Cuba and the United States: Origins and Antecedents of Relations, 1760s–1860s

ABSTRACT
This article examines relations between Cuba and the United States during the period in which commerce served to link the destinies of both countries. It is argued that trade and travel between Cuba and the United States served as factors to integrate the economy and culture of Cuba with the North American system.

RESUMEN
Este artículo examina las relaciones entre Cuba y los Estados Unidos durante el periodo en que el comercio vinculó los destinos de ambos países. Se sostiene que el intercambio mercantil y el viaje sirvieron como factores que facilitaron la integración de la economía y la cultura de Cuba con el sistema norteamericano.

I
Conventional historiographical wisdom has long advanced the proposition that the North American presence in Cuba had its beginnings in one of two periods: during the 1860s, in the aftermath of the Ten Years’ War; and during a decade of economic dislocation, and during and immediately after 1899–1902, the year of the U.S.-led armed intervention by the opening of the Cuban economy through the Reciprocity Treaty of 1903.1 Certainly both periods were characterized by rapid expansion of North American political influence and economic control on the island. Indeed, in some sectors this control was dramatic as it was total. But it is also true that much of what occurred after 1878 was in fact a continuation and culmination of a process with antecedents in the eighteenth century, one that had already shaped the form and function of the North American role in the Cuban political economy and set the course of future relations. Certainly geography played a part, and proximity alone serves to explain much about the nature of Cuban-U.S. relations, includ
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for their products declined even as imports diminished and their prices increased.

Cuban complaints were not confined to the state monopoly schemes. No less irksome were the endless proliferation of new taxes and the increase of old ones. Indeed, taxation was a central feature of the Bourbon strategy for transferring revenues from the colony to the metropolis. The number of taxes increased and collection improved. Profits went down, prices went up. No sector of Cuban society was immune from taxes, in one form or another.

There were further problems with economic organization. In fact, rising Cuban production had overtaken existing transportation capacity and available markets. Two developments were occurring: transportation bottle-necks were frustrating Cuban efforts to expand production, both from production points to ports, but especially from ports to overseas markets. Spain could not provide Cuban producers with adequate shipping, on a sufficiently regular basis, to accommodate expanding sugar production. Equally troublesome, Spain was losing the capacity to absorb Cuba’s rising production but nevertheless resisted Cuban demands for free access to other markets. Spain was not always consistent in these efforts, nor were they always unsuccessful. That was, in fact, part of the problem.

These conditions underscored the growing anomaly of a dynamic colonial economy dependent upon a stagnant metropolis. Spanish producers could not supply enough imports at reasonable prices, both essential to sustained economic growth. No less important, Spain’s inability to provide Cuban planters with African slaves, with regularity, and at reasonable prices, also thwarted the expansion of Cuban production. Spanish colonialism was increasingly unable to accommodate the changes transforming the Cuban economy.

What made some of the more oppressive features of Spanish colonialism bearable during the early decades of the eighteenth century were alternate markets and new sources of imports, principally from North American colonies. Spanish authorities had long been ambivalent toward trade between Cuba and British North America, alternating between acquiescence and resistance. Local officials recognized the logic of this commerce with nearby markets and access to cheap, dependable supplies. It promised also to meet some of the more outstanding Cuban demands, and even provide additional sources of revenues in the form of tax receipts and trade duties.

But colonial authorities were not without misgivings. The very benefits of trade with the thirteen North American colonies also made it threatening in the long run. Authorities in Cuba understood the perils of
proximity, meaning imports at lower costs and exports at higher profits, and that both portended a growing foreign influence on the island and Spain's eventual loss of the Cuban market altogether. Government authori-
ties were themselves subject to countervaluing pressures from peninsular merchants in Cuba and manufacturers in Spain who continually demanded the preservation of exclusive trade privileges with the island, no matter what the cost to local producers and consumers. The North American trade connection was to be severely restricted, to be sanc-
tioned only in the service of larger Spanish national interests.

So it was that contraband and illicit trade served an important func-
tion in the Cuban economy. There was an element of dependability about illegal commerce, even with its inherent uncertainty North Ameri-
cans were ready, and Cubans were willing, to supply these illicit contacts. They found outlets for their products and obtained otherwise scarce goods, at good prices, without taxes. Cubans provided sugar, molasses, cocoa, tobacco, and hides; the North Americans pro-
vided textiles, foodstuffs, manufactures, and slaves. Indeed, perhaps as much as half of all consumer goods available in Cuba arrived through illicit channels.

How these commercial contacts, legal and illicit, flourished was often a function of Spain's European diplomacy, and on whether it could impose its will on the colonists. The result was a policy characterized by irresolution and unpredictability—trade sometimes sanctioned, some-
times suspended; contraband sometimes permitted, other times prohib-
ited. Periodic attempts to suppress contraband often only created new problems and exacerbated old ones. Occasionally, and especially under the early Bourbons, Spain moved vigorously against illicit trade. In fact, however, smuggling continued, often at greater costs to Cubans, be-
cause risks were greater. Spanish authorities merely disrupted the flow of contraband trade without adequately meeting the increase in local demand. This caused hardship. Almost always decisions were made from above and abroad, in the pursuit of policies that Cubans often neither approved nor understood, and almost never influenced.

If Spain often acted to contain Cuban development, occasionally it inadvertently released them, as occurred in 1762. The entry of Spain in the Seven Years' War between England and France (1756–1763) trans-
formed the Caribbean into a zone of military operations and Cuba into a key military objective. In 1762 the British struck and seized Havana.

The British occupation of Havana promoted ties between Cubans and North Americans on a hitherto unprecedented scale. One-quarter of the 22,000-man expeditionary force, most of which was outfitted in the thirteen colonies, consisted of North Americans. The opening of Ha-

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expanding output. The rebellious colonies lost access to their former suppliers of tropical imports from the British Caribbean. Cuba served as an alternative and increasingly important, North American producers acquired alternative customers for products previously sold in the English Antilles. North American merchant vessels were again welcomed in Havana harbor, and Cuban producers once more had wider markets for their sugar and molasses, receiving in return flour, manufactured goods, lumber, and slaves. Spain’s official participation in the war against England after 1779 further stimulated trade. Unable to guarantee the continuance of Cuban trade by relaxing, and in some cases removing, old commercial restrictions. Not since the English occupation of 1762–1763 had Havana harbor been so crowded with foreign merchant vessels. The economy expanded. Merchants and producers alike prospered during these years, and trade with North America seemed to have no limits.

But the advantages derived from North American trade were short-lived. Once more Spain intruded itself into Cuban affairs. In January 1784 Spanish authorities fully restored trade restrictions, effectively proscribing Cuban commerce with all countries except Spain. North American commercial houses were closed, U.S. agents and jobbers were expelled, and foreign merchant vessels barred from Cuban ports. The total number of ships voyaging annually between Havana and the thirteen colonies that had increased from four in 1776 to 308 in 1782 dwindled to ten by 1785.

These policies announced Spain’s intentions to restore peninsular commercial exclusivism, fully and immediately. Advantages accrued once more to Spanish manufacturers and merchants, to the detriment of Cuban producers and consumers. Cubans were again officially forced to sell cheap and buy dear, and otherwise make do with contraband and smuggling as the alternate means of conducting commercial transactions with North America.

For the newly independent colonies, however, previously one of the principal collaborators in this clandestine trade, contraband could no longer meet expanding commercial needs. The North Americans soon offset the loss of Cuban markets through increased trade with the French colony of St. Domingue. By 1790, the value of North American exports to St. Domingue was more than the combined value of all exports to the rest of the Caribbean, some $3.3 million out of a total of $6.4 million. At the same time, St. Domingue provided almost all the sugar, molasses, cocoa, and coffee entering the United States. Cubans were the losers.

Again Cuban producers were reminded of the vagaries to which they were periodically subject and had little control over. Such policy reversals were causing havoc in Cuba and became increasingly intolerable. Each policy shift caused more disruption. When Spain and France (1793–1795) resulted again in opening Cuba to North American commerce. In June 1796, Madrid closed Cuba’s ports, only to reopen them the following October, when Spain allied itself with France and war against England. For the following five years, the island was opened to the shipping of neutral nations, which especially favored the North Americans. Trade with the United States flourished. Cubans exported sugar, molasses, rum, and coffee; the United States provided food supplies, clothing, furniture, manufactured goods, and slaves. During these years, too, North American vessels were permitted to carry Cuban exports to European markets. In 1798, for the first time—briefly but portentously—the volume of commerce between Cuba and the United States exceeded the trade between Cuba and Spain. "The wealth and importance of this colony," excelled U.S. consul agent George C. Morton from Havana in 1801, "has increased during the few years that it has been open to the American trade, in almost astonishing degrees, with regard to the habits of industry, knowledge of commerce, general civilization, and comforts of life." Not long thereafter, Spain abruptly reasserted trade exclusivism and suspended Cuban trade with the United States. Once more these decisions wrought havoc on the Cuban economy. Between 1800 and the end of 1801, North American exports to Cuba declined from $8.4 million to $5.7 million, while Cuban sugar exports to the United States dropped from 37 tons to 8,000 tons. By 1802, trade had deteriorated further, as North American imports declined to $938,289 and Cuban sugar exports dropped to 4,000 tons. A year later, Spain and France were again at war with England and North American merchant vessels were welcome in Cuban ports. During 1806–1807, the value of North American exports increased to $12 million, while Cuban sugar exports increased to 43,000 tons.

The Cuban economy expanded during these years, not spectacularly to be sure, but in fits and starts, and over time registered discernible gains. Indeed, twenty years after the British occupation of Havana, far-reaching changes had overaken Cuban society. If the availability of new markets had made the expansion of sugar production profitable, the availability of new slaves had made it possible. The slave trade flourished during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Slaves, long a coveted commodity, had been the stock in the illicit trade for almost two centuries. But the contraband slave trade as the principal means of meeting expanded labor needs was inadequate. Vital to the Cuban strategy of
expanded sugar production, was not only an increased supply of slave labor but also a guaranteed supply of slave labor. The British occupation, followed by the Bourbon liberalization of trade, was a powerful boost to the importation of slaves. During the previous 250 years of Spanish rule between 1512 and 1763, an estimated total of 60,000 slaves had been introduced into Cuba; between 1764 and 1800, the number approached 100,000, averaging approximately 3,000 slaves a year.

This had immediate effects on the economy. The number of sugar mills increased, the cultivation of cane spread, production expanded. New trade contacts between 1763 and 1783 stimulated both the conversion of old land to sugar and the expansion onto new land. The average devoted to sugar cane increased to spectacular fashion—from 10,000 acres in 1762 to 160,000 in 1792. After the 1760s, new mills were organized in regions where sugar had previously existed. By the early 1800s, there were almost 500 sugar mills. Sugar production increased, rising from 10,000 tons annually during the 1770s, to 12,000 tons in the 1780s and 16,000 tons in the early 1790s.

In fact, these production advances added new pressure to expand and stabilize Cuba's trade relations with markets other than Spain and brought problems of another kind. As Cuba moved inexorably toward monoculture in the eighteenth century, dependence on imports—foodstuffs, clothing, manufactures—increased, as did the importance of merchants. And so too did the importance of trade with North Americans, upon whom Cubans were becoming increasingly dependent.

IV

Cuba nears the end of the eighteenth century enjoying modest economic growth, stimulated largely by expanded sugar production and increased, it is true, trade opportunities. But Cubans were comparative latecomers to sugar production. The opportunity for expansion was limited, and by the end of the eighteenth century Cuba was approaching capacity.

One problem was competition. By the late eighteenth century, the French colony of St. Domingue was arguably the most prosperous European colony in the New World. An estimated 700 estates produced an average annual of 71,000 tons of sugar, nearly 3,000 coffee farms produced more than 30,000 tons of coffee, accounting for more than 60 percent of the world supply. Only one-third of this vast production was consumed in metropolitan France, the balance reexported to other world markets.

Cuban producers could not compete. They had increased sugar pro-
duction in steady but modest increments, but they lacked the means to sustain their expansion and the markets to expand into. Costs were higher, customers were fewer, and as a result of both Cubans found few incentives to expand.

There were other problems. Cuban producers operated within a restrictive trade system and retrogressive tax structure, producing for limited markets, expanding with meager capital. There could neither fully consume Cuban products nor adequately provide for Cuban needs, yet insisted upon regulating the terms of the trade. What growth had taken place was the result largely of improved returns to fortunate circumstances. Continued economic growth was contingent on finding new markets or expanding into old ones, and in the late eighteenth century the prospects for either were poor. The vast productive capacity of St. Domingue alone so determined world supply and demand, so influenced the market price and profit margin as to make the position of French producers all but unsaleable.

V

The opportunity for Cuban producers came unexpectedly in August 1791, when the slaves of St. Domingue rose in rebellion. For the remainder of the decade, the French colony was ravaged by civil strife. Successively, England, Spain, and France took turns at attempting to pacify the rebellious colony without any effect other than to prolong the conflict and add to widespread havoc and devastation. The results were dramatic and permanent. The plantations were destroyed, production collapsed, the planters departed.

The effects reverberated across the Atlantic. The world supply of sugar declined. Demand increased, sugar prices followed, increasing from 12 reales per pound in 1790 to 36 in 1795.

There were other, more immediate, effects. As a result of the turmoil in St. Domingue, the United States lost its principal trading partner in the Caribbean. This loss was, in part, offset by the sporadic opening of Cuban ports in the following decade. It stood to reason that Cuba would be an obvious beneficiary of the disruption of production in St. Domingue, and it was to Cuba that North Americans flocked after 1791. But it was also apparent that Cubans could not hope to sustain a stable trade relationship with the North Americans so long as the terms and duration of that trade remained subject to capricious dictates of Spanish authorities.

The need for Cuba to develop new and expanded trade relationships assumed added urgency in the decade immediately following the col-
lapse of St. Domingue. Indeed, few other circumstances could have favored the expansion of Cuban sugar production so swiftly. Cuban producers inherited all at once rising prices, increasing demand, and mounting world shortages. Sugar expanded in a frenzy, an immediate and improvised response to soaring world prices. Old producers increased production. New ones initiated production. The number of estates increased, and the zones of cultivation expanded. Between 1774 and 1827 the total number of mills more than doubled, increasing from less than 500 to 1,000. New acreage passed into sugar production: an estimated 1,700 acres a year in the 1790s, increasing to about 3,500 acres annually by the 1810s, and reaching 13,000 acres a year by the 1840s. Production soared, from an annual average of 12,000 tons during 1786–1790, more than doubling to 26,000 tons for 1796–1800, and more than tripling during 1831–1835 to 88,000 tons.

The opportunity to expand production after the fall of St. Domingue was also very much aided by timely expansion of trade contacts. Between the early 1790s and early 1800s, Cuban producers increased exports to old markets, and nowhere perhaps were gains registered as quickly and with such effect as with the United States. Between 1790 and 1799, the total value of North American exports to St. Domingue declined from $3.3 million to $2.8 million, while exports to Cuba increased from $147,807 to $9 million. No less dramatic were the changes in imports from the regions classified by the U.S. Treasury Department as the “French West Indies,” principally from St. Domingue, and the “Spanish West Indies,” principally from Cuba (see table 1). Cuban opportunities to expand trade and commerce were, to be sure, more a function of Spanish political receptiveness than Cuban economic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Selected U.S. Imports from the West Indies, 1790–1799</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French West Indies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>9,316,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>3,146,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish West Indies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>529,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>6,621,337</td>
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Note: All units in pounds except for molasses, which is given in gallons. Source: American State Papers, 1789–1809: Commerce and Navigation (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1832), 1:37, 441.

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for the local market than to sacrifice sugar exports for foreign markets. That the United States could meet these needs, as well as provide Cuba with necessary industrial and manufactured supplies, quickly and reasonably inexpensively, both encouraged and facilitated the expansion of Cuban sugar production.

It served also to increase the importance of trade with the United States. The number of North American ships arriving to Cuba increased from 150 in 1796, to 606 in 1800, 783 in 1826; from 1,702 during 1846–1850 to 2,088 during 1851–1856.11 Commerce flourished. Trade contacts expanded steadily. North American ships from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Savannah, and New Orleans provided Cubans with box shooks, staves, caskets, barrels, hoops, nails, tar, textiles, salt, fish, corn, lard, flour, and rice. They returned laden with sugar, cocoa, tobacco, molasses, and more.

The inexorable logic of these circumstances gradually transformed the United States into Cuba’s single most important trading partner. In 1850, Cuban trade with the United States represented 39 percent of the total, followed by England (34 percent), and Spain (27 percent). Five years later, the North American share increased to 42 percent and rose again to 48 percent in 1859 (see Table 2). In the following decades, these trade patterns continued. In 1865, Cuba exported 65 percent of its sugar to the United States and 3 percent to Spain. By 1877, the United States accounted for 82 percent of Cuba’s total exports, followed by Spain (5.7 percent) and England (4.4 percent). In some sectors, Cuban dependency upon North American imports was striking. The implications of these developments were far reaching and clear. “The trade of the country is falling into the hands of foreigners,” observed traveler Anthony Trollope from Cuba in 1859, “into those principally of Americans from the States. Havana will soon become as much American as New Orleans.”12

Cuba had previously obtained a number of important commercial concessions, particularly in trade relationships with Spain. These benefits were of limited value, however, for Cuban trade was no longer organized around Spain but the United States. Spain could neither offer Cuban producers adequate markets nor guarantee sufficient supplies. The United States promised both. Spain could no longer fully consume Cuban sugar exports, and lacking refinery capabilities, could not reexport Cuban sugar to other markets. Cuba’s economic needs diverged increasingly from those of Spain.13

By the mid-nineteenth century, Cubans realized that they could not achieve the full potential of their productive capacities within the traditional framework of empire. The anomaly was not lost on them. And, indeed, the Cuban economy had already expanded beyond existing colonial structures. But trade with Europe and the United States was still subject to the constraints of Spanish policy. Spain could not supply the goods, the shipping, or the markets demanded by Cuba, but persisted in obstructing itself between Cuba and world markets. Spain was superfluous to the Cuban economy in every way but one: it regulated the terms of the exchange, increasingly a point of contention. Official efforts to

| TABLE 2 | Cuban Trade with the United States, England, and Spain, 1846–1859 (in pesos) |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Imports  | United States   | England         | Spain           |
| 1846–1850| 27,838          | 21,682          | 27,210          |
| 1851–1855| 35,978          | 31,991          | 44,729          |
| 1856–1859| 40,308          | 29,406          | 31,842          |
| Exports  | 37,426          | 35,105          | 16,957          |
| 1581–1855| 61,817          | 42,388          | 17,717          |
| 1856–1859| 68,339          | 37,294          | 20,974          |


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<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Selected Cuban Imports for Domestic Consumption, 1852</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>$661,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>$1,061,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain and pulse</td>
<td>$320,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lard and butter</td>
<td>$948,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumber</td>
<td>$2,082,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specie</td>
<td>$989,424</td>
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promote Spanish exports and encourage the use of Spanish carriers cost Cuban residents dearly. The island was subjected to a series of discriminatory customs duties. The terms of the 1853 tariff law foreign products shipped on Spanish carriers paid 21.5 to 25.5 percent ad valorem, and on foreign carriers 29.5 to 35.5 percent. Peninsular products carried by national shippers paid 6 percent ad valorem; carried by foreigners, the duty increased 19.5 percent. So too with island exports: goods shipped by foreigners paid 7.5 percent, Spanish carriers 3 percent. Revised and modified periodically in the years that followed, the colonial tariff schedule had the net effect of increasing significantly the Cuban cost of living. The 1867 schedule, given in table 4, provides a representative price listing of basic commodities.

Colonial authorities levied duties on imports, imposed taxes on exports, and assessed freight charges on foreign carriers, all of which lowered profits for Cuban producers and raised prices for Cuban consumers. By the mid-nineteenth century, these duties were particularly odious, for the vast majority of Cuban imports originated from foreign producers, carried by foreign shippers.

A 35 percent ad valorem was only the beginning. Added to this levy were other surcharges, including port duties, tonnage duties, municipal and provincial surcharges, and retail taxes. Not infrequently, consumers in Cuba paid more than double the original market price on U.S. imports. One mid-century estimate calculated that approximately $15 million worth of North American textiles, agricultural goods, furniture, and tools was resold in Cuba for more than $30 million. A total of $73,000 in duties was paid on $91,000 worth of U.S. Borr.18

VII

Exorbitant customs duties and discriminatory tariff rates did not, however, interrupt the expansion of trade. Indeed, so vital was the U.S. connection in Cuba that local producers grudgingly accepted colonial taxes as part of the normal cost of doing business with the North Americans. And even with these patently sound surcharges, ties between both countries continued to deepen. Through the first half of the nineteenth century, North Americans in increasing numbers successfully integrated themselves into strategic sectors of Cuba’s emerging agrarian capitalism. North American traders shrewdly and effectively pursued the Cuban market, providing slaves and manufactured goods at reasonable prices, often extending generous credit arrangements, and accepting sugar and molasses as payment. U.S. interests in Cuba increased as the North American capital and commercial stake on the island expanded. Direct U.S. investments in Cuba increased in value and variety. North American merchants, bankers, and shippers established financial houses in the principal seaports, most of which played the dual role of trading establishments and moneylenders. Trade companies established themselves in Havana, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Camagüey, Santiago, and Santiago de Cuba and soon became ubiquitous across the island: Moses Taylor & Co., Charles Tying & Co., Martin Knight & Co., Storey & Co., George Harris & Co., Drake Brothers & Co., Howland Brothers & Co., Dudley Selden & Co., Safford, Smith & Co., and Morehead & Co. They provided credit, purchased the sugar crops, and supplied imports. Increasingly, the trading companies expanded their control over the carrying trade and augmented their shipping lines to handle Cuba’s coastwise traffic. But more importantly they controlled the service linking Cuban ports to New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston.19

From these positions, North American capital expanded into other sectors of the local economy, including sugar plantations, mills, and coffee farms. The Howland Brothers Co. properties included “El Dorado” sugar plantation and “Ontario” and “Mt. Vernon” coffee fincas. North American investments in mining increased. As early as 1853, U.S. investors acquired interests in the Jaragua iron mines near Santiago. Other North American claims followed in quick succession: copper mines in El Cobre, iron mines in Daiquirí and Manicuragua, and the Bayestabo mines in Nuevitas (American Mining Company).20 Thomas B. Smith and

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<tr>
<td><strong>Tarriff Rates on Selected Cuban Imports, 1867 (in pesos)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Carry</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spanish</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flour (100 kg)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tallow (50 kg)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Fish (500 kg)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Lard (50 kg)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Fuel oils (50 kg)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rice (25 kg)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vermicelli (50 kg)</strong></td>
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they purchased a debt-ridden mismanaged Desengano sugar plantation and a contingent of forty slaves from the Royo family. Louis Lay emigrated from New Orleans and soon owned a trading company and hotel in Havana. A year after the tremendous coal deposits near Havana in Havana reported of the large numbers of “refugees from New Orleans” who arrived to Havana with their personal slaves. North American residents were mostly connected with trade, commerce, shipping, and agricultural production. Their influence was well out of proportion to their numbers, and in some regions their participation was vital to the local economy. The first steam vessels employed outside the United States by loca North American shipper Woodbury, in need of a convenient port from which to export his sugar, and by merchant William F. Safford (W. Safford & Co.), who handled the expanding Cádiz trade. In the years that followed, Cárdenas became known as an “American city” in Cuba due to its large North American population. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, more than 90 percent of Cárdenas’s trade was with the United States. “From day to day the colonies of the Americans on the island increase,” reported Captain General Conde de Alcay in 1850, “as can be seen in the increases registered in Sagua la Grande, Cienfuegos, Matanzas, Cárdenas, etc. Daily, the Americans purchase extensive territories and under their auspices Cárdenas is being reborn into a new city.”

North Americans settled everywhere in Cuba, but tended especially to favor the north coast, most densely in Havana, and as far east as Gibara. “Havana is crowded with Americanos,” observed George W. Williams in 1855. The Mercantile Weekly Report was published in Havana expressly for the North American colony. In 1855 a new hospital was established in Havana to serve the needs exclusively of the North American community in Cuba. So prominent was the North American presence along the north coast between Havana and Sagua la Grande as to prompt Richard R. Madden to observe in 1849, “Some districts on the northern shores of the island, in the vicinity, especially, of Cárdenas and Matanzas, have more the character of American than of Cuban. For a brief period immediately after its founding, Havana was crowded with ranking representatives of the defeated Confederate, including Generals John C. Breckinridge, Robert A. Toombs, Birkett D. Fry, John B. Magruder, Hamilton P. Bee, William Preston, Jubal A. Early, Commodore John N. Maffitt, Colonel Wood Taylor, and the former governor of Louisiana, Thomas Overton Moore. Some eventually returned to the United States, but many remained and joined the growing ranks of North American planters and property owners in Cuba. Eliza McHattie-Ripley, her husband, and two personal slaves emigrated from Louisiana to Matanzas, where
ated principally by North Americans, mostly women, catering to visitors from the United States. In Havana Mrs. West operated a boardinghouse on Calle Obispo; Mrs. Fulton was the proprietor of an inn on Calle La Sibylle; Mrs. Davis and Parage operated the American Hotel on Calle Obispo; Mrs. Brewster, Mrs. Brewster, Mrs. Lawrence, Mrs. Chambers, and Mrs. Butts also operated boardinghouses in Havana popular with North American travelers. Mr. Woodberry's hotel in Guineo acquired a reputation for fine meals. The Planters' Hotel in Matanzas was also said to set an excellent table, as did the Elowar House. In Limonar, Mrs. Hudson's inn was the only one on the island known to have a chimney in its parlor. Also in Limonar, Mrs. Oliver's guest house was on the grounds of a small coffee finca and enjoyed a reputation for excellent service at reasonable prices. In Cárdenas the boarding house owned by Mrs. Lawrence was said to be unrivaled for its cleanliness and hospitality. Mr. Lovett's inn in Cárdenas suffered by comparison, but made up for it by charging lower prices for food and board. In Santiago de Cuba, Mrs. Siscoe's boardinghouse had a reputation for cleanliness, good meals, and wine, all for two dollars a day.

These boardinghouses served as the central point of congregation for North Americans, travelers and residents alike. They sponsored social functions and operated evening card games; on occasion they provided theater productions and cabaret entertainments and housed foreign dignitaries. U.S. national holidays were celebrated with grand festivity and the obligatory mixture of speechmaking and merriment. Local Cubans and Spaniards were frequent participants. In their own modest way, the boardinghouses served as centers of cultural diffusion, a point at which North Americans and Cubans converged socially, talked politics, trade, and commerce, and just came to know each other.53

Around the boardinghouses and inns on the north coast developed a variety of other establishments owned by North Americans that catered to the needs of both North American travelers and local residents. Among the principal bay streets appeared bars, brothels, and restaurants. Billiard rooms were especially popular, providing still one more point where Cubans and North Americans socialized.

North American tourists had early discovered Cuba and were especially fond of Havana. Visiting Cuba in the mid-1880s, British historian John Anthony Froude was dismayed by the numbers of North Americans in Cuba. He found his hotel "full to overflowing with them" and lamented that he had "not been better advised" about the choice of a hotel. "The dining saloon rang with American voices; in their shrillest
tone," wrote Froude. "Every table was occupied by groups of them, nor was there a sound in the room of any language but theirs."54 In 1884 U.S. tourist James McOuatle wrote from Havana, "American intercourse is modifying manners and customs.

As their numbers increased, and their roles expanded, the importance of North Americans also increased. Many married into prominent creole families. The Phinney family of Rhode Island married into the Quintana family of Matanzas. No less important, more North Americans were arriving to operate the expanding Cuban industrial manufactures imported from the United States—especially sugar mills, machinery and railroad locomotives—and to service the tracks and rail lines. North American maquinistas arrived late in the fall and remained in Cuba through June, in the sugar harvest, for which they were typically paid $2,500, plus room and board. In Regla, the great depot of the molasses trade, the foundry vital to the maintenance of local molasses tanks was managed by North American engineers. The island's consipicuous shipping was handled increasingly by steam vessels manufactured in the United States and, increasingly, piloted by North Americans.55 During the late 1850s, as railroad construction activity expanded across the island, hundreds of North Americans were employed in construction, repair, and maintenance capacities. In 1858 alone, more than 1,000 workers from the United States, principally engineers, mechanics, and artisans, arrived in Cuba under contract to work on the railroads. The following year, 5,034 North American travelers arrived in Cuba, 3,106 of whom remained to work.56

Cuban producers early developed a dependence on North American machinery and technicians to service it. "American steam-engines are fast taking the place of animal power," observed Maturin M. Ballou in 1854, "and more or less are monthly exported from New York, Philadelphia and Boston. This creates a demand for engines and machinery; for whom the Cubans are also dependent upon this country; and there are said to be at this time two hundred Bostonians thus engaged at a handsome remuneration, upon the island."57 Traveling in Cuba several years later, Richard Dana met a North American engineer on a Matanzas plantation, "one of a numerous class, whom the sugar culture brings annually to Cuba." Dana added, "They leave in the winter, engage themselves for the sugar season, put the machinery in order, work it for the four or five months of its operation, clean and put it in order for lying by, and return to the United States in the spring. They must be machinists, as well as engineers; for all the repairs and contrivances, so necessary in a remote place, fall upon them."58 Also traveling in Cuba during the late 1850s, Carlson H. Rogers observed

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The cars on this [Havana–Guáína] road are of American manufacture (that is, built in the United States), are drawn by American-built engines, and conducted by American engineers.  

Spanish colonial authorities saw the implications of Cuba's deepening reliance on technology and technicians from the United States. Governor General José G. de la Concha complained in 1853 that the number of Cuban students graduating as lawyers was well out of proportion to local needs, to the neglect of professions and occupations essential to the well-being of the island. "Ever since the introduction of steam-powered machinery in the sugar mills and the construction of the first railroad," de la Concha observed, "the need for Spanish maquinistas increased, for the consequence of giving foreigners, mostly North Americans, access to the mills was forseen." De la Concha had five educational institutions offering a full curriculum for law studies, it lacked even one school to train maquinistas, sugar masters, and engineers—all so necessary for the principal industry of the country.  

This trend continued through the end of the nineteenth century. Of the 846 total students enrolled in the University of Havana during the academic year 1887–1888, 280 were in law, 250 in medicine, 234 in pharmacy, 44 in philosophy, and 38 in science.  

Cuban imports of U.S. machinery increased through the nineteenth century, and the sugar industry expanded around these imports. The relationship between the two was obvious, as were the implications. The relationship was fixed early in the nineteenth century, and attempts to disengage Cuba from U.S. markets, or restrict imports from the United States, or in any other way interrupt the transactions upon which Cubans depended more and more, threatened the island with dire consequences. Cuban prosperity developed around the North American connection, and as this dependency increased, so too did North American influence. Richard Madden observed during his travels in Cuba as early as the 1830s, "The prosperity of the island has derived no small advantage from those numerous American establishments. Improved modes of agriculture; of fabrication, of conveyance, were introduced by the Americans." Madden added:

The substitution in Cuba of the old grinding mill, rudely constructed of wood, by steam-engine machinery, is also chiefly due to the Americans. To them, therefore, Cuba is indebted for the various improvements in the fabrication of sugar, and modes of conveyance of the produce of its plantations, which enable the proprietors to compete so successfully with those of the English colonies. Cuba, ever since I knew it, has been slowly but steadily becoming Americanised.  

Cuba and the United States, 1760s–1860s  

Through the first half of the nineteenth century, capital and credit from the United States, as well as investments and imports, were shaping the course of Cuban economic development. Although comparatively few in numbers, North Americans were located at strategic points in the economy. Increasingly, they were property owners, adding further to the power of the North American presence. William Stewart of Philadelphia owned the "La Carolina" estate near Cienfuegos, a plantation of about 5,000 acres worked by 500 slaves. Augustus Heintz of Boston purchased the "San Jorge" estate near Sagua la Grande in 1840, a property of more than 2,500 acres with 160 slaves. Other North American proprietors included George K. Thordike, owner of the "Santa Ana" plantation in Sagua la Grande; J. W. Baker from Philadelphia owned the "San José" estate near Cienfuegos, the first large "powerful" "La Palma," "Roble," and "La Sonora," all near Cárdenas; the Russell Jenkins family owned extensive holdings in the Yumuri valley of Matanzas. North Americans acquired estates, purchased slaves, and otherwise increased their participation in the expanding sugar industry. Observed one traveler in the mid-nineteenth century:

The great amount of American capital invested in slave property in Cuba, and the energy with which the new American settlers have entered on the cultivation of new land (the establishment of new American plantations averaging during the last three years, twenty a year), have largely contributed to give an impetus to the trade which has been fatal for the efforts for its suppression.  

The expanding American presence in Cuba presaged the new order of things. Its influence knew no boundaries. A predominantly Catholic society opened up to a Protestant migration that although comparatively small was nonetheless associated, modernization and progress. Wrote Richard Davey, "During the last seventy years ... the country has been overrun by Americans, who have introduced every form of Protestantism, from Episcopalianism to Quakerism, and even Shakerism.  

North Americans were moving into Cuban finance, trade, and commerce. They were moneylenders and shippers, buyers and sellers, engineers and machinists. Cubans, in turn, were becoming increasingly dependent on U.S. technology and technicians, on U.S. markets and imports, U.S. capital and credit. Above all, this presence facilitated the integration of the Cuban economy into the North American system and weakened Cuban cultural and institutional ties to Spain, with far-reaching consequences. The Anglo-Norman and Spanish races here meet," observed Fredrik Bremer at mid-century, "for good and for evil, secretly and
that today makes communication between the island the American Union so frequent and rapid, there existed more and better means of travel to that country than to the Peninsula. These circumstances have producing the "most baneful consequences," especially with regard to the "preservation of the national spirit." De la Concha urged Madrid to improve transportation to and from the island and modernize its maritime fleets with new steamships. Improved transportation between Spain and its Caribbean possessions, de la Concha predicted, would not only "strengthen the ties between the metropolis and the Antilles, but provide additional indirect means to promote immigration from Spain to the islands without the inconveniences of breaking relations and weakening family ties." 18

VIII

Developments during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries prepared the way for close ties between Cuba and the United States. In many ways, early relations between both countries shaped the Cuban social dynamic and accelerated Cuban disaffection with Spanish colonialism. As producers of commercial export crops, Cubans demanded direct access to foreign markets and cheap prices for foreign imports. They resented peninsular control of overseas trade, they resisted Spanish taxes on foreign commerce. The clash of rival economic interests between Cubans and Spaniards exacerbated political tensions between the colony and the metropolis. Spanish customs duties on the foreign imports upon which Cubans increasingly depended, foodstuffs no less than agricultural and industrial equipment, raised the cost of living and increased the cost of sugar production. Creole property owners demanded not only economic policies to protect and promote their interests, they demanded too the political positions to implement the policies themselves, according to their needs. Cubans demanded freedom to promote their own interests, arrange their own taxes, regulate their own economic growth. They demanded freedom to expand, to develop resources according to their needs on their terms, to earn more by producing more and to expand more by exporting more. They needed, above all, access to political power to protect their economic interests.

At the same time, the early North American presence in Cuba, particularly as it was strategically located in the local economy, set the stage for the vast influx of U.S. capital and promoted the trade connection. By mid-century, Cubans and North Americans were familiar with each other and well understood each other’s needs. Decades before the Spanish colonial
K. LYNN STONER

On Men Reforming the Rights of Men:
The Abrogation of the Cuban Adultery Law, 1930

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the mentality of men who abrogated Spanish Penal Code Article 437 that had permitted husbands to kill adulterous wives. While a Cuban woman's movement opposed feminicidio, it failed to mount a campaign to force the law's nullification. Men abrogated the adultery law as a means of breaking with colonial policy and instituting a bourgeois, republican order, but not with an eye toward addressing issues of sexual double standard or unjust gender relations.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo analiza la mentalidad de hombres que abogaron Artículo 437 del Código Penal el cual permitía a los maridos matar a sus esposas infieles. Aunque había un movimiento feminista cubano y aunque su movimiento se opoñía al feminicidio, no organizaron una campaña para forzar anulación de la ley. Los hombres revocaron la ley de adulterio como parte de la corriente modernizadora que buscaba romper la política colonial y instituir un orden burgués y republicano. Pero su objetivo fundamental no era corregir el doble "standard" en el terreno amoroso o las relaciones injustas entre mujeres y hombres.

On February 16, 1930, Cuba's all-male congress, with only verbal urging from women and feminists, abrogated article 437 of the penal code, thereby ending a centuries-old provision permitting a husband to kill his adulterous wife. The legal and social implications of this act ended the punitive authority men had over women, and it raised the possibility of mutual expectations of marital fidelity. Without sanctioned wife-killing and in accordance with the 1917 and 1930 divorce laws, divorce became the only means of ending adulterous marriages, and women as well as men could file suit. Under the new terms of sexual and marital relations, patriarchal control of women's sexuality, so central to male honor and identity, no longer had legal sanction.