⁸ The largest family group was Comandante Suisi (or Choisi) which numbered twenty-seven members.⁹ It included his consort Merot but surprisingly no children. There were many nieces and nephews however, and Suisi was the company commander of the grenadiers which contained twenty-six single men. Nearly all of the officers

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Benjamin was also a Marshal and co-ranked with Santiago, but Benjamin had gone to Cádiz along with Jean-François’ family.

⁶ Since the exit list from Havana records 307 individuals, and the entry list records 310, with four babies that means there is one unaccounted for.

⁷ AGCA, A2/120/2265/12-16v; David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 186.

⁸ The Spanish record lists the officers wives as esposa and consorts as mujer or muger. I’ve used David Geggus’ term “consort,” instead of the more common “woman.”

⁹ Choisi may be the same Sans-Souci mentioned in Chapter 2.

had wives and children. The family groups were extensive, with most of the officers bringing along mothers and mothers-in-law, sisters, brothers (who were often lower ranked officers or soldiers), and many nieces and nephews. Conspicuously absent are any fathers or fathers-in-law, suggesting that all mature males were both officers and heads of families, and infirm or non-militarized older males had already passed away or did not have a place in the community.

Slaves were also present in the community. Brigadier Gilé owned two female slaves (Pridans and Nasy); Pridans' son Luis was probably Gilé's since Luis was listed below his mother and yet not classified as a slave. Colonel Bivet (consort Madama Bivet) had a family of nine, six of which were slaves owned by his mother Cataris.¹⁰ Fortuna was both a slave and a soldier, Modest, Mari, Benjamin, and Serafin and her son Gabriel were just classified as slave. Captain Juan Santiago owned three slaves, Ascendor who was also a soldier, Delfina, and San Bernard.¹¹ Captain Carlos's family group of thirteen included a soldier named Luis who was "attached" to the family presumably as a servant in the same way as Marshal Santiago's Pridans. And finally, Captain Ari Mateo had one female slave named Mari Clec.

There were many single men, including the twenty-six troops in Suisi's grenadier company, but all of the single officers were attached the larger family structures in some way. Commander Bonhomini was unmarried but accompanied by his mother Luisa, his sisters (Roset, Laurina, Ariet), Yanit who was either his brother or cousin, and Roset's four children (Sorel, Policenta, Polina, and Abline). One member of Bonhomini's family stands out as odd; Mani, the aunt of Fransuè, did not have a connection to Bonhomini and instead was linked to a different commander. Three Captains were unmarried as well as two of the Lieutenants (Danuel, Caudio's

¹⁰ Bivet we know was with Jean-François back in Saint Domingue outside of Villière. He spoke with Doctor Thibal and relayed his stay of execution. Martin, Ch 2; See also, Jeremy D. Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). 165.

¹¹ Captain Juan Santiago is the son of Marshal Juan Santiago. Curiously, he is not listed in the family group with head of the family since he has his own family.

brother and Francisco Maurisiè, Maziè's brother). Captain Nicolas was accompanied only by his two sisters (Teresa and Sarit), however Captain Santiago Seran was part of Captain Ari Mateo's family group. Captain Chatar was also single but was listed in the family group with Lieutenant Guillermo and his consort Catarina.

Some of the more unique features from the Black Auxiliaries include the five officers who had been awarded medals, Marshall Juan Santiago, Adjutant General Caudio, Brigadier Gilè, and Commanders Pier and Benjamin.¹² Commander Bonhomini was listed as having a letter, although there was no record on what that letter contained. One interesting family group was Captain Fantaisie who listed six brothers, two named Gilè, and no women. In terms of African identifiers, Caudio's cousin was named Senegal, and on the earlier February 11th list from Havana one of the soldiers was named Mamu.¹³ The four newborns were all boys, born to Mandò in Suisi's group, Ariet in Clauten's group, Victorina in Captain Juan Santiago's group, and Aysen in Captain Carlos' group. And finally, of Fransuè's four daughters, the second youngest was named Gracias.

Administrative Reception

Juan Santiago's group arrived in Trujillo ready to establish themselves among the Spanish garrison community. The Guatemala City administrators, however, were not keen on honoring the promises from Jean-François. The judicial court appointed a public prosecutor to look into the possibilities for using the Black Auxiliaries. Even though the black troops had their own ideas about Spanish promises, these guarantees were made in Havana and the officials in the Guatemala *audiencia* were not disposed to follow those recommendations. On March 31,

¹² Caudio is also spelled Claudio or Candio.

¹³ AGCA A2/120/2265/4-5v.

1796, prosecutor Batallez suggested that the court follow three objectives: first, they needed to assist the black families; second, the court should make all possible use of the troops and any able men; third, the Guatemalan *audiencia* needed to avoid any problems that these Black Auxiliaries' opinions and conduct might cause to the rest of the community.¹⁴ Even though the group had fought for Spain, "on the right side," they needed "to be treated like people coming from a country where there is plague, and with whom no precaution is excessive."¹⁵ This reference to the plague is obviously a nod to the Saint Domingue slave rebellion, fear of which was circulating the Atlantic empires. It is interesting to note that even though Spain allied with the Black Auxiliaries, and the king awarded them a title from his own name, still local ministers were wary of these revolutionaries.

The prosecutor's recommendations to the judiciary were concerned about safety for the existing Trujillo community. To that effect, he proposed that all of the soldiers be relieved of their firearms which would be donated to the local armory. He suggested that the community could form an all-French colony on the Motagua River, on the border of Honduras and Guatemala and north of the Trujillo fort, however it "would be safer to disperse the officers and those with a trade" and send them into the interior cities and along the Pacific coast. He noted that if the Black Auxiliaries split up into small groups, they would be more likely to intermarry with the local inhabitants and thus pose less of a risk in terms of revolutionary rhetoric.¹⁶ Batallez' recommendations continued on the theme of disbandment. He suggested that some of the soldiers could stay in Trujillo as help to the local militia, but any "good Christians" could settle in Motagua as farmers in the river valley which was a more Ladino and Spanish area.¹⁷ He

¹⁴ AGCA A2/120/2265/22r.

¹⁵ AGCA A2/120/2265/22r; Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 186.

¹⁶ AGCA A2/120/2265/23v-26v.

¹⁷ AGCA A2/120/2265/26v-27r.

recommended any man who became a sailor or a carpenter on a ship could continue to receive a soldier's wage and rations, but he said nothing about maintaining all of their salaries as they had been promised. And most importantly, he said that none of the Black Auxiliaries should be sent to the Rio Tinto area near the Miskito Indians, nor should they be allowed to settle on the island Roatán. Both of these areas were British controlled, which shows yet again that the Guatemalan ministers were unsure about the loyalties of the Black Auxiliaries and they would take no chances about an imperial change of alliance. Finally, the prosecutor reiterated that the Black Auxiliaries should not move to Omoa (even though that town had asked for garrison help) since the ministers were worried the black troops would "teach the Saint Domingue path to liberty" to the slave soldiers in the Omoa fort.¹⁸ To all of these recommendations, the captain-general and the judicial court eventually agreed, and Captain General Domas y Valle continued to try and disperse the group.

Trujillo Life

Back in Trujillo, Juan Santiago and the Black Auxiliary community was not pleased. They were probably expecting a very different life than the one that was shaping up in the fort town. Disasters and personal confrontations were not making the transition any easier. A "raging fire" had destroyed several houses on April 5 and 6, 1796, and the Spanish regular military decided to make the new inhabitants rebuild the houses. They were instructed to make the new homes out of adobe covered in tile, a painstaking process. The Spanish determined to give the labor to the newly arrived blacks since they assumed the black community was sent there as "laborers" and this was necessary work to be done.¹⁹

¹⁸ AGCA A2/120/2265/26v-27r.

¹⁹ Leiva Vivas, *Tráfico De Esclavos Negros a Honduras*, 2 and 145.

Meanwhile, bad feelings had persisted from the shipboard trip as many of the families accused the sailors of stealing their belongings while sailing from Havana. Trujillo Commander Salvador Javalois wrote to Capitan General Domas y Valle on April 14 with news from the fort.²⁰ Jalavois had examined the Auxiliaries as directed by the Guatemalan prosecutor, and he discovered many problems. Juan Santiago was missing 400 dollars and blamed the sailors because two handkerchiefs had been found on one of the sailors.²¹ This had sparked a vicious row with the Havana frigate commander and Royal Armada Lieutenant, Don Fello Mantilla. Another headache for Javalois, the black troops refused to part with their arms. It took two colonels and two captains a four hour discussion to get the troops to agree to house their fifty-two carbines and muskets in the regular armory, but they categorically refused to sell the arms in the event they needed to use them “in service of the king.”²² Jalavois was making every effort to collect all of the “pistols and knives” since these weapons were also prohibited in his city so as “to avoid mishaps.”²³

Per the March orders from the capital, Jalavois attempted to get the Black Auxiliary community to split up, however they loudly refused to divide their group since “General Juan Fransuas who was in Court”²⁴ told them back in Saint Domingue that they were to stick together. The phrase “in Court” probably carried weight with the local officials. The loudest remonstrations came from Adjutant General Claudio who was “the most obstinant.”²⁵ Jalavois was also upset to discover that the black troops did not come with any laborer qualifications. Only four men claimed to be carpenters (Coronel Gudú, Mayor Marcial, Capitan Chatan, y Soldado Luiz) and there were none with sailing experience. Three officers spoke Spanish well

²⁰ Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/33r-35r.

²¹ Domas y Valle to las Casas, April 10, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/32r.

²² Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/33r-35r.

²³ Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/33r-35r.

²⁴ The mingling of Spanish and French pronunciation is delightful.

²⁵ Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/33r-35r.

and acted as interpreters. Thus, in light of this census and further knowledge of the black troops' attitude, Trujillo officials reported that it would be best to keep them as a group, far away from the slaves in Omoa, but only after ridding the community of "troublemakers" such as the Adjutant General Claudio.²⁶

The Trujillo settlement was proving to take more adjustments than the Black Auxiliary community originally anticipated. One of the Trujillo officials said that the auxiliaries found the fort "repugnant."²⁷ While back on Saint Domingue, the troops and their families must have looked forward to a new land with a new start, and since both García and Jean-François promoted their qualifications based on the soldiers' expertise, it must have come as a shock and confusion to discover that the local Trujillo officials wanted to take their guns away and force them to build houses. This was not the soldier-farmer employment that García had promoted to the city officials. These local officials wanted to treat the Black Auxiliaries as slaves. Juan Santiago knew how to arbitrate this misunderstanding, and taking the knowledge gained from Jean-François' arbitrations with the García and Las Casas, Santiago decided to go to the source. He and around fifty of the Auxiliaries traveled to Guatemala City to plead their case before Captain General José Domas y Valle.

Even though García had suggested to Las Casas that the Black Auxiliaries be reestablished somewhere as soldier-farmers (especially given their 1793 land settlement agreement), that notation either did not make it to Guatemala's capital city or, more likely, the ministers were not inclined to obey. The capital ministers still wanted to disperse the group, and Domas sent out a number of requests to various other colonies around the coast.²⁸ He petitioned

²⁶ Attachment to Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/35v.

²⁷ Attachment to Salvador Javalois to Domas y Valle, April 14, 1796, AGCA A2/120/2265/35r.

²⁸ AGCA, A2/120/2265, f. 32, A3/21/5301 and A3/14/290.

the Mexican viceroy to help with expenses for resettlement, but originally Mexico refused.²⁹ Guatemala had already racked up debts and the viceroy hesitated to add to them. Domas remarked to Las Casas that the 6,000 pesos in his treasury which were meant for the Trujillo expenses, never actually made it.³⁰ Did Las Casas steal the money? This seems like a petty amount based on the 100,000 pesos he had received from Madrid that were meant to go to Santo Domingo, but in that case also Las Casas decided to keep all of the funds for himself. Geggus notes that this was in retaliation for García sending him the Black Auxiliaries to deal with, however there is no excuse for the thievery from Domas. Since the Auxiliaries' expenses were only 715 dollars, Las Casas made quite a profit.³¹

San Fernando de Omoa

While Domas tried to find money for the black communities' resettlement, none of the Spanish colonies had accepted the soldiers and their families into their towns. None except for San Fernando de Omoa, the one place that the Guatemala ministers did not want to send the troops. Omoa was similar to Trujillo in that it was a coastal town on the northern Honduras border.³² It was much closer to British Honduras (Belize), however it did not have a military regiment like Trujillo. The town did boast an elaborate stone fortress which had been built beginning of the 1750s. The town officials continually requested slave labor from the capital. The arrival of the Black Auxiliaries were exactly what they needed.

²⁹ AGI, Estado 25, exp. 74, and Guatemala 453, report dated July 14, 1810, item 19.

³⁰ Domas y Valle to Las Casas, April 1, 1796, AGCA, A2/120/2265/32-32v.

³¹ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*. 188; AGI, Estado 5, exp. 61; AGCA, A3/1331/22446/77.

³² Rina Cáceres, "On the Frontiers of the African Diaspora in Central America: The African Origins of San Fernando De Omoa," in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy and David Vincent Trotman (London; New York: Continuum, 2003).

Pedro Gonzáles Hernandez, the commander at Omoa, wrote to Domas y Valle asking to be sent the black troops that arrived at Trujillo.³³ Gonzáles argued that Omoa had some of the most fertile land “in the world” and if Domas would send the men there, everyone would be extremely happy. Everyone, that is, except for Trujillo since that “serpent with seven heads” was working to destroy the kingdom and its constitution.³⁴ “They do not have land; their situation is the most inappropriate in the world; and their livelihoods are more harmful than useful.”³⁵ Gonzáles’ extravagant language gets away with him at times, although he makes his point clear. Omoa and Trujillo were historic trading competitors, and Gonzáles saw an opportunity to deplete Trujillo of slave labor while increasing the capital of his town and the Motagua region nearby. With Spanish officials in charge, he argued, the black troops would not be dangerous. The soldiers would be stabilized by their families and the homes and fields would provide security and an example to the local blacks. He argued, if the British could control their slaves then so could the Spanish. The commander even offered to help with the settlement costs, offering money and oxen to build houses.

The offer seemed perfect. Doug Thompson notes that “one of the preferred applications for free people of colour in Honduras, from the standpoint of Spanish administrators, was in the provincial militias that often served as the first line of defense of the colony. This reflected long-standing practice in various parts of the viceroyalty of New Spain, and in Spanish America more generally.”³⁶ Omoa had long been receiving escaped slaves from British Honduras and putting

³³ May 16, 1796, Hernandez to Domas y Valle, AGCA A2/120/2265/37-38r.

³⁴ May 16, 1796, Hernandez to Domas y Valle, AGCA A2/120/2265/37-38r.

³⁵ May 16, 1796, Hernandez to Domas y Valle, AGCA A2/120/2265/37-38r.

³⁶ Doug Thompson, “Between Slavery and Freedom on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras,” *Slavery & Abolition* (2011), 4; See also, Paul Lokken, ‘Undoing Racial Hierarchy: Mulatos and Militia Service in Colonial Guatemala’, *SECOLAS Annals* 31 (1999): 25–36; Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Peter M. Voelz, *Slave and Soldier: The Military Impact of Blacks in the Colonial Americas* (New York: Garland, 1993), 118–121; Jane Landers, ‘Transforming Bondsmen into Vassals: Arming Slaves in Colonial Spanish America’, in *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the*

them to work in the town, even in the militia.³⁷ There was no racial reason to refuse Omoa's request. There was, however, one large fear. The Black Auxiliaries came from the revolutionary turmoil of Saint Domingue, and even though they had fought for the king (the Spanish king no less), still Guatemalan officials feared their republican rhetoric could be spread to the Omoa slaves.

Guatemala City

Three months after their arrival in Trujillo, salaries were still being disputed, housing was a problem, and the local officials were paralyzed with inaction waiting on authorized decrees from the city. In March, Juan Santiago and fifty of the troops (with some family groups) decided to journey to Guatemala City. Juan Santiago and his wife Magdalena traveled with their entire family to the capital. Adjutant General Claudio's family of ten went; Intendent Luck took three; Brigadier Gile had the largest group of seventeen, even bringing along his sick mother-in-law Anica; Colonel Despombrages took five members and his sick mother Caten; Santiago also brought along eight of the servants (*agregados*) including three soldiers.³⁸

On June 18, the question of salaries was settled in Guatemala City. The agreement maintained the officers pay at their current rates: as upper ranked officers, Marshall Santiago and Luck both received 30 pesos per month; Adjutant Claudio received 20 pesos; Captains Silvens and Romé both received 15 pesos; and Lieutenant Danual received 10 pesos allowance. Colonel Desombrages, in addition to his regular allowance, made sure he received the back pay

Modern Age, ed. Christopher Leslie Brown and Philip D. Morgan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 120–145.

³⁷ An interesting aside, one of the commanders of Omoa refused to return the slaves to the British, claiming that they were now “free [and] out from under the yoke of captivity which they were suffering.” AGCA, 1.46 (6), Leg. 101, Exp. 1168; Exp. 1173, f. 9.

³⁸ AGCA A2/120/2265/39r-40r.

of two months in which there was an accounting error.³⁹ The regular soldiers would receive the standard daily rate of 2 *reales*. This was supplemented by one real per dependent if the soldiers had any family members “such as a wife, mother, children, aimless siblings, and other individuals that are in their shelter.”⁴⁰ The Guatemalan treasury minister Argüello increased their travel expenses from eight *reales* to twelve.

Meanwhile, Domas had sent word to Madrid that the Auxiliaries had arrived and he wondered what they were to do with them. In September, the crown responded that Domas was meant to continue the salaries and provisions which the Auxiliaries were accustomed to receiving from Cuba.⁴¹ But, just to be clear, the ministers would need Domas to send along the precise payments made to the troops. Spain also came through with monetary support, incorporating the expenses into the war budget against Great Britain.⁴² They stayed in Guatemala City until February 1797 lodging at public expense,⁴³ which shows that Guatemalan municipal leaders recognized them as public servants.

While in Guatemala City, the Black Auxiliaries made good use of their time near the church. On the March 1796 census, even though many of the family groups were extensive, the records show that a large portion of them were not married.⁴⁴ So sometime within the eight months in the capital, sixteen of them got married at the Franciscan monastery.⁴⁵ Geggus expresses some qualified surprise at the Christianity among them, evidenced by the priest who

³⁹ AGCA, A3/1331/22446/57-76.

⁴⁰ AGCA A2/120/2265/41r-42r.

⁴¹ AGCA, A2/120/2265/43-44; Carta de Gardoqui al presidente de Guatemala, San Ildefonso a 14 de septiembre de 1796.

⁴² AGI, Estado 25, exp. 74, and Guatemala 453, report dated July 14, 1810, item 19.

⁴³ AGCA, A3/1331/22446, f. 59-76; These are particularly illuminating records which show the family groups of the capital resident Auxiliaries and how they changed, particularly who got married.

⁴⁴ Ojeda notes that the large portion of unmarried mothers within the March 1796 census suggests that the Black Auxiliary troops (but maybe not the leaders) followed “pagan practices.” This seems to be a large leap, relying on a connection between practical, social, and theological functions (marriage requires a priest; women get pregnant outside of marriage regardless of religion); Ojeda, 216.

⁴⁵ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 188.

examined them “found them to be good Catholics beyond any doubt.”⁴⁶ However, we should probably not be so surprised at their familiarity with the Catholic faith; remember that priest Vásquez played an extremely prominent role within the black troops and was Jean-François’ confessor and confidant. Likewise, many parish priests were often seen communicating with the troops while on Saint Domingue, and we know that Jesuit priests often ministered directly to slave communities.

What might be more surprising however is just how “well instructed” that the Black Auxiliaries were “in obligations of the faith” as the capital city Franciscan priest remarked. Although Vásquez and García rarely comment on the liturgical practices of the black troops in Saint Domingue, outside sources from British and French observers often noted the church practices carried out by some troops and the leaders Jean-François and Biassou. For instance, Mon Odyssée remarked “The ceremony began with the sign of the cross, which was succeeded by an invocation to Our Lady of Seven Sorrows. We were subjected to long interrogations; we were asked if we believed in the Holy Trinity, the infallibility of the Pope, the soul in purgatory, etc., etc.,”⁴⁷ Mon Odyssée was a captive in Jean-François’ army and as such was interrogated by the leaders. One form of his interrogation was spiritual. His remembrance of the examination gives us some idea of what the black troops themselves were expected to know about the Catholic faith. Thus, it should come as little surprise that when they were interviewed by the Franciscan, they passed with flying colors.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Enclosures, AGI, Estado 49, exp. 89, Domas to Urquijo, July 16, 1801.

⁴⁷ Popkin, *Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, 254.

⁴⁸ On the other hand, there are comments from similar captivity narratives which remember that when no priest was present to conduct the liturgical practices, one of the black leaders (Biassou most often) would don a black robe and lead the church ceremony himself. This heretical execution suggests that while the Black Auxiliaries could recite their catechism convincingly, they did not quite follow the theological nuances with strict adherence.

At the beginning of March 1797 the Black Auxiliaries in the capital travelled back to Trujillo under the command of Captain General Don José Rosí y Rubí.⁴⁹ It was a fortuitous time for them to arrive back at the coastal fort, since the next month they would get a chance to prove their military worth to the Spanish. The war between the British and the Spanish had amped up again in the interim period, which is how the Black Auxiliaries were able to get their salaries approved so easily since Madrid incorporated the expense into the war budget. Almost immediately, those expenses were justified and put into very real successful application. In April 1797 the British war against the Black Caribs on St. Vincent reached the Spanish territory in the Bay of Honduras. The Black Auxiliaries helped repulse an British attack at Fort Trujillo, and they also acted as interpreters and intermediaries between the Spanish and the Black Caribs on Roatán Island.

Black Caribs

The Second Carib War was taking place on the island of Saint Vincent between 1795 and 1797. The conflict pitted large numbers of British military forces against a coalition of Black Carib, runaway slave, and French forces for control of the island. A major military expedition by British General Ralph Abercromby was eventually successful in crushing the Carib opposition in 1797, and the Caribs were deported from Saint Vincent to the island of Roatán off the coast of present-day Honduras. There they would meet the Black Auxiliary Troops.

The Black Caribs' ethnohistorical background has been sketched out by anthropologists Rebecca Bateman, Chris Taylor, Taylor Mack, and others intent on charting the indigenous and

⁴⁹ AGI, Estado 50, exp. 9, 11, 12; entry for February 18, 1797, AGCA, A3/2602/38449; Rosí was Italian, and had been acting as lieutenant in the Zapotitlan province. At some point he had been in Saint Domingue and held prisoner in Cap Français.

African entanglements in the Lesser Antilles.⁵⁰ Similar to the Zambo-Miskitu Indians on the Mosquito Shore, the Black Caribs of St. Vincent look to historical traditions involving slave ship wrecks and maroons escaped from Guadeloupe, Barbados, and Martinique. By the early eighteenth century, the Black Carib on one side of the island were politically distinct from the “Red” or “Yellow” Carib on the other side.⁵¹ Later in the century with European powers employing alliance tactics with the indigenous communities, the French and British would play the two groups against each other.⁵²

In 1795, the Second Black Carib war against the British began when the French began hunting around for another alliance. The agreement between the indigenous community and the

⁵⁰ For recent scholarship on the Black Caribs, see Chris Taylor, *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*, Caribbean Studies Series (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012); Taylor E. Mack, "Cultural Maladaptation and Preadaptation in Colonial Honduras: Spaniards Vs Black Caribs, 1787-1821," *Journal of Latin American Geography* 10, no. 2 (2011); Paul Christopher Johnson, "On Leaving and Joining Africanness through Religion: The 'Black Caribs' across Multiple Diasporic Horizons," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37, no. 2 (2007); For Black Caribs and the Spanish, see Robert L. Paquette and Stanley L. Engerman, *The Lesser Antilles in the Age of European Expansion* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996); Ruy Galvão de Andrade Coelho, *Los Negros Caribes De Honduras*, 2. ed., Colección Códices : (Ciencias Sociales) (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 1995); For Black Caribs and the British, see Mark Moberg, "Continuity under Colonial Rule: The Alcalde System and the Garifuna in Belize, 1858-1969," *Ethnohistory* 39, no. 1 (1992); For comparative studies, see Rebecca B. Bateman, "Africans and Indians: A Comparative Study of the Black Carib and Black Seminole," *Ethnohistory* 37 (1990); Gary Y. Okihiro, *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Michael Craton, "From Caribs to Black Caribs: The Amerindian Roots of Servile Resistance in the Caribbean," in *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History*, ed. Gary Y. Okihiro (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); For gender and the Black Carib, see Virginia Kerns, *Women and the Ancestors: Black Carib Kinship and Ritual* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Older ethnographic scholarship includes Ruy Galvão de Andrade Coelho, *Los Negros Caribes De Honduras*, 1a ed., Colección Códices (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Editorial Guaymuras, 1981); Ruy Galvão de Andrada Coelho, *Os Karaib Negros De Honduras* (São Paulo: [s.n.], 1964); Nancie L. Solien, "West Indian Characteristics of the Black Carib," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (1959); Douglas MacRae Taylor, *The Black Carib of British Honduras*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology (New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1951); Ruy Coelho, "The Significance of the Couvade among the Black Caribs," *Man* 49(1949); Eduard Conzemius, "Ethnographical Notes on the Black Carib (Garif)," *American Anthropologist* 30, no. 2 (1928).

⁵¹ Similar to the Mosquito Coast and the Miskitu Indians, some sources suggest that the Indians enslaved the blacks, while others maintain that the Africans formed their own separate colony on St. Vincent, intermarrying with the Indians and adopting their language and customs. Black Carib has been the standard designation in published ethnographic and historical works, but the names applied to the St. Vincent maroons throughout history have changed. In the eighteenth century, the British referred to the "free negroes of St. Vincent," "Black Indians," "Wild Negroes, and "Black Charibs." Young states this last term was the one chosen by the maroons themselves; William Young, *An Account of the Black Charaibs in the Island of St. Vincent's with the Charaib Treaty of 1773, and Other Original Documents*, Cass Library of West Indian Studies (London, [1795] 1971).

⁵² Rebecca Bateman, *Africans and Indians: A Comparative Study of the Black Carib and Black Seminole*, ed. Norman E. Whitten and Arlene Torres (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 201.

French would result in a two year war punctuated by the guerrilla tactics of the Black Caribs which frustrated traditional military tactics from the British. It would lead to the forced starvation, expulsion, and surrender of the St. Vincent Black Caribs. Chris Taylor, who has extensively researched this deportation using Nancie Gonzalez' original ethnohistory of the Black Caribs and Garifuna, gives us a graphic description of the Second Carib War, the landing at Roatán and the Attack of Trujillo.⁵³

Victor Hughes, the French Jacobin in the middle of his speech to the National Committee, exclaimed, "The time has come when... the ancient friendship of the French and the Caribs should be renewed; they must exterminate the English, their common enemy."⁵⁴ Hughes was France's military ambassador, seizing British colonies and spreading republican rhetoric. His swift journey through Guadeloupe and the Lesser Antilles quickly landed him on St. Vincent, ready to rally the beleaguered Black Caribs against their traditional British enemy. Hughes used the language of the revolution to win over the leaders of the Black Caribs, and using similar methods as the Spanish who courted the Black Auxiliaries, Hughes sent the leaders uniforms, weapons and other marks of leadership. Almost immediately the Black Caribs allied with Hughes and the French and began a series of skirmishes against the British.

The war that followed was nothing like the French had experienced on the previous Antilles islands. This war was protracted and characterized by brutal tactics on all sides. Following the aftermath of one bloody battle in June 1795, a British curate named Thomas Coke recorded the carnage: "Here lay a leg, and there an arm! Now the foot strikes against the shattered fragments of a head! or, with difficulty, disengages itself from adhering entrails! Yonder is discerned a breathless, disfigured form; while the wounded and dying pour, in every direction,

⁵³ Nancie L. Solien Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Taylor, *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*.

⁵⁴ *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*, 115.

their languishing groans upon the listening ear!”⁵⁵ Governor Seton, commander of the British forces, discerned that victory was at hand, but the Black Caribs survivors retreated into the northern mountains. Seton was weary of fighting them and longed to “not only repel but totally exterminate this savage & merciless Race of Charaibs, which whom no Treaties are binding, no Favours conciliating, nor any Laws Divine or human restraining.”⁵⁶ And so he set about implementing what he saw as the most effective strategy against an enemy “inured to the Climate, and accustomed from their Infancy to travel over Mountains and through Thickets almost impenetrable to Europeans.”⁵⁷ That is, Seton set about destroying the Caribs’ homes, canoes, foodstuffs, and to lay waste to the entire Carib country. Seton meant to starve them out. And yet still, the Caribs persisted.

Whitehall was getting anxious. Governor Seton had plenty of time to subdue the Indians, and their war with Spain and France was not easing. The Caribs persisted in inflicting “considerable losses” to the British, and by the end of 1795 “a degree of apathy and indifference seem[ed] to have overtaken not only the troops but all the people of the island.”⁵⁸ The troops were continually ravaged by disease and “the greatest part of them were reduced to skeletons.”⁵⁹ If the British were to win the fight against the Caribs and the French, they would need to change strategy. And so it was that on June 8, 1796, General Sir Ralph Abercromby set sail for St. Vincent, with an army of just under four thousand men.⁶⁰ Two days later, having taken up positions flanking the French/Carib forces at Vigie, the British artillery opened up. By five pm

⁵⁵ T. Coke, *A History of the West Indies: Containing the Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical History of Each Island; with an Account of the Missions Instituted in Those Islands, from the Commencement of Their Civilization, but More Especially of the Missions Which Have Been Established in That Archipelago by the Society Late in Connexion with the Rev. John Wesley* (Nuttall, Fisher, and Dixon, 1808).

⁵⁶ Seton to Portland, 30 March 1795, BNA, CO 260/13.

⁵⁷ Seton to Portland, 23 June 1795, BNA, CO 260/13.

⁵⁸ Myers to Grey, 2 November 1795, J. W. Sir Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, 13 vols. (London & New York: Macmillan and Co., 1930).

⁵⁹ Myers to Grey, 2 November 1795, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Abercromby letter, September 1796, BNA, WO 1/82 in Taylor, *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*, 189.

that evening, the French commander Marinier surrendered. The French would leave the island. The Caribs were on their own.

By July, Seton was back in charge and the British war of attrition was proving effective. After every battle the British would round up prisoners. First 276 Carib men, women and children were intercepted retreating into the mountains, then 177 more by the end of August. By October the figure was 2,664 individuals, and on 18 October, British General Hunter wrote to Whitehall, "I have now the satisfaction to inform you of the total reduction of the Brigands [French] and the Charibs on this Island."⁶¹ The entire group has been starved into submission, herded into prisons and then shipped south to the tiny island called Baliceaux, only 320 acres squared covered in scrubby trees and cactus plants, and no streams or springs on the island.

At first, few problems were reported to the British when there were only a couple hundred Caribs on Baliceaux island. But as more prisoners were crammed into the confined area, people starting falling sick. Soon, they were dying by the droves. In September, a hundred Caribs died. By October the number had quadrupled, and by December nearly a thousand Caribs died in that month alone.⁶² With the disease taking its toll, not only devastating the remaining Caribs but also attacking the British soldiers stationed on the island, the navy finally made preparations to transport the Caribs off Baliceaux and into the decided destination – Spanish controlled Roatán island in the bay of Honduras, nearly seventeen hundred miles to the northwest.

Commanded by Captain John Barrett, the British convoy with the Black Carib prisoners left Baliceaux on March 9, 1797.⁶³ They first landed in Granada to resupply, then sailed to Port Royal in Jamaica to conduct repairs on the John and Mary. At some point between these two

⁶¹ Hunter to Graham, 18 October 1796. WO 1/85 in *ibid*, 189.

⁶² *Ibid*, 141-143; Nancie Gonzalez suggested that the disease may have been typhus or yellow fever.

⁶³ *Ibid*, Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*, 36; Nancie Gonzalez, who first researched the deportation, lists the ships as *Experiment*, *Sovereign (or Severn)*, *Boyton (or Boyston or Boston)*, *Topaze*, *Ganges*, *Fortitude*, *Prince William Henry*, *John and Mary*, *Sea Nymph and Britannia*, plus an American brig impressed en route to Roatán.

ports, the ship Prince William Henry, carrying approximately three hundred Caribs, was captured by the Spanish and taken to the nearby port of Trujillo. On Tuesday, April 11, 1797, the full convoy arrived at Roatán, where they found a small Spanish fort and garrison whose commander quickly surrendered to the large British flotilla. That evening, the last of the Black Caribs from St. Vincent Island were deposited on the shores of Roatán. They numbered 2,026 men, women and children, less than half the number who had surrendered on St. Vincent just two months earlier.⁶⁴

British Attack Trujillo

At the Roatán landing, Captain Barrett learned of the Prince William Henry's capture, and determined to see his orders fully discharged with all Caribs deposited on Roatán, he ordered three ships to quickly sail to back Trujillo and recover the stolen ship and its Carib cargo. At this point, the official details of the Siege of Trujillo are somewhat puzzling. The British ships arrive on April 27 and bombard Trujillo, but the Spanish "simply withdrew" from the fort "leaving behind a small hidden intelligence force."⁶⁵

The Spanish relate the particulars of the battle as follows.⁶⁶ On April 26 at five pm, the British arrived at the mouth of the Trujillo river in two ships of war and a brigantine. The British commander demanded the fort's surrender from Commander Javalois, suggesting it was in his best interests to surrender without a fight so as to preserve the settler's homes. Javalois replied that he needed four hours to confer with his commanders, even though they were all in agreement that they would not agree to the terms. Thus, they readied their canon and battery to fight. When the British landed in order to sack the town, the Spanish regular army was

⁶⁴ "News," *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, London, England, Apr. 28 - May 1, 1797.

⁶⁵ Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*, 41.

⁶⁶ *Gaceta de Guatemala*, 17 May 1797; AGCA, A1/6920/56903.

overwhelmed by the British troops, but “French Black” Artillery Captain Juan Luis Santillan, “in a brilliant action, evicted the enemies of the Plaza!”⁶⁷ More of the Auxiliaries appeared.⁶⁸

Captain Fantacia (Fantasi) placed himself in front of the hospital which was on fire and fought back the British very forcefully.⁶⁹ One Englishman was killed here, and so the Spanish took back the hospital. Discovering that the Plaza was still under attack, the commander (unnamed) gave the order for Fantasi, Jose Lapis, and Hilario to march at the head of a division to attack Fort San Hipolito, while Jalavois, Marcier, and other officials would take back the Plaza. Finally the Spanish drove the British back to their ships, and the next few days they all haggled over an exchange of prisoners.

The British were not able to fully take Trujillo, and they blamed the Spanish for releasing “reinforcements” from the “interior” and some “prisoners from the local jail.”⁷⁰ These reinforcements however, were the Black Auxiliaries who had been initially housed in the barracks jail upon their arrival in Trujillo. One wonders, had the British known about the Black Auxiliaries being housed in Trujillo, if they would have tried to sack the town.

Don Jose Rosí y Rubi, a member of the Guatemalan elite who commanded the Black Auxiliary Troops wrote letters of commendation for many of the troops, including Colonel Desombrages and thirteen of his men.⁷¹ The Guatemalan Treasury Minister Don Juan Ortiz de Letona signed letters awarding Santillan the honor of a silver medal in service to the Spanish crown. Commander Choisi and his men, Macier, Tantase, Gil, Lapis, and Jampol, were also

⁶⁷ Letter from Ramón de Anguiano, May 1797, AGCA, A2/120/2268.

⁶⁸ *Gaceta de Guatemala*, 17 May 1797; AGCA, A2/120/2267 and 2268.

⁶⁹ AGCA, A1/6920/56903.

⁷⁰ Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*, 41.

⁷¹ These troops include some of the Black Auxiliary Troops as well as some new names: Colonel General Desombrages, Colonel Commanders Piere Siricoren, Joseph Vivet (Bivet), Fusesi, Ysena, Bernan, Josef Lopas; Captains Jantacie, Pol, Silvain, Roman, Chasand; Ensigns Adrien and Achilles.

given medals and pay raises.⁷² The Spanish victory at Fort Trujillo would have surely been a loss had it not been for the fighting force of the Auxiliary Troops, and the Spanish commanders recognized this with letters of commendation, medals, and bonuses.

The Spanish claimed the victory, but then, so did the British.⁷³ Note British Honduras Lt. Commander Thomas Barrow's somewhat confusing reply to his superior in Jamaica Earl Balcarres wherein he claims, Captain Barrett "silenced the Fort there [at Trujillo], re-captured the transport and Charaibs, and returning to Rattan, left the Vessel with a considerable quantity of Provisions on board of her, some ammunition, and arms – the Artillery, and Fort [presumably Trujillo], as surrendered by the Spaniards, in possession of the Charaibs." It might have been Captain Barrett who stretched the truth of victory since he, in fact, abandoned the Prince William Henry after it seemed to have run aground in the Trujillo shallows and then he quickly made off for Nova Scotia. It is unclear whether the ship foundered during the initial Spanish capture or under an British recapture. In any case, Captain Barrett decided that the captured Black Caribs were not worth troubling over, and he "received assurances from the Spanish that the Caribs would not be disturbed in their new settlement [meaning Roatán]."⁷⁴

Roatán

Meanwhile, the Black Caribs on Roatán were not pleased at all with their new home, and just a few weeks after their arrival, "three Carib men found their way to Trujillo to petition the Spanish to liberate them from the island."⁷⁵ Gonzalez notes that "at least two Caribs had

⁷² *Gaceta de Guatemala*, 17 May 1797; AGCA, A2/120/2267 and 2268.

⁷³ CO 137/99/180.

⁷⁴ Taylor, *The Black Carib Wars: Freedom, Survival, and the Making of the Garifuna*, 166.

⁷⁵ "AGCA A3.16/2025/194, (4) Honduras" from Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*, 42; It should be noted that when Gonzalez published *Sojourners* in 1988, her document reference for the AGCA was recorded as Expediente/Legajo/Folio. Sometime later, the AGCA began recording their documents as

accompanied the British ships sent to Trujillo to negotiate an exchange of prisoners,” and in fact, these Caribs might have “observed the presence of other French-speaking blacks in that port.” In May 1797, Don Jose Rosí y Rubí, a member of the Guatemalan elite who commanded the Black Auxiliary Troops, sailed to Roatán to reconquer the Island for the King. A letter from Juan de Araoz gives us the particulars of the mission. He opens with a list of all the military commanders, of which Rosí y Rubí is one, in which they judge the expediency of sailing to Roatán and liberating the Caribs. He defends the journey to Roatán, saying that in the defense of the kingdom it is necessary to have both good offense and defense. In this case, the offensive measure required sailing to Roatán, which worked out because they drove off the British. But first, it was necessary to have a “secret and instructive exploration of the situation, both political and military.”⁷⁶ The offensive was a delicate operation. Luckily, he writes, they had troops from Rosí y Rubí in whom there “was a common circumstance and well as the required language.”⁷⁷ Rosí y Rubí, though having known these men for only a few months, chose a contingent from the Black Auxiliary Troops to journey to Roatán. Colonels Desombrages, Bivet, Toussaints, Jose de Grad, Dinicount, Hiliare; Captains Silvein, Fantesse, Chatant, Romain, Paul; Lieutenant Adrain, and Soldier Aguiles.⁷⁸

When they arrived on the island on May 17, they found a somewhat disparate collection of individuals. Rosí y Rubí noted that "a good part of the Blacks of Roatán are Frenchmen from St. Vincent and Martinique, made prisoner and taken to Jamaica. The rest are also natives of these islands, but independent-known as Caribs. Among them, then, are true French, others

Legajo/Expediente/Folio. Additionally, most of the “Honduras” files are considered part of the A1 (4) groups. Therefore, it may be somewhat difficult to accurately match the precise record Gonzalez references here.

⁷⁶ Juan de Araoz to Juan de Langara, September 26, 1797, Newberry Library (NL), Ayer 1034, 3v, Section “Acuerdos de la Junta de Guerra celebrada en Trujillo.”

⁷⁷ NL, Ayer 1034, 3r, Section “Acuerdos de la Junta de Guerra celebrada en Trujillo.”

⁷⁸ NL, Ayer 1034, 5r, Section “Otro del mismos a la Junta de Guerra”; Despite the spelling changes, these are the same men who were listed as fighting and receiving medals during the attack on Trujillo the previous month.

aligned with the British, and some (the majority) who recognize no party or nation. Those who command, in the name of Great Britain, are two Black Carib brothers named 'Jack'."⁷⁹ One of the Jacks "speaking in English lurched forward in an obnoxious drunken condition, with a knife in each hand, and declared that he governed neither in the name of France nor England nor Spain nor any other country but was an independent cannibal."⁸⁰ Rosí y Rubí replied that he would speak directly to the people of the island, and having done so, Jack whispered in English to one of his followers, "He goes on fair and softly; we shall go near to lose our liberty."⁸¹ These black Jacks, so called "British dictators" by Rosí y Rubí, were apparently somewhat in charge of the inhabitants, although perhaps not fully in charge since Rosí y Rubí "remarks that he "eventually succeeded in winning over the majority of the Islanders... and the acquisition of this Island has not cost the King a single maravedi, or humanity a single tear."⁸² The Black Caribs on Roatán, on May 19, 1797, formally surrendered to Rosí y Rubí who promised to bring all of them over to the Spanish mainland, and by October 1797 all but 206 Black Caribs had left Roatán.⁸³ Rosí y Rubí wrote up the assistance of the Black Auxiliaries who helped on Roatán, and Guatemalan Treasury records remark that these Black Auxiliaries helped Rosí's negotiations "with their opinions and their color."⁸⁴ Likewise, we might assume that the Caribs, who were going to assist Rosí y Rubí with the Trujillo prisoner exchange, had viewed life favorably with the Spanish and had somehow communicated that back to the Caribs on Roatán. In any case, we can be sure that the presence of other French blacks helped convince the Black Caribs that an alliance with the Spanish would be beneficial.

⁷⁹ NL, Ayer MS Box 1034, 8r.

⁸⁰ NL, Ayer MS Box 1034, 10v.

⁸¹ NL, Ayer MS Box 1034, 11v, quote recorded in English.

⁸² Attachment to NL, Ayer MS Box 1034.

⁸³ NL, Ayer 1034; See also Gonzalez, *Sojourners of the Caribbean: Ethnogenesis and Ethnohistory of the Garifuna*. 49; José Rosí y Rubí, "Diario," *Gazeta de Guatemala*, 1 (21): 164 – 168.

⁸⁴ *Gaceta de Guatemala*, 26 June 1797; AGCA, A2/120/2267; AGI, Guatemala 805, entry for May 22, 1797.

Finally, in a 1798 letter to Governor Balcarres in Jamaica, British Honduras commander Lt. Col. Barrow tried to explain how he had lost Roatán Island to the Spanish, again. He remarked:

“From the prisoners I learn that the Garrison of Rattan consists of a Captain, Lieutenant, and about 50 Men of the 1st Regiment of Guatemala Regulars, called by the Spaniards Veteranos, 250 Caribs, and 70 Negroes, part of those who had fought against France, prior to the peace between that country and Spain, and those who preferred being sent to the Spanish settlements on this coast, to remaining in Hispaniola after the surrender of the Spanish part of that Island to the French.”⁸⁵

Barrow may have been speaking of the Black Auxiliary troops when he referenced the “70 Negros,” in which case it seems as though the British are aware of the influence of a French black presence. He could also have been speaking of the exiled French blacks that Rosí y Rubí noticed. Regardless, in his 1797 diary remarks, Rosí y Rubí listed the commanders of the “French Auxiliaries from Santo Domingo” and called them “necessary for the reconquest of the Island of Roatán.”⁸⁶

Conclusion

This chapter examined the Black Auxiliaries’ incorporation into the local Trujillo culture. When confronted with the recommendations from the Guatemalan ministry that were unfavorable, they travelled to the capital and negotiated their salaries and living standards. This chapter also looked at the religious examination by the Guatemala City Franciscan church. Even though the Guatemalan government was not originally inclined to trust the Black Auxiliaries, after meeting with them face to face and submitting to an examination from the Franciscan priest who quizzed them on articles of faith, the ministers relaxed their fear about the spread of

⁸⁵ Lt. Col. Barrow to Governor Balcares, Honduras, February 22, 1798, BNA, CO 137/99/180.

⁸⁶ NL, Ayer 1034.

revolutionary contagion. They were more willing to trust the Black Auxiliaries as allies and to allow them the lifestyle they wanted. It is clear that the tactics of diplomacy and face to face negotiation, learned in Saint Domingue, suited Juan Santiago and his community well.

Likewise, when the attack from the British navy encroached on the sovereignty of Trujillo, many of the Black Auxiliaries more fervent soldiers took part in the battle and helped repulse the British. Artilleryman Santillan and others received medals and bonuses as a result of their bravery. Meanwhile, the Black Carib resettlement on Roatán allowed the Black Auxiliaries a military and political arena with which to show their talents. Commander Rosí y Rubí specifically selected Colonel Desombrages and some of his men to accompany him on the delicate mission to the British island, and they proved their worth yet again when needed as translators and as sailors against a small skiff of British settlers.

The first year on Spanish soil was not without hardships however. It might be surprising that Juan Santiago did not take part in any of the military missions against the British, especially since in later years he was quick to show Guatemalan ministers his medal from Jean-François in Saint Domingue commending him for bravery in battle. However, Santiago's wife Magdalena was one of the first casualties in the new land. She died on June 12, 1797, in Trujillo only three months after arriving back in the coastal town after their extended stay in the capital.⁸⁷ There are no notes regarding the manner of her death, just that she was offered the last rites in the hospital and was buried in the town cemetery.⁸⁸ One wonders if Magdalena was in the hospital during

⁸⁷ "Honduras, registros parroquiales y diocesanos, 1633-1978," index and images, *FamilySearch*, Colón/Trujillo/San Juan Bautista/Bautismos, defunciones 1797-1880, image 20 of 530; paróquias Católicas, Arquidiócesis de Tegucigalpa (Catholic Church parishes, Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa).

⁸⁸ Bivet's mother Catarina died on August 15, 1799 and was buried near Magdalena Santiago in the Trujillo cemetery; "Honduras, registros parroquiales y diocesanos, 1633-1978," index and images, *FamilySearch*, Colón/Trujillo/San Juan Bautista/Bautismos, defunciones 1797-1880, image 72 of 530; paróquias Católicas, Arquidiócesis de Tegucigalpa (Catholic Church parishes, Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa).

the attack by the British in April. If so, she was in one of the buildings which the British targeted with their cannons. Perhaps Santiago remained in the hospital near her.

Epilogue

The year 1797 was only the beginning for the Black Auxiliary Troops in Central America. By the end of the year the group had made political and military inroads into the administrative system of the Guatemalan *audiencia*. The capital city ministers trusted their political ideology, having been assured of their royalist loyalty to the king and the Spanish empire. The Franciscan church in the capital had one of the parish priests examine the Black Auxiliaries and was assured of their Catholic faith. After the British entanglements on the coast, they were also assured of the black troops' military prowess and felt justified in writing out the expense report to Madrid with explanations on their battle-readiness. The Black Auxiliary community under Juan Santiago was assured of their salaries on the coast of Trujillo where the soldiers could work within the local militia under Don Rosí y Rubí. Unfortunately, as is often the case, the community who had so stalwartly refused to be separated because their leader Jean-François told them to stick together at all costs, now succumbed to internal strife and dissension.

Despite the recent military successes of the Black Auxiliaries, some Guatemalan ministers were hesitant still to have so many African descendants on the coast, especially with the recent influx of 2,000 Black Caribs.¹ Thus, when a rivalry between Choisi and Desombrages facilitated a split in the community, and divided several families naturally, the capital officials were happy to provide them passage to a new home in Nicaragua. Colonel Desombrages remained in Trujillo along with his troops, most of whom were single. Desombrages' uncle Silvain returned to the capital and in 1798 he was tonsured in the Franciscan cathedral and ordained a lay brother.² Colonel Joseph Bivet returned to Roatán as a commander, signing his name to the orders, and

¹ David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), Ch. 12.

² AGI, Estado 49, exp. 89.

brought with him five soldiers: Major Marcial and soldiers Figuera, Antonio, Fransua, Pedro. They were titled the Artillery regiment “Franceses de Color,” and they were stationed in Roatán from May 1798 until at least December.³

In October 1797, a large group under Juan Santiago (with Choisi) left Trujillo and moved south to Lake Nicaragua outside of the city of Granada.⁴ This was probably partly due to the strife between Choisi and Desombrages, however it seems that most of the Black Auxiliaries who left Trujillo were those with large families. Doubtless they wanted to move to a place with more land so as to take advantage of the settlement offers from their agreement. Santiago’s command continued while in Lake Nicaragua, although there were difficulties with the settlement agreements and salaries.

In 1801, Antonio González Saravia succeeded Domas as Captain General and immediately instituted a number of reforms. The war with England was over as of March 1802 and suddenly the 100,000 pesos from Madrid, which had been incorporated into the war budget, dried up. In September, González instituted a Plan of Reform for the defense forts in Granada and Trujillo⁵ which reduced their budgets by 60 percent. Within these reforms were the salaries for the Black Auxiliaries. González argued that the October 22, 1792 agreement with García had promised the troops land settlements, not salaries. Ignoring the salary agreement with Domas from 1796, he immediately ended their salaries and provision support with the order that they become self-supporting by August 1803, twelve months away.⁶

The Trujillo contingent grumbled about the González reforms, but overall the transition was fairly smooth. They were offered settlements in the mountainous area around Chapagua and

³ AGCA, A2/100/1981.

⁴ AGCA, A2/300/6775.

⁵ “Plan de reforma” September 30, 1802, AGCA, A1(4)/51/520 (Honduras).

⁶ Proclamation, January 20, 1803, AGCA, A1(4)/51/519 (Honduras); report of July 14, 1810, AGI, Guatemala, 453.

Saladillo, and some of the lower ranked families moved inland to begin farming. The officers refused the mountainous agriculture settlement and instead received land near the Aguan River in order to graze their cattle, a not so subtle nod to their burgeoning status as rancher landowners.⁷

From Granada, the González reforms were less acceptable. In February 1803, Santiago and three others journeyed to Guatemala City to renegotiate their salaries, land settlements, and military titles which were suddenly forbidden by González. Juan Santiago, Gabriel Coter, José Toussants, and Oliano José Pecholi arrived in the capital asking to continue their service at Granada. Santiago presented to the Guatemalan officials a silver medal awarded to him from Jean-François for his service on Saint Domingue. Santiago reminded the officials that Coter, Toussants, and Pecholi had assisted in the “reconquest of Puerto Trujillo.” González offered to reinstate the salaries of the four officers, although at the lesser amount of twenty pesos per month. All others in Granada were offered \$10.50. Their provisions for farming were also reinstated so that they could feed themselves from their home farms. These stipulations were provided as long as they agreed to work in the fixed regiments at Fort San Carlos or Castillo San Juan, neither of which were acceptable postings. The first was used as a prison workhouse and the latter had been in ruins for twenty years.

In August 1803 local Granada commander Brigadier Ansoategui took an official census asking each man what his wishes were. Most of the Auxiliary troops decided to refuse González’ military offer along with the salaries. Besides standing as a certificate of their refusal, this document certifies that the Black Auxiliaries (though somewhat fractured) still continued to regard themselves as a community. Despite the difficulty in getting González to fully agree to their terms, still they must have recognized that they were stronger together than apart. Of the

⁷ Letters of October 5, 1802, and August 8, 1803, AGCA, A1(4)/51/520 (Honduras).

thirty-two men interviewed by Ansoategui, only two accepted Mateare. What many did not realize was that in June 1803, Gils Narcisco led a group of 33 to the farms in Mateare.

Along with the disagreements over land and salaries, González forbade their further use of military titles.⁸ Following orders but with great satisfaction, Ansoategui quit using the titles in his correspondence with the Auxiliary leaders. The first letter that came to Santiago ushered in a critical exchange between the two. Santiago declared the title was given him by the king, and Ansoategui demanded that Santiago show him any “real royal titles.”⁹ Ansoategui threatened to put them into the stocks if anyone appeared in public wearing their medals. Finally, his letter closed by referring numerous times to the “*Morenos* of Santo Domingo,” including a third person reference to Santiago - a direct insult. Even still, in 1818 on the eve of the Spanish wars of independence, “Marshall” Juan Santiago reappears in the records at the head of a military corps. And in 1820, “Colonel” Desombrages was at the head of Trujillo’s auxiliary artillery regiment.¹⁰

The August 1803 census also gives us a particularly close look at the remaining Auxiliaries under Juan Santiago in Granada. The family structures had changed over time. Santiago’s wife Magdalena had died in 1797, but by 1803 Santiago had a new wife (*mujer*) and a toddler son. Andrés Santiago, the son of Juan Santiago, had a wife and stated that he would remain with his father. Gabriel Cloter had a wife and two children. Claudio had a wife. Francisco had a wife and a baby boy. José Guerra had a wife and an 18 year old boy that was in his care. Juan José Fusan had a wife, and expressed his wish to follow Juan Santiago. Benjamin had a wife, a brother, and sister. He replied that he had no desire to go to Mateare. Gudú only had a wife. Bernardo had a wife and “nothing else.” Ylario’s family was his sister who had her four children from her marriage. Roman had a wife, and he also expressed his destination to be that of Juan Santiago.

⁸ Letters of July 26 and August 7, 1803, AGCA, A2/121/2280.

⁹ Geggus’ translation, Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 193.

¹⁰ AGCA, A2/133/2423, no. 77-78; and A2/ 301/6893-6897.

Juan Santillan, the hero of Trujillo, had a wife, two children, and wanted to remain in royal service. José Fantasi had a wife, two children, and a sister in Trujillo. Another Ylario said he did not have any family. Feliz had a wife and small child, but did not want to go to Mateare because he preferred to be near his family. Antonio did not have family, but he did not want to take the offered land because it would be impossible for him to work it. Calistro did not reply. Ysidoro had no family, and said he would follow the word of Clotér. Bernardo had a wife, one boy and would follow Juan Santiago. Miguel had a wife and would follow the family of Juan Santiago. Profeta had no family and so would follow Santiago. Abidón had a wife and wanted to follow Román (who was pledged to Santiago). Juan Luis Lordi had a wife, teenage daughter and would go to Mateare for the farming option. Recañe had a wife and four kids and in Trujillo there were more children; he accepted Mateare. Agustin Asòr had a wife and wanted to be free from military service to be with his wife. Prens had family in Trujillo, and he wanted to go to where she was. Agustin had no family and preferred to live here (Granada). Luis Cenigal had no family, said his destination will be wherever they say. His last name suggests a closer Senegalese heritage, but then so does Pedro Senigal, with no family. Either could have been the “Senegal” reported from the 1796 census under Claudio. Chanito had family in Trujillo, and he wanted to live with Suasy (Choisi). Ysidro does not mention a wife but he has a small son. He wanted to go with the Brigadier, presumably Ansoategui, the Granada commander.

Finally, in the midst of all of the disputes with González and the Trujillo and Granada commanders, Jean-François wrote to Santiago informing him of his plan to reunite with the group in Honduras or Nicaragua. The plan to unite had been attempted once before in October 1796, but the war with England interrupted any sea-going plans.¹¹ On April 21, 1802, Jean-François sent a letter to Santiago informing him of their plans to take land on the Mosquito

¹¹ Correspondence, July-October, in AGI, Estado 3, exp. 10; and AGS, GM 7161, exp. 24.

Coast, and for Santiago to pick out for them the best plots. Jean-François urged Santiago and Choisi to work together, to make sure everyone under them knew their official place, and to keep in mind that the king was their protector. He also assured Santiago that their salaries would be taken care of, and to provide him a list of all the troops so that he might present it to the proper authorities.¹²

Jean-François and the Cádiz retinue never made it to the Mosquito Coast, although the possibility of his arrival did strike fear into the Trujillo commander.¹³ Even if he had arrived it is not sure that the group would have reunited in the glory of prestige and salary that Jean-François envisioned. By 1802, the group was fairly well fractured between Desombreges in Trujillo, Santiago in Granada, and Choisi (who did not make peace with Santiago as Jean-François instructed) in Mateare. Still, Juan Santiago's reception of Jean-François' letter probably made him a bit more obstinate when dealing with Ansoategui, as he probably assumed that Jean-François' negotiations on their salary would help set things right. Ansoategui actually claimed that dealing with the "impertinent" and prideful Black Auxiliaries was "the worst task he had ever undertaken."¹⁴

Over the years, integration occurred between the Black Auxiliaries and the other residents of coastal Honduras and Nicaragua. Bivet's Roatán artillery corps worked alongside the *marineros* under Francisco Perdomo who had eight soldiers in his employ, two of which were Caribs. The farming communities in the mountainous zones around Trujillo and Mateare worked their land allotments next to the St. Vincent Black Caribs who were also given land in the same areas. This intermixture eventually culminated in the ethnic group known as the Garifuna.¹⁵ They currently

¹² Letter of April 21, 1802, AGCA, A1(4)/51/519.

¹³ Letter from the Trujillo commander, "Top Secret," December 22, 1802, AGCA/A2/130/2344.

¹⁴ Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies*, 192.

¹⁵ Anthropologist Nancie Gonzalez's ethnographic study of the Garifuna revealed, through oral history, that many Garifuna claim a Haitian ancestor.

live along the Caribbean Coast in Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and on the islands of Roatán and Utila, along with Diaspora communities in New York and Miami. In 2001 UNESCO recognized the Garifuna cultural heritage through a Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Finally, one of the most difficult cultural practices to reconcile with the Black Auxiliaries has been their continued use of slaves and their acceptance of the Spanish slave society. Because of the rhetoric from the Haitian Revolution, particularly following Toussaint's ascendance in 1795 and beyond, often modern readers are surprised and dismayed to discover that certain groups fighting in the rebellion did not maintain a strict abolitionist policy. Modern commentators on the Saint Domingue rebellion are quick to point to Jean-François and Biassou's practice of selling captured slaves to the Spanish. Usually the Spanish and black leaders argued that the captured slaves were arrested because of espionage, republican rhetoric, or some other political offense, however the reality was that most likely any black individual who did not take up arms within the troop regiment was considered fair game to be sold. The black leaders' continual application of the slave system, while at the same time operating at the head of a garrison of ex-slaves fighting for their freedom, smacks modern readers of hypocrisy and deceit. Additionally, readers will often express astonishment at Jean-François' willingness to submit his own troops back into French slavery and the plantation system. He did not ultimately make an alliance with the French planters and thus we will never know how much his promises were based on negotiation tactics and how much were based in reality. Still, these diplomatic exchanges in addition to the slave selling tell us that Jean-François and Biassou were not entirely concerned with the abolition of slavery as a practice. They were primarily concerned with freedom for themselves and their family members.

Once on Spanish soil, the census records of Black Auxiliaries show that slaves are referred to in two ways; they are called *esclavos*, the traditional term for slaves, or they are called *agregados*, or helpers, which suggests they were considered more as family servants. At least in one instance, Juan Santiago's servant Pridans was referred to as "attached to the family." Later in the records, some slaves who entered the census in March 1797 as *esclavos* were referred to as *agregados* in June. This suggests various things. Perhaps the Spanish census taker recorded certain individuals as *esclavos* and others as *agregados* based on how those individuals labeled themselves or were labeled by the head of the family. Also, within the Trujillo fort where slavery was still practiced, it was probably more common for the census taker to think of family servants as slaves. Finally, we might assume that the slaves who remained with the Black Auxiliaries did so with willingness and a personal decision, particularly since they were coming from a revolution in which slaves continually deserted their plantations and killed their owners.

Once the Black Auxiliaries under Juan Santiago arrive on Spanish soil in Trujillo, we are again shown that they not only brought their slaves with them to the new land, but once under the legal slave system within the Spanish empire, some members of the Black Auxiliaries chose that moment to free their slaves. For instance, Colonel Joseph Bivet freed four of his six slaves between 1796 and 1802, including his son, his son's mother, and his two slave-soldiers, who were reclassified as nephews.¹⁶ Ultimately it might be best to think of these labels as fluid markers of social standing. Matthew Restall's study of slave mobility in the Yucatan argued that those slaves were not anonymous workers as was on par in a plantation economy; they were individuals.¹⁷ And Doug Thompson's examination of slavery in the Omoa community on the northern coast of Honduras maintained that in such a fluid and mobile society as the Atlantic coast, while slavery

¹⁶ AGCA, A2/120/2275; A2/120/2265, f. 5-6, 12-21; A1(4)/51/ 520 (Honduras).

¹⁷ Matthew Restall, 'Manuel's Worlds: Black Yucatán and the Colonial Caribbean', in Landers and Robinson, *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives*, 152.

could contain within it some of the worst aspects of human bondage, it also demonstrated other aspects like family ties and mobility.¹⁸

In the long run, we might examine the Black Auxiliaries' journey within Central America as just one more part of a long blurry, fragmented line between slavery and freedom.¹⁹ Their experience in the French slave system on Saint Domingue was formative in the way that most bondage experiences are formative. One learns just how much one can put up with, and then one vows to never put up with it again. The revolution on Saint Domingue gave many in the French colonial plantation system a new chance to explore their options. The community under Jean-François was made up of many different social and ethnic classes, and those who eventually grouped under Juan Santiago in Central America used their knowledge of negotiation, legal challenges, and community cohesion to advance their lives in the Spanish empire. These learned diplomatic navigations were not always successful, however the important thing to remember is that they learned how to use all of the tools available. At times they gained the advantage, and at other times they did not. Ultimately however, we should understand the experience of the Black Auxiliary Troops of Carlos IV as a unique community operating under familiar practices of Spanish legal and ministerial negotiation tactics, advocating for their freedom to live and work as they desired.

¹⁸ Doug Thompson, "Between Slavery and Freedom on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras," *Slavery & Abolition* (2011), 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

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AGI	Archivo General de Indias
AGI, SD	AGI, Audiencia de Santo Domingo
AGS	Archivo General de Simancas
AGS, SGU	AGS, Secretaría del Despacho de Guerra
AGCA	Archivo General de CentroAmerica
BARS	Belize Archives and Records Service
BM	French Bibliothèque Municipale de Rouen
BL	British Library
BNA	British National Archives
BNA, PRO, CO	BNA, Public Record Office, Colonial Office
BNA, SP	BNA, State Papers
BNA, WO	BNA, War Office
NL	Newberry Library
Leg.	Legajo
exp.	Expediente
f.	Folio(s)

Newspapers

Cobbett's Weekly Political Register
Courier and Evening Gazette
Diary or Woodfall's Register
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