

Slavery on the Gold Coast and African Resistance to Slavery in Jamaica during the Early Colonial Period

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This research demonstrates a diasporic connection between slavery on both sides of the Atlantic, English and African interactions on the Gold Coast, and slave resistance in Jamaica from 1655 to the middle of the eighteenth century. This article transfers the site of 'seasoning,' the process by which enslaved peoples became physically and socially acclimated to slavery, from New World plantations to the homelands of Africans held in bondage. In turn, a challenge is presented to the notion that 'seasoning' led toward greater acceptance of slavery. Furthermore, this article explains what people subjugated in early colonial Jamaica from the Gold Coast of West Africa envisaged of their English masters and connects their expectations to their experiences on the Gold Coast. Men and women from the Gold Coast anticipated opportunities to improve their material and social status while enslaved in Jamaica. Denied those opportunities during the early colonial period they became frequently, and sometimes violently, rebellious.

'Collective memory, stereotype, myth, or speculation...what all are, and for my purposes all they need to be, is historical evidence that cannot be fully corroborated, but that may nevertheless prove valuable in conveying a sense of what may-have-been until such time that additional, more persuasive evidence comes to light that would contradict these suggestions.'

- Edna Bay¹

In 1678 close to thirty enslaved men staged an uprising on Captain Duck's plantation in the parish of St. Catherine, on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. The militia eventually quelled the insurrection, but not before the insurgents stole guns and ammunition and killed several whites on the plantation. During the interrogation of the alleged participants, the rebels from Captain Duck's plantation implicated several enslaved men from the nearby estate of Thomas Modyford. They, in turn, revealed that Quashee Eddoo, one of the most trusted bondmen on neighbouring Bybrook sugar plantation, knew about the plot. In an act of self-preservation, Quashee Eddoo implicated several other enslaved men from Bybrook including seven 'new Negroes' or 'unseasoned' enslaved Africans.²

¹ Edna Bay, 'Protection, Political Exile, and the Atlantic Slave Trade: History and Collective Memory in Dahomey,' *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 22 no. 1, 2001, p. 49.

² Joseph Bryan to William Helyar, June 8, 1678, Somerset Record Office, Walker Heneage MSS (Helyar MSS) box 1089, part 3, #47. 'Seasoning' involved an intricate mentoring and socialization process for newly enslaved people that took place over a two to five year period. During the 'seasoning' period, captives recuperated from the Atlantic crossing and adjusted to the disease environment of the New World. However, for Jamaican slave owners, the central purpose of the 'seasoning' period was socialization. Recently arrived Africans learned the fundamental rules of chattel slavery, which were work and obedience, from other slaves. For 'seasoning' see Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Harvard University Press : Cambridge, 1982, pp. 38-51; Richard B. Sheridan, *Doctors and Slaves: A Medical and Demographic History of Slavery in the British West Indies, 1680-1834*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 1985, pp. 83-89, 133-134; Edward Long, *History of Jamaica or, General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of the Island*, 2 vols, T. Lowndes: London, 1774, vol. II, p.444; Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831*, University of Illinois Press : Urbana and Chicago, 1994; Lynne Guitar, 'Boiling it

The revolt on Captain Duck's plantation was not unique in Jamaican history. Hundreds of enslaved men and women, most of them African-born, had revolted on the island just five years earlier and then again in 1685 and 1690. The eighteenth century was an equally volatile period. During the 1730s, Jamaica was the site of a protracted war between the maroons (bands of runaway slaves who had established themselves in the mountainous interior of the island) and armed whites. Enslaved men and women on the plantations provided aid to runaways and coordinated with the maroons on collective uprisings. In an address to King George II in England in 1734, Jamaican Governor Robert Hunter remarked that the success of the maroons 'had such influence on [the] other slaves that they [were] continually deserting to them in great numbers and the insolent behaviour of others [gave them] but too much cause to fear a general defection.'³ In fact, there was a small-scale rebellion in St. James Parish in 1742 followed by larger rebellions in St. David's parish in 1745 and St. Mary's parish 1760. Five years later another smaller rebellion broke out again in St. Mary's parish. Then, in 1766, thousands of bondmen rose up in Westmoreland parish. According to many contemporary slave owners the Coromantee, a label denoting captives traded through the Gold Coast fort at Kormantin in West Africa, were leaders in at least five of these revolts in Jamaica, and participants in many other plots and uprisings.⁴

Scholars have examined the causes, characteristics, and consequences of the slave rebellions during what historian Michael Craton has labelled the 'African phase' of slave resistance from many disciplinary approaches.⁵ The present research seeks to add nuance to discussions of the motivations for slave rebelliousness during this period while contributing to scholarly efforts to centralize the African backgrounds of the participants in analysis of their rebelliousness. Though it is indisputable that opportunity was one of the primary reasons for the frequency of New World slave revolts during the early colonial period, recent scholarship has shown that the social, political, military, and religious backgrounds of these African-born captives are also of utmost importance to understanding their participation in collective

Down: Slavery on the First Commercial Sugarcane Ingenios in the Americas (Hispaniola, 1530-45)' in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson, (ed), University of New Mexico Press : Albuquerque, 2006, pp. 39-82.

³ Address of the Governor, Council and Assembly of Jamaica to the King, Feb 21, 1734, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* [hereafter CSPCS], W. Noel Sainsbury, J.W. Fortescue, et.al, Kraus Reprint Ltd: Reprint, Vaduz 1964, #55.

⁴ Joseph Bryan to William Helyar, June 8, 1678, Helyar MSS, box 1089, part 3, #47; British Library, Additional Manuscripts [Add MSS] 12431: Tracts Relating to Jamaica; Earl Inchiquin to the Lords of Trade and Plantations, Aug. 31, 1690, CSPCS, #1041. Minutes of the Council of Jamaica, Dec. 16, 1701 (addenda), CSPCS, #1190; Governor Codrington to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Dec. 30, 1701, CSPCS, #1132. Edward Long, 'Account of the Maroons,' British Library, Add MSS 1241; Anon., 'History of the Revolted Negroes of Jamaica,' Add. MSS 12431, pp.69-74; Richard Price, ed. *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, 3rd ed., Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 1996, Mavis C. Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655-1796: A History of Resistance, Collabouration, and Betrayal*, Africa World Press: Trenton, N.J, 1990. Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1982. In contrast to Jamaica, Barbados experienced one revolt in 1649 that included servants and slaves. There were five slave revolt plots in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that never came to fruition. The 1692 plot in Barbados, which was led by Afro-Creoles rather than Africans, was by far the largest. Of the African-led plots, only two involved a significant number of slaves. The St. Kitts revolt of 1690 was the only slave insurrection on the island during this period. Antigua experienced one revolt in 1701, but it only included a few dozen slaves.

⁵ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp.99-104. Although Genovese does not call it the 'African phase' he discussed a shift in slave resistance that corresponded with the decline in the number of African-born slaves in the New World. See Eugene Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World*, Louisiana State University: Baton Rouge and London 1979, xiv, pp.82-124.

resistance.⁶ The differences between slavery in West Africa and on the plantations in New World colonies have been well documented and are widely accepted in academia. Yet, scholars have not fully explored what those differences may have meant to the captives transported to the Americas, especially during the early colonial period when the differences were most notable.⁷ We know what English planters expected of their slaves; they have left numerous manuals, journals, and personal letters to attest to their demands. Although they left no written testimony, my work seeks to bring to light the understanding and resulting expectations enslaved Africans may have had of slavery and their English masters through an examination of indigenous forms of slavery on the Gold Coast and the nature of early slave trading with Europeans in that region.⁸

In November 1674, four years before the revolt on Captain Duck's plantation, the English slave ship *William* docked at Port Royal in Jamaica with more than 400 enslaved

⁶ Walter Rodney, 'Upper Guinea and the Significance of the Origins of Africans Enslaved in the New World,' *The Journal of Negro History* 54, no. 4, 1969, pp.327-345. Monica Schuler discussed how the cultural heritage of Akan people shaped their rebellious behavior in 'Akan Slave Rebellions in the British Caribbean,' *Savacou* no.1, June 1970, pp.8-31. John Thornton explored the connection between the military training of enslaved Kongolese men and New World rebellions in 'African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion,' *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4, Oct. 1991, pp.1101-1113 and *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500-1800*, UCL Press, London and New York, 1999. Sylvaine Diouf pointed out skills that West Africans gained through resistance to the Atlantic slave trade, which they could have employed in the New World. See the introduction to *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, Ohio University Press; Athens and Oxford, James Currey, 2003. Most recently, Stephanie Smallwood has examined the alienating processes by which slave merchants transformed the meaning of enslavement for their African-born captives and thus shaped their experiences in the New World in *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2007.

⁷ Amy M. Johnson, 'Expectations of Slavery: African Captives, White Planters, and Slave Rebelliousness in Early Colonial Jamaica', PhD diss., Duke University, 2007. Audra Diptee has also explored connections between slavery in Africa and slave rebelliousness in Jamaica although her research focuses on a later period. See *From Africa to Jamaica: The Making of an Atlantic Slave Society, 1775-1807*, University of Florida Press: Gainesville, 2010.

⁸ It is unnecessary to try to determine who had been a slave or slave owner prior to their forced Atlantic migration to appreciate the significance of their pre-existing understandings of slavery. Bondmen participated in New World slave insurrections for a variety of reasons; a linear connection between their experience with slavery and their rebelliousness would be problematic. Craton, *Testing the Chains*, p.26. The cross-disciplinary scholarship on memory, trauma and identity formation is particularly useful for understanding how divergent experiences with and subsequent expectations of slavery and English slave owners may have taken on value for Gold Coast captives in colonial Jamaica faced with collective trauma. See, for example, *Remembering Violence: Anthropological Perspectives on Intergenerational Transmission*, Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm, (eds), Berghahn Books: New York and Oxford, 2010, and *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*, K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone, (eds), Transaction: New Brunswick and London, 2006. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001, Remembrances of slavery on the Gold Coast- how slaves were treated, what their obligations and duties were, and what rights slaves had- may have been particularly relevant given that the emerging collective identity of these captives in Jamaica was grounded in slavery. Likewise most of the planters in Jamaica were English suggesting that prior interactions with the English on the Gold Coast would have also been part of these memories. There is no evidence that captives sought to remember slavery specifically, but given the continuity of many other cultural practices on New World plantations and the ways that the upheaval associated with the Atlantic Slave Trade became embedded in social and religious discourses in West Africa it seems likely. Emmanuel Akyeampong, 'History, Memory, Slave-Trade and Slavery in Anlo (Ghana),' *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 22, no.3 (December 2001): 1-24; Rosalind Shaw *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Bayo Holsely, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Katharina Schramm, 'The Slaves of Pikworo: Local Histories, Transatlantic Perspectives,' *History and Memory* vol. 23 no.1 (Spring/Summer 2011): 96-130.

Africans from the Gold Coast aboard.⁹ These forced migrants arrived in Jamaica during the early stages in the development of the slave society and were on the cusp of the upward swing in the African population on the island where they were brought to meet the growing demands of the burgeoning sugar industry.¹⁰

Slave ships arrived in Jamaica having collected captives from many regions of Africa, resulting in a diverse African population on the island. On a single voyage, slaving vessels often touched at multiple ports along the West African coast from present-day Senegal to the Western Central region of Congo-Angola. Figure 1 represents the diversity of the African population in colonial Jamaica.

Figure 1: African Region of Origin for Captives in Jamaica, 1655-1780¹¹

	Senegambia & Off-shore Atlantic	Sierra Leone	Windward Coast	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra & Gulf of Guinea Islands	West Central Africa & St. Helena	South-east Africa & India Ocean Islands	Totals
1659-1660	0	0	0	0	0	94	0	0	94
1661-1670	0	0	0	0	1,090	6,025	632	4,392	12,137
1671-1680	273	0	0	3,357	3,845	3,316	1,437	2,262	14,490
1681-1690	1,389	177	0	734	12,583	4,699	8,878	199	28,659
1691-1700	5,814	697	0	3,599	7,848	7,411	10,256	0	35,625
1701-1710	2,934	382	194	21,006	17,837	1,265	10,327	0	53,947
1711-1720	1,574	479	0	27,994	16,052	829	3,053	1,462	51,442
1721-1730	3,284	595	383	32,424	18,035	8,615	12,135	0	75,467
1731-1740	1,017	213	1,914	23,718	3,264	13,548	28,693	0	72,365
1741-1750	3,614	3,653	1,080	15,461	2,103	30,235	13,831	0	69,977
1751-1760	2,573	1,992	8,557	29,927	6,221	22,239	13,348	0	84,857
1761-1770	998	4,419	8,937	29,281	9,725	21,942	5,986	0	81,290
1771-1780	2,930	7,521	8,847	37,826	11,605	33,663	3,655	0	106,047
Totals	26,399	20,128	29,912	225,322	110,205	153,882	112,230	8,314	686,398

The research for this article concentrates on slavery and slave trading in the region of the Gold Coast for several reasons, the first being the significant concentration of enslaved people from the Gold Coast in Jamaica. During the first decade of the eighteenth century, the British carried relatively equal numbers of captives from the Gold Coast and Bight of Benin to the island. However, the proportion of Gold Coast captives increased steadily over the next two decades reaching 32,000 people exported by the British to Jamaica in the years between 1720 and 1730. Between 1700 and 1730, approximately two-thirds of the captives the British shipped from the Gold Coast arrived in Jamaica creating a viable ethno-linguistic community. In fact, Jamaica received two times more Gold Coast captives than any other region of the Caribbean and Brazil during the period of this study, as illustrated in Figure 2.

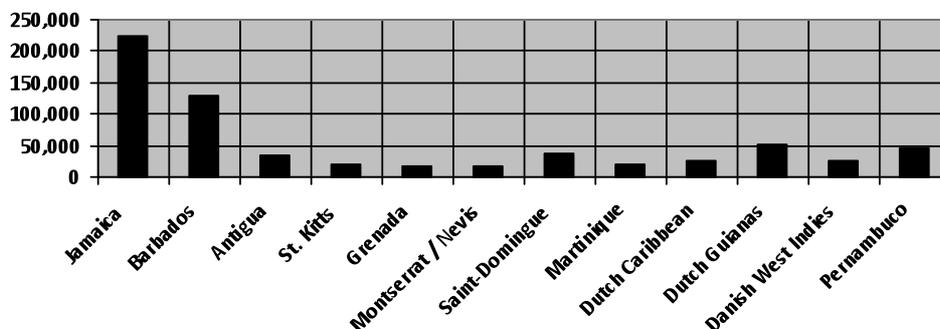
⁹ Account-Ledgers, Cape Coast Castle, 1673-1675, London, Public Records Office [PRO], Treasury Department, Series 70 (T70), T70/656, f. 29; Invoice Books, Homeward, PRO T70/936, ff. 45-46v. Ten Gold Coast captives from the *William*, six men and four women, were enslaved on Bybrook plantation.

¹⁰ By 1675, just twenty years after the English captured the island from the Spanish, there were approximately seventy sugar plantations dotting the island coast and more than 3,500 Africans were imported annually to provide them with labour. Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1972), 156-157.

¹¹ David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.

<http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?yearFrom=1655&yearTo=1780&disembarkation=301>. These figures represent the number of captives who disembarked from all European carries. Also see David Eltis, 'The Volume and African Origins of the British Slave Trade before 1714,' *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* XXXV vol.2, p.138, 1995, pp.618-169 and K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company*, London and Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd: New York, 1957, p.46.

Figure 2: Distribution of Gold Coast Captives in Select Caribbean Islands and Brazil, 1655-1780¹²



Second, the Coromantee, an Akan-speaking people from the Gold Coast, were often named as the ring leaders in the slave revolts in Jamaica and quickly gained a reputation for rebelliousness throughout the Caribbean rivaled by no other African ethno-linguistic group.¹³ Third, and more importantly, Gold Coast communities had a long history of indigenous slavery, including the importation of ‘saltwater’ captives from the Kingdom of Benin prior to the middle of the seventeenth century. This suggests that the region’s inhabitants had well-developed norms for how to purchase and treat slaves, even those who were ethnically distinct.¹⁴ The familiarity of people from the Gold Coast with acquiring and holding slaves allows for tentative conclusions about their own anticipations for their lives after enslavement and the role these expectations may have played in the rebelliousness of enslaved people from the Gold Coast in Jamaica. Fourth, some people enslaved in Jamaica had experiences with English traders on the Gold Coast as buyers and sellers of slaves and others as servants and slaves in English homes and factories on the West African coast. Regardless of their former slave or free status, these people were used to a relatively reciprocal relationship with the

¹² Only figures for regions that had a total population of more than fifteen thousand Gold Coast captives during the period from 1655 to 1780 have been included. Some islands, such as Antigua and St. Kitts, received small but steady imports from the Gold Coast while the Dutch Guianas and Saint Domingue experienced a rapid increase in the Gold Coast population in the 1720s followed by a steep decline in imports from the region in the 1750s. Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database. <http://slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces?yearFrom=1655&yearTo=1780&embarkation=4&disembarkation=402.403.401.404.405.804.702.805.703.701.801.802.803.305.304.307.306.309.308.311.310.705.501.704.502.600.301.302.303>

¹³ Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, 472; Bryan Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols, Dublin, 1793, vol. II, 59. Governor Jonathon Atkins of Barbados wrote that a slave rebellion on the island had spread rapidly ‘especially amongst the Cormantin negroes, who are much the greater number from any one country, and are a warlike & robust people,’ Gov. Sir Jonathan Atkins to Sec. Sir Joseph Williamson, Oct. 3, 1675, CSPCS, #690. Also Codrington, Dec. 30, 1701, CSPCS, #1132.

¹⁴ ‘Saltwater’ usually refers to African-born captives in the Americas. They were distinct from Creoles because of their language, lack of socialization to European society, and sometimes by dress, ritual scarification, and hairstyle, among other differences. I use the term here because captives from the Bight of Benin arrived on the Gold Coast by ship and were also distinct from free people and locally-born bondmen on the Gold Coast. Captives taken from the Gold Coast to Jamaica may have been frustrated that they did not have access to many of the opportunities for advancement and amelioration that bondmen, even ‘saltwater’ captives, often received in their homeland. Pieter De Marees, *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea (1602)*, translated from the Dutch and edited by Alber van Dantzig and Adam Jones, The Oxford University Press: Oxford, for the British Academy, 1987, p.76.

English, further challenging their adjustment to chattel slavery under English masters in Jamaica. Finally, the Gold Coast is significant to this study because the English sustained an early and intense association with the inhabitants of the region. They established their first fort at the port city of Kormantin, east of Elmina, by the early 1630s. By 1665, the Royal African Company, the English trading monopoly in West Africa, reported no fewer than seven trade factories on the Gold Coast.¹⁵

The 230-mile coastline of the Gold Coast stretched from Axim, situated 40 miles west of Cape Three Points to the Volta River in the east. The geographic boundary then reached inward some 350 miles to the border of modern day Burkina Faso. By the latter-part of the seventeenth century, the villages in this region were transforming from peripheral depots of inland trade routes to a bustling nexus of Atlantic commerce. This transformation was largely in response to European traders' search for gold and later for slaves.

In the late fifteenth and into the sixteenth century, many of the Africans captured by European slave traders were coastal-dwelling victims of disorganized and sporadic kidnappings. However, by the time the slave ship *William* sailed from London to the Gold Coast in 1674, a complex system of slave trading was already in place to procure captives in the interior, funnel them to the coast, and ship them across the Atlantic to burgeoning slave societies. African slave dealers procured many of these captives through kidnapping and warfare, and by the eighteenth century the judicial process resulted in many people being sentenced to slavery. The indiscriminate nature of slave procurement intimates that as the Atlantic slave trade expanded during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, people who had hitherto been free may have found themselves bound for sugar plantations in Jamaica alongside those who had already been slaves. One of the first tasks of enslaved Africans, beyond survival, would be learning to navigate the constraints of racial chattel slavery.

Many of the enslaved Africans who arrived in Jamaica on the *William* and other slaving vessels like it during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were familiar with slavery in their homelands. Indeed, eighteenth century Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards wrote of the Africans imported to the colony, 'many of them [had] undoubtedly been slaves in Africa,' and others were 'perhaps the owners of slaves themselves.'¹⁶ Recent scholarship has confirmed the widespread existence of indigenous forms of slavery in West Africa that predated the Atlantic trade.¹⁷ Yet, enslaved Africans were largely unfamiliar with the 'Customs of the Island' in Jamaica.¹⁸ That is, they had yet to learn what was expected of them in the role of chattel slaves

¹⁵ John Vogt, *Portuguese Rule on the Gold Coast, 1469-1682*, University of Georgia Press: Athens, 1979, Davies, *The Royal African Company*, p.224; Elizabeth Donnan, 'Part II: The Seventeenth Century, Introduction' *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols, Carnegie Institution of Washington: Washington, D.C, 1930, vol. I, p.89.

¹⁶ Edwards, *The History*, vol. II, pp. 74-75.

¹⁷ General studies of pre-colonial slavery and the impact of the Atlantic slave trade on slavery in Africa include Walter Rodney, 'African Slavery and other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade,' *Journal of African History*, vol. 7 no.3, 1966, pp.431-443; Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery' as an Institution of Marginality' in *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*, University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 1977, pp.3-81; Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, and Jan Vansina, *African History*, Boston, 1978, pp.156-171; Frederick Cooper, 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies,' *Journal of African History* vol.20, no.1, 1979, p.119, Ray Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1982, Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*; Paul E. Lovejoy *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1983, Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental, and African Slave Trades*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 1990, Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1991, Akosua Perbi *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*, (Sub-Saharan Publisher: Ghana, 2004.

¹⁸ 'Whenever we purchase a New Negro,' wrote plantation owner Charles Spooner of the Caribbean island of St. Christopher in the late eighteenth century, 'we fix him with an Old one, who teaches him the manner of living and the Customs of the Island,' Testimony Feb. 25, 1788, Board of Trade, 6:9, p.165.

and what they could expect of their masters in Jamaica in return. Similar to Edwards, Edward Long concluded that many of the African captives brought to Jamaica had been slaves in their homelands, 'and [had] only exchanged their owners and laws.'¹⁹ The significance slave owners in Jamaica placed on 'seasoning', coupled with the rebelliousness of African-born captives throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, proves that this was never a simple exchange. It is not necessary to re-hash comparisons between slavery in Africa and New World plantation slavery; the purpose here is to foreground the significance of these differences to African captives. The similarities between slavery on the Gold Coast and in Jamaica and English/African interactions on the West African coast highlight the significance enslaved Africans from that part of Africa may have placed on receiving opportunities for amelioration.

There were several parallels between slavery on the Gold Coast and in Jamaica during the early colonial period. As in colonial Jamaica, slavery on the Gold Coast was pervasive and slaves functioned in many different capacities.²⁰ In some cases, Gold Coast masters expected their bondmen to work longer and harder than their freeborn dependents and, as in Jamaica, recently acquired, or 'purchased,' captives often received the most difficult and demeaning tasks, and were the most likely to suffer in chattel-like conditions.²¹ Secondly, slave status on both the Gold Coast and the island of Jamaica was hereditary. While enslaved people on the Gold Coast could sometimes improve their social standing and material lives and even obscure their slave origins, they nevertheless passed their status on to their offspring.²² Finally, bondmen generally occupied the bottom of the social hierarchy in both societies. Although the prestige of their master and the manner in and reason for which they were acquired largely determined their social standing, Historian Akosua Perbi identified many of the restrictions placed on enslaved men and women on the Gold Coast.²³ Moreover, few enslaved people on the Gold Coast legally went from being a slave to a free person within their lifetimes. Consequently, even well established, prosperous, and influential slaves remained slaves.

Because of their experiences with slavery on the Gold Coast - either as former masters, slave traders, slaves, or by association with someone who fell into these categories - people

¹⁹ Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, p.403.

²⁰ Perbi detailed the various uses of slave labourers in chapter 4 of *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana*. Miers and Kopytoff noted that the complexity of the local society, the varied use of slaves, and the range of social positions of slaves were interrelated, 'African 'Slavery,'' p.46.

²¹ Salt and gold mining was reserved almost exclusively for slave labourers due to its grueling and dangerous nature. According to Wilhelm Müller, a German cleric who traveled to the Gold Coast in the 1670s, 'The Accasseers [Akan], with great effort and hazard allow the veins of gold to be sought deep in the earth in the mountains. To which end, they use all manner of instruments: huge iron picks, baskets, and strong ropes, not just to dig steps and galleries in the ground, but also to retrieve the gold found there.' He further reported, 'They are also in the habit of telling that a great number of slaves are lost in cave ins in the gold mines.' Wilhelm Müller, *Die Africanische auf der Guineischen Gold-Cust Gelegene Landschafft Fetu*, Hamburg, 1976, p. 272 translated by Paul E. Lovejoy and cited in *Transformations in Slavery*, p.117. Also see Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics in the Seventeenth Century Gold Coast*, pp.202-204 for the organization of labour in gold mining. A small portion of the gold produced was consumed locally, yet most was sent northward through Muslim trade routes or to Europe via Atlantic routes. Ivor Wilks, 'Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante: A Model of Early Change,' in *The Evolution of Social Systems*, J. Friedman and M.J. Rowlands, (eds), University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh, 1978, pp. 520-522.

²² Slaves could obscure their slave origins through marriage and adoption into the master's lineage and by acquiring personal wealth to enhance their material status. Moreover, among the Akan it was impolite to discuss a person's origins. As a result it became more difficult overtime for outsiders of the community to distinguish bondmen from free people. Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana*, p.113 and p.124. Slave origins continue to be a stigma in Ghana. See Peter Haenger, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*, Switzerland: Schlettwein, 2000, pp. 162-165 and Interview with Koranteng Ata-Caesar, Lawyer in Tema, on the History of his Family' March 30, 1993. Appendices 5.5, pp.182-191.

²³ Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery on the Gold Coast*, pp.130-132.

enslaved from this region may have expected poor treatment and grinding labour upon arriving as captives in Jamaica. Moreover, they may not have been surprised by the stigma attached to slave status or that their children inherited this disgrace. This is not to say that captives should have readily accepted their circumstances. Indeed the persistence of collective and individual rebelliousness suggests that enslaved Africans resisted slavery whenever the opportunity presented itself.

The diminished ability of Gold Coast captives to access opportunities to improve their social and material status may have been more significant than the scholarship on African slave resistance in the Americas has perceived. On the Gold Coast as well as in Jamaica slaves had an economic and social value. However, on the Gold Coast, the social value of slaves tempered the power of slave owners. A large assemblage of dependents, which included kinsmen, wives, clients, and slaves, reflected the prestige of the guardian/master and were indicative of his or her potential labour, economic, and military resources.²⁴ The guardian/master attracted and maintained dependents by displaying the exemplary characteristics of protectiveness, generosity and benevolence. Although enslaved people were more vulnerable to the whims of their masters than other types of dependents it was, nevertheless, socially risky for slave owners to mistreat or sell industrious, loyal, and well-established bondmen. Such behavior would impugn the character of the slave master, and possibly lead to the defection of some dependents.

Consequently, while exploiting slave labour, African slave owners on the Gold Coast also took steps to create a master/slave relationship that resembled that of a guardian/ward rather than an owner and his or her property. They accomplished this mainly by incorporating enslaved people into their lineage group through fictive kinships and marriages.²⁵ The practice was largely unheard of in colonial Jamaica, but was an important part of securing the productive and reproductive capabilities of bondmen on the Gold Coast. Upon arriving in Gold Coast communities captives often received a new name and a fictive kinship title such as son or daughter that reflected their junior (ward) status. This ritual adoption does not portend that slave owners treated their bondmen as family members or even that enslaved people held such an expectation.²⁶ Rather, it highlighted the social value of enslaved people on the Gold Coast, which led to what anthropologists Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff refer to as lifetime mobility. That is, even 'purchased' slaves became socially and affectively integrated into the community over time. Bondmen may have seen their ability to marry and acquire personal property, apparent indicators of their integration into the master's community, as two of the most important rights in their reciprocal relationship with the master.²⁷ Not only does the nature of slavery on the Gold Coast suggest that this would be the case, but colonial planters often mentioned the connection between lack of family and the rebelliousness of enslaved Africans.²⁸

²⁴ Willem Bosman remarked that for people on the Gold Coast, 'their Riches consist in the Multitude of Slave,' *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, Divided into the Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coasts*, London, 1721, p.204. Bondwomen were particularly important because of their productive and reproductive capabilities that enhanced the material wealth and human capital of the lineage.

²⁵ Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana*, pp.112-114. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, pp. 53-55.

²⁶ Miers and Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery,'" pp. 25-26.

²⁷ Miers and Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery,'" p. 20.

²⁸ Jamaican planter Edward Long suggested that the separation of families was the 'chief oppression' under which slaves lived and was a likely cause of their high mortality rate. Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, p. 499. Moreover, an anonymous observer in Jamaica during the first half of the eighteenth century wrote that when planters employed slaves in small numbers and they had families, '[they] were no better affected to their condition tho obliged to stay rather than abandon their familys.' But he recalled that 'in later times when the planters were so rich as to buy great Numbers of Stout Robust Negroe men att once and immediately began to treat them as the others they began to fly to the mountains in small bodies.' Anon., 'History of the Revolted Negroes in Jamaica,' p. 69. Likewise, Sir Hans Sloane who travelled the West Indies remarked that slave families '[kept] their Plantations chiefly in good order' and when they

The lifetime mobility enslaved people on the Gold Coast achieved depended on the manner in which they became a slave, their age, and their gender. Many of the men captured in warfare on the Gold Coast were either quickly sacrificed, moved to salt or gold plantations where they could be closely supervised, or possibly redeemed to their kinsmen. It certainly would have been dangerous for masters to keep a large population of hostile adult males in their communities. Thus the enslaved men most likely to have significant lifetime mobility were either brought into the village community at a young age or were locally born. These men were permitted to marry, own other slaves, establish independent wealth, and even become the head of the lineage.²⁹ However, it seems that women and children were more readily incorporated into the master's lineage, possibly because of their perceived docility.³⁰ In fact, it was not uncommon for masters on the Gold Coast to marry their bondwomen or distribute them among their kinsmen, clients and other slaves. Masters sometimes freed their enslaved wives, but, more importantly, through marriage enslaved women established closer ties to the master's lineage.

The social value of slaves also mitigated the most denigrating aspects of their economic exploitation. Enslaved workers could reasonably expect similar labouring conditions as freeborn workers and that their slave status would not necessarily determine their employment or social standing in the community.³¹ In addition to their age, gender, and talent, the type of labour enslaved people performed was based on the status of the master and the purpose for which they were acquired. Moreover, in some cases enslaved labourers were crucial to the production process because they increased output, not because they performed a different type of work.³² For example, during the harvest, bondmen toiled beside equally overworked free women and children who performed most of the agricultural duties in many parts of West Africa.³³ Likewise, enslaved wives fulfilled many of the same domestic duties as freeborn wives.³⁴ As a result of the integration of bondmen in the communal labour force, masters may have treated their enslaved dependents, in the context of labour, in the same manner as the free people alongside whom they worked, though they likely expected their bondmen to work longer and harder in some instances.

lacked slave wives, 'the Men should wander to neighboring Plantations, and neglect to serve them.' Sir Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves, St. Christophers and Jamaica, etc.* 2 vols, Printed by B.M. for the author: London, 1707, vol. I, p.xlviii.

²⁹ Miers and Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery,' pp.27-29; Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 116. Also see Perbi's *A History of Indigenous Slavery*, pp.122-130 and 'Mobility in Pre-Colonial Asante from a Historical Perspective,' *Research Review NS* vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2, 1991, pp.72-86. Some enslaved males were able to achieve notable incorporation and accrue considerable personal wealth largely because of the wide range of social and occupational roles available to them. Indeed, their ability to do so was often a *result* of their foreignness.

³⁰ Miers and Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery,' pp. 30-32; Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, pp. 114-115.

³¹ John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 1992, pp. 85-88. Wealthy men and women invested in slaves as a reproducing form of private property similar to European investments in land.

³² The exception would be in gold and salt mining. Slave based plantations developed around Kumasi, Denkyira, and Akyem in the early 1700s in response to the centralization of the Akan states. However, the number of slaves labouring under this mode of production was small and free peasants farmed alongside them. Moreover, the Asante slowed the creation of a slave caste by assimilating captives into their lineages. For gold mining plantations see Wilks, 'Land, Labour, Capital and the Forest Kingdom of Asante,' pp. 519-526; Kea, *Settlements, Trade, and Politics*, vol. 5, pp.11-50, pp.202-204; Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, pp. 117.

³³ Basil Davidson with F. K. Buah. *A History of West Africa to the Nineteenth Century*. Rev. (ed.), Anchor Books: Garden City, N.Y, 1966, 178-179; E. Frances White 'Women in West and West-Central Africa' in *Women in Sub Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*, Iris Berger and E. Frances White, (eds.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1999, p.65.

³⁴ Miers and Kopytoff, 'African 'Slavery,' p.29.

Not only was the fundamental role and experience of slavery on the Gold Coast quite distinct from slavery in Jamaica, but the social environment around the slave trading factories on the West African shoreline was also notably dissimilar from Jamaican society. On the Gold Coast, power and opportunity were not solidly tied to race, colour, and status as it was in colonial Jamaica. As a result, some people held as slaves had opportunities to exert their influence over free people, including Europeans, and amass personal wealth. Captives swept from the coastal regions of the Gold Coast into the Atlantic Slave Trade may have grappled to reconcile their experiences with the English on the West African coast to the unrestrained power English masters wielded in Jamaica.

Ignorance of hinterland trade routes, diseases, and the strength of coastal chiefs prevented English traders from travelling far from the factories local leaders had allowed them to establish. In the early 1700s Dutch slave trader Willem Bosman wrote: 'The English here are so horribly plagued by the Fanynean Negroes, that they are sometimes even confined to their Fort, not being permitted to stir out.'³⁵ There was little the English could do under such restrictions besides attempt to placate local leaders. Consequently, English merchants throughout the Gold Coast found themselves heavily dependent on African employees and businessmen. Captain Coffee, an African employee of the Royal African Company during the 1680s,³⁶ and entrepreneurs like him, who historian Ira Berlin refers to as 'Atlantic Creoles,' acquired, explained, and disseminated information between Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast.³⁷

Similarly, the employment of Gold Coast labourers who functioned as canoe men, porters, and guardians on slave ships was an essential part of conducting business on the Atlantic littoral. For example, slave trader Jean Barbot described Gold Coast canoe men as 'the fittest and most experience'd men to manage and paddle canoes,' and he admitted that without the 'activity and dexterity' of these men, trade on the coast would cease.³⁸ African workers were acutely aware of their role in promoting trade, and often leveraged this knowledge with European traders to resist onerous demands, poor working conditions, and insufficient pay.³⁹ The independence of canoe men was especially irritating to some English traders. Canoe men often went on strikes at times when English merchants need them most to transport valuable trade goods and captives. In response to an incident in 1695, Edward Seale, factor at the slave trading fort at Commenda, recommended that the Royal African Company not pay the canoe men in order to make an example of them, but there is no evidence that the Royal African Company acted on his advice or that European traders in general were ever able to bring canoe men on the Gold Coast under their control.⁴⁰

³⁵ Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, p.56.

³⁶ Founded in 1672, the Royal African Company maintained a monopoly of the English slave trade until the 'ten percent act' of 1698. From 1698 to 1712, individual traders paid a fee to the company to trade in slaves. After 1712, the English slave trade was carried on exclusively by private traders. George Zook, *The Company of Royal Adventures Trading in to Africa*, New Era Publishing Co.: Lancaster, P.A, 1919, and Davies, *The Royal African Company*.

³⁷ Ira Berlin, 'From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no.2, 1996, pp.251-288. Also see George Brooks, *Eurafricans in West Africa: Commerce, Social Status, Gender, and Religious Observance from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Ohio University Press : Athens, 2003. For examples of their service see Robin Law, (ed), *The English in West Africa, 1681-1683*, part I, Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 1997.

³⁸ *Barbot on Guinea: The Writings of Jean Barbot on West Africa, 1678-1712*, P.E.H. Hair, Adam Jones, and Robin Law, (eds), 2 vols, Hakluyt Society : London, 1992, vol. II, p. 382. William Rogers wrote from Whidah, 'Forty or fifty Gold Coast Slaves are much wanted for Factory use' May 22, 1714, T70/5, Letter Books, Letters Received, Abstracts from Africa, 1705-1714, f.102-103.

³⁹ 'Voyage of the Hannibal, 1693-1994,' Donnan, *Documents Illustrative*, 404-407. Also see W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1997, p. 52.

⁴⁰ Commenda, February 20, 1694/5, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MSS (Rawl.MSS) C746, f.67.

Some of the businessmen that English traders relied on were slaves, who had risen to positions of power and prestige in local Gold Coast communities. Their slave status did not prevent them from becoming wealthy and influential even among the Europeans inhabiting the trading centers along the coast. Bosman remarked about a visit to the Gold Coast in 1705, 'Those who come from the inward part of the Country to traffick with us are chiefly Slaves,' yet European traders treated them with respect.⁴¹ Thus we see that both free people and those enslaved to Gold Coast masters were somewhat successful at resisting English domination while on the Gold Coast. Unfortunately few existing records indicate whether captives taken to Jamaica previously had been enslaved or free, and few detail the nature of captives' interactions with the English on the Gold Coast. Thus is it impossible to determine how many of the captives brought to Jamaica from this region fit this category. Nevertheless, achieving independence, power, and prestige over the English set a noteworthy precedence for this population of captives in early colonial Jamaica. Their inability to accumulate wealth and influence in Jamaica because of the connection between race, color, and chattel slavery in the colony may have been a serious, and under examined, challenge to their expectation of slavery.

English slave owners on the Gold Coast adopted similar customs as Gold Coast slave owners in dealing with their bondmen; thus even relationships with the English as their servants or slaves while on the Gold Coast would not have fully prepared enslaved African captives for racial chattel slavery in Jamaica. Most notably, English slave owners on the Gold Coast provided some of their enslaved workers with opportunities for negotiation, amelioration and protection. For instance, in 1702 John Freeman of the Royal African Company instructed the company's agents that their slaves should be allowed to marry and that 'they [were] not to be beaten or ill used at will or pleasure of any person.'⁴² Undoubtedly many English slave owners on the Gold Coast failed to follow these directives. However, the English were in danger of attack by captives awaiting transport, local inhabitants, and hostile European merchants on the coast. Given their vulnerability, it was in the best interest of English slave owners to engage in this form of reciprocity with their captives in the hope of these slaves standing as allies. In another example, two African tradesmen working at Cape Coast Castle demanded to be released from service. When apprised of the situation, an official of the Royal African Company agreed that English traders should 'not be burdened with any unserviceable person nor keep any on the coast, who have such violent inclinations to return home.' This suggests that the African tradesmen had the opportunity to negotiate the conditions of their service. However, he also encouraged the factors at slave trading depots to retain servants until the expiration of 'their stated time,' implying that workers were contractually bound to the factory, though not for life.⁴³

It is reasonable to assume that captives taken from the Gold Coast, whether they had previously been held as slaves or were free people, anticipated a process of incorporation into the village community and the resulting opportunities it created for limited power and amelioration. Gold Coast captives who had been traders on or spent time in the coastal region also would have been keenly aware that even enslaved people could achieve some rank among the English on the Gold Coast in ways closed to them in colonial Jamaica.

Similarly to slave owners on the Gold Coast, Jamaican planters measured their wealth in their human property. Slaves were expensive to purchase, thus a large retinue of enslaved workers demonstrated that the slave owners could afford such an expense. Slave ownership boosted the social prestige of Jamaican planters. Moreover, slave ownership had an economic value. The slave owner could sell and bequeath enslaved men and women as well as use them as collateral. In addition, slave labour generated enormous profits in agriculture and manufacturing. Despite the social and economic value of slaves, however, there were few social

⁴¹ Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Gold Coast*, pp. 92-93. Bosman noted that the leader of the slave caravan was 'not treated as a Slave, but as a great Merchant.'

⁴² John Freeman, August 4, 1702, T70/51, Letters sent to Africa, 1698-1728, p.268.

⁴³ July 1, 1720, T70/53, Letters sent to Africa, 1698-1728, f.3.

incentives for colonial slave owners to treat their bondmen- especially African-born captives who did not speak English, practiced unfamiliar religions, and were phenotypically distinct from their European masters- humanely.⁴⁴ Likewise, there were few laws that required masters to moderate their treatment of their bondmen. Colonial planters, who filled the legislative assemblies in Jamaica, enacted few laws during the early colonial period to protect slaves. The laws that did pass were often vague or the punishment insubstantial such that this legislation was ineffective at shielding bondmen from abuse. Moreover, slave owners simply ignored the laws that attempted to restrain their authority in any way.⁴⁵

Brutality then became a staple in the relationship between white planters and enslaved blacks on the island. As historian James Walvin noted, 'Slaves were kept in place by a curious mix of violence and benefits, of stinging blows (and worse) and rewards.'⁴⁶ Yet planters reserved many of these 'rewards' or positive incentives for locally-born, or Creole, bondmen. By the late seventeenth century, almost sixty percent of all able-bodied workers on a Jamaican sugar estate were field hands.⁴⁷ While many Creoles undoubtedly found themselves relegated to fieldwork, many others, especially those with European ancestry, were trained as domestic servants and skilled artisans.⁴⁸ As domestics and craftsmen, Creoles attained some degree of social and physical mobility. Skilled bondmen often travelled independently around the island and acquired personal wealth by hiring themselves out and selling their wares in local markets. Domestic slaves worked closely with the master and his family and created close relationships from which they sometimes attained special privileges and opportunities.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the vast majority of Africans, especially women, found little employment outside of the sugar fields. Even within fieldwork, Africans and women rarely became drivers, the most important position held by slaves associated with sugar cultivation.⁵⁰

African-born bondmen failed to attain many of the familial comforts that enslaved people on the Gold Coast eventually achieved. First, enslaved Africans in early colonial Jamaica had limited opportunities to form stable families because African men disproportionately outnumbered African women.⁵¹ Polygamy and the preference of African men for women from their own, or a similar, ethno-linguistic group, further exacerbated the shortage of women

⁴⁴ James Walvin, *Questioning Slavery* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 75, 79-80; Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1973), 74.

⁴⁵ Patterson, *Sociology*, 74, 79-84. Also see Diana Paton 'Punishment, Crime and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth Century Jamaica,' *Journal of Social History*, (Summer 2001): 923-954.

⁴⁶ Walvin, *Questioning*, 70. Also see pages 49-71. Physical punishments were common for both servants and slaves during this period.

⁴⁷ Barry Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 170-172.

⁴⁸ Patterson, *Sociology*, 64.

⁴⁹ Close ties to the master's household were not always favorable as enslaved females were especially vulnerable to sexual, physical, and verbal abuse in the master's home. See Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-1786* (MacMillan: 1999).

⁵⁰ Patterson, *Sociology*, 61-62; Thomas Roughley, *The Jamaica Planter's Guide; or, A System for Planting and Managing a Sugar Estate, or Other Plantation in that Island, and Throughout the British West Indies in General*, Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster-Row: London, 1823, pp.79-82.

⁵¹ Between 1674 and 1725 approximately 62 percent of the 31,360 Africans shipped from Africa to Jamaica by the Royal African Company were males. See David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, 'Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men?' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1992, p.241, Table 1. Herbert Klein, 'African Women in the Atlantic Slave Trade,' in *Women and Slavery in Africa*, 36; David Galenson, *Traders, Planters and Slaves: Market Behavior in Early English America*, Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1986, 95; Joseph E. Inikori, 'Export versus Domestic Demand: The Determinants of Sex Ratios in the Transatlantic Slave Trade' *Research in Economic History* Vol. 14, 1992, pp. 117-166.

available to become wives, or domestic partners.⁵² In addition, African-born men competed with both Creoles and European men for access to African women. Meanwhile European women were off limits and Creole women tended to marry locally-born men. African men were at a disadvantage in competitions for domestic partners because their exclusion from skilled and leadership positions made it difficult for them to acquire the wealth and prestige necessary to attract a mate. When African men were able to find a partner, sale or transfer to another plantation and the high death rate among bondmen disrupted the stability of these unions.⁵³ English planters on the Caribbean island of Barbados in the seventeenth century were especially conscious of the problems that arose in the enslaved community from the lack of women. Richard Ligon noted that in Barbados, 'if they have more Men than Women, the men who are unmarried will come to their Masters and complain, that they cannot live without Wives, and desire him, they may have Wives.'⁵⁴ Enslaved men, who were largely African-born during the period of this study, likely anticipated having access to female domestic partners, despite their slave status, and may have taken their demands to their masters.

The Gold Coast captives in Jamaica who had originated from or spent time on the Atlantic littoral would have lamented their lack of opportunities to elevate their status or create and protect their families. It may have been equally difficult for them to accept the connection between color and slavery and their exclusion from power based on both. According to English law, the slave was property and as Elsa Goveia stated, 'the power of the master over his property, the slave, [was] virtually unlimited.'⁵⁵ The authority of Jamaican planters, who were exclusively white, was codified in both custom and law. By the end of the seventeenth century, this hegemony was already extended to all whites, theoretically regardless of class or religion. The 1664 slave code made it a crime for slaves to assail a 'Christian' and gave the planter explicit power to punish his bondmen as he saw fit. In case any blacks had become Christian, the 1674 law sought to more explicitly state who it protected by making it a crime for a slave to assault a 'white Christian.' Three years later, the term 'white person' replaced 'Christian,' further extending the authority of whites on the island. Likewise, the penalty for such an offense increased from whipping to 'death or any other punishment' with each successive slave law or code.⁵⁶ Captives taken from the Gold Coast littoral would have understood the power of the master over his slaves, but the legal supremacy of all whites over all blacks was contradictory to the manner of English/African interactions on the Gold Coast during this period.

Colonial planters themselves saw a clear connection between the origins of their enslaved labourers, the way they treated these bondmen, and the rebelliousness of African-born slaves. The remarks of Edward Long are particularly illuminating. Long wrote, 'The Negroes,

⁵² Barry W. Higman, 'African and Creole Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad,' *Journal of Family History* Vol. 3, 1978, pp. 163-180; Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 172; Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial*, vol. II, 135.

⁵³ See Michael Craton, 'Changing Patterns of Slave Families in the British West Indies' *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, (eds), The New Press: New York, 1991, 228-249. Long wrote of bondmen in Jamaican in 1774, 'They are all married (in their way) to a husband, or wife, pro tempore, or have other family connexions...'*The History of Jamaica*, vol. II, 414. Slaves did attempt to create stable families, but they had limited ability to control or protect its members. See Chapter 6 in Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society: 1650-1838*, Indiana University Press : Bloomington, 1990).

⁵⁴ Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of Barbadoes Illustrated with a Map of the Island*, Humphrey Mosey: London, 1657, pp.37-38, 43-47. Also see Richard Blome, *A Description of the Island of Jamaica; With the other Isles and Territories in America, to which the English are Related* 2nd ed., Printed by J.B for Dorman Newman, London, 1678, p. 37.

⁵⁵ Elsa V. Goveia, 'The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century,' in *Caribbean Slave Society and Economy*, pp. 349-350. Also see Walvin, *Questioning Slavery*, p.61 and Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery*, pp.80-84.

⁵⁶ Paton, 'Punishment, Crime and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth Century Jamaica,' p. 931.

who have been chief actors in the seditions and mutinies,...were the *imported Africans*;... and of these the Coromantins stand the foremost.⁵⁷ In truth, slave owners often mentioned the Coromantee in relation to slave rebelliousness. Long reported that their 'turbulent, savage, and martial temper was well known' and according to Governor Christopher Codrington of the Leeward Islands, the Coromantee were 'implacably revengeful when ill-treated.' Codrington further referred to the Coromantees as 'the best and most faithful of [their] slaves,' but he cautioned, 'Noe man deserved a Corramante that would not treat him like a Friend rather than a slave.'⁵⁸ In other words, captives from the Gold Coast chafed against efforts by colonial planters to deny a reciprocal relationship and restrict their opportunities for any lifetime mobility. Historian Michael Craton noted of the British Caribbean during this period that 'less aristocratic planters- an increasing majority- lacked the instinct or will to enter into such a socializing contract with the slaves whom they owned,' and this contributed to the turbulent relationship between African-born bondmen and English masters in early colonial Jamaica during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵⁹

Following the slave rebellion on Captain Duck's plantation, the magistrate banished Quashee Eddoo rather than have him executed as recompense for the information he provided against his alleged co-conspirators. The other rebels from the Bybrook estate received far worse punishments. The magistrate sentenced Mingo, the plantation's boiler, to hang and Wagey, Ned Gumpey, Will Governor, and Johnson suffered the fate of slow death by fire. Interestingly, the seven 'new Negroes' from Bybrook plantation who participated in the insurrection were at first sentenced to deportation. However, the magistrate changed his decision and Cromwell, Rafoo, Punch, Christover, Governor Tom, Jefferry, and Captain Grey were instead hanged and their bodies burned.⁶⁰ The magistrate's initial sentence for these seven 'unseasoned' bondmen points to an expectation, if not acceptance, of their rebelliousness because they had not completed the 'seasoning' process. Less than twenty years later, the Jamaica Slave Act of 1696 codified the importance of acculturation in law.⁶¹

Although slavery was widespread on the Gold Coast even prior to the Atlantic slave trade, in many ways the men and women captured from this region and brought to Jamaica were 'seasoned' by experiences that were inimical to racial chattel slavery. The most profound dissonance between African captives from the Gold Coast and English masters in Jamaica occurred around slaves' access to opportunities to improve their material and social status. This expectation was born partly from their varied contact with slavery in their homeland. Slave status on the Gold Coast was hereditary and degrading, but some slaves were socially mobile and able to amass material wealth. The expectation of opportunities for amelioration was also a result of English/African interactions on the African littoral. English merchants on the African coast negotiated with free and enslaved Africans in an effort to safely operate in the region. It becomes evident that slave status and power and prestige were not mutually exclusive on the Gold Coast, even when dealing with Europeans. Unfortunately captives brought from the Gold Coast during the early colonial period left no definitive testimony about what they expected of

⁵⁷ Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, 444-445.

⁵⁸ Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, 470; Codrington, Dec. 30 1701, CSPCS, #1132.

⁵⁹ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 37. Daniel Warner wrote that captives from the Gold Coast in Antigua were considered 'the best esteemed Slaves here,' cited in Mullin, *Africa in America*, 25. For a discussion of African ethnicity and labour in the opinions of colonial planters see Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, 403-404 and Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial*, vol. II, 59-72. While many planters held the Coromantees in high esteem, their prominent roles in rebelliousness prompted some island officials to consider refusing additional shipments from the Gold Coast. See Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. II, pp.444-446, pp. 470-471.

⁶⁰ Joseph Bryan to William Helyar, June 8, 1678, Helyar MSS, Box 1089, part 3, #47.

⁶¹ According to this act, captured runaways who had been on the island for less than three years received a lighter punishment than those who had been 'seasoned.' *Acts of Assembly Passed on the Island of Jamaica, from the year 1681 to the year 1769 Inclusive*, Jamaica, Kingston, 1787, p.76.

slavery in the Americas or of their English masters. Nevertheless an analysis of what their expectations may have been because of their experiences with slavery and English merchants on the Gold Coast is an important part of understanding their decisions about when and how to engage in various forms of resistance and rebelliousness in Jamaica.