

**‘UNDER THE COLOMBIAN FLAG’:
NATION-BUILDING ON SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE ISLANDS, 1886-1930**

by

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Under the Colombian Flag examines the Colombian state’s efforts to incorporate the Afro-Caribbean English-speaking Protestant islanders of San Andrés and Providence into the Spanish-speaking Catholic nation. The project analyzes how those cultural struggles and political negotiations shaped the Colombian nation-building process. I illustrate how Colombian political elites largely spoke of islanders’ ethnic differences in terms of cultural attributes such as language, religion, and customs. In their minds, these characteristics were malleable. The Colombian nation-builders’ project thus ignored North American and European pseudo-scientific understandings of race in order to incorporate ethnically and racially diverse populations into their homogenizing agenda, which promoted the Spanish language, Hispanic culture, Roman Catholicism, gendered notions of morality, and racial views of health and modernity. San Andrés and Providence islanders had a different understanding of racial and national identities. They tended to formulate their Colombian identity in terms of loyalty, reciprocity, and rights. My work contributes to the growing body of historical scholarship on race and nation-building in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as scholarship investigating the experiences of black communities in the Atlantic world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	VII
ABBREVIATIONS.....	XII
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 AFRO-COLOMBIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY.....	7
1.3 SOURCES AND METHODS	11
2.0 A PORTRAIT OF SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE ISLANDS.....	16
2.1 PURITAN COLONIZATION OF PROVIDENCE ISLAND, 1630-1641	16
2.2 THE RESETTLEMENT OF SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE ISLANDS.....	20
2.3 ENGLISH SUBJECTS UNDER SPANISH RULE	23
2.4 FROM SPANISH SUBJECTS TO GRAN COLOMBIANS	28
2.5 THE END OF SLAVERY.....	32
2.6 FROM COTTON TO COCONUTS	35
2.7 SOCIAL RELATIONS ON SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE	41
2.8 CONCLUSION	46
3.0 THE PROVINCE OF PROVIDENCE, 1887-1912.....	48
3.1 DEPARTMENTAL RULE.....	49
3.2 FEDERAL INTERVENTION.....	59

3.3	ELITE MOBILIZATION	67
3.4	REPERCUSSIONS.....	73
3.5	CONCLUSION	83
4.0	THE INTENDANCY, 1913-1930.....	85
4.1	THE NATIONAL AGENDA	86
4.2	THE COCONUT CRISIS	96
4.3	POWER STRUGGLES.....	103
4.4	SUBJECTS OR CITIZENS?	112
5.0	THE CULTURAL INCORPORATION OF THE ISLANDS, 1913-1930	118
5.1	THE CHALLENGE	118
5.2	THE CATHOLIC MISSION.....	124
5.3	EDUCATION.....	142
5.4	CONCLUSION	152
	CONCLUSION	155
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	165

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for me to complete this project. I thank him for his patience. Finally, I must thank my son, Yoshua, who helped me to just get the dissertation done!

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Archivo del Congreso
AGN	Archivo General de la Nación
AHC	Archivo Histórico de Cartagena
BBR	Banco de la República, Centro de Documentación, San Andrés
BLAA	Biblioteca Luís Ángel Arango
BNC	Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia
CC	Casa de la Cultura, San Andrés

1.0 INTRODUCTION

San Andrés and its sister island Providence form a small archipelago in the western Caribbean that jurisdictionally belongs to the Republic of Colombia. Initially colonized by English Puritans in the 1600s, the islands became a Spanish, and later a Colombian, possession. By the late twentieth century, however, San Andrés and Providence islanders contested this national affiliation and identity. These contestations occasionally erupted onto the pages of the local, national, and even the foreign press. Present-day newspaper accounts often tell a story of conflict depicting the English-speaking, black and largely Protestant population of San Andrés and Providence as victims of an oppressive Spanish-speaking, Catholic nation.¹ While these reports grab the attention of foreigners like me, they also raise several questions. Is this story of conflict the complete picture? Are islanders not “real” Colombians, and when did this notion emerge? How have islanders responded over time to their status as Colombian nationals and citizens?

¹ Simon Romero, “Talk of Independence in a Place Claimed By 2 Nations,” *New York Times*, 1 February 2008; “San Andrés es y seguirá siendo de Colombia,” *El Tiempo*, 13 December 2007; Chris Kraul, “Border Tensions Rise in Central and South America,” *Los Angeles Times*, 17 September 2007; Peter Espeut, “A Jamaican Outpost,” *Jamaican Gleaner*, 13 September 2006; “Trouble in Paradise,” *The Guardian*, 10 June 2002; “El Grito de los Raizales,” *El Tiempo*, 29 July 1999; Alfonso López Michelsen, “San Andrés y Providencia. El Problema no es limítrofe,” *El Tiempo*, 26 September 1999; James Brooke, “San Andres Journal; On English-speaking Isle, Tidal Wave of Spanish,” *New York Times*, 1 July 1991; Armando Neira y Arquimedes Suárez, “Se integra la otra Colombia,” *El Tiempo*, 5 July 1991.

This dissertation shows how islanders' attempts to insert themselves into national politics have a long and rich history, first under departmental rule (1887-1912) and then under federal rule (1913-1991). My study examines that period, concentrating on the nation-building project implemented on the islands between 1870 and 1930. I show how federal authorities proposed to incorporate the islands into the Colombian nation, and how their proposals were then carried out in practice. In particular, I focus on the interactions between islanders and state officials, and trace their challenging relationships over time. In doing so, I seek to understand the nature of islander politics and their impacts on the nation.

Four central questions guide this dissertation. First, how did the Colombian state envision the incorporation of these Caribbean islands? Second, what specific policies were employed, how were they implemented, and with what consequences? Third, how did San Andrés and Providence islanders address Colombian authorities' efforts to incorporate them? Fourth and finally, in what ways did islanders define and articulate their collective interests? Did they present themselves as "Colombians"? What did a Colombian national identity mean to them? By answering these questions, my study seeks to offer a more complex understanding of the islands' relationship with Colombia by moving the discussion beyond a story of conflict. I describe and explain moments when islanders acquiesced in and appropriated, as well as opposed and resisted, the national agenda for San Andrés and Providence Islands.

This dissertation has two central arguments. I contend that late 19th- and early 20th- century political actors largely spoke of islanders as ethnically distinctive from mainland Colombians by focusing on cultural attributes like their English language, Protestant religion, and Anglophone Caribbean culture. Colombian elites portrayed San Andrés and Providence islanders as outside the nation due to the island population's inability to speak Spanish and non-

adherence to Roman Catholicism. This cultural gulf alarmed politicians and intellectuals, though both believed the situation could be corrected. In their minds, these characteristics were malleable. Perhaps this ideological view partially explains Colombian elites' refusal to comment on or speak of islanders' Afro-Caribbean ancestry or their blackness. The only way islanders could participate as Colombian citizens was through the adoption of Hispanic customs and language and the Catholic religion. Colombian nation-builders thus ignored European and North American pseudo-scientific understandings of race in order to incorporate their ethnically and racially diverse population into their homogenizing agenda.

I argue that this impetus for the remaking of the national image crystallized as a state agenda in the years after Panamanian secession in 1903. The scarce literature on this topic understands Colombian policy towards the islands in the context of struggles with Nicaragua over territorial and maritime rights.² Historians have overlooked the impact that the Panamanian secession had on Colombia's view of the islands.³ In contrast, I argue San Andrés and Providence islanders had a different understanding of racial and national identities. They tended to formulate their Colombian identity in terms of loyalty, reciprocity, and rights, while maintaining their Anglo-Caribbean heritage. Hence, islanders rejected the notion of a shared common culture as fundamental to the formation of a national body.

² César Bonilla Moyano, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia. Estudio-histórico-jurídico a la luz del derecho internacional* (Bogotá: Editorio Temis, 1983); David Uribe Vargas, *El Meridiano 82. Frontera marítima entre Colombia y Nicaragua* (Bogotá: Universidad de Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 1999); Juan Carlos Eastman Arango, "Colombia y el Archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia, 1910-1920: un encuentro detrás de los Estados Unidos," *Boletín Historia Santafé de Bogotá* 8 (1991):15-16:55-68; Juan Carlos Eastman Arango, "Creación de la Intendencia de San Andrés y Providencia: la cuestión nacional en sus primeros años," *Revista Credencial Historia* 36 (1992). Digital publication found at <http://www.lablaa.org/blaavirtual/revistas/credencial/diciembre1992/diciembre2.htm>.

³ One exception is Joseph Arbena, "Colombian Reactions to the Independence of Panama, 1903-1904," *The Americas* 33:1 (1976): 130-148. A Colombian historian offers an explanation of the nation's indifference towards Panamá; see Alfonso Múnera, "Panamá: ¿La última frontera?," *Fronteras imaginadas: La construcción de las razas y de la geografía en el siglo XIX colombiano* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2005), 89-127.

The second argument is that elite islanders played an important role in the process of nation- and state-building on San Andrés and Providence Islands. From the 1870s through the early 1900s, islanders occasionally expressed their interest in either seceding from Colombia or joining another nation such as the United States or Panama. These expressions included the poisoning and shooting of federal agents during their tenure as administrators on San Andrés, petitioning the United States to provide financial assistance in the wake of a hurricane, and inviting the newly-formed Panamanian government to annex the islands.⁴ Despite this proto-nationalist sentiment among elements of the island population, island notables eventually abandoned the pursuit of independence in order to secure positions as regional elites within the Colombian government. At the same time, federal officials in Bogotá sought to use island notables to extend their state authority. They struck an alliance with a few elite San Andrés and Providence islanders who worked to have federal authorities in Bogotá manage the islands' governance. It is probable that island notables hoped to strengthen their positions as influential power brokers between the government and island population. When the national government transformed the islands into a national intendency in 1912, it brought in mainland Colombian administrators to serve as its eyes and ears on the ground. San Andrés and Providence island notables had played an active role in this process; but by working to strengthen the islands' ties

⁴ Shooting and murder of prefects, Políodoro Martínez to Secretary of the Interior and Foreign Relations, 28 March 1870, AGN, Ministerio de lo Interior y Relaciones Exteriores, Tomo 78, Folios 492-293; "South American News," *The New York Times*, 5 December 1883. Prefect Richard J. Newball wrote on behalf of Providence islanders to the United States government for financial help in 1876 and 1877. Manuel R. de la Torre to Secretary of Interior and Foreign Relations, 15 September 1876, AGN, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Primera, Diplomática y Consular. Correspondencia con Gobernación de Bolívar, transferencia 10, caja 71, carpeta 540, folio 6; Manuel R. de la Torre to Prefect of San Andrés and Providence Islands, 29 November 1877, AGN, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Primera, Diplomática y Consular. Correspondencia con Gobernación de Bolívar, transferencia 10, caja 71, carpeta 540, folio 7. Island attempts to join Panamanian secessionists, "Islands May Revolt too," *New York Times*, 10 January 1904; Eugenio Garnica, "Nuestras islas misteriosas," *El Porvenir*, Cartagena, 6 December 1911.

with the federal government, local elites undercut their own bids for regional autonomy and once again faced a decision of whether, and how to appropriate, cooperate with, or oppose the state project.

These arguments seek to contribute to historiographies on race and nation-state formation in Latin America, as well as on black history in Latin America generally and Colombia specifically.

1.1 LATIN AMERICAN NATION AND STATE FORMATION

Between 1870 and 1930, Latin American ruling elites sought to build modern, civilized nations. One aspect of this state-and-nation-building project was the ability to control their territory, especially through state-governing mechanisms. During the late nineteenth century, Latin American nation-builders sought to incorporate frontier areas formerly beyond the reach of state power: areas such as northern Mexico, the Argentine pampas, the Brazilian Amazon, the Colombian and Venezuelan llanos, the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast, and the Caribbean islands of San Andrés and Providence.⁵

A second component of state-building was the transformation of allegedly backward, “uncivilized” inhabitants into modern citizens. Influenced by scientific racism, Latin American nation-builders sought to “whiten” their racially diverse populations. A first wave of historical scholarship, in the 1980s, tended to focus on elite efforts to make their nations racially and

⁵ Richard Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1983); Jane Rausch, *The Llanos Frontier in Colombian History, 1830-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993); Charles A. Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction. Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Jane Rausch, *Colombia: Territorial Rule and the Llanos Frontier* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999); Erick D. Langer, “The Eastern Andean Frontier (Bolivia and Argentina) and Latin American Frontiers. Comparative Contexts (19th and 20th Centuries),” *The Americas* 59:1 (2002):33-63; Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

culturally “whiter.”⁶ More recent scholarship, in the 1990s, investigated how Afro-descended populations responded to those efforts, looking mainly at race-based mobilization.⁷ Current scholarship has broadened the examination of black responses by looking at black and indigenous participation in multiracial movements and organizations such as national armies, labor unions, and political parties, and asks how those multiracial movements impacted the shaping of the nation.⁸

These two components of state-and nation-building – territorial and racial – come together in what we might call black borderlands: areas distant from state control and populated by African-descended people.⁹ Available studies of black borderlands are mainly anthropological and focus on the present.¹⁰ Historical investigations of such areas and their incorporation into the

⁶ Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); George Reid Andrews, *The Afro-Argentines of Buenos Aires* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); Richard Graham, ed., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Winthrop R. Wright, *Café con Leche: Race, Class, and National Image* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Nancy Leys Stephan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁷ George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Kim Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

⁸ Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds. *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of a Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Alejandro de la Fuente, *A Nation for All: Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth Century Cuba* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Nancy Appelbaum, Anne Macpherson, and Karin Roseblatt, eds., *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁹ I am grateful to Lara Putnam for this concept.

¹⁰ Peter Wilson, *Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of English-Speaking Negro Societies in the Caribbean* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Norman Whitten, *Black Frontiersman: A South American Case* (New York: Knopf, 1974); Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction*; Edmund T. Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African Nicaraguan Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

nation have only just begun.¹¹ My dissertation contributes to this historical literature by examining how struggles over territorial incorporation shaped the nature of black mobilization and identity formation on the islands as well as islanders' dealings with the nation-state.

1.2 AFRO-COLOMBIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Colombia has the third-largest black population in the Americas, yet only in the last few decades have Afro-Colombians begun to attract scholarly attention. Most of that attention focuses on slavery.¹² The few post-emancipation studies barely go beyond 1870 and thereby leave an impression that Afro-Colombians disappeared into the national body as undistinguishable citizens.¹³ The rest of the scholarship centers on the contemporary life, experiences, and struggles of Afro-Colombians living in the Pacific and, to a lesser degree, Caribbean coasts.

¹¹Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Richard Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹² Aquiles Escalante, *El negro en Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1964); Ildefonso Gutiérrez Azopardo, *Historia del negro: sumisión o rebeldía?* (Bogotá: Nueva America, 1980); Germán Colmenares, *Historia económica y social de Colombia*, T.11: *Popayán: una sociedad esclavista, 1680-1800* (Bogotá: La Correta Ineditos, 1979); Dolcey Rodríguez Jaramillo, *Esclavitud en la Provincia de Santa Marta, 1771-1851* (Santa Marta: Fondo de Publicaciones de Autores Magdalenses, Instituto de Cultura y Turismo de Magdalena, 1997); Alfonso Múnera Cavidia, *El fracaso de la nación. Región, clase, y raza el Caribe Colombiano, 1717-1810* (Bogotá, El Ancora Editores, 1998); Rafael Díaz Díaz, *Esclavitud, región y ciudad: El sistema esclavista urbano-regional de Santa Fé de Bogotá* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano, 2001); Luz Adriana Maya, *Brujería y reconstrucción de identidades entre los africanos y sus descendientes en Nueva Granada siglo diecisiete* (Bogotá, Ministerio de Cultura, 2005). English-speaking scholarship has unintentionally reproduced this unbalanced account; see Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in the Colombian Caribbean, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹³ Exceptions are the following: Jason McGraw, "Neither Slaves nor Tyrants: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Caribbean Colombia, 1850-1930" (PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 2006); James Sanders, "'Citizens of a Free People': Popular Liberalism and Race in Nineteenth-Century Southwestern Colombia," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84.2 (2004): 277-313; Jorge Castellanos, *La abolición de la esclavitud en Popayán, 1832-1852* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1980).

Sociologists and anthropologists have taken the lead in producing critical scholarship on African cultural retentions, racial discrimination, and the politics of identity formation.¹⁴

Most of these studies have concentrated on the black communities along the Pacific littoral. San Andrés and Providence islands have not generated the same attention from Colombian and foreign scholars, especially those engaged in Afro-Colombian research. This is largely due to the fact that the Colombian government and non-black Colombians have identified and constructed the region of the Chocó as unambiguously “black.” The Caribbean coast has been viewed as racially mixed, in contrast to the “black” Pacific, the indigenous Amazon, and the *mestizo* Andean highlands.¹⁵ While the islands are listed in the 1991 Colombian Constitution as one of the several Afro-Colombian communities, islanders’ retention of their Anglo-Caribbean culture has complicated the ways their racial and national identities are constituted. In his entry on Colombia in the *Africana Encyclopedia*, British anthropologist Peter Wade devotes only three sentences to the inhabitants of San Andrés and Providence. “These people belong historically and culturally to a West Indian cultural complex formed under British colonial influence, but since the 1950s they have been subject to formal incorporation within the Colombian nation.” He admitted his entry would “only make a passing reference to them.”¹⁶ My work adds to this literature with a study on the state’s attempts to assert its authority while at the

¹⁴ Norman Whitten Jr, *Black Frontiersmen: A South American Case* (New York: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1974); Nina de Friedemann, “La antropología colombiana y la imagen del negro” *América Negra* 6 (1993): 161-172; Jaimes Arocha and Nina de Friedemann, *De sol a sol: Génesis, transformación y presencia de los negros en Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1986).

¹⁵ Peter Wade, *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000):14-15; Múnera, *Fronteras imaginadas*; Bettina Ng’weno, *Turf Wars: Territory and Citizenship in the Contemporary State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Peter Wade, “Colombia,” *Africana: Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, eds. Kwame Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Basic Civitas Books, 1999), 475-477.

same time incorporate an isolated black community into the nation-state. It stresses how territorial disputes impact the way race and national identities are formed and presented.

Academic interest in the islands is relatively new and can be divided into two categories. The first is largely anthropological and focuses on island culture. Most of these investigations examine kinship patterns, oral traditions, and the local *Creole* language.¹⁷ These studies proliferated in the 1970s. Leading the pack of researchers was Australian sociologist Peter Wilson with his classic study, *Crab Antics*.¹⁸ His work focused on the role played by reputation and respectability in forming gendered and cultural identities on the island. Colombian anthropologist Nina de Friedemann—the pioneer of Afro-Colombian studies—also took interest in the islands.¹⁹ Although the bulk of her work dealt with black communities on the Pacific coast, she also conducted fieldwork on San Andrés, studying funeral rites as well as oral traditions such as the Anansi stories.²⁰ More recent studies look at island political mobilization.²¹

¹⁷ Thomas Price, “Algunos aspectos de estabilidad y desorganización cultural en una comunidad isleña del Caribe colombiano,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* (Bogotá: ICANH, 1954); Jay Edwards, “Social Linguistics on San Andrés and Providence Island” (PhD thesis, Tulane University, 1970); Cecilia Londoño López, “San Andrés y el cocotero: Estudio histórico” (BA thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 1970); Lucia Desir, “Between Loyalties: Racial, Ethnic, and ‘National’ Identity in Providencia, Colombia” (PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1990); Carol Chaves O’Flynn, *Lenguas aborígenes de Colombia: Tiempo, aspecto y moralidad en el criollo sanandresano* (Bogotá, CCELA, Universidad de los Andes, 1990); Marcia Dittman, *El Criollo sanandresano: Lengua y cultura* (Cali: Universidad del Valle, 1992); Oakley Forbes, “Cultura y lengua criolla en el Caribe colombiano,” *Voces: Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 4 (1998): 95-110; Marianne Dieck, “Criollística Afro-Colombiana,” *Los Afrocolombianos* (Bogotá: ICANH, 2004).

¹⁸ Wilson, *Crab Antics*.

¹⁹ Nina de Friedemann, “Estudios de negros en la antropología colombiana: presencia e invisibilidad,” in: Jaime Arocha y Nina S. de Friedemann, *Un siglo de investigación social: antropología en Colombia* (Bogotá: Etno, 1984): 507-572.

²⁰ Nina de Friedemann, “Ceremonial religioso funébrico representativo de un proceso de cambio en un grupo negro de la isla de San Andrés,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* (13): 147-180; “Miss Nansi, Old Nansi y otras narraciones el folclor de las Islas de San Andrés, Colombia” *Revista Colombiana del Folclor* 4:9 (1965): 213-234; “Religión y tradición oral en San Andrés y Providencia” in: Isabel Clemente, ed., *San Andrés y Providencia Tradiciones culturales y coyuntura política* (Bogotá: Editorial Uniandes, 1989).

The second category of research on the islands is historical and can be divided into three subcategories. The first is comprised by foreign academics that have privileged the islands' origins as a former Puritan colony as well as their economic and kinship ties to Jamaica, the United States, and the Mosquito Reserve in Nicaragua.²² The second looks at Colombia's jurisdictional ties to the archipelago as well as the Mosquito Coast and defends the nation's claims to the islands.²³ Colombian historians and jurists postulate that the islands have always belonged to the Spanish Crown, as noted in early Spanish maps of the Americas. Their accounts play down English occupation, and later resettlement, of the islands by Jamaicans, Cayman Islanders, and other folk from the Caribbean, even though there never was a permanent settlement of Spanish subjects throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Finally, a third version of island history attempts to look at island history through geopolitical struggles and explain why Colombian federal authorities sought to incorporate the islands around the early

²¹ Camila Rivera, "Old Providence: minoría, no armonía. De la exclusion a la etnicidad" (BA thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 2002); Andrea Leiva, "*Man no sell yuh birthright, man les fight!*" *Dinámicas de reivindicación y autodeterminación del movimiento para la autodeterminación del pueblo raizal de la isla de San Andrés (Amen S.D.) en medio de un escenario 'pluriétnico y multicultural'*" (Masters thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 2004); Natalia Guevara, "San Andrés Isla, Memorias de la colombianización y reparaciones," *Afro-reparaciones: memorías de la esclavitud y justicia reparativa para negros, afrocolombianos y raizales*, ed. Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé and Luíz Carlos Barcelos (Bogotá, UNAL, Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, CES, 2006): 295-317.

²² Arthur Percival Newton, *The Colonising Activities of the English Puritans: The Last Phase of the Elizabethan Struggle with Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914); James Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia: English-Speaking Islands in the Western Caribbean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630-1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²³ Felix Galindo Díaz, *Monografía del Archipiélago de San Andrés* (Bogotá: Ediciones Medio Pliego, 1978); Wenceslao Cabrera, *Isla de San Andrés y Providencia. Historia* (Bogotá: Editorial Cosmos, 1980); César Bonilla Moyano, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia. Estudio histórico-jurídico a la luz del derecho internacional* (Bogotá: Editorio Temis, 1983); David Uribe Vargas, *El Meridiano 82. Frontera marítima entre Colombia y Nicaragua* (Bogotá: Universidad de Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 1999).

twentieth century.²⁴ While this scholarship has greatly influenced my own thinking, it also privileges the motives and actions of non-island actors.

While previous research has introduced us to and sought to broaden our understanding of island culture, society, and geopolitical history, there is still much for us to learn. The historical scholarship in particular tends to focus on the actions of nations and governments as opposed to elite and non-elite actors; islanders' opinions and actions are sometimes overlooked even in contemporary accounts of island politics.²⁵ This dissertation seeks to correct this oversight by examining the role that San Andrés and Providence islanders played in their own history. In so doing, it explores the historical development of an island political culture and formation of an island identity.

1.3 SOURCES AND METHODS

This dissertation draws on primary sources located in archives and libraries in Bogotá, San Andrés, Cartagena, Baltimore, and London. The bulk of the source material came from the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Bogotá, where I relied on a rich and varied document collection. My analysis of governmental policies drew on sources such as telegrams, officials' reports, islander complaints, and legislation published in the official government gazette. I

²⁴ Carlos Andrés Charry Joya, "En el trasfondo de la 'colombianización': el archipiélago de San Andrés visto por tres funcionarios del estado colombiano (1888-1924)," *Revista Sociedad y Economía* 2 (2002), 73-94; <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/colombia/cidse/soceco/2/soceco2.pdf>; Eastman Arango, "Colombia y el Archipiélago"; Eastman Arango, "Creación de la Intendencia."

²⁵ Beatte Ratter, *Redes Caribes. San Andrés y Providencia y las islas Cayman: Entre la integración económica mundial y la autonomía cultural regional* (Bogotá: Universidad de Nacional, 2001); Gerhard Sandner, *Centroamérica y el Caribe Occidental: Coyunturas, crisis, y conflictos, 1503-1984* (San Andrés: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Instituto de Estudios Caribeños, 2003).

supplemented this material with foreign missionary accounts and official reports from the St. Joseph Society of the Sacred Heart, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, and the Seventh Day Adventists for the years 1900 to 1927. These sources were especially useful in my discussion of government efforts to acculturate the islanders through conversion to Catholicism, teaching of Spanish, and civic education.

While it was easy to identify the efforts of the state, it was harder to hear the multiple islander voices and to detect patterns of islander political mobilization and identity formation. I attempted to reconstruct island political culture by drawing on rich but limited source material. Newspapers were particularly useful. After noting down the names of newspapers that I had repeatedly found in archival documents, I made a list and searched through old issues to find any new items about San Andrés and Providence Islands. I was fortunate to locate the following periodicals: *El Caribe* (Cartagena), *El Porvenir* (Cartagena), *La Época* (Cartagena), and *La Patria* (Barranquilla) for the years prior to 1930. These particular newspapers frequently printed editorials on events happening on the islands and letters from islanders. I also combed through *The Colon Telegram* (Colón), *Diario de la Costa* (Barranquilla), *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), *Estrella de Panamá* (Panama), *Gil Blas* (Bogotá), and the *Star & Herald* (Panama). Especially important in recovering islander voices was *The Searchlight*, the archipelago's first newspaper. Francis A. Newball, an island notable and former departmental employee, created the newspaper in 1912 to provide a public venue for islanders and others to express their grievances regarding public administration. The publication had a short run—only two years—but is an incomparable source for this time period.

Newspapers helped me to hypothesize the reasons for specific islander actions and responses. However, they do have limitations. The newspapers tend to privilege people and

events deemed important to the elite sector and which may or may not have been significant to the lives of average islanders at the time. San Andrés and Providence island notables utilized the press as a tool to make claims on or negotiate with the state, and these elite voices cannot necessarily be seen as representative of the entire island community. In fact, there was no homogeneous island community. We must not disregard elite views and perceptions as irrelevant or not a true representation of on the ground events. I agree with other scholars that elite opinions and thoughts are essential to understanding the transformation of island life.²⁶ Still, I acknowledge that, since ordinary islanders' voices are largely absent from the newspapers, my study is limited largely to the responses of islander elites. When possible, I do present occasional hypotheses or observations concerning non-elite actions and responses.

Another source vital to my understanding of islander responses was the numerous island complaints, or *memoriales*. In these complaints, groups of elite islanders drafted specific grievances to send to the president and obtained signatures from hundreds of islanders. I located over fifty *memoriales* in the Colombian national archive, which informed much of my analysis on island-state relations between the years 1924 and 1930.²⁷ Most of these complaints were translated into Spanish and occasionally accompanied by the original English text. As with any source, the *memoriales* must be read with caution. I encountered several cases in which officials accused the petitioners of acquiring signatures by fooling, coercing, or simply not accurately

²⁶ On the importance of local elites, see Greg Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

²⁷ Historians of Latin America have found petitions a useful source, especially for indigenous peasants and communities. See Patrick McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*, 22-23.

informing signers of the true nature of the petition or affidavit.²⁸ Such accusations sought to raise doubts in the minds of the president and other federal officials regarding the legitimacy of islander complaints. It is probable and even likely that island notables used unscrupulous methods to persuade their relatives, friends, neighbors, and fellow church members to sign these *memoriales*. However, we should be careful not to relegate non-elite islanders to the status of passive victims. Is it not just as likely that ordinary islanders assisted, sided with, and agreed to lend their support to these local notables for their own reasons, even if we are unable to identify the signers' motives? Perhaps these *memoriales* serve to highlight those elusive ties of kinship, friendship, religious and commercial interests not otherwise seen in the source material. By combining the petitions with the periodicals, we are better able to identify, track, and explain the shifting perspectives of elite islanders and their attempts to represent the entire community.

The dissertation is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the development of San Andrés and Providence Islands from a contested place in the Anglo-Spanish struggle over the Caribbean during the colonial era to a premiere coconut producer by the early 20th century. I argue that these distinctive economic and political circumstances led to the emergence of a consolidated island identity by the late 1800s. Chapter 2 focuses on the political situation of the islands as a province under the Department of Bolívar in 1887 and the factors that led to their return to federal governance in 1913. This chapter highlights the active role that elite islanders played in this process. Chapter 3 analyzes the efforts of federal authorities in Bogotá to incorporate the islands into the nation. It focuses on specific administrative policies

²⁸ Francis A. Newball, "National Territory," *The Searchlight*, 1 June 1912; Félix A. Howard, Gustavus Shagreen [Sjogreen], Simon A. Taylor, Alfred Robinson, Franklin Howard, Samuel V. Archbold, Michael Newball, John Archbold, William C. Tayler, William S. Newball, Joseph E. Howard, Herbert Taylor, Elzaphan N. Howard, Percival R. Robinson. (residents of St. Isabel) and Alejandro Abrahams, *The Searchlight*, 20 May 1912; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 8 September 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 936, F. 308-310.

and their outcomes and, on the political struggles between appointed officials and island notables. Chapter 4 explores the contested meaning of Colombian nationhood and citizenship as federal officials attempted to turn the islanders into proper Colombian citizens. I contend that contestations and negotiations over language and religion pushed islanders to cling to their Anglo-Caribbean institutions and consolidate a more local identity vis-à-vis Colombian nationalism.

2.0 A PORTRAIT OF SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE ISLANDS

This chapter offers an overview of the islands' history from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, of the formation of island society and economy in the 1800s, and of life on San Andrés and Providence on the eve of the twentieth century.

2.1 PURITAN COLONIZATION OF PROVIDENCE ISLAND, 1630-1641

On December 24, 1629, English Captains Sussex Cammock and Daniel Elfrich landed on Henrietta and Providence Islands.²⁹ They were pleased with their new “discovery” and made plans to settle on these seemingly unoccupied islands. Elfrich decided to return to England to inform his patron, Robert Rich, the second Earl of Warwick, known for his investment in the Plymouth and Bermuda (Somers Island) colonies.³⁰ Cammock stayed on San Andrés with 31

²⁹ There is some discrepancy on the exact arrival of the Puritan colony on the islands. Lorraine Vollmer, *La historia del poblamiento del Archipiélago de San Andrés y Vieja Providencia y Santa Catalina* (San Andrés: Ediciones Archipiélago, 1997), 30; Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*; 1; Walwin Petersen, “Cultura y tradición de los habitantes de San Andrés y Providencia,” in *San Andrés y Providencia: Tradiciones culturales y coyuntura política*, ed. Isabel Clemente (Bogotá: Uniandes, 1989) 115.

³⁰ Robert A. Naylor, *Penny Ante Imperialism: The Mosquito Shore and the Bay of Honduras* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1989), 29.

men, while Elfrich returned home to ask for permission to occupy the islands.³¹ En route to England, he stopped at Bermuda and informed his brother-in-law, Governor Richard Bell, of these unoccupied islands strategically located near Panama.³²

Despite Bell's enthusiasm for the venture, the islands also presented a problem. They were located "in the heart of the Indies & the mouth of the Spaniards," explained Bell to Sir Nathaniel Rich, cousin to the Earl of Warwick.³³ The Dutch had already arrived on the islands before the English Puritans and had established trade relations with the Indians on the coast of Nicaragua.³⁴ Although settling on the islands appeared to be difficult, Bell insisted on pursuing a colony on Providence Island. He argued that if the island were secured with forts it would become "invincible" to attacks. He promised Rich and other potential investors that the islands could produce double or triple the amount of tobacco being farmed in Bermuda. Bell excited his investors with promises of large profits and they eagerly signed on.³⁵

In 1630, a royal patent issued the charter for The Providence Island Company. That same year, the first settlers arrived from Bermuda. These men came with Phillip Bell and Daniel Elfrich, who had been rewarded with the posts of governor and admiral, respectively. Captain Samuel Axe, a fortifications expert, joined them in helping to build Warwick Fort and the town of New Westminster. On February 11, 1631, 100 more men arrived on the *Seaflower* from

³¹ Troy S. Floyd, *The Anglo-Spanish Struggle for Mosquitia* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967), 171; Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 25.

³² Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 26.

³³ *Ibid.* 27.

³⁴ The first Puritan settlers discovered that a "small number of Dutch men had already been living on [Providence] island." *Ibid.* 40.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 26-28.

England. These emigrants would eventually be joined by men and women from England and nearby Caribbean islands such as Barbados, St. Christopher (Kitts), and Tortuga.

The colonists were divided into four types of settlers: planters with plots of 30 to 50 acres; artisan wage laborers; indentured servants who worked for the planters; and the military men or privateers who protected the colony from foreign attacks. Unlike the Massachusetts Bay colony, the Providence Puritans failed to offer sufficient wages or to honor the contract terms for indentured servants. Artisans demanded higher wages, while Providence Puritans refused to recompense indentured servants for their labor in public works projects on the island.³⁶ When more labor was needed, the Puritan colonists sought out new sources of labor: African slaves.

Although Governor Phillip Bell brought his slaves from Bermuda in 1633, the Providence Island Company was initially reluctant to introduce slavery to the Providence colony. This was not due to any moral objection to the institution. On the contrary, the Providence Puritans saw slavery as necessary to the success of their tropical plantations and many had slaves in Bermuda. “They conceive English bodies as not fit for that work,” explained an investor of the Providence Island Company. However, the company hoped to turn the Providence colony into “a godly settlement replicating the best features of English communities.” The settlers also feared that too many slaves would threaten the stability of their economic venture through slave uprisings, runaway slaves, and disgruntled slaves allying with foreign invaders.³⁷

³⁶ Ibid. 165-167.

³⁷ Ibid.166.

Despite these concerns, Providence Puritans did begin to use African slaves in place of their English indentured servants.³⁸ The company largely purchased their slaves from Dutch slave traders, though some were possibly captured in privateer raids of Spanish ships.³⁹ Their labor was used for public works projects such as the construction of forts, bridges, and roads. By 1635, Providence Island had some 500 white men, 40 women, and 90 enslaved Africans. Two years later, the African slave population nearly matched the number of English settlers on the island.⁴⁰ In 1641, the Spanish forcibly took Providence Island and expelled the colonists. Among the population, they found 350 Englishmen and 381 African slaves; the company claimed to have lost 600 slaves.⁴¹

The Providence Island colony failed for economic and military reasons. Colonists never saw high profits in their tobacco and cotton exports nor produced a commodity of greater importance. The tobacco boom ended six years before the arrival of the first colonists to Providence. By 1633, company investors encouraged Providence colonists to cultivate cotton “till better things can be obtained.” Moreover, planters refused to pay fair wages to artisans and to allocate land to indentured servants. This forced the colonists to recruit enslaved Africans, who brought their own set of problems. Slaves ran away and occasionally sought refuge among the Indian communities along the Mosquito Coast.⁴² Sometimes slaves assisted Spanish invaders

³⁸ Ibid. 171. Kupperman notes that the Providence Island Company enjoyed “the flexibility the island’s slave population gave them; they could take back English servants from planters when some special need arose, supplying slaves in their place.”

³⁹ Newton, *The Colonising Activities*, 168-172.

⁴⁰ The women included both white and non-white women. Newton, *The Colonising Activities*, 150, 258, 303.

⁴¹ Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 338. The Spanish learned that the Puritan colonists’ fear of a slave rebellion sent their slaves off to St. Christopher (Kitts) and Bermuda.

⁴² Kupperman, *Providence Island*, 179 note 98; see also Cyril Hamshere, *The British in the Caribbean* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 44. In 1633, runaway slaves formed a maroon community in the southeast portion

in trying to destroy the colony during foreign attacks. Finally, despite their best efforts to combat Spanish incursions in 1635 and 1640, the colonists proved unable to defend the island.

2.2 THE RESETTLEMENT OF SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE ISLANDS

The initial settlement of San Andrés and Providence islands was part of a larger process of informal migration taking place to the Spanish Main and adjacent Caribbean islands in the mid to late seventeenth century. This movement was mostly led by British men seeking land on which to grow their own crops and make an independent livelihood. As early as 1698, Anglo settlers established a town at Campeche in present-day Belize. Soon, new arrivals swarmed the town, absorbing the buccaneer population that resided there. A year later, Bermudan emigrant William Pitt relocated to and settled at Black River in Nicaragua where he facilitated trade relations between the Miskitu and Jamaican traders in sarsaparilla, cacao, and logwood.⁴³ By the eighteenth century, several additional British settlements existed at Bragmans, Rio Grande, Pearl Lagoon, Punta Gorda, Corn Island, and San Andrés Island. Most settlements had no more than a hundred people and were largely populated by white male settlers, free people of color, enslaved Africans, and Amerindians.⁴⁴ A few larger settlements, such as Black River, Bluefields, and

of the island called Palmetto Grove. They lived as precariously as Jamaican maroons, with colonists consistently organizing hunts for their recapture.

⁴³ Troy Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 55-57.

⁴⁴ Jennifer Goett, "Diasporic Identities, Aughtothonomous Rights: Race, Gender, and the Cultural Politics of Creole Land Rights in Nicaragua" (Ph.D diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 109.

Cape Gracias a Dios, reportedly had a thousand or more inhabitants by the middle of the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

By 1780, Anglo settlers had arrived in San Andrés, joining a small remnant population from the Puritan settlement and a few English buccaneers.⁴⁶ Although scholars have spoken of these settlers as uniformly English, evidence shows they were a diverse lot.⁴⁷ While the majority of them were Englishmen hailing from Jamaica or the British Isles, others came from the Dutch Caribbean and the Spanish empire.⁴⁸ Many were traders who learned of these remote islands through their travels to trading stations dotted along the coast of Central America.

What is known of San Andrés and Providence settlers at this time is largely drawn from travel accounts by visitors to the islands. One of the most telling comes from Lieutenant Stephen Kemble who in 1780, along with some British troops, blew off course en route to Nicaragua. The American commander noted some 12 families residing on San Andrés, who he described as “chiefly mustees who settled there without any authority.” These settlers lived in relative comfort. Kemble counted 100 head of cattle and a small cultivation of cotton. He also observed a small sloop docked at the beach, which indicated that woodcutters were attracted to the island’s fine cedars. In addition to lumber, Kemble found San Andrés to be ripe for other agricultural pursuits. “Good sugars might be raised on it though the present inhabitants make no more than serve their own use,” he wrote.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 56-57.

⁴⁶ Floyd argued that, in spite of Spain’s victory over the English in Providence Island and the Bay Islands, a small remnant continued to exist in British Honduras (Belize) and east to Golfo Dulce. Floyd, *Anglo-Spanish Struggle*, 25.

⁴⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 14; Cabrera Ortiz, *Isla de San Andrés*, 52-53.

⁴⁸ Petersen, “Cultura y tradición,” 129-133.

⁴⁹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 14.

Kemble's description of San Andrés settlers as "mustees" offers us insight into the social formation of this community and similar British frontier settlements. While there were almost certainly white male settlers in San Andrés, the island also attracted men and women of mixed Amerindian, European, and African ancestry seeking a new life away from communities based on racial, class, and gender hierarchies that might have constrained their freedom. It is likely that these settlers came from other British settlements along the Mosquito Shore that had witnessed an increase of free people of color by the middle of the eighteenth century. Although the scholarship credits the growth of this population to an absence of white women, one scholar warns us that white female presence in slave societies of the eastern Caribbean did not impede an emergence of the colored population.⁵⁰

The status of Providence is unclear for these years. In 1782, Spanish authorities reported that the English had placed military supplies on the island, which they planned to use for a base of operations in a second attempt to take San Juan from the Spanish.⁵¹ Existing evidence makes no further reference to this incident or settlement at Providence around this time; sources suggest that most settlers bypassed the island for San Andrés. Settlers came to Providence later in the 1790s, some with permission from Spanish officials. It was the collusion of this diverse set of individuals seeking out an independent form of living that shaped settler existence on these islands. In fact, contemporary islanders trace their origins to these settlers.⁵²

British settlement of San Andrés played an important part in the Anglo-Spanish struggle for domination over the Caribbean. This informal and gradual migration of Anglo emigrants to

⁵⁰ Karl Offen, "The Miskitu Kingdom: Landscape and the Emergence of an Ethnic Identity, Northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, 1600-1800" (PhD thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1999), 272; Goett, *Diasporic Identities*, 134.

⁵¹ Parsons, *San Andrés*, 14.

⁵² Petersen, "Cultura y tradición," 122-124.

the Spanish Main and offshore Caribbean islands unintentionally extended British influence and interest in the region. San Andrés and Providence settlers established kinship ties and strong trade relations with other nearby British settlements encompassing Jamaica and London as principal trading centers. The emergence of these communities alarmed Spanish authorities who sought to rid the region of English interlopers once and for all.

2.3 ENGLISH SUBJECTS UNDER SPANISH RULE

On July 14, 1786, the English and Spanish monarchies agreed to end over a half-century of conflict by signing the Convention of 1786. This treaty called for the evacuation of English subjects residing in small communities along the Mosquito Shore, now officially recognized as Spanish territories. Article 1 describes these settlements as “extending from sixty miles east of Trujillo in what is now Honduras along some 550 miles of coast to Cape Gracias a Dios, and then south and east to Nicaragua’s San Juan River.”⁵³

The description of the evacuated areas did not mention San Andrés or Providence Islands, but there is no doubt that the Spanish intended to rid the islands of every English settlement. English and Spanish vessels stopped at the island to remove a number of settlers who relocated to Jamaica, Grand Cayman, and the Bahamas. A group of remaining settlers petitioned the Governor of Cartagena and the Viceroy of New Granada asking not to be evacuated and offering their submission to the Spanish king. Viceroy Antonio Caballero y Góngora supported their request; however, the Spanish royal court denied it and sent a ship to evacuate the remaining

⁵³ Frank Griffith, “The Evacuation of the Mosquito Shore and the English who Stayed Behind, 1786-1800,” *The Americas* 55, 1 (1998), 63.

English subjects. In December 1789, Captain Juan Castelú and his interpreter Lieutenant Tomás O’Neille arrived to enforce the expulsion. Although Irish-born, O’Neille grew up on the Canary Islands with his aunt and had already been living in Spanish America for nine years before his arrival at San Andrés.⁵⁴

Upon their arrival, Castelú and O’Neille met with settlers regarding their orders to evacuate them; the latter refused to go. The settlers found an ally in Tomás O’Neille, who encouraged the settlers to appeal again to the Spanish Crown and helped them draft another petition.⁵⁵ In addition to their submission to Spanish authority, they also promised to convert to Catholicism and to cease trade relations with Jamaica. “I think they would have promised much more rather than to have been dispossessed of their lands,” wrote O’Neille in a later petition to the Minister of War.⁵⁶ The settlers were allowed to remain on the island until the Spanish Crown had come to a decision concerning their request.⁵⁷ In 1792, an affirmative reply reached the San Andrés settlers, who were allowed to remain on the islands. The Crown instructed the governor of Cartagena to turn San Andrés into a minor port free from all import and export duties. Soon thereafter, the Crown placed the islands under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Guatemala and named Tomás O’Neille to act as governor. The islands were eventually returned to Cartagena in 1803.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 15; Cabrera Ortiz, *San Andrés y Providencias*, 55.

⁵⁵ Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 39.

⁵⁶ Thomas O’Neille to Don Pedro de Ceballos (Minister of War). “The Governor of the island of San Andrés, Doc. 15,” 5 December 1802, BBR.

⁵⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 15.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

San Andrés and Providence grew in those intervening years. In 1793, a Spanish official estimated the population at about 35 free people and 285 slaves. There were also a few Miskitu concubines of some mainland settlers who had relocated to the island. That same year, the viceroy of New Granada ordered a census for San Andrés which counted 291 total inhabitants.⁵⁹ Enslaved people made up the majority of the population, with a count of 207 slaves. The largest slave owners were William Lever with 50 slaves; John McNish with 41 slaves; Diego Anderson with 42 slaves; John Taylor with 30 slaves; Torquiel Bowie with 16 slaves and John Pratt with 12 slaves. Most free island residents, however, held five or fewer slaves.⁶⁰

San Andrés settlers lived on their properties at the northern and eastern portions of the island, where land was most fertile. There was no central village. Cotton was the principal cash crop, which settlers cultivated through the importation of enslaved Africans who worked on their plantations. Settlers also grew provision crops such as yucca, sweet potatoes, avocado, corn, oranges, and some coconuts. However, roasted plantains were “their daily bread.” Small amounts of coffee, sugarcane, indigo, and tobacco were also grown for local consumption. In addition to these crops, settlers had plenty of pigs, chickens, and turkeys. Although the cedar forests were depleted, there was still sufficient wood to build homes, sloops, and schooners.⁶¹

By the late 1700s, there were also a number of settlers on Providence Island. Some, like Jamaican Francis Archbold, received permission from the Spanish Crown to settle on the island. He came along with his family and slaves to settle on the fertile land located at the southern end

⁵⁹ Cabrera Ortiz, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 58-59.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 59.

⁶¹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 14.

of the island, later called Bottom House. There the Archbold family cultivated cotton.⁶² After his arrival, Providence's population steadily grew. In 1789, the island reportedly had ten settlers of both sexes living on the adjacent island of Santa Catalina along with their 12 slaves.⁶³ Four years later, first Lieutenant Don José del Rio of the Royal Navy identified four patriarchs heading the principal island families: Francis Archbold, Juan John, Andrés Brown, and José Hygges. Archbold was the wealthiest and the only Catholic.⁶⁴ He had 21 slaves working on his cotton plantation.⁶⁵ In addition to cotton, settlers raised livestock, cut wood, and fished for turtles.

Although San Andrés and Providence islanders were under Spanish rule, officials in Madrid and on the Spanish Main knew only vaguely what was taking place on the islands. The Spanish Crown initially turned the islands, as well as the Mosquito Shore, over to the Kingdom of Guatemala, Spanish naval officer Tomás O'Neille served as the governor of both islands. After O'Neille had served only six months, the president of Guatemala called him to the mainland to fill various positions, as Spain and England were again at war. San Andrés islander Torquiel Bowie replaced him as governor and was instructed to defend the island from a possible English attack. O'Neille returned to San Andrés in 1801 as governor. Three years later, he orchestrated, with the help of the islanders, the return of the islands to the viceroyalty of New Granada under the government of Cartagena in 1803.

Despite their good relations with O'Neille, San Andrés islanders were not entirely wedded to the idea of being under Spanish rule. Spanish authorities seemed uninterested in

⁶² Ibid. 18; Cabrera Ortiz, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 50.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Crab Antics*, 32. It is unclear if the Spaniard Hispanicized the names. Thus, the patriarchs could also been John John, Andrew Brown, and John Hygges.

⁶⁵ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 18.

defending them from foreign attack or promoting their commercial interests. In 1802, Roberto Clark, Isaac Brooks, Solomon Taylor, Juan Taylor, and George Ellis spoke of an attack they had faced by Jamaican pirates who arrived with “fifty men with the purpose of stealing negroes [slaves] and sacking our homes.” While they did not succeed in this pursuit, the buccaneers managed to seize “at various times six vessels loaded with cotton” destined to Cartagena. Islanders also worried about trade restrictions placed on them by Guatemalan merchants and reminded the viceroy that Spanish funds paid only for the salaries of the governor and the small garrison; no monies had been sent for developing the island.⁶⁶

San Andrés islanders appeared not to have adopted an identity as Spanish subjects. Years after the Spanish Crown gave the settlers permission to stay on San Andrés, many still spoke no Spanish and had not yet converted to Catholicism as they had promised.⁶⁷ Existing evidence suggests that these Anglo settlers maintained a strong sense of their British identity. In 1806, Captain John Bligh reportedly took San Andrés “amidst the rejoicing of the inhabitants.” Their high hopes were squashed when Bligh left two months later with Governor O’Neill and the Spanish garrison whom they dumped on the beach at Cartagena. Captain Bligh only left behind a small case of ammunition for the islanders to use for their defense.⁶⁸

Spanish officials were bruised by the “disloyalty” of San Andrés islanders and debated whether or not the islands should be reoccupied. They decided to do so, with Tomás O’Neill again in command. Although some New Granada officials feared island uprisings upon their

⁶⁶ Petition of Roberto Clark, Isaac Brooks, Solomon Taylor, Juan (John) Taylor, and George Ellis, 25 November 1802, in, Manuel Peralta, *Limites de Costa Rica y Colombia. Nuevos documentos para la historia de su jurisdicción territorial, con notas, comentarios y un examen de la cartografía de Costa Rica y Veragua por Manuel Maria de Peralta* (Madrid: M.G. Hernández, 1890), 178-179.

⁶⁷ Cabrera Ortiz, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 69.

⁶⁸ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 17.

return, none took place. O’Neille resumed his position as governor until poor health forced him into retirement in 1810. A Cartagena captain briefly succeeded him. In 1811, New Granada officials, embroiled in independence wars on the mainland, forewent sending a governor to San Andrés, where the local municipal council took power.⁶⁹ In the years to follow, San Andrés and Providence Islands were again left vulnerable to foreign interlopers.

2.4 FROM SPANISH SUBJECTS TO GRAN COLOMBIANS

In 1818, a French corsair occupied Providence Island along with his diverse crew of English, French, American, and Haitian nationals. Louis Michel Aury was a privateer who had given his support to Spanish American leaders in their campaign for independence from Spain. His occupation transformed Providence into a privateer base that helped finance wars on the mainland. A year later, Aury brought more troops from Jamaica, led by Scottish adventurer Gregor MacGregor, to occupy the island of San Andrés.⁷⁰ Although Aury and his officers initially focused on Spanish vessels, they eventually turned to ravaging all brigs, ships, sloops, and schooners that happened to pass by.⁷¹ In 1819, American trader Captain Jacob Dunham stopped by the island to resume trade relations with islanders only to find it occupied by men who “pretended to hold some commission under General Bolívar.”⁷² Aury and his officers

⁶⁹ Ibid. 18.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 20; Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 44-46.

⁷¹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 20.

⁷² Jacob Dunham, *Journal of Voyages: Containing an Account of the Author’s being Twice Captured by the English and Once by Gibbs the Pirate* (New York: Huestis & Cozans, 1850) 141.

received eighteen percent of all prizes earned from these raids; the rest was shared among the lower officers and crew. A need for more profits to share forced Aury and his officers to encourage the plundering of nearby ports like Trujillo and Santa Ysabel. Aury resumed trade relations with Jamaican traders. Reports in Kingston spoke of prize goods for sale at Providence Island “worth a quarter of a million dollars.”⁷³ Islanders’ responses to foreign occupation and reactions to Spanish American independence struggles remain unclear. A San Andrés historian suggests that some islanders supported the royalists and others the patriots; he stresses their astuteness in navigating changes in imperial interests while pursuing their own self-interest. In any case, islanders dutifully complied with Louis Aury’s rule.⁷⁴ Perhaps they enjoyed receiving English goods from Jamaican traders who bought plundered goods from Aury and his men.

Louis Aury’s privateering enabled him to funnel aid to Simón Bolívar; despite this support, Bolívar snubbed him. Writing to Aury in 1821, Bolívar explained that he “no longer has use for the support of corsairs, who only degrade his flag before all the world” and demanded that Aury leave Colombian waters.⁷⁵ The year before, Aury had submitted a petition from a group of island leaders who asked to become formally integrated into the Republic of New Granada in 1820. Aury never received a response and died the following year from injuries sustained after he fell from his horse. Most of his men dispersed for other parts; two of his French officers briefly governed Providence Island. In July, 1822, San Andrés and Providence

⁷³ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 20.

⁷⁴ Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 47.

⁷⁵ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 20.

islanders held public meetings in which they voted to recognize the Constitution of Cúcuta and join the Republic of Gran Colombia.⁷⁶

Like the Spanish, Gran Colombian officials benignly neglected San Andrés and Providence Islands for more critical issues. Struggling to build a confederacy out of the former Spanish American colonies, mainland officials paid little attention to the needs of a remote island population. The Gran Colombian government initially appointed Antonio Cárdenas as military commander to govern the islands; he served in this capacity until 1833, when a civilian *jefe politico*, Antonio Escalona, replaced him. Two years later, the seat of government was located on San Andrés, the more populous of the two islands. The government presence on Providence Island included a tax collector, a civil magistrate, and two assistants. There also was a military garrison on San Andrés.⁷⁷

The islands remained a canton administered by the government of Cartagena until 1868, when the islands were named one of six “national territories” under direct federal rule.⁷⁸ This designation acknowledged the islands’ strategic importance. In 1867, Colombian intellectual and journalist José María Samper had argued that the islands “are of the greatest importance by virtue of their position in the middle of the Panama Isthmus, the islands of Cuba and Jamaica, and the coasts of Central America. They need the presence of the federal authority, making itself

⁷⁶ Petersen lists the names on the petition asking to be annexed including those of Providence and San Andrés councilmen. On Providence, James Davidson, Peter Archbold, James Archbold, Francis Archbold Jr., Ralph McBean. On San Andrés, the council consisted of James Torquiel Bowie, Thomas O’Neill, Peter Peterson, George Barker, William Lever, a French chaplain Luis Jose Villabril, and Max Ogle May. There were also several signers who came with Simón Bolívar, Luís Aury, or Gregory McGregor. Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 48-49.

⁷⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 21.

⁷⁸ The 1863 Constitution provided for the designation of such areas, which included the Llanos (1868), Casanare (1869), and others. Rausch, *Colombia*, 89.

felt directly and energetically.”⁷⁹ Under the territorial system, prefects were appointed by the president and served two-year terms. Prefects enforced laws, settled disputes, established towns, civilized Indians (if there were any in the region), and protected Colombian sovereignty from foreign encroachment.⁸⁰ Municipal councils handled local government affairs. The central government paid the salaries of the prefects, missionaries, and school teachers and was responsible for the construction of primary schools, provision of postal service and public protection.⁸¹ Prefect Eduardo Mamby arrived in 1869 to administer the islands but we know little about his activities there.⁸²

This institutional arrangement did not last long. Under the Constitution of 1886, all national territories were transferred back to their original departments—in the case of San Andrés and Providence, to the Department of Bolívar.⁸³ Under the new charter, departments were divided into provinces and municipal districts. The president appointed the governor, who served a three-year term. Departmental governors acted as representatives of the federal government and were responsible for the fiscal system, primary schools, economic development, promotion of foreign immigration and national colonization, construction of public roads and buildings, and police protection.⁸⁴

⁷⁹ José María Samper, “División Territorial de Colombia,” *El Republicano*, no.22, 2 October 1867 (Bogotá), 88.

⁸⁰ Rausch, *The Llanos*, 89.

⁸¹ Manuel Roca Castellanos, *Diez luces sobre el futuro* (Bogotá: Editorial Nueva, 1936), 39; Rausch, *The Llanos*, 89.

⁸² Santiago Guerrero, 18 July 1912, Breve historia del archipiélago de San Andrés, AGN, Ministerio de Gobierno, Sección Primera, T. 696, F. 451.

⁸³ Rausch argues that this change was owing to the growing political power of departmental authorities and the central government’s desire to rid itself of the financial demands of administering the territories. Rausch, *The Llanos*, 138.

⁸⁴ 1886 Constitution, Article 185; William Gibson, *Constitutions of Colombia* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Popular de Cultura Colombiana, 1951), 251.

2.5 THE END OF SLAVERY

The eighteenth-century resettlement of the islands reintroduced the institution of slavery. In the 1810s, a US trader noted that on Providence, there were “thirty families of free people of different nations and colors, and from five to thirty slaves to every free person in the island.” The enslaved population was larger on San Andrés, somewhere between eight and twelve hundred slaves.⁸⁵ Most of these slaves came from Jamaica.⁸⁶ By the 1840s, nearly half of the total population on both islands was enslaved; James Parsons estimated no more than 1,000 slaves on San Andrés and Providence. The white and colored slave owners forced slaves to work on their cotton plantations. Enslaved blacks planted cotton in December and harvested it from December to March. Slaveholders permitted slaves to keep provision grounds and to fish on Sundays and alternate Saturdays for their own subsistence.⁸⁷ In the British Caribbean, slaves often sold their surplus crops from their provision grounds to earn cash incomes.⁸⁸ This was especially true for enslaved women, who took an active role in developing an informal market based on surplus provision goods. This economic opportunity gave enslaved black women independence from slaveholders as well as enslaved men.⁸⁹

While the existing evidence regarding slavery on San Andrés and Providence is murky, it is clear that slave owners faced resistance from the enslaved population. In October 1799, a slave

⁸⁵ Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 39.

⁸⁶ Wilson, *Crab Antics*, 34.

⁸⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 29.

⁸⁸ Goett, “Diasporic Identities,” 171.

⁸⁹ Wilson, *Crab Antics*, 35-36.

insurrection occurred that was only suppressed through the arrival of a Spanish naval sloop.⁹⁰ In May 1841, slaves of Torquiel Bowie Sr. and James Archbold revolted against their owners, who had used them to fight in a land dispute over an adjoining piece of property. Bowie severely punished the organizers of the revolt, but others managed to escape to the Mosquito Shore. These escapees were warmly received by the Miskitu King, who refused to return them to the *jefe político*.⁹¹ Runaway slaves from San Andrés routinely sought refuge along the Mosquito Coast and continued to do so until slavery was finally ended on the islands.⁹² Escapees also formed fragile maroon communities on both islands such as Palmeto Grove in Providence and Battle Alley in San Andrés.⁹³

Slave emancipation arrived to the islands in 1853 even though the New Granada government had officially abolished the institution two years earlier.⁹⁴ The continuation of slave ownership on San Andrés was partially the result of poor communications between island authorities and central officials in Bogotá as well as of slaveholders' refusal to let go of their slaves.⁹⁵ Although slave owners resisted manumitting their slaves, San Andrés and Providence slaveholders had often bequeathed freedom to individual slaves or allowed them to self-manumit. In 1799, a French slave owner on San Andrés emancipated his slaves, who relocated to

⁹⁰ Inhabitants of San Andrés, 25 November 1802, in Costa Rica, 596. Signatures included Roberto Clark, Isaac Brooks, Solomon Taylor, Juan Taylor, and Jorge Ellis (George Ellis). Manuel Peralta, *Límites de Costa Rica*, 177-178.

⁹¹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 29; Petersen, *Province of Providence*, 84.

⁹² Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 77-89.

⁹³ Angela Rivas Gamboa, "Anansi en el mar de los siete colores: historia, memoria y cultura en el Archipiélago" (B.A. thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 1995), 46.

⁹⁴ Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 84.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* Two of the last slaveholders were Torquiel Bowie and William Lever.

Jamaica after other slaveholders feared the presence of freedmen might stir unrest among their own slaves.⁹⁶ There were also cases of slave owners giving freedom to their children, as oral historical accounts recall.⁹⁷

Philip Beekman Livingston Jr. offers the best example of an islander voluntarily manumitting slaves. In 1834, Livingston returned to Providence Island at the request of his mother, Mary Archbold, who had moved to Jamaica. She asked him to grant freedom to her slaves as well as divide up the land between himself and the slaves. While the reasons for her decision are not altogether clear, it is probable that the Jamaican-born woman sought to follow the British decision to abolish slavery throughout the British Caribbean. Livingston freed his mother's slaves, giving them land plots while keeping some property for himself. Four years later, he traveled to San Andrés, where his family also had property, and granted freedom to those slaves, too.⁹⁸ However, their freedom was tenuous: an elderly islander explained that Livingston's freed slaves had a curfew and after six in the afternoon could not travel to the northern portion of the island.⁹⁹

Livingston's desire to emancipate his slaves was not shared by many of the San Andrés slave owners, who were particularly alarmed by his teaching the children of ex slaves how to read and to write. On Sundays, Livingston gave religious instruction to his former slaves, who in turn regarded him as their "Pa fader."¹⁰⁰ His desire to rid the island of slavery and to promote

⁹⁶ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 29.

⁹⁷ Gamboa, "Anansi en el mar," 42-43.

⁹⁸ Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 80; Gamboa, "Anansi en el mar," 46-47.

⁹⁹ Gamboa, "Anansi en el mar," 47.

¹⁰⁰ Author heard many islanders refer to him as such during her field research in 2001-2002.

evangelization on the islands was strengthened after a brief stint in the United States. Livingston became baptized in Ohio and later joined the Laight Street Baptist Church in New York City, where he was ordained a missionary and given permission to begin evangelization on San Andrés. In 1847, Philip Beekman Livingston Jr. established the first Baptist chapel on the islands and made many converts.¹⁰¹

2.6 FROM COTTON TO COCONUTS

Coconut agriculture replaced cotton as the leading cash crop in the aftermath of slavery. The reasons behind this shift remain unclear. One North American scholar argued that emancipation and the loss of slaves provoked this economic transformation.¹⁰² Oral history accounts offer different explanations. One account explained the transition to coconuts as the result of a hurricane that nearly destroyed the entire cotton crop and one slaveholder's forethought to plant coconut seeds imported from the San Blas islands off the coast of Panama on the eve of emancipation.¹⁰³ Another popular explanation credited the first *jefe político*, Antonio Escalona, with introducing the crop.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Loren Turnage, *Island Heritage: A Baptist View of the History of San Andrés and Providencia*, (Cali: Colombian Baptist Mission, 1975), 21.

¹⁰² Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 28.

¹⁰³ See this account fictionalized in Hazel Robinson, *No Give Up, Maan!* (Bogotá: Editorial Unibiblos, 2002), 93-120.

¹⁰⁴ Cecilia Londoño López, "San Andrés y el cocotero: Estudio histórico" (MA thesis, Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 1970), 38.

While these reasons are certainly plausible, it is more likely that San Andrés islanders sought to capitalize on the growing demand for coconuts in US and European markets. During the second half of the 1800s, the populations of the United States and Great Britain increasingly incorporated coconut into their many confections, which explained the frequent visits of American and British ships to the islands. By 1900, European and U.S markets sought coconut for its oil, which was used to replace vegetable oil and margarine.¹⁰⁵ A contemporary observer reported that “more than half of all cocoanuts imported are bought by the confectioners, a single firm in New York using as many as forty thousand a month, and it is possible to fill this large standing order because importations are made all year round.”¹⁰⁶ However, coconuts had a variety of uses. “Nothing that grows on earth has so many uses for humanity as this wonderful tree. To the native it is food, drink, clothes, houses, and many other important necessities of life,” explained two agro-export industrialists.¹⁰⁷

The emergence of coconut enclaves along the Atlantic coast of Central America occurred in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In 1817, US trader Captain Jacob Dunham purchased several thousand coconuts for export to New York from indigenous traders on the San Blas islands.¹⁰⁸ Indigenous and Creole traders in the off-shore island of Bocas del Toro near northern Panama also carried on a thriving coconut trade. It peaked in the 1840s and became

¹⁰⁵ Robert Wilkinson Munro and L.C. Brown, *A Practical Guide to Coco-Nut Planting* (London: John Bale, Sons, and Danielson, Ltd., 1920), viii; Anonymous. *The Cult of the Coconut: A Popular Exposition of the Coconut and Oil-Palm Industries; containing important, timely, and somewhat exclusive information upon a rapidly increasing trade, and upon the uses of the products and by products of the Coconut (copra) and Oil-Palm tree* (London: Curtis Gardner & Company, 1912), 34.

¹⁰⁶ Anonymous, “The Coconut-Tree,” *Garden and Forest* 7:307:14.

¹⁰⁷ Munro and Brown, *A Practical Guide*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 134-135.

threatened by migrants from New Granada who, eager to earn high profits, started to cut down trees for the hard to reach nuts.¹⁰⁹ In 1841, it was reported that four or five ships came to San Andrés each year in search of coconuts.¹¹⁰ That same year slavery ended on Corn Island and the inhabitants also shifted from cotton to coconut agriculture.¹¹¹ Coconut production grew similarly in Ambergris Cay (Belize) and the Bay Islands (Honduras).¹¹²

By the late nineteenth century, a coconut boom had overtaken San Andrés. In 1873, a US commercial agent described San Andrés as a coconut island.¹¹³ Alfred Tremble, an American writer, traveled to San Andrés in 1877 and deemed it “the greatest cocoanut-producing island in the Caribbean, and from it almost all American fruit merchants, *en gross*, draw the greater part of their supplies of fruit.”¹¹⁴ The coconut trade at San Andrés created a robust economy that was outdone in production and quality only by Cuban and San Blas coconut farmers.¹¹⁵ During the 1880s, the United States and Great Britain sent nearly 100 ships to the port of San Andrés

¹⁰⁹ Goett, “Diasporic Identities,” 17.

¹¹⁰ Francisco Javier Vergara y Velasco. *El Archipiélago de San Andrés (las islas de San Andrés y Providence: una noticia geográfica)* (Bogotá: Imprenta de Vapor de Zalamea Hs., 1888), 38.

¹¹¹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 31.

¹¹² William Davidson, *Historical Geography of the Bay Islands, Honduras* (Birmingham: Southern University Press, 1974), 93-97; Edmund T. Gordon, “Phases of Development and Underdevelopment in a Caribbean Fishing Village: San Pedro, Belize” (Ph.D diss., Stanford University, 1981), 92-115.

¹¹³ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 30.

¹¹⁴ Alfred Tremble, “Among the Cocoanuts: A Jaunt through the Island of St. Andrews,” *Leslie’s Popular Monthly*, (1877): 691.

¹¹⁵ The 1883 import list shows that San Andrés was only behind San Blas in the number of coconuts brought to the United States. San Blas exported 2,048,186 and San Andrés sent 1,863,837. Charles Kenworthy, *Climatology of Florida* (Savannah: Morning News Steam Printing House, 1890), 30. However, San Blas coconuts were preferred, “since they shell more easily, while the meat is richer and oil retains its flavor longer than others.” Yet Cuban coconuts from Baracoa “are larger, but they lack oil and flavor, and cost less.” See Anonymous, “The Coconut-Tree,” 14.

annually in search of coconuts and about twelve Americans traded solely in this product.¹¹⁶ By 1900, San Andrés had consolidated its position as a coconut-producing island. “The whole [island] is covered with tropical vegetation, consisting chiefly of coconut trees. The nuts from these trees constitute the chief wealth of the island,” reported an American missionary.¹¹⁷

The cultivation of coconuts was a relatively simple process. After clearing and preparing the land, farmers planted the seedlings and waited between six and eight years for the trees to reach full maturity. At that point, a tree bears anywhere from 80 to 150 nuts per year.¹¹⁸ On San Andrés and other coconut enclaves in the Caribbean, younger, agile men climbed the trees with a knife in hand and made “the thump, thump, thump of the fruit tree, as it was severed from the parent stem and fell into the sand.”¹¹⁹ Some coconut exporters considered this method “undoubtedly the best” for picking coconuts. “The native climbs the tree, supported at the waist by a rope loop, which leaves both hands free to pick the nuts, and, at the same time, it enables him to remove the moss and lichen from the tree.” A good coconut picker gathered “as many as 1200 a day.”¹²⁰

Both men and women husked and loaded coconuts. “Before them, between their legs, was an instrument, simply a piece of iron, perhaps nine inches long, slightly sharpened at the edge, and inserted firmly in a vertical position in a block of wood. Raising the nut with both

¹¹⁶ Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 57.

¹¹⁷ Quote from Daniel Duffis, *A Blessed Heritage: The History of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church on San Andrés and Old Providence Islands* (Medellín: Litografía ICOLVEN, 2000), 29; his observation was repeatedly made by other visitors. See N.T., “Las islas de San Andrés y Providencia,” *La Época*, 18 August 1912.

¹¹⁸ H. Lake Coghlan and J.W. Hinchley, *Coconut Cultivation and Plantation Machinery* (London: Crosby, Lockwood, and Son, 1914), 109-110.

¹¹⁹ Tremble, “Among the Cocoanuts,” 697.

¹²⁰ Coghlan and Hinchley, *Coconut Cultivation*, 110.

hands, a single blow on this primitive instrument penetrates the husk to the hard shell, which a dexterous twist then lays bare.” Other times, islanders drove “a pointed stake into the end of the nut by which it is attached to the tree” and split the husk into halves and out appeared the nut.¹²¹ It was not uncommon to find young boys and women carrying loads of coconuts to the docks where the merchants stored the coconuts. Coconut industrialists applauded this Caribbean practice, which gave unripe coconuts an opportunity to mature in a cool shed for one to two months.¹²² The coconut trade consisted mostly of smallholders and several large landowners who sold their coconuts to US and British traders, who in turn scoured the circum-Caribbean for coconuts to sell to companies in Baltimore and New York. By 1900, several of these North American merchant-traders took up residence at San Andrés. Fred Wright, John A. Matheson, and the Bradley brothers (Ambrose and Henry) collected and stored the coconuts in warehouses located in the nearby cays before sending them to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. These men represented retail firms in the United States.¹²³ Dropping off cargos of coconuts at US ports, they returned to San Andrés with imported goods like liquor, foodstuff, furniture, and other household items.¹²⁴

With the introduction of coconuts, power dynamics shifted somewhat between former masters and slaves as some ex-slaves and their families managed to achieve economic independence and a comfortable existence. In 1873, US Commercial Agent Philip Beekman Livingston Jr. reported that ex-slaves had benefited greatly from the coconut trade. “Their houses

¹²¹ Tremble, “Among the Coconuts,” 697.

¹²² Coghlan and Hinchley, *Coconut Cultivation*, 110.

¹²³ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 30.

¹²⁴ Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 115-116.

are all shingled, boarded round and painted, much nicer and more expensive than were their owners' houses." They also had the cash to buy "broadcloths, muslins, costly, and fashionable dresses and hats." In stark contrast, the children of their former white and colored masters "had to beg and wait as well as pray to get their coconuts prepared for shipment, being obliged to carry loads on their heads and do all kinds of work themselves."¹²⁵ Four years later, a North American visitor made a similar observation. San Andrés islanders, "without exception people of color...have in the course of years, thanks to the productiveness of their cocoanut walks, become, beyond a doubt, the wealthiest community among the smaller islands of the Caribbean." He added, "They have kept adding to their accumulations year by year, until the island is literally a mine of coined gold."¹²⁶

This depiction of ex slaves and their children as beneficiaries of the coconut industry was short-lived. In 1877, white and colored landowners succeeded in preventing an emancipated black from acquiring a desirable piece of land in the sector of Orange Hill. A bloody altercation ensued, leaving the man dead and his son fleeing to Costa Rica, never to return to San Andrés. The property he intended to purchase was eventually sold to Philip Livingston.¹²⁷ Thereafter, white and colored elites colluded to thwart the economic advance of black islanders and to monopolize opportunities for landownership.¹²⁸

Most San Andrés islanders were smallholders who had to divide their meager properties between provision grounds and a few coconut trees. In contrast, larger landowners possessed

¹²⁵ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 30.

¹²⁶ Tremble, "Among the Cocoanuts," 694.

¹²⁷ Walwin Petersen, "An Account of the Walker War," undated ms., Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede San Andrés.

¹²⁸ Michael Rosenberg, "A Social History of San Andrés and Old Providence Islands," undated ms., BBR.

extensive pieces of land, known as coconut walks, almost entirely covered with trees. The money that smallholders received for their nuts was sometimes insufficient for their needs, leading them to rely on island shopkeepers for credit.¹²⁹ Landless islanders obtained work cutting, husking, and transporting coconuts to the docks.¹³⁰ In the 1860s, a day worker usually received 50 cents per day; by comparison, a sailor earned one peso.¹³¹

San Andrés's larger landowners received between \$25 and \$36 per thousand from US merchants before the turn of the twentieth century.¹³² The same coconuts sold for \$50 to \$100 per thousand in the United States, depending on their quality.¹³³ By 1912, San Andrés coconut growers regularly received \$20 per thousand and the going rate in New York was between \$30 and \$40.¹³⁴

2.7 SOCIAL RELATIONS ON SAN ANDRÉS AND PROVIDENCE

By the late 1800s, San Andrés and Providence were noticeably stratified in terms of color, class, culture, and gender. The elite on both islands consisted mostly of colored sea captains of small trading and turtle vessels, landowners of large coconut walks, and merchant-

¹²⁹ Interview with Hazel Robinson Abrahams, 13 December 2005, Bogotá.

¹³⁰ Interview with Orvis O'Neill, 13 March 2006, San Andrés Island.

¹³¹ Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 31.

¹³² Ibid. 48. In 1892, a Panamanian newspaper reported to its isthmian readership that Captain Ambrose Bradley, a US resident at San Andrés, bought coconuts for \$25 per thousand in San Andrés before he carried them off to New York. J. Humphreys, *The Colon Telegram*, 29 August 1892.

¹³³ Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 48. Additionally, the Fruit Trade Journal for that same year valued coconuts in the United States at \$50 per thousand. J. Humphreys, *The Colon Telegram*, 2 November 1912.

¹³⁴ Santiago Guerrero to Minister of Government, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 461.

traders. These merchant-traders also served as middlemen, selling coconuts, turtle shell, and other raw materials to North American and Jamaican traders in exchange for goods that in turn they sold to local consumers. They maintained a vibrant regional trade with English-speaking settlements along the Mosquito Coast as well as Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, and the United States. The rest of the inhabitants were mostly black smallholders who earned cash from selling coconuts and other agricultural crops, as well as turtle fishing. While these economic activities afforded them some protection against labor coercion, most islanders found themselves indebted to the elite sector that controlled the terms of commerce.

Broadly speaking, the elites were composed of descendants of the leading white and colored families who settled on the island in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On San Andrés, these families included the Bents, Bowies, Corpuses, Forbes, Livingstons, and Mays; on Providence, it was the Archbolds, Newballs, Robinsons, and Howards.¹³⁵ While some families had formed strategic unions by marrying across racial lines, others kept strict codes of color segregation. In 1810s, American trader Jacob Dunham observed bad feelings between the white and free colored residents on San Andrés, noting that white islanders took great pain to keep social events segregated. None of the colored families had been invited to a ball “except an old man, by the name of Bent, the wealthiest man on the Island, owning about ninety slaves, whom the whites dare not overlook.”¹³⁶ These racial tensions remained in post-emancipation San Andrés. In 1862, white residents strongly criticized Philip Beekman Livingston Jr., the Baptist

¹³⁵ Petersen, “Cultura y tradición,” 130.

¹³⁶ Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 117.

minister, for marrying Josephine Pomare, a black woman who had served as domestic servant and caretaker to Livingston's first wife until the latter's death three years earlier.¹³⁷

This color schism among the elite sector persisted into the twentieth century. In 1915, San Andrés physician Zelotes Pusey was distraught when Florence Robinson, a member of an affluent colored family, rejected his offer of marriage because of her family's disapproval of his dark skin color. Pusey eventually snapped and shot and killed Florence as well as her father, Captain Tim Robinson.¹³⁸ In the 1940s and 1950s, colored and so-called white elites made every effort to separate themselves from black islanders at public events. Prior to such gatherings, elite young women arranged with their male cousins and friends to be chosen as dance partners in the event that black, non-elite boys attempted to ask them for a dance.¹³⁹ Similar social exclusion occurred on Providence Island. In preparation for private parties, elite families passed around an invitation list requesting the agreement of all potential attendees before confirming the event. This act allowed prominent islanders to exclude from the inner circle of elites upwardly mobile islanders deemed undesirable.¹⁴⁰

Elite islanders accumulated wealth through their participation in the coconut industry, seafaring, and professional careers. As one of the largest landowners on San Andrés, David L. May used his earnings to send his son Arthur to the Tuskegee Institute in the United States. Arthur returned to the island and opened one of the largest merchant houses transporting

¹³⁷ Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 95.

¹³⁸ Duffis, *A Blessed Heritage*, 43-49.

¹³⁹ Desir, "Between Loyalties," 102.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

coconuts and other exports, and selling imported goods on San Andrés.¹⁴¹ David L. May also had a daughter named Sarah who married Milciades P. Martínez, the son of Políodoro Martínez and Rebecca Bowie. This union joined together two of the largest landowning families on San Andrés in that period.¹⁴²

The largest landowner on Providence was Captain Frederick Robinson, who murdered a man in order to get his property and was imprisoned in Cartagena for a number of years. In addition to his extensive landholdings, he also owned several schooners and transported cargo to neighboring ports.¹⁴³ Robinson's wealth extended to members of his family. His brother Tim resided on San Andrés and was also quite affluent. "He had over 100 acres of coconut plantation that his wife, Jane Bowie, inherited, he had his own boat, he sold provisions, he was president of the municipal council, and his brother Frederick Robinson was the richest person in Old Providence," one islander explained.¹⁴⁴

Caribbean and North American immigrants also entered the ranks of the upper echelon as shopkeepers, sea captains, and merchant-traders. In several cases, marital ties with established families solidified their position. Alexander Abrahams, a Jamaican Jew, arrived in the 1850s and formed an important alliance through his marriage with Catherine Bernard, a daughter of a wealthy Afro-Caribbean landowner.¹⁴⁵ His literacy and fluency in Spanish and English enabled

¹⁴¹ Interview with Ida Vélez de Bustillo, 23 February 2006, San Andrés; interview with Cecilia Francis Hall, 22 March 2006, San Andrés.

¹⁴² Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 101.

¹⁴³ Interview with Hazel Robinson Abrahams, 13 December 2005, Bogotá; Wilson, *Crab Antics*, 63-64.

¹⁴⁴ Duffis, *A Blessed Heritage*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ María Cristina Laverde Toscano, "La cultura isleña en la vida de la mujer: Miss Iris Abrahams, símbolo del mestizaje en el archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia," *Hojas Universitarias: Revista de la Universidad Central* (Bogotá: Universidad Central, 1991), 173-175.

him to take on government jobs and, later, he accumulated wealth from his wife's property. Isidore E. Rubenstein, a Russian-American Jew, and his son Luís became the owners of the most important merchant house on San Andrés. Called the Stanco, it was stocked with American books, clothes, food, and other goods.¹⁴⁶ Rubenstein earned much of his wealth through extending credit to islanders who mortgaged their properties to him. He quickly became a large property owner.¹⁴⁷ Mr. Rubenstein had a reputation for his charity, including occasional donations to First Baptist Church.¹⁴⁸ Finally, brothers and merchants Ambrose and Henry Bradley, and William and John A. Matheson became prominent San Andrés residents.¹⁴⁹ San Andrés smallholders occasionally lashed out at these foreign merchant-traders who benefited most from the export trade in coconuts.¹⁵⁰

Especially on San Andrés, island elites adopted cultural behavior and values that sought to distinguish them from the majority of islanders. They took great pride in speaking standard English; elites never spoke Creole to each other or with foreigners.¹⁵¹ The island elite assumed, correctly, that North American visitors disliked the localized language. During the 1840s, North American Charles Bell spent his childhood in Bluefields and wrote disparagingly about the Creolized language they spoke. "It was a jargon of English, which left to itself, would soon have become a distinct language. As a boy I learned it in no time, and for years after my sister had a

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Cecilia Francis Hall, 22 March 2006, San Andrés.

¹⁴⁷ Eduardo de Armas and Francis A. Newball. *Visitas de Practicas de la Notaria*. 15 April 1915. BBR, Carpeta 476.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Lina May de Kelly, 9 February 2006, San Andrés.

¹⁴⁹ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Francis A. Newball, "A Conflagration," *The Searchlight*, 1 February 1912; Gabriel Jiménez. "Importante Carta," *La Época*, 20 August 1912.

¹⁵¹ Isabel Clemente, "Educación, política, y conflicto político-cultural, 1886-1930" (MA thesis, Universidad de los Andes, 1991), 121.

hard task in bringing me back to pure English.”¹⁵² Colombian visitors also characterized Creole as broken or “corrupted” English.¹⁵³ Accordingly, elite islanders took great measures to ensure that their children learned standard English and received an American or British education. The wealthiest families sent their children to schools in Jamaica and a few attended colleges in the United States such as Tuskegee, Howard, and Fiske.¹⁵⁴ The coconut trade was indeed generous to a number of San Andrés and Providence islanders.

2.8 CONCLUSION

By the end of the nineteenth century, San Andrés and Providence had witnessed profound changes. Slavery had ended. Former masters and slaves struggled to find new ways of dealing and interacting with each other. Emancipated blacks sought out labor situations suitable to their needs, which infuriated former slave owners. While the introduction of coconut agriculture opened up avenues of social mobility previously closed to former slaves, San Andrés elites refused to allow emancipated blacks to benefit from this fledgling economy and targeted black smallholders and the landless poor. By the twentieth century, San Andrés elites, most of whom were colored, had consolidated their control over the coconut industry and succeeded in thwarting black islanders’ attempts to acquire an independent livelihood.

¹⁵² Charles N. Bell, *Tangweera: life and adventures among gentle savages*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1899), 19.

¹⁵³ Gabriel Jiménez, “Informe del Prefecto de la Provincia de San Andrés,” *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 2 October 1912.

¹⁵⁴ In the 1810s, American ship captain Jacob Dunham noted that Sarah Taylor of Providence had received an education in Jamaica. Dunham, *Journal of Voyages*, 49; Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 41.

Beyond these restrictions, the coconut industry solidified islanders' commercial ties with the British Caribbean and introduced them to North American markets. Their contact with US traders also elevated them into a small yet profitable coconut enclave. Yet in spite of these social and economical changes, islanders were still governed by officials seemingly uninterested in their concerns or wellbeing. In the years to come, island elites pondered how to achieve political influence consonant with their social and economic position.

3.0 THE PROVINCE OF PROVIDENCE, 1887-1912

From 1887 to 1912, the islands of San Andrés and Providence were administered by the Department of Bolívar, with its capital in Cartagena. During those years, islanders repeatedly complained to federal authorities in Bogotá about the abuses and malfeasance of departmental administrators. When Panama seceded from Colombia in 1903, some islanders pushed for the archipelago to do the same. Those proposals were ultimately rejected; but in the years 1903 to 1912, elite islanders continued to complain and agitate against departmental rule. They drafted and distributed community petitions as well as wrote and published editorials demanding a change in government. In doing so, island elites participated in the national debates over the future of these Caribbean islands.

Those debates were prompted by the Colombian government's fears of losing the islands just as they lost Panama. Given their proximity to Caribbean ports and the Panama Canal, the islands became viewed as a strategic territory. As part of a larger project of securing national borders and rebuilding the Colombian nation, during the first decade of the 1900s politicians and the federal government became increasingly concerned with the islands. That concern provided islanders with a political opening, which they did not hesitate to seize, to escape departmental rule and obtain direct access to the federal government in Bogotá. Petitions, appeals, and claims-making by island elites played a central role in that process.

3.1 DEPARTMENTAL RULE

In the 1880s, Conservatives and Independent Liberals united to counteract the federalist policies promoted in previous decades by Liberal politicians. Their criticisms centered on the weakening of the executive branch and worries that federalism granted too much power to regional elites.¹⁵⁵ This rising opposition culminated in a transfer of power to a coalition led by Rafael Núñez, which proceeded to enact a program of reforms known collectively as the “Regeneración”. This program focused on administrative centralization, capitalist modernization, a strong presidency, and a renewed alliance between the state and the Catholic Church. In addition, proponents such as Miguel Antonio Caro promoted a Colombian national identity based on Hispanic culture, Spanish language, and moral and Catholic teachings.¹⁵⁶

This program was realized in the Constitution of 1886, the central objective of which was to “guarantee order in the country.”¹⁵⁷ It extended the presidential term to six years and granted presidents the right to appoint governors, who in turn selected the mayors. The constitution thus sought to reduce the power of regional elites and strengthen that of the central government. States were renamed and called departments. These new territorial units retained some taxes; others passed to the central government under a new elective administrative branch called the

¹⁵⁵ Frank Safford and Marco Palacios. *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 244; David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 142.

¹⁵⁶ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 143.

¹⁵⁷ Jorge Orlando Melo, “La Constitución de 1886,” *Nueva Historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta, 1989), 48.

Departmental Assembly. The constitution also limited individual rights, censored the press, reinstated the death penalty, and restricted voting rights to propertied and literate men.¹⁵⁸

The 1886 Constitution returned island administration to the Department of Bolívar, with its capital in Cartagena.¹⁵⁹ Island elites initially welcomed their new departmental administrators. On January 23, 1887, San Andrés municipal councilmen praised President Rafael Núñez and the departmental authorities, who they hoped would guarantee their “constitutional rights” in the “interest of citizens.”¹⁶⁰ The governor of Bolívar converted the territory of San Andrés and Providence into the Province of Providence, composed of three districts: San Andrés, San Luís, and Providence, with San Andrés as the capital, located near the principal port of San Luís.¹⁶¹ Initially, the province only had a few administrators which included a prefect, an official interpreter, and a *portero*.¹⁶² A year later, the prefecture grew to include additional officials: a circuit judge and his secretary, two municipal judges, two public notaries, two schoolteachers, a fiscal agent, tax collectors, an *alcalde*, and a *corregidor*.¹⁶³ The police force consisted of four

¹⁵⁸ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 143.

¹⁵⁹ Gibson, *Constitutions of Colombia*, 315.

¹⁶⁰ “Proposición aprobada por la Municipalidad del Corregimiento de San Andrés, en session 1o de enero de 1887,” *Registro de Bolívar*, 10 October 1887.

¹⁶¹ “Decreto número 305 por el cual se erige en Provincia el Territorio de San Andrés y San Luís de Providencia,” *Registro de Bolívar*, 10 October 1887.

¹⁶² Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 20.

¹⁶³ *Registro de Bolívar*, 10 October 1887.

officers.¹⁶⁴ The districts of San Andrés and Providence each had a municipal council made of five elected members to manage local issues such as roadway repair and public works.¹⁶⁵

In 1890 Prefect Juan C. Ramírez in his annual report offered insight into public administration on the islands. He called his superiors' attention to the fact that the islands' 3,000 inhabitants were English-speaking Protestants and urged the government to take the necessary steps to incorporate them into the nation. "It can be said that these people are foreigners in their [own] country", stressed Ramírez. "These circumstances", he explained, "in addition to the commercial ties that they have with the United States, easily explain the desire they have to belong to that nation. Only by force do they accept the title Colombian."¹⁶⁶ Colombian cartographer Francisco Vergara had documented similar attitudes two years earlier. The islanders' "ambition is to call themselves British subjects or American citizens and not Colombians, since they believe these countries would offer them a better government and more effective protection."¹⁶⁷

Ramírez informed his superiors that departmental officials were trying to eradicate these ethnic differences. They had opened a public school in the district of San Andrés but were unable to find competent English-speaking teachers. For this reason, many departmental officials in

¹⁶⁴ Cabrera Ortiz, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 109.

¹⁶⁵ Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 33.

¹⁶⁶ "...puede decirse que este pueblo es extranjero en su misma patria. Estas circunstancias, unidas á las relaciones comerciales que tiene con los Estados Unidos de América, con los cuales lo une el poderoso lazo del idioma, explican fácilmente el deseo que manifiesta de pertenecer á esa Nación, y el que, solo por fuerza, acepte el título de colombiano." Juan C. Ramírez. "Informe del Prefecto de la Provincia de San Andrés," 8 May 1890, *Informe del Gobernador de Bolívar a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1890*.

¹⁶⁷ "...por más que su ambición sea la de llamarse súbditos ingleses o ciudadanos americanos y no colombianos, por creer que aquellas naciones mantendrían en la isla mejor gobierno y le prestaría más eficaz protección." Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 27.

Cartagena mistakenly believed no schools existed in San Andrés and Providence. Ramírez corrected them. There were ten private schools, one of which was the primary school at First Baptist Church administered by a “competent Jamaican” and enrolling some 50 island boys and girls.¹⁶⁸ Prefect Ramírez explained that these schools taught neither “our language nor our religion nor our history.”¹⁶⁹ He believed that the issue of public schools contributed to the antipathy islanders felt toward local officials.

There were few tangible indications of departmental authority on San Andrés and Providence. There was a total of eight office buildings, all made of wood at an estimated value of two thousand pesos. The department rented offices for the provincial government and the circuit court. The local administration did not even have a jail and had to lease “a small wooden house only ten feet long by five feet wide.” Consequently, Ramírez requested that the departmental assembly allocate funds to purchase an office building. Two roadways facilitated communication among the different island settlements, as well as two “magnificent ports” visited regularly by foreign ships.¹⁷⁰

Examining the problems associated with the administration of San Andrés and Providence, Ramírez urged his superiors to reconsider his 1888 proposal to transfer the islands to another department. The impoverished islanders tended to emigrate elsewhere in search of better employment opportunities, and produced too little revenue to cover the expenses of the

¹⁶⁸ The church’s pastor, Philip Beekman Livingston, recruited George Hodgson and, later headmaster Josiah Cranston from Jamaica to teach at the school. Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 96.

¹⁶⁹ Ramírez, “Informe del Prefecto,” 43.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 44. Prefect P.A Carbonell visited a province in the Department of Bolívar and noticed the “poverty of government” there, too. See Eduardo Posada-Carbó, *The Colombian Caribbean: A Regional History, 1870-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 256.

administration. The Department of Panama, Ramírez suggested, should administer the islands. Besides stressing the physical proximity, he argued that Panamanians were more familiar with commercial transactions involving the United States and other countries in the circum-Caribbean. Ramírez pointed out that they even used the same money, most likely US currency that circulated in Panama and San Andrés at that time. “The special laws that govern that department are more in line with the needs of this region.” The Department of Bolívar, moreover, had difficulties even maintaining regular contact with the islands via a postal service.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, departmental officials in Cartagena did not pursue Ramirez’s proposal.

The problems Ramírez raised in his 1890 report continued to plague departmental administrators. Fiscal penury, poor communications, inadequate schools, and a cultural rift between mainland officials and islanders characterized public life in the years from 1890 to 1910. A sparse written record has concealed much about these years of departmental rule. It is clear, however, that administrative deficiencies worsened in the aftermath of a hurricane that devastated San Andrés in October 1908. The storm destroyed one hundred homes and about a million palm trees and coconuts, the principal wealth of the island. Maximiliano Vélez, a former prefect and resident, estimated that seventy percent of the palm trees were completely destroyed, representing a loss of two hundred thousand pesos in gold.¹⁷² This natural disaster impoverished many San Andrés farmers and landowners, who sought refuge and charity from their neighbors.

¹⁷¹ “...las leyes especiales que rigen ese Departamento están más en consonancia con las necesidades de esta region y con la franquicia de sus puertos.” Ibid. 44. A Panamanian reporter begged for improved transport in the port of Colón, too. He noted that a trip to San Andrés took between sixteen and eighteen days. See *The Colon Telegram*, 12 March 1893.

¹⁷² Maximiliano E. Vélez to Secretario de Gobierno (Bolívar), 18 November 1908, AGN, MG, SP, T. 611, F. 200; Governor Gerónimo Martínez to President Rafael Reyes, 4 November 1908, Telegram, AGN, MG, SP, T. 611, F. 202.

On behalf of the island population, Vélez requested that the Department of Bolívar send disaster relief funds and suspend the export tax on coconuts.

The first measure, he said, would show the islanders that departmental officials cared for their welfare. “Because the inhabitants of this archipelago differ from us in their religion, language, and customs, they believe that they cannot count on anything from the Colombian government,” wrote Vélez. “That belief,” he explained was rooted in “various petitions directed to [the Colombian] government in previous years referring to analogous cases that have never been answered.” With regard to the suspension of the tax on coconuts, Vélez pointed out that the tax forced local producers to lower their prices considerably in order to compete in the international market. With a tax suspension, San Andrés farmers would have the opportunity to improve their livelihood and pull themselves out of debt.¹⁷³ Governor Gerónimo Martínez informed President Rafael Reyes of the hurricane and requested that the federal government grant Vélez’s request for disaster relief funds.¹⁷⁴ In December 1908, President Reyes informed the Department of Bolívar that the central government agreed to send relief funds and to suspend the export tax for an undisclosed period of time.¹⁷⁵

Two years later, departmental authorities in Cartagena once again turned their attention toward the islands. Governor José María de la Vega appointed Eugenio Garnica, a former

¹⁷³ “...porque los habitantes del Archipiélago que difieren de los demás del país en su religión, en idioma, y en costumbres, creen que no deben contar para nada con el Gobierno colombiano.—Tal creencia que conviene desarraigar, procede de que cuantas peticiones han dirigido a dicho gobierno, en años anteriores y referentes a casos análogos del que me ocupo, no han sido siquiera contestado.” Maximiliano E. Vélez to Secretario de Gobierno (Bolívar), 18 November 1908, AGN, MG, SP, T.611, F.201.

¹⁷⁴ President Rafael Reyes to Governor Gerónimo Martínez, Telegram, 6 November 1908, AGN, MG, SP, T. 611, F.221.

¹⁷⁵ A. Bedoya Restrepo (Jefe de la Sección Primera), Memorandum, 9 December 1908, AGN, MG, SP, T. 611, F. 204.

general in the Thousand Days' War (1900-1903), as the new prefect and instructed him to conduct a thorough investigation of public administration and life on the islands. Garnica painted a gloomy portrait. There were no telegraphs or other forms of communication to connect the islands to the mainland. The postal service was unreliable. Barely any progress had been made toward public works.¹⁷⁶ Roadways were in poor condition with limited funds to start or even to finish projects. The school lacked competent teachers, or even blackboards, tables, and chairs.¹⁷⁷

Governor de la Vega sought to address these issues and several others. On January 18, 1910, he granted the request of Archbishop Adam Pedro Brioschi to allocate one hundred pesos in gold monthly to the Catholic mission on San Andrés and Providence supervised by an American missionary.¹⁷⁸ The priest gratefully accepted the governor's generosity, since for years he had begged the local authorities to assist the apostolic mission to no avail.¹⁷⁹ The governor also appointed a principal for the girls' school on San Andrés, though it is unclear whether the woman ever took up her responsibilities.¹⁸⁰ Sanitation and hygiene issues were addressed by convening a Board of Public Health that included the prefect and two island residents.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Eugenio Garnica. "Informe del Prefecto de la Provincia de Providence, *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 25 May 1910. Officials and residents consistently noted the poor mail service on San Andrés and Providence. See *Registro de Bolívar*, Cartagena, 3 November 1887; *Registro de Bolívar*, Cartagena, 10 March 1897; Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, SSJ, 16 October 1908.

¹⁷⁷ Eugenio Garnica and Timothy St. John, "Visita," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 4 June 1910.

¹⁷⁸ "Decreto número 31," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 12 February 1910.

¹⁷⁹ Timothy St. John to F.A. Gómez Pérez, 17 July 1908, Banco de la República, Centro de Documentación, San Andrés (thereafter, BBR, CD).

¹⁸⁰ "Decreto número 32," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 12 February 1910.

¹⁸¹ "Decreto número 94," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 26 March 1910.

Most importantly, the governor raised taxes. On February 24, 1910, he increased the coconut export tax to \$2.00 pesos in gold per thousand exported coconuts, with half the revenue devoted to public works and the other half to purchase an office building.¹⁸² The governor also raised import duties to twenty-five percent on all goods with the exception of tobacco, cigarettes, and liquor, which paid a fifty-percent tax.¹⁸³ Some elite islanders praised the Department of Bolívar for showing interest in their welfare. The Board of Public Works in Providence commended Eugenio Garnica, who had assured the men that departmental authorities would address their concerns. Others, however, opposed the tax increase and began to mobilize in opposition.

On March 1, 1911, Francis A. Newball entered the departmental assembly as an elected deputy for the islands of San Andrés and Providence.¹⁸⁴ Never had the assembly hosted an islander representative. Gabriel O'Byrne, editor of the Cartagena newspaper *El Porvenir*, sarcastically suggested that islanders had only voted for Newball because the other candidates were unknown.¹⁸⁵ Newball came from a prominent Providence family with a long history of participating in local politics. His grandfather and father held posts as prefect and circuit judge in previous governments. Francis Newball had attended law school at the University of Cartagena and returned to work in various administrative positions in San Andrés. During the Thousand Days' War he served as the official interpreter, being paid fifty pesos in paper currency per

¹⁸² "Decreto número 93 que reglamenta el impuesto sobre la exportación de cocos en la Provincia de Providence," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 19 March 1910.

¹⁸³ "Decreto número 88," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 26 March 1910.

¹⁸⁴ "Candidatos Conservadores para Diputado a la Asamblea de Bolívar," *El Caribe*, 21 January 1911.

¹⁸⁵ Gabriel O'Byrne, "Elecciones en Providence" *El Porvenir*, 21 February 1911.

month.¹⁸⁶ Later, he served as circuit judge on San Andrés and now, in 1911, as assembly deputy for San Andrés and Providence.

At the assembly sessions, Newball carried a heavy burden. His mission was to advocate for policies that favored islanders. Of all the issues pertaining to the islands, Newball argued most fiercely for a reduction on the export tax on coconuts. Before the hurricane of 1908, the island of San Andrés exported between twelve and fourteen million coconuts annually.¹⁸⁷ By 1911, exports had fallen to eight million per year.¹⁸⁸ San Andrés exporters and farmers believed the tax adversely impacted their position in an increasingly competitive international coconut market.¹⁸⁹

The assembly debate over taxation on coconuts caught the attention of assembly president and soon-to-be senator Lácides Segovia, who used his own newspaper, *La Época*, to cover the debate. He supported Newball's efforts to suspend the export tax, which Segovia called illegal and arbitrarily imposed. He contended that the tax on coconuts came out of a national decree to raise funds for the Thousand Days' War, which was then annulled by Law 30 of 1903. Article six of Law 30 stated that, with the exception of cattle, pigs, *tagua*, and forest products, no product could be taxed for either national or departmental revenue. The departmental governor had ignored this legislation and in departmental Decree 15, on October 22, 1903, had imposed a

¹⁸⁶Francis A. Newball to Editor of El Caribe, *The Searchlight*, 1 August 1912.

¹⁸⁷James Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 29.

¹⁸⁸ Santiago Guerrero to Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 462.

¹⁸⁹ Lácides Segovia, "San Andrés de Providence" *La Época*, 1 April 1911.

tax of \$1.00 silver per thousand coconuts exported from the Province of Providence. Segovia contended that this measure was illegal.¹⁹⁰

Newball partially succeeded. The departmental assembly tabled the discussion of the coconut export tax but shortly thereafter reduced the tax from \$2.00 to \$0.60 in silver per thousand coconuts. The assembly also approved measures to open additional schools on the islands and to provide scholarships to island youth to study in mainland Colombia.¹⁹¹ There were also proposals to improve the postal service and public roads.¹⁹² Yet several months later, San Andrés and Providence islanders were still waiting for funds to implement these measures.¹⁹³

Meanwhile, departmental officials in Cartagena continued to impose new taxes on the island population. Only a few months after the assembly sessions ended, Germán Amador arrived as the province's new financial administrator and informed residents that the commercial duty on imported goods had been increased. A correspondent for *El Porvenir* reported that every man, woman, and child was ready to sign a petition begging the central government to remove them from the Department of Bolívar.¹⁹⁴ Some islanders even boycotted local shops in response to the duty imposed on them.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*; Santiago Guerrero provided a different figure and date for the departmental decree of 1903. Guerrero said the decree was established on December 18, 1903 increasing the tax on coconuts to \$2.00 gold. See Santiago Guerrero to Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 462.

¹⁹¹ "Decreto número 88," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, Cartagena, 25 mayo 1910; *Ordenanzas y Resoluciones expedidas por la Asamblea Departamental de Bolívar: en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1911* (Cartagena: Edición Oficial, 1911), 118-119.

¹⁹² Francis A. Newball, "Departmental Assembly," *The Searchlight*, 1 March 1912.

¹⁹³ Santiago Guerrero to Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 457.

¹⁹⁴ Gabriel O'Byrne, "Lo que pasa en San Andrés: los habitantes se quejan," *El Porvenir*, 5 May 1911.

¹⁹⁵ Eugenio Garnica, "Carta," *The Searchlight*, 15 March 1912.

On October 10, 1911, Governor Rafael D. Calvo increased the tax on coconuts to \$2.00 gold per thousand, further enraging San Andrés merchants and farmers. Most egregious to islanders was that the departmental governor demanded that the increase be applied immediately. This measure destroyed any remnant of trust elite islanders had in the Department of Bolívar, and they began to look for ways to remove the islands from departmental rule.

3.2 FEDERAL INTERVENTION

At that very moment, after decades of bipartisan conflict the country's two principal political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, were reconciling and beginning to focus on their shattered nation. Leading them in this effort was President Carlos E. Restrepo, a Conservative, elected by the Colombian Congress in 1910. His agenda focused on rebuilding the economy, reaffirming Colombian nationalism, securing national borders, and incorporating frontier populations, such as the San Andrés and Providence islanders.¹⁹⁶

The presence of the United States in the circum-Caribbean increasingly alarmed federal authorities. In 1903 the United States had forcibly removed Panama from Colombia and, the following year, started construction of the inter-oceanic canal. American companies and individuals were also investing heavily in Colombia, which had not gone unnoticed by embittered Colombians. A growing number of Colombians, increasingly resentful of US political

¹⁹⁶ Beginning in the 1890s, national authorities redirected efforts toward integrating their frontier areas and people into the nation. Most such efforts concentrated on sparsely populated or mineral-rich areas such as the Llanos and the Chocó. See Jane Rausch, *Colombia: Territorial Rule and the Llanos Frontier* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999); Claudia Leal, "Black Forests: The Pacific Lowlands of Colombia, 1850-1930" (PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2004).

and economic power, lashed out against political and religious figures seemingly in favor of the United States government.¹⁹⁷ A concern for national security coincided with a change of government in Bogotá, which propelled federal interest in strengthening Colombia's economic, political, and military presence in the Caribbean.¹⁹⁸

Responding to these concerns, President Restrepo sent his nephew, Pedro Pablo Restrepo, and a fiscal administrator to San Andrés and Providence to gather information about the political situation on the islands. After five months of investigation, Restrepo presented a disturbing report on departmental rule in San Andrés and Providence. He described the political situation as dangerous.¹⁹⁹ This was partly due to the corrupt departmental authorities, who were more interested in filling their own pockets than in public administration. "San Andrés has been exploited in a cruel and barbaric manner for some time by authorities."²⁰⁰ For decades, Bolívar officials Maximiliano E. Vélez, Juan Arias, and Héctor Brid, acting as "caciques," had controlled the positions of prefect, secretary, and fiscal administrator. They alternated in these three positions and retained government power in their hands. This arrangement was left undisturbed by new arrivals Eugenio Garnica and later, Rafael de H. Morales, who came to replace them as prefects. The newly-appointed officials joined Vélez, Brid, and Arias in their corrupt

¹⁹⁷ In early 1910, a hostile mob attacked former minister to the United States, Enrique Cortés, and his wife in Barranquilla. That same year, a mob stoned an American school in Bogotá and the U.S. legation. See Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 91. In December 1910, Archbishop Adam Brioschi of Cartagena also was driven out of the city when an angry mob attacked him after he sold church property to Americans. See Román Vega Cantor, *Gente muy rebelde*, vol. 3, *Mujeres, artesanos y protestas cívicas* (Bogotá: Ediciones Pensamiento Crítico, 2002), 18-19.

¹⁹⁸ Eastman Arango, "Creación de la Intendencia."

¹⁹⁹ Pedro Pablo Restrepo to President Carlos E Restrepo, 25 August 1910, in Colombia, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F.238.

²⁰⁰ "San Andres ha sido desde tiempo explotado por sus autoridades de una manera cruel y bárbara." Ibid.

activities.²⁰¹ The consolidation of state power in the hands of a few officials allowed them to hire and to fire employees at will.

A few months earlier, Salustiano Ramírez and Germán Restrepo, former coast guards on San Andrés, had submitted complaints about these departmental authorities to Governor José de la Vega. In their complaints, Restrepo and Ramírez accused departmental authorities of introducing contraband goods and committing other arbitrary acts. These former employees claimed to have been fired after refusing to participate in the illicit trade.²⁰² “Here one sees things that do not happen in any other part of the Republic,” wrote Restrepo concerning the activities of departmental authorities.²⁰³ Ramírez pointed out that the departmental employees who replaced himself and Restrepo had previously served as coastguards and were allies of Vélez, Brid, and Arias, who “need them to facilitate the contraband trade.”²⁰⁴

Possible alliances between departmental authorities and U.S. residents on San Andrés also alarmed Pedro Restrepo. He suggested that departmental officials received bribes from U.S. merchants such as Henry and Ambrose Bradley, William and John Matheson, and Isidore E. Rubenstein and his son. Restrepo informed the president of leases that permitted North American residents to rent nearby cays for 20-year periods, paying only eight pesos annually.²⁰⁵ Vélez,

²⁰¹ Ibid. 239.

²⁰² Germán Restrepo to Governor José de la Vega, 29 June 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 253-354; Salustiano Ramírez to Governor José de la Vega, 29 June 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 258.

²⁰³ “...aquí se ve lo que no pasa en ninguna otra parte de la República.” Germán Restrepo to Governor José de la Vega, 29 June 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 253-254.

²⁰⁴ Salustiano Ramírez to Governor José de la Vega, 29 June 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 258.

²⁰⁵ Pedro Pablo Restrepo to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 25 August 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 241. See the contracts, Contract, 25 April 1904, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 415; Contract, 1 July 1904, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 413; Contract, 1 June 1904, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 151; Contract, 1 June 1907, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 416; Contract, 16 February 1908, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 414.

Brid, and their cronies were able to commit these acts because they received support from higher authorities in Cartagena. Governor José de la Vega, for instance, was a relative of both, and Lácides Segovia included them in his patronage circle.²⁰⁶ Governor de la Vega denied these allegations, said that he also found the leases with the U.S. residents outrageous, and called for their immediate nullification.²⁰⁷

Restrepo noted frustration on the part of islanders, too. Disgusted by departmental authorities, the municipal council of Providence abstained from participating in the election for a deputy to represent them at the departmental assembly in Cartagena. The councilmen explained that the Colombian government appointed officials who only sought to deplete their scarce riches and demanded islanders' votes upon arrival. The San Andrés municipal council members only participated in the election because public employees held four of the five council seats.²⁰⁸

Restrepo confided to the president that Colombia might lose the islands to another country. "Today one speaks with uncertainty in Colón, Panama, of these islands becoming a part of what the Americans and Nicaraguans call the 'New Nicaragua,' or to say, the entire Atlantic littoral of those Republics and their neighboring islands," he reported.²⁰⁹ The following year, a Jamaican newspaper reported the United States government's interest in securing the islands of

²⁰⁶ The exact nature of the ties between Vélez and Segovia is unclear. One hypothesis is that, as a member of a leading Cartagena family, Vélez had strong ties to the Bolívar senator. Another hypothesis is Vélez and Segovia knew each other as both fought in the Thousand Days War. Pedro Pablo Restrepo to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 25 August 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F.239.

²⁰⁷ Governor José María de la Vega to Minister of Government Pedro María Carreño, 23 November 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 229-236.

²⁰⁸ Pedro Pablo Restrepo to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 25 August 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 240.

²⁰⁹ "*Hoy se habla con incertidumbre en Colón, Panamá de que aquellas islas formaron parte de --muy en breve de lo que los americanos y nicaragüenses llaman Nueva Nicaragua, es decir, todo el litoral Atlántico de aquellas Repúblicas y sus vecinas islas.*" Ibid.

San Andrés and Providence as a coaling station, given their proximity to Panama.²¹⁰ There were also reports that Japan was interested in the islands.²¹¹

Even more distressing was the knowledge that there were islanders who desired to form part of another nation and had already tried to make this happen. In November 1903, a group of disgruntled islanders sent a petition to the provisional Panamanian government asking them to annex the islands of San Andrés and Providence.²¹² A commission arrived on the US gunboat *Nashville* to meet with islanders regarding their separating from Colombia. In the end, a committee of a few prominent islanders and mainland residents agreed to stay loyal to Colombia.²¹³ Eugenio Garnica reported that islanders feared the treatment they would receive under racist North Americans.²¹⁴ Despite the committee's refusal to join Panama, local officials alerted their superiors of the situation on the island, who sent an occupation force of some five hundred men to protect the island from any foreign incursions.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Rafael de H. Morales, "Nuestras islas misteriosas," *El Porvenir*, 8 December 1911.

²¹¹ Pedro Pablo Restrepo to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 25 August 1910, AGN, MG, SP, T. 650, F. 240; Gónzalo Pérez to Minister of Foreign Relations, 1913. Japan also watched the progress of the Panama Canal, seeing the waterway as furthering the development of its trade with Latin America. See "Japan and the Canal," *Christian Science Monitor*, 26 April 1911.

²¹² "Las islas misteriosas," *El Porvenir*, Cartagena, 16 September 1911; Secretary of Government (Bolívar) to Minister of Government, 27 January 1912, BBR, Folder 469.

²¹³ The committee included David May, Maximiliano Vélez, Carlos Vélez, Francis Newball, and Theodore Corpus. See Galindo-Díaz, *Monografía del Archipiélago*, 66-67. Panamanian newspapers inquired if the islands were to join Panamanian secessionists. "Want Islands for Panama," *New York Times*, 30 November 1903.

²¹⁴ Garnica arrived to San Andrés in 1910, but had clearly known of this incident and the reasons prominent islanders decided to remain with Colombia. Eugenio Garnica. "Nuestras islas misteriosas," *El Porvenir*, Cartagena, 6 December 1911. Present-day accounts of this incident also make note of islanders' reluctance to face US-style racism as part of Panamanian territory. See interview with Fidel Corpus Suárez, 22 February 2006.

²¹⁵ "Islands May Revolt, Too," *New York Times*, 10 January 1904.

Fearing the possible loss of the islands, President Restrepo decided to remove the territory from the Department of Bolívar. The next year, the Minister of Government, Pedro María Carreño, introduced a bill in Congress to create a new administrative status for the Caribbean islands, an intendency to be governed directly by federal authorities. Discussion of the bill was postponed to the following year after representatives from the Department of Bolívar vigorously attacked the project.²¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Restrepo administration prepared to send another commission to collect a more detailed report on San Andrés and Providence, which would be used to assist them in governing the island territory.

On November 27, 1911, President Carlos Restrepo appointed Santiago Guerrero to take the national census of San Andrés and Providence.²¹⁷ Guerrero was probably chosen for this position because he had previously served as a port inspector at San Andrés in 1909; very few officials in Bogotá had ever traveled to the faraway islands.²¹⁸ Guerrero was also instructed to thoroughly describe the economy, history, and society of San Andrés and Providence, a project last performed nearly a quarter of a century ago by Francisco Javier Vergara. Pedro Restrepo's 1910 report had barely discussed the island population, focusing instead on the islands' acute administrative problems. Federal authorities in Bogotá needed to know more about the population they intended to govern.

²¹⁶ Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 457-458.

²¹⁷ "Decreto Número 1089 de 1911," *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 27 November, 1911.

²¹⁸ Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 462.

Guerrero found islanders even more angry than usual with departmental authorities.²¹⁹ Several prominent islanders complained of the increased tax on coconuts and their general unhappiness with the Department of Bolívar. Departmental authorities oppressed them daily with new taxes from which the islanders received no benefits.²²⁰ Guerrero concluded that their anger was justified.²²¹ His report confirmed Restrepo's earlier conclusions. No material progress had been made on the islands, and there was not even a cemetery to bury the dead.²²² The public schools were in poor condition. There were only four, evenly divided between San Andrés and Providence and staffed by Jamaicans who spoke no Spanish and knew nothing of the history of Colombia.²²³ Postal service was infrequent and even official correspondence from Cartagena was frequently lost.²²⁴

Guerrero also called attention to the U.S. residents living on the islands, whom he perceived as an "imminent threat."²²⁵ American residents were increasingly acquiring property on the islands, he reported, which drew the United States government directly into Colombian

²¹⁹ Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño (Ministro de Gobierno), 8 July 1912, in Colombia, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 456.

²²⁰ Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 475. These individuals were Pastor Felix A. Howard (Providence), Victor Abrahams (San Andres), Cleveland Hawkins (Providence), Joshua Pomare (San Andres), Ephraim B. Archbold (Providence), Lorenzo D. Howard (Providence), Daniel J. Bent (San Andrés), Oswald L. Robinson (San Andrés), Sam A. Newball (Providence), John James (San Andrés), Alejandro Archbold (Providence), Meschel Forbes (San Andrés), Federico Archbold (Providence), William A. Taylor (Providence), Julio Robinson (Providence), Wallace Hayes (San Andrés), Holfermes Forbes (San Andrés), William B. Forbes (San Andrés), M. Vélez Forbes (San Andrés), and Percival R. Robinson (Providence).

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 456.

²²² *Ibid.*, 455.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 466.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 468.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 472.

affairs.²²⁶ Like other Colombians in the 1910s, Guerrero viewed the United States as an imperialist threat to the sovereignty of Colombia.²²⁷ Given islanders' historical propensity for dealing with Americans, Guerrero believed he had reasons to worry. Baptist minister Thomas Livingston caused further alarm with his Protestant "fanaticism" and close ties to the United States. Not only did Livingston have commercial relations with the United States, he also had an American wife. His influence extended far and wide; this troubled Guerrero.²²⁸

After listening to islanders' complaints, Guerrero informed them that the government had already presented a project to Congress to create a new territorial administration for San Andrés and Providence, which would now be governed directly by federal authorities in Bogotá. The proposed project would reduce taxes, improve public works, create more schools, provide scholarships, and build a stronger Catholic mission.²²⁹ Islanders had heard nothing of this state project, which Guerrero attributed to departmental authorities' efforts to prevent discussions of removal of the islands from their jurisdiction. He cautioned those islanders he met with that the project had not yet been approved, but pointed out that the government had already created new federal administrations for Putumayo and Caquetá.²³⁰ Hearing this news prompted elites on San Andrés and Providence to draft petitions in support of federal authorities' efforts to remove them

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 473.

²²⁷ See for example the cartoons in Luz Angela Núñez, "El rapto de Panamá en la caricatura política colombiana, 1903-1930," in *Colombia y Panamá: La metamorfosis de la nación en el siglo XX*, ed. Heraclio Bonilla and Gustavo Montañez (Bogotá: Unibiblos, 2004): 413-440.

²²⁸ Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 474.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 457.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 458.

from the Department of Bolívar. The Restrepo administration had offered them the opening they needed to transform their relationship with the Colombian state.

3.3 ELITE MOBILIZATION

San Andrés islanders swiftly responded to news of federal interest in removing their province from the Department of Bolívar. Two petitions, drafted only days apart, articulated islander grievances. On December 28, 1911, Baptist ministers Thomas B. Livingston and Felix A. Howard led nearly three hundred islanders in writing a petition to President Restrepo.²³¹ Reflecting the islands' close commercial ties and communication with the United States, Livingston sent this petition to the Colombian consul in New York and asked the consul to forward it to the president.²³² Fearing that it might not arrive, on January 4, 1912, islanders wrote another petition, with 250 signatures.²³³

In both petitions, islanders claimed that departmental authorities cared little for the material progress of the islands. Poor roadways and infrequent postal service greatly concerned islanders. "It is more than half of a century since we have opened up a system of parochial roads, and as a matter of fact, there have been absolutely no improvements made on them in all that

²³¹ Reprinted in *The Searchlight*, 15 August 1912.

²³² Santiago Guerrero to Minister Pedro María Carreño Carlos E. Restrepo, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 458.

²³³ Originally written in English, petition of Thomas B. Livingston and 249 petitioners to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 12 January 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 406-411.

time, save by voluntary work of natives,” wrote the petitioners in Spanish.²³⁴ Roadways were so badly paved that islanders still traveled around the island mostly by schooners. Mail arrived from mainland Colombia infrequently, even though the departmental government routinely awarded mail contracts. “We are so isolated with respect to the rest of the country ... on various occasions the mail has been late in coming by six months,” they protested.²³⁵

These situations embarrassed elite islanders, who “had enjoyed cultural advantages abroad” and found it “an awful thing to have to admit to any friend of another country such a condition as obtaining in the land of your nativity.”²³⁶ Most troubling was the inadequate and insufficient number of public schools on the islands. “We leave it to you to determine, according to your estimate of the percentage of youths, as to whether two small schools having buildings with a capacity for seating two hundred children, and with very poor facilities, at that, are enough; besides, we say, add that these have been in operation but three years, respectively,” they wrote. These schools were supervised by poorly qualified school teachers who did not even know the Spanish language.²³⁷

The petitions also spoke of the elite islanders’ concerns about taxation. The 1908 hurricane worsened the economic conditions of the islands and provoked elite islanders to resent departmental attempts to exact taxes. They pointed to the export tax, which was applied too harshly. “It does seem as if rather than encourage ‘Home Production,’ they depreciate it, for the

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 406.

²³⁵ Petition of Thomas B. Livingston, Felix A. Howard, and nearly 300 others, published in *The Searchlight*, 15 August 1912.

²³⁶ Petition of Thomas B. Livingston and 249 petitioners to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 12 January 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 406-411.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 407.

present ‘Tariff’...seems more favourable to ‘Import’ than to ‘Export’ duty, although itself is exorbitant, being 25%,” wrote the petitioners.²³⁸

Islanders warned the national government not to ignore their pleas for help again, informing President Restrepo that they had previously sent two petitions through their deceased leader, Reverend Brockholst Livingston. “Your Excellency ... be it known to you that we are weary of this present government over us, and we will have to take steps ourselves to gain Freedom from this yoke of Oppression, should you ignore our Petition and not help us; as much as we would deplore such action.”²³⁹ This statement appeared as a veiled threat to secede and possibly join Panama, largely controlled by the United States.

That same year, a frustrated Francis A. Newball created the archipelago’s first newspaper, *The Searchlight*, to open a public forum to discuss the future of the islands.²⁴⁰ Publishing articles, editorials, and letters to the editor in English and Spanish, he invited all residents, including departmental authorities, to participate in the public forum. “In establishing this Journal, our principal aim is to seek for the betterment of this archipelago, our native land. We shall attack all official acts which may be executed in detriment of the constitutional and legal rights of the islanders, whether said acts be of a national, departmental, or local character.”²⁴¹

²³⁸ Petition of Thomas B. Livingston and 249 petitioners to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 12 January 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F.407.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Hazel Robinson, “The Searchlight: un periódico isleño en 1912. ¿Se creían que a la isla iba a ser vendida, como Panamá?” *El Espectador Dominical*, 11 October 1959.

²⁴¹ Francis A. Newball, “Purpose of Paper,” *The Searchlight*, 1 February 1912.

In the inaugural issue, Newball attacked the governance of the Department of Bolívar and called for the creation of a national intendency. He bemoaned that “our people have been deprived, from time to time, of various rights and privileges of the Republic, by the arbitrary rulers of the Department of Bolívar, of which we are an integral part.” He repeated grievances against departmental authorities similar to those presented in the two island petitions, and gave assurance that every islander held such opinions. “These unjust measures have brought a general discontent, and we can say, without fear of incurring error, that every islander favors the movement made by the National Government to segregate these islands from the Department of Bolívar, with the object of converting them into a National Intendency.”²⁴²

Prominent islanders applauded Newball on his publication, and more importantly, its impact on the social and political life of San Andrés and Providence islanders. Victor Abrahams praised Newball and encouraged all islanders to contribute to its success. “We are in the days when a press is of a great social, political, and moral power, one so great that it cannot be overlooked by any individual who has the slightest desire for an improvement.”²⁴³ Agnew Duffis, a Dutch Caribbean resident of San Andrés, viewed the creation of the publication as a step toward progress. “In regard to your first issue, I was much delighted in getting its contents, and will say that it, in my poor opinion, means a betterment [sic] to us, the people of this isolated island, especially those who haven’t the privilege of learning beyond this, our benighted shore.”²⁴⁴ The municipal council of Providence affirmed Newball as a legitimate regional spokesperson. “We shall say that we believe your expressions are the genuine sentiments of the

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Victor Abrahams to Francis A. Newball, “A Well Wisher,” *The Searchlight*, 1 February 1912.

²⁴⁴ Agnew Duffis to Francis A. Newball, *The Searchlight*, 15 February 1912.

people of Providence,” the councilmen wrote.²⁴⁵ However, not every islander supported Francis Newball. In *The Searchlight*, Newball accused Simon Watson of encouraging islanders in his district not to purchase the newspaper.²⁴⁶

Through his publication, Newball promoted and documented island mobilization against the Department of Bolívar. In 1912, islanders elected officials to represent them in the municipal councils, spurred on by Newball, who advised islanders “to give their votes only to *prominent natives*.”²⁴⁷ Previous councils, especially on San Andrés, had had a significant number of former departmental authorities. These men failed to deliver. In taking back the municipal councils, islanders sought to wield more influence over public administration. It was the councilmen who directed funds to public works and primary schools. More importantly, the council elected a deputy to represent the islands at the departmental assembly sessions in Cartagena.

Newball congratulated the newly elected council members as “men [who] have the country’s interests at heart, and will not allow themselves to be carried by the current.”²⁴⁸ “We trust that when called upon to defend the country’s interest, they will know how to respond as genuine representatives of the people.”²⁴⁹ Upon taking office, the councils refused to elect a deputy to participate in the departmental assembly. Since Francis Newball had been elected the previous year as a deputy to advocate for policies favoring the betterment of the islands, and

²⁴⁵ Cleveland Hawkins, Felix A. Howard, and Julius C. Robinson to Francis A. Newball, “Congratulations,” *The Searchlight*, 1 March 1912.

²⁴⁶ Francis A. Newball, “A Malicious Act,” *The Searchlight*, 15 May 1912.

²⁴⁷ Italics in original. Francis A. Newball, “Election,” *The Searchlight*, 1 February 1912. .

²⁴⁸ Francis A. Newball, “Election,” *The Searchlight*, 15 February 1912.

²⁴⁹ Francis A. Newball, “Election in Providence,” *The Searchlight*, 1 March 1912.

having seen no results, many island notables feared a repeat performance. “We have resolved not to put in our appearance, thus proceeding in accordance with the desire of the majority of the people,” explained Newball. He predicted that the absence of an island deputy at the assembly session would not prevent departmental authorities in Cartagena from enacting policies on their behalf. Newball directed the community’s attention to these departmental measures. “If such a plan is adopted, we take the liberty of warning our country folks, regarding their mode of procedure, as in our opinion—that would only be an invitation similar to the one the spider made to the fly,” he wrote.²⁵⁰

The councilmen drafted more petitions to the president, again requesting that the national government remove the islands from the Department of Bolívar.²⁵¹ Echoing the sentiments expressed by islanders in earlier petitions, the municipal councils accused the departmental government of having neglected the welfare and progress of the island population in spite of “the numerous quantities of American gold islanders had produced and invested in the departmental treasury.”²⁵² The councilmen emphatically insisted on the archipelago’s transfer to the jurisdiction of the federal government.

²⁵⁰ Francis A. Newball, “Departmental Assembly,” *The Searchlight*, 1 March 1912.

²⁵¹ “Municipal Council of San Andrés,” *The Searchlight*, 15 August 1912.

²⁵² Petition of Municipal Council of Providence to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 22 March 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 448-449; Petition of Municipal Council of San Andrés to President Carlos E. Restrepo, 1 June 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 446-447.

3.4 REPERCUSSIONS

Islanders' actions did not go unnoticed: several Cartagena newspapers ran articles challenging islanders' complaints and the idea of a national intendancy for the islands. A public debate ensued, focused largely on issues of political autonomy and the loss of financial resources, in particular, the allocation of bureaucratic posts and public money. In an effort to impede the intendancy project, officials and concerned residents in Cartagena framed the debate over whether or not San Andrés and Providence should become an intendancy as a crisis—another Panamanian secession. Several newspaper editorials suggested that a few disgruntled island notables were rousing trouble for departmental officials and blaming the latter for the islands' depressed economic condition. These pro-Bolívar advocates repeatedly evoked images of Panama by painting islanders' protest against Bolívar officials as reminiscent of the traitorous secessionists. These public debates intensified in the summer and fall of 1912 as Congress deliberated on the project.

On January 27, 1912, Gabriel Porras Troconis, the editor of *El Porvenir*, alerted Cartagena residents and higher authorities that trouble was brewing on San Andrés. An unnamed correspondent, likely a local official, had informed him that there was a movement to transform the islands into a national intendancy to be governed by the central government in Bogotá. Although the informant insisted that the majority of islanders were content, he did note that a few notable islanders desired to live under “an honest, just, and honorable government.” His source told Porras Troconis that a “violent campaign” raged on the island “against the entire coast, fomenting island hatred against the Atlantic littoral.” Porras Troconis claimed these instigators were the same individuals who had petitioned the newly-formed Panamanian

government to annex the islands in 1903. Moreover, the federal government had sent Santiago Guerrero, in the guise of a census taker, to garner support for its project to create a national intendancy for the islands. This news alarmed Porras Troconis, who called on authorities in Bogotá and Cartagena to pay attention and take action.²⁵³

Bolívar official Gabriel Bustos Villareal stirred up more anxiety with his condemnation of island “agitators” such as Francis Newball who held no “patriotic sentiment” and sought to disturb the “healthy principles” and “moral order” that existed on the island. Villareal described Newball as a man of “mediocre” skills who behaved as an “absolute lord” over the majority of the population, which he believed was drifting dangerously toward anarchy. The final words of his editorial urged Congress not to approve the intendancy project.²⁵⁴

Copies of Cartagena newspaper articles arrived on San Andrés and Providence, infuriating several islanders. Responding to *El Porvenir*'s assertions that the majority of islanders were content with the Department of Bolívar, Francis Newball cited islander petitions as evidence of their desire for a new government. In the previous 25 years, the administration of Carlos E. Restrepo was the only government that “has turned its eyes toward these islands, which form an integral part of the national territory, and has worried about their welfare.”²⁵⁵ Newball did not, however, address nor explain earlier attempts by some San Andrés islanders to form a part of newly-independent Panama. On the contrary, he insisted that islanders were loyal Colombian citizens.

²⁵³ Gabriel Porras Troconis, “San Andrés de Providencia,” *El Porvenir*, 27 January 1912.

²⁵⁴ Gabriel Bustos Villareal, “San Andrés y Providence,” *La Época*, 8 July 1912.

²⁵⁵ Francis A. Newball, “La Intendencia Nacional,” *The Searchlight*, 15 March 1912.

Two months later, Newball once again took up the issue of the national intendency for the islands. “Shall the islands be converted into a national territory, or shall they continue under the domain of the Department of Bolívar?” Newball reminded islanders that the Minister of Government had already presented the bill to Congress, which planned to vote on it on July 20. He reiterated why the project should be passed. Besides a reduction in taxes, the islanders demanded it. “The change is fervently desired by the inhabitants, who have petitioned for it, giving irrefutable causes for their discontent with the State Government, and we do not see any reason that would justify a denial...Neither do we believe that the honorable Congressmen will obligate the people, after putting forth their grievances, to remain under the Departmental Government against their will. *That would not be, at all, a wise policy, as it would probably bring bad results.*”²⁵⁶

This editorial, with its strong language and insistence on an administrative transfer, angered elites in Cartagena. Carlos A. Capela, editor of *El Caribe*, accused Francis Newball of fomenting separation from the Republic of Colombia. He called on the Colombian Congress to draft a law to severely punish any act of treason against the country, including efforts to secede from Colombia. Capela wrote, “If that law had existed and had punished those Panamanian journalists when, as in San Andrés, they formulated the dilemma of the Canal or separation, perhaps that idea would not have made headway among a good number of Panamanians, and Panama would not display this title of quasi-Republic.”²⁵⁷ Gabriel Porras Troconis of *El*

²⁵⁶ Author emphasized the last sentence. Francis A. Newball, “National Territory,” *The Searchlight*, 1 June 1912.

²⁵⁷ “Si esa ley hubiera existido y se hubiera castigado en tiempo a los periodistas panameños cuando, como el de San Andrés, formulaban el dilemma del Canal o separación, quizá no se habrá abierto camino esa idea en un buen numero de panameños y Panamá no ostentaría el título de cuasi-República.” Carlos A. Capela, “¿Separación?” *El Caribe*, 16 June 1912.

Porvenir agreed with Capela that “these islands are a problem that should be resolved prudently, because if one does not proceed in that way, we will lose them forever, perhaps, in a painful way.”²⁵⁸

Island elites denied allegations of disloyalty. Newball wrote, “We have never yet conceived the idea of separating ourselves from our beloved country ... the fact that we desire to be under the National Government is a conclusive proof that we want to continue forming a part of the Colombian territory.” He compared the islanders’ desire to become a national intendancy with the desire of the Sabanalarga residents in the Department of Atlántico, who sought to join the Department of Bolívar. “Can the sons of that city be considered antipatriotic for such an attitude?” He denied rumors of an island separatist movement by insisting that islanders had already emigrated to nearby countries, seeking better treatment.²⁵⁹ Oswald L. Robinson, a San Andrés islander, also refuted reports published in the *Star & Herald*, a Panamanian newspaper, that islanders were seeking annexation to the United States.²⁶⁰

During the months preceding the congressional debates over the bill to create an intendancy, officials in Cartagena scrambled to garner islander support. At the beginning of the departmental assembly of 1912, Governor Rafael D. Calvo announced his intention to make an official visit to the islands to discuss their grievances. He offered to provide more frequent communication between the islands and the capital and pledged to find Spanish-speaking Catholic teachers to instruct islanders in the nation’s language and religion. Most importantly, he

²⁵⁸ “*Esas islas son un problema y debe resolverse cuerdamente ; porque si no se procede en esa forma, las perderemos para siempre y tal vez en una forma dolorosa.*” Gabriel Porras Troconis, “San Andrés de Providence: Nueva intendencia nacional,” *El Porvenir*, 30 September 1911.

²⁵⁹ Francis A. Newball, “A Misconstruction,” *The Searchlight*, 15 June 1912.

²⁶⁰ Oswald L. Robinson, “A Falsehood,” *The Searchlight*, 2 December 1912.

swore “to foment a love for the great Fatherland through the most appropriate means.”²⁶¹ In June 1912, Calvo appointed a new prefect, Gabriel Jiménez, who promised islanders that the departmental assembly planned to reduce the export tax on coconuts. Upon arrival, he noted that the majority of islanders favored the project to transform the islands into an intendency. While there were “some conscious of the autonomy the region will have...the others because they believe it would improve [their] life conditions due to a tax reduction of 50 percent.” Jiménez hoped a decrease in the export tax would win over the bulk of islanders and convince them to give up their demands for an administrative transfer.²⁶²

Francis Newball was not impressed by these concessions undertaken “with the object—no doubt—of inducing the people to desist from their determination of having ‘a transfer.’” In response, he encouraged the “country folk” to stay on the path toward a new administrative status.²⁶³ In response to the prefect’s allegation that islanders desired an intendency because they believed it would result in lower taxes, Newball reiterated the reasons listed in the petitions that explained islanders’ support for an intendency.²⁶⁴

Departmental officials tried unsuccessfully to intimidate and threaten island leaders, such as Baptist minister Thomas Livingston, who supported the bill.²⁶⁵ On Providence, Julius

²⁶¹ “Mensaje del Gobernador de Bolívar a la Asamblea Departamental en sus sesiones ordinarias de 1912,” *El Porvenir*, 2 March 1912.

²⁶² “...unos conscientes por la autonomía que con tendrá allá la región; y otros porque creen mejorar de condiciones de vida con la reducción que se le promete, de los impuestos al 50%.” Gabriel Jiménez, “Informe del Prefecto de la Provincia de San Andrés,” *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 2 October 1912; see also Gabriel Jiménez, “Importante Carta,” *La Época*, 20 August 1912.

²⁶³ Francis A. Newball, “Departmental Assembly,” *The Searchlight*, 1 March 1912.

²⁶⁴ Francis Newball, “La Intendencia de San Andrés y Providencia,” *El Nuevo Tiempo*, 27 September 1912.

²⁶⁵ Santiago Guerrero to Pedro María Carreño, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 696, F. 464.

Robinson and Cleveland Hawkins were removed from their positions as *alcalde* and school director on Providence after they publicly supported Francis Newball.²⁶⁶ These intimidation tactics did not stop islanders from pushing for the intendency. It merely intensified their desire to rid the island of departmental administrators.

In pursuing this goal, the municipal councils of San Andrés and Providence appointed Francis Newball to serve as their representative in the debates to take place in Bogotá.²⁶⁷ Newball's presence was welcomed by federal authorities, as he shared with Bogotá newspapers the merits of the bill. He warded off attacks from Bolívar Congressman Manuel Dávila Flores, Senator Lácides Segovia and others who continued to argue that this would be disastrous for Colombia and the islands.

In addition to comparing islanders' demands for an intendency with Panama's secession in 1903, Bolívar officials charged that islanders were incapable of self-governance. Carlos Capela identified a lack of competent personnel and the physical distance between the islands and mainland Colombia as legitimate reasons why islanders could not "enjoy administrative independence."²⁶⁸ The prefect of San Andrés and Providence shared similar fears and proposed that the Department of Bolívar retain veto power over the selection of officials on the islands and over the islands' administration.²⁶⁹ Departmental authorities also charged that the islands barely produced enough revenue to cover administrative costs. This raises the question of why departmental authorities sought to retain control over the islands.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.; Francis A. Newball, "A Strange Insult," *The Searchlight*, 15 July 1912.

²⁶⁷ Oswald L. Robinson, "Our Ex-Editor and Representative," *The Searchlight*, 15 October 1912.

²⁶⁸ Carlos A. Capela, "Islas de San Andrés de Providencia," *El Caribe*, 11 July 1912.

²⁶⁹ Gabriel Jiménez, "Importante Carta," *La Época*, 20 August 1912.

There are three reasons why Bolívar officials opposed efforts to remove the islands from their jurisdiction. First, the islands' value rested in their strategic location near the Panama Canal. In August 1912, a reporter for a Cartagena newspaper wrote of the islands' importance to Bolívar not in terms of their ability to produce revenue but as an entry point to the Panama Canal, which he called "the key to the world's commerce."²⁷⁰ The prefect of the islands agreed with the reporter's assessment of the archipelago's growing importance.²⁷¹ Bolívar authorities anticipated that the archipelago might become a coaling station and thus generate some revenue.²⁷²

Second, Bolívar officials feared that the transfer would result in a loss in bureaucratic jobs and patronage. In opposing the bill, Senator Lácides Segovia charged that it would give well-paid jobs to Bogotá officials at the expense of local administrators. He gave the example of the island postal service. The central government had appointed as postmaster Eduardo Guzmán Espinosa, a native of Bogotá, at a monthly salary of 150 pesos in gold. Why was a native of Bogotá appointed to this position? Segovia asked, replying "those nearest to the tree that bears fruit, have the ability to raise their hands and take from the tree".²⁷³

Segovia also feared that intendants from Bogotá would abuse their power. "It could very well happen that the chiefs of police will turn into dictators because they find themselves with

²⁷⁰ N.T, "Las islas de San Andrés y Providencia," *La Época*, 18 August 1912.

²⁷¹ Gabriel Jiménez, "Importante Carta," *La Época*, 20 August 1912.

²⁷² Phanor James Eder, *Colombia* (Eder Press, 2007), 191.

²⁷³ "Porque los que se encuentran más proxima al arbol que carga al fruto, tienen facilidades para levantar la mano y arrancarlo cuando esta en razón"; "San Andrés y Providence: Discurso en la session del Senado, de 7 de octubre, por el General Lácides Segovia, Senador por Bolívar, al discutirse en segundo debate el proyecto de ley que crea la Intendencia de San Andrés y Providence," *La Época*, 9 November 1912.

guns in their hands, in remote regions”, he predicted.²⁷⁴ Segovia also attempted to frighten his colleagues in the Senate with fears of a revolt like that in Panama. He recalled how incompetent officials from Bogotá had provoked Panamanians into declaring independence in 1903.²⁷⁵ Thus, Segovia borrowed tactics employed by Cartagena newspaper editors and departmental employees who frequently compared San Andrés and Providence islanders’ support of the intendancy bill with Panamanians who sought independence from Colombia.

Third, authorities in Bolívar and other departments wanted to curb the centralizing agenda of the national government. Lácides Segovia claimed the bill was unconstitutional because intendancies and *comisarías*, a smaller territorial unit, were basically the same. The national government designated intendancies, he claimed, as a way to separate “portions of territory from the departments to give them [the inhabitants] a special government independent” of departmental authority.²⁷⁶ Segovia disliked the idea that federal authorities were willing to grant these miniscule islands a relatively autonomous government, arguing that the president and his cabinet should not raise the concerns of the island community over everyone else. “The islanders feel hurt. I said it because I know,” declared the senator. Yet islander complaints were not sufficient grounds for the president to remove the islands from the Department of Bolívar, especially since Segovia was not convinced that the national government would do a better job governing the archipelago.

²⁷⁴ “...muy bien puede acontecer que los Jefes de Policia vayan a ser dictadores porque se encuentran con las armas en la mano, en regiones apartadas.” Ibid.

²⁷⁵ “San Andrés y Providence: Discurso en la sesión del Senado, de 7 de octubre, por el General Lácides Segovia, Senador por Bolívar, al discutirse en segundo debate el proyecto de ley que crea la Intendencia de San Andrés y Providence,” *La Época*, 9 November 1912. .

²⁷⁶ Lácides Segovia, “Intendencia de San Andrés y Providencia: Habla al Gral. Segovia,” *La Época*, 8 November 1912.

Segovia reminded the Senate that federal officials had governed the islands as a national territory in the 1870s and 1880s and had done a terrible job, much worse than the departmental prefects. It was during those years of federal administration, Segovia claimed, that islanders learned to distrust authorities coming from the mainland.²⁷⁷ He argued that federal officials in Bogotá were too far away to quickly address potential problems on the islands. “Is it not true that one feels the administration’s action fastest when the authority is closest?” Segovia asked the Senate.²⁷⁸ He also was not convinced that the central government had demonstrated its ability to effectively govern intendancies. Segovia cited the case of the Intendancy of the Chocó, where the federal government had sent “some few employees and nothing more.” There were no public schools and administration remained precarious. Would this be the future of San Andrés and Providence under the jurisdiction of federal authorities?²⁷⁹ In an attempt to retain control over the islands, Segovia implored the national government to work alongside departmental administrators to improve conditions on the islands.

The Congressional debates allowed Bolívar officials like Lácides Segovia an opportunity to make their case against the intendancy bill. Island elites also sought a voice in the debates. Recognizing the importance of having an island representative present for the deliberations in Bogotá, the municipal councils of San Andrés and Providence appointed Francis A. Newball to represent their interests and advocate for their support of the administrative transfer.²⁸⁰ Newball

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Lácides Segovia, “San Andrés y Providence: Discurso en la session del Senado, de 7 de octubre, por el General Lácides Segovia, Senador por Bolívar, al discutirse en segundo debate el proyecto de ley que crea la Intendencia de San Andrés y Providence,” *La Época*, 9 November 1912.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Oswald L. Robinson, “Our Ex-Editor and Representative,” *The Searchlight*, 15 October 1912.

eventually won his battle to remove the Department of Bolívar—with a bit of luck. In an interview done in the 1950s, he recalled that the federal government had almost lost its bid for the intendency. During his visit to Bogotá, Newball received news from the minister of government that Flores and Segovia had asked José Vicente Concha, one of the most respected Conservative politicians, to speak on their behalf. Fortunately for Newball and the supporters of the intendency, Concha's mother suddenly died, and he never gave an opposing speech on the Senate floor.²⁸¹ Unable to garner sufficient support, the Department of Bolívar lost its fight against the bill, and President Carlos Restrepo authorized Law 52 of 1912, which created a national intendency for the islands of San Andrés and Providence.²⁸²

The Department of Bolívar initially refused to accept this decision. With the support of departmental Attorney General Ricardo Ochoa González, Senator Segovia appealed Law 52 to the Supreme Court.²⁸³ Ochoa González and Segovia contended that the 1886 Constitution did not authorize Congress to create the administrative entity of an intendency, thereby making Law 52 of 1912 unconstitutional.²⁸⁴ Newball fired back, announcing that islanders were “also prepared to bring suits before the Court of Justice that will deeply affect the entity, as they are determined not to continue as slaves of the Cartagenians.”²⁸⁵ When the Supreme Court upheld the

²⁸¹ Hazel Robinson, “The Searchlight: un periódico isleño en 1912. ¿Se creían que a la isla iba a ser vendida, como Panamá?” *El Espectador Dominical*, 11 October 1959.

²⁸² “Ley 52 de 1912 sobre creación y organización de Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providence,” *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 16 November 1912.

²⁸³ Oswald L. Robinson, “Accusation,” *The Searchlight*, 16 December 1912.

²⁸⁴ Ricardo Ochoa González, “Concepto del señor Procurador de la República sobre constitucionalidad de la Ley 52 de 1912, por la cual se crea y organiza la Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providence,” *Gaceta Oficial del Departamento de Bolívar*, 12 December 1912; “Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providence,” *La Época*, 5 December 1912.

²⁸⁵ Oswald L. Robinson, “Accusation,” *The Searchlight*, 16 December 1912.

constitutionality of Law 52, Segovia bitterly concluded that “the threats of the islanders have triumphed over justice.”²⁸⁶

3.5 CONCLUSION

Fears of losing the islands of San Andrés and Providence to the United States, Panama, or Nicaragua led federal authorities to make the decision to take charge of the islands. By 1910, officials in Bogotá were collecting data and learning about the faraway archipelago. This growing federal presence spurred local mobilization on the part of elite islanders seeking to remove the islands from the Department of Bolívar. Through their letters, petitions, and editorials, these islanders reaffirmed their Colombian citizenship while expressing their displeasure at being ruled by departmental authorities. Bolívar officials were notoriously unable to deliver an efficient administration; corruption and patronage ran rampant. Under these conditions, why did islanders opt to remain part of Colombia? Why was independence apparently not seen as a viable option?

The leading island figure, Francis Newball, campaigned to turn over the administration to the federal government because he believed that under federal rule he and other elite islanders would finally take over the local administration. In 1903, Newball had been involved in the deliberations over San Andrés joining Panamanian secessionists and had ultimately argued against secession. Educated in Cartagena, Newball was the son of a wealthy and politically influential family. Perhaps he was persuaded to remain a part of Colombia by fears of US racism.

²⁸⁶ “Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia,” *La Época*, 5 December 1912.

Perhaps he felt his personal ambitions, and those of other island notables, were more likely to be realized under Colombian rule than US or Nicaraguan oversight. Whatever the reasons, Newball waited for an opening, which occurred in 1912, with the creation of the federal intendency.

On January 1, 1913, the islands of San Andrés and Providence inaugurated their new administrative status as a national intendency. Writing in *The Searchlight*, Francis Newball reported that the islanders viewed the intendency as “full of promises and hopes for the future,” as they sought “to demonstrate to the outside world that in this remote corner of Colombian soil exists a people, that while being aloof from party struggles, only aspires to its aggrandizement through the pacific means that God has conceded to man to labor for his own welfare.”²⁸⁷ Reflecting the islanders’ hopes and optimism, Reverend Thomas Livingston penned an island anthem.²⁸⁸ The islanders were hopeful that this new government would put an end to years of official neglect and malfeasance, restore them to economic prosperity and bring them a just government. Those hopes and expectations were not destined to be realized.

²⁸⁷ Francis A. Newball, “The New Administration,” *The Searchlight*, 1 January 1913.

²⁸⁸ Francis A. Newball, “An Island Anthem,” *The Searchlight*, 1 January 1913.

4.0 THE INTENDANCY, 1913-1930

On January 1, 1913, San Andrés and Providence islands officially became a National Intendancy governed directly by the Ministry of Government. The islands' chief administrator, called an intendant, was appointed directly by the president for a renewable one-year term. His principal responsibility was to execute the nineteen articles listed in Law 52 of 1912. In addition, he was expected to turn islanders into proper Colombians: Spanish-speaking Catholics who would be obedient to the Colombian state.

Between 1913 and 1930, intendants and other public officials struggled to alter the political, physical, and cultural landscape of San Andrés and Providence islands. Their results were mixed. The new administration sought to build an infrastructure that responded to former criticisms of federal and departmental neglect. Islanders witnessed the construction of wharfs, bridges, roadways, and public schools. The intendancy also attempted to facilitate better communications with mainland Colombia and foreign nations, especially beneficial to the island residents involved in foreign commerce. Nevertheless, that infrastructure proved difficult to maintain and depended on the stability of financial resources and good management. At times, the intendant had a difficult time recruiting qualified personnel or securing resources for necessary equipment. Moreover, intendants' efforts to impose political authority brought them into conflict with existing islander institutions and social networks. Intendancy officials found it difficult to maneuver through the crosscurrents of islander politics, which often threatened their

claims as federal authorities. In this chapter, I examine the programs and consequences of the Intendancy's agenda for San Andrés and Providence in the years 1913 to 1930, and the political struggles over that agenda. In doing so, I pay close attention to the multiple ways islanders constructed their Colombian citizenship.

4.1 THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The principal objective of the intendancy was to build an effective administrative structure, focusing on six objectives: collection of taxes, regulation of commerce, better communication with the mainland, development of infrastructure, public safety, and promotion of hygiene and sanitation. The intendants' ability to enact effective policies depended on financial resources, administrative aptitude, and sufficient support from the federal government as well as public employees. In all six areas, the intendancy had difficulty performing to the expectations of their federal superiors and island habitants. Their official correspondence and annual reports reveal a weak and ineffective administrative structure in spite of the supplementary financial assistance federal officials in Bogotá offered to them.

As on mainland Colombia, communication was a chronic problem for the intendancy. Despite the establishment of a national post office on the islands, mail service remained extremely slow and inefficient.²⁸⁹ This was largely due to the intendancy's reliance on contracts with sea captains who owned sloops and schooners that relied on good wind to get the mail in a timely manner. Although the contracts required the captains to make two round trips to

²⁸⁹ "Agencia Postal Nacional," *The Searchlight*, 7 October 1912.

Cartagena per month, most made only three trips in two months.²⁹⁰ Other contractors never returned home and drowned at sea.²⁹¹ The postmaster blamed the poor mail service on the lack of good ships, noting that most merchants sent their mail through ships passing en route to Colón.²⁹² Officials and islanders unsuccessfully solicited the government for funds to buy a gasoline-powered boat.²⁹³ In 1932, Intendant Benjamin Moreno asked the Ministry of Government to consider a mail contract with the United Fruit Company or Panama Mail.²⁹⁴

Although the postal service was inadequate, the intendancy did manage to build a wireless telegraph station on San Andrés in 1914. The Colombian government contracted with German technicians to construct the station to facilitate better communications with the ports of Cartagena and Puerto Colombia, as well as with Bogotá.²⁹⁵ The station closed during World War I and only reopened in 1920. Thereafter, it was used to communicate with the Ministry of Government, in particular in periods of crisis. Regular communication with Puerto Colombia was scheduled at 8:30AM, 1:30PM, and 5:00PM.²⁹⁶ There is no evidence that ordinary islanders

²⁹⁰ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 18 April 1916, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.496; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 April 1917, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.263; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 March 1921, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.490; Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 10 June 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 486.

²⁹¹ Francis A. Newball to Minister of Government, 14 February 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T. 732, F. 406-7; Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 12 November 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 533; Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 7 May 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 585.

²⁹² Juan de J. Castro, "Informe del Administrador de Correos," 27 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 503.

²⁹³ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 March 1921, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.490; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 16 April 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 56.

²⁹⁴ Benjamin Moreno to Minister of Government, 14 June 1932, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.156.

²⁹⁵ Puerto Colombia was a port located in the Department of Atlántico which was eventually replaced by the port of Barranquilla. Emilio Eitón, *El Archipiélago*, (Cartagena: Mogollón, 1913), 4. On the expansion of the national telegraph system during this period, see Safford and Palacios, *Colombia*, 255.

²⁹⁶ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 March 1921, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.491.

used the telegraph, but intendency officials did. By 1926, the telegraph station required urgent repairs.²⁹⁷

The intendency also sought to develop the islands' infrastructure as part of the larger federal effort to modernize the nation. During the early 1900s, Colombian cities received federal funds to pave roads, widen streets, install street lamps and telephones, and construct streetcar lines.²⁹⁸ There was also much effort placed on expanding the railway system and overland transportation. Bogotá was finally connected to the Magdalena River, giving the capital better access to its Caribbean ports.²⁹⁹ Article 6 of Law 52 stated that ten percent of the revenue from coconut exports was to be allocated for public works. The legislation created a Board of Material Improvements to manage these funds and oversee projects.³⁰⁰ On July 20, 1913, the intendency inaugurated a spacious building to hold its offices. San Andrés received a jail house, and a “magnificent” dock was built in Providence.³⁰¹ Visiting the islands in 1915, Attorney General Elisio Medina noted the projects the board had accomplished and the need for future maintenance of those buildings.³⁰²

In later years, intendants and federal officials visiting the islands questioned the efficacy of the Board of Material Improvements. In 1923, Intendant Joaquín Contreras called it “purely decorative” and complained that the group rarely addressed programs for the construction or

²⁹⁷ Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 25 May 1926, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.56.

²⁹⁸ James Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001), 16-17.

²⁹⁹ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 159.

³⁰⁰ Francis A. Newball to Minister of Government, 23 April 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T. 732, F. 475-6.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* F. 475.

³⁰² Elisio Medina, *Archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia: informe del Procurador de Hacienda* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 1916), 25.

repair of roadways.³⁰³ Despite these criticisms, the board managed to accomplish several additional projects. In 1929, Intendant Jorge Lozano informed the Ministry of Government that the road in Providence had been extended two kilometers. Moreover, a new electricity plant in San Andrés powered 800 street lamps, an ice machine, and a movie theatre.³⁰⁴

The intendency also promoted public health and sanitation. The most prevalent problem on both islands were the swamps harboring disease-carrying mosquitoes.³⁰⁵ Official correspondence and annual reports regularly noted outbreaks of disease, which had caused several English priests and mainland public employees to fall ill.³⁰⁶ The intendants complained about the lack of medicine to treat these tropical illnesses.³⁰⁷ In 1922, Intendant Manuel M. Leal convened a Board of Public Hygiene and Sanitation to draft and enforce sanitation and health policies.³⁰⁸ The board consisted of physicians Thomas Hemans, Philip Francis, and Philip Livingston, and oversaw a public health campaign aimed at eradicating swamps, building cisterns, encouraging the population to use latrines, and educating students on basic hygiene.³⁰⁹

³⁰³ Joaquín Contreras to Minister of Government, 3 January 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 2.

³⁰⁴ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 10 June 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 494.

³⁰⁵ Gonzalo Pérez to Minister of Government, 18 March 1913, AGN, MG, SP, T. 713, F. 91; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 18 April 1916, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, 497; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 13 January 1921, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 365.

³⁰⁶ For public employees, see Eugenio Garnica to Antonio J. Sánchez, 3 December 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 358-9; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 10 January 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 243; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 27 October 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 328. For English missionaries, see Richard Turner to Francis Henry, 12 January 1923, BBR.

³⁰⁷ Antonio J. Sánchez to Minister of Government, 10 March 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T. 734, F. 246; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 10 January 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 243; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 27 October 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 328.

³⁰⁸ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 13 January 1922, AGN, MG, SP, T. 860, F. 365-6.

³⁰⁹ Thomas W. Hemans, Phillip A. Francis, and Philip B. Livingston, "El Plan Desarrollo Sanitario de las Islas de San Andrés y Providencia," AGN, MG, SP, T. 860, F. 401-2.

The intendency had a difficult time implementing the board's recommendations. In 1925, the newly-appointed official doctor, Alberto Roldán Ramírez, described poor sanitation conditions on San Andrés. The island lacked medicine, a hospital, and even potable drinking water. It was common for islanders to seek medical care in the Panamanian port of Colón.³¹⁰ In 1927, 143 islander midwives and nurses petitioned the intendant to build a hospital on San Andrés. They asked him to solicit Congress "to grant us such an appropriation of funds as may be required to erect in this island a small hospital for general purposes of about four wards of four beds each, supplemented with the necessary appointments usual in modern hospitalization so that the needy such are allowed the facilities of proper treatment and attendance."³¹¹ A month later, island residents asked again for the federal government to provide them with the necessary funds to build a hospital.³¹²

Intendants worried little about public safety. Most federal officials commented on the sober, obedient, and pacific nature of the island inhabitants.³¹³ In 1927, Intendant Jorge T. Lozano described them as having "respect for authority, well behaved, more or less good customs, and alcoholic, political, and religious self-restraint."³¹⁴ However, the *alcalde* of San

³¹⁰ Alberto Roldán Ramírez, "Informe que rinde el Médico de Sanidad," AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 56-60.

³¹¹ Petition of Maria F. de Duffis, Louis O. de Bowden, Esedora M. de Barker, and 140 additional midwives and nurses to Intendant Jorge T. Lozano, 11 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 526.

³¹² Simon A. Howard Britton recommended to the government that they build a hospital, too. See Simon A. Howard Britton, Report, May 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 416.

³¹³ Ismael Ramos Vesga to President José Vicente Concha, 22 August 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T. 754, F. 344; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 18 April 1916, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.502; Jorge L. Ospina, "Informe del Intendente Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia," 25 May 1926, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.43; Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 25 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 357; Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 21 May 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 973, F. 655.

³¹⁴ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 25 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 357.

Andrés noted islanders were implicated in a number of cases associated with robbery and arson against local merchants.³¹⁵

Islanders sometimes found themselves the victims of violent crime and harassment by public employees. On May 15, 1916, Luis F. Troncoso, secretary to the police chief, disturbed a party held at the store of Philip B. Livingston which resulted in the death of Edward Bent, a San Andrés islander. Witnesses claimed that another police officer interrupted the party and attacked attendees. In the commotion, Bent was hit in the head by Troncoso.³¹⁶ Cleveland Hawkins accused a British subject, most likely a Jamaican resident, of burning down his store in Providence. Several islanders, including Francis Newball, believed Hawkins was the target of violence because he supported efforts to remove Intendant Carlos Hernández from office. Despite these allegations, Hernández was never charged with being an accessory to a crime.³¹⁷ Accusations surfaced that the mayor of Providence, Guillermo Guzmán, attacked Melba Tomás with a knife at a wedding and Harmon Archbold with a revolver at a local bar. Islanders became alarmed by Guzmán's volatile behavior.³¹⁸

There were also incidents of police mistreatment of islanders as well as other residents. Zelda May, the wife of Fernando Howard, was detained for hours after police gave her a citation

³¹⁵ "Visita Oficial Practicada a la Alcaldía Municipal de San Andrés," 8 May 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 73.

³¹⁶ Fernando Howard, Manuel M. Leal, Miguel Camacho, and John Archbold, 17 May 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 332; Allin Whittaker, Manuel M. Leal, Miguel Camacho, and John Archbold, 17 May 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 333; Burnett Guerrero, Manuel M. Leal, and Miguel Camacho, 17 May 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 334; Adonyiah Perry, Manuel M. Leal, Miguel Archbold, and John Archbold, 17 May 1916, AGN, MG, SP, T. 767, F. 335.

³¹⁷ Cleveland H. Hawkins to Minister of Government, 1 April 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 242; Petition of Francis A. Newball, Pablo Serrano Plata, Jeremiah M. Mitchell, Robert A. Pomare, Eduardo de Armas, José María de Arias, Silverman R. Perry, Miliciades P. Martínez, Fidel R. Duffis, Thico Staalman, and Arturo May to Minister of Government Miguel Abadía Méndez, 5 April 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 116-7.

³¹⁸ Cleveland H. Hawkins to Carlos M. Hernández, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 289.

for not allowing them to search her home without a warrant. The police believed she was helping her husband hide an unregistered .22 caliber rifle.³¹⁹ The detention of a “respectable matron” angered islander notables, for whom this arbitrary act reminded them of the abuses they had suffered during the departmental period.³²⁰ That same year, attorney Eduardo Staalman accused San Andrés police of arresting islanders and other residents without due process and denying them legal counsel.³²¹ These incidents put a strain on islander-police relations.

The intendancy also sought to secure Colombian sovereignty over the archipelago, especially its outlying cays. For decades, fishermen from the Cayman Islands had hunted greenback turtles in the cays of Quitasueño, Roncador, and Serranilla without paying license fees to Colombia. This outraged islanders like Simon Howard who denounced the arrival of “fleets of vessels all year round, in season and out of season, carrying on fishing for the valuable tortoise shell and sponges; extract Guano and gather Bird eggs, without license or payment of any contribution whatever, detrimental to our territorial sovereignty.”³²² Intendants tried to enforce the requirement that foreigners obtain permission before entering Colombian waters; in 1913, Intendant Gonzalo Pérez warned a Cayman Island ship captain about bringing fishermen in search of turtle and guano to the cays without proper licenses.³²³ Despite these efforts, Cayman

³¹⁹Francis A. Newball and Eduardo Staalman to Minister of Government, 17 March 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 144; Fernando Howard, John Archbold, Luis Alvarado, and José Alberto Múnevar to Minister of Government, 25 March 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 152-153.

³²⁰ Francis Newball, Pablo Serrano, Milciades M. Martínez, Eduardo Staalman, James Barker, and Robert Pomare to President Pedro Nel Ospina and Minister of Government, Cable, 7 March 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 297.

³²¹ Testimony of Eduardo Staalman, 29 March 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 149.

³²² Simon A. Howard, “Problems of Our Archipelago,” *The Searchlight*, 21 April 1914.

³²³ Gonzálo Pérez to W.L. Ryan, Captain of the English sloop *W.E. Hurlston*, from Cayman Brac, published in *The Searchlight*, 21 April 1913.

Islanders continued to fish and hunt in the cays; intendants asked the federal government to put diplomatic pressure on Great Britain or purchase a motor boat to assist them with surveillance.³²⁴

Bogotá officials responded to the intendants' calls for help, but with little success. In 1925, Juan Restrepo Sáez, an official in the Ministry of Foreign Relations, informed the Minister of Government that he had communicated with the governor of Jamaica, telling him to alert all fishermen that they needed a license to fish in Colombian territorial waters.³²⁵ That same year, Providence islanders told the intendancy that foreign fishermen laughed at the requirement that they obtain licenses.³²⁶ A few weeks later, the intendancy captured two vessels with a thirty-man crew illegally carrying a total of 1,200 tons of turtle shell from Quitasueño.³²⁷ The following year, intendancy officials arrested a crew of English subjects illegally fishing in Colombian territorial waters.³²⁸ But without a warship or motor boat to watch over the cays, the intendancy found it difficult to enforce Colombian sovereignty.

Intendancy officials worried about the United States or other countries making an effort to secure the islands for their own political and economical ends. Nine years before the creation of the intendancy, rumors circulated that the United States was interested in utilizing the islands as a coaling station for the Panama Canal.³²⁹ “Uncle Sam has endeavored to obtain control over our Archipelago, ever since the Panama Canal became a possibility...because the canal is the

³²⁴ Antonio J. Sánchez to Minister of Government, 10 October 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T. 732, F. 494-5; Jorge L. Ospina to Minister of Government, 13 August 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 115; P.V. Fonseca to Minister of Government, 4 September 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 136.

³²⁵ Juan R. Sáez to Minister of Government, 9 September 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 137-8.

³²⁶ P.V. Fonseca to Minister of Government, 10 September 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 139.

³²⁷ P.V. Fonseca to Minister of Government, 19 September 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 146.

³²⁸ Jorge L. Ospina to Minister of Government, 24 May 1926, AGN, MG, SP, T. 936, F. 364.

³²⁹ “Want Islands for Panama,” *New York Times*, 30 November 1903.

door with locks, and our islands are the KEYS to the locks of the doors,” explained the editor of *The Searchlight*.³³⁰ These reports resurfaced as the Americans finished the Panama Canal and rumors circulated of their plans to build another inter-oceanic pathway in Nicaragua.³³¹

In 1917, intendency officials refused an American captain’s request to dock on San Andrés before going on to the Corn Islands. Intendant Manuel Leal found the request suspicious and reported it to the Ministry of Foreign Relations.³³² Two years later, a Panamanian paper reported Canal employees had visited Roncador Cay and intended to repair a lighthouse on that islet. This action caused the intendant to protest US aggression. In response, President Woodrow Wilson claimed the United States had rights to Roncador cay through the 1856 Guano Act.³³³ Despite Colombia’s outrage, the United States did not relinquish its claims to Roncador or the other cays until 1972.³³⁴

Finally, the most important responsibility given to intendants and their finance administrators was overseeing the treasury and budget. The islands’ revenue was largely confined to duties on imports and exports. According to Law 52, the intendency had the right to enforce a duty of 15 percent on all imported goods of “first necessity,” 25 percent on other

³³⁰ “The Pearl of the Caribbean,” *The Searchlight*, 22 June 1914.

³³¹ C. Grand Pierre, “Idyllic Isles of Spanish Main Acquire Strategic Importance,” *Panama Times*, 29 August 1925, 18.

³³² Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Foreign Relations, 15 March 1917, AGN, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Primera, Diplomática y Consular. Correspondencia con Gobernación de Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia, Transferencia 10, Caja 71, Carpeta 540, F. 90-92.

³³³ “U.S. Claims Roncador Cay: President Wilson’s Proclamation of June 5, 1919, Establishes Sovereignty over Noted Reef,” *Estrella de Panama*, date unknown, 5, AGN, MG, SP, T. 812; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 11 August 1919, AGN, MG, SP, T. 812, F. 210.

³³⁴ The United States renounced its claims to Roncador Cay through the Saccio-Vásquez Treaty with Colombia. Jonathan I. Charney and Lewis M. Alexander, *International Maritime Boundaries*, vol.1 (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1993), 543.

goods, and 50 percent on liquor and tobacco. Imports had to enter the port of San Andrés with an invoice of fixed prices for each item that had been registered by the Colombian consulate before departing for the island. The duty on exports, primarily coconuts, was one gold peso per thousand whole coconuts. Intendants also generated revenue by selling licenses for turtle fishing.³³⁵

Although the Intendancy managed to earn significant revenue from import and export duties, it was never able to sustain a stable budget without the assistance of federal subsidies. Intendants and officials pointed out that the foreign ship captains tampered with the invoices, hiding the true price of their merchandise.³³⁶ Corruption was another problem the intendancy had to face. In 1926, finance administrator Dewey May allegedly absconded with over twenty thousand pesos from the treasury. He fled to the city of Colón, where Intendant Jorge Luna Ospina worked unsuccessfully to bring him back to Colombia to face criminal charges.³³⁷ Two years later, bookkeeper Luís Alejandro Ortíz fled with ten thousand pesos to the port of Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua. Unlike Intendant Ospina in the May case, Intendant Lozano succeeded in obtaining Ortiz's extradition to Colombia.³³⁸

³³⁵ "Intendancy," *The Searchlight*, (San Andrés, 2 December 1912).

³³⁶ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 18 April 1916, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, p.491; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 7 November 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 324; Benjamín Baena to Minister of Government, 17 January 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 28; Benjamín Baena to Minister of Government, 19 January 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 29; P.V. Fonseca to Minister of Government, 20 September 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 142.

³³⁷ Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 17 July 1926, AGN, MG, SP, T. 944, F. 61; Antonio Gómez Restrepo to Minister of Government, AGN, MG, SP, T. 944, F. 71; Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 28 August 1926, AGN, MG, SP, T. 944, F. 65; Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 31 August 1926, AGN, MG, SP, T. 944, F. 73; Enrique de la Vega to Eduardo Restrepo Sáez, 31 July 1926, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Diplomático y Consular, Legación de Colombia en Panamá, 1926, Caja 673, F. 63-65; Enrique de la Vega to Eduardo Restrepo Sáez, 4 September 1926, MRE-DC, Panama, 1926, Caja 673, F. 82.

³³⁸ Enrique de la Vega to Minister of Foreign Relations, 12 February 1928, MRE-DC, Panama, 1928, Caja 673, F. 7-8; Jorge Tadeo Lozano to Minister Enrique de la Vega, 11 February 1928, MRE-DC, Panama, 1928, Caja 673, F. 9;

A final factor reducing government revenue was the changes in the coconut economy.

4.2 THE COCONUT CRISIS

Accounts of San Andrés during the initial years of the intendency painted a rosy picture of the coconut industry. Visiting in 1913, naval officer Emilio Eitón noted that the island exported between six and eight million coconuts, with hopes of returning to pre-1908 levels of 14 to 16 million. He quoted the selling price for coconuts at US\$20 per thousand.³³⁹ Upon his arrival in December 1913, English priest James Fitzpatrick described San Andrés as “fairly wealthy and trad[ing] chiefly in coconut with Colón and the United States.” In contrast, Providence was “poor, particularly since the last hurricane in November 1912.”³⁴⁰ In 1916, Intendant Manuel Leal reported that San Andrés coconuts had risen from US\$20 to US\$28 per thousand.³⁴¹

This sense of prosperity was short-lived. In 1921, Intendant Manuel M. Leal described the economy as “unsatisfactory” in his report to the Minister of Government, noting that the price for coconuts had fallen from US\$65 to US\$15 per thousand.³⁴² Two years later, the price

Enrique de la Vega to Minister of Foreign Relations, 20 February 1928, MRE-DC, Panama, 1928, Caja 673, F. 12; Enrique de la Vega, Report, 30 April 1928, MRE-DC, Panama, Caja 673, F. 16-24.

³³⁹ Eitón, *El Archipiélago*, 91.

³⁴⁰ James Fitzpatrick to Francis Henry, 26 April 1913, BBR.

³⁴¹ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 18 April 1916, ACC, *Memorias de Gobierno*, 502.

³⁴² Manuel M. Leal, “Informe que el Intendente de San Andrés y Providencia rinde al señor Ministro de Gobierno,” 26 March 1921, *Memorias de Gobierno*, ACC.

plunged to eight dollars.³⁴³ “Cocoanuts formerly a good source of revenue, are now practically worth nothing,” an English priest residing on San Andrés reported.³⁴⁴ In 1925, coconut prices fluctuated between US\$10 and US\$25 dollars per thousand. That year, Intendant Jorge L. Ospina observed some improvement in the coconut economy, estimating that San Andrés exporters received about US\$22. However, he was well aware that the market was extremely volatile.³⁴⁵ By 1927, the price for coconuts had fallen to ten dollars.³⁴⁶

Several reasons explain the downward turn of the coconut economy on San Andrés. The global market for coconuts had grown more competitive with the entry of new producers in the Caribbean as well as Africa and Southeast Asia. In 1919 and 1920, San Andrés and Providence islands only exported some 4 million coconuts against 19 million from Panama and 35 million from Jamaica.³⁴⁷ Intendants reported that competition from these new producers was driving down prices.³⁴⁸ Yet as islander Simon Howard noted in 1927, this did not entirely explain the declining prices for San Andrés coconuts.³⁴⁹ A tariff enacted by the United States in the early 1920s collected five dollars per thousand coconuts imported into the U.S.³⁵⁰ Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories did not pay the tariff; in order to remain competitive, San Andrés producers

³⁴³ Rafael Triana, “Interesante correspondencia de Jimenes Triana sobre el Archipiélago de San Andrés y Providencia,” *La Época*, 17 February 1923; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 9 October 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 46.

³⁴⁴ Richard Turner to Francis Henry, 26 September 1926, BBR.

³⁴⁵ Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 15 May 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 5-6.

³⁴⁶ Belisario Salamanca, “Informe del Administrador Hacienda Nacional,” AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 487.

³⁴⁷ Parsons, *San Andrés and Providencia*, 29.

³⁴⁸ Rafael J. Triana to Minister of Government, 9 October 1922, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 46; Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 9 October 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 46.

³⁴⁹ Simon A. Howard Britton, Report, May 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T.954, F.410.

³⁵⁰ Simon A. Howard Britton., Report, May 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 410.

had to lower their prices accordingly. Intendant Carlos Hernández called the federal government's attention to this matter and urged them to intercede. He reminded Bogotá officials that islanders lived on coconuts and might easily conclude that it would better to join the United States so as not to incur the tariff.³⁵¹

Moreover, a new economic actor dominated the local market for coconuts. The Franklin Baker Coconut Company of New Jersey³⁵² had its employees scavenge the island in search of coconuts which they purchased at extremely low prices—sometimes three dollars per thousand coconuts. Islanders and intendancy officials viewed the company as having a monopoly on coconut exports which particularly disadvantaged smaller coconut farmers.³⁵³ Some local producers in need of cash mortgaged their properties to the Baker Coconut Company and were then unable to repay their loans.³⁵⁴

Overproduction and poor care of the coconut groves also led to diseased trees and poorer quality of coconuts. In 1923, Intendant Carlos Hernández informed the Ministry of Government

³⁵¹ Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 16 April 1923, AGN, MG, T. 886, F. 57-8.

³⁵² In 1898, Franklin Baker, a U.S. miller, replaced his flour business with coconuts after purchasing a machine to produce shredded coconut meat. See James Trager, *The Food Chronology: A Food Lover's Compendium of Events and Anecdotes from Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Owl Books, 1997), 346. The company moved to Bocas del Toro, Panama, around 1925, "intend[ing] to plant 300,000 palms of which 100,000 have already been sent out." U.S. Department of Commerce, *Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce: Special Agent Series N. 164* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1918), 441.

³⁵³ Clodomiro Herrera to Intendant Jorge T. Lozano, 28 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 515. Also see discussion of Baker Coconut Company, petition of Felix A. Howard, Elliot Robinson, Phillip Hawkins, Julius C. Robinson, Cleveland H. Hawkins, and 182 additional signees to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 18 February 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 405; Francis A. Newball, Cleveland H. Hawkins, Pablo Serrano Plata, Manuel A. Almonacid, Luis Rubenstein, Juan de J. Castro, Phillip B. Livingston, Jeremiah M. Mitchell, Jeremiah Lynton, and Eduardo De Armas, "Informe de Varios Caballeros Notables de la Isla," 27 April 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 505; Simon A. Howard B. to Minister of Government Carlos E. Restrepo, 23 September 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 405.

³⁵⁴ Clodomiro Herrera to Intendant Jorge T. Lozano, 28 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 519.

that a rat infestation had damaged the coconut trees and harmed the nuts.³⁵⁵ This problem was aggravated by the rudimentary techniques used by San Andrés coconut farmers. Intendant Jorge Lozano blamed the poor quality of coconuts on producers who neither used fertilizer nor any other scientific method to “keep the trees strong and vigorous.”³⁵⁶ Farmers planted the trees too closely to each other, depriving them of sufficient water and air.³⁵⁷ Islanders like Simon Howard and James Barker called federal authorities’ attention to the technique of cutting down unripe coconuts, which bled the trees and made them vulnerable to disease.³⁵⁸ Due to poor agricultural care, the island’s coconut groves had fallen victim to pathogens and disease. This reduced the quantity as well as quality of the export crop.³⁵⁹

Although none of the contemporary sources identify the disease that afflicted the coconut trees, their descriptions point to stem bleeding disease. This disease causes cracks in the tree bark, from which a dark viscid liquid oozes and turns black, staining the tree. Coconut planters carved away at the bark to find decay in the tree. Diseased groves continued to produce nuts, but of poor quality. Stem bleeding disease was prevalent in wet climates, including the Caribbean, where coconut producers inadvertently harmed production by making notches to climb for

³⁵⁵ Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 16 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 57.

³⁵⁶ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 25 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 361.

³⁵⁷ Clodomiro Herrera to Intendant Jorge T. Lozano, 28 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 515.

³⁵⁸ James Barker, “Informe del juez municipal de San Andrés,” 29 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 591; Simon A. Howard Britton to Minister of Government Carlos E. Restrepo, 23 September 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 408.

³⁵⁹ Petition of Felix A. Howard, Elliot Robinson, Phillip Hawkins, Julius C. Robinson, Cleveland H. Hawkins, and 185 signees to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 18 February 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 405.

coconuts. Similar diseases such as bud rot affected Cuba and Jamaica, reducing their levels of coconut production.³⁶⁰

The decline in coconut prices had a devastating impact on the islands, leading many islanders to migrate to the mainland. English missionaries lamented the loss of their newly-won converts.³⁶¹ Father Richard Turner commented on the multitude of islanders in Panama. “One of the first things I noticed on my return from England was the many Island people on the coast, in Colon. There has always been a steady flow coastwise, but recently it has developed into quite a big rush, so that the Island population is now considerably below the estimate I gave last year.”³⁶² Public officials and island residents also observed and commented on islander emigration.³⁶³

Despite the steady outflow of emigrants, most San Andrés islanders stayed and waited for the economic situation to improve. Some landowners experimented with other products in hopes of earning more money. A few farmers turned to the production of copra oil, which won little favor from the intendency; Intendant Rafael Triana reported that the intendency only collected

³⁶⁰ Coughlan and Hinchley, *Coconut Cultivation*, 115-116; Horne, W.T. “The Bud Rot and Some Other Coconut Troubles in Cuba,” *Bulletín 15*, Estación Central de Agronomía de Cuba; Munro and Brown, *A Practical Guide*, 142-144.

³⁶¹ Richard Turner to Francis Henry, 15 January 1924, BBR; Richard Turner to Joseph Biermans, 23 July 1924, “The Caribbean Mission,” MHA.

³⁶² Richard Turner to Joseph Biermans, 10 January 1926, BBR.

³⁶³ In 1930, the Intendency counted a loss of 249 people since the last census, taken in 1918. The total population dropped from 5,074 to 4,825 inhabitants. Emigration explained the population shift. See Alfonso Rincón to Minister of Government, 20 June 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 989, F. 53-56; Francis A. Newball, Cleveland H. Hawkins, Pablo Serrano Plata, Manuel A. Almonacid, Luis Rubenstein, Juan de J. Castro, Phillip B. Livingston, Jeremiah M. Mitchell, Jermiah Lynton, and Eduardo de Armas, “Informe de Varios Caballeros Notables de la Isla,” 27 April 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 505; Enrique Vargas, “Informe del Jefe del Resguardo,” 26 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 491-492.

between 5 and 10 cents per kilo on copra oil.³⁶⁴ Other islanders turned to fishing.³⁶⁵ The rest of the small coconut farmers, who were the majority, “abandon[ed] [themselves] with Muslim fatalism to their bad luck and limit themselves to lament and wait for the government to take action,” wrote Intendant Carlos Hernández in 1923.³⁶⁶ A few years later, fiscal administrator Belisario Salamanca called the farmers “apathetic” and “indolent.” He estimated that “eighty percent of them do not work and the other twenty percent only works a third of the day...They do not want to do anything other than to live from the sale of coconuts.”³⁶⁷ Municipal Judge James Barker reported an increase in coconut theft.³⁶⁸ Although the nuts had fallen in price, they still held some value, especially to the impoverished day laborer who needed cash to purchase goods for his family.³⁶⁹

By the end of the 1920s, intendancy officials and island residents scrambled to restore the coconut economy. Some focused on improved agricultural methods, encouraging coconut producers to fertilize their properties and care for trees or at least not mistreat them through the harmful practice of cutting down coconuts with a sharp hanger tool. Intendant Lozano urged islanders to invest in machinery to produce coconut oil, which could be used to make soap and

³⁶⁴ Rafael J. Triana to Minister of Government, 9 October 1922, AGN, MG, SP, T.886, F.46.

³⁶⁵ Enrique Vargas, “Informe del Jefe del Resguardo,” 26 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 492.

³⁶⁶ “*Los nativos se abandonan con fatalismo musulman a la suerte adversa y se limitan a lamentarse y a esperarse todo de la acción de Gobierno.*” Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 16 April 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 58.

³⁶⁷ “*De ellos hay ochenta por ciento que no trabaja y el viente que trabaja, solamente un tercio del dia meridiano. Ellos no quieren hacer otra cosa que beneficiarse con la venta de las nueces, pues ni siquiera han pensado en elaborar como lo hacen los habitantes de otros regiones tropicales los demás productos de la palma de coco.*” Belisario Salamanca, “Informe del Administrador de Hacienda Nacional,” 29 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 487-8.

³⁶⁸ James Barker, “Informe del juez municipal de San Andrés,” 29 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 591. Also see, “Visita Oficial Practicada a la Alcaldía Municipal de San Andrés,” 8 May 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T. 921, F. 73.

³⁶⁹ Joaquín Contreas to Minister of Government, 3 January 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 2.

other products.³⁷⁰ A group of “notable island gentlemen”, mostly local merchants, asked the Ministry of Government to invite agricultural experts to teach new scientific methods to San Andrés farmers in order to “increase the wealth of the island.” They requested funds to pay for fertilizer to be distributed along with instructions to coconut farmers and called on the federal government to establish a branch of the National Agricultural Bank as in other parts of the country.³⁷¹ Others encouraged islanders to seek employment in construction and transportation in cities on mainland Colombia.³⁷²

In 1928, the Ministry of Industries agreed to send an agricultural expert to the archipelago, and plans were made to set up an Agriculture and Mortgage Bank on San Andrés to provide credit for islanders.³⁷³ Two years later, Rafael A. Toro and Alberto Mocco came to the islands to teach the farmers how to combat disease in their crops. In addition to this instruction, these agro-technicians studied the physical and chemical composition of the soil, introduced islanders to new crops, examined guano deposits, and facilitated a first-class meteorology station to work with nearby countries in the Caribbean. Islanders still waited for the establishment of an agricultural bank.³⁷⁴

Despite these efforts, by 1930 the coconut economy on San Andrés had collapsed. Writing to the Minister of Government, Intendant Alfonso Rincón proclaimed the demise of the

³⁷⁰ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 25 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 361.

³⁷¹ Francis A. Newball, Cleveland H. Hawkins, Pablo Serrano Plata, Manuel A. Almonacid, Luis Rubenstein, Juan de J. Castro, Phillip B. Livingston, Jeremiah M. Mitchell, Jeremiah Lynton, and Eduardo De Armas, “Informe de Varios Caballeros Notables de la Isla,” 27 April 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 505. Simon A. Howard Britton requested similar things a year before. See Simon A. Howard Britton, Report, May 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 412.

³⁷² Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 25 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T. 954, F. 363.

³⁷³ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 21 May 1928, BBR.

³⁷⁴ Jorge T. Lozano to Minister of Government, 10 June 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 490.

coconut trade, noting that only a single steam boat visited the island every two months to take coconuts to the United States.³⁷⁵ The next year, agro-technicians discovered that the rat infestation had destroyed most of the coconut trees.³⁷⁶ Exports never recovered the levels of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With a faltering economy, the intendency had a difficult time fulfilling many of the promises that the federal government made to islanders. This may well have intensified internal conflicts among island elites.

4.3 POWER STRUGGLES

In January 1923, President Pedro Nel Ospina appointed General Eugenio Garnica as intendant of San Andrés and Providence. Garnica was a former departmental prefect who had advocated for the creation of an intendency in 1912 and subsequently played a divisive role in local politics. He was appointed to replace Rafael Jiménez Triana, who had died a few months earlier during an official visit to Providence.³⁷⁷ The president's decision to select Garnica had dire consequences, as a group of island residents and public employees refused to allow the newly appointed intendant to take office. Their responses ignited real concern in the federal government over its inability to govern the tiny archipelago. The incident also suggested islanders' refusal to permit former departmental authorities to exercise authority once again over the islands.

³⁷⁵ Alfonso Rincón to Minister of Government, 20 June 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 989, F. 64.

³⁷⁶ Benjamin Moreno, "Informe del Intendente Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia," 14 June 1932, *Memorias de Gobierno*, ACC.

³⁷⁷ Joaquín Contreras to Minister of Government, 22 November 1922, AGN, MG, SP, T.861, F.391-3.

Cartagena newspapers traced the development of this story, which reignited the debate over how best to govern the islands. The most detailed account of the events that led to the resignation of General Garnica came from Julio Grosso, a Cartagena merchant returning from a business trip to San Andrés. Grosso told his version of events to the *Diario de la Costa*. Garnica had announced his plans to take office on January 3, 1923; in response to that announcement, several prominent islanders and public employees gathered at the home of Arthur May, a wealthy San Andrés merchant. Those in attendance included Francis Newball, the telegraph manager Mr. Elliot, the port captain Pablo Serrano Plata, and the finance administrator. These men vehemently opposed Garnica as intendant and demanded that he resign. Grosso reported that Serrano even made a veiled threat, suggesting that the intendant should be murdered if he refused to step down from his office. News reached General Garnica of opposition to his appointment as intendant and he offered to meet with his opponents. At that gathering, General Garnica offered to select a secretary of their choice to run the day-to-day affairs of the intendency. According to Grosso, the opposition did not receive this proposition well. Within days of Garnica's accepting the post, "unknown hands" set fire to the intendency office, damaging the mayor's office located on the ground floor.

A few days later, the island community started holding meetings to discuss Garnica's appointment as intendant. At one meeting, General Garnica tried to appease his detractors and nominated Juan de J. Castro, a former departmental employee, to serve as interim intendant. After long deliberation, islanders agreed to Castro's appointment.³⁷⁸ Soon afterwards, Garnica informed the Ministry of Government of his resignation. His appointment had made a "bad

³⁷⁸ "La situación de San Andrés y Providencia," *Diario de la Costa*, 17 January 1923.

impression on the island people,” he said, and he hoped to avoid any further conflict over this issue.³⁷⁹ Juan de J. Castro took over as secretary of the intendancy in Garnica’s absence.³⁸⁰

Grosso described the situation on the islands as “shameful and sad.” “All the employees have abandoned their obligations and on the archipelago there is neither government nor administration, nothing.”³⁸¹ His account of the Garnica fiasco and portrayal of the intendancy resonated with Cartagena editors, who had forecast the intendancy’s failure since its creation.³⁸² *El Porvenir* criticized the federal government for not upholding Garnica’s authority or doing anything to correct this situation. “To be frank, none of our [past] governments has concerned itself with colonizing this portion of our territory, in which separatist sentiment exists, which one day may cause a new affront against Colombia.”³⁸³

The reasons islanders objected to Garnica’s appointment as intendant were revealed a year later. In a memorandum to former President Carlos Restrepo, islanders Cleveland Hawkins, Julius Robinson, MacArthur Hawkins, Jonah Archbold, Ellit Robinson, and Miguel Dawkins expressed their disappointment that the federal government had ignored their nomination of Francis Newball for intendant and had instead given the office to Garnica.³⁸⁴ Further proof that

³⁷⁹ Eugenio Garnica to Minister of Government, 6 February 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 311.

³⁸⁰ Juan de J. Castro to Minister of Government, 6 February 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T. 886, F. 313.

³⁸¹ “A su turno los demás empleados todos tienen en abandono sus obligaciones y en el Archipiélago no hay Gobierno, ni administración ni nada.” “La situación de San Andrés y Providencia,” *Diario de la Costa*, Cartagena, 17 January 1923.

³⁸² “El abandono de las islas de San Andrés y Providencia, o Bogotá hace mal en no creer en el peligro,” *El Porvenir*, 21 February 1923.

³⁸³ “Y seamos franco, ninguno de nuestros gobiernos se ha preocupado por colonizar esa porción de la Patria, en tanto que allí incubre el sentimiento separatista, que uno u otro día puede ser motivo de nueva afrenta para Colombia.” “Lo que pasaron en San Andrés y Providencia,” *El Porvenir*, 20 February 1923.

³⁸⁴ Petition of Cleveland Hawkins, Julius Robinson, MacArthur Hawkins, Jonah Archbold, Ellit Robinson, and Miguel Dawkins to Carlos Restrepo, 10 June 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 290.

this disappointment was widespread was a petition of 187 Providence islanders led by Reverend Felix Howard, Julius Robinson, and Cleveland Hawkins, sent to the Ministry of Government several months earlier.³⁸⁵

Ten years earlier, Newball and Garnica had been allies, working together in the effort to remove the islands from the Department of Bolívar.³⁸⁶ In 1913, Garnica had worked alongside Newball in the intendancy.³⁸⁷ However, by 1914, a split had occurred between the two men, for reasons that remain unclear. That year, Eugenio Garnica publicly criticized interim Intendant Newball for his handling of an alleged uprising by Baptist minister Thomas Livingston, who ignored a judicial order to perform an autopsy on a local boy. He also lambasted the interim intendant for appointing only a few non-islanders to positions within the intendancy and for slow progress on public improvements.³⁸⁸

Garnica's struggles with Newball continued into the term of Intendant Antonio Sánchez (1914-1915), who sided with Newball. Writing to President Miguel Abadía Méndez, Sánchez charged that Garnica and his ally, Maximiliano Vélez, had cared more for enriching themselves than for local governance and had left a horrendous impression among the islanders regarding public administration. Islanders despised "panyas", Spanish-speaking mainlanders, who violated their homes, seduced their daughters, and imposed heavy taxes on them.³⁸⁹ Sánchez reminded the

³⁸⁵ Petition of Felix Howard, Julius Robinson, Cleveland Hawkins, and 187 signers to Carlos Restrepo, 18 February 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 210-214.

³⁸⁶ Eugenio Garnica to President Carlos Restrepo, 22 January 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T. 698, F. 281-290.

³⁸⁷ Eitón, *El Archipiélago*, 57.

³⁸⁸ "Interesante entrevista: San Andrés y Providencia—lo que dice una personalidad que allí vive," *La Época*, 1 May 1914.

³⁸⁹ Antonio J. Sánchez to President Miguel Abadía Méndez, 3 January 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.767, F.269.

president that it was this contempt for departmental authorities that had provoked some islanders to attempt to separate from Colombia and join Panama in November 1903.³⁹⁰ He also charged Garnica and Vélez with not supporting the work of the Catholic missionaries, an integral part of the intendency agenda. He warned that future intendants would have to deal with the machinations of Vélez, who used money to buy respect and friendships.³⁹¹

Antonio Sánchez's relations with Eugenio Garnica came to a head in May, 1915, when Garnica was arrested for embezzlement of public funds.³⁹² Garnica and others accused Sánchez and Newball of fabricating those allegations and forced the intendant to leave the islands.³⁹³ As he prepared for departure, Sánchez informed the federal government that former departmental officials sought to undermine the efforts of the intendency and recommended that Francis Newball be reinstated as interim intendant.³⁹⁴ His departure disappointed the English priests as well as prominent islanders such as Francis Newball, Eduardo de Armas, Pastor James Smith, the municipal council of San Andrés, and nearly one hundred others who congratulated him on his good works.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁰ Antonio J. Sánchez to President Miguel Abadía Méndez, 20 November 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T.732, F.513.

³⁹¹ Antonio J. Sánchez to President Miguel Abadía Méndez, 4 January 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.754, F.214-6.

³⁹² Francis Newball to Minister of Government, 24 May 1915, AGN, MG, SC, Justice, T.477, F.41-5.

³⁹³ Eugenio Garnica to President, Minister of Government, Minister of Foreign Relations, 24 May 1915, MG, SC, Justice, T.477, F.44; Juan Arias and 9 others to Minister of Government and editors of *El Tiempo*, *Gil Blas*, *Sociedad*, and Santiago Guerrero, 28 May 1915, AGN, MG, SC, Justice, T.471, F.46-8.

³⁹⁴ Antonio J. Sánchez to Minister of Government, 6 March 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T. 734, F. 254-6; Antonio J. Sánchez to Governor of Bolívar, 10 March 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T. 734, F. 262-263; Antonio J. Sánchez to Governor of Bolívar, 10 March 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T. 734, F. 268.

³⁹⁵ "Cuestiones del Archipiélago," *La Época*, 13 March 1915; "Resolución Número 1," *La Época*, 13 March 1915; Father Herbert Keane to Antonio J. Sánchez, 2 August 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.325-7.

These power struggles between Newball and his allies against Garnica, Vélez, and their supporters continued until 1924. In 1923, the Ministry of Government appointed Carlos Manuel Hernández as the next intendant, granting him free rein to govern the islands as he saw fit.³⁹⁶ *El Porvenir* applauded his “intelligence and prudence,” which would be necessary in administering the islands that “until now have been ungovernable.”³⁹⁷ Hernández reported a warm reception from islanders: “Yesterday I was the object of an important celebration unprecedented on the archipelago; ladies presented me with flowers, a multitude cried ‘Long live Colombia’ and sang the national anthem, and speakers declared their love for Colombia and respect for the authorities.”³⁹⁸ Islanders assured Hernández that they had never participated in any act against the government. They professed love for the nation of Colombia and enthusiasm for his appointment.³⁹⁹ Despite this warm reception, Hernández soon lost favor with a number of prominent islanders. The intendant had given out administrative positions to a select number of native islanders and members of the Liberal Party. These individuals held multiple jobs that drew salaries from the treasury, which drew condemnation from former intendency officials belonging to the Conservative Party.⁴⁰⁰ Beginning in 1924, a series of petitions surfaced that asked the federal government to intervene and remove Intendant Hernández.

³⁹⁶ “El caso de San Andrés y Providencia—En Bogotá no se le quiere conceder importancia—se considera ‘bluff,’” *El Porvenir*, 21 February 1923.

³⁹⁷ “Dr. Carlos Hernández nombrado Intendente de San Andrés y Providencia,” *El Porvenir*, 15 February 1923.

³⁹⁸ “...ayer fué el objeto de importante manifestación popular sin precedentes Archipiélago, damas obsequiaronme flores, muchedumbre viva Colombia, canto himno nacional, oradores protestaron respecto autoridades amor patria colombianos.” Hernández described the festivity in a telegram to the Governor of Bolívar, which was later published in a Cartagena newspaper. “El Nuevo Intendente, el objeto de simpatías; o, en el archipiélago no se ha renegado de Colombia,” *El Porvenir*, 22 March 1923.

³⁹⁹ Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 16 March 1923, AGN, MG, SP, T.886, F.23-26.

⁴⁰⁰ Petition of Cleveland Hawkins, Julius Robinson, MacArthur Hawkins, Jonah Archbold, Ellit Robinson, and Miguel Dawkins to Pedro M. Carreño, 10 January 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 290; Petition of Felix Howard,

On January 10, 1924, a group of prominent San Andrés islanders lambasted Hernández in a memorandum to former Minister of Government Pedro Carreño. They informed their old political ally of their unhappiness with intendants selected since the creation of the intendancy and asked him to tell federal authorities not to appoint any more intendants from the Department of Bolívar. “We are convinced that for the island to progress, we need a man more in harmony with the principles of the majority of islanders,” and this man could “not be from the Department of Bolívar.”⁴⁰¹ These calls for a native islander as intendant were echoed in other communications and petitions.⁴⁰²

Intendant Hernández fired back. In a letter to the Minister of Government, he explained that the petitions came largely from disgruntled former public employees seeking to return to office. Hernández admitted that they had succeeded in fooling some islanders by taking advantage of the latter’s “good nature.” However, he dismissed their charges as efforts to attack an intendant unwilling to cooperate in their fraudulent actions. “As you know, every previous intendant has been in the same position,” he explained, citing the most recent case of General

Julius Robison, Cleveland Hawkins, and 187 signers to Carlos Restrepo, 18 February 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 210-211.

⁴⁰¹ “...*hoy convencidos de que para el progreso del Archipiélago necesitamos un hombre más en armonía de los principios de la mayoría de los habitantes que no siendo del Departamento de Bolívar.*” Petition of Arturo May, Samuel W. Robinson, Jeremiah M. Mitchell, Robert A. Pomare, Joseph A. Pusey, Eduardo de Armas, Ashkelon D. Francis, José María de Arias, Pablo Serrano Plata, and Thico Staalman to Pedro M. Carreño, 10 January 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 290.

⁴⁰² Petition of Cleveland Hawkins, Julius Robinson, MacArthur Hawkins, Jonah Archbold, Ellit Robinson, and Miguel Dawkins to Pedro M. Carreño, 10 January 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 905, F. 289; Carlos Federico Lever to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 16 August 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 313.

Eugenio Garnica, who “was deposed by force; Juan de J. Castro, whom the government had not appointed to exercise the post, was in charge when I arrived.”⁴⁰³

Hernández did have supporters, who sought to defend him. A group of public employees composed both of native islanders and mainland-born residents questioned the motives of the opposition. Manuel Almonacid, Guillermo Garcia, and Rafael Prins—all former departmental employees—claimed that Hernández’s opponents—they mentioned Francis Newball, Pablo Serrano Plata, and Cleveland Hawkins—sought to satisfy their own personal ambitions by exploiting the ignorance of the people.⁴⁰⁴ Another petition signed by islander employees and long-time residents argued similarly that Newball and others sought to keep the people “eternally in ignorance” by not allowing them to learn in “our schools the language of our country, so that the rising generation will comprehend for themselves the duties of a loyal citizen and not be deceived by persons that are not animated by real patriotism, but rather cherish the idea of deceiving the people for there [sic] own benefit.”⁴⁰⁵ By casting a shadow on the true intentions of well-known figures like Francis Newball, these employees forced Bogotá officials to question the efficacy of appointing native islanders who seemed to be against the Intendancy agenda.

⁴⁰³ “*Ud. debe saber que todos los Intendentes anteriores les han hecho la misma oposición...Gral. Eugenio Garnica lo derrocaron a la fuerza, pues yo encontré encargado de la Intendencia al Sr. Juan de J. Castro, a quien el Gobierno no ha nombrado para ejercer este cargo.*” Carlos M. Hernández to Minister of Government, 8 September 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 936, F. 308-310.

⁴⁰⁴ Manuel Almonacid, Guillermo Garcia, and Rafael Prins to Gabriel Cancino, 15 March 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 219-220. See also, Manuel Almonacid, Samuel Camargo, Rafael Prins, Guillermo Garcia, Rafael de la Pena, Gumersindo Herrera Bareto, Belisario Salamanca, and 22 additional signers to Minister of Government, 15 April 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 285-7.

⁴⁰⁵ Dewey May, Vernon May, Domingo Gallardo, Juan R. Bent, Reney Humphries, Philip B. Livingston, John Archbold, Maximiliano Vélez, Alonzo James, and 133 signers to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 12 April 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 266-73.

Despite these voices in his favor, Carlos Hernández stepped down as intendant on September 5, 1924.⁴⁰⁶ Although his opponents may have seen his departure as a victory, in the years that followed federal authorities in Bogotá tightened their reign over the islands and continued to appoint non-islanders to the position of intendant. These actions angered elite islanders, who grew more vocal and agitated over their marginal role in the administration of the islands.⁴⁰⁷ Between 1924 and 1930, there was a surge of *memoriales* and petitions from islanders demanding changes to the intendency. Although it is not entirely clear what drove this discontent, the written complaints do offer insight into the ways islanders constructed their understanding of Colombian identity and citizenship, and how they viewed their marginal position within the nation.

⁴⁰⁶ Cleveland Hawkins to Minister of Government, 5 September 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 936, F. 303.

⁴⁰⁷ Joab Escalona, Wellington Howard, and 35 signers to President Miguel Abadía Méndez and Minister of Government, "The Cry of the People," 15 September 1926, AGN, MG, SP, T. 944, F. 89; Pablo Serrano Plata to Minister of Government, 8 May 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 973, F. 365; petition of Santiago Archbold, Enrique Lara, Isidoro A. Escalona, John Duffis, D.B. May, Ansliffe Pomare, Burnett Guerrero, Azariah Mitchell, Alexander E. Bowie, Robert Hooker, Robert Forbes, Alanzo Forbes, Samuel D. Forbes, James C. Duffis, Melvin Walters, Charles E. Brant, William Barker, Elah Pomare, Waltham Martínez Jr., and L. Barker to Minister of Government, 12 May 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 973, F. 367; Manuel A. Almonacid to Minister of Government, 22 June 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 411; petition of Santiago Archbold, Enrique Lara, Isidoro A. Escalona, John Duffis, D.B. May, Ansliffe Pomare, Burnett Guerrero, Azariah Mitchell, Alexander E. Bowie, Robert Hooker, Robert Forbes, Alanzo Forbes, Samuel D. Forbes, James C. Duffis, Melvin Walters, Charles E. Brant, William Barker, Elah Pomare, Waltham Martínez Jr., and L. Barker to Minister of Government, 12 May 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 973, F. 366; Enrique Lara and Wellington Howard to Minister of Government, 24 July 1928; petition of Tesofilo Forbes, Elon Mitchell, Almido Manuel, Denmark Forbes, and 35 additional signers to Minister of Government, 4 August 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 486-7; petition of Joseph Pusey, Fernando Howard, and several others, Telegram, 5 August 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 530-1; petition of Ephraim Archbold, Robert Rankin, James Robinson, Roosevelt Hayes, and 11 additional signers to Minister of Government, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 484-485.

4.4 SUBJECTS OR CITIZENS?

In the minds of many islanders, the creation of the intendency in 1912 had signaled a positive change. Island elites envisioned playing an important role in local and perhaps even national politics. In a 1914 editorial in *The Searchlight*, coconut planter Simon Howard appealed to the government to “acknowledge that we are intelligent human beings, with laudable ambitions and aspirations like other citizens of the Republic; and yet what is more important, that we are justified in having them.”⁴⁰⁸ His tone reflected the hopes and aspirations of many islanders in those early years of the Intendency. But this hopefulness turned to discontent as the federal government brought in officials from the mainland to teach islanders how to take part in local politics.

Beginning in 1924, a growing number of islander petitions began to arrive on the desks of the minister of government. In these *memoriales*, islanders presented themselves as loyal Colombian citizens who sought to strengthen the ties between the islands and mainland by bridging the gaps in distance, culture, and language between the two regions. In so doing, the petitioners sought to counter public images, found primarily in the Cartagena press, depicting them as separatist and ungovernable.⁴⁰⁹ In order to convince Bogotá authorities that they were not agitating for personal ambitions, and that their pleas for better governance were rooted in demands for citizenship, islanders adopted a rhetorical strategy that emphasized their Colombian identity. Unlike the government, they did not define this identity in terms of the Spanish

⁴⁰⁸ Simon A. Howard, “The Pearl of the Caribbean,” *The Searchlight*, 22 June 1914, 46.

⁴⁰⁹ “Las predicciones de Senador Segovia; los isleños en rebeldía, el ministro protestante a la cabeza del movimiento; el intendente solicita cien hombres,” *La Época*, 12 March 1914; “Interesante entrevista: San Andrés y Providencia—lo que dice una personalidad que allí vive,” *La Época*, 1 May 1914.

language, Catholic religion, or Hispanic ancestry. Rather, islanders emphasized their allegiance and loyalty to Colombia and their desire to participate in the political affairs of the nation-state.

Writing in April, 1924, Dewey May and 141 additional signers spoke of their “sincere patriotism” and described themselves as “lovers of the progress of Colombia and her national integrity.” They contrasted their obedience and loyalty to Colombia with that of Francis Newball and Cleveland Hawkins, who, they said, cared nothing for promoting the intendancy agenda. They praised Intendant Carlos Hernández “as a man sent to us by Colombia, our country, and who has come to these shores with the firm intention of teaching us to be *Colombians* in reality.”⁴¹⁰ San Andrés islander Carlos Federico Lever echoed their sentiments. “We have been Colombians by right, but not by fact...I would like you to love us as true children of Colombia. I would like for you to identify with us as with yourself, and for our cause to become your cause.”⁴¹¹

Although these petitioners identified themselves as Colombians, they also suggested that it was not an entirely solidified identity. Rather, it depended on the person who was governing the islands and his adherence to or support of the intendancy agenda. A group of San Andrés and Providence islanders residing in Panama underscored this point in their memorial to the minister of government. They dreamed of a day when “greater Colombia” and her institutions would rectify the poor state of public affairs on the archipelago.⁴¹² By presenting themselves as

⁴¹⁰ Italics in original. Dewey May, Vernon May, and 140 signers to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 12 April 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 960, F. 267.

⁴¹¹ “*Yo quisiera que nos amara como verdaderos hijos de Colombia; yo quisiera que nos identificara con su mismo y que hiciera nuestra causa su propia causa.*” Carlos Federico Lever to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 16 August 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 313-315.

⁴¹² Joab J. Escalona, A. Biscaino, Eric Mitchell, O. Newball, R. Hayes, J. Newball, W. Verner, E. Robinson, J. Newball, and 6 additional signers to Minister of Government, 24 July 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 373.

Colombians who sought to fulfill the tenets of the intendency project, native islanders hoped to capture the attention of Bogotá officials, who continued to make all the administrative decisions about the islands.

Many of their complaints about the intendants in these years focused on the moral uprightness of island society. Islanders accused Intendants Jorge Luna Ospina and Jorge Tadeo Lozano and their employees of disrupting the moral fabric of San Andrés and Providence society. Perhaps one of the most common islander grievances against intendency officials was their sexual impropriety. For instance, Ashkelon D. Francis and his wife testified in an affidavit that the intendant's brother and police chief, Miguel Lozano, had seduced their daughter, Cresencia Francis. Her parents were distressed by the fact that she still "live[d] in that state of moral turpitude up to this date, to the disgrace of our family, absolute disregard for public opinion, a scandal to public morals, and in dishonor to public authority."⁴¹³ This was a sore spot for the Francis family because fourteen years earlier another daughter had been identified as the mistress of Maximiliano Vélez.⁴¹⁴ By accusing mainland employees of "seducing their women," islanders construed themselves as a morally sound society threatened by immoral mainland officials.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ Ashkelon D. Francis, Ellen D. Francis, William B. Forbes, and Frank Smith, 21 February 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 973, F. 345.

⁴¹⁴ Joab Escalona, Wellington Howard, D. Augusto Errán, Wallace Hayes Jr., Ernest M. Taylor, Ira Taylor, Eloy López, Carlos Vélez, E. Britton, D. Robinson, Napoleon Cayaso, Roosevelt Hayes, Eduardo M. de Armas, Reginald Archbold, Cardinal Dawkins, Robert Steel, William Verner, Granvil Mitchell, Gideon Howard, Hayward Archbold, William Brown, Dazzar Archbold, Emerson Bowie, Pribe Hawkins, Neri Fox, Thomas Bent, Cotral Forbes, Orephael Bent, L. Robinson, F. Howard, C. Alamilla, M. Olivero, A. Guitierrez, and O. Bonilla to President Miguel Abadía Méndez and Minister of Government, "The Cry of a People," 15 September 1926, AGN, MG, SP, F. 89.

⁴¹⁵ Carlos Federico Lever to President Pedro Nel Ospina, 16 August 1924, AGN, MG, SP, T. 906, F. 314.

Islanders also claimed that intendants and their employees abused alcoholic beverages and displayed drunken behavior in public.⁴¹⁶ Islander sobriety was not necessarily a strategic tool used to garner the support of Bogotá officials, but a part of the moral code of behavior promoted by island religious groups. The First Baptist Church was particularly strict in its observance of alcoholic temperance. According to the church's records, members found using, selling, or drinking alcoholic beverages lost their membership. "It's contrary to Christian morals, injurious to personal, piety, and hindrance to Gospel."⁴¹⁷

For many islanders moral issues were so important that they even chastised members of their own community for unsavory behavior. A group of islanders and long-time residents rejected Julio E. Gallardo as a spokesperson on behalf of their grievances. He "is the actual concessionaire and exploiter of the gambling business of the island, in company with his uncle Eduardo de Armas." The petitioners explained that Gallardo and de Armas' establishment held public dances "every Saturday night until dawn of Sunday morning, with the attendance of women of evil repute with its accompanying orgies of immorality...even those who are passersby cast a passing glance."⁴¹⁸ By attacking these two particular islanders, the memorandum suggests a genuine concern that islanders remain moral and respectable beings; though, it might also indicate their envy of Gallardo.

⁴¹⁶ James L. Barker and Graciano Pomare, 8 May 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T.973, F.360; Ernesto M. Taylor, Teohaldo Archbold, Archon Archbold, and 34 signers to Minister of Government, 1 June 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F. 495-7.

⁴¹⁷ First Baptist Church, San Andrés Island, Book 3. Register of Members, marriages, births includes church constitution, 1922-1928. Pastor Noel Gonçalves, Wallace Hayes, Emiliano Rye, and 23 other members, October 25, 1927. Intendant Ospina blamed island Adventists' organization of a temperance movement for the low demand for alcoholic beverages. Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 21 March 1925, AGN, MG, SP, T.921, F.43.

⁴¹⁸ Simon A. Howard Britton, Manuel A. Almonacid, Max E. Vélez, Enrique Lara, James L. Barker, and 48 signers to Minister of Government, 9 October 1928, AGN, MG, SP, T. 977, F.425-426.

These rhetorical strategies failed to persuade Bogotá officials to make the changes requested by the islanders. Intendants continued to come from the mainland, much to the islanders' chagrin. Consequently, islanders grew more vocal in their demands for change, and their memorials, petitions, and editorials took on a more threatening and less conciliatory stance. In 1929, Julio E. Gallardo gave an interview to a Cartagena newspaper in which he spoke about the turbulent atmosphere on the islands. "We are tired, annoyed, [and] desperate about the current administration because we can only tolerate so many humiliations and so much ridicule and arbitrary treatment."⁴¹⁹ "We do not impose, expect, threaten, nor demand more than a governor conscious of his rights and duties," the islanders pleaded.⁴²⁰ Another petition called on the federal government to intervene "for the first and last time, and finally resolve the string of poor administrators."⁴²¹

Islanders demanded that the federal government appoint a native-born intendant, and by 1930, several petitions had nominated Francis Newball.⁴²² Support for Newball may have been yet another tactic to get Bogotá officials to come to their aid. It was, he after all, who had led the campaign for the creation of the Intendancy in 1912. Perhaps he would again be able to win

⁴¹⁹ "*Estamos cansados, fastidiados, desesperados de la actual administración, porque no pueden tolerarse tantos vejámenes, humillaciones, y arbitrariedades.*" La pavorosa situación que confronta la isla de San Andrés y Providencia," *La Prensa*, June 26, 1929.

⁴²⁰ "...*pues no imponemos, no pretendemos, no amenazamos, ni exigimos más que un gobernante consciente de sus deberes y derechos.*" Petition of Simon Howard Britton, Julio Gallardo, Simon A. Howard, Timothy Britton, W. A. Howard, Fulton Pomare, and 25 signers to President of Congress, 24 July 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 543.

⁴²¹ Petition of Ephraim Archbold, Robert Rankin, James Robinson, Roosevelt Hayes, and 11 signers to Minister of Government, 19 August 1929, AGN, MG, SP, T. 978, F. 484.

⁴²² Petition of Louisa W. Howard, Camila Duke, Salome Lever, Iris Abrahams de Robinson, Sadie Staalman, Joy Lever, Ana Pomare, Adelina Pusey de Barker, and 76 signers to Minister of Government, 20 August 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 388; Municipal Council of San Andrés, Resolution Number 3 of 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 382; Vernon W. May, James Barker, Eduardo de Armas, James Olsen, and 63 signers to Minister of Government, 20 August 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 383; Julio E. Gallardo, Theodore Staalman, Samuel Wright, James Rankin, Jr., Alfred Martínez, and 93 signers to Minister of Government, 21 August 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 384-5; James A. Hayes to Minister of Government, November 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 417.

favor with Bogotá officials. Pedro Carreño also endorsed Francis Newball and Carlos Federico Lever as candidates for the intendency in correspondence to President Miguel Abadía Méndez.⁴²³ However, neither man received the appointment.

After seventeen years of intendency rule, elite islanders realized that their dreams of full participation in local administration and acceptance as Colombian citizens had gone unfulfilled. The federal government viewed the island population not as citizens but as subjects who needed to be transformed into more acceptable members of the national polity. This transformation required intendants from the mainland to educate island inhabitants in the ways of Colombian political culture and to carry out a policy of national acculturation, turning islanders into Spanish-speaking Catholics. It is to that project that we now turn.

⁴²³ Pedro M. Carreño to President Miguel Abadía Méndez, 26 August 1930, AGN, MG, SP, T. 1021, F. 377.

5.0 THE CULTURAL INCORPORATION OF THE ISLANDS, 1913-1930

5.1 THE CHALLENGE

State officials commented repeatedly on islanders' retention, well into the twentieth century, of Anglophone Caribbean culture and Protestant religion. Despite the archipelago's formal incorporation into Colombia in 1822, islanders remained ignorant of the Spanish language, Colombian history, and Hispanic customs. In 1873, Prefect Eduardo Mamby called on the Secretary of Foreign and Interior Relations to hire good bilingual teachers for the archipelago's public schools. "English is the only language known in this territory," he explained, and "it is incompatible to be a citizen of a nation without knowing its language, because one knows neither the country's laws nor one's duties" as a citizen. The federal government needed to "nationalize the inhabitants of this territory," Mamby argued, "through the teaching of the national language."⁴²⁴

Nearly a decade later, Javier Vergara y Velasco drew similar conclusions. In 1888, the federal government commissioned Vergara to conduct a survey of the islands. Like Mamby, he reported that "the population of both islands speaks corrupted English...some islanders, though few, know Spanish that [is even] more spoiled than English." In the area of religion, the majority

⁴²⁴ *El único que se conoce en el territorio, es el inglés. Usted comprende lo incompatible que es ser ciudadano de una nación sin saber su idioma, porque así mismo ignorará sus leyes i no conocerá sus deberes.* "Informe del Prefecto del Territorio Nacional de San Andrés i San Luís de Providencia," 3 Febrero 1873, *La Escuela Normal: Periódico Oficial de Instrucción Pública* (Bogotá, 1873).

of islanders were Baptists “with a small number of Methodists in Providence.”⁴²⁵ “Islanders lack a true education that is in line with the Catholic religion... This makes it impossible to judge or govern this people in the same manner as in the rest of the country.”⁴²⁶ Vergara also saw the islanders’ racial background as problematic. Like mainland Colombians, islanders were a hybrid of “black blood mixed with the English.” Vergara had a difficult time even identifying the characteristics of the islanders’ “race.” He did not know what to make of the “passionate black blood and the cold and Positivist English [blood]” which had made “a people who are not yet definitively formed and whose character is very difficult to specify.”⁴²⁷

Similar observations regarding the islanders’ cultural identity were repeated into the twentieth century. In 1902, an Adventist missionary on San Andrés described the island language as “nondescript, neither Spanish nor English, though the latter approaches it.”⁴²⁸ Nine years later, another missionary confessed his “inability to master West Indian English...find[ing] it more difficult even than Spanish.”⁴²⁹ In 1904, itinerant priest Albert Stroebele described the island inhabitants as “composed of Jamaicans, some Spaniards, English, Irish, and Scotch.”⁴³⁰ It is unclear whether or not Stroebele meant to say that Jamaican, English, Irish, or Scotch nationals

⁴²⁵ “La población de ambas islas habla un inglés corrompido cuyo principal caracter estriba en fortalecer aún más fuerte pronunciación inglesa, cambiando para eso ciertas letras, sonidos y giros. Algunos islenos, aunque pocos, conocen el español que desvirtúan todavía más que le inglés. Estas gentes son protestantes de religión y pertenecen a la secta bautista y anabaptista como ellos dicen, salvo algunos pocos de Providencia que son metodistas.” Vergara, 30.

⁴²⁶ “En primer lugar carecen de verdadera instrucción que esté en sano acorde con la religión Católica...Las consecuencias de lo dicho, es la imposibilidad de juzgar y de gobernar este pueblo de la misma manera que se hace en el resto del país.” Ibid. 27.

⁴²⁷ “...lo ardiente de la sangre negra y lo frío y positivista de la inglesa: por esto sus vicios y virtudes son los de todo pueblo aún no definitivamente formado y su carácter muy difícil de precisar.” Ibid. 24-25.

⁴²⁸ Samuel Parker Smith, *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (June 24, 1902), 13.

⁴²⁹ John J. Albert, “Old Providence Island,” *The Colored Harvest* (June, 1911), 106.

⁴³⁰ “An Apostolic Missionary,” *The Colored Harvest* (January 1904), 457.

resided on the archipelago, or if he was using the same ethnic terminology that islanders employed when describing the population. Catholic priest James Fitzpatrick was astonished to find Afro-Caribbean islanders speaking with pride of their Scottish and British ancestry. “But what would really stagger a proud son of the British Isles would be to hear the older people relate with glowing pride that their grandfather or some great-great ancestor came from England or Scotland.”⁴³¹

In 1912, federal census-taker Santiago Guerrero reported to the Minister of Government that “there is nothing that constitutes civilization or progress either on San Andrés or Providence... everything remains in a state of deep and lamentable backwardness.” Guerrero went on to name the first and most important task facing the government. “There is much to do on these islands, principally teaching the inhabitants that they are Colombians as many do not know it. The language, religion, customs—everything is absolutely contrary to ours.”⁴³² He reiterated the same program of incorporation that Vergara and Mamby had articulated: find competent bilingual teachers to give instruction in Spanish. Guerrero suggested Catholic priests who “have already been in Colombia for many years, know the language and the nation’s customs and traditions.”⁴³³

Naval officer Emilio Eitón elaborated further on Santiago Guerrero’s proposals. . . . Arriving in 1913 to San Andrés, Eitón met with long-time residents and prominent island figures

⁴³¹ James Fitzpatrick, “Caribbean Mission,” *St. Joseph’s Foreign Missionary Advocate* (Summer 1915), 276.

⁴³² “*En San Andrés como Providencia no existe nada de lo que constituyes la civilización y el progreso de los pueblos. –Allí todo permanece...en lo más hondo y lamentable atraso... En las islas está todo por hacer, principando por enseñarles a sus habitantes que son colombianos, pues muchos de ellos lo ignoran.--La religion, el idioma; los costumbres, todo es absolutamente contrario a lo nuestro.*” Santiago Guerrero to Minister of Government, 8 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T.696, F.455.

⁴³³ *Ibid.* F.468.

and wrote to the government to report his findings. Like Guerrero and other previous officials, Eitón supported the teaching of Spanish and Colombian customs. And like Vergara, he viewed the Catholic Church as an essential component of the project and spoke of islander inclusion as guided by the moral teachings of Catholicism. In many ways Eitón's analysis and proposals anticipated the government's Colombianization program of 1913-1930.

After meeting the interim Intendant Francis Newball, who impressed him with his impeccable command of the Spanish language, and with other island elites, Eitón concluded that many islanders were "patriotic" men interested in linking the islands to the mainland. "They love Colombia in spite of the indifference with which for many years [the government] has looked upon this territory. The love of a far away Fatherland is almost by divine law; under that law, there is veneration here for Colombia but not because Colombians have fulfilled our brotherly duty."⁴³⁴ Islanders knew little about the mainland because departmental officials had never implemented a program to teach them of "our traditions, our glorious feats, [and] our history...the genuine representation of a people."⁴³⁵ He urged federal officials to build schools, find competent teachers, and build Catholic churches to counteract the Protestant, Anglo-focused education received by most islanders. "They know nothing [of Colombia] because children do not have schools in which to learn Catholic dogma in the vibrant words of Spanish." Island children knew of "Wellington and Nelson, of Washintong and Linconl [sic], they know how to

⁴³⁴ "*Aquí se ama a Colombia a pesar de la indiferencia con que durante muchos años y años se ha mirado esta porción de territorio. El amor a la Patria lejana es por ley casi divina; por esa ley se tiene aquí la veneración a Colombia pero no porque los colombianos del continente hayamos cumplido con nuestro deber de hermanos, absolutamente.*" Eitón, *El Archipiélago*, 60.

⁴³⁵ "...*nuestra tradición, nuestros hechos gloriosos, nuestra Historia, en una palabra, ya que la Historia es algo como la genuina representación de un pueblo.*" *Ibid.* 63.

read the Bible and to listen respectfully to the word of the minister, [Martin] Luther's disciple." But they knew nothing of Simón Bolívar, of Colombian history, or of Catholicism.⁴³⁶

Eitón called on the federal government "to hispanicize the territory... to Colombianize it, bringing [our] religion, language, and customs."⁴³⁷ He recommended that Catholic priests be brought to the archipelago to staff Catholic-run public schools in which islanders would learn both Spanish and English. "We only desire that the language that in Colombia rules, also someday rule on the islands...This is just, it is rational."⁴³⁸ Perhaps thinking of his fellow Cartagena residents, Eitón dismissed claims that islanders were not interested in Spanish language instruction. He pointed out that, in speaking with mainlanders, islanders often used the few Spanish phrases they knew. He also opined it was an error to believe that "islanders profess some fondness to a specific nationality" such as the United States or Great Britain. "The United States and England send written learning products in English and as English is what is spoken on our archipelago, [it is] natural for the natives to be in greater contact and greater intimacy with those nations."⁴³⁹ Again, he blamed this situation on "our indolence, our lack of sound judgment, and even charity."⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ "Nada saben porque cuando niños no tuvieron escuelas donde ir a aprender el dogma católico escrito en las vibrantes palabras que tiene el idioma castellano. Ellos saben de Wellington y Nelson, de Washintong y Linconl [sic], saben leer en la Biblia y escuchan respetuosos la palabra del Ministro, discípulo de Luetero." Ibid. 69.

⁴³⁷ "...su obligación eran hispanizar un territorio...colombianizarlo, trayéndole su religion, su idioma y sus costumbres." Ibid. 61.

⁴³⁸ "Solo deseamos que la lengua que en Colombia impera, impere algún día también en las Islas que hacen parte integrante de su territorio. Es lo justo, es lo racional." Ibid. 76-77.

⁴³⁹ "Lo que pasa es que los Estados Unidos e Inglaterra envían sus producciones de entendimiento escritos en inglés y como inglés es lo que hablan en nuestro Archipiélago nada más natural que los nativos estén en más contacto, en más intimidad con aquellas naciones." Ibid. 78.

⁴⁴⁰ "A la faz del mundo está nuestra indolencia, nuestra falta de juicio, y aun caridad." Ibid. 78-79.

Eitón recognized the limited ability of state institutions to achieve such changes. “Laws and decrees cannot accomplish the transformation to which we refer. Laws and decrees must come, yes, naturally; but only as developing elements of a just and honorable plan.”⁴⁴¹ “We must not impose on the islands the mainland’s religious practices...Listen well: we will not impose them but, yes, teach them. Let the islanders see [the Catholic practices] and if they believe them holy and pure, teach them to their children. That is all. Let them compare and choose.”⁴⁴² Eitón’s Catholic faith led him to believe it superior to other religions and thus to be confident in its eventual success on the islands.

However, in order to ensure that success Eitón urged Bogotá officials to bring in bilingual Colombian clerics. While he recognized the efforts of the English Catholic missionaries on Providence, who had just arrived in 1913, Eitón also worried that they might not cultivate islanders’ patriotism toward Colombia. Patriotism, he felt, “should be intimately linked to the religious” project. Moreover, he was confident that Colombian and/or Spanish priests had the intellectual capability and missionary experience to work in religiously and linguistically diverse communities, as they had done on mainland Colombia. “In the various [religious] communities that exist in Colombia there are numerous priests skilled in the study of languages; and it is those priests that we call on to employ their linguistic skills” on the islands.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ “Con decretos ni con leyes no se lleva a cabo la transformación a que aludimos. Las leyes y los decretos han de venire sí, naturalmente; pero solo como elementos desenvolventes de un plan justo y honrado que en unos cinco lustros se ejecute.” Ibid. 75.

⁴⁴² “No vamos a imponer en las islas las practicas religiosas que en el continente tenemos nó. Oigasenos bien: no vayamos a imponerlas pero sí a enseñarlas. Que los isleños las vean y pero sí las creen santas y puras, se las inculquen a sus hijos. Eso es todo. Que ellos comparen y que escojan...” Ibid 75.

⁴⁴³ “Insistimos en creer que el clero colombiano es el llamado a dar principio a la obra que, con apremiamente necesidad, se impone en nuestra conciencia de hermanos en el patriotismo. En las diversas comunidades que hay en el país existen numerosos religiosos que tienen predilección por el estudio de idiomas; y es a esos religiosos a quienes especialmente nos dirigimos denunciándoles un amplio campo para poner en vigor sus aptitudes lingüistas.

Emilio Eitón returned from his short visit to San Andrés with a determination to elucidate the cultural differences between island and mainland Colombians and call the federal government to action. Like previous Colombian authorities, he had little to say about the islanders' blackness or their African ancestry. His account made only one reference to skin color, when he used the term "of color" to describe an island dock worker. If anything, he was more focused on the islanders' British ancestry. "Let's not speak of race because we must accept, painful as it may be, the differences of genealogical origin between the archipelago's inhabitants and the rest of Colombia... Hispanics were not the first to come" to the islands.⁴⁴⁴ As a result, the islanders' most important characteristics (for the Colombian government) were their English language, Protestant religion, and cultural affinity to the United States and Great Britain. In response, federal officials enforced an incorporation project based on the Spanish language, Hispanic customs, and Roman Catholicism.

5.2 THE CATHOLIC MISSION

On January 2, 1913, the British priests James Fitzpatrick, James Rogan, and Herbert Keane arrived in San Andrés to take over the Catholic mission on the islands.⁴⁴⁵ It had been nearly a year since the Vatican had started to make arrangements for the priests from the St. Joseph's

Sacerdotes que no conozcan perfectamente el ingles y el español no tendrán todas las facilidades que los que dominan dichos idiomas tiene para laborer con el debido provecho." Ibid. 77.

⁴⁴⁴ "No hablemos de la raza porque hay que aceptar, por doloroso que sea, la diferencia de origen genealógico de los habitants del archipiélago con el resto del país colombiano...No fueron los hispanos los que primero vinieron." Ibid 61.

⁴⁴⁵ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 3 January 1913, BBR.

Foreign Missionary Society, located north of London at Mill Hill, to take over the mission.⁴⁴⁶ Their appointment was a response to repeated calls from the Apostolic delegate in Bogotá to the Vatican regarding the need for English-speaking priests on the islands.⁴⁴⁷ Colombian authorities sought to replace the Mill Hill missionaries' American predecessors, the Josephites, who had supervised the Catholic mission since 1910. Many presumed that the Josephites' removal was due to the sour relations between Colombia and the United States over the Panama Canal.⁴⁴⁸

The Baltimore-based Josephites had inherited the Catholic mission from an old itinerant priest, Timothy St. John, who had labored as a missionary on Providence for some seven years. St. John learned of these distant islands from his friend Father Albert Stroebele, the first to establish a Catholic mission on the archipelago. An Austrian priest, in early 1901 Stroebele was proselytizing to African Americans in Louisville, Kentucky, when he read an article informing readers there was no established Catholic presence on San Andrés and Providence. "I resolved to go there and devote the rest of my life to the missionary work among the poor ignorant natives of these islands and bring to them the light of the true Faith," recalled Stroebele.⁴⁴⁹ He received permission to leave his post in Kentucky and set off for the islands in August 1901.

Stroebele soon discovered why Catholic missionaries had never succeeded in proselytizing to the islanders. Upon his arrival to San Andrés, a passerby questioned the captain about the purpose of Stroebele's visit. Upon learning that Stroebele was a priest, the islander exclaimed, "We don't want no priest!" During his stint on San Andrés, Stroebele encountered

⁴⁴⁶ James Fitzpatrick, "Caribbean Mission," *St. Joseph's Foreign Missionary Advocate* (Winter 1915), 300.

⁴⁴⁷ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 30 November 1912, BBR.

⁴⁴⁸ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 3 January 1913, BBR.

⁴⁴⁹ Albert Stroebele. "An Appeal," *The Colored Harvest* (March, 1904), 554.

significant obstacles largely coming from the strength of the then Baptist minister, Brockholst Livingston. Despite Baptist opposition, the missionary managed to build a small chapel named after Saint Anthony, which was mostly attended by mainland officials and a handful of islanders that Stroebele converted.⁴⁵⁰ Such converts were few. The Baptist Church maintained a strong hold over its congregation, repeatedly denouncing, both privately and publicly, at community functions, the dangers of the Catholic faith.

The following year, in 1902, Stroebele relocated to Providence, where he was better received. He even managed to obtain invitations to preach at a few of the local Baptist churches. One of them was the Bethel Baptist Church, with Eusebio Howard as its pastor. Howard's father and brother were both ministers, and Eusebio had separated from his childhood church, East Baptist, after his father, Simon Howard, appointed Eusebio's brother, Simon Howard Jr., as pastor. Eusebio Howard felt his brother underserving of such a position, since Simon Jr.'s daughter, Caroline Howard, had a common-law marriage with Maximiliano Vélez. Eusebio and a number of the church's members left the congregation when Simon Howard Jr. refused to expel his daughter for her sinful actions, as was customary among Baptists on both islands. Eusebio and his followers had already established a small church, where he agreed to permit Albert Stroebele to give a few sermons.⁴⁵¹ The sermons must have been successful: by the end of the week, Howard and his flock had converted to Catholicism. The congregation renamed the church *Mater Dolorosa*, becoming the first Catholic chapel on Providence.⁴⁵² While the reasons

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Albert Stroebele, "An Apostolic Mission," *The Colored Harvest* (January, 1904), 457.

⁴⁵² Albert Stroebele, "An Appeal," *The Colored Harvest* (March, 1904), 554.

for their conversion are not entirely clear, the members may have believed it was better to connect themselves with a foreign, white priest as opposed to an island-born colored minister.⁴⁵³

With a new-found congregation, Stroebele focused his attention on increasing membership there. As a result of internal struggles within local Baptist churches, he continued to win new converts. Soon after Eusebio Howard and his congregation joined Stroebele, Baptist deacon Lemuel Newball left Smooth Water Bay Baptist Church.⁴⁵⁴ In contrast, Brockholst Livingston was more successful at keeping Catholic encroachment at bay on San Andrés.

In 1904, Albert Stroebele departed for the United States in hopes of raising mission funds, leaving two itinerant priests to continue his work on San Andrés and Providence. Walter Yates soon left San Andrés after his alcoholism hindered his efforts to proselytize the islanders and he was later called to return to the United States.⁴⁵⁵ Timothy St. John did a better job at maintaining the congregation on Providence but rarely visited San Andrés. “To neglect two hundred faithful children here, some of whom may die in my absence [,] simply for a chance for people who rarely go to church in San Andrés and never to take the sacraments,” made no sense to St. John.⁴⁵⁶ Moreover, he had to defend himself against unsavory attacks from First Baptist Church and its members.⁴⁵⁷ He battled age, illness, poverty, and resistance from Baptist and Adventist islanders who thwarted his attempts to strengthen the Catholic mission.

⁴⁵³ Desir, “Between Loyalties,” 88.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. 86.

⁴⁵⁵ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 1 May 1905, Saint Joseph Society of Sacred Heart Archive (thereafter, SSJA).

⁴⁵⁶ Timothy St. John to F.A. Gómez Pérez, 17 July 1908, BBR.

⁴⁵⁷ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 22 October 1909, SSJA; Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 5 February 1910, SSJA.

Timothy St. John was largely responsible for bringing the Josephite priests to the islands in 1910. He maintained regular communication with the religious order Saint Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, whose mission focused exclusively on African Americans in the United States. The order was an extension of the Missionary College of St. Joseph in London, which in the 1870s sent five of its missionaries to Baltimore to proselytize emancipated blacks. Within twenty years, the Mill Hill order had established an American branch with sixteen men serving in over eight different churches.⁴⁵⁸ While it is unclear whether Stroebele or St. John were members of the order, or just sympathetic to its mission, records show that the American Josephites had taken an interest in the islands, providing funds to Stroebele to support missionary work.

By 1910, Stroebele had moved on to Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean to evangelize, leaving St. John alone on Providence. St. John regularly expressed to Reverend Justin McCarthy at the Saint Joseph Society his hope that they might send priests to manage the mission.⁴⁵⁹ He also put McCarthy in communication with Adam Brioschi, the Archbishop of Cartagena.⁴⁶⁰ McCarthy promised to send help. Timothy St. John died before McCarthy and Brioschi had finalized their plans of sending a pair of missionaries to San Andrés and Providence.⁴⁶¹

Father John Albert agreed to continue the work that Albert Stroebele and Timothy St. John had begun. His youthfulness helped to keep some of the new converts, one islander describing him as “more ‘sportified’” than St. John.⁴⁶² Together with his brother James, during

⁴⁵⁸ A brief history of the American Josephites is found in Alfred Lesson, “Josephite History: Origins of the American Josephites,” *The Josephite Harvest* (Autumn, 1992), 1-16.

⁴⁵⁹ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 2 April 1910, SSJA.

⁴⁶⁰ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 10 March 1910, SSJA.

⁴⁶¹ Justin McCarthy to Timothy St. John, *The Colored Harvest* (January, 1911), 74.

⁴⁶² John Albert, “Old Providence,” *The Colored Harvest* (June, 1911), 106-108.

their first two years on the island the two priests baptized a total of 96 islanders, including 11 from San Andrés. This was a great improvement over previous years, when the highest number of baptisms performed was in 1905 and 1906, with 26 islanders each year. John Albert urged his superiors to send additional priests to work on San Andrés, where “a herculean task awaits us.”⁴⁶³

The Josephites’ greatest opposition may have come from Colombian officials, especially those from the mainland. While visiting Archbishop Brioschi in Cartagena, Albert spoke of the police chief “eyeing me closely,” suspecting that he “might be a United States spy disguised as a cleric.” He heard a Liberal lash out at the “government for not washing out with blood the insult which our government had offered in the Panama affair.” Albert explained, “It is said by many that the United States of America is cordially hated by many of her little Latin American sister-republics.”⁴⁶⁴ It is unclear to what degree islanders and mainland authorities shared this sentiment. Yet it seems plausible that one or more of the departmental employees would share a similar distrust of Yankee missionaries and may have played a role in pushing for the removal of the Josephite priests in 1912.

By all accounts, the transfer of the mission from the American missionaries to the British went smoothly. Josephite priest James Albert greeted the Mill Hill missionaries upon their arrival. Although sad about his impending departure, Albert was relieved to know that the mission was being transferred to British priests.⁴⁶⁵ Only months before, the newly appointed Intendant Gonzalo Pérez had requested that he and his brother John Albert continue to direct the

⁴⁶³ John Albert, “Letters from the Foreign Missions,” *The Colored Harvest* (March, 1912), 156.

⁴⁶⁴ John Albert, “Old Providence,” *The Colored Harvest* (June, 1911), 106-108.

⁴⁶⁵ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 3 January 1913, BBR.

mission on Providence while leaving San Andrés to the new missionaries.⁴⁶⁶ Their Josephite superiors told them to decline the offer and return to the United States. In fact, John Albert had already returned to Baltimore, leaving his brother in charge of the mission.⁴⁶⁷ James Fitzpatrick, the leader of the Mill Hill mission, learned that the Albert brothers had acquired four houses and other property that they planned to transfer to the Mill Hill priests.⁴⁶⁸ Fitzpatrick expressed his discomfort over taking over the mission, especially since the Josephites appeared to be doing good work, and hoped the Mill Hill Order might convince the Vatican to allow the Albert brothers to keep the mission.⁴⁶⁹

Despite his reluctance to replace the Josephite priests, Fitzpatrick did take charge of the mission and soon recognized the significant work left to be done toward the evangelization of San Andrés. This island was the administrative seat of the intendancy, with “a population over 2,000 inhabitants”, Fitzpatrick explained to his superiors in England.⁴⁷⁰ There were about 30 Catholics, “mostly Colombian officials” who were more “a hindrance than a help [and] absolutely nothing in the way of church, house or school.”⁴⁷¹ Despite the poor state of the mission on San Andrés, Fitzpatrick appeared hopeful and gave an optimistic assessment of the potential for growth on the island. “There seems to be a better feeling towards the Catholic

⁴⁶⁶ “Two Islands in the Caribbean: Phenomenal Labors of Two Young Brooklyn Priests on the Islands of Old Providence and St. Andrews,” *The Tablet*, November 1913.

⁴⁶⁷ John J. Albert to James Fitzpatrick, San Andrés, 29 October 1912, BBR.

⁴⁶⁸ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 3 January 1913, BBR.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 26 April 1913, BBR.

⁴⁷¹ James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 3 January 1913, BBR.

Church at present,” he explained.⁴⁷² Nevertheless, he decided to postpone serious efforts to evangelize. “We are dependent on the charity of the people back home and no serious attempt can be made to convert the people until we possess a church, house, and priests in San Andrés.... Our work must be limited to at present a few periodical visits to San Andrés for the benefit of a few Colombians there.”⁴⁷³

The Catholic mission on Providence was more active. The island had a population of 1500; most were Baptist, but some 350-400 islanders belonged to the Catholic Church. The mission had a parsonage, a church in St. Isabel, and several additional chapels in the villages of Baily, Lazy Hill, and Southwest Bay, where there was a Catholic stronghold. The Mill Hill priests credited the progress on Providence to the Josephite fathers.⁴⁷⁴ Under these conditions, the Mill Hill priests decided to concentrate their initial efforts on Providence. In addition to holding mass every Sunday and on holidays, the priests also held services and religious instructions in the satellite chapels. During the week, the priests toured the island trying to visit the sick in every Catholic and, if possible, non-Catholic household.⁴⁷⁵ These activities were necessary in maintaining previous converts and gaining new ones.

The Mill Hill priests faced several challenges. First, they had to overcome an initial shortage of priests and financial support. Without sufficient priests and money, the British missionaries had to struggle to pay for the church-related services that would attract islanders to the faith. Second, the Mill Hill priests needed to form relations with intendency officials, who

⁴⁷² James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Francis Henry, 26 April 1913, BBR.

⁴⁷³ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Islands, 26 April 1913, St. Joseph’s College, Mill Hill Archives (hereafter, MHA).

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Islands, 6 January 1914, MHA.

often distrusted them. Third and finally, these Catholic missionaries had to find ways to attract islanders to Catholicism while maintaining a hold over their newly converted flock.

Soon after his arrival, in 1913, Fitzpatrick requested two additional priests and financial support. He needed more help “not so much on account of the number of Catholics, but because the work over the rugged mountain roads is very wearing and if their strength must last a series of years in this country, it is necessary that their work be divided.” Fitzpatrick reminded his superior that it was a Society rule not to station missionaries alone and that the other priests “claim that right chiefly as a safeguard for themselves on these isolated islands.” Lastly, Fitzpatrick envisioned their efforts expanding to San Andrés and thus, a “necessity for two priests on each island and for a Superior who should remain free in his movements.”⁴⁷⁶ James Fitzpatrick asked the Society to pay for the additional priests’ services, since the mission’s finances were not secure.

The Colombian government had agreed to financially support the Mill Hill priests with an initial start-up payment of 3,000 francs followed by an annual stipend of 3,000 francs.⁴⁷⁷ While it was not clear whether the priests ever received that amount, Fitzpatrick thought this “grant is too small if ever it is given.”⁴⁷⁸ The priests also believed it impossible to collect donations from the island population. “A great many calls are made upon our slender resources by our own people and we cannot possibly ignore the distress of some of our Catholics.” These

⁴⁷⁶ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Islands, 26 April 1913, MHA.

⁴⁷⁷ It is unclear why the currency was given in francs as opposed to pesos or British pounds. James Fitzpatrick to Superior General Henry Francis, 30 November 1912, BBR.

⁴⁷⁸ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Islands, 26 April 1913, MHA.

calls for help were brought on by the latest hurricane to hit Providence, in November 1912, impoverishing the majority of islanders.⁴⁷⁹

The Mill Hill priests went in search of money. In 1914, James Fitzpatrick reported fundraising efforts in Europe and the United States.⁴⁸⁰ His efforts paid off, and the priests used these funds to build a church in San Andrés, Holy Family, which opened in 1915.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, the Catholic mission welcomed two additional Mill Hill priests. One of them resided on the island and helped to offer services on Sundays and holidays in the villages of San Luís and North End, the location of the Holy Family Catholic Church.⁴⁸²

While intendency officials publicly supported the Catholic mission, their actions were inconsistent and suggested a lack of support of the Mill Hill priests. For example, in 1913, the Board of Mission pledged to allocate funds for the building of a church on San Andrés. After learning this, Intendant Gonzalo Pérez authorized the erection of a church “on ground seized from private persons and tried to force the building” on the Mill Hill fathers. He asked them to repay the intendency 1,000 pesos for constructing the church, but Father Fitzpatrick refused his offer.⁴⁸³ The church was “within ear-shot of the rowdiest public house in the two islands, where every second word is a curse or a blasphemy.” In the end, the property was converted into a police barracks.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Report on the Catholic mission of San Andrés and Providence, 1 January 1915, MHA.

⁴⁸¹ Herbert Keane, “Caribbean Missionary: A Pressing Missionary Need,” *St. Joseph’s Foreign Missionary Advocate* (1916), 397.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Report on the Catholic mission of San Andrés and Providence, 6 January 1914, MHA.

⁴⁸⁴ James Fitzpatrick, “Caribbean Missions,” *St. Joseph’s Foreign Missionary Advocate* (Winter, 1915), 301.

This incident dampened relations between the Mill Hill priests and local officials. Soon thereafter, Father Fitzpatrick learned that Intendant Pérez had spoken to authorities in Bogotá asking for the missionaries' removal from the islands, arguing that "Spanish priests were a necessity and that he (Dr. Pérez) would only consent to return to the island [if] I was removed from the Superiorship, for I might make a good teacher, but I was a failure as a missionary."⁴⁸⁵ While Fitzpatrick considered the intendant's statement to be revenge for his refusal to accept the property, Pérez's accusations did provoke inquiries from the Apostolic delegate and Vatican authorities. Bogotá officials, the priest explained, "always score a point, if they can depict both to the Apostolic Delegate and the government spiritual desolation of San Andrés, whose only hope they say lies in Catholic regeneration."⁴⁸⁶

Local authorities' immorality and sexual impropriety also infuriated the British missionaries, who deemed intendency officials' actions to be impediments to the mission. "Many of the officials came from good families in Bogotá, but were 'exiled' to the islands because of some 'indiscretion.' Their conduct left much to be desired and their Catholicity was no advert for the Church."⁴⁸⁷ After obtaining posts in the intendency, "they [intendency employees] throw away all restraints and spend this time in gambling, drunkenness, and debauchery of every kind."⁴⁸⁸ The worst offender was former departmental employee Maximiliano Vélez, "who at present has three concubines and about 50 illegitimate children."⁴⁸⁹ While it is unclear whether

⁴⁸⁵ James Fitzpatrick to General Francis Henry, 6 June 1914, BBR; Gonzalo Pérez to Minister of Government, November 1913, AGN, MG, SC, T.721, F.89.

⁴⁸⁶ Report on Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence, 1 January 1915, MHA.

⁴⁸⁷ James Winstanley, "Mill Hill and the Caribbean Islands (An Oral History Interview)," 1978, MHA.

⁴⁸⁸ Richard Turner to Superior General Joseph Biermans, 28 July 1924, MHA.

⁴⁸⁹ Herbert Keane to Antonio J. Sánchez, 2 August 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.327.

Vélez fathered that many children, Baptist birth records do indicate two children born to him and different women in consecutive years.⁴⁹⁰ This behavior outraged the British priests and motivated one of them to refuse Catholic funeral services to a deceased former employee who was a notorious womanizer.⁴⁹¹ “Of course everyone is not bad,” explained priest Richard Turner. A few mainland Colombians were “very honorable men whose way of living inspires islanders to truly love God and respect the fatherland. However, being in the minority, this healthy example almost entirely destroys the bad example of the rest of them.”⁴⁹²

The priests worried that former employees and intendency officials served as representatives of Catholicism and that their actions directly impacted missionaries’ ability to attract islanders to the faith, especially in the face of anti-Catholic resistance by Protestant islanders. Writing in 1914, Father Fitzpatrick credited an anti-Catholic campaign by Baptist and Adventist churches for the reduced numbers of conversions that year. He explained that the Baptist and Adventist ministers had aligned with former officials “in a secret campaign of calumny and slander against the priests of malicious opposition to anything Catholic.”⁴⁹³ During church services and home visits, Protestant islanders received sermons on the dangers of the Roman Catholic Church. Pastors, deacons, and other prominent figures disseminated anti-Catholic literature such as the *Watchman*, *Protestant Magazine*, and the works of Pastor Charles

⁴⁹⁰ The First Baptist Church Baptism, Marriage, and Death Records show Vélez fathering illegitimate children with Merab Abrahams in 1911 and Casilda Forbes in 1912.

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Hazel Robinson, Bogota, 13 December 2005.

⁴⁹² Richard Turner to Archbishop Bernardo Restrepo, 15 December 1925, BBR.

⁴⁹³ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence, 1 January 1915, MHA.

Chiniquy.⁴⁹⁴ Protestant islanders even spread rumors regarding the moral character of the missionaries to their neighbors and relatives. “No calumny or lie is too base for their plan to ruin Catholic influence.”⁴⁹⁵ This sort of opposition was reminiscent of that faced by Timothy St. John several years earlier. In 1909 Adventists and Baptists on San Andrés slandered St. John with a falsified article supposedly written by the elderly priest criticizing the island population. “It was going on for 2 or 3 weeks, and I wondered at the frowns and black looks where formerly things had been friendly, until some outside people told their Catholic relatives & then all came out,” wrote St. John.⁴⁹⁶ Protestant resistance was “aided by the network of relationship all over the island, where almost every family is more or less connected to every other family.”⁴⁹⁷

When these actions failed to stop the Catholic advance, the Adventists and Baptists employed other strategies. Baptist churches on both islands assigned members more leadership roles, thus elevating some islanders’ social status in the community. On Providence, Reverend Howard extended leadership roles to “each head of household” within his church as well as every member “of his own household.” This was done to retain his members’ “allegiance to the Baptist faith.” In addition to parceling out religious authority, Baptist ministers offered more church activities including Sunday school and Christian Endeavor societies; on occasion the

⁴⁹⁴ Charles Chiniquy was a French-Canadian Catholic priest who became an anti-Catholic Presbyterian pastor. He claimed Catholicism was a pagan religion in which believers worshipped the Virgin Mary and its theology anti-Christian. Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence, 1 January 1916, BBR.

⁴⁹⁶ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 22 October 1909, SSJA.

⁴⁹⁷ Timothy St. John to Justin McCarthy, 5 February 1910, SSJA.

church even became a music hall. “Lest their religious services not prove sufficiently attractive every form of social accruement has been enlisted to retain the adherence of their members.”⁴⁹⁸

These measures did not go unnoticed by the Mill Hill priests, who reported that the anti-Catholic campaign “cannot fail to weaken the adherence of newly made converts, eliminate the sympathy of possible neophytes and create an atmosphere of distrust of men, whose sole purpose is to the good of the people.” Their fears were legitimate. Island Catholics even stirred trouble for the missionaries with unsettling rumors, “simply because they think we show more charity to some people than to others.”⁴⁹⁹ As a result, the Mill Hill priests only baptized a total of 34 islanders in the first two years of their mission.⁵⁰⁰

Despite Protestant resistance, the mission did gain islander converts. In 1914, the Mill Hill priests baptized only four islanders on San Andrés; two years later, they performed sixteen baptisms.⁵⁰¹ The following year, 1917, the British missionaries announced plans to build a second chapel in the district of San Luís on San Andrés to accommodate a growing number of Catholic islanders.⁵⁰² “A few years ago a priest was a very unwelcome personage,” the priests reported in 1918, and “open hostility was shown him at every turn. Today friendliness prevails and a good hearted welcome everywhere extended to him.”⁵⁰³ Between 1921 and 1925 baptisms averaged over 40 per year, for a total of 205.⁵⁰⁴ The “work may seem small numerically

⁴⁹⁸ Richard Turner to General Superior Joseph Biermans, 5 January 1921, BBR.

⁴⁹⁹ James Fitzpatrick to General Superior Francis Henry, 27 April 1915, BBR.

⁵⁰⁰ Reports on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence, and Corn Island (1913) and (1914), MHA.

⁵⁰¹ Reports on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence (1915) and (1916), MHA.

⁵⁰² Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence (1917), 1 January 1918, MHA.

⁵⁰³ Richard Turner to Joseph Biermans, 5 January 1921, BBR.

⁵⁰⁴ Reports on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence (1921-1925), MHA.

speaking, but the thousand Catholics of today, together with the complete change of feeling toward the priests of the mission[,] mark a decided advance in the little Caribbean mission.”⁵⁰⁵ If the Mill Hill priest counted correctly, Catholics comprised one-fifth of the total population on both islands.

The mission may have benefited from the instability of the Baptist churches, especially on Providence. Writing to General Superior Biermans, Richard Turner acknowledged that Baptist inactivity partly explained the good condition of the mission. On Providence, Reverend Felix Howard of the Santa Isabel Baptist Church fell ill and dissension arose around his replacement. “It is openly said that within a few years there will be a big secession from the Baptist Church, for now it is only family connections and a certain amount of fear that keeps them together.”⁵⁰⁶

Despite the growth of the Catholic mission, Bogotá officials decided to seek a replacement for the Mill Hill priests. Officials and visitors commented that the British missionaries had not made significant progress in turning the islanders into Spanish-speaking Catholics.⁵⁰⁷ Postmaster Raimundo Ayure claimed the British priests failed to “speak of the patriotic love for our country.” He requested Colombian priests who knew both English and Spanish to not only counteract the British priests’ ill-advised presence but also to instill in

⁵⁰⁵ Richard Turner to Superior General Joseph Biermans, 28 July 1924, BBR.

⁵⁰⁶ Richard Turner to Superior General Joseph Biermans, 10 January 1926, BBR.

⁵⁰⁷ Gonzalo Pérez to Minister of Government, 1913, AGN, MG, SP, T.713, F.95; Ismael Vega to President José Vicente Concha, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.348.

islanders “patriotic and religious sentiments and assist them with the learning of Spanish.”⁵⁰⁸ A visiting Claretian vicar echoed his concerns.⁵⁰⁹

The national government’s ultimate goal was to transform islanders into Spanish-speaking Catholic citizens who enjoyed and celebrated the same cultural activities as their mainland counterparts. While the British missionaries proselytized and addressed the religious needs of the people, they were unable to represent the nation’s culture and language as Bogotá officials had envisioned. Thus, central authorities had to identify a group of missionaries better able to realize their overall vision for the islands.

In 1926, Vatican officials appointed the Capuchins, a Spanish religious order, to take over the Catholic mission on San Andrés and Providence Islands. These missionaries already had substantial experience in Colombia. They included two veteran and two young priests along with a friar: Eugenio de Carcagente, Cristóbal de Canals, David de Castellfort, Carlos Vicente María de Orihuela, and Antonio de Novelda. De Carcagente was chosen to lead the mission. He had arrived in Colombia in 1891 from Spain and had spent twenty-six years working as a missionary in La Guajira, Barranquilla, and Bogotá. Father Cristóbal de Canals, another veteran Capuchin, had been a missionary since 1896, primarily in the South Pacific. Castellfort and de Orihuela were ordained in 1926.⁵¹⁰

Cristóbal de Canals arrived on San Andrés on November 3, 1926. He was initially surprised by the cultural differences between islanders and mainland Colombians, which made it

⁵⁰⁸ Salomón Correa forwarded this letter by Raimundo Ayure to the Minister of Government. Salomón Correa to Minister of Government, AGN, MG, SP, T.780, F.75-76.

⁵⁰⁹ Eastman Arango, “Colombia y el Archipiélago,” 64-65.

⁵¹⁰ Manuel Benlloch Castellar, *San Andrés y Providencia: cincuenta años de misión bien cumplida* (Bogotá: Editorial Andes, 1976), 36.

difficult for him to view the islanders as Colombians. “The [mainland] Colombians have visited me, since they are all very dear and good and more so with us. The Colombians only speak Spanish; the others, English. The natives are in everything Yankee. This explains such a cold character that we must change with our mission to make them love Colombia and the Catholic religion.”⁵¹¹

With their prior experiences in the Colombian Caribbean, the Capuchin priests were well positioned to take on the challenges of converting an anti-Catholic, English-speaking population. Capuchin priest Cristóbal de Canals believed he and his spiritual brothers would bring about positive changes to the Catholic mission. “The pearls of change come from Spanish missionaries who love Colombia as a second motherland, who share the same language and who for Colombia have sacrificed the best years of their youth.”⁵¹² The Capuchins’ commitment to Colombianization was seen in a public attack they made on the Mill Hill priests, who the Spanish missionaries blamed for the poor progress of the cultural project.

In December 1926, Capuchin Eugenio de Carcagente traveled to Bogotá to solicit financial support from the government. While in the capital, he gave an interview to *El Tiempo* that outlined the Spanish priests’ agenda for the islands. Calling San Andrés and Providence “one of the most important missions” in the country, de Carcagente made clear that, in their efforts to evangelize the island population, it was the duty of the Capuchins to support the intendancy. Unlike the Mill Hill priests, the Capuchins had good working relations with the intendancy employees. “The English priests do not sympathize with the Colombians nor do they

⁵¹¹ Ibid. 38.

⁵¹² Ibid. “Viene de perlas de cambio de misioneros españoles que amamos a Colombia, como a nuestra segunda Patria, que tenemos la misma lengua y que por Colombia hemos sacrificado los mejores años de nuestra juventud.”

understand or want to understand them. They each complain about the other.” This resentment was exemplified by Intendant Jorge Luna Ospina’s complaint that, on his most recent visit to Providence, he was neither received nor greeted by the Mill Hill priests.⁵¹³

This interview outraged the British missionaries and almost delayed the transfer of the mission to the Capuchins. In a letter to de Canals, Richard Turner rebuked him for his public statements. “I am not surprised about your views of the Mission as expressed to your Superior, in so far as they are an entirely one-sided report based on information given by our supposed friends.” He went on to say that the Mill Hill priests “resent the attitude on the part of officials and likewise your moral support of their conduct.” Turner then informed de Canals of his refusal to relinquish the mission until the arrival of the Capuchin superior de Carcagente.

Despite this clash, Turner agreed to stay on for a few weeks more and assist the Capuchins with the transfer of the mission. Although Father de Canals supposedly spoke English, “neither Colombian, native or ourselves can hardly understand a word he says...the other three priests know nothing of the English language.” As a result, the Capuchins had no one to take on the daily responsibilities of listening to confession, leading catechism, visiting the sick, and recruiting islanders to their flock. Fearful of losing the gains won “in the last fifteen years,” Turner agreed to “carry on the work of the old lines, and at the same time give what lessons I can in English.”⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ “*Los padres no simpatizan con los colombianos, no se entienden con ellos ni quieren entenderse. Todos se quejan unos de otros.*” “Un grave conflicto en San Andrés y Providencia: Una misión de los padres Capuchinos,” *El Nuevo Tiempo*, 27 December 1926.

⁵¹⁴ Richard Turner to Superior General Joseph Biermans, 24 March 1927, BBR.

By mid-1927 all of the Mill Hill priests had departed and the Capuchins had taken full control of the Catholic mission. They decided to concentrate their efforts on island children and, therefore, on the public schools.

5.3 EDUCATION

With the transfer of the islands to the intendancy, local authorities insisted that the schools promote the cultural incorporation of the island population. Bogotá officials envisioned schools as spaces where islanders learned to be Spanish-speaking, patriotic citizens. But most teachers were “native” islanders or Jamaicans⁵¹⁵ who reinforced islanders’ Anglo cultural heritage by emphasizing the geography, history, and culture of Great Britain, the United States, and the British Caribbean. Nearly all were Protestants, with the Baptists in the majority, and stressed the basic components of Baptist moral education: seriousness, good manners, cleanliness, and discipline.⁵¹⁶ Federal officials viewed this situation as an impediment to their effort to hispanicize the island population.

In 1913, Intendant Gonzalo Pérez increased the number of schools on the islands, thus addressing one of the principal concerns of island petitioners: the lack and poor quality of schools on the archipelago.⁵¹⁷ In San Andrés, he opened two schools in the districts of San

⁵¹⁵ Santiago Guerrero to Minister of Government, 16 July 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T.696, F.468.

⁵¹⁶ Clemente, “Educación y cultura,” 63.

⁵¹⁷ Municipal Council of San Andrés, 18 March 1912, AGN, MG, SP, T.696, F.447.

Andrés and San Luís, two of the most populated areas on the island. The intendant also created four schools on Providence, one in the district of Santa Isabel and three in the rural villages of Bottom House, Lazy Hill, and Southwest Bay.⁵¹⁸ Within a year, there was a total of eleven schools.⁵¹⁹ By 1915, the total number of island public schools had grown to fifteen, eight on San Andrés and seven on Providence.⁵²⁰

In addition to the creation of new schools, intendants tried to standardize the school curriculum, including lessons on the Spanish language, Catholic teachings, and Colombian history, geography, and civics.⁵²¹ This project proved difficult to accomplish. In their official letters and reports, intendants and school officials complained about incompetent teachers, poor facilities, and islander resistance to their efforts. Intendants actively sought bilingual teachers,⁵²² but the majority were Protestant native-born islanders who spoke no Spanish and were unfamiliar with Colombian history and geography.⁵²³ Consequently, teachers replaced Colombian textbooks with American ones.⁵²⁴ “The biography of Washington, taken from history of the United States, and the commercial geography of that country, were the most interesting

⁵¹⁸ Gonzalo Pérez to Minister of Public Instruction, November 1913, AGN, MG, SC, T.721, F.82.

⁵¹⁹ Francis A. Newball to Minister of Government, 23 April 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T.732, F.477.

⁵²⁰ Roberto Angulo, Inspección escolar de escuelas primarias, 11 May 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.294.

⁵²¹ Decree 491 of 1904. See Aline Helg, *Educación en Colombia: una historia social, económica, y política* (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial, 1987), 56.

⁵²² Gonzalo Pérez to Minister of Public Instruction, November 1913, AGN, MG, SP, T.721, F.87; Francis A. Newball, Informe, 23 April 1914, AGN, MG, SP, T.732, F.477; Antonio J. Sánchez, Informe, 10 March 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.250.

⁵²³ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 3 May 1916, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC; Jorge Luna Ospina to Minister of Government, 25 May 1926, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC.

⁵²⁴ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 3 May 1916, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC.

points for school lessons here,” reported a school inspector.⁵²⁵ Only the few schools supervised by the Mill Hill missionaries on Providence instructed island youth on Colombian history from texts that priest Richard Turner had translated from Spanish to English.⁵²⁶

Although the bulk of schoolteachers were either unable or unwilling to instruct in Spanish, there were some exceptions. Roberto Angulo, the school inspector, identified Lorna Aibuid as the only qualified teacher on San Andrés. Unlike the other teachers, she had received pedagogical training and learned Spanish as a student at the Normal School in Cartagena.⁵²⁷ Another exception was the boys’ school teacher in San Luís, Bernabé Watson. The school inspector credited his school as “without doubt the best that we have in the entire archipelago, as much for the number of enrolled students as for the visible signs of progress that they have made.”⁵²⁸ His admiration for Watson had been reported to the minister of public instruction the year before in the school inspector’s annual report. “In these moments of the exam I felt happy to be among those children who spoke to me in Spanish and to whom I replied in the same language...Then I felt as if the flag of my fatherland, was flying defiantly in [the face] of the northern enemy” i.e., the United States.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁵ “La biografía de Washington, sacada de la historia de los Estados Unidos, y la Geografía Comercial del mismo país, eran los puntos más interesantes para las lecciones de las escuelas de aquí.” *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (1923), BBR, Carpeta 541.

⁵²⁶ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 3 May 1916, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC.

⁵²⁷ Roberto Angulo, Inspección escolar de escuelas primarias, 11 May 1915, MG, SP, T.734, F.294; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 October 1917, AGN, MG, SP, T.779, F.78.

⁵²⁸ “*Es ésta sin duda alguna la mejor escuela que tenemos en todo el Archipiélago, tanto por el número de niños matriculados, como por los visibles progresos que en ella se han hecho.*” *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (1925), BBR, Carpeta 543.

⁵²⁹ “*En esos momentos de examen me sentía feliz en medio de esos niños que me hablaban en español, y a quienes yo contestaba en el mismo idioma...Entonces sí me parecía que la bandera de mi Patria, izada en esos preciosos momentos, airosa desafiaba al enemigo del Norte.*” *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (1924), BBR, Carpeta 543.

Intendants and school officials complained about inadequate school facilities and supplies. In 1915, Roberto Angulo assessed the poor school facilities, largely housed in rented buildings, and called on the government to provide additional funds.⁵³⁰ Two years later, he again alerted the minister of government to the poor condition of the schoolhouses, which “are the object of curiosity of many foreign eyes.” Julio Gallardo, a native-born islander and local official, also called for financial assistance. Noting the lack of good buildings for the schools, he wrote, “in the winter they are impossible to use.” He also pointed out the lack of supplies, particularly “chalkboards and maps for the study of geography, especially Colombian.”⁵³¹

San Andrés and Providence public schools suffered from fiscal penury, but the biggest challenge facing intendants and school officials was islander resistance. In 1913, Antonio R. Espinosa and his wife, Amalia de Espinosa, came to run the boys’ and girls’ schools on San Andrés. Upon their arrival, Espinosa met with prominent islanders such as Philip Livingston, who was pleased that Espinosa spoke English as well as Spanish. Yet after the first week of classes, the schoolteacher was disappointed to find his school nearly empty. No parent would leave their child with him because “they did not want their children forced to change the religion into which they were born.” Also, “for them it was important to learn Spanish and English grammar.” Espinosa promised to win over the parents, and then the students, by convincing them of Catholicism’s superiority to other religions.⁵³² But four years later, Intendant Leal admitted that most of the public schools on the archipelago had low attendance. He blamed island parents

⁵³⁰ Roberto Angulo, *Inspección escolar de escuelas primarias*, 11 May 1915, AGN, MG, SP, T.734, F.294.

⁵³¹ Julio Gallardo, *Inspección escolar de escuelas primarias* (1921), BBR, Carpeta 539.

⁵³² Decree 20 of December 1913 appointed Espinosa and his wife as principals. See *Inspector de Educación* (1913), BBR, Carpeta 532; Antonio Espinosa, *Dirección de la escuela primaria*, 23 March 1913, AGN, MG, SP, T.713, F.64.

who refused to send their children to the government schools. Leal reported to the minister of government what had happened when he decided to remove a Catholic mainland teacher to appease Protestant islanders. “As soon as I appointed an islander teacher, this school that barely functioned with more than five students, in a few days grew to seventy.”⁵³³

Protestant parents removed their children from public schools and often placed them in religious schools. Private religious schools already had a history in the Baptist community with Pastor Brockholst Livingston’s establishment of reading rooms in the 1890s that focused on Bible reading.⁵³⁴ The Adventist churches were very successful in recruiting new members with the opening of their schools, which were directed by American missionaries and supported by the United States Foreign Mission Board. “The Adventist schools, particularly, of which there is one in San Andrés and three in Providence, are better organized and provided for than the public schools,” acknowledged a school inspector in 1924. However, he found their instruction to be “extremely Americanized” and failed to bring islanders closer to understanding and appreciating Colombia.⁵³⁵

These religious schools attracted a large number of island children. In 1916, Intendant Manuel Leal reported that the government-run boys’ school only enrolled an average of five students, in contrast to the Baptist school with some 80-100 students, so many that “the teachers do not even know the [students’] names.”⁵³⁶ Yet parents consistently opted for the Protestant schools. In 1928, the public school for girls in the village of The Hill on San Andrés began the

⁵³³ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 23 April 1917, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC; Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 26 October 1917, AGN, MG, SP, T.779, F.78.

⁵³⁴ Clemente, “Educación y cultura,” 185.

⁵³⁵ *Memoria de Instrucción Pública* (1924), BBR.

⁵³⁶ Manuel M. Leal to Minister of Government, 3 May 1916, *Memorias de Gobierno*, AC.

year with fifty students but dropped to ten after the opening of a Protestant school.⁵³⁷ The following year, a Protestant school opened in the village of Santa Isabel on Providence and subsequently, enrollment dropped at the public school there. School inspector José Munévar explained, “it is only for religious reasons [and] not because the government-run schools are inferior to the Protestant ones; completely to the contrary.” He returned to the example of the Baptist school in The Hill, which had opened the previous year. “I am convinced that [its success] is no more than momentary enthusiasm.” Munévar insisted that private schools could not “compete with ours and in the end fail because most poor people cannot pay the monthly tuition.”⁵³⁸

Intendancy officials set out to address the challenges facing public schools. In 1916, Intendant Leal made the teaching of Spanish, Colombian history and geography mandatory, and hired Lorna Aibuid to visit each school and teach Spanish to all students. The intendant even prepared a notebook of the most important events in Colombian history, along with geographical information, to be translated into English and distributed in all classes.⁵³⁹ Roberto Angulo was pleased to see the intendancy had taken this action. “One looks with special attention to the teaching of Spanish, for it is one of the most effective ways to Colombianize these islands.”⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Memoria de Instrucción Pública (1928), BBR, Carpeta 546.

⁵³⁸ “...eso por razones de religión únicamente, no porque las escuelas del Gobierno sean inferiores a la protestante; todo lo contrario. Tengo la convicción de que eso no es más que entusiasmo del momento, pues la novelaría a algunos, como pasó a principios del año pasado aquí en La Loma. En ninguna forma esas escuelas pueden competir con las nuestras, y al fin fracasan porque la gente pobre, en su mayoría, no puede pagar mensualmente las cuotas.” Memoria de Educación (1929), BBR, Carpeta 547.

⁵³⁹ Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia, 25 April 1917, Memorias de Gobierno, AC.

⁵⁴⁰ Inspector de Educación, Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia, Memoria de la Instrucción Pública (1917), BBR.

In spite of these efforts, most students, and their teachers, remained unfamiliar with Spanish, Colombian history, and geography, concluded a school inspector in 1924.⁵⁴¹ Two years later, Intendant Carlos Hernández once again declared the teaching of Spanish to be obligatory. All teachers were to prove their fluency, and students were required to enroll in a Spanish course if unfamiliar with the language. In that course, students would also be given instruction on Colombian history and geography. Hernández also sought to promote patriotism among the students by requiring monthly flag celebrations at which teachers would discuss the significance of the flag, important events in Colombian history, and sing the national anthem. The best-performing students would raise the flag and lead the pledge of allegiance. Students were also required to recite the national anthem at the end of each day.⁵⁴²

Adventist and Baptist islanders had opposed the intendency's attempts to place public schools in the hands of Catholic missionaries. After assessing the mission in 1913, priest James Fitzpatrick predicted a fierce fight over public instruction.

There are several schools on the islands...with teachers paid lavishly by the Colombian government...the Baptists fear the priests' interference in religious education. The priests are supposed to be directors of the schools and give religious instruction, but we have limited ourselves to claiming the right of instructing all our own Catholic children.⁵⁴³

Despite Father Fitzpatrick's pledge to concentrate only on the Catholic students, he and his colleagues soon realized that efforts to convert the population rested in the children, especially those in the primary schools. Their unsuccessful pleas to include catechism as a part of

⁵⁴¹ Memoria de Instrucción Pública (1924), BBR.

⁵⁴² Decree 10 (April 15 1926), Inspector de Educación, Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia, Memoria de Instrucción Pública (1926), BBR.

⁵⁴³ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Island, 26 April 1913, BBR.

the daily routine at school were met with great resistance. “Here again the work is unsatisfactory owing to the poor administration of the schools and the superior numbers of Baptist children.” Aware that it was just an “idle dream” due to the poor finances of the Catholic mission, Father Fitzpatrick was determined to pursue “schools for Catholic children under the direction of the priests.” He understood that Catholic-run schools would help the priests retain their newly-converted flock and “would further extend our influence to non-Catholic children, for the parents, in spite of their objections to priests and Catholic teaching, see the superiority of Catholic training.”⁵⁴⁴

The Mill Hill priests did make some gains in their supervision of public schools. By 1921, a Mill Hill priest in Providence had served for several years “as local inspector of Public Schools under the direction of the National Inspector of San Andrés.” Bogotá officials had responded to the priests’ pleas about their exclusion from public schools by appointing a National Inspector to ensure that no one religious denomination had full control. However, the public school system on the islands was in a poor state. “The Government lacks competent teachers, suitable schools and suitable textbooks...private dwellings served as schools and textbooks are such as each child can find for himself,” complained Turner. He also blamed Bogotá officials for poorly selecting the National Inspector, a former islander teacher who had been dismissed for incompetence.⁵⁴⁵

In an effort to capitalize on islanders’ preference for private religious schools, Father Turner proposed a plan to open a Catholic school. He recognized that this would not only be an

⁵⁴⁴ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Island, 6 January 1914, BBR.

⁵⁴⁵ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Island, 5 January 1921, BBR.

expensive project but might also elicit animosity from Colombian officials.⁵⁴⁶ Two years later, Mill Hill priests continued to contemplate the idea of opening a Catholic school as they lost another battle in the fight for control over the public schools: the Protestants still “retain a fair percentage of teachers and have succeeded in having the Catechism entirely eliminated.” Turner blamed Colombian authorities who kowtowed to Protestant islanders. “They supported the Government in the last election and deem it their right and privilege to acquire complete control over every branch of administration, and as far as we can see, will not rest until they get it.”⁵⁴⁷ The Mill Hill priests never opened their own Catholic school.

The Capuchin priests also focused on public schools. They believed island youth to be the future of the Catholic mission and recruited Colombian nuns to assist them with public schools. On May 26, 1927, five Capuchin nuns arrived from mainland Colombia and three more the following year.⁵⁴⁸ These Capuchin sisters concentrated on the girls’ schools in San Andrés. The Capuchin priests focused on the boys’ schools. The work was not easy. The island children “do not understand anything of Spanish and the work that awaits us is arduous and heavy to be able to teach the language of Colombia, their fatherland.”⁵⁴⁹ Despite the arrival of the nuns, some island parents still opted for the privately run Protestant schools. Florence Smith, who taught at

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés, Providence, and Corn Island, 12 January 1923, BBR.

⁵⁴⁸ Castellar Benlloch, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 42, 46.

⁵⁴⁹ “No entienden nada de castellano y el trabajo que nos espera es arduo y pesado para poder enseñar el idioma de Colombia, que es su Patria.” Ibid., 45.

one of the girls' schools in San Andrés, reported her class was reduced from 50 to 40 after ten students went to attend one of the Protestant schools in 1928.⁵⁵⁰

The nuns and priests introduced Catholic teachings infused with patriotism and civic pride in Colombia. They took every opportunity to observe patriotic and religious holidays and promote Colombian culture. The Capuchins commemorated Colombian Independence Day by helping their students to prepare a play an entitled “Day of the Fatherland.” Students sang songs and performed a dance, which was conducted “entirely in Spanish.”⁵⁵¹ One nun recalled, “The community showed enthusiasm and admiration, since never had anything similar been presented [to them].”⁵⁵² This pageantry extended into the mission’s religious activities, in the form of public processions. By 1930, the entire parish came out to participate in the observances of saint days, marriages, baptisms, and other religious holidays.⁵⁵³ These activities not only attracted potential converts, but also tied their flock to the Catholic mission.

The strides made by the Capuchin priests provoked a strong Baptist reaction. Following the departure of Pastor Thomas Livingston, the First Baptist Church hired Noel Gonçalves, a native of British Guiana who accepted the post in June 1926.⁵⁵⁴ In his position as pastor, Gonçalves was responsible for reigniting Baptist opposition to the Catholic mission—a point not lost on the departing Mill Hill missionary Richard Turner. “For several years the Protestant church has been entirely disorganized and a few more years would have completed its

⁵⁵⁰ Memoria de Educación. Inspector de Educación. Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia (1928), BBR.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Benlloch Castellar, *San Andrés y Providencia*, 46.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 49-51.

⁵⁵⁴ Turnage, *Island Heritage*, 53.

destruction...[but now they have] begun to reorganize and up to the present have collected quite a large sum of money to open private schools so that their children may be withdrawn from all Catholic influence.”⁵⁵⁵

By 1930, the intendency aggressively attacked Baptist churches and schools and viewed Noel Gonçalves in particular as a threat. Local authorities targeted Gonçalves for speaking against the Catholic Church, and police appeared in front of his church to catch him attacking local officials or the Capuchin priests in his sermons.⁵⁵⁶ School inspector José Múnevar argued for the closure of private schools, on the grounds that they refused to teach Spanish and Colombian history as dictated in article 13 of Law 56 of 1927. Moreover, these schools impeded the Colombianization agenda.⁵⁵⁷ The intendency snubbed island children who attended private schools by not permitting them to participate in official parades or celebrations. They did not even consider non-Catholic children for scholarships to study on the mainland.⁵⁵⁸

5.4 CONCLUSION

Colombian officials’ efforts to assimilate the island population had mixed results. While on both islands there was a growth in numbers of Catholics, the majority of islanders remained Baptists

⁵⁵⁵ Report on the Catholic Mission of San Andrés and Providence Islands, 24 March 1927, BBR.

⁵⁵⁶ Clemente, “Educación y cultura,” 206.

⁵⁵⁷ Memorias de Educación. Inspector de Educación. Intendencia Nacional de San Andrés y Providencia (1931), BBR.

⁵⁵⁸ Turnage, *Island Heritage*, 56; Petersen, *Province of Providence*, 109.

and Adventists. The British priests complained of sabotage from intendancy authorities; their removal, in 1926, was a culmination of their strained relations with local officials. The Spanish Capuchins also faced Protestant resistance and some difficulties with island parents over public schools, but their mission seemed to have had the support of intendancy officials. For example, intendancy officials refused to recognize Baptist marriages. This resulted in many islander children becoming illegitimate, threatening their inheritance and claims to land.⁵⁵⁹ Some islanders became Catholics to circumvent these discriminatory acts; they were called “job Catholics.”⁵⁶⁰ Even under the Capuchins, however, Catholic evangelization did not replace or greatly reduce Protestantism on either island.

In addition to Catholicism, Bogotá officials also sought to promote the national language of Spanish. The results were a disappointment. Despite a series of laws on school curriculum, the majority of children spoke very little Spanish and only a handful spoke functional or fluent Spanish. As it had been prior to 1913, Creole remained the language for most islanders at home, work, and play, and English was spoken during Protestant religious services. Visitors to the islands in 1930 were just as likely as those seventeen years earlier to comment on the dominance of English in the islands.

San Andrés and Providence islanders showed through their actions that they had not accepted the government’s cultural project. While there is no evidence to reveal their personal thoughts on the foreign Catholic missionaries or mainland school teachers, we do see their refusal to accept the program given to them. The majority of San Andrés and Providence islanders were Protestants who refused to lose their children to Catholic evangelical efforts.

⁵⁵⁹ James Barker, “Informe del juez municipal de San Andrés,” 29 April 1927, AGN, MG, SP, T.954, F. 591.

⁵⁶⁰ Oakley Forbes, “Creole Culture and Language in the Colombian Caribbean,” *Voces: Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 4 (1998), 95-110.

Their decision to pull them from schools or to send them to privately-run Protestant schools was a rejection of Catholicism, though not necessarily of the Spanish language or Colombian nationality. The Baptist churches, particularly those following Pastor Gonçalves, continued to promote the tenets of Baptist faith and provide education in English, refusing to accept the notion of Colombian citizenship only in terms of a shared language and religion.

CONCLUSION

On October 26, 1962, the *San Andrés Bilingüe*, an island newspaper, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Intendancy of San Andrés and Providence by devoting that day's issue to articles on the history of these Caribbean islands. In so doing, the newspaper's editors were constructing their version of the islands' past. In one article, U.S. geographer James J. Parsons stressed the islands' deep connections to other English-speaking communities in the western Caribbean. He spoke of the English Puritans who first settled on Providence and, later, the eighteenth-century Jamaican and Caribbean sojourners who sought better lives on San Andrés and Providence.⁵⁶¹ Ali Omar interviewed Francis Newball and Timothy Britton, two native-born islanders who had served in the capacity of intendant, in 1913 and 1941, respectively. Both recalled their struggles to establish an administration free from corruption and respectful of island culture.⁵⁶² Fray Fidel de Benaguacil recalled the efforts of the American, British, and Spanish Catholic missionaries who worked to convert the island population. He was careful not to claim a complete victory in winning over the bulk of San Andrés islanders, many of whom remained Protestants.⁵⁶³ Finally, other articles focused on the archipelago's historic

⁵⁶¹ James Parsons, "San Andrés and Providence Islands in the Western Caribbean," *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962.

⁵⁶² Ali, Omar, "Dos veteranos dan sus impresiones sobre el viejo y nuevo," *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962.

⁵⁶³ Fray Fidel de Benaguacil, "La misión católica y el cincuentenario," *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962.

links to Colombia. One article listed the names of former island administrators —the majority of them mainland Colombians—while another denounced recent Nicaraguan claims to the islands.⁵⁶⁴

Fifty years after the creation of the intendancy, the archipelago of San Andrés and Providence remained a national territory governed by presidentially appointed administrators. These included a few native-born islanders such as Francis Newball, Timothy Britton and Frederick Lever, but the majority of intendants were mainland Colombians. In 1953, President and General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla declared San Andrés a free port in which imports paid no tariffs. At this time, Colombia, like other Latin American nations, had instituted import-substitution-industrialization (ISI) policies aimed at protecting domestic markets; these included high tariffs that raised prices on imported goods several times higher than the global market. The decision to make the island a free port turned San Andrés into an attractive tourist destination for mainland Colombians seeking to purchase consumer durables such as electronic appliances, perfumes, and televisions at a fraction of the cost on the mainland.⁵⁶⁵ The increase in the number of Colombian visitors to San Andrés also brought Colombian and foreign investors, who took control of the tourist industry and reaped many of the financial benefits of the free port.

By the 1960s, San Andrés islanders had grown frustrated with the state of the archipelago: poor communication systems, insufficient electricity, lack of inter-island transportation, native islander marginalization in the tourist sector, battles over land titles, and

⁵⁶⁴ “Gobernantes de las islas,” *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962; “Gráficas que traen recuerdos,” *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962; “Monografía sobre las islas de San Andrés y Providencia,” *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 26 October 1962.

⁵⁶⁵ Adolfo Meisel Roca. “The Contentualization of San Andrés Island, Colombia: Panyas, Raizales, and Tourism, 1953-2003,” *Documentos de Trabajo sobre Economía Regional* No.37 (August 2003), 21.

overpopulation.⁵⁶⁶ They also resented the treatment accorded them by visitors from the mainland. Antonio McNish, secretary of the Club Archipiélago Unido—a Bogotá-based organization focused on the social improvement and cultural life of islanders—recalled an official visit from the governor of North Santander and the mayor of Cali, who called islanders “pseudo-Colombians.”⁵⁶⁷ Mauricio McNish, a San Andrés lawyer and activist, encouraged islanders not to trust mainlanders and explained to Luís Carlos Vásquez—one of the early *pañamen* (mainlanders) to arrive to San Andrés—his feelings about mainlanders. “You and I are fundamentally different. You are from the mainland, Catholic, white and speak Spanish; we are islanders, black, Protestant, and speak English. You will continue being *pañamanes*.”⁵⁶⁸ Marco Polo Britton Archbold echoed similar words in an interview he gave to the newspaper *El Espectador* and agreed with Colombian anthropologist Nina de Friedmann’s assessment that the Colombian government had not successfully remade islanders into Spanish-speaking, Catholic nationals.⁵⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Colombian politicians were still concerned about the nation’s sovereign rights over San Andrés and Providence and about the national identity of the island inhabitants.

⁵⁶⁶ In 1962, the government building burned down, containing the islands’ legal and notary archives, including all land titles. After this event, islanders’ property rights were challenged when the Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (INCORA) classified the land as “forestland” and without titles. Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 273-274.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ “A ustedes y nosotros nos separan esas fundamentales: ustedes son interioranos, Católicos, blancos y hablan español; nosotros somos isleños, negros, protestantes y hablamos inglés. Ustedes siguen siendo pañamanes.” Juan Gossain, “Los pañamanes y San Andrés, Isla,” *El Espectador*, 27 Octubre 1969.

⁵⁶⁹ Friedemann published an article in *El Espectador* titled “El caso de San Andrés,” in which she referred to the lack of acculturation or absorption of the foreign English island culture into the Hispanic culture. Britton agreed, explaining, “It is that way because of what we call the blood, the culture... we do not have Spanish blood.” “Es por eso que a nosotros nos llama la sangre, la cultura... No tenemos sangre española.” Myriam Luz, “Marco Polo cuenta su vida y explica plan separatista,” *El Espectador*, 29 October 1969. Walwin Petersen recalled fights breaking out between “pañas” and islanders, whom the former believed were “ignorant niggers” (negro ignorante). Petersen, *The Province of Providence*, 252.

Part of this was due to the Nicaraguan government challenging Colombia's territorial claims to the archipelago.⁵⁷⁰ In 1969, Marco Polo Britton Archbold, a Providence-born naturalized United States citizen, submitted a proposal to the United Nations and the United States Vice President asking for their support in helping the islanders to separate from Colombia and form an independent nation. Britton claimed that islanders living in the United States and Panama supported his efforts.⁵⁷¹

Most islanders, reporters, and Colombian officials considered Britton's proposal to be "craziness" and labeled him as "senile."⁵⁷² Other observers cautioned, however, that Britton was expressing resentments that were widespread in the islands. While dismissing his bid for independence, Britton's uncle, former Intendant Timothy Newball Britton, warned Colombian authorities to take seriously threats of secession, especially if they did not act to rectify the errors of past administrations. "The islander demands respect and the right to participate without hateful discriminations in all aspects of national life." Antonio McNish echoed Newball's warning.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷⁰ In the 1960s, the Nicaraguan government gave oil exploration rights to Union Oil in 1964, Mobil Oil in 1966, and Chevron in 1967. By 1969, Colombian authorities were trying to prevent Nicaragua's expansionist policy by brokering a new treaty to affirm their sovereignty over the Archipelago of San Andrés and Providence. Augusto Zamora, "Roots of the Colombia-Nicaragua Territorial Dispute," *Revista Envio Digital* 161 (1994): 4. <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2802>

⁵⁷¹ Myriam Luz. "Marco Polo cuenta su vida y explica plan separatista," *El Espectador*, 29 October 1969.

⁵⁷² "Sanandresanos hablan sobre intento separatista," *El Espectador*, 19 October 1969; Juan Gossain, "El separatismo sigue su marcha," *El Espectador*, 26 October 1969. Myriam Luz described Britton's inability to express his thoughts clearly and depicted him as emotionally unstable. "Marco Polo cuenta su vida y explica plan separatista," *El Espectador*, 29 October 1969. *El Tiempo* took Britton's movement more seriously and compared it to the Panamanian secessionists of 1903. Juan Roca Lemus, "Timbre de alarma: ¿un segundo Panamá?" *El Tiempo*, 18 October 1969.

⁵⁷³ "El isleño reclama el respeto y su derecho a participar sin discriminaciones odiosas en todos los órdenes de la vida nacional." "Sanandresanos hablan sobre intento separatista," *El Espectador*, 19 October 1969.

Baptist Minister Rodwell Morgan also dismissed the idea of island separatism. “Native resistance is not against the government nor authorities, nor a violent resistance... We islanders are very Colombian and respectful of our government because it has not done anything against us. Here one respects the law and authorities more than other places.”⁵⁷⁴ An anonymous San Andrés islander pulled aside Minister of Government Carlos Augusto Noriega to dismiss Britton’s proposals and affirmed that “We [islanders] are Colombians. We are proud of it and deeply love Colombia.”⁵⁷⁵ Cristóbal Whitaker believed that talk of separation was simply a strategy to get Bogotá officials to pay attention to islanders’ concerns. “But in truth, we were born and will die Colombians.”⁵⁷⁶

These patriotic sentiments echoed those of Vernon May, a San Andrés community leader and former intendancy employee who four years earlier, in 1965, offered a rebuttal to concerns regarding islanders’ patriotism by tracing their loyalty to Colombia over the years. May proudly recalled how island men had joined their compatriots on the mainland in the nation’s fight against Peru in a 1932 territorial dispute, some losing their lives. He drew further from the past in recalling how islanders had refused to secede along with Panama in 1903. “The islander, with no [feeling of] difference whatsoever, has always felt Colombian. In spite of the central government’s neglect and abandonment, [the islander] showed exemplary patriotism. In 1903,

⁵⁷⁴ “*La resistencia de los nativos no es contra el gobierno, ni contra las autoridades, ni es una Resistencia violenta... Los isleños somos muy colombianos y respetamos nuestro gobierno, porque no ha hecho nada en contra de nosotros. Allí se respetan la ley y las autoridades más que en muchos otros lugares.*” “No existe ‘Pastor Rebelde’ en San Andrés, Isla,” *El Tiempo*, 10 May 1969

⁵⁷⁵ “*Nosotros somos colombianos, nos sentimos orgullosos de serlos y amamos a Colombia muy fuertemente.*” “Noriega comenta el “separatismo’,” *El Espectador*, 19 October 1969.

⁵⁷⁶ “*Nosotros nacimos y moriremos colombianos.*” Juan Gossain, “Los pañamanes y San Andrés, Isla,” *El Espectador*, 27 October 1969.

when Panama separated from Colombia, the islander could have done the same thing, but because of his patriotism, he stood firm.”⁵⁷⁷

Islanders continued to use the same rhetoric and political strategies in the 1960s as they had in the 1910s and 20s. Vernon May’s words echoed those written by Francis Newball and other islanders who made similar appeals to the nation when they tried to broker a new administration to govern the islands. Yet May’s editorial, the articles on the separatist movement in 1969, and the celebratory issue commemorating the creation of the intendancy, all suggest that the nation-building project on San Andrés and Providence was not finished.

Between 1890 and 1930, Colombian nation-builders sought to incorporate the country’s vast frontier areas: the Llanos Orientales, Amazonia, the Chocó, the Guajira Peninsula, and the islands of San Andrés and Providence. Those regions accounted for “nearly half of Colombia’s national territory but less than 3 percent of its 7,851,000” people (as of 1930).⁵⁷⁸ These regions were populated primarily by indigenous and African-descended people; following the reconciliation of the Colombian state and the Catholic Church through the Concordat of 1887 and the Convention of Missions of 1902, the Colombian government assigned responsibility for those populations to Catholic missionaries. Those missionaries, most of whom were foreign, were to work with civilian authorities to promote evangelization and Christianization, better sanitation and health conditions, literacy and civic education, colonization, and infrastructure

⁵⁷⁷ “El isleño sin distinción alguna, siempre se ha sentido colombiano. A pesar de todo el abandono y el olvido por parte del Gobierno Central, mantuvo un patriotismo ejemplar. En 1903 cuando Panamá separó de Colombia, bien pudiera haber hecho lo mismo lo isleño, más por ese patriotismo, se mantuvo firme”. Vernon May, “Somos o no somos,” *San Andrés Bilingüe*, 29 May 1965.

⁵⁷⁸ Jane Rausch, *Colombia*, 5.

development, “with the goal of making Colombian rule over these lands more effective.”⁵⁷⁹ However, Colombian control over these areas remained tenuous, as seen in this dissertation and other recent studies of frontier regions.⁵⁸⁰

An overarching theme in all of these incorporation projects was anxiety over race and ethnicity. In the Chocó region, officials from Bogotá, settlers from the highlands, and foreign visitors all viewed the region’s black residents as a counter-force to national progress and modernization. A federal commission concluded in its report that Chocoanos lived “with little more civilization than their ancestors had when they were taken out of the forests of Africa.”⁵⁸¹ Officials held similar concerns about the black and indigenous populations in the Guajira Peninsula of the Caribbean coast, where sanitation and health policies were aimed at preventing further “racial degeneration” along the coast, “the face of the nation.” Elites’ attempt to restructure and transform the Caribbean coast into a modern society required both biological and moral renovation, inspired in eugenics and targeting black and mulatto workers, who became the center of the region’s incorporation project.⁵⁸²

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Colombian nation-builders applied “scientific” notions of race to the black populations of the Chocó and the Caribbean coast.⁵⁸³ When they arrived in Providence and San Andrés, however, those officials seemed to

⁵⁷⁹ Rausch, *Colombia*, 25-26.

⁵⁸⁰ Claudia Leal, “Black Forests: The Pacific Lowlands of Colombia, 1850-1930” (Ph.D diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2004); Jason McGraw, ““Neither Slaves nor Tyrants’: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in Caribbean Colombia, 1850-1930” (Ph.D diss., University of Chicago, 2006); Jane Rausch, *Colombia*, 5-26.

⁵⁸¹ Leal, “Black Forests,” 192-193.

⁵⁸² McGraw, “Neither Slaves,” 384.

⁵⁸³ Leal, “Black Forests,” 192-193; McGraw, “Neither Slaves,” 400-401.

leave notions of race behind. In their official reports and correspondence, they spoke very little about the racial character of the island population. The British and American missionaries were far more attentive to the racial character of their new converts than were the newly arrived public officials.⁵⁸⁴

Perhaps mainland authorities were silent on this point because of their inability to categorize the islanders' "race." This was the case with Francisco Javier Vergara y Velasco, who considered them a racial hybrid "who are not yet definitively formed and whose character is very difficult to specify."⁵⁸⁵ Or perhaps for Colombian nation-builders on the islands, race loomed less important than nationality, language, and culture. Even more than on the mainland, the nation-building project on San Andrés and Providence was spurred by Colombian authorities' desire to curb the growing geopolitical presence of the United States. And even more than on the mainland, islanders' linguistic, religious, and commercial ties were with the United States and the Anglophone Caribbean, not Colombia.

In the face of this challenge, Bogotá officials sought to correct decades of neglect and poor governance and consolidate their authority on the islands through nationalization. Mainland authorities called it "Colombianization", which was a program aimed at converting the island population to Catholicism, teaching them the Spanish language, and instilling civic pride and Hispanic customs. Officials entrusted this agenda both to intendency employees and to Catholic missionaries whom they placed in charge of the public schools. The term "Colombianization" underscored Bogotá and other mainland officials' questioning of islanders' Colombian identity.

⁵⁸⁴ Samuel Parker Smith, *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 24, 1902, 13; Albert Stroebele, "An Apostolic Missionary," *The Colored Harvest*, January 1904, 457; John J. Albert, "Old Providence Island," *The Colored Harvest*, June 1911, 106.

⁵⁸⁵ Vergara, *El Archipiélago de San Andrés*, 24-25.

Mainlanders and islanders shared neither a common history, nor language, nor religion, nor culture, nor racial character. But state officials believed that these characteristics were malleable and that islanders could be taught to be Colombian nationals and thus, good citizens.

For nearly thirty years, departmental and intendency authorities used foreign English-speaking Catholic missionaries to impart Catholic religiosity, the Spanish language, and Hispanic customs to islanders. Yet Colombian officials eventually concluded that they could not rely on British and American missionaries who did not share a love for the Spanish language or Hispanic culture. By 1930, another foreign missionary group had arrived, but now one with the same language and arguably the same culture as mainland Colombia. Yet despite their decades of experience with indigenous and black communities on mainland Colombia, the Spanish Capuchins did only marginally better than their English-speaking counterparts, and even this modest success was largely due to their better relations with intendency officials.

The Catholic missionaries' limited success was the product of islander resistance. Islanders actively participated in the process of creating an intendency and bringing the archipelago into a closer relationship with the Colombian state. However, their desire for administrative change had more to do with ridding the island of poor administrators and taking part in the nation's modernization project—the construction of roads, bridges, and schools and promotion of commerce and export trade. In their petitions, island elites like Francis Newball claimed islanders were Colombian because of their loyalty and obedience to the laws and political authority of the state. Newball and other island notables rarely made claims to a shared culture, language, or religion and in only a few cases did they demand to share the culture of their mainland counterparts. Protestant island families succeeded in minimizing the impact of the Catholic mission on the islands, but not completely eradicating it. Their opposition to Catholic

conversion raised questions about islanders' fitness as Colombian nationals which are still circulating into the contemporary period.

By 1930, Bogotá officials had warded off potential outside threats from the United States and Nicaragua toward sovereignty over San Andrés and Providence. But as we have seen, Colombian officials could never be completely confident that they had consolidated their authority over these faraway islands. Fears of island separatists still haunted Bogotá authorities into the later part of the twentieth century. Bitter memories of Panamanian secession became directly tied to San Andrés islanders' demands for autonomy or redress of grievances as newspaper headlines stirred up controversy and sparked debate.

Between 1924 and 1930, most island complaints centered on ill-treatment from intendancy employees and on the intendancy's numerous administrative failures. Islanders complained of poor schools, roads, and other island infrastructure projects—the same demands islanders had made in the early 1900s when seeking to remove departmental islanders from the islands. Islanders believed it was the government's responsibility to address and resolve these problems; only in a few cases do we find islanders threatening to secede or ask another nation to intervene. In spite of their linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences from the mainland, islanders saw themselves as belonging to Colombia and entitled to the benefits of membership in the nation. San Andrés and Providence islands thus offer historians an opportunity to reevaluate our understandings of national belonging and citizenship and an alternative model of state- and nation-formation.

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