The Impact of the American Revolutionary War on the Slave Trade to Cuba

Alex Borucki and José Luis Belmonte Postigo

IN mid-September 1783 the schooner *Eagle*, captained by David Miller, landed 104 enslaved Africans in Charleston. This is the first known U.S.-flagged transatlantic slave voyage arriving in the United States after independence. Before bringing these captives from Africa, Miller had conducted a previous voyage on the *Eagle*, which landed fifty other captives in Havana in May 1783.[1] The latter group of enslaved men and women, whom Miller brought from the Danish colony of Saint Thomas in the eastern Caribbean, were some of the nearly 14,500 captives we have found who were shipped to Havana, mainly from other Caribbean ports by merchants based in Cuba, the Danish West Indies, and the United States, from 1781 to 1785. Though British North American colonists had been organizing slave voyages for more than a century before the American Revolution, these slave vessels arriving in Cuba during that war were the first to sail under U.S. colors.[2] That was no trivial detail for the multilateral Caribbean itineraries

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[1] On the *Eagle* in Charleston, see Slave Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TASTD), https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/WHytqquD. On the *Eagle* in Havana, see "Entrada y salida de embarcaciones al puerto de La Habana, 1781–84," Miscelánea de Libros, Libro 3166, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (ANC), Havana. All citations and hyperlinks to the TASTD and the Intra-American Slave Trade Database (IASTD) hosted by the Slave Voyages website used the data available on May 15, 2023. Because these databases are annually updated, results of future searches from these links may be different than those shown in this article.

[2] Sean M. Kelley, "Massacre at Portudal? Reexamining the *Rainbow*, Boston's First Transatlantic Slaving Voyage, 1644–45," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 49, no. 1 (Winter 2021): 82–109.

that characterized voyages of this sort because ships had to carry registration papers from the United States or neutral powers such as Denmark, rather than from Great Britain, to be able to dock in Havana. The wartime politics of the American Revolution shaped the organization of these trafficking voyages and opened a new chapter of U.S. slave trading centered on Cuba that lasted for twenty-five years.

An investigation of the traffic of captives to Cuba during the American Revolutionary War allows several important developments in U.S. and Cuban history to come to the fore. To begin with, the early slave trade of the United States, as an independent country with its own registered ships, was intrinsically connected with Cuba. During this conflict, Havana became the first and foremost port of disembarkation for U.S.-flagged slave ships, which meant that the silver received there in exchange for captives flowed into the United States. In addition, U.S. involvement in the traffic to Cuba included outfitting and manning Danish-flagged vessels, which carried enslaved people from Saint Thomas to Havana in 1781–85, when Saint Thomas became the main point of forced embarkation for captives heading to Cuba. In other words, U.S. merchants and mariners used Saint Thomas as a logistical hub to ship captives to Cuba in vessels flying the neutral Danish flag during wartime. What might appear to have been a Danish inter-Caribbean slave trade was, overwhelmingly, U.S. traffic in disguise.

The study of the trade in enslaved people to Havana during the American Revolution also sheds new light on the periodization and politics behind the broader traffic to Cuba. Though the historiography portrays the eighteenth century as the era of the British slave trade to this island—one that only began to wind down when the Spanish Crown opened this traffic to all Spanish and foreign traders in 1789—U.S., Danish, and Spanish merchants, not British slavers, were already carrying the majority of enslaved Africans to Havana by the early 1780s.[3] Indeed, almost 40 percent of the captives arriving in Havana in 1781–85 were carried by Spanish Cuba-based shippers, underscoring that the Spanish-organized traffic began well before 1789. Moreover, the opening and deregulation of the slave trade to Cuba in 1789, which the scholarship portrays as emerging from initiatives of Cuban ideologues such as Fernando Arango y Parreño and Spanish metropolitan authorities, now seems to rubber-stamp already consummated events,

[3] Since the 1970s, foundational works have identified 1789 as a watershed, an interpretation followed by the historiography cited in this article. See Herbert S. Klein, "North American Competition and the Characteristics of the African Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790–1794," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 28, no. 1 (January 1971): 86–102; Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: complejo económico social cubano del azúcar* (Havana, 1978), 1: 50–52, 259–69; José Luciano Franco, *Comercio clandestino de esclavos* (Havana, 1980), 89–120; David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1980), 1–21.

since Spanish merchants based in Cuba had been conducting slave voyages to other Caribbean islands for almost a decade.

The American Revolution is often considered the beginning of the end of the U.S. overseas slave trade, with the rebelling colonies halting the arrival of captives as part of their nonimportation strategies, most of the new states continuing the slave trade's prohibition, and Congress outlawing the slave trade to the country as soon as the Constitution allowed in 1807. But just as barriers emerged to shipments of enslaved people to the newly independent United States, the nation's traders redirected their activities to Cuba and actually increased the number of enslaved people they carried to the Americas. In the twenty-five years following 1783, Cuba became the most important market for U.S. maritime slave traders.[4]

Scholars intent on considering the American Revolution's relationship to and influence on systems of slavery must be sure to look outside of the United States. In the years preceding the war and during the actual fighting, most patriots identified the slave trade with Great Britain; after all, more than 80 percent of the captive Africans who had arrived on the British North American mainland by then came via voyages organized in Great Britain rather than in the colonies. Yet by the time of the American Revolution, a traffic of captives organized by North American merchants into regions that either were or became part of the United States had already developed, and a new branch of this traffic—also organized in the United States, and now carried on under the U.S. flag—began to bring captives to Cuba. Two decades after the revolution, it was mainly through this latter traffic that the United States became a "very much rising [slave-trading] power at the time of abolition," as noted by historian David Eltis.[5] The U.S. slave trade to Cuba during the American Revolution reminds us that to portray this war as the beginning of the end of the U.S.-organized maritime slave trade runs the risk of uncritically reproducing a U.S.-centered teleology.[6]

[4] Not including the U.S.- and Danish-flagged trade examined in this article, merchants based in British North America disembarked nearly 87,000 captives in transatlantic voyages arriving in Cuba and an additional 27,000 enslaved people from within the Americas from 1764 to 1862; TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/JADC8qEk; IASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/qdC6WQzE. During that same period, the same set of merchants disembarked 67,000 captives in the United States directly from Africa and an additional 7,000 from the Americas. For U.S. transatlantic and intra-American slave voyages to the United States, see TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/ID1cHV3X and IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/6gDY1jOt. The site's estimates page suggests that 110,000 captives were likely brought by U.S. slavers to the United States (http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/853IXovx), but the site lacks updated estimates for Cuba reflecting the last decade of research.

[5] David Eltis, "The U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1644–1867: An Assessment," *Civil War History* 54, no. 4 (2008): 347–78 (quotation, 365), esp. 359–61.

[6] For a debate about the effects of the American Revolution on the slave trade, see Sean Wilentz, "The Paradox of the American Revolution," review of *Liberty Is Sweet: The*

The American Revolution, though, did cause several significant changes in the U.S. slave trade. It shifted control of the traffic to the United States from British to U.S. merchants and cut the ability of the latter to disembark captives in the British Caribbean. The war precipitated the rapid geographic expansion of U.S. slave traders' operations, which extended first to Cuba and the Dutch and Danish Caribbean and then, in the following decade, to the Río de la Plata and the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the U.S.-Danish trafficking networks in Saint Thomas formed during the war became part of the first significant U.S. commercial operations in the Danish Caribbean; the islands eventually became an incorporated territory of the United States in 1917. Moreover, the war led to a distinct divergence between the organization of the slave trades in the United States and Great Britain, one that the U.S. slave trade to Cuba demonstrates quite clearly. British shipping of enslaved people usually increased in volume in times of peace and declined during wartime.[7] But starting with the American Revolution, U.S. merchants actually increased their slave-trading operations during wartime. They did so because during more than two decades of conflicts between the French-Spanish alliance and Great Britain, the United States either allied with the former (during the U.S. Revolutionary War) or remained neutral (after 1783).[8] In 1779–83, while Spain was at war with Britain, U.S. merchants as well as those from neutral powers such as Denmark were allowed to sell slaves in Havana. After the peace, Spanish authorities tried to prevent foreign ships from disembarking captives in Havana throughout 1784, but interloping slave traders continued to do so until 1785. Then, the U.S. traffic of captives to the Spanish colonies followed the ebbs and flows of the overall neutral trade during the Atlantic wars up to 1808.[9]

Tracing the contours of that U.S. slave trade to Cuba during the American Revolution itself also opens up the chance to dramatically increase our understanding of the broader traffic in enslaved people to the island during this period. Newly discovered port records from the early 1780s and notarial sources from Havana provide information on 97 previously unknown ships forcibly disembarking captives from 1781 through

Hidden History of the American Revolution, by Woody Holton, and *American Republics: A Continental History of the United States, 1783–1850*, by Alan Taylor, *New York Review of Books*, Jan. 13, 2022; David Eltis, Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Constitution and the Slave Trade," a response to Wilentz's review, ibid., Apr. 7, 2022; and a reply by Wilentz, ibid.

[7] Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619–1807* (Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2014), 296–98.

[8] The Franco-Spanish alliance broke down during the War of the Convention (1793–95) but was restored at war's end.

[9] For the argument that war encouraged trade across eighteenth-century Caribbean ports, see Adrian J. Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America, 1763–1808*, paperback ed. (Liverpool, 2014), 62–70; Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic War* (Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2018), 63–110.

the end of 1785.[10] To the best of our knowledge, scholars focused on the slave trade have not made use of the port records produced during the war. When these new data are added to the eighteen trafficking voyages currently listed in databases at the Slave Voyages website, there are 115 shipments of captives and an estimate of at least 14,476 enslaved Africans and Afro-descendants arriving in Cuba in 1781–85.[11] Almost 40 percent of these captives were forced to embark in vessels flying Spanish colors, which points to Cuba-based Spanish slave-trading connections from previous decades, but merchants using either the U.S. or the Danish flag brought 34 percent of these captives to Havana through new and complex Caribbean commercial networks involving Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue.

This multilateral traffic forcibly transshipping captives through Caribbean ports fits the definition of the tramp trade—merchants who specialized in making many short trips, connecting various Caribbean and mainland ports, and carrying commodities that were cheap in one port to another where these goods were scarce. The intra-American slave trade conducted in the Caribbean during wartime was a form of tramp trade, as short multistage voyages linked two or more islands across imperial borders. Tramp traders were not bound—as their transatlantic counterparts often were—to stable itineraries connecting the same ports. They were usually the first to know about and exploit new commercial openings. Bermudians were exemplary tramp traders. Their sloops connected the British Caribbean and mainland ports before the American Revolution. When this war interrupted their North American trade, some Bermudians moved to Saint Thomas, declared themselves and their ships

[10] For the Havana port records, see "Libro que ha de servir para [anotar] las Embarcaciones que entraren en este Puerto de La Havana, 1781–88," Miscelánea de Libros, Libro 3956, ANC; "Entrada y salida de embarcaciones al puerto de La Habana, 1781–84," Libro 3166, ibid. Spanish ships are listed in Libro 3956, and foreign ships are listed in Libro 3166. We thank Michael Zeuske for providing us with these sources. Additional arrivals (and additional information about voyages listed in "Miscelánea de Libros") can be found in notarial records: Protocolos Notariales de La Habana (PNS), ANC, tomo (t.) 1, fols. 75r, 125r, 356v, 365r, 424r, 443r, 458r, 459r, 481r, 496v, 498v, 542v, 544r, 567v, 578v, 672r, 712r, 716r, 717r, 724r, 733r, 735r, 827v, 836r, 918v, 924r, 925r, 931v, 941v, 944r, 946r, 1008r, 1013r, 1015r, 1040r, 1048v; t. 2, fols. 984r, 998v, 1015r, 1160r, 1178v, 1180r, 1251r, 1252v, 1303r, 1327r, 1343v, 1397r, 1409r, 1423r, 1436r, 1523r–1526r, 1528v–1534r, 1538r, 1541v, 1543v, 1584r–1591r, 1592r–1595r, 1679r, 1685r, 1691r, 1702r, 1794r–1823r, 1851r–1879r, 1905r, 1914r, 1942r, 1954r–1964r, 1968r–1974r, 2019r, 2028r, 2031r–2035r, 2069r, 2074r, 2097r, 2141r–2145r; t. 3, fols. 2301r, 2318v–2330r, 2361r, 2372r, 2393v–2411r, 2501r–2510v, 2605v–2608r, 2736r, 2744r, 2881r, 2896r–2902v, 2944r, 3196r. For additional slave voyages, see "Relación de los negros que ha introducido en este puerto Miguel Antonio de Herrera. . . . ," Aug. 4, 1785, Indiferente 2823, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville, Sp.; "Nota de la entrada y la salida. . . . ," Jan. 2, 1783, Indiferente 2175, AGI. Sources stored at the AGI were used to study this wartime traffic. See María Encarnación Rodríguez Vicente, "El comercio Cubano y la guerra de emancipación norteamericana," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 11 (1954): 61–106.

[11] For the eighteen other slave ship arrivals, see TASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/vHio4GMT; IASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/zWTYLlBa.

Danish, and continued to trade with the United States as well as with the Spanish and French Caribbean.[12] U.S. and Bermudian merchants were behind most Danish-flagged slave voyages from Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue to Havana during the American Revolution, and they continued these activities during the following two decades, when they became the most important suppliers of captive Africans to Cuba.

Long ago, historian Ramiro Guerra suggested that the close and enduring economic connections between Cuba and the United States began during the American Revolution, and the U.S. slave trade to Havana during the war offers powerful support for that claim.[13] For Cuba, the American Revolution ended a period when the trade in enslaved people was dominated by Spanish and Cuba-based merchants who dealt with British slavers. That partnership was replaced by networks linking Spanish Cuba-based merchants with U.S. and Danish shippers carrying intra-American traffic during the war itself, and then transatlantic voyages from the next decade to 1808. Cuba-based merchants also organized slave voyages within the Caribbean during the era of the American Revolution, particularly after the 1789 opening of the slave trade to the Spanish colonies, but a Cuba-based transatlantic traffic fully developed only after U.S. and British merchants withdrew from the slave trade because of prohibitions issued by their own governments.[14] After 1808, U.S. involvement mostly dwindled to supplying ships, personnel, and logistics to the last branches of this traffic that extended to Brazil, Cuba, and Puerto Rico.[15] Though New York City became the main port for the organization of the final transatlantic slave voyages from 1850 to 1866, also heading

[12] Michael J. Jarvis, *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680–1783* (Williamsburg, Va., and Chapel Hill, N.C., 2010), 130, 432.

[13] Ramiro Guerra, *La expansión territorial de los Estados Unidos: a expensas de España y de los países hispanoamericanos* (Havana, 1964), 1–5.

[14] O'Malley, *Final Passages*; Emily Berquist Soule, "The Spanish Slave Trade during the American Revolutionary War," in *Spain and the American Revolution: New Approaches and Perspectives*, ed. Gabriel M. Paquette and Gonzalo Quintero Saravia (New York, 2020), 100–121; Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez, "Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790–1820," in *From the Galleons to the Highlands: Slave Trade Routes in the Spanish Americas*, ed. Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat (Albuquerque, N.Mex., 2020), 223–48; Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez, "The Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade: New Data, New Paradigms," ibid., 201–22.

[15] Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807* (Philadelphia, 1981). Felipe-Gonzalez's "Reassessing the Slave Trade to Cuba" updated Klein's "North American Competition." On U.S. involvement in the traffic to Cuba and Brazil, see Leonardo Marques, *The United States and the Transatlantic Slave Trade to the Americas, 1776–1867* (New Haven, Conn., 2016). On U.S.-centered narratives of this traffic in Latin America, see Gerald Horne, *The Deepest South: The United States, Brazil, and the African Slave Trade* (New York, 2007); Stephen M. Chambers, *No God but Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States* (London, 2015). On the historiography of the U.S.-based slave trade, see Sean M. Kelley, "New World Slave Traders and the Problem of Trade Goods: Brazil, Barbados, Cuba and North America in Comparative Perspective," *English Historical Review* 134, no. 567 (April 2019): 302–33.

to Cuba, this was mostly a Cuban and Portuguese network established in New York, rather than a U.S.-led conglomerate.[16]

Although studies of the slave trade have decisively shifted to more qualitative analysis centered on the experiences of the enslaved, quantitative methods remain crucial to reveal the massive scale and capillarity of this horrific traffic, and to confront those who wish to downplay its scope, significance, and legacies. This sort of research inevitably complements studies centering on the experiences and subjectivities of the enslaved. The trade of captive Africans to Havana during the revolutionary era had concrete and lasting implications for Cuba and the United States. The number of African-descended people caught up in these slaving networks is striking and appalling—but that number offers one of many possible beginning points for stories that have not yet been heard. Better understanding the slave-trading patterns that brought these people to Havana, as well as the merchant networks in which U.S. slavers inserted themselves during the American Revolution, requires familiarizing ourselves with the traffic of captives to Cuba in the decades before the conflict. After examining the slave voyages to Havana during the war and its aftermath, including the places from which merchants brought captives, we evaluate the representativeness of this study for the entire traffic to Cuba in 1781–85 and connect the significance of these findings with the period when the U.S. and Danish slaving networks became predominant for the traffic to Cuba, from 1789 to 1808.

Captive Africans, flour, and silver became key items of commerce strengthening ties between British North America and Cuba in the decades before the American Revolution. Though the concession granted by the Spanish Crown to Great Britain—the asiento (1713–39)—allowed Britain's South Sea Company to deliver enslaved people to the Spanish Americas, mainland ports such as Cartagena rather than island ports such as Havana received most of the captives.[17] Yet Havana was significant for the British

[16] John Harris, *The Last Slave Ships: New York and the End of the Middle Passage* (New Haven, Conn., 2020), 60–61.

[17] The slave trade to the Spanish colonies had been transnational since the sixteenth century, with various Iberian and Mediterranean merchants obtaining overlapping licenses; Alex Borucki, David Eltis, and David Wheat, "Atlantic History and the Slave Trade to Spanish America," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 2 (April 2015): 433–61. French, Dutch, English, and Italian merchants had controlled the provision of foreign products sent from Cádiz to the Spanish Americas since the mid-seventeenth century, which makes it unsurprising that, by the 1660s, the Spanish Crown began to grant monopoly contracts to foreign merchants and companies for the slave trade to the colonies. Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, 2000), 72; Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and Their Overseas Networks* (Woodbridge, U.K., 2010), 4–8; Alejandro García-Montón, *Genoese Entrepreneurship and the Asiento Slave Trade, 1650–1700* (New York, 2022). Whereas the South Sea Company brought about nine thousand captives from the Caribbean and

asiento as a place from which to conduct legal and illegal trade in European merchandise brought by asiento ships because Havana was the stopover for the Spanish fleets bringing silver from other colonies to Cádiz. The asiento also licensed British ships to transport flour to Havana, since it lacked a hinterland capable of providing sufficient wheat for its large and mobile population, which was subject to sudden increases with the arrival of Spanish fleets. Flour also came from Spain and Mexico but in unreliable frequency and volume. British ships sailing under cover of the asiento legally and illegally transported North American flour to Havana and Cartagena, either directly or by way of Jamaica. Gregory E. O'Malley notes that when British Caribbean merchants served as middlemen for flour, the profits sometimes went from Jamaica to New York in the form of captives, but when British North American merchants sent flour directly to Havana, they usually received silver in exchange.[18] The shipments of British North American flour to Cuba continued through the American Revolution, increasing once the war began.[19]

British mercantile networks, of course, also brought enslaved people to Cuba. Scholars estimate that nearly forty thousand captive Africans arrived from 1701 to 1762, most of them from Jamaica rather than directly from Africa.[20] Slavery was the basis for maintaining colonial rule in Cuba, with enslaved men and women working alongside a large free Black and mixed-ancestry population to secure the functioning of Havana (the largest North American port city), provision the island, and harvest tobacco and, to a lesser extent, sugar and bring them to market within the Spanish Empire. The *Real Compañía de Comercio de La Habana* (Royal Havana Company) was established in 1740 to increase tobacco production and exports to Spain, continue the slave trade, and provide shipping services after the de facto ending of the British asiento. Even during the War of

Africa to Cuba, it brought seventy-three thousand captives to the Spanish American mainland. See TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/fdMoemtu; IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/Q8q64xTN. Technically, the British asiento concluded in 1750, but the start of the War of Jenkins's Ear in 1739 ended its operations.

[18] O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 241; Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, 89–94; Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez, "Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade," 211–13.

[19] Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Compañía Gaditana de Negros* (Seville, 1973), 179–83; Johanna Von Grafenstein Gareis, "La Habana, Veracruz y Puebla en el negocio de harinas y víveres, 1750–1810: el tema, su historiografía y fuentes para su estudio," *América Latina en la Historia Económica* 9, nos. 17–18 (2002): 127–42, esp. 129; Sherry Johnson, "El Niño, Environmental Crisis, and the Emergence of Alternative Markets in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1760s–1770s," *WMQ* 62, no. 3 (July 2005): 365–410; Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2011), 86–91; Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, 84–85.

[20] For trafficking voyages, see TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/n6VCiSdS; IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/oyN85B9Z (which shows the significance of Jamaica). For the estimates, see Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez, "Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade," 205.

Jenkins's Ear (1739–48), the Royal Havana Company bought captives from Jamaica with permission from the local authorities.[21] For example, Havana merchant Juan de Miralles built his fortune working as the company's agent in Kingston for the slave trade up to the late 1750s, which later allowed him to establish trading networks in Charleston, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.[22]

Evidence of specific slave ship arrivals during the British occupation of Havana in 1762 and its aftermath is sporadic, but scholars estimate that about ten thousand captives were landed in Cuba from 1761 to 1765, although mainly after the British ended their brief occupation in 1763.[23] As Elena A. Schneider asserts, the British authorities during the occupation tried to monopolize and monetize permission to sell captives in Havana, a practice that resembled the asientos and had the effect of actually reducing slave sales.[24] More captives arrived in Havana immediately after the occupation, in 1763–64, brought by the networks rooted in Havana's commerce with British Caribbean traders. In this period, Miralles became fundamental once again, as the British authorities appointed him to mediate on behalf of the Cuban planters during their purchases of enslaved people. Because of the close ties linking British and Spanish merchants living in Havana, some traders from Britain's mainland colonies began to operate in Cuba.[25]

After the Spanish recovered Havana, Miralles's slave-trading networks with British merchants continued under different configurations up until the American Revolution. The Royal Havana Company, allied with British merchants such as John Wilmod and the Irish-born Havana merchant Cornelius Coppinger (who had been endorsed by Miralles), won a bid for slave trade licenses granted by Spanish colonial authorities, which allowed Coppinger to transport captives from Jamaica to Cuba in 1763–66.[26] The

[21] Gloria García, "El mercado de fuerza de trabajo en Cuba: El comercio esclavista (1760–1789)," in *La esclavitud en Cuba*, [ed. José L. Franco] (Havana, 1986), 124–48, esp. 126–32; Montserrat Gárate Ojanguren, *Comercio ultramarino e ilustración: la Real Compañía de La Habana* (Donostia-San Sebastián, Sp., 1993), 108–11.

[22] Vicent Ribes, "Nuevos datos biográficos sobre Juan de Miralles," *Revista de Historia Moderna* 16 (1997): 363–74, esp. 365–67; Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, 163.

[23] David Eltis and Jorge Felipe-Gonzalez estimate that from 1761 to 1765, about 6,500 captives arrived from Africa and about 3,500 from the Caribbean; Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez, "Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade," 205. Gregory E. O'Malley estimates that 3,800 captives left Jamaica for other colonies in these same years; O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 364.

[24] Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, 205–26, esp. 206 n. 74, based on Enrique López Mesa, "Acerca de la introducción de esclavos en La Habana durante la ocupación británica (1762–1763)," *Rábida* 19 (2000): 29–40.

[25] Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, 191; Nikolaus Böttcher, "Juan de Miralles: Un comerciante cubano en la guerra de independencia norteamericana," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 57, no. 1 (2000): 174–94, esp. 174. In 1766 Cuban buyers contacted Pennsylvania merchants regarding the supply of enslaved people; see O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 298.

[26] Coppinger settled in Havana in 1762, marrying the daughter of the main officer of the royal treasury. He obtained his Spanish naturalization a few years later, becoming

Royal Havana Company and these British merchants began to play a prominent role in granting loans to the large Havana plantation owners that funded the purchase of construction materials and technology for the sugar mills, as well as the acquisition of enslaved people.[27] The Spanish Crown, however, favored the creation of a Spanish slave-trading company to eliminate reliance on British slavers. Backed by the merchant guild of Cádiz, the crown licensed the *Compañía Gaditana de Negros* (Cádiz Company) in 1765, with Miralles becoming a shareholder and the representative in Havana. Based in San Juan, Puerto Rico, with the aim of launching a direct trade with West Africa, the Cádiz Company nonetheless became heavily indebted to British slave-trading houses and, after a financial crisis in 1773, moved to Havana to oversee traffic with British Jamaica and Barbados.[28]

For British merchants, and later U.S. slave traders, access to Havana brought them closer to one of the Spanish Empire's main centers of silver redistribution. Havana received the silver *situado* (subsidy) sent from the royal treasury in Veracruz, Mexico, to fund the increasing military expenditure of the crown in the Caribbean and redistributed it to Santiago de Cuba, Puerto Rico, Saint Augustine, and Santo Domingo. Given the frequent delays in the situado's arrival, the royal treasury at Havana contracted debts with local merchants, which allowed those merchants to acquire large amounts of Mexican silver once the situado finally showed up. Spanish merchants used this silver to purchase goods and enslaved people.[29] These flows of silver, along with the financial policies and military structures created

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one of the most important local slave traders. See Nikolaus Böttcher, "Trade, War and Empire: British Merchants in Cuba, 1762–1796," in *Dinero y negocios en la historia de América Latina: Geld und Geschäft in der Geschichte Lateinamerikas*, ed. Böttcher and Bernd Hausberger (Madrid, 2000), 169–98, esp. 181–82; Vicent Ribes, *Don Juan de Miralles y la independencia de los Estados Unidos* (Valencia, 2003); Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*, 63, 67; Eltis and Felipe-Gonzalez, "Rise and Fall of the Cuban Slave Trade," 213.

[27] Pablo Tornero Tinajero, *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales: Esclavos, hacendados y comerciantes en la Cuba colonial (1760–1840)* (Madrid, 1996), 35–36; Mercedes García Rodríguez, "El crédito hipotecario a los ingenios habaneros: 1700–1792," in *Diez nuevas miradas de historia de Cuba*, ed. José A. Piqueras Arenas (Castelló de la Plana, Sp., 1998), 41–67. These loans were repaid in tobacco and sugar.

[28] Miralles later became the main Spanish representative to the Continental Congress, obtaining financial aid and military supplies for the United States and funneling significant support from Cuban planters and merchants to the revolution. Helen Matzke McCadden, "Juan de Miralles and the American Revolution," *Americas* 29, no. 3 (January 1973): 359–75; Ribes, *Revista de Historia Moderna* 16: 367. For the Cádiz Company's trade, see Torres Ramírez, *Compañía Gaditana*, 16–51, 176; Tornero Tinajero, *Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales*, 37–38; María del Carmen Barcia, "La trata negrera inter-caribeña y la región oriental de Cuba," *Revolución y Cultura* 2 (2016): 58–63, esp. 59.

[29] Juan Marchena Fernández, "Capital crédito e intereses comerciales a fines del periodo colonial: Los costos del sistema defensivo americano. Cartagena de Indias y el sur del Caribe," *Tiempos de América*, no. 9 (2002): 3–38, esp. 9.

in Havana for the Spanish forces, facilitated the transactions of Spanish, Danish, and U.S. slave traders during the American Revolution.[30]

As a result, Havana became the most important slave port in the Spanish Americas and a financial center for the purchase of captives, as well as being an extraordinary nexus point for Spanish and British merchants and Spanish colonial officers, all of which had profound implications once Spain entered the American Revolution. The Spanish entry into this war in 1779 cut the economic circuits that the Spanish traders living in Havana had established with the British Caribbean, leading to the disappearance of the Cádiz Company while simultaneously intensifying connections with British North American merchants who had embraced the cause of the United States.

The beginning of the American Revolutionary War paralyzed the slave trade to Cuba and led Havana's planters to demand that the Spanish Crown loosen regulations. They envisioned that the arrival of more slaves would benefit both the Cuban economy and royal revenues. The possibility of a slave rebellion occurring in the context of war (as Jamaica had experienced in 1760–61) or in its aftermath (as in Berbice in 1763–64) seemed minimal to the planters.[31] The creation of a plantation society, on the model of Saint Domingue, required a constant flow of enslaved people to increase the labor force as well as to cover the high mortality associated with plantation labor.[32] In early 1780, the crown allowed Spanish subjects in some of its colonies to sail in Spanish vessels to the French Caribbean to buy captives. However, the immense Cuban demand could not be satisfied exclusively by Spanish merchants. By mid-1781, the crown began allowing allied and neutral vessels to sell enslaved people in Havana. North American merchants who had been banned from trading with the British Caribbean because of the war were eager to conduct commerce with the Spanish and French colonies.[33]

[30] The barracks outside of Havana built to house soldiers during the American Revolutionary War were later acquired by the Havana merchants' guild as barracoons for recently arrived enslaved Africans. Michael Zeuske and Vicent Sanz Rozalén, "El *Negrito* y la microeconomía política de la trata negrera en el Atlántico: La arribada a puerto con un cargamento de esclavizados," in *Reflejos de la esclavitud en el arte: Imágenes de Europa y América*, ed. Aurelia Martín Casares, Rafael Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, and Andrea Schiavon (Valencia, 2021), 139–60, esp. 139–54.

[31] Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2020), 208–36; Marjoleine Kars, *Blood on the River: A Chronicle of Mutiny and Freedom on the Wild Coast* (New York, 2020), 57.

[32] Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, 2014), 23.

[33] For Spanish subjects, see "Expediente sobre el comercio de negros," Jan. 25, 1780, Indiferente 2820-B, AGI. For others, see "Método que se observa en las concesiones. . . . ," Aug. 12, 1781, ibid.; Andrew Jackson O´Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000), 68.

TABLE I
SLAVE ARRIVALS IN HAVANA BY FLAG OF THE SHIP, 1781–85

Flag	*Captives*	*% of Captives*	*Voyages*	*% of Voyages*
Spain	5,586	38.6	54	47.0
Denmark	3,049	21.1	25	21.7
Great Britain	1,958	13.5	7	6.1
United States	1,878	13.0	17	14.8
France	1,438	9.9	8	7.0
Other	567	3.9	4	3.5
Total	14,476	100.0	115	100.0

Note: The four ships in "Other" were three flying the flag of the Holy Roman Empire and one that entered Havana under a truce flag.
Sources: 497 nn. 10–11, above.

To examine the merchant networks organizing the slave trade to Cuba during the American Revolution, Table I combines newly discovered sources from Havana with the information available on the Slave Voyages website. Out of the 14,476 captives arriving in Havana in 1781–85, nearly 11,000 were recorded by these new sources, providing us with the most comprehensive overview of the timing and direction of this traffic to Cuba during these years. The sources identify the captain and the ship, the place of forced embarkation of captives or the last port of call, and the flag of the vessels (as declared to Havana's port authorities), and thereby reveal significant information regarding the merchant networks that enabled this traffic.[34]

The Danish and U.S. slave voyages, as well as the U.S. participation in Danish shipping, are particularly noteworthy because they represent a new element in this network of unfreedom and death, as U.S. and Danish ships together brought 34.1 percent of all captives through multistage voyages transshipping enslaved Africans from one or more islands. Danish and U.S. merchants were central in 1783—the year when the majority of slave ships arrived from 1781 to 1785—as U.S. and Danish ships accounted for 35 out of the 66 incoming slave vessels that year. Spanish vessels, usually sailing to and from neighboring islands, brought 38.6 percent of the captives. If one counts only Spanish and British ships, these years would look like the slave trade to Cuba in the previous two decades, when the Cádiz Company ran

[34] The port entry records lack mention of the owners of the vessels and the ventures. Some of the notarial sources show the names of the Spanish merchants commissioned to sell captives.

the traffic with British merchants.[35] This U.S.-Danish network, in short, expanded the slave-trading routes to integrate Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue while competing and collaborating with British transatlantic slavers.

Free port status, neutrality, and a lack of competitors made Saint Thomas the hub of the traffic of captives to Havana during the American Revolution. Charlotte Amalie had been a free port since 1764, but Danish neutrality during the American Revolutionary War made Denmark the only neutral power with Caribbean colonies after the Dutch entered the conflict in 1780. That status encouraged foreign merchants and agents to settle temporarily in Saint Thomas so as to conduct neutral trade using the Danish flag.[36] In a letter to a Swedish diplomat in 1785, Thomas Jefferson named Saint Thomas and Saint Eustatius as the neutral ports where U.S. shippers operated, and for a while Saint Thomas was the only neutral port after British forces sacked Saint Eustatius in 1781.[37] Danish slavers and their associates, including especially U.S. merchants, used the facilities at Saint Thomas for slave-trading activities as neutrals. The rush to participate in the slave trade to Havana in 1783 thus occurred after the renewal of transatlantic slave voyages in 1782–83 supplied Caribbean routes, and after the signing of the peace preliminaries in January 1783, which meant the British navy was less likely to interfere with the neutral Danish vessels. Slavers, of course, followed the news about the cessation of hostilities carefully because that would reopen the market for captives, particularly in the French and Spanish colonies.[38]

The early 1780s increase of the Danish slave trade to Cuba drew on multinational Caribbean-based merchant networks rather than on royal metropolitan companies.[39] The merchants, captains, and crews operating

[35] Torres Ramírez, *Compañía Gaditana*, 72–118.

[36] For Denmark, see Weiss, "Trade and Neutrality during Times of War," 59–84. For the Danish flag, see Ole Feldbæk, *Dansk neutralitetspolitik under krigen 1778–1783: Studier i regeringens prioritering af politiske og økonomiske interesser* (Copenhagen, 1971), 145–52.

[37] Jeppe Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires: Networks and Crossings in the Revolutionary Caribbean* (Cambridge, 2020), 47, 70–72.

[38] As a British slave trader in Liverpool wrote to his correspondents in Africa, "the independence of America fully granted them, and that cessation of hostilities with Holland agreed on at the same time, wch events and the enormous prices given for Negroes at Tortola and Jamaica for the French market has made every adventurer here eager to push his ships out"; Richard Wilding to Richard Miles, Jan. 1, 1783, Treasury (T) 70/1549/2, National Archives of the United Kingdom (NAUK), Kew. We thank Nick Radburn for this source.

[39] Sv[end] E. Green-Pedersen, "The Scope and Structure of the Danish Negro Slave Trade," *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 19, no. 2 (1971): 149–97, esp. 167, 174–75, 184–85; Ole Feldbæk, "Caracas-spekulationen 1782–1783 Dansk neutralitetsudnyttelse under den Amerikanske Frihedskrig," *Historik Tidsskrift*, 12th ser., 6, nos. 1–2 (1972): 159–76; Jeppe Mulich, "Microregionalism and Intercolonial Relations: The Case of the

under the Danish flag in the traffic from Saint Thomas to Havana were heavily multinational. When population counts were done in 1770 and 1789, fewer than five hundred white people lived on Saint Thomas, alongside ten times as many enslaved people, with the Danes being a minority of those of European origin, except among colonial administrators.[40] Though most of the white population of Saint Thomas was of Dutch descent, British subjects from the Caribbean and North America had become increasingly significant since the Seven Years' War. English was the island's everyday language by the 1780s, and English-speaking merchants dominated the local community by the end of the century.[41] The American Revolution accelerated this process, and during the war, in historian Svend E. Green-Pedersen's words, "foreign merchants could easily acquire Danish citizenship and the nominal sale of their ships to Danish puppets did not encounter difficulties either."[42] Such arrangements were common in the Danish Caribbean because foreign planters and merchants were essential to the survival of these colonies.[43]

A U.S. presence, both substantiated and claimed, became important for the Danish trafficking of captives. For example, of the twenty-five Danish slave ships arriving in Havana in 1781–85, twenty-four had captains who were named in the port records, and fifteen out of those twenty-four had English surnames.[44] An English name did not necessarily mean these captains lived in the United States, but they all had to present themselves as Americans, rather than as British, to Havana's authorities because of the war. Beyond appearances, five of these twenty-five Danish ships either used the U.S. flag in another slave voyage or had a captain who commanded another voyage while under the U.S. flag.[45] The Cuban sources also list four men

Danish West Indies, 1730–1830," *Journal of Global History* 8, pt. 1 (March 2013): 72–94, esp. 84; Pernille Røge, "Why the Danes Got There First: A Trans-imperial Study of the Abolition of the Danish Slave Trade in 1792," *Slavery and Abolition* 35, no. 4 (2014): 576–92, esp. 580–81.

[40] See Neville Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix*, ed. B. W. Higman (Mona, Jamaica, 1992), 5–7, esp. 5, table 1.

[41] Mulich, *Journal of Global History* 8: 87; Erik Gøbel, *The Danish Slave Trade and Its Abolition* (Leiden, 2016), 52.

[42] Svend E. Green-Pedersen, "Colonial Trade under the Danish Flag: A Case Study of the Danish Slave Trade to Cuba 1790–1807," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 5 (1980): 93–120, esp. 100–102.

[43] Mulich, *In a Sea of Empires*, 35.

[44] For the sources, see 497 n. 10, above.

[45] Four Danish ships shown by the port records delivering captives in Havana during the war later made voyages under the U.S. flag, as shown in the IASTD: *Nat Cooper*, which made slave voyages to Havana in the 1790s (IASTD, voyage id# 105448 and 105528); *Bonita*, which sailed the St. Thomas-Havana route in 1804 (IASTD, voyage id# 105876); *Dobe*, which did the same route in 1798 (IASTD, voyage id# 106352); and *Christiana*, which took part in the Jamaica-Cuba slave traffic in 1795 under the U.S. flag (IASTD, voyage id# 105220). In addition, James Duncason (who had captained the

with Spanish names and one with seemingly an Italian name captaining these Danish slave ships, which put captains with Scandinavian names in a minority, four out of twenty-five.[46] This modus operandi continued in the Danish Caribbean traffic to Cuba in the 1790s, when almost all ship owners of the Danish vessels arriving in Havana had either English or Spanish last names and were clearly naturalized foreign shippers.[47]

Prominent among them were a group of Bermudian merchants who moved to Saint Thomas during the American Revolution to ship enslaved people to Havana and then continued with this traffic in captive Africans from 1789 to 1808. Thus, in 1783, Joseph Darrell delivered one hundred captives from Saint Thomas to Havana in the U.S. sloop *Amiga*, which he captained. Though he belonged to the Darrell seafaring family of Bermuda, he was based in Charleston in the 1770s.[48] Likewise Green-Pedersen's data shows six ship owners of the 1790s (Darrell, Nicholas Hinson, Christian Hueber, James Murphy, Thomas Smith, and G. Tucker) who had naturalized as Danish in Saint Thomas from 1781 to 1783.[49] We found three of them—and likely the relative of a fourth—in a Bermuda property-holder census of the early 1780s.[50] They moved to Saint Thomas to take advantage of Danish neutrality in the 1780s, which further benefited them in the 1790s, when Saint Thomas and U.S. shipping became central to the slave trade to Cuba and, to a lesser extent, Puerto Rico. Though the Cuban

Danish ship *Deception* to Havana during the war) later captained the U.S. ship *Amity*, which disembarked captives in St. Kitts in 1786 (TASTD, voyage id# 25554 and 26320). For Havana's port records, see 497 n. 10, above.

[46] We think Vicente Garibardo was Italian, Sardinian, Corsican, or Maltese, as mariners from these places settled in Puerto Rico in these years. Out of four captains with Scandinavian names, one was a nominal captain of a British transatlantic slaver, *Madam Pookata*, reflagged as Danish.

[47] Green-Pedersen, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 5: 100–103.

[48] For the *Amiga*, see the port books at Miscelánea de Libros, Libro 3166, ANC; "Nota de la entrada y la salida. . . . . ," Jan. 2, 1783, Indiferente 2175, AGI. We thank Michael Johnson for this information about the Darrell family. See also "Survey of Bermuda," pts. 3–4, *Bermuda Historical Quarterly* (*BHQ*) 3, no. 3 (July/August/September 1946): 170–84; no. 4 (October/November/December 1946): 223–45, esp. 229. For Joseph Darrell in Charleston, see R. Nicholas Olsberg, "Ship Registers in the South Carolina Archives, 1734–1780," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74, no. 4 (October 1973): 189–299, esp. 259–61. Charleston's newspapers before 1780 show Darrell's activities. See "Run Away," [Charleston] *Gazette, of the State of South-Carolina* (*GSSC*), Aug. 4, 1777, [2]; "Run Away," *GSSC*, supplement, Sept. 15, 1777, [2].

[49] Green-Pedersen, *Scandinavian Journal of History* 5: 120.

[50] For Nicholas Hinson, see "Survey of Bermuda," pt. 4, *BHQ* 3: 231; for Thomas Smith, see ibid., pt. 3, *BHQ* 3: 183; for the Tucker family, see ibid., pt. 4, *BHQ* 3: 240–42; for St. George Tucker, see "The Tucker Letters from Williamsburg," *BHQ* 3, no. 1 (January/February/March 1946): 24–38, esp. 24. Because of the Spanish rendering of English names as recorded in Cuban sources, we think the ship owner Christian Hueber may have been related to John Ebert, who captained a Danish slave ship arriving in Havana in 1783.

sources aggregated in Table I identify ship captains, they are silent on the merchants who outfitted this traffic, which makes the Saint Thomas ship owners' list invaluable.

Charleston became part of the networks connecting Bermuda, Saint Thomas, and Cuba that delivered enslaved Africans to Havana during the American Revolution. Prewar itineraries linked Charleston, Bermuda, and Havana, as four of the aforementioned Bermudians (or close relatives) sailed as captains from Charleston to the British, Dutch, and Danish Leeward Islands before the revolution.[51] And they drew on merchants and mariners from Charleston to outfit slave voyages from Saint Thomas to Havana in 1783. Seemingly apart from the Bermudian network but trading through Charleston, William Hall sailed from there to Havana with his ship *Notre Dame* in late 1778, before Spain entered the war. He sailed again to Havana from Môle-Saint-Nicolas, Saint Domingue, with nearly three hundred captives in the U.S. frigate *Coppinger*, named after the aforementioned Cornelius Coppinger, in February 1783. Though it was flying the U.S. flag, the name of this frigate made it recognizable to Havana's authorities, which surely implies local connections that would ensure its captives could be sold legally rather than being confiscated. In December, Hall brought a shipment of rice from Charleston to Cap Français (present-day Cap Haitien) in the brigantine *Neptune*, perhaps the same *Neptuno* that, with a French flag and a different captain, had delivered seven captives from Port-au-Prince to Havana in May 1783.[52] Charleston's multistage and multinational shipping also played a significant role in other slave voyages to Havana.[53]

[51] For Joseph Darrell, see Olsberg, *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 74: 259–61. There was a Smith & Darrell Company in Charleston, but we are unsure if this is the Thomas Smith of Bermuda. See "Run Away," *GSSC*, Aug. 4, 1777, [2]; "Run Away," *GSSC*, supplement, Sept. 15, 1777, [2]. The ship arrivals in the *South-Carolina Gazette* (*SCG*) are listed under the heading "Timothy's Marine List." For Thomas Smith as captain of the *Three Friends*, connecting Charleston with St. Croix, see *Postscript to the SCG*, Aug. 25, 1773, [2]; *SCG*, Sept. 6, 1773, [3]. For captains named Hinson, see the brigantine *Bellons* from Charleston to St. Eustatius, *GSSC*, Aug. 19, 1778, [3] (no first name given); the sloop *Sarah* entering Charleston and sailing to Grenada, *SCG*, Jan. 2, 1775, [3] (Ephraim); the *Sarah*, sailing the same route, ibid., Jan. 23, 1775, [2] (Edward); the *Sarah*, connecting Charleston and Turk Islands, ibid., Dec. 5, 1774, [3] (Edward); and the sloop *Industry*, connecting Charleston and Bermuda, ibid., Jan. 21, 1772, [3] (Zaccheus). For captains named Tucker, see sloop *Diana* connecting Charleston with St. Eustatius, *GSSC*, Apr. 9, 1777 (no first name given); "Charlestown, April 14," ibid., Apr. 14, 1777, [3] (Henry); "Charles-town, May 19," ibid., May 19, 1777, [3] (Henry); "Charles-town, May 26," ibid., May 26, 1777, [5] (Henry). For all of these captains in the Havana records, see 497 n. 10, above.

[52] On the *Notre Dame* and *Neptuno* in Havana, see Miscelánea de Libros, Libro 3166, ANC; "Charles-Town, July 15," *GSSC*, Oct. 15, 1778, [3]; "Biends et Effets a Vendre," [Cap Français] *Affiches Américaines*, Dec. 24, 1783, [4]. A combined French-Spanish force was stationed in Cap Français preparing an invasion of Jamaica; thus, foodstuffs were in high demand.

[53] Humphrey Taylor captained the U.S. brigantine *Adventure* to deliver captives from St. Thomas to Havana in 1783 (see the Havana port records on 497 n. 10, above),

Military operations brought together some of Charleston's and Havana's merchants and mariners before the rise of the U.S.-Danish slave trade in 1783. The U.S. frigate *South Carolina* captured six or seven British ships while sailing from Charleston to Havana in 1778, where the prizes were seemingly sold, and then, after the British occupied Charleston, this frigate returned to Havana for prolonged stays.[54] In April 1782, twelve ships outfitted in South Carolina sailed to Havana to join Spanish forces equipped by Havana's merchants. The combined fleet of sixty-six ships, led by the *South Carolina* as flagship, occupied Nassau, in the Bahamas, in May. The U.S. brigantine *Four Sisters*, which was based in Charleston before the British occupation and may have been part of the invasion of Nassau, carried captives from there to Havana on July 2.[55] South Carolinian privateers and their crews surely shared living spaces and tavern conversations with Spanish naval officers and merchants. Thus, they strengthened connections that went beyond the more established and larger Cuban networks with the ports of Philadelphia and Baltimore, which dominated the flour trade.

Charleston-based merchants may also have engaged in slave-trading operations with Spanish naval officers because the latter were already bringing enslaved Africans to Havana while conducting naval patrols during the war. The use of warships as slave vessels emerged in the context of Spanish and French merchant ship losses from British privateering. Spanish merchants and officers used patrols between Saint Domingue and Havana to bring enslaved Africans to Cuba, turning warships into slave vessels.[56] Spanish patrols often stopped at Cap Français, which was the second-most important port of forced slave embarkation to Havana after Charlotte

and then he captained the *Mary*, delivering slaves from Tortola (the island next to St. Thomas) to Charleston in 1784. See IASTD, voyage id# 106600. A ship named the *Adventure* made the following voyages from the British Caribbean to Charleston under several different captains in 1784–85: IASTD, voyage id# 106582, 106621, 103467, 100052. The U.S. schooner *Agness*, captained by Wingate Bradley, departed from Charleston to bring captives from St. Thomas to Havana in 1783 (see 497 n. 10, above). Bradley also captained the *Agness* from Dominica to Montserrat the following year (IASTD, voyage id# 101815). And the *Caton*, delivering captives in Havana while under Spanish colors, was in fact an English transatlantic slaver that also connected Africa, the British Caribbean, and Charleston. For the *Caton* in Charleston in 1774, see TASTD, voyage id# 91999. All of these voyages appear in Miscelánea de Libros, Libro 3166, ANC.

[54] Francisco de Saavedra, *Los Decenios (Autobiografía de un Sevillano de la Ilustración)*, ed. Francisco Morales Padrón (Seville, 1995), 188.

[55] Thomas E. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque, N.Mex., 2002), 206–9, 265 n. 50. On the *Four Sisters*, see the sources on 497 n. 10, above.

[56] Warships disembarking captives in Havana included the *Nuestra Señora de la O*, *San Francisco de Paula*, *San Nicolás*, *San Agustín*, and *San Ramón*; for sources, see 497 n. 10, above. For the list of warships based in Havana, see Juan Marchena Fernández and Justo Cuño Bonito, eds., *Vientos de Guerra: Apogeo y crisis de la Real Armada, 1750–1823*, vol. 2, *Como enormes fortalezas en el mar y en lejanas mareas: Los buques de la Armada, 1700–1825* (Aranjuez, Sp., 2018), 522.

Amalie in Saint Thomas from 1781 to 1785. The Havana merchant Manuel de Soto y Costoya used the warships *San Agustín* and *San Ramón* to bring slaves from Cap Français in September 1782, and Captain Miguel Félix de Goycochea, in command of the *San Nicolás* warship, did likewise in 1783. Goycochea handed over the captives to his wife, Josefa Duarte, who acted as his commercial agent.[57] The Cap Français-to-Havana route avoided the straits between Jamaica and Cuba, and the British ships that patrolled there, by sailing from Saint Domingue to the northern shores of Cuba.

The involvement of naval officers and their families notwithstanding, the main commercial agents for selling enslaved Africans in Havana were the same Cuba-based slave traders from the previous decade. Merchants associated with the Cádiz Company continued to operate after Spain entered the war, either directly or as intermediaries, by consigning captives from U.S., Danish, and other foreign traders. As the historian Juan Bosco Amores Carredano notes, the American Revolutionary War opened a unique opportunity to develop the economy of western Cuba, which particularly enriched local merchants.[58] Thus, Pedro Francisco Marcos, one of the main merchants of Havana who lent funds for the foundation and renovation of sugar mills, had ninety-nine captives in consignment brought by the Danish brig *Damne Catharina* from Saint Thomas in December 1782. Other merchants acted more directly, such as Pedro Más, who captained the schooner *El Inventor* to Nassau. Taking advantage of the Spanish occupation, he acquired captives and carried them to Havana in August 1782.[59] Cuban merchants paid silver in exchange for captives coming from other Caribbean colonies, as confirmed by documents produced by middlemen such as Miguel Antonio de Herrera y Chacón, who sold one thousand slaves in 1784–85.[60]

As all slavers did during the war, U.S. merchants primarily sold captives in Havana for silver pesos, the currency of the Spanish Empire and the metallic reserve adopted by the Confederation of the United States (1781–89) for its new paper currency, the dollar.[61] The situado from Mexico to Cuba peaked

[57] PNS, t. 2, fols. 2141r–2145r, ANC.

[58] Juan Bosco Amores Carredano, "Juan Ignacio de Urriza y la intendencia de La Habana (1776–1787)," in *Euskal Herria y el Nuevo Mundo: La contribución de los vascos a la formación de las Américas*, ed. Ronald Escobedo Mansilla, Ana de Zaballa Beascoechea, and Óscar Álvarez Gila (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Sp., 1996), 227–46, esp. 235.

[59] For the *Damne Catharina*, see PNS, t. 2, fols. 1851r–1879r, ANC; for Pedro Más, see PNS, t. 2, fol. 1160r, ANC. The *Damne Catharina* and *El Inventor* are listed in the Havana port records on 497 n. 10, above.

[60] Herrera y Chacón sent 163,000 pesos to St. Thomas and Jamaica to purchase 1,012 captives, who arrived in four vessels. "Relación de los negros que ha introducido en este puerto Miguel Antonio de Herrera. . . . ," Aug. 4, 1785, Indiferente 2823, AGI.

[61] Carlos Marichal, "The Spanish-American Silver Peso: Export Commodity and Global Money of the Ancien Regime, 1550–1800," in *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000*, ed. Steven Topik, Marichal, and Zephyr Frank (Durham, N.C., 2006), 25–52, esp. 46.

during the American Revolution, when Havana became the command center for the Spanish forces participating in the campaigns in Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, and the Bahamas. From 1779 to 1783, the royal coffers in Mexico sent to Cuba slightly more than 30 million pesos to fund the war.[62] As the royal treasury in Havana repaid local merchants with the situado, this flow of silver rapidly fueled all commerce, including the traffic in enslaved Africans. Records of Havana's royal treasury taxation of silver exports also account for 4,598 enslaved Africans arriving from 1781 to 1786, which is a small fraction of the total slave trade and suggests that most silver exchanged in this traffic left the island untaxed. Historian Gloria García shows that in these slave sales recorded by the treasury, 1,687,283 pesos left Cuba, with 32.5 percent of that total heading to Saint Thomas, 28.4 percent to Saint Domingue, 16.2 percent to Ostend (in present-day Belgium), 10.4 percent to the United States, and the rest either to other places in the Caribbean or to undetermined destinations.[63] Because these records only account for one-third of the captives arriving in Havana in this period, the total amount of silver leaving Cuba in exchange for enslaved Africans could have been close to five million pesos, nearly one-sixth of the wartime situado. Even though no captive was seemingly embarked in the United States, at least 10 percent of the silver headed there. In fact, the amount of cash flowing to the United States was surely even greater than this because silver also circulated through multilateral routes ultimately leading to cities such as Charleston, the home ports of U.S. shippers who used the Danish flag to embark captives in Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue. When combined with the greater amounts of silver entering Philadelphia and Baltimore as a result of the burgeoning U.S. trade of flour and goods with Cuba, all this commerce increased liquidity in the cash-strapped wartime economy of the United States.[64]

[62] Carlos Marichal, "La bancarrota del virreinato: finanzas, guerra y política en la Nueva España, 1770–1808," in *Interpretaciones del siglo XVIII Mexicano: el impacto de las reformas borbónicas*, ed. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (Mexico City, 1992), 153–86; Marichal and Matilde Souto, "La Nueva España y el financiamiento del imperio español en América: Los situados para el Caribe en el siglo XVIII," in *El secreto del Imperio Español: los situados coloniales en el siglo XVIII*, ed. Marichal and Johanna von Grafenstein (Mexico City, 2012), 61–93.

[63] Gloria García, "La exportación de moneda y el comercio de esclavos (Cuba, 1760–1800)," *Rábida* 11 (1992): 73–81. The firm Romberg & Consors organized slaving voyages departing from Ostend, then part of the Habsburg Empire. The Spanish authorities welcomed neutral merchants such as those from the Habsburg Empire, already operating in Saint Domingue, to trade in Havana. Françoise Thésée, *Négociants Bordelais et colons de Saint-Domingue: "Liasons d'habitations." La Maison Henry Romberg, Bapst et Cie, 1783–1793* (Paris, 1972), 10; María Dolores González-Ripoll Navarro, *Cuba, la isla de los ensayos: Cultura y sociedad (1790–1815)* (Madrid, 1999), 150.

[64] At least 565 U.S. ships arrived in Havana in 1778–84, about half of all the ships departing from Philadelphia and Baltimore from 1780 to 1784. James A. Lewis, "Anglo-American Entrepreneurs in Havana: The Background and Significance of the Expulsion of 1784–1785," in *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy,*

The U.S. trade to Cuba had an impact on the postrevolutionary slave trade to the United States itself. When Havana's slave market began to close to U.S. and Danish merchants, they started redirecting this traffic to Charleston and other U.S. ports. In a further indication that the slave routes between Cuba and the United States were connected from 1781 to 1785, most of the U.S.-Danish slave voyages to Havana took place in 1783, while most of the ships disembarking captives in the United States arrived in 1785. The Slave Voyages website shows about 3,400 enslaved Africans arriving in the United States from 1781 to 1785 in U.S. ships; two-thirds were forced aboard ships in Africa and the rest in the Caribbean. Half of these captives arrived in 1785, after the rise and fall of the U.S.-Danish traffic to Havana in 1783–84.[65] Danish- and U.S.-flagged vessels brought at least 5,127 captives to Cuba, which is comparable to the number brought in by the U.S.-based traffic to the United States in these years. The overwhelming majority of captive Africans who arrived in the United States in the 1780s landed in Charleston, which was also, of course, one of the hubs for U.S. and Danish slave voyages to Cuba during the American Revolution.[66]

Focusing on the places from which merchants shipped captives to Cuba allows for a deeper examination of how they established these multilateral routes during wartime. Table II shows where captives were forced onboard, or at least the last port of call, for all documented ships arriving in Havana in 1781–85: 91.3 percent of these voyages departed from the Caribbean and carried 75.9 percent of the captives. About half of all the men, women, and children were embarked in either Saint Thomas or Saint Domingue. On the table the British Caribbean—the main region of slave embarkation for Cuba since the early eighteenth century—appears to no longer be important. In fact, slave captains were hiding the previous British transatlantic component of Caribbean routes from Havana's authorities.

The rise in the number of enslaved people from Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue arriving in Havana in 1783 occurred as slavers from Cuba and neighboring islands rushed to take advantage of the Spanish permission to trade with neutrals (the Danish) and allies (the French and Anglo-Americans) before this measure expired at war's end. Note that

1760–1819, ed. Jacques A. Barbier and Allan J. Kuethe (Manchester, U.K., 1984), 112–26, esp. 117–20.

[65] For the figures on U.S.-flagged slave arrivals to the United States in 1781–85, see TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/yIQUNh4N; IASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/vT8UrURg. Louisiana and the Gulf Coast are excluded here because they were under Spanish rule at the time.

[66] About 8,300 of the roughly 10,300 captives arriving in transatlantic voyages were landed in Charleston in the 1780s; see TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/lmD1oPMn. For the intra-American traffic, Charleston was also almost the only port receiving captives, with the exception of New Orleans, which was a Spanish port. See IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/Ho3HbhdH.

TABLE II
SLAVE ARRIVALS IN HAVANA BY PLACE OF EMBARKATION OR CALL, 1781–85

Embarkation declared by captain	*Captives*	*% of Captives*	*Voyages*	*% of Voyages*
St. Thomas	4,084	28.2	34	29.6
St. Domingue	3,503	24.2	42	36.5
La Guaira and Trinidad (Venezuela)	2,386	16.5	9	7.8
British Caribbean	745	5.1	13	11.3
Other	274	1.9	7	6.1
Caribbean subtotal	10,992	75.9	105	91.3
Africa	3,484	24.1	10	8.7
Total	14,476	100.0	115	100.0

Note: Vessels embarking captives in the British Caribbean came from Jamaica except for two ships from New Providence (Bahamas) and St. Kitts. "Other" includes three voyages from East Florida, two from Pensacola, and one each from Charleston and Martinique.

Sources: See 497 nn. 10–11, above.

80 of 115 slave voyages arriving in Havana in 1781–85 did so between the announcement of peace talks in late 1781 and the notice of the peace treaty between Spain and Great Britain in late 1783. This window for slave traders began to close in February 1784, when the Spanish Minister of the Indies ordered the exclusion of all foreign ships from Cuba, a policy that gradually became effective as the year went on and Havana's authorities expelled foreigners, particularly U.S. merchants.[67] Doing so underscored Spain's belief that the disruptions of the war years were a thing of the past.

The internationalization of the war as France entered this conflict in 1778 and Spain did so in 1779 had paralyzed the slave trade to the Americas. The years 1779–81 comprised the main trough in the expanding transatlantic slave trade during the second half of the eighteenth century, a boon for the tens of thousands of Africans who avoided forced shipping and enslavement in the Americas during these years that merchants and plantation owners experienced as a period of scarcity. Slave traders had disembarked about 75,000 captives per year in the Americas on the eve of the war, a figure that decreased to 23,000 in 1779 and did not return to prewar levels of

[67] Lewis, "Anglo-American Entrepreneurs in Havana," 121–23.

enslavement until 1784.[68] The capture and destruction of British, French, and Dutch vessels meant fewer slave ships arrived in Africa, with predictable results for those who bought and sold other human beings: prices for the enslaved in African regions went down. And just as predictably, enslavers rushed to ship and purchase more people when it looked as if the war was ending. Those decisions are apparent in the average number of embarked slaves on British, French, and Dutch vessels, which jumped from a range of 261–94 captives per ship in 1771–75 to 331–90 in 1780–84, when captains packed enslaved men, women, and children in vessels as never before. The first ships arriving in Africa after the cessation of hostilities found low prices for enslaved people and then sold these captives at great profit in the Americas. In Jamaica, for example the average price of enslaved adult men rose from £32.8 sterling in 1780 to £49.4 sterling in 1784.[69] The slave market of Havana followed this pattern, with average prices rising from the late 1770s to a high point in 1782, when an enslaved man would sell, on average, for 361 pesos and an enslaved woman for 341. And then, as the number of unwilling African captives arriving in Cuba increased during the peace process and its aftermath, prices began decreasing so that, in 1787, an enslaver could expect to pay 260 pesos for a man or 231 pesos for a woman.[70]

After the news of the cessation of hostilities spread in 1782, Caribbean merchants continued using the cover of Spanish wartime regulations to ship captives from the British Caribbean to Havana via Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue. Then Caribbean slave traders began using Saint Thomas for redistributing captives carried by British vessels into other ships heading to Saint Domingue and Cuba and for reflagging British transatlantic slave vessels. Later in 1783 and 1784, England-based merchants employed this strategy of reflagging, with transatlantic voyages conducted by the vessels *Madam Pookata*, *Thomas*, and *Cato*, all British slavers, arriving in Havana as either Danish (the first two) or Spanish (the third). Havana's port records, for example, show the 1784 arrival of the Danish ship *Thomas* coming from Saint Thomas, but this was really a British vessel that had departed from Liverpool to embark captives in New Calabar (in present-day eastern Nigeria), which then stopped in Saint Thomas to get new papers, flag, and crew to allow legal access to Cuba.[71]

[68] For these averages, see TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/qRzQJmMd.

[69] French, Dutch, and British slave ships of the early 1780s were only slightly larger than those of the previous decade. The average standardized tonnage of French, Dutch, and British slave ships ranged from 192 to 231 tons in the years 1771 through 1775, which increased to 210 to 260 tons in 1780 through 1784; TASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/E4pAMmP8. For Jamaica, see TASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/E4pAMmP8. We thank Nick Radburn for this observation and for providing British sources for this section.

[70] García, *Rábida* 11 (1992): 79.

[71] For Cuban sources, see 497 n. 10, above. For the British sources on these voyages, see TASTD, voyage id# 82415 (*Madam Pookata*), 83752 (*Thomas*), and 80762 (*Cato*).

Events surrounding the ship *Comte du Norde*, which landed captives in Charleston in July 1784, reveal how merchants based in England planned this reflagging and the operations that made Saint Thomas necessary. The owner of this ship, London's Samuel Hartley & Co., recommended its captain, James Penny, "purchas[e] slaves well adapted for the Spanish Market" in Malembo, in today's northern Angola.[72] Thus, this voyage was planned with the Cuban slave market in mind from the beginning. After embarking the captives, Penny was expected to sail to Saint Kitts, near Saint Thomas, where he was instructed to change papers and add crew to sail to Havana. In Saint Kitts, he received papers making the ship and the captain Flemish. The English outfitters told Penny to get a Spanish translator before sailing from Saint Kitts to Cuba, and they gave him instructions on how to act when dealing with Spanish officials and merchants, naming Pedro Juan de Erice as a contact in Havana. Erice was one of the main moneylenders for Havana's planters, with a vast network of foreign, and particularly U.S., merchants that endured into the 1790s.[73] The outfitters told Penny to sell the people he had enslaved for silver pesos in Havana. Once in Saint Kitts, though, Penny decided to sail to Charleston instead, as he wrote to the outfitters, because he had learned of both high slave prices in the Carolinas and news that Havana's authorities had prohibited entry to foreign ships.[74] Penny's intelligence is consistent with the timing of the Spanish banning of even reflagged foreign ships during early 1784, as only sixteen slave voyages reached Havana in 1784, almost all before the end of July.[75]

British transatlantic ships reflagged as Danish were a minority of those arriving in Havana in the early 1780s, far fewer than Danish and U.S. vessels departing from Saint Thomas with captives previously transshipped from British colonies. Danish customs ledgers identify British Antigua and nearby Tortola as the place of embarkation of 68 percent of the captives (out of 5,225) arriving in Saint Thomas from August 1782 to June 1783.[76] Sailing from Tortola to Saint Thomas took a day. British sources confirm the significance of Tortola for supplying captives to the French and Spanish Caribbean, as well as the high prices for people that encouraged slave traders to rush into this horrific commerce in 1783. Thus, the ship *Ann*, owned by Liverpool-based merchants, disembarked 442 enslaved Africans in Tortola in May 1783. The captain sold 350 men, women, boys, and girls to Ball, Jenning, and Co., a company that intended to resell the captives to other

[72] For the slave ship *Comte du Norde* from Sept. 20, 1783, to June 9, 1784, see Letters of Samuel Hartley & Co., Exchequer (E) 219/377, NAUK. Also see TASTD, voyage id# 80917.

[73] Linda K. Salvucci, "Anglo-American Merchants and Stratagems for Success in Spanish Imperial Markets, 1783–1807," in Barbier and Kuethe, *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy*, 127–33, esp. 130.

[74] James Penny to Miles Barber, July 1, 1784, E 219/377, NAUK.

[75] See 497 nn. 10–11, above, for the sources of all the slave voyages.

[76] Gøbel, *Danish Slave Trade and Its Abolition*, 52–53.

islands.[77] Merchant intelligence from the Leeward Islands emphasizing high slave prices passed to the metropolis and from there to agents of the slave trade based in Africa, fueling the 1783 expansion in the number of enslaved people shipped across the Atlantic.[78] Overall, a significant number of the captives sent from Saint Thomas to Havana in 1783 passed through Antigua and Tortola after the Middle Passage.

The first eighteenth-century rise of the Danish transatlantic slave trade in the early 1780s was a product of this combined context of the American Revolutionary War and the traffic to Cuba. The volume of this early trade was only surpassed when the Danish colonies again became the main Caribbean source of captives for Cuba in 1795–1805.[79] Historians of the Danish slave trade identify a very active traffic in enslaved people between Saint Thomas and the French Caribbean up to 1787, but Cuba was also a significant market for these voyages up to 1784. However, neutrality during wartime was key, as many fewer captives left Saint Thomas after the war, about fifty to five hundred slaves per annum in 1785–89, a volume that certainly evinces the decrease of the Danish transatlantic slave trade.[80] While Danish, Spanish, and British sources provide precise information about the role of Saint Thomas in the slave trade to Havana during the war, such evidence about Saint Domingue as a hub of this same traffic is scarce.

The French Caribbean colonies also opened to foreign traders, among them U.S., Danish, and Spanish merchants embarking captives from Saint Domingue to Cuba during the American Revolution. Yet it is difficult

[77] TASTD, voyage id# 80253. For the record of the slave sales from the *Ann*, see William Davenport and Co., account book relating to ship voyages, 1777–1784, HM82854, April 1783, p. 86 of upside-down section [image 87], Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p16003coll17/id/195. (The book is written in two directions with the text beginning at one cover and then flipped over and beginning again at the end. So p. 86 is used two times in the volume.) Ball, Jenning, and Co. moved to Charleston in 1784 to continue selling captives.

[78] John and Thomas Hodgson, Liverpool, to Richard Miles, Cape Coast Castle, Feb. 17, 1783, T 70/1549/2, NAUK; Charles Bell, Liverpool, to Richard Miles, Cape Coast Castle, Dec. 12, 1782, T 70/1579/2, NAUK. "There was a rush to enter the [slave] trade and 1783 saw a dramatic increase in the numbers willing to risk their capital, and individual merchants rapidly increased their investments"; see Jonathan Huddleston, "And the Children's Teeth Are Set on Edge," electronic publication, 2010, pp. 110–38 (quotation, 117), https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/2230464/africa-adam-hodgson-the-razing-of-caton-chapel.

[79] Whereas an average of 2,125 captives arrived in the Danish Caribbean from Africa during each of the five-year periods from 1701 to 1780, almost 8,000 captives were landed in 1781–85. See TASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/OwOvkdBh. Also see Holger Weiss, "Trade and Neutrality during Times of War: An Analysis of Danish Slave Trade during the Eighteenth Century," in *Neutres et Neutralité dans l'espace atlantique durant le long XVIIIe siècle (1700–1820): Une Approche Globale*, ed. Éric Schnakenbourg (Bécherel, Fr., 2015), 59–84.

[80] Green-Pedersen, *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 19: 184, table 6; Røge, *Slavery and Abolition* 35: 580–81.

to identify the routes these enslaved people were forced to take prior to arriving in French territory. Documented shipments of captives from other islands in the Caribbean to Saint Domingue were negligible from 1780 to 1783, and only slightly larger from 1784 to 1785.[81] The slave trade from English, Danish, and Dutch colonies into the French Caribbean does appear in anecdotal accounts, but because this foreign commerce was prohibited (except for some ports starting in 1783) by the French, information is limited.[82] Almost all slave voyages from Saint Domingue to Havana in 1781–85 occurred in the eighteen months after mid-1782, a period that overlaps with the rise of the U.S.-Danish slave trade to Havana. Captives may have arrived in Saint Domingue via the French transatlantic slave trade and in the undocumented Caribbean traffic from Saint Thomas. As in the Spanish colonies, the opening of the French Caribbean to foreign traders helped offset the enormous losses in the French Atlantic trade at the hands of British privateers. The American Revolution, like the Seven Years' War, saw France unable to defend its Atlantic trade, including that of enslaved people.[83]

Apart from Saint Thomas and Saint Domingue, enslaved people were forced to board ships departing from Trinidad Island and La Guaira, both in colonial Venezuela, to Cuba immediately after the war. The Spanish Crown signed a contract with the Irish-born Edward Barry (who lived in Jamaica) to supply captives to Trinidad in 1784, which ultimately led to the reshipment of captives to Cuba. This is why Trinidad and, to a lesser extent, La Guaira (the port serving Caracas) figure as sources of enslaved people for Havana (see Table II). Captives who had arrived in Trinidad in British ships because of Barry's contract were then reshipped to Havana in Spanish vessels. The Liverpool-based firm Baker & Dawson had forcibly embarked these Africans mostly from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Biafra to Trinidad and La Guaira.[84] In 1781–85, five out of the seven slave

[81] For shipments of captives from other Caribbean islands to Saint Domingue, see IASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/nvYKGJ2N. Saint Domingue imported a reduced number of enslaved people in 1779–80, after France entered the war. The slave trade only returned to prewar levels in 1784; TASTD, https://slavevoyages.org/voyages/eZshP6YH.

[82] David Geggus, "The French Slave Trade: An Overview," *WMQ* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 119–38, esp. 126; Gregory E. O'Malley and Alex Borucki, "Patterns in the Intercolonial Slave Trade across the Americas before the Nineteenth Century," *Revista Tempo* 23, no. 2 (May/August 2017): 314–38, esp. 328–30.

[83] Alan Forrest, *The Death of the French Atlantic: Trade, War and Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, 2020), 55–56.

[84] Barry initially represented the Jamaica-based house Fitch & Company, but he later associated with the Trinidad-based merchant John Black. Barry & Black eventually became agents of Baker & Dawson. José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "A Caribbean Affair: The Liberalization of the Slave Trade in the Spanish Caribbean, 1784–1791," *Culture and History Digital Journal* 8, no. 1 (June 2019): 1–14, esp. 3–4.

vessels entering Havana under the British flag (as opposed to reflagged British ships) belonged to Baker & Dawson and arrived directly from Africa after the war was over.[85] The Spanish Crown entrusted British merchants to deliver captives in the colonies after the war, which turned Baker & Dawson into the most important slave trader for the Spanish Americas from 1784 up to the 1789 liberalization of this traffic, with the firm operating in Cuba, Venezuela, and the Río de la Plata. While Spanish metropolitan authorities tried to secure the supply of captives with these contracts in the second half of the 1780s, Caribbean-based merchant networks among Spanish, Danish, and U.S. slavers reemerged with more energy after the 1789 deregulation of this trade.

The figures shown above in Table I and Table II are slightly incomplete, given that additional captives landed as undocumented contraband, others may have been confiscated by colonial authorities different than those producing the records, and yet others may have arrived outside of Havana. The vessels examined here were not necessarily conducting legal commerce, a status assigned after disembarkation, which did not prevent the port authorities from recording their arrival and the number of enslaved people that they brought.[86] Yet these figures for vessels and captives constitute the majority of all arrivals in 1781–85, which permits us to discern patterns and chronological shifts within this horrific traffic. Even contraband trade conducted by Spanish officers could enter the record, such as the case involving Eliphalet Fitch, a Boston-born merchant of Jamaica who forcibly embarked captives for Havana in November 1781. Fitch negotiated the selling of merchandise and slaves with Francisco de Miranda—a Spanish naval officer visiting Kingston to exchange prisoners—who would become, thirty years later, one of the main leaders of Venezuelan independence. Fitch connected Miranda with Jerónimo Enrile y Guerci, the director of the Cádiz Company resident in Havana, to sell the captives.[87] The arrival of Miranda in Havana with contraband rumored to be worth ninety thousand pesos became a scandal pitting the highest-ranking authorities against each other, according to the memoirs of Francisco de Saavedra. This same Saavedra had been a prisoner of war in Kingston the previous year, in 1780, where he learned about another form of slave trading—unrecorded by Havana's documents—involving the corsairs of Trinidad, a port in south-central Cuba. During Saavedra's short stay in Jamaica, these Spanish privateers assaulted

[85] See 497 nn. 10–11, above.

[86] On post-facto legalized contraband, see Borucki, Eltis, and Wheat, *American Historical Review* 120: 438–42.

[87] J. H. Parry, "Eliphalet Fitch: A Yankee Trader in Jamaica during the War of Independence," *History* 40, no. 138/139 (February and June 1955): 84–98, esp. 91; Torres Ramírez, *Compañía Gaditana*, 92–150, esp. 206.

small British ships, capturing twenty-eight enslaved people later sold in Trinidad.[88] Attacks on British ships and settlements as far away as Belize brought other small groups of captives to Havana.[89] Yet it was in Santiago de Cuba, on the eastern end of the island, where we assume most of the unrecorded slave arrivals took place.

In contrast to the traffic to Havana, where long-distance Atlantic commerce coexisted with intra-Caribbean shipping and was in the hands of Spanish and foreign traders, local Spanish merchants alone dominated the exchanges in Santiago de Cuba, which were limited almost exclusively to shipping between that city and the nearby Caribbean islands.[90] Merchants from Santiago surely brought additional enslaved people into this port—arrivals who are missing from Havana's records—because of the strong significance of neighboring Cap Français (from which 38 out of the 42 ships embarking captives in Saint Domingue departed for Havana), the itineraries involving Jamaica, and the fact that some of the ships heading to Havana stopped at Marayí and Baracoa in eastern Cuba. Far from the main Atlantic trade routes, *Oriente* (the East) as well as southern Cuba maintained intense, and mostly illegal, commerce with Jamaica.[91] For residents of Santiago, acquiring enslaved people legally meant dealing with the merchants and middlemen of Havana, the only Cuban port allowed to receive shipments of captive Africans. Santiago's enslavers found it cheaper to avoid the inevitable markup that accompanied shipping slaves from Havana to eastern Cuba and to deal illegally with Jamaican traders, whose island had seen strong growth in the number of enslaved people shipped there in the decade before the American Revolution.[92] As that suggests, the complementary local economies of the islands structured a distinctly articulated Caribbean zone connecting eastern Cuba, Jamaica, and Saint Domingue, enabling

[88] Saavedra was sent by Minister of the Indies José de Gálvez to coordinate logistics in Havana during the war. On the corsairs, see Saavedra, *Los Decenios*, 132; on Francisco de Miranda, see ibid., 187–88.

[89] Jorge Victoria Ojeda, "Acerca de la trata inter-caribeña de esclavos: Un episodio desconocido entre Yucatán y Cuba en 1780," *Revista de Indias* 83 (forthcoming).

[90] Sherry Johnson, "The Rise and Fall of Creole Participation in the Cuban Slave Trade, 1789–1796," *Cuban Studies* 30 (2000): 52–75.

[91] Kingston, Montego Bay, Savanna-la-Mar, and Port Antonio—all in Jamaica—had close connections with Santiago de Cuba and Trinidad. Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *Santiago de Cuba desde su fundación a la Guerra de los Diez Años* (Santiago de Cuba, 1996), 37–87; Lizbeth J. Chaviano Pérez, *Trinidad: Una historia económica basada en el azúcar, 1754–1848* (Barcelona, 2014), 41–104.

[92] About 100,000 captive Africans arrived in Jamaica in 1770–78, many to be sent on to Cuba. See TASTD, http://www.slavevoyages.org/estimates/6aKixDcv. On violence and mortality, see Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana, Ill., 2016), 40–54; Trevor Burnard, "Slaves and Slavery in Kingston, 1770–1815," *International Review of Social History* 65, special issue S28 (2020): 39–65, esp. 50–51.

increasing exchanges of goods and captives, even as these territories belonged to different empires.[93]

Evidence from the first years after the opening of the slave trade in Cuba in 1789 suggests unrecorded slave arrivals in Santiago de Cuba during the American Revolution. Santiago became the Spanish Caribbean port where the largest number of Spanish slave ships disembarked captives in 1789–94. During that period, more than 350 vessels (40–80 per year, mostly small and medium-sized) departed from Santiago to forcibly embark captives in Jamaica and, to a lesser extent, Saint Domingue.[94] The quick efflorescence of this trade, at least as far as the legal authorities were concerned, attests to an earlier strong commercial interweaving of eastern Cuba with Jamaica. It is hard to conceive that Santiago-based merchants could have lacked experience in the slave trade within the Caribbean before 1789 because they assembled a large number of slave voyages right after the legal opening of this traffic. Of course, the port of Santiago was only allowed to trade in captives brought by Spanish merchants because the colonial authorities feared that this opening of the slave trade would lead to an increasing British presence, another nod to Santiago's history of contraband trade in enslaved people with Jamaicans in the early 1780s. The Santiago-based slave trade organized by Spanish merchants in the early 1790s surely developed from the previous informal commerce during the American Revolution, which the 1789 Spanish liberalization of this traffic formalized.

During the American Revolution, U.S. and Danish slavers followed the patterns of the larger Spanish Caribbean commerce in goods conducted by Spanish merchants based in Cuba and added additional stopovers to hide the previous embarkation of captives in the British Caribbean, thus creating new multilateral routes for sending enslaved people to Havana. They forcibly moved these men and women from the British colonies to Saint Thomas, as well as from Saint Thomas to Saint Domingue, in order to sell them ultimately in Havana. Spanish, U.S., and Danish merchants collaborated to change the names and flags of British ships anchored in Saint Thomas to allow them access to Havana. And the slave traders of eastern Cuba surely benefited from their connections with Saint Domingue and Jamaica during the early 1780s. Spanish merchants based in Cuba took part in these Caribbean slave routes because they were already active in the

[93] José Luis Belmonte Postigo, *Ser esclavo en Santiago de Cuba: Espacios de poder y negociación en un contexto de expansión y crisis, 1780–1803* (Madrid, 2012), 134–35.

[94] Forty-six other vessels brought captives from Santiago to Havana, creating an intra-Cuban traffic. See José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "Brazos para el azúcar, esclavos para vender: Estrategias de comercialización en la trata negrera en Santiago de Cuba, 1789–1794," *Revista de Indias*, 70, no. 249 (2010): 445–67, esp. 452, 458; Belmonte Postigo, *Ser esclavo en Santiago de Cuba*, 164, 178; IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/RgHaKVy7.

regular (non-slave) trade across imperial boundaries, and they increased their direct participation in the traffic of captives as they partnered with the U.S. and Danish slave traders.[95]

Sudden changes shaped by Atlantic wars favored merchants located in the Americas, who had closer and more timely contacts in neighboring colonies than did commercial houses based in Europe. Merchants and mariners living in Cuba, Saint Thomas, Saint Domingue, and the United States rushed to take advantage of provisional wartime measures by the Spanish Crown during the American Revolutionary War to bring captives to Cuba. This was the start of an expanding trade between the United States and the Spanish Americas facilitated by three decades of Atlantic wars.

The American Revolution marks the beginnings of an increasing partnership of U.S. slavers with Danish and Spanish merchants in the traffic to Cuba, and scholars should analyze this traffic beyond national boxes. The U.S.-Danish slave-trading partnership of the early 1780s later drove half of the traffic of captives to Cuba. U.S. shippers were central to the slave trade to Cuba from 1790 to 1808, with U.S. vessels disembarking at least 53,900 captives, 37.3 percent of the total number of enslaved people sent to the island during these years. U.S. merchants also played a central role in conducting Danish slave voyages to Cuba in 1790–1808, when Danish vessels carried about 18,300 captives, 12.7 percent of the island's total. In other words, merchant networks of U.S. and Danish shippers created during the American Revolution later carried together half of all captives arriving in Cuba from 1790 to 1808, a period when the trade in enslaved people to the island also significantly increased.[96]

With the opening of the slave trade in the Spanish colonies to foreigners after 1789, U.S. merchants not only expanded operations in Cuba but also aggressively tried to supply captives to places as far away as Cartagena and Buenos Aires. The Vernon merchant family of Newport, Rhode Island, sent slave ships to Cuba starting in the early 1790s, and they directed Captain Daniel Gray to bring captives in the ship *Don Gálvez* from Anomabu (in present-day Ghana) to La Guaira (Venezuela) in 1792. Gray only sold five captives in this port, which led him to make other stops in Coro (Venezuela) and Cartagena (then New Granada in today's Colombia),

[95] Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America*, 41–79; O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 301–16, 332–66.

[96] We combine data on transatlantic and Caribbean traffic and identify the flag of the enslaver in voyages to generate these figures. The TASTD shows 66,744 captives arriving in Cuba in 1790–1808 under a known flag, with 27,247 carried by U.S. ships and 4,889 by the Danish. The IASTD shows an additional 77,802 enslaved people arriving in vessels with known flags, with 26,678 carried by U.S. ships and 13,459 by the Danish. Combining the two databases' figures results in a total of 144,546 captives, 53,925 (37.3 percent) carried by U.S. vessels and 18,348 (12.7 percent) by the Danish. See TASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/mkvQq8Co; IASTD, https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyages/ejJa1roR.

where he exchanged twenty-five captives. Unable to sell the remaining eighty-nine enslaved Africans because of a silver shortage in these ports, Gray sailed to Havana. After a prolonged and excruciating set of voyages to these Spanish American ports, the surviving Africans landed in Cuba. The Vernons later delivered captives to Montevideo, in the Río de la Plata region. Though further U.S.-organized slave voyages to Venezuela and Cartagena were uncommon, U.S. merchants became the main suppliers of captives in the direct commerce between Africa and the Río de la Plata in the decade following 1798.[97] The U.S.-organized slave trade became truly hemispheric at the start of the nineteenth century.

The sudden increase of U.S. slave-trading activities and their wide geographic span took place in the context of the overall U.S. merchant fleet engaging in a much broader range of long-distance commerce, including whaling and the trade with China. In all these maritime ventures, U.S. shippers superseded British competitors up to the beginning of the age of steamships in the mid-nineteenth century.[98] But the legal U.S.-organized slave trade to foreign ports ended in 1808 with the prohibition of the transatlantic slave trade to the United States, which also was intended to prevent U.S. merchants from delivering captives to Latin America and the Caribbean. Though an illegal U.S.-organized traffic continued after 1808, the volume was much smaller than before, and U.S. participation was mostly limited to provisioning ships owned and operated by Cuban and Luso-Brazilian slavers.[99] The American Revolution led to the 1787 constitutional measure allowing the prohibition of the transatlantic slave trade by Congress in 1807, but that same revolution marked the beginnings of a much-energized U.S.-organized slave trade to Cuba, which increased exponentially, expanded to other regions, and would undoubtedly have continued and grown if not outlawed by the U.S. Congress.

Though this article reveals the impact of the American Revolutionary War on the slave routes to Cuba, an examination of the experiences of the captives is required on its own terms. Port authorities listed most of the ships entering Havana as bringing both men and women, but only four

[97] José Luis Belmonte Postigo, "'Debiendo ser gravosa esta negociacion, por tener que comprar negros de ultima mano': Cartagena de Indias en la primera época del comercio libre de esclavos, 1791–1797," in *Tratas, esclavitudes y mestizajes: Una historia conectada, siglos XV–XVIII*, ed. Rafael M. Pérez García, Manuel F. Fernández Chaves, and Eduardo França Paiva (Seville, 2020), 89–112, esp. 107; Alex Borucki, "The U.S. Slave Ship *Ascension* in the Río de la Plata: Slave Routes and Circuits of Silver in the Late Eighteenth-Century Atlantic and Beyond," *Colonial Latin American Review* 29, no. 4 (2020): 630–57. On Caribbean slave voyages organized by the U.S. merchant William D. Robinson to Venezuela, see Edward P. Pompeian, *Sustaining Empire: Venezuela's Trade with the United States during the Age of Revolutions, 1797–1828* (Baltimore, 2022), 89.

[98] Eltis, *Civil War History* 54: 364.

[99] See 493 n. 2, 498 n. 15, and 499 n. 16, above, on the U.S. slave trade and the U.S.-organized traffic.

entries show specific gender information.[100] The overwhelming majority of the captives were surely Africans who had been recently forced to cross the Atlantic. For enslaved men, women, and children, the arrival and departure in various Caribbean ports within days, the transshipment to other vessels, and the separation from shipmates and family members with whom they had shared the Middle Passage increased their sense of chaos and distress, which added to their prolonged physical exhaustion. Their forced voyages, moreover, became ever lengthier because of these multistage routes.[101]

Even under these extreme circumstances, captives shaped, to a certain extent, the outcome of these voyages, as those brought by the U.S. brig *La Juana* to Havana's harbor did in 1783. The port's authorities interrogated the ship's captain, Henry Halley, who indicated that he had purchased 180 men and women in Saint Thomas, consigned to Cornelius Coppinger. According to Halley, the captives rebelled after departure, which led the crew to fight the rebels with swords and firearms and ultimately to nail down the hatch to imprison them in stowage. Of course, we lack testimonies from the captives. After interrogating the captain, the Spanish authorities seized *La Juana*. When they opened the hatch, in their words, a "stench of corruption" spread, evidencing a massacre. The authorities moved the ship outside the bay and then inspected the hold, where they found 106 deceased captives, whose bodies they threw into the sea. Yet one document from Havana records this ship arriving with captives alive.[102] If some of these men and women survived, they would have disembarked near the fortress of La Punta, where captains anchored ships to land captives.[103] Since these captives had rebelled, though, Spanish officers may have imprisoned the survivors and even forced them to work in the fortifications of Havana or in outposts such as Saint Augustine. These people's lives, their suffering, and their untimely deaths were intimately connected to the American Revolution, even though they never set foot in the United States.

The stories of these African and Afro-Caribbean men and women knit together not only the pasts of Cuba and the United States but also the shared history of Cuba and Haiti. The forced movements from Cap

[100] These four ships departed from Saint Domingue to Havana: *Principe Real* (136 males and 65 females), *San Jose* (7 males and 3 females), *Santa Cruz de la Parra* (32 males and 17 females), and *Manuela* (2 males and 1 female); for sources, see 497 n. 10, above.

[101] Elise A. Mitchell, "Morbid Crossings: Surviving Smallpox, Maritime Quarantine, and the Gendered Geography of the Early Eighteenth-Century Intra-Caribbean Slave Trade," *WMQ* 79, no. 2 (April 2022): 177–210, esp. 195.

[102] The ship arrived in Havana on Feb. 11, 1783; on the interrogations by the Spanish authorities and their actions, see "Certificación de lo ocurrido en el bergantín la Juana. . . . ," May 22, 1784 (quotation), and "Solicitud de D. Cornelio Coppinger," Apr. 9, 1785, both in Indiferente 2821, AGI. For the document listing the ship arriving with captives, see "Nota de la entrada y la salida. . . . ," Jan. 2, 1783, Indiferente 2175, AGI.

[103] For La Punta, see Alexander von Humboldt, *Diario "Habana 1804": El diario original de Humboldt escrito en La Habana*, trans. and ed. Michael Zeuske (Havana, 2021), 28.

Français to Havana fleshed out communication of Black communities across the islands in the years preceding the Haitian Revolution, as discussed in Julius S. Scott's *The Common Wind*.[104] Quantitative analysis can show us the outlines of their stories. Combined with other methodologies, we can continue weaving a historical fabric that reveals the interconnectedness of people who endured the terrible depths of a global economy based on exploitation.

[104] St. Thomas was a hub of geopolitical intelligence for Africans and their descendants; Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London, 2018), 45–48, 62.