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Diego García's Long and Winding Road to Freedom: A Microcosm of Slavery in Costa Rica, 1705–1744

Russell Lohse

ABSTRACT

'Diego García' was the name given to a West African-born man who was brought to Costa Rica at the turn of the eighteenth century. His life history reflects many of the unusual features particular to the slave regime in that peripheral Spanish colony. These include rapid creolization, the intense and sustained contacts between members of different ethnic and racial groups, the broad geographical mobility of male slaves, the spatial separation of male and female Africans in the colony, and the enhanced possibilities for manumission available to male Africans.

In many cases, Spanish American archives hold more documentation about enslaved people than about other plebeians in colonial society. This is a result of the double status of slaves as both property and human beings under Spanish and ecclesiastical law. As objects of sale and barter; as disputed property claimed by rival parties; as damaged goods for which owners sought compensation; as collateral for loans; as more or less valuable items among others listed in testaments, donation certifications, postmortem inventories, and other notarized documents related to transactions in movable property, slaves left a paper trail that the free poor did not. In some other cases, Spanish law treated slaves like free subjects of the Crown. Slaves testified in civil litigation and criminal trials. With the permission of their masters, they could bring civil lawsuits and even enter into binding contracts. Like other Christians, slaves were baptized, confirmed, married, and died in the communion of the Catholic Church, milestones that were duly recorded by priests in sacramental registers.

These generalizations hold especially true for an enslaved man brought to Costa Rica in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, who was known at various times in his life as Diego de Casasola and Diego García. Born in West Africa about 1681, Diego appears in no fewer than eighteen separate documents in Costa Rican archives, which are remarkably well-preserved

and well-organized. Although they do not address many of the questions we would most like answered, in these centuries-old pages we can glimpse an exceptional man who lived under an unusual slave régime that provided exceptional, although limited, opportunities for advancement to a number of enslaved men. Diego quickly learned the cultural and social norms of life in Costa Rica and turned his skills to the pursuit of freedom. We can be sure that he was trying to buy his freedom by 1713 or 1714, when he acquired a precious stone with which he intended to liberate himself. He earned the trust of his master and rose to the rank of overseer among his fellow slaves on his master's cacao *haciendas* in Costa Rica's Matina Valley, far from the supervision of whites. Eventually he was able to grow some of the valuable crop for himself and save toward purchasing his freedom. He struck out on his own in search of gold, again, hoping to manumit himself through self-purchase. He married twice, both times to free women, and benefited from the connections and resources of his free extended family to advance his cause. Despite these exceptional opportunities, unimaginable to slaves in many other colonial societies, Diego toiled in bondage for more than thirty years before he could realize his dream of freedom. In the end, he died a free man of modest means, a devoted family man, a householder, a devout member of his parish, and even the owner of three small cacao *haciendas*. Although Diego worked under difficult conditions for decades, he was not the only African-born enslaved man to achieve such success.

Despite the richness of the documentation, there are large gaps in our knowledge of Diego's story. The first record we find of the African man who came to be called Diego dates from 22 September 1705, when Field Marshal (*Maestre de Campo*) don José de Casasola y Córdoba, *Alférez Mayor* and city councilman (*regidor*) of Cartago, Costa Rica's colonial capital, sold Diego, a black man described as of *casta cabo verde* ('Cape Verde caste') to Manuel García de Argueta. Diego was sold with another enslaved African-born black man, known as Carlos, who was identified as of *casta arara*. The bill of sale specifies that Carlos was twenty-four years old at the time, but does not mention Diego's age. García paid 800 pesos for both men.¹ In a later document from 1717 we learn that each man brought a price of 400 pesos, as we might guess.² From this price, high by Costa Rican standards, we can infer that in 1705 Diego was a healthy man of prime age for agricultural labour, between about fifteen and thirty years of age. Finally, in a 1721 statement Diego declared that he was about 40 years old, which would make him just about exactly Carlos's age and put his birthdate around 1681.³ Don José de Casasola indicated that he had purchased Diego and Carlos from the *Asiento de Negros*, the official regional slave market in Panama City, but did not say when; thus, we do not know how long Diego had been in Costa Rica, or how deeply he might have adapted to the local culture by the first decade of the eighteenth century.⁴

Like other colonial slave buyers, Costa Rican slave owners demonstrated strong interest in the African origins of their slaves. In records pertaining to African-born slaves in Costa Rica between 1600 and 1750, five times as many enslaved Africans were identified with a specific *casta* (a name indicating 'national' or ethnic origin) rather than as *bozales*, the generic term for those born in Africa.⁵ Ethnicity mattered to prospective slave buyers as well as to the captives themselves. The name *cabo verde*, however, provides few clues to Diego's origins. Portuguese slave traders applied the name to anyone exported by way of the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of West Africa, one of the largest export centres of the early Atlantic slave trade. Diego was likely deported from Africa between 1696 and 1703, while the legal slave trade to Spanish America was monopolized by the Portuguese-owned Cacheu Company, named for the major slave market at the mouth of the river of the same name in what is now northwestern Guinea-Bissau.⁶ This was among the most ethnically diverse regions in all of West Africa, including people of Banhum (Bagnoun), Biafara, Brame (Bran), Casanga, and Mande origins – all of whom arrived in Costa Rica – among many others.⁷ Diego would have arrived at Cacheu as a captive, been purchased there by slave traders, and carried by ship several hundred miles to the Cape Verde Islands, where he would have been sold to European slavers and deported to the Americas.

Less likely, Diego was from the Cape Verde Islands themselves. Uninhabited before Portuguese colonization in the fifteenth century, Cape Verde was home to a vibrant creole culture that from the beginning blended Upper Guinea and Portuguese elements. If Diego was from the islands, he would have been a creole, perhaps a descendant of local Portuguese slave traders (*lançados*) and African women from the mainland, and would have never lived in an indigenous African society. He would have been a native speaker of a Portuguese-based creole language and almost certainly a baptized Catholic when he was sold into the Atlantic slave trade at the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. It is even possible, however remotely, that 'Diego' (or its Portuguese equivalent, 'Diogo') was the name by which he had been baptized.⁸ Such a cultural inheritance would have been of incalculable value in helping Diego adapt to the society and culture of Costa Rica, another multiethnic, multiracial, Iberian language-speaking, Catholic, creole society. We know of another man known as a *cabo verde*, a contemporary of Diego's whom he might very well have known, who became so thoroughly integrated into Costa Rican society that many assumed he was native-born.⁹

In either case, Diego would have left Africa for the Americas by way of Cape Verde, almost certainly from the island of Santiago rather than directly from the mainland. The *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* records nine slaving voyages that obtained most of their captives in Cape Verde between 1696 and 1701, and Diego might have crossed the Atlantic in the hold of one of those.¹⁰ It was beneficial for captives (not just slave traders) to leave for the Americas from Cape

Verde rather than directly from the West African coast. In the Islands, ships invariably took on fresh food and water. The Atlantic crossing took considerably less time than from the mainland, contributing to better health and a better chance of survival for the captives on the Middle Passage.¹¹ Five of those nine slave ships disembarked the majority of their captives in Venezuela, from where some might have been sent on to Panama.¹²

Although the numbers and origins of Africans who arrived at the Isthmus of Panama varied widely over time, the procedures of Spanish officials for disembarking them remained similar. Slavers from Africa or the Caribbean arrived at Panama's Caribbean port of Portobello, where the captives were taken to the local *Asiento* compound. There hundreds of captives were held in pens while awaiting auction or transportation to Panama City. Because of its hot, humid climate and unhealthy disease environment, slave traders tried to keep their human cargoes in Portobello for as little time as possible. Like the barracoons in Africa, the pens of Portobello could prove as deadly as the Middle Passage itself. Although thousands of Africans were purchased at auction in Portobello, many slave traders hoped for even higher profits in Panama City. Heavily guarded, captives were forced across the Isthmus by one of two routes.¹³ In Panama City, the captives were held in the pens at El Coco; Diego and Carlos would have met there, or perhaps had already met in Portobello. Soon the inspections, inventories, and frenzied buying and selling resumed. After José de Casasola y Córdoba purchased them, Diego and Carlos would have sailed north with him to La Caldera, Costa Rica's port on the Pacific coast.¹⁴

Most slaves acquired legally entered Costa Rica alone, in pairs, or in small groups, as did Diego and Carlos. Costa Rican colonists like José de Casasola often travelled personally to Panama to procure slaves and brought them back to the province by boat, beginning unusually close relationships with their slaves as they navigated the ocean in small craft.¹⁵ In contrast to plantation slave societies, on the small properties in Costa Rica, many slaves lived in intimate contact with their masters. At the same time, the fact of birth in Africa and the shared experience of the Middle Passages to Costa Rica continued to hold meaning. Diego and Carlos would surely have grown close during their journey into the unknown, and the relationships between enslaved shipmates proved strong in Costa Rica as elsewhere.¹⁶

What was Costa Rica like when Diego first saw it? Diego and Carlos would have disembarked at the deep-water port of La Caldera and proceeded to nearby Esparza. Although it was Costa Rica's second-largest city, in 1683 only 55 Spanish *vecinos* (householders, sometimes translated as 'citizens' because they enjoyed full legal rights) and 29 free black and mulato householders were recorded as living there. Because this figure did not include family members other than heads of household, servants, slaves, or people considered only 'residents' (*moradores*) of the town, it is an inadequate and misleading measure of Esparza's population. From other sources we know that

most of Esparza's residents were free mulatos and blacks, with Spaniards making up roughly a tenth of the population.¹⁷ Pirates attacked the town in 1684, 1685, and most brutally in 1687, scattering most of the inhabitants to the inland Valleys of Bagaces and Las Cañas. Never a wealthy town, Esparza fell on hard times. By 1719 it was described as a truly miserable place, situated in 'an inconvenient, mountainous, and swampy field, the habitat of all kinds of dangerous and poisonous animals ... There are nine thatched houses or huts, some worse than others, only that of the priest plastered with mud, and the rest covered in leaves ...'.¹⁸

From Esparza, José de Casasola y Córdoba would have driven Diego and Carlos to Cartago, a few days' journey of perhaps seventy miles (113 km) across scorching plains, volcanic mountain ranges, and rushing rivers. The abrupt transition from the dry tropical forests of the Pacific through the relatively cold and rainy mountains and valleys of the central region was regarded as unhealthy and often fatal. Diego and Carlos would surely have passed through Pacaca, an indigenous pueblo strategically located between the North Pacific and Central Valley regions. Costa Rica's indigenous population had dropped disastrously in the preceding decades, most recently due to a smallpox epidemic that raged between 1690 and 1694, and Pacaca was no exception. Pacaca was one of the larger remaining Indian towns in Costa Rica at the turn of the eighteenth century, with about 93 total residents.¹⁹ Diego would explore this area extensively in the years to come.

Compared to the North Pacific region, the Central Valley where Cartago was located was 'cold and humid because of a very dense fog that falls on it', lasting throughout the long 'winter' (rainy season) from April through December.²⁰ Perhaps Diego and Carlos needed some time to recuperate once they arrived in Cartago, but unlike in plantation societies, Costa Rican masters did not customarily dedicate a long period for 'seasoning'. They generally allowed only a short convalescence before putting their slaves to work.²¹

Cartago was among the more modest provincial capitals in colonial Spanish America. According to a 1683 description by Governor don Miguel Gómez de Lara, there were 465 Spanish *vecinos* in Cartago and an additional 100 free blacks and mulatos in the segregated neighborhood of the Puebla de los Angeles.²² A nominal record of Cartago *vecinos* in 1691 counted 496 Spaniards and 63 free blacks and mulatos.²³ Based on these figures, we might make a reasonable guess at a total population of 2,500–3,000 people in the Cartago area at the turn of the eighteenth century. A judge (*oidor*) from the *Audiencia* of Guatemala described Cartago in 1703 as 'composed of 60 houses more or less, and some little straw houses on the outskirts, and most [people] live on small farms outside the city in such poverty that it is an inexplicable shame ...'.²⁴ In 1719, Governor don Diego de la Haya Fernández described Cartago in a bit more detail: 'one church and one chapel, a convent of Lord Saint Francis, two shrines and 70 houses made of earthen adobe and covered with

tile ...'. De la Haya explained that many more *vecinos* were found in 'country *haciendas* around [the city], in which they usually live because of the extreme poverty of the country, thus there are more than 300 families in the countryside, most of them in straw houses ...'.²⁵

Diego's first owner, don José de Casasola y Córdoba, was a member of Cartago's ruling élite, among the wealthiest and most powerful men in the colony, a cacao planter, high-ranking military official, an officeholder, and a large slave owner by Costa Rican standards.²⁶ In 1700 he married doña Agueda Pérez de Muro, another member of Costa Rica's ruling circle, who had grown up surrounded by enslaved servants. Compared to members of the ruling class in other colonies, however, Cartago's élite was decidedly rustic. In Costa Rica 'the clothing is so limited that the most important lady wears only a *mantilla* of green *bayeta* and a silk (*picote*) skirt, knowing nothing of jewels, diamonds, pearls, or earrings because of the extreme poverty of this Province', admitted one *vecino* in 1719.²⁷ Doña Agueda brought two young enslaved women to the marriage in her dowry – María, a black woman about 17 years old, and Manuela Josefa, a 12-year-old girl of *color pardo*, a mulata.²⁸ Casasola owned several slaves himself by the time he sold Diego and Carlos, including Jerónimo, a black man married to a free woman and the father of a free son.²⁹ Casasola had also owned two other African-born men reputed, like Carlos, to be of *casta arara* – Juan, of unspecified age, and Miguel, age 30. A few months before he sold Diego and Carlos to Manuel García de Argueta, Casasola's slave Mateo, an African-born adult, was baptized at the parish church of Cartago, as was José, another African-born slave of Casasola's, a year later.³⁰

We know very little about Diego's life as a slave of don José de Casasola, but we do know that by the time he was sold to Manuel García de Argueta in 1705, Diego had already lived in a household with at least two other African-born men, including his shipmate, Carlos, as well as Jerónimo, who might have been either African- or American-born. It is easy to imagine that Carlos and Diego relied heavily on each other, and that Casasola's other slaves 'adopted' them and helped them face the frightening experience of forced adaptation to slavery in an alien culture.³¹

We do not know why Casasola chose to sell Diego in 1705, but the fact that he was sold or exchanged no fewer than six times in his life suggests that Diego was a 'troublesome property' for his masters. (By contrast, we have no record that Carlos was ever sold again.)³² Diego remained 'in the service of his second master for seventeen years, but it was a troubled relationship. Manuel García de Argueta, a native of Granada (Spain), was also a member of the local Cartago élite, a military officer, a cacao planter, and a large slave owner by local standards. Diego now moved into a large, ethnically and racially mixed 'family' of slaves – including three West Central Africans, at least two natives of the Slave Coast, two people from the Gold Coast or Upper Slave Coast, three mulato creoles, and a black woman born in Africa or the

Americas – within Manuel García de Argueta’s home.³³ But we do not know how long he stayed in the household, or how close he might have been to its other enslaved members.

Like many other African men, Diego – by now often called Diego Casasola, after his first master, or Diego García, after his second – was soon sent by his master to work on the cacao *haciendas* of the Matina Valley in Costa Rica’s Caribbean region. A combination of unusual circumstances combined to allow male slaves in Matina an exceptional autonomy, especially striking when compared to the brutal control exercised over slaves elsewhere in the Americas. Like slaves in some plantation societies, enslaved men in Matina worked largely free of white supervision and organized the use of their own time. Some of the same reasons that made Matina ideal for cacao cultivation, such as its heavy rainfall and high humidity, along with endemic disease, caused Spanish colonists to shun the area. In keeping with stereotypes of the time, one Spaniard remarked, ‘Only blacks enjoy good health in that intemperate climate’.³⁴

Although climate, disease, and wild animals could make the Matina Valley a dangerous place, the greatest threat by far came from humans – more specifically, from the foreign attackers who frequented Matina’s shores from the mid-seventeenth century.³⁵ By the 1690s the Miskitu Zambos of Nicaragua and Honduras, newly allied with the British, began to attack Matina. The Miskitus preferred to sack the valley at the time of the cacao harvest, when they could make off with cacao as well as prisoners.³⁶ On several occasions, Miskitus kidnapped African slaves as well as free mulatos and Spaniards and took them to their territories to the north. Manuel García, for example, a slave whom Manuel García de Argueta had named after himself and whose fate Diego surely knew, was kidnapped by the Miskitus from one of his master’s cacao *haciendas* about 1703.³⁷ Especially because of the threat of military attack and also because of their hunger for domestic servants, Costa Rican masters rarely if ever sent female slaves to Matina – a fact that had crucial consequences – preventing the development of slave families, communities, and culture. Free women, on the other hand, were free to travel to the Caribbean region, and some began relationships with enslaved men. At some point during these years, Diego met Ana González del Camino. The two had a son, Manuel Cayetano, who took his father’s surname (García) although his parents never married.³⁸

Safer and more comfortable in the temperate Central Valley, *hacendados* generally left day-to-day operations in the hands of their male slaves. Only once or twice a year did ‘some of the masters’ come to supervise the harvest, traditionally around Christmas and the festival of Saint John the Baptist in June, usually staying from two to three weeks. In 1744, Luis Díez Navarro reported to the Captain General of Guatemala that in the Caribbean lowlands near the Matina and Barbilla rivers, two or three black slaves lived year-round on cacao *haciendas* in thatch-covered huts. According to Díez Navarro, Central Valley masters left the slaves to cultivate, harvest, and transport the cacao to

Cartago. Bishop Pedro Morel de Santa Cruz confirmed in 1751 that the cacao planters came to Matina ‘only a few days’ a year, leaving the *haciendas* in the care of their black slaves in the interim.³⁹ After building their own homes and managing the cacao *haciendas* in every way, slave men understandably felt a sense of proprietorship and regarded the semiannual visits of the *hacendados* as unwelcome intrusions.⁴⁰

The choice of Spaniards not to live in the Atlantic zone had important implications not only for the cacao industry, but for the defense of the entire province. As elsewhere in Caribbean Central America free mulato militias made up the bulk of military forces in Matina.⁴¹ But exceptionally, in Matina slaves were also regularly mobilized for service. When don Manuel Antonio de Arlegui reviewed the militiamen of Matina in January 1719, twenty-one slaves stood among them. Eight of them, including Diego and his fellow slave of Manuel García de Argueta, *congo* Felipe Cubero, carried guns – their ‘own arms’, the roster specified – and thirteen, including Diego’s longtime companion Carlos and *mina* Antonio García, carried lances. Slaves were better armed than their free counterparts in all respects: of the 120 free men mustered in Matina, thirty had firearms, sixty-one carried lances, and two wielded machetes. More than one-fifth of the men (twenty-six) reported for review with no arms of any kind.⁴² Several of the enslaved African men whom Diego knew were captured by the Miskitu Zambos in 1724 and taken as slaves to the north.⁴³

Slave men in Matina developed a powerful sense of independence. They provided the first line of defense against the Miskitus and other invaders. Unlike female slaves and others in Costa Rica, they rarely had to confront their masters directly. They met all their needs themselves and built their own houses, roofing them with palm thatch. Plantains, ‘which serve in place of bread’, formed the most important part of their diet.⁴⁴ Fruits such as oranges, avocados, and *zapotes* added variety and nutrients.⁴⁵ Rice provided another staple. Men like Diego and Antonio Cabo Verde, another slave of Manuel García who shared Diego’s regional origin in West Africa, likely brought Old-World experience to the cultivation of the crop. In precolonial Guinea-Bissau, rice provided the dietary staple, and it was grown in the Cape Verde Islands as well.⁴⁶ Slave men also hunted – in 1721, don Diego de Barros y Carbajal complained that ‘my negro is asking for’ his shotgun, which was being repaired – and fished the nearby rivers.⁴⁷ Every year, the sea turtles that came to lay their eggs on the beaches provided another important source of meat.⁴⁸ From the slaves’ perspective, life in Matina meant a mostly independent lifestyle, which in many respects compared favourably to that of free peasants. After meeting their own subsistence needs, some slaves accumulated a surplus of foods to sell to others in the valley. Antonio Cabo Verde farmed rice successfully enough to sell some to free people in the area.

He also raised and sold chickens and pigs.⁴⁹ Most importantly, however, slaves raised and sold cacao for their masters – and for themselves.

Masters relied largely on enslaved overseers (*mandadores*) to administer their Matina *haciendas*, and eventually Manuel García de Argueta appointed Diego as *mandador* over the other slave men on one of his *haciendas*. Most often, drivers were Africans as were the men they supervised. Masters employed overseers to maximize cacao production, and drivers like Diego exercised authority over other slaves. For example, Antonio Cabo Verde purchased a mule from Juan Masís in 1718, but only after securing Diego's permission.⁵⁰

Slave men managed all stages in the cultivation, processing, and sometimes sale of cacao, the colony's most important export. They found their independence increased by a circumstance particular to Costa Rica, where a chronic silver shortage led to the adoption of cacao as legal currency in 1709.⁵¹ Each *zurrón*, a leather bag weighing about 214 lb (97 kg), was valued at twenty-five pesos in cacao. Cacao pesos were officially worth two-thirds of silver pesos, thus the value of a *zurrón* ostensibly equalled slightly more than sixteen pesos five reales in silver. Buyers, sellers, and appraisers, however, frequently negotiated their own values and might accept cacao pesos at just half the value of silver ones.⁵² In any case, enslaved men had as easy access to cacao, and therefore money, as anyone in Costa Rica.

Because land in Matina was fully available, many slave men took the opportunity to plant and cultivate their own cacao groves. Some masters allowed this activity, provided the slaves cultivated their plantings only 'on feast days and without missing other days in the service of their masters'.⁵³ Other slaves made secret plantings or appropriated some of the cacao they grew themselves without bothering to secure anyone else's permission. Cacao enabled slaves to purchase needed items from merchants or smugglers, and increasingly in the eighteenth century, to purchase their own freedom. Enslaved men in Matina had several advantages over slave men elsewhere in Costa Rica and even over some of the free poor. Although they and all their property technically belonged to their masters, for all intents and purposes African men in Matina lived in their own homes and grew provisions on their own land, just as free peasants did. They exercised much greater independence than slaves or free servants who lived closer to their masters. With cacao money, slave men in Matina furnished their modest homes with goods such as iron pots and coveted European cloth which they bought from the smugglers who frequented the coast. For example, Antonio Mina, an African from the Gold Coast or Upper Slave Coast and like Domingo an enslaved *mandador* on one of Manuel García de Argueta's *haciendas*, was accused of trading tobacco to the Miskitus for iron goods in 1721.⁵⁴ Most important, cacao could provide the means to freedom itself, and ultimately a path to financial and social advancement. Ramón Durán, a *cabo verde* like Diego, purchased his own freedom for eight *zurrones* of cacao (about 777 kg or 1,712 lb), worth a total of 200 pesos in 1725.⁵⁵ After

working and saving for decades with the help of his free sons Juan Manuel and Gaspar, *congo* Diego de Angulo succeeded in purchasing his freedom in 1730 for 375 pesos in cacao (about 1,456 kg or 3,210 lb), a grossly inflated price considering that he was about 60 years old by then.⁵⁶

All of the advantages related to residence in Matina were closed to slave women. Largely because of the threat of military attack, Cartago masters rarely, if ever, sent their female slaves to Matina. As a result, Matina slave men saw slave women only on occasional visits to the capital. Even then masters tended to confine female slaves to their homes as domestic servants, subjecting them to heightened vigilance and curtailing their opportunities to pursue outside relationships. For these reasons – and even more importantly, because of the dreadful certainty that a couple’s children would be born in slavery – enslaved women rarely married. Enslaved men faced fewer restrictions. Although they married legally relatively infrequently, they did so ten times as often as enslaved women. In Costa Rica no formal obstacles prevented marriage between slaves and free persons. Of seventy-two marriages of slave men recorded in Cartago parish registers between 1670 and 1750, a full sixty-six (92 percent) – including Diego’s – were to free women.⁵⁷ With marriage to free women a viable option, slave men almost never married slave women. (One of the few who did was Diego’s fellow *mandador* Antonio García, who married the slave Agustina de Ibarra in 1733.)⁵⁸

Carlos, the *arará* man with whom Diego had worked as a fellow slave since around the turn of the eighteenth century, married Josefa de Rojas, an indigenous widow, in October 1715. Their son, Manuel Nicolás, was born free but listed as a tributary Indian when he was baptized in 1720. (He almost certainly lived with his mother in San Juan de Herrera de los Laboríos, the neighborhood of indigenous servants adjacent to Cartago.)⁵⁹ Diego himself married twice, both times to free women. His first wife was Ana Santiago, likely the same Ana Santiago who was the mestiza widow of Mateo Gutiérrez Zapata and the mother of a grown daughter who married in 1707. Diego’s wife in ‘second nuptials’ was Manuela Gutiérrez, of uncertain ethnicity but free legal status.⁶⁰ The women who married enslaved men were free mulatas, Indians, and mestizas in that order.⁶¹ Race and ethnicity mattered on Costa Rica’s ‘marriage market’, but for the women who married slave men, other factors proved more important. Poor, often illegitimate, and including a number of widows, the free women who married slaves generally counted on few resources of their own. When Diego composed his will in 1743, he stated plainly, ‘The said two women brought nothing at all to my possession’.⁶² For free women with few other marriage options, enslaved men living in Matina must have seemed viable marriage partners. Free wives must have seen a promise in their husbands that mitigated the men’s slave status.

In Costa Rica’s diversified, small-scale economy, there was little specialization of labour. Enslaved women of African descent worked at activities such

as farming, and perhaps sold produce, in addition to caring for the homes and families of their owners in Cartago or (less frequently) the Pacific region. Slave men were usually ‘jacks of all trades’, working at whatever task presented itself. It was not unusual for an enslaved man to shuttle all over Costa Rica, for example, between his master’s home in Cartago to a country estate outside the capital, to a cattle ranch in the North Pacific Bagaces Valley or a mule ranch in Barva, and a cacao *hacienda* in Matina. Geographical movement guaranteed that slave men especially developed varied work skills and encountered a broad range of people. Not infrequently, slave men even travelled outside the province – whether with their masters, as Diego did when he went to Nicaragua with don Miguel de Alvarado in March 1725 – or on their own, as mulato slave José Cubero did when he drove his master’s mule train to Panama and Nicaragua many times in the early eighteenth century.⁶³ As one Nicoya master wrote in 1703, ‘there is nothing new in the rush of mulatos and blacks, free and slave, who go from one province to another in the service of their masters’.⁶⁴ Male slaves went to work wherever their masters sent them. The work of enslaved men demanded that they be given broad freedom of movement.

Cacao planters constantly tried to expand their holdings, relying on their slaves to occupy and improve new areas of unclaimed land. Sometime in 1713 or 1714, Diego remembered, he and Manuel García de Argueta’s other slaves were clearing trees for a new cacao grove at a place he called Turrubales, not far from the indigenous pueblo of Pacaca. In circumstances Diego did not specify, he befriended a local indigenous man, who made a gift to him of a solid-gold disc (*tejo*) weighing approximately three to four pounds. The Indian told Diego explicitly that he was giving him the gold so that Diego could use it to purchase his freedom from his master. According to Diego, one Miguel González learned of his windfall and offered to trade him his small livestock ranch (*hato*) and a mare for breeding mules in exchange for the disc. ‘[That’s] crazy!’ Diego had exclaimed. ‘I [am] going to liberate myself with it and what [is] left over I would give [you] for nothing’. Diego gave the disc to González, asking him to intercede with his master on his behalf, and believing González to be ‘an honourable man. After I gave it to him and he received it, I experienced the contrary’, Diego recalled bitterly. González kept the gold for himself. When Diego’s master Manuel García learned of the swindle, he took González to court, filing suit before Judge (*Alcalde Ordinario*) Sergeant Major don Pedro Sáenz. Diego was certain that Sáenz had obliged González to turn over the gold to García, but García never freed him.⁶⁵ For what must have been several tense years, Diego bided his time.

A couple of years later, in 1717, professional miner Captain don Diego de Lamas came to Costa Rica searching for gold in the valleys west of Cartago. Somehow Lamas learned of the gold disc that the anonymous Indian had given Diego years before, and pulled Diego aside to offer him a deal. Lamas promised Diego his freedom in exchange for divulging the source of the

gold. When Diego told Lamas that he did not know and that the indigenous man who had given him the disc was now dead, Lamas proposed that Diego prevail upon the man's widow to tell Diego, 'out of friendship', where her husband had excavated the gold. To sweeten the deal, Lamas gave Diego 'two yards of *bayeta*, two "legs" of blankets, and four pesos in cacao' with which to bribe the woman for the information. Diego took the goods to María de la Cruz. She said she knew nothing, however, about any gold or its origins. Diego left her with a gift nevertheless, she said – of a single blanket and one peso in cacao.⁶⁶

The setback did not deter Diego and Lamas. Cutting Manuel García de Argueta in on the deal, the three devised a remarkable plan. Surely it was Diego who insisted on a written legal agreement to formalize the arrangement. On 3 August 1717 Lamas and García notarized a contract that amounted to a grant of conditional manumission for Diego. Recalling that he had purchased Diego for 400 pesos, García now promised that, Diego having fulfilled certain conditions, he would give Diego half that amount toward the purchase of his freedom. Lamas would contribute the other 200 pesos so that Diego could satisfy the price of his purchase and pay for his own freedom. For all this to happen,

... said black man Diego must go to explore and reconnoiter all the hills, swamps, and streams that there are from Limón Creek, which is near the pueblo of Pacaca, to the Turrubales River, which makes a junction with the Río Grande, and all the areas that there are from said Limón Creek to Diablo Creek, which is [also] called by another name Jesús María, tributaries of the Río Grande, to the junction of the Turrubales, and from the junction of the two rivers, following along said junction to all the places that may be found, on one and the other bank of said Turrubales River, with a complete circumambulation of the Cerro del Gallo, four leagues around, of which I don Diego de Lamas have traditions and indications ...

If Diego found gold, he would gain freed his freedom,

and if the said black man does not discover anything and if I said don Diego because of the expertise that I have in this Art of Mining and recognition of deposits and metals make the discovery referred to, he must enjoy his freedom as if he himself had discovered it or pointed it out.

Nor would Diego's good fortune end there. 'And furthermore', Lamas continued, 'I pledge with what I discover to help him and give him the wherewithal to maintain himself during [all] the days of his life'.⁶⁷

Lamas's 'indications' described a considerable area of what is now the Canton of Turrubares in the Province of San José. Crisscrossed by the crocodile-infested Río Tárcoles and its tributaries, much of it is remote even today, the least populated canton in Costa Rica. This mountainous area had long been rumoured to hold rich gold mines, but little of the precious mineral had been discovered so far.

Nor did Diego or Lamas find any more. Lamas left Cartago and Diego returned to his master's cacao *haciendas* in Matina. Diego came to believe that the deal he had struck with Manuel García and Diego de Lamas was a scam in which 'from greed [García] tried to take from me, giving me to understand that they were giving me my freedom'. Although it is not clear why he waited so long, in 1721 Diego petitioned don Diego de la Haya Fernández, governor of Costa Rica, asking him to force Manuel García de Argueta to grant him his liberty. Although García had always denied it, Diego was certain that García still had the gold disc that the Indian had given Diego almost a decade before. He had been told so by a string of individuals that he now asked the governor to call as witnesses to the fact.⁶⁸

Sergeant Major don Pedro José Sáenz remembered that when he had served as judge (*alcalde ordinario*) back in 1715 and 1716, he had received a petition from Manuel García, requesting his help in securing the return of a gold disc from Miguel González. Because González was an active military officer at the time, Sáenz had been unable to pursue the case, and Sáenz had kept the matter secret ever since.⁶⁹ Matías Masís, one of Cartago's two blacksmiths, now cleared up the mystery of the gold's fate. He recalled that about five years earlier, Miguel González had arrived at his home one night and secretly brought him a stone to examine. Planning to cheat the King of the royal *quinto* (one-fifth of any gold discovered in his realms), González had urged Masís to keep the secret of his windfall 'because of the friendship he professed for him'. With González at his side nagging greedily, 'Tell me, man, tell me what gold there is in this, tell me the truth!' Masís passed the stone through a flame. The pair watched breathlessly as it disappeared in 'foul-smelling smoke and sparks'. González's dreams of riches – and later, Diego's dream of freedom – wilted when Masís told him that 'as far as I know, it's just a rock'.⁷⁰

On 2 May 1721, Diego married his second wife, Manuela Gutiérrez.⁷¹ We know little with certainty about their relationship, but it is plausible that Manuela exercised a strong influence on Diego, spurring him to work even harder toward gaining freedom. It was about three months after their wedding that Diego filed suit against Manuel García de Argueta, and even before the wedding Manuela had begun to recruit family members to help Diego in his quest for freedom. Although myriad individual circumstances influenced the decision to marry, for enslaved men, marriage to free women could form part of a long-term strategy to acquire freedom. Diego succeeded in persuading Manuel García de Argueta to allow him to pursue his own outside business interests, as long as he did not neglect the cultivation of García's *haciendas*. With García's permission, Diego leased a cacao *hacienda* in the Barbilla Valley from Juan González for fifty pesos in cacao per year. A relative of Diego's wife, González leased the property 'more out of love than for the two *zurrones* each year', because he 'loved him as if the said Diego were his father'. Unable to care for the *hacienda* personally because he had to

attend Manuel García's estates, Diego entrusted its cultivation to a local free mulato, Agustín de la Riva, in return for a year's harvest.⁷² De la Riva's stewardship proved so profitable to Diego that not only did he meet his obligations to González, but also with a surplus of 'many *zurrone*s of cacao', lent money to Francisco Morales, the Spanish Captain of the Matina Valley.⁷³ Of course, such men hoped ultimately to raise enough cacao on their own account to purchase freedom from their masters. Ironically, Diego could pursue his economic activities only with the consent of his master, with whom he had a sometimes fraught relationship. And even with the help of free family members, it often took decades to amass the cacao necessary to buy freedom. Diego never did succeed in buying his freedom from Manuel García de Argueta, although he served him as a slave for seventeen years, and did not obtain his freedom until more than a decade after that.

A few months after Diego brought his unsuccessful lawsuit against his master, Manuel García de Argueta exchanged him with doña Nicolasa Guerrero for another slave, the Yoruba Felipe, in February 1722.⁷⁴ This was the first of five sales and transfers that thrust Diego from one owner to another over the next fifteen years or so. Diego worked at doña Nicolasa's sugar compound near Ujarrás for a little more than a year, when she exchanged Diego with Captain Miguel de Alvarado for a young mulata woman, María Josefa, 18, in June 1723. By this time, Diego was about 42.⁷⁵

As a slave of don Miguel de Alvarado, Diego returned to the familiar cacao *haciendas*, where he continued his long practice of growing cacao and trying to negotiate a price for his freedom. After serving don Miguel de Alvarado and his wife doña María de Torres for nearly three years, he succeeded in convincing his masters to free him for 400 pesos – the same high price for which he had been sold twenty-one years earlier, when he was a young man of 24. In May 1726 the couple sold Diego to partners Captain don Juan Antonio de Villarevia and don Pedro González León for 275 pesos, 'although we should sell him for 400 pesos in said cacao', they claimed

Said black man has given us five *zurrone*s on account, hoping to free himself; for which reason we sell him for 11 *zurrone*s of cacao [worth 275 pesos], on the condition that when he gives them to his said masters [Villarevia and González León], they will give him [his] letter of freedom ...⁷⁶

For reasons unknown to us, in February 1727, don Juan Antonio Villarevia sold Diego for just 150 pesos to Father José de Chávez, a priest in the indigenous pueblo of Curridabat.⁷⁷ This sale was not like the preceding one, because after one year Father Chávez sold Diego at a profit to Sergeant Major don Pedro de Alvarado y Girón for 210 pesos.⁷⁸ At some point in the next decade, Diego was sold or otherwise transferred to don Antonio Pacheco. Unfortunately we know nothing about how this transfer was effected, but the two had had a long-term and unusual relationship. Pacheco had acted as

Diego's benefactor many years before, when he helped Diego file his case against Manuel García de Argueta in 1721.⁷⁹ Diego next appears in the documents when he was listed in the will of Sergeant Major José Felipe Bermúdez in 1738. Bermúdez noted that he had promised Diego his freedom in exchange for cultivating a cacao grove. Bermúdez referred in the will to a written contract containing the specific conditions of the arrangement, which unfortunately has not been located.⁸⁰

Whatever the exact stipulations might have been, Diego's agreement with Bermúdez fit a pattern that was well-established by the late 1730s. In that decade and the next Cartago notarial records reflect a mini-wave of self-purchased manumissions. More research is needed on the subject, but a reasonable explanation for the trend would be that some combination of soil exhaustion or other environmental causes, low cacao prices, and high slave prices had made cacao cultivation much less viable economically by then.⁸¹ Such factors would explain a discernible drive by cacao planters to expand production at this time as well as their growing willingness to part with their slaves – for a price. Enslaved men had long been negotiating agreements with their masters to purchase their freedom in exchange for cacao. By the 1730s, in addition to a fixed payment, slave men increasingly agreed to plant new groves for their masters as well as caring for those already in production. Such agreements resembled the practice of *arrendamiento*, a sharecropping arrangement whereby a renter agreed to pay a portion of the cacao harvest to the landowner. Obviously, this arrangement benefited the landowner as much as the contractor.⁸² For example, Juan Román, a black slave nearly sixty years old in 1733, enlisted the help of his free son, José Nicolás, to cultivate a grove of 500 trees adjoining the groves of his master, Captain Francisco Gutiérrez. Juan ultimately sold the new grove to his master in exchange for his freedom.⁸³ In the case of an aging slave such as Juan Román, a master improved his landholdings at the same time as he recouped much of his initial investment in slave property.

Also in 1733, Gregorio Caamaño, an enslaved *arara* man who had once been a slave of Diego's first mistress, doña Agueda Pérez de Muro, struck a similar bargain with his current master, don Tomás López del Corral. In exchange for Gregorio's promise to plant a new cacao grove of 5,000 trees for him, López del Corral promised to free Gregorio immediately.⁸⁴ Antonio de Rivas (sometimes known as Antonio de la Riva), a *mina* from the Gold Coast who had arrived in Costa Rica on the Danish slave ship *Christianus Quintus* in 1710, contracted such an arrangement with his master and mistress, Captain don Juan José de Cuende and doña Manuela de Ibarra, in 1737. Antonio promised to care for the couple's existing cacao *hacienda* of 1,500 trees and to plant and raise to fruition an additional 500. 'And believing that our said slave will not fall short in anything that is contracted', they continued, 'we have agreed to give him his letter of freedom from this day forward'.⁸⁵ Although Antonio might have lived much like a free man after 1737, he did not in fact gain his

legal freedom until June 1745, when he turned over not only the 2,000 trees previously agreed upon, but an additional 500 trees ‘of his spontaneous will’.⁸⁶ Since details of such manumissions were recorded only in unusual circumstances (above all, when slaves insisted on a written record of the terms), we can assume that there were more – perhaps many more – informal arrangements between masters and enslaved men that were never notarized.

After gaining their freedom, several former slaves bought homes in Cartago but maintained cacao *haciendas* in the Caribbean region, something like the masters who had once owned them, and came to acquire modest fortunes. These included Nicolás Barrantes, a mulato who purchased his freedom from Captain don Nicolás de Guevara for 300 pesos in 1719 at age 36.⁸⁷ By the time he composed his first will in 1745, Nicolás owned a home in Cartago and another, smaller house on the outskirts of the city. He had a cacao *hacienda* in Matina of 400 trees in production and 1,200 more that were beginning to bear fruit. Near Cartago he owned 16 mules, 40 horses, and 54 head of cattle. ‘I declare that I do not owe any person any quantity’, he declared proudly, ‘except for 5 pesos in produce that Baltazar Fernández has given me on account for one *zurrón* of cacao’.⁸⁸ Diego Angulo was a Kongo-born ex-slave who paid for his own freedom in 1730 after exactly three decades of working the *haciendas* of his master, a priest. Between the time he gained his freedom and his death in 1745, Diego Angulo had built a considerable legacy of 3,008 pesos to leave to his family, including a cacao *hacienda* of 1,265 trees, five mules, a home in Cartago, and two adjacent vacant lots. (By contrast, doña Agueda Pérez de Muro, Diego García’s first mistress and one of the richest women in Costa Rica, brought property worth 10,447 pesos in cacao to her second marriage in 1722).⁸⁹

Diego García won his freedom sometime in the last six years of his life between 1738 and 1744. Sick in bed, Diego composed his testament on 30 December 1744, and from it we gain a look at the success he had achieved after four decades of struggle in slavery and freedom. He had been married twice, both times to free women and had a daughter, Ana Efigenia. Diego listed his property in Cartago as including ‘a house thatched with straw with a kitchen and fence made of *poró* wood in El Arrabal, with all the furnishings that there are in it’, which he left to his wife Manuela.

I declare that I have three young plantings (*rozás*) of cacao on the road from Barbilla to Matina, one seven years old, which it is likewise my will be awarded to my said wife ...; the other six years old, and it is my will that it be awarded as part of her inheritance to my said daughter.

These groves were old enough, or nearly old enough, to produce fruit, and would soon bring profits to their heirs. ‘It is my will that ... the other [grove], one year old, be awarded to Manuel Cayetano García who is now [working] in it, because of what he has ... given me in labour and for the

relief of my conscience'.⁹⁰ Diego did not mention it in his testament, but when he married two years after Diego's death, Manuel Cayetano revealed that he was Diego's son by the late Ana González del Camino, born out of wedlock.⁹¹ The house on Manuel Cayetano's grove was furnished with an ax and two machetes (one Diego's, one Manuel Cayetano's), six cowskins, and a basin – all the tools necessary to harvest and cure cacao, in addition to a grinding-stone for corn and a large pan for cooking. Diego also owned four horses, then in the care of Isidro Sandoval in the indigenous neighborhood of El Laborío near Cartago; one of these he designated for Manuel Cayetano, with its saddle and bit.⁹² Diego designated his daughter, Ana Efigenia, as his 'universal heir'.⁹³

Diego demonstrated a pronounced religiosity at the end of his life. Although slaves might be forced to conform to the religious inclinations of their masters, freedmen were under no obligation to observe more than minimum requirements such as annual communion at Easter. From that perspective, Diego's final actions displayed a fervent devotion to 'Holy Mother Church'. If Diego was a *crioulo* from the islands, he would have been a Catholic before deportation from his homeland. In his 1743 will he commended his soul, as was customary, to 'My Intercessor and Advocate, Queen of the Ages, Most Holy Mary, Mother of God and Our Lady'. He instructed that his body be interred in the Cartago parish church with a solemn burial service including a vigil and sung mass. Most significantly, he designated part of his legacy to establish a chaplaincy (*capellanía*) in his name, appointing don José Miguel de Guzmán y Echeverría to sing five masses per year for his soul and the rest of those in purgatory at a cost of two pesos each.⁹⁴ The following year Diego's executor presented receipts for the 29 pesos in cacao and 8 pesos in silver paid for his funeral, burial, shroud, wax candles, masses, and mandatory donations – a sum equal to the cost of a burro, a small house, or even an elderly slave. To establish the chaplaincy her husband had willed, Diego's widow Manuela Gutiérrez guaranteed it with a cacao *hacienda* and designated the rents paid on it in the future to finance the endowment 'perpetually and forever more'.⁹⁵ Diego passed away at 1 pm on 5 January 1744.⁹⁶

Diego García's biography demonstrates in microcosm several salient characteristics of slavery in Costa Rica at a pivotal time. Probably born in Guinea-Bissau or the Cape Verde Islands, Diego arrived in Costa Rica near the turn of the eighteenth century, at the peak of cacao production. The short-lived cacao boom allowed planters such as Diego's first master, don José de Casasola y Córdoba, to purchase African slaves from the Asiento in Panama and elsewhere. Higher profits motivated *hacienda* owners such as his second master, Manuel García de Argueta, to bring new lands under cultivation in places such as Pacaca. This work was done by enslaved men, who had to be allowed broad geographical movement in order to carry out the demands of production. Such movements brought them into contact with a broad range of people, such as the Indian man who gave Diego a large gold-colored disc in 1713 or 1714,

who was evidently moved to help the African-born slave buy his freedom. From such relationships and exchanges we know that Diego had assimilated the language, culture, legal norms, and customs of Costa Rica within about a decade of his arrival from Africa, possibly in part due to origins in Cape Verde.

Like other enslaved African men, Diego married a free woman (two, in fact) and was helped by her and his in-laws on the road to freedom. After many years, many masters, and growing many tons of cacao, Diego was finally freed, probably sometime around 1740. In the years he had left, he divided his time between his family in Cartago and his cacao *hacienda* on the road to Matina, amassing enough wealth to provide for the future of his widow and two children as well as his own soul.

Within a single generation, an African-born slave managed to free himself, establish himself as a local planter, and leave a small fortune to his wife and children. Nor was Diego García the only one. From the mid-eighteenth century the free population of African descent continued to rise as the enslaved population dropped sharply, in part due to the self-purchased manumissions of African-born men like Diego García, Diego Angulo, Gregorio Caamaño, and Antonio de Rivas. Mixed marriages – all of these men married free women – favoured the further integration of people of African descent into the broader creole culture.⁹⁷ Within a few generations, the descendants of Costa Rica's slaves disappeared as an identifiable group, becoming part of the majority mestizo population. Ironically, the cacao *haciendas* offered enslaved men opportunities for freedom and social mobility only because they were located in an unhealthy and dangerous place that Spaniards deemed fit only for blacks.

Notes

1. Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (hereafter, ANCR), Protocolos Coloniales de Cartago (hereafter, PC) 861, fols. 6–8 (26 Jan. 1705); ANCR, Complementario Colonial (hereafter, CC) 3798, fol. 2 (12 Feb. 1705).
2. ANCR, PC 882, fols. 86–88 (31 Aug. 1717).
3. ANCR, CC 4112, fol. 14v (11 Oct. 1721).
4. ANCR, PC 861, fols. 49v–61 (22 Sept. 1705).
5. Kent Russell Lohse, 'Africans and Their Descendants in Colonial Costa Rica, 1600–1750' (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2005), 59.
6. Georges Scelle, *La traite négrière aux Indes de Castille: Contrats et traités d'assiento*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1906), 2:1–105.
7. Russell Lohse, *Africans into Creoles: Slavery, Ethnicity, and Identity in Colonial Costa Rica* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 56–8, 60.
8. John K. Thornton has argued that this occurred in the case of West Central Africans; see 'Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns', *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 50, no. 4 (1993): 727–42.
9. Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 59. Ramón, sometimes called Raimundo, was a *cabo verde* slave owned by mulato militia captain José de Chavarria. ANCR, PC 877, fol. 37 (16 Feb. 1715); ANCR, Mortuales Coloniales de Cartago (hereafter, MCC) 733,

- fol. 14 (22 April 1720); ANCR, PC 898, fol. 21v (10 April 1725). Although she knew Ramón was a *cabo verde*, Chavarría's widow María Calvo described him as a creole when he ran away in Panama and she authorized an agent to apprehend him. ANCR, PC 891, fols. 26–27 (27 Nov. 1720); ANCR, PC 898, fol. 21v (10 April 1725). In a 1721 statement, Diego noted that he had visited Chavarría's home. ANCR, CC 4112, fol. 1v (13 Aug. 1721).
10. *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (website), <http://slavevoyages.org/voyages/OKQn9HZE> (1 Aug. 2017).
 11. Unfortunately, we lack any data on the length of the Atlantic crossings of these specific voyages.
 12. *Transatlantic Slave Trade Database* (website), <http://slavevoyages.org/voyages/OKQn9HZE> (21 Feb. 2021).
 13. For the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524–1650* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), 61–2. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin detail the process in Cartagena, Portobello, and Panama City in *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish South America in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007), 144–56, 188–95.
 14. Lohse, 'Africans and Their Descendants', 160; Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 79–80.
 15. Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 82.
 16. Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 90–2.
 17. Archivo General de Indias, Seville (hereafter, AGI), Contaduría 815, no. 1, fol. 92 (20 July 1683); Archivo de la Curia Metropolitana de San José (hereafter ACMSJ), Libros de Bautizos de Esparza (1706–1819)/Family History Library, Salt Lake City, UT (USA; hereafter, FHL), VAULT INTL film 1223548, item 5.
 18. León Fernández, *Historia de Costa Rica durante la dominación española, 1502–1821* (Madrid, 1889), 270–2; Raveneau de Lussan, *A Journal of a Voyage Made into the South Sea, by the Freebooters of America; from the Year 1684–1689* (London, 1698), 52–3, 61–2; AGI, Escribanía 353B, fol. 331v, 332 (29 Aug. 1719) (quoted).
 19. Eugenia Ibarra Rojas, *Las sociedades cacicales de Costa Rica (siglo XVI)* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 35; Claudia Quirós, *La era de la encomienda* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990), 232, tables 30–31, 33.
 20. 'Informe del Gobernador don Diego de la Haya Fernández a S.M. – Año de 1719', in *Colección de documentos para la historia de Costa Rica*, ed. León Fernández, 10 vols. (San José-Paris-Barcelona, 1881–1907), 5:481.
 21. Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 104.
 22. AGI, Contaduría 815, no. 1, fol. 92 (20 July 1683).
 23. ANCR, Cartago (hereafter, C) 83, fols. 3–18 (27 March 1691).
 24. AGI, Audiencia de Guatemala (hereafter, AG) 359, pieza 4, fol. 60v (20 June 1703).
 25. 'Informe del Gobernador don Diego', 5:478–9.
 26. Archivo General de Centro América, Guatemala City (hereafter, AGCA), A3.10, exp. 1179, no. 83 (6) (1702).
 27. *Bayeta* is a type of woolen cloth woven especially around Segovia in Castile, much used in ecclesiastical vestments and women's *mantillas* and relatively expensive at the official price of 25 *reales* per *vara* (roughly one yard). Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de autoridades*, 6 vols. (Madrid, 1726–1739), vol. 1, s.v. *bayeta*. AGI, Escribanía 353B, fol. 135 (8 Aug. 1719). Governor don Diego de la Haya described the clothing of Cartago's *señoras principales* in very similar terms. 'Informe del Gobernador don Diego', 5:482.

28. ANCR, PC 854, fol. 43 (23 Dec. 1700).
29. ACMSJ, Libros de Bautizos de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219701, item 3 (30 June 1705).
30. ACMSJ, Libros de Bautizos de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219701, item 3 (30 June 1705, 24 Aug. 1706).
31. Philip S. MacLeod, 'On the Edge of Empire: Costa Rica in the Colonial Era (1561–1800)' (PhD. diss., Tulane University, 1999), 262.
32. ANCR, PC 861, fols. 49v.–52 (22 Sept. 1705); PC 895, fol. 32v–35 (27 March 1722); ANCR, PC 896, fols. 66–68v (17 June 1723); ANCR, PC 899, fols. 45–46v (7 May 1726); ANCR, Protocolos Coloniales de Heredia 578, fols. 14v.–16v (27 Feb. 1727); ANCR, PC 901, fols. 10v.–12v (15 Feb. 1728). Kenneth Stampf made the phrase famous in *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956), chap. 3.
33. ANCR, PC 911, fols. 70–73v (17 Dec. 1734); ANCR, PC 851, fol. 38 (8 April 1698).
34. University of Texas at Austin, Benson Latin American Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Joaquín García Icazbalceta Collection, vol. 20, no. 7, fol. 58 (8 Sept. 1752).
35. 'Fragmentos del testimonio de los autos hechos con motivo de la invasión de la provincia de Costa Rica por los piratas Mansfelt y Henry Morgan en 1666', *Revista de los Archivos Nacionales* (Costa Rica) 1, nos. 1–2 (Nov.–Dec. 1936): 5–33; ANCR, C 85, fol. [14v] (22 Oct. 1691).
36. Germán Romero Vargas, *Las sociedades del atlántico de Nicaragua en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Managua: Fondo de Promoción Cultural-BANIC, 1995), 80.
37. Lohse, 'Africans and Their Descendants', 415.
38. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 4/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 10 (13 March 1746).
39. AGI, AG 359, pieza 1, fol. 10v (28 June 1703); 'Informe sobre la Provincia de Costa Rica presentado por el Ingeniero don Luis Díez Navarro al Capitán General de Guatemala don Tomás de Rivera y Santa Cruz. – Año de 1744', *Revista de los Archivos Nacionales* (Costa Rica) 3, nos. 11–12 (September–October 1939): 583 (quoted); University of Texas at Austin, Benson Latin American Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Joaquín García Icazbalceta Collection, vol. 20, no. 7, fol. 58 (quoted) (8 Sept. 1752).
40. Lohse, *Africans into Creoles*, 165.
41. Salvador Montoya, 'Milicias negras y mulatas en el reino de Guatemala, siglo XVIII', *Caravelle* (Toulouse, France), no. 49 (1987): 93–104; Paul Lokken, 'Undoing Racial Hierarchy: *Mulatos* and Militia Service in Colonial Guatemala', *SECOLAS Annals* 31 (1999): 25–36; Paul Lokken, 'Useful Enemies: Seventeenth-Century Piracy and the Rise of Pardo Militias in Spanish Central America', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 5, no. 2 (2004); Rina Cáceres, *Negros, mulatos, esclavos y libertos en la Costa Rica del siglo XVII* (Mexico City: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2000), 98–105.
42. ANCR, CC 3797, fols. 24v–27v (23 Jan. 1719).
43. ANCR, C 303, fol. 66v (1 May 1724).
44. AGCA, A2 (6), exp. 3, leg. 1, fol. 39v (22 April 1720).
45. ANCR, PC 910, fol. 8 (2 March 1733).
46. ANCR, CC 4292, fols. 20, 21v (27 Aug. 1733); ANCR, CC 4036, fol. 4v; Walter Hawthorne, 'Nourishing a Stateless Society during the Slave Trade: The Rise of Balanta Paddy-Rice Production in Guinea-Bissau', *Journal of African History* 42, no. 1 (March 2001): 1–24; Hawthorne, *Planting Rice and Harvesting Slaves*:

- Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau Coast, 1400–1900* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2003); T. Bentley Duncan, *The Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and Cabo Verde in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 167, 168.
47. ANCR, MCC 941, fol. 16 (16 July 1721).
 48. ANCR, C 211, fol. 13v (18 March 1717).
 49. ANCR, CC 4075, fol. 10v (1 Aug. 1719); ANCR, C 187, fol. 205 (28 June 1710).
 50. ANCR, CC 4075, fol. 36v (9 Sept. 1719).
 51. 'Pedimento del procurador síndico de Cartago al cabildo para que reciba el cacao como moneda en la compra de toda clases víveres y otros artículos de comercio. Año de 1703', *Revista de los Archivos Nacionales* (Costa Rica) 1, nos. 9–10 (July-Aug. 1937), 590–9; 'Se dispone que el cacao corra en la provincia de Costa Rica para la compra de víveres por no haber en ella moneda de plata. Año de 1709', *Revista de los Archivos Nacionales* (Costa Rica) 1, nos. 9–10 (July-Aug.), 600–3.
 52. ANCR, PC 844, fol. 2 (19 Nov. 1693); ANCR, PC 899, fol. 45v (7 May 1726).
 53. ANCR, CC 4292, fol. 16 (26 Aug. 1733).
 54. ANCR, CC 5805 (20 Nov. 1721).
 55. ANCR, PC 898, fols. 21–22v (10 April 1725).
 56. ANCR, CC 4259, fol. [2] (12 Sept. 1729); ANCR, PC 903, fols. 1v–4 (20 Feb. 1730).
 57. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, nos. 1–6, FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, items 6–10.
 58. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 8 (3 May 1733).
 59. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 8 (16 Aug. 1707, 2 Oct. 1715); ACMSJ, Libros de Bautizos de Cartago, no. 5/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219701, item 5.
 60. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 8 (2 May 1721); ANCR, PC 931, fols. 9–9v (30 Dec. 1743).
 61. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago nos. 1–6, FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, items 6–10.
 62. ANCR, PC 931, fol. 10 (30 December 1743).
 63. ANCR, CC 4148, fo. 5 (16 March 1725); Tatiana Lobo Wiehoff, 'José Cubero', in Lobo Wiehoff and Mauricio Meléndez Obando, *Negros y blancos: Todo mezclado* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997), 47–52; 'Documentos relativos a la población afroamericana', ed. Franklin José Alvarado Quesada, *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica), no. 39 (1999): 266–71.
 64. AGCA, A1.24 (6), exp. 10217, leg. 1573, fol. [496v] (26 Nov. 1703).
 65. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 1–1v (13 Aug. 1721).
 66. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 1v–2 (13 Aug. 1721); ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 7v–8 (3 Sept. 1721).
 67. ANCR, PC 882, fols. 86–87 (30 Aug. 1717).
 68. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 1–1v (13 Aug. 1721).
 69. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 4v–5 (1 Sept. 1721).
 70. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 6–6v (9 Sept. 1721).
 71. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 8 (2 May 1721).
 72. ANCR, CC 4148, fol. 1 (20 Nov. 1724); ANCR, CC 4148, fol. 2v (20 Nov. 1724, quoted); ANCR, CC 4148, fol. 4 (23 Nov. 1724).
 73. ANCR, CC 4148, fol. 4v (24 Nov. 1724).
 74. ANCR, PC 895, fols. 32v–35 (22 March 1722); Lohse, 'Africans in a Colony of Creoles', 142–3.

75. ANCR, PC 896, fols. 66–68v (17 June 1723).
76. ANCR, PC 899, fols. 45–46v (7 May 1726).
77. ANCR, Protocolos Coloniales de Heredia 578, fols. 14v–15v (27 Feb. 1727).
78. ANCR, PC 901, fols. 10v–12v (15 Feb. 1728).
79. ANCR, CC 4112, fols. 14–14v (11 Oct. 1721).
80. ANCR, PC 919, fol. 32 (17 March 1738).
81. Lowell's Gudmundson's landmark study did not find a clear relationship between slave prices and 'self-purchase', but perhaps considering other factors could enrich the analysis. Gudmundson, 'Mecanismos de movilidad social para la población de procedencia africana en Costa Rica colonial: Manumisión y mestizaje', in *Estratificación socio-racial y económica de Costa Rica, 1700–1850* (San José: EUNED, 1978), 40, 43.
82. E.g. ANCR, P.C. 885, fols. 41v–43v (23 March 1718); ANCR, P.C. 906, fols. 119v–120v (8 Oct. 1731); ANCR, P.C. 910, fols. 40v–42 (29 May 1733).
83. ANCR, CC 4292, fol. 1v (27 July 1733); ANCR, PC 910, fols. 70–73 (3 Oct. 1733).
84. ANCR, PC 910, fols. 7v–9 (2 March 1733).
85. ANCR, PC 916, fols. 166–167 (18 Sept. 1737).
86. ANCR, PC 933, fol. 55 (15 June 1745).
87. ANCR, PC 887, fols. 16v–17v (1 Feb. 1719).
88. ANCR, PC 933, fols. 41v–42v (30 April 1745).
89. ANCR, MCC 462, fols. 1–1v (10 Nov. 1745), fol. 3v (Feb. 1746); ANCR, PC 895, fol. 52 (16 April 1722).
90. ANCR, PC 931, fol. 9v (30 Dec. 1743).
91. ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 4/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 10 (13 March 1746).
92. ANCR, PC 931, fols. 9v–10 (30 Dec. 1743).
93. ANCR, PC 931, fols. 10, 10v (30 Dec. 1743).
94. ANCR, P.C. 931, fols. 9 (quoted), 10 (30 Dec. 1743); ANCR, PC 931, fol. 83v (26 Aug. 1744).
95. ANCR, PC 931, fols. 81v–84, quoting fol. 83v (26 Aug. 1744); ACMSJ, Sección Cofradías, Serie Cartago, Libro 16, fol. [93v] (29 Oct. 1737; burro valued at 30 pesos); ANCR, PC 889, fols. 53–53v (25 Sept. 1719; house valued at 30 pesos); ANCR, MCC 797, fol. 94 (22 July 1746; slave José valued at 30 pesos).
96. ANCR, PC 931, fol. 6 (5 Jan. 1744).
97. ANCR, PC 931, fol. 9v (30 Dec. 1743, García); ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 3/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 8 (21 June 1707) (Caamaño); 16 Oct. 1709 (Angulo); 2 May 1721 (García); ACMSJ, Libros de Matrimonios de Cartago, no. 4/FHL, VAULT INTL film 1219727, item 10 (18 April 1747) (De la Riva).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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