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Free Association and Civil Society in Cuba, 1787–1895

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Abstract. This study provides a new perspective on civil society in Cuba during the nineteenth century based on concrete information about multiple types of association in different regions of the island. Modern associations developed mainly to meet specific social and cultural needs, achieve legal autonomy from the state and exercise free association despite colonial constraints. This long-term evolution covers several periods of intersections between civil society and political spheres, framed primarily by non-violent constitutionalist and reformist struggles rather than armed separatist conflicts. These findings contradict prevalent interpretations that portray an endemically weak yet increasingly militant civil society. Instead, a growing, moderate, and progressively autonomous and diverse civil society contributed gradually to undermine colonial despotism and establish key bases for post-independence democracy.

Keywords: Cuba, civil society, associations, constitutionalism, reformism

Introduction

Well before republican constitutions guaranteed the right of free association in Cuba, non-governmental associations contributed to the enrichment of Cuban social life in important and necessary ways.[1] The birth of modern autonomous association is closely tied to the rise of civil society, a sphere of human collaboration abstractly distinct from that of political society and the state. In specific historical settings, these spheres intersect with and influence each other. Kernels of civil society appeared in Europe and elsewhere during

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[1] *Nueva Constitución de la República de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Luz-Hilo, 1940), p. 27: Article 37, based on Article 28 of Cuba's 1901 Constitution, states the following: 'Los habitantes de la República tienen el derecho de reunirse pacíficamente y sin armas, y el de desfilar y asociarse para todos los fines lícitos de la vida'.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even under autocratic regimes that allowed associations with varying degrees of autonomy.[2] For most of the nineteenth century, Cuban subjects struggled under the division and oppression of a colonial and slave-based order that curtailed legal and political conditions for free association. However, uneven socio-economic change in the island's main regions contributed to resources, population growth and information favourable to rising associative aspirations, needs and innovations, which weakened and replaced older corporations, guilds and confraternities. This distinctive evolution of civil society in Cuba demands explanation of, first, the historical determinants of resilient civic collaboration and autonomy despite colonial constraints, and second, the connections between political and civil societies geared towards reform and the ultimate demise of the Spanish colonial establishment.

The concept of civil society has generated considerable debate, with two schools of thought vying for theoretical predominance. The Tocquevillian approach emphasises the civic or social capital roots and democratic potential of civil society, while the opposing Gramscian position views civil society as being shaped by vested elites exercising hegemonic class-based power.[3] For the case of nineteenth-century Cuba, the dominant interpretations argue for the hegemony of a sugar planter oligarchy and composite pressure groups over a perennially weak civil society until its invigoration through militant revolutionary influence.[4]

Instead of the rise of a militant civil society infused by hegemonic group or radical separatist interests, this study shows an evolving civil society driven

[2] Marvin Becker, *The Emergence of Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), part II; and Joseph Bradley, 'Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia', *American Historical Review*, 107: 4 (2002), pp. 1094–132.

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 2002 [1838]); Robert Putnam, Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Víctor Pérez-Díaz, *Sueño y razón de América Latina: política, cultura y sociedad civil en la gran transición* (Madrid: Taurus, 2005). For alternative views, see Bob Edwards, Michael Foley and Mario Diani (eds.), *Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and the Social Capital Debate in Comparative Perspective* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001); and Jorge Luis Acanda, *Sociedad civil y hegemonía* (Havana: Centro Juan Marinello, 2002).

[4] See Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *The Sugarmill: The Socioeconomic Complex of Sugar in Cuba* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), pp. 47–8; José Antonio Piqueras, *Sociedad civil y poder en Cuba: colonia y poscolonia* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2005), pp. 125–34; and María del Carmen Barcia, *Una sociedad en crisis: la Habana a finales del siglo XIX* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000), pp. 75–8, 86, 99; and *Elites y grupos de presión: Cuba 1868–1898* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1998), pp. 45–56. For a precise contextual study of radical separatist movements and exiled political associations, see Gerald Poyo, '*With All, and for the Good of All*': *The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

by moderate, multiclass and interracial struggles for increased legal autonomy and rights of free association with only marginal ties to separatism. The foundations of Cuban civil society were manifestly animated by ideas of progress, collaboration and common good encapsulated in a growing 'spirit of association'. These enlightened collective notions and practices, often at odds with the colonial establishment but within lawful boundaries, were encouraged further by reformist-constitutionalist leaders fighting for associative autonomy and reform, and later reinforced by labour organisation, non-violent demonstrations and massive civic movements.

To ground the concept of civil society in concrete, verifiable historical data, this study focuses on key communalities of multiple constituent organisations of civil society and their relevance to political change. Through research in legal, press and colonial government sources, this paper therefore scrutinises voluntary, not-for-profit civilian associations among groups and individuals of different social, ethnic, gender and regional backgrounds. These organisations engaged in bottom-up civic contributions to educational, cultural, entertainment, mutual aid, self-help and philanthropic goals outside the top-down priorities of the state.

The paper commences with a brief introduction to the economic, regional and demographic bases of Cuban civil society; the following section centres on the origins of civil society, which were characterised by semi-autonomous enlightened societies initially co-sponsored by local state officials. The ensuing parts analyse the island-wide search for associational autonomy linked to constitutionalist efforts that stirred Cuban public opinion during successive reformist periods in 1810–14, 1820–3, 1836 and 1862–7.

Early constitutionalist efforts in Cuba have frequently been disregarded as just another aspect of Spanish colonialism and dismissed as inconsequential or alien to dominant creole sugar and slaveholding interests.[5] However, constitutional movements were at the centre of the most important reforms and public debates before independence was achieved.[6] Native constitutionalism forged initial legal spaces and structures that prepared the associational impetus to benefit fully from legal reforms in the 1880s and early 1890s, as discussed in the final part of this study.

Economic and Regional Contrasts

The only comparative study on nineteenth-century Spanish American civil societies reveals that, despite Cuba's relative size and population, its

[5] José A. Piqueras (ed.), *Las Antillas en la era de las Luces y la Revolución* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2005), pp. 320–1.

[6] Larry Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790–1840* (Tampa, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1988).

associational networks advanced more quickly and strongly than those of Mexico, Argentina and Peru, according to the recorded number of associations.[7] In part this key difference can be accounted for by economic and institutional factors. Cuba enjoyed uninterrupted, stable economic growth in the first half of the century, whereas independent Spanish American republics experienced acute economic disruptions and a civic life besieged by instability, civil wars and autocratic caudillos eroding the constitutional rule of law.[8]

Cuba, strategically located at the crossroads of expanding exchanges within the Atlantic world, had entered a period of economic transformation from the late eighteenth century. Economic change touched the island's three main regions – the western, central and eastern regional territories, described by contemporary travellers and reflected in 1827 administrative subdivisions – and their varied production of sugar, coffee, tobacco and cattle unevenly.[9] This accentuated regional differences in rates of urban and rural population growth, racial mix, labour sectors, and educational and informational resources. These cleavages divided the island's spatial history and conditioned differentiated characteristics of regional associational and civic life.[10]

The advancing core of economic transformation encompassed areas of innovating sugar and coffee plantations in the provinces and cities of Havana, Matanzas, Colón, Cienfuegos, Trinidad and Remedios. The far western tobacco- and coffee-producing territories of Vuelta Abajo and Sierra de los Organos in Pinar del Río, part of Havana province until 1878, constituted a subregion in themselves.[11] In particular, the city of Havana and its hinterland benefited from freer trade reforms, fiscal concessions and

[7] Carlos Forment, *Democracy in Latin America 1760–1900*, vol. 1: *Civic Selfhood and Public Life in Mexico and Peru* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. xvii; compared with 2,186 voluntary groups in Cuba, the figures reported by Forment for these three countries were 2,291, 1,567, and 912 respectively.

[8] Pedro Fraile, Linda Salvucci and Richard Salvucci, 'El caso cubano: exportación e independencia', in Leandro Prados and Samuel Amaral (eds.), *La independencia americana: consecuencias económicas* (Madrid: Editorial Alianza, 1993), pp. 80–101.

[9] Gaspard-Théodore Mollien to Ministre des Affaires Étrangères (hereafter MAE), Havana, 11 May 1836, Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris (hereafter AMAE), Correspondance Consulaire et Commerciale (hereafter CCC), vol. 10, ff. 225–77v; Leví Marrero, *Cuba: economía y sociedad* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial San Juan, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 8–9, 27; and Leida Fernández Prieto, *Cuba agrícola: mito y tradición, 1878–1920* (Madrid: CSIC, 2005), pp. 30–5.

[10] Juan Pérez de la Riva, *La conquista del espacio cubano* (Havana: Fundación Fernando Ortiz, 2004), pp. 20–1.

[11] Jorge Ramírez and Fernando Paredes, *Francia en Cuba: los cafetales de la Sierra del Rosario (1790–1800)* (Havana: Ediciones Unión, 2004), pp. 29–31; Laird Bergad, *Cuban Rural Society in the Nineteenth Century: The Social and Economic History of Monoculture in Matanzas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

favourable international sugar market conditions following the collapse of Saint Domingue's production in the 1790s. By 1827, after the clearing of woodlands, which had lasting ecological effects, and the restructuring of traditional property rights, the western region had 408,537 inhabitants; more than half of these resided in or near Havana, the island's largest city with 94,023 souls.[12] The region thus comprised 58 per cent of the island's total population of 704,487. White inhabitants represented 41 per cent, free people of colour 11 per cent, and slaves 48 per cent of the population in the region.[13] West of Santa Clara the number of slaves increased by 56 per cent between 1817 and 1827, whereas that figure remained constant in the central and eastern provinces. The introduction of steam-powered sugar mills and a network of privately financed railways facilitated the growth of exports and domestic demand, and the concentration of urban workers in Havana.

In comparison, the central region (Puerto Príncipe–Sancti Spíritus/Las Villas) faced isolation, delayed change to property rights, and uneven Atlantic and Caribbean links.[14] With just a few traditional sugar mills, the central region did not experience the direct benefits or costs of a rising sugar economy. The central provinces maintained the demographic and ethnic features of a pre-sugar revolution society. From Sancti Spíritus to Las Tunas the region encompassed 3,800 square miles of *sabanas*, the largest area of continuous flat land on the island. Puerto Príncipe's cattle ranching economy supplied most of the island's needs for beef and beasts of burden. At the region's heart, the city of Santa María de Puerto Príncipe (renamed Camagüey in 1903) acted as the island's *Audiencia* or judicial centre after 1800. Railway projects eventually connected the landlocked city with ports on the province's northern and southern coasts. In 1827, the central region had 164,497 inhabitants (59 per cent white, 15 per cent free people of colour, and 26 per cent slaves) or 23 per cent of the island's entire population. Around 40 per cent of the region's population lived in or near the city of Puerto Príncipe, which boasted 49,000 inhabitants.[15]

[12] On property rights, see Duvon C. Corbitt, '*Mercedes* and *Realengos*: A Survey of the Public Land System in Cuba', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 19: 3 (1939), pp. 262–85.

[13] Alexander von Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2001 [1826–7, 1856]), pp. 130–5, based on the 1827 census; Joan Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), p. 24.

[14] Hernán Venegas, *La región en Cuba: un ensayo de interpretación historiográfica* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2001), pp. 99–102; Carlos Venegas Fornias, *Cuba y sus pueblos: censos y mapas de los siglos XVIII y XIX* (Havana: Centro Juan Marinello, 2002), pp. 19–22.

[15] Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, pp. 130–5; Ramón de la Sagra, *Historia económica-política y estadística de la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta Viudas de Arazoza y Soler, 1831), pp. 6–7.

Before the Haitian Revolution, the eastern region (Baracoa–Santiago–Bayamo–Holguín) suffered stagnation that fomented lingering resentment of western commercial and political predominance. Wars, epidemics, earthquakes and hurricanes caused scarcity and triggered petitions in the port city of Santiago de Cuba for freer trade in flour, cattle and slaves. The insufficient supply of cattle grieved *santiagueros*, causing them to lash out against Bayamo's cattle raisers, who seemed more interested in exporting to Jamaica.[16] Events in Saint Domingue, however, contributed to socio-economic changes in eastern Cuba, and particularly Santiago. After 1792, and notably in 1803, the immigration of French merchants, corsairs, artisans and planters provided an economic stimulus. Many Frenchmen settled in the eastern highlands to plant coffee groves. A shifting land and credit market contributed to the modernisation of the property rights of medium-sized and small ranches (*hatos* and *corrales*).[17] Projects for the construction of highways, canals and urban improvements in 1797 preceded the network of roads and railways that eventually connected the ports of Santiago and Bayamo with the fertile Valle Central.[18] In 1827 the eastern region's population consisted of 131,453 inhabitants (almost half living in or around the city of Santiago de Cuba), representing only 19 per cent of the island's total population. The region's inhabitants were 36 per cent white, 28 per cent free people of colour, and 36 per cent slaves. The population of the city of Santiago grew from 19,792 inhabitants in 1791 to 26,738 in 1827 (35 per cent white, 37 per cent free people of colour, and 28 per cent slaves).[19]

Complex and diversified urban societies thus evolved with improving educational levels, laying the human foundations of civil society. The standard Caribbean dichotomy of a small 'saccharocracy' and a rural slave majority does not describe well this particular socio-economic landscape. A range of middle and popular classes multiplied, but were divided primarily by race and their peninsular, creole or African origin. However, the spirit of association and collaboration took hold, unevenly at first, among these

[16] Emilio Bacardí y Moreau (comp.), *Crónicas de Santiago de Cuba*, ed. Amadea Bacardí Cape (Madrid: Gráficas Breogán, 1972 [1908]), vol. 1, pp. 266, 273.

[17] Laura Cruz Ríos, *Flujos inmigratorios franceses a Santiago de Cuba (1800–1868)* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2006), p. 12; Alain Yacou, 'Santiago de Cuba a la hora de la revolución de Santo Domingo (1790–1804)', *Del Caribe*, 26 (1997), pp. 73–80. Hatos and corrales were circular, often overlapping rural properties originally granted in the sixteenth century for grazing.

[18] Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 1, pp. 142, 287–9; María Meriño, 'La red de caminos entre la ciudad de Santiago de Cuba y el Valle Central: 1800–1868', *Del Caribe*, 36 (2001), pp. 70–9.

[19] Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 2, pp. 253–4; Humboldt, *The Island of Cuba*, p. 133.

diverse and divided groups, subjected to control by colonial authorities who were wary of the autonomy that early associations could attain.

Early Semi-Autonomous Societies

A first innovative associational thrust originated from top-down patronage of enlightened societies in the cities of Santiago and Havana and soon spread to other regional centres and social groups. These local *sociedades patrióticas* or *sociedades económicas* followed the blueprints of similar associations established in Spain from the 1760s.[20] According to a creole member in 1793, these early associations in Cuba satisfied the 'shared need humans have to enlighten themselves'.[21] Patricians, intellectuals and liberal professionals formed these societies in order to study the island's material wealth, explore productive technological improvements, and sponsor educational and philanthropic activities that had wider social repercussions. Initially guided by a practical ethos of useful knowledge, these societies had a lasting educational, associational and cultural legacy.[22]

The limited autonomy of these societies made them vulnerable to interference or neglect by colonial authorities; consequently, membership participation and enthusiasm fluctuated widely. The first Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País was formally established in Santiago de Cuba in 1787. It had been promoted since 1783 by a creole alderman, Pedro Valiente, who mustered support from 60 other *vecinos* and official sponsorship by Governor Nicolás de Arredondo (1782–8). Valiente authored two projects on the cotton industry and young female practical education for cotton spinning and weaving. The society's by-laws, based on those of Madrid's Sociedad Económica, were approved by a royal order of Charles III in 1787. This pioneering organisation ceased its activities in May 1792, however, besieged

[20] Campomanes, 'Historia de las Academias y glorias de Felipe V fundador de la de Historia', Madrid, 5 April 1748, Real Academia de la Historia, Manuscritos; Jacobo de la Pezuela, *Ensayo histórico de la isla de Cuba* (New York: Imprenta Española de R. Rafael, 1842), pp. 330–1.

[21] 'Discurso del Amigo D. Pedro Pablo O'Reilly', in *Memorias de la Sociedad Patriótica de la Havana, año de 1793* (Havana: Imprenta de la Capitanía General, 1794) (hereafter *Memorias*), pp. 3–4, 181.

[22] See Izaskun Álvarez Cuartero, *Memorias de la Ilustración: las Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País de Cuba (1783–1832)* (Madrid: Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País, 2000), pp. 16, 20; and Gabriel Paquette, 'State–Civil Society Cooperation and Conflict in the Spanish Empire: The Intellectual and Political Activities of the Ultramarine *Consulados* and Economic Societies, c. 1750–1810', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 39: 2 (2007), pp. 263–98; and *Enlightenment, Governance and Reform in Spain and its Empire, 1759–1808* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 150.

by lack of official leadership and dwindling membership and funds. It was re-established only in 1825.[23]

Among the 27 founding members who established the Real Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana in 1793, the most important aristocratic landlords and planters were present. A few sessions later some less notable surnames, prominent among the educated classes and professions, were added to the membership list. By July 1793, all 81 members were divided into four types or classes of affairs: agriculture and rural economy, sciences and arts, popular industry and public adornment, and trade.[24] According to its first by-laws, the objectives of the Sociedad were to promote agriculture and commerce, cattle rearing, popular industry and the education of the young. The Sociedad published its papers in the bi-weekly *Papel Periódico*, an official initiative supported by an enlightened captain-general, Luis de las Casas, after 1790.[25]

The range of pioneering collaborative activities decided upon and implemented by the Sociedad contributed through scientific, educational and philanthropic means to satisfying some of the material, health and cultural needs of the elite and general population. The Sociedad aimed to encourage, fund and support technical projects, establish charity houses for the poor, and 'stimulate and regenerate public schools'.[26]

The Sociedad reinforced the local educational initiatives of private educators and vecinos. A growing middle sector in Havana's urban core and suburban outskirts and nearby villages, such as Güines and Santa María del Rosario, needed primary education for their children. The Sociedad's educational activities included the formation of a special education section that met separately after 1816. This section was in charge of registering,

[23] 'Testimonio del espediente sobre restablecimiento de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de esta ciudad [de Santiago de Cuba]', Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Gobierno Superior Civil (hereafter GSC), año 1825, leg. 1601, no. 81711, ff. 1–1v, 3v–4, 12–12v; Fernando Ortiz, *La hija cubana del iluminismo* (Havana: Editorial Academia, 1993), pp. 20, 27–35; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 1, pp. 243–4, and vol. 2, p. 225; María Meriño and Carlos Fleitas, 'Trayectoria y ocaso de la Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Santiago de Cuba', *Santiago*, 90 (2000), pp. 112–25; Lucía Provencio García, 'Proyectos de escuelas primarias femeninas en Santiago de Cuba (1788): educación civil y productiva', *Contrastes*, no. 12 (2002–3), pp. 119–41.

[24] 'Libro de [Actas de] Acuerdos de la Sociedad Pat[riótica]' (hereafter Actas SEH), 9 Jan. 1793, Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística, Havana, Sociedad Económica de la Habana (hereafter SEH), vol. 1 (1793–5), ff. 3–4, and 25 July 1793, ff. 70–2.

[25] *Memorias* (1793), pp. 102–3; Ortiz, *Hija cubana*, pp. 3–5.

[26] Actas SEH, 28 Feb. 1793, vol. 1, f. 19; see also 17 Jan. 1793, ff. 5–7; 24 Jan. 1793, ff. 7–9; 31 Jan. 1793, ff. 10–11; and 9 Oct. 1794, ff. 226–31; ANC, GSC, año 1814, leg. 1601, no. 81709; *Diario del Gobierno de la Habana*, 11 Feb. 1814; Raimundo Cabrera, *La Casa de Beneficencia y la Sociedad Económica (sus relaciones con el gobierno de Cuba)* (Havana: La Universal, 1914), pp. 18, 54–5, 63.

supervising, encouraging through prize awards, and funding a host of small and medium-sized schools.[27]

Havana's Sociedad served as the model for the formation of similar associations in other cities and towns. Sociedad branches, or *diputaciones*, were established in Sancti Spíritus in 1803 and Puerto Príncipe in 1813. The diputación in Puerto Príncipe soon supported six schools with 330 boys and five other schools with 164 girls. Diputaciones also appeared in Trinidad and Matanzas, with active roles in supporting schools.[28] By 1818, private efforts at free primary education, charity and elite association had animated Santa Clara.[29]

Despite the growing civil collaboration made possible by the sociedades, traditional interests imposed limits on the development of more independent associations. Religious dominance in basic education capped resources for the sociedades' funding of free schools and other charitable projects.[30] Censorship of publications hindered scientific and civic endeavours.[31] Furthermore, the sociedades had one major institutional flaw: they were not fully autonomous, since their legal status was that of a royal corporation.[32] This meant that captains-general, provincial governors and officials could preside over meetings of local sociedades in representation of the king. Political interference was therefore constant, but official funding was stingy and unreliable. Demands for increased government subsidies to alleviate the Havana Sociedad's debts, incurred to support its ambitious educational and research programmes, ended in disappointment.[33]

Other semi-autonomous associations encountered the same legal problems as the Sociedad and its branches. The Casa de Expósitos and all hospitals were considered royal corporations despite their private constituencies.[34] The weakening guilds, confraternities and brotherhoods, and the more resilient *cofradías* and *cabildos de nación* among groups of African

[27] 'Actas de la Sección de Educación de la Real Sociedad Patriótica de la Habana' (hereafter Actas Educación), SEH, 9 Oct. 1816, vol. 1, ff. 7–7v; 9 Nov. 1816, ff. 12v–13; 7 Dec. 1816, ff. 16v–17; ANC, GSC, año 1827, leg. 1601, no. 81714.

[28] *Guía de forasteros de la isla de Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1836), pp. 187–94.

[29] Manuel Dionisio González, *Memoria histórica de la villa de Santa Clara y su jurisdicción* (Villaclara: Imprenta del Siglo, 1858), pp. 175–93, 231.

[30] Actas SEH, 9 Oct. 1794, vol. 1, ff. 227–9, and 25 Dec. 1794, f. 267.

[31] Actas SEH, 2 and 23 Oct. 1794, vol. 1, ff. 222, 233–5; Actas Educación, 14 Feb. 1828, vol. 2, f. 19.

[32] Despite the reform of the Havana Sociedad's by-laws in 1884, it officially remained a 'royal corporation': Actas SEH (1884–7), 10 Nov. 1884, ff. 105–20. In 1898, the Sociedad changed its legal status to that of a private and autonomous (*libre*) society: Actas SEH (1898–1906), 28 Nov. 1898, ff. 26–39.

[33] ANC, GSC, año 1828, leg. 1610, no. 81721.

[34] *Guía de forasteros de la isla de Cuba … para el año 1815* (Havana: Oficina de Arazosa y Soler, 1815), pp. 122–31; and *Guía de forasteros* (1818), pp. 67–76.

origin and free blacks that combined self-help charitable and religious functions, were closely supervised by ecclesiastical and colonial authorities. The cabildos were tolerated as part of the old colonial social fabric in order to reinforce Catholicism and ethnic divisions. Early black associations carved a niche of relative independence for their everyday cultural activities; in contrast, black secret societies were illegal and repressed due to worries about slave rebellion. Until the end of the colonial period, several executive decrees explicitly forbade meetings of the all-male, interracial Abakuá or Ñáñigo secret societies that were suspected of harbouring rebellions and criminal activities.[35] Until the reforms of the 1880s, all private voluntary associations needed governmental approval by decree for their formation. Local laws enacted by captains-general therefore reflected negotiations, concessions and backlashes in connection to new associations striving to affirm their autonomy.

Striving for Autonomy in Western Associations

An important moment in Cuban associational evolution arrived in July 1812, when all members of the major corporations, including the Sociedad Patriótica of Havana, were compelled to swear allegiance to the political constitution of the Spanish monarchy promulgated by the Cortes of Cadiz.[36] The legal notion of self-regulation through by-laws and 'constitutions' of specific institutions was now expanded to include general individual and electoral rights, due process, and freedom of press and association.[37] The most symptomatic consequence was the increased publication of pamphlets and periodicals subject only to locally elected post-publication censorship boards. Beyond Havana, newspapers in Santiago, Puerto Príncipe and Matanzas set a moderate tone of public opinion between 1811 and 1814. Within existing associations, a growing entitlement of autonomy and self-government challenged customary authority. In December 1813, members of Havana's Sociedad voted to admit a moderate newspaper editor, Simón Bergaño, despite his lingering judicial problems. Captain-General Juan Ruiz

[35] Sentence by José Antonio Olañeta, Audiencia Pretorial, Havana, 24 Sep. 1839, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Ultramar–Cuba–Gracia y Justicia, leg. 1626 (3), exp. 30, docs. 2–3; Philip Howard, *Changing History: Afro-Cuban Cabildos and Societies of Color in the Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), pp. 27, 42, 69; Matt Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle against Atlantic Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 96, 188; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, pp. 47–8; and Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 15, 29–30.

[36] Actas SEH, 31 July 1812, vol. 4, n.f.

[37] *Constitución política de la Monarquía española* (Cadiz: Imprenta Real, 1812; Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1820), Arts. 4, 131, 175, 287 and 371.

de Apodaca threw all his weight into pressing Sociedad members to redress their majority decision. Francisco Filomeno, a leading member and tolerant press censor, blatantly opposed Apodaca, arguing that legislation by the Cortes protected the Sociedad's internal decisions and by-laws from political interference. Apodaca prevailed, however.[38]

Despite the personal feuds and anti-creole grievances reflected in some pamphlets, a dominant sector of the free press in Cuba gave life to early native constitutionalism, closely related to economic liberalism, and expectations of free and autonomous associational life. The restoration of Ferdinand VII in 1814 ended the first brief constitutional period, although liberal trade rights and the dismantling of the royal tobacco monopoly were granted in 1817–19. A new generation of constitutionalist members of local sociedades económicas rose to the task of promoting and defending the Constitution of 1812 when it was reinstated in Cuba during the Trienio Liberal (1820–3), and again in Santiago in 1836, with momentous legal consequences for civil society. In 1820 the Havana Sociedad petitioned and funded the creation of a chair of constitutional thought at the liberal-leaning Colegio Seminario de San Carlos. Father Félix Varela occupied the post, tasked with educating young Cubans in constitutional principles, and was later elected to represent Cuba in the Spanish Cortes. The reintroduction of a free press in 1820–3 allowed the publication of the moderate newspapers *El Observador Habanero*, *El Revisor Político* and *Gaceta de La Habana*, which propagated reformist-constitutionalist articles by Varela, José Agustín Caballero and José Agustín Govantes, as well as their younger disciples, José Antonio Saco, José de la Luz y Caballero and Domingo del Monte, all progressive members of the Sociedad.[39]

The new restoration of Ferdinand VII, proclaimed in Cuba in December 1823, restrained free press and association once again, but creole liberal-constitutionalism remained strong among those who dared to think differently. These individuals engaged in institutionalised journalistic, literary and artistic endeavours that enhanced autonomous cultural life. After 1827 these associational developments benefited the prosperous port city of Matanzas, also known as the 'Athens of Cuba' for its cultural achievements, and Trinidad, which consumed sophisticated imports and foreign books and newspapers.[40] Other diputaciones, promoted by an itinerant member of the

[38] Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, pp. 17–21, 43, 46.
[39] Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, pp. 61, 82, 90.
[40] Mireya Cabrera, *El Ateneo de Matanzas: su historia y trascendencia (1874–1968)* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2000), pp. 5–25; Francisco Marín and Rafael Rodríguez, *Historia de Trinidad* (Havana: Jesús Montero, 1945), pp. 12–14; ANC, GSC, año 1827, leg. 1601, no. 81717; año 1835, leg. 1601, no. 81725.

Havana Sociedad, José María Calvo, appeared in Güines and Cárdenas, spreading notions of prosperity and associative spirit.[41]

Despite renewed censorship of the press and limited funding, the Matanzas diputación published *La Aurora de Matanzas* (1828–56), which combined Cuban and international journalistic sources. Readers in Matanzas were well informed in economic, commercial, international and cultural matters pertinent to provincial 'prosperity and future aggrandisement'.[42] The journal also published literary collaborations by Domingo del Monte, a constitutionalist associate of *Aurora*'s editor, Félix Tanco. Del Monte, a well-travelled literary figure with local roots, was a leading reformist and abolitionist. He organised dissenting networks within the Sociedad Patriótica, heading the new Comisión de Literatura in 1830, and provincial diputaciones through *tertulias* (social gatherings) and literary works that circumvented censorship. Under Del Monte's impulse and editorship, the famed *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, established in 1832, published critical works by Varela, Luz and Saco. Del Monte's efforts to form an independent Academia Cubana de Literatura (1834), however, were defeated by an increasingly restrictive establishment.[43]

Creoles were subjected to a policy of containment under the code word 'assimilation', which advanced during the administrations of captains-general Miguel Tacón (1834–8), Leopoldo O'Donnell (1843–8) and José Gutiérrez de la Concha (1850–2, 1854–9). The social status of free people of colour, including their participation in militia units, was undermined.[44] The Spanish legislative decisions in 1837 to deny Cuba parliamentary representation in the Cortes, govern the island by ad-hoc laws and, consequently, exclude basic rights guaranteed by a moderate constitution only in Spain, deeply offended creoles in Cuba, who felt as if they were being treated, according to the French consul, as 'simples colons'.[45] The attack against secret black associations, first evident during the 1812 Aponte rebellion, reached a paroxysm in 1844 with the repression of the Matanzas-centred Escalera conspiracy. This assault brutally severed the links between creole reformists favouring gradual abolition and black abolitionists. Together with political secret societies and clandestine Freemason lodges, black secret societies defied extensive prohibitions on free association.[46]

[41] ANC, GSC, año 1837, leg. 1602, no. 81735; año 1840, leg. 1602, no. 81742.
[42] *La Aurora de Matanzas*, 1 Jan. 1829.
[43] Urbano Martínez, *Domingo del Monte y su tiempo* (Maracaibo: Editorial Universidad de Zulia, 1996), pp. 47, 124, 157–8; Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, pp. 100–7.
[44] ANC, Comisión Militar, año 1826, leg. 4, no. 2; GSC, año 1844, leg. 9, no. 469.
[45] Mollien to MAE, Havana, 1 May 1837, no. 31, AMAE, CCC, vol. 11, ff. 97–8.
[46] Howard, *Changing History*, chapter 4; Eduardo Torres-Cuevas, *Historia de la masonería cubana: seis ensayos* (Havana: Imagen Contemporánea, 2004), chapter 1; and Dominique Soucy,

The darkening political climate in the 1830s and 1840s had constraining effects on associational initiatives and their funding. Instead of collaborating in the promotion of sociedades, authorities actively undermined them. In 1835 the military governor of the Villa de San Antonio Abad de los Baños wrote to Captain-General Tacón concerning the summoning of local vecinos to a *junta preparatoria* of the diputación patriótica. The governor expressed mistrust of such action, which he deemed illegal, disruptive and inspired by the 'constitutional dictionary of the year 1812'.[47] Continued official disrespect toward the diputación caused deep divisions among peninsular and creole municipal officers and residents of San Antonio, Güira de Melena and Alquízar. This enmity damaged community campaigns for vaccination and funding of local schools.[48]

Associational efforts toward more autonomous public and private education were led by creole reformists Luz y Caballero, Del Monte, Antonio Bachiller y Morales, Pedro Romay and Antonio José Gutiérrez, all members or directors of the Sociedad's education section.[49] In 1846 the Sociedad contributed to the funding of 42 free public schools in Havana with a total of 914 students receiving 904 grants or *pensiones*.[50] That year, however, the Sociedad's education section ceased to exist due to the colonial state's controversial takeover of public education, following the local adoption of Spanish educational legislation designed to arrest creole educational autonomy. The independent school of art, the Academia San Alejandro, was also severed from the Sociedad's sponsorship and administered by the government.[51]

The expulsion of abolitionist British consul David Turnbull from the Havana Sociedad triggered a daring reversal of that decision, led by the Sociedad's director, Luz y Caballero. This prompted the resignation of 17 recalcitrant members and accusations that Luz and his group had aided the enemies of the island's prosperity. Official censorship then barred the Sociedad's paper from publishing a speech by Luz justifying his actions on moral and patriotic grounds.[52] Retaliation from Madrid followed, in the form of a royal order to change the Sociedad's by-laws so as to grant the

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Masonería y nación: redes masónicas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811–1902) (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Ediciones Idea, 2006), pp. 40–8.

[47] Marqués de Cárdenas de Montehermoso to Tacón, 25 Feb. and 6 May 1835, ANC, GSC, leg. 1601, no. 81722.

[48] ANC, GSC, año 1836, leg. 1601, no. 81732.

[49] Actas Educación, 6 April 1837, vol. 2, f. 111v; and 17 Jan. 1839, ff. 122v–3.

[50] Actas Educación, vol. 3 (1841–6), f. 50.

[51] Concha to Ministro, 10 Sep. 1846, AHN, Ultramar–Cuba–Fomento, leg. 24, exp. 1, doc. 1; ANC, Instrucción Pública, año 1861, leg. 735, no. 46834.

[52] Letter by Tomás Romay and Manuel Costales, 5 March 1843, ANC, GSC, leg. 1602, no. 81761; Sophie Andioc Torres, *La correspondence entre Domingo del Monte et Alexander Hill Everett* (Paris: Histoire des Antilles Hispaniques, 1994), pp. 25–6.

captain-general the decision to appoint its directors, demand from prospective members proof of 'love to country and adhesion to government', and forbid the admission of foreigners.[53]

Captain-General O'Donnell took measures aimed at controlling collective entertainment. Cockfights and bullfights were forbidden in the countryside and allowed only in certain urban centres on holidays. Dancing academies established in Havana were suspected of transgressing gender and race limits. Masquerade balls were restricted due to religious and public order concerns, despite the declared need of rural inhabitants to engage in some sort of entertainment to enrich their lives of harsh toil.[54]

From these limited associational opportunities, however, emerged new types of associations seeking more autonomy. The example of French residents in Havana and increased immigration from Spain contributed to activities of mutual aid, charity and instruction among groups defined by foreign and peninsular regional origin. A cholera epidemic that ravished Havana in 1833 prompted the French consul-general to head the organisation of a mutual aid and charity association to assist French nationals. The Association Française de Bienfaisance de la Havane opened in April 1833, financed by monthly contributions from its initial 114 members; on average it assisted 50 persons annually between 1834 and 1837. It was the first modern mutual aid association that we know of in Cuba, an early expression of the international spread of mutualism that reached Mexico only in the 1850s and 1860s.[55]

Peninsular Spaniards in Cuba formed their own regional charitable, mutual aid and cultural societies. The first such society established in Havana was the Sociedad de Beneficencia de Naturales de Cataluña, authorised in 1840.[56] Other peninsular regional groups – Asturians, Galicians and Canarians – established their own centres of remarkably long and active life in Cuba.[57] Mutual aid associations then spread to embrace lawyers, doctors, scientists and other professionals, and white and coloured artisans and workers in Havana and Matanzas in the 1850s and early 1860s.[58]

[53] Real Orden, Madrid, 4 March 1843, ANC, GSC, leg. 1602, no. 81752.

[54] ANC, GSC, años 1843–1848, legs. 995 and 997, nos. 94929, 34449, 34454–5, 34457 and 34490.

[55] François Guillemin to MAE, Havana, 26 May 1833, AMAE, CCC, vol. 9, ff. 186–7; Juan Felipe Leal, *Del mutualismo al sindicalismo en México: 1843–1910* (Mexico City: Ediciones El Caballito, 1991), pp. 14–15.

[56] ANC, Gobierno General (hereafter GG), año 1840, leg. 330, no. 15839; and año 1842, leg. 81, no. 3384a.

[57] AHN, Ultramar–Cuba–Hacienda, leg. 150 (2), exp. 22, doc. 1.

[58] ANC, GSC, año 1854, leg. 1601, no. 81696; años 1848–1852, leg. 327, nos. 11188 and 11231; año 1860, leg. 410, no. 16102; año 1864, leg. 1601, no. 81706; año 1864, leg. 1601, no. 81706.

Women's charitable organisations also formed in Havana and the western provinces.[59]

During Captain-General Pedro Téllez's term (1840–1) the Sociedad Caja de Ahorros, Descuentos y Depósitos was established to assist individuals of 'all classes' with their savings. Although organised in 1849 as a bank and limited stock company or *sociedad anónima*, under the able management of Bachiller y Morales, it relied on a growing spirit of association to fulfil basic financial needs for its 1,147 associates and petty depositors (967 men and 180 women, mostly white except for 36 free people of colour and 38 slaves).[60] At this time of frenzied prosperity, associations appealed to the benefits of stockholding self-finance, taking advantage of the blurred legal distinctions between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations before 1857. In that year of economic crisis, Captain-General Concha enacted an order ostensibly to limit 'abuses' of sociedades anónimas but also to control and filter the formation of other types of associations. The order required people to file for specific government permission and supervision when establishing a new association. This is the origin of the official paper trail of not-for-profit associations which would later form the Registro de Asociaciones.[61]

The formation of *liceos*, *filarmónicas*, *círculos*, *centros*, *ateneos* and *sociedades de recreo* showed a renewed wave of private associative enthusiasm by the late 1840s. Just as the sociedades económicas had justified their official existence by promoting enlightened practical knowledge, these newer and more private cultural and leisure associations appealed to the practical benefits of the 'spirit of association' for culture, civilisation, and sophisticated entertainment and recreation.[62] With time, the initial mistrust of provincial authorities and captains-general concerning proposed objectives and orderly gatherings of white 'members only' *tertulias filarmónicas* was surmounted.[63] The liceos and sociedades filarmónicas flourished especially in Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Regla, Mariel, San Antonio, Bejucal, Guanajay, Trinidad, Havana and rural towns such as San Juan de los Remedios, where local notables endeavoured to introduce a 'principle of civility that can induce families to have a taste for music, as part of a caring education, [and] evade isolation that causes antipathies and disunion'.[64] A typical sociedad filarmónica, such as

[59] ANC, GG, año 1845, leg. 1010, no. 4760; GSC, año 1866, leg. 418, no. 16727; AHN, Ultramar–Cuba–Hacienda, leg. 859 (2), exp. 22, docs. 1 and 3.

[60] ANC, GSC, año 1841, leg. 1587, no. 81498; and no. 81508.

[61] Text of the *circular* of 6 July 1857 in 'Sociedad Alemana de la Habana', ANC, GSC, año 1861, no. 81702; Sociedad 'El Siglo', GSC, año 1864, no. 81705.

[62] ANC, GSC, año 1846, leg. 1590, no. 81597; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, p. 46.

[63] Narciso López to Captain General Gerónimo Valdés, Trinidad, 9 Feb. 1842, ANC, GSC, leg. 995, no. 34948.

[64] Filarmónicas' files in ANC, GSC: San Juan de los Remedios, año 1847, leg. 997, no. 34450, and leg. 994, no. 34282; San Antonio de los Baños, año 1847, leg. 997, no. 34461; Trinidad,

the one in Matanzas in 1848, financed the rental of a centrally located mansion with billiard tables, parlour games, a bar, and spacious halls for musical events and society balls.[65]

One important association that added to the quality of life of Havana's *buena sociedad* was the autonomous Liceo Artístico y Literario, dedicated to musical, literary, artistic, scientific and leisure activities. The Liceo gathered the most important musical and literary figures among its white male and female members, eventually including the poet Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and the writer Cirilo Villaverde, among many others. The Liceo was established with official permission at a general meeting in September 1844. It was created on the basis of the old Sociedad Filarmónica Santa Cecilia, which had been active since 1816, with 53 members sponsored by the Sociedad Patriótica.[66] In 1845, members of another philharmonic society, the failing Sociedad Filarmónica Habanera, joined the Liceo.[67]

The Liceo's first director, José de Imaz, aspired to raise the association's levels to cultivated-world standards. Lectures and classes allowed members to learn from other specialised members and faculty. Musical performances and balls provided relaxation and entertainment once a week.[68] By 1853, society balls and masked and costumed dances had achieved great popularity among members. Charitable performances were also organised to aid the poor or victims of hurricanes.[69] Political interference disturbed the Liceo's independence, however. In October 1851, after the defeat and execution of the annexationist expeditionary Narciso López, and his followers, the Liceo's leadership organised a celebratory *función patriótica*. This was coordinated with Captain-General Concha, who allocated the event's proceeds to benefit the wounded and the families of those who died defending 'the national cause' against 'piratical invasion'.[70]

The first mutual aid society of white tobacco workers, the Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos del Barrio del Pilar, was established in Havana in 1857 on the basis of an older cultural society established in 1848. Despite a lack of racial integration, a wave of artisan societies followed, spurred both by

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año 1848, leg. 997, no. 34481; Matanzas, año 1849, leg. 1607, no. 81922; Cienfuegos, año 1850, leg. 1595, no. 81624; Regla, año 1851, leg. 998, no. 340606; and Bejucal, año 1865, leg. 1601, no. 81708.

[65] ANC, GSC, leg. 997, no. 34473.

[66] Actas Educación, 5 Nov. 1816, vol. 1, f. 12; 'Actas de sesiones del Liceo de la Habana, 1844–45' (hereafter Actas Liceo), ANC, Liceo de la Habana (hereafter LH), leg. 48, no. 524, f. 1.

[67] Actas Liceo, 18 Jun. 1845, ANC, LH, leg. 48, ff. 5–10, 88–9, 103–4.

[68] Actas Liceo, 11 May 1845, ANC, LH, leg. 48, f. 77.

[69] ANC, LH, leg. 1, nos. 5 and 10, n.f.; Actas Liceo (1844–5), 8 Dec. 1844, LH, leg. 48, no. 524, f. 45.

[70] Vicepresidente del Liceo to Concha, Havana, 17 Sep. 1851, ANC, LH, leg. 24, no. 277, n.f.

educational aspirations and by cyclical economic stress. Book and newspaper readings by collectively hired *lectores* became customary among tobacco factory workers. In 1865 the first labour weekly, *La Aurora*, was published, and the first strike for collective bargaining organised.[71]

Behind this important contribution to a more autonomous civil society, reformist-constitutionalist endeavours had a crucial impact. Heirs of the previous struggle for autonomy and constitutional freedoms, a new group of reform-minded civic leaders flourished in the 1860s under the more relaxed political, press, and associational conditions allowed by captains-general Francisco Serrano and Domingo Dulce. Saturnino Martínez, an Asturian cigar maker and editor of *La Aurora*, and Francisco Frías, conde de Pozos Dulces, a creole agrarian reformer and editor of the reformist newspaper *El Siglo*, collaborated with liceos, sociedades económicas and mutual aid societies to encourage and promote labour and middle-class association and education.[72] After a long struggle for professional autonomy dating back to the 1820s, creole medical scientists emerged from liceos and economic societies to form the Academia de Ciencias in 1861, led by Doctor Nicolás José Gutiérrez, a fierce defender of scientific and educational independence from colonial government interference.[73]

A dynamic and more independent civil society was thus already in place in the western region of Cuba before the colonial reaction that started in 1867 defeated advancing constitutional reformist hopes for self-government. The remarkable progress of autonomous association, proceeding also at its own pace and with its own peculiarities in the centre and east of the island, was abruptly reversed with the eruption of the Ten Years' War (1868–78).

Rise and Reversal in Central and Eastern Cuba

Puerto Príncipe

In 1795 a concerned resident of Puerto Príncipe, Manuel Mariano de Acosta, sent an essay to Havana's Sociedad Patriótica aiming to show that the backward state of Puerto Príncipe's commerce had caused the decline of

[71] Jean Stubbs, *Tobacco on the Periphery: A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860–1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 97; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, pp. 66, 80.

[72] Marie-Claude Lecuyer, *Anticolonialisme à Cuba au XIXe siècle: Pozos Dulces (1809–1877)* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), pp. 52–3, 99; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, pp. 75–80.

[73] Pedro M. Pruna, *La Real Academia de Ciencias de La Habana, 1861–1898* (Madrid: CSIC, 2002), pp. 32–3, 77–8; Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *El despertar del asociacionismo científico en Cuba (1876–1920)* (Madrid: CSIC, 2004), pp. 42–4.

local agriculture and income.[74] Landlocked Puerto Príncipe was quite isolated from the rest of the island by great distances and lack of good communications, and contraband trade was customary.[75] Lack of economic modernisation severely limited voluntary associational life. A few charitable and philanthropic initiatives aimed at building and funding hospitals and shelters for poor women and children came from wealthy altruistic individuals, priests and religious orders.[76] When the judicial court of Santo Domingo was transferred to Puerto Príncipe in 1800 after the Franco-Spanish treaty of Basel, judges, lawyers and litigants brought new customs and ideas.[77] By 1817 Puerto Príncipe had grown enough to deserve the official title of 'city'.

By then, Antonio Herrera, a member of the Havana Sociedad living in Puerto Príncipe, had managed to gather 15 individuals to start a branch there with the aid of Governor Francisco Sedano.[78] Soon Puerto Príncipe's diputación patriótica was engaged in educational efforts and experiments in adapting new crops. In 1815 a group of vecinos addressed Sedano for permission to establish an Academia de Bellas Artes.[79]

Puerto Príncipe's elite continued to be divided on several issues, however, such as the presence of newly arrived slave *bozales* in town.[80] In 1823, deep political divisions polarised the city's population further. Despite the restoration of the 1812 Constitution, a local anti-liberal group, 'Esmeralda', led by Puerto Príncipe's mayor, Santiago Hernández, attacked the constitutional rights of citizens. Opposing liberals were imprisoned. These 'liberticidas esmeraldinos' controlled the sole printing press that had operated since 1814. The loyalist military regiment of León supported the anti-liberal faction; a petition signed by 313 residents requested the regiment's immediate removal from the province.[81]

A remarkable resident of Puerto Príncipe, Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, played an active part in both the associational and political tendencies that gave a distinct renown to Puerto Príncipe. Betancourt was born in 1803 into

[74] Actas SEH, 23 Jul. 1795, vol. 1, f. 333.
[75] Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Santo Domingo, legs. 496 and 503.
[76] René Ibáñez Varona, *Historia de los hospitales y asilos de Puerto Príncipe o Camagüey (periodo colonial)* (Havana: Ministerio de Salubridad y Asistencia Social, 1954), pp. 17, 22, 25, 29; *Indice histórico de la provincia de Camagüey* (Camagüey: Archivo Histórico Provincial de Camagüey, 1968), pp. 7–8; AGI, Ultramar, leg. 44, exp. 17.
[77] Fernando de Armas Medina, 'La Audiencia de Puerto Príncipe (1795–1853)', *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 15 (1958), pp. 273–370.
[78] Actas SEH, 5 March, 2 April and 18 June 1813, vol. 5 (1812–16), ff. 112, 124, 148–9.
[79] Actas SEH, 18 Nov. 1814; 13 and 20 Jan. 1815, vol. 5 (1812–16), ff. 342, 363, 367.
[80] ANC, GSC, año 1813, leg. 861, no. 29141.
[81] 'Puerto Príncipe', *El Revisor Político Literario* (Havana), 28 May 1823, citing *El Zurriaguito Camagüeyano*; 'Nuevas ocurrencias en Puerto Príncipe', *El Americano Libre* (Havana), 9 Feb. 1823.

a wealthy family of philanthropic repute in Puerto Príncipe.[82] In 1821 he travelled to Philadelphia to advance his practical business education. There he participated regularly in the tertulia held at the home of his relative, Bernabé Sánchez. These meetings gathered a motley group of exiled Spanish American liberals; in such an atmosphere, the young Betancourt espoused ideas of both economic modernisation and political separatism.

Back in his native city in 1834, Betancourt managed his sprawling estate, Hato Najaza, 25 miles south of Puerto Príncipe, with the aim of modernising it, liberating the few slaves he had inherited, and educating its workers and peasants. Between 1845 and 1866 he subdivided and sold portions of this *mayorazgo* inheritance. The conversion of this large hato into smaller ranches or *sitios* set an example for the whole province, aided by new disentailment laws and the granting of low-interest mortgage credit, a *censo reservativo* at 5 per cent annual interest, to small landholders.[83]

Betancourt also became a member of the Sociedad's local branch and actively supported new school initiatives, teaching methods and examinations. He also engaged unceasingly in the promotion of railways to connect the city with the coast. In 1837 he led the formation of a private stock company to build a railway line connecting Puerto Príncipe to the northern port of Nuevitas. He continued to be the company's president in 1843 and owned part of its appreciating stock. In comparison with the sugar-exporting Güines–Havana railway, Betancourt argued that the Nuevitas railway was both an export and an import line based on Puerto Príncipe's market.[84] Writing under the pen name of 'El Lugareño', Betancourt poked fun at the old-fashioned ways of the local elite and folk.

Puerto Príncipe residents collectively funded public works that improved the city's square and boulevard. A new school for the humanities, El Siglo, directed by a renowned professor, was established in addition to the prestigious Academia de Jurisprudencia de San Fernando. The periodical press, especially *La Gaceta*, where El Lugareño published his articles, and *El Fanal*, contributed to awakening the city from its 'intellectual slumber'.[85]

[82] Andrés Segura y Cabrera, *Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros (El Lugareño)* (Havana: La Universal, 1919), pp. 16–19; Federico de Córdova, 'Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros y las *Escenas cotidianas*', in *Escenas cotidianas* (Havana: Ministerio de Educación, 1950), pp. 8–14; Amado R. Freyre, *Camagüey a través de la historia: ensayo polémico histórico 1837–1937. El Lugareño y el centenario de caminos de hierro* (Havana: Cultural, 1937).

[83] Archivo Histórico Provincial de Camagüey (hereafter AHPC), Anotaduría de Hipotecas, libro 267.

[84] Gaspar Cisneros Betancourt, *Sexto informe anual del Presidente de la Compañía del Camino de Hierro entre Puerto Príncipe y Nuevitas* (Puerto Príncipe: Imprenta de Gobierno y Hacienda Real, 1843), pp. 10–13.

[85] Antonio Bachiller y Morales, 'Recuerdos de mi viaje a Puerto Príncipe', *La Siempreviva*, no. 1 (1838), p. 24, and no. 2 (1838), p. 324; Domingo del Monte, 'Movimiento intelectual en Puerto-Príncipe', *El Plantel*, no. 1 (1838), pp. 88–9.

In 1856 an association for the improvement of cattle ranching, agricultural production and 'honest recreation', the Casino Campestre, was created. This new type of association was emulated in other parts of the island despite legal observations about its mixed objectives and goals of 'joining what is useful with what is pleasant'.[86] Moreover, another railway initiative was launched in 1861 to connect Puerto Príncipe with the southern port of Santa Cruz del Sur.[87] In January 1866 a Sociedad Anónima Caja de Ahorros was established by 14 local shareholders, including Betancourt Cisneros, pooling together a capital of 26,000 pesos.[88]

Two important new societies of leisure and instruction contributed to the associative collaboration among Puerto Príncipe's creole elite and middle social groups. The Filarmónica was established in 1842, initially meeting at the house of Diego Alonso Betancourt for literary soirées, scientific lectures and balls; in 1859 it moved to the marqués de Santa Lucía's luxurious house.[89] The growing cultural and social needs of the professional and middle groups in Puerto Príncipe led to the formation of the Sociedad Popular Santa Cecilia in 1864. In this more open association, according to an idealistic inaugural speech, members overcame social differences and considered themselves equals in the pursuit of knowledge, merit and cultural refinement.[90]

Twentieth-century authors have argued that these legal associations offered a cover for the patriotic and political intentions of their members, including separatist heroes Joaquín Agüero and Ignacio Agramonte.[91] These assertions exaggerate political-patriotic activism within non-political societies, however, since the majority of their memberships did not participate in the radical separatist actions of 1851 and 1868. In the Cuban political tradition, the identification of hidden political agendas within voluntary non-political associations and Masonic lodges has provided useful justification for attacking the right of free association.[92]

[86] Sociedad Casino Campestre de Güines, ANC, GSC, año 1863, leg. 1591, no. 81570; Sagua La Grande, no. 81571; Caibarién, año 1864, no. 81573.

[87] Miguel Rodríguez Ferrer, *Dictamen … sobre el nuevo ferro-carril del camino de esta ciudad al puerto de Santa Cruz* (Puerto Príncipe: Imprenta del Fanal, 1861).

[88] ANC, GSC, año 1866, leg. 1591, no. 81577.

[89] ANC, GSC, leg. 995, no. 34343; Darío Castillo Socarrás, *El Liceo de Camagüey (sucediente de La Filarmónica de Puerto Príncipe) en su gloriosa historia de cien años* (Camagüey: Imprenta El Camagüeyano, 1942), n.p.

[90] Aurelio Barrios Pascual, *Notas históricas de la Benemérita Sociedad Popular Santa Cecilia* (Camagüey: Compañía Impresora de Camagüey, 1921), pp. 11–14.

[91] Castillo Socarrás, *El Liceo de Camagüey*, n.p.

[92] On distinctions between Masonic lodges and secret societies, see Antonio Iraizoz, *La masonería y la tendencia al nacionalismo en Cuba* (Havana: Imprenta La Prueba, 1916), pp. 10–13; Torres-Cuevas, *Historia de la masonería*, pp. 251, 260; and Soucy, *Masonería y nación*, pp. 69–72.

Santiago de Cuba

Santiago's traditional social life in the late eighteenth century consisted mainly of popular cockfights and bullfights, official commemorations, and religious processions and prayers to assuage the effects of calamities or smallpox. There were only one or two struggling primary schools. In 1787, however, the short-lived establishment of the first enlightened society on the island stirred intellectual and cultural gatherings among the local elite. The first literary circles, informal tertulias and lodges of Freemasons were established, but soon suppressed. The subsequent expulsion and expropriation of French subjects, following Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808, momentarily froze eastern regional development. Some of the French managed to remain as naturalised subjects, and others returned to eastern Cuba years later.[93]

By the time Santiago's Sociedad was re-established in 1825, important transformations had occurred in the city and its region. In the 30-odd years since the original Sociedad had closed, coffee production had become a main source of wealth; experiments in planting cacao and cotton demanded specialised knowledge for their cultivation and the eradication of a pestilential caterpillar. Of the several periodicals launched since 1805, particularly during the constitutional periods of 1810–14 and 1820–3, only one remained in 1825. The three primary schools supported by the city council needed an overhaul, as did the prestigious Colegio Seminario de San Basilio. The local hospital, under religious administration, demanded improvements, and a new hospital for women had opened since 1817. All these reasons and more were used to justify the urgent re-establishment of the 'useful' Sociedad.[94] The legal process for the reinstatement of the Sociedad was not easy, however. The original by-laws and royal decrees had been lost, but then luckily surfaced among the papers of an old member. A reinstallation meeting of prospective members in Santiago was convened in February 1825 by an interim governor, Colonel Juan de Moya. The governor also appealed to the residents and authorities of Baracoa, Holguín and Bayamo to establish branches of the Sociedad in their cities.[95]

Soon afterwards, Colonel Moya and his legal advisors realised that parts of the old by-laws were missing. An inquiry charged that the Sociedad was

[93] Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, *Santiago de Cuba: desde su fundación hasta la guerra de los diez años* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 1996), pp. 109–13; Cruz, *Flujos inmigratorios*, pp. 41–5, 75; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 2, pp. 40–55; Ernesto Buch López, *Del Santiago colonial* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial ROS, 1944), p. 15.

[94] Maldonado to Ayuntamiento, Santiago de Cuba, 28 Jan. 1825, ANC, GSC, leg. 1601, no. 81711, ff. 2–2v; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 2, pp. 45, 67, 74, 154.

[95] Leonardo Bravo to Ayuntamiento, Santiago de Cuba, 31 Jan. 1825; *auto* signed by Juan de Moya, 8 Feb. 1825, ANC, GSC, leg. 1601, no. 81711, ff. 13v–14v.

illegal and its meetings clandestine. Moya indicted the Sociedad's director, José Emigdio Maldonado, and denounced his 'scandalous' conduct before the incoming governor.[96] In his defence, Maldonado, a liberal former mayor of Santiago, presented the minutes of the Sociedad meeting in which it was decided to ask for official authorisation to replace the missing articles with those of Madrid's Sociedad Económica. The fact that the Santiago Sociedad claimed an old right to 1 per cent of local customs revenues might explain, in part, Moya's sudden aggressive stance against the Sociedad's leadership.[97] In order to continue its activities during the next six decades, the Sociedad had to find its own resources from members, donations, and income from the local daily, *El Redactor* (1833–69), which campaigned for civic progress, philanthropic causes and loyalty to the ideals of 'peace, order, and fortune'.[98]

The Santiago Sociedad contributed notably to enhancing and improving public education. The number of schools climbed to ten in 1829. By 1836, the Sociedad had 71 members and supported or supervised 11 schools for boys and 19 for girls. It also had branches in Bayamo, Baracoa and Holguín.[99] The role played by one leading member, an educator named Juan Bautista Sagarra, was particularly valuable. He was the main promoter of the Colegio de Santiago de Cuba, founded in 1841 to prepare students to study at university in Havana.[100]

Sagarra, together with other liberal-constitutionalist members of the Sociedad, was forced to flee the island in 1836 for supporting Governor Manuel Lorenzo's defiant restitution of the 1812 Constitution in Santiago and its jurisdiction under the motto 'Constitution or death'. Civil freedoms were enjoyed for a tense period of three months, during which the Sociedad's newspaper, *El Redactor de Santiago de Cuba*, renamed *El Cubano Oriental*, praised the constitutional measures taken by Lorenzo against despotism. At the risk of a civil war, Captain-General Tacón opposed and defeated Lorenzo's movement, though strong constitutional traditions in Santiago and Oriente remained alive among other civilian members of the Sociedad.[101]

Another contribution of the Santiago Sociedad in 1849 was investing in the formation of the Caja de Ahorros, a helpful savings institution modelled

[96] Moya to Governor, Santiago de Cuba, 23 July 1825, ANC, GSC, leg. 1601, no. 81712, ff. 1–2v.

[97] Minutes of meeting, 24 March 1825, in ANC, GSC, leg. 1601, no 81712, ff. 3v–5.

[98] Meriño and Fuentes, 'Trayectoria y ocaso', pp. 118–20; *El Redactor: Diario de Santiago de Cuba*, 12 July 1848, 23 July 1848 and 2 Aug. 1848.

[99] *Guía de forasteros* (1836), p. 168.

[100] ANC, GSC, año 1865, leg. 1591, no. 81576.

[101] Ernesto Buch López, *Historia de Santiago de Cuba* (Havana: Editorial Lex, 1947), pp. 138–40, 152; Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism*, p. 121.

on the Caja in Havana.[102] Although they remained in legal limbo until Concha's decree of 1857, sociedades anónimas also facilitated the exploitation of the El Cobre mine and the completion of its railway in 1844.[103] By the late 1840s improved steamship communication had connected Santiago with Havana and the ports of the island's north coast, and hence to New York and New Orleans, as well as Manzanillo, Cienfuegos and Batabanó on the island's southern coast. News from London, Paris and Madrid arrived in Santiago within 30 days.[104]

The craze for sociedades filarmónicas on the island did not bypass Santiago de Cuba. The Filarmónica de Isabel II was established in 1832 but was forced to close in 1844 due to a cholera epidemic and drought that drained members' funds. It was replaced in 1845 by the Sociedad Filarmónica Cubana, an association that hosted the most prestigious social and musical events for more than five decades, especially during the popular feasts of San Juan, San Pedro, Corpus and Santiago Apóstol.[105] In 1847 a group of members caused disruption in the association's quarters in an attempt to force a dissenter, Miguel Bou, onto the board of directors. The Filarmónica's creole president called the rebel members '*godos* and emigrants from Costa Firme' in allusion to peninsular and loyalist groups that had arrived from South America during the 1820s and 1830s.[106]

During the 1850s and 1860s, associations and civil society in Santiago experienced a stronger expansion. In 1861 material progress and urban improvements had stimulated an increase in population to 36,752 persons. Although gaslights, train services to Sabanilla and Caney, and a daily mail service were present in 1860, Santiagueros demanded telegraphic services that Havana and Matanzas already enjoyed.[107] Italian opera companies performed regularly in the city's theatre.[108] The new Banco Mercantil was established in 1857, while the ten-year-old Caja de Ahorros had 1,817 depositors (1,552 white, 93 free persons of colour and 172 slaves) with 207,143 pesos in savings.[109] Governor Carlos Vargas Machuca (1855–60) implemented public and urban works that reaffirmed philanthropic and educational collaboration. The Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos de Beneficencia was established in 1848, the charitable association Hijas de María in 1856 and the Hospital de Caridad in 1860. More casinos, social clubs and even

[102] ANC, GSC, año 1843, leg. 1602, no. 81760.
[103] A. del C., 'Sociedades Anónimas', *El Redactor*, 26 July 1848; Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 2, pp. 377, 397.
[104] *El Redactor*, 9 July 1848, 16 July 1848, 21 July 1848 and 23 July 1848.
[105] Buch López, *Del Santiago colonial*, pp. 17–18; *El Redactor*, 2 July 1848 and 10 July 1848.
[106] ANC, GSC, año 1847, leg. 997, no. 34451.
[107] *El Redactor*, 8 Jan. and 25 Jan. 1860.
[108] *El Redactor*, 22 Jan. 1860.
[109] *El Redactor*, 29 Feb. 1860.

clandestine Masonic lodges of the Gran Logia de Colón appeared.[110] Most of these associational advances were drastically cut down during the Ten Years' War.

The impact of the Ten Years' War

The separatist insurrection of 1868, and the retaliatory repression spearheaded by loyalist troops and *voluntario* militias, triggered a long and bloody internal war. The Ten Years' War had devastating effects on the island's economy, population and budding civil society.[111] In Matanzas and Havana, associations and educational institutions experienced a marked decline following the forceful closing of creole-dominated associations, including Havana's famed Liceo, as well as the expropriation, imprisonment, execution and forced exile of thousands of creoles and their families.

The central and eastern provinces, where most of the fighting took place, suffered particular destruction and expropriation. Puerto Príncipe was profoundly damaged due to its strategic importance for both insurrectionist and loyalist troops. The forceful transfers of rural population to urban centres, later known as *reconcentración*, were first practised in Puerto Príncipe and Bayamo. The majority of those who were expropriated were not supporters of the insurrection but creole rural and urban property owners and reformists, caught in the middle of a cruel war ruthlessly waged by loyalists intent on re-Hispanicising the island, resisting colonial reform and the abolition of slavery, and obtaining corrupt gains.[112]

In Puerto Príncipe, the Filarmónica and Santa Cecilia societies were forced to close in 1869 and 1870 respectively. The Spanish military authorities forbade associational activities in the city. Only the Casino Español, controlled by loyalists and peninsular Spaniards organised as voluntarios, was allowed to exist. The Casino Español took control of the buildings formerly

[110] Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 3, pp. 142, 218, 230–1, 256, 258, 296; Buch López, *Del Santiago colonial*, pp. 18–19, 120; *El Redactor*, 21 Jan. 1860 and 24 Jan. 1860.

[111] Rodríguez Ferrer, *Dictamen*, pp. 4–9; José del Monte y Garay, *Memoria leída en la apertura del curso académico de 1866 a 1867 en el Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza y Estudios de Aplicación de Puerto Príncipe* (Puerto Príncipe, 1866), pp. 3–4.

[112] Juan Torres Lasqueti, *Colección de datos históricos-geográficos y estadísticos de Puerto Príncipe y su jurisdicción* (Havana: Imprenta El Retiro, 1888), p. 370; Alfonso W. Quiroz, 'Loyalist Overkill: The Socioeconomic Costs of "Repressing" the Separatist Insurrection in Cuba, 1868–78', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 78: 2 (1998), pp. 261–305.

occupied by the Filarmónica and Santa Cecilia. In Santiago, a reactionary and militant Círculo Español led by Juan Tarrida and the mayor, Julián Martínez Muñoz, was formed in 1869, with approximately 70 members. In 1870 Círculo members lashed out against 32 persons accused of belonging to the Gran Logia de Colón, including its grand master, who was executed.[113] Santiago's Sociedad Económica lost its liberal members and succumbed to a loyalist onslaught on its funds, which were funnelled into support for war efforts. The financial failure of the Caja de Ahorros contributed to the Sociedad's final demise. The moderate daily *El Redactor* merged with the rabidly loyalist *La Bandera Española*.[114] Civil society in Santiago and Puerto Príncipe recovered only partially from these blows in the post-war years.

Associations and Civic Movements after the Ten Years' War

The restoration of constitutional monarchy and the promulgation of the 1876 Constitution in Spain, together with promises of reform in Cuba, contributed to a political solution to the prolonged Ten Years' War. Despite the limited proclamation of the Spanish Constitution in Cuba in 1881, important reforms were introduced, including the abolition of slavery in 1886 and new regulations protecting the rights of freedom of press and association, culminating in the liberal Spanish Law of Associations being extended to Cuba in 1888.[115] Cuban reformist, constitutional, associational and labour efforts had paved the way in the previous decades for the boom of autonomous associations that developed in the last two decades of a waning colonial order.

There were more than 330 associations registered in Havana by the 1890s.[116] Most of these were of the types termed 'instruction and leisure' and 'cooperative and mutual aid', which, under their statutes, forbade political or religious activity and debate among their members. These restrictive conditions were accepted as a means to preclude outside interference and internal

[113] 'Sociedad de Beneficencia y Círculo Español de Santiago de Cuba', ANC, GSC, año 1869, leg. 1591, no. 81578; Torres-Cuevas, *Historia de la masonería*, p. 251.

[114] Bacardí, *Crónicas*, vol. 4, pp. 97, 141; Meriño and Fleitas, 'Trayectoria y ocaso', pp. 124–5.

[115] *Ley para el ejercicio del derecho de asociación en las islas de Cuba y Puerto Rico, publicada en la* '*Gaceta de la Habana*' *el día 10 de julio de 1888, y Ley de reuniones públicas para la isla de Cuba, publicada en la* '*Gaceta de la Habana*' *el día 10 de diciembre de 1881: Adicionadas con las últimas disposiciones que aclaran o modifican sus conceptos* (Havana: Imprenta del Gobierno y Capitanía General, 1891).

[116] Rafael Villena Espinosa, 'El asociacionismo cubano antes de la independencia', in Isidro Sánchez and Rafael Villena (eds.), *Sociabilidad fin de siglo: espacios asociativos en torno a 1898* (Cuenca: Editorial Universidad de Castilla–La Mancha, 1999), pp. 281–323; Barcia, *Sociedad en crisis*, pp. 85, 88.

disunity. Until 1888, an official Junta General de Beneficencia supervised these non-political associations.[117]

Enhanced unionisation of workers, initially led by a reformist, Saturnino Martínez, and later by competing anarchist organisers, Enrique Roig and Enrique Messonier, profited from the new climate of free association. Labour unions and related mutual aid societies, such as associations of cooks (Centro General de Cocineros) and carriage drivers (Caridad Centro de Cocheros), multiplied among white, black, and desegregated constituencies.[118] Their origins dated to the 1860s and late 1870s, but in the 1880s they grew in size, diversity, racial integration and organisational complexity. In 1884 there were 29 associations of workers in Havana, including eight associations of militant tobacco workers, supporting a host of labour press organs. This alarmed authorities wary of the spread of anarchist collectivist ideas from Spain and mounting strikes in 1883–4 and 1887–8. Two major coalitions of unions emerged, the Junta Central de Artesanos (1882) and the influential Círculo de Trabajadores de La Habana (1885), which defended labour demands within the system, had little incentive to support separatism and retained a tolerant political independence.[119]

Likewise, in 1888, formerly persecuted Masonic lodges and orients were legalised and allowed to pursue their charitable and ritual activities peacefully. The fusion in 1891 of Cuban and Spanish Masonic obediences in the Gran Logia de la Isla de Cuba embraced ethnically and socially diverse individuals such as Asturians like Segundo Alvarez and Saturnino Martínez, and liberal autonomist leaders Rafael Montoro and Antonio Govín.[120]

As in Havana, Puerto Príncipe's mutual aid and instruction and leisure associations predominated during the associational boom of the 1880s and early 1890s. Mutual aid associations charged low monthly fees of 50 cents to members between the ages of 15 and 60 to provide for aid in case of disease or death. The mutual aid association for white retirees of the army and militias had strict rules to avoid fraud and malfeasance, not entirely uncommon among its members.[121] More open mutual aid societies for the poor of any 'class or sex' were also formed, as well as mutual aid associations with a Catholic religious affiliation.[122] The most important mutual aid society,

[117] 'Junta General de Beneficencia. Expediente relativo a regularizar la marcha de las asociaciones constituidas en esta capital', ANC, GG, año 1884, leg. 99, no. 4557.

[118] ANC, Registro de Asociaciones (hereafter Asociaciones), leg. 439, no. 13481; and leg. 446, exp. 14799.

[119] Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, pp. 11–12, 130–4, 149–53, 177–9.

[120] Joaquín Nicolás Aramburu, *La masonería cubana: obra de propaganda* (Havana: Imprenta La Moderna, 1893), pp. 33–9; José Castellano Gil, *La masonería española en Cuba* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Centro de Cultura Popular Canaria, 1996), pp. 353–4.

[121] AHPC, Asociaciones, leg. 329, exp. 15, f. 19.

[122] AHPC, Asociaciones, leg. 329, exps. 16, 17; leg. 28, exp. 5; leg. 329, exp. 22.

however, was the creole-led El Porvenir, which had approximately 1,690 members in 1886. With a monthly income of 4,300 pesos, El Porvenir financed the medical needs of 306 sick members, 915 pharmacy prescriptions and the monthly newspaper *El Eco del Porvenir*.[123] This society's treasurer, Gonzalo Moreno Delgado, later became a constitutional mayor of Puerto Príncipe in 1888.[124] Leisure and instruction societies included La Fraternidad and San Fernando in Nuevitas (both formed in 1882), the Casino Español (existing since 1872), the restored Popular Santa Cecilia and Liceo, La Unión and El Progreso.[125]

The Popular Santa Cecilia association had serious financial problems after its reopening in 1875. In 1877–8 it organised costume balls to raise funds and pay debts. It had only 271 contributing members in 1877, but recovered after 1882, reaching a total membership of 500 in 1886. Thereafter membership remained on average at around 320 members until the association's collapse as a direct consequence of the start of the 1895 war. That year, membership of the Popular Santa Cecilia totalled only 69 individuals. Under strained financial circumstances and increasing suspicion and vigilance from the Spanish authorities, the Santa Cecilia board decided to close the association in August 1896.[126]

Associations of workers in Puerto Príncipe were not as prominent as in Havana. A Junta Central de Obreros of Puerto Príncipe was organized in 1891–2 under the 'instruction and leisure' category, devoid of political purposes. Another association of the same type, the Artesanos de Color, was formed in 1882 to gather artisans of colour for the improvement of their education and entertainment.[127] Sundry other types of association were also developing, such as a Catholic lay brotherhood, the Asociación Católica Humanitaria Universal, organised to 'practise, defend and propagate the Catholic doctrine', and the Asociación de Madres Católicas and Conferencia de San Vicente de Paul, which held bazaars and conferences aimed at providing charitable aid to poor mothers and orphans.[128] Other provincial associations elsewhere included agrarian owners in Sancti Spíritus and teachers of the Oriente province, which published their own periodicals.[129]

The reforms of this period included an expansion of press freedom and political association. A host of newspapers and magazines were published, and the opposition reformist party, the Partido Liberal Autonomista, which

[123] *El Eco del Porvenir* (Puerto Príncipe), 30 Jun. 1886.
[124] *El Progreso*, 1 Nov. 1888.
[125] AHPC, Asociaciones, leg. 329, exps. 14, 18 and 19.
[126] Barrios Pascual, *Notas históricas*, pp. 71–4.
[127] AHPC, Asociaciones, leg. 66, exp. 12; leg. 329, exp. 19.
[128] AHPC, Asociaciones, leg. 328, exps. 4 and 3.
[129] *La Asociación* (Sancti Spíritus, 1894); *El Maestro de Oriente* (Santiago de Cuba, 1895).

held a liberal-constitutionalist ideology and was headed by middle-class professionals, became popular. Despite occasional official harassment against reformist local parties and clubs and their newspapers, especially in the early 1880s and 1891–3, reformist political dissent was tolerated. Separatist and anarchist groups and parties continued to be outlawed, though separatist leaders were allowed to travel to Cuba until the outbreak of the 1895 insurrection.[130]

Colonialist refusal to grant political autonomy inflamed reformist interactions between civil and political society. Earlier intersections between associations and civic movements were expressed in mobilisations stirred by the burials of important civic and political leaders such as Luz y Caballero (1862), Betancourt Cisneros (1866) and Saco (1880), the latter praised at the time for his struggle for 'reforms, civil and political liberties, and government of the country by the country'.[131] These were non-violent mass demonstrations aimed at disputing public spaces and achieving lasting civic education. Important creole-dominated non-political and political associations came together in such movements. Conversely, peninsular-dominated associations, such as the Asociación de Dependientes de Comercio, *casinos españoles* and Asociación de Voluntarios, also organised public celebratory and reaffirmation acts and processions that drew in Spanish regional charities and societies, loyalist politicians and journalists, and even military units and bands.[132]

During a difficult economic situation for sugar producers in 1884, a concerted action of elite, middle-class and labour associations and official political parties formed the Junta Magna, a civic movement geared toward lowering taxes on Cuban export products. It was initiated by the Círculo de Hacendados, an association of sugar producers acting as a corporate lobby, led by the head of the conservative Partido Unión Constitucional, the conde de Casa Moré. The Sociedad Económica, represented in the movement by liberal autonomist leaders, supported this reformist initiative.[133] Creoles and peninsular Spaniards had a rare opportunity to collaborate in a common cause brokered by activist parts of civil society and legal political organisations. Something similar happened in 1890–3, during deteriorating economic and financial conditions caused by harmful protectionist policies, with the formation of a second Movimiento Económico.[134] The ultimate

[130] Sociedad anarquista Tierra y Libertad, ANC, GG, año 1895, leg. 68, no. 2884.
[131] 'El cadáver de Saco', *El Triunfo*, 10 Aug. 1880.
[132] 'Dependientes de Comercio', *Diario de la Marina*, 5 Aug. 1884.
[133] Rafael Montoro, 'Necesidad de una reforma arancelaria', Colección Manuscrita Montoro, vol. 47, Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, Havana; Leida Fernández Prieto, *Espacio de poder, ciencia y agricultura en Cuba: El Círculo de Hacendados, 1878–1917* (Madrid: CSIC, 2008).
[134] Paul Estrade, 'Cuba a la veille de l'indépendance: le Mouvement Economique (1890–1893) – Bilan et essai d'interpretation', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velásquez*, 13 (1977), pp. 385–424, and 14 (1978), pp. 353–80.

failure of these movements resulted from pressure exerted by the highest colonial authorities, who were alarmed at such dangerous collaborations.

In Puerto Príncipe, the popularity of the liberal autonomists was strong. A leading autonomist, Rafael Montoro, was elected deputy to represent Puerto Príncipe in Madrid's legislative Cortes. In December 1886, after making brilliant speeches in favour of Cuba's colonial autonomy in Madrid, Montoro and other autonomists sailed from Havana to Nuevitas and from there travelled by train to Puerto Príncipe for a short visit. More than 10,000 people of diverse social groups greeted Montoro and friends at Puerto Príncipe. A parade from the railway station to the city centre included carriages representing several prominent autonomous associations such as the *sociedades de color* La Nueva Aurora and El Progreso, the *soccoro mutuo* El Porvenir, and the cultural and leisure societies Popular Santa Cecilia, Liceo, La Unión and the Círculo de Hacendados. During the next few days some of these associations organised symphonic and lyrical shows, balls and dinners in honour of the distinguished guests, who delivered speeches in favour of the moral and material advantages of union in the island.[135]

Another important public display of civic solidarity was held in January 1887, celebrating the abolition of slavery in Havana. At the centre of this demonstration were black associations now free to express themselves publicly. The event comprised music bands marching with 'cabildos, agrupaciones, hermandades, corporaciones, cofradías, sociedades de recreo y de instrucción' of Havana, Matanzas, Cárdenas, Santiago de Cuba, Guanabacoa, Puerto Príncipe, Santa Clara, Bejucal, San Antonio de los Baños, Santiago de las Vegas, Guanabacoa and Regla.[136] Associative change among the now free black population translated into the legal conversion of many semi-clandestine and traditional Afro-Cuban organisations into lawful autonomous associations: 23 new black associations were registered in Havana, eight in Santiago and four in Puerto Príncipe between 1879 and 1895. An abolitionist leader and journalist, Juan Gualberto Gómez, contributed to organising an influential and island-wide federation of black associations, the Directorio Central de las Sociedades de la Raza de Color, formed in 1887, and its press organ, *La Fraternidad*. The Directorio led successful legal battles to redress racial and educational discrimination toward the ultimate goal of achieving equal rights. The overtly separatist Gómez rallied many members of the Directorio to join the 1895 revolutionary insurrection as individuals.[137] Likewise in 1892, in reaction to the repressive measures of the conservative

[135] *El Popular* (Puerto Príncipe), 5, 9 and 12 Dec. 1886.
[136] *La Ilustración Cubana*, 3: 19 (10 July 1887), pp. 206–7.
[137] Carmen Montejo, *Sociedades negras en Cuba 1878–1960* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2004), pp. 64–5, 79–3, 106–7; Helg, *Our Rightful Share*, pp. 35–6.

Captain-General Camilo de Polavieja, the anarchist-led Congreso Obrero, the first workers' congress representing delegations from all over the island except the eastern provinces, voted for a resolution recognising the right of a Cuban separatist struggle.[138]

Until 1895, the increase in civil associations paralleled a heightened level of non-violent social and political mobilisation. Overall, the reformist Autonomist Party was the temporary beneficiary of this tendency, led by prestigious politicians and lawyers with close links to labour and black organisations. Civil associations and reformist political parties and clubs participated in a transitory consensus underpinned by expectations of further economic and institutional reforms leading to a gradual transition towards autonomy and independence. For the moment, legal associations and parties accepted the rules of the game of a withering colonial regime. This fragile consensus collapsed at the outbreak of the second war for independence in 1895–8. As in the war of 1868–78, the colonial government drastically curtailed civic space and the legal existence of autonomous associations, Masonic lodges, ethnic clubs and workers' unions.

Conclusions

Associational development in Cuba was positively influenced by regional economic change and enlightened ideas of progress and spirit of association, initially nurtured by creole elites and the emerging professional middle classes. Associationism was subsequently reinforced by reformist-constitutionalist pressure at times of lessened colonial oppression, when interconnections between civil and political societies became more transparent through freer press organs captained by reformist civic organisers. Mounting legal efforts later continued towards achieving fully autonomous association, racially integrated labour unions and anti-discriminatory black associations. Associational drive was negatively affected by economic downturns, autocratic colonial constraints to constitutional rights and self-determination, and creole–peninsular conflicts that led to destructive internal wars.

Civil society in Havana and its western region was relatively larger and denser compared to other regions, particularly with respect to associations of workers and persons of colour. Economic transformation in Puerto Príncipe and Santiago was delayed, despite conscious efforts to emulate regional progress and improve commercial and economic advancement and education. The war of 1868–78 had particularly damaging effects on central and eastern autonomous association, though improved means of communication and information (within the island and with the Atlantic world), the

[138] Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, pp. 214, 221.

spreading spirit of association and progress, and constitutional reformist efforts contributed to tempering some of the most drastic civic differences among the regions.

International waves of associational innovations, spreading mainly from Spain, France and the United States, were embodied in enlightened economic societies, cultural and educational associations, scientific academies, stock-financed non-profit organisations, mutualism, Masonic lodges, unions and cooperative organisations. These innovations were aptly adapted to the specific local needs of both creole and peninsular communities, and shaped by collaborative goals of autonomy from government and state interference. Cubans developed a distinct associational network reflecting reformist blueprints built by three generations of constitutionalist civic leaders that embodied the most significant intersection between the civil and political spheres. Consequently, after the 1860s and particularly in the 1880s, legal association contributed to a more autonomous civil society that compared favourably to other Spanish American cases.

The strengthening of Cuban civil society has been explained, from a Gramscian perspective, by the rise of militant revolutionary groups that replaced, in part, previous hegemony by planter and peninsular pressure groups. Such an explanation is unable to fit the comprehensive historical evidence discussed in this work. This new analysis of the interactions between political trends and legal associations points instead to non-violent, diverse and moderate elements predominating in civic associations, movements and civil society. These findings are more in accord with Tocquevillian approaches to civil society. Only in the repressive final years of the colonial regime was support for separatism among a growing number of individuals in labour and black associations evident on the island. However, increasing autonomous association before 1895 contributed to the non-violent erosion of colonial constraints and despotic transgressions that, if unchecked, resulted in radical civic retrogression and violent confrontations.

Finally, some relevant implications of this revised historical view of a not-so-militant yet sizeable, diverse and firmly independent civil society are worth pondering for ensuing studies and debates. Firstly, the coalescence of an autonomous civil society laid important social foundations for further development of democracy in the twentieth century as civil society took a stand against despotic infringements. Secondly, civil society entered the twentieth century unsynchronised with a divided political society that pressed for militant control despite constitutional protections. And thirdly, the right of free and autonomous association continued to be subjected to political attacks that ended in the legal abolition of civil society in the early 1960s and its replacement by party- and state-controlled social organisations.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Este estudio ofrece una nueva perspectiva de la sociedad civil de Cuba durante el siglo XIX basada en información concreta sobre múltiples tipos de asociación en diferentes regiones de la isla. Las asociaciones modernas se desarrollaron principalmente para resolver necesidades sociales y culturales específicas, lograr autonomía legal del Estado, y ejercer una asociación libre a pesar de las limitaciones coloniales. Esta evolución de largo plazo cubre diversos periodos de interacciones entre la sociedad civil y las esferas políticas enmarcadas primariamente alrededor de luchas constitucionalistas y reformistas no violentas, en vez de conflictos separatistas armados. Estos hallazgos contradicen interpretaciones prevalentes que muestran una sociedad civil endémicamente débil aunque crecientemente militante. En vez de ello, una creciente, moderada, progresivamente autónoma y diversa sociedad civil contribuyó gradualmente a minar el despotismo colonial y estableció bases claves para la democracia pos-independiente.

Spanish keywords: Cuba, sociedad civil, asociaciones, constitucionalismo, reformismo

Portuguese abstract. Baseado em informações concretas sobre múltiplos tipos de associação em diferentes regiões da ilha, o estudo oferece uma nova perspectiva acerca da sociedade civil em Cuba durante o século dezenove. Associações modernas foram desenvolvidas principalmente para atender necessidades sociais e culturais específicas, atingir a autonomia legal do estado, e exercitar a livre associação a despeito de restrições impostas pela situação colonial. Esta evolução de longo-prazo cobre vários períodos de intersecções entre a sociedade civil e as esferas políticas moldadas principalmente pelas lutas pacíficas por reformas constitucionalistas, ao invés de conflitos armados separatistas. Estas descobertas contradizem as interpretações dominantes que retratam uma sociedade civil endemicamente fraca, porém cada vez mais militante. Ao contrário, a sociedade civil em expansão – moderada e progressivamente autônoma – gradualmente contribuiu para minar o despotismo colonial e estabelecer bases-chave para a democracia pós-independência.

Portuguese keywords: Cuba, sociedade civil, associações, constitucionalismo, reformismo