

FILIBUSTERO: ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

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IN 1855, an American expeditionary force, headed by soldier of fortune William Walker, descended upon Nicaragua, ostensibly to help the beleaguered Liberal party unseat the reigning Conservative government. Although official U. S. policy was against such privateering, public sentiment was with Walker; during the entire period Walker and his men were referred to as *filibusteros* in Spanish and *filibuster* in English, and the U. S. Minister in Nicaragua, John H. Wheeler, whose frank encouragement of privateering expeditions was a flagrant violation of the official policy of neutrality and non-intervention, was referred to by Central Americans as *el ministro filibustero*.¹ Walker himself was aware that the term *filibustero* was being applied to him by his Central American foes, and the thought did not seem to bother him;² indeed, in the United States the idea of mounting filibustering expeditions captured the public fancy, and despite the reverses suffered by Walker and others, "going a-filibusterin'" remained a popular subject for daydreams.

At approximately the same time, in the United States, the term *filibuster* became generalized to mean roughly the seizure of foreign territory through pirate-like actions. Only a few years later (the first attestations come in 1858), *filibuster* came to mean disruption of meetings of the United States Senate and Congress, in order to

¹ Frederic Rosengarten, *Freebooters Must Die* (Wayne, New Jersey: Haverford House, 1976), p. 140. See also Andrew Carr, *The World and William Walker* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

² William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua* (Mobile: S. H. Goetzl, 1860), p. 364. See Also Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (New York: Frank Cass, 1859), pp. 138, 262.

forestall voting, a meaning that has survived until the present day.³ Thus, while the average American turns his mind to the national government upon hearing *filibuster*, his nineteenth-century counterpart would have shared the image that springs to mind in the Latin American, that of a pirate, privateer, or zealous mercenary. French has a similar term, *flibustier*, also meaning pirate or privateer, and now confined to literary reference to pirates of earlier centuries.

When Central Americans of the mid-nineteenth century applied *filibustero* to Walker and other soldiers of fortune, they were reactivating a word which had previously enjoyed currency in the Caribbean region as a result of the extensive activities of pirates during earlier centuries. However, this curious word, which had been used in French and English since the early seventeenth century,⁴ does not appear in any Spanish language dictionary until the first edition of the dictionary of the Cuban Esteban Pichardo, in 1836.⁵ Moreover, both in the first and in succeeding editions of Pichardo and in other etymological accounts in English, Spanish, and French, the history of this word is revealed to be confusing, torturous, and contradictory, and all but impossible to establish with certainty. Indeed, the word itself seems to have been spawned in the same hideaways that gave rise to the colorful and mysterious lifestyle of the early pirates.

Although the etymology of *filibustero* is clouded, there is not a total absence of order, nor is there a complete lack of accepted opinions (which does not preclude their reexamination). The Spanish lexicographer Juan Corominas readily admits that the word is of uncertain origin.⁶ Following the lead of French and English lexicographers, Corominas supposes *filibustero* to be ultimately derived from French *flibustier* or from the presumed original source, Dutch *vrijbuiter* "corsair," which also gave rise to English *freebooter*.

³ *A Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), II, 970-71; *The Century Dictionary* (New York: The Century Company, 1889), III, 2213.

⁴ The first English citation, *fleebooter* / *flibutor*, comes in 1591, while French *flibustier* is first recorded in 1684.

⁵ Esteban Pichardo, *Diccionario provisional casi-razonado de voces cubanas* (La Habana, 1836).

⁶ Juan Corominas, *Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Berne: Francke, 1954), II, 524-25.

to the addition of the *s*, Corominas can only suppose a possible association with *farabustear*, a medieval criminal slang term meaning "cleverly rob or cheat." The similarity of meaning makes this hypothesis somewhat plausible, but does not answer the obvious question of why, since *farabustear* already existed, a new similar form should be created. Nor is any indication given of the extent to which *farabustear* played an active role in Spanish, both in terms of geographical location and frequency of usage among various individuals, although the time period of the first attestations (1609) at least places the word in the same time frame as the supposed origins of *filibustero*.

Pichardo lists *filibustero* as a corruption of *flibotero* "fly-boat pilot." However, a later revisor, Rodríguez Herrera, believes Pichardo to be in error, "a no ser que aquí censure a los que, haciendo sinónimos estos dos vocablos, usen el primero por el segundo."⁷ Rodríguez Herrera further notes that *flibotero* is the same as *flibotero*, which he derives from English *fly-boat* (translated as *barco mosca*) "especie de fusta de unas cien toneladas de capacidad, pero en cuyo aparejo no hay artimón ni masteleros"; he admits that some individuals may have confused the two terms, but maintains that they have generally been kept separate, in both pronunciation and meaning.

The *Oxford English Dictionary*⁸ provides more food for thought, as well as more room for conflicting opinions and derivations. While coinciding with Corominas that Dutch *vrijbuiter* is most likely the original source, the OED merely notes that Spanish *filibustero* is "presumably" derived from French *flibustier*, which was also current in English until well into the present century. The first attestation of the early variant *flibustier* is given as 1667, but *flibustier* does not appear in print until the French edition of Esquemeling's *Histoire des aventuriers* of 1686;⁹ the original Dutch edition of 1678 contains no reference to this word, nor do the English translation of 1685 or the Spanish translation of 1681. *Flibustier* also appears in De Lussans' *Journal du voyage fait à la mer du sud avec les flibustiers de l'Amérique en 1684*

⁷ Esteban Rodríguez Herrera, notes to the Pichardo *novissimo*, revised edition of Pichardo's dictionary (La Habana: Selecta, 1953), p. 313.

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), IV, 212-13.

⁹ Olivier Exquemeling, *Histoire des aventuriers* (Paris, 1678).

et années suivantes, published in 1689,¹⁰ which indicates that the word must have been in use at least a few years prior to that date. Another early attestation comes in a report from the governor of Saint-Domingue, who speaks of the "men they call *flibustiers*."¹¹

The *OED* goes on to speculate on the possible derivation from *flyboat* (from Dutch *vlieboot*, which gave French *flibot* and Spanish *flibote/filibote*), but eventually decides against this hypothesis, considering in turn the possibility of derivation from English *freeboter*. It is suggested that a corrupted form may have originated in contacts between French and English subjects in the West Indies or that the French form came into being in Europe during the wars of the sixteenth century. The matter is further complicated by a single attestation, in 1587, of the English term *flibutor* and its variant *fleebooter*, used roughly in the sense of pirate or bandit. The modern English *filibuster* is a recent introduction, coming directly from the mysterious Spanish *filibustero*.

Moving away from lexicography and turning to history, among the principal histories of piracy both old and modern, the consensus is almost universal that *filibustier* is but a corrupt pronunciation that French-speaking pirates gave to English *freebooter*. Thus Powell, in an introduction to an 1893 edition of Esquemeling's *The Buccaneers of America*, notes that the French "took the title of *flibustier*, which is the English word 'freebooter' pronounced in the French manner."¹² Haring states that when the French developed into corsairs and pirates, "they adopted an English name and called themselves 'flibustiers,' which is merely the French mariner's mode of pronouncing the English word 'freebooter,'"¹³ while Stockton, in 1898, gives *flibustier* as the French pronunciation of *freebooter*, which was then "corrupted" into English *filibuster*.¹⁴ After a while, all these

¹⁰ Raveneau De Lussan, *Journal du voyage fait à la mer de sud avec les flibustiers de l'Amérique en 1684 & années suivantes* (Paris: Jean Baptiste Coignar, 1689).

¹¹ In a document of 1677, cited by Arthur Newton, *The European Nations in the West Indies 1493-1688* (London: A. & C. Black, 1933), p. 323.

¹² Henry Powell, introduction to John Esquemeling (Alexander Olivier Exquemelin), *The Buccaneers of America* (New York 1893), p. xxv.

¹³ C. H. Haring, *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the XVII Century* (1910; rpt. Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), p. 66.

¹⁴ Frank Stockton, *Buccaneers and Pirates of our Coasts* (New York: Macmillan, 1967; first ed. 1898), p. 32.

accounts begin to share a suspicious similarity, and indeed it is obvious that the majority of the authors have merely copied from earlier sources, without checking original sources or adopting a critical attitude toward the derivation of the word, preferring instead to get down to the more exciting business of describing the pirates' exploits. The above cited works, and the scores of similar lesser-known statements that could be quoted from the literature on piracy in the West Indies, all take their cue from a very few early works in French, in which the possible derivation from *freeboter* is mentioned. One is that of Jean Baptiste Lepers, whose *Histoire de Saint-Domingue* (1732) gives the derivation in question.¹⁵ Another early source is Pierre F. Xavier de Charlevoix, whose *Histoire de l'Isle d'Espagnole ou S. Domingue* (1730) mentions the same possibility.¹⁶

Even if one were to accept English *freebooter* and/or Dutch *vrijubiter* as the original source of *flibustier*, or even if reference to *flyboat* or *flibutor* were permitted to enter into the picture, there remains the question of the insertion of *s* in *flibustier* and related forms. It has already been seen that Corominas supposes the *s* to have been added in the Antilles, influenced by *farabustear*. The *OED* takes a different track, assuming that the *s* originated in French as a sign of vowel length, i.e. not being pronounced. However, a citation from a dictionary of 1704 indicates that the *s* was already pronounced by that time, which was not long after the supposed origin and spread of *flibustier*. Thus, in addition to the etymological basis for *flibustier* and *filibustero* and the routes of mutual interaction and evolution that the words took in the course of their history, we are also left with the problem of explaining away a rather strange phonetic evolution. Let us consider these problems in turn, before turning to additional data and the formation of a hypothesis that may promise a higher degree of plausibility than some of its predecessors.

Beginning first with the putative root word, one has to look for a source which, in terms of influence and contact spans several languages, including English, French, Spanish, and possibly Dutch. Thus, it would appear that Corominas' postulate of the influence of

¹⁵ Jean-Baptiste Lepers, *Histoire de Saint-Domingue* (Paris, 1732).

¹⁶ Pierre F. Xavier de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'Isle d'Espagnole ou S. Domingue* (Paris, 1730), II, Book 7.

farabustear is inadequate to account for the developments in French and English, unless one were to suppose that *filibustero* were the source for *flibustier*, which goes against the chronology of attestations; this matter will be returned to below. That leaves the possible connections with English *freebooter*, in turn derived from a Dutch etymon. This is most likely a contributing source, for attestations of *freebooter* with the sense of "pirate" antedate those of *flibustier* and the later reintroduction of this word into English. There remains the possible influence of *flyboat*, which in turn gave French *flibot* and Spanish *flibote*. The *OED* objects that the first attestations of *flibutor* and *flibuster* appear to refer to land-based marauders. Rodríguez Herrera, in his commentary on Pichardo's dictionary, simply indicates that the two words were distinct, and that *filibustero* cannot be considered a defective pronunciation of *flibotero*. Burney notes that "some authors have given a derivation to the name *flibustier* from the word 'flyboat' because, say they, the French hunters in Hispaniola bought vessels of the Dutch, called flyboats, to cruise upon the Spaniards."¹⁷ To this supposition, Burney offers two objections. First, that *flyboat* is only a translation of the Dutch *fluyt*. The second is that "it would not very readily occur to anyone to purchase Dutch fluyts or flyboats for chasing vessels." Here there is some confusion regarding the Dutch etymon of *flyboat*, but the existence of some such vessel is beyond doubt. In one description, we learn that a flyboat is "a large flat bottomed high-sterned Dutch vessel of 400-600 tons."¹⁸ Corominas defines *flibote* as "pequeña embarcación semejante a la urca," while Rodríguez Herrera notes a *flibote* as "especie de fusta de unas cien toneladas de capacidad." Newton (p. 169) mentions that the French applied the term *flibustiers* "because they were accustomed to use light craft like the Dutch 'fly-boats' in their attack upon the Spanish vessels that came near their coasts." The latter descriptions sound more appropriate for a pirate vessel than the 400-600 ton monster described earlier, but the conclusion to be drawn from the various descriptions of *flyboat* and *flibote* is that this term did not refer to a single, specific type of vessel, but rather to an entire class of ships, or perhaps to a style of vessel, of Dutch

manufacture or origin, used at a particular time and place. It is not difficult to see how such a term, which may perhaps at one time have had a single unequivocal reference, came to lose such a high degree of specificity, to the point there its meaning could encompass an entire class of ships, which in any case were those used by pirates in the West Indies during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the English translation of Esquemeling (p. 111) we learn that "to l'Ollonais all this seemed but little; and thus he assaulted her with great courage, his own ship carrying only twenty-two guns, and having no more than a small asetia, or flyboat, for help." The sixteenth century author Antonio Rojo y Sojo¹⁹ uses the term *flibote* in similar fashion, as does a 1680 document "Recopilación de la historia de las Indias,"²⁰ while in a later description²¹ we learn that "los aventureros ingleses y franceses compraron a los holandeses pequeños barcos llamados *flibots* con los cuales recorrieron los mares cercanos, donde capturaron cuantos navíos y barcos españoles pudieron atrapar." In a *cédula* dated 1629²² we find "la vissita y despacho necesario a los urcas o *ffibotes*." Thus it is impossible to completely rule out the influence of these terms on the derivation of *filibustero/flibustier*. Whether or not the boats in question were totally appropriate for acts of piracy, if the term came to refer to an entire class of foreign manufactured and foreign piloted vessels whose crews were often pirates and robbers, then the active fermenting process of folk-etymology could not inconceivably have forced a semantic rapprochement and eventual coalescence between *freebooter* and *flyboat*;²³ it has already been seen how *flyboat*, through accidental phonetic similarity, became associ-

¹⁹ Cited in Aniceto de Pagès, *Gran diccionario de la lengua castellana (de autoridades)* (Barcelona: Fomento Comercial del Libro, 1932), III, 58.

²⁰ Cited in the Real Academia's *Diccionario de autoridades*, III (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1732), 765.

²¹ José Luciano Franco, *La presencia negra en el nuevo mundo* (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1968), p. 63.

²² Reprinted in Gustavo Adolfo Mejía, ed., *Historia de Santo Domingo* (Ciudad Trujillo: Pol Hermanos, 1953), VI, 37-38. The document is dated 27 March 1629.

²³ For a more complete description of the vessels used by the pirates, see J. and F. Gall, *El filibusterismo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957), pp. 149-51.

¹⁷ James Burney, *History of the Buccaneers of America* (London, 1816), pp. 49-50.

¹⁸ H. R. Allen, *Buccaneer: Admiral Sir Henry Morgan* (London: Arthur Barker, 1976), p. 183.

ated with English *fly* and defined in Spanish as *barco mosca*.²⁴ Whether or not the vessels so described were small and agile, this pseudo-etymology would suggest that they were, and would further the development of the term into one used to designate pirates, who were noteworthy for the high degree of maneuverability of their ships. These words, presumably originating among the pirates themselves, or at least acquiring among the pirates the accepted meanings, trickled down slowly to the shore-based populations that included those literate individuals responsible for the attestations that survive, although the first real explanations came from writers like Esquemeling and De Lussan who were themselves pirates. In view of the orthographical and etymological irregularity in the works of scribes in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, when dealing with words which formed part of the common vocabulary and whose roots had an established literary and historical tradition, it would be too much to demand that these same scribes would place a premium on linguistic accuracy when dealing with words derived from wild groups of polyglot marauders. Thus, the best that one can hope to do is offer a plausible reconstruction of the state of flux and confusion that must have surrounded the creation of the terms *flibustier* and *filibustero*.

The next affair to be discussed is the relative dates of appearance of the terms in English, French, and Spanish, in particular the relatively late acceptance of *filibustero*. Before continuing, it is useful to consider another word which arose at about the same time and place as *filibustero* and came to have the same approximate meaning in several languages. The word is *bucanero*, English *buccaneer* and

²⁴ Another strange derivation is offered by Julio Calcaño, *El castellano en Venezuela* (Caracas, 1897), p. 492: "Parece que *filibustero* no procede del inglés *freebooter*, saqueador, sino del vocablo del mismo idioma *flyboat*, que en la América del Norte aplican al conductor o patrón del *flyboat* (en danés *vliboot* y en castellano *filibote*), formado de *fly*, atacar violentamente, y *boat*, bote." Equally original, if not entirely accurate, is the derivation proposed by Juan Sosa and Enrique Arce in the *Compendio de historia de Panamá* (Panamá: Casa Editorial del Diario de Panamá, 1911), p. 119; according to them, *filibustero* is a "decomposición de las voces inglesas *fly-boat*, bote-mosca, por el uso que hacían de embarcaciones pequeñas y sutiles, propias para navegar en mares de poco fondo y para escapar a la persecución de navíos de algún calado." Objections to the proposed phonological developments are also offered by J. L. Dillard, *American Talk* (New York: Random House, 1976), pp. 38-39.

French *boucanier*. Fortunately the history of this word is rather well known. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Caribbean region was infested by pirates and privateers of all nations, predominant among them Dutch, French, and English sailors and soldiers of fortune. Eventually, a large number of these individuals settled on the island of Tortuga, off the coast of Hispaniola. Today Tortuga (Tortue) is part of the republic of Haiti, but in the sixteenth century the island, while nominally a Spanish possession, was a no-man's-land where few law-abiding citizens of any nation dared to go. Originally, before the pirates built their hideaways in the island's numerous coves and mountains, the island was peopled by groups of renegades living on the margins of the law and trading sporadically with ships that stopped. One of the first activities of the settlers was curing and drying meat of animals they had hunted and selling the dried jerked meat to ships that called. Gradually, the Carib Indian name for the drying hearths, *boukan*, came to be used not only for the hearth itself but also for the settlements and the activities that were pursued therein, and from there it was a logical next step to derive French *boucanier* and Spanish *bucanero*. According to available evidence, it was the former, French word that was adopted into English by the English-speaking members of the groups, while, at least according to the legends, the French in turn adopted *freebooter* into *flibustier*. Whether or not there was really a bilateral exchange of designations, *boucanier*, *bucanero*, and *buccaneer* soon came to mean not only the quasi-legal entrepreneurs and meat curers, but also the lawless pirates that used the island as headquarters; eventually only the latter meaning survived.

The original *boucaniers* lost their quasi-legal status when the Spanish and French governments attempted to tax and regulate the free-lance drying operation, which was operating outside the boundaries of the strict colonial trade laws. The *boucaniers* resisted, and it was perhaps this ambience of defiance that attracted the seafaring pirates that eventually made the island infamous, and who appropriated *boucanier*, *buccaneer*, and *bucanero* for themselves. The pirates on the island formed a sort of informal but powerful organization, called the Brotherhood of the Coast, formed around 1640;²⁵

²⁵ See Maurice Basson, *The Scourge of the Indies: Buccaneers, Corsairs and Fili-*

they spoke a kind of *lingua franca* in which were included elements of English, French, Spanish, Dutch, and indigenous languages, and this motley population came to represent a powerful social force in the lives of the Spanish and French colonies in the West Indies,²⁶ as well as on the mainland areas of Central America, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador.

The term *buccaneer* undoubtedly had its origin on Tortuga in the late sixteenth century, but its appearance in written documents does not come until the following century, reflecting the passage from criminal argot to common parlance of land-based literate individuals. When Esquemeling's book came out in an English edition in 1684, Henry Morgan, who was branded a pirate in the book, started a libel suit against the Flemish writer and referred to both Esquemeling and Malthus, the publisher, as *bucaniers* and *buccaneers*,²⁷ using a term which was more familiar to the pirates than to the population of England. That the latter statement is accurate is demonstrated by the comment of Esquemeling's first English translator, who after speaking in general about the pirates, states "of all which actions, as we cannot but confess ourselves to have been ignorant hitherto (the very name of *Buccaneers* being as yet known but to few of the ingenious, as their lives, laws and conversation are in a manner unto none)."²⁸ In fact, before the formation of the Brotherhood of the coast, the English knew the *boucaniers* merely as "cow-killers."²⁹

The word *bucanero* also appears in Spanish at about the same time; for example, in a document written in Santo Domingo and

busters, trans. E. Thornton (London: George Routledge & Son, 1929), p. 11. Gall, pp. 84-85, considers that the founding of the Brotherhood may be dated back to 1620, when the Spanish government made its first attack on the *bucaneros* of Tortuga.

²⁶ See also Mendel Peterson, *The Funnel of Gold* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955); Alfred Sternback, *Filibusters and Buccaneers* (New York: Robert McBride, n.d.); Philip Lindsay, *The Great Buccaneer (Sir Henry Morgan)* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1951); Peter Gerhard, *Pirates on the West Coast of New Spain* (Glendale, California: Clark, 1960), Chapter 4; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Central America* (San Francisco: History Company, 1886), II, Chapter 26; Conrado Bonilla, *Piraterías en Honduras* (San Pedro Sula: Imprenta Renovación, 1955).

²⁷ Lindsay, pp. 257-59.

²⁸ *The Buccaneers of America*, p. xxix.

²⁹ Newton, p. 169.

dated 1687,³⁰ we find "a donde franceses monteadores que dicen bucaneros se mantienen haciendo indecibles daños...si no es sacándolos de raíz con el gran poder de V. M. en cuyo recelo y anhelo de mantenerse en tan violenta posesión han hecho dichos franceses bucaneros diferentes informes al rey de Francia." Sigüenza y Góngora, in his *Trofeo de la justicia española en el castigo de la alevosía francesa* (1691)³¹ speaks of "quienes acompañaron en ella quantos piratas y bocaneros estaban allí haziendo tiempo para salir al corso." However, the word did not gain real currency in any language until later in the eighteenth century, despite the fact that by this time, the principal nuclei of West Indian piracy, the *boucans* of Tortuga, Jamaica, Margarita, had already been dismantled by the combined efforts of Spanish, French, and British authorities. The history of this word suggests a possible parallel evolution for *filibustier*, which having its origin among the pirates, made only sporadic contact with the land-based population, which in general would have used the words already available to them for describing the seafaring bandits: *pirata*, *corsario*, *enemigo*, and *ladrón*.

During the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, English *buccaneer* was used interchangeably with *filibustier*, with the latter never being as frequent in English and eventually fading away altogether, until reintroduced as *filibuster* in the mid-nineteenth century; this may reflect the fact that several influential works on piracy were written in English and/or described the exploits of the most famous English pirates, including Drake, Hawkins, and Morgan.

Corominas gives the first attestation of *filibustero* in Spanish as the 1836 edition of Pichardo's dictionary, but it is certainly possible to push this date back. For example, in a document dated in Santo Domingo in 1783,³² we find "y quedando quasi despoblado un país tan basto, facilitó la entrada y establecimiento de los Filibusteros,

³⁰ "Memorial del Lic. Gregorio Semillán Campuzano, Sto. Domingo, 16 de agosto de 1687," published in Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, ed., *Relaciones históricas de Santo Domingo* (Ciudad Trujillo: Montalvo, 1957), III, 289.

³¹ Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *Trofeo de la justicia española en el castigo de la alevosía francesa* (1691); reprinted in his *Obras* (Mexico: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Mexicanos, 1928), p. 207.

³² José A. de Castro Palomino, "Breve descripción de la isla española de Santo Domingo" (1783); published in Demorizi, III, 338.

origen de la Colonia Francesa." The fact that this term is not in any way glossed or set apart in the text indicates that, at least in the circles in which the document (a general description of the island of Hispanolia) was read, the word *filibustero* needed no explanation. By this time, French *flibustier* had appeared and been explained by LePers, Charlevoix, Raveneau de Lussan, and others, so that a literate individual may have been aware of the French word merely through reading. However, given the relative isolation of Santo Domingo from the European centers in which the early works were published and the significant fact that no attempt is made to explain the use of *filibustero*, it is likely that the word was already part of the vocabulary spoken in the Caribbean regions. In a document from coastal Colombia of 1758,³³ we find "aquel espíritu de piratería, o mas bien de crueldad y carnicería de los Bucanieres o Filibusteros . . ." Previous to this time, *filibustero* does not appear to have been used extensively in Spanish documents, although an exhaustive search of colonial documents in archives, museums, libraries, and academies would most probably turn up a few more citations. Vera,³⁴ whose history of Honduras was written at the end of the nineteenth century, notes that "en 1643 fue saqueada i aniquilada la ciudad de Matagalpa por los piratas establecidos en las costas del Norte. Fue entonces cuando por vez primera se les designó con el nombre de *filibusteros*." However, there is no indication that this word is recorded in any document of the period; Vera's remark probably points to the spread of French *flibustier*, which is often indiscriminately translated as *filibustero* in later Spanish works, as though it were a native word and had been all along. In fact the original source for Vera's idea seems to have been Gámez' *Historia de Nicaragua* (1888): "La ciudad de Matagalpa fue saqueada y arruinada en 1643 por los piratas establecidos en la costa del norte, haciendo oír por primera vez entre nosotros el nombre de filibusteros con que

³³ Antonio Narváez, "Informe sobre las provincias de Santa Marta y Río-Hacha" (1758); published in Antonio B. Cuervo ed., *Colección de documentos inéditos sobre la geografía e historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Zalamea, 1891), II, 188.

³⁴ Robustiano Vera, *Apuntes para la historia de Honduras* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta de "El Correo," 1896), p. 126; also L. Mariñas, *Honduras* (Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 1963), pp. 230-31.

se designaban."³⁵ Again, no documents are cited, and it is probable that the inference is made since Matagalpa was the first site of a major pirate attack on Central America's mainland; the *nosotros* may then simply refer to the inhabitants of Nicaragua and Honduras.

Santo Domingo had the greatest possibility of an early assimilation of *filibustero*, given the proximity to Tortuga. However, an examination of documents written in Santo Domingo beginning at the end of the seventeenth century and continuing well past the middle of the eighteenth century reveals no use of the term; the most common word is *pirata*, with *ladrón* running a close second.³⁶ An examination of documents from other Caribbean areas where pirates were active during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals a similar lack of usage of *filibustero*. As late as the mid-eighteenth century, most documents, including those originating in the coastal areas of Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru, and in Panama, Honduras, and Nicaragua, refer only to *piratas*, *enemigos*, *corsarios*, and *ladrones*.³⁷ The conclusion that emerges from

³⁵ José Dolores Gámez, *Historia de Nicaragua* (Managua, 1888), p. 208; another source is Tomás Ayón, *Historia de Nicaragua, desde los tiempos más remotos hasta el año de 1852* (Granada, 1887), II, 54-55. Gámez cites Ayón on the etymology of *filibustero*, which the latter describes (ostensibly citing Esquemeling) as derived from the English [sic.] word *flibustier* "que significa corsario." In another work, *Historia de la costa de Mosquitia* (Managua: Talleres Nacionales, 1939), p. 50, Gámez clarifies his remarks, noting that the pirates that sacked Matagalpa caused the word *filibustero* to be used for the first time "en suelo centroamericano."

³⁶ Documents consulted include those published by Demorizi and Mejía; in addition, some unpublished documents were consulted in the Dominican National Archives, but no new information came to light.

³⁷ For Venezuela, see Rodolfo Cortés, *Antología documental de Venezuela 1492-1820* (Caracas, 1960), pp. 98-9; José Sucre Reyes, *La capitania general de Venezuela* (Barcelona: Editorial R. M., 1969); Miguel Acosta Saignes, *Vida de los esclavos negros en Venezuela* (Caracas: Hespérides, 1967). For Costa Rica, see León Fernández, *Colección de documentos para la historia de Costa Rica* (Barcelona: Imprenta Viuda de Luis Tasso, 1907). For Panama, see Sosa and Arce; also Carlos Pereyra, *Historia de la América española* (Madrid: Saturnino Gallejo, 1924), Volume V; *Collección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas Indias españolas de Ultramar* (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1899), Volume XII; Rubén Darío Caries, *220 años del periodo colonial en Panamá*, 2nd ed. (Panamá: Imprenta Nacional, 1957), Chapters 5 and 9. For Colombia, Juan Friede, *Documentos inéditos para la historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Academia Colombiana de Historia, 1955), Volumes I-V; also Cuervo, *Colección de documentos*. For Mexico, see *Historia documental de México* (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1964), Volumes I-II; José Antonio Calderón Quijano, *Historia de las*

these documents is that for some reason *filibustero* was not in common use at the time, or that there was some factor which caused it not to appear in written documents. Both suppositions probably contain elements of truth, in a diachronic perspective. First, given the putative origin of *filibustero* on or around Santo Domingo, the word may well have spread only slowly to the neighboring islands and to Central and South American areas, carried by pirates, travellers, military personnel, religious figures, and other bearers of linguistic innovation. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that for a considerable period of time, *filibustero* belonged only to the slang of the seafaring pirates themselves and the Spanish soldiers and sailors that combatted them, and that even when the word became definitively implanted on the shore, it remained a regionalism, not able to displace the universal and time-honored words already in use. The vast majority of Spanish documents in which pirates are mentioned are official communications written by or to military personnel, usually in Spain. Given the fact that Spanish already contained several acceptable words, it is not surprising that the New World writers did not choose to employ a word that at best was a regionalism, and that would not have been understood in Spain or even in the more remote American colonies. The military reports and letters are characterized by a laconic style not given to elaborate explanations and the authors, often in spite of an obvious lack of literary skills, tried to adhere to the established norms of official writing. There may even have been a desire to

fortificaciones en Nueva España (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, 1953), pp. 249-84; Gregorio M. de Cango, *Diario 1675-1664*, ed. Manuel Romero de Terreros (Mexico: Porrúa, 1952), I, 5 and II, 24-25. For Nicaragua, see Ayón and Gámez; also, Manuel M. de Penabaz, *Costa Rica: No oaquea* (Panamá en el siglo XVI (Madrid: M. Mondillo, 1883). For Honduras, José A. Calderón Quijano, "El fuerte de San Fernando de Omoa: su historia e importancia que tuvo en la defensa del golfo de Honduras," *Revista de Ibero*, 3 (1942), 515-18 and 1 (1943), 127-63. In the Honduran National Archives no new evidence was turned up, although in a document dated 1687 ("Mortual del Capitán Labián de Alvarado" (Caja 19, document 590) *piratas* and *enemigos* are mentioned, and the same terms are found in documents dated 1688 ("Inventario de los bienes de Eco Beltrán," Caja 20, document 598; "Proceso contra Labián de Velasco y José Nieto" (Caja 19, document 589) for Ecuador, see G. Chiriboga, *Historia de cabildos de la ciudad de Quito* (Quito: Imprenta Municipal, 1969). For Peru, see *Virreinato peruano—documentos para su historia* (Lima, 1955), Volume III. In addition to the above sources, numerous unpublished documents were consulted in various archives and libraries, without turning up any new evidence.

avoid mentioning a word by which the pirates, who were both *ladrones* and *enemigos* to the Spaniards, designated themselves, since to do so would be to give *de facto* recognition to the Brotherhood of the Coast. Even the eighteenth-century *Infortunios* of Sigüenza y Góngora only makes reference to *piratas* and *bucaneros*,³⁸ despite the fact that the author, having lived both in coastal Mexico and in the Antilles, must surely have come into contact with those who called themselves *flibustiers*. As in the case of many etymologies lost in the distant past, one must not confuse dates of written attestation with actual societal usage. Regardless of actual active usage in late seventeenth century Spanish America, *filibustero* was at least passively familiar in the areas where contact with pirates was a major factor in shaping the lives and cultures developing in the New World. There is no ready explanation for the fact that the word became accepted earlier in French and English than in Spanish, although one might suggest that the origin of the most famous writers and pirates is influential. There were few well-known Spanish pirates, and those that existed operated on a local scale and never attained the stature of the French, English, and Dutch, who also supplied the writers to describe the deeds. An element of nationalism may also be adduced, the refusal to use a term which had gained popularity in countries with which Spain was in constant conflict. The early attestations of *flibote* are suggestive, as is the obvious contact between Spanish military personnel and French and English pirates on Tortuga, Margarita, and Tigre as the Spanish made a definitive move to wipe the islands clean of pirates in the last decades of the seventeenth century.

The most significant detail in tracing the history of *filibustero* is the insertion of the *s*, assuming an original etymon with no syllable-final *s*. It has been seen how several influential writers on the subject of piracy have assumed that *flibustier* represents a phonetic deformation of *freebooter* by French sailors, but to make this statement without qualification is extremely rash since there are no precedents for this type of interference when the two languages have come into contact. The fronting of English [u] to French [y] is

³⁸ Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez (1698)*, included in Sigüenza's *Obras históricas* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1944).

normal, as might be the addition of the suffix *-ier*, corresponding to English agentive *-er*; in many cases the English suffix is but a reflection of earlier French influence. The putative change of *r* to *l* does not stretch the boundaries of credibility excessively, since the history of French abounds with such changes, as does that of Spanish, Portuguese, Galician, and occasionally also English. However, the introduction of a syllable-final *s* is not a change to be expected from interference of French phonotactics, since *freebooter* could easily have given **flibutor* or **fributor*, both completely consistent with French phonetic and morphological patterns, as indicated by the existing attestations. *Flibot* is also attested in French, and *flibote* in Spanish. The *OED* speculates that the insertion of the *s* "probably originated in Fr. as a mere sign of vowel length," although as early as 1704 there is testimony that the *s* was pronounced in French. Precedents do exist for an *s* indicating vowel lengthening in Middle French, but there are serious objections in the case of *flibustier*. Much as is occurring in many contemporary dialects of Spanish, syllable-final [s] was lost in French, apparently first through a process of aspiration: syllable-final [z] also participated in this process, probably even earlier.³⁹ In any case, the final vestiges of syllable-final [s] appear to have been lost some time during the thirteenth century, and by the end of this century the process was all but complete, except in some isolated dialect areas of France. Obviously, by the time of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pirate activities in the Caribbean, syllable-final [s] in French was long gone, not only in pronunciation and in the memory of speakers, but in most cases also in the orthography.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the syllable-final *s* was occasionally introduced orthographically, for a variety of reasons, including vowel length, but none had to do with actual pronunciation of [s]. The letter served merely as a diacritic mark and was accessible only to scribes, printers, and other members of the small elite of literate individuals who were capable of appreciating the orthographical niceties facilitated by the reintroduction of written *s*.

³⁹ M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1943), paragraphs 377-79.

A syllable-final [s] was added to the pronunciation of a few words, due in most cases to the influence of the reformed Latin pronunciation in the Church and of some learned Italian and Spanish loan words. Some words in which the *s* had previously been effaced also saw the reinstatement of this sound for purely analogical reasons, and vacillation persisted for some time afterward. More frequent were words influenced by the combination of learned spellings and attempts to mirror the same in pronunciation. A noteworthy characteristic of all words in which a phonetic [s] was reintroduced in syllable-final position is the learned, erudite, and restricted status, found in Church functions, scientific and belletristic pursuits, and the fine arts.

Given the ease with which the [s] was reintroduced into French and the facility which modern speakers of French evidence for the pronunciation of this sound, it may safely be concluded that at the time of the reintroduction, the tendency to weaken syllable-final consonants had essentially disappeared. For whatever reason, there has been no indication of a resurgence of this weakening tendency, but at the same time there has never been a wholesale tendency to reintroduce lost or non-etymological fricatives; the only non-etymological *s* to be found almost invariably results from incorrect division during *liaison*, whence vulgar pronunciations such as *zoiseau* for *oiseau*, *zoreille* for *oreille*, and *zaricot* for *haricot*.

While the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pirate captains were not infrequently men of some education, who might be expected to have had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the fine points of French orthography and the latest in the ever-growing list of learned borrowings, such was definitely not the case with the pirate crews, who by all descriptions were truly a motley assortment of largely or totally illiterate adventurers, many of whom did not even speak French as a first language. These sailors were not aware of or interested in the vagaries of orthographic representation and the consequent battles over pronunciation that were being waged in the academic centers of Europe; in their strongholds on Tortuga Island and on their ships the pirates spoke a mixture of

⁴⁰ Lindsay, pp. 257-59.

several languages, including indigenous words.⁴⁰ Given the slow spread of *filibustier*, it is clear that this word did not pertain to the erudite vocabulary that might conceivably have participated in the pseudo-etymological reorganization of sixteenth-century French, but rather that its origin was entirely popular and therefore that the source of the *s* must be sought elsewhere.

Given the preceding review and summary of the known external history of *filibustero*, I believe that a plausible case may be made for the introduction of the *s* through Spanish influence, from which *s* may have passed directly to English or French or may have participated in a process of mutual influence and borrowing. This claim may seem paradoxical in view of the relative dates of first attestations, but this fact alone should not be a deterrent. In order to demonstrate the plausibility of a Spanish origin of the *s*, it is first necessary to demonstrate sufficient phonological precedents within Spanish to warrant the claim that Spanish could have created such a form, and then to demonstrate adequate contact with the Spanish language in order for the transfer to have taken place.

Current dialects of Spanish present several phonological processes which appear to be historical repetitions of those occurring centuries ago in French; the most noteworthy is the aspiration and deletion of syllable-final *s*, common not only in southern Spain and the Canary Islands, but also in all major areas of Latin America except for some interior highland areas. Within Latin America, this process reaches its greatest extent in the Antilles and on the Caribbean coastal areas of Central and South America, including Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Venezuela, and the coastal provinces of Colombia and Ecuador.⁴¹ Various theories have been adduced to account for the spread of this phenomenon in Latin America, including influence by original settlers from southern Spain,⁴² the influence of African slaves who spoke Spanish only imperfectly,⁴³ climatological factors causing natives of southern Spain to seek

⁴¹ D. Lincoln Canfield, *Spanish Pronunciation in the Americas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 17.

⁴² For example, M. L. Wagner, "Amerikanisch-Spanisch und Vulgarlatein," *ZRP*, 40 (1920), 286-312.

⁴³ For example, Rufino J. Cuervo, *El castellano en América* (Buenos Aires: El Ateneo, 1927), pp. 82-85.

tropical regions of Spanish America,⁴⁴ and separate but parallel evolution on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁵ More plausible is the fact that the major coastal areas maintained a constant contact with Spain, particularly with the Andalusian cities of Cádiz and Sevilla where the aspiration appears to have originated, and phonological innovations are more easily transmitted to those areas where the existence of ports facilitates constant linguistic transference. Those inland areas reached only with difficulty from the coast might be expected to remain somewhat insulated from phonological innovations, and it is not coincidental that these same areas largely conserve the *s* even today.⁴⁶

Although Nebrija did not give any hint of aspiration of syllable-final *s* in his grammar of 1492, this phenomenon may already have been prevalent in Andalusia towards the turn of the sixteenth century.⁴⁷ That there was a stigma attached to weakening of syllable-final *s*, which is attributed to the most unworthy and low-born individuals, is evident by an examination of various literary documents. Sixteenth century Spanish playwrights attempted to give a phonetic indication of the speech of black slaves, with clearly derogatory intent, and one of the many changes is loss of syllable and word-final *s*.⁴⁸ While no sociolinguistic description of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Spanish is available, it is not difficult, by combining an examination of literary documents with a general knowledge of the history of Spanish, to arrive at the conclusion that aspiration or loss of syllable-final *s*, while perhaps typical of un-

⁴⁴ M. L. Wagner, "El supuesto andalucismo de América y la teoría climatológica," *RFE*, 14 (1927), 20-32.

⁴⁵ For example, J. González Moreno, *Etimologías del español* (Mexico: 1936), p. 110.

⁴⁶ Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "Sevilla frente a Madrid," in Diego Catalán, ed., *Miscelánea Homenaje a André Martinet* (La Laguna: Universidad de La Laguna, 1962), III, 99-105, at p. 103.

⁴⁷ Rafael Lapesa, *Historia de la lengua española*, 10th ed. (Madrid: Gredos, 1980), pp. 248, 322, 374.

⁴⁸ Frida Weber de Kurlat, "Sobre el negro como tipo cómico en el teatro español del siglo XVI," *RPh*, 17 (1962), 380-91; Edmund de Chasca, "The Phonology of the Speech of the Negroes in Early Spanish Drama," *HR*, 14 (1946), 322-39; Germán de Granda, "Posibles vías directas de introducción de africanismos en el 'Habla de negro literaria castellana,'" *Thesaurus*, 24 (1969), 459-69; Howard Jason, "The Language of the Negro in Early Spanish Drama," *GLA*, 10 (1967), 330-40.

educated black speakers, was by no means exclusively confined to this group. Rather, the syllable-final weakening was considered a sign of low breeding and served as a sociolinguistic marker whenever it was necessary to ridicule a character by means of speech patterns. As the Spanish language continued to evolve differences between orthographic representation and popular speech, it became possible to offer, in pseudo-phonetic transcription, glimpses of socially stigmatized pronunciations. According to all evidence, this aspiration did not originate among black speakers, who were merely the recipients of a popular Andalusian tradition, carrying it in many instances to an extreme not present before the introduction of Africans who did not speak Spanish.⁴⁹ Blacks imported into Spanish-speaking areas never received the benefits of education, and had to learn the language as best they could. Some had the advantage of being in contact with numerous native speakers of Spanish, while others found themselves most often in the company of other *bozales* (slaves recently arrived from Africa) or other comrades whose knowledge of Spanish was less than perfect. In any case, there was no attempt at indicating the social values attached to particular phonetic variants, since such information would have been of no value under the circumstances. Therefore, if one supposes that aspiration of syllable-final *s* was already prevalent among speakers of Andalusian origin, at least among the lower social strata, then it would be equally logical to assume that this pronunciation would be readily absorbed and even extended by the slaves. Aspiration of *s* in Spanish is frequently perceived by foreign

⁴⁹ Manuel Álvarez Nazario, *El elemento abronceado en el español de Puerto Rico* (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1974); Germán de Granda, *Estudios lingüísticos hispánicos, atrohispánicos y criollos* (Madrid: Gredos, 1978), p. 216f. Corroborating evidence is offered by parallel developments in Portuguese, where syllable-final */s/* sometimes palatalized, but even when transplanted to Asia and Africa did not suffer large scale aspiration or loss, except in the verbal desinence *-mos*. See John Lipski, "The Survival of a 'Marked' Segment in Portuguese," *GL*, 13 (1973), 1-15; "Final *s* in Rio de Janeiro: Imitation or Innovation?" *HR*, 44 (1976), 357-70; W. Gäse, "Notas sobre a fala dos negros em Lisboa no principio do século XVI," *Revista Lusitana*, 30 (1932), 251-57; Elias Farias de Lacerda, "O tratamento do fonema 'S' em português," *Revista Brasileira de Filologia*, 6 (1961), 43-50; Mary L. Nunes, "The Phonologies of Cape Verdean Dialects of Portuguese," *BdF*, 21 (1962), 1-56; Graciela Nogueira Batalha, "Estado actual do dialecto macaense," *RFF*, 9 (1958-59), 177-213; Renato Mendonça, *A influência africana no português do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Sayer, 1933).

speakers as total loss.⁵⁰ It is not accidental that down to the present, in the speech of slaves and other uneducated individuals depicted in Hispanic literature, *s* is frequently indicated as completely lost. Students of Spanish, imitating speakers who aspirate syllable-final *s*, often pronounce no *s* at all, much to the chagrin of their instructors. Even Spanish speakers from dialects where *s* is tenaciously retained often perceive aspiration as loss, and their attempts at imitating and ridiculing *costeño* speech are usually inaccurate.

In the later history of Spanish American literature, it has been common to attribute popular phonetic characteristics to only the socially most inferior characters, including blacks, mestizos, and peasants, even if the characteristics in question are shared by the entire speech community; weakening and loss of *s* is one of the traits most found in literature, attributed nearly exclusively to these low-prestige groups.⁵¹ The noted Cuban folklorist Fernando Ortiz noted that "el lenguaje vulgar suele ser un elemento de la poesía mulata, aunque no es indispensable."⁵² In all Latin American countries where there is a distinctly identifiable black population, popular tradition (among white speakers) often ascribes to them a whole host of popular linguistic tendencies which may be applied to the entire linguistic community, although perhaps with decreasing frequency among higher social classes and also among immigrants from regions of Spain where *s* is consistently preserved.⁵³

In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish, aspiration of *s* was beginning to become widespread, in Andalusia and throughout the Americas, among speakers of little education. By the eighteenth century evidence of loss of *s* is even beginning to crop up in documents written by educated individuals.⁵⁴ Given the distribution

⁵⁰ See Bertil Malmberg, *Études sur la phonétique de l'espagnol parlé en Argentine* (Lund: Gleerup, 1950), p. 170.

⁵¹ A survey of the social connotation of phonetic deformations in literature was carried out and reported in John Lipski, "On the Significance of Literary Black Phonology in Spanish America," presented at the annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, New York, December, 1981.

⁵² Fernando Ortiz, "Más acerca de la poesía mulata—escorzas para su estudio," *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, 32 (1936), 23-39, at p. 23.

⁵³ See Robert Politzer, "Final *s* in the Romania," *RR*, 38 (1947), 159-60.

⁵⁴ For example, in a document dated in Trujillo, Honduras in 1787, we find the Nicaraguan town of Bluefields written *Blatil*, which is the way it is pronounced in Central America ("Diario de ocurrencias particulares... de Don

of aspiration of *s* in most coastal areas of Latin America, in the speech of all social classes, there is no way that the phenomenon could be considered a spontaneous New World development. Rather, this aspirated pronunciation is part of the Peninsular heritage, not of the first *conquistadores*, but of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century immigration and trade with Spain.

Lest it appear that the preceding discussion has wandered too far afield, it should be noted that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pirates of the Caribbean, the *flibustiers* and *boucaniers*, spent the majority of their time attacking and sacking the Spanish provinces, and that the cities and territories upon which the pirates concentrated their greatest repeated efforts are precisely those in which aspiration and loss of [s] has reached its greatest extent: the Antilles and the coastal areas of Central and South America.

There is probably no coastal area of the Caribbean and Central American region that was not visited by pirates at one time or another, but the *flibustiers* based on Tortuga and the other pirate operating in the area showed a preference for certain cities, including the following: Campeche, Veracruz, Acapulco, Puerto Caballos (modern Puerto Cortés), Trujillo, Omoa, Portobelo and Panama, Cartagena, Río Hacha, Santa Marta, Caracas, Maracaibo, Guayaquil, Realejo, Acajutla, and naturally the Antillean ports. English and French pirates had settled themselves on Tigre Island, in the Gulf of Fonseca, and attacked inland towns in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Honduras.⁵⁵ Frequently, the defending soldiers, in a

Gonzalo Vllejo" published in *Relaciones históricas y geográficas de América Central* [Madrid: Victoriano Suárez, 1908], p. 222). Maximiliano Jiménez Sabater, in his *Más datos sobre el español de República Dominicana* (Santo Domingo: Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo, 1976), pp. 34-35, cites Dominican documents from 1696, 1729, 1776, and 1779 in which loss of *s* is already indicated.

⁵⁵ In addition to previously cited works, see the following: L. E. Elliott, *Central America* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1925), p. 129; Pedro Pérez Valenzuela, *Historias de piratas—los aventureros del mar en la América Central* (Guatemala, 1936), pp. 9-32; Vito Alessio Robles, *Acapulco en la historia y en la leyenda* (Mexico, 1932), pp. 95-109; C. H. Haring, *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the West Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1918), p. 232 f.; Sofonías Salvatierra, *Compendio de historia de Centroamérica*, 2nd ed. (Managua, 1946), pp. 125-28; Justo Zaragoza, *Piraterías y agresiones de los ingleses y de otros pueblos de Europa en la América española desde el siglo XVI al XVII* (Madrid, 1883); Manuel A. Peña Battle, *La isla de Tortuga* (Madrid: Cultura Hispánica, 1951); Rómulo Durón, *Bosquejo histórico de Honduras*, 3rd ed. (Tegucigalpa: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, 1982); Félix Salgado, *Elementos de historia de Honduras* (Tegucigalpa, 1945), pp. 47-48.

tradition which has not changed radically in the intervening centuries, came from the lowest social classes, and except for the uniform, did not differ substantially in their outlook or behavior from the pirates they were fighting.⁵⁶ The attacking pirates came into face-to-face contact predominantly with black, mulatto, and Indian soldiers and guards, and it was only when sacking individual homes that the pirates were likely to meet high-born citizens, who did not usually form part of the shock troops sent to hold off pirate attacks. There is even evidence that, of the slaves taken prisoner by the pirates, some eventually became members of the pirate crews, since life aboard a pirate ship was probably no worse than the lot of a slave in the colonies.⁵⁷

Due to their contact with the coastal populations, many of the pirates spoke Spanish tolerably well. In addition to rapid attacks launched from ships, the pirates frequently spent considerable periods of time on land, mounting massive expeditions and besieging cities. Just as an example, Morgan's troops occupied Panama for 28 days in 1671, while at the same time a troop of pirates marched across Costa Rica in military formation, leaving devastated villages in their wake. It is thus possible to postulate a ready avenue of transference between pirates speaking the jargon of their own group with uneducated slaves, soldiers, and guards, and high-born residents of the colonies, may be adduced as a key factor in reconstructing the historical trajectory of *filibustero* and *flibustier*. The coastal areas frequently attacked by the pirates exhibit an extremely high rate of aspiration and deletion of syllable-final *s*, with the proportion decreasing somewhat in the higher social classes. Moreover, this process of aspiration has developed gradually at least since the seventeenth century and most probably even before, in all

⁵⁶ James Lockhart, *Africans in Sixteenth-Century Peru 1532-1560* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Jorge Palacios Preciado, *La trata de negros por Cartagena de Indias* (Tunja: La Rana y el Águila, 1973); Rolando Mellafe, *Negro Slavery in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 75 f.; Leslie Rout, *The African Experience in Spanish America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 30 f.; Carlos Federico Guillot, *Negros rebeldes y negros cimarrones* (Buenos Aires: Fariña, 1961), Chapters 11-12; Ian Hancock, "A Provisional Comparison of English-based Atlantic Creoles," *African Language Review*, 8 (1969), 7-22, at p. 25.

⁵⁷ Lindsay, pp. 142-43; Allen, p. 119; Gall, p. 174; Lancelot Lewis, *The West Indian in Panama* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 10-11.

likelihood being first more prominent in the speech of uneducated Spaniards, and of slaves and Indians who learned Spanish from each other, and ultimately from these same relatively uncultured Spanish colonists. On the other hand, the reaction of the more cultured colonists, judging from the socio-linguistic evidence represented by literary documents, was to not accept such a pronunciation so readily, and these citizens, then as now, could be expected to seek a more refined diction and to correct the "defective" pronunciation when they heard it in members of their own class.⁵⁸ It is this aspiration of *s* and the identification of the phenomenon with less educated classes that contains the key to the introduction of *s* in *filibustero* and *flibustier*.

There are at least two distinct ways in which the confluence of factors could have produced the change in question. The first scenario involves the relatively uneducated slave, soldier, or guard who acquired, from contact with the pirates, the lexical item *flibotero* or *filibotero* to refer to pirates and the ships on which they sailed. A superior officer, master, or highborn citizen, hearing this word for the first time and associating the pronunciation with the speech habits commonly heard among the lower social strata, could be expected to surmise that the intended word was **flibostero*, since there was a phonotactic/morphological paradigm already provided by *forastero*, *embustero*, etc., all of which contain the common sequence *VstV*. There are parallels in those contemporary dialects where aspiration of syllable-final *s* is common, and spelling errors, particularly of place names and less common words, indicate that phonological knowledge is often lost and that individuals believe an *s* should exist in a word in which it was never present. The hypercorrected **flibostero* or **filibostero* could then have made its way back to the pirates, either by the same soldiers and slaves who by force of correction had themselves adopted the hypercorrected form, or by

⁵⁸ One good literary example of this phenomenon is offered by Rómulo Gallegos in *La brizna de pan en el viento* (La Habana: Selecta, 1952), pp. 176-78, where several young Venezuelan girls are having a conversation about a play they are going to put on. After one of the (middle class) girls imitates popular speech, including weakening of *s*, her sister asks her "¿Por qué hablas así Lidia?... No estás ante el micrófono," to which her sister replies "Es verdad... la costumbre de representar criadas mal habladas."

direct contact between the pirates and wider segments of the colonial population. It is not even necessary that the Spaniards converted *flibutor*/**flibutier* into Spanish for the *s* to have been added: the word in French could itself have been interpreted as **flibustor*/*flibustier* by the Spaniards, using their own phonological model, and the *s* retransferred to French by imitation.

Since the words *flibote* and *flibotero* appear to have been used somewhat earlier in Spanish than in French, and given that *boucanier* already existed as a term which the pirates could apply to themselves, it is also possible that the pirates, upon coming into contact with the slaves and soldiers, heard themselves referred to as *fliboteros*, and given their own at times less than perfect knowledge of Spanish combined with an awareness of the aspiration process and a passive knowledge of cognate forms in French in which syllable-final *s* had already disappeared, added the *s* to form the hypercorrected **flibostero*, which then became translated as *flibustier*. It is not uncommon for a group to adopt, as an emblem of pride, a term originally applied by a hostile group as a derogatory label. William Walker adopted *filibuster* with pride; one may also consider the term *gusano* used by Cuban exiles, *barbudo* used by the early Cuban revolutionaries of Fidel Castro's army, *turbas* used by Sandinista insurrectionist groups in Nicaragua, *cop* as used by police officers, *chicano* as used by Mexican Americans, *freak* as used by members of the United States counterculture, and so forth.

A hypothesis such as that advanced above would account for the relatively late appearance of *filibustero* in Spanish, coupled with the earlier appearance of *flibote* and *flibotero*, since the "s" may have been added by the pirates themselves to a word which had little currency in Spanish outside of the groups in contact with the pirate invaders. However, even if one supposes that the *s* was added at this time as a hypercorrection, there is no reason to suppose that it would have made much headway amidst the beleaguered population on the shore, who would not have wished to legitimize the pirates' activities by adopting a slang term and who preferred the traditional *pirata* and the more vehement *enemigo* and *ladrón*. The French, on the other hand, were not as often besieged by pirates; to the contrary, citizens in France read with curiosity and amusement the accounts

and autobiographies of pirates who plied their trade in the Spanish Main and who attacked the little-loved Spaniards, and hence *flibustier*, which made an early appearance in the seventeenth-century accounts of French piracy, would not have met the same civic resistance in France. The known facts, demographic, geographic, sociological, and linguistic, support some version of this hypothesis, although there is probably no documentation of the event(s) which changed the Spanish colonists' pronunciation of *flibotero* into **flibustero*.

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