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The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance:

An Atlantic History of the 1795 Insurrection at Coro, Venezuela

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Enrique Salvador Rivera

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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Professor Peter James Hudson, Chair

On the night of Sunday, May 10, 1795, hundreds of enslaved and legally free people of African and native American descent took up arms to overthrow colonial rule in Coro, Venezuela. The rebels stated that their new society would be free of Coro's coercive political and economic systems, particularly slavery and taxes. After three days of fighting, however, Coro's rebels were ultimately defeated, and at least 125 of them were killed in combat, or brutally executed in the days, weeks, and months that followed. Despite this defeat, the Coro rebellion has created an archive that allows historians to unearth new information on the history of capitalism, as well as the radical ideologies that circulated the Atlantic during the Age of Revolution.

This dissertation bridges the fields of capitalism studies and histories of enslaved people's resistance movements to examine the role of the Atlantic's political economy in structuring eighteenth-century Coro, as well as rebel ideology. It argues that Coro's rebels were inspired, not so much by abstract Enlightenment ideas of liberty and equality, but by their autochthonous political and economic customs, as they were practiced in Coro, and in the Gold and Loango Coasts of West and West Central Africa, from where most rebels descended. This dissertation also intervenes in the history of capitalism, asserting the need to define and periodize capitalism. It begins with a study of textile production in the manufacturing enclaves of Flanders, Brittany, and Devon, and investigates the three joint-stock companies that shaped eighteenth-century Coro: The Dutch West India Company, the South Sea Company, and the Real Compañía Guipozcoana. Through a study of the political economies of the people indigenous to Coro and the Gold and Loango Coasts, it demonstrates that the precapitalist class structure of eighteenth-century Europe, based on peasant production and merchant capital, was unable to completely destroy autochthonous social systems in Africa and the Americas, as would progressively become more common under capitalism. These communalist mores informed the moral economy of the African and native American communities of Coro, and they were the ones that inspired the 1795 insurrection.

The Dissertation of Enrique Salvador Rivera is approved.

Lauren Derby

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Vita

Enrique Salvador Rivera received his B.A. in Communications Studies from American University in 2007. He received an M.A. in Latin American History from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2013.

Introduction: The Coro Rebellion, Enslaved People's Resistance Movements, and the History of Capitalism

On the night of May 10, 1795, in the lush mountains nestled south of the City of Santa Ana de Coro in the Captaincy General of Venezuela, six men launched a revolutionary movement that, although brief and ill fated, would reverberate for centuries to come. The rebels, led by the legally free *zambo* José Leonardo Chirino, attacked and killed white elites, recruited hundreds of others to join them, and stormed onto the city of Coro, demanding that local authorities hand over the city. The insurgents stated that once they were in control, they would abolish slavery, the *alcabala*, and all other taxes paid for by free men. After three days of fighting, culminating in a bloody armed conflict between as many as 450 rebels and half as many loyalists, the rebels were ultimately defeated; dozens were brutally killed in the battlefield and many more were callously executed in the days that followed. Despite this defeat, Coro's rebels have inspired hope for generations of Venezuelans, and fear and hatred for still others. For historians, the Coro rebellion has generated an archive that reveals important, yet understudied, aspects of the history of capitalism, and of the radical ideologies of liberty and equality that circulated the Atlantic during the Age of Revolution.[1]

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance: An Atlantic History of the 1795 Insurrection at Coro, Venezuela" examines the rebellion alongside the Atlantic system that gave rise to it. On the one hand, it argues that eighteenth-century Coro and the 1795 insurrection were shaped by peasant production and mercantile expansion in

[1] The term Age of Revolution was coined by late great Eric Hobsbawm: Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution, Europe, 1789-1848* (N.Y: Praeger Publishers, 1962).

Europe. On the other hand, the rebellion was molded, not by the latest waves of Enlightenment thought, but by the communalist political and economic practices of the people indigenous to Coro and to the Gold and Loango Coasts of West and West Central Africa. The political and economic claims of Dutch, English, French, and Spanish elites connected Coro's rebels to artisans and merchants in Brittany, Devon, and Flanders, and to investors, traders, and suppliers of the Dutch West India Company (WIC), England's South Sea Company (SSC), and Spain's Real Compañía Guizpocoana (RCG). European elites were also responsible for creating the Atlantic slave trade that captured Coro's rebels and their ancestors throughout the African continent, particularly on the Gold and Loango Coasts, from where most rebels descended. Although they rested an ocean away, these royal families, as well as these stockholders, merchants, and bureaucrats, created the plantation economy of eighteenth-century Coro—the one that the 1795 rebels aimed to destroy.

The political economy of eighteenth-century Coro, and the Atlantic, was the product of the class structure of contemporary Europe. The history of this Atlantic world is also the history, or perhaps more appropriately, the prehistory, of capitalism. The agricultural and manufacturing industries of eighteenth-century Europe were based on peasant production and/or feudal land tenures. This mode of production constrained economic growth in these industries and had the effect of funneling capital into mercantile activities. The accumulation of capital in Europe during the eighteenth century relied heavily on the Atlantic trades, the conquests of new territories, and the coerced labor of African and native American people in the Americas. These Atlantic ventures required the administrative, financial, and military support of European states. With the

expenses of Atlantic commerce being too high for individual merchants or small groupings of merchants, European states filled the void through providing capital, and the security needed to broaden the pool of potential stockholders. State support was also necessary because large conglomerates were illegal without royal charters in England and Spain.

In a similar vein, geopolitical concerns drew European states to joint stock ventures. If Atlantic commerce were somehow monopolized by one European power, this would ensure the political and economic dominance of that power over all the others. It was the imperial state's duty, then, to ensure claims in the Atlantic, and to strive for dominance over their rivals. The political and economic stakes in the Atlantic also required military force, which was the domain of the state. All joint-stock companies had these forces at their disposal, and relied on them to acquire new markets and territories, and to protect the strongholds they already occupied. It is this dissertation's contention that the joint-stock companies and their methods for acquiring investments and accumulating capital came as a result of the dominant mode of production of eighteenth-century Europe. These methods would ultimately give rise to the capitalist mode of production in Europe, as peasants would be forced from their land to work for wages under a capitalist employer. From this point of departure, the Atlantic economy would become increasingly capitalist over time.

Coro's rebels, who were all of African and/or native American descent, took advantage of Europe's political and economic conjunction by continuing to practice their autochthonous social systems in the face of coercion and imperial intervention.[2] Legally

[2] When referring to the people indigenous to Coro, this dissertation rejects the term "indio" that colonial authorities used across Spanish America, as well as it's English language equivalent, Indian.

free indigenous and Afro-descended people in Coro, and across the Atlantic, conducted political and economic practices that centered on communal production and egalitarian distribution. This production and distribution was based primarily on agriculture, hunting, fishing, and manufacturing. But these communities and societies were not entirely self-sufficient—they also engaged in commodification and trade to acquire goods that complemented those they themselves produced. Leadership was also highly valued and respected in these communities and societies, and local leaders in the home and at-large were almost always allotted a higher share of produce, game, and merchandise. African and native American commoners in Coro, and across the Atlantic, also paid tribute to their local or national leaders.

These autochthonous practices served as the foundation for the moral economy of Coro's rebels. Following E.P. Thompson and his study of "riots" in eighteenth-century England, this dissertation understands moral economy to be a form of ideology, which is informed by conceptions of just and unjust political and economic practices. [3] All social groups rely on conceptions of right and wrong, and these codes also exist within the realm of economic practices. As James Scott argues, moral economies are based on the rational application of strategies for survival on the part of group members.[4] Moral economies are maintained by the socieites in question because they facilitate the

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This is for the obvious reason that these peoples were not natives of India, as early conquistadors had thought. Instead, this dissertation uses the terms "native American" and "indigenous" when referring to the peoples of Coro as a whole. When appropriate, this dissertation identifies the indigenous peoples of the region by their ethnicity. Native American with a lower case "n" is used so as not to confuse with the racial classification used for the indigenous people of the contemporary United States.

[3] E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" Past & Present 50 (1971): 79.

[4] James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.)

achievement of the maximum level of harmony possible within the strucutural posibilites of each society. In the case of migration and/or regime change, social groups maintain aspects of their moral economies, although these do, of course, undergo certain adjustments in order to survive within a new environment.

Slavery and taxes, as they operated in eighteenth-century Coro, violated the moral economy of Coro's native American and Afro-descended peoples. This moral outrage became more acute as plantations expanded, community lands were encroached upon, and tax collection soared, in the years prior to the rebellion. Using the words of Thompson, Coro's rebels considered communalist practices to be "the proper economic functions" of legitimate societies, and they were rightfully convinced that this view was "supported by the wider consensus of the community."[5] This dissertation aims to demonstrate that the moral economies of their African and American homelands inspired Coro's rebels to take up arms, and that this moral economy also informed how the rebels conceptualized the new society that they hoped to build.

Therefore, it was the political economies of Europe, as well as those of the indigenous peoples of Coro and the Gold and Loango Coasts, that shaped eighteenth-century Coro and its 1795 rebellion. This dissertation intervenes in the literature on the history of capitalism, as well as the history of anti-slavery resistance in the Americas. It argues in favor of more clearly delineating a definition of capitalism, one that is based on the Marxian emphasis on mode of production. This dissertation also argues that it was the autochthonous moral economies of Coro's rebels, rather than Enlightenment concepts, that informed their ideology and shaped their visions of a new society. But before these

[5] Ibid., 78.

interventions are discussed in more detail, it is necessary to provide more background on eighteenth-century Coro, and to present a narrative of the 1795 insurrection.

Introduction to The Political Economy of Eighteenth-Century Coro and its World

Santa Ana de Coro was the first European settlement in the region that would later become known as the Captaincy General of Venezuela. The city of Coro was established in 1527 by the Spanish conquerer and *encomendero* Juan de Ampíes. Ampíes founded the city after negotiations with the Caquetío, the Arawak-speaking group that was the dominant indigenous polity of the time.[6] The Diocese of Coro was established three years later, and this remained the center of eccliastical authority in Coro until the Diocese of Caracas was established in 1637. Coro was also the capital of the Province of Venezuela for fifty years, until Caracas took this title in 1578.[7]

During the eighteenth century, Coro's principal role in the European world system was to produce livestock and agricultural goods for Caribbean and European markets, and to consume commodities brought by Europeans.[8] As will be seen in the first chapter, the bulk of European goods consumed were textiles manufactured on the continent. Coro also imported thousands of enslaved African people, whose descendants became the majority of the region's population, and who would largely define the moral economy of

[6] See Chapter 4 for more details on this negotiation.

[7] Otilia Margarita Rosas González, "La población indígena en la Provincia de Venezuela" (Ph.D. Diss.: Universidad de Salamanca, 2015), 93-6.

[8] The term European World System is inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein. See: Immanuel Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).

the 1795 rebels. Coro's African and native American peasants and plantation workers produced livestock, grains, fruits, vegetables, sugar, hides, cacao, and Brazil wood for domestic consumption and for export. Livestock, agricultural commodities, and sugar were consumed in Coro, exported to other parts of the Captaincy General of Venezuela, and to other colonies in the Caribbean.[9] Sugar, cacao, hides, and Brazil wood were traded in the region before they were shipped to Europe, where they entered circulation and served as the basis for a number of industrial pursuits.[10]

The raising of livestock, such as bovine animals, horses, and mules was the dominant economic activity of eighteenth-century Coro. The meat from bovine creatures was consumed in Coro and other parts of the Captaincy General of Venezuela, while the skins were illegally traded in Curaçao before they were shipped to Europe. Most horses and donkeys were used domestically, but most mules were exported to Saint Domingue to power the French colony's infamous sugar mills. All of these farm animals were raised by enslaved black people and legally free black and native American people on the 95 haciendas throughout the region, which were owned by white elites.[11] It is important to note, however, that some peasants of African and/or native American descent raised these animals independently on their own lands. The Peninsula of Paraguaná, of which the vast majority of the population was Caquetio, was famous for its livestock rearing.

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[9] See chapter four for more details. Also see: Wim Klooster, "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies," in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. Gert J. Oostindie and Jessica V. Roitman (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 25-51.

[10] Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-179*5 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1998), 96.

[11] "Expediente sobre la insurrección de los negros, zambos y mulatos proyectada en el año 1795 a las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Coro, Provincia de Caracas," 1795, Caracas, 426, Archivo General de Indias, Seville (AGI), ff. 1-2.

Sugar production followed the raising of animals as Coro's second major economic activity—the former being produced mainly in Coro's sierra, the birthplace of the 1795 rebellion. White slave masters owned the approximately 48 sugar plantations in Coro and their *trapiches*.[12] They employed enslaved black people, as well as legally free black and native American workers, who lived on or near plantation grounds, and who were paid a wage. This sugar was consumed domestically and traded to Curaçao, where some of it was consumed there, while another portion was exported to Amsterdam. Blocks of raw sugar cane, known as *panelas* or *papelones*, also served as a form of currency in the region, and agricultural laborers were often paid their wages in these goods.[13]

Coro also provided other agricultural commodities for European markets. Cacao was Venezuela's most important cash crop, but it was of only minor significance in eighteenth-century Coro, as there were only seven cacao plantations in the region at the time of the rebellion.[14] Brazil wood was also an important commodity that was collected in Coro's mountains and sold, often illegally, to foreign merchants, most of who were from Curaçao.

But most plantation and hacienda workers in Coro dedicated the bulk of their days to independent agricultural production. There were only 150 haciendas and plantations in the region of Coro, but there were nearly 27,000 people. If each plantation and hacienda employed 30 people at a time, this could only employ 4,500 enslaved and legally free

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[12] Ibid.

[13] "Tocuyo: El Protector General de Indios Don Antonio Briceño, sobre el pago de tributos," 1759, Indígenas Tomo XIII, Archivo General de la Nacíon, Caracas (AGN).

[14] "Expediente," ff. 1-2.

workers, or less than 17% of the overall population.[15] With about 74% of Coro's population being legally free people of African and/or native American descent, these people settled on unoccupied land that was usually within a day's walk to a neighboring plantation or hacienda.

Throughout the eighteenth century, peasants would plant and harvest agricultural goods both for their own consumption and for commodification and sale, until repression increased in the years leading to the rebellion. Black and indigenous peasants would grow rice, corn, cassava, and plantains, as well as raise chickens and goats.[16] These products, as well as small batches of cotton and tobacco were consumed in the household and sold at local markets, which relied on the goods provided by local peasants. Even enslaved people tended their own crops in the eighteenth century, as slave owners would grant the people they owned small plots of land, known as *conucos*, where they would grow the crops they needed to feed themselves. As will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters, these practices were rooted in precolonial African and native American political and economic traditions. But with the expansion of plantation production and the proliferation of new taxes in the years leading up to the 1795 insurrection, these independent customs became untenable.

But the lives that the people of Coro lived were not consumed solely by work. People would often socialize outside their homes, and children, as well as adults would play games. In fact, playing cards were becoming increasingly popular in eighteenth

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[15] For more on this see chapter four. This estimation is made upon the basis of the figures which cite 29,000 heads of livestock produced on 95 haciendas. As well as the documents pertaining to the plantations of Josef de Tellería, which housed about 15 enslaved people on each. See: "Testamentaria de Joseph de Tellería, 1798." Archivo Histórico del Estado de Falcón. Coro, Venezuela.

[16] "Expediente," ff. 1.

century Venezuela, so much so that taxes on their sale were implemented in 1779.[17] As will be discussed in the second chapter, black people in the city of Coro, and in the sierra, were known for throwing parties on the eve of holidays, where they would play music and dance. In the neighborhood known as Guinea, in the center of the city of Coro, these dances were often held in the open and even white elites attended them.[18] The inhabitants of Guinea were also known to sing and dance when returning home after a day's work in the fields they held in Coro's sierra, which lay about 15 miles away.[19]

The political and economic structure of eighteenth-century Coro was arranged in accordance with the region's unusual topography. Coro was one of 23 cities and towns that made up the Province of Venezuela, but it was—by far—the city that held the largest jurisdiction, spreading across over 32,000 square miles. According to a 1787 census, Coro had a sparse population of 26,549, which, nevertheless, gave it the third largest population in the Province of Venezuela, after Caracas and La Victoria.[20] The coast of Coro stretched over 260 miles long. It had an arid climate, which made agriculture difficult in that zone, although it was practiced in a few patches in and around the city of Coro.[21] This climate encouraged the establishment of livestock raising as an economic activity. This was particularly the case for the Peninsula of Paraguaná, which began at the

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[17] Eduardo Arcila Farias, *Economía colonial de Venezuela* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 328.

[18] "Sublevacion de los negros de Coro, pieza 3," 1795, Criminales, Letra C, Archivo General de la Nacion, Caracas, ff.. 70-84. See the second chapter for more details.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Población de la Provincia de Venezuela, 1785-1787," 1787, Caracas 397, Archivo General de Indias, Seville. The Province of Venezuela (also known as the Province of Caracas) was one of six provinces that were united after the establishment of Venezuela as a Captaincy General. The other five provinces were those of Barinas, Guayana, Maracaibo, Nueva Andalucía (also known as Cumaná), and Mérida.

[21] "Expediente," ff. 1

base of the city of Coro and extended over 80 miles north, and consisted of a surface of over 1,500 square miles. Going south from the city of Coro into the highlands, or sierra, which lay 15 miles south, there was about 225 square miles of lush forest, in which the many of the region's sugar plantations were located.

Coro's inhabitants were diverse and whites were a minority. Most of the Coro region's population was racially classified as "free people of color" or *pardos*, who numbered nearly 12,000 or approximately 44% of the overall population.[22] The second largest population in the region was "free Indians," Caquetíos who were exempt from tribute payments because of their loyalty to the Spanish Crown. The Caquetío numbered over 7,000, or about 26% of the population of Coro and mostly lived in the towns scattered along the Caribbean coast, and in the Peninsula of Paraguaná.[23] Coro's legally free indigenous population was—by far—the largest in the Province of Venezuela. According to the 1787 census, the jurisdiction of Guanare had the second largest "free Indian" population at less than 1,900.[24] The third largest group was whites that numbered 3,700 or nearly 14% of the population.[25] Most whites were native born and descended from Spaniards, although there was also a community of white migrants from the Canary Islands. It is probable that many of those classified as "white" were also of partial native

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[22] "Sublevación de los negros de Coro, pieza 1" 1795, Criminales Letra C, Archivo General de la Nación, Caracas. *Pardo* literally translates to Brown. It is generally understood that *pardos* in colonial Venezuela were people of mixed African and European descent. It is important to note, however, that the term negro, or black, was used only when referring to enslaved people. In addition, mestizo, was a term rarely used in Coro. This may be because many mestizos were categorized as white. Given the large number of native American people in Coro, however, it is probable that many *pardos* were also of mixed indigenous and African descent. The often-used category, *zambo*, is not used in the population censuses, and therefore *zambos* fell under the category of *pardos*.

[23] Ibid.

[24] "Población de la Provincia de Venezuela."

[25] "Sublevación de los negros, pieza 1" ff. 1.

American and African descent. Many of the white militia members of the neighboring Province of Maracaibo, for example, were described as "trigueño" or "wheat-colored" in 1787.[26] The fourth largest group was enslaved people of African descent who numbered over 3,200, equaling about 12% of the population. Most enslaved people toiled on plantations, although some worked as domestic servants.

Finally, there were the Ajaguas and Ayamanes, the tribute paying indigenous people who numbered 768, or 3% of the region's population.[27] Most of these communities were concentrated in Coro's *sierra*, and west of it. The indigenous towns in Coro's *sierra* were San Luis, Pecaya, and Pedregal, and they were inhabited mostly by Ajagua people. Like the Caquetio, the Ajaguas were Arawak speakers, while the Ayamanes spoke Jirajara. More research in needed on the origins of Coro's indigenous peoples, but all evidence thus far points to the Ajaguas, Ayamanes, and Caquetios being indigenous to the region, with their descendants having settled there 10,000-12,000 years ago.[28]

Most of Coro's rebels, and the region's population as a whole, were of African descent. As was the case throughout the Americas, these people arrived to Coro via their enslavement or that of their ancestors. Also like enslaved and legally free people of African descent throughout the Americas, the Afro-descended people of Coro had origins throughout the African continent, although the vast majority came from West and West Central Africa. The Gold Coast of Guinea and the Loango Coast of West Central Africa

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[26] "Revista de Inspección de la Tropa Veterana y de Milicias de Maracaibo," 1787, SGU 7198, 18Archvio General de Simancas, Simancas.

[27] "Sublevación de los negros, pieza 1" ff. 1.

[28] Jossy M. Mansur, *E indiannan Caquetio* (Aruba: Imprenta Nacional Arubano, 1981), 29; Willem F.H. Adelaar, *The Languages of the Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129.

were the two leading places of origin for Coro's population of African descent. The SSC held the *asiento* for the Spanish Crown between 1715-39, and provided many of the enslaved people of Coro. Just over 23% of people enslaved by the SSC had origins on the Gold Coast, while 32.8% had origins in the Loango Coast.[29] It is likely, however, that the Dutch illegally provided most enslaved people to eighteenth-century Coro. After the English *asiento*, 33% percent of enslaved people purchased by the Dutch were from the Gold Coast, while 37% were from the Loango Coast, making 70% of enslaved people procured by the Dutch having origins in one of the two regions.[30]

The Gold and Loango Coasts were home to several ethnic groups and polities. The largest ethnicity on the Gold Coast was the Akan, followed by the Ga, and the Guan. All three groups spoke mutually intelligible Kwa languages. During the eighteenth century, Greater Asante was the largest polity of the region. The Loango Coast was home to the Vili, the Woyo and the Kotchi, who all spoke Kikongo languages, but were politically divided into three kingdoms: the Loango, the Ngoyo, and the Kakongo, respectively. Despite the ethnic, linguistic, and political diversity of the regions, all ethnic groups adhered to an ideology of consanguinity, which allowed for the adoption of neighbors and strangers into their homes and communities. As will be shown in the third chapter, these practices would continue in eighteenth-century Coro.

The political economy of eighteenth-century Coro was geared towards serving the political and economic interests of European and white creole elites. The region consumed European manufactures, including enslaved African people, and produced

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[29] Colin Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 107-110.

[30] Alex Borucki, "Trans-imperial History in the Making of the Slave Trade to Venezuela, 1526-1811." *Itinerario* 36:2 (2012): 29-54.

agricultural commodities that were utilized in neighboring colonies and in Europe. Many of the goods exported from Coro were produced on the region's haciendas and plantations. But despite the fact that thousands of people of African and native American descent were coerced into laboring on these plantations and haciendas, most of Coro's population was able to plant, harvest, and trade agricultural goods during the eighteenth century with only limited state interference. As the third and fourth chapters demonstrate, however, this would change in the years leading up to the 1795 rebellion.

The 1795 Insurrection

The May 10-13 insurrection, and its aftermath, reveals important details about eighteenth-century Coro's political and economic system, as well as that of the wider Atlantic complex. African-born and Afro-descended people, who were in Coro because of WIC, SSC, and RCG efforts, rose up in a revolutionary attempt to overthrow white supremacy in the region, and to establish a new, independent republic.[31] This new republic would be of slavery and taxes, such as the alcabala and indigenous tribute. People of African descent were joined by rebels of native American descent, with whom they worked with on the plantations and haciendas of Coro's sierra. These plantations and haciendas produced agricultural commodities for Atlantic markets. During the rebellion, Coro's rebels ransacked the plantation homes of white elites and many of the goods

[31] For a discussion of white supremacy, see below. Also see: Charles W. Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy," *Social and Economic Studies* 43: 3 (1994): 105-34. For a particularly illuminating look into White Supremacy, see: Jemima Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013)

seized, and distributed, were textiles manufactured by European peasants, and shipped to Coro via the joint-stock companies.

The Coro rebellion was planned well in advance, although there are contradictory details about how exactly this happened, and who was involved. As will be examined in more detail in Chapter 2, authorities claimed that before the rebellion, a legally free black man known as Cocofio had been roaming the *sierra* telling people of African descent that the Spanish Crown had abolished slavery, but that Coro's authorities were ignoring the law.[32] Officials also stated that Cocofio died two or three years before the rebellion, but that the legally free, African-born Josef Caridad Gonzalez had been communicating the same message. Gonzalez's version of Cocofio's message, however, added that the Crown had also abolished the alcabala.[33]

While under duress and offering contradictory details about the rebellion and it's planning, Chirino stated that he started planning the insurrection in April at the house of a friend named Juan Bernardo Chiquito. Chirino and Chiquito also testified that only they, González, and Joaquin, an enslaved man racially classified as *zambo*, and living as the legal property of Doña Nicolasa Acosta, were the only ones who knew about the rebellion in advance.[34] But it appears that at another point during Chirino's testimony, he also stated that Gonzalez was innocent; making the above claims difficult to prove.[35]

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[32] "Expediente," ff. 84. Emancipation rumors were common in anti-slavery rebellions and conspiracies during the 1790s. See: David Patrick Geggus, "Slave Resistance in the Spanish Caribbean in the Mid-1790s," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, edited by David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997).

[33] "Expediente" ff. 90-1.

[34] "Sublevacion," ff. 3-9.

[35] Ibid., ff. 144-51.

Only small fragments of Chirino's testimony survive in the statements given by Coro's authorities who sometimes make reference to it when interviewing witnesses or suspected rebels.

Don Nicolas de Coronado, a landowner in Coro's sierra, claimed that in the days leading up to the rebellion, black people were meeting in large groups in the sierra, and he insinuated that this is how the rebellion was planned.[36] Coronado added that he was not the only person who thought that these meetings were odd, stating that an unnamed black neighbor considered abandoning his home because there were "nightly meetings of blacks."[37] In addition, as will be seen in Chapter 2, Coro's priest, Don Pedro Pérez, Ramírez Valderraín, and other white elites testified that in the city of Coro, many black people would gather to sing scandalous songs on the eve of the insurrection. The lyrics included threats to "cut off the head" of white men, and looking forward to the day when "Josef Leonardo with his gang" would strike "a blow from his Royal Palm," which would result in the death of "the white."[38]

Although facts concerning the insurrection's planning are scattered and murky, most details about the rebellion itself are well documented.[39] On the night of Sunday, May 10, 1795, Chirino, accompanied by four indigenous and enslaved black men, killed Don Josef de Martínez, a native of Nueva España, who was living at the Socorro plantation; the same place where Chirino, his enslaved wife, his enslaved children, and the other men accompanying him lived. After killing Martinez, the rebels stole his clothes

[36] "Sublevación de los negros, pieza 1" ff. 217-18.

[37] Ibid.: "juntas de negros por las noches."

[38] Ibid., ff. 74-6.

[39] The following narrative is largely based on Mariano Ramirez Valderrain's testimony: "Expediente," ff. 1-15.

and other valuables and distributed them amongst themselves. The rebels then turned their attention to the Socorro owner's son, Don Yldefonso de Telleria. They tried to kill him and left him for dead, but he would survive the attack. As will be detailed in the first two chapters, the rebels then moved on to neighboring plantations, sacking homes, stealing textiles and clothes, and distributing them amongst themselves. They killed Don Josef Maria Manzanos, a friend of Joaquin's owner Acosta. They then tried to kill Acosta herself and left her for dead, although she too would ultimately survive her wounds. The insurgents then burned Acosta's house down after robbing it, and did the same to the nearby homes of Don Miguel de Urbina and Don Josef de Arcaya. Arcaya managed to escape, and Urbina's son Manuel, who appears to have been administering his father's plantation, escaped to the city of Coro, and would later give the first news of the uprising to Coro's officials.

The rebels then set up a guard post outside of the sierra, on the path to the city of Coro, to intercept anyone trying to leave or come in. The next morning, May 11, the rebel guard intercepted Josef de Telleria's party, which they knew would be arriving that morning. The rebels killed Telleria and his brother in law, Pedro Francisco Rosillo, and kidnapped Telleria's wife, Doña Maria Josepha Rocillo, and her three children; escorting them to the plantation of Macanillas, which served as rebel headquarters.

Recounting that day months later, Rocillo stated that she reprimanded Chirino, asking "how could they be so ungrateful, and traitors that Tellería being the father of all of them they went out and killed him the same people of his house, who he loved so much and helped!" Rosillo stated that Chirino replied to her scolding by stating that Tellería had told him "that he would never be governed by a sambo," to which Rocillo

stated that if Chirino's "intent was to dominate the person who said those words how could he find him after his death." To this Chirino responded "Tellería did not impede the tax collector of Coro from charging the *alcabala* with such excess and rigor." Rocillo said that after she told Chirino that her husband had tried to address the issue through legal means, Chirino responded furiously, "it is none of that, that the whites were in cahoots with the tax collector so that they did not have to pay, and so that all the weight of the contributions fell onto the arms of the poor, and that now either it would be repaired, or Coro would be ruined."[40]

Manuel de Urbina and his child arrived to the city of Coro at 2 PM that same day to warn, "the blacks were coming to attack the city, sack it and kill all of the whites.[41] With this news, Coro's Justicia Mayor Mariano Ramirez Valderrain sent a message to the closest Caquetio towns of Carrisal and Guaybacoa to come to Coro with haste to help defend the city. Ramirez Valderrain then helped gather all the people he could from the city of Coro at his home in the city center, and instructed them to bring weapons if they had any. Ramirez Valderrain also ordered a force of 16 men to arm a post at Caujarao, which was a league from the city, en route to Coro's sierra, and which served as a customs post to charge the *alcabala*. At some point that same night, Gonzalez and 21 or 22 other *loangos* arrived at Ramirez Valderrain's home saying that they wanted to help in their fight against the rebels. Ramirez Valderrain later testified that he was suspicious of their request and imprisoned them instead.

[40] "Expediente," ff. 260-2.

[41] Ibid., ff. 228-9. "los negros traian ánimo de asaltar a la ciudad, saquearla y matar a todos los blancos."

That night, according to authorities, the rebels sent two spies down to the city of Coro to inform González and the *loango* militia that they were to attack the city the next morning. The two spies were captured by Ramirez Valderrain's contingent at Caujarao. Ramirez Valderrain received word soon after and responded by doubling the forces at the customs post. By the time the second force arrived at around 1 am on the morning of May 12, however, they found a bloody scene. The rebels had ambushed the *alcabala* at Caujarao, and had defeated Ramirez Valderrain's initial force, killing two men and injuring two others, one who would later die as a result of his wounds. They then freed their two comrades and took aim at the house of the *aduanista*, Luis Barcenas. The rebels broke the doors and windows of Barcenas's home, and taunted Barcenas to come out "to charge the *alcabala,* to receive through seizure the rosaries and other personal property that he was used to taking."[42]

When Ramirez Valderrain received news of the ambush, he rallied all the local and foreign white and mulatto men he could, along with some Caquetio from Carrizal, Guaybacoa and Santa Ana, as well as two cannons, which would soon prove decisive. Ramirez Valderrain and his troops waited until about six in the morning when over four hundred men appeared, waving two flags, one white and one black. The rebels then exclaimed, "to give them freedom for the slaves, exemption from the *alcabala* and all the other taxes on the free, and that no harm would come if we handed them the city."[43] Ramirez Valderraín said that his response was to shoot a canon filled with shrapnel at them.

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[42] Ibid., ff. 228: "a cobrar las alcabalas, a recivir en prenda los rosarios y demas muebles que acostumbrava quitar."

[43] Ibid., ff. 22: "se les concediesela livertad a los esclavos y la exepcion de derechos de alcavala y demas impuestos a los libres, y que nada se ofreceria entregandoles asi la ciudad."

Ramirez Valderrain's force of 213 men, armed with cannons, guns, and bows and arrows, soundly defeated the rebels that day. Ramirez Valderrain later boasted that he killed two men with his own hands, and that "we created a formidable carnage going after them, as many as two leagues in distance."[44] He added, "the ones that appeared on the plains were twenty five: the signals of blood that flowed, informed of the many injured, and the fields are now sowed with bodies."[45] Coro's assorted army also captured 24 rebels who were tormented into confessions, which Ramírez Valderraín claimed implicated Chirino and González as the masterminds of the insurrection. These rebels were escorted to Coro's jail where they were decapitated in public.

Back at Macanillas, Chirino got word of the rebel defeat and sent a letter to the Cacique of Pecaya in an attempt to recruit help. Meanwhile, Ramirez Valderrain and his soldiers claimed more lives. Ramirez Valderrain later claimed that before they were decapitated, the 24 rebels admitted their guilt and stated that they were lead by González and Chirino. Having been apprehended the night before, Ramirez Valderrain went to transfer the *loangos* from his home to Coro's jail. Ramirez Valderrain claimed that González and another man tried to escape and were thus killed by officers wielding swords and lances. It is far more likely, however, that Ramirez Valderrain murdered Gonzalez, having had his suspicions of him confirmed by the men he had just executed.

On the morning of Wednesday, May 13, Caquetio groups from Santa Ana, Mitare and Moruy, lead by Ramirez Valderrain, made rounds around the city of Coro and its port of La Vela, apprehending anyone who they considered suspicious. At around 1pm that

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[44] Ibid., se hizo una carniceria formidable yendo en alcanze de ellos, hasta mas de dos leguas de distancia."

[45] Ibid., "los que aparecieron en el llano fueron veinte y cinco: las señales de sangre de los que corrian, avisaban ser muchos los heridos, y asi estan los campos sembrados de cuerpos."

day, a group of locals began shouting, "the blacks were coming" and Ramirez Valderrain jumped out of bed "almost naked and without shoes I rushed to the fields to register the troops where the enemy incursion was coming from and I explored more than two leagues of the countryside, returning after not having found anything at four in the afternoon."[46]

The following day, Ramirez Valderrain sent two expeditions, comprised of 200 men each, into the sierra to announce a general amnesty for anyone who would surrender, but to also secretly apprehend suspected leaders. While on these campaigns, local officials murdered three suspected rebels and captured nine more. Ramirez Valderrain had these nine people hanged on May 15. Subsequent expeditions into the sierra brought more carnage. On May 18, Ramirez Valderrain had 35 suspected leaders executed by gunshot, and five days later he executed 21 more people. The local Justicia Mayor of the Peninsula of Paraguaná executed five more people there who had escaped from the decisive battle of May 12.

Chirino fled in the days following the rebellion, and was not discovered until nearly three months later in Baragua, approximately 80 miles south of Coro. A man named Juan Manuel Aguero captured Chirino, who had been armed with a sword and arrows. Chirino escaped after Aguero had captured him the first time, but he was soon apprehended again by Aguero and escorted to Coro.[47] For his trouble, Aguero was awarded the 100-peso bounty authorities had put on Chirino's head. Chirino spent the

[46] Ibid., "quasi desnudo y sin sapzatos me tire al campo a registrar la tropa por donde venian la incursion de los enemigos y explore toda la campaña en mas de dos leguas, retornandome sin haver encontrado novedad a las quatro de la tarde."

[47] Ibid., ff. 10-11.

next year in jail at Coro where he was repeatedly questioned by authorities, under what were, no doubt, tortuous conditions.

On December 16, 1796, Chirino was publicly executed in what was a grisly spectacle that took place in Caracas's Plaza Mayor. He was hung to death and his body was then mutilated: his head and hands were cut off and these body parts were then transported to Coro to be hung up at various locations in the sierra, serving as a warning to those who would dare defy white rule.[48] As was the case in most anti-slavery rebellions, Coro's rebels and those members of their community who happened to be of African descent, and were presumed guilty, felt the brunt of the suffering. The rebels killed nine people: seven white and two native American, but Valderrain's bloodbath claimed the lives of at least 125 people of African and Afro-indigenous descent.

The rise and fall of Coro's revolutionary movement was structured by the political economy of the region, and that of the greater Atlantic world. Informed by a moral economy based on African and native American communal practices, Coro's rebels found this moral economy violated by the institutions of slavery and taxes, and the way in which they functioned in Coro. The rebellion was crushed by Coro's military authorities who relied on the efforts of Coro's tribute-free indigenous people, the Caquetio. As will be seen in the fourth chapter, Caquetio loyalty was the product of the long and peculiar history of the conquest of Venezuela. As will also be demonstrated, the Caquetio helped defeat the insurrection because, ironically, they thought that this would bring their community relief from alcabala payments. Connecting back to the Atlantic, Coro's defenders brutally suppressed the rebellion because Coro formed a small piece in the giant puzzle that was the European world system during the eighteenth century. This

[48] Ibid., ff. 1-4.

world system was forged through the efforts of Europe's joint-stock companies, and ruled by the interlocking logics of capital accumulation and white supremacy.

Historiographical Interventions

This dissertation bridges the historiographies on capitalism and anti-slavery resistance in the Americas, and intervenes in each of these fields. More specifically, it engages histories of capitalism that discuss the role of the conquest, slavery, and coerced labor within this history. This dissertation intervenes in this literature by suggesting the need to more specifically define and date the emergence of capitalism. It also argues in favor of a periodization that begins in the nineteenth century. In addition, this dissertation engages the history of anti-slavery resistance in the Americas, particularly those works that focus on rebellions during the Age of Revolution (1789-1848). It adds the Coro rebellion to a list of case studies on anti-slavery resistance during the period, and it intervenes in this literature by emphasizing the significance of the Atlantic's political economy in giving rise to these movements. In particular, this dissertation identifies African political and economic practices as providing the ideological foundation for anti-slavery movements.

Recent decades have seen an explosion of scholarly work dedicated to antislavery resistance movements in the Americas. This literature has demonstrated that enslaved people detested their condition so much that they went through great lengths, often risking their lives, to abolish slavery. These works have also shown that enslaved people's resistance movements were generally ambitious, meaning that these movements

had established goals that usually included the destruction of the political, economic, and political orders of their societies, and their replacement with a radically different one.

Given the fragmentary and prejudicial nature of contemporary sources, case studies on antislavery resistance movements have been essential in providing depth to scholars' understandings of the character of these movements.[49] These case studies have uncovered details about rebel leaders and their backgrounds, rebel demands and ideologies, as well as rebel strategies and alliances. These studies have also been able to provide new details on the societies in which these people lived.

Although this dissertation is not the first work to examine the 1795 Coro rebellion, it is the first book-length study of the insurrection and the world that gave rise to it. The historiography on the Coro rebellion begins in 1910, with Venezuelan historian, intellectual, and politician Pedro Manuel Arcaya's induction speech—which was later published—at Venezuela's Academia Nacional de Historia, titled *Una insurrección de negros en 1795*.[50] In his speech, Arcaya argues that the rebellion was a spasmodic episode of violence, fueled by abolition rumors and the inebriation of the rebellion's leader, Chirino. Although Arcaya's work is a rich resource for information on eighteenth-

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[49] For examples of case studies, see: : Emilia V. da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood: The Demerara Slave Rebellion of 1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Douglas Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Madison, Wis.: Madison House, 1999); Manuel Barcia Paz, *The Great Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Robert Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict Between Empires Over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletwon, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Michele Reid-Vasquez, *The Year of the Lash: Free People of Color in Cuba and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Athens: Univeristy of Georgia Press, 2011); Joao José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: the Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[50] Pedro Manuel Arcaya, "Una insurrección de negros en 1795: Discurso de incorporación a la Academia Nacional de Historia, 11 de diciembre de 1910" in Pedro Manuel Arcaya, *Personajes y hechos de la historia de Venezuela* (Caracas: 1977), 227-273.

century Coro and the 1795 rebellion, this dissertation rejects his conclusion that the rebellion was unplanned and void of political substance.

This dissertation compliments the studies of Venezuelan historians who have written on the Coro rebellion from within the Marxist tradition. As part of their larger studies of black life and labor in Venezuela during the colonial period, Miguel Acosta Saignes and Federico Brito Figueroa, included narratives of the Coro rebellion.[51] Acosta Saignes and Brito Figueroa censured Arcaya's patronizing posture and perspective, while demonstrating that Coro's 1795 rebels were part of a long history of coordinated Afro-Venezuelan resistance to systems of exploitation and oppression. This position was taken up again by Pedro Gil Rivas, Luis Dovale Prado, and Lidia Lusmila Bello's 1996 essay, *La Insurrección de los negros de la serranía coriana: 10 de mayo de 1795*, which was based on their university thesis.[52] In *La insurrección*, Gil Rivas, Dovale Prado and Lusmila Bello argue that the Coro rebellion was a reaction to increasing land concentration in the region. This dissertation complements the work by Acosta Saignes, Brito Figueroa, and Gil Rivas, Dovale Prado and Lusmila Bello by providing depth to their examination of local conditions, and by adding an investigation into how these conditions were shaped by Atlantic ones.

In the United States, studies on enslaved people's resistance movements also began as a response to the racist logic of white historians of slavery. Early works on anti-slavery resistance, such as C.L.R. James's 1938 classic *The Black Jacobins* and Herbert

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[51] Miguel Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela* (La Habana: Casa de las Americas, 1978); Federico Brito Figueroa, *El problema de tierra y esclavos en la historía de Venezuela* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1985).

[52] Pedro A. Gil Rivas, Luis Dovale Prado and Lidia Lusmila Bello, *La insurrección de los negros de la serranía coriana: 10 de mayo de 1795* (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deportes, 2001).

Aptheker's 1943 book *American Negro Slave Revolts* and were written as rebuttals to the racist logic dominant at the time, in regards to slavery and slave rebellions.[53] This position, which was posited by nineteenth and early twentieth-century historians, such as Arcaya and Ulrich Phillips, assumed the natural inferiority of black people.[54] These historians tended to consider that black people were generally accepting of their condition as slaves, concluding that the institution was thus a natural one, and one that was necessary for the integration of black people into white societies. As mentioned earlier, white scholars of this generation viewed slave rebellions as spasmodic acts of indiscriminate violence—ones void of political content.

The Black Jacobins and *American Negro Slave Revolts* showed the above claims to be untenable. The latter recounted the history of 250 slave rebellions and conspiracies in the North American territory that would become the United States, as well as during the first decades of the republic, showing that enslaved black people did not like, nor easily accept their condition as slaves. As a biography of Toussaint L'Ouverture and a history of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), *The Black Jacobins* effectively flipped the ideology of white supremacy on its head, by displaying the political and ideological complexities of the revolution, as well as the ability of black revolutionaries to outwit, and ultimately defeat, numerous European battalions. Although the points these historians made may seem self-evident to much of the reading public today, this was not the case

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[53] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938); Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

[54] Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1918).

when these books were published, making them groundbreaking contributions to the study of antislavery insurrections and revolutions.

Since the publication of the second edition of *The Black Jacobins* in 1963, scholars began identifying the Age of Revolution as a historical watershed in the history of enslaved people's resistance movements.[55] Eugene Genovese's 1979 book *From Rebellion to Revolution* and Michael Craton's 1982 response, *Breaking the Chains*, both see the Age of Revolution as a period in which the ideological content of anti-slavery resistance took a turn.[56] Genovese and Craton concur that, before the period, enslaved people's resistance movements sought to recreate their African homelands in the Americas. After the period, however, anti-slavery resistance changed. For Genovese, these movements adopted the "bourgeois-democratic" spirit of the age, while Craton believed rebels were guided by their desire to live independent lives as peasant producers. This dissertation largely rejects the dichotomy of before and after the Age of Revolution, instead focusing on the continuity of rebel concerns throughout the periods in question. This dissertation aims to demonstrate that the political economy of the Coro rebels' homelands, or that of their parents and/or grandparents, largely informed rebel ideology.

The question of ideology has continued to burn in recent years for historians of enslaved people's resistance movements during the Age of Revolution, although opinions vary greatly. Some scholars, such as Laurent Dubois, David Patrick Geggus, and David Scott, have emphasized the influence that Enlightenment ideas about liberty and equality

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[55] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963).

[56] Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Lousiana State University Press, 1979); Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982).

had on anti-slavery insurrections during the Age of Revolution.[57] Other scholars, such as Manuel Barcia, Jacob Carruthers, and Walter Rucker have stressed the significance of African cultural and military practices on resistance during the period.[58] Although this dissertation does not aim to discount the multitude of ideas that informed enslaved people's resistance movements, it finds itself more in line with those scholars that have emphasized the significance of African concepts in the construction of rebel ideology.

This dissertation intervenes in the scholarship on antislavery resistance in the Americas during the Age of Revolution through a study of African political economy and its role in structuring the ideologies of Coro's rebels. This dissertation investigates the indigenous social relations on the Gold and Loango Coasts, from where most rebels

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[57] David Patrick Geggus, *Slavery, War, and Revolution: The British Occupation of Saint Domingue, 1793-1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); David Patrick Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution in the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Laurent Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution & Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014);); Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); Doris Garraway, ed., *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); David P. Geggus and Norman Fiering, eds., *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Gerald Horne, *Confronting Black Jacobins: The U.S., the Haitian Revolution, and the Origins of the Dominican Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2015); Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008); David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); David P. Geggus, *Haitian Revolutionary Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[58] Manuel Barcia Paz, *The Great African Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Jacob Carruthers, *The Irritated Genie: an Essay on the Haitian Revolution* (Chicago: Kemetic Institute, 1985); Walter C. Rucker, *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

descended. It finds that the political and economic practices of these African regions carried over to maroon communities throughout the Americas, including the *loango* community of Coro, which was involved in the rebellion. This dissertation argues that once plantation lands were encroaching on the lands of Coro's black peasants, and once the enactment of taxes make the rebels' ability to practice their autochthonous social systems untenable, Coro's rebels reached a breaking point, which was expressed in the 1795 insurrection. This revolutionary movement aimed to destroy Coro and to build a republic based on African social systems.

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" also intervenes in histories of capitalism, by arguing that the Coro rebellion was shaped by the pre-capitalist order of the eighteenth-century Atlantic. Across the political spectrum, definitions of capitalism vary greatly, but because this dissertation uses a Marxist framework, it engages mostly with those ideas put forward by scholars who work within this tradition. "The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" utilizes a Marxist framework because the most empirically informed studies of capitalism have come from studies within this canon. In their studies on slavery, and the European conquest of the Americas, Marxist scholars of the global south have adhered to Marx's ironclad definition, but have also tended to adopt one of the weaknesses in Marx's analysis.[59] This dissertation follows Joseph Inikori's

[59] See, for example: Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1969); Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970); Wallerstein; Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

lead in expressing doubt in Marx's periodization, which dated "the capitalist era" to the sixteenth century.[60]

Before discussing Marx's definition of capitalism, it is important to first explain why a definition is needed. Liberal scholars of the "new" history of capitalism, such as Sven Beckert and Louis Hyman, have provided ambiguous definitions for capitalism and/or have outright refused to define capitalism because they find the effort to be "deductive."[61] This school of thought has raised the concern that because industrial capitalism and neoliberal capitalism have relied on, or at least exploited, peripheral production processes based on war, and forms of forced labor, such as slavery, then defining capitalism becomes a messy proposition. These scholars argue against the notion that wage labor is the defining characteristic of capitalism, and emphasize the importance of circulation and modes of production not based on wages.

However, failing to define capitalism can potentially lead to anachronistic conclusions. As generations of Marxist scholars have made clear, historians of the new history of capitalism are right in their assertions that capitalism has relied on, or in the very least exploited, what Samir Amin called "capitalist formations on the periphery."[62] But capitalism, or the modern world's economic system, is not the first political and economic system to invade rival polities, or to conduct long-distance trade, or combine modes of production. If these processes were to be considered the basis of capitalism,

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[60] Joseph E. Inikori, *Slavery and the Rise of Capitalism* (Mona, Jamaica: Dept. of History, the University of the West Indies, 1993); Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[61] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Louis Hyman, *Debtor Nation: The History of America in Red Ink* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); "Interchange: The History of Capitalism" *Journal of American History* 101:2 (September 2014): 517.

[62] Amin.

then medieval Europe, as well as their contemporaries in Mesoamerica, the Andes, Ghana, and Benin should also be considered capitalist, as should ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. If everything is capitalism, then nothing is capitalism. But capitalism is a real political and economic system that was formed at a particular time and in a particular place; capitalism has a history.

For Marx, capitalism is a political and economic system whose foundation is the capitalist mode of production. The capitalist mode of production is a system of production in which the worker is divorced from the means of subsistence (i.e. food, housing, clothing, etc.) and the means of production (i.e. tools, machinery, raw materials, warehouses, etc.). Unable to work independently because the means of production have been usurped by a capitalist class, and unable to subsist because they have been removed from their land, workers are left with no choice but to sell their labor-power for wages in order to survive.[63]

For Marx and for scholars who work within his theoretical and methodological frameworks, this distinction between the capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production is of the upmost importance. Once the capitalist mode of production develops, it creates an environment of what Ernest Mandel called "generalized commodity production," meaning that the means of subsistence, and of production, become commodities on the market.[64] Because they have been divorced from their means of subsistence, workers are forced to purchase these means through the wages they earned from their employers. Generalized commodity production, or capitalism, is the most

[63] See, in particular, Chapter 6 in Marx's Capital, Vol. 1, "The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power" in Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 270-80.

[64] Mandel uses the term "generalized commodity production" in his introduction to Marx's *Capital, Volume 1,* 20.

dynamic system of economic expansion in human history. It has lead to the unprecedented growth of industry and technology, as well as unparalleled economic inequality and environmental devastation.

Scholars of the global south have generally stayed loyal to Marx's definition of capitalism, as well as his timeline. Marx argued that the "first sporadic traces" of capitalism were found in western and southern Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but that "the capitalist era" begins in the sixteenth century.[65] Following this, scholars such as Eric Williams, André Gunder Frank, Cedric Robinson, and Immanuel Wallerstein have based their important studies of European imperialism on the assumption that capitalism was the dominant mode of production operating in early modern Europe.[66] These scholars have then presumed that Europe's imperial expansion into Africa and the Americas was guided by the logic of capitalism. European capitalism, then, was the driving force behind the conquest of the Americas and the trade in enslaved Africans. Although these scholars would contend that conquest and slavery were not proper modes of capitalist production, they argued that these modes of extermination and exploitation were implemented in order to meet the needs of European capitalists.

The research conducted for this dissertation supports the contention made by Inikori that capitalism emerged as the dominant mode of production in Europe much later than Marx had surmised. Following Marx's timeline, Marxist scholars of medieval and early-modern Europe, such as Wallerstein, Maurice Dobb and Robert Brenner, have

[65] Ibid., 876.

[66] Williams; Frank; Robinson; Wallerstein.

agreed that English agriculture was the first field of capitalist production in Europe.[67] But Inikori has shown that it was not until 1801-3 that wage-laborers in agriculture began to exceed the number of farmers in England by a count of 340,000 families to 320,000 families.[68] As for manufacturing, this was not organized around the capitalist mode of production until at least fifty years later. As Inikori, among many others have shown, and as will be demonstrated in Chapter one, textile manufacturing was a non-capitalist enterprise confined mostly to peasant households before the mid nineteenth century.[69]

The logic of the eighteenth-century Atlantic's political and economic system shaped eighteenth-century Coro and the 1795 rebellion. As Marx has shown, the mode of production that serves as the basis of every economic system is key in determining the productivity, structure, and contradictions inherent in these systems. During the eighteenth century in Europe, peasant production was the dominant mode of production. As will be shown in the first and second chapters of this dissertation, European industries were limited in their ability to expand, and capital was funneled into mercantile activities. Mercantile expansion could only come through the forcing open of new markets, as well as new zones of production, across the Atlantic. This extension into the Atlantic could only come through the establishment of joint-stock companies.

The eighteenth century was a precapitalist era, not just in Europe, but also in the Gold and Loango Coasts, as well as in Coro. In the Gold and Loango Coasts, a political and economic order based largely on communal agricultural practices, was encroached

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[67] Wallerstein; Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1947); T.H.Aston and C.H.E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[68] Inikori, *Africans*, 45.

[69] Inikori, *Slavery.*

upon by the slave trade, but it was not eliminated. In Coro, the primary economic activity was agricultural production and livestock rearing. Peasants did the vast majority of this work and they also provided for themselves via these activities. This peasant economy was complemented by slavery and/or day labor on plantations and haciendas.

Therefore, as will be seen in the third and fourth chapters, eighteenth-century merchant capital was powerful enough to slaughter and enslave, but it was unable to grab complete control of the political and economic systems of indigenous peoples across the Atlantic. Although certainly encroached upon and altered by European imperialists, the structure of indigenous peasant production in Coro, and the Gold and Loango Coasts, was not yet fully replaced by an alternative formation. These autochthonous political and economic practices were the bedrock for the moral economy of Coro's African and native American peoples, and the 1795 rebels.

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" aims to bridge the fields of capitalism studies with histories of enslaved peoples resistance movements in the Americas. It intervenes in the literature on antislavery rebellions in the Americas by providing the first book-length case study for an important, yet understudied insurrection during the Age of Revolution. This dissertation argues that the Coro rebellion was shaped by the political economies of the Atlantic, and that this economy informed rebel ideology. "The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" also engages the literature on the history of capitalism by revising scholarship on the European world system. It argues that the emergence of this system, and the international division of labor, actually predated capitalism, and was thus shaped by the laws of peasant production and merchant capital.

Methods, Theories, and Outline

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" utilizes the methods and theoretical frameworks employed by scholars of diverse specialties. The dissertation is comprised of four chapters, plus an introduction and a conclusion that is based on secondary sources, archival research, and eighteenth-century publications. All four chapters begin and end with episodes from the Coro rebellion that touch on a particular aspect of the Atlantic's political economy, while the bodies of each chapter examine these topics in depth. The chapter titles are based on the primary commodity that is under investigation. This dissertation uses the methods employed by historians of anti-colonial resistance to read archival documentation related to violent insurrections of colonized people. The chapters also borrow from the methods employed by scholars who study the intersection between materiality and ideology, as well as the relationship between race, gender, and political economy. "The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" also contributes to the advancement of theoretical frameworks relating to these themes, as it provides evidence for some theories while slightly altering others.

The narratives that begin and end each chapter are based on colonial archival sources relating to the Coro rebellion. To read these documents, I employ methods by historians who have studied resistance by colonized people, particularly Aisha Finch and Ranajit Guha.[70] These scholars have pointed out that colonial archives relating to insurrection can only exist because of the actions taken and the words deployed by the rebels themselves. These "rebel utterances," to use Guha's term, are interspersed between

[70] Finch; Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford, 1983).

the sea of hate, fear, and paranoia that dominate the records produced by colonial authorities.[71] This dissertation utilizes these records with care, and is skeptical of official narratives because they are always warped by the biases of Spanish and white Venezuelan officials charged with administrating and policing a violent society. In eighteenth-century Venezuela, white elites were only very loosely constrained by law and custom in regards to violence and corruption, and even these mores did not stop these individuals from routinely ignoring them. Nevertheless, as Finch and Guha point out, colonial documents relating to resistance are still, at least partly, informed by the rebels themselves, and this dissertation is inspired by a duty to extract rebel words, actions, and ideologies from these documents.

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" conceives of ideology as a system of thought that informs political and economic ideas and actions. Following Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, V.N. Vološinov, and Stuart Hall, this dissertation recognizes that ideologies both inform, and are informed by political and economic conditions.[72] This dissertation argues that the anti-slavery and anti-tax ideology of Coro's rebels was informed by their moral economy. As mentioned above, this moral economy was based on the communalist political and economic customs the rebels were accustomed to practicing in Africa and in the Americas. As will be seen in the third chapter, it is likely that Coro's rebels planned to instill these communalist practices if

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[71] Guha, 16.

[72] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London and New York: Verso, 2005); Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology—Marxism without Guarantees." Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10:2 (1986): 28-44; Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10:6 (1985), 5-27; V.N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Ma. and London: Harvard University Press, 1973).

they had taken control of the region, in ways similar to that of maroon communities in the Americas. Therefore, Coro's rebels did not necessarily need Enlightenment ideas of liberty and equality; they, and/or their ancestors, experienced these values themselves.

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" also utilizes methods borrowed from scholars who study the intersection of race and political economy. This dissertation does not use Martin Legassick and David Hemson's term "racial capitalism," which was popularized in Robinson's *Black Marxism*, because it argues that the period under question was not capitalist.[73] However, this dissertation is in tune with these works' analysis of the overlap between race and class, and the intersection between racial formation and capital accumulation. The dissertation provides evidence for Robinson's notion that racialized divisions of labor predated the emergence of capitalism, and that this custom continued under Europe's modern political and economic system.[74] As this dissertation demonstrates, the eighteenth-century Atlantic was an organic political and economic unit in which roles in the European world system, often shaped by "race" and/or place, were clearly designated. The indigenous people of the Gold and Loango Coasts were consumers of European cloth and exporters of enslaved human beings. These enslaved people were sent to toil in Coro—a region used to produce cheap

[73] Martin Legassick and David Hemson, *Foreign Investment and the Reproduction of Racial Capitalism in South Africa* (London: The Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1976); Robinson.

[74] But the dissertation refutes Robinson's notion that "race" was operating in medieval Europe, mostly because of the importance of skin color to the modern notion of race. It therefore concurs with scholars such as Anibal Quijano who point out that markers of difference took political and economic shape in the Atlantic after 1492 and the creation of a truly global economy.[74] It is my contention, then, that this global division of labor was established before the advent of capitalism, but that the modern world's political and economic system hardened and exacerbated these racialized divisions. See: Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power: Eurocentrism and Latin America" Nepantla: Views from the South 1:3 (2000): 533-580.

agricultural commodities, which served as raw material for other European industries in the circum-Caribbean and in the metropole.

Gender is key when studying racialization and capital accumulation in the Atlantic. This dissertation follows Hilary Beckles and Jennifer Morgan in recognizing the significance of black women to the political economy of societies with enslaved people.[75] Enslaved and legally free black women were crucial to the functioning of Coro's plantation society, both as plantation workers and through the literal reproduction of capital, as their bodies were often used as vessels to bring commodified human beings into the world. "The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" also follows Finch's work on enslaved women in the *Escalera* Conspiracy, as it seeks to uncover the "hidden labors of rebellion" that Coro's women rebels were responsible for.[76] The women rebels of Coro sang seditious songs on the eve of the insurrection, escaped plantations and sacked masters' quarters, hid loot from colonial authorities, and attempted to break their partners out of jail.

These hidden labors are prominent in the dissertation's first chapter, "'Precious Objects,'" which utilizes the above methods and frameworks, as well as others, to investigate cloth manufacturing in Europe and the material and symbolic value of these textiles in Coro. The chapter begins with a recounting of the significance of European cloth during and after the May 1795 insurrection. Following the work of scholars such as Hall and Vološinov, regarding language, representation, and materiality, it argues that

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[75] Hilary Beckles, Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jennifer L. Morgan, "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery." *Small Axe*. 22.1 (2018): 1-17.

[76] Finch, 7.

these textiles and clothes both informed and represented racial and class status in eighteenth-century Coro.[77]

The first chapter utilizes primary and secondary source material to examine cloth production in the European manufacturing enclaves of Flanders, Brittany, and Devon. Using archival sources from the SSC, the WIC, and the RCG, the chapter first establishes that these regions were some of the principal cloth providers for eighteenth-century Coro, as well as those textiles used to procure enslaved people in Africa. It then examines the manufacturing processes in Flanders, Brittany, and Devon, showing that peasant production formed the basis of cloth assembled, which limited the growth potential for these industries. The chapter concludes that the manufacturing process of these enclaves ensured their high exchange value in Coro, therefore largely influencing the textiles' symbolic value.

The second chapter, "Joint-Stock Company Capital," examines the three companies that were responsible for molding eighteenth-century Coro: the SSC, the WIC, and the RCG. The chapter begins and ends with an introduction into the African-born communities of Coro through a study of the circulation of abolition rumors in the years leading up to the rebellion, as well as scandalous songs sung in the nights preceding May 10, 1795. Using firm records and recent biographies of the companies, the chapter then demonstrates how they were responsible for establishing Coro's African character, as well as creating the region's plantations and haciendas.

The second chapter employs theories regarding white supremacy, the interplay between racial formation and capital accumulation, as well as interpellation, to tell the history of the SSC, the WIC, and the RCG. It adopts Charles Mills's framing of "white

[77] Hall; Vološinov.

supremacy," to explore how this Atlantic political, economic, and cultural order was forged historically, in the eighteenth century, by joint-stock companies such as the SSC, the WIC, and the RCG.[78] The chapter's investigation into the joint-stock companies also utilizes the research methods of Legassick and Hemson and Peter Hudson, who in their research on racial capitalism have traced racial formation by identifying political and economic actors, as well as institutions, that have shaped the racial and class conditions in the societies in question.[79] Following the work of Louis Althusser on interpellation, this chapter concludes that varying interests and processes were at work to establish these companies and to carry out their practices, even though these interests all intersected with the desire and/or need to accumulate capital and subordinate non-European peoples.[80]

The third chapter, "The People," continues the study of Coro's African communities through an investigation into the social systems of the Gold Coast, the Loango Coast, and maroon settlements across the Americas during the eighteenth century. The chapter begins and ends with an inquiry into Coro's *loango* community and their involvement in the 1795 rebellion. Recognizing Walter Rodney's determination that eighteenth-century Africa was a proto-colonial, rather than a pre-colonial space, this chapter nevertheless discerns that the communalist customs of the peoples of the Gold and Loango Coasts continued to be practiced in the eighteenth century, much as they had before the fifteenth-century invasion. The third chapter uses the autobiographies of formerly enslaved people, eighteenth-century European traveller accounts, and secondary

[78] Mills.

[79] Legassick and Hemson; Peter James Hudson, *Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

[80] Althusser.

literature to study these autochthonous political and economic practices, and demonstrate how they were carried over to maroon communities across the Americas, including the *loango* settlement in Coro. As has been stated earlier, this chapter argues that the moral economy of much of Coro's rebels was based on this African political economy.

The fourth chapter, "Indigenous Labor-Power," studies the role played by native American people in the Coro rebellion and in the Spanish Crown's counter revolution, alongside the regimes of taxation that largely determined the involvement of legally free people. The chapter uses secondary sources and eighteenth-century documents relating to indigenous labor and taxation in Coro to recreate the lives of Coro's indigenous peoples before and after the conquest. The fourth chapter determines that, similar to the indigenous people of the Gold and Loango Coasts, those people indigenous to Coro practiced a communalist political and economic system, which although not free of hierarchy or exploitation, was based on collaborative subsistence practices and decentralized political authority. The chapter also demonstrates that—despite the brutality of colonialism—legally free people in Coro, including the indigenous peoples there, continued these practices as they lived and worked as peasants. It argues that a dramatic increase in taxation in the years leading to the 1795 rebellion made these customs untenable, violating the moral economy of Coro's indigenous population, and leading some to seek relief through revolution, while others sought for it through loyalty.

A final note should be made about this dissertation's reading of eighteenth-century sources. This dissertation utilizes economic data collected from Dutch, English, and Spanish colonial sources. Given the prevalence of contraband during the eighteenth century, particularly in regards to the trades under investigation here, this dissertation

recognizes that these numbers cannot be taken at face value. Nevertheless, the data does reveal certain trends, particularly in regards to exports from Coro, which were not previously available. Therefore, even though the information may be flawed, it does reveal important insight into the functioning of Coro's economy and its role in the Atlantic trades. A similar dilemma is present when studying eighteenth-century autobiographies written by formerly enslaved people and contemporary travel narratives written by Europeans. This dissertation reported only those statements that seemed most logical, and which could be cross-verified through other sources.

"The Political Economy of Anti-Slavery Resistance" examines the Coro rebellion alongside the Atlantic world that gave rise to it. It aims to bridge the gap between works on violent antislavery resistance movements and the history of capitalism by intervening in both of these fields. It argues that the Coro rebellion was a product of the precapitalist Atlantic economy of the period, which was based on a mode of production in Europe that combined peasant production and feudal land tenures. During this period, the legally free indigenous peoples of Coro and the Gold and Loango Coasts would continue to practice their political and economic customs, despite colonial exploitation and the enslavement of their friends and family members. Once their autochthonous lifestyles became untenable, however, these peoples took up arms in May of 1795. This is the story of how the yin of European imperialism, conquest, and slavery confronted the yang of communitarian societies in Africa and in the Americas. This is the history of capitalism.

Chapter One: 'Precious Objects'

Soon after Don Juan Estevan de Valderrama arrived in Coro to lead an investigation into the Coro rebellion, he uncovered details about a conspiracy, which rocked long established hierarchies, and revealed the operations of race and class through the prism of European cloth.[81] Valderrama, the Lieutenant Governor of the Captaincy General of Venezuela, arrived on the night of October 3, 1795; sent from his post in Maracaibo to Coro by Venezuela's Governor and Captain General, Don Pedro Carbonell. Carbonell called for Valderrama's assistance about six weeks before, on August 17, because he considered that local authorities in Coro had "grave difficulties" in accurately informing him of what transpired during the rebellion.[82] According to Carbonell, this poor record of communication had the dangerous potential of "confusing the innocent with the true criminals of this case, unless it is conducted by an outsider of that jurisdiction, of known integrity, expertise, maturity and advice."[83] Carbonell seems to have distrusted Coro's authorities, particularly its Justice Major Don Maríano Valderraín, who would be substituted for Valderrama. Valderrama's job, then, would be to determine who was involved in the rebellion, who was not, and who was being unfairly scapegoated by Coro's biased officials.

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[81] "Expediente sobre la insurrección de los negros, zambos y mulatos proyectada en el año 1795 a las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Coro, Provincia de Caracas," 1795, Caracas, 426, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, ff. 193.

[82] Ibid., 116; "graves dificultades."

[83] Ibid; "de confundir los inocenttes con los verdaderos reos de esta causa, sino se pone la substtanciacion de ella a cargo de persona forastera de aquella jurisdicion y de conocida provedad, ciencia, madures y consejo.

In order to discern who was truly guilty or innocent, Valderrama questioned witnesses and suspected rebels on the whereabouts of European textiles and luxurious clothes, which were stolen from local elites during the rebellion. As was the case throughout the Atlantic, European textiles held a great deal of material and symbolic value in eighteenth-century Coro. These textiles were imported to manufacture clothes, which served as markers of elite racial and class status. From the very start of the rebellion, clothes, clothing articles, and other valuables were stolen from plantations, and even off of the corpse of one of the rebels' victims. Scores of witnesses and accused rebels were called to testify before Valderrama during the months that he was leading the investigation. Many of them were asked about the status of textiles, clothes, and other valuables that had been looted. Some deponents had been incarcerated since the earliest days of the rebellion. Others were called into court by local officials for questioning, and showed up voluntarily.

One person who arrived to court on her own volition was 45-year-old María de los Dolores Chirino. Chirino was married to José Leonardo Chirino, the alleged leader of the May rebellion. María de los Dolores Chirino was born enslaved—the legal property of the landowner, merchant, and Crown bureaucrat Joséph de Tellería. Although her husband was legally free, her three children were, like her, born enslaved because slavery was inherited by way of the mother in Venezuela, as it was throughout the Americas.[84] Evidence suggests that Chirino and her family were close to the Tellería family. They

[84] Most historical analysis on the role of women's bodies in reproducing enslaved labor has focused on Anglophone America. These insights are easily applicable to the rest of the continent, however. See: Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Angela Y. Davis, *Women Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jennifer L. Morgan, "Partus Sequitur Ventrem: Law, Race, and Reproduction in Colonial Slavery." *Small Axe*. 22.1 (2018): 1-17.

lived inside of the master's quarters at El Socorro, one of the two plantation homes owned by Tellería in Coro's *sierra*, and the plantation that birthed the May rebellion.

On October 23, 1795, Chirino testified that on the night of May 10, she was serving dinner to Don Joséph Nicolas Martínez, a houseguest of the Tellería family. She said that a child interrupted her work, by telling her that people were fighting outside. Chirino said that she asked the child if her husband was involved, and that the child responded that she did not know. As Chirino kept attending to Martínez, the child interrupted two more times. It was during the third interruption that Chirino decided to investigate for herself. Chirino stated that she found her husband outside drunk. She scolded him, "is it possible that you are this way when you must leave at dawn to receive my master Don Joséph Tellería."[85] Chirino returned to the kitchen and served Martínez his food, telling him that she did not dare, "bring him the coffee because with Leonardo being in the disposition that he is in, she distrusted to go out for it."[86]

Chirino then stated to Valderrama and the court that she waited in a bedroom for some time when she suddenly saw her husband standing next to the door, accompanied by six men, and holding an unsheathed sword. Chirino said that she ran out of the house to hide, when a mortally wounded Martínez approached her, telling her to escape to Tellería's other plantation, La Asunción. According to Chirino, Martínez stated that he

[85] "Expediente," ff. 303.; "es possible estés de esa manera deviendo salir de madrugada a recivir a mi amo Don Joséph Tellería."

[86] Ibid; "a traerle el café por que estando Leonardo en la disposicion que se hallava se recelava salir por el."

could not escape with her because "he was already injured, that he could not."[87] Chirino's next recorded statement would seal her fate:

> the insurgents had just taken the life of Martínez, as the declarant witnessed, in the same place where he was left, and Leonardo divided up his clothes amongst themselves, but she does not know whether [they also divided up] the clothing articles or money that he had, because in regards to this, she does not know what was done with them.[88]

Chirino went home after this initial testimony, but she would be arrested two weeks later, as Valderrama accused her of lying before the court. Valderrama's suspicions arose on November 7 when Don Juan Francisco Santaliz, a white landowner in Coro's mostly indigenous village of Pedregal, gave his testimony. Santaliz stated that in the aftermath of the rebellion, he found Chirino and her three children, and pressured her to tell him where her husband was hiding. Santaliz added that he threatened to whip Chirino and her daughter if they did not reveal where he was. Santaliz did not say whether or not he beat Chirino or her children, but he revealed that he had confiscated a host of stolen goods from her, which included textiles and clothes.[89]

Two days later, Chirino was arrested and confronted with Santaliz's testimony, and Valderrama accused her of being part of the rebellion. Valderrama believed that the truth behind the extent of her involvement lied in her suppression of key details. Why had Chirino neglected to mention that her husband had given her some of Martínez's clothes after he was killed? Why did she also say that she had no idea if José Leonardo had

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[87] Ibid; "ya estaba herido que no podia."

[88] Ibid; "los insurgentes acabaron de quitar la vida a Martínez como lo vió la que declara en el mismo parage en donde lo dejó, y entre ellos repartió sus bestidos Leonardo, pero no save si tambien las prendas o dinero que tendria, pues de esto no esta entendida que se hizo.

[89] "Expedientes, sublevacion de esclavos en la sierra de Coro, 1795," 1795, Judiciales, A16-C54-D11183, Academia Nacional de Historia, Caracas, ff. 1-3.

distributed linens or other articles of clothing, when she had some in her possession just days after the rebellion?[90]

Chirino was not the only person whose testimony about stolen textiles landed them in hot water. Juan de Jesus de Lugo, an indigenous man from the tribute-paying town of San Luís de Pecaya, had been jailed in the aftermath of the rebellion, implicated by José Leonardo Chirino and other rebels. The thirty-one year old Lugo had been incarcerated for five months before he testified before Valderrama. Like Chirino, Lugo denied being involved in the rebellion. In fact, the opposite was true. Coro's rebels tried to kill *him*, Lugo claimed, because they accused him of fighting "in defense of the whites."[91]

Lugo stated to Valderrama that he left home for work on the morning of May 11. While on his way, Lugo ran into Juan del Carmen Rivero, a man racially classified as *pardo*, who told him to go back home because "the blacks are revolting."[92] Lugo stated that soon after he returned home, he came across the rebels who beat him severely before he managed to escape by entering the home of an elderly landowner, Doña Concepción Suárez. Lugo added that the rebels wanted to kill Suárez and steal her belongings. In response, Lugo testified, he and Suárez grabbed a hammock, all the items of clothing and other goods that belonged to her, and hid them outside of Lugo's home.[93]

Lugo attested that he then went to notify another elderly landowner who lived nearby, Doña Ana Vera, of what was happening. Lugo stated that he did this so that she

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[90] Ibid., ff.13-14.

[91] Ibid., 186.; "en defensa de los blancos"

[92] Ibid., 184; "los negros estan sublevados."

[93] Ibid.

could escape and hide her clothes, textiles, and other valuables from the rebels. When Lugo arrived, however, the rebels had already "sacked the house."[94] Lugo testified that Vera gave him a large bag and asked him to go to her home in San Luís and to try to recover whatever goods he could find. When Lugo arrived to Vera's home, however, Cristóbal Acósta, an infamous rebel who authorities considered to be José Leonardo Chirino's "captain," was already distributing Vera's clothes and other goods to his rebel contingent. Lugo said that when he realized that these were Vera's belongings, that he stuffed them into the bag that she had given him.[95] Valderrama was suspicious of Lugo's testimony, and he called a number of witnesses to testify as to whether or not Lugo was involved in the rebellion, and to find out what happened to the clothes and clothing articles he had had in his possession.

The interrogations of Chirino and Lugo reveal the significance that clothes and clothing articles had for Coro's rebels. From the instance that the rebellion was launched on the night of May 10, Coro's rebels, led by José Leonardo Chirino, stole Martínez's clothes, textiles, and other valuables after they killed him. As María de los Dolores Chirino testified, her husband then distributed these goods to the six men who were with him. As would later be made clear, Chirino also gave some of Martínez's valuables to his wife, María de los Dolores, to keep safe. Likewise, Lugo's testimony reveals how rebels in San Luís, led by Chirino's "captain" Acósta, stole clothes while sacking the homes of white elites. Like Chirino, Acósta, distributed these luxury items to the rebels he was with.

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[94] Ibid.,; "saqueado la casa."

[95] Ibid., 187.

Coro's rebels recognized the social and material value of European textiles. They were also morally indignant at the racial and class differences of the world they lived in. They saw textiles as one of the ways in which these differences were manifested. For the rebels, Martínez was an embodiment of their oppressor. He was an elite white man who held the privileges of men of his caste; the ability to live comfortably, be attended to by servants, bark orders, and whip whichever enslaved person he wished. As poor people of African and native American descent, Coro's rebels were trapped in a life in which they worked for men like Martínez, and suffered the humiliation and abuse of horrid working conditions and terrible inequities. When the rebels killed Martínez, they felt they were killing Coro's entire racial and class structure. When the rebels stole his clothes, they continued in the unraveling of Coro's society. Martínez's clothes, his textiles, his luxury items were the bedrock of a plantation economy that sustained these inequities. By stealing these clothes, Coro's rebels were upending society; making what was his, theirs. By distributing these goods amongst themselves, Chirino, Acósta, and Coro's rebels were further chastising Coro's socioeconomic structure. The act of redistribution was also the symbolic declaration of their own moral code, which was the opposite of that of their oppressors. This redistribution also served to catalogue this moral code, which would serve as the foundation of their new society. This new moral regime would do away with the inequities that defined Coro; each person would receive the fruits of his or her own labor.

Surviving records of the Coro rebellion also reveal an obsession with textiles and clothes on the part of Valderrama and other colonial authorities. For white elites, European textiles and luxurious clothes were a means to an end; status symbols that one

dedicated their lives to accumulate and to display. Likewise, opulent clothes made of European textiles were a marker of whiteness, a resource that was simultaneously prodigious and scarce in Coro.[96] When Santeliz discovered European textiles, clothes, and other valuables in the possession of María de los Dolores Chirino, he confidently confiscated them, knowing that these magnificent items could not belong to a black slave. When Santeliz threatened to whip Chirino if she did not reveal where her husband was hiding, he was threatening to punish her for her record as a rebel. In Santeliz's eyes, Chirino's possession of European textiles and other valuables was a crime in of itself. It was an act of subversion that threatened to blur the line between the powerful and the powerless. When Valderrama had Chirino arrested for lying under oath, it was her temporary possession of clothes, and her hiding them from authorities, that threatened the hegemonic order just as much as her lying in court did.[97]

The importance of European textiles during the Coro rebellion points to the complex network of production and consumption, semiotics and political economy, which created the hierarchal social worlds of the eighteenth-century Atlantic. This chapter explores the material reality that interfaced with the language of European cloth.[98] The clothes and textiles that Coro's rebels stole and hid, and the ones that

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[96] For a theoretical discussion of whiteness as a form of property, see: Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness As Property." Harvard Law Review. 106.8 (1993): 1707-1791.

[97] For hegemony, see Gramsci's definition in Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smit, ed., trans, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 12.

[98] This position is inspired by many works, including the following: Louis Althusser, *For Marx* (London and New York: Verso, 2005); Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology—Marxism without Guarantees." Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10:2 (1986): 28-44; Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10:6 (1985), 5-27; V.N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Ma. and London: Harvard University Press, 1973).

authorities were obsessed to find, were one of the pillars of an Atlantic economy that connected European peasants to merchants, and these merchants to producers in Africa and the Americas. This chapter examines textiles in Coro through an investigation into their manufacture in two regions, which were principal providers of cloth there: Flanders and Brittany. This chapter will then examine woolen cloth production in Devon during the first half of the eighteenth century. Devon was the production center for most of the textiles that were used to purchase the ancestors of Coro's rebels in West and West Central Africa. This chapter shows that textile production in eighteenth-century Europe was a slow, assorted process that involved thousands of workers, most of whom were peasants. The high costs incurred in this non-capitalist production process helped ensure that textile prices in Coro would be out of reach for most people, who were poor, and of African and native American descent. European textiles, infused with a multiplex of social relations, helped shape the nature of race, class, and revolution in eighteenth-century Coro.

Textiles and Clothing in Eighteenth Century Coro

One morning in 1774, María Francisca de la Peña and her daughters, all of whom were racially classified as *mulatas*, went to church in the city of Coro.[99] They attended church in their most extravagant attire, wearing *alfombras*, elegant sheets made of silk and wool, which covered their heads, draped over their shoulders, and engulfed their

[99] Neruska Rojas, "Las criollas y sus trapos: matices de la moda femenina caraqueña durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII," in *Se ataca pero no se cumple: historia y sociedad en la Provincia de Caracas (siglo XVIII)*, edited by Neller Ramón Ochoa Hernández and Jorge Flores González, 275.

torsos.[100] But because they were caught wearing *alfombras*, de la Peña and her daughters were arrested and would soon face trial. According to the *Leyes de las Indias*, women of African descent were not allowed to wear expensive jewelry, blankets, or any other luxury items of clothing, unless they were married to a Spaniard.[101]

During the trial of de la Peña and her daughters, a local lawyer for the Crown expressed his concern about African people wearing European clothes. His principal concern was that it blurred hierarchies of race and class, but he also critiqued, what in his mind, was the deterioration of European style:

> The competing *mulatas* abrogate the grace of the *alfombra* during the day, and because it would look very bad with a wool skirt, a primitive garment in our laws for certain roles; out comes the haggler with the hieroglyph of a necklace, gold bracelets, pearls, or precious stones with the most decorated velvet overskirt, slippers made of fabric, etc.[102]

Coro's authorities wanted to make an example out of de la Peña and her daughters. Although the outcome of their trial is unknown at this time, the scandal did result in an attempt to harden the enforcement of the law that prohibits people of African descent from wearing luxurious clothes. Officers soon posted a notice in Coro's central plaza, stating that the breaking of this law would result in a 25 *peso* fine for a first offence. A second offence would result in another 25 peso fine, plus six months of hospital service, and any other penalty deemed appropriate by local officials.[103]

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[100] "Alfombra," in Real Academia Española, Diccionario de la lengua castellana, 1791.

[101] Cited in Rojas, 250; Leyes de Indias, Tomo VII, Título Quinto. De los Mulatos, Negros, Berberiscos, é hijos de Indios, "Ley xxviii. Que las Negras, y Mulatas borras no traigan oro, seda, mantos, ni perlas."

[102] Ibid., 276. Las mulatas a competencia se abrogan en el dia la gracia de la alfombra, y como pareceria muy mal con una saya de lana un traje privativo en nuestras leyes a determinados papeles; sale la regatona con el gerolifico de punta, collar, manillas de oro, perlas, o piedras preciosas con los mas atavios de basquina de terclopelo, chapines de tela, etc."

[103] Ibid.

Luxurious clothes were a marker of whiteness and elite status in eighteenth-century Coro. The production of cacao grew rapidly throughout the eighteenth century. As cacao production expanded, trade increased, along with the purchasing power of elites, who squandered much of their wealth on ostentation.[104] This ostentation was buttressed by the Spanish Crown's transition from the Hapsburg dynasty to that of the Bourbons at the turn of the century. At this time, the flamboyant style of French elites became a fad in the Spanish Atlantic, replacing the more spartan clothing of the previous centuries.[105] Consumption of French and other European textiles in Venezuela grew further after the establishment of the Real Compañia Guipozcoana (RCG) in 1730, which was able to provide a steady influx of European products during the fifty-five years in which it operated.[106]

As was also the case throughout the Spanish colonies in America, European travellers were impressed with the clothing of Venezuelan elites. Some years after the 1795 rebellion, Frenchman F. Depons noted, "Laces also form a part of the Spanish dress; those of Flanders obtain the preference."[107] Depons later added, "there are few whites who are not dressed in ash coloured or blue casimere."[108] Another French visitor, Louis Alexandre Berthier noted in 1783, "'first class men' were 'dressed as in Spain.'"[109] Berthier gushes over the beauty and "sumptuousness" of elite Venezuelan women whose

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[104] Carlos F. Duarte, *Historia del traje durante la época colonial venezolana* (Caracas: Armitano, 1984), 58.

[105] Ibid., 57.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid., 332.

[108] Ibid., 333.

[109] Ibid., 124; "los hombres de primera clase' estaban 'vestidos como en España.'"

wealth and sense of fashion allow them to wear as many as three outfits in one day: one in which they go to church, one they wear while at home, and another with which they go dancing.[110]

The clothes worn by people of African and native American descent were more modest. Berthier mentioned that there were three classes of people below "pure-blooded" Spaniards in Caracas: the second class was mestizos, the third was indigenous and the fourth was of African descent. Mestizos, Berthier noted, dressed similarly to Europeans, although their outfits were made of less expensive textiles. Indigenous people tried to imitate mestizos the best they could, according to Berthier, but they were not allowed to wear black shawls to church, they could only wear white veils. The fourth class, people of African descent, only wore a shirt, a skirt, and a handkerchief on top of their heads. The wealthier black people would wear large gold earrings.[111] According to Duarte, enslaved people wore few items, usually made of cotton or animal skins.[112]

This is not to say, however, that people of African and native American descent did not ignore law and custom and wear flamboyant European clothes. For eighteenth-century Mexico, Peru, and Saint-Domingue scholars such as Rebecca Earle, Tamara Walker, and Joan Dayan have shown that European visitors were appalled to see people of African and native American descent wearing the same clothes worn by elites of European descent.[113] Historians have also shown that European dress could be used as a

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[110] Ibid., 134.

[111] Ibid., 135-6.

[112] Ibid., 201.

[113] Rebecca Earle, "Luxury, Clothing and Race in Colonial Spanish America," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, edited by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (New York: Palgrave, 2003); Tamara J. Walker, *Exquisite Slaves: Race, Clothing, and Status in Colonial*

means of social mobility for nonwhite people. It is most likely that Venezuelan authorities could not completely control the use of luxurious clothing by people of African and indigenous descent, particularly those who made up the vast majority of the middling classes of colonial society. As seen with the episode with de la Peña and her daughters, however, white elites could—and did—enforce this law when they found it in their interest to do so.

Textiles were imported into Venezuela from Europe, but clothes were manufactured locally. Clothes were made in tailor's shops, which were owned by master tailors; usually men of African descent who employed enslaved apprentices. In the largest tailor shops, there would be a master tailor, five other tailors and two enslaved apprentices.[114] To become a tailor, one had to register with the local tailor's guild, pay a registration fee, and pass examinations.[115] Elites would meet with their tailor after they had purchased their textiles at the market or in a local store. They would then tell the tailor what kind of clothes they wanted made. The tailor would offer his expert advice, but it was ultimately the client that made final decisions as to how their clothes would be designed.[116]

Prices at tailor's shops were high. In 1770 Caracas, for example, some of the products stolen by Coro's rebels were produced for about 1 peso and 2 *reales* a piece.[117] This equaled about 10 days of fieldwork for most laborers, which ensured that hiring a

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Lima (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Joan Dayan, Haiti, History, and the Gods (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 170-82.

[114] Duarte, 228.

[115] Ibid., 233.

[116] Ibid., 227.

[117] Ibid., 228-9.

tailor was out of reach for most people of African and native American descent.[118] Most of these workers probably made their own clothes from imported textiles, or from textiles that were produced by local artisans.[119]

Clothing in eighteenth-century Coro reflected the intertwined hierarchies of race and class in colonial society. Clothing contributed to defining elite status because local landowners and merchants accumulated capital in order to spend it on luxury items, such as clothing. This clothing served as an announcement of European elites' race and class. The middling classes in Coro—most of whom were of African and/or native American descent—could use their limited acquisitive powers to emulate European landowners and merchants. Clothes, therefore, had the power to help these populations ascend the racial hierarchy, from *indio* to mestizo or *mulato* to *pardo.* Those with dark skin, however, had little hope of accomplishing this. A further obstacle to racial ascension through wearing attire was that middling classes ran the risk of serious consequences for violating clothing laws, as was seen with de la Peña and her daughters.

Much of the money elites allocated to clothes, however, was spent before they arrived at the tailor's shop. The reason why lies in the manufacture of textiles in Europe.

Flanders

In November of 1787, two local officers discovered 22 bales of contraband goods in Cumarebo, a Caquetio town northwest of the city of Coro. The officers found the bales

[118] For wages in eighteenth-century Venezuela, see: Otilia Rosas González, *El tributo indígena en la Provincia de Venezuela* (Caracas: Historiadores SC, 1998), 21

[119] Rojas, 235.

on a nearby beach, stashed in a crevice that lay between two massive rocks. [120] The discovery was not an uncommon one. Contraband trade in European commodities was a ubiquitous feature of life in Coro at the time. Most contraband came via Curaçao and was exchanged for Coro's cash crops and livestock.

The haul from Cumarebo was valued at over 1,050 pesos. Besides four small barrels of gunpowder, and two pounds of incense, the 22 bales of contraband were exclusively made up of European textiles. About 452 pesos worth of these textiles—over 43% of the shipment's overall value—were manufactured in Flanders.[121] Before being sold in Coro, some of these cloths may have first been stored in the Dutch West India Company's (WIC) warehouse in Curaçao. Records from the last quarter of the eighteenth century usually show just two types of textiles housed there: linen from Flanders, and Osnaburgs, which were made in Scotland and mostly used to clothe enslaved people. During this period, the presence of Flemish linen in the WIC warehouse reached a high of 977.5 yards in 1773. Although the yearly balance of Flemish linen in the WIC warehouse vacillated during this period, it never fell below 250 yards of fabric.[122]

Flemish linen also entered Coro through legal means, by way of the RCG. Although exact numbers of Flemish textile imports into Venezuela are not possible at this time, it is clear that Flemish manufacturers accounted for a large share of RCG imports. In 1779, for example, five RCG ships exported textiles to the Province of Venezuela, and all of them carried cloth manufactured in Flanders. All together these ships exported

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[120] "1787: Autos formados con motivo del apresamiento de varios efectos de contraband, ejecutado por el Guarda Tomás Manuel Barbera en los montes de Pichibrea, costa del mar arriba," Comisos XXXV, Archivo General de la Nación, Caracas, ff. 308-332.

[121] Ibid.

[122] "Ingekomen bijlagen van Curaçao, met tafels," WIC 609-16, Nationaal Archief, The Hague.

2,803 pieces of *presilla*, linen used to make shirts, trousers, and veils, for a value of 23,618 pesos. They also exported a total of 627 pieces of *bramantes*, a textile made of cotton but thread with flax, for a value of 6,747 pesos. In addition, the RCG exported 104 pieces of Flemish textiles with line patterns for a value of over 2,991 pesos. The RCG exported an additional 50 linen pieces from Flanders that year, but their value was not given.[123]

Although Flemish linen was a recognized commodity in eighteenth-century Coro, most inhabitants probably knew little about Flanders itself. Today, Flanders spreads across the countries of The Netherlands, France, and Belgium. During most of the eighteenth century, however, Flanders was politically divided between France and Austria. Maritime Flanders, to the north of the region, extended from Dunkirk to Zeeland. The interior of Flanders, where the vast majority of the population lived, ran south of the Maritime region, extending west of Lille, and southeast of Alost. The region's land is characterized by its low altitude, flat terrain, and natural waterways.[124]

Manufacture in French Flanders was geared towards the French market, while production in Austrian Flanders was almost exclusively made for consumers in Spain's American colonies.[125] Flanders had been famous for its textile production since the ancient Roman period. During this time, wool was exported to the rest of the Roman Empire. This trade continued, and by the twelfth century Flanders had become the most

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[123] Franklin Mendels signals the Spanish names given to certain forms of Flemish textiles. See: Franklin F. Mendels, *Industrialization and Population Pressure in Eighteenth-Century Flanders* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 72. Also see Duarte. Data is from: "Expedientes de la Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas," Caracas, 934B, AGI, ff. 628-30; "Expedientes de la Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas," Caracas 935C, AGI, ff. 30-34, 61-89.

[124] Mendels, 51-55.

[125] Ibid., 182.

industrialized part of Western Europe. Land-holding structure and labor patterns remained similar from the medieval period through the mid nineteenth century. In the maritime zone, large farms produced food for the region and for export. Workers in this region were paid a wage, although they were not required to purchase commodities for their subsistence. Farmers would sometimes pay for the lodging and board of these workers, and they may have been provided food as well. The vast majority of Flanders's population, though, lived in the sandy interior, where large-scale farming was at a disadvantage, and where small-scale peasant economies developed early.[126]

Peasants dominated linen production in eighteenth-century Flanders. Although big cities such as Ghent and Bruges had been the epicenter of production previously, as demand spread for Flemish linen, production expanded in the countryside, while production in the cities deteriorated. Although Flanders's peasants did grow much of their own food, they could not completely sustain themselves from their land because of its poor quality. This led many to industrial production during the medieval period. Flemish peasants purchased a part of their diet with the cash that they earned from manufacturing textiles.[127] The vast majority of Flemish peasants owned their own looms and wheels. In one region of Flanders, peasants rented only 2.7% of looms in the years 1700-19, and this number fell to .4% in 1780-96.[128] A turning point for Flemish manufactures came during the last half of the seventeenth century when taxes and rents were increased dramatically, and the local population became more dedicated to textile

[126] Ibid., 64-82.

[127] Ibid, 182.

[128] Ibid., 181.

production as a result.[129] This increase in taxes coincided with the growth of Spanish American markets.

Therefore, most linen producers in Flanders provided much of their own subsistence, and they owned the tools with which they worked. This system of production limited the growth potential of the industry. Exports of linen grew from about 120,000 pieces in 1700 to about 175,000 in 1775. This expansion came, not through innovation in the system of production, but through the spread of manufacturing to new towns, and through demographic growth.[130]

Linen production in Flanders was a complex system that involved many workers in towns and cities throughout the region. Most flax was produced commercially in large fields in the northeast of Flanders, although some peasants grew their own flax on their plots of land.[131] After the flax was planted, it was pulled after maturing at 100 days. After being pulled, the flax was left in bundles in a field to dry. The flax was then usually taken to the weekly town markets that served as an intermediary between producers and merchants. Linen producers would purchase the flax at the market and take it home to be processed by the male head of the household, who employed his wife and children. The first step in production was to deseed the flax by beating it. The producer would then ret the flax to rid it of the components that do not contain fiber. The manufacturer would

[129] Christiaan Vandenbroeke, "Proto-industry in Flanders: A Critical Review," in *European Proto-Industrialization*, edited by Sheilagh C. Ogilvie and Markus Cerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 111.

[130] Christiaan Vandenbroeke, "Le cas flamand: évolution sociale et comportements démographiques aux XVIIe-XIXe siècles." *Annales* 39:5 (1984): 928.

[131] Mendels, 191-2.

then press the flax to remove the stalk's bast. The flax would then be dried and dressed. The last preparatory action was combing the flax to separate its fibers.[132]

Most spinning and weaving of the flax's fibers was conducted by families in their homes. The mother and her children span the flax into yarn, although yarn was sometimes purchased at local markets. The male head of the household would do the weaving. Spinning and weaving was done part time, as a supplement to subsistence farming. This production was usually done during winters and in evenings, depending on the needs of the family. The finished product would usually be taken to the weekly market for sale to a local merchant. Sometimes, however, rural producers would sell their product to a middleman referred to as a "kutser" who would purchase the linen at a discount, saving the local producer from a trip to the urban market.[133]

Merchant-manufacturers were responsible for dying the linen produced by peasants and small farmers, and for selling them abroad. Most often, merchants would purchase linen directly from the rural producers at the weekly market. These merchants would then bleach the linens, probably from their own homes in the large cities.[134] Merchants would then start a complex shipping system in which they may not see any returns for years. Merchants would send their goods aboard a ship to a port in Spain (usually Cádiz) under the care of a Spanish recipient. This Spanish recipient would then send the Flemish merchant's goods to the Americas, where it would be sold for cash or—more likely—traded for agricultural goods. These goods would then return to Spain, be

[132] Ibid.,215-17.

[133] Ibid.,, 181-204.

[134] Ibid., 180.

re-shipped to Flanders, and sold to other European merchants. Because of the long wait times required to see returns, only the extremely wealthy could become merchants. [135]

Flemish textile manufacturers enjoyed high living standards during much of the eighteenth century. According to historian Christian Vandenbroeke, a weaver had to work a high of about 270 days a year to support his family in 1710, but the number of days of work required decreased greatly over the course of the century. Just five years later, this number decreased dramatically to about 140 days of work a year. This number reached 120 days a year in 1740, and reached an all time low of 110 days a year in 1775-80.[136] Health conditions increased as a result of this prosperity and the region's population ballooned.[137] Population in the manufacturing zones of the south and east of Flanders increased by as much as 160% during the eighteenth century. These regions as a whole grew at just over 94% during this period.[138]

Industrial production in Flanders was not a capitalist enterprise, and this contributed to the high costs they sold for in Coro. The vast majority of manufacturers owned much, if not all, of the means of production, and they provided much of their own subsistence through farming. They were not, therefore, wholly dependent on a capitalist employer in order to survive. The growth of cloth production in eighteenth-century Flanders came as a result of the expansion of textile production to new villages, rather

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[135] Hilda Coppejans-Desmedt, *Bijdrage tot de studie van de gegoede burgerij te Gent in de XVIIIe eeuw: de vorming van een nieuwe social-economische stand ten tijde* (Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1952), 27-8.

[136] Vandenbroeke, "Proto-industry," 113.

[137] Herman Van der Wee and Peter D'Haeseleer, "Proto-Industrialization in South-Eastern Flanders: The Mendels Hypothesis and the Rural Linen Industry in the 'Land van Aalst' During the 18th and 19th Centuries," in *Proto-industrialization: Recent Research and New Perspectives in Memory of Franklin Mendels* (Geneva: Droz, 1996), 248.

[138] Vandenbroeke, "Le cas flamand," 918.

than through any technological improvement. Because Flemish manufacturers were not wholly dependent on manufacturing for survival, production was limited to small-scale, part-time producers. This limited the number of items that could be manufactured, which in turn, kept the prices of Flemish clothing out of reach for Coro's poor majority.

Brittany

Six months after the Coro rebellion, sixty-year-old José Manuel de la Cruz Castillo was called to testify about the cache of stolen clothes, jewelry and textiles that he discovered in the sierra. In the aftermath of the rebellion, de la Cruz Castillo led a contingent of militia members and volunteers to arrest suspected rebels and to recover stolen goods. Among the dozens of items recovered by de la Cruz Castillo and his team were "two sheets, from Brittany, already worn-out."[139] De la Cruz Castillo testified that he had handed the items, including the worn-out Brittany sheets, to his superiors, but that he did not know where they currently were.

De la Cruz Castillo's mention of Brittany sheets is the only time a cloth's place of origin is included in testimonies related to the Coro rebellion. This is fitting because *bretañas* may have been even more celebrated in eighteenth-century Coro than textiles from Flanders were. Brittany cloth was famous in Venezuela for its rippled look and feel, which was unique, and came to be seen as a sign of opulence and panache.

Although the *bretaña* design was distinctive, their dissemination was wide. There are only four cases of contraband available in surviving documents from eighteenth-century Coro that include the place of origin for textiles. Of these four cases, three

[139] "Expedientes," ff. 131; "dos Sabanas, de Bretaña, ya usadas."

include a shipment of Brittany cloth. Six pieces of Brittany cloth valued at 2 pesos apiece were among the goods confiscated in Tucacas in 1715.[140] More than 70 years later, in 1787, 6 ¾ yards of *bretaña* worth 1 peso and 7 reales were confiscated in El Trapichito, and that same year, 13 pieces of Brittany cloth, worth 26 pesos was confiscated in Pichibrea.[141] The number of *bretañas* found in the records of confiscated contraband in Coro pale in comparison to those imported by the RCG, however. In the sample year of 1779, two RCG ships carried Brittany cloth to the Province of Venezuela, totaling 4,809 pieces for a value of over 22,000 pesos.[142]

The region of Brittany, and its population, was as idiosyncratic as the cloth they produced. Located across the English Channel in northwestern France, the people of Brittany descended from the Britons who settled what would later be known as Britain. Partly because of this, Brittany's inhabitants were considered culturally distinct to the rest of France. In addition, most Britons practiced Protestantism in what was officially a Catholic country.[143]

Brittany also set itself apart through its world-renowned textile industry. The earliest records of the industry are from 1430, and from the start, linen production in Brittany was geared almost exclusively to Spanish markets.[144] These markets would soon

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[140] "1715: Autos sobre el comiso hecho en las playas de las Tucacas por el Sargento Mayor Don Luís Francisco de Castro," Comisos II, AGN.

[141] "1787: Autos sobre la aprehensión que hizo Don Juan Antonio Barbera, Cabo de Resguardo," Comisos XXXV, AGN; "Autos formados."

[142] Expedientes de la Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas."

[143] Nancy Locklin, *Women's Work and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Brittany* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2007), 9.

[144] Jean Martin, *Toiles de Bretagne: la manufacture de Quintin, Uzel et Loudéac, 1670-1850* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1998), chap 1, para. 12-17, https://books.openedition.org/pur/21844.

include the Americas, and with the conquest and settlement of the region, Brittany's industry grew. As was the case in Flanders, textile production was adopted largely because of the lack of agricultural options available to rural producers. The land in much of the region did not allow for people to subsist solely on cultivation.[145]

Flax production usually started with the import of seeds from Eastern Europe and New Zealand. Peasants there would produce flax seeds and sell them to merchants at their local markets. These local merchants would then either resell the seeds to foreign merchants or ship them themselves. The trade in flaxseed was massive. In 1750, for example, 12,000 barrels of seeds were imported into Brittany's port of Roscoff.[146] The trade was also a lucrative one for merchants, as the price per barrel of seed was about 35 *livres* at Roscoff, twice as much as it cost in the Baltic.[147]

Unlike in Flanders, where paid workers produced flax on large farms, peasants grew and pulled the flax in Brittany. It took a barrel of seed to plant half a hectare. Flax was planted in May and harvested in July, when the stem had reached two to five inches high. Peasants tore the flax out manually in order to make it longer. The flax was then placed in a vat and retted at the base of a fountain on the peasant's property or on the course of a natural, nearby stream of water. The retting process took between one and two weeks. The flax was then taken out of the water and put to dry outside during the day for eight to ten days, and sheltered in a barn at night. Finally, the peasants would take the flax to the local market at Tregor. More often, however, small merchants known as *les*

[145] Ibid., chap 2.

[146] Ibid., chap 5, para. 5.

[147] Ibid., para. 10.

linotiers would collect the flax from its cultivators in the countryside and take them to local markets for a commission.[148]

Les linotiers transported the flax from Tregor to markets throughout the region. Each horse could carry 60 kilos worth of flax, which became 10-15 kilos of yarn. These small merchants then sold the flax to larger merchants at local markets. The *linotiers* could also serve spinners and weavers with flax directly. It was common for them to tour the countryside to deliver flax, particularly to widowed and other single women, who were less likely to travel to urban markets.[149]

As in Flanders, spinning and weaving was done within the households of peasants. Official data on eighteenth-century weavers is currently unavailable, but records from the first quarter of the nineteenth century shine light on the eighteenth century's labor market. In 1825, there were 5,441 weavers in the three largest linen markets. 3,289 of these workers, or just over 60%, were classified as farmer/weavers, meaning that they were part time workers who also had access to land. Fewer than 40% of weavers were classified as full time workers; these are probably those that lived in the urban areas.[150] Although indicative of general patterns, these figures likely underestimate the percentage of peasant/weavers in the eighteenth century. The peak of Brittany's linen industry was in the mid 1770s, and production dropped greatly after 1779.[151] Because the linen industry's expansion was primarily in the countryside, most of those who stopped production after 1779 probably lived in rural areas. Also, the 1825 figures do not include

[148] Ibid., para. 3-20.

[149] Ibid., para. 21-30.

[150] Ibid, chap 5.

[151] Jean Martin, "Les toiles bretagnes dans le commerce franco-espagnol de 1550 à 1830," *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest*, 119:1 (2012), 31-60.

other linen producing regions, which were primarily rural. Nevertheless, the fact that over 60% of weavers in three large linen producing areas were classified as landowners in 1825 indicates that peasants made up the majority of spinners and weavers.

The man's wife and their children span the flax in order to create the thread, which was woven by the male head of the household. Spinning consisted of several related operations. First, the flax was cleaned in order to rid it of impurities. Next, the spinner used a braie (a tool that resembled a bench, and which was created by the workers themselves) to separate the tow from the woody part of the plant. The spinner would then grind the flax using a tool called *le péseau*, which was made up of two boards that formed at a right angle. Finally, the spinner would comb the flax by using a *bressage*, which would prepare the flax for spinning. After all these preparations, the women and children of the home would use a spinning wheel, which they owned, to spin the flax string into yarn.[152]

As was the case in Flanders, weavers in Brittany owned their own looms, whether they were part time or full time workers. The loom was often kept in a separate room or in a barn. To become a weaver, one had to join the local guild and serve as an apprentice, which lasted between 18 months to three years. Apprentices lived with their master. In some places, such as Allineuc, employers paid for the apprentices' room and board. In more urbanized areas, such as Quentin, however, families had to pay the employer for the time spent in his home. After the flax yarn was spun, weavers would weave their product and sell it at their local weekly market. Sometimes, however, weavers would have contracts with local merchants. In 1759, for example, François Rabet agreed to produce linens for the merchant François Lalleton for four years. Rabet agreed that his wife would

[152] Martin, *Toiles*, chap 5: 31-43

spin the flax into yarn, and that he would weave the yarn into cloth for 4 *sous* per yard of cloth produced. Peasant-weavers appear to have been better off than their full-time, urbanized counterparts. According to historian Jean Martin, peasant-weavers were worth an average of 1000 livres at the time of their death, while their urban counterparts were worth about 300 livres.[153]

After *bretañas* were weaved, specialists bleached them. Some merchants took care of the bleaching process themselves, but most often, small farmers and their families bleached the cloths on their land. Typical bleachers rented a house and a barn with a straw cover. Besides land to grow crops, these properties also contained one hectare of uncultivated land on which the cloths were dried. Bleachers would first put the linens to soak in large wooden vats for three to four weeks. Here, the flax would soften in a mix of rye, buckwheat flour, and water. The linens were then beaten and placed on a drying rack. This process was repeated for two to three days. The cloths were then leached by being placed in vats. A bag filled with wood ash was placed on top of the pile, and boiling water was then poured over the bag of ash. This process was repeated for all pieces of cloth between 8 and 12 times. After being washed, the linens were starched. The bleaching process required many workers, so people would live on these properties with their families and extended families, which equaled between eight and 12 people.[154]

After being bleached, the textiles were returned to the merchants for storage and further preparation. First, workers hired by the merchant removed the folds from the textiles. Then, the workers pounded the cloths with wooden mallets. This gave the linen the rippled look, which made it so popular in Venezuela and across the Atlantic. The

[153] Martin, *Toiles*, chap 6.

[154] Ibid., chap 7.

cloths were then folded in the shape of an accordion. The goods were then subject to a softer pounding called a *pilotage*. A specialist then intervened to turn the folded pieces into a piece of 12 layers. The cloth was then ironed around the edges of the layers in order to make the edges sharper. Finally, the layers were pressed to preserve their form.

The *bretañas* were then packaged; first wrapped in gray paper and then covered with a protective cloth. The merchant then labeled the package with his name, the name of the launderer, the number and quality of the linens, and the total length enveloped. Each package weighed between 78 and 100 pounds. This final mode of preparation took a worker about 12 days to complete. Workers were paid twelve *sous* a day in the mid eighteenth century, but it is unclear at this time if these workers were peasants or full-time workers.[155]

Merchants were key in the production process in Brittany, and their numbers increased over time, as did their wealth. At Brittany's central textile market, Quentin, the number of merchants grew considerably, from 45 merchants in 1687 to 67 merchants in 1736 and 118 in 1781-91.[156] Houses built by merchants grew from 66 in the seventeenth century to 133 in the eighteenth century.[157]

There were four principal ports in Brittany, but nearly 80% of the textiles produced between 1748 and 1788 were exported out of Saint-Melo. The merchants hired carriers to take the material to the ports. Once the goods arrived at the port, local authorities inspected them, although it was impossible for authorities to inspect all the

[155] Ibid.

[156] Ibid., chap 8.

[157] Ibid., chap 10.

textiles that arrived.[158] As the vast majority of textiles were exported to Cádiz, to be later shipped to the Americas, French merchants from Brittany settled in Andalucía during the eighteenth century. One hundred French merchants were registered as living in Andalucía in 1771, and it has been estimated that about one-fourth of them were from Brittany. These French merchants owned warehouses in Andalucía where *bretañas* and other products were stored.[159]

As in the case of Flanders, textile production in Brittany was done by independent craftspeople, most of who were peasants who produced textiles part time. The vast majority of workers owned their own tools, which were needed for the production of yarn, the weaving of cloth, and its bleaching. The only segment of the workforce that may have been proletarianized (wholly dependent on the capitalist class for survival) would be the workers hired by the merchants in the final stages of the production process. It is unclear at this time, however, whether this was a part-time or full-time job, and if they had some access to land and crops. Even if these workers were fully proletarianized, which seems unlikely, they were a small minority of the overall textile workforce. As was the case with Flanders, textile production in Brittany could only increase through demographic growth or the geographical expansion of industrial production. This mode of production resulted in high production costs, which contributed to the high real and symbolic value of *bretañas* in eighteenth-century Coro.

Devon

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid., chap 2.

Although many of Coro's rebels were conscious of the connection between European textiles and their labor, perhaps less were thinking of the fact that their very existence was largely due to the manufacture of these products. Most of Coro's rebels were born in Coro, but their parents and/or grandparents were born in West and West Central Africa.[160] The rebels' forebears had been enslaved in Africa and exchanged for European commodities, most of which were textiles. Some of the rebels' ancestors had been purchased by England's South Sea Company (SSC), which held a monopoly on the Spanish slave trade for much of the eighteenth century, and which held a factory at Caracas. The SSC imported 5,240 enslaved Africans into Caracas between 1715-1739.[161] Many of these enslaved people were taken to work, live, and die in Coro.

The SSC purchased their textiles from British merchants, and most of these products were produced in Southwestern England, in the region of Devon.[162] The prolific writer and businessman, Daniel Defoe, toured Devon in 1724, at the height of woolen

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[160] Although it is difficult to determine exactly where in Africa the populations of Coro descended from, based on historical trends it is probable that most came from the outskirts of the Gold and Loango Coasts of West and West Central Africa. The largest share of people purchased by the SSC in 1715-39 came from the Gold Coast, who provided 39% of enslaved people during the time. After 1739, the English continued to supply Venezuela with enslaved people—albeit illegally. The Gold Coast had lost its ground as holding the largest share of British shipments, but it still accounted for 24% of enslaved people acquired by British companies. It is most likely, however, that the Dutch provided most enslaved people to eighteenth-century Coro. After the English *asiento*, 33% percent of enslaved people purchased by the Dutch were from the Gold Coast, while 37% were from the Loango Coast. The French, who also illegally provided enslaved people to Coro, received many enslaved people from the Loango Coast as well—approximately 30% of all of their enslaved victims. The preceding data comes from Alex Borucki, "Trans-imperial History in the Making of the Slave Trade to Venezuela, 1526-1811." *Itinerario* 36:2 (2012): 29-54.

[161] Colin Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 107.

[162] Although official figures are lacking, it is clear that Devon was the largest cloth producer for—at least— the first quarter of the eighteenth-century. Cloth produced in the Southwest of England accounted for 16% of *everything* exported out of Britain in 1710. See: "How the Regions became Peripheral: A Complex Long-Term Historical Process," by Michael Havinden, Andre Lespagnol, Jean-Pierre Marchand and Stephen Mennell in *Centre and Periphery: Brittany and Cornwall & Devon Compared*, eds. M.A. Havinden, J. Quéniart, and J. Stanyer (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), 14.

cloth production and its trade. The author of *Robinson Crusoe* gushed about the state of the region:

> Devonshire, one entire county, is so full of great towns, and those towns so full of people, and those people so universally employed in trade and manufactures, that not only it cannot be equaled in England, but perhaps not in Europe.[163]

Indeed, Devon was the third most populous area in England at the time, and it was regarded as England's premier manufacturing region. Devon's principal port, Exeter, was synonymous with the country's growing international trade in woolen cloth.[164] Writing of Exeter, Defoe recommended that all travelers visit its market, "The serge market held here every week is very well worth a stranger's seeing, and next to the Brigg market at Leeds, in Yorkshire, is the greatest in England."[165]

One regular visitor to Exeter's market was the London merchant Nicolas Cholwell. Although he lived in London, Cholwell held land and homes in Woolston, an aptly named town in the Parish of West Abington and the County of Devon.[166] Cholwell served markets in the Mediterranean, which along with Holland, were the principal markets for Devon cloth.[167] Cholwell also sold a significant amount of Devon cloth to the SSC. In the same year that Defoe visited Devon, Cholwell sold over £13,114 worth of

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[163] Daniel Defoe, "A Tour Through Great Britain (1724)," in *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall*, edited by R. Pearse Chope (Devon: David & Charles, 1967), 145-6.

[164] W.G. Hoskins, *Industry, Trade and People in Exeter, 1688-1800* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1968), 16.

[165] Defoe, 147.

[166] "Will of Nicholas Cholwell, Merchant of London," PROB 11/610/437, The National Archives-Prerogative Court of Canterbury, United Kingdom.

[167] Defoe, 147-8. Cholwell was involved in a legal case relating to his trade in the Mediterrean. See: Andrea A. Addobbati, "When Proof is Lacking: A Ship Captain's Oath and Commercial Justice in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century" *Quaderni Storici* 153 (2016), 727-52.

cloth to the SSC, the most of any merchant that year.[168] According to historian Marion Johnson, total English exports to Africa equaled £91,150 in 1724.[169] If this is correct, it means that the cloth Cholwell sold to the SSC in 1724, which was manufactured by peasants and farmers in Devon, provided over 14% of the *total* exports of British products to Africa that year. It was this cloth that was used to purchase the African ancestors of Coro's rebels.

As was the case in Flanders and Brittany, the vast majority of spinning and weaving was done part time by peasants who were unable to subsist without producing cloth.[170] Because land conditions were not conducive to agricultural production in Devon, small farming was largely complemented by stock raising since the Middle Ages.[171] About 24% of Devon's land was still held in common during the eighteenth century, but this land was mostly used to house livestock.[172] These agricultural conditions encouraged small producers to engage in manufacturing as an ancillary activity, which enabled some to consume at a level above subsistence.[173]

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[168] "South Sea Company Papers," Manuscripts 25502, British Library, London, England, United Kingdom.

[169] Marion Johnson, *Anglo-African Trade in the Eighteenth Century: English Statistics on African Trade, 1699-1808* (Leiden: Centre for the History of European Expansion), 94.

[170] Joyce Youings, "The Economic History of Devon, 1300-1700," in *Exeter and its Region*, edited by Frank Barlow (Exeter: University of Exeter), 168.

[171] Ibid., 165-6.

[172] Robin Stanes, "Devon Agriculture in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: The Evidence of the Milles enquires" in *The South-West and the Land*, edited by Michael Ashley Havinden and Celia M. King (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1969), 45; Harold S.A. Fox, "Outfield Cultivation in Devon and Cornwall: A Reinterpretation," in *Husbandry and Marketing in the South-West, 1500-1800*, edited by Michael Havinden (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1973), 19-38.

[173] David Levine, *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 105.

Commercial wool production was a profitable enterprise in England throughout the Middle Ages, but this production did not begin in Devon until the mid fourteenth century. At this time, production continued to be done at the household level, but it began to create a surplus, which was used to supply local markets. A century later, Devon began exporting woolen cloth, and by 1501-2 Devon cloth was providing 10% of the country's overall exports.[174] During this period, wool produced from local sheep provided the raw material needed to spin yarn and weave cloth.

By 1700, the vast majority of the wool used to produce Devon cloth was imported. This is because, as cloth production expanded, local wool supplies were unable to cover manufacturing needs. Evidence suggests that farmers lived a comfortable life and were not interested in expansion. Expansion through the hiring of wage labor was also difficult because peasants were uninterested in working for wages, making labor expensive.[175] Almost all of the wool imported into Devon came from Ireland in the early eighteenth century. During the Devon industry's peak years of the 1720s, however, the trade in Irish wool declined and imports of Irish yarn increased. By 1745, yarn imports were three times that of wool.[176]

When yarn was not imported, Irish wool was imported by local merchants at Exeter and sold to spinners and weavers at Exeter's weekly market. The vast majority of spinners and weavers travelled a great distance to arrive to the weekly market at Exeter. Devon's strongest manufacturing region, centered around Tiverton, was 14 miles away. When raw wool needed to be spun, weavers would employ their wives and children to do

[174] Youings, 169.

[175] Youings, 167.

[176] Hoskins, 30-1.

the spinning. Weavers needed about eight spinners, however, and so weavers would sometimes hire out. Middlemen, known as "yarn jobbers" would arrange the weaver's wool to be spun by nearby workers.[177] Once the wool was spun into yarn, weavers would use their own looms to weave the yarn. This was not always the case, however, as eighteenth-century Devon may have had more production warehouses than were seen in Brittany or Flanders. In 1754, for example, one manufacturer owned over 100 of the 700 looms in the town of Modbury.[178] The vast majority of weavers worked on their own account, however, and sold their finished product to merchants at the weekly serge market. From there, merchants would arrange for the woven cloth to be finished and dyed.

Unfortunately, little is known about the finishing processes in Devon during this period, but by using the few details available for Devon and supplementing these with the processes in Yorkshire, a fuller picture emerges. In Yorkshire, fullers and their families handled the bulk of the finishing processes. There, local lords owned the fulling mills, but leased the land and the equipment to workers and their families. Fulling mills in Yorkshire were located on arable land and included several homes for immediate and extended families.[179] Ample space was necessary because the finishing processes required large machinery, a still larger workforce, and crops and livestock to feed the working families.

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[177] Stanley Chapman, ed., *The Devon Cloth Industry in the Eighteenth Century: Sun Fire Office Inventories of Merchants' and Manufacturers'' Property, 1726-1770* (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1978), vii.

[178] Ibid., xiv.

[179] Pat Hudson, *The Genesis of Industrial Capital: A Study of the West Riding Wool Textile Industry, c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 85-9.

In order to work as a fuller in Devon, men had to serve for seven years as an apprentice for the Gild of Weavers, Fullers, and Shearmen of the City and County of Exeter.[180] Technically, every man who worked in the cloth industry of Devon had to belong to this guild, but given the decentralized nature of spinning and weaving, this was untenable. Although the vast majority of workers in the cloth industry were weavers and spinners, most members of the Gild were fullers.[181] Fulling mills had to be settled on a body of water, because this provided the power for the fulling machinery. There were dozens of fulling mills sprawled across the county of Devon in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[182]

Before being fulled, the woolen cloths were burled; knots and other impurities were removed. In Exeter, the wives and children of Gild members did this work. The wives and children of rural fullers—who made up the vast majority of fullers in Devon—probably carried out this work as well. The cloths were then fulled; heavy wooden hammers, powered by water, pounded the wet cloths. Next, the fabrics were sheared by an expert shearman who cut away any loose strands. The cloths were then given to a drawer who repaired any remaining impurities. The drawer then moved the cloth to a pressman, who pressed the cloths in between wooden plates.[183] It appears that each of

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[180] Beatrix F. Cresswell, *A Short History of the Worshipful Company of Weavers, Fullers and Shearmen of the City and County of Exeter* (Exeter: W. Pollard & Co., 1930), 58.

[181] Ibid., 6.

[182] Michael Havinden, "The Woollen, Lime, Tanning and Leather-working, and Paper-making Industries, c. 1500-1800," in *Historical Atlas of South-West England*, edited by Roger Kain and William Ravenhill (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 339.

[183] Hoskins, 56-8.

these services were handled by different specialists in Exeter, but the vast majority of the finishing processes were probably handled by rural fullers and their families.[184]

Once the fullers handled the bulk of the finishing processes, the cloths were returned white to merchants and then dyed in either London or Exeter. The SSC, for example, often arranged for the cloths they purchased to be dyed by professional dyers in London, who were paid a fee.[185] By the early eighteenth century, however, the vast majority of Devon cloth was dyed and shipped out of Exeter. In 1701, for example, just over 83,000 pieces were sent to London from Exeter, although at least three times this amount was produced that year.[186] Once dyed, the cloths were returned to the merchant who exported them.

Like eighteenth-century Flanders and Brittany, production in early eighteenth-century Devon was done mostly on the household level, by artisans and their families. Feudal lords owned the land in Devon and required some type of payment in exchange for people's settlement there. Unfortunately, little is known at the time about what this compensation looked like. What is known for certain, however, is that production in Devon was a complicated process, involving thousands of workers, the vast majority of whom worked from home, owned their own tools, and worked at their own pace.[187] Most workers also controlled their own subsistence needs. When British merchants purchased enslaved people in Africa with textiles, this was the labor process embodied in the cloth.

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[184] Celia Fiennes (1695) observed that all finishing processes are carried out in fulling houses, although she cites only the case at Exeter. See: Celia Fiennes, "Through England on a Side Saddle," in *Early Tours in Devon and Cornwall*, edited by R. Pearse Chope (Devon: David & Charles, 1967), 113-4.

[185] See "South Sea Company Papers."

[186] Hoskins, 66-8.

[187] The link between ownership of tools and the ability to work at one's pace, in juxtaposition to production in the capitalist mode, is made by Levine in *Family Formation*, 1.

Conclusion

When we last left María de los Dolores Chirino she had been arrested—accused of taking part in the rebellion, stealing clothes and other valuables, and lying to authorities about it. When confronted with testimony by Don Juan Francisco Santeliz, which stated that he confiscated clothes, clothing items and other goods from her in the days following the rebellion, Chirino stated that she did not mention this in previous interrogations because—as a woman—she got confused: "the confusion and shortsightedness of her sex did not allow her to specify what goods and clothing articles her husband Joséf Leonardo Chirino gave her to put away."[188] In order to avoid prison and/or death, Chirino desperately attempted to exonerate her involvement by playing up to the role of the feminine house slave. As historian Hilary Beckles has shown, enslaved house servants had access to femininity in the high culture homes of plantation societies. This femininity was unique to female house servants, and rarely extended to the vast majority of enslaved women, who worked in fields.[189]

A few months later, Doña Ana Tellería, Joséf de Tellería's sister, pleaded with Coro's court to free Chirino and other enslaved people owned by her family.[190] Tellería argued to the court that Chirino was innocent. She referred to the testimony of two witnesses—including one convicted rebel—who corroborated Chirino's account that she was not involved in the rebellion. Tellería also argued that Chirino had split up with her

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[188] "Expedientes," ff. 134.; "no la permitio la confucion, y cortedad de su sexo expecificar los bienes, y prendas que le dio aguardar Joséf Leonardo Chirino su marido."

[189] Beckles, 55-71.

[190] Ibid., ff. 159-67.

husband in the days following the rebellion, evidenced by the fact that José Leonardo fled the region and was not found until three months later. Besides, the kind of violence that was unleashed during the rebellion "are not possible within the feminine breath."[191]

"Therefore," started Tellería, "María de los Dolores is only part of this summary process for the simple reception of precious objects that Dn Francisco Santaliz found."[192]These "precious objects"—principally European textiles and clothes—were not hidden away in the mountains as so many other rebels did with their goods, argued Tellería, because Chirino was innocent. She accepted the merchandise from her husband because she was afraid of him, and for good reason. Chirino handed the objects over to Santeliz once he found them. She simply forgot to mention this to Valderrama in her testimony because "unsure of the success of the trial, in which she is afraid that her innocent life is in danger, in the presence of a Judge who is circumspect and respectable for his character and honor and ultimately unknown, as an outsider she was much more exposed to fall in contradictions, to be disturbed, to be confused."[193]Unfortunately for Chirino, her family, and her community, Coro's authorities did not believe her testimony or that of Tellería.

In December of 1796, a year and a half after the rebellion, the Tellería family was ordered to sell Chirino and her children outside of Coro. Chirino would not make it out of prison alive, however. The last record of Chirino, which is currently available, comes from Joséf de Tellería's will, where it reads: "the Mulata María de los Dolores died

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[191] Ibid., ff. 159-60.; "no caven en el aliento femenino."

[192] Ibid., ff. 160.; "Resta pues que María de los Dolores solo parece en el proceso suMaríada por la simple receptacin de las alajas que le encontró Dn Fran.co San teliz."

[193] Ibid., ff. 161-2.; "incierta del excito del juicio en que teme peligre su vida ynocente, aprecencia de un Juez sircunspecto y respectable por su carácter, y honores, y enfin desconocido, como forastero esta mucho mas expuesta a caer en contraiciones, aturbaxos, confundirse."

without being sold." [194]The document adds that she was buried, but that a death certificate was not issued "in order to avoid costs."[195]Chirino, enslaved since birth, separated from her children, and incarcerated for the last months of her life, died in prison for possessing "precious objects."

It is unclear whether or not Chirino was actually involved in the rebellion. She may very well have forgotten to mention to Valderrama that, at one point, she had held some of Martínez's goods in her possession. Perhaps Doña Ana Tellería was correct, that Chirino was embarrassed and afraid to mention this detail; that she thought it would land her in trouble. But perhaps Chirino was lying, perhaps she was an active participant in the rebellion, and that she helped her husband murder Martínez and take his belongings. If Chirino was involved, at the very least, she was eager to receive this merchandise after the deed was done. Or perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Perhaps Chirino was, like most rebels no doubt, "tentative," as historian Aisha Finch makes clear in her study of the Escalera conspiracy.[196] Finch demonstrates that most rebels, the non-elite, were unsure about whether or not they wanted to join an insurrection. There appears to have been a spectrum with enslaved peoples' resistance during this period. Some people were not involved at all, others were zealous, but it is likely that many—perhaps most—were caught somewhere in the middle. Chirino's testimony points to this latter scenario as being the most likely, although historians may never know for sure.

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[194] "Testamentaria de Joséph de Tellería, 1798," Archivo Histórico del Estado de Falcón. Coro, Venezuela, ff. 403.; "la Mulata María de los Dolores fallecio sin ser vendida."

[195] Ibid.; "por evitar costos."

[196] Aisha Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba*: La Escalera *and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 141-167.

Juan Jesus de Lugo was brought to trial in February of 1796, accused of being a part of the Coro rebellion. In the minds of authorities, the key determining factor in his guilt or innocence was what he did with the textiles and clothes of two elderly white women who lived in Coro's sierra: Doña Concepción Suárez and Doña Ana Vera. Had Lugo stolen them, or did he, as he contended, hide them for Suárez and Vera in order to keep their merchandise safe from the rebels?

Suárez and Vera were questioned on the Hacienda of Quitaragua, because they were too frail to make the trip to Coro. Suárez testified that the rebels surprised her outside of her home, and she felt threatened. Lugo then escorted her back home, although Suárez stated that she was unsure of his motives. She added that the rebels had not physically assaulted Lugo as he had testified. Suárez confirmed Lugo's account, however, that together, she and Lugo had used one of her hammocks to fill with clothes, textiles, and other valuables, and that Lugo took this hammock to his home to hide it from the rebels.[197]

Vera's testimony contradicted Lugo's even more than Suárez's did. Vera declared that it was not true that Lugo showed up to her home in the first hours of the rebellion, asking for a sack to help recover some of her stolen goods. Vera stated that she did not see Lugo until he arrived at her home in the days following the rebellion. She added that Lugo told her that he had arrived to check on her and her house, and to assess any damage that may have occurred. It was at this point, insisted Vera, that Lugo asked for a sack in order to retrieve the clothes and other goods that were stolen from her. According to Vera, Lugo also stated that he had some of her clothes-filled chests hidden at his

[197] "Expedientes," ff. 301-2.

house, and that he would also bring these back to her.[198] As was the case with Chirino, Valderrama did not believe him. Over one year later, in February of 1797, Lugo was banished from Venezuela and sent to live in Puerto Rico.[199] This was the last mention of Lugo in surviving documents.

Chirino and Lugo's presence in documents relating to the Coro rebellion end awfully, but not before they reveal much about the rebellion's actors and the society in which they lived. European textiles were of great symbolic value in eighteenth-century Coro, serving as markers of race and class with the potential to subvert the very order they were meant to solidify. Because Coro's landowners squandered much of their wealth on European cloth and the production of palatial clothes, these commodities served as the ends that elites hoped to achieve by accumulating capital through their plantations and haciendas. When Coro's rebels sacked these haciendas, they were claiming rightful ownership to the European textiles owned by elites, which epitomized the racial and class hierarchies of eighteenth-century Coro. Through evenly distributing these goods amongst themselves, Coro's rebels were critiquing these polarities, which served as the backbone of Coro's society. The act of redistribution also served as a declaration of what their new republic would be like, once they took power. The stealing of textiles and their distribution, then, was as significant an ideological proclamation as any reference to the French Revolution.

The role of European cloths in the Coro rebellion reveals how ideology and materiality cannot exist without one another. The high exchange value of European textiles was largely responsible for their high symbolic value in eighteenth-century Coro.

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[198] Ibid.

[199] "Expediente," ff. 16.

This exchange value was high because of the costly nature of textile production in eighteenth-century Europe. These exorbitant costs were largely due to their long, multiplex, non-capitalist production process. Thousands of peasant artisans in Flanders, Brittany, and Devon grew the raw material used for the cloths, and worked as spinners, weavers, fullers, and a host of other specialty jobs in order to produce these textiles. The vast majority of these peasants worked in textiles part time, as they were provided much of their own subsistence through other means. The vast majority of workers also owned their own tools, giving them the independence to work largely at their own convenience. By the time European merchants were able to ship textiles across the Atlantic, a large chunk of their costs were already sunk.

Despite the archaic forms of production employed across the eighteenth-century Atlantic, these productive systems still managed an organic relation to one another. Textile production in Flanders and Brittany expanded due to the growth of overseas markets, such as Coro. Coro's plantation economy grew through the cheap labor they employed in the form of African slaves and their enslaved or legally free descendants. These enslaved Africans were exchanged in their homelands for European commodities, most significantly textiles. And during the time of the SSC, the bulk of these products were produced in Devon.

The common misconception among historians that the early modern period, and the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, can be characterized as capitalist, runs up against the reality of commodity production in the Atlantic during these periods.[200]

[200] This does not mean, however, that these modes of production and the Atlantic system that connected them were not hugely profitable, both quantitatively, and more importantly, qualitatively. The point made about qualitative significance is taken from Inikori. See: Joseph Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New

Marx's definition of capitalism is helpful here; it explains the historical "stages" of production. Capitalism is an economic system in which the worker is divorced from her means of subsistence and from the means of production.[201] Instead of being in the hands of workers, as was the case in eighteenth-century Flanders, Brittany, and Devon, these means are under the domain of the capitalist class. Capitalism is an economic system of "generalized commodity production," signifying that the means of subsistence and of production are manufactured as commodities.[202] These commodities are then purchased by wage earners who are not provided these necessities or are not able to provide them for themselves, as their ancestors were. A cart-blanche definition of capitalism disguises the qualitative differences between economic systems; systems that, in accordance with their particular laws, have the power to greatly shape the societies in which they operate. This is evident in the manufacturing process of textiles in eighteenth-century Europe, and their consumption in Coro. But commodities cannot be produced unless they can be circulated. For this, we turn to the joint-stock companies of eighteenth-century Europe.

York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See the introduction of this dissertation for a further discussion of the scholarship on capitalism and its history.

[201] See, in particular, Chapter 6 in Marx's Capital, Vol. 1, "The Sale and Purchase of Labour-Power" in Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 270-80. This is not to say that Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production is without flaws. Particularly, his historical understanding of its birth and its development are faulty. See the introduction for further discussion.

[202] Ernest Mandel uses the term "generalized commodity production" in his introduction to Marx's *Capital, Volume 1,* 20.

Chapter Two: Joint-Stock Company Capital

The textiles that Coro's elites consumed were brought to the region during the eighteenth century thanks to the efforts of three European companies; ones responsible for not only providing the region with European commodities, but for creating Coro's African character and constructing its plantation economy. The Dutch West India Company (WIC), Britain's South Sea Company (SSC), and Spain's Real Compañía Guipuzcoana (RCG) were responsible for the enslavement of thousands of African people and sending them to toil on Coro's plantations. Moreover, many of the cacao and sugar plantations that Coro's rebels loathed to work on were created as a result of the economic stimulation that the WIC, the SSC, and the RCG provided the region. These plantations were erected, and others had their production increased, as a result of the companies' provision of enslaved people and European goods, as well as their purchase of Coro's plantation commodities. When Coro's rebels killed white elites, sacked plantations, and burned down fields, they were attacking a system of oppression whose core was found an ocean away, in Europe's financial capitals, among wealthy stock holders, blue blood aristocrats, royal families, and the continent's leading merchants.

Slavery in eighteenth-century Coro was largely a product of the WIC, the SSC, and the RCG's endeavors, and it was an institution that Coro's rebels hoped to eliminate. Ironically, however, the 1795 insurrection began its momentum six years before the movement began, with the enactment of a law that was meant to strengthen slavery in Spanish America, rather than destroy it. On May 31, 1789, the Spanish Crown issued the "Real Cédula sobre educación, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos," which called for the

"humane" treatment of the enslaved people living, working, and dying in Spain's American colonies.[203] As was the case throughout the Americas, rumors soon swirled in Coro that the Real Cédula was in fact an edict that abolished slavery, and that local white elites were holding people in bondage against the wishes of the King and His laws.[204]

After the rebellion, Coro's authorities testified that a mysterious African-born wanderer, known as Cocofío, had spread the abolition rumors there. Cocofio was legally free and said to have made his living as a *curandero* in Coro's sierra. It was said that he had no home, but roamed the countryside, going from hacienda to hacienda, encouraging plantation workers to resist their enslavement because slavery was no longer allowed in the Spanish Empire.[205]

Coro's authorities reported that Cocofio had died "two or three years" before the 1795 rebellion, but that his mission to stir up trouble in Coro's sierra was taken up by Joseph Caridad González, the *loango* leader who lived free in Coro after having escaped enslavement in the WIC operated island of Curaçao.[206] González, according to authorities, had been spreading the rumor that the 1789 Cédula had not just outlawed slavery, but also some taxes, including the *alcabala*.[207] Although González lived between

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[203] Manuel Lucena Salmoral, "El original de la R.C. instrucción circular sobre la educación, trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias e Islas Filipinas," https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/58906381.pdf.

[204] Abolition rumors were common during the period. See David Patrick Geggus, "Slave Resistance in the Spanish Caribbean in the Mid-1790s," in *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean*, edited by David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997): 131-155.

[205] "Expediente sobre la insurrección de los negros, zambos y mulatos proyectada en el año 1795 a las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Coro, Provincia de Caracas," 1795, Caracas, 426, Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Seville, ff. 84-88.

[206] Ibid., "dos o tres años."

[207] Ibid.

Coro and Caracas, he settled back into the city of Coro a few weeks before the rebellion—in a part of the city known as Guinea.

Guinea was the name used in the Atlantic to describe what is known today as West Africa, between the Sahara desert and the Gulf of Guinea, a region of the world in which the WIC and the SSC carried out much of their slaving activities. Coro's neighborhood of Guinea lay about 30 miles south of the sierra, but despite its distance, the neighborhood was linked to the rebellion by mysterious dances that took place before the insurrection was underway. Guinea and it's celebrations came to light in the days, weeks, and months that followed the rebellion, as authorities tried to scramble together a narrative on how this uprising could have occurred.

On November 17, 1795, the head of Caracas's military, Comandante Francisco Jacot, crafted and signed a testimony that included a bombshell of an allegation—one that made claims of a conspiracy much wider than even paranoid planters could have imagined. Jacot penned the letter upon his return to Caracas, after having been sent to Coro as soon as word on the May 10 rebellion reached the capital. Jacot arrived in Coro on May 24 to oversea military operations there in support of Coro's military and militias, headed by Mariano Ramírez Valderraín. Jacot submitted a detailed memorial of his time in Coro to the Governor and Captain General of Venezuela, featuring 29 points that he thought were of utmost importance. What concerned Jacot the most, however, was the link that he had established between González, Coro's rebels, and none other than Coro's Justicia Mayor himself, Ramírez Valderraín.[208]

[208] "Sublevacion de los negros de Coro, pieza 3," 1795, Criminales, Letra C, Archivo General de la Nacion, Caracas, ff.. 70-84.

Jacot suspected Ramírez Valderraín because he believed that he had uncovered links between the Justicia Mayor and Coro's *loango* community, whose origins were believed to lie on the Loango Coast, the other major WIC and SSC slave-trading port whose only rival was the southern Coast of Guinea. Jacot's misgivings of Ramírez Valderraín were on alert the moment he arrived in Coro, partly because of "the rudeness with which he treated me."[209] His reservations developed further when he noticed that people spoke ill of him and of his handling of the rebellion. Jacot stated that he was in this state of discomfort over Ramírez Valderraín and his tenure as Justicia Mayor when he received news that stunned him. It all started when three *loango* men, all supposedly infected with smallpox—Felipe Guillermo, Domingo Cornelio and Francisco Castro—were apprehended, incarcerated, and accused of being active participants in the insurrection. But Jacot actually thought that the *loango* men's apprehension was unjustified because the three men were on his list of black militia members. It appears that perhaps Jacot saw their incarceration, at this moment, as part of the anti-black hysteria that gripped the city of Coro in the days that followed the rebellion. So Jacot ordered that the three men be set free. Jacot soon regretted this decision, however, as residents began informing him that the three men, particularly Guillermo, were close friends of González.

Jacot ordered that the three men be apprehended once more, and he placed them under the charge of Gabriel Gárces, a member of the *pardo* militia. Jacot would once again regret this decision when he found the three *loangos* walking around the jail without being chained. This was an unacceptable liberty being granted by Gárces and Jacot immediately began questioning the jailer's motives. Jacot asked residents about

[209] Ibid., ff. 72: "la groseria de que me trataba."

Gárces, and an anonymous member of the black militia told him that Gárces was also an intimate friend of González. In fact, Gárces was dependent on the accused mastermind of the Coro rebellion, because he made his living off of selling the vegetables that the *loangos* grew in the sierra. Bringing the conspiracy full circle, Jacot revealed that Gárces was a close friend of Ramírez Valderraín, creating just one degree of separation from the Justicia Mayor and González, the devious author of the May insurrection.

But it was what Jacot reported next that all but confirmed his terrible suspicions. Jacot recounted a conversation that he had with Coro's Priest Don Pedro Pérez in which the priest hinted at Ramírez Valderraín's involvement. Pérez told Jacot, "I'm a Priest, I've confessed many people, and I cannot say anything else."[210] Despite his purported reservations, Pérez continued:

> suppose that before the uprising, there were some dances or celebrations where people sang, some dishonorable little verses, and they danced a thousand obscenities: I remember one that said: a black man with a brand is worth more than the head of a white man: candle up, candle down, take out the machete, cut off the head, the vultures eat, drink the liquor.[211]

Pérez recorded, then, that, before the rebellion, there were dances in Coro in which black people sang songs that threatened the lives of local whites. But it was what Pérez said next that would astonish and offend Jacot. Pérez told Jacot that this song—and others—were sang in the open. Jacot asked Pérez if Ramírez Valderraín knew of these dances, to which Pérez responded yes, "because they were public."[212]

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[210] Ibid., ff. 75: "Yo soy Sacerdote, he confesado a muchas personas, y no puedo hablar mas."

[211] Ibid.: suponga VMD que antes al levantamiento, se hacían unos Bailes, o Zambras en que se cantaban,, unos versitos muy deshonestos, y se bailaban mil obsenidades: me acuerdo,, de una que dice: mas vale negro con placa, que cabeza de blanco:,,candela arriba, candela abajo, saca la macheta, corta la Caveza, come los Zamuros, beva la Aguardiena.

[212] Ibid.: "porque eran publicos."

Jacot's next recorded a conversation that he had had with another white elite that confirmed Pérez's observations. Don Nicolas Coronado, according to Jacot, confirmed that these songs were sung in public dances, and the lyrics he provided were even more heinous than the ones cited above:

> Candle down candle up, the white dies, the black lives: and Josef Leonardo with his gang, together with the Blacks in Macanilla, and with a blow from his Royal Palm, the white dies, blacks plant *semilla*: the White man digs, the black man stays to plant his *semilla*, those that live will see.[213]

Coronado's statement confirmed that the Africans in the city of Coro, many of who had escaped the clutches of the WIC's slaveocracy in Curaçao to live "free" in Coro, had advanced knowledge of the rebellion, and openly sang about its imminence. The songs also point to the fact that Chirino was known to Guinea's singers who looked forward to the rebellion and the newfound freedom this would bring them. Jacot fretted over the scandalous nature of the songs, adding that another local authority, Don Juan Fermin Emasavel, confirmed that these songs were sung at public dances, and that he had even seen Ramírez Valderraín there.

If true, these scandalous songs, sung before the insurrection, would be proof positive of the correlation between sierra and city, between Chirino and González, between *criollo* and *bozal*, and incriminate Ramírez Valderraín as a rebel or—at the very least—a negligent fool. Some historians of the 1795 rebellion have questioned the official narrative of González being a mastermind of the insurrection.[214] One historian has

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[213] Ibid.: "Candela abajo candel arriba, muera lo blanco, lo negro viva: y Josef Leonardo con su pandilla, junta los Negros en Macanilla, y con su volezo de Palma Real, muera lo blanco,, negro semillan: Blanco cava, negro queda para semillan, quien vivieze lo verán."

[214] See: Pedro A. Gil Rivas, Luis Dovale Prado and Lidia Lusmila Bello, *La insurrección de los negros de la serranía coriana: 10 de mayo de 1795* (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deportes, 2001);

suggested that it was unlikely that González, being African-born and the leader of an African-born community, would have conspired with a Venezuelan-born rebel in Chirino, and the largely *criollo* contingent of the sierra.[215] The song quoted above, sung by Guinea-community members in the city, counters these historians' assessments, however, and suggests that perhaps the divisions between *bozal* and *criollo* have been overstated.

The songs sung by people brought to Coro by the joint-stock companies could have been delusions of hysterical white elites, but there exists further evidence that ties these songs to Chirino and the rebels of the sierra. In September of 1795, the landowner, Doña Nicolosa de Acosta, described being abused by the rebels, having her belongings stolen, and her home and fields burned down. De Acosta stated that she actually lived in the home constructed on her sugar plantation Baron since 1779, unlike most plantation owners who lived in the city and retired to their country estates for the occasional weekend away. De Acosta stated that between 8 and 9 PM on the night of May 10, the rebels appeared at her front door, shouting threateningly. Once they realized that de Acosta would not open the door, the rebels lit it on fire. It was at this point that de Acosta encouraged her lover, Don Joseph María de Manzanos, to escape, and the insurgents, who were surrounding the home, killed him. One of the rebels then broke open a window to allow for his sister, who worked at the plantation, to get away, and this is how de Acosta herself managed to flee, along with her niece and two granddaughters.

Ramón Aizpurua, "Revolution and Politics in Venezuela and Curaçao, 1797-1800" in *Curaçao in the Age of Revolutions, 1795-1800*, edited by Wim Klooster and Gert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2011), 97-122.

[215] Cristina Soriano, "Rumors of Change: Repercussions of Caribbean Turmoil and Social Conflicts in Venezuela (1790-1810)" (Ph.D. Diss.: New York University, 2011) 204-5.

This is when de Acosta found herself face to face with Chirino and two other rebels who stated "there should not remain a white man, not even for *semilla*, that the women would have to accommodate to the new laws, that there was no longer slavery or *alcabalas*."[216] De Acosta's recounting of this episode points to the rebels' use of the word "semilla" to describe both the new society that would be built and the literal reproduction of African lineage, which would serve as the foundation for this new society. De Acosta's account echoes the usage of "semilla" in the songs sung in the days before the rebellion where the black *semilla* was counter posed to the white *semilla*, which would disappear. De Acosta's testimony also provides further evidence for claims made by white elites that Coro's rebels had planned to "marry the white women."[217]Although statements made to this effect were reflections of planters' worst fears, when paired with rebels' usage of *semilla* in both Guinea and the sierra, it appears that Coro's rebels planned, not just to marry white women, but to allow them to live in their new society, and to adopt roles similar to those taken up by black women in their communities.[218] Because white women represented chastity, honor, and beauty in Coro, there may have been a preference for white women amongst some rebels. More importantly, however, white women were not considered the same threats as white men, and the rebels probably decided to spare their lives for this reason.

De Acosta stated that she was beaten as her residence burned down, but that she managed to escape, only to return days later and find a shell of her former home. Much of

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[216] "Expediente sobre la insurrección," ff. 291: "no havia de quedar blanco baron, ni para semilla, que las hembras se havian de acomodar a sus nuevas leyes, que ya no havia esclavitud, ni alcabalas."

[217] See the introduction for a discussion of the claim that Coro's rebels planned to marry white women.

[218] See the next chapter for a discussion of black women's roles in Africa and in maroon communities in the Americas.

her cane was destroyed. Her clothes, textiles, silverware and tools were stolen, and much of her livestock was decimated. De Acosta was not alone. The landowners Don Josef Antonio Zárraga, Don Josef de Tellería, and Don Francisco de Manzanos also had their cane fields and homes destroyed, as well as their belongings sacked.

These sugar plantations, the ones that Cocofío and González allegedly roamed to spread the word of abolition, and the ones that Chirino, his family, and his community labored on, were the product of more than a century of groundwork laid by European joint-stock companies. These companies crafted the world in which Coro's rebels hoped to plant the *semilla* of a new society, one in which the white ruling class would no longer exist, and where the black race would govern in its place. This chapter will inspect three of the principal companies that shaped eighteenth-century Coro: the WIC, the SSC, and the RCG. This examination shows that Coro's rebels were striking against a local political economy that was stubbornly resistant to reform because it was lodged into a much wider political and economic project invested in its immutability. This Atlantic undertaking served disparate interest groups, but groups whose concerns all convalesced around the accumulation of capital and the extension of white supremacy.

The Dutch West India Company

The first European joint-stock company that formed eighteenth-century Coro and the conditions that led to the 1795 insurrection was the Dutch West India Company (WIC). The WIC was responsible for creating the African character of Coro through the steady supply of enslaved African people throughout the eighteenth century, some of

who, no doubt, were involved in the rebellion, as well as many more rebels whose ancestors had been brought to Coro via WIC activities. The WIC also governed the island of Curaçao, which was, perhaps, the premier entrepôt of the early modern Caribbean. Ceded from Spain in 1634, Curaçao lay just 60 miles off of the coast of Coro, and dominated the latter's economy, which relied on contraband trade with Curaçao's merchants. The WIC collapsed four years before the 1795 insurrection, but not before its practices helped build Coro's plantation economy through promoting the production of sugar and livestock, and by providing these industries with the enslaved workers that it relied on.

Formed in 1621, the WIC was constructed by the States General at the end of the twelve-year truce between The Netherlands and Spain. The WIC was to serve as a weapon against their Spanish rivals and their commercial, military, and political interests in the Atlantic. The first WIC went bankrupt in 1674, but through coercion and financial manipulations, a second WIC was immediately formed upon the corpse of the first company's dead capital. The WIC's main interests were in the slave trade and the running of Caribbean plantations and commercial colonies, Curaçao being the company's crown jewel throughout its history.

The idea for a Dutch joint-stock company holding a monopoly on Atlantic trade was first promoted in the early seventeenth century by the influential merchant and pamphleteer Willem Usselinecx. Usselinecx was born in Antwerpt and moved to Middleberg in the late sixteenth century after Antwerp fell to the Spanish during the Eighty Years War. Driven by a—perhaps understandable—hatred towards Spain, Usselinecx's fortunes ironically grew as a merchant serving Spanish land in Iberia and

the Azores. Usselinecx envisioned the coming joint-stock company as a righteous instrument of Calvinism, represented by The Netherlands, to be used in their commercial and military struggle against Catholicism, represented by Spain.[219]

Usselenicx eventually became one of the first shareholders of the company he had envisioned: the WIC. Shareholders like Usselenicx were attracted to the company because of its monopoly on the Dutch slave trade, as well as its potential trading operations in the Americas. This, no doubt, would bring profits. Investors were also drawn to the idea of missions to sack Spanish bullion shipments, and were buoyed by major successes of these operations in 1628 and 1646. In addition, WIC investments were considered safe because the company was state-sponsored, it received government subsidies, and guaranteed regular dividends.[220]

The States General's interests in the WIC complemented those of shareholders. Having found great success with its first joint-stock company, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), they considered that the WIC had the potential to bring similar benefits, but through the Atlantic. In addition to serving as an instrument of war against Spain, the Staten General also believed that a joint-stock company was necessary in order to pull together enough capital to secure Dutch shares in the Atlantic trades.

When the WIC was founded it took several years to raise enough capital to begin operations, and the general financial health of the company would vacillate until it went bankrupt in 1674. The value of the company's stock was at 115% in 1628 and reached a high of 206% the following year. In 1633, the stock price dipped to 61% of its nominal

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[219] Henk Heijer, *De Geschiedenis Van De Wic* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2007), 21.

[220] P.C. Emmer, "The West India Compnay, 1621-1791. Dutch or Atlantic?" In Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancien Régime (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1981), 76.

value, and by 1638, it was consistently selling at below this price.[221] In 1638, the company lost part of its monopoly on Atlantic commerce, keeping a monopoly on its most prized trade, enslaved people, as well as other successful commodities, including ammunition and Brazil wood.[222] This adjustment may have helped the value of stock to increase in the following years, but by the 1670s, it became clear that the company would not be able to continue operating as it had. The WIC directors came to the conclusion that they were losing money because of competition from illegal slave traders in Africa. They came to believe that if they could manage to raise one million guilders, however, that they would be able to strike blows against these interlopers and regain control of the slave trade.[223]

But the WIC was unable to raise this money, so the company devised a plan to raise these funds by force. The WIC decided to disband and to form a second WIC with the capital investments still held by its shareholders. Shareholders were compensated by transferring 15% of their nominal stock from the first company into the second, upon the stipulation that they hand the new company 4% of the value of their holdings in cash. Holders of bonds had 30% of their investments transferred to the new company upon the condition that they give the company 8% of their investments in cash. If investors did not agree to these conditions, they would lose everything they had invested in the first company.[224] The 1.2 million guilders that were collected surpassed the 1 million guilders

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[221] J.G. Van Dillen, "Effectenkoersen aan de Amsterdamsche beurs, 1723-1794" Economisch-Historisch Jaarboek 17 (1931): 1-46.

[222] Emmer, 79.

[223] Heijer, 107.

[224] Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas, 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Corcum, 1985), 4.

the company thought they needed to revamp their trade, and this money served as the cash used for the second company's operations, which had no money when it was declared bankrupt.[225]

The transition from the first WIC to the second came with some structural changes to the company and its operations. When the WIC was first founded, it was established with five regional chambers: that of Amsterdam, Zeeland, Rotterdam, Northquarter and Grogingen. There were 19 members of the board of directors, who were leading shareholders chosen by the regents of each chamber.[226] With the second WIC, the chambers were kept as they were but the board of directors was reduced to 10. As before, the company directors were voted in by the *bewindhebbers*, principal investors who oversaw the daily operations of their respective chambers. The Chamber of Amsterdam, which held 4/9s of the company's shares, had 10 *bewindhebbers* and 6 *buytenheeren*, essentially *bewindhebbers* who were selected from outside of the city of Amsterdam, but in its vicinity. The Zeeland Chamber held 2/9 of the company's capital and had 6 *bewindhebbers.* The Noorderkwartier held 1/9 parts and 13 *bewindhebbers*, the Maze chamber had 1/9 parts and 7 *bewindhebbers* and the Kamer Stad en Lande also held 1/9 of the company's capital, but had 14 *bewindhebbers*. The b*ewindhebbers* were selected by and amongst the *hooftparticipaten*, or major investors, in each chamber. In the Amsterdam chamber, *hooftparticipaten* were those who had 4,200 florins invested in the company, but *hooftparticipaten* in the other chambers invested a minimum of 2,800

[225] Emmer, 81.

[226] C.R. Boxer, *The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 48.

florins. The *Upperbewindheber* was William IV of Orange, who technically had the final say on matters.[227]

The *bewindhebbers* were the backbone of the WIC, and were ultimately responsible for all decisions made by the company. In exchange for their service, *bewindhebbers* received a 10% commission on all dividends that were issued, a sizeable sum indeed. Many *bewindhebbers* held investments in Atlantic trade not monopolized by the WIC, and thus used their positions to obtain inside knowledge on Atlantic conditions. *Bewindhebbers* were also attracted to the position for the social status it afforded them at home.[228]

The WIC oversaw a host of Dutch state and commercial operations over its lifespan, but these changed as years went by—ironically because of the company's very success. The company began as a heavily armed monopoly holder of all Dutch trade in the Atlantic. As stated above, the company lost part of this monopoly in 1638, but retained their hold on a number of trades, most significantly the slave trade. The company held a monopoly on Dutch trade in Africa, including the slave trade until 1730, when the slave trade was opened to private concerns. And finally, in 1734, the WIC lost its monopoly on the trade in other African goods. From here until the company's demise in 1791, the WIC served as a state management company that operated with the aid of private capital. This phase of the WIC's lifespan was aimed at promoting Dutch private

[227] Heijer, 117.

[228] Ibid.

interests in the Atlantic.[229] In other words, the WIC's efforts in forcing open new markets for Dutch interests paid off, and their trading activities were no longer necessary.

But after 1730, private Dutch traders came to rely on the WIC for the stability of their operations, whether they realized it or not. Key to Dutch slaving activities in Africa was the presence of WIC forts across the West African Coast. The Dutch held a dozen forts on the Gold Coast from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, which provided enslaved people to private merchants looking to complete their cargoes. These forts and their personnel also provided Dutch merchants with provisions and other goods that they could trade in the Atlantic.[230] The heavily armed WIC establishments also provided security for merchants in case they would need it, and gave Dutch traders legitimacy, which was needed to carry trade with indigenous peoples. In the Caribbean, the WIC administered the island entrepôts of St. Eustatius and Curaçao, making it possible for Dutch traders to stake claims in the Caribbean, and allowing for the mother country to benefit from the supply side of the slave trade, as well as from the procurement of Caribbean commodities that were sold in Europe.

Like their European rivals, the Dutch traded in enslaved people up and down the West African coast and, to a lesser extend, in East Africa as well. Taken together, however, the Gold Coast of Guinea and the Loango Coast accounted for 54.3% of all enslaved people transported by the WIC between 1700-1738, and just over 47% of enslaved people during the free trade period of 1730-1803.[231]

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[229] Ibid., 180.

[230] Ibid., 124.

[231] Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114-121. It is important to note, however, that the latter period

Dutch traders first arrived to the Gold Coast in the late sixteenth century, years before the foundation of the WIC. As part of their offensive against Portuguese claims in the Atlantic, the Dutch seized control of the Portuguese fort at Elmina in 1637. After the Portuguese retook their fort at Luanda in 1648, Elmina became the center for WIC operations on the African continent. The Elmina castle was the largest fort operating on the Gold Coast during the protocolonial period.[232] It was heavily fortified, with cannons placed upon a massive, seemingly impenetrable stonewall that surrounded the castle.

About half of the WIC's African staff, which oscillated between 200-400 people over the life span of the company, was housed at Elmina. The head of the operation was the Director General, who was head of a decision making counsel, which also included high-ranking military personnel. Most WIC employees in Africa were soldiers, who, along with sailors and craftsmen, made up about 4/5 of all WIC workers on the continent. The remaining workers were administrators.[233]

This military force allowed the Dutch to stake a considerable share in the Gold Coast trade. Until the turn of the eighteenth century, this trade consisted of an assortment of African goods, primarily gold, which were exchanged for an assortment of European and Asian goods, foremost were textiles, followed by guns, gun powder, alcoholic beverages, and small trinkets, primarily beads. This commercial and military prowess, which went hand in hand, gave the WIC the power to wield strong influence across local political, economic, and military events on the Gold Coast. When the Denkyara struggled

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is rather imprecise, given that ships with an unknown destination accounted for 33.6% of the records consulted by Postma.

[232] The term protocolonial is borrowed from Walter Rodney. See: Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast: 1545-1800* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970).

[233] Ibid., 64.

against the Asante in the interior of the coast in the late seventeenth century, for example, the Dutch offered military support to the Denkyara until it was clear that the Asante would win in this struggle for access to Atlantic markets. Thereafter, the WIC paid the Asante tribute or land rent known to the Dutch as *kostgeld*. In exchange for preferential terms of trade over their European rivals, the Dutch paid the Asante King 6 ounces of gold a month, which was usually in the form of textiles that were valued at this amount. In exchange for this payment, the Asante assured protection for the Dutch and their presence at Elmina, as well as guaranteed a steady influx of enslaved people who were regularly brought to the castle in droves.[234]

After the WIC lost their monopoly on the Dutch slave trade in 1730, their role was to provide military and commercial support for private traders. The largest private company was the Middleburgh Commercial Company (MCC), which accounted for as much as 3/4 of all Dutch private trade in Africa after 1730.[235] Nowhere was the MCC more active than on the Loango Coast.[236]

The Dutch first ventured into the Loango coast in 1593, and held a steady presence there through the nineteenth century. The Loango Coast, also referred to as Angola by Dutch and other European traders, was a 460 mile stretch of land along the Western Central African coast below Cape Lopez and above the Congo River. Loango was also the name of the dominant polity of the coast until the turn of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, the Kakongo and Ngoyo began to assert a role in the Atlantic trade,

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[234] Larry W. Yarak, *Asante and the Dutch, 1744-1873* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 96-133.

[235] Postma, 132. The Zeeland region accounted for over 77% of all African trade during the period, and the MCC was the dominant company.

[236] Stacey Jean Muriel Sommerdyk, "Trade and the Merchant Community of the Loango Coast in the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. Diss.: University of Hull, 2012), 115.

along with the Loango.[237] As was the case throughout the continent, WIC slaving increased heavily during the 1670s. In the 1660s, the WIC set up a lodge on the Loango Coast, but closed it in 1686.[238] Thereafter, WIC traders, like their European rivals, would have to fend for themselves without castles or lodges to protect them.

During the free trade period, independent Loango merchants handled most trade. In fact, 593 Loango merchants conducted business with the MCC between 1732-97. These were small merchants, however, as 85% of them traded an average of less than one enslaved person a year.[239] Although reliable data is unavailable, it appears that most enslaved people were kidnapped on the coast, although some were brought from the interior, principally across the Mayombe rainforest, and traded to African merchants on the coast in exchange for Atlantic commodities.[240]

Once people were enslaved, they were transported to the coast for sale. On the Loango Coast, the captain of a Dutch vessel would fire a canon from their ship offshore. A Loango merchant and his workers would then guide the ship's captain to an anchoring post. From there, the Loango merchant would board the ship to set trade terms. Once terms were agreed upon, the Dutch captain would check the availability of enslaved people and the level of European competition before they hired indigenous workers to set up a temporary base on land from where business would be conducted.[241]

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[237] Ibid., 37-42.

[238] Postma, 60.

[239] Sommerdyk, 162.

[240] Christina Frances Mobley, "The Kongolese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti" (Ph.D. Diss.: Duke University, 2015), 142-3.

[241] Sommerdyk, 175-9

On the Gold Coast, business was managed through the WIC's forts. Each fort would contract a *caboceer*, a local broker, usually someone who lived in the small commercial communities that lay outside of the fort's walls. The *caboceer* would serve as an interpreter for local traders from the interior and collect outstanding debts.[242] Enslaved people, once purchased, were kept in a dungeon below the fort, under tortuous and unsanitary conditions that bread much suffering, disease and death. Until 1730, the WIC would hold enslaved people in these dungeons until WIC ships arrived to purchase them. After 1730, however, most enslaved people on the private ships had already been purchased independent of the WIC forts. The role of the forts was still key, however, as they were almost always the last stop on the slaving voyage, and would provide food and commercial items, including the last human cargoes needed for the trip across the Atlantic.[243]

Until 1730, the WIC's board of directors directed all slave shipments, including the African and American destinations and the desired size of the cargos. In The Netherlands, the ship had to be prepared, a crew was hired, merchandise was purchased from local merchants, and food—dried fish, smoked meats, break, beans, barley, cheese and spirits—was obtained in Holland for both the enslaved captives and the ship's crew. This preparation usually took several months, followed by an average of 76 days voyage to West Africa. While on the continent, slaving crews spent as little as a month to as long

[242] Meijer, 131.

[243] Emmer, 46.

as a year obtaining enslaved people, although the average time spent in Africa was 92 days.[244]

The middle passage was, of course, brutal, especially for the enslaved Africans on board. Upon Dutch ships, it was customary to place men in the *slavegaaten* or slave hole, chained to each other, whereas women and children were kept on deck, more easily subject, one could imagine, to the sexual tortures of their transporters. In the *slavegaaten*, men had only about 15 cubic feet of space. Enslaved people were fed twice a day, at 9 AM and 5 PM, and the men in the *slavegaaten* were regularly brought on deck for fresh air, exercise, and the occasional dance party. These practices were considered essential in order to minimize death among their ranks. But death was inevitable. Historian Johannes Postma estimates that nearly 18% of enslaved people aboard WIC ships died during the middle passage between 1700 and 1739.[245]

Most of the enslaved victims of the WIC and their partners ended up on Curaçao for sale to nearby plantation regions, such as Coro. In the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, the WIC was responsible for nearly 20,000 enslaved people who arrived in Curaçao. By the eighteenth century, however, the slave trade via Curaçao had already declined, having reached its peak of over 23,000 enslaved people from 1662-1674. By the late eighteenth century, the slave trade via Curaçao had declined considerably, a far cry from its heyday when it was the chief supplier for the entire Caribbean. The slave trade in Curaçao was still active in the late eighteenth century,

[244] Postma, 152.

[245] Ibid., 240.

however, and this was one of the means by which enslaved people in Coro were procured up until the 1795 insurrection.[246]

But enslaved people were ultimately but one of the many commodities that were traded between Curaçao and Coro during the eighteenth century. Most eighteenth-century trade between Curaçao and Coro was illegal in Coro, however, as it was in all of Spain's empire. Therefore, it is impossible to record exactly how much trade was conducted between Curaçao and Coro over this period. In 1778, however, various acts of "free trade" were incorporated in Spain's American colonies, including The Captaincy General of Venezuela, which was upgraded to this status that same year.[247] One of the free trade acts allowed for commerce in certain goods to certain foreign powers. The measures were meant to increase access to enslaved people and specie, two commodities that were needed in Venezuela, but that colonists had trouble accessing. Beginning in 1783, Coro's Real Hacienda began recording recently legalized foreign commerce, which is indicative of the overall balance of trade between the two regions in the eighteenth century, as a whole. Data is currently available for most years between 1788-1794.

Data on imports from Curaçao is currently available for the years 1788-90 and 1793-4.[248] According to the free trade laws, only enslaved people and specie were to be imported from foreign colonies, but authorities in Coro recorded other goods as well.[249]

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[246] Ibid., 54.

[247] Before this time, the Province of Venezuela was under the jurisdiction of Nueva Granada.

[248] "1788, pliego 3," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 4," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 5," Caracas 578, AGI; "1789, pliego 3, Caracas 578, AGI; "Libro manual de la Real Caja del Departamento de Coro," Caracas 579, AGI; "1792, pliego 4," Caracas 580, AGI; "1793, pliego 2," Caracas 580, AGI; "Libro manual de las Reales Cajas del Departamento y Ciudad de Coro," Caracas 581, AGI.

[249] Eduardo Arcila Farias, *Economía colonial de Venezuela* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 307-9

The vast majority of goods imported were tools needed in plantation production. In the five years that are available, Coro's merchants imported 1,501 pesos worth of hoes, 983 pesos and 1 real worth of machetes and 674 pesos 1 real worth of knives. For some reason, Coro's authorities did not register imports of enslaved people or specie, which were presumably the items that returned to Coro in exchange for the region's exports. The one exception is for 1793 when Coro's authorities noted an importation of 713 pesos worth of silver coin. They did not, however, record the number of enslaved people imported. The 713 pesos of silver coin that was imported amounted to 27% of the 2,639.5 pesos of imports that year, only superseded by the 910 pesos of hoes imported that year, which accounted for 34.48% of imports that year.[250]

Data on exports from Coro to Curaçao are much more complete, and is currently available for the years 1788-1790 and 1792-94. Most of Coro's exports to Curaçao during these years were in sugar products, the overwhelming majority of these being *panelas*, blocks of raw sugar. In these six years, Coro's merchants were recorded as exporting 30,954 pesos and 6.5 reales worth of *panelas* (also known as *papelónes*), or approximately 54% of all exports to Curaçao. Second were cow hides, which equaled 12,117 pesos or 21% of all exports, followed by bovine creatures that equaled 5,341 pesos or 9.25% of exports, followed by Brazil wood at 3,644.5 pesos or 6.31% of all

[250] "1788, pliego 3," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 4," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 5," Caracas 578, AGI; "1789, pliego 3, Caracas 578, AGI; "Libro manual de la Real Caja del Departamento de Coro," Caracas 579, AGI; "1792, pliego 4," Caracas 580, AGI; "1793, pliego 2," Caracas 580, AGI; "Libro manual de las Reales Cajas del Departamento y Ciudad de Coro," Caracas 581, AGI. It may be pertinent to note that 1793 was an extraordinary year for recorded imports in that the total recorded value of the imports from Curaçao (2,639.5) is significantly higher than the imports from other years, which saw a low of 339 pesos in 1788 and a high of 779 pesos in 1794.

exports to Curaçao. The rest of the recorded exports were primarily in deer, sheep, and goat hides, followed by other miscellaneous animal products including fish and turtles.[251]

There are, of course, many problems with this data. If the export data from Coro's Real Hacienda is compared with Curaçao's Day Register, Coro's merchants sometimes arrived with goods that were not recorded during their exit from Coro. For example, in January of 1792, the *Coriano* merchant Don Francisco Lucambio was recorded as exporting only *panelas* from Coro. But when this shipment was recorded in Curaçao, the island authorities also noted that Lucambio had imported animal skins.[252] Unfortunately, Curaçao's Day Registers do not record the exact amount of goods imported or their value, nor do they register what was exported from the island. Another issue with this documentation is that, despite the legalization of trade, contraband was still common. Between January and June of 1792, for example, there were 18 boats from Coro registered as coming into Curaçao's port at Willemstad, but only 14 recorded by Coro's Real Hacienda as leaving for Curaçao.[253] Some of these merchants were undoubtedly from Curaçao and conducted their trade off of Coro's coast, as their names (of Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese origin) do not come up in Coro's accounting of any merchants exporting anywhere.

The above data does give clear indications about the nature of Coro-Curaçao traffic, however, particularly for exports. *Panelas* were the majority of exports from Coro to Curaçao, showing the dependence that Coro's sugar plantations in the sierra had on

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[251] Ibid.

[252] "1792, pliego 4," Caracas 580, AGI; "Dag Register, 1792" Raad der Koloniene 77-80, Nationaal Arhief (NAN), The Hague, The Netherlands.

[253] Ibid.

Curaçao as a consumption market. This evidence counters the common understanding in the historiography that Venezuelan sugar production was geared exclusively towards the domestic market.[254] It seems clear that Coro's sugar plantations were producing for foreign markets, particularly for merchants in Curaçao. In addition, if the export of cow hides are combined with those of the bovine animals themselves, they total 17,519.5 pesos or 30.34% of exports to Curaçao, making bovine products the second largest area of domestic production for Curaçao's market. Together with sugar, bovine products accounted for over 84% of all exports to Curaçao, followed by Brazil wood, which accounted for just over 6% of exports to Curaçao. Imports are trickier, however. In the five years that are available, 5,121 pesos 1.5 reales worth of goods were imported, but these number was exchanged for 45,175 pesos ½ real worth of exports. This makes a discrepancy of over 40,000 pesos. It is presumed that these goods were exchanged for specie and enslaved people, but we cannot know for sure at this time. These goods could have illegally been exchanged for luxury items such as textiles, jewelry, household furniture, or an assortment of other goods.[255]

It is also important to note that exports to Curaçao during these years were only a fraction of Coro's overall exports, with the majority of products being shipped to French

[254] This is the general understanding in the historiography. For prominent examples, see Arcila Farias and Ramón Aizpurua, *Curazao y la costa de Caracas: Instroucción al estudio de la provincial de Venezuela en tiempos de la Compañía Guipuzcoana, 1730-1780* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de Historia, 1993).

[255] "1788, pliego 3," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 4," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 5," Caracas 578, AGI; "1789, pliego 3, Caracas 578, AGI; "Libro manual de la Real Caja del Departamento de Coro," Caracas 579, AGI; "1792, pliego 4," Caracas 580, AGI; "1793, pliego 2," Caracas 580, AGI; "Libro manual de las Reales Cajas del Departamento y Ciudad de Coro," Caracas 581, AGI.

colonies in the Caribbean.[256] In fact, exports to the French Caribbean reached as high as 78.5% in 1789 and 79% the year after, equaling approximately 62.5% of Coro's exports from 1789-90 and 1792-4. Exports to the French colonies were mostly in mules and cattle. Curaçao was the second leading destination for Coro's recorded exports, equaling 19.4% for the years in question. Curaçao was challenged for second place by Spain's other American colonies, which received approximately 16.5% of Coro's recorded exports, with the remaining exports, just over 1.5% going to other ports in the Captaincy General of Venezuela. Not one import from the French colonies was recorded in the years in question, although it is presumed that the imports were of specie and enslaved people. The imports from other ports in Spanish America and Venezuela were mostly in foodstuffs.[257]

This data points to the fact that if it were not for the WIC, its shareholders, and its founders, Dutch shares in the Venezuelan trade would not have existed, and perhaps neither would have Coro's plantations. But Coro's plantations were found, and this was largely due to the WIC. The WIC, and by extension the lives of Coro's rebels, existed, therefore, to meet the needs of Dutch merchants and investors, as well as the needs of the Dutch state, which was active in helping these parties achieve their financial goals.

After 1785, a commission was appointed to evaluate the WIC, which, despite its activity was struggling to stay afloat given its enormous overhead costs. The commission

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[256] This counters most work that has been on Venezuela, Curaçao and contraband. For an example, see: Wim Klooster, "Curaçao as a Transit Center to the Spanish Main and the French West Indies," in *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680-1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. Gert J. Oostindie and Jessica V. Roitman (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 25-51.

[257] "1788, pliego 3," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 4," Caracas 578, AGI; "1788, pliego 5," Caracas 578, AGI; "1789, pliego 3, Caracas 578, AGI; "Libro manual de la Real Caja del Departamento de Coro," Caracas 579, AGI; "1792, pliego 4," Caracas 580, AGI; "1793, pliego 2," Caracas 580, AGI; "Libro manual de las Reales Cajas del Departamento y Ciudad de Coro," Caracas 581, AGI.

recommended that the company be loaned 150,000 guilders to pay off its outstanding debts, and that the company be subsidized with 250,000 guilders a year until it's charter expired in 1791.[258] The WIC was disbanded that year and the State General compensated stockholders by paying their shares at 30% of their nominal value, although shares were selling at 22% at the time.[259] In November of 1792, the Council of the Colonies was formed, and this government body took over the WIC's administrative duties in Africa and the Caribbean.[260]

Through its 170 years of operation, the WIC managed to shape much of the Atlantic world, and nowhere was this influence felt stronger than in late eighteenth-century Coro. Through its direct trade in enslaved Africans, as well as their facilitation of the trade in the years after they lost their monopoly, the WIC was perhaps the entity most responsible for transporting Coro's rebels and their ancestors to the lifestyle they despised. The provision of enslaved people to Coro also buoyed the region's plantation economy, which was at the heart of the rebels' suffering. In addition, the WIC's management of Curaçao throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries created an entrepôt that provided a permanent stimulation to this economy. Although the WIC no longer existed in 1795, it had furthered the interests of Dutch elites and laid the groundwork for a hierarchical political economy in Coro—one organized around the principal of white supremacy.

The South Sea Company

[258] Goslinga, 599.

[259] Heijer, 187.

[260] Goslinga, 606.

The second company that shaped late eighteenth-century Coro had ceased operations in the region more than half a century before the 1795 insurrection. Great Britain's South Sea Company (SSC) was awarded The Spanish Crown's coveted *asiento* contract in 1713, giving the company the exclusive right to provide Spain's American colonies with enslaved African people. The SSC was responsible for the shipment of about 75,000 enslaved people to Spanish America between 1715 and 1739, with about 7%, or 5,240 of these people, being shipped to Venezuela. Many of these enslaved people ended up in Coro, and were the ancestors of the 1795 rebels.[261]

Founded in 1711, the SSC was a latecomer to England's slaving activities, and benefitted from the work of its predecessors. England first set up a joint-stock company dedicated to the African slave trade in 1660 with the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa. The company would be reorganized and renamed the Royal African Company (RAC) in 1672, and the RAC received a 1000 year monopoly on the English slave trade. The RAC's monopoly would not reach 1000 years, however, and was disbanded in 1752.[262] Central to the founding of these companies was the desire amongst English elites to provide enslaved people to Spain's colonies in the Americas, whether by legal or extralegal means.

The SSC was established with several aims, including the desire to make profits from the slave trade to Spanish America. The initial reasoning given to form the SSC, however, was to restructure England's spiraling debt, which was thought to weaken the

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[261] Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 107-110.

[262] Ibid., 5.

country militarily during a time when military conflict and territorial expansion was ubiquitous. In addition, the company was envisioned as a Ponzi scheme in which its principal proponents could speculate and make big earnings. This scheme would lead to the 1720 London stock market bubble and it's bursting, making the SSC responsible for one of the first stock market crashes in history.

But the financial goals of the company would not be possible without trade, and therefore, the SSC was organized with the aim of procuring Spain's *asiento*.[263] The *asiento* contract was thought to be so profitable that the company was able to raise capital with ease, especially when this contract was confirmed two years after the company was established. The SSC was awarded the *asiento* on a 30 year contract in 1713, and began providing enslaved people to Spain's American colonies soon after. They were to provide these colonies with 4,800 *piezas de indias* a year. A *pieza de india* was a subjective measuring tool used to evaluate the fitness of an enslaved person and their body. Men over 4 feet 10 inches tall were considered a whole "piece" as long as they had no physical "defects." Women and children could be counted as less than one "piece," but this was not always the case.[264] Per the *asiento* contract, the SSC also had the right to send one ship a year carrying commodities other than enslaved people to any Spanish American port. Although the SSC could ship European commodities to any Spanish American port, they only shipped to Veracruz, Cartagena, and Porto Bello throughout the country's history.

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[263] Spain did not have access to the African coast because of the Treaty of Tordesillas, first ratified in 1494.

[264] Helen Paul, *The South Sea Bubble: An Economic History of its Origins and Consequences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 123.

In a sample size of 134 SSC ships, historian Colin Palmer found that 55.9% of the SSC's captives came from either the Loango Coast or the Gold Coast, with 32.8% being purchased in the former region.[265] The SSC did not own many ships used in the slave trade, but rented most, and commissioned a captain and a crew. The SSC utilized the RAC both to procure enslaved people and to serve as protector of their interests. Oftentimes, the purchases of enslaved people had been previously arranged with the RAC. Perhaps just as often, however, enslaved people were procured in the same way the private traders obtained enslaved people, by conducting operations on their own, though relying on RAC support by way of their military presence, particularly at their forts.

The RAC operated between 15 and 20 settlements during the lifespan of the SSC. These structures, varying in degree from massive castles to fortified enclosures of several buildings, to small factories meant to be used temporarily, housed between 200-300 soldiers, sailors, and administrators.[266] By far the most important settlement, and the military and administrative center of the British Empire in Africa was Cape Coast Castle, located in the town of Fetu on the Gold Coast. Second in size only to the Dutch castle of Elmina, Cape Coast Castle was built by Swedish merchants in 1652, sold to the Royal Company of Adventurers twelve years later, and inherited by the RAC. In 1710, Cape Coast Castle was described as being defended by out-works, being surrounded by 14-foot thick walls, being protected by 74 large guns sitting atop, as well as many small arms held inside. Also inside, there were living quarters for those stationed at the castle as well

[265] Palmer, 31.

[266] Ibid., 23; K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), 240.

as warehouses, water tanks and workshops. There were also underground enclosures meant to hold up to 1,000 enslaved people.[267]

The RAC wielded much power on the Gold Coast, and many considered the company's military establishments to be necessary for trade, particularly for maintaining an upper hand. Relations between Europeans and Africans were consistently marked with tension that could turn violent. The kidnapping of white traders for ransom, for example, was a common practice during the RAC's tenure. There are also reports of RAC employees taking African traders hostage in order to settle debts, and to enact other forms of violence to maintain control in the region. In 1726, Liverpool merchants reported that Africans preferred trading at sea rather than at the forts, because at the latter they were liable to receive "abuses."[268]

Enslaved people were procured by the RAC and the SSC in much the same way as the WIC and Dutch merchants acquired them. The RAC paid 9 marks of gold or 288 pounds as rent for the Cape Coast Castle.[269] Indigenous allies would provide enslaved people to the RAC and the company would exchange European and Asian commodities, particularly textiles, for enslaved people. Enslaved people were placed in the dungeons below Cape Coast Castle and in other forts, where they were put in irons around their feet and/or their neck.

The Cape Coast Castle dungeon was notorious for its unsanitary conditions, which worried the directors of the company who felt that too many enslaved people were dying after being purchased. In 1718, the Cape Coast Castle surgeon recommended that

[267] Davies, 248.

[268] Palmer, 34.

[269] Davies, 282.

enslaved people be given buckets where they could urinate and pass bowels. It appears then, as Palmer points out, that enslaved people were forced to sit and stand in their own excrement. These conditions, the company directors believed, were unsustainable, and had to be improved in order to preserve the lives of their human commodities. The directors' instructions and the surgeon's recommendations do not appear to have been heeded, however, as similar complaints were repeated in 1721 and again the year after.[270]

After suffering through these conditions, enslaved people were then purchased by SSC agents. Captain William Eyre, Commander of the ship Russell, undertook a typical SSC voyage in 1723. Eyres was hired by the SSC to sail from London to Cape Coast Castle and then to Jamaica. At Cape Coast Castle, Eyres was to receive 340 enslaved people from RAC agents. Eyres was instructed to take the River Themes out towards Guinea, while insuring that the ship's gunpowder be safely stored away, and that the ship's gunner be a "sober careful person."[271] Once flanked outside of Cape Coast Castle, Eyres and his crew were to stay on the Gold Coast for no longer than 60 days. Before beginning to load enslaved people onto the Russell, he was to first load the Atlantic voyage's provisions, which had already been purchased from the RAC in London. These included 14 bushels of salt, 280 chests of corn, 170 pounds of malgitta and 70 gallons of palm oil.

Enslaved people were to be brought on board, 40 at a time, and Eyres was given specific instructions on how to handle his human cargo, so as to minimize losses. He and the ship's surgeon were to examine every enslaved person they took onto the ship, to

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[270] Palmer, 42-4.

[271] "Instructions to Captain William Eyres," MS 255567, The British Library, London, The United Kingdom, ff. 10.

ensure that "no one wants neither limb or eye, nor that they have any dangerous distemper sore or wound nor be lame sick meagre or refuse."[272] The SSC requested that half of the enslaved people boarded be men, and that six out of seven of them be between the ages of 16 and 30. The remaining seventh of the cargo should comprise of boys and girls no younger than 10 years old. It seems that Eyres was asked to take 40 enslaved people at a time because they had to wait for the RAC to receive periodic supplies of enslaved people, meaning that not all 340 people were available at once. Eyres was also told that if any enslaved person were to die on board during the loading period, that the RAC was required to provide replacements. Once all of the enslaved people were procured, Eyres was to receive a receipt from RAC authorities and take a copy with him to Jamaica.

Once on the way to Jamaica, Eyres was to make a list of everyone on board, including the enslaved people, along with descriptions of them. If someone was to die on the crossing, he was to "note the numbers at the close of each muster distinguishing their ages and sexes."[273] He was also instructed to not throw any dead overboard without the knowledge of the chief mate and surgeon. Eyres also had to create a certificate of death that included the date and time of death, as well as swear an oath. If any enslaved person died on the voyage, and they were not documented in this fashion, Eyres was warned that he would not get paid. Eyres was instructed "to take particular care that the tobacco beef and spirits laid in for the negroes be expended amongst them and not wasted or embezzled by your men which waste and embezelments has sometimes occasioned great

[272] Ibid., ff. 12.

[273] Ibid.

mortality."[274] In addition, Eyres was instructed to wash the Russell's deck frequently with vinegar, and to "divert" his enslaved captives with "musick and play as much as you can."[275] Finally, Eyres was warned to not mix drinking water with salt water and to give a written account of what works and what does not work in terms of "what may conduce most to their preservation."[276] While in Jamaica, Eyres was to be compensated four enslaved people for every 104 people that survived the middle passage and made it to Jamaica.

Upon their arrival to Jamaica, captains such as Eyres would transfer custody of the enslaved people to SSC agents on the island. Enslaved people would then go through a "refreshment" period that lasted weeks but no longer than 30 days. During this period, SSC agents were charged with improving the physical condition of enslaved people, in order to make them more attractive for purchase in Spanish America. These agents were instructed to feed enslaved people twice a day with meals that included beef, fish, rice, bread, yams, fruit, rum and tobacco. Once enslaved people were considered ready for their next voyage, they were placed on one of the many ships that the SSC contracted to send their human cargo to Spanish American ports, such as Coro and Caracas. The contractors were usually local owners of small vessels who were usually paid a fixed sum per head sold in Spanish America. The ship-owner or captain manned the ship and travelled to the destinations, but the SSC provided the voyage's provisions. Some enslaved people, perhaps as many as a quarter before 1730, were purchased by the SSC

[274] Ibid., 14.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Ibid.

from other traders in Jamaica.[277] About 13% of enslaved people died on SSC trips such as these from 1720-1725.[278]

Sometimes, however, the SSC would contract captains in London to sail directly to Jamaica to provide enslaved people to markets in Spanish America. One such case occurred with Captain James Dufay on the SSC's sloop The Queen of Spain.[279] Dufay was tasked with sailing to Jamaica to work in the service of the company's representatives there. He was to be paid 8 pounds a month, plus the 10 pounds he was given ahead of time for provisions. He was to stay in Jamaica to follow directions of the factors there and take enslaved people to any point in Spanish America where he was requested to go. He was to receive bills of health before leaving Jamaica, and he was to receive another one after departing every Spanish American factory he visited to unload his human cargo. As was the case with Eyres, Dufay was instructed to keep the sloop clean and to register any enslaved people who died during his travels.[280]

Planters in Spanish America were notoriously picky about the enslaved people they purchased. Factors in Caracas pressed the SSC to provide them with African-born enslaved people, and the SSC responded by trying to ensure that the enslaved people provided to Caracas were dark-skinned. In edition, enslaved women were to be deemed sexually attractive and "as near as possible be all virgins."[281] In 1736, the Caracas factor requested that the enslaved people he receive be "the finest deep black" and "without cuts

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[277] Palmer, 62.

[278] Ibid., 53.

[279] "Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Capt. James Dufay," MS 255567, The British Library, London, The United Kingdom.

[280] Ibid., ff. 52-54.

[281] Palmer, 75.

in their faces nor filed teeth."[282] Three years later, an agent in Caracas requested that enslaved men be no older than 25, and be preferably between 20 and 24 years old, while women be from 18 to 20 and no older than 22.[283]

In Coro, it seems that the "license trade," in which an entrepreneurial slaver would purchase a license to carry enslaved people to Spanish America from the SSC, provided the majority of enslaved people to the region. The licensed traders dominated the trade in enslaved people to the more peripheral regions of the empire, such as Coro. This was certainly the case before 1735, when Caracas was upgraded to a factory due to years of increasing demand.[284]

It is also likely that many enslaved people who ended up in Coro were purchased in Curaçao by the SSC. The company is known to have purchased a small percentage of enslaved people from Dutch traders in St. Eustatius and Curaçao, and this was particularly the case for Caracas.[285] In 1730, the SSC's factors in Caracas mention that a Mr. Murray Crymble, was the "agent and attorney for Curaçao and Coro for some years."[286] This letter is the only form of documentation that is currently available, which references *asiento* operations in Coro. It indicates that the function of the *asiento* in Coro was intimately tied to Curaçao, so much so that the Caracas factors of the SSC assigned an agent to cover the two places together.

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[282] Ibid., 62-3.

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid., 71-9.

[285] Ibid., 59.

[286] "Copy of a letter wrote by Cobitt and Berrie Factors at Caracas," SP 36/18/187, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, ff. 190.

Spanish planters were considered to be unhappy with the prices provided by the SSC, and as a result, many turned to contrabandists. In Coro, it's likely that this was the case, particularly with Curaçao so nearby. Contrabandists did not have the same overhead costs as the SSC, so they could sell enslaved people to planters for 120 pesos or less, while the company sold enslaved people for between 200 and 300 pesos. In response to the problem of contraband, the SSC tried to lower prices of enslaved people, to 200 pesos, in 1734 Cuba for example. The SSC even allowed for "indultos," which were essentially fines doled out against interlopers whose illegally traded human commodities were declared legal after payment. Between 1716-19, 91 enslaved people were brought into Caracas via this method. [287]

Payments by Spanish planters for enslaved people were always a problem for the SSC everywhere, and this was also true of Venezuela. In 1736, Caracas's Treasurer, Don Joseph de Armas, informed the Commander General of the Province of Venezuela that the SSC was becoming less willing to accept payment for enslaved people in cacao.[288] Armas claimed that in 1733, they traded about 6,000 *fanegas* of cacao to the SSC, but that this number dropped in half the following year, and in 1735, it had reached a low of 1,000 *fanegas*.[289] The SSC would respond to this issue in a way that favored the planters and Venezuela's authorities. In 1736, the SSC declared that all of the enslaved people

[287] Palmer, 86.

[288] "Certficacíon numero 3," Caracas 925, AGI.

[289] Ibid.

they sent to Venezuela would be exchanged for "fruits of the country," or agricultural products, such as cacao.[290]

Much of the cacao produced in Coro ended up in London during this period, and some wound up being sipped by the company's stockholders as they bought and sold shares in the SSC. London's Stock Exchange was organized in coffee shops scattered around a part of town known as Exchange Alley. At these houses, traders would sip chocolate, tea, and coffee as they bought and sold shares in a handful of publicly owned companies, one of the most prominent of which was the SSC. Buyers and sellers could operate at the coffee houses by themselves, or they could hire a broker who was paid a .5% commission.[291] By the time of the 1720 bubble, London's newspapers were publishing stock quotations, and these papers would circulate around the Alley's coffee shops.[292]

Although some of the SSC's proponents may have anticipated the 1720 Bubble with glee, they probably did not foresee it's bursting that same year, especially not when the company was first proposed. On March 7, 1711, Member of Parliament Robert Harley spoke in front of his London colleagues to present a plan on how to restructure the government's debt, which had become a concern for some time. England had begun accruing debt in 1693 once Parliament ruled to guarantee all debt that had thereto been personal debt of the King.[293] Harley proposed that part of the government debt be

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[290] Palmer, 127.

[291] Richard Dale, *The First Crash: Lessons from the South Sea Bubble* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 26.

[292] Ibid., 16.

[293] John Carswell, *The South Sea Bubble* (Dover, N.H.: Alan Sutton, 1993), 20.

restructured through the formation of a joint-stock company that would trade in the South Seas. The plan envisioned government bonds being converted to stock in the new company, which could potentially save the government millions of pounds in interest payments, make the country more fiscally stable, and hence, allow it to acquire more debt. Harley was a Tory and his plan received much ridicule because it ruffled the feathers of the entrenched Whig interests of the East India Company and the Bank of England. Harley's proposal was so ill received by the Whigs that he even was stabbed right after his speech. But Harley would eventually survive his wounds and spearhead the company's formation once he regained his health less than two months later.[294]

Many interests converged to make the South Sea Company happen. First and foremost, were those interests of the Kingdom of Great Britain. With the expansion of Atlantic warfare in the seventeenth century, increased capital investments were needed for growing militaries and their ships, armor, and weapons.[295] The strength of a state's finances was essential to their ability to fight wars. War overseas was taking up over 1/3 of government expenditures in 1710, and these could only be met if the state was able to continue borrowing. Another third of state revenues were being used to make interest payments, and this figure was projected to rise to 50% by 1714-17.[296] A collapse in credit issued in Europe following the great frost of 1709, made matters more difficult, and this certainly influenced the timing of Harley's proposal.[297]

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[294] John G. Sperling, *The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographical Finding List* (Boston: Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, 1962), 7.

[295] Paul, 24-35.

[296] Dale, 41.

[297] Sperling, 3.

At the time of the South Sea's founding, the English government held 9.47 million pounds in interest arrears.[298] These bonds were not highly valued, as they were being traded at 32 percent on the stock market.[299] Therefore, the state's amount of short-term debt was damaging its credit standing and making it more expensive for the government to borrow.[300] Harley's plan, then, was to convert the government's floating debt into stock for a company that held a monopoly on trade to Spain's American colonies. In addition, the government would set up an annual tax fund of 558,678 pounds, which would be transferred to the SSC. With this money, the SSC could disperse annual dividends to their shareholders.[301] The holders of government bonds were forced to convert their assets into SSC stock, but as will be seen shortly, they were happy to do so.[302]

Spanish American markets were massive, and coveted by all European powers for this reason. These markets were closed off to legal commerce, however, except for times of need during wartime, and more significantly, except for the *asiento*. Providing enslaved people to Spanish America held the potential for being a profitable exercise, and just as importantly, it gave the holding power the ability to dominate their rivals in the Atlantic. With the *asiento* in hand, states could stake their claim to the largest consumer market in the Americas while effectively closing these markets off to their rivals. In addition, it gave states the legal right to confiscate contrabandists' goods in the Americas.

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[298] Ibid.

[299] Dale, 41.

[300] Ibid., 42.

[301] Sperling, 1.

[302] Carswell, 45.

Although traffic in goods other than enslaved people was usually banned in *asiento* contracts, *asiento* holders took advantage of Spanish colonists' desires for European products, which could be provided more cheaply via illegal trade, under cover of *asiento* trade. It is safe to assume that many, if not most, slaving vessels carried a host of contraband goods, although exact amounts are impossible to know for sure, due to their dubious legality.

It is important to note here that although the SSC did not hold the *asiento* when the company was approved by Parliament, it was assumed to be coming as a result of the anticipated peace with France during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14). Sure enough, five months after the SSC scheme was approved by Parliament, France and England came to a secret agreement that saw France grant England the *asiento* of their Spanish allies. This agreement would be officially ratified two years later.[303]

It was not just the British state that hoped to benefit from the establishment of the SSC, as another, just as influential band led to the company's erection. This group was comprised of the speculators John Blunt, George Caswall, Jacob Sawbridge and Elias Turner. The latter three men were partners in the Sword Blade Company, which received a royal charter in 1691 to manufacture French-style sword blades, which were grooved rather than the traditional English swords, which were flat.[304] Blunt took control of the company in 1700, and along with Caswall, Sawbridge, Turner, and others began to utilize

[303] Sperling, 10.

[304] Dale, 43.

the company as a front to dip into public finance operations, which was legally monopolized by the Bank of England.[305]

The Sword Blade Company and the Bank of England would go to war over the right to serve as the Kingdom's bank. The drama began when lands confiscated by Irish Jacobites were put up for auction by the British government in the aftermath of the Williamite War in Ireland. The Sword Blade Company was one of the largest purchasers of Irish land, and by the fall of 1702, they had purchased 200,000 pounds worth. To pay for this land, the Sword Blade Company used its privilege to issue stock, which was not purchased with cash but exchanged for Army Debentures, or government debt. The debentures stood at 85% on the market, and were converted at 100%. Through these manipulations, the government was able to make a substantial profit, which they used to cancel 200,000 pounds of debt.[306] It is likely, although not confirmed, that the Sword Blade directors held Army debentures themselves, and thus made a handsome profit off of their sale.[307]

After this charade was concluded, the Sword Blade Company began issuing mortgages and providing other financial services with the land they now owned, which precipitated conflict with the Bank of England. Legal action was taken against the Sword Blade Company in 1707, when the Bank had its charter prolonged another 25 years. In addition, the Bank's new charter included language aimed at the Sword Blade Company

[305] Sperling, 5.

[306] Carswell, 30.

[307] Ibid.

and their ability to extend credit, as a conglomerate of more than six individuals.[308] By the following year, the Sword Blade Company was nearly bankrupt. Loyal heirs to the Jacobites who had their land confiscated were claiming legal ownership to the land in question, and the Sword Blade Company shares had fallen to 51%.[309] Only a new venture could save the company, as well as the fortunes of Blunt, Caswall, Sawbridge, and Turner.

This new venture came in the form of the SSC. It is nearly certain that months before Harley proposed the idea of an SSC, Blunt and Caswall had been in contact with him, encouraging the idea.[310] What is known for sure is that Blunt was appointed by Harley to draft the SSC's charter, and that Blunt, his brother, Caswall, and Sawbridge would be named to the SSC's directorate.[311] In addition, the Sword Blade Company became the SSC's official bank.[312] The Sword Blade Company's history of speculation, insider trading, and government debt conversion would weave itself into the very nature of the SSC venture, lead to the 1720 bubble and its bursting, and contribute to the downfall of the SSC.

Political interests also contributed to the formation of the SSC and the makeup of its directors and governors. Harley, a Tory, hoped to establish a financial interest for his political party, one that could rival the Whig-dominated institutions of the Bank of England and the East India Company. The East India Company's directorate included 19

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[308] Ibid., 31-2.

[309] Ibid., 32.

[310] Carswell, 35; Dale, 46.

[311] Sperling, 6.

[312] Ibid.; Paul, 47.

Whigs, just four Tories, and one director who was elected by both political parties. The Whigs chose all 24 directors of The Bank of England.[313] Harley managed to control the appointment of the SSC's governors and directors, the vast majority of whom were Tory merchants and politicians.[314] In addition, the SSC's charter stipulated that no governor or director of the Bank of England or the East India Company could serve a similar position for the SSC.[315]

Governors and directors of the SSC were also investors, which motivated them to participate in the company. Governors were required to hold 5,000 pounds of stock, and directors were to hold 3,000 pounds. In addition, governors received 500 pounds a year as salary, sub-governors received 300 pounds, deputy-governors earned 250 pounds and directors received 150 pounds. Although illegal, SSC directors were known to carry on personal trade with the SSC, and had inside information on Atlantic market conditions. Finally, directors were motivated by the ability to have inside information on the company for the purposes of speculation.[316]

As mentioned above, although stockholders were probably forced to convert their government bonds into SSC stock, they were happy to do so. Government bonds were not transferable or inheritable, but stock was. Therefore, a creditor or investor could buy and sell stock shares at her or his discretion, which was not possible in the case of government debt.[317] But joint-stock companies were few, and investors took advantage of

[313] Sperling, 7.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid., 17.

[316] Ibid., 17.

[317] Paul, 32-3.

the opportunity to purchase stock in these companies when they could. In addition, the SSC's access to yearly payments by the British government made the investment a safe one, and one that guaranteed an annual dividend. In addition, converting their individual bonds into stock for a big company gave stockholders more leverage to collect their debts from the government.[318]

Stockholders were also motivated by the potential for profit, which was laid out in the initial plans of the SSC. Although concrete details were not given as to how trade would be completed in Spain's American colonies, the public was led to believe that the SSC would have "security ports" throughout the region, which would allow them to conduct trade.[319] The idea was also floated around that the SSC would conquer portions of Spanish American territory, and that this could lead to limitless possibilities for profit with a company that held a monopoly on commerce for the region.[320] The fact that the Royal Navy protected SSC ships also offered security to their investments.[321]

The Spanish Crown was also an interested party in the formation of the SSC because their many colonies relied on the labor of enslaved African people, and these could only be provided to the colonies through a contract with a foreign merchant or government. The SSC was formed, after all, when England had established itself as the major military power in the Atlantic. The fact that the Royal Navy protected SSC shipments was, again, a form of security for the Spanish Crown. In addition, the RAC—who provided many of the enslaved people that were purchased by the SSC—were the

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[318] Ibid., 46.

[319] Sperling, 11.

[320] Sperling, 9; Paul, 6.

[321] Paul, 7.

most efficient traders in enslaved people in the Atlantic; their voyages were faster and they were capable of trading more enslaved people, per tonnage, than any of their competitors.[322] From the standpoint of the Spanish Crown, then, the agreement with the SSC must have been considered a success, despite the fact that the company fell about 20,000 bodies short of providing the 95,000 enslaved people to Spain's colonies during its 25 years of activity.

Trade, however, had ceased being the principle concern of the SSC's directors early into the life of the company, if it had ever been the principle concern at all. Throughout the period between the commencement of trade activities and the 1720 bubble, the SSC continued to convert government debt into stock shares, and this was where the vast majority of the company's capital resided. The 1720 bubble, then, was the culmination of a series of speculative moves made by the SSC, which would change the character of the company.

In 1719, Parliament agreed to a scheme to convert lottery annuities into SSC stock, which would bring instant profits to the government, annuitants, and the SSC itself. 94,330 pounds of lottery annuities were converted to SSC stock as a result, and this was capitalized at 1,084,790 pounds, in accordance with their current market price of 11.5 years purchase. In addition to this sum, 117,912 pounds of stock were issued as arrears of interest, and the government was loaned 544,142 pounds. As a result of these maneuvers, the SSC's nominal capital was increased by 1,746,844 over night, reaching a total of 11,746,844 pounds. The holders of the lottery annuities made a profit of 117,912 pounds after converting their holdings. The SSC made a profit of 76,522 pounds after

[322] Ibid., 42.

they sold 520,000 pounds of stock at 114%, which netted them a profit of 48,658 pounds cash and 27,522 pounds worth of stock.[323]

Later that year, the King of Great Britain gave a speech that would precipitate the 1720 bubble and it's bursting. The King urged members of the House of Commons to come up with a plan to reorganize all of the country's debt. That month, Blunt proposed a scheme in which the SSC would convert all of the country's existing debt into SSC shares. The Bank of England countered this offer, before the SSC provided a counter offer and won Parliament's approval to restructure as much as 30,981,712 worth of government debt, all debt held by the country, which was not owned by the Bank of England or the East India Company.[324] The company would pay 4,156,305 pounds for the privilege of converting the redeemable debt and they agreed to pay a percentage for the irredeemable debt, which could have fetched a total of 3.4 million pounds. Therefore, the SSC agreed to pay the government as much as 7.5 million pounds for the privilege to convert state bonds into SSC stock. This scheme was designed to have the effect of saving the government 422,499 pounds in annual interest payments until 1727, and 542,499 in the years following.[325]

But the SSC did not have 7.5 million pounds. In order to raise this money, then, they would have to inflate the price of their stock. As was the case during the 1719 debt swap, the SSC could only issue new shares for the same amount of government debt that they converted. However, if the prices of the shares were high enough over their nominal value, then they would not have to convert all of the new shares they acquired. If they

[323] Sperling, 26.

[324] Sperling, 27-8.

[325] Ibid.

were able to convert the 24 million pounds of government debt, for example, and sell the shares at twice the price of their nominal value, then they would have 12 million pounds of surplus stock with which they could sell at the prevailing rates, pay the government what they owed them, and keep the rest as profits.

This is, in effect, what happened. In order to attract investors to the scheme, which was not a mandatory transfer, the SSC agreed to make shareholders eligible for loans from the company, and issued favorable terms, such as payments for shares in installments. By the time the 1720 SSC bill passed, the price per share had risen from 130 when the bill was first introduced, to 300 when the first stocks were sold three months later. By this time, the vast majority of the company's capital was held in government debt, and its cash flow was mostly the result of the sale of shares, rather than from the Atlantic trade. Therefore, when the SSC lent money to subscribers, they were lending them their own money, and when they issued dividends, they were doing the same. But the public was unaware and stock prices went out of control, raising from 302 on April 1, 1720, ballooning to 610 on June 1 of that year, and reaching a high of 950 the following month. Stock prices would then steadily decline through the next couple of months before they began their sharp decline in October, reaching the price of 290. This total fell to 192 two months later, and to 155 two weeks after that.[326]

By this time, the vast majority of shareholders had purchased their stocks at prices well above their nominal value or their prevailing market price. Fortunes were lost, and the country's political and economic elites were incensed at the company. An investigation into the SSC and the 1720 bubble brought down a host of MP's charged

[326] Ibid., 31.

with taking bribes, and brought down the company's directors who were forced to pay huge fines to the government.

The largest task of Parliament, however, was to ensure that the British state was not harmed during these proceedings.[327] In late December, in the aftermath of the bubble's bursting, Parliament passed a resolution stating that the SSC debt conversions were final, and that no changes would be made to return the state's burden to the levels at which it existed before the swaps commenced in April. Parliament then acted to soften the blow to investors and to rescue the SSC itself. Parliament acted to cancel over 7/8ths of the company's debt to the government, leaving this total at 1 million pounds. The SSC would be obliged to pay the government 2 million pounds in cash, plus interest to the government by the summer of 1722. Still burdened with over 7 million pounds of debt, which was owed to the public, Parliament allowed the company to sell part of the annuity the government was contractually required to provide them every year. This move effectively restored the SSC's credit, and they were able to resume the sale of shares pegged to the nearly 17 million pounds of capital it still held in government bonds.[328]

After the bubble burst, and the SSC's financial health was restored, the trade with the Americas, with Venezuela, and with Coro, changed little. The RAC continued to supply a large amount of enslaved people to the Americas on the behalf of the SSC, but these shipments halted in 1724, when the SSC began purchasing all enslaved people from private traders at Jamaica and Barbados.[329] The *asiento* contract with the SSC was terminated five years early with the outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear, which pitted

[327] Ibid., 34.

[328] Ibid., 44-7.

[329] Ibid., 39.

Spain against England in a tit for tat of ship confiscations in the Americas. The Spanish Crown bought out the final years of the contract for 100,000 pounds.[330] Thereafter, the SSC continued its work managing Great Britain's debt, serving as an intermediary for interest payments between the government and SSC stockholders until the company was disbanded in 1855.[331]

All in all, the SSC was responsible for ruining the lives of nearly 75,000 people and responsible for the deaths of thousands more, structuring the plantation economy of Coro in the process. The SSC performed these tasks as an instrument designed to further the interests of merchant and financial elites, but most importantly, those of the British state. Erected in order to cancel the country's spiraling debt, the SSC was able to accomplish this while allowing the country to further its military engagements and expand its reach into the Atlantic and its markets. The bubble fiasco, aimed at enlarging the pockets of the company's directors and its key shareholders, resulted in the conversion of most of Great Britain's debt, giving the country the ability to continue its campaign of dispossession of non-European peoples. Great Britain's ability to continue its expansion would not have been possible without the SSC and the ancestors of Coro's rebels.

The Real Compañía Guipuzcoana

Given that they held a monopoly on the Venezuelan market, the Real Compañía Guizpocoana (RCG), also known as the Caracas Company, was the company that, on

[330] Paul, 110-11.

[331] Sperling, 48-9.

paper, most directly shaped the conditions that spurred the 1795 insurrection in Coro. The RCG was founded in 1728 through a partnership between the Spanish Crown and Basque merchants who were engaged in the trade of Venezuelan cacao. The company was granted a monopoly on Venezuelan trade soon after its establishment, and its activities stimulated plantation production in Coro and provided many of the region's consumer goods. But the company also engaged in a number of other enterprises, including the slave trade. Taken together, the RCG's efforts converted Venezuela from a backwater dependent on government subsidies to a Captaincy General, and one of Spain's most valuable colonies.[332]

The impetus for forming the RCG was the Crown's desire to stimulate the cacao economy of Venezuela, and to gain control of this trade, which had been encroached upon by foreign merchants. Chocolate consumption was growing throughout Europe, from the stock trading alleys of London to the homes of middling families in Madrid. In fact, it appears that its consumption grew steadily since the mid seventeenth century. In Spain, books were written on chocolate as early as 1625.[333] The vast majority of Europe's supply of cacao beans, from which chocolate was produced, came from Venezuela. Despite this fact, non-Spanish merchants, particularly the Dutch, controlled much of the Atlantic cacao trade. It was claimed that no ship had sailed directly from Spain to Venezuela from 1706-1721, and that between 1700 and 1728, only five ships had made the voyage.[334] In fact, this was a worrying trend for the Empire as a whole, as in 1705 it

[332] Ronald Dennis Hussey, *The Caracas Company, 1728-1784: A Study in the History of Spanish Monopolistic Trade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 87.

[333] Ibid., 53.

[334] Ibid., 57.

was estimated that no Spanish ship had sailed to Peru in 10 years, or to New Spain in six years. The Spanish Crown, then, was desperate to revitalize their American trade, and Venezuela was considered an untapped goldmine.[335]

The semi-autonomous Basque region of Spain was home to the Province of Guipuzcoa—a region that had been active in the cacao trade for decades before the erection of the RCG. Guipuzcoa was a sovereign state united to the Spanish Crown by a common King. The Province held its own assembly and was not required to provide men for military service. They also had some autonomy in their commercial affairs.[336] In fact, the Province had tried unsuccessfully for years to have certain duties removed from nearby ports in the interest of increasing the cacao trade, and combatting contraband. The Province of Guizpucoa, then, decided to pursue a different strategy to further their interests in the trade, and to reanimate Spain's fledgling empire. They would erect a joint-stock company, a partnership between the Province, its merchants, and the King of Spain; one that would intervene in the foreign-dominated cacao trade and promote the development of a potentially rich but underutilized colony in Venezuela.[337]

The Basque Province's representative, Felipe de Aguirre, proposed the idea to the Crown, which approved the formation of the Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas in 1728.[338] It was clear from the *asiento* offered the RCG that taking the cacao trade into the Crown's hands was the company's primary purpose. Although the document has

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[335] Ibid., 41.

[336] Vicente de Amezaga, *Hombres de la compañia guipuzcoana, Vol. II* (Bilbao: Editorial la Gran Enciclopedia Vasca), 29.

[337] Hussey, 52-60.

[338] Ibid., 60.

deteriorated, and not all of the its words can be read, the first sentence of the contract stated that the Company was erected to:

remedy the scarceness of cacao…in this Kingdom…and facilitate to the relief of the public, that without having to depend on the judgment of Foreigners that unjustly and fraudulently enjoyed this, and from whose hand the cacao was purchased, this will be managed by Spanish Traders.[339]

The 1728 contract, then, gave the RCG permission to send two ships a year to Venezuela, each equipped with 40-50 guns. These vessels could unload their merchandise at Caracas's port of La Guayra and at Puerto Cabello. The ships were given permission to sail directly from Guipuzcoan ports, but return voyages would need to stop in Cádiz to pay import duties. At first, however, the King refused to agree to a monopoly on the Venezuelan market, but this would change just two years later, when the King agreed to grant no other licenses for Venezuelan trade, and the legal monopoly was issued in 1741.[340]

Shares were initially divided between the Spanish Crown, the Province of Guipuzcoa, and Basque merchants, but it would later include elite Venezuelans as well. When first erected, the RCG was tasked with raising 1.5 million pesos by issuing 3,000 shares, valued at 500 pesos each. The King of Spain was the company's largest shareholder, with 200 shares, followed by the Guipuzcoan Province at 100 shares.[341] But the company was unable to reach their lofty goals, and was only able to raise about

[339] "Compañia de Caracas: asiento de 1728," Caracas 924, AGI: "remediar la escaséz de cacao….en estos Reynos…y facilitar al comun de España el alivio, de que sin pender de el arbitrio de Estangeros, que indebida, y fraudalentamente le desfrutaban, y por cuya mano se compraba el cacao en ella, le lograsse por la de los Comerciantes Españoles."

[340] Hussey, 73, 85.

[341] José Estornés Lasa, *La Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de navegación de Caracas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Vasca, 1948), 22; Ramón de Basterra, *Los navíos de la ilustración: Una empresa del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispanica, 1970), 49.

750,000 pesos in the five years in which actions were issued.[342] As state bodies held only 20% of the company's shares, the vast majority of shareholders were private individuals, and most were probably Spanish merchants, particularly those from the Basque country. Twenty five percent of shareholders held less than eight actions, whereas 22.73% held between 8 and 15 shares, 17.05% held between 15 and 30 shares, 10.23% held between 30 and 50 shares, 10.79% held between 50 and 100 shares, and the Crown was the only entity to hold more than 100 shares.[343]

The RCG's trade was organized through San Sebastián until 1751, when the seat of the company was moved to Madrid. From the company's hub, its five directors would manage the trade. The Crown appointed the company's first directors from a pool of shareholders that held at least ten shares. Directors earned the lofty salary of 5,000 pesos a year, and were required to meet at least once every five years at a gathering which could be attended by all stockholders. Investors holding eight or more shares had the right to vote at these meetings.[344]

The RCG's directors arranged for the purchase of commodities, their shipments to Venezuela, and their returns. At their ports in Spain, the company erected storage sheds, which were designed to house one year's worth of supplies for Venezuela.[345] Sailors were paid three months of wages before they set sail to Venezuela and three months salary

[342] Hussey, 65.

[343] Montserrat Garate Ojanguren, *La Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas* (San Sebastián: Grupo Doctor Camino, 1990), 76.

[344] Hussey, 64.

[345] Ibid., 157.

before the return voyage.[346] Between three and six ships departed and returned each year.[347] The company's vessels were given the authority to seize any ships and/or goods engaged in contraband trade, as long as they were within Venezuelan waters. These seized goods were not taxed, and 2/3^{rds} of the goods went to the RCG, while the ship's crew kept the remaining third.[348]

But the company did not confine themselves to trade, they also engaged in a number of manufacturing ventures. The first and, by far, the most successful venture was their management of the Spanish Crown's arms factory at Plasencia, which the RCG took over in 1735. The proceeds earned from the Plasencia arms factory would be deducted from the royal duties the company owed the Crown for the Venezuelan trade.[349] The RCG's intervention into the factory stimulated production from 8,000 muskets a year to 12,000.[350] Many of these arms were used to equip Venezuela's militias.[351]

The RCG also established other manufacturing bodies. They built a flourmill in Campos, liquor distilleries in Estella and Viana, and even began hiring out weavers in Valdenoceda, Rioja, and León. These enterprises were designed to lower the costs of their trade, and to stimulate domestic production in Spain, which by this time had become

[346] Ibid., 82-3.

[347] Ibid., 74.

[348] Ibid., 62.

[349] Ibid., 74.

[350] Ibid., 169.

[351] Ibid., 267.

dependent on foreign products. To compensate the company for these exercises, they cut their liquor shipping duties in half.[352]

Dividends were handed out regularly during the early life of the company but slowed once financial trouble hit the RCG. The first dividends of 20% were paid out in 1735, 1737, 1738 and twice in 1739. Two dividends were issued in 1741, the first for 26 2/3% and the second for 33 1/3%. The following dividend would take ten years to issue, and in 1751 25% was paid to shareholders. In 1752, the company voted in favor of a dividend of 100%, which would be paid through an annual payment of 5%. A special 10% dividend was announced in 1775, with half paid in 1777 and the other half the year after.[353]

The RCG's activities in Venezuela, and the Atlantic, greatly stimulated cacao production in Venezuela, and in Coro. Before the advent of the RCG, it was reported that Coro only produced 280 *fanegas* of cacao a year, and that this was consumed internally.[354] Although exact figures on cacao production in Coro during this period are impossible to calculate at this time, it is safe to assume that this production expanded rapidly, as it did throughout Venezuela. In 1749, the RCG reported that they had exported slightly over 869,247 *fanegas* of cacao from Venezuela in the 17 years in which it had operated. This figure was almost 25% higher than the 643,215 *fanegas* of cacao that Venezuela had exported in the previous thirty years. The company also claimed that year that the productivity of cacao harvests more than doubled between the two periods, from

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[352] Ibid., 169.

[353] Ibid., 321.

[354] Pedro José Olavarriaga, *Instrucción general y particular del estado presente de la Provincia de Venezuela en los años 1720 y 1721* (Caracas: Collección Fuentes para la Historia Colonial de Venezuela, 1965), 289.

an average of 60 to 130 *fanegas*.[355] The following years saw cacao production expand further. From 1749-1764, Caracas exported over 880,000 *fanegas* of cacao; most cacao—over 500,000 *fanegas* during these years were shipped to Spain, but 300,000 *fanegas* were shipped to Vera Cruz, 75,000 *fanegas* for the Canary Islands, and 28,000 *fanegas* to Spanish islands in the Caribbean.[356] These export numbers would eventually drop, however, largely because of competition from Guayaquil. In 1777, the company reported that they were exporting just 18,000 *fanegas* of cocoa to Vera Cruz every year, and that same year, the RCG exported a paltry 9,691 *fanegas* of cacao to Spain.[357]

Payment for cacao was always a tensional situation for both the RCG and for planters. In 1749, the cacao planter and crown bureaucrat Juan Francisco de León led an insurrection against the RCG, denouncing the company's abusive and corrupt practices. Part of the issue was the amount that the company paid for cacao, something that left planters with little choice because of the RCG's successful battles against contrabandists from Curaçao. After the rebellion, the RCG raised the price of cacao to 14 pesos per *fanega*. This required, however, that the cacao be traded for the company's goods of the same value.[358] In addition, the King required that the company purchase all cacao that colonists presented them, and that the company also reduce the prices of the manufactured goods that they sold and traded to colonists.[359]

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[355] "Certificación del producto de los derechos reales y novenos," Caracas 924, AGI.

[356] Hussey, 233-4.

[357] Ibid., 270, 316.

[358] Ibid., 136.

[359] Ibid., 165-7.

But tension continued. In 1760, more than 10 years after the de León rebellion, colonists complained about the company's inability to pay for cacao in silver coin, rather than merchandise. They also complained that the RCG's merchandise was still too expensive. The company reacted by further slashing the prices of textiles, tools, and oils. They also increased the purchasing price of cacao to 14 pesos per *fanega* (without requiring that the payment be in company goods), and expressed that they had been trying their best to pay planters in specie, but found it difficult to do so. But the company claimed that they had actually made great strides in providing Venezuela with specie, stating that from 1750 to 58, they had introduced 2,425,000 silver pesos into Venezuela from Veracruz or an average of 303,125 pesos a year.[360] This amount was significantly more than the annual average of 253, 025 pesos of coin that they imported from 1731-48, and even more than the 66,404 pesos a year that were imported into Venezuela from 1701-30, before the RCG began operations.[361]

As mentioned above, although RCG ships would sail directly from Guipuzcoa to Venezuela, the return voyages had to come through Cádiz. While at Cádiz, the company's ships were not required to unload, but a government representative would board the ship to calculate the duties, which were required to be paid. Cacao sales were done in public auctions twice a year, in March-April, and September-October.[362] After the company's midcentury reforms, however, sales were reduced to once a year in September-October because merchants had trouble unloading their cacao between

[360] Ibid., 186.

[361] "Certificación del producto."

[362] Hussey, 157.

purchasing periods during the previous arrangement.[363] These reforms also saw the company expand its mercantile activities beyond Cádiz, Madrid, and San Sebastian, giving them the permission to supply cacao to Aragón, Asturias, the Basque region, Castille, Galicia, and Navarre. They also were given warehouses at these ports for where they could store cacao, which was non-perishable, and other goods. It appears, however, that sales to merchants in the new markets was forbidden, and that the company could only sell cacao to individuals for their own consumption and to communities and their representatives.[364] Muleteers, contracted by the provinces themselves, would then purchase the cacao at the port and transport them inland, presumably to be purchased by retailers at the towns' respective markets.[365]

But the Spanish market only consumed about half of the cacao they imported. Spain imported about 80,000 *fanegas* of cacao—60,000 of which came from Venezuela—but only consumed 40,000 a year. The rest was exported to foreign markets. This cacao was exported from either Cádiz or San Sebastián.

But because Coro's chief agricultural commodities were sugar and livestock, the RCG mostly shaped the region indirectly, through the promotion of their production, propelled by the company's principal interest in cacao. After the 1749 rebellion, the Company issued a statement defending their existence and highlighting the ways in which they had boosted Venezuela's economy. Besides the increase in cacao production, which had more than doubled under their watch, they claimed that sugar production had increased dramatically all over the Province, and that the number of livestock had tripled

[363] Ibid.

[364] Ibid., 158.

[365] Ibid., 160.

since the company's founding.[366] The RCG also claimed responsibility for the provision of enslaved people to Venezuela, which nearly doubled since 1715-30.[367] Although the vast majority of Venezuelan exports were cacao, the company did trade in tobacco and in hides, both produced in Coro, particularly the latter. From 1749-64, for example, the RCG exported 88,000 arrobas of tobacco and over 177,000 hides to Spain from the Province of Venezuela.[368]

The RCG also shaped Coro through its struggle against contraband, particularly coming to and from Curaçao. In fact, one of the reasons why the company as erected in the first place was to gain claims to the growing Venezuelan market, which was largely lost after the WIC seized Curaçao in 1634.[369] In fact, the Dutch often dominated the cacao trade, even though Spain was perhaps the largest consumer market for the product, and despite the fact that their colony, Venezuela, was its chief supplier.[370] In the thirty years before the RCG was founded, Dutch contrabandists usurped a substantial portion of Venezuelan cacao. From 1701-1729, the Dutch were responsible for shipping most Venezuelan cacao during six of those years, averaging 43.13% of cacao shipments during the entire period.[371]

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366 "Manifiesto, que con incontestables hechos prueba los grandes beneficios, que ha producido el establecimiento de la Real Compañía Guipuzcoana de Caracas," Caracas 924, AGI, ff. 13-14.

367 "Certificación del producto."

368 Hussey, 234.

369 Ibid., 52.

370 Ibid., 53.

371 Calculated using the figures provided in: Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden, KITLV Press, 1998), 228-9.

For many years, the RCG was successful in its battle against contraband. It was able to cut back on contraband through a huge military presence both at sea and on the ground. In 1760, the company had 15 ships at its disposal, 10 of which patrolled the Venezuelan coast at any given time, loaded with 518 men, 92 cannons and 86 guns.[372] The RCG would use these means to confiscate goods being trafficked by contrabandists. Historian Wim Klooster argues that there was a pattern to these confiscations: essentially, one or two RCG vessels would approach the contrabandist's vessel and open fire, to which the contrabandists would return fire as they retreated to land or escaped their boat via a canoe. RCG soldiers would then take possession of the contraband goods and return them to shore.[373] In 1760, the RCG had 12 land patrols of 10-12 men each that would frequent contraband hotbeds.[374] Methods such as these saw a great deal of success. During the first ten years of the company's operations, from 1730-40, the Dutch share in Venezuelan cacao declined sharply to an average of 10.18%.[375] Although this figure would climb to an average of 30.23% from 1741-1755, this was still significantly lower than previous Dutch shares in the trade.[376]

As these figures show, the RCG's efforts reduced contraband trade, significantly during certain periods, but it never fully disappeared. In 1779, Dutch traveller to Curaçao, J.H. Hering, wrote that trade to Venezuela from the island was extremely dangerous because of Spanish coast guards. He added that only small shipments could be carried to

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[372] Ibid., 148.

[373] Ibid., 149.

[374] Hussey, 233.

[375] Calculated from Klooster, 228-9. The year 1733 is missing from Klooster's figures.

[376] Ibid. Post 1755 records for cacao exports are currently unavailable.

Venezuela, and legally free black sailors conducted most of this commerce, insinuating that the trade was conducted piecemeal. Hering added that Spaniards would also go to Curaçao where they could "get a pretty good price for their merchandise."[377] Hering was right. In 1757, the company reported that Dutch merchants could sell their manufactures 35% cheaper than could the RCG, and that they could always undercut the prices that the latter had established. This was because of the high overhead costs that the RCG was responsible for.[378] In addition, Dutch traders would purchase cacao for two to four times higher than the RCG did. When the company would purchase cacao for 8-12 pesos a *fanega*, Dutch merchants from Curaçao would pay 24-26 pesos if the cacao was purchased in Venezuela, and 30-32 pesos per *fanega* if Venezuelan merchants made the trip to Curaçao.[379] Although extensive records are not available at this time, the RCG claimed that contraband had picked up extensively after 1770. Between 1769-1771, based on information they gathered from an agent in Amsterdam, the RCG claimed that 34 ships left Curaçao for the Captaincy General of Venezuela, carrying over 194,500 pesos worth of goods and returning with over 229,275 pesos in coin, 16,196 *fanegas* of cacao, and 144,855 hides.[380]

The RCG also shaped Coro through their forays into the slave trade after receiving a contract to import 2,000 enslaved people in 1755. The company argued that Venezuela had been deprived of enslaved people since the SSC ceased operations in

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[377] J.H. Hering, Beschrijving van het eiland Curaçao (Amsterdam: S. Emmering, 1969), 59: "vry goeden prys voor hunne Koopwaaren maken."

[378] Hussey, 181.

[379] Ibid., 273.

[380] Ibid., 249.

1739, estimating that only 60 enslaved people were legally imported into Venezuela from 1739-1755.[381] It appears, however, that the RCG did not come close to securing this first contract, as they imported just 310 enslaved people, after having purchased them in Curaçao for 45,378 pesos. Before they were sold in Venezuela, however, 13 of these people were born and 28 died, so a total of 295 people ended up being sold in Venezuela for 62,320 pesos.[382] Ten years later, the RCG would receive another *asiento* to supply The Captaincy General with 2,000 enslaved people. They would purchase the enslaved people through a factor stationed at Puerto Rico who would receive them. The RCG contracted two outfits to bring enslaved people to Puerto Rico. They contracted the Weyland Brothers, presumably an English slaving company, and a private French slaver, to bring between 1,000 and 1,100 enslaved people to Puerto Rico. By 1769, the RCG had imported 1,013 people with this second contract, and sold them all in Venezuela.[383]

The RCG may have been the most profitable of three companies profiled here, but its profits vacillated throughout its existence. The first ships sent by the company produced a loss of about 800,000 pesos, and the company blamed locals and their preference for contraband trade for its losses. The RCG had estimated that their first three ships would bring in 80,000 *fanegas* of cacao, but they brought only 27,797 *fanegas*.[384] This trend continued, and in 1747 in was recorded that the RCG had provided Spain with only a little more than half of the approximately 16,000 *fanegas* of cacao imported.[385]

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[381] Ibid., 172.

[382] Ibid.

[383] Ibid., 239-42.

[384] Ibid., 69-70.

[385] Ibid., 81.

From 1752-53, the RCG claimed a deficit of 350,000 pesos.[386] By 1763, however, fortunes had turned for the company, and after being granted concessions by the Crown, particularly allowing the RCG to increase the price of cacao by 6 pesos per *fanega*, the RCG reported assets that surpassed liabilities by over 1.7 million pesos, although 44% of these assets were classified as "collectible debts."[387] Three years later, this surplus reached over 2 million pesos.[388] It appears, however, that these figures may have been misleading, because it was determined that the Venezuela factors for the RCG were owed just under 1.5 million pesos in 1769. This number climbed to over 2.4 million pesos two years later.[389] Nevertheless, in 1774, the RCG recorded a surplus of nearly 1.6 million pesos.[390]

In 1777, the RCG lost its monopoly privileges after years of contestation by local elites in Venezuela gave through, along with the burgeoning ideals of liberalized trade. By this time, the company's surplus had climbed to 1.8 million pesos. After war broke out in 1779, however, the company's fortunes declined, and by 1781, their surplus had fell to 1.17 million pesos. By 1783, this surplus further declined by half, reaching 559,096 pesos. Two years later, it was announced that the RCG would be liquidated, and that a new joint stock company, The Philippine Company, would be erected in its place. The Philippine Company would continue to provide Venezuela with goods, 2,000 tons a year, in fact, and it was granted a twenty-five year monopoly on trade to The Philippines.

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[386] Ibid., 181-2.

[387] Calculations made from data Provided by Hussey, 191-4.

[388] Ibid., 236.

[389] Ibid., 250.

[390] Ibid., 257.

Although the RCG was liquidated, stockholders were encouraged to transfer their holdings to the new company, and most probably did. The period of free trade was enacted in 1780 in Venezuela, and this practice began in Coro in 1783.[391]

Because of the RCG's efforts, in tandem with the WIC and the SSC, Venezuela went from a peripheral and overlooked slab of land in Spain's vast empire, a region dependent on subsidies for survival, to a Captaincy General producing a surplus.[392] The RCG greatly increased the Province's production of cacao, struck blows against the WIC and their contraband, stimulated the trade in enslaved people, and practiced the abominable commerce itself. These practices greatly shaped Coro's culture and its political economy, while stimulating production on its sugar plantations and haciendas. It was these latter effects, which spurred the 1795 rebellion in Coro.

Conclusion

Two days after Jacot submitted a letter denouncing him as a potential participant in the insurrection, Ramírez Valderraín began testifying before the court in Caracas. He was presumably sent from Coro to Caracas for this reason, and his testimony lasted seven days. Ramírez Valderraín was first asked if he had any suspicions of a coming rebellion, to which he flatly answered "no."[393] The next five questions he faced all concerned the dances and seditious songs that Jacot had reported just days before.

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391 Ibid., 273-93.

392 Ibid., 87.

393 "Sublevacion de los negros de Coro, pieza 3," 1795, Criminales, Letra C, Archivo General de la Nacion, Caracas, ff..86.

Ramírez Valderraín steadfastly claimed that there were no unusual songs or dances before the rebellion, but he later contradicted himself. When asked if anyone had told him that there were "abusive" songs sung before the rebellion, which hinted at its coming, Ramírez Valderraín stated that no one said anything "before verifying the uprising."[394] He added:

that the black Luangos (sic.) or [black people] from Curaçao that inhabit the City's neighborhood of Guinea have always been accustomed to have a dance out in the open, on the eve of a holiday once they retire from their labors in the countryside, turning on their candles if there is no moon, but always asking for a license from the Justicia Mayores, who put up guards when it seems appropriate, and even attending [the dance] in order to avoid whatever disorder because there is no other amusements in that city, people from all classes attend, until the middle of the night, the principal men and women of the town: that the blacks are accustomed to singing at these dances in a language that you cannot understand.[395]

Ramírez Valderraín then stated that he did remember hearing "*Pa' semilla*" sung at the dances, that he did not understand its significance at the time, but that after the rebellion he understood that this expression meant that "the Blacks wanted to extend their generation through the White women."[396]

Ramírez Valderraín's overall point was that there was no way that he or any other military authority could have known about the Coro rebellion in advance. He argued that nothing unusual occurred that could have given him notice that such an event would unfold. He conceded that there were dances before the rebellion, but that dances were a

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394 Ibid.: "antes de verificarse la sublevacion."

395 Ibid.: que los negros luangos o de Curaçao que habitan en un Barrio de la Ciudad llamado Guinea han acostumbrado siempre quando se retiran de las labors del campo en las visperas de fiesta poner baile al raso encendiendo su candelada, sino hay Luna, pero pidiendo siempre licencia a los Justicias Mayores que la han dado como el declar.te poniendo Guardia quando le ha parecido oportuno, y aun asistiendo el mismo a fin de evitar qualquiera desorden porque no hay otra diversión en aquella ciu.d suelen concurrir a ellas presionar de todas clases, y hasta la hora de recogerse que en la media noches, los hombres y señoras principales del Pueblo: Que en estos bailes acostumbrar los negros cantan en lengua que no se entiende sus canciones.

396 Ibid.: "los Negros trataban de extender su generacion en las Blancas."

common occurrence in Guinea and that songs were often sung. He added that he was not the only white elite to attend these dances, either. Because there was never much to do in Coro, many white elites attended the dances, but Ramírez Valderraín and other whites did not understand the lyrics of the songs sung because they were in a foreign language.

But then Ramírez Valderraín testified that he did remember hearing "*Pa' semilla*." He stated that he did not understand the significance of the term at the time, but Ramírez Valderraín added that he now realized that the expression meant that the singers of the songs aimed to "extend their generation through the White women." Therefore, as Ramírez Valderraín gave this testimony, he revealed that there were, in fact, signs given before the rebellion that indicated that an insurgency was afoot. This acknowledgement served as evidence to contradict his earlier statement that there were no clues that could have pointed to a rebellion being underway.

It is not clear at this time what, if anything, came about regarding Jacot's accusations of Ramírez Valderraín. But Jacot's pointing to the use of the term *semilla* in songs sung in the city of Coro before the rebellion, and de Acosta's testimony that indicates its usage in the sierra during the rebellion, point to the possibility that there was, indeed, a coordinated conspiracy between the largely creole rebels in the sierra and the largely African-born black people in the city. It is unlikely, however, that Ramírez Valderraín was involved. Jacot's claims regarding his possible involvement were used to accentuate his primary contention, which was that Ramírez Valderraín failed in his responsibilities as Justicia Mayor when he ignored signs of a coming insurrection. In addition, Jacot's expressed concerns were likely influenced by a personal rivalry that had

developed between the Justicia Mayor and the outsider who was appointed as his de facto superior.

After the rebellion was crushed, and long after Cocofío, González, and Chirino were dead, various landowners such as de Acosta received reparations from the Crown for damages they suffered during the insurrection. De Acosta was awarded a pension of 300 pesos a year for her losses. Don Josef Antonio Zarraga's heir, Doña Felipa Caro, her son and her daughter, were awarded a pension of 600 pesos a year until her daughter was married. Caro was also awarded a 2,000 peso dowry for the purposes of her daughter's future wedding. Doña María Josefa Rosillo de Telleria, the widow of Don Josef de Tellería, and her two daughters and three sons were awarded a pension of 100 pesos a year. The male Tellerias would receive their pension until they were 25 years old, and the women would receive their pensions until their death or until they were married. They would also be exempt from taxes and their debts would be placed on hold until the boys were employed and able to pay these bills themselves.[397]

Coro's *hacendados* were granted reparations because they were part of an Atlantic political economy in which the assets of whites were supported—in fact, guaranteed—by imperial states; states that, in turn, were backed by merchant and financial elites. Nowhere was this partnership more crystallized than in the organization of European joint-stock companies like the WIC, the SSC and the RCG. The WIC was created as a weapon in the fight against Spanish rivals at the end of a truce. It was envisioned a means to further Dutch commercial interests in the slave trade and in the Americas, and to do so by force if necessary. The British government formed the SSC largely out of their need to restructure the country's spiraling debt. The Province of

[397] "Expediente."

Guipuzcoa and the Spanish Crown created the RCG to tap into, and further develop the Venezuelan market, which had been taken over by foreign rivals, particularly the Dutch.

Although merchants and shareholders were hoping to make profits from their investments, they also had diverse reasons for financing joint-stock companies. Investing in the WIC was considered a safe venture because they had government backing, and big money holders saw it as a viable alternative to hoarding inactive capital. Many SSC investors were attracted to the company for speculative reasons, in order to turn a large profit in a matter of weeks. Before the 1749 de León rebellion, RCG investors were attracted by the promise of high returns on what was essentially a new colonial enterprise, in the restructuring of Venezuela. After the rebellion, investors may have been more interested in investing because they were guaranteed their money back after a 100% dividend was announced in 1752.

Regardless of the motives for their founding, the WIC, the SSC, and the RCG created Coro and the racialized political economy that the rebels sought to destroy. Operating for more than a century and a half, the WIC established a Dutch stronghold in the trade in enslaved people, furthered Dutch interests in this trade, and opened the door for private merchants to eventually take over. The WIC also turned Curaçao, laying just sixty miles off shore from Coro, from a Spanish cattle depot to the premier trading station of the Greater Caribbean. Through acquiring the *asiento*, the SSC was able to further England's share in the slave trade to places like Coro, and helped propel England's hegemony over Atlantic waters. The RCG, through its monopoly of the Venezuelan market and its chief product cacao, stimulated the crop's production in Coro, while working with the SSC to import enslaved people, as they carried out an assault on Dutch

interlopers, who were, in turn, buoyed by the protection of the WIC. These three companies' activities would contribute to the demographic growth of Coro's black population and to the development of Coro's plantation economy.

When Coro's rebels exclaimed their desire to kill all white men and further the black race, they did so because the world they lived in was based on the dominance of white capital and the denigration of black workers.[398] But Africans in Coro and across the Atlantic did not give up their cultures or their moral economies.[399] The latter will be the focus of the next chapter.

[398] The term "white capital" is borrowed by W.E.B. Dubois. See: W.E.B. Dubois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free Press, 1935).

[399] The term "moral economy" was coined by E.P. Thompson. See: Thompson, E P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" *Past and Present*. 50.1 (1971): 76-136.

Chapter Three: The People

Three and a half years before the 1795 rebellion, José Caridad González received a Royal Order from the King of Spain, which signaled the coming of a revolution, while it propelled González to a level of prominence that rivaled that of the region's most senior authorities. On October 29, 1791, González met with King Carlos IV in the outskirts of Madrid, at His El Escorial Palace in San Lorenzo, to ask for help on behalf of Coro's *loango* community. González complained that he and his people had suffered "harms and harassments that have been made with the objective of suffocating the resources of the interested parties."[400] According to the Royal Order, Coro's *loangos* had been "peacefully enjoying the land in the territory of Santa María" until a man named Luis de Rojas sold the lands to Don Juan Antonio Zárraga.[401] The Order claims that Rojas was not the rightful owner of the property, and that, therefore, he did not have the authority to sell it.

The Royal Order concluded by stating that González and the *loangos* should be provided "justice" without "complaints," "trouble nor any form of harassment."[402] But the *loangos* would not receive justice. One year following the rebellion, the Real Audiencia of Caracas requested "whatever papers that exist within the Secretary's office of the Captaincy General, and Government scribes, in relation to the dispute over lands that the black *luangos* of Coro continued with the home of Don Juan Antonio

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[400] "Real Orden," October 29, 1792, Caracas, 375. Archivo General de las Indias. Seville, Spain (AGI); "perjuicios y vejaciones q.e se han preparado con el objeto de sufocar los recursos de los Ynteresados."

[401] Ibid.: "disfrutando pacificame.te un terreno en el territorio de S.ta Maria."

[402] Ibid.: "quejas," molestia ni vejacion alguna."

Zárraga."[403] The Audiencia's request indicated that the struggle over the land of Santa María de la Chapa was still alive and well at the time of the May, 1795 insurrection.

The 1791 Royal Order, and the *loangos*' struggle for La Chapa, point to the significance of land for Coro's rebels. The right to cultivate land and to enjoy the fruits of one's own labor was the basis of the rebels' moral economy.[404] This moral economy was informed by the autochthonous social structures of the rebels' African homelands, where open space, coupled with low population densities, assured that fields were available to all. This African moral economy collided with the realities of Coro, where land was concentrated into the hands of a few white elites. These elites used these territories for the purposes of plantation production; an economic activity that had the effect of depriving Africans of the lifestyles that they felt they were entitled to.

The *loango* struggle over ownership of the lands of La Chapa was first documented twenty years before González received the Royal Order. On December 27, 1771, a group of *loangos* was jailed for living on this land, because Zárraga claimed that it was his property. Two *loangos*, Francisco Bartolo and Juan Antonio Curazao, testified before a Caracas Tribunal on April 13, 1772, saying that they had been incarcerated since their December arrest simply because they were cultivating the lands of La Chapa, where they lived. They added, "in this settlement there is a neighbor named don Juan Antonio Zárraga that causes us great harm, for he has even taken water away from us and tries to

[403] "Expediente sobre la insurrección de los negros, zambos y mulatos proyectada en el año 1795 a las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Coro, Provincia de Caracas," 1795, Caracas, 426, AGI, ff. 372.:"qualesquiera papeles que existtan en la Secrettaria de Capittania General, y escribanias de Govierno, relattivos al pleitto que sobre tierras seguian los negros luangos de Coro con la casa de Don Juan Antonio Zárraga."

[404] See the introduction for a discussion on the term "moral economy."

remove us from the entire possession."[405] Bartolo and Curazao added that Zárraga had paid Juan Luis Rojas—who was named in the 1791 Royal Order as having sold the land to Zárraga— to "remove us from there."[406] The *loangos* exhorted authorities to help them convince Rojas, the Captain of Coro's Black Militia, and his soldiers to "set boundaries on the property."[407]

Bartolo, Curazao, and the other *loangos* were arrested while Coro's Black Militia began the forcible removal of their community to other lands. It appears that in December of 1771, Coro's authorities gave in to Zárraga's pressure and determined that the *loangos* should be removed from La Chapa and sent to live four miles away in Macuquita. In October of 1772, Rojas stated that because the *loango* community was so large, and because their numbers were growing every day, that he and the militia were authorized "to little by little and with the best convenience send them to royal land in the said Macuquita, which are more comfortable, more extensive lands, and with better waters."[408]

The *loangos* were not the first people to claim rightful ownership over the "extensive lands" of La Chapa. Zárraga inherited this land at some point between 1758 and 1772 from his aunt, Doña María de Sangronis. But de Sangronis had been in a

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[405] Cited in: Pedro A. Gil Rivas, Luis Dovale Prado and Lidia Lusmila Bello, *La insurrección de los negros de la serranía coriana: 10 de mayo de 1795* (Caracas: Ministerio de Educación Cultura y Deportes, 2001), 90. "en este sitio se halla un vecino nombrado don Juan Antonio Zárraga que nos sirve de grande perjuicio, pues hasta el agua nos la ha quitado y nos procura desapropiar de toda la posesión."

[406] Ibid.: "desapropiarnos de allí."

[407] Ibid., 91: "que ponga en propiedad los linderos de la tierra."

[408] Cited in: Miguel Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela* (La Habana: Casa de las Americas, 1978), 196.: "a que podríamos poco a poco y con la mejor comodidad irlos mandando a la tierra realenga de dicho Macquita, que son tierras más cómodas, más extensas y con mejores aguas."

dispute over the land of La Chapa for some time, with Don Ysidro Navarro, who claimed that he had purchased the land from the Spanish Crown. Navarro claimed that de Sangronis was illegally claiming the land because it had, in fact, been royal lands before he had purchased it. But the case was settled in 1758 in favor of de Sangronis. In 1774, Navarro again claimed ownership of the land and, this time, took Zárraga to court. Navarro claimed that Zárraga had been illegally using about 320 yards of royal lands in La Chapa, those that were adjacent to Zárraga's plantation of San Ygnacio. Navarro asserted that Zárraga could only claim about 10 of the 330 yards of land that he was using.[409]

In Zárraga's defense of himself, he revealed important details about *loango* settlement in the region. Zárraga stated, "the free blacks from Curazao hoped to disrupt me on the same lands, without any foundation except for me having added them to these with pious spirits that they could stay there if destiny allowed it."[410] Zárraga's claim that he had allowed the *loangos* to stay on his land, but that they were now "disrupting" him on those lands may, actually, have some validity. As Rojas stated above, the *loango* community in the city and sierra of Coro was growing continuously, as families grew and as newcomers arrived every year from Curaçao. It seems likely that the *loangos* simply squatted on the lands of La Chapa, perhaps with the understanding that the land was royal land and not claimed by any individual. As the community grew, however, and as their lands expanded, their presence became a nuisance to Zárraga and his family.

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[409] Gil Rivas, Dovale Prado, and Lusmila Bello, 86-91.

[410] Ibid., 89.: "pretendieron perturbarme en las mismas tierras los negros libertos venidos de Curazao, sin otro fundamento que el de haberlos agregado en ellas con piadoso ánimo de que pudiesen mantenerse entre sí si se les daba dicho destino."

González and the *loangos*' struggle for the land of La Chapa mirrors their other struggle for power in Coro's society. In September of 1794, Coro's Justicia Mayor, Mariano Ramírez Valderraín divided the city's black militia into two. The original militia, headed by Rosas, was comprised mainly of formerly enslaved, Curacaoan born refugees. After the rebellion, Valderraín stated that, because there were so many migrants from Curaçao in the sierra and the city of Coro, that he thought it necessary to form a second company, one made exclusively of the African-born *loangos*. But it is likely that Valderraín took responsibility for the formation of the second company because he did not want to reveal to his superiors, in the aftermath of the rebellion, that he had given in to pressure from González and his African-born followers. González and his *loango* contingent appear to have been eager to form a militia of their own so that they could increase their power within the region, while separating themselves from Rojas, who they had a history of quarrels with.[411]

The African-born *loangos* wanted González to be the captain of the newly formed militia, but they encountered problems in appointing him. When González's confidants—Juan Felipe Guillermo, Juan Bernardo, and Domingo José Nicolas—made the petition for a new militia, Valderraín told them that González could not be named captain because he was in Caracas. The militia captain had to be present in Coro to be given an official title. Valderraín then named another African-born *loango*, Nicolas Soco, as Captain. Valderraín claimed that he sent the men's petition to the Captain General in Caracas, but that the Captain General responded by naming Soco as Teniente (second in charge) and Juan Domingo Rojas—Juan Luiz Rojas's friend, and perhaps, his family member—as

[411] "Sublevacion de los negros de Coro, pieza 3," 1795, Criminales, Letra C, Archivo General de la Nacion, Caracas (AGN), ff. 96-100.

Captain. Soco and the *loangos* returned to Valderraín after Juan Domingo Rojas was named their Captain, insisting that González be named Captain of the new militia, and arguing that Juan Domingo Rojas could not be their captain because he was already a member of Juan Luiz Rojas's militia.[412]

Valderraín appears to have been sympathetic to the *loangos*' position, and he sent a missive along with the three *loango* men to Caracas in order to appeal to the Captain General. Guillermo, Bernando, and Nicolas immediately set off for Caracas and returned in January or February of 1795, accompanied by González himself. It is unclear whether or not González officially took charge of the *loango* militia in the eyes of Coro's authorities, but he was named as the captain of the 46-man strong *loango* militia in the official list that the new company gave Valderraín.[413]

The disputes over land and power in Coro led some *loangos* to participate in the planning and execution of the Coro rebellion. As stated in the introduction, a *loango* named Juan Francisco Año Nuevo was accused of planning the rebellion alongside Chirino at the home of Juan Bernardo Chiquito. Año Nuevo worked on the Socorro plantation, which was home to Chirino.[414] Two other *loangos* were among the rebels in the sierra. On the first night of the rebellion, Juan Luis Martin, an African-born *loango*, who lived and worked on Doña Nicolosa Acosta's plantation of El Baron, was identified as the rebel who lit the match that burned down de Acosta's door. Martin was also one of the two rebel "spies" that were apprehended at Caujarao on the night of May 11. Martin

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[412] Ibid.

[413] "Expediente," ff. 47-9.

[414] "Expedientes, sublevacion de esclavos en la sierra de Coro, 1795," 1795, Judiciales, A16-C54-D11183, Academia Nacional de Historia, Caracas (ANH), ff. 87-95.

and another person who was formerly enslaved in Curaçao, a rebel known only as Flores, were allegedly sent to the city to inform González of the rebels' whereabouts.[415]

The second *loango* spy may have been a member of González's militia. Five months after the rebellion, local landowner, Don Juan Echave, reported that a black man, Martin Olave, told him that Juan Luis was a corporal in González's *loango* militia and that he filled the same role with Chirinos' rebels in the sierra. But Juan Luis Martin was not listed as a member of the *loango* militia.[416] The First Corporal of González's militia, however, was a man by the name of Juan Francisco Flor.[417] It is possible that Olvave and/or Echave confused Martin for Flor, and that Flor is the Flores that was identified as the other *loango* spy sent by the rebels to the city.

What Martin and Flor (or Flores) did after being freed by their comrades is unclear, but hours after the spies were let loose, González and 21 other *loangos* arrived to Valderraín's house asking for guns. González and the *loango* militia members arrived after 2pm on May 11, soon after Valderraín had received word that there was an uprising underway in the sierra. By the time the *loangos* arrived, however, about 40 white and pardo volunteers were positioned outside of Valderraín's home.[418]

The *loango* militia members arrived with seven or eight guns and requested that they be given more for those that were not carrying arms. Valderraín testified that he immediately became suspicious of the *loangos*' request, and advised the Ayudante of the Pardo Militia, Gabriel Gárces to confiscate the guns they were carrying. Valderraín later

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[415] "Sublevacion," ff. 120-25.

[416] "Expediente," 315-17.

[417] Ibid., ff. 47-9.

[418] "Expedientes," ff. 111-16.

testified that González's response was that he "he said he would obey but in a disgusted way."[419] Valderraín then told González, "although he did not doubt his loyalty to the King, as well as that of his companions, but because they are saying that the rebels are black, it would be best if Caridad, and his companions would enter and stay in a room."[420] Valderraín then escorted the *loangos* to a bedroom in his home, but he viewed the detention as a precaution rather than a necessity. He even left the door to the room open, although at some point later, guards closed it. Valderraín added that the *loangos* stayed in the room all afternoon, and night, and through the following day.[421]

But González and the *loangos* would eventually resist their confinement. Five months after the rebellion, Captain Nicolas Antonio de Nava, Don Juan de la Paz and the enslaved woman, Gabriela Sarraga, all testified that González and the other *loangos* had repeatedly tried to escape. Nava stated that González often asked to be let go, "saying that he and his twenty two other armed blacks were obliged to capture the rebels."[422] At one point, González tried to force his way through the bedroom door, and as the door was being detained by guards on the other side, González "sticking his hands through the door trying to force it [open], which was responded with going after a gun and requiring him to contain himself because if he did not, they [his hands] would be removed."[423] Nava

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[419] Ibid., 113: "dijo obedecia pero con un modo que significaba repugnacnia."

[420] Ibid.:, "aunque no dudaba de su fidelidad, y la de sus companyeros al Rey, pero como les decía que los levantados eran negros, convenia que el mismo Caridad, y dichos sus companyeros entrasen y se estuviesen en un quarto que esta en el mismo."

[421] Ibid.

[422] "Expediente," ff. 309.: "diciendo que el con sus veinte y dos negros armados, se obligava a prender a todos los sublevados."

[423] Ibid.: "meditendo manos a la puerta pretendio forsarla a cuya accion abocandole un Trabuco y requeriendole a que se contubiera pues de lo contrario se quitava."

added that González replied to the threat by removing his hands from the door and keeping in silence. According to Nava, González "did not speak again and he was bothered when he heard a cannon which was shot at the insurgents."[424]

Hours later, the rebel force suffered their first defeat at the hands of Coro's ragtag royal army, and González would soon suffer a gruesome fate. After the decisive battle of the early morning of May 12, 24 rebels were captured in the battlefields and escorted to the city center. According to Valderraín, every one of the 24 rebels that were apprehended testified the following:

> that the black Luango Josef de la Cardiad Gonzales who was in court, and in that capital [Caracas], attempting to become the captain of those of his nation; had inspired a thousand errors in the slaves and free blacks, telling them, that for the first he had brought a royal document in which your Highness had declared them free, and that the leading subjects of the city were hiding it; and to the second ones that in aiding his designs for the uprising of the slaves, it was them that would rule afterwards in a republic; in whose harmony there is universal truth that the zambo Leonardo head of the main insurrection of the hills, that he would be the one that started the movement in the countryside and when he came down to the city he would find aid with the people that followed Josef Caridad Gonzales.[425]

According to Valderraín, the 24 rebels confessed to the crimes they committed and provided him with the details of the conspiracy. As was seen in the previous chapter, Coro's authorities claimed that González had followed the lead of the late African wanderer Cocofío, who had told enslaved people that the 1789 laws regarding slavery were actually a pronouncement of emancipation. González, according to Valderraín and

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[424] Ibid.: "no bolvio a hablar, y amostaso al oir un cañonaso que tiro a los amotinados."

[425] "Expedientes," ff. 6-7.: "que el negro Luango Josef de la Caridad Gonzales que estubo en la corte, y en esa capital, pretendiendo la capitania de los de su nacion; havia inspirado mil errores a los escablos y negros libres, diciendoles, que para los primeros havia traido real cédula en que su Magestad los daba por libres, y que los sugetos principales de esta ciudad se la havian ocultado; y a los segundos que auxiliando sus designios a la sublevacion con los esclabos, serian los que mandasen despues en republica; en cuyo concierto es constancia universal entro en el zambo Leonardo cabesa de motin principal en la serrania, este havia de ser el que diese el primer movimento en los campos y quando vajase a la ciudad havia de auxiliarse de la gente que siguiera al Josef Caridad Gonzales."

local authorities, had been telling enslaved people that he had proof of emancipation in his hands—that the King of Spain himself had granted him a copy of the proclamation when he had visited him in 1791.

Immediately after the 24 rebels were executed, Valderraín ordered that González and the *loangos*, who were being held in his home, be transferred to Coro's jail. Valderraín stated, that, as the *loangos* were being transferred to the jail, González was killed when he "ran off with two of his closest people."[426] In September of 1795, a royal bureaucrat in Coro, Don Gerónimo Tinoco, gave more details on what happened the day González was murdered:

> in front of the jail's door where the beheaded blacks were, horrified without a doubt of that spectacle, Charidad escaped from the guards, and he ran away with two others who were followed by some members of the same guards, and they were killed by blows from sabres and lances at a short distance.[427]

González and his two comrades died a horrific death on the afternoon of May 12, 1795. Not only did numerous people wielding brutal weapons stab them sadistically, but they were also murdered amidst a horrifying, grisly spectacle of 24 headless bodies. González's struggle for arms and *loango* lands in Coro ended in his heinous demise, and would lead to even more suffering for his community.

An investigation into the lives and deaths of Coro's *loango* rebels points to the significance of African political economy to the construction of antislavery ideology in the Americas during the Age of Revolution. The African moral economy of the *loangos*, in which a strong leader ensured that community members had equal access to land, was

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[426] Ibid., ff. 7-8.: "emprendio fuga con dos de los mas inmediatos de su gente."

[427] Ibid.: "al frente de la puerta de la carcel donde estaban tendidos los negros degollados horroisado sin duda de aquel espectaculo se escape de la escolta Charidad, y se puso en fuga con otros dos a quienes siguieron algunos de la misma escolta, y fueron muertos a sablasos y lansasos a poco trecho."

pit against the plantation economy of Coro. This plantation economy was born out of an already hierarchical European system, which was further perverted through the conquest of the Americas, and the formation of an Atlantic political economy structured by a racialized division of labor. Being denied the land that they rightfully used, González, the *loangos*, and the rest of Coro's rebels sought to take control of their environment through first forming a militia and by later fomenting a revolution. Key to this revolution was a desire to build a new republic, based on the political and economic principles of their homelands. This chapter will examine the political economy of Africans in the Atlantic through a study of the social systems of the *loangos* and of other maroon communities in the Americas. The chapter will then investigate the origins of maroon political economies through the study of autochthonous social systems of the two principal regions of descent for Coro's rebels: The Gold and Loango Coasts of West and West Central Africa.

The *Loango Cumbés* and Maroon Communities

González and the *loangos* made up a tight-knit community of hundreds of formerly enslaved people who fled Curaçao for Coro during the eighteenth century. These formerly enslaved people were known as *loangos* in Coro, whether or not they or their ancestors descended from the African coastline that bore the name. In fact, the *loango* community included formerly enslaved people born in Curaçao and others who were born throughout Africa. The communities also included black people born free in Venezuela, but who joined the *loango* communities voluntarily.

In 1761, it was estimated that about 400 *loangos* lived in Coro.[428] Although some lived in the city of Coro, most lived in the semi-autonomous *cumbés* of the sierra. *Cumbé* was the word used in Venezuela to designate a community removed from governmental and church control, and which was usually utilized to refer to maroon communities of black people who fled slavery in the Captaincy General. The *loangos* that lived in the city still maintained ties to the *cumbés* in the sierra, which were about 20 miles away. It was there that the city's *loangos* held land and grew crops, both for their own consumption, and for sale at the city's market.

Dutch West India Company (WIC) data helps paint a picture of the *loango cumbés* of Coro. On July 7, 1775, the WIC compiled a list of escaped slaves from Curaçao's plantations between 1745 and 1774. According to the list compiled through consultation with the island's slave owners, 537 people escaped their condition during this period, and every single one of them went to Coro. According to this document, then, every year, an average of nearly 18 people fled Curaçao to live free in Coro. As was the case in most maroon settlements in the Americas, the vast majority of those that fled were men. Women did account, however, for 79 of those people who escaped during the period in question, meaning that two or three women fled Curaçao each year to live in Coro. Most of the women that left Curaçao took their children with them. In fact, 22 total children fled Curaçao for Coro during this period, and 16 of them came with their mothers. Only six boys journeyed to Coro alone. Taken together, women (14.71%) and children (4.1%) made up 18.81% of the enslaved people who fled Curaçao to Coro during

[428] Pedro Manuel Arcaya, "Una insurrección de negros en 1795: Discurso de incorporación a la Academia Nacional de Historia, 11 de diciembre de 1910" in Pedro Manuel Arcaya, *Personajes y hechos de la historia de Venezuela* (Caracas: 1977), 242.

the third quarter of the eighteenth century, with adult men making up over 81%.[429] But it is clear that most men who settled in Coro were married and had children, meaning that most women of the *loango* communities of Coro were actually black women native to Venezuela.

The *loango cumbés* were highly organized and operated with some autonomy from colonial authorities. One month after the rebellion, Coro's Ayuntamiento reported that the *loangos* "make up a large and united congregation in homes and *conucos*, with a sort species of economy and republics."[430] The Ayuntamiento added that the *cumbés* were "formidable" entities due to the fact that the *loangos* "demand contributions from their individuals which are deposited in the community's coffers for their public needs."[431] The *loangos* planted vegetables such as cabbage and corn and raised farm animals for their own subsistence.[432] They also travelled to the city of Coro to trade these products.

The *loango* communities were somewhat insular, they spoke to each other in African and creole languages, and they had their own system of justice. The Ayuntamiento testified, "they conserve their foreign dialect in the language with such precision that you cannot discern the new arrivals from the naturals even though they are

[429] "Lyst der slaaven," WIC, 610, July 7, 1775, Nationaal Arhief (NAN), The Hague, The Netherlands, ff. 292-301.

[430] "Informe por el Ayuntamiento de Coro," April 21, 1796, Caracas, 95, AGI.: "componen una numerosa congresacion unida en casas y conucos, con una especie de economia y repubublicas."

[431] Ibid.: "exigen desus indibiduos contribucion q ban depositando en las cajas de comunidad para sus urgencias publicas."

[432] "Sublevacion," ff. 94-5.

different."[433] Ramirez Valderraín made the point about language again in the months following the rebellion when he declared "I did not understand their conversations because they were in their Dutch or Guinea language."[434]

Although insular, the *loango cumbés* were at the same time open to new community members, as was the case with most maroon communities across the Americas. Historian Miguel Acosta Saignes has found that Venezuelan-born runaways also lived in the *loango cumbés* of Coro.[435] In the great Brazilian *quilombo* of Palmares, enslaved people who were kidnapped from plantations remained in a condition of servitude—under vastly more humane conditions—but those enslaved or legally free black people who found their way to Palmares were welcomed as new members of the community.[436] Although some maroon groups in Jamaica would capture enslaved people who had fled their plantations for a reward, they did also take in runaways—perhaps just as many as they captured.[437]

It also appears that the *loango cumbés* utilized their own legal system, as was the case in many maroon communities across the Americas. Coro's Ayuntamiento testified that the *loangos* "use an authority which they gave themselves and that they find convenient for their government, arresting, awarding, and punishing in accordance with

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[433] "Informe.": "ellos conservan su estrangero dialecto en el idioma con tanta exactitude q noze disiernen los advene_sos de los naturales aun que se an distintos."

[434] "Expediente," ff. 302.: "no entendia sus combersaciones por que era en su idioma olandés, o de Guinea."

[435] Saignes, *Vida*, 196.

[436] Edison Carneiro, *O quilombo dos Palmares* (Rio de Janeiro: Editôra Civilização Brasileira, 1966), 26-7.

[437] Carey Robinson, *The Fighting Maroons of Jamaica* (Jamaica: William Collins and Sangster, 1969), 71.

their barbaric and despotic caprice."[438] Although the Ayuntamiento may be overstating the fact, it is likely that the *loango cumbés* of the sierra had rules, regulations, honors, and penalties, which were governed by a set of established laws. Maroon community members throughout the hemisphere elected leaders and councils in accordance with specific principles. And there is evidence to suggest that even executions took place in some maroon communities, particularly for crimes such as stealing.[439]

But the *loangos* were not completely removed from the influences of colonial authorities. As seen above, they had their lands confiscated and some were arrested over the fight with Zárraga. The *loangos* were also within the orbit of the Catholic Church, although they did not have continual contact like other communities in the region. When Coro's Ayuntamiento complained about the "abundance of the people of this infamous plebe" in the aftermath of the rebellion, they stated that proof positive would be found in local baptism records, suggesting that most *loangos* had been baptized.[440] This is likely the case given the fact that most *loangos* used Christian names. The Ayuntamiento added that the *loangos* had lacked spiritual support for over a year. Although the Ayuntamiento lamented this course, their concerns reveal the fact that a priest had indeed visited the community in recent years. The Ayuntamiento's concern was anticipated twenty-one years before the rebellion, by Caracas's Archbishop Mariano Martí. Martí reported that the sierra that lay between the city of Coro and the towns south was fully populated and

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[438] "Informe.": "disponen con autoridad conferida por simismos lo q conciben combeniente a su goverio, prendiendo, apremiando, y castigando segun su barbaro y despotico capricho."

[439] Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago: University of West Indies Press, 2006), 223.

[440] "Informe.": "abundancia de gente de la infima plebe".

that many people were "blacks who came from the island of Curazao."[441] Martí added that because priests were set up in the towns surrounding the sierra and not in the sierra itself, that the *loangos* needed the assistance of a priest, something that they were then lacking.

There exists scant evidence on the agricultural customs of the *loango cumbés*, but by studying other maroon communities of Venezuela and the Americas, a pattern emerges, in which the *loangos* certainly fit. In Venezuela, in September of 1794, Miguel Gerónimo, also known as Miguel Guacamayo, was apprehended after spending over ten years as the member of a *cumbé*.[442] After being caught, Guacamayo testified about the importance of land in the maroon community from which he belonged, even stating that whoever refused to work the land "was expelled from the community."[443] The Trelawny maroons of Jamaica cultivated about 100 acres of land where they grew plantains, cassava, corn, and cash crops such as tobacco and cocoa. The women of Trelawny did most of the cultivating, and the men were dedicated to raising the livestock.[444] Agriculture was the primary economic activity in Palmares and the most important crop was corn, which was grown on plantations twice a year. After the corn-cultivating season,

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[441] Mariano Martí, *Documentos relativos a su visita pastoral de la Diocesis de Caracas (1771-1784): providencias* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historía, 1969), 64.: "negros venidos de la isla de Curazao."

[442] Federico Brito Figueroa, *El problema de tierra y esclavos en la historía de Venezuela* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1985), 238-9. It is not clear at this moment whether or not Guacamayo lived in one of the cumbés of the Valles of Tuy or Aragua, outside of Caracas, or from Yaracuy, outside of Puerto Cabello.

[443] Ibid., 240.: "era expulsado de la comunidad."

[444] Robinson, 68-9.

community members would take two weeks off for rest. They also grew plantains and sugar cane.[445]

All available evidence demonstrates that the political economy of maroon communities was, for the most part, egalitarian. Living in close quarters, and in precarious situations in terms of survival, unity was of the upmost importance in maroon communities. This unity was most effectively consolidated by ensuring that everyone in the community had their needs met. In addition, as historian Alvin Thompson points out, there was little incentive to accumulate wealth because of the small amount of resources available to these communities, and because of the need to move the community with frequency.[446] As historian Gabino La Rosa Corzo demonstrates, most maroon settlements in Cuba held land in common, and it is safe to assume that distribution was handled in a like fashion.[447] This reality is perhaps best demonstrated by the name of Cuba's largest maroon community, Todos Tenemos.

But not all maroon communities held hand in common, and this appears to have been the case with the *loango cumbés*. In documentation referring to *loango* lands in the sierra, the plural form of the term *conuco* (*conucos*) is usually applied, suggesting that each *cumbé* had more than one *conuco*. It appears likely, then, that the *loango cumbés* of Coro were organized around small plots of land attached to each home, rather than a large plot of land held in common. This would follow the pattern practiced on most of Coro's plantations, where enslaved people were assigned a plot of land from which they were

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[445] Carneiro, 28.

[446] Thompson, 212.

[447] Gabino La Rosa Corzo, *Runaway Slave Settlements in Cuba: Resistance and Repression* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 231-2.

expected to feed themselves and their families. More importantly, however, and as will be seen below, this practice was common in Africa, and still lent itself to communal political and economic formations.

It is likely that members of the *loango cumbés* also hunted, fished, and gathered wild fruits and vegetables. Coro's Ayuntamiento stated that *loango* children "are dedicated to gathering wild fruit."[448] Gathering wild plants was a common practice in maroon communities throughout the Americas.[449] Hunting and fishing were key sources of food for members of the Palmares community, as were manufacturing activities such as weaving baskets, hats, fans and molding ceramic bowls.[450] Men from maroon communities in Jamaica would hunt birds and catch turtles, and men and women would also make salt for local consumption.[451] Although hunting, fishing, salt-making and manufacture are not documented activities amongst the *loangos*, it is likely that they engaged in most or all of these economic activities.

Agricultural goods, including cash crops such as sugar cane, tobacco, and cacao were consumed within maroon communities, but some were also commodified and sold at local markets. In their 1772 testimony, Bartolo and Curazao stated that they cultivated the land of La Chapa "with fruits not just for the supplicants but also for the neighbors of that city."[452] Also, as was seen in the last chapter, the Pardo Militia member Gabriel

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[448] "Informe.": "los dedican a coger frutas libertres."

[449] Thompson, 249.

[450] Carneiro, 2.

[451] Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica, 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration & Betrayal* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 47.

[452] Gil Rivas, Dovale Prado, and Lusmila Bello, 90.: "con frutos no solo para los suplicantes sino tambien para los vecinos de aquella ciudad."

Garcés was known to work with the *loangos* in the sale of the crops they harvested to inhabitants of the city of Coro. Trade in agricultural commodities was an important economic activity in Palmares, and Thompson has found the practice of trade was a thorn in the side of colonial authorities throughout the hemisphere, as they saw it as standing in the way of their goal to eliminate maroon communities.[453]

Guns and ammunition were perhaps the most important commodities that maroon communities acquired in exchange for agricultural goods. When the Ocoyta *cumbé* was destroyed in 1771, authorities found a cache of weapons, which included swords, lances, arrows, and eight guns.[454] In Jamaica, where two large-scale wars broke out in the eighteenth century between the island's white authorities and various maroon communities, guns and ammunition were purchased secretly by maroon community members during weekly markets.[455] Maroons from Palmares have also been documented as having acquired guns via trade.[456] In their declaration, Coro's Ayuntamiento stated that the *loangos* would regularly have meetings and celebrations in the city of Coro and that they "march with uniforms and arms with the seriousness of troops."[457] The Ayuntamiento added that they never saw *loangos* acquiring guns via trade, insinuating that their guns were stolen from local plantations.

Like maroon communities everywhere, the *loangos* were known as criminals in Coro. In the Ayuntamiento's 1795 report, they complained that the *loangos*' "conduct is

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[453] Carneiro, 2; Thompson, 258.

[454] Jesús Chucho García, *Contra el cepo: Barlovento tiempo de cimarrones* (San José de Barlovento, Venezuela: Lucas y Trina Editorial, 1989), 74.

[455] Robinson, 34.

[456] Carneiro, 2.

[457] "Informe.": "marchan uniformados y armados conformalidad atropa."

corrupt and incorrigible" and that Coro's jails were filled with *loangos*, most of who were imprisoned for stealing from local haciendas.[458] It is likely that some *loangos* did engage in the theft and/or robbing of cattle, crops, and tools from neighboring plantations, as this was common among maroon communities across the Americas, so much so that Thompson suggests that "banditry" should be considered an economic practice amongst these communities in of itself.[459] The Ocoyta *cumbé* outside of eighteenth-century Caracas used guns to carry out raids on nearby towns and robbed merchants as well.[460] The maroons of the Clarendon Hills of southern Jamaica carried out similar raids during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[461]

González himself may have been sought for robbery by Coro's authorities fifteen years before the 1795 insurrection. An investigation conducted by Coro's Justicia Mayor from 1780-1 was carried out against Josef Colina, racially classified as pardo, and Josef Charidad Moreno, the last name being a racial signifier meaning dark black. Colina and Charidad were accused of carrying out various robberies of cattle and crops from the haciendas that neighbored their *cumbé* at Aduare, in the Peninsula de Paraguaná. Several witnesses were brought in to testify that they had seen Colina in the act of stealing agricultural goods, but Colina denied any wrongdoing. Josef Charidad was never found or questioned about these accusations, and Colina's fate is not documented. Because the Josef Charidad pursued in this case of theft was never found, it is impossible to say for certain that this individual is the same one who was accused as being the mastermind

[458] Ibid.: "conducta es estragada e incorrigible."

[459] Thompson, 239.

[460] Miguel Acosta Saignes, "Life in a Venezuelan Cumbé" in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas, edited by Richard Price* (Garden City, New Jersey: Anchor Books, 1973), 67.

[461] Robinson, 32.

behind the 1795 rebellion. And although Coro's Justicia Mayor was carrying out the investigation, Aduare laid about 50 miles from the city of Coro and about 70 miles away from Coro's sierra. Whether or not this man was González, the incident does point to the fact that at least one *cumbé* inhabitant of the region of Coro was being sought for the stealing of hacienda goods.[462]

Although historians have probably overstated it, maroon community members across the Americas did occasionally kidnap enslaved women from plantations.[463] This activity was carried out in order to bring women into the communities, in which men formed the vast majority of the population. In the early eighteenth century, maroon communities in Urama and Moron, outside of Puerto Cabello, were documented as having carried out these actions.[464] In the seventeenth century, inhabitants of Palmares were also known to kidnap women from nearby plantations.[465] As mentioned above, however, it is likely that a sizeable percentage of women who lived in the *loango cumbés* were legally free and joined the communities through a partnership with one of the community's men. Gonzalez's wife, for example, Jossefa Leonarda de Piña, had been born in Coro, was legally free, and racially classified as mulata.[466] And given that legally free black people were a majority in the region, it is likely that this was the case for the *loango cumbés*.

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[462] "Contra José Colina y José Caridad Moreno por robo," 1780-1781, Casos Criminales, Archivo Histórico del Estado Falcón (AHF), Coro, Venezuela.

[463] Thompson, 71.

[464] Saignes, *Vida*, 189.

[465] Carneiro, 33.

[466] "Expediente," ff. 301-3.

Although maroon communities in Coro were communalist, there did exist a hierarchy of command where a leader held some material advantages over other members of the community, as was the case throughout the Americas.[467] After he was able to obtain a Royal Order, Gonzalez rose to a position of leadership in his community. This is seen in the fact that it was he who travelled often to Caracas to lobby for a *loango* militia, and that it was he who travelled to Spain to receive the Royal Order. Local whites also noted the power González held in his community. On the second of June, just a few weeks after the rebellion, Captain Don Manuel de Carrera wrote that González "turned into a petty king or casique of slaves who gave him gifts, attended to him, and had considered him so much that without fatigue, or industry he lived idly and comfortably in the placid tranquility of the city."[468] Carrera added that Gonzalez's followers were like his "tributaries."[469]

There are reasons to interpret Carrera's portrayal as an exaggeration, however. Mariano Ramirez Valderraín's testimony before the court in Caracas also indicated that González held a special position within the *loango* community, but one that was reciprocal. Ramirez Valderraín stated that González's wife, Peña, had come to him the year before the rebellion to complain that the *loangos* had failed to provide for her while González was away, as they promised they would.[470] Ramirez Valderraín added, however, that the *loangos* had come to this agreement with González and Peña because

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[467] As Thompson points out, this is typical of most, if not all, communalist societies. See: Thompson, 211.

[468] "Expediente," ff. 89.: "se conbirtio tambien en un regulo o casique de esclavos que lo regalavan, attendian y concideravan tantto que sin fatiga, ni industria vivia ocioso y comodamente en la apacible tranquilidad de la ciudad."

[469] Ibid., ff. 90.

[470] "Sublevación," ff. 101-3.

González was in "Madrid and Caracas on errands in the interest of the same black Luangos."[471]

Although leaders in maroon communities did have some material advantages over their peers, it is important to note that the position of maroon leader was always acquired through merit, rather than through inheritance. Coro's authorities repeatedly asserted that González's notoriety grew as a result of his efforts in defense of *loango* lands, especially after he was granted the Royal Order. Guillermo Rivas, the leader of the Ocoyta *cumbé*, earned his title of Captain because of his leadership qualities, his combat abilities, and his ability to create commercial opportunities for his community. Much like González, Rivas was considered a protector of the people of his community and even those on neighboring plantations. Historian Jesus "Chucho" García even asserts that enslaved people would threaten their owners with reprisals from Rivas if they endured what they considered excessively poor treatment.[472] Thompson argues that a consistent feature in maroon communities is that leaders had the largest homes and gardens and more than one wife, even though women were a minority in the communities.[473] A King governed Palmares, and the *quilombo*'s most famous leader, Zumbi, was married to three women. But again, leadership in maroon communities from Coro to Jamaica, and to Brazil, was earned rather than awarded. Zumbi gained the crown after he led an insurgency against his unpopular uncle Ganga-Zumba.[474]

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[471] Ibid.: "Madrid y Caracas en dilig.s interasantes a los mismos negros Luangos."

[472] García, 65-70.

[473] Thompson, 212.

[474] Carneiro, 36.

The political economy of the *loango cumbés* of Coro bore striking similarities to that of maroon communities throughout the Americas. Although unable to break away completely from white control, maroon communities in the Americas, including the *loango cumbés*, were highly organized and did enjoy a significant amount of autonomy from colonial authorities. These communities maintained their native languages and developed new creole ones as well. They had their own legal system, yet they sometimes found themselves in trouble with colonial authorities for raiding plantations. Most importantly, perhaps, was the fact that maroon communities practiced an agrarian lifestyle in which land, its fruits, and its game were available to all members, even those that that were enslaved, or had recently joined the community. As will be demonstrated below, these practices were not created in a vacuum; they were forged in accordance with the social relations of their African homelands.

The Gold Coast

Although the maroon communities of the sierra of Coro—most of whose members had previously been enslaved in Dutch Curaçao—were known as *loangos*, many of them actually had origins approximately 500 miles northwest of the Loango Coast. As stated in the introduction, about one third of the enslaved people transported by Dutch slavers during the eighteenth century were from the Gold Coast.[475] Although royal authorities usually referred to the maroons of Coro as *loangos*, they did sometimes refer to the maroons as "*loango* or *mina*" and "*loangos* or *minas*." *Mina* was an ethnic marker

[475] Alex Borucki, "Trans-imperial History in the Making of the Slave Trade to Venezuela, 1526-1811." *Itinerario* 36:2 (2012): 29-54.

used in the Atlantic to refer to someone with origins in the Gold Coast. The term *mina* was taken from Elmina, the name of the largest fort on the Coast. The term Elmina was a variant of the original name that the Portuguese gave the castle, São Jorge da Mina, with *Mina* meaning mine in Portuguese. The Portuguese referred to the region that would later be known as the Gold Coast as Costa da Mina because it was known for its large gold deposits.[476] As stated earlier, *loango* was a term used to describe Coro's maroon community, whether they were born in Venezuela, Curaçao, on the Loango Coast, the Gold Coast, or anywhere else on the African continent.

Maroon settlements throughout the Americas, such as the *loango* community in Coro, were constructed upon African political and economic customs, such as those that were practiced on the Gold Coast. Communalist principles in regards to production and consumption produced a highly organized egalitarian society. A familial system that connected members of society to a common ancestor facilitated this mode of existence. Leadership was important. The heads of households (usually males) were responsible for the home's other members, whose numbers could be in the dozens. This structure expanded to the levels of the town itself, the larger community and the head of state.[477] Slavery was practiced throughout the Gold Coast, but its nature was dramatically different to the way it was practiced in the Americas, and quite different than how the institution had existed throughout European history.

The region that was known as the Gold Coast during the protocolonial and colonial periods is roughly coterminous to present-day Ghana. The indigenous peoples of

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[476] Ivor Wilks, *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993), 4.

[477] K.Y. Daaku, "Aspects of Precolonial Akan Economy," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5:2 (1972): 245.

the region are known as the Guan. The region's largest ethnic group was the Akan, who inhabited the forests of the interior of the coast up to the Black Volta. The second largest group was the Ga who mostly lived on the eastern coast. The Guan lived amongst both the Akan and the Ga during the eighteenth century, although they were mostly concentrated on the coast, near Winneba. The Ga and the Akan spoke mutually intelligible Kwa languages. Although it is a matter of controversy regarding when the Akan and the Ga arrived to the Gold Coast, it was probably at some point in the thirteenth century. Regardless of when they arrived, both groups were certainly present when the Portuguese invaded the lands during the fifteenth century.[478]

The Akan dominated the Gold Coast during the early modern period, and in the eighteenth century, the Akan's largest historical polity, Greater Asante, held political and economic control over the region.[479] Historian Ivor Wilks traces the rise of the Akan and the Asante to the transition that occurred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Akan developed an agrarian society. Prior to this period, Akan-speaking groups engaged in hunting until demographic expansion, through the incorporation of migrants, facilitated the need for settlement and agricultural production. Thus began the clearing of forestlands for cultivation, as well as the concomitant growth of the Akan population.[480]

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[478] Kwame Yeboa Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600-1720* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), 1-2; J.K. Flynn, *Asante and Its Neighbors, 1700-1807* (London: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 4.

[479] I follow Kwame Arhin's decision to avoid the term "empire" when discussing the Asante, and utilize the term Greater Asante instead. As historians have made clear, Asante expansion had the effect of uniting a people, making this expansionary process quite different than imperialism. See: Kwame Arhin, "The Structure of Greater Ashanti (1700-1824)" *The Journal of African History* 8:1 (1967): 65-85.

[480] Wilks, 41-90.

Akan polities and those of the Ga and Guan followed a social system whose basis was the home. A typical household on the Gold Coast comprised of a family head, usually a male and a father. Polygamy was common on the Gold Coast and the male head of the household could have one or more wives. The household also included unmarried children, married sons and their families, the household head's mother, younger brothers and unmarried sisters, and the sons and daughters of the head of the household's married sisters. Servants were also considered part of the household, and so pawns, as well as enslaved people and their descendants, were also considered members of the home.[481]

Agriculture was one of the principal economic activities for families. Men, free and enslaved, cleared the Gold Coast's forests to prepare it for cultivation. This practice was the most labor-intensive aspect of agricultural production, but the bulk of the work was only carried out once every three years. Men would cut down the trees, fence the field, and weed the land during the clearing period. Wilks estimates that families cultivated about 2.5 acres of land every three years before the land was abandoned for new ones. The soil of the cleared land required fallowing every three years, and the land could not be replanted until 10-15 years later, in order to give the soil time to recuperate.[482]

Women and children would harvest the land, while men hunted, fished, and raised livestock. Families would plant cereals, fruits and vegetables, such as rice, maize, yam, cassava, and pineapples.[483] Wilks estimated that the planting and harvesting of

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[481] Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Century* (Legon: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004), 112.

[482] Wilks, 46-63.

[483] Wilks, 52; Perbi, 72.

agricultural goods required about 83 work days every three years, meaning that women and children had time to pursue other economic activities, such as marketing, as well as ample leisure time.[484] Men in the family would rear cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and donkeys.[485] During the eighteenth century, men used guns, spears, and bows and arrows to hunt food for consumption and for sale. Hunting groups would leave their homes early in the morning and return in the evening with food and/or ivory.[486] One early nineteenth century Tatar traveller noted that Gold Coast hunters dipped their arrows in poison, and if they were hunting big game, they would climb a tree for safety once the animal was inflicted. Sometimes, hunters would follow their prey for days before they died.[487] Fishing was most important on the coast, where men would fish, while women would prepare the meat for sale or consumption.[488]

Some of the agricultural and animal products were commodified and joined other commodities, such as gold, onto local markets. Before the slave trade took over the Coast's economy during the seventeenth century, the trade in gold had been the dominant economic activity European traders were engaged in. In fact, Gold Coast peoples had produced gold for European markets since the ancient Roman period.[489] During the eighteenth century, most gold production was conducted on Akan lands. Women

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[484] Wilks, 60.

[485] Perbi, 75.

[486] Ibid., 76.

[487] Wargee of Astrakhan, "The African Travels of Wargee" in Africa Remembered: Narratives by West Africans from the Era of the Slave Trade, edited by Philip D. Curtin (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1967), 181.

[488] Ibid., 76-7.

[489] Perbi, 83.

produced much gold through panning in riverbeds, loose alluvium deposits, and coastal sand. This form of production was not taxed, and was available to all individuals. Gold was also mined, however, which was a larger, more intensive undertaking, and which was controlled by local leaders who employed enslaved men.[490]

Although leadership was important amongst Gold Coast peoples, the society's stated ideals contributed to a political economy that was more horizontal than hierarchical. In the eighteenth century, the holder of the Asante Golden Stool was considered head of state, and the Queen mother, who held veto power, assisted him in his duties. These premier positions were followed by senior elders, who were in charge of the army.[491] The holder of the Stool was the trustee of all the land, but in practice, the custodians of land were town leaders or chiefs. These subchiefs were entrusted with ensuring that all community members had access to land. Family heads were awarded land, which was then allotted to each member of the household.[492] Asante states were considered an enlarged nuclear family, and as such, the state's role was to ensure that all family members had equal access to land.[493] In a similar vein, the vast majority of trade in commodities was free to all individuals and families, with minimal state interference. As historian K.Y. Daaku insists, the highest level of human achievement among the Asante was not the hoarding of wealth, as it was among European leaders, but the distribution of wealth to as many people as possible.[494]

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[490] Ibid., 83-7.

[491] Ibid., 94.

[492] Daaku, *Trade*, 50-1; Daaku, "Aspects," 241-5.

[493] Daaku, "Aspects," 245.

[494] Ibid., 247.

Throughout the eighteenth century, many communities on the Gold Coast were incorporated into the Asante, who forced new towns to pay tribute. The Asante established themselves as the dominant polity on the Gold Coast in 1701. Prior to that time, the Asante had begun uniting various polities surrounding Kumase, which became the capital of Greater Asante. Change came in the early eighteenth century when the Asante had grown to such an extent that they began refusing tribute payments to the Denkyira, which was the dominant polity of the late seventeenth century. Although the Asante were able to establish their growing presence at the turn of the eighteenth century, there were still Denkyira loyalists dispersed throughout the region, and the Asante would find themselves in conflict with these communities through the following decades, as well as with incorporated towns that rejected Asante control.[495]

The Asante continued their expansion throughout the eighteenth century, but in the model typical of Akan political growth. Those new communities, the vast majority of them being Akan, were incorporated into Greater Asante as provinces, protectorates or tributaries. Provinces, such as Akwamu and Assim, were considered parts of Greater Asante, and had the benefits of royal protection, but their chiefs were required to pay tribute, and pledge loyalty to the Golden Stool. Chiefs of the Asante Provinces would receive 20% of the tribute for themselves. Protectorates, such as Accra and Elmina, were independent partners who engaged in trade with the Asante and with Europeans. They could request protection from Asante but their political ties were not as formal as they were with the Provinces, and they were not considered members of Greater Asante. Protectorates usually recorded this status because of their fortuitous geographical locations, which gave them economic independence and strong relations with trading

[495] Daaku, *Trade,* 144-60.

partners, particularly Europeans. Tributaries were towns that were tied to the Asante simply through tribute payments, which were collected by an annual Asante visitor. But there were no other formal political ties, except if the town's leader invited the Asante to intervene in some way.[496]

Throughout the eighteenth century, the Asante were constantly occupied with battling Provinces that resisted incorporation or some particular aspect of their relationship with Asante. These battles resulted in the enslavement of thousands of people, fed the Atlantic slave trade, and created eighteenth-century Coro. Many of the Provinces that were incorporated into Asante rejected their newfound relationships because of their loyalty to Denkyira. Others rejected the amount of tribute that they were responsible for paying, and still others refused the presence of the Asante military.[497]

Most people on the Gold Coast were enslaved by way of warfare, whether they remained in the region or if they were traded to Europeans. Contemporary oral histories taken by historian Akosua Adoma Perbi show that 31% of respondents found that warfare was "very important" to acquiring slaves, while 26% noted the importance of local markets. Kidnapping, tribute, and pawning each received 10% of interviewee responses designating those areas of slave procurement as "very important."[498]

As was the case throughout Africa, slavery in the Gold Coast region was radically different than it was in the European tradition, and from how it was practiced in the Americas. The Gold Coast peoples were linked through an idea of consanguinity and for this reason, neighboring communities, even if they belonged to a different ethnic group,

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[496] Arhin, 76-85.

[497] Ibid., 78.

[498] Perbi, 28.

were considered family. Although enslaved people were marked by their condition in particular ways they still held the same rights as any other family member of the household. They had the same right to plant, eat, and trade, to be clothed, and to receive protection. Enslaved people on the Gold Coast could have independent incomes, could own property, and they could inherit their master's property. Slaves could also rise to positions of authority within their communities and within society. In fact, Perbi has documented that 20% of Asante stools, or royal office appointments, were held by enslaved people.[499]

But slavery did limit one's possibilities in life and enslaved people were considered a separate, lower class. Enslaved men and women ate with the free women of the home, separated from the free men. Enslaved people were also expected to dress more modestly and were barred from wearing gold. The status of enslaved people was not forgotten during their lifetimes, although by the third or fourth generation, enslaved people would be considered an equal member of their families.[500] Enslaved people made up a sizeable minority of the population and practiced all of the economic activities conducted by free people.

Before being sold to Europeans on the coast, most enslaved people were taken to local markets where they were sold to intermediaries. Perbi has located 63 slave markets in the Gold Coast region; 30 of them on the coast, and the remaining 33 were scattered across the vast interior.[501] At these markets, enslaved people were traded for an assortment of other commodities, such as cowries, ivory, iron, weapons, and textiles.

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[499] Ibid., 142.

[500] Ibid., 113-32.

[501] Ibid., 37.

European commodities held a special prestige, were in high demand, and were always available for trade. Salaga, laying approximately 120 miles northeast of Kumasi, and about 240 miles from the coast, was the site of the region's largest market. At Salaga, people from as far as present day Burkina Faso and Nigeria would trade in commodities such as enslaved people. The Salaga market was divided into two sections: one for the sale of slaves and the other for the sale of all other goods. Sale items were placed on top of mats that lay on the ground. Enslaved people were chained together by their necks and waists, in groups of 10 to 15.[502]

Although enslaved people were treated as family members, the act of being enslaved was a horrendous experience, particularly for children. Quoba Ottobah Cugoano was kidnapped in 1770 when he was 13 years old. Cugoano may have been born a slave, stating in his memoir years later that his father was "a companion" of the Fante King. Cugoano states that he lived in the late King's home until he was sent to live with his nephew who had inherited leadership. Cugoano stated that he lived in his new home with the new chief's children "enjoying peace and tranquility, about twenty moons, which, according to their way of reckoning time, is two years."[503] After that time, he was sent to live with an uncle who had "hundreds of relations" and that he enjoyed his three months there, playing with all the other children. One day, Cugoano and a group of friends went "into the woods to gather fruit and catch birds, and such amusements as pleased us" when

[502] Ibid., 47.

[503] Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 12.

he and his friends were confronted by "several great ruffians" who claimed that the children "had committed a fault against their lord."[504]

The men demanded that Cugoano and his friends follow them to account for their offence. Some children tried to run away, according to Cugoano, "but pistols and cutlasses were soon introduced."[505] Cugoano added "one of them pretended to be more friendly than the rest, and said, that he would speak to their lord to get us clear, and desired that we should follow him."[506] After travelling a considerable distance, Cugoano was placed in the home of a strange man for six days. The whole time that Cugoano was away from his home, he was desperate to return. He refused to eat until the strange man promised him that he would return him to his uncle's home. Cugoano finally ate "a little fruit with him" but he was not returned to his uncle.[507] One morning, Cugoano was sent to travel with the man where he "saw several white people, which made me afraid that they would eat me, according to our notion as children in the inland parts of the country."[508]

Although he was born and raised a few hundred miles east of the Gold Coast, Olaudah Equiano had a similar experience to Cugoano. As mentioned above, the market at Salaga welcomed traders from far and wide, and many brought enslaved Igbo people from present day southeast Nigeria, such as Equiano. In his autobiography, Equiano

[504] Ibid., 13.

[505] Ibid.

[506] Ibid.

[507] Ibid., 14.

[508] Ibid.

stated that he was one of seven siblings and that his father also held many slaves. But Equiano added:

> but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West-Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their master. Their food, cloathing, and lodging were nearly the same as theirs, except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free born.[509]

Like Cugoano, though, Equiano was kidnapped at a young age. He stated that in his community, it was common for children to stay home and play while the adults travelled to work the land, "and commonly some of us used to get up a tree to look out for any assailant, or kidnapper, that might come upon us."[510] One day, two men and one woman grabbed Equiano and his sister "stopped our mouths, tied our hands, and ran off with us into the nearest wood."[511]

Equiano and his sister were separated and Equiano changed masters numerous times until he was finally sold to Europeans. On his first long stop, Equiano "got into the hands of a chieftain, in a very pleasant country."[512] He added, "This man had two wives and some children, and they all used me extremely well, and did all they could to comfort me; particularly the first wife, who was something like my mother."[513] Equiano stated that he was at this home for about a month, and that although he had much freedom of movement and was treated well, he used this "liberty" to "embrace every opportunity to

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[509] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 40.

[510] Ibid., 47.

[511] Ibid.

[512] Ibid., 48.

[513] Ibid.

inquire the way to my own home."[514] Equiano was traded various times before he reached the coast and boarded a slave ship, which "filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror."[515]

Cugoano and Equiano's testimonies confirm that slavery, as practiced in West Africa, was a vastly more humane condition than the versions practiced by their European contemporaries in the Americas. Despite this fact, however, their autobiographies also reveal that the act of enslavement was often brutal, and that even though enslaved people were adopted as kin, they still longed for an opportunity to return home. Although angry at people who practice kidnapping of people for sale, Cugoano was also sympathetic towards his captors, stating, "wicked and barbarous as they certainly are, I can hardly think, if they knew what horrible barbarity they were sending their fellow-creatures to, that they would do it."[516] There is reason to believe, then, that people who traded enslaved Africans to Europeans did not realize that they were sending them into horrific conditions. Some African traders could have assumed that Europeans treated enslaved people in the same manner that they were treated at home.

Many of Coro's *loangos* once had homes on the Gold Coast, and the political economy of the region shaped the structure of their *cumbés*, as well as the moral economy of Coro's rebels. Like the *loango* communities, towns in the Gold Coast held an open door policy for new community members, based on the notion of consanguinity. A political economy with a foundation in communalist agricultural practices, buttressed by hunting, gathering, and trade, also carried over to the *loango cumbés*. The Gold Coast's

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[514] Ibid.

[515] Ibid., 55.

[516] Cugoano, 26.

social structure was not without hierarchy, however, as town and state leaders, as well as male household heads, held political and economic advantages over others, particularly enslaved people. This was also the case in maroon communities, and glimpses of these practices can be seen amongst the *loangos*, especially in regards to the unique treatment that González received. Nevertheless, the political economy of the Gold Coast was a rather egalitarian one, and one void of the worst aspects of slavery, white supremacy and colonial rule; features that defined life in eighteenth-century Coro. It was this lifestyle that served as the guiding light for Coro's rebels.

The Loango Coast

The region that served as the *loangos*' namesake featured a political and economic system that was strikingly similar to the one practiced on the Gold Coast. When they held the *asiento*, the South Sea Company procured about 32.8% of its enslaved people from the Loango Coast.[517] During the eighteenth century, about 37% of enslaved people acquired by Dutch slavers were also from the Loango Coast region.[518] Therefore, many of Coro's rebels had origins on the Loango Coast. There is not much secondary material on the region during the protocolonial period. But by parsing through the existing literature, as well as reviewing contemporary European travel accounts, one is given the picture of a social system that was homologous to that of the Gold Coast and maroon communities throughout the Americas, including the *loango cumbés*.

[517] Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 31.

[518] Borucki, 40.

In the eighteenth century, the Loango Coast was home to three ethnic groups, which each had their own King and their own port of trade. The Vili of the Kingdom of Loango were the dominant polity for much of the early modern period until the Ngoyo and Kakongo Kingdoms achieved independence during the mid eighteenth century as a result of their engagement in the European slave trade. The Loango Kingdom was about 120 miles long and stretched from the Chiloango River to the Baynya lagoon. The Kingdom had four provinces, of which Loangiri (also known as Loango) was home to the Kingdom's capital of Buali and was the main trading point of the Loango Bay. The people of the Kingdom of Ngoyo identified as the Woyo people, and they held the port of Cabinda. The smallest of the three kingdoms, the Kakongo, was of the Kotchi people who held their port at Malemba. All three kingdoms had similar cultural and institutional practices and they spoke mutually intelligible dialects of Kikongo, a Bantu language.[519]

It is most likely that the three peoples broke off from the Kingdom of Kongo at some point in the fourteenth century. There were probably people living in the region that would become known as the Loango Coast when these peoples arrived, but definitive clues are lacking. The Vili, Wolo and Kotchi founded the land north of the Kongo Kingdom after the latter's population had expanded. For some time, perhaps as long as a century, the Loango Coast was part of the Kongo Kingdom until it gained independence. By the late sixteenth century, the King of the Kongo no longer laid any claims to the Loango Coast.[520]

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[519] Phyllis M. Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576-1870: The Effects of Changing Commercial Relations on the Vili Kingdom of Loango* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 3-30.

[520] Ibid., 1-9.

Homes and communities were organized on the Loango Coast in ways similar to the Gold Coast. Homes consisted of 10 to 40 people who conducted food production collectively.[521]Women in the family planted and harvested the fields, producing beans, cassava, yams, and maize.[522] It is likely that enslaved men and women also worked in agriculture. Free men—and probably enslaved ones too—would clear a new field out of the forest once a year. The men would then build a fence around the field and plant traps to keep animals out. Women would then plant their crops and harvest the yams 10 months after planting them. Men and women in the house worked together to stack the yams, and most of the land was then allowed to fallow. During this fallow, small greens would grow, and be used for the family's consumption. A small portion of the field was maintained to grow kitchen crops until a new field was planted. Homes needed about 10 times the amount of land they cultivated to maintain their families, and once a great distance between the homes, their towns, and their primary fields got further away, entire towns would migrate to new lands. This migration occurred about once every 10 years, and assumed the availability of open spaces and low population densities.[523]

But farming was meant to produce about only about 40% of a home's food supply. The animal traps that men set up inside of the fields' fences produced a steady supply of meat. Families also hunted, gathered fruits and vegetables, fished, and grew insect colonies for consumption. During the dry season, groups of men from a town would camp for about a month on hunting and fishing expeditions in which game was

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[521] Jan Vasina, *Paths in the Rainforests, Towards a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (London: James Currey, 1990), 75.

[522] Martin, 13; Vasina, 84-5.

[523] Vasina, 85-99.

shared collectively. Goats and dogs appear to be the only animals that were domesticated on farmland.[524] Households also produced pottery, and manufactured cloth and baskets.

All three of the ethnic groups of the coast traced themselves to a common ancestor, and as was the case in the Gold Coast, this is perhaps what led strangers and slaves to be welcomed as family. Writing of his journeys through the Loango Coast in 1776, French traveller Liévain Bonaventure Proyart wrote that the peoples of the coast "are human and obliging, even towards strangers, and those whom they have nothing to hope for. Hotelleries are not in use among them. A traveler who passes by a village at mealtime, enters, without any way, in the first home, and he is welcome."[525] This courtesy towards strangers was extended to people not considered relatives, however, as in the case of missionaries. Proyart added, "The missionaries often set out without provisions and without merchandise to procure them: they were received everywhere humanly, they lacked nothing for life."[526]

As was the case in the Gold Coast, the structure of Loango Coast society was based on the composition of the home. Historian and anthropologist Jan Vansina argues that three interlocking groups formed the basis of society for Bantu-speaking peoples in Equatorial Africa: the district, the village, and the house. The house was led by a polygamous male head of the family who acted as father to a host of kin and servants, as well as friends. Marriages occurred in many ways: sisters could be exchanged amongst

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[524] Ibid., 83-5.

[525] L'Abbé Proyart, Histoire de Loango, Kakongo, et autres Royaumes d'Afrique (Paris, 1776), 73.: "Ils sont humains &obligeans, meme envers les inconnus, & ceux don't ils n'ont rien à espérer. Les hôtelleries ne sont point en usage parmi eux. Un voyageur qui passe par un village à l'heure du repas, entre, sans façon, dans la premiere case, & il y est le bien-venu."

[526] Ibid.: "Les Missionnaires se sont souvent mis en route sans provisions & sans marchandises pour s'en procurer: on les a reçus partout humainement, ils n'ont manquéde rien pour la vie."

male heads of families, women could be married off as a form of payment, or even given as a gift. Women were also married to heads of families as the result of violence, when they were granted as compensation from the losing party in war or if they were outright kidnapped.[527]

The structure of a "village" or town followed a similar logic to that of the home. Each Loango town had a leader who had earned, rather than inherited, his title. In the nineteenth century, a town consisted of about 100 inhabitants, and this was surely true of the eighteenth century as well. Therefore, a town probably consisted of between three and ten homes during the eighteenth century. Although a few towns of nineteenth-century Equatorial Africa had only one home, this was rare, and Vansina suggests that this was rarer still during the previous centuries. The town comprised of private rectangular homes that lay along the sides of a road or plaza. The town also had communal sheds, which were used by all community members for manufacturing activities, such as weaving, carpentry, and smithing.[528]

Each town had a central area designated for community meetings, including those of the town's leader and his council. Here, plans were collectively made and disputes were handled. The town's leader commanded respect from all members of the community. He and his home were always provided the largest share of a hunt, and the most emblematic animals hunted, such as the leopard, were always given to the town leader.[529]

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[527] Vasina, 75-7.

[528] Ibid.

[529] Ibid., 77-9.

Homes and towns were tightly knit, communalist spaces. As mentioned earlier, towns in the Loango Coast generally changed locations about once every ten years, once farming lands proved too distant, but all of the town's homes would move together. Towns, like homes, had a communal structure, which ensured that all community members were cared for. Proyart wrote that individuals of the towns were "willing to share the little they have with those they know to be in need."[530] He added that, "if they be happy in hunting or fishing, and have obtained some rare piece, they also run to give notice to their friends and neighbors, carrying them their share."[531]

Finally, the district was a loosely organized confederation of towns that subscribed to a common identity. The district did not have a leader or a "chief" entrusted with the district's care. Rather, the town leaders themselves maintained relations between neighbors. Inter-town relations were conducted by the leaders of two adjacent towns who maintained open communication with each other to address issues of mutual interest. When entire towns migrated every ten years to work new fields, they tended to stay within the vicinity of their district, which had the effect of maintaining a group identity.[532]

The Kingdom of Loango united the districts of the coast for much of the eighteenth century, until the Kingdoms of Ngoyo and Kakongo gained independence in the middle of the century. The King of Loango, known as the Maloango, held his throne at the city of Buali, just a few miles in from the coast. Unlike the leaders of the towns, the

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[530] Proyart, 71.: "ils sont prêts à partager le peu qu'ils ont avec qu'ils savent être dans le besoin."

[531] Ibid.: "s'ils ont été heureux à la chasse ou à la pêche, & qu'ils se foient procure quelque piece rare, ils courent aussi-tôto en donner avis à leurs amis & à leurs voisins, en leur en portant leur part."

[532] Ibid., 81-2.

Loango King's title of Maloango was hereditary. All homes were responsible for paying tribute to the Maloango, but in accordance with the wealth of the home. So homes with fewer occupants and less land paid a lower rate than those homes that held more. Tribute payments were made in both labor and kind. Officials who were appointed by the Maloango collected tribute from the various towns. Other officials were responsible for meting out justice and others for providing armies during wartime. By midcentury, the Loango Kingdom splintered as a result of the rise of the Mafouks, merchants who gained much wealth and influence as a result of the slave trade. Before the split, the Ngoyo and Kakongo Kingdoms were tied to the Kingdom of Loango as junior partners who paid tribute.[533] But even after the Ngoyo and Kikongo split from the Loango Crown, they continued to pay some form of tribute to the Maloango.[534]

Proyart's observations reveal a society that is at once communal and hierarchical. His discussion of greeting customs offer insight into class, royalty, and status in the Loango Coast:

If they are equals who meet each other, they make a genuflection, and recover themselves by clapping their hands. He who meets a man who is remarkably superior to him, professes himself, lowers his head, touches the earth with his fingertips, carries them to his mouth, and raises himself by clapping his hands. The person who has been thus received, whether it be a Prince or even the King, never dispenses with salvation, genuflecting, and clapping.[535]

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[533] Martin, 22.

[534] Christina Frances Mobley, "The Kongolese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti" (Ph.D. Diss.: Duke University, 2015), 70.

[535] Proyart, 72.: "Si ce sont des égaux qui se recontrent, ils font une génuflexion, & se relevant en battant des mains. Celui qui recontre un home qui lui est notablement supérieur, se prosterne, baisse la tête, touche la terre des du bout des doigts, les porte à sa bouche, & se releve en battant des mains. Le personne qui a été ainsi saluée, fut-ce un Prince, ou meme le Roi, ne se dispense jamais de render le salut, en faisant une génuflexion, & en battant des mains."

Status was an important aspect of life on the Loango coast, one that was reflected in, while being buttressed by, ubiquitous gestures and actions. Yet, Proyart also notes that the King's wealth did not seem radically superior to that of commoners, saying that the Maloango palace consisted of only "five or six houses, a little larger" than those of commoners.[536] Speaking of the Mafouks, Proyart also stated, "the bourgeois have nothing that distinguishes them from the villagers; they are neither better dressed nor better housed. The bourgeoisie of the capital will work in the fields, like the peasant women of the smallest hamlet."[537] Therefore, it seems that although the society was hierarchical, and people atop the ladder had larger material means, income was still not nearly as stratified as it was in Europe, or its colonies.

As was the case in the Gold Coast, slavery was practiced on the Loango coast, but it was radically different from the European tradition. Another late eighteenth century French traveller, Louis de Granpre, wrote "many (servants) are slaves and subject to the caprices of their master, who sells them according to his will."[538] De Granpre added, however, that "though law places them there as slaves; either that their wealth gives them a consideration that shelters them, or that a long filiation in the place of their residency, has made them so natural that their master is afraid to sell them."[539] De Granpre's insight demonstrates that slavery in the Loango Coast was an institution similar to the one

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[536] Ibid., 57.: "cinq ou six cases, un peu plus grandes."

[537] Ibid., 54-5.: "Les bourgeois n'ont rien quiles distingue des villageois: ils ne sont ni mieux vêtus, ni mieux loges. Les bourgeoises de la capitale vont travailler aux champs, comme les paysannes du plus petit hameau."

[538] L. Degrandpré, Voyage a la côte occidentale d'Afrique, fait dans les anneees 1786 et 1787 (Paris, 1801), 105.: "sont esclaves et soumis aux caprices de leur maître, qui les vend suivant sa volonté."

[539] Ibid.: "quoique la loi les y assujettisse comme esclaves; mais soit que leur richesse leur donne une consideration qui les met à l'abri, soit qu'une longue filiation dans le lieu de leur residence, les y ait tellement naturalizes que leur maître craigne de les vendre."

practiced on the Gold Coast. Enslaved people were considered a class below ordinary members of society, but at the same time, they were treated as family, whether this was due to tradition or necessity.

Enslaved people who were sold to Europeans on the Loango Coast had origins on the coast itself and in the Mayombe rainforest outside of Malemba.[540] People received their enslaved status as a result of inheritance, criminal prosecution, kidnapping, and war. As was seen in the Gold Coast, many people on the Loango Coast inherited their condition as slaves, and could be sold to Europeans because they were in this condition. Historian Christina Mobley suggests that criminal prosecution for crimes, such as fighting, failure to pay debt, and witchcraft grew throughout the eighteenth century as a result of the stimulus provided by the slave trade.[541] The punishment for these crimes increasingly became enslavement. It is also likely that kidnapping was another source of enslavement, given that many enslaved people were captured on the coast. As Mobley points out, de Granpre's narrative consistently discuses the method of kidnapping as one of the major ways in which Europeans procured enslaved people.[542]

The emergence of a new class of merchant elites native to the Loango Coast eroded the power of the Maloango, contributed to a political breakdown in the region, and led to war. After the Kakongo and Ngoyo Crowns gained independence from the Moloango, they began to receive threats of their own from inland groups such as the Solango. Polities from the interior were eager to become direct providers of enslaved people to Europeans by getting rid of the Ngoyo and Kakongo middlemen, particularly

[540] Mobley, 186-230.

[541] Ibid., 159.

[542] Ibid., 144.

when these groups were considered weakened by factionalism. Disputes over legitimacy in the two breakaway Loango states also contributed to an outbreak of civil wars, which coincided with the slave trade's peak on the Loango Coast between 1763 and 1793. Mafouks, who mostly lived on or near the coast, also began fighting each other over territorial disputes.[543]

It is important to note, however, that warfare on the Loango Coast was not as destructive as it was in Europe and its colonies. Vasina argues that there were two types of wars waged during the protocolonial period in Equatorial Africa: restricted wars and destructive wars. Restricted wars were—by far—the most common from of warfare and were fought in accordance with strident rules. The leaders of the two communities in conflict would meet to agree upon a day in which battle would be waged. The two parties would then meet on that day on the borders of the two fighting districts. After one or two men were seriously injured or killed, peace negotiations would commence and compensation was negotiated. Destructive wars were extremely rare in the nineteenth century, and Vasina argues that they were probably rarer still prior to that. Destructive wars come from the Bantu word "to burn" because the communities of the losing party were burned to the grown. The burning wars, then, were designed to destroy or chase away an enemy, take their lands, and perhaps subordinate those that were defeated.[544] The result of these wars, however, whether restricted or destructive, was the transfer of enslaved people from the losing to the winning party, and to the enslavement of some of the losing party's community members. These people who became war booty were those that would be sold to Europeans.

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[543] Ibid., 64-107.

[544] Vasina, 80.

Like the *loango cumbés* of Coro, daily life on the eighteenth century Loango Coast was governed by a communal political and economic system, although classes did exist, as did violent conflict. On the Loango Coast and in the *loango cumbés*, families would grow crops for their own consumption, and would supplement this food source through hunting, fishing, collecting, and small-scale trading. These practices were conducted in such a way as to ensure that all community members had relatively equal access to food, shelter, and clothing. As was seen with maroon communities in the Americas, Loango Coast towns were open to new members and travellers. As was also true of González and the *loangos*, town heads on the Loango Coast gained their title, not through inheritance or appointment, but through earning the position by proving their ability to lead effectively. In addition, Loango Coast towns would regularly move to settle on land that was being unused, once their lands became too distant from their homes. It was this latter practice that caused much friction between the *loango* communities and local plantation owners in Coro, and led to the 1795 insurrection.

Conclusion

Soon after González and the two anonymous *loangos* who attempted to escape were murdered, nine of their comrades suffered a similar fate. On the night of May 14, the wives of nine *loangos* were detained for trying to bribe one of Coro's jailers to let their husbands free. Valderraín testified that, on the following day, he decapitated the nine men as a response to their wives' actions.[545]

[545] "Expediente," ff. 9.

On May 23, Valderraín continued the brutal retribution of suspected rebels by sentencing 53 people, 22 of who were *loangos*, to terrible fates. Twenty-one legally free and enslaved men of African descent were to have their throats slit. Three enslaved women, Polonia, Juana Antonia, and Trinidad, were ordered to receive 200 lashes each at the Royal Jail of Coro, and then be sold outside of the region. Seven indigenous men were sentenced to work on the King's ships at Puerto Cabello for 10 years. The *loangos* that had accompanied González to request "various times arms which were denied them" at the home of Valderraín, and perhaps a few others were sent, along with the indigenous men, "to serve your Majesty for rations and without wages" for six years.[546]

Soon after these sentences were meted out, Captain Francisco Jacot suggested that more *loangos* be round up and sent to Puerto Cabello. On June 7, Jacot stated, "I conferenced with the Justicia Mayor about whether it would be convenient to expatriate the black Luangos, or minas."[547] Five days later, Jacot expounded on his position to the Captain General, stating that there were about 250 black and pardo free people living in the sierra, "added to the haciendas without a home, nor property, corrupting the growers with their depraved customs and most of them took part in the rebellion in order to rob, or as compliant troops, but it is difficult to prove for many."[548] Jacot added that the *loangos* in the sierra should be taken to Puerto Cabello because if "they are not totally expatriated

[546] Ibid., ff. 1-3.: "varias veces las armas que se le denegaron"; "a que sirvan a su Magestad a racion y sin sueldo."

[547] Ibid., ff. 51-2.: "conferencie con el Justicia Mayor sobre si coviene expatriar los negros Luangos, o minas."

[548] Ibid., ff. 53-4.: "agregados a las haciendas sin domicilio, ni propiedad, corrompiendo a los criados con sus depravadas constumbres y los mas de ellos concurrieron a la rebellion asi para rrobar, o como efectivos complices dificl de probarselo a muchos."

this land will not be secure."[549] A few weeks later, on July 8, Jacot and Valderraín got their wish, and about 60 *loangos* were sent to prison in Puerto Cabello, where they would work in service of the King. Jacot claimed that the exiled included members of the *loango* militia who had not already been sent to Puerto Cabello in the previous group of 22. Forty-two adult men, and ten of their sons, were sent to Puerto Cabello. Coro's authorities determined that seven *loango* men could stay in Coro because they were considered "useless old men."[550]

But the authorities in Puerto Cabello pushed back against what they interpreted as a burden being placed on them and their city's resources. When Comandante Antonio Guillelmi reported that 60 *loangos* had arrived to Puerto Cabello two months later, he complained "there is no room to receive more prisoners without grave danger for their security because we no longer have bodegas, jails, nor other locations where they can be secured."[551] Guillelmi suggested that if Coro's authorities were to send any more prisoners, that they should send them to Caracas's port of La Guayra because Puerto Cabello simply would not be able to feed or house any other prisoners.

The Real Audiencia de Caracas came up with a temporary solution to the problem, followed by a more permanent solution that was favorable to the *loangos*. On September 28, the Audiencia stated that, because the *loangos* could no longer be held in Puerto Cabello, in accordance to Guillelmi's missive, that the *loangos* should be sent to

[549] Ibid.: "no se expatrien totalmente no quedara aseguarada esta tierra."

[550] Ibid.: ff. 147.: "viejos inutiles."

[551] Ibid., ff. 256.: "no hay ya donde recivir mas presos sin gravissimo peligro de su seguridad por no tenerse ya mas bodegas, carceles, ni otros parajes donde aseguralos."

fight in Spain's war against Revolutionary France in the "Ships of the Flotilla for as long as the War lasts."[552]

On December 10, 1796, the Audiencia declared "the black Luangos entirely free of involvement in the expressed uprising, and that they are loyal servants of the King and of the public, commanding that they be returned to the care of their homes, and families."[553] The Audiencia added that whether they were in Caracas, Puerto Cabello, or fighting for the King overseas, that all of the *loangos* held in custody should be sent home to Coro. After having spent a year and a half in various prisons across the Captaincy General, the *loangos* were shockingly declared innocent. This is the only evidence currently available that reveals the fate of Coro's *loango* community. It is unclear whether or not the Audiencia's instructions were actually carried out, although it should be assumed that the Court's subalterns followed these directions.

The Audiencia's declaration of the *loangos*' innocence raises just as many questions as it does answers. González and the *loangos* who were not dispersed in "service to the King" were not mentioned in the Audiencia's sentencing, making it unclear as to whether or not they considered these *loangos* to be innocent as well. The Audiencia's verdict could have been the result of pressure from Puerto Cabello's authorities who were overwhelmed with *loango* prisoners. Perhaps feeling secure that victory in Coro was assured over a year after the rebellion, and after the brutal public executions of dozens of suspected rebels, the Audiencia could have determined that the *loangos* were no longer a threat. They may have ordered the *loangos*' return to Coro in

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552 "Expedientes," ff. 56-7.: "Baxeles de la Esquadra por el tiempo que dure la Guerra."

553 "Expediente," ff. 6.: "entteramentte libres de complicidad en la expresada subleacion a los negros Luangos, y que son fieles servidores del Rey y del publico, mandando que sean restituidos al cuidado de sus casas, y familias."

order to solve the problem of Puerto Cabello's overcrowding prisons, and declared them innocent in order to facilitate this resolution.

Given the conflicts over land that existed between the *loango* community and local authorities, it is easy to see why they would have contributed to the launching of a revolutionary movement. Informed by the communalist, agriculturalist social orders of their African homelands, Coro's *loango*s found common cause with local black people, who had the same African roots, decades before the 1795 rebellion. This is evident by the fact that many members of Coro's black community, who did not have origins in the escaping of enslavement in Curaçao, joined the *loango cumbés* in Coro's sierra. This was particularly the case for women who married into *loango* families. These women also brought their children with them, and maintained close relationships with their parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and siblings.

Coro's rebels, including those members of the *loango* community that participated in the insurrection, had similar visions of what their new society would look like. These hopes were based on the traditions of their African homelands, particularly the communal political and economic practices of the homes, towns, and districts in which they themselves, or their ancestors lived. The history of maroon settlements throughout the Americas shows that once Afro-descended people achieved freedom from bondage in the Americas during the early modern period, they organized their new society in ways that mirrored the structures of autochthonous communities in West and West Central Africa.

Therefore, the conceptions of freedom that Coro's rebels held did not rely on the latest waves of Enlightenment thought, but were found in the political and economic

traditions of the Gold and Loango coasts. Coro's rebels sought equal access to land, food, and shelter, but they did not assume that its application would do away with status or rank. Coro's rebels would continue to respect their community's leaders, and they accepted that these positions brought about special, but not extravagant, benefits. When rebels called for the abolition of slavery, they had American—rather than African—slavery in mind. Some rebels probably envisioned that the African form of slavery would exist in the new Coro. Likewise, when Coro's rebels called for the elimination of taxes, they thought of the colonial conception of taxes, which were applicable to all, regardless of one's station in life. The rebels may have also envisioned that African forms of tribute would be applied to their new society as well. But these plans for a new Coro were not only shared by the region's Afro-descended people. Coro's native American rebels were also buoyed by dreams of a communalist society that would be rebuilt upon the ashes of colonial Coro.

Chapter Four: Indigenous Labor-Power

Like the *loangos* and other Afro-descended rebels, the peoples indigenous to Coro practiced a communal social system that was interrupted by European imperialism. These precolonial practices and their mores—this moral economy—continued operating in eighteenth-century Coro, although colonial institutions significantly distorted them. During the eighteenth century, Coro's indigenous people settled on land in which they produced agricultural goods, both for consumption and for sale. But indigenous people were forced to supplement these subsistence methods through laboring for wages on Coro's haciendas and plantations. Some indigenous peoples, such as the Ajagua, were also singled out to pay bi-annual taxes called tribute, which they despised. And like all legally free people in Coro, all indigenous people, including those exempt from tribute, were responsible for making *alcabala* payments, a tax imposed on the transport and sale of commodities. Non-whites in Coro disproportionately shouldered these *alcabala* charges, and their exaction increased dramatically in the years leading to the 1795 rebellion. Therefore, the ideal lifestyles that Coro's indigenous peoples hoped to lead were arrested by an intensifying racialized labor system—one that would lead some indigenous people to launch an insurrection, and others to look for relief through aiding the Crown's counterrevolution.

People of native American descent planned the rebellion in advance and were among the first to rise up. José Leonardo Chirino himself was born in the Ajagua town of Pedregal to an indigenous mother and an enslaved black father. When the first blows were struck on the night of May 10, Chirino was accompanied by four other men, two of whom were indigenous. Juan de los Santos, a Caquetío man from Carrizal and Pedro

Coyo, an Ajagua man from Pecaya or Pedregal, were among those that killed Don Josef de Martínez while Chirino's wife, María de los Dolores Chirino cooked him supper.[554]

People of indigenous descent continued their participation in the insurrection on the night of May 10 and in the morning of the day after. Like Chirino, de los Santos, and Coyo, the free *zambos* Candelario and Juan Christoval were residents of the Socorro plantation and among the first people to take up arms. Juan de Matos, a Caquetio man from Carrizal was a resident at the nearby plantation of Macanillas, and he would be by Chirino's side in the first days of the rebellion.[555] As mentioned in the first chapter, it appears that the Ajagua man Juan de Jesús de Lugo also participated in the rebellion, even though he claimed to be innocent. Not all rebels were named alongside their racial classification in surviving documents, however, so it is impossible to know exactly how many people of native American descent were involved. Nevertheless, it is clear that several of the leading figures of the rebellion were native American.[556]

Indigenous people played a key role in the 1795 insurrection as rebels, but more significantly, as soldiers defending the Crown. These efforts began on May 11, when word of the uprising reached Coro, as several indigenous people were being organized into contingents at Justicia Mayor Mariano Ramírez Valderraín's home that morning. Two Caquetios from Carrizal, Cipriano Antonio Gonzales and Lorenzo Reyes Díaz, were injured on the night of May 11 in the battle at Caujarao, and they would later die of their

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554 "Expediente sobre la insurrección de los negros, zambos y mulatos proyectada en el año 1795 a las inmediaciones de la ciudad de Coro, Provincia de Caracas," 1795, Caracas, 426, Archivo General de Indias, Seville (AGI), ff. 96-7.

555 Ibid., ff. 92-5.

556 Ibid., ff. 97-102.

wounds.[557] During the decisive battle of the morning of May 12, 84 Caquetio men—42 from Guaybacoa, 20 from Carrizal, 20 from Santa Ana, and two from Mitare—comprised nearly 40% of the 213 men that defeated the rebel advance of as many as 425 insurgents that day.[558] Being out-manned, colonial forces relied heavily on the Caquetio, their bows and arrows, and their expertise in using these deadly weapons to crush the rebellion.

The rebel defeat outside of the city of Coro led indigenous people to reach out to other native American communities for help. Once he received word on the rebel defeat, Chirino wrote a letter to the Ajagua authorities of Pecaya, in what was a calculated, yet desperate, attempt to breath new life into the rebellion:

> Sir Casique, and Sir Captain, and Sir Governor, my dear sirs, finding myself in this effort to see if these burdens which kill us will end, requesting the people that you are able to give me, so that I can go make a good entrance to Coro, to see if we seize them, so that we may have some relief; with this, you will not pay for a delay, and this is what is offered for now; I beg to God that he keep me many years. From your affectionate servant that kisses your hands, Josef Leonardo Chirino.[559]

A white hostage named Josef Güero, who was captured alongside Josef de Tellería's family after the latter was killed, penned the above letter as Chirino dictated it. Matos, the Caquetio man from the Macanillas plantation, was charged with accompanying Güero to Pecaya to hand the note to Joseph Barnandino Carencio, the town's Cacique.[560]

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[557] Ibid., ff. 343.

[558] Ibid., ff. 176-7; ff. 350-2.

[559] "Expedientes, sublevacion de esclavos en la sierra de Coro, 1795," 1795, Judiciales, A16-C54-D11183, Academia Nacional de Historia, Caracas (ANH), ff. 337: "Señor Casique, y el Señor Capitan, y el Señor Governador, mui señores mios hallándome en este empeño de ver si se acaban estos pechos que nos matan, proponiendo a Vds la gente que me pueden dar, para ir a hacer le una dentrada buena a Coro, a ver si lo cojemos, para tener algun alivio, con eso, no pagaran demora, y es quanto se ofrece por ahora, rogar a Dios me guarde muchos años=De su afectísimo servidor que besa sus manos, Josef Leonardo Chirino."

[560] Ibid., ff. 387.

It is unclear if Carencio heeded Chirino's call, but the letter does reveal insight into rebel strategy and ideology. As the son of an Ajagua woman from Pedregal, Chirino reached out to Ajagua authorities in the nearby town of Pecaya, which served as the de facto capital of the Ajagua people. The "burdens" that Chirino refers to—those that were weighing on people of African and native American descent alike—were taxes, such as the *alcabala*, and indigenous tribute, which served as important means of labor extraction for the colonial state.

The Caquetio, who made up about 90% of Coro's indigenous population, were exempt from tribute payments because of their historical loyalties to the Spanish Crown, but these supposed benefits came in exchange of colonial subordination, with some of its most tangible effects being mandatory military service and *alcabala* payments. Still, the indispensible role that Caquetio soldiers played in defense of Coro proved that they wielded a great deal of power, at least potentially, and when compared with other legally free people in the region.

Although the Caquetio were tribute-exempt, two of the largest indigenous groups in Coro, the Ajaguas and the Ayamanes, were not, and this fact would further contribute to the rebel defeat. On the Morning of May 15, Valderraín sent two expeditions of one hundred men each to the sierra of Coro to defeat and capture any rebels still in arms or those they judged to be guilty. Don Juan Ramos de Chaves led one of the two expeditions, which included 104 men, 84 of whom were Ajaguas from Pecaya, Pedregal, and San Luis.[561] The other contingent that Valderraín sent out also included a number of Caquetio, although it is unclear exactly how many. These expeditions resulted in the capture of 35 suspected rebel leaders who, three days later, on the morning of May 18,

[561] Ibid. ff. 9-11; ff. 76.

Valderraín would viciously execute.[562] The 84 tribute-paying indigenous people who helped clean up the last residues of insurrection in the sierra were promised exemption from tribute payments in exchange for their efforts, although it will be seen later that these promises would not be immediately fulfilled.

Indigenous participation in the 1795 insurrection, as well as its undoing, was a reflection of the importance of native American—and legally free—labor in eighteenth-century Coro. Eighty eight percent of Coro's overall population was legally free, and 74% of the region's population was legally free people of African and/or native American descent. These workers provided free military service, made indigenous tribute and *alcabala* payments, maintained the Catholic Church through their ecclesiastical payments, and supported local hacienda and plantation owners through raising animals, and planting and harvesting cash crops. Legally free workers in Coro, such as the Caquetio and the Ajaguas, suffered through centuries of genocidal acts and policies that clashed with their communal values. An increase in exploitation in the years leading up to the Coro rebellion led many native American people to participate in an anti-colonial revolutionary movement. Many more legally free workers, however, found it in their best interest to fight for the Crown. In fact, although the participation of indigenous people on the side of the rebels was significant, the vast majority of native Americans involved in the rebellion fought for the Crown. This chapter will examine the role of native American labor in eighteenth-century Coro and explore why some indigenous people rebelled, while others remained loyal. But before this subject can be considered, it is necessary to review the precolonial and conquest periods of the region.

[562] "Expediente," ff. 9.

Indigenous Labor until 1721

The political economy of eighteenth-century Coro, as well as the structure of indigenous labor during the period, was formed by the character of precolonial social systems, as well as by the nature of the conquest. During the precolonial period, Coro's indigenous people practiced a communalist agricultural economy based on independent peasant production. Despite the conquest and the introduction of the encomienda, this political economy continued to be the dominant one for those people not coerced into labor arrangements with European overseers. In addition, when indigenous people who labored on encomiendas were not working for Europeans, they practiced similar political and economic customs in their spare time. The nature of the conquest, the alliance forged between certain conquistadors and the Caquetio, as well as European rivalry with the other indigenous polities of the region, likewise determined the character of eighteenth-century labor arrangements. On one hand, the Caquetio would be ruled exempt from the encomienda until it was abolished in 1721, and this would also exempt them from indigenous tribute payments. On the other hand, the Jirajara, Ajaguas, and Ayamanes were forced into these institutions during the colonial period.

Unfortunately, not much about precolonial life in Coro is known at this time, but Venezuelan scholars have been able to sketch an image of precolonial society through the use of early colonial accounts, as well as through the use of sociological, anthropological and archeological theories and methods. At the time of the conquest, there were four indigenous peoples that inhabited the region that could come to be known as Coro: the Caquetio, the Jirajaras, the Ajaguas, and the Ayamanes. The largest, and perhaps, the

longest established group in the region was the Caquetios. The Caquetios were an Arawak-speaking people who arrived to Coro between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago.[563] At the time of the conquest, the Caquetio inhabited the coastal region of much of the future province of Venezuela, including the coasts of the region of Coro and the Peninsula of Paraguana, as well as many populations on the interior, including the region that would become known as Barquisimeto. They inhabited many key towns that shaped the Coro rebellion, such as Cumarebo, Santa Ana, Moruy, Jácura, Guaybacoa, and Carrizal. The Caquetio also inhabited the islands that would become known as Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, whose settlements maintained close connections with the mainland before and after the conquest. At the time of the 1795 rebellion, there were 7,000 Caquetio in Coro, making up 26% of the region's overall population.

The Caquetio had a sedentary agricultural society in which a Cacique, Manuare, was the head, but where power was dispersed to individual towns and households. The Caquetio capital was held northeast of where the city of Coro would be established, and it was called Todariquiba.[564] Before the Spanish invasion, the Caquetio practiced a communalist, yet hierarchical political economy that was similar to the one practiced on the Gold and Loango Coasts of West and West Central Africa. Society was structured upon the ideal of the family, and all community members were considered to have descended from the same ancestor.

The structures of homes differed from town to town but they did share certain characteristics. Homes varied in size but they would typically hold five or six immediate

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563 Jossy M. Mansur, *E indiannan Caquetio* (Aruba: Imprenta Nacional Arubano, 1981), 29.

564 Adrián Hernández Baño, *Los Caquetíos de Falcón: Modos de vida* (Coro, Venezuela: Instituto de Cultura del Estado Falcón, 1984), 45.

families, who were all closely related to one another. A town's land was held in common, although homes were placed some distance from one another, erected in the middle of fields. Polygamy was practiced, but it is unclear how common it was. The anthropologists Mario Sanoja and Iraida Vargas suggest that the practice may have been reserved for important members of each town or region.[565]

Households consisted of a sexual and generational division of labor in which the home's "father" assigned tasks to "junior" household members. Men cleared and prepared the fields, while women planted and harvested crops such as corn, potatoes, yucca, pineapple and tobacco. Men fished and hunted, while women and children gathered fruit. Men manufactured axes, knives, lances, and bows and arrows, while women created the hammocks on which people slept and the ceramics in which they ate their food.[566]

Each town practiced some economic activities together while others were practiced on the household level. Because fields were shared, agriculture was largely conducted cooperatively between neighbors. In addition, hunting and fishing was conducted in groups of men, probably from various households. Fishing was particularly important for communities near the coast, where men would light campfires near the shore to attract fish, which led to a rather efficient system. Hunting for armadillos, deer, elk and rabbits was also done collectively amongst groups of men. Each household

[565] Mario Sanoja and Iraida Vargas, *Antiguas formaciones y modos de producción venezolanos* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1974), 149-175.

[566] Hernández Baño, 26-35.

provided their own fruits and vegetables that were collected from the wild, and women, especially, probably conducted their manufacturing duties at home, and for the home.[567]

Towns and homes were largely self-sufficient but individuals did conduct trade and pay tribute to Manaure. Salt, tobacco, gold, corn, hammocks, salted fish and smoked meat were all traded at local markets.[568] Manuare was considered divine and was revered in this way. Early fifteenth-century European chroniclers wrote that Manaure's followers carried Him on their shoulders when He was being transported, so that His feet would not touch the ground.[569] Town leaders earned their titles through their abilities to battle, hunt, or practice medicine.[570] These town leaders were probably those responsible for collecting regular tribute goods from the townspeople and for transporting them to Manaure.

If it is considered that little is known about the precolonial Caquetio, than even less is known of the Jirajaras, Ajaguas, and Ayamanes. According to the conquistadors, the Jirajaras were the second largest polity of the region at the time of the conquest. They lived in what would become known as Coro's sierra and south of it. The Jirajaras and the Ayamanes spoke Jirajara, a language that was unique to these two groups of the region.[571] The Ajaguas occupied the mountainous regions west of the sierra, in the places that would become the colonial towns of San Luis, Pecaya, and Pedregal. Like the Caquetio,

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[567] Ibid.

[568] Ibid.

[569] Sanoja and Vargas, 175.

[570] Hernández Baño, 44; Sanoja and Vargas, 176.

[571] Willem F.H. Adelaar, *The Languages of the Andes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 129.

the Ajaguas were Arawak speakers.[572] All of these groups were known hunters and gatherers, although it is likely that their communities centered around agriculture, like the Caquetio, although they settled on less abundant tracts of land. It is unknown, however, if they paid tribute to Manaure, although the Jirajaras were known enemies of the Caquetio at the time of the conquest.[573]

The conquest of Tierra Firme, and of the region that would come to be known as Coro, was a slow process that began in 1498. In that year, Cristobal Colón invaded an eastern region of what would become known as Venezuela to enslave indigenous people and sell them in Spain.[574] The following year, another conquistador by the name of Alonso de Ojeda began his exploration of the region, passing by the region of Coro and enslaving people there.[575] Two years later, Ojeda returned to Coro with another license from Queen Isabel, which gave him authority to establish a new colony, but after killing many Caquetios and enslaving still others, Ojeda's mission failed because of indigenous resistance. Similar ventures continued over the next decade, but things truly took a turn in 1511 when Queen Isabel's war against the "Caribs" was put in motion, and 2,000 Caquetios were enslaved and sent to toil in Santo Domingo.[576]

The act of enslaving and shipping 2,000 Caquetios to Santo Domingo would greatly determine the structure of eighteenth century Coro and the unfolding of the 1795

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[572] Pedro Manuel Arcaya, *História del estado Falcón* (Caracas: Tip. La Nación, 1953), 74.

[573] Otilia Margarita Rosas González, "La población indígena en la Provincia de Venezuela" (Ph.D. Diss.: Universidad de Salamanca, 2015), 55-61.

[574] Ibid., 73.

[575] Ibid., 84.

[576] During this period, all native American peoples of the greater Caribbean region were known as "Caribs" if they were hostile to the Crown or considered "uncivilized."

rebellion. Some of the Caquetio people who were enslaved ended up working for Juan de Ampíes. Ampíes was impressed with the Caquetios who slaved for him, their alleged dedication to Christianity and their supposedly high work ethic.[577] It is also likely that, as Arawak speakers, the Caquetios proved themselves useful in Ampíes's dealings with the native Arawak speakers of Española.

In 1520, Ampíes received permission to create a new settlement in Curaçao, along with other Spaniards and his Caquetio slaves, some of who may have been natives to the island. Ampíes used his enslaved Caquetio people to establish relations with Manaure and the Caquetio on the mainland. At some point after this, Ampíes met with Manaure and agreed to help prevent the enslavement of his people, who were continuing to be kidnapped by Spaniards in coastal raids. In addition, Ampíes agreed to help Manaure defeat His Jirajara rivals by enslaving them instead. In exchange for these services, Manaure agreed to allow Ampíes and his group to establish the city of Coro, which they did in 1527.[578]

Ampíes would ultimately lose the city of Coro to European rivals, but the relatively privileged position of the Caquetios would continue throughout the colonial period. As anthropologist Otilia Margarita Rosas González points out, Ampíes's plans were "frustrated" the year after he founded Coro when the Spanish Crown gave the German banking family, the Welsners exclusive rights over Tierra Firme.[579] The Welsners eroded the agreements that had been made with the Caquetio under Ampíes, but once the Spanish Crown reestablished its domain over Venezuela in 1539, the Province's

[577] Rosas González, 91.

[578] Ibid., 93-96.

[579] Ibid., 97.

Bishop Rodrigo Bastidas declared that the Caquetios were "amigos", "buena gente," and loyal vassals of the Spanish Crown.[580]

With this ruling, Bastidas declared the Caquetio exempt from encomienda service, but the rest of the indigenous population was required to submit to this arrangement.[581] Little is known about the encomienda in Venezuela, and even less so for Coro, but elsewhere in Venezuela, the encomienda was practiced on a rotational basis. Indigenous workers were required to work for an encomendero for free for one month, before they were allowed to return to their homes for two months. After the two months of free time was over, indigenous people would then return to their encomendero to work for one more month, and so on.[582] The encomienda was ultimately abolished in Venezuela in 1721, and indigenous labor arrangements were organized around tribute payments, which were made in money or kind. After 1721, Coro's Jirajara, Ajagua, and Ayaman peoples were required to pay tribute, rather than be employed in encomiendas.

Before the conquest, indigenous people in the region that would become known as Coro practiced a communal political economy, but one that was not free of hierarchy. Societies were based upon the notion of an expanded family or household. On the household level, indigenous people provided subsistence for themselves through planting and harvesting crops on land that was held in common. It should be assumed that the spoils of the land were distributed in a like fashion. Indigenous people also hunted, fished, traded, and paid tribute to their leaders. The communal economic practices of the precolonial period would be carried through to the conquest and colonial periods, despite

[580] Ibid., 134.

[581] Ibid., 134; 181.

[582] Ibid., 163.

the fact that indigenous people were forced into coercive, and often brutal, labor arrangements. Despite the establishment of a colonial political and economic system, Coro's indigenous people continued to conduct agricultural production, as well as hunt, fish, and gather, on a communal basis during their free time until the encomienda was abolished.

Indigenous Labor from 1721 to 1795

During the eighteenth century, the labor-power of indigenous people was usurped by the Spanish Crown and their political, economic and ecclesiastical authorities by way of mandatory military patrols, tribute, alcabala, and corregidor payments, as well as plantation work and church fees. Although the Caquetio were exempt from tribute and corregidor payments, they were exploited in the all of the other areas. The Jirajaras, Ajaguas, and Ayamanes were exempt from military service but required to make tribute, corregidor, *alcabala* and church payments, and they worked in the plantations and haciendas in and around Coro's sierra. The Jirajaras, who were considered the most dangerous, devilish, and unruly indigenous peoples during the period of the European conquest, appear to have been slaughtered by the Europeans at some point prior to the eighteenth century, although it is possible that they were incorporated into neighboring indigenous communities. Archbishop Mariano Martí visited the region in 1771 and did not report the existence of Jirajara groups in Coro, although he did recognize the three other groups.[583]

583 Maríano Martí, *Documentos relativos a su visita pastoral de la Diócesis de Caracas, 1771-1784* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1969). See, in particular, volumes 1 and 6.

Some of the Caquetio communities that provided military support to the Spanish Crown during the 1795 insurrection were organized in patrol units in Coro during holidays and during times of war. Around Christmas, eighteen months before the rebellion, Caquetío men were assigned to guard the city of Coro. The year before the rebellion, Bacilio López, the Head Guardian of Coro's port of La Vela, stated that the Caquetío of Carrisal guarded La Vela during Holy Week, while those of Acurigua guarded other locations, and the Caquetío from Cumarebo would guard La Vela during times of war. He added that during the past six months, the Caquetío from Cumarebo had been keeping watch over the port, to warn authorities of any incoming boats.[584]

The Ajaguas and Ayamanes were forced to pay tribute after the encomienda was abolished. Indigenous tribute was a heavy tax imposed on indigenous people throughout the Spanish colonies. The amount charged depended on which colony and what area you lived in. In late eighteenth-century Coro, tribute payments varied from pueblo to pueblo, from one peso a year to four pesos and six reales a year. In the Ajagua towns of San Luis and Pecaya, for example, married men paid two pesos a year, while single men above the age of 18 paid one peso a year. In the place of Chirino's birth, the Ajagua town of Pedregal, married men paid four pesos, and six reales a year, while single men above 18 years of age paid two pesos, and six reales a year.[585]

Indigenous people in Coro's sierra paid their yearly tribute in kind. The tribute was handed to authorities in bulk and on behalf of all tribute payers in the community. The four towns of the sierra made their payments in hammocks and heads of cocuiza, an

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584 "Cumarebo: Autos seguidos contra el Teniente Justicia Mayor de la jurisdiccion de Coro por los maltratos que ha dado a los Indios y la introduccion de negros de Curacao," 1794, Indígenas Tomo VII, Archivo General de la Nacion, Caracas, ff. 443-5.

585 Martí, *vol.1,* 78-84.

Andean plant similar to the agave. Cocuiza served as raw material for the production of hammocks, ropes, and certain items of clothing. The people of the sierra would collect the cocuiza independently, and often had to travel great distances to do so. Authorities priced the hammocks at 8 reales, and the cocuizas at one real a head. One day of labor was valued at one real in eighteenth-century Venezuela.

This established system of tribute payments in cocuiza and hammocks would come under fire from Venezuelan authorities who had trouble reselling these goods. On April 14, 1788, Puerto Cabello's Treasurer, Miguel de Basterra, petitioned the Captain General to see if Coro's tribute-paying communities could make their tribute payments in goods other than cocuiza and hammocks.[586] It appears, then, that some or all of Coro's tributes were sent to Puerto Cabello at some point after being collected. Basterra complained that the goods he received were very difficult to sell, and if they were sold, the eight reales worth of hammocks could only be sold at three reales, and the heads of cocuiza, which were valued at one real, could only be sold for half a real.[587]

Upon receiving the news, the Captain General, Juan de Guillelmi, requested information on the state of Coro's tribute-paying communities, in order to inquire as to whether or not they had the ability to pay their tributes in other goods. Coro's Treasurer, Navarrete, replied, "the great poverty of the natives, the miserable situations of their towns, does not allow them to subsist, nor to dress, and much less to provide subsistence

[586] "Número 6: Testimonio del Expediente promovido por el Tesorero Ministro de R.l Haz.a de Coro, sobre el recivo de Cocuisa a los Yndios en pago de Tributos R.s," Caracas 397, 8 de enero, 1791, AGI.

[587] Ibid., ff. 1.

for their families."[588] Navarrete added that the indigenous people in Coro's sierra and surroundings did not have access to other goods from which they could pay their tribute, but that as a compromise, Navarrete asserted that he would no longer accept cocuiza as tribute, but only hammocks.[589] The elimination of cocuiza as tribute payments in favor of hammocks must have been a new strain on indigenous people, as the labor time required to produce hammocks was eight times as great as that needed to produce a head of cocuiza.

Changes to the character of tribute payments changed again just two weeks before the May 10 insurrection. On April 24, 1795, the Administrator of Venezuela's Real Hacienda, Josef del Abad, issued an "Instrucción" to quell the constant confusion that was common in Venezuela in respect to tribute payments.[590] Of signature importance for the unfolding of the Coro rebellion, Abad ruled that all descendants of tribute-payers were responsible for paying tribute.[591] This was a devastating blow to much of the *zambo* communities of Coro, who after lifetimes of avoiding the dreaded tribute payments, were now legally responsible for making them. As will be seen below with the case of Jácura, these new rules were enforced in Coro in the months before and after the May insurrection, and they were met with a great deal of resistance.

But tribute was not the only concern of indigenous people, as the alcabala had the effect of depriving them, as well as all poor people in the region, of the ability to feed

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[588] Ibid., ff. 7-8; "la grande pobreza de los naturales, y miseria de las situationes de sus Pueblos, no les brinda conmodo alguno para sustentarse ni vestirse, y mucho menos para conservera la subsistencia de sus familias."

[589] Ibid.

[590] "Testimonio de la Ynstruccion formada para las matriculas de yndios y auto de su aprovasíon por la Junta Superior de R.l Hac.da," Caracas 514, 24 de abril, 1795, AGI.

[591] Ibid., ff. 9-10.

themselves. The situation for indigenous women was particularly precarious given that the sexual division of labor in indigenous communities made them responsible for marketing. Many women worked in their families' *conucos*, small plots of land on which families would grow fruits and vegetables, both for their own consumption, and in order to sell in nearby towns. Women would often travel long distances to sell these products. Just six weeks after the 1795 rebellion, María Flores, a widow from the Caquetío pueblo of Santa Ana complained to authorities that the *alcabala* collector in the town of Cumarebo had taken one and a half *almuds* from her 3 *fanegas* of corn, or 25% of her corn, as *alcabala*, although the going rate was 5%.[592]

The *alcabala*, in fact, was one of the chief complaints advanced by the 1795 rebels. The *alcabala* was a sales and transport tax imposed on residents throughout Spain and its colonies. It was first imposed in Spain in 1342 in order to raise funds for the Crown's struggle against the Moors.[593] In Venezuela, the alcabala was first put into effect on August 4, 1596 for a period of nine years. The alcabala returned from 1624-1630, and in 1652 King Philip IV issued a Royal Order making the alcabala a permanent institution in Venezuela.[594] The alcabala was to be charged at 2% on all transactions, whether they were traded for coin or kind, and the payments could be made in a like fashion.[595] On

[592] "Expediente," ff. 139-40

[593] F. Depons, *Travels in Parts of South America, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803 & 1804, Vol. 2* (London: Richard Phillips, 1806), 13.

[594] Eduardo Arcila Farias, *Economía colonial de Venezuela* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 121.

[595] Depons, 13.

July 1, 1753, the Governor of Venezuela, Don Phelipe Ricardos, increased the alcabala payment to 5% and this was the going rate at the time of the 1795 insurrection.[596]

Alcabala collection increased dramatically in the three years prior to the 1795 insurrection, but these actions can be traced to concerns coming from Caracas's Real Hacienda 25 years before the rebellion.[597] Authorities in Caracas expressed their concern that Coro's treasury was not collecting enough fees for the alcabala. They stated that eight months of alcabala payments, made from November 1, 1765 to February 1766, were missing, insinuating that the fees were embezzled. Just as concerning, authorities added that Coro's treasury was utterly failing in their responsibility to collect alcabala on all the goods that were purchased and sold in the region. Using an example, the author of the document stated that in the previous two years, Coro's treasury only collected tax on 1,500 bovine animals that were sold. The author added that this was concerning given that it is estimated that 10 times that many bovine animals, or 15,000 animals, were sold during the period in question. Furthermore, the author added that Coro's treasury had failed to charge alcabala on corn and cassava, the two main dietary items marketed in the region. [598]

Authorities in Caracas would eventually get their wish—alcabala collection would increase in Coro, but it would directly lead to the 1795 insurrection. Caracas's authorities reported that Coro had collected 1,108 pesos 1 real during the eight months

[596] "Ramo de alcabala de tierra: Reparos generales al cargo," Caracas 574, AGI.

[597] Ibid.

[598] Ibid.

for which the money was missing from 1765-66.[599] If this is taken as standard, it can be assumed that, before this document was created, Coro was collecting about 1,662 pesos a year in alcabala payments. For the years that are currently available, 1788-1794, this amount increased drastically. In 1788, Coro collected 3,809 pesos and 1.5 reales in alcabala, and over 3,452 pesos the following year, until the total dipped to 2,430 pesos 1 real in 1790.[600] In 1791, alcabala collection again spiked to 3,895 pesos .5 real. [601] From 1788 to 1791, then, Coro's treasury averaged an income of over 3,396 pesos from alcabala collection, roughly twice as much of that which was collected in the previous decades.

Once Coro's treasurer, Don Joseph de Navarrete, was replaced by his comptroller, Don Francisco de Yturbe, in 1792, Coro's alcabala collections skyrocketed, coming close to the 10 times as much alcabala that Caracas's authorities requested in 1771. In 1792, with Yturbe serving as Coro's treasurer, his office collected 8,096 pesos and 6.5 reales, over 238% higher than the previous year.[602] This number jumped again to 9,036 pesos and 7 reales in 1793, and again to 10,939 pesos in 1794.[603] Between 1792-1794, under Yturbe's leadership, Coro's treasury averaged 9,357 pesos a year in alcabala collection, nearly three times as much as was collected in the previous years and over 800% higher than Coro was collecting before 1771.

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[599] Ibid.

[600] "Cuenta de Real Hacienda de Coro, 1788," Caracas 578, diciembre 31, 1788, AGI; "Cuenta de la Real Hacienda de Coro, 1789," Caracas 578, diciembre 31, 1789, AGI; "Libro manual de la Real Caxa del Departamento de Coro," Caracas 579, diciembre 31, 1790, AGI.

[601] "Cuenta de la Real Hacienda de Coro, 1791," Caracas 579, diciembre 31, 1791, AGI.

[602] "Cuenta de la Real Hacienda de Coro, 1792," Caracas 580, diciembre 31, 1792, AGI.

[603] "Cuenta de la Real Hacienda de Coro, 1793," Caracas 580, diciembre 31, 1793, AGI; "Libro Manual de las Reales Caxas del Departamento y Ciudad de Coro," Caracas 581, diciembre 31, 1794, AGI.

Coro's rebels called for the abolition of the alcabala as one of their central demands. On June 2, 1795, Carrera wrote a memorial from his post in Coro's sierra about how indignant Coro's rebels were about the alcabala and Coro's new treasurer, Yturbe. Carrera reported that Chirino had ordered the rebels to intercept and kill Josef de Telleria on his way to the sierra because he had failed to find a solution to the sierra's populations' complaints about the alcabala. Carrera wrote that, according to the rebels, they had "suffered" "violations" from the "treasurer Don Juan Manuel de Yturbe and his administrator Luis Barcena" and that the rebels accused Telleria of seeing "with indifference the unjust sorrow of the poor," which led to his murder.[604]

Therefore, it appears that poor non-whites were the targets of the alcabala, or at least that is how the poor perceived things to be. As discussed in the introduction, Chirino was quoted by Telleria's widow, Doña María Josefa Rocillo, as stating, "Telleria did not impede the tax collector of Coro from charging the alcabala with such excess and rigor." Chirino also added, "that the whites were in cahoots with the tax collector so that they did not have to pay, and so that all the weight of the contributions fell onto the arms of the poor."[605] Chirino's assessment was confirmed by Jacot weeks after the rebellion, when he stated that many Caquetío people have complained of being overcharged the *alcabala*. According to Jacot, people were routinely forced to give up their personal belongings, such as shirts and earrings, if they did not have the specie to pay the tax on the goods they were transporting.[606]

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[604] "Expediente," ff. 109; "tesorero Don Juan Manuel de Yturbe y su administrador Luis Barcena"; "con indiferencia las injustas afliciones de los pobres."

[605] Ibid., ff. 260-2.

[606] Ibid., ff. 135-6.

The Venezuelan state depended on taxes such as the alcabala in order to function, but the genesis and expansion of the alcabala in Coro went hand in hand with that of plantation and hacienda production. In the aftermath of the insurrection, authorities stated that there were 150 plantations and haciendas in the region of Coro. Of these, 95 were haciendas dedicated to raising 29,000 heads of livestock each year. Authorities also listed just seven cacao plantations. Although they did not include figures for sugar plantations, it is likely that most of the 48 remaining estates were dedicated to this activity. [607]

But labor system in Coro was not particularly well developed, meaning that most people were not employed full time, but used plantation and hacienda labor as a way to supplement their subsistence practices, which were based on peasant production. About 2,900 workers would be needed to raise the 29,000 heads of cattle on the 150 haciendas, meaning that each hacienda employed about 30 people at a time. This figure is consistent with the available data on sugar plantations. Tellería's will reveals that he owned less than 40 enslaved people. About 30 of them worked on his two sugar plantations in the sierra, meaning that he employed about 15 enslaved people on each plantation.[608] But the often legally free life partners of Coro's enslaved people would also labor on plantations. The average plantation then, based on the data from those owned by Tellería, would employ about 30 people as well. If the 150 haciendas and plantations in Coro employed 30 people each, then these would employ only about 4,500, or 17%, of the nearly 27,000 people in Coro.

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[607] Ibid., ff. 1-2.

[608] "Testamentaria de Joseph de Tellería, 1798." Archivo Histórico del Estado de Falcón. Coro, Venezuela.

With 74% of Coro's population being legally free people of African and/or native American descent, the alcabala had the indirect effect of encouraging peasants to work for wages on plantations and haciendas. Paying taxes for transport and marketing cut into peasants' independent earnings, thus incentivizing day labor. In their traditional societies, native American and African people would produce for their own consumption, as well as market combustibles and/or manufactures that they themselves produced, but this marketing was not taxed in their homelands. The imposition of the alcabala impeded the ability of people to market their goods as they had in the past because they were forced to volunteer *at least* 5% of the produce that they transported and sold.

Therefore, as well as serving as an important source of state income, the alcabala had the added effect of forcing people uninterested in colonial labor arrangements into local markets for labor, particularly after Yturbe took over Coro's treasury in 1792. Referring again to Chirino's comments to Rocillo, the former stated that Coro's tax collector was charging the alcabala "with excess and rigor." The excess that Chirino refers to is probably in reference to situations such as the one María Flores found herself in, where she was charged 25% for alcabala instead of 5%. The "rigor" Chirino referred to was probably the implementation of a more rigorous taxing system to replace the lax system that predominated prior to Yturbe's takeover. It is clear that after Yturbe took over as treasurer, the laws concerning alcabala collection were more effectively put into place, and many of the transactions that Coro's inhabitants were accustomed to making, without being taxed, were suddenly being taxed in accordance with the law. This was also in accordance with what Caracas, and the Crown, expected to be enforced in Coro. The expansion of alcabala collection threatened the lifestyles of Coro's rebels, and

encouraged these people to work for wages on plantations and haciendas, instead of conducting the independent production that had sustained them previously.

Military service, tribute, the alcabala, and plantation work were not the only ways in which native American labor was exploited in Coro, however. During his late eighteenth-century visit and inspection of Coro, Martí noted the "contributions" that the indigenous people of Coro's sierra made both to their corregidor and to their priests. A corregidor was essentially a governor that was assigned to indigenous towns in Coro's sierra. He was responsible for prosecuting crimes, litigating disputes, and ensuring that taxes were paid. Only tribute paying towns in Coro had a corregidor, but all indigenous towns had a priest that served them. The priest's duties varied from town to town, but in essence, he was to ensure that all children assisted church twice a day, and were instructed in the Spanish language. In addition, the priest was to ensure that adults assisted church regularly. In some towns this was only on Sundays and holidays, but in others it was daily.[609]

Priests and corregidores came from elite families, and in addition, they were paid handsomely by indigenous workers, which ensured that they lived comfortably. In the sierra, one priest served both San Luis and Pecaya, and indigenous people paid him 60 pesos a year in the former and 90 pesos a year in the latter.[610] Pedregal was served by a different priest and he was paid 90 pesos a year in hammocks, which was likely the form of payment in the other two Ajagua towns.[611] The corregidor of the sierra served all three Ajagua towns and received an annual payment of 4 reales a year from each indigenous

[609] Martí, *vol. 1*, 40-95.

[610] Ibid., 79.

[611] Ibid., 86.

person. Given the populations of the sierra, which Marti provided in 1771, each indigenous adult in San Luis paid the priest 6 reales a year for a total of 60 pesos. Each indigenous adult in Pecaya would have paid the priest about 2.4 reales a year for a total of 90 pesos. In Pedregal, each indigenous person was responsible for paying the priest about 3.5 reales a year for a total of 90 pesos. The corregidor was paid a total of 40 pesos a year from San Luis, 148.5 pesos a year from Pecaya, and 100.5 pesos from Pedregal. In total, then, each adult of San Luis was responsible for paying these authorities a total of 10 reales a year or 10 work days, those of Pecaya were responsible for paying 8.4 reales, and those of Pedregal were forced to pay 9.5 reales or the equivalent workdays. These figures should be added onto the amount of tribute these community members paid, and doing so rounds the figure to 20.5 days of work a year for people in San Luis, 16.4 days for those in Pecaya, and 31.5 workdays for those in Pedregal.

Marti also discussed the large number of Church contributions made by the Caquetío. In Curamebo, each indigenous man had to pay 2 pesos a year for wax, presumably for the maintenance of candles. In addition, the community as a whole had to pay 194 pesos a year to the pueblo's priest. By examining the size of the population at the time of Martí's inspection, it can be asserted that a married couple in late eighteenth-century Cumarebo would be responsible for up to 3 peso*s* a year for contributions to the Church. This amount of money is worth about 24 days of work a year.[612]

But not all Caquetío were charged so much by the church. The indigenous people of Jacura, Guaybacoa, and Carrizal paid 8 reales a year to their priest.[613] Those in the Peninsula de Paraguaná paid even less. The 1,900 Caquetios in Santa Ana paid their

[612] Ibid., 49-51.

[613] Ibid., 40.

priest 180 pesos a year or less than one real each a year.[614] Likewise, those of Moruy paid the priest less than one real a year in the form of 45 pesos, probably in the form of hammocks, six fanegas of corn, and three cows. [615]

Those Caquetio in the Peninsula of Paraguaná paid these low fees because they received little Church control. Santa Ana only counted on church services six months out of the year, and those of Moruy only three. Without a corregidor, these communities had more independence than most indigenous towns, and they were famous for being uncontrollable populations. During Martí's visit, the priest at Santa Ana, Juan Joseph Más y Ordoñes, told him that a local once stabbed him after a dispute.[616] In another episode, the Caquetío of Moruy were in litigation for many years when there was controversy regarding a new Casique who was being imposed by the Crown. Those of Moruy refused to recognize Juan Gil Martínez as the new Casique and even forced his explusion from the town. [617]

After the abolition of the encomienda in 1721, the nature of labor relations in Coro drastically changed, and these changes informed the roles of indigenous people in the 1795 rebellion. During the eighteenth century, indigenous people were forced to display their allegiance to the Crown and to contribute to its wealth through manufacturing hammocks, which were then sold or bartered by authorities. In addition, tribute payers had to pay corregidores and priests, and the Caquetio also supported the

[614] Ibid., 89.

[615] Ibid., 108.

[616] Ibid., 88.

[617] "Moruy: Testimonio de autos de los indios de Moruy contra Dn. Gil Martinez," 1769, Indígenas XI, Archivo General de la Nación, Caracas. "Moruy: Los indios de San Nicolas de Moruy contra el yndio Juan Martínez Gil," 1779, Indígenas XI, Archivo General de la Nación, Caracas.

latter, albeit not as much. Indigenous people went from forced labor on plantations and haciendas during the encomienda period to "voluntary" labor for these institutions. The willingness of indigenous and other legally free workers to volunteer their labor was done out of necessity, however. The enactment and expansion of the alcabala, one of the principal targets for Coro's rebels, had the indirect effect of incentivizing waged labor by cutting into the ability of legally free people to provide their own subsistence. Just as importantly, the alcabala was a major source of income for the Venezuelan state, and this was likely the rationale given for its implementation. Once alcabala payments skyrocketed after 1792, the rebels found their livelihoods, as well as their moral economies encroached upon, and many took up arms as a result. This moral economy, as we have seen here and in the previous chapter, was rooted in precolonial labor customs. Not all of those that resisted the alcabala and other means of labor extraction rebelled, however. In fact, most legally free people, including the people indigenous to Coro, fought for the Crown because they found this strategy to be a more effective means to ameliorate their condition.

Conclusion

After the Ajaguas of San Luis, Pecaya, and Pedregal assisted the Crown's terror campaigns in the sierra, which resulted in the capture and execution of 35 accused rebels, they demanded that they be compensated for their efforts. On August 3, 1795, Geronimo Tinoco, the Visitor General of the Real Renta de Tabaco stated that the people of Pecaya were refusing to pay tribute because in the initial days of the May rebellion, Coro's

authorities promised that they would be freed from these if they fought against Coro's rebels.[618] Tinoco reported that Yturbe had tried to charge the people of Pecaya tribute two months after the rebellion, but that they refused. The leaders of Pecaya told Yturbe to verify whether or not they had to pay tribute and to then return. The leaders threatened that if Yturbe returned saying that they did have to pay tribute that they would "rise up."[619] Adding fuel to the fire, Tinoco added that the Ajagua's fellow Arawak speakers of the Caquetío communities of Paraguaná had stated that if Pecaya revolted, "they would not take up arms against their comrades."[620]

The Ajaguas of the sierra were not the only indigenous people refusing to pay tribute in the aftermath of the May insurrection. In fact, Tinoco was sent to the region of Coro by Venezuela's Governor and Captain General, Pedro Carbonell, to carry out a secret investigation into the claims made by Rio de Tocuyo's Intendant for the Real Hacienda, Miguel Francisco de Latiegui. Latiegui notified Caracas that the people of Jácura had been refusing to make their tribute payments, and authorities feared that they were conspiring with other indigenous communities to refuse payments or—even worse—to rebel against the Crown. Tinoco was, therefore, charged by Caracas to visit Jácura "with the utmost caution, steady hand, and moderation, putting everything

[618] The Real Renta de Tabaco or the Estanco de Tabaco was a Spanish Crown monopoly founded in Venezuela in 1777, and enacted two years later. It was a policy that gave the Crown total control over the production of tobacco and of cigars in the Captaincy General. Prior to the enactment of the *estanco*, tobacco was produced for domestic and international markets by private growers. The *estanco* established prices for tobacco that could only be purchased by the Crown, and it charged a tax on all tobacco produced. For more, see: Arcila Farias, *Historia de un monopolio: el estanco del Tabaco en Venezuela (1779-1833)* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1977).

[619] "Expediente,"ff. 209.

[620] Ibid.: "no tomaran ellos las armas contra sus compañeros."

regarding his Real Hacienda Ministry in order with respect to the royal orders, avoiding any reason for complaint from the Indians and other inhabitants of that jurisdiction."[621]

The people of Jácura told authorities that they were never asked to make tribute payments before, and that they would not start. The trouble appears to have begun five months before the Coro rebellion, in January of 1795, when Latiegui informed the community that they would have to begin making tribute payments. This decision was in accordance with the coming "Informe" of April that would require people of native American descent, especially *zambos*, to pay tribute unless they could prove Caquetio descendance. Although considered a Caquetio pueblo, most of Jácura's population in 1771 was free people of mixed African and native American descent, which made them more vulnerable than other Caquetio people.[622] After conducting his investigation, Tinoco reported that Jácura had, indeed, united to refuse tribute payments.

Alcabala payments were also a recurring issue in Coro after the rebellion. On June 13, a wary Jacot warned his superiors in Caracas that Coro's authorities needed to avoid getting too involved in the lives of Indians, particularly in charging too much for the *alcabala*. Jacot stated that this can "upset these peoples who are the largest force in this Province."[623] Jacot sent this letter just five days after indicating the same on June 8, pleading with Caracas to grant concessions to the Caquetíos: "let providence dictate what it believes to be conducive to softening the spirits of those, upon whose freedom one can only say depends the defense and conservation of that territory, which they prove time

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621 "Ibid., ff. 215. "con la mayor prudencia, pulso, y moderacion, arreglandose en todo lo respectivo a su ministerio de Real Hacienda, a las reales dispociciones, evitando todo motivo de queja a los yndios, y demas havitantes de aquella jurisdicion."

622 Martí, vol. 6, 80-1.

623 "Expediente," ff. 139-40: "disgustar a estas gentes que son la mayor fuersa de esta Provincia."

and again."[624] He insisted that not only was the Crown's authority dependent on Caquetío cooperation, but that the Caquetío were not happy, and needed to be granted concessions in order to preserve the Crown's power during a period of heightened uncertainty. It is unclear whether or not the Caquetio were ruled exempt from alcabala payments after the rebellion, but given that the *loangos* were, it is possible that this "gift" was also granted to the Caquetio.

As the historically loyal Caquetio and the opportunistically loyal Ajaguas fought to defend the Crown, others were punished for their crimes, but the punishment reflected the dynamics of power in Coro, particularly in regards to the Caquetio. On June 3, Valderraín dished out punishment to 55 people implicated in the May rebellion, including seven Caquetios. Twenty-one of those punished were enslaved *negros* who were executed by having their throats slit. Three enslaved *negras* were sentenced to receive 200 lashes in the royal jail, and to be sold outside of Coro. Twenty two *loangos* were sent to Puerto Cabello, along with the seven Caquetios, to serve on the King's ships. The *loangos* were sentenced to seven years of labor, while the Caquetios were sentenced to 10. Valderraín stated that the Caquetios had admitted their guilt and "although these are capital punishment criminals, it is not imposed because of the conspiracy that is feared from their comrades who are up in arms in the garrison of the city because of the insurgency."[625]

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[624] Ibid., ff. 137: "que dicte la providencia que estime conducentte a dulcificar el animo de aquellos, de cuya livertad unicamente puede decirse pende la defense y conservacion de ese territorio, la qual cada ves dan nuevas pruebas."

[625] Ibid., ff. 65: "aunque reos estos de pena capital no se les impone por la conspiracin que se teme de sus compañeros que estan en guarnicion de la ciudad sobre las armas por el motive de la insurgencia."

While some Caquetio were being punished as rebels, others were singled out for special awards. On May 29, 1797, Carbonell ruled to give "The Indian Captain" from Santa Ana, Pedro Phelipe, and others a reward for their service. He granted Phelipe 25 pesos, an amount worth approximately 200 workdays. Carbonell also ruled to give Phelipe's Sargent, Juan Andres Bernal, 12 pesos, and 10 pesos each, to twenty soldiers from their same town.[626] These men were given special attention because they were amongst the very first soldiers to defend the city of Coro against the May insurrection.[627]

The tribute paying communities of the sierra and of Jácura would eventually be granted "gifts" as well. In 1798, Carbonell ruled that all tribute payers in the Province of Coro would be, from then on, exempt from these fees. Carbonell argued that this exemption would allow them to "know the appreciation that loyalty merits," after these "yndios" "took part in the laudable action of exterminating the enemy."[628] Carbonell added, "if the qualities of those Indians are accredited, they should be permitted to marry white women so that that population, desolate during the day, shall increase."[629] This license to marry white women was an extraordinary "reward" for the tribute-paying communities of Coro. It was also a reflection of a patriarchal society that commodified all women's bodies, even white women's, although the latter were also considered a symbol of wealth, grace, and beauty—one that was desired by many, and expected to be desired amongst all of Coro's inhabitants.

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[626] Ibid., ff. 154.

[627] Ibid., ff. 351.

[628] Ibid., ff. 16-7: "conozcan el aprecio que merece la lealtad"; "concurrieron a la accion laudable de exterminar a el ememigo."

[629] Ibid: "que acreditasen su calidad de tales yndios permitirles casarse con blancas para que se aumentase aquella poblacion desolada en el dia."

The awards given to indigenous people in the aftermath of the Coro rebellion were a reflection—and recognition—of these people's struggles against the labor arrangements of eighteenth-century Coro. The region's structure of race and class clashed with these people's moral economies, which valued egalitarian subsistence practices largely divorced from state and employer interference. This moral economy was rooted in the precolonial social systems of the Caquetio, Jirajara, Ajagua and Ayaman polities, in which towns were largely self-sufficient units that practiced communal methods of procuring subsistence. In this tradition, as was the case in the Loango and Gold Coasts, surpluses were commodified and bartered, but not taxed.

These political and economic traditions were constantly under attack during the colonial period, and a surge in these attacks led many indigenous people to take up arms, both for and against the Spanish Crown. Some indigenous people who lived and worked on the haciendas of Coro's sierra were among the first rebels to take up arms. Chirino himself, and several other leaders were of both African and native American descent. Many more indigenous people, however, took up arms in defense of the Spanish Crown, often doing so because they were enticed by certain "benefits" that they thought may be possible to acquire, or ones that they were outright promised. It appears, then, that all people of African and native American descent, whether rebels or loyalists, could agree that current conditions prevented them from living the lives they hoped to live. The kernel of these lifestyles, both the real and the ideal, was political economy.

Conclusion: The Conquest Continues

The precapitalist political economy of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world shaped the racialized class structure of Coro, as well as the ideology of the 1795 rebels. This Atlantic economy was based upon peasant modes of production, which predominated in Europe at the time, as seen with the textile manufacturing industries of Flanders, Brittany and Devon. Peasant production would encourage capital investments in the Atlantic trades, which were organized through joint-stock companies, such as the Dutch West India Company (WIC), the South Sea Company (SSC) and the Real Compañía Guipozcoana (RCG). These firms were constructed through state backing, which allowed for, and stimulated, investments by wealthy Europeans. But these companies were unable to take full control of communitarian production in Africa and in the Americas, as seen with the Gold and Loango Coasts, and in Coro. The indigenous peoples of these regions continued to carry out their egalitarian customs with a structure similar to that which was practiced before the imperial intrusions of Europeans. These political and economic mores served as the foundation for the moral economy of Coro's native American and Afro-descended communities. The encroachment onto peasant lands and the increase of tax collection in the years leading up to the 1795 rebellion, made these communitarian practices untenable, however. These incursions violated the moral economy of Coro's rebels and inspired them to launch a revolutionary movement.

This study of the political economy of the 1795 Coro insurrection thus intervenes in two distinct fields of scholarship. On the one hand, it engages works on antislavery resistance movements in the Americas, and on the other hand, it enters into scholarly discussions in regards to the history of capitalism. This dissertation complements the

work by historians such as Manuel Barcia Paz, Jacob Carruthers, and Walter Rucker on the African character of antislavery rebellions and revolutions in the Americas.[630] It supplements these histories of African cultural and military practices in antislavery insurrections by highlighting the role of African political and economic systems in the Coro rebellion. This dissertation, therefore, counters the dominant trend in the historiography on enslaved peoples resistance during the Age of Revolution, which sees the Enlightenment as providing enslaved people with their ideas concerning liberty and equality. On the contrary, the ideology of Coro's antislavery rebels was rooted in the communalist mores of the peoples indigenous to Coro, and the Gold and Loango Coasts.

"The Political Economy of Antislavery Resistance: An Atlantic History of the 1795 Coro Insurrection" also intervenes in histories of capitalism. It argues in favor of the need to define capitalism, and to use Marx's definition that capitalism is an economic formation based on the capitalist mode of production.[631] This dissertation's research lends support to Joseph Inikori's contention that capitalism did not take hold of the European economy until the nineteenth century.[632] Therefore, as discussed above, the precapitalist political economy of Europe organized these formations in the Atlantic in accordance with the laws of this particular social system. As the dominant political economy of the Atlantic, this precapitalist organization concomitantly informed the structure of race and

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[630] Manuel Barcia Paz, *The Great African Slave Revolt of 1825: Cuba and the Fight for Freedom in Matanzas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012); Jacob Carruthers, *The Irritated Genie: an Essay on the Haitian Revolution* (Chicago: Kemetic Institute, 1985); Walter C. Rucker, *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); John K. Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

[631] Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

[632] Joseph E. Inikori, *Slavery and the Rise of Capitalism* (Mona, Jamaica: Dept. of History, the University of the West Indies, 1993); Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

class in Coro, as well as in the Gold and Loango Coasts. In other words, the political economy of Europe, based on peasant production and merchant capital, created eighteenth century Coro, and the conditions that the 1795 rebels sought to destroy.

This dissertation has sought to tell the story of Coro's rebellion alongside a history of the political and economic system that gave rise to it. It has found that the political economy of eighteenth-century Coro was intimately connected to peasant producers in Flanders, Brittany, and Devon, as well as the WIC, the SSC, and the RCG, not to mention the kings, queens, aristocrats, merchants and stockholders throughout the European continent. It has also found that the political economies of the peoples indigenous to Coro, as well as to the Gold and Loango Coasts, also influenced Coro's system. Coro's rebels, then, lived, worked, suffered, and celebrated in one corner of an interdependent world system, which was nevertheless ruled by the logics of capital accumulation and white supremacy.

Writing in May of 2019, white supremacy has been buoyed by racial capitalism, and continued its rule over the indigenous peoples of the global south, including Venezuela. Just weeks ago, the openly white supremacist government of Donald Trump launched its latest coup d'état attempt against the communitarian government of Nicolás Maduro Moros. Since Trump's election in 2016, he has aggressively sought to destroy the socialist governments of the Americas, ramping up what was already an asphyxiating political and economic stance on the part of the U.S. government towards its rivals living in its "back yard." In fact, John Bolton, Trump's current National Security Advisor, stated last month, "in this administration we're not afraid to use the phrase 'Monroe

Doctrine.'"[633] It is important to note that the vast majority of Chavistas and leftists in Venezuela are workers and peasants of African and/or native American descent, and that opposition supporters come from the professional class, which is overrepresented by whites.

The most recent tragic events in Venezuela were clearly orchestrated by the U.S. government, which has invested hundreds of millions of dollars into overthrowing the Venezuelan government since the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998.[634] This most recent debacle began in February of 2018 when the U.S. government ordered the Venezuelan opposition to back out of a peace accord that it had agreed to with the Venezuelan government.[635] Instead of signing a power-sharing agreement, most opposition leaders boycotted the upcoming May 2018 elections. Because of this boycott, Maduro won the election with 67% of the vote, followed by opposition challenger Henri Falcón, who gained 21% of the vote.[636] It is clear that the U.S. government is uninterested in promoting peace in Venezuela, but is instead aiming to destroy a political and economic system that stands in the way of their geopolitical and economic interests.

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[633] Andre Vltchek, "Russia Warns Bolton: 'Monroe Doctrine' Remarks Insulting to Latin Ameica," Mint Press News, April 12, 2019: https://www.mintpressnews.com/russia-warns-bolton-monroe-doctrine-remarks-insult-latin-america/257331/.

[634] Eva Golinger's work is particularly useful in tracking U.S. intervention in Venezuela. See: Eva Golinger, *The Chavez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela* (London: Pluto Press, 2006). Also see: Jean-Guy Allard and Eva Golinger, *USAID, NED y CIA: La agresión permanente* (Caracas: Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación y Información, 2009).

[635]Rachael Boothroyd Rojas, "Government Claims 'Pre-Agreement' Reached in Dominican Republic, Opposition Denies," Venezuelanaysis, February 1, 2018: https://venezuelanalysis.com/News/13633.

[636] Jorge Martin, "Venezuela: Maduro Wins Presidential Election, Despite Imperialist Meddling-What's Next?" Venezuelanaysis, May 22, 2018: https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13831.

The 1795 Coro rebellion was, therefore, just one of the many battles fought in the five-centuries-long-war to conquer non-Europeans peoples and their ways of life. This war is still being waged today.

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