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A Requiem for the Vultures: The Afro-Peruvian Stevedores of Callao and Their Fight for National Incorporation in Late Nineteenth Century, Post-Emancipation Peru

By

MIGUEL ALBERTO NOVOA CIPRIANI
THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This social microhistory examines the stevedores of Callao, an Afro-Peruvian community, and their pivotal role in shaping Peru's culture, economy, and defense. It argues that their struggle for national inclusion in post-abolition Peru entangled them in the country's significant nineteenth-century crises. Recent scholarship on Afro-Latin American societies has uncovered experiences of Afro-descendants after abolition and their contributions to emerging republics. By exploring the lives of this working-class group during Peru's Guano Era (1840–1880), this study sheds light on economic competition, the development of liberal ideals in Callao's seaport, and the trajectory of Peru's Civil Party—a liberal faction that leveraged the national guard and navy to counterpoise the conservative army. This research ultimately contends that a bottom-up analysis of Callao's black stevedores demonstrates how race shaped their historical marginalization. However, their disappearance from historical narratives stems primarily from their liberal political alignment, which made them targets of a victorious conservative opposition in late nineteenth-century Peru.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In late November 2009, Peru took the unprecedented step of becoming the first country in Latin America to officially apologize to its Afro-descendent society for centuries of oppression, recognizing enduring racial prejudice hinders their socioeconomic opportunities and prosperity.[1] Peru's government has since raised awareness of the nation's black identity by promoting June—the birth month of Afro scholar Nicomedes Santa Cruz—as an observance for black culture, but anti-racism activists urge highlighting blacks in areas besides dance, music, and sports.[2] Integral to this process is rectifying Peru's history, which elites methodically cleansed of folk they judged racially unfit for their vision of nationhood.[3] This essay addresses the issue by navigating Peru's volatile late nineteenth century in its chief seaport of Callao, crafting a social microhistory of a black stevedoring guild that oddly became vital features of a liberal national project and, just as enigmatically, vanished from recorded history. Although race is relevant to the story, discerning the stevedore's disappearance requires a bottom-up approach, besides race, also featuring their experience and agency as a working-class group that fought for incorporation into the incipient Peruvian nation. Thus, this essay demonstrates that Callao's black stevedores were erased from history not just because of their race, but primarily due to their key role in the liberal national project whose political opponents, upon reacquiring power, obscured from the historical record.

Fathoming this argument's premises compels this essay's division into six sections, each answering a relevant research question. First, the prelude: a group of black sailors in a peculiar

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[1] "Peru apologises for abuse of African-origin citizens," *BBC News* (London, U.K.), 29 November 2009, accessed 31 March 2017, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8384853.stm.

[2] Santa Cruz was a leading proponent of the revitalization of Peru's African cultural heritage. Dan Collyns, "Peru tries to end discrimination against Afro-Peruvians," *The Guardian* (London, U.K.), 12 July 2012, accessed 1 April 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/jul/12/peru-discrimination-african-peruvians.

[3] Since the 16th century Spanish chronicles of Peru's conquest, the role of black individuals has been largely hidden from history. For a an in-depth analysis, see Luis Martin Valdiviezo, "Afro-Peruvian Perspectives and Critiques of Intercultural Education Policy" (University of Massachusetts: Amherst, 2012), Dissertations, Paper 602, pp. 66-69.

photo with Peru's President in 1921—who were these people? Second, learning more about these peoples' history in Peru's oceanfront—why become stevedores and what was their social status? Third, unearthing their power source—what made them relevant? Fourth, learning their reason for supporting a liberal political ideal—why ascribe to a project that endangered their life? Fifth, exploring their role in the War of the Pacific—what occurred to them during the war? Lastly, the aftermath considers and presents a response to the question raised in the prologue. A conclusion recaps matters to clarify the stevedores' erasure from history and their struggle for survival.

To acknowledge Santa Cruz's literary works as inspiring this essay's crafting, each of the body parts begin with his pertinent poetry on Afro-Peruvian society and identity. Santa Cruz—a self-taught scholar born in the working-class, black district of La Victoria in Peru's capital—was the foremost voice in reviving Afro culture and history in mid-twentieth century Peru. Criticized and downplayed by political opponents, Santa Cruz died a defeated pessimist in Spain in 1992.[4]

This investigation also contributes to the literature on the Afro-Peruvian people's history, including their participation in the War of the Pacific—a conflict that pitted Chile, Bolivia, and Peru over control of nitrates in the world's driest non-polar desert. Overall, this case study aids in filling a narrative gap between the period after Peru's abolition of slavery in 1854, and before its mid-twentieth century Afro-identity revival through music and dance.[5] Including the War of the

[4] Santa Cruz's poetry denounced racism, poverty, and the workers' oppression. See Carlos Aguirre, "Nicomedes Santa Cruz: A Black Public Intellectual in Twentieth-Century Peru," in *BlackPast.org*, accessed 26 April 2017, http://www.blackpast.org/perspectives/nicomedes-santa-cruz-black-public-intellectual-twentieth-century-peru

[5] Afro-Peruvian history's gap is evident in the English literature; beginning with Frederick Bowser's study of blacks in colonial Peru (*The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650.* California: Stanford University Press, 1974), it advanced with Peter Blanchard's work on slavery's abolition in post-colonial Peru (*Slavery and Abolition in Early Republican Peru*. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1992), and ends with Heidi Feldman's study on Afro identity revival since the 1950s (*Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006). Roberto Sánchez attempted closing this gap, exploring identity, migration, and modernization in post-abolition Afro society ("Black Mosaic: The Assimilation and Marginalization of Afro-Peruvians in Post-Abolition Peru, 1854-1930." Ph.D. thesis. Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008). Besides English, other publications—mostly in Spanish—focus on aspects of Afro-Peruvians such as art, religion, crime, and demographics; a comprehensive historiography is available from historian José Ragas ("Afroperuanos: un acercamiento bibliográfico," in *Etnicidad y Discriminación Racial en la Historia del Perú*, Vol. 2, ed. A.C.

Pacific (1879-1884) without it being the sole focus, by assessing events before and after the war, places this study at the vanguard of a literature about Afro-Peruvians' role in a confrontation that reshaped the economic and national development of the country.[6] Hence, this investigation also dialogues with a wider literature of significant importance for Peruvian identity and conscience.

Particularly prominent in the War of the Pacific's literature at large is the blaming of nonwhites for Peru's lack of national unity and consequential defeat. Already during the conflict, the national discourse of the chief contenders, Chile and Peru, hinged on the idea that patriotism was stronger among racially homogeneous peoples than on a multi-racial society.[7] After the war, this discourse became the Peruvian elite's assessment for the loss to Chile, with ardent blame pinned on Peru's majority Amerindian population. The idea stood unchallenged until historian Florencia Mallon reframed studies of nationalism in 1995, arguing that subalterns formed a national vision detached from the elite—proven by the war's Amerindian resistance that elites repressed since it contested their national ideals.[8] Under this framework, the historian Vincent Peloso, analyzing a Chinese migrants' massacre by blacks in rural Cañete in 1881, contends that Peru's costal black peasantry also held unique "ambivalent sentiments" both to the nation and to their Afro-identity.[9] Thus, Mallon's framework opened new methods to understand the formation

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Carrillo. Lima: Instituto Riva-Agüero, 2003. Pp. 191-226). Ragas argues that knowledge has progressed on how Afros skillfully overcame systems of coercion and successfully influenced culture beyond the restraints of marginalization, but that further research is needed on their relation as citizens and their political participation.

[6] Lawrence Clayton, *Peru and the United* States (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999), pp. 51-53, 71-73. For information on what little is known about Afro-Peruvian participation in the war, please see Maribel Arrelucea and Jesús Cosamalón, *La Presencia Afrodescendiente en el Perú* (Lima: Ministerio de Cultura, 2015), pp. 146-147.

[7] For a complete study of this race-based discourse, see Juan Carlos Arellano, "Discursos racistas en Chile y Perú durant e la Guerra del Pacífico (1879-1884)," *Estudos Ibero-americanos* 38, n. 2 (2012): 239-264.

[8] The dominant elite, in Peru, are centered in Lima, the country's capital. Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 1-20. For more on Peru's post-conflict national identity, see also William Skuban, *Lines in the Sand: Nationalism and Identity on the Peruvian-Chilean Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), pp. 179-180. [9]

[9] He contends Blacks saw the Chinese as Chilean allies and social competitors. See Vincent Peloso, "Racial Conflict and Identity Crisis in Wartime Peru," in *Military Struggle and Identity Formation in Latin America*, ed. Nicola Foote and René Harder Horst (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2010), pp. 282-283. Pedro Paz Soldán used this to claim blacks could never be Peruvians. Elliot Young, *Alien Nation* (Chapel Hill: The UNC Press, 2014), pp. 77-79.

of national identity. Nonetheless, Mallon's framework also refuses subalterns' incorporation to the authorities' vision of nationhood, perpetuating the elite's contention on national unity. Such an outlook is refuted by this study of black stevedores who pursued their incorporation into the Peruvian nation as envisioned by the liberal elite. Moreover, this study also stakes its relevance as more reflective of coastal Afro-Peruvians than Peloso's study, because Cañete in this late-nineteenth century timeframe is an outlier in population size and racial composition— having less blacks than Callao alone, and a racial makeup less like the characteristic Lima-Callao coastal metropolis and more like Peru's Andean highlands (see **FIGURE 1**, Page 5).[10]

Ultimately, this essay not only recovers the history of a forgotten racial group but also interrogates the mechanisms of historical erasure. Peru's liberal national project in offering a pathway to inclusion also contained within it the seeds of exclusion. When its proponents lost political power, so did their supporters lose their recognition. This investigation draws attention to how the liberal elite's vision for Peru necessitated the contributions of marginalized groups. Afro-Peruvians, especially those in coastal urban areas like Callao, leveraged their labor and presence to assert a claim to citizenship and national belonging. This act of self-determination, though extraordinary, was systematically erased when political tides shifted, revealing how power dynamics and historical memory selectively preserved or erased narratives to suit elite agendas. By reframing the Black stevedores' contributions as central, rather than peripheral, to Peru's national formation, the essay challenges prevailing narratives and invites a reexamination of national identity that is more inclusive and reflective of its true historical complexity.

The juxtaposition of the War of the Pacific's literature, which attributes Peru's defeat to a lack of national unity, with the lived experiences of Afro-Peruvians provides a fresh lens through

[10] Peru's black population is historically concentrated in the coastline, more specifically the Lima-Callao metropolis. See Alberto Flores Galindo, *Aristocracia y Plebe: Lima, 1760-1830* (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1984), pp. 99-103.

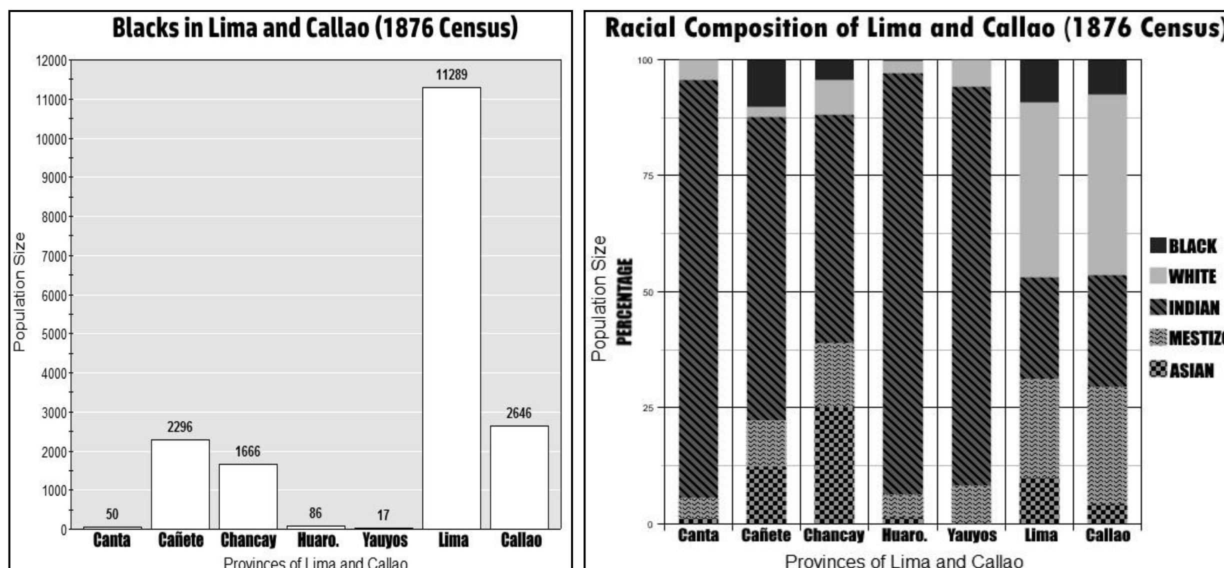

Figure 1. Lima-Callao's blacks were more numerous than Cañete's. Lima's Andes provinces (Canta, Yauyos, Huarochirí) have insignificant black numbers, but prove Cañete's racial composition resembles them, except for the number of blacks and Asians. Callao better reflects Peru's coastal society. The 1876 census was Peru's last official until 1940. **Source:** Own work; based on *Censo General de la República del Perú Formado en 1876*, Vol. IV & VI (Lima: Imp. del Teatro, 1878).

which to view the nation's failures and achievements. Far from being passive partakers, Callao's Black stevedores actively formed a vision of national identity beyond racial homogeneity.

Beyond Peru, this essay adds to the literature on the maritime experiences of the Western Hemisphere's Afro-descendant societies. It brings the study of Africans in the Americas outside a conventional plantation analysis, bridging the idea of seaports as both reflecting customary social hierarchies and fostering a budding working-class identity.[11] This essay also contributes to works

[11] Marcus Rediker argues shipmates formed class-based political consciousness from liberty at sea and unity in ships (*Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Paul Gilje argues sailors were more individualistic than politically-driven, because their socioeconomic status differed little from the mainland (*Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). This study adapts these opposing views, returning to Jesse Lemich's focus on seamen's rationality, their context, to understand how they overcame adversity, forming political allegiances ("Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1968): pp. 371-407). Relations between Afro-Americans and the sea are studied by historians Jeffrey Bolster and Alex Borucki. Bolster studies blacks in the Atlantic, mainly New England, and how, with their liberty at sea, formed individuality and antislavery ideals (*Black Jacks: African American Seaman in the Age of Sail*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). Borucki studies blacks in the River Plate, mainly Montevideo, and how their seaborne captivity and experience strengthened them as a group—using their power as soldiers to influence national politics (*From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Black Identities in the Rio de la Plata*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

on post-abolition experiences in the Americas, expressly the acquisition of Black political rights and their relation towards the state and its politics as they turned from slaves into citizens.[12] The transition from slavery to citizenship was neither linear nor universal; rather, it was marked by negotiations between marginalized communities and the state. The inclusion of maritime labor underscores the intersection of race, class, and geopolitics, positioning Callao as a microcosm of Peru's coastal identity and its evolving relationship with Afro-descendant populations.

[12] This theme is rooted in Eugen Weber's theory on the importance of nationalizing institutions in creating identity among people without a broader nation-state vision (*Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. California: Stanford University Press, 1976). Yet, even if missing national identity, Afro-Americans had consciousness of status. In the United States, Norrece Jones (*Born a Child of Freedom, Yet a Slave*. Middletown: Wesleyan, 1991) and William Dusinberre (*Them Dark Days*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996) contend slave agency is in resistance through both violent and non-violent acts, such as work slowdowns and insubordination. Similarly, Carlos Aguirre proves Peru's black slaves pursued liberty before 1854 by resistance, rather than passively waiting for abolition (*Agentes de su propia libertad*. Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1993). David Sartorius shows 19th century Afro-Cubans consciously supported Spain in Cuba's war of independence, because they found their structure better for social mobility and inclusion (*Ever Faithful*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

II. PRELUDE—HOMAGE TO THE ANONYMOUS PATRIOTS

Ostentatious ceremonies, patriotic parades, lavish banquets, and gaudy fireworks adorned Peru's capital of Lima for the country's centennial celebration of independence from Spain. Red-and-white waving flags and fanfare greeted Latin American and European dignitaries, local elite, and Peru's President Augusto Leguía as they marched through the streets by foot and in elegant motorcades. They attended horse races, football matches, grand ballrooms, and the unveiling of the monuments and museums gifted by the country's immigrant communities. At night, for these few festive days in 1921, the gracefully-lit edifices and streets reinforced a false impression that the country's coffers easily covered these and other luxuries.[13] Greatly unusual must it have been, then, for the sophisticated President Leguía to have met, either amid this ceremony or some days earlier, and taken a photograph with a lowly crew of weary-faced, elderly black seamen—most proudly in their sailor's outfits—from Lima's adjacent seaport of Callao (see **FIGURE 2**, Page 8).

The black-and-white photograph depicts a formal gathering featuring five men, including President Leguía at the center. The setting, an ornate interior characterized by patterned flooring, elaborate furniture, and a decorated wall with a mirror panel, suggests an official venue. Leguía's prominent central placement and emphasize his role as the leading figure in the image. To his left and right are four Afro-Peruvian men, medals adorning their uniforms, indicating recognition of their service. The expressions of the men range from solemn to neutral, reflecting the formal tone of the occasion. The composition underscores the hierarchical yet respectful relation between Leguía and the other men, showcasing them as symbols of nationalism and military pride.

The photograph's historical value lies in its representation of Afro-Peruvian individuals in

[13] Leguía sought to demonstrate Peru's economic stability. For more on the celebrations and attendees, see Juan Luis Orrego Penagos, *¡Y Llegó el Centenario!* (Lima: Titanium Editores, 2014), pp. 67-87. For more on excessive spending, see Alfonso Quiroz, *Corrupt Circles* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), pp. 231-32.

Figure 2. Augusto B. Leguía (center) with the survivors of the Peruvian warship *Huáscar* (whose only known member in the image is *Grumete* Alberto Medina, second from left), 1921, in what is perhaps the first photo of a Peruvian President posing for a picture portrait with Afro-descendants. **Source:** Aldo Panfichi, "Los Héroes y Sus Legados," in *Blog de Aldo Panfichi: Sociología y Ciencia Política*, 12 October 2015, http://blog.pucp.edu.pe/blog/aldopanfichi/tag/afroperuano/.

formal and honored roles during a period when their contributions were overlooked. It speaks to the dynamics of national identity in early 20th-century Peru under Leguía's government, a time marked by modernization and efforts to unify diverse groups under a nationalist narrative.

Nowadays little is known about these men aside that they, national guardsmen of Callao's *Columna Constitución* (Constitutional Column), served in eight watercraft of Peru's Navy during the War of the Pacific. Nicknamed *los buitres* (the vultures), they primarily labored as stevedores at the docks, hauling materials to-and-from ships using their backs and boats.[14] Yet, Leguía likely knew more about veterans like them for, not long after this meeting, he personally authorized and inaugurated a monument in honor of "the anonymous patriotism" exhibited by the masses who were "the first to be present for sacrifice without reward" in defense of the nation.[15]

[14] Jorge Ortiz Sotelo, *Acción y Valor* (Lima: Asociacion de Officiales de Infanteria de Marina del Perú, 2010), p. 90.
[15] Luis Torrejón Muñoz, "Ritual y Nación: El Caso de la Procesión Cívica al Morro Solar," in *Historia y Cultura*, n. 25 (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 2003); see also Arrelucea and Cosamalón, *La Presencia Afrodescendiente en el Perú*, p. 147.

III. PART ONE — AFRICANS IN THE PACIFIC RIM: FEAR, OPPRESSION, AND STATUS

In preparation for a performance by the "Pancho Fierro" Afro-Peruvian culture company at the Chilean capital's municipal theatre in 1957, Nicomedes Santa Cruz composed the "*Ritmos Negros del Perú*" poem, which in time became an anthem of Peru's Black identity and an iconic *décima*—a poetic tradition that in the past had chronicled events of historic importance for the nation, such as the the War of the Pacific.[16] As a form of recognizing Peru's history with slavery, some of the poem's first lines read: "From Africa came my grandmother / Dressed in spiraled shells / Brought by the Spanish / In a caravel sail."[17] Santa Cruz's opening lines also rescue Black history with the sea, a past that has not received attention from scholars of Black Peru.

Understanding the sea's formative role in coastal Peru's black community is vital for this study, because it reveals much about peoples whose existence and labor depended on the sea and its provision of resources. Furthermore, not only have Afro-Peruvians historically lived along the country's coastline, but human habitation in Peru as a whole has always depended on the special connectivity between the Pacific Rim's marine environment and the Andean highlands. [18] Taking the marine surroundings into consideration in the shaping of Callao's black community also nods to historian Jeffrey Bolster's call for more focus on marine environmental history.[19] Therefore, this first part begins by presenting the setting and its influence on the Afros' situation, before proceeding into a specific narrative on the stevedores' formation into a guild and their status.

[16] Heidi Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), pp. 86-92.
[17] Translated from the Spanish text: *De África llegó mi abuela / vestida con caracoles / la trajeron lo'epañoles / en un barco carabela*. See *Nicomedes Santa Cruz: Obras Completas I*, ed. Pedro Santa Cruz (LibrosEnRed, 2004), p. [18] . According to Feldman, these few words and the remainder of the poem were powerful reminders of the Atlantic slave trade and the hardships of slavery at a time when Peru "rarely acknowledged" the matter. See *Ibid*., p. 90. [18] The lack of studies on Afro-Peruvian maritime culture is likely because slavery mostly occurred in households, plantations, and mines. See Carlos Aguirre, *Breve Historia de la Esclavitud en el Perú* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2005), pp. 49-100. However, maritime studies in general have been missing in Peru despite the country's long connection with the sea. See Héctor López, *El Perú y El Mar* (Lima: SCPC, 2008), pp. 11-16.
[19] Jeffrey Bolster, "Opportunities in Marine Environmental History," *Environmental History* 11, n. 3 (July 2006).

Under Pachacamac's Whim: The African Slave in Callao

Africans first reached the shores of Peru along with the forces of the conqueror Francisco Pizarro in 1524—some thirty or so years after Genovese explorer Christopher Columbus' first voyage reached the Western Hemisphere. Male slaves made up the majority of the Africans, with at least a third of the fifty slaves brought in 1529 being females. All played a role in the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire and Peru's colonization.[20] Black Africans labored as servants and public works constructors, but many others also aided Spanish military expeditions as explorers, soldiers, and mediators with the Amerindians; some also fought as freemen, a notable case being the black conqueror Juan Valiente, whose exploits earned him a grant for land and local slaves.[21] Rarely absent in any of the Spaniards' journeys, Black Africans likely joined Francisco's brother, Hernando Pizarro, in his raid of the Temple of *Pachacamac* and his reconnaissance of the Rímac Valley and its coast, the future site of Lima and Callao, in 1533. During this mission, the African troops possibly witnessed the Amerindians' fear of *Pachacamac*, an earthshaking deity that they believed was imprisoned in the sea in front of the temple, and felt the tremors deemed by the locals as an omen of the invaders' imminent destruction.[22] Ignoring the omens, the Spaniards not only settled this coast, but also made it their headquarters—bringing the Africans with them.

Whether or not the curse is actually real, Callao's environment definitely terrorized its residents. The seaport is located in an ample natural harbor with cold, calm waters and gentle

[20] An African slave saved the life of Diego de Almagro, the expedition's second commander. The steady flow of the black slaves to Peru came mostly from Spanish America rather than Spain or Africa. See Frederick Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (California: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 3-4.
[21] In another peculiar case, a black scout was "vigorously scrubbed" by natives that had never seen a black person. See Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru*, pp. 4-5; please see also John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 140-141.
[22] For Hernando Pizarro's journey, see Antonio Raimondi, *El Perú: Historia de la Geografía del Perú*, Vol. 2 (Lima: Imprenta del Estado, 1876), pp. 29-43. For the omen story, see Raúl Porras Barrenechea, *El Legado Quechua* (Lima: Fondo Editorial UNMSM, 1999), p. 283. For the mythology of the deity Pachacamac, see Jerry Moore, *Architecture and Power in the Andes* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), pp. 174-175. See also Thornton, pp. 140-141.

winds made favorable by the landscape's slightly concave shoreline, a thin peninsula, elevated backdrops, and El Frontón and San Lorenzo islands in the mainland's front—conditions easing sailships' entrance and departure, making it a safe roadstead for multiple vessels' anchorage.[23] Yet, the seaport's kind features also hindered its defense from English and Dutch pirates who—inspired by Francis Drake's crossing of South America's ship-wrecking Cape Horn in 1578—tormented Peru's coast for over a century.[24] The terrain also condemned the port to destructions by earthquakes and tsunamis. Its soft and pebbly ground is unsuitable for buildings to withstand the coast's recurrent seismic activity, and the landscape's moderate incline from the waterfront expands the tsunamis' range.[25] Thus, Callao's natural aspects shaped the bustling seaport into both a heavenly center of trade and an exceptionally hellish atmosphere for human habitation.

Nonetheless, authorities found most problematic that the unstable environment increased the likelihood of a slave uprising. The coast's demographics explains the elite's fear since, by the 1600s—when Callao and Lima became Spain's main distribution center for slaves in West South America—well into the mid-1800s, blacks composed nearly half of the coast's populace.[26] Thus, elites feared threats to social structures, as occurred when the English Oxenham and the Dutch L'Hermite threatened to ally with slaves during their pirate raids in the seventeenth century, and when a devastating earthquake-tsunami in 1746 destroyed most of Lima and all of Callao.[27] The

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[23] Francisco Quiroz, *Historia del Callao* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Pedagógico San Marcos, 2007), pp.19-27.
[24] A Portuguese Jew describes an incident in 1615, when Dutch pirate Spilbergen defeated Spain's fleet at Cañete. Lima's populace panicked, organizing prayer vigils where even the future St. Rose of Lima asked God's mercy. Spilbergen withdrew his forces. See Ramiro Flores Guzmán, "El Enemigo Frente a las Costas: Temores y Reacciones Frente a la Amenaza Pirata, 1570-1720," in *El Miedo en el Perú: Siglos XVI al XX* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 2005), pp. 33-47. Chronology of piracy in Lima, see M. Darío Arrús, *El Callao en la Epoca Del Coloniaje Antes Y Despues de la Catastrofe De 1746* (Callao: Imprenta de "El Callao," 1904), pp. 253-268.
[25] These natural disasters have destroyed Callao in 1586, 1687, and 1746. Quiroz, *Historia del Callao*, pp. 19-20.
[26] At Callao, in 1838, the naturalist Johann Jakob von Tschudi remarked that "most of those we saw were negroes." See J.J. Tschudi, *Travels in Peru* (London: David Bogue, 1847), p. 27. For society, see Bowser, pp. 55, 75; see also James Higgins, *Lima: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 77.
[27] Colonial authorities regretted Callao's destruction since its troops helped subdue blacks. See Flores Galindo, p. 96. For pirates, see Higgins, *Lima*, p. 44; Flores, "El Enemigo Frente a las Costas," in *El Miedo en el Perú*, pp. 48-49.

fears continued into the 1800s, as evidenced by the elite's hostility to independence from Spain, in 1821, because they feared that this threatened social hierarchies and incited uprisings of freed blacks and slaves.[28] Basically, the authorities associated social stability with controlling blacks.

Authorities placated their fears on Callao's black inhabitants, placing oppressive laws that traumatized this community. Most slave ordinances passed in Lima authorized lashings of no less than 100 for offenses like wandering at night without their master, stealing maize, reselling fruits, and absenting from work.[29] Authorities inflicted harsher penalties, like castration or death, on runaways, subversives, and the sexually promiscuous. Freedmen, exempt from few controls, could be exiled or re-enslaved.[30] Penalties specific to Callao included the sentencing of blacks to the oars or to break rocks at San Lorenzo island for public and private edifices.[31] The laws surely physically and mentally traumatized Callao's blacks, just as historian Nell Irvin Palmer argues happened with African-Americans, whose over-worked haulers tore muscles and ligaments, and slaves drank high amounts of alcohol and exhibited bouts of rage.[32] At least some known similarities exist in Callao; for instance, naturalist Charles Darwin's description of this seaport's non-whites as “a depraved, drunken set of people” in 1835, and the remarks of the Black haulers' aggressiveness by spy Fernando López Aldana in 1820 and banker Robert Proctor in 1823.[33]

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[28] Whites escaped to Callao in 1821, due to its importance as a royalist bastion. Higgins, pp. 43-44; Bowser, p. 151.
[29] Harsher punishments included the breaking of limbs, castration, and death. See M. Darío Arrús, *El Callao en La Epoca del Coloniaje Antes y Despues de la Catástrofe de 1746* (Callao: Impreta de "El Callao," 1904), pp. 169-173. In 1560, Callao acquired an *alcalde* to also impose penalties on the port's blacks, but these were limited to enforcing curfews, punishing petty theft, and placing vagrants into employment; all else was handled by Lima. See Frederick Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (California: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 162, 392.
[30] In 1573, Leonor Negra got 100 lashes and was exiled from Callao for revealing her idea that "mere fornication" was not a sin. In 1537, Francisco Pizarro appointed constables to hunt and punish runaways in Lima and Callao. Slave hunters earned 5 to 25 pesos for each catch, dead or alive. See Bowser, p. 151, 196, 232; Arrús, p. 170-173.
[31] According to Bowser, the useless galleys at Callao did not work for much else. Bowser, p. 173; Arrús, p. 62.
[32] Neill Irvin Palmer, *Creating Black Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 90-92. [33]
[33] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species and the Voyage of the Beagle* (New York: Knopf, 2003), p. 379. From a fellow traveler to Callao, in 1838, it can be inferred that most non-whites in Callao were black. See Tschudi, p. 27. López Aldana, spy for Argentine José de San Martín, reported on the "damn *zambo* stevedores" killing Englishmen at the docks. See Mariano Felipe Paz Soldán, *Historia del Perú Independiente* (Lima: Alfonso Lemale, 1868), p. 86. Proctor describes the black haulers as "wild and ferocious." Proctor, *Narrative of a Journey Across the Cordillera of*

Figure 3. The sea's prominence for Callao is evident in the watercolor painting by Leonardo de Ferrari, who Marquis of Heliche commissioned to draw the Spanish Empire's frontiers and coasts in 1655. **Source**: Rocío Sánchez Rubio, *et al.*, *Imágenes de un Imperio Perdido: El Atlas del Marqués de Heliche* (Junta de Extremadura, 2008).

Adding to this situation, the ecology and location of Callao also hurt the seaport's slaves. The coastal desert's treeless surroundings made summers unbearably hot and filled the port with excessive dust. This complicated the living condition of slaves and others, but also hindered the fugitive slaves' chance of hiding.[34] The slaves' escape attempts faced further difficulty due to the sea entrapping most of the port (see **FIGURE 3**), and because constables patrolled the land between Callao and Lima—eight miles of deep sands and barren fields.[35] Trapped in the port,

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the Andes and of a Residence in Lima, and Other Parts of Peru, in the Years 1823 and 1824 (London: 1825), p. 113.

[34] For more on forests and fugitive slaves, see Russell Menard, *Sweet Negotations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), p. 79. For the environment, see Quiroz, p. 27; Proctor, p. 112; Tschudi, pp. 40-41; Karl von Scherzer, *Narrative of the Circumnavigation of the Globe by the Austrian Frigate Novara*, Vol. 3 (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1862), p. 364.

[35] Slaves in Callao resorted to creative ways to oppose their enslavers, like when they aided Drake's attack by hiding the harness and bridle of Lima's cavalry. Flores Guzmán, "El Enemigo Frente a las Costas," in *El Miedo en el Perú*,

Figure 4. The ever-present vultures—or *gallinazos*—appear in writings and images as the unsung heroes of cleanliness. They are depicted in the colored lithograph by French artist A. Bichebois, visitor of South America from 1836-1837. **Source**: Louis Philippe Alphonse Bichebois, *et al.*, [184-], *Une rue de Valladolid a Lima, Perou [picture] / dessine par Lauvergne; lith. par Bichebois.*

the Black slaves likely lived in the unpleasant, small, filthy, and ill-built buildings described by many nineteenth century travelers, including naturalist Johann von Tschudi in 1838.[36] As if not gloomy enough, Callao's rich marine biology attracted sizeable bands of traveler-startling black vultures that sat atop houses or walls when not hopping around busy streets (see **FIGURE 4**). Best known locally as *gallinazos*, these large birds were accustomed to live along the locals, helping maintain the streets clean from decaying matter.[37] Considering all of these factors, Callao's nightmarish scenario functioned as the Black slaves' inescapable imprisonment.

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pp. 48-49; Bowser, pp. 40-41. See also Tschudi, p. 40, and Scherzer, p. 364.

[36] Most homes were made of red clay and reed, due to lack of wood. Proctor, p. 112; Tschudi, p. 47; Darwin, p. 379.

[37] Despite being commonplace for locals, the large birds surprised most visitors. Tschudi, pp. 37-38; Darwin, p. 379

From Slaves to Stevedores: Forming the Gremio de Playeros

Having described the setting of the story and its effects on Callao's Afro community, now the narrative moves into a narrower emphasis on the seaport's stevedores to understand who they were, decipher their social status, and learn the guild's history. The history of stevedoring in Callao offers a lens on the intersections of race, labor, and social hierarchy in colonial Peru. Even though little is known about the origin of stevedoring in Peru or when the guild came to exist, the few available pieces of data can recreate an image for rational hypotheses.

One of the first points that can be established about this matter is that the history of Black stevedoring in Peru is older than the guild itself. According to the historian Frederick P. Bowser, sixteenth century merchants conducting commerce between Panama and Callao would generally have "a slave or two" unloading their cargo at Lima's seaport.[38] Bowser also indicates a "fair number" of black stevedores worked in Callao during the seventeenth century, both enslaved and freedmen—including mulattoes, of African and Spanish descent.[39] The friar Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa's colossal compendium, *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, reveals details like the merchandise traded being mostly salt, carbon, wood, and multiple kinds of seeds. It demonstrates that stevedoring was not limited to Blacks, with Spaniards and Indians also partaking in this task at the seaport.[40] This is further corroborated by drawings of sixteenth century Spain by German artist Christoph Weiditz, depicting Black and white haulers—all of which seem to serve as slaves, evidenced by the rings around their legs, although only the Black

[38] These same merchants developed the early slave trade in colonial Peru. See Bowser, p. 54.

[39] Black women apparently were not involved in this task of hauling materials. At least one enslaved woman did, nonetheless, travel as a cook in a ship that traveled from Callao to Panama and back. See Bowser, p. 97.

[40] Vázquez de Espinosa completed this writing before 1630, but a transcript of the source was first published in 1929 by Dr. Charles Upson Clark. See Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, transcribed by Charles Upson Clark (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1948), pp. 421-422.

Figure 5. The drawings of German artist Christoph Weiditz, a traveler of Spain (1528-1529), reveal the Spaniards' long history of using black haulers and that early hauling was not limited to black individuals. Nonetheless, it does indicate that slaves performed these tasks, which evidences that social status always played a role in this labor. **Source**: Christoph Weiditz, "Trachtenbuch," published between 1530–1540. Nuremberg: German National Museum, Hs. 22474.

laborer is evidently enchained and being directly ordered (see **FIGURE 5**).[41] Thus, this indicates an old tradition of enslaved haulers that Europeans brought to the Americas.

Another point that can be established is the approximate formation date of Callao's guild of stevedores. The first clue is again found in Vázquez de Espinosa's writing, when he points out that stevedores in Callao worked organized into "five companies."[42] This curious detail connects this workforce to the oldest-known mention of the stevedores' guild, the economist José Ignacio Lequanda's late eighteenth century "*Descripción del Puerto del Callao*," where he mentions that Callao's *Gremio de Cargadores Playeros* (Beach Haulers' Guild) was "composed of 50 colored men, most of them slaves, distributed into five gangs of ten including a private, and all under the direction of a recommended Spanish captain, and an overseer for their absences and sickness."[43]

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[41] Based on the drawings, it seems that status determined who labored as lifters in Spanish society. Since most of the drawings are of Mediterranean Spain, perhaps this is part of a larger multi-cultural tradition of this sea.

[42] The source is unclear on a few points. It cannot be understood if most of the stevedores were Spaniards or if they commanded the five companies. It seems the stevedores were infantrymen and "lots of people of service" (perhaps military servicemen or non-military servants). The number of stevedores in Callao possibly numbered up to 500. Vázquez de Espinosa completed this writing before dying in 1630, but a transcript of the source was first published in 1929 by Dr. Charles Upson Clark. See Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, transcribed by Charles Upson Clark (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1948), pp. 421-422.

[43] Lequanda, who at the height of his career worked as interim administrator of the Royal Customs House of Lima, lived between 1748 and 1800. Curiously, just as happened to Vázquez de Espinosa, Lequanda's work was published at a later date than its time of creation, because the newspaper ("Mercurio Peruano") ceased to print. For more on

Thus, a connection exists in the structural division of the stevedoring group into five blocks. It seems reasonable, therefore, to consider that Callao's *Gremio de Playeros* (Stevedoring Guild) came to exist between the 1600s and 1800, founded as a private company by the slaveowners.[44] More specifically, Callao's merchants likely formed the guild after the earthquake and tsunami destroyed Lima and Callao in 1746, as part of a wide reform for better organization.[45] It must have also been during these re-organizations when haulers became an all-black workforce.

The gradual monopolization of Black slaves and freedmen in unloading cargo reveals a deliberate racialization of manual labor. This transition to Black-only haulers in Callao is best explained by the social impositions and environment. Starting in 1590, the Peruvian Viceroy created a system whereby vessels in Callao became "floating prisons" housing 40 to 50 Black, Mulatto, and Amerindian convicts carried out their sentence working in the royal shipyards and constructing government warehouses at the seaport.[46] This demonstrates a pattern embedded in colonial economic systems, whereby non-white people were relegated to the most physically demanding and socially stigmatized jobs. As time went on, royal authorities increased their reliance on Blacks as deliverymen, janitors, haulers, and *grumetes* (cabin boys) aboard the ships and in the mainland, such as Lima’s council chambers and Callao’s customs house, armory, and arsenal.[47] To reconstruct Callao after 1746, locals relied on Black slaves from the *Chalas*—one of ten African nations recognized in Lima—to work as peons, builders, and stevedores. Lima's populace possibly began referring to Callao's residents as *Chalacos*, the seaport's demonym ever

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this and his memoirs of Callao, read José Ignacio Lequanda "Descripción del Puerto del Callao," in *Documentos Literarios del Perú*, Vol. 4, ed. Manuel de Odriozola (Lima: Imprenta del Estado, 1873), pp. 369, 380.

[44] The shortened title *Gremio de Playeros* is more common in the sources. Upon the arrival of ships at the docks, the slave-owners discussed the work plan for unloading ships, but under the guild's regulations. See Lequanda, p. 380.

[45] Centro de Investigaciones Historicas del Callao, *Historia del Callao* (Callao: El Centro, 1989), p. 120.

[46] The plan was to cut costs, having the convicts' labor pay for their incarceration. See Boswer, pp. 98-99, 173.

[47] Basically, the jobs of stevedoring and transportation became associated with blackness. See Bowser, pp. 96-106.

since, to mock the large number of these Black slaves residing at the port.[48] Thus, hauling at the port became associated with criminality and Blackness during the colonial era, and European travelers indicate that this continued into the nineteenth century. A particularly revealing report, elaborated by France's consul in Lima in 1850, tells its readers that muleteering and hauling are "professions of zambos and blacks that a European should never dare undertaking."[49] All of this information explains the social stigma, race, and low-class status associated with stevedoring.

By situating the story of Callao's stevedores within these broader socio-economic and racial dynamics, it becomes clear that their labor history is not just a narrative of exploitation but also one of resilience. The social stigma attached to stevedoring connects to the broader societal disdain for manual labor performed by people of African descent. This perpetuated a cycle of marginalization, limiting social mobility for Afro-Peruvians and entrenching racial inequality in the region. The French consul's 1850 description of hauling as a profession beneath Europeans further illustrates the enduring association between race and labor roles well into the nineteenth century. Analyzing the role of the stevedores also sheds light on the economic backbone of colonial Callao. These laborers, though marginalized, were indispensable to the functioning of the seaport, which served as a vital hub for commerce in the Viceroyalty of Peru. Their work facilitated the flow of essential goods to both the local economy and transatlantic trade. Yet, despite their economic contributions, the stevedores were excluded from the wealth and status generated by this system, reflecting the systemic exploitation of marginalized groups in Peru. It further reflects the ways in which marginalized communities navigated oppressive systems.

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[48] No record of *Chalaco* exists prior to 1747. Ricardo Palma, *Tradiciones Peruanas*, Vol. 4 (Madrid: Calpe, 1924), pp.126-127; Rosendo Melo, *El Callao*, Vol. 1 (Lima: Imprenta Gil, 1899), p. 168; Aguirre, *Breve Historia*, p. 110.

[49] The report served as a guide for recent French immigrants at the city to acquire a good sense of the job opportunities in Peru. Carlos Aguirre, *Agentes De Su Propia Libertad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1993), p. 57. Proctor and Tschudi also note that blacks operated nearly every aspect of hauling, from Callao to Lima. See also Proctor, p. 113.

IV. PART TWO—POWER FROM BELOW: MONOPOLIES OF FAITH AND TRADE

After considering the formation and status of the black stevedores of Callao, it becomes important to now explore how exactly these oppressed peoples acquired power within the port. A couple of poems by Santa Cruz shed light on this topic. The first, "*Puerto Callao*" (Port Callao), from 1963, contains the lines: "Unloading televisions, loading copper / Thanks to the provisions' transporters / Goes my *patria* from the docks to the stores / Over the lungs of the stevedores."[50] The second, "*En El Nombre de Dios Comienzo*," from 1957, is an agonizing plea to God, Christ, and the Virgin Mary from a black slave that believes his African music might appease these deities and grant him liberty and salvation.[51] The two poems, written when Santa Cruz had become Peru's central voice of Black identity, show the connection between Blacks and the Peruvian nation; the former underlining that Callao's stevedores brought modernity and *patria*—nationhood—for consumption, and the latter hinting at the religious syncretism that occurred between Afro beliefs and European Catholicism, as well as the devoutness of Blacks.[52]

Thereupon, this second part focuses on the stevedores' religious and economic monopoly power at the seaport, specifically the history of how they acquired these tools and what it meant on the larger scheme within Peruvian society and the global economy. People's response to the environment continues to serve a prominent role in the unfolding events. Comprehending the stevedores' religious and economic strength will not only help elucidate their importance in the political sphere, but it also indicates much about non-political ways through which these Black subalterns incorporated themselves into the imagined Peruvian nation.

[50] Translated from Spanish: *Bajan televisores, suben cobre / Gracias a los gestores de la entrega / Va mi patria del muelle a la bodega / Sobre el pulmón de los estibadores*. *Nicomedes Santa Cruz*, ed. Pedro Santa Cruz, p. 282.
[51] The poem's sung version, known as "Navidad Negra" (Black Christmas), includes a mention to a vulture, maybe hinting at its deeper spiritual connection with Peru's Afros. *Nicomedes Santa Cruz*, ed. Pedro Santa Cruz, p. 141.
[52] For more on Santa Cruz's formation as a leading voice of Peru's Afro identity, see Feldman, pp. 83-92.

Appeasing Pachacamac: The Confraternity of The Lord of the Sea

Although the post-colonial Catholic Church in nineteenth century Latin America shifted loyalties from the Iberian monarchies to the conservatives in the Western Hemisphere's incipient states, it kept structural integrity and popular appeal—upholding social unity better than most new governments. Liberalism, influenced by positivist ideals that progress required replacing the region's archaic beliefs with a new order based on scientific reasoning, challenged the Church in most of the region; but the Church's interests in Peru remained largely safeguarded with the loss of few privileges and the small advance of liberal programs in public education.[53] Not only does this prove the Church's power in Peru, but it also reflects the high devoutness of Peruvians.

More precisely, it shows the deep spirituality of the elite and the masses in Peru's capital, which undeniably relates to the area's constant seismic activity. A testimony to the depth of such devotion are the vultures, whose docility and multitude can be partly attributed to *Pachacamac*'s worshipers caring for them to appease this earth-shaking deity during Pre-Columbian times.[54] In colonial times, religious syncretism morphed *Pachacamac* into the Christian God, and, as French geographer Louis Feuillée records in 1709, European and Amerindian alike turned to confessions and prayers when earthquakes raised fears of an imminent catastrophe.[55] Africans also partook in this festival of faiths through the *cofradías* (confraternities)—Christian lay brotherhoods—where they veiled African beliefs within Catholicism, and also fused their worship with *Pachacamac*'s cult through two related anti-earthquake brotherhoods still widely

[53] John Lynch, "The Catholic Church in Latin America, 1830-1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, ed. Leslie Bethell (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 527-531, 553, 571-572.

[54] Darwin notes that the vultures are "tame as poultry." Darwin, p. 379. For more on the vultures and *Pachacamac*, see Andres Gutiérrez, *Dioses Simbolos y Alimentacion en los Andes* (Quito: Editorial Abya-Yala, 2002), p. 315.

[55] Chronicler Garcilaso de la Vega, when asked God's name in Peru, replied: "'Pachacamac,' because in the general language of Peru there is no other name for God." Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 345. See also Louis Feuillée, *Journal Des Observations Physiques, Mathematiques et Botaniques*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Pierre Giffart, 1714), pp. 402-502.

popular in the area: *El Señor de Los Milagros* in Lima and *El Señor del Mar* in Callao.[56] Thus, the peoples of the Lima-Callao metropolis shared a common currency of faith for protection against supernatural forces, made ever-present by the ground's recurring tremors.

Callao's stevedores fit prominently within this story because they controlled the *cofradía* of The Lord of the Sea, giving them a significant amount of power within the seaport's "spiritual economy."[57] Even before reaching Callao, the *Chalas* controlled such a powerful confraternity in Lima that an anecdote tells of their leader challenging Peru's authorities by proudly gifting more alms at church than the viceroy.[58] Once in the port, the *Chala* stevedoring guild acquired control over a statue of Christ that mysteriously appeared in Callao's beach after the 1746 disaster—the stevedores hauled this icon, *El Señor del Mar*, in processions (see **FIGURE 6**, Page 22) until their apparent dissolution in 1875.[59] In between those years, the guild must have also functioned as a mutual aid society, similar to most confraternities, amassing wealth as a group.[60] Additionally, it probably helped the black stevedores incorporate themselves into Peruvian society.[61] Yet, in this deeply devout society, the *cofradía*'s sole control over the Christian icon most importantly gave the black stevedores a virtual monopoly of faith and a direct connection with the supernatural.

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[56] The first African confraternity in Lima was established in 1540. Bowser, p. 247. For a more thorough analysis on Afro-Amerindian-Catholic syncretism in Lima and Callao's brotherhoods, see María Rostworowski, *Pachacamac y El Señor de los Milagros* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1992); María del Pilar Fortunic, "El Señor del Mar y El Espacio Sagrado Prehispánico," *Revista de Marina*, Vol. 95, Issues 1-2 (Ministerio de Marina). Other examples of syncretism in the Americas are Brazil's Candomblé and Cuba's Santería. See Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 102-106.

[57] "Spiritual economy" is based on historian Kathryn Burn's definition, which is that spiritual goods operate with currency without there being a "perceived contamination or contradiction." Basically, religious favors have value and can be purchased. Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4.

[58] The leader, Taita Otárola, made sure all were aware of his brazen religious offering, thereby claiming legitimacy within Peru's religious culture. See Ricardo Palma, *Tradiciones*,Vol. 3 (Lima: Libreria Universal, 1875), p. 202.

[59] Fortunic, pp. 62-63. For an excellent description of the gruesome 1746 natural disaster, which led to this Lord of the Sea cult's rise, see Charles Walker, *Shaky Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 7-11.

[60] Tschudi, p. 110; Carlos Aguirre, *Agentes De Su Propia Libertad* , p. 232.

[61] Bristol contends that *cofradías* helped Africans learn "about Catholic practices and Ibero-American social practices," especially in Mexico and Peru. See Joan Bristol, "Afro-Mexican Saintly Devotion in a Mexico City Alley," in *Africans to Spanish America*, ed. Sherwin Bryant, *et al.* (Champaign: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2012), p.116.

Figure 6. The modern procession of *El Señor del Mar* (left) depicts the hauling likely also carried out by stevedores until 1875. The venerated statuette of Christ (right) is a multi-cultural symbol. **Source:** Wikimedia Commons/Public Domain.

Moreover, not only did the Christian icon give spiritual power to the guild, but also the stevedores held an inherent power of performance due to their labor as haulers and their Black bodies. In the closely related Lord of Miracles brotherhood, the two-ton icon's haulers hold the most prestigious role—those privileged with the task prefer damaging their shoulders than to ask for a replacement.[62] Blackness is also tied to the ceremony of lifting, evidenced by nineteenth century images of all-black funeral pallbearers and also because this custom remains a tradition in modern Peruvian society.[63] Women serve crucial parts in processions too, as singers and incense holders, roles historically belonging to Black enslaved women—deemed the masters' favorites—appearing in luxurious clothes and well-adorned, just as the Czech botanist Thaddäus Haenke documents they also did within *cofradía* ceremonies in Lima between 1790 and 1793.[64]

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[62] Haulers tend to bruise their shoulders, and at least one even slipped a disk. See Valentina Napolitano, *Migrant Hearts and the Atlantic Return* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), ch. "Migrant Hearts."

[63] Santa Cruz refers to this spiritual connection as Blacks having taught Peru's religious icons "to dance" to their rhythms since the colonial era. *Obras Completas II*, ed. Pedro Santa Cruz (LibrosEnRed, 2004), p. 200. Despite the practice of black pallbearers is at times deemed racist, historian Henry Louis Gates understanding of this as "tall, lean black men as the agents of Death" more accurately underlines the supernatural connection that this tradition endows black bodies in Peru. See H.L. Gates, *Black in Latin America* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), pp. 98-99.

[64] Thaddäus Haenke, *Descripción del Perú* (Lima: Imprenta El Lucero, 1901), p. 35. See also Napolitano, ch. "Migrant Hearts;" Rostworowski, p. 181, and Palma, *Tradiciones* (1875), p. 203.

Guano, Boon and Conflict: Monopoly Power at the Docks

Contrary to the spiritual economy's relative stability as Peru shifted from Spanish colony to independent state, the country's national economy after independence struggled to find a place in the global commerce. Even prior to independence, most of Latin America grappled with shifts caused by the nineteenth century Bourbon Reforms, which liberalized the Habsburg mercantilist system that had stagnated the Spanish Empire's economy with its restrictive approaches to trade and non-competitive institutions such as monopolistic guilds and coercive labor systems.[65] Peru benefitted from the Habsburg commercial monopoly that gave it uncontested control of Potosi's silver mines and South America's maritime trade, with Callao the exclusive port of commerce—on the converse, the Bourbon Reforms reduced Peruvian territory and ended Callao's privilege.[66] As in most of Latin America, the wars of independence left Peru politically unstable and without a clear economic agenda until mid-nineteenth century, when it consolidated its economic model based on the extraction and exportation of guano.[67] As a result, Peru's trade soared once more.

World demand for guano proved particularly beneficial for Callao, as its colonial legacy made it Peru's only practical port from which the resource could be massively exported. Guano is a result of Peru's ecology, where its rich marine biology housed many birds and the arid climate allowed their dried-up feces' accumulation into massive mounds (see **FIGURE 7**, left, Page 24).[68] Since Pre-Columbian times, Amerindian peoples used guano as fertilizer, providing

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[65] The Habsburg economic approach reflected its sociopolitical hierarchy, imposing strict limits on those who could control wealth in the Iberian peninsula and the American colonies. See James Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 69-72, 256.
[66] Control of Potosi went to Buenos Aires, being better located to trade in the Atlantic. Mahoney, pp. 48, 154-155.
[67] William Glade, "Latin America and the International Economy, 1870-1914," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, ed. Leslie Bethell (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-56. See also Juan Luis Orrego Penagos, *La Ilusión del Progreso* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 2005), p. 160.
[68] Robert Coker, "Habits and Economic Relations of the Guano Birds of Peru," in *Proceedings of the United States National Museum*, Vol. 56 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), pp. 497-498.

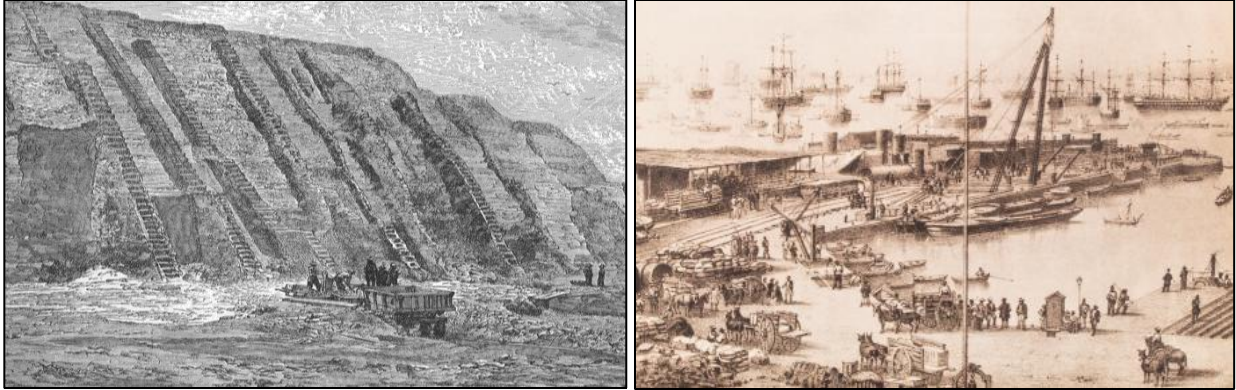


Figure 7. (Left) The accumulation of guano left massive mounds in Peru that required unskilled labor for extraction. (Right) Callao became a bustling seaport thanks to the commerce resulting from the guano trade. **Source**: (left) "Iles Chincha - Chargement du Guano Dans Les Wagons," from *Flores Des Serres et Des Jardins de L'Europe* (1867), via Wikimedia Commons. (right) Manuel Atanasio Fuentes, *Lima: Apuntes Históricos* (Paris: Lib. De Fermín Didot et Fréres, 1867), pp. 64-65.

their crops with rich nutrients; however, Europeans did not discover the value of this fertilizer until British chemist John Nesbit, using Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt's earlier studies, found, in 1841, that Peru's guano had more than thirty-three times the nutrient value of manure.[69] The ensuing Guano Boom (1845-1873) turned Callao into a global hub of commercial exchange, especially because it headquartered the distribution of the precious Chincha Islands guano, so rich in nitrogen and phosphorus that it could even help manufacture gunpowder.[70] Yet, this commerce did not simply operate on its own, as the American politician George Washington Peck realized, in 1853, after turning a street corner in Callao and being shocked to find "a mudwalled lane, full of sailors and blacks, of all shades of color."[71] These workers, operators of the world supply of guano, like the vultures, were the unsung heroes of this global commerce.

Among Callao's workers, the stevedores played a crucial role in the seaport's commercial occurrences even before the Guano Era, enduring various challenges posed against their guild by domestic opponents. A vestige of the Habsburg system, Callao's stevedoring guild had since

[69] Humboldt first recorded his studies in 1802, and these would serve as the foundation for most later research on Peruvian guano. See Gerard Helferich, *Humboldt's Cosmos* (Old Saybrook: Tantor Media, 2011), ch. "Cajamarca."
[70] The Chinchas are three small islands south of Callao, barren where it not for guano. See Glenn Knoblock, *The American Clipper Ship, 1845-1920* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2014), p. 142; Helferich, ch. "Cajamarca."
[71] Dave Hollet, *More Precious Than Gold* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2008), p. 206.

its creation enjoyed by royal decree all of the benefits of a monopoly at the port, meaning that any shipmasters wishing to hire additional help to disembark or embark goods at the dockyard could only hire members from the *Gremio de Playeros*.[72] The Bourbons attempted to restrict the power of the stevedores' monopoly by regulating, in 1805, a tariff on specific goods to prevent the guild from excessively charging services.[73] Simón Bolívar, the revolutionary leader that sealed Peru's independence, raised these tariffs in 1826 to such an extent that, in 1833, caudillo Agustín Gamarra—pressured by Lima's elite—overrode them for the alleged benefit of trade and the public interest.[74] Lima's authorities continued imposing regulations on the guild, as well as hauling between Lima and Callao, under the Peru-Bolivian Confederation of Gamarra's rival caudillo, Andrés de Santa Cruz, in 1837.[75] Despite all these regulations, the guild persisted.

Furthermore, not only did the stevedoring guild demonstrate determination for survival, but it also wisely operated legal loopholes to gain more favorable deals during the Guano Boom. The most important of these loopholes concerned time, more precisely "laytime" or the amount of time a ship is chartered to load and unload cargo—a ship that took too long to unload or load its cargo paid additional fees known as demurrage. Laws from 1847 and 1851, which demand that the Stevedoring Guild simultaneously use its five work-gangs to avoid unnecessary delays, prove both the existence of this practice and the laws' inefficacy at stopping it.[76] Having this in

[72] Three reasons exist for the monopoly. First, the guild provided free service for the royal authorities and public works. Second, the Crown had a reasonable concern about the haulers' safety, albeit they do not make reference to their humanity (they describe the workers as items that can be damaged). Third, the Crown considered the guild's monopoly a deterrent to malcontents and loiterers. Lequanda, *Documentos Literarios del Perú*, pp. 380-381.
[73] This is implied from a decree from 1833 by Peruvian President Agustín Gamarra. See *Coleccion de Leyes, Decretos y Ordenes Publicados en el Peru*, Vol. 4 (Lima: Imprenta de Jose Manias, 1837), p. 292.
[74] Even non-guild members could haul materials into ships so long as not listed in the tariff. See *Coleccion de Leyes, Decretos y Ordenes Publicados en el Peru*, pp. 292. Gamarra, to maintain power, likely decreed this law to appease Lima's elite. For more on Gamarra, see Charles Walker, *Smoldering Ashes: Cuzco and the Creation of Republican Peru, 1780-1840* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 121-151.
[75] In 1837, the government also passed a minimum wage for the haulers of 10 reales per day, and half that amount if they could not work "due to just cause." For more on this and an extensive tariff list, see *Coleccion de Leyes, Decretos y Ordenes Publicados en el Peru*, Vol. 5 (Lima: Imprenta de Jose Manias, 1841), pp. 501-504.
[76] The mention of the five workgangs, or *cuadrillas*, again proves this is key to its organization. J. Toribio Flores,

mind helps better understand the many background ships in Callao's harbor (see **FIGURE 7**, right, Page 24); a substantial number of them likely waiting for stevedores to unload their cargo.

The delays provided benefits to the Stevedoring Guild in several possible ways. First, it likely gave them leverage power to charge more costs to ships willing to pay for faster hauling, using the tariffs as a point of reference rather than actually applying them.[77] Second, as Callao's merchants created and likely still held considerable sway in the guild, it benefitted them having travelers staying more time in the seaport, spending their money in local establishments.[78] Third, the delays surely protected the stevedores' bodies from overwork, which is a consideration often ignored in the state's laws.[79] Hence, the stevedores modified the rules to better meet their needs.

Nevertheless, the stevedores' gaming of the system did not find willing participants in the British merchants, who also used loopholes to facilitate trade. In 1865, George Petrie, the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's manager, obtained official government authorization to construct a floating dock, which they used as a private pier, requiring usage of their hauling equipment and installations, annoying Callao's merchants and stevedores.[80] Petrie's company allegedly also illicitly hired haulers outside of the Stevedoring Guild, but still charged a high price for its merchandise—claiming hauling costs higher than those charged by the guild.[81] Matters turned violent in 1873, when Callao's dockworkers rioted against a "British Navigation Company" that

Compilación de Las Leyes Expedidas Desde El Año de 1821 (Callao: Imprenta Gomez y Aparicio, 1862), pp. 7-8.

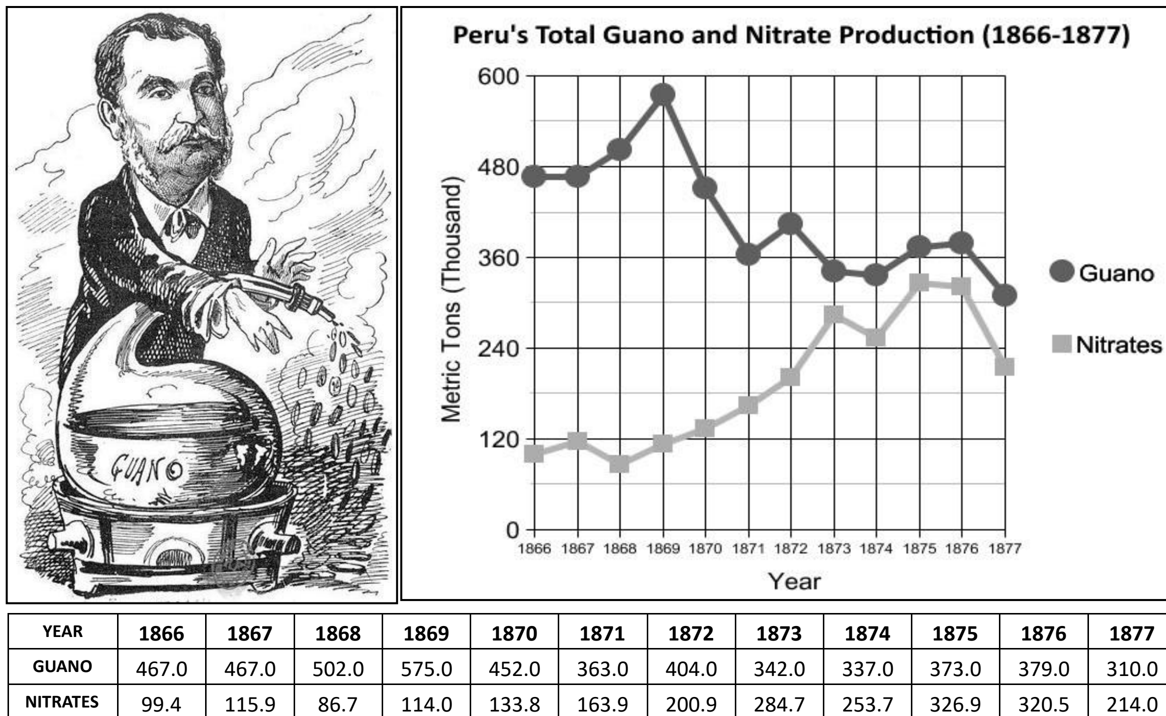
[77] A law passed in 1884 in the neighboring port of Huacho seems to corroborate the existence of this leverage practice. See *El Peruano: Boletín Oficial* (Lima: Empresa Editor del Diario Oficial "El Peruano," 1884), p. 677.

[78] Pertaining to this, maritime historian Dave Hollett writes, "After being on board their ships for several months, and struggling to get around Cape Horn, one can well understand why so many master mariners did turn to drink and spent too much time in low drinking dens. Callao, in common with all nineteenth-century seaports, responded to these 'market forces' by providing numerous dives to cater for this particular human weakness." Holett, p. 206. A list of important merchants from Callao defending the guild can be found at *Muelle Dársena: Refutacion del Folleto de los Agentes y Comerciantes del Callao*, ed. J.R. Sánchez (Lima: Tipografia de "El Comercio," 1870), pp. 97-98.

[79] Laws focused on efficiency, but ignored the haulers' body-breaking labor. See Quiroz, *Historia del Callao*, p. 229.

[80] T. Hutchinson, *Two Years in Peru*, Vol. 1 (London: Low & Searle, 1873), pp. 192-199; *Muelle Dársena*, p. 90.

[81] Petrie's company apparently had its own stevedoring costs, but these were inflated. *Muelle Dársena*, p. 97.



YEAR	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877
GUANO	467.0	467.0	502.0	575.0	452.0	363.0	404.0	342.0	337.0	373.0	379.0	310.0
NITRATES	99.4	115.9	86.7	114.0	133.8	163.9	200.9	284.7	253.7	326.9	320.5	214.0

Figure 8. (Left) As guano did not require much technical expertise, it basically produced money quickly, as shown in this image of French merchant Auguste Dreyfus. (Right) Peru's guano and nitrate production began slowing down after 1870, undoubtedly negatively affecting the quantity of commerce in Callao. **Source**: (left) *Comic-Finance* (Paris), 10 April 1873, via Wikimedia Commons. (graph & table) Own work. Based on data found in Robert Greenhill and Rory Miller, "The Peruvian Government and the Nitrate Trade, 1873-1879," in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (May, 1973), pp. 110-111; Alexander de Secada, "Arms, Guano, and Shipping," in *Business History Review* 59 (Winter 1985), p. 601.

brought Chinese coolies from California to serve as its stevedores, exploiting the loophole that allowed merchant ships to use their own crew to unload their cargo.[82] In the contest of maritime wits, the British thus seem to have posed the most serious threat to Peru's stevedores.

Taken as a whole, these events demonstrate the realities of Callao and the Guano Boom beyond a traditional economic analysis. It also demonstrates the adeptness of Callao's stevedores to persist as a guild, passing from one political turmoil to another. Regardless, a quantitative look can illuminate more on the analyzed qualitative aspects. For instance, the Guano Era's apogee up until the 1870s (see **FIGURE 8**) demonstrates why Callao's stevedores so ardently fought for the maintenance of their monopoly at the docks. Certainly, it also explains why the Peruvian state and

[82] The company's name remains a mystery, but it could possibly also be the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. See *The Annals of Philippine Chinese Historical Association*, n. 3-7 (Manila: 1972), p. 40.

the British merchants also fought for their own interests in this matter. Moreover, the figure also depicts that the Guano Boom thereafter unraveled to an unfortunate end, which must have affected Callao's entire society, as it completely ingrained itself into the export of this resource.[83]

The history of Callao's stevedoring guild during the Guano Boom is a testament to the intricate dynamics of labor, race, and economic power in nineteenth century Peru. It reveals a labor force that, despite systemic marginalization, exerted agency in shaping its economic and social conditions. The stevedoring guild's monopoly over dock labor, a vestige of the Habsburg system, exemplifies how colonial structures persisted well into the post-independence period. The guild's ability to sustain its privileges reflects its embeddedness in Callao's economic fabric. Its capacity to withstand political and economic upheavals, and post-independence reforms aimed at liberalizing trade, from the Bourbon Reforms to British competition, underscores its resilience. The guild's story also serves as a microcosm of the broader tensions between local labor systems and global capitalist forces, a theme that remains relevant in discussions of labor and trade today. The Guano Boom and its impact on Callao's stevedoring guild underscore a complex interplay of monopoly power, labor dynamics, and international competition. At the heart of this period lies the unique role of guano as a resource that catalyzed Peru's integration into global trade. While guano brought economic prosperity to Callao, it simultaneously exposed the stevedoring guild to challenges that tested its resilience and adaptability.

[83] During the Guano Era, Peruvian exports increased by 500% between 1831 and 1851. Between the 1830s and the 1850s, British and French imports increased by 350%. See Penagos Orrego, *La Ilusión del Progreso*, pp. 159-160.

V. PART THREE—THE LIBERAL SEAPORT: JOINING A NATIONAL PROJECT

Comprehending the stevedores' power at Callao can now allow an analysis of why these individuals became associated with the liberal politics of nineteenth century Peru. An early key figure in this story is the caudillo Ramón Castilla, under which Peru initiated its Guano Era. The poetry of Santa Cruz has numerous mentions of this individual, because he decreed the abolition of African slavery in 1854 and numerous traditional Afro-Peruvian songs reflect their immense gratitude for it.[84] For instance, in one such poem, "*A La Molina No Voy Más*" (To the Molina I'll Go No More), a line declares that "Until From Heaven / Came for Us All / Don Ramón Castilla / Holy Liberty!"[85] However, these lines can also be interpreted as more than just gratitude; in fact, the poem reflects a direct political statement in favor of not just a person, but rather an ideal that came to blacks in Peru from the Heaven that they had so devoutly pleaded for their liberty.

Having just discussed the stevedoring guild's economic confrontations also provides an understanding as to why it might have been convenient, for Callao's stevedores and merchants, to ally themselves with the country's liberals. Rather than to face them as opponents, it better served their interests to have them on their side. For this reason, it makes sense that their stance often tended to take the side of free trade and the improvement of commerce at the docks, even though the guild 's monopoly activities clearly did not fit within this liberal framework.[86]

This section begins by presenting the rise of the liberal order in Peruvian politics, and then proceeds to focus on the stevedores and how they fit within this story. Particular attention is now placed on their military service, since their fighting reflects their political allegiances.

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[84] *Nicomedes Santa Cruz: Obras Completas II*, ed. Pedro Santa Cruz (LibrosEnRed, 2004), pp. 61-64.

[85] Translated from Spanish: "*Hasta que del Cielo / Llegó por toitos / Do Ramón Castilla / Santa Libertad!*" See this and more of the poem at *Santa Cruz: Obras Completas II*, p. 64.

[86] An element of cynicism exists in this perspective, but in this troublesome atmosphere it makes sense that the Stevedoring Guild would seek to strategically present itself as a proponent of commerce. The British merchants and the Peruvian government also attempted to sway matters in their own favor. *Muelle Dársena*, pp. 90-98.

Challenging Pachacamac: The Rise of Peru's Liberal Order

Beginning a brief overview on the rise of Peru's liberal order with Ramón Castilla is a tad strange, not least because Castilla did not actually espouse liberal beliefs. More than a liberal, or even a conservative, Castilla represents one of the last classic nineteenth century caudillos. As a result of his shifting political allegiances and capacity to please and appease both the masses and the elites, as well as the liberals and the conservatives, Castilla politically masterminded his own rise to power and consolidation as one of Peru's longest-serving presidents.[87] Peru's environment also played an important part in Castilla's success, namely in the form of guano, as the revenues from the Guano Boom allowed him to compensate slaveholders for emancipation, reimburse the landowners and merchants who had lost property during the independence wars and tumultuous political period subsequent to them, and acquire patronage by expanding the bureaucracy.[88] As a political figure, therefore, Castilla simply existed as a force of order rather than an ideologue.

Yet, as fate would have it, Castilla became closely entangled with the radical liberals in his last full administration (1855-1862), as a consequence becoming the target of conservatives and—at least in the grand scheme of things—further placing him as a liberal icon. Ironically, his intentions seem to have been to overthrow the corrupt government of his hand-picked successor, but so conservative had this regime turned that Castilla's natural allies became the liberals.[89] As the liberals gained advances thanks to Castilla's military victories, so did opposition to their new constitutional plans grow among conservatives in the provinces. In 1856, after refusing to sign a liberal constitution developed a year earlier, the southern city of Arequipa rose up and elected

[87] Castilla took hold of the Peruvian presidency in several occasions: 1844, 1845-1851, 1855-1862, 1863. See Ronald Schneider, *Latin American Political History* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2007), pp. 102-103
[88] Peter Henderson, *The Course of Andean History* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2013), pp. 143-144.
[89] Castilla seems to have only been interested in restoring order into the government, as he had done in the past. See Fernando Armas Asín, *Liberales, Protestantes y Masones* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1998), pp. 83-87.

General Manuel Ignacio de Vivanco to lead the opposition against Castilla. Arequipa's uprising seems to have been largely a result of religious sentiment, but the city also deeply resented being under the control of Lima.[90] Neither the liberal constitution nor Vivanco's uprising worked, but it influenced Castilla's formation of a balanced constitution in 1860.[91] Peace proved momentary.

In 1865, amid the chaos caused by Spain's occupation of the Chincha Islands due to an international scuffle involving Spanish citizens, the liberals again repeated a similar process to attain power as they had in 1855. In this case, the chosen commander, Colonel Mariano Prado, mobilized his revolution under the position that the treaty between Vivanco and Spain's minister proved humiliating for Peru and could, therefore, not be accepted.[92] His successful revolution led to the return of liberals into the Peruvian Congress, and they used this position to again initiate a series of reforms that undermined the Church and promoted greater democratization, liberalism in educational practices, and a liberal constitution in 1867 emulating the one passed nearly one decade earlier. Prado found himself under control of congress and could do little as forces of opponents massed to overthrow him—and they did, in 1868, restoring the constitution of 1860.[93] As before, nonetheless, this return to the status quo only proved temporary.

Not long after Prado's resignation, the liberals again convened in 1871 to cement a union of those who had defended the nation against Spanish aggression—this group, which became the Civil Party, later attained electoral victories that reignited the confrontation between the liberals and the more conservative factions in government. The founders of this political group include

[90] Arequipa would continue to find ways to undermine Lima's authority. Sarah Chambers, *From Subjects to Citizens* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), pp. 229-230; see also Armas Asín, pp. 92-96.
[91] Christine Hunefeldt, *A Brief History of Peru* (New York: Facts on File, 2004), p. 122.
[92] The treaty's most problematic aspects seem to have been the monetary concessions from Peru to Spain, basically presenting Spain as the injured party. The treaty reflected Peru's military unpreparedness at the time. See Fabián Novak, *Las Relaciones entre el Perú y España* (Lima: Fondo Ediorial PUCP, 2001), pp. 45-48.
[93] On technical terms, he resigned in 1868 under pressure from Congress. However, by that point the government had been taken over by the conservative forces. See Armas Asín, pp. 97-103.

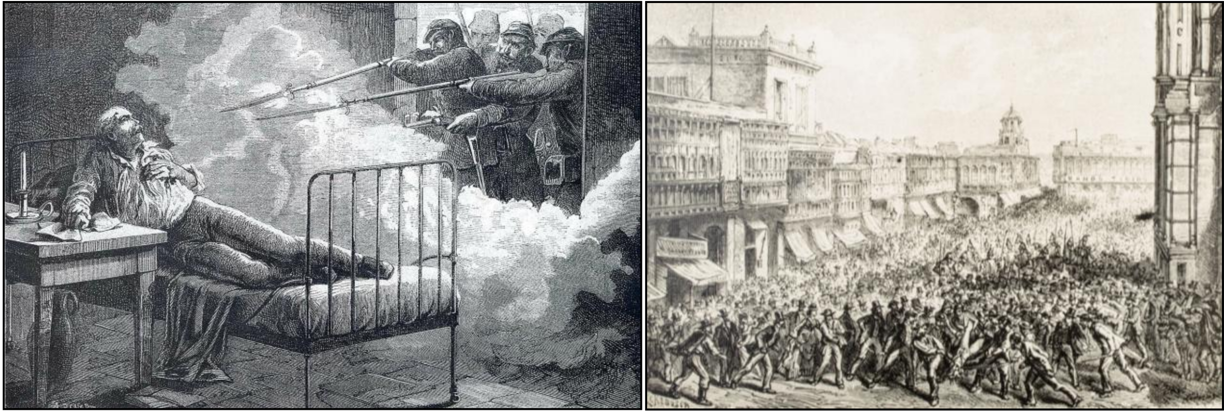

Figure 9. (Left) Peru's sitting president was shot during the ensuing revolution against Pardo's election. (Right) The perpetrators of the revolution were caught and lynched by the masses in Lima and Callao. **Source**: (left) "Asesinato del Presidente José Balta." *Repositorio PUCP* (1872). (right) "Revolución de los Hermanos Gutiérrez." *Repositorio PUCP* (1872).

people important to Callao, including Manuel Pardo, Lizardo Montero, Aurelio García y García, and José Sánchez Lagomarsino. In addition to sharing a common political vision, all also had a connection as veterans of the Battle of Callao that had seen the Spanish fleet withdraw from the shores of South America.[94] In 1871, Pardo became Peru's first civilian president. He sponsored programs such as a focus on southern Peru's nitrates, the reduction on military spending, and an expansion of the public school system.[95] Peru's minister of war, Tomás Gutierrez, did not find such a result acceptable and led a brief, but deadly, revolt that ended in the death of the sitting president and three of the Gutierrez brothers, in addition to countless masses of peoples, from Lima and Callao, that fought for Pardo (see **FIGURE 9**).[96]

Unfortunately, matters for the liberal order became more complex. Not only did the military pose an ever-imposing threat on the Civil Party, but the conservatives again presented themselves in the form of the rebel-rouser Nicolás de Piérola, who attempted to blow-up Pardo's train in 1872, and in 1874 led an armed revolt against the government.[97]

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[94] Carmen Mc Evoy, *La Utopía Republicana* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1997), pp. 57-59.
[95] Lawrence Clayton, *W.R. Grace & Co.* (Lima: Asociacion de Historia Maritima y Naval, 2008) p. 69.
[96] Clayton, *W.R. Grace & Co.*, p. 69.
[97] Piérola operated with the secret financial support of conservatives. Alfonso Quiroz, *Corrupt Circles*, pp. 167-168.

Liberalism at the Docks: Becoming Emblems of the National Guard

Although mainstream history has obscured Callao's black stevedores from their partaking in these liberal projects, they served important roles in most of these events. For example, in 1856, the stevedores and other civilians in the port organized themselves into a national guard battalion to defend the seaport against Vivanco's forces. To honor the cause of their fight, they named their unit *Constitución*—a direct reference to the liberal constitution of the Castilla administration—and surprisingly managed to stop Vivanco's seasoned troops. Due to this victory, Peru's National Convention awarded Callao the status of Constitutional Province.[98] This event marked not just the future of the seaport within Peru, but also the life of its residents.

However, although 1856 marks an important milestone for the stevedores, they had prior experience in these engagements. To elaborate, before the events of this narrative on the rise of a liberal order, the stevedores played key roles in the defense of the seaport. For instance, in 1820, the Argentine spy Fernando López Aldana complained to his leader, José de San Martín, how the "damn *zambo* stevedores" caused an uproar at Callao because they murdered the Englishmen accused of having helped the rebel fleet acquire a Spanish vessel.[99] Later, in 1821, they provided funds to the independence cause, likely as a way to cover all of their bases.[100] Most importantly, in 1824, the Argentine commander Rudecindo Alvarado, finding a need to supply the fortresses of Callao with artillerymen, took the decision to instruct the stevedoring guild to operate cannons.[101] In total sum, these early events not only demonstrate that the stevedores had a sense of identity, as belonging to the seaport, but also demonstrate how they became adept at warfare.

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[98] This status, and title, has been held proudly by *Chalacos* ever since. Quiroz, *Historia del Callao*, pp. 261-269.
[99] .They received payment for each dead Englishman. See Paz Soldán, *Historia del Perú Independiente*, p. 86.
[100] Quiroz, however, considers it a sign of patriotism. See Quiroz, *Historia del Callao*, p. 184.
[101] According to Alvarado, he trained the stevedores thoroughly until they knew how to use it. See *Memorias del General O'Leary*, ed. Simon O'Leary, Vol. 21 (Caracas: Imprenta "El Monitor," 1883), 41-42.

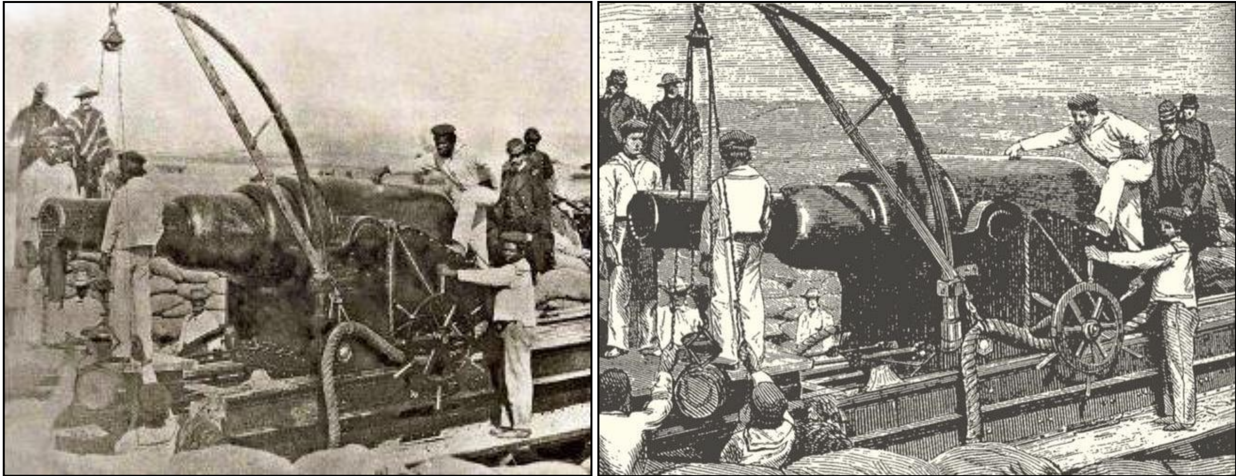

Figure 10. In the original photo (left), Afro dockworkers volunteer to help soldiers operate the Blakely gun at Fort Santa Rosa during the Battle of Callao in 1866. A print of the same photograph (right) alters the skin color and facial aspects of those in the original, erasing them from history. (Left) "150° Aniversario del Glorioso Combate del 2 de Mayo de 1866," *CEHMP* (blog), May 2, 2016, https://cehmp.wordpress.com /2016/05/02/150-aniversario-del-glorioso-combate-del-2-de-mayo-de-1866/. (Right) Manuel Zanutelli Rosas, *El Callao: Su Historia en Imagenes* (Lima: Dirección de Intereses Marítimos, 1993), p. 39.

Later events further prove the stevedores' will to join the liberal national project. In 1866, they joined Captain Sánchez Lagomarsino in the operation of a *Batería Provisional* (Provisional Battery) during Spain's bombardment of the port during the Battle of Callao that occurred on May 2, 1866.[102] Unfortunately, the role of these and other black dockworkers who fought for the Peruvian nation became obscured (see **FIGURE 10**). Yet, anecdotes—such as the fact that the *Provisional*, despite constantly breaking down, maintained a steady and accurate fire on the Spanish fleet, to the point of taking down the banner of the "Almanza"—revive the bravery and resilience of the black stevedores.[103] Their commitment to the liberal project was reaffirmed in the Gutierrez's Revolution, when they volunteered with Lagomarsino in aiding Manuel Pardo, who was in the southward port Pisco. To reach Pardo, Lagomarsino and the stevedores took control of *Sofia*, a vessel owned by the Dreyfus company, and received the orders to notify the

[102] *El Comercio*, 5 August 1872. Others from Callao hauled water. See Quiroz, *Historia del Callao*, p. 271.
[103] The firing lasted 24 hours. Interestingly, the battery was also named *Chalaca*—harkening back to the *Chalas*—and five cannons of 32 caliber were operated, possibly one for each stevedoring work-gang. As the cannons kept falling down, it likely was the task of the stevedores to lift and mount them. Captain Sánchez Lagomarsino was among the injured during the battle. See *El Comercio*, 11 May 1866; see also *El Comercio*, 12 May 1866.

southern regions of Peru, including the rebellious Arequipa, that Pardo remained in power.[104] Even though the task may seem minor, it symbolically made this group heralds of liberalism.

The stevedoring guild further demonstrated their devotion to the liberal regime when, in 1872, they joined Pardo's newly reformed national guard. This national guard had two purposes, the first being to help neutralize the power of the army and caudillos, and the second to create an identity of warrior-patriotism for the national guardsmen—basically, people who would always be ready and willing to defend the nation in times of crises.[105] By this time, Lagomarsino served as the *Comandante de Playeros* (Stevedoring Commander), and so it seems natural that, when Pardo ordered him to form a national guard column in Callao, the stevedores rapidly joined.[106] The only request made by the national guardsmen from this light column was that they be named *Constitución* (Constitution), "because nearly all its personnel made up the battalion of the same name that had defended the constitutional order in 22 April 1857."[107] Although Callao's Black stevedores already embodied the ideals of the guard, now they officially belonged to the nation.

Callao's stevedores eagerly continued volunteering for the defense of the liberal order that had incorporated them into Peru. When Pardo requested aid in defeating Piérola in 1874, the *Columna Constitución* volunteered before the other national guards.[108] Upon returning to Callao, the local newspaper *El Comercio* lauded them as laborers that expected no awards for their defense of the public peace and national institutions. Additionally, President Pardo declared the *Columna Constitución* as "one of the pillars of the Civil Party."[109]

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[104] Although their main action here was taking the *Sofia*, which later placed all of them in some legal issues, the task given to them has importance when considering they prevented further uprisings. *El Comercio*. 5 August 1872.
[105] Carmen Mc Evoy, *Un Proyecto Nacional en el Siglo XIX* (Lima: Fondo Editorial PUCP, 1994), p. 109.
[106] *El Comercio*. 23 August 1872; see also *El Perú Ilustrado*, 12 May 1888 (Lima), p. 14.
[107] *El Comercio*. 3 December 1872.
[108] *El Perú Ilustrado*, 12 May 1888 (Lima), p. 14.
[109] *El Comercio*. 7 January 1875; see also *El Perú Ilustrado*, 12 May 1888 (Lima), p. 14.

VI. PART FOUR—THE LAST ROUND: THE NATIONAL PROJECT'S DEMISE

In the last stanza of Nicomedes Santa Cruz's poem "*Ritmos Negros del Perú*," he revives the spirit of those who have passed away, stating: "The old negroes have died / But in the dried sugar fields / Can be heard their *Zamacueca* / And the *Panalivio* far afield / And the *Festejos* can be heard / As they sung them in their youth."[110] These last few lines are an invitation for readers and listeners to rethink the end of life as vividly continued by surrounding elements, rather than just seeing it as an empty void. Similarly, the analysis of the demise of the stevedores and their incorporation into Peru's liberal national project should not be seen as the tragedy of this group of workers. Instead, the greatest tragedy faced by these Afro-Peruvians is that of having been erased from history, the tribulations and joys of their existence forgotten, the record of them ever having lived lost in archives and in old, nameless photographs. This requiem for the vultures is a remembrance not only of those who lost their lives in wars, but rather of all those dockworkers from Callao whose story remained untold before this essay.

Hence, this fourth part focuses on acquiring a stronger sense of what occurred to Callao's Stevedoring Guild amid the local and international conflicts during the second half of the 1870s. Rather than it simply being considered a record of the stevedores' misfortunes, this part brings forth again the deep sentiment of national identity that drove them on to continue fighting for their political ideals—despite facing serious internal and external opposition. Most importantly, it demonstrates how race did not cloud the stevedores' sense of identity throughout the ensuing events; rather, their actions and statements indicate that they viewed themselves as part of the larger nation, serving a larger purpose of national defense.

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[110] The text evokes a connection between the past and the present, establishing a continuity. Translated from the Spanish text: *Murieron los negros viejos / pero entre la caña seca / se escucha su zamacueca / y el panalivio muy lejos / y se escuchan los festejos / que canto en su juventud*. See *Nicomedes Santa Cruz: Obras Completas I*, p. 36.

Pachacamac's Revenge: The Demise of Peru's Liberal Order

Most troubles that unfolded for Peru in the late 1870s are primarily rooted in Pardo's lack of political dexterity, creating a two-front opposition from the military and those who opposed his reduced defense spending and public education programs. To save the Civil Party, it occurred to Pardo that again supporting the military commander Mariano Prado could mend this discord between the liberals and the military, as well as provide a stronger figure to deal with the likes of Piérola and the rebellious conservatives.[111] However, the plan completely backfired as most of the Civil Party members did not share Pardo's approval for an army officer as party head, and the conservatives as a result considered Prado a weaker opponent than even Pardo. Making matters worse, upon taking power in 1876, General Prado clearly also had no intention to let the liberals again dictate his administrative acts, preferring instead a return to caudillo politics.[112] In essence, what could have turned out into a favorable political coalition instead turned into a very complex political carnival where practically everyone stood in opposition to everyone else.

It did not take long before matters spun out of control, assuming that any control actually existed, specially due to the widespread mistrust among the different political leaders. A catalyst for the unfolding events came in the form of Piérola, who again received financial support from Prado's conservative opponents to stage another coup attempt, this time boldly capturing Peru's ironclad *Huáscar* in late 1876 and using it to raid the Peruvian coastline, even daring to engage into a naval scuffle against a British Navy cruiser.[113] It seems that Pardo, or some faction of the Civil Party, considered that Piérola's actions threatened the downfall of General Prado's regime,

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[111] Vinod Aggarwal, *Debt Games: Strategic Interaction in International Debt Rescheduling* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.201; see also Bruce Farcau, *The Ten Cents War: Chile, Peru, and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific, 1879-1884* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2000), p. 19.

[112] Farcau, pp. 19-20. Mc Evoy, *La Utopía Republicana*, p. 193.

[113] The scuffle, strangely enough, earned him enough popular support for amnesty to be granted. Farcau, p. 20. The insubordination cost Peru a considerable amount of money, in addition to also presenting the weakness of Prado's government to a Chilean regime weighing its options to attack. See also A. Quiroz, *Corrupt Circles*, pp. 170-171.

so they led a separate uprising at Callao in 1877. The uprising failed, however, and conservative news outlets sufficiently raised suspicions claiming Pardo as the revolt's mastermind that he left the country in exile. Pardo's final undoing, however, came when he returned to Peru after an election placed him as president of the senate—in November 1878, at the doors of the Peruvian Congress, Manuel Pardo perished after an assassin's bullet pierced his left lung.[114] Pardo's death signaled the start of the end for the Civil Party during this period.

Worsening an already precarious political environment, the seismic activity of the region added yet another layer of problems that unchained the War of the Pacific. In 1877, after a strong earthquake struck the southern Peruvian port of Iquique, powerful tidal waves caused substantial damages to various ports in the Pacific, including Callao. However, Bolivia's port of Antofagasta stood as the hardest hit, left nearly without buildings, and so the port's Chilean-run council voted to increase the local tax by ten cents so as to help rebuild the seaport.[115] Opposition to this tax by a Chilean company escalated into an international crisis between Bolivia and Chile, which had a deal in place where no new taxes could be imposed in the territory. A secret mutual defense deal between Bolivia and Peru brought the latter also in confrontation with Chile, whose own vetted interests sought to acquire control over the valuable nitrates in the coasts of Peru and Bolivia.[116]

War started badly for Peru and ended in terrible defeat with the Chilean armies marching into Lima. As the prior political instability and austerity measures shrank Peru's military, it stood unprepared to face Chile. Moreover, Piérola ineptly managed Peru's defenses after taking over the government early during the conflict.[117] Peru's defeat in the conflict ended in chaos.

[114] Mc Evoy, *La Utopía Republicana*, p. 192-194.
[115] Antofagasta was largely composed of Chilean citizens, despite being in Bolivian territory. See Farcau, p. 40.
[116] Heraclio Bonilla, "Peru and Bolivia from Independence to the War of the Pacific," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. 3, ed. Leslie Bethell (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 563, 580-581 [117] A. Quiroz, *Corrupt Circles*, pp. 172-174.

The Condors of Peru: Foreign Threats, Domestic Enemies

In 1888, the magazine *El Perú Ilustrado* pointed out to its readers, in a publication dedicated to Captain Sánchez Lagomarsino, that "everyone knows" about Callao's stevedores and how "several of them paying with their blood their love towards the *patria*, above all distinguished themselves for their boldness and discipline."[117] Yet, only since 2006, have the people of Peru again began questioning the existence of these individuals, wondering who they were and what they did during the War of the Pacific.[118] This last section focuses on presenting a brief history of the stevedores in the period briefly before the war and during the conflict.

As it turns out, Captain Sánchez Lagomarsino and the *Columna Constitución* supposedly led the Civil Party's revolution at Callao in 1877 (for an image of the crew, see **FIGURE 10**, Page 35). Yet, the story is itself muddled by the account of the stevedores themselves, who a few days after the event wrote a poignant account explaining their version of occurrences and pleading for the freedom of Lagomarsino, whom they considered to have been misinformed about the events. According to the stevedores, they marched into Callao expecting to quell an alleged uprising that they had been informed threatened the presidency of General Prado.[119] Moreover, they also point out how they are constantly insulted by the professional soldiers, who derogatorily refer to them as *cachimbos* (newbies). Due to their deep idealism, they note that Lagomarsino is mockingly compared to the insane "Don Quixote" and the haulers named as his sidekick "Sancho Panza."[120] The stevedores conclude their letter by stating that "commander Lagomarsino is and always will

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[117] *El Perú Ilustrado*, 12 May 1888 (Lima), p. 15.

[118] Diego Pereira, "Esta es la historia de la tripulación afroperuana del Huáscar que aún no sale en ningún documental," *Utero.pe*, published 31 October 2014, http://utero.pe/2014/10/31/esta-es-la-historia-de-la-tripulacionafroperuana-del-huascar-que-aun-no-sale-en-ningun-documental/

[119] According to the stevedores, Lagomarsino even lectured them on how General Prado had been fooled for "being too trusting." The stevedores had previously told the same to Lagomarsino. *El Nacional*. 18 June 1877.

[120] They indicate that their intention has never been to challenge the army. *El Nacional*. 18 June 1877.

Figure 11. (left) Captain José María Sánchez Lagomarsino. (right) The "vultures" of the Peruvian warship *Huáscar*. Through these photographs, part of the Stevedoring Guild reunites. **Source**: (left) Jose Sanchez Lagomarsino (1890). *Colección Courret* (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú). (right) Renzo Babilonia, Guerra y Fotografía (Lima: PUCP, Instituto Riva-Aguero, 2016), p. 71.

be for us and all those who know him, a martyr of his generous and patriotic feelings."[121] While it remains difficult to assess whether or not these individuals attempted to lead a revolution, the letter does reveal this group's deep level of patriotism and brotherhood.

This same level of deep patriotism for the Peruvian nation the men from the *Constitución* exhibited when they willingly volunteered to serve as marines during the War of the Pacific. One particularly colorful scene of their boarding of the ships *Unión*, commanded by Aurelio García y García, and *Pilcomayo*, tells much about the commitment of not just the stevedores, but also of the people of Callao as they sent-off their beloved guardsmen. The stevedores from the *Columna* marched down the port singing the song "*Buitre*" (Vulture), demonstrating that this word had to them become an identifier rather than an insult. Many likely wore on their necks the devotional scapulars commissioned by the rear-admiral's wife and blessed by the local monsignor, revealing again the importance of the devoutness of local society. Most dramatically, as not all members of the *Constitución* embarked, causing some men who wanted to join to weep along with the wives of those who departed, some comforting each other with the idea that the stevedores would soon

[121] *El Nacional*. 18 June 1877.

return along with a medal in their chests, possibly thinking that this war would be the same as the scuffles they had previously had against the forces of Piérola.[122] Unfortunately, having now the benefit of hindsight, it can be affirmed that many of these men actually never returned home.

Life aboard the ships proved challenging for the men of the *Constitución*. Their pay often seems to have been delayed, to the point that Captain Lagomarsino had to even pen a letter that indicated that many of these volunteers had given up their valuable trade to defend the nation—revealing that the level of commitment of these men went beyond the constraint of economics.[123] The available files on the Columna Constitución also indicate that the unit consistently ran short of uniforms for its members, the lack of shoes being a particularly problematic situation for those in metal ships.[124] Lagomarsino and the *Columna Constitución* unfortunately joined the frigate *Independencia*, which sunk not long after the start of the war. Instead, they spent the rest of the war in Arica, until the fateful battle of that port city where all of the defenders promised to fight until "firing the last round."[125] Yet, these hardships did not waver these men's spirit.

Not everything in the ships proved troublesome, nonetheless. A particularly picturesque case is what occurred in the warship *Huáscar*, where the sub-commander of the *Constitución*, Manuel Arellano, encouraged his troops to fight by shouting "Onward, my vultures!" to which the stevedores replied, "Here are present the condors of Peru!"[126] These little exchange of words is an interesting demonstration of the symbols used by these black stevedores and their identity.

Unfortunately, most of these men met their doom in the battles that they fought while in

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[122] *El Comercio*. 8 April 1879. Morning edition.
[123] Meliton Carvajal Pareja, *Historia Maritima del Peru*, Tomo 10, Vol. 1 (Lima: Instituto de Estudios HistoricoMaritimos, 2015), pp. 801
[124] "Constitucion, Columna de la Guardia Nacional: 1879-1880." Archivo Historico de Marina.
[125] Meliton Carvajal Pareja, pp. 801-803.
[126] Zelmira Aguilar, "Los Valerosos Negros del Huáscar," in *El Peruano*. June 2, 2016. http://www.elperuano.com.pe/noticia-los-valerosos-negros-del-huascar-...

defense of Lima and Callao, in the Battle of Miraflores. The *Columna Constitución* served as the foundation for the formation of the unit named *Guarnición de Marina*, and several other workers from Callao formed the *Guardia Chalaca*.[127] Nearly all members of these units perished during the battle, having been at the frontlines serving as the brunt force that at least for a few moments managed to stop the Chilean advance into their homeland.[128]

Nicolas de Piérola, who upon hearing the news of his opponents demise in southern Peru proclaimed that he was overjoyed by the end of the old regime, probably also found deep joy in knowing that more of his opponents now joined their brethren to the grave.[129]

[127] Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna, *Historia de la Campaña de Lima* (Santiago: Imp. Cervantes, 1881), p. 1084.
[128] Pascual Ahumada, *Guerra del Pacifico*, Vol. 5-6 (Santiago: Editorial Andres Bello, 1982), p. 184.
[129] Tommaso Caivano, *Historia de la Guerra de America Entre Chile, Peru, y Bolivia* (Lima: G Stolte, 1901), p. 287.

VII. CONCLUSION

The history of Callao's stevedores uncovers a narrative of resilience, agency, and erasure, shedding light on race, labor, and national identity in nineteenth century Peru. These Afro-Peruvian dockworkers were far more than laborers; they were economic agents, spiritual leaders, and political actors who left an indelible mark on the nation's history, even as subsequent forces sought to erase their contributions. Their story challenges traditional historiography that overlooks the critical roles of marginalized groups in shaping national development.

Callao's Black stevedores were at the heart of Peru's rise during the Guano Boom, an era that positioned Callao as a vital global port. It was their labor, hauling the prized guano that fueled Peru's economy, which facilitated the country's brief ascendancy in international trade. Their strategic control over port operations—manifested in practices such as manipulating laytime and leveraging their monopoly as members of the *Gremio de Playeros*—illustrated their ability to assert influence within an exploitative system. Despite being burdened by the racialized and class-based stigma associated with their work, they secured a degree of economic power that enabled them to resist both domestic and foreign encroachments, even when facing threats from foreign merchants and technological advances in shipping.

By controlling Callao's Confraternity of the Lord of the Sea, the stevedores wielded significant influence, which exemplified how marginalized communities could use religious institutions to build solidarity and cultural legitimacy. By appropriating and adapting religious practices, they created a spiritual monopoly that both empowered their community and linked them to the broader fabric of Peruvian society. This duality of labor and faith not only reinforced their identity but also provided a platform for resistance and resilience against oppression.

Politically, the stevedores' commitment to the liberal national project exemplified their

vision for an inclusive Peru. In stark contrast to elite narratives that framed Afro-Peruvians as peripheral to the nation, these dockworkers actively shaped its trajectory. From their role in defending Callao in 1866 to their service in the War of the Pacific, the stevedores demonstrated unwavering patriotism and a profound sense of belonging. The *Columna Constitución*, their national guard battalion, embodied their ideals, fighting under the banner of liberalism and the promise of a more equitable society. Their actions were not merely acts of loyalty to the state but assertions of their right to be recognized as integral members of the nation.

Yet, the tragic irony of their story lies in their erasure. As the liberal order crumbled and conservative factions regained power, the stevedores' role was systematically obscured. Their alignment with a defeated political project and their challenge to Peru's sociopolitical hierarchies rendered them inconvenient to a nation that sought to redefine itself along exclusionary lines. The photographs altered to whitewash their presence, the narratives that omitted their sacrifices, and the silence that followed their contributions all point to a deliberate act of historical amnesia.

Revisiting the story of Callao's stevedores challenges the mechanisms of erasure and the frameworks that have marginalized Afro-Peruvians in Peru's national memory. Their history is a testament to the power of marginalized groups to navigate and reshape systems designed to exclude them. It underscores that the foundations of the Peruvian nation were not solely laid by its elites but by the labor, faith, and sacrifices of its working-class citizens—citizens who believed in the promise of a unified nation, even when that promise seemed out of reach.

The legacy of the stevedores illuminates the tensions between inclusion and exclusion, resilience and erasure. It compels a reconsideration of what it means to be part of a nation and whose voices are amplified in its telling. Their story is not just a narrative of the past but a reminder that the fight for recognition and justice is ongoing.

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