

They Were There to Rule: Culture, Race, and Domination in Spanish Equatorial Guinea, 1898–1963

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In the aftermath of the 1963 referendum that set Equatorial Guinea's transition to independence in motion, a Spanish report warned against the racist character of the "Equatoguinean youth, especially, those who enjoy a higher degree of education or economic independence."¹ The author of the report described this small group of Equatoguineans as being not only "supporters of independence but also anti-white racists." The accusation may appear paradoxical, coming from an agent of the colonial state, but it clearly stemmed from the type of European rhetoric that denied any hint of racism in the colonial domination of Africa. Thus, Spanish colonialism in Equatorial Guinea made constant reference to its Catholic values and the hybrid makeup of Hispanic American societies in order to emphasize the non-racial character of Spain's colonial tradition. In spite of such rhetoric, few students of African history would question that race was a fundamental element of European domination in Africa; Equatorial Guinea was no exception. As educated Equatoguinean youngsters came to realize by the early 1960s, race shaped many aspects of colonial society.

Scholars have long engaged with the notion of race and the implications that it has had on the configuration of societies worldwide, particularly within contexts of unequal relations between racialized groups. As Mahmood Mamdani argues, historians, in particular, have focused on the development of these ideas and, in the case of Africa, many accepted that European colonialism was responsible for the introduction of racial thought in this continent. Recent attempts to engage more directly with race in Africa indicate that racial thought was not necessarily introduced by European colonialism. At least in regions where "multi-racial" coexistence was more intense, such as the Indian Ocean and Sahel, racial thought, we are told, existed before the arrival of European colonizers, according to scholars such as Brennan, Burgess, Glassman, and Hall. Thus modern racial ideas in Africa would be the result of the blend between precolonial racial thought and its European counterpart. It follows that Africans might have played an active role in the development of racial discourses and categories during the colonial era. This would be especially so in colonies where miscegenation between African women and European colonizers was common. The study of *métissage* (hybridization) has revealed that, despite being a colonial anomaly, *métis* (mixed-race) actors, particularly women, were able to renegotiate their position *vis-à-vis* colonizers.² In Fernando Po (modern-day Bioko), the existence of a materially

successful and acculturated black Creole minority also represented an anomaly within the Spanish discourse of domination. Nevertheless, as I have argued, the small size of the Creole population and, above all, their initial tendency to distance themselves from the so-called uncivilized Africans minimized the challenge that their presence could have posed to the Spanish discourse in Equatorial Guinea. As it relates to the colony's indigenous cultures, it is doubtful that a sense of race existed prior to the establishment of colonialism. The fluidity of Central African socio-cultural identities makes it difficult to equate, as Jonathon Glassman does, precolonial forms of "ranked" ethnic stratification" to modern forms of European racialization (16). In Equatorial Guinea, racial consciousness among much of the African population was influenced by colonial policies and attitudes that made evident the racial and racialized nature of Spanish domination.

While the contribution of recent studies to the development of racial thought in colonial Africa is most valuable, we cannot lose sight of similar developments in colonies such as Equatorial Guinea, where the majority of Africans lived in rural areas where they had little or no contact with "racial" groups other than Europeans and, even so, this was rather limited. It is also undeniable that Africans contributed to the development of racial thought and racialized categories of identity during the colonial era. I will argue, however, that colonizers had the upper hand in this process. In Equatorial Guinea this began to happen from 1858, when the Spanish made effective its presence on Fernando Po, and especially from the turn of the century, once they began to gain control over Río Muni (mainland Equatorial Guinea) in search for laborers for the thriving cocoa plantations on the island. From that moment on, Spanish colonial policies and discourse led to the creation of the "white," primarily a biological category that held power over Africans by virtue of his "innate" cultural superiority. Concurrently, as many scholars contend, they also created the African, primarily a cultural category who was dominated upon the premise of a cultural inferiority from which Africans could hardly escape.³ Anti-colonial sentiments largely developed against the white as symbol of the oppressive policies of colonialism. Despite the limited interaction between white rulers and African subjects outside Fernando Po and coastal Río Muni, the nature of colonial policies facilitated the adoption of racial categories by most Equatoguineans.⁴ It is unclear the extent to which Bioko's Creole minority contributed to this process, but we know that, from the mid to late 1950s, a number of them began to reach out to prominent members of the so-called native population in an effort to challenge Spanish hegemony.⁵ In the process, anti-colonial nationalism began to take shape and nationalists embraced Spanish racial logic in their struggle against colonialism throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Nonetheless, few nationalists, if any, noticed the effects that discourses of domination like the one Spain deployed in Equatorial Guinea had on African societies. The elevation of the Spanish was achieved through the denigration of African cultures, hence

converting the African into a “savage” or “primitive.” Such a racializing discourse was reinforced by the development of a legal framework that discriminated against the majority of Africans. Once legal inequality was abolished from the late 1950s, biologism increasingly dominated the Spanish discourse. I will show, however, that the type of cultural racism deployed in Equatorial Guinea was not simply a gentler disguise for crude biological racism. The effects of the Spanish culturalist discourse on the African population were equally, if not more, pervasive than other forms of racial discourse.

My main focus in this paper is to examine the construction of a colonial discourse of domination that, in Equatorial Guinea, was characterized by the prevalence of culture over biology in legitimizing Spanish hegemony. Similarly to other colonizers, Spain’s discourse was deceitful in so far as it also contained biological notions, especially regarding the racialization of the white or, as typically referred to in Spanish colonial documents, the *uropeo*. In other words, the Spanish discourse was explicitly constructed on the basis of a cultural understanding of race, while it implicitly acknowledged the notion of biological race in shaping power relations. The complexity of colonial discourses in Africa did not only respond to the logic of dominating a distinct Other but, it was heavily influenced by developments taking place on European soil and which, in the case of Spain, were characterized by the country’s decadence and growing sense of inferiority *vis-à-vis* their northern European neighbors. Whether Africanist scholars understandably make African societies the main focus of their analysis, it seems necessary to take also the discussion outside the continent so as to better understand the logic behind the Spanish discourse of domination in the Gulf of Guinea and the close relationship between colonial powers and the racialization of the European or white. As I will show, the racialization of the white colonizer—the Spanish in this paper—was as much a reflection of the historical circumstances in which they lived as of, borrowing Ira Bashkow’s concept, “their own moral failings” (14). Finally, the case of Equatorial Guinea can illustrate the extreme difficulty of making sense of racializing discourses that sought seemingly contradictory goals in colonial Africa: domination and legitimacy.

Saving the Inferior Spaniard from Africa

Much attention has often been paid to the process by which European biologicistic and culturalist forms of racialization of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created the African—a subject. But we now understand that, for colonial domination to be possible, it was also necessary to invent the European—a ruler. In the process, the diversity that characterized European metropolitan and colonial populations was concealed to the point of becoming almost invisible (Brown and Shaw 29–38; Gilroy 15). Any serious analysis of European discourses of domination in Africa requires some reflecting upon the changing identity of the European as

well as the tensions that characterized the relationships between European nations. Only then it is possible to understand the series of concerns and complexes that informed the development of European discourses of domination in Africa.

During the nineteenth century, European hegemony became gradually associated with three countries—Britain, France, and what became Germany since 1871—where the dominant character of the industrial and scientific revolutions came to define their respective national identities. By extension, the dominant position of these three nations redefined the image of Europe, as they epitomized the model of “progress” and “enlightenment” that other European nations strived to emulate. Although nineteenth-century biologicistic and culturalist discourses of domination emerged from different points across Western Europe, there is little doubt that these three nations—in addition to the United States—played a leading role, as reflected by the influence of “thinkers” such as Georg Hegel, Count Arthur Gobineau, Herbert Spencer, or Houston Chamberlain. In this respect, countries such as Spain, increasingly feeble during the nineteenth century, became fundamentally consumers of these types of theories (Marcilhacy 26). In addition, marginal European countries were also victimized by their neighbors’ notions of superiority. In the colonial setting, this type of discourse survived into the early twentieth century and served to belittle Spain’s colonizing aptitudes, as reflected by a brief review published in the *African World* in 1924:

The phenomenal activity in promoting the economic development of Tropical Africa in British, French and Belgian possessions draws attention to the apparent stagnation in this respect in the Spanish possessions in Guinea and Fernando Po. The productive potentialities of Spanish Guinea are great, but they require for their realization much more energy and financial assistance on the part of the governing power than has hitherto been shown. . . . The whole of Spanish Guinea is rich in tropical products. But it appears to suffer from “*mañana*.”⁶

Indeed, it was the process of redefinition of national identities that Europe underwent from the late nineteenth century that explains the nature of specific discourses of domination in colonial Africa. Among Hispanists, it is a common assumption that the development of modern Spanish identity predated the formation of European national identities by several centuries as a result of the confrontation against the Muslim Moor and, later on, the encounter with the “pagan” Indian of the Americas (Martin-Márquez 12–13). This early development was possible through the definition of two distinct religious Others, the Muslim and the Jew. Interestingly, these were not simply religious identities because, as Susan Martin-Márquez rightly points out, conversion could prevent neither *moriscos* nor *conversos* from being identified as the Other (13–14). As Spain and its monarchy became increasingly identified with Catholicism between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the so-called *estatutos de limpieza de sangre*, were consolidated to exclude converts on the basis that “degenerate Jewish” and Muslim “blood was impervious to baptism

and grace” (Friedman 16). Both Jewish and Muslim converts became the necessary Other that served to define the “true” Spanish identity.

By the nineteenth century, the socio-cultural transformations that Spain underwent from the sixteenth century rendered the early foundations of Spanish identity obsolete. This was particularly so in light of Spain’s notorious decline and against a backdrop of thriving northern European nations. From the beginning of the century, a succession of endless political crises reflected in continuous government changes and the country’s economic inability to keep up the pace of industrialization contributed to a profound sense of racial and cultural inadequacy in Spain. This was further aggravated by the loss of its last overseas possessions in the 1890s—Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba. The dimension of the crisis has been recorded in Spanish historical memory as *La crisis del 98* after the loss of Spain’s last American colony, Cuba. In the midst of such a profound crisis, Spanish intellectuals and politicians felt the need to reinvent an identity that no longer provided the sense of reassurance and confidence that was necessary to tackle the enormous challenges faced by the country at the turn of the twentieth century. The process was characterized by the bitter struggle between the conservative advocates of Spain’s Catholic and historical tradition and the liberal champions of secular and progressive values. The ramifications of this conflict were visible in Equatorial Guinea where, at least until the late 1930s, clashes between civil and religious authorities over the colonizing model often required the intervention of the Spanish government in Madrid.

In searching for a renewed identity, Spanish intellectuals found it difficult to fully embrace evolutionist and biological theories because of the implications that this had for a nation which, despite its self-induced amnesia, could not hide its “racially” mixed past. From antiquity and through the modern era, the Iberian Peninsula had been visited by Phoenicians, Romans, Carthaginians, Visigoths, Jews, Moors, blacks, and all of them left a genetic imprint in the Peninsula. At a time when miscegenation was increasingly condemned by social Darwinists as a sign of degeneration, pseudo-scientific theories were used to vilify the nation that had first officially envisioned the idea of blood purity. Spain’s decline during the nineteenth century appeared to confirm the dangers of miscegenation. Racial theories did not only create hierarchical differences between whites and non-whites, but also among whites themselves. Gobineau’s 1852 infamous book, *An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, served to popularize ideas of Germanic-Nordic-superiority in relation to Southern and Eastern Europeans. Spaniards, like other “inferior” Europeans, were degenerated versions of the ideal Aryan race that Gobineau exalted in his work. Notwithstanding the implications of these theories, there were Spaniards who partially, when not totally, ascribed to them including in colonial Equatorial Guinea. There, Governor Barrera did not hesitate to cite advocates of scientific racism, such as Léopold de Sarsure, to justify the advantages

of association over assimilation in ruling the colony. Barrera rejects assimilation by paraphrasing Sasseur, contending that education is the art of managing and utilizing the faculties inherited by the individual in relation to the function that they will perform in the setting where they exist. Moreover, Barrera argues that rather than upsetting them and insisting on forcing them into the framework of our civilization, we must find the way to protect them in order to avoid the systematic destruction of what we cannot effectively replace.⁷

During the late nineteenth century, European intellectuals, and the English in particular, tended to stress the inferiority of the Spanish and other European “races” by linking them to North African peoples.⁸ Under these circumstances one should not be surprised about Spanish intellectuals’ reluctance to fully embrace nineteenth-century biological notions of race. Richard Graham explains that a similar situation happened in Latin America, where, despite the growing popularity of Social Darwinism from the end of the nineteenth century, local elites were much more favorable to accept notions of white superiority than those condemning racial mixture (1–5). More so than in Spain, Latin American elites, even the so-called whites or *criollos*, could not hide the “racially” mixed nature of their societies. The “solution” to the problem was the encouragement of massive European migration from the late nineteenth century so as to “whiten,” and thus elevate, their “polluted” societies. In Spain, however, the solution was somewhat more complicated, as its population was already white, if an “inferior” one.

Recent works are consistent with the accepted notion that Spain’s existential crisis served as stimulus to an unprecedented level of intellectual production at the turn of the twentieth century. Spain’s quest for a renewed identity took a detour from dominant racial discourses by rejecting the biological notion of race in explaining differences between human groups or the essential character of the Spanish people. However, as Joshua Goode convincingly argues, race was central to the process, though in a different manner. Spain’s particular needs led to the development of a notion of race which fundamentally relied on culture. What makes the Spanish case particularly distinct is the extent to which it embraced cultural hybridity in its definition of its Self so as to address the undeniable African Moorish legacy of Spain and the racial mixture or “contamination” with this African.

By the turn of the twentieth century, attempts to define the Spanish race on purely essentialist grounds against the idea of cultural hybridity were increasingly rejected. *Hispanidad* emerged as the dominant culturalist alternative to the biologicistic definition of race (González Alcantud 177; Goode 14; Marcilhacy 52). This newly developed concept embraced Spain’s history of biological and cultural mixing as the ideal and the basis of a *Raza Hispana* which celebrated the historical and cultural links between Spain and its former overseas possessions. Furthermore it imagined a trans-continental raza that transcended phenotype. Hispanic America, thus, came to play a central role in the redefinition of the Spanish new Self at the

same time that it symbolized the “glorious” past upon which Spain should seek its internal *regeneración* (Marcilhacy 6–10). Nevertheless, neither from biologicistic nor culturalist perspectives, was the notion of hybridity acceptable within the colonial context of Equatorial Guinea. We are yet to explore the relevance of miscegenation in this colony, but there is little doubt that colonial authorities discouraged it.⁹

Although their objectives differed, both conservative and progressive sectors strongly embraced the notion of cultural race in the process of identity redefinition and national regeneration. However marginally, Africa also played a role in such a process. Azucena Pedraz Marcos sees the lobbying of the so-called *africanistas* as an alternative contribution to the regeneration of Spain which rested on the tangible notion of the colonization of Africa as opposed to the mostly intellectual response represented by the so-called *hispanoamericanismo* (243–53). To the most progressive intellectuals, Africa represented Spain’s future, whereas Hispanic America was part of the regretful past that was responsible for Spain’s decadence. This was not, however, the dominant view. Even within the Africanist lobby the colonization of the Americas was deemed as the ideal model for the colonization of Africa and the proof of Spain’s colonizing ethos (275–6). The work of the Africanists provoked certain misgivings among Spanish colonial officials and missionaries in Equatorial Guinea since they were aware of the difficulty of meeting the expectations raised by the enthusiastic writings and public talks of the Africanists. In fact, Governor Barrera could not hide his disdain for their work, which he described as “propaganda” disguised as “scientific” findings.¹⁰

The relationship between Spain and Africa during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is, as Martin-Márquez indicates, a reflection of the disorientation Spanish intellectuals felt during this period. Such a state of confusion did not make the process of finding a renewed national identity easy. By and large, two main culturalist discourses sought to find solutions to Spain’s problems. On the one hand, Spanish conservatives chose to stick to the invented historical memory that portrayed Spain as a quintessentially European nation, which, unlike its powerful European neighbors, still maintained Catholicism as the cornerstone of a trans-continental and “trans-racial” Hispanic civilization. On the other hand, Spanish liberals were more prone to accept an “Orientalized” Africa as part of Spain’s rich historical heritage and past splendor. Such a strategy sought to make virtue of the difference, and, more importantly, to embrace a nineteenth-century tendency by European intellectuals to belittle Spain by stressing the Africanness of the most southern European nation. Nevertheless, in the face of increasingly racist discourses in Europe, Spanish liberals gradually tended to use the comparison between Spain and Africa to highlight the inadequacies of Spain. In 1906, José Ortega y Gasset expressed to his friend, Miguel de Unamuno, such feelings in the following terms: “in some moments I feel ethnic shame, shame in thinking that for centuries my race has lived without contributing the slightest thing to the human project. We are Africans, Don Miguel” (61).

Decivilizing the African in Equatorial Guinea

Whether we are dealing with generous or vilifying images of Africa during the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, to the Spanish, Africa was fundamentally North Africa. Not even the most liberal of Spanish intellectuals could envision any sort of comparison between Spaniards and black Africans, who, without a question, were perceived as the lowest of peoples in the hierarchies of cultures prevailing at the time. The black African was too unknown, too distant, and, above all, too alien so as to make any connection possible in the Spanish imagination. However, the Africanists vigorously campaigned to convince both the Spanish public opinion and politicians about the benefits of joining the rest of European nations in the colonization of Africa beyond the Sahara. To their desperation, Spain was too occupied dealing with all types of internal and external troubles (Pedraz Marcos 230–54). It was only after Spain lost its last American colony that politicians expressed greater interest in an African colonial enterprise that could provide the abundant material wealth that the Africanists forecast, as well as a sense of national purpose through a renewed Civilizing Mission.

It was at the time of scramble when Africa moved from the realm of ideas and imagination to the much more specific of overseas possessions, that millions of uneducated Europeans became almost automatically “enlightened” by virtue of being made co-participants in the conquest of the “savage” and “primitive” African. Antoinette Errante shows how this was particularly evident in the case of small and poor European nations, such as Spain’s Iberian neighbor, where colonial possessions served to reinforce the idea that “Portugal is not a small country” (14). However, this was not equally as effective for the Spanish. In addition to the Western Sahara that Spain was awarded at the Berlin Conference (1884–85), Spain could only obtain a tiny territory in mainland Equatorial Africa to add to its insular possessions in the Gulf of Guinea after the French gave in to the desperate pleas of the Spanish and the two nations signed the Treaty of Paris in 1900. Equatorial Guinea became then a symbol of what many considered a humiliation at the hands of more powerful European nations. Nearly three decades later, when the occupation of Río Muni was finally completed, Spanish public opinion remained indifferent to the territories in the Gulf of Guinea. Government officials were aware of this reality and its implications for public and financial support of Spanish colonialism in the region, as reflected by the response from Madrid to the news on the pacification of Río Muni:

We are going to send you a mining engineer as part of a commission to study the colony’s geology and its mining regulations. I wish we could find something worthy!, since this would finally create some affection [for the colony].¹¹

Lacking any historical and intellectual tradition in Africa south of the Sahara, early twentieth-century Spanish discourse of domination in the Gulf of

Guinea was characterized by a reconstruction of the archaic discourse employed in the Americas. Despite efforts to modernize it, the development of a recognizable discourse was rather slow. Administrative and missionary sources reveal that, before the late 1930s, attempts to develop an official colonial discourse were undermined by the same type of irreconcilable disputes that characterized the confrontation between conservatives and liberals in metropolitan Spain. Particularly between 1910 and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), disagreements between colonial administrators and the Claretian Missionaries were common. The latter believed that Christianity should be the cornerstone of the Spanish Civilizing Mission. In principle, this view was shared by the authorities in Madrid, as illustrated in a 1906–1907 report on the situation in the colony:

Neither the authority, nor the civil servant, nor the colonist, nor the school teacher will ever be able to civilize or educate a single native. They will be able to teach him a trade or a skill ... they will be able to introduce him to scientific knowledge, but they will not be able to make the man. The man is made of sentiment and the sentiment is the result of moral education, religious education, and this can only be done by the missionary.¹²

On the whole, however, colonial officers on the ground were in favor of more secular values—acculturation and labor—as foundations for the “civilization” of the African until the late 1930s. In one of the numerous clashes with the Spanish missionaries that characterized the term of Governor Barrera, he explained his position on this issue: “Spain needs ... to form men and women ... with Spanish ideas before evangelizing them ... at the moment, [this] is impossible because their rudimentary brains cannot understand yet [emphasis added] the mysteries of our Religion” (*Memoria del Gobernador* 41). To Barrera and other colonial administrators, the Claretians were a hindrance to the material progress of the colony having “left little evidence of their presence despite what they claim in their publications and magazines” (38).

For the most part, the capacity of the Claretians to influence Spain’s discourse of domination in the Gulf of Guinea depended on the presence of an ideologically like-minded government in Madrid. Nevertheless, administrators and missionaries were often able to keep their differences in check, publically supported each other, and cooperated in the colonization effort despite their episodic clashes. Even during the Spanish Second Republic (1931–39), when the confrontation between church and state in Spain became extreme, both colonial officers and missionaries sought to maintain their collaboration. Under the influence of left-wing republican governments in Spain, colonial authorities praised “the commendable task carried out by the Spanish missionaries in favor of teaching the Spanish language.”¹³ They also expressed their full commitment for the cultural transformation of the African over those who had previously prioritized the colony’s “*puesta en valor*.” The main task of the “good administrator” became then to be an “educator,” an “example” to the “natives,” and “always contribute to the state’s fundamental work:

Civilization” (Inspección). Notwithstanding colonial administrators’ effort to maintain cordial relations with the missionary, between 1931 and 1936, the official discourse stressed the secular Hispanization of Africans as a means to achieve their upliftment. Emphasis was placed on the teaching of Spanish as the main symbol of the civilizing process and the need to prevent “the use of English by the Methodist missions, since this seeks to foreground the superiority of Anglo-Saxon culture over ours,” a government official in Madrid argued.¹⁴

The development of a more consistent and identifiable discourse of domination culminated from the early 1940s with the adoption of the ideological principles of General Franco’s autocratic regime (1939–75). The establishment of this ultra-conservative government in Equatorial Guinea from 1936 served to reinforce the Catholic and paternalistic character of the Spanish Civilizing Mission in the region for the rest of the colonial period.¹⁵ While the economic prospects of Spain’s colonies in Africa were discouraging, the Franco regime found new value in its African possessions, which now came to play a central role in the ideological propaganda of the dictatorship (Medina-Domenech). The scars left by the bloody civil conflict made it necessary to create an ideology that could bring all Spaniards together around the principles advocated by Francoism. As such, deeply patriotic values were prioritized. To this effect, Rosa Medina-Domenech argues that Equatorial Guinea became “an experimental laboratory . . . for the invention, application and reinforcement of a single Spanish identity constructed and imposed by Francoism on the metropolis as well as the colony” (91). At the same time, the defeat of similar Fascist regimes at the hands of the Allies left Spain politically and ideologically isolated after 1945. With Spain being treated as an international pariah, Francoist ideologues needed to create a sense of pride and purpose that could consolidate their national project.

To Governor Bonelli Rubio (1943–49) and José Díaz de Villegas (1944–68), head of the *Dirección General de Marruecos y Colonias* (DGMC), Africa, and Equatorial Guinea in particular, came to represent a continuation of the cultural values that Spain had once proudly spread across the world (“Por qué” 396; Díaz de Villegas 19). In defending the role of Spain in the region, Heriberto Álvarez García, head of the colony’s education department during the 1940s, wrote: “our cultural policy . . . is essentially parallel to the one that was carried out in the vast possessions that Spain formerly had in the Americas and the Philippines” (“La cultura” 27).¹⁶ Because of the emphasis on civilization and cultural transformation by the Francoist regime, North Africa lost the relevance that it occupied in Spanish intellectual discourse at the turn of the century. The dominant position of Islam rendered the notion of transformation nearly impossible in North Africa, as Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida and Eloy Martín Corrales point out (421–22).¹⁷ Instead, Equatorial Guinea provided a seemingly more feasible opportunity to “civilize” an African that was now increasingly identified with the category of the black in Spanish discourse and imagination.

On a much smaller scale, Spain was to exercise in Equatorial Guinea a God-given mission, the civilization and redemption of the African. This “savage” and “primitive” being was to be made Catholic and Spanish, because, in Francoist ideology, the two things were not contradictory but the essence of one of the central concepts of the regime’s propaganda, *Hispanidad*.¹⁸ According to Álvarez Chillida, this discourse sought to establish a connection between Equatorial Guinea and the old Spanish Empire by highlighting that “the Spanish were repeating in Guinea the benevolent and Christian task that was formerly done in the Americas” (“Epigono” 108). This idea was eloquently expressed by José Díaz de Villegas in 1959, at a time when both Equatoguinean nationalists and the international community began to question Spain’s presence in the Gulf of Guinea:

None of these lands were acquired in a hail of bullets! If we are still able to keep them, this is due to the colonizing genius of [our] race—since Spain is the colonizing nation par excellence—and the fact that all our actions overseas have been carried out under the divine sign of the Cross. The crucifix has certainly been our constant guide in the Americas, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa. (9)

The cultural inferiority of the African became the principle of the Spanish colonial discourse from early in the century. This does not mean, however, that Spanish invectives against Africans were less degrading than the biologicistic notions that predominated in the Americas or in settler colonies elsewhere in Africa. From early on, Spanish descriptions of the African were extremely derogatory and offensive, expressing contempt for African cultures. In addition to the prevailing use of the terms savage and primitive in the description of Africans, the following expressions were also commonly used by the Spanish colonial discourse of the pre-Franco era: cruel, barbarous, untrustworthy, treacherous, reactionary, backward, lazy, idle, filthy, repugnant, and superstitious. Similarly to other colonizing powers, the African in Equatorial Guinea—the Fang in particular—became the savage antagonist of the civilized Spaniard (Sánchez Molina). According to colonial and especially missionary writings, their savage and primitive character was mostly symbolized by its idolatry and cannibalism, which were said to be encouraged and perpetuated by their polygamous customs and nomadic lifestyle. Francoist ideologues kept these images of cultural inferiority alive so as to continue legitimizing Spanish domination over Africans.

Indeed, memories of African savageness and cannibalism resurfaced from the late 1930s, when the colonial authorities identified, within Fang society, what they believed to be an increase in witchcraft activity, which was usually associated to “anthropophagy.” Reporting on this subject, the subgovernor in Bata wrote in 1939: “Regarding the n’buo [*mgbóo*] (witchcraft), I will send you the report and you will see things that will freak you out. There is a chick who in eating has eaten even her own mother.”¹⁹ In addition to the enormous difficulties that the Spanish had in understanding local witchcraft beliefs, the stubborn continuity

of nineteenth-century stereotypes contributed to make the notion of symbolic anthropophagy real in the minds of colonizers during the 1940s. Once again, the Fang who, mostly lived in the interior of Río Muni and were in less contact with the European population, were singled out as the archetypical primitive African. Accordingly, the perceived decline in so-called witchcraft activities from the late 1940s was explained in the following terms:

we have been able to observe, compared to previous years, a very notable decrease [and] the nearly total disappearance of those matters which evidenced the backwardness of the natives, especially those of the interior of the mainland. We are specifically referring to those related to criminal manifestations of their secret Sects—the autochthonous Evu [*evú*] and the imported Mbueti [Bwiti]—in connection with ritual anthropophagy. This [decline] is evidence of the vigilant and educational work of the government ... and the spiritual [activity] of the missionaries.²⁰

The Spanish were certainly not oblivious to the type of biologicistic discourse that shaped the notion of race elsewhere in Europe. Indeed, there are numerous instances in which one can identify traces of biologicism in colonial Equatorial Guinea. In most cases, such deviations from the official discourse were a reflection of the colonizers' frustration with their lack of progress. The prevalence of biologicistic notions in the depiction of Africans was particularly evident between the late 1930s and early 1940s. It is likely that this was due to the influence that the more secular and Fascist ideology of the Falangist faction had over Francoism during those years.²¹ The eventual consolidation of National Catholicism as the cornerstone of General Franco's regime, combined with the growing rejection of biologicism in the West in the aftermath of the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe, are likely to have led to the marginalization of these views at an official level from the mid-1940s. As Medina-Domenech points out, "National Catholic sectors were reluctant to fully subscribe to a hierarchical and biological understanding of races" (91–92). Therefore, colonial administrators increasingly embraced an official discourse that insisted on the redemption of the African through the civilizing process. Reflecting on this view, in 1942 a territorial administrator explained:

The most complex mission [of the state] is to make the natives continue their evolution from the dawn of their primitive culture to the point at which they can be included in our civilization, while at the same time trying to prevent them from feeling unconnected to our culture. This process is what is called

COLONIZATION . . .

we do not argue for evolutionist doctrines . . . because we believe that, in reality, it is man, under God's plan, who implements great ideas.²²

Francoist renewed emphasis on culturalist racialization could not hide, however, that this was, fundamentally, a discourse of domination which made it necessary the slow "civilization" of African men and women increasingly eager to embrace the so-called benefits of Spanish civilization. The contradictions of

Spain's colonial discourse would become evident from the 1950s when "civilized" Africans began to openly question Spanish hegemony.

The Danger of Civilizing Biological Beings

Discourses of domination are always characterized by internal contradictions, especially when the notion of race, whether biological or cultural, is placed at the center of the discourse. Within the colonial setting, it is easy to see how difficult it was to reconcile European aspirations to legitimize their presence in Africa with their need to securing its grip over the colonized population; Equatorial Guinea was no exception. Medina-Domenech points out that Francoist ideologues sought to utilize the colonization of this Central African colony to build a "single Spanish identity" on the basis of a non-biological understanding of races. Indeed, such a discourse responded to the regime's need to heal the wounds left by the civil conflict and the repression that followed. Yet, in the colony itself, the situation was more complicated, for the need to consolidate Spanish hegemony over Africans required the implicit incorporation of biologicistic notions into the discourse of domination as reflected by the explicit construction of two antithetical identities—the African and the European.

Whether the racialization of Africans reflected the implicit presence of biologicistic notions in the Spanish discourse of domination, the biological nature of the European or white category was unambiguous. Europeans, regardless of their education and material wellbeing, were never denied the legal privileges of the so-called civilized.²³ In essence, the European was as much a biological as a cultural category for their civilized character could not be detached from their biology. It is no wonder, therefore, that Africans' recollections of the colonial era barely make distinctions between European officials, missionaries, and settlers, despite recent historiography has shown that the reality of European domination in Africa was more diverse and complex than implied by these memories (Errante; Johnson and Watson). Indeed, the reification of European rulers by colonized Africans was partly the result of the strategies and ideas spread by anti-colonial nationalism. But, more importantly, it was the discourses and actions of colonizers that mostly racialized the European in Africa. This combination was most effective. On the one hand, colonial discourses likened power to Europeanness or whiteness, and, on the other, the actions of Europeans or whites *vis-à-vis* Africans nearly always exuded power. For colonized Africans, the white fundamentally came to be the colonial one; the one who condemned African culture; the one who always knew best; the one who worked with his mind rather than his hands; the one who held—and abused—power.

Indeed, power was crucial to solidify racializing discourses. During the colonial era, Equatoguineans not only experienced abuses at the hands of colonizers but, more significantly, they witnessed the type of power that allowed Europeans

to escape unpunished after acts of arbitrary and disproportionate violence against them. Colonial records show that this was the norm throughout much the colonial period. Such was the instance in 1938 when a Spanish priest, who got a schoolgirl badly “lashed with an elephant [skin] strip” for “running away” from the boarding school at the Catholic mission in Bata, was simply admonished by a colonial official (AGA, 9 June 1938).²⁴ Should violence go in the opposite direction, like in the case of an African woman who allegedly hit a Spanish nun, colonial officials applied “almost brutal punishments,” which included “the destruction of the farms” on which the African women involved in the incident relied on for feeding their families (AGA, January 1942).²⁵ Circumstances might vary from one case to another, but the fact remained that Europeans were not punished even when they committed heinous crimes against Africans. Then, like in the case of the Spanish foreman who “bit to death” an African laborer, a medical report could exonerate the criminal after certifying “pneumonia” as the cause of death (AGA, 25 December 1939).²⁶ Even though colonial officials might express frustration and even remorse for “undoubtedly committing an injustice” against Africans, almost invariably they chose not to punish or publically discredit the culprits for their misdeeds. The preservation of the moral superiority of the white—the principle of colonization—was more important than any act of justice.²⁷ Undoubtedly, it was the capacity of Europeans in the colonies to do all kinds of wrongs to Africans without seemingly suffering any punishment or sanction that helped to reinforce the racialization of the European and its identification with unrestrained power.

As it relates to colonized Africans, the clearest example of Spain’s veiled biologicistic discourse in Equatorial Guinea was the portrayal of the “native” as an “eternal child” which inherently denied Africans the capacity to reach full personal development, and, thus, condemned them to permanent tutelage by the European. Developed from the late nineteenth century, this paternalistic approach underlays a strategy that sought to perpetuate Spanish hegemony in the Gulf of Guinea while hiding the effects of the extremely unequal relationship between Spanish colonizers and African subjects. The Spanish became aware of the need to confer the Civilizing Mission a gradual character so as to extend colonial domination for as long as possible. Such a convoluted discourse of domination led, in 1904, to the classification of Africans in two cultural or legal categories: the uncivilized *indígena* (legal minor) and civilized *emancipado* (assimilated or legal adult). The presence in Fernando Po of a significant Creole community, which formed an economic and cultural elite, made it very difficult for the Spanish authorities to deny these Africans their rights on the basis of their primitivism. Despite this initial step, it took more than two decades before the authorities consolidated this categorization, after regulating the legal capacity of *indígenas* and approving the statutes of the *Patronato de Indígenas*; the institution in charge of looking after so-called African “minors,” according to Altozano (56). Ten years later, under Franco’s rule, these categories

were further reinforced after the passing of the Native Justice Statute, commonly known as *justicia de raza*, which officially regulated the administration of justice for non-assimilated Africans until 1959.²⁸ In the process, the *emancipado* condition was finally defined: “a state and right of the colonized which is acknowledged by Spain provided that they [Africans] demonstrate a sufficient cultural level to make the tutelage by the Patronato unnecessary” (Álvarez García, “El problema” 8–9).

Nearly forty years since the introduction of the legal differentiation for colonized Africans, the conflict between civilization and domination remained unresolved. Therefore, the Spanish continued tempering the idea of civilizing the African. If colonialism was justified as a necessary evil to civilize Africans, this meant that Spain’s presence in the Gulf of Guinea had to be temporary. Governor Bonelli Rubio explained the problem in the following terms:

If the native is exactly equal in his psychology and mentality to the inhabitant of a civilized country, will you please tell me where the colonizer fits in the colony? . . . If we are not there to rule, if we are only there to give advice and education, did they ask us to do so? If nobody asked the colonizer to do it, and we all know that we were never asked, why should the colonizer meddle in people’s business? (*Concepto* 8–9)

Certainly, the continuation and reinforcement of such categories for Africans reveal the differences between Francoist metropolitan and colonial discourses. As opposed to the effort to construct a single identity in Spain, in Equatorial Guinea both colonial discourse and policies sought to maintain two antagonistic identities—*indígena* or African, on the one hand, and *europeo* or civilized, on the other—in addition to a third, intermediate category—*emancipado*. The latter was a rare privilege conferred to a very small number of Africans.²⁹ Full legal personality, however, did not amount to being a “black Spaniard,” as Sanford Berman referred to the *emancipados* (308). Álvarez García admitted that, in practice, assimilated Africans rarely received the same treatment as Europeans did. As he put it:

The *emancipado* believes that the mere possession of the precious [emancipation] document will open up all doors to equality. . . . Whether this may be so in theory, in reality things are very different. . . . For this reason one cannot be surprised about the not always unsubstantiated complaints that many evolved Africans express. (“El problema” 598)³⁰

As Governor Bonelli posits *Concepto*, the classification of Africans into different legal statuses was necessary in order to encourage the formation of a “native bourgeoisie” and, thus, fill the gap “between the two societies” coexisting in the colony—Africans and Europeans. In reality, little effort was made to facilitate the development of an African middle class before the 1960s. If anything, greater effort was made to appease Africans’ grievances while impeding them from enjoying full legal rights. As late as 1952, the Spanish created an additional status for Africans: *emancipado parcial*. In accordance with a discourse that deemed acculturation as a gradual process, it could not be expected for Africans to become *emancipados*

overnight. The *emancipado parcial*, therefore, was granted partial control over his property and limited legal independence. Although not explicitly mentioned, women and children were not eligible for emancipation though it was implied that they were subject to the same legal classification as the “head of the family.”

Although implicit, Spanish colonial policies could not hide from Africans that the African was a cultural category that could be conveniently transformed into a biological category. Eventually, it was Africans’ understanding of the racialized and racial nature of Spanish domination that led to the rise of anti-colonial nationalism and the gradual change of policies by the colonizers. By the late 1950s, the idea of Africans’ cultural inferiority was formally abandoned by the Spanish authorities, as they yielded to growing pressure from both the Equatoguinean nationalist movement and the international community. According to Campos, such developments coincided with the emergence within Francoism of a new generation of politicians and government officers who sought to leave behind previous autarchic policies while seeking international recognition for Spain. It is in this light that, in 1959, the status of Fernando Po and Río Muni was changed from colony to provinces and the discrimination that created two separate legal frameworks for assimilated and non-assimilated Africans was officially abandoned. This critical change was justified on the basis that “Spain’s traditional overseas policy and the sacrifice and selflessness shown by Spain in the administration of the territories of Guinea, have allowed [Africans] to overcome the indispensable stage of evolution and reach the requisite degree of progress.”³¹ There is no question that this legal reform, which granted all Equatoguinean Africans full citizenship, did not change the views of colonial Spaniards on Africans overnight. This much became clear when the Spanish authorities decided to maintain the so-called *tribunales de raza* (native courts) in clear contravention to the principles of the late-1950s reforms. According to a 1961 report, it was necessary to retain the native justice system because it was not “possible to think of an immediate and unanimous acceptance, especially by the non-evolved natives, of the institutions established in the laws that were applicable in the Peninsula. These [laws] are the result of a millenarian cultural evolution.”³²

Furthermore, the aftermath of the 1959 reform showed that Spain’s culturalist discourse of domination was effective because of the establishment of a legal system that prevented Africans from competing against Europeans on an equal footing. After 1959, biologism became more explicit in Equatorial Guinea, as the Spanish authorities had to change a discourse that, increasingly, was less about domination and more about “cooperation.” This was, indeed, a difficult transition because the effects of decades of rhetoric and policies vilifying and belittling African cultures could not be wiped over as a result of legal and political reforms. The granting of equal rights between Africans and Europeans from the late 1950s contributed to a change in language and attitude regarding the categorization of the African and,

interestingly, to growing racial tensions between blacks and whites. Legal equality caused the gradual fall into disuse of the term native to refer to Africans who were now increasingly referred to as blacks.³³ As Africans, in particular Western-educated youngsters, became aware of the new situation, they sought to push their presence into public spaces that previously had been the sole realm of whites. In some instances, like a veteran Equatoguinean civil servant recalls, this provoked a number of low-intensity clashes between Equatoguineans and whites as the latter had to be “imposed respect for the native,” for the African was now deemed “a civilized person.”³⁴ In light of Africans’ growing political activism and contestation, one can detect how the previous culturalist discourse was increasingly replaced by the type of biologicistic racialization that, in some cases, considered the African “a real mental retard”³⁵ The response by sectors of the Equatoguinean nationalism led the Spanish authorities to characterize this movement as divisive and racist. But, indeed, what Equatoguineans were expressing was their rejection of a system that, as Marcelo Ndong Mba explained, “regardless of one’s level of education, it had [always] treated everybody the same: with contempt.”³⁶

Conclusion

At first glance, the colonial relationship between Spain, a marginal colonial power, and Equatorial Guinea, a tiny colony, may seem insignificant regarding our understanding of the development of racial thought in colonial Africa. However, the limited interaction between two racial categories—white and African—in the absence of other meaningful “racial” groups is representative of the experiences of many colonized Africans. As useful as Eastern, Southern, and urban Africa examples are, it is also necessary to explore the development of racial thought in predominantly rural contexts where infrequent “racial” interaction did not preclude the internalization of racial thought. Indeed, European colonialism was able to establish a social model that racialized Europeans as holders of power and Africans as subjects of it. While Africans played a role in the development and expansion of racial ideas, ultimately it was the close identification between European colonizers and most forms of power that proved crucial in shaping and reinforcing European racializing categories in Africa.

The exact meaning of racial categories was not unilaterally determined by colonial masters, but, within colonial society, the hierarchical position of individuals attached to these categories was. Racialization became an instrument for domination, but the emphasis of the Spanish and European discourses in Africa was not so much on the so-called biological inferiority of the African but on their alleged cultural inadequacy. Culture, therefore, became crucial in the construction of the idea of Africa, and the sense of cultural deficiency that has characterized the relationship between Africa and Europe since the late nineteenth century. For this reason, it is critical to continue delving into European discourses of domination

as well as the particular circumstances that led to their development. I contend, we cannot understand the construction of racial thought in colonial Africa in isolation from similar developments in the respective metropolises.

As this article has also shown, the Spanish culturalist discourse of domination mainly sought to boost the confidence of the colonizer, revealing, in the process, their own sense of inadequacy. The Spanish refused to accept the idea of their inferiority, but there is little doubt that most Spaniards shared a sense of cultural deficiency during the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth. The African could then become the perfect cure for the ills afflicting Spanish society, but Spain first needed to disassociate itself from North Africa, which it had been historically linked to. Equatorial Guinea, hence, became the other Africa, the one that Spain could not be linked to; the one that could highlight the adequacy of Spanish culture; the one that could offer a new frontier in which to expand Spanish Civilization-*Hispanidad*, even if Equatorial Guinea was too small to redeem Spain.

Whether Equatorial Guinea occupied a marginal position in the Spanish imagination during the twentieth century, Spain did play, and still does, a central role in the definition of the Self in this Central African country. Along with a sense of cultural inadequacy, most Equatoguineans appear to have embraced the notion of a paradigmatic European/Western culture. The African is, thus, compared against an unreal, but yet perfect, paradigm which stresses his or her cultural deficiency. Colonial rhetoric presented European and African cultures as two poles apart; a totally perfect Europe and a totally imperfect Africa. The image of Europe created by colonialism could not be questioned, since Africans did not know this reality firsthand, and were never shown the flaws of European societies. Furthermore, in Equatorial Guinea the illusion was consolidated through the legal classification of Africans into civilized and uncivilized statuses as well as residential segregation, which prevented non-assimilated Africans and Europeans from living in the same areas and, thus, becoming knowledgeable of each other. Ultimately, this legal classification created the conditions that facilitated the development and implementation of Spain's culturalist discourse of domination.

Neither Spanish rhetoric nor policies, however, could hide the biological undertone of colonial rule. The domination of the African Other required both a discourse and policies that, ultimately, could not transcend biologicistic notions of race. The essentialization of Africans as carriers of primitive and savage cultures converted the African or native into a *de facto* biological category that was dominated by the European or white, an undeniable biological category. Even after the advent of the Francoist regime, the priority continued to be the preservation of Spanish hegemony over Africans. Therefore, Spanish discourse and policies in Equatorial Guinea still reflected the two distinct identities in which society was divided—the African subject and the European ruler. The ending of legal discrimination by Spain from the late 1950s served to rid the discourse of

domination of its internal contradictions. It, then, became increasingly explicit that colonialism was, above all, about the domination of black Africans by white Europeans, as nationalists became aware from the 1950s.

Today, Equatoguineans stick to their culture partly as a gesture of defiance, but also as what seems to be recognition of their inability to transcend their own deficiency. In addressing the contradictions between the Civilizing Mission and colonial domination, the European certainly racialized the African, transforming him or her into an eternal cultural child. Africans could only aspire to escape their imperfection by renouncing their culture, their Fang-ness, Bubi-ness, Ndoweness, their Africanness. Thus, becoming a European or what the Fang refer to as *ntángán* (white or European). Throughout the colonial period and afterwards, this has been a common aspiration due to the material benefits that individuals and their families could derive from it. Yet one does not get the impression that most Equatoguineans aspired to completely renounce their cultures. Mastering, rather than embracing, the ways of the European was the goal. At the same time, the social value of the African individual in Equatorial Guinea is fully appreciated if he or she is still able to partake in village celebrations; speak the local language; eat the local food. This is one of the complex legacies that the Spanish discourse of domination left in Equatorial Guinea, the perfection is European, but people resist to totally abandon their imperfection or Africanness. If we are to rediscover African cultural paradigms that can provide a more profound and generalized sense of self-assertion for Africans and people of African descent, we, historians, must continue exploring the colonial interaction between the holders of power and those who aspired to regain it.

Notes

¹ From the “Informe sobre el plebiscito.” 19 December 1963. Box D474. Archivo General de la Administración, Alcalá de Henares (Madrid, Spain), (hereafter cited as AGA). All translations are mine.

² Throughout Africa, mixed-race individuals represented a dangerous exception for a colonial order that only contemplated two “racial” categories: the African-native and the European-non-native. Within this context, “mixed-race” individuals were able to renegotiate colonial categories (H. Jones, “From Mariage”; H. Jones, *The Métis*; Lee; Saada). This situation could be further complicated through the role of gender in the configuration of racial categories under colonialism (Feo Rodrigues; Jean-Baptiste). In East Africa, the sizeable presence of Indians and Arabs complicated the colonial racialist map but the British resolved this complication by re-categorizing Indians and Arabs as non-native (Brennan 17).

³ Cultural studies scholars have identified the link between race and culture as a new phenomenon in which culture has replaced biology as the main explanation for differences between human groups. As Glassman proposes, however, there are numerous precedents of “culturalist racial thought” in history of which, I contend, African colonialism is one of its most salient manifestations (8–9).

⁴ According to the 1942 census, Europeans made up 2.4 percent of the colony’s population. The

percentage fell slightly in the 1950, 1.9 per cent; 6.4 percent on Fernando Po and 0.9 per cent in Río Muni. On the mainland, 74.5 per cent of Europeans were located in the coastal region. The 1966 census reflects a slight increase in the European population, 3.3 per cent of the total population; 8.4 percent on Fernando Po and 1.6 percent in Río Muni. Gobierno General de los Territorios Españoles del Golfo de Guinea. *Resúmenes estadísticos del censo general de población de los territorios españoles del Golfo de Guinea a 31 de diciembre de 1950*. Madrid, 1952; and Censo de población de Guinea Ecuatorial año 1966. Box D479, Folder 1. AGA.

- ⁵ While the connections between the Creole and Equatoguinean anti-colonial nationalism are yet to be studied, we know that a number of Creole individuals were actively involved in the incipient nationalist movement. It is also known that nationalists from the mainland, such as Acacio Mañe and Enrique Nvo, met with Creole notables and probably obtained financial support from them during the 1950s. Okenwe, Fortunato N. Personal Interview. 6 September 2001.
- ⁶ Spanish records show that there was a continuous monitoring of international media regarding news on colonialism, such as this newspaper clipping from Leo Weinthal's publication, *African World*.
- ⁷ Barrera, Ángel. *Memoria del Gobernador-General*. 14 May 1911: 273–75. Box G167. AGA. (Hereafter cited as *Memoria del Gobernador*).
- ⁸ In 1862, the English ethnologist John Beddoe (quoted in Stepan 103) established a connection between the colonized Irish and North Africans via the Celts. A few years later, in 1888, another English author, Strickland Constable (quoted in Bornstein 177), claimed that the "Iberians are believed to have been originally an African race."
- ⁹ Perhaps the most notorious example of miscegenation involves Otto Krohnert, a German refugee from Cameroon that became a very successful planter in Río Muni, where he married numerous local women in accordance to Fang "custom." Particularly in coastal Río Muni, relationships between African women and Spanish men were not uncommon. It appears that, following the reform of the Spanish civil code in 1932, Spanish men could legally acknowledge children born out of wedlock if they chose to, but it is highly likely that this was no longer possible after 1938, when the Francoist regime began to abolish the legal reforms implemented during the Second Republic (Moraga García 235–36).
- ¹⁰ *Memoria del Gobernador* 183.
- ¹¹ Director General de Marruecos y Colonias al Gobernador General. 15 March 1927. Box G196, Folder 10. AGA.
- ¹² *Memoria Comisaría Regia en las posesiones españolas del Golfo de Guinea, 1906–1907*. Box G166. AGA.
- ¹³ In turn, the Claretians expressed their gratitude for the recognition of their work by the Colonial authorities while maintaining their commitment to spreading the "Spanish culture and language." Gobernador General al Vicario Apostólico. 24 April 1934. Box G76, Folder 8 AGA. Vicario apostólico al gobernador general. 25 April 1935. Box G76, Folder 8. AGA.
- ¹⁴ The short-lived British occupation of Fernando Po and, above all, the presence of the influential Creole community on the island favored the activity of Methodist missionaries who conducted both religious services and education in English. Informe de la Inspección General de Colonias. 8 April 1935. Box G76, Folder 8 AGA.
- ¹⁵ Although Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War did not happen until 1939, the Francoist faction gained control of Equatorial Guinea from as early as September 1936.
- ¹⁶ Álvarez García was largely responsible for reorganizing the colony's education system. He was also considered to be a firm supporter of the transformative capacity of colonialism and the "civilizable" nature of Africans (Álvarez Chillida, "Raza y pedagogía").

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- ¹⁷ In addition to the dominant presence of Islam, the different status of Morocco-protectorate-limited Spanish policies in the region (Álvarez Chillida y Martín Corrales 421–22).
- ¹⁸ The concept of *Hispanidad* was developed by the *regeneracionistas* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was later appropriated by conservative intellectuals and politicians (Medina-Domenech 100).
- ¹⁹ Subgobernador Cabrera al Gobernador-General interino Víctor Suances. 11 December 1939. Box G1928, Folder 2. AGA.
- ²⁰ *Memoria del servicio de justicia* 1946–49. 2 March 1950. Box G1914, Folder 1. AGA. *Evú* was not really a cult; rather, it was believed to be a being responsible for anti-social sorcery and which demanded symbolic human sacrifices for its deeds.
- ²¹ In the early 1940s, the ascendancy of *falangismo* contributed to the short-lived popularization of racial science. As a result, in Equatorial Guinea the notion that the intelligence of the African degenerated from when they reached puberty became conventional wisdom within colonial society (Arbelo Curbelo y Villarino Ulloa 16; Fontán y Lobé; Ibarrola 14; Thomàs 225–26).
- ²² Memoria del administrador territorial del Este dirigida al Gobernador General. 1942. Box G1914, Folder 1. AGA.
- ²³ Olegario Negrín Fajardo (19) argues that, by the 1950s, illiteracy rates were officially lower in Equatorial Guinea than in Spain. While this might seem questionable considering the deficiencies of the education system, particularly in mainland Equatorial Guinea, it is also indicative of the numerous challenges that education policies faced in Spain in the aftermath of the Civil War. In accordance with Spanish colonial rhetoric, this reality was hidden from colonized Africans. Similarly, in Portuguese Africa Errante (20) tells us that the European was as much a cultural as a biological racialized category in Portuguese colonial Africa.
- ²⁴ Subgobernador al Gobernador General Fontán. 9 June 1938. Box G1926. Folder 2. AGA.
- ²⁵ The unidentified African women in question were the wives of colonial guards who were granted access to land close to the Bata military camp. According to the Spanish official, the nuns used to send schoolgirls to collect firewood as well as foodstuff from these farms. After a group of women decided to stop this practice, a nun accompanied the schoolgirls in the belief that her presence would discourage the African women from resisting. Subgobernador al Gobernador General, 29 January 1942. Box G1926, Folder 2. AGA.
- ²⁶ Informe sobre la situación del Continente del subgobernador Cabrera. 25 December 1939. Box G1926, Folder 2. AGA.
- ²⁷ See Sundiata, especially chapter 7, for the prevalence of violence against African workers in Fernando Po.
- ²⁸ The so-called *justicia de raza* was implemented through the *tribunal de raza*, a three-tiered court system, where civil matters involving non-assimilated Africans were addressed by European officers with the aid of African advisors. In these courts, local “custom” was observed.
- ²⁹ According to Álvarez Chillida, there were sixty four *emancipados* in 1964 (“Epígono” 105).
- ³⁰ A decade later, the Spanish head of the economic development commission confirmed the existence of an “internal tension” as a result of the “salary gap between European and African civil servants in favor of the former, despite having the same or inferior qualification.” *Informe previo del presidente (Juan Velarde Fuertes) de la comisión de desarrollo económico de la región ecuatorial sobre los principales problemas de las provincias de Río Muni y Fernando Poo*, 6 November 1962. Box D479, Folder 1. AGA.
- ³¹ Objectively, the colony’s development, especially in Río Muni, was rather limited and “Africans’ lack of preparation” was a concern, as the US ambassador recognized after his visit in 1962. *Bases sobre régimen de los Territorios Españoles del Golfo de Guinea*. 1959. Box D474. AGA; Traducción

del informe realizado por el embajador de los EEUU en su visita particular a Río Muni. 15 August 1962. Box D479, Folder 1. AGA.

³² The reform of the legal system established that, unless Africans chose their matters to be heard at an ordinary court of justice, customary law would continue to apply regarding civil matters. Proyecto de Decreto para la reorganización de la Justicia en la Región Ecuatorial. 16 August 1961. Box D479, Folder 1. AGA.

³³ In the past, Africans were rarely referred to as *negros* in *La Guinea Española*, but this term became increasingly used from the late 1950s.

³⁴ Informe del redactor Tomás Gallego Sánchez-Palencia. 19 December 1963. Box D474. AGA.

³⁵ Informe del redactor Tomás Gallego Sánchez-Palencia. 19 December 1963. Box D474. AGA.

³⁶ Ndongo Mba, Marcelo. *Personal interview*. 27 November 2002.

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