

# Rethinking society

*Individuals, Culture and Migration*

Volume 3

**The Blues**

Origins and Transculturation

**The Blues.**  
**Origins and Transculturation**

Edited by:

**Vladimer Luarsabishvili**

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This book contributes to the development of blues studies outside the U.S. and within the field of academic research. Forming part of the third volume of the book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration*, the principle aim of *The Blues. Origins and Transculturation* is to reveal the main peculiarities of a phenomenon of Blues in a complex world of human communication.

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## Introduction: The Blues. Origins and Transculturation

VLADIMER LUARSABISHVILI

The book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration* aims to describe the structural peculiarities and functional characteristics of modern society. In the era of globalization, multiculturalism and massive migrations, the disappearance of one set of values and the appearance of another is observable. Society as a form of human interactions is subjected to revision and re-definition from the points of view of philosophy, rhetoric, history, literature and psychology, among others.

*Rethinking society* means the critical examination of modern ways of communication and their impact on the creation of new sets of values. Different approaches to the system of education and its role in the formation of free individuals may be of crucial importance for personal liberty and for establishment of liberal democracies all round the world.

*Individuals* are the main composers of human progress due to their different and original approaches to human values and basic rights. As Bertrand Russell put it, “[...] a community needs, if it is to prosper, a certain number of individuals who do not wholly conform to the general type. Practically all progress, artistic, moral, and intellectual, was dependent upon such individuals, who have been a decisive factor in the transition from barbarism to civilization.” The role of individual needs to be reconsidered in modern socio-cultural ambience and historical context which is one of the main challenges for modern society.

*Culture* is an ambience where values are formed and shared. Peter Burke indicates the coexistence of *Cultural History* and *History of Cultures* making emphasis on five moments of the development of the History of Culture in different parts of the world. The cultural tradition is a mode of experience and acting which reveals the intellectual possibilities and human perspectives of creation and thinking. “Studies in Culture” may contain basic mechanisms of human relations demonstrating the acceptance or rejection of ideas, values and relations.

*Migration* facilitates diffusion of ideas and values, reveals possibilities for adaptation in the new *topos* and conditions the formation of new



individual and/or collective narrative. According to Stephen Greenblatt, in an age of global mobility we need to rethink the essence of culture.

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*The Blues. Origins and Transculturation* is the third volume of the book series *Rethinking society. Individuals, Culture and Migration*. Its principle aim is to reveal the main peculiarities of miscegenation that began in the Modern Age in the colonies of Louisiana and Florida, favored by the less repressive environment of these territories in French and Spanish hands, as well as to analyze, on the one hand, the strong link that *blues* had with the forms of urban popular music that formed the style called *rhythm and blues*, and to study the leaks that this Afro-American musical style had on the European and, especially, Spanish *pop-rock* of the sixties. As a book series editor, I would like to thank all authors for their kind participation – I indicate here my sincere debt to them for their encouragement with this project. Special thanks to the members of Editorial and Advisory Editorial Boards for their remarks and suggestions.

## Towards the Blues Diaspora: About Blues as an Object of Study

JOSEP PEDRO

When Vladimer Luarsabishvili got in touch me, explaining that he was working on the publication of a book dedicated to the blues, I reacted with surprise and joy. The combination of these emotions is explained, firstly, by the rare publication of volumes on blues in the academic field, particularly in the Spanish context, even in the Spanish-speaking one, although this was a project in English. Apart from the news and the invitation, it was striking to me that Vladimer was writing to me from Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, a country located at the intersection between Europe and Asia, which I knew very little of. His experience and research proved that Georgia had also been touched by the powerful influence of the blues.

In the globalization of blues music, I confirmed once more, this foundational popular expression of African-American origin has left its mark on countless territories, fostering certain translocal bonds, present though not always recognized, from which further collaborations and camaraderie may be established. Without going any further, I began to write these lines on an Alfa train that travels through Portugal from south to north, passing through my destination, Porto. I am immersed in a research stay focused on the study of blues and jazz scenes in Portugal, with special attention to relations with Spain. The relationship of Spanish and Portuguese blues and jazz is undoubtedly growing, and I remember the words of Rui Guerreiro, president of the BB Blues Portugal association, based in Baixa da Banheira, southeast of Lisbon, on the other side of the river Tagus. In contrast with the notion of Portugal as an “unknown neighbor”, which was posited in the 2013 Blues Yearbook in Spain (edited by Societat de Blues de Barcelona), Rui now affirmed a more recently acquired sense of belonging: “We feel completely integrated in the blues community in Spain. We even think that we can speak of an Iberian Blues community” (personal interview, 04/10/2022).

Vladimer told me about the collection “Rethinking Society. Individuals, culture and migration”, founded at New Vision University (Georgia) in 2020, and frame of reference for this new book: *The Blues. Origins and Transculturation*. Besides Vladimer’s presence as editor, when I looked

into it I discovered the presence of Spanish researchers on the editorial board: colleagues from Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and Universidad de Salamanca. Also, other staff from U.S, Chilean, Swiss, Danish, Polish and New Zealand universities, belonging to different departments and disciplines. Among them are Tomás Albaladejo (UAM), who supervised Vladimer's PhD thesis on Spanish literature, and Javier Sánchez Zapatero (USAL), whom I know from the novel and film noir conferences he organizes annually.

*The Blues. Origins and Transculturation* presents a new take on the blues, and hopefully it will contribute to strengthen the development of different research lines related to it. The introduction, written by Vladimer Luarsabishvili, situates the volume within the mentioned book series, and delves into the notions of society, individuals, culture and migration. Indeed, since its origins, the history of the blues has been marked by displacement and cultural formation, as well as by migrations from South to North and subsequent globalization processes. Two extensive and detailed chapters follow. The first one is "Blues and Transculturation: From West Africa To America", by José Ignacio González Mozos (PhD at UCLM). It explores the historical development of blues since the early twentieth century, and it is particularly interested in the post-WWII evolution of blues, rhythm & blues and soul. The focus on the United States leads to a reflection on rhythm and blues in Europe and in Spain during Franco's dictatorship. This includes a discussion on the reception of rock 'n' roll and rock culture along with a study of the influence of blues in Spanish popular music, with a particular focus on the 1960s.

The following chapter is "Indian Blues: The origins of a Native-African American culture in colonial Florida", by Héctor Martínez. Sharing a historical inspiration with the previous text, it addresses the colonial context in Florida, United States, focusing on the development of a Native African-American culture. As pointed out by Martínez, there were key artists in blues history who were from Native American descent, including rural pioneer Charlie Patton and influential singer-guitarist T-Bone-Walker. The chapter draws on significant song lyrics and territories, while discussing the ongoing construction of the North American nation and its relation with European countries such as Spain and the United Kingdom. Thus, the author provides a contextualized

selection of artists and songs that express and deal with the Native American identity.

This book contributes to the development of blues studies within the field of academic research. A valuable effort, it adds to the interdisciplinary research on the blues that has been going on since the early to mid-20th century. More particularly, it builds new ground for the development of blues studies outside the U.S., in what we might call the blues diaspora context. Such studies, like the more established diasporic jazz studies, seek to explore cultural, social and political aspects of the development of blues both in the U.S. and in other territories, where the influence of blues has been and continues to be transformative.

## Blues and Transculturation: From West Africa To America

José Ignacio González Mozos

**Abstract:** The development of the different styles of *blues* throughout the 1920s and 1930s had a special impact on the birth of *rhythm and blues* and on the influence, it had on the genres of urban popular music developed after the Second World War. Through this chapter we will analyze, on the one hand, the strong link that *blues* had with the forms of urban popular music that formed the style called *rhythm and blues*. On the other hand, and as the main objective of this chapter, we will study the leaks that this Afro-American musical style had on the European and, especially, Spanish *pop-rock* of the sixties. In conclusion, the evolution of the *blues* in the direction of *rhythm and blues* and its return to Europe through the leaks it experienced in Spanish *pop-rock* of the period so-called “desarrollismo”, will form the basis of the content that we will develop throughout this work.

**Keywords:** Syncretism, blues, rhythm and blues, leaks, desarrollismo, Spanish pop-rock.

By 1822, Major Alexander Gordon Laing was exploring the territories of West Africa in command of the *Royal African Corps*, with the aim of consolidating the lines of communication between Britain and the kingdoms of sub-Saharan West Africa. During the arduous journey through Sierra Leone, Major Laing could not have suspected that the song that *griot* dedicated to him in Seemera was the primordial antecedent of the music that, years later, the *songster* would transform into the African-American *blues*.

At parting, he sent his griot or minstrel to lay before me, and sing a song of welcome: this man, of whom I give a sketch, had a sort of fiddle, the body of which was formed of a calabash, in which two small square holes were cut to give it a tone; it had only one string, composed of many twisted horse-hairs, and although he could only bring from it four notes, yet he contrived to vary them so as to produce a pleasing harmony; he played at my door till I fell asleep (Laing, 1825: 148).

The musical traditions described by Major Laing, which were current in large parts of West Africa when the Atlantic slave trade of Africans to America was still in full swing, had an enormous impact on the development of most African-American-based popular music genres established on the American continent. To Alexander Gordon Laing's testimony, we can also add that of the British traveler Thomas Edward Bowdich, who around 1820 published *Mission from Cape Coast Castle*

*to Ashantee: with a descriptive account of that kingdom.* Both documents provide clear evidence of the links between African music and the music developed in America by slaves brought from the west coast of Africa.

With this in mind, we must underline the fact that in certain African-American popular music such as the *blues*, these parallels are particularly noticeable. Such links are manifested not only in not through the use of modal scales and stringed instruments, but through character and vocal expression articulated around certain antiphonal *call-and-response* structures, a procedure that is widespread in traditional African music and appears in both religious and secular African-American-based genres. As Thomas Edward Bowdich observed on his trip to the Ashantee Kingdom: “the whole of the establishment of the palace shout, and their shout is echoed by the people throughout the town” (Bowdich, 1873: 230), a detail that shows us the importance of the antiphonal *call-response* structure in West African music, a reflection of the influence it would later exert on American popular music.

However, although the African antiphonal structure is one of the bases for the development of African-American folk music in North America, the evolution of the musical instruments built there by the slaves in the image of those played in Africa is no less important. Gerhard Kubik makes an interesting correspondence on the *banjar*, the African predecessor of the banjo in North America. Alongside the guitar, this chordophone regularly accompanied early African-American folk singers and bands:

During the eighteenth century the British slave trade brought many people through the Gambia/Senegal corridor to the United States. Some of these came from far inner parts of the West African savannah and sahel zone. They were settled in the seaboard states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Caroline, and Georgia, within the thirteen early colonies. It is likely that plucked lutes of any of the West African Savannah designs were reconstructed by slaves, both in the Caribbean and in the seaboard states of the British colonies [...] After 1776, on the plantations founded in the interior, where the use of drums by Africans was suppressed, the «banjar» derivatives or proto-banjoes became popular in many experimental homemade construction variants (Kubik, 2017: 102).

The development of African and Anglo-Saxon *call-and-response* antiphonal structures and the evolution of the musical instruments that accompanied these musics contributed to the emergence of *blackface minstrel shows* in the early 19th century and the enshrinement of musical genres such as *cakewalk*, *blues* and *ragtime*, while establishing the use of instruments such as the banjo and fiddle for accompaniment. Likewise, the development of syncopated rhythms through the performance of *coon songs*, *work songs* and *fields holler* -exclamations used by African-American slaves in the hard work they carried out on the plantations-, together with dances such as the *toe and heel*, the *juba* or the *breakdown*, helped the development of the *blackface minstrel shows*.

The impact of these dances among the slave population on the plantations was narrated by Solomon Northup as follows:

My task for those feast days was to play the fiddle [...] the dance resumes till dawn. And the fiddling does not cease, but the attendants themselves play a peculiar music. It is called clapping [*Juba*] and is the accompaniment to one of those meaningless chants [...] The clapping is done by first beating the hands on the knees, then the hands between them, then the right shoulder with one hand and the left with the other, while tapping the rhythm with the feet, singing (Northup, 2014: 175-180).

Be that as it may, we can trace the beginnings of the *blues* both to the emergence of syncopated music and the *fields holler*, and to the performances of *songster ballads* and compositions for the first syncopated instrumental bands, which, like that of William Handy, known as “The father of the blues”, managed to bring the formal twelve-bar structures and harmonies based on the I, IV and V degrees of the scale, from the rural environments of the South to the urban environments of the North.

Negroes react rhythmically to everything. That's how the blues came to be. Sometimes I think that rhythm is our middle name. When the sweet good man packs his trunk and goes, that is occasion for some low moaning. When dark town puts on its new shoes and takes off the brakes, *jazz* step in. If it's the New Jerusalem and the River Jordan we're studying, we make the spirituals (Handy, 1941: 82).

William Handy's "Memphis blues" (1912), "St Louis blues" (1914) and "Yellow dog blues" (1919) represented an early attempt to popularize a musical form which in 1920 Mamie Smith gave its characteristic features in her "Crazy blues",<sup>1</sup> one of the first blues recordings. In the following years of the 1920s, other artists such as Ma Rainey accentuated the melancholic character of the *blues* with recordings such as "Moonshine blues/Southern blues"<sup>2</sup> (1924) and "Slave to the blues/Oh my babe blues" (1926).<sup>3</sup> The twelve-bar structure based on the harmonic sequence of I, IV and V inherited the sad and melancholic character of the early *bluesmen* who developed their music in marginal environments dotted with clubs, violence and misery, where penitentiaries and rural plantations, such as the Dockery and the Parchman, were part of the regular landscape.

African-Americans became the main inhabitants of the penitentiary centres during the first half of the 20th century and this was obviously reflected in the blues. Prisons such as Angola Prison in Louisiana or Parchman Prison Farm in Mississippi were as important for the development of the *blues* as the Dockery Plantation in the Delta or the Beale Street Clubs in Memphis (López Poy, 2018:101).

After a first stage of assimilation and development, other authors such as Leadbelly, Robert Johnson, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton, Son House, Elmore James, Sonny Boy Williamson, Big Bill Broonzy or Bessie Smith, helped the definitive development of *blues* music, consolidating during the thirties the hatching of the *race record market*, the prelude to *rhythm and blues*.

### From Blues to Rhythm and Blues: The Influence of Blues on Urban Popular Music Genres after the Second World War

By the early 1940s, the *blues* was beginning to spread from the segregated regions of the South to the industrialized cities of the North. Chicago was one of the most important centers for the development of a particular style of *blues* in which musicians such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Big Joe Turner, John Lee Hooker, Willie Dixon and B.B.

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<sup>1</sup> *Okeh*, 1920, Ref. number: 4169.

<sup>2</sup> *Paramount*, 1924, Ref. number: 12083.

<sup>3</sup> *Paramount*. 1926, Ref. number: 12332.



King left a deep imprint that transformed the rural *southern blues* into electrified *Chicago-style blues*. The electrification of the *blues*, together with the attempt to bring its harsh and melancholic lyrics closer to the tastes of the white *pop* market, were the two fundamental pillars on which it was based after the Second World War, a rapid evolution that led it in the direction of the *rhythm and blues* that was emerging strongly at the end of the 1940s in the Western record market.

One of the first major transformations came from what was then known as *race music*. *Race music* was a label intended to catalogue recordings made by African-American musicians and also aimed at the African-American market. Since the early 1920s, record companies such as *Columbia*, *Okeh*, *Paramount* and *Victor*<sup>4</sup> had made a variety of recordings that included most popular genres of African-American music, from religious sermons to *blues* to *jazz* music. All these musical recordings aimed at the African-American music market were labelled *race music* to differentiate them from those recorded by white musicians. By 1948, however, the clearly discriminatory and demeaning race label was dropped in favor of the so-called *rhythm and blues*.<sup>5</sup> *Rhythm and blues* embodied a wide range of music that again referred to African-American based genres such as *electric blues*, *boogie-woogie*, *doowop* or *soul* in combination with secular *pop* music. The term, devised by Jerry Wexler, had an important influence on the development of *rock'n roll* music and some of the genres that derived from it (González Mozos, 2018: 91-92).

The term *rhythm and blues* encompassed, therefore, a wide diversity of Afro-American-based musical genres focused almost exclusively on the urban environment and with a clear danceable purpose, styles that inevitably marked the history of popular music in the Western world throughout the second half of the 20th century.<sup>6</sup> On the emergence of

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<sup>4</sup> <https://sandiegotroutadour.com/2015/10/race-records-the-birth-of-black-blues-and-jazz/> [29-9-2018]

<sup>5</sup> “On 25 June 1949, *Billboard* magazine, a sort of record yearbook, referred to this same music [African-American music] as *rhythm & blues*, and from then on, this new term was used. All the black music of the time, from swing orchestras to solo *bluesmen* to variety singers, came under this name. However, *rhythm & blues* came to designate a specific genre of black music that blends the influences of *swing jazz* with those of *blues* and *boogie-woogie* in which a *blues* shouter with an elegant, urbane style, giving instrumental prominence to brass and piano, was presented as the visible head” (Herzhaft, G. *La gran enciclopedia del blues*. Barcelona: Ediciones Robinbook, 2003: 275).

<sup>6</sup> The African-American bluesman Johnny Copeland describes the *rhythm and blues* music scene around which the youth of the American city of Houston gravitated in the early 1950s: “Everybody wanted to get out, to go to the music -*gospel* in the

the *rhythm and blues* style and its subsequent importance in the development of urban popular music in the second half of the 20th century, professors Bill C. Malone and David Stricklin state:

Led by such musicians as Eddie Durham, Charlie Christian, and Aaron «T-Bone» Walker, *blues* performers everywhere after 1934 began electrifying their guitars. They also increased the size of their combos, adding pianos, saxophones or other horns, basses, and drums. By the end of the 1930s, the term *race* was passing out of usage and *blues* as it had been known was being replaced by a form more consonant with the city, what came to be known as *rhythm and blues*. Like *race music* before it, *rhythm and blues* served as an umbrella phrase for a large number of black styles that were often very different from each other and were played by a diverse set of musicians. It drew energy from the *boogie-woogie jazz* rhythm developed by the late 1920s and prefigured even in certain ragtime pieces [...] *rhythm and blues* was much more oriented toward dancing than *country blues* ever had been. It was urban, aggressive, electrified, and youth-oriented [...] *Rhythm and blues* also helped bring about the music revolution known as *rock'n roll* (Malone & Stricklin, 2003: 75).

Following this contribution in which *rhythm and blues* music is identified with the terms urban, aggressive, electrified, and youth-oriented, we can assume that the main musical styles that were included within the term were born thanks to the electrification of guitars and the incorporation of wind instrument sections within the original *blues* music formations:<sup>7</sup> “Early *rhythm and blues* instrumentation is characterized by the interplay of screaming vocals or soulful ballads

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churches, *rhythm and blues* in the city-. The wages were low and the music talked to the people [...] There were hardly any televisions and only two black radio stations, *KCOH* and *KYOK*, but dances were held on Monday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and sometimes Wednesday at *the Eldorado Ballroom*, *Club Matinee*, *Diamond L. Ranch*, *Club Ebony*, *Shady's Playhouse*, *Double bar Ranch*, and *Club Savoy*” (Govenar, 2004: 8).

<sup>7</sup> In light of the changing musical tastes of African-American citizens settled in the large cities of the United States, and how this change in musical tastes motivated the transformation of *Southern blues* into urban *rhythm and blues*, Dick Weissman points out: “Although the continuing flow of Delta migrants to Chicago offered the *blues* musicians a definitive audience for *blues*, as time moved on and the black population was exposed to *jazz*, and later to *rhythm and blues*, it began to lose interest in the older *blues* styles. These black emigrants identified the *blues* with their hard life in the south, replete with poverty and sharecropping. This music and its associations became less and less attractive to the urbanized population. Out of this restlessness with the down-home subject matter and rural instrumentation of the *folk blues* artist came the impetus for *rhythm and blues*” (Weissman, 2005: 86).

with electric guitar, saxophone, piano and drums” (Govenar, 2004: 9). It was precisely in these urban centers that southern *blues* evolved in its purely danceable and commercial facet, which led to the entrenchment of *rhythm and blues* throughout the 1940s.

In this sense, the change in the traditional role played by *blues* musical instruments was one of the keys that made the transformation from *rural blues* to the more urban *rhythm and blues* possible. It should also be noted that these technical innovations, as well as the development of a new entertainment culture among the new generations of African-American citizens settled in the urban areas of the North Country, led to the emergence of the broad spectrum of musical genres that shaped *rhythm and blues*. The list of musical genres ranged from *blues* music in its various styles to *doowop* vocal groups, *gospel* music and *soul*.

On the evolution that *blues bands* underwent on their way to *rhythm and blues* and the leading role of the electric guitar in the bands, Dick Weissman points out:

*Rhythm and blues* was characterized by a new sound: the sound of the electric guitar. Along with the honking saxophone, piano, bass, and drums, the guitar became a leading voice in every *r&b* ensemble. Amplification made this possible. Before the introduction of the electric guitar, the guitar was not really an efficient instrument for playing solo lines with orchestral groups or even small ensembles [...] Playing melodic lines required the use of microphones, and even with a microphone the guitar tended to be drowned out by horns [...] T-Bone Walker was the first one to use the guitar to play melodic phrases like a horn (Weissman, 2005: 86-87).

The importance of the electric guitar's leadership in *rhythm and blues* groups was of great importance in the evolution of urban popular music in the 1950s and 1960s, especially thanks to the work of African-American musicians such as T-Bone Walker. T-Bone Walker's contributions led to the beginning of *modern blues* and, consequently, to the development of *rhythm and blues* and the musical genres that were integrated into it. This was possible because Walker established the leadership of the electric guitar through a personal sound that prioritized the melodic line and swing over other elements. The *blues tempo* he used often oscillated between the quietness of the ballads and the relatively lively tempos of the *electric blues*. Thanks to “Call it

Stormy Monday (But Tuesday is Just as Bad)”,<sup>8</sup> recorded in 1947, T-Bone Walker achieved an important success in the *rhythm and blues* charts, creating a peculiar style that was followed by other musicians.

T-Bone Walker epitomized the idiom of *rhythm and blues*, and he had a profound influence on the electric guitarists who followed him, including Johnny Copeland, Joe Hughes, Pete Mayes, Roy Gaines, Clarence Green, Zuzu Bollin, T.D. Bell, Blues Boy Hubbard, and B.B. King, as well as their white successors, including Johnny Winter, Duke Robillard, Ronnie Earl, Jimmie and Steve Ray Vaughan, and Anson Funderburgh (Govenar, 2004: 13).

One of the most important developments in the evolution of *rhythm and blues* took place in the music charts of early 1950s America. This phenomenon consisted in the gradual inclusion of *rhythm and blues hits* in the *pop* music charts for white audiences.<sup>9</sup> The phenomenon, which was a one-off in the early 1950s, multiplied after the release of songs such as “Sixty Minutes Man” by *The Dominoes* and “Sh-boom”,<sup>10</sup> recorded by the African-American group *The Chords*. Thus, thanks to “Sh-boom”, the *rhythm and blues* style known as *doo-wop* gained popularity among both young white and African-American audiences.

[*Doo-wop*] A style practiced in the 1950s by black *rhythm and blues* vocal groups, who often based their harmonies on simple, repeated *doo-wop*-like phrases. However, the term is not applicable to any kind of song in which meaningless syllables are repeated, but to the kind of choral pieces embellished with various vocal harmonies popularized by the so-called *street-corner groups* [...]. Some classic *singles* of the *doo-wop* era, almost always recorded by glorious one-hit wonders, were «Gee» by *The Crowns*, «Sh-Boom» by *The Chords*, «Get a job» by *The Silhouettes*,

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<sup>8</sup> *West Soul*, 1967, Ref. number: WS-1002.

<sup>9</sup> “When *The Chords*’ «Sh-boom» crossed over from the *rhythm and Blues* charts into the predominantly white *pop* charts in July 1954, it was not the first *r&b* record to leap that racial and commercial divide [...] *The Dominoes*’ «Sixty-minute man», *Lloyd Price*’s «Lawdy Miss Clawdy», and *Faye Adams*’ «Shake a hand» were among the other *r&b* records which had appeared on that chart earlier still [...] In 1950, for example, only three of the record which made the national *Rhythm and Blues* charts also crossed over into the *pop* field: and all three -saxophonist Lynn Hope’s «Tenderly», Nat King Cole’s «Mona Lisa», and Billy Eckstine’s «Sitting by the window»- were markedly from the slicker end of the broad *r&b* spectrum. Before «Sh-boom», *r&b* forays into the *pop* record charts were relatively isolated phenomena [...] After «Sh-boom», however, there was a sustained surge of *r&b* into the *pop* charts, with more than twice of many records crossing over in 1954 as in the previous year” (Ward, 1998: 19- 20).

<sup>10</sup> *Cat records*, 1954, Ref. number: 45-104.

«The ten commandments of love» by *The Moonglows*, «Only you» by *The Platters*, «The book of love» by *The monotones*, «In the still of the night» by *The Five Satins*, «Why do fools fall in love?» by *Frankie Lymon & The Teenagers* (Lapuente, 2015: 20).

We could say, therefore, that it was from the success of “Sh-boom” on the *pop* music charts in 1954 that *rhythm & blues* began to carve out an important niche for itself in the urban popular music of segregated America in the 1950s. The months that followed its release saw the emergence of other *rhythm & blues* hits on the *pop* market. These included Joe Turner's “Shake, Rattle and Rock”,<sup>11</sup> LaVern Baker's “Tweedlee dee”,<sup>12</sup> “Hearts of Stone”<sup>13</sup> by *The Charms*, “Ling Tin Ton” by *Five Keys* or “Goodnight Sweetheart Goodnight”<sup>14</sup> by *The Spaniels*, a trend that indicates the sudden and unstoppable *boom* that the *doo-wop* style was acquiring in the *pop* market, a fact that would influence the emergence of *rock'n roll* in the mid-fifties.

But what were the main characteristics of this musical style? The *doo-wop* style of the mid-1950s was based on the use of lyrics inspired by themes of youthful love, as well as on the careful elaboration of vocal harmonies, inherited, in a way, from the choral tradition of African-American *gospel* music. The polarisation of the voices<sup>15</sup> was another essential feature of the *doo-wop* style, forming a compact harmonic structure that played between the cavernous timbre of the bass - who used to imitate with his voice the typical form in instrumental playing - and the warm falsettos of the soloist, as well as the use of curious vocal onomatopoeias<sup>16</sup> that were performed by the rest of the group.

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<sup>11</sup> *Atlantic*, 1954, Ref. number: 45-1026.

<sup>12</sup> *Atlantic*, 1955, Ref. number: 45-1047.

<sup>13</sup> *Deluxe*, 1954, Ref. number: 45-6062.

<sup>14</sup> *Oldies 45*, 1964, Ref. number: OL-23.

<sup>15</sup> *Doo-wop* groups usually consisted of between three and five singers, the most common being a vocal quartet. In these groups, there was a clear tendency to emphasise the extreme voices of the group, that is, there was an attempt to exaggerate the melodic and timbral leap between the bass voice and the lead voice, a voice that usually used the technical resource of falsetto. This timbral contrast between the extreme voices of the group, together with the use of onomatopoeias and youth-inspired lyrics, gave *doo-wop* groups an irresistible appeal among black and white American teenagers in the early 1950s.

<sup>16</sup> Onomatopoeic sounds were common in the performances of *doo-wop* vocal groups. Their purpose was to provide a rhythmic-harmonic filler to the soloist's voice in order to give it an aura of novelty. The most commonly used onomatopoeias were: sh-boom,

As music critic Luis Lapuente suggests: “*Doo-wop* was just one more (wonderful) link in the chain that began to take shape with Louis Jordan, *The Ink Spots* and the *Soul Stirrers*, to be perfected with *The Temptations*, *Marvin Gaye* and *The Impressions* and ended, for the time being, with Jill Scott, India Arie and Anthony Hamilton” (Lapuente, 2015: 20). The *doo-wop* style could therefore be conceived as a logical evolution of African-American urban popular *rhythm and blues* music on its way to *soul* music, contributing, in turn, to the emergence of *rock & roll*. The honeyed, velvety timbres of the *doo-wop* soloists made this possible by definitively distancing themselves from the harshness and realism of the vehement *blues* vocal style. Recordings by the genre's leading groups, such as *The Platters*, *The Temptations*, *The Coaster*, *The Orioles*, *The Flamingos*, *Spaniels*, *The Larks* and *The Drifters* suggest this. Tracks such as “Save the last dance for me” by *The Drifters*,<sup>17</sup> “Charlie Brown”<sup>18</sup> by *The Coaster*, “Crying in the Chapel” by *The Orioles*, or “Only You” and “The Great Pretender” by *The Platters*, began to clearly target both the white *pop* and *rock'n roll* market and the African-American *soul* market.

This first incursion of the *doo-wop* style was followed by the incorporation of other music such as *gospel* and *soul* within the term *rhythm and blues*, styles that played an important role in its consecration, becoming part of this essential genre in the development of popular urban music in the West during the second half of the century. Thus, the success of *gospel* music meant that in the second half of the 20th century it was introduced into *rhythm and blues* as another expression of black popular music. This fact motivated that at the end of the forties most of the record companies that distributed *rhythm and blues* music included religious *gospel* records in their catalogues, standing out labels such as the independent *Apollo*, the *Savoy company* or the also independent record label from the city of Houston, *Peacock Records*,<sup>19</sup> labels that helped in a fundamental way to the consecration of *gospel* music within *rhythm and blues*.

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doo-wop, uuua-uuua, oom-pahp, bomp-baba-bomp, etc. As we can deduce, the name of the musical style is fully justified taking into account the rhythmic-harmonic onomatopoeias that were used.

<sup>17</sup> *Atlantic*, 1960, Ref. number: 45-2071.

<sup>18</sup> *ATCO Records*, 1959, Ref. number: 45-6132.

<sup>19</sup> “Houston businessman Don Robey founded *Peacock Records* in 1949 to record Clarence ‘Gatemouth’ Brown, a headliner in Robey’s Bronze Peacock Club. Robey

The popularity of *gospel* was made possible by the recordings that pastors such as Calvin P. Dixon, J. M. Gates and preacher J. C. Burnett made for the *Columbia* records company. In this regard, Reverend Doctor Tim Barger notes: “The superstar of the phonograph preachers was the Rev. James M. Gates of Atlanta, whose first two records, *Death's Black Train Is Coming* and *I'm Gonna Die with the Staff in My Hand*, were 50,000-copy bestsellers in 1926” (Barger, 3-1-2015).<sup>20</sup> The use of electronic recording media was a huge breakthrough both in improving the sound quality of the records and in the rapid dissemination of African-American church music, which distributed more than 50,000 copies of Reverend Gates' sermon records to the public in 1926.

Reverend Gates's first recording had the benefit of cutting-edge technology. Columbia was the first of many labels to purchase Western Electric's electric recording system [...] Electric recording replaced the recording horn with carbon microphones. Microphones produced superior sound and made it possible to increase the audio frequency range of the recording. The microphone captured and amplified central sound performances and attenuated others [...] The company (*Columbia*) recorded Reverend Gates in Atlanta with its innovative recordings technology. Unlike his preaching-on wax predecessors who recorded their solo lecturing voices in the rigid confines of recording studios, the Baptist minister had the benefit of preaching his recorded sermon in the familiar surroundings and comfort of his own church in the present of his congregation [...] This time, *Columbia* captured a recorded sermon that not only had superior sound quality, but also had the contextual benefit of a migrant church sanctuary and the accompanying rituals. *Columbia's* recording of Gates thus captured a black evangelical worship service [...] The first release, *Death's Black Train is Coming*, was put on sale on July 20, 1926. It packaged and transmitted the folk worship of Reverend Gates and Mount Calvary across the country (Martin, 2014: 98-100).

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had opened the Peacock in 1946 as a restaurant and music showplace for Walker, Louis Jordan, Ruth Brown, and the other *rhythm and blues* stars of the day. Evelyn Johnson, Robey's longtime business associate, recalled: ‘The Bronze Peacock attracted a mixed audience, black and white. Different companies and social clubs had parties there. We had the finest food and chefs’” (Govenar, 2004: 13).

<sup>20</sup> Barger, TK. (2015). Author looks at history of folk sermons, pastor who delivered them. *The Blade*. 3-1-2015.

<http://www.toledoblade.com/Religion/2015/01/03/Author-looks-at-history-of-folk-sermons-pastors-who-delivered-them.html> [Consulted 1-3-2022].

During the 1940s a number of soloists and vocal quartets appeared that helped to enshrine this African-American religious style within *rhythm and blues*. These included Mahalia Jackson, Sister Rosetha Tharpe, Willie Mae Ford Smith, *The Golden Gate Quartet*, *The Birmingham Jubilee Singers*, *The Famous Blue Jay Singers*, *The Dixie Hummingbirds*, *The Swan Silverstones* and *The Soul Stirrers*, whose lead singer, Sam Cooke, made a fundamental contribution to the development of *soul* music.

Along these lines, one of the first commercial *gospel* music groups within the *rhythm and blues* framework was created in 1950 by Professor Billy Ward, under the name of *The Dominoes*. Their first hit, "Sixty Minutes Man",<sup>21</sup> placed the melodic responsibility on the group's bass. Within this vocal style, other groups appeared that revolved around the *gospel* music of the 1950s. Among them, *The Ink Spots*, *Drifters*, *Five Royales*, *Midnighters* or *James Brown and the Famous Flames* developed a style close to preachers' singing, supported by a minimal instrumental accompaniment over a repetitive and irregular rhythm. Meanwhile, in the sixties, a *gospel* style influenced by both *blues* and *soul* music appeared in which Bobby Bland stood out with "Cry, Cry, Cry"<sup>22</sup> and "Turn on Your Lovelight"<sup>23</sup> and Junior Parker with "Annie get Your Yo Yo".<sup>24</sup> Both musicians, who had been members of *The Beale Streeters* in 1950 before Parker formed *The Blue Flames* in 1951, established a style of *rhythm and blues* music close to *soul*, which Parker approached in "I'm so satisfied".<sup>25</sup>

African-American music was also present in the civil rights struggles that took place in America during the 1960s, playing a key role in spreading the political messages of African-American citizens, a role it had already played in the years of slavery through coded messages embedded in the lyrics of *spirituals* and *work songs*. In the early 1960s, however, it was political *gospel* and, later, *soul* music that served as a vehicle for the old messages. Thus, Mahalia Jackson's political *gospel* gave strength and encouragement to civil rights activists in the crucial days of the movement, while *soul* denounced in Sam Cooke's voice the

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<sup>21</sup> King, 1951, Ref. number: 45-15002.

<sup>22</sup> Duke, 1960, Ref. number: UV 7046 (327).

<sup>23</sup> Duke, 1961, Ref. number: UV 7082 (D 344).

<sup>24</sup> Duke, 1961, Ref. number: UV 7084 (D 345).

<sup>25</sup> *Blue Rock*, 1969, Ref. number: B-4080.



miseries and injustices faced by the African-American race in certain regions of North America. In this sense, and although Sam Cooke was the first to raise his voice against the discriminatory situation in soul songs such as “Chain gang” and “The Change is Gonna Come”, it was up to Mahalia to make music that was really committed to change.

*Soul* thus took the *call-and-response* principles of the *gospel* choir and soloist, its vocal turns, characteristic shouts and sounds, accentuated rhythms, clapping and body movements, and blended them with the secular lyrics, *boogie-woogie* and *blues* rhythms of *rhythm and blues* music. *Soul* thus became a musical style coming directly from *gospel*, but taking the strength of the instrumental sound and rhythms present in *rhythm and blues* music.<sup>26</sup> However, *soul* music did not only take the technical elements of *gospel* and *blues*, *soul* was also imbued with its message of protest and proclamations of equality and tolerance, a message of freedom that Aretha Franklin, *the Queen of soul*, expressed with a strong, soaring voice in “Freedom”.

Artists such as Aretha Franklin used the melodic roots of *gospel* music sifted by the rhythmic force of *rhythm and blues* in her personal style. The result was the emergence of a soulful, emotionally charged and soulful *soul* that became very popular with *rhythm and blues* audiences. The five *albums* she released between 1970 and 1972 reflect the deeper roots of the racial issues that were beginning to emerge thanks to the human rights movement. At the age of fourteen, Aretha made her first recording, *The Gospel Soul of Aretha Franklin*,<sup>27</sup> an *album* containing *gospel*-based compositions accompanied by a forceful soulful piano sound. The *album*, recorded in 1956, anticipated the appearance of others such as *The Electrifying Aretha*,<sup>28</sup> in 1962; *Laughing on the Outside*,<sup>29</sup> in 1963, and *Running out of fools*,<sup>30</sup> in 1964. *I Never loved a Man The Way I Love You*,<sup>31</sup> the first *album* she recorded on the *Atlantic* label, was released in 1967 with “Respect”, originally written by Otis

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<sup>26</sup> In the words of Luis Lapuente: “*Soul* was born in the early 1960s from the fortunate encounter between *gospel*, electric *rhythm and blues* and southern country, as a fabulous outlet for the illusions of racial equality generated by the Civil Rights Movement” (Lapuente, 2015: 13).

<sup>27</sup> Reprinted in Checker, 1965, Ref. Number: LPS 10009.

<sup>28</sup> *Columbia*, 1962, Ref. number: CS 8561.

<sup>29</sup> *Columbia*, 1963, Ref. number: CS 8879.

<sup>30</sup> *Columbia*, 1964, Ref. number: CS 9081.

<sup>31</sup> *Atlantic*, 1967, Ref. number: SD 8139.

Redding in 1965, which, however, consecrated Aretha as *the queen of soul*: “what most of them did not realize is that the song was really written by a man -Otis Redding- two years before Aretha ever sang it. Otis released the song as a single on August 15, 1965, as his message to his wife” (Eggerichs, 2004: 47).

Nina Simone. A great fighter for civil rights, her discography included *blues*, *jazz* and *soul*. After the death of Martin Luther King, Nina went into self-imposed exile in France, where she died in 2003. Some of her most notable *albums* were *Forbidden Fruit*,<sup>32</sup> from 1961, *I Put A Spell On You*,<sup>33</sup> from 1965, *Wild Is The Wind*<sup>34</sup> and *High Priestess Of Soul*,<sup>35</sup> from 1966 and 1967, as well as *Black Gold*,<sup>36</sup> released in 1969.

In the same vein, Sam Cooke also spread the music that accompanied the civil rights struggle of the African-American community in some way. Cooke began singing *gospel* in *The Soul Stirrers*, developing a meteoric solo career that earned him fame within the *black pop* genre that emerged from *gospel*. His output included songs such as “You Send Me”,<sup>37</sup> released in 1957, “The Wonderful World of Sam Cooke”,<sup>38</sup> “Chain Gang”,<sup>39</sup> from 1960, and “A Change is Gonna Come”,<sup>40</sup> released posthumously in 1963, shortly after his assassination. This piece has become one of the masterpieces of *soul* music of the early sixties: “in it we can hear the phrase: “living is too hard, but I'm afraid to die”, as a chilling posthumous message” (López Poy, 2014: 68). In many of Sam Cooke's hits, the responsorial texture between soloist and choir can also be appreciated, a resource with clear African roots that was less common in the white *pop* music of the time. Thus, in songs like “Chain gang”, “Having a party”, “Bring it on home to me”<sup>41</sup> or “Twistin' the night away”,<sup>42</sup> there is a nod to the African roots of white

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<sup>32</sup> *Colpix records*, 1961, Ref. number: SCP 419.

<sup>33</sup> *Philips*, 1965, Ref. number: PHS 600-172.

<sup>34</sup> *Philips*, 1966, Ref. number: PHS 600-217.

<sup>35</sup> *Philips*, 1966, Ref. number: PHS 600-219.

<sup>36</sup> *RCA Victor*, 1970, Ref. number: LSP 4248.

<sup>37</sup> *Keen*, 1957, Ref. number: 34013.

<sup>38</sup> *Keen*, 1960, Ref. number: 86106.

<sup>39</sup> *RCA Victor*, 1960, Ref. number: 47-7783.

<sup>40</sup> *RCA Victor*, 1964, Ref. number: 47-8486.

<sup>41</sup> *RCA Victor*, 1962, Ref. number: 47-8036.

<sup>42</sup> *RCA Victor*, 1962, Ref. number: LPM-2555.

*pop* music, a nod to the *call-and-response* style so common in African-rooted religious music.

Ray Charles, for his part, began to mix secular lyrics with sacred music as early as 1949. In 1951 he released his first big hit: “Baby, Let Me Hold Your Hand”,<sup>43</sup> a synthesis of *rhythm and blues*, *gospel* and *jazz* music that laid the foundations of *soul* music. After signing with the *Atlantic* label, Ray Charles began to record in the mid-fifties songs such as “Mess Around”, “Kiss Me Baby”, “Hallelujah I Love Her So” and “I Got A Woman”,<sup>44</sup> a mixture of *gospel* and *blues* that consecrated the *soul* genre as a new musical style, differentiated from the other *rhythm and blues* genres, although indebted to all of them. From 1959 onwards came the accolades thanks to works such as *The Genius Of Ray Charles*,<sup>45</sup> from 1959, and *Ray Charles in Person*,<sup>46</sup> from 1960. During 1962 Ray Charles fused *pop* and *country music* in his compositions, resulting in such original *albums* as *Modern Sounds In Country And Western*.<sup>47</sup> His musical style drifted towards *country*, *black pop*, *jazz* and *rhythm and blues*, further proof of the versatility that this African-American musician achieved and which helped “Georgia On My Mind”<sup>48</sup> to be adopted as the official anthem of the State of Georgia, one of the many honors that the leading pioneer of *soul* music would receive during his lifetime.

Despite the importance of the work of these two musicians in the birth of the *soul* style, the real person responsible for reshaping *rhythm and blues* and revolutionizing *soul* was James Brown, an African-American artist who took this musical genre from the spiritual and melodic shelter of *gospel* to the choppy rhythms of *funk*. When he was only twenty years old, and after spending three years in prison, James Brown joined a *gospel* group called *The Starlighters*, a group that Brown converted into a *soul* band under the name of *The Famous Flames*. With *The Famous Flames*, Brown had his first hit, “Please, Please, Please”<sup>49</sup> in 1956. Other songs followed, such as “Try Me”<sup>50</sup> in 1959, and the album

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<sup>43</sup> *Swing Time Records*, 1951, Ref. number: 250A.

<sup>44</sup> *Atlantic*, 1957, Ref. number: 8006.

<sup>45</sup> *Atlantic*, 1959, Ref. number: SD 1312.

<sup>46</sup> *Atlantic*, 1960, Ref. number: SD 8039.

<sup>47</sup> *ABC-Paramount*, 1962, Ref. number: ABC-410.

<sup>48</sup> *ABC-Paramount*, 1960, Ref. number: 45-10135.

<sup>49</sup> *Federal Records*, 1956, Ref. number: 45-12258.

<sup>50</sup> *King Records*, 1959, Ref. number: 635.

*Live At The Apollo*<sup>51</sup> in 1962. It was around 1965, however, that James Brown began to introduce syncopated rhythms, percussive bass and drum counter-rhythms into his recordings, characteristics that already heralded the rhythmic revolution that *funk* music would bring. “Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag”,<sup>52</sup> from 1965, and “Cold Sweat”,<sup>53</sup> from 1967, can be considered the true precursors of the new *funk* genre.

Although *soul* became established, in part, thanks to the work of these three musicians, other singers such as Otis Redding, Al Green, Solomon Burke and *Curtis Mayfield & the Impressions* popularized it. In this way, *soul* became one of the most important styles of African-American urban popular music developed during the 1960s.

Endowed with a *soul* style close to *pop*, Otis Redding is considered one of the most popular *soul* singers among the mid-1960s audiences, despite his brief musical career. His first *single* with the *Stax* label, *Hey, hey baby*,<sup>54</sup> appeared in 1962, although his definitive consecration would come with *albums* such as *Otis blue/Otis Redding sings soul*,<sup>55</sup> from 1965, and *Complete & unbelievable...The Otis Redding dictionary of soul*,<sup>56</sup> from 1966, both recorded by the *Volt* label, a subsidiary of *Stax Records*. Unfortunately, in December 1967, the plane in which he was touring with his band, *The Bar-Kays*, fell into the icy waters of the Monoma River in Wisconsin, a terrible accident that cut short the life of one of the most promising *soul* music artists of the time. His last *single*, the ballad “Sittin’ on the dock of the bay”,<sup>57</sup> was released posthumously in 1968.

Within a more eclectic musical style, Solomon Burke emerged as the most versatile *soul* musician of the 1960s, fusing styles as diverse as *country*, *gospel* and *rhythm and blues*. His musical beginnings were with the *Atlantic Records* company, for which he recorded some *country* music *singles* in 1960, including the song “Just out of reach”.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Kings Records*, 1963, Ref. number: 826.

<sup>52</sup> *Kings Records*, 1965, Ref. number: 938.

<sup>53</sup> *Kings Records*, 1967, Ref. number: 1020.

<sup>54</sup> *Volt*, 1962, Ref. number: 103.

<sup>55</sup> *Volt*, 1965, Ref. number: 412.

<sup>56</sup> *Volt*, 1966, Ref. number: 415.

<sup>57</sup> *Volt*, 1968, Ref. number: 419.

<sup>58</sup> *Atlantic*, 1961, Ref. number: 45-2114.

Later, and within the *soul* music orbit, he recorded “Cry to me”,<sup>59</sup> in 1961; “Home in your heart”,<sup>60</sup> in 1962; “Goodbye baby”,<sup>61</sup> in 1964, and “If you need me”<sup>62</sup> in 1963. In this way, Solomon Burke's overflowing and emotional style left a deep impression on other soul musicians of the time.

Al Green boasted a melodious voice in a cooler musical style, a trait we can relate to the work of Sam Cooke and Otis Redding. Like Sam Cooke, Al Green came from the world of *gospel* music, which made him, given his elegance and vocal quality, a direct heir to the soul style of both singers. Some of his most important *albums* include *Al Green gets next to you*,<sup>63</sup> from 1971; *Let's stay together*,<sup>64</sup> released in 1972; *Call me*,<sup>65</sup> in 1973 and, later, *The belle album*,<sup>66</sup> released in 1977.

Within this same period, other authors deserve to be mentioned, such as Wilson Pickett, known for songs like “Mustang Sally”; Fontella Bass, with “Rescue Me”; Roberta Flack, with “Killing Me Softly With This Song”; *Sam and Dave*, with “Hold On I'm Coming”; Marvin Gaye with “What's Going On”; Gloria Gaynor with “I Will Survive”; Donny Hathaway with “Everything is Everything”; Curtis Mayfield with “Move On Up” and Steve Wonder with “Superstition”, among others.

## Rhythm and Blues Arrives in Europe: Rhythm and Blues in Spanish Popular Music During Franco's Developmentalist Period

In the early 1950s, Spain was slowly beginning to integrate into the liberal democracies of the West thanks to the external legitimization that the political regime imposed by General Francisco Franco was experiencing. Spain's entry into the WHO in 1951, the ILO in 1955, the signing of the Concordat with the Vatican in 1953 and its entry into the international monetary fund (IMF) in 1957 were some of the

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<sup>59</sup> *Atlantic*, 1962, Ref. number: 45-2131.

<sup>60</sup> *Atlantic*, 1963, Ref. number: 45-2180.

<sup>61</sup> *Atlantic*, 1964, Ref. number: 45-2226.

<sup>62</sup> *Atlantic*, 1963, Ref. number: SD-8085.

<sup>63</sup> *Hi Records*, 1971, Ref. number: SHL 32062.

<sup>64</sup> *Hi Records*, 1972, Ref. number: SHL 32070.

<sup>65</sup> *Hi Records*, 1973, Ref. number: XSHL 32077.

<sup>66</sup> *Hi Records*, 1977, Ref. number: HLP 6004.

consequences of an openness that began in September 1953 with the signing of the *Madrid Pacts* between the Eisenhower and Franco governments. The arrival of the long-awaited American aid led to the appearance in Spain of urban popular music genres similar to those developed in the Anglo-Saxon world, a fact helped by the establishment of military bases in Torrejón de Ardoz, Zaragoza, Rota and Morón de la Frontera and the frequent exchanges between soldiers and the civilian population. Likewise, the establishment of radio stations broadcasting *blues*, *jazz* and *rock 'n roll* music from the bases, and the establishment of *Radio Liberty* on the beach at Pals, in the province of Gerona, helped to popularize the values of American popular music among Spaniards.

The socio-cultural transformations that resulted from political openness affected the development of Spanish popular urban music from the late 1950s onwards, transformations that were based on genres such as *rock'n roll*, *blues* and the different styles that made up *rhythm and blues*: *gospel-pop* and *soul-pop*. The consecration of these musical styles in Spain was sustained by the development of *rock'n roll* in its various ramifications, which gave a halo of modernity to the rhythms that had been heard in Spain up to that time.

It is important to highlight, in this sense, the importance that certain American companies had in the development of Spanish *rhythm and blues*. In fact, the close relationship of some managers with the Franco regime led to personalities such as James A. Farley receiving various awards during the 1950s. Thus, according to Iván Iglesias: “Its [*Coca-Cola*] president, a vehement anti-communist, visited Spain for the first time in 1948 and had regular meetings with General Franco. In 1955 he received the decoration of the Order of Isabella the Catholic” (Iglesias, 2017: 278). Specifically, the recipient, James A. Farley, was a former US Minister of Communications and, at the time, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the *Coca-Cola Export Corporation*.

The *ABC* newspaper of 1 April 1955 reported on the award to James Farley:

On the occasion of Victory Day, the Head of State has awarded the following decorations:

[...] Encomienda de Número: a D. Jaime Suárez Morales, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador; D. James Farley, former Minister of Communications of the United States of America; Don

Francisco Aguilar Villacorta, Counsellor of the Embassy of El Salvador in Mexico [...] (*ABC*, 1-04-1955: 33).

Probably due to this close situation of cultural exchange between the two nations, in 1956 the *Columbia record company* recorded in Spain an EP with serial number CGE 60148 on which the latest hits by *Bill Haley and his Comets*<sup>67</sup> could be heard. Thus, along with the track “Rock around the clock” -next to which, on the cover, one could read: “Al compás del reloj”- appeared “Birth of the boogie”, “Thirteen women” and “Mambo rock”. The record represented a first recording incursion into the work of the most important North American *rock'n roll* artists in our country, a phenomenon that would continue thanks to the arrival of *rock'n roll cover albums* sung in Spanish by Mexican and Cuban groups such as *Los Teen Tops*, *Los Llopis* and *Los Locos del Ritmo*.

As we can appreciate, and despite the bad press that the film for which it served as soundtrack, *The Wild One*, had earned in the Western media, “Rock around the clock” was introduced in the Spanish record market little more than a year after its commercialization in North America. In fact, due to the enormous success of this record, *Bill Haley and his Comets* came to Spain to give several performances in Barcelona and Madrid during the month of November 1958. The reaction of the Barcelona public led to the cancellation of the planned concerts, due to the government suspension signed by the Civil Government. In the *ABC* newspaper of 23 November 1958, one could read:

The governmental authority suspended the modern music festival with the performance of the creator of «Rock and Roll», Bill Haley, announced for tonight and tomorrow night, in the Palacio Municipal de los Deportes, as a consequence of the acts of «hooliganism» registered in the first performance last night, in which the public forces had to intervene (*ABC*, 23-11-1958: 97).

The note provided by the civil government stated: “The show given yesterday at the Palacio Municipal de los Deportes, which had not been authorized by the Civil Government, has been suspended by the

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<sup>67</sup> “Number one in the US, here it is presented as an EP with four different covers. The content is the same - 'Rock around the clock', 'Birth of the boogie', 'Thirteen women' and 'Mambo rock' - but the covers show a music stand with the artist's name on one of them, two similar covers in different colours with the image of a trumpeter and a saxophonist or a last one with dancers” (Faulín, 2015: 394-395).

government and banned throughout the province of Barcelona” (*ABC*, 23-11-1958: 97).

Despite the prohibition of certain popular urban music activities, such as Bill Haley's concerts in Barcelona or, later, the Matinees at Madrid's Circo Price, Spanish *rock'n roll* and *rhythm and blues* did not suffer particularly from the effects of government censorship during its early years, at least not to the extent of other artistic manifestations. The behavior that this music provoked among young people was a cause for reproach on the part of the authorities, at whose service certain conservative sectors of the Spanish press worked, openly criticizing the loss of values among adolescents.

Therefore, and independently of the strict control that the Ministry of Information and Tourism exercised over cultural events, *rhythm and blues* music was able to spread normally in Spain in the late 1950s, both through radio stations and record companies, and with the records of the first Spanish groups that made its development possible. The slow evolution of the first recordings by these groups can be attributed, rather than to a consequence of political censorship, to the economic shortages and the technical backwardness that existed in our country in those years. The scarcity of record players and the lack of interest in the English language in large sectors of a rural society that was beginning to emigrate to the cities in search of better living conditions, can be considered as the main obstacles that delayed the development of Spanish *rhythm and blues*. This fact circumscribed, at first, the new urban popular music to the student and university environments of the country's big cities.

Thus, throughout the 1960s, the records began to be heard on the radio stations of the American bases established on Spanish soil, and were broadcast at nightclubs and on Spanish music radio programs such as *Boite*, *Discomanía*, *Caravana* and *El Gran Musical*, a circumstance that helped the emergence of the first Spanish *rhythm and blues bands*. The *hit parades* that appeared in the music magazines dedicated to urban popular music, which began to be published timidly in the late fifties and early sixties, also contributed to their development. In this sense, publications such as *Mosaico Musical*, *Discóbolo*, *Fans* or *Fonorama* by José Luis Álvarez, a publication entirely dedicated to the young Spanish music of the time, stand out. Some of the first pioneering Spanish groups emerged, such as *Los Estudiantes*, *Los Pájaros Locos*,



*Mimo y Los Jump, Los Teleko, Los Sonor, Los 4 Jets, Los Relámpagos, Los Pekenikes, Los Flaps, Los Rocking Boys, Los Continentales, Micky y Los Tonys, Bruno y sus rockeros, Los Diapasons, Los Rockets, Alex y Los Findes, Los Giovanes, Los X5, Los Brisks, Los Ágaros or El Dúo Dinámico*, among others, and soloists of authentic *rock* inspiration such as *Kurt Savoy, Rocky Kan, Baby, Nelo, Gavy Sander's or Chico Valento*.

The musical references of these early Spanish groups revolved around American and British *rhythm and blues, rock'n roll, gospel-pop* and *soul-pop* soloists and bands of the stature of *The Shadows, Cliff Richard, The Drifters, The Platters, Little Eva, The Four Tops, The Gladiolas, The Everly Brothers, The Kingston Trio, Johnny and The Hurricanes, The Ventures, The Pacifics, The Tornados*, Elvis Presley, Ricky Nelson, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran, Ray Charles and many more. In this sense, the versions that Spanish groups performed of many of the songs by the artists mentioned give an approximate idea of the important role that popular urban music from North America and Great Britain played in the consecration of Spanish popular urban music during the 1960s. Thus, after the first stutters that the pioneering groups made in “talking magazines”, modern music festivals and nightclubs, a period of creative explosion began after the visit of the British group *The Beatles* to Spain on 2 and 3 July 1965. From that moment on, the *merseybeat* and *rhythm and blues* sounds were definitively established within the style of the most important Spanish bands of the mid-decade. Thus, the Spanish band *Los Bravos* inherited the sound and expressive force of British *rhythm and blues* groups such as *The Rolling Stones* or *The Spencer Davis Group*, while *Los Brincos* became a sort of Spanish version of *Beatle*, with their Seseña layers, their lyrics sung in English and a clearly British-inspired *merseybeat sound*.

Meanwhile, the energy of Afro-American *soul* and *gospel* music filtered into the style of bands such as *Los Grimm*, with Pedro Ruy-Blas on vocals, *Conexión, Pop Tops* and *Los Canarias*. For their part, *Los Canarias* with their *album* entitled *Ciclos* and *Los Módulos* with *Realidad* opened the path of Spanish *symphonic* and *progressive rock*, a path that was developed by other groups such as *Smash, Triana, Pan y Regaliz* or *Máquina!*

In relation to the birth of Spanish *rhythm and blues*, in the interview we conducted in 2017 with Pedro Ruy Blas, one of the main Spanish

*rhythm and blues* singers, who began his musical career during the second half of the sixties in bands such as *Los Grimm*, it was stated:

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** Your musical references came more from *rhythm and blues* than from the *pop-rock* that was emerging at that time in Spain. Could you talk about what were your direct musical influences in those sixties?

**Pedro Ruy Blas:** I have been fortunate to have received from nature a fairly extensive vocal tessitura, which has allowed me, and fortunately still does, to emit notes ranging from quite high-pitched to those of a baritone. At a decisive moment in my pre-adolescence, for a little over two years, I had the privilege of being able to listen intensively every day to an endless number of American songs and singers, something which at that age could be considered a vital influence on my later development. Now many of those staples are referred to as *doo-wop*. For me, however, they are simply the beginning of the glorious beginning of *rhythm and blues*, although I not only listened to the basics produced by African-American artists, but also by great white artists, although it is true that I acquired a special empathy for black artists, which would later manifest itself in the way I played, once *rhythm and blues* and *soul* made their irresistible appearance, permeating the whole world with that music. I was able to put into practice what I had assimilated in the second period of groups like *Los Grimm*, or *Los Brisks*, and with greater intensity during my time as singer of *Los Canarios*, an unbeatable group dedicated entirely to that musical style at that time.

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** If I'm not mistaken, around 1967 you made an interesting trip to the United States where you got to know first-hand the urban popular music of North America. What differences did you find between what was being done in Spain in relation to *rhythm and blues* and soul music during the sixties and the musical product that was being consumed in North America during those years?

**Pedro Ruy Blas:** Actually, that stay in New York was a very intense experience, albeit brief, which meant that I realised that what I wanted most at that time was to sing *rhythm and blues*, feeling ready for it. It then became clear that those years in which I listened to and enjoyed that form of performing had left a very deep impression on me. Obviously this was not

something common in other singers and musicians who were not able to enjoy such valuable information as in my case, and yet another, precisely at a time of life such as adolescence, when music, cinema, literature, politics and many other aspects related to art, culture and society can leave an important mark, shaping a certain personality.

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** “typical Spanish” *soul* began to fill Spanish nightclubs and discotheques in the late 1960s. When you joined the group *Los Grimm*, I imagine that you tried to adapt the original *soul* that came from North America to Spanish tastes. How would you describe your musical passage through bands like *Los Grimm*, *Los Brisks* and later *Los Canarios* and the way *soul* music was experienced in Spain at that time?

**Pedro Ruy Blas:** From my point of view there was never a “typical Spanish” *soul*. There were only two types of groups or singers; those who did it well, with conviction, quality and professionalism, very few by the way, and on the other hand, a vast majority who were very bad, without soul, without “swing”, musicians with hardly any personality who used some of those songs just to jump on a bandwagon that was in fashion at the time, making it painful to listen to them. It could be that the latter were the ones who really deserved the somewhat dubious and pejorative title of “typical Spanish”, which is usually associated with shoddiness and/or mediocrity. To beach bar music to conquer Swedish women, to summer bands for undemanding audiences and to the majority of artists whose only intention in making music is to make a lot of money as soon as possible, providing a good cut for sharks lurking around, disguised as entertainment. My experience in those groups you mention were decisive, unforgettable for me and, in them, I began to become a man and to understand the meaning and responsibility of being an artist.

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** In 1970 you began your solo career, a time when government censorship would attack some of your recordings, specifically the version of “I am a Preacher” that you recorded under the title “Mi voz es amor”, a heart-wrenching *gospel-pop* that overwhelms with its expressive intensity. I imagine that singing to those who are “executioners in their own law” must not have gone down

well in certain government circles. Could you explain your relationship with censorship in those final years of Franco's regime?

**Pedro Ruy Blas:** Bad. I don't think there is anyone who was censored who was happy to be so. Perhaps even less so for political reasons. In such cases, censorship tends to be destructive, and not simply a reprimand, a warning to make the censored repent and mend their ways in the future after a minor prank that is nothing more than a slap on the wrist, or having to remain kneeling facing the wall for an entire religion class. Political censorship has serious consequences, and can completely cut short the future of a career, of a good start. One of its worst reprisals can be even more damaging than censorship itself. This is self-censorship, because once it is initially carried out and decreed by the highest authority, it spreads like an epidemic, infecting each and every one of the operators who, out of their own interest, affection or fear of the censor, become executors, the long arm of punishment, placing themselves at his service with caution, ...lest ..... But now it doesn't matter. It is water under the bridge. The worst thing is to see that censorship is also exercised in times of peace, of democracy, of «freedom», as it seems to be inherent to the human condition and wherever there is power, there will be some form of censorship (Fragment of the interview with Pedro Ruy Blas on 4-12-2017).

For his part, Luis Cobos, another of the great Spanish musicians who cultivated *rhythm and blues* and *soul* in Spain in the late sixties and early seventies, stated in the interview we conducted with him in 2017:

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** For some, *soul* music arrived in Spain around 1966 thanks to the agreement that *RCA* made with *Motown* to distribute their records in our country, although even before that, at the beginning of the sixties, you could listen to Marv Johnson. Others claim that *soul* music was popularised in Spain thanks to a musical jingle used by TVE, which was none other than *Soul Finger* by *the Bar-Kays*. Could you tell us about your personal experience with *soul* music in Spain in the sixties and the reason that led you to embark on the great project that was *Conexion*, as a musician, arranger and composer, just at a time when *progressive* and *psychedelic music* was beginning to take off

in large parts of the country, such as Madrid, Catalonia and Andalusia?

**Luis Cobos:** My love of *soul* comes from the fact that *soul* music, which is nourished by *gospel*, *rhythm & blues*, *doo-wop* and some other genres, brings together all the qualities of instrumental and choral music, which is what I have liked and like the most, and also includes the melodic and rhythmic voice: the combination of many instruments and voices. *Soul*, in addition, has rhythm, it's hipnotic (it has hiccups (jumps) in the voice, the choirs, the percussion and the metal and string phrases. It is a vibrant and very emotional music and although it has its rules, it allows for variation without fundamentally altering the song or the message. It comes from 1950 to '67 and extends beyond, until the great singers of the genre have continued to cultivate it and to evolve into other sub-genres heavily influenced by *soul*.

The great *rock* and *pop* groups have been influenced by *soul*. The instrumentations move and are perceived as relays and all of them, being part of a whole, have strength and musical value by themselves. A marvel.

In *soul*, strings are also included and are handled as a soft and warm wind, sometimes, and with energy at other times, which floats the themes or stirs them up. It is a great lesson in the behavior and collaboration of the instrumental sections in the service of a melody and text that can be varied without altering the song in a way that changes the content or the message. The choirs reinforce the voice and complement it, taking the harmonized melody, while the voice can improvise or phrase around the melody, always supported by the choirs, the strings or the brass. The rhythm section is forceful and resounding. It's a perfect combination. That's why I was captivated by *soul* and am still captivated by this amazing music.

Of course, I discovered *soul* because it became fashionable but I didn't join the style because it was the prevailing trend but because I fell into its nets. It simply grabbed me because of its beauty and the emotional power it gives off.

I didn't want to get started and join the genre, dragging *Conexion* into it, but it happened, influenced by the strength and inspiration of songs like: Sweet *soul* music, This is a "men's world", "Respect", "Sittin' on the dock of the bay", "My girl" and many others... and I had no trouble sharing that fascination with the rest of the group. And so *Conexion*

embarked on the *soul* revolution of the late sixties and early seventies.

**José Ignacio González Mozos:** According to my information, *Conexion* signed in 1969 for the record label *Movieplay*. Do you think this was an important milestone in the band's career to reach the top of the charts in our country? How was the relationship with the record labels in those years? Was there usually total freedom when it came to making musical arrangements and choosing the songs or, on the contrary, the bands had to conform to the commercial canons established by the companies? What was your personal experience?

**Luis Cobos:** Signing with *Movieplay* was a good thing because Carlos Guitart, a cultured and very well-informed man who loved American music and was very fond of *folk* and *soul*, was the artistic director of that label, so we were lucky because we were able to start our journey without major obstacles, problems or impositions of repertoire to record. We recorded a first single containing “Strong lover” and “West soul”, two songs composed by me, without being asked for any reference or previous proof.

Just before we started recording, we received a call from Alain Milhaud, producer of *Los Bravos*, *Los Canarios* and *Los Pop-tops*, asking for an audition to evaluate us. We gave it to him at the *Club Paraninfo*, a discotheque where groups like the ones described above and others usually performed.

Mr. Milhaud, very respected at that time for being French, representative of the *Barclay* record company and the most important producer of international hits, listened to *Conexion*, live and exclusively. We played about four songs, after which he told me that he accepted us as a group to be produced by him and managed by *Barclay's* office in Augusto Figueroa Street in Madrid.

I talked to him for about thirty minutes and I didn't tell him that a few days earlier I had signed a recording contract with *Movieplay*, which, coincidentally, was the record company that distributed *Barclay* and Alain Milhaud's productions.

A few days later I told him that I had accepted the offer that *Movieplay* had sent us and that we could not be produced by him. He told me that he would then take us on as manager. In fact, that is how it was for about six months, after which we

left his tutelage, by mutual agreement, and went our own way with other management offices.

At *Movieplay* we did very well and I think this influenced our initial success. On that label there was also a very good and successful folk group called *Nuestro pequeño mundo*, with whom I worked as arranger and musician and whose singers Pat and Laura recorded backing vocals on our records, along with Cecilia who also participated in some backing vocal recordings.

There was a very good atmosphere and we shared our taste for folk and soul and for modern and classical choral music.

Later, with success came the record company's interest in helping us to "orientate" our songs and direct them towards a more commercial field, and the freedom to decide on the songs to record was shared, as in many other cases of groups and singers, although I never had direct pressure, but the record company gradually imposed itself.

I approached *gospel* music and *Conexión* with me, because I like choral music very much, and we recorded *Harmony* in English and Spanish, which was a great success, because it is a song that speaks of harmony between human beings, solidarity, joining forces and humanism. Then I composed the song "Children of Eden" in the same choral *gospel* genre, attracted by the good results of *Harmony*. And continuing in the same style, we recorded the chorus of the *gospel opera: Prepare ye the way of the lord*, also in English and Spanish. I added a verse of lyrics and music to this song to make it into a theme, as it was initially just a refrain. I was given permission by the authors and the publisher and it was a very appreciated and successful song.

Yes, there were some conditions imposed by formula radio and by the people and teams that governed the formula radio stations, where hit records were consolidated. It mattered a lot that the radio station rated a song as a red record, since at that time the daily plays were numerous and helped it to climb the charts and become a hit. Despite all these conditioning factors, *Conexión* was one of the first groups to record a long song composed by me, called "Concierto uno", 20 minutes long, which occupies an entire side of the LP *Harmony*, recorded and released in 1973, and we had no problem with *Movieplay* to record it in one go in the studio, as if it were live, and that's how we left it (excerpt from the interview with Luis Cobos on 23-10-2017).

Taking these documents into account, we can say that many of the Spanish *pop* groups of the 1960s developed their style around *rhythm and blues* music. In fact, some bands such as *Los Buenos*, whose members included the British organist Rod Mayall, *Los Gatos Negros* or *Lone Star* divided their discography between *blues*, *rhythm and blues*, *soul* and even *jazz*, something that was not alien to the discography of the rest of the Spanish groups. Despite the large number of Spanish bands in this style, we will comment, by way of representation, on the *rhythm and blues* discography of three of the great Spanish bands of the time: *Los Bravos*, *Los Canarios* and *Los Pop Tops*.

The group *Los Bravos* was born in 1965 from the fusion of two bands: *Los Sonor* and *Mike and The Runaways*. From *Los Sonor*, Tony Martínez on guitar and Manolo Fernández on keyboards joined the new line-up, while from *Los Runaways* came singer Michael Kogel, better known as Mike Kennedy, and drummer Pablo Sanllehi. Regarding the way in which the merger of the two groups took place and the prominence and conflictive nature of the new singer Mike Kogel, the director of *CBS* and *Sony Music Spain*, Manolo Díaz, ex-member of *Los Sonor* and composer and arranger of many of the songs that made them famous, commented on the following anecdote:

*Los Runaways* and *Los Sonor* merged into a single group and adopted the name *Los Sonor*. Then they came to Madrid and Manolo, who played the keyboards, the organ at that time more than anything else, called me and told me that they had joined this group where there was a German singer who he thought was fantastic but who was a very complicated guy, very difficult, an anarchist, a man who was not at all disciplined, who was constantly getting into trouble, who stole fruit from the fruit shops, who stole from the department stores and was always on the prowl. In other words, he was a tremendous case, in fact, he asked me to go and see him, because he was already convinced that this guy had to be removed from the group. And both Tony and Manolo sent me to go to a club that I don't remember the name of at the moment, which I think was on Paseo de las Delicias, where *Los Sonor* with Mike Kennedy and Pablo and Miguel, who called them *Los Runaways with Mike*, were working there for money. So, I saw that group perform there and, evidently, Mike Kennedy was effectively a kind of savage, in a way he would burp into the microphone and put more echo, so the burping went on for a long time, burping and other kinds of noises that we're not going to mention. It was a provocation what he was doing, but, yes, he sang fantastically well, and he was also a star, he was a man who, with those screams he made, was something very different, a kind of very young



Tom Jones, very wild, very strong, who barked and at the same time had a great voice. So when they finished the performance, Manolo and Tony came to see me: «Well, what do you think of this... is this guy crazy?» And I told them: «Boy, maybe he's crazy, but I think that if you have any chance in your life of having a big international success and becoming famous, it's with this guy» (Arteseros, *La Puerta Verde I*, 61 min 52 s).

This, then, was the cocktail of success for *Los Bravos*: a diligent and powerful manager, Alain Milhaud, a competent composer and member of the *Columbia record label*, Manolo Díaz, and a charismatic singer with a perfect command of the English language, Mike Kogel, whose stage name was *Mike Kennedy*.

On the occasion of the presentation of *Los Bravos* on 13 March 1966 at the Teatro de Zarzuela in Madrid, *Discóbolo* magazine, in issue 97, noted:

Barely six months ago we heard for the first time at Nicca's a German boy whose voice possessed the characteristic strength and tear of Tom Jones and Mick Jagger, but with the particularity that he sang in higher tones than the two aforementioned «monsters» of the disco world [...]. On 13 March, *Los Bravos* -the name with which the «musicals» christened the group made up of Tony, Manolo, Pablo, Juan y Junior and Michel- gave a ninety-minute recital at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, which for the second time tore its garments to make way for popular music. Twenty songs were performed without interruption. From the greatest hits of *The Animals*, *Rolling Stones* and *The Beatles*, to the new compositions of Manolo Díaz, soul of *Los Bravos* and author of the Spanish songs they perform. «I'm crying», «Day Tripper», «We gotta get out of this place», «Extasy», «Don't let me misunderstood», «Quiero gritar», «No sé mi nombre» and, above all, «It's not unusual», which got the «musicals» off their seats [...] Michel, the leader of the group, was the great attraction of the recital. His naturalness and friendliness were evident on several occasions, such as when he stuck his head through the curtains to say hello, or when he threw the aeroplanes he had made with the hand programmes to the audience (*Discóbolo*, 1-04-1966: 57).

After the presentation of the group, *Los Bravos* recorded their first *single* for the *Columbia* label, which included two songs, “It's not unusual”, on side A, and “No sé mi nombre”,<sup>68</sup> on side B. The *single* was released with notable success at the beginning of 1966, a preamble to the enormous popularity the group would achieve in the following years. With the possibility of a more than feasible international success

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<sup>68</sup> *Columbia*, 1966, Ref. number: S.S. 44-1966

for the band in mind, Alain Milhaud went to London to deal with the *Decca record company*. The agreement reached by *Columbia España's* management with *Decca* would allow them to publish and distribute the Spanish group's recording in the UK, all in exchange, obviously, for a substantial share for the English, represented by Phil Solomon. The recording was to be made in London and the tracks prepared by the arranger provided by *Decca*, Ivor Raymonde. To this end, a series of sketches were taken to Madrid to choose the ones that best suited the group. Finally, "Black is black" was chosen as the star song and *Los Bravos* travelled to England to record it at the *Decca* studios in London. In the interview that the music magazine *Discóbolo* conducted with Ivor Raymonde during his stay in Madrid in April 1966, the British arranger said:

-Question: Mr. Raymonde, what is the reason for your trip to Spain?

-Ivor Raymonde: *Decca* sent me to prepare the orchestral arrangements for the recording that *Los Bravos* will make in London at the end of this month. I have also brought some unreleased English songs for them to record (*Discóbolo*, 1-04-1966: 49).

For his part, Alain Milhaud, who was the manager of *Los Bravos* and an executive of the *Columbia company* in those years, in an interview with Concha Velasco, told some remarkable details of the recording for *Decca* in London:

-**Concha Velasco:** You were the producer of «Black is black», which is fifty years since it was recorded. A recording that was made in London, wasn't it?

-**Alain Milhaud:** Yes, in the *Decca* studios.

-**Concha Velasco:** It is said that only Mike and Tony were there, is that true?

-**Alain Milhaud:** That's true. Well, I didn't do it. Who had the responsibility for the recording at that time was the *Decca* company, who recommended me a manager who was a legendary director of a pirate radio station called *Radio Caroline*, and when I presented the demos and records of *Los Bravos* to Solomon, he told me: «I'm interested in this group». This has been the principle that has allowed *Los Bravos* to have the success they have had in Spain.

-**Concha Velasco:** The song wasn't by *Los Bravos*, was it?

-**Alain Milhaud**: No. The song was by three young London composers Grainger, Hayes and Wadey. When *Decca*, supported by Solomon, decided to sign *Los Bravos*, they sent one of *Decca's* artistic directors who came to Madrid with about twenty-five demos that we listened to in a room [...] Ivor Raymonde and I then decided to record «Black is black». <sup>69</sup>

Tony Martínez, the guitarist of *Los Bravos*, also talked about the reasons why the group recorded in London and other details of that 1966 album:

In England at that time, in a way, it was the absolute vanguard of what music was. We were getting English music and we were freaking out, so the only thing we could do was to go to England in order to be successful in that country. In Spain, I suppose that at that time there were qualified studios to make those recordings, the only thing was that of everybody who recorded in Spain, nobody had really worked internationally and, curiously, with regard to this group, there were a number of people who were very interested and very involved in the project who decided that the group should go to England to record. Curiously, the band didn't record, that's another different anecdote, others recorded for the band because of external provocation, that is, there were some rules within the union in England, we showed up, which was very funny because we showed up with our little guitars there very excited thinking that we were going to enter the studio, Keith Sullivan replaced me in most of the recordings that *The Bravos* group made there, I only remember the guitar player because he was the basic element in which I had to intervene. Curiously, he also learned something from me and it was a series of interesting anecdotes within the projection of the songs that had a certain Spanish accent, so my projection as a guitarist was identified then, 20 years ago. Consequently, the recordings were made in England for the sole reason of reliability. From then on, all the trade was established from there and from there it was projected to Spain, and in Spain there was success thanks perhaps to that foreign anecdote (*Arteseros, La Puerta Verde I*, 64 min).

This was the way the recording was made, a work in which the protagonists were not the musicians of the band *Los Bravos*, but English session musicians provided by the *Decca company* and totally unrelated to *Los Bravos*, led for that special occasion by Mike Kennedy. In any case, the single: *Black is black/No sé mi nombre (I want a name)*, <sup>70</sup> also marketed by *Decca* for the international market with the songs “Black

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<sup>69</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/cine-de-barrio/cine-barrio-chicos-chicas/3631318/>. [Consulted 3-12-2021].

<sup>70</sup> *Columbia*, 1966, Ref. number: 453-1966.

is black/Sympathy”, was a notable success in the English and North American markets, and there was even a French version, “Noir c’est noir”, performed by the French rocker Johnny Hallyday. In Spain the success was extraordinary, a fact that catapulted the group to the pinnacle of fame after only a year of existence, quite an achievement for an almost unknown Spanish *rhythm and blues* group.



Rhythm and blues bass line by «Black is black». [Transcribed by José Ignacio González Mozos]

The group's second *single* in the English market, *I don't care/Don't be left out in the cold*, was not as successful as “Black is black”. Other singles and EPs followed for the Spanish market with songs that had a certain popularity, such as “Bring a little loving” (1966), “La moto” (1966), “Going nowhere” (1966), “Los chicos con las chicas” (1967), the *álbum*: *Dame un poco de amor* (1968) or “Love is a symphony”<sup>71</sup> (1968), a romantic ballad accompanied by symphonic orchestra in a different style to their previous works.

With the 1969 *album*: *Ilustrísimos Bravos*, and after the suicide of the keyboardist, Manolo Fernández, and the departure of Mike Kennedy from the group, the band ended up disappearing in 1970 in the face of the rise of new musical trends such as *psychedelia* and *progressive rock*, which were gaining more and more ground among the tastes of young Spaniards.

Another prominent Spanish group that cultivated *pop-soul* and *gospel-pop* music, occasionally embellished by the colors of European baroque music, was *Los Pop Tops*. The importance of this Spanish band lay in their ability to project, together with *Los Canarios*, popular urban music with Afro-American roots beyond our borders, thanks to songs such as “Mamy blue” and “The voice of the dying man”.

*The Pop Tops* began their musical career in 1965 under the name of *Los Tifones*, a group that evolved from the Merseybeat sound of the middle of the decade to a *pop-soul-rhythm and blues* with musical overtones

<sup>71</sup> Columbia, 1968, Ref. number: MO 481.

coming from the European baroque. In 1968, thanks to the incorporation of Trinidad and Tobago singer Phil Trim, *The Pop Tops* began their personal artistic transformation by performing a Spanish version of the song “A whiter shade of pale”, by the British group *Procol Harum*. The song was entitled “Con su blanca palidez”,<sup>72</sup> and was very well received by the Spanish public. Their next *album*, the *gospel-pop* entitled “Oh Lord, why Lord”,<sup>73</sup> was presented in November 1968. This work meant for the group the first place in the Spanish charts and a notable success in the North American market, where the *rhythm and blues* singer Brooke Benton performed his own version of *Pop Tops* song. The music was based on the Canon by the German baroque composer and organist Johann Pachelbel, and the lyrics were a plea against racial segregation and oppression, premises that also gave the work weight among a sector of the Spanish population that identified with the pro-freedom proclamations.

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of a series of chords and single notes. Below the staff, the lyrics are written in a call-and-response format: "Loo-oo-oord" followed by "Oh-Lord", "Why-Lo-ord", "Oh-Lord", and "Why-".

Typical African-American antiphonal gospel *call-and-response* structure in “Lord Why Lord”. [Transcribed by José Ignacio González Mozos]

Thus, after their first successes, the group's fame began to grow, due, above all, to the daring staging of their live concerts, truly transgressive for the time and for the political and social situation in Spain at that time. Probably one of the most complicated situations that this *gospel-pop-soul* band experienced took place in the city of Pamplona, during the Sanfermines, when they went out to perform in their skivvies and with their bodies tattooed, so that they all seemed to be naked. To top it all off, Phil Trim, as a foreigner and ignorant of Spain's turbulent past decades ago, was dressed in a Carlist beret, without knowing what it represented. The battle was on.

The documentary by Alfonso Arteseros entitled *Phil Trim y la música valenciana*, with the participation of Enrique Ginés -presenter of the programme *Discomóder*, a programme dedicated to popular urban music and broadcast since 1961 on Radio popular de Valencia-, Phil

<sup>72</sup> *Sonoplay*, 1967, Ref. number: M. 11098-1967.

<sup>73</sup> *Sonoplay*, 1968, Ref. number: M. 14058-1968.

Trim, singer of *Los Pop Tops*, and Alfonso Arteseros, documentary maker and manager of *Los Pop Tops* in that year, dealt with what happened in Pamplona in 1969:

-**Enrique Ginés:** There was something with *Los Pop Tops* that had a certain repercussion as a scandal, because, I don't know if it was in Pamplona...

-**Alfonso Arteseros:** Yes, it was in Pamplona, with Martínez Dodero (he was who signed them).

-**Enrique Ginés:** But they performed with naked bodies.

-**Arteseros:** Indeed, they went out with their bodies, not naked, but painted, with a slip and the whole body painted. He (points to Phil Trim) was wearing a beautiful dove of peace on his chest and there was an altercation. It was in Pamplona, but it was all because he didn't know anything, he didn't understand anything, and when they went on stage, it was the Sanfermines, it was packed with people, wasn't it, and there was someone who took it and put a red *requeté* beret on his head and then he went out there and they almost didn't get to perform.

-**Enrique Ginés:** That had a repercussion that at the time made *Pop Tops'* popularity a little shaky.

-**Arteseros:** But that was before “Mamy Blue”.

-**Phil Trim:** No, but it didn't have any effect on the popularity of *Pop Tops*.

-**Enrique Ginés:** Seen from afar it gave the impression that it did, didn't it, we were watching it from Valencia and it really seemed...

-**Phil Trim:** No, apart from the 200,000 pesetas fine... nothing else.

-**Arteseros:** And you had to leave there escorted by the police. There was one, one of the brass players, they didn't know where he was and he was lying under the stage. They took him out in an ambulance (Arteseros, *Phil Trim y la música valenciana*, 17 min 22 s).

The eccentricities of *Los Pop Tops* not only took centre stage in their live performances, they were also evident in the meetings they held in their office, located in Madrid's Calle de Jacometrezo. These parties were remembered with irony by Felipe González, the first president of the socialist government of Spanish democracy. Alfonso Arteseros pointed out on this issue:

At that time, we had the *Los Pop Tops* office in Jacometrezo Street, just around the corner from the Manila cafeteria. Curiously, it was there, in the Santo Domingo building, that Felipe González, who was still the labor lawyer Isidoro, had his office at the time. Years later, in Moncloa, when he was already President of the Government, Felipe told me that he remembered us, because we were the ones who were responsible for the police coming to his office and arresting Yáñez. We attracted attention because we used to ride girls, we had a duck that ran up and down, who we called Carlofo after Agustín García Carlof, another member of the group who died recently. Felipe reminded me that we made a lot of scandals and one day the police ended up going there, and instead of covering our mouths they took Yáñez away. The fact is that our office was there, where we spent the day, at the end of which we would have dinner in the area and would inevitably end up in *JJ*, a fashionable place at the time (Arteseros, 2011: 236-237).

This was the image radiated by *Los Pop Tops*, the pioneering Spanish *gospel-soul* band that was beginning to find its place in the varied Spanish music market of the late 1960s.

Continuing with the group's discography, we should point out that in the same vein as "Oh Lord, why Lord", *Los Pop Tops* recorded "The voice of a dying man" in 1968, a tribute to the recently assassinated Afro-American leader Martin Luther King. However, despite the depth of the song, the greatest recognition came in 1971 with "Mamy blue". The music was composed by Hubert Giraud, although the English text was written by Phil Trim and the musical production was by Alain Milhaud. The problems surrounding the release of "Mamy blue" were intricate indeed. In the end, despite all the efforts made by Alain Milhaud to prove that the original of "Mamy blue" belonged to *The Pop Tops*, when the song was first marketed in Europe on 15 August 1971, *The Pop Tops'* version had to compete with five other versions by singers of different nationalities. However, *the Pop Tops'* version prevailed over the others, reaching number one in most European popular music hit parades.

*The Pop Tops* disbanded in 1974, but not before they had successfully established the *gospel-pop* and *soul-pop* style in our country. Phil Trim, the group's singer, began a solo career at the expense of his manager, Alfonso Arteseros, but he did not achieve the desired success. His first solo album was released in 1975 with songs such as "Ceremonia",<sup>74</sup> "Amor de Verano" and versions of "El largo y tortuoso camino", as

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<sup>74</sup> *Explosion*, 1975, Ref. number: E. 34539.

well as “Angelitos Negros”. After this failure, Phil Trim's musical career slowly faded away.

Another important band, *Los Canarios*, began their musical career as *Los Ídolos* in 1961. Its initial members were Teddy Bautista, singer and rhythm guitar, Germán Pérez, lead guitar, Rafa Izquierdo, bass, and Tato Lizardo, drums. The music they initially played was rock'n roll inspired by *Merseybeat*, which led them to record covers of Beatles songs, such as “Can't buy me love”, titled “No puedes comprar mi amor?”<sup>75</sup> or “Hold me Tight”, under the title “Toma mi mano” (Take my hand). However, from 1964 onwards, their style began to veer towards African-American based *rhythm and blues*, a transformation that intensified during 1965 on the occasion of the US tour that would take them from South Carolina to New York, when they changed their name to *The Canaries*.

On this trip, Teddy discovered the religious music of North America - *gospel* and *spirituals*- which the African-American community celebrated in Baptist churches, as well as the *soul* music of Otis Redding and Wilson Pickett. Teddy Bautista attested to the importance of their stay in New York in the band's later musical development, as follows: “*Los Canarios* had a style, a discourse, that made them sound different from the others. I think it was our stay in the United States, not anything else” (Domínguez, 2002: 337).

On the other hand, in the course of an interview, Teddy Bautista highlighted the enriching musical experiences they had while working as session musicians at the *Brill Building*, experiences that had a definitive influence on the change of musical direction that the band underwent after their return to Spain at the end of 1966. In relation to the intense musical experience of the group during their stay in the United States in the mid-sixties, Teddy Bautista provided the following information:

We worked in a very famous place called *The Brill Building*, that's where *Los Tokens* had their office and we recorded demos every day in the *RCA* studio, which was very close, on 48th Street and the corner [...] We stayed at the *Hotel Victoria*, so we would get out of the hotel and walk straight to the studio. In the studio, one day we found a lot of people there and the doorman wouldn't let us in. The doorman knew us, we'd been working there for two weeks, but you can't go in and so on, and everyone

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<sup>75</sup> *Belter*, 1964, Ref. number: 51.411.



was looking, like, really scared. Finally, one of our producers, Mitch Margo, who was one of the two Margo brothers from the famous *Tokens*, said: come with me. So, we went in and went into one of the checkpoints, and the checkpoint was connected to the other checkpoints by some fish tanks, so it was closed and we waited there for most of the morning. Almost at the end of the morning, we saw the curtains open and it was like they had finished the session, and we then left the studio to go in, and when we were leaving we looked back and through the fish tank we saw Elvis, King Elvis who was the guy who had been recording there all morning, making some demos with a vocal group called *The Foxis*, I don't know what... The emotion was unspeakable, singing into the mics that he had sung into and all that kind of bullshit. At that time, for everybody, Elvis was the genesis of the whole movement (*Arteseros, La Puerta Verde I*, 56 min 55 s).

The change of direction was marked. On their return to Spain in 1966, already under the name *Los Canarios*, the group incorporated a wind section -trumpet, trombone and saxophone- a transformation that definitively marked the course of the most important Spanish *pop-soul-rhythm and blues* band.

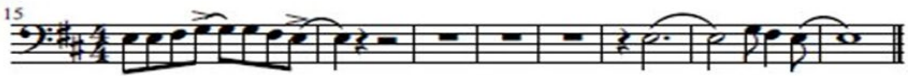
Although they gained some popularity between 1967 and 1969 with *singles* such as *Peppermint Frappé/Keep on the right side*<sup>76</sup> and *Pain/Three-two-one-ah*,<sup>77</sup> the first of which was used as the soundtrack for the film of the same name directed by Carlos Saura, the real success would smile on them in the summer of 1968 with the *single: Get On Your Knees/Trying so hard*,<sup>78</sup> a *single* that burst onto all the Spanish radio stations, including the European reference Radio Luxemburg.

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<sup>76</sup> *Sonoplay*, 1967, Ref. number: M. 16644-1967.

<sup>77</sup> *Movieplay*, 1969, Ref. number: M. 8469-1969.

<sup>78</sup> *Sonoplay*, 1968, Ref number: 2695-1968.



Different elements of African-American soul music in “Get on your Knees”. Ostinato bass (first staff) and syncopated brass section lines, vocals and syncopated instrumental interludes. [Transcribed by José Ignacio González Mozos.]

Other *singles* such as *Child/Requiem for a soul*, *Free Yourself/I wonder what freedom means* and *Extra, extra/Reachin' out*, or *albums* such as *Canarios vivos* put the icing on the cake of an impeccable career within the Spanish *soul* scene of the time. Despite the success of these albums, in 1972 *Los Canarios'* music began to evolve in the direction of *progressive* and *symphonic rock*, a process that culminated in 1974 with the release of the *LP: Ciclos*, a remarkable conceptual work inspired by Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

In the words of Teddy Bautista, *Los Canarios* influenced not only the dissemination of popular Spanish urban music with an Afro-American base, promoting *soul* music among the Spanish public, but also the

training of the majority of musicians who were beginning their musical activity in those years. In this sense, Teddy Bautista stated:

I think that what *Los Canarios* meant at that time was a kind of revolutionary breeze because we were quite provocative and when we were having the most fun was when the people were most revolutionised. I still meet people who say to me: «Hey, do you know why I'm in music? Because in 1968 I saw a concert by *Los Canarios*». That has a special meaning for me (Arteseros, *La Puerta Verde I*, 59 min 12 s).

In 1972, and due to the new style adopted by *Los Canarios* in the direction of *progressive* and *symphonic rock*, the wind section split from the group, founding the *Orquesta Alcatraz*, a light music group that enjoyed great prestige during the seventies and eighties.

*Los Canarios* disappeared in 1975 after having set the direction for the Spanish urban popular music of the late sixties and having given continuity to Spanish *rhythm and blues* through a series of *soul-pop* recordings that today form an essential part of the history of Spanish urban popular music of the sixties.

## Conclusions

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the syncretism implicit in *blues* music evolved in the direction of *rhythm and blues* and the African-American based musical styles that shaped it, during the 1940s. Its influence on popular music in Europe was very important, in fact Spanish *rhythm and blues* developed especially throughout the 1960s as a style inspired by African-American-based musical genres such as *blues*, *doo-wop*, *gospel* and *soul*. Although the *blues* began to arrive timidly in Spain through the Hot Clubs that proliferated in the country's main cities in the 1940s and the performances of certain bluesmen such as Big Bill Broonzy during the 1950s,<sup>79</sup> the formal, harmonic and timbral elements of the *blues* were integrated into Spanish urban popular music thanks to the development of *pop-rock* and the *rhythm and blues* that derived from it.

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<sup>79</sup> Professor Josep Pedro notes: “the concert by bluesman Big Bill Broonzy captivated a smaller audience of excited enthusiasts, who attended the small Capsa theatre on 11 May 1953” (Pedro, 2021: 55).

Spanish bands of the stature of *Los Sonor*, *Los Buenos*, *Los Dixies*, *Henry and The Seven*, *Los Gatos Negros*, *Els 5 Xics*, *Lone Star*, *Los Grimm*, *Los Pop Tops*, *Los Canarios*, *Conexion* or *Los Bravos*, among others, began performing versions of *rhythm and blues*, *doo-wop* or *gospel* music, with which they managed to consecrate a style of *soul* music that marked the path to follow for Spanish popular urban music in later years.

Therefore, in this chapter we have attempted to trace the origins of *blues* music in its journey towards *rhythm and blues* and the musical styles that shaped it, making special mention of the sonorous reflection that it built in the Spanish popular music of the 1960s. We thus confirm the idea that the path opened up by *rhythm and blues* music in the Spain of developmentalism impregnated different genres of popular urban music, playing an essential role in the adoption of *doo-wop*, *pop-soul* and *gospel-pop* sounds in the discography of groups such as *Los Bravos*, *Los Pop Tops*, *Conexión* and *Los Canarios*. This sonorous path would continue thanks to the birth of a soul with its own characteristics that still survives in Spain thanks to bands like *The Excitement*, *Freedonia*, *Aurora & The Betrayers* or *Cosmosoul*, a nod to the musical negritude originally implicit in the *blues*.

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# Indian Blues: The origins of a Native-African American culture in colonial Florida

Héctor Martínez

**Abstract:** In classical blues there are a large number of artists of African and Native American descent. From T-Bone Walker to Charlie Patton, the mixture of blood and cultures influenced their musical repertoire, which was infused with references to these native heritages. This study aims to shed light on this phenomenon of miscegenation that began in the Modern Age in the colonies of Louisiana and Florida, favored by the less repressive environment of these territories in French and Spanish hands. The escaped slaves or maroon established a relationship with the natives of the environment and forged a relationship of warlike alliance, friendship or vassalage, depending on the circumstances. The climax came with the Seminole Wars and with the invasion and subsequent purchase of the Florida territory by the United States of America and its consequent expulsion of the Indians and their allies.

**Keywords:** Black Seminole, slavery, Maroon, Indian Blues, Spanish Florida, Diaspora

## Introduction: Blues in the Territory

On June 14, 1929, Charlie Patton stepped into a studio in Richmond, Indiana for the first time, to record some of the songs from his repertoire. Among these was what would be one of his first hits, *Down the Dirt Road Blues*, a song about life on the road that included the following lines:

I feel like choppin', chips flyin' everywhere  
I feel like choppin', chips flyin' everywhere  
I been to the Nation, Lord, but I couldn't stay there

Patton talks about going to *the Nation*, referring to the territory that was conceded to American Indians belonging to the Five Civilized Tribes<sup>80</sup> after they were expelled from their ancestral lands in 1834, due to the Indian Intercourse Act. This territory was to the west of the Mississippi River, on uninhabited land, and the journey that Indigenous people had to take over thousands of miles, known as the Trail of Tears, took thousands of their lives.

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<sup>80</sup> The Five Civilized Tribes were those American Indian tribes that had showed some degree of acceptance of certain aspects of Western culture, such as the language. The five tribes were the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek and Seminole peoples.

This song could have passed unnoticed among the others that Patton recorded if tradition, fueled by the comments of Patton's protégés, Son House and Honeyboy Edwards, had not accorded the musician American Indian ancestors.

Patton's song was not groundbreaking, since there were earlier songs that talked about this Nation, such as *Shanty Blues*, recorded in 1927 by Henry Thomas, or Mooch Richardson's *Low Down Barrel House Blues*, which dates to 1928. There is no evidence that either Thomas or Richardson had American Indian ancestry, unlike the musicians behind the song *Bamalong Blues*, from 1927, recorded by Jim Baxter and his father Andrew, who was half Cherokee.<sup>81</sup>

As well as the Nation, a new concept was introduced in other songs of that time – the Territory – the name given to the space where the reserves for American Indian tribes were established, in the present-day state of Oklahoma. It was not unusual for songwriters to mention the Nation and refer to the Territory in the same song, as George 'Bullet' Williams did in his *Touch Me Light, Mama*:

I went to the Nation, from there to the territo'  
I couldn't find my good gal, honey, nowhere I go

Williams talks of going to *the Nation* and from there to the *territo'*, making an interesting distinction between the two terms and reflecting historical events in the song's message, as the terrains that had been allocated to the Five Civilized Tribes were reorganized by the federal government in 1889: an action driven by the settlers' desire for virgin land.<sup>82</sup>

The region was divided into two territories: the Territory of Oklahoma in the west, which was shared between the white settlers using the 'land run' method;<sup>83</sup> and the Indian Territory to the east, now half its former

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<sup>81</sup>Haymes, M. (1990), *The Red Man and the Blues*, earlyblues.com. <https://www.earlyblues.com/Essay%20%20The%20Red%20Man%20and%20The%20Blues%20-%20Chapter%204.htm>

<sup>82</sup>Smith, C. (2007), "Going to the Nation: The Idea of Oklahoma in Early Blues Recordings", *Popular Music*, Vol 26, No. 1, Special Issue on the Blues in Honour of Paul Oliver, pp. 83-96: 85.

<sup>83</sup>A 'land run' was a method for sharing out plots of unassigned land in which ownership of a terrain was granted to the first settler who arrived on it. Participants gathered at a specified spot and waited for the starter pistol to be fired, at which point



size. This Indian Territory was the ‘*territor*’ about which ‘Bullet’ Williams would sing.

In addition to Charlie Patton and the Baxters, other blues musicians, such as the Chatmon family, Scrapper Blackwell, ‘Champion’ Jack Dupree, Robert Wilkins, Lowell Fulson, Roy Brown, Leadbelly and Louisiana Red,<sup>84</sup> also described themselves as descendants of American Indians although, as we have seen, songs about the Indian Nation and its territory were also performed by musicians with not a drop of Indian blood in their veins.

The motivation behind this interest among African American musicians may have other origins, as well as kinship, as we will see below.

The Indian Territory was divided into five areas, one for each Civilized Tribe; each of these areas was governed by the laws of the tribe, and the tenets of the white man’s way of life did not apply:

As a result the physical appearance of Indian Territory towns presented a shocking contrast to their real prosperity. There were no city taxes except in the Cherokee Nation, hence no schools except voluntary subscription schools, no police or fire protection, and no sewers, city lighting, or paving.<sup>85</sup>

It was not until 1907, when Oklahoma became a state within the Union and the Indian Territory disappeared, that laws deemed civilized by Western culture began to be applied.

The years of laxity in enforcing the law involved, primarily, a lack of restrictions on the consumption of alcohol, gambling and prostitution, as a result of which Oklahoma was soon filled with hustlers, hobos, tricksters, card sharps, madams, street musicians and other colorful characters.

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they raced off with the intention of claiming a piece of land. Several of these races were organized in the Oklahoma Territory between 1889 and 1895 to apportion out the land that had previously been granted to the American Indian tribes.

<sup>84</sup> Haymes, M. (1990).

<sup>85</sup> Debo, A. (1973), *And Still the Waters Run: The Betrayal of the Five Civilized Tribes*, Princeton University Press, p. 18.

Many of the musicians were Black, given that the Jim Crow laws<sup>86</sup> were among those that were not enforced in the Indian territory, with the result that Oklahoma was viewed in the deep South as a destination where one could enjoy a certain amount of freedom.

Apart from coming to Oklahoma for work or good times, an outsider could take the opportunity to seek an Indian wife there, and so secure one of the plots of land allocated to the Indigenous population. American Indian societies were matrilineal, meaning that tribal membership and inheritance were passed down by the women. A man from outside the Nation could therefore marry into the tribe and have a relatively stable future.

He might even make it big, thanks to the oil that lay under many plots of land: a fact which attracted all kinds of vultures and schemers who would try to con the legitimate owners or declare themselves descendants of some long-departed Indian woman, so as to lay claim to the property in a lucrative inheritance.

This also found expression in some blues songs, such as *Big Chief Blues*, by Furry Lewis, where the singer claims that when he marries, it will be to an Indian woman, so that he can become the son-in-law of the tribal chief:

Baby, when I marry, goin' to marry an Indian squaw  
I mean when I marry, goin' to marry an Indian squaw  
Big chief's, Lord, be my daddy-in-law

Some years later, Cripple Clarence Lofton sang about the same idea in his *Streamline Train*, as did Will Shade in *Memphis Boy Blues*, by the Memphis Jug Band, which suggests that this endeavor to marry an American Indian woman was common in popular African American culture.

These relationships between Indigenous and African American people led to an intimate interplay between the two cultures, generating flows of cultural influence that would be given shape in blues music.

Some authors, such as Joe Gioia, argue that the contribution of American Indians to blues music was greater even than the influence of

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<sup>86</sup> Jim Crow laws were all the laws of a clearly segregationist nature that were adopted in the US.

African Americans, contending that the blues has more in common with Indigenous music than it does with the music of the African *griots*, who are always cited as the most direct influence of the bluesman.

Gioia cites the use of the exclamation “hey hey”, an omnipresent expression in blues songs that was used by the Plains Indians to call upon the spirits, as one of the clearest Indigenous contributions to African American music.<sup>87</sup>

Two of the most salient songs in this respect were Blind Blake’s *Hey Daddy Blues*, recorded in Chicago in 1927, and *Hey Hey*, recorded in 1952 by Big Bill Broonzy, in which the word is used to call for the attention of the person the song addresses:

Hey hey your daddy's feeling blue  
Hey hey your daddy's feeling blue  
I'm worried all the time, can't keep you off my mind  
Hey hey your daddy's feeling blue

Gioia also cites *Indian Tom-Tom* as an example of the roots shared by the blues and certain forms of American Indian music. The song consists of a series of American Indian chants recorded in 1928 by Big Chief Henry’s Indian String Band, a Creek group from Oklahoma whose traditional Indigenous music had a clearly African American violin and guitar accompaniment.<sup>88</sup>

Some contemporary artists such as Cyril Neville – singer in The Meters and The Neville Brothers – make the case for the existence of this influence by citing evidence not from the Indian Territory era, but from the years prior to the Trail of Tears:

We have Native blood, but we’re not sure what nation.... It goes back hundreds of years. The shuffle and hesitation in the second line rhythm is probably a combination of the two musical cultures. Africans and Natives had similar ways of worshipping and playing music, and they were thrown together by racism and slavery...<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Gioia, J. (2013), *The Guitar and the New World: A Fugitive History*, Excelsior Editions, p. 96.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 90.

<sup>89</sup> Cain, M. C. (2006), “Red, Black and Blues: Race, Nation and Recognition for the Bluez”, *MUSICultures*, 33, p. 8.

The musician Taj Mahal also upholds this idea of a long road traveled side-by-side by American Indians and African Americans over hundreds of years, leaving their mark on the blues, gospel and jazz. He identifies elements of both cultures in the way Little Brother Montgomery sang:

The majority of African-American people have some Native blood.....That fast vibrato you hear in the vocals of Little Brother Montgomery, in songs like the “Vicksburg Blues,” it's both African and Native. That vibrato and tone, you have to work at it from the back of your throat and nose to crank it out and go up into that falsetto that happens. He might look Creole, but when you hear him sing, it's Native American singing.... There were a hundred years when the races blended hard-core. They were Black Indians in jazz, blues, gospel everything. It's an untapped history and when people start investigating it, they're going to be surprised.<sup>90</sup>

The objective of this text is to investigate what Taj Mahal calls Black Indians: the result of bloodlines mixed over the centuries. There were significant encounters in the Mississippi valley between Louisiana slaves and the Natchez tribe, and with the Cherokee people in the settlements of the Carolinas and Alabama. However, here we will focus on one of the Five Civilized Tribes, the Seminoles, who had a very special relationship with the African American community during the colonial era, which would lead to the emergence of a new tribe: the Black Seminoles.

In memory of the Seminole People, who originated in Florida, their name was given to the train line that ran through the state, to which the musician raised in the Sunshine State, Tampa Red, would dedicate a song:

I've got the Seminole blues  
Leaving on my mind  
Leaving on my mind, whoa-oooh  
Seminole blues, leaving on my mind  
I'm goin' to find my baby  
If I have to ride the blind.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

## Indians and Africans in Spanish Florida: A safe haven?

The history of La Florida,<sup>91</sup> from Ponce de León's landing in 1513 to the mid-nineteenth century, was marked by the struggle of the Spanish with, first, the English and later, the Americans. The Indigenous and African American populations suffered most from these conflicts, sometimes as the victims of collateral damage, and at other times from the colonial powers using them as a military tool with which to damage their enemies.

The first European colony in what is now the United States was founded by Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón in 1526 in the present-day state of Georgia and received the name of San Miguel de Gualdape. A significant amount of slave labor arrived in this colony from Africa, since the Spanish soon realized that it would be very challenging to replicate on the North American Atlantic coast the *encomienda* model implemented in the Caribbean region.<sup>92</sup> This difficulty was due to the low density of the Native population in that region and the hostility with which any attempt by the Spanish military or Franciscan friars to approach them was received.

Only four months after San Miguel de Gualdape was founded, the poor living conditions in the colony caused by the shortage of food and proliferation of diseases led the Guale people,<sup>93</sup> who were used by the Spanish to provide the food supplies needed by the colony, rebelled. The revolt was led by a *mico* – or Guale chief – named Juanillo, who had a deep hatred of the Franciscan friars and had ordered several of them to be assassinated. The African slaves in the colony supported the rebellion, which resulted in its success and the colony being dismantled and abandoned. Many of the slaves and Guale people who participated in the rebellion fled to the forests of La Florida, in what may have been

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<sup>91</sup> The name “La Florida” is used to refer to the historical territory of “Spanish Florida” that existed in the periods of 1513-1763 and 1783-1821.

<sup>92</sup> In the *encomienda* system, the Spanish crown assigned a certain number of Native people to an *encomendero*, as compensation for his service. Thereafter, the *encomendero* took responsibility for the Native people entrusted to him, protecting and evangelizing them, and securing the profits generated by their work.

<sup>93</sup> The Guale tribe inhabited the north of La Florida and south Georgia. Their resistance to Spanish attempts at Christianization resulted in them being annihilated by the Spanish troops. The dispersal of the survivors and their mixing with other tribes in the area led to the ethnogenesis of the Yamasees.

the first contact between African Americans and American Indians in the region.<sup>94</sup>

This first colonial debacle discouraged the Spanish, who did not make any great advances in their occupation of territory, although they did react to the arrival of an expedition of French Huguenots to North America. This Protestant group would found a fort called Charlesfort in 1563, in what is now South Carolina, which would be attacked by the Spanish in 1566. After expulsion of the French, the Spanish would reinforce the fort and establish a mission named Santa Elena there, to shore up their defenses in the face of a possible English advance from the north.<sup>95</sup>

This would be the dynamic throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, marked by the founding of two cities that would be the focal points of Spanish and English operations: San Agustín (now St. Augustine), in 1565, and Jamestown, in 1609.

The establishment of Jamestown marked the beginning of the English presence, serving as a bridgehead for founding Charleston in 1670, which would draw the frontier between English and Spanish territory back to the approximate position of the current border between the states of Florida and Georgia. San Agustín, the capital of the Spanish colony, would effectively become a frontier city. This made it the object of English attacks and incursions, which would be of central importance for the future of Native and African American people.

In retaliation for the privateer attacks on San Agustín sent from the Carolinas, the Spanish launched several raids on the plantations of the Carolinas between 1686 and 1687. In these incursions, the Spanish stole food supplies, captured slaves and destroyed the plantations, including the English governor's mansion. This was not only an application of *lex talionis* – an eye for an eye – but served to undermine the burgeoning

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<sup>94</sup>Dixon, A. E. (2020), “Black Seminole Ethnogenesis: Origins, Cultural Characteristics and Alliances”, *Phylon* (1960-), Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 8-24, p. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Toscano, N. (2008), “La Florida y el suroeste americano”, *Enciclopedia del español en los Estados Unidos*, pp. 32-55, p. 42.

plantation economy, based on slave labor, that had been developed in the Carolinas since Charleston was founded.<sup>96</sup>

The Spanish soon found a new way to chasten the English colonizers. In 1688, a group of slaves who had fled the Carolinas – eight men, two women and a child – arrived at San Agustín in a boat. The governor of La Florida offered them their liberty in exchange for embracing the Catholic religion and engaging in paid work to improve the Castillo de San Marcos, close to San Agustín. The English governor sent emissaries to the capital of La Florida calling for the slaves to be returned to their owners, but received a negative response: the Spanish contended that, having converted to Catholicism, they were free individuals and could not be enslaved again.

In the following years, more Maroons<sup>97</sup> arrived from the English colonies, which prompted King Charles II of Spain to sign a royal decree on November 7, 1693 offering freedom to the slaves who had escaped the English colonies if they converted to the Catholic faith, the idea being to motivate more slaves to flee the plantations in Virginia and the Carolinas. This would leave the economy of these colonies, which was based almost exclusively on slave labor, in a precarious position.<sup>98</sup>

[...] desde el año de 1693 por diferentes Reales Cédulas se a mandado por S.M. dar Libertad a los Negros que fujitivos de las Colonias Ynglesas an venido anpararse y Recevir el Bautismo a los Dominios de S.M. en la florida de lo que a resultado abersele dado Libertad a unos por haverlo participado a S.M. [...]<sup>99</sup>

The Spanish scheme worked: while slavery had not been abolished in La Florida, offering freedom to the fugitive slaves had a pull effect that

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<sup>96</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), *A People's History of Florida, 1513-1876: How Africans, Seminoles, Women, and Lower Class Whites Shaped the Sunshine State*, Adam Wasserman, pp. 86-87.

<sup>97</sup> "Maroon" is used in this text in the sense of the Spanish term, *cimarrón*, as a person who escaped slavery and settled outside of slave society, sometimes in remote areas but also in existing white and Indigenous settlements.

<sup>98</sup> Cano Borrego, P. D. (2019), "La libertad de los esclavos fugitivos y la milicia negra en la Florida española en el siglo XVII", *Revista de la Inquisición. Intolerancia y Derechos Humanos*, Vol. 23, pp. 223-234, p. 225.

<sup>99</sup> Wright, I. A. (1924), "Dispatches of Spanish Officials Bearing on the Free Negro Settlement of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, Florida", *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 144-195, p. 180.

soon proved a headache for the English authorities, who received a deluge of complaints from the colonists as they watched their enslaved workforce disintegrate.

The English responded with force using, as noted earlier, American Indians as instruments to execute their plans. Bearing in mind the modest amount of territory occupied by the Spanish –the capital, San Agustín, the city of Panzacola in the Gulf of Mexico, and a few forts and missions dotted around the territory – the colony was sustained primarily by the diplomacy employed with the Indigenous tribes who, after their first, traumatic contact with the Spanish, had agreed to provide them with food supplies in exchange for protection.

Aware of these circumstances, the English decided to strike an indirect blow to the Spanish by attacking their Native allies. To do so, the English would use their own Lower Creek and Yamasee allies, inciting them to make incursions into La Florida territory. These raids became increasingly bloody: settlements were destroyed and Indigenous people were captured to sell to the English as slaves.

These attacks gradually forced the Apalachee people – the last Pre-Columbian Native inhabitants in La Florida – to seek refuge in the area surrounding San Agustín, where they hoped to be protected by the Spanish, and in the French city of Mobile. This protection could not prevent the virtual decimation of the Apalachee population in 1704, when a party of English and Creek raiders swept through the north of La Florida, slaughtering members of this tribe.<sup>100</sup>

As a result of this campaign, the last Apalachee people migrated to the south, where they took refuge in Cayo Hueso (today's Key West), and were then taken by the Spanish authorities to the nearest territory, Cuba. Little is known of what happened to this group of Florida Natives on the Caribbean island, although it is suspected that the vast majority of them died from typhus and smallpox.

Seven years later, in 1711, another group of Indigenous people from La Florida arrived in Cuba and were settled in the Havana suburb of

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<sup>100</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 54.



Guanabacoa, under the tutelage of the parish priest, who was tasked with teaching them the Spanish language and Christian doctrine.<sup>101</sup>

When the Native population of the peninsula had decreased so much that expeditions to capture slaves began to be relatively unprofitable, the British decided to enslave their own Lower Creek and Yamasee allies, which prompted the two tribes to change sides and join forces with the Spanish. Yamasee and Lower Creek People populated the areas in the south of Georgia and the north of Florida that had been the ancestral home of the Apalachee tribe. The new settlements soon became a safe haven for Maroons who did not want to live alongside white people, while also serving as a first line of defense against the British for San Agustín.<sup>102</sup>

These Yamasee and Lower Creek settlements would be the seedbed for the ethnogenesis of the Seminole tribe, whose name was a corruption of the Spanish word *cimarrón* and meant ‘deserter’ in the Muscogee language.

The Lower Creek and Yamasee tribes were age-old enemies, meaning that they had several confrontations which concluded when the Creeks ambushed the Yamasees at the San Juan River, exterminating all of their warriors except forty to forty-five men. According to Seminole tradition, the Creek people took the Yamasee women, and when a baby with particularly dark skin was born, its Yamasee blood was said to be showing.<sup>103</sup>

The Spanish fought back by incentivizing a larger-scale flight of slaves from the British colonies. To do so, they sent secret agents to visit the Carolina plantations, informing the slaves that they would receive their liberty and even be given paid employment if they fled to Spanish territory.

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<sup>101</sup> Worth, J. E. (2004), *A History of Southeastern Indians in Cuba, 1513-1823*, Unpublished paper presented at Southeastern Archaeological Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, pp. 6-7.

<sup>102</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 90.

<sup>103</sup> Covington, J. W. (1967), “Migration into Florida of the Seminoles, 1700-1820”, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 340-357, p. 350.

Unsurprisingly, this fueled the desire to escape for a great number of slaves, who would resort to the use of arms, if necessary, to get themselves across the border.

The groups of Maroons who had journeyed from the British north interacted with the Yamasees and Creeks – the Seminole people – but without forming a homogenous community with them. The Maroons settled in Florida in one of two ways: either in small, scattered communities on the outskirts of Panzacola (present-day Pensacola) and San Agustín, such as Pilaklikaha, King Hadjo’s Town, Bucker Woman’s Town, Mulatto Girls’ Town and Minatti, or in the newly-founded fort of Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mosé, later renamed Fort Mose.<sup>104</sup>

Fort Mose was built in 1738 to accommodate the large number of runaway slaves that were arriving in San Agustín and, as an added benefit, to protect the city from potential British attacks. Fugitive slaves newly arriving in San Agustín were sent to the fort and, although several friars were posted there, its leader was chosen by its inhabitants: the first was Francisco Menéndez, the Maroon of Mandinga origin and member of the militia of *negros y pardos* in La Florida. The population of the fort was never particularly large, at around one hundred people, but it became the first settlement of free Black citizens in the territory of the present-day United States.<sup>105</sup>

The appeal created by the idea of freedom in Fort Mose among slaves on the British plantations was the spark that ignited the bloodiest revolt in the history of North America, the Stono Rebellion, which began on Sunday, September 9, 1739.

The leader of the rebellion, an Angolan slave called Jemmy from a plantation near the Stono River, took twenty men to Hutchinson’s store, where they stole arms and ammunition and decapitated the two white men who were occupying the building. From there, Jemmy and his men headed south of the Stono River, killing more than twenty white people in the area as they acquired more weapons, gunpowder, provisions and, most importantly, men. By the end of the day, they were close to the

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<sup>104</sup> Dixon, A. E. (2020), p. 12.

<sup>105</sup> Cano Borrego, P. D. (2019), p. 228.

Jacksonborough ferry on the Edisto River, and they had amassed more than a hundred slaves.

Although the rebel group had traveled ten miles from Stono River to the bridge over the Edisto River, they were a long way from Florida. The sense of approaching war present in the colony, along with the colonists' prevailing fear of outright revolt among the slaves, resulted in Governor William Bull being sent to confront the group, leading a militia of one hundred soldiers. After the first skirmish, thirty slaves were killed and over the following month, most of those who escaped were captured and executed.<sup>106</sup>

There was also a religious component to the Stono case, since many slaves from this area "are a People brought from the Kingdom of Angola... many thousands of the Negroes there profess the Roman Catholic Religion"<sup>107</sup> which, in the eyes of the British, further motivated these slaves to flee toward the Catholic kingdom of Spain to the cry of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."<sup>108</sup>

The belligerent actions between the British and Spanish on the border reached a head when Fort Mose became one of the arenas of the War of Jenkins' Ear (known as the *Guerra de Asiento* in Spanish)<sup>109</sup> on American land. Taking advantage of the general clamor for war, the governor of the recently founded colony of Georgia, James Oglethorpe, sent an army made up of British militia and Creek allies to attack San Agustín. When passing by Fort Mose, which was a strategically important site for defense and laying siege to the capital of La Florida, the governor decided to take control of it. Achieving this posed no great

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<sup>106</sup> Niven, S. J. (2016), *The Stono Slave Rebellion Was Nearly Erased From US History Books*, The Root, <https://www.theroot.com/the-stono-slave-rebellion-was-nearly-erased-from-us-his-1790854336>.

<sup>107</sup> Thorton, J. K. (1988), "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas", *The Americas*, Vol. 44, No. 3, pp. 261-278, pp. 268-269.

<sup>108</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 89.

<sup>109</sup> This war was waged between Britain and Spain from 1739 until 1748 and received its Spanish name due to the situation that sparked the hostilities: the suppression of the British right to *asiento*, which was a monopoly contract for trading slaves in the Spanish colonies. This right was denied in retaliation for the contraband from which the British and Dutch were profiting, taking advantage of the Spanish colonies' difficulties with securing provisions. The conflict's English name came from the *casus belli* of the war: an incident between the smuggler, Robert Jenkins, and a Spanish coastguard, which resulted in the amputation of the Briton's ear.

difficulty, since it had just been evacuated, after Indigenous scouts allied to the Spanish brought news of the enemy troop movements.

The Spanish response was resounding, as they launched an attack with a battalion comprising Black and mixed-race men that annihilated the troops of Colonel Palmer, who had been posted in the fort after its capture. This attack resulted in the destruction of Fort Mose, weakening the morale of the British who, seeing that the Spanish were also receiving reinforcements over the sea from Cuba, decided to lift their siege of San Agustín and return to Georgia.

After the destruction of Fort Mose, most of the Maroons who had lived there went to settle in San Agustín, which provided the conditions for them to fully embrace Catholicism and the Spanish language, as well as certain Hispanic customs. This communal life in San Agustín led to the rise of mixed marriages, since there were many fewer women of African origin who had escaped the British colonies than men. It was therefore common for the men to look for partners among the Native or white women who lived in the city.

However, tensions soon arose between the Maroons that had come from Fort Mose and San Agustín's poorest white people, the latter seeing the former as direct competitors when it came to securing work and sustenance. As a result, in 1749, Governor Fulgencio García de Solís ordered the fort to be rebuilt and, in 1752, he commanded the Black people to return to Fort Mose. These Black residents refused stating that, while life in the fort had been better than life in the plantations, it was not comparable to the freedom they enjoyed in San Agustín.<sup>110</sup>

The strain on resources felt across the province of La Florida at the time was evident in Fort Mose, where the armed militia was totally lacking in ammunition with which to defend itself. As a result, in 1759, the Black people living there were allowed to return to San Agustín if they so desired.<sup>111</sup>

The importance of Fort Mose lies not only in its status as the first legally established African American settlement, but also in the fact that it acted as a magnet for Indigenous Seminole people who settled nearby

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<sup>110</sup> Dixon, A. E. (2020), p. 13.

<sup>111</sup> Morgan, A. A. (2020), *Precarious lives. Black Seminoles and other freedom seekers in Florida before the US civil war*, A. A. Morgan, p. 21.

after fleeing from the British. Contact between these two ethnic groups would thereby become even more frequent in the subsequent chapters of Florida's history.

Fort Mose was permanently abandoned in 1763, the year in which the Treaty of Paris was signed, ending the Seven Years' War, in which half of Europe had fought each other. Spain and Britain were left on opposite sides, and had to agree on the exchange of several territories as a result of the British superiority during the conflict: in order for Spain to keep Havana and Manila, which had been conquered by the British, it had to give La Florida to them, receiving Louisiana from France in exchange.

These exchanges forced the sparse Spanish population of what was now British Florida to leave the province, with dramatic consequences for Black and Indigenous people. The former witnessed the loss of the right to freedom granted by the Spanish crown to slaves who had escaped British territory. The Seminole people, meanwhile, lost their Spanish allies, leaving them in the hands of the British and, above all, their Creek enemies.

Faced with this situation, many Indigenous and Black people decided to hide out in remote parts of the peninsula, seeking protection from nature, although no small number of them decided to emigrate alongside the Spanish from San Agustín to Havana. There they could choose between going to Guanabacoa, where Indigenous people from Florida had already been living since 1704 and 1711, as noted earlier, or settling in La Regla. Another eighty-four families were settled, together with families from the Canary Islands, in a newly created town called San Agustín de la Nueva Florida.<sup>112</sup>

The destination of the inhabitants of Panzacola and San Marcos de Apalache, as well as the nearby *presidios* (fortified bases or settlements) of Escambe and Punta Rasa,<sup>113</sup> which together came to over six hundred military personnel and civilians, was La Antigua Veracruz (the present-day city of La Antigua) in Mexico. They spent almost a year living in the city's port, before being relocated to a town founded for this

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<sup>112</sup> Cano Borrego, P. D. (2019), pp. 232-233.

<sup>113</sup> The northern border of Nueva España was protected by a network of *presidios* that extended from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico. Each *presidio* consisted of a fortification with a garrison of around forty to fifty soldiers, Indigenous explorers, and a stable of seven horses and one mule per soldier.

purpose, San Carlos, around two and a half leagues from La Antigua Veracruz.<sup>114</sup>

The governor of La Florida, Melchor Feliú, and the last families remaining in San Agustín, left the city for Havana on June 21, 1764.

#### An uncertain future: Florida changes hands

The British tried to set up a plantation economy in Florida similar to that established in the Carolinas and Georgia, so they drew on colonists with experience in these territories to implement their existing work methods. This created two fundamental changes in the lives of African Americans. Firstly, greater separation between the Black and white social groups was enforced, with mixing of the two avoided. The privileges of the social group comprising free people of color that had formed in La Florida during two centuries of Spanish occupation were eliminated. Secondly, given the size of the workforce required by the British plantation economy, the number of people with African origins increased substantially as large shipments of slaves arrived, in even more degrading conditions than in the previous period.<sup>115</sup>

The speed at which demand for labor was increasing outstripped that at which African slaves were arriving, which drove an increase in raids into the Florida forests to locate the settlements where Maroons were hiding, in order to capture and enslave them again. This pushed the Maroons to seek refuge further and further south, as had occurred with the waves of attacks in 1704, until they reached Cayo Vacas (now known as Vaca Key) and Cayo Hueso.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> García de León, A. (1996), “Indios de la Florida en La Antigua, Veracruz, 1757-1770. Un episodio de la decadencia de España ante Inglaterra”, *Estudios de historia novohispana*, No. 16, pp. 101-118, p. 110.

<sup>115</sup> Riordan, P. (1996), “Finding Freedom in Florida: Native Peoples, African Americans, and Colonist, 1670-1818”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 1, pp- 24-43, p. 34. An example of the change in how slaves were treated can be found in a description written in 1783 of the punishment meted out to Black people who met to dance after 10 o'clock at night: thirty-nine lashes, in Leitch Wright Jr. J. (1976), “Blacks in British East Florida”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 4. The Floridas in the Revolutionary Era: Bicentennial Issue, pp. 425-442, p. 432.

<sup>116</sup> Covington, J. W. (1967), p. 342.

This need for labor prompted certain colonists to come up with a very different solution to that employed thus far, albeit with similar results. In 1768, Andrew Turnbull, owner of the New Smyrna plantation, drew in Mediterranean workers from Greece, Corsica and Menorca with the false promise of working on a fertile land where they would be guaranteed to receive all basic provisions, such as food, clothes and tools. The agreement established that, after a three-year period of service, they would be assigned ownership of a plot of land and thereby gain their freedom.

Turnbull treated these settlers as the other plantation owners treated the African slaves. After all, Turnbull had sought out these Mediterranean workers in the belief that he could secure greater yields from them than he could from Africans, since they would be more docile and cause fewer problems. The working conditions were brutal and, in just two years, half of the 1,400 settlers had died. In 1777, the relentless hardships led the remaining survivors to move to San Agustín, where they would become ancestors of the region's current population of Mediterranean descent, and put an end to Doctor Turnbull's utopian project.<sup>117</sup>

Between 1775 and 1783, the American War of Independence was fought between the Thirteen Colonies of North America, supported by Spain and France, and the British metropolis. During the war, the British employed the tactic used earlier by Spain, offering freedom to slaves fleeing from Georgia to Florida. Attacks were also launched from Seminole settlements to capture or liberate, depending on your perspective, slaves from the plantations belonging to the American Patriots.<sup>118</sup>

These attacks resulted in people of African descent being incorporated en masse into the Seminole settlements, in the capacity of serfs. While the Seminole people, like the rest of the Five Civilized Tribes, accepted the institution of slavery brought into their continent by the white man, they did not understand it in the same way, their version being closer to a vassalage in which the Maroons paid a tax in exchange for protection.

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<sup>117</sup> Fernández-Shaw, C. M. (1972), *Presencia Española en los Estados Unidos*, Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, p. 215.

<sup>118</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 116.

The Maroons lived freely, but in nearby communities rather than sharing the Seminole people's settlements. The white observers who visited some of these Black settlements described how there was good housing, and that the residents cultivated their lands and kept their own livestock. They had to give part of the profits obtained from their harvests or slaughter of animals to the Seminoles as a tax. They were also able to hunt and fish freely, and they took part in the Seminole people's armed conflicts as warriors.<sup>119</sup>

The Maroons did not belong to the tribe, as this right was only granted to those with a Seminole mother but, on occasions, a Maroon would enter into marriage with a Native person, if the elders of the Seminole tribe and the African community acquiesced to it. These Maroons who lived alongside the Seminole people are those described as Black Seminoles.

The Black Seminoles' contributions to the Seminole people included the agricultural knowledge they brought from Africa and their work on the plantations, which made harvests more productive and ensured the tribe's survival. In exchange, the Seminoles protected and defended the Black people from white slave hunters. The Black Seminoles were also important to the Native people because of their knowledge of white men, gained in their time living with them as slaves. They knew about white traditions and customs, which was important when it came to trade and managing the relationship between the Indigenous people and the white colonists, but above all, they were familiar with the languages of the colonists: both English and Spanish. This gave them a key role as interpreters between the Native people and the whites, particularly in negotiations relating to conflicts.

In addition to the European languages, the Black Seminole people had developed their own language: Afro-Seminole Creole. This language is actually a dialect of the Gullah language spoken by slaves in plantations on the Sea Islands of Georgia and the Carolinas: the place from which the Maroons who would form the Black Seminole group had come. Gullah or Geechee, also known as Sea Island Creole English, is a pidgin language – an informal mixture of several languages – which arose in the aforementioned Atlantic coastal region. It has its roots in various

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<sup>119</sup> Porter, K. (1964), "Negroes and the Seminole War, 1835-1842", *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 427-450, p. 428.



West African languages, such as Wolof and Ewe, to which words from the informal English spoken on the American plantations were added.

The words of J. Leitch Wright Jr. paint a picture of how Florida was a veritable Tower of Babel at the time:

A visitor to East Florida's slave quarters during the American Revolution might have hear English, French, Mandingo, Fulani, Hausa, and Mende, among other languages. In the Indian country there were black Hitchiti and Muskogee speakers. A pidgin, such as Gullah, was emerging and presumable was spoken with varying degrees of proficiency by a majority of East Florida Blacks.<sup>120</sup>

When the province fell into Spanish hands again in 1784 (and became known as La Florida once more), as a result of the end of the American War of Independence, the Spanish authorities decided to incentivize those Black and Indigenous people who had been deported from British Florida to return. Those who came back did not go to the cities, but settled in the communities of the Indigenous Seminole people with whom they had been living before their deportation.<sup>121</sup>

The situation in La Florida after the British interregnum had changed significantly: its neighbor to the north was now the United States of America, which was experiencing an economic boom, created by its expansion into new territories and the plantation economy. Consequently, despite Spain having been an important ally in their struggle for independence, the North Americans set their sights on La Florida, taking advantage of the weakness shown by the Spanish in the preceding years.

First, they proposed that Spain revoke the law under which runaway slaves on foreign soil were granted freedom when they sought asylum on Spanish territory. The man charged with spearheading this request was Thomas Jefferson, and the pressure he placed on the Spanish diplomats bore fruit: on May 7, 1790, a Royal Order was published calling for all fugitive slaves originating in the United States to be arrested and returned to their owners, after the latter had proved ownership and paid the costs associated with the capture and upkeep of the slaves until their handover.

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<sup>120</sup> Leitch Wright Jr. J. (1976), p. 427.

<sup>121</sup> Dixon, A. E. (2020), pp. 14-17.

The end of emancipation for slaves arriving from the north and the threat of raids by fugitive slave catchers prompted the Maroons to engage in a series of actions to protect themselves from that point onward, the most significant being that led by the adventurer, William Augustus Bowles.

Bowles was born in the state of Maryland around 1763 and, when he was still a boy of thirteen years, he enlisted as a volunteer in the loyalist army in the American War of Independence, and was sent to join the garrison of Panzacola. After a year there, he deserted and joined a party of Muskogee people, going to live in one of their encampments. He spent two years with them, in which he learned their language and traditions, and went so far as to marry two Muskogee women, which made him a person of respect among the tribe.

When Bowles returned to the British army and his old post in the Panzacola garrison in 1781, there was a battle with the Spanish in which he was captured and sent to a military camp in Havana, from which he escaped. He spent a year in New York before traveling to the Bahamas, where he developed a relationship with the future governor, Lord Dunmore. In 1788, he returned to La Florida with the intention of setting up a trading post for commerce between his Bahamian partners and the Indigenous population, for which purpose he had assembled a militia of Seminole people and Britons who were eager to make their fortune and acquire land. This adventure came to nothing because of his failure to secure the support he needed, so he decided to organize a tour around British territories to muster economic support for his enterprise of creating an Indigenous territory that was independent, but allied with Britain, with him at its head. He had five supposedly Native chiefs accompany him and visited Canada and Great Britain in 1791, at a time when relations between Spain and Britain were not at their best. As a result, he did, this time, receive a small consignment with which to arm the Indigenous people.<sup>122</sup>

Better equipped, he returned to La Florida in 1792 with the intention of attacking Panton, Leslie and Company, to which Spain had given a monopoly on trade with the Native population, since this was

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<sup>122</sup> Din, G. C. (2010), "William Augustus Bowles on the Gulf Coast, 1787-1803: Unraveling a Labyrinthine Conundrum", *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 89, No. 1, pp. 1-25, pp. 5-10.

jeopardizing the interests of his patrons.<sup>123</sup> The Spanish, alarmed by Bowles' attacks on the company, ordered his arrest, which was carried out in the fort of San Marcos de Apalache in February 1792. He was sent to Madrid, where he was imprisoned for two years, after which he was deported to a prison in Manila for fifteen months, after a journey of over a year between Spain and the Philippines. When he was returning to the Iberian Peninsula, he managed to escape just off the African coast, before heading to London, where he would arrive in 1798.<sup>124</sup>

During the time he spent as a prisoner, Bowles had been fleshing out his idea of creating an independent Muskogee state, and returned to La Florida in 1799 with that in mind. He soon gained the sympathy of the Maroons who, disillusioned with the Spanish government, joined his militias of Indigenous people and landless Britons. Bowles would make two of these ex-slaves, Prince and Héctor, his trusted interpreters, with the mission of strengthening the bonds between Native and Black people.

The British encouraged the creation and maintenance of this state, seeing it as a means of destabilizing the Spanish colony and gaining military positions, in a scheme focused on recuperating some of the land lost in the American War of Independence. Bowles led a militia of around four hundred men and, noting Spain's passive response, took the fort of San Marcos de Apalache and thereby divided La Florida, leaving San Agustín in the east and Panzacola in the west.

This was a critical moment when it seemed that the State of Muskogee could take on a stable form. However, the peace settlement between Spain, France and Britain in 1802 put an end to British support for the cause, meaning that Bowles, without the arms and food they had provided, could not keep the promises he had made to the Indigenous people of securing continuous supplies to sustain their conflict with the Spanish, giving him a reputation as a liar. His former Indigenous allies, spurred on by a lucrative reward, took Bowles prisoner in May 1803 and handed him over to the Spanish authorities, who sent him to Cuba,

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<sup>123</sup> White, D. H. (1975), "The Spaniards and William Augustus Bowles in Florida, 1799-1803", *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No. 2, pp. 145-155, p. 145.

<sup>124</sup> Din, G. C. (2010), p. 12.

where he would remain captive in the Castillo de la Cabaña until his death two years later.<sup>125</sup>

The expansionist pillaging engaged in by the United States led colonists in Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama to make incursions into La Florida, driven by increasingly intense competition in their territories, in order to seize lands and capture Maroons. The North American government encouraged these attacks and even engaged undercover agents whose mission was to stir up the colonists of La Florida, in the hope that they would rise up against the Spanish government and demand the territory's incorporation into the United States. Given that the US did not want to enter into conflict with a nation that had been an ally in its struggle for independence, its goal was for the inhabitants themselves to call to become Americans, alluding to Spain's poor governance.

The Washington government had its sights set on La Florida, with a public message focused on claiming sovereignty over that territory so that they could counter a hypothetical British invasion. However, the real rationale was to exploit Spain's weakness to take possession of its territory and eliminate the safe haven created for Maroons in La Florida given that, despite the withdrawal of the royal decree of 1693, slaves fleeing from the north continued to arrive. They were drawn by the continued sense of freedom in San Agustín, where there was a large Black population who had been granted their liberty by the Spanish and were integrated into the structures of the city, and in the Indigenous settlements where Seminole and Black Seminole people shared food, defenses and everyday life.

Large communal meals were an integral part of life in these settlements, and were very much to the liking of the Black Seminole residents, dance being an important part of the event, accompanied by music "play'd on a crack'd fiddle and tin pan."<sup>126</sup>

These were quite common instruments in the music played by African Americans in other regions, using European instruments such as the violin, and other improvised instruments made from odds and ends such as pots, pans or buckets.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid. pp.14-15.

<sup>126</sup> Morgan, A. A. (2020), p. 27.

Another description of musical instruments used by the Black Seminole people for their dances was provided by a North American soldier inspecting the Maroon village of Pilaklikaha after its destruction during a military operation: “a ball stick, an Indian flute, and small gopher shells, or box-turtle, with rattling Indian shot, or palmetto seed: the music of their dance.”<sup>127</sup> In this case, the instruments in question were typically Native ones made from animal- and plant-based materials, which had been adopted by the Black Seminoles to perform their music.

The Black Seminoles took part in the dances performed by the Indigenous people, as a Black man named Alex Brackston recalled:

Negro Alex Brackston related how as a youth he used to go to the Creek busk and stomp dance, where Indians tied shells on their ankles and beat drums while the medicine man distributed black drink.<sup>128</sup>

This description tells us that it was routine for such a man to be invited to these healer-led ceremonies, in which the dance was accompanied by the beat of drums, as were the Voodoo ceremonies of Haiti, Martinique and Louisiana. A black drink is also mentioned in the description, called *Asi Yahola* by the Seminole people: it was made from a type of holly native to the region that has a high caffeine content, and was used in rituals in which the drink was shared while participants chanted and danced.

According to E. Urlin, the tribal dances of the Black Seminoles would give rise to the cakewalk: a common dance in the North American plantations consisting of partners dancing in a procession, with the most graceful couple winning a cake made from corn and decorated with pumpkin leaves.

It [cakewalk] originated in Florida, where it said that the Negroes borrowed the idea of it from the war dances of the Seminoles, an almost extinct Indian tribe. The Negroes were present as spectators at these dances, which consisted of wild and hilarious jumping and

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>128</sup> Kokomoor, K. (2009), “A Re-assessment of Seminoles, Africans, and Slavery on the Florida Frontier”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2, pp. 209-236, p. 228.

gyrating, alternating with slow processions in which the dancers walked solemnly in couples.<sup>129</sup>

Urlin paints a picture in which Black people watched this Seminole war dance as spectators and would then use the idea in their own dances. We can pick out several errors in Urlin's narrative that, nevertheless, do not invalidate his account of Native influence on African American dances.

Firstly, Black Seminole people would not be mere spectators but, as noted above, participated earnestly in these dances as members of the tribe. A narrative by William Simmons, who was present at one of these dances, stressed that Native and Black people danced together although, as Simmons described, the former did so with grace and elegance, while the latter made some strange and more vulgar movements.

Secondly, Urlin uses the category "war dance" whereas, according to the aforementioned account by Alex Brackston, these dances corresponded to what was many American Indian communities' most important celebration: the Green Corn Dance.<sup>130</sup>

It might have been Black people from outside the tribe who were watching these scenes and would take with them a more comic and, in Simmons' words, vulgar version of these dances to the rest of the American territory, where they would prove a hit and form the basis for many African American dances by the end of the nineteenth century.

Returning to the pressure the United States was exerting on the Spanish territory of La Florida, there were two further attempts at annexation in this period. These initially sprang from private initiatives with no connection to the Washington government, but the government would subsequently make use of them, ultimately to expel the Spanish from the Florida peninsula.

The first was the proclamation of the Republic of West Florida on September 26, 1810, on the strip of land between the Perdido River, to the west of Panzacola, and the Mississippi River and Pearl River (then the *rio Perla*), which marked the border with Louisiana. This operation was spearheaded by the Kemper brothers, a family from the Baton

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<sup>129</sup> Urlin, E. (1912), *Dancing, ancient and modern*, D. Appleton & Company, p. 13.

<sup>130</sup> Kokomoor, K. (2009), p. 228.

Rouge region who had been annexing Indigenous lands for their own use since 1804, and were looking for a way to have their ownership of these lands recognized and legalized. They spent the first part of 1810 plotting with other landowners, who saw this as a unique opportunity to expand their properties, before taking control of the fort at Baton Rouge and declaring themselves an independent republic, then immediately calling for annexation to the United States to protect themselves from potential Spanish reprisals.

A militia led by Reuben Kemper set out from Baton Rouge with the intention of taking Mobila (today's city of Mobile) and Panzacola, but they were fended off by the Spanish. The US president, James Madison, took advantage of the crisis to offer himself as guarantor of the pro-American inhabitants of La Florida and prepare for annexation of the Republic of West Florida as part of the Mississippi Territory. Despite opposition from part of Congress, who saw this illegal act as a provocation that could lead to war with a foreign power, Madison pushed forward and took control of Biloxi, pointing to a misinterpretation of the Louisiana Purchase document, according to which West Florida would be included within the boundaries of Louisiana. Whatever the truth of the matter may have been, the annexation went ahead, ending with the takeover of Mobila by General Wilkinson in 1813.<sup>131</sup>

Owing to the success of the operation in West Florida, the United States began to prepare the ground for replicating it with the annexation of East Florida. In this case, as well as occupying land, the primary motivation was catching slaves: in the years when La Florida had been a safe haven for them, it had become a tempting prize for plantation owners in the neighboring states, added to which a free Black population in La Florida continued to pose a danger because of their pull effect and potential to inspire plantation slaves to rise up in arms.

Planning for the operation had begun as early as February 1811, including the appointment of agents whose goal was to incite a revolt among the inhabitants of La Florida, so that they would call for assistance from the North American federal government. By March 1812, the governor of Georgia, General Matthews, had recruited a force of 350 volunteers from the Georgia landowners – the self-proclaimed

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<sup>131</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 138-139.

Patriots – who were joined by around 50 citizens of La Florida. On March 16, the Patriots began their siege of the town of Fernandina on Amelia Island, on the north coast of La Florida, initiating what would become known as the Patriot War. The presence of several American warships in the vicinity of Fernandina accelerated the surrender of the town by the Spanish.

The Patriots dedicated the following weeks to their true objective, launching a campaign of slave catching and raiding across the north of the territory. Many colonists, fearful of the actions carried out by the gangs of Patriots, decided to abandon their plantations and seek shelter in San Agustín, leaving their slaves helpless before the slave catchers, leading many to flee to the inland swamps to avoid capture. On April 8, confident that the military force in San Agustín would be limited in number, the Patriots took up position in Fort Mose with the intention of taking over the city.

However, the Patriots did not foresee that San Agustín would be defended by a militia of free Black men from the city, as well as Maroons, Seminoles and Black Seminoles from the surrounding area, who saw how an American conquest of the city could jeopardize their free lifestyle. These militiamen of color would put every last ounce of energy into repelling the Patriots' attempts to take the city, since their lives and those of their families depended on their success.

The garrison of St. A. were not inactive spectators of their enemies, several sorties were made particularly by a non-commissioned black officer called Prince, who in one of his recounters carried off the whole of the enemy's forage, killed the commanding officer and three of his men, and wounded many of the remainder of the foraging party.<sup>132</sup>

The arrival of a new governor of La Florida, Sebastián Kindelán, gave a boost to the Spanish defense, when he built a united front with the Seminole people to put an end to the Patriots' incursion.

On September 27, 1812, the Patriots attacked the region of Alachua, where Paynes Town – the settlement of the Seminole leader, Chief Payne – was located, with the aim of diverting Seminole attention

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<sup>132</sup> Miller, J. (1819), *Narrative of a Voyage to the Spanish Main: In the Ship "Two Friends"*, John Miller, p. 123.



toward this area, so they could evacuate the Patriot troops stationed around San Agustín. There were several days of clashes between the American soldiers and the Seminoles and Black Seminoles, causing many casualties on both sides.

Among those killed was Chief Payne, whose death was a severe blow to the Seminole and Black Seminole people. In the meetings that ensued between the tribal chiefs, it was agreed that the Seminoles would remain in the territory under the command of Payne's brother, Billy Bolek, called Billy Bowlegs by the whites, while the Black Seminoles would emigrate to the south, toward the region of Tampa Bay, which was far enough away from the North Americans to be safe. There they would found the prosperous Black community of Sarrazota, which would take in Black people fleeing from the numerous conflicts waged against whites in the ensuing years.<sup>133</sup>

The defense of San Agustín meant that the conflict would not be resolved quickly, as it had in West Florida, so the American government withdrew its support for the Patriots in April 1813, recognizing the borders preceding the conflict. Given that the United States was in the midst of war against the British in 1812, it was not desirable to have another front open against the Spanish at the rear.

Nevertheless, the Patriots kept up their raids into Spanish territory, stealing cattle, capturing Black people and destroying Seminole settlements. On January 25, 1814, after occupying the land abandoned by Chief Payne's people a year earlier, they declared the Republic of East Florida, requesting the United States' support, as had occurred in West Florida. However, this time, the North American government rejected this course of action, since it was not in its interests to increase tensions with Spain at the time. The Spanish governor of La Florida made a peace offer to the Patriots in 1816, extending the possibility of self-governance if they renounced their independent Republic. These terms were accepted, bringing the conflict to a close.<sup>134</sup>

The root cause of the attacks on Spanish sovereignty in West and East Florida were, as noted above, the private interest of Southern

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<sup>133</sup> Brown, C. Jr. (1990), "The "Sarrazota, or Runaway Negro Plantations": Tampa Bay's First Black Community, 1812-1821", *Tampa Bay History*, Vol. 12, Iss. 2, Art.3, p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 141-162.

landowners in seizing lands and capturing Black people to incorporate into their plantations as slaves, supported by the state. This had the effect of cementing the relationship between Seminole and Black Seminole people over these years, since both groups felt threatened: one by the loss of territories upon which they had been settled for years, and the others by the loss of their freedom. Another Native tribe scarred by its relationship with the United States would join these two groups: the Red Sticks.

In the same period, and within the context of the ramifications felt after the 1812 war between Great Britain and the United States, a group of Creek people commanded by Tecumseh, the Shawnee chief, initiated a campaign to try to convince the whole tribe of the need to resist European acculturation, using weapons against the whites if necessary. Natural phenomena, such as a comet and an earthquake, fired up the prophets who accompanied Tecumseh, charging the atmosphere to the point at which an attack was launched against the Creeks who did not support confrontation with the whites.

This conflict is known as the Creek War and the faction that followed Tecumseh were called the Red Sticks, because of their ritual weapon of a red-painted club, symbolizing ongoing war. The Red Sticks were supported by the British, while the rest of the Creek people received North American support.

Between 1813 and 1814, there were clashes between these two factions in their ancestral territories of Alabama and Georgia. The evolution of this war would be similar to that of the colonial powers, with clear superiority on the North American side, who had a brilliant officer in their ranks that would play a key role in the future of the tribes living in La Florida: General Andrew Jackson.

The final battle between Jackson's troops – made up of regular soldiers, militias of volunteers from Tennessee and Native allies – and the Red Sticks, took place at Horseshoe Bend on March 27, 1814 and resulted in the defeat of the Red Sticks. Around a thousand warriors then withdrew into the territory of La Florida, where they would bolster the ranks of the Seminole people.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Brown, C. Jr. (1990), p. 2.

The Creek allies of General Jackson had no better luck: he made them sign the Treaty of Fort Jackson, citing the need to ensure US security as justification. This compelled them to give the North Americans their land, amounting to almost 8.5 million hectares, or half the current state of Alabama.

### Applying Manifest Destiny in La Florida: The First Seminole War

In the summer of 1814, as part of their operations in the War of 1812 between Britain and the United States, two British military officers, Edward Nicolls and George Woodbine, started a campaign to win over the American Indians and Maroons of La Florida as allies for their cause. Nicolls and Woodbine convinced the Red Sticks who had fled the Creek civil war to gather at an area on the banks of the Apalachicola River known as Prospect Bluff, approximately 120 miles east of Panzacola. They also offered slaves who joined the Corps of Colonial Marines their liberty, which led several hundred slaves from Panzacola, Mobila, San Agustín and the territory of Georgia to agree to settle at Prospect Bluff.

Nicolls and Woodbine ordered a small fort to be built and the community around it began to prosper from cultivating corn on the surrounding land and trade. One year after it was founded, there were already close to 1,100 soldiers, most of whom were Black, who had come with their families looking for the protection they could not find elsewhere, which led to it receiving the name of Negro Fort.

The influence the fort may have over other slaves in US territory and the precedent this could set prompted General Jackson to demand that the Spanish government take action to retrieve the fugitive slaves and destroy the fort. Meanwhile, Woodbine, who was responsible for the Corps of Colonial Marines and relations with foreign powers, was lodging complaints about the attacks being carried out by the Patriots against the Seminole villages.

The Americans built Fort Scott upriver of Prospect Bluff and, although the waters in question were Spanish, transport to the American fort passed in front of Negro Fort, which was clearly intended to provoke an attack from the fort against one of the convoys traveling to Fort Scott.

Tensions continued to build until, in 1816, an attack was launched from the Negro Fort against a transportation boat and, in light of Spain's

inaction, Jackson gave the order to Lieutenant Colonel Duncan L. Clinch to carry out a reprisal operation that was to end with the fort's destruction. Clinch had a company of Coweta Creek people go with him, and they traveled downstream along the bank of the Apalachicola River while two gunboats journeyed upstream to provide support.<sup>136</sup>

The fort housed a significant number of Seminole and Maroon soldiers, who had been training for months and had enough weapons and supplies for a large-scale defensive operation. When the battle began on July 27, 1816, there were several skirmishes between the defenders and the Creek warriors allied to the Americans, but nothing that hinted at the sudden, bloody climax of the siege: a shot from one of the gunboats hit the fort's powder magazine, blowing the entire complex to smithereens. This description of the scene after the explosion reveals the horror that ensued:

The explosion was awful and the scene horrible beyond description. You cannot conceive, nor I describe the horrors of the scene. In an instant lifeless bodies were stretched upon the plain, buried in sand or rubbish, or suspended from the tops of the surrounding pines. Here lay an innocent babe, there a helpless mother; on the one side a sturdy warrior, on the other a bleeding squaw. Piles of bodies, large heaps of sand, broken glass, accoutrements, etc., covered the site of the fort... Our first care, on arriving at the scene of the destruction, was to rescue and relieve the unfortunate beings who survived the explosion.<sup>137</sup>

Of the more than three hundred people occupying the fort at that time, including a large number of women and girls, only around forty survived the explosion. The leaders of the fort's garrison, a member of the Choctaw tribe and a Black man called Garçon, were among the survivors, although they were handed over to the Creek and subsequently scalped. Of the other survivors, those who were severely wounded were executed on the spot, while those in better condition were returned to their owners or sold as slaves.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Landers, J. (2003), "Cimarrones africanos e indios en la frontera española con los Estados Unidos. El caso de los *Seminoles* negros de La Florida" (trans. Mejía Pavony, G. R.), *Memoria & Sociedad*, No. 15, pp. 25-36, pp. 29-30.

<sup>137</sup> Federal Writers' Project (1939), *Florida. A Guide to the Southernmost State*, Oxford University Press, p. 489.

<sup>138</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 161-174.

The community living in the area around the fort fled in the chaos that ensued immediately after the explosion. Close to eighty Black Seminole people left, shown the way by Woodbine, to join the Maroon community of Sarrazota created in the Tampa Bay region after Chief Payne's town was destroyed.<sup>139</sup> Others were taken in British boats to the Bahamas, where they established themselves on the north of Andros Island in a settlement known as Nicholls Town, in honor of Edward Nicolls.<sup>140</sup> However, the vast majority of those able to escape headed to the east, into the heart of La Florida, settling in a community that had flourished on the banks of the Suwannee River, where the Seminoles who followed Bowlegs after their defeat at Paynes Town had taken refuge.<sup>141</sup>

In November 1817, using the excuse that a group of Seminoles and Black Seminoles in a settlement upstream on the Apalachicola River were preparing to avenge the Negro Fort massacre, a detachment from Fort Scott attacked the community, in what is considered the beginning of the First Seminole War.<sup>142</sup>

The Seminoles, led by the Indigenous Chief Bowlegs and the Black leader Nero, decided to take action and organize a guerrilla campaign to face off the slave catchers from Georgia who were taking advantage of the situation to increase their profits. Over the course of 1817, the rebel tactics consisted of small-scale attacks against plantations on borderland territory in order to steal supplies and free slaves.<sup>143</sup>

Now engaged in open warfare with the group of Native and Black warriors, General Jackson entered into La Florida in April 1818 to carry out an act of retaliation against these unruly Seminoles, Red Sticks and Black Seminoles, who had crossed a red line when they attacked a party of soldiers on a mission to reinforce American positions after the Negro Fort massacre.

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<sup>139</sup> Brown, C. Jr. (1990), p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> Millett, N. (2013), *The Maroons of Prospect Bluff and Their Quest for Freedom in the Atlantic World*, University Press of Florida, p. 129.

<sup>141</sup> Covington, J. W. (1967), p. 355.

<sup>142</sup> Morgan, A. A. (2020), pp. 49-50.

<sup>143</sup> Kai, N. (2015), "Black Seminoles: the maroons of Florida", *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, Vol. 8, p. 12.

Some months later, the two sides fought the Battle of Suwannee River: the site of Bowlegs' headquarters. Jackson deployed a large number of American troops and Creek allies in this battle, with the intention of destroying the Indigenous settlement and capturing the Black people taking refuge there. In the defensive action employed by Bowlegs, some of his warriors kept the enemy soldiers occupied while the women and children fled on the other side of the river, enabling them to escape with their lives.

This group of Seminoles and Black Seminoles sought refuge in the south with the Sarrazota community. There, alongside those who had fled during the Patriot War and the survivors of the Negro Fort massacre, they had hopes of being able to live in peace, far away from the North Americans and their incessant search for new lands and Black slaves.

The Tampa region community was called Angola by the Cuban fishermen who had set up some *ranchos* on the coast. These *ranchos* were small semi-permanent settlements where the fishermen prepared and dried the season's catches. Some fishermen preferred to spend the whole year in the *ranchos* rather than return to Cuba when the fishing season ended, developing closer relations with the Seminole people in the Sarrazota region as a result, in some cases even entering into long-term relationships with Native or African-American women. The fishermen also provided work to the newly arrived Seminoles, whether in the fishing boats themselves or as suppliers of products from the land, such as game meat, hides and fruit.<sup>144</sup>

For a time, the community of Angola prospered, thanks to its distance from the Americans, the fertility of its soil and Caribbean trade, not only with the aforementioned Cuban fishermen but also with the Bahamian wreckers who were operating in the region. The British and Spanish, seeing that the town of Angola could prove a real headache for the Americans, provided them with a large quantity of arms, lead for bullets and gunpowder with which to defend themselves from American incursions.<sup>145</sup>

Jackson used the momentum gained from a run of successful actions against the Native population to go one step further in the liberation of

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<sup>144</sup> Covington, J. W. (1967), p. 352.

<sup>145</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 193-198.

La Florida and take the fort of San Marcos de Apalache, where he captured and executed one of the Red Stick prophets, Hillis Hadjo, who had accompanied Tecumseh at the start of the Creek War.<sup>146</sup>

It was on this site that Jackson would convene a military tribunal to try two subjects of the British Crown, Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot, who were accused of assisting the Seminoles. Ambrister originated from the Bahamas and had worked with Nicolls and Woodbine on setting up the Corps of Colonial Marines, as well as the support they provided to the Seminole people. Arbuthnot was Scottish by birth and worked in trade; as someone with strong abolitionist sympathies, he joined Ambrister, Woodbine and MacGregor to help support the Native cause.

The summary trial found both guilty and they were hung. The British and Spanish responses took a severe tone, viewing the execution of two British citizens on Spanish soil by a North American tribunal as a wholesale contravention of international law, although their complaints became less strident in light of the meager opposition the Europeans could mount on the land against Jackson's continued aggressions.

After taking the fort of San Marcos de Apalache, Jackson repeated the action at Panzacola, before setting his sights on San Agustín and even Cuba, for good measure, to force the Spanish out of North America for good.

However, President Monroe had other plans, since he was still unconvinced that a military operation would be free of repercussions, so he ordered Jackson to return the sites taken from the Spanish. The negotiations behind closed doors bore fruit and the Spanish finally succumbed to the military and diplomatic pressure, agreeing to cede La Florida (thereafter, Florida) to the United States of America. The Adams-Onís Treaty established the liberty and rights of all Florida's inhabitants.

The inhabitants of the territories which his Catholic Majesty cedes to the United States, by this treaty, shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, as soon as may be consistent with the principles of the Federal Constitution, and admitted to the enjoyment of all the

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<sup>146</sup> Landers, J. (2003), p. 31.

privileges, rights, and immunities, of the citizens of the United States.<sup>147</sup>

However, the reality was quite different, given that the Seminoles were considered part of the Creek tribe, to whom they were expected to submit, despite the years of clashes between them, and the Black Seminoles were considered runaway slaves who should be returned to their masters.

When the Spanish ceded the territory, many of the Black people from San Agustín – both Maroons and free citizens – decided to flee to Havana, as they felt safer and better treated under the Spanish than the Americans. There are records in 1820 of a large group of Black people from San Agustín arriving in Guanabacoa, where there were already immigrants originating in Florida who had fled during the raids of 1704 and when the territory was transferred to the British in 1763.<sup>148</sup>

In 1821, Florida was officially handed over, with Jackson appointed governor under the title of Commissioner of the United States.

### The Black Seminole diaspora. First destination: The Bahamas

Andrew Jackson's attitude toward the Black and Indian problem in Florida, according to which the groups of independent Natives were hampering efforts to control the territory, which had become a haven for runaway slaves, was not the product of objective reasoning alone. It became clear that Jackson's approach toward the non-white inhabitants of Florida was informed by hatred when the only solution he was able to identify was the total annihilation of the Native population and the apprehension of every last Black person in the territory.

In this spirit, when the First Seminole War ended and Florida became a North American territory, Jackson sent out a party of Coweta allies, as he had already done at Prospect Bluff, to destroy any remaining settlements after the flight of the Seminoles and Black Seminoles to the south of the peninsula. Among the communities obliterated was the

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<sup>147</sup> Mahon, J. K. (1962), "The Treaty of Moultrie Creek, 1823", *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 350-372, p. 351.

<sup>148</sup> Dixon, A. E. (2007), *Black Seminole involvement and leadership during the Second Seminole War, 1835-1842*, Thesis, Indiana University, p. 25.



prosperous town of Angola, prompting the Red Sticks remaining in that region and the Black Seminoles to flee.

The Red Sticks moved to the area around the source of the Peace River, where they founded the settlement of Minatti. The Black Seminole people decided to travel even further, taking refuge in Cape Florida, the southern tip of Key Biscayne and meeting place for Blacks, Natives and castaways, while others built canoes with which to hide away in the Florida Keys, before traveling in them to the Bahamas.

Two parties of Black Seminoles went to New Providence, the most important island in the Bahamas – one in 1819 and the other in 1821 – with the intention of seeking asylum as recompense for the support the Seminoles had given the British Crown during the War of 1812. The Bahamas governor denied their request and the Native people had to return to Florida.

They wasted no time in organizing a clandestine trip for later in 1821, assisted by people of low moral standing such as Captain Simonds, one of the many Bahamian pirates and wreckers who operated on the coasts and cays of Florida and had no scruples about trading in slaves.

One of the first groups to reach the Bahamas was that commanded by Scipio Bowlegs, who led between 100 and 150 Black Native people. The Black Seminoles arrived on Andros Island, where they founded a settlement known as Red Bays in the northwest of the island, around twelve miles west of their first settlement, Nicholls Town, which had been established by people from Prospect Bluff after the Negro Fort massacre. Other smaller parties would later arrive at the Joulter Cays, north of the island, but they soon moved to Red Bays to join the larger group.<sup>149</sup>

The region around Red Bays had previously been uninhabited, and nobody in the Bahamas found out about the arrival of these people for seven years. When they entered into contact with the Black Seminoles in 1828, the British thought they were Black people who had been brought there by the Spanish to be sent to Cuba and sold as slaves at a later date. The British decided that the best course of action to prevent the Spanish from returning for these people was to take them prisoner

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<sup>149</sup> Goggin, J. M. (1945), “The Seminole Negroes of Andros Island, Bahamas”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, pp. 201-206, p. 204.

and move them to Nassau. They were imprisoned there for a year, until they were able to demonstrate that they were Seminole people originating in Florida who had fled North American persecution and been freed.<sup>150</sup>

The Black Seminoles returned to Andros Island, where they lived in almost complete isolation from the outside world until the twentieth century, cultivating the corn, bean and squash seeds they had brought with them from Florida. They also engaged in hunting and bowfishing, and due to their traditional Seminole dress, became known as the “wild Indians” of Andros Island.

Alan Lomax made a trip to the Bahamas in 1935, alongside Mary Elizabeth Barnicle, and in Nassau heard stories that there were Black people living on Andros Island, whom the other Black communities feared, and that all of these Indians were called Bowlegs. When Lomax recounted this to the anthropologist Kenneth Porter in the 1940s, Porter immediately identified the typically Seminole surname that originated with the great warrior, Billy Bowlegs, and concluded that it couldn't be an invention or a coincidence. We can therefore say that the group of Black Seminole people who migrated to the Bahamas were discovered by Western anthropology, thanks to Alan Lomax.<sup>151</sup>

Alan Lomax made recordings in several parts of the Bahamian archipelago, tracing parallels with the colonial music of the mainland, given that the islands' proximity facilitated the movement of people and cultural and musical influences between the two locations. However, Lomax's fieldwork on Andros Island and Cat Island provides us with a magnificent opportunity to listen to songs that were untainted by external influences from 1821 to 1935 since, as noted above, Andros Island was an infrequently visited site, even by Bahamians themselves.

These songs – spirituals brought with the Black Seminole people in their flight from Florida – were not learned when living alongside the Seminole people, but dated back to the years when their ancestors were slaves on the plantations of Georgia and the Carolinas, enabling us to

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<sup>150</sup> Howard, R. (2006), “The “Wild Indians” of Andros Island: Black Seminole Legacy in the Bahamas”, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 275-298, pp. 280, 282.

<sup>151</sup> Porter, K. (1945), “Notes on Seminole Negroes in the Bahamas”, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 55-60, p. 55.

venture that these sounds must be very close to those heard in the plantation cabins at the end of the eighteenth century.

Many of the songs recorded by Lomax were performed by sailors and sponge fishers, who sang these shanties during their work day, while it was in the religious ceremonies that the spirituals were performed. Of the 24 songs on the record that compiles this work, the following are particularly worth highlighting: *Blow, Liza Blow*, performed by a group of men; *Round the Bay of Mexico*, sung by Henry Lundy; *Stand Up From Below* by Zacharias Green, and *I May Be Gone* by Cleveland Simmons.

Lomax also found a trace of the Black Seminoles in Nassau, where a singer going by the name of Mr. Bowlegs volunteered to record several singles, such as *Long Time Ago* and *Jump Up, Joe*.

The musicologist Sam Charters also visited the island in 1958, coinciding with a festival celebrating emancipation from slavery. Consequently, there was an intent behind the music he encountered that was very different to the songs of work and prayer recorded by Lomax twenty years earlier. Exogenous influences can also be heard that enrich the sound.

Charters managed to record a dance group from Fresh Creek: one of the other communities in which the Black Seminoles settled. Songs in the rake-and-scrape style stand out, such as *Gal, You Want to Go Back to Scambo* and *Everything the Monkey Do*, although the collection also includes harmonica players such as Charles Bastian with *Under the Precious Blood*, a musician called Joseph Green playing the fife in the song *I Drink All the Rum and Never Get Drunk* and several brass bands, such as the Daniel Saunders Brass Band and St. Bartholomew's Friendly Society Brass Band.

In 1965, it was Jody Stecher who would travel to the Bahamas to record local artists. She found a singer from Andros Island named Edith Pinder, whom she recorded performing a range of spirituals, singing alongside her husband Raymond and her daughter Geneva, and accompanied by Edith's brother, Joseph Spence, who was also born on Andros Island and was one of the most important guitarists in the Bahamas, later being cited as an influence by musicians such as Taj Mahal, Ry Cooder and Jerry García.

## Destroying the Seminole population and capturing the Blacks: the Second Seminole War

The systematic campaign to destroy Florida's Indigenous settlements launched by Andrew Jackson resulted in the largest groups that had not yet escaped becoming cornered in the south of the peninsula. Eventually, the Treaty of Moultrie Creek between the United States government and representatives of the Seminole people was signed in 1823. According to the treaty, an Indian reservation would be established in the center of the Florida peninsula, where the Seminoles should settle. This reservation had no connection to the east and west coasts, to prevent the Seminole people from contacting the Cuban fishermen with their coastal *ranchos* and the Bahamians, whom the North Americans suspected were providing the rebels with weapons and ammunition. The treaty stipulated that the United States would provide the Seminole people with land, tools and protection, if they would agree to stay within the limits of the reservation, forgo making claims over other territories in Florida, and capture and hand over any Black people who entered the reservation. The objective was twofold: to control the Seminoles, and to create enmity with their Black allies.<sup>152</sup>

The Seminoles soon realized what a bad deal they had struck, since the reservation was located in an undesirable region of little utility: the soil was infertile, there was no water course within the reservation and the water from the wells that had been dug made people sick.<sup>153</sup>

Collectives of Indian chiefs then formed, visiting Washington with the intention of resolving a situation that was causing them to die of hunger, having been condemned to live on a barren land. Obviously, the landowners who had already taken possession of the choicest lands in Florida vehemently opposed any solution that involved having to return that which had never been theirs but which Jackson's war had enabled them to acquire. The proposed resolution to the conflict was the expulsion of the Native people to the west of the Mississippi River, promoted by Jackson, who was now President of the United States and had signed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, enabling the federal

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<sup>152</sup> Mahon, J. K. (1962), pp. 370-371.

<sup>153</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 216.

government to negotiate with the Seminole people to secure their forced relocation.

In 1832, the Seminoles were called to Payne's Landing in Oklahoma, the intention being to offer them relocation to that region, where the Creek people had already been moved, with the added condition that they would have to hand over all the Black people who lived with them. Some Seminole chiefs signed the treaty, but they reneged on it upon returning to Florida, since the lands offered were no better than those they already had, to which was added the age-old Seminole conflict with the Creeks, and the strong ties that bound them to the Black Seminoles.

The Seminole people's opposition to deportation led the North Americans to apply more pressure: they considered the treaty valid, so saw themselves as justified in pursuing and attacking any Seminoles they found in Florida.

Some chiefs, such as Osceola, paid secret visits to the sugar plantations in the area around St. Johns River, to the north and west of the city of St. Augustine (San Agustín, during Spanish rule), aiming to finding slaves willing to join forces with them and the Black Seminoles in fighting against the white man.

Between 500 and 1,000 slaves from the Florida plantations joined the revolt that would give rise to the Second Seminole War: a substantial number, considering that the number of Black Seminoles did not reach 500. This demonstrates the importance slaves had in this war, not only in terms of numbers, but because slaves had a lot to lose if their uprising was not successful.<sup>154</sup>

The slave revolt began on December 26, 1835 and, through the month of January, sixteen of the largest and most productive plantations in the US were reduced to ashes, which spread panic among the owners about the prospect of a general revolt akin to the one that had occurred in Haiti.

In an apparently well-planned movement, only three days after the uprising in the St. Johns River plantations, the Seminoles, led by Chiefs Micanopy and Tiger Tall, ambushed a party of 110 soldiers who had set

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<sup>154</sup> Porter, K. (1964), p. 429.

out from Fort Brooke, commanded by Colonel Francis Dade. The attack turned into a massacre, with a survivor from the US party describing the horrific scenes he had lived through and how the soldiers' bodies were mutilated. This battle is known as the Dade Massacre and may be considered the first skirmish of the Second Seminole War.

By December 1836, one year after the war began, General Thomas Jesup was convinced that this was not an "Indian war" but a "Negro" one:

This you may be assured, is a Negro, not an Indian war; and if it be not speedily put down, the south will feel the effects of it on their slave population before the end of the next season.<sup>155</sup>

The war was progressing well for the coalition of Seminoles, Black Seminoles and fugitive plantation slaves, due to the rapid strikes they were able to deliver, helped as they were by terrain and climatic conditions that favored small, mobile groups over the inflexible American battalions. There was a steady trickle of US casualties and the North American troops were unable to find the Seminole bases in the center of Florida, where their attacks were being launched.

All the peace talks held required the Seminoles to hand over the Black people fighting alongside them: both the slaves who had escaped in the revolts around Christmas 1835, and Black Seminoles who had been living with the Indigenous group for several generations but who were nevertheless viewed as the descendants of past runaway slaves.

With the war causing the US to hemorrhage lives and money, General Jesup was backed into a corner, and offered the Seminole people a treaty in March 1837 allowing them to take their Black allies with them if they accepted expatriation to the west. The month of June was set as a deadline for the Native people to gather at Fort Brooke, close to Tampa.

The Seminole and their allies who come in and emigrate to the west, shall be secure in their lives and property; that their negroes, their bone fide property, would accompany them to the west.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 250.

<sup>156</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), p. 270.

However, this treaty was not to the liking of the slave owners, who demanded the return of the slaves who had escaped in the St. Johns River revolt. There were constant visits from slave catchers to Fort Brooke and it was not uncommon for them to leave with a Black person they had managed to identify as a fugitive slave. Jesup succumbed to the pressure from the plantation owners and asked the Seminoles and Black Seminoles who had already gathered at Fort Brooke to, at least, hand over those who had escaped in the St. Johns River revolts. Some chiefs gave in, wishing to get away from the war, but the Black Seminole people began to suspect that their safety was not guaranteed, so nearly all of them escaped Fort Brooke to return inland and take up arms again.

Little by little, the momentum that the slaves' revolt at St. Johns River had brought to the war began to dissipate. Jesup had changed the North American approach to war, carrying out small-scale operations against the Seminole communities that were more effective in a guerrilla war. Further, many Black people had decided to voluntarily return to the plantations they had fled from, seeing life as a slave as preferable to life in the swamps in a state of permanent war against the North Americans.

Nevertheless, Jesup believed that the ultimate objective of the conflict, which was to neutralize the negative influence that Florida could have over slaves in neighboring territories, could only be achieved by completely crushing the resistance put up by Seminoles and Black Seminoles. After the Fort Brooke episode, Jesup felt he could not take the chiefs at their word, so he came up with a plan to invite all the chiefs to a peace negotiation and apprehend them, forcing them to accept unconditional surrender. Chief King Philip and Chief Osceola, along with their lieutenants, Wild Cat – a Seminole and son of King Philip – and Juan Cavallo, a Black Seminole also known as John Horse or Gopher John, were imprisoned in St. Augustine's Fort Marion (today known by its original name, Castillo de San Marcos).<sup>157</sup>

Horse and Wild Cat came up with a plan, the account of which has more to do with Seminole mythology than history. According to the narrative recounted by Wild Cat and Horse themselves, they led twenty prisoners in their escape through a window located high up in the cell and nearly 50 feet above the fort's moat. The window was very narrow – less than

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<sup>157</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 279-284.

eight inches wide and sixteen tall – so the prisoners had to fast for five days, and eat a type of root that made them vomit, to slim down as much as possible in order to fit through the window. On the fifth day, which coincided with a new moon, they climbed through the window one by one and slid down the outside of the prison wall with a rope made from strips of the sacks used in the cell’s straw mattresses.<sup>158</sup>

The chiefs, King Philip and Osceola, did not escape: the first due to his advanced years, the second because of a serious illness. In fact, both died shortly afterward. King Philip passed away traveling up the Mississippi River toward Oklahoma, and Osceola in a Fort Moultrie cell in South Carolina, where he was transferred from St. Augustine. As a result, Wild Cat and John Horse, who were much less open to dialog in their relations with white people and were willing to lead their tribes along the path of war, would take their place at the head of the tribes. Moreover, Jesup’s betrayal meant that any hint of an amicable settlement of the conflict was viewed with great suspicion by the other chiefs.

Wild Cat and John Horse took refuge in the Kissimmee region, together with other chiefs who were not willing to accept expulsion from Florida, such as Alligator and Sam Jones. On Christmas morning, 1837, General Jesup sent the largest US military force deployed to date in Florida: close to 1,350 soldiers, commanded by Colonel Zachary Taylor, future President of the United States.

The rebel forces numbered barely 380 warriors, but their knowledge of the terrain and the superior mobility afforded by a smaller number of combatants would again be decisive. The Seminoles and Black Seminoles prepared the ground where the armies would do battle: a swampy area close to Lake Okeechobee. They cut down the trees to get a good line of sight and positioned themselves among the tall grass, forming a bottleneck through which the US forces entered without realizing that they were flanked on both sides.

The first barrage of shots by the rebel warriors mowed down the first North American detachment. The Native attack lasted two and a half hours, but the superior numbers of the other side eventually caused the rebels to relinquish terrain and withdraw. The Americans had suffered

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<sup>158</sup> Porter, K. (1943), “Seminoles Flight from Fort Marion”, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 3, pp. 113-133, p. 117.



139 casualties but, having taken the position, they sold the outcome as a victory, with Taylor receiving the moniker of “Old Rough and Ready.” However, this public-facing euphoria contrasted with the prevailing feeling among the military leadership and the government: not even the most powerful army was able to crush the alliance between Seminoles and Black Seminoles.

Following the severe setback suffered by the army at Okeechobee, in March 1838, General Jesup offered Black people who would emigrate to the west their freedom, albeit, framing the offer as if they were property of the Seminole people.

That all Negroes the property of the Seminole...who... delivered themselves up to the Commanding Officer of the Troops should be free.<sup>159</sup>

Between March and May of 1838, some Seminole and Black Seminole chiefs – such as Abraham, John Horse and Alligator, followed by almost 1,200 warriors – accepted the conditions the North American government was offering them to end the war, tired of several years of conflict and many more of persecution.

However, the Black people who gave in and accepted deportation still had to deal with the claims made by their former owners in Georgia or by the Creek people, who said the North Americans had promised them the right to all the Seminoles’ possessions, including the Black people. Some groups of Black Seminoles were detained in New Orleans, on their way to Oklahoma, to wait for a court ruling which was annulled when the deportees were declared prisoners of war, meaning that the United States government would decide their future, rather than private claimants.<sup>160</sup>

Forty of these Native people who had chosen to migrate to the west would return to Florida two years later as guides or interpreters for the North American forces, which would earn them the animosity of the rebels still fighting for their land and freedom.

Jesup’s offer still failed to convince most of the Florida plantation owners and, consequently, command of the United States army in

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<sup>159</sup> Porter, K. (2013), *The Black Seminoles: History of a Freedom-seeking People*, University Press of Florida, p. 95.

<sup>160</sup> Wasserman, A. (2010), pp. 287-293.

Florida was passed to Taylor in May 1838, who advocated resolving the situation through the use of force.

Things remained relatively calm for a year, with the odd raid of the plantations and a steady drip of surrenders from the Indigenous side, some military circles considering the war to be over. However, on July 22, 1839, a gang of Seminole fighters led by Billy Bowlegs attacked a United States military camp on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River, killing eighteen of the thirty soldiers camped there.

This massacre marked the return of active war, enabling Taylor to impose his doctrine of exterminating the Native population, for which purpose he requested the use of Cuban bloodhounds.

The use of these dogs in the pursuit of escapees hiding in the jungle dates back to the Maroon revolts in Jamaica between 1655 and 1737. The arrival of these Cuban bloodhounds on the island enabled the colonial authorities to find the Maroon communities and crush the revolt in less than a month.

This success in Jamaica and, subsequently, in the Saint-Domingue slave revolt, attracted the interest of the governor of Florida, Richard K. Call who, in February 1840, sent Colonel Fitzpatrick to procure bloodhounds and handlers to train and control them. They bought thirty-three bloodhounds and engaged four Cubans as trainers.

These animals' arrival in Florida and use by the army was very controversial, since many people – particularly abolitionists from the north of the country – thought that releasing these legendary man hunters on the Seminole people was unnecessarily cruel.

After several tests with the dogs, the army realized that they did not work effectively in Florida's swamps against the Native people and stopped using them, refusing to pay the costs the state governor had incurred in purchasing and maintaining them.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Covington, J. W. (1954), "Cuban Bloodhounds and the Seminoles", *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 111-119. For more information on the reaction of the abolitionist groups and the arguments for and against the use of the bloodhounds in the war against the Seminoles, see the following article: Campbell, J. "The Seminoles, the "Bloodhound War", and Abolitionism, 1796-1865", *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 72, No. 2, pp. 259-302.

In May 1840, command of the war was handed over again, this time from General Zachary Taylor to General Walker Keith Armistead. Ignoring the order from the US secretary of war, who advocated a negotiated end to the conflict by creating an Indian reservation in the Tampa region for Indigenous people who did not want to emigrate to Oklahoma, General Armistead encouraged his men to execute Seminoles taken prisoner in situ. Several Native men were hung from the trees, which again stoked anti-American feeling among chiefs such as the Red Stick, Sam Jones, who vouched eternal hostility and cruelty toward the whites.

John Horse, who was one of the Black Seminoles to accept Jesup's 1838 proposal of migrating to the west from the beginning, and had returned to Florida to serve the US army as an interpreter and guide, met with Wild Cat in March 1841, hoping to convince him to follow his example and surrender.

Wild Cat finally accepted the terms offered by the North Americans and agreed to bring all his warriors to the US forces. However, this was no easy task, the warriors in question being scattered around extremely inaccessible areas. On May 21, after several weeks with limited success, General Armistead ordered Wild Cat to be arrested and sent to New Orleans, suspecting that his true intentions were to gain time through negotiations for his warriors to secure supplies and carry on fighting.

This order was not well received by the military high command and Armistead was deposed, to be replaced by Colonel Worth, who immediately ordered the boat taking Wild Cat to New Orleans to be intercepted and returned to Florida. When the boat arrived, Wild Cat was placed under arrest, while messengers were sent in search of his followers, with the order for them to lay down their arms and follow him to the west.

At the start of 1842, there were barely 300 Seminole people left in Florida, who were followers of the most combative chiefs: Billy Bowlegs, Sam Jones and the Prophet, a Red Stick shaman. On August 14 of that year, the most important of these chiefs, Billy Bowlegs, agreed to permanent surrender on behalf of the others.

And so the most costly war the US waged against American Indians came to an end, in which the Seminole and Black Seminole people defended their freedom against an aggressor that boasted of having

waged exactly the same struggle in its revolution against the British. The role of slaves and their descendants in the war was vital. Twenty-three years before the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery, they managed to bend the world's most powerful nation to their will and gain their freedom. They would have to live far away from their home, but they had finally ceased to be slaves.

### Heading west with a stopover in New Orleans

The relocation of the Seminoles and Black Seminoles from Florida to Oklahoma normally began at the Port of Tampa, although some of the exiles set sail from Pensacola or the Atlantic port of Fort Moultrie. Their destination was the Port of New Orleans, where the migrants spent an unspecified period of time in the military barracks of Fort Pike until they were able to leave in a steamboat that traveled up the Mississippi and continued along the Arkansas River, with its final destination in Little Rock. There, they were offloaded and taken in smaller boats to Fort Gibson, within the borders of Oklahoma, where they were finally assigned their designated plot of land.

Seven chiefs were invited to prepare the Treaty of Payne's Landing, including John Blunt, Charley Emathla, Hohahte Emathla, John Jumper and interpreter and Black leader, Abraham, all of whom made the same journey from Tampa via Nueva Orleans and Little Rock to Fort Gibson. The chiefs were forced or tricked into signing, but upon their return to Florida they reneged on the agreement.

The Seminole people were expected to start arriving in the west three years after the Treaty of Payne's Landing was signed, in 1835, but upon rejecting it, their arrival was pushed back to the following year, when Chief Charley Emathla negotiated the surrender of their lands and relocation in Oklahoma with the North Americans. This led to him being branded a traitor and eventually assassinated by Osceola. The 407 members of Charley Emathla's tribe were led by their new chief, Black Dirt, to Tampa, where they asked the North Americans for protection, fearing that the chiefs seeking to fight the whites would exact revenge.

The Seminoles were put on a boat to New Orleans, where they arrived on April 23, 1836, spending just a few days there. They reached Little

Rock on May 5, at the end of a journey in which twenty-five died, the statement that was released attributing this to the Indian treatments they used to cure the diseases contracted on the way.<sup>162</sup>

More than two years would pass until the arrival of another group of Seminoles or Black Seminoles was recorded. This would occur in 1838, as a result of the offer made by Jesup after the Battle of Lake Okeechobee, when many chiefs, such as Micanopy and Coa Hadjo, would accept relocation alongside their Black Seminole comrades. These first groups would arrive in New Orleans in March 1838, when a reception for the chiefs would be organized in the St. Charles Theatre on March 17:

The St. Charles is to be honored tonight with the presence of some celebrated warriors, viz: old Micanopy, the king of the Seminole tribes; Jumper, the orator, warrior and constant companion of the late Osceola; Cloud, who commanded the hostiles at the battle of the Wahoo Swamp; King Philip, so long one of the principal leaders, and Coahadjo, the most kind hearted and friendly disposed man among all the tribe, attended by six of their picked braves.<sup>163</sup>

Just two months later, in May 1838, there were already more than 1,000 Seminole deportees from Florida in the Fort Pike barracks: “among those who have gone up are about 150 Spanish Indians or Spaniards who have intermarried with the Seminoles.”<sup>164</sup> A third of these deportees would be Black Seminole people.

Given that the dispute about ownership of the Black people suspected to be fugitive slaves occurred in this period, this group of Seminoles spent almost twenty days in the city before they were able to continue upriver. Life did not stop for the Seminole people in the Fort Pike barracks and, going by the following narrative, their movements were not restricted, as they paraded through the city in full dress for a

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<sup>162</sup> Foreman, G. (1953), *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*, University of Oklahoma Press, p. 332.

<sup>163</sup> Brock, J. (2016), “Chula Bungo! The Seminoles in New Orleans”, *The Jazz Archivist*, pp. 50-64, p. 52, citing “The St. Charles,” *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, March 17, 1838, p. 2.

<sup>164</sup> Foreman, G. (1953), pp. 362-365, citing *Arkansas Gazette*, May 30, 1838, p. 2, col. 1.

wedding, stopping in all the stores they saw, causing a great stir among the locals:

Sauntering along the levee on Sunday last, [...] we observed a considerable procession of Seminole Indians, of both sexes, moving upwards. When we first saw them, they were near “the Vegetable Market” comin’ as we supposed, from the new garrison. The leader of the column or line, (which is more proper expression we know not,) was a stout athletic sample of a red man, painted with a rainbow or something else containing all sorts of colors, and hung about with as many rings and bells as a Chinese Pagoda. We made some inquiry as to what was on foot, and soon found that it was a wedding party. [...]

At the other end of the train, were the blissful twain who were about to be consolidated into one the ceremony being conducted upon the plan of a Free Mason’s march, where the most important personages bring up the rear.

In their progress they stopped at every shop or store where there happened to be a gathering, and went through a performance which may be considered very good among that nation to which the performers belong, but in our opinion, it would suffer aside an Italian opera. As to the paper above alluded to and its inscription, we had not the specific resolution to examine it, as one who attempted to read it informed us that the first word was so crooked, that his mouth was twisted clear around in endeavoring to pronounce it.

Wherever the party stopped, they were treated with the utmost kindness and lots of money was presented, whether to compensate for the music or to get the amateurs to depart, we cannot say.

A sufficiency of the rhino having at length been served, the weddingers returned to their quarters; and though the shower which threatened, may not have overtaken them, yet we have no doubt they were well soaked.<sup>165</sup>

In July 1838, Chief Alligator’s group – a smaller party of sixty-six Seminoles and one Black person – arrived after having been captured close to Tampa. Similar parties continued to land in New Orleans for a brief stopover on their journey to Fort Gibson for the rest of year, as well as in 1839 and 1840.

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<sup>165</sup> Brock, J. (2016) p. 53, citing “A Seminole Wedding,” *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, May 15, 1838, p. 2.

In October 1840, fourteen influential Seminoles who had already arrived in Oklahoma retraced their steps, hoping to convince the warriors remaining in Florida to join them. The visit achieved its objective over the course of 1841 and 1842, the year when the Second Seminole War ended; each of the groups that arrived in New Orleans was large, with more than 200 members on each trip.

One of the most celebrated Seminole visits was that of Billy Bowlegs in 1858, since it represented the end of the Seminole wars, with the definitive surrender of the legendary chief. Bowlegs had stayed in Florida with 200 of his warriors, attempting to live in peace. No problems arose until 1855, when the arrival of colonists and contractors who wanted to build roads through the spaces inhabited by Bowlegs' group provoked a reaction from them, unleashing another guerrilla war. This lasted until the government, unable to break down the Seminole resistance, entreated Wild Cat to return to Florida and convince Bowlegs to be relocated in the west.

In his journey to Oklahoma, Bowlegs stopped in New Orleans for two weeks with his cortege of two hundred warriors and fifty former slaves. Receptions and events were again held, in which the chief and his lieutenants took the prime positions. The reactions from society at the time described the Seminole people as elegant and attractive, but drew particular attention to the guide, philosopher and friend of Bowlegs, Ben Brune, for his intelligence and cultured ways:

Ben Bruno, the interpreter, adviser, confidant, and special favorite of King Billy, is a fine intelligent looking negro. Unlike his master, he shows a decided predilection for civilized life, and an early visit to a ready-made clothing establishment speedily transformed him into a very credible imitation of, "a white man's nigger." He has more brains than Billy, and all his tribe, and exercises almost unbound influence over his master.<sup>166</sup>

These receptions and parades of the Seminole and Black Seminole people around New Orleans must have been a real sensation for the city's residents, and particularly striking for Black people, who witnessed people of African descent like them walking the streets dressed like Seminole people, alongside the chiefs who had stood up to

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<sup>166</sup> Brock, J. (2016) p. 58, citing "Billy Bowlegs In New Orleans," *Harper's Weekly*, June 12, 1858, pp. 376-377.

the US army. We should bear in mind that the Seminole wars were narrated at length in the national newspapers, with the Seminoles portrayed as bloodthirsty savages, although many people admired their determination to defend their right to live on their ancestral lands, as well as the Black Seminole people's struggle for freedom.

On June 17, 1868, an extravagant party was held in New Orleans, the stars of which were the Seminoles. The exhibition aimed to give the New Orleans population a taste of Seminole culture, with fifteen Seminole people present to put on all kinds of performances, including traditional dances, such as the Green Corn Dance, and others such as the Chula Bungo which, after a fashion, was assimilated and reinterpreted by African Americans:

Grand Exhibition, To be given at Boese's Hall, Corner of Leonidas and Levee Streets, This evening, June 17, 1868 At 7:00 P. M. by FIFTEEN SEMINOLE INDIANS!

The entertainment consists of INDIAN SCENES, SONGS, SPEECHES, And WILD INDIAN DANCES!

Programme, Long Dance, or Journey Dance, Drunkards Dance, Regions Song – Tom Wildcat and squaw, Wild Buffalo Dance, Green Corn Dance, Chula Bungo Dance, Bull Dance, Tick Dance, To conclude with the SCALPING SCENE.

Admission 50 cents children 25 cents Doors open at 7 o'clock P. M. performance commences at 8.<sup>167</sup>

The Chula is a dance of Portuguese origin that was exported to the colonies in the New World and took root in Brazilian territories, where it had an influence on samba. In it, a male couple dance face-to-face in the style of some Afro-Caribbean dances, such as the stick dances, which are closer to war dances than recreational ones.

It is not clear whether the Portuguese Chula is the direct predecessor of the Chula Bunga danced by the Seminoles, but if we wanted to pinpoint the moment when the Seminole people entered into contact with Portuguese culture, we might imagine this occurred in the years when

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<sup>167</sup> Brock, J. (2016) p. 60, citing "Fifteen Seminole Indians," *Carrollton Times*, June 17, 1868, p. 2.



they lived in Florida alongside the Iberian neighbors of the Portuguese: the Spanish.

It seems a little implausible that the Spanish could have transmitted a traditional Portuguese dance to the Native group, but there is an earlier occasion which might better explain this apparent Portuguese influence on a dance presented as Seminole. We should bear in mind that, in the early periods of American colonization, slaves originating on the Atlantic coast of Africa came from Portuguese slave factories or trading houses, such as on the island of Gorée, off the coast of Dakar, or São Jorge da Mina (now known as Elmina Castle). In these communities, there was very frequent contact between the African population and Portuguese traders and missionaries.

One result of this contact was that Africans acquired elements of the Portuguese language, creating a pidgin with Portuguese words that would subsequently evolve into other languages, such as Louisiana Creole and Gullah, of which Afro-Seminole Creole is a dialect. Additionally, the constant visits from Portuguese missionaries to the African settlements on the Atlantic coast meant that many slaves arriving in the New World already had a profound knowledge of the gospel, some even having been baptized before or during the Middle Passage. This was evident in the aforementioned Stono Rebellion, in which it was noted that many of the slaves, originating in Angola, were Catholic, which prompted them to flee to the Catholic territory of Spanish Florida.

If these African slaves acquired Portuguese cultural traits, such as Portuguese words and the Catholic religion, it would not be surprising if other elements, such as dance – in this case, the Chula – were learned and adopted by the Africans. Conceivably, they could then take the dance with them across the ocean, continue to perform it in the plantations of Georgia and the Carolinas, and teach it to the Seminoles after the former slaves fled to the south and began living alongside this Indigenous group.

If this were the case, the Chula Bungo that Black people of New Orleans took from the Seminole people visiting the city would have been learned by the Seminoles from African slaves who had been captured and sold to Portuguese traders. This is a theory for which reliable proof has not yet been established, but some bands in the city have already

used this dance as inspiration for their own compositions, such as the To Be Continued Brass Band: one of the most famous groups of street musicians in New Orleans, who recorded the single *Abungo*, inspired by the Chula Bungo.

Another very probable impact of the time spent by the Seminoles and Black Seminoles in New Orleans would become one of the city's most recognizable cultural phenomena: the Mardi Gras Indian bands.

There is a classic theory according to which Becate Batiste founded the city's first tribe of Indians in the 1880s – the Creole Wild West – inspired by the procession of Native people from the plains and grasslands in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which had stopped by in the winter of 1884 to 1885, on the occasion of the World's Industrial and Cotton Exposition.<sup>168</sup>

Shortly afterward, in 1897, taking his ideas for the masks and headdresses from Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Robert Sam Tillman would found the Yellow Pocahontas tribe, whose Big Chief after the Second World War would be the legendary Tootie Montana, great-nephew of Batiste.<sup>169</sup>

It was around that time that Jelly Roll Morton must have seen these processions and been profoundly impressed, telling Alan Lomax in his 1938 interview that, as a boy, he was convinced that they really were Indians, since they acted as one imagined real Indians must act:

When I was a child, I thought they really was Indians. They wore paint and blankets and, when they danced, one would get in the ring and throw his head back and downward, stooping over and bending his knees, making a rhythm with his heels and singing – T'ouwais, bas q'ouwais – and the tribe would answer – Ou tendais. [...]

They would dance and sing and go on just like regular Indians, because they had the idea they wanted to act just like the old Indians

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<sup>168</sup> Deahl Jr., W. E. (1975), "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in New Orleans", *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 289-298, p. 289.

<sup>169</sup> Lipsitz, G. (1988), "Mardi Gras Indians: Carnival and Counter-Narrative in Black New Orleans", *Cultural Critique*, No. 10, pp. 99-121, p. 104.

did in years gone by and so they lived true to the traditions of the Indian style.<sup>170</sup>

While the feather headdresses and dress of the Black Indians of Mardi Gras correspond to those worn by the Plains Indians rather than those used by the Native people of the Mississippi River Valley or the Seminoles, there is another theory contending that the Indigenous influence on the Black population of New Orleans is due to the Seminole people's stopovers in the city during their deportation to the west. These sojourns brought the city's inhabitants into contact with thousands of American Indians who paraded and walked through their streets and neighborhoods, familiarizing people with their clothes, traditions, songs and dances.

Almost fifty years before Buffalo Bill's visit to New Orleans, while there was still no evidence of the organization of tribes or krewes, there were already Indian-style processions, according to the account provided by Henry Didimus, pseudonym of Edward Henry Durell in his book, *New Orleans as I Found It*. In this text, he described how, on Sundays after mass, a procession of Black worshipers would spill out of the cathedral and march along to music with great exuberance, parading as "Native American" people:

The deep-toned notes of the organ had not yet died upon the ear, when our attention was attracted by a well-dressed company of "Native American" militia, which preceded, followed, and hemmed in on every side by a motley collection of all colours, sexes, and conditions, marched hurriedly along to the old familiar tune which had so unceremoniously serenaded my bedchamber. Drum and fife were now more fortunate in their audience, and consequently played with a corresponding addition of spirit. Bond and free were equally happy, and danced, sang, shouted, poked each other under the ribs, and played at shuttlecock with their neighbour's heads, in the true equality of the Roman saturnalia. This is the Sabbath of the slaves.<sup>171</sup>

The book recounts Durell's experiences in New Orleans, where he arrived in 1837 and was made mayor in 1863; bearing in mind that the book was published in 1845, this gives us a window of time that

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<sup>170</sup> Lomax, A. (1973), *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and Inventor of Jazz*, University of California Press, p. 15.

<sup>171</sup> Didimus, H. (1845), *New Orleans as I Found It*, New York, Harper & Brothers, p. 36.

coincides with the surge in Seminole and Black Seminole parties arriving in the city.

Clearer still is the narrative given in the *Daily Picayune*'s February 7, or Ash Wednesday, edition in 1837, which describes the Mardi Gras procession of the day before, with dances, revelry and people handing out sweets and trinkets. The journalist notes that some people described what they saw as a parade of Seminoles, while others talked of a zoo or a circus:

A lot of masquerades were parading through our streets yesterday, and excited considerable speculation as to who they were, what were their motives and what upon earth could induce them to turn out in such grotesque and outlandish habiliments. Some said they were Seminoles; some that it was the Zoological Institute come to town; some that it was Brown's Circus - while others said nothing and very likely knew nothing at all about it. Boys, negroes, fruit women and what not followed the procession - shouting and bawling and apparently highly delighted with the fun or, what is more probable, anxious to fill their pockets with sugar plums, kisses, oranges &c, which were lavishly bestowed upon them by the so good-hearted jokers, whoever they were. For ourselves, we hardly saw them; but from the noise and tumult they made we conclude that it was a cowbellion society turned loose in the street to practice their harsh discordant music.<sup>172</sup>

To this persistent presence of Seminole people in New Orleans from 1838 through 1842, and the sporadic visits that occurred until the 1860s, should be added the significance of the decades-long struggle waged by the Seminoles and Black Seminoles against the whites.

A simple imitation of Buffalo Bill's show or the old legends about slaves who fled from the city and were helped by Native people<sup>173</sup> would not have had a great enough impact to become, rather than a mere aesthetic icon of the carnival, a genuine spirit of resistance against white oppression.

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<sup>172</sup> "Cowbellin," *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, Feb 7, 1837, p. 2.

<sup>173</sup> This theory about the Mardi Gras Indians originally being descendants of Black Maroons who were taken in by Indigenous tribes in the area surrounding New Orleans was put forward by Maurice Martinez in his documentary, *The Black Indians of New Orleans* (1974).

The Seminole people were seen as proud warriors who had shed blood, sweat and tears in the fight to defend their land, heroically rejecting any peace offer that would entail capitulating or bowing down before the enemy. This identification with the Seminoles and Black Seminoles took root in the Black Indian parades, developing into the message “we won’t bow down, not on that ground” in the chorus of the song, *My Indian Red*, which all the tribes sang before the start of their processions.

In 1947, Danny Barker would record a version of the chant in which, as well as the reference to refusing to bow down before anybody, he described his pride at hearing people call him Indian Red.

*Here comes the Big Chief, the Big Chief,  
the Yellow Pocahontas, the pretty Monogram Hunters.  
And we don't bow down (we don't bow down),  
on nobody's ground (on nobody's ground).  
Oh, how we love to hear you call us Indian red.*

Other well-known versions of “My Indian Red” were made by Dr. John, and The Wild Tchoupitoulas: a real tribe of Black Indians led by “Big Chief Jolly,” George Landry, who recorded an album produced by Allen Toussaint with participation from Landry’s nephews, the Neville brothers.

As mentioned above, this song is the anthem that marked the beginning of the procession of Indian tribes through the streets of New Orleans and in which the tribe’s members were introduced. Tradition stipulates that the spy boy, or scout, marches ahead of the group containing the Big Chief, so he can tell them where the rival tribes are setting out from. If the spy boy confirms that the path is clear, the flag boy can set off and, behind him, the rest of the company, including the musicians of the second line.

This discipline or paramilitary organization in the Indian tribes can be clearly seen in the song from the beginning of the twentieth century, *Got to Sew, Sew, Sew*:

Up early that morning on Mardi Gras Day.  
Oh Fla boy holler: Get the hell out the way!  
Oh the Big Chief holler: Get the hell out the way!  
Oh, I sew, I gotta sew, all day and I sew all night.  
Oh, Chief de White Eagles done shot by!

Oh, if you won't bow down, get the hell out the way!<sup>174</sup>

When a group strayed into the territory of another tribe or simply turned a corner and came across another tribe, there would be a fierce street fight that has now, thanks to the action of Allison 'Tootie' Montana, been substituted with a battle in which each side shows off their musical skills and the Big Chief's suit. Jelly Roll Morton described what these clashes were like, and how it was the second line that led the procession, making it the first line of attack in the confrontation:

[..]- the second line, armed with sticks and bottles and baseball bats and all form of ammuniion ready to fight the foe when they reached the dividing line.

It's a funny thing that the second line marched at the head of the parade, but that's the way it had to be in New Orleans. They were our protection. You see, whenever a parade would get to another district the enemy would be waiting at the dividing line. If the parade cross the line, it meant a fight, a terrible fight.<sup>175</sup>

The spy boys' role was vital, then, and the position has always been associated with bold, courageous and sharp-witted people. The war cry of these scouts was *Coochee Malay*, which is hard to translate, but is interpreted as "here I am." The documentary director and author, Maurice Martinez, has developed a theory about the meaning of this phrase, relating it to the Seminole people.

According to Martinez, *Coochee* was short for Coacoochee, the name of one of the most renowned chiefs, also known as Wild Cat: one of the Native people who offered the most resistance to the US forces and who visited New Orleans several times. *Malay* was a way of saying "I'm coming" in Creole, from *moi aller*, which was contracted to *Malay*. In other words, the *Coochee Malay* war cry would mean "Coacoochee, I'm coming": an oath that the speaker would follow Chief Wild Cat into battle.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Becker, C. (2013), "New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians: Mediating Racial Politics from the Backstreets to Main Street", *African Arts*, Vol.46, No. 2, pp. 36-49, p. 40.

<sup>175</sup> Lomax, A. (1973), p. 12.

<sup>176</sup> Martinez, M. (2019), *No I Won't Bow Down on That Dirty Ground: A History of the Black Mardi Gras Indians*, Maurice M. Martinez, p. 130.

There is another position in the tribe, the wild man, whose mission is to act as the Big Chief's personal bodyguard, making this a figure of great status, and one which has received somewhat surprising names, such as Witch Doctor or Medicine Man. These titles for the wild man have a direct link to the Voodoo tradition in the region, where slaves with knowledge of traditional African medicine who had been taught how to use autochthonous plants by the Native people would be figures of great power within their community, as spiritual leaders, exactly as occurred in the slave revolts of Haiti and Jamaica.<sup>177</sup>

The Black Indians of New Orleans had another chant, called *Xangô Mongo Lo Ha*, known to have been sung around 1915, which also connects the tradition of the Mardi Gras Indians to the Voodoo tradition in the city. Xangô would be Shango – the spirit or *loa* of fire, lightning and passion – which is associated with Saint Barbara in Louisiana Voodoo, to whom Catholics commend themselves when a thunderstorm hits.<sup>178</sup>

Hey, hey. Xangô mogno lo ha.  
Hey, hey. Xangô mogno lo ha.  
Hapway, paquay maka nuhulee anh dough, say.  
Hapway, paquay maka nuhulee anh dough  
Hewy hey la hey mata kulafay  
Chief don't bow today, Ritchie ca no fay.<sup>179</sup>

The Black Seminole diaspora. Second destination: Mexico

Once he reached the territory, John Horse, as leader of the Black Seminole people, founded the town of Wewoka, where the Black Seminoles lived apart from the Seminole and Creek peoples. The Creeks, who believed themselves to have the right to the possessions of the Seminoles, whom they considered their vassals, did not look favorably upon the freedom enjoyed by the Black Seminoles in the Territory since, like the plantation owners in Georgia earlier on, they

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<sup>177</sup> Martínez, H. (2022), *Al compás del vudú. Magia, Religión, represión y música*, Allanamiento de Mirada, pp. 136-137.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>179</sup> Martínez, M. (2019), p. 156.

believed that having free Black people as neighbors could motivate their own slaves to demand their freedom, or seek it by other means.

The dissatisfaction some Seminoles felt with the treatment their Black allies were receiving prompted Chief Wild Cat to visit the south of the Territory, hoping to find a place among the autochthonous tribes – the Comanche, Caddo, Kickapoo, Apache and Tonkawa peoples – in which to settle with the Seminoles and Black Seminoles who so desired.

In June 1848, the federal government again gave in to pressure from the slaveholders, and the attorney general, John Y. Mason, revoked Jesup's order granting freedom to Black Seminole people who accepted relocation to Oklahoma. This new legal situation meant that the supply of food and weapons was withdrawn, and the lands allocated to the Black people were expropriated. Worse still, parties of slave catchers began to arrive in the Territory, and the Creek persecution of the Black Seminoles became uncontrollable.<sup>180</sup>

These events accelerated Wild Cat's decision to escape the Territory and, in 1849, Wild Cat and John Horse agreed on making their getaway to Mexico, where slavery had been abolished in 1829. Wild Cat would finally get the sovereign land that he did not have in Oklahoma, and John Horse would gain freedom for the Black Seminole people.

The journey to Mexico would be very dangerous, with hunger, hostile Native people and slave catchers awaiting them, but first they had to escape the Territory without attracting attention. To do so, Wild Cat tricked Marcellus Dual, who was Indian sub-agent for the Territory and one of the main figures contending that the Black Seminole people's freedom was invalid, as well as an active slave catcher. Wild Cat convinced him to take a trip to Florida in November 1849 to reclaim some belongings left there by the Indian chief, who would then start the journey to Mexico in his absence.

During a stopover to spend the hardest part of winter in west Texas, a group of Kickapoo people, led by Papicuan (also known as Papicua), joined the group in its migration, and the whole party arrived in Mexico in the summer of 1850. They numbered 309 people in total, including Seminoles, Kickapoos and Black Seminoles. The latter were called Mascogus in Mexico (derived from the word Muskogee), although the

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<sup>180</sup> Kai, N. (2015), pp. 21-22.



group also included slaves that had fled from Texas and were living in small, scattered Maroon communities in the borderlands before they joined the Black Seminoles to cross the border.

Wild Cat, John Horse and Papicuan met with the Mexican authorities to request permission to settle. They received a positive response and were granted lands on the border between the state of Coahuila and Texas, as well as tools for working the land and respect for their customs, provided that the immigrants accepted Mexican law in exchange, and supported Mexican troops in defending the border from attacks by tribes from the north.<sup>181</sup>

Wild Cat, called Gato del Monte by the Mexicans, was designated justice of the peace, to monitor compliance with federal laws by the new colonists – who would be considered Mexican citizens with all the rights of their compatriots – and by all the Native people to arrive in the Mexican territory in the future, provided that they were not nomad tribes engaging in pillage. This created a new safe haven where African Americans could take shelter when fleeing from slave catchers.<sup>182</sup>

One year later, in January 1851, Wild Cat returned to the Territory, with the Mexican government's consent, accompanied by a hundred Kickapoo and Mascogo warriors. There, he would escort any groups of Indigenous and African American people who wanted to go with him to Coahuila. The party leaving this time was larger than the last, containing 840 people, 101 of whom were Mascogos.<sup>183</sup>

The Black Seminoles, as they had done in Florida and Oklahoma before, settled in El Moral, very close to the Río Bravo (known as Rio Grande in the United States), apart from the Kickapoo and Seminole communities. The former had settled in Colonia Guerrero, which was also close to the Río Bravo, and the latter in La Navaja and San Fernando, around 30 miles inside the Mexican territory.

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<sup>181</sup> Izard, G. (2010), “Garífuna y seminole negros: mestizajes afroindígenas en Centro y Norteamérica”, in Cunin, E. (dir.), *Mestizaje, diferencia y nación. Lo “negro” en América Central y el Caribe*. Centro de estudios mexicanos y centroamericanos, pp. 197-222, p. 200.

<sup>182</sup> Velázquez Gutiérrez, J. C. (2020), “Gato del Monte” in Martínez García, C. C. and Valdés Dávila, C. M. (coord.), *Negros Mascogos. Una odisea al Nacimiento*, Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila, pp. 202-219, pp. 206-207.

<sup>183</sup> Izard, G. (2010), pp. 215-218.

The primary mission the Mexicans had in mind for the new arrivals was not to till new lands, but to defend the territory from outlaws, with the result that Wild Cat was called in September 1851 to take a group of warriors to repel an invasion from north of the border. José María Carbajal, a Texan landowner, had pulled together an army of around 300 to 400 American volunteers, along with some Texas Rangers, hoping to seize part of the Mexican territory and proclaim themselves the independent Republic of the Sierra Madre.

Wild Cat's sixty warriors, twenty of whom were Mascogos, played a decisive role in the complete defeat of Carbajal in November of that year. However, while Wild Cat and his people were fighting against those who would attack Mexican sovereignty, a group of around one hundred slave catchers had taken the opportunity to go to Piedras Negras and demand that its population hand over all the Black people for them to take to the plantations of Texas and Arkansas. They were driven away by a people's militia of 150 individuals, although some Black families were captured and taken to the north.<sup>184</sup>

The help provided by the Seminole, Black Seminole and Kickapoo people, as well as the constant danger they were in, led the Mexican government to allocate them new, better and safer lands further inside the country at the end of 1851, around 120 miles away. There, the Seminoles and Kickapoos would found the settlement of El Nacimiento, and the Mascogos would found El Nacimiento de los Negros.

Between 1856 and 1859, an epidemic of smallpox spread through the communities of Coahuila, hitting the Seminole population particularly hard. Of those struck down by the disease, it was Chief Wild Cat's loss, together with the recognition by the United States of the Seminole people's independence vis-à-vis the Creeks, and the promise that they would be given a plot of land and a mule, which prompted many El Nacimiento inhabitants to return to Oklahoma.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Porter, K. (1951), "The Seminole in Mexico, 1850-1861", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 31, No.1, pp. 1-36, pp. 7-8.

<sup>185</sup> Izard, G. (2007), "De Florida a Coahuila: El grupo Mascogo y la presencia de una cultura afrocriolla en el norte de México", *Humania del Sur*. Year 2, No. 3, pp. 13-24, pp. 16-17.

The Mascogos, fearful of ending up as slaves if they tried to cross the border again, stayed in Coahuila. Their lives revolved around agriculture and cattle farming, maintaining many of the traditions they had acquired over the years of migration and contact with different cultures.

The Mascogos continued to speak Afro-Seminole Creole, which even today is very close to the original 18th-century Gullah from which it developed, thanks to the isolation of the Coahuila region and the fact that the language has absorbed very little of the Spanish spoken in the communities around El Nacimiento.<sup>186</sup>

The Mascogo people's gastronomy also has clear roots in the African American meals cooked by the Gullah when they lived in the plantations. We therefore find recipes in present-day El Nacimiento that have their equivalent over 1,200 miles away, on the Sea Islands. This is true of soske bread (a corn bread), which is cooked in the same way as hoe cake, and tetapun, which is the Mascogo name for sweet potato bread.<sup>187</sup>

It is also striking how Mascoga women grind corn in a *pilón* – a large mortar carved out of a Holly Oak trunk – which is identical to that used by the Gullah communities, due to their African ancestry.<sup>188</sup>

The community's musical heritage is of particular interest. It includes a type of a cappella song called *capeyuye*, which is a corruption of the phrase "Happy New Year," precisely because it is performed in the celebrations on that day, as well as at funerals. *Capeyuye* is a type of Black spiritual, similar to those performed in US Baptist churches, with lyrics in Afro-Seminole Creole. It is normally sung by the women in the community, although they are sometimes accompanied by a man or two

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<sup>186</sup> Hernández, J. E. (2010), "La reconstrucción de un pasado lingüístico através de la narrativa presente: lengua, historia e identidad en El Nacimiento de los Negros", *Signótica*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 309-341, p. 311.

<sup>187</sup> Muñoz Estrada, B. (2020), "Los sabores culinarios en la comunidad de los negros mascogos", in Martínez García, C. C. and Valdés Dávila, C. M. (coord.), *Negros Mascogos. Una odisea al Nacimiento*, Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila, pp. 148-171, pp. 161-164.

<sup>188</sup> Izard, G. (2007), p. 19.

who, in the style of the oldest spirituals, sing the melody an octave lower.<sup>189</sup>

The melancholic theme of these songs' lyrics is the acceptance God's will and of death as the end of the vale of tears, this being typical of North American spirituals. The Mascogos perform some of the most classic numbers, such as *Swing Lord, Sweet Chariot*. Since there is no written record of the spirituals, when the singers were asked (the most renowned of whom was Gertrudis), they gave the name as the English title sounded to them: *Glove en tu jebon, Dan monen stanait, Dis meve mal lastaim, Leni chaain, O plis telmi jaulón, Stelle en da fil o wallo* and *Da lor jasperros en jape gulle*.<sup>190</sup>

A fragment of *An paquen on*, performed by Gertrudis in the documentary *Gertrudis Blues*, is reproduced below, transcribed in English:

I'm packin' on  
I'm gettin' ready to go  
I'm packin' on  
And I am ready to go

Lord, I'm packin' on  
Gettin' ready to go

My mother is gone  
And she was ready to go  
My mother is gone  
And she was ready to go

Lord, I'm packin' on  
Gettin' ready to go<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Madrid, A. L. (2011), "Transnational Identity, the Singing of Spirituals, and the Performance of Blackness among Mascogos" in Madrid, A. L. (ed.) *Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Oxford University Press, pp. 171-190, p. 177.

<sup>190</sup> Perales Jiménez, L. (2020), "La religión de los negros mascogos" in Martínez García, C. C. and Valdés Dávila, C. M. (coord.), *Negros Mascogos. Una odisea al Nacimiento*, Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila, pp. 90-119, pp. 111-115.

<sup>191</sup> To see these songs being performed, it is worth watching the documentaries: *Gertrudis Blues*, by Patricia Carrillo (2002); *From Florida to Coahuila*, by Rafael Rebollar Corona (2002); and *Tribu mascogos de Coahuila* (2005), by José Luis Velázquez.

## The scouts of the borderland: Epilogue on Seminole migration

In 1870, five years after slavery was abolished in the United States, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs thought that the Mascogos should return to their country of origin, where they could be employed as scouts in the border zone, thanks to their skills as trackers and their ability to survive in harsh conditions with few resources.

The commander of Fort Duncan, Zenas R. Bliss, authorized offering the Black Seminoles in Mexico paid employment within the 25th Cavalry, which included a salary, provisions for their families and plots of land on which they could settle once their service as scouts had ended. On July 4, 1870, a group of one hundred Mascogos arrived at Fort Duncan, and two months later they were already signed up and prepared to start a six-month term of enlistment, under the command of Sergeant John Kibbitts, known by the Black Seminoles as Snake Warrior. Two years later, they were sent to Fort Clark, around twenty-five miles from the border, where they lived with their families.

Their primary task was to patrol the border between Texas and Mexico, to protect the cattle and any travelers in the area from attacks by gangs of Native cattle rustlers, although they also acted as guides for the Buffalo Soldiers when they needed to make any large-scale incursion into the region.

Their attitude and work were excellent, but the issue of how they fit in with the regular army exacerbated their superiors, who could not stand their use of Indian dress, which sometimes included horned headdresses. Added to this was the fact that the scouts spoke Spanish, the only English speakers being the ex-slaves who had fled Texan plantations and joined Wild Cat and John Horse's group.<sup>192</sup>

They also had certain customs, originating in their Gullah ancestors and their time living with the Seminole people, which attracted the attention of white observers. From their African heritage came their nightly practice during expeditions of giving thanks for their good fortune with songs and prayers while warming themselves around the campfire, in

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<sup>192</sup>Porter, K. (1952), "The Seminole Negro-Indian Scouts 1870-1881", *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3, pp. 358-377, p. 361-364.

ceremonies that were similar to the African and African American ring shout. Their Seminole background was evident, apart from in their names and surnames, in a tea similar to the Seminole black drink or *Asi Yahola*, which the scouts drank to stay awake.

In their years of official active service, to 1914, they took part in twenty-six expeditions and twelve battles, in which they were always recognized for their courage and fearlessness. They lost no men in these adventures, only one suffered an injury, and four scouts received the Congressional Medal of Honor.<sup>193</sup>

The first medal was won by Adam Payne in 1874, when he tenaciously defended his fellow scouts' position during a clash with a group of Comanches who greatly outnumbered them. His surname dated back to the times when Chief Payne stood up to the Patriots who, under the pretext of annexing Spanish Florida, hunted down Maroons and destroyed Seminole settlements.

The other three medals were granted to John Ward, Pompey Factor and Isaac Payne in 1875, after a skirmish with the Comanches in which Sergeant Kibbitts fell from his mount and was rescued by the three scouts, who resisted the onslaught from twenty-five enemies.<sup>194</sup>

Over the years, the danger in the borderlands decreased and, in 1882, Sergeant Kibbitts was transferred to the Territory, which meant that the provisions received by the battalion of Black scouts decreased, and the group was gradually dismantled. In the end, the treaty under which the scouts would be offered a plot of land was not fulfilled, meaning that they were never compensated according to their initial terms and some of them, such as the decorated Factor, did not even get their pension, receiving the excuse that there was no record of their service.

Once their relationship with the army had come to an end, the Black Seminoles were made to leave Fort Clark, many of them settling in the nearby communities of Brackettville and Del Rio. These towns, together with El Nacimiento and the Oklahoma reservation, contain the last remaining traces of the Black Seminoles, and the legacy of the

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<sup>193</sup> Patrick, M. (2006), *The Black West in Story and Song*, Black West Publishing, p. 71.

<sup>194</sup> "Above and Beyond: The Medal of Honor in Texas." Capitol Visitors Center, State Preservation Board of Texas.

Black Seminole scouts continues to be shared with pride during Brackettville's celebrations of Juneteenth, or Emancipation Day.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Gil, R. (2013), "The Mascogo/Black Seminole Diaspora: The Intertwining Borders of Citizenship, Race, and Ethnicity", *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 9, pp. 23-43, p. 29.

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