Edgardo Perez Morales, *No Limits to Their Sway: Cartagena's Privateers and the Masterless Caribbean in the Age of Revolutions*. Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018. xii + 236 pp. (Paper US\$ 27.95)

Amidst a plethora of recent books on the relationship between pirates, privateers, state formation, and empire consolidation, *No Limits to Their Sway* contributes an account of the Republic of Cartagena (1811–15) and the privateers, heavily Haitian Blacks, who sustained it. The history of Cartagena (Colombia) during the Age of Revolution (1776–1830), and the role it played in the breakdown of Spanish rule in the Terre Firme is a little-known, but fascinating episode whose existence is masterfully ferreted out by Edgardo Morales.

Although few foresaw it at the time, the beginning of the end for Spanish rule in the New World and the establishment of the Republic came in the aftermath of Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 1808. Three years later a group of radical leaders who were allied with the city's large contingent of "French Negroes" (free people of color, mostly of African descent), declared their independence and established Cartagena as an independent republic. It was subsequently governed by a constitution that abolished the slave trade (but not slaveholding), extended a warm welcome to all foreigners and people of color who wished to obtain citizenship, and enshrined legal equality for all male citizens.

However, at the time of the Republic's founding, Cartagena, the key to the Terre Firme, had no navy, which rendered it unable to defend itself militarily or launch maritime attacks against the Spanish. Conflict with neighboring Santa Marta nearly bankrupted the new state and caused its leaders to begin welcoming privateers and issuing their own letters of marque as acts of sovereignty.

Thereafter privateers under many flags flocked to Cartagena. In the midst of the War of 1812, scores of American freebooters used the port as a basis for anti-British activities. Among them was Morales's "protagonist," the French mariner Louis-Michel Aury, who was recruited in Baltimore to accept a commission. Aboard the schooner *Bellona*, he filled out his crew with scores of "French Negroes" from Haiti and worked closely with the former slave Ignacio the Younger. By July 1813, he had sunk 23 ships and sent six prizes to Cartagena. Also joining the privateer ranks at Cartagena was Simón Bolívar, the future liberator of South America, who sought refuge there in 1812 after the fall of pro-independence forces in Caracas and the crushing of its revolutionary impetus.

Between 1812 and 1815, Cartagena authorized at least 40 ships and an estimated 1500 privateers who, according to Morales, presented a credible challenge to Spanish authorities and contributed to destabilization in the Terre

Firme. However, the heyday of the Republic was short-lived as Spanish forces under General Pablo Morillo y Morillo closed in on Cartagena.

On the run, privateers, including both Aury and Bolívar, sought refuge in Haiti, which, in the aftermath of its own revolution, welcomed people of African descent and served as a place of refuge from which large privateering crews were recruited and from which Bolívar began preparing his counterattack against the Spanish.

However, anti-Spanish alliances among the privateers were fragile, and Bolívar's political stance, along with his advocacy of strong central leadership, ended up fracturing them for good. This was the beginning of the end for privateering as Aury and his counterparts had known it. Unwelcome in Haiti, Aury now took his mission to the Gulf of Mexico where, in trying to found a new privateering enterprise at Matagorda, Texas, he found himself the object of mutiny by his Haitian crew. Finally, in desperation, he fled again, this time to Amelia Island (northern Florida) where his dream of Spanish liberation conflicted with the realities of slavery and expansion in the United States. The occupation of Amelia Island by U.S. forces on Christmas Eve 1817, forced him into exile yet again. Intrepid to the end, Aury sailed back to Cartagena, where in 1820, he discovered that the struggle had passed him by. His request for incorporation into the Colombian forces was denied, and he died the following year.

This is a detailed account that abounds with information about privateering on the *Terre Firme* during the Age of Revolution. In addition to the account of Aury, it includes the names of nearly all the vessels that plied those waters and where possible, of the crew members that manned them. It is carefully researched and clearly written with good introductions to each topic or chapter. As a specialized case study it will probably be of most interest to scholars of the Atlantic world, maritime historians, and students of piracy, whose time spent with it will be well rewarded.

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