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From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Black Identities in Montevideo, 1770-1850

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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My dissertation examines the formation of the social identities of Africans and their descendants living in Montevideo in the era of Atlantic slaving and emancipation. Identities emerged from the interplay of social forces and conceptions of self. I explore experiences that bonded free blacks and slaves to each other and to the larger society in which they found themselves. The slave trade, Catholic black lay brotherhoods, African-based associations or “nations” and black military service were crucial and overlapping fields of experience. While the historiography has hitherto focused on one or other of these fields at a time, my work draws on new archival material to chart the interconnectedness of these arenas and how individuals simultaneously operated across these organizations. It offers a more precise and more comprehensive interpretation of black identity formation. It also shows free blacks and slaves were active participants in the written culture of the period. Given that the Río de la Plata has been largely excluded from the studies on the African Diaspora, this project aims to fully integrate the region into the larger historiography of the Black Atlantic.

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Acknowledgments

When I first entered the National Archive in Montevideo as part of my college education in History at the University de la Republic (Uruguay) in 1997, I did not imagine that my life would take me across the Americas and the Atlantic to study the history of Africans and their descendants in the Río de la Plata. In 1996, I began my undergraduate studies at the School of Humanities and Education in the University of the Republic, Uruguay. In those years, I met the people who shaped my professional life as well as those with whom I first shared the task of writing history. Professors Ana Frega and Carlos Zubillaga encouraged my research and writing, and they helped me contacting scholars in the Río de la Plata and Brazil. During a course taught by Ana Frega, my friends Natalia Stalla, Karla Chagas and I decided to do research on slavery in the countryside –an inexistent field of study for Uruguayan historiography. This work later took the shape of the book *Esclavitud y Trabajo. Un estudio sobre los afrodescendientes en la frontera uruguaya, 1835-1855*.

Professor José Pedro Barrán generously commented on my early work on rural slavery and suggested me to research the experience of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo. His intuition proved successful. In 2003, I began to study the debates on slavery and abolition published by the newspapers of Montevideo in the 1830s and 1840s. I also started to work on black social life through police records and the writings of free black Jacinto Molina (1766-1841). These were exciting years as I had finished my undergraduate education. Additionally, I had been working in theater in Montevideo for some years by then. Even though I finished this research on abolitionism by 2004, this study was only recently published as *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo tras la fundación republicana, 1829-1853*. As there was no PhD in History offered in Uruguay at that time, I decided to seek graduate education abroad. Ana Frega, Carlos Zubillaga and José P. Barrán encouraged my application and that is how I ended seeking a PhD in the United States.

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Introduction

In 1777, Pedro Antonio, a slave born in Angola, wanted to marry Ana María, a slave born in Rio de Janeiro. Both of them lived in Montevideo, a South Atlantic outpost founded by the Spanish empire in the Río de la Plata as a defense against the Portuguese. Under the Catholic Church regulations, Pedro Antonio had to provide evidence of his single status prior to the marriage ceremony. In front of an ecclesiastical notary who took down his application, Pedro Antonio swore that he was single. Then, the notary asked two witnesses –who came with Pedro Antonio– to substantiate this information. Domingo, a slave from Benguela (Angola), said that he had known Pedro Antonio for six years and the two of them had come together from Rio de Janeiro to Colonia do Sacramento –a Portuguese town on the Río de la Plata then occupied by the Spanish– and from there to Montevideo. Pedro, the second witness, said that he had known Pedro Antonio for ten years. He had first met Pedro Antonio in Benguela, saw him again in Rio de Janeiro, and finally reencountered him in Montevideo six years prior to the marriage application. Sixty years later, in the 1830s, participants in African-based celebrations wore military uniforms reflecting a growing black presence in Montevideo’s armed forces. Africans and their descendants had by this time incorporated the new symbols of the larger community in which they found themselves, including the Uruguayan flag, while celebrating their African origins during the Day of Kings –a Catholic festivity bringing together the black population of the city. These vignettes portray networks forged from African homelands, shared experience in the slave trade, black recruitment, participation in Catholic brotherhoods, and a strong African element in the emerging patriotic milieu. The stories point to the possibility of examining the interconnections between the experiences of generations of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo on the one hand,

and the social ties and collective identities that subsequently developed out of these experiences on the other.

This dissertation analyzes how Africans and their descendants living in Montevideo created social identities on the basis of their common experiences in the era of Atlantic slaving and emancipation. To a certain extent, identity was a synonym of belonging to something rather than an indicator of individual expression both in pre-colonial Africa and colonial Latin America. Kinship and genealogical ties were the predominant languages to describe boundaries of communities and political configurations in pre-colonial Africa. Rather than freedom from social ties, the antithesis of slavery meant belonging to families and extended lineages.¹ Across the Atlantic, kinship was also the main metaphor of power relationships for the vassals of the Spanish Crown –the Father King.² Some scholars have identified horizontal and vertical links based on family and membership of corporate bodies as the thread holding together the diverse social fabric of colonial Latin America.³ While others have focused on vertical patron-client relationships to explain this issue, recent scholarship has stressed the role of both European and indigenous intermediaries who mediated colonial power within the multilayered social hierarchy.⁴ In a social milieu that

¹ Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1977, 1-11; Joseph Miller, *Kings and Kinsmen: early Mbundu States in Angola*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976; Frederick Cooper, “The Problem of slavery in African Studies,” *Journal of African History*, 20, 1 (1979): 103-125. Donald R Wright points out that family, village and occupation indicated identity in precolonial Gambia. He argues that ethnicity is very limited as an analytical concept to understand identity in precolonial Africa, Donald R Wright, “‘What Do You Mean There Were No Tribes in Africa?’ Thoughts on Boundaries and Related Matters in Precolonial Africa,” *History in Africa* 26 (1999): 409-426.

² Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King. Youth, Authority, and Legal Minority in Colonial Lima*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2005, 1-19

³ Susan Socolow, *The Merchants of Buenos Aires 1778-1810 Family and Commerce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Pilar Gonzalbo, *Familia y Orden Colonial*. Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1998; Alida Metcalf, *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de Parnaíba, 1580-1822*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005; Luis Roniger and Tamar Herzog (eds), *The collective and the public in Latin America: Cultural Identities and Political Order*. Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2000.

⁴ R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994; William Taylor “Between Global Processes and Local Knowledge: An inquiry into Early Latin American Social History,” in Olivier Zunz (ed.), *Reliving*

defined personal identity through membership of kin and corporate bodies, enslavement posed an enormous disadvantage for the enslaved.

Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as "social death" is extremely useful here.⁵ As recently argued by Vincent Brown, the concept of "social death" is solely a metaphor of the violence and alienation needed to socially produce slaves, but this metaphor lacks roots in the actual experience of slaves as it denies any agency on the part of the people constrained by enslavement. The concept of "social death" is nevertheless useful to study the strategies of the enslaved to regain social identity or the "struggle[s] to define a social being that connected the past and present."⁶ In connecting past and present, Africans and their descendants participated in overlapping social networks in Montevideo from which they crafted new social identities. In the process, they overcame dispossession as the baseline of black identity.

The process of how multiple arenas of experience shaped individual lives and collective identities is the object of this study. Analysis of any one field of experience produces only partial knowledge on black identities. Likewise, scrutiny of the interactions of black populations with the dominant sectors of society alone offers only limited perspectives on this issue. Social identities emerged from the interplay of external categories and self-understandings.⁷ To study identity formation, I look at experiences that bonded Africans and their descendants to each other and to the larger society in which they found themselves. The

the Past: The Worlds of Social History. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991, 115-190; Alida 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.

⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: a Comparative Study*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982, 13.

⁶ Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, 5 (2009): 1231-1249, quote 1233.

⁷ Fredrick Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Bergen: Universitets Forlaget, 1969; Vered Amit, "An Anthropology without Community?" in Vered Amit and Nigel Rappaport (eds.), *In Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on Movement, Identity, and Collectivity*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.

slave trade, black confraternities, African-based associations or “nations,” and black battalions were not isolated from each other. Mapping the different arenas of social experience and studying how individuals simultaneously operated across them leads us to build a more complete and more complex interpretation of black identity formation. These fields of experience became the social fabric upon which Africans and their descendants developed collective identities and interacted with the dominant sectors of society. From these social networks, Africans and their descendants pushed against the limits of racial domination within the colonial Spanish regime. These experiences not only bounded black communities by providing individuals with a sense of belonging, but also tied them to the larger colonial society and thereafter to the new nations.

From Shipmates to Soldiers focuses on the processual formation of social identities emerging from Atlantic slaving. Identity is best understood by the analysis of social practices that left a paper trail for historians. Social experience provides empirical evidence on the intersection of external categories with individual self-understandings. Andrew Fisher and Mathew O’Hara describe “contact points” as interactions between subjects and institutions where both the dominated and the dominant “talked” about categories of differentiation and belonging and “acted” to define these questions. The prosopography of black participation across arenas of experience provide us with the social scenario within which black leaders and commoners acted. Life-course analysis of black leaders of brotherhoods and militias reveals key incidents where expressions on the *process* of black identity formation were voiced and articulated. The lives of black leaders evince *how* individual strategies intersected with patterns of differentiation and belonging to social identities. Their stories illustrate the limits of what blacks could achieve even as they continually tested those limits through interaction with the dominant sectors of society. Black leaders also left a trail on the

meanings of social identities given that they were active participants in written culture as a field of social interaction in early nineteenth-century Montevideo.⁸

The experience of enslaved Africans in the Atlantic crossing redefined the meanings of the nomenclature emerging from this traffic. Under violent conditions, captives developed networks with shipmates on board slave vessels. These ties survived for decades if shipmates stayed together in the same region as they did in Montevideo. Shipmate ties not only represented a living connection for Africans with their experience in the Atlantic crossing, but also with their homelands. Shipmates provided support to their fellows when they needed trusted associates as the marriage files of Montevideo clearly demonstrates. Enslaved Africans commonly asked fellow shipmates to testify about their past when marrying into the Catholic Church. This action happened at a defining moment of the slave's quest for social identity: the creation of family networks. Shipmate ties also laid the foundation upon which enslaved Africans redefined the nomenclature of the slave trade. In Montevideo, umbrella terms such as *Angola* reflected shared experiences of survival more frequently than specific ethnicities. Precise ethnonyms describing African inland origins of the enslaved also existed; however, umbrella terms such as *Congo* predominated in the Americas. These labels continued to be used as social markers by Africans throughout their entire life –even after obtaining freedom. In the past, scholars discarded these terms because they were seen as imposed on Africans by Europeans. More recently scholars have embraced these categories as evidence of the endurance of African ethnicities in the Americas.⁹ The present study

⁸ These authors articulate experience, process and meanings to study social identities. Andrew Fisher and Mathew O'Hara, "Racial Identities and their interpreters in Colonial Latin America" in Andrew Fisher and Mathew O'Hara (eds.), *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009, 1-37.

⁹ Robin Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade: 'Lucumi' and 'Nago' as Ethnonyms in West Africa," *History of Africa* 24 (1997): 205-219; Robin Law, "Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the Diaspora: On the Meanings of Mina (Again)," *History of Africa* 32 (2005): 247-267; David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman, *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*. London: Continuum, 2003; Gwendolyn Hall,

examines the meanings of these umbrella terms for enslaved Africans as these labels connected them with a crucial experience –the Atlantic crossing– as well as with their brothers in survival –shipmates.

In the New World, Africans sought to gain a new sense of social belonging and to connect their past with their present. Both for pre-colonial African religions and for Catholicism, the most important rituals were destined to ease the passage from life to death. In the case of Africans in the Americas, such a passage meant the oft-mentioned return to their homelands.¹⁰ Catholic black lay brotherhoods –*cofradías* or *confradías*– emerged in most cities where slave populations were significant in colonial Latin America. These associations collected money from their members to celebrate the annual festive day of their patron saint and particularly to fund funeral wakes for their members. Also in the eighteenth century, African-based associations emerged in the Río de la Plata (called *naciones* or African “nations”) and Cuba (*cabildos*). These groups also held funeral wakes, but they congregated according to the broad, but sometimes precise, Africans origins of their members. They also held weekly gatherings to perform drumming and dancing. While black confraternities were the first associations of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo, African “nations” proliferated in the nineteenth century urban public space. This study thus provides a better picture of black brotherhoods during the late-colonial era than in the years following independence. In contrast, sources on African “nations” were scant in colonial times, but they mushroomed from the 1830s to 1850s.¹¹ The decline of confraternity life and

Slavery and African ethnicities in the Americas. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

¹⁰ Rituals of aquatic passage are linked to death, rebirth and the formation of new identities in the African diaspora discourse on the slave trade. Monica Shuler, “Enslavement, the Slave Voyages, and Astral and Aquatic Journeys in African Diaspora Discourse,” in José Curto and Renée Soulondre-La France (eds.), *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005, 185, 191 and 198.

¹¹ Miguel Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes en el Río de la Plata, Siglos XVIII-XIX*. Buenos Aires: Durken, 2009, 210. This falling of confraternity sociability and public expressions coincided with the secularization of private life in Montevideo as well as the overall fading away of public confraternity life in

the increasing visibility of African-based associations are also apparent in nineteenth-century Buenos Aires. This study shows consistent overlapping of black leaderships in these confraternities and African “nations” both in colonial and independence times. Apparently, there were no impediments to participating in both these arenas of socialization.

While black confraternities were mainly dominated by free Africans of some means, African “nations” were ruled by enslaved or free Africans. A third arena of experience was open only to free blacks during colonial times –militia service. In Spanish America, recruitment of people of African ancestry into militias and national armies was encouraged by first the Bourbon Reforms and later the Wars of Independence.¹² In theory, militia membership put free blacks in better social standing than the poor, the enslaved, and the Amerindians given that the crown conferred benefits on black militiamen via tax exemptions, salary, honors, and the military fuero –a separate body of justice to which only the military had access. In practice, black militiamen received almost none of the above benefits from their service in Montevideo. Black officers were respected by neither the larger Spanish society nor the professional military –only by black militiamen. Instead, black militias provided an opportunity for leadership to free blacks born in the region. This dissertation shows that all identifiable captains of black militias in Montevideo were born in neighboring Buenos Aires. They emerged as captains because of their knowledge of the Spanish colonial world and their reading and writing skills (in some cases). While free black captains were born in the region, the majority of the commissioned and noncommissioned officers under

Spanish America. On the secularization of private life in the 1830s-1860s before the secularization of public life see José P. Barrán, *La espiritualización de la riqueza. Catolicismo y Economía en Uruguay (1730-1900)*. Montevideo: EBO, 1998. On the decline of confraternities in Bourbon Mexico, see Brian Larkin, *The very nature of God: baroque Catholicism and religious reform in Bourbon Mexico City*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010.

¹² Blacks and people of mixed origin joined militias in Mexico before the 18th century, but that is not the case for the rest of mainland Spanish America, where militias emerged mainly in the Bourbon era. Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

their command were free Africans who were already at the head of the black confraternity of Montevideo. When choosing noncommissioned officers, black captains saw participation in confraternities as an index of black leadership. Along a continuum of black organizations ranging from the free black militias to predominantly slave African “nations,” brotherhoods provided a middle ground where African-born and American-born slaves and freedmen mingled.

If colonial black militias were only open to free blacks in Montevideo, this situation was very different after 1810, when an expanded black presence in the armed forces heralded the end of slavery. In exchange for freedom, slaves joined the forces of all sides in the armed conflicts across the Río de la Plata in the 1810s and 1820s. They were conscripted or voluntarily enrolled in the royalist forces of Montevideo, the revolutionaries of Buenos Aires, the local party of Artigas and the Luso-Brazilian army occupying Montevideo. In the 1830s, black soldiers formed the backbone of the first professional Uruguayan infantry. By the 1840s, almost all able-bodied men of African ancestry were conscripted into the army during the civil war called the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1852) and freed as slavery was abolished in Uruguay in 1842 and 1846.¹³ While colonial black militias, including officers, were entirely drawn from people of African ancestry, the Uruguayan black battalions were commanded by white officers who also participated in the politics of this country. After independence, black soldiers not only bonded with each other, but also engaged in networks headed by white officers and *caudillos* –the leaders of nineteenth-century popular politics. To a limited extent, these ties were already present in the colonial era when black militia officers sought the support of Spanish officers in their quest for the protection of military fuero. After 1810,

¹³ The two contestants in the Guerra Grande each passed laws of abolition one in 1842 and the other in 1846 in order to recruit the liberated slaves. The first one was almost exclusively applied in Montevideo, where the *Colorados* governed under siege. The second one was applied in the countryside, where the *Blancos* dominated.

increasing militarization created vertical links via a new patriotic culture, which from the elite perspective provided an ideal link between elites and plebeians.¹⁴ Through their participation in coups led by white officers, black soldiers contributed to the national politics in mid-nineteenth century Montevideo.

In neighboring Buenos Aires, the experience of war and the figure of the “citizen-soldier” symbolized for the plebeian population the identification of military service with the ideals of the revolution. Military service to the homeland bonded plebeians with a society ostensibly based on freedom, justice, and egalitarianism.¹⁵ For Africans and their descendants living in Montevideo, military participation tied them to nascent Uruguay through two different expressions: their relationship with the state and the celebrations of black associations. The dominant discourse on slave emancipation portrayed military service as a duty in exchange for freedom bestowed on slaves by the state in Uruguay. This narrative was embedded in patriotic expressions given that elites assumed that a link of gratitude tied freedmen to the homeland. Black petitioners defending their rights before the state turned the tables on this narrative of emancipation and patriotism as they based their claims on past and present military service. For them, it was the larger society that owed gratitude to the population of African ancestry. This interpretation nevertheless asserted their place in the new national community. But the most visual impact of militarization on black social identities was the Day of Kings in Montevideo. *Día de Reyes* or Epiphany celebrated on January 6 in commemoration of the adoration of the three Magi to Jesus. As one of the kings was black, Africans and their descendants gave this Catholic festivity diasporic African

¹⁴ The army became a privileged arena of communication between plebeians and elites in Buenos Aires. Research is needed on whether this was also the case in Montevideo. Gabriel Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo! La plebe urbana de Buenos Aires y la política entre la Revolución de Mayo y el rosismo*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2007.

¹⁵ Pilar González Bernaldo “Producción de una nueva legitimidad: ejercicio y sociedades patrióticas en Buenos Aires entre 1810 y 1830,” in Noemí Goldman et al., *Imagen y Recepción de la Revolución Francesa en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: CEL, 1990.

meanings. From Havana to Buenos Aires, black associations celebrated the Day of Kings to honor their leaders and their African homelands. In Montevideo, Africans wore military uniforms and flew the national flag during this festivity even when faced with police repression in the 1830s. In the following years, the national uniform became a sign of black leadership as the kings of African-based associations, dressed as generals of the Uruguayan army and paid a visit to the President of Uruguay and other authorities. Experiences such as confinement below deck on a slave ship from shipmate ties to camaraderie in arms show how two or more arenas of social experience shaped black identities in Montevideo.

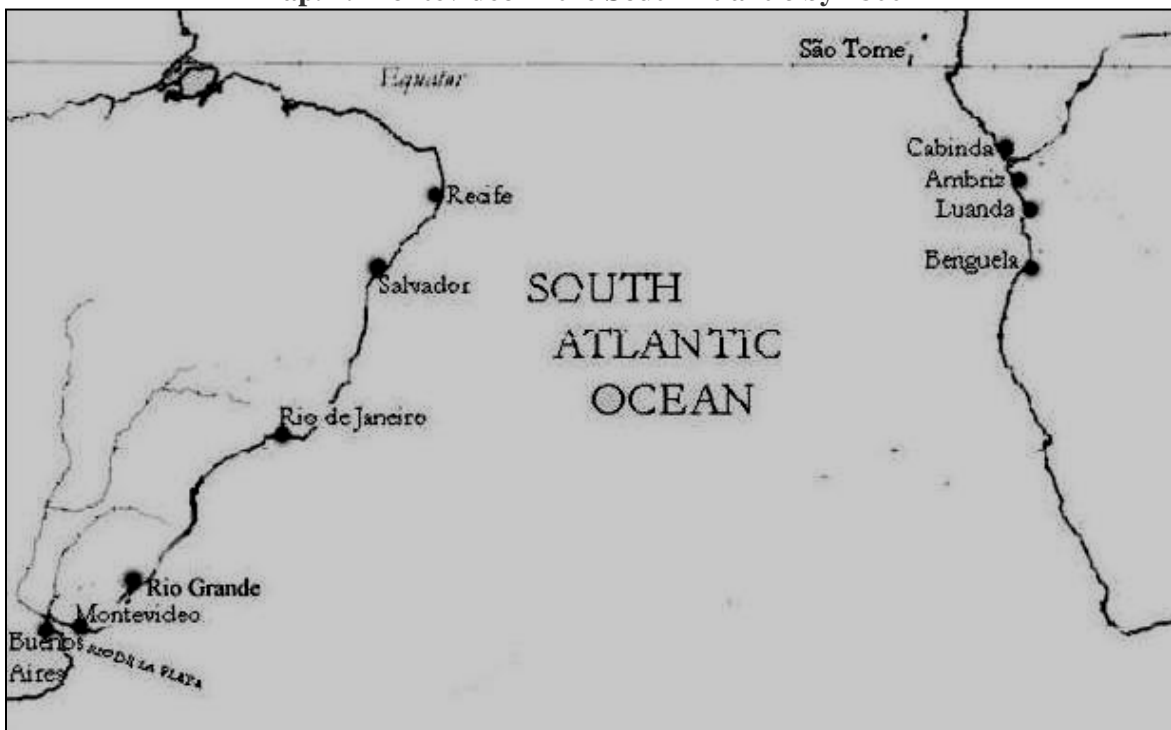
Montevideo, 1770-1850

Colonial and early independent Montevideo, the capital of modern-day Uruguay, provides an ideal environment in which to explore black identity formation. In most parts of the Americas, the period from the beginnings of slavery to abolition spans centuries. In Montevideo, by contrast, the rise and fall of the slave trade and slavery covers a period of only eight decades (1770-1850). Elsewhere, documentary evidence of the early phase of African American life is often scarce due to the very early European settlement in the New World, which contrasts with the rich sources of the late colonial period. Montevideo, the last sizeable city founded by the Spanish in the Americas (1726), developed during the age of a growing Spanish Bourbon bureaucracy, and, as a consequence, has a rich documentary legacy for this topic. Major historical events often play out differently in separate regions of the larger Latin American countries such as Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, and this often complicates analysis at the national level. In contrast, the study of Montevideo can illuminate the historical patterns for the entire country of Uruguay.

The rise of Montevideo as a South Atlantic port in the 1770s serves as an opening for this dissertation. While founded in 1726, the city began a rapid growth only after the Spanish

conquest of Colonia do Sacramento from the Portuguese in 1777. From then on, Montevideo developed as a key center for Spanish military defense in the South Atlantic. In 1776, the crown created the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata –comprising modern-day Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay – and raised neighboring Buenos Aires to the status of viceregal capital, for which Montevideo served as port. From 1776, all shipping sailing from Spain to Peru had to stop in Montevideo. The Royal Navy also made this port its base in the South Atlantic. The crown created a royal customs and coastguard administration there in 1779. At the turn of eighteenth century, vessels sailing from the three main oceans called at Montevideo as this port developed standing commercial contacts with the Philippines, Mauritius, Boston and Hamburg.

Map. 1. Montevideo in the South Atlantic by 1800



Note: Map is not drawn to a scale

In Montevideo and the *Banda Oriental*, slaves were employed in the urban economy as domestic servants and artisans, laborers in agricultural activities that supplied the city, and in the production of cattle hides –the first item from this region widely marketed to the

Atlantic.¹⁶ As Montevideo became a stopover supplying consumer markets stretching from Buenos Aires to Lima, the slave trade thrived. Coastal navigation connected Montevideo with the two most important slave trading ports of the Americas: Rio de Janeiro and Salvador in Brazil. South Atlantic winds ensured easy access from Montevideo to the most important region of slave embarkation in the history of this traffic, West-Central Africa, and to the last significant region incorporated into Atlantic slaving, South-East Africa. Captives from six broad African coastal regions disembarked in Montevideo, the southernmost slave trading port of the Atlantic.

As the Wars of Independence unfolded from 1810 to 1830, the rapid growth of late-colonial Montevideo came to an end. The port's merchant community disintegrated and the cattle-ranching hinterland was destroyed. Few places in Latin America endured such a complex process of state formation as Uruguay given the engagement of local, regional, and imperial interests.¹⁷ When the revolution began in Buenos Aires in May 1810, the elites of

¹⁶ The term *Banda Oriental*, or Eastern Bank, referred to the territory east from the Uruguay River. Natives of Montevideo and its countryside called themselves *Orientales* during our period of study. On the strategic use of the term "Oriental" see chapter 6 of Fabrício Prado, "In the Shadows of Empires: Trans-Imperial Networks and Colonial Identity in Bourbon Río de la Plata." Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 2009.

¹⁷ Artigas and Uruguayan independence were the initial core interests of Uruguayan historiography as attested by these foundational works: Francisco Bauzá, *Historia de la dominación española en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: Barreiro y Ramos, 1895-1897; Eduardo Acevedo, *Artigas, Alegato Histórico*. Montevideo: El Siglo Ilustrado, 1908-1910; Eugenio Petit Muñoz, *Artigas y su ideario a través de seis series documentales*. Montevideo: UdelaR-FHC, 1956; Juan E. Pivel Devoto, *Raíces coloniales de la revolución artiguista de 1811*. Montevideo: Monteverde, 1952; José P. Barrán and Benjamín Nahum, *Bases económicas de la Revolución Artiguista*. Montevideo: EBO, 1964; Washington Reyes Abadie, Oscar Bruschera, and Tabaré Melogno, *El Ciclo Artiguista*. Montevideo: UdelaR, 1968; Lucía Sala de Tourón, Julio Rodríguez and Nelson de la Torre, *La revolución agraria artiguista*. Montevideo: EPU, 1969. On recent studies see Ana Frega and Ariadna Islas (eds.), *Nuevas Miradas en torno al Artiguismo*. Montevideo: UdelaR, 2001; Ana Frega, "La Virtud y el Poder. La soberanía particular de los pueblos en el proyecto Artiguista" in Noemi Goldman and Ricardo Salvatore (eds.), *Caudillismos Rioplatenses: Nuevas Miradas a un viejo problema*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1998, 101-134, and *Pueblos y Soberanía en la Revolución Artiguista. La Región de Santo Domingo de Soriano desde fines de la colonia a la ocupación portuguesa*. Montevideo: EBO, 2007. On the integration of Artigas in the Argentine historiography see Noemí Goldman (ed.) *Nueva Historia Argentina. Revolución, República, Confederación (1806-1852)*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998, 62-63, 88-89. On the historiography on Uruguayan independence see Carlos Real de Azúa, *Los Orígenes de la Nacionalidad Uruguaya*. Montevideo: Arca, 1990. On the reassessment of British mediation and the legacy of Artigas see José P. Barrán et al., *El Cónsul Británico en Montevideo y la independencia del Uruguay*. Montevideo: UdelaR, 1999 and José P. Barrán "La independencia y el miedo a la revolución social en 1825" *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional* [Montevideo], 26 (1986): 65-77. On recent studies on Uruguayan

Montevideo remained royalist –a strategy embedded in old divisions between the merchants of this city and those of the viceregal capital. As a Criollo of the *Banda Oriental* who belonged to traditional families and served in the Spanish army, José Artigas became the local leader loyal to Buenos Aires who fought against the royalists. He gathered support from diverse social groups such as landowners, the rural poor, and the Amerindian population. After the final defeat of the royalists of Montevideo in 1814, war broke out between the centralist government of Buenos Aires and the federalist forces of Artigas. By March 1815, the entire Banda Oriental was under the rule of Artigas, who became head of an unstable alliance with the provinces of Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Santa Fe, Córdoba and Misiones called *La Liga de los Pueblos Libres* –an alternative political organization for those opposed to the centralization of power in Buenos Aires. To complicate this scenario further, Portuguese troops from Brazil had invaded the Banda Oriental to support the royalists in 1811, but then moved back to Rio Grande do Sul. A second Portuguese invasion took place in 1816, but this time Artigas relied solely on the forces of the Banda Oriental to repel this attack. The government of Buenos Aires had triggered this invasion by promising the Portuguese to remain neutral in the event of an attack. The alliance created by Artigas with other provinces also disintegrated. While the Portuguese entered in Montevideo early in 1817, they continued fighting Artigas in the countryside until 1820. The now occupied Banda Oriental joined the Empire of Brazil in 1822, but open war against the Brazilian rule broke out from 1825 to 1828 –with the rebellion receiving decisive support of Buenos Aires. The *Estado Oriental del Uruguay* emerged from the peace negotiations arranged by Britain between Brazil and Argentina. Yet the independence of Uruguay was still at risk during the *Guerra Grande* (1839-1852), a civil war pitting the Argentine *Federales* and the Uruguayan *Blancos* against

independence see, Ana Frega (ed.) *Historia Regional e Independencia del Uruguay. Proceso histórico y revisión crítica de sus relatos*. Montevideo: EBO, 2009.

the Argentine *Unitarios* and the Uruguayan *Colorados*, which involved British, French, and Brazilian military intervention. The abolition of slavery in Uruguay during this war concludes this dissertation given that the balance of power emerging from this conflict held for most of the rest of the century.¹⁸

Across Latin American History and Slavery Studies

Although this dissertation is written by a native of Uruguay, the problems, methods, and interests of my work emerge from both the broader Latin American historiography and Slavery studies in the United States. Scholars of the black experience in the United States have tended to focus on plantation societies where black identities emerged from religion, family, folk culture, and slave community –more commonly in the rural south than in the urban north.¹⁹ Their work depicts black identities as coming from a single location and downplays the translocal links of the black populations living in the Atlantic ports of the Americas.²⁰ In places such as New Orleans, Havana, or Rio de Janeiro, however, Africans and their descendants engaged in cultural –albeit usually unequal– dialogues with peoples of

¹⁸ War remained endemic in the region as the Triple Alliance War (also known as the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870) mobilized forces in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. In fact, civil wars in Uruguay persisted until as late as 1904.

¹⁹ Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll. The World the Slaves Made*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976; Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925*. New York: Pantheon, 1976; Lawrence Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977; John Blassingame, *The Slave Community*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972. The black social life in cities of continental British America as well as translocal connections remains secondary in the field. See Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964; James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton, *Black Bostonians: family life and community struggle in the antebellum North*. Boston: Holmes & Meier, 1979; Michael Johnson and James Roark, (eds.), *No Chariot Let Down: Charleston's Free People of Color on the Eve of Civil War*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1984; William Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth Century New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988; Leslie Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery. African American in New York City, 1626-1863*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003; on black urban writers of the early English-language Atlantic see, James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America. Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007.

²⁰ A recent explanatory model regarding the passing from African to African American and from ethnicity to race in the United States is: Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

European and Amerindian origins. Lorand Matory asserts that black identities emerged not in *spite* of the cultural interactions of Africans with these groups, but *because* of these dialogues in Atlantic ports.²¹ In the nineteenth century, black populations living in the Atlantic littoral produced the cultural amalgam from which emerged essential features of national identities in the Caribbean, Brazil, and the Río de la Plata.²² The usage of military uniforms during African-based celebrations as well as the readings and writings of free black Jacinto Molina on Atlantic literature and history posits new problems on how people of African ancestry interacted with the larger society.

This study focuses on individuals who, in terms of the legal system of the Spanish regime, shared the “taint of slavery” as slaves, freedmen and free people of African ancestry. The “taint of slavery” affected even the black leaders who were located farthest away from slave status. In the 1780s, free black Manuel Farías was Sergeant Major of all black militias of Buenos Aires, but he could not free his own wife who was still held in slavery by a free African. And when a well-known literate free black, Jacinto Molina tried to cast his vote in the Uruguayan national elections of 1833, he was asked if he was a slave and also if his parents had been so. Slavery and freedom defined the individual standing of Africans and their descendants, but could not prevent the dynamic mapping of overlapping clusters of their social identities. While freedom may have been publicly celebrated as a precious status shared by all black militiamen, slaves could not celebrate their common fate while enslaved. Instead, slaves sought the support of shipmates as they formed confraternities and African “nations” to meet their social needs.

²¹ Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion. Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, 1.

²² John C. Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Dance*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004; George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation: A History of Afro-Uruguay*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Labor in a specific craft did provide a potential field of shared experiences for free blacks and slaves as they joined guilds of artisans and tried to establish a guild of black shoemakers in Buenos Aires. While guilds existed in vicegeral capitals, they did not emerge immediately in Montevideo partly because this city developed only in the late-colonial period.²³ Crosschecking the data of the black leaders of guilds in Buenos Aires with records of black confraternities and militias might reveal an additional layer of social networking of free blacks. However, guilds provided no lasting bond across generations for free blacks and slaves. In fact these associations lost their institutional basis after independence. While African “nations,” black brotherhoods, and military service generated opportunities to envision “otherness” and “belonging” for both their members and the larger society throughout our period of study, an attempt to found a guild of black shoemakers in Buenos Aires is the only surviving example of a key social experience in guilds.

While I focus on social networks and identities of people of African ancestry living in urban settings, this is not a study on urban slavery. Mariana Dantas reveals that the density of black social life in cities pushed the limits of slavery in favor of those who sought freedom in widely separated Baltimore (Maryland) and Sarabá (Minas Gerais).²⁴ Rather than the oft-mentioned space permeability of urban settings, she notes that specific actions by free blacks and slaves redefined the terms of slavery in cities. Her analysis of material life provides the skeleton of an interpretation of urban black communities, but not the flesh and nervous system. Dantas leaves aside the meanings of social relations given that she does not tackle the role of culture within the relations of domination and subordination –the very cultural

²³ Lyman Johnson, “The impact of racial discrimination of black artisans in colonial Buenos Aires”, *Social History*, 6, 3 (1981): 301-316 and “Artisans” in Louisa Hoberman and Susan Socolow, *Cities and Societies in Colonial Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986, 227-250; Rosal, *Africanos*, 58-54, 60-69. Frederick Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974, 125-146.

²⁴ Mariana Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in Eighteenth-Century Americas*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

activities that led slaves and freedmen to form new black identities in urban settings. In focusing on the formation of social identities, this dissertation aims to connect experiences with meanings for both slaves and free blacks. The study of Arturo Bentancur and Fernando Aparicio on slave manumissions in Montevideo shows patterns similar to those described by Dantas on how slaves pursued freedom and by other scholars who have examined the gender dynamics of urban manumission.²⁵ Table 1 summarizes the data of Bentancur and Aparicio gathered from notary records. In Table 1, the category “granted freedom papers” describes manumissions conceded either gratis or in the masters’ wills, but this category also includes manumissions where masters required additional services from slaves. The category “purchase of freedom papers” involves plain monetary transactions.

Table 1. Slave manumissions in Montevideo broken down by type and gender, 1790-1820

Years	Granted Freedom papers		Purchased Freedom papers		Total
	Women	Men	Women	Men	
1790-1799	31	23	34	17	105
1800-1809	63	68	125	58	314
1810-1820 ¹	102	110	71	39	322
Total	196	201	230	114	741
Total	26.5	27.1	31.0	15.4	100.0
Percentage	53.6		46.4		100.0

Source: Arturo Bentancur and Fernando Aparicio, *Amos y Esclavos en el Río de la Plata*. Montevideo: Planeta, 2006, 115-141.

Note 1: Notary records for the year 1816 are missing; this table adds 1820 to gather data for ten years.

Note 2: Manumissions ordered by civil authorities or related to the recruitment of slaves are not included.

While the categories of granted manumissions and purchase of freedom show approximately similar percentages, we should note that masters asked slaves to perform

²⁵ Lyman Johnson, “Manumission in colonial Buenos Aires.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59, 2 (1974): 258-79; Kathleen J Higgins, *Licentious Liberty” In A Brazilian Gold-Mining Region: Slavery, Gender, And Social Control In Eighteenth-Century Sabará, Minas Gerais*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; Susan Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Frank Proctor, “Gender and manumission in New Spain” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, 2, (2006) 309-336.

additional services or to meet special conditions in 178 cases or 44.8 percent of the first category. In cases where freedom was conditionally granted upon the completion of requirements, masters most commonly wanted to secure access to freedmen's labor.²⁶ Masters unconditionally granted freedom only in 29.5 of all manumissions recorded in Table 1. Masters granted manumission almost equally to enslaved men and women, but we should note that enslaved women purchased their freedom twice as often as men did even though men and women comprised a similar share of the slave population by 1812.²⁷ The high participation of enslaved urban women in the practice of hiring themselves out generated the money for them to purchase freedom. Bentancur and Aparicio add that the slave herself paid for the manumission in 66 percent of all the purchased freedoms. Enslaved women represented almost sixty percent of those who were freed by notary documents –a pattern similar to other colonial Latin American cities. At the other end of the spectrum of slavery and freedom, notary records report that in Montevideo between 1790 and 1820 26 slaves were owned by women of African ancestry compared to only nine by men of the same origin, a pattern that reveals the relative material security of a small minority of free black women in this city.²⁸

Even though women of African ancestry were so active in the urban economy and –in comparison to men– so successful in purchasing freedom, this study delves into the lives of men rather than women. While chapter 2 focuses on shipmate networks emerging from the slave trade, it lacks information of ties between women because the notaries producing the

²⁶ These conditions included, among others, extension of service on the part of the freedmen as if they were continuing to be slaves for a predefined term, living in the establishment of the master for which freedmen would become wage laborers, and personal care of elderly masters, etc. See also Dantas, *Black Townsmen*, 124-5.

²⁷ The 1812 census shows 454 women and 465 men among the slave population. While this census is incomplete, it offers a large sample of the entire slave population of Montevideo. Archivo General de la Nación, Uruguay, (hereafter AGN-U), Fondo ex-Archivo General Administrativo (hereafter AGA), Libro 240.

²⁸ Arturo Bentancur and Fernando Aparicio, *Amos y Esclavos en el Río de la Plata*. Montevideo: Planeta, 2006, 9.

evidence requested testimonies about the status of only grooms, not brides in Montevideo. As patriarchy as well as Catholicism set the boundaries for both the larger colonial society and local identities in Latin America, these cultural features ensured that men of African ancestry led black communities, rather than women. Spanish gender constructions barred women as institutional intermediaries; thus, men of African ancestry represented black communities in negotiations with the dominant sectors of society. This did not thwart women from becoming the main authority in two African-based associations in Montevideo of the 1830s. Life-course analysis of leaders of black confraternities yields good data only on men even though women participated in these associations.²⁹ The free black colonial militias as well as the black battalions of the era of independence were worlds of men, mostly, though this did not prevent women from obtaining benefits on the basis of their family ties with black soldiers. Chapter 6 delves into the life of a black writer, again a man rather than a woman, because he left a comprehensive record of his life. We may wonder what a study largely on the life experience of men of African ancestry suggests about the social networks and identities of black women. While some fields of social interaction such as colonial militias and national battalions were arenas for men, the most enduring black associations –confraternities and African “nations” – also had many women members. Future research would unveil the gender underpinnings of these fields of experience.

This study also casts light on the debate about the *Charter Generation*, the blacks who first entered New World slavery. Ira Berlin coined this phrase for the United States, but

²⁹ While Pedro Mascareño led the black brothers of Saint Benito since the foundation of this brotherhood to 1788, I did not find a similar black sister for the female branch of this confraternity who exercised power for such a long tenure. Leaders of black confraternities of Buenos Aires in this study were also men. I find no reference to female leadership in these associations as seen by Nicole Von Germeten, *Black Blood Brothers: Confraternities and Social Mobility for Afro-Mexicans*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. She stresses female leadership in the seventeenth century rather than in the Bourbon era, when she sees confraternities as more male-dominated.

the concept is useful for the entire continent.³⁰ Berlin stresses the role of the Atlantic slave trade ports and routes in the making of the first Black communities, but he has been criticized for presenting scant evidence about the lives of these Atlantic creoles –a consequence of their arrival at a very early moment of the colonial era for which sources are not abundant. This study shows that Christian Kongo men shipped across the Atlantic became prominent in the early history of Montevideo as they founded the first black confraternity of this city and ranked among the first black militia officers in 1780. Ira Berlin’s portrayal of “generations of slavery” inspired me to track whether and how black social experiences changed over time. In this study, the emphasis is not so much on belonging to a generation, but rather sharing similar momentous experiences such as the Atlantic crossing, membership into confraternities, militia service, manumission through warfare, the coming of independence, and abolition.

This dissertation ranges over a major watershed era of Latin American history, the period from the reforms applied by the Spanish crown –the Bourbon Reforms– in the second half of the eighteenth century to the emergence of the new states as a result of the Wars of Independence in the first half of the following century. The Bourbons launched a set of policies to increase royal revenue from the colonies and improve their defenses. These reforms increased both the slave trade and the engagement of blacks in the colonial militias of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. This generates fertile grounds for comparisons across the Americas with the studies of Ben Vinson, Aline Helg and Matt Childs on Mexico, Colombia, and Cuba respectively.³¹

³⁰ Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: a History of African-American Slaves*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

³¹ Vinson, *Bearing the Arms*; Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004; Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

The opening of the slave trade transformed the Río de la Plata and provided this region with direct links with Africa, but apparently this Bourbon measure had little effect in Mexico. The black population of late-colonial Mexico was mostly American-born, in contrast to the Africans who predominated among blacks in the Río de la Plata. Mexican elites envisioned society into opposites of “Europeaness” and “Indianness” leaving people of African ancestry between these poles.³² In contrast, the most important sign of otherness for colonial elites in the Río de la Plata was the increasing black population. In this region, independent Amerindian groups lived beyond the borders of Spanish rule or formed the indigenous and mixed-origin immigrants into Montevideo and Buenos Aires. The demographic Amerindian center of this region was located north in Paraguay. While the Bourbons tried to disband the free black and colored militias of Mexico, in the Río de la Plata they actually encouraged their organization in the aftermath of the Seven Years War (1756-1763) and during the conquest of Colonia (1777). The Atlantic wars between Britain and France, which involved Spain in the 1790s, and a renewed conflagration with Portugal in 1801 led Spain to create a specific *Reglamento de Milicias* for the Río de la Plata in 1801. According to Ben Vinson, the privileges granted to black militiamen facilitated the corporate identity of black militias in colonial Mexico, but as these benefits began to evaporate in the late colonial era and the years following independence, militia participation disappeared as a marker of social identification and melded into regional identities. In contrast, late-colonial black militia service occurred just before –and sometimes overlapped with– the enrollment of slaves during the wars of independence in the Río de la Plata. The military became an arena in which social networks could be bridged, identities for all the black population could be

³² Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors. Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

reshaped, and Africans and their descendants could be connected with the new national communities.

Caribbean Colombia displays historical patterns more similar to the Río de la Plata than colonial Mexico. While both regions shared a predominantly “white-black” racial spectrum by the late colonial period, free people of color constituted the large majority of the population in Caribbean Colombia as a result of early arrival of enslaved Africans between 1580 and 1640. By contrast, late-colonial Buenos Aires and Montevideo probably had an equal share of whites (both European and locally born) on the one hand and a combination of people of African and, to a lesser extent, Amerindian ancestry on the other. Thus, free people of color were a minority in the Río de la Plata. While Ben Vinson notes that in colonial Mexico militiamen used the institution of the militia to negotiate the meanings of race (rather than actually diminishing racial differentiation), Aline Helg notes that free coloreds were part of all militias in Caribbean Colombia and that this limited racial collective identities within militia service. This study shows that militia membership reinforced pre-existing patterns of black leadership and social networks in Montevideo and Buenos Aires; thus, the militias was only one of the multiple arenas of experience defining black identities in the colonial era. In the years following the revolution, black loyalists existed alongside black patriots in both Colombia and Venezuela. But there were no black loyalists in Buenos Aires. The political and military black experience in Montevideo, which underwent five different political regimes from 1810 to 1828, resembles that of the Spanish Caribbean littoral, where black and colored soldiers weighted their loyalty either to the rebels or the Spanish according to changing events. In mid nineteenth-century, the meanings of “blackness” increasingly became entangled with military experience in Montevideo, and vice versa, the military “blackened” as people of African ancestry mostly filled the infantry units. A similar process

occurred in Caribbean Colombia during this period, with perhaps parallel implications for social networks and identities within black and colored populations.

Cuba had striking similarities with the Río de la Plata regarding both the slave trade and free black involvement in the armed forces, though the colonial regime endured in the island up to the end of the nineteenth century. When the Spanish Crown threw open the slave trade to all participants in 1789, these two Spanish American regions first drew on intra-American slave trades, carried on mostly by foreign slave traders, then launched their own transatlantic slave voyages, and, as a result, received captives from many different African regions –an unusual pattern in the broader context of Atlantic slaving. Surprisingly, the Spanish participation in transatlantic slave trading emerged first in the Río de la Plata rather than in Cuba. The trans-imperial networks of the merchants of Montevideo with the Portuguese led this region to revive the transatlantic links broken in the mid seventeenth century. From 1790 to 1805, the Spanish merchants located in the Río de la Plata introduced twice as many slaves direct from Africa into the Americas as did their Cuban-based counterparts.³³ Regarding black social life, Matt Childs has found a similar transition in Cuba from black confraternities to African-based associations (*cabildos* or *naciones*) to what is described here in the Río de la Plata.³⁴ As black militiamen defended Havana against the British in 1762, the Spanish Crown conferred honors on black officers in the following years. However, black officers were among the leaders of the 1812 island-wide slave Aponte rebellion in Cuba –including Aponte himself. Free black Felipe Malaber, who was Captain in the revolutionary armies of Buenos Aires, had built his leadership in the colonial black militia in Montevideo in the decade prior to 1810. Jacinto Molina served in that same unit as lieutenant, but he remained loyal to the Spanish crown for his entire life. As the Río de la

³³ David Eltis, David Wheat, Alex Borucki “Spanish Slave Trading in the Broader Atlantic Context: An Overview” unpublished manuscript.

³⁴ Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 101-102.

Plata cut off links with Spain in the 1810s, Cuba became the loyal Spanish island relying almost entirely on slavery to produce sugar for Atlantic markets. In the last third of the nineteenth century Cuban independence resulted in massive black mobilization just as had happened in the wars against Spanish rule in the Río de la Plata fifty years previously. In both Uruguay and Cuba, black participation in the long wars of independence redefined the place of Africans and their descendants in the larger national community.³⁵

Yet black leadership in colonial militias however did not carry over into national armies after independence. Aline Helg finds paradoxically that black and colored militiamen had better standing in the royal corps than in the national armies. Often, black officers were demoted when absorbed into desegregated national battalions. The same pattern is evident in black militias in Salvador (Brazil) according to Hendrik Kraay.³⁶ He notes that colonial militias served as an arena of leadership for Afro-Brazilians and that no African served in these units. However, black officers in Salvador saw their benefits vanish after the liberal reforms in the 1830s. The fall of colonial society –divided into corporate estates– and the coming of a liberal society based on the individual explains this change, which also affected other subaltern groups who enjoyed certain royal protection - for example the Indian communities who held on to communal lands. While Reid Andrews finds that black officers reappeared in national armies after the revolution in Buenos Aires, they were actually quite rare in desegregated national armies.³⁷ Independence brought mixed results for people of African ancestry. On the one side, black military leaders mostly disappeared as desegregated units led by white officers became the norm. On the other, the expansion of black

³⁵ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation and Revolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

³⁶ Hendrik Kraay, "The Politics of Race in Independence-Era Bahia: The militia Officers of Salvador, 1790-1840," In Hendrik Kraay (ed.) *Afro-Brazilian culture and politics: Bahia, 1790s to 1990s*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1998.

³⁷ Vinson, *Bearing the Arms*, 223-2; Helg, *Liberty and Equality*, 111 and 248. George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980, 135.

militarization also meant the final demise of slavery as civil wars called for the recruitment of slaves in Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Uruguay, leading in some cases to abolition.³⁸

Even in Brazil, where decolonization occurred without the dreadful combination of wars of independence and decade-long civil conflagrations that loomed large in Spanish America, black militarization helped redefine the terms of race, slavery, and freedom. Conscription of slaves did take place in Brazil, but in non-plantation regions such as Rio Grande do Sul. Although insurgents enrolled more than a thousand slaves during the War of Farrapos (1835-1845), they did not promise abolition as a part of their platform.³⁹ Twenty years later, the War of the Triple Alliance (Paraguayan War) increased the conscription of slaves in several regions of Brazil, and helped to launch abolition in the form of the Law of Free Womb in 1871.⁴⁰ New black identities emerged as military service intersected with patriotism during this conflagration. These institutional identities were based on early military experiences of Afro-Brazilians during the siege of Bahia of 1822-1823. Peter Beattie examines the link between the military involvement of Afro-Brazilians and the demise of slavery as he demonstrates how ideas related to military service undermined racial discrimination.⁴¹ Adding the aforementioned case of the colored militias of colonial

³⁸ Peter Blanchard, *Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru*. Wilmington: SR Books, 1992; Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom. Slave Soldiers & the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. John Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela, 1820-1854*. Westport: Greenwood, 1971. Alex Borucki, Karla Chagas, Natalia Stalla, *Esclavitud y Trabajo. Un estudio sobre los afrodescendientes en la frontera uruguaya*. Montevideo: Pulmón 2004.

³⁹ Spencer Leitman, "Negros Farrapos: Hipocrisia Racial no Sul do Brasil no Século XIX." In *A Revolução Farroupilha. História & Interpretação*. Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1985.

⁴⁰ Hendrik Kraay, "Slavery, Citizenship, and Military Service in Brazil's Mobilization for the Paraguayan War." *Slavery and Abolition* 13, 3, (1997): 228-256; Peter Beattie "Measures of Manhood: Honor, Enlisted Army Service, and Slavery's Decline in Brazil, 1850-1890." In Matthew Gutmann, *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

⁴¹ Hendrik Kraay, "Patriotic Mobilization in Brazil: The Zuavos and Other Black Companies," in Hendrik Kraay and Thomas Whigham (eds.), *I Die with My Country. Perspectives on the Paraguayan War, 1864-1870*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, 61-80. Peter M. Beattie, *The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864-1945*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Salvador to these episodes, it is clear that the recruitment of free blacks and slaves into armed forces is a persistent theme in nineteenth-century Brazilian history.

For neighboring Buenos Aires, this study adds to the work of George Reid Andrews on black militarization and of Gabriel di Meglio on the participation of subaltern groups in early the republican era.⁴² While both of them recognize the previous existence of black militias in the vice-regal capital, they argue that militias were active only from 1801 on. They find the British invasions (1806-07) and wars following the Revolution of 1810 as the first meaningful participation of people of African ancestry into the military. This dissertation, however, not only spells out the social significance of the early black militias in Buenos Aires, it establishes their history as beginning in the 1770s. Right after the Spanish conquest of Colonia, the free black Captain Manuel Valladares travelled from Buenos Aires to Madrid to win recognition from the Spanish Crown for his fellow black militiamen in 1778. Six years later, free black Bentura Patrón sailed to Cadiz to seek the rank of Colonel in black militias in Buenos Aires. Additional struggles over leadership of black militias in the 1780s provide new perspectives on this institution. Some black militiamen may have understood this service as a burden, while black officers and noncommissioned officers most likely looked upon their participation as a duty and as source of potential benefits. The struggles involving free blacks Manuel Valladares, Manuel Farías and Pablo Agüero in the Buenos Aires of 1780s show that they perceived high rank in black militias as highly advantageous. Leadership itself may have been the only privilege of service for black officers in the Montevideo of 1800s as they were paid infrequently –if paid at all– and commonly failed to obtain the benefits and honors due to them from militia service according to royal regulations. In mid-nineteenth century Montevideo, it was the army rather than the political arena where black populations met

⁴² Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines*, 59, 115, 118, 135-137; Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*, 85-87.

elites and engaged in early nationalistic discourse.⁴³ During war and peace, the last generation of blacks who lived through the era of slavery (1830s-1840s) was thereby engaged in early expressions of nationalism ranging from pamphlets to performances in theaters and festivities celebrating the independence of Uruguay. Like the army as a whole, black soldiers mostly supported the *Colorado* party. It remains unclear to what degree these links expressed subaltern participation in the emergent liberal politics or whether they simply reflected the old patterns of patron-client relationships of the colonial world.

Leadership of black communities was not just rooted in militia service. In Montevideo, long-serving leaders also emerged in the black confraternity of Saint Benito, headed by Pedro Mascareño between 1778 and 1788, and in the African “nation” of the Congo, over which Antonio de la Rosa Brito presided from the late 1820s to the early 1840s. Black militia officers became leaders because they acted as intermediaries between black communities and those in power. These individuals mediated between the dominant and dominated. They carved out benefits from themselves and for their communities. In colonial Latin America, black communities followed leaders who knew African traditions while at other times they followed those who could navigate the Spanish colonial world. But when black associations needed a defense against the colonial rule, not an uncommon circumstance, they most likely requested the help of a leader acquainted with Spanish bureaucracy rather than from an African diviner.

The leadership of free black officers in urban black communities vanished during independence because their rank was no longer recognized in national armies. Leaders of African associations continued to be recruited in nineteenth-century Montevideo. However,

⁴³ I did not find evidence of black electoral participation in mid-nineteenth Uruguay of the type described by James Sanders in Colombia from the late 1840s to the late 1870s, James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans. Popular Politics, Races and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Reid Andrews identified black electoral engagement in the period just following the end of this study, in the late nineteenth-century. Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 32-42.

they were now no more than non-commissioned officers under the command of white officers. Increasingly, the new republican milieu in which people of African ancestry found themselves required a new type of leader –a black *letrado*. The *letrados* or “men of letters” were bureaucrats and officers who set in motion the machinery of the Spanish colonizing project in America as they executed metropolitan orders throughout the empire.⁴⁴ After independence, local *letrados* participated in political discourse, public spheres, and the written culture of the emerging nations. Born into the Spanish literary colonial tradition, free black Jacinto Molina became a black *letrado* living in the republic of Uruguay in the 1830s. He had served as an officer in colonial militias, and became a well-known figure in Montevideo as he defended the African-based associations against police repression in the 1830s. As an active participant in the public sphere, Jacinto Molina harbingered the black leaders of the second half of the nineteenth century –the editors of the first black press of Uruguay.⁴⁵ Thus, as the socio-political scenario in which black communities lived transitioned the passage from the colonial rule to liberal republics, the contours of these communities and their leaderships also changed.

Race and Language

This dissertation does not focus on race because the modern meanings of this concept do not translate well into colonial Latin America and tend to interfere with the main objective of this study: how social networks shaped black social identities. In colonial documents, Africans and their descendants described themselves and were categorized by others, according to legal status (slave, freedmen, free), to a mix of phenotype appearance and ancestry (black or of mix origin such as *Pardo*), and to geographical origin (born in America

⁴⁴ Angel Rama, *The Lettered City*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, 18-24, 32-35.

⁴⁵ Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 34-36.

or in Africa, and, if the latter, from which group or “nation”). All these categories are embodied in the colonial term *calidad* or quality, which incorporated multiple markers beyond phenotypes such as occupation, family background, legitimacy, and honor.⁴⁶ People of African ancestry employed all-encompassing labels such as *Ethiopians*, *Ethiopians and their descendants*, and the *Negro People*, which illustrate racial connotations, only in exceptional circumstances. These all-inclusive terms were used by free blacks such as Bentura Patrón and Jacinto Molina when they claimed leadership over the entire black population of Buenos Aires and Montevideo, respectively, by petitioning the Spanish Crown and the Uruguayan state, respectively. This dissertation is not about race and ethnicity as conceptualized in modern understandings of the terms, but rather aims to contribute to comprehend how people subjugated by slavery –or by the proximity of it– acted and expressed themselves according to what they thought at the time –long before the existence of race and ethnicity as concepts.

While comprehensive racial terms are extremely rare in this study, labels reflecting the dynamics of “race thinking” are not.⁴⁷ Terms such *Pardo* and *Indian* blended a combination of legal terms with lineage, bloodline, as they developed specific meanings in Spanish America –meanings that were not necessarily connected to biological differentiation.⁴⁸ Spanish colonial societies created various nomenclatures to describe phenotypical difference. In Spanish, *Negro* means *both* the color black and a person of full sub-Saharan African ancestry. While the word *Moreno* implies obscure color in Spanish, it does not stand for a specific synonym for the color black. However, *Moreno* became the euphemistic Spanish term for *Negro* –a person of full sub-Saharan African ancestry. It is

⁴⁶ Andrew Fisher and Mathew O’Hara, “Racial Identities and their interpreters,” 11-12.

⁴⁷ The term “race thinking” coined by Irene Silverblatt works better than “race” for colonial times. Irene Silverblatt, *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

⁴⁸ Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between*, 14-15.

striking that Ben Vinson's study shows that language used by crown officials and black militiamen in early eighteenth-century Mexico is almost entirely applicable to late-eighteenth century Río de la Plata.⁴⁹ He finds that black and mixed origins militiamen consistently used *Moreno* to mean people of full African ancestry and *Pardo* to mean mixed ancestry. While Spanish officials used this terminology, they also employed the more derogative terms *Negro* and *Mulato*. The same is true for the Río de la Plata, where I found no example of a person of mixed ancestry calling himself mulatto, but just *Pardo*. The term *Negro* had strong connotations with slavery, for which reason probably most free blacks called themselves *Moreno* in the Río de la Plata.

Neither *Moreno* nor *Pardo* resonate for the English readers and some further discussion of the meaning of these terms is required. The descriptors *Moreno* and *Pardo* had starkly different trajectories since the former originated in Spain, while the latter seems a product of American realities. The first written definition of *Moreno* captures its initial euphemistic nature. Apart from connotations related to color, the first Spanish *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1734) of the *Real Academia Española* defined this term as: "*Moreno. Llaman tambien al hombre negro atezado, por suavizar la voz negro, que es la que le corresponde,*"⁵⁰ which translate as "Moreno refers to the intensely dark Negro man to soften the term Negro, which is the applicable descriptor for him." Thus, *Moreno* softened Negro, but was equally applicable to a person of full African ancestry. The 1734 dictionary provides a literary example of this term which suggests that this meaning of *Moreno* was rooted in the era of wars between Catholic and Muslim kingdoms in Spain. By contrast, the term *Pardo*

⁴⁹ Ben Vinson notes that the sixteenth-century racial nomenclature was more derogative for the people of African ancestry than the eighteenth-century language and usage, which was somewhat more euphemistic. Vinson, *Bearing the arms*, 199-206.

⁵⁰ For these terms look at the website of the *Real Academia Española*, the institution chartered to regulate the Spanish language since 1713 <http://buscon.rae.es/ntlle/SrvltGUILoginNtllle>. As Tzvetlan Todorov noted, the first Spanish grammar, which is also the first grammar of a modern European language, dates from 1492.

does not figure in any eighteenth-century Spanish dictionary as a synonym of mulatto. For two centuries, the meanings of *Pardo* for the *Real Academia Española* related only to color and to clothing combining black and white colors. Not until the 1899 edition of the Spanish dictionary do we find a new definition: “*Pardo. (pr. Cuba y Puerto Rico) Mulato.*”

Paradoxically, as Spain lost the last remnants of her American empire, it officially added to her language the Spanish-American meaning of *Pardo* –people of mixed European and African ancestry. Noteworthy, *Mulato* and Mulatto are easily translatable from Spanish to English and constitute an English borrowing from the Spanish –reflecting the paucity of terms in English for describing people of mixed origins. There is no euphemistic term for Mulatto in English that allows “Pardo” to be translated from Spanish.

In translating the sources of this study from Spanish to English, I have tried to maintain parallel meanings for “proto-racial” labels. I translate *Moreno* as Black, but I do not translate *Negro* as Black. I use *Negro* in both Spanish and English as the term had derogative connotations in both languages. I also use the awkward terms in English “of color” and “colored” to refer to people of mixed ancestry given their acceptance and usage by the people to whom these terms were applied during the nineteenth century. I do not translate *Pardo* as mulatto given that the people who defined themselves as *Pardo* tried to detach themselves from the descriptor *Mulato* –a term employed pejoratively by white people. While contemporary Uruguayans are using *Afro-Uruguayo* in recent decades, and this term may aesthetically ease the reading in the English language, I do not use the term Afro-Uruguayan for the subjects of this dissertation given that to call the people of African ancestry living in late-colonial Montevideo “Afro-Uruguayans” undermines its very object: black identity formation. Not even people of full European ancestry born in the territory of Uruguay called themselves Uruguayans in the colonial era and in the aftermath of independence. As explained below, the predominant term for people born in the territory of modern-day

Uruguay was *Orientales*, given that this land was called *Banda Oriental*, *Provincia Oriental*, and after independence *Estado Oriental del Uruguay*.⁵¹ To use the terms Uruguayans or Afro-Uruguayans for the period 1770-1850 is not only an anachronism but also misrepresents the agents of this history by defining a national horizon for them. People living in “colonial Uruguay” could have become Argentine, Brazilians, or even British. Thus, I use “Uruguay” to refer only to the nation and its government after 1830. I agree with Ada Ferrer, when she writes “...if the racial labels sound sometimes strange, it is my hope that this strangeness, rather than deterring readers, will function to remind them, first, of the nonuniversal nature of North American understandings and, second, of the unnatural character of all these categories.”⁵²

Confraternities –and more broadly religious practice– as well as militia service provided the institutional and every-day framework to fix “proto-racial” categories as these institutions simplified the wide diversity of colonial society into a set of categories such as *Pardo* or *Indio* as well as fixed these terms over time.⁵³ These categories were extremely fluid during the initial phase of each colonial society as shown by Alejandro Apolant for the foundational period of Montevideo (1726-1766), when *pardo* and *mestizo* men were not always recorded as such. He shows that Pardo men married with Indian women sometimes were recorded as Indian and vice versa. Pardo men not always were described as such in colonial censuses as they were when enlisted in the first white militia unit in Montevideo. In this early period, the category *Pardo* covered both Euro-African and Afro-Indian peoples as

⁵¹ Only in the late nineteenth century did *Orientals* become *Uruguayans*. The Constitutional Assembly named the new state as *Estado Oriental del Uruguay* in May 1829 drawing on the prevalent term *Oriental*. Ana Frega, "Uruguayos y orientales: itinerario de una síntesis compleja" In José Chiaramonte et al (eds.) *Crear la nación, Los nombres de los países de América Latina*. Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 2008, 95-112.

⁵² Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba*, 12.

⁵³ Mathew O'Hara, *A Flock Divided: Race, Religion and Politics in Mexico, 1749-1857*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, 231; Vinson, *Bearing the Arms*, 226-7.

Pardo men navigated in and out of whiteness according to the eye of the beholder.⁵⁴ People of full African or European ancestry served respectively either in black or white militia units, while people of mixed origins served either in black, pardo, or white militias. For people of mixed origins, the moment of joining one of these units fixed their social identities with one of the many labels emerging from the caste society or *sociedad de castas*.

Social perceptions on these categories seemingly changed with the demographics of society. Free blacks and pardos from Buenos Aires and the hinterland of the viceroyalty arrived in Montevideo in the late 1770s, along with an influx of Spanish migrants.⁵⁵ The increasing frequency of judicial cases sparked by differentiation of *calidad* in the last two decades of the eighteenth century perhaps illustrates the growing awareness on the part of the white population of non-white migrants from the interior of the viceroyalty. Calling a person of full European ancestry a mulatto was considered an affront to both his personal and family honor. Between 1729 and 1779, there are only two recorded claims of slander against people who called others mulatto in Montevideo. In contrast, there are six cases of this kind just in the decade of 1780. A similar situation arises regarding cases of “limpieza de sangre,” when people wanted to demonstrate that they were free from the “stain” of non-Catholic ancestry such as Jewish or African origin and therefore “pure” Spanish. Between 1729 and 1781 there were only three cases of “limpieza de sangre” in Montevideo. In contrast, there were fourteen such cases from 1782 to 1811.⁵⁶ The influx of Spanish bureaucrats during the vice-regal

⁵⁴ From 1727 to 1767, Apolant shows 24 marriages involving *pardo* groom and eight of *pardo* brides –all but one natives of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, and Paraguay. Only three weddings had both *pardo* groom and bride. In fact, 18 pardo men married Indian women, and five pardo women married Indian or white grooms. Juan Apolant, *Génesis de la Familia Uruguaya*. Montevideo, Vineaak, 1975, 927, 1001, 1108, 1143, ss. Juan Apolant, “Padrones Olvidados de Montevideo del Siglo XVIII,” *Boletín Histórico del Estado Mayor del Ejército*, Vols. 112-115, 1967: 88.

⁵⁵ Juan Apolant, *Operativo Patagonia. Historia de la mayor aportación masiva a la Banda Oriental*. Montevideo: Letras, 1970.

⁵⁶ On mulatto as an insult: AGN-U, Archivos Judiciales (hereafter AAJJ), Cajas 35 (1775), 48 (1780), 50 (1781), 51 (1781), 71 (1786), 80 (1787), 87 (1788), and Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Buenos Aires 551, Expediente de José Gomez contra Diego Cardoso por injurias, 1751. On “limpieza de sangre”:

period may help to explain this pattern as well. Further research is necessary, but it is noteworthy that judges were not professionally trained and were rather drawn from citizens of Montevideo (*Alcaldes*).

Categories of *calidad* such as white, black or mixed origin were applied inconsistently even in the following years. Felipe Malaber and Jacinto Molina were the witnesses in a marriage file in 1800, where the notary recorded them as a free *pardos*. However, Jacinto recognized himself as a free black in his writings, and he was recognized as such by others. The same is true for Felipe Malaber, who was lieutenant and then captain of the black militia of Montevideo. I believe the notary *whitened* them, turning them from black to mixed ancestry, probably because they were literate.⁵⁷ The categories of *Negro* and *Pardo* had geographical connotations, too. In marriage files of Montevideo between 1768 and 1803, eighty-three percent (81 cases) of the *Pardo* grooms were born in what is today Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay. Through migrations within the Río de la Plata, they came to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, where the population was growing rapidly. Their families had lived in this region for two or three generations, and they could navigate the codes of Spanish colonial culture. Most of the witnesses in their files –whether they were whites or *pardos*– had a shared Río de la Plata origin. In contrast, 83 percent (251 cases) of the black grooms were born in Africa. They came to Montevideo through the transatlantic and intra-American slave trades. Some of them had lived in Brazilian slave ports before arriving in Montevideo, and thus they had been in contact with Portuguese culture. People identified as *Negro* usually did not share itineraries ending in Montevideo with people identified as *Pardo*, suggesting that there was not much interaction between *negros* and *pardos* prior to meeting in

AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 6 (1759), 21 (1770), 24 (1772), 54 (1782), 58 (1783), 87 (1788), 109 (1793), 112 (1793), 135 (1799), 139 (1800), 140 (1800), 143 (1801), 155 (1805), 165 (1809 [1801]), 170 (1811).

⁵⁷Archivo del Arzobispado de Montevideo, Expedientes Matrimoniales (hereafter AAM-EM), 1800, exp. 8; Jacinto Ventura de Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra en el Río de la Plata*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2009.

Montevideo. Black grooms rarely asked witnesses of mixed origin to testify in their marriage files, and vice versa. Thus, “proto-racial” categories employed by ecclesiastical notaries intertwined culture, social ties, and geography in these records.

I would add that not all sources reflect “proto-racial” labels to the same extent as the documents of the early Uruguayan armed forces. Descriptors such as *Moreno*, *Pardo* or *Negro* continued to appear in judicial records, censuses, and police files following Uruguayan independence and began to disappear only after the end of the period of this study, in the 1850s. However, these terms disappeared much earlier among military records after 1830. It is sometimes difficult to trace whether a person was of African ancestry solely on the basis of such records given that the earlier disappearance of these categories. It is unclear to what degree this pattern was due to the massive black participation in the army, and how to connect this development with the place that people of African ancestry occupied in independent Uruguay. For the military bureaucracy all soldiers had become just *Orientales*.⁵⁸

Geographical and Chronological Framework

This dissertation casts new light on the history of the thousands of enslaved Africans who arrived in Montevideo and Buenos Aires and gives center stage to a single black writer who left a comprehensive record of his time: Jacinto Molina (1766-1841). In the first two chapters, this study zooms in from the South Atlantic to Montevideo by analyzing the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. These chapters are significantly quantitative in perspectives and methods. Chapters 3 through 5 provide a prosopography of black social life in Montevideo and connect the history of the city with the region. Finally, chapter six steps back from Montevideo to the Atlantic World through the life and writings of Jacinto Molina. Both

⁵⁸ Kraay describes a consistent lack of racial data on military records in Brazil after 1837, which he attributes to the color-blind policies of the army under liberal politics. Kraay, “Patriotic Mobilization in Brazil,” 65.

chapters 1 and 6 cover almost the complete period under study, from quantitative and qualitative perspectives respectively as part of an attempt to make the two approaches complement each other.

Chapter 1 provides a chronology of the timing, routes and dimension of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata from 1770 to 1839. The analysis of slave arrivals is the foundation of a reassessment of the history of Africans in this region. Once the general features of the traffic are clear, I move to the social and cultural implications of the slave trade. Chapter 2 shows that slaves arriving in Montevideo relied on social networks developed through slave trade routes, but also raises new questions on how these social ties shaped their identities. The emergence of “umbrella terms” such as *Congo* in the Americas and the usage of these terms by African diasporic communities illustrate this process. These terms reflect the experience of Africans caught up in the slave trade. Chapter 3 illustrates that shipmate networks intersected with other social ties of Africans and their descendants. Both in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, the first black militia officers were also leaders of black confraternities, and for some of these leaders I am able to track shipmate networks. While records show networks of solidarity among black officers, they also reflect struggles for leadership that led black officers to travel back and forth from Buenos Aires to Montevideo when they found themselves in trouble.

Chapter 4 takes up the connections between black military life and participation in African cultural associations in a new scenario –the wars of independence and the foundation of Uruguay (1810-1850). Here, I trace the participation of slaves and freedmen in the continuous warfare of this period that further developed black social networks and created new identities. As black soldiers became prevalent in Montevideo, Africans and their descendents created one of the largest festivities in this city –the Day of Kings or Epiphany Day on January 6 - analysis of which is the core of Chapter 5. Initially, this celebration

reflected black participation in Catholic confraternities and the desire of members of African-based groups to see a crowned African king; thus, this was a festival of both Saint Balthazar and the Kongo King. Eventually, Africans incorporated the new symbols of the larger community in which they found themselves –the flag and the military uniform of Uruguay. On the Day of Kings, African leaders wore the uniform of a general while visiting the President of Uruguay and other civil and military authorities. Such activities reminded white authorities about the importance of close relations with black leaders. The Day of Kings incorporated experiences that Africans and their descendants desired to celebrate: the shared African past, the coronation of a Holy Black King, the military involvement of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo, and the links of the latter with those in power. Chapter 6 analyzes the unique perspective of a man who lived through the entire period of this study – Jacinto Molina. A literate free black born in the New World, he was at once a recalcitrant royalist and also wise pragmatist. He voiced one of the few early expressions of an all-inclusive black identity in his writings in defense of his community in Montevideo.

Chapter 1: The Foundation of the Black Population of the Río de la Plata, 1777-1839

Atlantic European empires faced reform and centralization in the second half of the eighteenth century at a time when Spanish American dominions were challenged by British and Portuguese interests. The Seven Years War (1756-63) left an important part of Spanish America confronting the British possessions of North America and the West Indies and the Portuguese in the Río de la Plata. The periphery of the Spanish Empire –Cuba, Venezuela, and the Río de la Plata– experienced both Atlantic warfare and economic growth as Spain turned to a more commercial and maritime model of Atlantic empire.⁵⁹ This era of imperial redefinition coincided with the zenith of the transatlantic slave trade. Almost half of twelve million and a half enslaved Africans who crossed the Atlantic between 1500 and 1867 made their passage from 1750 to 1825.⁶⁰ Sharp imperial competition developed in the Atlantic over the production of staples, shipping, and the acquisition of slave labor. However, as this study will show, instead of rivalry it was actually cooperation between the Spanish and the Portuguese in the South Atlantic that led to the introduction of the greatest number of enslaved Africans in the history of the Río de la Plata.

This chapter revises estimates of the slaves entering in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and the intermittent continuance of the slave trade after the demise of the colonial regime. By studying the slaving connections of this region with both Brazil and Africa, we show how commercial networks shaped the slave routes ending in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The trans-imperial networks which drove this southernmost branch of the slave trade might seem inimical to the mercantilist policies held by the Spanish and Portuguese

⁵⁹ J. H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic world: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, 292-324.

⁶⁰ Stephen Behrendt, David Eltis, Manolo Florentino, and David Richardson. *Voyages: The trans-Atlantic slave trade database*, online edition at www.slavevoyages.org, afterwards *Voyages Database*.

metropolis, but both Iberian powers benefited from this traffic.⁶¹ While illegal for the Portuguese, the slave trade from Brazil and Mozambique to the Río de la Plata provided a continuous inflow of silver –the life blood of Portuguese commerce in Asia and a source of specie for the empire. Increasing slave arrivals in the Río de la Plata were expected to expand colonial agriculture and trade beneficial to Madrid. Merchants of the Río de la Plata illegally introduced foreign merchandise while taking advantage of the royal measures encouraging the slave trade. *Rioplattente* slave traders navigated a continuum of illegal and legal strategies to introduce both slaves and merchandise. They did not remain passive in their relation to the metropolis; instead, they shaped their colonial strategies to imperial trading policies. Rioplattente merchants confronted imperial control as they pursued their own commercial ends, which included the integration of the colonial economy into the Atlantic system.

To analyze the slave trade to the Río de la Plata, this essay builds on information provided by Elena de Studer (1958), archival documents from Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Seville, and *Voyages. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*. My own database encompasses 712 slave voyages sailing from Brazil and Africa to the Río de la Plata from 1777 to 1812. Each record contains information on slaves embarked (region of provenance, sex, age, and mortality), the slave traders (name of the ship, her flag, captain and owner), and the routes followed by the ship (port of departure and arrival, ports of slave embarkation, and stopovers). In addition, we show slaves arriving just after independence of Argentina and Uruguay.

A new Spanish policy in the 1780s linked slave arrivals in the colonies to agricultural prosperity. Francisco de Arango and other imperial thinkers saw slavery as providing the

⁶¹ “Trans-imperial networks” refers to networks existing between the Portuguese and Spanish located in the Río de la Plata and Brazil, who participated jointly in commercial ventures that transcend imperial borders in the Atlantic.

route to expanding production, trade, and benefits for the metropolis.⁶² For Bourbon reformers and colonial merchant elites alike only slavery could transform Cuba, Venezuela, and the Río de la Plata into centers of production and trade.⁶³ However, Spanish merchants had no previous experience in trading directly with Africa. In 1494 Spain had ceded the exploration of Africa to Portugal through the Treaty of Tordesillas. Apart from dividing the New World between the two Iberian empires, this pact also inhibited Spain from exploring sub-Saharan Africa. Consequently Spanish transatlantic slave trade was severely impaired prior to 1789. The Spanish Crown negotiated contracts with Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British traders for the supply of slaves to its colonies.⁶⁴ In 1778, Portugal ceded the islands of Fernando Poo and Annobon, in the Gulf of Guinea, to Spain given the Spanish desire of an African base to engage in slave trading. However, the expedition to take possession of the islands, which departed from Montevideo, was a complete disaster for Spain.⁶⁵ A decade later, in 1789, the crown threw open the Spanish Caribbean slave trade to merchants of all nations, and three years later did the same for the Río de la Plata.

⁶² The Spanish Crown issued the “Real Cedula de su Magestad sobre la educación, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias, é Islas Filipinas” in May 31, 1789. This Real Cédula foresaw the scenario of increasing numbers of slaves living in the colonies following the opening of the slave trade in 1789. Biblioteca de la Real Academia de Historia (BRAH), Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. CXIV, f. 301. On the ideology linking economic benefits for the Río de la Plata and Spain, the slave trade and slavery, see the reports of Tomás A. Romero, the Cabildo of Buenos Aires, and the *Gremio de Hacendados* in 1794-6. BRAH, Colección Mata Linares, T. XII, fs. 160, 178 and 184. On the plans to expand slavery in Venezuela, see BRAH, Colección Manuscritos sobre América, *Plan de comercio para la provincia de Caracas, puntos del Ayuntamiento y Consulado*, 1799, T. IV, ff. 344-345. On the Spanish admiration of plantation agriculture in Saint Domingue, and its application to Cuba see: *Memorias de la Colonia Francesa de Santo Domingo, con algunas reflexiones relativas a la Isla de Cuba, por un viajero Español* [printed in Madrid, 1787] BRAH. On Cuba, see the *Discurso sobre la agricultura de La Habana y medios de fomentarla* (1792) by Francisco de Arango y Parreño in Hortensia Pichardo, *Documentos para la Historia de Cuba*, Vol. 1. Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 1977, 162-216.

⁶³ Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and revolution in the Iberian Atlantic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 56-110; Elliot, *Empires*, 255-89.

⁶⁴ Henriqueta Vila Vilar, *Hispanoamérica y el comercio de esclavos*. Sevilla: EEHA, 1977.

⁶⁵ Diego Molinari, *La trata de Negros. Datos para su estudio en el Río de la Plata*. Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1944, 81; I. K. Sundiata, “A note on an abortive slave trade: Fernando Po 1778-1781.” *Bulletin de l'Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire*. Serie B, 35, 4 (1973): 793-804.

The crown established taxation, shipping, and commercial policies to encourage Spanish engagement in the slave trade. Slaves could be imported duty free and, from 1793 on, foreign ships bought by Spanish subjects for slave trading purposes were exempted from paying taxes. In addition, products exported from Spanish dominions to buy slaves in Africa were to be free of export duties if the captain and at least half of the crew were Spanish. In another cases, Spanish and foreigners alike paid a six percent export tax on products intended as payment for slaves. In 1794, given the initial difficulty of Spanish traders in Africa, the crown authorized slave vessels to embark machinery and tools for sugar mills on their return voyage if they could not buy slaves, and these products too were tax-exempt. Other merchandise was specifically prohibited as a return cargo for such ships. However, local authorities allowed slave traders to introduce certain goods as returning cargo in spite of the Crown's reiterated prohibition against this illegal trade in 1799.⁶⁶ The crown authorized Spanish ships between three hundred and five hundred tons to introduce slaves in 1791, but admitted foreign ships below three hundred tons. In 1792, the crown extended the period that foreign slave vessels could stay in port from eight to forty days.⁶⁷ These measures reflected the imperial interest in developing the slave trade, and expanding colonial agricultural production and commerce.

The opening of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata was part of the imperial-wide change in metropolitan policies. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish crown had already introduced a wide range of new policies into its American dominions –the so-called Bourbon reforms. To better administer and defend the vast borderland with Brazil, and to reduce the cost of transporting silver from Upper Peru, the crown created the

⁶⁶ Elena F. de Studer, *La trata de negros en el Río de la Plata durante el siglo XVIII*. Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1958, 251.

⁶⁷ James Ferguson King, "Evolution of free Slave Trade Principle in Spanish Colonial Administration." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 22, 1 (1942): 52-56; David Murray, *Odious commerce: Britain, Spain and the abolition of the Cuban slave trade*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, 12-14.

Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in 1776 by cutting off the territory of what is today Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay from the Viceroyalty of Peru.⁶⁸ The inflow of Upper Peruvian silver to the new viceregal capital –Buenos Aires– provided the means for the defense and administrative maintenance of the Río de la Plata.⁶⁹ All viceroys of the Río de la Plata were military men, who followed a policy of militarization exemplified by the expulsion of the Portuguese from Colônia.

Military policies were costly, and raised colonial expenditures as well as royal concerns about the economic viability of the colonies. The metropolis' attempt to make the colonies more financially viable was one of the main impulses behind the Bourbon reforms. In the Río de la Plata commerce expanded with the introduction of measures allowing trade, first with other Spanish colonies (1778), then with foreign colonies (1795), and finally with neutral powers during wartime (1797). The first edict authorized direct trade between the Río de la Plata and Spain as well as reinforced the position of Buenos Aires as the main commercial link between the Andes and the Atlantic; the second legalized the commerce between the Río de la Plata and Brazil, while the third encouraged trade with the US merchant fleet after the British navy blockaded Spain.⁷⁰ All these actions paved the way for the rise of slave trade since they favored slave trading activities within the Spanish domain, with Brazil and US slave traders.

Though the Río de la Plata was not a plantation society, it nevertheless suffered from a pervasive scarcity of labor. The Spanish of Buenos Aires and Montevideo were never able to extract the labor they needed from Amerindians, though colonists did trade with Indians

⁶⁸ Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, *Lima y Buenos Aires, repercusiones económicas y políticas de la creación del Virreinato del Plata*. Sevilla: EEHA, 1947; Susan Socolow, *The bureaucrats of Buenos Aires, 1769-1810. Amor al servicio real*. Durham: Duke University Press 1997, 7-24.

⁶⁹ John Te Paske and Herbert Klein, *The Royal Treasuries of the Spanish Empire in America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1982, XI.

⁷⁰ In 1767 the crown allowed a line of mail vessels from A Coruña (Galicia) to Montevideo. Other Royal ordinances allowed trade with the Portuguese in the early 1780s during wartime. Arturo Bentancur, *El Puerto colonial de Montevideo, 1791-1806*. Montevideo: FHCE, 289-343.

who largely remained outside Spanish rule.⁷¹ The scarcity of laborers was particularly evident in the most important part of the agricultural cycle: the wheat harvest. In almost every single year from the 1740s to the 1770s the Governor of Buenos Aires issued edicts interrupting public works in order to make the city's labor force available for the January harvest of wheat. The governor mentioned free blacks, colored peoples and Amerindians in these edicts in eight different years between 1743 and 1774.⁷² In these cases, free people of color and Indians were compelled to work in the fields. However, there are no such references in the years 1780s and 1790s. This fact perhaps reflects the increasing number of slaves becoming available to agriculture by the last two decades of the eighteenth century.

In the Río de la Plata, slaves were employed in the urban economy as domestic servants and artisans, laborers in agricultural activities that supplied the city, and in the production of the first widely sold item in the Atlantic: hides. Slaves had been the main laborers of the Jesuit *haciendas* in Cordoba and the Argentine Northwest before the expulsion of this order.⁷³ Slaves had been prominent in rural production and urban crafts in distant places of the viceroyalty such as La Rioja and Santa Fe.⁷⁴ In the main wheat producer region for the market of Buenos Aires, San Isidro, slaves outnumbered free workers among the labor force by 1815.⁷⁵ In San Isidro one out of three males above the age of twelve was

⁷¹ Spaniards could not control Amerindian nomadic societies, which threatened the Spanish even during the late colonial period. However, Amerindians were not removed from colonial Montevideo and Buenos Aires. These cities depended on rented Amerindian labor particularly for public works. Raúl Mandrini, *Vivir entre dos mundos. Las fronteras del sur de la Argentina. Siglo XVIII y XIX*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Dimensión Argentina 2006, 21-42.

Archivo General de la Nación, *Fondo documental. Bandos de virreyes y gobernadores del Río de la Plata*. Buenos Aires: AGN, 1997, 16, 20, 33, 46, 59-62, 69, 100.

⁷³ Carlos Mayo, *La Historia agraria del Interior. Haciendas jesuíticas de Córdoba y el Noroeste*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1994.

⁷⁴ Florencia Guzmán, "El destino de los esclavos de la Compañía: el caso riojano." In Dina Picotti (ed.) *El negro en la Argentina. Presencia y negación*. Buenos Aires: Editores de América Latina, 2001, 87-108; Catalina Pistone, *La esclavatura negra en Santa Fe*. Santa Fe: Junta Provincial de Estudios Históricos de Santa Fe, 1996.

⁷⁵ Juan C. Garavaglia, "Los labradores de San Isidro (Siglos XVIII-XIX)." *Desarrollo Económico* 32, 128 (1993): 513-542.

either black or a person of color, and 61 percent of the slaves were Africans. This was a direct consequence of the previous three decades of slave trade. Studies of rural history reveal the presence of slaves alongside wage and family laborers in rural estates of the late-colonial Río de la Plata.⁷⁶ The simple technology of cattle ranching and the open land frontier made labor the principal expenditure of entrepreneurs. In these cattle ranches, slaves constituted a source of continuous labor in contrast to the shifting and seasonal need of free workers. They performed year-round tasks while free workers performed seasonal labor.

Hides, the main but not the only product of the ranches of the Río de la Plata was, after silver, the most important means of payment for slaves. Leather was increasingly used around the Atlantic at the end of the eighteenth century. Markets in the Northern Hemisphere developed for a wide range of industrial and domestic purposes.⁷⁷ The Río de la Plata also diversified its agricultural output during the viceregal period to supply markets stretching from Lima to Rio de Janeiro and from Boston to Hamburg. The rise of the slave trade was an essential ingredient of this expansion of production and commerce in the Río de la Plata. In the 1790s local traders built a merchant fleet by purchasing ships in Brazil and the United States, establishing a maritime insurance company, and founding a Nautical School.⁷⁸

In addition to this large increase in demand for slave labor, slave manumission, flight of slaves, and internal slave traffic reduced supply and this too account for the increasing number of slaves arrivals. Fugitive slaves and negative ratios of slave reproduction were

⁷⁶ Juan C. Garavaglia, "Las chacras y quintas de Buenos Aires: Ejido y campaña, 1750-1815." In Raúl Mandrini and Andrea Reguera (eds), *Huellas en la Tierra: Indios, agricultores, y hacendados en la Pampa bonaerense*. Tandil: IEHS, 1993, 121-146; Jorge Gelman, "Sobre esclavos, peones, gauchos y campesinos: El trabajo y los trabajadores en una estancia colonial rioplatense." In Juan C. Garavaglia and Jorge Gelman (eds.), *El mundo rural rioplatense a fines de la época colonial*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1989, 44-83; Samuel Amaral, "Rural production and labor in late colonial Buenos Aires." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 19, 2 (1987): 235-278. For slave labor and the economy of the colonial *Banda Oriental* see Sala, De la Torre, and Rodríguez, *Estructura económico-social de la colonia*. For slavery in rural mid-nineteenth century Uruguay, see Borucki, Chagas, and Stalla. *Esclavitud y trabajo*.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Brown, *A socioeconomic history of Argentina*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

⁷⁸ Jerry Cooney, "Neutral vessels and platine slavers: Building a viceregal merchant marine." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 18 (1986): 25-39.

pervasive in the Río de la Plata.⁷⁹ In Buenos Aires, slaves could flee southward to the Indian frontier, whereas in Montevideo they could join parties of bandits operating in the countryside and in the Portuguese borderland. In both cases, they apparently had the option of starting a new life as wage earners in another town under the protection of local *vecinos*. Slaves quickly became acquainted with the Spanish legal procedures of manumission in the region. Almost sixty percent of manumissions legally registered in viceregal Buenos Aires favored women.⁸⁰ This reinforced the gender imbalance of the slave population, which was already shaped by the high ratio of men brought by the transatlantic slave trade, and thus reduced the possibilities of slave reproduction. But the Río de la Plata was not only a destination market, it was also an entrepôt. Slaves were dispatched inland and through the Magellan straits to Chile and Peru. The Compañía de Filipinas shipped near 2,900 slaves from Bonny and Calabar to the Río de la Plata in 1788-9. Only 2,177 Africans arrived alive in Montevideo, 1073 of whom were sent to Lima.⁸¹ From 1800 to 1803, at least 1,679 slaves were carried from Buenos Aires and Montevideo to the interior of Argentina, Upper Peru, Chile and Lima, a number that amounted to ten percent of all slaves entering the two Río de la Plata ports during those four years.⁸² This figure is certainly a lower-bound estimate of the actual number of slaves departing from the Río de la Plata to other South American destinations.

⁷⁹ Eduardo Saguier, "La fuga esclava como resistencia rutinaria y cotidiana en el Buenos Aires del siglo XVIII." *Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales* 1, 2 (1995): 115-184; In a large cattle ranch in Entre Ríos, north from Buenos Aires and west from Montevideo, 61 slaves worked by the 1800s. Fifty-six slaves were born in that ranch from 1785 to 1817, but not a single one survived childhood. Julio Djenderedjian, "¿Peones libres o esclavos? Producción rural, tasas de ganancia y alternativas de utilización de mano de obra en dos grandes estancias del litoral a fines de la colonia." In *III Jornadas de Historia Económica*. Montevideo: AUDHE, 2003.

⁸⁰ Lyman Johnson, "Manumission in colonial Buenos Aires." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 59, 2 (1974): 258-79.

⁸¹ Archivo General de la Nación, Argentina (hereafter AGN-A), IX, 33-6-1, "Dn Martin de Sarratea apoderado de la Real Compañía de Filipinas sobre la Alcabala de Negros que vinieron de cuenta de la Compañía..." [1789].

⁸² This figure comes from data on slave purchases produced by some slave traders. AGN-A, IX, 18-8-11.

Merchants of Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador created trans-imperial networks that shaped the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. This commerce was significant to the Luso-Brazilians and Portuguese located on both sides of the Atlantic. Spaniards of the Río de la Plata bought slaves with silver, which was essential for both Portuguese royal revenues and Portuguese long-distance commerce with India and China given that specie was in short supply after the decline of the Minas Gerais gold-mining production.⁸³ Spanish silver entered Portuguese commercial circuits beneficial to the merchants of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, the royal revenue in Lisbon, and Luso-African traders in Mozambique. The Portuguese authorities of Luanda perceived that an important part of the slaves sent to Rio de Janeiro was redirected to Montevideo in the 1790s.⁸⁴ Despite the fact that the Spanish had little experience in slave trading in Africa prior to 1791, Luso-Spanish networks in the Río de la Plata and the larger Atlantic were able to shape the slave trade to this region.

Buenos Aires (established in 1580) was the principal city of the Río de la Plata, but it had a shallow anchorage and could offer little protection for ocean-going vessels. Across the estuary from Buenos Aires, the Portuguese Colônia do Sacramento developed as a complementary port from 1680 to 1777.⁸⁵ From here goods and slaves were smuggled into Buenos Aires until the Spanish expelled the Portuguese in the latter year. While the Portuguese were expelled from this town, some of them moved their commercial operations to neighboring Montevideo, where they merged with the emerging local elites and reestablished Luso-Spanish trading networks. The foundation of Montevideo (1724-6), located in the best natural bay for ocean-going vessels, completed the system of ports in the

⁸³ On the Portuguese needs of silver for trading in China see Alberto da Costa e Silva, "Do Índico ao Atlântico." In João Fragoso et al. (eds.), *Nas Rotas do Império*. Vitória: Edufes, 2006, 20.

⁸⁴ Joseph Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade 1730-1830*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, 495.

⁸⁵ I will call this city *Côlonia* or *Colonia*, indistinctly, in Portuguese and Spanish.

Río de Plata. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Montevideo became the base of the Spanish Navy in the South Atlantic and the port of entry for ships sailing to and from Buenos Aires. The crown declared Montevideo the only authorized entry for slaves to the Río de la Plata in 1791. The slave trade to the Río de la Plata developed through the two Spanish port cities of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. While the merchants of Buenos Aires had the upper hand in the Río de la Plata and the routes toward Chile and Peru, the merchants of Montevideo had active networks with Luso-Brazilians, the most experienced slave traders of the South Atlantic.⁸⁶

The Luso-Spanish networks emerging from Colonia shaped both the slave trade to the Río de la Plata and the formation of black social networks in Montevideo for the earliest years of this study. The role of Colonia in the formation of black social networks in Montevideo is of utmost importance since, as we will show in chapter two, almost thirty percent of all witnesses of marriage files of blacks and coloreds in Montevideo between 1768 and 1779 had met the groom in Colonia or its neighborhood. Therefore, the study of the fall of Portuguese Colonia may show why and how Montevideo emerged as a slave port when it did. As a consequence of the Seven Years War, the Spanish besieged Portuguese Colonia in 1761. For this, they established the Real de San Carlos –a military camp just beyond a cannon shot from Colonia. The Spanish took the town but after the peace agreements they handed back Colonia to the Portuguese in 1763. However, the Real de San Carlos enforced a land blockade to this city up to her final capitulation. In 1766, Spanish authorities confiscated twenty slaves on the coast of Buenos Aires who had just being shipped from Colonia.⁸⁷ Reports from the Real de San Carlos mention two landings of slave vessels in Colonia sent

⁸⁶ Fabrício Prado, “In the Shadows of Empires,” 83-121.

⁸⁷ AGI, Buenos Aires, Leg. 591, June 11, 1766.

from Rio de Janeiro in 1768, and three other in 1769.⁸⁸ In the 1760s, 211 slaves entered Colonia from Salvador, which shows that not only Rio de Janeiro sent slaves to the Río de la Plata in this early period.⁸⁹ According to Portuguese authorities, the Spanish confiscated more than one thousand slaves as contraband from Colonia in 1760-1775.⁹⁰ A list of vessels entering in Colonia between March 1772 and July 1773 includes twelve ships from Rio de Janeiro, twelve from Santa Catalina, and one from Sao Francisco. Almost all of these vessels brought supplies to Colonia –from foodstuff to firewood– and only one carried slaves.⁹¹ Even under Spanish scrutiny, Colonia functioned as a slave-trading entrepôt up to the very end of this Portuguese enclave in the Río de la Plata.

The Spanish land blockade of Colonia still allowed Luso-Spanish trade. Increased Spanish control of the hinterland also improved the conditions of trade for the merchants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo as well as the rural petty traders in their transactions with the Portuguese. Spanish merchants not only paid for goods and slaves smuggled through Colonia with silver, but increasingly with foodstuff and provisions –the price of which soared because of the blockade. In addition, Portuguese governors of Colonia had to augment their gifts to the Spanish commanders of the blockade in order to allow the Portuguese to take foodstuff from the countryside and this too encouraged contraband. Spanish military harassment of this trade grew as they confiscated slaves in fishermen’s canoes of Colonia and housed runaway slaves who were then incorporated in the black militia of Real de San Carlos.⁹² People

⁸⁸ AGN-A, IX, 7-9-6. October 9 and December 22 of 1768; 7-9-7, March 27 (150 slaves), December 12 and 19 (80 slaves) of 1769.

⁸⁹ Alexandre Vieira Ribeiro, “O tráfico Atlântico de escravos e a Praça Mercantil de Salvador (1678-1830).” Master Thesis. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ-PPGHIs, 2005, 108.

⁹⁰ Prado, “In the Shadow,” 75. While fighting riverine contraband, a Spanish captain identified seven ocean-going vessels and half-dozen small ships anchored in Colonia in September 1771. However, he failed to note whether or not these vessels carried slaves. AGN-A, IX, 7-10-1, *Diario del Capitán de la zumaca N Sa de los Remedios*, September 1771.

⁹¹ AGN-A, IX, 7-10-1. List of ships entering in Colonia. August 9, 1773.

⁹² Between March 1769 and June 1774 the Spanish of Real de San Carlos burned thirteen boats and canoes used for smuggling. AGN-A, IX, 7-10-2. Nicolás de Elordoy to Juan J. de Vertiz, June 28, 1774. The

knowledgeable of the countryside took advantage of these trading parameters. In 1768, the slave overseer (*capataz*) of the ranch of the Bethlem Order was accused of smuggling foodstuff and hides into Colonia with the help of three white soldiers.⁹³

Old commercial networks and the military operations surrounding the fall of Colonia led to the emergence of Montevideo as new slave entrepôt in the Río de la Plata. In 1779, two ships of the Portuguese Navy stopped in Montevideo while en-route to Colonia to embark military equipment after the Portuguese expulsion. These ships disembarked 118 slaves in Montevideo.⁹⁴ Slaves in one of these vessels belonged to the merchant of Colonia Francisco A. Gonzales Cazón. One of these ships also disembarked 142 slaves in Buenos Aires with the viceregal approval.⁹⁵ In 1780, two Portuguese vessels brought to Montevideo Spanish military equipment from the village of Rio Grande, which the Spanish had occupied from 1762 to 1776. These vessels brought fifty slaves in Montevideo. One of these captains, Manuel d’Cunha returned to Montevideo from Rio de Janeiro the two following years bringing first 23 and then 213 slaves. The other captain, Manuel José de Fleytas, conducted 130 and 155 slaves to Montevideo in 1782 and 1783. The same pattern is evident in the career of José Joaquim de Fleytas who captained four slave voyages from Rio de Janeiro to

Spanish captured a fishing canoe manned by four slaves in 1775: “Declaraciones sobre haber aprehendido la Fragata Portuguesa ...” April 12, 1775. See Fabrício Prado, *Colônia do Sacramento. O extremo sul da America Portuguesa*, Porto Alegre: Fumproarte, 2002, 122-127, and Prado, “In the Shadow,” 76. By 1770, ninety-six free blacks served in the Real de San Carlos –at least one third were runaway slaves from Colonia. AGN-A, IX, 7-9-7. Nicolás de Elordoy to Francisco Bucarely, June 25, 1770.

⁹³ AGN-A, IX, 7-9-6. September 10, 1768. From Nicolás de Michelarena to Francisco Bucarely. This slave overseer may have been the famous Patricio Belen before he became the main overseer of this ranch. Carlos Mayo, “Patricio de Belén: nada menos que un capataz.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, 4 (1997): 597-617.

⁹⁴ AGN-A, XIII, 15-8-2, 3v, and IX, 2-3-5.

⁹⁵ AGI, Indiferente 2820B, “File on the introduction of slaves to Buenos Aires,” March 14, 1781. In April 29 of 1780 Viceroy Vertiz wrote to the crown that he approved this introduction of slaves to please the Portuguese and ameliorate the claims of the Portuguese Viceroy in Rio de Janeiro. Note that the Spanish obtained intelligence on British movements in the South Atlantic through the Portuguese. In addition, trade between the Río de la Plata and Spain was disguised under the Portuguese flag in subsequent years to avoid the British Naval interference.

Montevideo in 1782-4.⁹⁶ Born in Colonia, the Portuguese Francisco da Costa Pereyra captained seven slave voyages between Rio de Janeiro and Montevideo –and one from Salvador– during 1782-1803. Another native of Colonia, Antonio da Costa Pintos, captained three slave voyages from 1779 to 1809.⁹⁷ From 1778 to 1788, the second in command of suppressing contraband in Montevideo was a Portuguese-born official named Cipriano de Melo. In these years, the life of *Don Cipriano* encapsulates the reallocation of Portuguese merchant networks from Colonia to Montevideo which made possible the introduction of more than six thousand slaves in 1782-3.⁹⁸

Two merchants, Domingo Belgrano and Francisco A. Maciel, illustrate the Spanish trading connections across the Río de la Plata and the links of this region with Brazil just after the fall of Colonia do Sacramento. Belgrano, a merchant of Buenos Aires, participated in trading circuits connecting Lima, Chile, Upper Peru, the Río de la Plata, Brazil, and Spain.⁹⁹ Belgrano sold Spanish and other European merchandise, as well as slaves, in the interior of the viceroyalty, Chile and Peru. He obtained in return gold, silver, and local products. Belgrano employed specie to purchase goods in Europe, slaves in Brazil, and to invest in urban property and rural businesses. When specie was not available, he received products he could sell in the markets he controlled in the viceroyalty. He developed links in

⁹⁶ AGI, Buenos Aires, 141 and 449; AGN-A, XIII, 15-7-4, 15-8-11, 15-9-2, 15-9-5, IX, 2-3-4, 2-3-5, 14-4-4, 14-4-6.

⁹⁷ AGN-A, IX, 45-2-11.

⁹⁸ *Don Cipriano* had been merchant and pilot in Colonia, where he married into an important local merchant family. During wartime, he passed to the Spanish in 1762, and then he moved back to the Portuguese. In 1777 he passed again to the Spanish as he enjoyed the trust of the first Spanish Viceroy Pedro Cevallos. In 1778 he was appointed second in command of the *Resguardo* –the force in charge of suppressing contraband in Montevideo. In a few years he became one of the wealthiest local merchants. Prado, In the shadow, 246-272, and Arturo Bentancur, *Don Cipriano de Melo. Señor de fronteras*. Montevideo: Arca, 1985. Captains of Portuguese slave vessels such as Francisco de Acosta Pereyra stayed in Cipriano de Melo's house when arriving in Montevideo. *Don Cipriano* was intermediary in slaves purchased to the captain Miguel J. de Fleytas. AGN-U, Escribanía de Gobierno y Hacienda (hereafter EGH), Caja 22, exp. 38, 1794-5.

⁹⁹ Jorge Gelman, *De mercachifle a gran comerciante: Los caminos del ascenso social en el Río de la Plata colonial*. Sevilla: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, 1996.

Montevideo to pursue slave trading activities in Brazil.¹⁰⁰ The commercial routes used by Belgrano drained silver from the viceroyalty toward Spain and Brazil. Like most colonies in the temperate Americas, Buenos Aires had a persistent trade deficit which was covered with specie, much of which passed through Montevideo to Brazil and on to neutral powers.¹⁰¹ In 1780, Francisco A. Maciel arrived in Rio de Janeiro as delegate of the merchants of Montevideo to re-establish the Rio de Janeiro-Rio de la Plata route after the destruction of Colonia by the Spanish. He stated that Portuguese ships would be able to enter Montevideo if they claimed distress at sea, and that Cipriano de Melo would not impede the resulting trade.¹⁰² Don Cipriano's own commercial contacts in Rio de Janeiro helped Maciel to reestablish this trading route. In addition, Maciel became the most important slave trader of Montevideo during the next three decades.

By the first decade of the nineteenth century, Montevideo had emerged as an entrepôt for the Río de la Plata and the large Atlantic. In 1802, the commercial house of Malaga Domingo Cabarrús and Cía applied to the Spanish crown to introduce 15,000 slaves in her American dominions with the following breakdown: 6,000 slaves to Havana, 5,000 to Montevideo, 3,000 to Cartagena de Indias, and 1000 to Venezuelan ports. This plan shows the importance assigned to Montevideo in the metropolis vis-à-vis other ports as this city was second only to the main Spanish project of Caribbean plantation agriculture.¹⁰³ In 1808, as the collapse of the Spanish crown became apparent in Europe, the viceroy of the Río de la

¹⁰⁰ AGN-A, IX, 36-6-4, "Expediente sobre la deuda que tiene Dn Domingo Belgrano Pérez con la Real Aduana de Montevideo, en concepto de introducción de esclavos del Brasil." [Montevideo, 1783], and IX, 33-2-5 "Dn. Domingo Belgrano Pérez solicita licencia para pasar a Río de Janeiro a traer negros." [Montevideo, 1784-5].

¹⁰¹ Juan C. Garavaglia describes the functioning of a trading operation during wartime in 1779-1783. He points to merchants of Buenos Aires who sent metallic to Cadiz via Lisbon. Portuguese ships coming to Montevideo took silver from Buenos Aires' merchants. The merchants in Montevideo, who had received this silver, placed part of this specie in trading networks outside of the legal Spanish commercial circuits. Juan C. Garavaglia, "El ritmo de la extracción de metálico desde el Río de la Plata a la Península, 1779-1783." *Revista de Indias* 36: 143/144 (1976): 247-268.

¹⁰² Prado, "In the Shadow," 253.

¹⁰³ AGI, Indiferente 2825B, Proposal of Domingo Cabarrús and Cía, Málaga, December 1, 1802.

Plata implemented a new tax on trade to enhance military defense called *Contribución Patriótica*. Authorities expected to raise 1,042,000 pesos per year among the twenty-two main towns under their jurisdiction. Predictably, the capital Buenos Aires was top in the list by expecting to yield 485,000 pesos, and the second was Montevideo with 130,000 pesos. Apart from Buenos Aires, Montevideo, La Paz and Potosí, each of the remaining towns would pay in average 12,600 pesos.¹⁰⁴ Montevideo blossomed in the viceregal era as an entrepôt for trading networks and consumers stretching from Buenos Aires to Lima. Almost seventy percent of all slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata had first disembarked in Montevideo in this period. However, most of them were on carried to Buenos Aires, Chile and Peru.¹⁰⁵

The increasing number of slaves arriving in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata was the most important demographic event since the Iberian colonization of this region. At least 70,000 slaves arrived in the Río de la Plata from Africa and Brazil between 1777 and 1812, which is surprising given that Buenos Aires had only 43,000 inhabitants by 1810, and Montevideo no more than 12,000 by 1803. Between 1778 and 1810, the population of Buenos Aires grew 34 percent, while the slave population increased 101 percent. In Montevideo, the total population grew 119 percent between 1791 and 1810, while the slave population increased 486 percent.¹⁰⁶ In these two cities, thirty percent of the population was enslaved by 1810. The dimension of the slave trade in the viceregal times emerges if we compare it with other periods of this traffic to the region. A mere 20,000 slaves arrived in

¹⁰⁴ AGN-A, IX, 14-6-8, Tomás de Razón, f. 149, June 4, 1808.

¹⁰⁵ See "Diario del capitán de fragata de la Real Armada, D Juan Francisco de Aguirre, en la Demarcación De Límites De España Y Portugal En La América Meridional" BRAH, 9/4021, T. V, ff 96-99. Aguirre, who visited Montevideo in 1782 and 1797, left evidence of the great growth of Montevideo in those years and the importance of this port for the Spanish defense in the region.

¹⁰⁶ Ernesto Campagna, "La población esclava en ciudades puertos del Río de la Plata: Montevideo y Buenos Aires." *Actas do primer Congreso sobre a História da População da América Latina*. São Paulo: SEADE, 1990. Lyman Johnson and Susan Socolow, "Población y espacio en el Buenos Aires del siglo XVIII." *Desarrollo Económico* 20, 79 (1980): 289-340; Horacio Arredondo, "Los apuntes estadísticos del Dr. Andrés Lamas." *Revista del Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay* 4 1 (1928): 1-44.

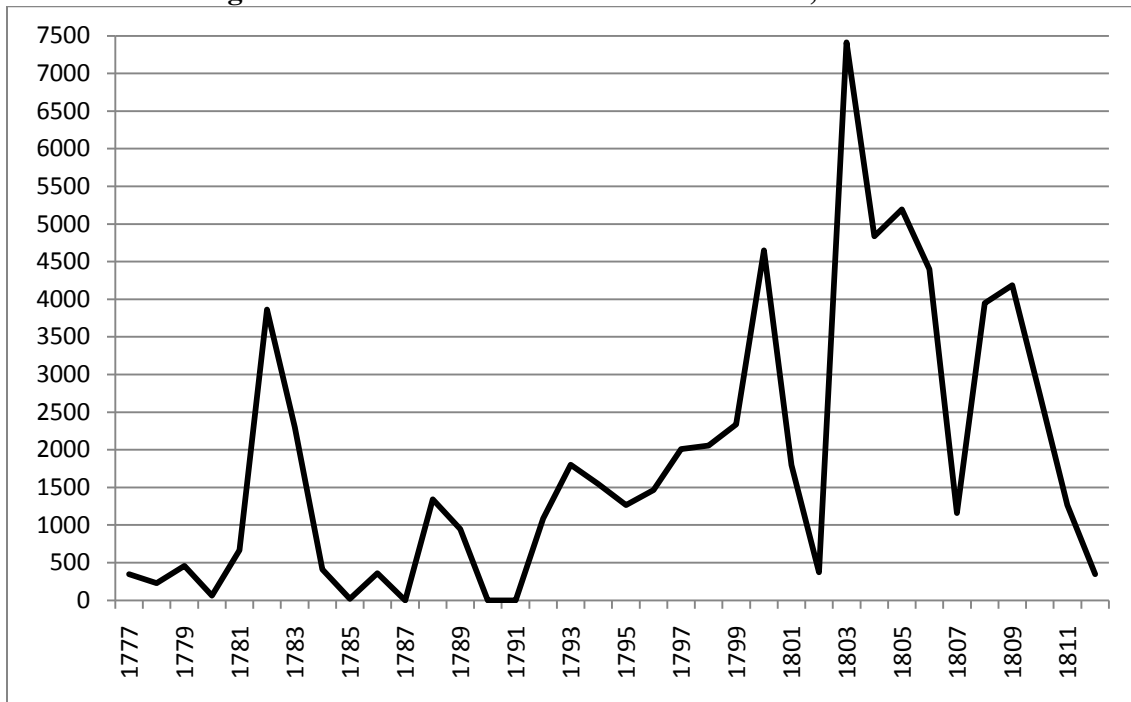
Buenos Aires in the seventeenth century, while less than 40,000 slaves were brought to the Río de la Plata by the combined effects of the French *Compagnie de Guinée* (1703-1713), the English *South Sea Company* (1714-1737), the Spanish contracts (1743-1760) and the Portuguese of Colonia before 1777.¹⁰⁷

1.1. Two slave trade routes to the Río de la Plata: Africa and Brazil.

The opening up of the slave trade in 1791 paved the way for a continuous inflow of enslaved Africans. Figure 1.1 and table 1 show that 84 percent of the slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata between 1777 and 1812 were disembarked after the new regulations went into effect. From 1792 on, there was a continuous increase of slave arrivals up to 1807, when a political crisis led to the end of the colonial traffic. Table 1 also depicts four periods of the slave arrivals to the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata.

¹⁰⁷ Studer, *La Trata*, 102; Fernando Jumar, *Le commerce atlantique au Río de la Plata 1680-1778*. Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2000; *Voyages Database*. The French brought 3,000 slaves to the Río de la Plata, and the English disembarked other 14,000. The contracts of Peninsular Spanish Tomás Navarro, Ramon Palacio, and Francisco de Mendieta brought 2,800 slaves from Africa in mid-eighteenth century. It is difficult to estimate the slaves brought in by the Portuguese of Colônia, but I believe they sent to Río de la Plata a number of slaves similar to the combined French, English, and Spanish contracts from 1680 to 1777. Only in 1748-9, the Portuguese disembarked 1,654 slaves in Colônia. Prado, "In the Shadow," 74-75.

Figure 1.1. Slave arrivals to the Río de la Plata, 1777-1812



Sources: Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Sección Buenos Aires Leg. 101, 102, 141, 334, 389, 449, 483; Sección Indiferente 2820B, 2821, 2824, 2825A, 2827. Archivo General de la Nación, Argentina, Sala IX, Leg. 18-8-11, 5-2-11, 31-1-10, 31-1-8, 10-4-7, 3-1-7, 2-10-7, 2-8-7, 2-3-7, 14-4-3, 14-4-4, 14-4-5, 14-4-6, 31-1-5, 10-6-4, 27-6-4, 2-3-4, 2-3-5, 2-4-5, 2-5-5, 2-5-6, 2-6-3, 2-7-6, 2-9-3, 2-8-2, 2-8-3, 2-8-6, 2-9-4, 2-9-6, 2-10-1, 2-10-2, 2-10-3, 2-10-6, 10-5-1, 5-2-1, 2-9-1, 45-3-6, 45-3-7, 45-3-8, 45-3-9, 45-3-10, 45-2-12, 45-2-10, 45-2-9, 45-2-8, 45-2-6, 45-2-5, 45-2-1, 45-1-1, 38-8-7, 37-3-1, 36-7-3, 36-6-4, 36-4-5, 34-5-8, 4-5-2, 33-9-7, 33-4-7, 33-4-2, 33-3-8, 33-3-6, 31-2-1; Sala XIII, 15-7-4, 15-8-1, 15-8-2, 15-8-3, 15-8-5, 15-9-2, 15-9-5. Archivo General de la Nación, Uruguay, AGA Caja 228, 243, 247, 296, 304, 306, 329, 336, 346, Libro 95; EGH Caja 82, 83, 84, 90, 92, 73, 28, 32, 40, 41, 55, 56, 24, 27, 34, 46, 54, 61, 66, 74, 80; Studer, *La trata; Voyages Database*, www.slavevoyages.org. **Note:** At least 77,500 slaves were embarked to the Río de la Plata but the figures and tables only show slaves disembarked.

Table 1.1. Slaves arrivals to the Río de la Plata, 1777-1812

Years	Disembarked Slaves		Average of slave arrivals per year of each period
	Percentage	Number	
1777-1791	15.7%	10,998	785
1792-1799	19.3%	13,575	1,939
1800-1806	45.6%	32,008	5,335
1807-1812	19.4%	13,644	2,728
Total	100.0%	70,225	2,006

Source: Same as Figure 1.1.

Two large slave arrivals in 1782 and 1788 characterize the first period of this traffic,

1777-1791, when there was a low average of slave arrivals per year in comparison with the following phases. A major increase of slave arrivals defines the second and third periods, while a politically induced decline of the slave trade occurred in the fourth period, 1807-1812. However, the annual average of slave arrivals in this last phase was larger than in the first two periods, which shows the continued dynamism of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata even under political turmoil.

Events in Spain, North America, and Brazil shaped the first great introduction of slaves in the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. In 1779, Spain allied with the North Americans in the war against British colonial rule. This interrupted the trade between Spain and its colonies as the British navy pursued Spanish ships. To counteract the impact of this blockade, the Spanish crown allowed Portuguese ships to sail between Spain and the Río de la Plata.¹⁰⁸ As noted earlier, these vessels were required to sail in ballast to Montevideo, where they would embark hides and silver to be shipped safely to Spain under the Portuguese flag. However, the majority of these Portuguese ships using the claim of distress at sea asked permission to disembark slaves in Montevideo, and at the same time, illegally introduced merchandise previously embarked in Brazil. This major smuggling activity is illustrated by the first spike in Figure 1.1. Peace with Britain in 1783 and the appointment of the new Viceroy Marquis de Loreto changed this scenario as this official prohibited commerce with the Portuguese in 1784 and prosecuted Cipriano de Melo.¹⁰⁹ No other major slave landing occurred before 1788.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Bentancur, *Don Cipriano de Melo*, 18.

¹⁰⁹ AGI, Buenos Aires 141, Marqués de Loreto to Joaquín del Pino, January 20, 1784. See Bentancur, *Don Cipriano de Melo*, 39-73. Cipriano de Melo joined a network of merchants and Spanish authorities in both sides of the Río de la Plata which came under judicial scrutiny after the bankruptcy of the Treasury of Buenos Aires in 1788.

¹¹⁰ In 1786 only two slave vessels arrived in Montevideo under the Royal licenses issued to Matías Lopez Arraya and Diego Cantero. In 1785 the Governor of Montevideo warned port authorities in the Río de la Plata that Portuguese vessels rejected in Montevideo could attempt disembarking slaves in other locations or Rio Grande. In 1787, the Portuguese ship Bom Jesus, captained by Juan de Almeyda and carrying 60

The Compañía de Filipinas brought the second major batch of slave arrivals prior to 1791 shown in Figure 1.1. Within the mercantilist milieu of the Bourbon reforms, the Spanish crown created the Compañía de Filipinas in 1785.¹¹¹ Initially devoted to commerce between Spain and the Philippines, this company entered the slave trade to the Río de la Plata in 1788. The Compañía de Filipinas in turn arranged for a British company, Baker and Dawson, to carry out these expeditions. Spanish agents sailed from Great Britain to Africa in Baker and Dawson's vessels complete with an English crew and flying the British flag. When the vessels reached the Río de la Plata they hoisted the Spanish colors, and disembarked the slaves in Montevideo. There, the ships were loaded with hides, and returned to England. The crown viewed the outcome of the Compañía de Filipinas sally into the slave trade as disastrous given the high mortality and high African slave prices. As a consequence, in Buenos Aires, the agent of the Compañía Martín de Sarratea requested that the crown waive the royal levies due on these slave arrivals, a request which the crown granted.¹¹²

The second period (1792-1799) of the slave trade to the viceregal Río de la Plata began with the opening of the legal slave trade. As noted, slave arrivals increased substantially in these years, but there were still factors deterring slave trading activities in this region. Atlantic warfare, the opposition of the traditional merchants of Buenos Aires, and the lack of experience of Rioplatense slave traders in the commerce with Africa inhibited this traffic in the 1790s. First, there were no more than three years of peace between Spain and Britain (1802-1804) from 1797 to 1806. In this period, the British Navy interrupted Spanish

slaves, approached Montevideo. Spanish authorities forced this ship to leave the bay without landing. AGN-A, IX, 2-4-5, Joaquín del Pino to Marqués de Loreto, June 27, 1785; and 2-5-3, Joaquín del Pino to Marqués de Loreto February 1, 1787.

¹¹¹ María L. Díaz, *La Real Compañía de Filipinas*. Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1965.

¹¹² *Voyages Database*; Díaz, *La Real Compañía*, 224-225.

Atlantic commerce.¹¹³ The first four years of this conflict (1797-1800) saw the rise of Brazilian slave arrivals to the Río de la Plata to their peak in 1800. Second, the profits of Rioplatense slave traders raised the concerns of the merchants linked to other trades. In Buenos Aires, one of the most important judicial conflicts over colonial commerce saw slave traders pitted against the merchants of traditional trade with Spain. The traditional traders tried to curtail slave trader links with Brazil and the United States. The irritation of traditional merchants stemmed from the fact that slave traders could introduce hides to Brazil paying lower taxes on exports than they did.¹¹⁴ Finally, the lack of contacts of the Rioplatense merchants with slave markets in Africa also complicated the slave trade to this region. While the Portuguese crown excluded foreign slave traders from Angola, only after 1797 it allowed slave traders from the United States and the Río de la Plata continued access to their Mozambique markets.

In the third phase of the slave trade to the viceregal Río de la Plata (1800-1806), the colonial authorities swung its support behind slave traders in their dispute with the traditional merchants of Buenos Aires. Slave arrivals direct from Africa attained all time highs. In just two years (1803-1804), 11,000 captives arrived in the Río de la Plata from Africa and Brazil, a figure that matched Montevideo's entire population of 11,400 at the time.

The fourth and last period of the slave trade to the viceregal Río de la Plata (1807-1812) began with the British occupation of Montevideo in 1807, and finished when the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata banned the slave trade in 1812. The British launched two unsuccessful invasions of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1806 and 1807. Even though they disrupted this traffic in 1807, slave arrivals in the Río de la Plata continued the two following two years with figures similar to those previous to the invasion. From 1810 on, war

¹¹³ The Portuguese joined the British during the first six months of 1801, which triggered a Portuguese invasion of the north of what is today Uruguay. Bentancur, *El puerto colonial de Montevideo*, 303.

¹¹⁴ Socolow, *The merchants of Buenos Aires*, 126.

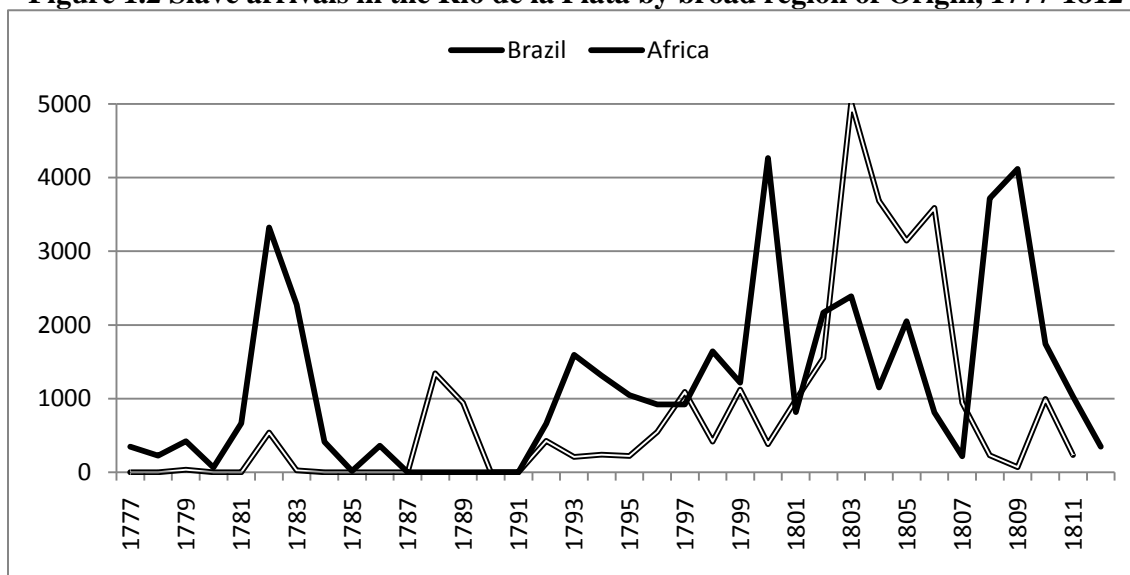
and revolution engulfed the region. The Junta of Buenos Aires fought the Spanish loyalist in Montevideo to their defeat in 1814, and these events led to the definitive decline of the slave trade as shown by Figure 1.1. In December 1810, the Portuguese ship *Brilhante* brought 113 slaves from Salvador to Montevideo. While her captain initially set sail to Buenos Aires, news of the political developments in the viceregal capital led him to change the port of disembarkation. In January 1812, the Portuguese ship *São José Americano* disembarked 194 slaves in Montevideo from Rio de Janeiro. Her captained intended to arrive in Buenos Aires, but he received news that the revolutionary government had issued an embargo against Portuguese property.¹¹⁵ At that time, the forces of Buenos Aires and José Artigas were laying siege to loyalist Montevideo, which was backed by a Portuguese army invading from Brazilian. War at land and sea as well as the prohibition of the slave trade by the new government of Buenos Aires brought this traffic to an end. We should note that in 1810, the year that the revolution began, more than 2,700 slaves arrived in the Río de la Plata. The last slave ship from Mozambique arrived in Montevideo in January 1811, just four months before the town was besieged by the revolutionary forces. These events show that in the Río de la Plata, as in other places of America, the slave trade ended because of political developments rather than the disappearance of a market of slave labor.¹¹⁶

To understand the fluctuations of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata, two branches of this traffic must be analyzed: The intra-American from Brazil and the transatlantic from Africa. These two slave trading routes operated largely independently of each other. One of the most important characteristics of the traffic to the Río de la Plata was the significant inflow of slaves from Brazil. Figure 1.2 and table 1.2 show that the slave trade from Brazil to the Río de la Plata was actually larger than the direct trade from Africa.

¹¹⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 95, see entries for December 27, 1810 and January 19, 1812.

¹¹⁶ David Eltis, *Economic growth and the ending of the transatlantic slave trade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Figure 1.2 Slave arrivals in the Río de la Plata by broad region of Origin, 1777-1812



Sources: Same as Figure 1.1.

Table 1.2. Slave arrivals in the Río de la Plata by broad region of Origin, 1777-1812

Years	Africa	Brazil	Total
1777-1791	2,887 (26%)	8,111 (74%)	10,998 (100%)
1792-1799	4,262 (31%)	9,313 (69%)	13,575 (100%)
1800-1806	18,356 (57%)	13,652 (43%)	32,008 (100%)
1807-1812	2,468 (18%)	11,176 (82%)	13,644 (100%)
Total	27,973 (40%)	42,252 (60%)	70,225 (100%)

Sources: Same as Figure 1.1

Sixty percent of all slaves disembarking in the Río de la Plata and 77.5 percent of all slave voyages departed from Brazil.¹¹⁷ Out of 712 voyages carrying slaves into the Río de la Plata, only 160 obtained their captives from Africa during this period. Thus, Rio de Janeiro, not Africa, was the source of most slave voyages and slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata as, at least 333 voyages embarked 23,000 slaves to Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Slave arrivals from Brazil and Africa did not develop evenly through this thirty-five-

¹¹⁷ The majority of slave arrivals with non-declared origin came in 1800-1806, at the zenith of the direct African trade. Probably these voyages came mainly from Africa.

year period. Between 1777 and 1791 almost all slaves coming from Africa were carried by the Compañía de Filipinas. The slaves brought from Brazil were introduced mainly in 1782-1783 via a huge smuggling operation. In this period immediately preceding the opening of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata, the ratio of Brazilian to African shipments of slaves was almost 3 to 1. This ratio was reduced to almost 2 to 1 in the years following the opening of the trade (1792-1799). Thus, the Río de la Plata was still reliant on Brazil for the trade of slaves. The removal of the already noted obstacles to the direct trade with Africa at the end of the eighteenth century saw the ratio of Brazilian to African slave shipments reverse to 1 to 1.5 between 1800 and 1806. A brief peace in the Atlantic for the Spanish, the entrance of US slave traders into the Río de la Plata traffic, and the opening of Mozambique stimulated arrivals directly from Africa. In this third phase, the large Brazilian slave arrivals in the year 1800 probably continued the previous trend, but a sharp decline set in when the war between Spain and Portugal reduced trade between the Río de la Plata and Brazil in 1801. Finally, when political turmoil threatened the trade, in 1807-1812, the ratio of Brazilian to African slave shipments reversed again to a ratio even greater than 4 to 1. War and revolution inhibited Rioplatense merchants from engaging in slave trading activities in Africa. In this final period, almost all slave arrivals directly from Africa came from Mozambique under the Portuguese flag.

We can observe the evolution from Brazilian to African slave routes in the records of Tomás A. Romero, the most important slave trader of Buenos Aires and one of the leading figures of the local merchant community. Romero introduced more than 3,000 slaves to the Río de la Plata between 1792 and 1800, of which 2,000 were embarked in Brazil. By contrast, he introduced 3,000 slaves to Río de la Plata between 1801 and 1806 almost all

brought directly from Africa.¹¹⁸ Romero did engage in some slave voyages direct from Africa in the 1790s, but after 1799 he traded almost exclusively in Africa –particularly in Mozambique– through US slave traders.

We may wonder if the slaves coming from Brazil had remained there long before embarking to the Río de la Plata. A similarity in the seasonal patterns of both the African and Brazilian slave routes to the Rio de la Plata suggests that the majority of slaves coming from Brazil were re-embarked soon after their arrival from Africa. Thus, 68.5 percent of slave voyages from Africa to the Rio de la Plata sailed between November and March, while 63.5 percent of Brazilian slave arrivals occurred during the same season –roughly the summer in the Southern hemisphere. In 1782, data on the diseases and mortality of slaves shipped from Brazil to Montevideo also suggest that these voyages were the continuation of Atlantic crossings.¹¹⁹ If slave voyages from Brazil to the Río de la Plata mainly consisted of slaves recently sent from Africa to Brazil, there was always a trade in small groups of slaves from Brazil to the Río de la Plata every month. Vessels bringing such small numbers also carried sugar, coffee, tobacco, and manufactured products for sale in Montevideo. An experienced merchant could embark a single slave in Salvador claiming the vessel as a slaver when in fact his main business was introducing tobacco to Buenos Aires. Although all foreign merchants took advantage of the new royal taxation policy that encouraged the slave trade, such smuggling operations underpinned much of the increase in slave arrivals from Brazil to the Río de la Plata.

1.2. The Brazilian slave trade routes to the Río de la Plata.

Many branches of commerce between the Río de la Plata and Brazil were illegal

¹¹⁸ AGN-A, IX, 18-8-11, Papers of Tomás A. Romero.

¹¹⁹ See the entries for slave voyages in AGN-A, IX, 14-4-4 and 14-4-5, Tomas de Razón, 1782.

according to Spanish regulations, but we should note that the Brazilian slave trade to Montevideo and Buenos Aires was completely illegal according Portuguese regulations as well. In 1751, the Portuguese crown prohibited the exportation of slaves to places outside the empire.¹²⁰ However, the Portuguese crown and colonial authorities in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires tolerated this slave route and were well aware of the profits for Spanish and Portuguese subjects. Two documents illustrate this trans-imperial cooperation. In 1780, the arrival of Francisco A. Maciel at Río de Janeiro from Montevideo to buy merchandise and slaves triggered a letter from the Viceroy of Brazil to the Portuguese crown about how convenient it was for the empire to sell slaves to the Spanish. In 1799, the Viceroy of the Río de la Plata Joaquín del Pino, former Governor of Montevideo, warned the merchants of Rio de Janeiro about the presence of French privateers in the region. The French were capturing Portuguese vessels in transatlantic and intra-American slave voyages to sell the slaves in Montevideo. Such activities disrupted a commerce that was of the utmost importance for the Spanish viceroy.¹²¹ Rather than Portuguese prohibition, it was in fact Luso-Spanish collaboration which drove the slave trade from Brazil to the Río de la Plata. Table 1.3 depicts the fluctuations of this traffic and the main ports of Brazilian slave embarkation to Montevideo and Buenos Aires.

Table 1.3. Brazilian origins of slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata, 1777-1812

Year	Rio de Janeiro	Salvador	Other ports	Brazil, unspecified	Total
1777-1791	3,697 (46%)	3,689 (46%)	363 (4%)	362 (4%)	8,111 (100%)
1792-1799	4,673 (50%)	392 (4%)	1,632 (18%)	2,616 (28%)	9,313 (100%)
1800-1806	8,150 (61%)	2,690 (19%)	1,165 (8%)	1,647 (12%)	13,652 (100%)

¹²⁰ Edmundo Correia Lopes, *A escravatura (subsídios para sua história)*. Lisboa: Agência Geral Colónias 1944, 149.

¹²¹ Prado, "In the Shadows," 76, 154; Frago and Gouvêa note a Portuguese scheme to sell slaves in Spanish America in 1799. João Frago and Fátima Gouvêa. "Nas rotas da governação portuguesa: Rio de Janeiro e Costa da Mina, séculos XVII e XVIII." In Frago et al, *Nas rotas do Império*, 35.

1807-1812	6,097 (54%)	4,604 (41%)	405 (4%)	70 (1%)	11,176 (100%)
Total	22,617 (54%)	11,375 (27%)	3,565 (8%)	4,695 (11%)	42,252 (100%)

Sources: Same as Figure 1.1. **Note:** Other ports were Rio Grande, Laguna, Parati, São Sebastião, Pernambuco, Santos, Santa Catalina, Ilha Grande, and Ilha dos Porcos. Except from Ilha Grande, none of these ports sent more than 1000 slaves to the Río de la Plata.

More than half of the slaves coming from Brazil to the Río de la Plata were embarked in Rio de Janeiro and almost thirty percent in Salvador. The significant role of first Rio de Janeiro and second Salvador in the traffic to Montevideo and Buenos Aires is not surprising. Rio de Janeiro and Salvador were the first and second most important ports of slave disembarkation in the history of the transatlantic slave trade, receiving 2.6 and 1.7 million enslaved Africans respectively.¹²² All the other Brazilian ports engaged in the slave trade to the Río de la Plata together account for just eight percent of total arrivals. We have no data on the Brazilian port of embarkation for eleven percent of the Rioplatense slave arrivals. These cases are mainly confined to the 1790s and do not affect our assessment of the primacy of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador in the Brazilian routes to the Río de la Plata.

Apart from this coastal slave trade, continuous inland slave traffic existed from the southernmost Brazilian province (present-day Rio Grande do Sul) to the Río de la Plata. In the eighteenth century, Spanish garrisons frequently captured petty traders who tried to smuggle slaves, tobacco, and European products through the countryside of present-day Uruguay. From the reports of these frontier garrisons, we estimate that between 100 and 200 slaves were introduced yearly from Rio Grande do Sul between 1777 and 1812. This inland traffic would increase from five to ten percent (3,500-7,000) the total slave trade to the viceregal Río de la Plata.¹²³

¹²² *Voyages Database*.

¹²³ For other estimates of this inland slave trade see Rudy Baus, "Rio Grande do Sul in the Portuguese empire: The formative years, 1777-1808." *The Americas* 39, 4 (1983): 519-535.

A more complete view of the Rio de Janeiro-Rio de la Plata connection emerges by examining some of the main features of the transatlantic slave trade to Rio de Janeiro. The second half of the eighteenth century was a time of transition for Brazilian slavery between the gold mining boom of Minas Gerais (1695-1750) and the rise of the nineteenth-century coffee plantations in Southeast Brazil.¹²⁴ In this phase, the agriculture feeding the Brazilian markets (especially Rio de Janeiro) and the renaissance of sugar production in Salvador in the 1790s –as revolution engulfed Saint Domingue– created the main sources of demand for slave labor. The Río de la Plata was not a plantation society and could certainly not match the main markets for slaves passing through Rio de Janeiro to the Brazilian hinterland. However, the Río de la Plata absorbed thirty percent of the slaves arriving in Rio de Janeiro in 1781-1783, and ten percent of those arriving in 1792-1806.¹²⁵ This demand for slaves from the Río de la Plata played an important role in sustaining the Rio de Janeiro slave trade just prior to the emergence of the coffee sector.

By the turn of eighteenth century, the Río de la Plata was relevant for the internal Brazilian slave trade in comparison with two regions: Rio Grande do Sul and Minas Gerais. Rio Grande do Sul had a rural economy similar to the Río de la Plata, based on cattle ranching, but lacked a major trading center like Buenos Aires and an open Atlantic port like Montevideo. From 1800 to 1812, more than 7,500 slaves arrived in Rio Grande do Sul, 5,600

¹²⁴ On the role of Rio de Janeiro in the Portuguese empire see João Fragoso and Manolo Florentino, *O arcaísmo como projeto. Rio de Janeiro 1790-1840*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira 2001. On the significance of the merchants of Rio de Janeiro in the imperial system see João Fragoso, *Homens de grossa aventura: Acumulação e Hierarquia na praça mercantil do Rio de Janeiro, 1790-1830*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1998. On the slave trade to Rio de Janeiro see Manolo Florentino, *En Costas Negras: uma história do tráfico atlântico de escravos entre a África e o Rio de Janeiro, séculos XVIII e XIX*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997. On the debates on Brazilian slavery see Stuart B Schwartz, *Slaves, peasants, and rebels. Reconsidering Brazilian slavery*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

¹²⁵ In 1781-1783, near 10,000 slaves arrived in Rio de Janeiro, out of which 3,000 were shipped to the Río de la Plata. In 1792-1806, approximately 168,000 slaves arrived in South-Eastern Brazil (Rio de Janeiro and neighboring minor ports), and 15,000 were shipped to the Río de la Plata. In these same years other 4,300 slaves arrived in the Río de la Plata from Brazil, but we lack of data on their port of origin. Half of them surely departed from Rio de Janeiro. On slave arrivals to Rio de Janeiro see *Voyages Database*.

of whom had been embarked in Rio de Janeiro.¹²⁶ In the same period 14,500 slaves were shipped solely from Rio de Janeiro to the Río de la Plata. Thus, the slave route from Rio de Janeiro to the Río de la Plata was almost three times larger than the Rio de Janeiro-Rio Grande slave traffic. In addition, we must note that Rio de Janeiro had greater commercial control over Rio Grande, part of the Portuguese domain, than on the Río de la Plata, and of course the trade was legal.¹²⁷

Minas Gerais was quite different from Rio Grande do Sul as far as the internal Brazilian slave trade was concerned. Gold mining turned Minas Gerais into the main destination for slaves in Brazil in the first half of the eighteenth century and made Rio de Janeiro the major export point for gold in Portuguese America. According to Laird Bergad, the slave trade to Minas Gerais had almost ceased by the 1770s.¹²⁸ As this suggests, prices of slaves were at historically low levels there between 1773 and 1796, making Minas Gerais not a very attractive market for slave traders. According to some estimates, between 1,600 and 5,100 slaves arrived annually in Minas Gerais from 1786 to 1808.¹²⁹ In this same period, 2,500 slaves per year arrived to the Río de la Plata from Africa and Brazil on average.¹³⁰ Thus, the figures of slave arrivals to the Río de la Plata were in the same range as those to Minas Gerais in the same period. From a long run perspective, the Río de la Plata was a secondary market for the slave traders of Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, but at the turn of the eighteenth century this region claimed an important share of the slaves arriving in Brazil.

¹²⁶ Helen Osório, *O império português no sul da América. Estancieiros, lavradores e comerciantes*. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2007, 221.

¹²⁷ Rio de Janeiro supplied three quarters of all slaves entering Rio Grande do Sul, but only half of the slaves entering the Río de la Plata via Brazil.

¹²⁸ Laird Bergad, "After the mining boom: Demographic and economic aspects of slavery in Mariana, Minas Gerais, 1750-1808," *Latin American Research Review* 31, 1 (1996): 67-97. See also on this issue on comparative view Laird Bergad, *The comparative histories of slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹²⁹ Amílcar Martins Filho, and Roberto B. Martins, "Slavery in a non-export economy: Nineteenth-century Minas Gerais revisited." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, (1983): 537-568.

¹³⁰ Note that there was no recorded slave arrival to the Río de la Plata in 1787, 1790 and 1791. If we take those years out of the figures, the average increases to 2,800 slaves arriving per year.

Slave arrivals from Salvador to the Río de la Plata increased in the decades of 1780 and the late 1800s, while there were few slave arrivals in the 1790s. These were not years of growth for the slave trade to the Río de la Plata; rather the first of these periods was one of illegal trading and the late 1800s was one of decline. The slave route from Salvador was relevant to the Río de la Plata in years in which Rioplatense arrivals were at their lowest. This patterns shows that trade with the Rio de la Plata attracted all Brazilian traders, not only from Rio de Janeiro since merchants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo paid mainly silver for slaves, and silver was essential for Portuguese long-distance commerce in the Indian Ocean and Eastern Asia.

It is also possible to trace the African origin of the slaves channeled through Brazilian ports. Slaves coming from Río de Janeiro to the Río de la Plata were most likely from Angola originally. We now know that from 1777 to 1812, 97 percent of slaves coming to Rio de Janeiro were embarked in West-Central Africa, and that 85 percent were shipped only from two ports: Luanda and Benguela. A minority of slaves, particularly those departing from Salvador, may have initially come from the Bight of Benin. From 1777 to 1812, sixty percent of the captives arriving in Salvador were embarked in the Bight of Benin.¹³¹ If we apply these percentages to the slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata from Brazil, we could project at least 19,200 slaves departing from Luanda and Benguela compared to 6,800 captives from the Bight of Benin. Therefore more slaves from West-Central Africa and the Bight of Benin came to the Río de la Plata via Río de Janeiro and Salvador than directly from Africa. The larger role played by the Brazilian slave trade routes in bringing enslaved Africans from the Bight of Benin and Angola perhaps explains the existence of African-based associations called *Hausa*, *Mina Nagó*, *Angola*, and *Benguela* in the late-colonial period and throughout

¹³¹ *Voyages Database*.

most of the nineteenth century in Montevideo and Buenos Aires.¹³²

1.3. *The African slave trade routes to the Río de la Plata.*

The Río de la Plata's direct trade with Africa drew on a different mix of African regions than did trade through Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. While the two Brazilian ports had firm commercial links with a single region of slave embarkation, direct African trade with the Río de la Plata had short-lived connections with three regions: Southeast Africa (Mozambique), West-Central Africa (Loango and Angola), and the Bight of Biafra. At least 78 percent of all slaves brought directly from Africa to the Río de la Plata came from these three regions. This different pattern is probably due to the fact that slave traders of several different nationalities brought captives into Montevideo and Buenos Aires throughout the period examined here. By contrast, Luso-Brazilian slave traders alone supplied Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, and they drew on the areas of Africa where the Portuguese traditionally had a large presence. Table 1.4 shows the African regions which sent slaves to the Río de la Plata and the fluctuations of the direct trade.

Table 1.4. Declared region of provenance for slaves arriving from Africa to the Río de la Plata, 1777-1812

Years	Southeast Africa	West-Central Africa	Bight of Biafra	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Upper Guinea	Africa, unspecified	Total
1777-1791	40 (2%)	0	2,347 (81%)	500 (17%)	0	0	0	2,887 (100%)
1792-1799	1,482 (35%)	1,405 (33%)	495 (12%)	660 (15%)	0	0	220 (5%)	4,262 (100%)
1800-1806	9,279 (50%)	4,164 (23%)	768 (4%)	709 (4%)	385 (3%)	1,859 (10%)	1,192 (6%)	18,356 (100%)
1807-1812	1,708 (69%)	69 (3%)	0	0	0	0	691 (28%)	2,468 (100%)

¹³² Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*, 233-4.

Total	12,509 (45%)	5,638 (20%)	3,610 (13%)	1,869 (7%)	385 (1%)	1,859 (7%)	2,103 (7%)	27,973 (100%)
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Sources: Same as Figure 1.1. **Note:** This table accounts only for disembarked slaves. At least 34,600 captives were embarked in the direct traffic between Africa and the Río de la Plata.

All broad areas supplying slaves to the Americas took part in the direct traffic to the Río de la Plata. However, three regions (Bight of Benin, Upper Guinea and Gold Coast) accounted for only fifteen percent of the total. Atlantic winds and currents ensured that 65 percent of all direct shipments came from regions south of the equator: West-Central and Southeast Africa. Probably the majority of the slave voyages with no data on their African provenance also came from these two regions.

The island of Mozambique was the main African port for the direct transatlantic slave trade to the Río de la Plata. At least 12,600 slaves embarked there for Montevideo and Buenos Aires. Other Southeast African ports like Quelimane and Kilwa played a smaller role and they sent 3,400 slaves to the Río de la Plata. The route from Mozambique sometimes detoured to Île de France (Mauritius), a commercial hotspot of the Indian Ocean linked to the Río de la Plata, and ruled by Spain's traditional ally France. Almost all slave voyages sailing from Mozambique stopped at Cape Good Hope for water and supplies. Ships could not sail straight from the Cape to Montevideo, located almost in the same latitude, because of the pattern of Atlantic winds and currents. Instead, vessels had to sail north from the Cape and follow the Benguela current parallel to the African coast. Close to present-day southern Angola they then began the Atlantic passage. These ships reached South America at the latitude of the Rio de Janeiro region and then they followed the Atlantic winds southward to the entrance of the Río de la Plata. A slave voyage from Mozambique to Montevideo could take from two to four months.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Rio de la Plata was as important market as

Rio de Janeiro for slave suppliers in Mozambique. From 1797 to 1812, an estimated 18,000 slaves were sent from Southeast Africa to Rio de Janeiro.¹³³ In the same period, Southeast Africa shipped from 16,000 to 23,000 slaves to the Río de la Plata. This development in the Spanish-Portuguese networks emerged from impediments faced by Rioplatense merchants in buying slaves in West-Central and West Africa. Spanish silver dollars formed one of the main currencies of the slave trade in Mozambique since the 1760s due to commerce with the French Mascarene Islands,¹³⁴ but the slave trade with the Río de la Plata brought an unprecedented inflow of silver. Luis F. Dias Antunes notes that 260,000 pieces of Spanish silver entered the Portuguese custom office at Mozambique from 1796 to 1806. Half of this sum came from the slave trade with the Río de la Plata.¹³⁵ From these figures, he provides a high estimate of 23,000 slaves embarked from Mozambique to the Río de la Plata. Our data of 16,000 embarked slaves originates from information on vessels arriving in the Río de la Plata with full accounts of disembarked slaves. Data on embarked slaves sometimes is missing. Fourteen vessels coming from Southeast Africa does not provide the total number of embarked slaves, but only the figure of those who survived the Atlantic passage.

From 1777 to 1812, the average mortality ratio of slave voyages from Africa to the Río de la Plata was 0.20. Overall one out of five captives died during the Atlantic crossing. This was twice the shipboard mortality experienced on all slave voyages from Africa to the Americas in the same period. Both regional and seasonal patterns shaped the mortality in the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. High mortality rates stemmed from Río de la Plata's strong connections with two of Africa's regions from which voyages always experienced elevated mortality. One was the Bight of Biafra (0.28 of all slaves embarked there died) and the other

¹³³ *Voyages Database*.

¹³⁴ José Capela, *O tráfico de Escravos de Moçambique para as Ilhas do Índico, 1720-1902*. Maputo: Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 1987.

¹³⁵ Luis F. Dias Antunes, "O Rio da Prata e África oriental: negócios de escravos e prata (1796-1806)." In *IV Jornadas Uruguayas de Historia Económica*. Montevideo: AUDHE, 2007.

was Southeast Africa (0.23 died), the most remote of all major embarkation regions. But while shipboard deaths on vessels from Southeast Africa were similar whether the vessel was going to the Río de la Plata or some other part of the Americas, voyages from the Bight of Biafra to the Río de la Plata experienced noticeably higher mortality than those going to other transatlantic markets. From 1777 to 1812 the average mortality ratio from the Bight of Biafra to all transatlantic ports was 0.15, while the slave shipments of the *Compañía de Filipinas* from Bonny and Calabar to the Río de la Plata was almost twice this figure at 0.28.¹³⁶

Seasonality, which shaped the time of departure and arrival of slave voyages, also influenced mortality ratios. Almost 70 percent of all slave voyages from Africa to the Río de la Plata sailed between November and March, from late spring to the end of summer. Slave voyages from Africa sailing outside of this range bore the highest mortality ratios measured by month. In May, four slave voyages had an average mortality ratio of 0.38. For June, the mortality ratio was 0.29. José Milá de la Roca, one of the most important slave traders of Montevideo, recognized that seasonal patterns were significant for the success of slave trade activities, and that this factor was especially influential for voyages from Mozambique.¹³⁷

West-Central Africa was the third most significant region in the direct slave trade to the Río de la Plata. This area of slave embarkation supplied 45 percent of all Africans who entered in the transatlantic slave trade to the Americas.¹³⁸ It took thirty to sixty days for a vessel to sail from Luanda and Benguela to Montevideo, which made West-Central Africa the closest area of slave embarkation to the Río de la Plata in terms of voyage length. This proximity is reflected in the comparatively low mortality ratio (0.07) of slave voyages sailing from there to the Río de la Plata. Why the most important area of slave embarkation in the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the closest to Montevideo supply only twenty

¹³⁶ *Voyages Database*.

¹³⁷ Bentancur, *El Puerto colonial*, 258.

¹³⁸ *Voyages Database*.

percent of the slaves arriving direct from Africa to the Río de la Plata? The answer rests on the commercial hegemony enjoyed by the merchants of Rio de Janeiro in Angola. The slave traders of Rio de Janeiro wanted to keep their position as intermediaries between Angola and the Río de la Plata.¹³⁹ Thus, they limited the direct trade between Angola and the Río de la Plata just as Luso-Angolan traders asked permission from the Portuguese crown to sell slaves directly to the Río de la Plata.¹⁴⁰

Most of the slave voyages that did sail from West-Central Africa to the Río de la Plata in fact did not depart from Portuguese Angola. Out of 31 slave voyages sailing from West-Central Africa, nineteen departed from Loango (the Atlantic coast of present-day Republic of Congo), Cabinda, and Congo (which implied slave embarkation in the Congo River), while twelve voyages departed from the Portuguese ports in Angola. Thus, 62 percent of the slaves embarked in West-Central Africa came from the Congo River or the Atlantic coast north from its mouth. Slave traders of various flags operated in Loango, Cabinda and the Congo River. Of the nineteen slave voyages originating in this region, eight were carried out by US vessels, ten British, and only one by Spanish. The majority of those British ships arrived in Montevideo because they were captured in Loango by French or Spanish privateers.

The slave trade from Angola to the Río de la Plata was different from the branch north from the Congo River. Out of twelve slave vessels sailing from Luanda and Benguela, five were Spanish, three Portuguese, two English, and two American. The Spanish (or Rioplatense) vessels in this group reveal the efforts of the merchants of Buenos Aires to

¹³⁹ The slave trade from Rio de Janeiro to Rio Grande do Sul illustrates the profits of the slave traders of Rio de Janeiro in the Río de la Plata. Fragoso and Florentino point out that the merchants of Rio de Janeiro obtained a hundred percent return of sales in Rio Grande. João Fragoso and Manolo Florentino *Negociantes, Mercado atlântico e mercado regional: estrutura e dinâmica da praça mercantil do Rio de Janeiro de 1790 a 1812*. In Júnia Furtado (org.) *Diálogos oceânicos. Minas Gerais e as novas abordagens para uma história do Império Ultramarino português*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2001, 167-170.

¹⁴⁰ Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution*, 88.

obtain slaves in Angola in the 1790s, after the opening of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. The same was true of the three Portuguese ships which broke the well enforced prohibition on trading with the Spanish. Throughout our thirty-five-year period (1777-1812), 333 ships embarked slaves in Rio de Janeiro to the Río de la Plata, while only a dozen slave voyages came directly from Angola.

The Gold Coast and Upper Guinea were minor regions of slave embarkation for the Río de la Plata, mostly operated by non-Iberian slave traders. Approximately 2,000 slaves disembarked in the Río de la Plata from the Gold Coast between 1777 and 1812. They were brought in twelve slave voyages: six Americans, three English, two Portuguese and one Danish vessel. In the same period, 1,900 slaves disembarked in the Río de la Plata from Upper Guinea. They were brought in twenty-two slave voyages: fifteen American, three Portuguese, one from Hamburg, one Prussian, and one Spanish ship. Slave traders of the North Atlantic mainly operated in these two areas, but they began to trade with the Spanish South Atlantic after the opening of the Río de la Plata to the slave trade. Both the trade in slaves and goods were attractive for these merchants. Fifteen out of the twenty-two slavers sailing from Upper Guinea to the Rio de la Plata disembarked fewer than one hundred slaves, which points out to the disembarkation of merchandise too.

Only two slave ships from the Bight of Benin reached the Río de la Plata in this period. However, vessels embarking slaves in the Gold Coast also stopped in neighboring ports of the Bight of Benin to complete their human cargoes. While the Portuguese term *Costa da Mina* initially labeled ports in the Gold Coast, it increasingly included the Bights of Benin and Biafra.¹⁴¹ Thus, more Africans from these bights might have been caught in the direct traffic to the Río de la Plata than those recorded here.

¹⁴¹ Law, "Ethnicity and the Slave Trade" and "Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the Diaspora."

1.4. The slave traders operating in the Río de la Plata

As the above suggests, the direct slave trade from Africa to the Río de la Plata attracted slave traders from many countries, including Portugal, Spain, United States, Britain, France, and even Prussia. However, Portuguese and Spanish vessels brought more than three quarters of all slave arrivals in this Viceroyalty. In fact, these were Brazilian and Rioplatense vessels since most of these slave traders, although born in the Iberian Peninsula, resided in the New World. Table 1.5 reveals not only the Portuguese hegemony over the slave trade to the viceregal Río de la Plata, but also the varying involvement of other national groups.

Table 1.5. Slave arrivals in the Río de la Plata broken down by flag, 1777-1812.

Years	Portugal	Spain	Britain	USA	Other	Total
1777-1791	7,958 (72.4%)	713 (6.4%)	2,287 (20.8%)	0	40 (0.4%)	10,998 (100%)
1792-1799	5,833 (43.0%)	6,646 (49.0%)	660 (4.9%)	349 (2.5%)	87 (0.6%)	13,575 (100%)
1800-1806	10,679 (33%)	9,619 (30%)	2,642 (8%)	6,897 (22%)	2,171 (7%)	32,008 (100%)
1807-1812	9,482 (69%)	3,402 (25%)	0	760 (6%)	0	13,644 (100%)
Total	33,952 (48%)	20,380 (29%)	5,589 (8%)	8,006 (12%)	2,298 (3%)	70,225 (100%)

Source: See Figure 1.1. **Note:** French vessels brought almost 1,500 slaves to the Río de la Plata. The remaining slaves arrived in three ships with the Prussian, Hamburg and Danish flag respectively.

To establish which ships were Portuguese or Spanish in the Río de la Plata is sometimes a difficult task. Merchants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo used the Portuguese flag to enter Rio de Janeiro. During wartime, ships of Rioplatense merchants usually had two names and two flags in order to prevent actions of privateers and the British navy. Spanish colonial authorities knew of this camouflage which allowed Spanish trade during Atlantic warfare.¹⁴² Portuguese ships also used the Spanish colors to avoid taxes in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. A detailed study of crew members of Spanish slave vessels show several Portuguese officers and sailors who had experience in the coastal Brazilian and transatlantic

¹⁴² AGN-A, IX, 4-7-5, “Instancia promovida por varios individuos del comercio de esta capital sobre remisión a España por la vía de Brasil los frutos acopiados de sus negociaciones...” [1799].

slave trades. As already argued, Portuguese and Spanish merchants located in Brazil and the Río de la Plata built trans-imperial networks to increase their returns from the slave trade.

Portuguese slave traders brought half of all slaves to viceregal Río de la Plata. This is not surprising given that sixty percent of all slaves came from Brazil, and two of the three most important regions of African slave embarkation for the Río de la Plata were under Portuguese control. In addition, the activity of Portuguese slave traders was continuous throughout the period taken up here, whereas other slavers had a much more limited periods of access to the Río de la Plata –specially US slave traders.

Many Rioplatense merchants were only intermittently involved in slave voyages, while a few traders had a major and continuous presence. We have incomplete records of owners and consignees of slave cargoes disembarked in the Río de la Plata: 247 owners (35 percent of all slave voyages) and 230 consignees (32 percent). Merchants who were one or two-time owners of slave cargoes are linked to 35 percent of the slave voyages sample. One or two-time consignees account for 39 percent of slave voyages for which consignee information survives. Apart from occasional participants, a group of merchants in Buenos Aires, and to a lesser extent in Montevideo, maintained long-term involvement in slave trading activities. We know that Tomás A. Romero was owner or consignee in at least 32 slave voyages.¹⁴³ Behind him in Buenos Aires came Pedro Duval (30), Bartolomé Rusiano (21), Manuel Aguirre (18), José Rubio (12), Felipe Vidal (12), Francisco Beláustegui (10), and Martín Álzaga (10).¹⁴⁴ Most of these merchants had representatives in Montevideo. We must point out that slave ventures commonly had co-ownerships, and thus two or three of the

¹⁴³ Romero owned –or he was the consignee- of entire slave vessels, while Pedro Duval commonly was the co-owner or co-consignee of slave ventures. Thus, Duval had a less important participation in the trade than Romero even though he was involved in a number of slave ventures similar to Romero.

¹⁴⁴ Less prominent slave traders were Diego Agüero (7), José de María (7), Manuel Sarratea (7), Manuel C. Pacheco (6), Juan Silva Cordeyro (6), Juan Nonell (5), Juan R. Baudrix (5), Antonio Cornet (4), Manuel Pinedo y Arroyo (4), Felix Sainz de la Masa (4), Gerardo Esteve (3), José F. de Castro (3), José J. de Almeyda (3), Juan A. Lezica (3), and Martín F. Añorga (3).

names in this list usually had a share of the ownership of slaves brought by a single vessel. The list of the most important owners or consignees of slave cargoes in Montevideo is shorter than in Buenos Aires: Francisco A. Maciel (15), Francisco Joanicó (13), José Milá de la Roca (10) and Mateo Magariños (8).¹⁴⁵ To those operating in Montevideo, we should add the privateer Hipólito Mordell –who captured six British slave vessels– and the commercial house Berro y Errazquin –who sold slaves captured from three other slave vessels. Finally, it is difficult to measure the share in slave trading activities of Cipriano de Melo –the Portuguese-born official in charge of suppressing contraband in Montevideo. After the slave arrivals of 1782, Don Cipriano sent slaves to Upper Peru.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the Intendente of Buenos Aires licensed him to introduce slaves in the Río de la Plata in 1786.¹⁴⁷ However, the illicit character of most of his commerce makes it difficult to track his operations.

For one voyage, the American frigate *Almanac*, we have the complete itinerary from Rhode Island to Montevideo in 1800-1801. Tomás A. Romero had paid for this expedition with hides and other products sent from Montevideo to Newport in the frigate *La Agenoria* in 1799.¹⁴⁸ Perhaps Romero used the same arrangement for most of the American slave voyages in which he figures as owner of the slaves, while he had a looser connection with other US slave voyages where he appears as consignee. Both *La Agenoria* and *Almanac* had the same captain, Samuel Chace. The *Almanac* left Rhode Island in May 1800, and arrived in Rio de Janeiro in June. The ship wintered for two months in Rio and then sailed to Mozambique in August, where she reached the coast in late September. There, it took Chace almost three months to embark 344 slaves. In December, Chace sailed from Mozambique to Cape Good Hope to embark water and supplies for the Atlantic passage from which he departed in late

¹⁴⁵ The list includes José Costa y Texedor (5), Carlos Camuso (4), Antonio Masini (3), and Cristobal Salvañach (3).

¹⁴⁶ Prado, "In the Shadow," 253-9.

¹⁴⁷ Molinari, *La trata de Negros*, 90.

¹⁴⁸ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 41, Exp.122, 1799.

January 1801, before reaching Montevideo in mid March. During the crossing 24 slaves died, a moderate toll for three months sailing from Mozambique to Montevideo. We should note that almost one out of three Africans died on Portuguese ships taking this route, and one out of four on American vessels.

Two major slave traders of Montevideo, José Milá de la Roca and Francisco A. Maciel, drew on different sources of slaves and strategies of traffic. Milá de la Roca prided himself of being the first Spaniard to successfully engage in slave trading with Mozambique. He sent at least five slave voyages to Mozambique, two others to Mauritius and one to Senegal between 1797 and 1800. His reports reveal that Portuguese authorities in Mozambique did not hinder Spanish slave traders as did their counterparts in Angola –a fact that no doubt also explains why American slave traders specifically drew on Mozambique, too. While initially successful, Milá de la Roca could not overcome the changing environment that impeded Spanish Atlantic trade. Many of his shipments did not reach Montevideo because of privateers, mostly, a couple of shipwrecks, and one slave rebellion. Francisco Maciel, by contrast, coupled the introduction of slaves from Brazil with the export of hides. However, ninety percent of his exports sent to Brazil to buy slaves were in silver in 1792-6. Maciel probably exported hides to make it seem he was using these goods for the slave trade, while in fact he mainly bought slaves with silver.¹⁴⁹ In this way, he took advantage of Spanish regulation of the slave trade to profit from his commerce in goods with Brazil.

Almost a quarter of all slaves arriving in viceregal Río de la Plata came in vessels of the United States, Britain, France, as well as Hamburg. English ships were involved in two separate periods: the slave shipments of Baker and Dawson for the *Compañía de Filipinas* in the 1780s and the British ships captured by French and Spanish privateers in the 1800s. US

¹⁴⁹ Bentancur, *El Puerto colonial*, 255-263, and 277.

involvement was short lived but intense. Although it lasted only eleven years (1797-1807), Americans accounted for 56 slave voyages from Africa to the Río de la Plata out of a total of 160 direct Atlantic crossings: sixteen voyages from Southeast Africa, fifteen from Upper Guinea, ten from West-Central Africa, six from the Gold Coast, and nine from unknown African origin. American traders shipped more slaves direct from Africa to viceregal Río de la Plata than any other nation.¹⁵⁰ Both British and US slave traders simultaneously ended their activities in the Río de la Plata with the separate but concurrent ending of their own slave trades in 1807-1808.

1.5. The continuance of the slave trade to the Río de la Plata, 1812-1839

The independence movement in the Río de la Plata interrupted the colonial slave trade, but the prohibition of 1812 did not completely prevent scattered slave arrivals from Brazil and Africa. In 1817, the Luso-Brazilian occupation turned Montevideo into the southernmost outlet of the internal slave trade centered in Rio de Janeiro. After rising against the Brazilian rule, the patriotic government of Uruguay reinstated the prohibition of the slave trade in 1825, and this measure figured in the first Uruguayan constitution in 1830. But enslaved Africans continued arriving in the Río de la Plata: as servants accompanying with their masters, as prizes of privateers, and as African “colonists.” Political and commercial relationships with Rio de Janeiro shaped the continuance of the slave trade in the three cases.

Britain conducted active negotiations with Argentina and Brazil during the Argentine-Brazilian War that led to the independence of Uruguay. Even as these discussions among British, Brazilian and Argentine diplomats took place, enslaved Africans continued arriving in the South Atlantic, and not just in Rio de Janeiro. The last shipments of slaves to Buenos

¹⁵⁰ For a new assessment of the wide-ranging activities of United States-based slave traders see David Eltis “U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644-1867: An assessment.” *Civil War History* 54, 4 (2008):347-378.

Aires direct from Africa reached port as a consequence of this war, for the government of Buenos Aires issued privateering commissions against Brazilian ships. Since colonial times it was common for the authorities of Buenos Aires to issue licenses of privateering against English enemies during wartime. The Argentine-Brazilian war coincided with the peak of slave arrivals to Brazil in 1826-1830, induced by the Anglo-Brazilian treaty of 1826 prohibiting the slave trade after 1830. As a result, these privateers introduced more than 1700 slaves from captured ships as ‘apprentices’ to Buenos Aires, where the transatlantic slave trade was already prohibited.¹⁵¹ Table 1.6. shows that the majority of the captives came from only four ships.

Table 1.6. Slaves seized by the privateers of Buenos Aires, 1826-1828.

Captured vessels and year of the seizure	Trade slaves captured	Slave crew members captured	Total of all slaves captured
São Jose Diligente (1826)	380		380
Bom Jesus / Golphino (1828)	700		700
Adamastor (1828)	357		357
All other ships combined (1826-1828)	97	182	279
Total	1534	182	1716

Source: Liliana Crespi, “Negros apresados en operaciones de corso durante la guerra con el Brasil (1825-1828)” *Temas de Asia y Africa* 2 (1994): 109-22.

Note: the same privateer captured the *Bom Jesus* and *Golphino*.

After the Argentine-Brazilian War, the foundation of Uruguay as an independent country led to measures inimical to the slave trade and slavery, typical of the early Spanish American republics.¹⁵² However, political and economic issues ensured a pattern unique to Uruguay. In 1825, the provisional Assembly had prohibited the slave trade and passed a free womb law in the country. At that moment, Montevideo and Colonia del Sacramento remained under Brazilian rule and, thus such laws had no real effect in the two towns. Both measures were included in the Uruguayan constitution of 1830.¹⁵³ The ending of the slave

¹⁵¹ Liliana Crespi, “Negros apresados en operaciones de corso durante la guerra con el Brasil (1825-1828)” *Temas de Asia y Africa* 2 (1994): 109-22.

¹⁵² George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America 1800-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 57.

¹⁵³ *Actas de la Asamblea General Constituyente y Legislativa del Estado*. Montevideo: Tipográfica de la Escuela Nacional de Artes y Oficios, 1897, Vol. 2,¹⁸¹⁻² 252-3; Vol. 3, 41-3.

trade to Uruguay was merely a declaration of intent given that slaves who entered the country in the company of their masters were permitted, and procedures to regulate the arrival of such slaves had yet to be created. The records of Rio de Janeiro show that at least 201 slaves were shipped from that port to Montevideo between 1830 and 1833, after the constitutional ban of the trade.¹⁵⁴ The arrival of Brazilian and Argentine refugees due to regional conflicts provided the perfect cover for an illegal coastal slave trade. Apart from a dozen exceptional cases where authorities took actions, there are no systematic data on the arrival of these small groups of slaves illegally introduced from 1830 to 1841, just one year prior to the abolition of slavery in Montevideo.¹⁵⁵

Governmental reluctance to enforce the anti-slave trade constitutional measures did not mean that public opinion was openly pro-slavery. Montevidean newspapers did not assume a pro-slavery stance; indeed the slave trade was systematically attacked in the press. Newspapers friendly to the continued inflow of masters and slaves depicted Brazil, Cuba, and the South of the United States as the main centers of economic progress in the Americas.¹⁵⁶ They portrayed the arrival of Brazilian slaves with their masters as vital to the progress of Uruguay because of the severe shortage of labor in the country. They claimed that the newly arrived slaves would eventually be free because of the Uruguayan anti-slavery laws, and that these slaves would enjoy the ‘mild’ treatment that Uruguayans gave to slaves. This standpoint parallels the attitude of the government, which made public declarations against this traffic but privately signed contracts to introduce ‘African colonists.’

¹⁵⁴ João Fragoso and Roberto Ferreira, *Tráfico de escravos e relações comerciais no Sudeste do Brasil: primeira metade do século XIX*. Rio de Janeiro: Inst. de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada - Univ. Federal de Rio de Janeiro, 2000, database.

¹⁵⁵ In January of 1841, five vessels tried to introduce no more than twelve slaves each to Montevideo. Borucki, Chagas, and Stalla, *Esclavitud y trabajo*, 24-7.

¹⁵⁶ *El Indicador*, Montevideo, 6 April 1832, 2.

Peace brought renewed economic growth and, as a result, increased demand for slave labor in Uruguay. Rising exports of hides and jerked beef ensured that slaughter houses, ranches, and urban construction could not function without additional labor. Slave societies such as Brazil and Cuba were the markets for jerked beef, whereas England and France were the main importers of hides. Moreover, civil wars in Buenos Aires and Rio Grande do Sul, competitors in the exportation of hides and jerked beef, further increased the demand for labor in Uruguay during the 1830s.¹⁵⁷ The burgeoning external market and the internal reconstruction of the country drove economic growth. Without free or slave laborers, the new country could not trade. In this context, the continuation of a small slave trade with Brazil and the last arrival of slave vessels directly from Africa are hardly surprising.

Slaves were a significant part of sparsely populated Uruguay. In 1829, it is probable that 74,000 people lived in the country, 14,000 of whom lived in Montevideo. The following year, a census of four quarters of the inner city, *Ciudad Vieja*, counted 9660 inhabitants. This census did not register free blacks, but the slave population constituted 25 percent of *Ciudad Vieja*.¹⁵⁸ According to Andrés Lamas, the population of Montevideo was 23,404 in 1835, of which slaves comprised 25 percent. Lamas stated that 566 Africans arrived in the country as ‘colonists’ in 1834, and that 4,540 more entered between 1835 and 1842: 2,740 males and 1,800 females.¹⁵⁹ The local demand for labor, the relatively easy access to the Brazilian slave trade and even to the African coast meant that the inflow of new slaves continued almost up to the abolition of slavery itself, a very unusual chronology in the wider Atlantic world.

Political and commercial networks between Brazilians and Uruguayans facilitated the continuance of the slave trade toward Montevideo. The first President of Uruguay, Fructuoso

¹⁵⁷ Lucía Sala and Rosa Alonso, *El Uruguay comercial, pastoril y caudillesco*. Montevideo: EBO, 1986, 49.

¹⁵⁸ Oscar Villa, Gerardo Mendive, *La prensa y los constituyentes en el Uruguay de 1830*. Montevideo: Biblioteca Nacional, 1980, 85 and 146.

¹⁵⁹ Arredondo, “Los apuntes estadísticos del Dr. Andrés Lamas,” 25-7 and 56.

Rivera, had been the Military Commander of the countryside during most of the Brazilian occupation –up to the beginning of the war of independence. Other prominent figures of the first Uruguayan government had been active supporters of the Brazilian annexation and influential members of the local commerce.¹⁶⁰ They previously might have known the Brazilian merchants that made the proposal for the ‘African colonists.’¹⁶¹ Such links would facilitate the understanding between the government and the slave traders that led to the introduction of these Africans. The merchants Domingo Vázquez and Teodoro Villaça made loans to the government and arranged the first shipments of ‘African colonists’ to the country.¹⁶² In 1832, the Uruguayan Secretary of Finance, Lucas Obes, approved the contract with Vázquez and Villaça.¹⁶³ The latter paid 30,000 pesos to the government in return for the right to introduce 650 ‘African colonists.’ Vázquez and Villaça were allowed to embark 150 Africans over the quota to compensate for the expected mortality on the voyage. The proposal submitted by the contractors stated that these ‘colonists’ had to be younger than 16 years and at least 40 percent were to be female. Once in Uruguay, the agents sold the right to the work of the ‘colonists’ to cover the expenses of the travel plus benefits. The ‘colonist’ had to work for 12 years for the person that bought that right. The price of a ‘colonist’ younger than 8 years old was 200 pesos and those 8 years and older cost 225 pesos, but there were claims that they were sold in fact for 300 and 400 pesos.¹⁶⁴ In 1834, Manuel da Costa Guimarães underwrote another agreement in which he offered 42 pesos to the government for

¹⁶⁰ Juan Pivel Devoto, *Historia de los partidos políticos en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: Cámara de Representantes, 1994, 53-60.

¹⁶¹ On the Brazilian background and slave trading connection that made possible the entire operation of the ‘African colonists’ see: Alex Borucki, “The ‘African Colonists’ of Montevideo. New Light on the Illegal Slave Trade to Rio de Janeiro and the Río de la Plata (1830-1842).” *Slavery and Abolition* 30, 3 (Sept. 2009): 427-444.

¹⁶² Sala and Alonso, *El Uruguay comercial, pastoril y caudillesco*, 1989, Vol. 2, 185 and 208.

¹⁶³ *El Universal*, Montevideo, 7 February 1835, 2.

¹⁶⁴ AGN-AGA, Libro 938, Libro de Colonos Africanos, 1833-35; *El Estandarte Nacional*, Montevideo, 26 January 1835, 3.

each African disembarked, all of whom were to be younger than 13 years old.¹⁶⁵ Table 1.7. lists the five vessels that disembarked ‘African colonists’ in Montevideo as well as the two others that were prevented from doing so.

Table 1.7. Shipments of ‘African colonists’ to Montevideo, 1833-1835.

Date of arrival	Ship	Place of disembarkation	Africans	Agents
10/25/1833	<i>Águila I</i>	Montevideo (Santa Lucía)	239	Platero
02/14/1834	<i>Río de la Plata</i>	Maldonado	*450	Vázquez and Villaça
04/04/1834	<i>Porfia</i>	Montevideo	*300	Vázquez and Villaça
12/28/1834	<i>Río de la Plata</i>	Captured by the British Navy and landed in Rio de Janeiro	-	Vázquez and Villaça
01/30/1835	<i>Esperanza Oriental</i>	Montevideo (Buceo)	350	Guimarães
03/16/1835	<i>Delfina</i>	Maldonado	**251	Vázquez and Villaça
06/13/1835	<i>Paquete Africano (a) Cesar Augusto</i>	No disembarkation permitted, redirected to Brazil	-	Guimarães
Total			1590	

Notes: *Hood claimed that 450 and 300 Africans, respectively, were landed by the *Río de la Plata* and *Porfia*, whereas the Police records registered only 336 and 164. The Police figures could be explained by mortality of the Africans, previous sales, and bribery. **The government seized the Africans and allocated them as ‘apprentices’ in Maldonado. **Sources:** *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers. Slave trade* Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969, Vol. 14, Sessions 1836, Class B, 82-3, 149. María Díaz de Guerra, *Documentación relativa a esclavos del Departamento de Maldonado* (Montevideo: IMCO, 1983), 40-4; AGN-AGA, Libro 938, Libro de Colonos Africanos, 1833-35.; *El Universal*, 2 Nov. 1833, 3; *El Estandarte Nacional*, 4 Feb. 1835, 3; *El Nacional*, Montevideo, 13 Jun. 1835, 2.

In Montevideo, the Police Department kept a register listing the name of each ‘colonist’ and his or her patron. This list was the only official document that referred to the condition of the Africans as ‘colonists.’¹⁶⁶ This book registered only 220 Africans since the majority was sold simply as slaves.¹⁶⁷ Less than one fifth of these Africans were actually processed under the ‘colonist’ system, which underlines the enslaved status of these so-called colonists.

¹⁶⁵ Juan Pivel Devoto, “Prologo,” in Francisco Bauzá, *Estudios sociales y económicos*. Montevideo: Clásicos Uruguayos, 1972, xvii-xviii.

¹⁶⁶ *El Universal*, Montevideo, 7 November 1833, 3.

¹⁶⁷ AGN-AGA, Libro 938, Libro de Colonos Africanos, 1833-35.

The age of these Africans is another peculiarity of this traffic and contradicted their status of ‘colonists.’ Tables 1.8. and 1.9. show the gender and age of the majority of the Africans disembarked by the ships *Aguila I* and *Delfina*. More than 50 percent of the first group constituted children between 8 and 9 years old. We have no data on 40 percent of these Africans because they were sold before the Police registered them. Both ships might have carried some adult slaves since these tables do not include 98 slaves from the former and 57 from the latter. In the case of *Delfina*, at least 70 percent of the slaves were under 12 year old.¹⁶⁸ In addition, they were predominantly boys, which inflicted the gender requirements of the contract.

Table 1.8. Age and gender of 141 Africans disembarked by the ship *Aguila I*, 1833.

Gender \ Age	8-9 years	14-18 years
Female	56	6
Male	68	11

Source: AGN-AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 848, [List of 141 out of 239 Africans disembarked in Santa Lucía], 2 November 1833.

Table 1.9. Age and gender of 194 Africans disembarked by the ship *Delfina*, 1835.

Gender \ Age	4-7 years	8-11 years	+12 years
Female	18	25	12
Male	76	58	5

Source: Diaz de Guerra, *Documentación*, 44.

British sources confirmed the high ratio of very young Africans on other shipments to Montevideo. In 1834, Thomas S. Hood reported on the disembarkation of the ship *Porfia* that ‘These slaves (principally children) were landed openly, and are now publicly exhibited for sale, in a mart recently established at the gates of the city.’¹⁶⁹ The following year, he described the Africans brought by the vessel *Esperanza Oriental* as ‘principally children

¹⁶⁸ María Díaz de Guerra, *Documentación relativa a esclavos del Departamento de Maldonado*. Montevideo: IMCO, 1983, 44-7.

¹⁶⁹ *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers. Slave trade.* (hereafter abbreviated as IUP) Shannon: Irish University Press, 1969, Vol. 14, Sessions 1835, Class B, 83.

from eight to twelve years old.’¹⁷⁰ The Africans found in the last voyage of the *Río de la Plata*, which was confiscated by the British Navy, were overwhelmingly children: 269 boys and 179 girls, or 85 percent of 522 surviving Africans.¹⁷¹ The high proportion of children on these shipments matches the trends of the last period of the Brazilian and Cuban slave trade, when children and male adults were predominant. Children were more involved in the last and illegal period of the slave trade to Rio de Janeiro than in any region throughout the Atlantic World, and the case of the ‘African colonists’ to Montevideo is consistent with this trend.¹⁷²

Evidence from the ‘African colonists’ can help us to address the debates of the significant ratio of children embarked in slave vessels during the nineteenth century.¹⁷³ One of the issues at stake is whether or not African or New World developments led to this increase of child ratios. If the transatlantic slave trade mirrored the internal variations of the African slave trade, then the reasons of this change were located in Africa. However, New World developments –such as the prohibition but continuance of the slave trade– might have contributed to augment the number of children entering this traffic. Paul Lovejoy has recently reviewed the literature on children and the transatlantic slave trade by focusing in the Bight of Benin.¹⁷⁴ He reveals cases in which some slave vessels embarked a shipment consisting entirely of enslaved women and children just prior the nineteenth century. Regarding that century, Lovejoy points out that labor on Brazilian coffee plantations might have contributed

¹⁷⁰ British National Archives, Foreign Office (hereafter BNA, FO) 84/182, Hood to Wellington, 16 Feb. 1835.

¹⁷¹ IUP, Vol. 23, Sessions 1843, Class B, 475. The list included 94 men.

¹⁷² Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987. See David Eltis, “Fluctuations in the Age and Sex Ratios of Slaves in the Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Slave Traffic.” *Slavery & Abolition* 7:1 (1986): 257-72; David Eltis and Stanley Engerman, “Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men.” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23:2 (1992): 237-57; and “Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864.” *Economic History Review* 46:2 (1993): 308-23.

¹⁷³ See the dossier of *Slavery & Abolition* “Children in European Systems of Slavery” of August 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Lovejoy, “The Children of Slavery – The Transatlantic phase” *Slavery & Abolition*, 27:2 (August 2006): 197-217.

to this increase in children since children could have been employed then in picking coffee beans. In addition, this New World development might have occurred just as critical changes happened in the slave trade within Africa.

British anti-slave trade patrolling in the Atlantic led slave traders to test new tactics regarding the purchase, credit, and sales of slaves. Lovejoy suggests that loading slave vessels with children allowed for so-called tight packing and also diminished some costs of controlling slaves on board.¹⁷⁵ We may note that the strategy of buying as many slaves as quickly as possible might have led to this increase in child ratios as far as children were readily available in the markets along the African coast. The records of one of the vessels that intended to bring ‘African colonists’ to Montevideo may illustrate the timing and procedure of slave purchases in the Angolan coast. Before her capture by the British Navy, the brigantine *Rio de la Plata* had embarked 552 Africans. The Brazilian slavers in charge of that ship bought 74 slaves in Benguela, 35 in Novo Redondo, 100 in Luanda, and 343 in Ambriz. They began purchasing slaves in late August of 1834, and they ended it in late November of that year.¹⁷⁶ The activities of these slavers were not carried out hastily; they stopped at four Angolan ports to fill the brigantine with a very large cargo of enslaved Africans. It is not clear if this slow pace in slave purchasing was a feature or an anomaly of the Angolan slave trade in this period. David Eltis and Stanley Engerman point out that this rise of children among slave cargoes was particularly pronounced in West-Central Africa, which was the main region supplying slaves for South-East Brazil.¹⁷⁷ A larger pool of case-studies on nineteenth-century Angola is essential to cast light on this issue.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 207.

¹⁷⁶ Arquivo do Palácio de Itamarati (Archive of the Brazilian Foreign Office), Rio de Janeiro, Lata 28, Maço 1, Pasta 2, List of slave purchases, August 24, 1834.

¹⁷⁷ Eltis and Engerman, “Fluctuations in Sex and Age Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1663-1864.”

The end of this traffic came about as a result of both British involvement and a new Uruguayan government. Beginning in March 1835, President Manuel Oribe was in office, and one of his goals was to enforce the Uruguayan prohibition of the slave trade, as a part of the general application of the constitutional measures. Two of the last ships that tried to disembark Africans in Montevideo had no success. The British Navy confiscated the brigantine *Río de la Plata* and sent it before to the Anglo-Brazilian Court of Mixed Commission in Rio de Janeiro, while the Uruguayan authorities withheld permission for the ship *Paquete Africano* (alias *Cesar Augusto*) to disembark Africans. This vessel subsequently departed from Montevideo to Brazil due to the impossibility of selling slaves in that port, as well as the impending arrival of a British ship that was coming from Buenos Aires.¹⁷⁸ While no more Africans were to be introduced in Uruguay under the rubric of ‘colonists,’ the issue of the ‘African colonists’ would loom over the Anglo-Uruguayan relationships for seven more years as the British pursued additional treaties to encourage commerce and suppress the slave trade.

The Anglo-Uruguayan treaty of commerce was interwoven with the agreement against the slave trade, which was signed in July 1839 after some British concessions. Only after exchanging the ratifications of this agreement (January 1842) did Uruguay and Britain sign a treaty of commerce –in August 1842. The Uruguayan government ratified the latter in March 1843, much more quickly than the former.¹⁷⁹ The treaty against the slave trade had gone two years without ratification, during which period the Uruguayan authorities tried to obtain additional financial concessions from the British. The recent payment of £ 12 million to British slave-owners as part of the process of abolishing slavery in the British dominions no doubt raised the expectations of the Uruguayan authorities.

¹⁷⁸ IUP, Vol. 14, Sessions 1836, Class B, 149.

¹⁷⁹ República Oriental del Uruguay, *Tratados y Convenios Internacionales*. Montevideo: IMPO, 1993, 102-6.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the supply of slaves centered in late colonial Buenos Aires and Montevideo shifted between African and Brazilian sources in response to factors originating in the larger Atlantic environment, the Spanish metropolis, and initiatives of local merchants. The slave trade between Brazil and the Río de la Plata developed from long-standing interactions between the Spanish and the Portuguese. This coastal traffic served the Spanish as a platform from which to launch their transatlantic slave operations since these voyages followed the patterns of the Brazilian slave trade –structured by South Atlantic winds and currents. Rioplatense slave traders of the early 1790s dealt mainly with Brazil, but they turned to Africa in the next decade, except when European wars jeopardized the Atlantic crossing. Indeed, the slave trade to the Río de la Plata was not divorced from other branches of commerce, a fact that also influenced the evolution of the slave arrivals from Brazil. Smuggling of merchandise certainly encouraged Brazilian slave arrivals to the Río de la Plata and vice-versa.

Fluctuations in the Río de la Plata slave inflows illustrate not only shifting Atlantic conjunctures but also the availability of alternative supplies of slaves. In other words, the Río de la Plata could shift between Brazilian and African sources of slaves when political decisions outside the region changed the conditions of trade. In addition, the fluctuations that affected this trade were not unique to the Rioplatense slavers given that the opening and closing of the Atlantic markets affected every branch of trade. Despite these fluctuations, the Río de la Plata absorbed an increasing inflow of slaves from 1777 to 1812.

The Río de la Plata was unusual in the context of the South Atlantic in the diversity of the Africans arriving in these thirty-five years. While Rio de Janeiro drew mainly on slaves from Angola, and Salvador from the Bight of Benin, the Río de la Plata absorbed a

significant share of slaves direct from the Bight of Biafra, West-Central and Southeast Africa. This pattern was uncommon for the South Atlantic but matches other Spanish American areas, specially the most important Spanish destination for slaves, Cuba.¹⁸⁰ These two Spanish American regions first drew on intra-American slave trades, then launched transatlantic slave voyages, and, as a result, received Africans from many different broad areas of slave embarkation.

Apart from regional differences, captives underwent profound transformations in social networks and identities from their inland African journeys to their transatlantic landing. They underwent enormous changes in identification by both the self and others as they approached the littoral of Angola, Mozambique and the Bight of Biafra. These transformations did not happen in the void, but under severe conditions of violence, malnutrition, fatigue and disease. As they moved down to the coast, captives experienced continuous reallocation, which curtailed them from their references of social identification. As well, captives developed new bonds of solidarity with those who shared their fate as they were differentiated by African slave traders who saw them all as strangers –a product of violence and displacement. In an everyday world shaped by abuse, starvation, illness and continuous reallocation, bonds of solidarity could make the difference between life and death for those enslaved. Finally, embarkation in slave ships introduced captives and brought them to close proximity to a new and distinct other –the European and New World slavers. In the next chapter we analyze how experiences in the slave trade forged social networks and identifications for the captives arriving in Montevideo.

¹⁸⁰ Oscar Grandío, The African Origins of Slaves Arriving in Cuba, 1789-1865. In *Extending the Frontiers. Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, eds. David Eltis and David Richardson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, 176-204.

Chapter 2: The Origins and Social Networks of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo, 1770-1810

Throughout Colonial Spanish America, records of the Catholic Church and the colonial state contain countless labels and descriptors of Africans and their descendants. These peoples were mostly categorized according to legal status (slave, freedmen, free), to a mix of phenotype appearance and ancestry (black or of mix origin such as *pardo*), and to geographical origin (born in America or in Africa, and in the latter from which group or “nation”). All these categories formed the colonial term *calidad* or quality, which gathered multiple markers beyond phenotypes such as occupation, family background, legitimacy, and honor.¹⁸¹ The experience of blacks and coloreds facing both the Church and colonial bureaucracy modified European constructions of phenotype, gender, origin, and family constructions among others. These labels were reshaped in Spanish America at all levels of the colonial society as they varied substantially from Mexico to the Caribbean and the Río de la Plata.¹⁸² Here, I analyze records of the Catholic Church and the colonial state to show how experiences in the slave trade shaped social networks and identifications of the captives arriving in late-colonial Montevideo. I focus on the shipmate ties emerging among captives who shared the transatlantic and intra-American slave trade routes ending in Montevideo, but I do not limit social networks to the experience on the slave ship.

To study the continuity of bonds among shipmates after slave disembarkation, we analyze marriage files –*expedientes matrimoniales*. In the Catholic Americas, people who wanted to marry had to demonstrate before the Church that there were no impediments to

¹⁸¹ Andrew Fisher and Mathew O’Hara, “Racial Identities and their interpreters,” 11-12.

¹⁸² On terms such as *vecino* and *naturaleza* related to belonging to local communities and the large Spanish empire see Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations. Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

their wedding.¹⁸³ The Church gathered the evidence they provided in marriage files. Roughly a month previous to the wedding, the groom –or his master in some cases of slaves– sought permission to wed by submitting an application. He provided information about the spouses to the ecclesiastical notary, who gathered the facts and completed the file. Then, witnesses (*testigos de soltería*) who had previous knowledge of the spouses provided supportive information. Once the file was complete, the parish priest gave public notice of the prospective marriage on three successive Sundays before the wedding –during the mass celebration. Those who had information which would impede the wedding would thus have an opportunity to respond. Marriage files were produced in most Latin American cities where parish records exist.¹⁸⁴ In colonial Montevideo, marriage files were completed for *all* people marrying into the Catholic Church –Spanish, *criollos*, Africans, Amerindians, and all people in-between– who had been born outside of Montevideo.

These files contain data on the routes of Africans across the Atlantic and the Americas. They indicate the origin of the groom, bride, and witnesses, their shared itineraries, and how these itineraries changed over time. Thus, they reveal patterns of geographical mobility and networks created by common experiences. Marriage files can be easily quantified and each one is a unique story, a pattern that allows us to track both social trends and individual stories. Each file is also a story in itself. Close reading of these stories

¹⁸³ On marriage regulations and canon law impediments and its application to Bourbon Río de la Plata see Susan Socolow, “Acceptable Patterns: Marriage Choice in Colonial Argentina, 1778-1810.” In Asunción Lavrin (ed.) *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989: 209-250. For other analysis on the application of the *Real Pragmática* see Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts Over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988; Steinar A. Saether, “Bourbon Absolutism and Marriage Reform in Late Colonial Spanish America,” *The Americas* 59, 4 (2003): 479–81; Jeffrey M. Shumway, *The Case of the Ugly Suitor: And Other Histories of Love, Gender, and Nation in Buenos Aires, 1776–1870*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005.

¹⁸⁴ See the project *Ecclesiastical Sources and Historical Research on the African Diaspora in Brazil and Cuba*, <http://lib11.library.vanderbilt.edu/diglib/esss.pl>. I am thankful to David Wheat for the information on this project.

contextualizes the experiences of slaves and underscore common patterns in ways that lie outside of quantification.

No one has previously employed marriage files, systematically, to study the routes of Africans through slave trades from Africa to America. Susan Socolow first used a handful of these records to analyze geographical mobility in late-colonial Río de la Plata. She saw initially the potential of this source for the slave trade from Salvador to Montevideo.¹⁸⁵ Herman Bennett has employed marriage files in his study of free and enslaved Africans in Mexico during the Iberian Union. While he rightfully considers the links between spouses and witnesses as networks of support within the black communities, he argues that African ethnonyms such as *Mina* or *Congo* tell us little about African backgrounds and routes of enslavement.¹⁸⁶ Finally, Arturo Bentancur analyzes the marriage files of Montevideo between 1790 and 1812 in order to shed light on the structure of the Black family in slavery and freedom.¹⁸⁷ The study of the slave trade and the networks emerging from that experience is beyond the scope of his work –the only scholarly piece on the Black family in colonial Montevideo.

The analysis of the marriage files of Montevideo shows bonds among free and enslaved Africans emerging from the transatlantic and particularly the intra-American slave trade. Experiences in the slave trade were critical for creating social ties among Africans who gave testimony in these files. When explaining how they had met the groom, half of all

¹⁸⁵ Susan Socolow, “Permission to Marry: Eighteenth-Century Matrimonial Files (Montevideo, 1786)” in Boyer, Richard and Spurling, Geoffrey, *Colonial Lives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 236-248.

¹⁸⁶ Herman Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico. Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003, 79-125. In his most recent book, Bennett asserts that “Shared experiences alone could not forge an enduring collective identity” (82) when referring to experiences in the slave trade and before embarkation. In contrast, he sees Christianity as the main agent of creolization for colonial Mexico, Herman Bennett, *Colonial Blackness. A History of Afro-Mexico*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2009, 59.

¹⁸⁷ Arturo Bentancur, “Algunas pautas acerca de la organización familiar de esclavos y libertos en el Montevideo tardocolonial,” In Arturo Bentancur, Alex Borucki, and Ana Frega (eds.) *Estudios sobre la cultura afro-rioplatense. Historia y Presente*. Montevideo: FHCE, 2004: 17-30.

witnesses in marriage files of slaves told the notary that they had been shipmates or that they had met in other slave ports before arriving in colonial Montevideo.

In this chapter, I review the historiography on shipmate networks emerging from the slave trade. Then, I analyze the characteristics of *expedientes matrimoniales* in order to assess the potential of these records. Finally, I reconstruct the itineraries drawn of enslaved and free blacks from the testimonies in these files, and show how these testimonies cast light on shipmate networks. These records not only provide information on Africans, but also on captives born in the New World as well as on people of mixed ancestry –all of whom I include in this analysis given their shared experience in social networks in Montevideo. Finally, I analyze documents where the colonial state employs African ethnonyms in order to categorize Africans, and I integrate this analysis with our assessment on shipmate networks.

2.1. Shipmate networks and the renaissance of the slave ship

Historians and anthropologists have long debated the relative importance of African and New World influences on the emergence of black identities in the Americas. The debate was initiated by Melville Herskovits, who stressed how “Africanisms” survived acculturation, and E. Franklin Frazier, who argued that the slave trade had shattered African cultures in the Americas.¹⁸⁸ In a major contribution, Fernando Ortiz depicted the emergence of hybrid cultures different from European, Amerindian or African societies, and the transformation that affected all individuals in colonial societies through transculturation.¹⁸⁹ In the years following these debates, scholars studying the British Caribbean noticed the existence of bonds of affection and solidarity among slaves who had shared the Atlantic passage. Using mainly the narratives of white contemporaries, Philip Curtin, Elsa Goveia and

¹⁸⁸ Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941; Edward F. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

¹⁸⁹ Fernando Ortiz, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1973 [1941].

Orlando Patterson showed that captives had bonds of friendship with people of their same origin and with shipmates, and that these ties survived generations.¹⁹⁰ While these authors did not present a fully articulated view on this issue, they understood shipmate bonds as extension of relationships based on origin and kinship.¹⁹¹

Sidney Mintz and Richard Price introduced shipmate networks to the debates over black cultures in the Americas. Moreover, they attribute greater importance to shipmate bonds, as “cooperative efforts,” than to the cultural traits Africans brought to the Americas. In their work, the middle passage turns into a crucible of destruction and rebirth where African cultures were weakened and ultimately recast as random patterns of slave trading threw together slaves of wide-ranging origins.¹⁹² I disagree with their depiction of slave routes randomly mixing peoples from multiple origins, given that recent scholarship shows a limited number of African ports supplying slaves to a limited number of regions in the Americas, a pattern creating transatlantic slave routes between broad African regions and American destinations.¹⁹³ Yet, I accept their portrayal of shipmate networks as dyadic bonds of two persons of the same sex. Such ties originated along the lines of gender separation enforced in slave vessels –all cases I analyze here are of men rather than women. Marriage files of Montevideo do not provide information of ties between women given that the church only requested testimonies about the status of grooms.¹⁹⁴ Mintz and Price saw shipmate networks as harbingers of new communities generated by forced displacement, but because

¹⁹⁰ Philip Curtin, *Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony, 1830-1865*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955, 26; Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965, 245; Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Developments and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*. London: Mac Gibbon, 1967, 149-150.

¹⁹¹ Herbert Gutman saw fictive kinship first in the quasi-kin relationship of children with their parents' shipmates in the Atlantic crossing. Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 222.

¹⁹² Sidney Mintz, Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [1976], 42-44.

¹⁹³ www.slavevoyages.org.

¹⁹⁴ Marriage files of colonial Mexico provide information of shipmate ties among women. Bennett, *Africans*, 100.

their model of creolization downplayed the importance of African origins in the shaping of black identities, it has been lately –and largely– criticized by scholars who highlight the existence of African cultural transferences to the Americas.¹⁹⁵ These scholars do not necessarily de-emphasize the significance of shipmate networks, rather they see these ties overlapping with relationships based on shared African origins and cultures.¹⁹⁶

Rather than looking for African ethnicities in the marriage files, I use ethnicity as a lens to study the transformations of African diasporic communities as proposed by Paul Lovejoy.¹⁹⁷ He suggests that scholars should analyze how ethnic redefinition occurred in tandem on both sides of the Atlantic by specifying who the Africans were and when they did cross the ocean. The study of shipmate ties brings the possibility of analyzing how African ethnicities and identities changed on the basis of the experience of captives in the slave trade. Africans marrying in Montevideo in the 1770s largely declared provenance in Kongo and Angola, from where they were shipped in the late 1750s and 1760s. Marriage files points to their Christianization long before their forced departure from West-Central African slave ports given that a minority of grooms provided the Christian names of their parents when petitioning to wed in Montevideo. This generation of West-Central Africans developed networks with shipmates caught up in the same slave trading routes. They stayed long enough in Montevideo to marry as well as to establish the first black Catholic confraternity in

¹⁹⁵ Mintz and Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture*, 48.

¹⁹⁶ See the analysis of the literature on shipmates in Walter Hawthorne, “‘Being now, as it were, one family’: Shipmate bonding on the slave vessel *Emilia*, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic Word.” *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 45, 1 (2008): 53-77. For Afro-centric perspectives see: John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*; and Gwendolyn Hall, *Slavery and African ethnicities in the Americas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. See also the response of Price to the Afro-centric critiques of his work in Richard Price, “On the Miracle of Creolization,” in Kevin A. Yelvington (ed.) *Afro-Atlantic Dialogues. Anthropology in the Diaspora*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2006, 115-148.

¹⁹⁷ Paul Lovejoy, “Methodology through the Ethnic Lens: The study of Atlantic Africa,” in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, *Sources and methods in African History*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003, 107.

this city in 1778 and to command the first black militia in 1780. However, evidence of Christianity of West-Central Africans arriving in Montevideo stops in 1784, which probably illustrates changing slave trading routes. Shipmate ties were one of the basic shared experiences that “once these were compared, [enslaved Africans] might discover the basis of renewed or redefined mechanisms and institutions of identity.”¹⁹⁸ Shipmate experience emerged as a violent and momentous watershed for captives between their African past and their present in the New World. Shipmate networks provided to West-Central Africans the language to bridge different arenas of experience and identities such as previous Christianization, African religions, ethnicities and languages during their new lives in the Americas.¹⁹⁹

Captives from West-Central Africa in Brazil used the word *malungo* (malungu) for shipmate networks.²⁰⁰ As analyzed by Robert Slenes, the term had various connotations: from ship to mate, and finally to brother in suffering as developed in the Diaspora. This meaning had kinship connotations, but also expressed West-Central African cosmological beliefs since slaves saw the Atlantic passage as the itinerary from life to death. Captives understood the ocean as the borderland leading to the realm of death, whose crossing meant an all-consuming event during which nobody wanted to be alone.²⁰¹ Once in Brazil, captives

¹⁹⁸ Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman, “Ethnicity and the African Diaspora,” in Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman, *Trans-Atlantic Dimension of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*. London: Continuum, 2003, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Through internal slave trades, captives sometimes learnt other languages or dialects to communicate with slavers and fellow captives. Thus, language was both a feature of African origin and a result of the process of enslavement. Early captivity could modify one of the features modern scholars identify as cultural markers of origin.

²⁰⁰ Robert Slenes, “Malungo, ngoma vem! Africa coberta e descoberta no Brasil” *Revista USP* 12 (1991-2): 48-67.

²⁰¹ Monica Shuler notes that rituals of aquatic passage are linked to death, rebirth and the formation of new identities in the African diaspora discourse on the slave trade. She suggests that hallucinations of captives on board of slave ships, based on self-abandonment and remembrance of a past life, shaped diasporic initiation ordeals. She also notices the importance of metaphors based on ship and shipmates: flight narratives “...prescribe correct behavior and envisage diaspora voluntary associations (e.g. religious initiation bands and churches) as ships, transforming the container for captives into an incubator of diaspora communities and at the same time into a magical naval, air or space ship for repatriation/escape.” Monica Shuler, “Enslavement, the Slave Voyages, and Astral and Aquatic Journeys in African Diaspora

became aware of cultural affinities which were obscured in Angola by geographical isolation, war and state formation. The story of the term *malungo* reveals how both internal and transatlantic slave routes affected captives, and how people caught by this traffic became to identify themselves as brothers in suffering. This implied the reshaping of kinship and ethnic boundaries to include and ally with strangers against death, oppression, and violence.

Concurrent with these general patterns, Walter Hawthorne describes an exceptional case where captives from the slave ship *Emilia* were brought to Rio de Janeiro by the British Navy during the period of the illegal slave trade and then managed to return to Lagos.²⁰² These liberated Africans remained in contact while living in Brazil for fifteen years. Evidence of shipmate ties for both men and women also emerges from studies on seventeenth century Costa Rica, eighteenth century Chesapeake and South Carolina, and nineteenth century Guyana.²⁰³

Recent scholarship reintroducing violence and displacement in the shaping of black identities in the Americas underlines the importance of experiences in slave ships as well as locates shipmate networks in the context of the strategies of the enslaved.²⁰⁴ Such scholarship

Discourse,” in José Curto and Renée Souldre-La France (eds.), *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005, 185, 191 and 198.

²⁰² Walter Hawthorne, “Being now”

²⁰³ Russell Lohse, “Africans in a Colony of Creoles: The Yoruba in Colonial Costa Rica,” in T. Falola, M. Childs, *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004: 130-156. Patterns of slave selling allowed for shipmates to be sold to same masters more commonly in South Carolina than in the Chesapeake area. Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint. Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, 78, 448-449. Shipmate networks and ethnic ties were probably the base for mutual aid associations in Guyana. Monica Shuler, “Liberated Central Africans in Nineteenth-Century Guyana,” in Linda Heywood (ed.), *Central Africans and Cultural Transformation in the American Diaspora*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 326.

²⁰⁴ Alexander Byrd, *Captives and voyagers: black migrants across the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2008, 8-9, 46-51, 248; Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery. A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 118-121, 190-8; Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 45, 74, 117-8. For a review of this literature see Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” cit. Changing boundaries of kinship and identifications not only affected those caught by the slave trade, but also those who escaped from slave raiders and founded new communities outside the fringe of African slaving regions, Saidiya

incorporates the enhanced knowledge of the patterns of the slave trade, highlights African agency in this traffic, and generates renewed insights on how terror shaped the history of slaves. In other words, we now know more about how violence shaped social networks and transformed identities with which slaves made sense of their changing world. To rephrase some of these contributions, the slave vessel was a “non-community” in African terms, a group of strangers separated from their kin and references, who shared certain affinities with some others onboard, but were nevertheless isolated as a group. At the same time, the slave ship was a new community emerging from the hardships of New World slavery, where Africans created shipmate networks. The studies highlighting the importance of experiences in the slave ship and the now sophisticated knowledge of the transatlantic and African internal slave trade points to both continuities and ruptures in social networks and identities. On the one hand, slave trade itineraries shaped by New World demand for labor, trading networks and Atlantic winds defined common patterns of slave experience through the African and American geographies. On the other, people caught up in the slave trade understood disjointed pieces of the whole –the unconnected parts with which they could make sense of their own story. The present study shows that shipmate networks and broad experiences within the slave trade were influential when free and enslaved African men had to select trustworthy associates in Montevideo. A common African provenance was also important. Thus it is not helpful to privilege any one factor--African backgrounds, slave trade experiences, and New World developments--over the others; rather, these should be treated as mutually reinforcing elements in the development of distinctive black identities over time.

Hartman, *Lose your Mother, A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, 2007, 225. Markus Rediker depicts experiences in the slave ship reminiscent of Mintz and Price. He points that singing was a creative common ground to forge collective identities among onboard captives, Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship. A Human History*. New York: Viking, 2007, 265, 283, 305-7.

Marriage files allow me to analyze African choices in deciding who could speak about their past. In these records, the Church asked free and enslaved Africans about their companions' past. Narratives of the past were thus reconstructed by people whom they knew in their present. Under other circumstances, Africans and their descendants could have selected other people and thus different responses may have appeared in the records. The slave trade loomed large in the narrative of their past, but that was not the only factor shaping their present. This request of witnesses was at a specific moment: marriage into the Church. While this section neither delves into family construction nor African Christianity, it is worth noticing that families and corporate bodies were the most important social networks in colonial Latin America. After much forced movement, Africans expected some protection from marriage given that the Church generally impeded the separation of spouses by slave sales. Apart from the dyadic shipmate ties, slaves could develop additional social networks and identities if they stayed sufficient time in a single place. Marriage files portray an intersection of past shared experience in the slave trade, present social ties, and future possibilities for local black communities. They reflect how people understood who they were as participants in various networks and, to a large extent, the processual construction of identities by shared experiences. In summary, this chapter shows how lifelong shipmate ties were keystone in the creation of black collective identities for generations of Africans living in a slave trading port of the Americas. As these networks fleshed out the memories of survival for those who were forced to cross the Atlantic, they provided coherency to the disjointed personal stories of African past experiences in the New World's black communities.

2.2. The Geography of Testimonies in marriage files

While most of the historiography has shown shipmate networks through

microhistories or narrative descriptions, this chapter uses statistical analysis to show social ties emerging from the slave trade.²⁰⁵ For this study, I entered in an SPSS database all marriage files of Afro-descendants in Montevideo between 1768 and 1803: 431 cases, an average of twelve files per year. The total number of people involved in those files, including spouses and witnesses, constitutes a representative sample of the population of African ancestry living in the city. In 1778, approximately 1,300 free and enslaved blacks and coloreds lived in Montevideo, accounting for 29 percent of the total population. Between 1768 and 1779, marriage files provide data on 377 individuals of full or mixed African ancestry –nearly thirty percent of the black and colored population of the city.²⁰⁶ The nature of this source did change over time, and this may affect its representativeness. From 1727 to 1767, during Montevideo’s first forty years of existence, there were only 61 weddings involving at least one African or person of mixed origin, of which 48 took place between 1754 and 1767 –less than four weddings per year. Only after 1768 do the marriage files show the black and colored presence to have been growing.²⁰⁷ From this year to 1799, there were between five and twenty-two marriage files of free and enslaved blacks and coloreds each year. Then, between 1799 and 1803 they almost disappear from these files.

²⁰⁵ The word *malungo* –discussed earlier– was not unknown in Montevideo by 1830. A letter from a reader and a verse published in newspapers included this term while trying to portray the “voice” of Africans celebrating the laws against the slave trade and freeing the newborn children of slaves, and then complaining about the continuance of this traffic. In these printings, *malungo* meant friend and had no connection with shipmates. However, the incorporation of this word in newspapers indicate both its usage by Africans in Montevideo and that white lettered men caught at least part of its meaning. The conclusion of the letter denouncing the slave trade ends with: “Li pido min pidona mi safalulia, e qui manda á ese su malungo quiliano e sinvidole,” [I ask your pardon for my freshness, your dear friend and servant]. *El Indicador*, Montevideo, October 13, 1831, 3; See “Canto Patriótico de los Negros,” *El Universal*, Montevideo, November 27, 1834, 3, attributed to Francisco Acuña de Figueroa. Nestor Ortiz Oderigo, *Diccionario de Africanismos en el Castellano del Río de la Plata*, Buenos Aires: Edutref, 2007, 135.

²⁰⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 246, Relación de habitantes, 1778. Marriage records before 1768 were published in Juan Apolant, *Génesis de la Familia Uruguaya*, cit.

²⁰⁷ The first record of a free *pardo* groom is in 1728, when he married an Indian woman. The first record of a slave groom marrying a slave bride is in 1741 –both presumably Africans. Apolant, *Génesis*, 177, 485.

These figures reflect increases in the slave trade to the Río de la Plata in the late eighteenth century. At least 70,000 slaves arrived in Buenos Aires and Montevideo between 1777 and 1812, which is surprising given that Buenos Aires had only 43,000 inhabitants by 1810 and Montevideo no more than 12,000 by 1803.²⁰⁸ Many of these slaves continued toward the countryside, Paraguay and Upper Peru, as well as to Chile and coastal regions of Peru. The years 1782 and 1791 were landmarks for the slave trade to this region. First, warfare interrupted all trade between Spain and its colonies as the British navy pursued Spanish ships in 1779. To counteract this blockade, the Spanish crown allowed Portuguese ships to sail between Spain and the Río de la Plata. The majority of these Portuguese ships disembarked slaves illegally in Montevideo, leading to the arrival of more than 5,000 slaves from 1780 to 1783. Second, a change in metropolitan policies led the Spanish crown to open the slave trade to the Río de la Plata in 1791, which led to increasing slave arrivals during the two following decades.

The slave shipments of the early 1780s explain the growth of marriage files between slaves in the period 1780-1791. However, the next twelve years –from 1792 to 1803– see fewer records just when slave arrivals were at their highest. The sharp decline of marriage files of slaves after 1799 explains this paradox. Marriages between slaves represent half of these cases between 1768 and 1779, and this figure rise to 65 percent from 1780 to 1791. However, only 38 percent of cases involving blacks and coloreds were files between slaves from 1799 to 1803. Slaves almost disappeared from the marriage files between 1799 and 1803, which led me to close our analysis in 1803. The rapidly increasing population of Montevideo probably led priests and notaries to exempt slaves from the filing process in the early 1800s. Records of nonwhite weddings continued, but the filing of marriage files was apparently no longer required for slaves. They continued to marry, since there were near forty

²⁰⁸ See Chapter 1.

annual weddings of slaves from 1800 to 1812. However, in the first decade of the nineteenth century there were only five to ten marriage files of slaves yearly.²⁰⁹ Royal orders constraining marriages of “unequal” people increased in the Río de la Plata in 1803-1805. Additional measures of the *Real Pragmática* (1776) –applied and adapted to Spanish America in 1778– regulating marriage increased the work of priests, and this may have led them to stop keeping records of marriage files of the growing slave population.²¹⁰

Marriage files provide detailed information about the origin of people of African ancestry. Table 2.1. shows the broad origins of the spouses and witnesses who provided that information. Most of the sample is African, followed by people from the Río de la Plata. Even though they were the majority, Africans may be under-represented in this count. The lack of information for almost two thirds of the cases in 1792-1803 –particularly for enslaved Africans– explains the overrepresentation of free blacks and coloreds born in the Río de la Plata. By 1812, no less than seventy percent of the black population of Montevideo was born in Africa.²¹¹ Table 3 also illustrates that the race descriptors employed in marriage files overlapped geographical origins given that Africans and most people born in Brazil were recorded as black, while most of those from the Río de la Plata were registered as pardos.

Table 2.1. Origins of black and colored spouses and witnesses. Marriage files of Montevideo, blacks and coloreds, 1768-1803

<i>Calidad</i>	Africa	Brazil	Rio de la Plata	Other	Total
Black	717	84	51	8	860
Pardo	0	24	184	6	214
Total	717	108	235	14	1,074
Percentage	66.7	10.1	21.9	1.3	100

²⁰⁹ Arturo Bentancur believes that after 1800 the ecclesiastical notary just filled a yearly quota of five to ten marriage files of blacks and coloreds and left no records of other petitions to wed of this population. He shows that 92.5 percent of marriage files of slaves between 1790 and 1812 took place in the 1790s. Bentancur, “Algunas pautas”.

²¹⁰ See Socolow, “Acceptable Patterns,” and Bentancur, “Algunas pautas”.

²¹¹ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 249, Padrones de Montevideo. Censo de varias calles, Año 1812.

Source: Archivo del Arzobispado de Montevideo, Expedientes Matrimoniales, 1768-1803.

Marriage files shows people predominantly from Portuguese Angola and Kongo. Most of the spouses and grooms declared Benguela (41.7 percent) or Angola –the region around Luanda– (18.3 percent) as their homeland, but those who declared provenance from Luanda or Benguela were not necessarily born there. These were two major slave ports from which West-Central Africans were shipped to America. Spouses and witnesses also declared other Angolan eponyms as provenance: Gangela, Masangano, Mondongo, Ambaca, Garangui, Songo, Mocondo, Cambonda, Casancha, Manguela, Camunda, Rebolo, Lubolo, Upolo, and Majumbe.²¹² Some of these places, Masangano and Ambaca for example, were inland villages (*presidios*) from where the Portuguese tried to expand their authority over neighboring African chiefs. *Congo*, which referred to the decentralized mid-eighteenth century Kingdom of Kongo and its satellites,²¹³ was the third most important region appearing in these files: 14.9 percent. The eponym *Congo* described Africans whose provenance was also south of the Congo River, but who were taken via slave routes to Luanda, other northern Portuguese ports, or who were sold by African merchants to British and French slavers in Cabinda (modern-day Angolan exclave), Loango (Republic of Congo) and Muyumba (Gabon).²¹⁴

Captives from West-Central Africa shared common linguistic origins given that the predominant languages of this region, Kimbundu and Kicongo, were easily understood by speakers of each one. While divided into multiple kingdoms and smaller entities, the foundation of West-Central African societies was matrilineal kinship. Along with similarities

²¹² I thank Daniel Domingues for helping me to identify African eponyms pertaining to eighteenth-century Angola.

²¹³ John Thornton, *Kingdom of Kongo*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, 115-121.

²¹⁴ Roquinaldo Ferreira, “Transforming Atlantic Slaving: Trade, Warfare and Territorial Control in Angola, 1650-1800” PhD diss., UCLA, 2003, 107. See also entries for Congo provenance in www.slavevoyages.org.

in language and family structure, John Thornton and Linda Heywood point out that many captives leaving Kongo and Angola were at least nominally Christian in the seventeenth century. Evidence from mid-eighteenth century Montevideo also points to this feature.²¹⁵ Between 1768 and 1784, four Kongo, four Angolan and one Ambaca groom provided the Christian name of their parents in their marriage files, which suggests that they were at least second generation Catholics. These were ten percent of all African grooms marrying in this early period. Six Angolan and Kongo witnesses as well as two Kongo and one Benguela bride also provided the Christian names of their parents in these same years. Out of nine Christian grooms, three arrived in Montevideo via Rio de Janeiro and Colonia, which suggest a forced departure from Luanda. Six other grooms may have crossed the Atlantic solely in four slave vessels arriving in Buenos Aires and Montevideo: the Spanish *San Jorge* (1752), which brought slaves broadly from Angola, the British ship *Saint Andrew* (1752), which followed the same itinerary, the Spanish *San Pedro* (1759) which departed from Mayumba with mostly Kongo slaves, and the Spanish ship *San Juan Evangelista* (1760), which embarked captives in Loango.²¹⁶ Still remains unclear to what extent warfare in the Kingdom of Kongo and its neighbors shaped the enslavement and shipment of Catholic Africans in mid-eighteenth century. While bypassing Portuguese control, British and French slavers drew captives directly from Africans merchants in ports north of Luanda in the 1760s, which is illustrated by the four last slave voyages. In contrast, West-Central Africans arriving via Rio de Janeiro in Montevideo between 1770 and 1799 had initially departed from Luanda and Benguela, where the enslavement and shipment of Catholic Africans to the Atlantic was formally prohibited. While West-Central African vassals of the Portuguese were not

²¹⁵ Linda Heywood and John Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, on language p. 56, on Christianity, 327-331.

²¹⁶ www.slavevoyages.org, AGN-A, IX, 2-2-1, Studer, See Annex on slave vessels 1742-1806.

supposed to being enslaved because they had embraced the Christian faith, Catholicism did not entirely protect them from enslavement even in areas under Portuguese control.²¹⁷

Even though a minority, these Christian West-Central Africans ranked among the first black leaders in Montevideo. Pedro Mascareño, who declared provenance in Kongo, arrived in the Río de la Plata in one of the aforementioned slave vessels in the 1750s. He was purchased by the *Procurador* of the Jesuit Order in Montevideo, the priest Cosme Agullo. Pedro was free by the time of his marriage to María in 1773 –another enslaved Kongo then free. The two witnesses in his marriage file knew Pedro for twenty years in Montevideo. Pedro stated that his parents’ names were Sebastian and Maria, which indicates previous Christianization. He began the process of founding the confraternity of Saint Benito in Montevideo in 1773, too. Five years later, Pedro was the first *Hermano Mayor* and *Mayordomo Mayor* of this brotherhood. He was also the Second Lieutenant of the first black militia of Montevideo in 1780, where he followed Lieutenant Mateo de los Santos, another Kongo, and Captain Antonio Silva, a free black born in Buenos Aires. Pedro still commanded the brotherhood of Saint Benito in 1788.²¹⁸ Both his Christian experience in Kongo and his proximity to the Jesuits in Montevideo may have facilitated Pedro Mascareño to establish the first black confraternity of this city in 1778.

Apart from West-Central Africa, the only other broad region consistently represented in the marriage files is the *Costa da Mina* at 4.8 percent of our sample. Slaves from the *Costa da Mina* were shipped from Salvador to Montevideo in the 1780s and 1790s, a period in

²¹⁷ Ferreira, 202; Mariana Candido, “Enslaving Frontiers: Slavery, Trade, and Identity in Benguela, 1780-1850,” PhD diss., York University, 2006, 56; John Thornton, “As guerras civis no Congo e o tráfico de escravos: a história e a demografia de 1718 a 1844 revisitadas” *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* 32 (1997): 55-74.

²¹⁸ AGN-A, IX, 2-3-6, Compañía de Negros de Montevideo, May 31, 1780. AGN-U, AGA, Caja 37, Carpeta 4, Constitución de San Benito de Palermo, 1773-1774; Archive of Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

which Salvador was prominent in the slave trade to the Río de la Plata.²¹⁹ However, fewer Mina slaves show up in these files than expected. The same is true for slaves coming from Mozambique and the Bight of Biafra—the first and third ranked regions in the slave trade direct from Africa to the Río de la Plata from 1777 to 1812. Chronology explains the lack of cases from Mozambique since significant slave arrivals from there to Montevideo occurred only after 1796, just when references to slaves began to disappear from marriage files. Before 1797, there is only one file where both groom and witnesses declared origin in Mozambique.²²⁰ The small number of Biafran slaves has a different explanation. In 1787-88, the *Compañía de Filipinas* shipped 2,900 slaves from Bonny and Old Calabar to the Río de la Plata. Only 2,177 Africans arrived alive in Montevideo, of whom 1,073 were sent to Lima.²²¹ Of the remainder, it seems that only 21 were sold in Montevideo.²²²

Table 2.1. shows ten percent (108) of this sample composed of people of African ancestry born in Brazil: 59.2 percent enslaved and 40.8 free. Most of the slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata before 1777 came through Brazilian ports and sixty percent of them after that year. Slaves shipped from Brazil to Montevideo most likely were African rather than Brazilian-born. Nevertheless, slave vessels from Brazil also brought a handful of captives natives to Brazil. The ship *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* carried 151 slaves from Salvador to Montevideo in 1786, out of whom seven were from Salvador.²²³ Upon interrogation, one of these captives claimed he knew how to write, an example of the transference of specific crafts from Brazil to the Río de la Plata. Papers belonging to the Portuguese smuggler

²¹⁹ On the debates of what *Mina* meant over time, see Robin Law, “Ethnicity and the Slave Trade...” and “Ethnicities of Enslaved Africans in the Diaspora: On the Meanings of *Mina* (Again),” cit.

²²⁰ The three of them had arrived in Montevideo in 1782, brought by a French slave ship that had departed from Mauritius. Archivo del Arzobispado de Montevideo, Expedientes Matrimoniales (hereafter AAM-EM), 1783, exp. 24. See AGN-A, Sala IX, 14-4-5, Frigate *Marques de Flori*, July 1, 1782.

²²¹ AGN-A, Sala IX, 33-6-1, “Dn Martin de Sarateca apoderado...” 1789.

²²² AGI, Sección Buenos Aires, Leg. 447, Cuentas de la Real Hacienda de Montevideo, 1789-1798. I wonder if some witnesses and grooms described as *Guinea* were in fact *Carabali*.

²²³ AGN-A, Sala IX, 33-3-6, “Expediente obrado para la tasación... de la Zumaca Ntra. Sra. de los Dolores.” 1786.

Antonio d’Cunha supply details of slave purchases required by his contacts in Montevideo in 1781, who demanded slave carpenters, shipwrights, masons, shoemakers, barrel-makers, musicians, as well as “mulatas” who could cook, iron and sew.²²⁴ The elites of Montevideo had certain preference for Luso-Brazilian ways of cooking, domestic chores, and crafts. Luso-Hispanic commercial trading networks led to the emergence of Montevideo as Atlantic port and this must have had consequences for taste and fashion.²²⁵

In Table 2.1., the column “other” refers to those who did not come from the previous three broad provenances, and arrived instead from Peru, Chile, the Spanish Caribbean, Philippines, and Spain. Blacks and coloreds born in these places came to Montevideo as sailors in the Spanish navy or servants of Spanish administrative and military officers. Their presence in these files evinces the growing bureaucracy and military personnel living in Montevideo linked with the rising significance of this port for the defense of the Spanish South Atlantic. From 1776, all shipping sailing from Spain to Peru had to stop in Montevideo. The Royal Navy made Montevideo its base in the South Atlantic, as well. The crown created a royal customs and coastguard administration there in 1779.²²⁶

Marriage files indicate where grooms and witnesses met before arriving in Montevideo, and this reveal patterns of internal slave trades and regional migrations. In 1778, Bernardo, a slave born in Angola, testified in the marriage file of Juan, a slave from Benguela. Bernardo said about Juan that: “que le conoce hara cosa de dieziocho años entre en las costas de Guinea y un año en el Rioxaneiro y otro en la Colonia y siete en esta de Montevideo y siempre desde Angola [h]an ido juntos.”²²⁷ He had met Juan in Portuguese

²²⁴ AGI, Buenos Aires 333, “Montevideo, quinto legajo de papeles hallados en poder de Antonio Juan de Acuña (alias capitan barriga)...” Buenos Aires, March 20, 1785.

²²⁵ See Prado, “In the Shadows of Empires,” 257.

²²⁶ John Street, *Artigas and the Emancipation of Uruguay*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959, 34.

²²⁷ AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 36.

Angola. Then, they were shipped together to Rio de Janeiro, and then to Colonia del Sacramento. Spanish Montevideo was the third slave port where they arrived, either by land or sea. Bernardo said he had met Juan 18 years previously, but this timeframe is doubtful given that Juan was roughly in his twenties according to the estimated age recorded in his file. However, the itinerary described by Bernardo is convincing since other Africans went through similar –but not identical– slave routes. In each file, witnesses mentioned from one to three locations when telling where they had met the groom. Table 2.2. tabulates the number of times each place was mentioned by a witness.

Table 2.2. Places where groom and witnesses met. Marriage files, Montevideo, blacks and coloreds, 1768-1803

Colonia and Real de San Carlos	Buenos Aires	Other Rio de la Plata, Paraguay	Africa	Rio de Janeiro	Other Brazil	Montevideo	Other Banda Oriental	Other	Total
121	100	51	37	97	66	188	25	19	704
13.5%	16.7%	9.4%	5.3%	11.3%	10%	27%	3.2%	3.6%	100%

Source: See Table 2.1.

This table pulls together seven hundred references to locations where witnesses met grooms. Montevideo is included only when this city was the only place mentioned by the witness, which implies that he had not met the groom outside of Montevideo. The total number of mentions as well as testimonies decreases over time, which reflects the declining data contained by these files. Thus, for the period 1792-1803, I have less than one third of the total number of mentions found for the 1770s. Table 2.1. also gathers depositions from witnesses of all colors, which means that white witnesses are included.

Table 2.2. shows that places in Africa comprises just five percent of the locations mentioned by witnesses. We may have expected more testimonies of Africans meeting before the Atlantic passage, but we must remember that it was through Brazilian ports that most slaves arrived in the Río de la Plata. As the next section shows, on board ship or previous

slave ports in the Americas were the two most frequent mentioned places where witnesses met slave grooms. The slave trade from Brazil to the Río de la Plata shaped shipmate networks as well as the transatlantic passage and the African origins of captives. That is why Rio de Janeiro and Portuguese Colonia del Sacramento, in addition to other Brazilian regions, are so prominent in Table 2.2.

After its capture by the Spanish in 1777, Colonia del Sacramento experienced an extreme decline as a slave trade entrepôt. From 1768 to 1779, almost thirty percent of all witnesses had met the groom either in Colonia or in the Real de San Carlos, the Spanish garrison located just a cannon-shot from Colonia. Most of these people had come from Rio de Janeiro, which indicates that the main slave trade route ending in Montevideo passed through Rio de Janeiro and Colonia in 1760-1777. The Spanish conquest of Colonia ended its role as a trading site for the Spanish and the Portuguese.²²⁸ In the 1780s, at least 10 percent of witnesses declared having met the groom there, but by the next decade Colonia lost significance in the life of the black population in Montevideo. Before the fall of Colonia, slaves commonly fled from this town to the Spanish Real de San Carlos, as shown by this testimony of 1778: “se desertaron para el Real de San Carlos en las Guerras primeras de Cevallos.”²²⁹ The two witnesses and the groom –all free Africans living in Montevideo by the time of the wedding– had run away from Colonia to Real de San Carlos in the early 1760s.

Over this period, increasing numbers of respondents met in the Spanish Río de la Plata before arriving in Montevideo. They mainly came from neighboring Buenos Aires, but also from Córdoba, Tucuman, Salta, Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, Mendoza, Corrientes, Santa Fe, and Paraguay. Some of these were free blacks and coloreds who migrated to Montevideo given that the city absorbed craftsmen as it expanded in the late eighteenth

²²⁸ Prado, “In the Shadows of Empire,” cit.

²²⁹ AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 17.

century. Others were slaves who moved with their masters to Montevideo. Early in the eighteenth century, the Spanish authorities of Paraguay reinstated taxation of free blacks and coloreds. In addition to the bustling activity in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, this taxation may explain the migration of free Africans and their descendants from Paraguay to these two port-cities, where they were not taxed by the crown.²³⁰ Finally, the growing importance of the category “other” (defined as Spain, the Philippines, Peru or the Caribbean), also suggests the rising significance of Montevideo for the Spanish defense in the South Atlantic –revealing long-distance movements of military and administrative resources of the Spanish empire.

A small share of testimonies points to places in the Banda Oriental, modern-day Uruguay, other than Montevideo and Colonia. Those include the old Spanish settlements of Soriano and Vívoras near the Uruguay River and the Plata River and new towns such as Maldonado near the Portuguese frontier. Those who claimed to have met in these places usually were free blacks who worked in the countryside and then came to Montevideo or slaves who had fled or been purchased from the Portuguese eastern borderland. Finally, Montevideo accounted for one-fourth of the locations identified. Not every groom had ties with witnesses he had met before arriving in this city, which supports the idea that the stories recorded in marriage files were neither invented nor formulaic.

Portuguese America was the broad region for more than twenty percent of the references to meeting place.²³¹ Rio de Janeiro was of utmost importance for the slave trade to the Río de la Plata. Witnesses also met the groom in other Brazilian slave ports (Salvador, Pernambuco, Santa Catarina) inland locations (São Paulo and Minas Gerais) and frontier villages (Rio Grande, Rio Pardo, and Viamão). In these cases, witnesses and groom had met in previous slave ports before being shipped to the Spanish dominions, or as runaway slaves,

²³⁰ Ignacio Telesca, “Sociedad y afrodescendientes en el proceso de independencia del Paraguay” in Silvia Mallo and Ignacio Telesca (eds.), *Negros de la Patria*. Buenos Aires: SD, 2010, 164.

²³¹ Here I do not include Colonia, which belonged to the Portuguese Empire up to 1777.

or as soldiers deserting from the Portuguese army. In 1777, free black Manuel Xavier de la Cruz, who was from Rio de Janeiro, acted as witness for Manuel de Jesus, a free black from Mondongo (Angola). Manuel told the notary about Juan that “cinco años lo conocio en la Ciudad de San Pablo en el Brasil y vinieron desertados juntos para Misiones y de alli pasaron a Buenos Aires.”²³² Both were soldiers or members of Portuguese militias who fled to Spanish missions during wartime, and then down the Paraná River to Buenos Aires and Montevideo. In this case, war and migration determined their patterns of movements rather than the internal slave trade.

2.3. *Shipmates: Social Networks emerging from the Slave Trade*

To show how marriage files portray social networks, I have classified each testimony according to witnesses’ explanations of how they met the groom. Table 2.3. tabulates the testimonies according to eight categories: (1) the witnesses and groom had been shipmates in the slave trade, (2) they had met in previous slave ports but it is not clear they were shipmates, (3) they shared origin in the Río de la Plata region or migrated together from another city in the region, (4) they shared the same master, (5) they ran away together from Portuguese to Spanish, (6) they served together in the military, (7) they were artisans of the same craft, (8) unknown.²³³

Table 2.3. How witnesses first met the groom. Marriage files of Montevideo, blacks and coloreds, 1768-1803

Status of the groom	Shipmates	Met in previous slave port	Ran away together	Military experience	Rio de la Plata share origin or migration	Same Craft	Same master	Unknown	Total
Slave	82	74	0	11	9	1	37	95	309

²³² AAM-EM, 1777, exp. 11.

²³³ I was unable to identify the relationship between groom and witness in 27 percent of the available testimonies, which I label as “unknown.” In these cases, I usually read short phrases such as: “que han sido compañeros,” AAM-EM, 1794, exp. 40, and “que lo conocio 17 años que [ha] andado junto con [é]” 1783, exp. 42.

%	26.5	23.9	0	3.6	2.9	0.3	12	30.7	100.0
Free	12	29	10	15	89	28	5	60	248
%	4.8	11.7	4.0	6.0	35.9	11.3	2.0	24.2	100.0
Total	94	103	10	26	98	29	42	155	557
%	16.9	18.5	1.8	4.6	17.5	5.2	7.6	27.9	100.0
Without White Witnesses	94	103	10	16	67	15	42	100	447
%	21.0	23.0	2.2	3.6	15.0	3.4	9.4	22.4	100.0

Source: See Table 2.1.

Marriage files of slaves show that experiences in the slave trade were particularly important for developing social ties. People who had been shipmates in slave vessels or who had met each other in slave ports before arriving in Montevideo constituted half of all testimonies in cases of slaves. Networks developed in the slave trade are even more important if we remove the testimonies of white witnesses as shown in the last row of Table 2.3. One third of testimonies under the category “unknown” came from white witnesses as well thirty percent of those in the category “Río de la Plata share origin or migration.” Near forty percent of witnesses under the category “military experience” and half of those under the category “same craft” were recorded as white too. After removing white witnesses, the combined categories “shipmates” and “met in previous slave port” now constitutes 44 percent of the total –and goes up to 58 percent if we exclude all unknown cases from our count. Migratory experience also shaped networks of free blacks and people of mixed origin, though these ties were mostly developed through free migrations from the hinterland of the Río de la Plata to Buenos Aires and Montevideo as previously shown by Table 2.3. It is worth noticing that Montevideo and Buenos Aires were probably the two Spanish American cities with the highest percentages of European and internal free migrants in the early 1800s.²³⁴ Marriage files may also reveal the origins of the free population as well as broad similarities in the

²³⁴ Johnson and Socolow, “Población...,” cit.

migratory paths and social connections bounding European grooms to their witnesses. But that is the subject of another book.²³⁵

While the category “shipmates” holds steady over the thirty-six years of this study, the category “met in previous slave ports” decreases over time. Perhaps this reflects that in the 1780s more people than before were reshipped in the same vessels from Africa to Brazil and then to Montevideo –and were not disembarked first into Rio de Janeiro or Salvador which constituted just a stopover. Thus, the beginning of an increasing direct slave trade between Africa and Montevideo in the 1790s could explain this decrease in the last period of our sample, as fewer people than before would have met in other slave ports prior to their arrival in Montevideo. While the decline of the number and quality of slave files in the 1790s might partially account for this trend in the last twelve periods of this study, too, the decrease is already noticeable in the 1780s, when most slaves were reshipped from Africa to Montevideo via Brazil with no further stopover in Brazilian ports.

The broad categories of Table 2.3. disguise rich details of previous links, and these details made me separate who had been shipmates from who had met in previous slave ports. For the first group of cases, I chose testimonies where the notary specifically wrote down that the witness and groom had arrived together in Montevideo. Certain testimonies describe the entire itinerary of a slave voyage from Africa to this city: "que vinieron juntos desde Guinea estuvieron a la Colonia y desde alli en esta de Montevideo,"²³⁶ and "lo conoce por haber venido junto con [é] en una embarcacion desde Benguela al Janeiro, y de este a

²³⁵ In late-colonial Buenos Aires and Montevideo, Spanish immigrants had the possibility of writing back to their families and friends in Spain and thus to renew the links with their homelands. Africans only depended of shipmate networks and African-based associations to relive memories of their past, which underlines the importance of shipmate ties for them. Catholic confraternities also shaped ethnic collective identities across the Spanish Atlantic. Tamar Herzog shows that the brotherhood of *San Fermin de los Navarros* shaped a “Creole-Navarre” identity in Spain and America. “Navarreness” seemed an open category related to both a territory and a people, but also to a religious devotion: the followers of Saint Fermín. Tamar Herzog, “Private Organizations as Global Networks,” in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America” Luis Roniger and Tamar Herzog (eds), *The collective and the public*, cit.

²³⁶ AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 45.

Montevideo."²³⁷ In these cases, the phrasing is definitive about the shared experience in slave vessels whether from Africa or Brazil. A further group of cases shows that the witness and the groom had met before, but the phrasing does not definitively establish that they were shipmates. These were people who met again in Montevideo after sharing past experiences in other slave ports, as the following indicates: "que le conoce quince años, que le conoció en las tierras de Congo y un año en el Rioxaneiro y diez años en esta ciudad,"²³⁸ "lo empezo a conocer en su tierra muchos años,"²³⁹ "que lo conoce por que son de una misma tierra,"²⁴⁰ "que hace diez años que le conoce en Santa Catalina."²⁴¹ In most of these cases, witnesses said they had met the groom in their homeland or in a Brazilian slave port, but their testimonies do not allow me to necessarily infer that they were shipmates in slave vessels. Certain witnesses declared they met the groom in Africa, but they came to Montevideo in different years, as in this case of 1771: "que le conocio en Congo hace seis años, y después se ausento el declarante para esta de Montevideo despues de haber pasado seis años poco menos vino el contra[y]ente."²⁴² Here, the important issue was that the witness had met the groom in Congo, and then both of them were shipped from Africa to Montevideo but at different times. The witness did not clarify if they had stopped in other slave ports because the important piece of information for the Church was that he had met the groom in Congo.

Testimonies of shipmates varied greatly from case to case. Occasionally, the witness and the groom re-encountered each other in Montevideo after being shipmates in the transatlantic passage but not in the intra-American slave trade, as portrayed by this testimony of 1788: "que conoce al referido Gonzalo desde Angola al Rio Geneyro que bin[i]eron juntos

²³⁷ AAM-EM, 1783, exp. 3.

²³⁸ AAM-EM, 1773, exp. 24.

²³⁹ AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 36.

²⁴⁰ AAM-EM, 1787, exp. 24A.

²⁴¹ AAM-EM, 1788, exp. 21.

²⁴² AAM-EM, 1771, exp. 12.

que el declarante se bino primero a esta ciudad dejando al d[i]ho Gonzalo en el Rio Geneyro.”²⁴³ A shipmate-witness expressed a common origin with the groom through a shared language as shown by this case of 1778: "vinieron juntos siempre en esta siendo Bozales en la lengua en donde han estado hasta ora y Esclavos."²⁴⁴ In a few cases shipmates even mentioned the vessel in which they arrived in Montevideo as these slaves in 1794: "que hace cinco meses que llegaron a este Puerto en el Penque."²⁴⁵ These slaves had just arrived five months before the marriage application took place. They arrived from Brazil, not from Africa, in a vessel known as *Penque Portugués*. They must have lived in Brazil for some time before arriving in Montevideo, which would explain how they communicated with the notary and their understanding of the proceedings for marriage.

As already mentioned, migrations within the Río de la Plata played a significant role in the origin of blacks and coloreds who married in colonial Montevideo. As well, links between free and coerced migrations shaped relationships between grooms and witnesses in the category “Río de la Plata share origin” in Table 2.3. The difference between coerced and free migration sometimes blurred, as when the groom and witnesses had shared imprisonment in Buenos Aires and then were sent as convicts to Montevideo. In 1769, a witness declared he had met the groom because “vino preso a esta ciudad.”²⁴⁶ In another case the two witnesses were in prison by the time of the marriage application.²⁴⁷ These prisoners were employed in the public works as shown by this testimony of 1771: “dho Negro se escapó para Buenos Aires y que no lo ha visto hará de poco tiempo que vino desterrado para estas obras reales de esta ciudad.”²⁴⁸ Here, Gonzalo Rocha, a free black born in Salvador, had

²⁴³ AAM-EM, 1788, exp. 10.

²⁴⁴ AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 23.

²⁴⁵ AAM-EM, 1794, exp. 1.

²⁴⁶ AAM-EM, 1769, exp. 26.

²⁴⁷ AAM-EM, 1774, exp. 17.

²⁴⁸ AAM-EM, 1771, exp. 5.

run away from Portuguese Colonia –where probably he was slave– to Buenos Aires. It remains unclear why he was jailed in Buenos Aires, but then he was sent as a convict to Montevideo.²⁴⁹ Sometimes these convicts remained in Montevideo after their release, and started a family there, as Gonzalo was trying to do.

Some grooms and witnesses shared the same craft and worked together, and this seemed the source of their relationship. A 1794 file brought together a groom and witnesses who were tailors. The second witness declared: “Que sobre once años que trabaja con el referido Bera tanto en casa del maestro Pin como en su misma casa.”²⁵⁰ This witness worked with the groom in two separate workshops. In that same year, a file shows both groom and witnesses were carpenters.²⁵¹ These cases commonly illustrate, too, regional migration within the Río de la Plata, and a mix of white, black, and *pardo* witnesses. In 1800, Pedro Godel, an Indian shoemaker from Cuzco, wanted to marry Juliana, a slave born in Montevideo. The two witnesses were people of mixed European and African ancestry and shoemakers.²⁵²

A common military background was another reason for groom and witnesses meeting. In 1772, the first witness in the file of Francisco Zelaya, a free *pardo* born in Cordoba, declared about Francisco: “que salieron juntos de esta ciudad para las Misiones en la expedicion con el Cap. Gal. Andonegui.”²⁵³ Probably both had been enrolled in the Guaraní War. Francisco Zelaya was the captain of the *pardo* militia of Montevideo in 1780; thus, militia participation was an important feature of his life.²⁵⁴ In the file of Manuel Benito Campero, a free *pardo* of Buenos Aires who married in 1802, both the groom and the second witness were members of the *pardo* militia of Buenos Aires. Their military service in the

²⁴⁹ Emilio Luque Azcona, *Ciudad y Poder: La construcción material y simbólica del Montevideo colonial (1723-1810)*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2007.

²⁵⁰ AAM-EM, 1794, exp. 15.

²⁵¹ AAM-EM, 1794, exp. 76.

²⁵² AAM-EM, 1800, exp. 37.

²⁵³ AAM-EM, 1772, exp. 2.

²⁵⁴ AGN-U, Archivos Judiciales (hereafter AAJJ), Caja 51, exp. 80, “Autos sobre averiguar la libertad de Francisco Castañares”, 1781.

Spanish-Portuguese war in the Banda Oriental explains why they had been moved from Buenos Aires to Montevideo the year before.²⁵⁵ War with the Portuguese was a common point of reference in the period 1768-1779, when witnesses often declared having met the groom before, during, or after hostilities: “que salieron de d[ic]ha Colonia en el tiempo de las guerras y desde aquel entonces siempre han estado en Montevideo,”²⁵⁶ and “que le conoce hara cosa de nueve años desde las ultimas guerras en el tiempo de Don Pedro Sevallos y que han trabajado los dos juntos con su amo...”²⁵⁷ This last witness and groom met because of war, but they continued in touch given that they worked together as free laborers. Slaves living on the Portuguese frontier commonly took advantage of war to run away to the Spanish. Therefore, these wars opened venues to obtain freedom and became a powerful momentum in their lives.

In just a few cases I encountered more than one way in which grooms met witnesses; in those cases, I list only the initial meeting in my database. In 1799, a witness and a groom, both *pardos* from Paraguay, arrived together in Montevideo from Paraguay, and then worked together: “que vinieron juntos a esta tierra en donde trabajan juntos.”²⁵⁸ I classify this case as people sharing the same origin in the Río de la Plata rather than of people working together in the same craft. In a 1781 case, the groom and the first witness were from Kongo and arrived in Buenos Aires together in the same ship probably from West-Central Africa. In Buenos Aires, they were bought by the Jesuit order, as the first witness declared: “vinieron juntos en una embarcación hasta llegar a Buenos Aires y fueron esclavos de la Compañía de Jesús.”²⁵⁹ The second witness met the groom as a slave of the Jesuits, not as a shipmate. I

²⁵⁵ AAM-EM, 1802, exp. 9A.

²⁵⁶ AAM-EM, 1768, exp. 16.

²⁵⁷ AAM-EM, 1771, exp. 22.

²⁵⁸ AAM-EM, 1799, exp. 38.

²⁵⁹ AAM-EM, 1781, exp.11.

classify the relationship between the groom and the first witness as “shipmate”, and the link between the groom and the second witness as “same master.”

In Table 2.3., almost all of the testimonies I classify as “unknown” were of people who met in Montevideo. Herman Bennett underscores the importance of shared spaces in the selection of marriage witnesses in colonial Mexico.²⁶⁰ He points that slaves and freedmen commonly selected witnesses with whom they shared a household or neighborhood. In this chapter, this observation applies to grooms and witnesses who had the same master and thus shared a household, and probably to most grooms and witnesses whose relationship I classified as “unknown.” I found no cases of witnesses saying that they had been neighbors of the groom. However, the testimonies of long-standing companionship fit into in this category of shared experience, such as “que son compañeros sobre diez años,” and “que le conoce hará ocho años en esta ciudad.”²⁶¹ Closer analysis of common broad origins shed light on the category “unknown.” I would have expected that a common broad origin may have directed the groom when choosing witnesses he only met in Montevideo. But in fact, only for twenty percent of cases involving Africans in the category “unknown,” were groom and witness from the same broad origin –mostly Benguela-Benguela, Angola-Angola, and Kongo-Kongo. Apparently, a shared broad origin was not important for those African grooms when choosing witnesses they only met in Montevideo. Thus, proximity and friendship developed from experience in this city may explain these cases.

A common broad origin, perhaps shared ethnicity, *was* relevant for African grooms when selecting witnesses, but overall seems less significant than shared experience. Out of the 284 witnesses selected by African grooms, 21.5 percent were not African but European, Criollo or Amerindian, and 45 percent were Africans but not from the same broad region as

²⁶⁰ Bennett, *Africans*, 84-86.

²⁶¹ AAM-EM, 1802, exp. 51 and 1782, exp. 42.

the groom.²⁶² Only one third (33.5 percent) of African witnesses came from the same region as the groom, but this ratio varied across the categories in table 2.3. Thus, 52 percent of African witnesses who had been shipmates with African grooms also shared a common broad origin such as Benguela. The same was true for 38 percent of African witnesses who had met the African groom in a previous port before arriving in Montevideo. Therefore, half of the African witnesses who declared shipmate networks with the groom shared also broad African origin, as well as four out of ten of those Africans who met in previous slave ports. Shared experience in slave trade routes commonly, but not always, overlapped and subsumed common African origins and both factors appeared as determinants for Africans in creating social networks in Montevideo.

I find expressions of solidarity among those who claimed a common African provenance as suggested by these testimonies of 1790: "que lo conoce desde que era muchachito por el motivo de ser de la Benguela"²⁶³ "que lo conoce desde criatura quando benian de Camundad," "que heran de un mismo varrio alla en Camondad y vinieron juntos para esta."²⁶⁴ In the last case, the witness seems to reinforce that he had the same origin of the groom given that the notary wrote down "barrio" –neighborhood– as modifier of an African eponym –Camondá. At least, the witness wanted to express common origin with the groom. Witnesses gave clues about ethnic identities as the notary wrote down details such as: "Guarangi en Benguela,"²⁶⁵ or "descendiente de Banguela y natural de la Ciudad de Córdoba del Tucumán."²⁶⁶ These sentences might have expressed the will of the slave in specifying his

²⁶² My body of 431 marriage files should produce 862 witnesses –two witnesses per case. But this is not the case. In fact, I have 557 witnesses –some marriage files had no witnesses while others had only one. In addition, I know the origin only for 487 witnesses –out of which 284 were selected by African grooms.

²⁶³ AAM-EM, 1790, exp. 61.

²⁶⁴ AAM-EM, 1791, exp. 3.

²⁶⁵ AAM-EM, 1775, exp. 27.

²⁶⁶ AAM-EM, 1801, exp. 4.

geographic origin or his claim of certain ancestry in Africa. However, such detailed testimonies are exceptions.

Enslaved people from many inland regions shared experiences in the internal African traffic toward slave ports; therefore, broad African origins were certainly not consonant with ethnicity. The same is true for people who met in intra-American slave voyages. On the one side, African eponyms such as Benguela and Angola are more informative about slave-trade routes than about African origins. On the other, labels such as Bolo, Rebolo and Lubolo, which are sparse in marriage files, point to the geographical origins of those enslaved in West-Central Africa. Perhaps the majority of witnesses in marriage files identified themselves with broad categories such as Benguela since these connected them with more people than did specific ethnic labels, and were descriptive of their shared experience in the slave trade.²⁶⁷ Spanish and Portuguese initially labeled Africans with these eponyms, which for Europeans meant origin or “nation.” Slaves probably reshaped these meanings to connect with other captives, given that African eponyms often related to common slave routes, which redefined their shared identities. This study offers a window to understand how captives caught up in the slave trade create alternative meanings for the nomenclature of slave traders to define new communities based on their shared past and experience. Moreover, this process

²⁶⁷ Miller gives a different but complementary interpretation of this appropriation of the slave trade nomenclature by West-Central Africans: “Since the growing variety of the origins of the central Africans and the instability of political identity in the turmoil of slaving at home, as well as the greater contrast between them and the West African Minas in Brazil, would have promoted only the broadest sense of shared backgrounds, they appropriated the commercial distinction of their masters as ‘Angolas’ or ‘Benguelas’ by their ports of embarkation in Africa. Small groups of countrymen might use specific ‘ethnic’ affinities to collaborate for special purposes, networking ad hoc for mutual protection, but these associations were pragmatic tactics more than comprehensive, even politized identities.” Joseph Miller, *Retention, Reinvention, and Remembering: Restoring Identities through Enslavement in Africa and under Slavery in Brazil* in C. Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (eds.) *Enslaving Connections. Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil during the Era of Slavery*. New York: Humanity Books, 2004, 99.

shows that “in the shift from imposition to self-interpretation, received terms are rarely if ever entirely synonymous with self-assumed ones.”²⁶⁸

2.4. African ethnonyms in Montevideo

Close analysis of the nomenclature both adopted by slaves, and assigned by the new society in which they found themselves is sometimes impaired by the scarce information in documents of the slave trade and the lack of details in colonial censuses. Records of slave arrivals rarely described captives beyond the number embarking and disembarking and their points of departure. Colonial censuses seldom included more specific information on people of African ancestry beyond color (black or mulatto) or status (free or slave). However, these sources cast light on the processes of identification both imposed from above and contested from below as African identifications increasingly became entangled with expressions of links to the Spanish community as attested by the Church and official records.²⁶⁹ Umbrella terms such as Congo or Benguela were used by captives even before their embarkation in African broad regions and slave ports. As abovementioned, these terms were reshaped by shipmate networks, and the accompanied Africans during their entire life in Montevideo as muster militia rolls and colonial censuses attests.

In 1767, the Spanish Crown expelled the Jesuit Order and confiscated its holdings. The Jesuits had 45 slaves –thirty men and fifteen women– across the main residence of Montevideo (eight), the watermill outside the city walls (seven), the cattle ranch of Pando east of the city (eleven) and the main cattle ranch of *La Calera* north of Montevideo.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ David Golberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993, 9.

²⁶⁹ Maria Elena Diaz, “Conjuring Identities. Race, Nativeness, Local Citizenship, and Royal Slavery on an Imperial Frontier (Revisiting El Cobre, Cuba). In Fisher and O’Hara, 207-208.

²⁷⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 14, Carp. 8 Doc 1 “Razón de lo que se debe a la residencia y lista de esclavos que pertenecen a ella,” 1767 and Caja 20, Carp 13, Doc 5 “Copia de diligencias, tasaciones de negros de los jesuitas,” 1770.

Slaves were listed only with Christian names, but a minority had African ethnonyms as last names or nicknames such as Antonio Cassanche –a Spanish rendering of the kasanje east of Luanda–, the barber Juan Musorongo –who may have been shipped from the southern bank of the Congo River into Luanda or the ports of North Angola and Loango- and Juan José Calumbo –who may have been captured southeast from Luanda on the Kwanza River. Other slaves have nicknames describing crafts such as Antonio Ovejero –shepherd– and Antonio Barbero –barber. Judicial records of this period offer mentions of African ethnonyms as in case of the murder of the slave Cayetano Torres by Domingo Candumbo. The alleged murdered may have been originally from the Angolan plains between Luanda and Novo Redondo (Sumbe) parallel to the Atlantic coast.²⁷¹

In 1778, Francisco de Medina brought 28 slaves to Montevideo from Santa Catalina, temporarily under Spanish rule. Slaves were listed upon disembarkation, but only in twelve cases the origin of slaves was recorded: Benguela (3), Congo (2), Bolo (1), and Mozambique (1) –probably the first captive arriving from Southeast Africa. The list also included slaves born in Brazil: Salvador (1), Laguna (2), and Santa Catalina (2) –the man born in Salvador was a shoemaker, and the only women of the group were natives of Santa Catalina.²⁷²

Another list of 1780 shows origins different from the predominantly West-Central Africans. This time 33 sailor slaves were captured by the Spanish in two Portuguese ships. All of them had nicknames evincing African ethnonyms, craftsmanship, and personal appearance. Among the first listed were Mina slaves (8), Nago (1), Abino (1) –probably a Yoruba name²⁷³–, and Magungun (1) from the Bight of Benin. These West Africans outnumbered sailors from

²⁷¹ AGN-U, AAJJ, 1781, Civil 1, Caja 50, Exp. 56.

²⁷² AGN-U, AGA, Caja 76, Carp. 1 doc. 9, “Visita y reconocimiento de la carga que ha traído Na Sa del Carmen...” 1778. These captives would work in a cattle ranch to produce jerked beef. The first establishment to process beef to supply the Spanish Navy with jerked beef was implemented by Francisco de Medina in the 1780s. By his death, he owned between 20 and 30 slaves. Arturo Bentancur, *Francisco de Medina y la empresa de la Discordia*. Montevideo: Arca, 1987, 38-40.

²⁷³ <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/resources/slaves.faces> id 75477.

West-Central Africa: Benguela (3), Cambonda (3), Congo (2), and Songo (1). There were also three captives born in Brazil listed as *criolos*.²⁷⁴ The pervasiveness of Mina slaves among sailors was a characteristic of black crew members in Brazilian coastal shipping as well as in transatlantic vessels.²⁷⁵

The customs records of slave shipments from Brazil to the Río de la Plata in 1781-1782 offer only three mentions of Mina slaves which may indicate that the majority of captives were from West-Central Africa. In 1786, the *zumaca Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* sailed from Salvador to Buenos Aires.²⁷⁶ After preventing this ship from disembarking in Buenos Aires, the port authorities order it to land slaves in Montevideo, but they were illegally disembarked in Colonia which brought about the confiscation of the entire shipment. All slaves were listed individually with the use of African translators who asked slaves who they were since the ownership of these slaves was subject to litigation.²⁷⁷ There are data of origin for 148 out of 151 slaves in that vessel as shown by Table 2.4.

Table 2.4. Declared origin of slaves of *N Sa de los Dolores*, 1786

	Men	Women	Total	Percent
Angola	33	15	48	32,4
Benguela	31	23	54	36,5
Congo	6	0	6	4,1
Mina	7	0	7	4,7
Salvador	7	0	7	4,7
Canbunda	6	0	6	4,1
Bolo	7	0	7	4,7
Mandinga	1	0	1	0,7
Rebolo	4	3	7	4,7
Casanchi	2	0	2	1,4

²⁷⁴ AGN-U, AGA Caja 96, Carp 3, Doc 21 “Borrador de un oficio de José Francisco de Sostoa al virrey Juan José de Vertiz para enviarle certificados de llegada, empleo y venta de negros esclavos,” 1780.

²⁷⁵ Jaime Rodrigues, *De Costa a Costa. Escravos, marinheiros e intermediários do tráfico negreiro de Angola ao Rio de Janeiro (1780-1860)*. Rio de Janeiro: Companhia das Letras, 2005, 161.

²⁷⁶ AGN-A, Sala IX, 33-3-6, “Expediente obrado para la tasación...” 1786.

²⁷⁷ The list includes Christian name, sex, estimated age, declared origin, health, price, and physical appearance and price. Among the physical description, the notary described eyes, height, body strength and marks, teeth, and signals of previous illnesses.

Sumbe	2	0	2	1,4
Masondo	1	0	1	0,7
Total	107	41	148	100,0

Source: AGN-A, Sala IX, 33-3-6, “Expediente obrado para la tasación y venta...” 1786

This case contradicts the assumption that the majority of slaves shipped from Salvador had originally departed from the Bight of Benin or largely West Africa. In fact, ninety percent of the captives embarked by this vessel had been shipped initially from West Central Africa. Only five percent were from West Africa and the remaining five percent were born in Salvador. According to the list, only a Mina and a Benguela captive were *ladinos* in Portuguese –that is they were well versed in the Portuguese language. The remaining Africans had probably not been in Brazil for long, but were reshipped soon after reaching Salvador. Since the largest groups claimed they were from Luanda (32,4 percent) and Benguela (36,5), this case may show the partial continuation of a transatlantic slave voyage departing from Luanda to Salvador given that Luanda more commonly received slaves from Benguela rather than in the other way around. The existence of captives from north of Luanda such as Kongo and east (Kasanje) indicate an initial departure from Luanda. This vessel may also have initially left Benguela and then stop at Luanda –the single largest group on board were slaves from Benguela.

The captives in this intra-American slave trade vessel already used distinctive ethonyms, “umbrella-terms,” and no doubt the coastal traffic encouraged this tendency. First, only 17,7 percent of the captives in this shipment produced an identification related to specific African origins while 77.7 percent used four broad eponyms: Angola, Benguela, Congo and Mina. These terms were in usage for the majority of these enslaved Africans even before they reached the Río de la Plata. Most probably the usage of these terms began before their initial embarkation. Captives sent from Benguela to Luanda may have been identified

there as “Benguela,” which differentiated them from those originating in Northern Angola and Congo. With such a mix, captives might develop shipmate ties rather than ties based on broad African origins. In cases of coastal slave trade from Brazil, the shipmate bonds would facilitate knowledge among captives beyond African origins and Atlantic passage given that sixty percent of slaves arriving to the Río de la Plata had been reshipped via Brazil during the viceregal period. The shipmate experience reinforced the creation of these broad African ethnonyms and set terrain for specific networks beyond African origins.

These captives were neither too young nor too old. The estimated average age of these slaves was 18 years old, but this estimate varied across the price of slaves. Age was the main factor determining the estimated price of slaves by the Spanish officers in the Río de la Plata as this list make clear: slaves priced over 200 pesos were 22 years old in average, those between 150 and 200 pesos were 16 years old, and those appraised less than 150 pesos were 12 years old in average, all estimated. Age was probably the factor that Spanish bureaucrats tried most to identify since clearly affected their estimated price. Slaves coming from Salvador were the oldest –their average 26 years old– and thus they were well verse in Luso-Brazilian slavery. The two main groups (Angola and Benguela) had clear differences regarding sex and age. While both men and women from Luanda were in average 19 years old, men coming from Benguela averaged 14 years old and women 16 years. At least, it was clear for the beholder that captives who claimed to come from Benguela were comparatively younger than the rest which would have some significance in the meaning of “Benguela.”²⁷⁸ Though, it is unclear how this early age impacted on the shaping of shipmate networks. In addition, the separation of men and women in the holds continued in this intra-American slave voyage, which drew a gender line for shipmate ties. Almost all women in this shipment

²⁷⁸ Though, two slaves from Sumbe (near Novo Redondo) were 13 year old and one Mandinga, from West Africa, was just an eight-year-old child.

claimed they came from Angola and Benguela, being the group from Benguela the most numerous.

African ethnonyms characterized free and enslaved Africans from their early age to adulthood in Montevideo. A list of the free black militia of Montevideo in 1807 provides a window to specifically address this issue.²⁷⁹ The British invasions to the Río de la Plata in 1806-7 provided the backdrop of this list. None of three other lists of this same black unit listed the homeland or “Patria” of their members.²⁸⁰ In the previous three lists the head of this company was the free black Juan de Dios Gabira, who died in 1806 as we will see in the next chapter. The new captain and former lieutenant, Felipe Malaber and his new lieutenant Jacinto Molina were both literate free blacks, which probably influenced the content of the list signed by Malaber. That last year Molina joined the company as lieutenant surely because of his literacy and previous knowledge of Malaber in Buenos Aires. The 96 men listed here constitute a representative sample of the free black population of Montevideo. By 1805, no more than seven hundred free blacks and coloreds lived both within and outside the city walls.²⁸¹ Two thirds of the black militia members were born in Africa, but their status differed dramatically from that of the recently-arrived Africans of the *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* twenty years earlier. As seen in the next chapter, free Africans asserted their membership of the Spanish community through horizontal ties with others serving in the militia –militia service being one of the main duties of *vecinos* (citizens), and vertically to the Spanish king as loyal subjects.²⁸² As it had happened with those carried by the *Nuestra*

²⁷⁹ AGN-A, IX, 3-1-3, “Lista y Filiación de la Compañía de Morenos Libres de Montevideo” January 8, 1807.

²⁸⁰ For the lists of 1802, 1805 and 1806 see Oscar Montaña, *Umkhonto. Historia del Aporte Negro-Africano en la formación del Uruguay*. Montevideo: Rosebud, 1997, 235-240.

²⁸¹ Arredondo, “Los Apuntes...,” 23-24.

²⁸² Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 14-5.

Señora de los Dolores twenty years earlier, no African provided a general descriptor such as Guinea or Africa for themselves, as Table 2.5 shows.²⁸³

Table 2.5. Members of free black militia of Montevideo broken down by origin and age, 1807.

Broad origin	Patria (Homeland)	Number	Percent	Age (average)
Río de la Plata 16 (16.8 percent)	Buenos Aires	11	11,6	28
	Montevideo	3	3,2	19
	Colonia del Sacramento	2	2,1	24
Brazil 11 (11.6 percent)	Salvador	1	1,1	38
	San Pablo	2	2,1	41
	Río Grande	2	2,1	41
	Pernambuco	1	1,1	36
	Itú	1	1,1	40
	Espíritu Santo	1	1,1	40
	Porto Alegre	1	1,1	23
	Santa Catalina	1	1,1	25
	Río Pardo	1	1,1	25
West-Central Africa 55 (57.9 percent)	Benguela	21	22,1	31
	Congo	11	11,6	34
	Angola	7	7,4	30
	Songo	4	4,2	36
	Muyumbi [Mayumba]	2	2,1	29
	Camundá	2	2,1	30
	Quisama	2	2,1	32
	Lubolo	2	2,1	27
	Bolo	1	1,1	32
	Gunga	1	1,1	26
	Casanche	1	1,1	22
	Munyolo	1	1,1	24
Southeast Africa 2 (2.1 percent)	Mozambique	1	1,1	40
	Mauricio	1	1,1	36
West Africa 5 (5.3 percent)	Mina	4	4,2	38
	San Tomé	1	1,1	24
Other 6 (6.3 percent)	Lisbon	2	2,1	26
	Lima	1	1,1	28
	Havana	1	1,1	22
	North America (US)	1	1,1	20
	Martinique	1	1,1	24
Total		95	100	30

Source: AGN-A, Sala IX, 3-1-3, Lista y Filiación de la Compañía de Morenos Libres de esta ciudad de Montevideo” January 8, 1807

²⁸³ As David Wheat asserts for early seventeenth century Spanish Caribbean: “There is no reason to assume that forced migrants’ African identities were obliterated by the acquisition of an additional language, or adoption of religious practices.” David Wheat, “The Afro-Portuguese Maritime World and the Foundations of Spanish Caribbean Society, 1570-1640.” PhD Thesis. Vanderbilt University: Nashville, 2009, 240.

The origins of the free black militia are wholly consistent with the Table 2.1., which shows the origins of grooms and witnesses in marriage files of people of African ancestry. There, people born in Brazil represented nearly ten percent of the sample, and Africans almost sixty percent. This share also for West Africans and Southeast Africans in Table 2.5., as well as for the people born outside of Africa, the Río de la Plata and Brazil.²⁸⁴ The smaller participation of people born in the Río de la Plata shown in Table 2.5. is explained by the fact that people of mixed ancestry had their own separate militia.²⁸⁵ Significantly, the list of the *pardo* militia written that same year provides no detail of origin and age. The list of *pardo* militia was not signed by a militia member but by Lorenzo Fleytas –the Spanish official attached to this company who probably generated the list. While the calligraphy of the list of the black militia belongs neither to Felipe Malaber nor to Jacinto Molina, either might have collected the data from the militia and Malaber as already noted signed the list. This would explain why there are no general descriptors as Guinea –probably Africans themselves produced these identifications. As those of the *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*, the majority of West-Central Africans choose a broad term such as Congo, and only one third provided a more specific denomination.

Apart from being freedmen, the members of the black militia differed in another significant way from the recently-arrived Africans of the *Nuestra Señora de los Dolores*. While the latter averaged less than twenty years in age, the militiamen averaged thirty years old. They had lived a significant span of their lives within the Spanish society and probably most of them had family arrangements which linked them to this region. The eldest members enjoyed positions of command among their peers given that the Captain, lieutenant, second

²⁸⁴ Perhaps free blacks born in Lisbon and the United States may have landed in Montevideo as crew members of vessels, while those born in the Spanish and French Caribbean came as a result of an increasing trade with Cuba.

²⁸⁵ AGN-A, Sala IX, 3-1-3, “Compañía de Pardos Libres de la Plaza de Montevideo.” January 6, 1807.

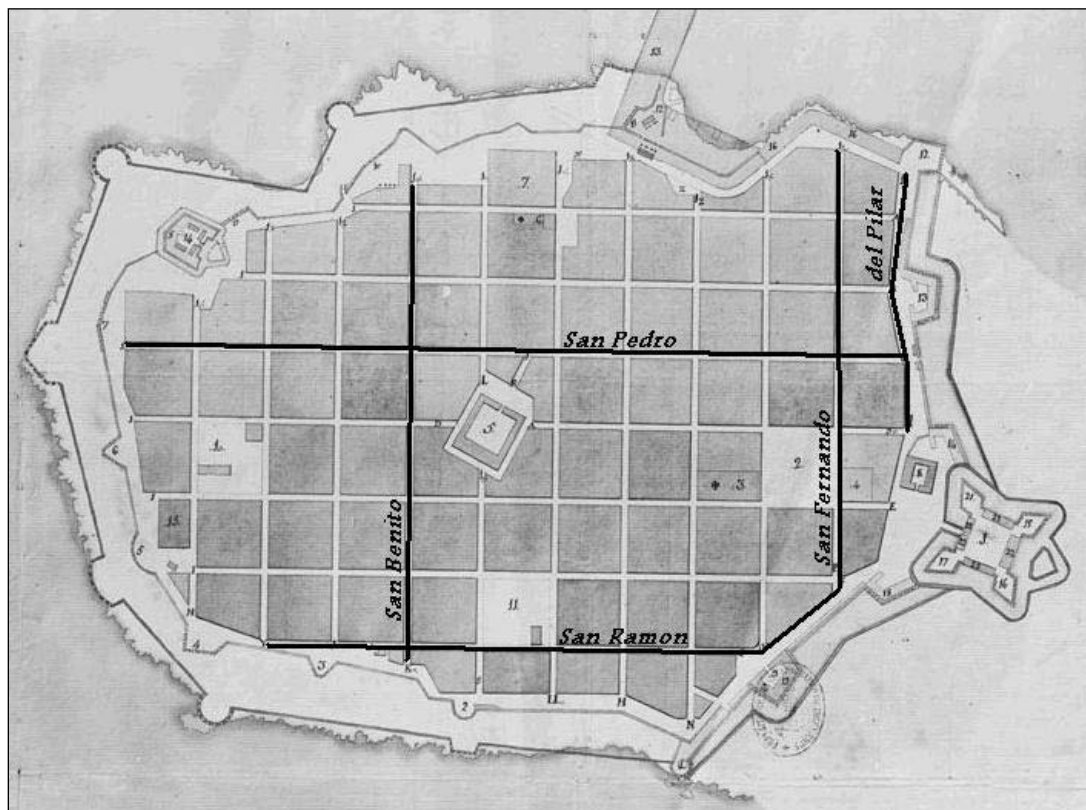
lieutenant, Sergeants and Corporals averaged 38 years, which make them almost a decade older than the rank and file. It seems that age imposed respect, and that the command of written Spanish led to positions of command in the militia, as the cases of Malaber and Molina attest. Malaber and Molina were born in the region and thus were much more familiar with the workings of Spanish society than Africans. However, Africans prevailed among the ten non-commissioned officers: three were born in the Río de la Plata, one in San Pablo, and then there were two Minas, two Benguelas, one Angolan and one Muyumbi [Mayumba] officer. Two black *rioplatenses* commanded this unit, but the composition of those with rank almost paralleled the integration of the entire unit since six out of ten non-commissioned officers were Africans older than the ordinary soldiers.

Africans represented two thirds of the militia members, but this percentage probably varied across ages for the entire free black population of Montevideo. On average, the youngest members of this black militia were those born in Montevideo –nineteen years old. But by 1807 the majority of free black men of Montevideo were still Africans who largely employed “umbrella” identifications such as Benguela, Congo, and Angola. The largest single group among free black militia members was those claiming provenance in Benguela, which parallels our findings from the marriage files. One out of five militia members was a Benguela, and this underscores the early significance of this slave port in the shaping of the black communities of colonial Montevideo. By 1807, the slave trade from Southeast Africa to Montevideo had been going on for a decade. However, there are only two freedmen from that provenance among militiamen. This may indicate that people from Mozambique were still largely slaves in Montevideo, and that were not fully integrated into the colonial society.

The census of Montevideo in 1812 shows a much more varied free and enslaved population of African ancestry than the list of the free black militia. In 1812, Montevideo was under siege by the revolutionary forces of Buenos Aires and the local leader José Artigas.

The besieged colonial regime conducted a census of the population, which revealed a heavy concentration of African ethnonyms in just the five streets shown in Map 1. This sample covers most of the walled city but excludes the docks located north toward the bay and the lightly populated western tip. These five streets were inhabited by 1,101 free and enslaved blacks –most of them Africans– and just eight people of mixed ancestry. They may constitute a third of the entire population of African ancestry living in the city and thus form a representative sample of the entire black population. San Pedro, the longest street crossing Montevideo East-West, contained 40,5 percent of the free and enslaved blacks of this sample. Fewer people of African ancestry lived in the remaining streets: San Ramon (25,2 percent), San Benito (16,5), San Fernando (14,3) and Del Pilar (3,5). It was common to see more than one family living under the same roof given that war resulted in royalists of the region fleeing to Montevideo.

Map 2. Montevideo by 1812. Streets of San Benito, San Pedro, San Fernando, del Pilar and San Ramón.



Source: Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Mapas y Planos, map 73.

The census of 1812 casts light on the composition of the population of African ancestry of Montevideo just at the point at which war and revolution had closed down the growing intra-American and transatlantic slave trade. Most of those listed here were slaves (94.6 percent) rather than free blacks (5.4 percent). This sample shows certain gender balance among slaves since 50.7 percent were men and 49.3 women. The heavy men component in the transatlantic slave trade was offset in colonial cities by a high demand for female domestics.²⁸⁶

Table 2.6. suggests that seventy percent of black population of Montevideo in 1812 was born in Africa, and that among these West-Central Africans (41 percent) predominated.

²⁸⁶ Susan Socolow, *The Women of Colonial Latin America*,. 130-46. In the case of free blacks, this gender ratio reverses to 52 percent of women and 48 percent of men –as a result no doubt of the prevalence of women among manumitted slaves throughout Spanish American cities. Frank Proctor, “Gender and manumission in New Spain.”

Africans living in Montevideo were much more diverse than the reported by previous sources given that a significant population from West and Southeast Africa comprised seventeen and ten percent of the sample, respectively. Once more, however, umbrella-terms such as Mina (West Africa), Mozambique (Southeast Africa) and Congo, Angola, and Benguela (West-Central Africa) predominated as means of identification. Yet, a minority of captives consistently used more detailed ethnonyms such as Ganguela, Hausa or Maqua. This census both confirms the prevalence of umbrella-terms across the black population regardless of sex and age, and provides evidence of the usage of detailed ethnonyms describing paths of inland African slave trade. This source not only shows the typical prominence of West-Central Africans in Montevideo, but also the recent arrival of Southeast Africans during the preceding decade.

Table 2.6. People of African ancestry broken down by origin. Montevideo, 1812.

Broad Origin	Origin	Number	Percentage	Age (average)
Rio de la Plata 251 (22,80 percent)	Montevideo	206	18.71	13
	Buenos Aires	26	2.36	34
	Other Banda Oriental	7	0.63	15
	Other Rio de la Plata	12	1.09	22
Brazil 68 (6,18 percent)	Pernambuco	1	0.09	30
	Brazil	63	5.72	26
	Rio de Janeiro	4	0.36	31
West Central Africa 450 (40,84 percent)	Congo	184	16.71	24
	Benguela	99	8.99	27
	Angola	76	6.90	27
	Ganguela, Manguela [Ngangela]	28	2.54	23
	Camunda	10	0.91	28
	Lubolo, Luboro, Bolo, Rebolo, Ubolo [Libolo]	25	2.26	23
	Casanche, Quisanche [Kasanje]	8	0.73	24
	Calumbo	1	0.09	27
	Quisama, Ysama, [Kisama]	4	0.36	25
	Quizambe	1	0.09	14
	Mojumbe, Magumbe, Muyumbi [Huombe]	5	0.45	30
	Monyolo [Monjolo, Tio]	5	0.45	29
Songo	4	0.36	29	
West Africa 187 (16,98 percent)	Mina	159	14.44	25
	Carabali	19	1.73	20
	Moro	5	0.45	29

	Hausa	3	0.27	16
	Folá [Fulani]	1	0.09	18
Southeast Africa 103 (9,35 percent)	Mozambique	95	8.63	22
	Maqua, Macuva [Makhuwa]	5	0.45	22
	Manganha [Mang'anja]	1	0.09	19
	Muñanbano [Inhambane port]	1	0.09	13
	Maconde	1	0.09	30
Non-identified Africa 40 (3,63)	Costa Loro	1	0.09	29
	Tamban	1	0.09	12
	Africa or Guinea	38	3.45	24
Other 2 (0,18)	Peru	1	0.09	14
	Cadiz	1	0.09	14
Total		1101	100.00	22

Source: AGN-AGA, Libro 249, Padrones de Montevideo. **Note:** Other Banda Oriental includes Colonia, Paysandú, Minas, Santa Teresa and Soriano. Other Río de la Plata includes Córdoba, Misiones, Paraguay, Salta and Santa Fé. There are only 8 persons of mixed European and African ancestry in this sample.

In this list, information on the slaves was filtered by the census taker. Each *alcalde de barrio* –a person elected by neighbors who represented the authority of the City Hall– collected the data, which was probably provided by the head of the household. Even under these circumstances, the appearance of very detailed African ethnonyms –almost impossible to render in the Spanish language without alterations– make the case for Africans themselves being the source of this information. In addition, a captive’s identification as Maqua –an ethnonym of Southeast Africa– would not prevent this person being recognized in a different context as Mozambique –a broad eponym based on port of embarkation.

Information on age may serve to estimate different times of arrivals according to broad African areas. Captives claiming identification with Benguela and Angola were older in average than Mina and Mozambique slaves, and this may indicate that the latter were latecomers in Montevideo. There were only five Minas and one Mozambique in the list of the free black militia, which may confirm this conjecture. In addition, it is surprising that the Congo identification was larger than the combined eponyms Angola and Benguela. This may indicate an increase of slave arrivals from the Congo River, Cabinda and Loango in the first

decade of the nineteenth century as seen in chapter 1. The comparatively young age of Congo captives with other West-Central Africans, particularly from Benguela and Angola, suggests that some of them were recent arrivals in Montevideo. The young age of those claiming to be Carabari –from the Bight of Biafra– makes it difficult to connect them with the shipments of the Compañía de Filipinas in 1788-9. In fact, the majority of the Carabari must have arrived in the English ship *Neptune*, brought to Montevideo by a French privateer in 1804. Some ethnonyms of West-Central Africa seen before and in the present list may suggest early slave arrivals in Montevideo –especially if this couples with comparatively older average age.

Little more than one out of five individuals of this sample was born in the Río de la Plata. However, the largest single group of the entire list was of those born in Montevideo (18.71 percent). They were also the youngest significant group since they averaged thirteen years old. The same youthfulness holds for those born in other parts of the Banda Oriental as well, except from those from Colonia. Eleven percent of those born in Montevideo were free and comparatively older than the enslaved group since they averaged 21 years. In contrast, those born into slavery in the city averaged just eleven years old. This suggests that free blacks born in Montevideo obtained their freedom by their own means rather than by being born from a free mother. Captives born in Buenos Aires as well as in the rest of the Río de la Plata, who then moved to Montevideo, were older in average than those born in the Banda Oriental; this may be evidence of the early internal migrations described in the previous sections of this chapter. Specific origin of most of the captives born in Brazil who lived in Montevideo are lacking; however, they were largely women (59.3 percent). As noted earlier, this may indicate certain preference of local elites for Luso-Brazilian ways of preparing meals and domestic chores –and thus a tendency to rely on women with experience of Brazilian culture.

This census illustrates another simple fact of slave life in Montevideo: Africans of wide different origins lived within the same block and socialized in everyday-life because of their vicinity. In the block of San Pedro street between San Joaquin and San Felipe lived 36 slaves in nine houses: fourteen were born in Montevideo (most of them very young), seven in West-Central Africa, five in Mozambique, three in West Africa, two in unknown African regions, three in Santa Fe and two in Brazil. While people from broad African regions might have shared some common features, they had little in common with peoples from widely scattered areas of sub-Saharan Africa. Before reaching Montevideo, they could only meet peoples from widely different African regions through the intra-American slave trade in ports such as Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, or as sailors in transatlantic slave voyages. The forced intimacy of a slave vessel morphed into the somewhat less extreme conditions of crowded urban areas for Africans arriving and then living in Montevideo, but this was part of their New World experience rather than their shared experience across Africa and the Americas. Within this new environment, broad African eponyms might have provided the language to represent previous shipmate networks and for the construction of future social ties and associations in Montevideo.

Conclusion

Marriage files show patterns of geographical mobility, especially linked to the internal slave trades, and networks among free and enslaved Africans emerging from their shared itineraries across the Atlantic and the Americas. Church and colonial records unveil past stories of geographical mobility and draw attention to shared experiences which survived transatlantic and coastal slave trades. These records also show major differences between groups within the African communities in Montevideo, for example those of the free black

militia and the recent arrivals from Mozambique during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Shipmate experiences in the slave trade were crucial for the formation of social networks for Africans in the New World. This chapter not only shows Africans relying on ties developed in the slave trade, but also raises new questions on how these social networks shaped their identities. I also suggest explanations on how social networks and identities emerged and intertwined in the New World after the constraints of the forced transatlantic passage. Among Africans, shipmate ties helped to bridge ethnic senses of belonging in the Americas. The early emergence and persistence of “umbrella terms” such as *Angola* and *Mina* throughout the New World and the constant usage of these terms by African diasporic communities is suggestive of this process as such categories reflected personal experience in the slave trade. In this chapter, I have connected shipmate networks with these African eponyms. While shipmate ties usually foster solidarity among captives who shared broad regions of origin, we also see such networks emerging even among captives from disparate broad origins given that they sailed together in slave voyages from Brazil to Montevideo or they met before in previous slave ports. Shipmates’ stories contribute to our understanding of the effects of forced displacement.²⁸⁷ Transformations of social networks and identities started well before slave disembarkation in the New World and extend as far back as the inland African slave trade. Thus, specific slave trading routes did matter in the shaping of social networks and identities of Africans in the Americas.

²⁸⁷ On Jamaica, Monica Shuler states that “...the oft-mentioned shipmate bond, so strong a force in creating a fictive kinship among Africans during the slave trade, would have worked to *reinforce*, not break down ethnicity. The shipmate relationship provided a substitute kinship bond complete with the incest taboos, and united people of different villages, towns, lineages, and kingdoms. But in many instances, it did so *within the same cultural context*.” Monica Shuler, “Afro-American Slave Culture” *Historical Reflections*, 6, 1 (1979): 123.

Chapter 3: Building Networks and Leaderships in Black Militias, Confraternities and African nations

In 1784, three free blacks sailed from Buenos Aires to Cadiz without permission of the Spanish authorities. While the *capitán de resguardo* of Cadiz –the port officer– sent them back to Buenos Aires, he also forwarded a petition from their leader –Bentura Patrón– to the Spanish Crown. Bentura Patrón asked the rank of Colonel of black militias for himself and the ranks of Lieutenant-Colonel and Captain for his two colleagues because they had excelled in their service in the wars against the Portuguese of Colonia.²⁸⁸ Patrón introduced himself as “overseer of the nation of Ethiopia.” In this case, Ethiopia represented the biblical name for sub-Saharan Africa rather than an ethnic label. He portrayed his leadership with a term related to the African-based associations but encompassing all blacks of Buenos Aires rather than a group. Bentura Patrón had had a wide experience in black associations since he and others had founded the brotherhood of Saint Balthazar in 1771.²⁸⁹ After the incident in Cadiz, the Viceroy of Buenos Aires reported that Patrón had not excelled in royal service. In fact, his insubordination toward authority made him deserve punishment rather than honors. Bentura Patrón tried to establish the confraternity of Saint Balthazar in Montevideo in 1787, which means he probably left Buenos Aires upon his return from Cadiz.²⁹⁰ In 1793, he helped the lieutenant of the black militia of Montevideo, Mateo de los Santos, who had run away to Buenos Aires in order to avoid a judicial investigation.²⁹¹

This case demonstrates the ties among members of black colonial militias and lay-brotherhoods as well as African-based associations in the Río de la Plata. Black socialization

²⁸⁸ AGI, Buenos Aires 513, “Al Virrey de Buenos Aires. Aprobándole la reprensión que dio a Bentura Patrón por haber resultado falsos los servicios que alegó con sus Comp.s...”, October 19, 1785.

²⁸⁹ Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, 209. Ricardo González, Daniel Sánchez, and, Cristina Fúkelman, *Arte, culto e ideas. Buenos Aires, Siglo XVIII*. Buenos Aires, Fundación para la Investigación del Arte Argentino, 1999, 100.

²⁹⁰ AAM, Libro 1º de la Cofradía del Rey de San Baltazar, July 29, 1787.

²⁹¹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 111, exp. 45, “Causa criminal de oficio de la Real Justicia...” 1793.

moved in various and sometimes overlapping arenas, but the archives held by the colonial church and state of Africans and their descendants mainly shows these three institutions to have been particularly prominent in Spanish America. The complementary worlds of militias, confraternities and African-based associations or “nations” shaped networks among Afro-descendants from where they could elaborate a defense against slavery and the colonial state within the parameters of the Spanish community. In effect, free blacks used these organizations to assert their membership of the Spanish community while at the same time establishing their “otherness” within that community.²⁹² The leaders of these groups became spokespersons of black communities in the relationship of the latter with the Church and the colonial state. No wonder Bentura Patrón felt entitled to bypass the bureaucracy of Buenos Aires and present himself to the Spanish King. His life is both exemplary and exceptional in demonstrating the black leadership and identities emerging from shared experience and social networks in colonial militias, confraternities and Africa-based associations.

In Colonial Spanish America, identity was a process rather than a fixed entity particularly for Africans and their descendants. The composite Spanish community recognized a place for Spanish, white criollos and Amerindians in America, but there was no pre-defined place for Africans in this scheme. Africans arrived in Spanish America against their will; and Spanish rulers attached the “stain of slavery” to their descendants as colonial documents and the Spanish Constitution of 1812 attest. Free coloreds had to assert their identity as imperial subjects in order to obtain benefits of belonging to this community.

While the term *vecindad* described horizontal bonds of belonging to local communities, the term *naturaleza* embodied vertical ties between the Spanish King and his community of

²⁹² This reasoning has been applied first for the usage of Spanish courts by Amerindian communities, but it is useful for understanding black associations under the Spanish rule. Steve J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1650*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press: 1992. These institutions could become revolutionary as in the case of the Aponte Rebellion in Cuba. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 78-119.

subjects. Historian Tamar Herzog asserts that networks of relationships defined belonging to the community in colonial Spanish America –the everyday social classification depending on subjective relations. Obtaining freedom was the first step for Afro-descendants in the process of becoming both a *vecino* and a royal subject. Free blacks defined themselves as *vecinos* to assert their belonging to the local community when pleading to the state. Exercise of rights rather than legal enactments defined the boundaries of communities, and free blacks and coloreds had to assert their membership to this community in order to improve their status in face of rejection born in the “stain of slavery.”²⁹³

The existence of multiracial militias drawn from people of African and Amerindian origin was even more common in the late colonial period due to the militarization promoted by the Bourbon reforms. As with most measures applied to the Spanish colonies, the outcome of such recruitment differed by region.²⁹⁴ Black and colored militias were altogether more pervasive in frontier areas such as the Río de la Plata rather than in the core of the empire, where the main indigenous population lived. In borderlands, militias were the first line of defense against imperial interlopers, while in core areas such as Lima they were supposed to prevent indigenous insurgency. Spaniards perceived colored units as threat, but they comprised the only affordable way to defend the extensive empire. Overall, free blacks tended to perceive participation in militias as leading to upward mobility. Militia membership also allowed free blacks to identify with local communities as ties emerging from these units linked them with regional identities.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 3-7, 159-161; Fisher and O’Hara, *Racial Identities*, 3.

²⁹⁴ Christon Archer, *The army in Bourbon Mexico, 1760-1810*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977; Leon Campbell, *The military and society in Colonial Peru, 1750-1810*. Philadelphia: American P.S., 1978; Allan Kuethe, *Military reform and society in New Granada, 1773-1808*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1978.

²⁹⁵ Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, “Black Soldiers, Native Soldiers. Meanings of Military Service in the Spanish American Colonies” in Matthew Restall (ed.), *Beyond black and red: African-native relations in colonial Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005, 46.

Networks of militia participation included most free black and colored men in Montevideo by the first decade of 1800. The analysis of five lists of the black and pardo units taken in 1802, 1805, two in 1806, and in 1807, offers a glimpse into militia participation. Without repetitions, these muster rolls counted 178 free black and 214 free pardo militiamen. The pardo company enlisted just over hundred men and the black unit less than this figure which means that some men only occasionally appeared in these lists as illustrated by Table 3.1. In fact, 52 percent of the free blacks and 42 percent of pardos were listed only once by these five muster rolls.

Table 3.1. Participation of free blacks and pardos in militia drills, Montevideo 1802-1807

Number of muster roll appearances	Free blacks	Free pardos
Five appearances	(6%) 11	(13%) 28
Four appearances	(10%) 18	(19%) 41
Three appearances	(17%) 30	(10%) 20
Two appearances	(15%) 27	(16%) 35
One appearance	(52%) 92	(42%) 90
Total men	178	214

Source: AGN-U, AGA, Libro 435, ff. 83, 99, 255-7, 267-9; Libro 873, January 5-6, 1806; AGN-A, IX, 3-1-3, “Lista y Filiación de la Compañía de Morenos Libres de Montevideo” January 8, 1807.

No more than seven hundred free blacks and coloreds –both men and women– lived in Montevideo in 1810.²⁹⁶ Most freedmen living in this city took part of black or pardo units at least once, which highlights the importance of militias for all free men of African ancestry. Some may have understood this service as a burden, which seemingly explain the significant percentage of men appearing only once. Black officers and noncommissioned officers, by contrast, were commonly listed in three or more muster rolls, which suggest that they took this as a duty and as source of benefits. Africans and their descendants also joined black brotherhoods in this city. The book of elections of the confraternity of Saint Benito in

²⁹⁶ Arredondo, “Los Apuntes...,” 23-24.

Montevideo listed 68 men and 70 women of full or mix African ancestry who held elected positions from 1778 to 1792.²⁹⁷ Regrettably, the full record of members of this brotherhood is missing. As earlier expressed, the black population of Montevideo was near 1.300 individuals by 1778, which reflects the significance of this confraternity in the early years of this city. Black lay brotherhoods –*cofradías* or *confradias*- emerged in most cities where slave populations were significant in the Catholic Americas.²⁹⁸ In Montevideo, these confraternities were active in the early history of the black population but then they seem to fade as African “nations” emerged –a pattern also apparent in Cuba.²⁹⁹ Apart from the brief records produced by two black brotherhoods of Montevideo, information on brotherhoods is extremely scant as time goes on.³⁰⁰

3.1. Imperial Warfare and Black and Colored reallocation in the Río de la Plata

War in the Río de la Plata had sparked free black mobilization since mid eighteenth century. In 1753, the governor of Buenos Aires ordered all free blacks and coloreds to march with the Spanish forces against the Guarani Missions east of the Uruguay River which had rebelled against the treaty ceding their territory to the Portuguese. Governor Pedro Cevallos

²⁹⁷ Archivo de los Hermanos Conventuales de Montevideo, Records of the Confraternity of Saint Benito, Book of elections, 1787-1792.

²⁹⁸ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, “Black and Mulatto Brotherhoods in Colonial Brazil: A Study in Collective Behavior” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, 4, (1974): 564-602; Patricia Mulvey, “Slave Confraternities in Brazil: Their Role in Colonial Society.” *The Americas* 39, 1 (1982): 39-68; Elizabeth Kiddy, “Ethnic and Racial Identity in the Brotherhoods of the Rosario in Minas Gerais, 1700-1830.” *The Americas*, 56, 2, (1999): 221-252; Mariza Carvalho Soares, *Devotos da Cor. Identidade étnica, religiosidad e escravidão no Rio de Janeiro, século XVIII*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2000; Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*; Miguel Rosal, “Algunas consideraciones sobre las creencias religiosas de los africanos porteños” in: *Academia Nacional de Historia, Separata de Investigaciones y Ensayos*, Buenos Aires, Issue 31, (1984): 369-382; Daniel Walker, *No More, No More. Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans*. Minneapolis, Minnesota Univ. Press, 2004; Philip Howard, *Changing History: Afro-Cuban cabildos and societies of color in the nineteenth century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1998.

²⁹⁹ By mid eighteenth century, African “nations” of *cabildos* seemed to have outnumbered black brotherhoods in Cuba. Childs, *The Aponte Rebellion*, 101-102.

³⁰⁰ AAM, Records of the Confraternity of Saint Balthazar (1787); Archivo de los Hermanos Conventuales de Montevideo, Records of the Confraternity of Saint Benito (1773-1799, 1832).

ordered all free blacks into militia service to support the Spanish positions against Portuguese Colonia in 1762. When free pardo Agustín Rodríguez requested payment for service, he documented his participation in both the Guarani War and the siege of Colonia, as well as marching against Amerindians near the frontier of Buenos Aires. Free black Antonio Galain stated that he had been sent to Colonia from Buenos Aires in 1777 while requesting to the Viceroy to be freed from labor related to militia service. Antonio Alvarez, a free black *vecino* of Buenos Aires, made a similar request because he had a groin strain caused by work performed for the siege of Colonia. His request was granted. At least initially, free coloreds were compelled to join these militias, and they reallocation associated with it. In addition, the colonial state requested seasonal labor from black militia men during for example the wheat harvest. The Captain of the free black militia José Narbona sought permission from the governor of Buenos Aires for married men under his command to return to Buenos Aires after serving in the construction of trenches in the Real de San Carlos. He stated that they would both help their families and continue their militia service. Unmarried members of the free black militia of Buenos Aires probably had a longer stay in the Real de San Carlos during the 1760s and 1770s.³⁰¹

By 1768, the black militia of the Real de San Carlos was growing because of incorporation of runaway slaves from Colonia. This unit carried out the military works needed to sustain the Spanish blockade –from construction of fences and trenches to taming horses and cattle.³⁰² By 1770, this force was composed of 96 free blacks.³⁰³ Not surprisingly, the first chapel in the Real de San Carlos was devoted to Saint Benito –the most well-known

³⁰¹ Archivo General de la Nación, *Bandos de virreyes*, 33 and 46: AGN-A, IX, 12-9-9, Solicitudes Civiles, f. 98; IX, 12-9-6, Solicitudes Civiles, f. 269; IX, 12-9-4, Solicitudes Civiles, f. 88; IX, 12-8-11, Licencias, f. 5.

³⁰² AGN-A, IX, 7-9-6. Nicolás de Michelarena to Francisco Bucarely, September 6, 1768. All correspondence from the Real de San Carlos to Buenos Aires about this free black unit comprised petitions to obtain clothing for them.

³⁰³ AGN-A, IX, 7-9-7. Nicolás de Elordoy to Francisco Bucarely, June 25, 1770.

black saint. The white regular company stationed there accounted for only 166 men in 1769; this force increased only during the final attack on Colonia. While the fall of Colonia meant the black militia was disbanded in 1777, this unit still comprised twelve in 1787-1794, when extinction loomed.³⁰⁴

The siege of Colonia required a workforce mainly filled by Missionary Indians and colored militias. Free non-white soldiers were lumped together with recently escaped slaves when work was needed. In 1766, the captain of the free pardo militia of Buenos Aires Martín Pastor complained to the governor on behalf of his company. He claimed that military officers burdened free pardos with manual labor while their duties should have been restricted to battlefield. In his view, the militia members were not mere servants. Pastor argued that the military fuero kept militia members apart from these tasks and officers should respect their militia status. Spanish officers probably grouped together free blacks and coloreds from Buenos Aires with the recently freed deserters from Colonia, and this sparked one of the first complaints emerging from colored militias regarding their status vis-à-vis civilians and slaves.³⁰⁵

In May 1776, three slaves deserted from Colonia to the besieging camp. They gave information to the Spanish about the activities of an English captain in Colonia, a Spaniard who smuggled foodstuff, and Portuguese military information.³⁰⁶ These Africans had departed from the Angolan coast and lived years in Rio de Janeiro and Colonia. They understood the changing scenario of Luso-Hispanic wars, and seized the opportunity to

³⁰⁴ AGN-A, IX, 7-9-7. Luis Ramirez to Francisco Bucarely, April 5, 1769; IX, 14-4-11, June 5, 1787. Free black Esteban de los Santos was both in the list of 1770 and 1787; IX, 14-5-6, January 17, 1794, f. 11v and June 20, f. 225. In June of 1786, the Royal Treasury of Buenos Aires sent 6,000 pesos to Colonia to pay salaries of workers and black militiamen, and also provided clothing and hospital expenditures, IX, 14-4-4, (1782) ff. 231, 242, and 275.

³⁰⁵ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-3, September 17, 1766, f. 240. By 1776, there was a pardo company of Buenos Aires in the Real de San Carlos composed by 25 men. AGN-A, IX, 7-10-3, May 16, 1776.

³⁰⁶ AGN-A, IX, 7-10-3, Declaration of Joaquin Gomez, Juan Correa, and Mateo Silva. May 11 and 25, 1776.

desert. Another eight slaves, both men and woman, ran from Colonia to the Spanish in early September. All of them joined the black militia or, in case of women, worked for the Spanish. All fishermen of Colonia were black according to the Spanish, and fishing was a essential craft during the siege. Whether free or enslaved, they trafficked both merchandise and information with the Spanish; thus, slaves had notions of what to find in the besieging camp. Portuguese authorities denounced to the governor of Buenos Aires that Spanish sentinels enticed slaves to run away.³⁰⁷ These cases reveal that slaves had to evaluate what was the best time to take flight –for example when the enemy guaranteed that they would not be returned to the former masters.³⁰⁸

After the fall of Colonia, Portuguese who were relocated to Buenos Aires and Montevideo tried to regain possession of their former slaves. In 1778, free black Jacinto Lima was jailed in Buenos Aires. He described how he had run away from the Portuguese in 1762 because of ill treatment from his master, and then the Spanish commander in Real de San Carlos had allowed him to travel to Buenos Aires. Since then, Jacinto had been a loyal subject of the Spanish king by contributing to all “expeditions and works,” which means that he was compelled to join black militias.³⁰⁹ In 1778, the son of his former master moved to Buenos Aires and with the help of the Alcalde jailed Jacinto. That same year José Ignacio Proenza, a Portuguese living in Buenos Aires, requested that the Spanish authorities restored him three slaves who had run away from Colonia to the Real de San Carlos in 1762-63. Proenza requested their reenslavement now that he was living in the same city as the escaped slaves. Another native of Colonia, Joaquin Rodrigues Carvalho, requested the return of three

³⁰⁷ AGN-A, IX, 7-10-3, Report of Marcos de Sarrazabal, September 19, 1776; IX, 7-10-4, Report of Marcos de Sarrazabal, February 19, 1777; IX, 7-10-3, File on runaway slaves February 13, 1776.

³⁰⁸ The Spanish and Portuguese had agreements on the devolution of criminals, deserters and slaves, but in 1762 and 1776-7 the Spanish stop returning slaves. This fell into a Spanish strategy of debilitating the enemy by enrolling runaway slaves. See Jane Landers, “Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose: A Free Black Town in Spanish Colonial Florida.” *The American Historical Review*, 95, 1 (1990): 9-30.

³⁰⁹ AGN-A, IX, 12-9-12, Solicitudes de Presos, Jacinto Lima, March 28, 1778, fs. 190 and 221.

runaway slaves who he had located in Montevideo and Buenos Aires. These and further requests were denied by authorities in Buenos Aires, where hundreds of Portuguese subjects from Colonia were moved after 1777.³¹⁰

A few years earlier, parallel events had occurred in Montevideo regarding the freedom of slaves escaped from Colonia. In 1770, free black José Cabral sent a petition to the Governor of Montevideo from jail describing that he had run away from Colonia to the Spanish in 1762 given that Pedro de Cevallos “gave freedom to all slaves deserting from Portuguese towns in order to enroll them in the Black Companies.” But now his former master was living in Buenos Aires, and he requested the return of his slave –the occasion of José’s imprisonment. In his petition, José requested the testimony from Captain Sebastian Sanchez, who reported that José worked in the trenches and that “this black as all of their nature were thought to be free as all the troop of the garrison in [Real de San Carlos] know them as free.” Sanchez added the names of four other Spanish officers who could testify that José Cabral was free. The sergeant Juan Perez had known José Cabral since 1765 in the trenches, and he also said that José worked for the barber Ambrosio who lived in Montevideo. Another witness, Pedro Cortez added that José Cabral was a corporal in the black militia. Ambrosio also provided testimony that José and other runaway blacks were employed on the siege of Colonia, prior to moving to Montevideo. The former master of José asserted that the latter had escaped from Colonia in 1770, when the Spanish and Portuguese had agreed to return slaves and deserters. The commander of Real de San Carlos at that time, Nicolás Elordoy, stated that Cevallos had granted freedom to all slaves escaping from Colonia in 1762, but he –Elordoy– then agreed with the Portuguese governor of Colonia to

³¹⁰ AGN-A, 12-9-9, ff. 116 and 648. See also AGN-A, IX 12-9-8, ff. 178-79; 12-9-4, ff. 25, 29, 170; 12-9-5, f. 600-1. Free black Domingo Ferreira figures among these masters requesting slaves back, AGN-A, 12-9-6, f. 200-1, 1778.

return slaves to their former owners on January 20, 1770.³¹¹ All witnesses attested that José had worked in the Real de San Carlos before 1770, and thus he was released. Even though he was imprisoned, José found someone who could write for him and make his request up to the governor. He also needed assistance from outside the prison to reach the officers who could attest for him. Other free blacks from the Real de San Carlos living in Montevideo might have helped in building his case since he was not the first to have to fight for his freedom. In 1771, free black Antonio de Acevedo sued Juan Goys in Montevideo. Goys was the representative of Antonio's former master in Buenos Aires, who tried to sell Antonio to a ship's captain in Montevideo. Antonio wanted reparation for the labor he was forced to perform for Goys, and for the amount of his property that Goys had seized. Captain Sebastian Sanchez attested that Antonio ran away from Colonia before 1770, that he worked in his house, and that he had a family in the Real de San Carlos. At the end Goys was requested to pay 97 pesos to Antonio.³¹² All these claims were put to an end when, upon his arrival to Montevideo, the new viceroy Juan José de Vertiz ordered the Governor not to "disturb the freedom" of the "black and mulatto slaves of the Portuguese" who had escaped to the Spanish in the wars of 1762 and 1777.³¹³

The conquest of Colonia was a moment of celebration, when Spanish colonial authorities were willing to intercede for slaves against Portuguese masters now living under Spanish rule. The bundle of slave petitions in the National Archive of Buenos Aires comprises some 244 requests from slaves to the Governor and then Viceroy of the Río de la Plata between 1766 and 1809.³¹⁴ While this collection is surely incomplete, we should note

³¹¹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 21, exp. 34, "Instancia producida por el negro Joseph Cabral..." 1777.

³¹² AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 22, exp. 32, "Autos seguidos por el Negro libre Antonio Acevedo contra Juan Goys," 1771.

³¹³ AGN-A, IX, 2-3-4, Viceroy Juan J. de Vertiz to Governor of Montevideo Joaquín del Pino, August 6, 1778.

³¹⁴ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-5, Solicitudes de Esclavos.

that 45 percent of these pleas were written in 1777-78 alone, when the first viceroy was appointed –Pedro de Cevallos, the “conqueror” of Colonia. The freedom granted to slaves who had run away from Colonia in 1762 and 1777, who subsequently moved to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, as well as the arrival as Viceroy of the same military who had granted freedom to these runaway slaves might have sparked the actions of the captives of Buenos Aires in 1777-78.

Imperial warfare in the Río de la Plata brought to Montevideo people of mixed and full African ancestry from the Portuguese domain as well as from Buenos Aires, and also provided the base in which military recruitment could stimulate social networks. The Spanish organized the first pardo militia in this city in 1761 during the Seven Years War. People of mixed African, European and Amerindian ancestry had lived in Montevideo since her foundation, but the militia –which comprised 52 men–, is the first documented association of free people of mixed origins in the city.³¹⁵ Eight militia members had “Paraguay” and others “Chileno” and “Cordobés” as surnames which indicates migrations.³¹⁶ Marriage files suggest that both the first and second lieutenant were from Buenos Aires as well as three other soldiers. Two militiamen, Francisco Xavier Molina from Santa Fe and Manuel Torres from Buenos Aires, were recorded as witness and groom by a marriage file in 1760.³¹⁷ They learned the craft of shoemaker in Buenos Aires and then they moved together to Montevideo in the 1750s. They shared the same craft, a similar migration narrative, ties of support as expressed by marriage files, and they were soldiers of the same company –plus they were

³¹⁵ Most of them arrived in the foundational period of Montevideo directly from Buenos Aires, though they may initially come from Paraguay and other provinces. AGN-A, IX, 2-2-1, Joaquín de Viana to Governor of Buenos Aires, September 18, 1761.

³¹⁶ Other sources reveal the significance of Paraguayans of mixed origin in early Montevideo. A free pardo from Paraguay, Bartolo Velazquez, married there in 1756. He and the two witnesses arrived in Montevideo with the forces of Governor Andoanegui after the Guarani War. Bartolo married a slave of the Sergeant José Gomez. After Bartolo’s death, his widow remarried with one of the witnesses of her first marriage, free pardo Benito Caceres from Paraguay. The other witness was another free pardo from Paraguay. AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 12, exp. 10, 1762.

³¹⁷ Apolant, *Génesis*, p. 1255.

both pardos.

One of five militiamen with Portuguese surnames, Juan de Silva, was involved in a judicial case which indicates shared migratory experience into Montevideo.³¹⁸ Both Portuguese pardos and tailors, Juan de Silva and Esteban Gonzales deserted from Colonia to Buenos Aires and then moved to Montevideo in 1760-61. Initially, they had migrated from Rio de Janeiro to Colonia, where they married local women. Both Esteban and Juan were in their thirties by 1762. They caught the attention of the Spanish authorities because of the correspondence Juan de Silva conducted with people in Colonia, Rio Grande and Rio de Janeiro. One confiscated letter mentioning British vessels approaching Montevideo sparked an investigation by the Governor of this city, who thought these Portuguese pardos wanted to run away from Montevideo to avoid the imminent British invasion. The Governor sentenced Juan and Esteban to work in the defenses for Montevideo on the grounds that they wanted to leave the city without authorization and had withheld vital information from the Spanish. Seven Portuguese testified in this case: three tailors, a stonecutter, a shoemaker, a mason, and a rural worker. Their testimonies show that not only merchants and former slaves had relocated from Colonia to Montevideo, but also a great numbers of artisans. Free people of mixed origins moved from Rio de Janeiro to Colonia and then to Montevideo, but they kept in written contact with family and friends in Brazil.

By 1761 in addition to the pardo militia there were also company of married Spanish, two of single men born out of the city, and one of Amerindians. No free black company was created at this time, probably because the free black population was not sufficiently large to form a unit. Only eleven free black men married in Montevideo from 1727 to 1767 as well as

³¹⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 12, exp. 16, "Causa criminal contra Juan de Silva," 1762. While Juan Silva or João da Silva was an extremely common name both in Spanish and Portuguese, we should note that the Juan Apolant's index of names does not list any other Juan Silva in Montevideo from 1727 to 1767. Apolant, *Génesis*, Index of names.

only 157 slaves lived in this town by 1751.³¹⁹ Juan Apolant also shows pardos enlisted in the white companies. His findings delineate blurred racial lines in this early period, when the category “pardo” described both Euro-African and Afro-Indian peoples, and when these men navigated in and out of whiteness according to the eye of the beholder.³²⁰ In the 1760s, the campaign against the Portuguese put into contact and renewed networks of people of mixed origin throughout the region and across the Spanish and Portuguese lines.³²¹

3.2. The overlapping networks of Black Militias, Confraternities and African Nations

Renewal of hostilities against the Portuguese led to the relocation of the militias of Buenos Aires to Montevideo in the 1770s and the creation of a black militia in this city. In May 1775, sixty-three pardo militiamen from Lujan, Magdalena and Buenos Aires disembarked in Montevideo, as well as a unit of 27 free blacks captained by Manuel Valladares.³²² These companies remained in Montevideo for six months, but six pardos and two blacks stayed behind. The lists of the free black militia of Real de San Carlos (1770), the free black company of Buenos Aires in Montevideo (1775), and the free black militia of Montevideo (1780) shows how military activity facilitated networking and migration.³²³ Fourteen men listed in the Real de San Carlos enrolled a decade later in the black militia of Montevideo.³²⁴ In addition, six free black militiamen of Buenos Aires later enlisted in the

³¹⁹ Pereda Valdés, *El Negro en el Uruguay*, 40.

³²⁰ Juan A. Apolant, “Padrones Olvidados de Montevideo del Siglo XVIII,” 88.

³²¹ AGN-A, IX, 2-2-2, Joaquin de Viana to Pedro de Cevallos, September 10, 1762; IX, 2-2-3, Relación de las compañías de milicias de Montevideo, July 26, 1766.

³²² AGN-U, AGA, Caja 48, C. 10, Lista de la Compañía de Pardos de Luján; Lista de la Compañía de Pardos de Buenos Aires; Lista de la Compañía de Pardos de Magdalena, Lista de Morenos de Buenos Aires, May 10, 1775.

³²³ AGN-A, IX, 7-10-7, Lista de morenos libres del Real de San Carlos, 1770; IX, 2-3-6, Compañía de Negros de Montevideo, May 31, 1780; AGN-U, AGA, Caja 48, Carpeta 10, Lista de Morenos de Buenos Aires, May 10, 1775.

³²⁴ Acevedo Antonio, Juan Antonio, Manuel Antonio, Juan de Almeyda, Juan de la Cruz, Manuel de los Santos, Pedro de los Santos, Cayetano Diaz, Manuel Domingues Chaves, Manuel Gonzales, Manuel José Gonzales, José Gomez de los Santos, Juan Manuel, and Francisco Rivero.

latter unit too.³²⁵ The first black militia of Montevideo –composed of eighty men– had at least twenty members with previous military experience in the Río de la Plata who had migrated across the Portuguese lines. It is not surprising that runaway slaves from Colonia found networks to support them in Montevideo when their former Portuguese masters tried to seize them.

Probably the black militia of Montevideo at least predated in some provisional form the Spanish conquest of Colonia in 1777. The free black Enrique Cardoso was identified as captain of the black company of Montevideo in 1779.³²⁶ The muster roll of 1780 named Captain Antonio Francisco de Silva, Lieutenant Mateo de los Santos and Second Lieutenant Pedro Mascareño. Antonio Francisco Silva had been aide-de-camp (*Ayudante Mayor*) in the companies of Buenos Aires since 1766, when Pedro Cevallos had appointed him.³²⁷ The pool of experienced free black militia officers in Buenos Aires explains the appointment of Antonio Francisco Silva as captain of the black unit of Montevideo. He had probably taken part in the military relocation explained above. By contrast, most of the officers of this company had been slaves in Montevideo; they were Africans who had obtained their freedom, and who were in their late thirties or mid forties by the time of the creation of this militia –the first generation of free blacks of Montevideo.

Biographical sketches of the black officers illustrate how their militia involvement intersected other aspects of their daily life. Three examples are provided here. First, Mateo de los Santos was lieutenant of this black militia. He lived in Arroyo Seco, a mile north of Montevideo, where many free blacks and pardos had their home. In 1793, he was arrested in

³²⁵ Antonio Pintos, Antonio Caboverde, Domingo Antonio Pereyra, Juan de la Rosa, Ignacio Pacheco, and Francisco Joseph Olivera.

³²⁶ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 42 exp. 29, “Causa seguida contra Juan de Aguirre...”, 1779.

³²⁷ AGN-A, IX, 2-4-1, Alonso de Quesada to Viceroy of the Río de la Plata, 5 September 1781. While the militia probably initiated their training in the late 1770s, they did not received new weapons and what they needed for their service until May 1781. AGN-A, IX, 2-4-1, Viceroy to Governor of Montevideo, May 4, 1781.

Buenos Aires by Pablo Agüero –a free African appointed by the Cabildo to chase runaway slaves and control free blacks. Mateo was sent back to Montevideo where he faced charges of having murdered an Indian in 1787. He spent one year in prison while the case was pursued. Before running away to Buenos Aires, Mateo de los Santos entrusted his possessions in a box to free black Maria Luisa de Jesus –his neighbor. In that box, Mateo placed his uniform: a red wool coat, a white sleeveless jacket and white trousers. He had two pairs of shoes –one with silver buckles– two hats, seven silver pesos, a jar of honey, an ivory-handle knife, silver epaulettes, two fine shirts, two pairs of long johns, two new knives, four hoops, and three new handkerchiefs. Upon opening the box in 1793, Mateo de los Santos noted that there were missing items: freedom papers belonging to himself and to another soldier, his military commission as lieutenant, and documents related to his purchase of a small farm.³²⁸ Thus, his most important possessions were his uniform, money, clothing and knives, and the documents attesting his freedom and his ownership of plot of land. In addition, another black soldier had entrusted his freedom papers to this lieutenant.

When he was appointed as lieutenant, Mateo de los Santos was in his early thirties. He declared provenance from Congo and that he was forty years old by the time of his incarceration. In 1787, all testimony –including that of one of Francisco’s friends– indicted that the Indian Francisco had harassed Mateo de los Santos in a *pulpería* –a bar and grocery store– and that the latter had no alternative but defend himself with the small sabre he wore as a lieutenant. Free black Bentura Patrón supported his neighbor Mateo de los Santos. I believe this Bentura Patrón is the same person mentioned at the beginning of this chapter who went to Cadiz, and was then expelled from Buenos Aires to Montevideo.³²⁹ While Bentura declared he knew “Mateo de los Santos really well,” he added no new information.

³²⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 111, exp. 45, “Causa criminal de oficio de la Real Justicia...,” 1793.

³²⁹ Note that his first wedding did not occur in Montevideo, and he was not enlisted in the free black militia of 1780.

Probably Bentura Patrón helped Mateo to run away to Buenos Aires given his former militia connections there. Mateo de los Santos declared that he had run away to avoid being imprisoned long time without swift judicial process. Once captured, he spent one year in prison in Montevideo before his release in 1792. The case illustrates the support of the free blacks of Arroyo Seco for Mateo de los Santos since all of them testified that he was defending himself and all referred to him as *teniente* –lieutenant. This case also shows the connections of Mateo with people in Buenos Aires who could house him, and his boxed possessions established his militia involvement. It is particularly significant that the case was opened only when he was sent from Buenos Aires to Montevideo. In other words, the commissioner of Arroyo Seco had not attempted to prosecute Mateo for the murder of Francisco in 1787, but only after his detention in the viceregal capital.

As Mateo de los Santos, the second lieutenant of the black militia of Montevideo in 1780, Pedro Mascareño, declared provenance from Congo. His case reveals overlapping leadership of black confraternities and militias. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Pedro Mascareño had been slave of the Procurador of the Jesuit Order in Montevideo Cosme Agullo. This priest had arrived in the city in 1745 and remained there up to the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1767, but Pedro Mascareño had been his slave from the mid 1750s. Pedro Mascareño was free by the time of his marriage to María in 1773 –another enslaved Congo then free. Pedro stated in his marriage file that his parents’ names were Sebastian and Maria, which may indicate Christianization before crossing the Atlantic. While African-born, Pedro had lived for almost thirty years in Montevideo before joining the black militia. Historian Carlos Ferrés points out that the Jesuits created a “Cofradía de Negros” which later became the black confraternity of Saint Benito in Montevideo.³³⁰ Pedro Mascareño was the founder of this black brotherhood and perhaps had been encouraged by the Jesuits in this endeavor.

³³⁰ Carlos Ferrés, *Epoca Colonial. La Compañía de Jesús en Montevideo*. Montevideo: MEC, 1975, 60.

Or perhaps the fact that Pedro was a slave of a priest, or his previous experience of Christianity in Kongo, might have contributed to his leadership in the brotherhood. Pedro Mascareño began the process of founding the confraternity of Saint Benito in Montevideo in the year of his marriage in 1773. Five years later, he was the first *Hermano Mayor* and *Mayordomo Mayor* of this brotherhood. He was still *Hermano Mayor* in 1788, though other members were elected as *Mayordomo Mayor* from 1778 on.³³¹ The captain of the black militia of Montevideo Antonio Silva was *Mayordomo Mayor* of the confraternity of Saint Benito in Buenos Aires in 1777, which means that Silva participated in black brotherhoods before his arrival in Montevideo.³³² Probably Pedro Mascareño brought Captain Antonio Francisco Silva to the black confraternity of Montevideo, since Silva signed as secretary in 1783. Silva was a newcomer in this city and his incorporation in the brotherhood meant the creation of links to the local black community.³³³

The case of the Second Sergeant of the black militia in 1780, Domingo Duran, reveals further networks intersecting military and religious participation. He arrived in Montevideo as slave of the lieutenant of infantry of Buenos Aires, Esteban Duran. Domingo may have got his freedom in the late 1760s.³³⁴ In 1774, he was jailed for stealing some minor personal objects belonging to the deceased widow of his former master. Among these items was a figurine of Saint Antonio which may indicate strong religious feelings. By the time of his appointment as Second Sergeant he was in his mid forties. Domingo Duran first appeared in the records of the confraternity of Saint Benito as *Procurador General de la Campaña* in 1787, which means that he probably lived outside the city walls. He occupied the position

³³¹ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 37, Carpeta 4, Constitución de San Benito de Palermo, 1773-1774; Archive of Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

³³² AGN-A, IX, 31-7-7, "Testimonio del expediente obrado para la aprobación de las Constituciones..." ff. 13-15.

³³³ Pedro Mascareño was also a man of some means. In 1784 he loaned two hundred pesos to the slaves Catalina de Jesús and her husband to purchase their freedom. AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 87, exp. 70, 1788.

³³⁴ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 30, exp. 9, "Autos obrados por robo hecho por Domingo Duran Negro Libre..." 1774.

formerly held by Pedro Mascareño as *Hermano Mayor* in 1789 and 1792. He was already connected to the confraternity of Saint Benito by 1780, when he paid for the funeral of the free black Juana Gomar.³³⁵ The brotherhood paid the funeral, the mass, and the burial. The eight pesos and five reales for the burial Domingo could get back from the remaining property of Juana –she was a widow without children. Once again, militia involvement overlapped participation in black confraternities.

Neither Pedro Mascareño nor Domingo Duran was exceptional in his participation in the first black militia and the first black confraternity of Montevideo. Table 3.2. shows that eight out of twelve officers of this unit held an elective position in Saint Benito. Four other officers may have belonged to Saint Benito, but in the absence of any members' list, only the records of annual elections have survived. By the 1780s, the same group of mostly free West-Central African men held some degree of authority in both the black militia and in the only black brotherhood of Montevideo. Membership in this confraternity in the 1770s probably facilitated their leadership of the black militia in the following decade. Table 3.2. shows that five men held a position in Saint Benito before their appearance on the militia muster roll of 1780, and in addition that the captain had previously participated in Saint Benito in Buenos Aires.

Table 3.2. Officers of the black militia of Montevideo in the Confraternity of Saint Benito, 1778-1792

Name	Militia Rank by 1780	Elective Position in Confraternity of Saint Benito	Origin
Antonio Francisco Silva	Captain	Secretary 1783; Mayordomo Mayor 1788; Celador Mayor 1789	Buenos Aires
Mateo de los Santos	Lieutenant	Celador Mayor 1780	Congo
Pedro Mascareño	2 nd Lieutenant	Founder and Hermano Mayor 1778-1788	Congo
Antonio Sosa	1 st Sergeant	Enfermero 1779 and 1787; Procurador de Entierro 1780; Sacristan Menor 1781; Procurador General 1784	Angola

³³⁵ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 46, exp. 3, “Testamentaria de la Negra Juana Gomar y diligencias...,” 1780.

Domingo Duran	2 nd Sergeant	Procurador del Campo 1787; Hermano Mayor 1789 and 1792	Africa
Juan Martinez	2 nd Sergeant	None	Unknown
Francisco Xavier	1 st Corporal	None	Mozambique
Juan Lopez	1 st Corporal	Procurador de Entierro 1778; Mayordomo Menor 1781; Mayordomo Mayor 1782; Celador Mayor 1783-4	Benguela
Manuel José Gonzales	1 st Corporal	None	Angola
Miguel Acuña	2 nd Corporal	None	Unknown
José Cayetano	2 nd Corporal	Sacristan Menor 1784; Sacristan Mayor 1786	Benguela
José Antonio Meneses	2 nd Corporal	Mayordomo Menor 1779; Mayordomo Mayor 1780; Celador Menor 1781-2; Procurador Campo 1785; Hermano Mayor 1791	Cape Verde

Source: AGN-A, IX, 2-3-6, Compañía de Negros de Montevideo, May 31, 1780. Archive of the Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito. AAM, Expediente Matrimoniales.

This overlapping leadership of black militias and confraternities leads to interesting speculation. Elite civilians commanded white militias in the expectation that their social standing would help them maintain discipline especially over non-elite whites. Spanish professional officers looked for Amerindians and Afro-descendants of some means and respectability to occupy similar roles.³³⁶ In 1782, the *Teniente del Rey* Diego de Salas asked the Viceroy of Buenos Aires to issue commissions for captains and lieutenants of non-white militias. He examined the prospective officers, who were “...men free from vice, who live in the city, and with some means to present themselves decently for the Royal Service...” Diego de Salas noted that the Sergeant Major and Aide-de-camps had already received commissions, and that other officers were eager to receive these papers. He proposed that while reviewing the troops, he personally would give these commissions to the officers of each company “to stimulate them in their duty.” He added that: “There were only a few officers from the [Black, Pardo, and Mestizo] companies who were not yet properly maintaining their uniforms with the designated colors.” Diego de Salas requested

³³⁶ AGN-A, IX, 30-1-2, Teniente del Rey Diego de Salas to Viceroy Vertiz, July 20, 1782.

commissions for non-white captains and lieutenants because he thought this would encourage them to organize their companies. Note that the Congo lieutenant Mateo de los Santos kept three personal documents: his freedom papers, the title of a farm, and his militia commission. Free blacks and pardos sometimes struggled to reach these positions of leadership. The captain of pardos of Buenos Aires, Juan J. Gomes, complained that a non-qualified officer had been appointed as Sergeant Major of all pardo militias –a rank to which he felt entitled by his years of service.³³⁷ The Sub-inspector of the army reported that Gomes had more years of service than his rival, but the latter was more efficient and had promised “to provide twenty-five jackets and hats” for men under his service. Financial wherewithal triumphed over experience, but this was also the case for most appointments in the Spanish bureaucracy.

The organization of militias put black and pardo officers in the position of go-betweens: they communicated directly with white officers representing Spanish society and non-white subordinates belonging to the communities in which they lived. Black and pardo officers appointed corporals and sergeants who gave shape to the organization and such appointments did not need approval of superiors. Thus, the selection of sergeants and corporals reflected the perceptions of Afro-descendant leadership. In the black militia of Montevideo of 1780, there were members of Saint Benito among all the commissioned and more than half of non-commissioned officers. It seems that it was not only white officers who saw leadership in the Saint Benito confraternity as a sign of respectability. Did slaves see leadership of this confraternity in the same way?

The background of black officers of Montevideo includes shipmate ties as well as multiple itineraries involving Africa, Brazil, and the Río de la Plata. Francisco Antonio Silva enjoyed previous leadership in the militias of Buenos Aires and was a newcomer in Montevideo when he was appointed captain of the black company in 1780. He was probably

³³⁷ AGN-A, IX, 2-9-7, Memorial de Juan Josef Gomez, June 1, 1801 ff. 36bis-39.

born free in the Río de la Plata region as he was literate. In contrast, most of the officers serving under him were West-Central Africans who had crossed the Atlantic by mid eighteenth century and obtained their freedom by the late 1760s or early 1770s. Some of them such as Pedro Mascareño and Domingo Duran had arrived first in Buenos Aires before moving to Montevideo with their masters. Others ran away from Portuguese Colonia to Real de San Carlos as did Juan Lopez, Antonio José Sosa, José Cayetano, and Manuel José Gonzales.³³⁸ There are a couple of different stories too: José Antonio Meneses departed from Cape Verde to Rio the Janeiro, where he lived for some years before arriving in Montevideo, where he was slave of José Morales by 1771.³³⁹ Francisco Xavier seems to have been the only man in this group from Mozambique, but he, too, passed through Colonia and Buenos Aires before arriving in Montevideo.³⁴⁰ These shared itineraries lend credibility to the ties described in chapter two emerging from marriage files: Antonio José Sosa was one of the witnesses provided by Juan Lopez in his marriage file and Manuel José Gonzales acted similarly for José Cayetano. Thus, bonds emerging from shared migratory experience reinforced the ties of militia and black brotherhood membership.

The confraternity of Saint Benito drew on the company of pardos in Montevideo as well as the black militia. Tiburcio Ortega, a soldier of the pardo militia in 1780 and captain in the 1800s, was also Secretary of Saint Benito in 1784. Alexos Garcia, first soldier and then lieutenant of the pardo unit, also held the position of Secretary in 1791-92. Probably literacy of these two individuals –a requirement for the office of Secretary in the brotherhood– facilitated their high militia rank. Other free pardos participated in this confraternity as we will see next.

³³⁸ AAM, EM, 1768, exp. 11; 1780, exp. 41; 1777, exp. 51. Miguel Acuña may be a Spanish rendering of Portuguese Miguel d’Cunha, which suggests a story beginning in Colonia and Real de San Carlos.

³³⁹ AAM, EM, 1771, exp. 17.

³⁴⁰ AAM, EM, 1772, exp. 5.

Free blacks and coloreds arriving from the interior of the Río de la Plata to Montevideo often suspected of being runaway. In 1781, a representative of the Mercedarian Order of Córdoba accused the pardo Francisco Castañares of being a runaway slave.³⁴¹ Francisco had arrived in Montevideo at least in 1775. He married free parda Bartola Josefa the following year.³⁴² According to his marriage file, he was a free pardo from Córdoba. The first witness Manuel Bilches from Córdoba testified having met Francisco there and in Montevideo over a total of ten year period. The second witness Miguel A. Galván, a mestizo from Tucumán, told the notary he had met Francisco in Córdoba and Buenos Aires over four years. In 1781, Francisco needed witnesses once again, but this time to prove his freedom. The first witness, free pardo Francisco Zelaya, captain of the pardo militia of Montevideo, declared that he met both Francisco's mother and maternal grandfather and both were "Indians" and thus free. Francisco had joined this pardo militia as second corporal at the age of twenty-four years in 1780. The following witness was a soldier of Buenos Aires who declared that the father of Francisco was "a mulatto slave of Saint Francisco" and his mother a "free Indian." The third witness supported this version. Note that Francisco used the commander of his militia and two white men as witnesses, rather than Manuel Bilches – another pardo soldier– and the mestizo Antonio. Finally, Francisco produced a letter from the Franciscans of Cordoba saying that he and his brothers were free from their mother's family and that he had been raised in their convent. He won his case. In 1782, Francisco served as *Sacristán Menor* in the brotherhood of Saint Benito. He became the Secretary in 1786, and thus, he may have known to read and write.³⁴³ His case shows that the brotherhood of Saint Benito included people of mixed origin, and once again, that leadership in militias and brotherhoods overlapped.

³⁴¹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 51, exp. 80, "Autos sobre averiguar la libertad de Francisco Castañares", 1781.

³⁴² AAM, EM, 1776, exp. 34.

³⁴³ Archive of the Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

The story of the black and colored militias of Buenos Aires, Real de San Carlos and Montevideo reveals a great deal of communication and mobility across the Río de la Plata. In 1788, the infamous Pedro Agüero of Buenos Aires told the Viceroy that “there are many married free blacks living in this Capital who have women in the port of Montevideo. They take no care of their families. The same happens with [black men] married in this Capital but living in Montevideo. Also, there are many blacks who had requested a permit to travel to Montevideo, where they say they are free but they have a master in Buenos Aires.”³⁴⁴ Agüero demonstrated that it is impossible to delineate the life of the earliest generation of free blacks and slaves of Montevideo without taking into account movement between Buenos Aires and this city. Thus, social networks of slaves and freedmen were not only rooted in Montevideo or in their African homelands, but also across the Río de la Plata region.

Black confraternities and militias represented accepted forms of participation in the colonial church and state. By contrast, the *naciones africanas* or African nations lied outside colonial institutions. Africans and their descendants formed these associations to give material support for their celebrations outside the framework of the Catholic Church. The African “nations” gathered each Sunday to practice African-based rituals and celebrations sparking suspicion from both the colonial state and church. African “nations” were not coterminous with African “ethnicities” in the Río de la Plata, but the process of participation in these organizations could be described as ethnogenesis. The slave trade both separated Africans from their previous forms of identifications and created new identities on the basis of cultural affinities and shared experience. For instance, Congo and Angola groups emerged both in Buenos Aires and Montevideo in the late eighteenth century as well as in major slave ports of the Americas.

³⁴⁴ AGN-A, IX, 12-9-4, Pablo Agüero to the Virrey of the Río de la Plata, December 7, 1788, f. 39.

Leadership of confraternities and African nations often overlapped in Buenos Aires. In 1785, Juan Belen “*Mayor de la nación Conga*” thanked the Viceroy for having allowed the confraternity of Saint Balthazar to build a chapel in the Church of the Piety. He wrote to the Viceroy in his capacity as headman of the Congo association rather than as a council member of Saint Balthazar. Two other council members of this brotherhood addressed the viceroy in the following years. In January 1791, Domingo Sena wrote to the viceroy on behalf of the “*Hermandad de Morenos de Guinea del Glorioso San Baltazar*” to complain about the actions of Pablo Aguero and a Spanish officer who broke their musical instruments and took their written license when they were to start the celebration of Saint Balthazar. In 1795, Domingo Sena and Alfonso Calacete –or Calayzete– sought permission to dance in honor of the entrance of the new Viceroy of the Río de la Plata in the name of the Congo association.³⁴⁵ This was the most important celebration of the Spanish Crown in America occurring only when a newly appointed viceroy entered the capital to take office.³⁴⁶ The authorities approved this request, but prohibited the coronation of a Congo King –the occasion of a judicial case in 1787. As with Juan Belen in the 1780s, Domingo Sena and Alfonso Calacete led both the confraternity of Saint Balthazar and the Congo association in 1790s.³⁴⁷ Bentura Patrón, who was African and founder of the confraternity of Saint Balthazar in the 1770s, probably led the Congo association in those early years. After he lost his first wife, he married a Congo woman in Montevideo in 1790.³⁴⁸

These cases established that often Congo leaders were dominant in the Saint Balthazar confraternity. In fact, this brotherhood accepted non-Congo members. In another

³⁴⁵ AGN-A, IX, 12-9-4, Juan Belen to the Viceroy, March 27, 1785, f. 254; IX, 42-6-3, “Los morenos de la cofradía de San Baltazar solicitando...,” 1783-1787; IX, 12-9-13, Domingo Sena to Viceroy, January 23, 1791; IX, 12-9-10, “Los negros de la nación Conga solicitan hacer la danza...,” October 31, 1795, f. 278.

³⁴⁶ Linda Curcio-Nagy, *The Great Festivals of Colonial Mexico City. Performing Power and Identity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

³⁴⁷ AGN-A, IX, 31-8-5, “Testimonio de las constituciones y varias diligencias obradas...,” 1803-1804.

³⁴⁸ AAM, EM, 1790, exp. 47.

judicial case, Pablo Agüero indicated that he had prohibited some blacks from dressing as Cambunda (Cambonda) in the church of the Piety during the celebration of Saint Balthazar before 1787.³⁴⁹ This was the church where the brotherhood of Saint Balthazar operated, and these Africans were almost certainly members of Saint Balthazar. Just two years later, free blacks Agustin Borja and Sebastian Pellizar asked permission in the name of the Cambunda to have their own association.³⁵⁰ Probably, those from Cambunda participated in another African association and now wanted a separate nation –in the old sense of the word– of their own.

Men of African ancestry born in the Río de la Plata also found in militias a venue to expand black social life which sometimes overlapped with the celebrations of African “nations.” In early January of 1790, the lieutenant of pardo militias Feliz de los Santos asked permission to the Viceroy to organize a dance ball entitled “Estado Congo” to honor the Spanish King Carlos IV in Buenos Aires. The Viceroy granted approval with the condition of finishing the gathering before evening. These militiamen of mixed African and European origins organized a “baile de máscaras” or masked ball for January 10, just at the time of the main celebration of Saint Balthazar on January 6 –Epiphany Day.³⁵¹ As we will see in chapter five, the Day of Kings was the major black celebration in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo from the late colonial period through the nineteenth century. Noteworthy, the militiamen denominated their dance meeting “Estado Congo” or “Congo State,” which evoked the Kingdom of Kongo and its court just at the date that the Congo association of Buenos Aires and the confraternity of Saint Balthazar celebrated the Day of Kings. While the dance of the militiamen recalled on the “Congo State,” the lieutenant Santos cautiously made clear that the militiamen would honor the Spanish king in their meeting. Whether this dance

³⁴⁹ AGN-A, IX, 36-4-3, “Información echa para esclarecer lo que expone Farías....,” 1787

³⁵⁰ AGN-A, IX, 12-9-4, Agustin Borja and Sebastian Pellizar to Viceroy, December 16, 1789, f. 313.

³⁵¹ AGN-A, IX, 10-8-5, Feliz de los Santos to Viceroy, January 8, 1790.

ball was part of the larger Day of Kings festivity or not, the militiamen of mixed origins wanted to organized their own gathering to enjoy the season of festivity during that summer, for which they employed their militia status to support their plea.

This burgeoning black social life preoccupied the authorities of Buenos Aires in the late 1780s. In a case pitting two black leaders against each other, the Sergeant Major of white militias Francisco Rodriguez recommended that all “*tambos*” –places where Africans gather to dance and sing on Sundays– be suspended since “slaves believe they are not slaves those days.” He claimed that meetings organized by African nations to celebrate Saint Balthazar and the Virgin of the Rosary always ended in fighting and casualties because of excess of alcohol.³⁵² The free black population expanded in the 1780s as runaway slaves arrived after the fall of Portuguese Colonia and increasing number of enslaved Africans also come into the region. Both black confraternities and African-based associations flourished in this decade. In January 1791, The *Síndico General* of Buenos Aires Manuel Warnes produced a report on the African “nations.”³⁵³ Warnes walked through the black neighborhood of Montserrat and visited the “*tambos*” where Africans and their descendants danced and played drums. He ordered them to stop since a viceregal edict of March 1790 had prohibited those meetings, but without success. Warnes recommended the viceroy be especially watchful of free blacks. Probably he had the events in Saint Domingue in mind. Warnes mentioned that most leaders of these associations were free Africans who had deserted from Colonia a decade early and now subverted the slave population. Warnes’ informant was free black Pablo Agüero, who may have denounced the newly arrived free Africans from Colonia to preserve the position of other Africans (he was a Mondongo) and Afro-descendants who had lived for a long time in Buenos Aires and had become leaders of black associations. But Agüero would probably

³⁵² AGN-A, IX, 36-4-3, “Información echa para esclarecer lo que expone Farías... 23 de enero de 1787,” ff. 19-20.

³⁵³ AGN-A, IX, 19-7-2, Report of Manuel Warnes on African celebrations, January 21, 1791.

have stayed silent if he had known of Warnes' recommendations. Warnes urged the Viceroy to send all free blacks from Buenos Aires to serve on Indian frontier of Chascomús and Lujan, where black militias had been stationed in the past. Even though the Viceroy ignored this advice, African-based associations continued under the royal scrutiny. In 1804, during the days leading to the celebration of Saint Balthazar (January 6), the royal justice raided an African "nation" where more than forty people were celebrating. The authorities jailed ten Africans and seized a drum and wooden sticks.³⁵⁴

The ramifications of these events soon crossed the River Plate. In November 1790, the Governor of Montevideo issued a series of edicts governing urban life, which seemingly followed the viceregal edict of March 1790 for Buenos Aires. Governor Antonio Olaguer Feliú stated that "dance meetings of Negroes known as Tambos are prohibited under the penalty of one month of prison for slaves and a six-peso fine for the freedmen in first instance. These penalties will increase in proportion with the fault."³⁵⁵ Was this just the reflection of what was happening in Buenos Aires, or was black social life of Montevideo worrying the Spanish authorities there too? Probably both. The 1780s saw the same increase of free coloreds and enslaved Africans, emerging black social life, and evidence of growing racial differentiation on the part of the Spanish society in Montevideo as in Buenos Aires.

Africans met to celebrate in Montevideo even before our period of study. As noted early, the Jesuits were the largest slave owners of the Banda Oriental before 1767. The headquarters of this order was in the center of the city grid, in front of the main plaza and between the Cabildo and the main Church. The Governor of Montevideo complained about celebrations of slaves during night in 1752 –the first recorded reference to an African cultural

³⁵⁴ AGN-A, IX, 27-5-5, Report of Francisco González, January 4, 1804.

³⁵⁵ AGN-A, IX, 2-7-4, Edicts of Governor of Montevideo Antonio Olaguer Feliu, November 26, 1790. A copy of these edicts was sent to Buenos Aires in January 18, 1792.

event in the city.³⁵⁶ Mentions of “dances of Negroes” in the Corpus Christi parades exist for 1777, which included Africans dancing and representing pagans. This festivity allowed “others” such as Indians and Africans to affirm their “otherness” while celebrating the victory of Christianity over idolatry.³⁵⁷

Celebrations of free blacks and slaves were common part of the weekends of Montevideo by the 1780s. Cayetano, a slave of Cayetano Torres, was murdered while watching the rehearsal of the dances for the festivity of Saint Benito in 1781. Antonio, another slave, declared that in “...Sunday afternoon he saw the black Cayetano laid on the floor, injured in his head, [while he was] watching the rehearsal of Blacks for the dances to the Day of Saint Benito near the dock...” The Spanish Tomás Martínez declared that “having entered an empty square next to Saint Francis, some twenty-four days ago, to see a dance of Blacks, he observed that one of the Blacks threw a brick at the head of another...” The slave Manuel attested that “having been together many Blacks in the surrounding of the Convent of Our Father Saint Francis in the rehearsal of a dance to be done for the day of Saint Benito, it was the hour of prayers and all Blacks began to return to their home, and in this interval he saw an injured Black...”³⁵⁸ The kind of dancing free and enslaved blacks were performing is not known, but it attracted the attention of both black and white bystanders. Royal authorities did not prosecute celebrations of black brotherhoods, which may have provided a protective framework for African-based celebrations in this early period. In the 1780s, the leaders of Saint Benito whom we have identified were all, bar one, Africans, as were the slaves of Melchor de Viana who were prominent in this confraternity.

³⁵⁶ Jorge Troisi, “Los esclavos de los jesuitas en los Memoriales de la provincia del Paraguay (Siglo XVIII), *Anuario del Centros de Estudios Históricos Prof. Carlos Segreti*, 4, 4 (2004) 95-105. AGN-A, IX, 6-10-1, Alonso Fernández, November 1, 1752, Residencia de Montevideo.

³⁵⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 64, C. 4, “Cuentas presentadas al Alcalde de 1 Voto...,” October 15, 1777. The Cabildo of Montevideo paid 18 pesos for three “dances of Negroes.” Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

³⁵⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 50, exp. 56, “Cayetano Torres sobre heridas a su esclavo,” 1781, ff. 4-5v.

The case against the slave Francisco Rios, who was around 18 years old in 1784, also provides glimpses of black social life in Montevideo.³⁵⁹ Francisco was accused of stealing sacred cups from the church. He had access to the temple since he was a bell ringer. Francisco recapitulated what he did that Sunday. He declared “that he was all day in the Church as usual. After finishing the Rosary of the Confraternity of Negroes [Saint Benito] he helped to bury a baby for which received a real in addition to two reales which he already had. He went to the Pulperia of the Negroes and he drank there, and afterwards he also drank in the grocery functioning in the home of Don Francisco Zufriategui...” Francisco mentioned three other places where he drank that Sunday, one of which was the “Pulpería de los Negros.” Pulperías were both grocery stores and bars in colonial Spanish America. Was this pulpería owned or run by Afro-descendants? At least, it was known in the city as a meeting place for blacks. We have identified two “pulperías de negros” in Buenos Aires too, which may bring some light on this issue.³⁶⁰

In April 1786, free black Antonio Perez wrote to the Viceroy asking him permission to organize a dance celebration in Montevideo. We lack the actual petition from Antonio Perez, but only two short descriptions of it from the Spanish bureaucrats of Buenos Aires.³⁶¹ This petition bypassed the Governor as directly reached the Viceroy, who eventually sent the petition to the Governor of Montevideo for final decision. Beyond informing that Antonio wanted to organize a “dance of blacks,” these short briefings left unclear the nature of this celebration. Antonio Perez had been slave in 1778, by the time of his wedding.³⁶² Antonio, his wife and the two witnesses declared Benguela as provenance in his marriage file –though

³⁵⁹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 65, exp. 55, “Causa criminal seguida de oficio sobre averiguar...” 1784.

³⁶⁰ AGN-A, IX, 39-9-2, “Causa criminal de oficio contra Josef Leandro...” 1784, witnesses mentioned a “Pulpería de los Negros”; IX, 32-1-5 “Autos criminales que sigue Eugenio...” 1784, free black Juan de Dios ran a pulpería.

³⁶¹ AGN-A, IX, Viceroy of the Río de la Plata to Governor of Montevideo, April 7 and 27, 1786.

³⁶² AAM-EM, 1778, exp. 3.

the witnesses and groom had not been shipmates in slave vessels. By this time, Antonio was in his early twenties; thus, he sent the petition to the Viceroy when he was in his early thirties. Antonio Perez was *Sacristan* of the confraternity of Saint Benito both in 1791 and 1792. No previous records of Antonio Perez exist in this brotherhood.³⁶³ His petition to the viceroy may have been connected with this confraternity given that annual celebration of Saint Benito was in April 3. In 1786, perhaps Antonio wanted to organize a separate gathering for those from Benguela given that the meetings of Saint Benito were predominantly Kongo and Angola as Kongo and Angola members led this group. At least, the cases of the celebrations of Saint Benito, the “pulpería de Negros” and the proposal of Antonio Perez clearly evoke a vivid black social life in the 1780s.

The emerging black life of Montevideo was also a concern for Spanish authorities. In 1789, the Viceroy Marquis of Loreto received an anonymous plea from the “Black Slaves of Montevideo.”³⁶⁴ They complained that masters did not allow them to change masters or buy their own freedom and that the latter punished them when they tried to claim such a right. As the case of Antonio Perez, the actual petition from the slaves did not survive in the archive, but only a description of it from the colonial bureaucrats. With the petition of Antonio Perez, these are the first collective requests from the black population of Montevideo in the record. This petition had bypassed the Governor of Montevideo Joaquín del Pino and had been sent directly to the Viceroy in Buenos Aires. The Viceroy sent the document back to the Governor. Five days later, Governor Del Pino replied that the royal justice always taken into account the demands of slaves. This petition should be seen in relation to the pleas for freedom from prison that the Viceroy had received in 1788, some of whom were free and

³⁶³ Archive of the Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

³⁶⁴ AGN-A, IX, 2-6-5, Papers on the “memorial” of the slaves of Montevideo, September 9-14, 1789.

enslaved blacks³⁶⁵. These too, had bypassed the governor of Montevideo and reached the highest office of the viceroyalty.

Free black Manuel Ferreyra sent at least four written communications to the Viceroy in 1788. Jose Ruiz was his amanuensis for most of these petitions. As he was accused of murdering a slave, Ferreyra had been four years in prison without judicial process. He was sentenced in 1791 and his imprisonment continued to 1793.³⁶⁶ Cayetano da Costa, another petitioner to the Viceroy, was an enslaved tailor born in Rio de Janeiro and 32 years old by 1786. That year, his master accused him of stealing clothes from a church. Cayetano told the royal justice that he had tried to commit suicide because of the punishment of his master, and was in the hospital as a result. He also stated that he had run away from his master because the latter did not allow Cayetano to change master.³⁶⁷ Cayetano received a sentence of three years of prison and two hundred lashes in 1791. He was jailed up to 1794 and shared most of his time in prison with Manuel Ferreyra. Cayetano was a slave who could not change master and was punished for trying –a situation similar to that described in anonymous plea on behalf of the slaves of Montevideo mentioned earlier. He signed his petition to the Viceroy but probably didn't write it.

In 1787, black prisoners Manuel Ferreyra, Benjamin Almeyda and Cayetano da Costa denounced other black inmates who were trying to escape from the prison located in the basement of the Cabildo.³⁶⁸ Cayetano wrote in *Portuñol* –half Spanish half Portuguese– that other prisoners were cutting the wooden ceiling of the cell, which gave them access to the meeting room of the City Hall. While the paper was signed by Ferreyra, probably the leader

³⁶⁵ AGN-A, IX 2-5-5, Ventura Cardoso to the Viceroy; Cayetano da Costa to the Viceroy, both dated March 3, 1788; Petition of the free black Manuel Ferreyra to the Viceroy, February 21, 1788. In this bundle and in the 2-5-6 and 2-5-7, there are more letters from white, black and Indian prisoners in Montevideo to the Viceroy all dated in 1788.

³⁶⁶ AGN-U, AAJJ Caja 97 exp. 2, “Sentencia contra los reos Juan Rodriguez Figueredo y ...,” 1791.

³⁶⁷ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 75, exp. 78, “Denuncia dada por Pedro Sanchez contra su esclavo,” 1786.

³⁶⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 81, exp. 82, “Sumaria practicada a fin de descubrir y esclarecer...,” 1787.

of the three, it was Cayetano who wrote it. He pointed out free black Juan Pablo Silva as the leader of the escape, who was helped by two slaves “who are jailed in the same cell because they understand the language of the Indians which many prisoners talk.” These prisoners broke through the ceiling without being heard because they sang and danced with a guitar while one of them worked at the ceiling. It is likely that the petitions of Cayetano da Costa and Manuel Ferreyra reached the Viceroy the following year with some help of authorities of the prison. In those petitions, rather than complaining about the prison, they criticized the indifference of the civil justices –*Alcaldes*. In 1787, this escape attempt failed because of the actions of three black prisoner informants but the two following tryouts –when white, Indian and black men followed the same method of going through the ceiling– succeeded in 1788 and 1792.³⁶⁹ This case opens up the world of prisons as site of network creation. It is surprising that some free blacks and slaves knew Amerindian languages such as Guarani – which functioned as indigenous lingua franca in the region. Rural work may have facilitated the acquisition of such language. The use of guitars rather than drums by Afro-descendants is striking. Juan Pablo Silva alias “Palencia” was a free black born in Rio de Janeiro, where perhaps he learned to celebrate in “Iberian” ways.

Networks of urban slaves with free blacks facilitated their escape from Montevideo to the Portuguese frontier, whose trails were known by rural workers and bandits who came to this city. Free black Juan Pablo Silva had led collective slave escapes from Montevideo in 1780 and 1785. The latter event was the occasion of his imprisonment, from where he escaped in the 1790s. Four slaves ran away from Montevideo to the Portuguese borderland with the help of a free black deserter from Colonia in 1774.³⁷⁰ In 1779, the Governor of Montevideo asked the Viceroy what procedures he should follow to recover slaves who had

³⁶⁹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 88, exp. 84. “Causa criminal contra los que resulten...,” 1788; Caja 104, exp. 4, “Criminales contra los que resultasen reos en la Escalacion que hicieron del 2º calabozo...,” 1792.

³⁷⁰ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 30 exp. 14, “Sobre fuga de varios esclavos,” 1774.

recently ran away from this city to the Portuguese borderland.³⁷¹ It seems that the 1774 episode was repeated along the 1770s, which attracted the attention of Spanish authorities. In 1780, Juan Pablo Silva offered to help two enslaved Africans to run away to Rio Pardo, across the Portuguese frontier, for which he was jailed but then escaped. Silva signed a petition to the royal authorities, and thus he may have had some knowledge of writing.³⁷² In 1785, Juan Pablo Silva led three slaves into the countryside toward Rio Pardo. Juan Pablo and his fellows had in their possession 65 pesos in cash, a couple of buckles, many papers, a blunderbuss and a carbine. They resisted the attacks from those who wanted to seize them with two firearms, and only were eventually captured as a result of an ambush.³⁷³ Juan Pablo had convinced two slave women to join him to the Portuguese frontier, while the other slave wanted to run away because his master refused to sell him to another master. Probably Juan Pablo conducted more slaves to the Portuguese border than those mentioned here since he knew the countryside well. In any case, he was an experienced individual since he had escaped at least twice from prison in Montevideo. In 1793, the slaves Juan, Joaquín and Pedro ran away from the ranch of Felipe Pires. They tried to contact another slave named Francisco who knew both Portuguese and Guarani. His rural experience meant that he knew the “route of Yaguarón” –the path toward the Portuguese lands.³⁷⁴ These cases show established patterns for those who resisted life under slavery in Montevideo. For urban slaves, contacts with free blacks with sharp “geopolitical literacy”³⁷⁵ as well as with those knowledgeable of the countryside were essential to run away from the city. Slaves not only

³⁷¹ AGN-A, IX, 2-3-5, Viceroy of the Río de la Plata to Governor of Montevideo, February 23, 1779.

³⁷² AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 48, exp. 100, “Diligencias practicadas a instancias de Ramon Franco...”, 1780.

³⁷³ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 70 exp. 75, “Causa criminal formada contra unos Negros...”, 1785.

³⁷⁴ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 17, exp. 24, “Expediente promovido por Felipe Pérez sobre huida de tres esclavos,” 1793.

³⁷⁵ Geopolitical literacy described the knowledge of slaves and freedmen regarding the specificities of the status of slavery across political jurisdictions and borders. Phillip Troutman, “Grapevine in the Slave Market: African American Geopolitical Literacy and the 1841 Creole Revolt” in Walter Johnson (ed.), *The Chattel Principle. Internal Slave Trades in the Americas*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, 203-233.

had ties with people living in ports such as Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, they also had links with the countryside from where slaves and freedmen moved cattle, hides and agricultural products to Montevideo.

Most slaves running away from Montevideo went to the mouth of Santa Lucía River, the delta of which was located west of the city, where they hid in the forest. From there, they followed this river upstream toward the north-east and beyond to reach the Portuguese borderland north of Yaguarón River and south of the large Negro River. In March 21, 1803, the Governor of Montevideo stated that twelve slaves from the city had run away, and seven other joined them in the Santa Lucía River, where they sought refuge in the islands. They had firearms, sticks and arrows with which they expelled the first Spanish troops trying to seize them. The leader of these troops reported that he was beyond the Santa Lucía River north from Montevideo near the Timote Creek when he found five ranches, remains of the previous night camp fire, hanging meat, and many arrows. This camp was in the middle of the forest, but no slaves were found. It remains unclear if these ranches comprised an actual *quilombo* – a free black community– already in place before the arrival of the runaways from Montevideo. Pedro Chirivao, the lieutenant of militias who captured the runaways, identified this place as a quilombo. He was seeking a group twelve men and four women in hilly territory, who took a position in a natural trench, from which they shot at the Spanish with firearms and arrows. The man who Chirivao identified as the leader of the runaways was finally killed by the Spanish after which they captured the entire group.³⁷⁶ These slaves spent two years imprisoned and then they may have been returned to their masters –who asked the Governor their release in 1805.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ AGN-A, IX, 2-10-2, Governor José Bustamante to Viceroy Joaquin del Pino, March 21 and 30, 1803.

³⁷⁷ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 79, exp.120, “Vecinos hacendados denunciaron oportunamente la fuga...” June 26, 1805.

This was not the only group running away from Montevideo in the Holy Week of 1803. The most important slave flight from Montevideo took place on Palm Sunday. Slave revolts and escapes usually took place in holy days when slaves were free to circulate in groups through the city without arising much suspicion. Rafael Morales, who helped capturing another group of slaves in the Santa Lucía River declared that these runaways had barber's knives as well as sticks with irons, and "that all the nine blacks were of large stature as were hauza."³⁷⁸ Were these slaves actually Hausa or was Morales just wanting to reinforce the dangers he faced while seizing them? The slaves had fled from a house outside of the city walls, but they clearly lacked knowledge of the delta region since they had chose as refuge a place subject to frequent flooding. It seems they did not communicate with those who reached the Timote Creek, but there must have been some coordination because they chose the same date to escape. We have identified thirty-one slaves who escaped from the city on Palm Sunday, but only those captured were recorded –other slaves might have escaped successfully. Slaves also took advantage of British attack on this city in 1807 and the siege of Montevideo by the troops of the revolutionary government of Buenos Aires and José Artigas to escape to the countryside in the first case and to the enemy lines in the second.³⁷⁹

These events led the Cabildo of Montevideo to ask a report on African "nations," whose activities fell under suspicion. The *Sargento Mayor* Juan A. Martinez wrote the oldest surviving description of the African-based associations of this city in 1805.³⁸⁰ These organizations rented houses to dance and play during the weekends. They had a hierarchical structure headed by a king, but other positions were elected. Members of these associations provided money to sustain the celebrations and to purchase the freedom of their leaders in case

³⁷⁸ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 62, exp. 74, "Instancia promovida por Ignacio Albin..." 1803.

³⁷⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 316, C. 2, Decree of the Cabildo of Montevideo compelling runaway slaves to return to their masters, February 9, 1807; Peter Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom*, 38.

³⁸⁰ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 80, exp. 167, "Informe del Sargento mayor Juan Antonio Martinez..." March 22, 1805.

their master moved out of the city. Clearly slaves were among the leaders of these associations. Martinez found that these meetings were in contravention of royal orders prohibiting meetings of blacks, banning weapons as well as “seditious speeches.” The Governor Pascual Huidobro subsequently prohibited meetings of the “councils of Negroes” in accordance with Governor Antonio Olaguer Feliú’s ordinances fifteen year earlier. This edict was obviously ineffective because in 1808 a group of citizens of Montevideo once more asked the Governor to prohibit the African meetings.³⁸¹

By the 1800s, the slave trade had substantially increased the African population of Montevideo, which increased black social life and racial fear. In March 1803, the slave runaway and others events frightened Spanish Montevideo. That month, two slaves murdered his master Captain Manuel Correa, his wife, son, a Portuguese visitor, a rural worker, and two other enslaved women in San Carlos –east from Montevideo.³⁸² Another crime of a slave against his master had occurred in 1800, which led the Governor to ask permission to the Real Audiencia of Buenos Aires to put a whipping post in the plaza to fasten and flog blacks. The Cabildo stated that contacts between the slaves of Montevideo and black sailors of French vessels had provoked “insubordination” among local slaves. However, the edict on the whipping post went without effect up to the runaway of 1803.³⁸³ The increasing awareness of the Spanish society toward slaves and their gatherings in Montevideo also helps explain the mounting difficulty that free black militia officers in Montevideo met with when facing the justice system

³⁸¹ Homero Martinez Montero, “La Esclavitud en el Uruguay (III)” *Revista Nacional*, Montevideo, 45 (1945), 410.

³⁸² AGI, Buenos Aires 91, “Expediente sobre asesinato de Manuel correa y su familia,” April 18, 1803.

³⁸³ AGN-A, IX, 35-8-5 “Expediente promovido por el Gobernador de Montevideo...,” 1800; AGN-U, AGA, Caja 272, C. 2, Governor of Montevideo José Bustamante to Alcaldes, May 18, 1803; AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 137, exp 93, “Criminal contra el negro Pedro por haber dado muerte a su amo Joaquin José Muxica,” 1799; Caja 138, exp. 26, “Sobre la causa contra el negro Pedro por la muerte de su amo,” 1800.

in the decade of 1800, as seen in the next section. It seems that the little respect that free black leaders of militias had won from the Spanish vanished as slavery grew stronger in the region.³⁸⁴

3.3. *The limits of militia participation*

Africans and their descendants struggled to obtain promotion within militia units, which may be accompanied by opportunities for leadership roles, honor, and material retributions. Free black and pardo officers tried to invoke the privileges of militia membership to get out the reach of civil justice and thus protected by *military fuero* –a separate body of justice ruling the military in colonial Spanish America. Only officers provided justice to the professional army and the militia officers. Black officers sought respectability from white civil authorities, too. They also asserted their membership to the urban community through the Spanish sense of citizenship by referring to themselves as *vecinos*.³⁸⁵ When possible, a few Afro-descendants applied directly to the crown in order to obtain more benefits than their militia participation permitted. They tested how the crown would respond to their petitions. Throughout Spanish America, militia service encompassed a modest salary during wartime, exception from taxes on free blacks, and the military fuero. In the Río de la Plata, however, free blacks joining militias obtained few of these benefits. They were paid infrequently and most commonly they were subjected to ordinary rather than military justice. Free blacks were not taxed in Buenos Aires and Montevideo as they were in Mexico.³⁸⁶ Black officers were respected by neither the Spanish society nor the professional military.

Free black Manuel Valladares captained a militia unit of Buenos Aires and served

³⁸⁴ In the years before the 1812 Aponte rebellion in Cuba, the growth of slavery was parallel to the worsening social standing of black and colored militiamen vis-à-vis the larger society. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 46-77.

³⁸⁵ See discussion of this term by Herzog, *Defining Nations*, 17-63.

³⁸⁶ As in New Granada, the tax on free blacks and coloreds was not implemented in the Río de la Plata. Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality*, 103.

with his men in both Colonia and Montevideo in the 1770s. The captains José Narbona and Manuel Valladares, as well as the lieutenant Matías Malaber –all free blacks– submitted a petition to Viceroy Cevallos requesting him to appoint free black Bartolo Espinosa as new Sergeant Mayor of all black militias in May 1778.³⁸⁷ Six free black militia units –each one led by a captain– existed in Buenos Aires and were commanded and coordinated by a Sergeant Major and three Aides-de-camp. Free black Manuel Farías was one of the aides-de-camp as we will see below. In late 1777, the aide-de-camp Juan Felis congratulated Viceroy Cevallos for the victory at Colonia and asked to be recognized for his participation in the first takeover of this city in 1762 –a subtle way of applying for the rank of Sergeant Major too.³⁸⁸ The third aide-de-camp was probably Bartolo Espinosa –who had a staff of two black captains and a lieutenant for this position. In May 18, Viceroy Cevallos asked the Sergeant Major of white militias Pablo Ibañez who should be appointed Sergeant Major of black militias. But Cevallos and his entourage left Buenos Aires soon afterwards, when his presence was requested in Madrid.

Manuel Valladares accompanied Cevallos to Spain –he was part of their entourage. There, Valladares presented a request to the Spanish King in his capacity of “Captain of one of the companies of Black Creoles of Buenos Aires” in September 1778. I did not find the word “*criollo*” heading any muster roll of these militias whether in Buenos Aires or Montevideo. Possibly Valladares placed the name “Criollos” in his petition emphasizing his membership of the Spanish community. Even though the majority of his company must have been African, this plea was presented as emerging from blacks born in the Spanish empire to reaffirm links between the “Father King” and his most underprivileged sons, the free blacks born in the New World. He pleaded that the crown:

³⁸⁷ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-2, Solicitud del Capitán José Narbona, 1778, f. 65.

³⁸⁸ AGN-A, IX, 12-9-6, Solicitudes Civiles, Juan Felis, 1777.

“...would grant to the Regiment some honorable reward so their officers could enjoy the fuero and privileges of the military and thus that ordinary justice would not interfere with their businesses and ask to be treated with the respect deemed to this troop which sacrifices itself in the Royal Service whenever asked, and specially in this last war with the Portuguese. This Regiment has worked day and night more than six months following superior Orders, without payment or daily food. [This Regiment] joined the Army of Don Pedro Cevallos where they have distinguished themselves among others...The supplicant and this officer see with pain that the Ordinary Justice system treat them with disrespect far from rewarding their good services. These troops have been harassed after discharged from the campaign...”³⁸⁹

Valladares asked that all officers of his company receive the honors and privileges as *plana mayor* (commanding group or cadre) of this militia, and some payment. He offered to increase the muster roll of his company and to add three companies of free blacks to the existing six units. His only personal request was to receive a *Real Patente de Capitán* –a royal commission– specifying that he had served in this capacity from 1770 on but without a formal appointment. Valladares received a mixed response from the crown. An anonymous short minute on this case reads as follow: “He proves to be Captain, but he does not provide any license to come [to Spain]. He says he has arrived with the family of Cevallos. What he demands is nonsense. Even a professional officer needs first to submit his request to the Viceroy. You will decide according to what the Viceroy says. Submit to the Viceroy.”³⁹⁰ Most probably this minute is the advice given to the king, who subsequently dispatched Valladares to Buenos Aires with a passport in November 1778, and a letter to the new Viceroy Juan J. de Vértiz. Thus, Manuel Valladares received nothing but a respectful order to lay this question before the Viceroy rather than with the crown. On the other hand, he received no formal punishment for bypassing the line of command. Instead, the Crown paid for his return to Buenos Aires –both travel and food– as his passport stated. Thus, Valladares would gain access to the Viceroy and perhaps some influence over the status of black militia

³⁸⁹ AGI, Buenos Aires 528, “Solicitud del Capitán de Criollos Morenos libres Manuel Valladares,” 1778.

³⁹⁰ Cit, f. 5.

officers, which seemed a good resolution for his case. However, there is no record of a viceregal response archived in Seville.

Valladares enjoyed links of patronage with Viceroy Cevallos, which allowed him to travel to Spain, present his case, and safely return to Buenos Aires. He was not the only free black trying to take advantage of connections with the conqueror of Colonia and first Viceroy, as the petition of Juan Felis discussed earlier demonstrates. In 1778, the confraternity of Saint Benito asked Viceroy Cevallos to remove an image of Saint Benito from the Church of Saint Francis in Colonia in order to place it in Buenos Aires. In effect the free blacks of Buenos Aires were asking permission to have their own booty from the looting of Colonia.³⁹¹ It seems that free blacks and slaves sensed the possibility of changing for the better their relation to the crown and the local community and sort to take advantage of this change.

Upon his return to Buenos Aires, Valladares saw his connections with authority weaken as replacement new Viceroy Juan J. Vertiz took office –Vertiz replaced most officers and bureaucrats appointed by Cevallos with his own men.³⁹² The person holding the appointment as Sergeant Major of blacks companies, free black Manuel Farías, sued Valladares in 1779.³⁹³ By appointing Farías, the Sergeant Major of white militias, Pascual Ibañez, had disregarded the petition from Narbona, Valladares and Malaber. Thus, Farías claimed that Valladares had summoned his officers to meet in the house of Matías Malaber to tell them not to follow orders from Farías. The latter asked Pasqual Ibañez to take depositions and suggested the expulsion of Valladares from the black militia. Ibañez obtained testimonies only from two soldiers and a corporal from Valladares' unit who substantiated the version of Farías. In fact only two men attested they had attended the meeting in Malaber's house. They

³⁹¹ AGN-A, IX, 31-7-7, "Testimonio del expediente obrado para la aprobación ...", ff. 31-32.

³⁹² Socolow, *The Bureocrats of Buenos Aires, 1769-1810*, 283.

³⁹³ AGN-A, IX, 32-2-2, "Informacion hecha contra el Capitan de Negros Manuel Valladares..." 1779.

added that Valladares had asked for money from his men to pay for a petition denouncing Farías to the Viceroy. Pasqual Ibañez wrote down that the other free blacks attending that meeting could not provide testimony because they were out of the city. Given that these officers did not act against Valladares and Malaber, corps solidarity may have prevailed even in the face of pressure from a white officer. Ibañez praised Farías as well as denigrated Valladares. He gave Farías a clear sheet since the wars of Colonia in 1763, while he pictured Valladares as an insubordinate. Moreover, Ibañez stated that he could not find out where Valladares was staying. Finally, Ibañez added that Valladares had stolen a cape belonging to another free black which explained Valladares disappearance.

Given the better networks of Manuel Farías with white officers, Valladares could not win this dispute. He was at risk of prosecution by the civil courts –an ever present fear made clear in his petition to the King. As Farías grew strong, Valladares moved out the city. Manuel Valladares was lieutenant of the black militia of Montevideo in 1788.³⁹⁴ Now Manuel Valladares was under the command of Captain Antonio Francisco Silva, who had already met him in Buenos Aires. In 1775, when Valladares had captained a black unit of Buenos Aires in Montevideo, four other free blacks of Montevideo joined his militia –among them Luis Valladares who may have been related to him. Another native of Buenos Aires, free pardo Juan Miguel Valladares had joined the pardo militia of Montevideo in 1761.³⁹⁵ Thus, Manuel Valladares drew on his connections with black militiamen in Montevideo including migrants and probably family from Buenos Aires to find a safe haven after Farías drove him out of the capital. Manuel Farías was still the Sergeant Major of black militias in 1787, when he sued free black Pablo Agüero, the “chaser of runaway slaves,” for the same

³⁹⁴ AGN-A, IX, 2-5-5, List of officers of militias of Montevideo, January 18, 1788.

³⁹⁵ Juan Miguel Valladares was listed in the censuses of 1769 and 1772 as a free pardo mason. He was the son of Juan Lorenzo Valladares and Ana María de Lara, both from Buenos Aires. Juan Miguel Valladares had three children in Montevideo, but none of them was the Luis Valladares who joined the black militia of Buenos Aires stationed in Montevideo in 1775. Apolant, *Genesis*, case 320, p. 927.

reasons that he had prosecuted Valladares ten years previously –insubordination.³⁹⁶ In 1790, the list of militia officers of Montevideo suggests that Valladares had returned to Buenos Aires.³⁹⁷

The lieutenant under Valladares in Buenos Aires, free black Matías Malaber, enjoyed no better fate than his captain. A Spanish woman, María de la Cuesta accused him of rape in 1781. Maria de la Cuesta was married to a cattle-rancher; Malaber was married to a free black woman. The Alcalde Pedro Alvarado immediately jailed Malaber, who suffered two hundred lashes without any formal trial. He was then exiled on the coast of Patagonia subsequently changed to deportation to Montevideo. Given the nature of this crime, Alvarado pursued an oral investigation without a written record. Pascual Ibañez also intervened in this case; he noted that there had been no formal judicial case against Malaber and that he needed documentation to carry out the sentence.³⁹⁸ The first papers on this issue are the appeal of Malaber’s wife, Pasquala Espinosa –note that Bartolo Espinosa was aide-de-camp of black militias. She claimed that gossips from a white woman had led to the imprisonment of her husband. The Defender of the Poor and Slaves (*Defensor de Pobres y Esclavos*) Francisco Ignacio Ugarte produced the other plea arising from this case when he protested that Malaber had been jailed and lashed without due process. Malaber’s wife and the Alcalde Alvarado – who imprisoned Malaber– conceded that Malaber and María de la Cuesta had a long-standing relationship, but they differed on the nature of the liaison.³⁹⁹ The striking point is that no

³⁹⁶ AGN-A, IX, 36-4-3, “Información [h]echa para esclarecer lo que expone Farías en su memorial...1787.”

³⁹⁷ AGN-A, IX, 2-6-8, List of officers of militias of Montevideo, June 23, 1770.

³⁹⁸ AGN-A, IX, 2-4-1, Request of Maria Pasquala Espinosa, January 30, 1781; IX, 32-2-8, exp. 3 “Solicitud de libertad de Matías Malaber, 1781; IX, 39-9-5, “Causa criminal contra Felipe Sosa por revoltoso,” 1788; IX, 42-9-5 “Expediente sobre la formación del gremio de zapateros,” July 29, 1792. On Dominga Malaber in 1828, see Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, Annex on wills of free blacks.

³⁹⁹ On the one side, the wife of Malaber claimed that María de la Cuesta had harassed her husband for long time and that Matías Malaber’s failure to respond had sparked the false accusation from the unrequited lover. On the other, Alvarado stated that Malaber took advantage of his professional relationship with María de la Cuesta and her husband, who were long-standing clients of this shoemaker, to sexually attack the unprotected women.

person –not even Matías Malaber himself– mentioned that he was lieutenant and thus should have been subject to military justice. Military fuero could not protect even one of the highest officers in the black militias.

Matías Malaber was a respected member of the free black community of Buenos Aires. Apart from his militia membership, Malaber had business connections with free black Pablo Agüero.⁴⁰⁰ Malaber was a shoemaker and Agüero owned a workshop which employed both slaves and free blacks in the production of leather strips for artisans. Malaber belonged to the exclusive group of only four free black “master shoemakers” listed in Buenos Aires by 1792; he was the owner of his workshop where he trained apprentices as shoemakers. Despite this prominence, Malaber was deported to Montevideo in 1781 since his file is among the papers of the governor of the city. There, the Confraternity of Saint Benito listed Fermin Malaber in 1783 in 1786.⁴⁰¹ As shown below, Matías Malaber already was member of the brotherhood of Saint Benito in Buenos Aires. Whether Fermin was related to Matías Malaber is not known. Felipe Malaber is the only other Malaber in our records, and it is perhaps significant that he was free black shoemaker from Buenos Aires who came of age in the late 1790s in Montevideo.

Manuel Valladares and Matías Malaber shared temporary exile in Montevideo in the 1780s but they returned to the viceregal capital as Manuel Farías fell in disgrace. Malaber had returned to Buenos Aires no later than 1788 when he is documented in a judicial case. He had friends in the black community –as Pablo Agüero– who had networks with the Cabildo and who could make the case for his return. Without those networks, his situation could have been even worse than undergoing lashes and exile. The litigation between Manuel Farías and

⁴⁰⁰ Osvaldo Otero, “De Esclavos a mercaderes, amos y otros. Redes Sociales de una capa de la Plebe.” Paper presented to the *Seminario Estudios sobre la Cultura Afro-Rioplatense*. Montevideo, FHCE, October 2007.

⁴⁰¹ Archive of the Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

Pablo Agüero created the grounds for the return of Valladares and Malaber in 1787. In this case, free black Juan Belen –former headman of the Congo association– declared that Farías had requested him to produce false testimony against Agüero. The new Sergeant Major of white militias Francisco Rodriguez advised the Viceroy that Farías should be punished, which created good conditions for the return of Valladares and Malaber.⁴⁰² The *Sindico* Manuel Warnes indicated that Agüero was the “Sergeant Major of blacks” by 1791; thus, he won this appointment after the fall of Farías.⁴⁰³

As in Montevideo, command of black militias in Buenos Aires overlapped with leadership in black brotherhoods, which contextualize the struggles between Farías and other black officers. Matías Malaber and Francisco Almentos submitted a petition to establish the confraternity of Saint Benito in Buenos Aires in 1769. The first *Hermano Mayor* was free black Bernardo Sanginés, who was also Sergeant Major of all black companies. Manuel Farías was among the founders as well as aide-de-camp in the militias. Matías Malaber was the first *Mayordomo*; he was listed as member of the Council of this confraternity in 1772. Manuel Valladares does not appear as leader in any brotherhood in this period. In 1778, Manuel Farías may have felt entitled to the rank of Sergeant Major because of his service in Saint Benito, where the *Hermano Mayor* also had been the main officer of black militias in the early 1770s. Farías probably thought he was the natural successor of Bernardo Sanginés and a better candidate than either Bartolo Espinosa, Matías Malaber –who was a subordinate in the militia– and Manuel Valladares –who had established his leadership credentials outside of brotherhoods. Pablo Agüero moved into leadership roles a decade later than Farías; he was a West-Central African still held by his master in Buenos Aires in 1774. That year, Pablo Agüero was just another slave member of the brotherhood of the Rosary while Farías led

⁴⁰² AGN-A, IX, 36-4-3, “Información echa para esclarecer lo que expone Farías...1787,” f. 19.

⁴⁰³ AGN-A, IX, 27-5-5, Report of Manuel Warnes on African celebrations in Buenos Aires, January 21, 1791.

Saint Benito as well as commanded black militias. In the 1780s, Farías tried to limit the rising authority of Agüero.⁴⁰⁴

A new viceregal administration may have sparked new efforts from free blacks of Buenos Aires to reach the top of the militia hierarchy. The new Viceroy Marquis of Loreto took office in 1783. The following year, Bentura Patrón, Juan García, and Manuel Joaquín – all free blacks living in Buenos Aires– arrived in Cadiz.⁴⁰⁵ Bentura Patrón had founded the confraternity of Saint Balthazar in Buenos Aires in 1771. However, no record on his militia participation has survived beyond this request. On the contrary, Juan Garcia and Manuel Joaquin were non-commissioned officers. Bentura Patrón led this trio and signed a petition to the crown in April 1784. He introduced himself as “capataz de los de su Nación Etiopia.” An innovative title, “Capataz” or overseer did not fit into militia or specific brotherhood patterns –he already pictured his leadership as encompassing all Africans who lived in Buenos Aires.⁴⁰⁶ He also appropriated the way Spaniards used the word nation to refer to specific groups, but molded this term to Ethiopia, the biblical name for sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, Bentura Patrón went beyond designations associated with militias and brotherhoods to claim leadership over the entire black community of Buenos Aires –the first time we observe a general black identity drawn by an African in this region.

In colonial Río de la Plata, Africans and their descendants seemed to understand leadership in black militias equaling leadership in the entire black community. Manuel Valladares, Bentura Patrón and Manuel Farías understood it in this way. Even though Bentura did not use militia titles, he narrates his leading contribution in attacks on Colonia in 1762 as against Amerindians who menaced Buenos Aires. According to Bentura, Juan García

⁴⁰⁴. AGN-A, IX, 31-7-7, exp. 1201, f. 1 and 11-12. González, Sánchez, and, Fúkelman, *Arte*, pp. 99-101; Otero, cit.

⁴⁰⁵ AGI, Buenos Aires 513, “Al Virrey de Buenos Aires. Aprobandole la reprensión...”, October 19, 1785.

⁴⁰⁶ In fact, *capataz* resonates as title of the African-based associations in Cuba as probably he was a leader of the Congo association of Buenos Aires. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*, 78-119.

and Manuel Joaquin were corporals under his command “to govern the Ethiopians.” He remarks that he had paid for a mass to be sung in the Convent of Saint Francis in Buenos Aires to celebrate the conquest of Colonia. Thus, Bentura was a man of some means as he almost certainly provided the money for the journey to Cadiz. He already enjoyed leadership of the Confraternity of Saint Balthazar –to which Juan García and Manuel Joaquin may have been members– and now he was seeking an appointment in the militia. But Bentura’s goal was the rank of Colonel, more senior than any black officer had attained –Sergeant Major was the highest position available to Afro-descendants. As aforementioned, the port officer of Cadiz dispatched Bentura Patrón and his followers to Buenos Aires. The Viceroy reported to the king that Juan García and Manuel Joaquin were already militia officers who would be considered for higher ranks when these became available. But he also reported that the claims of Bentura Patrón were spurious, and that he had let him know he deserved punishment for exaggerating his militia services. Bentura Patrón must then have left the viceregal capital to live in Montevideo, where he was collecting money to establish the confraternity of Saint Balthazar in 1787 –the Saint of his brotherhood in Buenos Aires.⁴⁰⁷

In summary, Bentura Patrón most probably was Congo –a West-Central African– as were other leaders of Saint Balthazar in Buenos Aires examined earlier: Juan Belen, Domingo Sena, and Antonio Calacete. Thus, Bentura may have crossed the Atlantic as a slave from Luanda or other Northern Angolan ports directly to Buenos Aires or via Colonia in the 1750s. He may have been shipped to Buenos Aires in one of the following slave vessels: the Spanish *San Jorge* (1752), which brought slaves broadly from Angola, the

⁴⁰⁷ I do not find Bentura Patrón in the plea of the confraternity of Saint Balthazar of Buenos Aires to the Viceroy in 1783-1787, which suggest that he was not living in the capital in those years. AGN-A, IX, 42-6-3, “Los morenos de la cofradía de San Baltazar...,” 1783-1787. Bentura Patrón was not among the first authorities of Saint Balthazar in Montevideo in 1795, which means that he had either returned to Buenos Aires or died. AAM, Libro de la Cofradía de San Baltazar, July 29, 1787 and November 18, 1795. Bentura Patrón collected money for the foundation of this brotherhood in Montevideo since 1787, but the first authorities are listed only in 1795.

British ship *Saint Andrew* (1752), which followed the same itinerary, and the Spanish *San Pedro* (1759) which departed from Mayumba with mostly Kongo slaves.⁴⁰⁸ Then, he freed himself, participated in the siege against Colonia in 1762, and founded a confraternity in Buenos Aires early in the 1770s. Bentura crossed the Atlantic again –this time willingly– to petition the Spanish King in 1784. Upon his return, he moved to Montevideo where he tried to found another brotherhood in the late 1780s, and almost certainly died by 1795. In the span of fifty years he set foot in three continents, was enslaved and freed himself from slavery. In Buenos Aires, he built his leadership through his participation in brotherhoods and probably African associations but he sought the honors of the royal service. Once in Montevideo, he seemingly tried to restore his leadership by creating a new black confraternity in this city.

Free black officers retained close connections with slavery given that some of them had family that were slaves. Manuel Farías, the most senior black officer of Buenos Aires, had his wife and children held in slavery by free black Ignacio Falcón and his wife Catalina del Águila in the 1780s.⁴⁰⁹ In 1768, Ignacio and his wife had no children but owned seven slaves including María de la Concepción –the wife of Farías. Both Ignacio and Catalina were members of the confraternity of the Rosary –rather than Saint Benito where Farías officiated. In 1771, they freed one daughter of María de la Concepción and Manuel Farías, but the latter still had two sons and one daughter held in slavery. In 1778, Catalina stated in her will that she would free María de la Concepción upon her death, but she did not die then. In 1784, Manuel Farías sued Ignacio Falcón and Catalina on the basis of this question, but he was unsuccessful. Catalina made Falcón promise he would free María de la Concepción after her death, but his husband did not keep his pledge. However, the Real Audiencia granted freedom to María de la Concepción before 1793, when Falcón wrote his last will. By this

⁴⁰⁸ www.slavevoyages.org, AGN-A, IX, 2-2-1, Studer, See Annex on slave vessels 1742-1806.

⁴⁰⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 135, C. 5, “Autos seguidos entre Ignacio Falcón y Manuel Farías...” 1784.

time Falcón was a member of Saint Benito; thus, his previous litigation with Farías did not impede his entrance into this confraternity.⁴¹⁰ Falcón was successful in economic terms for a free African in colonial Buenos Aires, but he seems not to have sought the honors of militias given that no records show him enlisted in these companies. While his conflict with Farías may have deterred him from joining black militias, he did not need advancement in these units. Not all free blacks of some means pursued militia leadership.

Black and pardo officers were threatened with imprisonment even by a minor debt, which lends significance to the plea of military fuero by Valladares. In 1787, the Sergeant Major of pardo militias Ignacio Torres sought the protection of Viceroy from the Alcalde, Antonio García, who wanted to imprison him since he owed twelve pesos of rent.⁴¹¹ Torres attached to his petition his military commissions signed by Viceroy Vertiz and wrote that “...in consideration to such a privileged document issued in the name of the King, I should not be imprisoned except for major crimes...” Torres avoided imprisonment. Afterwards, he successfully requested the return of his commissions, which were attached to the judicial case. Matías Malaber, by contrast, was imprisoned because he faced much serious charges and probably had Farías against him. Military commissions –those papers stored by Mateo de los Santos and requested by Valladares– did in fact help Torres to avoid prison. In the 1770s, the free black captain of the Real de San Carlos and his militia officers requested their commissions, which they hadn’t received in ten years of service. They proposed that one of them could travel to Buenos Aires to collect these documents and return with them.⁴¹² Once again, black officers sought formal appointments as protection.

⁴¹⁰ Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, 99-100; Falcón freed his remaining five slaves and bequeathed some minor properties to them. AGN-A, IX, 40-9-8, “Instancia promovida por el Defensor General de Pobres...,” 1794.

⁴¹¹ AGN-A, IX, 36-5-3, “Ignacio Torres Santuchos, Sargento Mayor de Pardos libres...,” 1787.

⁴¹² AGN-A, IX, 28-5-1, Captain Juan Diaz of the Real de San Carlos to the General Inspector of the Army, n.d.

In 1793, the second lieutenant of black companies Juan García –the same who had accompanied Bentura Patrón to Cadiz– requested the payments due to him and nine other free blacks when they moved from Buenos Aires to Colonia in 1777.⁴¹³ He provided a list of partial payments made to these men and a muster roll of the complete company. Juan García had kept these papers with the hope of gaining compensation. Perhaps his petition was triggered by the application of Captain of black militias José García in 1792.⁴¹⁴ José García noted that free blacks of Buenos Aires had been paid two salaries in advance –a total of twelve pesos– before arriving in Colonia, but then they received nothing thereafter even though they served a farther nine months. Their work was essential to the Portuguese defeat; and afterward, they took part in the demolition of Colonia when Viceroy Cevallos ordered that rocks, tiles and wood be sent to Buenos Aires.⁴¹⁵ Black militiamen received only the ration of food as Valladares had stated. Captain José García also provided the names of white officers who could verify his account, but the Treasury at Buenos Aires rejected this petition under royal orders.⁴¹⁶ It is curious that the crown denied compensation to José García and his fellows while other pardo officers obtained some reimbursement in these same years.⁴¹⁷

Black Militiamen obtained salaries during wartime, but even they got only partial salaries. In 1777, the Viceroy of Buenos Aires established the due salaries payable to militias

⁴¹³ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-2, Petition of Juan García to the Viceroy Nicolás de Arredondo, June 26, 1793, ff. 146-8.

⁴¹⁴ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-2, Petition of José García to the Viceroy Nicolás de Arredondo, December 29, 1792, ff. 138-9.

⁴¹⁵ Prado, “In the Shadow,” 83.

⁴¹⁶ José García seemed untouched by the fight of Farías against other black officers. In 1787, Captain José García –a free shoemaker from Buenos Aires– was cautious not to offend either Farías or Agüero in the case opposing each other– García acknowledged that these two leaders had daily confrontations but he blamed no one. AGN-A, IX, 36-4-3, “Información echa para esclarecer lo que expone Farías...” 1787, ff. 8v-9v. In 1796, Captain José García requested 416 pesos from Miguel Capdevila for having fed, dressed and educated a young slave owned by the latter, who finally negotiated that sum. AGN-A, IX, 41-8-3, “Demanda puesta por Josef Garcia Moreno libre...” 1796.

⁴¹⁷ In 1794, the sergeant of pardos Victoriano Arze requested and received 41 pesos and 1 real for his services during the fall of Colonia. In 1794, Antonio Soto and Nicolás Barrientos obtained from the Royal Treasury 82 pesos and 2 reales for their service as pardo militiamen in Colonia in 1776. AGN-A, IX, 14-5-6, ff. 294 and 377.

in Montevideo. For blacks and pardos: Sergeant Major 25 pesos, Aide-de-camp 14, Captain 16, Lieutenant 12, Second Lieutenant 10, Sergeant 8, Corporal 7, and Soldier 6. These salaries were smaller than white militias, and this was especially true for officers. White militia soldiers received two pesos more than black militiamen. Captains of white companies obtained 45 pesos –three times the payment of black and pardo captains.⁴¹⁸ This reproduced the inequalities of the colonial world as well underlining that non-white officers had far less autonomy and respectability than white officers in the eyes of Spanish colonial authorities. Non-white militias of Montevideo received 4292 pesos and 7 reales for their services stretching from May 1780 to August 1782. In this period all militias received 52,746 pesos; thus, payments for non-white militia amounted less than ten percent of all expenditure made by the royal treasury to these forces, but white militiamen were only four times more numerous than non-white militiamen in Montevideo.⁴¹⁹ In 1788, there were eight white infantry companies and one of artillery comprising 407 men. At the same time, two non-white companies (one of pardos and another of blacks) enlisted 109 men. The free black unit had three officers, six noncommissioned officers and 37 soldiers –a total of 46 men.⁴²⁰ The situation of the militias had changed little two years later. There were the same white companies now comprising 412 men, and the two non-white companies enlisting 108 men. In Montevideo, there was just one black and one pardo unit making the ranks above captain for non-white militias unnecessary.

In colonial Río de la Plata, black militiamen received less salary –even if paid– than white companies and their officers did not enjoy the military fuero. The Crown established that military fuero applied only to militia officers and noncommissioned officers in time of

⁴¹⁸ AGI, Buenos Aires 529, “Reglamento en que se prescriben los sueldos...” Montevideo, February 9, 1777.

⁴¹⁹ AGI, Buenos Aires 530, Reports of the Intendente of Buenos Aires on militias of Montevideo, November 12, 1782, February 15 and August 7 of 1783.

⁴²⁰ AGN-A, IX, 2-5-5, List of officers of militias of Montevideo, January 18, 1788.

peace in 1781. Thus, ordinary militia soldiers were not covered by military fuero in peace.⁴²¹ This measure said nothing about non-white militia officers, which left room to exclude them. In 1797, a new royal measure specified that colored and black militiamen could choose among their fellows to defend them in event of a trial. Since just a minority of colored militiamen was literate, they were allowed to choose any officer in their region to represent them.⁴²² The crown also specified that cases involving non-white officers could be heard by military tribunals only when they had committed military offenses –a measure that also held for white militias. This ordinance reached Montevideo in 1797 but black officers had to press for his application as explained below.⁴²³ The crown established a statute for the militias of the Río de la Plata in 1801, which standardized payments across all militias with respect to rank.⁴²⁴ White militia officers received all benefits that Spanish professional officers enjoyed, while “officers of Black and Pardo units will be treated with esteem: no one will be allowed to offend them with words or acts. They will be distinguished and respected among those of their class.” In fact, black officers still had to struggle for basic issues such as respect from the civil authorities and were still liable to long imprisonments.

As this new statute for militias was in the printing press in Madrid, Captain Juan de Dios Gabira and Second Lieutenant Domingo Ramos of the black company of Montevideo asked protection from military fuero in February 1801. Juan de Dios Gabira was a free black carpenter born in Buenos Aires, who had lived in Montevideo at least since 1780, when a muster roll listed him as militia soldier.⁴²⁵ As all known captains of this unit, he was born in

⁴²¹ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 202, C. 3, Governor Antonio Olaguer y Feliú to the Cabildo of Montevideo, Aug. 26, 1794.

⁴²² BRAH, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. CXVIII, f. 259, Royal Order to the Viceroy of Buenos Aires on the appointment of advocates for colored and black militiamen, Aranjuez, January 28, 1797.

⁴²³ AGN-A, IX, 2-9-2, Governor of Montevideo José Bustamante to Viceroy Antonio Olaguer, September 26, 1797.

⁴²⁴ BRAH, Madrid, Colección Mata Linares, T. CXX ff. 197-228, “Reglamento de Milicias... 1801”

⁴²⁵ AGN-A, IX, 2-9-6, Petition of Juan de Dios Gabira and Domingo Duran, February 3, 1801. AAM, EM, 1802, exp. 9bis. AGN-A, IX, 2-3-6, List of Compañía de Pardos de Montevideo, 1780.

the Río de la Plata. Domingo Ramos declared Benguela as provenance in 1779; he was one of the first members of the confraternity of Saint Balthazar in 1795, and he must have been over fifty years old by 1800.⁴²⁶ That year, an artillery soldier was found dead and since one of the last persons who saw him alive was Juan de Dios Gabira, he was accused of murder. Again at no point during the judicial case the notary ever note that Gabira was captain of free blacks –a situation no different from the case of Matías Malaber more than decade earlier.⁴²⁷ Second lieutenant Domingo Ramos was put in stocks and jailed because someone accused him of stealing a winning lottery ticket. In their petition, these free blacks quoted the article of the statute or militias of Cuba declaring that “officers of Black and Pardo units will be treated with esteem.” The abovementioned statute for the militias of the Río de la Plata was actually modeled on its Cuban counterpart. Captain Gabira complained that he had to share imprisonment with men convicted of serious crimes and black militiamen, which dishonored him as captain of those very same soldiers. Domingo Ramos was humiliated by his public exposure in stocks as a mere slave. Gabira had to bring the commander of militias Miguel Granada –a white officer– to free Ramos from the stocks, who then was sent to the Citadel –a military prison more in accord with his fuero– where Ramos remained for another day. Both black officers petitioned to be free from harass by civil authorities in the future given than they enjoyed military fuero. While they could establish their honor with other free blacks and slaves through leadership in militias and confraternities, they needed to rely on contacts with Spanish officers to safeguard their respectability vis-à-vis the larger colonial society.⁴²⁸ In 1801, the Sub-Inspector of the Army wrote on the case of Gabira and Ramos. He stated that the military fuero was the only benefit enjoyed by black officers in return of their service,

⁴²⁶ Archive of the Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

⁴²⁷ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja, 141,exp. 64, “Sumaria información echa al esclarecimiento...,” 1800.

⁴²⁸ Ben Vinson reports Sub-inspectors protecting black militia officers in late eighteenth-century Puebla. Ties with Sub-inspectors of the army assured military fuero for black officers. Vinson, *Bearing the Arms*, 181.

and thus they needed protection from arbitrary acts from civil authorities. He obtained viceregal approval to declare that black and pardo officers with written commissions –once again those precious papers– were protected by the fuero and deserved respect.

The lieutenant of the free black company of Montevideo Felipe Malaber was a free black shoemaker born in Buenos Aires –a master shoemaker like Matías Malaber. Felipe requested respect from the men who worked in his workshop.⁴²⁹ In 1800, he and Jacinto Molina –the major protagonist of the last chapter– were witnesses in the marriage file of Ermenegildo Bustos, a free pardo shoemaker from Cordoba who was a militia soldier in Montevideo while Felipe Malaber was lieutenant.⁴³⁰ By 1802, Felipe Malaber was thirty five years old and he knew the essentials of writing. That year, he initiated a judicial case involving slaves who fled from Portuguese Rio Grande to the Spanish in the war of 1801.⁴³¹ A Spanish man guided these slaves to Montevideo, where he tried to re-embark them to Brazil. In this city, they sought the help of Domingo Ramos, the second lieutenant of the black company. Ramos walked them to the workshop of Felipe Malaber –his superior– who finally initiated their claim before the Governor. This story illustrates that the chain of command of black militias sometimes worked in other arenas as Ramos sought the advice of Malaber, who helped these slaves to make their case in front of the Spanish authorities. In March 1803, Malaber wrote to the Viceroy claiming that he had spent one year imprisoned because he had been involved by chance in a fight in which a friend was injured and then died.⁴³² The free black Juan Belén evoked his militia membership to protect himself from the abuses of a Spanish low-rank civil official who first asked Juan Belén money and then put him in stocks. Militia service was an important component of the narrative that Juan created

⁴²⁹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 127, exp. 51. “Felipe Malaber contra José Molina por excesos,” 1797.

⁴³⁰ AAM, EM, 1800, exp. 8.

⁴³¹ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 50, exp. 20, “Testimonio del expediente promovido por Alejos Ferreros...,” 1802-1805.

⁴³² AGN-A, IX, 2-10-2, Report on the plea of Felipe Malaber, March 16, 1803.

about his humble but honorable life when presenting his case to the colonial justices.⁴³³

Military fuero did not protect Captain Juan de Dios Gabira in December 1805, when a colonial law enforcement official inflicted injuries which probably caused his death in 1806.⁴³⁴ Twenty-five witnesses testified in this case –in which the lieutenant Felipe Malaber represented his captain. Gabira was 54 years old at this time but did not know how to write, which explains the participation of Malaber in the case. Gabira declared he was accompanying a white woman to her home at the night of the incident. This woman, Ramona Leal, had commissioned a table from him since he was a carpenter. After visiting his workshop, she returned to her home and Captain Gabira escorted her since it was late. The lieutenant Alguacil Zenon Diaz –something like a colonial police officer– stopped Gabira and asked who he was, but without identify himself as a representative of the royal justice. Most witnesses declared that Gabira replied “I am a man like you,” and he did not take his hat off as Diaz had requested. Then, Zenon Diaz slapped Gabira to make him remove his hat. When Gabira replaced his hat, Zenon Diaz attacked Gabira with his sabre injuring his head and amputating most of his left hand. Zenon Diaz was helped by two white militia soldiers, but more soldiers from the Guard of San Juan joined them. Suddenly, two officers came out to defend Gabira when he was almost dead. They told the attackers that this was “inhuman” and that “neither God nor the King ordered this.” It is clear that Zenon Diaz expected deference from Juan Gabira, and the latter reacted defensively when challenged by this anonymous man who turned to be the lieutenant Alguacil. The first prosecutor of this case was Miguel Granada, the same officer who had defended Gabira and Ramos in 1801. On January 24, 1806, the Governor of Montevideo ordered home arrest for Zenon Diaz –a mild punishment. Felipe Malaber asked the Governor that Zenon Diaz be suspended from his position as lieutenant Alguacil, be imprisoned, and to

⁴³³ AGN-A, EGH, Caja 43, exp. 37, “Pedimento de Juan Belén...” 1800.

⁴³⁴ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 75, exp. 2, “Causa sobre las heridas dadas a Juan de Dios Gabira,” 1805.

have embargo on his property sequestered to pay Gabira a stipend. In March, the Governor ordered the imprisonment of Diaz and an embargo on his property. In April, Diaz agreed to pay four reales daily to Gabira, plus the hospital expenditure and the judicial process. But Gabira died in June. The military surgeon declared that Gabira had died because of stomach problems rather than the injuries produced by Diaz. According to the surgeon, Gabira's injuries had healed.⁴³⁵ In the end, Zenon Diaz was suspended from his job as lieutenant Alguacil for only two months.

By 1805, Gabira had been captain of the black militia in which he had enlisted since 1780 at least for five years. He knew –at least only by sight– most officers in late colonial Montevideo. Gabira may have felt that his royal commissions protected him. Neither the governor nor other authorities took exception to Gabira comment “I am a man like you” to a white officer, but they nevertheless punished the actions of the latter lightly. That phrase was against all we know about the caste system and probably stimulated the Alguacil's fury. Did Gabira's leadership of the militia cause him to utter those words (which Gabira did not deny having said)? As Domingo Ramos before him, Gabira requested the help of Felipe Malaber, which shows the links of solidarity of free black officers in trouble. It remains unclear how this death impacted on the black militiamen, whose captain survived a public lynching just to die a few months later. That the case involved twenty-five witnesses indicates its importance and suggests that it reverberated throughout Montevideo. All soldiers knew the captain and lieutenant of their units, and thus the death of Gabira could not have pass unnoticed. He attended the two militia drills of 1806 even though he was missing his left hand which shows how important his position was to him.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ Cit., ff. 67-69.

⁴³⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 435, ff. 83, 99, 255-7, 267-9; Libro 873, January 5-6, 1806.

After the death of Gabira, Felipe Malaber was appointed captain of the black militia. The lieutenant Jacinto Molina, who held this position from 1807, defended one of his soldiers in 1810. Molina wrote petitions on behalf of the free black drummer José Tarufo asking military fuero for him.⁴³⁷ Once again, militia members trusted black officers when faced with civil court proceedings. Literate free blacks such as Molina and Malaber defended their fellows, and this reinforced their authority over other Afro-descendants. Rather than building social networks on the basis of past experience in Africa or the slave trade, these free blacks used their literacy and knowledge of the intricacies of the Spanish bureaucracy to reaffirm their leadership of black communities.

As happened in the 1770s, in the years 1801-1810 free blacks and pardos from Buenos Aires and Cordoba were temporarily stationed in Montevideo, which strengthened black military networks across the Río de la Plata. Free black and pardo units of Montevideo fought through the end of the colonial period at which point they served against the revolutionary government of Buenos Aires and the local leader José Artigas.⁴³⁸ Slaves also were enrolled as auxiliaries of the Spanish forces opening new developments which taken up in the next chapter. In 1801, the war against the Portuguese was the driving force behind new military arrangements in Montevideo. A list counted 8.343 inhabitants within the city walls, of which 1.526 men served in militias –including 143 free pardos and 88 free blacks. In addition, this document recorded 768 able bodied enslaved men who could help the professional army or take up arms in case of necessity.⁴³⁹ The Spanish planned to put slaves to work for the defense of the city though in fact no attacks occurred. In December 1805, just before the

⁴³⁷ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 169, exp. 56, “Causa criminal contra el Negro Aniceto...,” 1810.

⁴³⁸ Just before the British attack in 1807, colonial authorities planned to pay 600 pesos to free blacks and pardos of Montevideo for their militia service and 1.200 pesos to the companies which had recently enrolled 200 slaves. AGN-U, AGA, Caja 275, C. 6, Payment of the pardos of Cordoba, March 2, 1803; Caja 313, C. 9, Budget for the defense of Montevideo, January 12, 1807; AGA, Caja 353, C. 10, Payments to black militias, December 31, 1811.

⁴³⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 258, Carpeta 13, List of people able to defend Montevideo, August 20, 1801.

British invasions, the Cabildo of Montevideo asked for permission from the Viceroy to gather 200 slaves to carry out defensive works. These slaves received a daily stipend retained by their masters and were under military orders. While many slaves took advantage of the British invasion in 1807 to run away from Montevideo, others defended the city. Blacks and pardos –both free and slave– reinforced the artillery of the Citadel during the British attacks.⁴⁴⁰ However, the Spanish authorities neither armed slaves nor formed slave battalions in Montevideo as they did in Buenos Aires.

Along with the coordinated escape of slaves in 1803, recent episodes of slave violence as well as the news of the Haitian revolution prevented the colonial government from openly recruit slaves in Montevideo.⁴⁴¹ In August 1803, the Governor of Montevideo, José Bustamante, complained about the results of the militia recruitment set by the new “Reglamento de Milicias” in 1801. As the Portuguese had conquered the Eastern Missions in 1801 --the western half of modern-day Rio Grande do Sul-- Bustamante underlined that their ambitions loomed large over the Spanish territory. He also described as a “failure” the recent militia formation in Montevideo given that the majority of the recruits were “vagabonds” recalcitrant to military discipline. Bustamante voiced specific mistrust against the black and pardo units: “The Isle of Santo Domingo and other French possessions have painfully shown us that the recruitment and instruction of Negroes and Mulattoes must be prevented as prejudicial. Their increasing and inveterate hate against Whites has been attested in this territory by horrible and recent episodes.” This commentary provides the backdrop which free black officers Juan de Dios Gavira and Felipe Malaber had to overcome these same

⁴⁴⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 303, Carpeta 9, Cabildo of Montevideo to Viceroy Sobremonte, December 19, 1805; AGA, Caja 316, C. 2, Decree of the Cabildo of Montevideo on runaway slaves, February 9, 1807; Homero Martínez Montero, *La Esclavitud en el Uruguay (III)*, *Revista Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 45, September 1941: 416.

⁴⁴¹ Servicio Histórico Militar [España], *Cartografía y Relaciones histórica de ultramar. Tomo VII. Rio de la Plata*. Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 1992, 350-1.

years. In addition, it shed light on the limited slave recruitment in Montevideo vis-à-vis Buenos Aires during the British invasions.

The participation of slaves in Buenos Aires against the British invasions created a powerful momentum which lessened some of the burdens of slavery.⁴⁴² In November 1807, the Real Audiencia of Buenos Aires asked Viceroy Santiago Liniers –the hero of the fight against the British– why he had temporarily suspended the execution of a slave sentenced to death.⁴⁴³ In a secret communication –*reservada*– Liniers replied that slaves had borne the brunt of the defense against the British, and that renewed attacks were expected so the King needed their full support. He wanted to delay the execution of this slave until a white man had also been condemned to death, at which point they would be executed together. Liniers wrote that with this measure “Negroes would not have reasons to think that the rigor of Justice is only exacted upon their class, which would diminish their bravery and military enthusiasm needed to face a new and expected attack.” This attitude of the highest colonial authority, a predecessor of the *caudillos* because of his popularity after the British invasions, opens up new perspectives of how black militarization shaped the relationship between local authorities and the slave population during the wars of independence in the Río de la Plata. Local authorities began to shape policies in such a way as to take into account the reactions and support of the plebeians –as they were known by elites. After the revolution in Buenos Aires, contending elite parties had to attract and mobilize plebeian support in order to seize power.⁴⁴⁴ Slave and free blacks were thus part of policy formation because of their military experience and the constant need of military resources by the emerging republican governments.

⁴⁴² Seth Meisel, ‘The Fruit of Freedom.’ Slaves and Citizens in Early Republican Argentina, in Jane Landers (ed.) *Slaves, Subjects and Subversives*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006, 280.

⁴⁴³ AGN-A, IX, 27-6-4, Case of the slave Sebastián, 9-12 of November, 1807.

⁴⁴⁴ Gabriel Di Meglio, *¡Viva el bajo pueblo!*, on the popularity of Liniers, 88-9.

Conclusion

A Black Rio de la Plata established a presence through networks of free and enslaved blacks across Buenos Aires and Montevideo. These ties penetrated the interior of the viceroyalty to Cordoba, Santiago del Estero and Paraguay and crossed imperial borderlands to Portuguese Rio Grande and the coastline to Rio de Janeiro and Salvador. These networks also transmitted knowledge deemed essential for Afro-descendants trying both to carve out a better place for themselves in Montevideo and for those who wanted to run away from slavery. In both cases free blacks emerged as leaders given their knowledge of the Spanish colonial world, their literacy (in some cases), and their geopolitical understanding. But this knowledge seemed irrelevant to the leadership of African “nations,” whose members shared broad African origins as well as endured similar slave trading routes. While African “nations” were ruled by Africans, all captains of black militias were known to have been born in the Río de la Plata. In contrast, confraternities provided a middle ground where African-born and American-born slaves and freedmen met and led –a space where different black social networks and identities overlapped.

Chapter 4: Black Battalions and Caudillo Politics in the formation of independent Uruguay

In December 1811, free Pardo Crispín Amores entered a *pulpería* –a grocery and bar– outside of Montevideo, where he got into a fight and was killed.⁴⁴⁵ This event might have been just another knife duel, but it was embedded in the revolutionary momentum. In May 1811, the military forces of Buenos Aires and local leader José Artigas laid siege to the loyalist Spanish government in Montevideo. As a Portuguese army invaded from Brazil to back the royalists, the government of Buenos Aires and the Spanish authorities of Montevideo reached an agreement which left the Banda Oriental under control of the city in October 1811. José Artigas accepted this treaty and withdrew his forces across the Uruguay River, followed by thousands of supporters. Crispín Amores entered the *pulpería* threatening patrons by asking if they were *Gallegos* –a disparaging term for Spanish-born.⁴⁴⁶ Crispín claimed that he was from the “family of the famous Artigas,” and that he had received one hundred lashes from the Spanish in the Citadel. He added that he would die for Artigas, who was destined to return to Montevideo. Crispín also threatened a native of Córdoba and pushed him into the fight outside the *pulpería* that led to his own death. Many other people of full and mixed African ancestry identified themselves with the revolution by crafting personal links such as claiming family relationships or modifying their names. Cayetano and Victoriano Libre (Free), Juan Voluntario (Volunteer) as well as Sebastián and Francisco de la Patria (of the Homeland) were former slaves enlisted in the Freedmen Battalion created by Artigas in 1816.⁴⁴⁷ Out of 579 wills of people of African ancestry in Buenos Aires from

⁴⁴⁵ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 171, exp. 32, “Causa criminal contra Juan Francisco Peralta...” 1811. See Ana Frega, “La dimensión de lo privado en tiempos revolucionarios,” In, José P. Barrán, Gerardo Caetano, Tereza Porzecanski, *Historias de la vida privada en el Uruguay, 1780-1870*. Montevideo: Taurus, 1996, 153.

⁴⁴⁶ Gallego is someone from Galicia, Spain. This word meant all Spanish-born in the early Río de la Plata.

⁴⁴⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, Listas de Revista del Batallon de Libertos, 1817.

1810 to 1864, Miguel Rosal found three individuals named “de la Patria” as in Joaquina de la Patria, who was born in West-Central Africa (Munyolo).⁴⁴⁸ Changing names was just the most obvious way through which the revolutionary process –and the abolition of slavery– impacted the black population in the Río de la Plata.

As slave trading peaked in the region, Africans and their descendants in Montevideo experienced the British invasions of 1807, the two sieges by the revolutionaries in 1811 and 1812-1814, the entrance of the forces of Buenos Aires into Montevideo in 1814, and of Artigas in 1815. After the occupation of the city by the Portuguese in 1817, war continued in the countryside up to 1820, and conspiracies and uprisings became constant under Luso-Brazilian rule. Open war against the Brazilian occupation broke out from 1825 to 1828, from which emerged the *Estado Oriental del Uruguay*. Minor civil wars erupted in 1832, 1836, and 1838, and led to more generalized conflict from 1839 to 1851. Warfare marked more than a generation. After 1810, what became Uruguay was under the subsequent and sometimes overlapping control of the colonial Spanish rule, the revolutionary government of Buenos Aires, the local leadership of José Artigas, and a Luso-Brazilian occupying force. After the foundation of Uruguay, petty civil wars persisted up to 1839, when a regional and international war called *Guerra Grande* began. This conflagration pitted the Argentine *Federales* and the Uruguayan *Blancos* against the Argentine *Unitarios* and the Uruguayan *Colorados* and also involved British and French naval and diplomatic intervention. This war ended in Uruguay in 1851, while continuing in Buenos Aires into the following year when the allied armies of Corrientes, Entre Ríos, Montevideo (Colorados), and Brazil defeated the Governor of Buenos Aires Juan M. de Rosas.

⁴⁴⁸ Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, 161. See Fructuoso Libertad in AGN-A, X, 32-11-3, October 27, 1828, f. 172; the free black Joaquin Santa Victoria, AGN-U, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 782, May 29, 1829; and the files of José María Libertad and Joaquin Valiente in AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 960, February 1845 and Caja 961, March 1845.

Warfare and the foundation of the republic coincided with the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in Uruguay. The United Provinces of the Río de la Plata prohibited the slave trade in 1812 and passed a free womb law in 1813 freeing children born of slave mothers. These measures took effect in Montevideo under the brief government of Artigas. However, the Luso-Brazilian occupation meant the continuation of the slave trade and slavery in Montevideo. Both the slave trade and slavery endured until a full decade after the Uruguayan constitution of 1830.⁴⁴⁹ Warfare triggered the abolition of slavery in Uruguay (1842 and 1846) during the *Guerra Grande*, which saw the continuation of policy of the slave recruitment that dated back to 1812. By 1842 most African and Afro-descendant men participated in various and overlapping social networks belonging to the new military units, which helped reshape their identity.

While the development of horizontal networks and black identities within the rebel army and later particularly in national infantry seems clear, it remains uncertain the nature of vertical networks between black soldiers and white officers as these links tied these soldiers with the larger political turbulence which underwent Montevideo. On the one side, these networks could be understood within the *caudillo* politics emerging in nineteenth-century Latin America which provided continuity to patron-client relationships rooted in colonial times.⁴⁵⁰ On the other, these ties may be interpreted as evidence of political mobilization on the part of subaltern groups now acting within liberal politics.⁴⁵¹ While the bibliography of these issues is predominantly rural, new studies pose the question of subaltern participation in

⁴⁴⁹ Borucki, Chagas, Stalla, *Esclavitud y Trabajo*; and Alex Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo tras la fundación republicana*. Montevideo: Biblioteca Nacional, 2009.

⁴⁵⁰ John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800-1850*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. On the cultural meanings of identification of subaltern populations with caudillos see John Chasteen, *Heroes on Horseback: The Life and Times of the Last Gaucho Caudillo*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995. For overlapping motivations related to patron-client networks, cultural ties, material support, and party identification, Ariel de la Fuente, *Children of Facundo: Caudillo and Gaucho Insurgency during the Argentin State-Formation Process (La Rioja, 1853-1870)*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

⁴⁵¹ James E. Sanders, *Contentious Republicans. Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

urban politics for the early revolutionary Buenos Aires.⁴⁵² This chapter shows that slaves both forced and willingly join these armies. Once in military units, they developed different strategies to assure their freedom such as staying in Montevideo rather than being relocated to Buenos Aires in the late 1810s. After the foundation of Uruguay, the black professional infantry units increasingly participated in the *caudillo* politics pitting Fructuoso Rivera against Juan M. Lavalleja and then Manuel Oribe. As open war increased in the region in the 1840s, some white officers such as Venancio Flores specifically based their political career on the support of black battalions. Rather than developing from strict line of command, this support emerged within the mutual identification of the *Colorado* party and the army. While still remains unclear to what degree these links expressed subaltern participation in liberal politics or the old patterns of patron-client ties, these views may be seen just as the two ends of the same continuum: the new political relationships between elites and urban subaltern populations in nineteenth-century Latin America.

4.1. Black militarization during the wars of independence

After captaining the black militia of Montevideo, Felipe Malaber returned to Buenos Aires.⁴⁵³ He was there at the time of the Revolution of 1810, but he was sent to royalist Montevideo with the Sixth Regiment of Pardos and Morenos commanded by Colonel Miguel E. Soler, who promoted Malaber to lieutenant after the Battle of Cerrito in December 1812. Malaber entered Montevideo once again in June 1814; and his Regiment was the first to take over the Citadel.⁴⁵⁴ However, Malaber spent less than a year in Montevideo before moving back to Buenos Aires and then to Upper Peru. In November 1815, he participated in the

⁴⁵² Di Meglio, *¡Viva el Bajo Pueblo!*, cit.

⁴⁵³ AGN-A, IX, 28-5-1, "Relación de los oficiales agregados a los cuerpos de Voluntarios...", Bernardo de Velasco, February 4, 1808, and Francisco Pizarro, February 3, 1808. Andrews, *The Afroargentinians*, 255, n. 66.

⁴⁵⁴ Marcos Estrada, *Argentinos de Origen Africano*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1979, 129.

Battle of Sipe Sipe in modern-day Bolivia, where the forces of Buenos Aires were defeated by the loyalists. Malaber lost his belongings but escaped with his life. He then was sent to La Rioja to organize a force to attack Copiapo in today's Chile. At some point, Malaber was appointed Captain. As with other free black officers he was still well-connected with slavery. In 1815, his wife Francisca requested that the government of Buenos Aires use pay due to her husband Felipe Malaber to purchase freedom from her mistress. Back in Buenos Aires in 1819, Malaber requested the government buy him a house –an accepted method of settling further pay arrears. According to Peter Blanchard, one Manuel Malaber was son of Felipe and reached the rank of second lieutenant in the Sixth Regiment –following his father across Southern South America. Yet a daughter of Felipe, Mariana Pérez, was still held in slavery in 1815. She was married to a corporal of the Sixth Regiment and she also requested freedom on the basis of salary arrears.⁴⁵⁵ Felipe Malaber must have been separated from his children when he lived in Montevideo in the late 1790s and mid 1800s, but reencountered them in Buenos Aires in 1810, and freed his son Manuel in 1812 prior to Manuel's enlistment under his father's command. Militia service under the Spanish regime and then leadership of black battalions in the era of independence marked the lifespan of Felipe Malaber. Now, Felipe and Manuel Malaber's names came to be preceded by "Don" in official documents. They had attained respectability, at least on paper.

Jacinto Molina, a lieutenant in the colonial black militia of Montevideo, had quite different experiences from Felipe Malaber. When Artigas' army entered Montevideo, Molina wrote that "The year 1815 was fortunate for Artigas in this city, but unfortunate for me... Otorgués entered in this city, and Tomás García de Zúñiga wanted me to take up arms to

⁴⁵⁵ Blanchard asserts that Felipe Malaber was the father of Manuel and Mariana, but I did not find documents on this family connection. AGN-A, X, 8-7-5, October 24, 1815; 10-1-1, April 28 and 30, September 20, 1817; 11-1-7, January 11 and April 1, 1819. Blanchard, *Under the flags of Freedom*, 41-5 and 153. The will of Dominga Malaber (1828), stated she was daughter of Manuel Malaber and Rosa Esquerrenea, AGN-A, r. 4, 1828, f. 449.

defend this city against King Fernando VII.”⁴⁵⁶ But Jacinto refused to betray the Spanish king. The rebel officers decided to execute him to set an example for other loyalist blacks, but the intercession of his wife saved his life. Jacinto was probably the leading voice of the black loyalists. A handful of black militiamen defended Montevideo from the revolutionary forces up to late 1811. Together with the white militias, this unit had supported the Governor Javier Elío and the new Junta of Montevideo in 1808 when Viceroy Liniers had appointed a new governor.⁴⁵⁷ In fact, some free black and pardo officers who had served in the colonial militias appeared in muster rolls during the years of Artigas. The free *Mina* Francisco Ortega was third in command of the black militia of Montevideo in 1807. He was listed as *Don* Francisco Ortega in 1817, while captaining a free black unit of 69 men now supporting Artigas. The same was true for free black Juan Otero, who appeared in militia muster rolls of both 1807 and 1817. The Captain of the pardo unit of artillery Don Alejos García, had joined the militia as soldier in 1780, was appointed lieutenant in the 1800s, and captain in 1817.⁴⁵⁸ As Reid Andrews found for Buenos Aires, free blacks of Montevideo led free black militia units and even used the term “Don” after the revolution.

In December 1810, the Junta of Buenos Aires granted access to the same honors and benefits for black and white officers.⁴⁵⁹ Now free black and pardo officers, some of them African-born, could officially use the term “Don” previously reserved for white officers only. This change did not restrain white military officers from abusing free black soldiers. In 1816, the Spanish-born soldier Martin Bentancour killed black militiaman Joaquín Estrada in

⁴⁵⁶ J Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra en el Río de la Plata*, 90.

⁴⁵⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 353, Payments to black and pardo militias, December 31, 1811; Inés Cuadro et al, *Los sectores populares urbanos en la independencia del Uruguay*. Paper presented at the Symposium *A 200 Años de la Revolución en Ibeoramerica*. Montevideo, FHCE, July 20-23, 2010.

⁴⁵⁸ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 435, ff. 83, 99, 255-7, 267-9; Libro 873, January 5-6, 1806; AGN-A, IX, 3-1-3, “Lista y Filiación de la Compañía de Morenos Libres de Montevideo” January 8, 1807; AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, f. 61.

⁴⁵⁹ George Reid Andrews, The Afro-Argentine Officers of Buenos Aires, 1810-1860, *Journal of Negro History* 64, 2 (1979): 88.

Montevideo while both served under Artigas.⁴⁶⁰ Bentancour, along with two other soldiers, sailed a boat to take firewood from across the bay, and when they returned he asked Joaquín Estrada to carry the firewood. According to witnesses –all of whom knew Bentancour– Estrada refused to perform this service and insulted Bentancour. One witness said Estrada responded to Bentancour that “he was as good as him [Bentancour] and as *paysano* as him.” (*Paysano* meant from the same country, but could express support for the same party in wartime). Bentancour struck Estrada with the back of his sword and then ran after him. All witnesses said Estrada’s death was accidental — the sword pierced his body during the struggle. Bentancour was sixteen years old and didn’t know Estrada, who was probably older. While the government pardoned Bentancour on the date of the anniversary of the May Revolution, it is clear that Estrada felt he should not perform menial tasks for a young unknown Spanish soldier just because he himself was black –all testimonies agreed that Bentancour was looking for a “Negro” to carry the firewood and did not know Estrada was a militiaman.

By May 1811, José Rondeau was in command of 3,783 men in the Banda Oriental of whom 450 were men belonging to the Regiment of *Pardos y Morenos* of Buenos Aires. This *porteño* army together with the forces of José Artigas besieged Montevideo. In response, royalist slaves began to desert to the revolutionary side, where they were assigned as auxiliaries to every regiment. According to Peter Blanchard, 350 slaves running away from Montevideo and its countryside formed a corps of lancers. The Spanish Navy Commander José Salazar estimated that one thousand slaves had fled from their masters between October 1811 and the armistice in October 1812. Another witness claimed that eight hundred slaves from Montevideo accompanied Rondeau when he left the siege.⁴⁶¹ Slaves also fled from Rio

⁴⁶⁰ AGN-U, EGH, Caja 112, exp. 79, “Información sumaria contra Martín Bentancour...”, 1816, see testimony in f. 6.

⁴⁶¹ Ana Frega, “La Patria me hizo libre. Aproximación a la condición de los esclavos durante las guerras de independencia en la Banda Oriental,” in Silvia Mallo and Ignacio Tellesca (eds.), *Negros de la Patria*.

Grande do Sul to the rebel forces. One of the conditions of peace was that the revolutionaries return the slaves belonging to Portuguese subjects who enlisted –a commitment that the revolutionary leaders never honored. Portuguese authorities estimated that eight hundred slaves from Portuguese subjects had been freed by Rondeau before the armistice.⁴⁶² These figures may sound exaggerated, but Lt. Col. Nicolás de Vedia shipped two hundred freed slaves from Colonia to Buenos Aires just before the peace went into effect.⁴⁶³ Mobilization of blacks on this scale in both Buenos Aires and Montevideo reinforced networks of Africans and their descendants across the Río de la Plata, the origins of which dated back to colonial times.

War returned to Montevideo in October 1812, when the government of Buenos Aires deployed the sixth regiment of *Pardos y Morenos* and later the tenth Regiment mainly comprised of freed slaves. A Portuguese spy noted that Rondeau commanded 3070 soldiers, some of whom would have been black.⁴⁶⁴ In 1813, the revolutionary government began manumitting slaves in Buenos Aires who then formed infantry battalions.⁴⁶⁵ These units were commanded by white officers and engaged the royalists in combat from Montevideo to Lima. The Spanish of Montevideo also enlisted slaves in the last phase of the siege. Although the regiment of six hundred men they created received military training, they were returned to their masters the day before the city surrendered to the forces of Buenos Aires.⁴⁶⁶ Some of these soldiers later joined the tenth battalion after the revolutionary authorities confiscated slaves owned by Spanish-born and Portuguese living in Montevideo in early 1815. Slaves who had run away during the siege of Montevideo but were recaptured by their masters also

Buenos Aires: SB, 2010, 171-186; Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom*, 41. Archivo Artigas (hereafter AA), Vol 4, 1953, 369-375; Vol 5, 1963, 23. Miguel Moraes to Diego de Souza, October 17, 1811.

⁴⁶² *Boletín Histórico del Ejército*, 96-97, 1963, Conde de Linhares to Diego de Souza, December 1, 1811.

⁴⁶³ *Boletín Histórico del Ejército*, 96-97, 1963, Memorias de Nicolás de Vedia, 106-107.

⁴⁶⁴ AA, Vol 13, 1975, 191 and, 245, Diary of Fr. Bartolomé Muñoz.

⁴⁶⁵ Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*, 116.

⁴⁶⁶ Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Estado, Caja 3767 (2), Anonymous diary of events in Montevideo, Jun 5-23, 1814. AGN-A, X, 8-7-6, José Apolinario Sauco, October 5, 1815.

joined the tenth Regiment. During the *porteño* occupation militarized freedmen sought the freedom of their enslaved wives and siblings.⁴⁶⁷ Slaves belonging to patriots were sometimes returned to their owners, but this depended on how much influence the master had with the new government.

After eighteen months, the besieging soldiers entered Montevideo in triumph, but warfare did not end since now Artigas' forces turned against Buenos Aires, creating a conflict between revolutionary parties. The pardo Juan Francisco Sosa, who was accused of deserting from the forces of Buenos Aires on July 12, 1814, defended himself by saying that the "day following our entrance into this city he met a fellow countrywoman with whom he spent a night of joy."⁴⁶⁸ Afterwards, he returned to his battalion –the sixth– but he was afraid of punishment since he had missed the daily muster roll. He spent the following days in the city in a jerked beef plant where he was finally captured. Sosa was fortunate in that the judge pardoned him as part of the celebrations to mark the takeover of Montevideo. Others were not as lucky. In his writings, Jacinto Molina described how Commander Soler had summarily executed an African soldier in 1814 –he was accused and executed the same day without Catholic sacraments. While Molina did not provide further details of this case, records exist of another mutiny by black corporals in Montevideo after the execution of a black soldier.⁴⁶⁹ According to Soler and his lieutenant Holmberg, a deserter from their battalion was executed in February 1815 during hostilities between Buenos Aires and Artigas. After the soldier's execution, corporal Miguel Almagro –a native of Lubolo– led a mutiny which took over the Citadel of Montevideo. Almagro and other corporals were subsequently jailed, but the

⁴⁶⁷ Frega, "La Patria me hizo libre," AGN-U, EGH, Caja 109, 1814, exp. 61 ; Caja 109, 1814, exp. 107 and exp. 119.

⁴⁶⁸ AGN-A, IX, 30-3-1, exp 882.

⁴⁶⁹ Molina, *Los caminos*, 91; AGN-A, X, 29-9-6, exp. 32.

ongoing warfare against Artigas and withdrawal to Buenos Aires impeded further judicial prosecution –and the jailed corporals were pardoned.

The split between authorities in Buenos Aires and José Artigas occurred over the extent to which the provinces of the former viceroyalty should be autonomous with hostilities breaking out in 1815. Even prior to this some black troops from Buenos Aires had deserted or threatened to switch to the party of Artigas. In 1813, free black officers and soldiers in Punta Gorda, Entre Ríos, conspired to join Artigas.⁴⁷⁰ In February 1818, a group of black soldiers stationed on Martín García Island in the Río de la Plata planned to desert to Artigas' army.⁴⁷¹ Unpaid salaries and harsh discipline sparked these conspiracies, but as the Artigas' plan included granting land to free blacks by 1815, this too may have led the black soldiers to desert. By March 1815, the entire Banda Oriental was under his government, and he had formed a shaky alliance with the provinces of Entre Ríos, Corrientes, Santa Fe, Córdoba and Misiones called *La Liga de los Pueblos Libres*. Nevertheless, in 1817 a black battalion mutinied in the headquarters of Artigas –in Purificación between Entre Ríos and the Banda Oriental to the north on the Uruguay River.⁴⁷² Black soldiers claimed they did not receive beef and other provisions. Ana Frega points out that these soldiers had been captured by Artigas's troops from forces of Buenos Aires in Entre Ríos and Corrientes, but this group may have included deserters from the army of Buenos Aires.⁴⁷³

The regime of Artigas in Montevideo first recruited slaves whose masters had died, slaves who had run away, as well as those could not prove their freedom in 1815.⁴⁷⁴ Two companies of freedmen were stationed in the *Caserío de los Negros*, where slaves arriving in

⁴⁷⁰ AGN-A, X, 30-2-2, exp. 725.

⁴⁷¹ AGN-A, X, 29-10-3 exp. 186. Some of these cases were analyzed previously by Di Meglio, *Viva el bajo Pueblo*, and Victoria Ribón "La participación de la población de origen africano en los ejércitos revolucionarios en el Río de la Plata, 1800-1820." BA Thesis, unpublished, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2001.

⁴⁷² AA, 2000, Vol. 33, 101-102.

⁴⁷³ Frega, "La Patria me hizo libre," 14.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

Montevideo had been quarantined. On May 15, 1815, twenty freedmen were assigned to a new artillery battalion, the forces of Buenos Aires having dismantled most of the defensive works of Montevideo before their withdrawal. In September, fifty freedmen were assigned to deploy military equipment and others were to be trained in artillery. In June, the Cabildo of Montevideo asked that the company of Dragoons, the Artillery, and the Company of Blacks remain in the city to keep social order. Freedmen performed some police tasks such as killing wild and rabid dogs, but the Cabildo also complained about the disorder caused by the aforementioned black troops. On September 3, the Cabildo asked Commander Fructuoso Rivera to restore order after an affray the previous night sparked by black troops. In November, the Cabildo inquired about further excesses committed by freedmen. It complained that black soldiers did not sleep in their quarters, but instead spent the night carousing. Black soldiers could not be held for long given that their officers quickly obtained their release. The Cabildo asked Rivera to ban armed black soldiers from the city at night.⁴⁷⁵ The city authorities wanted black troops to maintain order during the day, but to remain in their quarters at night when they would otherwise be socializing as these soldiers were a mixture of former slaves and free blacks who must have had friends and family in the city.

A second Portuguese invasion led Artigas to again resort to recruiting slaves. On August 23, 1816, recruitment began in Montevideo by targeting masters with more than two slaves: those having three slaves had to assign one to the army, those having four had to cede two and so forth. In just a week, 390 slaves had joined the army. Artigas relied entirely on the forces of the Banda Oriental to repel the Portuguese given that the government of Buenos Aires had triggered this invasion by promising the Portuguese Court to remain neutral. The alliance created by Artigas with other provinces against centralist Buenos Aires also disintegrated. The first action of the freedmen's battalion was against the elites of

⁴⁷⁵ AA, Vol. 28, 1994, 16 and 50; Vol. 24, 1991, 2 and 60; Vol. 28, 1994, 57, November 3, 1815.

Montevideo. On September 2-3, Cabildo members and the Battalion of *Cívicos* (a white militia unit) led a mutiny against Miguel Barreiro –the civil governor of Artigas’ regime. The black troops saved Barreiro and jailed the leaders of the movement in the *Caserío de los Negros*, now turned into a prison for the Spanish royalists.⁴⁷⁶ Black soldiers also escorted the unarmed white militiamen to Artigas’ camp.⁴⁷⁷ In November, the Portuguese army defeated three black companies and other troops commanded by Fructuoso Rivera in India Muerta, east of Montevideo. These freedmen had been recruited among the slaves of Maldonado. By January 1817, the forces of Artigas in Montevideo included 680 soldiers, corporals and sergeants of black and pardo units. The Portuguese commander Carlos F. Lecor noted that this was the core of Artigas’ army in the southern half of the country.⁴⁷⁸

The Portuguese entered Montevideo on January 20, 1817, after the withdrawal of Artigas’ army. In fact, the Portuguese were invited by the elites of Montevideo who had abandoned Artigas when revolution seemed to challenge the social order. But warfare continued near the city. In April, Artigas rejected a plan by his main officers to reestablish alliance with Buenos Aires. Fructuoso Rivera, who had not been part of these plans, was appointed commander-in-chief by Artigas. Officers such as Rufino Bauzá, who captained the freedmen, disagreed with this measure. These struggles led to the desertion of the majority of the black soldiers to the Portuguese.⁴⁷⁹ In May, the battalion of Bauzá mutinied against Artigas and began negotiations with the Portuguese with a view to joining the forces of Buenos Aires and embarking for that city from Montevideo. A Portuguese officer had contacted the officers of the freedmen’s battalions (who were white) as the Portuguese

⁴⁷⁶ Cuadro et al, “Los sectores populares urbanos;” AA, Vol. 31, 228-234; AHN, Estado, Leg. 3769 (1), Pedro Bermudez, Montevideo, October 14, 1819. Bermudez captained one regiment of freedmen and later narrated to the Spanish Ambassador in Rio de Janeiro that he had “lightened the Royalists jailed in the House of Negroes.”

⁴⁷⁷ AHN, Estado 3788, Villalba to [?], October 29, 1816.

⁴⁷⁸ AA, Vol. 31, 1999, 99; Vol 32, 2000, 243; AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, Listas de Revistas.

⁴⁷⁹ Frega, “La Patria me hizo libre,” 178-179.

authorities knew of the disagreements within the lines of Artigas. Over three months, Rufino Bauzá and other officers negotiated their desertion to the city of Buenos Aires, but once in Montevideo most black soldiers preferred to remain there –which was not in accord with the plans of their white officers.⁴⁸⁰ In June 9, the Portuguese Commander Lecor pardoned all men who had fought against the Luso-Brazilian army and were willing to desert from Artigas’ lines –Lecor assured freedom to the “armed slaves.” Four hundred out of seven hundred freedmen deserted along with their commanders. These officers agreed with Lecor that all soldiers and ammunition would be shipped to Buenos Aires. However, not all black soldiers wanted to follow their officers and notified Lecor in writing of their intentions to remain in Montevideo. Lecor successfully intervened to prevent the embarkation of most black soldiers to Buenos Aires. Only 175 soldiers arrived in Buenos Aires from the *Batallón de Libertos Orientales* in October.⁴⁸¹ Nearly 225 soldiers had joined the Portuguese forces in Montevideo or simply remained in the city. In June 1817, Lecor carried out a census of “freedom papers” given to black soldiers leaving Artigas’s forces –a total of 237 from June 1817 to March 1821 with the bulk of desertions happening in October 1817.⁴⁸²

Black soldiers in Montevideo had therefore joined three different armies in the Río de la Plata by January 1818. Those who continued under the flag of Artigas were led by Fernando Otorgués and José M. Gorgonio Aguiar –the latter would follow the defeated Artigas to his permanent exile in Paraguay accompanied by black troops. Those who followed Bauzá but stayed in Montevideo formed the Portuguese Freedmen’s Battalion of Volunteers enlisting two hundred men. They were captained by Pedro Bermudez –a white

⁴⁸⁰ Arquivo Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 976, Lecor to Vilanova de Portugal, May 20, 1819.

⁴⁸¹ We find neither in Spanish nor Brazilian archives this letter yet. AHN, Estado, Leg. 3791 (1), Juan J. Duran to Juan J. de Vargas, October 9, 1817. For a copy of the agreement between Lecor and the officers: AHN, Estado 3773 (2), Casa Florez to José Garcia, November 14, 1817; Frega, “La Patria me hizo libre,” 180, AA, Vol. 32, 2000, 131-133, AGN-A, X, 22-1-6, Troops and ammunition brought by Lt. Col. Rufino Bauzá, October 18, 1817.

⁴⁸² AGN-U, AGA, Caja 603, Carpeta 5, “Registro Geral das Cartelas de Libertade...”

officer of the freedmen who passed from Artigas to the Portuguese.⁴⁸³ The Portuguese sent sixty freedmen to Rio de Janeiro in late 1818 to avoid claims of Spanish masters for the return of their slaves. Even in Rio de Janeiro some of these masters attempted to claim the return of these freedmen.⁴⁸⁴ The Portuguese also captured black soldiers in the fights against Artigas, who were added to the freedmen battalion of Montevideo.⁴⁸⁵ Initially, the Portuguese captured black soldiers and sent them to Rio de Janeiro as slaves, but the creation of the freedmen's unit in Montevideo changed this policy.⁴⁸⁶ Finally, those black soldiers following Bauzá continued under his command in Buenos Aires, but they might have returned to Montevideo when war broke out with Brazil in 1825.

Spanish loyalists now living under the Portuguese rule in Montevideo also sought the support of the freedmen's battalion. In late 1817, the royalist Col. Feliciano del Río communicated to the Spanish Minister in Rio de Janeiro the arrangements needed before the arrival of a Spanish expedition to recover Montevideo. He mentions that black soldiers who initially had taken up arms for the enemy and lived in this city should remain free; thus, they would serve the Spanish King upon the arrival of the royalist army. News of an impending Spanish expedition departing from Cadiz persisted in 1819. In October, Spaniard Luciano del Mar commented that the patriots controlled the Cabildo of Montevideo. He warned that the patriots could defend their positions against the loyalists by using the freedmen's battalion in case of Portuguese withdrawal before the Spanish invasion. Another loyalist, Joaquin Bereterra, speculated on a patriotic conspiracy taking place as the Portuguese left

⁴⁸³ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, Listas de Revistas, ff. 124ss; Libro 895. See also AN, Rio de Janeiro, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 977, Lecor to Luiz Pereira de Nobrega, November 17, 1822. AA, Vol 32, 2000, 204.

⁴⁸⁴ AHN, Estado, Leg 3776 (2), Cecilio de Alzaga to Agustin Tavira de Acuña, December 3, 1817.

⁴⁸⁵ AHN, Estado, Leg. 3769 (1), Pedro Sarrasqueta y Olave to Casa Florez, October 16, 1818. Estado, Leg. 3768 (2), "Ocurrencias en las Provincias del Rio de la Plata desde primero de...." See the notes for September 4 and 5.

⁴⁸⁶ AN, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 975, Lecor to Conde da Barca, July 24, 1817. List of white and black prisoners sent to Rio de Janeiro. Lecor noted that eleven black prisoners were slaves.

Montevideo.⁴⁸⁷ The Portuguese would leave the city before the arrival of Spanish forces, leaving the freedmen's battalion as the only garrison for keeping order in Montevideo. In these circumstances, the Cabildo would spark a patriotic rebellion allied with Buenos Aires and local leaders such as Fructuoso Rivera against the Spanish. In October 1819, Col. Feliciano del Río confirmed to the Spanish Minister that the Portuguese had plans for withdrawal. They would leave the city to a local force rather than to the Spanish loyalists to prevent revenge. He also asked Spanish authorities to issue pardons to key patriotic officers now serving the Portuguese such as Pedro Bermudez, the Captain of the Freedmen. The patriots controlled this regiment, but Feliciano del Rio knew that Bermudez had written to Spanish authorities in Rio de Janeiro asking for protection and salary.⁴⁸⁸ Feliciano del Rio told the Spanish Minister in Rio that it was "important to calm down the freedmen" and asked him for "freedom papers to confirm their future freedom. I assured to them in writing that the King had ordered this..." The Portuguese anticipated these plans as they arrested and expelled sixty-two loyalists, mostly Spanish officers, in November 1819.⁴⁸⁹ Loyalist plans were sunk in 1820 as news of a liberal revolt against Ferdinand VII led by the officers and soldiers of the Spanish expedition in Cadiz reached Montevideo.

While the Luso-Brazilian army took control of the entire Banda Oriental only in 1820, black soldiers in Montevideo continued to experience warfare. The black Sergeant Benito Rivadavia led a mutiny of the freedmen's unit in the Citadel in January 1822. Once more, unpaid salary was the cause. Rivadavia and another black officer, Juan Gabito, underwent a

⁴⁸⁷ AHN, Estado Leg. 3773 (2), Feliciano del Rio to Casa Florez, November 2, 1817; Leg. 3785 (1), Joaquin Bereterra to Casa Florez, November 4, 1819; Leg. 3791 (1), Luciano del Mar to Dionisio Urioste, October 16, 1819.

⁴⁸⁸ AHN, Estado Leg 3762, Feliciano del Rio to Casa Florez, October 18 and 30 of 1819; Leg. 3769 (1) Pedro Bermudez to Casa Florez, October 14, 1819.

⁴⁸⁹ Cuadro et al, "Los sectores populares urbanos;" AN, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 976, List of Spanish sent to Santa Catalina, December 27, 1819.

military trial which sentenced the former to death and set the latter free.⁴⁹⁰ Lecor then sent Rivadavia to Rio de Janeiro in order to commute his death sentence for permanent exile, for “which the inhabitants of this Province would give thanks.”⁴⁹¹ Lecor probably did not want permanent enmity between himself and the freedmen soldiers since he foresaw forthcoming struggles. Brazilian independence provoked skirmishes between the Brazilian and the Portuguese loyalist forces later that year. Lecor left the city with the Brazilian forces in September 1822, but the bulk of the occupation army remained in Montevideo loyal to Portugal.⁴⁹² By May 1823, Lecor claimed that the Portuguese forces within the city walls comprised 1400 infantry men. He also mentioned two freedmen’s battalions who were “...not very important, a little more than the militias, who can only be useful in the defense of the city.”⁴⁹³ These skirmishes opened a window for Montevideo patriots to pursue an alliance with Buenos Aires to end the Luso-Brazilian occupation, and also to seek the support of freedmen for these plans. Struggles between Brazilian and Portuguese forces ended in March 1824 when Lecor re-entered Montevideo. There followed a short peace given that Uruguay’s ultimate war of independence started just thirteen months later.

In April 1825, a group of patriots led by Juan Lavalleja crossed the Uruguay River from Buenos Aires; sparking the definitive rebellion against the Brazilian rule in the countryside. In August 25, the representatives of the *Provincia Oriental* issued the Declaration of Independence from the Empire of Brazil and of union with the United

⁴⁹⁰ Benito Rivadavia was Sergeant of the third company of the first freedmen battalion by December 1820. Juan Gabito was slave of Juan or Antonio Gabito. He was freed and joined the black battalion as corporal captured by Ignacio Oribe in Montevideo and created by Artigas in 1816. He deserted to the Portuguese in October 7, 1817; then, he joined the Freedmen battalion of the Portuguese in 1818 as corporal and as Second Sergeant of the first company by 1820. AGN-U, AGA, Libro 895, ff.1, 109; Caja 603, Carpeta 5, “Carthelas...”; Libro 894, ff. 59, 124.

⁴⁹¹ Cuadro et al, “Los sectores populares urbanos;” AN, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 977, Lecor to Joaquim Oliveira Alvares, April 10, 1822.

⁴⁹² Lecor held a legion of 400 hundred men of Sao Paulo, a Battalion of 300 from Pernambuco, and more than 200 freedmen. AN, Col. Cisplatina, Caixa 977, Lecor to Minister of War Luiz Pereira de Nobrega, November 17, 1822.

⁴⁹³ AN, Colección Cisplatina, Caixa 977, Lecor to Manuel Marquez de Souza, San José, May 31, 1823.

Provinces of the Río de la Plata. Military victories followed when the patriots defeated the Brazilian army in Rincón (September 24) and Sarandí (October 12) leaving Montevideo and Colonia as the only Brazilian strongholds. The United Provinces of the Río de la Plata accepted the reunification and declared war on Brazil in December. The patriotic leader Manuel Oribe established his camp near Montevideo, which may have sparked a note from those of the “low color” from the city:

We, of the low color, are committed to take arms to defend our homeland and together spill the last drop of blood to free our country from the Portuguese tyrant. With utmost silence and secrecy from 400 to 500 men of this color offer to defend the flag of our Homeland. We will surprise the two main guards of the Docks and the Gate. Then, Your Excellency will present the troops to take over the city, with whom we will break the chains of our slavery. We ask your Excellency to send us a leader for this great Enterprise. Your Excellency will ponder a way to send us arms and ammunition to free this city from tyrants. We also have prepared the Freedmen, and they wait for any sign to declare themselves against the tyrant Emperor. We beg an answer from Your Excellency as soon as you can.⁴⁹⁴

Pedro Barreiro, J. Escobar, León Cuevas, Ciríaco Martínez, Pedro Fernández, Felipe Figueroa, Rufino Iriarte, Gregorio Martínez, and Luis Gimenez signed this plan –none of them listed in any muster roll of black battalions between 1817 and 1832. We only now that León Cuevas established a dance academy in Montevideo in 1837.⁴⁹⁵ This is not the first connection between the military and the performing arts, as we will see in the next section. These free blacks and pardos sought to coordinate the patriotic forces outside of Montevideo with the freedmen’s battalion as well as with other people of African ancestry within the city. However, the plan elicited no response from the patriotic forces. They may have disregarded this proposal because it would have momentarily put the city into hands of free and enslaved blacks. The patriotic leaders of 1825 tried to distance themselves from the movement led by Artigas a few years previously given that Artigas had alienated the elites of Montevideo. As

⁴⁹⁴ Ildefonso Pereda Valdes, *El negro en el Uruguay. Pasado y Presente*. Montevideo: Apartado de la Revista del Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay, 1965, 253-4.

⁴⁹⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Gobierno, Caja 898, Request of León Cuevas and Pedro Chaín, May 19, 1837.

noted by José P. Barrán, elites developed a “fear to social revolution” linked to the government of Artigas.⁴⁹⁶ The leaders of 1825 eschewed the radical politics of Artigas that would have stopped any elite support. This proposal is not the first document in which people of African ancestry drew parallels between freedom from slavery and the freedom of the country. Both Ana Frega and Peter Blanchard have demonstrated that slaves (both men and women) in Montevideo employed the “language of liberation” to assert their freedom in the name of the *Patria* –Homeland.⁴⁹⁷ However, the note to Oribe is the first example of writing in which this association of personal and national freedom is embedded in a collective proposal with political aims. It is also evidenced the political engagement of blacks in Montevideo, most of whom had experienced the defense of the regime of Artigas against the elites of Montevideo, the desertion from Artigas to the Portuguese or the porteños, the Spanish loyalist conspiracies, the mutiny of freedmen’s units, and the Luso-Brazilian separation. Needless to say, the prolongation of the Brazilian occupation implied the continuance of slave trade and slavery in the country and it is striking that just ten days after declaring independence, the patriotic government reinstated the prohibition of the slave trade and issued a free-womb decree.⁴⁹⁸ From that moment, the introduction of slaves was legal only in Colonia and Montevideo still held by the Brazilian army.

The patriotic leaders may have disregarded the freedmen’s plan to take over Montevideo, but they continued recruiting free and enslaved blacks. By August 1825, a freedmen’s battalion formed in Durazno –at the core of the Banda Oriental– adding 172 soldiers. By November, this battalion had four companies plus a grenadier unit, a total of 343

⁴⁹⁶ José P. Barrán “La independencia y el miedo a la revolución social en 1825” *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional* [Montevideo], 26 (1986): 65-77.

⁴⁹⁷ Frega, “La Patria me hizo libre;” Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom*.

⁴⁹⁸ The Assembly of the Oriental Province declared independence from Brazil in August 25, 1825, and reinstated these anti-slave trade and slavery measures on September 5.

men.⁴⁹⁹ This battalion was the only professional unit loyal to the patriots since all others were militiamen. They had police and other functions separate from the strictly military –which did not prevent them engaging in the siege of Colonia.⁵⁰⁰ The commander of Maldonado, Leonardo Olivera, asked to create a permanent company of blacks who would protect civil authority in August 1828 –when a peace agreement was on the horizon.⁵⁰¹ In June 1826, one of the headmen of the Assembly, Carlos Anaya, wrote “that all past suspicion of the Freedmen was groundless,” which evinces that patriotic leaders had reservations about black conscription and sheds light on their attitudes to the freedmen’s plan in 1825.⁵⁰² As the army sent by the government of Buenos Aires entered the Banda Oriental in 1826, new measures encouraged black recruitment. In October 19, the *porteño* commander Carlos Alvear ordered that all free blacks be enlisted, but Juan F. Giró, the local authority in Canelones –the jurisdiction outlying Montevideo– enrolled only free blacks without family in this area. Giró extended this measure to all “men of color, even slaves” to create a force to block incursions by the Brazilians of Montevideo. In May 1827, the government of Buenos Aires authorized Commander Miguel E. Soler to free three hundred slaves. This was initiated by the local authorities who then organized a unit of freedmen to be sent to Canelones, the site of the patriotic government. These measures specifically targeted runaway slaves from Brazil.⁵⁰³

⁴⁹⁹ AGN-A, Archivos Particulares (hereafter AP), Cajas Independencia, Caja 358, Listas de Revista Libertos Orientales. In September of 1825 uniforms from Buenos Aires arrived. Whites with red collars were destined to freedmen, while militiamen light blue. Caja 349, Carpeta 9, Lavalleja to Zufriategui, September 6, 1825.

⁵⁰⁰ “The Freedmen’s battalion was destined to guard the towns, the respectability of the Government and the Honorable Representative Assembly.” *Boletín del Ejército*, 37, February 1949, Correspondencia Militar, Lavalleja to Rodriguez, June 24, 1826, 88.

⁵⁰¹ AGN-U, AP, Independencia, Caja 356, Carpeta 6, Carlos Anaya to Lavalleja, August 19, 1828; AGA, Caja 642, Carpeta 2, Carlos Anaya to Lavalleja, July 26, [1828].

⁵⁰² *Boletín del Ejército*, N° 37, February 1949, Carlos Anaya to Lavalleja June 2, 1826, p. 103.

⁵⁰³ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 644, Carp. 6, Carlos Alvear to Giró, October 19, 1826; AP, Independencia, Caja 353, José F. Giró to Chief of Police of Canelones, April 27, 1827; Caja 354, Carp. 5, Francisco de la Cruz to Miguel E. Soler, May 11, 1827; Joaquin Suarez to Soler, May 23 and 31, 1827. In May 31, Suarez ordered the remittance of forty freedmen from Paysandú to Soler; Caja 355, Carp. 5, Juan Arenas to Lavalleja, Miguelete, September 26, 1827.

Local authorities carried out slave censuses which survive for Canelones, San Pedro (Durazno), and Salto (to the north on the Uruguay River) to help conscript slaves in mid 1827.⁵⁰⁴ These same steps would lead to the abolition of slavery in Uruguay fifteen years later.

4.2. Freedmen soldiers in the foundation of Uruguay

After British mediation, Brazil and the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata signed a preliminary peace agreement on October 4, 1828, leading to the independence of “the Province of Montevideo –today called Cisplatina,” but Brazilian forces left Montevideo only in April 1829. The first Constitution of the *Estado Oriental del Uruguay* was proclaimed in July 1830 –it was a country with militias but no standing army. The first permanent infantry unit emerged from the freedmen’s battalion serving the previous provisional government now called *Batallón de Cazadores* which added 302 men.⁵⁰⁵ Soldiers such as José Mozambique and Antonio Congo were enlisted; based on their names they were surely former slaves –one of them, named Serafín Ortiz was discharged after having been “delivered to his master in August 17.” Apparently, not even by joining the army were former slaves safe from enslavement.

In May 1829, the provisional government decided to free all slaves who had served three years in the past –those who did not comply would be freed if they had excelled in service.⁵⁰⁶ In November, Col. Garzón asked General Lavalleja to rescue from slavery the soldiers of the first infantry battalion who did not comply with these conditions and were being pursued by their masters. He stressed the utility of this measure by pointing out that

⁵⁰⁴ AGN-U, AGA, Caja 692, Carpeta 8 “Esclavos”. The lists of Canelones gather 141 men, San Pedro enlisted 117 both men and women, and Salto only 17 men. The majority of these slaves were Africans.

⁵⁰⁵ *Volteadores* comes from *voltear* “to turn” and designated those who turned artillery pieces. AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1183, Lists of the 1º Batallion of *Cazadores*, September 15-24, 1830.

⁵⁰⁶ Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo*, 36

they were already disciplined and trained.⁵⁰⁷ The government requested a list of those active soldiers at risk of enslavement. It was a decisive moment for freedmen –not only for those who served in the last war against Brazilian rule, but also for those who had been enrolled a decade earlier by Artigas. The papers published news about the fate of freedmen against the backdrop of patriotic fervor. The case of Adrián Lora illustrates this intersection of freedom from slavery with independence. In 1816, the government of Artigas enrolled the slave Adrián Lora, who was a cavalryman.⁵⁰⁸ Lora reached public attention in April 1830, when the paper *El Tribuno* published a story describing his situation and his relationship with Juan M. Marquez, the editor of the newspaper and defender of minors and slaves –the elected official *Defensor de Menores y Esclavos*. Lora stated that:

Before the formation of the regiment of Oriental Freedmen, I already served under the flags of the homeland. Once that regiment was formed, I served up until the battle of Paso del Cuello, where I was injured and captured. As prisoner, the Portuguese sent me to the navy where I forcibly served eighteen months. Afterwards, the Portuguese released me since I was disabled. They told me I was free. Once I disembarked, Mr. L.C. took me by and sold me for 55 or 60 pesos to Mr. M. [...] I was freed by the patriotic government, injured in the defense of the country, imprisoned for eighteen months, and then I returned to slavery...⁵⁰⁹

Lora lost his right arm in the Battle of Paso del Cuello in April 1817. He was one of the forty black soldiers captured by the Portuguese then forced to serve in the navy. Lora was eventually released since he was a one-armed man.⁵¹⁰ Brazilian authorities did not guarantee his freedom given that he fell into slavery and worked chained in a bakery. When the provisional government entered Montevideo in 1829, his alleged owner unchained Lora, who ran away to present his case to the defender of slaves. The attorney did not pay attention to his case, which led to the imprisonment of Lora, now accused of running away by his owner.

⁵⁰⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1174, Garzón to Chief of EMG Lavalleja, November 24, 1829.

⁵⁰⁸ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, Lista de revista de la Compañía de Dragones Libertos, January 15, 1817.

⁵⁰⁹ *El Tribuno*, Montevideo, 5 de abril y 10 de abril de 1830.

⁵¹⁰ AA, Vol. 32, 2000, p. 204.

Lora must have met Juan M. Marquez in jail. Marquez himself was jailed in March 1829, and he was later elected as new defender of slaves in August.⁵¹¹ In the published story, Marquez stated to Lora after achieving his freedom:

You can't make a living because you lost your right arm. We will present your case to the government which will give you a pension to assure your subsistence. You are still young and you will exclaim to your friends 'I was disabled by serving the State, but the State broke the chains of slavery and now I am free and independent.'

Marquez linked black military service to official retribution—a common feature in the following years. Lora actually got a pension as an invalid and he was one of the first black soldiers to get state support. In April 1830, he submitted a petition to the Secretary of War asking for an invalid's pension. Captain Manuel Balverde, who served in the central command of this office, wrote the petition; thus Lora had some internal support. The petition discussed his participation in the battalion of Bauzá in the years of Artigas as well as his loss of an arm, but mentions nothing more. In June, Lora received a payment of almost 20 pesos as invalid (a monthly salary for a rural worker at this time was between 8 to 10 pesos). Afterwards, we know only he was jailed for threatening another man with a knife in 1836, and for public drunkenness in February 1837—two common causes for imprisoning free blacks as seen in the next chapter.⁵¹²

José M. Marquez also published the case of Santiago Casavalle in *La Gazeta Mercantil* during his tenure as defender of slaves. Pedro Casavalle had requested the return of his slave Santiago in May 1829, who had joined the army. Initially the government agreed to compensate Pedro Casavalle. However, Santiago was dismissed from the army in January

⁵¹¹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Civil 1, Caja 249, exp 2, 1829 and exp. 3, 1829; Crimen, Caja 15, exp. 36, 1830. AGA, Gobierno, Caja 785 Result of the elections of in the City Hall, Montevideo, August 30, 1829.

⁵¹² AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 800, Carpeta 23, Adrian Lora, April 14, 1830; Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1178, April 27, 1830, f. 195; Caja 1181, Listado de pagos de invalidos, June 1830; Libro 944, January 4, 1836; Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 894, Report of the Chief of Police, February 25, 1837.

1830 and ordered to return to his master without judicial proceedings.⁵¹³ That January, he wrote to the government and his story reached the pages of *La Gazeta Mercantil*:

As an oppressed person, Santiago vehemently expresses that he served the Homeland in return for his freedom. It was by chance that he did not participate in combat, since from the moment he joined the army he was willing to die in action or become a prisoner of war. For this principle, and the tacit agreement of his master in allowing Santiago to serve during the war and ever after, Santiago claims a de-facto freedom.⁵¹⁴

Marquez brokered an agreement between Pedro and Santiago Casavalle by which Santiago would pay a monthly sum to Pedro of up to 200 pesos (the value of an adult slave was 300 pesos). Santiago was free and Pedro Casavalle was partially compensated – a solution that Marquez boasted as the pathway to the abolition of slavery. In the context of Montevideo, Marquez’s claims about the possibility of abolishing slavery mad him an extremist. His confrontations with the police, his imprisonment, and judicial prosecutions prove he was a radical. Beyond his activity, this was a foundational moment for the intersection of black militarization and patriotic discourse at the very time that newspapers created a public sphere in Montevideo. Slavery and freedom were major elements in elite discourse on war, politics, and independence across Spanish America. But this elite rhetoric did not include slaves, who in turn used this language when requesting their individual freedom to the patriotic governments.⁵¹⁵ Africans and their descendants pressed for freedom and material support for themselves and their families based on their participation in the events leading to independence. In addition, this strategy served for pleas of black associations for freedom of expression as seen in the next chapter. The cases of Lora and Casavalle show that military service might not only overturn slavery but also make black communities deserve the full benefits of belonging to the republic.

⁵¹³ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1168, Plea of Pedro Casavalle, May 7, 1829; Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 793, Carpeta 18, Plea of Santiago Casavalle, January 8, 1830.

⁵¹⁴ *La Gaceta Mercantil*, Montevideo, N°83, 26 de enero de 1830, p. 2.

⁵¹⁵ Frega, “La Patria me hizo libre;” Blanchard, *Under the Flags of Freedom*.

The formation of black infantry units did not put an end to black and pardo militias. The lack of professional infantrymen other than blacks may have encouraged military officers to keep black militias active. In March 1830, the Secretary of War Pedro Lenguas ordered the formation of a black and pardo militia of artillery. In June 1830, Col. Eugenio Garzón pointed out that decommissioned black soldiers living in Montevideo should join this militia, which included 92 black and 47 pardo militiamen.⁵¹⁶ In January 1831 these militiamen were called to active duty in Montevideo given that the black infantry moved to the countryside to fight against indigenous Charrúas. Free black militiamen such as Pablo J. Martínez requested pensions on the basis of their service. Two lieutenants led the black militia: Don Antonio Sanchez and Don Juan de los Santos. The latter was a free black who asked for retirement in December 1838 just as Fructuoso Rivera defeated President Oribe and took over Montevideo suggesting that his retirement may have had political causes too.⁵¹⁷ Indeed, black infantry soldiers rather than militiamen played a central role in the first military coup in the history of Uruguay.

For most of his presidency (1830-1834), Fructuoso Rivera remained in Durazno –in central Uruguay– instead of Montevideo, where Vice-President Luis E. Pérez exercised civil power. On July 3, 1832, Col. Eugenio Garzón and his troops mutinied in Montevideo following orders from General Lavalleja, who fought against Rivera in the countryside.⁵¹⁸ The British consul in Montevideo Thomas S. Hood narrated that “...the civil powers have been extinguished by two or three wicked ambitious men [Lavalleja, Garzón and Zufriategui]

⁵¹⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1179, Pedro Lenguas to Artillery commander, March 30, 1830; Caja 1180, Eugenio Garzón to Secretary of War, June 6, 1830; AP, Independencia, Caja 358, List of Cívicos Morenos Libres, June 13, 1830. These militia units were initially located and trained in the barracks of the Dragoons.

⁵¹⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1186, Secretary of Government to Pedro Lenguas, December 31, 1830; Caja 1222, Pedro José Martínez, December 4, 1833; Caja 1183, Petition of Tte. Juan de los Santos, August 4, 1830; Caja 1283, Petition of Juan de los Santos, December 17, 1838.

⁵¹⁸ Juan E. Pivel Devoto, *Historia de los Partidos Políticos en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: Cámara de Representantes, 1994, Vol. 1, 60-3.

assisted by less than one hundred black soldiers.”⁵¹⁹ Vice-President Pérez resigned under the pressure of Garzón and his troops, who proclaimed Lavalleja as commander-in-chief. News from the Citadel –where black infantrymen were stationed– changed this scenario. On the night of August 4, Hood continues, “the troops, who it now seems had on the 3rd of July been seduced from their duty by unfulfilled promises of money, rose upon their leaders and made some of them prisoners, the others who escaped [from the Citadel, including] Zufriategui, Giró, Muñoz and Gomez were however so far successful in circulating a report that the blacks had broken loose and intended to pillage the town...”⁵²⁰ Vice-President Pérez asked Hood to send British forces to protect the city from “a revolt of the black troops.” Fifty marines from Darwin’s *Beagle* landed, but “...the truth was discovered, that the reports were false as regarded any intended pillage, and that in fact the revolting troops had returned to their duty calling for the Constitutional Government.” Vice-President Pérez commissioned new officers for the black infantrymen, but now white militiamen supporting Lavalleja took up arms because of the threat of pillage. They remained armed to keep “the appearance of security” during the following days. Now black troops supported the constitutional government in the Citadel while white militiamen followed Lavalleja (who was staying near Montevideo) against the government. According to Hood, these militiamen initially besieged the Citadel, but then they refused to fight against the black soldiers on August 10. With no further support, Lavalleja fled Montevideo just before President Rivera entered with 1400 men. Hood left unclear the reasons for the black infantry’s initial support of Garzón and their understanding of the situation. At the very least, he underlines that a voluntary coup, emerging from the ranks of the black soldiers, turned the tables against the rebel leaders afterwards.

⁵¹⁹ BNA-FO, 51/8, Hood to Palmerston, July, 13, 1832, f. 124.

⁵²⁰ BNA-FO, 51/8, Hood to Palmerston, August 18, 1832.

Encarnación Zas provides a similar account of events with adding slightly different details. When the black battalion mutinied against the rebel officers, the latter called for the support of white militiamen who already sympathized with Lavalleja. Zas joined a governmental delegation that was sent out to avoid the clash of rebel white militiamen and the now loyalist black troops. He points out that militiamen claimed that “the city could not remain under the power of a disbanded troop which had denied the obedience to their natural chiefs, and that they know about disorders provoked by the blacks...”⁵²¹ Zas notes this was a pretext for the rebels to remain in control of the city. The white militia, then, not only besieged but also opened fire on the Citadel, where Zas was located. The militiamen also introduced other black soldiers in the Citadel, who followed their white officers in supporting Lavalleja. Black soldiers had joined the two competing parties, but the majority of the black infantrymen rebelled against their officers, defended the Citadel, reached an agreement with the constitutional authorities, and together with the latter held out until the arrival of President Rivera. Their actions were decisive for both initiating and ending the coup in the capital.

Some slaves took advantage of the confusion to join the infantry and obtain freedom. The Chief of Police of Montevideo reported that he had sent a number of slaves to the Citadel as punishment before the July coup, where they performed public works.⁵²² But these slaves joined the black troops when the latter rebelled against their officers on August, and began to serve in the army supporting the government. The Chief of Police asked Vice-President Pérez what to do with these former prisoner slaves since now their masters were requesting them

⁵²¹ Encarnación Zas, “Memorias de Encarnación Zas,” *Revista Historica*, Año XLV, Tomo XVII, Numero 49-50 (December 1951): 121-173. See 152.

⁵²² Masters sent recalcitrant and rebellious slaves for “correction” to the Police in Montevideo in the 1830s.

back, but their new status as professional soldiers put these slaves beyond the reach of the police.⁵²³

After most of the rebel leaders left the country, the government started a political purge.⁵²⁴ In December 1832, the Secretaries of War and of Government sent a joint communication to the Police Chiefs of six out of the nine administrative divisions of Uruguay. The Secretary of War sent small garrisons of black infantrymen to support the Police in these places. Confidentially, the Secretary of Government ordered to each Police Chief to replace these black soldiers with white men as the former requested retirement.⁵²⁵ Black soldiers were not sent to Durazno where part of the black infantry already stayed with President Rivera, nor were they sent to Tacuarembó and Cerro Largo near the Brazilian border where reenslavement by bandits was a serious risk. The Police Chief of Cerro Largo had already appointed freedmen and runaways from Brazil as messengers and thus black auxiliaries served the police.⁵²⁶ No less than twelve men were sent to each one of these six jurisdictions, which took nearly a third of the infantry battalion of 300 men. While intentions of whitening the army are clear, the political implications of this movement were that they were disbanding the not-so-loyal infantry battalion. The timing and context of this measure linked this relocation with the coup of July 1832 as the government sought to purge the unit of Lavalleja's supporters. The insurgents Lavalleja and Garzón had created the infantry battalion from the former freedmen units from the war with Brazil. As they were personally

⁵²³ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 832, Chief of Police to Vice-President Luis Pérez, August 16, 1832.

⁵²⁴ Pivel Devoto, *Historia de los Partidos Políticos*, 63.

⁵²⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 836, Secretary of Government Santiago Vazquez to Secretary of War Pedro Lenguas, December 11, 1832.

⁵²⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 836, Chief of Police of Cerro largo to Secretary of Government, December 7, 1832.

involved in freeing some black soldiers as Garzón had written to Lavalleja in 1829, which probably facilitated links of loyalty which now had concrete political implications.⁵²⁷

Free and enslaved blacks participated in caudillo politics in nascent Uruguay. They entered networks of patronage with white elites rather than participating in the electoral process from which they were largely banned.⁵²⁸ In February 1833, José Vasco—a slave of Lavalleja—was captured in Colonia when he was “...seducing the soldiers of this garrison and spreading news favorable to Lavalleja...”⁵²⁹ José Vasco was trying to convince the recently relocated black garrison of Colonia to join the partisans of Lavalleja in the country. José was sent to Montevideo where he was put in solitary confinement and thus isolated from any contact with black soldiers. On May 25, 1833, the authorities stopped a plot they identified as a slave conspiracy, but which fitted in the uprisings of Lavalleja as seen in the next chapter. This appears to have been political conspiracy on the part of the African associations of Montevideo. Political discussion was certainly a feature of *pulperías*—country stores—where newspapers were read aloud. In 1834, the Chief of Police wrote that “A pardo named Alejo Sanchez, an unknown man, an *Oriental*; [he] says he has lived many years in Buenos Aires, [he] was found in the country store of Aguada yelling *Long Live General Lavalleja, and I am from his people.*”⁵³⁰ Sanchez was condemned to public works for expressing political opinions when the threat of insurrection was alive.

⁵²⁷ Despite to the governmental intentions, these small black garrisons supporting the police still existed in Minas and Paysandú in 1853. AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 858, Police Chief to Secretary of Government, July 5, 1834; Caja 916, Report of Chief Police of Minas, May 2, 1839; Caja 931, Report of Chief Police of Montevideo, August 9 1841; Caja 1008, Piquete of blacks of Paysandú, July 13, 1853.

⁵²⁸ The constitution of 1830 suspended citizenship for men on the basis of personal wage-labor dependence, e.g. day-laborers. Slaves and freedmen, as well as the majority of free blacks could not vote on the basis of this article.

⁵²⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 839, Chief of Police of Colonia to Secretary of Government, February 19, 1833.

⁵³⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Gobierno, Caja 855, Chief of Police of Montevideo to Secretary of Government, April 21, 1834.

Beginning in March 1835, President Manuel Oribe took office. The next year, former President Rivera initiated a sporadic armed rebellion against Oribe and Lavalleja, who were now allies. In January 1837, the free pardo Luis Maturana was jailed "...for disorder in a pulpería and for scandalously yelling Long Live Rivera."⁵³¹ Some slaves took advantage of these uprisings to joining one side or the other. For example, José Jara served as field guide in the countryside for the governmental army from late 1835 to February 1837 –when his return was requested by his master.⁵³² Free black Salvador Fagundez gave his life while collaborating with Rivera. He lived in Durazno on the cattle ranch of Carmen Fragoso –an in-law of Rivera. In February 1837, Salvador went to Casa Pava in Rio Grande do Sul to deliver Rivera's letters, written while he was in exile in Brazil. On his way back, governmental forces captured Salvador with Rivera's correspondence. He was interrogated and summarily executed.⁵³³ His case shows the rising violence of this petty civil conflict, which escalated into open warfare in the following years.

Evidence of black support of President Oribe also emerges from unexpected arenas such as theatre. On September 19, 1836, the government defeated Rivera at *Carpintería*, which was then celebrated by patriotic shows performed in Montevideo. A group of free black and pardo amateurs rehearsed a show early in 1837 to celebrate the anniversary of Oribe's inauguration on March 1st. They rented the National Theatre, but their rehearsals did not pass unnoticed; two anonymous letters published in the most important paper of Montevideo denounced a "meeting of Negroes" in the theatre. These writings claimed that theatre was a "school of morals" with no room for black aficionados and suggested that their

⁵³¹ AGN-U, AGA, Gobierno, Caja 892, Chief of Police of Montevideo to Secretary of Government, January 2, 1837.

⁵³² AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1259, Bernabé Caravia to the Secretary of War, February 11, 1837.

⁵³³ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1258, Manuel Britos to Chief of EMG, January 31, 1837; Caja 1259, Summary against Carmen Fragoso, February 1837.

play could be performed somewhere other than the National Theatre.⁵³⁴ The editor Antonio Diaz commented that the manager of the theatre should review his policy. A response from the “black and pardo aficionados” was published three days afterwards by the *Defensor de las Leyes* –a recently launched paper that was the voice of Oribe’s party. The black and pardo amateurs were in fact militiamen who defended their rights of expression, citizenship, and Uruguayan identity on the basis of their military service:

As free men and as citizens of the Republic, we have the uncontested right to present ourselves and speak in public places without offending morals and good customs. Law, reason, and justice grant this right to all the inhabitants of this state. Rather than only a privilege reserved to the white men, this right is common to all, disregarding class or skin color. Even though we are black and pardo, we want to use this right in full extent. [...] Our theatre play and our presence on stage absolutely will not offend the public morals, because we will show a lesson of patriotism and morals. This play is no less virtuous for being performed by men of color. Nor will we offend the honor of the Republic which we love and adore since her foundation was sealed with the blood of our forebears and some of ourselves. [...] Had you studied the history of our America, you would have known that the African blood of our valiant NEGRO fathers was spilled in torrents to establish the American freedom. Among them, very few were combatants for the [Spanish], no one betrayed his adoptive homeland. We are in the National Guard, where we zealously serve, and we will fight to defend the laws and the authorities who determine the destiny of the Republic. Since nobody disputes our right to die for the homeland, we ask to enjoy the other rights that law, reason and justice have granted upon us.⁵³⁵

In Uruguay, the dominant discourse on slave emancipation via conscription usually portrayed military service as a duty in exchange for freedom bestowed on slaves. This narrative of freeing slaves who turned into soldiers of the homeland was embedded in patriotic expressions, too, given that elites portrayed a link of gratitude from freedmen to the homeland.⁵³⁶ The black and pardo actors turned the tables of this narrative on emancipation, militarization and patriotism. They based their claim to the full rights of citizenship on past and present black militarization which led to the foundation of the new republics in America.

⁵³⁴ *El Universal*, Montevideo, Issue 2225, February 22, 1837, 3.

⁵³⁵ *El Defensor de las Leyes*, Montevideo, Issue 138, February 25, 1837, 3.

⁵³⁶ Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo*, 129-89.

They called Uruguay their “adoptive homeland,” even though it saw them or their parents as slaves. They had contracted the playhouse, rehearsed for two months, but now the manager of the theatre disavowed the contract because of the machinations of influential people. What was the outcome? On Saturday February 25, the same day that the black and pardo aficionados published their letter, Juan Casacuberta debuted as the lead in *Othello* at the National Theatre.⁵³⁷ Casacuberta was a well-known actor across the region. He had now returned to Montevideo, where he had been accused of supporting the Brazilian rule almost a decade earlier.⁵³⁸ Small firework explosions and people booing intermittently interrupted his show.⁵³⁹ That night, the Police imprisoned two young white men, two free pardos, a free black, and a slave for “disorder in the theatre.” On Monday the 27th, the Police handed over the free Afro-descendants to the militia because they were militiamen. Thus, black and pardo militiamen who had defended the independence of the country participated in a demonstration against a public figure accused of collaboration with the Brazilian regime. These protesters surely were also involved in the interrupted show honoring Oribe.⁵⁴⁰

The black and pardo amateur actors may have performed their show in African-based associations, who had access to houses for their weekend meetings in Montevideo. These actors had already rehearsed for two months and they could have taken advantage of the mild March weather for outdoor performance. However, they certainly wanted to express their voice in the theatre –the main venue of cultural expression and meetings in the nascent Spanish-American republics. But the National Theatre was the only playhouse in Montevideo. A small theater house called the *French Theatre* opened in the former location

⁵³⁷ Alex Borucki, “Tensiones raciales en el juego de la representación. Actores afro en Montevideo tras la fundación republicana (1830-1840),” *Gestos* 21, 42 (Nov. 2006): 33-56.

⁵³⁸ Teodoro Klein, *El actor en el Río de la Plata II. De Casacuberta a los Podestá*, Buenos Aires, Ed. Asociación Argentina de Actores, 1994, Vol. 2, 66-67.

⁵³⁹ *El Defensor de las Leyes*, Montevideo, Issue 140, February 28, 1837, 3.

⁵⁴⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 894, Police Chief to Secretary of Government, February 27, 1827; Libro 949, Book of arrested white and free black men. February 25, 1837.

of a circus in mid 1837. Free black Pedro Vacari asked permission to the Police to perform *Othello* in this theatre in June 1838:

Pedro Vacari in his name and on behalf of other free blacks says: they asked and obtained permission to perform a Dramatic show to celebrate the triumph at Carpintería, but then the show could not take place because of insurmountable obstacles. Now they are holding meetings and they are able to accomplish that objective. They ask permission from Your Excellency to perform the Tragedy entitled *Othello* in the French Theatre.⁵⁴¹

Pedro Vacari and his fellows probably were the same black and pardo aficionados who had tried to perform a show at the National Theater a year previously.⁵⁴² Now Vacari requested permission from an authority higher than the Police: he approached the highest civil official in Montevideo. This strategy mingled with the patriotic discourse of celebrating the Battle of Carpintería where Oribe defeated Rivera. The black aficionados wanted to put on *Othello*, the same play Casacuberta had performed one year previously, as well as one of the few classics with a black protagonist. Whether showing that black actors could perform a better *Othello* than Casacuberta in blackface or simply choosing a widely known piece, these black soldiers wanted to perform a play to honor their chief. Spanish colonial traditions had shaped the intersection of performing and military arts. The first theatrical show in Montevideo took place in 1789, when Spanish navy officers celebrated the coronation of Charles IV. In late-colonial Río de la Plata, “the military origin of some professional actors of this time was common because of their experience in theatrical shows performed in barracks with casts formed by officers and soldiers.”⁵⁴³ Public amateur performance was a military tradition in which black soldiers participated as a consequence of their conscription. However, the largely white audience of Montevideo probably was more willing to see

⁵⁴¹ AGN-U, Jefatura de Policía Montevideo, Caja 17, Pedro Vacari to Secretary of Government, June 13, 1838.

⁵⁴² Apart from this mention, the only record on Pedro Vacari is his arrest because of a fight in March 1836. AGN-U, AGA, Libro 944, March 39, 1836.

⁵⁴³ Teodoro Klein, *El actor en el Río de la Plata de la colonia a la independencia*, Buenos Aires: Asociación Argentina de Actores, 1984, 36.

Spanish navy officers than black militiamen on stage even during this new patriotic environment.

But if the black aficionados wanted to honor President Oribe, both international and local conditions actually favored Rivera. In January 1838, Rivera's army ventured into the outskirts of Montevideo. Free black Juan Lencina participated in that campaign and was later captured by Oribe's army. He was delivered to the Police who interrogated him about Rivera's allies in Montevideo.⁵⁴⁴ In late October, President Oribe resigned to avoid open warfare in the capital. He left for Buenos Aires in November as Rivera entered the city to take office. Officers who had served Oribe but remained in Montevideo asked for retirement. Juan de los Santos, a free black who had commanded the black militia since 1830, was one of these. Others, such as Captain Juan J. Alvarez, another free black, tried to join the victorious army. He had joined the unit of Fortunato Silva – Rivera's main battalion – on December 5. However, by late December Alvarez was out of the army. The staff officer informed the Police Chief of Montevideo that Juan J. Alvarez had achieved officer rank in the past, but now had no place in the army: he deserved punishment for his "scandalous behavior." At this time, Captain Alvarez was jailed "because he was wearing a uniform with badges, emblems, and the sword of captain, he resisted imprisonment, and was warned twice about the prohibition on wearing uniforms for those who presently do not belong to the Constitutional army."⁵⁴⁵ Free black Juan J. Alvarez was a native of Montevideo and a tailor. He was stabbed in the back by a white tailor in January 1835. Perhaps the inefficiency of the law officers made Alvarez "express scandalous words against the Police" in a pulpería in January 1836,

⁵⁴⁴ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1272, Manuel Oribe to Chief of Police of Montevideo, January 31, 1838, and Chief of Police to Juan Spikerman, February 2, 1838.

⁵⁴⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 911, Police Chief Luis Lamas to Secretary of Government, December 31, 1838; Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1283, Cnel Julian Martinez to Cnel Fortunato Silva, December 5, 1838 and Cnel Julian Martinez to Police Chief Luis Lamas, December 24, 1838.

for which offence he was arrested.⁵⁴⁶ At some point Alvarez fell into disfavor with the new military authorities, who did not protect him from police actions. The Police of Montevideo prevented free blacks from wearing military uniforms during the African cultural celebrations. Juan J. Alvarez was wearing his military uniform at the end of December, as the main African celebration of the Day of Kings on January 6 approached.

The followers of Rivera –*Colorados*– eventually allied with the Argentine *Unitarios*, and the followers of Oribe –*Blancos* – did the same with the Argentine *Federales*. In March 1839, President Rivera declared war on the Governor of Buenos Aires, Juan M. de Rosas, an ally of Manuel Oribe, beginning what later was known as *Guerra Grande* (1839-1852) in Uruguay. After Rivera defeated the armies of Oribe and Rosas in Cagancha, west of Montevideo, in 1839, news of renewed invasions of the Uruguayan territory spread in 1841. The invasion began in December 1842, when the forces of Rosas and Oribe advanced across the Uruguay and eventually occupied the entire country except for Montevideo, where the *Colorados* and *Unitarios* prepared for a land siege. The two parties passed abolition laws in 1842 and 1846 to recruit all able-bodied slaves. The first law was almost exclusively applied in Montevideo by the *Colorado*, while second one was applied in the countryside by Oribe’s government.⁵⁴⁷

As war escalated across the Río de la Plata, black participation in the armed forces increased in Montevideo. Early in 1838, President Oribe ordered the creation of a new infantry battalion mainly comprising free blacks arrested by the Police.⁵⁴⁸ Oribe also planned

⁵⁴⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Jefatura de Policia Montevideo, Caja 6, Juan J. Alvarez, Jan. 26, 1835; Libro 944, Jan. 12, 1836.

⁵⁴⁷ Borucki, Chagas, Stalla, *Esclavitud y Trabajo*, 33-114.

⁵⁴⁸ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1271, Rafael Diaz to Secretary of War, January 10, 1838. Free blacks detained for correction were sent to the new infantry battalion, Gobierno, Caja 895, Chief of Police to Secretary of Government, March 14, 1838; Caja 906, Juan M. de la Sota to Secretary of Government, March 20, 1838.

to free two hundred slaves to create another battalion.⁵⁴⁹ When Rivera approached Montevideo, his army took slaves from the neighboring farms. As soon as Rivera entered the capital, masters attempted to reclaim their slaves. Rivera ordered slaves to be sent back to masters except for those who had participated in combat. The second infantry battalion –also a largely black unit– was formally created in March 1839.⁵⁵⁰ As new units emerged, freedmen developed ties with their comrades and commanders. In February 1841, two soldiers and a corporal –all freedmen– of the first battalion testified against Lt. Juan M. Mederos of the second battalion after an incident in a pulpería. Mederos had asserted that the victory at Cagancha was due to his battalion alone rather than to both infantry units and criticized Col. Lavandera, the commander of the two black soldiers with whom he was speaking.⁵⁵¹ Soldier Albino Aguilar, born in Kongo, declared that Mederos first said “I will not invite *Blanco* soldiers, but only *Colorados* can drink a glass with me.” Mederos added that the victory at Cagancha was only due to his battalion. Albino answered that the victory belonged to both battalions, but then Mederos called Lavandera a coward, at which point the conversation ended. This event must have reached Lavandera’s ears because he filed a military suit against Mederos. Networks of soldiers, their families, and officers involved only a portion of the black population of Montevideo and emerged chiefly during critical events in the 1830s. Abolition, general black militarization, and a nine-year siege reinforced horizontal social networks within the new black battalions and vertical ties with the white officers leading these units in the 1840s.

⁵⁴⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 908, Secretary of the Permanent Commission to President Oribe, June 21, 1838. Oribe obtained parliamentary approval to recruit two hundred white soldiers and two hundred blacks and pardos. The measure underlined that free blacks were preferred than slaves for recruitment.

⁵⁵⁰ Juan M. Perez provided a list of 34 slaves in November 1838. He was one of the wealthiest men in Montevideo, but another twenty-two masters also filed claims. AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1282, Juan M. Perez to Secretary of War, November 10, 1838. Florencio César González, *Ejército del Uruguay. Apuntes Históricos*. Montevideo: Dornaleche, 1903, 28.

⁵⁵¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1313, “Proceso contra... Juan M. Mederos.” February 1841, ff. 3-4.

4.3. Black images of the Great Siege of Montevideo

The press on both sides of the Río de la Plata commented on Rivera's declaration of war against Juan M. de Rosas and reported on the hostilities. In September 1839, Montevideo newspaper *El Gaucho Oriental* published a letter from "Benguela, Munyolo, Mozambique, and Congo blacks" supporting Rivera. This piece was written in *Bozal*, a combination of Spanish and scattered African words meant to imitate the speech of Africans.⁵⁵² The *bozal* dialect represented African phonetic renderings of Spanish rather than an African language. It was the form rather than the content that identified this written style as "African." For instance, the consonant "r" was systematically substituted by "l" which supposedly mimicked Africans' pronunciation of Spanish.⁵⁵³ This language represented the voice of the black population in the white press. In Buenos Aires, short-lived newspapers edited by Luis Pérez entitled *La Negrita* and *El Negrito* portrayed the loyalty of the black population to Governor Rosas in *bozal* writings.⁵⁵⁴ The 1839 article was not the first *bozal* writing published in Montevideo, but it was the first to use this language to express black loyalty to the *Colorado* party.⁵⁵⁵

We, the Banguela, Munllolo, Masambique Negroes, and those of all nations want to deliver this paper to the press so the Jew Rosas will know that we detest him for bad and villain. We, all the blacks who want freedom with General Rivera, will shoot the soldiers of Entre Rios who are slitting the throats of all who face them. The government ordered the formation of a unit

⁵⁵² The Spanish and Portuguese called *bozal* or *boçal* recently arrived Africans who barely could communicate.

⁵⁵³ Magdalena Coll, *El habla de los esclavos africanos y sus descendientes en Montevideo en los siglos XVIII y XIX. Representación y realidad*. Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 2010, 105-134.

⁵⁵⁴ See chapter 2 of William Acree, *Everyday Reading: Print Culture and Collective Identity in the Río de la Plata 1780-1910*. Vanderbilt University Press, forthcoming.

⁵⁵⁵ Two other pieces had celebrated the free womb law and denounced the continuation of the slave trade in the early 1830s. *El Indicador*, Montevideo, October 13, 1831, 3; *El Universal*, Montevideo, November 27, 1834, 3.

of free Negroes and pardos of artillery to fire the cannon to the thieving Entrerrianos⁵⁵⁶ who slit the throats of all blacks and who want to enslave us. Negroes want to be free, defend the government, and fight together with Don Luis Lamas against the slaves of Rosas who are beating the saints. Saint Benito of Palermo and God order us to take rifles to kill the Jew invaders, who steal cows, set fire to the huts of the poor people living in the countryside, beat our women and steal their shawls –women who are sisters of the countrymen who serve with General Rivera. Long Live the Homeland! Long Live freedom! Long Live President Don Frutos Rivera! Long Live all the free Negroes! Death to the Jew, the thief, the killer Rosas! Death to the villain Echagüe, the doomed Urquiza and all the villains who come with them! Please, Mr. Editor forgive our nerve and speech because we can't speak more clearly.⁵⁵⁷

This writing is translated here in plain English, but it was not written in plain Spanish –it was intended to mimic the pronunciation of Africans speaking Spanish. In the mid-nineteenth century, post-revolutionary elites produced writings appealing to country folk (gauchos) with the language typical of the countryside. As suggested by its title, *El Gaucho Oriental* published writings filled with expressions and stories of the cattle-based society of the countryside. While analyzing this politically-oriented literature, Angel Rama stated that “the emergent elites reclaim their role as legitimate interpreter of all in society who are oppressed.”⁵⁵⁸ The new elites claimed to represent the poor whites, mestizos as well as Africans and their descendants and these writings constitute the beginnings of gauchesque literature.⁵⁵⁹ The press in Buenos Aires and Montevideo, which circulated in grocery stores and parties, was the vehicle of this genre. The official press was read at Sunday mass with the

⁵⁵⁶ Entrerrianos refers to people of neighboring province of Entre Rios, who formed the army of Oribe and Echague.

⁵⁵⁷ The original first paragraph: “Nosotlo lo negro le banguela, munllolo, masambique y tula la nacion quelemo dal ete papé pus u impenta, pa quie sepa el julio tilano Losas, quei lo abolecemos po malo y picalo, que a lo Enteliano qui vienien legollando por afuella a tolitos cuantu incuentran, lis hemos le menia bala tolos lu negro que quellemo libetá con é genelal Libela. Lu gobierno lla mandó quie si formase un cuempo de paldos y molenos libles le *artilleria le Plaza* pa menia cañon a lo ladlone enteliano qui legollan lo ninglito y quelen hacelno escrabos a tolitos.” *El Gaucho Oriental*, Montevideo, September 9, 1839, Issue 2, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁸ Angel Rama, *Los Gauchipolíticos Rioplatenses. Literatura y Sociedad*. Buenos Aires: Calicanto, 1976, 42.

⁵⁵⁹ Adolfo Prieto, *El discurso criollista en la fundación de la Argentina Moderna*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2006.

intention of shaping citizenship, but short-lived newspapers were intended to be read aloud in bars, parties, and even on the front lines. These writers tried to represent a “voice” or familiar sound, because this literature was transmitted orally. Africans and their descendants took part in these public readings and thus interacted with written culture, which we will analyze in the sixth chapter.⁵⁶⁰ The actual author of these *bozal* writings seems to have been Isidoro de María – the editor of *El Gaucho Oriental*. His following comment indicates the political aims of the 1839 *bozal* writing:

It is great that the beautiful Blacks wrote to this newspaper. We like all the enemies of Rosas and his thieves. Don't mess with the *Oriental* gauchos and the Negroes because they know how to fire as they did in [the Battles of] Ituzaingó and Palmar. The Constitution says that the children of Negro women are free, but Rosas wants to shut it down so Negroes would not become freedmen, and [he wants] to beat the Negroes who scream long live to freedom. It is great that the Negroes –as God orders– serve the Government as the gauchos do [...] We like the enthusiasm of all the Negroes for the Homeland [...] Ah beautiful Negro townsmen! When freedom will be offered to you, you will fight to death...

Both the article and the editorial comment defined a paternalistic relationship between President Rivera and the black population by stressing shared Catholic beliefs and moral values. Religious content identified the enemy Juan M. de Rosas as Jewish as well as asserted the importance of Saint Benito –the patron saint of Montevideo's main black lay-brotherhood. The enemy was represented as a thief and a killer, but also as a Jew who wanted to desecrate the images of the saints. Political messages to subaltern classes were frequently mixed with moral and religious content in popular newspapers across the Río de la Plata.⁵⁶¹ This article subsumed political principles to moral and religious beliefs. Wartime determined the timing of appearance of this article: a conscription of free blacks into an artillery unit was taking place at this time. Freedom was a significant part of the appeal too. Isidoro de María

⁵⁶⁰ Rama, *Los gauchipolíticos*, 40.

⁵⁶¹ Pilar González Bernaldo, *Civilidad y política en los orígenes de la Nación Argentina. Las sociabilidades de Buenos Aires, 1829 – 1852*. Buenos Aires: FCE, 2001, pp. 149-150.

noted that the enemy would re-enslave free blacks, and that the government had decreed the free womb law. He added that the abolition of slavery was near: “When freedom will be offered to you, you will fight to death.” This war propaganda targeting Africans and their descendants combined patriotic overtones, religious and moral content, expectations of freedom and references to the African “nations.”

In 1841, the prospect of renewed invasion opened a debate on the abolition of slavery to create infantry battalions filled with manumitted slaves.⁵⁶² In mid-1842, the government of Montevideo intended to free three hundred slaves to create the third infantry battalion.⁵⁶³ The defeat of Rivera in early December –with the almost complete destruction of the first black battalion– sped up abolition promulgated on December 12. Three days after the declaration of abolition, the paper *El Constitucional* published the document below signed by “Masambiques, Banguelas, Congos.”

We are very happy because the government of Don Frutos Rivera freed us and because our little Negro and women are forever free. The Jew Rosas wants to steal this country and kill everyone because we yell *long live freedom!* Death to the tyrant! But we, Mr, Editor, with the help of Saint Benito, will kill the rogues coming with Oribe to steal and spit upon the saints of the Church, and to punish the Negroes as they did in past times. The *blanquillos-rocines*⁵⁶⁴ masters are disappointed because Don Frutos gave us freedom and broke our chains.

Masambique, Banguela, Congos, all the Negroes want to fight for the Homeland and for the government who gave us freedom. Then, after the end of the war, we will peacefully live with our children and women as free men, not as slaves. We will organize a religious service to Saint Benito to express thanks for our freedom and to pray for General Rivera who defends both the Homeland and us from the rogues, killers, and Jews who come with Oribe from Buenos Aires.

Masambique, Banguela, Congos, long live freedom! Long Live the Assembly! Long Live President Rivera! Long Live the Government! Long Live General Paz! –Death to the rogue Rosas and all the despots of the earth!⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶² Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo*, 129-195.

⁵⁶³ González, *Sociabilidad*, 38.

⁵⁶⁴ “Blanquillos” refers the party of Oribe, “blancos” meant whites. “Rocines” refers to the supporters of Rosas.

⁵⁶⁵ The original first paragraph reads: “Etamos mu contento poque ya somo libles pole gobiemo le Lon Fluto

Also the editor of this paper, Isidoro de María tied together patronage and loyalty between the black population and Rivera –this time on the basis of gratitude for abolition. Contrary to *El Gaucho Oriental*, *El Constitucional* was one of the main newspapers of Montevideo, ensuring that this new bozal writing reached a wide audience. Once again, political support for Rivera intertwined Catholicism, moral, and African-based groups. Here, supporters of the *Blanco* party were supposed to be angry because of the abolition of slavery decreed by Rivera and the *Colorados*. This article conceals the fact that not all slaves were actually freed. Although it mentions black women and children as free people, the abolition law turned female slaves, their children, and non-enrolled slaves into apprentices who had to remain under the rule of their former owners for a term.⁵⁶⁶ As black families were torn apart, black soldiers appealed to their officers to completely free their mothers, wives, sisters, and children after abolition. Black soldiers used their military connections to free hundreds of enslaved woman and children. Isidoro de María also portrays an idyllic future where black families will live in peace and freedom thanks to President Rivera. The abolition also encouraged other publications to address black militarization. The other main paper, *El Nacional*, encouraged *Colorado* officers to spread patriotism to the recently manumitted freedmen during these same days:

The chief and officers of the armed freedmen should imprint upon their minds the great truth relative to the law of the 13th [sic] instant. Freedmen should understand that the National Assembly broke their chains, that the small service requested from them is only temporary, and that they will be rewarded with salaries according to their rank in the army and with extraordinary rewards which the Homeland will grant to her saviors...⁵⁶⁷

Livela, y poque son tamién libles nuetas nengras y ninglitos pala siemple. E julio Losas quele lobal este pai y matanos a toltos poque glitamos ¡Viva la libetá ¡muela el tilano! Pero nosotlos siñole Litole con el favol de San Binito, hemo de matá a eso picalos qui viene con Olibe a lobar y escupil lon santos le la iglesia, y lal muzinga a los neglos como ante, poque le amo blanquillos-rocines etan enocados poque lon Fluto non lá la libeta y non quita las calenas.” *El Constitucional*, Montevideo, December 15, 1842, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁶ Borucki et al, *Esclavitud y trabajo*, 51-62. All remaining post-abolition apprenticeship was eliminated in 1853.

⁵⁶⁷ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 1206, 20 de diciembre de 1842, p. 3.

The *Colorados* should [...] hoist the patriotic spirit by imprinting upon the heart of the freedmen patriotic feelings and gratitude for the received benefit. They should not emphasize a difficult and terrible war campaign, but a path to glory leading to a fortunate future. They should draw for the men of color a picture of their past, abject, and overwhelming slavery in contrast to the future that the county lays for them in exchange for an easy and honorable sacrifice –their own freedom as the freedom of their successive generations.⁵⁶⁸

Argentine *Unitarios* exiled in Montevideo edited this paper; thus, this propaganda departs from the *bozal* writing of Isidoro de María. First, this writing is intended to reach white officers of the *Colorado* party who would train the liberated slaves; and second, the object of the patron-client relationship is the *Colorado* party rather than Rivera, which points to differences within the allied forces –Isidoro de María supported Rivera rather than the Argentine *Unitarios*. This writing called on officers to inspire the new recruits with both patriotism and a debt of gratitude for their liberation from slavery. Patriotic ceremonies also shaped these links of patronage. On February 14, 1843, the Secretary of War Melchor Pacheco y Obes delivered the flag of each battalion in a Napoleonic-style parade with a separate speech for each unit. Colonel Cesar Diaz points out that the entire town attended the ceremony in utter silence, except from outburst of patriotic fervor when each battalion received their respective flag.⁵⁶⁹ When addressing one of the black battalions, Melchor Pacheco y Obes proclaimed that: “this flag is destined for the Third Battalion, whose majority is formed by men of caste saved from barbaric slavery by a law of the republic declaring that nobody should be a slave in this country. Members of this battalion fight with the valor of free men under this flag upholding your freedom, and the independence of the republic which has freed you.”⁵⁷⁰ In 1843, Melchor Pacheco y Obes intervened to protect women who wanted to escape from apprenticeship and marry black soldiers, to suppress the publication of advertisements of slave sales in papers after abolition, and to materially

⁵⁶⁸ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 1204, 17 de diciembre de 1842, p. 2.

⁵⁶⁹ Cesar Diaz, *Memorias*. Montevideo: Clasicos Uruguayos, 1968, 71.

⁵⁷⁰ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, February 15, 1843, p. 3.

support black troops. He was not the only white officer trying to establish patronage over freedmen.⁵⁷¹ In April 1844, four injured African soldiers were baptized after the hospital personnel noticed they had not received this sacrament. President Rivera, the Chief of Police, Col Estivao, and Joaquín de Sagra y Periz served as godfathers, an event that publicized across the front lines.⁵⁷² Yet, these actions did not ensure loyalty given that black troops ousted Pacheco y Obes from office as well as beheaded Col. Estivao and paraded with his head on a pike in 1846.

On February 16, 1843, the forces of Oribe began the siege of Montevideo. Short-lived newspapers mushroomed to serve a multilingual population –Spanish, French, Italian and English– which consisted of more than 30.000 inhabitants. Papers such as *El Tambor de Línea* (The Drummer of the Front Line) chronicled military events with a folk tone similar to that of *El Gaucho Oriental*. These papers added the first illustrations to be published in the press in this city. All issues of *El Tambor* show a black drummer as messenger as shown in Figure 4.1:



Figure 4.1 *El Tambor de la Línea*, Montevideo, Issue 1, [March] 1843, Header.
Courtesy of the Library of the University of La Plata, Argentina

⁵⁷¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1338, Secretary of War to Secretary of Government, March 24, 1843, Secretary of War to Secretary of Government, March 24, 1843; Caja 1340, Captain of Port to Secretary of War, May 3, 1843; Caja 1342, “Suscripción voluntaria p.a socorrer al hospital de sangre”, n/d., July 1843.

⁵⁷² Isidoro de María, *Anales de la Defensa de Montevideo*. Montevideo: El Ferrocarril, 1883, T. 2, 275-276.

The first issue of *El Tambor de la Línea* depicted drawings of different types of soldiers of Montevideo such as *Orientales* (Uruguayans), Argentines, Spanish, Basques, French, Italians, and of course the African infantryman portrayed in figure 4.2. The drawing assumed that Uruguayan men were white, and black soldiers were Africans, leaving no room for black soldiers born in Uruguay. Each drawing had a caption through which the soldier figuratively spoke. For instance, the Italian soldier spoke in a mix of Spanish and Italian words telling the reader why he battled for the *Colorado* against Rosas and Oribe. In the case of the black soldier, he spoke for Africans in the same *bozal* language which filled the aforementioned articles:



Figure 4.2 *El Tambor de Línea*, Montevideo, Issue 1, [March] 1843.
Courtesy of the Library of the University of La Plata, Argentina

Fellows Banguera, Ausa, Casancha, Mina, Congu and all others! You all know that we are free for the service of the Homeland. But fellows, it is essential that we serve and kill all those assassins who came with [Oribe]. Then, we will leave the rifles; and we will celebrate a mass for Saint Balthazar, Saint Benito of Palermo, and our Lady of the Rosary for the

victory. We will go to work thanking God to support our obligation. All of us are *soldiers of the front line*, and it is necessary that we be the first to fire while yelling Long Live General Rivera! Death to the invaders! Death to Oribe and Rosas!

African identities, Catholic devotions, and President Rivera mingled to shape a political discourse of gratitude and loyalty which connected freedmen soldiers with the *Colorado* party. This writing was meant not to mock but to call for support from black soldiers as well as from all other men joining to defend Montevideo. This was a comforting text for white readers, too, given that this writing envisioned freedmen returning to work after abolition and war –a question left unclear by the abolition that was proclaimed in the middle of war. The next issue of *El Tambor de Linea* included an illustration of celebrating black soldiers as shown by Figure 3.

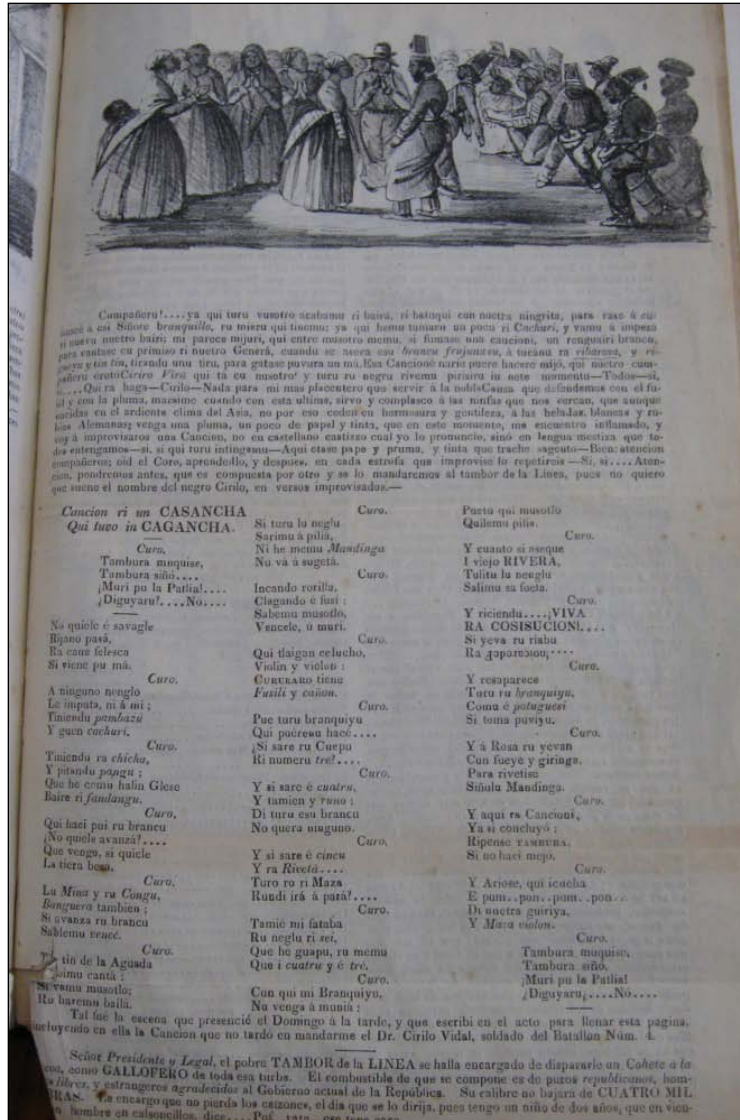


Figure 4.3 *El Tambor de Linea*, Montevideo, Issue 2, March 1843, 3
 Courtesy of the Library of the University of La Plata, Argentina

Figure 4.3 depicts a group of black soldiers and women dancing with drums and other instruments –the first illustration to represent African celebrations in this city. Men and women danced and clapped separately but also engaged in a partner dance. The paragraph below the illustration presents a storyline where black soldiers, who gathered to drink, play music and dance, found an opportunity to create a battle song. They designated one of their fellows, Cirilo Vidal, to collaborate with the narrator of this scene. But both Cirilo and the writer chose to write not in “Iberian Castilian as I myself speak but rather in a Mestizo

language that all understand.” The main paragraph in this page goes back and forth from *bozal* to regular Spanish, purposely portraying the multiplicity of voices involved in the scene. The ending of the main paragraph leads to a verse entitled: “Cancion ri un Casancha qui tuvo en Cagancha” Thus, this is a *song of a Casancha man* –the label Kasanje refers to a region east of Luanda– *who was in Cagancha* –who participated in the battle where Rivera defeated Oribe in 1839. Neither Catholic devotion nor references to abolition appeared in the paragraph or the verses –there is only a mention of Rivera and a last line outside of the song telling that all people are thankful to the government. Instead of Saint Benito and abolition, the song praised the bravery of black soldiers and lampooned the enemy. These verses mention all infantry units, but specifically those formed by recently freed slaves. At the end of the verse and in plain Spanish the author added: “I witnessed this scene this Sunday afternoon, and I immediately wrote a complete page, including the Song that Dr. Cirilo Vidal –a soldier of the Fourth Batallion– sent me, without delay.” The author probably wanted to underline the veracity of his account as he named a specific black soldier, Cirilo Vidal, who was somehow involved in the production of this writing. White acquaintances of free black Jacinto Molina called him “Dr” since he was literate, and Cirilo Vidal probably received similar treatment. The muster roll of these batallions did not survive, so the soldier cannot be located. The absence of Catholic and overly patriotic references suggest that the authorship of this piece may indeed include input from black soldiers.

Figure 4.3 combines dancing with a military life –both of which are powerful sources for collective identities. William Mc Neill underlines the efficacy of military drill in creating armies filled with *esprit de corps* as well as the importance of dance for social bonding.⁵⁷³ Both activities were central for Africans and their descendants in Montevideo in the 1840s.

⁵⁷³ William Mc Neill, *Keeping Together in Time. Dance and Drill in Human History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, 38, 48-50, 102, 131.

During the siege of Montevideo all able-bodied black and pardo men were conscripted and thus all had participated in military activity. Mc Neill argues that coordinated rhythmic movement such as the infantry drill generates feelings of affinity: “muscular bonding.” Moreover, dances portraying coordinated movement pursuing a collective aim such as agricultural labor and military engagement are pervasive in premodern societies. Dances related to both war and agricultural work were performed by Africans in Montevideo as seen in the next chapter.

Other authors produced *bozal* writings in the siege of Montevideo. Hilario Ascasubi, one of the main Argentine representatives of the gauchesque genre wrote in *bozal* in 1843.⁵⁷⁴ While he wrote in plain Spanish and *bozal*, he did not engage in a dialogue as in the abovementioned article. The writer of the Uruguayan national anthem Francisco Acuña de Figueroa also lauded the bravery of the black battalions in a *bozal* poem called “Warrior Song of the Negro Battalions” first printed in the mid-1840s.⁵⁷⁵ Additionally, illustrations of black soldiers continued to appear in the press such as the vignette portraying the Third Battalion in Figure 4.4.

⁵⁷⁴ Ascasubi mentioned the abolition law and praised the courage of the black troops resulting from this action: “¿Presumen que a infantería nosh an de medio pasar? Poquita es la morenada que les hemos de soltar. Cielito, ciloe y más cielo, cielito de la ciudá, que ha hecho cuatro mil infantes ley de la libertá! Ah, cosa! Es ver a los morenos bramando como novillos preguntado a cada rato ¿ónde e que está esem branquillos?” Fragment published by José Luis Lanuza, *Morenada*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1946, 123.

⁵⁷⁵ Ildefonso Pereda Valdés, *Raza Negra*. Montevideo: Edición del Periódico Negro La Vanguardia, 1929, 61-63.



Figure 4.4 from *El Telegrafo de Linea*, Montevideo, December 8, 1844.
 Courtesy of the Library of University of La Plata, Argentina

The caption of Figure 4.4 was written in *bozal* and shows a soldier addressing a black laundress with a pile of clothing on top of her head: “Do not worry auntie Lita! the washing place is over there. Here the third Batallion is scaring the enemy. [The enemy] brag that they are brave, but they only speak and fill themselves with fear when they see a Negro.”⁵⁷⁶ On the right of the laundress, two other soldiers talked and smoked in a setting which probably lay between the outer and inner lines of Montevideo’s defense. Apart from soldiers, few people lived there, and few houses survived destruction. Black soldiers wore white uniforms, which is confirmed by other illustrations analyzed in the next chapter. Figure five illustrates a vignette taking place in the outer line of defense where black soldiers of the fourth battalion shot the enemy.

⁵⁷⁶ Non se lecuila tía Lita! / polallá vá á e lavalelo; / aqui alá e númelo tles / que asuta a lon Masonqueros / Elle se andan muin galito; / ma en livisando á lon neglo / tulo ese legollalole / tene labia, e tene miedo.



Figure 4.5 from *El Telegrafo de Linea*, Montevideo, January 5, 1845.
 Courtesy of the Library of University of La Plata, Argentina

Here, the caption reads: “Don’t fire any more comrades, they run away from the fourth Battalion.” Both illustrations portray the pride of black soldiers in belonging to their units and mocking the enemy. The editor of both *El Tambor de la Línea* and *El Telégrafo de Línea* was Fernando Quijano, an actor and printer in Montevideo from the 1830s to the 1860s. While *El Tambor* published only four issues, *El Telegrafo* appeared each Sunday for twenty weeks. Quijano had shared the editorial duties of a couple of short-lived papers with the abolitionist José M. Marquez in the early 1830s. The work of Quijano in theatre put him in contact with black actors, musicians, singers and dancers. Probably he was part of this early movement trying to feature black voices in the national literary record.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁷ Antonio Zinny, *Historia de la prensa periódica de la República Oriental del Uruguay 1807-1852*, Buenos Aires, Casavalle, 1883, 495-496; Borucki, *Abolicionismo y tráfico de esclavos en Montevideo*, 25; Klein, *El actor en el Río de la Plata de la Colonia a la Independencia*, 31; Rama, *Los Gauchipolíticos*, 111.

While slaves were forced to participate in battalions of the 1840s, they developed a sense of solidarity and social cohesion within their units. Corps solidarity evolved from shared experiences starting with the abolition of slavery. The commander of the fourth battalion César Díaz left a comprehensive record of the training of the black units. Two days after abolition, three hundred former slaves were assigned to Diaz to train and form a battalion. In December 20, all black units took up residence at a ranch on the northern shore of the bay –in the same zone where the quarantine area for slaves arriving in Montevideo once stood. The new soldiers slept in the open field because it was summer. Training began one hour before dawn with the first muster roll and military exercises continued up to eight o'clock in the evening. Freedmen shared this life for 44 days before moving up to the line of active service. They performed military maneuvers, learned to fire, and to keep the lines together while marching. Diaz commented that people from the city visited the camp during weekends to admire their progress. He praised the discipline of his men, which contrasted with white militias –he explained this on the basis of their past condition as slaves. Diaz stressed that blacks were indebted to the homeland for their freedom, and that they understood they owed service to the country in return. Freedmen lacked only the experience of marching under the enemy's fire, but soon they acquired this skill too. On February 17, 1843, the fourth battalion was the first to inspect the field outside of the lines. In the following days, both the third and fourth battalions began to demolish houses which impeded the view of the enemy from the front line. On March 10, advancing and numerically stronger units of the *Blanco* troops surprised the fourth battalion. Rather than disbanding, the “number four” retreated in orderly fashion to the line where they were acclaimed with hurrahs by fellow soldiers as they passed through the gates of the city. Diaz stated that this skirmish elevated the morale:

This brief rehearsal fortified the *esprit de corps* of the troops and officers of my battalion, which had existed since the first days of training. Each soldier considered himself worthy of respect and estimation on the sole basis of belonging to his unit. When they wanted to attract the interest of townspeople, Negroes commonly said with arrogance ‘I am from the Number 4’, as if this was a title deserving homage. Up to that moment, the reputation of the battalion depended only on its discipline and training, but this event added a new foundation which the General and the army, as well as the people, recognized as such.⁵⁷⁸

César Díaz’s self-aggrandizement filled his memoirs, but he offers clues of the shared experiences of militarized slaves in the early days of the siege. Chronicles of everyday life on the front line decreased as the siege extended into the second half of the 1840s. However, reports of political unrest emerging from the black battalions increased. As had happened in 1832, black soldiers sparked and defined the political struggles within the lines in the second half of the 1840s and even after the peace agreement of 1851.

Joaquín Suarez was acting President in Montevideo as Fructuoso Rivera battled the *Blancos* near Brazil –where Rivera headed after his complete defeat in March 1845. In Montevideo, Secretary of War Melchor Pacheco y Obes and Chief of Police and later Secretary of Finance Andrés Lamas gathered supporters against Rivera to impose liberal constitutionalism over *Caudillo* politics. They also applied tax policies reaching the very poor for the first time in Uruguayan history, which made them unpopular.⁵⁷⁹ Colonel Venancio Flores was the spokesperson of Rivera in Montevideo. A young white officer, Flores built his political career with the support of black troops. In late March 1846, Fructuoso Rivera returned to Montevideo in a ship, but Pacheco y Obes withheld permission for his disembarkation. The government deployed troops in the city to avoid skirmishes caused by supporters of Rivera. British consular representatives reported that the black troops who had been stationed in the main plaza to preserve public order had revolted against the

⁵⁷⁸ Díaz, *Memorias*, 120.

⁵⁷⁹ Pivel Devoto, *Historia de los Partidos Políticos*, 155.

government and, in combination with the French Legion, now demanded that Rivera should be permitted to land and Pacheco deposed from office. Montevideo was struck the night of April 1st by the “[f]iring of musketry in the Plaza, and in several parts of the town [which] continued at intervals nearly the whole night accompanied by cries of “Viva Rivera” and “Muera Pacheco” uttered by small parties of soldiers who paraded the streets.”⁵⁸⁰ Troops loyal to the government fired against the rebels from the headquarters of the Port’s Authority (*Capitanía de Puerto*) which led the rebels to storm the building. The Port’s Authority, Col. Estivao was killed and, according to Antonio Pereira, his “head was cut and put on a pike as a trophy of the sanguinary triumph of the Negro.”⁵⁸¹ The British representative Turner reported that the following day “drunken black soldiers with Arms in their hands continued during the day to parade through the streets and the black battalion still remained in possession of the Cabildo, but no acts of violence occurred.”⁵⁸² While the French troops withdrew, black soldiers commanded by Flores occupied the governmental building (Cabildo). Turner interceded with Flores and got word that he would move the black soldiers out of the city –between the inner and outer lines of skirmish. As this pact was sealed, another black battalion without their officers was entering Montevideo to support the rebels. But as Turner states, “both Battalions shortly after left the Plaza with Col. Flores and returned to their quarters.”

The relationship between Venancio Flores and the black troops remains unclear since the rebel force was the fourth battalion commanded by César Díaz. In fact, Flores had no formal authority over this black battalion.⁵⁸³ But rank did not necessarily mean political command of the soldiers since these troops rebelled against their commander, Diaz, and the

⁵⁸⁰ BNA, FO51/40, Garner to Aberdeen, April 2, 1846.

⁵⁸¹ Antonio N. Pereira, *Recuerdos de mi tiempo*, Montevideo, El siglo Ilustrado, 1891, p. 33.

⁵⁸² BNA, FO51/40, Turner to Aberdeen, April 16, 1846.

⁵⁸³ Pereda Valdés, *Negros esclavos y Negros libres*, 139.

Secretary of War. Black soldiers initially put their own officers under restraint, but then they released them. Their officers, who were Argentine *Unitarios* allied with the *Colorados*, remained aloof for the rest of the coup and finally were shipped to Corrientes. The successful coup led to the landing of Fructuoso Rivera as well as the ousting of Melchor Pacheco y Obes, Andrés Lamas, and others from office. To mobilize these troops, Venancio Flores obviously was able to exercise power beyond the strict line of command; thus, black soldiers must have obtained something in return for their actions. While the full meaning of the black soldiers' support to Flores remains unclear, these soldiers pursued their own ends when, for instance, a group of them rescued the son of one of their fellows from the house of his former master. Antonio Pereira, a member of the Montevideo elite, witnessed these events when he was a child. The night of the coup, a group of black soldiers tried to break into his family's house. They tried it again the following day, when Pereira's mother faced them:

[...] one of these Negroes, who looked like the chief of this band of criminals, told us that he came to claim his son. This was about the little Negro called José, whose mother had been slave in our house, and who still lived there. Given the circumstances of social unrest, my mother delivered the boy in the middle of the cries of the little Negro who did not want to leave us...⁵⁸⁴

The abolition law had turned enslaved women and children into apprentices who had to work for their former masters. Most typically, black soldiers married former slave women who thus became free from apprenticeship, but this was an individual measure which masters with influence like the Pereiras could prevent. Black soldiers also harassed the enemies of Rivera living in Montevideo. On the morning of June 14, black soldiers searched the house of Andrés Lamas, former Secretary of Finance, looking for a deserter. At night, the group of soldiers tried to break into his house, but a British marine stopped their actions. Andrés Lamas was important enough to have British forces protecting him.⁵⁸⁵ This event has

⁵⁸⁴ Pereira, *Recuerdos de mi tiempo*, 34.

⁵⁸⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 968, Andrés Lamas to Police Chief, June 15, 1846.

political implications, too, given the unpopularity of Lamas among the population. After the April coup, black troops were quartered in barracks between the inner and outer lines, and were banned from entering the town except unarmed and in small groups.⁵⁸⁶ The attack against Lamas reveals that they could operate in the city even under these strict measures.

Just one year after this incident, the British consul Martin S. Hood commented on the public grievance against the new Uruguayan cabinet formed by Bejar, Chucarro and Muñoz, who were thought to appropriate public revenue: “The general dislike increased daily and at last the principal [number] of the native inhabitants commenced taking measures for overthrowing the ministry. The Regiment of Blacks espoused the cause of the opposition and was supported by a Colonel Flores who had made himself very conspicuous in opposing the Government.”⁵⁸⁷ As the government heard about these plans, they put Italian Giuseppe Garibaldi and the French Jean Thiebaut in command of the city while “...blacks and [a] few native soldiers were shut outside where they could do no harm even if they should attempt to oppose the Government by force.” The prospect of renewed black mobilization and public feelings led these ministers to resign on July 4, 1847. Hood noticed that the natives, the *Orientales*, were trying to create lasting peace without further foreign intervention given that the government of Montevideo and the local population were fed up with European soldiers. Hood added that “the Black Troops (the only troops which can be called native and that only because they have native officers) have continued in a very disorderly condition, and it is stated that they wish for a surrender of the Town to General Oribe.” This is one of the few instances in which black troops were not portrayed as following commands but voicing their own position, and further, trying to end the then five-year siege. Despite efforts of local leaders, the siege continued for four more years.

⁵⁸⁶ BNA, FO51/41, Hamilton to Aberdeen, April 16, 1846,.

⁵⁸⁷ BNA, FO51/46, Martin S. Hood to Palmerston, July 15, 1847, f. 67.

New regional alliances ended the war as the *Colorado* of Montevideo allied with Brazil and the governor of Entre Ríos Juan J. Urquiza (who turned his back on Rosas) to first free the Uruguayan territory from the Argentine army and then attack Rosas. In Buenos Aires, this alliance defeated Rosas in the Battle of Caseros in February 1852 –a turning point in the history of the region. In October 1851, the *Blanco* and *Colorado* leaders had agreed to avoid combat on the basis of the new *Colorado* military superiority. In 1852, a new government was elected gathering both *Colorado* and *Blanco* leaders in a reconciliation effort. However, the new President Juan F. Giró, a *Blanco* civilian, tried to dismantle *Colorado* control over the infantry to create a new non-partisan army. Black battalions still were the main force in Montevideo, as the French consul put it: “Two Negro battalions, soldiers of Caseros and perhaps the best in Uruguay, formed the principal guard of the government and the city.”⁵⁸⁸ In the first half of 1853, neither civil servants nor the army received their salaries—a perfect scenario for the *Colorado* coup of July 18, 1853.⁵⁸⁹ The French consul asserted that Melchor Pacheco y Obes had cultivated links with black soldiers, whom he supported with his own money during the months of unpaid wages.⁵⁹⁰ The battle between the black infantrymen supporting the *Colorados* and National Guards –former *Blanco* soldiers– took place during the parade celebrating the anniversary of the Constitution in Montevideo’s main plaza. Juan J. de Herrera, a surviving member of the National Guard later recalled:

A battalion formed by Africans and led by the Spanish adventurer Don Leon Pallejas took place in the Plaza Constitución [...] Another infantry battalion, also formed by Africans but led by Colonel Solsona, occupied a place on Rincón Street near the Government House. Thus, the National Guard marched between these two battalions. Not even the complete unit of National Guards ended their march into the Plaza as the voice of Pallejas ordered the Africans to fire against the National Guards. As the National Guard was dispersed, the battalion of Pallejas broke rank and searched the

⁵⁸⁸ M. Maillafer, “Informes Diplomáticos del Cónsul de Francia M. Maillafer 1851-1855.” *Revista Histórica*, Año XLV, T. XVII, 1951, 305.

⁵⁸⁹ BNA, FO51/79, Hunt To Clarendon, July 30, 1853,

⁵⁹⁰ Maillafer, “Informes Diplomáticos del Cónsul de Francia M. Maillafer 1851-1855,” 311.

streets of Montevideo, which were filled with many corpses surrounded by Negroes who took the clothing of their victims. The Negroes were drunk, but their captains were sober as well as Gal Pacheco y Obes, Gal Díaz, Don José María Muñoz and others who led this mutiny.⁵⁹¹

Melchor Pacheco y Obes and Cesar Diaz were accused of promoting this attack, but the leading man was actually Secretary of War Venancio Flores. Once the rebel troops controlled Montevideo, Flores marched with a black battalion to the countryside to prevent the resistance of *Blanco* chiefs. On September 22, President Giró communicated to the French Consul Maillafer that “the government could become independent only by dissolving the Negro battalions and ending the tyrannical position of Pacheco.”⁵⁹² Both the British and French consuls began negotiations between President Giró and Venancio Flores. In one of these meetings, Maillafer asserted that “the Government and the Constitution were worthless if two Negro battalions were the arbiters of the Republic,” to which Flores replied: “Yes Sir, but an entire political party backs these Negroes.” Flores asserted that the mobilization of black battalions was a continuation of political action by the *Colorado* party. After Giró sought refuge in a French warship, a provisional triumvirate formed by Fructuoso Rivera, Juan Lavalleja and Venancio Flores took office in September 1853. However, Lavalleja died in October and Rivera the following January –both of natural causes. Flores fulfilled all functions of the Executive from October 1853 to September 1855, when a new constitutional government took office.⁵⁹³

Venancio Flores became the main *Colorado* caudillo and leading popular figure of his time. After his resignation in 1855, he moved to Buenos Aires but sporadically came back to the country. In 1863, he overthrew the government of Bernardo Berro in Uruguay with the support of Argentina and Brazil, which sparked the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870) against

⁵⁹¹ MHN, Colección Museo Histórico Nacional, Escritos del Dr. Juan José de Herrera, Carpeta N° 1624.

⁵⁹² Maillafer, “Informes Diplomáticos...” 324-325; BNA, BNA, FO51/79, Hunt to Clarendon, November 2, 1853.

⁵⁹³ BNA, FO51/79, Hunt to Clarendon, November 4, 1853.

the Paraguayan government, which was allied with the defeated President Berro. Flores became de-facto ruler of Uruguay in 1865-1868. Black militarization and political participation made possible his first overthrow of a constitutional government. After the days of Flores, the politicians who sought popular favor and opposed liberal constitutionalism were called *Candomberos* in Montevideo, which was not a coincidence. This term referred to *Candombe*, the celebrations of the African-based associations which we will analyze next.

Conclusion

Enlistment in black militias had involved only free blacks in colonial Montevideo, but the wars of independence followed by regional and civil conflagration increasingly engaged the entire black population of what had become Uruguay. Africans and their descendants joined all armies across the Río de la Plata in the 1810s and 1820s giving their support to the royalists of Montevideo, the revolutionaries of Buenos Aires, the local party of Artigas and even the invading Luso-Brazilian army. They strategically balanced their participation according to the changing regional scenario as historical events unfolded. In the 1830s, Africans and their descendants formed the backbone of the first Uruguayan infantry. While colonial black militia units were entirely formed by people of African ancestry, the Uruguayan black battalions were commanded by white professional officers who also participated in the political arena of this nascent country. In the army, Africans and their descendants not only developed corps solidarity and bonding with each other, they also created social networks with white officers and political *caudillos*. It was through these networks that black soldiers helped to determine the outcome of white elite politics in Montevideo from the 1830s to the 1850s. These military networks and identities also shaped their African cultural celebrations, to which we now turn.

Chapter 5: African-based Associations and the Quest of the Day of Kings

For the period stretching from 1810 to 1860, there are more descriptions of African celebrations than for the entire colonial era in the Río de la Plata.⁵⁹⁴ The fall of the Spanish regime allowed previously banned foreigners to visit this region, and their travel narratives often described outdoor African-based festivities. A local press emerged as a forum for anonymous authors to comment on these festivities. Most of them usually condemned African celebrations as a relic of the colonial era that prevented the progress of the republic. The *Jefatura Política y de Policía* –the new police force– also recorded details regarding disputes among African “nations” as well as the aims of the new Uruguayan authorities at relocating these organizations and their celebrations outside of the city. Memoirs written in the second half of the nineteenth century included short descriptions of black festivities witnessed at mid-century. An emerging national print media documented the most striking sign of “otherness” in Montevideo –the celebration the Day of Kings at mid century.

Summer public celebrations in nineteenth-century Montevideo stretched from Christmas in December to Carnival, the pre-Lenten celebration, in mid February. The Day of Kings, or Epiphany, on January 6, celebrated the adoration of the three Magi to baby Jesus. One of these three Kings, Balthazar, was portrayed as African. Across the catholic Americas, “Pageants reenacting the Magi’s adoration of the Christ child at Epiphany, an old Iberian custom, provided the perfect focus for slave sociability, *especially if the get-together involved black kings.*”⁵⁹⁵ Africans and their descendants made this Catholic festivity their own by infusing diasporic African meanings. Black communities in places such as Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires, celebrated the Day of Kings to honor the leaders of their

⁵⁹⁴ Oscar Chamosa, “To Honor the ashes of their forebears: The rise and crisis of African nations in the Post-Independence State of Buenos Aires, 1820-1860” *The Americas*, 53, 3, (2003): 347-378; Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires*, 138-155.

⁵⁹⁵ Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots*, 92.

communities –the Brazilian *confrarías*, Cuban *Cabildos*, and Rioplatense *naciones africanas*. In nineteenth-century Cuba, the celebration of the Day of Kings survived as long as the colonial regime. This celebration reenacted links of paternalism between *Cabildos*, the black associations of Havana, and the Spanish King. The recognition of imperial hierarchy was typical of other public celebrations during the colonial era, which were later criticized and repressed during the early years of Cuban independence. In contrast, the period of early independence was the golden age of the Day of Kings celebration in Montevideo –just at the time of widespread black militarization.⁵⁹⁶

African-based associations (called *naciones africanas* or African nations) proliferated in the early-nineteenth century urban public space, black participation in Catholic confraternities diminished in the Río de la Plata. Almost 75 percent of free blacks and coloreds who produced a will in Buenos Aires before 1810 had also joined a brotherhood. However, little more than fifteen percent of Afro-descendants who left a will between 1810 and 1860 participated in confraternities.⁵⁹⁷ The same applies for Montevideo, where African-based associations seemed to have overtaken most of the functions formerly fulfilled only by black confraternities. In Black confraternities, black members were not only under supervision from priests, but also subordinate to white members who opposed the incorporation of ostensibly non-Catholic features in their celebrations. The book of elections of the female branch of Saint Benito recorded that from 1790 white women –labeled as *Doña*– were elected among the sacristans and treasurers. In 1799, acting as an inspector, the priest Fernando de Caravallo noted that there was no impediment for white, Indian, and Pardo members to enjoy the same rights as the black brothers; thus, they could fill elected

⁵⁹⁶ The same is true for the Buenos Aires of Juan M. de Rosas (1829-1852). Chamosa, “To Honor the ashes...”

⁵⁹⁷ Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, 210.

positions.⁵⁹⁸ It seems that only black members could fill elected positions before 1799. White participation in black confraternities may have contributed to the decreasing black engagement even before independence. In the mid nineteenth century, the altar of Saint Balthazar belonged to Doña Dolores Vidal de Pereira, a white woman.⁵⁹⁹

The press of Montevideo recorded tensions between members of Saint Benito and the priest chaplain in 1840-41.⁶⁰⁰ Despite white participation and tyrannical chaplains, confraternities did not disappear from the black social life given that some leaders of these groups still exercised guidance in other black associations. Felipe Arropea, one of the black brothers in conflict with the chaplain of Saint Benito, was the king of the Benguela association in the early 1830s. In this decade, free black Juan Sosa was both *Mayordomo menor* of Saint Benito and minister of the Congo Gunga association. The *Mayordomo Mayor* was José Cipriano, who had been second lieutenant of the black militia of 1817.⁶⁰¹ José Cipriano, Juan Sosa and Felipe Arropea led Saint Benito during the early 1830s. Their participation in multiple organizations demonstrates the continued, overlapping links among confraternities, African associations and black military units that lasted into the national period. Rather than disappearing, black confraternities occupied a secondary place vis-à-vis African-based associations, who transformed the Day of Kings into an African festivity.

African “nations” held funeral wakes, which were also the principal function of black brotherhoods. African-based associations overlapped with black brotherhoods in providing a “buena muerte,” by observing of the rituals of passage from life to death. But African “nations” offered advantages vis-à-vis brotherhoods –they could perform African-based

⁵⁹⁸ Archivo de los Hermanos Conventuales, Libro de Elecciones de San Benito; Decretos..., f. 18.

⁵⁹⁹ Isidoro de María, *Montevideo Antiguo*. Montevideo, Clásicos Uruguayos, 1957 [1888], Vol. 1, 282.

⁶⁰⁰ *El Compás*, Montevideo, N° 64, December 16, 1840, 3; *El Constitucional*, N° 607, February 27, 1841, 3; AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Letter of brothers of Saint Benito against the priest, November 16, 1840

⁶⁰¹ See *El Constitucional* in the previous footnote; Molina, 132, 150, and 161; AGN-U, AGA, Libro 894, f. 61.

rituals more freely than confraternities.⁶⁰² In the 1920s, the Afro-Uruguayan writer Lino Suárez Peña described rituals of birth, passage to adulthood, and above all, the funerals that took place in African associations of Montevideo half a century earlier.⁶⁰³ Since blacks were in control of these houses, these groups allowed ceremonies not necessarily connected with Catholic rituals. According to Suárez Peña, the king of each association conducted the whole ritual as priest when the corpse was deposited in the house of the “nation.” The queen led a possession rite bringing the spirit of the dead person into the room. People of other associations visited the place to take part in the funeral wake. At night, they sang in African languages and recited the names of the association’s dead members. Each nation recounted the names of its own dead fellows in a song and thus, the dead members lived on in the memories of the living through singing. This ritual was connected with the group’s specific history and its communitarian life. Beyond descriptions of the Day of Kings, however, less evidence on African rituals and their practitioners had survived. In 1826, a free black called Juan Mina was accused of “medical practice” without authorization in Montevideo. In 1842, the police arrested the slave Antonio Campos when he was fighting in the street, where he “pretended to be a wizard.” Probably these two men attracted the attention of authorities because their fame went beyond the black population as their services were known to white neighbors.⁶⁰⁴

In the 1830s, Jacinto Molina described the inner workings of the most important African-based association of Montevideo –the Congo. The main functions of this group were

⁶⁰² Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 164; AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 867, Report of the Police Chief, May 30, 1835; Caja 982, File on the Congo nation, March 1850.

⁶⁰³ Lino Suárez Peña rescued oral narratives from elder Afro-Uruguayans in a manuscript of 1924 held in the Museo Histórico Nacional, Montevideo, Biblioteca Pablo Blanco Acevedo, Manuscrito 127, which was later published as *La raza negra en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: Moderna, 1933.

⁶⁰⁴ AGN-U, EGH 141, exp. 95 “Causa contra el negro libre Juan [Mina] por ejercer como médico sin ser profesor de ello” 1826; AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 937, Antonio Campos to the Police chief, , March 13, 1842. Also in March 1842, a group of neighbors asked that Juan Niver be allowed to perform as healer (curandero). The petition had fifty signatures. AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 937, Petition to Chief of Police, March 8, 1842.

the celebration of Saint Balthazar during the Day of Kings, weekly gatherings on Sundays and holydays, and funeral wakes.⁶⁰⁵ The Congo Gunga owned a house and patio used for dancing and drumming. The other five provincial affiliates with which this association operated paid a monthly peso to the Congo Gunga to contribute for the Saint Balthazar celebration. The funeral service for both the Gunga and the provinces took place at the Congo Gunga site, but the provinces could have their own wakes in case they wanted.

African and their descendants met on Sundays for their celebrations, which included drumming and dance, either outdoors in the southern coast or in houses belonging to their associations. Free blacks and slaves participated in widespread gambling; they also played guitars and sang at predominantly white lower-class dances at *pulperías*. They also participated in the emerging dance academies in which the city's youth learned the latest fashions in European dancing. A black militia captain, Juan de Dios Gavira, commonly sang accompanied by Andalusian guitars at Spanish gatherings by 1800.⁶⁰⁶ In turn, white men sometimes participated in meetings of Africans. For example, "three white men [*paisanos*], a free pardo, nine free blacks, and seventeen slaves" were arrested together for dancing late at night without police permission on June 1837.⁶⁰⁷ As Africans and their descendants began to dominate Spanish music and entertainment in Montevideo, the white peninsular and criollo population became acquainted with the sound of drumming and even attended public African celebrations. The police detained two free blacks on the streets for not carrying police permission late at night in May 1835 –one of them was playing the guitar. In January 1842, eight free blacks were arrested for playing guitar and singing on the streets at one in the

⁶⁰⁵ Later in this century, Vicente Rossi stated that the Congo King enjoyed the largest number of followers among Africans in Montevideo. Vicente Rossi, *Cosas de Negros*. Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2001 [1926]. Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 162-164.

⁶⁰⁶ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja, 141,exp. 64, 1800.

⁶⁰⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 899, Police Report, June 30, 1837.

morning—one of them was in the military.⁶⁰⁸ Guitar was the most popular instrument for social meetings, and its mastery also meant participation in the culture of the countryside. In the 1830s, free blacks and slaves were arrested if the Police found them in racially mixed dance gatherings without a license. Gambling was also extremely popular but illegal. In April 1835, a judge declared that free blacks and slaves held nightly gatherings to gamble cards. In October, the police detained six free blacks and four slaves for gambling. In June 1837, the police arrested six free pardos, two free blacks, a slave, and a white man who were all gambling together.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, while the Day of Kings was the greatest visible mark of black culture in Montevideo, Africans and their descendants also participated in other cultural arenas.

Free blacks and slaves also took part in dance academies. By mid-nineteenth century, most dance professors were Europeans who taught the latest fashions for their elite patrons. Commoners also attended lessons and gatherings at less elite dance academies.⁶¹⁰ In chapter four, León Cuevas was noted as one of the free blacks who signed the petition to General Lavalleja for attacking with patriotic forces Montevideo in 1825, when the city was under the Brazilian rule. In May 1837, Cuevas and Juan Chaín requested a license from the Police to open a dance academy and to hold dance gatherings on weekdays on street San Fernando N° 7 in the central district.⁶¹¹ Actors and dance teachers were suspect “others” according to Catholic standards of morality. To defend themselves against claims of dubious morality, Cuevas and Chain wrote that “they were already committed to various decent families.” The lieutenant Alcalde of the district approved their petition since they had run their academy

⁶⁰⁸ AGN-U, AGA, Gob., Caja 868, Police Report, May 27, 1835; Caja 935, José Ortiz to Police Chief, Jan. 23, 1842.

⁶⁰⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 866, Judge of 3rd Section to Police Chief, April 13, 1835; Caja 876, Police Report, October 3, 1835; Caja 898, Police report, June 12, 1837.

⁶¹⁰ On European dance masters in mid-nineteenth century Latin America, Chasteen, *National Rhythms*, 118-119.

⁶¹¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 898, Request of León Cuevas and Pedro Chaín, May 19, 1837.

without problems for two years. He noted that Chain, a shoemaker, could not financially support his father and family solely with the income of his craft. In the entire application for a license, there is no mention that either Cuevas or Chain were of African ancestry. The Census of 1836 also lacks information on Cuevas, but it does provide information about the people who lived in the dance academy, which was also a house. Juan Chain was the first listed. He was born in Montevideo, and in 1836 he was a 29-year-old shoemaker. The second listed in the census was Manuel Sartori, a fifty-year-old African shoemaker. A young North American and a Londoner also lived in the dance academy. The other members of the group were two men from Buenos Aires (aged 30 and 14), a woman, and her recently born child. The census taker also recorded that one of the above was a freedman, but failed to note who he or she was. The lieutenant Alcalde stated that Chain supported his father, who lived with him, but the only person living in the house with the appropriate age to be Chain's father was the African Manuel Sartori, suggesting that Chain was of African descent.

The police licensed Cuevas and Chain to operate the dance academy with the provision of "not allowing attendance of slaves without written permission from their masters. [...] Licenses for slaves must be in writing and with all convenient securities." The petitioners neither mentioned nor hid the presence of slaves and free blacks in their initial request, but the police nevertheless specified that slaves could not attend dance gatherings without written permission. The free black Gabriel Batallan was arrested for a "disorder" in a dance academy in January 1839.⁶¹² Free blacks and perhaps slaves not only attended academies where European dances were taught, but they also became popular teachers. In the late nineteenth-century, Antonio Pereira provided an account of a black dance master called Martinez who taught in Montevideo just after the Great Siege: "He gave dance lessons in his

⁶¹² AGN-U, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja Caja 912, Police report, January 29, 1839.

home... where there were always dance gatherings, and almost every young person learned to dance.”⁶¹³

Free blacks and slaves had been acquainted with European styles of entertainment since at least the late colonial period when they are identified as musicians and dancers in the theaters of Montevideo.⁶¹⁴ In the midst of abolition in December 1842, the paper *El Nacional* announced that “...all men of color should serve together in the newly created battalions, with the exception of a few well known artists and property owners of this Republic already enrolled in the militia units whose position must be respected in consideration of their talents and wealth.”⁶¹⁵ Free black artists served in colored militias rather than in slave battalions. These artists were none other than actors, musicians, dance and music teachers who made a living out of teaching European arts. Dance and music constituted powerful crossroads for cultural interactions and transformations among Europeans, Africans and their descendants in Montevideo. After 1830, the Day of Kings became the main summer festivity, white involvement in which was massive. Africans and their descendants included symbols of the new nation in their public celebrations. For example, wearing the national uniform became a sign of leadership and protected them from increasing police repression. It seems they wanted to be *Orientales* in their own way. However, the larger white society excluded them from using the symbols of the new nation as well as from participating in the benefits of citizenship by restraining their freedom of expression as we will see next. Blacks and coloreds, whether voluntarily or conscripted, participated in the wars of independence and subsequent civil wars that shaped the future of Uruguay, but they could not reap the full fruits of victory.

⁶¹³ Pereira, *Recuerdos de mi tiempo*, 111.

⁶¹⁴ Borucki, “Actores Afro en Montevideo.”

⁶¹⁵ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N°1203, 16 de diciembre de 1842, 2.

5.1. *Composition of African-based associations*

Jacinto Molina listed the names of fourteen African-based associations and their officials in Montevideo in 1832. Although some groups shared Bantu cultural affinities, they came from the diverse regions connected to Montevideo via slave trading routes from the Angolan inland and the coastline south of Luanda (Casanche or Kasanje, Lubolo or Libolo, Camundá, Songo, Benguela) to East Africa (Mozambique, Muñanbano). Other associations claimed West African provenances such as the Sandes (Ashante), Carabari (Old Calabar) Moro, Nagó (Yoruba), Tacuá, Mina Magí, and Ausa (Hausa).⁶¹⁶ Kings, queens and princes occupied lifelong positions, but these organizations also held elections. The Nagó and Tacuá had the same king, Juan J. Estrada, which is representative of other organizational patterns. Some of these groups formed confederations, best exemplified by the Congo Augunga –or Gunga– association not listed above. Molina wrote several requests to obtain permission to reestablish the Congo association prohibited by the government after the slave conspiracy of 1833. He pointed to the existence of “...the Congo nation, naturally composed by seven Provinces of the African West: 1. Gunga, 2. [L]uanda, 3. Angola, 4. Munyolo, 5. Basundi, 6. Boma, Six Provinces of the Nation Congo Gunga.”⁶¹⁷ Peoples located south of the Congo River such as Boma and Basundi (Nsundi) and even north such as the Munyolo (Munjolo or Tio) were caught up in slave routes ending in Luanda, and thus this diasporic confederate association may refer both to local identities and experiences emerging from slave routes beginning in the Congo River basin and ending in Luanda. Molina adds that these provinces were, “linked to [the Congo] Monarch through ties of blood, language, antiquity, and origin.”⁶¹⁸ Thus, he listed common features such as kinship, language, history, and geographical origin. Antonio de la Rosa Brito ruled both the Gunga and all the Congo, but

⁶¹⁶ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 132.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 163. While Molina pointed to seven “provinces,” he only enumerated six ones by their names.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

each province had a king. The catholic Kongo monarchy provided a West-Central African baseline to unite this association and fostered the claims of Antonio de la Rosa Brito to extend his reign over all African associations as later he did. Molina mentioned a nation Urid Uriola as a spin off from the Carabali in 1833, which means that there were twenty-one African-based associations in Montevideo in the early 1830s. Police records indicate twenty African “nations” in 1850, which shows the diversity of these groups through mid-nineteenth century.⁶¹⁹ Suarez Peña mentions only eight African associations remaining active by the end of this century.⁶²⁰

Some leaders of African associations had been militia officers such as the King Hausa José Otero, who was a corporal in the black militia who served Artigas in 1817. He was also a sergeant of militias in 1830. Juan J. Estrada, King of both Nago and Tacua, served as sergeant in the same unit as Otero in 1817. The King of Mozambiques Juan Soto and the King of Casanche Antonio Cipriano both joined that same unit.⁶²¹ These four Africans were already free by 1817 and thus they had been living in Montevideo for at least two or three decades by the 1830s –Estrada was near 70 years old, Soto was 40 and the prince of Sande Luis Lima was nearly 50 by 1836.⁶²² Molina also mentions three queens: Maria Molina of the Carabari, Maria Moreti of the Mina Magi, and Maria Guardado of the Urid Uriola. Both Maria Moreti and Maria Guardado were free African women of some wealth. In 1824, Maria Moreti sued free black María Gracia Ríos for a debt of three hundred pesos –the price of a slave. That same year, the slave Pablo García sued Maria Moreti for money owing to him from slave sales. María Moreti owned slaves and was personally involved in selling and buying slaves. Moreover, María Guardado had freed her own husband, Domingo Lima,

⁶¹⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, File about Congo Gunga, March 1850.

⁶²⁰ Suárez Peña, *La raza negra en el Uruguay*, 19.

⁶²¹ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 132; AGN-U, AP, Independencia, Caja 358, Carpeta 4, List of Cívicos Morenos Libres, June 13, 1830; AGA, Libro 894, f. 61 and ss.

⁶²² AGN-U, AGA, Libro 149.

which did not prevent him from trying to divorce her in the late 1820s. She died in 1848 leaving no children but a house occupied by a family of exiled Argentines. Free African María Guardado provided her own house for the association Urid Uriola. In 1835, she was imprisoned for “beating a free black called José with a stick.”⁶²³ African women were frequently manumitted in cities of colonial Spanish America, and the urban economy gave them opportunities to save money to buy their own houses and sometimes even slaves. María Moreti and María Guardado provided accommodation for the meetings of their respective associations from whose members they received respect and admiration, as attested by Molina at the inception of the Urid Uriola.

Molina employed European categories of civil office to describe the leaders of the Congo in 1832. Seven men governed this group by forming the Junta (Council): a King or President, two Ministers, two Councilors, a Juez de Fiestas (Official of festivities) and an Asesor Fiscal (a law adviser, the position held by Molina). In 1850, the Junta of Congo Gunga still had seven members, but other men filled these positions.⁶²⁴ The most important authority had a dual denomination of King and President, which was connected with the language of civil associations during the national period—the petitions of Molina were sent to a republican government. The King Antonio de la Rosa Brito ruled the Congo at least from 1829 to 1841. While initially he was slave of Luis Ximenez, he was free by 1836.⁶²⁵ The two ministers were Joaquín Martínez, a free Congo, and Juan Sosa who was free and *Mayordomo* of Saint Benito. Molina did not mention the ethnic origin of Martínez or Antonio de la Rosa Brito. The two councilors were Gregorio Joanicó “a creole Portuguese Pardo... who knows how to read and is ladino” and Miguel Piñeyro “a black Congo slave.” Both councilors were

⁶²³ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 132 and 137-141; AGN-U, EGH, Caja 139, exp. 261, exp. 236; Molina, 256; AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 978, Juzgado de Intestados, December 19, 1848 and Caja 877, Report of the Police Chief, November 9, 1835.

⁶²⁴ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, March 1850, [File about Congo Gunga’s escition].

⁶²⁵ AGN-U, AGA 944, Libro de Policía, February 3, 1836.

slaves, but while one was Congo, the other was of mixed ancestry and born in Brazil. Molina stresses that Joanicó knew how to read and that he was ladino –fully conversant with Spanish culture. The remaining members of the Junta were the Official of Festivities Pedro Obes who was in charge of arranging the Saint Balthazar celebration, and the law adviser Jacinto Molina who was born in America and whose parents were Mina Dahomey and Benguela – unconnected with the Congo region. Not all the members of the Junta de Congo were Africans or even of full African ancestry. However, issues of literacy probably led the Congo leaders to appoint both Gregorio Joanicó and Molina to help keep papers. Petitions presented by the Congo association in the 1830s, 1841, and 1850 mentioned the existence of supporting documents. In 1850, the Congo presented to the government “...a file stating that they were chartered to represent the nation...”⁶²⁶ Thus, the Congo official used written documents about the functioning of the association which they zealously kept since these papers were never attached to the pleas they submitted to the Police.

While headed by kings and queens, the administration of these associations was in the hands of key members. At the opening of the house of the Urid Uriola, Jacinto Molina described the significant moments of this group. The founders of the Urid Uriola belonged to the Carabari association that existed before 1810, but these men decided to separate in 1829.⁶²⁷ Pedro Estrada, Luis Vilaza, Benito Candido, Domingo and Antonio Esteban sought to establish a new group which finally held meetings at the house of Maria Guardado –wife of Pedro Estrada by 1833. Molina referred to Domingo as General which probably meant he was in the army. Molina also referred to Antonio Esteban as *Mayor de Plaza*, Secretary of Finances and archivist of the association, suggesting he administered common funds as well as kept papers, such as petitions to the Police. These five men plus Maria Guardado governed

⁶²⁶ AGN-AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, File of Congo Gunga, March 1850.

⁶²⁷ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 139-142.

the association. Molina also reveals that it was of utmost importance to have a house for social gatherings:

All of us have experienced charges of 20, 30, and 40 pesos for places to dance according to the customs of your countries which now are supplied by Maria Guardado to solidify your society, social relations and friendship. This kind woman ceded her house to your headquarters. We all shall agree that the merits of Maria Guardado are rare among her countrymen...[she] must be elevated to the National Rank of Princess of Carabari, a title of the Nation, rather than your City or Province Urid Uriola.⁶²⁸

African associations had to rent a house for their meetings when they did not own one.⁶²⁹ This is why Molina celebrated and emphasized the generosity of María Guardado during the opening ceremony. Molina elevated María Guardado to princess of Carabari –an eponym referring to the slave port Old Calabar in the Bight of Biafra. He also dates the existence of a Carabari association to the colonial period, when African dances and drumming already were common in the city. Most of the African-based associations were located in the second district of Montevideo, between the old Citadel and the southern shore of the city during the 1830s and 1840s. In February 1830, after the celebration of the first Day of Kings in independent Uruguay, a Justice of Peace suggested that the Police relocate the African celebrations to the southern shore of Montevideo around the southeastern corner of the city where the remnants of the colonial walls met the coast. The judge made clear that these celebrations took place in every district of Montevideo. To better isolate them from the large population and to control them, the Police wanted to concentrate Africans festivities in the lightly populated and windy southern coast in front of the Río de la Plata. The Secretary of Government approved this measure:

Since it is necessary to tolerate the meetings and public dances of the African castes in holy days, I suggest separating them from the Center of the population because of the bad example they set for the youth who hear

⁶²⁸ Ibid., 140.

⁶²⁹ For a study on the real state ownership of these associations in Buenos Aires, see Rosal, *Africanos y Afrodescendientes*, 86-92.

obscene words and see scandalous activities. These celebrations outrage the decent people who stroll the streets looking for entertainment. The drums and shouts of joy of this rabble greatly disturb the entire neighborhood, mortify the sick, and perturb the good order of families. In my concept, the method to remove this evil would be to oblige them to perform their meetings and dances in one of the southern batteries by renting them a room to store their clothing and musical instruments.⁶³⁰

This statement suggests that previously prepared clothing and musical instruments were essential for African-based celebrations. Three other sources confirm that the southeast coast concentrated black social life. In 1836, the Judge of the second section complained about the "...few people [living] in the blocks 54, 55, 33 and 34 because they are inhabited all by blacks..."⁶³¹ This area was south of the main market of Montevideo, the old Citadel, toward the coast. In 1884, Daniel Muñoz singled out that same area as the location of *candombes* that were held thirty years earlier: "All that now is the streets Santa Teresa and Camacúa did not then exist. I remember that there were only roughly-built shacks inhabited by old blacks, who were the chiefs of the Negro tribes imported during times of slavery. The big *candombes* were celebrated in that open ground near the river called the *muralla* or *recinto* [...]"⁶³² In 1836, the census of Montevideo attests that African leaders lived in this district. Salvador and María Molina, the king and queen of the Carabari "nation," lived in a house located in the block 34 – the southernmost areas down to the river– next to Luis Lima, who was prince of the Sande (Assante) association. Miguel Piñeyro –councilor of the Congo– lived across the street in a tenement house mostly populated by Africans in the block 55. The King and prince of the Nagó and Tacuá Juan and Manuel Estrada (father and son) lived two streets upwards in the block 53 of the same section. Estrada lived in the same block of the king of Mozambique Juan

⁶³⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 794, Ramon Muñoz to Secretary of Government, February 15, 1830.

⁶³¹ AGN-U, AGA, Jefatura de Policia, Montevideo, Caja 13, Peace Judge of 2nd Section to Chief, October 4, 1836.

⁶³² Daniel Muñoz, *Crónicas de un Fin de Siglo por el montevidiano Sansón Carrasco*. Montevideo: EBO, 2006, 240. Rossi, *Cosas de Negros*, 67; Isidoro de María, *Montevideo Antiguo*, Vol. 1, 274.

Soto. All these kings and queens of African associations lived in the second district. Out of the 222 inhabitants of the block 55 of this section, 143 were freedmen and 10 slaves. Africans and their descendants were at least 69 percent of all who lived in this block –the highest ratio of black population in a single block in Montevideo.⁶³³ A Justice of Peace denounced to the Police that Africans held meetings in a house in the block 55 of Saint Agustin Street to gamble in 1835.⁶³⁴ However, the census offers more balanced perspectives of where Africans lived. Nearly the same number of Africans lived inside (1499 or 49 percent) as outside (1569 or 51 percent) of the city walls. Additionally, nearly the same number of Africans lived in the first (431), in second (538), and in the third section (530) of the inner city. This census lacks consistent data in order to identify Uruguayans of full or mixed African ancestry; thus, it is impossible to track the entire black population of the city.⁶³⁵ While the African population was evenly distributed in the districts of Montevideo, African-based associations were concentrated in the blocks 34, 53 and 55 of the second section as a significant African-born population lived there and in the nearby blocks.

In 1827, the Day of Kings began with a mass at the Cathedral, a parade through the streets, and finally a dance in a small plaza near the market, the only small plazas near the market were south toward the river.⁶³⁶ The aforementioned Police report of 1830 located African “nations” and their celebrations throughout old Montevideo. Initially, the police wanted to confine African festivities to the predominantly black second district. The authorities eventually pursued the expulsion of these celebrations from old Montevideo to outside of the city walls. From the 1830s to 1850s, both the press and the police campaigned to exclude African “nations” and their celebrations from the old Montevideo, with ultimate

⁶³³ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 132. AGN-U, AGA, Libro 149.

⁶³⁴ AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja, 866, Peace Judge of 3rd Section to Police Chief, April 13, 1835

⁶³⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Libros 146-149. I thank Raquel Pollero for allowing my analysis of her SPSS file of this census.

⁶³⁶ Alcide D’Orbigny, *Viaje a la América Meridional*. La Paz: Plural, 2002, 34.

success as seen below. Paradoxically, the Day of Kings became the main summer celebration in these same years.

5.2. Inclusion and exclusion of African celebrations in Montevideo

As the old ways of public celebration carried over into the first days of the republic, early revolutionary governments incorporated African-based festivities when they laid the foundations of a new republican imaginary. In 1816, the brief government of José Artigas in Montevideo held the *Fiestas Mayas* (May Celebration) to commemorate the revolution of May 1810 –a celebration first started in Buenos Aires in 1813 and later expanded throughout the Río de la Plata. The government of Artigas published a detailed account of the 1816 festivity, which portrayed the independence of the Oriental Province from the Spanish regime as well as its autonomy from Buenos Aires. Parades, theatrical performances, banquets, fireworks, and the inauguration of a Public Library were part of this festivity. The official account mentions that, “In the afternoon, some Negro dances appeared in the main plaza before sunset. Their instruments, dress and dancing represented the customs of their respective nations. All excelled in decency as well as in gratitude of this day, which was granted to them as a gift by the government as a brief relief to their miserable fate.”⁶³⁷ Historians have noted that this is the first time that the word “decency” described African celebrations in Montevideo.⁶³⁸ This first republican description portrays the diversity of African “nations” and the three elements of celebrations: musical instruments, costumes and dancing. The above quotation is taken from the official description of the celebration in the section describing how the lower classes offered their gratitude to the revolutionary

⁶³⁷ Anonymous, *Descripción de las fiestas cívicas celebradas en Montevideo de 1816*. Montevideo: UdelaR, 1951.

⁶³⁸ Clara Paladino, “Fiesta y Contrapunto. Miradas en las celebraciones de la Independencia de América.” In Hugo Achugar, *Derechos de memoria. Nación e independencia en América Latina*. Montevideo: FHCE, 2004, 123-188. Lauro Ayestarán, *La música del Uruguay*. Montevideo: Sodre, 1953.

government, which in turn portrayed itself as socially inclusive.⁶³⁹ However, social inclusiveness was limited to patriotic celebrations since the revolutionary government issued a set of decrees for the city in the same vein as colonial measures in January 1816. These rules prohibited “gatherings of Negroes” in pulperías of Montevideo, where they played guitars and sang, and particularly banned *Tangos*, one of the names for the African celebrations, inside the city walls. This policy of simultaneously restricting the freedom of expression of Africans, but also calling for their participation in officially sponsored festivities, continued in the following decades.⁶⁴⁰

African-based associations sought official permission for their activities as soon as the Brazilian army left Montevideo and the patriotic government entered in the city in May 1829. This same month, “[t]he black Antonio de la Rosa Britos, *Congo King*, ask[ed] permission to dance on the holy days according to their customs in a small plaza of this city, a favor granted by previous governments. To this effect, he present[ed] supporting documents and a Royal Order which should be read by his councilor to all his subjects the first holy day.” Even before the appearance of Jacinto Molina in the Congo association, this group had produced written documents that were read by the councilor Gregorio Juanicó in public meetings. Other African groups followed the lead of the Congo. Juan Gorrechea, a slave introducing himself as headman of the Lubolo, asked permission to celebrate the Days of Kings in January 1831 and offered to arrest anyone interrupting this festivity. Gorrechea’s offer reassured the Police that the Lubolo would keep order themselves, avoiding police intervention. But this measure may have also been related to actions of other Africans. The following year, the Hausa King José Otero protested that the Congo King wanted to

⁶³⁹ Spanish loyalists mocking the *Fiestas Mayas* did not fail to mention the black and colored participation in banquets and parades. AHN, Madrid, Estado, Caja 3784 (1), María Perez Rojo to Casa Florez, April 16, 1818; Flavio García “Critica de las fiestas mayas montevidéanas de 1816” *Boletín Histórico del Ejército*, 69, (April-June 1956).

⁶⁴⁰ AA, Vol. 24, 1991, 131.

subordinate all other African associations, who now were expected to request consent from the Congo King for weekend festivities. Moreover, the Congo now requested all African “nations” a payment for expenses related to the celebration of the Day of Kings. He added that Congo members were “disturbing and troubling the free time [that other African nations] dedicated to their dances” and suggested that “the Police Chief make clear to the Congo Nation the independence of all the other [Nations] in matters of religion and celebrations.” The Secretary of Government told the Police Chief to conciliate the parties –the most likely reason why Jacinto Molina wrote out a list of African “nations” in December 1832.⁶⁴¹

Joaquin de Sagra y Periz –one of the white maecenas of Molina– wrote a statement about the independence of the Hausa, Mina and all “nations” from the Congo King in December 1832 as a result of these proceedings. With the help of Molina, he listed the African-based associations and leaders who were separate from the Congo King. The document recommended that, “the Police [should] stop and punish any infraction against the harmony and good order among the loyal black Nations who reside in this our territory, whom we love and appreciate as they deserve...”⁶⁴² The Hausa leader Leopoldo Contucci y Oribe was to take this document, read it to each African king of Montevideo, and get their signatures. A separate note written by Molina listed the fourteen African-based associations and the leaders who should be addressed regarding this measure. Early in 1833, Molina wrote to Manuel Oribe, General Commander of Army, regarding Oribe’s support of the Hausa and Mina in their struggle against the Congo association.

Your Excellency protected the Mina blacks in their dispute against the Congo last year. These proceedings formed the proposal I presented to the Police Chief [...] [Your Excellency] heard the Police Chief with the idea of punishing the Junta of Negro Kings. [These Kings] had the object of honoring

⁶⁴¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 782, fs. 394-395, May 27, 1829. Highlighted in the original; Caja 810A, Juan Gorrechea to President of Uruguay, January 4, 1831. Caja 836, Juan Otero to Secretary of Government, December 5, 1832.

⁶⁴² Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 131.

the Magi King Saint Balthazar by creating an annual fund to make possible a solemn and formal devotion [...] [It is my goal] to demand from Your Excellency the association of the black kings in a single body benefiting the Church and honoring the festive association of the Holy Negro King Saint Balthazar.⁶⁴³

This is the first documented attempt at coordinating all black associations of Montevideo under a single chief. African Christianity was of utmost importance for this appeal since it employed images of the Catholic sanctioned kingdom of Kongo. Molina's letter uses Saint Balthazar as a metaphor for a holy black king for Africans in Montevideo. Molina's pious language and references to Catholicism supported the plans of the Congo king to subordinate other African-based associations and extract a tribute from them for the Day of Kings celebration. While the full extent of the plans of the Congo King vis-à-vis other African associations remains unclear, we should note Molina envisioned that Catholic institutions, such as monasteries, would provide education and enlightenment to Afro-descendants.

The Police not only tried to limit African-based associations and celebrations to the southern shore of the old city, they also limited the circulation of slaves and free blacks. This disrupted African-based ceremonies. On September 1831, the police compelled slaves lacking their master's written permission to be indoors from eight in the night until dawn "to moderate the abandonment of some slaves who have no attachment with their masters apart from paying a weekly or monthly stipend...who lived according to their will and vices."⁶⁴⁴ Slaves living outside their masters' home and hiring themselves out were targeted. Free blacks also were asked to show evidence of employment. On September 18, the Police arrested 52 slaves and free blacks in pulperías and on the streets, and eleven others on September 21st. These slaves and free blacks were freed after two days. Scattered records

⁶⁴³ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 133-137 and Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 3 [0187].

⁶⁴⁴ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 816. Police edict on slaves, September 10, 1831.

show how the police enforced this measure until 1835. In September 3, 1832, the Police arrested sixteen free blacks and slaves who were in a dance meeting without written permission as well as ten other free blacks for the same reason on October 1st.⁶⁴⁵ These meetings had both white and black attendants but only blacks were arrested. Police specifically targeted African-based celebrations. On March 22, 1833, the police reported that, “four free blacks were arrested for staying all that night [playing] *candombe*... some other [free blacks] were arrested, but they were released the following morning because they were good people and craftsmen.”⁶⁴⁶ Free blacks and slaves spent a night in jail, only to be later released, and their arbitrary imprisonment became frequent in Montevideo.⁶⁴⁷

In May 1833, a slave conspiracy led the Police to ban African celebrations altogether inside the town, which forced Africans to move their festivities to the outskirts.⁶⁴⁸ On February 1834, “36 blacks were arrested because they were in a dance without permission, which is prohibited inside of houses.” Ten others were arrested “for being in a dance without authorization” on April 1, 1834.⁶⁴⁹ On February 3, 1835, the Police arrested “fifteen black men and three black women dancing with drums and other instruments inside of a house at two in the morning.” Even African-based funeral wakes were disrupted: “Six black men and seven black women were arrested for staying at a funeral wake [*velorio*]” in May 1835.⁶⁵⁰ The next month, the police arrested six free blacks for attending a dance, though they had been ordered to disperse prior to their arrest. One of them was Luis Lima, the headman of the

⁶⁴⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 816, Report of the Police Chief, September 19 and 22, 1831; Caja 833, Police Report, September 3, 1832; Caja 834, Police Report, October 1, 1832.

⁶⁴⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 840, Police Report, March 22, 1833.

⁶⁴⁷ AGN-U, AGA, Libros 955 and 945. In October 1835, 74 white people and 83 blacks and coloreds were arrested.

⁶⁴⁸ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 842, May 28th 1833, Police edict about slaves and freedmen.

⁶⁴⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 853, Police Report, February 5, 1834; Caja 855, Police Report, April 1 1834.

⁶⁵⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 864, Police Report, Feb. 3, 1835; Caja 867, Police Report, May 30, 1835.

Sande (Assante) association. That same month, other African leaders were imprisoned such as Antonio Laguna, king of Basundi, who was arrested for “insulting and fighting the Police.” Pedro Obes, one of the headmen of the Congo association, was arrested for holding a knife in March 1836.⁶⁵¹

Eleven free blacks and slaves were jailed the night of May 25 of 1833, the anniversary of the May Revolution. Initially, the authorities believed that they were involved in a new uprising of Lavalleja, like that of April 1832 described in chapter four, but eventually the police considered that they were planning a slave revolt. The judicial case arising from this event is missing; and we are dependent on the mid twentieth-century writer José Pedemonte account of this document.⁶⁵² He argues that the free and slave blacks wanted to take the strongholds of the city, set the theater on fire to kill the civic officials in attendance, establish a republic modeled after Haiti’s, and either exterminate or enslave the white population of Uruguay. Scattered documents point to slaves Felix Laserna (a *Santa Colomba* and Antonio Duplessis as the leaders of the movement, but also to the participation of the Swiss Wilhelm Guirtanner, who subsequently escaped. While defending the Congo association from police repression, Molina narrated the meeting he held with Felix Laserna and the Junta de Congo:

“At the beginning of that year, Felix Columbio summoned the Junta of the African Chiefs of the Nation Congo de Gunga [...] Feliz Columbio arrived at the door and patio of the room of Juan Sosa. Gregorio Joanico told me in secret the business of Feliz, and I abhorred finding myself in such a hateful act [...] The ignoble and low proposition was to offer 4000 pesos for the revolution and uprising of the Congo Ethiopians, who would subject all other slaves and people of color because of their wisdom and loquacity [...] The King Antonio told [Feliz], ‘all of us have family in this city. If we fail, not only we, but also they, will be lost.’ Antonio de la Rosa Brito insisted they could not agree but they would let [Feliz] know”⁶⁵³

⁶⁵¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 869, Police Report, June 19, 1835; Caja 882, Police, March 8, 1836; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 132.

⁶⁵² Juan C. Pedemonte, *Hombres con dueño*. Montevideo: Independencia, 1943, 61-69.

⁶⁵³ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 150.

Military officers stopped this conspiracy on the intended night of the revolt. The Swiss Guirtanner contacted Germans enlisted in the Uruguayan cavalry, who then informed the authorities. While Guirtanner escaped, Laserna and Duplessis were sentenced to death. This ruling was commuted to prison on the anniversary of the Constitution in July, but Laserna began another rebellion among the inmates on September 1833.⁶⁵⁴ Both Laserna and Duplessis were from Buenos Aires and were newcomers to Montevideo. Why did two slaves or freedmen from Buenos Aires want to start a rebellion in Montevideo by offering 4000 pesos to the Congo association and contacting white officers? Regional politics shed light on this episode. Across the Río de la Plata, Governor Juan M. de Rosas enjoyed patron-client relationships with the black associations of Buenos Aires. He had supported the uprising of Lavalleja against Rivera in April 1832.⁶⁵⁵ As a slave rebellion was expected to break in Montevideo in late May 1833, the two Lavalleja brothers gathered black troops in the territory of Entre Ríos next to Uruguay; “Manuel Lavalleja was at the mouth of Gualeguaychú creek with one hundred men waiting for Juan Antonio Lavalleja who was to arrive with more than thirty prisoners given to him in Bajada del Paraná. The majority of Manuel’s soldiers are blacks,” reported Rivera’s intelligence.⁶⁵⁶ We should note that a slave of Lavalleja was captured while subverting black troops stationed in Colonia –halfway between Montevideo and Entre Ríos– in February 1833. After imprisonment, Laserna and Duplessis were deported later in 1833, but the Police recorded their return to Montevideo in 1835-1836.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵⁴ AGN-U, AMHN, Caja 26, José M. Navajas to Fructuoso Rivera, June 27, 1833; AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 842, Report of the Police Chief, May 28, 1833; AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1220, Note on the military summary against the rebels of the prison, October 8 and 18, 1833.

⁶⁵⁵ Pivel Devoto *Historia de los partidos políticos*, 101.

⁶⁵⁶ AGN-U, AyMHN, Caja 26, Julián Laguna to Fructuoso Rivera, June 1, 1833.

⁶⁵⁷ For Duplessis see AGN-U, AGA, Libro 945, October 31, 1835, and for Laserna Libro 949, September 19, 1836.

In September 1836, the Police Chief notified the Secretary of Government that Laserna had arrived in Montevideo just after the Battle of Carpintería, when Oribe defeated Rivera, and that Laserna claimed he came with the troops of General Manuel Britos. Laserna argued he was protected by *Blanco* military leaders following Lavalleja and Oribe.⁶⁵⁸ The Secretary of Government ordered the Police to keep Laserna jailed while waiting confirmation regarding the military status of Laserna. He was prepared to hand Laserna to the Secretary of War in case he asked for him. This suggests that the slave conspiracy of May 1833 actually fitted in the uprisings of Lavalleja against Rivera. Black infantrymen had supported Lavalleja which led the government to disband this unit in 1832. Lavalleja received further black support in Argentina for preparing a new coup against Rivera, though it remains unclear if these black soldiers were former Uruguayan infantrymen or were given by Rosas to Lavalleja just like the abovementioned prisoners of Bajada del Paraná.

Less than two months after the prohibition on African-based associations issued in May, the Police Chief called on these groups to participate in the third anniversary of the Constitution –a celebration lasting six days. The police requested that “the different African nations, presided over by their headmen, join the festivity with their public dances. The first and last day [of celebration] entertainment will be allowed in the interior of their houses with police permission.”⁶⁵⁹ The authorities promoted African celebrations for patriotic ends by softening the restrictions over these associations for these days only. The police also requested that masters allow slaves to participate in festivities. As happened during the *Fiestas Mayas*, the government released prisoners of minor offenses and commuted death sentences, a practice rooted in the colonial era. The police requested that shops be closed between ten in the morning to five in the afternoon and allowed the use of masks and

⁶⁵⁸ AGN-U, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 888, Police Chief to Secretary of Government, September 24, 1836.

⁶⁵⁹ *El Fanal*, Montevideo, July 19, 1833, 1.

disguises under written permission, which turned the patriotic festivity into a winter carnival. The government needed dancers and street musicians to fulfill public expectations of proper festivities. In so doing, they encouraged attractions such as theater shows, parades, public and private dances, carnival groups, and fireworks.⁶⁶⁰ By bringing their music and dance, African-based associations were part of this tradition of public display. Although a group of Africans had participated in a slave conspiracy less than two months before, the official commemoration placed African-based associations and the large slave population in the official program of festivities.

While the police encouraged black participation in the patriotic celebration of 1833, all other activities of African-based associations continued to be restricted, including the Day of Kings in January, 1834. That year, Molina produced a variety of writings that attempted to reestablish both the Congo association and the Day of Kings celebration. His writings described the police actions against the Congo in 1833: “The Police Chief ordered that the meetings of blacks be held outdoors in the cold winter of 1833. He took their house based on denunciations from neighbors –miserable disposition against the very same people who had defended his life and those neighbors’ lives.”⁶⁶¹ Molina pointed out that neighbors were ungrateful to the black soldiers who defended them –and the country– a few years before during a war against Brazil. Early in 1834, the Secretary of Government received his petition stating:

Your Excellency has seen the fidelity of Negroes in all the Americas since 1808, of those of Buenos Aires since 1813, and of the Blacks of this State since 1814. Benign Sir, have you ever seen any deceitful action from these unhappy men? Does the citizen Don Luis Lamas [Police Chief] ignore this? No Sir, that is what I know and which stimulates my satisfaction of leading the peace and happiness of my clients. [...] Since it is of the knowledge of the Excellency Vice President Perez and Mr. Chief Don Luis Lamas, I cannot

⁶⁶⁰ *El Fanal*, Montevideo, July 30, 1833, 1. “Comparsas” were groups of carnival street dancers and musicians.

⁶⁶¹ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 146 and 150.

omit how noisy was an sneeze of these Negroes the night they took the Cabildo and [they shoot] the violent cannons! Capes, hats, and weapons were found in the surroundings of the Customs House and on the streets [...] ⁶⁶²

Molina included a brief reference of the uprising of Lavalleja in 1832, when black troops took the Cabildo but finally supported the government, reminding authorities that black infantrymen were loyal to the government as freedmen and had supported the local rulers during the revolutionary period. Molina wrote other requests which were finally approved by the Police Chief in November of 1834. In the new petition, Molina drew links of gratitude from the Homeland (*Patria*) to black soldiers. In trying to obtain official authorization, Molina drew the most detailed description of an African-based association in Montevideo. Both the handwritten petition and the printout are among his manuscripts, which is probably the first work of an Afro-descendant published in Montevideo. Both at the beginning and the end of his plea, Molina mentioned black military participation in the shaping of independent Uruguay –the *Patria*. This is not the first appeal on behalf of Africans or Afro-descendants using this strategy.

In 1832, the *Hermano Mayor* of the Saint Benito confraternity, Juan Cipriano, requested clemency on behalf of the slave Juan de Dios Viera, who was sentenced to death. José Cipriano asked that this sentenced to be commuted given “the constant, faithful, and distinguished services of those of his class and color to the achievement of the country’s independence. [...] Those of my class present their service to the cause of Independence of the Republic to favor this unhappy man ...” José Cipriano added that those of “his class” deserved some merit since “there are no exceptions of classes and people in an enlightened and fair government.” Viera was a member of the Saint Benito brotherhood, a group that fully supported this request. Military engagement provided black leaders and commoners with a new language to carve out the full extension of constitutional rights in Uruguay. In

⁶⁶² AGN-U, Jefatura de Policía de Montevideo, Caja 3, Jacinto Molina to Police Chief, March 10, 1834.

1834, free black Juan Luis petitioned for release from the remaining seven months of imprisonment because “he had the glory of belonging to the Republican army contributing in part to the freedom of the Homeland.” In 1837, the black cavalry soldier Antonio Costa killed a white cavalryman. The Defender of the Poor and Slaves asserted that Costa had “devoted his life to save the homeland.” The initial death sentence was commuted to ten years in prison and public works.⁶⁶³ Thus, prior military service could be used for free blacks and slaves when they found themselves in trouble.

In the case of Molina and the Congo, this is the first time that a whole group claimed benefits on the basis of prior military service. In other words, the beneficiaries were not troubled individuals but collective organizations of free blacks and slaves. Molina describes the flag of the Congo association as comprising coat of Arms of Uruguay and the “seven stars” representing the provinces forming the Congo provinces. This is the first mention of African-based associations and celebrations using the new symbols of the republic, which the police tried to prohibit as seen in the next chapter. Molina’s appeal was successful; he then published an account of his plea as was the fashion among lawyers who won famous cases in this period. Black celebrations resumed in January of 1835 after Molina successful appeal, but new voices attacked these gatherings as winter approached. In May 1835, the Justice of Peace, *Juez de Paz*, of the southern district where most African celebrations took place, complained about the inefficacy of the police in stopping these meetings.⁶⁶⁴

Many neighbors complain about the continuous distress they suffer most nights because of the funeral wakes, dances or *candombes* of Negroes. I have called on the Lieutenant Alcaldes to see if they could eliminate this harm which interfere with the relief of people in the night destined to sleep. They told me they couldn’t stop this because when they have tried, [blacks] show them licenses issued by the police superintendant. [These meetings] start with

⁶⁶³ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 826, José Cipriano to Secretary of Government, February 20, 1832; Caja 895, Juan Luis to Secretary of Government, July 18, 1834; Caja 899A, File of Antonio Costa, August 17, 1837.

⁶⁶⁴ AGN-U, Jefatura de Policía de Montevideo, Caja 9, Luis Herrera y Oliva to Police Chief, May 12, 1835.

low whispers and end with high and tuneless drumming and racket, which I tell you so you can remedy this abuse.

African drums still continued to be heard inside the town as later that month they participated in the anniversary of the May Revolution. The paper *El Nacional* considered that while *bailes de negros* were necessary because they entertained slaves and gave them temporary relief, their long duration and their immorality caused problems for the families who depended on the service of slaves.⁶⁶⁵ The paper stated that the previous Thursday's drumming and songs had continued after sunset, which was prohibited. The following year, *El Nacional* renewed attacks against black celebrations between the Day of Kings and Carnival: "Native Africans offer a disgusting picture during the festive days, in which they represent the memories of their old state and [carry out] entertainments that contradict the culture and taste of this country."⁶⁶⁶

El Nacional was published by Andres Lamas, who saw the aesthetic side of these celebrations as relics of barbarism. His arguments were designed to ensure the emergence of what he saw as modern and civilized nation-state. Most characteristics of African-based associations contrasted with the republican institutions given that kings and queens ruled these groups. According to this view, black celebrations were doomed to disappear in order to promote the progress of national culture. Lamas particularly deemed it improper that Africans wore military uniforms during their celebrations; "In the days devoted to customs of the different nations or associations, we have seen innumerable men of this class running in the streets. They wear the uniform which distinguished our brave men and bear the arms which conquered independence in order to appeal to a phantasmagoric grandeur." Africans and their descendants wore military uniforms during the black celebrations showing the impact of conscription on African community life. However, Lamas and other members of

⁶⁶⁵ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N°47, May 30, 1835, 2.

⁶⁶⁶ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 250, February 4, 1836, 2.

the elite considered it improper that the national uniform became part of African celebrations. Uniforms represented the new status attained by blacks after the independence. Not only was their military rank shown off in indoor African celebrations, but also in society at large during the Day of Kings. *El Nacional* pushed to reinforce the edicts against these celebrations, and to expel African associations to the outer edges of Montevideo. Just two days after the publication of the last article on African celebrations, the Secretary of Government ordered the Police Chief of Montevideo to “regulate the festivities of societies of Negroes, prohibiting the use of the national flag and rosette with coat of arms by them,”⁶⁶⁷ which indicates the use of symbols of the nation, *Patria*, by Africans in their celebrations. The Police Chief crafted a provisory regulation relocating these celebrations and detailing the pieces of clothing which were now prohibited:

It is unjust that the southern neighborhood of the coast suffers and tolerates the racket and disorder caused by their meeting in the festive days encouraged by the dance known as Candombe. In order to put an end to the constant claims to the Police attention, the Chief determines the following: 1. Nations or societies of Negroes are prohibited to use in any of their festivities the Flag, Coat of Arms, rosette, or any piece of the national uniform. 2. From Sunday 14 on, these associations are prohibited to perform any kind of dance inside the capital. 3. For the festive days, they will be assigned to their meetings the exterior area from the Gate of San Juan to the old cemetery. 4. All meetings referred by the last article should finish by sunset. 5. After that time, all people of that class found in a dance without written license from the Police will be arrested [...].⁶⁶⁸

The Police who had wanted to concentrate African celebrations in the southern sector within the city in 1830, now pushed these festivities beyond the city walls –from the gate of San Juan to the former location of the cemetery. But use of military uniforms and national flags were central concerns of the police. Black infantrymen wearing military garments were a familiar sight not only in Montevideo but also in the countryside. Clothing was one of the

⁶⁶⁷ AGN-U, Jefatura de Policía de Montevideo, Caja 14, Index of Official Communications, February 6, 1836.

⁶⁶⁸ AGN-U, Jefatura de Policía de Montevideo, Caja 8, Edict on African associations, February 9, 1836.

basic aspects of material life in mid-nineteenth century when very few material objects defined class, race and social status. Wealth meant both quantity and quality of clothing. Thus, they were external signs of social networks and identities. Basque artist Juan M. Besnes e Irigoyen (1789-1865) moved to Montevideo in 1809. He produced a series of drawings of the camp of President Rivera in Durazno in 1830. Figure 5.1. illustrates the white uniform's which were the norm for the Uruguayan infantry from independence to the Triple Alliance war against Paraguay (1864-1870).



Figure 5.1. Infantry Battalion led by Colonel Lavandera, 1830. Juan Manuel Besnes e Irigoyen. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo.

These uniforms were also synonymous with freedom. In 1834, Isabel Herrera de Buela denounced Domingo Herrera as her slave ⁶⁶⁹ While he had served under the command of Rufino Bauzá in the times of Artigas, Domingo then deserted to the Portuguese who delivered him back to his mistress. According to her version, Domingo then hired himself out in the area surrounding Montevideo but never fought against the Portuguese. Her mistress

⁶⁶⁹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1224, File of Isidro Herrera o Buela, February 4, 1834.

wrote that Domingo “came into Montevideo with his uniform and arms claiming freedom...” in 1829. He had kept the uniform of the Artigas infantry for twelve years and used it as evidence of freedom. While the white infantry uniforms were of simple design, other uniforms could be rich and elaborate. Figure 5.2. shows a black soldier of the presidential personal escort in full military regalia. He brandishes a riding crop in his right hand, which implies he was a cavalryman. Other drawings of Besnes depict this type of soldier as part of the cavalry escorting President Rivera.



**Figure 5.2. Escort of President Fructuoso Rivera.
Juan Manuel Besnes e Irigoyen, 1830. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo**

A highly naturalist depiction of a black cavalry spearman was painted by Juan Manuel Blanes (1830-1901) most likely in the late nineteenth-century, as shown in Figure 5.3. This spearman wears white trousers with a red *chiripá*—a garment worn over trousers to protect his lower-body from friction of days-long horse-riding. As with the personal guard of

President Rivera in Figure 5.2., the upper-body of this cavalryman was protected by a metallic vest. The red *chiripá* as well as the additional red details in the hat of this spearman provides identification with the *Colorado* (red) party. His clothing suggests the period when the supporters of Fructuoso Rivera identified themselves with the color red in the late 1830s, and when military uniform began to display the identifications of caudillo party politics.

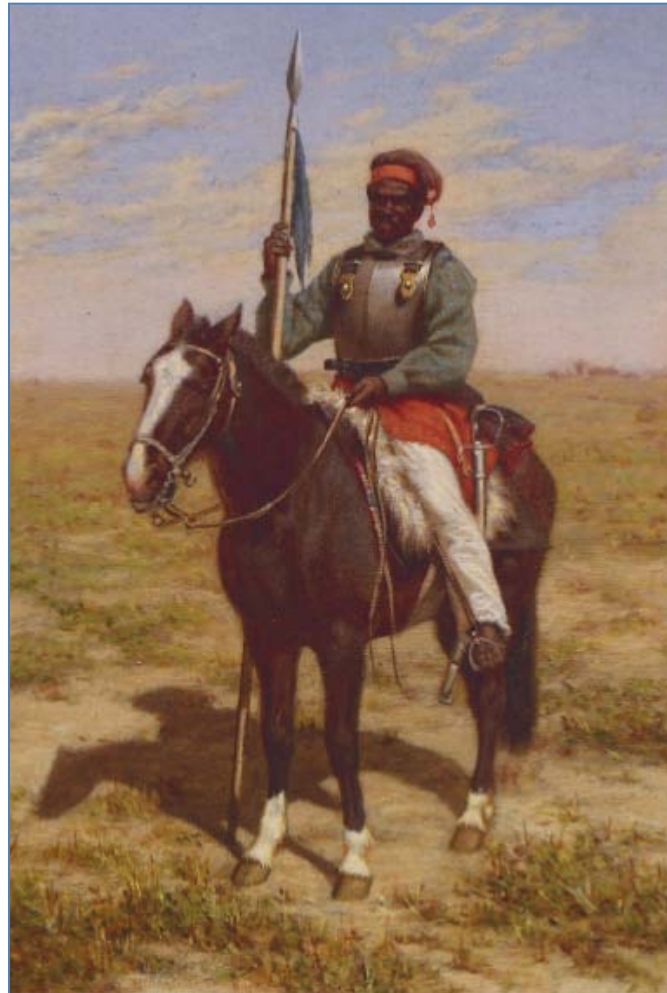


Figure 5.3 Juan Manuel Blanes, *Lancero de la época de Rivera*, n/d,
Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo

Shielded by their uniforms, soldiers could defend themselves from police harassment by seeking protection in their barracks, by overriding police authority, and by getting help from their officers. Records show the concern of policemen when facing black soldiers. In 1831, “five armed blacks wearing no military badges” were requested to identify themselves

by policemen. A black sergeant replied that they were chasing deserters. These soldiers refused to be delivered to the lieutenant of police and insulted the policemen, but the corporal of police “moderated” the situation without starting a fight.⁶⁷⁰ Fellow soldiers of the pardo Francisco Allende rescued him from policemen in June 1837. While initially three policemen overpowered Francisco, who resisted with his knife, five armed soldiers rescued him and the policemen “prudently yielded to him to avoid fatal consequences.”⁶⁷¹ An unnamed infantryman took refuge in the fort after insulting a police captain, who in turn was welcomed by the guard’s spears positioning to attack him when he approached the fort in January 1839.⁶⁷² In July, the Police arrested a black infantryman while he was trying to stab a police watchman with his bayonet. Another free black was arrested for carrying a bayonet and pretending to be a sergeant in April 1837. The national uniform saved some of these black soldiers from the police as well as other freedmen who pretended to be officers. The Police expected deference from free blacks and slaves, but sometimes authorities met open resistance from black soldiers.

The same day that the Police issued the edict on African associations in 1836, the paper *El Nacional* renewed its complaints against the celebrations of African kings. The paper denounced police tolerance toward African-based festivities, and the mixture of alcohol consumption along with the display of knives, swords, and guns by black soldiers—a picture that mirrors the descriptions of association members attending celebrations in military regalia mentioned above. The paper called for the prohibition of these meetings, or at least, for the banning of free blacks from carrying weapons during celebrations.⁶⁷³ The paper denounced that members of African associations not only caused injury to each other, but also to “decent

⁶⁷⁰ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1186, Secretary of Government to Secretary of War, May 31, 1831.

⁶⁷¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno 898, Police Chief to Secretary of Government, June 20, 1837.

⁶⁷² AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Guerra, Caja 1284, Casalla to Luis Lamas, January 30, 1839.

⁶⁷³ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 252, February 6th 1836, 3.

people” attending these celebrations, which evince white spectators in public summer festivities.

On February 3, 1836, the Police arrested twelve free blacks among whom were the Congo King Antonio de la Rosa Brito, and Antonio Laguna, the king of Basundi, one of the provinces of Congo. Renewed frictions among these associations seem to have provided arguments to those asking for more restrictive policies on black celebrations as this arrest preceded press accusations. Antonio Laguna was released the following day. He requested the release of Antonio de la Rosa Brito as he presented “a license issued by the Police Chief to celebrate festivities [and] narrate[d] the revolt of part of the subjects of the Emperor Congo [...] [Antonio de la Rosa Brito had] presented himself to the Police Chief to request measures to end these anarchists, but the Police jailed [him].”⁶⁷⁴ The Secretary of Government replied that, “in future, to avoid the disorder and excess of which blacks complain,” the Police Chief will create a new regulation. This turned out to be the general ban against military uniforms and the ousting of African “nations” from the city.

The police edict against African-based celebrations seems to have changed the target of official actions. The Police made approximately the same number of monthly detentions in February 1836 as in January, but there is a different balance of the targeted arrests. While in January the Police arrested 38 free blacks and pardos and 76 slaves, in February they arrested 64 free blacks and pardos and 49 slaves. This increase of free black and pardo arrests may reflect the application of the more restrictive measures against African-based associations. Table 5.1. shows increasing number of slaves arrested in January, which is likely related to the Day of Kings. Before February 1836, slaves outnumbered free blacks in numbers of

⁶⁷⁴ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 944, February 3, 1836; Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 881, Plea of Antonio Laguna, February 4, 1836.

monthly arrests, but this changed in February and March. In these months, most surprising is the significance of arrested free blacks and pardos as expressed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. Monthly arrests by race and status, Police of Montevideo, December 1835 - March 1836

Month	White	Free Pardo and Black	Enslaved Pardo and Black	Total
December 1835	81	41	54	176
January 1836	86	38	76	200
February 1836	98	64	49	211
March 1836	108	68	57	233
Average percentage	45%	26%	29%	100%

Source: AGN-U, AGA, Libro 944 and 945. Most arrested people were men. People recorded as “Indians” were not included here but they were a tiny minority of arrests.

While the free and enslaved colored population of Montevideo did not surpass 25 percent of the total in this period, they represented more than half of those detained monthly. According to Andrés Lamas, the population of Montevideo was 23,000 in 1835 of which the black population accounted for 25 percent.⁶⁷⁵ These figures do not explicitly mention free blacks who were assumed to form a minority of perhaps five to ten percent of the population. Apart from those who freed themselves –largely women– by manumission or by action of their masters, this group comprised the men who benefited from the recruitment of slaves by Artigas in 1816 and by the patriotic government before 1830. Free blacks and pardos probably hid from population counts and are thus underrepresented in the demographic data. However, this group could not hide from the police actions, which particularly targeted them more often than any other group.⁶⁷⁶

In June 1839, the new *Colorado* Chief of Police Luis Lamas tried to regulate African-based associations for a second time, which meant that the edict of 1836 was not effective.

Once again, the police prohibited “all candombes with drumming” inside the town and they

⁶⁷⁵ Arredondo, “Los Apuntes estadísticos,” 25-7 and 56; Oscar Villa, Gerardo Mendive, *La prensa y los constituyentes en el Uruguay de 1830*. Montevideo: Biblioteca Nacional, 1980, 85 and 146.

⁶⁷⁶ In 1836, the Police arrested a white militia corporal who pretended to be a policeman to extract money from free blacks and slaves threatening them with prison. AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 884, Police report, May 30, 1836.

allowed them only on the southern shore outside the walls.⁶⁷⁷ In August, Chief Lamas ordered a list of all leaders of African-based associations and summoned them to a meeting. He wanted to establish where *candombes* could take place. No records exist of the list or the meeting. Chief Lamas pointed out that it was “time to apply this edict since it is unfair to remain indifferent to the only entertainment that [slaves] had on festive days, after long hours of labor in which they can celebrate according to their uses and customs in total and absolute liberty. . . .”⁶⁷⁸ Chief Lamas respectfully mentioned slaves’ “uses and customs,” which suggests the existence of some dialogue among police authorities and black associations. Drumming inside the city nevertheless continued as the press renewed complaints in February 1842: “We have received repeated complains about the tambos of Negroes existing inside of this city [. . .] these tambos are actually a servitude imposed by a few people on the rest of society.”⁶⁷⁹ *El Nacional* shows the failure of police initiatives against African-based associations. As twelve hundred former slaves underwent military training from December 1842 to January 1843, the Day of Kings was celebrated in military regalia. Now the police targeted only blacks and pardos who avoided conscription, while no new restrictions were applied to African “nations.”⁶⁸⁰

In the first phase of the siege of Montevideo, dances were prohibited intermittently and then permitted as partying and drunkenness easily –and dangerously– arose among armed men from many different origins (French, Italian, Spanish, British, Argentine, and Uruguayans both black and white) inside Montevideo. In May 1847, the Secretary of Government prohibited all dance gatherings as a response to the increasing menace of a military coup. By July, as this threat dissolved, new licenses were issued to organize dance

⁶⁷⁷ *El Constitucional*, Montevideo, N° 123, June 28th 1839, 2.

⁶⁷⁸ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N° 226, August 23th 1839, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ *El Nacional*, Montevideo, N°948, February 5th 1842, 2. “tambo” refers to “baile de negros” and “candombe.”

⁶⁸⁰ Borucki et al, *Esclavitud y Trabajo*, 44-51.

gatherings. Francisco Antonio, “soldier of the Second Battalion... ask[s] permission to open a house of *candombe* with the name Lubolo [Libolo] in the street Buenos Aires N°29.” At least two other African leaders followed this lead, and all of them called *candombe* their gatherings by 1847. José Machado “President of the Mina Nation...asked permission to have *candombe* all festive days,” and as did Francisco Ferrer “President of the Tacua Nation”⁶⁸¹ All requests were approved. Thus, African-based associations continued to meet during the siege of Montevideo. Some African leaders even requested freedom from intervention by the Police captain of the district where they lived. In 1850, Antonio Castillo requested a license, in the name of the President of the Mina Hausa, to “dance in a house all festive days without asking the Police Captain of this district.”⁶⁸²

The disputes within the Congo continued through the 1840s as some members quit the association. After twelve years of service as the Congo King, Antonio de la Rosa Brito and two councilors presented a petition to ban the activities of free black Francisco de los Santos, who had separated from the Congo to create his own association in October 1841. Brito presented to the Police the same documents that Molina had produced to reopen the Congo in 1834 as well as another police license issued in 1841.⁶⁸³ While Police declared that the Congo association was “original and authentic” and thus, “is the only one of this Nation authorized to have meetings and festivities,” it did not forbid the activities of Francisco de los Santos. Some members of the Congo organization successfully seceded in February 1850. They stated that they wanted to establish a separate place to carry out funeral wakes. Pedro Obes –who had been a member of the Congo since the early 1830s– and Pedro Pimentel

⁶⁸¹ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 972, Francisco Antonio to Secretary of Government, July 17, 1847; José Machado to Secretary of Government, July 24, 1847; Francisco Ferrer to Secretary of Government, July 25, 1847.

⁶⁸² AGN-AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, Marzo de 1850, [Solicitud de Antonio Castillo], 27 de marzo de 1850.

⁶⁸³ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 932, Request of the Congo Gunga, October 16, 1841.

presented their case to the Secretary of Government stating that they had founded a separate association in October 1849.⁶⁸⁴ They had obtained approval from nineteen African-based associations of Montevideo but not from the Congo Gunga, which refusal led the Police chief to withhold his license. The Police Chief presented a different version since he asserted that Obes, Pimentel and Antonio Mendoza requested permission "...stating that they have already obtained authorization from their countrymen of the Nation Congo Gunga," which proved to be untrue. Soon afterwards, Joaquín Sosa, Lorenzo Martínez, Antonio Bautista, Juan Blanque, Joaquín Alvarez, José María and José Castro presented themselves to the Police as the "members of the Junta de Congos de Gunga." They claimed to have been selected by the deceased King Antonio de la Rosa Brito. The Police Chief Manuel Solsona confirmed this information by asking other African leaders and then organized a meeting with the two parties in conflict. After this meeting, Solsona banned the new association since the older one deemed it prejudicial. The Secretary of Government, Manuel Herrera y Obes, asked the Police Chief to hold a new meeting, which led to a new negative from both the Congo and the Police Chief. In March, the Secretary of Government issued a license for the new association ignoring both the Police Chief and the Congo de Gunga. It is likely that some personal association linked Manuel Herrera y Obes with former slave Pedro Obes.

Twenty African-based associations existed in Montevideo by 1850 even though –or perhaps because of– the Great Siege. Seven seats composed the "Junta de Congo de Gunga" both in 1834 and 1850, which illustrates a stable pattern of government. The Congo King Brito was in office from the late 1820s to the early 1840s. But the Congo was not the only association divided by conflicting leaderships. In 1850, the headman of the Bolo (Libolo), the same Francisco Antonio noted above, wrote that "...with the object of contributing to the union of the members of the same nationality, [I] had decided to repair this fracture with the

⁶⁸⁴ AGN-AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, March 1850, [File about Congo Gunga's escition].

old association led by the King of Bolos, but a Brazilian who accidentally is heading the new association in [my] name opposed [unification];” thus, Francisco asked the Police to “order the effective union of both houses and punish the aforementioned Brazilian acting in opposition to order and Justice.”⁶⁸⁵ A consensus style of government rather than a monarchy is apparent in these groups as Francisco, who founded the new house of Bolo in 1847, could not control this association.

Printed complaints against the African-based associations as well as renewed police efforts to move them reemerged after the Great Siege. In November 1852, the paper *El Nacional* published a letter from the “neighbors of the south” of Montevideo complaining about the drumming –probably rehearsals for the incoming Day of Kings: “after the second day of candombe, the fishermen cannot find a single fish since the drumming drove them away.”⁶⁸⁶ This is the first evidence in print indicating that these celebrations survived in the southern shore of the old town. In March 1853, the paper *El Noticioso* requested the police to remove these associations from urbanized areas. The paper railed against the immorality of these meetings, which, as it was argued, led the now all-free female domestic servants to depravity: “We heard the complaints of people about the abuse executed in candombes or houses destined to dances of colored people. We believe the Police must move these dances out of the town and prohibit all-night meetings that produce the misconduct of female house servants.”⁶⁸⁷ Immorality, public disorder and labor indiscipline summarized the attitude of the elites toward African celebrations, continuing the discourse produced by papers in the 1830s.

These were the years of disciplining the recently freed population; thus, official attempts to control African-based associations intersected with policies toward former slaves

⁶⁸⁵ AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 982, Francisco Antonio to Police Chief, February 7, 1850.

⁶⁸⁶ *El Noticioso*, Montevideo, N°39, 19 de noviembre de 1852, 2.

⁶⁸⁷ *El Noticioso*, Montevideo, N° 140, March 29th 1853, 3.

during the post-abolition era. In October 1852, the newspapers demanded a police regulation of the now all-free domestic workers. *El Noticioso* announced the determination of Chief of Police Francisco Lebrón to control domestic workers, who then issued a racially-defined edict to regulate black women's labor relations, and to discipline those with unknown occupation. *El Noticioso* praised the edict against black women, but the paper *La Constitución* criticized it since the edict tainted the Republic's Constitutional principles with racial discrimination. In November, the Police issued a new edict to regulate domestic laborers without racial targeting.⁶⁸⁸ Police records would include all domestic workers, no matter what color they were.⁶⁸⁹ The requirements for black women now applied to all house workers. In 1853, the police published a census of domestic workers: 83 percent of whom were black, as well as 79 percent of laundresses, 81 percent of cooks, and 60 percent of wet nurses.⁶⁹⁰

The Police also renewed actions against African-based associations in the 1850s. Francisco Lebrón, who was the Montevideo's Chief of Police during the brief government of Giró, reinvigorated edicts related to labor. The previous controversy in the press related to the targeting black women explains why Lebrón consulted the Secretary of Government about the prospective prohibition of *candombes* in 1853. Lebrón wrote that, "The dances of blacks known as *candombes* which takes place during festive days as an old custom in the middle of the town, notably bothers the nearby neighborhood, because of the number of participants, the noise of the instruments, and the complaints of neighbors that this Department repetitively receives."⁶⁹¹ In June, a new edict prohibited *candombes* inside the town.⁶⁹² A

⁶⁸⁸ *El Noticioso*, Montevideo, N° 9, October 13, and N° 20, November 27th 1852, 1; *La Constitución*, Montevideo, N° 94, October 25, 1852, 2 and N° 101, November 4, 1852, 3.

⁶⁸⁹ *La Constitución*, Montevideo, N° 109, November 13th 1852, 3.

⁶⁹⁰ *El Comercio del Plata*, Montevideo, 2185, June 1, 1853.

⁶⁹¹ AGN-AGA, MdeGob, Caja 1006, Police Chief to Secretary of Government, May 7, 1853.

⁶⁹² *El Comercio del Plata*, Montevideo, N°2192, June 9, 1853, 3.

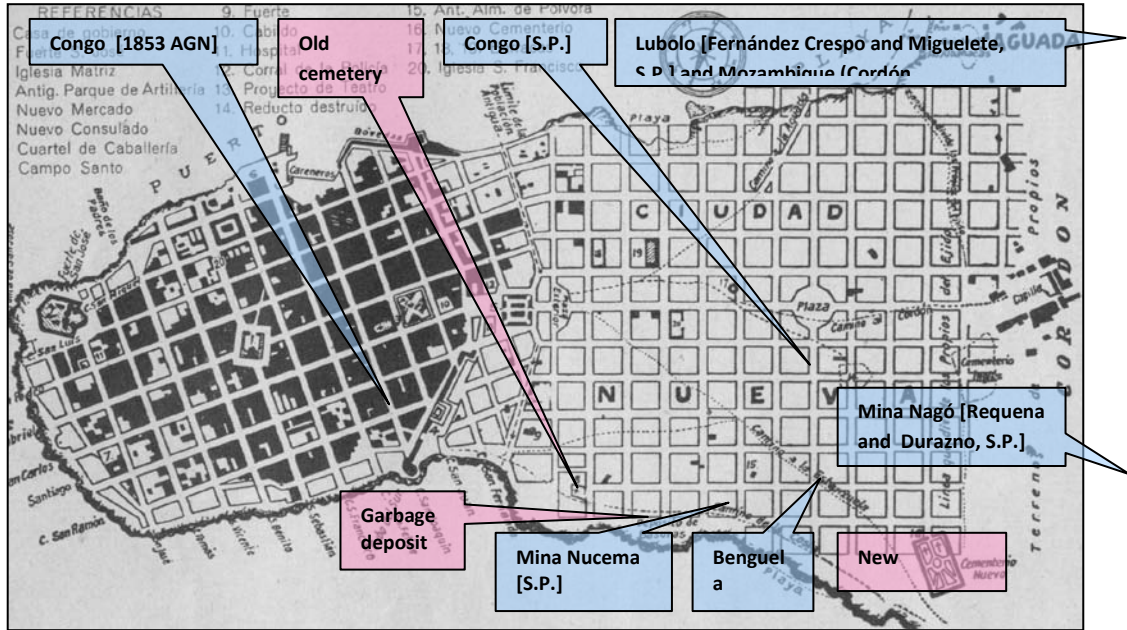
successful coup against the government of Giró made use of black infantry battalions in July 1853, which may have affected the enforcement of the edict on African “nations.”

Newspapers’ descriptions of the Day of Kings published in the early 1860s point out that this celebration moved to the southern shore right outside of the old town. In 1860, the paper *La Nación* identified the heart of the festivity at the streets Camacuá, Florida and Convención, while in 1862 this same paper pointed out that it was possible to see “dances of Congo, Cambunda and Benguela...” inside of the old city in the past years but they were now rare.⁶⁹³ Antonio Pereira mentioned that *candombes* occurred outside the town during the second half of the nineteenth century. He stated that African-based festivities were only permitted at the outskirts of the city. Isidoro de Maria places *candombes* inside the town from 1808 to 1829, before the beginning of the independence period.⁶⁹⁴ African-based associations and their celebrations moved to the new areas of *Ciudad Nueva* and *Cordón* during the second half of the nineteenth century to what currently constitute the historic black neighborhoods of Montevideo: *Barrio Sur* and *Palermo*.

Map. 3. Place of some *salas de nación* in Montevideo. Second half of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁹³ *La Nación*, Montevideo, January 7, 1860 and January 8, 1862.

⁶⁹⁴ Pereira, *Recuerdos de mi tiempo*, 146-147; De Maria, *Montevideo Antiguo*, Vol. 1, 274-282.



Sources: AGN-U, AGA, Gobierno, Caja 1003, File on the death of Manuel de los Santos, February 1853. Lino Suárez Peña, 23; Olivera and Varese, 112.

Map 3 shows that house of the Congo association was located inside the old town in 1853 just in the middle of the old black district identified in censuses and police records of the 1830s.⁶⁹⁵ This association moved itself, or was moved, to the south of the *Ciudad Nueva* (New City) in the second half of the century. In this map, black squares represent urbanized areas in *Ciudad Vieja* (Old Town) in 1830s and 1840s, while white squares represent the urbanization projected for *Ciudad Nueva* which began in the 1850s. By the end of the century, all African-based associations were in the *Ciudad Nueva* –the area of expansion adjacent to the old walls of Montevideo.⁶⁹⁶ Open spaces still predominated as it not heavily urbanized by the mid-nineteenth century. The southern district was unattractive because of the proximity of the old and new cemeteries as well as the garbage dump. In the second half of the century, African-based groups moved to the outer southern edge of Montevideo. These associations and their celebrations resisted coercive attempts by the press and police alike

⁶⁹⁵ AGN-AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Caja 1003, February 1853, [File about the death of Manuel de los Santos].

⁶⁹⁶ Suarez Peña, *La Raza Negra en Uruguay*; Tomás Olivera and Juan C Varese, *Los candombes de reyes. Las llamadas*, Montevideo, Ed. El Galeón, 2000, 112.

during the 1830s and 1840s. The analysis of the principal black community's festivity, the Day of Kings, sheds light on how this celebration became the main summer festivity of the city, showcasing blackness for a white audience, just at the time that African-based associations came under police attack.

5.3. *The Day of Kings*

Apart from participating in religious and patriotic festivities, Africans and their descendants had prominent roles in carnival in Montevideo. Historian José P. Barrán expressed the egalitarian character of that celebration, which momentarily disrupted class, gender, and race barriers. Foreign travelers and local journalists pointed out the ethnic diversity that exploded in carnival. To keep the social order, several restrictions on the carnival were enforced from 1830 to 1870. The police limited the modalities of celebration and its length, by regulating the use of masks, water, eggs, flour, and weapons.⁶⁹⁷

Newspapers first make reference to Africans in the 1834 carnival in Montevideo.⁶⁹⁸

However, the main black festivity of the city, which drew thousands of white spectators, was the Day of Kings. In 1888, Daniel Muñoz recounted that “Candombes, which was the great attraction of Montevideo in the first days of each year, is among the lost customs. It was January 6, the festivity of the Magi Kings, which was celebrated with great solemnity by the thousands of blacks who lived in Montevideo.”⁶⁹⁹

Initially, the Day of Kings included a mass at the Cathedral in front of the altar of Saint Balthazar, which was offered by the kings and queens of the African-based associations. These leaders and their followers, as well as spectators, paraded in the streets towards the southern district of Montevideo –a festive procession lasting four or five blocks.

⁶⁹⁷ José P. Barrán, *Historia de la sensibilidad en el Uruguay*. Montevideo: EBO, 1989, Vol. 1, 120, 223.

⁶⁹⁸ *La Matraca*, Montevideo, N° 5, 13 de marzo de 1832, p. 3.

⁶⁹⁹ Muñoz, *Crónicas de un Fin de Siglo* 239.

Finally, they gathered for an outdoor dance in an open field where the old city walls met the Río de la Plata just inside of the fortification. In 1827, the French naturalist Alcides D'Orbigny arrived in Montevideo as a part of a larger scientific expedition to South America. Fortunately, he was in Montevideo for the celebration of the Day of Kings.

On 6 January, the Day of Kings, strange ceremonies attracted our attention. All the blacks born on the coast of Africa gathered together in tribes, each one electing a king a queen. Costumed in the most original manner, with the most brilliant outfits they could find, preceded by the subjects of their respective tribes, these monarchs for a day went first to mass and then paraded through the city; and gathered at last in a small plaza near the Market, everyone performed, each one in his own way, a dance characteristic of their nation. I saw a rapid succession of war dances, representations of agricultural labor, and steps of the most lascivious type. There, more than six hundred blacks appeared to have regained for a moment their nationality, in the heart of that imaginary country, whose memory alone ... in the midst of that noisy saturnalia of another world, made them forget, for one single day of pleasure, the pains and sufferings of long years of slavery.⁷⁰⁰

This description points out the diversity of dances performed by Africans according to their origins, as well as to the massive black attendance. Thirty years later, a newspaper of Montevideo recounted two of the many dances performed at the Day of Kings: first the *chica*, “a passionate dance...the old drama of love” in which a man danced to seduce a woman, and second, the *bambula* “an imitation of military movements, a fencing made with sticks...a dance of spears drumming against shields.”⁷⁰¹ A late-nineteenth century writer and witness of mid-century black celebrations also recounted the variety of African-based dances:

They were not two or five candombes, but fifteen or twenty, one each half block, dancing all differently. There were Mina Negroes simulating warrior movements with sticks which clapped each other with the movement. There were Angolans making tricks with their feet and gymnastics with their arms in front of black women. Without stepping outside of their place, they moved their hips and followed the dance with their hands, singing all at the same time in chorus...This was performed as religious ritual rather than entertainment or extravaganza.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ D'Orbigny, *Viaje a la América Meridional*, 34. I have taken the translation from Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 25.

⁷⁰¹ *El Comercio del Plata*, Montevideo, January 21, 1857.

⁷⁰² Muñoz, *Crónicas de un Fin de Siglo*, 240.

In the 1830s and 1840s, African-based celebrations included warrior-like dancing just at the time in which warfare pervaded the country. Men and women danced separately in groups, sometimes in isolation and others in combination, but they also participated in the European-style dance-of-two as couples.⁷⁰³ While white attendants noticed the African characteristics, these celebrations were a mix of European and African forms, represented by the master of ceremonies, the *Juez de Fiestas*. This master of ceremony led the dancing outside of the association with a large cane or stick.⁷⁰⁴ He resembled the master of ceremonies of Spanish ball dances called the *bastonero* because of the staff he carried.⁷⁰⁵ In African-based celebrations in Montevideo, the master of ceremonies was a position which required coordination of dance and singing since he led the chorus as well as established the order of dancing. As seen in the previous chapter, the first image portraying African-based celebrations illustrates this combination of gender-defined groups of dances as well as couples dancing in 1843. At the center of the illustration appears the *Juez de Fiestas*.



Figure 5.4. El Tambor de Linea, Montevideo, Issue 2, [March] 1843.

⁷⁰³ Chasteen first notices this combination. See Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots*.

⁷⁰⁴ Muñoz, *Crónicas de un Fin de Siglo* 241, Rossi, *Cosas de Negros*, 69.

⁷⁰⁵ Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots*, 123.

Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo

All narrative descriptions shows the master of ceremony wearing a tuxedo with two hides (sometimes of cats) fastened around his waist to his front and back, where ribbons, beads, spangles, and pieces of glass were attached. However, figure 5.4 shows him simply wearing the attire of a countryman. Noteworthy, he was not wearing a uniform unlike the other men in this picture as this illustration was produced at the beginning of the Great Siege of Montevideo. As mentioned above, free blacks and slaves not only played European music and dance but also taught them, which explains the inclusion of the dance-of-two in African-based celebrations.

While Vicente Rossi offers the most detailed description of the Day of Kings in Montevideo, he attended only in its declining late-nineteenth century form.⁷⁰⁶ The preparation involved many weeks planning as it was necessary to decorate the altar of Saint Balthazar, provide clothing for participants, musical instruments and musicians, and prepare food for banquets. All started between eight and nine in the morning at the headquarters of the Congo association located in today's *Barrio Sur*, outside of old town, where a military band entertained the participants before beginning the procession to the Cathedral. Other leaders of African-based associations met there too. Black musicians were mostly part of the military bands. These musicians opened the way of the parade toward the Cabildo and Cathedral at the main plaza. By ten in the morning, the Congo king and queen, other African leaders and commoners attended mass at the Cathedral in front of Saint Balthazar altar. At eleven, they visited the homes of the President of Uruguay, ministries, bishops and "sometimes the visit extended to the most popular military officers." There, they reasserted fidelity and respect to the authorities and received donations for their associations. The African kings wore the uniform of a general –a real uniform– of the Uruguayan army.

⁷⁰⁶ Rossi, *Cosas de Negros*, 59-73.

According to Rossi, Africans and their descendants were “...excellent part of the military, whose bravery in the battlefield was not reflected in the military rank they had achieved. For the government, it was still convenient to keep good relationships with them... [African kings] received the nominal rank of general applied to their race as a high and collective distinction sincerely accepted.” After these visits, African leaders returned to the headquarters of the Congo where a banquet was offered. At the end all retired to their own associations to elect the new kings and queens. At approximately three in the afternoon, a dance outside of each association started. After the election, the new king went out of the house sided by the *Juez de Fiestas* and *Ministro* –the first was the master of ceremony for the party outside of the house and the latter for the party inside. The king announced the beginning of the dance and then he reentered the house, where he received visitors accompanied by the queen.

This account of annually elected kings contradicts accounts of the long tenure of Antonio de la Rosa Britos as Congo king since late 1820s to early 1840s as well as the significance of other African leaders such as Juan Estrada for the Mina –except that they could have been reelected. But this narration refers to the second half of the century when African-based tenures perhaps were more short-lived and ceremonial than in the past. As we have seen, struggles related to division and control among the African leaders of Montevideo in the 1830s and 1840s illustrate that their leadership was important enough for them to request police intervention in the associations’ issues.

The paper *La Prensa Uruguaya* chronicled the Day of Kings celebration of 1853. The festivity began with a ceremony in the Cathedral. What mattered most were the outdoor celebrations as flags decorated African-based associations on that day. Both interior and

outdoor spaces were arranged for dance gatherings.⁷⁰⁷ The paper described that many people, families with children among them, visiting the houses of African nations. The early twentieth-century Lino Suárez Peña noticed that visitors made small payments to dancers and musicians. In a way, they paid to see the show, which demonstrates their commitment to the celebration of this festivity.⁷⁰⁸ He also noted that former slaves sometimes visited their former masters at this date, from which they received donations for themselves and the associations. Vicente Rossi also pointed to links connecting elite families with their former servants as they shared everyday contacts and secrets; thus there was a paternalist element to the celebrations.⁷⁰⁹ Newspapers reported that Africans remembered their motherland by reproducing their “uses and customs.” Although the celebration centered on a Catholic devotion, it was a party for Africans in which their associations went to display the “uses and customs” of African homelands.

Antonio N. Pereira (1838-1906) addressed the political dimension of this festivity. Pereira was the son of President Gabriel Pereira (1856-1860) and he personally attended some of the “ceremony of visits” when African kings, dressed as generals, visited the President. Political authorities received them as equals, offering them a brief but official reception. “You had to see those receptions, in which there were refreshments and eventually some of those kings, forgetting his role said ‘It is true my master’ or some nonsense, betraying themselves. There was constant laughing, although they were treated with all formalities.”⁷¹⁰ Once again, military uniforms shaped African-based celebrations. The ceremony reinforced the patronage of civil authorities toward black leaders, who rendered loyalty in return. The military uniform represented the principal role played by blacks during

⁷⁰⁷ *La Prensa Uruguaya*, Montevideo, January 10th 1853, p. 2.

⁷⁰⁸ Suárez Peña, *La Raza Negra en Uruguay*, 22-23.

⁷⁰⁹ Rossi, *Cosas de Negros*, 73.

⁷¹⁰ Pereira, *Recuerdos de mi tiempo*, 146.

and after independence times, and the only one that they could proudly proclaim in the emerging republican society. As soldiers and officers, they took part in relationships shaped by the exchange of gifts and favors with military and political leaders. This tie expressed itself in the ceremony of visiting. The uniform of general was borrowed, because blacks could not become senior officers. Although the ceremony of visiting caused condescending smiles among white authorities, they respectfully received their “colored” visitors, because it constituted a renewal of patron-client bonds which still mattered.

The Day of Kings was a Catholic devotion, a popular celebration of sociability, an African remembrance, a demonstration of fidelity toward the authorities, and a repertoire of excess typical of carnival. The Day of Kings was the face that African-based associations showed to the larger white society. During the summer season, white people’s circuits of sociability included the visits of African nations on the Day of Kings, which was repeated during carnival. In the Day of Kings of 1853, *La Prensa Uruguaya* described a parade moving near the docks, where an incident happened as some “white chickens” upper-class youths joined the parade.⁷¹¹ Alcohol caused disorders where both blacks and whites participated as general confusion took over the celebration. However, the African leaders asked the police to stop the scandal. They had much more to lose than the “white chickens” because they were watched by the police. It is difficult to reconcile large scale attendance to the Day of Kings on the part of whites with the published complaints and police actions against black celebrations. Despite the constant complaints about the *candombes*, whites seemingly saw African-based celebrations as a reaction against the new ideals of civilization, discipline, and progress voiced by French-oriented local elites. Governmental policies of social disciplining affected society in unprecedented ways, reflected in increasing police action, the first expansion of the public school system, and the first measures to control

⁷¹¹ *La Prensa Uruguaya*, Montevideo, January 10th 1853, p. 2.

laborers.⁷¹² For those subject to this new pressure, African-based celebrations represented a good excuse to voice anxieties regarding the police, church, elites, and adults. African-based dances could have been seen as signals of confrontation, as a “game of representation” played on the streets that reflected a much larger social phenomenon: the changing demographics of Montevideo.

According to Andrés Lamas, close to 40,000 Europeans immigrants arrived in Uruguay between 1835 and 1842. Even if considering these figures as exaggerated, we should note that Montevideo had 23,400 inhabitants and the entire country probably less than 130,000 by 1835.⁷¹³ While belonging to Catholic societies, the majority of these immigrants were non-Spanish-speakers, particularly French (40 percent) and Italians (28 percent). A French-speaking theatre was established in Montevideo in 1837 and French language newspapers flourished in the 1840s.⁷¹⁴ A combined thirty percent of the total immigration was Spanish (20 percent Canary Islanders and 10 percent Peninsular Spanish), but the non-Spanish speaking Basque were prominent, contributing to the foreignness of this first wave of immigration into independent Uruguay. As predominantly male (61 percent), the recently arrived foreigners formed the bulk of the army defending Montevideo in 1843-1851 through the French, Italian, Basque and Canary Legions. They served alongside the black infantrymen in the defense. British troops added to this “foreign invasion” as the British fleet permanently placed a squadron in Montevideo to prevent a French imperial sally and to protect British commerce during warfare. British marines were sometimes deployed in Montevideo to keep social order in time of political turmoil during the siege. Apart from Catholicism, the *criollos* of Montevideo shared very few features with the French and Italians

⁷¹² On the overarching understanding of mid to late nineteenth-century as an era of increasing social disciplining and restriction of corporal violence and emotions, see Barrán, *Historia de la sensibilidad en el Uruguay*, Vols. 1-2.

⁷¹³ A total of 25,500 arrived in the country and 4,200 left. Arredondo, “Los Apuntes Estadísticos,” 25-27.

⁷¹⁴ Zinny, *Historia de la prensa periódica de la República Oriental del Uruguay 1807-1852*, IX-X.

and even less with the Protestant British. Only a third of the 32,000 inhabitants of Montevideo were native Uruguayans by October 1843, just at the beginning of the Siege. Moreover, European immigrants (15,000) slightly outnumbered the combined figures of Uruguayans and Argentine exiles in Montevideo (14,000). This context sheds light on the widespread attendance of white spectators at the Day of Kings celebrations. Both elite and common white *criollos* of Montevideo shared the colonial and revolutionary experience, linking them with Africans and their descendants. Local elites of Montevideo were now oriented more to France in matters of progress and civilization than to Spain. This sometimes alienated white *criollo* commoners, who mocked elite francophilia. But black celebrations offered a comfortable common ground for *criollo* elites and commoners, where white superiority was not endangered by immigrants and was actually reinforced by links of paternalism and patronage towards African-based associations. In the 1840s, the Day of Kings was one of the few public festivities that allowed white *criollo* inhabitants to remember colonial Montevideo and the times of peace.⁷¹⁵

Conclusion

As the sight of black soldiers became common in Montevideo, Africans and their descendants provided one of the largest urban festivities for all the common people in this city: the Day of Kings. Initially, this celebration represented the intersection of black participation in Catholic confraternities with African-based associations' coronation of an African king. Eventually, Africans incorporated the new symbols of the larger community in which they found themselves, in particular the national flag and the military uniform of Uruguay. Before the Great Siege, participants in African celebrations wore military uniforms

⁷¹⁵ On the appropriation of black carnival groups and themes by late-nineteenth century European immigrants and blackface, see Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation*, 50-84.

which visibly linked them to other Afro-descendants as well with the military commanders of their units. After the Great Siege, the leaders of African-based associations performed the “ceremony of visit” during the Day of Kings, which embodied the collective black military experience and social networks with the military and political leaders, the *caudillos*. In visiting the President while wearing the uniform of a general, African leaders reminded Uruguayan authorities of the importance of close relationships with black leaders –though the white audience of this ceremony largely mocked the solemnity of African kings. In the years surrounding the Great Siege, the society of Montevideo became fully invested in black culture through massive attendance to the Day of Kings. While the press condemned the sound of the African drums as relics doomed to extinction, their reverberation became a recognizable feature of the Uruguayan capital for years to come. As such, drumming became one of the symbols of the city decades before of the appearance of the modern Tango in the Río de la Plata.

Chapter 6: Jacinto Ventura de Molina, a Black Quixote of Montevideo

The second general election of independent Uruguay took place on November 27, 1833. The press encouraged citizens to cast their vote by reporting that the government had lifted the ban against opponents of President Rivera and supporters of Lavalleja.⁷¹⁶ Jacinto Ventura de Molina walked to a polling station in Montevideo with a piece of paper on which he had marked his candidates. However, the election judge of this station warned him: “You can’t vote because you were born a slave.” Jacinto replied: “I was born free, because my mother Juana del Sacramento was free, too.” Another official asked him “and was your father free?” Jacinto added: “My father was free because he saved the life of the Brigadier Don José Eusebio de Molina in the year 1762...”⁷¹⁷ This exchange points to the fact that the first Uruguayan constitution defined franchise not on the basis of racial status, but rather on economic independence: a wage laborer was viewed as dependant and was ineligible. Jacinto was born in the town of Rio Grande during the Spanish occupation of Portuguese Rio Grande do Sul, which might also have impeded his ability to vote. He had been a loyal subject of the Spanish Crown and a protégée of Spanish military officers. He served as lieutenant of colonial black militias in Montevideo and then he was Secretary of the Confraternity of Saint Benito in 1832. In these years, Jacinto defended the Congo Gunga association against police repression. He was an *Americano* –born in America– as well as a *letrado* –a man of letters. While Jacinto worked as a shoemaker, he wrote to the Portuguese and then the Brazilian monarchs to request a school for black students. Jacinto was the son of a man from Dahomey born on a slave ship who then married a woman from Benguela at what amounted to the

⁷¹⁶ Pivel Devoto, *Historia de los Partidos*, 65.

⁷¹⁷ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 107.

crossroads of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in America. But on that Sunday 27 November 1833, Jacinto was presenting himself as Uruguayan.

Jacinto Ventura de Molina, or simply Jacinto Molina (1766-1841), was part of the large population of African ancestry in the Río de la Plata, yet received an elite education. I interpret him as a “black Quixote” who lived between reality and delusion, between the white and black worlds, and between the world of letters and the world of arms. Like Don Quixote, Jacinto was heavily influenced by written culture. But the alleged madness of Jacinto came from a place other than chivalric romance. The chasm between his investment in European culture and the position he occupied in the society of Montevideo fed his anxiety. He exemplifies the “predicament of marginality” as described by Leo Spitzer: the sometimes-neurotic, liminal condition of marginal people who sought assimilation with the dominant values. This condition arises from barriers inhibiting social integration into the world of the dominant, which block the subordinate from the privileges of those in power. However, these barriers “do not necessarily prevent the subordinate’s absorption of the dominant’s cultural values and outlooks.”⁷¹⁸ Not even within propitious circumstances could the perception of subordinates like Jacinto Molina totally overcome the barriers of exclusion. And when their situation dramatically changed, this turning point led them to states of anxiety about their identity. Epoch changing events occurred during the lifetime of Jacinto Molina –the French and industrial revolutions, the late eighteenth-century all-time peak of the slave trade and slavery in the Americas and the nineteenth-century fall of Atlantic slaving –the era of emancipation and assimilation. His experiences are a mirror for the transformations of his time, in which the Spanish empire disintegrated via warfare into a set of new republics.

⁷¹⁸ Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between: Assimilation and Marginality in Austria, Brazil, West Africa, 1780-1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 130-131.

Moreover, he lived before the spread of scientific racism throughout the world, which erected barriers of exclusion to unprecedented new levels.

From the first time I saw the three volumes of the surviving manuscripts of Jacinto Molina at the National Library of Uruguay in 2003, three Spanish-language editions of his writings as well as other studies have been published.⁷¹⁹ However, there is still room to analyze his life and writings to illustrate the changing social networks and identities of Africans and their descendants in Montevideo. In this chapter, I will delve into the main events of the life of Jacinto to contextualize his writings. Then, I will examine the interactions of Africans and their descendants with the written culture in the Spanish colonies, which led to the emergence of Jacinto Molina as a black *letrado*. As portrayed by Angel Rama, the lettered men –*letrados*– were a social group of bureaucrats and officers who put in movement the machinery of the Spanish colonizing project in America. They executed and extended metropolitan orders throughout the empire; they wielded both the pen and the sword.⁷²⁰ The ideology of the Spanish monarchy based on patriarchy defined the relations of Jacinto Molina with those in power as well as his views on Africans and their descendants. Jacinto engaged with Montevideo elites in the last decade of the colonial era as well as during the Luso-Brazilian occupation, but the independence of Uruguay led him to refashion his relationships with African “nations.” Finally, I show how his life experience modeled overlapping black identities tying Jacinto with the monarchical regime, the Catholic Church, the African-based associations and the new emerging liberal state of Uruguay.

⁷¹⁹ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*. William Acree, “Jacinto Ventura de Molina. A Black *Letrado* in a White World of Letters, 1766-1841” *Latin American Research Review*, 44, 2 (2009): 37-58; William Acree, and Alex Borucki, *Jacinto Ventura de Molina y los caminos de la escritura negra en el Río de la Plata*. Montevideo, Linardi y Risso, 2008; Alejandro Gortazar (ed.), *Jacinto Ventura de Molina. Antología de Manuscritos (1817-1837)*. Montevideo, FHCE-CSIC, 2008; Alejandro Gortazar, *El licenciado negro: Jacinto Ventura de Molina*. Montevideo, Trilce, 2007, and “Del aullido a la escritura. Voces negras en el imaginario nacional,” in Hugo Achugar (coord.), *Derechos de memoria. Nación e independencia en América Latina*, Montevideo, FHCE, 2003, pp. 189-263.

⁷²⁰ Rama, *The Lettered City*, 18-24, 32-35.

A handful of records regarding African and American-born black leaders in late-colonial Río de la Plata such as Bentura Patrón and Felipe Malaber reveal only unconnected episodes of their lives. But the surviving manuscripts of Molina, the accounts of his contemporaries, and his petitions stored in police and judicial archives provide the fullest information of the life of any person of African ancestry who lived throughout this period. The study of personal experience helps to bridge the gap between individual and collective identities. Only a biographical analysis can grasp the performative and situational character of identities. Such an approach reveals how an individual *plays* one, two, or more identifications, simultaneously or separately. However, this strategy could lead to the negation of collective identities as a valid category if does not connect individual with social patterns.⁷²¹ In the process of constructing a biographical study of Jacinto Molina, I thus attempt to describe and link both individual and collective strategies.

Contemporaries of Jacinto Molina already compared him with Don Quixote. White acquaintances of Jacinto frequently lampooned him as a black *letrado*, which in fact helped them release the anxiety and discomfort provoked by the idea of a black writer entering the white world of letters. The only existing portrayal of Jacinto Molina was drawn by the Basque artist Juan Manuel Besnes e Irigoyen, probably in late 1820s, who included a caption lampooning the grandiloquence of Molina. Besnes compared Rufina Campana, who was the deceased wife of Jacinto, with Dulcinea del Toboso, the long-standing love of Don Quixote de la Mancha. Figure 6.1. shows this respectful portrait accompanied by the caption.

Dr Don Jacinto Ventura de Molina, original and tireless writer in all subjects, both in prose and in verse. Army Officer, Theologian, Jurist, Man of Letters, Economist, Historian, Philosopher. Master of Shoemakers. He was born free in the town of San Pedro del Sud del Rio Grande, October 15, 1766. Son of Ventura Molina servant of the Spanish Brigadier Don Jose Eusebio de Molina. There is no offspring of his relationship with Maria Rufina Campana, but the unmatched miscarriages of his fecund genius that

⁷²¹ Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'" *Theory and Society*, Vol. 29, (2000): 1-47.

have founded a new literary genre bearing his name, which will make him as famous or more than Dulcinea did Toboso.⁷²²



Figure 6.1 Portrait of Jacinto Ventura de Molina. Circa 1828-1830. BiblioMuseo Arturo Scarone. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo

William Acree states that this illustration “blends ridicule with respect” as it portrays a venerable gentleman of African ancestry with a humorous caption written as a baroque exercise of calligraphy –each line differs in style.⁷²³ Besnes also blends the careers of letters and arms as he depicted Molina with glasses over his forehead and an old military jacket covering his shirt. Isidoro de Maria wrote that “Molina assiduously attended theater, and he

⁷²² Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 242.

⁷²³ Acree, “Jacinto Ventura de Molina,” 53.

had free entrance to parties, where he had the habit of making an entrance by strutting , with his big collar, broad pants, corduroy sleeveless, and his extremely worn-out blue jacket full of moth holes which he patiently patched with small pieces of fabric.”⁷²⁴ In the 1820s and 1830s, pedestrians grew accustomed to see Jacinto holding a bundle of papers and wearing a worn-out jacket –perhaps part of an old Spanish military uniform– on the streets of Montevideo. Fashioned by the Spanish bureaucracy and military as the late-colonial *letrados* described by Angel Rama, Jacinto envisioned his own life through the lens of war and writing.

6.1. Jacinto Ventura de Molina, 1766-1841

Atlantic warfare, the expansion of the Spanish bureaucracy and military personnel in the Río de la Plata, and the slave trade from Brazil to this region brought the parents of Jacinto Molina together. The Seven Years War (1756-63) brought Captain José Molina to the Río de la Plata. Initially, the Governor of Buenos Aires Pedro Cevallos had requested Molina as a secretary in 1758, but Molina served in the military instead. José Molina previously underwent military and bureaucratic training as he belonged to the first generation of Bourbon officers arriving in the Río de la Plata in 1759 –the same year the Bourbon reformist Carlos III occupied the Spanish throne.⁷²⁵ The forces of Cevallos took over Portuguese Colonia temporarily in 1762. That year, José Molina bought the slave Ventura in Colonia, who would father Jacinto. According to Jacinto, his father Ventura saved the life of his new master José Molina during a battle. Even though José Molina granted freedom to Ventura, the latter chose to remain in the entourage of this Spanish officer. In 1763, José Molina occupied the Portuguese town of Rio Grande across the borderland. During war between the Spanish

⁷²⁴ De Maria, *Montevideo Antiguo*, Vol. 1, 240-2.

⁷²⁵ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 21, 102-3; Socolow, *The Bureaucrats of Buenos Aires*, 4-6.

and the Portuguese, slaves usually sought freedom in the lines of the enemy as did Juana del Sacramento when she ran away from her Portuguese master to the Spanish Rio Grande. José Molina became military commander of this town and took Juana del Sacramento as a free servant. In 1765, Ventura married Juana del Sacramento in Rio Grande, and they gave birth to Jacinto on October 15, 1766.

Jacinto's parents had been caught up in the Portuguese slave trade routes that brought slaves first to Brazil and then to the Río de la Plata in mid-eighteenth century. According to Jacinto, his father Ventura was a "Mina Dajome" which probably meant Dahomey in the Bight of Benin. Ventura's mother and brother were enslaved and shipped to Salvador. He was born during the Atlantic passage; in the words of his son Jacinto, Ventura was "amphibious" –born on the seas. From Salvador, Ventura was sent to Portuguese Colonia, where José Molina purchased him. Jacinto's mother experienced a different slave trading route. Juana departed from Benguela to Rio de Janeiro, from where her master took her to the recently founded Rio Grande –the southernmost Portuguese town in America apart from Colonia. The lives of Ventura and Juana show the significance of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro for slaves arriving in the Río de la Plata as well as the long-standing connections of these ports with the Bight of Benin and Angola. Their lives intersected just as the Spanish and Portuguese empires clashed in Rio Grande.⁷²⁶

Some sources dispute the fact that José Molina granted freedom to Ventura, but confirm the free status of Juana. One year after Juana died in 1777, Ventura married a young slave of José Molina and the marriage file identified Ventura as slave of this Spanish officer.⁷²⁷ However, we know José Molina actually freed the slaves such as Juana who had run away from the Portuguese. The letters between José Molina and the commander of the

⁷²⁶ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 23-28.

⁷²⁷ AAM, EM, 1778, exp. 40.

Portuguese Viamão testifies the influx of slaves escaping to Spanish Rio Grande as well as the unwillingness of the Spanish to return them. In 1782, the free parida María Luisa sued the man who claimed to be her master by saying she had run away from the Portuguese to Spanish Rio Grande, where she had joined Brigadier José Molina. The latter put her under the care of a family in Maldonado after the Spanish withdrawal, but then this family tried to enslave her. María Luisa succeeded in obtaining freedom papers from the Governor of Montevideo. This and other accounts confirm that, in the words of Jacinto, José Molina was a “liberator of blacks.”⁷²⁸

Jacinto Molina remembered his time in Rio Grande as joyous in his writings. He was born in the house of the commander of the town, who had no family in America. As an upper-middle rank officer, José Molina was surrounded by an entourage of bureaucrats, lower-rank officers, and servants. As Jacinto was the only child in his house, José Molina took care of his initial education. Jacinto developed a close relationship with José Molina during his childhood. We know of these early years through the biography Jacinto wrote about José Molina. The narrative of the biography suggests that José Molina molded Jacinto’s understanding of his own life. Jacinto described Rio Grande as an idyllic place where Brigadier Molina created schools and provided for the welfare of the Spanish garrison and settlers, in addition to hosting grandiose banquets to bewilder his Portuguese guests during the tense peace. Jacinto was born into the military as he proudly stated when he described that he –as well as the other children– became auxiliaries of artillery transporting cartridges when the Spanish founded the fort of Santa Tecla in 1774 (modern-day Rio Grande

⁷²⁸ AGI, Buenos Aires 539, “1768 Uruguay. El Gobernador de aquellos Pueblos Dn Francisco...” 1768; AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 55, exp. 41, “Instancia hecha por Luisa...” 1782; In 1787, Manuel Oliveira sued Martina Lara, who claimed to be her mistress in Buenos Aires. Manuel Oliveira stated that he had run away from the Portuguese to the Spanish and joined the forces of the Colonel José Molina, who assigned Oliveira to serve the Spanish captain Joaquin Morote –husband of Martina Lara. Once in Buenos Aires, Morote put Manuel to work as a free man. After the death of Morote, his widow intended to sell Manuel as a slave, but Manuel successfully obtained his freedom. AGN-A, IX, 35-6-2, exp. 21, “Manuel de Olivera negro...” 1787; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 83.

do Sul). He also took part in the second and definitive Spanish conquest of Colonia in 1777 as a servant-auxiliary of the son of a Spanish field Marshal of the army. The Spanish military officers found that Jacinto –then ten years old– could hold the horse and pacify the troublesome son of their fellow field marshal –another boy.

The good times ended for Jacinto when the Portuguese retook Rio Grande in 1776. The Spanish moved back to Maldonado, where his mother Juana died in 1777. From then on, he accompanied José Molina to Montevideo and Colonia. José Molina petitioned with the Spanish crown to become governor of Montevideo but his request went unheard as Ceballos returned to Spain and a new Viceroy took office.⁷²⁹ Jacinto continued his education in Montevideo, where he served José Molina. In 1782, both his father Ventura and José Molina died within four months. From 1782 to 1800, Jacinto made a living as a shoemaker since it was hard for a free black to occupy positions held by literate men. The list of the guild of black and colored shoemakers of Buenos Aires recorded Jacinto Baptista Molina in 1796, none other than Jacinto Ventura Molina –his full name.⁷³⁰ Non-whites could not be part of the royal bureaucracy or the professional army.

Jacinto enjoyed certain benefits from having had powerful patrons. After the death of José Molina and probably because of networks with officers of Rio Grande, Jacinto went to Buenos Aires. There, he met the free black woman Rufina Campana, whom he married in 1788. He had joined the colonial militias in 1786. The commander Antonio Olaguer y Feliú recommended Jacinto to the rank of first corporal despite his young age. Jacinto records that the Sub-Inspector of the Army Marquis of Sobremonte appointed him to train black militias in the 1790s. He noted that “[...] because of my ability to read and write I should [accept this

⁷²⁹ AGI, Buenos Aires 528, “El Brigadier Don Joseph de Molina, Teniente Coronel del Regimiento...” 1779.

⁷³⁰ AGN-A, Sala IX, 30-5-8, “Expediente de matrícula del gremio de zapateros pardos libres y morenos...,” f. 15.

appointment] because there was no other [black] in these units who was literate.”⁷³¹ Each Saturday, Jacinto had to submit a report on the progress of these units and attend night meetings with fellow black officers which probably included instructing them in reading, perhaps even writing, too. He adds that “all this fatigue motivated and led me to travel with my wife to Montevideo in 1799.”⁷³² The census of Montevideo recorded Jacinto living in the house of Teresa Fagiani in 1800 –a widow of a Spanish soldier of Rio Grande.⁷³³ By then, Jacinto was a lieutenant of black grenadiers –artillerymen.

The earliest evidence of Jacinto acting as *letrado* or as amanuensis emerges from a plea submitted by the free black Juan Colorado in Montevideo in 1804.⁷³⁴ I recognize the handwriting of Jacinto in this document. He did not sign this petition with his own name but with the name of Juan Colorado and he probably got paid as did other literate men who wrote for the illiterate majority. Jacinto Molina not only established his career of letters in Montevideo, but also his service to the Spanish arms. As a British fleet approached Montevideo, Jacinto wrote to the Governor of the city on January 4, 1807, probably to ask him for a lieutenant’s commission in the militia. By January 8, Jacinto was lieutenant of the black company on full pay captained by free black Felipe Malaber.⁷³⁵ Jacinto had never previously served in the militia of Montevideo. After the death of the previous black captain Juan de Dios Gavira, it is likely that the lieutenant Malaber wanted to assume the commanding role, and needed a capable –preferable literate– second in command whom he found in Jacinto Molina. Both Felipe and Jacinto were nearly forty-year-old shoemakers born

⁷³¹ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9317].

⁷³² Molina Manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9317].

⁷³³ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 240, Padrones 1800-1827.

⁷³⁴ In the late 1770s, Juan Colorado had obtained from the Cabildo a plot of land in Arroyo Seco, a mile north of Montevideo, where other free blacks such as Manuel de los Santos and Bentura Patrón lived. A Spanish neighbour was pressuring Juan Colorado to sell his plot in 1804, but this elderly free black wanted to remain in his land. The Governor of Montevideo ordered the Spanish neighbour not to bother Juan Colorado with further offers of sale. AGN-U, AGA, Caja 283, Carpeta 3 doc. 12, July 20, 1804.

⁷³⁵ This plea was forwarded to the viceroy, but only a reference of this letter is in the archive rather than the letter itself to be found. AGN-A, IX, 3-1-3, January 4 and 8, 1807.

in the region and part of the free black population living in Buenos Aires but who had settled in Montevideo during the boom decade of the 1790s.⁷³⁶

The British began their attack on Montevideo in January 15, 1807, and they occupied the city from February to September. Jacinto lived in the town of Guadalupe twenty miles north of Montevideo because of the delicate health of his wife Rufina Campana.⁷³⁷ Jacinto's wife hid his rifle and sable as well as burned his royal commissions, and perhaps all his papers, when British troops reached Guadalupe and threatened to punish the population if they discovered arms or military papers in their houses. She feared the British would identify Jacinto as an officer. Jacinto lamented this loss, which may explain why the documents kept by Molina and stored today in the National Library date back no earlier than 1817.

The judicial archive provides further evidence of Jacinto successfully interacting with magistrates before 1817. Jacinto defended Juan A. Tarufo, a nineteen-year-old free pardo drummer in the black militia in 1810.⁷³⁸ Tarufo had grown into adulthood as a professional military drummer as well as a shoemaker, but now he faced charges of murdering another free pardo. After six weeks in prison, Tarufo wrote to Molina claiming that he had been sent to jail by a civil court, when, as a soldier, he should have been tried in a military tribunal. In his capacity of lieutenant of black militias, Jacinto wrote to the Governor requesting the military fuero for Tarufo. The Governor passed the file to the Defender of the Poor Pascual Araucho, who succeeded in getting Tarufo out of jail and transferred to the custody of the commander of non-white militias. This was the last time that Jacinto defended blacks and coloreds before the Spanish colonial regime given that the revolution was shortly to end

⁷³⁶ In Montevideo, Jacinto and Felipe Malaber had been witnesses in the marriage file of the pardo militiamen Esmeregildo Bustos in 1800, which suggests that they had met before in Buenos Aires. AAM-EM, 1800, exp. 8.

⁷³⁷ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9317-9318].

⁷³⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 169, exp. 56, "Causa criminal contra el Negro Aniceto y Juan Antonio Tarufo...", 1810.

Spanish rule. In June 1814, the revolutionary forces of Buenos Aires entered Montevideo. On August 5, Jacinto presented a plea in the name of the free black soldier of the sixth battalion Antonio Ramírez, who wanted to free his wife and son. Just as Jacinto had done ten years previously for Juan Colorado, he acted as amanuensis without including his own signature.⁷³⁹ However, his handwriting reveals him.

Jacinto endured terrible moments when the forces of Artigas entered the city the following year. Black militiamen were ordered to defend Montevideo against an impending Spanish expedition departing from Cadiz in February 1815, which finally arrived in Venezuela. Jacinto reported that all free black and pardo militiamen were summoned to the house of the lieutenant Governor Tomás García de Zúñiga in March 19. While these men were waiting for García de Zúñiga at his door, a white artillery officer asked Molina “did you bring your commissions?” Then, the officer took the commissions of Jacinto and asked him “Do you promise to defend this city from all her enemies” to which Jacinto replied “Yes.” Then, he asked if Jacinto would defend the city against the Spanish King, to which Jacinto declined to do. The officer called Jacinto a “Spanish dog” [perro Godo] and all men were ordered to enter the house of García de Zúñiga. They surrounded Jacinto and insulted him for a time; then, the officers decided to execute him right there as an example to other black loyalists.⁷⁴⁰ However, García de Zúñiga chose to jail him in the Citadel, where Jacinto was put in stocks upside down. Jacinto lost his royal commissions, but he was also close to losing his life. As Rufina Campana heard about the imprisonment of Jacinto from a pardo officer,

⁷³⁹ Free black Antonio Ramirez had obtained the promise of Antonio Carrasco to free his wife Rosa in his last will. After the death of Carrasco, the executor of his will obstructed the freedom of both Rosa and her son. Marcos Carrasco, son and executor of the will, stated that his father never promised freedom to Rosa. The new authorities took Rosa and her son out of the house of Carrasco for the duration of the case, but their fate remains unclear since the case was left open. Antonio Ramirez served the forces of Buenos Aires; thus, he may have taken both his wife and son to Buenos Aires when these troops withdrew in the face of occupation by the army of Artigas in Montevideo in March 1815. AGN-U, EGH, Caja 109 exp. 119, “Antonio Ramírez, del Regimiento No. 6...” 1814.

⁷⁴⁰ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 113-4.

she hurriedly contacted both the mother and sister of García de Zuñiga to beg for his release. Jacinto Molina had known García de Zuñiga from Guadalupe since 1806, and this probably saved him. His wife Rufina knew the women of the García de Zuñiga's family and this finally got Jacinto released. Seemingly, Jacinto left Montevideo for Guadalupe to avoid further confrontation with the revolutionaries.

Jacinto's prospects improved when Portugal took over the territory of the Banda Oriental. Jacinto developed patron-client relationships with Portuguese officers as he personally met General Lecor, the commander-in-chief during the Luso-Brazilian occupation. Jacinto also met the secretary of Lecor, Joaquín de Sagra y Periz, who became his most important benefactor among the elites and who received the writings of Jacinto after his death.⁷⁴¹ In the early 1820s, Jacinto lived along the Miguelete creek, in a small house belonging to Captain Juan Pérez –halfway between Montevideo and Guadalupe. Once more, Jacinto had drawn on his military connections. There, Jacinto stored his furniture, books, papers, and clothing.⁷⁴² In the years 1822-1824, the Brazilian commander Lecor located his headquarters in Guadalupe because of the conflict between Portuguese and Brazilian forces in Montevideo arising from Brazilian independence. One of the short-lived newspapers emerging from the Luso-Brazilian divergence printed in Canelones (Guadalupe) commented on the writings of Jacinto.

By chance, we have in our hands the superb *Adicion y saludo a la ciudad de Montevideo del licenciado sargento mayor Joaquin [sic] Ventura de Molina* – the negro Molina– printed in Canelones. This beautiful work is a miscarriage conceived in the span of three months in the forest of Miguelete. Examined with deserved impartiality and attention, we find this work not only worthy of the celebrated Molina, well-known in the negro-literary republic, but also of the cause he defends as well as the great characters he advocates. This work is in the bookstore of Yañez for the curiosity of the public, where subscriptions

⁷⁴¹ After Jacinto's death, his manuscripts passed to the collection of Sagra y Periz. From then on, these writings passed through private collectors up to 1991, when the National Library of Uruguay purchased them in public auction. *La República*, Montevideo, Año IV, N°1149—2a sección, August 28, 1991.

⁷⁴² Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 116, 217.

are accepted to publish a magnificent edition on butcher's paper.⁷⁴³

Lecor put Jacinto to work in the printing press at the Brazilian headquarters, which most probably explains this first appearance of Jacinto in this paper of 1823.⁷⁴⁴ While lampooning Molina's work by referring to its publication on butcher's paper, this comment is clear evidence of the celebrity of Jacinto in Guadalupe. Molina is introduced both as an esquire (*licenciado*) and Sergeant Major, blending the careers of arms and letters. Moreover, the author suggests the existence of a black *lettered republic* (*república negro-literaria*) to envision the idea of black participation in written culture. Another newspaper commented on the work of Molina just at the time of Uruguayan independence. In 1828, the paper *El Observador Mercantil* published a salutation from Jacinto Molina: "The Esquire Jacinto Bentura de Molina is surprised to see his name in *El Observador Mercantil*... and he hopes for the Manager of this paper a promising future."⁷⁴⁵ Both *El Observador Mercantil* and later *El Observador Oriental* were edited by the abolitionist and defender of slaves José María Marquez. In this greeting from Molina to *El Observador*, Marquez published a poem written by Jacinto –perhaps his first contribution to appear in a newspaper. These comments illustrate the contacts of Jacinto with the emergent press as well as his interest in getting published – reflection of a desire perhaps both to be known by the "lettered city" and to be a member of it.

This was a time of suffering, too, as Rufina Campana died in 1819, leaving Jacinto alone. As Jacinto turned sixty years old, he became frequent visitor of the *Hospital de la Caridad*, the charity infirmary. Jacinto worked as sacristan of the hospital at least from

⁷⁴³ *Los Amigos del Pueblo*, Canelones, N°6, September 13, 1823, 24. I thank Wilson González for this reference.

⁷⁴⁴ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 199-200.

⁷⁴⁵ *El Observador Mercantil*, Montevideo, N°29, June 18, 1828. I thank Wilson González for this reference.

November 1828 to July 1829, receiving four pesos monthly.⁷⁴⁶ He produced wafers, lit the candles in the chapel, polished candlesticks, helped with masses, and kept the linens in order. There, Molina produced most of the writings today stored by the National Library of Uruguay. He worked in the printing press of the hospital, which put him in contact with *diaristas* –the men who published short-lived newspapers and participated in the emergent liberal and *caudillo* politics of Uruguay.

In May 1830, Jacinto left –or was ousted from– the hospital, from where he had sought further payments for his literary work as well as get it published. He had insisted upon freeing a young slave from the hospital to marry her. Jacinto noted that the priest attending the hospital had slapped him twice in his face.⁷⁴⁷ This suggests Jacinto had become troublesome to the directors of the hospital, which may explain his departure. This did not put an end to his literary production. In fact, the period opening in 1830 brought the most interesting of Molina’s writings when he sought the recognition from the Uruguayan government as a *licenciado* to act in court litigation as well as when he wrote on behalf of both the confraternity of Saint Benito and the Congo de Gunga. Jacinto had turned into a recognizable figure for both black leaders and white elites. In a piece of writing combining ridicule and legal formulae, the secretary of the House of Representatives Miguel A. Berro authorized Jacinto to act as a *letrado* in judicial cases in 1832.⁷⁴⁸ While William Acree interprets this as an official document conferring Molina the right to litigate, I see this writing as a lampoon which picked up all humoristic references made by others on Jacinto.⁷⁴⁹ Even though Molina wrote to the police and government on behalf of the Congo association in 1834, he was not able to act in official capacity in court litigation. In the 1830s, Jacinto

⁷⁴⁶ AGN-U, AGA, Libro 708, Hospital de la Caridad.

⁷⁴⁷ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 214.

⁷⁴⁸ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 235.

⁷⁴⁹ Acree, “Jacinto Ventura de Molina,” 50; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 229-242.

frequently visited state officials to apply for a position of notary, archivist, and even doorman. Joaquín de Sagra y Periz, one of the highest magistrates at this time, encouraged the petitions of Jacinto.⁷⁵⁰ These bureaucrats received Jacinto with condescendence, compassion and derision. An anonymous contemporary scribbled on a copy of Jacinto's verses the following: "Poetry of Uncle Jacinto Ventura Molina. A Black who said he was Doctor in Law, and who all the elderly made him believe so."⁷⁵¹ This sentence portrays the game played by elites with Jacinto –whose figure was the subject of scorn. In 1832, a newspaper opposing President Rivera mentioned Jacinto while lampooning the Secretary of Government Lucas Obes, who: "...must be a great man of letters since he says he has read every book from Beroso, Orpheus, Sanchuniathon, [Fourier], to the dossiers of licenciado Jacinto Ventura Molina, whom [Lucas Obes] resembles in physiognomy and expression."⁷⁵² Lucas Obes was mocked for both reading the writings of Jacinto and looking like him, which illustrates that Jacinto was a well-known figure for white elites by this decade.

Even though these years saw the decline of slavery in Uruguay, Molina's writings lack any reference to the issue of abolition. Given that his last manuscripts date from 1837, he may have been too old or ill to continue writing. His death occurred on 11 August of 1841, one year prior to abolition of slavery. His burial was gratis, which shows both his poverty and his lack of family.⁷⁵³ After Jacinto Molina's death, his name fell from celebrity into oblivion. While the papers *La Semana* (1857) and *La Cotorrita* (1877) made a reference to Molina, the black press of the 1870s ignored him.⁷⁵⁴ Jacinto was well-known in the 1820s and 1830s, but he was almost forgotten by both the white hegemonic literature and the lettered blacks in late

⁷⁵⁰ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 226.

⁷⁵¹ AGN-U, AMHN, Caja 205, Carpeta 7, Note on the reverse of a poetry written by Molina.

⁷⁵² *La diablada o el robo de la bolsa*, Montevideo, March 17, 1832, 5.

⁷⁵³ Archive of the Church of Saint Francisco, Montevideo. Libro de Defunciones, August 11, 1841.

⁷⁵⁴ *La Semana*, Montevideo, N°10, October 2, 1857; *La Cotorrita*, Montevideo, January 6, 1877, 1; I thank George Reid Andrews for confirming that the late nineteenth-century black press did not mention Jacinto Molina. Email communication, November 4, 2010.

nineteenth-century Uruguay. Isidoro de María included a vignette on Jacinto as one of the eccentric characters of this city in *Montevideo Antiguo* (1887), but this is a lone reference. This fall into oblivion says much about history and historiography. On the one hand, Molina's manuscripts were kept by private collectors for most of the twentieth century and were finally purchased by the National Library of Uruguay only in 1991.⁷⁵⁵ On the other, hardly any local intellectual could have had scholarly or political sympathy for Molina. While the Uruguayan literary canon depicted the country as a white nation against the backdrop of mixed-raced Latin America, Afro-Uruguayan writers portrayed the contributions of slaves and freedmen as essential to the emergence of the nation. According to nationalist eyes, Molina supported the wrong side when Uruguay became independent—he remained loyal to Spain during the uprising of José Artigas, and he welcomed the Luso-Brazilian invasion.

Yet the writings of Jacinto open up a world in which black militia service and networks with Spanish officers led to black engagement in written culture. While Africans and their descendants participated in different capacities in the colonial written culture, Jacinto not only was privileged in being literate but also in controlling different literary registers which allowed him to write memorials addressed to the colonial state and the writing of poetry and history.

⁷⁵⁵ At least one author mentioned Molina in the 1940s. The first reproduction of Molina's printout on the Congo Gunga was published in Idelfonso Pereda Valdés, *Negros esclavos y negros libres. Esquema de una sociedad esclavista y aporte del negro en nuestra formación nacional*. Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1941. The National Library seems to have purchased in public action the three volumes of manuscripts and the printout of Jacinto Molina in 1991. *La República*, Montevideo, Año IV, N°1149—2a sección, August 28, 1991.

6.2. Africans and their descendants in the lettered city

The study of José R. Jouve Martin provides an index of the interactions of Africans and their descendants with written culture in colonial Spanish America cities.⁷⁵⁶ The construction of a bureaucracy of *letrados* based on the production and control of written documents was one of the pillars of Spanish rule in America, but subaltern groups also accessed documents and books through an oral culture in which shared texts were read aloud. Rituals and ceremonies bridged the gap between such oral and written culture since legal terms dominated by *letrados* were repetitively used in executions, royal festivities, and Catholic processions. Royal ceremonies such as the entrance or visit of viceroys were conducted with references to sacred and secular texts. Acceptance of Christianity provided the first contact of Africans and their descendants with printed texts and images –especially in colonial cities. Blacks and coloreds participated in written culture in different capacities. Reading and writing did not necessarily go together as masters could teach a slave to read in order to extract a better service but avoid instruction in writing. Even owning books did not imply the ability to write for people of African ancestry.

The majority of documents about Africans and their descendants stored in Spanish American archives relates to property and justice: slave sales, manumission, purchases of property, and judicial files. While manuscripts of black writers were not considered worthy to be kept in repositories, these institutions stored notary documents involving blacks and coloreds as notaries were important in shaping the “colonial archive.”⁷⁵⁷ Freedom papers or *cartas de libertad* were the most desired documents for slaves because these papers assured their status as freedmen. Notaries mediated between oral and written worlds as they read

⁷⁵⁶ José Ramón Jouve Martin, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada. Esclavitud, escritura y colonialismo en Lima (1650-1700)*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2005, 15, 56-68, 71.

⁷⁵⁷ Kathryn Burns, *Into the Archive. Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

aloud freedom papers to the slave at the moment of the liberation –thus illiterates knew what was at stake. Freedom papers permitted the newly freed to become subjects rather than objects of justice.⁷⁵⁸ Free people could develop new relations with written culture through legal and notary transactions relating to property and rights. Marriage and marital disputes as well as membership of confraternities brought them into the realm of written documents. Judicial cases led slaves to create representations on their lives and claims against masters. Scribes participated actively in these writings as they made the oral testimony of their clients consistent with legal formulae. Such procedures enabled blacks and coloreds to counteract colonial authority and masters. However, black participation in colonial justice also harnessed energies that might otherwise have been directed against the colonial regime. In others words, judicial prosecution cemented social hierarchies because written culture legitimized Spanish colonial rule.⁷⁵⁹

Even though the world of letters ultimately contributed to Spanish hegemony, the metropolis nevertheless strongly disapproved of black participation in written culture. The crown prohibited notaries of mixed European and African descent in Lima as early as 1621. Only people of fully Spanish ancestry were allowed to join the royal bureaucracy as well as to prepare legal documents. This ban did not prevent people of mixed or full African ancestry from joining religious orders because blacks and coloreds certainly participated in the lowest echelons of religious orders in early colonial Lima.⁷⁶⁰ Against this backdrop, the project of Jacinto Molina to establish a black monastery in Montevideo in the 1820s does not sound outlandish. Examples of this and other of black low-rank notaries and members of religious

⁷⁵⁸ On the insistence of some slaves to obtain a notarized copy of freedom papers given to them without the official signature of a notary in colonial Montevideo, see Bentancur and Aparicio, *Amos y esclavos*, 44-46.

⁷⁵⁹ Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*, 79-97, 118, 152; Steve J. Stern, *Huamanga to 1640*.

⁷⁶⁰ Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*, 68, 188. Ursula de Jesus, a seventeenth-century black nun born in Lima left a diary of her mystic experiences. Nancy Van Deusen, *The souls of the purgatory: The Spiritual Diary of a Seventeenth-Century Afro-Peruvian Mystic, Ursula de Jesus*. Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2004.

orders point to the existence of a small group of literate blacks who closed the gap between the written practices and illiterates. Jouve considers that literate blacks may have enjoyed a certain leadership of black communities since they guided these groups into the Spanish lettered world. They possessed a rare talent which may have been particularly useful for black confraternities, which frequently petitioned ecclesiastical and municipal authorities. Brotherhoods could also offer the services of literate men when their members found themselves in troubled with the colonial state.⁷⁶¹ As time went on, black *letrados* emerged as unusual but not uncommon figures in colonial Spanish American cities.

The list of known secretaries of the confraternity of Saint Benito between 1783 and 1792 reveals that very few people of African ancestry were able to write for this black association. While the first secretary was the free black Antonio Francisco Silva, who also captained the black militia, all other secretaries were people of mixed origins or even of full European ancestry: the pardo militia officers Tiburcio Ortega, Francisco Castañares and Alexos Garcia, a priest, a white Portuguese, and two white Spanish men.⁷⁶² Both this black confraternity and the black militia of Montevideo were largely composed by Africans rather than by people born in America out of African parents in the 1780s, which might explain this question. Later on, Jacinto Molina was also secretary of Saint Benito in the early 1830s.

As a new wave of Spanish bureaucrats flocked into the colonies during the Bourbon period, written culture expanded –particularly in the Río de la Plata. While the number of bureaucrats increased from 14 to 35 between 1767 and 1778 in Buenos Aires, this figure had soared to 83 by 1779. By 1803, the colonial bureaucracy had expanded to a peak of 164 men. Because there was neither a university nor a strong clerical establishment in Buenos Aires, this expansion had and even greater importance in cultural terms than it would have had in

⁷⁶¹ Jouve, *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada*, 127, 140.

⁷⁶² Archive of Hermanos Conventuales, Montevideo, Libro de Elecciones de la Cofradía de San Benito.

Lima or Mexico.⁷⁶³ There is no detailed study of the colonial bureaucracy in Montevideo, but growth must have paralleled that of Buenos Aires given that viceregal agencies were established there. Military personnel also arrived in Montevideo to strengthen the fortifications of this city –the base of the Spanish fleet in the South Atlantic.⁷⁶⁴ Experts in military constructions, artillery, and naval engineering resided alongside the increasing numbers of Spanish troops. Bureaucrats, military and also merchants and priests created a public sphere within the parameters of the “colonial enlightenment.” Bourbon reformers sent scientific expeditions to the colonies to produce knowledge and explore the empire as newspapers started to appear such as *Telegrafo Mercantil* (1801-1802), *Semanario de Agricultura y Comercio* (1802-1807) and *Correo de Comercio* (1810) all published in Buenos Aires. The colonial enlightenment reinforced royal authority and allowed for the improvement in conditions of subjects, but this movement had little to do with political reforms.⁷⁶⁵ From within this intellectual movement, Jacinto Molina defended monarchism as the only sacred, rational and natural form of government.

Literate blacks as well as Bourbon bureaucrats and military personnel arrived in viceregal Río de la Plata –though the former were not welcomed. In January 1784, the free black José Arguelles was arrested in Buenos Aires. He was an instructor of music. This we know because he was first taken by the authorities at the end of a lesson with his students. The poor condition of the documents makes it impossible to know why he was jailed, but José Arguelles as well as others wrote petitions for his release. The manager of the recently created theater of Buenos Aires wanted to put Arguelles to work in the orchestra of the

⁷⁶³ Socolow, *The Bureaucrats of Buenos Aires*, 27-28.

⁷⁶⁴ Luque Azcona, *Ciudad y Poder: La construcción material y simbólica del Montevideo*.

⁷⁶⁵ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to write the History of the New World. Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, 299-300. For late-colonial Río de la Plata, see Nicolas Shumway, *The Invention of Argentina*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 15-17.

playhouse because of the dearth of musicians in the city. Born in Havana, this literate free black was a subject of the Spanish king, but he was treated as a foreigner by the colonial authorities. The royal official Francisco Basavilvaso wrote that José had “to be treated as those who have no reason to remain in these provinces;” thus, he was sent to Montevideo to be embarked in a ship sailing for Havana in April 1787.⁷⁶⁶ José Arguelles spent three years jailed in Buenos Aires, or at least he was intermittently imprisoned during this period. Don Manuel Gomez was a black Portuguese priest living in Buenos Aires in the mid 1780s. He probably arrived in this city as a chaplain on a Portuguese ship in 1782 during the first peak of slave trading into viceregal Río de la Plata. The Vicar-General of the bishopric of Buenos Aires denounced this “black presbyter” to colonial authorities, who sent him to Montevideo. The Viceroy ordered the Governor of Montevideo to detain and isolate Gomez in the convent of Saint Francis and then send him to Rio Grande. Probably Gomez tried to stay in Buenos Aires, but he was summarily expelled since he was classed as foreigner.⁷⁶⁷ Jacinto Molina lived in Buenos Aires in the mid 1780s, just at the time of José Arguelles and Manuel Gomez’s presence.

Like José Arguelles, Jacinto Molina had exceptional writing skills in comparison with other Africans and their descendants. In 1779, the slave Bentura was accused of killing a free black in Montevideo. Bentura declared that “he was slave of the father Domingo Chavarría but he was considered a freedman because he had given more than 223 pesos according to the receipts he kept in a briefcase...” The inventory of his property listed a briefcase with papers, but provides no details on its contents. Clearly, however, Bentura held the written word to be of great importance. He must have known the basics of reading given that his former master was a priest –an educator. In a judicial case over the ownership of the

⁷⁶⁶ AGN-A, IX, 32-4-2, exp 17, 1786.

⁷⁶⁷ AGN-A, IX, 2-4-4, Governor of Montevideo to Viceroy, February 15, 1785.

slave Domingo Ramos in 1788, Pedro Segovia declared that he had “brought up [Domingo Ramos and his brothers] as well as sent them to school where they were educated.”⁷⁶⁸ In 1802, litigation over the freedom of Rufino, a young slave, establishes the fact that he knew to read.⁷⁶⁹ The enslaved African Francisco de los Reyes was brought to Buenos Aires when he was a child, from where he departed to Havana with his master probably by 1810 as a consequence of the revolution. In Havana, a priest bought Francisco, and took him to Madrid. Once in Spain, Francisco presented a plea to the Spanish king in order to change master given that the priest had “treated him like a dog.”⁷⁷⁰ As Francisco signed this petition in 1816, one might wonder whether he had learned to write somewhere in between Buenos Aires, Havana and Madrid or he had employed a scribe. Thus, a minority of masters employed their spare time and even their money in training their slaves into literacy.

Masters commonly were the point of entry for slaves into literacy. If supported by powerful masters, judicial files of slaves could even reach the top of the imperial decision-making process. In 1788, a royal decree established that Maria, a slave of Mónica Arce, should be sold for no more than 300 pesos to the Colonel Francisco Betzebé given that his slave Juan was the husband of María and the couple wanted to live together.⁷⁷¹ Initially, both Juan and María had lived in Buenos Aires, but Colonel Betzebé was commissioned in Montevideo. Juan sued the mistress of María before his departure from Buenos Aires, but without success. Juan renewed proceedings in Montevideo in 1787.⁷⁷² This case went up to the Real Audiencia of Buenos Aires, and from there to the Council of Indies, which issued

⁷⁶⁸ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 98, exp. 21, Andres Yañez por sospechas contra su esclavo, 1788-1791, f. 8v.

⁷⁶⁹ AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 42 exp. 33, “Causa criminal seguida contra el Negro Bentura esclavo...” 1779, f. 10; EGH, Caja 52 exp. 51, “Expediente promovido por la mulata Melchora Montaner...” 1802.

⁷⁷⁰ AGI, Indiferente 2827, File of Francisco de los Reyes, Palace of Madrid, March 11, 1816.

⁷⁷¹ BRAH, Colección Mata Linares, Tomo IV, f. 8557.

⁷⁷² AGN-U, AAJJ, Caja 80, exp. 42. “Juan Betzebé, negro esclavo, sobre libertad de su mujer,” 1787.

the decree signed by the king.⁷⁷³ This measure set a precedent later used by the slave Manuel Correa in Montevideo in 1808. Networks of those slaves belonging to colonial bureaucrats and officers facilitated the process of writing and directing personal petitions to authorities. In 1796, the slave Cipriano Palavecino asked to be sold himself together with his sons to another master in Buenos Aires. He had asked a friend, a slave coachman of the Viceroy, to contact someone who could write for him. The slave coachman brought Cipriano to a corporal who began to write a petition that same day. As Cipriano's master came to know his intentions, he tried to punish him. After enduring shackles and prison, Cipriano ultimately found someone who wrote on his behalf and he did in fact changed masters. Like Cipriano, other slaves depended on contacts with white scribes and thus they reached out beyond the slave community.⁷⁷⁴

In his study on slave litigation in late-colonial Buenos Aires, Lyman Johnson points out that urban slave communities stored knowledge about the workings of courts, and that slaves had to find allies other than Afro-descendants, both as writers and witnesses, in order to pursue successful litigation against their masters.⁷⁷⁵ In Montevideo, the slave Manuel Correa produced three sets of files to free himself and his wife from Tomás Aranzana and from Manuel Gallegos, respectively.⁷⁷⁶ In 1806, Manuel presented to the justice a memorial signed by him stating his desire to be sold to another master. He added a plea from the Defender of the Poor which was rejected by the governor of Montevideo. In 1808, Manuel presented two other memorials signed by him to free his wife. This time he obtained support from his master, who submitted a statement declaring that Manuel had deposited money with

⁷⁷³ In 1790, Juan married Juana, both of them Angolan slaves of Colonel Francisco Betzebé in Montevideo. We ignore if this Juan is the same who AAM, EM, 1790, exp. 31.

⁷⁷⁴ AGN-A, IX, 13-1-5, Cipriano Palavecino, February 6, 1796.

⁷⁷⁵ Lyman Johnson, "A lack of Legitimate Obedience and Respect': Slaves and Their masters in the Courts of Late Colonial Buenos Aires" *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 87, 4 (2007): 631-651.

⁷⁷⁶ AGN-U, EHG, Caja 82, exp. 64, "Solicitud de Manuel Correa, esclavo de Thomas Aranzana ..." 1806; Caja 87 exp. 10 "Autos promovidos por el pardo Manuel..." 1808; Caja 98, exp. 88, "Solicitud de Manuel Correa..." 1811.

him to free his wife. The master of Manuel's wife replied that the royal justice should only accept writings from known *licenciados* –registered attorneys– rather than from a slave. Thus, the scribes working for Manuel came to be revealed; they included the priest Juan F. Martinez, Captain José Raymundo Guerra –who later was a benefactor of Jacinto Molina– as well as five other *licenciados*. In 1811, Manuel submitted another memorial this time seeking his own freedom. In fact, the law barring royal officials from accepting pleas written by unknown *licenciados* was not enforced in Montevideo. A random sample shows seven files where slaves and free blacks submitted signed pleas to the royal justices from 1802 to 1812 – apart from Manuel's case.⁷⁷⁷ While the majority of these writings were surely prepared by Spanish and Creole scribes, Africans and their descendants paid for their services, provided the information for the case, and sometimes articulated the arguments leading to a successful ruling.

Slaves and free blacks closely tracked the political changes underway in the Río de la Plata as revolution spread via both armies and pamphlets. In May 1812, a slave conspiracy was aborted in Mendoza. While this region was already governed by authorities loyal to the Junta of Buenos Aires, blacks and coloreds wanted to accelerate measures favorable to slaves –specifically rights to freedom and to join the army. The leader, free black Joaquin Fret, had read aloud to his fellows the newspapers from Chile and Buenos Aires which promised better conditions for slaves.⁷⁷⁸ News of impending measures against the slave trade led blacks to circulate rumors about the ending of slavery in Buenos Aires. Reading also was important for low-rank officers. In 1817, Col. Rufino Bauzá disembarked in Buenos Aires with part of the black battalion of Montevideo. While lamenting that his five sergeants were illiterate and

⁷⁷⁷ AGN-U, EHG, Caja 54, exp 96,1802; Caja 60 exp. 30, 1803; Caja 63 exp, 97, 1803 Caja 63, exp. 105, 1803; Caja 73 exp 110 1804; Caja 81 exp. 18, 1806; Caja 102, exp. 97, 1812.

⁷⁷⁸ Beatriz Bragoni, “Esclavos, libertos y soldados: la cultura política plebeya en Cuyo durante la revolución. In *¿Y el pueblo dónde está?* Ed. Raúl O. Fradkin. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros, 2008, 107-50.

only one “could barely read,” Bauzá requested new sergeants who knew how to write. It remains unclear whether these sergeants were black or white.⁷⁷⁹ Black soldiers also communicated with their families through writing. In 1820, Pablo Cabral was accused of carrying correspondence from the enemy into Buenos Aires. Cabral declared that he carried “letters from two black soldiers to their women.”⁷⁸⁰ The prosecutor supported his declaration; thus, establishing the fact that at least some black soldiers could write or use scribes. In 1814, the fourteen-year-old free black Antonio Lacarra asked to serve under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel “who had educated him” in Buenos Aires.⁷⁸¹ Instead of joining the free black units, Antonio wanted to follow a white officer into the professional artillery. That request would have pleased Jacinto Molina, whose career in the arms and letters followed his Spanish patron José Molina.

Jacinto Molina asserted that he knew to read and write even before he was ten year old. With other children of Rio Grande, he joined the make-shift school taught by Mateo Cabral in the 1770s. Cabral continued tutoring Jacinto in Montevideo after the Spanish left Rio Grande. In a memorial sent to the Portuguese General Lecor in 1817 after his entry to Montevideo, Jacinto detailed his prowess in the careers of letters and arms, which he envisioned as shaping his life:

I was born free in Rio Grande in October 15, 1766, in the house of the Brigadier Don Jose Eusebio de Molina... I began writing documents when I was three year old with the Secretary of my Señor Don Manuel Otero who died in Montevideo in 1782... I concluded [my education] in Montevideo with Mateo Cabral in 1780 when I was eleven year old. In 1771, I began to learn the rules of drawing with instruction from the then Lieutenant Colonel of artillery Don Francisco Betzebé... This exercise, in which I had little interest, came back to me with the documents of the mathematician Don Feliz de Idiarte from 1780 to 1792. I know almost all rules, but I did not learn how who to draw shadows.

⁷⁷⁹ AGN-A, X, 22-1-6, Rufino Bauzá to Miguel Azcuénaga, November 17, 1817.

⁷⁸⁰ AGN-A, X, 29-10-3, exp. 166, “Sumario seguido contra Pablo Cabral...,” f. 3, 1820.

⁷⁸¹ AGN-A, X, 8-7-5, August 31, 1814.

My Señor and my father went into the Sierra against Portugal that same year 1771. I began my military career in Rio Grande that year 1771 carrying cartridges for the cannons with all the boys of the school who thus became artillerymen. In 1775, the Portuguese took Rio Grande and this was my third military action, given that the second happened a month previously when the Portuguese expedition arrived...⁷⁸²

José Molina was the point of entry for Jacinto into the *lettered* world. It was thanks to José that Jacinto met military experts such as Francisco Betzebé –mentioned above as support of the litigation of his own slave– who introduced Jacinto into drawing. José Molina obviously took pains with Jacinto’s education because he brought to him a copy of the Spanish legal treatise entitled *Digesto*, which also introduced Jacinto to Latin –essential for ecclesiastical and legal writing. While living in Montevideo between 1777 and 1782, Jacinto had already memorized the Spanish catechism of Astete. Jacinto shared schooling with future intellectuals of Montevideo such as Dámaso A. Larrañaga, who would become one of the most important *letrados* in the nineteenth-century. José Molina also followed the progress of Jacinto as an entertainment:

At night, while [José Molina] drank eggnog or chocolate, I recited my lesson from memory to my Señor in the presence of my father and majordomo. My Señor explained the Latin passage to me word by word. So not only do I read and understand this language, but I translate it without having the ability to speak it, for I do not know the rules for forming sentences.⁷⁸³

Jacinto enjoyed reading aloud to José Molina, his parents, teachers, and later his wife and friends –he even read for General Lecor as well as reciting at meetings of African-based associations! His writings testify to his sense of himself as unique in relation to other Africans and their descendants. He repeatedly narrates stories about the surprise of Spanish or creoles who ignored his ability and how these Spanish or creoles ultimately benefited Jacinto. By using such vignettes, he describes his introduction into the study of law:

⁷⁸² Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 95-96.

⁷⁸³ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 187.

Full of admiration, the Señor Doctor of Law Don Antonio Escarranea watched me copying a file which he had given to a shoemaker who I worked with. As he knew I was Negro, he requested my attendance. Once he knew about my knowledge and interests toward the sciences, he asked me if I wanted to learn Political Law and to defend. Given my good will, he gave me drafts of all methods of memorials and political expressions. He gave me the books from which to study, and I bought the two books of *Política Indiana* [...] I learnt by giving lessons to my Señor at night in front of my father, who glorified himself to see his Señor enjoying with this instruction... In Buenos Aires, Doctor Contreras added farther to the instruction given by Doctor Escarranea, including explanations of Ecclesiastical Law... [a work] which my Señor had in his possession and after his death it was given to me. My Señor also owned the Military Law written by Señor Don Telis Colon which I read, the *Cartilla Real* with notary practice written in Madrid, and other political, moral, and theological works which my curiosity and application have me to consult.⁷⁸⁴

Learning for Jacinto combined copying, memorizing, and charming an audience comprising his father and his mentor José Molina among others. Jacinto avidly obtained paper and ink as well as manuscripts and books to read and copy. He received part of the library of the former –and now disgraced– chief of the custom office of Montevideo Francisco Ortega from his widow. His learning extended to far more than just literacy given that he acquired knowledge of bureaucratic procedures, epistolary genre, law, and Latin –he included Latin phrases alongside Spanish translations in his manuscripts.⁷⁸⁵ But for both reading and writing he needed benefactors to lend him books –even though Jacinto was bequeathed books by José Molina and others– as well as provided with paper and ink. Isidoro de María confirms that Jacinto had known Dámaso A. Larrañaga since childhood and adds that José Raymundo Guerra –the amanuensis of the slave Manuel Correa– gave paper and pens to Jacinto in the 1820s and 1830s. De María asserts that “[in] spite of his color, Molina was esteemed for his commendable qualities by many in upper society.”⁷⁸⁶ Jacinto was part of the lettered world of white men who in turned provided him material support. In 1824, he

⁷⁸⁴ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 106.

⁷⁸⁵ For a detailed account of books that Jacinto may have owned, see Acree, “Jacinto Ventura de Molina,” 47-48.

⁷⁸⁶ De María, *Montevideo Antiguo*, Vol. 1, 240-242.

wrote to General Lecor requesting a reimbursement. In the 1820s, Jacinto wrote to Joaquín de Sagra y Periz: “I need the favor of three *patacones* from your Excellency to pay for the making up of this jacket, my laundry, and to buy paper and ink which now I lack.”⁷⁸⁷ Jacinto was successful in securing benefactors, but the idea of a black *licenciado* made colonial bureaucrats uneasy, too. On his deathbed in 1782, José Molina listened to Jacinto, but this time he was interrupted as Jacinto later recalled:

“[When the minister entered into the room], he did not say hello, nor did I hear his steps since he came from the back. He noticed my reading, and he said: Negro, what are these papers? I answered, they are mine. Yours? Yes my Señor. Who taught you, and who wrote those figures? Master Molina? Yes Señor. The minister went out and saw José de Molina and said: Are you mad Molina? How dare you to teach a Negro, when at this moment slavery is being discussed at Cadiz, and they say that slaves in the Americas are not to be educated?”⁷⁸⁸

José Molina answered that Jacinto’s father Ventura had saved his life when Ventura was his slave. As a reward, José freed him and promised to raise his child. Although Jacinto depicted this Spanish visitor as malicious, Jacinto neither condemned him nor defended José Molina. Neither did Jacinto write a single word about why it was so dangerous to educate enslaved or free blacks. Such an initiative would have led him to criticize the crown or depict José Molina as diverging from royal guidelines. Jacinto felt that he had a tie with José Molina that was stronger than gratitude and fictive kinship. He points out that he had been born the same day –October 15– that José Molina died. Jacinto felt that his life was the mirror image of that of José Molina as Jacinto described his military career as an emulation of his mentor’s *vita*:

The Province of Montevideo would not deny that I have decided for myself...To my chagrin I have tolerated jokes and scorn that had nothing to do with my education, culture and upbringing... The military career is the path to honor....With the help of God and my behavior, I am not afraid of the horrors of emulation and tediousness if the actions of Jose de Molina [shape]

⁷⁸⁷ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 190-191.

⁷⁸⁸ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 86.

my instruction. I have the same happiness to finish my career with the rules and examples of the original who I follow.⁷⁸⁹

Jacinto first points to his determination in the process of learning and to the derision his education produced. His desire to imitate José Molina was behind his decision to join the militia. The shadow of José Molina would support other seemingly unrelated aspirations of Jacinto such as the desire to establish a school for black students or a black monastery. Alejandro Gortázar sees this relationship between Jacinto and José Molina through colonial mimesis as defined by Homi Bhabha.⁷⁹⁰ Gortázar points out that the structure of literary “model-copy” was essentially pre-modern as it began to be replaced by the free “subject-creator” in late-eighteenth century literature. Jacinto followed mimesis and reproduced a pre-modern structure of thought. This mimesis also implies that the colonized subject should copy the patterns of colonial culture. A great deal of ambivalence arises as the colonized copied the colonizer, but the former remained as the recognizable “other” for the colonial power. Cultural mimesis also provided a platform for the colonized to voice claims against domination; thus, colonial authority must raise barriers of exclusion as well as extend domination to new fields. This ambivalence already operated in the Spanish colonies in America, where the use of judicial litigation and writing led subaltern groups to contest the representatives of the colonial power but always within the limits of Spanish hegemony. Jacinto prided himself in emulating José Molina as a model deserving imitation –an operation deeply rooted in Spanish colonialism and the ideals of patriarchy and patronage. The analysis of Jacinto’s manuscripts on José Molina, his epistolary writings, and his project for the school for black students reveals his overarching concepts on patriarchal authority, the role of education, and his own identification with vertical networks and powerful benefactors.

⁷⁸⁹ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 98.

⁷⁹⁰ Gortázar, *El Licenciado Negro*, 36-37; Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, 85-92.

6.3. Patriarchy and patronage

The surviving papers of Jacinto Molina show him sharing the Spanish hegemonic culture where patriarchy was the language of power, but they also attest to the creation of space for plebeian self-representation within the *lettered* city. In her study of patriarchy in colonial Lima, Bianca Premo emphasizes age and law in the Spanish tradition of political governance and household regulations. The figure of the father modeled authority in mature colonial societies, where Spanish law portrayed family as the cell of the empire.⁷⁹¹ Jacinto Molina understood his relationship with José Molina, the Spanish monarchy, and the basis of authority, through the model of patriarchy. By writing the biography of José Molina, the colonized Jacinto depicted the colonizer José Molina. In other words, the black writer created the white hero.⁷⁹² Jacinto constructs the figure of a Spanish colonizer through the lens of colonial culture; thus, he reverses the logic of representation where only colonizers depict the “otherness” of those colonized. Biography, autobiography and history intersected when Jacinto wrote about José Molina. These literary genres allowed Jacinto to write moral literature: the creation of an exemplary figure whose behavior was worthy of emulation. Jacinto depicted himself as historian of José Molina, but at every step he also introduced readers to aspects of his own life: “I do not deny that historians have rules which I alter by writing the life of Don José de Molina. I am exempted since I depict him as a singular man of principle, conduct, and consequences destined by Providence. He had a servant who was

⁷⁹¹ Premo, *Children of the Father King*, 1-19; This did not prevent Spaniards from representing power through gender metaphors given that the first encounters between Europeans and Amerindians produced Spanish narratives on feminized indigenous people. Karen Vieira Powers, “Conquering Discourses of ‘Sexual Conquest’: Of Women, Language, and *Mestizaje*” *Colonial Latin American Review* 11:1 (2002), 7-32; Steven Stern, *The secret History of Gender. Women, Men and Power in Late Colonial Mexico*. Chappell Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

⁷⁹² Andrea Pitetta, “El discurso de Jacinto Ventura de Molina y la escritura de la historia” in Alejandro Gortazar (ed) *Jacinto Ventura de Molina, Antología de Manuscritos*. Montevideo: UdelaR-FHUCE, 2008, 28-30.

happy among books.” While describing José Molina as protector of fugitive slaves from the Portuguese, Jacinto added that this policy favored his mother.⁷⁹³ Alongside the history of José Molina, Jacinto included autobiographical vignettes supporting his own role as authorized witness and biographer as well as confronting other accounts of his mentor’s life and the history of the region.⁷⁹⁴

José Molina was a towering figure for Jacinto as particularly illustrated in 1782, when both his father Ventura and José Molina died. On his deathbed, Ventura instructed his son: “I ask you only one favor, never abandon my Señor, and put up with him as he is elderly. While you owe me your being; you owe all other things to him. You know better than me, and you will easily understand it.”⁷⁹⁵ Alejandro Gortázar speculates that José Molina was actually the biological father of Jacinto as he protected Jacinto and her mother.⁷⁹⁶ This is an attractive hypothesis; though, if it were the case Jacinto would have taken advantage of direct blood lineage with José Molina as he ingeniously tried to draw on the military fuero and privileges of this Brigadier to protect him.⁷⁹⁷ While delivering a speech to an African-based association, Jacinto claimed ancestry of the *Mina* through his biological father. Jacinto only offers scattered details about his parents, but he builds a moralistic biography around José Molina, whose teachings Jacinto summarizes when José Molina died:

In 1771, the first of many lessons that the Brigadier José de Molina taught to me, when I was five years old: ‘*Try to keep your honor as the most precious gift nature grants you,*’ and the last lesson was in 15 October 1782 when he died: ‘*Remember that you were born under my roof, that you have my last name, and every single event that happens to you could be attributed to the*

⁷⁹³ “Don José de Molina was the first to pursue freedom to the Negro slaves in this America. He set free all of those he took in Rio Grande in the name of the King of Spain Charles III as well as those deserting [to the Spanish] in wartime such as my mother Juana del Sacramento...” This and the previous fragment come from Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 83.

⁷⁹⁴ In defending José Molina, Jacinto criticized Manuel Moreno –brother and biographer of the revolutionary leader of Buenos Aires Mariano Moreno– for his lack of documentary evidence in his historical writings. Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 81-82.

⁷⁹⁵ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 89.

⁷⁹⁶ Gortazar, *El Licenciado Negro*, 22-23.

⁷⁹⁷ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 103, 120, 134, 223.

education that I gave you. The rule of obedience was the word that he dictated to me *'Little black, do what your master says, and you will eat with him at his table.'*⁷⁹⁸

Jacinto evoked honor, reverence for his mentor, and obedience. The link between José and Jacinto was one of education –the gift granted by Brigadier Molina. Jacinto repeated these lines in epistolaries directed to benefactors, military officers, kings and even the Pope. This shaped his determination to espouse Spanish written culture, which made it impossible to depict himself as rebel, counter-hegemonic, or even as emerging from popular culture. The language of patriarchy legitimized unequal relations of power among unequal subjects as different bodies of law ruled different people in the Spanish empire. Before Uruguayan independence, Jacinto criticized the idea of a republic ruled by a Constitution;⁷⁹⁹ indeed he was critical of the very idea of the secular origin of popular sovereignty:

“These men [of Buenos Aires] say that they are free without knowing from where or how that right of Independence comes to them. That is the most improper of all rights. These People are subjected to one authority and magistrate that have no law and it is based on no law. Who did give authority and power to their judges? They answer the people. People have no power, and the reason is because the people are lay. God with all his wisdom never constituted a government without individuals chosen by him.”⁸⁰⁰

The religious foundation of Jacinto’s conception of legitimacy also emerged when he greeted the Luso-Brazilian invasion that ousted the revolution: “Today we see how these Voltaires, Diderots, Calvins, and Luthers are destroyed by His Majesty Pedro de Braganza Monarch of Brazil. These pagans, atheists, killers, enemies of monarchy have been infesting these countries against God and his lieutenants...”⁸⁰¹ According to Molina, the Luso-Brazilian invasion brought peace to the country, whereas the forces of Buenos Aires and José Artigas fuelled rebellion and disaster. The fall of traditional authority caused tragic

⁷⁹⁸ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 109. Underlined in the original.

⁷⁹⁹ “The right of equality established by Constitutions destroys all the respects and rights of the elderly stated by the natural law and the Gospel.” Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9248], [9212].

⁸⁰⁰ Molina, manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9295].

⁸⁰¹ Molina, manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9315].

consequences such as bloodshed in the name of freedom, which Jacinto denounced when referring to casualties in black battalions. Dearth, violence, and harshness characterized the revolution.⁸⁰² Jacinto renewed patriarchal networks as the Luso-Brazilian troops entered Montevideo. He wrote to the Portuguese king: “In 1817, Commander Carlos Federico Lecor raised my humble person to your Majesty, with the captives of this Province of Montevideo who are now free.”⁸⁰³ The captives of Montevideo were no other than the colonial elites opposing the revolutionary rule of Artigas. Jacinto depicted with patriarchal overtones his relation with the Portuguese Commander: “Carlos Federico Lecor told me to speak with him when he needed me. He was an affable father, benign tutor, guide, protector, tutelary teacher, whose influence supported my modest humility.”⁸⁰⁴ In the writing entitled *Veni, Vidi, Vinci* – I came, saw, I conquered– Jacinto constructed a biography of Lecor in line with the story of José Molina.⁸⁰⁵ Jacinto wrote this manuscript probably in 1836 as news of Lecor’s death arrived in Montevideo. There, he narrates the Luso-Brazilian invasion of the Banda Oriental as well as his networks with Lecor. The Luso-Brazilian regime restored the order of patriarchal relations under which Jacinto Molina had grown up. In a letter dedicated to the Brazilian Emperor probably in 1828-29, Jacinto amalgamated fatherhood, monarchy, tutorship, and religious faith.

“The August honor of your Majesty has been injured by the mediation of the English Monarch because of his unfair politic. Powerful Emperor, what will happen to the Religion of Christ? Who destroys and injures it? Religion lay in all and every single Christian which your Imperial Majesty has seen overtaken by meaningless freedom. You must impugn that liberty as a Father, Monarch, Tutor, and God of the Monarchy, because kings rule.”⁸⁰⁶

⁸⁰² “The republican rule is not such a government as the monarchy! Buenos Aires has not seen such severe pain as now; however, they call themselves free.” Molina, manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9274-6] and [9392]; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 90.

⁸⁰³ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9320].

⁸⁰⁴ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9322].

⁸⁰⁵ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 3, [9836-9847].

⁸⁰⁶ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 282.

Jacinto Molina wanted Brazil to retain Uruguay. This writing belongs to a tradition of late-eighteenth century Spanish-American authors, some of whom Molina had read, who portrayed America not so much as a colony but as a separated kingdom ruled by the same king.⁸⁰⁷ Alternatives to the dyadic Old Regime-Modern Republic fell into oblivion for all late nineteenth-century intellectuals. While Jacinto belonged to this tradition of loyalty to the crown, he nevertheless departed from it through his claims that would benefit him and the black population. He sought politics of identification and inclusion within the monarchist ideology. Catholicism was a cornerstone of this politics of inclusion as Jacinto sought to explain how both broad theological concepts were consistent with the realities of black participation in confraternities and the lower ranks of monasteries and convents.⁸⁰⁸ The epistolary genre filled with Catholic references allowed Jacinto to attract benefactors. According to classical rhetoric, those who wanted to address the powerful should write to them with respect as well as aiming to attract their benevolence—a model followed in all by Spanish memorials. In his pleas, Jacinto introduced himself as a “humble Negro” or “Negro Esquire” which reinforced the effect of inequality between the sender and the receiver as well as pushed the former to indulge the latter. He changed the way he introduced himself according to the person he was addressing. When writing to the Brazilian officers in the 1820s, he introduced himself as “Sergeant Major of Royal Militias and Esquire in Royal Law.” Yet, he presented himself simply as a “Negro Esquire of Law” when facing the authorities of Uruguay in the 1830s.⁸⁰⁹ Initially, Jacinto requested support for minor expenses, paper and ink from benefactors in Montevideo. He also devised a project to create

⁸⁰⁷ Cañizares-Esquerro, *How to write*, 205. The only significant change colonial enlightenment proposed was that Spanish America turned out to be a separate kingdom ruled by the king rather than a colony.

⁸⁰⁸ “From high theology to popular practices, Catholicism helped to create a broad, and when compared to other projects of European colonialism, remarkable inclusive community of Christian subjects.” O’Hara, *A Flock Divided*, 3.

⁸⁰⁹ Pitetta, “El discurso de Jacinto Ventura,” 24; Gortázar, *El Licenciado Negro*, 40.

a school or monastery for black students in the 1820s, for which he wanted to attract the support of Portuguese, Brazilian, or Spanish monarchs –the top of imperial beneficence.

Catholic religious orders ran sugarcane plantations and cattle ranches in colonial Brazil and the Río de la Plata –slave and free black overseers mostly ran these establishments. These slaves enjoyed a certain degree of independence –unknown for others– since clergymen did not maintain day-to-day supervision.⁸¹⁰ Jacinto wanted to create a religious rather than secular establishment for black students with training for work included. He envisioned this place as self-sufficient after initial support from imperial patrons. Jacinto wrote to imperial officials to inform them that there was only a tiny Franciscan convent in Montevideo inadequate to the task. The creation of a new abbey would reinvigorate Christianization and facilitate the education of the black population.⁸¹¹ This plan would provide a more secure place for Molina in the *lettered* world, though he was careful to ask for elite men to be the administrators of the prospective black abbey or school. These three men that he recommended were members of the old elites of Montevideo supportive of the Brazilian occupation and would inform the Brazilian emperor about the progress of the abbey. Actually, these men were benefactors of Jacinto in Montevideo, who gave him assistance during the 1820s and 1830s.⁸¹² Molina included other white men in his project, who would take the role teachers. Jacinto drew a hierarchical tree of the positions and the structure of command that would administer the abbey, where he ranked himself at the top as an ordained priest. Molina requested material goods instead of money for the projected black abbey. He believed that black students should help to build the abbey, harvest crops, and

⁸¹⁰ Stuart Schwartz, “The Plantations of St. Benedict: The Benedictine Sugar Mills of Colonial Brazil, *The Americas* 39:1 (1982): 1-122; Jorge Gelman, *Campesinos y estancieros*. Buenos Aires, Los libros del riel, 1998; Troisi, “Los esclavos de los jesuitas...”. Carlos Mayo, “Iglesia y Esclavitud en el Rio de la Plata: El Caso de la Orden Betlemita (1748-1822),” *Revista de Historia de America*, 102 (1986): 91-102 and “Patricio de Belén: nada menos que un capataz.” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, 4 (1997): 597-617.

⁸¹¹ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9704].

⁸¹² Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9705].

raise cattle. However, labor was not central as Molina enumerated activities that were uncommon for slaves such as book learning and leisure, but central for the abbey.⁸¹³ Study and games should rule the life of freedmen, a panorama far removed from slavery. They would derive a living from production and commerce, which left them time for learning and leisure. These plans embraced men and women, who would live in separate religious institutions. If the Brazilian Emperor did not answer his petitions, Molina had other monarchs in mind. In a letter to the Spanish king, Jacinto proposed that the monarch should support the black abbey since the flow of merchandise between the abbey and Spain would reinvigorate the trade between Uruguay and Spain, and reinforce the influence of Spain in this region after independence.⁸¹⁴ He added drawings of the black abbey or school to these petitions such as the one shown in Figure 6.2., which was directed to Joaquín de Sagra y Periz in the early 1830s.



⁸¹³ “Study is the most difficult exercise of Humanity; therefore, they should adopt distractions such as games...” Molina, manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9463].

⁸¹⁴ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 2, [9465] [9333]; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 95.

Figure 6.2. Colegio de Negros Magos Rufina Campana drawn by Jacinto Molina. AGN-U, AMHN, Caja 205, C. 7. Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Montevideo

The petitions involving the black abbey led by Jacinto Molina described other aspects of his last years of life. In mid 1830s, he wrote that “today I teach children of my color [though] they are very few, and during the day I wrote an ecclesiastical book [leading to the] foundation of the [Archbishopric] of Montevideo.” Jacinto already took responsibility for the education of two children whose half-sister was the slave Jacinto wanted to marry as his second wife. Jacinto had become an educator, but he deeply wanted to be a priest in his last days. He wrote that Dámaso A. Larrañaga told him: “If I were bishop, I would ordain you [priest] instantly, because you taught me the paternoster in the school.”⁸¹⁵ Larrañaga became the first bishop of Uruguay in 1837, but his promise to Jacinto went unfulfilled. As an educator with an official position and a priest, Jacinto would have developed contacts with children and youth, and this may have compensated for his lack of family. He would have continued his longstanding relationship with books and writing and fulfilled his dream be the first black priest in the Río de la Plata.

In the project for the black abbey, Jacinto envisioned himself as patriarch and representative of black communities in vertical hierarchy headed by his imperial benefactors. But monarchs were replaced by popular sovereignty in Montevideo as the Brazilian army withdrew from Uruguay in the late 1820s. In these years, Jacinto left the comfort of the *Hospital de la Caridad* and probably fell on uncertain times just as he became a sexagenarian. The only writings of Jacinto involving African-based associations emerged from the period after these drastic changes. While Jacinto had defended fellow black soldiers within the colonial justice system since the early 1800s, his surviving manuscripts offer not a single detail on the whereabouts of the black communities of Montevideo through the 1820s.

⁸¹⁵ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol. 3, [0167] [0172]; Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 221.

While African nations or confraternities already existed in the 1820s, there is no mention of these groups in his writings before 1830. In contrast, immediately on Jacinto departing from the *Hospital de la Caridad* and Brazilian troops left Uruguay, he developed an increasing interest in the African-based associations. In the next section, the analysis of his writings on Africans, their associations and his understanding of his new role in Uruguay would provide the basis for one of the first expressions of an all-inclusive black identity in Montevideo.

6.4. From “Ethiopians” to “Negro People”

The writings of Jacinto Molina mostly display his interest in connecting with European kings as benefactors rather than with Africans and their descendants in Montevideo. Part of his writings produced in the early 1830s deal with African-based associations as these groups met police repression. Before 1830, Jacinto wrote generically of *Ethiopians* –the biblical term for Africans– while trying to depict an ancient and honorable black ancestry rooted in biblical characters. He also wrote of *Ethiopians* when criticizing the “curse of Ham” –a biblical story then understood as legitimizing slavery for Africans. However, when describing his own parents and other specific Africans, as well as African-based associations, he commonly used the secular expressions *Guinea* or *Africa* as well as diasporic terms such as *Mina*. It is from his writings to Uruguayan authorities that a new expression encompassing all Africans and their descendants emerged: Negro People –*Pueblo Negro*. Jacinto came out with this term while defending his role as black leader as well as defender of the poor. He was probably influenced by his studies on the concept of civil society –*sociedad civil*– as he tried to understand the workings of the new Uruguayan state. As Jacinto depicted himself as a black leader before national authorities, he envisioned a *Negro People* to guide and defend. In his later writings on black associations, Jacinto Molina articulated these terms to pursue his own ends. Thus, he envisioned a black antiquity

supported by biblical references as well as a black Atlantic loyalist tradition to serve material objectives of specific black communities in Montevideo –the *Negro People*.

These strategic identifications are especially evident in the writings Jacinto directed to prospective benefactors such as the Brazilian Emperor. While writing to obtain support for a school of blacks in 1827, Jacinto depicted Africans and their descendants as capable of great civilization as shown by antiquity. He blended the origins of Africans and biblical Israel. As the wife of Moses was black, Africans would have been precursors of the “chosen people”:

It is well known that those Great Peoples Janissaries and Phoenicians were Negroes, who established towns on the shores of Euphrates and Nile. They were distinguished by their courage. Negro was the first wife of the liberator of the Hebrew People, Moses, from whom the Holy Church sings his word in the hymn *Olibiser Populum Tum*. Moses dictated these words when departing from the towns dominated by the King father of that happy Ethiopian precursor of the Israelite people which Moses liberated from captivity in pharaonic despotism in Egypt. Moses took her in his company and told her to forget her People: *Beautiful and cordial wife forget your People and come with me. You will be the queen of my heart, much richer, wiser, and braver than all known Kingdoms and Provinces in the Middle Orient.*⁸¹⁶

Jacinto was not the first black writer to connect the biblical origins of Africans with the people of Israel. In late-eighteenth century Massachusetts, the slave Phillis Wheatley already used the term *Ethiopian* to point to the proximity of Africans to the biblical saga vis-à-vis Europeans, who lacked any direct participation in the Old Testament.⁸¹⁷ But Jacinto moved to practical proposals as the above excerpt was part of a letter to the Brazilian Emperor sent after the death of the Empress. Jacinto proposed that the Emperor should free some slaves and send them to the projected black school in Montevideo, where they would

⁸¹⁶ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 199.

⁸¹⁷ Sondra O’Neale, “A Slave’s Subtle War: Phillis Wheatley’s use of Biblical Myth and Symbol” *Early American Literature* 21 (1986): 402-26. See Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 17-38.

pray for the soul of the deceased Empress.⁸¹⁸ Molina envisioned that the slave trade and slavery would be abolished by an enlightened monarch rather than by a republican government. He considered the slave trade to be unnatural since it depopulated Africa.⁸¹⁹ Jacinto quoted fragments of the Spanish Isidoro de Antillón against the slave trade as well as Montesquieu against hereditary slavery. Jacinto saw slavery as a punishment for those who engaged in war, but this punishment was not transferable through generations. He claims that white slaves did exist in Spain before the advent of black slavery. Eventually, the former became free, as should have been the case for black slaves in America given that no African had rebelled against the Spanish or Portuguese monarchs before being embarked America.⁸²⁰ Jacinto drew on knowledge about white slavery in ancient cultures, like Rome, Sparta and Carthage. As a parallel to white slavery, Jacinto depicted an antiquity of black civilization where no black people held in slavery.⁸²¹ After recalling black biblical characters, he enumerates the black leaders who brought the gospel to North Africa during the Roman Empire and the black saints of the Catholic Church. Jacinto underscores that slavery was not the natural state of Africans, and that Europeans fell into slavery in the past; thus, slavery and color were unconnected. To this end, Jacinto developed an alternative interpretation to the biblical origin of black slavery –the curse of Noah against his son Ham who would have been enslaved by his brothers as punishment (Gen. 9:18-27):

The Negroes do not descend from Ham the last son of Noah. They descend from Shem second son of this Patriarch. From this line came Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Esau, who the Gospel does not narrate but it is his brother. Who denies that in the Partition with Jacob, African went to Esau? What was the

⁸¹⁸ “...your High Emperor wishes to exterminate slavery by this grant, emancipate black men and women to this August expression. This would be an expression of August Piety to your noble wife, High Emperor.” Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 207.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., 270.

⁸²⁰ “The past epochs demonstrates that Africa and Asia were filled with European slaves. Ptolomeo and Cleopatra, Kings of Egypt, had multitude of these slaves. The same is true for the Empire of Alexander the Great, from its ruins emerged the Kingdom of Egypt...” Ibid., 198.

⁸²¹ Ibid., 199.

promise of God to Abraham when he ordered Ishmael to be circumcised, son of his slave? Who were the Great people offered to Ishmael?⁸²²

Moving beyond biblical exegesis, Jacinto advocated a plan of emancipation: "...a law will determine the price of freedom of each single slave. Thus, these sad people could achieve freedom according to their will and without the abuses of their masters who chase humanity with unknown cruelty."⁸²³ By the time Molina wrote this piece, gradual emancipation had started in most of Spanish America, but not in Brazil. It was unrealistic to request abolition while Montevideo was under the Brazilian rule. The proposals made by Molina were radical because there was no plan for freeing slaves at that time. Jacinto patriarchal tendencies meant that distrusted total emancipation. He points out that slaves who were too young could not make right decisions as demonstrated by those who had joined the black revolutionary battalions in the Río de la Plata. While Jacinto states that the transatlantic slave trade was against all natural law, he recognizes that the origins of his own existence resulted from this coerced migration because his parents were enslaved Africans. In a letter directed to the Brazilian Emperor to prevent the independence of Uruguay, he wrote that the British had pushed the Portuguese out of this traffic:

Politics meant the Portuguese lost the commerce of Negroes. Had this traffic not occurred, I would not have existed. As it created me as a free, Christian human being, it was good. With all their devotion, Religion, and production, it is undeniable that Negroes are of the same nature as Whites. The Negroes do not commit the same crimes as Whites, [as is clear] by seeing the crucifixion of Jesus-Christ, where there was no Negro involved. Neither [were there Blacks] in the persecutions of the Holy Church, nor in the revolutions against monarchies...⁸²⁴

Jacinto states the paradox of the slave trade for those born of enslaved Africans in the Americas: while essentially evil, the slave trade brought together his enslaved parents who otherwise would not have met. According to Jacinto, Africans belonged to the biblical

⁸²² Ibid., 136.

⁸²³ Ibid., 272.

⁸²⁴ Molina manuscripts, Biblioteca Nacional, Vol.3, [0288].

lineage of Moses and lacked the guilt of the modern world beginning with the death of Jesus and ending with the liberal revolutions of his time. Another global calamity, the slave trade, brought his parents together. Jacinto felt closer to his mother than to his father. While he refers to “African woman” when describing both his mother Juana and the young slave Catalina with whom he wanted to marry in the late 1820, he described his father Ventura as a “haughty Ethiopian”. Jacinto strategically located biographical vignettes of his parents in his writings to serve moral ends, but he does not provide a full biographical account of them. When addressing the virtuosity of motherhood in teaching Christianity and good manners, he added a paragraph on the teachings his mother Juana, her care of Jacinto, and her early death.⁸²⁵ When describing slaves defending their masters during armed conflicts, Jacinto uses the story of Ventura saving the life of Brigadier Molina. Jacinto also added references to moral wrongdoings of Ventura to illustrate the magnanimity of José Molina.⁸²⁶ Jacinto was proud of his blackness as he repeatedly introduced himself as *Licenciado Negro*, but he only sporadically and strategically emphasized his specific African origins. When making the opening speech at a celebration of the African-based association Urid Uriola in 1833, Jacinto elaborated on the biblical origins of Africans again,⁸²⁷ but he added a reference to his own ancestry:

Receive prudent women this brief and political gift from a Creole Negro, though originally from your lands of Mina, in one of the many colonies in Africa populated by the Ishmaelite. Here I omit expressing the many countries in Asia, Africa and Europe populated by the descendants of Japheth, Shem, and Ham.
And you all, National Ethiopians, bless the Supreme Being whose infinite piety predestined you to prosper in your nation. Repeat happily, long life,

⁸²⁵ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 102-103.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72-78.

⁸²⁷ “Arphaxad, third son of Shem and one of the grand parents of Abraham inhabited Armenia and surroundings. His descendants through *Fectam* crossed Persia and went to the Indies as well as others to meridional Arabia. The descendants of *Phalep* remained near the Tigris and in the septentrional Mesopotamia, from where God called *Abraham*, from whom descended Hebraic or Jewish, great part of Arabs, and Africans specially the Ishmaelites.” *Ibid.*, 139.

long life to Our Carabari Princess Maria Guardado forever and ever,
Amen.⁸²⁸

Jacinto played his African card in front of an African audience while celebrating the generosity of Queen María Guardado of the Urid Uriola. It is noteworthy that Jacinto never depicted African customs and traditions as barbaric whether he was before a white or a black audience. Jacinto recalled that Spaniard José Molina made Juana and Ventura promise they would avoid teaching African languages to Jacinto because José himself would take care of his education.⁸²⁹ Jacinto made neither a negative nor a positive comment on the knowledge of African languages by his parents. In his pleas seeking support from kings for his the black abbey, Jacinto never described Africans as backward, but he stated that they needed to learn to write and read to become full members of the larger community in which they found themselves and to advance their social standing. Jacinto defended the morality of black celebrations before the Uruguayan Secretary of Government in the midst of his pleas on behalf of the Congo “nation,” by stating that:

[The philosophers criticize] the drumming and [they] claim that the dancing of black women in public is obscene. Shame on philosophers who scold the Creator for presenting the entire naked nature... That some people move in this way or in another scandalizes these philosophers as if they knew what the best way to move is.⁸³⁰

The target of Jacinto is the widespread criticism on African-based celebrations as obscene, which appeared in the press of Montevideo as shown in the last chapter. According to Jacinto, the body of women –the quintessential place of sin for Catholicism– accommodates both to nature and God as it is the direct result of God’s creation. Even in this

⁸²⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁸²⁹ Jacinto’s father knew some words of his mother language even though he had been born in a slave ship. Ibid., 77, 103, 125, 138.

⁸³⁰ AGN-U, Jefatura de Policia, Caja 3, Jacinto Molina to Secretary of Government, March 10 [?], 1834, f.3.

delicate circumstance, he did not relinquish his respect for African-based celebrations or fall into misogynous opinions.

The same year of his previously cited speech to the Urid Uriola, 1833, Jacinto petitioned to the Pope Gregory XVI to obtain funds to the school for black students. Jacinto introduced himself as a black esquire. He envisioned the concept of *Negro People* to encompass Africans and their descendants living in Uruguay. Jacinto established the piety of the *Negro People* through the enumeration of biblical characters. When addressing the Pope, he portrays himself as a servant who would save his people:

Given I am Christian, Roman Catholic, [...] I direct to Your Holiness my fragile though truthful reflection to see if I can save this unknown negro people, hidden according Don Juan de Solorsano of the Americas. Holy Father, we receive knowledge of this [people] from the Holy Scriptures, from Ishmael elder son of Abraham...the daughter of Jetro and wife of Moses was black. The *Acts of Apostles* tell us of a Negro baptized by Saint Bernabe, from whom the Spanish Dn Pedro Calderon de la Barca wrote the poetic work *The Most Prodigious Black*. The King Magi Saint Balthazar preceded this [character] as he was followed by the Princess Iphigenia baptized by gospel writer Saint Matthew. The Chronicle of the Religious men of Saint Domingo in Ethiopia records the priest and black king Saint Elesbaan...The Order of Saint Francis in Sicilia presents the devotion to the *Magno* religious observant Saint Benito of Palermo [...].⁸³¹

To guide the *Negro people* from, in the words of Jacinto, “hidden existence,” as well as to serve as example of conduct and study, Jacinto asked the Pope to be ordained priest. These writings indicate the grandiloquence of Jacinto and the chasm between his self-perception as belonging to the black saints and his reality. Beyond this, he considers himself an interlocutor of kings and the Pope. While delusional, Jacinto kept track of the biblical stories that could be used to build his leadership and his project of a black school. Along with these petitions, Jacinto also developed a secular repertoire that bypassed the Bible and drew on early-modern Atlantic history –most properly the Black Atlantic. In 1832, Jacinto went back and forth between government offices to get official recognition as a *letrado* to litigate

⁸³¹ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 186.

in court. The marginalia responses and lampooning from Uruguayan authorities in his writings attest to his persistence. Apart from the copious notes from Joaquín de Sagra y Periz, who supported Jacinto's claims, these writings include the presbyter José Oyuela, the Secretary of the House of Representatives Miguel A. Berro, the clerk of the Police Department Pedro Díaz, the General Accountants of the State Manuel Reissig y Ruano and Román de Acha, the Secretary of the *Junta Económico Administrativa* (City Hall) Francisco Araúcho, and finally the Treasurer of the State Ambrosio Mitre.⁸³² While responding to another piece of lampooning from Mitre, Jacinto depicted himself as a black leader of the entire *Negro People* of Uruguay –*Ethiopians and their descendants*. Given his secular audience, he stressed that black leaders emerged from history and literature, some of whom belong to early-modern literature and some others to the Atlantic revolutions:

There is no parallel to my life in the history of Negroes. My story is different from that of the well-known wife of Moses and the black Saints of Spain and America: Saint Bernabé of the Acts of Apostles; Saint Balthazar and Saint Benito of Palermo, the Roman Ritual, the adoration of the Magi, and the Ritual and Missal of the Order of Saint Francis.

In England, there is Oroonoko a fine Ethiopian prince fallen in love; North America has the Grateful Negro; Spain the Negro Juan el Latino in Granada as well as the brave Negro Juan de Alba in Flanders. Then, there is the story of General Jean-François from the Island of Saint Domingo, [who resided] in Cadiz from the years 1798 to 1803... The current Chancellor of the University of Buenos Aires met this sad Creole Negro from the Island of Santo Domingo in 1803. [The Chancellor] came from Madrid via Cadiz to Montevideo, [where] I met him. We ate together, and he described for me a portrait of this sad black who avenged the Island of Saint Domingo.

[...]

Here in the state of Uruguay, Jacinto, a humble *Licenciado*, who as Joseph in Egypt and Mordecai in Persia, will devote himself to bring together the Ethiopians and their descendants, to give Civilization to their children as well as customs, and religion as never before have given to the Negro People.

Not only did Jacinto depart from biblical figures, but also he went beyond the Spanish-speaking world given his references to English literature and leaders of the revolution in Saint Domingue. He performed a strategic selection: Oroonoko, the Grateful

⁸³² Ibid., 234-238.

Negro, Juan el Latino, Juan de Alba, and Jean-François all defended monarchy, goodhearted masters and white benefactors. All of them were famous black characters of the white lettered world emerging from theater, newspapers, and novels. A review of these references easily reveals their shared features and connections with the point of black leadership made by Jacinto.

One of the first novels in the English language, Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* (1688) depicts the story of an African prince caught up in the slave trade by an English captain who shipped him to the English colony of Suriname. Oroonoko is renamed Caesar by his new master—a model of a kind slave owner. But Oroonoko ultimately leads a failed slave rebellion, for which he was sentenced to death by dismemberment. The theater version of *Oroonoko* (1696) made the story extremely popular; moreover, this play was copiously rewritten and staged as the slave trade and slavery developed to unimaginable levels in the second half of the eighteenth century. These playwrights were critical of the immoral behavior of planters, a feature originally lacking in the novel.⁸³³ Eighteenth-century versions, which Jacinto Molina probably saw on stage or read in translation, praised paternalistic planters in preventing slave rebellions. Caesar was also the name of the leading character of the short story *The Grateful Negro*, written by Maria Edgeworth (London, 1804).⁸³⁴ The plot that unfolds is that of the planter Mr. Edwards who prevents the separation by slave sale of Caesar and his wife. In return, Caesar saved the life of Mr. Edwards during a rebellion led by a slave owned by violent planter. This story communicated paternalism as depicted in a reformed and ameliorated form of slavery close to wage labor. Jacinto probably

⁸³³ Derek Huges, *Versions of Blackness. Key Texts on Slavery from the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2007, p xxvii.

⁸³⁴ George E. Boulukos, "Maria Edgeworth's 'Grateful Negro' and the Sentimental Argument for Slavery" *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 23, 1 (Feb. 1999): 12-29.

knew this tale via a play or a serialized short story translated into newspapers, which relocated the plot in North America given the nineteenth-century anti-slavery debates there.

Spanish Golden Age theater provided Iberian black references for Jacinto. Juan Latino (1518-1596) was the son of African slaves, but he received education in liberal arts thanks to noble patrons in Spain –just like Jacinto did in Montevideo. Juan Latino even reached the position of professor at the University of Granada, which made him famous enough to be mentioned in Cervantes’s *Don Quixote* and in two plays of Lope de Vega. The fame of Juan Latino expanded with the play entitled *Juan Latino* by Diego Jiménez de Enciso (1585-1634).⁸³⁵ In his own poetry, Juan Latino celebrated the Hapsburg monarchy as well as the Spanish hegemony on the Mediterranean after the Battle of Lepanto (1571). The play *El Valiente Negro en Flandes* by Andrés de Claramonte (c.1560-1626) reflects the life of Juan Valiente, an actual black conquistador of sixteenth-century Chile, but moves the plot to seventeenth-century Flanders, where the fate of Europe itself was at stake. *El Valiente Negro* was staged for the birthday celebration of one of King Philip IV’ daughters, as well as reprinted in Madrid, Seville, and Barcelona – it was even one of the most popular plays in nineteenth-century Mexico. The storylines shows the slave Juan, who after obtaining freedom, went to Flanders to battle the Protestants, for which he gained the trust of the powerful Duke of Alba. That is how Juan Valiente was also known as Juan de Alba. Both Juan Latino and Juan de Alba were among the few secular black heroes of this time –out of eleven seventeenth-century Spanish plays with a black protagonist, six were centered on black saints.⁸³⁶ Thus, the insistence of Jacinto Molina on biblical black leaders might not only reveal his Catholic devotion, but also his cultural investment in seventeenth-century Spanish theatre.

⁸³⁵ John Beusterien, *An Eye on Race. Perspectives from Theater in Imperial Spain*. Lewisburgh: Bucknell University Press, 2006, 106-114.

⁸³⁶ *Ibid*, 114-123.

The last reference of Jacinto was also the only one to someone contemporary to him – Jean-François Papillon. Soon after Louis XVI went to the guillotine in 1793, the rebel leaders Toussant Louverture, Biassou and Jean-François sided with the Spanish King against the French republic in Saint Domingue.⁸³⁷ Without a monarch, these black officers were not at first prepared to accept the French state. While Louverture eventually changed sides and became a national hero, both Biassou and Jean-François died in exile serving the Spanish King. Biassou was relocated in Saint Augustine (Florida), whereas Jean-François and his retinue crossed the Atlantic to Cadiz, where he died during the Napoleonic Wars. It was probably in Cadiz where Santiago Figueredo met Jean-François; Figueredo later told Jacinto about this character while staying in Montevideo. Born in Montevideo, the priest Santiago Figueredo was the Chancellor of the University of Buenos Aires just at the time that Jacinto Molina wrote this inventory of black Atlantic leaders. Whether or not Figueredo met Jean-François and then talked about him with Jacinto, the latter had certainly other sources of information on Saint Domingue. At least four books published in Spain about the Haitian revolution circulated in Spanish America by 1810, and one of these included illustrations.⁸³⁸ As a black officer loyal to the Spanish king up to his death, Jean-François became one of the Atlantic world references of Jacinto Molina.

While Don Quixote envisioned his life through his reading of chivalric romance, Jacinto looked for loyalist black leaders –comparable to him– in Spanish and English literature as well as in the Atlantic world. He envisaged a monarchist black tradition in the

⁸³⁷ Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2010, 62-63, 69-75, 81; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2004, 152, 159-160.

⁸³⁸ *Vida de Dessalines, jefe de los Negros de Santo Domingo, con notas sobre el origen, carácter y atrocidades principales de los gefes negros* (Madrid, 1805); *Historia de la Isla de Santo Domingo continuada hasta los últimos acontecimientos durante la insurreccion de los xefes negros* (Madrid, 1806); *Codigo formado por los negros de Santo Domingo de la parte francesa, hoy estado de Hayti, con los retratos de los jefes de la insurreccion* (Madrid, 1806). *Perjuicios que debe causar a la Humanidad el establecimiento del gobierno independiente de los negros de la isla de Santo Domingo* (Madrid, 1807).

midst of the Atlantic revolutions which shattered the ancient regime.⁸³⁹ In the process, Jacinto depicted black communities in Montevideo as *Ethiopians and their descendants* as well as the *Negro People*. These are the broadest forms of identification employed by an Afro-descendant of this city to describe his own community. The connotations of *Negro People* point to both race and the concept of civil society. Jacinto studied the concept of “the people” in these years to understand the fabric of a republic. As a literary hall of mirrors, Jacinto employed European literature to support his own claims of black leadership which led him to envision an all-inclusive identification for Africans and their descendants in Montevideo.

Far from helping Jacinto make his case, these literary references provoked scorn and condescension from the individuals to whom they were addressed in independent Uruguay. As an example, Treasurer Ambrosio Mitre responded disdainfully to the “undigested fragments of history that abound in his brain”⁸⁴⁰ while referring to the text quoted above. If this was the official response to the individual who was the most accomplished black speaker of the language of supplication, yet who died in poverty in 1841, we may wonder what this suggests about the effectiveness of the black organizations and leaders.⁸⁴¹ At a minimum, these “undigested fragments of history” were the first expressions of articulated thoughts of an African Diaspora and an all-encompassing black identity in Montevideo by an author of African ancestry.

As Jacinto drew on references from the loyalist black Atlantic, he was an indisputable leader for black communities addressing colonial rulers. But Jacinto was writing to liberal republican authorities; thus, he was caught between two eras with his outmoded literary and political views. Even subalterns fully identified with the culture of the colonizer, such as

⁸³⁹ John W. Pulsis (ed.), *Moving on: Black loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic world*. New York: Garland, 1999.

⁸⁴⁰ Molina, *Los caminos de la escritura negra*, 238.

⁸⁴¹ I thank George Reid Andrews for this comment.

Jacinto suffered the predicament of marginality when new barriers barred them from enjoying the privileges of the dominant –a particularly pronounced pattern during postcolonial times. All the knowledge that black communities stored about the workings of the colonial state and church became increasingly useless in the new political environment. Instead, references to the *Patria* now pervaded the pleas to liberal authorities. Jacinto probably enjoyed a better social standing in the late-colonial era as a lieutenant of black militias than in the early republic, where society was seen to be built on the individual rather than on social corporate bodies. However, as Jacinto persisted in his quest to be known in the white world of letters and to create a black arena of literature, as well as to construct an image of an African Diaspora to support his pleas, he inaugurated social and cultural practices typical of the new black leaders of the second half of the nineteenth century, those who in fact ran the first black newspapers of Montevideo.⁸⁴²

A harbinger of the black republic of letters

Jacinto had the cultural equipment to achieve his goals but lived either after or before his time, which may have fed his delusions of grandeur that paralleled those of Don Quixote. Other black leaders were born into the grammar of the republic as old Jacinto grappled with the concept of civil society and liberal associations as illustrated by his later manuscripts.⁸⁴³ In August 1852, the newspaper *La Constitución* reported that some public schools were not admitting “colored children” in contravention of the constitution.⁸⁴⁴ The white editor Eduardo Acevedo Maturana stated that “A Negro or Mulatto could be the President of the Republic if he fulfills the constitutional requirements,” among which was literacy. This was

⁸⁴² George Reid Andrews, “Afro-World: African-Diaspora Thought and Practice in Montevideo, Uruguay, 1830-2000,” *The Americas* 67, 1 (2010): 83-107.

⁸⁴³ Molina, 273-280.

⁸⁴⁴ *La Constitución*, Montevideo, N° 42, August 20 1852, p, 2, “niños de color.”

not the first denunciation against racial discrimination in schools –these claims emerged as early as the Uruguayan state itself.⁸⁴⁵ As an early response the state had created a school for “colored girls” in 1834, but this institution closed in June 1835.⁸⁴⁶ As the integration of “colored children” into the incipient public school system continued to be resisted for some in 1852, a school for adult Africans and their descendants opened in the University of the Republic that year. This school first enrolled 53 adult students, some of whom already knew the basics of reading and writing; thus, they became instructors who were added to the two white teachers in attendance.⁸⁴⁷ Jacinto Molina had died a decade prior to the opening of this school; otherwise, he surely may have sought to become one of these professors. Rather than the black monastery envisioned by Jacinto, Africans and their descendants claimed space in the quintessential liberal institution of this time –university– an analysis of which goes far beyond the limits of this study.

⁸⁴⁵ The denunciations of the early 1830s probably were voiced by the abolitionist press editor Juan M. Marquez. *El Tribuno*, Montevideo, April 10, 1830, 2; *La Gazeta Mercantil*, Montevideo, January 26, 28, and April 15, 1830; *El Indicador*, Montevideo, October 10, 1831; *El Patriota*, Montevideo, April 10, 1832.

⁸⁴⁶ ALONSO CRIADO, Matías, op. cit., T. I, p. 251. AGN-U, AGA, Ministerio de Gobierno, Police Chief Juan B. Blanco to Secretary of Government Francisco Llambí, June 2, 1835.

⁸⁴⁷ *La Constitución*, November, 17, and December 22, 1852, and June 16, 1853.

Epilogue



Figure 7.1 Death of General Pallejas, 1866. Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional, Montevideo.

While commanding a Uruguayan infantry battalion, Colonel León de Pallejas died at the Battle of Boquerón (Paraguay) during the War of the Triple Alliance in July 18 of 1866. The picture shows the honor guard in attendance right after his death, and also happens to be the earliest photograph reflecting Afro-Uruguayan life. Exactly thirteen years previously, Pallejas had headed one of the black battalions leading the coup against President Giró. Perhaps some of men shown in the picture were already under the command of Pallejas in July 1853. Certainly, these would have been new recruits since the recruitment of blacks into separate units continued in the second half of the nineteenth century despite the protests of the new black newspapers against racially segregated conscription. Though of producing the second-largest black press and one of the three racially defined political parties of Latin America,⁸⁴⁸ Afro-Uruguayans subsequently became invisible as seven hundred thousand European immigrants arrived in the country and the dominant culture envisioned Uruguay as

⁸⁴⁸ George Reid Andrews, *Blackness in the White Nation. A History of Afro-Uruguay*.

a white social democracy free from racial prejudices and inequality. Early evidence of this process of obliteration can be found in this 1893 sketch drawn on the basis of the above picture and published alongside other images of the Paraguayan War.

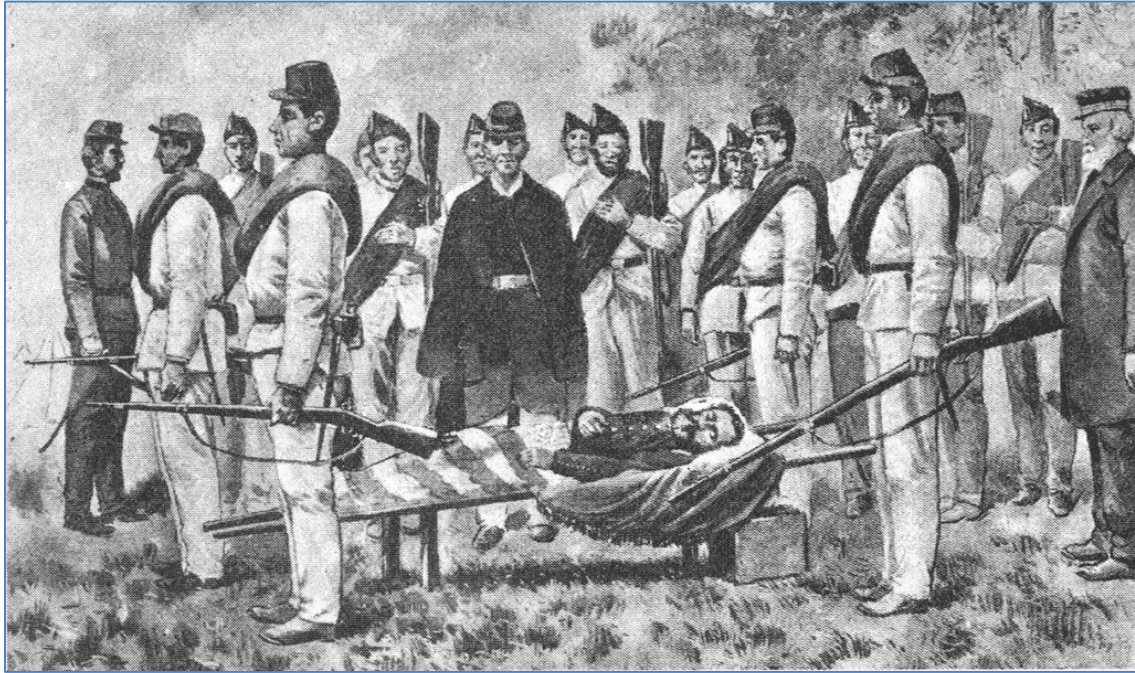


Figure 7.2 Drawing on the death of General Pallejas. **Source:** *Album de la Guerra del Paraguay*, Buenos Aires, 1893.

The physiognomic characteristics of African ancestry that the photograph of escorting soldiers shows clearly is blurred in the drawing, which seemingly portrays soldiers of mixed Amerindian and European ancestry to the eye of the modern beholder. This airbrushing as it would be called today provides an early example of the disappearance of Africans and their descendants from the historical record –a process relegating people of African ancestry to a secondary place even when they were central to the history of Uruguay during our period of study. This thesis has shown that in the late-colonial era, Montevideo emerged as an Atlantic port where slave trading became the most important source of revenue as well as the focus of Spanish imperial policies and colonial merchant strategies. Trans-Atlantic and intra-American slave trading enriched the merchants of Buenos Aires and Montevideo given their

position as intermediaries of slave routes ending in Lima, Chile and Upper Peru. As slavers from different nations carried captives from various African regions into the Río de la Plata, a widely diverse African population set foot in Montevideo and made sense of their lives by shaping their own identities from their African origins, shared experiences of slave routes and participation in new social networks such as black brotherhoods and militias. While rooted in the colonial era, black militarization reached unprecedented levels and loomed large in the politics of Montevideo from the time of Artigas to the Paraguayan War. The significance of black soldiers in shaping Uruguayan history perhaps is best illustrated by the political turmoil experienced in Montevideo during the Great Siege of 1843-1851, when relations between *Colorado* caudillos and black units was crucial to the political balance.

The Day of Kings portrayed some of the many social networks and black identities through which Africans and their descendants made sense of their lives in Montevideo. The uniqueness of their African origins had become evident to them even before they embarked on slave vessels. Not just cultural affinities but also specific shared experience shaped their sense of belonging to new diasporic groups. Members of these groups shared distinctive itineraries to the African coast, captivity and embarkation in slave ports, and the voyage to Montevideo. Once there, memories of an African past became reinforced via enduring contacts with fellow shipmates. Interaction with shipmates also reshaped the African past to accommodate new senses of belonging to diasporic communities such as *Angolas* and *Benguelas*. Interestingly it was not recently arrived captives, but rather free Africans with years of living in Montevideo who created the first documented black associations dedicated to Saint Benito and Saint Balthazar. As revolution and independence took a hold of Montevideo, the Day of Kings generated public displays of African music, dance, and clothing beyond just the celebration of Saint Balthazar. Such displays were also a source of power for African leaders as they fought among themselves for control of this festivity during

the 1830s. New garments such as military uniforms worn at this event by both black commoners and leaders represented a new source of power in nascent Uruguay. The new element in this identity became evident through the “ceremony of visits” representing bonds of loyalty binding African elders and national authorities. The Day of Kings became an opportunity for Africans and their descendants to commemorate African shared past, the coronation of a Holy Black King, their own prowess in combat, and finally their close relationships with those in power.

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