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Kin of the Leeward Port: Afro-Mexicans in Veracruz in the Making of State Formation,
Contested Spaces, and Regional Development, 1770-1830

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Kin of the Leeward Port: Afro-Mexicans in Veracruz in the Making of State Formation,
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by

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This dissertation explores the lives of Afro-Mexicans who lived in the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland, known as *Sotavento* (Leeward), during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It focuses on the understudied Afro-Mexican population of Veracruz and uses it to reframe the historical and historiographical transition between the colonial and national period. It argues how Afro-Mexicans facilitated, complicated, and participated in multiple socio-political processes that reshaped Veracruz and its Atlantic and inland borderlands. This dissertation's interventions are twofold. First, *Kin of the Leeward Port* resituates Mexico's socio-political, cultural, and economic networks with the Atlantic World and the Greater Caribbean; and second, it dissects and problematizes those networks by centering the Black and Afro-Mexican experience. Blacks and Afro-Mexicans shifted the late-colonial political landscape, inserted Mexico into nineteenth-century Atlantic revolutions, and altered the political texture of Veracruz and its connections to Mexican society and the larger Atlantic World.

This dissertation centers Afro-Mexicans to do more than recover lives and stories often excluded from the Mexican national narrative; it seeks to reframe the larger history of liberal politics in nineteenth-century Mexico. It seeks to do so by tracing the long, intellectual, ideological, and political traditions of Afro-descendants in Veracruz and connects them to the Black Diaspora. Through vast primary source research, including notarial records, censuses, episcopal formal visitations, Inquisition files, cartography, trade records, travel accounts, and correspondence, both personal and military, this dissertation brings together traditionally distinct historiographical periods in the history of Mexico and Latin America. It also joins three very well-developed historiographical traditions that often overlap but seldomly intersect: Atlantic World History, African Diaspora History, and Latin American History. This dissertation interrogates and subverts archival silences that have sought to erase Black and Afro-Mexican agency from narratives of identity and nation-state formation, seeking to diversify these narratives by foregrounding the voices, perspectives, and actions of Afro-descendants.

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Introduction

The year was 1826, the day December 24th, Christmas Eve. The Port-City of Veracruz exuberantly held celebrations over the one-year anniversary of the expulsion of the Spanish in the island-fort of San Juan de Ulúa. The expulsion of the once entrenched Spanish signified that the Port-City of the recently created State of Veracruz, and the newly established Mexican Republic, were now truly politically free from Spanish control. Veracruz was part of a free democratic Republic. Amidst the pomposity of speeches, a significant demonstration took place. A citizen by the name of Tomás Pastoriza took the stage, in the presence of the “liberator” of Veracruz, General Miguel Barragan, and alongside two African slaves, whom the historical record fails to mention their names, Pastoriza spoke:

Now restituted the sweet calm of peace, we now occupy ourselves alone in the fulfilling of our respective duties; and today, dedicated to celebrate the first anniversary of the surrendering of Ulúa, what better offering could we offer in such a plausible moment than that of redeeming these two Africans that lived under the hard yoke of slavery? I tenderly witness this singular display. Similar to us, they were born free, and only a nefarious principle, so inveterate in the practice of some nations, can perpetuate the unjust commerce of beings whom nature conceded the same prerogatives as all of us... Live in peace, oh so fortunate mortals! You are now free on the same day that we remember the day on which we became free from Spanish tyranny!¹

¹ Recapitulación de varias alocuciones y oficios de las autoridades de Veracruz, discursos, composiciones poéticas y oración del tribuno del pueblo veracruzano, en los días 23, 24 y 25 de diciembre de 1826, con motivo de celebrarse el primer aniversario de la rendición de Ulúa/ Veracruz/ imprenta del Papaloapan a cargo de J. Paladorio/ Diciembre de 1826 in Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz : La Guerra Por La Independencia de México 1821-1825 Antología de Documentos* (México : Universidad Veracruzana :, 2008). All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

Pastoriza's speech described both slavery and Spanish rule a thing of the past. It equated the manumission of the two slaves with Mexico's newly found freedom. Pastoriza identified then the "Africanness" and Blackness of these men as also a thing of the past, erasing Blackness from the new political Mexican discourse. As Pastoriza identified the two former slaves symbolically as "brothers" and made use of a new form of deracialized nationalism, one that rested on the idea of *mestizaje*. This idea, largely pushed by Mexican-born Spaniards called *criollos*, pushed the for the symbolic origin of Mexicans, and of Mexico as a nation, in the racial intermixing between Indigenous peoples and Spaniards during the colonial period, where culturally, ancestral Indigeneity, particularly of the Aztecs, was privileged. As such, colonial socioracial categories, and tangible Blackness in places like Veracruz, came to matter not for Mexico's social and political matters.

What the 1826 Veracruz' celebrations did show was an intentional forgetting and neglect of Blackness, something rather problematic for a Port-City, and its hinterland, where for three centuries peoples of African descent were the majority of the population, and who had not only enabled development of the region and of colonial Mexico's connections with Atlantic World economies and cultures. Veracruz' Afro-descendants were instrumental in the consolidation of Mexican independence and of Mexico as a federated republic. Nevertheless, by 1826 Veracruz' Afro-descendants had legally become Mexicans, their African ancestry and identity as Blacks radically extirpated, and their sociopolitical agency and roles in the transition of Mexico from colony to nation became coopted and forgotten by the Mexican project of deracialized identity. The denial

of Blackness by the state did little to counteract the social and cultural prejudices that continued against them.

The example of the 1826 Veracruz celebrations neatly encompasses the three main question that this dissertation, *Kin of the Leeward Port*, aims to answer: First, what are the multiple experiences of Afro-descendants in Mexico and Latin America? Second, how are these experiences connected to the larger trends and histories of the African Diaspora and the Atlantic World? And third, why are these stories and experiences in the margins of the archive and the narratives of Mexican nationalism?

The first goal of this dissertation is to resituate Mexico's sociopolitical and economic networks more closely with those of the Atlantic World and the Greater Caribbean via Veracruz' Afro-descendants. Afro-descendants, free and enslaved, were a pillar of the Port-City of Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland's regional development: From their roles as *conquistadores* with the arrival of Europeans, the massive arrival of African slaves from the 1550s to 1640, and to their multiple roles in the development of the regional colonial economy, society, culture, and defense for three centuries. Afro-descendants enabled in many ways the consolidation of the colonial state in a region largely devoid of Spaniards and sparsely populated by Indigenous peoples after the cataclysmic event of Indigenous depopulation via smallpox epidemics. Afro-descendants found in Veracruz the ability to assert themselves in the creation of a Black space that enabled them to take roles into important economic and sociopolitical roles as they navigated colonial structures of power and society. This population prevalence reflected

in the fact that by 1799 the population of the hinterland south of the Port-City was 73% comprised by individuals of African descent.

Afro-descendants helped link Veracruz to the Atlantic World. They fostered the development of commercial networks and were key for the economic development of the region, and by extension of New Spain, throughout the entire colonial period. These roles were augmented politically by the active participation of Afro-descendants in the coastal defense of Veracruz and its hinterland, where Afro-descendant individuals found ways to attain economic and political advantages from their services to the crown. At the same time, free and enslaved Afro-descendants became exposed to fluctuating and evolving political ideas and events that occurred across the Atlantic World from 1770 to 1830. This was certainly the case during the Age of Revolutions, for Veracruz' Afro-descendants played instrumental roles in the regional developments of the Mexican War of Independence for both sides, and in the consolidation of Mexico as a federal republic by the 1820s. In short, this work argues that Afro-descendants were integral to Mexico emerging and ensuing connections to the Atlantic World.

The second goal of this dissertation is to use the political agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants to reframe the historical and historiographical transition between the Mexican colonial and national period. Long thought-of as separate historiographical currents in the history of Mexico and Latin America, the colonial and modern period are often considered divided by the processes of independence in Spanish America. 1810 serves as the division. This historiographical dichotomy has tended to focus on peoples of African descent in Latin America as subjects of the colonial period. In later periods, their

agency becomes erased, coopted, and forgotten in favor of *criollo* narratives of nation-state consolidation that sponsored alleged post-racial discourses in early Latin American republics. By tracing the sociopolitical agency and roles of Veracruz' Afro-descendants from 1770 well into the 1820s this dissertation contests traditional temporal and historiographical divisions between the colonial and modern period in Latin America. By the same token, it also contests traditional associations of Blackness as strictly part of Mexico's colonial past by centering the regional development of Mexico's transformation into a free republic as strictly tied to Veracruz' Afro-descendant sociopolitical agency and contributions.

Lastly, the third objective of this dissertation is to understand how Veracruz' Afro-descendant political agency directly influenced the political transition of Mexico from colony to nation, resulting in the formation of a nation that ironically neglected and extirpated their Blackness from Mexican national identity after independence. The support of enslaved and free Veracruz' Afro-descendant was instrumental for the insurgency in Veracruz from 1812 to 1819. By the same token, Veracruz' Afro-descendants manned and supported most of the political insurrections that occurred in Veracruz after independence, which led to the transformation of Mexico from an empire to a federated republic by 1824. Yet their roles became coopted as their identity as African descendants was associated to the Spanish colonial past, an identity unable to exist under the frameworks of a deracialized Mexican identity that prioritized a romanticized Indigenous past, one that *criollo* national leaders aggressively pursued and implemented. Whilst localized prejudices against peoples of African descent in Veracruz

and its hinterland were not eliminated immediately with Mexico's transition into a republic, legally under the Mexican Republic and the State of Veracruz ,Afro-descendants became solely Mexicans and *Veracruzanos*.

This dissertation's builds upon the remarkable scholarship of Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Ben Vinson III, Ted Cohen, Patrick J. Carroll, Herman Bennet, Adriana Naveda Chavez-Hita, Antonio García de León, Ricardo Perez Monfort, Álvaro Alcantara, and Citlatli Domínguez Domínguez, amongst others. In doing so, its goal is not only that of advancing studies of the African Diaspora in Mexico and Veracruz, but also to push these studies forward into understanding how Veracruz' Afro-descendant intellectual and political agency. It argues that this agency, though crucial for the formation of Mexico, became coopted and forgotten, affecting both the real and remembered role of Mexicans of African descent for the past two hundred years.

Note on Terminology

This dissertation uses the term “Afro-descendant” as an overarching term to identify the historical actors of African descent that lived in Veracruz from 1770 to 1830. By 1740, the institution of slavery had resulted too expensive to maintain in most of colonial Mexico. By the eighteenth century a demographic growth of Indigenous populations, and as the rise of a plethora of racially mixed populations, presented an ample labor pool of free individuals that could be paid daily wages considerably cheaper

than the maintenance of slaves.² As a result, the importing of slaves declined considerably. But in the case of Veracruz and its hinterland, with a centuries-old established Black presence, most of the population in the region century was composed by free Afro-descendants. Only the sugarcane and tobacco planting enclaves of Córdoba and Orizaba remained as the largest, and more profitable, sectors of agricultural production based on slave labor, largely domestic rather than imported slaves, not only in Veracruz, but in all of colonial Mexico well into the 1810s.³

Since the early colonial period, Afro-descendants in Veracruz came to represent in this sparsely depopulated coastal region a unique community, recognized by Spanish authorities as regional actors that helped establish and maintain Spanish colonial presence. This mobility allowed Africans to intermix with local Indigenous populations and with arriving Spaniards, giving rise to multiple free socioracial *castas* that by the late-eighteenth century represented the largest demographic sector of the region, over enslaved Africans, Indigenous peoples, and Spaniards. These *castas*, recognized in eighteenth and nineteenth-century records as *Mulatos*, *Pardos*, and *Morenos* take a center

² Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: el puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519-1821* (México, D.F.; Xalapa, Veracruz: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011), 540.

³ The works of Veracruz historian Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita are instrumental to understand the development and persistence, well into the first decade of the 19th Century, of slavery in the Córdoba and Orizaba regions. See Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825,” in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 195–217; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “La lucha de los negros esclavos en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba en el Siglo XVIII,” Artículo (Centro de Investigaciones Históricas. Instituto de Investigaciones Humanísticas. Universidad Veracruzana, 1979); Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, *Esclavos negros en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba, Veracruz, 1690-1830* (Xalapa: Universidad Veracruzana, Dirección General Editorial, 2008); Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “Esclavitud negra en la jurisdicción de la villa de Córdoba en el siglo XVIII” (Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana, Unidad Docente Interdisciplinaria de Humanidades, Facultad de Historia, 1977).

stage in this dissertation. This dissertation often adopts the language of the archival record that describes the socioracial character of these historical actors, or the ways these actors on the historical record racially and socially identified themselves. But for the sake of narrative and argument making this project adopts “Afro-descendant” as an encompassing identity term for peoples of African descent in Veracruz prior to and after Mexican independence.

Veracruz’ Afro-descendants had immense roles in regional economic, cultural, and sociopolitical development by the late-eighteenth century. As liberalism entered Veracruz in 1812 via the Cádiz Constitution, Spanish administration, in recognition of these roles, lessened socioracial identity markers towards Afro-descendant *castas*. Scholars such as Juan Ortíz Escamilla have argued that the ways by which *Mulato* and *Negro* by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century were replaced in documents for *Pardo* and *Moreno* respectively. By the 1810s how Blackness was regionally recognized by insurgents as *trigueños*, and in the post-independence era representatives of the newly founded Mexican government marked Blackness with the regional voice *jarochos* in the 1820s.⁴ Nevertheless, whether prior independence or afterwards these racial terms, as presented in the historical record, were employed to identify and describe individuals of African descent. As such the voice “Afro-descendant” is used in order to identify these regional historical actors of immense political agency during the sociopolitical transition

⁴ See Juan Ortíz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750- 1825* (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008).

of Veracruz and Mexico from colony to nation, even as their identity as Black or African descendant was extirpated with the advent of Mexican nationalism.

Note on Sources

This dissertation relies primarily on notarial records, court records, legal processes, censuses, cartography, trade records, travel accounts, official decrees, petitions, constitutions, and correspondence, both personal and military, in order to trace the sociopolitical roles of Veracruz Afro-descendants from 1770 to 1830. These records are primarily found in the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, the Archive of the Indies in Seville, and in the Archivo Histórico de Veracruz, the Port-City of Veracruz' local historical archive from which a great majority of local records this dissertation utilizes are housed. This dissertation also uses documents contained in both the *Veracruz en armas: La guerra civil, 1810-1820* and the *Veracruz: La guerra por la independencia de México, 1821-1825* primary source collections. These primary source collections contain a plethora of records from various Mexican and Spanish historic archives; they mainly detail military correspondence and governmental decrees pertaining the period of the Mexican War for Independence and up to the expulsion of military Spanish forces from Mexican territory, 1810-1825. *Kin of the Leeward Port* interrogates and subverts archival silences within these records that have sought to erase Black and Afro-descendant political agency from narratives of identity and nation-state formation, seeking to diversify these narratives by foregrounding the voices, perspectives, and actions of Afro-descendants.

Despite this plethora and range of sources, there are two shortcomings to this dissertation. First, this dissertation is a very male-centered sociopolitical history. While Afro-descendant women were absolutely instrumental to the social, economic, and cultural development of the Port-City and its hinterland throughout the colonial period and beyond, the political processes of Atlantic Revolutions where Veracruz is included, and which occupy a large portion of this dissertation, were very male-centered. I aim, whenever possible, to include Veracruz' Afro-descendant women in the late-colonial and early independence period whose efforts were instrumental to the social and economic development of the Port-City and its hinterland. Particularly their role in institutions such as the Afro-descendant *cofradías*, lay confraternities, of the Port-City.

Second, despite its use of maps and cartographical analysis on its first chapter, the discussion of Veracruz as a Black space and the effect of Afro-descendant agency in the creation of spaces of mobility is largely relegated to Chapter one. I seek to counter this by extending cartographical analysis to each chapter, in order to examine the effects of Veracruz' Afro-descendant sociopolitical agency in the making of colonial, and eventually national, space. In analyzing how said space in turn defined and informed the sociopolitical action of peoples of African descent in the transition of Mexico from colony to nation, this will illustrate how state-sponsored projects of mapping were designed to restrict, control, and at times erase, Afro-descendant political agency and representation, thus posing a reconsideration of the connections between the Port-City of Veracruz, and Mexico, with the Atlantic World, the Greater Caribbean, and the African Diaspora.

Historiography/Theoretical Frameworks

This is a study of the sociopolitical development of Afro-descendants in the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland of *Sotavento* during Mexico's transition from colony to nation. In order to do such analysis, this study intersects three very well-developed, and growing, historiographical traditions that often overlap but that seldomly intersect: Atlantic World history, African Diaspora history, and Latin American history.

A study of the role of Veracruz' Afro-descendants during the late-colonial period warranted a deep exploration of the historiography of Latin America, and Mexico. The work of Antonio García de León in his book *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera* results instrumental for this study. His work sheds light not only on the ways Veracruz, its hinterland, and populations enabled commercial and political connections for New Spain and Spanish colonialism in the Americas. It also sheds light through a "long dureé" approach that encompasses from 1519 to 1821, the particularities and differences of this port-city and its hinterland with other port-cities and their hinterlands across late-colonial Latin America and their relationships with the colonial Metropolis: Seville, then Cádiz.⁵ Inspired by the approaches of García de León, this dissertation also follows works of scholars such as Álvaro Alcántara, Christon Archer, Doris M. Ladd, amongst others, who examine economic development, sociopolitical stratification, and cultural formation amongst the populations of late-colonial Veracruz and Mexico to lay out the social,

⁵ Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: el puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519-1821* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011)

economic, geographical, and political conditions of Veracruz, Mexico, and Latin America during the late-colonial period by which this study is situated.⁶

This dissertation also engages in the study of historical cartography of Latin America. As such, it engages the frameworks of J.B Harley, Karl Offen, Juliana Barr, and Edward Countryman in consideration of late-colonial space, contestation, and mapping as constructing the political and cultural character of late-colonial Latin America. As stated by Harley, cartographic production contains inherent and external relations of power, which serve to both link a determined region to a metropolitan nexus of commercial, state, or military power.⁷ Related to the notion of cartographic production containing inherent external or internal power, the notion of “edge of empire” results particularly powerful for this dissertation, as Veracruz can be particularly characterized, perhaps more than any place in late-colonial Mexico, as a space and place where the claims and structures of European powers in the Americas were enabled, defined, and often

⁶ See Álvaro Alcántara, “Un Imperio también de agua: puertos interiores, redes mercantiles y comercio de contrabando en las costas novohispanas, 1776-1795 (Dossier),” *Illes i imperis*, 2016, 77–104, <https://doi.org/208050024>; Christon I. Archer, “The Key to the Kingdom: The Defense of Veracruz, 1780-1810,” *The Americas* 27, no. 4 (April 1971): 426, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979859>; Alejandro de Antuñano Maurer, *Veracruz primer puerto del continente* (México: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz-Llave., 1999); Martín Aguilar Sánchez et al., *Historia general de Veracruz* (Veracruz (México): Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Secretaría de Educación de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011); Luis J. García Ruíz, *Unidos en un mismo cuerpo: monarquía y sociedad en un tiempo de reformas : Veracruz 1764-1810*. (México: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2017); Carmen Blázquez Domínguez, Carlos Contreras Cruz, and Sonia Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX* (Xalapa, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1996); Andrew L. Knaut, “Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (November 1997): 619, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2516981>; Rudolf Widmer Sennhauser, “La ciudad de Veracruz en el último siglo colonial (1680-1820) : algunos aspectos de la historia demográfica de una ciudad portuaria,” *La palabra y el hombre* Julio-Septiembre, no. No. 83 (1992): 121–34.

⁷ See J.B. Harley, “Deconstructing the Map” in Martin Dodge, ed., *Classics in Cartography: Reflections on Influential Articles from Cartographica* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK ; Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley & Sons, 2011), <http://uclibs.org/PID/175836>.

contested, by colonial subalterns, who ultimately imbued their lived spaces with unique sociopolitical and cultural meanings differing from those imposed by Europeans.⁸

The employ of both Harley's cartographical deconstruction framework, and that of Offen's "edge of empire", is ultimately complemented in this dissertation by the use of the "contested spaces" framework sponsored by Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman. Arguing that contested spaces were "places throughout the hemisphere where people who had been total strangers met, mingled, and clashed, creating colonial societies unlike any that the world had seen to that time," this dissertation thus situates the Port-City of Veracruz, and its hinterland, as places of communication, mobility, and contestation where Afro-descendants thrived.⁹

Of particular importance to this dissertation with the engagement of Latin American historiography is the scholarship that deconstructs subaltern agency in Latin America during the Age of Revolutions. The works of Marcela Echeverri, Marixa Lasso, Cristina Soriano, and Eric Van Young result instrumental for this study. In their study of Colombia during the Age of Revolutions, Echeverri and Lasso provide important frameworks that shed light not only on the ways Indigenous and Afro-descendants fought on the Royalist side during the struggle for independence in the Viceroyalty of New Granada doing away with modern nationalistic frameworks of assumed insurgent and radical stances by Indigenous and Afro-descendant subalterns. At the same time, their

⁸ Karl Offen, "Edge of Empire," in Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁹ Juliana Barr, Edward Countryman, and William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, eds., *Contested Spaces of Early America*, First edition, Early American Studies (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1, 4.

work help us understand how the participation of peoples of African descent in this struggle was instrumental in the military and political fields, even influencing the conformation of the nation-state in the early nineteenth century.¹⁰

Following on this vein are the works of Edgardo Pérez Morales and Christina Soriano, who recenter subaltern sociopolitical agency in the struggle for independence of Colombia and Venezuela respectively from the national into the transnational. By arguing the impact of intellectual currents during the Age of Revolutions, first with the impact of French and Haitian revolutionary ideals through maritime piracy, trade, and mobility of African descendants in Cartagena, and with the dissemination of those ideas with foreign printed materials firstly intended for elites but quickly absorbed and disseminated by Afro-descendants in Venezuela, they respectively push forward the study of Afro-descendant political and intellectual agency in the Spanish Americas during the Age of Revolutions.¹¹ This dissertation builds upon the contributions of these four authors by analyzing not only Afro-descendant sociopolitical participation in Mexico's War for Independence but their regional and local intellectual definition of the struggle, often influenced by transnational currents of thought and politics.

¹⁰ See Marcela Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution: Reform, Revolution, and Royalism in the Northern Andes, 1780-1825*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 102 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia 1795-1831*, Pitt Latin American Series Myths of Harmony (Place of publication not identified: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007).

¹¹ See Edgardo Pérez Morales, *No Limits to Their Sway: Cartagena's Privateers and the Masterless Caribbean in the Age of Revolutions* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018); Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution: Information, Insurgencies, and the Crisis of Colonial Rule in Venezuela*, First edition., Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018).

The work of Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion*, helps to complement the previous works as it applies the study of subaltern politics, particularly Indigenous, during Mexico's War for Independence, a cornerstone process that this dissertation tackles. As Van Young argues, Indigenous participation in the Mexican War of Independence was driven by the desire of enacting a "standoff" against both internal and external processes of cultural and sociopolitical change affecting regional change.¹² As such, rather than being driven by American-Spaniard's, *criollo*, intellectualism and political motives for insurgency, the participation of Indigenous peoples, and mixed peoples, in the Mexican struggle for independence was determined by local and regional conditions, together with their own intellectual, economic, and social determinants. This framework is used by this dissertation in its analysis of Afro-descendant insurgency in Veracruz during Mexico's struggle for independence at the local and regional level, complementing the application of frameworks that seek for commonalities amongst late-colonial subalterns in the Latin American struggles for independence.

This dissertation also follows on the frameworks put forth by scholars such as Juan Ortíz Escamilla and Will Fowler, whose analysis regarding the political developments during and after the Mexican War of Independence result instrumental.¹³

¹² See Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and The Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹³ Will Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821-1858*, Mexican Experience (Lincoln, Nebraska ; London, [England]: University of Nebraska Press, 2016); Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *Guerra y gobierno: los pueblos y la independencia de México*, Colección Nueva América ; no.1. (Seville: Universidad Internacional de Andalucía, Sede Iberoamericana de la Rábida, 1997); Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, ed., *Revisión Histórica de La Guerra de Independencia En Veracruz* (México : Universidad Veracruzana :, 2008).

Particularly, this dissertation applies their regional approaches to the study of the Mexican War of Independence, one that is centered around the agency of local and regional subaltern political actors in dialogue with Transatlantic political developments, and in their participation in regional forms of political representation, such as the *Pronunciamiento* in early independent Mexico. It does so by applying their frameworks onto the agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the consolidation of Mexican Independence. In doing so, this dissertation also enters in dialogue with historians of Mexican nationalism, particularly Timothy E. Anna, David Branning, Enrique Florescano, and Jacques Lafaye.¹⁴ All of these authors have made valuable contributions to the study and understanding of the development of Mexican identity and nationalism, particularly influenced by *criollo* intellectualism in the formation of a national identity that mythologizes the Indigenous past. Nevertheless, this dissertation aims to both build upon these studies through the inclusion of Afro-descendant political agency in the fomenting and consolidation of Mexican nationalism, which ultimately and ironically erased Blackness from the national character.

This dissertation also builds upon the historiography of the Atlantic World. The work of Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's*

¹⁴ See Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico: 1821-1835* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); D. A. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, Cambridge Latin American Miniatures 4 (Cambridge, England: Centre of Latin American Studies, 1985); Enrique Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana: Ensayo Sobre La Reconstrucción Del Pasado: Época Prehispánica-1821*, 1a ed, Contrapuntos (México, D.F.: Editorial J. Mortiz, 1987); Enrique Florescano, *Etnia, Estado y Nación: Ensayo Sobre Las Identidades Colectivas En México*, Nuevo Siglo (México, D.F: Aguilar, 1997); Enrique Florescano, ed., *Espejo Mexicano*, 1. ed (Ciudad de México: Biblioteca Mexicana de la Fundación Miguel Alemán, 2002); Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (México: Fondo de Cultura económica, 1977).

Transimperial Greater Caribbean World, and the works Antonio García de León, *El Mar de Los Deseos: El Caribe Afroandaluz, Historia y Contrapunto* and *Vientos bucaneros: piratas, corsarios y filibusteros en el Golfo de México*, result instrumental.¹⁵ Both scholars situate “The Greater Caribbean” as a maritime geographical space that comprehends port-cities and hinterlands across the Spanish Antilles and Spanish Main, along with the French, Dutch, and British Antilles and Main. It was in this space, both authors argue, particularly through maritime trade and communication where a significant degree of cultural, social, and economic mobility allowed colonial subalterns, particularly Afro-descendants, to inform the cultural and social currents of this region. As the Port-City of Veracruz was an enclave of the Greater Caribbean, this dissertation engages Bassi’s and García de León’s framework as instrumental in understanding the economic, social, cultural, and political relationship of Veracruz’ and its Afro-descendant populations with the Greater Caribbean, and by extension the Atlantic World.

The inclusion of Veracruz, its hinterland, and its populations into the Atlantic World and the Greater Caribbean was strictly related to its significance as New Spain’s premier Port-City during the entire colonial period. This dissertation then engages the historical geography framework of Miles Ogborn, who suggests a new way of considering port-cities, particularly those related to the development of empire across the

¹⁵ See Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada’s Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Antonio García de León, *El Mar de Los Deseos: El Caribe Afroandaluz, Historia y Contrapunto*, Primera edición, Sección de Obras de Historia (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016); Antonio García de León, *Vientos bucaneros: piratas, corsarios y filibusteros en el Golfo de México* (Mexico, D.F: Biblioteca Era, 2014); Antonio García de León, *Fandango: el ritual del mundo jarocho a través de los siglos*, Primera reimpression, 2009. (México D.F: CONACULTA, Dirección General de Vinculación Cultural, 2009).

Atlantic World. In his article “Making Connections: Port Geography and Global History” Ogborn argues that Port-Cities across the Atlantic World and beyond, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were points of articulation, transfer, and negotiation.¹⁶ Particularly the concept of the port-city as an articulation of terrestrial and maritime networks, of economic and sociocultural transfer, and as sites of political and cultural negotiation, allow us to situate the Port-City of Veracruz, and its hinterland, as space where Afro-descendants had a unique access to mobility.

This dissertation also engages important scholarship that explores the intellectual and political repercussions of the Haitian Revolution across the Atlantic World. The works of Ulrike Bock, Clarence J. Munford, Michael Zeuske, and Alejandro Gómez shed insight into the discourse of “The Great Fear”, particularly the fear of a replica of the Haitian Revolution from manifesting in the Spanish Americas by enslaved and free Afro-descendants alike that was held by Spanish colonial administration.¹⁷ This dissertation contributes to their works by situating Spanish colonial administration’s fears of political and intellectual empowerment in Veracruz regarding peoples of African descent in the post-Haitian Revolution era.

¹⁶ See Miles Ogborn, "Making Connections: Port Geography and Global History" in Lourdes de Ita Rubio, *Organización del espacio en el México colonial: puertos, ciudades y caminos* (Morelia, Michoacán, México; Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo ; Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2012), 99–100

¹⁷ See Alejandro E. Gómez, “El Síndrome de Saint-Domingue. Percepciones y Sensibilidades de La Revolución Haitiana En El Gran Caribe (1791-1814),” *Caravelle* (1988-), no. 86 (2006): 125–55; Ulrike Bock, “¿Un caso del ‘gran miedo’ hacia los afrodescendientes en Yucatán? El uso estratégico de un discurso caribeño en el contexto de las independencias latinoamericanas,” *Historia Caribe* 13, no. 32 (2018): 51–79; Clarence J. Munford and Michael Zeuske, “Black Slavery, Class Struggle, Fear and Revolution in St. Domingue and Cuba, 1785-1795,” *The Journal of Negro History* 73, no. 1/4 (1988): 12–32.

In relation to this framework, this dissertation engages the frameworks set forth by Julius Jul Magnum Opus *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*. Scott's magnificent concept of the "Masterless Caribbean", establishing the Greater Caribbean region as a maritime and geographic region of inherent mobility for intellectual and political mobility for free Afro-descendants, is instrumental for this dissertation. Scott situates port-cities of the Greater Caribbean, and their hinterlands, as regions which provided unique political and intellectual opportunities for runaway slaves and free peoples of African descent.¹⁸

Scott argues that communities of free peoples of African descent "imbibed the egalitarian spirit of the times and rapidly assumed a political voice which emerged and matured during the 1790s."¹⁹ Through Scott's grounding of the Greater Caribbean port-city and hinterland as spaces of inherent intellectual and political mobility during the age of the Haitian Revolution, this dissertation seeks to situate the role of Veracruz' Afro-descendant political and intellectual agency in the development of the currents of political empowerment over the lives of Afro-descendants across the Atlantic World during the age of Revolutions.

This dissertation not only engages the historiography of Latin America and the Atlantic World. At its core, this work engages the African Diaspora as rooted in a regional setting of colonial and post-independence Mexico, and as such engages and contributes to overarching trends in African Diaspora historiography. It engages and

¹⁸ See Julius Sherrard Scott and Marcus Rediker, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*, 2018, 22.

¹⁹ Scott and Rediker, *The Common Wind*, 22.

builds upon historiography of the African Diaspora by analyzing studies that analyze overarching patterns of Diasporic experience across the continent, studies pertaining to maroonage, and studies on the Afro-Mexican experience, a part of the field that is currently experiencing thriving growth.

The work of Ira Berlin in *Many Thousands Gone* serves not only to situate general patterns of African Diaspora experiences in the continent in relationship to the role of slavery in regional colonial societies across the continent.²⁰ This dissertation uses Berlin's frameworks to identify the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland as a nexus and focal point of African slavery in colonial Mexico, but also as a region where Black experience is not only shaped by slavery. This dissertation adapts Berlin's frameworks for early slavery in North America by situating the region not as a slave society, but as a society with slaves, where despite the presence of slavery in the region as indisputable, the experience of Veracruz' Afro-descendants became much more complex than just one grounded upon the experience of slavery, where mobility and agency of free Afro-descendants was key.

This dissertation adapts works of scholars that analyze the relationships between race and social mobility, particularly in Spanish America, as constructive to Black and Diasporic experiences in the region. The work of Ann Twinam in *Purchasing Whiteness* in establishing the malleability of the Spanish colonial system with regards to state-recognized racial categorizations in colonial Latin America, where race could be a social

²⁰ See Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

and economic capital that was both malleable and manipulated by powerful peoples of African descent,²¹ is adopted by this dissertation. Particularly, it adopts Twinam's frameworks of demonstrating the late-eighteenth century malleability of racial categorizations in Spanish America, particularly in demonstrating the ways by which an Afro-descendant demographic majority in Veracruz, despite being racialized by the colonial system, made use of such categorizations for the obtainment of specific economic and political benefits. Following on Twinam's work, this dissertation also adopts the frameworks of mobility and malleability of racial categories in late-colonial, and early-independence, Spanish America as discussed by authors such as Alex Borucki and Aline Helg, where such malleability and manipulation of racial categories led to heightened political and intellectual roles for Afro-descendant actors by the turn of the nineteenth century.²²

This dissertation also adopts novel frameworks that consider the ways European record making in the Americas was inherently designed to exclude the voices and agency of Afro-descendants, free and enslaved. The works of Aisha Finch and Marissa Fuentes

²¹ See Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015).

²² See Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Back Identities in the Río de La Plata*, Diálogos Series (Albuquerque, [New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2015); Aline Helg, "La Limpieza de Sangre Bajo Las Reformas Borbónicas y Su Impacto En El Caribe Neogranadino". In *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* (Academia Colombiana de Historia), Vol. 101, No 858 (Enero-Junio 2014), Pp. 143-180.," accessed August 5, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/16635133/_La_limpieza_de_sangre_bajo_las_reformas_borb%C3%B3nicas_y_su_impacto_en_el_Caribe_neogranadino_In_Bolet%C3%ADn_de_Historia_y_Antig%C3%BCedades_Academia_Colombiana_de_Historia_vol_101_no_858_enero_junio_2014_pp_143_180; Aline Helg, "Simón Bolívar and the Spectre of 'Pardocracia': José Padilla in Post-Independence Cartagena," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35, no. 3 (2003): 447–71; Aline Helg, *Slave No More: Self-Liberation before Abolitionism in the Americas*, North Carolina Scholarship Online (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

counter traditional ways of reading the European-produced documentary record that depicted Afro-descendant experience in the Americas.²³ Particularly, their novel frameworks are adapted by this dissertation in analyzing the colonial record against the grain to discover the ways by which Afro-descendants in slave rebellions, or daily forms of resistance against colonial oppression, exerted particular political pressure over the colonial apparatus which led to the erasure of their political agency in the documentary record.

The scholarship of slave rebellion and maroonage is also engaged in this dissertation. Not only does this dissertation contextualizes the role of rebellion and maroonage in Veracruz in relationship to hemispheric patterns as exemplified in places such as Panama and Brazil, widely studied by Ruth Pike and Stuart B. Schwartz respectively.²⁴ At the same time it builds upon the scholarship of authors such as William B. Taylor, Patrick J. Carroll, Juan Manuel de la Serna, and Frank Proctor III, who have contributed vastly to the study of maroonage in colonial Mexico.²⁵ It specially engages

²³ See Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive*, Early American Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

²⁴ See Ruth Pike, "Black Rebels: The Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," *The Americas* 64, no. 2 (2007): 243–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/30139087>; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, Illini books ed, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

²⁵ See Patrick J. Carroll, "Mandinga: The Evolution of a Mexican Runaway Slave Community, 1735-1827," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19, no. 4 (1977): 488–505; Juan Manuel de la Serna, ed., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, trans. Juan M. de la Serna H., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), <http://books.openedition.org/cemca/1606>; de la Serna; William B. Taylor, "The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Los Morenos de Amapa," *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (1970): 439–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980185>.

the vast scholarship of Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita whose work on maroonage in Veracruz, particularly in the plantations around the city of Córdoba, has been instrumental to situate maroonage in Veracruz as both a unique experience of the African Diaspora in Mexico, and one that has similarities with the Caribbean and other regions of the Americas.²⁶ This dissertation adopts the frameworks of these authors in the study of slave rebellion and maroonage not only to understand patterns of regional resistance to Spanish colonialism. At the same time, it adapts these frameworks to understand the ways by which Afro-descendant political agency, via maroonage and rebellion, enabled the establishment of alternative Black spaces in Veracruz and its hinterland that were in dialogue with Atlantic World Diasporic intellectual and political events.

Most importantly, this dissertation engages the growing and thriving subfield of studies dedicated to analyzing the experience of the African Diaspora in Mexico. It establishes dialogue with studies that seek to analyze the earliest presence of Africans and peoples of African descent in Mexico. From engaging Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's pioneering work *La población negra de México*, to the works of scholars such as Citlali Domínguez Domínguez, Peter Gerhard, and Matthew Restall, it engages the frameworks of studying Black presence in Mexico by tracing it back as early as 1519 with the advent of Spanish colonization and the founding of the Port-City of Veracruz.²⁷ In doing so it

²⁶ See Naveda Chávez-Hita, "Esclavitud negra en la jurisdicción de la villa de Córdoba en el siglo XVIII"; Naveda Chávez-Hita, "La lucha de los negros esclavos en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba en el Siglo XVIII"; Naveda Chávez-Hita, *Esclavos negros en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba, Veracruz, 1690-1830*; Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825."

²⁷ See Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negra de México, 1519-1810: Estudio Etno-Histórico* (México: D.F., Ediciones Fuente cultural, 1946); Citlali Domínguez Domínguez, "Entre Resistencia y Colaboración: Los negros y mulatos en la sociedad colonial veracruzana, 1570-1650," *e-Spania*, no. 25

seeks to establish Veracruz, and its hinterland, as a predominant Black space dating to the earliest patterns of regional Spanish colonization.

This dissertation seeks to evolve conceptions of Black presence in Mexico and Veracruz limited only to the experience of slavery by engaging studies of the varied economic roles that Afro-descendants, both free and enslaved, participated in during Mexico's colonial period. The works of Alvaro Alcántara, Patrick James Carroll, and Rafael Castañeda García, whom all situate Black economic experience in Mexico, and Veracruz, as one that not just rests on the experience of slavery result instrumental.²⁸ This dissertation adopts their frameworks to situate Veracruz' Afro-descendants in a complex relationship with regional, national, and Atlantic, economic development through their enabling of both regional agricultural and maritime trade economies, as well as in their roles as important tax and tribute payers by the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

(October 1, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.25936>; Peter Gerhard, "A Black Conquistador in Mexico," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (1978): 451–59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2513959>; Matthew Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America," *The Americas* 57, no. 2 (2000): 171–205.

²⁸ See Alvaro Alcántara, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795." in *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, ed., in Yovana Celaya Nández, Graciela Márquez, and Graciela Márquez Colín, (El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2018); Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2nd ed (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Rafael Castañeda García, "Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810," *Fronteras de la historia* 19, no. 1 (February 11, 2014): 152–73, <https://doi.org/10.22380/2027468835>. (El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2018); Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2nd ed (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Rafael Castañeda García, "Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810," *Fronteras de la historia* 19, no. 1 (February 11, 2014): 152–73, <https://doi.org/10.22380/2027468835>.

It engages the works of scholars that identify political and intellectual advancement of peoples of African descent in Mexico and Veracruz during the late-colonial and Age of Revolution periods. The work of Ben Vinson III in *Bearing Arms for His Majesty* results instrumental not only to identify avenues of Afro-descendant political and social empowerment through participation in free Black militias.²⁹ It engages Vinson's work on Black militias in colonial Mexico to understand the avenues of political empowerment for free peoples of African descent in Veracruz, but also how said avenues transcended the colonial period well into the early-national period in the midst of Atlantic Revolutions. In doing so, it also engages the works of Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, Luis Juventino García Ruíz, and Salvador Méndez Reyes, to analyze the effects upon Veracruz' Afro-descendant political and intellectual frameworks spurred about by the Enlightenment, early-nineteenth century liberalism, and the Haitian Revolution as having a profound definition in the lives of peoples of African descent in Veracruz.³⁰

Lastly, this dissertation engages, and seeks to build upon, the growing historiography of the relationship between Blackness and the development of racial constructs and national identity in colonial and early independent Mexico. It builds upon the works of Herman Bennet, Theodore Cohen, Ricardo Pérez Monfort, and Ben Vinson

²⁹ See Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001).

³⁰ See Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825," in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 195–217; Salvador Méndez-Reyes, "Hacia la abolición de la esclavitud en México: El dictamen de la comisión de esclavos de 1821," in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013); Luis J García Ruiz, "Esclavos de la subdelegación de Xalapa ante el Código Negro de 1789: insubordinación, justicia y represión," *Ulúa. Revista de historia, sociedad y cultura* 23 (2014): 28.

III, whose scholarly contributions enable a more nuanced understanding of the progression of racial categories and language associated to peoples of African descent from the colonial era, to post-revolutionary 1920s Mexico.³¹ It engages these works by situating the experience of Veracruz' Afro-descendants to fill the important gap of the early nineteenth century, during Mexico's consolidation as an independent nation, which this dissertation identifies as a period that is crucial in understanding the transformation of racial constructs and the eventual neglect and forgetting of Black identity in Mexican identity and the national Mexican character.

Kin of the Leeward Port not only builds upon these three distinct historiographical traditions through its analysis of sociopolitical development of Veracruz' Afro-descendants. It intersects these overlapping historiographies as it seeks to reframe the sociopolitical meanings of Blackness in Mexico, looking to reframe Mexico's connections with the Atlantic World through an analysis of the mobility of peoples and ideas, and reframe the roles of Blackness and African descendants in the history of revolutions in Latin America.

³¹ See Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, Afro-Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108632430>; Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "Lo 'negro' en la formación del estereotipo jarocho durante los siglos XIX y XX," Artículo (Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales. Universidad Veracruzana, 1997), <https://cdigital.uv.mx/>; Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139207744>.

Outline

Chapter One lays out the sociopolitical and economic foundations of late-colonial Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland of *Sotavento*. This chapter provides the historical background needed to understand Black and Afro-descendant presence in the region up to 1805. In analyzing Veracruz' Afro-descendant demographic patterns, their instrumental roles in regional defense, economic development, sociocultural development, and in establishing alternate Black spaces as maroons, this chapter argues that free and enslaved Veracruz' Afro-descendants made of Veracruz and its hinterland spaces of mobility and thriving Blackness. In doing so, this chapter demonstrates how Veracruz' Afro-descendants established important social and political precedents that enabled them to remain instrumental political actors of the region well into the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two is centered around a localized case of slave rebellion in the plantations of Córdoba in 1805. It shows not only how a significant slave rebellion in Veracruz' hinterland resulted from regional ideological and political growth of enslaved Afro-descendants' political awareness, but also how the shockwaves of the Haitian revolution influenced their sociopolitical agency as well. In its analysis of Spanish accounts of this event, this chapter builds on Atlantic World historiography that explores the narrative of "The Big Fear" at the turn of the nineteenth century, more specifically the fear by Spanish and British colonial powers of the Haitian Revolution spreading to their colonial possessions by the action of free or enslaved Afro-descendants. Also, by analyzing the Maroon narrative of this localized slave rebellion, this chapter links

Veracruz' Afro-descendant ideological and political action to Atlantic World political developments, demonstrating that by 1805 the ideological and political effects of Haiti had highly influenced enslaved peoples in Veracruz in their search for freedom.

While both Chapter One and Chapter Two serve in many ways as joint introductory chapters that lay out the setting to understand sociopolitical development and growth amongst free and enslaved Veracruz' Afro-descendants by 1805, Chapter Three marks a thematic departure for the second half of the dissertation, as it delves right into their roles, and agency, during the first three years of the armed conflict for Mexican independence. This chapter is centered around the 1810 to 1813 period, reperiodizing the struggle for independence in the region through the inclusion of Afro-descendant political and military action in both sides of the war. At the same time, this chapter helps complicate notions of political and social development of the region during the early years of the struggle by demonstrating the complex ways by which Afro-descendants participated as line troops, and leaders, while seeking political representation and growth, both through Cadiz liberalism and insurgent politics, and very often at the same time for both sides.

Chapter Four continues the exploration of heightened Afro-descendant political and military roles during the regional developments of Mexico's struggle for independence in Veracruz and its hinterland. It expands the analysis of Chapter Three by situating Afro-descendant political and military action for the most violent and transformative period of the war in the region, 1814-1819. This period saw Afro-descendants take on instrumental roles in the insurgency as Cadiz' liberalism became

outlawed by the Crown and as they saw greater opportunities with the insurgency by 1814. By the same token, as rebellion was regionally quelled by royalist pacification efforts by 1819, most of the pacifying efforts were manned by Afro-descendants. Emphasizing localized and individual case-studies, this chapter argues that regional liberal frameworks, the escalation of insurgent violence, and ultimate royalist pacification in 1819, were in fact instrumentally shaped by Veracruz' Afro-descendants. It also argues that this led to lessening of racial categories associated to Blackness by both sides.

Chapter Five examines the radical and complex shifting sociopolitical panorama of Veracruz and *Sotavento* from 1820 to 1825, grounded on the transformative experiences of Veracruz' Afro-descendants. Spanning the consolidation of independence, Mexico as a constitutional monarchy, and eventually the advent of a liberal republic with the expulsion from Spanish military presence from the Mexican territory, this chapter centers and credits these radical regional transformations of national impact on the roles and sociopolitical agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants. It does so not only to understand how the political militancy of Veracruz' Afro-descendants enabled these sociopolitical transformations to happen, but also to examine how with the advent of independence, and with the establishment of republican liberalism, their identity and political recognition as peoples of African descent became ironically extirpated by the nation-state they helped create. This chapter examines how the political transformations of Mexico in the 1820s made of Veracruz' Afro-descendant citizens of a deracialized nation that neglected Blackness and the political roles they played regionally.

Implications

This dissertation is not only the result of years of arduous research and work. It is also a result of a personal and intellectual necessity of reframing how Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and the Mexican nation, think historically of themselves, of their past, and of their identity.

The 2020 Mexican census shows that 2.04% of the population of Mexico, or 2,520,280 individuals, identified themselves as Afro-Mexican, whilst in the State of Veracruz, with a population of 8,062,579 individuals, 2.67% or 215,270 persons in the state identified in 2020 as Afro-Mexican.³² This dissertation aims to push for the historical recognition of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as its academic intervention intersects during a monumental period of state-sponsored recognition of Afro-Mexicans, and as we approach the 200th anniversary of the consolidation of Mexican independence on September 28th 2021. As such, this dissertation seeks to subvert and reassess narratives of identity and nation-state formation in Mexico in the early nineteenth century by foregrounding the voices, perspectives and actions of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as integral to the national historical processes of independence.

This dissertation not only engages current academic, social, and political efforts that are pushing for social and political recognition of Mexicans of African descent. At the same time, it engages with my own personal necessity to question and contest Mexican identity and nationalism which came about from my upbringing in the Port-City

³² XIV Censo General de Población y Vivienda, *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática*, 2020, México: INEGI.

of Veracruz, Mexico. I was exposed since an early age to this colonial-era commercial entrepôt, with centuries-old connections to Atlantic World and Caribbean economies, societies, and culture. As such, my own sense of identity was defined by Veracruz' historical sociocultural character that saw outward, towards an Atlantic and a Caribbean where African descendants and Blackness had played an instrumental role, rather than inward towards the Mexican nation.

I began an internal questioning of how localized Veracruz identity, culture, music, and foods, those of the *jarochos* and *jarochas*, were strongly defined by centuries of presence, thriving, intermixing, and development by African peoples and peoples of African descent in Veracruz. Furthermore, I began to ask how this culture, my own regional culture, fit within traditional conceptions of Mexico and its peoples, especially after migrating to the United States and becoming exposed to a varying degree of different conceptions of Mexican identity and nationalism. Ultimately, I understood that a reconceptualization of Blackness in the Mexican and local Veracruz character has potentially immediate and profound social repercussions for many Mexican families. Particularly for thousands of families in Veracruz, who to this day engage nationalist Mexican frameworks that render Blackness unable to exist within Mexican social and racial identities.

Such was the example of Amparo Mateos Cazarín, my paternal great-grandmother, who as an Afro-Mexican woman was born and raised in the town of Mandinga y Matosa, a small town south of the port-city that traces its founding by maroons of the 1619 Yanga rebellion. Nevertheless, as with many families in modern

Veracruz who embrace the modern national Mexican identity dogma from the state, in explaining the role of Blackness in her heritage, my family elders assured that her Blackness was not of national origin, but foreign. They attributed her African ancestry to her paternal grandfather, long-thought of to have been an Afro-Cuban man. Heavily inspired by the life, experiences, and history of Amparo Mateos Cazarín, *Kin of the Leeward Port* is an attempt to recover the presence, agency, and roles of the African Diaspora in Veracruz. It seeks to do justice to the voices and identities that were silenced with the coming of the Mexican state upon independence, and to rescue their legacy and roles as crucial players in the creation of the Mexican nation-state.

Chapter One

Veracruz and *Sotavento*: An Afro-descendant Space in an Atlantic World Place, 1770-1805

From their first roles as *conquistadores*,³³ to their myriad roles in the development of colonial economy, society, culture, and defense throughout the colonial period,³⁴ Afro-descendants were a pillar in the Port-City of Veracruz and its hinterland's regional development, the colonial state's consolidation, and the eventual liberation of Veracruz from Spanish colonialism upon independence in the early nineteenth century. During the Bourbon Reforms of the late-eighteenth century, and up to the first years of the nineteenth century, the roles of Veracruz' Afro-descendants were further developed and strengthened, creating a Black regional space of Atlantic World impact.

This chapter builds upon existing scholarship on Veracruz during the late-colonial period³⁵ by providing a snapshot of the integral roles of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the conformation of a regional Black space through an analysis of demographic patterns, their active roles in the economy, military defense, maroon communities and resistance,

³³ The figure of the African conquistador, exemplified by Juan Garrido and his participation in the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan alongside Hernán Cortés, bear to mind the role of peoples of African descent in Spanish colonization of the Americas from the mere beginning. See Peter Gerhard, "A Black Conquistador in Mexico," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (1978): 451–59, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2513959>; Matthew Restall, "Black Conquistadors: Armed Africans in Early Spanish America," *The Americas* 57, no. 2 (2000): 171–205.

³⁴ Patrick James Carroll presents in *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz* a classic survey study on the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants contributed to Veracruz' regional economic, social, and political development from the early sixteenth century to the mid eighteenth century. See Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2nd ed (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

³⁵ See Carroll; Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: el puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519-1821* (México, D.F.; Xalapa, Veracruz: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011); Luis J. García Ruíz, *Unidos en un mismo cuerpo: monarquía y sociedad en un tiempo de reformas : Veracruz 1764-1810*. (México: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2017).

and as conscious sociopolitical actors from 1770 to 1805. As such, this chapter argues that Veracruz, from its colonial foundation, up to the early nineteenth-century, remained a Black space of Atlantic World significance.

By providing a snapshot of Veracruz' Afro-descendant roles during the 1770 to 1805 period we can obtain an integral sense of their instrumental shaping of this local, yet globalized, late-colonial world. At the same time, it can be demonstrated that peoples of African descent in Veracruz were a historical sociopolitical constant that characterized the region as a Black space, revealing that this population sector, and their agency, did not disappear once Mexico consolidated into an independent nation. Showing how Veracruz' Afro-descendants formed a complex manifestation of regional Spanish colonialism in coastal New Spain has a twofold objective. First, it illuminates how they enabled the creation of a Black colonial space in Veracruz and its hinterland with ties to the Atlantic World and the Greater Caribbean. Second, it helps us understand the ways by which state-sponsored projects of deracialized Mexican nationalism of the early 19th century sought to discredit Blackness associated to the character of an independent Mexico.³⁶

³⁶ Scholars such as Alvaro Alcántara and Antonio García de León, although making essential contributions to the study of regional Veracruz' history, they describe the regional development of Veracruz' Afro-descendants under the frameworks of *mestizaje* for the late colonial period, by arguing that by the mid to late eighteenth century the lack of continued arrivals of African slaves, and the racial intermixing that free Afro-descendants underwent with Spanish and Indigenous Peoples, led to the almost nonexistent presence of true Blackness and African customs. Their posture reveals the undercurrents of traditional Mexican identity formation theory and scholarship that reinforces the ideas of *mestizaje* as the catalyst of nation-state formation in Mexico which has largely disregarded and neglected the contributions of the African past in the conformation of Mexico and Mexican identity for two-hundred years. This leads in turn perpetuate the use of narratives of *mestizaje* that further discrimination towards Afro-Mexicans to this day. See García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 549; Álvaro Alcántara, "Un Imperio también de agua: puertos interiores, redes mercantiles y comercio de contrabando en las costas novohispanas, 1776-1795 (Dossier)," *Illes i imperis*, 2016, 77–104, <https://doi.org/208050024>.

This chapter centers on Afro-descendants thriving in this particular regional Black space of geopolitical significance from 1770 to 1805. It analyzes how their essential roles as enablers of an Atlantic World economy, in regional defense, and in sociocultural regional development, maintained Veracruz as a space of evident and thriving Blackness unique to the dynamics of colonial Mexico and similar to societies with high Afro-descendant demographic sectors of the Caribbean.³⁷ As such, an analysis of the 1770-1805 period becomes imperative to understand the context and dynamics by which Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland of *Sotavento* remained a space of Blackness well past the struggles for Mexican independence, Spanish attempts of reconquering Mexico, and the founding of the first Mexican Federal Republic up to the 1830s.

This chapter seeks to answer two main questions: First, how was Veracruz formed and maintained as a Black space towards the late-colonial period? Second, how was this Black space reaffirmed through manipulation of Spanish colonialism by Afro-descendants, and as a result contested by Spanish administration? The first thematic subsection will examine the ways by which Veracruz represented a space of Blackness linked to the Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic World. It will also analyze the ways by which maroonage, and the establishment of legalized communities of former maroon

³⁷ This chapter, and dissertation, builds on the vanguardist and current efforts of historians such as Ben Vinson III and Theodore Cohen that seek to reframe the meanings of African heritage and Blackness within the frameworks, meanings, and conceptions of Mexican identity which to this day excludes, or relegates into a tertiary role, African ancestry as a catalyst of Mexican history and identity. For more on their contributions see Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, Afro-Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108632430>; Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139207744>.

communities, consolidated alternate Black spaces rooted in resistance to colonialism. The second subsection provides snapshots of the way free Afro-descendants manipulated colonial establishments through their participation in militias, and as both enablers and disrupters of regional and Atlantic World economies. It also analyzes how as they furthered this regional Black space, it came to be contested by Spanish administrators.

Veracruz and *Sotavento*: Afro-descendants and the Formation of a Black Space

The Port-City of Veracruz, and its Leeward hinterland of *Sotavento* along the Gulf of Mexico, represent a unique space for the history of Mexico, but also one that shares similarities with other places across the Greater Caribbean as Veracruz' Afro-descendants enabled both uniqueness and similarities.³⁸ Since its founding in 1519, the Port-City of Veracruz was situated in an inhospitable coastal plain surrounded by sand dunes facing the open ocean with no natural shelter limiting urban growth. Its hinterland

³⁸ The geospatial conceptions of the Greater Caribbean situates this maritime geographical space as a conglomerate of both the traditionally recognized regions of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. In the words of García de León, the Greater Caribbean represented more than a purely geographical space, as in turn represented an “ensemble of regions that constituted this region as a historical and geographical formation of many economic and cultural ‘plaques’” that included the Caribbean’s Spanish, French, and British Antilles, the Spanish Main with port-cities across Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela such as Portobelo, Nombre de Dios, Darien, Cartagena, Maracaibo, Caracas-La Guaira, Cumana, and the Port-Cities of the Gulf of Mexico such as Veracruz and Campeche in what was called *Seno Mexicano*, and in Louisiana, New Orleans. It was the mobility and constant contact across the greater Caribbean, especially within Spanish possessions and territories of what he calls the Afro-Andalusian Caribbean, that enabled for the creation of social and cultural regional identities that bear common similarities, such as that of the *jarocho* of Veracruz, the *Guajiro* of Cuba and Santo Domingo, the *Jibaros* of Puerto Rico, the *Llaneros* of Venezuela and Colombia, and the *Criollos* of Panama, who all were product of racial, social, and cultural intermixing but also of a constant presence of Afro-descendant sociocultural mobility and interchange. See Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada’s Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Antonio García de León, *Vientos bucaneros: piratas, corsarios y filibusteros en el Golfo de México* (Mexico, D.F: Biblioteca Era, 2014), 73–74; Antonio García de León, *El Mar de Los Deseos: El Caribe Afroandaluz, Historia y Contrapunto*, Primera edición, Sección de Obras de Historia (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016).

of *Sotavento*, consisted of a sparsely populated coastal strip of land extending westward to the limits of the Sierra Madre Oriental, and southward to the delimitations of modern Oaxaca and Tabasco.³⁹ Comprised mostly of hot and humid lowlands of rivers, lagoons, jungles, and marshes, and with endemic diseases like yellow fever, this environmental setting prevented effective royal communication, control, and the establishment of a sizable Spanish or indigenous population, presenting ideal spaces for the thriving of Afro-descendants.⁴⁰

It was here, in this environmentally rich, yet challenging, setting, where the roles of Afro-descendants were instrumental in the creation of a Port-City and hinterland that served as spaces of economic, sociopolitical, and cultural articulation, transfer, and negotiation between New Spain and the Greater Caribbean.⁴¹ Their roles enabled spaces where blackness was present, constant, and mobile since the early sixteenth century. First, through their arrival to the Port-City as both free Black conquistadores and Hispanicized urban slaves between 1526 to 1550, and afterwards through the arrival in

³⁹ See Citlalli Domínguez Domínguez, “Entre Resistencia y Colaboración: Los negros y mulatos en la sociedad colonial veracruzana, 1570-1650,” *e-Spania*, no. 25 (October 1, 2016): 6, <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.25936>; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 17, 19, 20; Andrew L. Knaut, “Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (November 1997): 621, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2516981>.

⁴⁰ Spaniards, since the early sixteenth century, preferred more hospitable climates such as those of Mexico City, Puebla, and Xalapa to live in and develop commercial activities, visiting the “insalubrious” Port-City only when deemed necessary. See Citlalli Domínguez Domínguez, “Entre Resistencia y Colaboración: Los negros y mulatos en la sociedad colonial veracruzana, 1570-1650,” *e-Spania*, no. 25 (October 1, 2016): 6, <https://doi.org/10.4000/e-spania.25936>; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 17, 19, 20; Andrew L. Knaut, “Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (November 1997): 621, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2516981>.

⁴¹ See Miles Ogborn, “Making Connections: Port Geography and Global History” in Lourdes de Ita Rubio, *Organización del espacio en el México colonial: puertos, ciudades y caminos* (Morelia, Michoacán, México; Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo; Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2012), 99–100; Julius Sherrard Scott and Marcus Rediker, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*, 2018.

1570 of Angolan slaves destined for sugarcane plantations. By the late-sixteenth century, Veracruz and its heavily depopulated hinterland, caused by Indigenous population decline via smallpox, provided a region where free and enslaved Afro-descendants quickly became the pillars of economic, social, and cultural life.⁴² A scant Spanish presence the region, and the important roles Afro-descendants played as de facto enablers of Spanish colonialism in the region, led them, at first mostly free and enslaved men, to intermix with the scant indigenous population giving rise to multiple free *castas*, such as *mulatos* and *pardos*, which by the seventeenth century became the region's largest demographic sector over enslaved Africans, indigenous peoples, and Spaniards.⁴³

⁴² The first enslaved Africans that arrived to the Port-City and its developing hinterland, between 1526 and 1550, were Hispanicized slaves of Iberian and Cape Verde origin who worked in households amidst urban spheres, and as such became pillars of early colonial development in the face of indigenous depopulation that was caused by the smallpox epidemic following the Spanish conquest. By 1570, a new contingent of African slaves that hailed directly from Angola, and were non-Hispanicized, arrived to Veracruz which were destined to work in silver mines of the Mexican interior, and in sugarcane plantations and in sugar mills in developing towns such as Córdoba since 1618. See Citlali Domínguez Domínguez, "Entre Resistencia y Colaboración," 4; Alvaro Alcántara López, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Yovana Celaya Nández, Graciela Márquez, and Graciela Márquez Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX* (El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2018), 62.

⁴³ Alcántara argues that by the late seventeenth century, for both the Port-City and most of its *Sotavento* hinterland, the demographic increase of free Afro-descendant *castas* that increased free labor availability made the perpetuation of slavery and the importing of African slaves by the late-seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries both an "unnecessary and unviable" investment for the development of regional economies. This of course with the exception of the sugarcane plantation region around Córdoba which continued to make use of slavery well into the early nineteenth century. See Álvaro Alcántara, "Un Imperio también de agua: puertos interiores, redes mercantiles y comercio de contrabando en las costas novohispanas, 1776-1795 (Dossier)," *Illes i imperis*, 2016, 84, <https://doi.org/208050024>; Domínguez states that not only were Afro-descendants involved in regional economic development and defense throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century, but that Veracruz' Afro-descendants, together with Portuguese sailors and merchants, were involved in the shipping and trade of slaves, wine, and textiles, of both legal and illegal nature, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Citlali Domínguez Domínguez, "Entre Resistencia y Colaboración," 7, 8; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 20, 537; The *Casta* system, a colonial-era conception of race and society established by the Spanish in order to justify European superiority over indigenous, African, and mixed peoples in their Spanish American colonies, was used by Spanish authorities to attempt and define socioracial and political relationships in places such as colonial Mexico. Vinson identifies such an ideology as arising from both the importing of racialized notions of identity imported from the Iberian Peninsula after centuries of conflict with the Moors during the *Reconquista*, and defined also by the racial miscegenation that occurred during

Afro-descendants became positioned in essential economic roles such as dockworkers, cattle ranchers, muleteers, amongst others, and in political ones by becoming members of military defense warding off pirate attacks through their roles as early royalist militias.⁴⁴ The growth of a population of free and enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz and its hinterland led to the creation, by the seventeenth century, of a diverse Black space that reflected the important roles they played in the development of the region.⁴⁵ Veracruz became a unique scenario for New Spain, but one that resembled other port-cities of the Greater Caribbean, as the port-city and its hinterland became a Spanish settlement where Afro-descendants were the majority, becoming a territory associated to thriving economic and social roles for peoples of African descent, then recognized as the people of *color quebrado*.⁴⁶ Proof of this was that by 1640 out of

the colonial period. See Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 33–34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781139207744>.

⁴⁴ García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 538.

⁴⁵ A 1584 description of the city and its hinterland by Franciscan Friar Antonio de Ciudad Real made interesting comparisons of free Black peoples in Veracruz to mosquitoes. Not only he evoked the unhealthy environs of the Port-City and its hinterland in such comparison, but more specifically referring to the mobility and freedom of movement of free Blacks in Veracruz, such as those of mosquitoes according to the friar, as he described that they “are a great lot and live with the greatest freedom that they desire.” The friar even expressed worry of rebellion as he described free Blacks in Veracruz as individuals of “dishonest customs, proud, mouthy, arrogant, and bold”, individuals who by late sixteenth century dominated regional life, economy, and society for the lack of substantial Spanish or indigenous presence, truly making of late-sixteenth century Veracruz a Black space. For more see Domínguez Domínguez, “Entre Resistencia y Colaboración,” 7.

⁴⁶ “*Gente de color quebrado*”, translated to people of broken color, was a sixteenth and seventeenth century term used to describe African and Afro-descendant peoples by the Spanish; By 1600, Spanish officials recognized that the former emplacement of Veracruz, afterwards denominated the town of La Antigua, had become a Black space where its remaining inhabitants were all Afro-descendants. By the early 1600s, Spaniards also recognized that south of the Port-City there existed a free-Black maroon community denominated as “Mocambo”, the Portuguese word used to describe a small maroon community. See Citlali Domínguez Domínguez, “Entre Resistencia y Colaboración,” 6.

the 6000 individuals in the Port-City, Spanish colonial authorities recognized that 83%, or 5,000, were Blacks and *mulatos*.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, the expansion and solidifying of Veracruz and its *Sotavento* hinterland as a Black space by the seventeenth century was not a unifying, nor equal, experience. The varied origin and experiences of Afro-descendants, tied for some to origin in the motherland when enslaved, or free birth in the Americas, grouped them into different categories that encompassed ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural identities. From urban free-Afro-descendants of cities such as Veracruz and Córdoba, to free and enslaved rural workers of plantations and *Haciendas* across the hinterland, some groups did not accept, or resented, the other.⁴⁸ As such, seventeenth-century Veracruz and *Sotavento* became well-solidified diverse Black spaces of mobility that situated Afro-descendants as essential actors of a complex regional society, a colonial society with slaves rather than a slave society.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ During most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the populations of the Port-City fluctuated with the arrival and going of the *Flota de Indias*, or Spanish Treasure Fleet. García de León estimates that for most of the year the population of the Port-City “did not exceed more than one thousand inhabitants, of which 600 were free and enslaved Blacks who worked in the consignment of goods, the careening of Spanish ships” and in small-scale agriculture that supplied the houses of the city and the incoming ships. See García de León, *Vientos bucaneros*, 109.

⁴⁸ These groups included: Urban Afro-descendants of Veracruz, Xalapa, Córdoba, and Orizaba, rural slaves of the plantations and haciendas surrounding Córdoba, Orizaba, Xalapa, and across the hinterland which worked in the production of sugar, tobacco, and cattle ranching, domestic service slaves; communities of free Afro-descendant *castas* such as Blacks, *zambos*, and free rural *mulatos*, and those which had pursued freedom through integration into indigenous communities across the immediacies of the Port-City, Cosamaloapan, Tuztlas, Guaspaltepec, and Coatzacoalcos. These differences made Afro-descendants to not conform a united social and cultural front, exemplified in the ways free urban Afro-descendants acculturated to Spanish practices and depreciated rural Afro-descendant *castas*. For more, see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 537, 573.

⁴⁹ Ira Berlin brings forth the concept of colonial societies not only in early North America, but across the American Atlantic World, belonging into two categories. First, slave societies, those which are heavily dependent on slave labor for the economic, social, and political development of the region, which bear to mind the U.S. Antebellum, nineteenth century Cuba, and Brazil. And secondly, societies with slaves, those which despite having slave labor in their social strata their presence and roles were often reserved for the

By the late-eighteenth century, the Black space that was Veracruz and its hinterland was not just reaffirmed by Afro-descendants but also recognized by colonial authorities. The region was in the 1760s included into the Spanish's attempts at consolidating their control over their colonies through the implementation of the enlightenment-inspired Bourbon Reforms.⁵⁰ Not only did the reforms included a plethora of administrative changes that sought reorganization and more infrastructure for military defense.⁵¹ The reforms also sought the consolidation of income for the crown by pushing for free commerce in 1778, the reorganization of the coastal Province of Veracruz as an Intendancy in 1789, the creation of a Veracruz *Consulado* or merchant's guild in 1795⁵², and the creation of censuses which sought to count the region's populations as possible taxpayers and in the process recognized the immense economic and sociopolitical role of Afro-descendants for the region.⁵³

These censuses, known as *padrones*, revealed not only a meticulous accounting of colonial society based on racial caste and profession, but at the same time they revealed

most part to the urban sphere where slaves performed household labors and were seen as symbols of status, this synonymous for example for most of the urban slave experience of colonial Mexican cities. For more see Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 8–9.

⁵⁰ Starting with the visit of Spanish colonial administrator José de Gálvez in 1764, and arising from existing geopolitical anxieties of a possible British invasion of New Spain via Veracruz that resulted with the British navy taking of Havana in 1762 during the Seven Years War, Veracruz became the foreground and experimental region for the implementation of Bourbon Reformism, where military and economic reforms took the biggest importance. See García Ruíz, *Unidos en un mismo cuerpo*, 12.

⁵¹ For more on the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants played instrumental roles on military defense during the late-colonial period please refer to second subsection of this study.

⁵² AHV/ C.50/Vol/58/fs.47-71/1795; AGN/Bandos/Vol.18/exp.4/fs.5/17 de enero de 1795

⁵³ See Michael Ducey, Juan Ortiz Escamilla, and Silvia Mendez Marín, "Las Reformas Borbónicas y la invención de Veracruz" in Martin Aguilar Sánchez et al., *Historia general de Veracruz* (Veracruz (México): Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Secretaría de Educación de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011), 164; García Ruíz, *Unidos en un mismo cuerpo*, 22–23; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 795–811; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750- 1825* (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008), 41.

how prominent had Veracruz' Afro-descendants become. The 1743, 1746, 1754, and 1777 *padrones* revealed that between thirty to forty percent of the population across the hinterland was made up by Afro-descendant individuals who made possible the development of eighteenth-century tobacco, sugar, and cotton trade, and the consolidation of commercial cattle ranching.⁵⁴ But it is perhaps the 1791 *Padrón de Revillagigedo* which demonstrated that the Port-City had solidified into the region's, and New Spain's, Black urban space per excellence.⁵⁵

Despite that the *Padrón de Revillagigedo* of 1791 described exclusively the demographics of the *Intramuros*, or inside the walls, neighborhoods of the Port-City of Veracruz, as it excluded the *extramuros*, or outside the walls, neighborhood of the city, Afro-descendants represented still an important demographic of residents in the households within the walls of the city nonetheless.⁵⁶ The census divided the city into

⁵⁴ These censuses were made by analyzing population within church districts, or *curatos*, across the hinterland. The 1743 census revealed that in the Port-City there resided 4503 inhabitants. The 1754 census particularly recognized that in that year the population of the port-city was that of 4790 inhabitants. For more see Alvaro Alcántara López, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 63; Alcántara, "Un Imperio también de agua," 85; Rudolf Widmer Sennhauser, "La ciudad de Veracruz en el último siglo colonial (1680-1820): algunos aspectos de la historia demográfica de una ciudad portuaria," *La palabra y el hombre* Julio-Septiembre, no. No. 83 (1992): 132–34.

⁵⁵ By the late-eighteenth century not only was the Port-City of Veracruz recognized as a "port of Blacks and *mulatos*", the hinterland itself was recognized as a space where free peoples of African descent thrived economically and socially. Coastal towns in the immediacy of the Port-City such as Tlalixcoyan, Alvarado, and Tlacotalpan, were recognized as commercial "nodes" where Afro-descendants engaged and facilitated the distribution of goods from the Port-City to the interior of New Spain. Also, along the *camino real* section from Veracruz to Córdoba, there existed multiple villages of Afro-descendants who practiced small-scale agriculture, where some were descendants of maroons that had escaped the plantations around Córdoba since the early seventeenth century. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 573.

⁵⁶ The Port-City's walled perimeter came as a result of imperial worries that resulted from pirate attacks in the late sixteenth and late-seventeenth centuries. The 1743 census states the creation of a neighborhood in the outer portion of the wall perimeter named *Barrio de San Sebastian*, containing 47 dwellings and 134 individuals. Forty years afterwards, drought in the *Sotavento* hinterland led to crop failure and massive migration to the Port-City, specially to its *extramuros* neighborhood. By the time of the 1791 census, the

four *cuarteles* or quarters.⁵⁷ On the first one, the quarter that included the docks and served as the hub of maritime trade, out of 846 inhabitants, 209 were Afro-descendants, making up 25% of this quarter's population.⁵⁸ Afro-descendants participated in economic activities of this quarter as waiters, servants, cooks, and apprentices in Spanish households.⁵⁹ The second quarter, situated amongst the city council and the town's parish church, represented the Spanish seat of power of the city, its hinterland, and the whole Intendancy of Veracruz. Nevertheless, the presence of Afro-descendants was very well established, as out of the total 740 inhabitants of this quarter 192 of them were Afro-descendants, representing 26% of the population, were they labored as butlers, servants, cooks, and craft apprentices.⁶⁰

If the first two walled quarters of the Port-City demonstrated an Afro-descendant population that was heavily involved in a burgeoning economy pushed forth by Spanish

excluding of this sector left out a considerable number of the port-city's population. The census also excluded the accounting of members of the military and their families, along with the racial categories of minors under the age of six, thus leaving large portions of Afro-descendants from being counted for each specific quarter that the 1791 census tackles. For more see Christon I. Archer, "The Key to the Kingdom: The Defense of Veracruz, 1780-1810," *The Americas* 27, no. 4 (April 1971): 427, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979859>; Alejandro de Antuñano Maurer, *Veracruz: Primer Puerto Del Continente* (México: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 2004), 278–79; García de León, *Vientos bucaneros*, 117–22; Knaut, "Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz," 622; Widmer Sennhauser, "La ciudad de Veracruz en el último siglo colonial (1680-1820)," 132.

⁵⁷ Census takers divided the port-city into a grid of four parts, where each was comprised from two to three blocks. The first part "included the north of the city, the second its center, the third was situated east, in between the center and south of the grid, and the fourth part collided with the southern part of the wall immediate to the *extramuros neighborhood*." See Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Carmen Blázquez Domínguez, Carlos Contreras Cruz, and Sonia Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX* (Xalapa, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 1996), 166.

⁵⁸ AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, 155.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*, 157.

merchants, mainly laboring for the service of Europeans, the last two quarters represented not only sectors of mobility and interracial interaction, but of high representation for Afro-descendants within Veracruz' walls. The third quarter, a mix of multiracial individual and communal households, was the setting where 274 individuals out of a total of 726 residents, or 38% of the quarter's population, were identified as Afro-descendant servants, butlers, dockworkers, cart drivers, carpenters, tailors, farmhands, cooks and even members of the Afro-descendant militias of the city.⁶¹ The last and fourth quarter of the walled city situated on the southernmost part of the port-city, and also the most numerous at 1637 individual residents, was where 660 Afro-descendant individuals represented 40% of the population of this sector.⁶² Amongst these individuals, some labored as independent low-wage laborers such as dockworkers, cart drivers, farmhands, construction workers, saddlers, fishermen, butchers, water carriers, tailors, barbers, carpenters, cobblers, smiths, and musicians.⁶³ Afro-descendants thrived in the quarter that bordered the unaccounted neighborhood of *extramuros*.

By 1791 the walled sector of the Port-City of Veracruz contained a population of 4,000 inhabitants. It was in this space where, despite the recent large influx of European

⁶¹ AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, 159.

⁶² AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, 163.

⁶³ Ibid. The fourth quarter of the walled city was also populated by over 131 indigenous peoples and by over 460 Spaniards of modest means, both European and American born, who attracted to the exploding economy of the Port-City of the 1780s, and unable to penetrate into the traditionally inhabited quarters where trade and merchant houses dominated, resided in a sector that was multiracial and considered by elite Spaniards to be the an extension of the *arrabales*, or poor quarters, represented by the neighborhood outside the city's walls.

and indigenous arrivals of the 1770s and 1780s, an approximate of 1,335 individuals, or 33% of the total population inside of the walled city⁶⁴, not counting the hundreds of individuals that lived outside the walls of Veracruz in the *extramuros* neighborhood,⁶⁵ continued to make of Veracruz a space of mobile and thriving Blackness that situated the port-city as a unique vector of New Spain's connection to the Greater Caribbean, and as a commercial, cultural, social, and political space that was enabled, since its founding, by Afro-descendants.

By 1799, in recognition that Afro-descendants held important roles in economic development, military defense, and colonial society furthering Veracruz and its hinterland as a Black space, Spaniards became preoccupied at influence they regionally exerted. This led to calls by the Viceroy himself, Miguel José de Aranza, to have the *Ayuntamiento*, city council, of Veracruz to carry out a census for the purpose of "having a greater control over the *Parda* and *Morena* population."⁶⁶ The Viceroy asked Veracruz' city council to conduct a meticulous census for the purpose of increasing recruitment in Afro-descendant militias and an increase of fiscal revenue. He ordered to count all male "*Pardo* and *Moreno* individuals established in this city and in its poor quarters, from the age of sixteen years to that of forty, expressing in separate fields those who are single, the

⁶⁴ AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, "Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*, 153; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 43.

⁶⁵ A 1793 census situated the population of the *arrabal de extramuros*, the neighborhood outside the city's wall at 536 individuals. See Widmer Sennhauser, "La ciudad de Veracruz en el último siglo colonial (1680-1820)," 133.

⁶⁶ AHV/C.61/Vol.70/fs.302-306/1799

married with children, the married without them, and those who are widowed.”⁶⁷ Not only were male Afro-descendants counted, but the census also required to count the number of women and minors who were Afro-descendants in the city and its outskirts neighborhoods.

The 1799 census not only counted the Afro-descendant population of the city, but also meticulously counted the entire diverse populations of six *cabeceras*, or regional administrative districts, in the hinterland that were in close proximity to the Port-City: the one in the *extramuros* neighborhood of Santo Cristo, and those in the towns of Medellín, Xamapa, Tlalixcoyan, La Antigua, and Cerro Gordo y Plan del Río, including all manner of ranches and villages within them.⁶⁸ The census shed important light on how Afro-descendants by 1799 represented an important sector of Veracruz and its hinterland as they continued to make of the region a Black space. Out of 8,045 individuals counted, 5,905, or 73% of these districts’ population, was of African descent.⁶⁹ Even more incredible were each of the population percentages of the Afro-descendant population in the outskirts Santo Cristo neighborhood of Veracruz, and in the *cabeceras* of Medellín, Xamapa, Tlalixcoyan and La Antigua: 79% for the Santo Cristo neighborhood, 86% for Medellín, 70% for Xamapa, and 53% for La Antigua.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ AHV/C.61/Vol.70/fs.302-306/1799

⁶⁸ The 1799 census counted meticulously the populations of these six *cabeceras*, as it divided the census categories not only by racial categories of Spaniards, Afro-descendants (*Pardos y Morenos*), and mestizos, but it also made sure to count men, women, and children into separate categories as well as the number of families in each of the ranches and villages that made up each of these administrative districts. Afro-descendants were the clear majority at 73%, while mestizos made only 22%, and Spaniards 8% of these districts population. For more see Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*, Colección América 14 (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008), 88–97.

⁶⁹ Ortiz Escamilla, 88–97.

⁷⁰ Afro-descendants made up 1,271 out of 1605 residents of the *extramuros* neighborhood. For Medellín, they were 947 out of 1099 residents. For Xamapa they conformed 665 out of the 945 residents of the

The population statistics of Afro-descendants showcased in the 1799 census reinforced what the general population, Spanish colonial administration, and Afro-descendants themselves, had known for over two centuries: Veracruz and *Sotavento* were, and continued to be, spaces of thriving Blackness where in many districts they represented the majority of the population. Not only was the port-city, and the economic and sociopolitical roles that Afro-descendants held, tangible manifestations of a regional Black space. Proof of a regional Black space was found in the toponyms of lagoons, rivers, marshes, mountains, and over sixty towns and villages with names such as Mocambo, Mandinga, Mozambique, Macondo, Mozombo, Mazoco, amongst others, that reinforced that Veracruz and *Sotavento* were Black spaces.⁷¹ In this region, many Afro-descendants named their geographical environs to allude to, their ethnic groups of origin, slave ports of exit, and maroon communities, where themselves or their forefathers originated from.⁷²

district. For Tlalixcoyan they represented 1,773 residents out of the entire population of 2,257 in the district. For La Antigua they made up 1,187 residents out of the 2,257 residents of the district. In the Cerro Gordo y Plan del Río district Afro-descendants were actually a minority when compared to mestizos, for they only made up 62 out of the 216 residents of that district, or 29%. For more see Ortiz Escamilla, 88–97.

⁷¹ Both Linguist Luis Fernando Lara and Historian Antonio García de León allude to Miguel del Corral's 1777 military *exploration and report of Veracruz and its Leeward and Windward hinterlands which includes the toponyms of multiple communities where Afro-descendants were the demographic majority*. Some of these toponyms are, per Luis Fernando Lara's enumeration of African toponyms of Veracruz in his breakthrough article "Africanismos en el español de México", as follow: Angola, Arroyo Mondongo, Paso del Bongo, Breve Cocina, Cabo Verde, Camarón, La Cananga, La Cazimba, El Cimarrón, Cimarrontepec, Cochindi, La Conduzca, La Conga, Cerro del Congo, Curazao, Cucuyenda, Chimbamba, La Chipuja, El Chomo, Guarumbo, La Guinea, Huarengo, Jimaguas, La Jimba, Juan Mulato, Loma de Lele, Mablinga, Macondo, Macuchi, Mandinga, María Lizamba, Mata Hualusango, Llano de la Matamba, Mazoco, Mocambo, Motilga, Motuto, Mozambique, Mozombo, Mozongo, Motzorongo El Ñape, Loma de las Negras, El Negrito, Los Negritos, Ozuluama, Palenque, Pampo, Paso de la Mulata, Paso Mulato, Rincón de Negros, Tembembe, Tongolo, Tosongo, Yanga. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 554, 559, 575; Luis Fernando Lara, "AFRICANISMOS EN EL ESPAÑOL DE MÉXICO," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 63, no. 2 (2015): 300, 316, 318-335.

⁷² *Ibid.*

The recognition of Veracruz and its hinterland as spaces of thriving Blackness was even acknowledged in Spanish cartography of the region. A 1793 map entitled “*Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos, Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur,*”⁷³ describes both the resources and defensive capabilities of Veracruz and its hinterland. It also includes the region adjacent to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Pacific Coast of the Intendancy of Oaxaca, demonstrated that Spanish cartographers not only acknowledged the presence of communities and districts that by the 1790s were dominated by Afro-descendants, but even those that had found their origins as former maroon communities.

⁷³ AGN/Mapas, Planos e Ilustraciones/Historia/ Vol. 359/exp.4/ *Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur.* /1793; The title of the map translates to “Portion of the *Seno Mexicano* coastline from *Puntilla de Piedra* southeast to the strip of land of Coatzacoalcos, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and the Southern Sea.” The map in question represented the information produced by reports from the expedition of Miguel del Corral and Joaquin de Aranda of the 1770s to the region.



Map 1. Miguel del Corral and Joaquín de Aranda, *Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur*, 1793. Manuscript. Mexico. Archivo General de la Nación.

The map, an inverted southward projection that took Mexico City as its main axis, not only represented in exemplary manner a description of the entire *Sotavento* hinterland. It also depicted the rivers, lagoons, mountains, volcanos, waterways, and coral reefs along the coast that represented both mobility and impediments for both communication and trade in the province. Spanish cartographers created a map that showed the topography and natural resources of the entire hinterland, the ways by which natural geography delineated the hinterland's geographical borders, possible ways by which to connect trade and mobility between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, and the clear manifestation of the region as a Black space.⁷⁴

In the map, other than the clear representation of the Port-City of Veracruz as the entire province's seat of political and economic power, the different settlements were divided into five categories: *cabeceras*/regional administrative districts or *Villa*, town, *Hacienda*, ranch, and locations where the cutting of wood for commercial purposes was carried out.⁷⁵ Interestingly, towns, villages, and *cabeceras* that by 1791 were recognized

⁷⁴ AGN/Mapas, Planos e Ilustraciones/Historia/ Vol. 359/exp.4/ Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur/1793; The Isthmus of Tehuantepec represented, since the earliest years of the colonial era, a possible region by which to create a commercial and political corridor that could connect the Gulf of Mexico, and by extension Greater Caribbean and Atlantic World economies and mobility, with the Pacific Ocean. During the colonial period, trade was carried out between the Pacific coast and Coatzacoalcos in the Gulf of Mexico by a mixed system of land and river transportation of good. Nevertheless, by the late-eighteenth century Spanish colonial administration desired to create a passageway in the Isthmus that were to serve as a corridor of exchange with other Spanish American colonies such as the Viceroyalties of Peru and New Granada. As such this 1793 map also serves as a manifestation of the Spanish Empire's desire to consolidate trade and communication between both regions via the Gulf. For more see John J. Winberry, "The Mexican Landbridge Project: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec and Inter-Oceanic Transit," *Yearbook. Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 13 (1987): 12–18.

⁷⁵ AGN/Mapas, Planos e Ilustraciones/Historia/ Vol. 359/exp.4/ Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur/1793

via censuses to have over 50% or a majority of its population as Afro-descendants were recognized as the places that functioned as regional administrative districts, thus linking Veracruz' Afro-descendants to the economic and political development of the region by the 1790s.⁷⁶ At the same time, former maroon communities such as Amapa, San Lorenzo de los Negros, and Mandinga, were recognized in the map as well. The map used the icon of towns to identify these communities as important elements of Spanish colonial geopolitical formation in the region.⁷⁷

The map demonstrated that Spanish administration, in attempts at populating a region where nor Europeans or Indigenous peoples could thrive, allowed for the settlement of Afro-descendants in the tropical and disease-ridden lowlands of *Sotavento* in the pursual of induced settlement. They considered Afro-descendant communities both political-military buffer zones to withstand foreign invasion, and spaces of foodstuffs production that could supply Veracruz and other settlements of the region furthering both regional and Transatlantic economies, but by the same token they also began to consider them as possible spaces of contestation.⁷⁸

This 1793 map became not only reflective of late-colonial Spanish administration's economic and political values applied to Veracruz, its hinterland,

⁷⁶ AGN/Mapas, Planos e Ilustraciones/Historia/ Vol. 359/exp.4/ Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur/1793

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ From the arrival of Afro-descendant Lancer militiamen as farmers to the lands of the Santa Fe Estate north of the walled Port-City, to the founding of 140 ranches, including the Paso de Varas, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Jamapa, and Los Negritos, all part of the immediacies of the Port-City, and of towns such as Boca del Río and Medellín, and along the Jamapa River basin, Afro-descendants created communities that furthered the Spanish desire of populating previously uninhabited lands that could be taken advantage of by an invading force, all while they served as the region's protectors and suppliers. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 789.

geography, resources, geopolitical standing, and its populations.⁷⁹ It also reflected the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants, enabled by their immense economic and sociopolitical enabling of Spanish colonialism in the region, maintained a Black space of articulation, transfer, and negotiation in the port-city and its hinterland.⁸⁰ In its inclusion of Afro-descendant communities, the map solidified their place as actors of relevance in a region Spanish colonial administration began to consider a danger both immediate and on the long run. Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland became spaces of Blackness that manifested Spanish maritime colonialism in New Spain through African descended actors. But they also became a space that engaged Spanish preoccupations of the power and roles peoples of African descent played in the region if unchecked.⁸¹ Maroon, and

⁷⁹ Map Historian John Brian Harley refuted beliefs that maps should be viewed as scientific objective objects that cartographers have considered as such in their analysis of maps. He specified that maps cannot be completely objective as they are "related to values, such as those of ethnicity, politics, religion, or social class, and they are also embedded in the map producing society at large." Thus, Harley established that any map, by its nature, it's a reflection of the cultural values which rule the society that produces said map. For more see J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map", in Martin Dodge, ed., *Classics in Cartography: Reflections on Influential Articles from Cartographica* (Chichester, West Sussex, UK ; Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley & Sons, 2011), 279, <http://uclibs.org/PID/175836>.

⁸⁰ Harley encourages us to consider how cartographic production contains inherent internal and external relations of power. He defined external power as that which "serves to link maps to the centers of political power" by becoming crucial to "maintenance of state power- to its boundaries, to its commerce, to internal administration, to control of populations, and to its military strength." On the other hand, he defined internal power as that which relates to "the political effects of what cartographers do when they make maps," more specifically as political power created by selecting specific information making a specific range of information that serves the geopolitical power exerted by the cartographer. It is as such that the inclusion of Afro-descendant communities reflects how they were enactors of the state's power in a region where they were its predominant inhabitants, and as a result created a specific Black space of regional, national, and international relevance. For more see J. B. Harley, "Deconstructing the Map", in Dodge, 286-87; Miles Ogborn, "Making Connections: Port Geography and Global History" in Ita Rubio, *Organización del espacio en el México colonial*, 99-100.

⁸¹ Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland, whether for being the focal point of New Spain's Transatlantic commerce, while at the same time being a disease-ridden tropical region of difficult mobility and communication with a scant Spanish population, fell into both the parameters of being a regional contested space and a place that qualified as an edge of empire. Juliana Barr and Edward Countryman define contested spaces as "places throughout the hemisphere where people who had been total strangers met, mingled, and clashed, creating colonial societies unlike any that the world had seen to that time." The scant population of the region, environmental and geographical obstacles, and the mobility and regional essential

formerly maroon, communities represented both one of the clearest articulations of Black spaces in Veracruz and its hinterland, while also being spaces where Blackness was contested by Spanish authorities.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants and Maroonage: Alternative Consolidation of Black Space

Most of Veracruz' Afro-descendants were enactors of a regional Black space through their instrumental roles in the development of the regional economy, and through their roles in defense of the region. Nevertheless, state-sanctioned sociopolitical and economic empowerment weren't the only ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants made of the region a Black space. Alternative forms of sociopolitical empowerment, especially for enslaved Afro-descendants through maroonage, enabled them and their communities in Veracruz to maintain the region as a Black space through resistance. By the late-eighteenth century even legalized former maroon communities continued to contest Spanish authority, in many ways carrying out tactics of maroonage as formalized

roles of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in defining Spanish colonialism in this place allowed for the inclusion of Veracruz and hinterlands into the categories of contested spaces. On the other hand, an edge of empire is defined by Karl Offen as a place where the claims and structures of European powers in the Americas, particularly those of the Spanish in tropical areas, were enabled, defined, and often contested, by colonial subalterns of color, who in their relative control and domain often this places imbued them with a unique meanings often contrary to Spanish imperial policy, leading Spanish colonial authorities to consider such areas as edges of the empire often expressed in multiple Spanish cartographical representations. In this way, the factors that enabled Veracruz and *Sotavento* to become a space of Afro-descendants allow them to be ironically qualified as the edge of empire whilst being at the same time a focal point of imperial economic development and trade. For more see Juliana Barr, Edward Countryman, and William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, eds., *Contested Spaces of Early America*, First edition, Early American Studies (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 1, 4; Karl Offen, "Edge of Empire," in Jordana Dym and Karl Offen, *Mapping Latin America: A Cartographic Reader* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 88.

settlements, thus consolidating alternative Black spaces. It was, in many ways, the legacies of maroonage in the region which informed the sociopolitical actions for a number of Afro-descendants who by the nineteenth century, participated in the military and sociopolitical upheavals that granted Mexico its independence.

Maroonage⁸² in Veracruz never manifested as it did with the same intensity and numbers of maroon movements as in the Isthmus of Panama during the sixteenth century.⁸³ Nor did it manifest with the complex and intricate sociocultural and political characteristics of the *Quilombo* of Palmares in seventeenth-century Brazil.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, the fact that by 1640 New Spain was inhabited by the second largest slave population of the continent, only surpassed by Brazil,⁸⁵ made of Veracruz and *Sotavento* an ideal setting by which enslaved peoples of African descent could conduct resistance through maroonage. This was due to the region being a sparsely populated tropical

⁸² Maroonage or *cimarronaje*, derived from the word *cimarrón* in Spanish, a term with connotations of domesticated fauna that fled to the mountains and became wild, was a common tool of resistance used by enslaved Africans across the hemisphere. Dating back to the first African slaves brought over to the Caribbean during the early sixteenth century, this practice was consolidated through the establishment of palenques, communities of escaped slaves in active resistance to colonial establishments. See Ruth Pike, “Black Rebels: The Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama,” *The Americas* 64, no. 2 (2007): 244, <https://doi.org/10.2307/30139087>; Juan Manuel de la Serna “Los cimarrones en la sociedad novohispana” in Juan Manuel de la Serna, ed., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, trans. Juan M. de la Serna H., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 40–41.

⁸³ See Pike, “Black Rebels,” 244–66.

⁸⁴ Long recognized as the “longest lived and largest fugitive community” in colonial Latin America, the *quilombo* or *mocambo* of Palmares resisted from 1605 to 1694 continued efforts by both the Dutch and the Portuguese for the elimination of this maroon community. For more see Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 103–36.

⁸⁵ Frank T. Proctor III “Rebelión esclava y libertad en el México colonia” in Juan Manuel de la Serna, ed., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, trans. Juan M. de la Serna H., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 54

hinterland of endemic disease, devoid of a large Spanish and Indigenous presence, where *Palenques* of maroons conformed alternative ways of creating Black space in the region.

The earliest patterns of maroon resistance in Veracruz occurred in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century. This period, between 1580 to 1650, coincided with the arrival of a large influx of slaves, many of them of Angolan origin, to Veracruz and its hinterland destined for the development sugarcane and tobacco plantations, along with cattle ranching.⁸⁶ Slaves served to develop the regional economies while strengthening the economic relationships of Veracruz and its hinterland with the Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic World. It was during this period of economic growth where the first and most notable instance of maroonage occurred in Veracruz, the rebellion of Gaspar Ñyanga, also known as Yanga. Gaspar Ñyanga, an African man of Bran ethnic origin of Senegambia, escaped bondage in 1570 with a group of slaves from La Antigua, forming *palenques* in the mountainside of the Zongolica sierra where he established himself as leader by claiming lineage to African nobility.⁸⁷

For over thirty years Yanga and other maroons attacked convoys and caravans along the *Camino Real*, New Spain's premier commercial and transportation route that connected the Port-City to Mexico City. By 1606 these attacks became so recurrent that

⁸⁶ Domínguez Domínguez, "Entre Resistencia y Colaboración," 4, 9.

⁸⁷ Yanga established in his *Palenque* a small, but complex, community that was encompassed by seventy houses and a church, and were close to eighty warriors, twenty-four Black women, and an unknown number children. The *Palenque* had a water well, and possessed agricultural plots where corn, squash, cotton, sweet potatoes, beans, sugarcane, and fruit trees were planted. The community also had some domesticated animals, fire weapons, and steel weapons. For more details on the *Palenque* of Gaspar Yanga see Frank T. Proctor III "Rebelión esclava y libertad en el México colonial" in de la Serna, *De la libertad y la abolición*, 55; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita "De San Lorenzo de los Negros a Los Morenos de Amapa: Cimarrones Veracruzanos, 1609-1735" in Cáceres Gómez, *Rutas de la esclavitud en Africa y América Latina*, 159.

Viceroy Luis de Velasco, acknowledging the difficulty of colonial administration to prevent further attacks by the maroons of Yanga, agreed to establish negotiations by 1608.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, by 1609 negotiations failed, skirmishes between maroons and the Spanish ensued, until Yanga and the maroon communities became forced to abandon their *Palenque*.⁸⁹ After decades of resistance, and following the founding of the city of Córdoba in 1618 by slaveowners of the region, in 1635 the maroon community of Yanga was granted a plot of land in the proximity of Córdoba and along the *Camino Real* to Veracruz, formalizing the former *Palenque* as the state-sanctioned community of San Lorenzo de los Negros, also known as San Lorenzo Cerralvo.⁹⁰ Yanga and his maroon

⁸⁸ Among the conditions that Yanga and his maroons petitioned was the petition for the colonial state to grant and recognize the freedom to all members of the *Palenque* that had escaped prior to 1608, the recognition of the *Palenque* as a free town with “a town council and judge” of Afro-descendant origin, the prohibition of Spaniards to live in the community, and the recognition of Yanga as leader of the town and for his descendants to be his successors, akin to a royal line. Showing a large degree of religious acculturation, Yanga also demanded that the Spanish send “a Franciscan friar to undergo evangelization labors in the community, and for the Crown to pay the ornamentation of the Church” they had created. In exchange to these conditions the maroons and Yanga agreed to capture and return any escaped slave of the region, along with helping to serve as militias in defense of the coastal hinterland. For more see Frank T. Proctor III “Rebelión esclava y libertad en el México colonial” de la Serna, *De la libertad y la abolición*, 55.

⁸⁹ Spanish accounts of the Yanga insurgency recount that the maroons expelled the Franciscan friar appointed as negotiator between the maroons and the Spanish, for the maroons “accused the priest of espionage.” Upon the breakdown of negotiations, the maroons “went into the nearby ranches and towns, stealing women and Black slaves with the purpose of increasing their population.” As a result, the crown ordered Captain Pedro González de Herrera the destruction of the maroon community in 1609. By early 1610 as the Spanish attacks commenced, “being too old to fight, Yanga delegated military leadership to Francisco de la Matosa” a maroon of Angolan origin. Despite resistance, Yanga and his followers were forced to abandon their settlement. For more see Frank T. Proctor III “Rebelión esclava y libertad en el México colonial” in de la Serna, 56. *Francisco de la Matosa founded the town of Mandinga y Matosa, coastal town that exists to this day along the Mandinga Lagoon, south of the Port-City of Veracruz. The paternal great-grandmother of this dissertation’s author was born in Mandinga y Matosa.*

⁹⁰ Despite obtaining their status as a state-sanctioned former maroon community, scholars such as Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita state that *Hacienda* and slave owners of the Córdoba region “never accepted” the free status of the Afro-descendants of San Lorenzo de los Negros, as she argues that throughout the remainder of the colonial period they were “systematically hostile” towards the free Black community in order to create obstacles over their “living modes” and in turn “propagate the idea of free black communities as impossible”. For more see Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita “De San Lorenzo de los Negros a Los Morenos de Amapa: Cimarrones Veracruzanos, 1609-1735” in Cáceres Gómez, *Rutas de la esclavitud en África y*

followers had become successful in enabling an alternative Black space in Veracruz and *Sotavento*.

Yanga's former *Palenque* ultimately evolved into San Lorenzo de los Negros, a state-sanctioned Black space that responded to the Spanish policies of induced settlement.⁹¹ Nevertheless, its origins in resistance and maroonage made of this community an alternative Black space that forced Spanish authorities to recognize it. The impact of Yanga/San Lorenzo de los Negros was profound as it changed the paradigms of Veracruz as a Black Space. More specifically, Yanga's rebellion enabled thriving alternative Black spaces in *Sotavento*, where maroonage became so frequent and prominent across the entire hinterland that the region became known as the *Cuenca cimarrona*, or the maroon basin.

América Latina, 159. The town of San Lorenzo de los Negros still stands in modern day, now known as Yanga, Veracruz.

⁹¹ This policy responded to a tradition of "Spanish policies of settlements around mines and ports" that had the aim of "fixing a labor and agricultural reserve that would allow to revitalize key regions for the colonial system's functioning" particularly in economic and military defense matters. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 556.



Map 2. Representation of the *Cuenca Cimarrona*. Extracted from Miguel del Corral and Joaquín de Aranda, *Porción de la Costa del Seno Mexicano desde la Puntilla de Piedra al Sureste hasta la Barra de Coatzacoalcos; Istmo de Tehuantepec hasta el mar del sur*, 1793. Manuscript. Mexico. Archivo Genral de la Nación.

In the map above, a portion of a 1793 map by Miguel del Corral and Joaquín de Aranda, the coastal lowlands and mountainous highlands that formed the *Cuenca Cimarrona* or maroon basin, are illustrated. This *Cuenca cimarrona* was geographically located in between the Blanco, Atoyac, Jamapa, Tonto, and Papaloapan rivers, extending to the point of Antón Nizado, and including the interior plains leading to the mountainous highlands of the Pico de Orizaba and Cofre de Perote volcanoes, the Zongolica sierra, and the hillsides of Huatusco, Teutila, and Mazateopan.⁹² Maroonage also occurred in the far south regions of the *Sotavento* hinterland, particularly around the towns of Cosamaloapan and Chacaltianguis.⁹³ The formerly maroon *Palenque*, later state-sanctioned town, of San Lorenzo de los Negros is represented in clear view of the map south of Córdoba. The community of Mandinga, situated next to the lagoon of the same name and south of the Port-City, founded by one of Yanga's former lieutenants, is also shown in this map.

By the late-eighteenth century Spanish cartographers recognized maroon, or former maroon communities, granting validity of this region as a Black space by including these communities as essential places of the colonial apparatus in Veracruz. This map also showcased another instrumental *Palenque* in the eighteenth century, a maroon community that led the founding of the town of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa, also known as Santa María Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa.

⁹² García de León, 559.

⁹³ Ibid.

The story of the maroons of Amapa takes place from 1735 to 1769, in the midst of a period that from 1705 to 1769 saw a new cycle of slave rebellions and escapes from the sugarcane plantations and mills around Córdoba along this maroon basin.⁹⁴ After decades of a regional growth of the enslaved populations, worsening working conditions, natural disasters, and continued escapes, the slaves in the sugar mill of the town of San Juan de la Punta, near Córdoba, destroyed the mill in open rebellion, propelling multiple slaves of other regional *Haciendas* and sugar mills to join the revolt.⁹⁵ After months of resistance, the maroons escaped southward deep into the hinterland towards Cosamaloapan.⁹⁶ It was in this southernmost part of the *Sotavento* hinterland, along the mountains of Mazateopa, and in the border with the Province of Oaxaca amidst the jurisdiction of the village of Teutila, that the remaining maroons founded six *Palenques*: Rosario, Mata de Anona, San Antonio, San Martín de Mazateopa, Breve Cocina, and Palacios Mandinga.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ García de León states that not all slave rebellions and maroon *Palenques* of the eighteenth century materialized into state-sanctioned communities such as Amapa or San Lorenzo de los Negros. He states that many of these maroons, due to constant “attacks and hostilities”, many of them, were forced to find safe refuge in “simple hamlets of difficult access and small ranches of *Pardos y Morenos*”, which ultimately were forgotten about by the Spaniard’s inability of bring them to control. The geographic locale of these hamlets and small settlements were chosen as they “combined access to lagoon systems and rivers with natural protection by dense mountainsides” sites that for the maroons looked like “the sabanas and mountains of Angola, Congo, or Senegambia.” Ultimately, he argues, many of the Afro-descendant small settlements were counted and recognized by the late-eighteenth century censuses, as tribute-paying Afro-descendant communities, such as those in the proximities of towns such as Tlalixcoyan, Cosamaloapan, Los Tuxtlas, the margins of the San Juan Michapan river, and the south of Acayucan. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 656, 753; Patrick J. Carroll, “Mandinga: The Evolution of a Mexican Runaway Slave Community, 1735-1827,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19, no. 4 (1977): 494.

⁹⁵ *Bozal* and its plural *bozales* was a term attributed in colonial Spanish America to slaves that were born in Africa, compared to those born in the Americas, and which were destined to intensive agricultural labor, which in the case of Veracruz and *Sotavento* were destined to the planting and harvesting of Sugarcane and Tobacco. For more see García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 756; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita “De San Lorenzo de los Negros a Los Morenos de Amapa: Cimarrones Veracruzanos, 1609-1735” in Cáceres Gómez, *Rutas de la esclavitud en Africa y América Latina*, 161–62.

⁹⁶ García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 756; Carroll, “Mandinga,” 494.

⁹⁷ Carroll, “Mandinga,” 494.

After three decades where the maroons of Palacios Mandinga evaded recapture efforts by the region's planters,⁹⁸ became integrated into the region's cattle ranches and plantations economies through illegal trade,⁹⁹ and endured internal strife and sectarianism,¹⁰⁰ by 1767 they obtained land titles securing territorial boundaries for a potential legalized community.¹⁰¹ After a year of negotiation between the maroons and the Spanish, who pushed for induced settlement, on March 1st 1769 the town of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa was founded.¹⁰²

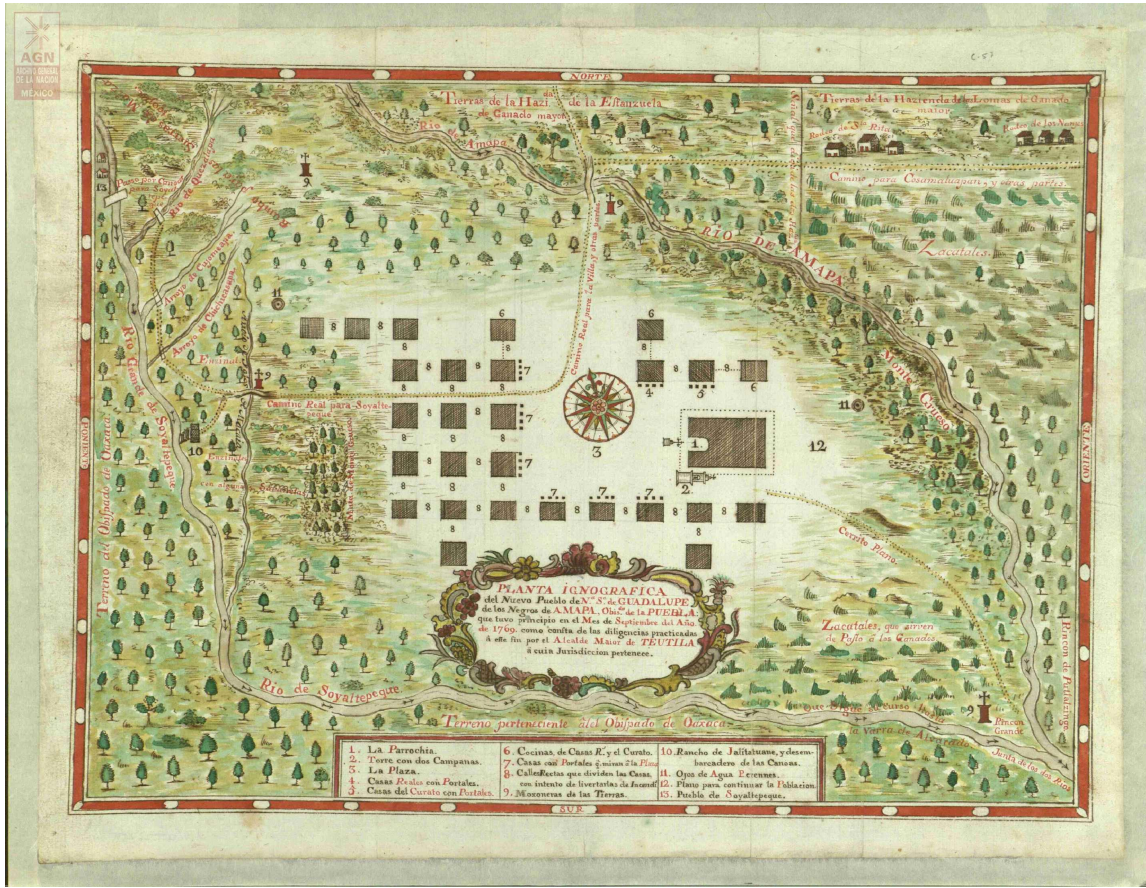
⁹⁸ Carroll, 495–96.

⁹⁹The maroons of Mandinga relied upon Afro-descendant “livestock-feed gatherers from the Port-City of Veracruz who foraged along the coastal savannahs”, most of them slaves. Amongst the Spanish elites who cooperated, and made use of the services of maroons, were Don Andrés Fernández de Oñate, the district manager of Teutila, Oaxaca, who not only used the maroons to “harass rival merchants who tried to break his monopoly of the area’s vanilla trade,” and Carlos Ribadeneyra, owner of the largest Hacienda and lands of the region who employed the maroons, through the magistrate, to “drive Indians off a parcel of land adjacent to his hacienda” in order to use the land for the grazing of his cattle. For more see Carroll, 497, 498.

¹⁰⁰ Thirty years after its foundation the social character of the *Palenque* began to change, for the older and original leadership, led by an older and Christianized maroon by the name of Fernando Manuel, willing for Mandinga to be integrated and recognized as San Lorenzo de los Negros had been, came at odds with younger maroon arrivals led by younger maroon named Macute who refused integration into Spanish colonial society, and who was also not Christianized. Macute and his followers were ultimately defeated and turned in to Spanish authorities by Fernando Manuel, while the maroons willing to integrate moved from their secluded location to a site along the Amapa river. Carroll, 498–99; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 759.

¹⁰¹ William B. Taylor, “The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Los Morenos de Amapa,” *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (1970): 441, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980185>.

¹⁰² The leaders of the newly founded town agreed to cooperation with the colonial government through militia service, scouting the area to apprehend future runaways, and not being able to visit any of the nearby sugarcane plantations and sugar mills. These were the former maroon leader Fernando Manuel as its Alcalde, Vicente Antonio, Santiago Joaquín, and Rafael Crisóstomo as the town's town councilmen, and Mariano Benito as Amapa's Chief Justice. See Carroll, “Mandinga,” 499; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 762; Taylor, “The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Los Morenos de Amapa,” 441.



Map 3. Anonymous, *Nuevo Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Negros de Amapa*, 1769. Manuscript. México. Archivo General de la Nación.

The anonymous map above depicts a spatial configuration of the then newly founded community that by 1769 was recognized as a state-sanctioned free Black town of Amapa. The map depicts twenty-seven houses, the town's church with adjacent tower with bells, and the surrounding ranches and *Haciendas* found in the town's limits. The map also depicts the road to the nearby town of Cosamaloapan, nearby grasslands for cattle ranching, the surrounding mountains, the limits with the diocese of Oaxaca, as well as the flow and meeting of the Soyaltepec and Amapa rivers, indicating their course ends at the river mouth and lagoon of Alvarado. The map makes express notion of the town's abundant natural resources in order to convey profitable commercial activities based on farming, cattle ranching, and wood cutting. Such cartography revealed, in many ways, Spanish desires to incorporate this new Black community fully as part of the Spanish colonial economic apparatus as productive subjects. Nevertheless, Amapa remained an alternative Black space deeply rooted in resistance and manipulation of the colonial apparatus. Amapa's inhabitants treasured freedom but not integration.

Despite that the founding of Amapa served for the Spanish as both induced settlement and as a source of Afro-descendant militiamen for the region's defense,¹⁰³ the state-sanctioning of this community did not bring absolute peace. Maroon-like attitudes continued to make of Amapa an alternative Black space. Throughout the 1770s the inhabitants of Amapa were accused of sacking and raiding Indian villages nearby,

¹⁰³ By 1771 Amapa, and the remaining maroon hamlets along the Mazateopan range, served as source of Afro-descendant militiamen that served in the Port-City and across the hinterland. See AGN/Correspondencia Diversas Autoridades/Vol. 16/exp. 26/ fs. 89-90, 98/ 6 de marzo de 1771 and AGN/General de Parte/Vol. 48/ exp. 283/fs. 181v-182/1771.

stealing cattle from nearby *Haciendas*, and incurring in unlicensed liquor trade.¹⁰⁴ Such practices demonstrated that the residents of Amapa, through manipulation of regional socioeconomic relationships as a state-sanctioned community, maintained practices akin to their years as maroons living in *Palenques*. Said practices further consolidated Amapa as an alternative Black space in the hinterland. Such efforts, often through violent means, are evident in a well-documented 1784 complaint by Don Joaquín Camaño against the inhabitants of Amapa.

By 1784, Indigenous peoples and Spaniards, such as Don Joaquín Camaño, began to inhabit the town of Amapa after the *Alcalde Mayor*, or regional magistrate, of Teutilla considered that the primarily Black community had reached a “point of decadence”.¹⁰⁵ As such, the magistrate encouraged non-Black settlers to move into the town.¹⁰⁶ As the flow of outside peoples and goods increased in the town, this angered the 1769 Black founders of Amapa. As legally recognized owners of the land where the town stood, they became preoccupied that the racial and social makeup of their town was to drastically change, eventually forcing them to integrate fully into the colonial apparatus.

As such, the founders of Amapa wished to exclude non-Afro-descendants from living and thriving in the town, wishing only for individuals of the same “quality” as the founding population that resided in Amapa, to arrive.¹⁰⁷ Joaquín Camaño informed regional Spanish authorities that one night he was “violently and arbitrarily robbed” of

¹⁰⁴ Carroll, “Mandinga,” 502.

¹⁰⁵ AGN/General de Parte/Vol.66/exp.75/fs.48-48v/1784

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

both his house and commerce by the “Blacks of Amapa”, who later proceeded to distribute his property, and that of other non-Blacks, amongst the original Afro-descendant founders and their progeny.¹⁰⁸ Camaño demanded colonial authorities to intervene immediately in restoring his property and in containing the insurrected Blacks.¹⁰⁹ The complaint of Joaquín Camaño is important in order to consider how Amapa, a state-sanctioned Afro-descendant community, resisted eventual attempts in the late-eighteenth century of economic and sociopolitical integration that attempted to make of Amapa another town or city in *Sotavento*.¹¹⁰ The Afro-descendant inhabitants of Amapa demonstrated, through violent means, that their identity as peoples of African descent, and as former maroons, was not to be trifled with by the colonial state. As the state attempted integration of their town, the residents of Amapa, in resistance, maintained an alternative Black space in *Sotavento*.

The case of Amapa represents not only an example of state-sanctioning of former maroon communities by the Spanish in Veracruz to fulfill three aims: The quelling of *Palenques*, the quelling of slave runaways, and the settling of previously uninhabited areas by the Spanish. It also represents a special instance where a state-sanctioned Black community in Veracruz’ hinterland continued to engage in maroon-like resistance through violent practices in order to maintain an alternative Black space. As they resorted

¹⁰⁸ AGN/General de Parte/Vol.66/exp.75/fs.48-48v/1784

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ While Patrick J. Carroll argues that by the 1820s the population of Amapa was much more “demographically balanced,” suggesting eventual racial miscegenation between the former maroons and their descendants with indigenous and European populations, this 1784 incident demonstrates that in the years preceding the nineteenth-century the founders of Amapa desired the town to continue having a distinct Afro-descendant cultural and social character. See Carroll, “Mandinga,” 503–4.

to distancing and limiting Spanish colonialism in their community, the Afro-descendant residents of Amapa became a unique case of Veracruz and New Spain, but one that would replicate in some ways with maroon, and formerly-maroon, communities and nations across the Caribbean in the nineteenth century. These patterns echoed eventually in nineteenth-century Haiti as peoples of African descent claimed alternative spaces that rejected European-dominated cultural and economic systems.¹¹¹

While most of Veracruz' Afro-descendants of the late-eighteenth century were enactors of a regional Black space through state-sanctioned economic and political roles, the presence of maroon, and formerly maroon, communities in the hinterland represented alternative Black spaces grounded in resistance to colonial integration. Maroonage in Veracruz served not only as a pathway to freedom and recognition by the colonial state. It also enabled Veracruz' Afro-descendants, particularly those who were enslaved, to have alternative avenues for the conformation of a Black space in the hinterland, even whilst living under state-sanctioned sociopolitical and economic frameworks. If Veracruz and its hinterland were undoubtedly Black spaces, they were also not conformed the same way across the region.

¹¹¹ Johnhenry Gonzalez in his masterly work of historiography *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti*, proposes the concept of "Maroon Nation" that I adopt here to relate a Greater Caribbean Afro-descendant commonality between the continued maroon-like ways of engagement with the Spanish colonial state in Veracruz by the inhabitants of the free-Black town of Amapa , and those by the inhabitants of a newly independent Haiti. Gonzalez argues that "victims of the slave trade and their immediate descendants, the early Haitian masses strove to re-create African rather than European cultural and ideological forms." And despite his assertion that Haitians did not detach entirely from Atlantic World economies and political systems, the in turn "favored what I describe a maroon pattern of economic and social life by which they purposefully opted to be less engaged with the European-and North American-dominated world economy." For more see Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti*, Yale Agrarian Studies (New Haven: N Yale University Press, 2019), 9,12.

Maroon, formerly maroon communities, and free Afro-descendants who cooperated with the colonial state, enabled well into the nineteenth century Black spaces in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. Such spaces would present, in many ways, ideological foundations and examples of resistance that would influence free and enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz to pursue an active sociopolitical role in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. But it was also their roles, and manipulation of the colonial apparatus regionally, which led to the Spaniards to worry about having peoples of African descent empowered in such a strategic place and region for New Spain and the Atlantic World. As such, Spaniards contested and attempted to restrict the roles of Afro-descendants in the region.

Militias and Economy: Spanish Contestation of Veracruz' Black Spaces

One of the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants participated in state-sanctioned formation of a regional Black space was through their role as militias. Afro-descendant militias, such as those of *Pardos y Morenos*, were not a unique experience of Veracruz or New Spain¹¹², as demonstrated by scholars of the Black Diaspora in the Viceroyalty of New Granada and other parts of the Greater Caribbean.¹¹³ Nevertheless,

¹¹² For a breakthrough study of Afro-descendant militias in colonial Mexico see Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001).

¹¹³ For works that explore the instrumental roles and experience of Afro-descendant militias in the Viceroyalty of New Granada, colonial Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela, see Marcela Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution: Reform, Revolution, and Royalism in the Northern Andes, 1780-1825*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 102 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Aline Helg, "La Limpieza de Sangre Bajo Las Reformas Borbónicas y Su Impacto En El Caribe Neogranadino," *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades*, Vol. 101, No 858 (Enero-Junio 2014), Pp. 143-180."; *Tides of Revolution: Information, Insurgencies, and the Crisis of Colonial Rule in Venezuela*, First edition., Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018).

despite that Afro-descendant militias in Veracruz were essential for both the consolidation of both state control and regional defense by the late-colonial period, their increased roles brought Spanish preoccupations at their heightened roles and sought to contest their enacting of regional Black spaces.

Their indisputable presence as defenders of the Port-City and its coastal hinterland of *Sotavento* harkens back to the late-sixteenth century. By 1584 Spanish accounts identified a militia of free Blacks and mulattos that served, in the face of a scarce presence of Europeans and a rapidly decreasing indigenous population, in the defense of the Port-City and the region.¹¹⁴ By the seventeenth century, Spanish colonial administration relied heavily on Veracruz' Afro-descendant militiamen, both for the protection of the region and the determent of contraband. Black militiamen virtually prevented the establishment of large smuggling and piracy operations in the second half of the seventeenth century, conducting both the seizure and arrests of British pirates and smugglers in the proximity of the Port-City and between the Point of Anton Nizardo and the fishing village of Alvarado.¹¹⁵ Their importance as both protectors and enactors of Spanish colonialism in this region only increased during the eighteenth century as Spain became embroiled in European and global struggles between imperial powers.

¹¹⁴ Domínguez Domínguez, "Entre Resistencia y Colaboración," 7.

¹¹⁵ García de León states that despite a strong pirate and smuggling commercial operation, manned primarily by Europeans of diverse origins, free "English Blacks", and "Zambos from the Mosquito Coast", was established in the southernmost region of Veracruz' Leeward hinterland, particularly between Point Roca Partida and the Sontecomapan Lagoon, where they took "advantage of the depopulated and mountainous coastal littoral of the Tuxtlas range." Nevertheless, these operations were not further developed in the proximities of the Port-City due to the fear that buccaneers expressed towards the ferocity of Black militiamen in Veracruz. For more see García de León, *Vientos bucaneros*, 91–93.

By 1763, fearing an impending invasion rooted in the British taking of Havana during the Seven Years War, King Charles III decided to grant corporate privileges to Afro-descendant militias such as tribute exemption and military *fuero*. Military *fuero*, the right of militiamen to present a legal cause to a military tribunal rather than to a civil tribunal that often followed discriminatory laws,¹¹⁶ greatly improved the sociopolitical standing of Veracruz' Afro-descendant militiamen. They became, through Spanish worries and needs, defenders and enactors of Spanish colonialism as they further solidified Veracruz as a now reticently recognized and state-sanctioned Black space. The crown resorted to Black military agency to protect its coastal territories. Conscious for the need of Afro-descendants in the protection of Veracruz and its hinterland, and echoing strategies adopted in all of its American colonies, by 1767 Spanish colonial administration created a set of regulations to further professionalize, and formally create, the first battalion of *Pardos y Morenos* militias. Black military agency was coopted as a regionally permanent apparatus of control and defense, formalizing the corporate privileges for Black militiamen in writing.

The 1767 regulations not only covered the formal creation of the militia companies of *Pardos y Morenos*, deemed Provincial militias by the decree, but also the regulation of Spanish militias, known in the regulations as “white urban militias.”¹¹⁷ It

¹¹⁶ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 81; Helg, “La Limpieza de Sangre Bajo Las Reformas Borbónicas y Su Impacto En El Caribe Neogranadino”. In *Boletín de Historia y Antigüedades* (Academia Colombiana de Historia), Vol. 101, No 858 (Enero-Junio 2014), Pp. 143-180.” 153; Juan Ortiz Escamilla "Las guerras napoleónicas y la defensa de la Nueva España en la Provincia de Veracruz, 1793-1810" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*, 214.

¹¹⁷ AGN/Bandos/ Vol. 6/ exp.67/fs. 243-251v/ 1767

expressively stated that the “two companies, one of free *Pardos*, and the other of free *Morenos*” were to “enjoy from military *fuero*”, further indicating that Afro-descendant militiamen were not to be detained in prison, but “on the barracks, bastions, or the fortress” of San Juan de Ulúa pending a military trial.¹¹⁸ The regulations not only indicated the type of uniform Black Veracruz militiamen were to use, it also specified that military *fuero* was to be extended to all militiamen who served more than twenty years in the corps, while officers would obtain said benefit after serving twelve years.¹¹⁹ The decree not only made specific directions at the amount of salary per month for common soldiers and officers in the militia corps. It also made the clarification that if any Black militiamen died during action, or became permanently maimed during service, their families would enjoy a four-year pension for their service to the crown.¹²⁰

In efforts of recruiting Black militiamen, the Spanish aimed to employ the Afro-descendant population to the advantage of the colonial state whilst also contesting other expressions of Black spaces in the region such as former maroon communities reticent to fully integrate. For example, these benefits were tied to specific obligations, such as monthly trainings on firearms and artillery, marches, reporting to the port-city’s governor, and absolute obedience to their superiors.¹²¹ More specifically, contrary to white urban militiamen who enjoyed of “no prohibition of movement and travel to other

¹¹⁸ AGN/Bandos/ Vol. 6/ exp.67/fs. 243-251v/ 1767

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid. The decree stipulated regarding salaries that “officers, *garzones*, sergeants, and captains will enjoy of eight pesos a month with honorary medals, equal benefits to those of veterans. To Lieutenants and their helpers six pesos a month. To the sublieutenant five pesos. To the sergeant of each company, four pesos a month.”

¹²¹ Ibid.

towns or provinces”, the mobility of Black militiamen in Veracruz was restricted as the regulation stated that “no one but the city’s Governor can authorize the permit to become absent or travel outside of the jurisdiction of their enlistment and service”, keeping tabs on Black militiamen who asked for permission to travel in case they became absent for an extended period.¹²²

Not only was Black space in Veracruz created by the agency, presence, resistance, and thriving of Afro-descendants in the region for over two centuries. By 1767, Black spaces began to be contested by the Spanish through strict codification of their mobility and roles, as seen in the militia regulations. In the retention and restriction of mobility for Black militiamen in Veracruz, and of Black bodies in general through census taking and tax collection, Black spaces were enforced and recognized, but by the same token contested, manipulated, and taken advantage of by colonial authorities as a bulwark against foreign invasion. Even more impressive, the 1767 regulation for Veracruz’ *Pardos y Morenos* militias delineated strict guidelines for Spanish and *criollo* military officials and public servants in terms of treating Black militiamen different from free and enslaved Blacks in the port-city and the region:

¹²² AGN/Bandos/ Vol. 6/ exp.67/fs. 243-251v/ 1767

In order that the free *Pardos y Morenos* that are employed in the distinguished service of the arms are not confused with slaves, or their own slaves, while off duty they will carry in their hats, of any type, a red ribbon of two fingers width with a knot. In occasions when they find another individual of their own *casta* wearing this distinction while not being enlisted in their companies, the militiamen will be allowed to take it away from them the first time. On the second occasion they arrest them and turn them in to the Governor for correction. On the third occasion they will be punished as corresponding. The captains of the companies will make known to the population of Veracruz that I prohibit them to carry in their hats a red ribbon, and that the wearing of such is only permitted, and mandated, to those who follow on the honorably military career.¹²³

This passage reveals many important sociopolitical dynamics for Veracruz' Afro-descendants by 1767. First, the Spanish colonial apparatus intended for Black militiamen to engage in policing fellow peoples of African descent, restricting mobility in this Black space for Afro-Descendants. The Spanish intended to gain the full loyalty of *Pardos* and *Morenos* in order to protect, defend, and police a region, where the Spanish population were a minority. Second, it revealed that the social and economic mobility of select free Afro-descendants was such that some even afforded to own slaves of their own accord, demonstrating a complex social and political structure where peoples of African descent in Veracruz figured as important actors. Third, by including Afro-descendants in the Spanish colonial apparatus through military participation, granting of corporate privileges, and policing of the region, the Spanish wished to regulate this Black space through the roles and actions of Afro-descendant themselves. This in turn confirmed that the creation of Black militias, more than responding to a need of militarization of the

¹²³ AGN/Bandos/ Vol. 6/ exp.67/fs. 243-251v/ 1767

region, it was in reality aimed towards a stricter sociopolitical organization of the population in the event of a foreign invasion.¹²⁴

Nevertheless, by the following decades Spanish authorities realized that despite ferrous defense and protection of the region by Afro-descendants, Spanish policing of their community and agency was not altogether successful.¹²⁵ By 1770 this became evident to Artillery Captain Don Andrés Sanz who considered that Afro-descendant militiamen abused their station, calling for the creation of an officer school to properly train the *Pardos y Morenos* in artillery and firearm use, and to further avoid issues and disturbances from their part.¹²⁶ Such manipulation of their benefits as protectors of the port-city and region was not exclusively carried out by the *Pardos y Morenos* militia, but also by the *Lanceros*, or Lancers, militia. The *Lanceros*, a racially mixed militia unit where Afro-descendants figured prominently, played instrumental roles in defense of the region and contraband determent and was also granted corporate privileges and the right to carry weapons and ride horses.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Juan Ortiz Escamilla "Las guerras napoleónicas y la defensa de la Nueva España en la Provincia de Veracruz, 1793-1810" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*, 219.

¹²⁵ As evidenced by scholar Juan Ortiz Escamilla, "far from serving as an incentive to serve the king, military *fuero* in New Spain became the conduit by which militiamen evaded authorities, evaded fulfilling an order, and eluded punishment from civil altercations. See Juan Ortiz Escamilla "Las guerras napoleónicas y la defensa de la Nueva España en la Provincia de Veracruz, 1793-1810" in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, 219.

¹²⁶ AGN/IV Indiferente de Guerra/ Caja 2658/exp.013/fs.1/1770

¹²⁷ Scholars such as Alcántara, Archer, and García de León all point the origin of the *Lanceros* militia to the hinterland's Black, *Pardo*, and *criollo* cattle ranchers and cowboys, who in the use of their cattle ranching lance as a weapon provided roles of defense, protection, and contraband determent in Veracruz and its hinterland. For more see Alvaro Alcántara, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 58, 64; Archer, "The Key to the Kingdom," 428; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 569.

Despite being considered essential to region's defense, Spaniards tried to further contest and constrain Black spaces in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. As they began to consider Afro-descendant militiamen unruly and expensive to maintain, Spanish authorities carried on multiple attempts to either reform or disband Afro-descendant militias in 1772, 1776, and 1778. Viceroy Martín de Mayorga in 1779 considered them only "fit to carry provisions", for once armed many resorted to extortion and outright robbery in the roads, becoming an entity outside the control of royal officials.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, Veracruz' Black militiamen held the upper hand. Not only they contested decisions to disband or reform the militia units by appealing to judicial courts for the maintaining of their corporate privileges.¹²⁹ Spain's involvement by 1779 in the American Revolutionary War in support of France led Veracruz's colonial authorities to become worried about British invasion, solidifying once more the need of Black militiamen for protection of Veracruz and its hinterland.

Despite their intent at contesting, coopting, and restraining these Black spaces, Spanish worries lessened control over the militias. This led into many opportunities for Afro-descendant militiamen to further solidify their sociopolitical and economic standings to their advantage. Conscious of their value and role as needed defenders of the region, Veracruz' Black militiamen in the city's artillery positions were able, by 1779, to

¹²⁸ AGN/ Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 100/ exp. 60/ fs. 1/ 21 de febrero de 1772; AGN/ Correspondencia de Diversas Autoridades/Vol. 17/ exp. 85, 304-306, 310-319, 341, 356, 362, 368/ 12 de mayo de 1772; AGN/ CDA/Vol. 19/ exp. 52, 142-145/ 20 de mayo de 1772; AGN/ Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 101/ exp. 51/ fs. 1./ 20 de agosto 1772; AGN/ CDA/Vol. 30/ exp. 83/ fs. 185/9 de octubre de 1776; AGN/ CDA/Vol. 31/ exp., 62/ fs. 225/ 24 de de junio de 1778; García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 787.

¹²⁹ AGN/ CDA/Vol. 17/ exp. 85, 304-306, 310-319, 341, 356, 362, 368/ Mayo 12 de 1772

bargain for, and attain, the right to labor on their own trades while not serving in active duty.¹³⁰ By 1781, those in the *Lanceros* corps were able to contest and reject a 1780 regulation that limited their roles “only for duration of the war”, threatening the loss of their corporate privileges.¹³¹ Ultimately, in the face of war and potential invasion by the British, local administrators conceded to the *Lanceros* demands for the rejection of the 1780 regulations. By 1782, Spanish administrators conceded and granted Afro-descendant militias’ requests for better supplies and higher pay.¹³² By the following year, Black *Lanceros* of the fishing village and entrepôt of Alvarado were lifted a sanction over a temporary fishing prohibition the crown had imposed over the region.¹³³

After a brief disbanding of Afro-descendant companies in Veracruz at the end of Spain’s involvement in the American Revolutionary War, and with mounting fears over the Haitian Revolution, Viceroy Juan Vicente de Güemes decided by 1793 to reinstitute the *Pardos y Morenos* militia. Not only was it further recognized that without the support of Veracruz’ Afro-descendants defense of the region proved impossible. Authorities also lessened requirements for tribute exemption. Viceregal decrees and new regulations specified that upon enlistment Black militiamen in Veracruz and *Sotavento* would be exempted from paying tribute, and that if they served for only eight years, while showing exemplary conduct, they were to receive tribute exemption for life.¹³⁴ Contradicting prior

¹³⁰ AGN/Correspondencia de Diversas Autoridades/ Vol.33/exp.64/fs. 261-263/ 30 de diciembre de 1779

¹³¹ AGN/Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 119/ exp. 41/ fs. 48/ 6 de mayo de 1780; AGN/Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 120/ exp. 307/ fs.418-419/ 30 de mayo de 1781

¹³² AGN/ CDA/ Vol. 36/ exp. 140/ fs. 468/ 10 de septiembre de 1782; AGN/CDA/ Vol. 37/ exp. 57/ fs. 182/ 30 de octubre de 1782.

¹³³ AGN/ Alcaldes Mayores/ Vol. 8/ fs. 190-190v/23 de julio de 1783

¹³⁴ AGN/ Impresos Oficiales/Vol. 19/exp. 23/ fs. 116-118/Mayo 11 de 1793; Bandos/Vol. 17/ exp. 13/ fs. 108/ Mayo 11 de 1793 ; AGN/ Bandos/Vol. 17/ exp. 15/ fs. 111/ Mayo 13 de 1793.

attitudes, colonial authorities recognized Black militiamen as “loyal and recognized vassals”, attempting to carry favor and willingness to serve from them.¹³⁵ They assured Black militiamen that they were to enjoy not only from tribute exemption, but also military *fuero*, such as their white militiamen counterparts. Nevertheless, said corporate privileges were only to be extended to new recruits, who needed to be single and with no dependents in order for corporate privileges to be enjoyed solely by Afro-descendant militiamen who served.¹³⁶

Spanish authorities accepted the fact that in this region the fates were in the hands of Black militiamen. This once again opened avenues by which Black militiamen obtained betterment through their station and further reaffirmed Veracruz as a Black space despite Spanish attempts of contesting their agency. Such was the case for the captains of the *Pardos y Morenos* militias, Antonio Santa Ana Espinoza and José Montero, who both claimed they were deserving of the use of “the medal that they carried on a pendant in their chest”, arguing their merit amounted to said benefit.¹³⁷ Clearly searching recognition and betterment of their sociopolitical status, their request was granted. Also, the case of the former sergeant of the *Pardos y Morenos* militia José Palomares demonstrate a similar instance. Palomares petitioned the then Virecroy Branciforte to respect his retirement and corporate privileges for life, those of tribute exemption, pension, and military *fuero*, granted by the previous Viceroy.¹³⁸ Both in

¹³⁵ AGN/ Impresos Oficiales/Vol. 19/exp. 23/ fs. 116-118/Mayo 11 de 1793; Bandos/Vol. 17/ exp. 13/ fs. 108/ Mayo 11 de 1793 ; AGN/ Bandos/Vol. 17/ exp. 15/ fs. 111/ Mayo 13 de 1793.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ AGN/Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 229/ exp. 24/ fs. 36/ Agosto 23 1796

¹³⁸ AGN/ Correspondencia Virreyes/Volumen 184/ Fs. 42-43/ Febrero 1º de 1796

recognition of his service, and in attempts to increase Afro-descendant militiamen recruitment, the Viceroy granted his request.¹³⁹

Such engagement with colonial authorities enabled Afro-descendant militias in Veracruz to make the Port-City the “only place where the militias of *Pardos y Morenos* have officers of their own class.”¹⁴⁰ Despite Spanish attempts of fully coopting and curtailing the development of a thriving Black Space in Veracruz, the role of Afro-descendant militias became so crucial by the last years of the eighteenth century that it became the only region in the whole of New Spain where Afro-descendant militias had Afro-descendant officers commanding them. In turn, Veracruz’ Black militiamen were granted approval from Viceroy Branciforte to be represented by their Black commanding officers as legal defenders whenever a militiamen was put on military trial.¹⁴¹ The solidification of Veracruz as a Black space transcended the boundaries of their military service, but came to be recognized even in legal matters. This was evident in the case of Diego de la Cruz Morales and Joseph Antonio de la Cruz Morales, father and son and both *Lancers* from the Port-City.

Diego de la Cruz Morales, an Afro-descendant member of the *Lancers* militia was accused of, and imprisoned over four months, for burning down the house and lands of Felipe Valenzuela, his “neighbor in the town of Medellín.”¹⁴² Once completing his sentence, Morales issued a counterclaim against Valenzuela for the forced payment of

¹³⁹ AGN/ Correspondencia Virreyes/ Vol. 184/ fs. 42-43/ Febrero 1 de 1796

¹⁴⁰ AGN/ Correspondencia Virreyes/ Vol. 187/ fs. 113/ Junio 28 de 1797

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² AGN/ IV Criminal/Caja 0854/exp. 006/ fs.9/ 1798

legal fees and half of Valenzuela's goods.¹⁴³ Diego de la Cruz claimed that it was in reality his son Joseph Antonio, also a *Lancero*, who while doing slash-and-burn agriculture in his ranch during a "rather windy day," accidentally caused the fire that burned down Valenzuela's house and lands.¹⁴⁴ Making use of their corporate privileges, both *Lanceros* appointed their commanding officer as their legal defender, who declared both Diego and Joseph Antonio innocent.¹⁴⁵ Valenzuela asked Joseph Antonio why he carried out slash-and-burning during a windy day. Joseph Antonio brazenly and callously responded that "he had no need to kiss anyone's hand to do in his house whatever he wished to do."¹⁴⁶ As none of the witnesses could testify that either Diego or Joseph Antonio began the fire that expanded to Valenzuela's house, the case was dismissed and both of the Black militiamen retained their roles and benefits.¹⁴⁷

The significance of the case against Diego de la Cruz Morales, and his son Joseph Antonio, rests on the ways by which Afro-descendant militiamen could manipulate colonial structures, via their exercising of corporate privileges such as military *fuero*, to obtain potential legal and social outcomes that could benefit them. As such, their experience, together with the experiences of Antonio Santa Ana Espinoza, José Montero, and José Palomares, demonstrate not only the ability of Black militiamen in Veracruz of

¹⁴³ AGN/ IV Criminal/Caja 0854/exp. 006/ fs.9/ 1798

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Valenzuela used the term "*Norte*", literally translated as North. The term, to this day, is widely used in Veracruz and its *Sotavento* hinterland to the meteorological phenomena of strong gusts of wind from the northern part of the American continent which arrive to the region in Fall and stay all through Spring time. Often rash and strong gusts of cold wind, during the colonial period *Nortes* represented occasional halts to maritime activity due to grave potential danger over ships and commerce.

¹⁴⁷ IV Criminal/Caja 0854/exp. 006/ fs.9/ 1798

engaging the highest spheres of colonial governance. It also shows how they secured their demands through recognition by the colonial state of their essential roles as defenders of the region. In their manipulation of their station to their advantage, despite adamant intents by the Spanish of contesting their agency, they continued to enforce of Veracruz and *Sotavento* as a Black space.

The need for Afro-descendant militias in Veracruz and its hinterland, along with the Black militiamen's role and agency in engaging colonial spheres of power, led to their continued existence in Veracruz and its hinterland well into Mexico's formal independence by 1821.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, they reaffirmed Veracruz and *Sotavento* as a Black sociopolitical space well into the nineteenth century. Despite some codification of Black spaces by the Crown, with attempts of contesting and ending these spaces, Spaniards ultimately failed. By the beginning of the nineteenth century Veracruz continued to be a Black space, nevertheless one that the colonial state had recognized and somewhat coopted to their advantage. These dynamics were not exclusive of Afro-descendants services to colonial defense. They were also present in their involvement with eighteenth-century economies.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants enabled economic development even during the earliest stages of colonization. Their roles can be traced back to the first Hispanicized free and enslaved Afro-descendants from the Peninsula and Cape Verde that arrived

¹⁴⁸ Scholars such as Ben Vinson III have argued that by the late 1790s most Afro-descendant militias in colonial Mexico for the most part were disbanded. He argues that factors such as a "wholesale assault on free-colored militia duty in the late eighteenth century, coupled with increased concern over bringing free-colored under taxation", and a slew of legal cases, led to the eventual disbandment of most militia units across colonial Mexico by the 1790s. Nevertheless, the experience of Veracruz' Afro-descendant militias well into the 1820s tells otherwise. For more see Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty*, 5.

between 1526 to 1550. They supported the nascent port-city and region in developing the social and economic formation of New Spain, along with its connections to the Greater Caribbean and Atlantic World economies, as the smallpox epidemic caused an Indigenous demographic and labor catastrophe.¹⁴⁹ Afterwards, between 1570-1650, the port-city and its hinterland saw an influx of slaves from Angola that labored in the mines, *obrajes*, and textile producing factories in the interior of New Spain, and in the sugarcane plantations and sugar mills of *Sotavento*, where in the Córdoba jurisdiction their labor enabled slaveowners to have considerable economic and political power until the last years of the colonial period.¹⁵⁰

By the eighteenth century the number of free Afro-descendants far surpassed those of enslaved peoples. Free Afro-descendants became essential actors in the development of regional and Atlantic economies through labor in varied and diverse sectors. In the Port-City, amongst a myriad of professions, free Afro-descendants labored as cooks, servants, apprentices, dockworkers, fishers, carpenters, cart-drivers, construction workers, saddlers, butchers, water carriers, tailors, barbers, carpenters, cobblers, smiths and musicians.¹⁵¹ But Afro-descendants also labored in important economic sectors that pushed the development of legal, and illegal, Atlantic World economies across the city and its hinterland, and beyond, by laboring as sailors,

¹⁴⁹ Domínguez Domínguez, “Entre Resistencia y Colaboración,” 4.

¹⁵⁰ Domínguez Domínguez, 4, 9; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “La lucha de los negros esclavos en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba en el Siglo XVIII,” Artículo (Centro de Investigaciones Históricas. Instituto de Investigaciones Humanísticas. Universidad Veracruzana, 1979), 76, <https://cdigital.uv.mx/>.

¹⁵¹ AHV/C.40/Vol.42/fs.1-92/Padrón de Revillagigedo/1791; Adriana Gil Maroño, “Espacio urbano y familias en la ciudad de Veracruz según el Padrón de Revillagigedo (1791)” in Blázquez Domínguez, Contreras Cruz, and Pérez Toledo, *Población y estructura urbana en México, siglos XVIII y XIX*.

smugglers, muleteers, haulage contractors, and small itinerant merchants.¹⁵² As they enabled regional and the Atlantic economies, peoples of African descent had an unprecedented role and stake through their participation in economic development and trade as they became the developers of commerce in a region mostly devoid of Spaniards.¹⁵³ Through their immense role in economic development they enacted and secured another aspect of Veracruz and *Sotavento* as Black spaces. This alarmed Spanish administration who worried about the economic roles and power of Afro-descendants, eventually seeking to contest their roles.

From cases of open rebellion in sugarcane plantations and mills, to tribute avoidance, Afro-descendants in Veracruz and its hinterland manipulated economic systems to their advantage. This led to rushed attempts by regional Spanish administrators of controlling Black spaces. Such an instance occurred in 1770, where in the town of La Antigua, Don José de Palacio y Varros, La Antigua's *Alcalde Mayor*, or chief administrator, informed Viceroy de Croix that the river rafts built to cross the Huitzilapan/La Antigua, river for public transport of peoples and goods were found in deplorable state due to the inclemency of the "sun, the air, night dew, and the inclemency of the waters."¹⁵⁴ As a result, in grave need to resume the transport of goods north of the Port-City, he authorized that "the Blacks of this town take over transportation" with their

¹⁵² García de León asserts that muleteer, along with maritime and land haulage, companies were already by the end of the XVII century "controlled by free Blacks, owners of mule trains and slaves, or by employees who were hired by the day." Not only did Veracruz' Afro-descendants enabled commercial interchange and development along the coast and with the rest of New Spain by the late-seventeenth century, they García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera*, 542–43.

¹⁵³ García de León, 543.

¹⁵⁴ AGN/ Alcaldes Mayores/ Vol. 1/ fs. 181-183/ 15 a 23 de mayo de 1770

canoes and rafts, while a local, Don Fernando Bustillo, repaired the crown's public rafts.¹⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the *Alcalde Mayor* showed grave reticence at Afro-descendants from La Antigua controlling the movement of peoples and goods over an extended period of time. He believed they would eventually define commercial flow and economic development in La Antigua. He expressed his worries as he stated, "I was of the contrary opinion that these tyrant blacks of the public held hope that transportation rights fell under their hands once again".¹⁵⁶ He proposed to Don Fernando Bustillo that while the town's underwent repairs, that Bustillo was to rent other rafts to prevent Afro-descendants from controlling the flow of peoples and goods perpetually.¹⁵⁷ Not only did José de Palacio y Varros confirmed that at some point in the past Afro-descendants controlled the flow of trade and peoples in La Antigua. He also worried that peoples of African descent, upon control of commercial networks, would exert pressure upon them to their advantage. In many ways, the worries of La Antigua's *Alcalde Mayor* not only demonstrated Spanish attempts at contesting Black Spaces in Veracruz. It also confirmed that Afro-descendants of the hinterland by 1770 maintained this Black space they manipulated the regional economy as they wished.

Another instance that shows Spanish attempts of codification and contesting of Black spaces, and how Veracruz' Afro-descendants rendered this effort futile, was the avoidance of tribute. Free Afro-descendants across New Spain were required via a royal

¹⁵⁵ AGN/ Alcaldes Mayores/ Vol. 1/ fs. 181-183/ 15 a 23 de mayo de 1770

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

decree since 1574 to pay yearly tribute to the crown.¹⁵⁸ By the late-seventeenth century the tribute requirement for Afro-descendants in New Spain was codified by the Laws of Indies of 1681, which required that all free Black and mulatto men and women “were to pay one silver *marco* each year.”¹⁵⁹ These requirements continued well onto the eighteenth century, where by 1786 the *Ordenanza de Intendentes* stipulated that free Afro-descendants, both men and women, had to contribute to the Crown’s treasury.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, with the formalizing of free Afro-descendant militia units since 1767, in its attempts of contesting and controlling Black spaces, the benefit of tribute exemption led to widespread tribute avoidance by Black militiamen, extended members of their families, and their community.

Militia regulations granted tribute exemption not only to Afro-descendant militia officers, but also to regular militia troops upon the express condition that they were to

¹⁵⁸ These requirements were furthered increased by 1579, when the Viceroy Don Martín Enríquez “informed *corregidores* and regional chief administrators that all free Blacks and mulattos were to contribute to the treasury.” By 1591 the crown imposed stricter and more stratified requirements for tribute that pardoned free Blacks and mulatto women that were married to Spaniards, but that required free Black shop owners to pay the same tribute as Spaniards. For more see Rafael Castañeda García, “Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810,” *Fronteras de la historia* 19, no. 1 (February 11, 2014): 156, <https://doi.org/10.22380/2027468835>; Alvaro Alcántara López, “Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795” in Yovana Celaya Nández, Graciela Márquez, and Graciela Márquez Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX* (El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2018), 56.

¹⁵⁹ These laws stipulated that all free Afro-descendants, men and women, “were to pay one silver *marco* each year.” See Castañeda García, “Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810,” 156.

¹⁶⁰ This 18th century law stipulated that the fiscal contribution “for Blacks, free mulattos, and other *castas*, married or single, and upon turning eighteenth years of age, to pay ‘the moderate quantity of 24 *reales*.’” See Alvaro Alcántara López, “Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795” in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 56.

remain on active duty during a specific period of time.¹⁶¹ Using this privilege, Veracruz' Black militiamen argued since 1770 that their roles in previous wars and protection of the region entitled them to stop paying tribute.¹⁶² Afro-descendants also cited the economic difficulties that the tribute "imposed upon their lives, as they restricted their economic mobility" and growth, causing ineffective military service detrimental to the Crown's interests.¹⁶³ Tribute exemption and extended tribute avoidance caused grave repercussions to the fiscal wellbeing of the region. Nevertheless, Spanish administrators were forced to turn a blind eye and to grant constant further exemptions of tribute to militiamen during the entire 1780s as the empire was engaged in war with Britain.¹⁶⁴ Veracruz' Afro-descendants engaged Atlantic World shifting political and economic paradigms through their station as militiamen, in turn reaffirming this region as a Black space.

Despite contesting economic empowerment in Black spaces by attempting to coerce the economic mobility of Afro-descendants in the 1780s and 1790s, the Crown was unable to prevent further avoidance of tribute by Afro-descendant communities.¹⁶⁵

The Crown's inability to collect tribute due to insufficient tax collectors, and due to Afro-

¹⁶¹ AGN/Bandos/Vol. 6/exp.67/fs.-243-251v/1767; Castañeda García, "Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810," 164; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 81.

¹⁶² Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 82.

¹⁶³ Castañeda García, "Hacia una sociología fiscal. El tributo de la población de color libre de la Nueva España, 1770-1810," 168.

¹⁶⁴ AGN/Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol.122/exp.55/fs.102-102v/ 1 de marzo de 1782; AGN/ Reales Cédulas Originales/Vol. 138/ exp. 2/ fs. 1/ 1 de septiembre de 1787; AGN/ Tributos/Vol. 40/exp.15/fs. 258-275/16 de abril de 1788

¹⁶⁵ AGN/ Indiferente de Guerra/Vol. 307b/ 1783-1790; AGN/ Correspondencia de Diversas Autoridades/ Vol. 52/exp.80/fs.296/25 de septiembre de 1793; Alvaro Alcántara López, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 71; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 83.

descendant mobility across this Black space,¹⁶⁶ led for tribute avoidance to occur in locales across the hinterland where the presence of mere fifty Black militiamen with tribute exemption led to collective avoidance of tribute by up to three-hundred Afro-descendants per community.¹⁶⁷ By 1810, in the southernmost *Sotavento* jurisdictions of Acayucan, Los Tuxtlas, and Cosamaloapan, and the Port-City of Veracruz, there were no more than thirty Afro-descendant taxpayers who contributed their fiscal due.¹⁶⁸

Veracruz' Afro-descendant militiamen, thriving as part of the Black space that was Veracruz and *Sotavento*, took advantage of their station and ultimately enabled their families, and the larger Afro-descendant population of the region, to avoid the payment of tribute. In doing so, Veracruz' Afro-descendants subverted attempts of contestation, control, and coercion of their economic and sociopolitical standings by the Spanish well into the early 1800s.

Conclusion

Whether as enablers of regional and Atlantic World economies, as maroons in outright resistance, or through their roles in regional defense, Afro-descendants in the Port-City and its hinterland established and maintained Veracruz and *Sotavento* as a thriving Black space. Despite continued Spanish attempts to contest, control, and coerce

¹⁶⁶ Alvaro Alcántara López, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 66.

¹⁶⁷ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 2008, 79.

¹⁶⁸ Alvaro Alcántara López, "Los otros contribuyentes: Pardos y Mulatos de la Provincia de Acayucan, 1765-1795" in Nández, Márquez, and Colín, *De contribuyentes y contribuciones en la fiscalidad mexicana, siglos XVIII-XX*, 57.

Afro-descendant roles during the late-colonial period, peoples of African descent ultimately enabled Veracruz and its hinterland to become a Black space influenced by, and connected to, thriving economies and political currents. At the turn of the nineteenth century, whether if state-sanctioned or in alternative fashion, Veracruz' Afro-descendants had consolidated Black spaces of Atlantic World sociopolitical and economic significance. These spaces, in many ways, came to influence the dynamics of how Afro-descendants in the region acted during the first decades of the nineteenth century. This century, a turning point for the political action of Afro-descendants free and enslaved, engaged them into the sociopolitical transitions of Mexico from colony to nation. As the 1805 Córdoba slave rebellion came to demonstrate, Black spaces in nineteenth-century Veracruz and *Sotavento* continued to be reaffirmed through rebellion and resistance.

Chapter Two

“They did not want any other thing but freedom”- 1805 Córdoba Slave Rebellion, Haiti, and transatlantic politics in Veracruz.

In Veracruz, the nineteenth century began with massive change, both internal and external. The growth and expansion of a bustling Atlantic economy, continued fears and anxieties regarding invasions to the region by foreign powers, and the solidifying and expansion of Bourbon reformism implemented in the last decades of the previous century, allowed Veracruz' Afro-descendants to develop their socio-political awareness to unprecedented levels in the Black space that by 1799 was Veracruz and its hinterland. It was Afro-descendants who eventually connected regional developments in Veracruz to those developments that occurred in both sides of the Atlantic, more specifically those of the Age of Revolutions. Afro-descendants in Veracruz adopted and implemented ideologies from the Haitian Revolution, while also they represented a constant threat by materializing ideals of egalitarianism sponsored by the French Revolution. This increased Spanish fears that regional economic production would be undermined, and at the same time massive rebellions among Veracruz' subalterns of color, both enslaved and free, would occur.

By 1805 the institution of Slavery, both in its urban and rural iterations, had become largely unused in much of New Spain¹⁶⁹: Veracruz and its agricultural hinterland

¹⁶⁹ Multiple authors have established the institution of slavery in colonial Mexico as particularly prominent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, arguing that by the eighteenth-century slavery in most of New Spain was in disuse. Among the reasons scholars have cited are racial intermixing, demographic increase, and the increase of free and salaried labor that replaced the need for slave labor. For some of these studies see Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001); Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640*, Blacks in the Diaspora

remained a clear exception to this rule. Specifically, the near-mountainous, but very fertile, cities of Córdoba and Orizaba represented the last significant centers of sugarcane production and sugar refinement that supplied a large quantity of the sugar produced by New Spain to Spanish inter-colonial, as well as foreign, markets in the Caribbean and further away onto Europe. These centers also represented regions of tobacco production via plantations. The sugar industry of both colonial centers and their surrounding plantations signified one of the strongest economic incentives for the Port-City of Veracruz in its trade with the Metropolis and other colonies of foreign powers in the Americas at the start of the nineteenth century¹⁷⁰.

Although both Córdoba and Orizaba have been traditionally geographically excluded from the categorizations of the Leeward region of Veracruz, I argue in favor of the expansion of the hinterland of *Sotavento*/Leeward to include these cities, as well as its surrounding Haciendas, into traditional conceptions and geographical demarcations of this hinterland.¹⁷¹ Despite that both centers were politically much more aligned with the

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003); Herman L. Bennett, *Colonial Blackness: A History of Afro-Mexico*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negra de México, 1519-1810: Estudio Etno-Histórico* (México: D.F., Ediciones Fuente cultural, 1946); Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570-1650* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2nd ed (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Luis J. Juventino García Ruiz, "Esclavos de la subdelegación de Xalapa ante el Código Negro de 1789: insubordinación, justicia y represión," *ULÚA. REVISTA DE HISTORIA, SOCIEDAD Y CULTURA* 1, no. 23 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.25009/urhsc.2014.23.1165>.

¹⁷⁰ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs.251. Secretaría del Virreinato. Asunto llevado en la Secretaría del virreinato, Juan Martínez de Soria, de los años de 1748, 1750, 1751, 1805, sobre la sublevación de los negros cimarrones.

¹⁷¹ Traditionally, historiographies have identified the *Sotavento* region as extending from the Port-City of Veracruz south towards the territorial limits of the modern states of Tabasco and Oaxaca, often excluding these regions into its geographic character. This chapter, argues in favor of the inclusion of both centers and surrounding plantations into the geographical, economic, and sociopolitical, demarcation of *Sotavento*.

mountainous colonial Villa of Xalapa, due to their importance as last true enclaves of chattel plantation slavery in colonial Veracruz, as well as their production of specific goods tied to the Atlantic and Greater Caribbean commerce that moved and financed trade in Veracruz and the rest of *Sotavento*, both cities and their respective agricultural regions must be included in geographical categorizations that further explain their role as production centers of goods which linked Veracruz to Atlantic economies of the early nineteenth century.¹⁷²

The specter of the Haitian Revolution represented one of the biggest anxieties for colonial administrators in the region, not only for the promises and abilities for freedom and empowerment that this revolution represented for all Afro-descendants in Veracruz and Sotavento, but by extension all New Spain. Although African slaves rebelled in Córdoba periodically, especially in the first few decades of the eighteenth century¹⁷³, the

¹⁷² Scholar Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita has argued that as a pattern of slave purchases increased, along with further reliance of slave labor in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries sugarcane plantations of Córdoba, Veracruz, in contrast with decaying reliance on slave labor for most of New Spain by the mid to late eighteenth century, this made of Córdoba and the sugarcane plantations around it, late and unique slave societies that tied Córdoba, and Veracruz, to slave-driven sugarcane plantation enclaves of the Caribbean more than those of central and western New Spain. For more see Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825,” in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 195–217, <http://books.openedition.org/cemca/1633>; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “Esclavitud negra en la jurisdicción de la villa de Córdoba en el siglo XVIII” (Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana, Unidad Docente Interdisciplinaria de Humanidades, Facultad de Historia, 1977); Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “La lucha de los negros esclavos en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba en el Siglo XVIII,” Artículo (Centro de Investigaciones Históricas. Instituto de Investigaciones Humanísticas. Universidad Veracruzana, 1979), <https://cdigital.uv.mx/>; Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, *Esclavos negros en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba, Veracruz, 1690-1830* (Xalapa, Veracruz [México: Universidad Veracruzana, Dirección General Editorial, 2008).

¹⁷³ Ibid. This document provides ample descriptions and reports of the slave revolts of 1748, 1750 and 1751 by the slaves of the Haciendas surrounding Cordoba. Although it is clear that the time proximity within the first three revolts of the eighteenth century that this ample document could have been motivated by organized leadership amidst slaves in the Haciendas, this dissertation covers only the 1805 revolt due to the complex and tense socio-political background that inspired these slaves at the time to revolt, linking afro-descendants in Veracruz to Atlantic World developments.

slave revolt of 1805 was different. In 1805 enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz showed their clear understanding of their increasingly connected world. In their demands for freedom and better treatments, they interacted, manipulated, and took advantage of legal crown systems, showing not only mastery at the understanding of colonial law, but at the same time showing a clear influence by the events and ideals that the Haitian Revolution spurred onto the Greater Caribbean.

The 1805 rebellion shows then intersectionality between both regional developments and conditions in Veracruz affecting Afro-descendants and the developments of the Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic World. As such, this chapter builds upon Atlantic World historiography of “The Great Fear” or the “Haiti Trauma”, the fear by European political and economic elites, in this case Spanish colonial administrators, of regional African, or Afro-descendant, slave revolts inspired by the radical sociopolitical liberation and independence of slaves and Afro-descendants in Haiti from 1791 to 1804.¹⁷⁴ This intersectionality, and the “Great Fear” experienced by local Spanish planters and bureaucrats as a reaction, is most evident in the actions and voices of Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, which made of this 1805 rebellion a watershed moment for the study of their political awareness in the early nineteenth century.

¹⁷⁴ See Ulrike Bock, “¿Un caso del ‘gran miedo’ hacia los afrodescendientes en Yucatán? El uso estratégico de un discurso caribeño en el contexto de las independencias latinoamericanas,” *Historia Caribe* 13, no. 32 (2018): 51–79; Aline Helg, *Slave No More: Self-Liberation before Abolitionism in the Americas*, North Carolina Scholarship Online (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Alejandro E. Gómez, “El Síndrome de Saint-Domingue. Percepciones y Sensibilidades de La Revolución Haitiana En El Gran Caribe (1791-1814),” *Caravelle* (1988-), no. 86 (2006): 125–55; Clarence J. Munford and Michael Zeuske, “Black Slavery, Class Struggle, Fear and Revolution in St. Domingue and Cuba, 1785-1795,” *The Journal of Negro History* 73, no. 1/4 (1988): 12–32; Julius Sherrard Scott and Marcus Rediker, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution*, 2018.

The 1805 Rebellion

The fateful events of this seven-day long rebellion came to materialize on Sunday February 10th, 1805 as slaves from both the Haciendas of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua Chico*, in the immediacy of Cordoba, took arms in an impressive and well-coordinated effort. They terrified the owners of the plantation economies of the region, the military governor of Veracruz, the *intendente*, and the Viceroy of New Spain himself. Despite that slaves in both haciendas, numbering close to 500 individuals, coordinated their rebellion through effective joint leadership, the documentary record, in its majority produced by the Spanish, clearly specifies that the slaves of El Potrero were the ones who mainly ideated and coordinated the upheaval against their master and the crown.

These limitations imposed by the historical record, pertaining to the slaves' role in this rebellion, are reflective of the ways by which Spanish colonial administration in Veracruz and its Leeward Hinterland attempted to downplay the importance of Afro-descendant agency for the region during this period. It is particularly reflective of the documentary efforts by the Spanish who portrayed the agency of enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz as disparate and unconnected, an effort to downplay imperial fears of massive revolt, manifesting their preoccupations of "The Great Fear" of the sociopolitical influence that Haiti had by then over the region.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ This rebellion is thus analyzed following the approaches implemented by both Aisha Finch and Marissa Fuentes in their latest works, who counter traditional ways of reading documentary records produced by Europeans which downplay the agency of Afro-descendant actors in slave rebellions or daily forms of resistance. For more information see Aisha Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba* and Marisa Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*.

As a result, the documents relating to this rebellion can be roughly divided into two sides. Most reports produced by Spanish administrators portray the rebellion as barbarous and harmful to imperial interests; connect slavery to the growth of imperial economic interest; and establish a marked prophesized warning on the adverse results of ignoring slave pleas while allowing for continued outside intellectual influence from the aftershocks of Haiti to reach slaves in the region. The documents produced by rebel slaves tell a different version of the story. They establish themselves as “sufferers” from landowners’ abuses; portray themselves as enactors of passive resistance; and demonstrate an impressive ability to understand, dialogue, and manipulate Spanish imperial structures of power. Both sets of documents create different narratives of this momentous rebellion. One shows large deficiency from the Spanish colonial apparatus, while the other reveals the heightened socio-political and ideological awareness that Afro-descendants in Veracruz had attained by the early nineteenth century, which in turn linked their conditions and socio-political development to those of Afro-descendants across the Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic World.

From the first moments of the slave uprising, Spanish authorities, along with local landowners, exhibited profound preoccupations, where the fear of the rebellion spreading throughout the hinterland took form as the main worry of Spaniards in the region. Although the documentary record of this rebellion excludes individual protagonists for the most part, the Colonel of the Infantry Regiment of Cordoba, Orizaba and Xalapa, Don Joseph Manuel de Cevallos, is an essential character for the understanding of the rebellion. We know little of his age, precedence, and reputation amidst Spanish military

ranks at the time, but his role as both informant and on-the-ground commander during the quelling of the slaves' rebellion is of utmost importance for the understanding of how local Spanish administration dealt with this momentous occasion of Afro-descendant socio-political upheaval.

In an initial report of concern, Cevallos expressed the need for reinforcements to put down the rebellion as Cordoba only counted with “no more troop than forty militiamen, who with the lack of dressing and the lacking state of munitions and weapons” could not take back the *Haciendas* of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua Chico*.¹⁷⁶ Cevallos proceeded to inform authorities in Veracruz that 300 people who “wrongly understanding the superior protection that the pardon offered to them would grant, not only have proclaimed from that point their freedom from slavery, but have also in their uprising neglected obedience to their master, and with all sorts of weapons are willing to combat any force that opposes them.”¹⁷⁷

In this worrisome report, Cevallos made two important assertions. First, he established that in *El Potrero* alone, close to 300 slaves began an uprising, amounting to an impressive number of slaves considering that by the nineteenth century, in New Spain the general institution of Slavery was on its way to disuse. This demonstrates the proclivity of chattel slavery as a system of economic production that enabled Veracruz and its hinterland, up to the nineteenth century, to include itself into the currents of

¹⁷⁶ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 1-4

¹⁷⁷ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 5-8. Cevallos also states that the slaves have banished any Spanish administrator that worked or oversaw labor in the plantation and production at the sugar mill, completely disrupting sugar production cycles in Cordoba.

Atlantic and Caribbean economies, where the labor of enslaved Afro-descendants was key. Second, he recorded the assertiveness of the slaves' defense of their freedom. In his report, slaves not merely rebelled against ill-treatment and oppression, they strove for freedom, even at the expense of their lives.

Cevallos' report demonstrated how the slaves of this *Hacienda* had completely been shaped by currents of egalitarianism and intellectual discourse radicalized by subaltern movements of the Atlantic World at the time such as the Haitian Revolution. After all, the slaves of this *Hacienda* believed and acted assuming that Spanish authorities would treat them as equal socio-political agents, for not only are they offered an *indulto*, or pardon, but are consciously aware of their own socio-political status, leading them to reject said pardon in favor of the pursuing of their freedom. The rejection of the offered pardon by the slaves of *El Potrero* demonstrates that the slaves in rebellion considered the avenues of political diplomacy exhausted, seeing only a revolt as a viable way of making a political statement.

Cevallos reported on the feared spread of the rebellion. A group of slaves established contact with the *Ojo de Agua Chico Hacienda*, where the slaves of said plantation "joined the slaves from the first one from the mere instant of the morning, when an odd church bell signal, and other scandalous signals not used amidst this class of people" were used to confirm the joining of these slaves in the uprising with the original group in rebellion.¹⁷⁸ He proceeded in his retelling to mention that the slaves of the

¹⁷⁸ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 5-8. Cevallos description of the ways by which slaves on different *Haciendas* communicated to confirm their allegiance to the rebellion raises interesting

second plantation amounted the rebellion to 500 individuals, fearing that “having solid assertions that spreading the word from one to another *Hacienda*, all the remaining plantations will rebel, and will make of this an insurrection that will cause insufferable damages, which Cordoba had experienced in the pitiful events of 1739.”¹⁷⁹ He finished his report by stating that finding themselves in such critical circumstances, specifically having only forty men to contain the uprising, that by “taking the providence of arming other peoples of the country, we fear that with said weapons could originate a bloody scene.”¹⁸⁰

Cevallos materialized two important factors of “The Great Fear” in his retelling. First, the rebellion could spread. He detailed a regional African slave rebellion across Veracruz and the *Sotavento* region, that could eventually spread to all over New Spain: this violent unrest would also lead to the arming of other racial subalterns in regional colonial society, and eventually become the undoing of Spanish power in the whole of New Spain. Although the conditions of this particular rebellion were in great part determined by socio-political developments of Afro-descendants across the Atlantic World at the time, the occurrence of African and Afro-descendant rebellions in colonial Veracruz was not new, an occurrence that was very prescient in the collective fears of

questions as to the ways by which slaves used to communicate ideas, strategies, and plans prior to, and during, slave rebellions in colonial Veracruz.

¹⁷⁹ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 5-8. In a separate letter written by Don Pedro de Alonso, a local magistrate in Cordoba, informs the need to secure the jails in the region where the uprising occurred, suggesting that the slaves who rebelled might take-in escaped prisoners. This reveals a larger fear of this uprising becoming for Veracruz the catalyst that could undo the colonial system in the region, and eventually expand said rebellion to the rest of the colony. AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 15-17.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Spanish administrators and collective political awareness of Afro-descendants looking for freedom.¹⁸¹ Second, Cevallos expressed the fear that the sugar production industry would become paralyzed and eventually collapse, profoundly harming imperial economic interests and local economies and society.

These fears present three elemental factors for the understanding of how this regional rebellion challenged Spanish power at a greater geo-political scale. First, Slavery was clearly tied to the economic development and wellbeing of the region. Second, slavery in *Sotavento* connected the region to the Atlantic World via the economic ties that the Port of Veracruz enabled with the Greater Caribbean. If sugar production and trade suffered, so would in turn the economies of the region and by extension the economic importance of the Spanish in the Atlantic World. Third, it was slavery, both as a regional mode of production, but also as a constant risk of regional social upheaval, that enabled, via the Port of Veracruz, for the dissemination of ideas connected to the Haitian Revolution which ultimately contributed to the development of an increased political awareness for enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz.

¹⁸¹ Rebellions of note are that of Gaspar Yanga in the early XVII century which set precedents for the ways by which enslaved African peoples and Afro-descendants could force colonial administration to their whims. For more information on the ways by which slave rebellions were precedent methods for Veracruz' enslaved Afro-descendants in the pursuing of their freedom see Antonio García de León, *Vientos bucaneros: piratas, corsarios y filibusteros en el Golfo de México* (Mexico, D.F: Biblioteca Era, 2014); Patrick James Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz: Race, Ethnicity, and Regional Development*, 2nd ed (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Aguirre Beltrán, *La Población Negra de México, 1519-1810*; Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: el puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519-1821* (México, D.F.; Xalapa, Veracruz: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011); William B. Taylor, "The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Los Morenos de Amapa," *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (1970): 439–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980185>.

Cevallos reflected prescient collective fears among the landowning classes of Cordoba, and by extension Veracruz, of a replica of the Haitian Revolution from occurring, revealing that the ideas of said revolution, as well as ideologies of egalitarian freedom and representation, transcended imperial, maritime, and geographical barriers reaching, what they once considered, isolated slaves. The “Great Fear” was very prescient in the region around Córdoba, Veracruz by 1805.

Upon the report by Colonel Cevallos to both authorities in the Port-City of Veracruz, and those in Mexico City, colonial authorities became alarmed by the enormous potential of success that 500 rebellious slaves had over a meager militia company of forty men. Said fears and anxieties must have proven powerful, for the Military Governor of Veracruz immediately mobilized local troops and militias towards Cordoba to quell the uprising. Urged by the authorities in Cordoba, he authorized to send one hundred armed men accompanied by “*paisanos* and armed Indians”.¹⁸² He had been informed that the rebellious slaves are armed with guns, gunpowder and plenty of ammunition, making them extraordinarily dangerous, which propelled him to authorize the sending of “100 infantry men and 100 cavalry men” stating that the military resources of the Port-City were stretched thin due to the “reduced garrison and the sensible disagreements with the court in London”, referring to the Anglo-Spanish War that would last until 1808.¹⁸³

¹⁸² AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 12-14

¹⁸³ Ibid. This war saw the momentous defeat of Spain allied with France at the time during the Battle of Trafalgar. The socio-political background on the other side of the Atlantic during this slave rebellion allows to situate the agency of Veracruz’ early-nineteenth century Afro-descendants with the developments of the Atlantic Revolutions and the Napoleonic Wars, extrapolating their agency in context of not only regional and local developments, but international ones as well.

The precarious situation of the entire region was expanded in a separate letter sent by the Military Governor of Veracruz to Cordoba, where he stated that the troops that were sent to quell the rebellion “should not remain in other commissions or use in that region more than during the needed time to subdue the rebel slaves,” expressing fears of possible invasion in the Port-City of Veracruz.¹⁸⁴ Although the Military Governor of Veracruz was willing to support the sugar plantation owners of Cordoba, he was politically and militarily constrained by the developments of the Napoleonic Wars and the Atlantic World. Though locally based and enacted, the slave rebellion of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua Haciendas* took place in the context of political developments of the Atlantic World, not as mere regional uprisings.

Cevallos and the local administrators in Cordoba produced a detailed retelling of the conflict. They began their narrative by stating that several attempts for peaceful negotiation were attempted to no avail with the slaves. Firstly, they mention that on Monday February 11th a contingent of two individuals who were close family to Don Francisco Segura, master of the slaves and owner of the plantation, were dispatched with the objective to negotiate, but eventually failed in their attempts after becoming captives of the slaves and being forced to escape avoiding the known roads to avoid being captured a second time.¹⁸⁵ Cevallos and the administrators informed of a more attempts at negotiations, first on Wednesday 13th led by the main priest of Cordoba, Thursday 14th by

¹⁸⁴ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 15-17

¹⁸⁵ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 21-30

a second set of priests, and lastly Friday 15th by the prior set of priests and members of the *Cabildo*, or Town Hall, of Cordoba.¹⁸⁶

Cevallos informed that he attempted to persuade the rebellious slaves of “the obedience and subordination that they ought to grant their master, as a result of the slavery on which they were born and were to die, but none of this was enough to contain the spirit of pride that they had attained.”¹⁸⁷ He proceeded to inform that as a last resort he attempted to suggest to the slaves that they should resume their work for fifteen days while the Viceroy was to send individuals to investigate their complaints while the slaves themselves would be able to appoint a couple administrators of their own choosing. Cevallos stated that they did not “accepted this extreme of benignity... for on the other hand served to insolate them more to the degree of proclaiming, in my presence, that they were free from slavery, that they could not recognize any dominion, and that the *Hacienda* was to become its own town with its own population.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 21-30.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. The statement by Cevallos, and his ideological assertion that African slavery in early-nineteenth century Veracruz, was unchangeable, unending, and transferable to the future generations, help to contradict the discourse and assertion of scholars such as Ann Twinam, whose analysis of the “*Gracias al Sacar*” documents, or royal documents of allegorical racial whitening, allowed Afro-descendants in Spanish America to climb the social ladder in order to obtain better economic and political benefits in colonial Spanish America. The case of this rebellion in 1805 Cordoba, Veracruz, reveals that the idea of a more flexible and benign form of slavery that is often associated with Spanish America rings untrue for this geographical and time scenario. I argue that as a result of the Haitian Revolution, slaveowners in colonial Veracruz, contemporary to the Haitian Revolution, saw the need to reinforce attitudes of slavery that would enforce the transmittal of the slave condition as fixed, unchangeable, transmitted over generations, making slavery more akin to the forms of slavery associated with Brazil and the United States. For more on *Gracias al Sacar* and questions of social mobility for peoples of African descent in colonial Spanish America see Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015).

What Cevallos considered “insolent” and “prideful” replies from the slaves of *El Potrero*, terms often associated in “Great Fear” narratives to slaves in rebellion empowered by the intellectual and social shockwaves of Haiti,¹⁸⁹ they actually reveal many facets of the slaves own socio-political self-development, while showing the political, economic and sheer militant power they held. As the slaves proclaimed their freedom in front of multiple Spanish administrators not only they demonstrated a heightened and intellectually developed self-recognition as individuals equal to other persons of the empire, regardless of socioracial origin, but at the same time they requested a degree of partial autonomy from the crown and colonial governments in order to proclaim a semi-independent Afro-descendant community.¹⁹⁰ In short, slaves knew the system well, but worked to break it. By engaging representatives of the colonial apparatus directly, the slaves considered themselves not as property or belonging to a master, but as enlightened individuals in search of their freedom, arguably greatly

¹⁸⁹ Bock, “¿Un caso del ‘gran miedo’ hacia los afrodescendientes en Yucatán?,” 55.

¹⁹⁰ Over 300 years of colonial domination by the Spanish in Veracruz, the method taken by rebellious African slaves of demanding legal recognition to the crown as autonomous communities, albeit under the general sponsorship of the empire, was by the early nineteenth century a well-known method of resistance by Afro-descendants in Veracruz. The first instance of the use of this method can be traced to the early seventeenth century to the maroon community led by Gaspar Yanga who would establish the town of *San Lorenzo de Los Negros* in 1609. By the eighteenth century this practice can be identified through the case of the town of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa*, founded in 1769 by maroons after fierce resistance to Spanish rule and forcing the Spanish to compromise. As Historian Antonio García de León argues, more so than often it was in the crown best interest to legalize communities of runaway slaves, integrating them to the colonial apparatus with the objective of serving as regional militias to defend the coasts in Veracruz. For more information see Taylor, “The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de Los Morenos de Amapa”; Carroll, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz*, 2001; Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*; Antonio García de León, *Tierra adentro, mar en fuera: el puerto de Veracruz y su litoral a Sotavento, 1519-1821* (México, D.F.; Xalapa, Veracruz: Fondo de Cultura Económica ; Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Universidad Veracruzana, 2011).

inspired by the socio-political empowerment of all peoples of African descent that by 1804 the Haitian Revolution had produced.

Soon after the failed attempts at diplomacy the troops from Veracruz arrived in Cordoba, and Cevallos mustered local regiments and improvised militias to the landowners' cause. On Sunday February 17th the armed clash between the slaves in rebellion and the government-supported troops occurred. Cevallos and the regional bureaucrats informed the Viceroy that upon seeing the reluctance of the rebellious slaves to surrender, they proceeded to gather close to 400 troops, consisting of the reinforcements sent from Veracruz and local armed militias, who proceeded to attempt to convey the surrender of the slaves by show of force, only to be ambushed and attacked by the slaves.

Cevallos informed that as they “throttled through the narrow path of the *Hacienda*” they “were assaulted tumultuously, even the smallest children and the women, opening fire, throwing rocks, and approaching us with all sorts of weapons and large sticks, which at their tips brandished sharpened irons.”¹⁹¹ Their troops, became in awe and shock of the surprise attack and scattered as they all ran to the main plantation hull to entrench themselves and repel the constant attack of slaves from the morning to the afternoon. It must be noted that the opportunity of rebellion and the search for collective freedom provided both women and infants in both of these *Haciendas* with an opportunity to provide their help and become active agents in the rebellion, demonstrating how opportunities for freedom found in radicalized rebellions of Afro-

¹⁹¹ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 21-30

descendants in Veracruz by the early nineteenth century provided both Afro-descendant women and children with the opportunities to participate in the pursuit of their freedom.

After a day-long resistance, the slaves commenced to retreat, and as they started to retreat further into the fields and countryside, the troops and militias began to capture some of the runaways they encountered. Cevallos confirmed that they found “four dead blacks” whom among them all of them are “heads of the rebellion or leaders of the insurrection”, followed by the capture of fourteen slave men and women, two out of those which perished due to their wounds.¹⁹² Cevallos reported the casualties on the expeditionary forces side as two gravely injured soldiers, two gravely hurt militiamen, and three lightly injured militiamen, confirming no casualties on his side.¹⁹³ Cevallos then informed the Viceroy and the Military Governor of Veracruz that in Cordoba, upon not receiving prompt news of the expeditionary force which travelled to quell the rebellion, the highest of fears and rumors were spread concerning the defeat of the Spanish assembled troops and the victory of slaves. These fears expressed by the landowners and population of Cordoba revealed, that albeit briefly, the regional populace truly feared a complete takeover of the region by African slaves, once again demonstrating that during this occurrence there was a prescient fear that Haiti would recreate itself in Veracruz.

Cevallos and the Spanish administrators finished their retelling of events by stating that the rebellion was virtually put to an end through the action of his troops, and that the slaves of the *Ojo de Agua Chico Hacienda* “upon seeing our existence and attack

¹⁹² AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs.21-30.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

on the first plantation, they remained docile from the moment they offered us to reduce themselves to the work and orders of their master and his aides.”¹⁹⁴ Cevallos and company finished their report to the crown stating that “we still fear that the alliance between slaves from one plantation with the other, and their families, might produce the same effects than those of the black slaves of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua*.”¹⁹⁵ Despite alleged “pacification” the prospect, and fear, of further regional slave rebellions remained.

This last statement reveals a consistent fear from the part of slaveowners and landholders in late-colonial Veracruz regarding an intendency-wide¹⁹⁶ rebellion that might include not only slaves, but also disassociated and disaffected free Afro-descendants and other racial subalterns in Veracruz and its Leeward Hinterland. As such, the parameters of “The Great Fear” ideology of Haitian revolution tenants affecting Veracruz were extended not only to include enslaved Afro-descendants but also disaffected free peoples of African descent in the region, attitudes that will be replicated in other parts of Spanish America during, and after, the struggles of independence to restraint the sociopolitical agency of Afro-descendants .¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs.21-30.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ In late-colonial Mexico, under the Bourbon Reforms, twelve Intendencies, territorial and political demarcations that answered directly to the Spanish Crown, were created. Intendencies served as the political and territorial basis that would lead to the creation of states once Mexico became a republic in 1824.

¹⁹⁷ For more see Aline Helg, “Simón Bolívar and the Spectre of ‘Pardocracia’: José Padilla in Post-Independence Cartagena,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35, no. 3 (2003): 447–71; Helg, *Slave No More*.

The documents crafted by Cevallos, portraying the Spanish narrative of the course and eventual quelling of the rebellion, provide few details of the slave's leadership and organization. This narrative focused much more on attempting to relay an effective Spanish response to the uprising on the eyes of colonial governance, as well as establishing the portrayal of Spanish administrators and military commanders in Córdoba as understanding, following the rule of law, and utilizing brute force only as a last resort. Despite that Afro-descendant agency in this narrative is, for the most part, ignored or identified as the consequence of actions from an ungrateful rabble, through the careful analysis and reading of these documents against the grain, important traces and elements of the slaves' drive for freedom come to light.

For Spanish administrators, as well as for Veracruz landowners, the threat that the 1805 slave rebellion in Cordoba posed signified not just a mere localized slave rebellion, but clearly demonstrated elements of influence brought about by the recently-completed Haitian Revolution at the time, whose news of its completion and success arrived via maritime trade and oral tradition through a highly fluid and mobile socio-political, and liberal culture, established in the Port-City of Veracruz. As Julius Scott states, in his Magnum Opus *The Common Wind*¹⁹⁸, Port-Cities in the Greater Caribbean, such as Veracruz, “nurtured the most complex patterns of mobility and presented the most vexing

¹⁹⁸ Scott argues, amidst many theoretical contributions to the study of slave and afro-descendant communication in the Greater Caribbean, that racial subalterns, specially enslaved Africans, often relied on informal oral communication to become acquainted with deficiencies and weaknesses in the colonial apparatus. Through these networks of information, that in turn became aided by fluid spaces of commerce and mobility that Port-Cities and their hinterlands represented, slaves were able to carry out tactics of resistance and open defiance to imperial colonial apparatuses in the Caribbean. Scott's framework wholeheartedly supports the occurrences of slave rebellions in 1805 and 1808 Cordoba, Veracruz. For more on Scott, *The Common Wind*.

problems of control for all the colonial powers.”¹⁹⁹ Not only were Caribbean coastal cities such as Veracruz “centers of commercial exchange, population and government”, they also represented places of education and transmittal of information into Port-Cities and their hinterlands regarding “knowledge of the Caribbean world and beyond.”²⁰⁰

It then becomes clear how enslaved Afro-descendants in *El Potrero* were able to develop their political awareness due to information on the Haitian Revolution arriving from abroad into Veracruz, and in turn extrapolated to the Cordoba region. For maritime trade, exemplified by “the movement of ships and seamen...provided the medium of long-distance communication”, allowed Afro-descendants, such as those enslaved in the Cordoba plantations, “to follow developments in other parts of the world.”²⁰¹

Not only did the instance of the enslaved peoples of *El Potrero* developing their own political awareness reveals a network of transmittal of ideological currents of the Atlantic World unto Veracruz via Maritime trade and mobility. At the same time, it reveals that during this period, ideals of intellectual and political development intended for individuals at top spheres of socio-political power in European Empires, often were received, adopted, and used to their favor by socioracial subalterns in destitution. Cristina Soriano, in her book *Tides of Revolution*, presents a scenario in Venezuela, akin to that of Veracruz and its hinterland, relating to political and intellectual development of socioracial subalterns. Despite the lack of intricate printing-press materials and culture in Venezuela, “hand-copied materials flooded the cities and port towns of Venezuela”,

¹⁹⁹ Scott, *The Common Wind*, 14.

²⁰⁰ Scott, 14–15.

²⁰¹ Scott, 39.

where at Port-Cities, such as that of Veracruz in New Spain, sailors “shared news and rumors of the French and Caribbean revolutions with locals.”²⁰² Akin to Veracruz and its hinterland populations, there occurred an emergence of “an incipient public sphere that, in semiliterate forms of knowledge and oral information, allowed the participation of a socially diverse population” in matters that included “questioning the monarchical regime and colonial rule, the socioracial hierarchies of colonial society, and the system of slavery.”²⁰³

Such as socioracial subalterns in Venezuela, the rebel slaves of *El Potrero* adopted intellectual and political currents of the Atlantic World that enabled them to further their political awareness and the ways by which they could challenge Spanish colonial governance at the local level. The 1805 slave rebellion in Cordoba, Veracruz, and specifically the retelling of these events by the Spanish, revealed not only a manifestation of “The Great Fear” narrative by regional Spanish administrators and landowners of an African takeover of the region that could disrupt the political and economic stability of the whole colony. At the same time, it demonstrated, heightened socio-political consciousness and agency of enslaved Afro-descendants by the early nineteenth century. Said consciousness and agency is further revealed upon the exploration of a very rare, but very valuable, first-hand written account of the rebellion written by runaway slaves.

²⁰² Cristina Soriano, *Tides of Revolution: Information, Insurgencies, and the Crisis of Colonial Rule in Venezuela*, First edition., Diálogos Series (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 3.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Counternarrative: The Maroons' Retelling of the 1805 Rebellion.

The former slaves' version of the uprising is found in an impressive and unique letter. Written on the run by rebel maroons from *El Potrero*, who escaped the aftermath of the skirmish between the rebels and the crown's troops, the letter shows masterful use of language from the part of the rebels, serving as proof of heightened political awareness and literacy they possessed. This letter, found among a series of documents relating to the 1805 rebellion, is preserved at the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City, and represents a treasure of a documentary record for understanding the ways by which enslaved Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Veracruz dialogued with, interacted, and ultimately challenged colonial administration via their heightened political awareness of Atlantic World connections and impact.

The letter explained not only the rebellion from the maroons' point of view, but also detailed the motives which led them to rebel. In the letter, the maroons omit any mention of names or leadership that could identify any of them and as a result bring even more negative effects to their socio-political status. The rebels opened the document with a plea: "We beg your excellency, by the blood of Christ, that you read this letter."²⁰⁴ By appealing not only to the Spanish socio-cultural religious piety, but also demonstrating their mastery at letter etiquette of the time, which often merged the religious cultural elements with political matters, the maroons situate themselves not as ignorant peoples, but as conscious actors of the socio-political and cultural environs they lived in. By the same token, they demonstrate how they could manipulate said factors to their benefit by

²⁰⁴ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

portraying themselves as cultured, breaking stereotypes of the time associated to slaves by the Spanish.

The maroons commenced their letter by situating themselves as equal subjects of the crown and conscious political actors through their use of language. They started their letter by saying: “Great Lord, the slaves of the *Hacienda of El Potrero* of Don Francisco Segura in the Villa of Cordoba we say to your Excellency.”²⁰⁵ Thus, the rebels established themselves as a collective body of political equals that sought to appeal for the favor of the Viceroy via diplomatic avenues. The rebels continued by making explicit mention of their limited literacy status, also reflected in the grammatical and syntax errors in their writing, as they stated that despite writing this document collectively their letter was not signed, for “those who have resulted alive from Sunday’s butchery do not know how.”²⁰⁶ Not only did the rebels portrayed themselves as having a limited degree of literacy, but at the same time they began their document by portraying themselves as sufferers of repressive Spanish policies that worsened their situation rather than solving their cries for justice.

The maroons on the run identified the main reason for the upheaval in *El Potrero* to be the “cruel and barbarous punishments” that were enacted onto more than thirty married and single women, along with a considerable number of men, who were brutally lashed all over their bodies, often completely naked, for no significant reason other than

²⁰⁵ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

the entertainment of their master, Don Francisco Segura.²⁰⁷ They made strong efforts to single-out this particular form of punishment enacted by their master as that which distinguished their sugar plantation/mill, *trapiche*, from other plantations of the regions, branding their plantation as brutal.²⁰⁸ The association made by the rebels of excessive and unnecessary corporeal punishment as the main motivator for labor inaction and their eventual upheaval is a clever method by which the rebels continued to portray themselves as collective sufferers who legitimately deserved justice, rather than the unconscious and bold aggressors in open rebellion against the Spanish Crown that the narrative of Cevallos attempted to portray.

The rebels explained in this careful document that their master often disregarded local authorities and royal decrees to his advantage. Don Francisco Segura, according to the rebels, created tensions amidst landowners and royal administrators for his own gain.²⁰⁹ This type of strategy, that of putting at odds slaveowners with colonial administration, reoccurs often across the rebels' testimony. This strategy demonstrates that the rebels of El Potrero knew how to manipulate divisions and tensions amidst royal bureaucracies to their advantage. The rebels continued their testimony as they stated that prior to their rebellion they "went to the Villa of Cordoba to speak and inform authorities of the conditions we suffered", but despite their pleas, they were ignored by troops at the

²⁰⁷ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42. Slaves specify that punishment, that of lashing specifically, was always carried over the shirts of slaves, but for this instance their master demonstrated a vicious character demanding the slaves become naked to suffer the lashes. In a masterful, yet hilarious, use of language, the slaves identify the motivations which led to the bad temper of their master Don Francisco Segura to whip the slaves for "having our master been possessed by a great flatulence, which he consistently suffer threatening us, and wanted to vent over us."

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

gate who custodied the members of local government. Instead, they were threatened with more physical violence.²¹⁰ But their retelling of violence and unjust punishment takes a profound turn, as they then decided to justify their actions as a direct result from their master's disregard of Spanish imperial legislation in their favor.

It is during this moment in their retelling that the rebels produced proof of their advanced intellectual and socio-political formation as they mentioned that they “decided not to work in the *Hacienda* until the judges of the Villa of Cordoba heard our plea according to the Royal *Cédula* enacted by our great King and Lord.”²¹¹ The Royal *cédula* or decree which the rebels alluded to is the 1789 *Real Cédula de su Majestad sobre la educación, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de indias, e islas filipinas, bajo las reglas que se expresan*.²¹² This particular royal decree, also known as the *Código Negro*, or Black Code, enacted towards the end of the eighteenth century, was aimed at establishing a set of regulations that covered the clothing, feeding, and education of slaves while limiting to certain types of occupations the labor that slaves could perform in order to prevent abuses from slaveowners across the dominions of the Spanish Empire, which could lead in turn to massive slave revolts.

Of specific relevance to the call for justice from the rebel maroons of *El Potrero*, the 1789 *Cedula* dedicates two specific regulations that aim to control the type of corporeal punishments slaves could endure, and one specific regulation that specifies

²¹⁰ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² The translation of this 1789 *Cedula* is: Royal Decree From his Majesty Regarding the Education, Treatment and Occupations of Slaves in All his Dominions of the Indies and the Philippine Islands, Under the Rules that are Expressed. Note: All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

both monetary and criminal penalties for slaveowners who overstep their authority by causing severe damage to slaves.²¹³ Nevertheless, the 1789 *Código Negro* was suspended by the Spanish Crown across all of its possessions in 1794 as a direct reaction of the role of slave uprisings in the Haitian Revolution that commenced in 1791, as the lessening of mistreatment onto slaves represented for the Spanish potential leeway for slaves to spread Haitian revolutionary ideals onto the territories controlled by the Spanish.²¹⁴

Clearly building from previous regional occurrences where slaves in other plantations appealed for justice and freedom on the basis of suffering abuses from their masters, such as slaves of the San Cayetano Pacho *Hacienda* in the surroundings of Xalapa in 1789²¹⁵, the rebels of *El Potrero* appeared to have a clear understanding of the provisions in the decree. The explanation given in their letter that they refused to continue their work until the *cédula* was fully adopted by their master demonstrates not only full awareness of imperial policies relating to slaves and peoples of African descent

²¹³ AGN/ Bandos/Vol. 15/ exp. 10/ fs. 10/ Mayo 31 de 1789. Chapters VIII and IX of the 1789 royal decree delineate specific procedures and types of punishments that slaveowners in the Spanish Americas can inflict onto their slaves in case that reprimanding becomes necessary. Chapter X specifies that any infringement by slaveowners of any of the chapters in the decree accrued to a monetary penalty that increased for the second and third occurrence of the offense. The chapter further specifies that if the slaveowners continued to disregard any of the decree's provisions beyond a third occurrence, the slaveowner would be trialed through a criminal court, the slave victim of abuse considered free for the legal purposes of the trial, and the slave, if able to work, would be sold to another owner. The provision states that if the slave victim of abuse were to become unable to work, the owner who inflicted said harm would pay the monetary support for the maintenance of the slave for the rest of his or her life.

²¹⁴ Ruiz, "Esclavos de la subdelegación de Xalapa ante el Código Negro de 1789," 46, 61.

²¹⁵ See Luis J. García Ruíz' excellent analysis of the ways that a number of slaves of the San Cayetano Pacho *Hacienda* and sugarcane plantation petitioned Spanish Viceregal authorities a betterment of their standing in the face of constant abuse from their master. The slaves demonstrate a well-understood knowledge and practice of the 1789 *Código Negro*. Ultimately Viceregal authorities dismissed the slaves' petition and ruled in favor of the slaveowners, affecting tensions between slaves and masters not only in this particular *Hacienda* near Xalapa, but also for plantations surrounding Córdoba such as the *El Potrero Hacienda* from which the 1805 slave rebellion originated. For more see Ruiz, "Esclavos de la subdelegación de Xalapa ante el Código Negro de 1789."

across Spanish possessions. It also demonstrated their intellectual development and growth spurred about by Atlantic World developments. The pleas of the rebels to royal authorities were a continued reliance on regional practices by enslaved Afro-descendants of appealing to royal authorities the immediate enforcement of Atlantic World-impact Spanish royal decrees. Ultimately, it was through their rebelling that the inspiration they acquired from the example of revolutionary action spurred about by the consolidation of the Haitian Republic in 1804 was manifested.

The rebels continued their retelling by stating that despite deciding to not perform any labor at both the plantation and mill, they had not disturbed anything in the *Hacienda*. They argued that their peaceful form of protest and resistance to perform their duties in order to bring justice to the abuses they had suffered, made the *Hacienda* seem “as a desert.”²¹⁶ The maroons of *El Potrero* continued to situate themselves as peaceful sufferers, as individuals who attempted to convey their suffering and cries for justice through all legal avenues, only to be shunned aside and disregarded by local colonial authority. The ways by which the rebels which wrote this letter use specific language marks a noted departure from the portrayal that Cevallos and Spanish administrators tried to relay to the Viceroy, that of the maroons as purveyors of irascible violence and irrational, yet uncontrollable, desires for freedom. Here the discourse of the maroons portrayed them as peaceful negotiators, who even during their conscious decision of

²¹⁶ This is a clear example of what Anthropologist James C. Scott would frame as “weapons of the weak.” The refusal by the slaves of *El Potrero* show a form of non-violent everyday resistance to bring about justice to the abuses they endured under their master. For more on “weapons of the weak” see Scott’s, *Weapons of the Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*.

insubordination, resorted initially to peaceful and non-violent labor strikes rather than open rebellion.

The maroons also acknowledged pacification efforts made by priests. They argued that the priests' attempts to compel them to resume their labor and pacify their actions were made in bad faith. The slaves vowed to the priests to remain obedient only if sold to other masters who would prove more humane, as their master "was the most inhumane man in the world, who could not be allowed to mandate over other creatures of God, for all the inhumane treatment that he enacted upon" them, despite all the riches they had enabled him at the expense of their "skins."²¹⁷ Upon hearing these complaints, the chaplain of the *Hacienda* assured them they were righteous in their search for justice, documenting said opinion as they stated that "our chaplain, and a father from the Villa, swear on this."²¹⁸

Nevertheless, the priests did little to remedy the situation, for the maroons recognized that "the following day the priests returned with the Judge, the town's scribe and a physician, and here they wrote the things they wanted... and upon seeing our mangled bodies they did not write everything in our favor for we well know that they are all in favor of our master because he is rich and we are miserable slaves that are treated worse and inmates and pigs."²¹⁹ Not only did the rebels appear to understand and work with cultural sensibilities of the Spanish administrators, but by the same token they appeared to possess a very well-developed socio-economic awareness of the system they

²¹⁷ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

enabled through their forced labor. This was revealed as they stated that they were the source of master's enrichment. Through this approach the rebels demonstrated that they were not the "brutish" individuals that local administrators attempted to portray in their narrative of events.

In their continued retelling, the rebels explained an instance that served as both causing factor for their uprising, while also demonstrating their avid manipulation of Spanish colonial sensibilities to their favor, for their intellectual development regarding being aware of colonial law and Spanish imperial customs and practices is also shown. The rebels state that their master sent for the lashing of slaves all across their bodies all for "no motive other than the festivities we made to our patroness the Virgen of Candelaria" which in turn propelled a delay in their labors at the *Hacienda*.²²⁰ They stated that following the intervention of a number of priests to pacify the situation, and at the lack of results from said conversations between the priests acting as ambassadors of Spanish authorities and the rebel slaves, on Sunday February 17th, their master aided by Spanish troops and local militias violently attacked the slaves.²²¹ They had trusted the priests in the past, and they had failed them again.

In a gruesome description of the attack they endured²²², the rebels aimed to portray their master, Spanish troops, and local militias that partook in the skirmish

²²⁰ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42. The maroons clearly appeal to Spanish authorities for the recognition that the slaves themselves are better devotees and Catholic subjects of the crown than their master, attempting to manipulate socio-cultural imperial sensibilities to their favor.

²²¹ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42

²²² Ibid. The narrative of the attack is as follows: "On Sunday, Lord, Sunday, came our master with one thousand men both infantry and cavalry, and many Indians with clubs, and catching us unprepared they commenced to kill us without us hearing nothing more than 'kill them all' and 'send them all to hell' and 'do not leave any Black alive.' And then they did so, killing twelve of us, fatally wounding more than fifty,

against them, as evil and acting contrary to the regulations specified by the 1789 Royal Decree, supposed to protect slaves in the Spanish Empire from violent abuses. The rebels clearly understood how the colonial apparatus and its regulations functioned in regard to the control of slavery and slaves in the Spanish Empire. Following this method, their letter continued by addressing the king of Spain directly recognizing him as “the common father of all of us, who won’t reject the poor and miserable slaves that we are.”²²³

The rebels then proceeded to appeal, in a masterful way, to the political and religious sensibilities of the crown by situating their former master as accountable for “the lives he has taken and the souls he has sent to hell without granting them confession” describing in gruesome ways the form by which he executed the prisoners.²²⁴ They also posed the question of considering if not working for a few days, whereas for religious festivities or as a form of protest, was worth “causing many pains and damages... for we have not committed any crime for we didn’t commit mutiny while we stayed always quiet, calm, not hurting anyone, and not including other parties onto our disgruntled band.”²²⁵ The rebels’ masterfully crafted an argument of innocence in regards to the violence experienced from the Spanish. Said argument was crafted to assert their role as

all of those who died, and they would have killed all of us if we hadn’t run, for it wasn’t enough to be forgiven by kneeling and begging forgiveness. Some of us found refuge within the church, and yet they still killed us with bullets and sabre slashes, and it wasn’t enough to grab and hold onto sacred objects for they took us to the patio where they hit us with blows of death while our master screamed that he rather lose the hacienda as long as he sent all of us to hell. For in the end it wasn’t the Hacienda he sought to retake, but to vent his tantrum of hate by sending us to hell. It shouldn’t then be said we made resistance for we killed none of them. There wasn’t no more than two whites who were hurt by themselves with the weapons and horses that clashed amongst them in the confusion, for if we have wanted to hurt them we could have easily done so, for we kidnapped a white soldier and we kept him safe in order for them to see that if we did not kill him they should not kill any of us.”

²²³ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

²²⁴ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42.

²²⁵ Ibid.

victims and sufferers not only of abuses from their master but of the Spanish colonial system itself.

On the one hand, their use of language is similar to many slave petitions that occurred in other slave societies of colonial, and early nineteenth-century, Latin America. Nevertheless, although this approach situates the maroons' discourse of innocence and suffering in relationship with other slave petitions across Latin America, the particular socio-political background influencing the slaves' upheaval, as well as the way by which the rebels engaged not only Spanish imperial policies, but attempted to manipulate tensions and cultural sensibilities while they challenged systems of governance and economic production in the region, made their political engagement during this rebellion unique.

The last portion of their letter to Spanish authorities, retelling their apparent uprising and the conditions which propelled their resilience to work for their master, constitutes a prime example on the ways by which Afro-descendant slaves in Veracruz participated in the ideological currents brought about by the Atlantic Revolutions of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. The maroons showed a clear knowledge of the colonial apparatus in New Spain. They knew how slavery functioned regionally, as well as how it was supposed to function. They appealed to the ideal of the rule of law in their favor, as they requested the King to instate an impartial judge, stating that those in Córdoba were “involved in sugarcane production, or are their nephews or their kin, and all the *regidores* are also the same, whilst are also the richest men in the Villa, and all

their friends, who cover one another while the poor Black slave perishes...”²²⁶ The maroons were clearly aware that for justice to be brought to their condition a judge that lived outside of, and did not belong to, the sugarcane production sphere of influence of Cordoba, needed to be appointed.

The rebels requested a Colonel from Xalapa by the name of Don Alonso, whom they identify as a “just lord who will give reason to those who possess it and won’t lie to Your Excellency in believing what they tell you for is always usually against the poor slave.”²²⁷ The maroons required the intervention of Don Pedro de Alonso, Colonel of the Infantry Regiment of Mexico, who would come to be interim Military Governor of the Port-City of Veracruz in 1808.²²⁸ It becomes clear that the maroons preferred to be judged by a member of the colonial military that had no economic or social interests in regional sugar plantation economies, as they saw in him a more plausible impartial decision that could benefit their situation. It is through their petition for this judge that the rebel slaves situated themselves as political actors on par with Spanish administrators, such as Cevallos, which sought their capture and punishment. In doing so, the rebels were not outcasts apart from the procedures of Spanish law, for they became active political actors appealing for just approach of Spanish legal procedures in their favor.

The rebels closed their letter by stating the desire and need for the Royal Decree of 1789 to be enacted. They demanded to be treated humanely, if not at least “as equally good as the mules and horses under our master’s saddle, for if we attain this we will have

²²⁶ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ AHV/ Caja 72/Vol.82/fs.110-141/1808

attained a lot, and if not may Your Excellency sent us all to be hanged, for we are desperate and it is better to die than to endure such cruel punishment, hunger, and abuses for the rest of our lives.”²²⁹ The maroons henceforth established themselves as sharing a collective identity as sufferers of abuses that hindered their condition, fully recognized by them, as human beings and not property. This approach used by the maroons, that of situating themselves as sufferers and pious to the imperial system and religious sensibilities which ruled over them, echoes the methods used by enslaved peoples across the Atlantic World during the colonial period.

As exemplified by the work of Vincent Brown in his analysis of what he calls “mortuary politics” in colonial Jamaica, the rhetoric of “suffering” in slave discourses, in the case of the slave society he studies exemplified through death, helped to mediate not only intra socio-political and cultural relationships between enslaved peoples but also the ways by which said enslaved peoples dialogued with, and ultimately challenged, colonial systems of oppression.²³⁰ The maroons of *El Potrero* engaged suffering as a category that legitimized their pleas for justice, exemplifying death as the ultimate price their fellow rebels paid at the expense of Spanish arbitrary repression. Herman Bennett’s work on seventeenth-century Afro-descendants in New Spain also brings forth the notion of “suffering” as a rhetoric deeply tied to Catholicism and the ways by which Afro-descendants, both enslaved and free, used this method to bring forth socio-political

²²⁹ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42

²³⁰ For more information on Brown’s work on “mortuary politics” and slave rhetoric’s of suffering in colonial Jamaica see Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2008).

change and identity to their lives by appealing, and manipulating, socio-cultural sensibilities of colonial governance.²³¹

As the maroons of *El Potrero*, asked the Viceroy and King to inquire on their condition and bring justice to their cause, they immediately reinstated their status as sufferers when they specified that Spanish troops were on the search of them “in the mountains to kill us so we die without confession, killing us with bullets and sending us to hell.”²³² Their statement further proved their knowledge to manipulate Spanish sociocultural sensitivities that could be used to further convince authorities of their status as human beings rather than property. Using suffering as a form of establishing collective identity as well-behaved Catholic subjects who experienced the rash and unchristian attitudes of their master and Spanish administrators, the rebels tried to bring attention and justice to their case.

In an important, yet humorous, final message to the Viceroy, the rebels’ knowledge of bureaucratic Spanish protocol was further demonstrated. They stated: “and we don’t use stamped paper for we are runaways, obstinately running through mountains, trees, and nations, we can’t reach the places that have them, but may it be known that this paper values as if it was stamped, and may our master pay later for the seal, for we have granted him multitude of *pesos* through our labor.”²³³ Not only did the rebels closed their petition for justice by making direct reference of their understanding of the socio-

²³¹ For more on Bennett’s analysis of how enslaved and free Afro-descendant individuals in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Mexico used suffering as both forms of communal identity and a rhetoric to bring about socio-political change see Bennett, *Colonial Blackness* and Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*.

²³² AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 33-42

²³³ Ibid.

economic system they partook in their previous role as providers of their master's wealth. They also specifically annotated that despite the lack of an official stamp, their pleas and testimony on the 1805 rebellion was to be taken as equally serious as the depositions and testimonies of Spanish bureaucrats, once again asserting their mastery of political awareness and knowledge of how the colonial system worked.

The rebels demonstrated, through their sophisticated use of language and rhetoric in their favor, proof of an informal network which transmitted unto them the ideas of equality and freedom that could be traced with the development of the Haitian Revolution. Despite their relative "isolation" in the Cordoba region immediate to Veracruz, the slaves of *El Potrero* demonstrate that the intellectual currents of the Age of Revolutions had reached multiple subaltern disaffected groups, where in this case, the enslaved Afro-descendants of nineteenth-century Veracruz, were no exception.

Aftermaths: Local rebellion, regional impacts and colonial policy changes.

Roughly three weeks after the attack, on March 4th 1805, the *Fiscal de lo Criminal*, or Prosecutor, of New Spain, sent a copy of a report to members of Cordoba's colonial administration where he stated that the Viceroy had received full notice and accounts of the slave rebellion incident by both Cevallos and the letter sent by the runaway slaves of *El Potrero*. In said report he informed that "the Blacks, for their part, have sent Your Excellency the Viceroy a paper that relates very different things, demanding the Royal Decree of May 31st 1789 that covers the education, treatment of occupation of slaves; they say that the cruelty of their master, and his indecency, gave

them motives to solicit to be heard by Judges and that they were to be sold to other *Haciendas*.”²³⁴

Nevertheless, the Prosecutor stated that what the rebels informed “could not be true” except “the part that concerns the ill treatment from their master propelling their rebellion.”²³⁵ He marked their statements as false, as he considered their concerns for justice expressed in their letter as a way to mask a “true upheaval, without just cause” proceeding to open a criminal case against the slaves that were captured during the skirmish, and against any that could be found as runaways in the mountain.²³⁶ Spanish administration hence attempted to define both criminality, and legality, as a result of the maroons’ letter sent to the Viceroy. Not only did Spanish administrators branded the maroons’ version of events as false, they immediately branded the rebels enemies of the crown, delineating provisions against future rebellions, legal procedures against rebels captured, and continued to inflame Afro-descendant discontent in the region.

Although the rebellion was quelled in 1805, and normality reestablished for all plantations in the region, by 1808 the fears of another uprising from occurring remained alive. As Spanish administrators were engaged in criminal trials against captured slaves from the 1805 rebellion, they also sought to obtain validation that the slaves of previously rebel plantations of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua Chico* remained peaceful and under strict obedience and fealty to their masters. Under these circumstances, a letter was produced by the slaves of the *Nuestra Madre y Señora de la Candelaria Hacienda*, retelling their

²³⁴ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 43-49.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

point of view on the 1805 rebellion, as well as informing authorities of recent developments in the region.²³⁷

The slaves of *la Candelaria* stated that shortly after the 1805 rebellion the Viceroy himself attended to Cordoba to make sure all the slaves in the surrounding *Haciendas* were being treated fairly. This was a clear immediate reaction to the *El Potrero* uprising that had shortly occurred.²³⁸ The slaves of this plantation informed the authorities that, to the day, three years after their rebellion, the slaves of *El Potrero* remained “quiet and restful, and in the state they existed prior to their rebellion.”²³⁹ The slaves of *la Candelaria* recognized that the uprising of the slaves in *El Potrero* had its roots in the constant ill treatments that said slaves received, nevertheless they distanced themselves from said upheaval by stating that amidst the slaves that tried to inform authorities of the abuses prior to their rebelling, many leaders of the uprising “who fomented the mode of separating themselves from servitude, among them the captain named Manuel Antonio” convinced the majority, wrongly, that if they presented themselves to the authorities to denounce ill-treatment by their master, such as the Viceroy and the Royal Decree had instructed slaves to do, that they had become free.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 50-54. This particular version produced by the slaves of the *Hacienda* named *Nuestra Madre y Señora de la Candelaria* represents a third version of events of the 1805 rebellion, that reveals apparent unconformity and dissent with the leaders and participants of the 1805 rebellion.

²³⁸ Ibid. The slaves state that the Viceroy personally mandated that the slaves were given “better treatments” and were to be looked “not as slaves, but as sons, what was verified shortly a few days afterwards.”

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. This statement by the slaves of *La Candelaria* instructs as to how the leaders of the slave rebellion of *El Potrero* were aware of how imperial policies, specifically the 1789 royal decree, affected their condition and status as slaves. Having knowledge of this, the leaders of said rebellion demonstrate absolute ability to manipulate imperial rhetoric and sensibilities to the favor of their cause.

The *Candelaria* slaves continued their narration of the 1805 rebellion by reaffirming the regional manifestation of “The Great Fear” of the slave revolt in *El Potrero* getting out of control, and thus expanding “to the other haciendas, if the slaves of this one were successful.”²⁴¹ They reasserted profound imperial fears from Spanish administrators that the socio-political character of this rebellion not only was different from those that came before it, but that the slaves could mobilize disenfranchised ethnic subalterns in Veracruz, and then New Spain, bringing about the end of the colonial regime. The alleged loyal slaves of *La Candelaria* affirmed once more imperial anxieties of massive social upheaval led by rebel slaves inspired by Atlantic World sociopolitical and socioracial revolutions. At the same time, they reaffirmed their knowledge of how these intellectual and social currents could affect Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Veracruz, themselves included, despite their apparent loyalty to the crown. Afro-descendants in the region were clearly not ignorant of the world beyond the Córdoba plantations, and Spanish administration knew the dangers of this.

The slaves finished their narration by confirming that the leader Manuel Antonio perished in the attack by Spanish forces, while other leaders became imprisoned and remained in jail awaiting their fate three years after the rebellion. Unfortunately, such as the Spanish records of the rebellion, and the rebels letter to the Viceroy and King, the letter by the slaves of *La Candelaria*, didn’t provide further information on the role, background, age, or origin of the rebel leader Manuel Antonio. They further reasserted their apparent support to the crown and local authorities by stating that the letter the

²⁴¹ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 50-54

maroons had sent is not “true in their retelling, for I am imposed not only by the justice of the principles of the uprising that I inform to Your Excellency, but also because I was a witness of the resistance, or war, from the slaves.”²⁴²

The narration by the slaves of *La Candelaria* revealed the prescient divisions amidst the slaves of different plantations and mills in the region. While some such as those of *El Potrero* and *Ojo de Agua Chico*, inspired by sociopolitical currents of the Atlantic World, chose the avenue of open defiance in the pursue of freedom, others such as those in *La Candelaria* saw political opportunities in remaining loyal, or feigning loyalty, to the landowners and slave masters of the region, as they saw that it could bring particular benefits to their socio-political advancement. This method of remaining loyal, or feigning loyalty, to Spanish colonial authority in times of political strife, slave rebellions, or social insurgency was commonly used by Afro-descendants in other parts of Latin America, specially during the time of Atlantic Revolutions.

In this way, the slaves of *La Candelaria* played a political game akin to Afro-descendants in early nineteenth-century Popayan, Colombia.²⁴³ Enslaved peoples in the Pacific lowlands of the Popayan region of Colombia acted in defense of the Crown’s rule of the region against movements for independence from Spain, all for their own benefit.

²⁴² AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 50-54

²⁴³ In her book, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution*, Marcela Echeverri masterfully counters traditional assumptions associated to royalism. Through the inclusion of African slave, and Indian, subalterns as enactors of royalism in the Popayan region of Colombia, Echeverri demonstrates that deep socio-political revolutions occurred in royalist regions prior to the independence of Colombia. She demonstrates how African enslaved subalterns dialogued with and manipulated colonial administration to their favor using royalist rhetoric. In doing so, Echeverri situates African slaves and indigenous peoples as essential members in the defense of Spanish imperial policies during the times of imperial strife from 1808 to 1822, policies that ultimately worked on their favor. For more see Marcela Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution: Reform, Revolution, and Royalism in the Northern Andes, 1780-1825*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 102 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

By acting as defenders of the crown in times of strife by sustaining “a royalist rebellion and defending the Pacific lowlands from incursions by the forces seeking independence,” slaves in this region acquired “de facto freedom and lived autonomously.”²⁴⁴ The slaves of *La Candelaria Hacienda* near Cordoba demonstrated fealty and loyalty to crown authorities akin to the slaves of the region of Colombia. By expressing fealty to the crown, the slaves of this *Hacienda* in the Cordoba region attempted to gain political favors, perhaps even their freedom, by demonstrating loyalty, although not sincerely, through their lack of involvement in the 1805 rebellion. The slaves of this *Hacienda* played a different political game than the rebels of *El Potrero*, demonstrating diversity of political thought and action amidst enslaved populations of Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Veracruz.

By June of 1808, colonial administrators in Mexico City sent a letter to regional administrators in Cordoba. They informed that the Viceroy did not consider as valid the pleas and reasons for uprising that were redacted by the maroons of 1805 in their letter. Nevertheless, colonial administrators recognized as necessary the liberation of political prisoners of the 1805 slave uprising and the ending to all their associated criminal charges deemed as “uprising against the crown.”²⁴⁵ In doing so, administrators attempted to quell further sentiments of dissent from enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz by liberating those formerly imprisoned rebels, revealing how colonial administration in New Spain preferred to suspend all criminal charges against slaves accused of

²⁴⁴ Echeverri, 1.

²⁴⁵ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 106-107

insurrection. Administrators foresaw a scenario where if they were to criminally proceed and punish these slaves, a massive insurrectionary movement might rise among the slaves of the Cordoba region. In this way, the rebels of the 1805 rebellion resulted somewhat victorious. Despite not attaining full freedom for all slaves in *El Potrero* three years later, they forced regional colonial administration to guarantee certain demands and protections to all slaves in the region, demonstrating how politically aware and savvy enslaved Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Veracruz were.

By August of 1808 the original owner and master of the slaves of *El Potrero*, Don Francisco de Segura, had died. In a letter sent by Joseph Manuel de Cevallos to the Viceroy, he informed him that to aid the sister of the deceased owner of the *Hacienda* and slaves, and in aid of a judge on whose care the properties befell after the passing of Francisco de Segura, he proceeded to accompany her to perform an appraisal of the property and the value of the slave population living in the plantation. He informed the Viceroy that upon their arrival they “found the slaves to be rather insolent, screaming that they did not want any other thing but freedom, threatening the judge and those who accompanied him, finally encircling them in the house they were appraising, fearing to be victims of the fury of the rebels.”²⁴⁶

Cevallos further informed that they left the property only through the aid of troops that escorted them out of the plantation as he made note of the continued “insolence” and resistance to Spanish law and administrators that the slaves of *El Potrero* kept demonstrating. The 1805 rebellion in *El Potrero* had forever changed the political

²⁴⁶ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 93-95.

awareness and perceptions of the slaves' role on the economic and political systems in the region. The death of their master served only to cement a feeling of sovereignty, as demonstrated in their interactions with Cevallos. The fears of both landowners and Spanish administrators became true: Enslaved peoples in the Cordoba-area plantations were not only politically able to challenge colonial governance, but also able to bring to a halt socio-economic systems that informed the relationships with Veracruz and its *Sotavento* hinterland with the Spanish Empire and the Atlantic World. This instance of unruliness not only demonstrated continued discontent from the part of these slaves, but also served as the preamble to a second attempt at rebellion carried out by the slaves of this same *Hacienda*.

October of 1808 saw another attempt by the slaves of *El Potrero* of rebellion against colonial governance. The municipal government of Cordoba directed a letter to the newly appointed Viceroy, Pedro Garibay: "counting with three thousand men on the arms for defense, we experimented that none of the slaves had any consideration and in turn executed the same uprising that we contained in the present year."²⁴⁷ The municipal government asserted that they worried that the removal of stationed troops in Cordoba back to Veracruz, at the orders of the Viceroy, were to incite another attempt at rebellion. They recognized that "although slaves are rustic people, they won't stop at receiving information by way of individuals who visit the *Hacienda* about the situation of the

²⁴⁷ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 70-76

region, of the Peninsula, and of the scarcity and lack of troops that would be precisely noticed and may take this information to carry on further attempts at rebellion.”²⁴⁸

This statement revealed a twofold truth about slaves in the region and of Spanish attitudes towards them. First, Spaniards believed that without information from the outside, which they considered a catalyst for their unruliness, slaves would not become politically able to construct complex ideas of socio-political identity in their search for freedom. Second, slaves confirmed not only that they were the recipients of information concerning developments in the Atlantic World via Veracruz, at the same time contradicted Spanish perceptions of them as politically inept as they used this information in their favor as they strived for freedom.

The *Ayuntamiento*, City Council, of Cordoba stated that if given the opportunity, and with the information the slaves informally received about the precarious political situation the Spanish Empire at the moment, “not only will the place become endangered by a general uprising of peoples that inhabit eighteen *Haciendas*, but also the sacred interests of Your Majesty will be endangered”.²⁴⁹ Ultimately, they recognized the danger that a rebellion of eighteen sugarcane plantations in the Cordoba region posed for tax collection and commerce in sugar, well needed sources of revenue for a badly-hurt empire. The *Ayuntamiento* in Cordoba finished its letter by asking the Viceroy for the establishment of a Veteran’s Regiment in Cordoba and the region for the “containment of the slaves”, arguing that if needed, due to the proximity of Cordoba with Veracruz, the

²⁴⁸ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 70-76. This portion of the document reveals precious information that supports the argument of Julius Scott in his magnum opus *The Common Wind*.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

troops to be stationed there could quickly aid with coastal defense in case of an invasion by Napoleonic forces.²⁵⁰

This letter thus becomes virtual written-proof of continued “Great Fear” narratives that equate the role of enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz as threats to Spanish power in colonial Veracruz, and Mexico, akin to an invasion by Napoleonic Forces. Hence, by the early nineteenth century, enslaved Veracruz’ Afro-descendants were not simply slaves but conscious players and agents in Transatlantic processes that included the Haitian Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, as well as becoming manifestations of the imperial state’s inability to restrict the socio-political conscious development of peoples of African descent in Veracruz, whether free or enslaved.

By November of 1808 the regional military commander of Cordoba, Francisco Manuel Cevallos, wrote to the Viceroy to inform that no longer eighteenth, but twenty-two *Haciendas* reported a stirring from their slave populations. There was an impending danger to an already weakened Spanish imperial presence in Veracruz and New Spain.²⁵¹ The threat of continued slave rebellion revealed two important elements to the complex situation which created a symbiotic relationship between local developments and Atlantic World happenings. First, as Cevallos mentioned that there were twenty-two slave plantations that represented impending danger of slave revolts in the Cordoba region of Veracruz, this reflected an impressive reliance on sugar production via slave labor that this part of Veracruz’ greater hinterland continued to implement. This reliance in slavery

²⁵⁰ AGN/Indiferente Virreinal/Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 70-76

²⁵¹ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 87-90.

by 1808, despite growth of free wage labor in New Spain, reveals the intricate ties that Veracruz had with the Greater Caribbean and Atlantic World sugar economies at the time.

Second, this instance reveals how Spanish administrators saw the slaves: As an unruly and unrestful large population that could begin a second Haitian Revolution. Enslaved Veracruz' Afro-descendants were not isolated and ill-informed individuals. They were active intellectual and political players in Greater Caribbean and Transatlantic struggles for freedom and equality that marked the time-period. They were the link not only between the economies of Veracruz and its Leeward Hinterland with the Greater Caribbean and the Atlantic World, but between local socio-political developments and those abroad. Slaves symbolized a network of political awareness for ethnic subalterns in late-colonial Veracruz that represented hope of resistance and representation for the destitute during a time of great weakness for the Spanish Empire.

Not only were enslaved Afro-descendants in Veracruz informed by developments from abroad during their growth in political awareness, they in turn informed regional responses by Spanish administration to their political agency, for it was their role in rebellions of the early nineteenth century which marked the ways and policies by which the Spanish could treat, dialogue, and interact with enslaved populations in Veracruz. The Atlantic World informed the political responses and attitudes of enslaved peoples in Veracruz during the early nineteenth century. In turn Veracruz' enslaved peoples informed the Spanish Empire's local manifestation of "The Great Fear", as the

possibilities that enslaved Afro-descendants were to become politically savvy and in open challenge to Spanish socio-economic systems of oppression were very apparent then.

Colonial administration responded in turn to Cevallos' letter of concern and petition for more troops by saying to be on the lookout for a possible insurrection, informed by rumors and fears of impending doom by a massive slave rebellion in the region. The Viceroy, in turn, responded to Cevallos that it was not possible to send a Crown Regiment to prevent another insurrection, specifying that local magistrates and authorities should "take the measures that correspond, taking care in contributing to public tranquility by all means necessary through giving the slaves the humane treatment they justly deserve and which their miserable condition demands."²⁵² The Viceroy demonstrated the inability of colonial administration to spare more troops for Cordoba as they considered the defense of the Port-City of Veracruz as insurmountable in case that a feared invasion by Napoleonic forces were to happen.

The landowners and slave masters of Cordoba were left to their own devices, as the Viceroy stated that the best way to prevent further insurrections from happening was clearly treating slaves in a correct and humane way. Unaware for the Viceroy was the truth that plantation owners in Cordoba had known for some time: that the slaves of Cordoba's sugar plantations and mills continued their resistance and their search for freedom, but as the Spanish Empire weakened, the slaves' political and intellectual development could spell the end of Spanish rule for the region. The ideologies of freedom and equality had crossed the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean and included

²⁵² AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 91-92

Veracruz' enslaved Afro-descendants in the struggles of freedom and self-determination that would mark the period of Atlantic Revolutions.

Conclusion

The failed attempt at insurrection of October 1808, and the continued unrest in twenty-two *Haciendas* of the region, forced Spanish administrators in Cordoba to recognize an impending danger at massive rebellion akin to Haiti. In a letter from December of 1808, the subdelegate of Cordoba informed the Viceroy the need for a "Regiment that may contain any uprising or insults from the slaves of the regional *Haciendas*" while at the same time asking the Viceroy to mandate that masters treat their slaves humanely, in order to avoid another uprising from occurring.²⁵³

By December of 1808, Spanish imperial administration was stretched thin as Napoleonic forces had already begun their invasion from Spain while deposing the Spanish monarch. The documents from Spanish administrators in Cordoba, when talking about their fears of a widespread slave rebellion in Veracruz, reflected anxieties of impending doom for Spain and its colonies due to the stress that the Napoleonic invasion had produced for crown authorities. On the other hand, they also revealed increased agency from the part of enslaved Veracruz' Afro-descendants as politically aware actors in the search for socio-political equality. They ultimately foretold of the development of subaltern popular mobilization that would not be seen in Veracruz until 1811, a year after Father Miguel Hidalgo's call for massive popular upheaval against the Spanish crown.

²⁵³ AGN. Indiferente Virreinal. Caja 2506/exp.002/fs. 55-58.

Chapter Three

Afro-insurgents and Afro-royalists: Early Mexican War of Independence, Cádiz liberalism, and the role of Afro-descendants. 1810-1813

By 1808, Veracruz' Afro-descendants continued to be essential members of regional society, a society that became soon embroiled in sociopolitical turmoil. The Spanish imperial crisis, resulting from Napoleon's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, made its repercussions felt in New Spain as King Charles IV abdicated in favor of his son Ferdinand VII, who in turn was forced to abdicate in favor of Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother. In Mexico City, Viceroy Iturrigaray, and other members of colonial governance, created a provisional *junta* that aimed at governing in representation of the absentee king.²⁵⁴ Nevertheless, conservative elites, unhappy with local representation of an absentee king, carried on a coup which separated Iturrigaray from the viceroyalty creating a double vacuum of power with a government seen by most as illegitimate for lacking both the authority of Ferdinand VII and his representative in New Spain, the Viceroy.²⁵⁵

By 1810, popular discontent, specially materialized by the resent of *criollo*, American-born Spaniards, leadership whose power had been diminished as a result of the Bourbon Reforms, boiled into the popular insurrection started by father Miguel Hidalgo²⁵⁶ and fellow *criollo* conspirators in Guanajuato, who on September 16th, began

²⁵⁴ Juan Ortiz Escamilla, ed., *Veracruz En Armas : La Guerra Civil, 1810-1820 : Antología de Documentos* ([Xalapa, Ver.] : Gobierno del estado de Veracruz :, 2008), 18.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, recognized by traditional historical narratives of the Mexican War for Independence as the "father of the nation" was the first leader of the insurgent movement which began in 1810. A priest, and man of the Enlightenment, Hidalgo conspired with other *criollo* elites to perform a coup

a popular movement that started firstly as an effort to legitimize a government of true representation of Ferdinand VII's reign. The movement evolved into an insurgency movement that sought complete independence from Spain. Historians categorize this political and social unrest that began in 1810 and culminated in 1821, with the formal and complete political independence from Spain, as the Mexican War of Independence.

Though the historiography traditionally carries the story to 1821, when the Treaty of Córdoba was signed, the inclusion of Afro-descendants helps reperiodize the story and forces us to reconsider the 1810-1813 as essential for the development of the war in Veracruz. The region presents a very interesting case that does not follow the patterns that the war took in other parts of Mexico, as it was a region where the war took on remarkable complexity. Situating Afro-descendants as central players of the war in Veracruz creates a framework by which to understand the complexities of the war. This chapter centers the socio-political role of Afro-descendants during the 1810 to 1813 period, a period considered as the earlier stages of the Mexican War of Independence.

For Veracruz this was a period of intensified violence in the region, marking regional patterns of the war until the end, where Afro-descendants played instrumental roles in both sides of the struggle, and where they helped inform Atlantic World revolutions and discourses, which in turn also informed them. By the same token, fears

to destitute convulsive colonial governance in Mexico City as a result of Ferdinand's VII destitution by Napoleon. Unbeknownst to him and fellow criollo leaders, his movement turned into a popular insurgency movement manned by colonial subalterns. His execution in 1811 marked the end of the first phase of the War for Independence which was then continued, at the national stage, by Priest José María Morelos y Pavón. For more information see Perla Chinchilla, *Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*, Serie de cuadernos conmemorativos 25 (Col. Juárez [Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para las Celebraciones del 175 Aniversario de la Independencia Nacional y 75 Aniversario de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985).

and assumptions associated to Afro-descendants as dangerous and unruly in turn made them act in ways that often procured their allegiance to the insurgency and away from royalism in order to improve their sociopolitical status. This chapter makes new and valuable contributions to historiography by exploring the ways by which subaltern Veracruz' Afro-descendants participated in the war during its early period, from 1810-1813, as it developed in the Port-City and its *Sotavento* hinterland.

The 1810-1813 period, marked by both armed insurgency and the resilient demonstration of loyalty to the crown by some individuals, provided peoples of African descent in Veracruz with avenues by which to engage political, military, and ideological frameworks that helped them shape the outcomes of the war at a regional, and national, level. By the same token, Veracruz' Afro-descendants were shaped by the currents and outcomes of the war, which in many ways affected their participation, recognition, and inclusion, in years to come, as Mexican citizens. Using the approach of historian Eric Van Young in his magnum opus *The Other Rebellion*, where he examined the struggle for independence at the local and regional level²⁵⁷, this chapter seeks to situate the struggle for independence in the context of Afro-descendant regional experience in Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland during the Age of Revolutions. The role of Afro-

²⁵⁷ See Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and The Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001). In his book, Van Young's primary concern is that of studying the Mexican War of Independence at the local level, whilst also looking at the diverse regional factors, specifically those which influenced, and were influenced by, indigenous peoples, that gave an unique character to popular indigenous participation in the Mexican War of Independence. Van Young argues that rather than being driven by *criollo* nationalist rhetoric in favor of political independence from Spain, the participation of popular sectors, particularly that of indigenous peoples, was motivated with the intention of enacting a "standoff" against both internal and external processes of cultural and socio-political change affecting their communities.

descendants as both insurgents and royalists seeks to be explored with the aim of presenting a narrative of Afro-descendant individual and collective socio-political action that hopes to re-imagine the narratives of the war of independence as they occurred in Veracruz and *Sotavento*.

This chapter follows time periodizations of the war in Veracruz as established by Historian Juan Ortiz Escamilla,²⁵⁸ marking the 1810 to 1813 period a period where Afro-descendants adopted a variety of, and sometimes contradictory, stances. Thus, this chapter explores reactions to the initial insurgent movement, the ways by which Afro-descendants quickly adopted sides in order to seek benefit to their own conditions and objectives, the initial effects that a prolonged siege of the Port-City had for its population, the ways by which Afro-descendants embraced, or rejected, Cádiz' liberalism, and the growing active role of subalterns on the insurgent movement.

1810 to 1811: Initial Reactions

If the insurgence movement that began on September 16th 1810 led by Father Miguel Hidalgo in the *Bajío* region of western New Spain revealed the discontent at Spanish governance due to deficiencies resulting from turmoil in the Peninsula, in Veracruz the allegiances to the crown were rekindled and strengthened. As earliest as

²⁵⁸ Juan Ortiz Escamilla divides the 1810-1820 period into three subdivisions: 1810-1813, a period of commencing and expanding insurgence in the province of Veracruz, 1814-1817, a period of open defiance to colonial governance both as a result of the dissolution of Spain's constitutional monarchy and the return of absolutism and inspired by Guadalupe Victoria's insurgent leadership in the region, and 1818-1820 as a period of royalist pacification and of drastic social mobilization in 1820 with the Cádiz constitution reimplementation. See Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*, Colecció Amèrica 14 (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008).

October of 1810, the *Ayuntamiento* of Veracruz responded to the orders of capturing Hidalgo and other insurgent leaders given by the then instituted Viceroy Francisco Javier Venegas, stating that in the Port-City “ and its province it is owed to God the singular benefits of not knowing in them the worrisome, division, rivalry, or parties that his excellency laudably wishes to extinguish.”²⁵⁹ Not only did authorities in the port-city reaffirmed compliance to the Viceroy’s desires, they also affirmed steadfast loyalty to the crown in the region by expressing no cause for worry in late 1810 regarding insurgency in the region. Said loyalty to the crown by the people and governance of Veracruz was reflected days after as they sought to create a regiment of volunteers as a precautionary effort to “conserve undisturbed the public tranquility by affirming the illustrious and loyal opinion of those that inhabit this city and of helping the efforts of his excellency of order” in the interior of New Spain.²⁶⁰

Showings of loyalty by the population also materialized in the *Sotavento* hinterland. Such demonstrations often translated into outright denunciation of royal officials accused of disloyalty. Such was the case of the subdelegate of the town of Cosamaloapan. Several townspeople accused him of relegating and suppressing royal decrees, having taken down and abandoning the portrait of Ferdinand VII, abandoning the care and public safety of the town and district, and not being strict enough against the suppression of favorable opinion regarding the insurgency.²⁶¹ People in Cosamaloapan wanted someone to “govern and instruct according to the critical circumstances of the

²⁵⁹ AHV/ 87/Vol. 98/f.57-58/1810. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

²⁶⁰ AHV/ C.93/Vol.107/fs.41-42/1810

²⁶¹ AGN/Subdelegados/Vol. 50/exp. 2/ fs.42-43/ 1810 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

present epoch.”²⁶² In other words, someone unlike the subdelegate, who would suppress any talk of insurgency. The residents of Cosamaloapan demonstrated steadfast loyalty to the Viceroy and the crown by December of 1810, reflecting a general pattern of loyalty and good favor towards the crown during the initial phases of the war, a pattern that would be present across the region.

Veracruz and its even hinterlands at first seemed largely unaffected by the insurgency. Veracruz seemed to be peripheral to the armed insurgency commenced by *criollo* conspirators in the *Bajío*, continuing its usual activities as New Spain’s most important entrepôt. But a year after Hidalgo’s Grito the region began to see and feel some effects of the popular uprising. First, there were the legal ramifications. Veracruz became a processing center for the judicial proceedings against alleged insurgents captured in the interior of the country²⁶³. Moreover, the city served as the port of exit for imprisoned insurgents to Havana to serve their sentence.²⁶⁴ This meant that for most people in Veracruz they experienced the insurgency as elements of counterinsurgency, serving in the legal and political arm that governed the city. This relative peace-of-mind by colonial officials provided Afro-descendants, specifically those already involved in colonial defense and protection, to reap the benefits of their service to the crown. This was true for the *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen.

²⁶² AGN/Subdelegados/Vol. 50/exp. 2/ fs.42-43/ 1810 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

²⁶³ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ t.883/ 1811 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

²⁶⁴ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 883/ f.217-217v/1811 in Ortiz Escamilla.

Clerical documents demonstrate that *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen were not only essential members of regional defense and stability for the colonial apparatus by 1811²⁶⁵, but they also contributed monetarily to the war effort in the peninsula. Militiamen donated close to 127 pesos for the buying and supplying of weapons to resistance fighters against Napoleon's forces in Spain.²⁶⁶ Such a donation demonstrated not only utmost commitment and dedication to the cause of regional defense, but also their apparent loyalty to the crown and to the system that empowered them socio-politically, demonstrating their resilience at being separated from their position of power amidst times of political turmoil. Their prestige and recognition by colonial administration in Veracruz led Afro-descendant militiamen to be recognized for their steadfast loyalty and service with tangible rewards. Such was the case for both Lieutenant Marcelo Rojas and Second Lieutenant Jose Pantaleon Gonzalez, both *Moreno* militiamen who were rewarded with retirement and the benefit military *fuero* for over twenty years of service to the crown.²⁶⁷ By the same token, militiamen who were considered as loyal servicemen, but unfit to continue their service due to old age or a physical impediment, were honorably discharged.²⁶⁸ By 1812 these patterns would change. The liberalism of the Cádiz constitution as well as the war itself would have profound impact onto the lives of

²⁶⁵ For more information on the ways by which Afro-descendant militias in Veracruz provided a bulwark of defense in a region endemic with tropical diseases see Andrew L. Knaut, "Yellow Fever and the Late Colonial Public Health Response in the Port of Veracruz," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (November 1997): 619, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2516981>; Christon I. Archer, "The Key to the Kingdom: The Defense of Veracruz, 1780-1810," *The Americas* 27, no. 4 (1971): 426-49, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979859>; Ben Vinson, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001).

²⁶⁶ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 230/ exp. 114/ fs. 364/ 1811

²⁶⁷ AGN/ IV Indiferente de Guerra/ Caja 5738/exp. 012/fs.13/1811

²⁶⁸ AGN/ IV Indiferente de Guerra/ Caja 3358/ exp. 042/ fs.1/ 1811

Afro-descendants in Veracruz, their perceptions of the crown and of their role in the Empire.

1812: Escalation of Violence

By March of 1812 insurgent parties led by insurgent leader José María Morelos²⁶⁹ tangibly threatened the mountainous highlands close to the cities of Cordoba and Orizaba, both important places of tobacco and sugarcane production and last true enclaves of slaveholding in New Spain.²⁷⁰ Fears of the union between insurgents and enslaved Afro-descendants in Cordoba and Orizaba became real, as the priest of the town of Quimixtlán, José Mariano Rosado, informed Spanish colonial authorities of the insurgents in the region:

In Chilchotla I know the number of them was that of 500 of all ranks, their armament two cannons, fifty lances, shotguns, various pistols and machetes... Their camp, I was assured, was in Sacajomulco, and they have taken the route to Huatusco, according to some, and according to others that of Cordoba and Orizaba, to reunite with the Blacks of eleven sugarcane plantations that have risen up.²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ José María Morelos y Pavón was an instrumental figure in the development of the insurgent movement at a national level from 1811 after the execution of its leader, Priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, and until his execution in 1815. A Priest by vocation, Morelos coordinated a complexly and strongly organized insurgency that was able to capture crucial regions in the southern portions of New Spain, such as the Pacific port of Acapulco, and the Province of Oaxaca. It was during his tenure as leader that the insurgent movement acquired both an ideological definition rooted in republican liberalism as well as the maximum military extension of the movement. For more information see Baltasar Dromundo, *José María Morelos.*, [1. ed.], Tezontle (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970).

²⁷⁰ For a discussion and argument on why both Cordoba and Orizaba must be considered part of the Leeward hinterland of Veracruz please refer to Chapter Two.

²⁷¹ Juan E. Hernandez y Davalos, "Colección de documentos para la historia de la Guerra de Independencia de México", México, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985, t. IV, núm. 21, pg. 31 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas.*

Spanish Royalists' fears of violence and insurrection by peoples of African descent were soon to become a reality. Insurgents from the interior of New Spain provided armament and resources to enslaved African populations that were irate at their sociopolitical status and saw in the insurgency an opportunity at freedom. On the sugarcane plantations, Insurgent Francisco Severino, a follower of Morelos, convinced the slaves of the *el Potrero* and *San José de Abajo* haciendas to rebel, while *pardo* insurgent Juan Bautista convinced the slaves of the *Toluquilla* hacienda and in turn created insurgent camps in Chiquihuite and Palma Sola.²⁷² Upon the contact of Morelos' insurgents, led locally by priest Juan Moctezuma y Cortes²⁷³, with enslaved populations of the region, the worries of slaveowners that enslaved Africans from the Cordoba plantations would take part in the insurgency materialized on March 6th 1812.

Field Marshall Carlos de Urrutia petitioned, from Orizaba, military assistance to fight the “threat on which the *villa* of Cordoba has found itself as a result of the rebellion of slaves in the sugarcane plantations”.²⁷⁴ He explained his decision to request aid against an impending attack of Black insurgents as the “force of 130 men which encompasses the reduced two companies that I have do not permit me to diminish it even further, this as a result of having sent one company to Cordoba with the aim of helping that population.”²⁷⁵ He communicated to his superiors that the commander of Tehuacan, in the Province of

²⁷² Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, “El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825,” in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 4, <http://books.openedition.org/cemca/1633>.

²⁷³ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 119.

²⁷⁴ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 888/ fs. 61-62v/ 6 de marzo de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Puebla, requested military aid, but that he neglected said petition as not only Orizaba was threatened “by the way of Tehuacan, San Juan Coscomatepec, and the rebel slaves of the plantations of Cordoba, but I also have information that disperse insurgents of the mountains can unite and attack from this side.”²⁷⁶ Urrutia thus expressed concern of both Cordoba and Orizaba being completely surrounded and attacked, not only by Morelos’ forces making their way from the interior of New Spain, but by the bolstering of support from enslaved Afro-descendants who had joined the insurgent movement.

On March 7th, Officer Miguel Paz informed Field Marshall Carlos de Urrutia that despite being informed of a sacking performed by over fifty insurgents in San Juan Coscomatepec, authorities in Cordoba had not given him “any notice regarding the rebel slaves, but it is known via gossip that those who rebelled from the haciendas of San Francisco and Palmillas, have now taken the route towards *tierra caliente*.”²⁷⁷ Not only were part of the perpetrators of the sacking of Coscomatepec individuals who themselves formed the core group of rebel slaves from the region, it was reported that they made their escape towards the coastal lowlands in the immediacy of the Port-City. The currents of Atlantic World liberalism, discourses of emancipation by insurgent leaders, and the echoes of the Haitian Revolution, helped propel the instrumental participation of Veracruz’ enslaved Afro-descendants during the early years of insurgency in the region.

²⁷⁶ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 888/ fs. 61-62v/ 6 de marzo de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. The term *tierra caliente*, or hot country, became a term synonymous during the colonial era and the first decades of the nineteenth century with the coastal lowlands that encompassed the majority, or near totality, of the *Sotavento* hinterland of the Port-City of Veracruz.

Fears of years past, those of regional slave uprisings materializing into outright insurgency, became a reality when the insurgent movement approached Veracruz and *Sotavento*. Enslaved Afro-descendants saw an opportunity not only of emancipation, but after years of repression and mild promises for better treatment by the crown since the 1805 rebellion of *El Potrero* near Cordoba,²⁷⁸ they saw an opportunity for the shifting of their socio-political condition through their participation in the insurgent movement.

At the immediate knowledge of rebel Afro-descendant slaves, now insurgents, and Morelos' forces from the interior attempting to make their way to the immediacies of the Port-City, *Ayuntamiento* authorities in Veracruz proceeded to create, on March 18th, a Security and Order *Junta*. The municipal government considered of imperative importance the establishment of such an organism, followed by a detailed regulation on how to better defend the Port-City, due to the "grave risk on which we live during the miserable present epoch... forcing us to adopt active measures and proportions to save ourselves."²⁷⁹ Said regulations established by the newly created *Junta* included: The naming of a Police Judge akin to the one in Mexico City, following the police regulation of that city; abiding to the then almost forgotten regulations for commissaries in all the neighborhoods of the city, and the strict control and regulations of peoples and commercial goods entering and exiting the walled city via the participation of retired former militiamen and loyal citizens.²⁸⁰ Finally, it called for the strict enforcement of

²⁷⁸ Refer to Chapter Two on slave rebellions in the Cordoba region at the turn of the nineteenth century.

²⁷⁹ AHV/C. 97/ Vol. 120/ fs. 98-137/ Marzo 18 de 1812

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

vigilance of the suburbs outside of the walls of the city, identifying the suburbs as spaces on which:

Suspicious characters could find refuge, due in great part that the population there is less exposed to the police and vigilance provided by the cavalry rounds provided by loyal neighbors... we recommend the enlistment of suburb neighbors to this service and for the common defense, in the best order and less expense possible.²⁸¹

Of note, the fourth regulation which specified a stronger need for control, observance and regulation of neighborhoods in the city made direct allusion to the *Barrio de extramuros*, the neighborhood right outside the walls of the city where the majority of its inhabitants were Afro-descendants.²⁸² This regulation, together with the impending threat of rebel slaves from the Cordoba region as they made their way to the coastal lowlands, created anxiety in local authorities that Afro-descendants in the city, by nature, were prone to insurgency and disloyalty against the crown by 1812. Spanish Royalist fears began then to associate Blackness and African descent not only as racial and class markers, they also informally classified Blackness as insurgency in the Royalist elite mindset. This created new informal sociopolitical categories for peoples of African descent in Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland as violence escalated and became a tangible reality for the ruling classes of the Province. This rhetoric eventually impacted

²⁸¹ AHV/C. 97/ Vol. 120/ fs. 98-137/ Marzo 18 de 1812

²⁸² The *Censo de la población de las costas colaterales a Veracruz* of 1799 identifies this sector of the city as that which contains the highest concentration of Afro-descendants in the Port-City. Alongside with the *Barrio de extramuros*, in the *rancherías* and *haciendas* immediate to the Port-City, out of 8,045 individuals reported in the census, 5,905 were identified as *Pardos y Morenos*, making 73% of the population outside of the walled Port-City, and in nearby ranches and villages to the city, Afro-descendant. See AGN/Indiferente de Guerra, Vol. 47B/ 1799 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas..* For further reference on the 1799 census, the 1791 *Padron de Revillagigedo*, sectoral divisions of the city according to the 1791 census, and ethnic makeup of the city by the late eighteenth century please refer to Chapter One.

conceptions associated to Afro-descendants, conceptions that could only be challenged by the ways Afro-descendants reacted to the escalation of violence, as either loyal militiamen or as insurgents.

The *Ayuntamiento* proceeded to give further reasonings for the creation of the security *Junta*. They acknowledged the “notorious and evident temptations that groups of thieves and rebel criminals that arrived through both sides of this Province with the intent of introducing disorder and desolation in the province’s dilated countryside, thus surrounding us the greater risks, afflictions and misery.”²⁸³ They acknowledged that the reason by which insurgency had not reached most of *Sotavento* was due to the “unalterable fidelity and good disposition of the peoples than inhabit this province”, which in turn enabled the scarce troops of the region to maintain the calm to date.²⁸⁴ Nevertheless, authorities acknowledged that despite the best wishes of the troops and militias of the region to keep order and loyalty to the crown, these found themselves:

Without the necessary goods to even sustain themselves in greater misery, lacking the indispensable means to make themselves respected in jurisdictions too dilated, resulting for the government to not be obeyed and to receive little respect throughout the countryside of this province.²⁸⁵

Hence, acknowledging a persistent growing problem of insurgence in the countryside of the Leeward Hinterland, *Ayuntamiento* officials suggested that the “favorable disposition that concurs the peoples that inhabit the countryside and lowland towns, along with their rooted custom of riding always their horse and arming themselves

²⁸³ AHV/C. 97/ Vol. 120/ fs. 98-137/ Marzo 18 de 1812

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

with machetes, could make them of incomparable utility for this province.”²⁸⁶ They held high hopes of loyalty from the inhabitants of the *Sotavento* hinterland, many of them Afro-descendant farmers and cattle ranchers, as potential militias due to loyalty and allegiance demonstrated to the crown and system that ruled over them in years past. These contradictory beliefs towards the inhabitants of Veracruz and its hinterland shed light on the ways by which Afro-descendants were considered by Spanish Royalist elites as both a danger and a solution. This represented the complex roles that were associated to Afro descendants as violence escalated in 1812, roles that they assumed through their agency as either loyal militias or insurgent forces as the war progressed.

Citizens, Subjects, or Subalterns? The Cádiz Question of 1812.

March of 1812 also brought ideological and political challenges for the populations of the city and its hinterland as Cádiz liberalism came to enact immense effects onto the sociopolitical standing of Afro-descendants. Despite constant objections prior to its ratification, the Cádiz Constitution became promulgated by the *Cortes de Cádiz*²⁸⁷ on March 19th, 1812. The charter established, in true liberal fashion, that all free

²⁸⁶ AHV/C. 97/ Vol. 120/ fs. 98-137/ Marzo 18 de 1812

²⁸⁷ The Cádiz Courts, established in Cádiz, Spain, on 1810 to represent the Imperial interests in the absence of King Ferdinand VII, commenced, since that year, to formulate and publish decrees that paved the way for the formation of a liberal monarchy in Spain in the absence of the King. Deputies to the court from various regions of the Empire were called in, and Veracruz became represented by Joaquín Maniau y Torquemada. The court began publishing by 1811 royal decrees specifying rights of the inhabitants of the Spanish Monarchy, such as establishing the recognition of citizenship, nationality, and equal rights to Spaniards, Indians, or *mestizos* in efforts to guarantee same access to employment and opportunities as peninsular Spaniards. The representative of Veracruz came to contest such decrees which restricted the political representation of Afro-descendant individuals in the province of Veracruz, for he considered that without their counting, a population of 154, 286 individuals in the whole province would be reduced to only 25,000 or 30,000 citizens, thus decreasing the political power of Veracruz in the Courts. Despite Maniau’s concerns at true representation of Afro-descendant individuals, such concerns resided on political

inhabitants of the Spanish Empire were subjects of the crown and formed the Spanish nation, while establishing that the sovereignty of the nation resided on the individuals which conformed said nation. Both the first and third articles of the charter recognize national sovereignty residing on the participation, representation, and inclusion of all Spanish individuals²⁸⁸, who are constituted and recognized, according to article five, as “first, all men born free and residing in the dominions of Spain and their sons; Secondly, foreigners who have obtained from the Courts naturalization letters; Thirdly, those who have been residing in Spanish dominions ten years; Fourthly, freedmen who acquired their freedom in the dominions of Spain.”²⁸⁹

It is evident that the language of the charter gave the impression of making, in true fashion of liberalism, the inclusion of peoples of African descent akin to other individuals in the Empire. Yet the charter imposed racial limitations for citizenship which solidified categories of exclusion that greatly affected the political status of peoples of African descent in Veracruz. The charter specified in its fourth chapter specific guidelines for the recognition not of Spanish individuals, but of Spanish citizens themselves. Article eighteen identifies Spanish citizens as “those Spaniards that through both lines have their origin in the Spanish dominions of both hemispheres and are

pragmatism rather than desiring a rightful inclusion of Afro-descendants as politically able citizens of the nascent liberal monarchy. See Manuel Chust and José Antonio Serrano, “Veracruz: Antiguo régimen, liberalismo gaditano e independencia, 1750-1826” in Juan Ortiz Escamilla, ed., *Revisión Histórica de La Guerra de Independencia En Veracruz* (México : Universidad Veracruzana :, 2008).

²⁸⁸ Luis González Obregon, *La Constitución de 1812 en la Nueva España Tomo I*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Mexico, D.F: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 2013), XXVII.

²⁸⁹ González Obregon, 1:XXVII.

residing in any town of those dominions.”²⁹⁰ Article twenty-two went further by establishing conditions for citizenship and hindrances aimed at preventing popular participation of Afro-descendants in the Spanish Empire:

Spaniards that by any line are found to originate from Africa, the door of virtue and right of citizenship remains open: as a result the Courts will concede a citizenship letter to those who have made significant services to the homeland, or those which distinguish themselves by their talent, application, and conduct, with the condition that they are to be legitimate children of free parents; that they are married with a free woman, that they reside in Spanish dominions, and that they exercise some profession, trade, or useful industry with their own capital.²⁹¹

Additionally, Article twenty-five established that the right to exercise the rights granted by Spanish citizenship could be forfeited on the grounds of judicial convictions, indebtedment, and the performing of domestic servitude in households,²⁹² aimed at restricting Afro-descendant individuals in domestic labor. Finally, Article twenty-nine of the charter established the population that was recognized as the base for national representation in the courts as composed by “naturals whom both lines originate from the Spanish dominions and those that by the courts have obtained citizenship letters”²⁹³, thus leaving out of the political game of the newly constituted liberal monarchy individuals of African-descent. While the Cádiz charter imposed grave restrictions for social and political mobility aimed at peoples of African descent, the preoccupations over political representation of Afro-descendants in Veracruz came to a halt in the collective mindset, as the insurgency became a very real threat soon after.

²⁹⁰ González Obregon, 1:XXIX.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

Loyalty and Scarcity: Afro-descendant militias and defense of the region

The *Lanceros* corps, a mixed military unit of armed cavalry where Afro-descendants were prominent in numbers, figured importantly by April of 1812 in plans of defense as local colonial administration became desperate in the face of an encroaching insurgent movement. *Lanceros* became important Afro-descendants in the region that represented the defense of crown interests in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. In a document sent by the Courts of Cádiz to the City Council of Veracruz, they expressed utmost concern at the “ills that are produced upon the industry and happiness of that province concerning the abusive method of enlisting the *Lanceros* and forcing them, as the militias of the coast, to provide garrison services.”²⁹⁴ They further expressed concern at the prejudicial effects that the establishment of the *matricula de marina* had for the populations along the coast of *Sotavento*.²⁹⁵ Referring to the *matricula de marina*, or marine registration, the Cádiz Courts referred directly to a late-eighteenth century incentive by Viceroy Bucareli of registering and controlling all small-boat activities of individuals along the coasts of Veracruz, pertaining specifically to the control of individuals dedicated to “the labor of fishing, whether on open waters or rivers”.²⁹⁶

The government in Cádiz recommended the City Council of Veracruz for both the *Pardos y Morenos* militias and the *Lanceros* corps to “remain in their homes, tending to their respective obligations in times of peace and tranquility, begging Your Excellency to promote that said matter be promoted to the Viceroy to attend with particularity these

²⁹⁴ AHV/C.100/Vol.132/fs.427-430/ 15 de Abril de 1812

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 83.

useful subjects.”²⁹⁷ Afro-descendants were, once again, seen by Spanish imperial administration as both a danger and a salvation, seeking to appease their immediate complaints and concerns as they regarded them not as citizens of the crown, but as subjects, nevertheless very useful ones for the defense of the region. Not only did Spanish Imperial administration recognized the danger that a forced quartering of militia divisions, which in their majority consisted of Afro-descendants, could have for the region both in a destabilizing of regional economic practices that aided in the sustenance of the region, and the possibilities of creating socio-political discontent which could propel desertion to the insurgent side. Cádiz’ liberalism continued to deny the recognition of loyal peoples of African descent in Veracruz as citizens, yet they continued to see them as shakily essential elements for the assurance of Spanish control in the region.

By May of 1812 Veracruz became concerned at the possibilities of imminent attack and invasion, along with the interruption of supply routes to the city from the hinterland. In a series of documents requesting aid to the Viceroy, *Cabildo* members of Veracruz informed of an “imminent danger that threatens this city all the way to its walls by parties of insurgents that have spilled over in the Province.”²⁹⁸ Veracruz was isolated: “the enemies intercepting the roads... stealing many cargoes of Tobacco from the King, along with flour and other goods.”²⁹⁹ The war had now reached the coast. Officials stressed that the loyal populations of the hinterland abandoned their towns as “for being

²⁹⁷ AHV/C.100/Vol.132/fs.427-430/ 15 de Abril de 1812

²⁹⁸ AHV/C.98/Vol.121/fs.384-464/ Mayo de 1812

²⁹⁹ AHV/C.98/Vol.121/fs.384-464/ Mayo de 1812

defenseless they don't have any other refuge than that of this fortified site to escape the atrocities of the enemy."³⁰⁰

Not only did the Port-City became by May of 1812 refuge for loyalists escaping a hinterland quickly dominated by insurgents, at the same time officials in the city saw a responsibility of Veracruz to supply with foods and goods for both refugees and loyal towns of the vicinity, as well as for Xalapa, Cordoba, and Orizaba, arguing that the Port-City was to receive utmost assistance, for if left to its own devices "in three months the Province will become desolate."³⁰¹ Scarcity and besiegement of the roads, communication, and supply routes immediate to the Port-City had begun. The scarcity experienced by the besieged Port-City was such that *Ayuntamiento* officials forbade the extraction of any supplies and goods from the walled Port-City, asking "the guards at the doors, and the troops that provide their custody, to remain vigilant and impede the exit of goods from this population," with the objective of preventing further scarcity but at the same time preventing the goods from reaching insurgents, deemed by authorities as "the enemies of humanity."³⁰²

Under such dire conditions, some Afro-descendants continued to provide service to the Royalist cause by July of 1812. The *Pardos y Morenos* militias of Veracruz became escort groups for military convoys arriving to the uncommunicated and besieged Port-City from the interior. Spanish military commander Count of Castro-Terreño wrote to the Viceroy informing him that the regiments of "*pardos y morenos* will accompany

³⁰⁰ AHV/C.98/Vol.121/fs.384-464/ Mayo de 1812

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² AHV/ C.102/Vol.135.4/fs.584-585/ 20 de Mayo de 1812.

the convoy to the city itself, this as the bad weather of the day will not be as pernicious to them as it is for the soldiers of this army.”³⁰³ Spanish colonial administration continued to rely on Afro-descendant militias for the establishment of order and the securing of essential goods amidst a state of siege and lack of communication with the interior imposed by insurgents. Despite their rejection at being considered citizens under Cádiz liberalism, Afro-descendants loyal to the crown continued to provide their services as they were the essential in the efforts to protect the interests of the empire of the region.

And if the continued reliance on Afro-descendant militias for the protection of the Port-City wasn't enough, their service to the crown was the element which prevented a large-scale rebellion within the walls of Veracruz from materializing. A Sergeant in the *Pardos y Morenos* militias involved in the seditious plans of Cayetano Pérez, José Evaristo Molina, José Ignacio Murillo, Bartolomé Flores, José Ignacio Arizmendi and José Prudencio Silva, all conspirators who had been in collusion and communication with then-deceased insurgent leader Ignacio Allende, and who planned outright rebellion in the Port-City, betrayed them and propelled their arrest.³⁰⁴ After being imprisoned, the aforementioned conspirators were executed by a firing squad on July 22nd 1812, and relative normality was thought to have returned inside the walls of Veracruz.³⁰⁵ Although

³⁰³ Hernández y Dávalos, *Colección de documentos para la historia de la Guerra de Independencia de México*, tomo IV, número 83, pg. 272 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

³⁰⁴ Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, *Apuntes históricos de la heroica ciudad de Vera-Cruz: precedidos de una noticia de los descubrimientos hechos en las islas y en el continente americano, y de las providencias dictados por los reyes de España para el gobierno de sus nuevas posesiones, desde el primer viage de Don Cristobal Colon, hasta que se emprendió la conquista de México ...*, vol. Tomo II (Mexico: I. Cumplido, 1857), 59–61. Lerdo de Tejada argues that the reasoning behind the *Pardos y Morenos* Sergeant betrayal of the conspirators rested upon the arrival of Spanish expeditionary forces sent to Veracruz from the Peninsula to help quell the insurgency in New Spain.

³⁰⁵ Tejada, Tomo II:61.

little to none is known of the Afro-descendant Sergeant which betrayed the trust of the conspirators, the role of loyalty by Afro-descendant militias to the crown in the Port-City, despite living amidst, and giving service to, a greater socio-political framework which legally excluded them as citizens under the Cádiz charter, was unquestionably the factor which allowed the conspiracy to be discovered and of rebellion to be avoided, leading to relative peace in the Port-City.

By August of 1812 the political and military Governor of Veracruz Don Juan Maria de Soto assured that in the southern portions of the *Sotavento* hinterland there existed a relative peace as Navy Commander Don Juan Topete had defeated insurgent leader Don José Ildefonso Gutierrez, and with said defeat the royalists retook important towns of southern *Sotavento* such as Cosamaloapan, Tesechoacán, Amatlán, and Chacaltianguis³⁰⁶. Nevertheless, to a great degree the success of royalist forces in retaking townships and villages in the southern portion of the hinterland rested in many ways to the actions and roles of royalist Afro-descendants. Such was the case of seventy-eight militiamen and 142 *pardo* patriots of the Huimanguillo company which ensured that the southernmost portion of the *Sotavento* hinterland remained in the hands of royalist control.³⁰⁷ Afro-descendants in militia units continued to be essential for the consolidation of Royalist authority in contested areas of the hinterland. Their efforts resulted

³⁰⁶ AGN/ Diario oficial/ *Gaceta del Gobierno de Mexico*/ tomo III./ num. 270/ 8 de agosto de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*

³⁰⁷ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 992/ fs.277-278/ 2 de Octubre de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*

instrumental in the early pacification of certain towns and villages of southernmost *Sotavento* that would remain in Royalist control for the duration of the war.

But if the townships of the southern portion of Veracruz' hinterland were being pacified by the efforts of Afro-descendants still loyal to the crown, in the immediacies of the Port-City scarcity, besiegement, and uncommunication continued. This propelled in turn fears of violence by subalterns of African descent, which defined informal stereotypes that Afro-descendants were prone to rebellion and treason. City Council officials ordered the closing of all stores in the *Barrio de extramuros*, the neighborhood right outside the walls of the city with a significant Afro-descendant population. The reasoning behind this decision was to avoid making the neighborhood and stores both prey and suppliers of foods for insurgents, arguing that due to their position outside the walls of the cities this population could become both victims of insurgent raids, or active participants and colluders of the insurgents designs in the immediacies of Veracruz.³⁰⁸

Once again, Afro-descendants, especially those of *extramuros*, were seen as prone to insurrection and outright treason despite the considerable contributions of Afro-descendants to defense and attainment of Royalist control of the region. These fear-based attitudes, together with legal exclusion of Afro-descendants as citizens of a liberal Spanish Empire by the Cádiz Constitution, came to exclude Afro-descendants outright, in late 1812, as political actors.

³⁰⁸ AHV/ C. 102/ Vol. 135.1/ fs. 598-600/ 8 de agosto de 1812

Gaditano Liberalism: Exclusion on the Ground.

In Veracruz, the Cádiz charter was ratified by October 14 1812³⁰⁹, propelling the establishment of new *Ayuntamientos*, or City Councils, in the region which reflected allegiance to the Cádiz Courts.³¹⁰ Such need propelled regional elections for *Ayuntamiento* members in Veracruz which generated further debate at the inclusion and representation of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as citizens. Ordinance from the courts and local lawmakers specified that in order to elect officers for the City Council of Veracruz, a group of seventeen parochial electors was to be voted in by Spanish citizens able to vote per the demarcations of the constitution's articles specifying citizenship and its restrictions.³¹¹ Said ordinance specified that those individuals which lacked "the rights of naming electors, if they tried to attend the vote, which we hope won't happen, they will be asked to leave as to avoid multitudes that may cause confusion and a delay of the vote."³¹² Thus the vote to choose parochial electors was carried out on October 25th, but was nevertheless annulled as factions of electors denounced that individuals of reputed African background participated in the parochial election, making said election invalid.³¹³

Despite that Afro-descendants in Veracruz and its hinterland were seen by Royalist elites as elements of the population with little political power, they were greatly important members of local and regional society, whether as important enablers of

³⁰⁹ AHV/C.97/Vol.120/fs.325/ 14 de octubre de 1812.

³¹⁰ AHV/C.97/Vol.120/fs.320/ 15 de octubre de 1812.

³¹¹ AHV/ C.97/Vol. 120/ fs. 326/ 19 de Octubre de 1812.

³¹² AHV/ C.97/Vol. 120/ fs. 326/ 19 de Octubre de 1812.

³¹³ Manuel Chust and José Antonio Serrano, "Veracruz: Antiguo régimen, liberalismo gaditano e independencia, 1750-1826" in Ortiz Escamilla, *Revisión Histórica de La Guerra de Independencia En Veracruz*, 89.

regional economies in the Port-City or the countryside or as members of Royalist militias. As such, they generated lots of discussion and debate whenever they tried to become participants, via legal routes, of the sociopolitical processes affecting them after the implementation of the Cádiz charter, such as those Afro-descendants who attempted to vote for parochial electors but were prevented from doing so by Veracruz' elites. Cádiz liberalism, as applied in Veracruz by its local elite, not only sought to limit the political recognition of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, but by the same token their ability to exercise any claim or right to citizenship that could lead to their participation in election processes for city councils and representatives to the Courts. As insurgency commenced to surround the Port-City via its own hinterland, and as the threat of insurgent Afro-descendants became more plausible, the recognition and political rights of Veracruz' Afro-descendants within a liberal framework of constitutional monarchy became restricted, at times severely.

Afro-descendants resented the restrictions and hindrances to their recognition as citizens. The attitudes of Court representatives, and of local electors, eventually confirmed that the Spanish imperial apparatus had, for decades, granted “privileges, *fueros*, and graces to Blacks and *pardos*” only for the purpose of encouraging these populations to become involved in the defense of the region and the appeasement of Afro-descendant populations rather “than as a policy to institutionalize them” as Spanish subjects.³¹⁴ Cádiz' liberalism proved to be apathetic at best at the important roles of Afro-

³¹⁴ Manuel Chust and José Antonio Serrano, “Veracruz: Antiguo régimen, liberalismo gaditano e independencia, 1750-1826” in Ortiz Escamilla, *Revisión Histórica de La Guerra de Independencia En Veracruz*, 89.81

descendants in the economy and defense of the region, in turn cementing the basis by which in 1812, and subsequent years for the remainder of the war, Afro-descendants commenced to seek alternatives of sociopolitical betterment in the insurgency.

Scarcity and the Threat of Afro-descendant Insurgency

By October of 1812 the situation of scarcity continued³¹⁵, and in the nearby fishing town of Alvarado the threat of a massive insurgent attack, spearheaded by peoples of African descent, soon materialized. On November 28th 1812, Spanish military officials redacted testimonies of three local *Lanceros* from the fishing village of Alvarado, which also functioned as occasional entrepôt of goods and supplies as the Port-City was besieged, who had been captured by insurgents and had recently returned to the region, specifically to the town of Mosquitero in the immediacies of Alvarado. The testimonies of twenty-four-year-old José Romualdo Losa, twenty-two year old Pedro de la Virgen, and eighteen year old Andrés Henriquez, all Afro-descendant *Lanceros*, revealed important information concerning insurgent mobilization and organization in the Cordoba and Orizaba region as well as revealed further roles of Afro-descendants in the insurgency as a threat to the stability of the *Sotavento* hinterland, and as a threat for the stability of Alvarado in a possible attack by insurgents.

The three *Lancero* militiamen informed Spanish authorities that as a result of their capture, they were taken to insurgent camps in the immediacies of Orizaba. From there they trekked to the town of Mosquitero as a way of escaping, and in the process, they

³¹⁵ ASHM/ C. 105/ 25 de Octubre de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*

witnessed many insurgents in the towns and villages of the hinterland, especially in the region between the Port-City and Alvarado, that posed a threat to Alvarado. They informed that the numbers of insurgents in the region immediate to Alvarado ascended to 100 men in Mosquitero, 100 in Joluca, 120 in Tlalixcoyan, 150 in Medellín, twenty in Moralillo, 100 in the detachment of La Pitaya, and the same number of men in Chiquihuite which were conformed exclusively by “Blacks from the sugar plantations”, making expressive notion to the escaped slaves from the Orizaba and Cordoba sugar plantations which had previously rebelled and joined the insurgent movement.³¹⁶

Not only did the three militiamen who escaped the clutches of insurgent captivity informed Spanish authorities that over 590 insurgents stood ready to attack the town of Alvarado, but most importantly that 100 of them were rebel slaves from the Orizaba and Cordoba region sugarcane plantations that had now made their way to the coastal lowlands. Their testimony showed how instrumental the role of Afro-descendants became for the insurgency in the region, as invading parties with the intent to destabilize commerce and stability of a crucial point of maritime communication and trade in lieu of a besieged Port-City. The threat of Afro-descendant insurgency in the immediacies of the Port-City became a reality.

By December of 1812, a new political-military governor of Veracruz, took over the control and authority of the Port-City, its hinterland, and of the Province as the new Intendent. The new Intendent, José de Quevedo y Chiesa a brigadier for the Spanish

³¹⁶ ASHM/ C.105/ Declaración tomada por el teniente Luis Martínez de Hermida a José Romualdo Losa, Pedro de la Virgen y Andrés Henríquez, Alvarado/ 28 de Noviembre de 1812 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

royalist forces, wrote in a letter to Spanish authorities about the devastating effects that the besiegement of insurgents around the Port-City, and their control of roads to the interior of New Spain, had for the city. He stated that lacking communications with the towns of Cordoba, Orizaba, and Xalapa, and communications being cut with the capital, they had scarce communication in *Sotavento* with “Alvarado, Tlacotalpan, Tuxtla, and Acayucan, and even these few points are threatened by the insurgents”.³¹⁷

Not only was the city in a continued state of scarcity and besiegement, authorities also reported a major depopulation of the Port-City. City Council members informed interim Governor García Dávila, as Quevedo was forced to subside his position briefly, in a letter that “according to the last reconnaissance made by the neighborhood constables with their respective census, this city did not reached 14,000 souls two years ago today, whose number has now dwindled in a visible great depopulation.”³¹⁸ City Council members made note of a pronounced depopulation of the Port-City due to the scarcity of goods and state of besiegement that the city suffered by the insurgents. From this point on, the Port-City would continue to experience a de facto state of uncommunication, scarcity, and depopulation until the end of the war.

A momentous year for the region, 1812 brought about the escalation of war and the arrival of Cádiz’ liberalism, both happenings that propelled a socio-political revolution for the agency of Afro-descendants. Whether free or enslaved, royalist or insurgent, Afro-descendants saw in the adoption of liberal ideology, despite their

³¹⁷ ASHM/ C.105/ *José de Quevedo a José María Carvajal, Veracruz/ 7 de diciembre de 1812* in Ortiz Escamilla.

³¹⁸ AHV/ C.106/Vol.139/fs. 333-335/ 14 de Diciembre de 1812

rejection by the institutionalized liberalism of Spanish Royalists, an ideological framework to better their socio-political conditions. This specifically demonstrated how the escalation of violence could cement sociopolitical betterment through their active participation in the defense of the region by adhering to the Cádiz charter, or its contestation by opposing Cádiz liberalism in favor of insurgent liberal ideology.

Rejected and Desired: Afro-descendants on Both Sides of the War in 1813

By 1813, regional conditions began to worsen. As the violence escalated, Royalists brought-in troops from other parts of the Empire, such as Campeche, and from Habana, which began to arrive to Veracruz by March of 1813. Yet many of these troops, unaccustomed to local climate and diseases, began to become sick and perish. Records showed that in March of 1813, out of 861 available troops for defense the coastal militias with 141 individuals, the *Pardos y Morenos* militias with 107 individuals, and the *Lanceros* militia with forty-eight individuals, represented 296 troops, or 34% of the total military force in the Port-City and immediate region who not only had ample knowledge of the region and topography, but who were also immune to endemic diseases.³¹⁹ The records also stated that most of the 146 individuals from the regiment that arrived from Campeche were returned due to both “disease and uselessness”, citing the endemic tropical disease environs of Veracruz and *Sotavento* as main causes of affliction.³²⁰ These documents revealed two important conclusions: First, that Veracruz found itself in a

³¹⁹ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 692/ exp.3/ fs. 21-36/ 8 de Marzo de 1813

³²⁰ Ibid.

continuous vulnerable military and political condition by 1813. Second, the last hope of defense rested, once again, in Afro-descendant militias.

Royalist administration, as it had done in the late-eighteenth century, continued to rely to a great degree in the role of Afro-descendants in the protection of the Port-City and the immediate regions, despite their rejections as citizens of a liberal empire.

Authorities assigned vital positions to Afro-descendant militiamen in the safekeeping of the walled city's bastions, hospitals, gates, docks, and even as part of expeditions to alleviate insurgent attacks in Orizaba and Cordoba.³²¹ Not only was the reliance on Afro-descendant troops in 1813 evidently shown by their making-up of a considerable portion of defensive forces in the Port-City, by the same token colonial administration granted particular rewards to loyal Afro-descendants with decades of service still present in the militia corps.

Such was the case of *Pardo* Sargent of the *Pardos y Morenos* militia corps, Fernando Montero, who in March of 1813 asked for his retirement due to an eye fistula which made him unable to render service in the company after fifteen years of service.³²² Montero, citing not only his exemplary service but also the fact that he was the son of a now deceased former *Pardo* militiamen, requested his superiors and Governor Dávila the granting of military *fuero*, or the corporate privilege of being exempt from civil law and being judged only by a military court of peers.³²³ Despite that the bylaws of the militia company stipulated that the obtainment of military *fuero* was subjected to a minimum of

³²¹ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 692/ exp.3/ fs. 21-36/ 8 de Marzo de 1813

³²² AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 694/ exp. 1/ fs.2-5/ 31 de Marzo de 1813.

³²³ Ibid.

twenty years of service, Governor Dávila ultimately granted Montero the privilege of *fuero* justifying such decision on Montero's "exemplary conduct in service" and due to the "unique circumstance by which we find ourselves of keeping individuals of this class under service."³²⁴

Dávila's reasoning for the granting of especial corporate privileges such as military *fuero* to retiring Afro-descendant militiamen in Veracruz during the War of Independence revealed two important elements. First, Dávila, together with other colonial authorities, considered important to reward the service of loyal Afro-descendants to the crown, especially those whose families had devoted lives and generations of service to the defense of Veracruz and the region, despite that the liberal framework of government seemed to not fully include them as citizens. Second, in doing so, Dávila hoped to obtain the favor and disposition in military service for the defense of Veracruz and *Sotavento* from the ever-encroaching threat of insurgents during the war by appealing to individuals that he described of "this class", specifically referring to Afro-descendants.

Despite rejecting the legality of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as Spanish citizens, royalist administration in Veracruz had no remedy but to rely on the service of individuals who were native to the region and which endured endemic disease and tropical weather which affected troops from abroad and from the inland of New Spain amidst a growingly encroaching insurgence. Royalist Afro-descendants, rejected by Cádiz' liberalism, but greatly desired by local administration for defense, were then

³²⁴ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 694/ exp. 1/ fs.2-5/ 31 de Marzo de 1813.

considered, by 1813, as essential players of the region against an ever-growing insurgent movement in New Spain.

Yet as the granting of special privileges to *Pardos y Morenos* veterans continued, by the same token commerce leaders in the Port-City expressed reservations and mistrust of Afro-descendant populations of *extramuros*, outside the walls of Veracruz. The administrator of the Port-City's customs house petitioned Governor Dávila for a reduction in the supplying of stores in the *extramuros* portion of the city.³²⁵ Reasons for such petition by the customs house administrator encompassed alleged disorders in the “perimeters that are done for the supplying of stores in the *extramuros* section of this city”, asking Governor Dávila for better knowledge of that city's section census, economic funds, and consumer habits in order to assert if supplies were being sold to insurgents by the inhabitants of this neighborhood.³²⁶

Not only was the problem of scarcity a constant in Veracruz, but by the same token colonial administration was worried that the inhabitants of *extramuros* represented a supply line for insurgents besieging the city. Royalist fears continued to equate Afro-descendant inhabitants of this neighborhood as seditious and untrustworthy, thus informally codifying attitudes and stereotypes towards Blacks other than those serving in militia units inside the city walls. Hence, Afro-descendants outside the walls of the Port-City, were, in the eyes of colonial administration, prone to violence, insurrection, and treason. For local administration, this reasoning became the reason for the prevention of

³²⁵ AHV/C. 106/ Vol. 139/ fs. 333-335/ 31 de marzo de 1813.

³²⁶ Ibid.

Afro-descendants as able political actors. This would soon push Afro-descendants to find alternatives in the insurgency.

As Veracruz continued to suffer the effects of prolonged insurgent-caused communication cutoffs, scarcity and besiegement, by April it began to suffer from instances of treason. In a report addressed to the royalist commander of Jamiltepec, Oaxaca, Brigadier Juan José Olazabal informed that of 700 soldiers that reinforced the besieged port-city “that number does not represent that regiment anymore, as one of them, whom I captured, declared saying that part of the 700 have become insurgents and part of them has died from the sickness and hunger in Veracruz.”³²⁷ Instances of desertion from militias and infantry by local subalterns propelled a radicalization in the violence, first by Royalists and then by insurgents.

On the early morning of April 3rd, in retaliation to the participation of the insurgent population of the town of El Tejar in the uncommunication and scarcity of foods the Port-City suffered, Governor José de Quevedo ordered the burning and destruction of the whole town, which ultimately displaced its inhabitants and ended a focal point of insurgency in the immediate proximity of the Port-City.³²⁸ In response, on April 12th insurgent parties reinforced their attacks against the besieged city, as expressed by insurgent figure Carlos Maria de Bustamante. He informed in a letter, directed at the insurgent government of José María Morelos, that Veracruz was “almost destroyed, as

³²⁷ “Juan José Olazabal a Francisco Rionda, comandante de Jamiltepec”, en *El correo americano del sur*, número vii, 8 de abril de 1813, pp. 51-52, en García, *Documentos históricos mexicanos*, t.iv., in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

³²⁸ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 692/ fs.55-57v/ “Jose de Quevedo, gobernador de Veracruz, al virrey Felix Maria Calleja, Veracruz/ 4 de abril de 1813 in Ortiz Escamilla.

half a city has been torn apart to make firewood out of beams and doors as coal is lacking.”³²⁹ He proceeded to inform that insurgents in the coast made use of small ships to harass fishers in order to prevent a supply of seafood to the Port-City, while the:

Blacks from the coast, dressed in their green cotton shirts, and camouflaging with the weeds and bushes of the beach, make from there terrible and constant rifle shots to those that approach from the sand dunes, causing that no troops have exited the city, nor approach it from the church of Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje.³³⁰

Afro-descendant insurgents became instrumental in the prolonging of communication cutoffs and besiegement of the Port-City. Insurgent Afro-descendants of the coast commenced to retaliate the escalation of violence from the royalists against towns under insurgent control, or populations that cooperated with insurgents in tightening the access of foods and supplies for Veracruz. As demonstrated by Bustamante’s letter to Morelos’ insurgent government, Afro-descendant insurgents had become instrumental in the cutting of communication between the Port-City and the interior, the prevention of more military aid from arriving to Veracruz, and of Veracruz sending military aid to other towns or cities in the region to be liberated from insurgent control. Afro-descendants had now become an established force of support and importance in the insurgent movement as it took place in Veracruz and its *Sotavento* hinterland. The active role in the insurgency by Veracruz’ Afro-descendants made even

³²⁹ “‘Carlos Maria de Bustamante al Ayuntamiento de México y corporaciones congregadas’, Zacatlán, 15 de abril de 1813, fragmento, en *El correo americano del sur, número XXXIII, 13 de octubre de 1813*, pp. 261-262, en García *Documentos históricos mexicanos*, t. IV” in Ortiz Escamilla.

³³⁰ Ibid. The church of Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje which Bustamante refers to in his letter to insurgent governance refers to a church located in the *Barrio de extramuros*, the neighborhood outside the walls of the city often considered a slum where the destitute of the Port-City resided.

more prominent the fears experienced by royalist leadership in 1812, fears of a well-coordinated attack on the fishing village, and second commercial entrepôt, of Alvarado. It ultimately became a reality, demonstrating not only the importance of Afro-descendant participation in the attack but that by 1813 Afro-descendants themselves had become an important core of insurgent leadership of the region.

On April 30th 1813 an attacking force of 1500 men was ordered to attack the village of Alvarado, against a meager force of only 200 militiamen and infantry soldiers garrisoned under the leadership of Navy Lieutenant Don Gonzalo Ulloa. Governor of Veracruz José Dávila informed the Viceroy of the valiant defense of the village and the ultimate scattering of over one thousand insurgent troops from Alvarado. Nevertheless, it is in Dávila's suggestions that Lieutenant Ulloa and all soldiers involved in the defense should be commended for their valiant defense that he informs that unfortunately the capture of a "free Black insurgent leader" was not achieved.³³¹

Although there is no mention of the Afro-descendant insurgent's name by Dávila, the acknowledgement that an insurgent leader of African descent played an instrumental role in the coordination and execution of the attack of Alvarado demonstrated two important points. First, it demonstrated how by 1813 the insurgent movement in Veracruz and *Sotavento* became a platform by which Afro-descendants could not only pursue socio-political betterment outside the frameworks of colonial governance and royalist military structures. Second, at the same time Dávila's acknowledgement demonstrated

³³¹ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 692/ fs. 112-114/ "José de Quevedo al virrey", Veracruz/ 4 de mayo de 1813 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

how Veracruz' Afro-descendants could achieve high ranking and leadership positions amidst insurgent military and socio-political leadership by contributing their actions in the cutoff of supplies and communications between Veracruz and *Sotavento* with the rest of New Spain. By becoming critical troops and leaders of the insurgency in Veracruz, the agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the insurgency by 1813 puts into question pre-existing assumptions and narratives of exclusive *criollo* or *mestizo* leadership in the insurgent movement.

Treason in Plain Sight: A Particular Case

The escalation of violence, as well as the increased participation of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the insurgency, made the latter of months of 1813 a challenging period for Royalists in the region. Not only did Afro-descendants solidified their roles as either essential protectors or contenders of Spanish colonial rule in Veracruz and its hinterland, by the same token they partook in, and established, a pattern where some Afro-descendants who served in royalist militias double crossed Spanish governance and served roles in the insurgency, a pattern that lasted until violence subsided in the region by 1819. A case which exemplified this pattern is the case of *Lancero* militiamen Mariano Guzmán, accused of collaborating with Afro-descendant insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez. José Antonio Martínez, considered a well-reputed and instrumental Black insurgent leader native to the town of Acazónica, worked alongside insurgent

leader Nicolas Bravo³³² in the 1812-1813 period, and coordinated important attacks against royalist convoys which enabled the communication and supplies cutoffs affecting the Port-City of Veracruz.³³³

An analysis of the witness testimonies, and confessions of the accused, found in Guzmán's trial sheds light on the ways by which Afro-descendant insurgent José Antonio Martínez operated in the area surrounding the Port-City, as well as the ways by which Afro-descendants such as himself could attain important military-political positions in the insurgent movement of Veracruz and its hinterland, along with the cooperation of Afro-descendant royalist militiamen in his movement. The legal process against mestizo Mariano Guzmán, forty- five-year-old farmer, resident of La Antigua's *corregimiento*, and corporal in the *Lanceros* militia commenced in August of 1813. Authorities accused him of the "crime of treason, by giving notice to the insurgent leader José Antonio the happenings of the Port-City," from March to August of 1813.³³⁴

Multiple witnesses were called to testify against Guzmán. Among them, Manuel Gómez Villegas, a farmer and former insurgent who obtained the grace of pardon, accused Guzmán of being in contact with an insurgent leader by the name of Juan García, to whom Guzmán "relayed, in person, information of how many insurgents came to this

³³² Nicolás Bravo was instrumental in the localized expansion of the insurgent movement from 1812 to 1814 from the highlands around Córdoba and Orizaba into Veracruz. He later functioned as protector of Morelos' Congreso de Chilpancingo, and became captured and imprisoned by royalists in 1817. Freed in 1820, Bravo became instrumental in the definitions of Mexico as an independent nation following Agustín de Iturbide's short-lived empire, eventually becoming president for three short-lived times during the convulsive political times of the 1830s and 1840s. For more see Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *Triumphs and Tragedy: A History of the Mexican People* (New York: WWNorton, 1992).

³³³ Among the instrumental actions of José Antonio Martínez as an insurgent was a daring attack to a royalist convoy consisting of 87 mules carrying five million pesos. This action made him, by February of 1814, known as "the master of Veracruz." See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 135.

³³⁴ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 122/ exp.3/ fs. 47/ 17 de Diciembre de 1813.

city to request the grace of pardon, in order for García to apprehend those who requested pardons and then execute them.”³³⁵ Gómez Villegas also informed royalist authorities that Guzmán also provided the insurgents information on “all the occurrences of this city, giving him notice of where the troops came from, and where they were headed”, along with providing insurgents with “clothes and any remedies they required.”³³⁶ Gómez Villegas proceeded to declare that whenever Guzmán was unable to perform errands of supply deliveries to insurgents he would send an assistant by the name of Pablo Salado, to whom Guzmán “would give the supplies by the beach.”³³⁷

A second witness by the name of José Teodoro Arriaga, farmer and member of the royalist patriot corps of *extramuros*, not only corroborated the story of Manuel Villegas against Mariano Guzmán, but added that “it wasn’t only to Juan García, but also to José Antonio, leader of the insurgents, to whom Guzmán relayed information to,” stating that he contacted the insurgents in Paso del Moral.³³⁸ Arriaga stated that Guzmán would relay information concerning the state of the Port-City, and the movement of royalist troops to José Antonio Martínez “in person”.³³⁹ Even more damning was the statement of Arriaga accusing Guzmán of transporting “his cattle, helped by the insurgents, and in their company” to the alleyways of the Port-City, from where the insurgents would then vanish.³⁴⁰ Arriaga accused Guzmán not only of being a traitor by collaborating with the insurgents in information and supply runs, he also accused him of

³³⁵ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 122/ exp.3/ fs. 47/ 17 de Diciembre de 1813.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

being in close connection to Black insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez, as evidenced in the help they provided to move his cattle through insurgent territory into the streets of the Port-City itself, for Arriaga stated that Guzmán's ranch "has not suffered any harm from the insurgents as he is their friend."³⁴¹

Royalist prosecution then proceeded to gather witness testimonies of Guzmán's family. The third witness, José Severo Ramos, Guzmán's brother-in-law, farmer, and member of the loyalist patriot corps of *extramuros*, corroborated the testimonies of the previous witnesses stating that Guzmán "had friendship with the insurgents of the circumference, which resulted in them taking care of his ranch, feeding of his cattle, and escorting him to the city's alleyways."³⁴² When asked how he was aware of such events he declared that he formerly was part of the insurgents and witnessed "the movements that said insurgent leaders made to harm the royal troops, such as stealing the cargo from returning convoys" to the Port-City.³⁴³

A fourth witness, Mariano Guzmán's own son, Bernabé de la Trinidad, confirmed that his father visited their ranch named *El Zopilote*, and that despite most of the time his father visited the ranch by himself, José Antonio had visited "around six or seven times to the ranch, being my father there present."³⁴⁴ Bernabé informed royalist authorities that his father asked him to be the messenger who called José Antonio to Guzmán's ranch, stating that often "José Antonio was accompanied by another insurgent."³⁴⁵ Guzmán's wife,

³⁴¹ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 122/ exp.3/ fs. 47/ 17 de Diciembre de 1813.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

María Tomasa Ramos, became the fifth witness in the case. Despite at first neglecting her husband's involvement with the insurgent cause, or any relationship between Guzmán and José Antonio, she ultimately confirmed all of the previous witnesses' accounts, but defended her husband by stating that indeed "José Antonio visited the ranch; but his presence there was for her husband to beg José Antonio to not harm them or their ranch."³⁴⁶

Mariano Guzmán was ultimately compelled to provide his own confession. When asked what his profession was from March 8th May 24th of 1813, he informed the prosecution that "he worked as a dockworker, paying monetary penalties for his military service."³⁴⁷ Creating an obvious contradiction to the knowledge provided by witnesses of him being a farmer and cattle driver, he explained that since no active service was assigned to him in the Port-City, he worked in the docks in the meantime to obtain some form of income, and from May 24th onwards he performed cattle drives from his ranch, *El Zopilote*, to the city with the purpose of supplying the Port-City with beef.³⁴⁸ He acknowledged knowing insurgents Juan García and José Antonio Martínez, but denied informing them of the happenings in the Port-City as well as to their supplying of goods.³⁴⁹ At the same time he acknowledged knowing Pablo Salado and accepted that he was the assistant of insurgent leader Juan García, but in turn denied any involvement of

³⁴⁶ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 122/ exp.3/ fs. 47/ 17 de Diciembre de 1813.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

turning over supplies or pardoned former insurgents to Salado in order for García to execute them.³⁵⁰

As he was asked if he had any knowledge of José Teodoro Arriaga and José Severo Ramos, witnesses of the case, he acknowledged knowing them and confirmed that Ramos, his brother-in-law, was an insurgent, same as his father-in-law, who in turn helped him to escort his cattle supply to the alleyways of the Port-City, acknowledging collaboration with insurgents.³⁵¹ Guzmán ultimately accepted that through his actions in having contact with insurgent leader José Antonio, and allowing him and his forces to escort him to the Port-City, he “erred and these actions did not eliminated his right to justice.”³⁵² Ultimately, royalist prosecution condemned Mariano Guzmán by September of 1813 to “seven years in prison... overseas, and with the understanding that if Guzmán is still able for military service that he is destined to one of the regiments of La Habana.”³⁵³

The case of Mariano Guzmán revealed many facets on the conditions of Veracruz and *Sotavento* towards the end of 1813, while it also illuminated important information of the role of Afro-descendants in the insurgent movement. Not only was the Port-City in continual besiegement and surrounded by insurgents towards the end of 1813, it was insurgents themselves who to a great degree controlled agricultural production in the *Sotavento* hinterland, often forcing royalist militiamen, farmers, and cattle drivers to

³⁵⁰ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 122/ exp.3/ fs. 47/ 17 de Diciembre de 1813.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid.

collaborate with them in order to assure safe passage to and from the Port-City. By the same token, as reflected in the testimonies of Mariano Guzmán's trial, the complex organization of the insurgents in the region immediate to Veracruz was led by a Black insurgent, José Antonio Martínez, who whether by establishing friendly contact with the populations of the region, or outright coercion, obtained the support of other colonial subalterns, even those in service to the crown.

In turn, Martínez controlled networks of information and supplies that benefited insurgent organization in Veracruz, damming the Port-City in a continual state of besiegement and scarcity. Centering Afro-descendants in the narratives of the War of Independence as it occurred in Veracruz and *Sotavento* in 1813, exemplified in the story of Mariano Guzmán, demonstrates the instrumental role of Afro-descendants as insurgent leaders opening and closing supplies and communication chains between Veracruz and the interior of New Spain, transforming their role from colonial subaltern players in the conflict to being instrumental elements and figures.

Conclusion

Cases such as the criminal case of Mariano Guzmán allow us to situate the role that an Afro-descendant leader, and Afro-descendant militiamen double crossing Spanish authorities by serving in the insurgency, served in the localized insurgent movement of Veracruz and *Sotavento*. In turn, it enables us to discern the importance that Afro-descendants had not only for the royalist side as defenders of the status-quo, but also as important disrupters of Spanish colonial stability by 1813. It also allows us to contest pre-

conceived notions of Afro-descendant population's participation in the Mexican War of Independence by understanding their participation not only as Royalist line troops, but also centering them as leaders essential to the thriving of the insurgent movement, and detrimental to Spanish governance.

It is arguably the 1810-1813 period of the war which in many ways affected the dynamics of sociopolitical agency on which Veracruz' Afro-descendants partook in for the remainder of the war. From initial demonstrations of loyalty, to the adoption or contestation of Cádiz liberalism, along an increased participation in the insurgency, Veracruz' Afro-descendants became instrumental players of the independence conflict for the region, on either side, during this period. As 1813 waned on, Afro-descendants' roles in the war not only continued, but they came to take even more precedence for the subsequent 1814-1819 period, as in many ways said roles and agency affected the ways by which the region responded to violence and greater ideological frameworks as they were enacted on the region's greater population.

Chapter Four

“Rebels as soon as they became enlisted”: Afro-descendants amidst insurgency, pacification, and malleable allegiances. 1814-1819

For Veracruz, the most intense years of the War for Independence were 1814-1817³⁵⁴. The return of Ferdinand VII to the throne of Spain and his abolition of the Courts in Cádiz and the Cádiz Constitution in mid-1814, marked the temporary death of Spanish liberalism and the return of absolutism. Insurgent liberalism, codified by Morelos’³⁵⁵ document *Sentimientos de la nación* on 1813,³⁵⁶ propelled Veracruz’ Afro-descendants to join the insurgency in greater numbers by 1814. This made of the years that followed a

³⁵⁴ From 1814 to 1817, the period described by Ortiz Escamilla as “three years of rebellion and open defiance to colonial governance,” constituted a period of greater strength in the insurgent movement exemplified by Jose Maria Morelos’ well-organized national movement. This period of increased insurgency concluded in 1817, symbolizing the decline of the insurgency two years after Morelos’ apprehension and execution, and the defeat of the failed expedition by Spanish insurgent Francisco Xavier Mina, which marked a decline in the insurgent movement nationally, and the beginning of pacification efforts by Royalists in Veracruz targeted at pacifying colonial subalterns. See Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*, Colección América 14 (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008).

³⁵⁵ José María Morelos y Pavón was an instrumental figure in the development of the insurgent movement at a national level from 1811 after the execution of its leader, Priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, and until his execution in 1815. A Priest by vocation, Morelos coordinated a complexly and strongly organized insurgency that was able to capture crucial regions in the southern portions of New Spain, such as the Pacific port of Acapulco, and the Province of Oaxaca. It was during his tenure as leader that the insurgent movement acquired both an ideological definition rooted in republican liberalism as well as the maximum military extension of the movement. For more information see Baltasar Dromundo, *José María Morelos*, [1. ed.], Tezontle (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1970).

³⁵⁶ Translated to Feelings of the Nation, this document drafted by José María Morelos as a speech to the insurgent National Congress of Chilpancingo, also known as Congress of Anahuac, encompassed twenty-three points that came to influence the ideological standings of insurgents for the remainder of the war, and of the early national governments of Mexico as an independent country. Being the first official document by an insurgent government which recognized Mexico as an independent nation by stating that “America is free and independent from Spain, and from any other Nation, Government, or Monarchy,” this document also encompassed important clauses that established the concepts of popular sovereignty, republicanism, state religion, and federalism as a form of government. More importantly for this research, clause fifteen established that “slavery becomes outlawed forever and with it *casta* distinctions, making everyone equal, distinguishing an American from another only through vice and virtue.” See “Sentimientos de la Nación rubricados por José María Morelos”, Chilpancingo, 14 de Septiembre de 1813. AGN/Acta de Independencia y Constituciones de México.

period of rise and fall of military confrontations as Royalists in Veracruz targeted the Afro-Mexican population as insurgents. As a result, Afro-descendants in Veracruz and *Sotavento* participated, in proactively increased numbers, as insurgents. Afro-descendants participated during this period of the insurgency as leaders and common soldiers which facilitated the continued siege to the Port-City and disruption of royalist supplies and communication between Veracruz with its hinterland and the interior of New Spain, well until general pacification of the region in 1819. Their increased participation in the insurgency, often by playing active roles in both sides of the war favoring the insurgency, revealed that they aimed to continue the pursuit of liberal tenants which they saw as bettering their socio-political condition. Their increased participation rose from the appeal which liberal frameworks of socioracial equality and self-determination, opposite of Spanish absolutism, provided.

Despite increased Afro-descendant participation in the insurgency, and consolidation of insurgent power in the region, by 1817, following strings of insurgent defeats and royalist consolidation of power in the region, most of the insurgent fervor in Veracruz and *Sotavento* came to deescalate. In turn, largely successful pacification campaigns, which often included participation of pardoned colonial subalterns, became prominent in Veracruz, and achieved to pacify the countryside bringing about Royalist control in the region. By 1819, Veracruz was virtually pacified, and traces of insurgency were all but erased. The cooperation of Veracruz Afro-descendants in pacification efforts, whether as pardoned insurgents made loyal militiamen or settlers of reformed royalist

communities, became instrumental for the consolidation of royalist control in the region by 1819.

This chapter takes a thematically, rather than chronologically, approach of study. As this chapter follows a strict analysis of primary sources in order to humanize the narratives of the war from the experiences of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, such approach reveals that patterns on the ground during the 1814-1819 period are reflected in both the nature of the documents and its contents. This documentary patchwork represents the reactions of Afro-descendant peoples to both the war and the increase of violence during the period. Such recognition of the nature of the documents and its contents allow us to emphasize local and individual cases rather than general patterns in order to better understand localized Afro-descendant participation during the 1814-1819 period of the war in Veracruz and *Sotavento*.

This chapter aims to understand how liberal frameworks, the escalation of violence, and the eventual consolidation of royalist authority in the region, were influenced and developed regionally in great part by the localized actions and participation of Veracruz' Afro-descendants which had a big impact in the regional course of the war and its aftermath. It seeks to analyze how Atlantic World liberal frameworks, and competing notions of political representation of the Atlantic World, were experienced and lived-on in Veracruz and *Sotavento* by Afro-descendants with active roles in either side of the war as they became instrumental for regional development of Atlantic World ideologies, such as liberalism, during this period of increasing and decreasing violence. It explores how Veracruz' Afro-descendants

challenged notions of subjecthood and citizenship amidst a fluctuating political paradigm with the abolition of the Cádiz Charter by becoming insurgents, or by using their royalist militia station to better their sociopolitical standing.

Amidst a deteriorating liberal order in the region, Afro-descendants made use of malleable allegiances amidst an uncertain and constantly changing socio-political paradigm with the objective of bettering their own socio-political conditions. This chapter also attempts to understand how the increased role of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the insurgency led to the lessening of racial categories by insurgents who understood the role of peoples of African descent in Veracruz as instrumental to the development of their movement, as Royalists had done so in previous years. Lastly, this chapter aims to explore how Afro descendants responded and contributed to the decrease of violence and of insurgent influence in the region that led to royalist pacification in 1819.

Treason and Subjecthood in 1814: An Exceptional Case-Study

A unique case-study which demonstrates and humanizes the increase of violence that occurred in 1814 and lasted until the pacification of 1819, while also showing increased Afro-descendant participation in the insurgency as troops and leaders of the movement exemplifying decision makings that Afro-descendants made, contentions which influenced them, and the consequences of their actions contesting Spanish absolutism in favor of liberalism, is the case of Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo. Zenón Arrillaga was a thirty-seven-year-old presumed slave and *Mayordomo*, or administrator, of the *Hacienda de San Fernando*, about three leagues distance from the

town of *Paso de Ovejas*, and Valeriano Cornejo was a carpenter and member of Royalist cavalry militia of *extramuros* in the Port-City³⁵⁷. Both men were accused of relaying information and correspondence to insurgent leadership. It is through their testimonies, and those of witnesses, that this case sheds light on the workings of Veracruz' Afro-descendant participation and organization as insurgents by 1814.

By March of 1814 a criminal process against both Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo was spurred about through Arrillaga's imprisonment and the capture, by two muleteers, of Drum Major of the Grenadier column of Veracruz José María Valverde in the Vergara alley within the walls of the Port-City. Accused of carrying a rifle and insurgent mail, Vergara stated that he stole both from an insurgent leader during his escape from an insurgent convoy heading to the village of *El Manantial*. He informed authorities that he was made prisoner in December of 1813 in the Intendency of Puebla by insurgents, and during the eventual movement of Martínez' insurgent forces from San Andrés Chalchicomula to the Leeward hinterland town of *Acazónica*, in an effort to attack Puente del Rey and continue the disruption of supplies and communication between the Capital and Veracruz, he was able to witness the numeric forces of Black insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez, which according to him numbered between "three and four thousand men between infantry and cavalry, with two cannons from the King's foundries."³⁵⁸ He then stated that he witnessed a "Black man who presented himself for the royal pardon, which entered this city and took correspondence to José

³⁵⁷ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

Antonio Martínez, hearing him say the letters were from his master, for whenever they finish their conversation this man tells to Martínez ‘two memories to my master.’”³⁵⁹

Valverde was then asked for a physical description of the mysterious Black informant. He stated that the informant was “short and thin, a slave from the gentleman who was once master of José Antonio.”³⁶⁰ Assuring Martínez was a former slave, Valverde specified that he knew the informant belonged to the once-master of the insurgent leader, for whenever Martínez departed he would tell the informant “tell my master I have no further news”, and the informant would mention the same upon meeting Martínez.³⁶¹ Royalist prosecution then proceeded to disguise imprisoned Zenón Arrillaga between five other Black men dressed in a similar form, and asked Valverde to identify the mysterious Black informant of his testimony. Valverde proceeded to single out Arrillaga as he stated that he recognized him based on his “face and body”, despite wearing another set of clothing when he witnessed Arrillaga’s interactions with José Antonio Martínez.³⁶² The testimony of Valverde informed Royalist administration in Veracruz not only of the military and political power that José Antonio Martínez, a former Black slave, possessed amidst insurgent leadership by 1814, but also of the ways by which Martínez’ background, as a former slave, was able to influence, or coerce, other Afro-descendant subalterns in Veracruz to the insurgent side, while at the same time

³⁵⁹ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid.

questioned the loyalty of Don Francisco de Arrillaga, the owner of the *Hacienda San Fernando* and master of Zenón.

Upon Valverde's testimony and identification of Arrillaga as the culprit of treasonous communication with Martínez, Arrillaga was interrogated. Asked if he knew Martínez he responded that he knew him as his former comrade when they were both servants of their master's residence, and declared that "after being in the fields he has talked to him once in *El Manantial* requesting written permission to continue on the road to the *Hacienda* so he wouldn't be bothered by insurgents."³⁶³ He stated he trekked from the Port-City to the *Hacienda* under directions from his master to visit the stores and warehouses of the property and recover what he could, and that he possessed a valid passport given by the Governor of Veracruz to trek on the hinterland, while proceeding to deny any knowledge or recognizing Drum Major Valverde.³⁶⁴ Valverde, as a result of being an underage minor, was condemned to "one month of arrest as service to a regiment under proof of conduct," but more specifically "to be expatriated overseas," while Arrillaga's legal process continued.³⁶⁵

Arrillaga stated that his character could be defended by his master and two gentlemen by the names of Don Manuel Serrano and Don Juan Ruíz. Serrano, a merchant of the Port-City, and Ruíz, a store owner in Veracruz, both confirmed the good character of Arrillaga and his work as administrator and supplier of the *Hacienda San Fernando*,

³⁶³ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

justifying Arrillaga's constant treks and movement in the *Sotavento* hinterland.³⁶⁶ Don Francisco de Arrillaga, Zenon's master, stated that Valverde's declaration should carry no weight against his slave's character and good conduct, denying any involvement of Zenón with insurgents. He stated that Zenón could have been mistaken with a "Black rancher that works in the trading and voyages between Xalapa and Veracruz", while also stated that Valverde's testimony of the insurgent leader and Zenón's particular greeting of informing his master there were no further news and asking for his wellbeing was a common question being asked to his slave by muleteers and travelers alike on the road, not a specific code between the two Black men.³⁶⁷ As a result of these testimonies, Zenón Arrillaga was made free, temporarily, on March 18th 1814.

Although the parties involved in the case of Zenón Arrillaga found seeming calm by March 1814, the sudden death of famed Black insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez, as a result of betrayal by fellow regional insurgent leaders,³⁶⁸ forced Royalist authorities to reopen the legal case accusing Zenón of treason by June of 1814. It would be the testimony of *Moreno* sailor Juan Gregorio Ramos which brought new details to the complicated narrative of Arrillaga's case, while also illuminating further dynamics of Veracruz' Afro-descendants by 1814. In his testimony, thirty-year old *Moreno* sailor Juan Gregorio Ramos stated that he arrived to the Port-City from the town of La Antigua, in

³⁶⁶ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ José Ortiz Escamilla states that the demise of José Antonio Martínez occurred as a result of infighting between Martínez and Juan Nepomuceno Rosains, local insurgent leader imposed by José María Morelos, national insurgent leader in 1814, as representative of the national movement in Veracruz. Escamilla states that in March of 1814 Rosains stole forty-thousand pesos from Martínez, and shortly thereafter, by the orders of Rosains, Martínez was assassinated as he was struck by a lance from the back. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 138.

order to obtain the royal pardon after having defected from service aboard the *Cantabria* in October of 1813, for after arriving to La Antigua, he became captured by insurgents and forced to render service to their cause.³⁶⁹

Ramos provided Royalist authorities not only with confirmation that prior to his death, José Antonio Martínez was considered the “Commander of all the region”, but also of multiple defeats of skirmishes attempted by Martínez against Spanish convoys, stating that due to said defeats, “all the insurgents of the region are moved to present themselves for the pardon.”³⁷⁰ He further stated that he witnessed how two Black servants of Francisco Arrillaga left the city under pretexts of heading to their master’s *Hacienda*, but upon leaving the city they headed to Martínez’ camp in Paso del Moral, taking the insurgents “*hojas morunas*”, among other supplies.³⁷¹ Ramos further stated to Royalist prosecution that if needed, he was willing to identify the suspect after “putting the Blacks in front of him.”³⁷² Mysteriously, shortly after his testimony, and prior to his attempt at identifying the culprit in-person, Ramos disappeared never to be seen again.

By July of 1814 Zenón Arrillaga, then free of charges, came to serve as an informant for the Royalists due to the alleged proximity he enjoyed with insurgents. Accounts by Spanish military officials described Zenón as “deserving of trust” after having informed the locations and meeting places of insurgent leaders in the region.³⁷³ Nevertheless, it became clear that despite seeming to act as a double agent to acquire the

³⁶⁹ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid. The words *hojas morunas* refer here explicitly to a way of describing tea leaves used in Arab customs for the preparation of tea infusions.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

trust of Spanish authorities, Zenón in turn did not fully disclosed the exact details, which led to a disastrous attack on a Spanish mail convoy that travelled from Veracruz to Mexico, as he was deemed to have “hidden the preparations of the insurgents which caused sad effects on the division that escorted the mail.”³⁷⁴ As a result, on August 6th 1814, Francisco de Arrillaga promised authorities to “secure him and put him in the disposition” of Royalist authorities of the Port-City, being eventually incarcerated, once again, as a traitor.³⁷⁵

As the legal prosecution pursued Zenón’s culpability, multiple witnesses came to the forefront to testify against him. One of them was José Antonio Rendón. Despite that documents do not specify much information on him, other than he found himself sick at the San Carlos hospital in Veracruz, he stated that Zenón Arrillaga trekked from the vicinity of La Antigua to the Port-City to buy supplies, but afterwards “he would arrive to La Antigua giving notice of the city to José Antonio Martínez and Villapinto, both insurgent chiefs.”³⁷⁶ Rendón described Zenón as “a dark-skinned Black man, wearing expensive and clean pants, shirt, and jacket, travelling at times atop a mule, and others in a horse on the fields outside the city and towards the insurgent camp”³⁷⁷ Authorities asked Rendón if he was sure that Zenón was guilty of this, and he immediately added that he would also visit the insurgent camp in Paso del Moral, delivering mail to José Antonio as well. He gave further proof of Zenón’s involvement with the insurgents as he stated that

³⁷⁴ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

“the *San Fernando* ranch, where Zenón is an administrator, is protected by the insurgent commander of the nearest camp, who dares not touch a single bush of the property.”³⁷⁸

Rendón’s testimony revealed not only that insurgents controlled supply lines, but also agricultural production in the hinterland, which increased the scarcity of the Port-City. At the same time, it revealed the cooperation that insurgent leaders had with plantations and *haciendas* in the Sotavento hinterland, demonstrating that by 1814, the participation of Afro-descendants in the insurgent movement in Veracruz went beyond pure military service by also including them as essential members in food production that sustained the insurgent movement in the Leeward hinterland.

Rendón made mention of multiple witnesses that could sustain his accusations against Zenón’s charges of treason. One of them was Lieutenant Juan Luis Beltrán. Beltrán not only corroborated Rendón’s deposition, he also stated that a Black man by the name of Valeriano Cornejo, who was at the time incarcerated in the city’s galleys, “witnessed Zenón twice in the camp of José Antonio, with whom he had much friendship.”³⁷⁹ Royalist prosecution then proceeded to apply the same charges that Zenón Arrillaga faced to Valeriano Cornejo, arguing that he communicated with the insurgents at their camp in Paso del Moral. Another witness by the name of José Vela recognized Cornejo as a member of the Patriot Cavalry Corps of *extramuros* in the Port-City and stated that he “effectively witnessed seeing him leave on two occasions on the road leading to the insurgent camp.”³⁸⁰ Royalist prosecution then proceeded to gather

³⁷⁸ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

testimony of an incarcerated insurgent leader, María Francisca Aburto, in order to obtain more information on Arrillaga's and Cornejo's communication with José Antonio Martínez. Aburto confirmed that Zenón Arrillaga "communicated with the insurgents of Paso del Moral, taking the leaders letters from Veracruz", but failed to mention anything regarding Cornejo.³⁸¹

Royalist prosecution then proceeded to determine any link of friendship or camaraderie between Cornejo and Arrillaga. Such linkage came in the testimonies of another witness cited by Rendón, José Tomás de Castro. Castro stated that despite not knowing Zenón Arrillaga, he stated that "a Black patriot from *extramuros* named Valeriano Cornejo has travelled twice to Paso del Moral, where the first occasion he did so in the company of dark-skinned Black man of regular stature, wearing clean good clothes, atop a horse."³⁸² For Royalist prosecution, Castro's description of the Black man accompanying Cornejo fitted Rendón's description of Zenón as a gallant and well-dressed Black man. Castro proceeded to testify that both Arrillaga and Cornejo "delivered gunpowder and bullets to insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez, and the Black man Valeriano took letters from Veracruz to José Antonio which gave individual accounts and news of the City."³⁸³

Castro then stated that Cornejo was recognized among insurgents as a Sergeant, for he "saw him walk among them with friendship and trust, especially with the leader

³⁸¹ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid.

José Antonio.”³⁸⁴ Castro even linked Cornejo’s connections to the insurgents to María Francisca Aburto, as he stated that Cornejo “travelled to Mata de Cazuela in company of María Aburto, insurgent from those surroundings, and with her brother, also an insurgent.”³⁸⁵ Castro then revealed that as a reward for Cornejo’s services to the insurgency in the supplying of munitions and information, José Antonio provided him with cattle.³⁸⁶

Royalist prosecution’s biggest fear came to be a reality: Veracruz’ colonial subalterns of African descent who had sworn loyalty to the crown and Empire betrayed Royalist government and cooperated with insurgent leadership whilst serving on active duty in Royalist patriot militias. At times, as Cornejo, holding dual ranking in both militaries. Cornejo became then a symbol of malleable allegiances, an exemplary case by which Veracruz’ Afro-descendants sought their individual, or communal, socio-political betterment despite participating in both sides of the war. Amidst the pervaded liberal culture of Veracruz by 1814, even after the official derogation of the Cádiz charter by Ferdinand VII’s return to power, it became clear that Afro-descendants of the region had been politically, and ideologically, empowered and were willing, by any means or allegiance necessary, to obtain socio-political betterment to their current conditions, whether free or enslaved.

After giving his testimony, Castro was asked to identify the mysterious Black companion of Cornejo which he witnessed as they met with José Antonio Martínez.

³⁸⁴ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ IBid.

Arrillaga was then presented among five Afro-descendant militiamen, and dressed in similar fashion. Castro immediately recognized Zenón Arrillaga as Cornejo's companion in their meetings with Martínez.³⁸⁷ As a result, by September 1814, Cornejo was asked to make his declaration of events. Cornejo denied knowing Zenón Arrillaga, or making trips to the insurgent camp in Paso del Moral, "less alone accompanied by any Black man", stating that the only time he left the city was in February of 1814 to buy cattle, citing his acting commander, and fellow patriot militiamen, as witnesses of his good character.³⁸⁸

Despite that Atonio Perez, an officer in Cornejo's company, defended his good character, alongside commander Antonio García, García nevertheless stated that he indeed granted Cornejo license to leave the Port-City in search of cattle, but despite granting him license for a fifteen day absence, Cornejo returned "one month after with no cattle, stating that his delay resulted in playing games of chance to recover 1500 pesos he lost to buy the cattle."³⁸⁹ García stated that Cornejo informed him of the active recruitment of cattle ranchers and cowboys by insurgents to their movement in efforts to attack Royalist convoys leaving from Veracruz to Mexico City. García's retelling of Cornejo's movements revealed not only Cornejo's discrepancies with his testimony, but also revealed how the insurgent movement, in 1814, largely relied on the abilities and knowledge of cattle ranchers and cowboys of *Sotavento*, whom many were Afro-descendants, for the strengthening of the movement in the region.

³⁸⁷ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

Zenón Arrillaga was forced to produce another declaration, where he denied knowing the Aburto siblings, and denied taking mail intentionally to José Antonio Martínez saying the mail was not destined for him and was forced by insurgents that captured him to open said mail.³⁹⁰ Nevertheless, once again Arrillaga did not deny the friendship he had with José Antonio Martínez stating that “before the insurrection he was a servant of his house, both of us serving one same master, and for that reason I have friendship with him since then.”³⁹¹ He also emphasized that Martínez did not provide any sort of protection to his master’s *Hacienda*, as other witnesses stated, for Martínez “burned the plantains, destroyed two hundred sheep, and burned all the houses of the *Hacienda*.”³⁹² Arrillaga also proceeded to deny any knowledge or connection with Valeriano Cornejo, denied delivering armament and supplies to the insurgents, and reaffirmed his innocence stating that every charge and accusation against him rose “due to the bad intelligence that sinisterly has been associated to his actions rising from the need of having to live in a region surrounded by insurgents.”³⁹³

Arrillaga’s testimony revealed the apparent hardship on which Veracruz’ Afro-descendants found themselves if they resided in pockets of the Leeward hinterland controlled by the insurgents, despite not feeling allegiance to the insurgency. Zenón’s testimony of innocence was backed by Navy Lieutenant Francisco de León y Luna, who stated that after being made prisoner in La Antigua he witnessed how Zenón and his

³⁹⁰ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid.

family were “prisoners in the *San Fernando* ranch, where José Antonio was present.”³⁹⁴ The lieutenant further stated that Martínez forced Zenón to take mail to the Port-City, as Arrillaga resisted at first, and that upon La Antigua becoming liberated, Arrillaga immediately sought pardon explaining that he was unwillingly made part of the insurgency by Martinez and his troops.³⁹⁵ Once again, testimony of defense in favor of Zenón revealed that José Antonio Martínez at times coerced the participation of other Afro-descendant colonial subalterns in Veracruz to participate in the insurgency, and that cooperation with insurgents was often motivated by feelings of pressure rather than of ideological fervor.

Upon Zenon’s most recent testimony, as well as that of Lieutenant León, Francisco de Arrillaga, Zenón’s master, proceeded to make another deposition in favor of Zenón’s defense. Francisco clarified that Zenón was no longer a slave of his property, but a free man, who upon becoming free he became “the servant most devoted to the care and conservation of the coffee plantation and other labors of the ranch named San Fernando in my *Hacienda* of Acazónica.”³⁹⁶ He proceeded to provide a description of his *Hacienda*, which he mentioned once counted with:

Forty-six enslaved Blacks from the best barracoons of La Habana, fifteen rustic houses but well built, small and large, for living purposes and warehouses, with large store of tools, carts, labor utensils, donkeys and mules, and the considerable existence of rice, corn, and beans valued at ten thousand pesos in 1812, and both a coffee and plantain plantations.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁴ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

Arrillaga's description of his *Hacienda* provided an interesting look at small-scale slave economies which persisted in the Leeward hinterland of Veracruz. Despite not being as large or profitable as slave plantations from Córdoba and Orizaba, nor close to slave economies in the Antilles Caribbean, Brazil, and Antebellum United States, Arrillaga's *Hacienda* symbolized an important element of local economy driven by slave labor, where often former slaves assumed administrative roles of the properties. His mention that the property was located in Acazónica linked the origin of insurgent leader José Antonio Martínez to the region, and more specifically his plantation. He stated that after being forced to move his slaves to his house in the Port-City with the growing encroachment of insurgents by 1812, "nothing remained in a year period that wasn't consumed by the insurgent camp that was established there by José Antonio, or by the attack and burning by insurgents of La Antigua."³⁹⁸

Arrillaga went on to specify that José Antonio Martínez, just as Zenón, was once his servant and resulted benefited of said relationship as he was a land tenant in Arrillaga's property, but that now, in his insurgent attacks, José Antonio had caused a loss of over "one hundred thousand pesos".³⁹⁹ Arrillaga sustained Zenón's defense as he stated that Zenón had profound hate against José Antonio for keeping him and his family as prisoners. He informed the prosecution that José Antonio, and insurgents under his leadership in the region, didn't act under purely ideological frameworks, as he asserted that "not only *criollos*, but also Europeans, were treated with humanity and protected in

³⁹⁸AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

their trade through the tax they enforced.”⁴⁰⁰ Arrillaga thus provided essential information regarding the ways by which Afro-descendant insurgents not only controlled the hinterland militarily and politically, but also economically as they held control over agricultural production, and over the roads that connected Veracruz with supplies and trade. Lastly, Francisco de Arrillaga reaffirmed Zenon’s innocence vouching for him as a result of his private knowledge of his servant’s loyalty to the crown, and stated that any accusation of treason over his servant is an extension of culpability to his character.⁴⁰¹

As Zenón Arrillaga made one last attempt on his defense, Valeriano Cornejo was also asked to make one last assertion of his defense. Cornejo indicated that everything he has already declared remained the same, but nevertheless stated that after leaving the Port-City to gather cattle to supply the scarcity he was forced to “ use the service of the insurgent cowboys to gather the cattle for in the countryside there is no other people, and paid the tax to the commander of their camp.”⁴⁰² Cornejo reaffirmed his innocence on the basis of insurgents controlling cattle industry of the Leeward hinterland, while also confirming Francisco de Arrillaga’s assertion that insurgents established a tax for travelers and merchants alike for the use of the roads and industries they controlled.

He further stated that all times that he was forced to leave the city he was forced to establish contact with insurgents never looking for the “damage of the government”, but with the sole objective of obtaining supplies.⁴⁰³ Finally Cornejo asserted his loyalty to

⁴⁰⁰ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

the crown, stating that if he hasn't provided service recently was after he paid his commander "three pesos monthly" to obtain supplies and labor in his profession, and that he has served multiple occasions on skirmishes against insurgents in Boca del Río, el Molino, and La Antigua.⁴⁰⁴

Members of Royalist prosecution considered both Arrillaga and Cornejo as "inmates of gravest danger" for the stability of crown interests in Veracruz and *Sotavento*, recommending that both of the accused were to be exiled "for the remainder of the insurrection that harms this Kingdom."⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the now reinstated José de Quevedo, Veracruz' military-political governor, basing his decision on the court-martial's examination of all the testimonies, determined by November of 1814 that Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo were to be absolved and given their freedom due to considerable discrepancies between the testimonies of witnesses during the *careo*, or instance where witnesses faced the accused and were asked to validate previous testimonies.⁴⁰⁶

News of the absolution of both of the accused reached colonial government in the capital by 1815, and stated that despite the discrepancies in witness testimonies during the *careo*, which led to the accused to be set free, that "the rebels treat them with consideration, for whenever they pass through their camps they make no harm unto them and made them free to continue their activities."⁴⁰⁷ Colonial government stated that "no

⁴⁰⁴ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

matter the means by which they achieved protection from insurgents”, Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo should not be allowed to continue to have freedom of movement, for “the traitors might force them to enter and exit the city to demand notice from there that could help their cause.”⁴⁰⁸ By September 29th 1815, government in the capital then asked the court-martial judging the accused in the Port-City that both Arrillaga and Cornejo were to permanently live within the walls of the Port-City, and if caught otherwise doing so they would be “irremediably destined for prison to the Islas Marianas”, thus giving the final sentence to both Arrillaga and Cornejo that of conditional freedom.⁴⁰⁹

The remarkable case of Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo provides us with an opportunity to reassess the role, and importance, of Veracruz Afro-descendants as insurgents and intellectually defining protagonists during the 1814-1819 period, a period of insurgence escalation in the region. Arrillaga and Cornejo’s clever use of the court system, despite being implicated and incriminated, not only demonstrated their advanced understanding of the workings of the judicial system in Veracruz. At the same time, it demonstrated their knowledge of using the court and its systems to achieve social and political betterment, which by the nineteenth century had become a widespread tradition of peoples of African descent in the Spanish Americas using the courts to further their case.⁴¹⁰ In the case of both Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo, it also demonstrated

⁴⁰⁸ AGN/ Infidencias/ Vol. 129/ exp. 6/ fs.97/ 9 de marzo de 1814- 25 de septiembre 1815.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ For more information on the ways by which peoples of African descent in the Spanish Americas used the court system to attain social and political betterment see Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015).

their affinity to the liberal system, a system where they could attempt to demonstrate their innocence regardless of being considered non-citizens by Spanish authorities.

The case also demonstrated the complex and intricate coordination of the insurgency in Veracruz and *Sotavento* by Afro-descendant leader José Antonio Martínez in terms of obtaining control of agricultural and cattle production of the region, along with supply and communication routes, but also at obtaining, whether through voluntary will or coercion, the cooperation of fellow Afro-descendants. It demonstrated the ways by which socioracial ties could inform cooperation, or affront, to the insurgency in Veracruz, which to a large degree made of the insurgent movement in Veracruz and *Sotavento* a movement led, manned, organized, and facilitated in great part by Afro-descendants. It demonstrated that Veracruz' Afro-descendants served the insurgency not only in roles as line troops, but also as suppliers, spies, and leaders, often working under oath of allegiance to Royalist defense, or serving as administrators of Spanish properties. This demonstrated that Veracruz' Afro-descendants performed their roles under what they considered malleable allegiances with the objective of obtaining total socio-political betterment.

Resting on the ideological conundrum which asked if treason was treason if committed by regional colonial subalterns existing in the political limbo of 1814 without subjecthood or citizenship, the case of Zenón Arrillaga and Valeriano Cornejo posed an essential question that applied to Veracruz' Afro-descendants upon the return of Spanish absolutism following the neglect of citizenship by Cádiz' liberalism: What is treason and by extension who is a subject or citizen of the Spanish Empire under times of war? The

case revealed that Afro-descendants were politically active and organized by contesting notions of citizenship that were debated in the region and the imperial metropolis, playing both sides in malleable allegiances.

This case demonstrated that their competing social ties at times aided them, while at other times undermined the insurgency. It is in the recognition of these differences amidst Veracruz' Afro-descendant agency that not only humanizes the struggle for independence in Veracruz and *Sotavento*, but it also shows active attempts at socio-political betterment by peoples of African descent in the region. As both Arrillaga and Cornejo attempted to play the imperial system, their actions and agency opens discussion on how ideas such as liberalism, insurgency, and royalism played on the ground, as Veracruz' Afro-descendants defined them and made them tangible in the region.

Insurgent Liberalism and New Racial Categories

While the case against both Arrillaga and Cornejo developed and solidified localized reactions to the increase of violence and the lack of a state-sponsored liberal framework in the region, José María Morelos' national Congress of Chilpancingo produced in October of 1814 a document that reaffirmed the liberal tenants of *Sentimientos de la nación*, while being a direct response to the suspension of Spanish liberalism by Ferdinand VII. The Apatzingán Constitution, officially known as the “Constitutional Decree for the Freedom of the Mexican America”, established the basis for insurgent republican liberalism that was offered to Veracruz' Afro-descendants who rejected Spanish absolutism. The Apatzingán Constitution was the first legal

manifestation of republicanism in Mexico, as its provisions were aimed at swaying public opinion amidst popular discomfort at the abolition of liberalism by the returning monarch. Not only it established provisions for a federalist-style government led by a Congress, it also established that sovereignty “resides originally in the people, and its exercise will be carried in national representation through deputies chosen by citizens under the process prescribed by the constitution,”⁴¹¹ codifying in turn notions of Mexico as an independent nation.

But establishing popular sovereignty and national independence were not the only efforts of insurgent liberalism that appealed to Afro-descendants. The Apatzingan Constitution made strong efforts to contravene the restricting notions of citizenship that were still based in socioracial and ethnic divisions adopted by the Spanish Empire. It declared “citizens of this America all of those who are born in her”, thus ending with stratified and complex exclusions that the Cádiz Constitution once established which excluded peoples of African descent in New Spain from being recognized as Citizens.⁴¹² The efforts of the Apatzingán Constitution, in swaying subaltern socioracial individuals to the insurgent cause, especially those who had become disaffected by the abolition of the Cádiz charter’s liberal framework of government and representation, appealed better than the current absolutist governmental framework of Royalists.

A reflection of the Apatzingán’s charter efforts of inclusive liberalism in Veracruz was seen with the creation of the *Batallón de la República*, or Republic’s battalion, a

⁴¹¹ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 699/ exp. 77/ fs.32/ “Decreto Constitucional para la libertad de la America Mexicana (Constitución de Apatzingán)”/22 de Octubre de 1814.

⁴¹² Ibid.

military insurgent corps formed in 1816 not under socioracial divisions but based on merit and ability. Said battalion strayed away from colonial racial categories such as *Pardo* and *Moreno*. Instead of using categories such as Black, *Pardo*, or *Moreno*, racial identifiers were lessened, and peoples of African descent in said corps were identified as *Trigueños*, or individuals whose skin resembled the color of golden wheat.⁴¹³ Insurgent republican liberalism in Veracruz sought then to appeal to Afro-descendants not only by enforcing the tenants of socioracial and political equality ideologically, but also practically as it lessened racial categories and identifiers within insurgent troops. In doing so, insurgents followed a model of lessening of the racial categories used prior by colonial administration in the decades before the war.

This pattern was created during the 1770s with the implementation of the Bourbon Reforms in Veracruz, as individuals once known as *Negros* or *Mulatos*, became officially identified as *Morenos* and *Pardos* respectively.⁴¹⁴ Knowing of the crucial role that peoples of African descent played in colonial defense, Spanish administration decided to lessen racial markers in hopes of coopt and attain the cooperation of Afro-descendant subalterns of Veracruz in royalist militias. Insurgents by 1816 did the same as they recognized the essential role for the insurgency in the region that Afro-descendants posed. Their use of liberalism and the lessening of racial markers by labeling Afro-descendant insurgents as *Trigueños* worked for the replacement of a restrictive form of liberal discourse in favor of an alleged all-inclusive discourse of liberalism by insurgents.

⁴¹³ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 140.

⁴¹⁴ Ortiz Escamilla, 78.

It became apparent that the insurgency appeared to hold in its best interest the socioracial and political advancement of Veracruz' Afro-descendants. In turn this notion reflected into increased numbers of Afro-descendant participation in the insurgency, leading to their consolidation in the region by 1816. Nevertheless, at the same time such liberal rhetoric influenced the actions of Royalist militiamen who often came to challenge, even in very indirect ways, the claims of Royalist control in the Port-City and its hinterland.

Needed and Pardoned: Royalist Militiamen and Malleable Allegiances

If on one side the 1814-1819 period saw increased numbers of Afro-descendants in Veracruz joining the insurgency as a reflection of their increased socio-political agency, on the other Afro-descendant Royalist militiamen did not stagnate their socio-political development. On the contrary, their agency evolved and at times demonstrated manipulation of their benefits and station under malleable allegiances to obtain betterment. By 1815 the situation of the Port-City and the hinterland remained the same, in a state of scarcity for Veracruz, and with a prominent insurgency across its Leeward hinterland. Nevertheless, a stronger push against insurgents began with the arrival of Royalist Brigadier Fernando Miyares' 2,000 soldiers.⁴¹⁵ Miyares stated that in the hinterland of Veracruz he did not "find any single inhabitant. The town of La Antigua is known only for a few ruined houses and a church in the same state. The lack of

⁴¹⁵ Ortiz Escamilla, 150.

inhabitants makes of this a horrible desert, where a few bandits transit.”⁴¹⁶ He further stated that the insurgency’s control of the hinterland led to a halt in “productions and even less so industry”, symbolizing a total economic standstill when it came to agricultural production in the region.⁴¹⁷

As a result, Royalist administration recognized the value and importance of individuals loyal to the crown who rendered service on defense of the Port-City from insurgent incursions from the hinterland. The Spanish minister of war, in correspondence with Brigadier Fernando Miyares, asked him to “know the names of the *pardos* and *morenos* that have made distinguished services to the Port-City, or Province, of Veracruz.”⁴¹⁸ The reasoning behind the request of the Spanish minister of war was that of seeking to reward *pardo* and *moreno* militiamen regarding “the merit they have acquired, in order for them to enjoy the graces by which the King, our lord, rewards... the meritorious individuals that employ themselves in royal service.”⁴¹⁹ The crown recognized that despite an increase of Afro-descendant agency in the insurgent movement, there still remained many peoples of African descent loyal to the crown in active service of defense of imperial interests, and as such said individuals were to be rewarded for being instrumental elements in the Royalist defense of Veracruz and its hinterland.

⁴¹⁶ ASHM/ C.97/ “Diario de la parte topográfica y estadística del terreno que recorre la división al mando del brigadier D. Fernando Miyares y Mancebo que da principio en el día 21 de junio de 1815 y finaliza en el día de la fecha”/ 21-26 de junio de 1815 in Juan Ortiz Escamilla, ed., *Veracruz En Armas : La Guerra Civil, 1810-1820 : Antología de Documentos* ([Xalapa, Ver.] : Gobierno del estado de Veracruz :, 2008).

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

Such recognition of steward loyalty from *Pardo* and *Moreno* militiamen, stemming from dire need of Afro-descendant protectors of the Port-City, could incur in complete pardoning of crimes such as insubordination. Such was the case of José Escobar, *Pardo* militiamen who was accused of insubordination and physical aggression against his superior, second lieutenant Abundo Moreno. In a letter to the interim political-military governor of Veracruz José María de Echegaray, Antonio María Durán, commander of the *Pardos y Morenos* militia by 1815, informed the Governor of an incident where José Escobar committed an act of insubordination and physical aggression. Durán stated that Escobar was removed from the “dungeon where he was with a pair of shackles” as a result of his attack, after appealing to the royal pardon.⁴²⁰ He stated that Escobar’s immediate superior, Abundo Moreno, pardoned his insubordination and Escobar was made free.⁴²¹ Afterwards, Durán gathered the troop, declaring to them the “inexhaustible clemency of our august sovereign, on whom with our useful service we, his loyal vassals of these companies, will pour up to the last drop of blood that resides in our veins.”⁴²²

Durán’s report of Escobar’s freedom reveals more than mere protocol. Firstly, it demonstrated the ways by which Veracruz’ Afro-descendant militiamen showed seeming loyalty to the crown as a way to obtain certain leeway and privileges, such as obtaining pardons for themselves and their peers, in turn advancing their socio-political standing amidst a regional colonial system that heavily relied on Afro-descendant militiamen.

⁴²⁰ AGN/ Operaciones de Guerra/ exp. 81/ fs. 246-248/ 21 a 22 de diciembre de 1815.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

Secondly, it also demonstrated how Royalist administration was willing to grant immediate pardons to Afro-descendant militiamen over minor or greater offenses, this with the objective of securing their support in the defense of the region. In doing so, royalist administration recognized that loyal Afro-descendant individuals continued to be key in defense of the region, even after the derogation of Cádiz liberalism in favor of absolutism. It was in their own self-awareness of their need as enactors of political and military control for royalists, that Veracruz' Afro-descendant militias realized the prospects that their service and apparent loyalty to royalism procured in socio-political terms.

On December 22nd, 1815, national insurgent leader José María Morelos was executed by Royalist authorities after his capture. This created a weakening of the national insurgent movement, while local insurgency in Veracruz became strengthened. As a result, on the year that followed, 1816, a complex and important push for insurgents in Veracruz occurred. It was this year that insurgents established their local insurgent government in the mountain town of Huatusco near Xalapa, and consolidated control over the bays of both Nautla and Boquilla de Piedras, on the *Barlovento* or the northern windward hinterland of Veracruz, where they established impromptu ports open to foreign trade, smugglers and pirates.⁴²³ As a result, Veracruz' insurgents began to openly "propose the republican method as a form of government."⁴²⁴ Nevertheless, by the same token 1816 marked also the commencing decline of insurgency in Veracruz and its

⁴²³ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 32.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

hinterland, as the insurgent's defeat in Puente del Rey by Royalists, the establishment of military positions along the *camino real* by Royalists, and the pardoning of rebels *en masse* by February 1816, greatly weakened the briefly renovated regional movement then led by Guadalupe Victoria.⁴²⁵ Royalist administration in Veracruz reacted by reinforcing their defenses in efforts to reopen communication and transit between the Port-City and its hinterland with the capital of New Spain.

The regaining of Royalist control and authority over communication and supply routes by 1816 presented Afro-descendants who served in Royalist militias with an opportunity to manipulate the benefits of their station and in turn gain economic standing over incoming supplies to the Port-City, causing considerable complaints and concern among Veracruz' general store merchant class. A group of Veracruz' *pulperos*, owners of *pulperías* or general stores, wrote to the Governor of Veracruz stating that "having multiple pending accounts with the peoples of ranches along the coast, which continually visit the Port-City to sell their foods, we have experimented grave damages from the moment the loyal royalist corps was formed."⁴²⁶ Store owners specifically referred to militia corps formed in the *extramuros* sector of the city, outside the walls of Veracruz.

⁴²⁵ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 153–54. José Miguel Ramón Aducto Fernández, better known as Guadalupe Victoria, was an instrumental leader in the local development of the insurgent movement in Veracruz and *Sotavento* from 1814 until pacification of the region by 1819. Instrumental in the establishment of insurgent government, representative of Morelos' Congreso de Chilpancingo, and of impromptu ports and forts, Victoria helped to strengthen insurgent pockets led by local leaders. Victoria also played an instrumental role in the first decades of Mexico as an independent nation, eventually becoming the first president of Mexico as federal republic. For more information on Guadalupe Victoria, and his role in the Veracruz insurgency, see Perla Chinchilla, *Guadalupe Victoria*, Serie de cuadernos conmemorativos 15 (Col. Juárez [Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para las Celebraciones del 175 Aniversario de la Independencia Nacional y 75 Aniversario de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985); Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*.

⁴²⁶ AHV/C. 119/ Vol. 159/ fs.21-26/ 30 de Mayo de 1816

Although these regiments were racially mixed in nature, a considerable Afro-descendant population made-up most of the population residing in this sector, along with the members of the militia corps. Store owners stated that:

These individuals, using the authority they have and their despotism, intercept the ranchers on the road to this city, and intimidate them saying if they enter the Port-City there would be adverse consequences such as imprisoning them or confiscating their horses, among other things, and many of them who come are women. With the fear that is infused unto them, they stop them to attempt to buy the goods they produced, buying them at whatever price they impose with violence, and afterwards introduce said goods, on their own account, to the city where they resell them with prices higher than those used by storeowners.⁴²⁷

The collective testimony of general store owners in Veracruz revealed not only that Royalist militias of *extramuros*, whom can be assumed that many were Afro-descendants based on the populations that resided in this sector, used their authority not only to extortion food producers of the *Sotavento* hinterland who arrived to the Port-City to sell their goods, they also resold said goods at higher prices competing with general stores. Store owners writing to the Governor also stated that not only was the patriot corps committing said extortion and altering of local markets, but also the *Lanceros* corps of *extramuros* incurred in the same actions, using as pretext earlier regulation that prohibited the extraction of goods and supplies from the Port-City.⁴²⁸ Storeowners revealed to the Governor that such instances of extortion and market altering did not occur when ranchers sold “their goods to the stores of *extramuros*, including forbidden goods to be extracted from the city such as salt”, which store owners of the walled city

⁴²⁷ AHV/C. 119/ Vol. 159/ fs.21-26/ 30 de Mayo de 1816

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

could not sell.⁴²⁹ They proceeded to link extortion and market alteration of militia corps of *extramuros* to the benefit of store owners on the same sector, arguing that they employed covert tactics of introducing goods “on the shoulders of carriers and not on their beasts.”⁴³⁰

The accusations by the general store owners of Veracruz against the actions of extortion and market price alteration of goods hailing from the hinterland, by militia corps of *extramuros* in league with store owners of the same sector, revealed that Afro-descendant militiamen took advantage not only of socio-political betterment by belonging to these military units, but also an economic one by partaking in such actions. Just as Afro-descendant insurgents had done in years prior demanding a tax for safe passage to travelers and traders on the roads which connected Veracruz and Mexico City, Afro-descendant royalists took advantage of the current situation by establishing themselves as the gatekeepers of supplies and their prices in the market. This revealed that Afro-descendants partook not only on extortion and control of supplies and communication on the insurgent side, but that peoples of African descent from Veracruz, which belonged to royal militia units, also partook in such activities, demonstrating that Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, regardless of their allegiance, always strove for socioeconomic and political betterment influenced by their allegiance to a political and economic liberal model of government.

⁴²⁹ AHV/C. 119/ Vol. 159/ fs.21-26/ 30 de Mayo de 1816

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

Despite the instance of Afro-descendant royal militiamen taking advantage of the region's current economic and political situation to their betterment, following instances of pardoning individuals along the *camino real*, Royalist authorities in Veracruz took no chances and continued to allow loyal Afro-descendant militiamen to be pardoned when involved in cases of insubordination. Such was the case of *Pardo* militiamen Anastasio Marquez, who was accused of *insulto de obra*, or physical assault, over his captain.⁴³¹ In a letter to the Viceroy, the Governor of Veracruz informed him that through a decree he enacted, if Marquez was pardoned by his superior officer, a royal pardon was to be bestowed upon him, exonerating him of any charges the *Pardo* militiamen faced.⁴³² Once again, Royalist administration demonstrated not being willing to incriminate and punish colonial subaltern individuals whom they considered essential for the wellbeing and defense of the Port-City and the hinterland. This especially so as Royalist administration began to recover control of its communication and supply routes in the region. Veracruz' Afro-descendants thus were fully aware of their privileged status as defenders, protectors, and as enactors of Spanish authority in the region among Royalist administration by 1816.

⁴³¹ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ Vol. 746/ fs.253/ 29 de Junio de 1816

⁴³² Ibid.

Decreased Insurgency and the Beginning of Pacification

By 1817, the continued decline in the insurgency which would lead to the relative pacification of the region progressed. On February of 1817 both impromptu insurgent ports of Nautla and Boquilla de Piedras, in the *Barlovento* or Windward hinterland north of Veracruz, were captured by Royalist forces⁴³³, providing military and economic relief to Veracruz and *Sotavento* by weakening supply routes for insurgents, and thus the pressure exerted by them over the Port-City and its southern hinterland. Insurgent commanders, such as José Manuel Herrera, wrote to regional leader Guadalupe Victoria regarding the effects that recent happenings in the region had for the movement. He stated that “everything announces our final ruin, and everything should excite our desperation.”⁴³⁴

As the efforts of the insurgency rested then upon the expedition of Spanish insurgent Francisco Xavier Mina, which entered New Spain via Soto la Marina in the Province of Nuevo Santander in April 1817, north of the Province of Veracruz,⁴³⁵ Royalist administration in the Port-City began to feel an ease of tensions as a result of

⁴³³ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 155.

⁴³⁴ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ t. 915/ fs.272-273v/ “Jose Manuel de Herrera a Guadalupe Victoria, Pileta”/ 27 de febrero de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

⁴³⁵ Francisco Xavier Mina was a Spanish revolutionary who participated in the Spanish war of liberation from French occupation under Napoleon, and who participated in a short-lived expedition into New Spain as an insurgent against absolutist policies of reinstated Ferdinand VII. Although at first not explicitly supporting the project of republican independence sponsored by Victoria, Mina nevertheless assisted their cause and rallied support for a declining insurgent movement in New Spain. Landing in modern-day Tamaulipas, Mina ventured inland to the Bajío region, where the insurgency originally commenced, and achieved a small number of considerable victories. Nevertheless, by October of 1817 he was captured and made prisoner and was executed on November 11th 1817, marking the end of large organized insurgency resistance to efforts of pacification by Royalists in New Spain and marking the death of an organized insurgency. See Verónica Zárate Toscano, *Xavier Mina*, Serie de cuadernos conmemorativos 17 (Col. Juárez [Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para las Celebraciones del 175 Aniversario de la Independencia Nacional y 75 Aniversario de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985).

their advances against insurgents in the region and Mina's movement venturing to the Bajío region of New Spain. This ease of tension informed certain questionings by Royalist authorities towards the role of Afro-descendants in militia units that had since 1812 become instrumental for Royalist defense of the region and assertion of imperial governance. Such effects were felt upon the status of the *Lanceros* militia, who began to be seen by many, including the Governor of Veracruz, as a militia unit that would bring more harm than benefit to a Veracruz and Leeward hinterland that were already commencing the processes towards pacification.

The military-political governor of Veracruz José Dávila, reinstated as governor of Veracruz due to Quevedo's retirement, wrote to Viceroy Juan Ruíz de Apodaca stating his discomfort at the petition of the Viceroy of reinstating the *Lanceros*, or mounted lancers militia in Veracruz, who by 1817 were disbanded as a result of commencing pacification of the region. He stated that among the reasons for his opposing to the reinstating of *Lanceros*, were the excesses made by colonial military authorities unto them, those he identified as "exact and terribly detailed truths that manifest the evident disorders and destructions under the current commander of the company" were "the main cause of the rebellion in this precious part of the hemisphere."⁴³⁶

Dávila specifically equated abuse of power by Spanish military superiors over colonial subalterns in this division as one of the main cause by which these individuals decided to join insurgent forces in years prior. Dávila informed the Viceroy of a

⁴³⁶ ASHM/ c.91/ José Dávila al virrey Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, Veracruz/ 6 de junio de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

“continued bad notion still associated with this corps”, as among the abuses were the forcing of militiamen not in service to pay “15 pesos monthly” as a fine.⁴³⁷ Dávila asserted that said abuses are not merely baseless complaints by colonial subalterns, but that they could be corroborated by the City Council, and the previous governor Quevedo, who together with Dávila and the affected populations believed that “the rebellion was the fruit of the vexations of the lance”.⁴³⁸

Dávila made an important argument when relating discontent among colonial subalterns in the *Lanceros* militia to the development of fervor for the insurgency in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. He argued that frustrations caused onto these individuals, and by extension their families, caused mass discontent which materialized into outright rebellion against colonial governance. Dávila thus assigned considerable power to the socio-political agency of Afro-descendant militiamen who resulted affected by arbitrary Spanish military policies, considering them not merely as essential members of colonial defense in the region, but ultimately a population that unless content with colonial policies towards them, represented a high risk factor for the assertion and securing of Spanish control in the region.

⁴³⁷ ASHM/ c.91/ José Dávila al virrey Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, Veracruz/ 6 de junio de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

Governor Dávila, knowing of the prescient danger, ultimately suggested to the Viceroy that the *Lanceros* needed a:

Particular bylaw that wards off these inhabitants from the most remote suspicion of being harassed and oppressed in the terms they once were, and which forced them to desert with ignominy from their banners in front of the enemy during the many occasions that the King needed their fidelity and efforts, and which forced many to request the pardon, which they obtained from Quevedo, under the condition of not serving in the *Lanceros*, for they are part of the loyal *extramuros* corps.⁴³⁹

As stated by Dávila, the fact that many Afro-descendant *Lanceros* who had become insurgents requested the pardon and were granted political and military forgiveness on the condition of serving on the *Extramuros* militia, revealed not only a dying insurgent movement in the region, but also two important factors of the royalist strategy for pacification. Firstly, it demonstrated the recognition of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as essential elements in the assertion of royalist control by 1817. Secondly, it showed that their pardoning was an instrumental method by which to pacify formerly insurgent Afro-descendant populations, while at the same time making them instrumental players in the pacification efforts of Veracruz and *Sotavento*. Dávila then requested the Viceroy to destitute the current commander in order to reform the company, as he argued that “the reunion of the corps for its discipline and organization is not possible if not having a calm peace, resulting in the destitution of its actual commander.”⁴⁴⁰

Dávila assured that the destitution of the commander was needed as the “extinction of repugnance towards the company by the naturals of the province” was not

⁴³⁹ ASHM/ c.91/ José Dávila al virrey Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, Veracruz/ 6 de junio de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

yet achieved, for if enlistment without reform was carried out “we would create rebels as soon as they became enlisted.”⁴⁴¹ Dávila not only requested the Viceroy for a set of rules and reforms to limit abuses by Spanish military officers onto colonial Afro-descendant subalterns who served in the company, but by the same notion he inferred that the abuses, together with the return of absolutism over a favored liberal framework of government by Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, led to massive desertion of these individuals from the company in favor of the insurgency. Pacification efforts could not, by any means, continue to permit such abuses.

Dávila thus situates the socio-political agency of Afro-descendant *Lancers* not only as needed and beneficial for defense, but as necessary to be coopted by Royalist authorities in order to prevent further spread of the insurgency and to ensure that pacification efforts, via the granting of pardons to once insurgent individuals, could solidify. Afro-descendant militiamen had then a direct and instrumental impact in the wellbeing of the Spanish colonial apparatus in Veracruz, especially during commencing pacification efforts by 1817, as they were a volatile group that could seek its socio-political and economic betterment under malleable allegiances.

By July 1817, Viceroy Apodaca informed the Spanish Minister of War the last fortified position of the insurgents in the town of Palmillas was secured by Royalists, ensuring that pacification efforts in the whole of the Province of Veracruz continued, and that the road between Veracruz and Mexico City, which the rebels intercepted from

⁴⁴¹ ASHM/ c.91/ José Dávila al virrey Juan Ruiz de Apodaca, Veracruz/ 6 de junio de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

Palmillas, was cleared, leaving Guadalupe Victoria and his insurgents “ruined with this last strike.”⁴⁴² By October of 1817 Francisco Xavier Mina, last hope of well-organized insurgency in New Spain, was captured during his campaign in western New Spain, in *El Bajío* region, and shortly thereafter executed on November 11th, thus ending significant instances of insurgency in New Spain, and specially for Veracruz and *Sotavento* as pacification via royal pardons was well underway. Afro-descendant insurgency was in the prospect of ending, in great part to the mass pardons being granted by the crown. Nevertheless, Veracruz’ Afro-descendants continued to search for socio-political improvement regardless of defecting to the Royalist side, where their role came to prove greater, as their participation in pacification efforts of Veracruz and its hinterland brought by 1819 peace to the region.

1818-1819: Insurgency’s last stand and Pacification

As 1818 dawned upon the region, the social effects of years of war and besiegement proved dire for the populations of the Port-City. Socially, the sector that became the most affected by the war was the Afro-descendant population. In a census ordered by the City Council of Veracruz, it demonstrated that the total population of the city, and its *Extramuros* neighborhood outside the walls of the city, amounted to 8615 individuals.⁴⁴³ Of that total number the census divided the population by socioracial

⁴⁴² ASHM/C. 5374/ Juan Ruiz de Apodaca al ministro de la Guerra, México/ 9 de julio de 1817 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

⁴⁴³ AHV/C. 124/Vol. 165/ fs.364-366/Estado de las clases y sus edades que comprenden la población de Veracruz según el resultado del padrón jecho por el Cura Don José Teodoro Martínez/ 28 de Mayo de 1818

colonial categories. Spaniards, whether *peninsulares* or *criollos*, amounted to 3,685 individuals or 43% of the population, indigenous peoples and *mestizos* amounted to 2,313 individuals or 27% of the population, while Afro-descendants identified as *Pardos* and *Morenos*, amounted to 2,617 individuals, or 30% of the total population of the Port-City.⁴⁴⁴ While the city contained a population of 15,000 individuals by 1810 prior to the escalation of violence due to the war,⁴⁴⁵ by 1818 it had lost 6,385 individuals many due to migration to Cuba and Europe of the Spanish ruling classes, while colonial subalterns, such as Veracruz Afro-descendants, abandoned the city for reasons such as to join the insurgency, due to dire consequences of besiegement, or due to forced military drafts in militias which assigned them somewhere else.⁴⁴⁶

The increase in numbers of populations of Spanish descent by 1818, concurrent with a decrease of Afro-descendant population in the city confirmed two important social factors of the populations of the city by 1818. First, the continued arrival of Spanish troops to the Port-City since 1812 to reinforce royalist control in Veracruz amidst an increasing insurgency, made the numbers of individuals of Spanish descent to increase in the city. Secondly, the numbers reflect that, despite some Veracruz' Afro-descendants continued their service as royalist militias in order to find socio-political betterment between 1810 and 1818, for the most part the majority of Afro-descendants in the city were compelled by either the hardships of besiegement and violence onto the city, along

⁴⁴⁴ AHV/C. 124/Vol. 165/ fs.364-366/Estado de las clases y sus edades que comprenden la población de Veracruz según el resultado del padrón jecho por el Cura Don José Teodoro Martínez/ 28 de Mayo de 1818

⁴⁴⁵ AGN/Operaciones de Guerra/ t.31/fs.242-246/ Representación del Ayuntamiento de Veracruz/ 11 de junio de 1818 in Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 154.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

with the promises of liberal republicanism sponsored by insurgents since 1814 that rose concurrent with an increase of violence in the region, to abandon the Port-City.⁴⁴⁷ The relocation of individuals of African descent who were former insurgents came to establish new patterns of Afro-descendant population in the hinterland of Veracruz, but they also became instrumental members of pacification efforts of royalists.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants continued their fight for socio-political improvement within royalist frameworks of government during pacification efforts of the region by 1818. Afro-descendants participated in these frameworks by forming part of militia units of pardoned insurgents. Former insurgent Afro-descendants of the Port-City, as well as Afro-descendants from the town of Boca del Río, formed part of a reformed *Extramuros* and Boca del Río militia unit which was led by Antonio López de Santa Anna, military figure that became instrumental in the history of independent Mexico.⁴⁴⁸ Led by Santa Anna, pardoned Afro-descendants in this particular militia unit became instrumental for the assurance of royalist control in the Port-City and immediate towns and villages. The unit was successful in routing last-standing pockets of insurgents entrenched in the town

⁴⁴⁷ The 1799 census identified Afro-descendants *Extramuros* neighborhood, and in the *rancherías* and *haciendas* immediate of the Port-City as 73% of the total population of the region. The stark decrease of Afro-descendants to only a mere 30% demonstrated stark negative effects on this population due to war, displacement, besiegement, and joining the insurgent cause en masse. For more information on Veracruz Afro-descendant population levels in the region prior to the war please refer to Chapter One.

⁴⁴⁸ Antonio López de Santa Anna was an instrumental player in the development of late-colonial and early nineteenth-century independent Mexico. Born in the highland town of Xalapa, but raised in the Port-City of Veracruz, Santa Anna came to develop a special relationship with his home province during his tenure as royalist military commander, and as a *caudillo* during Mexico up to the 1860, where he became known as the “liberator of Veracruz.” A contentious and often repudiated figure in the history of Mexico, Santa Anna navigated the political spectrum from conservative to liberal, and vice versa, many times, influencing defining events of nineteenth-century Mexico such as the War for Independence, the transition of Mexico from Iturbide’s Empire to Federal Republic, the transition of Mexico into a centralist republic, the Texas separation, and the U.S.- Mexico War, among others. For more information on Santa Anna see Will Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

of Boca del Río, while driving away insurgents entrenched from the *Haciendas* of *El Jato* and *Joluca*.⁴⁴⁹ Their participation under Santa Anna's leadership also became instrumental in the capture and execution of Francisco de Asís, known as a ruthless insurgent guerrilla fighter, thus bringing about the end of insurgent pockets in the proximity of the Port-City.⁴⁵⁰

In their willingness to participate as royalist militias under Santa Anna's leadership, Veracruz' Afro-descendants saw not only in their pardons, but also in their participation as elements of regional pacification, an opportunity. This opportunity to obtain renown, considerations, and socio-political betterment under the frameworks of pacification efforts led Afro-descendants to participate in equal terms as enforcers of a coming royalist peace. Afro-descendants saw their cooperation with royalist authorities as essential for the accomplishing of a status as essential elements of royalist administration, especially as the insurgency came soon to an end and as political conditions seemed to return to the ones experienced prior to 1810. Thus, Afro-descendants demonstrated intricate knowledge of late-colonial politics through their experience as they sought, under malleable allegiances, their socio-political betterment. Their participation in militia units during pacification efforts, specially under Santa Anna's leadership, came to cement a special role in the politics of early independent Veracruz that was to be seen in the coming years.

⁴⁴⁹ Fowler, 32–33.

⁴⁵⁰ Fowler, 34.

As Veracruz and its *Sotavento* hinterland came to be recognized by Viceroy Apodaca in 1819 as a region in great need of total and final pacification due to its status as the economic and political “key to the kingdom”, having an important military presence, safeguarding the most important customs house in all of New Spain, and controlling the tobacco monopoly,⁴⁵¹ a temporary change of regional leadership was suggested over the failing health of Governor José Dávila. As a response, Field Marshal Pascual de Liñán took charge as the new interim Intendent of the Province of Veracruz and political-military governor of the Port-City.⁴⁵² Liñán implemented a policy of pacification that relied in great part to the willingness and cooperation of pardoned colonial subalterns, many of them Afro-descendants. Not only was pacification a matter of including pardoned Afro-descendants in militia units, pacification meant for them to become settlers of reestablished and new towns loyal to royalist administration. In doing so royalist administration counted with populations that demonstrated not only allegiance, but at the same time individuals knowledgeable of the environment and the region which could prevent further attempted incursions by the last pockets of insurgents to the region.

Under the guidance of Santa Anna, pardoned Afro-descendants and their families joined a collective of 300 colonial subalterns in reestablishing the towns of Medellín, Jamapa, San Diego, Tamarindo, along with creating a new town by the name of Lomas

⁴⁵¹ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 155.

⁴⁵² ASHM/ C. 91/ Pascual de Liñán al secretario de Estado t del despacho de la Guerra, Francisco de Eguía/ Veracruz, 4 de febrero de 1819 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

de Santa María.⁴⁵³ As the inhabitants of these royalist communities established a thriving agricultural industry that supplied the Port-City, men were requested to serve in militia units and participate in the fabrication of local forts, restricting movement within the communities in order to avoid interactions between villagers and possible insurgents.⁴⁵⁴ Afro-descendants then became instrumental in the establishment and running of communities that served as models of a pacified Veracruz and its hinterland, while also serving as military buffers where the violence of the interior could not reach the Port-City. By June of 1819, Medellín, Jamapa, San Diego, and Tamarindo had collectively formed a population of 937 individuals, successfully creating a socio-political, military, and economic buffers that prevented further attempted incursions by insurgents.⁴⁵⁵

It was the participation of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the projects of royalist pacification, whether as militias or settlers of reformed royalist communities, that enabled the total pacification of the region by 1819. The Viceroy, writing to the Peninsula, reported by August of 1819 that "the Province of Veracruz and its side shores... continue under the entire calm and good order that I have informed to your excellency, nor have the many individuals that have been pardoned in the current year showed motives to doubt their conduct, nor any unfortunate news along the military road from Xalapa to Veracruz."⁴⁵⁶ He described the overall peace of the Port-City and its hinterland as a "happy state that causes admiration upon those who see it, comparing it to the one it had"

⁴⁵³ Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 35.

⁴⁵⁴ Fowler, 37.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ ASHM/ C.93/ El conde del Venadito al secretario de Estado y el despacho universal de la Guerra/ Mexico, 31 de Agosto de 1819 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

before the war.⁴⁵⁷ By October of 1819 the Viceroy informed of a continued peace, where pardoned populations of reestablished communities in the hinterland remained “in quietness, dedicated to the cultivation of the fields that through the present year have yielded more crops, and to the industries that they worked on prior to the rebellion.”⁴⁵⁸ Veracruz and its hinterland had at last been pacified.

Without the cooperation of Afro-descendants in militia corps, and in the establishment and running of pacified communities in the proximity of the Port-City, royalist peace could not have reached Veracruz and its hinterland. Their willing participation as either pardoned insurgents or seemingly loyal royalists established Veracruz’ Afro-descendants by 1819 as enablers and guardians of royalist peace against the disappearing insurgency in Veracruz. As in previous years, Afro-descendants demonstrated complex understanding of the political and social developments that by 1819 shaped the war in favor of royalists in Veracruz. It is through their understanding of said conditions, as well as the ways by which they reacted to them, that Afro-descendants demonstrated an utmost desire of socio-political improvement, even if by accepting once again royalist frameworks of government. Nevertheless, as their participation demonstrated, the roles of Afro-descendants in bringing peace to Veracruz and its immediate hinterland shaped them to rethink, in full liberal fashion, the relationship between them and the state, as the return of Cádiz liberalism in 1820 soon came to demonstrate.

⁴⁵⁷ ASHM/ C.93/ El conde del Venadito al secretario de Estado y el despacho universal de la Guerra/ Mexico, 31 de Agosto de 1819 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

The 1814-1819 period of the Mexican War of Independence in Veracruz marked a quintessential period of proactive socio-political formation and agency for Veracruz' Afro-descendants. Whether free or enslaved, Royalists or Insurgents, or at times both, Veracruz' Afro-descendants were instrumental players not only in the development of the war in the region as line troops, but also as spies, leaders, and as both enactors and disrupters of security and of economic, political, and social networks during this period of insurgency in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. It became clear for both Spanish administration and Insurgent leadership of the region that Afro-descendants were instrumental players, and that their participation resulted quintessential for the conduction of each side's designs during the war.

At the same time, this period demonstrated that Veracruz' Afro-descendants looked both inward and outward to developments on the Atlantic World and the political developments of the insurgency in the interior of New Spain. They were intellectually and politically receptive of the derogation of Cádiz liberalism in 1814, the promises of republican liberalism in subsequent years by insurgents, and of the promises of stability, peace, and inclusion in pacification efforts of royalists by 1819. Despite that the liberal framework of Cádiz was, for the most part, restrictive in its considerations of peoples of African descent as citizens of the Spanish Empire, nevertheless Veracruz' Afro-descendants became profoundly affected and inspired by it. They demonstrated preference to a system of political and economic liberalism which could provide them with an opportunity to thrive. This preference was seen specially so in their progressing

conceptions of them not only as Afro-descendant subalterns but as individuals essential to the economies and politics of the region. It is of no surprise then that upon the return of Ferdinand VII to the throne of Spain, and the derogation of the Cádiz constitution, this resulted in their open defiance of colonial governance and enrichment of the insurgency in Veracruz, leading some Afro-descendants to join the insurgency in droves.

It was only by 1817, with the decrease of well-organized national insurgency, that the participation of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as insurgents in the war decreased, concurrent with the consolidation of Royalist control on 1818, and the pardoning of insurgent individuals during pacification. By 1819 Veracruz was a peaceful region and the prospect of total eradication of insurgency was seen by Royalists as imminent. Nevertheless, the restoration of the Cádiz Constitution by the King by 1820, after mass revolt in favor of liberalism in Spain, created not only the conditions which cemented the final independence of Mexico from Spain by 1821, but also fervent demonstration of allegiance to liberalism and autonomy by Veracruz' Afro-descendants. Their instrumental role as makers of Veracruz and *Sotavento* as part of an independent Mexico soon came to be demonstrated.

Chapter Five

Being African and Mexican: Veracruz' Afro-descendants During Mexican Nation-State Consolidation, 1820-1826.

By October 1822, Veracruz' Afro-descendants were now part of an independent Mexico. Independence, via a constitutional monarchy called Mexican Empire and under the leadership of Agustín de Iturbide, former royalist turned insurgent catalyst for independence, made Afro-descendants central players in the securing of the Port-City and its hinterland for the insurgent side, even as the Spanish remained entrenched in the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa in the bay of Veracruz. Afro-descendants essential to independence in the region nevertheless experienced the contradictions between discourse and practice of a supposed benign and positive raceless nationalism. This was exemplified by the experience of the four former *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen Francisco Ruiz, Ignacio Soberón, Francisco Castro, and José Antonio Alfaro.

The former royalist militiamen complained about unjust imprisonment which resulted from their refusal to serve in a racially segregated militia unit under independent Mexico's deracialized social and political frameworks, and as they had been honorably discharged for their services during the colonial era. In doing so, they attempted to retain colonial-era benefits they had obtained, while reassuring Mexican authorities that they would abandon their retirement and serve national defense if needed, only as long as the old racial categories were not upheld.⁴⁵⁹ Ultimately, their liberation was granted by

⁴⁵⁹ AHV/C.139/Vol.184/188-194/Cuatro soldados de Pardos solicitan que se les respeten sus licencias/Octubre-Noviembre 1822

imperial authorities, under the expressed condition that their discharge was to be invalidated as they were needed in defense of Veracruz from the Spanish reduction at Ulúa. Along with their tenuous freedom from jail, the four former Afro-descendant militiamen also found their old benefits and their identity and political role as militias of African descent at odds.

The case of Francisco Ruiz, Ignacio Soberón, Francisco Castro, and José Antonio Alfaro is not unique, but rather encompassing of the ways by which the sociopolitical agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, along with their racial identity as peoples of African descent, radically changed with the sudden and complex transformation of Veracruz and Mexico from a colony of Spain to an independent nation. Spanning a Veracruz that first remained loyal to Spain as Cádiz' liberalism returned, which then switched sides due to mounting military and political pressure from Iturbide's push for independence, only to eventually become a bastion of republicanism, Veracruz' Afro-descendants became grounding regional enactors of Mexican independence and the liberal state from 1820 to 1826. As they helped to consolidate the nation it was ironically the Mexican state which by deracializing society and politics in turn hindered their recognition as instrumental sociopolitical actors of the region and the state. This propelled them to be forgotten and excluded from national narratives of nation-state consolidation as they defined themselves amidst shifting paradigms. This chapter aims to recover their narrative and to bring justice to their story.

This chapter centers Veracruz' Afro-descendants in Mexico's transition as an independent nation. Mexico had signed the Act of Independence in 1821, but

nevertheless the reality of a relatively large Spanish reduction in the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, just off the coast of Veracruz, unwilling to surrender and constantly threatening, attacking, and disrupting maritime trade and communication, became a constant problem for economic and political claims of total sovereignty and independence, first for Iturbide's empire and then for Mexico's first federal republic up to 1825.

It was Veracruz' Afro-descendants who secured national sovereignty against the Spanish reduction of San Juan de Ulua. Veracruz' Afro-descendants, through their experiences dealing with institutions of early independent Mexico, also became contesters of raceless equality frameworks, first sponsored by insurgents during the war, pushed by Iturbide's independence consolidation, and later codified as Mexico became a republic. Finally, Veracruz' Afro-descendants had a unique role as liberal actors in support of both independence and federalism through the *Pronunciamiento*⁴⁶⁰ as a method of popular political and social change for subalterns, that allowed them to be important participants of early independent Mexico's developments up to 1825. It was through their support of said *pronunciamientos* as a form of provincialism, that authorities used and

⁴⁶⁰ Will Fowler in his book *Independent Mexico* states that the *pronunciamientos* in early Independent Mexico "were not coups d' état" as they "were meant to be bloodless, and they were meant to negotiate political change forcefully, by use of threats and intimidation but without necessarily overthrowing the entire government or the head of state." Rather, Fowler identifies the *pronunciamientos* as "gestures of rebellion" where "a garrison declared its insubordination of the government and threatened to use violence if the authorities did not attend to its grievances" leading at times town councils and state legislatures to follow and make declarations against regional and national governments to favor and pursue an specific agenda. According to Fowler, *pronunciamientos* allowed socio-political subalterns to participate directly in socio-political events of defiance, ultimately affecting local, regional and national politics. For more on the *pronunciamiento* see Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821-1858*, Mexican Experience (Lincoln, Nebraska ; London, [England]: University of Nebraska Press, 2016).

cooped their sociopolitical agency in attempts of retaining provincial political influence amidst a federated Mexican nation⁴⁶¹.

This chapter is composed of two thematic currents. The first one explores how Afro-descendants shaped Veracruz' sociopolitical world. The second explores their historical erasure from that world. As Afro-descendant agency spanned, and made possible, the regional transition of Mexico from colony to nation, the eradication of racial categories with independence, along with a persistence of regional informal racial stigmas, came to discredit their immense political empowerment. Hence, Mexican populations of African descent became ultimately neglected in traditional historiographical and national narratives as sideline subjects for over two centuries. Veracruz' Afro-descendants were instrumental in the securing of independence at a regional level, influencing in turn national events, as they supported liberalism, and eventually federalism, as a form of government in early-1820s Mexico. In doing so, Veracruz' Afro-descendants helped to consolidate true political sovereignty and federalism in the face of remnant Spanish colonial aggression.

⁴⁶¹ Provincialism becomes an important framework by which to understand the socio-political effects of the transition of Mexico into a federated republic by 1824 and the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants participated vehemently in the events calling for Mexico to become a federal republic. Timothy Anna in his work *Forging Mexico* argues that provincial identity in late-colonial Mexico became reinforced by the 1812 Cádiz Constitution's creation of provincial deputations which gave individual provinces considerable political power over the courts in the Peninsula. By the time of independence, he argues, the transition from Iturbide's short-lived empire into a federal republic for Mexico became the "real revolution" as "the achievement of the status of statehood with internal sovereignty for each state within a federal republic was both the termination of the process of independence and the beginning of the process of nationhood." For more information on Anna's conceptualizing of provincialism see Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico: 1821-1835* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

Afro-descendant's as 1820 Cádiz' liberalism enactors

The start of 1820 seemed promising for both Veracruz' colonial administration and its populations. The insurgency was faltering. Royalists had struggled to reclaim, and “pacify”, the region for several years. Yet, Afro-descendants were a critical part of the colonial apparatus that had kept Veracruz in Spanish hands. But the war was ending. On January 1st 1820, back in the Peninsula, Spanish general Rafael de Riego led a *Pronunciamiento* calling for the end of Ferdinand VII's absolutist reign and the return of the Cádiz' charter as the supreme authority of the Spanish Empire.⁴⁶² Peace in Veracruz seemed finally attained.

Afro-descendants, who had served and fought in royalist militia units, sought to secure a role for themselves in peace, just as they had in war. Ten “men of the *Pardos y Morenos* Companies of this city,” begun a petitioned file directed at the city's military and political governor, stating they were individuals “that have always made many and very distinguished services, especially during all the time that the ominous insurrection of this province lasted.”⁴⁶³ Afro-descendants wanted more than recognition for their previous services; they wanted a way forward. The Afro-descendant militiamen argued that due to their important role as enforcers of royalist pacification efforts, said participation granted these individuals “high merits and important fundaments” to allow these “meritorious neighbors to enjoy the rest they desire”.⁴⁶⁴ Specifically, these *Pardo y*

⁴⁶² Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 56.

⁴⁶³ AHV/C.131/Vol.175/fs.350-352/ 16 de enero de 1820. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Moreno militiamen requested not only to be discharged, but also to be able to enjoy from tax exemption and military *fuero*, or the right to be judged by military peers rather than a civil court. Their military participation had given them a place and way in the war, they now wanted same rights in a liberal peace.

José Dávila, the military-political governor of the city, ultimately denied the ten *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen their request. He recognized and even lauded the central role they had played in wartime; but he feared that if Afro-descendants left their military posts, the city, and region, would find itself in grave danger as he stated that “even making their fatigued service the *Pardos, Morenos*, and *Lanceros*, the bastions of this city cannot be covered but with one soldier and a corporal.”⁴⁶⁵ Dávila considered the service of royalist Afro-descendant militiamen critical to the colonial Spanish efforts to safeguard Veracruz and its hinterland. Despite the seeming end of the war, Dávila remained unsettled about not only scarce but entrenched pockets of insurgents, but also he recognized that with in the coming liberal order, Afro-descendants had a prominent role in the world that was to emerge.

News of the reinstating of the Cádiz charter in Spain reached Veracruz by May. Popular action by all members of society exerted pressure on local authorities to ratify and swear-in the constitution. The cities of Mérida and Campeche ratified the constitution, but Veracruz’ leadership remained reticent. Opposition grew in the city, and before long a large gathering in the city’s square threatened physical violence against the

⁴⁶⁵ AHV/C.131/Vol.175/fs.350-352/ 16 de enero de 1820. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

local city council members.⁴⁶⁶ Forced by the popular discontent, Governor Dávila attempted to delay the process, promising that the swearing of the constitution would take place by June 4th.⁴⁶⁷ The crowd refused, and “demanded that it had to be done right away...and proceeded to take over the City Council building and the cathedral, hanging banners, and sounding the church bells” in support of the liberal constitution.⁴⁶⁸ The Port-City had a population of 8,615; roughly 30% were Afro-descendant individuals.⁴⁶⁹ These 2,600 individuals were some of the most vehement, demonstrators demanding the Constitution’s immediate implementation.

Governor Dávila and local city council members conceded. They read the constitution to all the inhabitants. A day after, Governor Dávila took a public oath to uphold the constitution; the military commanders of the city’s militias and regiments followed soon thereafter.⁴⁷⁰ Within days of the demonstration, large crowds were swearing their allegiance to the constitution. The *Pardos y Morenos* militia also swore loyalty to the Cádiz Constitution. Afro-descendant militiamen saw themselves as active political actors. They would not be sidelined, as had happened during the previous constitutional debates in 1812. Afro-descendants had fought in the war, now they wanted to be considered as liberal citizens of the constitutional monarchy with essential roles. Ignacio Loza, Second Lieutenant of the *Pardos y Morenos* militia unit, certified that:

⁴⁶⁶ AHV/C. 117/Vol. 157/ fs.119-146/ 3 de junio de 1820

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ AHV/C. 124/Vol. 165/ fs.364-366/Estado de las clases y sus edades que comprenden la población de Veracruz según el resultado del padrón jecho por el Cura Don José Teodoro Martínez/ 28 de Mayo de 1818

⁴⁷⁰ AHV/C. 117/Vol. 157/ fs.119-146/ 3 de junio de 1820

On Sunday twenty-eight of May at ten in the morning, the two companies were formed in front of their barracks and exhorted by Reverend Presbyter Fray Pedro Alegre of the *Nuestra Señora de la Merced* Convent, the Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy was read to them by their commander. Afterwards, asked loudly if they swore by God and the Holy Gospels to the safeguarding of the Constitution, sanctioned by the general and extraordinary Courts of the nation, and if they swore being loyal to the King, they responded loudly in unison 'yes we swear'.⁴⁷¹

Veracruz' Afro-descendant militiamen saw their participation in this constitutional process as an extension of their years of military service. Afro-descendant militiamen wanted a seat at the table and a voice in the debates over constitutional liberalism that by 1820 were taking place in Veracruz and across the *Sotavento* hinterland. As such, other towns followed suit. By May 30th other towns with significant Afro-descendant populations in the *Sotavento* hinterland, such as Alvarado and Tlacotalpan, had also sworn in the Cádiz charter.⁴⁷² By June 12th, Veracruz inaugurated its newly constituted Constitutional *Ayuntamiento*.⁴⁷³

The embrace of the 1812 constitution was neither smooth, nor complete. In Veracruz, Afro-descendants who fought to support the crown saw a reversal of attitudes onto them by royalist authorities. Local royalists, suspicious on the possibilities of social and political improvement by Afro-descendants in the new liberal order, turned their back on the very people who had fought for their protection. As such, royalist Afro-

⁴⁷¹ AHV/C. 117/Vol. 157/ fs.119-146/ 3 de junio de 1820

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ AGI/México/1679/ fs.358-359/ Instalación del Ayuntamiento constitucional de Veracruz in Juan Ortiz Escamilla, ed., *Veracruz En Armas : La Guerra Civil, 1810-1820 : Antología de Documentos* ([Xalapa, Ver.] : Gobierno del estado de Veracruz :, 2008).

descendants began looking at the insurgency for answers. Scant insurgents, not completely defeated, became led by Guadalupe Victoria in one last unsuccessful regional attempt at calling total independence from Spain. Rising voices of dissent mixed with ongoing struggles as by December of 1820 regional shows of defiance to the new constitutional order occurred, and although unsuccessful, they paved the way for Agustín de Iturbide and his call for independence.⁴⁷⁴

The political processes of 1820, encompassing the adoption of swearing-in of the Cádiz constitution regionally, enabled Veracruz' Afro-descendants to become front-and-center political actors. Initially inspired by Cádiz liberalism of 1812, which locally had excluded them from citizenship and political activity, and strengthening their conviction to liberalism as it became outlawed by Ferdinand VII's absolutism in 1814 which propelled some to join the insurgency in search of independence, Afro-descendants became outspoken in their loyalty, not so much to the crown, but to liberalism as a system of governance and political representation they saw in improving their socio-

⁴⁷⁴ As the adoption of the reinstated Cádiz charter occurred by the inhabitants and authorities of the Port-City and towns of the immediacies, such Alvarado and Tlacotalpan, the last remnants of insurgents, led by a Guadalupe Victoria who had been hiding in the mountains between the provinces of Puebla and Veracruz, began to incite pronunciamientos against the liberal government of Cádiz and in favor of total independence under the cry of "long live independence and let the servile that oppose it perish." As a result, by December of 1820 ample discontent in localities yet to adopt the constitution began to brew. Towns such as La Antigua, Boquilla de Piedras, Puente del Rey, and Paso de Ovejas, on the *Sotavento* hinterland, began to participate in Victoria's call for total independence. The judge of Paso de Ovejas, Francisco Rebolledo, was unable to organize a defense force as most inhabitants had defected to the independence side, but nevertheless pacification occurred as Hacienda and slave owner Francisco de Arrillaga proposed the inhabitants of Paso de Ovejas to unite with those of Puente del Rey in the creation of a constitutional city council through the adoption of the constitution. This action procured peace for this part of the hinterland while diminishing Victoria's final movement for absolute independence from Spain in 1820. For more information see Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*, *Collecció Amèrica* 14 (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008), 159–60. For information regarding Francisco de Arrillaga's role as *Hacienda* and slave owner during the war of independence please refer to Chapter Four.

political condition. By 1821, their role as liberal political actors was not to be denied, and it was said factor that enabled them to become instrumental regional participants in the processes of Agustín de Iturbide's⁴⁷⁵ *pronunciamiento* in favor for independence as it arrived in Veracruz and its hinterland.

1821, Afro-descendants in the Year of Independence.

If by 1820 the political panorama of Veracruz, its hinterland, and New Spain seemed peacefully under control as Cádiz' liberalism was reinstated, by 1821 a socio-political transformation shocked the core of Spanish governance that radically altered the course of New Spain forever. On February 24th 1821, *criollo* royalist commander Agustín de Iturbide launched the *Plan de Iguala*, identified by scholars as the first *Pronunciamiento* to be carried out in Mexico.⁴⁷⁶ Having served years as a royalist commander in the eradication of the insurgence, and showing reticence and preoccupations at the possibilities of newly reinstated Cádiz' liberalism developing into a republic for New Spain, Iturbide sided with last remnants of insurgence leadership, specifically leader Vicente Guerrero, and with *criollo* political and religious elites in the capital, creating a political and military pact through his *Pronunciamiento* in Iguala, in

⁴⁷⁵ *Criollo* military and political figure, Agustín de Iturbide was an instrumental figure in the events that catalyzed the formation of Mexico as an independent nation. A *criollo* royalist commander which ultimately made a pact with insurgent leader Vicente Guerrero, and who through his *Plan de Iguala* cemented the legal frameworks by which Mexico would become an independent nation, becoming in turn emperor of the first Mexican Empire. Iturbide was eventually was dethroned by a republican movement led by Antonio López de Santa Anna which originated in Veracruz, and was exiled from Mexico by 1823. By July 1824 Iturbide was executed via a firing squad after a failed attempt of courting favor from Mexican leaders as he was declared, unbeknownst to him, a traitor. For more see Ezequiel A. Chávez, *Agustín de Iturbide: libertador de México*, 2. ed., Colección México heroico (Mexico: Editorial Jus, 1962).

⁴⁷⁶ Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 62.

modern-day Guerrero. In said plan, Iturbide cemented the basis for unity among warring factions, for the creation of a national cultural and social identity, and for political independence, from Spain.⁴⁷⁷

Consisting of twenty-three articles, the *Plan de Iguala* established a reconciliatory posture to absolute independence from Spain under the encompassing principle of “Three Guarantees”: catholic religion, independence from Spain, and union between American born individuals and Europeans by eliminating all racial caste categories.⁴⁷⁸ The *Plan de Iguala* took the stance of insurgent liberal republicanism of years past, cemented in both Morelos’ *Sentimientos de la nación* of 1813 and in the Apatzingan Constitution of 1814, where sentiments of socioracial equality appealed to colonial subalterns, such as Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, in its call that all individuals born in New Spain were *Americanos*, with the same rights and opportunities than those of European ancestry.

Iturbide’s *Pronunciamiento* not only assured political, economic, and social independence from Spain promising radical stances of equal access to opportunities and

⁴⁷⁷ Fowler, 95; Eric Van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and The Mexican Struggle for Independence, 1810-1821* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2001), 34.

⁴⁷⁸ The *Plan de Iguala* specified the Three Guarantees as “the religion of New Spain is, and will be, catholic, apostolic, and Roman, with no tolerance of others... New Spain is independent from the old and from any other power, even in our continent...”, while also guaranteeing the “intimate union between Americans and Europeans.” The Plan de Iguala furthermore established a “moderated monarchy in agreement to a peculiar and adaptable Constitution.” It established in its third article that a constitution that would be created by courts akin to the ones in Cádiz, as established in both its tenth and eleventh articles. The plan also stated in its twelfth article that “all inhabitants of New Spain, without any distinction from Europeans, Africans, or Indians, are citizens of this monarchy with option to any employment, based on their merit and virtue.” For more see ASHM/C.5375/ Plan o indicaciones para el gobierno que debe instalarse provisionalmente con el objeto de asegurar nuestra sagrada religión y establecer la independencia del Imperio Mexicano/ 24 de febrero de 1821 in Juan Ortiz Escamilla et al., *Veracruz: la guerra por la independencia de México 1821-1825 antología de documentos* (México: Universidad Veracruzana : Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz : Comisión Estatal del Bicentenario de la Independencia y del Centenario de la Revolución Mexicana, 2008).

citizenship regardless of racial background. At the same time, it ensured the status, properties, and roles of *criollos* and peninsular Spaniards in governance remained the same.⁴⁷⁹ Thus Iturbide, in joining forces with Guerrero and in the creation of the army of the Three Guarantees, or *Trigarante*, set forth a political process that reverberated the sociopolitical foundations of New Spain, appealing to both elite and subaltern sectors of colonial society, deeply affecting Veracruz, its populations, and their role in the conformation of a new independent order.

News of Iturbide's abandoning of the royalist side did not reach Veracruz until mid-March. By then, most of New Spain, and most of the populations across the entire province of Veracruz, except the Port-City of Veracruz, and select towns in the mountains bordering the Province of Puebla⁴⁸⁰, had sworn loyalty to the *Iguala Pronunciamiento* and its stipulations for total liberation of New Spain from Spanish control.⁴⁸¹ Nevertheless, the Port-City reaffirmed its status as a loyal bastion of royalism and Cádiz' liberalism.⁴⁸² Spanish Governor of Veracruz José Dávila informed the Viceroy

⁴⁷⁹ In its sixteenth article, the Plan de Iguala stipulated that all the provisions set forth by the Iguala charter were to be enforced through the creation of a "protecting army that will be called of the Three Guarantees", which aimed to protect Catholic religion, "independence under the system set forth", and union between "Americans and Europeans. See ASHM/C.5375/ Plan o indicaciones para el gobierno que debe instalarse provisionalmente con el objeto de asegurar nuestra sagrada religión y establecer la independencia del Imperio Mexicano/ 24 de febrero de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁴⁸⁰ These provinces backed Guadalupe Victoria's one last effort at insurgent liberation of the region that began in 1820. For more see Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*.

⁴⁸¹ Ortiz Escamilla, 161.

⁴⁸² In a document sent to the Viceroy, Veracruz' political and military governor, José Dávila, and the City Council reaffirmed the sentiment of loyalty to the crown, but more importantly to the newly reinstated Cádiz Constitution. In the letter, both the Governor and City Council stated that a: "cry of general indignation against the infidel caudillo of Iguala, a noble quietness excited by the most steadfast patriotism, and a firm and severe attitude have been in these days the expression of loyalty sentiments by this illustrious neighborhood that seems destined to endure the onslaughts of the political tempests that agitate it from one and another side of the seas.", Veracruz would then become a last bastion, together with Acapulco in the Pacific coast and the royalist occupation in Mexico City, of royalism in New Spain. See AHV/ C.141/Vol.186/fs.1-2/16 de marzo de 1821

that 600 inhabitants of the Port-City had joined the local national militia “in defense of their rights and the unity of the Constitutional state.”⁴⁸³ It became clear that the population of the Port-City, a large part of them Afro-descendants, more than supporting the crown in a show of loyalty by joining the local national militias, in reality supported the survival of a liberal system of governance and economy newly reinstated in the swearing of the Cádiz charter in 1820.

Veracruz’ Afro-descendants living within the Port-City not only saw betterment with the arrival of the new liberal order, at the same time they saw more benefits in remaining part of the Spanish Empire under Cádiz’ liberalism, than being part of an uncertainly independent monarchical regime. Afro-descendants within the walls of the Port-City saw joining Iturbide as the eventual loss of rights and concessions that for decades they had fought for and now were beginning to enjoy. Port-City’s Afro-descendants became defenders of the last bastion of Spanish constitutional liberalism in New Spain amidst the political tidal wave commenced by Iturbide in Iguala.⁴⁸⁴

By April of 1821, military and political leaders of the province, along with whole military units, had defected to the *Trigarantes*.⁴⁸⁵ Ultimately, this tidal wave of change inspired Afro-descendants across the *Sotavento* hinterland, both in royalist militias and in

⁴⁸³ AHV/ C.141/Vol.186/fs.1-2/16 de marzo de 1821

⁴⁸⁴ The document sent to the Viceroy by Dávila and the Ayuntamiento finished reaffirming loyalty to constitutional liberalism as they stated that “the inhabitants of Veracruz will sustain it with all its resources and strength, even perishing at demand while reaffirming the constitution which is the only and true independence.” See AHV/ C.141/Vol.186/fs.1-2/16 de marzo de 1821

⁴⁸⁵ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 162. Among them, *xalapeño* José Joaquín de Herrera became leader of the first *Trigarante* force in the Province of Veracruz, composed entirely of deserting royalist troops from Xalapa, Orizaba, Córdoba, and Perote, near the bordering Province of Puebla. The desertion of royalist troops became an en-masse phenomenon, as troops across the *Sotavento* hinterland, including those of Paso de Ovejas and Puente del Rey, defected to Iturbide’s cause.

reformed communities of former insurgents, to join the Three Guarantees, or *Trigarante*, army.⁴⁸⁶ As a result, *Trigarante* Afro-descendant troops were instrumental actors in the taking of cities such as Córdoba and Xalapa, and in forcing the garrison of the coastal village, and second commercial entrepôt, of Alvarado, to join Iturbide's independence movement.⁴⁸⁷ They also successfully cutoff the communication and supply routes between Veracruz and the interior for months.

By June of 1821, Governor Dávila lamented to be in “absolute ignorance of the interior provinces” with lack of access to correspondence, and with the surrounding “towns and the troops of this province in rebellion, reducing the limits of my authority to the circumference of the walls of Veracruz”, and worrying over the loss of its “port, its fortress, and its geographical position which influence too much on the economy.”⁴⁸⁸ Afro-descendants of the hinterland, now active *Trigarante troops*, brought contention and insecurity to royalist claims over the Port-City. They became poised to consolidate total independence from Spain by sieging the last remnant of Spanish power in New Spain in an instrumental assertion of their sociopolitical agency as enactors of independence.

Afro-descendant *Trigarante* forces, comprised entirely by mounted parties of *lanceros* from the coastal regions of the *Sotavento* hinterland loyal to, and under the

⁴⁸⁶ Famed *porteño* royalist commander, Antonio López de Santa Anna, who himself had forged a special relationship with Veracruz' Afro-descendants both in royalist militias and in reformed communities of pardoned Afro-descendant insurgents near the Port-City, served an instrumental role in swaying the opinion of Afro-descendants in the reformed communities and in militia units under his command to join Iturbide's cause. See Ortiz Escamilla, 162; Will Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 46; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz : La Guerra Por La Independencia de México 1821-1825 Antología de Documentos* (México : Universidad Veracruzana :, 2008).

⁴⁸⁷ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 162.

⁴⁸⁸ ASHM/C.5375/ de José Dávila al secretario de Guerra/Veracruz/ 10 de junio de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

command of, former royalist turned *Trigarante* local military figure Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, arrived to the immediacies of the Port-City by June 23rd.⁴⁸⁹ Five days after, they carried out an attack by cannon and rifle fire from the *Extramuros* portion of the city against the San Fernando bastion, propelling the royalists, once fire subsided, to burn all the houses in *Extramuros* effectively destroying possibilities of Santa Anna's troops of taking refuge in the neighborhood next to the city walls where a considerable Afro-descendant population of the city resided.⁴⁹⁰

Following the attack of the 28th, Afro-descendant *Trigarantes* continued to harass and attack royalist parties that exited the city, as well as attacking the city's bastions along its walled perimeter, until July 3rd where constant cannon and rifle fire by Afro-descendant troops weakened royalist defense.⁴⁹¹ Afro-descendant *Trigarantes* commenced an actively violent siege to the Port-City that did not subside for months to

⁴⁸⁹ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 164. Royalist officials noted that the parties of Afro-descendants from the coastal hinterland of *Sotavento* that arrived to aid Santa Anna and the *Trigarantes* were commandeered by Valentín Guzmán, Crisanto Castro, and Sabino Cruz, authors of a rebellion in the reformed town of San Diego on January 1st of 1821 in favor of Iturbide's movement and Santa Anna. It became clear that the social ties which Santa Anna created with pardoned Afro-descendant insurgents in reformed communities in proximity of the Port-City, such as the town of San Diego, resulted instrumental in the gathering of support of Afro-descendants for the regional *Trigarante* movement. See ASHM/ C. 5375/ José Dávila al secretario de Guerra D. Tomás Moreno y Daoiz/ Veracruz/ 1º de agosto de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁴⁹⁰ ASHM/C.94/ Ignacio Cincunegui/ Noticias de lo ocurrido en el sitio y asalto de Veracruz/ Veracruz/ agosto 2 de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*. The *Censo de la población de las costas colaterales a Veracruz* of 1799 identifies this sector of the city as that which contains the highest concentration of Afro-descendants in the Port-City. Alongside with the *Barrio de extramuros*, in the *rancherías* and *haciendas* immediate to the Port-City, out of 8,045 individuals reported in the census, 5,905 were identified as *Pardos y Morenos*, making 73% of the population outside of the walled Port-City, and in nearby ranches and villages to the city, Afro-descendant. See AGN/Indiferente de Guerra, Vol. 47B/ 1799 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz En Armas*. For further reference on the 1799 census, the 1791 *Padron de Revillagigedo*, sectoral divisions of the city according to the 1791 census, and ethnic makeup of the city by the late eighteenth century please refer to Chapter One.

⁴⁹¹ ASHM/ C. 5375/ Copia del parte de José Rincón al mariscal de campo José Dávila, comandante general de la provincia/ Veracruz/ 1º de Julio de 1821; ASHM/C.94/ Ignacio Cincunegui/ Noticias de lo ocurrido en el sitio y asalto de Veracruz/ Veracruz/ agosto 2 de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

come. In the face of violence escalation, the arrival of Afro-descendant insurgent troops from the hinterland to the immediacies of the Port-City presented royalist Afro-descendants within the walls of Veracruz, a bastion of Black life and participation, with a dire choice: To remain steadfast defenders of Cádiz' liberalism or to join fellow Afro-descendants in the consolidation of Mexican independence under Iturbide's political and ideological frameworks.

By July 7th Afro-descendant *Trigarante* troops carried out a failed assault to the Port-City. Royalist commanders reported that despite that Afro-descendant troops took “the bastion of San Fernando, and opened the door of La Merced”, from where 500 troops, cavalry, and artillery guns entered to storm the city, many royalist sailors, infantry men, and Afro-descendant militiamen, avoided capture, reinforcing royalist defense, and in turn provoked the loss of 300 of Afro-descendant *Trigarante* troops amidst “dead, wounded, and prisoners.”⁴⁹² Santa Anna explained to Iturbide the failure of the attack on the Port-City, blaming it not on the lack of courage and agency of his Afro-descendant troops during the attack, but on the lack of sufficient munitions, forces, able officers that could help direct the attack, and the surprising defense of royalist Afro-descendants within the city.⁴⁹³ Royalist Afro-descendant militias decided, for the moment, to continue supporting royalism.

⁴⁹² ASHM/ C.94/ Ignacio Cincunegui/ Noticias de lo ocurrido en el sitio y asalto de Veracruz/ Veracruz/ agosto 2 de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁴⁹³ AHDN/Operaciones Militares/ Exp.174/ fs.71-73/ Antonio López de Santa Anna a Agustín de Iturbide/ Orizaba/ 18 de julio de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla.

Recognizing the insurmountable pressure exerted by the hinterland's Afro-descendants sieging the city, Governor Dávila issued a reconciliatory proclamation that both expressed liberalism of the Cádiz' charter and the social inclusive notions of the *Iguala Pronunciamiento* to court favor of *Trigarante* Afro-descendants to Spanish defense. He lamented the death of "three-hundred *americanos*", not making use of the use of socioracial colonial categories, specifying such losses occurred due to the "perfidiousness, treason, and deceit of an inexperienced young man, whom in the fury of his passions" blaming Santa Anna for needlessly causing the death of his troops.⁴⁹⁴ At the same time, he offered a general last pardon to *Trigarante* Afro-descendants, stating that he offered them "absolute forgiveness" of their actions if they swore loyalty to the Spanish constitutional government and its local representation in Veracruz.⁴⁹⁵

Dávila thus attempted to sway positive opinions and allegiance to his side from liberally empowered Afro-descendant *Trigarante* troops who, as active political players that made up the military support for Santa Anna's regional independence movement, were able to sway the critical regional political tide to either side who coopted their active political participation as troops. Veracruz' Afro-descendants thus were no longer sidelined unwanted but needed colonial subalterns, nor undesired liberally empowered insurgents. They had become instrumental and decisive players in the shift of the power balance in favor for either royalists or *Trigarantes*.

⁴⁹⁴ ASHM/ C. 5375/ Proclama del general José Dávila/ Veracruz/ 10 de julio de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

By August of 1821, the situation exerted by the hinterland's *Trigarante* Afro-descendants over the Port-City worsened. In a letter from Dávila to the Captain General of Cuba, Don Tomás Moreno y Daoiz, the details of the siege and failed attack by insurgent Afro-descendants were reported. Dávila stated that prior to the burning of the *Extramuros* neighborhood by royalists with the aim of preventing the approach of *Trigarante* forces to the city wall, most of this neighborhood "was abandoned by the unhappy neighbors that either migrated away, or inside the city's walls."⁴⁹⁶ He also highlighted the valor and merit of the "valiant defenders" of the Port-City, among them Afro-descendant royalist militiamen.⁴⁹⁷ Royalist Afro-descendants seemed to make a last stand in favor of Cádiz' liberalism which they had now fully adopted within the city. Nevertheless, at the same time Dávila expressed concern at the reduced forces for defense of the city, the prolonged state of communication and supplies cutoffs the city experienced, and the continual siege by Afro-descendant *Trigarante* troops.⁴⁹⁸

Soon after, the next viceroy, Juan de O'Donojú, arrived at Veracruz. This led to the establishment of dialogue between the soon-to-be Viceroy and Iturbide. Aware of the impossibility of taking power in the capital of New Spain, but more importantly how Afro-descendant *Trigarantes* continued the siege of the Port-City, peace talks began.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ ASHM/ C. 5375/ José Dávila al secretario de Guerra D. Tomás Moreno y Daoiz/ Veracruz/ 1º de agosto de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid. In the document, Dávila then informed that the soon to be next Viceroy, Juan O' Donojú, the man on whom "everyone hangs their hopes upon", had arrived to the Port-City, represented the last hope of Spanish governance amidst a radically changing political paradigm where most cities and localities of the interior of New Spain had already defected to Iturbide's movement.

⁴⁹⁹ O'donojú was also aware that as a result of the control of, towns, and cities along the road to Mexico City by troops aligned with Iturbide and the lack of true fervor for Cádiz' liberalism by remnant Spanish authorities in Mexico City, together with the local situation in Veracruz, Spain had lost New Spain. See ASHM/ C. 5375/ Manuel López de Santa Anna a Juan O'donojú/ Campo de extramuros/ 4 de agosto de

By late August, the dialogue led to the signing of the *Tratados de Córdoba*, or Treaty of Cordoba, on August 24th 1821, thus consolidating recognition by a Spanish emissary of Mexico as an independent nation.⁵⁰⁰ Hence, Afro-descendants from the *Sotavento* hinterland, through military service, made active use of their political agency which resulted instrumental in the considerations of Spanish colonial governance in declaring Veracruz and New Spain a lost cause, leading to consolidation of Iturbide's project of independence over Mexico and the region.⁵⁰¹

Despite that Ferdinand the VII declared the treaty and the authority of O'Donojú invalid,⁵⁰², the Treaty of Córdoba provided Iturbide's movement, and its *Trigarante* Afro-descendants, with legal political standing by which to pursue full consolidation of independence from Spain. Royalist Governor Dávila protested the Treaty and criticized O'Donojú of the decision to sign the treaty. O'donojú asserted that to conserve

1821; ASHM/ C.5375/ Juan de O'Donojú al ministro de Guerra/ Veracruz/ 5 de agosto de 1821; ASHM/ C. 5375/ Juan de O' Donojú a Agustín de Iturbide/ Veracruz/ 6 de agosto de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵⁰⁰ Consisting of seventeen articles, the Treaty of Cordoba cemented the status of Mexico as an independent nation to be known as "Mexican Empire" and ruled under a "constitutional moderate monarchical" government. The treaty established that King Ferdinand VII would be offered the throne, and in case of his renouncing of the title or neglect of it, the line of succession to the Spanish throne would follow, until, if rejected by any member of the Spanish royal line of succession, the throne would be determined by the Courts created by the Mexican Empire. This political ambiguity enabled Iturbide to eventually abolish Congress and declare himself emperor in 1822. Although acknowledging the "spirit of the Plan de Iguala" in its agenda of creating a provisional government, with the aim of preserving the guarantees promised by Iturbide's movement, the treaty did not make explicit mention of the end of socioracial colonial categorizations or castas. See ASHM/ C.5375/ Tratado de Córdoba/ Córdoba/ 24 de agosto de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla. The treaty established that King Ferdinand VII would be offered the throne, and in case of his renouncing of the title or neglect of it, the line of succession to the Spanish throne would follow, until, if rejected by any member of the Spanish royal line of succession, the throne would be determined by the Courts created by the Mexican Empire. This political ambiguity enabled Iturbide to eventually abolish Congress and declare himself emperor in 1822.

⁵⁰¹ The peace talks and dialogue between Iturbide and O'donojú led to a cease of hostilities, which allowed the free movement of individuals, correspondence, and goods, along with the liberation of royalist prisoners by Santa Anna captured during his failed attack of July 7th. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 170.

⁵⁰² The Spanish government did not recognize Mexico as an independent nation until 1836. See Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 73.

Veracruz, and Mexico City, under royalist governance and control was impossible, for “such is the decided will of the people, because they have the force to defend it, because the Spanish government is ruled by liberal principles.”⁵⁰³ He further stated that if Afro-descendant *Trigarantes* had not razed the Port-City, it was because they “tried to avoid further disgrace.”⁵⁰⁴ This led Dávila to disavow the Córdoba treaty, and to consider *Trigarante* Afro-descendants a threat for the city and Spanish governance, for they had become active political participants of a new order, not mere politically limited colonial subalterns under Spanish control.⁵⁰⁵

In a letter to the city council, which argued it represented “all the hierarchies and classes that conform this meritorious neighborhood”, European inhabitants of the Port-City expressed utmost concern at the position of hostility of Governor Dávila in disavowing O’donojú’s authority, the Treaty of Córdoba, and an imminent taking of the city by independent forces, along with the hostile measures he was planning before abandoning the city.⁵⁰⁶ The petitioners mostly Spaniards, expressed their desire for the City Council to limit the authority of the Governor in regards to opening hostilities that

⁵⁰³ ASHM/ C. 5375/ Juan O’donojú a José Dávila/ Puebla/ 7 de septiembre de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Such measures included “blowing up the bastions of la Concepción and Santiago, for he is mining them already, retiring to the isle-castle of San Juan de Ulúa with the rest of the troops, and from there demolish the city with its fires and with those of the ship Asia, as long as Spanish supplies last in the castle.” The inhabitants of the Port-City complained that “the people were not made for authorities, but authorities were made for the people”, specifying that the inhabitants of Veracruz “should not be treated as sheep herds... led towards the ocean”, for they were a society of “rational and free men.” They recriminated to the City Council that: “if the lord governor has sworn and its in charge of the defense of this city... we understand that is not in his disposal and will to offend it and ruin it with the castle of San Juan de Ulúa before attaining an honorable and prudent capitulation that would save the lives of its inhabitants.” See ASHM/ C. 5375/ Representación del vecindario al ayuntamiento de Veracruz/ Veracruz/ 15 de septiembre de 1821 Ortiz Escamilla.

could obliterate the city, the ways of life of its inhabitants, and their possessions.⁵⁰⁷ The petition corroborated Dávila's previous report that the populations of the *Extramuros* neighborhood, most of them Afro-descendants, had abandoned, without returning, their neighborhood prior to its burning by royalists in the face of Afro-descendant *Trigarante* attack.

This demonstrated that Veracruz' Afro-descendants, except for the few militias that by 1821 that still resided within the walled city, for the most part fully supported the notion of Mexico as an independent nation under the reconciliatory frameworks of the *Plan de Iguala*. Veracruz' Afro-descendants realized that peace under royalism was no longer an option, and as such took the practical decision to support Iturbide's movement and an independent order that in theory guaranteed equality under the law. Their support in Veracruz, in the enabling of an imminent victory for *Trigarantes*, allowed Iturbide to freely enter Mexico City on September 28th and declare the *Acta de Independencia del Imperio Mexicano*, or Declaration of Independence of the Mexican Empire, consolidating Mexican independence in 1821.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ The petition interestingly remarked the major presence of European descendants in the city during the siege as it stated that "it is no less worthy that this town is composed in its majority by European peoples" thus asking if it was worth for Spanish governance to risk the wellbeing of their compatriots. See ASHM/ C. 5375/ Representación del vecindario al ayuntamiento de Veracruz/ Veracruz/ 15 de septiembre de 1821 Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵⁰⁸ The Declaration of Independence consolidated Mexican independence as conformed by the principles established in the *Plan de Iguala* and the *Treaty of Cordoba*, declaring the Mexican Empire as an independent nation from Spain. See Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 74.; As expected, Dávila rejected the declaration, prompting an ultimatum towards Iturbide, and open defiance to Afro-descendants besieging the city stating "or this city embraces the generous system that other towns of New Spain have proclaimed, or it shall become a victim of its persistence resistance." Dávila thus presented a possible scenario of sabotage over the city by the Spanish. See AGN/ Colección Natie Lee Benson/ Rollo 71/ hd/ 15-6.1921/ Agustín de Iturbide al gobernador de la plaza de Veracruz/ México/ 11 de octubre de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

While Afro-descendants continued their siege over Veracruz, the nascent independent Mexican government sought to implement their notion of a raceless Mexico. Inspired originally on *criollo* notions of national identity and pride of the late-eighteenth century, and reinforced during the war by Insurgent leaders such as Miguel Hidalgo, Guadalupe Victoria and José María Morelos, himself Afro-descendant, this homogenizing nationalism called for the abolition of the colonial *casta* system, and in turn exalted the figure of *mestizaje*, or racial intermixing, as a sociocultural catalyst for identity in Mexico.⁵⁰⁹ This nationalism, echoed by Iturbide in the *Plan de Iguala*,⁵¹⁰ was reflected on October 24th of 1821 when a commission of the Provisional Governmental *Junta* issued a decree condemning slavery and calling its abolition in Mexico.

⁵⁰⁹ Morelos, in his *Sentimientos de la nación*, called for the “only distinction between one American and another shall be between vice and virtue,” thus embracing what Ted Cohen calls “assimilationist rhetoric and, in the name of egalitarianism” which ultimately “promoted homogenizing acts such as the abolition of caste categories”. For more see AGN/Acta de Independencia y Constituciones de México /“Sentimientos de la Nación rubricados por José María Morelos”/Chilpancingo/14 de Septiembre de 1813; Enrique Florescano, ed., *Espejo Mexicano*, 1. ed (Ciudad de México: Biblioteca Mexicana de la Fundación Miguel Alemán, 2002); Enrique Florescano, *Etnia, Estado y Nación: Ensayo Sobre Las Identidades Colectivas En México*, Nuevo Siglo (México, D.F: Aguilar, 1997); Enrique Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana: Ensayo Sobre La Reconstrucción Del Pasado: Época Prehispánica-1821*, 1a ed, Contrapuntos (México, D.F.: Editorial J. Mortiz, 1987); Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (México: Fondo de Cultura económica, 1977); Doris M. Ladd, *The Mexican Nobility at Independence, 1780-1826*, Latin American Monographs ; No. 40 (Austin: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 1976); D. A. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, Cambridge Latin American Miniatures 4 (Cambridge, England: Centre of Latin American Studies, 1985); Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, Afro-Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 14, 30, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108632430>.

⁵¹⁰ On racial matters, the *Plan de Iguala* stated in its twelfth article that “all inhabitants of New Spain, without any distinction from Europeans, Africans, or Indians, are citizens of this monarchy with option to any employment, based on their merit and virtue.” Nevertheless, in the Iguala charter, despite that Iturbide’s emphasis on national unity and his discourse on racial equality echoed tenants of criollo nationalism calling for racial equality for all, in reality a vision for an independent Mexico where criollos, and not former colonial subalterns such as Veracruz Afro-descendants, dominated the political scene was reinforced. For more see ASHM /C.5375/ Plan o indicaciones para el gobierno que debe instalarse provisionalmente con el objeto de asegurar nuestra sagrada religión y establecer la independencia del Imperio Mexicano/ 24 de febrero de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*; Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 30.

The slave commission, as it was called, stated in a decree a total repudiation of the system of slavery, and alluded to “inalienable rights” of all Mexican citizens born in the national territory.⁵¹¹ While the decree on one side called for the immediate freedom of children born to slaves, the prohibition of importing of slaves to the Mexican Empire, and the freedom of slaves brought by foreigners, it also took a reconciliatory and contradicting stance that aimed at protecting “individual property as an inalienable right of man.”⁵¹² As such, the new national government, in its adoption of *criollo* nationalism, considered African slavery a remnant of colonial submission and of a racially stratified society, indirectly considering Blackness associated with a colonial past unable to exist in the new nation, yet not making slavery illegal. Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, despite enacting political pressure over Veracruz that allowed Iturbide’s movement to consolidate into independence, eventually became affected by new racial ideologies. This became more evident as royalists abandoned the city.

In a letter requesting reinforcements from Cuba, Dávila, noted that the Port-City was in imminent danger of “having the enemies at a pistol’s shot reach and without other troops to defend it”, making note of the lack of Veracruz’ defenses in great part due to the “desertion that have made, principally, the *Pardos* and *Morenos*.”⁵¹³ Afro-descendant

⁵¹¹ Salvador Méndez Reyes, “Hacia la abolición de la esclavitud en México: El dictamen de la comisión de esclavos de 1821” in Juan Manuel de la Serna, ed., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, trans. Juan M. de la Serna H., *De la libertad y la abolición : Africanos y afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013)

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ AGI/ Cuba/ Legajo 2115/ fs. 5-6v/ Acta de la junta de generales/ La Habana/ 14 de noviembre de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla. Most of the militia units of the Port-City depended heavily on trade, and as such desired to end the armed conflict and tensions between the newly created Mexican Empire and Spanish representation of Veracruz. Trade, and the resuming of such, inspired not only elites but also common

royalist militias within the Port-City considered that in the face of the consolidation of Mexican independence across all territories, and imminently in Veracruz by *Trigarante* Afro-descendants from the hinterland, it was preferable to desert royalism and join the independent cause, as they believed true peace was with an independent Mexico.

Veracruz' Afro-descendant militias saw their future in the liberally oriented Mexican Empire, and abandoned royalism altogether. Their decision, pressured Dávila to abandon the Port-City by midnight of October 26th 1821, fleeing to the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, and leaving the city in the control of Manuel Rincon's *Trigarante* forces from the Mexican interior, thus ending 500 years of Spanish occupation of the Port-City.⁵¹⁴

Ironically, Veracruz' Afro-descendants, once essential for the assertion of Spanish colonialism in the region since the late-eighteenth century, now helped consolidate Mexican independence. They became instrumental actors in the inclusion of the Port-City of Veracruz as part of the nascently independent Mexican Empire. And while their participation in the events of 1821 reshaped their role from late-colonial socioracial subalterns to that of active, integral, and essential, political and military players of the

classes of Veracruz to side with the independents and desert the militia units. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 175.

⁵¹⁴ AHDN/ Operaciones militares/ Exp. 174/ fs. 171-173v/ Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna a Agustín de Iturbide/ Extramuros de Veracruz/ 27 de octubre de 1821; ASHM/ C.5375/ José Dávila al secretario de Estado y del despacho de Guerra/ San Juan de Ulua Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*. Upon Dávila's abandoning of the city, the City Council and the city's commercial *Consulado*, lamented that the city had become a desert due to the massive emigration of its inhabitants due to the war, the interruption of navigation, commerce with the Peninsula ruined, and the blocking of money flows from the capital to the city by Iturbide's troops. They also prophetically warned that as long as Governor Dávila and his fleeing Spanish garrison at the isle-castle of San Juan de Ulúa represented one last reduction of Spanish colonial governance, the war would not come to an end. For more, see ASHM/ C. 5376/ El Consulado de Veracruz al secretario de la gobernación de Ultramar/ Veracruz/ 19 de noviembre de 1821 and ASHM/ C.5376/ El Consulado de Veracruz al secretario de Estado y del despacho de la gobernación de Ultramar/ Veracruz/ 17 de Diciembre de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla.

region, the decision by Dávila of surrendering the Port-City not to Afro-descendant *Trigarantes*, but to troops from the interior commanded by *criollo* Manuel Rincón, revealed the ways by which informal racial categories were adopted and associated to Veracruz' Afro-descendants, both positively and negatively, in parallel fashion to a national push for deracializing Mexican identity.

Dávila, conscious of the instrumental role that Afro-descendants of the region had in the taking of the Port-City, stated that he intentionally delayed the capitulation of the city to Manuel Rincon's forces over Afro-descendants under Santa Anna's command. His reasoning was that he considered "those of the so called *jarocho*s of the proximities, irregular militias, semi barbarous, and which not wanting other than theft, would have desolated the city, whose Spanish inhabitants would not have condoned kindly," bringing as an example *Trigarante* Afro-descendant's failed attack of July 7th.⁵¹⁵ The term *jarocho*, associated to Veracruz' Afro-descendants by Dávila in negative terms, originated from a local designation for the carrier of the *jara*, or lance, of Andalusian fashion brought over by the Spanish in the sixteenth century with colonization, and used by the Afro-descendant cowboys of the haciendas surrounding Veracruz and across its *Sotavento* hinterland as both a cattle ranching tool and as weapon used by Afro-descendant militias, particularly that of the *Lanceros*, or lancers, by the eighteenth century.⁵¹⁶ By the 1820s,

⁵¹⁵ AGI/ Cuba/ Legajo 2115/ fs. 5-6v/ Acta de la junta de generales/ La Habana/ 14 de noviembre de 1821 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵¹⁶ Antonio García de León and Ricardo Pérez Monfort state that the original iteration of *jarocho* as a racial marker was taken from *ladino*, the language of Sephardic Jews from Andalusia, where it was used by the seventeenth century in Veracruz as a derogatory term that referred to the offspring of Blacks and Indians, particularly the *zambo* and *pardo* castas, as a "mountain pig" or *jaro* from Andalusia. They argue that the word changed its meaning to mark Afro-descendant cattle ranchers who used the *jara*, or lance, as an instrument of cattle ranching and weapon as they joined and participated in coastal militias in Veracruz

the marker became an informal categorization applied to peoples of African descent that had been active participants in regional economic, social, and political development well into the early nineteenth century.

The use of *jarocho* as a voice of racial marking by Dávila was proof of a regional process, that since the late eighteenth century, as Afro-descendants acquired increased sociopolitical and economic roles in the region, and as liberalism pervaded across the region becoming adopted by all social and political sectors, led to the lessening of racial markers applied to peoples of African descent in Veracruz and *Sotavento*. This process saw the transformations of the markers *Mulato* and *Negro* to *Pardo* and *Moreno* respectively during the Bourbon Reforms of the late eighteenth century, then transformed by insurgent criollo racial and national politics to *trigueños*, and lastly the voice *jarocho* or *jarochos* for plural during the first decades of independent Mexico.⁵¹⁷ But not only was *jarocho* used negatively as an informal and lesser racial marker of identity by Dávila onto

such as the *Lanceros* and *Pardos y Morenos*, the term became associated to peoples of African descent from Veracruz and *Sotavento* with active economic and sociopolitical agency in the region by the early nineteenth century. García de León argues that due to their “social origins and traditions”, *jarochos* have sociocultural similarities with the Cuban and Dominican *guajiro*, the Puerto Rican *jibaro*, the *llanero* of Colombia and Venezuela, and the *criollos* from central Panama. This, he argues, makes *jarochos*, and Veracruz, part of what he calls the Afroandalusian Caribbean, a geographical and sociocultural space defined by the constant racial, cultural, and social intermixing of peoples of African descent and southern Spaniards from Andalusia, that established similar cultural and social patterns across the Greater Caribbean’s coastal cities and hinterlands. The term in modern times is used to denote the regional musical folk style of southern Veracruz, *son jarocho*, and anyone from the Port-City and the *Sotavento* hinterland, often applied erroneously to all inhabitants of the state of Veracruz, regardless of racial origin. For more see Antonio García de León, *Fandango: El Ritual Del Mundo Jarocho a Través de Los Siglos*, Primera reimpression, 2009 (México D.F: CONACULTA, Dirección General de Vinculación Cultural, 2009); Antonio García de León *El Mar de Los Deseos: El Caribe Afroandaluz, Historia y Contrapunto*, Primera edición, Sección de Obras de Historia (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016); Ricardo Pérez Montfort’, “Lo ‘negro’ en la formación del estereotipo jarocho durante los siglos XIX y XX,” *Sotavento*, Sotavento, 1, no. 2 (verano de 1997): 131–54.

⁵¹⁷ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 78; Juan Ortiz Escamilla, “Las compañías milicianas de Veracruz. Del ‘negro’ al ‘jarocho’: la construcción histórica de una identidad,” *ULÚA. REVISTA DE HISTORIA, SOCIEDAD Y CULTURA* 0, no. 8 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.25009/urhsc.2006.8.1404>.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants, it was also used by leaders in newly independent Mexico in a positive light.

Guadalupe Victoria recognized that the *jarocho*s of *tierra caliente* were those “which perish less than those of the interior, allowing to relieve those who come from the interior or replacing the loss of soldiers.”⁵¹⁸ But despite Victoria's recognition of native *jarocho*s resistance to tropical climate and endemic disease in a positive light, he nevertheless committed an informal racialization of Veracruz' Afro-descendants that went against alleged frameworks of a deracialized Mexican identity. Thus, as racial categories began to be outlawed, concurrently in the regional setting of Veracruz and *Sotavento* the word *jarocho* became an informal racial categorization associated to Afro-descendants that could be used to refer to implicit Blackness of the city's and hinterland's inhabitants in both positive and negative light.

Dávila made two important points through his statement of reasoning behind capitulation to Rincon's troops from the interior and not to Afro-descendant *Trigarantes*. First, he equated Veracruz' *Trigarante* Afro-descendants as barbarous and prone to theft and violence, bringing to example the violence and destruction of Spanish property in their first failed attack over the city. Second, by using the word *jarocho*s, Dávila made use of an informal form of language for racial categorization that marked Veracruz' Afro-descendants for years to come, adopted by the royalist resistance and independent

⁵¹⁸ The term *tierra caliente*, or hot lands, was used to describe the coastal tropical lowlands that were ripe with endemic tropical disease and harsh tropical climate, comprising the immediacies of the Port-City of Veracruz and most of its *Sotavento*, or Leeward, hinterland. AHDN/exp.216/f.126/de Victoria al ministro de Guerra/Xalapa/ 29 de abril de 1824 in Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 196.

Mexico authorities, even as the socioracial language of the colonial era came to be challenged and banned amidst new sociopolitical and cultural frameworks imposed by Mexico's first independent government. As Veracruz' Afro-descendants discovered soon after, their increased sociopolitical agency continued to be challenged not only by regional and national events that defined Mexico as a nation, but also ironically by a continuing stigmatization of their identity and roles as peoples of African descent by a new nation designed around an alleged inclusive and deracialized society that sought to neglect their particular agency and identity.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants: Consolidators of a Raceless Republic, 1822-1823

Although by 1822 Mexico was an independent nation, unhappiness with the Mexican government being a constitutional empire, along with the presence of a Spanish entrenchment in the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, came to complicate regional and national political panoramas. Veracruz' Afro-descendants became instrumental in both the complication and ultimate resolution of these panoramas, for they were not only recognized as the safeguards of *Trigarante* independence in the Port-City and the hinterland, but by the same token, due to their prior allegiance to Cádiz' liberalism, and then to insurgent liberalism in the war, along with the resurgence of republicanism in the mountains near Puebla by Victoria, they became seen as possible republican agitators and threats by imperial authorities.⁵¹⁹ As their role complicated, Mexican Empire authorities

⁵¹⁹ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0049/exp.69/Documento7/fs.1/1822; AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0049/ exp.69/ Documento 5/ 1822 ;UT-BLAC/Colección Hernández y Dávalos-/ 15-1.1537/ Antonio López de Santa Anna a Agustín de Iturbide/ Xalapa/ 9 de febrero de 1822; UT-BLAC/ Colección

delayed the debate over slavery, and in that same year individual city councils, such as the one in Guadalajara in western Mexico, called for the “eternal banishment of the categories of *Mulatos*, Blacks, Indians, and others, substituting in their place that of Mexicans,” thus pushing for a raceless Mexican society where possible Afro-descendant dissidents in Veracruz would see their sociopolitical roles immediately diminished.⁵²⁰

As political discontent in the nation continued, in a surprising turn of events, Congress declared Agustín de Iturbide as Emperor of Mexico on May 21st,⁵²¹ and among his first decrees was a declaration that considered that everyone “regardless of race—except for Indians—was to be considered a full citizen.”⁵²² The imperial state attempted to

Hernández y Dávalos/15-1.1540/ Antonio López de Santa Anna a Agustín de Iturbide/Xalapa/ 11 de febrero de 1822 and UT-BLAC/Colección Hernández y Dávalos/ 15-1.1545/ Agustín de Iturbide a Santa Anna/ México/ 16 de febrero de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*. Both of Veracruz’ most important Mexican Empire regional authorities, Antonio López de Santa Anna and Manuel Rincón, recognized that the threat of republicanism remained entrenched in some pockets led by Guadalupe Victoria. Santa Anna identified the republican partisans as “weak, voluble, and superficial”, while Rincón in his report of loyal citizens of the cities of Veracruz, Córdoba, Orizaba, and Xalapa, decided to omit villages and townships along the *Sotavento* coast in his listing as he deemed them “unworthy of consideration”, as he associated townships of the coastal hinterland, where many were Afro-descendants, as prone to be supporters of republicanism rather than a liberal monarchy. In his documents, Santa Anna expressed particular preoccupation at Guadalupe Victoria’s, now on the run from imperial authorities, supporters gathering in the mountainous townships and villages near the Province of Puebla, specifically in the towns of Huatusco and Coscomatepec which were long-time enclaves of insurgency. Santa Anna identified this mountainous region where a strong pro-republicanism movement of 80 to 100 men was beginning to form. By February 15th, Santa Anna even informed Iturbide that a former royalist division of 1,400 individuals, which forcefully capitulated to the *Trigarante* side near Puebla, expressed vocally “insults against our cause”, thus expressing worrisome about the republican movement that Victoria continued to organize.

⁵²⁰ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0012/ exp.15/documento 6/fs. 8-10/ 1 de diciembre de 1821; AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0024/ exp.2/ Documento 4/ fs.7-10/ 4 de febrero de 1822 and AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0049/exp.67/Documento 1/fs.1/Solicitud para eliminar las palabras de mulatos, negros, indios, para en su lugar colocar mexicano/ 9 de marzo de 1822

⁵²¹ In following the guidelines of the Plan de Iguala and the Treaty of Córdoba, Ferdinand VII, and the rest of the Spanish royal family, had renounced the throne as they did not recognize Mexico’s independence. As a result, Iturbide was named emperor. AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0057/ exp.28/ fs.1-2v/21 de mayo de 1822

⁵²² By October of 1822, Mexican Empire authorities ordered Church officials to “stop using caste labels for identifying their parishioners,” effectively ending with colonial traditions of identifying *casta* categories in birth and death records, exempting only marriage records. For more see Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Cambridge Latin American Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 183.

further push deracialized Mexican identity as a bulwark to diminish the active and effective political agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, now considered very possible republican agitators and a threat, for by July the cities of Xalapa, Córdoba, and Orizaba had been identified as strongholds of republicanism, where both their political leaders and populations opposed the Mexican Empire as a system of governance.⁵²³ Authorities, such as intendent of the city and Province of Veracruz José Govantes y Ledesma, considered Afro-descendants of the Port-City and hinterland to be the next enactors of rebellion. He produced a decree warning the population of Veracruz of repercussions for allying with the republican cause, and despite reassuring the local population that “the truth is that all points of the Empire conserve their tranquility” nevertheless he expressed that many parts of the Mexican Empire recognized that “the port and its district have declared themselves in favor of insurrection.”⁵²⁴

As rebellion was brewing, Veracruz' Afro-descendants who had participated in colonial segregated militias, and then in the consolidation of independence in Veracruz, became affected by imperial deracialized nationalism. Manuel Rincón requested from the City Council of Veracruz, and from Santa Anna, that Afro-descendant troops replaced “the considerable losses that the *Pardos y Morenos* company of this city” experienced as they deserted to the *Trigarantes* in 1821, asking to review available troops and asking the

⁵²³ From the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa, despite relegating command of the Spanish reduction to Francisco Lemaur, José Dávila wrote to Spanish authorities in Cuba informing of the precarious status of Iturbide's imperial governance in the Province of Veracruz. He informed not only of growing dissent in the region, but also of growing abandoning of their posts by legislators in Congress, where only “a third remained”, along with a potential separation of Yucatán from the nation. For more see ASHM/C.5376/José Dávila al secretario de Ultramar/ San Juan de Ulúa/ 9 de julio de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵²⁴AHV/ C. 139/Vol. 184/ fs.145/ 13 de septiembre de 1822

city council to perform a racially stratified census that was to identify able Afro-descendants for military service.⁵²⁵ Santa Anna replied to Rincón that although the troops of the former companies were to be replaced, the terminology of the company itself was to be that of Provincial Companies, “formerly known as *Pardos y Morenos*”, thus inferring that in independent Mexico there was no place for colonial racial markers.⁵²⁶ Although Santa Anna’s discourse may seem benign in its intent, in deracializing the terminology of the former *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen, their instrumental agency and roles as peoples of African descent who made unique contributions to defense during the colonial era and for independence in the region was neglected.

This was further exacerbated as shown by the experience of former *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen Francisco Ruiz, Ignacio Soberón, Francisco Castro, and José Antonio Alfaro. In a document addressed to Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and Manuel Rincon, the four former militiamen stated that

Being discharged from service since last year by Mr. Dávila, who was the former General Commander of this Province, the Sergeant Major of this city wished to revoke our discharges, keeping us under arrest for resisting to continue our service under a company to which we once belonged.⁵²⁷

The former militiamen complained that the Sergeant Major was attempting to force their service under a segregated company that no longer represented the liberal and inclusive tenants of a raceless independent Mexico as they stated that “the Major surely does not acknowledge the contradiction that his petition reveals, nor the in consequence

⁵²⁵ AHV/C.139/Vol.184/fs.41-45/Reemplazamiento de bajas en la compañía de Pardos y Morenos/8 de octubre de 1822

⁵²⁶ Ibid.

⁵²⁷ AHV/C.139/Vol.184/188-194/Cuatro soldados de Pardos solicitan que se les respeten sus licencias/Octubre-Noviembre 1822

which incurs in carrying it out.”⁵²⁸ They further appealed for their right to being discharged as they had served their required years during the colonial era, in some ways appealing to their right to enjoy military benefits associated to years of service in this militia such as the old *fuero* and tax exemption. They reassured Santa Anna and Rincón that their resistance to serve did not represent a lack of patriotism or love over their city and region, but rather that they, along with many who abandoned the former colonial *Pardos y Morenos* militia when *Trigarantes* sieged the Port-City, would gladly serve under the new National Militia, as they wanted to express their “disaffection to the companies that with the name of *Pardos y Morenos* had been known,” specifically discontent in serving under racially segregated militias.⁵²⁹

The four former militiamen attempted to obtain their freedom and the enjoyment of their discharge through both their standing as discharged citizens and as patriots. Santa Anna later recognized that the militiamen were “legitimately discharged for accomplishing their necessary years in service and considered useless for continued service”, stating that the Seargent Major “should have taken this into consideration before harming them with a new enlistment.”⁵³⁰ Santa Anna ultimately supported the decision of the City Council of respecting their discharge, but he prevented them that upon need “it will precise for these four individuals to take up arms once again.”⁵³¹

⁵²⁸ AHV/C.139/Vol.184/188-194/Cuatro soldados de Pardos solicitan que se les respeten sus licencias/Octubre-Noviembre 1822

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

As the former militiamen appealed to authorities for their freedom based on having done service during the colonial era, and under the premise that serving under a racially segregated militia went against the tenants of social equality of the Mexican nation, Santa Anna conceded their petition. Nevertheless, by embracing the tenants of a Mexican deracialized identity, and in the face of possible aggression from the Spanish reduction at Ulúa, Santa Anna warned the former militiamen that their service might be required once again, thus ultimately possibly invalidating their discharge for having served in a colonial racially segregated militia that went against new ideological bases. This showed that under the apparent positive and benevolent intentions behind a raceless Mexican society, for individuals who once enjoyed specific protections and benefits for serving under racially segregated corporations, such as Veracruz' *Pardos y Morenos* militiamen, the transition into an independent Mexico hindered their political and social standing.

Taking advantage of national and regional tensions, the new Spanish commander of the Ulúa fortress, Francisco Lemaun invaded the Port-City on October 27th. Unknowingly to Lemaun, Afro-descendant defenders of the city organized a trap, and supported by prominent imperial newly-appointed Captain General of Puebla, Oaxaca, and Veracruz, José Antonio de Echávarri, they successfully repelled the invasion attempt.⁵³² The role of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as line troops and cavalry in the defense of the Port-City was identified, according to Spanish reports, as the prime factor

⁵³² Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 198; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 59.

that allowed imperial forces to repel the attack.⁵³³ Once again, Veracruz' Afro-descendants resulted instrumental in the defense of the city by repelling the Spanish attack. In doing so, Veracruz' Afro-descendants not only resulted instrumental in this military action, at the same time they reaffirmed their role and position as staunch defenders of Mexican liberalism and independence, even as a parallel current of deracialized identity sought to discredit their agency and political roles based on fears of them becoming republican rebels.

Despite that the Afro-descendants' victory temporarily solidified local control of the imperials on the face of a brewing republican revolt in the city and hinterland, and with it a temporary positive shift of their political role in the eyes of imperials, Iturbide's forceful dissolution of Congress on October 31st of 1822 countered such gains by increasing tensions.⁵³⁴ This led Antonio López de Santa Anna, on December 2nd, in the Port-City of Veracruz, to switch sides onto the republican side, and with the full support of Afro-descendant troops of the Eight Infantry Regiment, and of Guadalupe Victoria, he made a *Pronunciamiento* against Iturbide and the Mexican Empire calling for the

⁵³³ ASHM/ C. 5376/ José Valls a Bartolomé González/ San Juan de Ulúa/ 28 de octubre de 1822 and ASHM/C.5376 y C.100/Francisco Lemauro al secretario de Estado y del despacho de la Guerra/ San Juan de Ulúa/ 28 de Octubre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵³⁴ Spanish commander Francisco Lemauro worked to sow further political discord and instability between Iturbide and republican factions. This is exemplary of a period that Juan Ortiz Escamilla has identified as the period from 1822 since the brewing of republican unrest in the hinterland of Veracruz, until the abdication of Iturbide and the end of the empire in 1823, as "The War of Low Intensity" or the political "free-for-all". This period, Escamilla argues, was characterized by political intrigues and manipulation where imperials, republicans, and the Spanish reduction of San Juan de Ulúa, tried to play and benefit from the manipulation of each other. As such, temporary truces between Santa Anna and Lemauro, as well between imperial commander Echavarrri and Lemauro, occurred. For more see Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 196, 200-201, 205-6.

establishment of Mexico as a federal republic.⁵³⁵ By December 5th Afro-descendant troops under Santa Anna's leadership solidified republican control of the city, enabling Santa Anna the following day, on December 6th, to proclaim his *Plan de Veracruz*, reaffirming his position on the call for an end to Iturbide's Empire and the immediate restoration of congress. Despite its liberal undertones, the plan surprisingly dropped outright calls for the immediate establishment of Mexico as a federal republic, instead advocating for a more inclusive political coalition that would in turn work to immediately end Iturbide's tenure in power.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁵ In his *Proclama del general Santa Anna*, Santa Anna specified that the objectives of his political uprising could be summarized into the "inviolable observance of the three guarantees published in Iguala", the reestablishment of congress, the proclamation of a republican government, the establishment of an armistice with the Spanish reduction at Ulúa, and the immediate reestablishment of maritime trade. See "Proclama del general Santa Anna," The Pronunciamiento in independent Mexico, 1821-1876 Database: A Research Project at the University of St. Andrews, accessed June 6th, 2020, <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/pronunciamientos/index.php>; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 61.

⁵³⁶ The *Plan de Veracruz* demonstrated its inclusive nature on its annotations, as it considered Mexican citizens "everyone, without distinction, those born in this soil, the Spanish, and the foreigners whom live within it, and the foreigners that through Congress obtain citizenship." Following on calls of liberal comprehensive citizenship, the plan's annotations also called for "free and true commerce and other traffic of interests in the interior," perhaps attempting to calm the concerns of Veracruz' merchants and Spanish elites in the capital. According to Will Fowler, Santa Anna consulted with former Colombian republican ambassador Miguel Santa María in order to transform his pronunciamiento of December 2nd into a political inclusive movement that moved from calls of outright demand for the implementation of a liberal republic, to focus on the call for the immediate reestablishment of Congress as the higher political authority of Mexico. His objective, Fowler states, was that of appealing to the Spanish merchant elites of Veracruz, and the Spanish elites of the capital, in order to amass support from both popular subaltern sectors and elites, while also allowing Santa Anna to consolidate as the ultimate figure of republicanism in the nation at the time. The modifications of said plan became also representative of how regional elites "could successfully bring down an interfering centralist regime and defend their local power arrangements through pronunciamiento pressure." The plan reaffirmed the Catholic religion as the state religion on its first article, while in its second and third article it reaffirmed Mexico's independence and deposited the sovereignty of the nation on the Sovereign Mexican Congress. It called for a complete dismissal of Iturbide's government, political and military appointments made by him, and claimed that the Sovereign Mexican Congress was the "organism of true voice in the nation", claiming congress was the only institution able to "save us from the actual shipwreck." For more see *Plan de Veracruz*, "The Pronunciamiento in independent Mexico, 1821-1876 Database: A Research Project at the University of St. Andrews, accessed June 6th, 2020, <https://arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/pronunciamientos/index.php>; Fowler, 61; Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 90; ASHM/C.94/ Antonio López de Santa Anna a Francisco Lemaur/ Veracruz/ 5 de diciembre de 1822 and ASHM/C. 5376/ Circular del ministro de Estado José Dominguez/ Puebla/ 5 de diciembre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants manifested the worst fears of Iturbide and imperial authorities as the suspicions of them becoming republican rebels became a reality. Afro-descendants responded politically to what they considered a threat to the liberal order and peace they had fought for, threatened by a drift into absolutism from Iturbide.⁵³⁷ In being the primary backers of Santa Anna's *Pronunciamiento*, Veracruz' Afro-descendants further cemented themselves as instrumental political actors whose political impact now transcended their regional impact to the entire nation as they became the premier military and political force that asked for Mexico to become a liberal republic. It was their stance in favor of republicanism which ironically made them become the target of racialized attacks by imperial authorities, who hypocritically had sponsored an outlawing and disuse of racial categories in the nation. As their sociopolitical role became even more important, imperial authorities sought to further discredit their agency as Black republican rebels, not through the use of deracialized identity frameworks, but through the use of outright racial language.

This was demonstrated in a report to Iturbide by Brigadier José María Lobato, where he informed of the general political panorama of the province. In his report, Lobato assured Iturbide that most of the inhabitants of the Port-City favored the monarchical liberal government of the empire. Heavily implying that said inhabitants

⁵³⁷ With the full military and political support of the City and hinterland's Afro-descendants behind his back, Santa Anna established correspondence with Lemaur with the aim of negotiating an armistice. In said negotiations, Santa Anna informed the Spanish commander of Ulúa that the political insurrection he had commenced aimed at nothing but establishing for Mexico a governmental change that would grant to its inhabitants "the restitution of dignity of free men, that they had lost due to the loss of a ministry that became separated from the constitutional path. For more, see ASHM/C.94/ Francisco Lemaur a Antonio López de Santa Anna/ San Juan de Ulúa/ 3 de diciembre de 1822 and ASHM/C.94/Antonio López de Santa Anna/ San Juan de Ulúa/ 4 de diciembre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

were Europeans and European descendants he further stated that due to Santa Anna's *Pronunciamiento*, and his armistice with Spanish commander Francisco Lemaur at Ulúa, said events created "great discontent among Veracruz' troops and inhabitants, not having among them those who would adopt the wicked call, except some *jarocho*s that are as despicable for their vices as they are useless in battle."⁵³⁸ Lobato thus immediately identified allegiance to republicanism and Santa Anna's uprising exclusively to Veracruz' Afro-descendants. He used the term *jarocho* to refer to Afro-descendant troops, in turn identifying them in negative terms as prone to vices and uselessness, therefore using an informal and regional racial marker in negative ways, something technically outlawed and frowned upon by imperial authorities, to describe republican Afro-descendants. The use of informal regional terms of race in negative terms only worsened as Veracruz' Afro-descendants continued to make republican gains.

Shortly after Santa Anna's *Pronunciamiento*, the Veracruz Provincial Deputation, the City Council of Veracruz, Guadalupe Victoria, and the garrisons of the hinterland towns of Alvarado and La Antigua, followed suit by adopting the *Plan de Veracruz*, in turn solidifying Mexico's first formal call for a republic in post-independence Mexico.⁵³⁹ Veracruz' Afro-descendants served as both the military and popular class push that Santa Anna's movement needed to become a movement of national importance. Their importance to republicanism was well-noted by imperials, for as it continued to expand

⁵³⁸ AGN/ Gobernación sin sección/ C.19/ exp. 15/ fs.1-2/ Partes noticiales dados por el brigadier D. José María Lobato, sobre las últimas ocurrencias de Veracruz/ México/ Imprenta Imperial/ 6 de diciembre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵³⁹ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 207; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 62.

they were considered by commanders such as José Govantes as a threat to local economic and political stability brought by the empire, who through their zealous defense of the city and republicanism would put the nation at risk. He referred to them in negative ways as “*la jarocheda*”, making use of the plural form of the regional term *jarocho* directly associated to Afro-descendants. Thus, it was through their zealous defense of the city, and a liberal peace under republicanism, that Veracruz’ Afro-descendants propelled Govantes to recommend an imperial siege of the Port-City, a siege which José de Echávarri shortly after materialized.⁵⁴⁰

Despite continued negative racial connotations associated to their political action and identity, Veracruz’ Afro-descendants’ continued to be staunch defenders of republicanism. Their support became instrumental in the offensive republican military campaigns that from December 19th to December 21st were led by Santa Anna and Victoria through the hinterland in attempts at spreading republican ideologies to the interior. It was in these campaigns that Afro-descendants allowed the capture of strategic gun emplacements controlled by imperials, along with recruiting more Afro-descendants to the republican cause.⁵⁴¹ Afro-descendants, conformed by “one thousand men, the greater part of them Blacks from the coast” according to imperial sources, attempted to liberate Xalapa from imperial control and strengthen republican control in the highland

⁵⁴⁰ AGN/Justicia/Vol.31/ exp.1/ 18 de diciembre de 1822; UT-BLAC/Colección Hernández y Dávalos/ 15-7.2017/ José Govantes a ?/ Xalapa/ 8 de diciembre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁴¹ First, Santa Anna and 800 Afro-descendant troops attempted to liberate Orizaba, but his persuasion failed to capture support from local authorities as he was able only to conscript a number of Afro-descendant individuals, or *jarochos*, from Orizaba to his army. Then, Santa Anna and Afro-descendant troops attacked the *casamata*, or casemate, of Plan del Río where they defeated a force of 400 imperial soldiers. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 209; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 62.

region.⁵⁴² The attack on Xalapa failed and proved tragic for Afro-descendant republican. Not only was war officially declared by the imperials on Santa Anna and Black republicanism, but as republican forces became defeated, its soldiers dispersed in the surrounding mountains, forcing remaining republican Afro-descendants to retreat to the Port-City, where mass desertion to the imperial side occurred. It was in their defeat that imperials mockingly used negative informal racial terms to refer to defeated Black republicans, for as one imperial commander recounted: “all the roads are full of those troops that are called the *jarochada*.”⁵⁴³

But the use of informal racial terminology such as *jarochada* was not the only term used in mocking, and incongruent, fashion parallel to deracialized ideas of the new nation by imperials themselves. In associating them with violence and instability in Veracruz, imperial authorities even used old colonial terms after their defeat in Xalapa by referring to them as *negros*, or Blacks, “from *tierra caliente*”.⁵⁴⁴ This demonstrated that the frameworks of raceless national identity mattered only as long as Veracruz’ Afro-descendants complied with the preservation of Iturbide’s empire, for imperial authorities

⁵⁴² UT-BLAC/ Colección Hernández y Dávalos/ 15.7.2043/Faustino de Capetillo a José Domniguez/ Xalapa 20 a 21 de diciembre de 1822 in Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 62; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 209.

⁵⁴³ Santa Anna was forced to retreat to Veracruz with only one sole advisor to become the head of 600 troops surrounded by three-thousand imperial troops led by Echeverri. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 209; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 62; UT-BLAC/ Colección Hernández y Dávalos- 15-7.2055/Manuel de la Sota Riva a José María Lobato/México/ 23 de diciembre de 1822; ASHM/C.101/Orden imperial del ministro de Guerra y Marina/ Manuel de Sota Riva/ México/ 21 de diciembre de 1822 and Francisco Manuel Hidalgo a Manuel de la Sota Riva, ministro de Guerra y Marina/ Córdoba/ 22 de diciembre de 1822/ con anexos, en AGN, Diario oficial, Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de México, T. 1, número 3, 7 de enero de 1823, pp.9-10 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁴⁴ UT-BLAC/ Colección Hernández y Dávalos/15-7.2017/José Govantes a ?/Xalapa/ 8 de diciembre de 1822 and UT-BLAC/Colección Hernández y Dávalos/15-7.2043/Faustino de Capetillo a José Domínguez/Xalapa/20-21 de diciembre de 1822 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

continued to use racial, and often colonial, identity markers that aimed to discredit their political and social impact as Black republicans. Despite their long fight in support of liberalism and frameworks of governance and representation that were to include them, Afro-descendants continued to be racially excluded by the same frameworks of raceless national representation they originally had fought for.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants, in the face of incongruent discrimination and increased political roles during 1822, demonstrated three important points. First, their support of Santa Anna on the *Pronunciamientos* of December 2nd and 6th, calling for a radical change of Mexico into a republic via the restoration of congress demonstrated their continued support towards liberalism that Afro-descendants, firstly empowered by Cádiz' liberalism, and then inspired by insurgent liberalism during the War for Independence, had adopted and continued to sponsor. Second, their role as primary and instrumental military defenders and enactors of republican liberalism in Veracruz and *Sotavento* demonstrated the important role of Veracruz' Afro-descendants as active sociopolitical actors in the pursuit of egalitarian frameworks of representation, commerce, and governance, even if frameworks of egalitarianism were being used to exclude them. Third, the instances of desertion by some Afro-descendants after their defeat in Xalapa demonstrated the limits to republican compromises that Veracruz' Afro-descendants made explicit towards political and military *Pronunciamientos*.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants demonstrated that they were willing to pursue and support armed calls for republican liberalism as long as their political and personal well-being were not immediately threatened. As proved in Xalapa, deserting and joining

imperials became a viable alternative for some in the pursuit of both peace and their personal sociopolitical betterment. This made Veracruz' Afro-descendants active, unique, and complex, political and ideological players of the region. Considering these three factors of their political participation during 1822 helps us reframe conceptions of how former colonial subalterns in Veracruz, and Mexico, participated in the calls of rebellion against Iturbide and in support of republicanism.

By early 1823, Veracruz' Afro-descendant republicanism was on the verge of failure. After the taking of republican stronghold of Alvarado by imperials, on January 2nd Echávarri established an imperial siege and attacked the Port-City, but Afro-descendant troops stationed in the city repelled the aggression.⁵⁴⁵ Despite having reaffirmed republican liberalism in the city, their defense seemed to mount too little as the siege continued and prevented the entering of supplies and foodstuffs, eventually driving much of the population to abandon the city towards "the coasts and immediate towns," except for Black republican troops.⁵⁴⁶ The population exodus, expanding disease among imperial troops, and the steadfast control that republican Afro-descendants had over the city, propelled Echávarri to betray Iturbide and by February 1st, in coordination with Lemaur, made his own *Pronunciamento* against Iturbide with the *Plan de Casamata*.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 212; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 64.

⁵⁴⁶ AGN/ Diario Oficial/ Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de Mexico/ T. 1/ Número 8/ "Noticias de oficio recibidas de Xalapa fecha 11 del corriente/ 18 de enero de 1823/ p. 29 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁴⁷ Upon seeing growing discontent towards his superior, Iturbide, by the greater population and political leaders and corporations of Mexico, Echavárrri began negotiating a truce with Lemaur ultimately expressing to him his intent of rebelling against Iturbide and his support for liberalism as he stated that most of "military bosses and officers I have the honor of leading have manifested me their liberal feelings. See José María Calderón al ministro de Guerra y Marina, 17 de enero de 1823, con anexo, en AGN, Diario oficial, Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de México, Número 9, 21 de enero de 1823, pp.33-34 and ASHM/C. 101/ José Antonio de Echávarri a Francisco Lemaur/ Campo frente a Veracruz/ 28 de enero de 1823 in Ortiz Escamilla.

In same fashion as Santa Anna's *Plan de Veracruz*, which Veracruz' Afro-descendants had openly supported and fought for, the *Plan de Casa Mata* provided reconciliatory frameworks that sought the immediate deposition of Iturbide from power through the restoration of the national congress and the granting of political power to Veracruz' regional deputation, paving the way for republican liberalism in the whole province to take hold.⁵⁴⁸ Veracruz' Afro-descendants found in Echávarri's plan another pathway for the securing of a liberal republican peace, and as such, along with Santa Anna and Victoria, adopted the *Casamata* plan, creating a coalescing force that ousted Iturbide from power on March 19th of 1823, dooming the short-lived imperial experiment and opening the doors for Mexico to become a federal republic.⁵⁴⁹

While scholars such as Juan Ortíz Escamilla and Will Fowler have centered this process of transition from empire to republic around the figure and role of Antonio López de Santa Anna as "Liberator of Veracruz and Founder of the Republic", and in the regional settings of Veracruz and *Sotavento* as first-ever bastions of republicanism⁵⁵⁰, no scholar has recognized the instrumental role of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in enabling republicanism at a regional and national level. Veracruz' Afro-descendants secured, defended, and expanded republicanism into the hinterland of Veracruz, and beyond, via

⁵⁴⁸ In the Plan, Echávarri dropped outright calls of a republic that Santa Anna initially had called for, instead calling in its first article for the immediate restoration of Congress, the calling of elections and the liberation of imprisoned liberal politicians in its second and third articles, and the granting of all administrative matters to the Provincial Deputation of Veracruz in its ninth article. See Acta de Casa Mata/Casa Mata/ 1 de febrero de 1823, en Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (coordinadora), *Planes a la nación mexicana*, tomo 1, México, Senado de la República, 1987, pp. 143-14 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵⁴⁹ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 009/ exp.112/ Instrucciones o indicaciones que se deben tener presentes del acta hecha en Casa Mata, de conformidad con el Plan de Veracruz/ 23 de febrero de 1823; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 215; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 65; Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*; Chávez, *Agustín de Iturbide*.

⁵⁵⁰ Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 217-18; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 66.

their participation in *Pronunciamientos* that eventually led to the expulsion of Iturbide and the end of empire by 1823.

In doing so, peoples of African descent in the region became active and engaged political participants that influenced the conformation not only of Veracruz, but of Mexico as a whole, into a federal republic. Despite the constantly evolving conceptions of deracialized identity that sought to discredit their roles and agency as Afro-descendant political actors of importance, first by the Spanish and then by imperials, they nevertheless increased their sociopolitical roles by opposing the perpetuating of monarchical systems of government made by Iturbide. It was the regional action, support, and defense of republicanism that Veracruz' Afro-descendants made which in great part served as the catalyst for the transition from empire to republic in Mexico as a whole. As Veracruz' Afro-descendants later realized, the transition into a republic was not to be easy, for exacerbated conflict with the Spanish at Ulúa, along with further perpetuation of deracialized nationalism, came to affect them directly.

Formerly African, Now Mexican: In Defense of National Sovereignty, 1823-1826

As Iturbide abandoned Mexico in mid 1823, Veracruz' Afro-descendants were pitted in between resurgent aggression from the Spanish at Ulúa, unstable consolidation of federalism, and the consolidation of deracialized national identity. Despite the wide acceptance by the Afro-descendant, and general, populations of Veracruz in regard to the implementation of republicanism in Mexico, the transition was fraught with weakness in

government and an unsure outcome during peace talks with the Spanish.⁵⁵¹ As peace negotiations broke down, and supported by the military and political action of Veracruz' Afro-descendants in the city, the newly formed republican City Council, Victoria, the Provincial Deputation of Veracruz, and the national government decided to close down the port's commercial access to the Spanish reduction as it began a naval blockade of the nearby neutral Isle of Sacrifices. Spanish hostilities then resumed over the city of 7,279 inhabitants by constant bombardment from San Juan de Ulúa.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵¹ The nascent republican government organized under a temporary triumvirate representing the executive power of the nascent republic and formed by Guadalupe Victoria, Nicolás Bravo, and Pedro Celestino Negrete, while the once disbanded Congress reformed and called for the election of a new Constituent Congress. Civil and military authorities of Veracruz, along with its inhabitants, celebrated and congratulated the restoration of Congress and the path towards a federal republic for Mexico, and by May of 1823 peace negotiations commenced, with Guadalupe Victoria as Mexican commissioner, between the new liberal republic and Spanish commissioners, leaving out of peace negotiations Lemaur and his reduction of San Juan de Ulúa. To complicate things further, by June 5th Santa Anna, in a surprising turn of events during assignment in the interior province of San Luis Potosí made another *Pronunciamiento* where he challenged the recently restored national Congress by naming himself "Protector of the Mexican Liberty," asking for the three guarantees of the Plan de Iguala to be protected via his military supporters, the carrying of elections for the Constituent Congress that would enable full province representation, and the granting of full power to the provinces via their deputations to enable a fully federal system for national governance. Despite initial reticence to support Santa Anna's demands for radical implementation of federalism by Veracruz' local authorities, they ultimately conceded, and along with other provinces of the country, pushed Congress into making Mexico into a federal republic where provincial governments were to elect their national representatives. Santa Anna then renounced to his *Pronunciamiento* on July 3rd. Immediately after Spanish and Mexican commissioners for peace reached a grinding halt when Mexican minister Lucas Alamán demanded that the Spanish recognized total independence of Mexico from Spain along with the surrendering of the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa by the Spanish, and as the Spanish commissioners declared they could only fulfill provisional commercial treaties being unable to make any political decision on behalf of the Spanish government. See Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 71, 75–76; Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 100, 102; Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁵² The census ordered by Veracruz' Provincial Deputation showed a population of the whole province of Veracruz in 150,475 inhabitants, where only 7,279 were inhabitants of the city and its immediate suburb of *extramuros* and surrounding towns. These numbers demonstrated pronounced depopulation caused by two years of violence in the city and the region. For more see AHV/C.145/Vol.190/fs.29-35/Censo que fijó la Diputación Provincial; The Port-City, through previous negotiations with the Spanish reduction at Ulúa, had continued serving for two years as a commercial entrepôt for both the Spanish, who paid customs fees to use it, and for the Mexican government, who had their ships and merchandise dock in Alvarado or the isle of sacrifices. Republican authorities, upon seeing Spanish reticence at being recognized an independent nation, blockaded the isle of sacrifices while closing commercial activity in the Port-City in reprisal. For more see Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 222, 225–226, 228; AHDM/Guadalupe Victoria: correspondencia diplomática/ "Oficio de D. Francisco Lemaur, gobernador del castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, a los comisionados del gobierno español comunicándoles la tentativa del gobierno mexicano de

By October, further blockades, along with the exodus of commerce and trade from the city to coastal villages such as Alvarado and Antón Lizardo,⁵⁵³ created a situation of scarcity that propelled two-thirds of the already scant population to “find refuge in the *haciendas* and ranches of the region” which were full of refugees and created an environment where a deadly plague spread.⁵⁵⁴ A month after, Veracruz’ Afro-descendant defenders, which conformed the greater part of the military establishment defending the city and region from Spanish aggression, found themselves in need of urgent aid from the federal government and citizens of greater Mexico. In an anonymous and collective public request for support, they situated themselves as the last line of defense for national sovereignty stating:

And there will be those who attribute our lack of success to the difference of opinion regarding Congress or government, and between centralism or federalism; may it be known that is not the case, let it be known that with the scarce garrison that exists in this city, considerably lessened by more than two-hundred men that lay in the hospital, and other many losses between deaths, convalescents that had to abandon the city and deserters, eight fortified points of the city are covered, six other are guarded, three-leagues of coast are defended, while we attend to the safety and security of the city’s inhabitants and their interests.⁵⁵⁵

ocupar militarmente la isla de sacrificios.”/ pp.124-125/14 de septiembre de 1823 and AHDM/ Guadalupe Victoria: correspondencia diplomática/ “Nota del general Victoria acompañando los pasaportes de los comisionados españoles, en protesta del bombardeo de la plaza de Veracruz desde el fuerte de San Juan de Ulúa. Acotación marginal de D. Juan Ramos Osés.”/p.129/ 26 de septiembre de 1823 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

⁵⁵³ Tensions surmounted as the Mexican government ordered a naval blockade of the Spanish reduction at Ulúa, propelling merchant houses to move their goods to Córdoba, Orizaba and Xalapa, while the government moved all trade and the customs house to the coastal towns of Alvarado and Antón Lizardo. See ASHM/C.102/Bando publicado por Francisco Molinos del Campo, jefe político de la provincia de México/10 de octubre de 1823, publicando decreto del Congreso de 8 de octubre in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*; Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 230, 232.

⁵⁵⁴ Ortiz Escamilla states that the Port-City presented a grim picture for its inhabitants. Not only was the city subjected to constant bombardment from San Juan de Ulúa, but the lack of foodstuffs, crumbling infrastructure, and the expanding plague, really resulted challenging for the inhabitants of the Port-City. For more see Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*, 231.

⁵⁵⁵ ASHM/C.102/Artículo publicado en el militar de Veracruz/Veracruz/15 de noviembre de 1823 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

Afro-descendant defenders reaffirmed their conviction not only as supporters and enactors of regional and national republican federalism, but in their decision to remain as defenders of the city in the face of multiple tribulations they became the defenders of national sovereignty as well. Afro-descendants poised themselves as instrumental lines of defense for the securing of national independence in the face of foreign aggression. They were conscious political actors who were keen in attaining the liberal and republican peace that they had fought so hard for. It was also through their request for monetary funds, uniforms, troops, munitions, and foodstuffs, they ultimately recriminated the lack of support by the rest of Mexico as they stated:

Let it be known to the entire nation that us, loyal observers of our duties and oaths, will not dismay in taking this enterprise ahead, not even as our fatigues and hardships try to bend us, and that Veracruz, with the debris of its last buildings, it will cover our unburied corpses... we will not take to the grave the glory of making our motherland free, and there we will rest while they become overwhelmed with the weight of slavery, and more the remorse of a criminal conscience.⁵⁵⁶

In doing such recrimination, Veracruz' Afro-descendants made clear to the entire nation that their political and military agency was not to be taken for granted, even as deracialized nationalism threatened their identity and political agency as Black republicans, for they argued that the fate of the new nation depended on their ability to defend Veracruz and its hinterland from Spanish aggression. Such attitudes by them only became strengthened as the Mexican government ordered the continuation of the war

⁵⁵⁶ ASHM/C.102/Artículo publicado en el militar de Veracruz/Veracruz/15 de noviembre de 1823 in Ortiz Escamilla.

with the Spanish reduction of Ulúa by December of 1823.⁵⁵⁷ Veracruz Afro-descendant troops assumed the role of first-line defenders of not only Veracruz, but of the nation. By stating their needs of support, and their steadfast loyalty to the new nation, they reassured government and the general population that the experiment of republican federalism was not to be jeopardized by the aggressions of the Spanish reduction at Ulúa.

At the same time, it demonstrated that Afro-descendants had acquired sociopolitical development through decades of interacting, enacting, and becoming part of the implementation of liberal politics in the city and its hinterland. They became empowered by liberalism, and rather than becoming outliers of liberal policies as in years past, they had become the embodiments of Mexican liberalism in Veracruz as the province joined the newly created Mexican federation on December 22nd as a state.

By early 1824, the tangible demonstrations of allegiance to republican liberalism via their participation in the *Pronunciamientos* of 1823, and in the defense of Veracruz, that Afro-descendants made, along with a need to consolidate the political state of the nation in the face of Spanish aggression, persuaded the Mexican Congress to push forward with the drafting and formulation of Mexico's first federal constitution. As a result, congress drafted and published the Constitutive Act in January 31st, establishing that Mexico was to become a "popular, federal representative republic."⁵⁵⁸ Veracruz'

⁵⁵⁷ ASHM/ C.102/Dictamen de la comisión especial nombrada para examinar la declaración del gobierno de continuar la guerra con la nación española/ sin fecha in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵⁵⁸ The push for a federal constitution was exacerbated by a *Pronunciamiento* from General José María Lobato which demanded dismissals of all Spaniards from public office occurred in Mexico City. General José María Lobato, native to Xalapa, Veracruz, not only aimed to dispossess all Spanish born in the Iberian peninsula from holding positions in public office, he also aimed to "force the removal of two alleged Hispanophiles, Miguel Domínguez and Jose Mariano Michelena" from the executive-power Triumvirate,

Afro-descendants demonstrated exuberance at the news, as reported by Guadalupe Victoria who informed that “amidst the greatest demonstrations of jubilee the oath to the Constitutive Act was made in this Plaza by the praiseworthy troops that have the honor of safeguarding it.”⁵⁵⁹

Immediately after, following on the example set forth that the Afro-descendant defenders of Veracruz established, the rest of the population of the city followed suit by making the oath in the city’s cathedral, and by the 28th of February “all towns of the Province” had sworn allegiance to the federal republican system.⁵⁶⁰ Afro-descendant defenders of the Port-City inspired a political revolution that reverberated all the way to the capital through their allegiance and dedication to both republicanism and to the defense of the Port-City and *Sotavento*. In searching the path to republican peace, Veracruz’ Afro-descendants informed the legal pathway for Mexico to become as a republic in hopes to both a recognition of their role as consolidators and defenders of the nation in times of independence and peace.

Seeing this, Mexican republican leaders worked to coopt the agency of Veracruz’ Afro-descendant defenders to their advantage by expanding notions of deracialized identity over the identity of the Black defenders of the Port-City. Such attitudes of overhauling both formal and informal, negative or positive, racial categorizations that designated Blackness as a marker of socioracial and political identity for Veracruz’ Afro-

who had temporarily replaced Guadalupe Victoria and Nicolás Bravo. For more pleas see Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 102; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 77.

⁵⁵⁹ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0114/ exp. 14/ Documento 46/fs.95/28 de febrero de 1824

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

descendants were reflected in a speech by Guadalupe Victoria exalting their valiant defense of the city:

Each of those citizens are all defenders of national and liberal independence; their valiant and suffering troops have credited, and will continue to credit their bravery and virtues, opposing their chests as firm walls against the attacks of those who pretend to violate the national soil.⁵⁶¹

In his speech, Victoria assured the nation that Veracruz Afro-descendants were not socioracial “others” but brave Mexican citizens whose valiant defense was led by “the counsel of wisdom, justice, and the purest patriotism.”⁵⁶² By using the terminology of citizen, rather than that of *Pardo*, *Moreno*, *Trigueño*, *Jarocho* or Black, Victoria recognized the instrumental role of Afro-descendants from Veracruz not only in the defense of their city, but also in the efforts of consolidating the Mexican nation-state through the events of Veracruz. But in doing so, Victoria deracialized Veracruz’ Afro-descendants as he fully recognized them as Mexican citizens devoid of markers that denoted their Blackness or their agency as Black republicans. Purposefully, for political purposes of national unity, and using the frameworks of a benign and egalitarian new nation, Victoria enforced the coercion of their agency from regionally Black active sociopolitical actors to that of patriotic raceless Mexican citizens.

This action coerced Afro-descendant political agency, motivating national leaders to ask for financial and military support for the defenders of the Port-City, all while their position as Black republican defenders of the nation helped to pave both the process of

⁵⁶¹ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0109/ exp.1/ fs.1-4/ Discurso de Guadalupe Victoria al pueblo de Veracruz sobre alteración del orden/ 7 de julio de 1824

⁵⁶² Ibid.

national presidential elections and the election of representatives for Congress, consolidating the nation-state even more at their expense.⁵⁶³ Legal efforts of further extirpation of Blackness from the regional and national identity character continued by July of 1824, as despite temporarily allowing pre-existing slave ownership, the slave trade was outlawed.⁵⁶⁴ As such, despite benign intentions, national Mexican leadership sought to sever ties not only to ideological and social notions of Blackness as colonial and foreign, but also to eliminate part of its practical manifestation via the outlawing of the slave trade.

Veracruz' Afro-descendants transformed their political actions into physical manifestations of national republican defense. It was the coopting of their agency for nationalistic purposes which in great part enabled the consolidation, by October 4th, of the Mexican republican project into a federal republic through the ratification and publishing of the Mexican Federal Constitution.⁵⁶⁵ With the promulgation of the first federal Mexican Constitution of 1824, the Mexican state made no specific provision on slavery or socioracial equality, rather focusing on the nation having the responsibility of “protecting the rights of citizens” and with the establishment of a comprehensive

⁵⁶³ By August, Victoria became elected the first president of the Mexican Republic whilst elections for the Constitutional Congress commenced at the same time. AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0097/exp.19/ 15 de agosto de 1824; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 79.

⁵⁶⁴ Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 30; Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje*, 183.

⁵⁶⁵ The charter asserted the political independence of Mexico from Spain, as well as its formal consolidation into a liberal federated nation. It established a weak executive branch of power, giving multitude of faculties to a bicameral congress, such as passing laws, imposing taxes, the forming of an army, and declaring war, while also establishing a judicial branch of power with the creation of the Mexican Supreme Court of Justice. See Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 105; Fowler, *Santa Anna of Mexico*, 79.

federated system that respected the sovereignty of states in statewide and local matters, leaving matters of identity and citizenship to individual states.⁵⁶⁶

Veracruz' Afro-descendants inspired republicanism in the region and provided the temporary unifying social and political element, via their defense of Veracruz, that paved the way for the ratification of Mexico's first ever constitutional charter. Their defense of Veracruz, along with the precedence of supporting liberalism in the early 1810s, followed by republicanism during the end of the War of Independence, and ultimately federalism, proved that Afro-descendants of the region were willing to make sacrifices in exchange of the national establishment of a system that they believed would better represent them in peacetime. Nevertheless, the system they helped to implement continued to discredit their agency and roles as enlightened Afro-descendant republicans.

Efforts of discrediting the immense political agency of Afro-descendants in Veracruz continued by June of 1825, as the Political Constitution of the Free and Sovereign State of Veracruz, largely based off the 1812 Spanish Cádiz' charter,⁵⁶⁷ was

⁵⁶⁶ The 1824 charter made no provision regarding socioracial equality in the new republic, nor of the matter of slavery, still existent in Mexico by 1824. The constitution, according to Naveda, established that "citizenship was limited, equally as the access to enlightenment, to a few that did not belong to the Indian masses nor to the descendants of slaves, supposedly favored by the Constitution." For example, the 1824 charter established in its third article that the Catholic Church was to be recognized as the state religion, while in its article 154 it established that military and ecclesiastical *fueros* were to remain in place, preserving immense amounts of power for both institutions. The charter also allowed individual states to be in charge of civil militias while granting *Ayuntamientos* immense power over local matters. Then, in full consolidation of the nation-state, as the Mexican Constitution of 1824 was approved and published on October 4th, Guadalupe Victoria took office as the first President of Mexico five days after in October 9th. See Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825," in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica*, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 195–217, <http://books.openedition.org/cemca/1633>; Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 105–6.

⁵⁶⁷ Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825"; Fowler, *Independent Mexico*, 105.

implemented. The second section, entitled “Of *Veracruzanos* and Their Rights”, established in its sixth article that “*veracruzanos* are those who are born or reside in the territory of the state.”⁵⁶⁸ The state constitution adopted the term *veracruzano* in efforts to do away with prior racial categorizations, both formal and informal, that linked Veracruz to the colonial era, and in turn discredited the then essential role of Veracruz’ Afro-descendants as Black republicans in defense of the state and the nation.⁵⁶⁹ Also, in its tenth article, the charter established that “every *veracruzano* is born free, even if its parents are slaves.”⁵⁷⁰

Although not calling for the immediate abolishment of slavery, and despite the benign backdrop of the article as it attempted to diminish slavery’s effects in the state, in cutting ties with Blackness by considering it a foreign and colonial remnant the charter ultimately negatively affected the sociopolitical standing of peoples of African descent in Veracruz as it ordered all free children of slaves in the state to be recognized as *veracruzanos* and Mexicans, not Black. In doing so, the state government of Veracruz tackled the issues of slavery and racial categorizations by tackling an institution they saw as obsolete and strictly tied to their colonial past, but in turn affected the practical needs

⁵⁶⁸ In its seventh article, the constitution also specified that foreigners that resided in the state, and who had received naturalization documents, were also considered citizens. See Veracruz-Llave, *Constitución Política Del Estado De Veracruz: Sancionada Por Su Congreso Constituyente En 3 De Junio De 1825, Y Reformada Ultimamente En 3 De Abril De ... Legislatura Constitucional* (Nabu Press, 2010).

⁵⁶⁹ In its ninth article the charter stated that “in the State of Veracruz, the law is for everyone, whether it protects or punishes: all *veracruzanos* are equal before it,” adopting Iguala’s liberalism in its pursuing of egalitarian frameworks under the law. The charter thus established that the law applied equally regardless of socioracial, economic, or political background, thus adopting the tenants of mestizo criollo nationalism. See Veracruz-Llave, *Constitución Política Del Estado De Veracruz: Sancionada Por Su Congreso Constituyente En 3 De Junio De 1825, Y Reformada Ultimamente En 3 De Abril De ... Legislatura Constitucional* (Nabu Press, 2010).

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

and political agency of free peoples of African descent who had bravely and passionately fought in favor of republicanism and with the aim of obtaining certain rights and privileges in peace.⁵⁷¹

Both enslaved and free Veracruz' Afro-descendants not only represented prescient links to colonial systems of economy and sociopolitical structures, but also living remnants of racial stratification that could potentially harm the desired outcomes of deracialized Mexican nationalism. Veracruz' Afro-descendants, now considered plainly Mexicans and *veracruzanos*, realized that Blackness in Veracruz, and the nation, was deemed foreign and incompatible with Mexican identity. The Veracruz' charter of 1825 , as it attempted to make radical attempts of goodwill to establish a systematical end to slavery and racial categorizations with the adoption of liberal *criollo* nationalism, in doing so it obscured the particular sociopolitical contributions that since 1820 Veracruz' Afro-descendants made to the region and the nation not only as actively political former colonial subalterns in the definition of independent Veracruz, but in the consolidation of the Mexican nation-state. Veracruz' state authorities shared the liberal sentiments of President Victoria and his contemporaries, who in efforts of erasing *casta* nomenclatures more rapidly by emancipating slaves who had been insurgents, and granting the ability to

⁵⁷¹ Ben Vinson argues: "As long as slavery persisted, society retained a structural need to preserve aspects of caste hierarchy and nomenclature so as to demarcate the place of slaves." See Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje*, 183.

buy their freedom to others⁵⁷², demonstrated that slavery, caste systems, and Blackness needed to disappear in order to implement a true deracialized Mexico.⁵⁷³

As the republic and its national deracialized identity consolidated, ironically at the expense of Veracruz' Afro-descendant political agency and identity, the only impediment for the full consolidation of Mexican sociopolitical, and economic sovereignty rested in the remaining Spanish troops at the isle-fortress of San Juan de Ulúa.⁵⁷⁴ Nevertheless, further naval blockades,⁵⁷⁵ the continued and unrelenting defense of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, and the spread of rampant diseases such as the scurvy that made of Ulúa a fortress "full of sickness and surrounded by death, hunger, bad weather, and cannonballs after nine months of confinement", forced the new Spanish commander, Brigadier José

⁵⁷² Vinson III, 183; Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 30; Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825."

⁵⁷³ Ted Cohen argues that "slavery and caste were intrinsically bound together as a sociological problem in need of extirpation-and Blackness, its most pernicious social and demographic incarnation, needed to disappear. If a postcolonial fantasy rooted in national unity and racial harmony were to become a reality, then the new nation's African heritage could only remain as a subject of historical inquiry buried in Spanish colonial archives." See Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico*, 9.

⁵⁷⁴ The outcomes of the Spanish reduction of San Juan de Ulúa were influenced not only by the active resistance against them by Veracruz' Afro-descendants, but by events in Cuba and Spain, the securing and loss of supply chains, and the rise of disease amongst the troops stationed there. The Spanish reduction kept itself supplied through the commerce they established with American merchants from New Orleans, but as British ships allied with the Mexican government commenced active blockades against the isle-fortress, said supplies became scant. Also, ideological disputes amongst Spanish troops stationed there, due to the return of absolutism and the end of the liberal government in the peninsula, caused plenty of division. A scurvy epidemic in 1824, forced Francisco Lemaur to resign his post and gave way to Brigadier José Coppinger to take command of the critical situation. Nevertheless, the reemerging of scurvy by 1825 proved to be tipping point in breaking Spanish resistance at Ulúa. For more information on the ways by which Spanish resistance in San Juan de Ulúa developed. After a complicated year for the Spanish reduction of San Juan de Ulúa that ranged from desertions to epidemics, by September of 1825 the ground was set for an effective Mexican defense not only of the city but of national sovereignty. See Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra*, 234-44.

⁵⁷⁵ With the enabling of an impromptu fleet via the hiring of English sailors, the Mexican government proceeded to enact a stricter blockade over incoming supplies to the isle-fortress, in turn effectively weakening Spanish aggression over Veracruz. See Ortiz Escamilla, 245; Archivo General de Palacio/ Sección Fernando VII/ Fondo Reinado/ C.20/ exp. 10/ "Relación histórica en extracto de doce de los principales sucesos de la guerra de independencia de la nación mexicana."/fragmento/ México/ 27 de agosto de 1827 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

Coppinger, to capitulate to joint Veracruz Afro-descendant and Mexican forces of the interior on November 18th 1825.⁵⁷⁶

Veracruz' Afro-descendants helped to formally end over three-hundred years of Spanish presence in Veracruz and the final consolidation of Mexican national sovereignty. They were instrumental sociopolitical actors in the formation of the region and the nation under federal republican frameworks, and in the defeat and expulsion of the Spanish reduction of San Juan de Ulúa. Despite of this, at the same time they experienced an incongruent transformation of their identity that sought, through the use of frameworks of egalitarian deracialized nationalism, to disenfranchise their identity as Black republicans. As they came to see soon after, Veracruz' Afro-descendants were no longer "Afro", but now they became *veracruzanos* and Mexican. Their political roles and identity as peoples of African descent, which during the late-colonial era had helped them procure benefits and social standing through their roles as royalist defenders of the region, in the embracing of the same roles, now under an independent liberal republic, saw their identity and political roles coopted and thrown into the collective identity of Mexicans, leading to their singling out in the historical narratives of the struggles for Mexican independence.

By 1826, the neglect of Afro-descendant's instrumental political roles and Black identity had been formalized not only in legal government frameworks, but also in

⁵⁷⁶ The Mexican forces from the interior were led by General Miguel Barragán. See Archivo General de Palacio/ Sección Fernando VII/ Fondo Reinado/ C.20/ exp. 10/ "Relación histórica en extracto de doce de los principales sucesos de la guerra de independencia de la nación mexicana."/fragmento/ México/ 27 de agosto de 1827 in Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz*.

regional popular culture as the celebrations of the anniversary of the expulsion of the Spanish from San Juan de Ulúa demonstrated. On December 24th, the penultimate day of exuberant three-day celebrations, local newspaper *El mercurio* recounted that “the patriotic enthusiasm of all *veracruzanos* reached its apex. A massive gathering of the people reunited in the Constitution Plaza, where the most excellent General Barragán verified the manumission of two slaves.”⁵⁷⁷

It was during this symbolic and solemn act that a lengthy speech was made by Tomás Pastoriza, a citizen of the Port-City, where, in deracialized fashion, he alluded to the heroic odysseys of Veracruz and its inhabitants through the transition of colony to nation, while also alluding to the specters of slavery as a marking element of the colonial era, unable to exist in the new independent and republican order. Attempting to echo deracialized postcolonial nationalism, the speech called for “glory without end to all classes of the peoples of Veracruz”, where despite not specifically using direct and clear socioracial caste markers, it nevertheless inferred to them.⁵⁷⁸ This was further exemplified by the end of the speech which recited:

⁵⁷⁷ General and Governor of the State of Veracruz Miguel Barragán, amidst a large gathering of the population in Veracruz’ central square, presided the celebrations. See *Recapitulación de varias alocuciones y oficios de las autoridades de Veracruz, discursos, composiciones poéticas y oración del tribuno del pueblo veracruzano, en los días 23, 24 y 25 de diciembre de 1826, con motivo de celebrarse el primer aniversario de la rendición de Ulúa/ Veracruz/ imprenta del Papaloapan a cargo de J. Paladorio/ Diciembre de 1826* in Ortiz Escamilla. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified

⁵⁷⁸ *Recapitulación de varias alocuciones y oficios de las autoridades de Veracruz, discursos, composiciones poéticas y oración del tribuno del pueblo veracruzano, en los días 23, 24 y 25 de diciembre de 1826, con motivo de celebrarse el primer aniversario de la rendición de Ulúa/ Veracruz/ imprenta del Papaloapan a cargo de J. Paladorio/ Diciembre de 1826* in Ortiz Escamilla.

Now restituted the sweet calm of peace, we now occupy ourselves alone in the fulfilling of our respective duties; and today, dedicated to celebrate the first anniversary of the surrendering of Ulúa, what better offering could we offer in such a plausible moment than that of redeeming these two Africans that lived under the hard yoke of slavery? I tenderly witness this singular display. Similar to us, they were born free, and only a nefarious principle, so inveterate in the practice of some nations, can perpetuate the unjust commerce of beings whom nature conceded the same prerogatives as all of us... Live in peace, oh so fortunate mortals! You are now free on the same day that we remember the day on which we became free from Spanish tyranny!⁵⁷⁹

Pastoriza's use of language such as "African", and the symbolic parallels of the manumission of the two slaves, were meant to represent the occasion not as a humanitarian liberal act, but as a politically symbolic act which represented the break of political, social, and cultural ties between Veracruz and Spain. Neither the speech nor the newspaper article mentioned the names of the two slaves: they were but a symbolic element amidst one-year celebrations of victory over the Spanish. This was further demonstrated as the speech identified the two slaves as "our brothers who whimpered under slavery, due to barbarous and sacrilegious laws", who were now to enjoy "all of men's privileges, becoming equal as ourselves before the law, if they are virtuous, as should be all republicans."⁵⁸⁰

By identifying the slaves as "brothers", Pastoriza applied notions of deracialized *criollo* nationalism, and in his statement that they were to enjoy of equal representation before the law, and his association of them as virtuous individuals and republicans, he

⁵⁷⁹ Recapitulación de varias alocuciones y oficios de las autoridades de Veracruz, discursos, composiciones poéticas y oración del tribuno del pueblo veracruzano, en los días 23, 24 y 25 de diciembre de 1826, con motivo de celebrarse el primer aniversario de la rendición de Ulúa/ Veracruz/ imprenta del Papaloapan a cargo de J. Paladorio/ Diciembre de 1826 in Ortiz Escamilla.

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid.

attempted to counter notions of race and Blackness that differentiated them from other inhabitants of Veracruz and Mexico. In doing so, Blackness, for both the two slaves, and for free Afro-descendants of Veracruz and *Sotavento*, had become officially extirpated from not only national, but regional and localized notions of citizenship and civic duty to the nation, even as underlying regional racialized culture remained informally very much so alive. This demonstrated that despite legal attempts to erase caste markers and slavery, amidst popular culture and the collective regional cultural mindset, socioracial categories were still in force.

In both the speech and celebrations was the omission, and lack of recognition, of the ways by which Veracruz' Afro-descendants played instrumental roles in the social, political, and military, developments that from 1820 to 1825 enabled Veracruz and *Sotavento* to become the battleground for the consolidation of independence and the nation-state. Despite their important contributions, now living in a raceless society where the category of "Mexican" replaced colonial race categories, aiming instead to encompass their individual identity on the basis of "vice and virtue", Veracruz' Afro-descendants were now Mexicans, their identity as Blacks extirpated, and their former formal social and political associations with race done away. Veracruz' Afro-descendants became forgotten as they were coopted by the projects of national deracialized identity which associated Blackness intrinsically tied to the Spanish colonial period. They now contended with the fact that Blackness, as slavery, in Mexico were considered obsolete. Yet for some, such as for enslaved Afro-descendants, in an alleged post-racial society

where everyone was considered Mexican, they were still considered “Africans”.⁵⁸¹

Supposed all-inclusive Mexican citizenship and identity was then in reality for Afro-descendants incongruently exclusive.

Conclusion

From 1820 to 1825, Veracruz’ Afro-descendants became primordially active liberal players amidst political, social, and military developments of regional, national, and international significance. From the consolidation of royalist pacification through the implementation of Cádiz’ liberalism by 1820, to the liberation of Veracruz in favor of independence in 1821, and as supporters of republicanism whilst defending the Port-City and the region from Spanish aggression up to 1825, Veracruz’ Afro-descendants were the actors that consolidated independence, liberalism, and the republic, for Veracruz and in many ways for the rest of Mexico.

But ironically, it was the same liberal republic they fought for which ultimately worked to hinder their identify and political role as Afro-descendants by extirpating their Blackness from legal and informal, political and cultural, regional and national, frameworks of identity, whilst regional popular culture still held onto informal racial categories and connotations applied to peoples of African descent. Ultimately this hindered any recognition of them as important political players of African descent, rather cataloging them as Mexicans and denying any possible individual recognition and

⁵⁸¹ Slavery in Mexico was not to be legally abolished until 1829, three years later, under the presidential term of Vicente Guerrero.

benefits as Veracruz' Afro-descendants had enjoyed during the colonial era. Their Blackness and identity as Afro-descendants had been immediately and radically stripped away by the projects of national Mexican liberalism. Blackness had now become incompatible with the Mexican character. In the years to come, as the period of political chaos and instability that took place from 1827 to 1830 came to demonstrate, matters of identity and racial inclusion were the last thing in the Mexican political agenda.

Epilogue

This dissertation ends in 1830, when political matters in newly independent Mexico ceased to operate under colonial-era racial categorizations, shifting instead to the use of a social and political identity based on citizenship, that of “Mexican”, applied to all inhabitants of the newly formed Republic. With the expulsion of Spaniards from San Juan de Ulúa in 1826, the nascent Mexican Republic was politically truly free from the Spanish. Regionally, for Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland, after more than eleven years of war, peace seemed now a reality. But what both the Mexican State and its leaders failed to recognize was that those who enabled Veracruz and *Sotavento* to become the battleground for the regional consolidation of Mexico as a nation were in their majority of African descent. Through the almost immediate implementing of a raceless national identity, imposed early on with the consolidation of Mexican Independence through the elimination of *castas*, or racial categories, in the Plan de Iguala in 1821⁵⁸², reinforced through the first decrees of Iturbide’s short-lived Empire in 1822⁵⁸³, the belief of a national deracialized society quickly took hold.

Its impact, detrimental as it was for the recognition of Afro-descendant political agency in Veracruz as defenders of Mexico, came to cement by 1826 the ideological

⁵⁸² See ASHM/C.5375/ Plan o indicaciones para el gobierno que debe instalarse provisionalmente con el objeto de asegurar nuestra sagrada religión y establecer la independencia del Imperio Mexicano/ 24 de febrero de 1821 in Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *Veracruz : La Guerra Por La Independencia de México 1821-1825 Antología de Documentos* (México : Universidad Veracruzana :, 2008).

⁵⁸³ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0012/ exp.15/documento 6/fs. 8-10/ 1 de diciembre de 1821; AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0024/ exp.2/ Documento 4/ fs.7-10/ 4 de febrero de 1822 and AGN/Gobernación sin sección/Caja 0049/exp.67/Documento 1/fs.1/Solicitud para eliminar las palabras de mulatos, negros, indios, para en su lugar colocar mexicano/ 9 de marzo de 1822

belief that Blackness was now incompatible with the national Mexican character, regardless of the physical manifestation of Afro-descendants as still the major demographic of Veracruz and its hinterland. The Blackness of Afro-descendants was by the mid 1820s radically extirpated from their identity, legally recognizing them only as Mexican. Long gone were colonial-era specific economic and political benefits for Black militiamen in Veracruz, or their recognition as potential political powerhouses that could upset the regional balance of power, as the Veracruz' elites that implemented the 1812 Cádiz charter in the region cautiously recognized. As Veracruz' Afro-descendants defended the new nation from Spanish aggression well into 1825, Mexican leaders, most of them American-born Spaniards, or even *mestizos* without African heritage, devised a nation that came to exclude their Blackness. This was done under the idea of *mestizaje*, where the Mexican character was rooted under a mythologized Indigenous past, a glorified Indigenous past long gone after the colonial trauma, whose descendants, mixed peoples both Spanish and Indigenous origin, were to represent a new nation.⁵⁸⁴

Despite that Mexican legal reforms prohibited the official use of colonial racial categorizations that identified Blackness, something seen by Mexican leaders as a pivotal road to equality in newly independent Mexico, informal racial categorizations continued

⁵⁸⁴ See Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico: 1821-1835* (Lincoln, Neb: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); D. A. Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, Cambridge Latin American Miniatures 4 (Cambridge, England: Centre of Latin American Studies, 1985); Enrique Florescano, *Memoria Mexicana: Ensayo Sobre La Reconstrucción Del Pasado: Época Prehispánica-1821*, 1a ed, Contrapuntos (México, D.F.: Editorial J. Mortiz, 1987); Enrique Florescano, *Etnia, Estado y Nación: Ensayo Sobre Las Identidades Colectivas En México*, Nuevo Siglo (México, D.F: Aguilar, 1997); Enrique Florescano, ed., *Espejo Mexicano*, 1. ed (Ciudad de México: Biblioteca Mexicana de la Fundación Miguel Alemán, 2002); Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe: la formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (México: Fondo de Cultura económica, 1977).

to be used by local and national statesmen to refer to Veracruz' Afro-descendants. Particularly for Veracruz and *Sotavento* was the use of the term *jarocho*. This term originated from a local designation for the carrier of the *jara*, or lance, of Andalusian fashion brought over by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, and used by the Afro-descendant cowboys of the haciendas surrounding Veracruz and across its hinterland as both a cattle ranching tool and as weapon used by Afro-descendant militias, particularly that of the *Lanceros*, or lancers, by the eighteenth century.⁵⁸⁵ This new term came to be employed in the regional setting of Veracruz and its Leeward hinterland, becoming an informal racial categorization that for the first decades of the nineteenth century was used to refer to the implicit Blackness of Veracruz' Afro-descendants.

Despite this, the hope of racial equality transforming into popular political participation for Mexico's neglected social classes was perhaps best embodied by Mexico's first, and only, Afro-descendant President: Vicente Guerrero. Hero and consolidator of Mexican Independence, Vicente Guerrero was born in 1781 in Tixtla, in western New Spain, to a free Black muleteer father, Pedro Guerrero, and a *mestiza* mother of "light complexion" María Guadalupe Saldaña.⁵⁸⁶ Joining the insurgency at the behest of Afro-descendant insurgent leader José María Morelos, Guerrero became instrumental in both the consolidation of Mexican Independence in his political-military

⁵⁸⁵ See Antonio García de León, *Fandango: El Ritual Del Mundo Jarocho a Través de Los Siglos*, Primera reimpresión, 2009 (México D.F: CONACULTA, Dirección General de Vinculación Cultural, 2009); Antonio García de León *El Mar de Los Deseos: El Caribe Afroandaluz, Historia y Contrapunto*, Primera edición, Sección de Obras de Historia (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2016); Ricardo Pérez Montfort, "Lo 'negro' en la formación del estereotipo jarocho durante los siglos XIX y XX," *Sotavento*, Sotavento, 1, no. 2 (verano de 1997): 131–54.

⁵⁸⁶ Theodore G. Vincent, "The Contributions of Mexico's First Black Indian President, Vicente Guerrero," *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 2 (2001): 148.

truce with Royalist Agustín de Iturbide through the Plan of Iguala, and in the pushing for early abolition of caste categories by 1821.⁵⁸⁷ Guerrero cited the fact that Cádiz liberalism, imposed upon by the 1812 Cádiz Charter onto colonial Mexico, became restrictive both of citizenship and political representation for peoples of African descent in New Spain.⁵⁸⁸ This was a fact evident and manifested by the political and social exclusion of Veracruz' Afro-descendants from considerations of citizenship and political participation in late-1812.⁵⁸⁹

As the newly consolidated Mexican Republic entered a new period of reframing both its institutions, but more importantly its political character in the late 1820s, Guerrero became involved in the growing political factionalism of Liberals vs. Conservatives that would come to plague the Republic for decades. This period of political chaos was characterized, amongst other factors, by growing polarization, violence, and factionalism, represented best perhaps by the 1827 violent anti-Spanish sentiment,⁵⁹⁰ and by the consolidation of Conservatism that eventually led to the failure of the first Mexican Federal Republic in 1835.⁵⁹¹ Nevertheless, Guerrero, true to his political beliefs of the Insurgent era, where he thought of Mexican citizenship as an all-encompassing identity devoid of racial character,⁵⁹² ran and obtained the Mexican

⁵⁸⁷ Vincent, 150.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ See Chapter Three.

⁵⁹⁰ AHV/ C.150/Vol. 197/fs.289-294/ Decretos de la legislatura sobre la expulsión de los españoles a consecuencia del pronunciamiento de este vecindario/ Diciembre 3 de 1827

⁵⁹¹ See Josefina Zoraida. Vázquez, *Práctica y Fracaso Del Primer Federalismo Mexicano (1824-1835)* (México, D.F. : Colegio de México, 2012).

⁵⁹² Vincent, "The Contributions of Mexico's First Black Indian President, Vicente Guerrero," 151.

presidency, becoming Mexico's first, and only, Afro-descendant Mexican President on April 1st 1829.⁵⁹³

On September 16th 1829, in annual celebration of the beginning of the struggle for Mexican Independence, Vicente Guerrero legally abolished slavery as he proclaimed:

I wish to commemorate in this year of 1829 the anniversary of independence with an act of justice and national beneficence that transforms into the benefit of appreciated goodwill. An act that reaffirms more and more the public order, that contributes to the aggrandizing of the Republic, and that it returns to a disgraced part of its inhabitants the sacred rights that nature has given them, rights which protect the nation through wise and just laws. According to the disposition of Article 30th of our Constitution, and using the extraordinary faculties granted to me, I have come to decree: First, slavery is now abolished throughout the Republic. Second, as a result, those whom until today have been considered slaves are now free. Third, when the circumstances of the national treasury allow it, the owners of slaves will be compensated according to the terms expressed in the law.⁵⁹⁴

Guerrero materialized the old Insurgent cries that called for the abolishment of slavery. Nineteenth years after the War for Independence commenced, and eight years after political independence from Spain, enslaved Afro-descendants in the Mexican Republic were now free, and under deracialized frameworks of citizenship they were now Mexican citizens. This was a right bestowed upon them very significantly by the political success of an Afro-descendant President: Vicente Guerrero.⁵⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Guerrero's honorable and benign liberal intentions of granting equal citizenship and representation to all peoples of African descent, particularly those formerly enslaved, did not translate into

⁵⁹³ AHV/C.155/Vol.206/fs.107/ Circular sobre toma de posesión de Vicente Guerrero como Presidente de la República/28 de Abril de 1829

⁵⁹⁴ AGN/Gobernación sin sección/ Caja 0233/ exp.16/ 1 foja/ 16 de septiembre de 1829

⁵⁹⁵ Vincent, "The Contributions of Mexico's First Black Indian President, Vicente Guerrero," 153.

radical consolidation of Afro-descendant politics in Mexico. Despite good intentions, Guerrero inadvertently was part of a national trend of 1820s Mexico where rather than acknowledging Blackness as a forming element of the Mexican character, through the application of deracialized nationalism, Blackness in the political sphere became ultimately ignored for both free, and formerly enslaved, Afro-descendants.

This virtually relegated discussions of Blackness to conceptions of the colonial past, which had a profound effects particularly for Veracruz' Afro-descendants, who since the colonial period, and in the transition of Mexico to an independent nation, were essential political and social actors of the region, particularly as this dissertation has demonstrated. Guerrero thus became a clear example of the ideological ways Mexico in the 1820s thought about itself. By relegating slavery as a colonial institution, in many ways it led to the relegating of Black political agency a thing of the past, equating Blackness with the Spanish. This was evident in the 1826 celebrations of the Port-City commemorating the total defeat of the Spanish, where the symbolic manumission of two slaves, whom the historical record neglects to name, took place.⁵⁹⁶ This demonstrated that the role of symbolic manumissions in elaborate public ceremonies that associated slavery with Spanish tyranny during the colonial era, deracialized the identity of enslaved peoples of African descent, and in turn monopolized their agency as a tool by which new national elites could turn manumissions from acts of charity to patriotic demonstrations.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁶ See Chapter Five.

⁵⁹⁷ Adriana Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825," in *De La Libertad y La Abolición : Africanos y*

Also, President Guerrero's vision of a Mexico without slavery, particularly in having a radical change upon the life of enslaved Afro-descendants by including them in a deracialized society and economy had little impact by 1829 in regions such as the Córdoba and Orizaba, last enclaves of slavery in late-colonial and early 19th Century Veracruz and Mexico. Following decades of constant slave rebellions in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century,⁵⁹⁸ and along with massive escapes of slaves that joined the Morelos' insurgency in Veracruz by 1812,⁵⁹⁹ planters in the region experienced massive instability that led them to rely instead on low-wage free labor by the mid 1810s to sustain their plantations.⁶⁰⁰ Growing reliance over low-wage free labor during the duration of the Mexican War of Independence, rather than relying on the not so profitable investment of buying and maintaining slaves that could potentially escape and join the insurgency,⁶⁰¹ saw by 1829 the transformation of labor in the Córdoba plantations from slave labor to wage labor in near totality.⁶⁰²

In many ways, the 1829 decree not only responded to fulfilling one of the paramount ideological promises of Insurgents during the Mexican War of Independence: the abolishment of slavery. At the same time, it was very much so a reflection of the ways by which newly independent Mexico, and Veracruz, were ready to move on

Afrodescendientes in Iberoamérica, ed. Juan Manuel de la Serna, Africanías (Mexico: Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, 2013), 9–10.

⁵⁹⁸ See Chapter One and Chapter Two

⁵⁹⁹ See Chapter Three

⁶⁰⁰ Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825," 9.

⁶⁰¹ See Chapter Four

⁶⁰² Naveda Chávez-Hita, "El Nuevo Orden Constitucional y El Fin de La Abolición de La Esclavitud En Córdoba, Veracruz, 1810-1825," 10.

economically from the institution of slavery, which by 1829 was for the most part non-existent in the last enclaves of African slavery of then newly independent Mexico, Córdoba and Orizaba.

On one hand, the story of Guerrero and the 1829 Abolition of Slavery decree served to catalyze a triumphant narrative of the positive effects that the consolidation of an allegedly inclusive deracialized Mexican state had for the new nation. Particularly showing how a leader of African descent took charge of Mexico's highest office in the land. But at the same time, as this dissertation has shown, the situation on the ground, particularly for Veracruz' Afro-descendants, was much more complex. Such was the case in 1830. Under the fear of a second potential invasion attempt by the Spanish, whom had carried a failed invasion attempt via Tampico the year before,⁶⁰³ a commission of local elites in the Port-City of Veracruz was asked to determine if the creation of a cavalry company by individuals from the *extramuros* neighborhood, outside the walls of Veracruz, could be feasible.⁶⁰⁴ This neighborhood had been since the late-colonial period a bastion of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, for by 1799 out of 1605 residents, 1271 or 79% were individuals of African descent.⁶⁰⁵

Formed by Domingo Alonso, Manuel Antonio, and Francisco del Corral, local port-city elites, the commission in their report refrained from using racial categories which the Mexican state by law forbade them from using. Nevertheless, their descriptions

⁶⁰³ See Vázquez, *Práctica y Fracaso Del Primer Federalismo Mexicano (1824-1835)*.

⁶⁰⁴ AHV/C.157/Vol.209/fs.268-270/Sobre formar en los extramuros de esta plaza una compañía de caballería/10 de septiembre de 1830

⁶⁰⁵ Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *El teatro de la guerra: Veracruz, 1750-1825*, Colección América 14 (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2008), 88–97.

of individuals, along with their warnings about the potential dangers in creating a cavalry company with the inhabitants of this predominant lower class and Afro-descendant neighborhood, demonstrated both the persistence of negative informal racial ideas towards Blackness by Mexican elites. At the same time, in many ways, the report demonstrated the failures of deracialized nationalism of the 1820s. The commission specified that a good part of the neighborhood was formed by individuals who mostly worked in the administration and conducting of the national post, which “exempted them according to the law from military service.”⁶⁰⁶ They proceeded to describe the other part of the neighborhood as being composed by “vagrant men whose immorality renders any possible commission futile, enough motive for not trusting them”.⁶⁰⁷ In asserting negative associations with Blackness for these individuals the commission asserted that to organize a militia with them “had never been possible, no matter the effort implemented,” for they argued the Mexican state was trying almost the impossible as it tried to enforce upon these individuals a “discipline that they will never have”.⁶⁰⁸

As this report from 1830 showed, informal racial connotations that associated negative ideas with Blackness were still prevalent in Veracruz and Mexico. These attitudes demonstrated that regardless of legal deracialized nationalism being an established political reality, along with the abolishment of slavery by 1829, negative stereotypes and connotations with Blackness to Veracruz’ Afro-descendants, now

⁶⁰⁶ AHV/C.157/Vol.209/fs.268-270/Sobre formar en los extramuros de esta plaza una compañía de caballería/10 de septiembre de 1830

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

Mexicans, continued well by 1830. Despite benign intentions by newly independent Mexico's leaders such as Guerrero, deracializing Mexican politics and society instantly rather than producing immediate radical benefits for Mexico's citizens of African descent in reality gave way for Mexican elites, particularly those of Spanish descent, to manipulate identity and citizenship discourses that excluded Blackness from political conversations. Ultimately this led to the practical exclusion of Veracruz' Afro-descendants from the Mexican political sphere and conceptions of Mexicans of African descent as able political actors.

This dissertation ends with the story of Guerrero, the 1829 abolishing of slavery, and the local ramifications and impact that both the decree and deracialized nationalism had in Veracruz and its hinterland. It does so to contextualize how the political agency of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, which in many ways helped consolidate Mexico as an independent nation and as a republic, was eventually largely ignored by the time Mexico enters the third decade of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, by no means concluding this dissertation here suggest that the neglect of Veracruz' Afro-descendants, their Blackness, and their political agency was by 1830 conclusive. As the exciting work of scholars such as Ted Cohen has shown,⁶⁰⁹ throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Mexico continued to reckon with the meanings of being "Mexican", Blackness continued to be relegated as a colonial element of Mexico's past. In many ways, the legacies of such contention constitute a modern and ongoing problem in

⁶⁰⁹ See Theodore W. Cohen, *Finding Afro-Mexico: Race and Nation after the Revolution*, Afro-Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Mexican politics, identity tropes, and society today. A problem that for Mexicans of African descent has very present and tangible ramifications.

As this dissertation has shown, the political and social experiences of Veracruz' Afro-descendants from 1770 to 1830 provide a lens to not only bridge the historiographical divide between colonial and modern Latin America. Veracruz' Afro-descendant experiences also represent a way by which to ground the African Diaspora in Mexico, joining three very well-developed historiographical traditions that often overlap but seldomly intersect: Atlantic World History, African Diaspora History, and Latin American History. This dissertation thus invites us to reconsider how the lives and political experience of Veracruz' Afro-descendants were instrumental for the regional, and national, definitions of Mexico as a nation, of Mexicans as a people, and of Veracruz and its hinterland as a thriving space of Blackness that manifested into political and military matters.

Mexico will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the consolidation of Mexican independence on September 28th, 2021. Concurrently the 2020 Mexican census has shown a growing movement of over two million Mexicans self-identifying as Afro-Mexican.⁶¹⁰ It is the hope of this dissertation that the stories of Veracruz' Afro-descendants from 1770 to 1830 will provoke more academic and public interest that materializes into studies that explore the lives, histories, and political agency of peoples of African descent in Veracruz, and Mexico, for the remainder of the nineteenth century

⁶¹⁰ XIV Censo General de Población y Vivienda, *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática*, 2020, México: INEGI.

and during the twentieth century. As the experience of Veracruz' Afro-descendants have demonstrated, despite multiple attempts to forget and neglect their roles and importance in the consolidation of Mexico as a nation, their instrumental roles ultimately outshine said attempts.

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