

The Religious Life of Jose Antonio Aponte, Military Officer and Anti-Slavery Activist.

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Noteworthy histories of the 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Havana, as well as the most important works on other revolts of enslaved people in Cuba, draw almost exclusively on secular records such as criminal interrogations and military tribunals, primarily from the National Archives of Cuba and Spain. (1) This is largely due to the political divide between church and state in Cuba, and the tight controls the Cuban government maintains over access to its national and provincial archives. I, too, depend upon those valuable secular sources, but Cuba's sacramental records can enrich our understandings of these events and of the free black communities swept up and ruined by them. (2) Previously untapped Catholic Church records from Cuba now preserved in the Slave Societies Digital Archive (slavesocieties.org) offer new insights into the lives of famous black rebels such as Jose Antonio Aponte. These ecclesiastical records document membership in and direction of overlapping religious brotherhoods and military units, real and fictive kinship and patronage networks, and property holdings. They also illuminate networks among free black communities in Havana, Matanzas, and other Atlantic ports and the key roles these figures played in the Age of Revolutions. (3)

The Catholic Church recorded sacramental documents across the Americas systematically for over three centuries prior to the final abolition of enslavement and allowed an approved space within which persons of African descent could gather, organize, and represent themselves as respectable subjects and brothers in Christ. By the thirteenth century, free Africans in Seville, Spain, had established the religious confraternity or *cofradia* of San Bernardo. This brotherhood administered the Hospital of Our Lady of the Angels and provided medical care for its members. Members of Seville's second black confraternity of San Roque built a church and chapel on lots they purchased with hard-earned gains. Black brotherhoods also established chapels and hospitals across the Atlantic and provided for the brothers and their families in times of need. As black brotherhoods processed with their own banners and images through Spanish cities during religious holidays, they made their "proper" behavior and incorporated status visible to all. Partially in fear that *bozales*, or recently arrived enslaved people from Africa, might introduce the dread "contamination" of Islam or other "heathen" practices into Spain, the Catholic Church mandated the baptism of enslaved Africans in the fifteenth century. (4)

The Church subsequently extended this requirement across the Americas. Once baptized, Africans and their descendants became eligible for the sacraments of marriage and Christian burial, and through membership in the Catholic Church they generated a host of other religious records such as confirmations, petitions to wed, wills, and, on occasion, divorce actions. Catholic registers of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials yield the longest serial data available for the history of Africans in the Americas. In addition to providing critical demographic statistics on the African populations in the Americas, these records also provide detailed information on ethnicity (described in the records as *naciones* or *castas* in Spanish records and *nacoes* in Portuguese). Such ethnic and geographic markers enable scholars to track the history of specific groups over time in the targeted areas and make comparisons possible across Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Entries also record, when known, parents' names and occasionally allude to birthplaces in Africa. Fictive kinship patterns and patron/client relations are also evident in godparent and marriage sponsor choices. The records for

enslaved persons also provide information on owners, who in the Spanish cases at least, sometimes served as godparents and sponsors. Testaments of free Africans often detail their property, last bequests, special devotions, and additional clues to social networks. In the linked Spanish colonies of Cuba and Spanish Florida, and probably elsewhere in the Catholic Atlantic, white fathers often legitimated their mixed-race children to protect them and their inheritance, if any, in periods of political turmoil or transition. (5)

Following Iberian precedents, black Catholics across the Atlantic joined religious brotherhoods/confraternities (*cofradías* in Spanish colonies or *irmandades* in Portuguese) organized along ethnic lines. Black Catholics devoted hard-earned resources to support *cofradías* that promoted social cohesion, reinforced fictive and kin networks, provided charity and social services for their members, and recognized leadership that was generated from within the black community. As was true earlier in Iberia, public displays of religiosity and of civic organization also confirmed black claims to Christian brotherhood and membership in the larger corporate community. Historians have now begun to study the early black Catholic *cofradías* of Santo Domingo, Lima, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, and Havana, among other Atlantic sites, some of them dating to the sixteenth century. (6)

Sometime in that century, with the Pope's approval, *morenos criollos* (free Blacks born in the Americas) established the *Cofradía de Juan Bautista* that operated in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo, Espanola. Its constitution called for all the brothers to celebrate religious feast days together and to assist each other in illness and time of need "such as when one [of the brothers] is hung." In a clue to early race relations in Espanola, it added "the mothers of the brothers can enter the brotherhood and no one is allowed to disparage them." In 1602 a Biafran man from Upper Guinea named Anton Lopez also established a *cofradía* devoted to *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria* in the Cathedral of Santo Domingo (Larrazabal Blanco 134-36). By 1613, the *Candelaria* brotherhood had grown to more than 300 members; its membership included Catholics of African descent, but also some of the town's leading Spanish citizens. Six other brotherhoods of color were also operating in Santo Domingo by 1613: two within the cathedral, another in the Franciscan church, another in the Dominican church, another in the Mercedarian church, and another, *La Pura y Limpia Concepción de Nuestra Señora*, was housed in the Hospital of San Nicolás de Bari. Officials reported to the king that all the brotherhoods performed good works and charity and kept well-adorned chapels, and that no problems had arisen from the multi-ethnic memberships. (8)

Like their counterparts in Spain and Espanola, Havana's black residents also organized themselves within the Catholic Church. Their bequests to the predominantly white brotherhoods of the *Santisimo Sacramento*, *Soledad*, and *Veracruz* can be found in Havana's notarial archives as early as the 1580s. Alejandro de la Fuente found that after 1600, however, Africans and their descendants focused their gifts on the black brotherhoods of *Nuestra Señora de Remedios* and *Espíritu Santo*, which maintained well-decorated altars in the city's main church (de la Fuente 168-69, 252). Over the next decades the membership of the *Espíritu Santo* devotion grew, and in 1638 the brothers erected an *ermita* (hermitage) in the Campeche neighborhood. By 1648, the neighborhood around the *ermita* had grown so populated that church officials declared it an auxiliary parish, and in 1660, a royal order elevated *Espíritu Santo* to the status of second parish on the island (Suarez Polcari 130). From humble beginnings and with the piety and support of black Catholics grew the second most important church in Havana. A Diocesan Synod officially recognized *Espíritu Santo's* black *cofradía* of Souls of Purgatory in 1680, but, sadly, no records of that *cofradía* have been located to date. During a pastoral

visit in 1687, Monsenor Francisco Felix y Solana examined Espiritu Santo's only extant book of baptism of pardos y morenos (multiracial and black people), but those records have also disappeared. (9)

In 1681, Cuba's governor, Fernandez de Cordoba, issued an order forbidding African cabildos from gathering in private houses and requiring that all dances and gatherings take place outdoors, where they could be surveilled. (10) Like previous prohibitions, this one seems to have been ignored, for in 1691 the Araras Magino (from Dahomey in modern-day Benin) met regularly in a house on Compostela Street owned by a free Arara woman, Maria de la Luz Caballero. (11) The Espiritu Santo church experienced a revitalization after Jeronimo de Valdes was named bishop in 1706. Valdes performed many acts of charity for the black community, among which was founding the Casa de Ninos Expositos or Casa Cuna in 1711. This was a home for abandoned children, many of whom were of mixed race, and all of whom later bore his surname, Valdes. (12) The foundlings' patron was Saint Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters, a common occupation of free men of African descent across the Americas, like Aponte (Garcia del Pino). Bishop Valdes died in 1729, and among his last wishes was to be buried in of Espiritu Santo, where today a marble sepulcher made in his image holds his remains. With the Bishop's death, Espiritu Santo's archive was closed and remained unopened for over two decades.

In the late sixteenth century, black Catholics also established a second important hermitage, Nuestra Senora del Buen Viaje. It became customary for sailors and travelers to offer prayers for safe passage at Buen Viaje before voyaging and others of thanks upon their return to Havana. The city council of Havana elevated the Buen Viaje hermitage to a church in 1640, and it became the final processional point of Havana's Via Crucis or Stations of the Cross performed on Good Fridays. (13) Buen Viaje's black marriage and burial records date from 1692, and its baptismal records date from 1702. Keith Manuel used SSDA records to analyze 444 black marriages performed in Buen Viaje church and found that Carabalies were the most numerous of the many African ethnic groups represented. Other African ethnonyms listed in the Buen Viaje records include Congos, Lucumi, Mandinga, Ganga, Mina, Macuba, Mondongo, Briche, Arara, Bricama, Sape, and Mozambique. Many more parishioners are listed as American-born criollos from Havana, Puerto del Principe, and other Cuban cities, but also from across the Atlantic world: Jamaica; Curacao; Martinique; Portugal; Guarico, (the Spanish name for Le Cap Francais, Haiti); San Juan, Espanola; San Cristobal de La Laguna, Tenerife; Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; Campeche, Mexico; Mobile, Alabama; and Badajoz, Spain. (14)

Manuel's study and others by David Wheat, who has transcribed SSDAs earliest records from Havana, highlight another important feature of religious records--their detailed attention ethnolinguistic and natal origins. (15) In 1736, black parishioners of Buen Viaje established a cofradia dedicated to Santa Ifigenia, the black Virgin of Ethiopia (and Princess of Nubia), who paired with Santo Elesbao, was also a popular patroness of black Catholics in eighteenth-century Rio de Janeiro, as Mariza Soares has shown. (16) This brotherhood's foundational documents are so faded they are hard to read but, as in the case of Espiritu Santo, its officers were also officers in the Batallon de Morenos Leales, which reflects the overlapping nature of religious and military corporations in colonial Cuba. (17)

Despite their earlier prominence, black cofradias and churches seem to have lost autonomy and prestige as Cuba's demography shifted and the island's black population became increasingly African (Kiple 36-58). They also suffered physical neglect until a new Bishop, the Dominican-born Pedro

Agustín Morell de Santa Cruz, arrived to take up his post in the 1750s. Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz had already gained prominence by advocating on behalf of the black copper miners of El Cobre in the 1730s (Díaz 300-307). Once in Havana, he embarked upon a campaign to restore the city's neglected black churches, preserve what he could of their histories, and validate and encourage black Catholicism. The Bishop reported with dismay that the ecclesiastical archive of the Buen Viaje church had been closed since the death of Bishop Jerónimo Valdés in 1729 and that the records were terribly damaged by polillas (moths). After making an index of the few undamaged records, the bishop loaded the many more irretrievable records on carts to be burned in the countryside (Morell, Letter to the Captain General; Morell, *La visita* 28-29). Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz also addressed the physical neglect of Havana's historic black churches, completing renovations of the Buen Viaje church and enlarging the Espíritu Santo. By 1760, Espíritu Santo counted 1,100 'souls' among its parishioners. Each night, in a public display of their religiosity and claim to respectability, Espíritu Santo's black brotherhood of the Rosary processed from the church through the city streets (Cuadrado 152-53).

Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz made an extensive ecclesiastical *visita* of the island, baptizing as he went, and later wrote a detailed report of his tour and the religious state of the island. In Havana, Morell counted "twenty-one houses that have served the devil," by which he meant African *cabildos de nación* unsanctioned by either the Catholic Church or the Spanish authorities (*La visita* 101-102). Organized along ethnolinguistic lines, these groups gathered on Sundays and other of the Church's many obligatory feast days when they were released from their labors to celebrate with music and dance. They also hosted banquets and organized wakes and elected ethnic kings, queens, and courts who commanded authority among their followers. (18) These gatherings had long worried Spanish officials. In 1535 authorities in Santiago de Cuba registered a complaint that a Congo "king" was disturbing the peace with his drumming, and in 1568 a Havana resident complained that "the black men and women of this town call themselves kings and queen and organize gathering and banquets which create scandals." (19) An early eighteenth-century *cabildo* identified as Carabali Apapa and devoted to the Espíritu Santo operated out of a house on Calle Egido. (20) Like many others, Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz lamented the drunkenness he witnessed at their noisy gatherings and the provocative dancing "in the custom of their lands" but the Bishop advocated gentle persuasion to help Africans see for themselves "their abominations" (Letter to His Majesty). Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz handed out images of the Virgin and prayed the Rosary with the celebrants, whom he said lived and died "like beasts." Finally, he recommended converting African *cabildos* into "Temples of God or her mites." (25)

The Bishop's proselytizing efforts were interrupted by the unexpected and shocking British seizure of Havana in 1762, in which Aponte's grandfather, Captain Joaquín Aponte, and Father, Nicolás Aponte, both fought. Joaquín's bravery was rewarded with the Royal Effigy of Charles III and Aponte recorded this moment in his missing Book of Paintings (Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion* 25). Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz made himself such a nuisance to the British occupiers that they soon exiled him to nearby St. Augustine, Florida. In that frontier colony, the reformist prelate had new challenges but also new opportunities to win souls to the "True Faith" and perform acts of charity. Morell de Santa Cruz became a patron of the African runaways from Carolina enslavement who had converted to Catholicism and established the free black town of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose. (21) In Florida, the Bishop also ministered to members of the Disciplined Militia of Free Pardos and Morenos of Havana who had been assigned to help defend the Florida frontier from British and Indian raiders from Carolina. Captain Manuel Asencio de Soto's unit included his brother-in-law, adjutant Juan Fermín de Quixas, a biracial shoemaker, Sergeant Antonio Horrutiner, and seven soldiers. (22)

With the Treaty of Paris in 1763, the black militias of Havana and Mose joined approximately 3,000 other Spanish subjects--European, African, and Indian--and in "blind obedience to their king," evacuated to Cuba. (23) Havana was not prepared to receive such a large influx of immigrants and initially they were quartered in private homes. (24) In 1764, the wealthy landowner Don Simon Rodriguez donated land for Florida's displaced Spanish subjects, and 84 families relocated to the settlement of San Agustin de la Nueva Florida, about 24 leagues from the provincial capital of San Carlos de Matanzas. (25)

Much had changed in Cuba in the short time Morell de Santa Cruz had been in Florida. During their brief reign, the British had imported many new Africans to Cuba, and the Bishop had even more reason to be concerned about the state of Catholicism. Almost immediately, he set to work to reinvigorate black Catholicism. He began by re-establishing the historic black cofradia of Espiritu Santo, ordering that its officers be chosen from the leadership of Havana's free black militia. Following that directive, Commander Juan Bautista Lobainas and other officers who had served heroically in the recent British siege wrote a new constitution for Espiritu Santo. (26) The black officers followed earlier church-approved models and were supervised in the process by churchmen, thus guaranteeing a certain conformity, but they elected the brotherhood's officers and decided on devotions, dues, rules, and regulations. Among other requirements, the constitution called for members of the black militia to carry the cofradia's standard and the Eucharist from Espiritu Santo to the Cathedral and back during the annual Pentecost and Corpus Christi celebrations, thus restoring the black brotherhood to an important and public presence in the city. The new constitution was read aloud to the congregants, Lobainas and his officers signed the document, and the black militia officers were officially recognized as officers of the restored cofradia. (27) Some time later, in another display of public devotion, members of Espiritu Santo's brotherhood donated funds and skills to reconstruct a collapsed wall of the church and to build Espiritu Santo's high altar, guarding the sanctuary at night until repairs were finished. (28)

As Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz worked to reorganize Havana's black cofradias, black Catholics also seized the propitious moment to reconstitute themselves as government-sanctioned cabildos, thereby legitimating those discredited institutions to a certain degree. To be granted official recognition, members had to define their devotions as well as rules of conduct in charters or constitutions, just as religious brotherhoods would. Elected officers promised to monitor their own members and expel any miscreants, and they devoted themselves to a patron saint whom they honored on his or her feast day. In hopes that organizations affiliated with the Catholic Church would promote positive social values and good order, Spanish officials usually approved their requests to organize, granting them a license and designating the groups as cabildos rather than cabildos de nation, still associated with Africanness (Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion* 103-19).

Three different Carabali cabildos affiliated with the Buen Viaje church petitioned for new licenses in the eighteenth century. The Carabali Ungua cabildo devoted to San Agustin stated that its original documents were destroyed in the hurricane that ravaged Havana in 1768. Their hand-written petition listed only the officials of the cabildo. (29) The second Carabali cabildo attached to Buen Viaje church and devoted to Nuestra Senora de Belem also petitioned for a new license to replace one granted in 1759. Their petition written in idiomatic Spanish identified this as the "Sirgundo Cabirido" [sic] and listed 61 men and 240 women, both free and enslaved, among its members. By 1772 the Carabalties

Asicuatro cabildo had also formed in Buen Viaje with three officers and 22 members ("Memoriales sobre diferentes asuntos"). These ethnically designated religious associations were licensed, monitored, and controlled by Spanish government officials who produced the secular records, later deposited in Cuba's national archive, upon which scholars have so far depended for their histories (Childs, "Recreating"; Maria Carmen Barcia; Lopez Valdes).

Frequent government pronouncements, however, suggest that the newly licensed cabildos were not much more orderly than the informal cabildos de nation Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz earlier decried. The most famous of their public displays in historical accounts, as well as artistic renderings, was the Dia de Reyes, celebrated on the sixth of January (Epiphany). (30) On this day cabildo members, led by their newly elected kings and queens, paraded through the streets of Havana performing African songs and dances accompanied by drums, scrapers, and hollowed gourd rattles, while wearing elaborate costumes of raffia, peacock feathers, animal skins and horns, and beads. Stilt-walkers, lantern-bearers, masked figures, and gymnasts such as those depicted by Federico Miahle and Victor Patricio Landaluze added to the merriment. The cabildos also held well-attended dances, one of which the Swedish traveler Fredricka Bremer vividly recounted (379-83).

The cabildos' visible references to Africa and to alternative power structures represented by black kings and queens seemed even more threatening after the enslaved in nearby Saint Domingue rose in bloody rebellion. Black militia units from Havana had been posted in Guarico since the eighteenth century and more were sent to fight there during the revolt, suffering terrible losses. (31) The fact that the black militiamen had been exposed to the revolutionary "contagion" of Saint Domingue, even in the service of Spain, apparently tainted them. Childs has chronicled the repeated efforts of Havana's "honored" citizenry to control cabildo functions and the crowds they attracted to their houses. Finally, a 1792 edict finally gave the cabildos one year to relocate outside the city walls and ordered them to take the bodies of deceased members to the public mortuary rather than staging celebratory and "disorderly" wakes in their meeting houses (Childs, "Recreating").

Racial paranoia following the revolt of enslaved people in Haiti led Cuban officials to view all black religious organizations with suspicion, and it indeed seems there may have been some overlap between their memberships. At least some of Havana's free black militiamen belonged both to Catholic cofradias, organized within the Church, and the government-sanctioned cabildos that operated out of private homes. (32) Cuban historian Jose Luciano Franco earlier wrote that Jose Antonio Aponte was the capataz (elected leader) of the Lucumi or Yoruba cabildo devoted to the African deity of lightning and thunder, Shango. Franco gave no source for his assertion and that claim is now questioned by Childs in *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*. (33)

Ecclesiastical documents now available on the SSSA website, however, show that Aponte was a member of the Catholic cofradia established by the carpenters' guild and dedicated to St. Joseph. The cofradia had already been operating for three years (since 1777) in the Convent of San Francisco (see Fig. 1) when the brothers petitioned for official government approval in 1800. Their handwritten petition included a printed document titled "Carta de Esclavitud al Glorioso San Joseph" declaring their "enslavement" and devotion to the Glorious St. Joseph, the carpenter. In that document, they called themselves the "slaves of our Glorious Patron the Patriarch St. Joseph, and of Jesus, and of his Sainted Mother." It featured a printed illustration of the Holy Family being blessed by God, who floats above their heads in a cloud ("Petition").

The brotherhood's petition, part of which is visible in Fig. 2, listed the names of the first and second overseers, Marcos Camacho and Ciriaco Acosta, the treasurer, Antonio Eredia, the two brothers who kept the keys to the cofradia's treasury, Valetin Sanches and Julian Sendiga, 12 deputies, and the remaining 135 brothers, among whom was Jose Antonio Aponte ("Petition"). (34) Aponte's brothers in the cofradia included distinguished officers of the Batallon de Pardos, like Manuel de Soto and Joseph de Fuentes, and officers in the Batallon de Morenos Libres, in which Aponte and his father and grandfather served. Some had notable military careers serving under Bernardo de Galvez in the Gulf campaigns of the American Revolution (as Aponte and Gabriel Dorotea Barba did), against corsairs in the Bahamas, and in Saint Domingue during that island's world-changing revolt of enslaved people. Their military service, titles, battalion flags, and medals established the brothers as worthy of respect in Havana in this period, but it also meant that they were public figures under scrutiny.

After Saint Domingue, the disrepute Cuba's African cabildos had experienced was also aimed at Havana's formerly respected black cofradias. In 1803, Captain Marcos Morenos of the Batallon de Morenos, who, like Aponte's grandfather, had received the Medal of the Royal Effigy for his bravery during the British siege, attempted to re-establish the apparently once again lapsed brotherhood of Espfritu Santo. Despite that brotherhood's long history and former prominence, Bishop Juan Jose Diaz de Espada blocked Moreno in this effort on the grounds that he could not present the brotherhood's original royal approval. The distinguished black commander appealed Bishop Espada's decision to the Audiencia of Puerto Principe, but that court ruled that black brotherhoods had been "centers of reunion, and of shelter, where sedition and agitation have been conceived" in times of turmoil (Morenos qtd. in Manuel). It added that prohibitions against unapproved gatherings were wise "given the distance of these Dominions from the Metropole and center of Government, the different castes of their Populations, and the diversity of their customs and interests." The Audiencia's lawyer further commented that this was especially true in light of "the fire that embraces the neighboring French colony." In an added insult he wrote that, "the greater part of these Brotherhoods and Confraternities... denigrate frequently into pomp and vanity and maybe in disorders."

In 1812, a series of "disorders" and revolts by enslaved people, reminiscent of those of 1795, swept through Cuba. Angry enslaved people in Bayamo, Holgum, Puerto Principe, and Havana circulated stories that claimed the King of Spain, the Spanish Cortes, the King of England, the King of Haiti (Henri Christophe had crowned himself emperor that year), or the King of Kongo had planned to free them, but local authorities had suppressed their abolition decrees. Authorities reacted swiftly and brutally suppressed these uprisings, executing some of the rebels and sentencing others to hard labor or military service in contested areas of the Caribbean (Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion* 157-62). Some of the Puerto Principe rebels, like Tiburcio Recio, were deported to Florida where, ironically, they fought for Spain against Georgian "Patriots" and United States Marines. (35) However, not all the rebels had been detected and exiled.

On March 15, enslaved and free Blacks launched a revolt at the Penas Altas plantation on the outskirts of Havana. The leader of the revolt was alleged to be the free black militiaman and sculptor, Jose Antonio Aponte, of the "slaves of St. Joseph" brotherhood. Authorities confiscated from Aponte's house a famous libro de pinturas which contained drawings of his father and grandfather who served in Cuba's free black militia, sketches of free black soldiers in uniforms defending whites (perhaps referring to the service in the English invasion of 1762), portraits of King Carlos III, and more

ominously, also of Toussaint Louverture, Henri Christophe, and Jean Jacques Dessalines. Cuban officials considered the book a "blueprint for revolution." (36)

Not surprisingly, given the hysteria created by Saint Domingue and the earlier Cuban revolts, many of the men arrested in connection with Aponte's uprising were sentenced to die. The horrific spectacle of the hangings and decapitations of Aponte and his collaborators went on for more than six months. From the La Cabana prison where they had been held, tortured, and interrogated for months, the condemned men were marched to the scaffolds that had been constructed at the La Punta fort at the edge of the harbor. Crowds gathered there to watch the hangings and some "applauded the gesticulations" of the victims. The bodies of reputed leaders like Aponte were decapitated and their severed heads placed on display in steel cages or on pikes as a warning to other potential rebels. On April 9, 1812, Aponte and eight other men were hung, and soon, Aponte's head, like countless others in this revolutionary age, became an object lesson on the price of rebellion (Childs *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion* 21, 47, 120, 154).

However, the gruesome public executions of Aponte and his followers failed to silence Cuba's free black leaders. Unknown rebels nailed a manifesto to the door of the Captain General's house; it read, "At the sound of a drum and a trumpet you will find us ready and fearless to end this empire of tyranny, and in this manner we will vanquish the arrogance of our enemies" (Franco 19; Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion* 156; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 138-73). In May of 1812, Captain Miguel Porro, was arrested for refusing to doff his hat to a white officer; he spent eleven days in jail in Havana before being released and then posted to Florida alongside the enslaved rebel in exile from Puerto Principe, Tiburcio Recio ("Memorials"; Porro; "Troops"). (37) Other free black officers, like Gabriel Dorotea Barba, continued to assert their legal rights via memorials sent to Spain ("Memorials"). Barba asked that the sons of black militia men be given preference in officer appointment over those of men who had not served, and that they "never lack the honor, good education, and status that they should inherit from their fathers," a claim that had not protected Aponte. Barba closed this request by appealing to "the well-known beneficent heart of Your Majesty" adding that the black militia had no other protection or source of help but "Your Royal majesty whom we consider our only Father."

Cuban officials could hardly contain their anger when, only days after Aponte's execution, the commander of the *Batallon de Morenos Libres*, Ysidro Moreno, demanded his white superior hand over the unit's service records, stating publicly that if his predecessors did not know how to fulfill their obligations, he did. Although they considered the black officers' demands "pretentious," "prideful," and "insubordinate," they were required to forward them to Spain (Montalvo).

That summer the Cortes in Cadiz finally issued a new Liberal Constitution. By edict, it was to be read aloud with great pomp and circumstance in American plazas that were, by the same edict, to be renamed Plaza of the Constitution. One can still visit the obelisk that was erected in the plaza of St. Augustine on that occasion. A copy of the Constitution reached Cuba in July of 1812, and Cuban officials, almost all of whom were monarchists, must have been galled to have to swear allegiance to the new form of government. The Constitution reversed long-promulgated racial prohibitions and decreed that "Spaniards of African origin" should be helped to study sciences and have access to an ecclesiastical career, "so as to be ever more useful to the state" (Garrigo 100). Free black Cubans celebrated these expanded rights, and black military figures like Barba and Moreno, who had risked all to pepper Cadiz with memorials, must have rejoiced to see the outcome of their campaign. On 24 July,

1812, six months after their fellow officer Jose Antonio de Aponte had been executed, Spain granted Barba and Moreno the "honorific distinction of the Royal Effigy" that Aponte's grandfather had received. Three months later, on 19 October, 1812, both men received their medals in a public ceremony in Havana's Plaza de Armas (Montalvo).

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Notes

(1) On Aponte's rebellion see Matt D. Childs *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* and Jose Luciano Franco *La conspiracion de Aponte*.

(2) I am indebted to my graduate school mentors at the University of Florida, Eugene Lyon, Michael Gannon, Kathleen Deagan, and Bruce Chappel, for introducing me to the value of these records and for including me in their earlier preservation projects in Cuba. The Slave Societies Digital Archive (SSDA) holds Havana's oldest black records from the Sagrada Catedral de San Cristobal de la Habana, *Libro de Barajas: Matrimonios, 1584-1622*, as well as many more Cuban records from Havana, Guanabacoa, Regla, Matanzas, Santiago, Holguin, and Cienfuegos. The SSDA also preserves records from a number of Brazilian and Colombian sites, as well as from Spanish Florida, Guadalajara, Mexico, Angola, Benin, and Cabo Verde.

(3) See Landers, "Catholic Conspirators?"; Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions*.

(4) On cofradias see Moreno.

(5) For information on multiracial families see McKinley, Morrison.

(6) For current discussions of African ethnicities in Latin America see Maria Carmen Barcia, Landers, Lopez Valdes, Von Gernetten, and Soares.

(7) The Pope formally approved this brotherhood in 1602.

(8) See de la Fuente, Saez.

(9) See Cuadrado; Fernandez Santalices; SSDA.

(10) On restrictions for cabildos see Marrero. See also *Actas capitulares del Ayuntamiento de la Habana*, Tomo II, 1566-1574, cited in Maria Carmen Barcia (58-59).

(11) See Deschamps Chapeaux. Other free Blacks bought rooms in that house, a custom I found still held in 1819 in the Lucumi's cabildo house owned by the black militia Sergeant Juan Nepomuceno de Prieto. See also Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* (170-72). For an extensive discussion of cabildo properties and administration see Howard.

(12) In addition to establishing a number of new churches and Cuba's first institution of higher learning, in 1718 Bishop Valdes also established the convalescent home of Belen and in 1722 the Hospital of San Lazaro to treat lepers. See Miranda.

(13) See SSSA; Cuadrado, *Iglesia del Santo Cristo del Buen Viaje*.

(14) See Manuel.

(15) See David Wheat's transcription of *Catedral Sagrada de la Habana, Libro de Barajas, Matrimonios, 1584-1622 and Bautismos, 1590-1622*.

(16) See Machado de Oliveira 99-117; Soares 21, 174, 151-53.

(17) See Cuadrado and "Cofradia de Santa Efigenia" for foundation documents for Brotherhood of Efigenia. Maria Carmen del Barcia includes membership lists of this brotherhood.

(18) See de Mello e Souza, Ortiz, Suarez Polcari 134-36.

(19) Similar complaints and rumors of a planned revolt by Angolan cabildo members led authorities in Mexico City to execute 35 individuals, including five women, disband all black brotherhoods, forbid black gatherings and establish patrols of the city. See "Relation del alzamiento que negros y mulatos, libres y cautivos de la ciudad de Mejico de la Nueva Espafia pretendieron hacer contra los espanoles," qtd. in Landers, "Cimarron and Citizen."

(20) By 1714 the Carabali Apapa devoted to Espiritu Santo owned a house on Calle Egido; Pedro Deschamps-Chapeaux identified the subgroups of Carabali in Havana as Abalo, Acocua, Apapa, Agro, Bogre, Bricamo, Ecunaso, Elugo, Ibi, Ibo, Induri, Isicuatojsique, Isuama, Isuama Apapa, Isuama Bogre Abate Singlaba, Isuama Aballa Ocuite, Isuama Ibi Isuama Isieque, Isueche, Isuama Oquella, Oru, Oroso, Ososo Omuna, Ugri. See Deschamps Chapeaux.

(21) On *Gratia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose* see Deagan and MacMahon; Landers, *Black Society* 29-59.

(22) Like most of the free black militia, Fermin de Quixas/Quijas had a long career. Military records allow us to track his career in the Havana militia for more than half century as he steadily rose through

the ranks from soldier to Captain of Grenadier ("Libro de Servicios de los Oficiales y Sargentos del Batallon de Pardos Libres de la Habana," 31 Dec. 1805, Archivo General de Indias, Cuba 1667 and 1771 B, cited in Maria Carmen Barcia).

(23) Bishop Morell de Santa Cruz subsidized the passage of the Mose militia from St. Augustine to Cuba in 1764 (Archivo General de Indias, Cuba, 1076).

(24) Nine free black families were initially settled at the small fishing village of Regla, also across the bay from Havana. Fifteen families of Florida Indians were re-settled in the village of Guanabacoa, an Indian reserve since 1554, located across the bay from Havana ("Resumen de los Indios procedentes de la Florida").

(25) See Eligio; Landers, *Black Society*, 61-82; "Instructions to Don Simon Rodriguez; "Los emigrados de Florida." Sherry Johnson argues in "Casualties of Peace" that although the Floridano settlement was a failure, it was a prototype for later, more successful settlements, as Havana's population grew rapidly over the last part of the century.

(26) In recognition of their service in the siege, a noted churchman preached the "Sermon of the Flags" in Espiritu Santo and blessed the black unit's flag which bore the motto "Victory or Death," a ceremony repeated when the island was restored to Spain in 1763. Cuba's black troops also helped establish Spanish control of New Orleans in 1769. See Maria Carmen Barcia, *Deschamps Chapeaux* 31-32.

(27) See Manuel.

(28) The brotherhood apparently faltered thereafter and in 1803 Captain Marcos Moreno of the Batallon de Morenos Leales, who received the Royal Effigy from the King, attempted to re-establish it only to be blocked by a new bishop, Juan Jose Diaz de Espada (Moreno). For more on the impact of the Saint Domingue revolt see Gonzalez-Ripoll et al., Ferrer.

(29) Carmelita and Chamiso, First and Second Capataces respectively, reported that on 15 Oct. 1768 a hurricane had destroyed their meeting house and all their documents. They listed the cabildo's first and second Captains as Joseph Antonio Carmelita and Manuel de Sayas and other officers and members (Barcia, *Los ilustres apellidos*). See Carmelita and Chamiso.

(30) On images of black kings see Kaplan 111; Trexler 102-107, 140. Trexler demonstrates the "plasticity of the magi theme" as kings were described as Indian or black depending on place and time. Black Cubans identified Melchior as the black magi who honored Christ at his birth. See also Saunders.

(31) The 1795 Treaty of Basle required all Spanish subjects, military and civilian, to evacuate the island (Johnson, "The Bittersweet Homecoming").

(32) Sergeant Second Class Juan Nepomuceno Prieto, the capataz of the Lucumi (Yoruba) cabildo in

Havana's Jesus, Maria y Jose barrio, served as the Catholic godfather for many Lucumi "liberated" by the British. See "Baptism of Jacobo"; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 138-73. On Prieto also see Lovejoy.

(33) Stephan Palmie also questions Aponte's African cabildo membership pointing out that Aponte had copied several royal cédulas pertaining to religious brotherhoods and called himself the "deputy of the Virgen of Remedios" (90-91).

(34) Two other deputies, Diego Aponte and Norberto Aponte, may also have been related to Jose Antonio.

(35) Eighteen men appeared on this list. They were sentenced to ten years of labor and forbidden to return to Cuba. See also "Arrival of Miguel y Perico Gonzalez in St. Augustine"; Landers, *Atlantic Creoles* 138-73.

(36) See Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion*; Franco; Howard.

(37) Miguel Porro complained regularly about the poor conditions in Florida and his troops' lack of clothing and was imprisoned in the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine in 1813.

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