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Fourteen Views of Fernando Po to Save the Colony

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In December 1873 the Spanish governor on Fernando Po, Ignacio García Tudela, drafted a lengthy report in which he advised the Spanish Government to completely withdraw from all its possessions in the Gulf of Guinea. The reason he put forward was the present and future incapability of the Spanish to curb the influence of the British, the only nation that, in his words, was able to derive benefit from the island’s wealth. 1 Tudela’s successor Diego Santisteban (in office 22 January 1875–13 February 1877), a delegate of the newly installed cabinet of the Restoration, 2 stressed on the contrary the great benefit Spain could gain from its neglected and practically unknown colony. In order to support his argument, he sent fourteen photographs from Fernando Po to Madrid which were to bear visual, and hence truthful, evidence of the Spanish possession’s wealth and its inhabitant’s interest in the economic development of the island.

This article consists of three parts. In the first, we will analyse the wider political and historical context in which the photographs were taken. It will become explicit that Diego Santisteban’s initiative indeed fit into a larger framework where colonial administrations in the metropole and in the field and individuals who advocated their nation’s colonial aspirations and endeavours used photographs for the purpose of visual communication and propaganda. Evidently, national or individual initiatives were closely intertwined with developments on transnational levels. In the second part, we will take a close look at the photographs and their content. We will be able to follow the photographer on his way through Fernando Po’s capital Santa Isabel, turn our eyes on the various important buildings of the town, get a glimpse of the beautiful bay above which the town was built and meet some members of the island’s black and white community. The third part will introduce the photographer Francis W. Joaque himself. A native of Sierra Leone, he moved to Fernando Po in the late 1860s. There he took photographs of the local Fernandino community, white traders and the Primitive Methodist Mission before putting out feelers to Gabon where he was to settle probably in the late 1870s or early 1880s. 3

Introduction

On 1 July 1875, Diego Santisteban, the first governor appointed by the government of the Bourbon Restoration, sent fourteen views of the capital Santa Isabel’s buildings and inhabitants to Santiago Durán Lira, head of the Navy Department, with the purpose of giving his superior “el más exacto conocimiento de lo que es esta localidad tan olvidada y digna de mejor...

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2. The Restoration was the name given to the period that began on 29 December 1874 after the First Spanish Republic ended with the restoration of the monarchy under Alfonso XII following a coup d’état by Martinez Campos. It ended on 14 April 1931 with the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic.

The fourteen photographs sent to Madrid were taken by the Sierra Leonean photographer Francis Wilberforce Joaque who had moved from Freetown to Fernando Po about five years before. Santisteban hoped that the Navy Ministry and the Colonial Ministry together would intercede with the new cabinet of Alfonso XII to remedy the colony's grave lack of finances and send, as soon as possible, the necessary means for the proper administration of Spain's possession in the Gulf of Guinea. Madrid's reaction to this intervention was almost immediate. On 19 August, the Ministry informed Santisteban that the vessel *Prosperidad* would soon bring the sum of 50,000 Pesetas (between 190 and 6,800 euros)\(^5\) that together with the money already disbursed would sum up to a total of 280,000 Pesetas.\(^6\)

Impressed by these photographs and pushed by additional political and economic factors, the government of the Restoration reassumed the process of colonization which, in the six years between the dismissal of Isabella II and the installation of Alfonso XII, had practically come to a standstill. New capital was subsequently injected definitively shelving previous propositions to get rid of the colony which had at least been taken into consideration in the light of García Tudela's pessimistic and negative reports.

In order to grasp the significance of Santisteban's initiative to use photographic images as visual evidence to contradict his predecessor's negative view, we need to say a few words about the political context in which the photographs were submitted. In a further step we will situate photography in the wider framework of Europe's colonial expansion in West and Central Africa between 1840 and 1890.

Fernando Po is the largest of a series of island in the Gulf of Guinea. When European sugar growing shifted from the Mediterranean to Madeira and then to West Africa in the early 16th century, São Tomé became the largest sugar plantation economy subsequently providing the model for developments in the Americas and the Caribbean. Fernando Po, however, for reasons which Ibrahim Sundiata expounded in detail in his study of this small African island, stood outside these developments.\(^7\) Although Spain had laid claim to the island in 1778, there was in fact no Spanish representative until the second half of the 19th century; in fact, British traders – John Beecroft until 1854 and William Lynslager until 1858 – actually acted as “Spanish” governors until 1858. Between 1827 and 1835, the British had used Fernando Po as an anti-slaving base and only a few years after their withdrawal even seriously negotiated with Spain for the purchase of the island for the amount of £60,000.

After years of hesitation and negligence, Spain sent the naval officer Carlos Chacón y Michela (1816-1863) to Fernando Po in 1858 in an effort to set up a proper colonial administration. He was superseded as governor by José de la Gándara in 1859. In the following years, Spain tried to encourage emigration from the metropole and Cuba to Fernando Po; however

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4. “...the most exact knowledge of this place so completely forgotten and deserving a better lot.” Archivo General de la Marina “Álvaro de Bazán” (en adelante, AGMAB). Sección Expediciones. Legajo n. 356. Oficio del gobernador Diego Santisteban al ministro de Marina. Fernando Poo, 1º de julio de 1875. (The General Archive of the Navy “Álvaro de Bazán”, henceforth AGMAB. Section Expeditions. Dossier no. 356. Official letter of Governor Diego Santisteban to the Minister for the Navy. Fernando Poo, July 1 1875).


Sobre la formación de inventario de los Edificios del Estado; nombramiento de conserjes para atender a su conservación. Real Decreto de 26 de octubre. (Regarding the establishment of an inventory of the state-owned buildings; appointment of caretakers who attend to these buildings). See also Sundiata 1996 [reference 7], 55. AGA. A-G. C 675. E 18. Sobre la formación de inventario de los Edificios del Estado; nombramiento de conserjes para atender a su conservación. Real Decreto de 26 de octubre.

Adopting the new legal framework of October 1872, the governor asked Madrid’s permission to put up for sale the colonial premises and farms he considered unnecessary under the given circumstances only sparing the church, the building called the stone house and the Jesuit’s mission house, the latter conforming to the instructions regulating the divestiture. The Gaceta de Madrid commented that Spain better concentrate on places where the government could hope to establish a stable administrative regime and the situation did not demand direct and continuous protection.

Between September 1868 and December 1874 eleven governors, mainly in office ad interim and only for a very short time, succeeded one another. The last governor during these troubled six years was Ignacio García Tudela who remained in charge for the comparable lengthy period of two years (September 1872 to November 1874).

In the eyes of the republican government, García Tudela was the most reliable person to give such an advisory opinion on the island’s political and economic value with which he incidentally was in clear agreement with Madrid’s attitude. Personal and straightforward as it was, the detailed report he sent to the Ministerio de Ultramar in December 1873 was perceived as a trustworthy balancing of the actual situation on Fernando Po and the other Spanish possessions in the Gulf. Without a solid footing there, wrote Tudela, which in practice meant without military personnel to back the governor’s authority, without missionaries capable of counteracting the influence of the Protestant missions, without entrepreneurs who were ready to invest capital, and without the markets that could absorb the colonies’ products.
products, it was impossible to resist the British hegemony in the region. In fact, “in the 1870s the Spanish merchant marine went into a steep decline [...] in the face of foreign competition [and] in spite of grandiose plans, West Africa did not attract much Spanish capital.”

A timely and orderly withdrawal was, in García Tudela’s view, the best way to avoid further futile spending.

However, García Tudela’s opinion was not heard any more in the relevant circles of power after the sudden political change that had happened in Spain in December 1874. The new Alphonsine cabinet, heir to the Isabelian colonial and evangelical impulse, considered the colonies’ decadence rather to be the result of the “unjust and disgraceful” civil war than of the reasons governor Tudela had put forward in his report. Consequently, the government expressed its intention to again take up its engagement in West Africa by nominating Diego Santisteban Chamorro, a fifty-five year old navy captain with long experience in the Philippines, as governor of Fernando Po and commander of its marine base.

**Colonial propaganda in the age of photography**

Santisteban’s initiative to send photographic images to the metropole evidently was not his personal invention but well in line with what other governmental officials, travellers and mission societies had done before him to use visual means to illustrate the infrastructure, people and environments in the colonies or places they explored and reconnoitred “for the spectacle of empire, its modes and regimes of visibility were profoundly photographic”, as the British historian and anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards noted in paper she presented at the ESHSS conference 2012 in Glasgow in 2012.

The significance photography took on, practically from its invention and subsequent introduction in Africa in the 1840s, in the promotion of colonial and missionary endeavours in the metropole has been described in detail by many scholars. For instance, in his book *Picturing Empire*, historian James R. Ryan emphasized the important role photographs played for the “imaginative geography” of the colonial empires. “The human genre”, as the Franco-Peruvian artist and curator Juan-Carlos Belon Lemoine emphasised, “is constructed through operations in which the imagination plays a preponderant role”. There is no need to fully agree with Belon Lemoine that the “image has replaced words as the material [allowing people] to construct a narrative about their conception of reality” but the photographic image has, without any doubt, considerably changed the way in which we imagine the world and perceive reality.
Photographs, we have to bear in mind, did not circulate solely as original prints but were reproduced, first as wood engravings and – as from the 1880s – as half-tone photo engravings, in books and illustrated newspapers. Visual information about Africa had been reaching Europe for centuries before the second half of the 19th century, but it had concerned relatively small geographical areas and usually only reached small educated elites. This changed, however, when new printing techniques allowed for the production of cheap illustrated newspapers and books at the time when European imperialism gained momentum.  

The format of the illustrated newspaper emerged in the 1840s. Among the best known of these titles were the Illustrated London News, founded 1842, the German Leipziger Illustrirte Zeitung and the French L’Illustration which both first appeared in 1843. In the years that followed, nearly all of Europe, Russia, the USA and much of Latin America created their own examples of illustrated print media. The purpose of this new visually attractive format was “durch eine Verschmelzung von Bild und Wort eine Anschaulichkeit der Gegenwart hervorzurufen” (to evoke a vividness of the present through the amalgamation of word and image). In the context of what Benedict Anderson had termed “imagined communities”, cheap and easily accessible illustrated print media gained greatly in importance. 

During the second half of the 19th century cameras became part and parcel of scientific and military expeditions, explorations and missionary endeavours in Africa to the extent that in 1864 an anonymous author remarked, “For the purpose of science, an explorer and a photographer should be convertible terms.” Already a few months after the new technology had been made public in France in summer 1839, the French naval captain Louis Édouard Bouët-Willaumez (1808-1871), on his reconnaissance mission along the West African coast, “brought his Daguerreotype on shore [...] in order to produce a drawing of [the fort of] St. George [Elmina, today Ghana].” “Having felt the importance of obtaining faithful representations of the scenery, natives, animals of these remote countries,” the Franco-American traveller and gorilla hunter Paul Beloni du Chaillu carried along a camera while travelling in the Gabon hinterland in 1867. The French Navy officers Paul Serval and Griffon du Bellay, who explored the West and Central African coast from 1861–1864, included photographs “des reproductions fidèles des photographies,” in the account of their journey which appeared in the French journal Le Tour du Monde in 1865. Mission societies showed a specific interest in photographic images so that, for instance, as art historian Dalila Scruggs put it, the documents...

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21. For a list of such newspapers see Bernd Weise, “Aktuelle Nachrichtenbilder “nach Photographien” in der deutschen illustrierten Presse der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts”, in: Charles Grivel, André Gunthert and Bernd Stiegler (ed.), Die Eroberung der Bilder. Photographie in Buch und Presse (1816-1914), München 2003, in particular 62-63. Additionally there were also: Harper’s Magazine and Harper’s Weekly (USA, 1850 and 1857), Leslie’s Weekly (USA, 1852), Gartenlaube (Germany, 1853), El Museo Universal and Illustracion Espanola y Americana (Spain, 1857 and 1869), Le Monde Illustre [France, 1857], Uber Land und Meer (Germany, 1858), Le Tour du Monde [France, 1860], Globus [Germany, 1862], Daheim (Germany, 1864), Le Journal Illustre [France, 1864], The Graphic [USA, 1869], L’Illustrazione Italiana and Nuova Illustrazione Universale [Italy, 1873 and 1875]. Bernd Weise writes that in Germany in the period between 1850 and 1914 at least 290 different titles of so called Familienblätter were published [page 68].  
from the American Colonization Society were “peppered with visual keywords such as, ‘da-
guerreotype’, ‘lithograph’, and ‘likeness’, [indicating] that the A.C.S. actively commissioned
artwork and used visual propaganda in addition to the written word.”

The Spaniard José Muñoz y Gaviria (Vizconde de San Javier), as “Administrador
General de Rentas en las Posesiones Españoles en el Golfo de Guinea”, the chief of customs and
taxes for the Spanish crown’s possessions in the Gulf of Guinea, spent three years, from 1860
to 1863, on Fernando Po. Like the French, Muñoz y Gaviria also considered photography to be
the preferred means of visual communication with the Spanish administration and eventually,
as reproduced in illustrated newspapers, a broader Spanish audience. A photo album
which contains twenty-four photographs from Fernando Po and the island of Corisco, showing
buildings, people and scenery, bears witness to the Spanish officer’s attempt to promote
Spain’s sub-Saharan possessions in the metropole. Evidently, Muñoz y Gaviria had made the
photo album intended for the Spanish administration, but a selection of the photographs
also appeared in the journal El Museo Universal, accompanying his travel account Viaje al África
central y la isla de Fernado Poo. In 1883, another Spaniard, Navy Lieutenant Francisco Romero,
travelled to Fernando. The fourteen photographs the African photographer W.J. Sawyer took
in the interior of the colony on behalf of Romero show “the second king of the island, Bottey
Moytade” with his wives, men of his villages working in the yam fields, and the village where
the king resided.

Francisco Romero was the spokesperson of the Spanish subcommission responsible
for the country’s contribution to the International Colonial and Export Exposition in
Amsterdam in 1883. Romero’s expedition to Fernando Po and the subsequent display of eth-
nographic objects, agricultural products and photographic views at the Amsterdam exhi-
bition was, similar to the Vizconde de San Javier’s expedition and subsequent publication
of photographs some twenty years earlier, another attempt at pointing to the economic po-
tential and value of Spain’s possession in the Gulf of Guinea both to a Spanish and foreign
audience. The Vizconde de San Javier’s grievances that “those possessions [i.e. Fernando Po
and its dependencies], so rich in timber, are worthless for Spain because no one goes there to
export it, nor has a single commercial house been established, and rare are the boats which
arrive from time to time from Spain” still reverberated in the article in La Ilustración Española
y Americana.

It is in the context of this larger institutional and political framework, where pho-
tographic images served as the truthful visual means to convey a specific reality, that the
fourteen views of the capital Santa Isabel’s buildings and inhabitants Diego Santisteban sent

Colonizing Society and the Imaging of African-American Settlers in Liberia, PhD.
Dissertation. Department of History of Art and Architecture. Harvard University,
Cambridge, Mass. 2010. A forerunner was the British Methodist Daniel West who
took photographs, most likely ambrotypes, on his inspection tour along the West
African coast in 1856. See Thomas West, Daniel West, The Life and Journals of
the Rev. Daniel West; Wesleyan Minister, and Deputation to the Wesleyan Mission
1857.

29. José Muñoz y Gaviria [Vizconde de San Javier], ‘Viaje al Africa central y la isla
de Fernado Poo’, El Museo Universal, Año VIII, 1864, Nos 19, 149; 21, 165, 168; 23,
180; 24, 189; 26, 204; 32, 253.

30. About the Amsterdam exhibition see Laetitia Dujardin, Ethnicity and Trade:
Photography, the Colonial Exhibitions in Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels,
Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum and Nieuw Amsterdam Publishers 2007. Théophile
Fumière, L’exposition internationale d’Amsterdam et la Belgique aux Pays-Bas,
Brussels: É. Guyot 1883.

Figure 1
Map of Santa Isabel and the places shown in the photographs, 1867.
The General Administration Archive, Fonds Africa-Guinea (A-G), Box C 81/7050.
to Madrid in 1875 must be understood. The next section will introduce in detail the images Francis W. Joaque took. We will follow him on his circuit through the island’s capital.

A walk in Santa Isabel

Santa Isabel was founded by the British in 1827 as an alternative to Freetown, the then centre for British anti-slaving activities in West Africa, and christened Clarence in honour of the Duke of Clarence, the head of the Admiralty. In 1843 Clarence was renamed Santa Isabel by the Spanish. The autochthone population’s reaction towards the colonists was not hostile and they engaged in trade in yams and palm oil with them.

According to the census that was sent to London, Clarence had 747 inhabitants in October 1828. This reached 873 in 1841, 982 in 1856 and was around 1,100 in 1877. Since its foundation, Clarence continued to thrive attracting migrants from the African mainland and runaways from São Tomé und Príncipe. In the 1860s, several hundred Cuban emancipados and political deportees arrived on Fernando Po adding to the ethnic diversity of the town. British Baptists arrived in the early 1840s and laid the foundation for a parish that was to survive even after the Spanish expelled them from the island in 1858. However, in 1870, when the Spanish legislation provided for free exercise of religion, the Primitive Methodist Mission Society returned.

“Santa Isabel”, wrote the US-American historian Ibrahim Sundiata, “was a unique place, one where a black settler population could evolve without the checks imposed by an imperial power. […] The town contained Western schools, medical care, commercial transactions, and a brothel for visiting sailors.” Let us now take a stroll and see where the photographer Joaque set his tripod (fig. 1).

Figure 1: Map of Santa Isabel and the places shown in the photographs

The major part of the photographs show the buildings situated along the Marina, the road following the shoreline of the sea in front of the town. It seems that they were taken on the same day beginning in the east at the governor’s house and then proceeding to the housings of the Kru on the extreme west of the Marina, to Punta Christina. Six of the fourteen photographs were taken at the town’s central square, the Plaza de España, which clearly shows Santisteban’s intention to concentrate the viewers’ attention on Santa Isabel’s most emblematic space, a familiar and inevitable feature of Spanish urbanity.

Figure 2: View of the governor’s residence

The first Spanish governor, Carlos Chacón, bought the building, which was later to become his and his successor’s residence, from an English trader in 1858 (fig. 2). The site is U-shaped with a central section and two lateral wings enclosing a small patio. It was a wood construction but

33. Sundiata 1996 (reference 7), 57.
35. Sundiata 1996 (reference 7), 57.
36. The early years of Santa Isabel (from 1827 to 1859) are described in detail in Martín del Molino 1993 (reference 32), 13-172.
the house contained the governor’s office and two additional offices for the secretariat and administration, a dining room, a bedroom, a toilet and a bathroom on the first floor and four rooms, two toilets and two storerooms on the upper level. The adjacent buildings contained a kitchen, the cook’s accommodation, an additional storeroom and “a darkroom with two windows and a door”. We don’t know if Joaque used this room to develop his photographs. What we know, on the other hand, is that the documents Governor Ignacio García Tudela handed over to his successor Jacobo Varela on November 22, 1874 mentioned “cameras and the respective ingredients which are all in a totally disabled state.”

It seems that the cameras, or at least one of them (actually, we dispose of no information on how many cameras were handed over to Varela), had arrived on Fernando Po in 1859 as part of a larger shipment of scientific instruments. According to the accompanying documents, the camera and some wide angle lenses had cost “450 reales de vellón”. We can assume that the bad state of the equipment in 1874 was due to the fact that it had not been used for quite some time, but it is also possible that it was this very camera which the Vizconde de San Javier used during his period of residence on the island in the early 1860s.

In 1871, Governor Federico Anrich stated that the house was in a good state save the furniture which had been acquired in 1864. Three years later, in December 1874 and hence only a few months before Diego Santisteban sent Joaque’s photographs to Madrid, Governor Jacobo Varela reported to the responsible ministry in the capital that the house was in a bad state and a prompt renovation of the roof, the planks of the rooms and the veranda, as well as most of the posts and composite beams of the lower level, was urgently necessary. Indeed, the bad state of the roof where some parts of the roofing have completely disappeared is perfectly visible on the photography.

37. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6972. Oficio del gobernador accidental Pedro Ossa al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 20 de septiembre de 1872. Official letter from the acting governor Pedro Ossa Dueñas to the Minister of Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, September 20 1872. This governor asked for the permission to repair the buildings owned by the state.
38. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6981. Inventario de los edificios propios del Estado que existen en esta colonia. Santa Isabel, 20 de abril de 1863. Inventory of the state-owned buildings that exist in this colony, Santa Isabel, April 20 1863.
Apparently, the renovation works were not carried out since, in March 1877, Governor Alejandro Arias forwarded a detailed statement of costs valuing 45,137 pesetas for the renovation of all buildings in Santa Isabel that were in the possession of the state. He informed the ministry that all buildings needed immediate repair in order to avoid further decay and at the same time envisaged that he would have to neglect his duties as governor while overseeing the works. 2,753 pesetas were needed for the residence alone and the renovation of the floors of the reception hall and the dining room, as well as for the acquisition of some furniture and a complete set of dinnerware. Without these measures being undertaken, Arias argued, he would no longer be in the position to receive the official representatives of the nearby colonies and the officers of the various vessels calling at Santa Isabel’s harbour in decent way. However, the situation only changed in 1900 when Governor Francisco Dueñas transferred the government’s headquarters to a prefabricated iron building which had been bought in Belgium. Joaque’s photograph is a testimony to the Spanish government’s inability and reluctance during the troubled revolutionary years to provide Fernando Po’s colonial authorities with the means to maintain the infrastructure.

This view of a part of the Marina (fig. 3) was taken from the residence’s garden on the opposite side of the building. We can identify the same fence as in figure two and also recognize the same type of street lights. According to the map of Santa Isabel from 1867 (fig. 1), drawn by the engineer Félix Recio, the sequence of buildings towards Punta Cristina consists of a wooden house followed by a house called the stone house (“Casa de piedra o de pabellones”, see figure 4). The barracks follow and then, hardly visible on the photograph, the gaol. In the distance one can see the bell tower (la espadaña) of the Catholic San José Church and the edifices of the Catholic mission situated on the Plaza de España. Behind the church, the small house of the port authorities and the premises of the Protestant mission surrounded by a white wall can be discerned. We will have a closer look at these premises later. On the right, the terrain plunges down to the shore of the Bahía de Santa Isabel where the roofs of the old customs facilities are recognisable. All edifices visible on the photograph were built before 1863.

41. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6930. Oficio del governador Alejandro Arias al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel. 10 de Abril de 1877. (Official letter from governor Alejandro Arias to the Minister of Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, April 10 1877).

42. AGA. A-G. C 81/7050.
According to Governor Alejandro Arias' letter from March 1877 mentioned above it was the barracks ("la casa cuartel") that needed repair most urgently. The two-storey wooden house planned and constructed by the engineers Manuel Pujol and Luís García Tejero in 1860 was known as the barracks because it housed the troops on the lower level but the space upstairs was reserved for the colonial officials and public servants. In 1872, Governor Pedro Ossa had the zinc roofing replaced by much lighter panels of felt in order to avoid the devastating effects the rains had on the high building with the distinctive bullglass windows in its gables.

The harbour shed first served as a customs house and then as a storehouse for supplies for the naval station. According to an assessment by Governor Federico Anrich in 1871, it looked in very poor condition as, due to its location, it was constantly subject to the damage caused by cascading water coming down the side of the mountain and water ingress; this meant that damp not only affected the fabric of the building but also damaged the naval supplies within. To add to this, following the Decreto Orgánico of 26 October 1872, the colony's budget was reduced to the bare minimum, meaning that the amount of money allocated to public works and building repairs was cut even further. This speeded up the deterioration of public buildings and the abandonment of many of the plots intended for the enlargement of Santa Isabel planned by Julián Pellón, and these pieces of land were again overrun by vegetation.

Despite the poor state of repair of some of the buildings due to lack of maintenance, the image conveyed by Joaque's photographs appears to confirm that Governor Santisteban shared the positive view formed by Comisario Pellón in his 1866 assessments regarding the real transformation that the town had undergone in just a few years. In his report, Pellón made it clear that when the first Spanish colonists arrived on Fernando Po in 1859 they had hardly anywhere to stay and did not even have a church to worship in. In fewer than seven years, these problems had largely disappeared. Despite the lack of colonists in Santa Isabel, there were excellent houses laid out in streets and little squares where the highest standards of hygiene and cleanliness prevailed; a church, an inn, a dance hall, three casinos, several cafés and some bakeries had been built; the town was provided with shops that were well supplied with all sorts of articles from Europe, as well as with places to walk and relax. What was more, most of the urban space had been deforested and many swamps had been filled in and drinking water restored to three public drinking fountains; all reasons for the town looking very different from the way it was in 1859. All the same, Joaque's photograph bears witness to the
fact that the Calle de la Marina, the town’s main arterial street, was little more than a path.

**Figure 4: The stone house with pavilions for officials**

It was originally known as “pavilion house” (fig. 4) and considered an annexe of the Santa Isabel market at the front with a view of the sea for the accommodation of officials. Along with the church and the Jesuit missionaries’ house, it was one of the only three brick-built constructions in Santa Isabel.

Although it was referred to as the “casa de piedra” (stone house), it was in fact built using Cádiz bricks. Its construction was begun during the governorship of Pantaleón López Ayllón and completed by his successor, José Gómez Barreda. The plan had been costed in July 1863 and the budget for the sum of 18,268 escudos and 80 céntimos approved in November that year, but work on it had to stop for five months from October 1864 when they ran out of lime. With the delay and the modifications introduced while the work was in progress, the original costs increased substantially. The construction work, together with the wooden building intended as a market, was not completed until March 1866. The builders who did the work were contracted in Accra for 10 pesos a month with an additional half duro a week each for food. Governor José Gómez Barreda gave it the final push, requesting an additional sum of 2,000 escudos for the finishing touches (doors, tiles, windows and paint). The original basic plan had been greatly modified, with additional accommodation for three employees and space to have tax offices and courts, as well as storehouses, which were built to be separate from the main building. At the time the photograph was taken, the main floor was intended as employee accommodation while the ground floor was to be offices.

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48. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6970. E. 9. Informe y aprobación por el Ministerio de Ultramar del proyecto de mercado de Santa Isabel. Madrid, 26 de noviembre de 1862. [Report and authorization by the Ministry for Overseas Territories for the Santa Isabel market project, Madrid, 26 November, 1862]. The market was built on plot number 9, Calle de la Marina, with views over the Calle de Ulloa and the alley leading to the barracks. The pavilion building was built in Calle de la Marina with views over the bay.

49. AGA. A-G. C. 6973. Oficio del gobernador Pantaleón López Ayllón al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 15 de octubre de 1864. [Official letter from Governor Pantaleón López Ayllón to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 15 October 1864].

50. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficio del gobernador José Gómez de Barreda al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 10 de febrero de 1866. [Official letter from Governor José Gómez de Barreda to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 10 February 1866].

51. AGA. A-G. C. 81/7124. Oficio del gobernador Pantaleón López Ayllón al ministro de la Guerra y Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 28 de marzo de 1864. [Official letter from Governor Pantaleón López Ayllón to the Minister for War and Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 28 March 1864].

52. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficio del gobernador José Gómez de Barreda al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel 31 de marzo de 1866. [Official letter from Governor José Gómez de Barreda to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 31 March 1866].
In Governor Jacobo Varela’s report mentioned above, he requested that the roof be urgently replaced since, due to its construction type, it was almost impossible to carry out even the smallest repairs, this being the reason that most of its structural beams and boards were rotten. It meant that water had been coming in through the walls, which were crumbling in various places. The water ingress had also caused the collapse of interior and exterior cornices. Similarly, the walls of the second section had cracked and were also in need of prompt repair, something that had not been done up to that point because of the high cost of materials. The matter of raising the lower floors where the supporting beams of the vault had rotted, leaving them practically unable to support the tiles with which it was made, was also among the most urgent repairs that Varela mentioned.

Judging by how good it looks in the photograph taken by Joaque, little time can have passed since the roof reconstruction works and the repairs to cornices and walls were completed. Doubtlessly, it was the first of the buildings to benefit from the general repair plan for all of Fernando Po’s state buildings, something that was handled by Santisteban himself between 1875 and 1876 and carried out by “cuatro carpinteros morenos del país” (four dark-skinned local carpenters) and two builders.53

Even so, on 8 July 1877, part of the roof came away due to heavy rain taking with it the first-floor ceiling. In April 1878 the tile roof had to be replaced with a corrugated-iron one.54 In 1900, Governor Francisco Dueñas had some more repair works carried out.55 We do not know when the building was finally demolished. Nor do we know of any other picture of this house which was the flagship of the colony’s construction works for so many years and whose historical value is therefore exceptional.

53. AGA, A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficios del gobernador Diego Santisteban al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, Diciembre 1875- Junio de 1876. (Official letters from Governor Diego Santisteban to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, December 1875-June 1876).
54. AGA, A-G. C. 81/6973. E. 12. Reparación en la Casa de Piedra y Misión y aumento de crédito para obras públicas. (Repairs to the Stone and Mission houses and increase in the provision of money for public works).
55. AGA, A-G. C. 81/6931. Oficio del gobernador Francisco Dueñas al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 30 de diciembre de 1899. (Official letter from Governor Francisco Dueñas to the Minister of Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 30 December 1899).
From the angle the picture of the stone house was taken, you just needed to turn the camera round and cross the Calle de la Marina to get this splendid view of Santa Isabel harbour (fig. 5), a magnificent and natural circular inlet formed by a sunken volcanic crater and bounded by Fernanda Point to the east and Cristina Point to the west that gave access to the town. The sparseness of vegetation on Fernanda Point revealed by the photograph is due to the deforestation work carried out in 1862 at the behest of Governor Pantaleón López Ayllón. The whole harbour area was transformed in 1872 with the creation of a solid stone and earth quay and the building of new warehouses for coal and other supplies.

The steamer in the foreground is very probably the schooner Edetana, which was not replaced by the Prosperidad until February 1876. The smaller launch in the background could be the Trinidad, which was also assigned to the service of the colony at that point. However, on 25 October 1875, Santisteban raised the issue of the presence of two Spanish schooners in Santa Isabel: the Edetana, which had been serving the colony since the end of 1872 and the Prosperidad, which had come to relieve her when the Edetana was unable to return to Spain immediately because of the poor condition of her boilers. The presence of two crews gave Santisteban cause for complaint because it put him in the difficult position of “tener en estas aguas dos buques a la vez y por consiguiente dos tripulaciones a quien sostener con los escasos elementos con que aquí cuenta, especialmente de víveres” (having two ships in these waters at the same time and so two crews to provide for with the scarce resources that I have available here, particularly when it comes to foodstuffs). Not long before, his desperation over lack of funds had led Governor Ignacio García Tudela to write an official letter to the Minister for Overseas Territories demanding his relief, complaining that he had little choice but “que mendigar auxilios para esta pobre colonia como si fuese un pordiosero” (to beg for aid for this poor colony as if I were a beggar). This governor ended up breaking up a launch on his own initiative to sell its copper and bronze and thereby obtain some money to help the sailors.

The streetlamp that can just be made out on Fernanda Point is a dioptric device that worked with alcohol and was bought in Paris in 1866. It was the first streetlamp to be put in operation in the town. Figure 5: View of the port of Santa Isabel Bay and Fernanda Point, where the streetlamp is located.

56. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficio del gobernador Pantaleón López Ayllón al ministro de la Guerra y Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 10 de enero de 1863. (Official letter from Governor Pantaleón López Ayllón to the Minister for War and Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 10 January 1863).
59. AGA. A-G. C. 81/7035. Real Orden de 10 de septiembre mandando que la goleta Edetana sustituya a la Ligera en la estación naval de Fernando Po. (Royal Order of 10 September ordering the schooner Edetana to replace the Ligera at the Fernando Po naval station).
60. AGA. A-G. C. 81/7035. Oficio del gobernador Diego Santisteban al ministerio de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 29 de octubre de 1875. (Official letter from Governor Diego Santisteban to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 29 October, 1875).
61. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6978. Oficio del gobernador Ignacio García Tudela al ministerio de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 1 de agosto de 1874. (Official letter from Governor Ignacio García Tudela to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 1 August 1874).
62. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6978. Oficio del gobernador Ignacio García Tudela a Jacobo Varela al ministerio de la Marina. Santa Isabel, 31 de diciembre de 1874. (Official letter from Governor Ignacio García Tudela to Jacobo Varela at the Ministry for the Navy, Santa Isabel, 31 December 1874).
Breves apuntes sobre la colonia de Fernando Poo.
Santa Isabel de Fernando Poo, 11 de noviembre de 1871.
(Antonio de Vivar: Some short notes about the colony of Fernando Po, 11 November 1871).

In 1888, it was replaced by a special red harbour light, which could be seen from over six miles away and had also been bought in Paris.

Figure 6: View of Plaza de España

The Plaza de España (fig. 6) was undoubtedly the place that Governor Santisteban wanted Francis Joaque to take the greatest pains over and show off from various different angles. This was both because it was the town centre and also represented the best developed part of Santa Isabel and so a total of six photographs were taken for this purpose. The deforestation and levelling, the water drainage system and the levelling of the Plaza de España were carried out by emancipados and Kru people employed by the government at the end of 1862, shortly after the construction of the church was completed. It was not until 1901 that it would be concreted over for the first time.

Figure 7: View of San José’s Church and the Plaza de España gardens that look out over the bay

Of all the buildings around, the one most photographed by Joaque was San José’s Church (fig. 7). It was brick-built (even the foundations, which were 4.5 ft deep by 3 ft wide) with a 45 ft long by 30 ft wide nave. Two steps led up to it at the front. The church was in the Tuscan style, with six windows, two at the front and four at the sides, with coloured glass and a floor of fine tiles. The first building in Santa Isabel to be built entirely of brick was designed by Manuel Pujol Olives, a major in the Spanish Corps of Engineers living in Santa Isabel up to the end of 1861.

65. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6974. Oficio del gobernador José de Ibarra al ministro de la Guerra y Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 10 de marzo de 1888. (Official letter from Governor José de Ibarra to the Minister for War and Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 10 March, 1888).
66. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficio del Gobernador Pantaleón López Ayllón al ministro de la Guerra y Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 10 de enero de 1863. (Official letter from Governor Pantaleón López Ayllón to the Minister for War and Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 10 January 1863).
If we enlarge the photographs enough, we can tell from the clock on the bell tower at what time and in which order Joaque took them: the first, with the church seen from the front and shown near the centre of the picture, was taken by Joaque at 11:14. The second was taken from the western corner of the square at 11:31. The third would be the one that shows the house of John Holt the English trader, in which only the east side of the church appears. The fourth might be the one showing the house of trader José Joaquim de Souza, which is on a corner of the square. This is followed by two pictures showing the congregation coming out of church; first with them standing by the church porch and then seated on the benches in the garden.

According to the enthusiastic description given by Father José Irisarri, the head of the Jesuit Mission on Fernando Po who had arrived in early 1858, the floor of the church was made of blue and white Genovese marble and had a coffered wooden ceiling painted in a creamy white.

Both the triangular area above the pediment cornice and the areas between the four pillars were plastered or rendered using Roman concrete; the eight windows with their semicircular arches letting light into the inside were glazed in glass of different colours; the door, cut and crafted in Santa Isabel, was made out of local mahogany. The whole building was encircled by a stone wall rendered with mortar, leaving a ten-foot space between it and the walls of the building for processions, and a railing that was painted green. The space between this and the façade was broader and formed a kind of fairly open and uncluttered atrium. It could be accessed from the street by climbing up three steps, with another step leading into the church; each step was one foot high.

The budgeted cost was 119,020 reales de vellón.67

It was the first building in Santa Isabel to be built entirely of brick. With the exception of three black builders, the rest of the workers were Spanish, either from the boats anchored in the bay or from the company of soldiers. The foundation stone of the church was laid on 19 November 1861 (Saint Isabel’s Day) on the initiative of Governor José de la Gándara and it was officially opened exactly one year later by his successor, Pantaleón López Ayllón, in honour of Queen Isabel II, who had financed it. It need hardly be added that this time there were no delays due to lack of materials or funding to complete the work. However, the roof of the building must have deteriorated very quickly since we learn that, in 1868, the tiling had to be completely replaced and, as fate would have it, the roof gave way causing the four workers carrying out the job to fall to the ground; one of them died in a matter of days due to the severity of his injuries.

The clock was installed in the tower in May 1871. It had been bought from the firm of Zulueta in London in December 1870 and brought to Santa Isabel on board the English boat Liberation. It was initiated by Governor Federico Anrich, on the orders of Governor Zoilo Sánchez so that work in the government workshops might have “una regla fija para marcar el tiempo preciso de entrada y salida” (a fixed way of determining precise arrival and departure times) and started by his successor, Federico Anrich, on 18 March 1871. There is no reason to believe that it performed other than well.

At the beginning of 1880, the tiled roof was replaced by corrugated-iron sheeting to make it lighter as well as waterproof, in this way preventing both deterioration of the walls and water ingress. At the same time, the inside was restored and the outside repainted. However, nothing was done about the wooden bell tower, whose woodwork was “podrida completamente” (completely rotten) according to a report on the condition of government buildings issued in August the same year.

69. Archivo Histórico de Loyola [en adelante, AHL]. Historia de las Misiones de la Compañía de Jesús hasta 1865, de papeles recibidos de Salamanca. Reseña de los trabajos de la misión de Fernando Poo en el año 1862 escrita por el Rdo. Padre José Irisarri. Loyola Historical Archives [henceforth, AHL]. History of the Missions of the Society of Jesus up to 1865, from papers received from Salamanca. Report concerning the work of the Mission on Fernando Po in 1862 written by Reverend Father José Irisarri.


71. AHL. Carta del P. Berasain al P. Taverner. Sta. Isabel, 30 de diciembre de 1868 [AHL. Letter from P. Berasain to P. Taverner, Santa Isabel, 30 December 1868].


73. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficio del gobernador Anselmo Gazulla al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 5 de febrero de 1880 [Official letter from Governor Anselmo Gazullo to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 5 February 1880].
Santa Isabel de Fernando Poo, basado sobre el aprovechamiento de los restos de la antigua iglesia.

Santa Isabel de Fernando Poo, 5 de setiembre de 1890. (Plan for a building for Community Council meetings in Santa Isabel making use of what was left of the old church. Santa Isabel, Fernando Po, 5 September 1890).

77. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6470. Instancia del vicario apostólico de Fernando Poo al Director General de Marruecos y Colonias. Santa Isabel, 11 de marzo de 1930. (Official request from the Apostolic Vicar of Fernando Po to the Director General for Morocco and the Colonies, Santa Isabel, 11 March 1930).

On the night of 12 November 1888, the church was engulfed in flames when fire broke out in the storage area of the neighbouring Holt House (fig. 8) at 8:30. Some of the furniture from the inside was successfully rescued but nothing could be done to save the building. The flames started with the bell tower, which was wooden, and the windows on the south side, and ended with the roof and its zinc-covered wooden framework. By ten o’clock that night, the Holt House had disappeared completely and the church was a blazing furnace, despite attempts by the crew of the pontoon Ferrolana and some of the sailors from the British boat Landren to put out the flames. After the fire, all that survived were the masonry walls, which were 60 cm (24”) thick, surrounding the open church space, which was 8.30 metres (27 ft) wide by 19.90 metres (65 ft) long, as well as another area behind that was designed as the presbytery and vestry and measured 6.25 by 6 metres (21 x 20 ft).

In 1889 religious services were moved to a new, more modern and somewhat more spacious prefabricated church made of sheet iron, ordered from the Belgian firm Forges d’Aiseau and erected on the other side of the Plaza de España on the seaboard side of the Catholic mission.

In its session on 4 August 1890, the colony’s Junta de Autoridades (planning committee) approved the reconstruction of the building as a venue for the Consejo de Vecinos, Juzgado municipal and puesto de policía (community council, municipal court and police station), sending the report and plans for the redesign, in which they were looking at raising the floor a metre above the ground using a simple mahogany structure, to Madrid. The redevelopment works, signed by the forestry official Germán Garibaldi, were budgeted at 13,123 pesetas and 68 céntimos. This church was taken down in 1930 and moved to the west of the capital, as, at the beginning of the 20th century, the present-day Santa Isabel’s Cathedral had been built on the exact same spot where San José’s Church had originally stood.

Figure 9: House of the trader D. José Joaquim de Souza. This house was located on one of the corners of the Plaza de España (fig. 9). We can not provide any more details about it.

Francis W. Joaque, House of the trader D. José Joaquim de Souza, Santa Isabel, Fernando Po 1875, albumen print 13,4 x 10 cm. Archivo General de la Marina “Alvaro de Bazán” en Viso del Marqués (Ciudad Real).
Overseas Territories rejected his request in 1885, stating that he had absented himself from the colony without permission.

79. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6985 E. 52. Oficio reservado del gobernador al ministro de Ultramar. Sta. Isabel, 6 de marzo de 1874. (Confidential letter from the Governor to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 6 March 1874).

80. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6985 E. 52. Oficio reservado del gobernador al ministro de Ultramar. Sta. Isabel, 4 de mayo de 1874. (Confidential letter from the Governor to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 4 May 1874).

Figure 10: View of the atrium of San José’s Church on Fernando Po with people coming out of Mass, Santa Isabel, Fernando Po 1875, albumen print 13.6 x 10.1 cm.

Archivo General de la Marina “Alvaro de Bazán” en Viso del Marqués (Ciudad Real).

In the first of the pictures taken by Joaque showing people coming out of mass, we can see Governor Diego Santisteban, shading himself under a white parasol, in the centre (fig. 10). The photograph lets us see what the atrium was like, as well as the front door and the windows; at the same time the broken windows bear witness to the lack of maintenance due to the scarcity of available resources. The priest seen in the next picture is almost certainly Camilo Rivera Rodríguez, who was the parish priest for the colony from 1 May 1873 to 12 April 1876.78

In a confidential letter to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Governor Ignacio García Tudela mentions the inappropriate womanizing of this priest. According to García Tudela, reliable officials had assured him that, about a month before, Don Camilo had hit his sacristan because “se negó a permanecer de vigilante mientras alguna mujer estaba encerrada con él en una habitación, y porque no se prestaba a hacer recados a su querida. Uno de los agentes de la Policía de este Gobierno encontró acostado con su propia manceba y en su misma cama a las diez de la noche el enunciado Párroco” (he refused to stand guard while Don Camilo and some woman were shut up in a room together, and because he would not run errands for the priest’s lover. One of the policemen employed by this government discovered this same parish priest in his very bed with his own mistress at ten o’clock at night).79

In response to such scandalous behaviour, naval officers refused to attend church services conducted by this lustful and aggressive chaplain who was so lacking in Christian zeal. According to García Tudela, no disciplinary inquiry had been held because making his behaviour public would have meant “un escándalo mayúsculo para la población y motivo sobrado de burla para los misioneros protestantes” (a major scandal for the population as well as providing the Protestant missionaries with ample opportunity for mockery).

The reprimand the priest would receive from the decent and respectable governor must have been equal to his sins because, in another confidential letter a couple of months later, García Tudela recognizes that Don Camilo had mended his ways and was trying hard to carry out the duties of his sacred ministry.80 On 12 April 1876, Santisteban gave him
permission to return to Spain “por haber sido multiplicadamente atacado de la fiebres del país” (because of the numerous attacks of local fevers and illnesses he had suffered), and as a result, the governor found himself “en la dura necesidad de cerrar el templo católico” (obliged to close the Catholic church) till another priest arrived.³¹

In his report Informe al Gobierno de la República (Report to the Government of the Republic) in 1873, Governor García Tudela had declared that Fernando Po’s Catholic population was being reduced “a unos pocos peninsulares, a los congos venidos de Cuba, a algunos negros portugueses de la isla de Príncipe, a media docena o poco más de individuos catequizados por los jesuitas y al reducido número de jóvenes o niños educados en su escuela” (to a few people from mainland Spain, the Kongos who had come over from Cuba, some Portuguese Blacks from the island of Príncipe, half a dozen people or so who had received religious instruction from the Jesuits and the small number of young people and children educated in their school); this meant that the church was little used and it was even empty on some holy days.³² It therefore comes as no surprise that Santisteban had a particular interest in showing a large congregation coming out of mass to give the lie to what his predecessor had said (fig. 11).

Previously, and for the same reason, the primary school teachers for both boys and girls had also left for Spain; this resulted in the state school for girls being closed on 30 June 1876 and – for want of a more adequate and stable solution – the one for boys having to be run by staff with hardly any qualifications for the task. To resolve this problem, Santisteban offered the teaching posts to the explorer Manuel Iradier and his wife Isabel Urquiola, who held them till 1877. They stopped their work for two reasons: because they wanted to return to Spain after the death of their daughter and because they were unhappy with the pay they were receiving, which fell very far short of the salaries and allowances given to qualified teachers.³³
of the Spanish Monarchy, issued on 3 July 1876, established that in Spanish territories nobody could be harassed on account of their religious opinions nor their form of worship, except where it was a matter of giving due respect to Christian morality). (Article 11 of the Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy, issued on 3 July 1876, established that in Spanish territories nobody could be harassed on account of their religious opinions nor their form of worship, except where it was a matter of giving due respect to Christian morality).

84. Roe 1872 and 1882 (reference 34).

85. El artículo 11 de la Constitución de la Monarquía española, promulgada el 3 de julio de 1876, establecía que en territorio español nadie podía ser molestado por sus opiniones religiosas ni por el libre ejercicio del su respectivo culto, a excepción del debido respeto a la moral Cristiana. (Article 11 of the Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy, issued on 3 July 1876, established that in Spanish territories nobody could be harassed on account of their religious opinions nor their form of worship, except where it was a matter of giving due respect to Christian morality).
Any preaching among the indigenous Bubi population was also expressly prohibited. However, it was considered necessary to maintain a certain “estado de tolerancia” (tolerance) towards Protestant missions, at least until Catholic ones, which had been suspended in 1872, could be re-established.

In a colony given minimal support, these measures led to numerous protest demonstrations, causing quite some headaches in Madrid – especially in the matter of how to deal with the combative Reverend William Holland, head of the mission and leader of the opposition movement. All in all, a few altercations restarted the so-called “problema de las misiones protestantes” (Protestant mission problem), on a scale that was even more of a threat to Spanish sovereignty than that which had been experienced two decades earlier. This was not only because the Fernandians welcomed the new mission with open arms but also because the Bubi people were showing an interest in British missionaries settling in their villages, something which again posed a threat to the colony’s Spanishness.

Figure 13: Group of Kru employed in the service of the Colony

Contracted normally for a year, Kru workers (fig. 13) used to be engaged on the spur of the moment in Cape Palmas and vicinity (an area known as the Kru Coast) by the captains of Spanish ships, or else they would arrive in Santa Isabel on their own initiative on board Portuguese and British vessels. They lived in the so-called “Casa de Kruamanes” (Kru House), which can be seen in the photograph; it was built in the times of Governor José de la Gándara and was a one-room barracks, with room “para alojar setenta kruamanes, teniendo tres puertas y cuatro ventanas al frente y cinco ventanas y una puerta a cada lado” (to accommodate seventy Kru, with three doors and four windows at the front and five windows and a door on each side).

In 1872, Governor Antonio de Vivas was complaining about Fernando Po’s only having 97 Kru to do colony work. We must suppose that, with the cuts to the colony’s budget that were introduced that same year, the number of Kru would have decreased still further.

As can be gleaned from various contracts signed at the beginning of 1876, the Kru had to carry out “los servicios a que les destine el Sr. Gobernador General” (the services assigned...
to them by the Governor General), for which they would receive 15 pesetas a month and due maintenance allowances according to their station. They were under the orders of a Spanish overseer, whose salary could be as much as 75 pesetas.69 Some of them ended up in jail for petty theft or for running away from their employers’ houses.70 Despite this, in his report of 1873 to the Government of the Republic, Governor Ignacio García Tudela had no hesitation in describing them as “robustos y honrados” (healthy and honest).71

In various official letters, Santisteban indicates that the few Kru who were in the service of the government carried out general cleaning work in connection with streets, construction sites and roads leading to the outskirts of the town, as well as cleaning and maintenance tasks in government buildings and various jobs on Matilde Farm, an experimental farm for the growing of cocoa and coffee located to the west of the town, opposite Venus or Carboneras Bay.72 García Tudela makes it clear in his report, however, that the Kru were reluctant to take on agricultural jobs, “trabajando contentos en las factorías y en los buques” (while being happy working at trading posts and on ships). In Joaque’s picture, they are shown standing in front of palm-oil barrels.

The lack of available funds – eventually even to pay for their return passages – made contracting these workers enormously difficult. The delays and non-payments contributed to a loss of credibility for the Spanish authorities, which itself helped make contracting them back home even trickier.74 The problem was not just local, as Santisteban discovered for himself when he made his first trip to the Gulf on board the steamer San Antonio, whose command he had to assume when the captain, Manuel Corsini, fell ill in 1862. On that occasion, he was able to see for himself how minor rulers were reluctant to provide manpower on account of the deceptions and bad treatment their people had experienced in the Spanish colony.75

In 1861, the Jesuit brother Tomás Araujo wrote in his journal that he had witnessed how some Kru, who were being returned home after serving in the colony, were assaulted and robbed of their savings just after getting off the boat, for lack of any protection from the people who were taking them back to their homeland.76 In the opinion of another missionary, the scarcity of women was another reason for the Kru leaving the colony once their contracts had come to an end. It seemed that, given the impossibility of meeting women, “las aberraciones que

90. AGA. A-G. C. 81/7958. Contratas a Crumanes firmadas por el administrador de caudales e interventor de la colonia Juan Serón Marengo. Santa Isabel, abril de 1876. (Contracts to Kru signed by the treasurer and financial controller Juan Serón Marengo, Santa Isabel, April 1876).
91. AGA. A-G. C. 81/7958. Estado de los presos existentes en la cárcel. Santa Isabel, 1 de marzo de 1868. (Condition of prisoners, Santa Isabel, 1 March 1868).
92. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6939. Informe del Gobernador de Fernando Poo, D. Ignacio García Tudela demostrando y enardeciendo la necesidad y la conveniencia de abandonar dicha colonia y sus dependencias. Santa Isabel, 14 de diciembre de 1873. (Report by Don Ignacio García Tudela, the Governor of Fernando Po, demonstrating and highlighting in very strong terms the necessity and advisability of leaving said colony and its dependencies, Santa Isabel, 14 December 1873).
93. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6973. Oficios de Diego Santisteban al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 9 de mayo de 1874. (Official letter from Governor Ignacio García Tudela to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 9 May 1874).
94. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6974. Oficio del gobernador Ignacio García Tudela al ministro de Ultramar. Santa Isabel, 9 de mayo de 1874. (Official letter from Governor Ignacio García Tudela to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 9 May 1874).
96. AHL. H. Tomás Araujo [1869?]. Libro de memorias para uso del que lo pone, este libro está hecho por el H. Cirilo López, Coadjutor de la Compañía de Jesús. (Book of recollections for the use of whoever it may serve, this book is written by H. Cirilo López, Coadjutor of the Society of Jesus).
During Santisteban’s governorship, the island of Fernando Po was turned into a penal colony where political prisoners from mainland Spain – mainly Carlist ones – were confined in the hope that they would also serve as a workforce for the colony and make up for the chronic shortage of Kru. Santisteban was not at all happy about this new situation, arguing that the deportees generated a great deal of expense and disrupted the ways and traditions of the peaceful islanders; moreover he was afraid of having to witness “el triste espectáculo de verlos sucumbir a consecuencia de las fiebres intermitentes del país” (the sad spectacle of watching them succumb to the periodic fevers of the area). The fact that he had a number of Kru photographed showing off their vigorous looks and fine bearing confirms Santisteban’s interest in highlighting them as the ideal workers for the colony.

As a black photographer, Joaque must have inspired trust among the Bubi, the indigenous population of the Island of Fernando Po, as they appear relaxed and completely unafraid in the photograph. It contrasts with the way they reacted some years later when another 14 photographs from various inland places on the island were commissioned for the World Exposition in Amsterdam. In this case, their poor quality was attributed to the lack of resources the photographer found in Santa Isabel, as well as Bubi reluctance to be photographed, even though the photographer was African “pues no sabiendo lo que significaba aquello, les inquietaba verse delante de la máquina y cuando se les pedía que estuviesen sin movimiento se asustaban y salían corriendo, habiendo pruebas que ha costado más de un día de trabajo, y solo se obtenía a fuerza de constancia y de regalos de tabaco, telas y aguardiente, medio el más hábil para llevar la tranquilidad a sus espíritus” (since, not knowing what it signified, they were nervous about being in front of the camera and, when asked to stay still, took fright and ran off; there is evidence that it cost over a day’s work, and the photographs could only be taken by dint of keeping on trying and thanks to gifts of tobacco, fabrics and alcohol, the most effective way of calming them down).

Figure 14: Group of indigenous Bubi people
The quality of the print – in which one can clearly make out the expressions on the faces of a heterogeneous group made up of people of both sexes and different ages – is a unique document that confirms the docile character of Fernando Po’s indigenous population (fig. 14). Governor García Tudela himself had no hesitation in declaring that “los indígenas pertenecen a la raza más pacífica del mundo y no aspiran a otra cosa que vivir tranquilos en los bosques” (the local people belong to the most peaceful race in the world and have no other wish than to live tranquilly in the bush). However, this same governor was very pessimistic about Spain’s ability...
to “civilizarlos” (civilize them) since, according to him, they belonged to a race that lived entirely independently and fought off civilization in a surprising way; a people that had no needs of any sort and got by on what they gathered from the soil and from the trees almost without working. To get hold of the few things they needed from European trading posts – e.g. guns, powder, alcohol or tobacco – all they needed to do was to trade their palm oil with the merchants who came to their villages.

According to the governor, the only possible solution, if one wanted to use them as a labour force, would be to force them into submission using arms, something that was wholly inadvisable, both because of their capacity for resistance in such wild and rugged terrain, and because of the protests such measures would unleash amongst the other European powers, particularly Britain, which was ever ready to find an excuse for reducing the Spanish presence in the Gulf of Guinea.

One striking aspect of the photograph is the scant personal ornamentation and tattoos to be seen on those present; something unusual in their culture. The isolation of their island existence meant that they had kept to their own way of life over many centuries, far from the cultural models found in the Bight of Biafra, which explains the difficulties the Spanish authorities had trying to bring them into the colonization process. Doubtless, Santisteban wanted Joaque to show them at their most unadorned and unsurprising, focusing on those Bubi who came from the area around Santa Isabel and were most influenced by European colonialism, with the aim of providing photographic evidence that, in contact with the white man, it was not impossible to civilize them and overturn their disinclination to work.

Figure 15: House of the Protestant missionaries who had settled in San Carlos Bay
In December 1874, Jacobo Varela, the replacement governor, instructed the captain of the Edetana to tour the coastal towns and report on the expansion of Protestantism and the extent to which it had taken hold. We can discover more about the contents of this last picture from related documents (fig. 15). It seems that the Protestant missionary, who had settled in San Carlos Bay with his wife, was living in a “magnífica casa construida sobre pilares de tres metros de altura” (magnificent house built on pillars three metres high). Next to the house was “un salón
(Protestantism and the English language) were taught so successfully that the missionary was planning to build a new house in the village of Somo-Somo. When the officer showed the children the Spanish flag, they revealed that they had never seen it before and were not aware what Spain was.

On another visit by the Edetana to San Carlos Bay, as he confirmed on his return from Corisco and Eloboy, the captain reported that the house that was being built in Somo-Somo had now been finished, and that the missionary had set up a little printing press in his own house where he was applying himself, with the help of an assistant, “en imprimir cartillas y silabarios en inglés y bubis, facilitando de este modo la instrucción de los indígenas” (to printing little elementary readers and spelling books in English and the Bube language, facilitating in this way the education of the native population).

According to a subsequent report, issued three years later by the captain of the schooner Prosperidad, we learn that the Protestant mission was situated some 1,500 feet up on San Carlos Mountain and occupied a 10-hectare (25 acre) site and had the corresponding property title deeds; there were five buildings: a church, a school, a hospital and two houses providing accommodation. At that time around 60 pupils of both sexes were being educated there.

Judging by the long letter of complaint written by the new assistant priest Rafael Joaquín Acosta y Millán, Santisteban’s tolerant attitude towards the Protestants was at odds with the more hardline stance of parish priests sent out after the decree. It would seem that the governor refused to allow the priest to give religious instruction to the Protestant children on the upper floor of the former house of the Jesuit missionaries, taking as his defence the principle of religious tolerance that still held sway despite the new provisions. Acosta attacks him, accusing him of meddling in ecclesiastical jurisdiction “barrenando las leyes vigentes del Estado y obrando de una manera inconstitucional” (violating relevant state laws and operating in
Francis W. Joaque (ca. 1845 – active until 1893)
On the previous pages we have followed Francis Joaque’s wanderings through Fernando Po’s capital from east to west. Let us now, on the remaining pages, have a closer look at the photographer’s path of life which brought him to the small volcanic island some 25 miles off the Cameroonian coast sometime in the early 1870s.

Francis Wilberforce Joaque was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone around 1845. His father Richard Vincent Joaque was “a prominent member of the offspring of Liberated Africans. [R.V. Joaque’s father] had a peculiar experience. He was taken from his native home by Spanish slavers, and carried to one of the then flourishing Colonies of Spain. There he was employed as an able seaman in a vessel trafficking in human merchandise; and in one of her voyages the vessel was met by British cruisers, captured, and brought to Sierra Leone, and the father of Mr. [R.V.] Joaque was among those thus liberated and freed.”106 After some years in the service of a white businessman, Francis W. Joaque’s grandfather started business on his own account as a licensed auctioneer, a profession which was continued by his father Richard Vincent.107 Clearly, R. V. Joaque had established himself as a distinguished member of Freetown’s Krio community and it was he who presented an address on “The Liberated African Inhabitants of the Colony and their Descendants” to Queen Victoria’s second son Alfred who paid a visit to the colony on his way back to England in 1860.108

Francis W. Joaque attended the Church Mission Society’s Grammar School in Freetown. In the early 1860s he was admitted on board the HMS Rattlesnake to acquire practical training in navigation.109 Joaque served on the ship for two years and after – although it is not clear when – became purser on the Corra Linn, the three-masted screw steamer of the British governor in Sierra Leone. In 1869 he disappeared from Sierra Leone.110 He must have gone to Fernando Po shortly afterwards, since Henry Roe of the British Primitive Methodist Missionary Society mentioned him in his account of his work on Fernando Po. Most likely Joaque had been on the island before, since close connections existed between the Krio communities of Santa Isabel (the Fernandinos), and Freetown. Family members from the two places visited each other frequently. Fernandinos sent their children to the CMS Grammar School in Freetown and business partners met both here and there to do business.

105. AGA. A-G. C. 81/6959. Instancia de protesta de Rafael Joaquín Acosta al ministro de Ultramar, Santa Isabel, 16 de septiembre de 1876. [Complaint from Rafael Joaquín Acosta to the Minister for Overseas Territories, Santa Isabel, 16 September 1876].
111. Roe 1882 (reference 34), 41.
In February 1870, Henry Roe reported on Joaque’s wedding to Drucilla McAulay, “one of the choicest daughters of the African settlers here”. One month later he mentioned Joaque playing the harmonium during church service. We are ignorant of whether Joaque had already worked as a photographer while still in Sierra Leone or if he started his profession only after arriving on Fernando Po. It seems however, that his first photographs stem from the very late 1860s and he might have already taken up his business when the Primitive Methodists arrived in 1870 since Henry Roe used some of Joaque’s photographs to illustrate his book “West African Scenes” from 1874.

Most of the early African photographers worked as itinerants along the West African coast and Joaque too, though based in Santa Isabel from the early 1870s, soon started to travel to Libreville to explore work options there. Successfully, as it seems. In 1878 the US-American missionary Robert Hamill Nassau mentioned that Joaque had taken his photo in Libreville, and then again, some years later, in 1883. On various occasions Nassau bought photographs from Joaque which he sent to friends and relatives in the United States. Another regular was the French explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza who wrote from Libreville that the local anglophone photographer had taken his and his consorts’ portrait. Indeed, Joaque photographed de Brazza and parts of his entourage during his expeditions in 1875–1879 and 1879–1882.

The German journalist Hugo Zöller, who, on behalf of the German Ḟöhnische Zeitung, travelled in West and Central Africa in 1884, spoke of Joaque twice in his richly illustrated four volume travel report. Zöller wrote that “Joki” was permanently drunk and no longer worked as a photographer, or at least sold his photographs only to a few selected patrons. The reason for this, so Zöller gossiped, was that “Joki” had drunk all the chemicals necessary for the development of the photographs. However the photographer had done a good job for a good price for him simply because he had listened to Joaque playing the song “Die Wacht am Rhein” on a “terribly mistuned harmonium”.

Joaque had broadened his sphere of action to Gabon because the mid-1870s where a time when trade intensified in the region attracting traders and explorers like the French Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza and the region’s urban centre Libreville developed from a neglected outpost of French colonialism to the starting point of the Congo Basin’s exploration and exploitation. The small town featured a cosmopolitan community made up of local M’pongwe and other Gabonese, West African workers, as well as white traders, missionaries, and visitors. It was a place “where every language [was] heard.” The appearance of steam ships and the establishment of regular liner traffic between Europe and Africa in the mid 1850s had greatly enhanced the mobility of people, goods and technologies in a way that

112. Roe 1874 (reference 34), 85-86.
115. I argue here that “Joki” is a malapropism or corruption of Joaque.
late British historian Martin Lynn described this development as a “radical break in the history of the region’s external commerce”.118

However small it might have been in the 1870s, there was clearly a market for photographs in West and Central Africa and Joaque was certainly not the only African photographer in the region in those days. There were others like Shadrack Albert St John, Fred Grant, Gerhardt Ludwig Lutterodt and John Parkes Decker, and hence there must have been a certain competition between them. Joaque, however, was an extremely good businessman. He consistently printed his company logo on the backs of his photographs as his European – but practically none of his African – colleagues did. And, very obviously, as the records in various European archives show, he socialized easily with Europeans who bought his photographs for their personal collections or with the purpose of giving them away to relatives, friends and acquaintances. However, even though Joaque took such images by order of traders, missionaries, or colonial authorities, he evidently also anticipated the needs of a future clientele. This was, for instance, the case with a series of about forty photographs which Joaque took of buildings (mission and trading stations, and premises of the colonial administration such as the post office) in Libreville and further up the Ogowe River in Lambaréné and Talagouga. These photographs were later donated to the Paris Société Geographique in 1886 by Noël Ballay who had accompanied de Brazza during his expeditions to Gabon and the Congo.

A screening of Joaque’s photographs shows that his most prevailing topics were people and buildings. There are also a few landscapes that were taken in the Gabonese hinterland, but they do not quantitatively stand out of the material, and there are no images of plants or animals. Evidently nature was not good business. There are quite a number of portrait photographs showing groups and individuals. A substantial number of these photographs is carte-de-visite sized. Africans – men and women – prevail rather than Europeans. The buildings Joaque photographed were mission and trading stations, churches, many of them in Gabon, as well as the infrastructure of the French colonial administration in Libreville. Francis Joaque was a very talented portrait photographer who prepared the setting meticulously before exposing the glass plate. Only rarely did he take his clients’ likenesses in a studio fully equipped with props (such as a painted backdrop alluding to a bourgeois parlour); he worked mainly outdoors or in front of a bright and neutral backdrop.

The historian Christopher Fyfe found that Joaque returned to Freetown in about 1890.119 We learn from newspaper sources that, in February und September 1891, as well as in November 1893, Francis W. Joaque sold plots of land in Freetown which had belonged to his father.120 Some years earlier, on 26 November 1890 Joaque had performed at the “Juvenile Volunteers Concert” in Freetown. The Sierra Leone Weekly News reported that “Mr. Joaque’s songs were the good old ones in Christy’s Books, which we have often listened to, but rarely

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120. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 7 February 1891, 1; 12 September 1891, 8; 26 November 1893, 8.
121. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 29 November 1890, 5.
heard them better rendered. ‘Hold your Horses’ and ‘Hen Convention’, accompanied by Mr. Joaque himself on the banjo were thunderingly encored.” 122 Joaque already had performed during a CMS Grammar School concert in 1889; “An old boy”, as the Sierra Leone Weekly News reported, “hardly known to the majority of the old boys, and no wonder, seeing he was away from home twice ten years, I mean Mr. Francis Joaque, next gave ‘Rock me to sleep Mother’.” 122 On November 9 November 1890, the same newspaper reported on the death of “Mr. Francis Joaque, Surveyor [who] died on Friday 1st and was buried on the 2nd. Mr. Joaque was one of the young men who were trained by the Government of this Colony in England.” 123 It might be that Francis Joaque was Francis W. Joaque’s son, who like his father, had been trained by the British for some time. In any case we lose track of Francis W. Joaque after 1893.

122. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 4 January 1890, 2.
123. Sierra Leone Weekly News, 9 November 1895, 6.