

**Enemies Bound by Trade:  
Jamaica, Cuba, and the Shared World of Contraband in Atlantic  
Empires, 1710-1760**

by

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## **Dedication**

To my parents, for everything.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

AGI	Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain
AGS	Archivo General de Simancas, Simancas, Spain
ANC	Archivo Nacional de Cuba, Havana, Cuba
APS	American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
BL	British Library, London, England
CL	William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan
IRO	Island Record Office, Titchfield, Jamaica
JNA	Jamaica National Archives, Spanish Town, Jamaica
JNL	Jamaican National Library, Kingston, Jamaica
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England
SCL	Sheffield City Library, Sheffield, England
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, England
TSV	Islamorada Public Library, Islamorada, Florida.

## Abstract

This dissertation reveals how, in the half-century following 1710, inhabitants of British and Spanish America became ever more deeply intertwined in an interconnected regional economy based on illicit trade and violent conflict, regardless of peace or war. Drawing together English- and Spanish-language sources from European, American, and Caribbean archives, this dissertation shows how these evolving transnational relationships shaped not only Jamaica and Cuba, but also the rise of the Atlantic sugar plantation complex, the Atlantic slave trade, and the very nature of Europe's Atlantic empires.

To unpack this complex web of relationships, the dissertation first examines in detail three major aspects of the early eighteenth-century inter-imperial economy connecting British Jamaica and Spanish Cuba: smuggling; the South Sea Company's monopoly contract to supply slaves to Spanish America (the *asiento*); and privateering. The social and cultural net woven by contraband trade and privateering reached broad and deep, drawing in not only merchants and planters, but also poor whites and free blacks who manned the vessels traversing imperial boundaries. Jamaican slave traders carried tens of thousands of captive Africans to Spanish America, while simultaneously others enslaved in Jamaica used knowledge gained from illicit traders to escape their bondage. In seeking profits, status, or survival, colonists in both islands constructed an illegal and informal but nevertheless coherent system that operated alongside the formal structure imposed by each island's European metropole.

After narrating the emergence and workings of this inter-imperial economy, the dissertation then shows how the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739) revolutionized it, as newly

empowered Cuban elites took advantage of the conflict's disruption to forge contracts with their ostensible Jamaican enemies to peacefully supply the Spanish colony with foodstuffs and slaves. Following the Peace of 1748, these contacts continued and expanded to incorporate the rest of the Spanish Caribbean. Simultaneously, the dramatic expansion of the Jamaican sugar complex in that period opened new ports around the island, spurring Cuban merchants to travel clandestinely to Jamaica and meet directly with their Anglo-American counterparts, rather than waiting for British and British colonial vessels to come to them. As officials became increasingly conscious of how this integrated world was vital not only to the two islands, but also to societies across their Atlantic empires, Jamaican and Cuban elites were accommodated in ways not afforded to other colonists. The inter-imperial relationships they had forged were first quietly accepted and later formally incorporated into the structures of the "reformed" empires of the late eighteenth century. The result of these transformations was the quasi-legalization of the international slave trade and the dramatic decline in inter-imperial violence for the first time in centuries.

## Introduction

In 1778 the American-born painter John Singleton Copley was hired by the London merchant Brook Watson to paint an incident from Watson's youth. In 1749 Watson had sailed as a fourteen-year-old cabin boy on a voyage from Massachusetts to the Caribbean. The ship was owned by his uncle, who hoped the voyage would give the young man the opportunity to visit the markets with which he would someday trade. During the voyage, Watson decided to go for a swim in the seemingly inviting waters of a West Indian harbor. Unfortunately, during his dip, the impetuous bather was attacked by a shark and lost his right leg below the knee. It was this event Watson wished to commemorate.<sup>1</sup>

Copley's depiction of the event—*Watson and the Shark*—is a widely recognized American painting, the subject of innumerable studies examining the social contexts of its production and the diverse human figures depicted in it.<sup>2</sup> Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the detailed cityscape in the background, despite the original title of the painting: *A boy attacked by and rescued by some seamen in a boat, founded on a fact happened in the harbour of*

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of this incident and Watson's later life as merchant, military commissary, and eventually his rise to a Baronetcy as the Lord Mayor of London, see: John Clarence Webster, *Sir Brook Watson: Friend of the Loyalists, First Agent of New Brunswick in London* (New Brunswick, Canada: Mount Allison University, 1924).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Ann Uhry Abrams, "Politics, Prints, and John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*," *Art Bulletin* 61 (1979): 265-76; Albert Boime, "Blacks in Shark-Infested Waters: Visual Encodings of Racism in Copley and Homer," *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 3 (1989): 19-47; Boime, *The Art of Exclusion: Representing Blacks in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990), 15-46; Hugh Honour, *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 37-50; Irma B. Jaffe, "John Singleton Copley's *Watson and the Shark*," *American Art Journal* 9 (1977): 15-25; Louis P. Masur, "Reading *Watson and the Shark*," *New England Quarterly* 67:3 (1994): 427-54; and Roger Stein, "Copley's *Watson and the Shark* and Aesthetics in the 1770s," *Discoveries and Considerations*, ed. Calvin Israel (Albany, NY: State University of New York 1976): 85-130.

*the Havannah*.<sup>3</sup> The Cuban capital is depicted in rich detail. One can see the iconic walls of Moro Castle on the right in the background and the city's cathedral, *La Catedral de la Virgen María de la Concepción Inmaculada*, towers to the figures' left. It invites the question, however: How did a British-American merchant vessel come to be peacefully anchored in one of the most heavily guarded harbors of the Spanish Empire?



**Figure 1**  
*Watson and the Shark*  
John Singleton Copley, Oil on Canvas 1778  
Detroit Institute of Arts  
(Public Domain)

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<sup>3</sup> The two exceptions to this, both focusing on the 1762 British occupation of the city, are: Mónica Domínguez Torres, "Havana's Fortunes: 'Entangled Histories' in Copley's *Watson and the Shark*," *American Art* 30:2 (2016): 8-13; and Emily B. Neff, "Like Gudgeons to a Worm: John Singleton Copley's 'Watson and the Shark' and the Cultures of Natural History," in *American Adversaries: West and Copley in a Transatlantic World*, eds. Emily B. Neff and Kaylin H. Weber (Houston, TX: Houston Museum of Fine Arts, 2013), 189-93.

*Watson and the Shark* demonstrates a truth that eighteenth-century men and women were deeply conscious of, even if many frequently resented it. Europe's Atlantic empires were not limited by imperial borders. The worlds of British, Spanish, and French America were not separate, but deeply intertwined. Colonists constantly traded and warred with one another—both with and without official sanction—and the evolution of each empire was inseparable from that of its neighbors. These interactions occurred in every colony, but certain regions such as Newfoundland, Florida, Louisiana, and the Lesser Antilles were particularly shaped by inter-imperial exchange. This study seeks to reexamine the nature and importance of those entanglements through the lens of the two colonies in British and Spanish America most closely connected with one another: British Jamaica and Spanish Cuba.

A half-century before Watson's ill-fated voyage, both empires maintained, on paper, strictly autarkic mercantilist systems designed to keep their colonies' trade within imperial bounds. While inter-imperial exchange did occur, it did so illicitly, and was fundamentally intertwined with a centuries' old regional economy of piracy and privateering—both often carried out with the connivance of local imperial officials. Following the 1713 Peace of Utrecht which ended nearly a quarter-century of warfare, however, two developments upset this peculiar balance. First, a dramatic post-war rise in sugar prices spurred the expansion of sugar production in British and Spanish America. The growth of sugar plantations created an ever-increasing demand for labor, both human and animal, in both empires that neither could fully satisfy. Second was the formation of the South Sea Company, which was granted at Utrecht the *asiento*—the monopoly contract to import slaves into Spanish America—for the unprecedented span of thirty years. Together these changes fueled demand and opportunity for a massive increase in trade across imperial borders.



Expansion did not lead to the swift end of older habits of inter-imperial hostility, however. The Caribbean basin and North American seaboard remained fundamentally violent places as British pirates and Spanish-American corsairs—*guardacostas*—plundered shipping with near impunity. And although Anglo-American pirates were crushed by the early 1720s, Cuban *guardacostas* remained a menace, seizing vessels of all nations in the Caribbean and along the eastern seaboard. Although colonists in both islands accepted the role of violence as a normal, albeit at times resented, part of their relationship, the same was not true in the ministries of Europe. In both London and Madrid, the growing economic and political importance of Atlantic trade made it impossible for ministers to ignore the endemic violence “beyond the line” as they had in previous centuries. When Cuban colonists refused to abandon their piratical activities, the depredations of their *guardacostas* eventually led to open war between the two empires in 1739.

Ironically, the two empires had by then become so intertwined that their colonies could not function without inter-imperial trade. As a result, colonial elites in both empires successfully lobbied imperial officials to allow them to openly trade with their ostensible enemies. Key to this was the role played by former South Sea Company employees, particularly Edward Manning, whose work under the *asiento* allowed him to develop extensive transnational slave-trading networks that revived during the war. Such cross-border networked exchanges expanded dramatically alongside the massive expansion of sugar production in both empires following the return of peace in 1748, growing to incorporate other areas of the Atlantic World, including Britain’s North American colonies. It was that expansion that provided the origin of Watson’s ill-fated 1749 voyage. Simultaneously, that expansion and its grudging legalization led to a sharp decline in inter-imperial violence for the first time in centuries. The result was an ever-

closer integration of the two empires through ties of trade, even as politically mistrust and antipathy in Europe persisted.

The study of this revolution in inter-imperial relations forms part of a larger ongoing research inquiry into how America grew from small bands of European settlers scattered along the eastern coastline of North America and the Caribbean Sea early in the seventeenth century to a diverse group of colonies and empires that by the late eighteenth century were considered some of the most valuable lands in the world. Central to this phenomenon were ties between colonists across colonial and imperial borders. In her study of French colonial New Orleans, Shannon Lee Dawdy described such relationships as “rogue colonialism;” a phenomenon that arose out of the interaction between imperial designs and local conditions, creating colonies where “legitimacy and legality were of little relevance to daily operations, and the boundary between banditry and statehood was difficult to draw.”<sup>4</sup>

Such a description captures Jamaica and Cuba individually at the start of the eighteenth century. But over the following decades colonists in both islands together forged something greater. Seeking their own profit, free colonists in both empires integrated themselves into what might be termed a “rogue empire.” Together they constructed an illegal and informal but nevertheless coherent system that operated alongside the formal structure imposed by each island’s European metropole. The economy and society of the two islands were intensely and increasingly interdependent—neither could prosper without the labor, foodstuffs, and markets provided by the other. To facilitate exchange, highly organized groups of merchants and officials in both islands, frequently acting in concert, channeled goods, human captives, and even power across state boundaries, often with the aid of “official” resources. These exchanges and

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<sup>4</sup> Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil's Empire: French colonial New Orleans* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.

interactions not only formed the bedrock of the inter-imperial relationship, but also actively shaped the broader structure of both empires.

For, following the spectacular failures of post-Utrecht reform programs in both empires, the central governments in Britain and Spain showed little further disposition towards tampering with the prevailing relationship between imperial centers and their transatlantic possessions. In Spain, the new dynasty was preoccupied with the problems of domestic reform and the pursuit of European territories Spain had lost over the preceding century. In Britain, the administration of Sir Robert Walpole concerned itself with securing peace and commercial expansion. Controversy and high-intensity disputes were avoided whenever possible.<sup>5</sup> This period of inertia, bordering on neglect, was either salutary or pernicious, according to one's perspective. For colonists, it was welcomed as it allowed them to steadily expand their inter-imperial commercial ties, as well as local political and legal autonomy.<sup>6</sup>

But the growing understanding of the commercial benefits of their respective American empires as well as the ever-increasing costs of imperial defense, simultaneously spurred a growing intellectual movement in Europe arguing for the need to reorganize, rationalize, and

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<sup>5</sup> For studies of the limited reform efforts in Spain in this period, see: Ricardo García Cárcel, *Felipe v y los españoles. Una visión periférica del problema de España* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 2002); Allan Kuethe and Kenneth Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chaps. 1-4; Colin M. MacLachlan, *Spain's Empire in the New World: The Role of Ideas in Institutional and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), chaps. 4-5; and Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), chaps. 5-8.

For studies of the Walpole Ministry's policies, see: Jeremy Black, *Walpole in Power* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001); Harry Dickinson, *Walpole and the Whig Supremacy* (London: English Universities Press, 1973); J.J. Plumb, *Sir Robert Walpole* (London: Penguin, 1972); and Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire* (New York, NY: Allen Lane, 2007), chaps. 5-11

<sup>6</sup> James Henretta, *Salutary Neglect: Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972). In the British Atlantic, Jack Greene has argued that this period saw the emergence of an "undefined, even unacknowledged, imperial constitution," in which authority was distributed in an uncodified way with Parliament exercising power over general concerns and colonial legislatures handling local affairs within their respective jurisdictions. *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 68.

centralize imperial structures. These changes, it was believed, would maximize the benefits colonies provided the mother country.<sup>7</sup> Still, it was not until the massive disruptions sparked by the wars of mid-century that officials in London and Madrid attempted to reassert metropolitan dominance and implement significant centralizing reforms.<sup>8</sup> By then, the rogue empire forged by Jamaicans and Cubans was too strong and too important, both in its impact on the two islands themselves and flowing outward throughout their respective empires, to be dismantled. As a result, not only were Jamaican and Cuban elites accommodated in the new imperial systems in ways not afforded to other colonists, but the inter-imperial relationships they had forged were accepted and formally incorporated into the structure of the “reformed” empires of the late eighteenth century.

This rogue empire was the unintentional creation of a wide range of individuals, both free and enslaved, whose heterogeneity is captured in the diverse group depicted trying to save the

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<sup>7</sup> This belief was particularly strong in Spain where reform-minded officials such as Gerónimo de Uztáriz and José del Campillo y Cosío penned influential treatises on the importance of reasserting peninsular control over Madrid’s American territories. Gerónimo de Uztáriz, *Theorica y práctica de comercio y de marina* (Madrid, 1724); and José del Campillo y Cosío, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico de América* (Madrid, 1789). Campillo’s treatise was not published until 1789, but was written in 1736 and widely circulated in government circles both at the time and later. For analyses of their ideas and those of other reformers in the period, see: Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*; Reyes Fernández Durán, *Gerónimo de Uztáriz (1670-1732). Una política económica para Felipe V* (Madrid: Minerva Ediciones, 1999); and Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

In British America, although concerns over colonial independence, exemplified by the steady accumulation of power in the lower houses of colonial assemblies, were growing, they received less formal analysis. Studies of this subject include: David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2000), especially chaps. 5-7; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), chaps. 1-3; Jack Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1698-1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France c. 1500-c.1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), chap. 5; and Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> This massive reform agenda necessitated fundamental reconsiderations of the ideological and intellectual nature of empires. Some studies of this reimagining include: MacLachlan, *Spain’s Empire in the New World*, chap. 6; David Armitage, *Theories of empire, 1450-1800* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998); Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*; Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, chaps. 5-6; and Stanley J. and Barbara Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759-1789*. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

swimming Watson. Seeking profits, status, or survival, colonists—such as the merchant Edward Manning, the corsair Juan León de Fandiño, the border-traversing middleman Ignacio Clara, the enslaved María Josepha, and the runaway Talbeys—together forged a heavily interconnected transnational world. Although still outwardly loyal to their mother country, Jamaicans and Cubans were most concerned with events near their shores or just over the horizon. And when local interests significantly diverged from those in the metropole or when metropolitan officials attempted to rein in locals, resistance and even outright violence often resulted.

The creation of such an integrated world was vital not only to Jamaica and Cuba—for neither could prosper without the labor, foodstuffs, and markets provided by the other—but also to societies across Europe’s Atlantic empires. In Spanish South America, Jamaican smugglers supplied foodstuffs and European goods. In British North America, Jamaican and Cuban traders provided not only Spanish-American silver, but also the threat of Cuban corsairs. And in West Africa, inter-imperial agriculture and commerce increased demand for human captives carried forcibly across the sea. The transnational relationships forged between Jamaicans and Cubans were instrumental in shaping not only their own colonies, but also the rise of the Atlantic sugar plantation complex, the Atlantic slave trade, and the very nature of Europe’s Atlantic empires. In the name of profit and survival, smugglers, privateers, planters, and officeholders all found themselves bound together in volatile interdependence.

### **Historical Writing on Inter-Imperial Trade**

In the last four decades, Atlantic history has matured as a distinct and valuable historical subfield, reinvigorating scholarship on the Early Americas and Early Modern European empires. Focusing on the oceanic community as a regional system, scholars have uncovered how the

Atlantic served not as a barrier, but as a bridge that brought together disparate groups of Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans in the three centuries following Columbus' voyages. Arising from their interactions was a multi-polar yet integrated Atlantic community of overlapping networks of migration, communication and trade which traversed national and geographic boundaries and fostered exchange and interaction. J.H. Elliot, in his magisterial *Empires of the Atlantic World*, captured the broad thrust of this scholarship on British and Spanish America, noting that "the comparison...is not between two self-centered cultural worlds, but between cultural worlds that were well aware of each other's presence and were not above borrowing each other's ideas when this suited their needs."<sup>9</sup> Rediscovering this shared Atlantic experience has provided a richer and more nuanced understanding of the cultural, social and economic systems that shaped the Early Modern world.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John H. Elliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), xvii. Unfortunately, comparisons rather than interactions still dominate scholarship on British and Spanish America, many of which still implicitly draw on James Lang's *Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas* (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1975) which characterized the Spanish Empire as one created by conquest and the English Empire by commerce as an explanation for the later divergent economic and political development of the two regions. Comparative arguments also appear particularly frequently among economic historians. See, for example, Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth Sokoloff, *Economic Development in the Americas since 1500: Endowments and Institutions* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2012).

An exception to this trend is Jorge Canizares-Esguerra's *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006) which traces the ideological similarities and interactions between Iberian and English religious conceptions of the Americas. Stephen Saunders Webb has also argued, albeit unconvincingly, against this dichotomy and that the English empire was just as militant in purpose and organization as the Spanish, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of the Empire, 1569-1681* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> For discussions of Atlantic History generally, see: Bernard Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," *Itinerario* 20:1 (1996): 19-144; Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); and David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, eds. David Armitage and Michael J Braddick (London: Macmillan Education UK, 2002).

Atlantic History can claim diverse genealogies. One important strand, as Bailyn argues, arose in the post-war period as a result of political needs—the creation of an Atlantic community that rested on a shared Atlantic civilization—while another strand can trace its roots back to Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), and encompasses anthropological work on and from the Caribbean, with an emphasis on the consequences of the Atlantic trade in African captives.

Many of these insights were derived from studies of merchant communities and the networks of correspondents and agents created to coordinate traders' far-flung business ventures. Works such as those by Thomas Doerflinger, David Hancock, Xabier Lamikiz, and Stanley and Barbara Stein focused on intra-imperial networks as scholars sought to understand how Europe's empires integrated themselves into economically, politically, and socially coherent systems.<sup>11</sup> Accounts of inter-imperial trade have frequently taken the form of commodity or contraband studies.<sup>12</sup> Smuggling between empires, in particular, has long been of interest to Early American historians for the role that the Navigation Acts and their evasion played in the coming of the

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2010); Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*; Stein and Stein, *Apogee of Empire*; and Stanley J and Barbara H. Stein, *Edge of Crisis: War and Trade in the Spanish Atlantic, 1789-1808* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

Other studies of Atlantic merchants and their networks include: Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964); Jackie R. Booker, *Veracruz Merchants, 1771-1829: A Merchant Elite in Late Bourbon and Early Independent Mexico* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993); J.F. Boshier, *The Canada Merchants, 1713-1763* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987); D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); John G. Clarke, *La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Stephen A. Fortune, *Merchants and Jews: The Struggle for British West Indian Commerce, 1650-1750* (Gainesville, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1984); Antonio García-Baquero González, *Cádiz y el Atlántico (1717-1778): El comercio colonial español bajo el monopolio gaditano*, 2 vols. (Cádiz: Disputación Provincial de Cádiz, 1976); Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's Merchant Elite, 1590-1660: Silver, State, and Society* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); John Robert Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Robert Sidney Smith, *The Spanish Guild Merchant; A History of the Consulado, 1250-1700* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1940); Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Thomas Truxes, *Irish-American Trade, 1660-1783* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Inter-imperial commodity histories include: Kris Lane, *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Jacob Price, *France and the Chesapeake; A History of the French Tobacco Monopoly, 1674-1791, and of its Relationship to the British and American Tobacco Trades*, 2 vols. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1973); and Gedalia Yoyev, *Diamonds and Coral: Anglo-Dutch Jews and Eighteenth-Century Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978).

American Revolution.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the main analytical question for scholars of Spanish America has been how contraband underscored the failures and weaknesses of the Spanish Hapsburg's imperial system.<sup>14</sup> Only recently have historians begun to pay closer attention to the key role smuggling played in colonial communities. What Lance Grahn noted of Cartagena de Indias—that smuggling was simply “a central feature of eighteenth-century consumerism”—was true in many places.<sup>15</sup> Scholars of the Dutch Caribbean—whose main focus has been contraband trade—have led the way. They have been joined by historians of British America such as Alan Karras, Christian Koot and Nuala Zahedieh who have demonstrated the key roles played by Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-Dutch trade in early British American communities.<sup>16</sup>

Recent research on illicit trade forms part of the renewed interest in intra-American connections and the presence of what Jesse Cromwell has termed the “sinew populations” of the

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<sup>13</sup> Some of the most insightful works on this subject include: Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire; the British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1660-1775* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Oliver Morton Dickerson, *The Navigation Acts and the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1951); Matson, *Merchants & Empire*; Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); and John Tyler, *Smugglers and Patriots: Boston merchants and the Advent of the American Revolution* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Examples include: Ramón Aizpur Aguirre, *Curazao y la costa de Caracas; Introducción al estudio del contrabando en la provincial de Venezuela en tiempo de la Real Compañía Guipuzcoana, 1730-1784* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1993); Vera Lee Brown, “The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade,” *The American Historical Review* 31:4 (1926): 662-678; Brown, “Contraband Trade: A Factor in the Decline of Spain’s American Empire” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 12 (1932): 178-189; Héctor R. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés en el Caribe y el Golfo de México (1748-1778)* (Seville: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1990); Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008); and Murdo J. MacLeod. *Spanish Central America; A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973).

<sup>15</sup> Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1550-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971); Alan L. Karras, “‘Custom Has the Force of Law’: Local Officials and Contraband in the Bahamas and the Floridas, 1748-1779,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80:3 (2002): 281-311; Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011); Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven, eds., *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Trans-Atlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003); Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade*; Linda Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Nuala Zahedieh, “The Merchants of Port Royal, Jamaica, and the Spanish Contraband Trade, 1655-1692,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43:4 (1986): 570-93; and Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-89,” *The Economic History Review* 39:2 (1986): 205-222.



greater Caribbean: groups that were composed of individuals who were neither planters nor slaves, such as sailors, soldiers, and smugglers.<sup>17</sup> Where hitherto the plantation complex was the preeminent lens by which earlier scholars have understood the area's social, economic, and political currents, more recent studies have broadened our understanding of a diverse and complex region.<sup>18</sup> There are clear reasons why scholarship on the Early Modern Caribbean has focused on sugar, slavery and attendant institutions and *mentalités*. For apart from the scale and horrors of the system itself, the sugar plantation complex fits comfortably into a variety of historiographical narratives. Imperial histories emphasize the importance of each European power's sugar-producing possessions and the conflicts over them. Nationalist historians have

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<sup>17</sup> Jesse Cromwell, "More than Slaves and Sugar: Recent Historiography of the Trans-imperial Caribbean and Its Sinew Populations," *History Compass* 12:10 (2014): 771.

<sup>18</sup> Studies of the West Indian sugar plantation complex and the attendant enslaved populations that labored on them are too numerous to list, but include: Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650–1820* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2015); Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus' *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Reinaldo Funes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History Since 1492*, trans. Alex Martin (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Jack P. Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s: A Social Portrait* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016); B. W. Higman, *Plantation Jamaica 1750-1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2005); Higman, *Proslavery Priest: The Atlantic World of John Lindsay, 1729-1788* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2011); Russell R. Menard, *Sweet Negotiations: Sugar, Slavery, and Plantation Agriculture in Early Barbados* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, NY: Viking, 1985); Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio: Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar* 3 vols. (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978); Verene A. Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009); ); Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); and Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Richard Pares' work is the starting point for any attempt to understand the British sugar trade: *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936); *A West-India Fortune* (New York, NY: Longmans & Green, 1950); and *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Longmans & Green, 1956). Other important studies on the workings of the sugar trade include: Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*; and John McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989).

found the plantation a convenient organizing principle before the rise of modern nations in the region, while economic and cultural historians have connected slavery to the origins of capitalism and modernity.<sup>19</sup>

Recent studies have demonstrated that, although plantation slavery remains the overarching shaper of the region, it alone cannot adequately explain the diverse historical experiences of life in the West Indies during the colonial period. Those individuals not directly involved in the plantation complex frequently led peripatetic lives that “coexisted with, defied, and circumvented the plantation complex.”<sup>20</sup> This study builds on existing historiography by tracing out the lived experiences of those individuals, free and unfree, whose lives were shaped by traversing imperial boundaries. In doing so it presents an entirely different view of Europe’s Atlantic empires. By orienting its view from the deck of a ship sailing between the many islands of the Caribbean, this dissertation not only reveals the lives of those who plied the region’s

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<sup>19</sup> Examples of the imperial school include: G.L. Beer, *The Old Colonial System* 2 vols (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1912); Pares, *War and Trade*; and Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies 1700-1763* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917). For nationalist histories, see, for example: Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); and Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Harriet de Onís trans. (New York, NY: A.A. Knopf, 1947). Scholarship on the connection between sugar and capitalism includes: Robin Blackburn, *New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern* (New York, NY: Verso, 1998); Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*; and Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

<sup>20</sup> Cromwell, “More than Slaves and Sugar,” 771. Studies of such “sinew populations, many of whom were free people of color, include: Kristen Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean: Religion, Colonial Competition, and the Politics of Profit* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012); Roger Buckley, *The British Army in the West Indies: Society and the Military in a Revolutionary Age* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998); Kevin Dawson, “The Cultural Geography of Enslaved Ship Pilots,” in *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade*, eds. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt Childs, and James Sidbury (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 163–184; Juan Giusti-Cordero, “Sugar and livestock: Contraband Networks in Hispaniola and the Continental Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century,” *Revista Brasileira do Caribe* 15:29 (2014): 13-41; Sherry Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Jane Landers, *Black society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Julius Scott, “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution,” (Ph.D diss., Duke University 1986); Rebecca Scott, *Freedom Papers: An Atlantic Odyssey in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Virgil Henry Storr, *Enterprising Slaves & Master Pirates: Understanding Economic Life in the Bahamas* (New York, NY: P. Lang, 2004); and Benjamin Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

waters, but also opens new perspectives on the societies that developed along its shores. It demonstrates that, far from simply coexisting with larger structures of colonialism, the activities of contrabandists and their ancillaries were fundamental to them, shaping the very nature of early modern America. Goods, livestock, and individuals moving between empires formed the foundations of Jamaican and Cuban society. Both islands' privileged place in their respective empire meant that the impact of their relationship was felt throughout the Atlantic World. Plunder and conquest provided the basis for Europe's Atlantic empires, but exchange across imperial boundaries was essential to their survival and shaped their evolution.

### **Setting and Sources**

Although both peaceful and violent interactions and exchanges between Anglo- and Spanish-Americans occurred in every part of the Atlantic World, the focus of this study is on British Jamaica and Spanish Cuba. These two islands were the most closely intertwined European colonies, and their relationship reverberated throughout their respective empires. Although most famous for their sugar plantations at the end of the eighteenth century, the two islands were very different places in 1700.

Jamaica is the third-largest island in the Antilles—4,200 square miles—with a narrow coastal plain dominated by heavily wooded mountains in the interior. The island has a tropical climate, although higher inland regions are more temperate, and the interior mountains prevent rain reaching the southern coast in the same quantities as the north. The majority of free colonists lived in one of the island's three main urban centers: Spanish Town, Port Royal, and Kingston on the southern side. Spanish Town, or Santiago de la Vega as its original Spanish inhabitants had christened it, was the island's seat of government. Located fourteen miles west of Kingston, the

town had been chosen as the capital because it was the only town in the island at the time of the English conquest. A half-century later it still boasted many Spanish buildings as well as “the finest and largest church in the English colonies.”<sup>21</sup> Spanish Town was largely empty when the island’s Assembly and courts were not in session. Yet when they were open—generally in the late Fall and again in the Spring—Spanish Town became host to a whirl of balls, parties, and horse races.

In contrast, Port Royal and Kingston fourteen miles to the east were fully occupied the whole year. The former, located on a sandy spit jutting into what is today Kingston Harbor, had grown fabulously wealthy from Spanish gold and silver plundered by the buccaneers and was the busiest port in English America. Devastated by an earthquake in 1692, it never fully recovered and soon ceded preeminence to Kingston across the bay.<sup>22</sup> After its founding by survivors of the earthquake, Kingston grew quickly, reaching five thousand inhabitants by 1700.<sup>23</sup> Notable among the town’s inhabitants were nearly forty Jewish families representing the second largest Jewish community in the English-speaking world, behind only London.<sup>24</sup> Laid out in a sixteen-block grid pattern, Kingston appeared to visitors a more substantial place than Spanish Town, being “large and very well inhabited” with wide regular streets and “many sumptuous houses, with gardens, and offices.”<sup>25</sup> One visitor marveled at how “all the streets of the town are well aligned and the houses are all of brick and the same height and design [and] all have glass

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<sup>21</sup> James Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory: Spanish Town, Jamaica, 1534-2000* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2005), 70.

<sup>22</sup> Two decades later, a French prisoner described seeing brick ruins from the disaster still visible under the water and Port Royal itself as consisting of only a single street crowded with shops, inns, and cafes. David Buisseret ed., “A Frenchman looks at Jamaica,” *Jamaica Journal* 2:3 (1968), 7. See also: Michael Pawson and David Buisseret. *Port Royal, Jamaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), chap. 9.

<sup>23</sup> Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Eli Faber, *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 58.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Robertson, *Gone is the Ancient Glory*, 67.

windows just as in Europe.”<sup>26</sup> Kingston was not only the center of the island’s sugar trade but also home to a major naval base and a hub for trade with Spanish America. But the city was also notoriously unhealthy, located as it was in a low-lying and swampy region. Yellow fever and malaria were endemic.<sup>27</sup>

The vast majority of the island’s population—African slaves—lived outside of the three urban centers, primarily on sugar plantations that dotted the interior and the southeastern coast. Although Jamaica’s sugar industry had largely stagnated in the three decades after 1680, the island still had a permanent population of nearly 60,000 slaves and only 7,200 whites in 1710.<sup>28</sup>

Spanish Cuba, in contrast, had many more whites and far fewer slaves in the early eighteenth century. Although the island’s sugar industry had originated in the second half of the sixteenth century, it was still miniscule and concentrated around Havana. In 1717, the city’s hinterland contained only twenty-eight small sugar mills.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, Cuba was a vital component of Spain’s American empire. The largest island of the Antilles and the largest tropical island in the western hemisphere, at the time of the Spanish conquest roughly ninety percent of Cuba’s 42,800 square miles was covered by forest. The island was still heavily covered by tropical pinewoods with only a few poorly maintained roads crossing it two centuries later.<sup>30</sup> Thanks to consistent northerly winds, the island was relatively cool for the tropics, and those winds, so vital to travel and communication in the eighteenth century, were as regular as the rainy season that stretched from May to November.<sup>31</sup> These winds formed the highway between

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<sup>26</sup> Buisseret ed., “A Frenchman looks at Jamaica”, 7.

<sup>27</sup> In the years between 1722 and 1774 the city recorded 18,000 funerals and only 2,669 baptisms in the town. Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 177; and McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 2, 692.

<sup>29</sup> Fuñes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field*, 25; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Fuñes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> This description is taken from McNeill’s *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain*, 26-33.

Europe and the Caribbean, carrying ships past Cuba's eastern tip as they entered the region. Simultaneously, the Gulf Stream, whose head lies just north of Cuba, was a key route for vessels of all nations returning to Europe. The island thus lay at a crossroads of both Atlantic and Caribbean communication routes, and it was this location that shaped Cuba's role in the Spanish Atlantic empire. It was at Havana on the island's northwestern tip that the great treasure fleets reunited to join their escorts for the voyage to Europe.

Havana's harbor was one of the finest in the world, over sixteen kilometers square and deep enough to accommodate the largest treasure galleon. The city itself was perched on a promontory on the western shore of the harbor's mouth. One of the most fortified locations in the Americas, Havana was surrounded by bastioned walls enclosing an area containing nearly two hundred blocks, three plazas, six wharfs, and fourteen churches. Two castles—the Punta to the west and the imposing Morro to the east—guarded the harbor's entrance.<sup>32</sup> Havana was also by far the island's largest city. In 1700, there were probably fifty thousand people living in Cuba, including five thousand slaves. Perhaps one in four lived in Havana or its immediate environs.<sup>33</sup>

Santiago de Cuba was the island's second major city and lay on the island's eastern end. Less cosmopolitan than Havana, Santiago maintained regular ties with the north coast of South America but relatively few with Europe. Isolation was greater still in the center of the island where the towns of Bayamo, Puerto Príncipe, and Trinidad along the southern coast served as conduits to the outside world. Although the Captain-General in Havana was the overall governor

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<sup>32</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain*, 28.

<sup>33</sup> For this population estimate, see: Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8 (Madrid: Playor 1978), 1. The estimate of the fraction of the island's population that lived in Havana in 1700 is based on Table 2.9 in McNeill's *Atlantic Empires*, 39 which gives Havana and its suburbs a total population of 39,589 in 1755-57 out of a total island population of 160,512.

of the island, Santiago de Cuba oversaw the eastern provinces largely independently. The towns in the island's center were likewise effectively self-governing.<sup>34</sup>

At the dawn of the eighteenth century, Cuba and Jamaica had been buffeted and shaped by nearly a quarter-century of open warfare—first as ostensible allies during the Nine Years' War (1689–97) and then as enemies during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-13). The latter conflict centered on the issue of the succession to the Spanish throne following the death of the childless Habsburg king Charles II in 1700. On his deathbed, Charles had declared that his kingdoms would fall to the sixteen-year-old grandson of his half-sister Maria Theresa: Philip of Anjou. Maria Theresa had been the first wife of King Louis XIV of France and, although Philip had an elder brother and thus was unlikely to inherit the throne at Versailles, other European powers were aghast at the idea of a Bourbon monarch uniting France and Spain.<sup>35</sup> A France with access to the seemingly limitless riches of the mines of Peru and New Spain, they feared, would swiftly dominate Europe. Louis XIV himself testified to the truth behind those fears, when he pronounced that “the principal objective of this war is commerce with the Indies and the riches they produce.”<sup>36</sup>

When Louis refused to renounce Charles' will, a coalition led by Britain, Holland, and Austria declared war on France and Spain, rallying around the Habsburg Archduke Charles of Austria as the true heir to the Spanish Crown. The conflict raged for over a decade. Ultimately Philip retained the Spanish throne, ruling as Philip V. But the struggle was costly for all the powers involved.<sup>37</sup> The rulers of every Atlantic empire ended the struggle eager to assert their

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<sup>34</sup> Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8, 31

<sup>35</sup> “Will of Carlos II” in W.N Hargreaves-Mawdsley, ed., *Spain under the Bourbons, 1700-1833: A Collection of Documents* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1973), 1-4.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Jeremy Adelman, *Republic of Capital: Buenos Aires and the Legal Transformation of the Atlantic World*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 22.

<sup>37</sup> For accounts of the war's origins and course, see: Joaquim Albareda Salvadó, *La guerra de sucesión de España (1700-1714)* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2010); John B. Hattendorf, *England in the War of the Spanish Succession:*

dominance over their American colonies in the interests of extracting as much revenue as possible from them to help repay the wars' massive costs. Such dominance would not come swiftly or easily in the face of colonists' determination to control their own destinies, however.

To reconstruct the ongoing and evolving relationships between colonists in these islands and across their broader empires from several centuries remove is difficult. Not only has time and weather destroyed many documents, the fact that much of the interaction occurred through the illicit and semi-legal activities of smuggling, privateering, and piracy meant that few records were created in the first place. An additional challenge is that sources from a single empire necessarily provide only a partial picture of this evolving transnational world. Thus, to fully reconstruct the world of the Anglo-Spanish Atlantic, this study brings together a diverse range of sources from repositories in Britain, Spain, Jamaica, Cuba, and the United States.

Relevant documents fall into three primary categories. The first is the correspondence of officials serving in Jamaica and Cuba. Exchanges between colonial governors and the ministries in Madrid and London include lengthy reports on the economies and commerce of their island, often supplemented with letters and reports from colonists. Statements and reports from officials suggest general patterns of trade and detail individual episodes of inter-imperial interaction. Perhaps surprisingly, governors of British and Spanish colonies frequently corresponded with each other as well over issues of seized ships or runaway slaves, providing evidence of official interaction over issues of, often illicit, inter-imperial trade. Furthermore, Jamaica was also home to a British naval squadron, whose commanders corresponded at length with the Admiralty and the Ministry in London about naval and commercial matters—particularly those where violence

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*A Study of the English View and Conduct of Grand Strategy, 1702-1712* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 1987); Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969); and Shinsuke Satsuma, *Britain and Colonial Maritime War in the Early Eighteenth Century: Silver, Seapower and the Atlantic* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2013).



was reported. Other officeholders, civil and military alike, in both empires also dispatched reports to Europe concerning their oversight of colonial policies.

The second major body of primary material is the correspondence and accounts of merchants engaged in inter-imperial trade. The papers include material from the major British slave trading companies—particularly the South Sea Company—as well as those from the numerous independent traders engaged in the traffic throughout the Caribbean and North America. Merchants' documents offer crucial insights to the operation of inter-colonial trade and why it was so prevalent; frequently they contain detailed reports about their motivations, the trade's organization, market conditions, and the incorporation of slave trading into other commercial activities. These are supplemented by surviving port records from Jamaica that provide some sense of the trade's scale and broader structure.

A third set of sources is testimony from people who witnessed or were involved in inter-imperial trade. Some of these people were captured smugglers or runaway slaves, whose accounts were dutifully recorded and dispatched to Europe. Although such sources must be read carefully—particularly those by smugglers attempting to prove their innocence—they nevertheless provide glimpses of the lived experience of the men and women whose labor made transnational exchange possible or who were forcibly transported by it. Supplementing these are diaries such as those of the Jamaican plantation overseer Thomas Thistlewood who recorded the pervasive presence of Spanish-Americans and their goods in Jamaica in the 1750s, and printed accounts and memoirs such as James Houston's account of his time in the service of the South Sea Company and subsequent unsuccessful smuggling career.

## Structure of the Study

Combining these myriad sources from both empires allows this study to fully narrate the experience of free and enslaved colonists, both on-the-ground and on-the-waves, and to assess how Anglo- and Spanish-Americans were able to create and maintain the relationships necessary for international trade in the face of official efforts to crush illicit commerce. It also makes possible an understanding of how inter-imperial interactions influenced the broader economic, social, legal, and political development of both empires over the course of the eighteenth century.

The creation and evolution of this transnational world is traced over six chapters. Chapter One examines the Caribbean in the years immediately following the 1713 Peace of Utrecht, which ended a half-century of open warfare in the Atlantic Ocean. It argues that this period witnessed renewed efforts by imperial administrators in London and Madrid to impose mercantilist control over the region's colonists for the first time in decades. It then demonstrates how those efforts were defeated by hostile colonists in both islands devoted to a regional economy of contraband trade and privateering, aided by official corruption and diplomatic events in Europe. In Jamaica, Governor Archibald Hamilton was returned to England in chains following his sponsorship of raids on Spanish vessels, while in Cuba the Crown's tobacco monopoly was abandoned following colonists' repeated revolts. Only one major reform—the South Sea Company's *asiento*—survived the decade. But in the face of hostile Jamaicans and Spanish-Americans, it never succeeded in carrying on the slave trade to the satisfaction of its creators.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four build on Chapter One. Each examines one of the main strands—illicit trade, the *asiento*, and privateering—that made up the inter-imperial economy

binding Jamaica and Cuba together in uneasy co-dependence between 1710 and 1740. Over that span, each underwent a transformation in scope and importance, becoming ever more central to both islands' societies and impossible to ignore in Europe.

Chapter Two focuses on the largest element of the international Atlantic economy—contraband trade. It argues that by 1713 the trade had reached such a scale and pervasiveness that it had become an extensive and accepted branch of commerce. Hundreds of Anglo-American vessels crisscrossed the waters between Jamaica and Spanish America in the period carrying manufactured goods and African captives. The chapter demonstrates the “normalized” nature of illicit trade, tracing a voyage from Jamaica to Cuba from start to finish. In so doing it reveals the diverse array of merchants, seamen, and professional inter-imperial middlemen such as Ignacio Clara who made their living through smuggling and the highly developed networks of communication and trust that made such illicit relationships possible. It also exposes the vital role that goods provided by illicit trade played in both colonies. In Cuba, smuggled Africans such as María Josepha were central to the development of the island's emerging sugar and tobacco industries, while illegally imported textiles clothed the population. In Jamaica, the most important smuggled item was mules, whose presence in large numbers was central to the workings of the sugar plantation in powering mills and transporting sugar to the island's ports for export. However, illicit trade was a dangerous undertaking and its structure, while lucrative, created only temporary, albeit frequently renewed, relationships across borders that hampered its expansion and profitability.

Chapter Three centers on contrabandists' main rival—the South Sea Company—and its operations in Cuba. It demonstrates that the Company's true purpose was not to carry out the *asiento*, but to serve as a front for illicit trade for the benefit of its employees and a small group

of shareholders. The chapter first examines the slave trade carried on under the *asiento*, revealing its scale and fundamental unprofitability for the Company. It then uses the careers of four Company employees—Jonathan Dennis, Wargent Nicholson, Edward Pratter, and Edward Manning—to unravel the nature of the private commerce they conducted on their own accounts. While done for their own immediate profit, such trade was nonetheless revolutionary: the free access to Spanish-American ports and long-term relationships the *asiento* granted allowed Company employees to forge transnational networks of trade and trust with Spanish-American elites directly, something traditional smuggling did not.

Chapter Four focuses on the final strand of the inter-imperial economy: privateering. More specifically, it focuses on the *guardacostas* like Juan León de Fandiño who were commissioned by Spanish authorities to combat smuggling, but who found it safer and more profitable to target any foreign vessel they found. Over two hundred Anglo-American and countless more Dutch and French vessels were seized by Spanish corsairs in the three decades after 1710. Tracing the origins of the *guardacostas* back to the 1670s, the chapter argues that the continued reliance on these privateers is revealing of both the limited capacity of the Spanish imperial administration, and also of the continuation in Spanish official circles of centuries-old attitudes of Spanish territorial preeminence in the Americas and the acceptability of violence towards non-Iberians found there. Such attitudes were heartily reciprocated by some Anglo-Americans, particularly in the British Navy. The chapter closes then demonstrates how the ever-growing economic and political importance of Atlantic trade meant that privateering inter-imperial trade were increasingly central to European diplomacy.

Chapter Five examines the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-48), which arose specifically from imperial concerns over the two colonies' commercial relationship. It argues that, far from being a

disastrous but ultimately insignificant conflict, the struggle in fact inaugurated a transformation of the inter-imperial economy. At the same time, apart from privateering, the war itself ultimately mattered little to either island's inhabitants. It did initially disrupt inter-imperial trade, but the two colonies were so important to one another that such interruptions could not last long. Despite the ongoing war, trade between them soon boomed. Indeed, the conflict's disruptions allowed newly-empowered Spanish colonists, particularly in Havana, to draw on the transnational networks created by the South Sea Company's private trade to reconstruct the international slave trade in new bilateral ways. Guided by Edward Manning, this resulted in the peaceful shipment of thousands of Africans from Jamaica to its erstwhile enemies in Spanish America during the war.

Chapter Six focuses on the 1750s, tracing how the transformations inaugurated during the war continued and expanded with the return of peace. The Spanish Crown rejected the *asiento* concept in an effort to avoid foreign domination of the slave trade to its American territories. But this only resulted in Spanish colonists forming contracts with Jamaicans, particularly Edward Manning, to supply their colonies with the captive labor and foodstuffs their own empire could not. At the same time, the dramatic expansion of Jamaica's sugar industry in the period opened new ports on the island's northern and western coasts. This revolutionized illicit trade between the two empires, allowing Spaniards to travel to Jamaica in their own vessels to trade, rather than merely waiting for Anglo-American smugglers to arrive off their coasts. The development of these new outports was deeply resented by Kingston merchants, however, who, launched a disastrous effort to maintain their monopoly over the island's trade. They failed, but nearly destroyed the island's government in the effort. These twin changes in the structure of inter-imperial trade also impacted the *guardacostas* who were increasingly starved of support and so

ineffective. As a result, despite the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, inter-imperial violence was at its lowest ebb in centuries and inter-imperial trade had been placed on an increasingly formalized footing—even if it was still illegal under both nations' laws. By the late 1750s, the two islands were more deeply intertwined than ever before; linked commercially through trade and socially by the growing sugar industry and the movement of individuals, such as the runaway slave Talbeys and hundreds of his compatriots, between them.

The Conclusion describes the belated formalization of this more porous system of exchange by European ministers in the 1760s and afterwards. Most important was the 1766 Free Port Act which created the first major break in the Navigation Acts, the bedrock of the British imperial system, by opening Jamaica's ports to foreign traders. At the same time, however, the Act placed the inter-imperial slave trade at the heart of the British Empire. Legal ties between the two empires deepened further when Charles IV issued a royal *cédula* in 1789 permitting Cuban vessels to legally travel to foreign colonies in search of slaves and opened Havana to foreign vessels carrying captive Africans. With these changes, the bonds connecting these two empires that had been created over decades by colonists acting on their own initiatives were finally accepted by their respective imperial masters and formally incorporated into their own imperial structures. The ever-closer entanglement between Cuba and the English-speaking Atlantic would only deepen further in the nineteenth century and continue until the Revolution of 1959.

In pursuit of profit, freedom, and glory, free and enslaved colonists in Jamaica and Cuba forged an informal regional world binding them together economically, politically, and socially. That connection was never an easy or peaceful one, however. Violence and the threat of it were ever-present. Smugglers worried about authorities and whether they could trust their foreign counterparts. South Sea Company factors feared arrest and the Inquisition, even as they trusted in

their connections with local elites to protect them. Mariners sailed in constant fear of sighting a pirate or *guardacosta*'s sail on the horizon. Everywhere people of color, both free and enslaved, faced the horrors of enslavement and the possibility of being forcefully carried to another empire. Yet such was the value of their inter-imperial ties to both colonies' free inhabitants that these risks were consistently overcome and the economies of the two islands became ever-increasingly inter-dependent. The relationship only strengthened over time, shaping diplomatic events in Europe and eventually forcing imperial officials to acquiesce to, and even actively support, inter-imperial trade in the 1760s. Illicit trade not only served as the bedrock of Jamaican and Cuban society, but also helped shape the very nature of Europe's Atlantic empires.

### **Terminology and Conversions**

In both Jamaica and Cuba, indeed throughout the Atlantic World, smuggling was licit in the sense that it was socially acceptable, but it was frequently, though not always, illegal. As discussed in Chapter 2, inter-imperial trade was *not* forbidden under British law as long as such commerce was carried on in Anglo-American ships and did not trade in certain goods, though trade between the two nations in the Americas was banned by the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1670. Spanish Americans were forbidden from trading with foreigners in any form by both treaty and the laws of the Indies. The sole exception was the South Sea Company's *asiento*. Throughout the text I refer to inter-imperial exchange in a variety of ways—smuggling, contraband, and illicit trade being the most common—to denote that the exchange being conducted was illegal according to at least one of the participating colonists' laws. In general, if a particular commercial venture was legal under both Spanish and British law, I will note it; otherwise, all trade was forbidden by at least one of the two empires.

For consistency, all dates in the main text correspond to the Gregorian calendar (referred to in Britain as “New Style”) in use in Spain, France, and the rest of Western Europe. Britain remained on the Julian calendar (referred to as “Old Style”) which ran eleven days behind the Gregorian calendar. So July 24, 1715, for example, was referred to as July 13, 1715, in British records. Britain switched to the Gregorian calendar only in 1752. Unless otherwise noted, all dates from Spanish archival sources in footnotes adhere to the Gregorian system, while dates from British sources prior to 1752 follow the Julian system.

Throughout the text, monetary values are listed in both Spanish pesos and British pounds sterling. All comparisons are based on the conversion calculated by John McCusker that “from 1601 to 1816...the standard piece of eight [was] worth 53.9d or 4s6d.” Furthermore, conversions from Jamaican current money to pounds sterling have been calculated at the rate of £140 Jamaican currency to £100 sterling.<sup>38</sup> Monetary amounts are rounded to the nearest hundred to avoid conveying a false impression of precision.

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<sup>38</sup> John McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 8, and 251-253.



## Chapter 1

### The Caribbean and the Peace of Utrecht, 1713-1720

At dawn on July 24, 1715, a dozen ships weighed anchor in Havana's harbor, bound for Cádiz. The squadron under the command of Captain-General Don Juan Esteban de Ubilla was eagerly awaited in Spain, for it would be the first treasure fleet to return from the Americas since the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht had ended a dozen years of conflict (known today as the War of the Spanish Succession) that had engulfed both Europe and the Americas. Although the war had ended with the French-born Philip V on the Spanish throne, the struggle had been a costly one and the precious metals carried by the fleet were eagerly awaited in Europe.<sup>1</sup> During the long war only two "annual" fleets or *flotas* had returned from New Spain to Europe and only a single small fleet of *galeones* had sailed to Cartagena and Panama to meet with Peruvian traders.<sup>2</sup> A fresh influx of American bullion was desperately needed to help rebuild the royal finances and stabilize the new regime, as well as to fund the reforms the young king and his foreign advisers thought necessary to "modernize" Spain.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For accounts of the war's origins and course, see: Joaquim Albareda Salvadó, *La guerra de sucesión de España (1700-1714)* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2010); John B. Hattendorf, *England in the War of the Spanish Succession: A Study of the English View and Conduct of Grand Strategy, 1702-1712* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 1987); Henry Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1969); and Shinsuke Satsuma, *Britain and Colonial Maritime War in the Early Eighteenth Century: Silver, Seapower and the Atlantic* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1979), chaps. 1-2 and Appendix I, Table II, 228; and Carla Rahn Phillips, *The Treasure of the San José: Death at Sea in the War of the Spanish Succession* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the centrality of American bullion in ensuring the Spanish Crown's access to credit and the diffusion of Spanish-American silver across Europe, see: Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Ubilla's squadron consisted of seven ships of his own *flota*, joined by four *galeones* under Don Antonio de Echérverz y Subiza. Their twinned odysseys revealed much of the weakness of Spain's commercial empire. Both fleets had been trapped in the Americas by poor market conditions for years (Ubilla since 1712 and Echerverz since 1713). During the war, French, Dutch, and Anglo-American smugglers had eagerly provided Spanish-American colonists with the European goods they were unable to acquire from Spain. As a result, both fleets had confronted glutted markets and colonial merchants reluctant to pay the significantly higher prices demanded by their Iberian counterparts compared to those of illicit traders. Even the twelfth ship of the fleet provided evidence of the failure of Spain's exclusionary commercial policy: *Le Griffon* was a French vessel which had been granted a special license to trade in New Spain. Despite these obstacles, however, the fleet leaving Cuba carried valuable agricultural commodities as well as six and a half million registered pieces of eight (£1,460,000 sterling); and likely the same value again in unregistered bullion.<sup>4</sup>

A week after the fleet's departure from Havana, however, the twelve ships encountered one of the worst disasters that can befall a ship. Off Palmar de Ayx in Florida they sailed into the full force of a hurricane. Over the course of a single terrifying night, one by one the ships were driven ashore, onto rocks, or simply disappeared. The only survivor was *le Griffon* which had been sailing ahead of the main fleet. Unaware of the fate of its fellows, it reached France without incident. As for the luckless Spaniards, fewer than half the two thousand crewmen and passengers managed to reach the shore alive. Ubilla was not among them. Echérverz, who had spent his entire fortune and four years of his life in organizing the fleet, saw his only son

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<sup>4</sup> It was common practice for Iberian and Iberian-American merchants not to register the precious metals, particularly gold dispatched back to Spain to avoid the *quinto*—the royal tax of one-fifth on all American precious metals. Stein and Stein estimate that only half the value of cargoes from the colonies was registered. *Silver, Trade, and War*, 84.

disappear in the storm and “saved nothing but the clothes [he] stood up in.”<sup>5</sup> The survivors quickly dispatched news of the disaster to the Spanish settlements of Havana and Saint Augustine. But news of the loss of an entire treasure fleet could not be long confined solely to Spanish America.

Word of the disaster on the Florida coast spread swiftly, drawing scavengers from around the Atlantic to seek their fortunes amongst the wreckage. Clashes between Spanish-American salvaging expeditions and interloping foreigners, particularly Anglo-Jamaicans, would bring an abrupt and violent end to the uneasy calm that had fallen over the Caribbean since the Peace of Utrecht. Out of the wreckage of Ubilla’s fleet would come the ten-year period often referred to as the “Golden Age of Piracy.” The adventures and atrocities of a relatively small group of mariners—there were not more than four thousand active pirates total over the period and fewer than half that number at their peak—have dominated the popular imagination of the Caribbean in the early eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> The activities of the first pirates of this period—

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<sup>5</sup> Don Antonio de Echérvez y Subiza to Philip V, April 24, 1716, Indiferente General, 2658, AGI. For accounts of the Ubilla’s voyage and the disaster, see: Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade*, 56-63; Colin Woodard, *The Republic of Pirates: Being the True and Surprising Story of the Caribbean Pirates and the Man who Brought them Down* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2007), 56-59; and “Translation of Spanish and Vatican Documents from the Archives of the West Indies, Seville, Spain; overseen by Jack Haskins, Kip Wagner, and others,” unpublished manuscript, TSV.

<sup>6</sup> The outburst of piracy also reflected the post-war economic recession and consequent unemployment of large numbers of seamen; the Royal Navy, for example, plunged from nearly 50,000 sailors in 1712 to barely 13,000 just two years later. Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2007), 9 and 23; and Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 86-87. The contemporary writer Charles Johnson commented that “I have not so much as heard of a Dutch Pirate. It is not that I take them to be honest than their Neighbors; but when we account for it, it will, perhaps, be a reproach to ourselves for our want of industry. The reason I take to be, that after a war, when the Dutch ships are laid up, they have a fishery, where their seamen find immediate business, and as comfortable bread as they had before.” *A general history of the Pyrates: from their first rise and settlement in the Island of Providence, to the present time* (London: Printed for, and sold by T. Warner, 1724), 2.

Another popular view portrays pirates as class warriors resisting “the practices of [the] capitalist merchant shipping industry,” and seeking a “multi-cultural, multiracial, and multinational social order.” Rediker, *Villains of all Nations*, 17; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000).

Benjamin Hornigold, Henry Jennings, and Francisco Fernando—were, however, only the most famous element of a trans-national rejection of the broad-ranging imperial reforms that governments in London and Madrid sought to impose on their Caribbean colonies.

Since 1688 the Atlantic Basin had been engulfed in near ceaseless conflict, and the long struggles had created in imperial officials' minds a firm belief in the need to impose reform on their American empires. Reasserting imperial preeminence over colonial governance was seen as central both to enforcing the peace and, even more importantly, to substantially increasing imperial revenue to repay governments' ruinous wartime debts. In crafting their reform programs, ministers in both the Spanish and British empires gave special consideration to their most important West Indian colonies: Cuba and Jamaica. Both islands were at the center of efforts to reshape imperial governance and curtail the regional inter-imperial economy along monopolistic mercantilist lines. In both colonies reformers would find their hopes dashed within a decade.

In Spain, Philip V's chief minister Cardinal Giulio Alberoni recognized that Cuba was the linchpin of the Spanish imperial system. Not only did the island control two of the main access points to the Caribbean (the Windward Passage and the Florida Channel), but it was also at Havana that the treasure fleets gathered before beginning the crossing to Spain. The island was also the source for almost the entirety of the tobacco consumed in Spain. Yet Cubans were seen by Madrid as dangerously independent—particularly economically. Most of the island's agricultural commodities were sold illicitly to foreigners, and it was feared that commercial ties might weaken the islanders' political loyalties.<sup>7</sup> This fear was given further impetus by British efforts during the war to woo Spanish colonists into supporting the Habsburg claimant to the

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<sup>7</sup> John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 156.

Spanish throne with promises of expanded trade with Britain and its empire.<sup>8</sup> Spanish reformers were firmly committed to reaffirming imperial control over the island. Measures were imposed to weaken the power of local American-born elites by favoring peninsular-born Spaniards in administrative and military posts. Officials also sought to reshape the island's economy through the imposition of a state-owned tobacco monopoly which would secure the island's entire crop—and the taxes on it—for the Crown.

In Jamaica, much of the British Ministry's attention was focused on curbing the powers of the elected Assembly—notorious as the most independent and outspoken of any in the American colonies. In 1679, for example, the Assembly members had unilaterally asserted their right to consent to “convenient” imperial laws only, and to oversee all local Government financial expenditures.<sup>9</sup> Officials believed that the key to curtailing the pretensions of the island's inhabitants was a permanent independent revenue for the Governor and other crown-appointed officials. However, the parsimonious British treasury was unwilling to provide the needed funds, so any revenue would have to be voted by the Assembly itself. Securing this vote was the task given to Lord Archibald Hamilton, appointed Governor of the island in 1710.

The London Ministry also sought to form a monopoly over the sizeable and long-standing clandestine trade that flowed between Jamaica and Spanish America in violation of Spanish law. As part of the Treaty of Utrecht, British plenipotentiaries had coerced their French counterparts (Spain had no voice in the negotiation of the treaty) into granting Queen Anne the *asiento*—the monopoly contract to deliver African captives to Spanish America—for thirty

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<sup>8</sup> For a description of these efforts, which ultimately proved fruitless, see: Ruth Bourne, *Queen Anne's Navy in the West Indies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1939), 149-50 and 165-67; and Thomas Hansday to Sir Charles Hedges, April 5, 1706, CO 137/45, TNA.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 52.

years.<sup>10</sup> Anne then conferred the *asiento* on the London-headquartered South Sea Company, trusting it would prove more profitable than either the indirect trade to Spanish America via Cádiz or the illicit trade carried on by Jamaicans.<sup>11</sup> An unspoken additional hope for the new Company was that, by limiting Anglo-Spanish trade in the Americas to a single legal channel, it would curtail the incessant low-level violence surrounding Anglo-Spanish trade that had characterized the Caribbean for over a century. The constant inter-imperial friction engendered by contraband trade had become a major concern to officials and to West Indian sugar planters who sought a peaceful Caribbean to facilitate increased sugar production.<sup>12</sup>

Peace would not come to the Americas either smoothly or swiftly, however. Spanish- and Anglo-Americans were immediately and vocally hostile to any changes to their traditional regional economies. The inter-imperial plunder economy of contraband and privateering that had bound Anglo-Americans to their Spanish-American neighbors for fifty years was too entrenched and too lucrative for colonists to willingly surrender. In both empires colonists and officials actively resisted unpopular dictates through noncompliance, legislation, public protests, and even outright revolt. Reform efforts were further undermined by colonial officials such as Governor

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<sup>10</sup> The granting of the *asiento* can be found in Article 13 of the *Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the most serene and most potent Princess Anne and the most serene and most potent Prince Philip the Vth, concluded at Utrecht the 2/13 day of July, 1713* (Dublin: 1714).

<sup>11</sup> For accounts of the early days of the South Sea Company and the negotiations of the *asiento* contract, see: Elizabeth Donnan, "The Early Days of the South Sea Company, 1711-1718," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 2 (1929-1930): 422-428; Reyes Fernández Durán, *La corona Española y el tráfico de negros del monopolio al libre comercio* (Madrid: Ecobook, Editorial del Economista), chaps. 4-5; Jean O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A study of the influence of commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy in the first half of the eighteenth century* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1974), chap. 3; William Thomas Morgan, "The Origins of the South Sea Company," *Political Science Quarterly* 44:1 (1929): 16-38; John G. Sperling, *The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographic Finding List* (Harvard: Boston, MA, 1962); and Carl Wennerlind, *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), chap.6.

<sup>12</sup> This was of particular concern in the early eighteenth century because it was in this period that sugar production began to expand dramatically in the French West Indies, particularly Saint Domingue. In 1710, Saint Domingue exported 56,000 pounds of sugar; by 1720 it exported 203,000 pounds. John McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), 316, table V-1.

Archibald Hamilton in Jamaica and the South Sea Company's factor in Havana William Farril. So effective and universal was this backlash that, by 1720, officials in both London and Madrid were forced to abandon many of their reforms; this retreat left the illicit Anglo-Spanish world of contraband and conflict largely intact and firmly under local control for another half-century.

### **The Post-Utrecht Reform Program**

By the time the Peace of Utrecht was signed in 1713, Britain and Spain had been at war nearly uninterrupted for over a quarter century. Both nations were financially exhausted by the immense costs of waging war and looked to their American empires to help recover. A search for increased revenue from taxes on precious metals and agricultural commodities was joined with concerns that the lack of strong centralized authority had created a dangerous independence among colonial populations. Officials in both empires believed that tighter political control went hand in hand with increasing the revenue raised from the colonies. Despite inheriting considerable institutional and diplomatic obstacles, Ministers sought to curtail the power of colonial elites within their respective imperial systems in favor of crown-appointed officials who they believed would ensure the stricter enforcement of mercantilist imperial laws. These newly empowered imperial officials would also support and facilitate the functioning of a key element of the reform projects: the erection of royally-sanctioned monopolies to curtail and redirect the intense inter-imperial commercial networks connecting British and Spanish America. In Cuba, this took the form of a crown monopoly over the island's tobacco crop—Cuba's primary export. In British America, this took the form of the South Sea Company's *asiento*.

The impetus for imperial reform was particularly strong in Spain. Already suffering from a century of political and economic decline under the Habsburgs, Spain's new rulers had been

forced to concede a great deal at Utrecht as the price for peace and a Bourbon monarch. Philip V had surrendered most of Spain's non-Iberian European possessions to his enemies: the Spanish Netherlands (modern day Belgium), Naples, Milan and Sardinia to Austria; Sicily to the Duke of Savoy; and Gibraltar and Minorca to Britain. The Utrecht agreement also severely hamstrung efforts at reorganizing Spain's trade with its vast American territories. The eighth article of the 1713 treaty committed Philip to reestablish Spain's commercial system "as it was heretofore...according to the treaties of friendship, confederation and commerce, which were formally made between both nations."<sup>13</sup> This article forced Philip V to reaffirm the legacy of the grossly unequal commercial treaties imposed on Spain in the mid-seventeenth century that deprived Spanish officials of one of the most basic tools of mercantilism: tariff adjustment.

Treaties with the Dutch in 1648, the French in 1659, and the English in 1667 had granted each nation the equivalent of "most favored nation" status in Spain without reciprocating for Spanish merchants in their own countries. Joined with a corruptible bureaucracy, that meant that while nominal customs rates on foreign imports at Cádiz averaged an already low fifteen percent, the effective rate was nearer to three percent. At the same time, Spain's own inefficient industries were unable to produce the types and quantities of goods demanded in the colonies. As a result, while Spain maintained legal control over its American trade, it had given foreign powers the ability to drain away colonial bullion in massive quantities.<sup>14</sup>

The eighth article of the Utrecht treaty also severely curtailed any effort to reform the cumbersome annual fleet system by stipulating that "the exercise of navigation and commerce to the Spanish West Indies should remain in the same state" as when the Habsburgs ruled.<sup>15</sup> This

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<sup>13</sup> *Treaty of Peace and Friendship*, Article 8.

<sup>14</sup> Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 175.

<sup>15</sup> *Treaty of Peace and Friendship*, Article 8.



constraint was reinforced by the *asiento* contract (crafted separately from the peace treaty which granted it) which awarded the South Sea Company the right of an “Annual Ship” of five hundred tons burthen to trade in Spanish America along with the *flota* and *galeones*. This clause and its corollary compelled Spain to continue the inefficient annual fleets.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these constraints, the new regime was determined to revitalize Spain into a mercantilist power capable of successfully competing in the great power politics of eighteenth-century Europe. In choosing a model to follow in this quest Spanish ministers rejected England’s example. Despite the island nation’s clear commercial success, it was Protestant, had committed regicide, and forced limits on the power of the monarch. Rather, it was to France the reformers looked “where an empowered minister sponsored reforms insuring order, prosperity, and prestige to governors and governed.”<sup>17</sup> Following France’s example, a series of ministries were created to bypass the convoluted conciliar structures inherited from the sixteenth century. The Council of the Indies, which traditionally had controlled the governance of Spain’s far-flung empire, remained, but its powers were greatly weakened in favor of a new Ministry of Marine and the Indies.<sup>18</sup> The Council was reduced to a mere consultative body to which legal appeals were made. The new principal mechanism for governing the Americas would be the royal order—the *real cédula*—issued in the King’s name by the appropriate ministry.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, the strength of the *consulado*, the influential and deeply corrupt—many of its members were mere frontmen for foreign traders—Sevillian merchant guild that had monopolized Spain’s American trade since the 1500s, was broken when the Casa de

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<sup>16</sup> *The Assiento, or, Contract for allowing to the subjects of Great Britain the liberty of importing Negroes into the Spanish America signed by the Catholick King at Madrid, the twenty-sixth day of March, 1713* (London: Printed by John Baskett, 1713), Article 42.

<sup>17</sup> Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 154.

<sup>18</sup> The other three ministries were State, War, and Justice and Government.

<sup>19</sup> Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 44-45.

Contratación, which organized trans-Atlantic trade, was forcibly transferred from Seville to Cádiz. This shift brought together in one place the main port and the administrative apparatus of Spain's imperial system. The new trading structure was overseen by Don José Patiño, a close confidante of the Italian-born Cardinal and Chief Minister Alberoni. In 1717, Patiño was named Intendente General de Marina and president of the Casa de Contratación, responsible not only for overseeing trade with America but also for rebuilding Spain's navy to safeguard it. In America too, the Crown inaugurated several major reform programs. A Viceroyalty of New Granada was founded in 1717 along South America's northern coast in part to curb smuggling. At the same time, a new joint-stock company was formed for trading with Honduras and Caracas, the first break with the Cádiz monopoly since the 1500s.<sup>20</sup>

Ministers were also able to impose significant reforms on Spain's most valuable West Indian colony, Cuba. Except for the months when a treasure fleet was anchored at Havana, Cuba's economy was centered on cattle ranching and tobacco cultivation. The former took up much of the island's land while the latter was the island's primary export. The sugar industry was still miniscule and concentrated around Havana.<sup>21</sup> Tobacco was by far the most profitable agricultural product of the island, but due to a paucity of shipping it was also one that caused considerable concern among Spain's rulers. Eighty percent of Cuban tobacco was grown in central and eastern Cuba (although the best leaves were considered to be those cultivated in the western provinces), but the only outlet to Europe was through Havana in the west. Cuban tobacco farmers (*vegueros*) simply had no legal outlet for their crop. As a result, up to three-

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<sup>20</sup> For details of the company's founding and disastrous early trading voyages, see Roland D. Hussey, *The Caracas Company, 1728-1784: A Study in the History of Spanish Monopolistic Trade* (London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1934), 43-48.

<sup>21</sup> Reinaldo Fuñes Monzote, *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History Since 1492*, trans. Alex Martin (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 25; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), 1. Puerto Príncipe ranked second in sugar production.

quarters of Cuban tobacco was smuggled off the island.<sup>22</sup> Most of this went to French or Dutch smugglers who carried the Cuban leaf to Amsterdam, but a considerable amount went to nearby Jamaica. For example, in the year and a half following March 1710, Jamaica exported over 4,500 Cuban hides and nearly £4,000 sterling in Cuban tobacco to London.<sup>23</sup> The sheer volume of the illicit trade meant that most communities along Cuba's southern coast was economically oriented towards foreign, not Spanish, markets.

Spanish imperial officials were keenly aware of this flourishing illicit trade and of past failures to curtail it. The governor of Santiago de Cuba complained frequently that “the residents [of Bayamo in eastern Cuba] live in complete freedom and do not obey royal orders unless they are convenient for them.”<sup>24</sup> The officials appointed to enforce imperial trade laws were unsalaried, and the real governance of most Cuban towns was left to their *cabildos*—town councils made up of residents who were often deeply involved in illicit trade themselves. An inspection into contraband trade in Trinidad in 1719, for example, revealed that among the most prominent smugglers were the local Inquisition representative and a member of the town council.<sup>25</sup>

Determined to reassert imperial control over the island, Madrid set out to achieve three goals: heighten the security of the island against foreign assault or rebellion, eliminate contraband, and massively increase Cuba's contribution to the royal coffers. The first objective was accomplished through a reorganization of the island's garrison. The seven individual

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<sup>22</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 156.

<sup>23</sup> “Account of goods exported from Jamaica from 25 March, 1709/10, to 29 September, 1711,” CO 137/10, TNA.

<sup>24</sup> “...los vecinos y naturales, viven constante libertad que no obedecen despachos de los Gobernadores sin es aquellos que son de su conveniencia.” Don Mateo López de Cangas to Don Miguel Francisco Duran, June 8, 1720, Santo Domingo, 325, AGI.

<sup>25</sup> Gregorio Guazo y Calderón Fernández de la Vega to Don López Antonio de Sollozo, April 30, 1719, Santo Domingo, 378, AGI; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), 31.

companies in Havana, which previously had been contracted out to individuals, were reformed into a single fixed battalion. To help ensure peninsular control, Cubans were barred from serving as officers and Cuban enlistment was limited to twenty percent of the enlisted men.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the Armada de Barlovento, Spain's traditional West Indian squadron, was reestablished and Havana was made its headquarters.<sup>27</sup> Patiño also issued orders to erect a shipyard at Havana to aid in the rebuilding of Spain's navy. To combat smuggling, the Crown encouraged the fitting out of *guardacostas* to patrol the coasts. *Guardacostas*, like privateers, combined a measure of public management with private capital, since the Crown could not afford to maintain patrol vessels from its own purse. Rather, individuals would offer to outfit a *guardacosta* in exchange for a share of the proceeds from any seizures made. Santiago de Cuba in the east and Trinidad on Cuba's southern coast swiftly became major bases of these vessels.<sup>28</sup>

The largest reform effort was directed at fundamentally reshaping the island's tobacco economy. This was a major concern for imperial officials because, by 1700, tobacco brought nearly as much money into Spanish royal coffers annually as American bullion—and did so much more consistently than the irregular fleet system.<sup>29</sup> And although in the early 1700s Cuba produced three million pounds of tobacco, officials were sure it could be increased to over seven million pounds annually if contraband and private trading were eliminated. Historically, private merchants had purchased the bulk of Cuban tobacco from the *vegueros* and then sold it in Spain. But in officials' opinion there were two major drawbacks to relying on private traders. First, the

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<sup>26</sup> Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La armada de barlovento* (Seville: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-americanos de Sevilla, 1981), chap. 7.

<sup>28</sup> César García del Pino, *Corsarios, piratas y Santiago de Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2009), 70 and 88.

<sup>29</sup> In 1702, for example, the returning *flota* from New Spain carried 509,353 pesos in precious metals for the king, while taxes on tobacco that year brought 475,563 pesos into the royal treasury. Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain*, 180, and 209-11.

enforcement of anti-contraband laws proved impossible. Second, Seville's *real fábrica* did not receive a steady supply of the over three million pounds of leaf it needed every year to supply the Spanish domestic market.

On April 11, 1717, Philip V signed a *real cédula* creating a royal monopoly on Cuban tobacco under the name Real Factoría de Tabacos with *factorías* established at Havana, Trinidad, Sanctí Spiritus, Bayamo, and Santiago de Cuba. This was an unprecedented decree in Spanish America. Never before had a monopoly over a product other than a precious metal been established. The island was tasked with supplying annually five million pounds of leaf to Spain, five hundred thousand to the Canary Islands, three hundred thousand to Lima, Chile and Buenos Aires, and one and a half million to foreign kingdoms (primarily France). Governor Vicente de Raja in Havana was ordered to implement the monopoly.<sup>30</sup>

The other major economic change imposed on Cuba was an unwelcome one in many Spanish officials' eyes: the arrival of the British South Sea Company's agents. The Company—characterized by historians as being “more notorious than famous...conceived in an aura of dishonesty and fraud”—had arisen out of the British credit crisis in 1711. Its establishment was designed to lower the national debt through a debt-for-stock exchange.<sup>31</sup> As an incentive to holders of government debt to exchange their bonds for shares in the Company, the Company's charter granted it a monopoly of all British trade on the east coast of South America from the Orinoco River to Tierra del Fuego and all of its western coast as well.<sup>32</sup> When the peace negotiations between Britain and France commenced, it was widely rumored that the treaty

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<sup>30</sup> This description of the tobacco monopoly's origins and creation draws on: Cosner, *Golden Leaf*, 69-72; Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 45-51; and José Rivero Muñiz, *Las tres sediciones de los vegueros en el siglo XVIII* (Habana: Academia de la Historia de Cuba, 1951).

<sup>31</sup> Sperling, *South Sea Company*, ix.

<sup>32</sup> *An Act for making good deficiencies, and satisfying the publick debts and for erecting a corporation to carry on a trade to the South-Seas; and for the encouragement of the fishery; and for liberty to trade in unwrought iron with the subjects of Spain; and to repeal the Acts for registering seamen* (London: 1711), 433.

would require Spain to surrender four “security ports” in America to Britain for the Company to trade with.<sup>33</sup> Since such a concession would have been an unparalleled break in Spain’s closed commercial system, investment in the new company rose swiftly. But the four ports proved mirages. In order to secure a swift peace, the English negotiators abandoned the proposed ports, receiving instead the transferal of the *asiento* from the French Guinea Company to Queen Anne, who then granted it to the South Sea Company. Indeed, the very name of the company was soon a mockery; Article 19 of the *asiento* contract restricted the South Sea’s Company trade to the shores of Spanish America washed by the “North Sea” (the Atlantic) and to Buenos Aires.<sup>34</sup> The *asiento* itself was quickly seen by many London merchants as “crabbed and restrictive,” nowhere near what had been promised, despite the involvement of a knowledgeable former Caribbean smuggler named Manassas Gilligan in the drafting of its terms.<sup>35</sup>

By the *asiento* contract of March 26, 1713, the South Sea Company was granted the right to import slaves into Spanish America for thirty years, an unprecedented span, but little else was pleasing to the eyes of many potential investors. The contract stipulated that 4,800 *piezas de india* were to be delivered to Spanish America annually with a duty of thirty-three and a third pieces of eight to be paid on each of the first 4,000 *piezas*—whether they were actually delivered or not. The *pieza de india* was a measure not of individuals but of units of potential labor; a *pieza* was the equivalent of a male slave between the ages of fifteen and thirty-six and in good health. Women and slaves above or below this age range were counted as fractions of a *pieza*; a child between eight and twelve, for example, counted as two-thirds of a *pieza*.<sup>36</sup> The Company could

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<sup>33</sup>Sperling, *South Sea Company*, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *The Assiento*, Article 19.

<sup>35</sup> Sperling, *South Sea Company*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Johannes Postma, *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600-1815* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 228.

ship captives to any Caribbean port that held Spanish officials. To facilitate the sale of slaves the contract's Article 34 allowed for the erection of factories in Spanish ports to house and supply Company employees—called factors—and captives prior to their sale.

It was widely known that no *asiento* holder had ever made a profit from the slave trade alone. In acknowledgement of this, the Company was also granted the right to send one additional ship of five hundred tons burden every year to one of the ports—Cartagena de Indias, Portobello, and Veracruz—where Spanish fleets held their annual trade fairs. The Company acted quickly in setting the *asiento* in motion. In 1714 it established factories in Veracruz, Portobello, Cartagena de Indias, Buenos Aires, Havana, and Santiago de Cuba, and by March of that year ships contracted through the Royal African Company had been dispatched carrying a total of 2,400 captives.<sup>37</sup>

To oversee its trade around the Caribbean basin, the Company appointed two agents in Jamaica to coordinate deliveries of captives from Africa on their final voyages to Spanish America.<sup>38</sup> They were not met with open arms by Jamaicans, who were still reeling from two decades of economic difficulties and governmental turmoil. The 1690s had been especially traumatic in the island; Port Royal had been utterly destroyed in an earthquake in 1692, killing thousands, and a French invasion in 1694 had destroyed many of the island's sugar plantations. As a result of these disasters, exacerbated by the loss of several Jamaican sugar fleets during the War of the Spanish Succession, Jamaica in 1710 was far from the sugar-producing powerhouse that it would become by the end of the century. That year the island produced only 194,000

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<sup>37</sup> Sperling, *South Sea Company*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 20, 1713/14, Add Ms 25550, BL.

pounds of refined sugar while Barbados, less than a twentieth of its size, produced over 300,000 pounds.<sup>39</sup>

Simultaneously, the War of the Spanish Succession had not been kind to Jamaica's inter-imperial commerce. Although by the 1690s the island entrepôt had secured the lion's share of illicit commerce in the Caribbean, in 1698 the St Malo merchant Jacques de Beauschesne had led a trading voyage around Cape Horn into the Pacific; upon his return to France from Peru it was widely claimed that he had made a profit of nearly £25 million and that he sold his textiles for two-thirds the price demanded by Jamaican traders. Then, in 1701, Phillip V had granted his former countrymen the *asiento*, and French merchants used the wartime alliance to expand trade in both the Caribbean and the Pacific. By 1707, Seville's merchants estimated that thirty French ships had traded in New Spain, at least eighty-six to Cartagena and Portobello, and nearly twenty to the Pacific coast of Peru.<sup>40</sup> Dutch traders also crowded Spanish-American coasts, and Jamaican merchants even faced conflicts with their fellow Anglo-Americans. In an effort to woo Spanish colonists to the Habsburg cause, trade with the Spanish colonies was made legal by an Act of Parliament in 1704, but Anglo-American privateers continued to routinely attack Jamaican vessels trading on the Spanish coast. Island merchants frequently complained that Governor Thomas Handasyde colluded with the privateers in exchange for a share of the profits. Furthermore, the Royal Naval squadron at Jamaica demanded exorbitant fees for providing

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<sup>39</sup> Tables IV-4 and IV-20, McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 152 and 215.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Hansdayd to Board of Trade, June 4, 1710, CO 137/9, TNA; and Nuala Zahedieh, "Commerce and Conflict: Jamaica and the War of the Spanish Succession," in *The Caribbean and the Atlantic world economy: circuits of trade, money and knowledge, 1650-1914*, ed. A.B. Leonard (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 75. For further details of French trading ventures to Spanish America during the war, see: Kamen, *The War of Succession in Spain*, 143-50.



convoys, while also treating Jamaican traders who did not pay such fees as harshly as the privateers.<sup>41</sup>

These economic difficulties only exacerbated the island's eternally turbulent politics. So fierce were the factional clashes in the Assembly that they often erupted into violence. In 1710, for example, a brawl over the choice of Speaker had resulted in the death of former Governor Peter Beckford, who suffered a stroke as he attempted to protect his son, Peter Beckford Jr., from fellow Assemblymen.<sup>42</sup> The Ministry in London was convinced that a stronger executive in the island was needed to curtail the Assembly's intransigence and ensure the enforcement of imperial laws.

The man selected for this duty was Lord Archibald Hamilton. Hamilton was well-connected at Court; he was the youngest son of Anne, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duchess of Hamilton, and uncle to the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke, and so related to the senior peer of Scotland. He had already had a successful career as a Scottish officer in the English navy during the Nine Years' War and the War of the Spanish Succession. A loyal Whig, Hamilton had been granted a pension by King William III of £200, later increased to £300 by Queen Anne. He was awarded the Governorship of Jamaica in 1710. In a letter to his mother he boasted that the post came "with a salary of £2,500 Jamaica money" (£1,875 sterling<sup>43</sup>) and scope for further enrichment from fees and perquisites, making it "the best the Queen has, excepting that of Ireland."<sup>44</sup> In return for this lucrative post he was to ensure

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<sup>41</sup> Memorial of the Merchants of Jamaica, January 3, 1712/13, CO 137/9, TNA; and Archibald Hamilton to Board of Trade, March 5, 1712/13 and April 26, 1715, CO 137/10, TNA.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Handasyd to Lord Sunderland, December 27, 1706, Add Ms 61643, BL; and Handasyde to Board of Trade, April 9, 1710, CO 137/9, TNA. Peter Beckford Jr. was also notorious for his temper. As a young man, he murdered the Deputy Judge-Advocate of Jamaica, and was only acquitted following a lengthy court case. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur Press, 1962), 31.

<sup>43</sup> From the 1680s through the 1720s, £133.33 Jamaican currency was officially equivalent to £100 Sterling, though its actual value fluctuated wildly. John McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 247.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, and S. Handley, eds., "Member Biography: Lord Archibald Hamilton (1673-1754), of Motherwell, Lanark., and Riccarton and Pardovan, Linlithgow," *History of Parliament*

the island's safety and secure from the Assembly a permanent revenue to support the island's executive—freeing officials from the financial control of colonists. Following the peace, he was also ordered to assist the South Sea Company with the *asiento* and ensure the provisions of the peace treaty were enacted.

Thus, the end of the War of Spanish Succession inaugurated a wave of reform programs in both the British and Spanish empires. Monarchs and Ministers in both metropolises believed that the empowerment of imperial officials was desperately needed to curtail the independent political and economic activities of Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists, bringing peace to the colonies and greater revenues to their governments. In Madrid, reformers around Cardinal Alberoni anticipated that these reforms would reassert metropolitan authority over the vastness of Spain's American territories, and redirect into proper mercantilist avenues the precious metals and tobacco that had long been siphoned off by foreign smugglers. In London, the Ministry believed that the securing of a financially independent executive in the American colonies would free governors to assert greater control over unruly colonists and tighten enforcement of the Navigation Acts. Simultaneously, proponents of the South Sea Company predicted that the *asiento* would secure for England the wealth of Spanish America. Furthermore, by establishing a structured, legal Anglo-Spanish trade, it was believed the Company's monopoly would curtail the sizable smuggling trade that gave rise to the Spanish use of *guardacostas* to combat contraband, but who instead frequently targeted Anglo-American vessels regardless of their location or destination. However, these ambitious plans swiftly encountered concerted opposition

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Online, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1690-1715/member/hamilton-lord-archibald-1673-1754> (Accessed September 8, 2016).

from both Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists and imperial officials committed to “whatever the desire of gaine leads them to.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Governor Hamilton turns Pirate**

The peace that the Treaty of Utrecht had brought to the Caribbean was an uneasy and incomplete one. The ingrained habits and attitudes that Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists had developed over two centuries of inter-imperial violence were not easily surrendered. Spanish *guardacostas*, under the guise of combatting smuggling, seized Anglo-American shipping with near impunity, while former Jamaican privateers continued to raid Cuban shipping. It was the destruction of Ubilla’s fleet off Florida in 1715, however, that truly shattered the relative calm in the Caribbean. Governor Archibald Hamilton of Jamaica—frustrated by years of clashes with a hostile Assembly and attracted by the prospect of vast wealth—allied himself with those Jamaicans eager to continue their old habits of preying on the Spanish. Under his commission, Anglo-Jamaicans raided the Spanish salvage camps and attacked both Spanish and French shipping. The violence unleashed by Hamilton’s license upended the already precarious peace. Indeed, his privateers would become the founding fathers of the so-called “Golden Age of Piracy.”

When Hamilton had arrived in Jamaica in 1711 he was stunned by the state of the colony’s finances. While provision had been made to pay the outgoing governor’s salary, Hamilton complained that “there is not any money to pay me.” At the same time, the Assembly’s continued reluctance to vote supplies for the troops stationed there forced Hamilton to provide funds out of his own pockets. Hamilton’s efforts to win any form of permanent revenue for his

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<sup>45</sup> Benbow was discussing the Jamaican Assembly’s refusal to provide provisions for his ships and men. Admiral John Benbow to Charles Montague, June 1, 1702, CO 137/45, TNA.

administration were repeatedly and resoundingly rebuffed by both the Assembly and even his own Council. The frustrated governor blamed the legislature's hostility on their "being Creolians born in this country [who] cannot endure English Government."<sup>46</sup> The Assembly countered his complaints with accusations of corruption aimed at Hamilton and a "triumvirate" of cronies.<sup>47</sup> Among other charges, the Governor and his confidantes were accused of taking bribes and embezzling government stores "to the manifest lessening of Her Majesty's revenue." One of them, Richard Rigby, was even charged with altering the contents of the Council Books to hide evidence.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Hamilton and Admiral Hovendon Walker had reputedly schemed to create a private, monopolistic, and illicit trade in indigo with French Saint Domingue.<sup>49</sup>

As damning as the Assembly's accusations may have been, it was not unknown or even necessarily seen as illegal for officials to use their posts for their own gain. Many of Jamaica's former governors had been heavily involved in supporting privateers or had been gifted sugar plantations in return for political favors. The Assembly's hostility arose not from Hamilton's corruption, but from his attacks on their political dominance and the privileges they had awarded themselves over the previous half century. Hamilton's efforts to secure an independent revenue were threatening enough, but the prickly Assembly's final break with Hamilton began with a seemingly innocuous lawsuit. In 1710, the merchant Robert Saunders attempted to sue Assemblyman Graham Ely over the ownership of a sugar plantation that Saunders' wife had inherited, but that Ely had taken possession of. However, the legislature had long claimed the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid; and Thomas Handasyd to Lord Sunderland, December 6, 1706, Add Ms 61643, BL.

<sup>47</sup> This "triumvirate" included John Stewart of the Council, the Attorney General William Broderick, and Richard Rigby, who simultaneously held the offices of Secretary and Provost Marshal. A List of the Patent Offices in Jamaica, 1712, CO 137/10, TNA; and Hugh Totterdell to Capt. H Gawne, June 18, 1712, Ms 2050, JNL.

<sup>48</sup> Roderick Mackenzie to Board of Trade, October 8, 1712, CO 137/9, TNA.

<sup>49</sup> Archibald Hamilton to Captain Francis Hosier, November 3, 1712; Hosier to Hamilton, November 4, 1712; Hovendon Walker to Hamilton, November 6, 9, and 15, 1712; Hamilton to Walker, November 9, 1712; and Captain Robert Jackson to Walker, November 9, 1712, CO 137/9, TNA. The scheme is also discussed in the Journal of Admiral Hovendon Walker, entries for November 8, November 15, and December 12, 1712, Ms 249, JNL.

privilege that that its members were immune from arrest or lawsuit. Members of Parliament had the same privilege, but Jamaica's Assembly surpassed them by claiming that its members were immune from trial during the entirety of their tenure in office, not just when the Assembly was sitting. No one would serve Saunders' suit. He therefore went to England to petition the Board of Trade and, in May 1713, received an Order in Council ordering the writ be served as the Jamaican Assembly had "no reason for claiming such privilege." When the Order reached the island, it caused such an uproar that Hamilton was forced to dismiss the Assembly and call a new election.<sup>50</sup>

For the next two years Hamilton faced unremitting hostility in the Assembly, joined with fierce and ever shifting factionalism among its members. Accusations of corruption both personal and electoral were levied on all sides. By the summer of 1715, the island's rulers were so deeply divided that the government was unable to pass money bills to provide for even the most basic costs of government, forcing Hamilton to pay yet more out of his own pocket. For the desperate and cash-strapped Governor the news of the destruction of Ubilla's fleet could not have come at a more fortuitous time. The wealth scattered across Florida's beaches was an irresistible lure.

Furthermore, Hamilton believed he had the perfect cover for pursuing the lost wealth. Peace had not in practice come to the Caribbean with the Treaty of Utrecht. Since the armistice had been announced in the West Indies, more than twenty Anglo-American vessels worth nearly £80,000 sterling had been seized by Cuban corsairs under the cover of suppressing illicit

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<sup>50</sup> Order in Council, May 31, 1713, in Henry Barnham, *The Civil History of Jamaica to the year 1722*, Add Ms 12422, BL; and Leonard Woods Labaree, *Royal Government in America: A Study of the British Colonial System before 1783* (New York, NY: F. Ungar Publishing, 1958), 204-206. For the Assembly's complaints against Hamilton, see: Representation of the Assembly of Jamaica, December 1715; and "An Account of the maladministration in Jamaica during the Government of Lord Hamilton," n.d., CO 137/11, TNA.

commerce (see **Appendix C**). Many of these *guardacostas* sailed from what the English described as the “pirate nest” of Trinidad on Cuba’s southern coast, which had no royal officials to oversee the trial of prizes. This had long made it possible to condemn ships seized on the flimsiest of grounds, and also to falsify their value and consequent taxes owed on them.<sup>51</sup> Vessels fitted out from Cuban ports also raided Jamaica’s northern coast for slaves. In one nighttime raid, a Jamaican planter lost twenty-four slaves valued at £600.<sup>52</sup> Another expedition led by the former shoemaker turned *guardacosta* Miguel Henríquez—soon to be described in British circles as the “grand archvillain”—destroyed the nascent British settlement on Vieques (or Crab) Island off eastern Puerto Rico.<sup>53</sup>

Anglo-Americans had not been done their part in upholding the peace either. A British Naval vessel had seized a Spanish trader loaded with cacao and specie off Cartagena in 1713. Although the vessel was released, its captors made off with the cargo, over the protest of both Hamilton and Spanish officials.<sup>54</sup> In another case, the Jamaican John James had agreed to transport the Marquis de Nevares and his personal effects from Jamaica to Santa Marta (near Cartagena). But after landing the Marquis and his family, the faithless James sailed off with

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<sup>51</sup> Karelia Cadalso Echenagusía, “Particularidades del corso en Trinidad durante el siglo XVIII,” *Siga la marcha* 3, 4, 5 (1994): 37-42.

<sup>52</sup> “A List of some of the many ships, sloops, and other vessels taken from the subjects of the King of Great Britain in America by the subjects of the King of Spain since the conclusion of the last peace contrary to the treaties of peace and commerce concluded between their said Majesties,” n.d., CO 137/12, TNA. Hernán Venegas Delgado claims that the majority of plunder brought in by Trinidadian corsairs was slaves taken from Jamaica: “la mayor parte de los botines de los corsarios armados en la región consistía en esclavos capturados a los ingleses en las costas de Jamaica.” *Trinidad de Cuba: Corsarios, azúcar y revolución en el Caribe* (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2005), 25.

<sup>53</sup> Arturo Morales-Carrión, *Puerto Rico and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean: A Study in the Decline of Spanish Exclusivism* (Rio Piedras, P.R.: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1952), 62-65; and Jonathan Dennis to Joseph Eyles & Peter Burrell, November 2, 1731, in William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, CL.

<sup>54</sup> Archibald Hamilton to Board of Trade, March 5, 1712/13, March 31, and July 11, 1713, CO 137/10, TNA.

£16,000 worth of the Spaniard's goods.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, the former Jamaican privateer Benjamin Hornigold had left the island for the Bahamas where he had taken command of three vessels and nearly a hundred men—including the young Edward Teach, soon to be known as Blackbeard—which he used to raid Cuban settlements. Hornigold and his followers claimed that Englishmen had nothing to fear from them, for they were only avenging their countrymen's losses to the French and Spanish.<sup>56</sup>

The depredations committed by colonists of both empires created an atmosphere of tit-for-tat violence that offered a seeming opportunity to Hamilton. The Royal Navy—whose peacetime establishment left only one man of war and one sloop on the Jamaica station—had proven ineffective at curbing the *guardacostas*. Accordingly, the governor issued commissions to ten Jamaican vessels to “act against the pirates, wherewith these seas are at present infested.”<sup>57</sup> Hamilton's actions were technically legal, for his royal instructions granted him the power to issue commissions against piracies; they were also in keeping with a long history of Jamaican governors issuing commissions to privateers in times of peace to raid the island's neighbors under the pretense of fighting pirates.<sup>58</sup> Hamilton likely hoped that any improprieties or Spanish

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<sup>55</sup> The Case of the Marquis of Nevares, CO 23/13, TNA. James' ship was later forced into Charleston, South Carolina; but, despite orders from England to prosecute James and the Governor Charles Craven who had sheltered him in return for a share of the Marquis' wealth, nothing was done. Unknown to Marquis de Monteleon, n.d; Lords Proprietors of Carolina to Governor Craven, February 23, 1716/17; and Paul Methuen to Lords Proprietors of Carolina, August 8, 1716, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, vol. 29, 1716-1717 (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), item 34ii, p.11, item 56 pp. 26-27, and item 304 p. 162.

<sup>56</sup> Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 87-99.

<sup>57</sup> Archibald Hamilton, *An answer to an anonymous libel, entitled, Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton* (London, 1718), 51; “A List of Vessels commissioned by His Excellency the Lord Archibald Hamilton,” CO 137/11, TNA; and Copy of the Commission for taking Pirates, November 21, 1715, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>58</sup> Leonard W. Labaree, *Royal Instructions to British Colonial Governors, 1670-1776*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1967), 446, 450-51.

protests would be ignored in London, which was preoccupied with suppressing a Jacobite revolt that had engulfed England and Scotland.<sup>59</sup>

The owners of the vessels were prominent Jamaican merchants, while several of their commanders were “men of good estate.” Henry Jennings commander of the *Bersheba*, for example, had a Jamaican estate worth over £400 annually. A few, however, such as Captain Francisco Fernando of the *Bennet*, described as a “mulatto,” came from less well-off backgrounds. Each vessel’s owners had also given bond of £1,500 Jamaican currency (£1,125 sterling) for their commanders’ good behavior.<sup>60</sup> The chief motive for these men emerges in a conversation between Hamilton and Captain Jonathan Barnet, commander of the *Tiger*. Barnet had been fitting out his vessel to sail for the wrecks and was uninterested in Hamilton’s pirate-hunting commission. However, Hamilton assured him that the commission would not only defend him from pirates but also enrich him: for “if he was stronger than the Spaniards, then [he] might take the money he could get up.”<sup>61</sup> Barnet agreed to the commission, while Hamilton himself took either a quarter or an eighth share in each of the vessels.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Henry Jennings hired fourteen divers to help man his sloop *Bersheba*, a skill seldom needed in pirate-hunting.<sup>63</sup> Such a venture was popular in Jamaica for, as one witness commented, colonists

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<sup>59</sup> Despite the claims of Colin Woodard, there is no evidence that Hamilton was a Jacobite, although several of his brothers were. In truth, he was a staunch Presbyterian, and his Parliamentary voting record was largely Whiggish. Certainly, upon his recall to England, no accusations of Jacobitism were levelled against him. Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 102-103.

<sup>60</sup> Hamilton, *Answer to an anonymous libel*, 59; and “Security of Jonathan Barnet, Lewis Galdy, and Daniel Axtell, November 24, 1715”, in Hamilton, *Answer to an anonymous libel*, 74.

<sup>61</sup> “Deposition of Captain Jonathan Barnet, August 10, 1716,” in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton, late governour of Jamaica with sundry depositions and proofs relating to the same* (London: 1717), 7. The granting of commissions by colonial governors was authorized by the 14<sup>th</sup> Article of *An Act for the more effectually Suppressions of Piracy* (1698 11 William 3 c.7).

<sup>62</sup> “Deposition of John Beswick, August 18, 1716,” in *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 15; Juan Francisco del Valle to the Marqués of Monteleon, March 18, 1715/16, CO 137/11, TNA. The Marqués was the Spanish ambassador in London.

<sup>63</sup> Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 107.



widely claimed that “the Spaniards are indebted to that island a considerable sum of money and they must repay themselves.”<sup>64</sup>

Hamilton’s privateers wasted little time in assaulting their Cuban neighbors. In early December, Barnet’s *Tiger* raided several settlements along Cuba’s southern coast, plundering and murdering. A furious Governor Vicente de Raja dispatched the Havana merchant Don Juan del Valle to Jamaica to demand that the marauders be brought to justice. Del Valle reached Jamaica in the first week of January only to receive a letter from Havana bearing even more disturbing news—vessels led by Henry Jennings had raided the Florida salvage camps.<sup>65</sup>

During the night of December 27, Jennings, in overall command, had landed a hundred and fifty men near the camps the Spanish survivors had erected near the wrecks. The following morning, with flags flying and drums beating, they had approached the main Spanish camp. The Spanish commander met with Jennings and asked “if it was war” between the two Crowns. Jennings responded that they had merely come to fish at the wreck. Jennings was informed that there was nothing for the Jamaicans there, since the destroyed vessels and their cargo belonged to His Catholic Majesty. The Spaniard then offered the privateers 25,000 pieces of eight to leave. Jennings refused the offer and, knowing resistance was futile, the Spanish surrendered. The privateers made off with over 120,000 pieces of eight (£27,000 sterling), as well as a sizable quantity of wrought silver and all the clothing the Spaniards wore. They even destroyed the parapet and spiked the few cannons the Spaniards “had thrown up to defend themselves from the Indians” before departing.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Extract of a letter from Capt. Balchen of the *Diamond* to Mr. Burchett, May 13, 1716, CO 137/11, TNA.

<sup>65</sup> Don Juan del Valle to the Marqués de Monteleon, March 18, 1716, Consulados, 855, AGI.

<sup>66</sup> “Extract of a letter to the Marquis of Monteleon from Juan Francisco del Valle dated at Jamaica March 18, 1715/16,” CO 137/11, TNA; and Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 108-112.

On January 26, Jennings returned to Jamaica with his plunder which he distributed among his crew and investors. Hamilton reportedly received nearly five hundred pounds weight in silver as his share.<sup>67</sup> Almost immediately, another twenty vessels began to fit out to sail for the wrecked *flota*.<sup>68</sup> In an outraged memorial delivered to Hamilton three days later, de la Valle demanded that the privateers be recalled, the stolen silver returned, and all those who raided the salvage camps punished.<sup>69</sup> In a meeting to discuss de la Valle's demands, Hamilton and his supporters in the Council acknowledged that those who raided the salvage camps were robbers, but defended Jamaicans' right to salvage anything not physically occupied by the Spaniards. The Council also convinced de la Valle not to press charges against Jennings and his crew as it might deter others from returning to Jamaica "and be a means of putting them upon desperate attempts of more pernicious consequence to the crown of Spain."<sup>70</sup> As to restoring the silver to its Spanish owners, the Council defiantly argued that "the Spaniards being the first aggressors, his Excellency and the Council think they should be the first to give satisfaction."<sup>71</sup>

Shortly after Jennings' raid, the *Bennet* under Francisco Fernando seized the Spanish sloop *Nuestra Señora de Belem* as it sailed from Veracruz to Havana with a load of flour, cochineal, and specie worth over a hundred thousand pesos (£22,500 sterling). Fernando took the prize into a bay along Cuba's southern coast to ransack it. As a cover, Fernando offered the Spanish captain six thousand pesos and the value of the ship itself if he were to abandon all claim

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Heywood to Board of Trade, August 11, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA. At least one of Jennings' subordinates, a Captain Carpenter, was caught by a Cuban privateer and hung shortly after the raid. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 6, 77.

<sup>68</sup> Extract of a letter from Capt. Balchen of the *Diamond* to Mr. Burchett, May 13, 1716, CO 137/11, TNA.

<sup>69</sup> Primero Memorial, January 29, 1716, Consulados 855, AGI. English translations of the memorial can be found in CO 137/11, TNA and in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 9-11.

<sup>70</sup> "Minutes of Council of Jamaica, February 9, 1715/16," in Hamilton, *Answer to an anonymous libel*, 78.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*; and Archibald Hamilton to Marquis de Casa Torres, February 27, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA. Casa Torres had been succeeded by Don Vicente de Raja as Governor of Havana in 1711, but Hamilton was either unaware of that fact or had forgotten.

to it. The Spaniard refused and Fernando marooned most of the Spanish crew on the Cuban shore before dispatching the prize to Jamaica, while Fernando took the *Bennet* to the wrecks in search of salvage.<sup>72</sup> When the *Nuestra Señora de Belem* reached Kingston in the first week of February, it came with a letter from Fernando to Hamilton in which he revealed that the vessel was in fact the ship *Kensington* belonging to James Knight, the Receiver-General, that had been seized by the Spanish while smuggling off Portobello, “where, nor in any other Spanish port, she had never been condemned.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, argued Fernando, she was in fact piratically seized rather than justly taken by Spanish authorities. Hamilton worked quickly to arrange her condemnation in the Vice-Admiralty Court on this basis.

Simultaneously, a furious de la Valle brought the *Nuestra Señora de Belem*’s captain to meet with Hamilton, who claimed that rumors of his ownership of Fernando’s sloop “was only talk” and that he would have Fernando himself arrested when he returned to Jamaica. Hamilton further assured de la Valle that he would ensure the sloop not be condemned. But that was a lie. On March 17, the *Nuestra Señora de Belem*, alias *Kensington*, was condemned as a pirate, “without having heard what [de la Valle and the Captain] had to say nor taken any examination” from the owners. When de la Valle demanded a copy of the condemnation to send to Europe, it was given only grudgingly; to his outrage, he discovered it had been altered to claim that the condemnation sprang from the lack of any appearance by the sloop’s owners.<sup>74</sup> As Chief Judge, Hamilton received over four hundred pounds of silver from the condemnation.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Minutes of Council, September 3, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, JNA.

<sup>73</sup> “Remarks on Dr. Page’s list of vessels commissioned by Lord Archibald Hamilton which Dr. Page delivered to the Secretary of State with his affidavit,” n.d., CO 137/12, TNA. See also: “Copy of a letter from Francis Fernando to Lord Archibald Hamilton, January 7, 1715/16,” in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of Council, September 3, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, JNA; and Copy of the proceedings of the Court of Admiralty held at Port Royal in Jamaica, March 16, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>75</sup> “Receipt, May 31, 1716,” in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 23.

Hamilton's actions sent shockwaves throughout the Spanish and British empires. One of the most immediate consequences was Spanish officials' decision to put an end to the British settlements in the Bay of Campeche. These settlements, established in the second half of the seventeenth century, had emerged along the sparsely settled Central American coast to facilitate the cutting of logwood trees, whose wood was the source of valuable dyes. By the early eighteenth century, they were home to several hundred loggers, their African slaves, and local native peoples. Spanish officials never accepted the legality of foreigners living on their shores, denouncing them as intruders and violators of the various treaties between England and Spain. In 1716, furious at the piracies of the Jamaicans, the Spanish struck. A fleet burnt the settlements in Campeche, capturing nearly two hundred "baymen." Several hundred others escaped to Jamaica and the Bahamas, many of whom would join the latter colony's growing pirate community. Spanish warships continued to patrol the bay throughout the rest of the year to prevent reoccupation, capturing another twenty-six British and Dutch ships.<sup>76</sup>

Time was beginning to run out for Hamilton. His hopes of making a fortune from the wreckage of Ubilla's fleet were coming undone in the welter of unexpected attention Jennings' raid and Fernando's piracy had attracted. Sensing that official protection was waning, Jennings quietly sailed from the island in the *Bersheba* along with three other vessels shortly before the *Kensington* was condemned. Hamilton claimed that Jennings had left the island despite his

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 222-25; and Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 161. Charles Johnson's *A general history of the Pyrates*, 29, lists twenty Anglo-American vessels seized during the raid.

For accounts of the logwood settlements and trade in the valuable dyewoods, see: Gilbert M. Joseph, "British Loggers and Spanish Governors: The Logwood Trade and Its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part I," *Caribbean Studies* 14:2 (1974): 7-37; Joseph, "British Loggers and Spanish Governors: The Logwood Trade and Its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part II," *Caribbean Studies* 15:4 (1976): 43-52; and Nathaniel Uring, *A history of the voyages and travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring. With new draughts of the bay of Honduras and the Caribbee islands; and particularly of St. Lucia, and the harbour of Petite Carenage* (London: 1726), 354-58.

“express commands” to remain. But according to the Secretary’s records, he had sailed with a “let pass” from the Governor.<sup>77</sup> Two weeks after leaving Jamaica, Jennings, along with fellow privateer Leigh Ashworth and the soon to be infamous Samuel Bellamy, seized and plundered a French vessel off Cuba’s southern coast. French officials in Saint Domingue were enraged and sent letters to Jamaica demanding the arrest and punishment of the pirates. Jennings, however, had taken his flotilla to Nassau in the Bahamas to wait for an opportunity to return home safely.<sup>78</sup>

In Jamaica, Hamilton began to sense how precarious his legal position was becoming. When the owner of Fernando’s *Bennet*, approached the governor about meeting with Fernando to discuss his safe return to Jamaica, Hamilton initially refused, stating that “he should be worried to death by these Spaniards” if he were to meet openly with the privateer. However, he eventually agreed to meet with Fernando in secret at night if he were quietly “let in at the gate of the north side of the garden” of the Governor’s mansion. But at the last moment, Hamilton refused to meet.<sup>79</sup> The Governor also deposited the silver he received from his share of the *Kensington* (but not that from Jennings) with Jamaica’s Receiver-General for safe-keeping, ostensibly due to his newfound belief that Fernando “had exceeded his commission and broken his instructions.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “Remarks on Dr. Page’s list of vessels commissioned by Lord Archibald Hamilton which Dr. Page delivered to the Secretary of State with his affidavit,” n.d., CO 137/12, TNA; “Minutes of a Council held at Santiago de la Vega, October 11, 1716,” in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Translation of a letter from Governor Michon of Saint Domingue to Peter Heywood, June 18, 1716; Translation of a letter from Intendant Blenac of Saint Domingue to Peter Heywood, July 18, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA; “Memorial of Bernardo de Guardia and Peter Dicharce and Memorial de Messrs. Bonfils and Freres Marchand Francois de la Rochelle touchant la Prize de leur Navire *L’aimable Marie* pour cinq chaloupes de la Jamaïque,” CO 137/13, TNA; and Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 127-31.

<sup>79</sup> “Deposition of Thomas Bendish, August 14, 1716”; and “Some further depositions of Thomas Bendish Esq., September 10, 1716,” in Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton*, 27 and 29.

<sup>80</sup> “Minutes of the Lords Commissioners for Trade &c upon hearing the Lord Archibald Hamilton, on each article of his said memorial,” n.d., in Hamilton, *Answer to an anonymous libel*, 34.

Hamilton might have managed to survive in office despite the international outrage his actions had sparked if his enemies in the Assembly had not sensed his weakness and chosen that moment to strike. Leading Assemblymen subscribed a sizable amount of money and dispatched Samuel Page to England. Two years before, Page had been deputized by the holder of the patent to the office of Island Secretary to serve in his place, but Hamilton had refused to admit Page to the post, preferring to keep his confidante Richard Rigby in control of Jamaica's records.<sup>81</sup> Although eventually an order from London forced Hamilton to grant Page the office of Assistant Secretary, Page was now an avowed enemy of Hamilton's. And in March 1716, under the pretense of illness, Page forged a license for himself to depart the island and sailed to London with the money collected by the Assembly.<sup>82</sup> In England, Page used the funds to collect affidavits testifying to Hamilton's abuses of power, supposed Jacobitism, and the piracy he had initiated in quest of Spanish gold "violating the strongest security of a lasting peace [and] despising the efficacious promises of sovereigns."<sup>83</sup> With protests from the Spanish ambassador ringing in their ears, British officials acted swiftly and in May issued orders for Hamilton's arrest and return to Britain. The orders were modelled on those Charles II had issued for the arrest of Governor Thomas Lynch in 1671 for his continuing support of the buccaneers, suggesting how little had seemingly changed from Henry Morgan's Jamaica to that of Hamilton. Peter Heywood,

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<sup>81</sup> "An account of some of the many grievances of Jamaica, touching the multiplication of offices, in the person of Mr. Richard Rigby," n.d.; Hamilton to Board of Trade, April 26, 1715, CO 137/10, TNA; and Hamilton, *Answer to an anonymous libel*, 15.

<sup>82</sup> Samuel Page to Archibald Hamilton, March 6, 1715/16; Extract of a letter from William Bernard to Archibald Hamilton June, 1717; and Ticket, February 25, 1715/16, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>83</sup> Deposition of Samuel Page, May 15, 1716; Deposition of Walter Adlington, May 15, 1716; Representation of the merchants against Lord Archibald Hamilton, n.d.; Samuel Page to Sir Gilbert Heathcote, May 8, 1716; and "An Account of the maladministration in Jamaica during the Government of Lord Hamilton," n.d., CO 137/11, TNA.

a member of the Council and former Chief Justice of Jamaica before Hamilton had forcibly removed him from that office, was appointed Hamilton's successor.<sup>84</sup>

The orders for Hamilton's arrest, along with those for the arrest of all those involved in the "depredations at sea," reached Jamaica in August, and Hamilton's enemies acted swiftly, removing him from office and placing him under house arrest.<sup>85</sup> Over the next month, Heywood and the Council made lengthy inquiries into the piracies of the privateers and Hamilton's culpability, but did little to actually pursue the perpetrators. In a partisan five to four vote, the Council pronounced the ex-Governor "criminal according to the King's instructions" and shipped him to England in chains.<sup>86</sup> Hamilton's departure did nothing to calm the storm he had unleashed in the Caribbean, however, for, as one Kingston merchant observed, "the attempt of taking up some of the piratical sailors has so alarmed the rest that it seems they are gone off in swarms, whereby what was done before, by encouragement or accident, will now, 'tis doubted, be done under an apprehension or pretense of necessity."<sup>87</sup> Many ex-privateersmen made for Nassau. There, many of these descendants of the buccaneers, who had been granted commissions from authorities knowing they would "stretch [their commissions] as far as they would at the capstan," moved into outright piracy.<sup>88</sup>

It is nonetheless possible to still distinguish between "true" pirates and those like Henry Jennings, Francisco Fernando, and their Spanish *guardacosta* contemporaries who made up most of the marauders in these years. As corsairs, the latter group generally refused to attack vessels of

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<sup>84</sup> "Draft of a letter to Peter Heywood Esq. for securing the persons and effects of those concerned in the piracies and robberies committed upon the Spaniards," n.d.; Copy of Charles II to Thomas Lynch, March 23, 1670/71; and James Stanhope to Board of Trade May 19, 1716, CO 137/11, TNA.

<sup>85</sup> Hamilton, *Answer to an Anonymous Libel*, 18.

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of Council, September 13, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, JNA.

<sup>87</sup> Extract of a letter to Thomas Onslow from Mr. Bowes, August, 1716; and Peter Heywood to Board of Trade, August 11, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>88</sup> This quote is attributed to Nicholas Browne and Christopher Winter, two of Hamilton's privateers. Quoted in Earle, *Pirate Wars*, 162.

their own nation. Jennings, for example, even after he had been forced to flee Jamaica, resolutely refused to attack British shipping. He even sent the *Amiable Marie's* cargo back to Jamaica for trial and legal condemnation.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, there are no reports of Cuban *guardacostas* seizing Spanish shipping. In Nassau, however, the ex-privateers discovered that no colonial government was willing to offer them protection or sponsor further raids. In frustration, some, such as Edward Teach and Samuel Bellamy, began to seize vessels indiscriminately. Jennings and many of his peers soon lost their leadership positions for refusing to follow suit, and their more ruthless followers and the new recruits they gathered well matched Cicero's description of pirates as "the common enemy of all."<sup>90</sup>

Anglo-Americans were not alone in harassing British merchants in the Caribbean that summer. In August 1716, the same month of Hamilton's arrest, it was reported that nearly twenty British vessels, mostly from North America, had been captured by corsairs fitted out from the Cuban ports of Trinidad and Santiago, while French ex-privateers were joining their English counterparts in the Bahamas. By the end of the year, Acting-Governor Heywood wrote plaintively that pirates "of all nations" were seizing half the vessels bound to or from Jamaica, along with similar proportions among the French and Spanish. Heywood described the geographical reach of these pirates as:

those to Windward are generally Spaniards & some few French, but most mulattoes, quadroons & negroes, they lie from the Leeward part of the island of San Juan de Puerto Rico, down along the south side of Hispaniola, then on the other side Hispaniola from Cape Nicolas down the northwest, & west of Hispaniola & upon the South side to the Isle of Ash, then on the Coast of Cuba from the south easternmost and down to the South Keys, and

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<sup>89</sup> Matthew Musson to the Council of Trade and Plantations, July 5, 1717, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 29, 338.

<sup>90</sup> "Nam pirata non est ex perduellium numero definitus, sed communis hostis omnium." Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, Book III, Ch. XXIX, 107.



Trinidad lies others, and from the Isle of Pines clear round to the Bay of Hondo, and so on to the Havana & Bay of Matanzas, & from thence to the Island Providence.<sup>91</sup>

Heywood's description underscores that the so-called "Golden Age of Piracy" unleashed by Hamilton's schemes was a truly international affair and recognized by contemporaries as such. Spanish-American (primarily Cuban) and Franco-American pirates were just as central to a larger and, in officials' and merchants' eyes, deeply disturbing phenomenon that rocked the Caribbean in the years following 1715.<sup>92</sup> Rather than help quiet the turbulent region, Hamilton's tenure in office had instead only given added impetus to the regional economy of inter-imperial piracy, privateering, and violence that would continue for another three decades.

### Colonial Political Economy

The arrest of Governor Hamilton opened a seven-year period in which white Jamaicans essentially ruled their own island, for the next two Governors—Peter Heywood and Sir Nicholas Lawes—were both colonists. Essentially able to operate as their own independent city-state, the island's merchant and planter elites tolerated the safe return of many of Hamilton's former privateers while refusing to provide recompense to their victims.<sup>93</sup> Cubans too continued to

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<sup>91</sup> Extract from a letter from Peter Heywood to Board of Trade, January 3, 1716/17, CO 137/46, TNA.

<sup>92</sup> Examples of the neglect of non-British pirates can be seen in Rediker's *Villains of all Nations*, 52, in which he calculates 6.9% of Europeans among pirate crews were of non-British descent. However, Rediker's calculation is based on a sample of only 348 pirates captured by English authorities between 1716 and 1726 and his analysis of piracy in the period includes no discussion of vessels or crews commanded by non-Anglo-Americans. Similar Anglo-centrism in accounts of the Golden Age of Piracy is notable in: Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nest and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), chap. 10; Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Rediker *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*; Robert Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*.

<sup>93</sup> An argument about the largely self-interested political economies of Boston and Jamaica was presented by Trevor Burnard and Mark Peterson, "A Third Way Lost: The City States of Boston and Kingston, the Parameters of Empire, and the American Revolution," Paper presented at The American War: Britain's American Revolution conference, San Marino, CA, September, 2012.

support their *guardacostas*, with many officials happily asking few questions about the foreign vessels they seized in return for a share of a prize's value. Colonists in both islands also demonstrated their commitment to "free trade" and their traditional regional trading networks through fierce hostility to the monopolies imposed from Europe: the South Sea Company, and the *Real Factoría de Tabacos*. By 1720, colonial hostility joined with events in Europe would severely former and completely destroy the latter.

Although officials in both empires were quick to condemn the raids by Hamilton's former privateers and the excesses of the *guardacostas*, many colonial elites were not as willing to abandon them—at least those marauders from their own communities. In Trinidad, for example, many of the most prominent families in the city were heavily invested in privateering and made their fortunes in it.<sup>94</sup> When a British warship visited the Cuban port in 1716 to demand the restitution of an unjustly captured English vessel, the town's *alcaldes* reportedly responded "that [the messenger] might take his demand and wipe his arse with it."<sup>95</sup>

In Jamaica, after Hamilton was forced from office the island's leaders suddenly had little interest in pursuing his privateers or offering restitution to the Spanish. One of the men Heywood nominated for his new Council was John Wyllys, a Kingston merchant who received from Jennings the money he stole from the wrecks as well as the cargo of the French ship Jennings had seized.<sup>96</sup> Jamaicans also refused to restore either the *Kensington* or any part of its cargo, telling Juan del Valle that "there was a reasonable ground where to found justification of the capture of her" and that they could do nothing until orders were received from the King in

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<sup>94</sup> Echenagusia, "Particularidades del Corso;" and Delgado, *Trinidad de Cuba*, 25.

<sup>95</sup> "Deposition of David Johnson, August 9, 1716," in A. B., *The State of the Island of Jamaica, Chiefly in relation to its commerce, and the conduct of the Spaniards in the West Indies. Addressed to a member of Parliament. By a person who resided several years at Jamaica* (London: H. Whitridge, 1726), 55.

<sup>96</sup> Deposition of Allen Bernard, Minutes of Council, August 10, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, JNA.

London for “it is not in the power of his Excellency [Heywood] and [the Council] to make restitution here.”<sup>97</sup> Del Valle continued on in Jamaica vainly attempting to receive some justice for either Jennings’ or Fernando’s piracies, until he was expelled from the island in 1718 for “giving great umbrage to the merchants” by his repeated demands.<sup>98</sup> The Council also refused the suit of the owners of the *Amiable Marie* for the value of the security Jennings had signed upon receiving his commission.<sup>99</sup>

Jamaica’s elites also turned their ire towards the South Sea Company. From the moment the *asiento* was signed, Jamaicans were keenly aware of the threat it posed to their lucrative trade to Spanish America. Fearing that the Company’s legal trade would supplant their own smuggling networks, merchants in Kingston and Port Royal loudly condemned the contract as liable to prove far less profitable to Britain than their own private trade; arguing that it would discourage trade to Jamaica and even harm British manufacturing by losing the Spanish American market to the French and Dutch. Furthermore, it would expose the island to danger by discouraging white seamen from settling there; these men normally served on smuggling ships and, with no work, were likely to leave the island in search of it.<sup>100</sup> In many ways, these attacks echoed those that had been levied against the Royal African Company whose monopoly over the slave trade had

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<sup>97</sup> Minutes of Council, Jamaica, September 1, and 4, 1716, 1B/5/3/8, JNA.

<sup>98</sup> Minutes of Council, August 12, 1718, 1b?5/3/9, JNA; Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, September 1, 1718; and The Governor and Council’s answer to Juan del Valle, August 5, 1718, CO 137/13, TNA. The High Court of Admiralty would eventually reverse the condemnation in 1726, but the Spanish owners were convinced they would receive no restitution in Jamaica. Memorial of the Marquis de Pozobueno, 1726, SP 100/57, TNA.

<sup>99</sup> Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade April 28, 1719, and n.d., 1719, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example: “A Gentleman who has resided several years in Jamaica,” *The trade granted to the South-Sea-Company considered with relation to Jamaica in a letter to one of the directors of the South-Sea-Company* (London, 1714); and William Wood, *The Asiento contract consider’d. As also, the advantages and decay of the trade of Jamaica and of the plantations, with the causes and consequences thereof* (London, 1714).

only ended in 1712. Jamaicans were not pleased to see one monopoly so quickly replaced with another.<sup>101</sup>

Jamaican merchants were right to be concerned, for the Company was taking active steps to eliminate competition. In a memorial submitted to Secretary of State James Stanhope in 1715, the Company's Directors requested that orders be dispatched to Royal Navy commanders "to seize any ships or vessels bound to [the Spanish] coast with negroes." The Directors even inquired in Madrid if it were possible for their agents "to get commissions from the King of Spain to seize and take" any smugglers they found. The Company's agents were also accused by the Jamaican Assembly of urging the 1715 assault on Campeche in service to their monopoly.<sup>102</sup>

The hostility of Jamaica's sugar planters was joined to the anger of its merchants when the Company chose to make Jamaica, due to its central location and easy sailing distance—less than a week's sail from nearly the entirety of the Spanish Caribbean—its main Caribbean headquarters. The Jamaica factory's role was to receive shipments of captives from Africa, originally contracted through the equally detested Royal African Company, "refresh" them after the horrors of the Middle Passage, and then reship them to the various factories once they had regained some measure of their health.<sup>103</sup> Slave prices had fallen from £20 to £12 per head in

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<sup>101</sup> For accounts of the Royal African Company and hostility towards it by colonists, see: Kenneth Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957), chap. 7; and William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic slave trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), chaps. 2 and 4.

Colonists' hostility towards monopoly companies was part of a wider trans-Atlantic phenomenon in this period. See, for example: Malick W. Ghachem, "'No Body to be Kicked?' Monopoly, Financial Crisis, and Popular Revolt in Eighteenth-Century Haiti and North America," *Law and Literature* 28:3 (2016): 403-431.

<sup>102</sup> Memorial to the Right Honorable James Stanhope, 1715, Add Ms 25555, BL; and Minutes of the Assembly of Jamaica August 23 and 27, 1717, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 2 (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1811), 247 and 249.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of the Court of Directors of October 28 1713, January 22, 1713/14, and October 6, 1714, Add Ms 25495, BL; Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence of January 5, 19, and 20, 1713/14, Add Ms 25550, BL. For details of the South Sea Company's contract with the Royal African Company, see: Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), chaps. 2-3. The South Sea Company also established a short-lived factory in Barbados to supply slaves to Caracas but it did little business and was eliminated in 1719.

Jamaica after the declaration of peace, but the news that the *asiento* would be managed from the island raised them again—to nearly £40 per slave—as traders anticipated the demands of the Company would engross the island’s supply.<sup>104</sup>

The normally fractious Jamaican Assembly wasted little time in beginning a united offensive against the unwelcome monopolistic newcomers. For over twenty years, the island had maintained a duty of 20 shillings (£1) on every slave exported from the island. But in the fall of 1715, the Assembly voted to double the duty to 40 shillings per slave. The Company’s agents in Jamaica petitioned to have slaves landed in the island for “refreshments” excluded from the duty, but were denied. The Assemblymen saw in this duty not only an opportunity to discourage the Company from settling in the island, but also of forcing outsiders to help pay off the island’s substantial debts. When the Company complained in London, the island’s agents countered that there were many slave traders in the Assembly who were equally liable to lose by the Act. This defense joined with the uncertainty of events in the island during the Hamilton crisis led the Board of Trade to decline to taking action.<sup>105</sup>

In response, the Court of Directors ordered their Jamaican agents to ensure that “none of the Company’s negroes come within Charles Fort or any other place on the Island of Jamaica that is within the reach of the Law for imposing the said Duties.”<sup>106</sup> But those orders were impossible to reconcile with the need to land and rest the captives. Furthermore, the Jamaican Assembly again passed laws in 1716 and 1717 imposing a duty on slaves exported from Jamaica

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<sup>104</sup> Extract of a letter to Mr. Thomas Onslow from Mr. Bowes dated Jamaica, August, 1716, CO 137/12, TNA; and Zahedieh, “Commerce and Conflict: Jamaica and the War of the Spanish Succession,” 86, fn. 73.

<sup>105</sup> Minutes of the Assembly of Jamaica, December 7, December 20, and December 21, 1715, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 157, 159-160; Petition of John Morris and Edward Pratter, December 1, 1715; James Bateman to Earl of Stanhope, February 28, 1715/16; and Francis March, John Carver, Ezekiel Gomerall, and N. Herring to Board of Trade, March 8, 1715/16, CO 137/11, TNA; Board of Trade to James Stanhope, March 9, 1715/16, CO 137/46, TNA; Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, February 27, 1715/16, Add Ms 25550, BL; and Memorial to James Stanhope, February 28, 1715/16, Add MS 25555, BL.

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, March 15, 1715/16, Add Ms 25550, BL.

“by way of merchandise.” These bills did lower the duty to only 20 shillings per slave exported, but in a pure example of economic protectionism levied an additional 20 shilling duty on those exported by the South Sea Company. They also proclaimed that if a vessel so much as came in sight of Jamaica it owed the duty. In the months following the passage of the 1716 Act, the Company reported that it was charged over £5,000 sterling.<sup>107</sup>

These discriminatory duties were strongly supported by Jamaica’s new governor Sir Nicholas Lawes. He had been born in Jamaica, and first introduced coffee cultivation to the island on one of his sugar estates. In defending the duty, Lawes argued that “planting is the mother of trade and negroes the support of planting.” Since the *asiento* carried away the healthiest slaves, leaving “old, sickly, and decrepit, or what are called refuse” Africans for the planters, it therefore caused manifest damage to both the island and Britain. Furthermore, the island’s government must be supported with the Assembly, “like Parliament,” finding the best means of doing so. If the profits of the *asiento*, supposedly of such great benefit to the nation, were insufficient to pay the duty “then it may be supposed the negroes employed on our plantations are of greater advantage to this Kingdom than selling them to the Spaniard.”<sup>108</sup>

The Company again asked the King to annul the laws and this time the Company’s appeal met with more sympathy.<sup>109</sup> The Privy Council determined that “it cannot be reasonable that [the Jamaicans] should lay a tax upon negroes landed there by the South Sea Company for refreshment, and much less on such as do only put into their harbor for wood and water.” The laws were also condemned as clearly prejudicial to non-Jamaican British subjects. The Privy

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<sup>107</sup> Minutes of the Assembly of Jamaica, September 26 and October 2, 1716, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 204 and 207; “An Act for continuing an Act entitled an Act to impose duties on several commodities to defray ye extraordinary charges of the Government & applying ye same to several uses,” August 29, 1717; and Extract of a letter from the South Sea Company agents at Jamaica, October 19, 1717, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>108</sup> Memorial of Sir Nicholas Lawes, 1717, CO 137/12, TNA. Lawes also achieved fame as being the judge at the trial of the pirates "Calico Jack" Rackham, Anne Bonny, and Mary Read.

<sup>109</sup> Humble Petition of the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company, 1717, CO 137/12, TNA.

Council not only repealed the Act, but issued orders to Lawes that in the future such duties were to be levied only on slaves purchased in Jamaica to be re-exported.<sup>110</sup>

But such orders had little impact on Jamaica's legislative hostility to the Company. For as one member of the Council boasted to the *asiento*'s Jamaican agents, though the Company "might have interest enough to prevent any Act of this island passing at home; yet as soon as one was rejected they could make another, which would remain good till the arrival of advice that the same was rejected."<sup>111</sup> And such would prove to be the case for the next two decades.

Despite this, the South Sea Company gamely began the process of exporting slaves to Spanish America. Two factories were established in Cuba: one at Havana and another at Santiago de Cuba. The Havana factory was to have a staff including a chief factor, an accountant, and a storekeeper. However, initially it consisted of only one factor—Captain William Farril.<sup>112</sup> The Santiago factory was smaller and established to relieve some of the burden from the Havana factory in supplying the entire island and, more importantly, to keep an eye on the contraband trade that flourished along the eastern Cuban coast.<sup>113</sup> Its lack of independence, as well as eastern Cuba's close ties with the north coast of South America, is evidenced by the fact that it was manned by two subordinate agents assigned there from the staff at the Cartagena factory.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Minutes of Privy Council, January 9, 1717/18, Add Ms 25562, BL; and Order in Council, January 9, 1717/18, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>111</sup> Extracts of Letters from Messrs. Thompson, Pratter & Hazelwood to Court of Directors, August 20, 1717, CO 137/12, TNA.

<sup>112</sup> Minutes of the General Court, October 28, 1713, Add Ms 25495, BL; Court of Directors to Messrs. Thompson, Pratter, and Hazelwood, February 6, 1716, Add Ms 25563, BL; and Minutes of the Court of Directors, January 9, 1717/18, Add Ms 25497, BL. For comparison, the Cartagena factory consisted of a chief factor, two under factors, an accountant, a warehouse keeper, and a surgeon.

<sup>113</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 60.

<sup>114</sup> Minutes of the General Court, July 10, 1717, Add Ms 24597, BL.

Once settled, the factors turned to the business that had brought them there: the sale of African captives. The *asiento* specified that every *pieza de India* imported by the South Sea Company was to pay a duty of 33 1/3 pesos to the Spanish treasury, which, along with the costs of the Company's infrastructure, led to very high slave prices.<sup>115</sup> In Cuba, the price of an adult male slave was set at 266 pesos in Havana and 239 in Santiago de Cuba; the equivalent in Havana prices of twelve teams of oxen, a hundred cowhides, fifteen hundred pounds of low-grade tobacco, or a year's wages for a common laborer.<sup>116</sup> The relative shortage of currency in Cuba meant that the factors were often forced to take agricultural produce in return; a practice allowed by the *asiento* but frowned on by the Company's Directors.<sup>117</sup> For example, in 1716, a ship reached London from Havana carrying on the Company's behalf twenty thousand pieces of eight, thirty-two tons of logwood, and seventy bags of snuff.<sup>118</sup>

The Company's slave trading operations swiftly proved a disappointment, however. Despite optimistic reports from Farril that there was an annual demand for over a thousand slaves from Cubans who "had been obliged to abandon their sugar works and betake themselves to the planting tobacco by reason fewer negroes were required for tobacco than for sugar," the Havana factory paid duties on only 1,418 slaves in its first four years of operation.<sup>119</sup> In the same period, Santiago de Cuba received as few as 217.<sup>120</sup> Overall, in its first four years of operation,

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<sup>115</sup> *The Assiento*, Article 2.

<sup>116</sup> Prices varied considerably between factories. In 1716, for example, the average price of an adult male slave was only 146 pesos at the Cartagena factory. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 123; and McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 44.

<sup>117</sup> *The Assiento*, Article 10.

<sup>118</sup> Minutes of the General Court, July 19, 1716, Add Ms 25496, BL; and Minutes of the General Court, May 27, 1719, Add Ms 25498, BL.

<sup>119</sup> The annual totals for slaves reaching Havana by year were 238 in 1715, 365 in 1716, 467 in 1717, and 349 in 1718. Directors to William Farril, April 30, 1718, and Directors to Dudley Woodbridge, May 8, 1718, Add Ms 25563, BL; and Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 106, table 15.

<sup>120</sup> This estimate is assembled from: "Account of negroes sent to the Spanish West Indies from the island of Jamaica since the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1716 the time when the Act took place as the same was extracted out of the Company's letter & accounts for which duties have been demanded," Add Ms 25555, BL; Court of Directors to



the South Sea Company forcibly shipped over eleven thousand captives to Spanish America, two-thirds of whom were destined for Portobello and Buenos Aires.<sup>121</sup> Yet, in that span the Company was contractually obligated to have delivered 19,200 *piezas de india*. It was clearly already falling far behind its obligations.

Cubans, it turns out, had other options when acquiring enslaved laborers: smugglers. In 1718, the Company's directors complained that over three thousand slaves had been illegally introduced to Spanish lands since the *asiento* took effect, barely seven hundred of whom had been seized. In truth, the number was far higher, for Jamaican traders exported over eight thousand African captives in that period. Even those Spanish colonists who had been caught with illicitly imported captives had little to fear, for the normal policy was that, rather than arrest, they were compelled to pay an *indulto*—legal forgiveness for past lawbreaking received—of a hundred pesos for every captive. While a boon to colonial treasuries, this policy did little to discourage the future purchase of smuggled Africans for, even with the fine, *negros de mala entrada*, as they were known, were considerably cheaper than those sold in the factory.<sup>122</sup> The difficulties faced by Farril and the other Company factors were exacerbated by the fact that, upon learning of illegally imported captives, they were obliged to receive permission from the Governor before pursuing them, by which time the captives were often gone. Even when illegal shipments were seized the Company had cause for complaint. By the *asiento*'s terms, any illegally imported captives seized by authorities were to be sold by the Company and counted among the quota the Company was obligated to provide. Often however, Spanish officials

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Messrs. Thompson, Pratter, and Hazelwood, February 6, 1716; and Court of Directors to John Cumberlege and Peter Walsh, October 31, 1717, Add Ms 25563, BL.

<sup>121</sup> 11,075 slaves in total were shipped to the Company's factories in this period with the Portobello factory receiving 3,738 and the Buenos Aires factory receiving 3,165 slaves. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, chap. 6.

<sup>122</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 93, table 8. For an example of an *indulto*, see: "Cuenta de venta de ciento y quince negros esclavos indultados desde febrero de 1717 a 30 de agosto de 1718 por cuenta de la Real Compañía del Asiento de Inglaterra," Contaduría, 266, AGI.

ignored this in favor of their own profit. When a *guardacosta* seized a smuggler off Panama carrying nearly two hundred Africans “belonging chiefly to the Jews of Jamaica,” for example, the captors sold the captives without paying the required duty on them or presenting them to the Company’s factors.<sup>123</sup>

The Cuban town of Puerto Príncipe was particularly infamous as a major haven for illicit trade. When news of a large group of illicitly introduced slaves there reached Farril, he appointed a Cuban “of the best estate and fairest character” to journey to Puerto Príncipe to oversee the seizure of any smuggled slaves and determine how many had already been introduced. But his deputy was violently prevented from fulfilling his task by Puerto Príncipe’s residents who threatened that if he attempted to seize any slaves or disturb the contrabandists “they would hang him and his power on the tallest tree.”<sup>124</sup>

The Spanish imposition of a tobacco monopoly in Cuba also caused difficulties for Farril. When the royal orders to erect the *estanco* (state monopoly) reached Havana in the early summer of 1717 officials informed the factor that it was “death and confiscation of goods to any person who should export that commodity except those concerned for his Catholic Majesty.”<sup>125</sup>

Fortunately, for the South Sea Company, and even more so for Farril personally, Spain’s Cuban subjects were not prepared to quietly accept the imposition of the monopoly.<sup>126</sup> When the monopoly’s officials arrived in Cuba, they upended the traditional system of tobacco purchasing

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<sup>123</sup> *The Assiento*, Article 2; and Court of Directors to Mr. Bowles, June 6, 1717, Add Ms 25563, BL. In a similar episode that same year, the factors at Portobello discovered that a smuggler had landed slaves destined for Peru. The factors attempted to open an official investigation, but those Spaniards interested in the slaves bribed the governor with 2,500 pieces of eight and he ordered the matter be dropped.

<sup>124</sup> “A State of the Difficulties which the South Sea Company labor under and in which they pray to be redressed,” September 24, 1718, Add Ms 25555, BL.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> This account of the *veguero* revolts draws on: on Cosner, *Golden Leaf*, 69-75; Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, 89-95; Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 45-56; and Rivero Muñiz, *Las tres sediciones de los veyeros*, 23-41.

in which independent traders paid *vegueros* for their crops in advance; announcing that they would only pay tobacco growers when they delivered the dried leaf at late summer fairs, forcing farmers to self-finance production. Furthermore, the monopolists were ill-prepared for the enterprise, for they brought from Europe only a hundred thousand pesos' worth of goods to exchange for tobacco when hoped-for annual production was to be worth seven times that.

Cuban farmers protested and an appeal to halt, at least temporarily, the monopoly's operation was presented by members of the clergy on behalf of the *vegueros* to officials in Havana. But the petition was perfunctorily denied by Havana's ruling council. Two weeks later, several hundred *vegueros* armed with machetes and a few firearms gathered south of the city and marched north. Encircling the capitol, they entered the city to cries of "Long live Philip V and death to bad government!"<sup>127</sup> The still poorly trained and disorganized garrison offered no opposition, and the rebels swiftly confronted Governor Vicente de Raja. The *vegueros* demanded the Governor renounce the monopoly and in fear of his life, he did so. Shortly afterwards, Raja and four other monopoly officials were unceremoniously shipped back to Spain by the victorious Cubans.<sup>128</sup>

When news of the uprising reached Madrid, a new governor—Brigadier General Gregorio Guazo Calderón—was swiftly dispatched along with a thousand troops to Havana, though he did not reach the island until June 1718. Calderón treated the rebels leniently, however, offering a general pardon to the *vegueros*. While he reinstated the monopoly, he also insisted that its officials pay for the tobacco in advance and that they have sufficient specie on

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<sup>127</sup> "Viva Felipe V y muera el mal gobierno!" Quoted in: Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 49.

<sup>128</sup> As the historian Levi Marrero commented, this was the first time in Cuban history that the highest representative of the imperial regime was forced out of office by colonists: "Por primera vez en la historia cubana, el máximo representante del régimen colonial era expulsado por la rebeldía popular." *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 50.

hand to pay for the entire crop. Calderón also arrested a number of members of Havana's oligarchy, including several members of the city council, for supposedly instigating the rebellion. Five of the council members were sentenced to prison in Spain, but upon arrival in Madrid all were pardoned and returned to Havana. Tensions nevertheless remained high and the *vegueros* revolted once more in June 1720. Although the reinforced military garrison prevented the rebels from entering the city, the insurgents dammed the aqueduct that provided water to Havana. Calderón was forced to concede that after the *estanco* had met its needs farmers could sell the remainder of their crop on the open market. In effect, the monopoly was no more. It merely had the right of first purchase.

In both Cuba and Jamaica, the monopolies that officials expected would reorient regional inter-imperial trading were met with extreme hostility and resistance by colonists. In Cuba, the two *veguero* revolts had deposed a governor and all but destroyed the tobacco monopoly. While in Jamaica, with Hamilton's arrest, colonial elites imposed harsh protectionist measures against the South Sea Company. The Company also found its operations hampered by Spanish-Americans continued commitment to illicit trade. Although both monopolies still legally survived, events in Europe in 1718 would doom them both.

### **The War of the Quadruple Alliance**

A major motive for Calderón's leniency upon his arrival was the rapidly deteriorating diplomatic situation in Europe. Spain's new rulers, and especially its Italian-born Queen Elizabeth Farnese, were unreconciled to the territorial losses Spain had suffered at Utrecht. Determined to regain lost territories in Italy, in 1717 Spain invaded Sicily and Sardinia. Such were the fears that Spanish ambitions were upsetting the European balance of power, an

unprecedented Quadruple Alliance of Britain, France, Holland, and Austria formed to curtail Spanish ambitions. In August 1718, while still formally at peace the British Navy attacked and destroyed nearly the entire Spanish fleet that had been so painstakingly rebuilt by Patiño in the Mediterranean.<sup>129</sup> Spanish protests and a declaration of war swiftly followed. The renewal of open warfare proved disastrous to the remnants of the imperial reform programs. The Spanish suspended the *asiento* and seized all the South Sea Company's goods in Spanish America—a huge financial blow. At the same time, the end of the Company's trade led to a boom in Anglo-Spanish smuggling. Privateering also flourished, and many of Hamilton's former privateers used this opportunity to not only receive pardons, but to legally continue their assaults on the Spanish.

The outbreak of war proved particularly disastrous for the South Sea Company. Following the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Cape Passaro, orders were swiftly dispatched from Madrid to suspend the *asiento* and seize the factories. The Company's Directors protested that Article 40 of the *asiento* contract granted them six months following the declaration of war between the two states to peacefully remove all their goods and employees from Spanish America, but their complaints were ignored.<sup>130</sup> By the Company's reckoning, goods and slaves valued at over 1,400,000 pesos (£333,000 sterling) were seized.<sup>131</sup> All the Directors could do was order their agents in Jamaica to sell what slaves they had on hand to prevent further losses.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> War was not formally declared until December. The conflict has received little attention from scholars, but two overviews of the war's origins and course can be found in: Kuethe and Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century*, chap. 1; and Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire* (New York, NY: Allen Lane, 2007), chap. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 21, 1718/19, Add Ms 25551, BL; Unknown to Sir James Bateman, December 27, 1718, Add Ms 25562, BL.

<sup>131</sup> Minutes of Proceedings of the General Court, April 10, 1734, Add Ms 25544, BL.

<sup>132</sup> Court of Directors to Dudley Woodbridge, September 25, 1718; and to Messrs. Pratter and Hazelwood, September 25, 1718, Add Ms 25563, BL. See also: "The Whole Proceedings of Captain Dennis' Expedition to the Governor of the Havana; being a Memorial or Journal of what occurrences happened during his stay there," CO 137/13, TNA.

The news of war was met with great excitement in Jamaica when it arrived in February 1719, and Governor Lawes swiftly began issuing letters of marque.<sup>133</sup> The conflict also provided an opportunity to re-purpose the Anglo-American pirates infesting the Caribbean. Spurred by the need for seamen to man warships and privateers, in the fall of 1718 King George I offered a general pardon to all pirates who surrendered within six months. Hamilton's former privateersmen, including Henry Jennings, Leigh Ashworth, Benjamin Hornigold, and many of their fellows, had never desired to sever all bonds of legality and eagerly accepted. Many then immediately took new commissions to once again legally hunt the Spanish.<sup>134</sup> Jennings operated as a privateer in his trusty *Bersheba*, capturing at least three Spanish vessels off Veracruz and retiring to Bermuda with his wealth.<sup>135</sup> His compatriot and sometimes rival Benjamin Hornigold was not as lucky. Hornigold also operated a privateer out of Jamaica, but in the spring of 1719 his vessel was captured by Spanish warships off Havana, and he died either in the engagement or in a Spanish prison.<sup>136</sup> Two of their comrades—Nicholas Browne and Christopher Winter—took a different route, however. Leaving the Bahamas, they accepted commissions from the *alcaldes* of Trinidad and began stalking their former countrymen. When, after the war, British officials demanded that the pair be extradited as pirates, Spanish officials refused, claiming they were

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<sup>133</sup> *Jamaica Courant*, February 11, 1718; and Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, March 24, 1718/19, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>134</sup> Woodes Rogers to James Craggs, December 24, 1718, CO 23/13, TNA; "A list of Spanish Prisoners sent in since May 7, 1719," Vernon-Wager Manuscripts, Library of Congress, Washington D.C; and Johnson, *A general history of the Pyrates*, 35. Upon his return to Jamaica in 1719, Jennings was briefly arrested before being released, and his bond for his original 1715 commission returned to him, Minutes of Council, November 15, and October 27, 1719, 1B/5/3/9, JNA.

<sup>135</sup> "Shipping News, New York, October 10," *Boston Gazette*, October 17, 1720; "New York Dispatch, August 15," *American Weekly Mercury*, August 18, 1720; and "New York Dispatch, October 23," *American Weekly Mercury*, October 19, 1721.

<sup>136</sup> Woodard, *Republic of Pirates*, 314.

now Spanish subjects and had been baptized into the Catholic faith. The Jamaican Assembly then offered a £500 reward for their heads.<sup>137</sup>

Although Jamaicans celebrated the outbreak of war for not only removing the South Sea Company but also greatly reducing the number of attacks on their shipping, one concern remained—the lack of the “indulgence as was shown to our own subjects [in] the last war which permitted them to trade with the Spaniard.” This absence caused one Jamaican merchant to lament that “the war so much desired here is like to be of no advantage to us.”<sup>138</sup>

The lack of formal legal authorization from Parliament may have slowed Jamaica’s illicit trade with Spanish America, but it did not stop it.<sup>139</sup> This is evident from a remarkable diary written by the Spaniard Don Antonio de Cordayre. De Codayre’s ship *la Señora de la Candelaria* was carrying cacao from Venezuela to Veracruz when it was captured by a Jamaican privateer in December 1718, and he spent ten months as a prisoner in Kingston. During his time there he recorded as much as he could of the island, its defenses, and the vessels, entering and leaving port. He also recorded reports of the losses experienced by Jamaican smugglers to Spanish privateers. And although he did not write every day, his account gives clear evidence of the scale of the contraband trade between Jamaica and Spanish America.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Hieronimo de Fuentes and Benito Alfonso del Manzano to Nicholas Lawes, February 20, 1720, reproduced in Johnson, *A general history of the Pyrates*, 43.

<sup>138</sup> Petition of merchants and traders of Jamaica, Minutes of Council, May 19, 1719, 1B/5/3/9, JNA; Extract of a letter from John Kelly, April 30, 1719, CO 137/13, TNA; and Extract of a letter from Lewis Galdy to Aaron Lamego, March 24, 1719, CO 137/46, TNA. Similar concerns were raised in: Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, March 24, 1718/19, CO 137/13, TNA; Petition of the Merchants of London trading to Jamaica, n.d.; Extract of a letter from Isaac Bravo to John Mendes da Costa, March 23, 1718/19; Extract of a letter from Charles Alcroft to William Bignell, March 30, 1718; and Extract of a letter from Moses Lamego to Aaron Lamego, March 23, 1718/19, CO 137/46, TNA.

<sup>139</sup> Edmund Kelly, Jamaica’s Attorney General, provided some legal cover for Anglo-Spanish trade by citing the “American Act” passed during the War of the Spanish Succession as continuing in effect, Minutes of Council, July 27, 1719, 1B/5/3/9, JNA.

<sup>140</sup> “Diario de la fragata nombrada *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria* de mi cargo que salió de la Provincia de Caracas cargada de cacao para la puerto de la Veracruz,” Santo Domingo, 359, AGI.

The diary demonstrates that Cuba was increasingly the most popular destination for Jamaican smugglers, rather than Portobello or elsewhere on the mainland. De Cordayre also took note of what goods were being exchanged. Mules were frequently mentioned as arriving from Cuba; one vessel returned from Puerto Príncipe with eighty-five animals. Another smuggler returned from Portobello with eighty thousand pesos (£18,000) in specie. In return, Jamaicans carried textiles and slaves to their Spanish customers.<sup>141</sup> In 1719 and 1720 Jamaicans exported more than four thousand captives, primarily to Spanish America, and of those, most were likely sold in Cuba (see **Appendix B**).

**Figure 2**  
Destinations of Jamaican Smuggling vessels, January-September, 1719

Destination	Exited	Entered	Captured	Total by Location
“Cuba”	3	37	-	40
Puerto Príncipe	10	9	-	19
Portobello	14	2	11	27
Rio de la Hacha	4	11	-	15
Santo Domingo	-	1	-	1
Truxillo	3	-	3	6
Unknown	2	2	-	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>112</b>

Source: “Diario de la fragata nombrada *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria* de mi cargo que salió de la Provincia de Caracas cargada de Cacao para la Puerto de la Veracruz,” Santo Domingo, 359, AGI.

Note: Vera Lee Brown states that a copy of de Cordayre’s diary held in the Archivo General de Simancas, Estado, 7607 records 201 smuggling vessels to Spanish shores including 143 to Cuba in “Contraband Trade: A Factor in the Decline of Spain’s American Empire,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 12 (1932): 182, but I have not personally examined this document.

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<sup>141</sup> Entries for March 12, April 14, and September 7, 1718, in “Diario de la fragata nombrada *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria*,” Santo Domingo, 359, AGI.



The diary also makes clear the importance of slavery in the wartime economy, and the ruthlessness with which Anglo- and Spanish-Americans were willing to go to acquire slaves. The diary recounts several raids on Jamaica by Cuban privateers who landed men at night to steal slaves. Perhaps even more ominously, he also witnessed more than sixty Indians and free people of color taken from captured Spanish vessels sold as slaves in Kingston.<sup>142</sup>

One Anglo-American trader who did particularly well from the war was William Farril. Farril was adept at taking advantage of a crisis. When, during the 1717 tobacco revolt, a Jamaican smuggler arrived off Havana, Farril promptly purchased 127 captive Africans from him and resold them on the Company's behalf. Or at least that was the narrative the factor presented to the *asiento*'s Directors in London. But he refused to provide them with his accounts or the factory's journal and it seems likely that Farril was conducting considerable private trade on his own behalf.<sup>143</sup> During the War of the Quadruple Alliance, Farril, or Ricardo O'Farril as he was known to the Spanish, received special permission from Governor Calderón to export Cuban tobacco to Jamaica in return for seven hundred barrels of badly needed flour.<sup>144</sup> By the time peace was restored in 1721, the factor had acquired enough wealth to purchase 236 slaves in Jamaica on his own account, as well as two sugar mills near Havana. Farril had also cultivated contacts among Havana's elite; marrying the daughter of Bartolomé de Arriola y Valdespino, the head of the Royal Treasury and founder of Havana's shipyard.

In 1721 he petitioned Philip V to be naturalized a Spanish citizen and a *vecino* of Havana; stressing his Irish background and Catholic faith. His petition was granted by a Royal *cedula* in

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<sup>142</sup> "...y hasta ahora de esta día tengo visto vender desde que estoy aquí más de 60 personas entre negros, mulattos, y indios," September 6, 1718, "Diario de la fragata nombrada *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria*," Santo Domingo, 359, AGI. See also: entries of May 14, June 8, 18, 28, July 2, 13, 27, August 21, 23, and September 5.

<sup>143</sup> Court of Directors to Thompson, Pratter & Hazelwood, February 2, 1717/18; and Court of Directors to William Farril, June 5, 1718, Add MS 25563, BL.

<sup>144</sup> Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, 107.

1723.<sup>145</sup> By that time Farril had been summarily dismissed from the Company's service for his irregular accounting and for his marriage, since all factors were expressly prohibited from marrying Spaniards.<sup>146</sup> Farrill nevertheless effectively parlayed his role as *asiento* factor into wealth and prestige in Havana, and by the end of the century his grandchildren would be among "the most powerful and influential" families in the island.<sup>147</sup>

When the War of the Quadruple Alliance ended in the spring of 1720 in humiliating defeat for Spain, it also ended many of the reforms enacted so confidently in both Madrid and London. In Spain, Cardinal Giulio Alberoni, the chief architect of reform, was ordered into exile. Cuba's tobacco monopoly, although technically surviving Alberoni's fall, had been reduced to a hollow shell and was eliminated altogether following a third revolt by the *vegueros* in 1723. Cuba's tobacco growers were once again free to sell on the open market, which frequently meant illegally to foreigners. The shipyard ordered erected in Havana had not constructed a single vessel by the time of Alberoni's fall. The only Cuban reform that outlasted the Cardinal was the restructuring of Havana's permanent garrison.<sup>148</sup> The War of the Quadruple Alliance had also destroyed the South Sea Company's already severely hampered trade with Spanish America; freeing Jamaican traders to recapture the Spanish-American market the Company had sought to

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<sup>145</sup> Petición de Don Ricardo O'Farril, June, 1721; and Gregorio Guazo y Calderón to the Council of the Indies, June 28, 1721, Santo Domingo, 378, BL.

<sup>146</sup> Minutes of the Court of Directors, July 19 and September 12, 1721, Add Ms 25551, BL. The regulations forbidding factor's marriage to Spaniards or any Catholic can be found in "Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the Company of Merchants of Great Britain Trading to the South Seas and other parts of America and for Encouraging the Fishery to Mr. Richard Farril, Mr. Wargent Nicholson Factors and Mr. John Garrard Writer for the said Company at the Havana," South Sea House, June 12, 1718, Add Ms 25563, BL.

<sup>147</sup> "...los O'Farrill, probablemente la familia más poderosa e influyente," Allan J. Kuethe, and José Manuel Serrano Álvarez, "La familia O'Farrill y la élite Habanera," in *Elites urbanas en Hispanoamérica*, ed. Luis Navarro García (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 2005): 203. See also: Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), 9.

<sup>148</sup> Kuethe and Andrien, *Spanish Atlantic World*, 94.

monopolize. By the time the war ended, Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists were once again firmly in control of the regional inter-imperial economy.

### Conclusion

The Treaty of the Hague concluded in 1720 officially restored peace to the Americas on the footing of the status quo *ante bellum*, but in its wake imperial officials in London and Madrid recognized that their ambitious programs for asserting greater control over their unruly Caribbean colonists had failed. In both Cuba and Jamaica, colonists remained the dominant voice in determining the extent to which their communities obeyed imperial decrees. And they would generally do so only when it was in their own interest.

In Cuba, popular uprisings had put a swift end to the Real Factoría de Tabacos. Local elites in Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad, and Puerto Príncipe continued to control their local economies—and their relations with foreign neighbors. Illicit trade flourished. In response, Spanish officials throughout the Caribbean issued *guardacosta* commission with little oversight. Many officials were investors in the corsairs themselves, giving them little incentive to closely monitor the legality of their seizures. *Guardacosta* crewmen boasted to their captives that this was “the time of their harvest.”<sup>149</sup> And they were right, for in the two decades following 1720 at least 231 Anglo-American vessels would become their prey (see **Appendix C**). At the same time, however, Spanish officials, angered by the repeated revolts by *vegueros*, were increasingly sympathetic to the calls by Cuban elites to foster a sugar industry in the island, which they believed would encourage loyalty and dependence on Spain.

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<sup>149</sup> Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, August 24, 1720, CO 137/13, TNA.

In Jamaica, Lord Archibald Hamilton's tenure had left the colony as fractious and independent as ever.<sup>150</sup> The island's Assembly continued to levy discriminatory duties on the South Sea Company and assert their rights and privileges as being on par with those of Parliament, particularly in regards to finance. However, despite the Assembly's triumph over imperial officialdom, difficult times for the island lay ahead. Beginning in 1720, the price of sugar began a two-decade slump, greatly depressing the Jamaican economy. At the same time, the island's white colonists began a bitter and extended struggle with Jamaica's maroons—settlements of free Africans and runaways from slavery—further injuring the island's economy. In fact, one of the many reasons Jamaicans offered in defense of the duties on the South Sea Company was the island's desperate need for revenue to confront these crises.

The one partial exception to the failures of the post-Utrecht reforms was the South Sea Company, whose *asiento* was reinstated with the peace. The Company's agents returned to their factories, though Spain adamantly refused to restore the effects and captives it had seized in 1718.<sup>151</sup> But the South Sea Company had already proven a disappointment, not only to its investors, but to officials in London as well. Not once had it fulfilled its obligation to provide 4,800 *piezas de india* in a singly year and that trend would continue. In the nearly three decades the Company held the *asiento*, there was not a single year that it would meet its quota. The Company fell into further ill repute among investors and officials following the Directors'

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<sup>150</sup> Hamilton himself escaped any censure or penalty for his actions as governor. Upon his return to London in 1716 he swiftly marshalled a large body of influential supports; submitting memorials and affidavits of his innocence and accusing his Jamaican enemies of lies and corruption. Thanks to his influential patrons, Hamilton was cleared of all wrongdoing by the Board of Trade in 1718. He was reelected to Parliament that same year, and even named a Lord of the Admiralty in 1729. Hamilton, *Answer to an Anonymous Libel*; and Cruickshanks, and Handley, ed., "Member Biography: Lord Archibald Hamilton."

However, the Jamaican Assembly doggedly refused to repay the former governor for the funds he had forwarded for public use during his time in office despite repeated orders from the Privy Council to do so. Thomas Bernard to Board of Trade, February 4, 1719/20, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>151</sup> Minutes of the General Court, April 28, 1729, Add Ms 25499, BL.

financially catastrophic scheme to inflate its stock value, the infamous South Sea Bubble.

Although the Company would continue its trading operations for another two decades, it never came near to realizing the profits that had so confidently been predicted upon its founding.

In the years after 1720, the Caribbean remained a fundamentally violent and unstable international region. Contraband trade between British, Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies continued to flourish. And although Anglo-American piracy suffered a mortal blow with the acceptance of pardons by many of its most prominent and successful members in 1718, a number of the most infamous marauders would continue their raids well into the 1720s. And seemingly everywhere Spanish *guardacostas* lurked.

## Chapter 2

### A Contraband World, 1710-1740

By 1720 the efforts by the ministries in London and Madrid to enforce their control over their unruly West Indian colonies and subsume them into mercantilist structures had failed spectacularly. In both Jamaican and Cuba, governors had been overthrown and returned to Europe in chains for attempting to enforce unpopular imperial decrees. The transnational world of trade and plunder that defined the Anglo-Spanish relationship in the Americas stubbornly refused to disappear; it was merely joined by the arrival of the South Sea Company as yet another avenue of commercial exchange. Anglo-American pirates and Spanish *guardacostas* continued to roam the Caribbean, attacking ships at will. And smuggling continued unabated, with contraband traders crisscrossing the waters between every island and empire.

Illicit trade was the largest and most important of the three main branches of Anglo-Spanish “commerce” that bound Jamaica to Cuba and the rest of Spanish America. Smuggling played a vital role throughout the Americas, but especially in those lands claimed by Castile. And this was particularly true in Cuba. With a population of around 50,000 in 1700, the largest island in the Antilles witnessed its population triple in the next half century, yet was still woefully underserved by the Spanish Empire’s commercial system. Occasional ships would be detached from the trade fleets to visit, but these were relatively rare—only thirty-three ships arrived in Havana from Europe between 1713 and 1738.<sup>1</sup> As a result, illicit trade was the primary

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<sup>1</sup> John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 35 and 195.

means by which Cubans could access the broader Atlantic economy, providing an export market for the island's agricultural products as well as the bulk of the consumer goods its colonists demanded and the slave labor they increasingly depended on.

Although Cubans traded with French, Dutch, and Anglo-Jamaican merchants, it was the last group with whom they forged the closest bonds. Jamaica and Cuba were barely a day's sail apart, but there was much more to this relationship than just geographic proximity. The British colony was a major trading entrepôt and the heart of Britain's commercial penetration of Spanish America. Kingston harbor sheltered hundreds of vessels that were loaded with European goods—particularly textiles—and African captives for re-export by the island's merchants. Those ships returned from their clandestine voyages bearing hundreds of thousands of pounds of precious metals, providing a source of hard specie that flowed from the island both to Europe and throughout Britain's American empire. But Cuba, despite its lack of gold and silver mines, was Jamaica's most important foreign trading partner, for the Spanish island provided a vital commodity to the British colony: the humble mule. These hardy animals performed crucial work on plantations in powering the mills that ground sugarcane and in transporting refined sugar across Jamaica's mountainous terrain to the coast for shipment to Europe. As Jamaica's sugar industry grew in the first half of the 1700s, so its ties to Cuba became ever stronger. Spanish plunder provided the capital to erect the island's sugar plantations in the seventeenth-century, but in the eighteenth-century trade with Spanish America—and especially Cuba—made the functioning of those estates possible.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Nuala Zahedieh, "Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development in Early English Jamaica, 1655-89," *The Economic History Review* 39:2 (1986): 205-222.

However, despite its scale and importance to both islands, illicit inter-imperial trade was not without considerable risks. *Guardacostas* and Spanish troops were a constant threat; they forced smugglers to sail heavily armed or under naval escort—either of which added significantly to a voyage’s costs. Additionally, while lucrative, the relationships created by clandestine commerce were, by their very nature, uncertain and short-term. Neither a Jamaican trader or a Cuban merchant could be sure their foreign counterpart would turn on them or that they would ever see one another again once the smuggler’s ship disappeared over the horizon. This made it difficult to fully trust one’s counterpart or offer credit. As a result, sales were immediate and limited by what Spanish customers would purchase on the spot. At the same time, the sheer number of smugglers hoping to trade meant that competition for sales was fierce—a fact that Cubans took full advantage of. Thus, while central to the economies and societies of the region, illicit trade was never a fully reliable investment.

To fully unravel the workings and impact of this transnational economy in the first half of the eighteenth-century this chapter reveals how the “Sloop Trade,” as it was known, was conducted. It traces smuggling voyages from their initial organization in Jamaica to the actual exchange on the Cuban coast and the vessel’s return to the British colony. The details of the clandestine economy’s operation are important for understanding how by the early decades of the eighteenth century contraband trade had become such a sizeable and stable industry that it had generated a normalized system for carrying it on. In both empires, a sizeable body of merchants, sailors, and middlemen emerged who made their living from conducting inter-imperial trade. Simultaneously, the need for up to date market information spurred networks of communication both between Caribbean colonies and outward to the broader Atlantic world.



The Chapter then explores the impact of the inter-imperial economy on Jamaica and Cuba. In the latter, illicit trade was vital to the island's agricultural and ranching economy, particularly in the central and eastern portions of the island where towns such as Bayamo and Puerto Príncipe (modern-day Camagüey) organized their economies around the foreign export market. Illicitly introduced Africans such as María Josepha were increasingly important to the island's nascent sugar industry, while smuggled textiles clothed the island's free and enslaved populations. In Jamaica, Spanish coin was the primary medium of exchange and provided the specie needed to help pay the island's debts to both Britain and North America. Just as, if not more, important was the trade's role as the chief source of the mules vital to powering the island's sugar mills such as those at Worthy Park.

In both islands, the social and cultural effects of illicit trade reached broad and deep, drawing in not only wealthy merchants and planters, but also poor whites and free blacks such as Peter Bedlow and Ignacio Clara who manned the vessels carrying contraband cargoes and guided the pack trains of smuggled goods across Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains. The illicit inter-imperial economy crossed all social classes and gave shape to institutions, economies, and societies in both Jamaica and Cuba. Goods, animals, and human beings exchanged across imperial lines could be found on every plantation and in every town in both islands. The scale and importance of this trade brought together traders and consumers who constructed networks of communication, commerce, and cautious trust between individuals from two supposedly distinct and antagonistic empires.

## Organizing a Smuggling Voyage

Since the 1560s the Spanish Crown had organized its trade with its vast American holdings around an “annual” fleet system. In theory, every year two fleets would sail from Cádiz—one to Panama and the other to Veracruz—where they would exchange European manufactured goods to Spanish colonists in return for precious metals and agricultural produce. The goods sold at these annual fairs would then be distributed throughout the empire.<sup>3</sup> Almost from the beginning, however, the Seville-based commercial monopoly was unable to meet the demands of colonists either for European manufactured goods or in African captives. By the early eighteenth century, the situation had reached crisis levels. Much to the frustration of Spanish reformers, however, the international treaties signed by Spain following the War of the Spanish Succession prevented them from making substantive changes to the cumbersome fleet system. The result was the continuation of a faltering system which comprehensively failed to provide Cubans and other Spanish colonists with access to the broader Atlantic economy.

Anglo-American merchants were eager to fill the void left by the failures of the Iberian commercial system. By the early 1700s Jamaica lay at the center of an intricate web of inter-imperial networks that connected the island to its neighbors, centered first in Port Royal, and later in Kingston, where an array of resident Jewish, Huguenot, and Anglo-American merchants traded with Europe and to every neighboring empire. These traders, such as Benjamin Bravo, Lewis Galdy and Alexander MacFarlane, labored ceaselessly to create and maintain networks of correspondence stretching both to neighboring colonies and across the Atlantic. It was their

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<sup>3</sup> For the workings of the fleet system and its decay, see: George Robertson Dilg, “The Collapse of the Portobello Fairs: A Study in Spanish Commercial Reform, 1720-1740” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1975); Clarence Haring, *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Habsburgs* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918); Xabier Lamikiz, *Trade and Trust in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World: Spanish Merchants and their Overseas Networks* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2010); J. H. Parry, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973); and Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

ability to utilize these connections to provide the textiles and African captives desired by Spanish-American consumers that made contraband trade possible and profitable.

Almost as important as the selection of goods in determining the success of a smuggling venture was the hiring of a vessel, crew, and supercargo to conduct the trade. To meet this demand a specialized cadre of seamen such as Peter Bedlow emerged by the early 1700s, practiced and experienced in negotiating the physical and human terrain of the Spanish Coast. The role of supercargoes—agents of the owners responsible for the sale of the cargo—as translators and negotiators was key, and Jamaica’s Jewish community provided many of the best. But the Anglo-Spanish trade was never monopolized by any one group, despite Jamaicans’ fears over the South Sea Company, and always involved free Jamaicans from all levels of society as passive investors and active employees.

Until 1692, Jamaica’s contraband trade was organized primarily out of Port Royal, the largest and busiest city in English America.<sup>4</sup> Following the destruction of the city and the death of many of its inhabitants in a massive earthquake that year, the center of the island’s commerce began to shift to newly-founded Kingston. This process only accelerated during the War of the Spanish Succession when a fire destroyed much of the rebuilt Port Royal.<sup>5</sup> Jamaica’s developing sugar economy and fortuitous position vis-à-vis neighboring Spanish America drew to it a wide array of merchants and traders. Prominent among them were Sephardic Jews. Although there had been a few Portuguese Jews in Jamaica at the time of the English conquest in 1655, the true development of the island’s Jewish community began with the arrival of Dutch Sephardim in the

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<sup>4</sup> For accounts of the rise of Port Royal as a trading entrepot, see: Michael Pawson and David Buisseret, *Port Royal, Jamaica* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), particularly chap. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Wilma A. Bailey, "Kingston 1692-1845: A Colonial City" (Ph.D. diss., University of the West Indies, Mona, 1974), chaps. 3-4; and Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), chap. 1.

1660s from Brazil, Curaçao, and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> By the 1730s there were over seven hundred Jewish men and women in the island, concentrated in Kingston.<sup>7</sup> Although they did not dominate the trade to the extent their competitors often claimed, the island's Sephardic community played a prominent role in inter-imperial commerce. Of the fifty merchants petitioning Governor Nicholas Lawes to allow the Spanish trade to resume during the War of the Quadruple Alliance in 1719, thirteen were Jewish.<sup>8</sup> Among them was Benjamin Bravo who was active in inter-imperial trade for over two decades, organizing at least a half-dozen smuggling voyages in 1728 and 1729 alone.

Jewish Jamaicans were joined by a diverse array of fellow traders. Among them was a small community of French Huguenots whose most prominent member was Lewis Galdy. Born in Montpellier in 1659, Galdy emigrated to Jamaica in the 1680s. He was one of the few survivors of the Port Royal earthquake—later building the Anglican church that stands in Port Royal to this day in thanks for his deliverance. By the first decade of the 1700s, he was described by one Kingston merchant as “our chief trader” to Spanish America. He also invested in privateers, standing security for Jonathan Barnett, one of Governor Archibald Hamilton's privateers, and arranged Barnett's interview with the Governor about the privateers' true purpose.<sup>9</sup> A member of the Assembly for Port Royal and a churchwarden, Galdy remained

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<sup>6</sup> The Columbus family, which retained title to Jamaica, had married into a Portuguese noble family whose non-Spanish status granted them and their holdings immunity from the Inquisition, allowing a number of Portuguese Jews and crypto-Jews to settle safely in the island. Mordechai Arbell, *The Portuguese Jews of Jamaica* (Kingston: Canoe Press University of the West Indies, 2000), 6-7; and Benjamin Schlesinger, “The Jews of Jamaica: A Historical View,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 13:1 (1967): 46.

<sup>7</sup> The island's Jewish population owned roughly fifteen sugar plantations, despite the lack of any legal prohibitions on Jewish landholding in the island, underscoring the urban nature of the Jewish community. Benjamin Bravo to William Wood, February 17, 1735/36, CO 137/22, TNA.

<sup>8</sup> “Petition of merchants and traders of the said island in behalf of themselves and their employers in Great Britain,” Minutes of Council, May 19, 1719, 1B/5/3/9, JNA.

<sup>9</sup> Anonymous, *Articles exhibited against Lord Archibald Hamilton, late governour of Jamaica with sundry depositions and proofs relating to the same* (London: 1717), 6-8.

active in the Spanish trade his entire life.<sup>10</sup> Upon his death in 1739 at age eighty, he left nearly £15,000 Jamaican (£10,700 sterling) in goods as well as debts owed him in both Havana and Saint Domingue, testimony to the breadth of his international contacts.<sup>11</sup>

Anglo-American merchants were also highly active in the trade. One such “trader to New Spain,” Richard Lee commanded numerous voyages to Cuba in the 1730s and 1740s.<sup>12</sup> Another was the Scotsman Alexander MacFarlane, a Fellow of the Royal Society who erected Jamaica’s first observatory on the roof of his home in Kingston.<sup>13</sup> MacFarlane was heavily involved in the slave trade to Spanish America, and later emerged as a major commercial rival to Edward Manning in the 1740s.<sup>14</sup> Being active in illicit trade did not preclude one from also becoming part of the island’s sugar industry. Lewis Galdy had an estate at Green Bay, for instance, while at the time of his death Alexander MacFarlane owned four sugar estates and two cattle pens scattered throughout the island.<sup>15</sup>

Inter-imperial trade was not confined solely to private traders. Officers in the Royal Navy were also eager to profit from contraband. Particularly in the years following the Peace of Utrecht,

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<sup>10</sup> Galdy’s biography comes from his tombstone, which stands in Port Royal churchyard and is transcribed in: J. H. Lawrence ed., *Monumental Inscriptions of the British West Indies From the Earliest Date, with Genealogical and Historical Annotations, Illustrative of the Histories and Genealogies of the Seventeenth Century, the Calendars of State Papers, Peerages and Baronetages; with Engravings of the Arms of the Principal Families* (London: Chatto and Windues, 1875). For the description of him as chief trader, see: William Parke to Thomas Eyre, March 20, 1707/8, Ms 403, JNL.

<sup>11</sup> Inventory and Appraisalment of the goods and chattel of Lewis Galdy, January 5, 1739/40, 1B/11/3/20, JNA. Other prominent traders with possible French antecedents included John DuCommun and John Barjeau, both active contrabandists in the 1730s and 1740s. Edward Pratter to the Court of Directors, August 23, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, July 18, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL; and Thomas Ayscough to the Duke of Newcastle, August 15, 1735, CO 137/55, TNA.

<sup>13</sup> His astronomical instruments were donated to the University of Glasgow upon his death and became the basis for its observatory. John MacFarlane, *History of Clan MacFarlane* (Glasgow: Clan MacFarlane Society, 1922), 127.

<sup>14</sup> Francis Bright, Kingston, to Henry Bright, April 7, 1746; and Francis Bright, to Henry Bright, October 14, 1747, in Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199 and 203; and Minutes of the Assembly, April 11 and 12, 1746, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4 (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1811), 15-20.

<sup>15</sup> Will of Lewis Galdy, August 8, 1737, Will Liber 22, IRO; and Inventory and Appraisalment of the goods and chattel of Alexander MacFarlane, Esq., January 14; August 16, and n.d. 1756, 1B/11/3/36, JNA.

naval captains stationed at Jamaica frequently purchased goods and slaves and sailed on patrols that led to their hovering off Spanish American coasts. So eager were naval captains for the profits of illicit trade that, when the *Ludlow Castle* arrived in Jamaica in 1718 carrying the new Governor Sir Nicholas Lawes, within a week it had sailed again for Panama full of merchandise. The other two ships in the squadron were already on trading voyages to New Spain, leaving the island defenseless.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, naval officers' devotion to their own profits significantly weakened their ability to pursue the pirates and *guardacostas* who so bedeviled Anglo-American trade. As one contemporary dryly commented: "the taking of pirates...is but a dry business, unless they catch 'em by extraordinary good fortune, with a prize fresh in their mouths."<sup>17</sup>

All these traders were able to organize their voyages openly in Kingston, because this inter-imperial commerce, although outlawed by Spain, was *not* illegal according to British law. As long as the trade was carried on in British vessels, crewed by British crews, and did not trade in enumerated products, such as tobacco, in conformity with the Navigation Acts, the British legal system had no qualms with it.<sup>18</sup> And while the trade *was* forbidden by the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1670, which by its Eighth Article prohibited trade between the two nations' subjects in

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<sup>16</sup> Sir Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, June 21, 1718, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 188.

For example, Captain Jonathan Laws allowed the pirate Richard Taylor and his crew to escape into Portobello safely because, during the negotiations between Laws and the pirates over the possibility of a pardon, Laws had moved his vessel to a position more convenient for trading with the locals, which granted the pirates an avenue of escape. Ironically, Taylor and his men had aboard the wealth of the single most valuable prize in pirate history—the *Nossa Senhora do Cabo* (Our Lady of the Cape) which they had captured the previous year off Madagascar while it was transporting gold, uncut diamonds and church regalia belonging to the retiring viceroy of Portuguese India.

See, Duke of Portland to Board of Trade, March 4, 1723/24; Jonathan Laws to the Duke of Portland, April 24, May 5, May 6, and June 4, 1723; Petitions of the Pirates on board the *Cassandra* at Harbor of Pines near Caledonia, April 10, and April 26, 1723; Jonathan Laws to the Pirates, n.d. and May 8, 1723; Copy of a letter from Unknown to Jonathan Laws, April 14, 1723; Duke of Portland to Jonathan Laws, May 21, 1723; Jonathan Laws to the Governor of Portobello, May 5, 1723; and the President of Panama to the Duke of Portland, October 5, 1723, CO 137/14, TNA.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the Navigations Acts and their provisions, see: Lawrence A. Harper, *The English Navigation Laws: A Seventeenth-Century Experiment in Social Engineering* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1939).

the West Indies, the Ministry in London consistently refused to enforce that provision.<sup>19</sup> Instead, ministers adopted the public attitude that “a Prince cannot be responsible for any of his subjects carrying on a commerce forbidden under treaty.”<sup>20</sup> Yet in reality, they did far more than turn a blind eye to the trade, ordering colonial and naval officials to support the trade by all means possible—including the use of naval ships to convoy smugglers.

Most smuggling voyages organized in Jamaica were not outfitted by a single merchant or firm. Rather, a voyage normally had numerous investors, each consigning a set of goods or human captives to the vessel for sale. For example, when the sloop *Union* sailed for Cuba’s South Keys in 1738, seventeen individuals and partnerships were interested in the sloop’s voyage. Among them were two Jewish and thirteen Anglo-Jamaican merchants, as well as two widows.<sup>21</sup> This system of multiple investors in a single voyage allowed free whites of all social levels and employments opportunity to partake in the profits of illicit trade and helped ensure a broad base of support for it among white Jamaicans.

Whether a voyage was fitted out by one trader or many, the standard practice was to consign the goods aboard to a supercargo who was responsible for their care and sale during the

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<sup>19</sup> “Treaty between Great Britain and Spain, concluded at Madrid, July 8/18, 1670,” in Frances G. Davenport, ed., *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies*, vol. 3 (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1934), 187-96.

London officials refused to enforce the Treaty because they were enamored with the flow of bullion produced by the trade, a supply needed to supply the island nation’s trade deficits with the Baltic and Asia. For overviews of these bullion flows, see: Artur Attman, *Dutch Enterprise in the World Bullion Trade 1550-1800* (Göteborg Sweden: Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, 1983); Attman, *American Bullion in European World Trade, 1600-1800* (Göteborg: Kungl. Vetenskaps- och Vitterhets-Samhället, 1986); and Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 13:2 (2002): 391-427.

<sup>20</sup> “Considerations relating to the Navigation and Commerce of Great Britain in America, with respect to the Treaties with Spain and the Depredations committed by the Guardacostas,” January 23, 1737/38, Add Ms 9131, BL.

<sup>21</sup> “Petition of Henry Crawford, William Sinclair, Alexander Crawford, David and Alexander Sutherland, Alexander Strachan, Edward Wilson, James Woodcock and Henry Lang, Alexander Mountier, John David, Peter Bedlow, Prean & Co, James Graham, Peter and Robert Baldwin, David Bravo, Isaac Lamego, Mary Carter and Joanna Gerard,” 1738, CO 137/48, TNA.

voyage. For example, in 1743 several merchants consigned two boxes of cloth and a cask of metalwork to David Dias Arrias, the supercargo on the sloop *Exchange*, who was to sell them “on the Spanish Coast for ready money.” In return, the supercargo received five percent of the net profits of the voyage and the factor who provided the vessel and organized the voyage received twelve percent.<sup>22</sup> It was in this role that Jamaica’s Sephardim were most prominent, for the majority of supercargoes were Jewish. Their language skills were invaluable—Spanish was still the language they spoke in their homes throughout the century—and their experience on repeated trading voyages helped earn the trust of their Spanish-American counterparts. Other Jamaicans also served as supercargoes, however, learning Spanish either through experience or formal training.<sup>23</sup> James Houston, for example, learned Spanish while an employee of the South Sea Company and served as his own supercargo during his smuggling voyages in the 1740s.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps the single most important element of organizing a trading voyage was the selection of goods to carry. For not just any assortment of textiles or dry goods would do. Cubans and other Spanish colonists, like all consumers, preferred certain items to others, and knowing what their customers wanted was a key concern for Jamaican merchants since Spanish-American markets were relatively small and were easily glutted, especially when the galleons were present. A detailed knowledge of what was in demand was vital. As a result, Jamaican traders were in constant communication with both fellow contrabandists and with suppliers in England regarding what types of material were best suited for the Spanish trade.

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<sup>22</sup> David Dias Arrias vs. Matthias Philips, Alexander Campbell, and Aaron Lopes Riz, 1743, 1A/3/12, JNA; and “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica from the breaking out of the War with Spain in 1739 when the asiento contract was stop’t to the present times,” 1765, WWM/R35/1, SCL.

In the seventeenth century, Jamaican factors and supercargoes had received a much higher percentage of the proceeds, as much as fifty percent. Thomas Halls to John Aylward, November 21, 1688, C 110/52, TNA.

<sup>23</sup> In the 1770s, for example, Isaac Morales was advertising his services as a Spanish tutor in Kingston. *Supplement to the Jamaica Mercury & Kingston Weekly Advertiser* September 4, 1779, MGS/4, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

<sup>24</sup> Houston, *Dr. Houstoun's memoirs*, 306-10.



Generally, the best way to know what types of goods were in demand was to speak with other merchants about how their cargoes had sold on the coast. As the merchant William Parke commented, “to proportion colors for woolen goods at home is uncertain for ye Spaniards alter very frequently”, but “when ye ships arrive [from the coast] I shall find out both ye colors & which sorts will be first in demand.” Once a state of the market had been reported, Kingston’s merchants would then reach out to their European correspondents to fill them. David Bravo, for instance, drew on transatlantic family networks to supply his trading ventures: one brother was a merchant in London, and another in Amsterdam.<sup>25</sup> These requests could be exceptionally detailed. In another letter, Parke reported that “all or most of ye bays are shipped off & now ye commodity comes again in demand especially good yellows, light greens, light reds &c packed in single pieces and ye Spaniards love also the long ells to come in fillets as ye says & scarlets.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, another merchant described how “the blue calicoes & platillas will sell well as also the broadcloths & brown papers and French linens if can get them,” but that “no woolen goods will do” at that time.<sup>27</sup> Along with filling these orders merchants in England relayed news of events that would affect the trade in the Caribbean. One of the most important pieces of information they provided was whether or not the galleons would sail that year—and to where.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Benjamin Bravo to William Wood, February 17, 1735/36, CO 137/22, TNA. By the 1730s, Bravo himself had moved to London, leaving the management of his sugar plantation in St Andrew parish and his trading house to his nephew David Bravo, although he returned to the island to be naturalized in 1740. David Bravo continued his uncle’s trading ventures, organizing a dozen voyages to Spanish America in the 1740s. “A True and Perfect list of the names of all and every person and person s who have entitiled themselves to the benefit of the Act entitles An Act for Naturalizing such foreign Protestants and others therein mentioned as are settled or shall settle in any of his Majesty’s colonies in America from the first day of June 1740 to the first day of June 1741,” CO 137/23, TNA; and Will of Benjamin Bravo, November 16, 1742, PROB 11/735/368, TNA.

<sup>26</sup> William Parke to Thomas Eyre, March 9, 1706/7; and William Parke to John and Thomas Eyre, May 24, 1708, MS 403, JNL.

<sup>27</sup> William Halls to Thomas Brailsford, March 13, and May 21, 1689, C 110/152, TNA.

<sup>28</sup> For discussions of the importance of knowing the timing of the galleons, see: William Halls to Thomas Brailsford, May 21, 1689, C 110/152, TNA; Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, January 16, March 9,

These networks of correspondence reveal what sort of goods were smuggled into Spanish colonies. Textiles were by far the most common cargo. Linen cloth was one of the most consistently demanded items everywhere, while woolen goods seem to have been more popular on the mainland than in the Spanish Antilles.<sup>29</sup> In 1735, the sloop *Carolina* was seized by Spanish authorities near Matanzas in Cuba while carrying several of the most common varieties desired by Spanish-Americans: six bales of oznabrigs (a coarse, durable linen or cotton) totaling three thousand yards of cloth, two bales of Colchester Bays (coarsely woven woolen or cotton fabric napped to imitate felt and dyed in solid colors), one chest containing platillas (a type of white linen fabric), seventy-five pieces of Russian Duck (a fine white linen canvas), and twenty-five pieces of sailcloth.<sup>30</sup> Other popular fabrics sought by Spanish colonists included anascotes (a cross-woven cloth of combed wool, used for women's dresses and aprons), "Hollands" (a catch-all term for bleached cottons and linens originating in the Low Countries), and Rouen cottons, known for their bright coloration. Silks seem to have initially been another popular item in illicit trade, but over the course of the 1700s they declined in popularity among Jamaican cargoes—perhaps due to an increased supply from Asia via the Manila galleons. Linens remained the most common textile type throughout the period.<sup>31</sup>

Jamaica's traders generally shipped cloth rather than finished articles of clothing, the primary exception being hats. Jamaicans throughout the eighteenth century included large numbers of black and brown hats among their cargoes. Lace, particularly gold and silver lace,

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1723/24, and April 25, 1724, C 104/14, TNA; and Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, February 26, 1723/24, C 104/13, TNA.

<sup>29</sup> Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, July 17, 1723, C 104/14, TNA.

<sup>30</sup> The *Carolina* also carried 189 barrels of flour. "Autos sobre la aprehensión que en virtud de orden de la Gobernador y Capitán General se hizo desde el puerto de matanzas a una Balandrilla inglesa con la de la carga del Capitán Don Andrés Carrillo," 1735, Santo Domingo, 382, AGI.

<sup>31</sup> Robert S. DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic: Clothing, Commerce, and Colonization in the Atlantic World, 1650-1800* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), chap. 2.

was also a common item.<sup>32</sup> In terms of price, linens were generally cheapest per yard or ell (a unit of measurement for cloth that varied between countries, but in England was 45 inches), followed, in ascending order, by woolens, cottons and silks. This hierarchy remained relatively stable throughout the period, even as prices in general declined.<sup>33</sup>

Jamaicans also provided European manufactured goods to Spanish-Americans. Generally, these were “everyday” items, for when Spanish merchants sailed for America they concentrated on luxury goods which commanded higher prices in their limited cargo space.<sup>34</sup> Among the goods consigned to a supercargo by one investor, for instance, was a cask containing two gross of butcher’s knives, eight dozen pen knives, and two and a half gross “large scissors.” When he died in 1739, Lewis Galdy had in his possession, besides various textiles, “a Spanish chest [with] 31 French box locks. & ditto English brass knobs & 4 ditto ordinary hinges...and 13 chiffats, 20 dovetail hinges, with hooks,” all destined for Spanish America.<sup>35</sup>

While dry goods formed the physical bulk of smugglers’ cargoes, the most valuable items they carried were African captives. Although Jamaicans complained that the South Sea Company had “deprived the Island of its commerce, and a considerable number of its inhabitants,” the merchants of Kingston continued to export large numbers of captives to Spanish and French colonies.<sup>36</sup> In the nearly thirty years that the Company held the *asiento* it transported slightly

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<sup>32</sup> Among the goods consigned to David Dias Arrias to sell in 1742 were seventy-five hats. David Dias Arrias vs. Matthias Philips, Alexander Campbell, and Aaron Lopes Riz, 1743, 1A/3/12, JNA. For the popularity of hats, see also: Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, July 7, 1723, C 104/14, TNA.

<sup>33</sup> DuPlessis, *The Material Atlantic*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 182.

<sup>35</sup> David Dias Arrias vs. Matthias Philips, Alexander Campbell, and Aaron Lopes Riz, 1743, 1A/3/12, JNA; and Inventory and Appraisalment of the goods and chattel of Lewis Galdy, January 5, 1739/40, 1B/11/3/20, JNA.

<sup>36</sup> Franklin Knight, *Some Observations on the Asiento Trade, as it has been exercised by the South Sea Company; proving the damage which will accrue thereby to the British commerce and plantations in America, and particularly to Jamaica. To which is annexed, a sketch of the advantages of that island to Great Britain, by its annual produce, and by its situation for trade or war. By a person who resided several years at Jamaica* (London: 1728), 2.

over forty-one thousand Africans to Spanish America from Jamaica; in the same period, Jamaican merchants forcibly shipped nearly the same number from the island (**Appendix B**).<sup>37</sup> A number of the captives re-exported from Jamaica were those not deemed healthy enough for the South Sea Company's customers. Upon a slave ship's arrival in Jamaica, many of the least-healthy survivors would be purchased by speculators who attempted to restore them to health before selling them, either to Jamaica's planters or to Spanish America.<sup>38</sup>

A specialized body of seamen developed in Jamaica to transport these cargoes to Spanish America. In the early part of the century they were said to number over a thousand sailors, but their numbers fell to slightly more than half that following the Peace of Utrecht as a result of the South Sea Company diverting a sizeable fraction of inter-imperial trade into its own hands.<sup>39</sup> The commander of a smuggler had to be familiar with Spanish-American coasts in order to navigate treacherous shoals and to find the appointed places of rendezvous with his Spanish counterparts. His knowledge was valuable, and Jamaican merchants tended to form steady relations with commanders who knew their business. One such master was Peter Bedlow, captain of the *Union*, who commanded every recorded voyage organized by Benjamin Bravo and his nephew David Bravo between 1728 and 1750. When the *Union* was captured by a *guardacosta* off southern Cuba in 1738, he confessed to his captors that he "had been at Bayamo, Manzanillo and Puerto

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<sup>37</sup> In total, the South Sea Company delivered approximately 64,000 captives to Spanish America. Those not reshipped from Jamaica either were purchased in Barbados or, for the majority, delivered directly to Buenos Aires from West Africa. Colin Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 110.

<sup>38</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 6, 1736, Shelburne Papers vol. 44, CL.

<sup>39</sup> The Jamaican Assembly constantly complained of this decline, citing it as weakening the island against any potential invader. See, for instance: Unknown to Governor Robert Hunter, October 2, 1727, Add Ms 22677, BL; "The Humble Address and Representation of the Council and Assembly of this your Majesty's Island of Jamaica," in Minutes of the Assembly of Jamaica, February 9, 1731/32, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3 (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1811), 75; and "The Representation of the President, Council & Assembly of Jamaica, Spanish Town May 2, 1735," CO 137/21, TNA.

Príncipe twenty to twenty-five times and to the inhabitants of which he is well known if not better known than in Jamaica.”<sup>40</sup>

Due to the dangers of Spanish *guardacostas*, the sloops that made up the majority of smuggling vessels were “fitted out in a defensible and expensive manner” with a minimum of two dozen crewmen—and often twice that number—and an average of eight guns.<sup>41</sup> The danger of a smaller crew was made evident by the *Carolina*’s capture. When discovered by a Cuban *guardacosta* it had a crew of only eight. These men came from all over the British Atlantic; several were from London, others from the Bahamas and New York, while the ship’s boy was the captain’s slave.<sup>42</sup> To encourage the crew to fight when confronted by Spanish authorities, wages were high—nearly £3 sterling per month—and at least in some instances sailors were also allowed to carry their own small bundle of goods to sell.<sup>43</sup> These incentives made smuggling voyages a popular employment among Jamaica’s seamen. Indeed, one unlucky sailor was seized three times by Spanish authorities for smuggling within the space of two years.<sup>44</sup> However, they also added considerably to the cost of the voyage. Another major cost to investors was the high insurance premiums on smuggling voyages—normally at least eight percent.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> While imprisoned in Havana, Bedlow managed to escape onto a South Sea Company vessel and return to Jamaica, allowing him to continue to his trade. John Merewether to Peter Burrell, December 27, 1738, Shelburne Papers vol. 44; and Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to Edward Trelawney, November 29, 1739, CO 137/56, TNA.

<sup>41</sup> The figures for crew size and number of guns was calculated from Walter E. Minchinton ed., *Naval office shipping lists for Jamaica, 1683-1818* (England: EP Microform, 1976). These figures are corroborated by descriptions in: John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 6, 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44; and “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica,” 1765, WWM/R35/1, SCL.

<sup>42</sup> “Autos sobre la aprehensión...se hizo desde el puerto de matanzas a una Balandrilla inglesa,” 1735, Santo Domingo, 382, AGI.

<sup>43</sup> John Stagg, *A Concise History of the Spanish America; Containing a succinct Relations of the Discovery and Settlement of its several Colonies: A circumstantial detail of their respective situation, extent, commodities, trade, &c. And a full and clear account of the commerce with Old Spain by the Galleons, Flota, &c. As also of the Contraband Trade with the English, Dutch, French, Danes, and Portuguese* (London: 1741), 314; and “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica,” WWM/R35/1, SCL.

<sup>44</sup> Don Blas de Lezo to Charles Brown, June 24, 1739, Adm 1/232, TNA.

<sup>45</sup> “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica,” 1765, WWM/R35/1, SCL.

Once the voyage had been organized, the cargo loaded, and a crew hired, it was time to select a destination. Making this decision was a vital element for a successful voyage. Merchants had to gauge the state of the markets in the different Spanish colonies, as well as reports of patrolling *guardacostas* or other traders. Records of 592 voyages from Jamaica to Spanish America between 1710 and 1748 survive in the island's Naval Office Shipping Lists and in the Diary of Don Antonio de Cordayre. Of these, 321 specified the vessel's destination, and they reveal that Cuba was by far the most popular market for Jamaican smugglers. Despite its lack of silver and gold mines, 147 voyages sailed for the island—nearly 43% of all known Jamaican smuggling voyages. Panama, the second most popular destination, received a mere 61.<sup>46</sup>

By the eighteenth century the contraband trade operating out of Kingston and Port Royal had become so large and systematized that it was dominated by no one ethnic or religious group, but attracted investors and workers from all levels of the island's white population. Simultaneously, networks of correspondence stretched both to Spanish America and across the Atlantic to Britain and Spain, providing constant updates on market conditions and goods most sought after by Spanish colonists. The continual flow of vessels traversing imperial boundaries also created a body of merchants and mariners well-experienced in contraband trade. Such experience was critical when a Jamaican vessel dropped anchor off a Spanish shore and awaited the arrival of smugglers every bit as knowledgeable and practiced as they.

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<sup>46</sup> Calculated from Minchiton ed., *Naval Office Shipping Lists for Jamaica*; and "Diario de la fragata nombrada *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria* de mi cargo que salió de la Provincia de Caracas cargada de cacao para la puerta de la Veracruz," Santo Domingo, 359, AGI.

## Making a Deal

When Cuba was chosen as a voyage's destination, the vessel would depart Kingston harbor and sail around the western tip of the island, normally stopping at the small settlements of Lucea or Montego Bay on the north coast for water and last-minute instructions. Although the voyage around Jamaica took nearly a week, it was only a day or two's sail from Montego Bay to Cuba's southern coast.<sup>47</sup> Once a smuggler arrived off a foreign coast, he still faced formidable challenges however. Spanish-American merchants had to be contacted, then travel to the coast undetected with their goods. Deals had to be negotiated, and both parties needed to load their contraband purchases and depart undetected by Spanish authorities. Fortunately, a regularized system had emerged by the eighteenth century to facilitate illicit trade. Specific areas of Cuba served as "hotbeds" of contraband trade where a semi-professional class of pilots and messengers such as Ignacio Clara kept watch for foreign traders, standing ready to carry news of their arrival and cargoes to merchants in the larger towns. There, *corredores* waited, prepared to serve as middlemen and brokers for larger merchants and colonial elites. But even once both sides had met face-to-face, negotiations were often challenging and competition between traders fierce, something Cubans took full advantage of. Once an exchange had been agreed to, captives and clothing were exchanged for silver, hides, and, above all, mules.

Three areas of Cuba were most commonly chosen by Anglo-Jamaican traders as their destinations and served as centers of illicit trade. All three shared two key features: numerous inlets and bays for concealment, and proximity to larger urban centers. If the market was Havana, the Gulf of Batabanó was the primary destination. If Puerto Príncipe (modern Camagüey) in the middle of the island, the South Keys of Santa Cruz del Sur were a popular

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<sup>47</sup> This itinerary is reconstructed from the Captain's log of the *HMS Biddeford* while it escorted convoys of Jamaican traders to Cuba in the 1740s, Adm 51/110, TNA.

choice. And if destined for Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba, the bay of Manzanillo was generally selected.<sup>48</sup> All offered protection from the weather, a wealth of secluded coves to anchor and trade in, and reasonable proximity to the larger towns and cities.

Upon arriving at the chosen destination, the Jamaican sloop would signal its desire to trade, either through smoke or by hoisting a white flag if during the day or by a fire aboard if at night.<sup>49</sup> When these signals were spotted a waiting *metedor* would travel out to the vessel in a canoe to inquire into the vessel's cargo and offer his services as a broker and guide.<sup>50</sup> These middlemen were key interlocutors in the illicit trade, displaying linguistic skills and the deft ability to navigate across both cultural and geographic boundaries. One such *metedor* was Ignacio Clara of Trinidad, who was known to be "acquainted with all the English traders that came that way." Clara's father, Wat Clarke, had lived in Jamaica before moving his family first to the Caymans and then to southern Cuba in the early 1720s when Clara was either very young or not yet born. As an adult, Clara became a key participant in Cuba's illicit trade "being a person always entrusted by Spanish traders to carry their money," and "was very useful to our trading vessels that went to the South Keys, not only in procuring them trade, but as a pilot, and in giving them notice of any *guardacosta* that he knew was coming out to them." When there were no English traders on the coast, he supported his family by fishing or travelled to Jamaica to offer his services as a pilot.<sup>51</sup> While Clara had grown up in Cuba, other *metedores* were

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<sup>48</sup> Other regions of Spanish America also had preferred trading locations for Jamaicans as well, for example, the "Grout" near Portobello and "Gran Baru" near Cartagena. Héctor R. Feliciano Ramos, *El contrabando inglés en el Caribe y el Golfo de México (1748-1778)* (Sevilla: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1990), 356-59; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), 177.

<sup>49</sup> Stagg, *A Concise History of the Spanish America*, 313; Notes on the illicit trade carried on by sloops from Jamaica with the Spanish in the Gulf of Mexico, 1740, Ms 1049, JNL; and Ramos, *El contrabando inglés*, 84.

<sup>50</sup> This term is used to describe these middlemen in Reyes Fernández Duran, *La Corona Española y el tráfico de negros: del monopolio al libre comercio* (Madrid: Ecobook, Editorial del Economista, 2011), 68; and Celestino Andrés Arauz Monfante, *El Contrabando Holandés en el Caribe durante la primera mitad del Siglo XVIII* (Caracas: Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1984), 77.

<sup>51</sup> Minutes of the Assembly for April 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 30-32.



foreigners, such as the Fleming Juan Blanco who was active in Bayamo for nearly three decades.<sup>52</sup>

Upon contacting Clara or another *metedor*, the supercargo would dispatch them with letters signaling his intent to trade along with a “carta cuenta” or manifest of his cargo to be carried to the merchants in the nearest town or city.<sup>53</sup> These manifests would often include actual samples of the types of cloth available for sale. They were sent to demonstrate the color, texture, pattern, and quality of the wares on offer. Illustration 2.1 shows an example of such a sample, taken from the sloop *Carolina* when it was seized by Spanish officials near Havana in 1735. The Spanish merchants, if they were interested, would reply conveying where they would meet the Jamaicans to conduct the exchange. If they were not interested, the smuggler would have no choice but to sail to a different part of the coast and try again.

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<sup>52</sup> Andrés Arauz Monfante, *El Contrabando Holandés*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Affidavit of Richard Lee, September 26, 1740, SP 42/85, TNA; and Nathaniel Uring, *A history of the voyages and travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring. With new draughts of the bay of Honduras and the Caribbee islands; and particularly of St. Lucia, and the harbour of Petite Carenage* (London, 1726), 164.

**Figure 3**  
Cloth Sample from the sloop *Carolina*, 1735  
MP-Tejidos, 25, AGI



Spanish merchants generally did not travel themselves to meet the foreigners. The risk was simply too high, especially because the largest traders were often officials or prominent members of their communities. Instead, they normally used *corredores* to serve in their stead.<sup>54</sup> These middlemen often travelled “in the habits of peasants, and had their mules with them, on which they brought their money in jars, which they filled up with meal” and travelled “through the woods, and not in the road, in order to prevent their being discovered by the royal officers.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Houston, *Dr. Houstoun's memoirs*, 249.

<sup>55</sup> Uring, *A history of the voyages and travels*, 164-65.

Sometimes these journeys to the coast could last over a week and they were escorted the final part of the way by the smuggler's crew.<sup>56</sup>

An account from Puerto Príncipe in 1734 gives a good description of how this system worked as well as the extent to which illicit trade permeated local officialdom. That year, upon receiving news that two Jamaican sloops had anchored at nearby Santa María six prominent *vecinos* (residents) of the town travelled to meet them. Among them were a local merchant, a *regidor* (town councilor), and a lieutenant in the local militia. While their prominent positions in the local elite at first glance makes these three seem unlikely figures to serve as middlemen, they in fact represented men even more influential than they. For the trio carried 6,000 pesos (£1,350 sterling) to trade on behalf of the *alcalde ordinario* (municipal magistrate) of Puerto Príncipe, as well as the *sargento mayor* (major) and captain of the local militia. The three were accompanied by peasants and free people of color they had hired to travel with them to guide the mules and transport the hides they would exchange as well as to carry their purchases.<sup>57</sup> These muleteers made a handsome living, earning as much as six pesos per muleload of smuggled goods.<sup>58</sup>

Silver and gold were the items most sought after by Jamaican smugglers. But even with almost the entirety of the specie Cuba received from New Spain being used to purchase contraband goods, there was never enough. Instead, hides and mules were the most common forms of payment. Tobacco and dyewoods were also occasionally exchanged, though the former

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<sup>56</sup> To trade with Benjamin Lee, traders from Havana travelled for nine days in 1735. Thomas Ayscough to the Duke of Newcastle, August 15, 1735, CO 137/55, TNA; and Deposition of Captain John Drudge, Minutes of Council, March 3, 1726/27, 1B/5/3/11, JNA.

<sup>57</sup> Testimonio de los Autos originales seguidos contra Bartolomé de Mojarrieta, October 22, 1734, Escribanía 60A, AGI; and Testimonio y Autos contra Don Andrés de Estrada, 1731, Santo Domingo, 361, AGI.

<sup>58</sup> Linda Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 170.

was more commonly sought by the Dutch.<sup>59</sup> Mules normally fetched £10-12 sterling per head, while the prominent role of hides as a means of exchange is evident from the prices listed in Table 2.1.<sup>60</sup>

**Figure 4**  
Exchange Rate for Contrabandists

Item	# of Cured Leather Hides
Linen, 3 yards	1
Linen, white Rouen, 3 yards	1
Linen, crude Rouen, 3 yards	1
Silk, tafetán, 1 yard	2 ½
Silk, all colors, 1 yard	12
Velvet, black, 1 yard	4
Hat, black	3
Hat, brown	2
Paper, 1 ream	1 ½
Needles, 100	1

Source: César García del Pino, *El corso en Cuba, siglo XVII: causas y consecuencias* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2001), 237.

Cuban purchasers preferred to use their limited supplies of specie for purchasing African captives, for slaves were the most sought-after “item” supplied by smugglers. The prices demanded by Jamaicans for their captives were considerably cheaper than those imposed by the South Sea Company. In the 1730s, a Jamaican observer described how small children were sold in the South Keys for 65 pesos (£15 sterling), adolescent boys for 85 (£19), and adults for 100 to 110 pesos (£25) each. In contrast, the South Sea Company’s slaves were being sold for nearly

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<sup>59</sup> The Dutch were more likely to take Cuban tobacco because they had the liberty of carrying it directly to Amsterdam to sell on the European market. Jamaicans, on the other hand, were constrained by the Navigation Acts from transporting tobacco anywhere but England, which was already well-supplied from the Chesapeake.

<sup>60</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1 (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 549.

300 pesos (£68 sterling) for an adult captive in Havana and Santiago de Cuba. The attraction of the illicitly introduced slave, or *negro de mala entrada* as Spanish authorities referred to them, was obvious.<sup>61</sup>

All goods and captives were purchased on the spot by Spanish colonists rather than through credit, as there was no enforcement mechanisms for debt collection. The resulting inability of most individual Spanish-American merchants to purchase an entire vessel's cargo meant that Jamaican traders were forced to linger for long periods on the Spanish coast to allow as many different customers to arrive as possible. Traders were also required to shift locations frequently to meet with contacts and to load mules and hides. As a result, a typical smuggling voyage involved nearly three months on the Cuban coast. Towards the end of a voyage, as supercargoes became increasingly anxious about selling the last of their cargo, traders occasionally offered credit to be repaid on a later voyage, but this was extremely risky.<sup>62</sup>

An additional challenge for Anglo-Jamaican traders was the fierce competition between smugglers, for frequently several vessels hovered off Spanish coasts at any one time. And these included not just Jamaicans, for the Dutch and the French were also major contrabandists. The Dutch operating out of Curaçao, in particular, were seen as Jamaica's main commercial rivals.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 6, 1736, Shelburne Papers vol. 44; and A State or Calculate of the Asiento Trade for 5 years and 4 months from 1 Jan. 1730/31 to 1<sup>st</sup> May 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 43, CL.

<sup>62</sup> Edward Manning to Peter Burrell, September 5, 1737, Shelburne Papers vol. 44.

When they died, both Lewis Galdy and the Jewish merchant Aaron Touro both left debts owed from correspondents in Spanish America. Inventory and Appraisal of the goods and chattel of Lewis Galdy, January 5, 1739/40, 1B/11/3/20, JNA; and Meyers, "Ethnic Distinctions and Wealth," 57.

<sup>63</sup> For complaints of this nature, see: John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 1, 1737; John Merewether and Edward Manning to Peter Burrell, January 1, 1736/37, Shelburne Papers vol. 44; Petition of John Sharpe, November 9, 1739, CO 137/48, TNA; Charles Holmes to William Pitt, January 4, 1761, CO 137/60, TNA; and Houston, *Dr. Houstoun's memoirs*, 224.

The Dutch had a long history of illicit trade in the Caribbean centered on Curacao, indeed it was the primary focus of their empire. For studies of Dutch smuggling, see: Ramón Aizpur Aguirre, *Curacao y la costa de Caracas; Introducción al estudio del contrabando en la provincial de Venezuela en tiempo de la Real Compañía Guipuzcoana, 1730-1784* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1993); Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast 1580-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971); Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985); Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the*

In one instance, a Jamaican smuggler arrived at Portobello to discover nine Dutch and one French vessel already there.<sup>64</sup> The large numbers of traders joined with the relatively easily glutted markets meant that competition for Spanish customers was often fierce. In the face of the struggle between traders off Panama, one merchant complained that “the goods that was sent out will not clear much more than a common insurance which is small encouragement.” In general, according to one observer, an adventurer would do well to sell three-fourths of his dry goods on any given voyage.<sup>65</sup>

In such a setting, it was common for Jamaican traders to lie about the goods and faithfulness of their fellows in an effort to switch a potential buyer’s interest to themselves. The former South Sea Company surgeon turned independent trader James Houston complained bitterly on the subject, describing how his fellow merchants were determined to “sell at all events, every one endeavoring to undersell and undermine one another, at any dirty, low rate, or even by tricking.”<sup>66</sup> Most frequently, Jewish traders were attacked for utilizing underhanded tactics, such as telling Cubans that “another vessel which had been fitted out by the Christian & had been there just before & promised to return was not capable of so doing.”<sup>67</sup> In another instance, Houston recounted how

I wanted some of the commodities to make up the assortment agreed on, so looked out for them amongst the rest of the trading vessels; when it happened, that one Moses Mendes, a Jew, engaged to answer for such and such goods, the best of their kind in quantity and quality, at the prices agreed on, to make up my assortment. I went on board of Mendes’ sloop myself to negotiate

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*Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1988); Christian J. Koot, *Empire at the Periphery: British Colonists, Anglo-Dutch Trade, and the Development of the British Atlantic, 1621-1713* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2011); and L.A. Wright, “The Dutch and Cuba, 1609-1643,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 4:4 (1921): 597-634.

<sup>64</sup> Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, March 9, 1723/24, C 104/14, TNA.

<sup>65</sup> William Parke to Thomas Eyre, February 19, 1707/8, MS 403, TNA; and “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica,” 1765, WWM/R35/1, SCL.

<sup>66</sup> Houston, *Dr. Houstoun's memoirs*, 223.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Mill to Edward Trelawney, July 14, 1738, CO 137/56, TNA.

the contract and the contractors appointed one Compton as broker on their behalf; We lay off the mouth of the harbor of Portobello to deliver the goods, and receive the return, one half in cash, the other in cacao. On delivering the goods, Mendes sent on shore Dutch bays instead of English bays; Compton, their broker, immediately challenged the imposition, and upon enquiry I found it to be truth, and a downright willful cheat of Mendes'. So the bargain was broke off, and the contractors laid the whole blame on me.<sup>68</sup>

Such complaints, however, almost certainly arose more from general anti-Semitism than any monopoly of duplicity on the part of Jamaica's Jewish community, as witnessed by the lengths to which Edward Manning and Alexander MacFarlane went to secure their primacy in Anglo-Spanish trade (see Chapters 3 and 5).

Once prices had been agreed upon, the actual exchange took place. While dry goods and African captives were simply unloaded, and specie, agricultural products, and hides were easily carried aboard the smuggler's vessel, the same was not true for the mules that were so commonly purchased. Loading these animals on deserted beaches and in out-of-the-way coves where they were assembled by Spanish traders was a difficult and time-consuming task. Years later, the process of transporting mules was described by the German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt who witnessed the illicit trade in those beasts in Venezuela:

[mules are] hoisted on board the vessels by means of a machine resembling a crane. Ranged in two files, the mules with difficulty keep their footing during the rolling and pitching of the ship; and in order to frighten and render them more docile, a drum is beaten during a great part of the day and night.<sup>69</sup>

Such constant drumming must have made the journey back to Jamaica a far from peaceful experience!

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<sup>68</sup> Houston, *Dr. Houstoun's memoirs*, 306-307.

<sup>69</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travel to the Equinoctial Regions of America During the Years 1799-1804*, vol. 2, trans. Thomasina Ross (London: George Bell & Sons, 1907), 155-56.

Once as much of the cargo had been sold as was possible, both parties departed. For Jamaicans, the journey back to the island took no more than a day or two thanks to the near constant northwest trade winds. They would make their way around the eastern tip of Jamaica before dropping anchor in Kingston harbor. As for their Cuban counterparts, their illicit purchases were loaded onto horses, mules, canoes, or even small coasting vessels for transport to larger population centers for resale. Once near a town or city, they would be hidden in corrals or other nearby hiding places until they could be safely snuck into town and hidden in stores and private homes.

While the risks of glutted markets or roaming *guardacostas* meant that any individual voyage might or might not be a success, there were also clear booms and slumps in the inter-imperial economy. The best periods—as Jamaican traders well knew—were during wartime; when the normal trans-Atlantic trading system was disrupted and prices for goods and slaves rose. This knowledge gave rise to a popular expression in seventeenth-century Jamaica among contrabandists: “Peace with England, and war with all the rest of the world.”<sup>70</sup> Fortunately for Jamaican smugglers, Britain and Spain were at war for more than half of the first fifty years of the eighteenth century: 1702-13, 1718-20, 1727-29, 1739-48. Another benefit of warfare was the disruption of the *asiento* which placed the inter-imperial slave trade firmly in private traders’ hands. However, the immediate post-war period was among the worst times for clandestine traders. For after the end of hostilities the government in Madrid would hurriedly dispatch galleon fleets to America to reclaim colonial markets and secure bullion for Spain’s depleted treasury, making “trade dull and money scarce.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 120.

<sup>71</sup> Sir Nicholas Lawes to the Board of Trade, June 12, 1721, CO 137/14, TNA. For example, following the Anglo-Spanish War of 1727-29, the *flota* was dispatched to New Spain almost immediately following the signing of



The arrival of the *galeones* at Portobello was also an auspicious time for illicit trade, for it was then that Peruvian merchants, carrying the silver of Potosí and elsewhere, traveled to Panama and could be courted by both smugglers and legal traders.<sup>72</sup> In 1722, for instance, it was reported that there were no fewer than twenty-one foreign smugglers anchored near Portobello during the fair, each attempting to undersell the Iberian merchants.<sup>73</sup> As a result, one of the most important pieces of news sought by Jamaican merchants from their European networks was whether or not the treasure fleets would sail in a given year, and if so when and to where.

Nevertheless, in boom times and in bad, illicit trade continued. For by the first half of the eighteenth century, illicit trade between Jamaica and Cuba had become such a persistent and regularized industry that well-established and diverse networks of professional middlemen, sailors, and traders had developed in both islands who specialized in organizing and carrying on the delicate process of clandestine exchange. At the same time, however, the sheer number of contrabandists hovering off Spanish-American coasts mean that fierce competition arose over access to limited markets. As a result, no voyage was guaranteed to be profitable even with the detailed information that flowed to Kingston merchants regarding market conditions around the region. The risks of the seizure of vessel and cargo by Spanish *guardacostas* was serious as well.

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the armistice while the *galeones* to Panama followed the following year. Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 228-29.

These trade depressions were not limited to smugglers but were a common feature of securing a peace in the early modern world. The most well-known example of this tendency was the recession that effected Britain's mainland colonies in the 1760s, following the Seven Years' War. See: Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), chap. 62; Thomas Doerflinger *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 168-80, and William S. Sachs, "The Business Outlook in the Northern Colonies, 1750-1775" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1957), 107-13.

<sup>72</sup> In 1724 the Port Royal merchants Diego and Abraham Gonzalez complained that although the Peruvian merchants had arrived in Panama, Jamaican traders had sold only 40,000 pieces of eight (£9,000 sterling) worth of goods as the viceroy had set guards over the merchants and refused to allow any money to be brought from Lima to Panama until the galleons arrived. Diego and Abraham Gonzalez to Nathan Simson, January 16, 1723/24, C 104/14, TNA.

<sup>73</sup> Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade*, 146.

Nevertheless, small vessels crisscrossed the waters between the two islands exchanging slaves and textiles for silver, hides, and mules.

### **Contraband in Jamaican and Cuban Society**

The scale of the illicit inter-imperial economy meant that, even if any single voyage proved a failure, the trade in general was immensely profitable. As a result, the fruits of contraband trade were ubiquitous in both Jamaica and Cuba. Smuggling was vital in delivering the consumer goods and the captive labor—both human and animal—that were at the center of the plantation economies of both islands. This was particularly true for Cuba, where contraband trade permeated all levels of society. From the poor *vegueros* who worked the island's tobacco fields to noble peninsula-born governors, smuggling provided not only the clothes Cubans wore, but the goods of everyday life. Jamaican smugglers, in conjunction with the *asiento*, also supplied untold thousands of captive Africans who were at the center of the island's transformation from a tobacco and ranching economy to one in which sugar production was increasingly important. Such was the value of clandestine trade that towns such as Puerto Príncipe and Bayamo oriented their economies not towards their own empire, but towards the Jamaican market. So important was this inter-imperial trade to their communities, they were willing to defend their *de facto* economic independence by force.

Simultaneously, in Jamaica the returns from illicit trade played crucial roles in Jamaica's internal and external economy. Spanish silver not only gave the island a circulating medium of exchange, but also proved essential in helping pay islanders' debts for imported goods—particularly those from the thirteen mainland colonies. Even more important, Jamaicans also purchased tens of thousands of mules from Cuba. These hardy animals were central to the

expansion and operation of Jamaica's sugar plantations, for they were the most efficient power source for the mills that ground the canes and often the only means of transporting the finished sugar and rum from plantation to the coast for export.

Although it is impossible to know the true scale of the trade between Jamaica and Cuba, it is possible to gain some sense of its volume based on the quantity of illicit goods seized and condemned by Spanish officials. Table 2.2 summarizes the value of those goods apprehended by authorities in Havana between 1711 and 1739.

**Figure 5**  
Value of Contraband Goods seized in Cuba, 1711-1739

Year <sup>1</sup>	King's Share of Seizures (pesos)	King's Share of Seizures (£ sterling)	Estimated Total Value of Seized Contraband (pesos)	Estimated Total Value of Seized Contraband (£ sterling)
1711-13	32,436	7,298	55,890	12,575
1713-15	17,720	3,987	30,533	6,870
1715-17	18,992	4,273	32,725	7,363
1717-18	14,380	3,235	24,778	5,575
1719	194	44	334	75
1720-22	4,512	1,015	7,775	1,749
1722-25	17,509	3,939	30,169	6,788
1725-27	18,354	4,130	31,625	7,116
1727-28	9,953	2,239	17,150	3,859
1728-31	37,769	8,498	65,079	14,643
1731-32	8,688	1,955	14,970	3,368
1733	3,133	705	5,398	1,215
1734	6,878	1,548	11,851	2,667
1735	55,031	12,382	94,823	21,335
1736	983	221	1,694	381
1737	3,646	820	6,282	1,414
1738	2,453	552	4,227	951
1739	4,523	1,018	7,793	1,754
<b>Total</b>	<b>257,152</b>	<b>57,859</b>	<b>443,096</b>	<b>99,697</b>

Note: Normally, the Spanish Crown, through various taxes and the royal share of seizures, received approximately sixty-five percent of the value of seized goods. For a detailed breakdown of the procedure, see: “Demostración práctica del método y reglas observadas por los Oficiales Reales de la Ciudad y Puerto del Cartagena de las Indias, y demás parajes de la Costa de Tierra Firme en observancia de las Leyes de la recopilación de aquel los Reinos y demás posteriores reales órdenes para la distribución del valor de los efectos de mercaderías, oro y plata labrado Chafalonía y Amonedada que como respectivos a el ilícito comercio son incursos en la pena de comiso cuya practica conforme a la Ley 9 titulo 17 libro 8 de ducho nueva recopilación debe igualmente observarse en los demás Puertos de la América y es a saber,” 1752, Santo Domingo, 369, AGI.

Source: The first row is from John Robert McNeill’s *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 199. The conversion from to pounds sterling is based on the exchange rate in John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 7

<sup>1</sup>Prior to 1733, arbitrary intervals were used by Cuban accountants, thus the inconvenient form of the early data.

Together, the data suggests that the value of illicit trade was far higher than official reports indicated, especially when three caveats to these values are taken into account. First, they include only the seizures made in Havana; not in Santiago de Cuba's jurisdiction and the eastern part of the island. Secondly, the values noted here reflect the value seized goods were sold for at public auction. Frequently these were corrupt affairs where the goods were sold at only half, or even less, of their market price. As a result, perhaps half again should be added to the value of the seizures listed to gain a sense of their real value. Finally, it is unlikely officials ever seized even a fifth of the illicit goods entering the island. Thus, the value of contraband goods and African captives clandestinely imported into Western Cuba alone in those three decades was quite possibly around £1,000,000 sterling—over £33,000 annually.

By comparison, in 1717 Havana's legal trade in imported goods from both Europe and the rest of Spain's American empire was worth only 118,000 pesos (£26,500 sterling).<sup>74</sup> Two decades later it was estimated that the value of Havana's official imports had climbed to 596,000 pesos (£134,600 sterling), but that was during a rare year where a *registro* was dispatched to the island from Spain.<sup>75</sup> And even as late as the years 1760-61 Cuba received only 255,000 pesos (£57,400 sterling) in manufactured goods from Spain, most of which went to Havana.<sup>76</sup>

As the Cuban historian Levi Marrero commented, "licit trade could only cover the residual sector of a market supplied via other import sources."<sup>77</sup> And with massive quantities of contraband goods flooding the island, it is no surprise that complicity, if not active involvement, in illicit trade permeated Cuban society. Nowhere was this truer than the towns of Puerto

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<sup>74</sup> Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 96.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>76</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 197.

<sup>77</sup> "el comercio licito solamente podía cubrir el sector residual de un mercado abierto a otras vías de importación," Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 197.

Príncipe in the center and Bayamo in the east. In 1701, Puerto Príncipe was a backwater town with fewer than three thousand inhabitants, but by 1729 it was a bustling commercial center of more than twelve thousand.<sup>78</sup> Such explosive growth is only explainable by remarkable economic opportunity, but the town and its environs had no trade with Europe and very little with the rest of the Spanish circum-Caribbean. Rather, the town's economy was centered on large-scale livestock production for the Jamaican market. By the 1720s, Puerto Príncipe was raising over a thousand mules annually, most of whom were sold to Jamaican traders, and by 1737 its *haciendas* held nearly twenty thousand oxen and mules.<sup>79</sup> Bayamo, with a population of thirty thousand in the 1730s, was another hotbed of illicit trade. The town and its hinterlands were popular among smugglers not only for their proximity to Santiago de Cuba, but also because the region was the only site outside of Havana where the tobacco monopoly, reintroduced in limited form in 1727, purchased tobacco in hard money.<sup>80</sup> Its traders were thus more likely to have specie on hand to purchase illicit goods, and Dutch traders in particular were always eager to purchase tobacco grown in its rich soil.

Contraband goods were not confined to the smaller towns of Cuba, but were widespread in the major urban centers as well. While the South Sea Company's factory sold illegally imported goods to *habaneros* (see Chapter 3), a considerable quantity was also snuck into the city from the southern coast. Some of these goods were sold by peddlers and other small traders

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<sup>78</sup> Tomas Pio Betancourt, "Historia de Puerto-Príncipe," in *Los Tres primeros historiadores de la Isla de Cuba*, vol. 3, eds. Rafael Cowley and Andres Pago (Havana: A. Pago, 1876), 543 and 547; and McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 199.

<sup>79</sup> "Matricula de los hatos y corales de Ganado mayor y menor y ingenios de fabricar azúcar y miel que comprehende la jurisdicción de la Villa de Santa María del Puerto del Príncipe situada en la isla de Cuba," 1737, Santo Domingo, 384, AGI.

<sup>80</sup> Extracto sobre los ilícitos comercios que se cometen en las costas de la Villa del Puerto del Príncipe, 1735, Santo Domingo, 381, AGI; and Charlotte Cosner, *The Golden Leaf: How Tobacco shaped Cuba and the Atlantic World* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 76-80.

in market stalls and on the streets, but major merchants also sold contraband in their shops.<sup>81</sup> In 1749, for instance, an anonymous informer reported that the storeowner Fernando Morillo was selling smuggled cloth in Havana. When officials raided his home and store they found nineteen bundles of cloth worth over 5,000 pesos (£1,125 sterling). Under interrogation the unfortunate Morillo confessed that he had purchased smuggled goods many times before then resold them to his fellow *habaneros*. For his crimes, all of Morillo's possessions were seized and he himself was sentenced to hard labor in the Castillo de Jagua on Cuba's southern coast.<sup>82</sup>

The illicitly imported cloth that Morillo and his contemporaries sold was transformed by their customers into clothing for both formal and everyday wear. This was the reason behind the high percentage of cloth rather than finished garments among Jamaican smuggling cargoes: British and Jamaican tailors did not make garments in Spanish fashions. The smuggling of bolts of cloth rather than finished garments also had the beneficial side effect of helping storeowners and consumers conceal the origins of their garments; for who would argue that Spanish fashions came from anywhere but Spain? Practical and fashionable, Cuban clothing was the envy of many. The planter-turned-historian Edward Long, for instance, argued for its adoption by his fellow Jamaicans in his 1774 *History of Jamaica*, and in so doing provided a vivid image of Cuban dress:

All their clothes are light; their waistcoat and breeches of Bretagne linen, and their coats of some other thin stuff...On the head, they wear a cap of very fine, thin and white linen...Their women wear a kind of petticoat, which they call a *pollera*, made of thin silk, without any lining; and on their body a very thin white jacket...On the head, they wear a cap of fine linen covered with lace, and

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<sup>81</sup> In 1750, for instance a group of peddlers were arrested for selling contraband clothing near the gate to the shipyard, passing through the gate multiple times in a day, each time with a small and seemingly innocuous bundle of goods. In response, the Governor ordered that traders and peddlers could only enter and leave the city once a day. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 201.

<sup>82</sup> Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega to the Marquis de Enseñada, April 30, 1749, Santo Domingo, 389, AGI.

worked into the shape of a mitre; which, being plentifully starched, terminates forward in a point, not easily discomposed. This they call *panito*, and it is worn by the ladies, and other native whites, as an undress.<sup>83</sup>

Note the prominence of linen in Long's description, the same type of cloth that was most heavily represented among contraband cargoes. Long's description was of free white Cubans, but smuggled goods were not confined to the middle- and upper-classes. Much as in the English-speaking Caribbean, poorer-quality woolens and linens, such as oznabrigs, were primarily reserved for poorer free Cubans and the island's ever-increasing number of enslaved Africans.



**Figure 6**  
Close-up of *A View of the City of Havana*, 1762.  
(Courtesy of the National Library of Jamaica)

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<sup>83</sup> E Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 521-522.



For in this period, thanks to smugglers and the South Sea Company, African slaves were becoming an increasingly important part of Cuba's economy and society. In 1700 it is estimated that the island only held around five thousand slaves, but by mid-century that number expanded more than four-fold.<sup>84</sup> Precise estimates of the number of slaves imported into the island in this period are impossible to calculate, but some estimates can be made. From 1713 through 1739, approximately eighty-two hundred Africans were imported into Havana and Santiago de Cuba by the South Sea Company.<sup>85</sup> In the same period, private Jamaican merchants forcibly transported over forty-one thousand African captives to Spanish America (**Appendix B**). How many of these went to Cuba as opposed to elsewhere in Spanish America is impossible to know, but in the five years 1743 to 1748 the Naval Office Shipping Lists for Kingston recorded the departure of eighty-three vessels carrying 8,211 Africans to Spanish America. Of those, 3,127 were on vessels that had a particular destination listed, nearly forty percent of whom were destined for Cuba.<sup>86</sup> If that ratio holds true across all voyages, over thirty-one hundred captives may have been smuggled into Cuba during that five year span. And as many as fourteen thousand over the previous three decades. The true number was likely considerably higher. J.R McNeill has estimated that between fifty-five and fifty-seven thousand Africans may have illicitly entered Cuba in the period 1700-1760.<sup>87</sup>

Anecdotal evidence suggests the plausibility of McNeill's estimates. For instance, in the first six months of 1729 alone Benjamin Bravo exported over six hundred Africans in four

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<sup>84</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 43.

<sup>85</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 110.

<sup>86</sup> 1,190 captives were dispatched to Cuba on fifteen vessels. In those same years, Portobello received 1,182 captives, Cartagena 686 and Rio de la Hacha 69. The remaining 5,624 captives were recorded only as being destined for the "Spanish Coast;" a catch-all phrase that could mean anywhere in the Spanish Caribbean.

<sup>87</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 169. Levi Marrero estimated that an average of 800 slaves arrived annually in Cuba through both legal and illegal channels in the period 1700-63 for a total of slightly more than 50,000 slaves. Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), 21.

voyages to Cuba. A few years later, in 1733, a smuggler carried over three hundred captives to Puerto Príncipe on a single voyage.<sup>88</sup> That same year the South Sea Company's factors in Santiago de Cuba estimated there were two thousand recently illicitly introduced Africans in Puerto Príncipe. By 1744 an accountant in Havana's treasury claimed there were six thousand *negros de mala entrada* in Havana and its immediate hinterlands alone. According to his report, they could be found "working in every type of estate" near the city as well as within it.<sup>89</sup>

Among them was María Josepha. A free woman of color living on New Providence in the Bahamas, one night in 1753 she was kidnapped along with eight other women and carried to Puerto Príncipe. Once reaching the Cuban coast, she and her fellow captives were sold, along with a cargo of textiles, to several Cuban buyers. Josepha and ten muleloads worth of goods were carried to the home of Agustín de Armas where she became a domestic servant. After several months and after learning some Spanish, she seized an opportunity to escape and denounce Armas before a district magistrate. Her detailed testimony did not result in any arrests, as Armas and the other contrabandists she named were forewarned and escaped, but Josepha, at least, was rewarded with her freedom.<sup>90</sup>

At a bare minimum, at least 5,728 slaves like María Josepha were introduced illegally to Cuba in the period 1720-39 for that was the number who were later legalized by their

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<sup>88</sup> An Account of Negroes Exported from Jamaica from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1728 to the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1729, Add Ms 22676, BL; and Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, July 18, 1733, Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>89</sup> "porque siendo como es copiosísimo el cuerpo de negros con que se trabajar toda clase de haciendas," Joseph Ante Galabert to Marquis de la Regalia, April 22, 1744, Santo Domingo, 326, AGI; and Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, March 28, 1732, Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>90</sup> "Extracto de la carta del Gobernador y Oficiales Reales de la Habana con que remitieron un Testimonio de Autos formados acerca de una denuncia ejecutada por una Negra en Puerto del Príncipe," 1754; and "Testimonio de los Autos formados sobre la Denuncia que des y hizo una Negra nombrada María Josepha," 1754, Santo Domingo, 398, AGI.

purchasers.<sup>91</sup> Generally, to indult—and thus receive a pardon for past law-breaking—a *negro de mala entrada* cost 33 1/3 pesos per captive, effectively the import duty on those slaves imported by the South Sea Company.<sup>92</sup> Once the *indulto* was paid, the slave was “legalized” and the owner could openly display his or her property and even resell the captive outside of the island. Considering the relative cheapness of smuggled slaves compared to those sold by the South Sea Company, even after factoring in the cost of legalizing them they remained far cheaper than those legally imported. As a result, the *indultos* did little to turn Cubans away from smuggling.<sup>93</sup> Yet, while *indultos* were ineffective in curtailing smuggling, they did provide a valuable source of revenue for colonial governments; in the period 1720-1759 *indultos* brought in 5.7% of Havana’s total internal taxation and 8% of Santiago de Cuba’s.<sup>94</sup>

Slaves were in such high demand because Cuba in this period was beginning to undergo an economic transformation. Although ranching and tobacco farming continued to be the main employments of most of the island’s population, the island’s nascent sugar industry was growing steadily. Cuban sugar planters, such as the former South Sea Company factor Richard Farill, were wealthier, better educated, and more literate than the *vegueros*, and thus better able to express their needs to Spanish authorities, regularly petitioning the Crown by 1730s. These petitions fell on receptive ears among officials in Madrid, eager to weaken the political

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<sup>91</sup> This number is calculated from the *indultos* described in: Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, July 18, 1733; and Edward Pratter to the Court of Directors, August 23, 1733, Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL; Gregorio Guazo y Calderón to Don Miguel Durán, January 25, 1720, Santo Domingo, 378, AGI; Gregorio Guazo y Calderón to the King, March 18, 1722, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI; and Don Carlos Sucre to the King, June 27, and July 4, 1724, Santo Domingo, 359, AGI.

Levi Marrero states that 9,500 slaves were indulted between 1702 and 1759, but he claims that the price of an *indulto* was 40 pesos per *pieza de india*, whereas the true price was 33 1/3 pesos per *pieza*, so his estimates are likely too low. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8, 47.

<sup>92</sup> Testimonio de los Autos obrados en la Ciudad de la Trinidad de la Isla de Cuba sobre la Comisión que despachó el Gobernador de la Habana Don Gregorio Guazo Calderón, 1728, Santo Domingo, 360, AGI.

<sup>93</sup> This fact was recognized at the time, and the *indulto* system was frequently criticized as a result. Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to the King, December 23, 1726, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI.

<sup>94</sup> Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8, 47.

importance of the rebellious *vegueros* and concerned about France's dominance of the Spanish domestic sugar market. Sugar planters' petitions first bore fruit in 1730 when the Crown dropped the import duty on Cuban sugar at Cádiz from twenty-five percent of the price at Havana to five percent and the *millón* (sales tax) from forty-five *reales* per *arroba* (approximately £1 sterling for every 25 pounds of sugar) to three *reales*. Simultaneously, freight rates for shipping sugar were lowered from eight *reales* per *arroba* to three.<sup>95</sup> In theory, Cuban sugar could now compete on a level playing field with French sugar in the peninsula.

The result was the steady growth of Cuban sugar production. By the mid-1730s the island was producing perhaps five million pounds of sugar annually, but due to a paucity of shipping exported only around a third of that to Europe. The rest was shipped to the rest of Spanish America or illicitly exported.<sup>96</sup> In 1737 the island was reported to have 158 *ingenios* or sugar plantations, and that was after the general depression of sugar prices in the mid-1730s had caused a number to cease operating.<sup>97</sup> Due to the greater capital available to potential investors and easier access to shipping, the largest *ingenios* were located around Havana and averaged eighty slaves each by the 1750s.<sup>98</sup> It was this expansion of the sugar industry that gave such an impetus to the Cuban slave trade, joined with the demand for labor in the Havana shipyard and the copper mines of El Cobre. For although *vegueros* also used slaves in tobacco production, most could

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<sup>95</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 128.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 164. For comparison, in 1740 Jamaica produced 60,256,000 pounds of sugar. John McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), 152.

<sup>97</sup> These *ingenios* were located in the following regions: Havana 43, Puerto Príncipe 48, Sancti Spíritus 36, Trinidad 19, and Santa Clara 12. In 1729, the *cabildo* of Puerto Príncipe reported there were 70 *ingenios* in its hinterlands that year, but two years later only reported 61. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 8; and McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 126-27.

<sup>98</sup> Ramiro Guerra y Sánchez, *Historia de la nación Cubana*, vol. 2 (Havana: Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1952), 213. J.R. McNeill, however, estimates that the average number of slaves was only around forty-five in the same period. McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 43.

afford no more than one or two slaves each.<sup>99</sup> An unknown number of slaves were also taken from the island to be sold elsewhere in Spanish America.

Although pleased with the expansion of sugar in the island, Spanish officials were well aware of the central role contraband trade played in the lives of Cubans—and deeply resentful of it. They maintained a special ire for the smuggling hotbeds of Puerto Príncipe and Bayamo; describing the residents of the two towns as “living without God, without King, nor justice.”<sup>100</sup> But they could do little to stop it. The military garrison in Cuba, even following the reforms of the 1710s, was simply too small to enforce the law and colonists were willing to defend their contraband trade by force.

The most infamous example of this willingness came in August 1729 when the Governor of Santiago de Cuba Don Juan de Hoyo travelled to Puerto Príncipe to appoint a Lieutenant-Governor and to arrest those residents known to have purchased illegally imported slaves. Shortly after his arrival, a riot erupted. Claiming they were defending their ancient rights to be ruled by their own elected officials only, over eight hundred armed residents of the town led by members of the *cabildo* gathered outside the home de Hoyo was resting in. Once again chanting “viva el rey y muera al mal gobierno!” (“long live the King and death to bad government!”) they overwhelmed the governor’s escort and seized de Hoyo, sending him in chains to Havana.<sup>101</sup> Ironically, upon his arrival the unfortunate governor was again arrested for having embezzled treasure salvaged from Ubilla’s destroyed fleet a decade earlier while he was commander of a

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<sup>99</sup> For accounts of slaves used in tobacco cultivation in Cuba, see: Enrique López Mesa, *Tabaco Mitos y Esclavos: Apuntes Cubanos de historia agraria* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2015), chap. 1; and Fernando Ortíz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York, NY: A.A. Knopf, 1947), 81-84.

<sup>100</sup> “han vivido sin Dios, sin Rey, ni justicia.” Extracto sobre los ilícitos comercios que se cometen en las costas de la Villa del Puerto del Príncipe, 1735, Santo Domingo, 381, AGI.

<sup>101</sup> Consulta, April 24, 1736, and August 19, 1738 Santo Domingo, 1736, AGI; and Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 179-80

privateer.<sup>102</sup> Later that same year, when a troop of cavalry captured fourteen English smugglers near Puerto Príncipe, over two hundred armed men attacked the soldiers, freeing their captives.<sup>103</sup>

Inter-imperial trade was also fiercely defended in Jamaica where its fruits were just as pervasive, as they were throughout Britain's Atlantic empire. The motive for the British government's turning a blind eye to a trade that broke international treaties was that it served as a valuable source of silver and other precious metals to help pay the island nation's trade imbalances with the Baltic and Asia. And while the Caribbean never provided anywhere near as much silver as direct trade with Spain did, it was still considered of vital importance by British policy makers.<sup>104</sup> In 1691 it was reported that the sugar fleet returned from Jamaica carrying over £100,000 sterling in precious metals; in 1701 it was calculated at £150,000.<sup>105</sup> Even during the 1730s, when trade was generally depressed across the region, it was estimated that Jamaicans had imported £250,000 in goods and up to £500,000 in bullion from Spanish America.<sup>106</sup> The most detailed figures date only from mid-century when an examination was made by Parliament into the amount of bullion imported and brought to the Bank of England from the American

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<sup>102</sup> Sent to Cartagena to be imprisoned on the galleon fleet, de Hoyo escaped in his son's privateer from Guárico in what is now Venezuela. Don Jacobo de la Pezuela, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico de la Isla de Cuba*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Establecimiento de Mallado, 1863), 188; and "Al Tribunal de la Casa de la Contratación de Cádiz ordenándole que en el caso de arribar a aquel puerto o de ser hallado Don Juan del Hoyo Solórzano y Sotomayor sea arrestado y asegurado, 21 de junio de 1733" in Antonio Muro Orejón, ed., *Cedulario americano del siglo XVIII: colección de disposiciones legales indianas desde 1680 a 1800, contenidas en el Archivo General de Indias*, vol. 3 (Seville: CSIC Press, 1977), 145.

<sup>103</sup> Extracto sobre los ilícitos comercios que se cometen en las costas de la Villa del Puerto del Príncipe, 1735, Santo Domingo, 381, AGI. For other instances of *principeños* taking up arms against Spanish authorities, see: Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 178.

<sup>104</sup> In the 1730s British silver imports from Spain averaged around £450,000 sterling annually (2,000,000 million pesos). In the same period Portugal, by then effectively an economic colony of Britain, supplied around £1,125,000 annually. Artur Attman, *American Bullion in European World Trade*, 62 and 64.

<sup>105</sup> "An estimate of what value is shipt every year from Jamaica to England, April 20, 1700," Sloane Ms 2902, BL; and "Abstract of the Representation of the Lord Commissioners of Trade concerning the Island of Jamaica, 1735," CO 137/48, TNA.

<sup>106</sup> George H. Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento," *The American Historical Review* 51:1 (1945): 64.

colonies. It was found that in the years 1748-65, Jamaicans had supplied the Bank with £2,368,484 sterling, or nearly £140,000 a year.<sup>107</sup> That figure constitutes a lower bound for estimating the amount of bullion received in payment by Jamaican merchants, for much of it never entered through the Bank's doors.



**Figure 7**  
Spanish Piece of Eight, 1739.  
(Public Domain)

A significant fraction of the Spanish coins that flowed into the island either stayed there or were used to help pay the island's debts with the hundreds of North American traders who visited the island annually carrying provisions, lumber and other supplies.<sup>108</sup> In return, they normally took West Indian molasses and bills of exchange payable in England northward. However, Jamaica produced relatively little molasses for export due to its sugar planters'

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<sup>107</sup> The rest of the American colonies had provided £308,000 in that span. "Account of Bullion imported and brought to the Bank of England from Jamaica & the other West India Islands & the British Colonies in North America from the year 1748 to the year 1765," WWM/R/34/5f, SCL.

<sup>108</sup> A considerable body of scholarship has examined this trade, albeit almost entirely from the perspective of the thirteen colonies and tends to generalize about the different colonies in the Caribbean. See, for example: Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1964); Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*; Cathy D. Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); John J. McCusker *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989); and Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (New York, NY: Longmans, Green, 1956).

preference for focusing on the production of muscovado sugar and rum, which consumed most of the molasses created on their estates.<sup>109</sup> As a result, North American traders who called at Jamaica took their payment primarily in hard currency or bills of exchange. Between 1735 and 1752 over 2,500 North American vessels called at Jamaica, and on their departure nearly eight hundred were in ballast and more than half the remainder carried only between one and five hogsheads of sugar or molasses. In 1751, it was calculated that the imports from North America into Jamaica that year were worth £80,500 sterling, but that the mainland colonists only carried off produce worth approximately £20,900 and paid another £6,470 in port charges. The remaining £63,000 was paid off in Spanish coins or bills of exchange, “all of which goes to the French” to purchase molasses in Saint Domingue complained one governor.<sup>110</sup> While trade between the North Americans and the French was indeed significant, the Governor’s complaint was somewhat exaggerated. Spanish coins were the primary circulating specie in the mainland colonies, and indeed continued to be legal tender in the United States into the nineteenth century.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> John McCusker calculated that, on average, only 2% of Jamaica’s sugar and sugar byproducts went to North America, compared with 5.5% of Antigua’s and 4% of Barbados’. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), 135-59, 170, and 213.

<sup>110</sup> “Report of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations on the present state of the island of Jamaica presented to the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, February 22, 1753,” Ms 040, JNL; and State of the Island of Jamaica 1752; and Sir Charles Knowles to the Board of Trade, November 18, 1752, CO 137/25, TNA.

The Thirteen Colonies carried on a sizeable trade with the French Caribbean, where mainland provisions could be sold for a greater profit than in the British colonies due to the relative paucity of French shipping to supply them. While this trade itself was legal—though bitterly resented by Anglo-American sugar planters—many mainland merchants evaded the duty levied on foreign sugar and molasses upon their return to their home ports. See: Thomas C. Barrow, *Trade and Empire; the British Customs Service in Colonial America, 1660-1775* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); and Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>111</sup> John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 7; and Curtis Nettels, *The Money Supply of the American Colonies before 1720* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1934), chap. 9.



The trade with Spanish America may also have helped increase the numbers of Africans who were shipped to Jamaica, rather than elsewhere in the British Caribbean. For the Spanish trade provided a steady market for slaves, and one that paid in hard money as well. If slave traders could receive their payment at least partly in cash, it would obviate many of the risks and delays in the normal two to three-year credit cycle for slave sales.<sup>112</sup> As one Bristol slave trader wrote to his Jamaican factor regarding how best to dispose of a cargo of slaves, selling to the Spanish traders was “ten times better than trusting them to the planters & serving [suit] for payment after one year’s credit.”<sup>113</sup>

Silver coins were far from the only good Jamaica received from Spanish America, though they do figure most prominently in scholarly and contemporary accounts of the island’s trade. Cuban tobacco, hides and French indigo were all imported into Jamaica via illicit trade. Largely unrecognized, Jamaica was second only to Ireland as a source of cowhides to England during the eighteenth century, receiving thousands of hides from Cuba—hence why the prices quoted in Table 2.1 were quoted in them. The scale of this trade is evidenced by the fact that during the British occupation of Havana in 1762 Jamaica’s hide exports plunged from over five thousand to less than fifteen hundred as Cubans sold their hides directly to the British occupiers.<sup>114</sup> French indigo and Cuban tobacco were either shipped to Europe or North America to repay debts with mainland merchants, though the latter was illegal under the Navigation Acts. For example, the Jewish merchants Diego and Abraham Gonzalez shipped £1,485 in Spanish coins along with

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<sup>112</sup> Jacob Price, “Credit in the Slave Trade and Plantation Economies,” in *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System*, ed. Barbara L. Solow (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 295.

<sup>113</sup> Richard Meyler II to Jeremiah Meyler, June 10, 1758, in Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers*, 335.

<sup>114</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 171-73.

sixty-five hundred pounds of Cuban snuff and a thousand pounds of French indigo from Kingston to New York between 1720 and 1724.<sup>115</sup>

The most important agricultural commodity Jamaicans received from Cuba, however, was the humble mule. Mules are the offspring of male donkeys and female horses and are themselves almost invariably sterile, so breeding mules thus requires large herds of donkeys and mares. Despite these handicaps, however, mules are also capable of carrying more weight than horses and had longer working lives than oxen, as much as twenty or thirty years.<sup>116</sup> These capabilities, joined with mules' surefootedness over hilly or mountainous terrain, made them vital to the success of Jamaica's expanding sugar complex in the eighteenth century. Without them the island's sugar industry would have been severely hampered.

Mules' fulfilled two key roles in the workings of a sugar plantation: powering the mills used for crushing the cane and transporting sugar and rum to the coast for export to Europe. Once sugarcane is harvested it must be quickly ground in a mill to extract the juice in the stalks from which the sugar is extracted. In Barbados and the Leeward Islands, the constancy of the trade winds, joined with the lack of available pasturage for livestock, meant that windmills were the most prominent type of cane mills.<sup>117</sup> The same was not the case in Jamaica, however, where the winds were less reliable. Water mills were an option, but required considerable capital to erect as well as access to a steady water source. As a result, Jamaican estates relied primarily on animal-powered mills. In 1732, the island was reported to have only one windmill, but over five

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<sup>115</sup> Calculated from the brothers' correspondence in CO 104/14, TNA.

<sup>116</sup> Leonard Wray, *The practical sugar planter: a complete account of the cultivation and manufacture of the sugar-cane, according to the latest and most improved processes. Describing and comparing the different systems pursued in the East and West Indies and the Straits of Malacca, and the relative expenses and advantages attendant upon each: being the result of sixteen years' experience as a sugar planter in those countries.* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1848), 61.

<sup>117</sup> In 1712, Barbados had 409 windmills and only 78 cattle mills. Verene A. Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery: Contested Terrain in Colonial Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2009), 30-31; and Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 112-14.

hundred “cattle” mills.<sup>118</sup> Even as late as 1804, the island boasted 656 such mills as compared to only 88 windmills and 333 watermills.<sup>119</sup> Although referred to as cattle mills, these mills could be powered by mules, cattle, or even slaves in times of necessity. Mules were the preferred motor, however, because they ground at a faster rate than cattle. It was estimated that an eighteenth-century mill pulled by five oxen or horses could produce 125 gallons of juice an hour, while the same mill powered by mules was able to produce 180 gallons.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, in Saint Domingue where French planters faced many of the same constraints as they did in Jamaica sugar mills were referred to as “mule mills.”<sup>121</sup>

These mills were generally composed of three vertical rollers, made either of copper or wood covered with iron, close to one another, and made to turn on pivots. The middlemost roller was rotated by the animals and the two others were turned by cogs connecting them to the middle one. Two slaves would work the mill, feeding canes through singly or at most by threes between the rollers and then back through again. A basin below would catch the juice and a trough would carry it to the boiling house to begin the process of producing sugar. It was estimated that animal powered mills could extract as much as sixty-five percent of juice from the canes, while windmills would only grind fifty percent. Even early steam mills only ground around sixty percent.<sup>122</sup>

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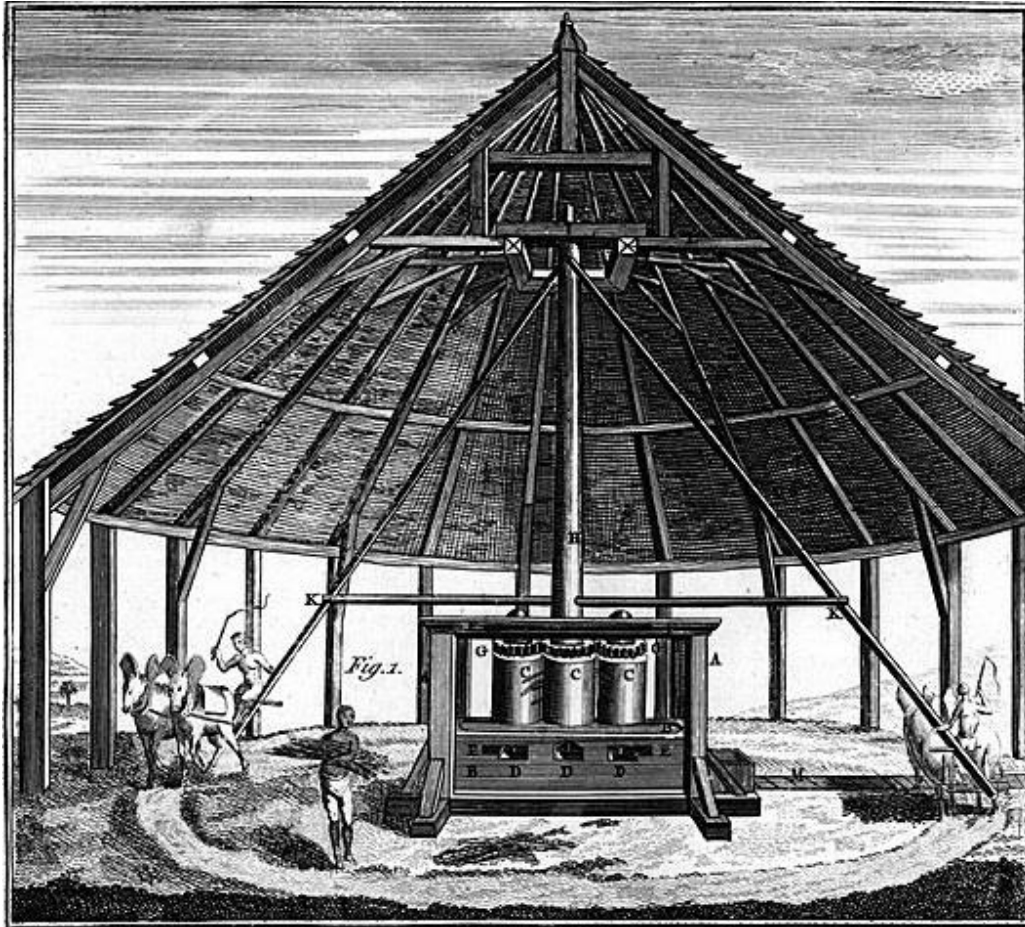
<sup>118</sup> Unknown to Unknown, December 22, 1732, Ms 248, JNL.

<sup>119</sup> Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, 31.

<sup>120</sup> A water wheel could produce around 110 gallons. Ward Barrett, “Caribbean Sugar-Production Standards in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Merchants & Scholars: Essays in the History of Exploration and Trade*, ed. John Parker (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 157.

<sup>121</sup> *The Art of making sugar. With an appendix containing the art of fermenting and distilling molasses, scums, &c. for rum* (London: Printed for R. Willock, 1752), 10; and Juan Giusti-Cordero, “Sugar and livestock: Contraband Networks in Hispaniola and the Continental Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century,” *Revista Brasileira do Caribe* 15:29 (2014), 27.

<sup>122</sup> Michael Craton and James Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation: The History of Worthy Park 1670-1970* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 107.



**Figure 8**  
Mule-powered sugar mill with vertical rollers  
Copperplate engraving, London, 1764.

Mules performed other tasks on plantations as well, such as transporting firewood to the boiling house and carrying harvested canes from the fields to the sugar works, but apart from powering the grinding mill their most important task was transporting the finished sugar and rum produced on an estate to the coast for shipment to Europe.<sup>123</sup> Jamaica consists of a narrow coastal plain dominated by the steep ridges of the Blue Ridge, John Crow, and Dry Harbour

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<sup>123</sup> William Beckford, *A descriptive account of the island of Jamaica with remarks upon the cultivation of the sugar-cane ... also observations and reflections upon what would probably be the consequences of an abolition of the slave-trade, and of the emancipation of the slaves*, vol. 1 (London: Printed for T. and J. Edgerton, 1790), 260 and 263.

mountains in the interior where most plantations were located. The difficulties of the terrain were compounded by the poor state of the island's roads. Following the English pattern, public works were the responsibility of the different parishes, which, in effect, meant the local planters gathered together in the vestries. By law, each parish was required to annually choose four surveyors to inspect the highways in the parish and to draw from every estate in the district a set number of slaves to labor on road repair and construction. But, as the Jamaican historian Edward Long complained, slaves' owners "being in haste to get to the end of the space respectively assigned them, dispatch it with so little care, and in so slovenly a manner, as for the most part to leave the way rather worse if possible than they found it."<sup>124</sup>

Even as late as the nineteenth century travelling the roads of Jamaica was a harrowing experience. Matthew Gregory Lewis left a vivid description of the road from his estate to the coastal plain in the 1820s:

The road is bordered by tremendous precipices for about twelve miles... The chief danger, however, proceeds from the steepness of the road, which in some places will not permit the wagons to stop, however well their conductors may be inclined; then down they come drawn by twelve or fourteen, or sometimes sixteen oxen, sweeping everything before them, and any carriage unlucky enough to find itself in their course must infallibly be dashed over the precipice.<sup>125</sup>

The challenges and dangers of transporting sugar and rum over such roads are obvious.

Worthy Park, one of Jamaica's largest and most long-lived sugar plantations, still in operation to this day, provides a clear example of the challenges of the mountainous terrain for planters. The estate is located in a valley in the John Crow mountains in St Catherine parish, and its owners had to transport their produce nearly twenty-eight miles to the coast to load onto

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<sup>124</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, p. 469

<sup>125</sup> Matthew Gregory Lewis M.P., *A Journal of a West India Proprietor* (London: Murray, 1834), 360-61.

ships. Over that same distance, the road fell two thousand feet—most of it in the first few miles. Such was the poor state of the road that until 1789 its owners did not risk transporting their sugar in hogsheads on wagons. Instead, the crystals were packed into “hessian bags” weighing between one and two hundred pounds on the backs of mules for the trip down to the coastal plain. At the height of the crop season, batches of thirty to thirty-eight bags, totaling five to six thousand pounds of sugar, arrived each day at Price’s Pen at the base of the mountains where the sugar was repacked into the traditional hogsheads and transferred to oxcarts.<sup>126</sup>

Such was the importance of mules that it was estimated by various commentators that, to produce two hundred hogsheads of sugar annually (approximately three hundred thousand pounds) an estate required sixty mules.<sup>127</sup> An examination of sugar plantations as they expanded over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveals the number of mules they possessed increased steadily as well. In 1673 Worthy Park possessed eight horses and six mules, but by 1730 when the estate was producing around two hundred and fifty hogsheads of sugar annually over sixty cattle and ninety mules worked on the plantation.<sup>128</sup> The relative importance of mules to the day-to-day operation of the sugar plantation is apparent from their distribution among the four sugar plantations and two livestock pens owned by the merchant and planter Alexander MacFarlane. At the time of his death, 166 mules were kept on his four sugar estates and only 57 in the pens, while 729 cattle were in the pens and only 177 on the estates.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Craton and Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation*, 112. In Cuba as well, the roads were in such poor condition that mules were used to transport sugar from the plantations to Havana for export. McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 123.

<sup>127</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The history, civil and commercial, of the British West Indies*, vol. 2 (London, 1793), 240; and Thomas Roughley, *The Jamaica Planter’s Guide; or, A System for Planting and Managing a Sugar Estate, or other plantations in that island, and throughout the British West Indies in general* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 332.

<sup>128</sup> Craton and Walvin, *A Jamaican Plantation*, 31 and 56.

<sup>129</sup> MacFarlane also held 687 slaves on his sugar estates and 72 at the pens. An inventory & appraisement of all & singular the goods & chattels of Alexander McFarlane Esq., 1756, 1B/11/3/36, JNA.

The steady increase in the number of mules at Worthy Park was mirrored across the island, and, as a result, so were Jamaica's ties with Cuba. For, despite repeated calls for the development of a mule-breeding industry in Jamaica, one never developed, and Jamaicans continued to rely on imports of mules from Spanish America.<sup>130</sup> Early in the eighteenth century, when the colony's sugar industry was still relatively small—less than two-hundred thousand pounds were produced in 1710—relatively few animals were imported.<sup>131</sup> From 1709 to 1711, fewer than three hundred horses and mules were recorded as entering the island.<sup>132</sup> But over the following decades as the sugar industry grew to nearly seven hundred thousand pounds annually in 1750 the Jamaican-Cuban livestock trade grew ever greater. As Table 2.3 shows over four hundred mules were imported annually in the 1730s and over six hundred in the following decade.<sup>133</sup> By the 1760s when the island's sugar industry had expanded dramatically, the need for mules climbed even higher, with as many as two thousand animals imported every year.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, 470.

<sup>131</sup> McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 152.

<sup>132</sup> Goods imported to Jamaica from 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1709 to 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 1711, CO 137/10, TNA.

<sup>133</sup> McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 152.

<sup>134</sup> Answers to 1764 questionnaire on the state of the island by Governor Lyttleton, Ms 239, JNL.

**Figure 9**  
 Jamaican Livestock Imports, 1729-49  
 Add Ms 18273, British Library

Animal	From Where	October 31, 1729- October 31, 1739	October 31, 1739- October 31, 1749	Total
Cattle	Spanish Coast	92	31	123
	Thirteen Colonies	32	24	56
	Cape Verde Islands	-	64	64
	Total	124	119	243
Horses	Spanish Coast	185	922	1,107
	Northern Colonies	1,315	1,614	2,929
	Total	1,500	2,536	4,036
Mules	Spanish Coast	4,215	6,192	10,407
	Thirteen Colonies	70	-	70
	Total	4,285	6,192	10,477

The pervasiveness of mules from Spanish testimony is also testified to by surviving eighteenth-century Jamaican newspapers whose pages contain nearly as many advertisements for livestock as they did for runaway slaves. In 1772, for instance, the *Jamaica Courant* advertised “a parcel of choice Spanish mules, lately arrived and to be sold by Benjamin Pereira.” A few years later *The Cornwall Chronicler and Jamaica General Advertiser* proclaimed that “Spanish mules and horses” were for sale in Montego Bay.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Extract of Jamaican Newspaper sent with Lt. Gov. John Dalling to the Board of Trade, December 19, 1772, CO 137/68; *The Cornwall Chronicler and Jamaica General Advertiser*, February 19 and February 26, 1785, MGS/46, The National Maritime Museum.



The reason for the popularity of Spanish mules as compared with those from North America was that the former were already acclimated to the heat of the Caribbean and did not have to suffer through a long and debilitating sea voyage before their arrival in Jamaica.<sup>136</sup> This demand for Spanish mules was the major factor behind the dominance of Cuba in Jamaica's regional trade. While some mules were also imported into Jamaica from Rio de la Hacha in modern-day Venezuela, most of the animals clandestinely exported from South America went to Saint Domingue or to the nearby Leeward Islands.<sup>137</sup> In contrast, Cuba lay less than two hundred miles off Jamaica's northern coast. Small vessels could easily and swiftly travel there and purchase a cargo of mules at £9 sterling a head, then sell them for £14 sterling in Jamaica—a highly profitable endeavor.<sup>138</sup>

### Conclusion

In his magisterial *War and Trade in the West Indies*, Richard Pares marveled at the “remarkable degree” to which Jamaican planters identified and supported the illicit traders whose activities justified the existence of the *guardacostas* who so bedeviled the island's trade.<sup>139</sup> The reason for that can be found in the sturdy mules that were omnipresent throughout the island and were so instrumental in the production and transport of sugar. Far more than commonly supposed, inter-imperial trade within the Caribbean was central to Jamaica's role as a sugar producer and caused planters to acknowledge and value the island's illicit trade—at least with Spanish America. At the same time, the yield from that trade made Jamaica the “constant mine”

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<sup>136</sup> Shepherd, *Livestock, Sugar and Slavery*, 69.

<sup>137</sup> Giusti-Cordero, “Sugar and livestock,” 27.

<sup>138</sup> Long, *The History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, 549.

<sup>139</sup>Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 84 fn. 5.

of British America, providing massive quantities of silver not only to Britain, but to the mainland colonies as well.<sup>140</sup>

Contraband trade was important to Jamaica, but it was even more vital in Cuba where it provided the primary access to the wider Atlantic market and the “empire of goods” that flowed from Europe to its colonies.<sup>141</sup> Smuggled clothing was omnipresent in Cuban society, visible at all levels from the poorest farmer to the peninsula-born governors. Entire communities in central and southern Cuba built their economies around it, serving as livestock breeding grounds for the Jamaican market. The majority of foreign goods and African captives who were smuggled into the island remained there, clothing the populace and providing the labor that fed the island’s nascent sugar industry, although an unknown quantity of smuggled cloth was re-exported to Veracruz and South America by Cuban merchants. Contraband goods were thus disseminated from Cuba throughout Spain’s American empire.<sup>142</sup>

Records of nearly six-hundred Jamaican smuggling voyages survive for the four decades following the Peace of Utrecht, representing a fraction of the constant traffic that flowed from the island to Spanish America. This massive multi-lateral web of clandestine inter-imperial exchange was made possible by the development in Kingston of a body of traders and mariners experienced in international trade. By the eighteenth century, these traders had developed a network of contacts stretching outward from Jamaica to the Spanish colonies and across the Atlantic to Europe who kept them constantly informed of market conditions and opportunities. Simultaneously, a professional class of smugglers had arisen in Cuba who made their living

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<sup>140</sup> Charles Leslie, *A New History of Jamaica. In Thirteen Letters from a Gentleman to his Friend* (Dublin: Printed for Oliver Nelson, 1741), 246.

<sup>141</sup> This phrase was coined by T.H. Breen to describe the impact of manufactured goods on creating a trans-Atlantic British identity in the eighteenth-century mainland colonies. Breen, “An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776,” *Journal of British Studies*, 25:4 (1986): 467-499.

<sup>142</sup> Havana maintained a lively flour trade with Veracruz, while Santiago de Cuba maintained close ties with New Grenada. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 168; and McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 191.

through trafficking in contraband cargoes. Some, such as Ignacio Clara, served as translators and guides, while others served as middlemen for wealthy merchants in towns and cities across the island. Together these traders, sailors, and muleteers created a clandestine regional economy that bound Jamaica and Cuba together in an ever-closer commercial relationship. Without these inter-imperial bonds, neither Jamaica nor Cuba could have functioned. Illicit trade made Europe's empires in the region viable—and profitable.

Yet, despite its size and importance, this illicit economy was nevertheless hampered by its illegality. Bribing officials, defending one's vessel, and fierce competition among traders all cut into profits. Simultaneously, the immediate, short-term nature of clandestine exchanges severely limited the quantity of goods an individual trader could expect to sell on a given voyage. Nevertheless, the trade was lucrative, and the seemingly infinite market offered by Spanish America was enough to lure the South Sea Company and its investors to the region. The Company sought to supplant these regional trading links through the openings created by the *asiento*, but its agents would prove to be most successful only when they joined pre-existing networks of illicit trade. And though they were fiercely attacked by their enemies in Jamaica, the Company's employees did not displace Kingston's merchants, but instead created yet another avenue of trade between the two empires.

### Chapter 3

#### The South Sea Company and the *Asiento*, 1720-1740

In January 1736, the South Sea Company's Jamaican agents Edward Manning and James Merewether penned a private letter to the Company's secretary Peter Burrell. In it, they recounted their dispatch of a vessel from Jamaica to Panama carrying a considerable cargo of flour and manufactured goods to sell on the agents' behalf. Knowledge of such abuses of the *asiento* was widespread in Europe, both in England and among Spanish officials. Furious at the widespread smuggling penetrating their supposedly autarkic empire, Spanish authorities were laying ever-increasing bureaucratic and administrative burdens on the operation of the *asiento*. In the face of official anger, the pair warmly defended their conduct; arguing that they could not be expected to prevent private trade with Spanish America carried on by the Company's employees. The letter closed with a comment that aptly summarized Anglo-Americans' attitudes and justification for their illicit trade to Spanish territories: "the Ministers at Madrid may give what orders he pleases & the Commerce at Seville may take their own measures, but still a people who want goods will find out ways for a supply." So why should they not be the ones who provided those goods?<sup>1</sup>

Manning and Merewether's letter underscores the true nature of the South Sea Company's *asiento*. Far from being focused on fulfilling its contract of supplying Spanish America with slave labor, for the Company's employees and Directors the *asiento* was viewed as

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Manning and John Merewether to Peter Burrell, January 6, 1736/37, William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, CL.

a means through which to carry on an illicit trade with the Spanish colonies. Partly this was due to the near impossibility of actually supplying the almost five thousand captives a year the contract demanded. Even during the first years of the *asiento*, when English public enthusiasm ran high for the endeavor, the Company was unable to meet its contractual obligations, but in the aftermath of the War of the Quadruple Alliance and the ruinous South Sea Bubble the situation was even more difficult.

Nevertheless, the Company rebuilt its factories, hired new factors to operate them, and recommenced the slave trade for another nineteen years. And during its nearly three-decades of activity the South Sea Company successfully supplied over sixty-four thousand slaves to Spanish America, including over eight thousand to Cuba. But overall the Company's slave trade was a failure. Not once did the Company meet its required annual quota of forty-eight hundred *piezas de india*, and the profits on those captives that were delivered were nearly non-existent. The reasons for this failure were many, but two were particularly debilitating. The first was the factors' continued sale of slaves on credit, despite repeated orders not to do so. In Cuba, for example, the Company normally received only a third of the sale price of a slave in specie or agricultural produce, the rest was on credit. The failure of the factors to keep accurate accounts of their activities—primarily to hide their corruption—made it extremely difficult for the Company to collect those debts. The difficulties of debt collection were only exacerbated by the second major factor: the disruption of the War of the Quadruple Alliance from 1718-20 and the Anglo-Spanish War of 1727-29. In both conflicts the Company's factories were seized by Spanish authorities along with all their goods and records. Not only did these *represalias* cost the Company heavily materially, but the loss of their accounts made debt collection nearly

impossible. As a result of these losses, the Company's shareholders were increasingly unhappy with the *asiento* and by the mid-1730s the Company's slave trade had slowed to a trickle.

These losses on the slave trade were not of great concern for the Company's leadership and its employees in the Americas, however, for, to them, the Company's chief purpose was the carrying on of illicit trade. This commerce was not done for the benefit of the Company's shareholders, but rather for the private profit of the employees who organized it and the small group of Directors centered around Sir John Eyles who supported them. Vessels carrying slaves from Jamaica also carried manufactured goods and foodstuffs, ostensibly for the use of the factories but really to sell to Spanish colonists. This "private trade," as it was called, far surpassed both the slave trade and the infamous annual ships in undermining Spain's commercial monopoly. And, ultimately, it is the most important aspect of the Company's legacy.

Adrien Finucane has argued convincingly that the Company's "real importance" arose "from its bringing together of the Spanish and British imperial projects at the level of individual actors."<sup>2</sup> This chapter builds on Finucane's argument by using a detailed study of the careers of four of the Company's longest-serving employees—Jonathan Dennis, Wargent Nicholson, Edward Pratter, and Edward Manning—to reveal the workings of the clandestine commerce carried on under the *asiento*. Together the careers of these four men demonstrate that the success of the private trade carried on by the South Sea Company's agents arose from two primary

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain, and the Struggle for Empire* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 17.

Other studies of the *asiento* include: Vera Lee Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade," *The American Historical Review* 31:4 (1926): 662-78; Elizabeth Donnan, "The Early Days of the South Sea Company, 1711-1718," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 2 (1929-1930): 422-28; Jean O. MachLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940), chap. 3; George H. Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento," *The American Historical Review* 51:1 (1945): 55-67; Colin A. Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981); and Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1979), chaps. 4-10.

reasons. The first was opportunity. The vessels hired to supply the Company's factories with slaves and supplies served as the perfect cover for the clandestine introduction of foreign goods directly into Spanish cities. This was an advantage not enjoyed by normal smugglers who had to use their own vessels and land their goods on empty coastlines far from population centers. The second was the ability of agents and factors to legally reside in and trade to Spanish-America for years. This unprecedented access allowed them to integrate themselves into local communities and forge transnational personal and commercial networks with Spanish colonists and officials unavailable to traditional smugglers.

Such was the strength of these carefully cultivated relationships that these men and their colleagues were able to not only arrange the entry and sale of contraband on a massive scale while in the Company's service, but even maintain them well after the *asiento* itself had collapsed. And while their own profit was always uppermost in their minds, the Company's activities also proved of great benefit to Spanish colonists. In Cuba, the factories in Havana and Santiago de Cuba helped provide the labor for the island's tobacco fields, nascent sugar industry, shipyards, and even the means to feed its cities. In the end, despite the attacks of its many opponents in both empires, the *asiento*—proclaimed as “the strongest cement of affection and good correspondence between the subjects of both Kingdoms”—did come close to fulfilling its boasts, just not in the way its framers had intended.<sup>3</sup>

### **Human Cargoes**

Following the War of the Quadruple Alliance the South Sea Company attempted to rebuild its slave trade to Spanish America. But although tens of thousands of African captives

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<sup>3</sup> Memorial of Richard Rigby and Edward Pratter in Minutes of Council, September 23, 1725, 1B/5/3/10, JNA.

were sold to Spanish colonists under its auspices, the trade was a failure in the eyes of its shareholders. The continual reliance on credit and the disruptions caused by conflicts in Europe prevented the Company's shareholders from realizing any profits from its trade in human beings. Nor did the annual ships, which had been included in the *asiento* to counteract the difficulties of profiting from the slave trade, prove more profitable. Although the Company initiated another burst of activity in the early 1730s in a final effort to realize a profit from the contract, by the middle years of that decade an increasingly conservative Board of Directors had effectively abandoned the *asiento*.

The slave trade carried on by the South Sea Company after 1720 was significantly different than before. Previously, the Company had maintained two entrepôts in the Caribbean—one at Jamaica and a smaller one at Barbados. The former supplied Havana, Panama, Cartagena, Veracruz and the latter had organized the slave trade to Caracas and Santiago de Cuba.<sup>4</sup> But after the war, the Company decided to close the Barbados agency and farm out the trade to Caracas.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the Company had initially contracted with the Royal African Company to supply captives to its agents in the Caribbean, but this practice largely ceased following 1720.<sup>6</sup> Instead, contracts were issued to individual slave-traders to secure cargoes of human captives in West Africa and deliver them to the agents in Jamaica for distribution to the various factories. By

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<sup>4</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 59-60.

<sup>5</sup> In the next two decades, over 4,700 slaves were delivered to the Caracas factory, with most coming from either Barbados or St Kitts. Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 59 and 107.

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 28, 1713/14, Add Ms 25550, BL. The decline of the South Sea Company's contracts with the Royal African Company may have resulted from the decline in the latter's slave trade following the end of its monopoly in 1712. For studies of the Company, see: Kenneth Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957); and William A. Pettigrew, *Freedom's Debt: The Royal African Company and the Politics of the Atlantic slave trade, 1672-1752* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).



1729, even that ended and the Company's agents were ordered to purchase slaves from slave ships arriving in Jamaica as they required.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of these changes, the Jamaican agents of the Company were the linchpin of the Company's trade with Spanish America. They directed the flow of African captives to the various factories, supplied the factors with provisions and other goods, received the payments for the slaves sold, and remitted them to England. They were also the chief organizers, or at least co-conspirators, in the massive contraband trade carried on by the Company's employees. Initially the agents were paid on a commission of twenty shillings Jamaican currency (fourteen shillings three pence sterling) for every slave shipped to the Spanish Coast, but in 1728 that was changed to a one percent commission on all returns made from Jamaica.<sup>8</sup> This was augmented by a ruthless commitment to cheating the company at every turn in the carrying out of the *asiento*.

The agents' chief role was to receive or purchase captives following their arrival in Jamaica from Africa, "refresh" them after the horrors of the Middle Passage, and then deliver them to the factories as the factors called for. By the 1730s, many of the slaves who were unloaded were kept in a ninety by thirty-foot pen on Harbor Street in Kingston, right at the water's edge.<sup>9</sup> There they were cleaned, fed, provided with tobacco, and rested to help them recover their health, though the extent to which they actually recovered is doubtful considering

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<sup>7</sup> Examples of these contracts can be found in Minutes of the General Court, May 7, June 25, and July 30, 1724, Add Ms 25502, BL. Orders to purchase slaves in Jamaica were issued in Minutes of the General Court, December 19, 1729, Add Ms 25503, BL.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the General Court, September 15, 1721, Add Ms 25500, BL; and Minutes of the General Court, June 21, 1728, Add Ms 25503, BL.

<sup>9</sup> A slave pen for this purpose is included in the Kingston Quitrent List for 1745 belonging to the Pratter Estate but occupied by Edward Manning, Kingston Vestry Minutes of May 8, 1745, 2/6/1, JNA. For the size of lots on Harbor Street see: Wilma Bailey, "Kingston, 1692-1843: A Colonial City" (PhD Diss. UWI Mona, 1974), 89.

the famously unhealthy nature of Kingston and the agents' tendency to cheat the Company by skimping on expenses and provisions.<sup>10</sup>

Most slaves stayed in the pens for less than a month. Once they had recovered, or at least were judged to appear to have done so, they were dispatched to the various factories on sloops either hired or owned by the Company. These sloops, with celebratory names such as *Asiento*, *Prince of Asturias*, and the *Don Carlos*, were often commanded by masters who had formerly been smugglers to Spanish America.<sup>11</sup> The choice of such men made sense due to their knowledge of the Spanish coastlines and harbors, but frequently angered Spanish officials, for old habits of illicit trade died hard.

The Company tried to maintain certain standards for the makeup of the human cargoes they dispatched to the Spanish colonies. According to the contract with the Royal African Company, two-thirds of the captives delivered were to be males between the ages of ten and forty with nine-tenths between sixteen and forty—thus meeting the requirements for a *pieza de india*.<sup>12</sup> These gender requirements were met to some degree; a sample of 970 slaves imported by the Company into Spanish America between 1715 and 1735 included 584 male and 386 female slaves. But over a third were under sixteen or over forty.<sup>13</sup> Spanish Americans had other requirements as well. Like Anglo-American planters, they preferred certain Africans groups to

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<sup>10</sup> Edward Searle to Edward Manning, October 9, 1738, Ms 130, JNL. For an overview of Kingston's disease-ridden environment, see: Colin G. Clarke, *Kingston Jamaica: Urban Development and Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), chap. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Among them was Nathaniel Uring, who had written a famous memoir of his adventures as a sea captain and smuggler *before* joining the Company's service. Uring was named commander of the *Asiento* sloop in 1727. Minutes of the General Court of May 11, 1727, Add Ms 25503, BL. Uring's memoir was entitled: *A history of the voyages and travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring. With new draughts of the bay of Honduras and the Caribbee islands; and particularly of St. Lucia, and the harbour of Petite Carenage* (London, 1726).

The Jamaica agents also occasionally employed North American vessels to deliver slaves to Havana on their homeward voyages when the Company's sloops were unavailable. Court of Directors to Richard Rigby and Edward Pratter, November 11, 1724, Add Ms 25564, BL.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 28, 1713/14. Add Ms 25550, BL.

<sup>13</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 122, Table 27.

others; they would take “no others but Pappaws, Gold Coast, or Angolas,” for those from the Congo were considered “apt to run way.” Spaniards also preferred those without “filed teeth & breaches in the face.” Cubans seem to have been more inclined to accept female slaves, particularly “those who are not too much on the yellow cast.”<sup>14</sup> Those slaves who were considered “refuse” and unfit for the Spanish market were generally sold in Jamaica, though on at least one occasion Edward Pratter sent a shipment of a hundred such slaves to the French colony of Saint Domingue.<sup>15</sup>

Upon their arrival in either Havana or Santiago de Cuba, the slave-bearing sloops were boarded by Spanish officials who inspected the ship’s papers to prove that it belonged to the *asiento*, checked the health of the slaves carried, and searched for contraband. A particular concern was smallpox, which the Spaniards greatly feared—and with reason. In 1732 an estimated four thousand *habaneros* died after a South Sea Company ship arrived with smallpox-infected slaves.<sup>16</sup> Yet the agents showed little remorse. In 1739, when another Company sloop arrived in Havana carrying smallpox-infected slaves and was seized John Merewether complained that “they should have on the visit, have shown two of the sailor negroes for the cargo negroes, to have gratified the doctor visitor” and taken care of the sick ashore so “that no damage had ensued.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Tyndall and Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse and Company, November 13, 1729, in Elizabeth Donnan ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. 2 (Washington D.C: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), 382; Court of Directors to John Cumberledge and Peter Walsh, October 31, 1717, Add Ms 25563, BL; Smith & Baillies to Henry Bright, February 2, 1767, in Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 407; and John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 6, 1736, Shelburne Papers vol. 44.

<sup>15</sup> The Company decreed that “such a trade seeming to be of a clandestine sort is not fit for the Company to engage in” and the whole profits went to the two agents. Minutes of the General Court, October 21, 1726, Add Ms 25502, BL.

<sup>16</sup> Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to the King, January 26, 1732, Santo Domingo, 381, AGI.

<sup>17</sup> John Merewether to Sub- and Deputy Governors, Jamaica April 25, 1739, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

Once ashore, the captives were taken to the factories for sale. Both factories in Cuba were normally overseen by two factors, though at times the Havana factory also employed a bookkeeper and surgeon. The Company's Directors attempted to micromanage the factors' actions with detailed instructions of their tasks and how to comport themselves. Among other guidelines, they were enjoined to live in "a civil and friendly manner" with each other and to do nothing to offend the Catholic faith. Marriage to a Spaniard was forbidden and grounds for immediate termination. When a cargo of slaves arrived, they were immediately to be branded with the "negro marks" provided—in Havana this took the form of a the letter "H" circumscribed over the letter "A." In 1725 the Court of Directors even specified the precise technique to be used: "mark the negroes on the left shoulder, heating the mark red hot, and rubbing the part first with a little palm or other oil, and taking off the mark pretty quick, and rubbing the place again with the oil."<sup>18</sup> Any slaves found without the mark were assumed to have been introduced into the island illegally and were to be seized.



**Figure 10**  
Brand applied to slaves sold by the South Sea Company's Havana Factory  
Add Ms 25566, British Library

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 69.

Slaves were to be sold as soon as possible, ideally within two weeks of arrival, to prevent losses by their death or illness. The factors were enjoined to sell them for “ready money” rather than “fruits of the country.” And if credit must be given, the factors were forbidden to extend it for more than twelve months. Every slave sold was to have two copies of the bill of sale issued, one to the purchaser and one kept in the factory, in order to prevent illicitly introduced slaves from later being claimed as having been sold by the Company. Detailed accounts were to be kept and remitted to London frequently. In return, the factors were to receive a five percent commission on all their returns remitted to Jamaica and England.<sup>19</sup>

Both factories in Cuba did steady business, though neither was the largest or most profitable for the Company. Partly this was due to the relative scarcity of specie in the island compared to the mainland Spanish territories. The island had no gold or silver mines of its own, and received the money needed to pay the garrisons and governmental expenses via the *situado* from New Spain.<sup>20</sup> Most of that specie swiftly disappeared into contraband trade. As a result, much of the Cuban factories’ trade was in agricultural products, particularly tobacco and sugar. Between 1724 and 1739 at least twenty-three ships sailed from Havana to England carrying produce from the factory there, along with another eleven from Santiago de Cuba. They were

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<sup>19</sup> “Orders & Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Messrs. Jonathan Dennis, Hubert Tassel, and Leonard Cocke,” July 4, 1729, Add Ms 25566, BL. The surgeon was to receive a fixed salary. “Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Mr. Alexander Wright Appointed Surgeon at Havana,” August 1, 1729, Add Ms 25566, BL.

<sup>20</sup> The scarcity of specie was so severe that the Governor of Santiago de Cuba in 1730 proposed the erection of a mint for manufacturing copper coins that would be legal tender in the island. The mint was eventually approved in 1742, but does not appear to have ever gone into operation. See: Expediente sobre fábrica de moneda de vellón para la Isla de Cuba, 1731, Santo Domingo, 360, AGI; and Real Cedula, February 19, 1742, Santo Domingo, 364, AGI.

For an overview of the role of *situados* in providing specie to Spain’s West Indian territories, see: Carlos Marichal and Matilde Souto Mantecón, “Silver and Situados: New Spain and the Financing of the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 74:4 (1994): 587-613.

then dispatched onward to Amsterdam or Hamburg to sell their cargoes.<sup>21</sup> Three others were dispatched from Cuba to Cádiz, much to the frustration of the Directors who wished the vessels to be sent to England first.<sup>22</sup> The willingness of the factors to take tobacco and sugar was a boon to Cuban farmers limited by the restrictive Iberian commercial system. This was particularly true in the case of Cuban sugar in the 1720s, which could not compete in a Spanish market swamped by sugar from the French colonies. The factor's willingness to accept it certainly aided in the early development of the island's sugar industry, particularly in eastern Cuba.<sup>23</sup>

Despite this flexibility in payment options, the Cuban factories never turned a profit for the Company. This was largely the result of the factors continually issuing generous credit to slave buyers. They justified this by necessity, for many Cubans simply could not afford to purchase the slaves from the Company at the prices demanded—ostensibly 250 pesos for an adult slave but in reality, considerably higher—in either specie or agricultural products. So despite the high sale price of slaves in Cuba, because so much of it was in the form of debt, the Company was actually *losing* money on the trade. The issue is summarized in the table below.

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<sup>21</sup> For example, the sloop *Don Carlos* arrived in Plymouth with a cargo of sugar, hides and tobacco and was dispatched to Hamburg after prices current were considered for there, Amsterdam, and Cádiz. Minutes of the Court of Directors, October 28, 1725, Add Ms 25502, BL.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of the Court of Directors, September 3, 1718, Add MS 25498; Minutes of the Court of Directors, July 30, 1724, Add Ms 25502, BL; and Court of Directors to Richard Rigby and Edward Pratter, April 21, 1725, Add Ms 25564, BL.

<sup>23</sup> For overviews of the development of the sugar industry in Cuba in the early eighteenth century, see: John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 122-128; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7 (Madrid: Playor, 1978), chap. 1.

**Figure 11**

State of the Havana Factory, January 1731 to May 1736

Factory	Havana	Santiago De Cuba
# Slaves Sold	2,353	693
Total Purchase Price and Expenses (pesos)	272,923	79,395
Purchase Price and Expenses per Slave (pesos)	116	115
Purchase Price, Related Expenses, and Duty owed per Slave (pesos)	149	148
Total Credit from Slave Sales	660,014	215,539
Cash Received (pesos)	215,570	55,539
Debt Outstanding (pesos)	445,444	160,000
Sale price per slave (pesos)	280 ½	311
Sale price per slave received (pesos)	92	80
Net Profit per slaves (pesos)	-188 ½	-231

Source: A State or Calculate of the Asiento Trade for 5 years and 4 months from 1 Jan. 1730/31 to 1<sup>st</sup> May 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 43, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

Even larger debts were accumulated at the Company's other factories and help explain why the Company was so determined to avoid paying the duties owed to the Spanish Crown. While credit and debt were a central element of early modern trade, the Company's efforts to recover these debts were frustrated by two factors: the poor recordkeeping of the factors and the seizure of the Company's effects and records during the reprisals of 1718 and 1727. Both made debt collection near-impossible.

Despite repeated orders to keep clear and regularly transmitted “authentic accounts,” the Directors complained incessantly of the poor state of their factors’ accounts. In one case, Gibson Dalzell, the factor at Santiago de Cuba was even accused of burning his books upon his return to Jamaica and writing up new ones to conceal his corruption.<sup>24</sup> When the Havana factors Wargent Nicholson and Hubert Tassel attempted to settle their accounts with the Company following their dismissal in 1733, the disputes arising over them lasted until the 1750s.<sup>25</sup> Similar issues arose with the Jamaican agents. Following the suspension of the *asiento* in 1739, Edward Manning kept both the account books of the slave trade and all of the Company’s effects in his possession.<sup>26</sup> As a result, it was nearly impossible for the Company to trace or recover outstanding debts. These issues were only exacerbated by the seizures of the factories’ papers at the outbreak of the Anglo-Spanish War of 1727-29. Apart from the loss of its debts, it was estimated by the Company that between the 1718 and 1727 reprisals it had lost goods and slaves worth over 1,633,000 pesos (£367,440 sterling).<sup>27</sup>

Such losses made it understandable that the Company’s shareholders increasingly began to lose interest in the slave trade, particularly after the second reprisal. The Spanish ambassador to England Don Tomás Geraldino, who sat on the Company Board of Directors, tried several times to capitalize on this lack of interest and to buy out the remainder of the *asiento*. By doing

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<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the General Court, January, 19 and 26, 1732/33, Add Ms 25505, BL.

<sup>25</sup> Court of Directors to Muilman & Son, August 8, 1753, Add Ms 25558, BL.

<sup>26</sup> William Searle to George Arnold and Mr. Truman, November 28, 1745; and William Searle to Drake & Long, September 28, 1748, Add Ms 25558, BL.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of a Special Committee, October 13, 1737, Add Ms 32797, BL; and “An account of what remains due to the South Sea Company from the King of Spain on account of the Seizures made by the King of Spain’s Officers,” Shelburne Papers, vol. 43.

When the Company made demands for the return of its seized goods, Spanish officials claimed the money from their sale had already been spent to pay colonial garrisons and that the accounts had been lost, requiring specific orders from Madrid regarding restitution. David Westcomb to the Duke of Newcastle, August 1, 1730, Add Ms 32769, BL.

All conversion of Spanish coins to pounds sterling in this chapter is based on the conversion calculated by John McCusker: “from 1601 to 1816...the standard piece of eight [was] worth 53.9d or 4s6d.” *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 8.



so he hoped to end the legal foreign intrusion into Spain's empire, and curtail the contraband trade carried on by the Company. Although opposed by Sir John Eyles and the other Directors involved in illicit trade, by April 1734 there was enough support among the General Court for abandoning the *asiento* that a request was sent to George II asking for permission to treat for an equivalent. But such a policy did not suit the British government who feared that, if surrendered, the slave trade would swiftly fall into French hands just as it had in the War of the Spanish Succession. The request was denied.<sup>28</sup>

This loss of interest among the Company's investors impacted both elements of the *asiento*: the slave trade and the annual ships. Although there was an initial burst of enthusiasm for the trade in the early 1720s and again immediately after the second restoration of the factories in 1730, the Company's slave trade steadily declined and by the mid-1730s was miniscule. The following table gives an overview of the Company's trade in the two decades after 1720 and indicates the clear overall decline, particularly in Havana.

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<sup>28</sup> Geraldino offered the Company two percent of the profits of the *flotas* and *galeones* for the remainder of the *asiento* period as an equivalent. Minutes of the General Court, September 8, 1732, Add Ms 25505, BL; and Sperling, *The South Sea Company*, 45.

**Figure 12**  
The *Asiento* trade, 1722-38

Year	# of Ships to Spanish Ports	# of Slaves to Veracruz, Campeche, Panama, Cartagena, and Havana	# of Ships to Havana	Recorded # of Slaves to Havana	Estimated Average # of Slaves to Santiago de Cuba
1722	11	810	1	170	88
1723	16	2,761	4	204	88
1724	19	3,202	5	289	88
1725	23	3,860	8	637	88
1726	18	1,787	6	576	88
1727	9	942	2	150	88
1728	0	0	0	0	0
1729	5	392	1	69	88
1730	19	2,970	5	630	88
1731	29	4,520	10	1,105	88
1732	25	3,297	8	656	88
1733	15	2,184	2	76	88
1734	13	1,481	3	32	88
1735	12	1,787	0	0	0
1736	11	1,891	-	230	88
1737	9	979	4	75	88
1738	7	688	1	70	88
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>33,551</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4,969</b>	<b>1,320</b>

Source: Calculated from Tables 12, 14, 15, 17, and 19 in Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 103,105-06, and 108-09.

<sup>1</sup>There are no surviving annual records for the annual shipments of slaves to the Santiago de Cuba factory. These estimates were created using Palmer's figure of 1,759 slaves delivered to Santiago in the entire *asiento* period (1714-38) and averaging it to coincide with every year the Havana factory was open. This artificially flattens the considerable variation between years, but nevertheless gives some sense of the scale of the trade to the Cuban city.

In order to fulfill the terms of the *asiento*, the South Sea Company needed to supply at least 140,800 African captives to Spanish colonies, yet it did not supply even half that figure over the nearly three decades of its trade.<sup>29</sup> Only 67,000 captive Africans arrived in Spanish

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<sup>29</sup> Palmer, *Human Cargoes*, 111.

America under the Company's auspices, and of those approximately 41,000 were carried from Jamaica. The remainder either were dispatched to Buenos Aires directly from Africa or via Barbados. During its operation, the Company sold 6,400 captives in Havana and another 1,800 in Santiago de Cuba, approximately one-eighth of its total slave trade. Although nowhere near meeting the Company's obligations, these captives, particularly those shipped to Havana, did contribute to the expansion of the Cuban tobacco and sugar industries. By 1737, the island had nearly a hundred and sixty *ingenios* producing sugar and worked by slaves supplied by the *asentistas* or by smugglers.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the grandiose claims of the *asiento*'s proponents, the initial concerns by critics of the contract proved well-founded. The slave trade—due to its costs, the difficulties of coordination, corruption, and the interruptions of great power politics—proved unprofitable for the Company's investors. Nor did the annual ship, which allowed the Company to dispatch a vessel of five hundred tons openly laden with British goods, prove more profitable. Only nine annual ships sailed during the *asiento* period—and one of those was seized during the 1727 reprisal—with the last one sailing in 1732.<sup>31</sup> Though several voyages were very profitable, the money flowed primarily into the hands of the supercargoes and a select few of the Directors clustered around Sir John Eyles. The Company's shareholders actually suffered a loss of over £67,000 on the four voyages of the 1720s.<sup>32</sup> While certainly a boon to Spanish-American

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<sup>30</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain*, 127.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade*, 228-29, table 2.

<sup>32</sup> Sperling, *The South Sea Company*, 40. Although some early scholars of the *asiento* concluded that the annual ship was the largest source of contraband and effectively destroyed the Spanish imperial trading system, this was incorrect. Certainly at times individual trade fairs were ruined by the annual ships—such as the *Royal George's* voyage to Portobello in 1722—the amount of contraband carried on by the Company's employees and Jamaican, French, and Dutch smugglers far surpassed the annual ship. The annual ship, due to its visibility and prominence, was merely the symbol in Spanish officials' eyes of the corruption and perfidy of the Company. For examples of studies that emphasize the importance of the annual ship, see: Vera Lee Brown, "Contraband Trade: A Factor in the Decline of Spain's American Empire," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 12 (1932): 178-189; Nelson,

customers and a misery for the Africans captured to sustain it, the *asiento* made a profit only for those Anglo-Americans abusing it.

### **Private Trade**

The real value of the *asiento* arose from the massive contraband trade carried on by the Company's employees throughout Spanish America under its protections. This trade mirrored that of the illicit commerce long carried on by Jamaicans and other Europeans around the Caribbean by providing manufactured European goods, particularly textiles, to Spanish-American colonists. But it also provided large quantities of foodstuffs to feed the cities of Cuba and South America; providing relief to Spanish colonists from the failures of their own empire's commercial and agricultural systems. The *asiento* made illicit trade much safer than "normal" smuggling, for the vessels carrying captives to the factories from Jamaica provided the perfect cover for the introduction of contraband cargoes. The *asentistas* had another advantage over Jamaican traders as well: their prolonged presence in Spanish American communities. Company factors were able to build relationships with local elites not only to facilitate their own private trade, but also to take advantage of already existing inter- and intra-imperial networks. These networks allowed them not only to spread their illicitly introduced goods across Spanish America, but even to aid Cuban contrabandists in trading their own illegally purchased slaves to other Spanish Colonies—a third Middle Passage.

The wealth earned from the factors' illicit labors did not flow to the Company's investors. Instead, it remained in the hands of the factors who carried it on, the Jamaican agents who coordinated it, and the small coterie among the Court of Directors centered around the sub-

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"Contraband Trade under the Asiento"; and Helen J. Paul, "The Asiento Treaty As Reflected In The Papers of Lord Shelburne," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 8:2 (1928): 167-177.

Governor, Sir John Eyles, who protected it. The abuses carried out under the *asiento* were well known to Spanish officials, not only from the seizures made of illicit goods on the Company's vessels but also from the testimony of those who carried it out.<sup>33</sup> Spanish officials tried steadily to limit and prevent contraband trade, but largely failed. In the end, it was primarily the decline of the Company's slave trade from the mid-1730s that actually succeeded in curtailing the private trade by limiting the number of vessels carrying slaves—and private goods—from Jamaica to Spanish America rather than Spanish pressure.

The careers of four of the Company's employees—Jonathan Dennis, Wargent Nicholson, Edward Pratter, and Edward Manning—reveal the workings of the corrupt world created by the *asiento*. Jonathan Dennis was a factor at the Company's factory in Panama in the 1720s, and then in Santiago de Cuba from 1730 until 1735 when he was forced to flee the island following a clash with the Inquisition. Wargent Nicholson was the Company's chief factor at Havana from 1718 until 1733 when he was fired following repeated and increasingly angry complaints from Don Geroldiño in London. Between them they were involved in every kind of illicit trade carried on by the Company, from the sale of manufactured goods to the abuses of the annual ship, to even providing legal protection to Cuban smugglers trading with Jamaica. Edward Pratter was one of the Company's agents in Jamaica from the *asiento*'s foundation until his death in 1735. He was succeeded by Edward Manning who took over management not only of the Company's private trade, but also of dealing with Jamaicans still resentful and angry over the South Sea Company's monopolistic pretensions.

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<sup>33</sup> At the Congress of Soissons in 1729, the Spanish plenipotentiary successfully paid two of the Company's agents to confess in writing to the extent and workings of the Company's private trade. See: Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade."

The South Sea Company's illicit trade was condoned and encouraged by a small faction in the company's Court of Directors. The key figure was Sir John Eyles, who was elected Sub-Governor in 1721 to bring order to the firm in the wake of the South Sea Bubble.<sup>34</sup> Eyles was an important figure in London society, a member of Parliament from Chippenham since 1713, he had previously served as a Director of the Bank of England and was even elected as Lord Mayor of London in 1726.<sup>35</sup> Yet, Eyles was also deeply corrupt and determined to use the *asiento* for his and his confederates' own ends. Fortunately for the Director and his confederates, by the 1720s, and despite the disastrous South Sea Bubble, the Company enjoyed a greatly increased capital and steady interest payments from its holdings in government debts. This meant that the unprofitable *asiento* received less attention from investors and in the Company's General Court, allowing Eyles and his co-conspirators to encourage and support illicit trade by the Company's servants. They were even able to insert a clause in the instructions sent to factors granting themselves the power to dispatch "such private instructions as they may think proper."<sup>36</sup>

Eyles' support for illicit trade was well known. In 1732, Captain Edward Vernon of the Royal Navy even attacked him on the floor of Parliament; claiming Eyles and his conspirators "had carried on a private trade contrary to their oaths and hurtful to the Company, neglecting to prosecute and punish those they employed abroad because they had in fact trafficked for the directors." It was only with difficulty that the two men were prevented from fighting a duel.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> George I and later George II served as Governor of the Company but the title was purely honorary. The two monarchs had no involvement in the management of the Company's operations.

<sup>35</sup> D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, and S. Handley, eds., "Member Biography: Sir John Eyles (1683-1745), of Gidea Hall, Essex," *History of Parliament Online*, [http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/eyles-john-1683-1745#footnoteref5\\_ml58id6](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1715-1754/member/eyles-john-1683-1745#footnoteref5_ml58id6) (Accessed March 22, 2017).

<sup>36</sup> "Orders & Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Messrs. Jonathan Dennis, Hubert Tassel, and Leonard Cock," July 4, 1729, Add Ms 25566, BL.

Eyles kept private accounts of what he was owed from the profits from private trade. Edward Searles to James Rigby, London March 6, 1738/9, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>37</sup> Entry of April 26, 1732, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of Viscount Percival afterwards first Earl of Egmont* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1920), 263.

Under increasing attack from more conservative stockholders interested in potentially accepting a buyout for the *asiento*, Eyles resigned in 1733. Although his co-conspirator Peter Burrell remained on the Court of Directors, and even became Sub-Governor in 1737, Burrell was unable to prevent the period of retrenchment which led to the decline in slave shipments and thus a decline in opportunities for contraband.<sup>38</sup>

The protection afforded by Eyles and his fellows proved vital in prolonging the career of Jonathan Dennis. Dennis was appointed as the Company's chief factor at the Portobello factory in January 1723.<sup>39</sup> Upon his arrival, the tone of his future career was set when he was presented with a 1,000 peso (£225 sterling) bribe by the previous factors not to report their wrongdoing to the Company. And well they had to worry, for the Panama factory was perhaps the most corrupt of all the stations maintained by the South Sea Company. Among other activities, Dennis' predecessors had clandestinely purchased a hundred slaves from a Jamaican smuggler and, in concert with corrupt Spanish officials, marked them as belonging to the Company before selling them on their own account with each of the conspirators clearing over 1,400 pesos (£315 sterling) in profit.<sup>40</sup>

Dennis joined in with a will in such corrupt schemes. Perhaps the least of his infractions, was that he ignored his instructions and brought his wife and children with him to Panama. He sold slaves on the Company's account marked at one price and reported a different, lower price in his account books. Dennis also entered into business with the Jewish merchants David and

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<sup>38</sup> For Burrell's knowledge of the private trade see: John Merewether to Peter Burrell, n.d., Shelburne Papers, vol. 44. His election as Sub-Governor is mentioned in Hubert Tassel to Peter Burrell January 7, 1737, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44. For an overview of the Eyles' tenure as Sub-Governor and the internal politicking within the South Sea Company, see: Sperling, *The South Sea Company*.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the General Court, January 17, 1722/23, Add Ms 25501, BL.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Templeman, *The Secret History of the Late Directors of the South Sea Company* (London, 1735), 29-30. Templeman was a disgruntled former secretary of the Court of Directors and after he left the Company's employ published a number of documents revealing the abuses of the *asiento* carried on by the factors under Eyles' patronage.

Moses Bravo of Jamaica to transport “jewels and toys” to Panama, though he claimed to have refused to follow his predecessors’ example in purchasing clandestinely imported slaves from them.<sup>41</sup>

However, Dennis’ greed got the best of him when the annual ship *Royal George* arrived in Portobello to trade alongside the *galeones* in 1723. Despite the restrictions imposed by the *asiento* limiting the annual ship to only 500 tons, the *Royal George* carried nearly 1,000 tons of merchandise and regularly refilled its hold from ships bearing “provisions” from Jamaica. Gifts to the Royal Governor of diamond rings, mirrors, gold watches and the like ensured that the authorities looked the other way. Underselling the Iberian merchants by as much as a quarter, the *Royal George* ruined the fair and made off with the vast majority of the money brought from Peru. Although Dennis had not been named as one of the supercargoes initially, the deaths of two of them on the outward voyage gave him the opening to insert himself into the ships’ trade. Dennis was heavily involved in facilitating the sale of the goods carried in the *Royal George*’s seeming infinite hold.

Yet the agents’ corruption went even deeper. Upon their departure from Panama in company with the British naval ship *HMS Kinsale* the supercargoes entered into a conspiracy with the naval officers. As a result of their clandestine agreement, when the two ships reached Antigua the *Kinsale*’s carpenters pronounced the *Royal George* unsafe to continue on to England. The vessel was condemned, and after the supercargoes and officers “kept open house at Antigua three or four days in a week for all comers and goers, with music and dancing” they

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<sup>41</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, October 9, 1728, Add Ms 25552, BL.



loaded all of the treasure into the *Kinsale* to continue on to England. There the chief supercargo, Thomas Bumpsted, married Sir Eyles' daughter.<sup>42</sup>

The condemnation of the *Royal George* was more than an insurance scheme. By transferring the bullion from Panama onto the *Kinsale*, the conspirators were able to hide from both the General Court and the Spanish Crown the amount of money they carried. This was valuable on two fronts: both for the corrupt *asentistas* and for Spanish-Americans. The latter were particularly pleased because they regularly used South Sea Company vessels to transmit bullion to Europe in order to avoid the taxes levied on it by the Spanish Crown.<sup>43</sup> These shipments could reach truly staggering amounts. For example, the year after the destruction of the *Royal George*, two Royal Navy ships returned to London from Jamaica carrying 1,350,000 pesos (£303,350 sterling) ostensibly for the Company. However, fewer than 170,000 pesos (£38,250 sterling) were actually entered into the Company's accounts, the rest went to its agents or onward to Spain.<sup>44</sup>

The blatant corruption of the *Royal George's* voyage was too much for both Spanish officials and London insurers. In an effort to protect themselves, the Directors offered a sacrifice to their critics by suspending Dennis from his position in 1724, ostensibly for having himself named supercargo of the annual ship without explicit orders.<sup>45</sup> He spent the next two years

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<sup>42</sup> The fundamental fraud in the events at Antigua is made clear by the fact that the insurers, desperate to avoid the massive payout required by the policy, dispatched several agents to the island who successfully sailed the *Royal George* to Deptford, despite its having remained in the West Indies for nearly a year. Templeman, *The Secret History*, 13-24.

<sup>43</sup> The main tax levied was the *quinto*, equivalent to one-fifth of the value of all precious metals sent from America to Spain, but there were additional charges as well.

<sup>44</sup> Royal Navy ships were preferred by both the Company and private merchants when shipping bullion or specie to Europe as they were considered safer than merchantmen. Marquis de Grimaldi to the Earl of Stanhope, November 21, 1724, Add Ms 32741, BL; and An Account of Gold and Silver received from Jamaica by the South Sea Company, Add Ms 25556, BL. The naval captains usually were paid freight money equivalent to one or two percent of the gross value of the bullion. Daniel Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 111.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the General Court, January 2, 1723/24, Add Ms 25501, BL.

between Jamaica and London, attempting to prove his innocence before the General Court. Following the second disruption of the *asiento* by the short-lived Anglo-Spanish war of 1727-28, enough time had passed for Dennis to be found “not as blamable in his conduct as first appeared” and he was officially rehabilitated. For his next assignment, he was appointed to serve as chief factor at Havana.<sup>46</sup> However, before Dennis reached Cuba it was decided instead to retain Wargent Nicholson as factor there, and instead Dennis was shifted to the factory in Santiago de Cuba with Leonard Cocke as his assistant.<sup>47</sup>

The factory at Santiago de Cuba was the smallest and least served station of all those maintained by the South Sea Company. Indeed, its importance was ranked so low that, initially, it had been a subsidiary of the factory in Cartagena and manned by factors delegated from there.<sup>48</sup> The relatively few slaves who were dispatched there provided few opportunities for the type of illicit trade carried on by Dennis at Panama or that Wargent Nicholson was involved in at Havana. However, when slave ships were dispatched from Jamaica, Dennis and Cocke made the most of such opportunities, though not always successfully. In 1732, for example, the sloop *St Philip* was seized for carrying forty barrels of flour, nails, and several chests of “Florence” cloth.<sup>49</sup> Still, such opportunities were few. In one letter, Dennis complained it had been over six months since the factory had received a ship from Jamaica and that since he had arrived he had received only a dozen slaves to sell, though he had written for three hundred.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the General Court, March 10, 1725/26, Add Ms 25502, BL; Minutes of the General Court, October 10, 1728 and November 15, 1728, Add Ms 25503, BL; and Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, October 9, 1728, Add Ms 25552, BL.

<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, April 16, 1730, Add Ms 25553, BL.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Court of Directors, January 9, 1717/18, Add Ms 25497, BL.

<sup>49</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 31, 1733/34 and November 26, 1734, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Dennis to Sir Joseph Eyles & Peter Burrell, November 2, 1731, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

As a result of this neglect, Dennis and Cocke turned to other means to make money from their position. The method they chose was the *indulto*—in the Spanish legal system, a fine paid by a lawbreaker in return for the remission of any further penalty. *Indultos* had been opened by Spanish officials and Company agents for illegally introduced slaves several times in the past.<sup>51</sup> However, due to the encouragement *indultos* gave Spanish-Americans to purchase slaves from smugglers in hopes of later being able to legalize them, both Spanish Governors and Company employees were forbidden from initiating them without approval from Europe.<sup>52</sup> Yet the issue of illicitly introduced slaves was a pressing one in Cuba. Although the Eighteenth Article of the *asiento* granted factors the ability to seize illegally introduced slaves, Dennis and Cocke complained repeatedly that it was “next to madness” to attempt to seize the large numbers of them in Cuba. They complained how any such effort would receive little official support, “everybody being alike guilty in a greater or lesser manner.”<sup>53</sup>

The two factors resisted opening an *indulto* for two years, explaining that the calls for one arose from no other desire “but in order to send the negroes they now have to Havana, Cartagena, and Portobello (when indulted) there to sell them at the *asiento* price, and with the returns to purchase two or three for one they now have.” An *indulto* would not put an end to smuggling they argued, “for tis folly to think of breaking them from the private trade without a

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<sup>51</sup> For example, an *indulto* had been opened in eastern Cuba in 1724, but when Governor Dionisio Martínez de la Vega in Havana complained loudly of the encouragement the *indulto* had given to smugglers it was ordered closed and not reopened without the King’s specific orders. Don Carlos Sucre to the King, June 27, 1724, Santo Domingo, 359, AGI; and Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to the King, December 31, 1726, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI.

<sup>52</sup> Real Cedula, December 10, 1725, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI; David Wescomb to Richard Rigby and Edward Pratter, March 31, 1724, Add Ms 25564, BL; and “Orders & Instructions given by the Court of Directors of the South Sea Company to Messrs. Jonathan Dennis, Hubert Tassel, and Leonard Cocke,” July 4, 1729, Add Ms 25566, BL.

<sup>53</sup> *The Assiento, or, Contract for allowing to the subjects of Great Britain the liberty of importing Negroes into the Spanish America signed by the Catholick King at Madrid, the twenty-sixth day of March, 1713* (London: Printed by John Baskett, 1713), article 18; and Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, April 10, 1731 in Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL. The Company’s authority to open *indultos* was granted in article 37 of the *asiento*.

more regular Government were established amongst them,” and there was no Spanish garrison in either of the main smuggling centers of Bayamo or Puerto Príncipe to compel them to give it up. Nor was one likely to be established anytime soon.<sup>54</sup>

Yet by 1733 Dennis and Cocke agreed to open a general *indulto* in company with Santiago’s Governor Don Pedro Ignacio Jiménez. Their justifications to the Directors were twofold. First, they claimed the inhabitants had promised to desist purchasing illicit captives in the future. Secondly, they argued that the *indulto* “can no way prejudice the sales of your Honors as we have none to dispose of, nor have not had for some months past, and...we are not like to have any for this good while to come.” The true reason, however, was that Dennis and Cocke had come to the conclusion that the low state of the slave trade provided little opportunity for profit and another avenue was needed. The *indulto* was laid at 50 pesos per *pieza de india* brought in during the thirty days the *indulto* was officially open.

However, even after the fine was added to the 100 peso price of an adult male slave sold by smugglers, smuggled slaves cost less than half the price of those sold by the factory in Santiago de Cuba.<sup>55</sup> Such a policy would clearly do little to discourage future smuggling. Yet Dennis and Cocke strongly defended the *indulto*, claiming that its opening had caused the inhabitants of Bayamo to turn away the Jamaican smuggler Benjamin Lee when he arrived carrying three hundred slaves for sale. By June, Dennis was said to have *indulted* over three thousand slaves. In a letter to the Directors, however, he reported that he had received only a

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<sup>54</sup> Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, March 28, and August 10, 1732 in Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>55</sup> The price of slaves sold by Jamaican smugglers in the South Keys was 60-75 pesos for “large boys” and 100-110 pesos for adult men and women, John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 9, 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

hundred and fifty. Doubtless Dennis, Cocke, and the royal officials split the *indulto* on the remainder.<sup>56</sup>

The concerns raised by Dennis and Cocke during their initial reluctance to open an *indulto* proved well-founded. Shortly after the *indulto* ended a letter arrived in London from the Cartagena factory reporting that a ship had arrived from Puerto Príncipe carrying fifty newly legalized slaves and “having brought dispatches from Mr. Dennis, the Governor of Cartagena had admitted them.”<sup>57</sup> The complicity of Dennis in this scheme by Cuban smugglers which could only harm the Company’s sales in New Grenada seems certain. When news of Dennis’ actions reached London, the new conservative faction that had seized control of the South Sea Company after Eyles’ downfall justly concluded that Dennis’ *indulto* “carries with it the probability of a contrivance for private ends.”<sup>58</sup>

However, before any potential disciplinary action could be taken against Dennis, the Court of Directors received a letter from the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for the Southern Department, that he had been warned by the Spanish ambassador that if Dennis “was nor recalled, he would certainly be taken up by the Inquisition.”<sup>59</sup> The crisis that engulfed Dennis illustrates that, despite their privileged status as servants of the South Sea Company, the factors still faced dangers as Protestant foreigners in Catholic Spanish America. Upon his arrival in Cuba, Dennis had initially stayed in the house of a presbyter, Don Francisco Mustelier. Shortly after the factor’s arrival, Mustelier visited the Company’s warehouse and demanded the right to purchase goods at what Dennis considered an exorbitantly low price. Dennis refused, and the

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<sup>56</sup> Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to the Court of Directors, July 18, 1733; and Edward Pratter to the Court of Directors, August 23, 1733 in Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>57</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, July 25, 1734, Add Ms 25554, BL; and Minutes of the General Court, July 26, 1734, Add Ms 25507, BL.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 29, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the General Court, February 21, 1734/35, Add Ms 25507, BL.

enraged cleric threatened that if the factor did not sell him the goods he would be evicted. Dennis in turn responded that Mustelier already owed over seven thousand pesos from past purchases and the priest stormed out.

Shortly afterwards a packetboat arrived in Santiago from Jamaica. During the voyage, the ship's boy had broken one of the officer's watches and, afraid of being punished, fled ashore. The fugitive found refuge in a hut belonging to a free man of color and declared that he wished to be baptized in the Catholic faith. After several days, the vessel's captain convinced the boy that nothing would happen to him and he returned to the ship. However, Mustelier had heard the story and boarded the *St Philip* with a company of soldiers and demanded the "kidnapped" boy be handed over for baptism. Dennis happened to be aboard at the time and refused to surrender the boy; arguing that per the *asiento* the Spanish could not board the vessel without the Governor's order. The boy departed with the vessel while Mustelier, who was a local informer for the Inquisition, accused Dennis of publishing several books attacking Catholicism and of preventing the baptism of the serving boy. Dennis attempted to defend himself in the court of public opinion, but failed. He was forced to flee Santiago for Jamaica in early 1735, and the Cartagena Tribunal of the Inquisition sent word throughout Spanish America to seize him if he appeared.<sup>60</sup>

Dennis spent the next several years in Jamaica and England, purchasing a house in Kingston and a livestock pen in St Andrew parish, as well as carrying on trade with the factory in Panama—dispatching in one instance eighteen diamond buttons to be sold by the factors there.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Memorial of Don Thomas Geraldino, November 26, 1734, SP 100/58, TNA; Richard Hopkins to the Duke of Newcastle, London February 21, 1734/35, Add Ms 32787, BL; and Reyes Fernández Duran, *La Corona Española y el tráfico de negros: del monopolio al libre comercio* (Madrid : Ecobook, Editorial del Economista, 2011), 359-362.

<sup>61</sup> The land and the diamond buttons are both mentioned in the will Dennis made out while in Kingston. In it, he also references large debts owed him in Campeche, Havana, and Santiago de Cuba. Will of Jonathan Dennis, September 12, 1736, Will Liber 22, IRO.

At the same time, he repeatedly importuned the Court of Directors to be reassigned to another factory. His wife, now living in England, did the same.<sup>62</sup> Despite his past corruption and difficulties with the Inquisition, in 1737 he was selected to return to Panama as first factor.<sup>63</sup> However, the Spanish Governor refused to admit him without a direct order from Philip V and it was not until 1739 that Dennis was granted leave to enter.<sup>64</sup> He reported in February that he had been cordially received there. He died shortly afterwards, however, of an “apoplectic fit.”<sup>65</sup> Ironically, Dennis’ death occurred just months before the outbreak of the War of Jenkins’ Ear, and with it the end of the *asiento*.

The career of Wargent Nicholson at Havana was less exciting than that of Jonathan Dennis but gives added insight into the workings of the Company’s contraband trade and the wealth it brought. Havana was a larger, more important factory than Santiago de Cuba—receiving four times as many slaves—and provided more opportunities for illicit trade. In his fifteen years in Havana, Nicholson used these opportunities to become a wealthy man, while also forming close working relationships with *habanero* merchants. Just as Dennis facilitated the spread of slaves clandestinely introduced into Cuba throughout Spanish America, Nicholson integrated himself into networks of Spanish-American traders to dispatch goods illicitly imported into Cuba on to New Spain.

Wargent Nicholson joined the Havana factory as assistant to Richard Farril in 1718. However, he arrived in the Caribbean just as the War of the Quadruple Alliance and, unlike Farril, had not had time to ingratiate himself with Havana’s elites. As a result, he was imprisoned

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<sup>62</sup> Minutes of the General Court, October 25, 1734, and November 21, 1735, Add Ms 25507, BL; and Jonathan Dennis to Peter Burrell, June 6, 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>63</sup> Minutes of the General Court, October 21, 1737, Add Ms 25509, BL.

<sup>64</sup> William Smith to Sir Benjamin Keene, September 14, 1738, Add Ms 32799, BL.

<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Dennis to Peter Burrell, Panama, February 15, 1739, Shelburne Collection, Vol. 44; and Francis Humphreys to Anthony Weltden, September 28, 1739, CO 23/14/330, TNA.

and then exchanged for Spanish prisoners in Jamaica.<sup>66</sup> After the war he returned to Cuba and replaced the fired Farril as chief factor. In addition to carrying on the work of the slave trade, he swiftly began carrying on private trade on his own account.

Nicholson primarily relied on vessels coming from Jamaica to supply him with illicit goods and export his payments. However, that was not without risks, especially when the commanders of the *asiento* vessels proved too greedy. Such was the case with Captain Eaves of the sloop *Bellamont* which arrived in Havana from Jamaica in 1732. Upon her arrival, Nicholson warned Eaves of attempting anything clandestine without his prior knowledge so that he could properly bribe the Spanish searchers. Eaves reassured him that the vessel carried “but a trifle.” However, during the inspection of the ship Eaves panicked and told Nicholson “that he had two or three bales of cinnamon, which as I was speaking to the royal officers to patronize, the searchers were actually hoisting up for seizure.” Although Nicholson convinced them that the cinnamon was the goods he had spoken of—and bribed them for—“they told me that it must go ashore to the customhouse as the people upon the Keys had seen it, but if there was nothing more it should be delivered afterwards.”

The guards’ response indicates the level of complicity among Spanish officials in allowing contraband trade, something known and accounted for by the Company which granted its commanders £10 per voyage for provisions and wine for “entertaining” officers while they searched the ship.<sup>67</sup> At other times outright bribes were offered, such as the “gold chased watch

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<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the General Court, January 9, 1717/18, Add Ms 25497, BL; and Minutes of the General Court, September 16, 1718, Add Ms 25498, BL.

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of the General Court, September 12 and 19, 1729, Add Ms 25503, BL. Eaves quite possibly carried his illicit cargo on commission from a Jamaican merchant. Such practices were described as quite common. Brown, “The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade,” 671.



with a shagreen case” presented to an inspector in Veracruz.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, in every port the factors also kept several Spanish officials on the payroll to ensure their support for the Company’s trade. The most important was the Governor, who in Havana received an annual salary of 2,000 pieces of eight (£450 sterling).<sup>69</sup>

Although Nicholson had defused the situation, Captain Eaves had lied to him yet again. In the middle of the night, a small boat was seen leaving the *Bellamont*. When pursued, those aboard were seen throwing goods overboard into the harbor; by the time they were caught up with were found with only twenty pesos worth of “druggets,” a type of coarse woven fabric. Even worse, several sailors also deserted and one of them enlisted aboard a Spanish warship then in harbor. From there he demanded his wages and when Captain Eaves refused, the sailor applied to the Governor claiming that there was yet more illicit cargo hidden under the ballast of the *Bellamont*. A search revealed ten barrels of blue paint,

from which seizure of the Governor’s as it reflected on the indolence or favor of the royal officers as well as upon the deception of the Captain for having concealed from them the goods which afterwards appeared, so incensed them that they even excluded the cinnamon from their protection.

It was only with considerable difficulty and a great deal of “purchased favor” that Nicholson was able to free Eaves and the ship, though the cargo was entirely lost.<sup>70</sup>

The misfortunes of Captain Eaves demonstrated the risks of carrying on a private trade without a strong knowledge of the Cubans one would be interacting with. Fortunately for him, Nicholson, like Farril before him, was stationed in Havana long enough to not only gain an

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<sup>68</sup> At other times outright bribes were offered, such as the “gold chased watch with a shagreen case” presented to an inspector in Veracruz. Minutes of the General Court of September 29, 1729 and March 25, 1730, Add Ms 25553, BL.

<sup>69</sup> In Santiago de Cuba the regional governor was deemed to merit only 800. List of Spanish officials in Company pay formerly and their salary, Minutes of the General Court of September 5, 1721, Add Ms 25551, BL.

<sup>70</sup> Wargent Nicholson to Peter Burrell, January 24, 1732, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

understanding of the city's politics, but also to form close bonds with prominent *habaneros*. The records of these ties have survived in a remarkable collection of bonds and obligations left by Nicholson and his partner Hubert Tassel now stored among the Chancery records at the National Archives at Kew, England.<sup>71</sup> These debts reveal not only the extent of Nicholson's commercial activities, but also testify to the strength of the relationships he formed; they were clearly strong enough to last well past Nicholson's immediate presence in Cuba.

When he left Havana, Nicholson left behind records as creditor totaling over 240,000 pesos (£54,000 sterling) on top of what he had remitted to England in the past. Most of these debts were to be paid in tobacco, particularly snuff, and indicate the importance of agricultural products in credit in Cuba, just as it was in the British West Indies. Don Gabriel González del Alamo, for example, promised in 1737 to repay Nicholson with "12,000 dollars in Verdin Rancio snuff of a superior quality," "3,914 dollars 5 reales in leaf tobacco pressed of upwards half foot if it be of the growth of Estancias," and the remaining six hundred pesos in silver. Half was to be paid that year and the remainder from the following year's crop. Other debts were to be repaid in hides. One Cuban, for instance, pledged to ship two hundred untanned and two hundred and fifty tanned hides as well as an unspecified amount of sugar to Tenerife in the Canaries to repay his debt to Nicholson.<sup>72</sup> Since British vessels could legally trade there, it could then be shipped on to England for Nicholson to collect.

Nicholson's debtors were primarily upper-class *habaneros* and included officials such as the *guarda mayor*.<sup>73</sup> No record survives stating what the majority of the debts were contracted

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<sup>71</sup> "Memorial of the Affairs Consisting of Sundry Bonds, Notes, and other papers which we Wargent Nicholson and Hubert tassel leave with Don Pedro Miguel Garcia Menocal of this City, Apostolical Accountant of the Royal Tribunal of the Holy Cruzada," August 8, 1737, C 111/200, TNA.

<sup>72</sup> Obligation of Don Gabriel Gonzales del Alamo, August 6, 1737; and Obligation of Don Joseph Peres, August 2, 1737, C 111/200, TNA.

<sup>73</sup> Note of Don Jorge Vicente Blanco, n.d, C 111/200, TNA.

for. However, occasional references indicate it was primarily a trade in manufactured goods. For example, one note describes how Nicholson and fellow factor Hubert Tassel sold “a parcel of hatchets and other ironware” for fifty pesos and another eighty pesos worth of chairs to Don Sebastian Calvo. Another note makes reference to a thousand barrels of flour being supplied through the factory.<sup>74</sup> Most of the flour likely entered Havana disguised as provisions for the factory, but the remainder did so clandestinely. Through bribes and an intimate knowledge of Spanish officials’ practices, the factors were experts at avoiding discovery. They routinely imported clothes hidden in water barrels, hats in smaller containers, and flour in casks supposedly containing beer.<sup>75</sup> Not all of these illicit goods remained in Havana, for Nicholson was also engaged in the re-export trade. In one case, he entered into partnership with a Cuban merchant to ship “three hundred and fifty muffs of feathers and twenty-six plates of glass, fourteen of which were quicksilvered & twelve without” to Mexico City.<sup>76</sup>

Wargent Nicholson managed to successfully navigate both the world of illicit trade and the disruption of the *asiento* by the Anglo-Spanish War of 1727-28, but he was unable to survive the downfall of his protector Sir John Eyles. The final straw for the more conservative Directors who replaced the Sub-Governor was the arrival in 1733 of the ship *Rochester* from Havana carrying a significant amount of private specie. Don Tomás Geraldino in London demanded an investigation and both Nicholson and his partner Tassel were suspended from their posts.

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<sup>74</sup> Note regarding the debt of Don Sebastian Calvo, n.d.; and Bond of Don Gabriel Gonzales del Alamo, n.d., C 111/200, TNA. The note states that there is no voucher for Calvo’s debt but it appears in Nicholson and Tassel’s account book.

<sup>75</sup> “en las barricas de agua se introducían ropas, en los barriles pequeños sombreros, y en los toneles de cervezas se escondía harinas de trigo,” Durán, *La Corona Española y el tráfico de negros*, 248.

<sup>76</sup> Bond of Maria de Meyreles and Joseph Cipriano de la Luz, July 31, 1737, C 111/200, TNA.

However, they nevertheless remained in Havana for another two years, until Geraldíño wrote to the Governor explicitly ordering they be expelled from the island.<sup>77</sup>

Nicholson and Tassel were perhaps the most highly ranked employees that Geraldíño managed to have dismissed for illicit trade. Previously, he had only been able to secure the dismissal of captains who had been caught trading on their own account, such as the foolhardy Captain Eaves.<sup>78</sup> However, with the increased apathy towards the *asiento* among the Company's Directors and shareholders he was able to implement other policies to combat contraband by its employees. Among them were orders issued to Spanish officials in America to permit no *asiento* vessels to enter if they carried fewer than four slaves for every five tons. Geraldíño did allow that, due to the practice of receiving agricultural produce in exchange for slaves in Havana, vessels might enter that port with only fifty slaves per hundred tons. The Company complained repeatedly to Madrid, but nothing was done.<sup>79</sup> Geraldíño also succeeded in having an "interventor" appointed to Havana to keep an eye on the *asiento* and prevent the introduction of illicit goods.<sup>80</sup>

These changes greatly increased the difficulties involved in arranging and coordinating inter-imperial trade faced by the Company's Jamaican agents such as Edward Pratter who served as one of the Company's representatives in Jamaica from 1714 until his death in 1735. After his death, he was succeeded by Edward Manning Both men, like all of the *asiento* agents in Jamaica,

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<sup>77</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, December 6, 1732, Add Ms 25553, BL; Minutes of the General Court, January 26, 1732/33, Add Ms 25505, BL; Minutes of the General Court, April 27, 1733, Add MS 25506, BL; and Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, January 27, 1734/35, Add Ms 25554, BL.

Ironically, Jonathan Dennis was initially chosen to replace them, but his difficulties with the Inquisition precluded it. Minutes of the General Court, December 8, 1732, Add Ms 25505, BL.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, March 19, 1732/33, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>79</sup> "The South Sea Company: Order of the General Court, November 8, 1734," in Donnan ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. 2, 453-54; and Minutes of the committee of Correspondence, May 5, 1735, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>80</sup> Don Thomas Geraldíño to the Duke of Newcastle, 1734/35, SP 100/58, TNA.

were originally from Essex, the home of Sir John Eyles. That connection likely explains their choice as agents. Both men were also related to Edward Searles of Hertfordshire, a member of Sir John's inner circle, to whom they entrusted both private correspondence and the remittances of their private trade.<sup>81</sup> Their official role in Jamaica were to supply the various factories with the slaves they requested, but their true purpose was to facilitate and coordinate the illicit trade by the Company's employees.

Their own profit was the main goal of the agents, and they discussed it quite openly in their confidential correspondence to England. Indeed, so open were they that they were even warned "not to be so free in writing home of private trade" by one of their co-conspirators.<sup>82</sup> The agents worked in concert with the various factors to provide them with the illicit goods they desired. Generally, the Jamaican agent would split the value and profit of an illicit cargo equally with the factor. For example, Pratter confessed that he and fellow agent John Merewether had been "concerned the one half in 300 barrels of flour on the *Lion*" when it was seized by Spanish officials at Havana. The vessel had left with a dozen slaves for Havana as qualification for her admittance, ostensibly to carry to Europe effects for the Company, but when visited by the Spanish Interventor "several tons of tum, wine &c likewise great quantities of dry goods to the amount of several hundred pounds" were found in addition to the flour.<sup>83</sup> In the wake of the incident, however, Pratter claimed that the debacle was not the Jamaican agents' fault. For, while

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<sup>81</sup> Will of Edward Pratter, April 6, 1735, Will Liber 19, IRO; Will of Edward Manning, July 1, 1750, Will Liber 30, IRO; and Will of Edward Manning December 22, 1756, T 1/368, TNA. At least three other Jamaican agents of the Company—John Merewether, Richard Rigby and his son James—also hailed from Essex. Will of John Merewether, June 25, 1739, Will Liber 23, IRO; and "Member Biography: Richard Rigby (1722-88), of Mistle Hall, Essex," *History of Parliament Online*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/rigby-richard-1722-88> (accessed March 22, 2017).

<sup>82</sup> James Merewether to Unknown, September 30, 1737, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>83</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, January 25, 1736/37 Shelburne Papers, vol. 44; Edward Searle to Edward Manning, May 4, 1736, MS 130, JNL; Informe de la Contaduria, May 9, 1736, Santo Domingo, 382, AGI; and Templeman, *The Secret History*, 40.

happy to provide manufactured goods to the factors when requested, they kept a “constant rule...not to be concerned in any dry goods” themselves.<sup>84</sup>

This was a wise policy as the trade in provisions was equally profitable and far easier to conceal from suspicious Spanish officials. When questioned about the arrival of a large quantity of flour to the Santiago de Cuba factory, for example, Jonathan Dennis explained away suspicion by claiming that as slave ships from Jamaica arrived so infrequently that he was “glad to lay in a store for 6 or 8 months” for the factory.<sup>85</sup> Most of these foodstuffs were sold to Spanish consumers in the cities of the empire, testimony of the failures of Spanish colonies to feed their urban centers. In Cartagena flour was available, but the supply from Jamaica was half the price as that supplied from New Grenadan farmers.<sup>86</sup> In Cuba, however the foodstuffs needed by its citizens were not supplied from the countryside. Authorities in Santiago de Cuba in particular, complained constantly of Puerto Príncipe and Bayamo’s failure to provide the city with sufficient foodstuffs, particularly beef. Instead the two towns preferred to export their animals to Jamaica.<sup>87</sup> Although most cargoes of provisions were sold clandestinely out of the factories, at other times the agents signed formal contracts to supply the Spanish military. For example, in 1738 an agreement was made to supply the galleon fleet anchored in Cartagena with two thousand barrels of flour, five hundred barrels of beef and pork, and a hundred and sixty barrels

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<sup>84</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, June 5, 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>85</sup> Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, November 26, 1734, Add Ms 25554, BL.

<sup>86</sup> James Ord and John Gray to Edward Vernon, November 20, 1739, SP 42/85, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> Don Pedro Ignacio Jiménez y el cabildo secular to the King, January 22, and May 30, 1731, Santo Domingo, 361, AGI.

The South Sea Company agents were not the only ones making a profit off the difficulties Cubans had in feeding their cities. In the same year that Governor Jimenez penned his complaints, a ship from Cartagena entered the port laden with 173 barrels of flour it had purchased from the French in Saint Domingue. “Testimonio de los Autos sobre la entrada en este Puerto el aviso del cargo de Don Simón de Lezama,” 1732, Santo Domingo, 361, AGI.

of pitch and tar. Another four hundred barrels of flour were to be delivered to the city itself.<sup>88</sup>

The provisions trade reached such a scale that specific contracts to supply flour were made with New York merchants by the agents and materially affected the price of flour in Jamaica. This so angered the Jamaican Assembly that its members levied a discriminatory duty against the export of flour.<sup>89</sup>

The agents also performed other services for Spaniards on the Company's behalf. When in 1730 the Spanish warship *Genovesa* was wrecked off Jamaica's southern in its passage to Cuba carrying treasure and the former governor of Panama, on his way to Spain in chains for his involvement in illicit trade, Pratter helped organize the salvage operation. He even stored the rescued bullion in his home until a vessel could be dispatched from Havana to recover it.<sup>90</sup> In another incident, Manning secured the released of a Spanish merchant vessel that had been seized by the Royal Navy on the mistaken suspicion of its being a *guardacosta*.<sup>91</sup> While described as being done purely for the Company's service, it's likely there was a private profit for the agents to be made as well. Doubtless, some quantity of the precious metals carried by the *Genovesa* were consigned to Pratter for delivery to Europe in return for a hefty commission.

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<sup>88</sup> John Merewether to the Sub- and Deputy-Governors, January 29, 1738/39, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44. The flour trade between Jamaica and Cartagena is discussed in Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 176-180.

<sup>89</sup> Petition of the Directors of the South Sea Company, August 3, 1724; and Order in Council, December 10, 1724, CO 137/16, TNA; Unknown to Walter Jenkins of Bristol, February 20, 1737/38, Add Ms 32797, BL; and Tyndall and Richard Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse and Co., November 13, 1729, in Donnan ed., *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, vol. 2, 382-383.

<sup>90</sup> Council of Jamaica to Robert Hunter, September 17, 1730; Robert Hunter to Charles Delafaye, September 19, 1730; Royal Proclamation, September 27, 1730; Robert Hunter to the Board of Trade, October 1, 1730; Treasure taken up from His Catholic Majesty's Ship called the *Genovesa*, n.d., CO 137/47, TNA; Minutes of Council, September 16, 1730; April 6, and May 11, 1731, 1B/5/3/11, JNA.

Pratter provided the same services again two years later when the Spanish ship *San Miguel* also wrecked off Jamaica. Extract of a letter from Robert Hunter to the Duke of Newcastle, January 18, 1732/33, Add Ms 32782, BL.

<sup>91</sup> John Merewether to Sub- and Deputy-Governors, September 30, 1738; Copy of a letter from John Merewether & Edward Manning to Don Juan Antonio de Horcasitas Y Guimes, October 27, 1738; and John Merewether to Sub- and Deputy-Governors, November 6, 1738, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

The value of the illicit trade carried on under the agents' oversight was highly lucrative for both agents and factors. Though they may have been "not worth a shilling, when they went hence" from England, they soon began to see large profits. Indeed, despite the decline in the Company's slave trade over the 1730s, it has been suggested that as much as £5,000,000 sterling in total profit accrued from the illicit trade carried on by the factors and agents that decade.<sup>92</sup> In one instance, a single ship carried £3,000 sterling in gold and silver to England for Edward Manning.<sup>93</sup> When he died in 1735, Edward Pratter left bequests in his will totaling over £10,000 sterling, as well as half-shares in two sugar plantations in St Thomas in the East and another in St Andrew in addition to his properties in Kingston.<sup>94</sup>

However, just as with contraband trade, the agents' private trade was not always carried on in good faith. At times, the precious metals the Jamaican remitted in payment proved to be false. In one incident when a quantity of gold was sent to England and melted down it was discovered that "there was a ponderous matter more weighty than iron amongst it." Another shipment of gold from Havana was described to Manning as "miserably bad ye worst return I ever had," so adulterated was it with other metals.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the risks of fraud on the part of their Spanish-American partners, the private trade carried on by Jonathan Dennis, Wargent Nicholson, Edward Pratter, Edward Manning, and their colleagues under the *asiento* was immensely profitable. How else to explain Jonathan Dennis' fervent desire to return to it even after barely escaping the Inquisition? Their success arose from the unique opportunities presented by the *asiento*, opportunities not enjoyed by the rest of

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<sup>92</sup> Nelson, "Contraband Trade under the Asiento," 64.

<sup>93</sup> Edward Searle to John Bourne, June 3, 1736, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>94</sup> Will of Edward Pratter, April 6, 1735, Will Liber 19; and Edward Searle to Mrs. Thompson, April 13, 1742, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Searle to Edward Manning, November 30, 1736 and October 29, 1737, MS 130, JNL.



Jamaica's smuggling community. The ability of the factors to reside in Spanish-American communities—the first time Englishmen were legally allowed to do so—allowed them to integrate themselves into local social and commercial circles, facilitating the creation of long-term relationships to facilitate the sale and distribution of smuggled goods. At the same time, the Jamaican agents' role in coordinating the shipment of African captives provided the perfect cover for conveying foodstuffs and other merchandise directly to Spanish ports. Fulfilling the *asiento* contract proved impossible, but profiting from abusing it certainly did not.

### **Jealous Rivals**

As a result of their successful trade to Spanish America, the agents found themselves ceaselessly attacked by both Spanish officials and by Anglo-Jamaicans. On the Spanish side, repeated efforts were made in London to have factors, agents, and shipowners fired for carrying on private trade. Simultaneously, Jamaican planters and merchants were united in their resentment of the Company's raising the price of slaves in the island and attempted monopoly of the lucrative Spanish trade. Throughout the period of its operation, they defied governors and royal instructions to continually levy restrictions and taxes on the Company's trade in an effort to undermine it. As a result, the Company's agents were locked in a constant struggle to defend the Company's affairs, both open and clandestine; an effort at times compromised by their own greed. At the same time however, the Company's factors were greatly appreciated by the hundreds of Anglo-American mariners captured by *guardacostas*, for the factors frequently provided shelter and transportation back to British territory following their ordeals.

The illicit trade carried on by the Company outraged Spanish officials. They knew in great detail both its size and its workings, for in 1730 they had bribed two Company employees

to reveal all they knew about it. And the pair knew quite a lot, having been heavily involved in it themselves as part of the Cartagena factory.<sup>96</sup> Spanish anger was twofold. They saw the contraband carried by the Company's agents as yet another example of English perfidy and determination to break the laws of Spain. Spanish reformers also deeply resented the Company, and especially the long duration of its *asiento*, as a check to initiating the reforms that Spain's Atlantic trading system so desperately needed. Yet, because the Company was a private, foreign entity whose contract was enshrined in an international treaty there was relatively little Spanish officials could do. They could not fire corrupt Company agents, but only push the Court of Directors in London to do so. As described earlier, Don Tomás Geraldino ceaselessly petitioned the Company's General Court concerning the private trade carried on by the its employees. One of his primary targets was Edward Pratter, who Geraldino petitioned to have fired at least three times for carrying out "transactions repugnant to the tenor of the *asiento* contract." But the Spaniard's efforts generally came to little, for the protection offered by Sir John Eyles and his co-conspirators among the Directors held and Pratter died in 1735 still in office.<sup>97</sup>

However, following Eyles' downfall Geraldino had somewhat more success, such as the dismissal of Nicholson, as the Company's new leadership was increasingly interested more in public finance than the slave trade. Pratter's successor Edward Manning was repeatedly warned about "spies everywhere" in England searching for evidence of malfeasance on behalf of Geraldino. Though he was also reassured that, despite Spanish pressure, the Directors would "not

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<sup>96</sup> For details of the successful wooing of the two agents and the information they provided, see: Brown, "The South Sea Company and Contraband Trade."

<sup>97</sup> Minutes of the General Court, June 15, 1733, Add MS 25506, BL; Minutes of the Committee of Correspondence, September 4, 1733, Add Ms 25554, BL; and Templeman, *The Secret History*, 40.

be angry at provisions” sent to Spanish America, “but if anything else comes to their knowledge depend ye consequences will be bad.”<sup>98</sup>

In Jamaica, colonial elites among both the merchant and planter classes were united in hostility to the Company. In an effort to discourage its activities, the Assembly continued to vote annual duties on the export of slaves—an action aimed at the Company despite repeated annulments in London and instructions to a succession of royal governors to veto any bills of that nature. Between 1721 and 1725 alone, the Company was charged over £8,480 sterling in duty. Over the following decade, an additional £34,678 was levied by Jamaicans.<sup>99</sup> The Assembly defended itself to London by accusing the Company of ruining the island’s trade by assuming control over the slave trade to Spanish America; thus lowering the number of white inhabitants in Jamaica as sailors and merchants abandoned the island. Jamaicans also argued that, due to the low price of sugar during the depression of the 1730s and the expenses of combatting the maroons, the slave duty was vital to support the colony’s government.<sup>100</sup> Considering that in the

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<sup>98</sup> Edward Searle to Edward Manning, May 4, 1736 and August 15, 1737, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>99</sup> “An Account of the Duty paid on Exportation & importation of negroes by Edward Pratter & Richard Rigby agents for the Royal British Asiento Company since the month of January 1721”; “Duties charged in his Majesty’s books by the Receiver General to Messrs. Rigby & Pratter’s account not enclosed in the foregoing account,” CO 137/16, TNA; and “Account of the Money raised in Jamaica by duty on negroes imported into and exported out of this Island between the 28<sup>th</sup> day of March 1725 & the 28<sup>th</sup> Day of March 1735 being 10 years,” CO 137/22, TNA.

A timeline of the duty issue can be found in “An Abstract of proceedings in relation to Duties on Negroes in Jamaica,” n.d., CO 137/21, TNA.

<sup>100</sup> Unknown to Unknown, March 18, 1725, Add Ms 22677, BL; Unknown to Robert Hunter, October 21, 1727, Add Ms 32677, BL; “Observations on the Asiento Contract,” July 1732; and The Humble Address of the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, February 10, 1731/32, CO 137/20, TNA.

Criticisms of the South Sea Company along these lines appeared frequently in published writings as well. A small sample of these include: A. B., *The State of the Island of Jamaica, Chiefly in relation to its commerce, and the conduct of the Spaniards in the West Indies. Addressed to a member of Parliament. By a person who resided several years at Jamaica* (London: H. Whitridge, 1726); Proprietor of the said company, *An Address to the Proprietors of the South-Sea Capital: Containing a Discovery of the Illicit Trade Carried On In the West Indies* (London, S. Austen 1732); Anonymous, *Consideration on the American trade, before and since the establishment of the South Sea Company* (London, 1739); Anonymous, *Some Observations on the Asiento Trade, as it has been exercised by the South Sea Company; proving the damage which will accrue thereby to the British commerce and plantations in America, and particularly to Jamaica. To which is annexed, a sketch of the advantages of that island to Great Britain, by its annual produce, and by its situation for trade or war. By a person who resided several years at Jamaica* (London, 1728).

decade following 1725, all other taxes levied in the island apart from the slave duty raised only £91,368 sterling, they were not being entirely disingenuous. The South Sea company effectively provided a quarter of Jamaica's annual revenue, an additional burden to shareholders.<sup>101</sup>

While the Company's slave trade was resented by Jamaica's planters, the agents' private trade was despised by Jamaica's merchants. Manning and his fellow agent John Merewether, in particular, were seen not just as competitors, but as Spanish agents taking active steps to destroy their competitors. They were repeatedly accused of informing Spanish officials of the departure of smuggling vessels to Spanish coasts so that they could be seized. Following one such episode, Merewether reported that following a narrow escape from *guardacostas*, the returning traders had been urged to go to the Assembly where they were assured that the members would have "voted me an enemy to the Country, and to have sent me home in irons." Merewether insisted that the agents' "correspondence with the several factories is too uncertain for the illicit trader to be in much danger to suffer by it."<sup>102</sup> Instead they argued that the failures of smuggling voyages resulted from the fact that Anglo-Spanish trade in general "has been on the decline for some years past, and is now at a very low ebb."<sup>103</sup>

Merewether's arguments were not completely self-serving. During the 1730s low sugar prices caused a severe recession in the British American sugar industry, which spread throughout the region.<sup>104</sup> By the late 1730s both the South Sea Company's trade and the contraband trade carried on by Jamaicans had indeed declined considerably owing to glutted markets, the increased vigilance of Spanish officials, and an upsurge in *guardacosta* activity. This decline is

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<sup>101</sup> Account of the Money raised in the Island of Jamaica by taxes & duties payable by the inhabitants thereof between the \_\_\_ 1725 and 28 March 1735 being 10 years, CO 137/22, TNA.

<sup>102</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burchett, March 26, September 1, and September 5, 1737; Merewether to Unknown, September 30, 1737, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>103</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 6, 1737, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>104</sup> Richard Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1775* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 427-33.

evident in the numbers of slaves exported from Jamaica. While in 1731 nearly six thousand African captives had been dispatched from Jamaica, two-thirds under the *asiento*, by 1737 the number had fallen to barely over two thousand with fewer than half transported on South Sea Company ships (**Appendix B**).

The results of renewed Spanish efforts to curtail the Company's trade in Cuba are evident from the visit of Captain George Ware to Havana in 1738. Ware described the factory there as "vastly different from Cartagena, an Englishman here dares not speak, the factor himself no way regarded, our provisions obliged to be landed and stores of all sorts at our own charge and carried into a store." At the same time, Spanish soldiers searching his ship made off with half of his "loose goods" and his sailors lost most of their clothes. Ware had hoped to use the profits of the voyage to set up as a merchant under his own name, but the increased security under the new Governor Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas precluded it. The infamous *guardacosta* commander Juan León de Fandiño even talked openly of waiting for Ware to sail so he could seize him as a smuggler. Despairingly, Ware wrote that there was no point of continuing a factory in such a "nest of pirates."<sup>105</sup>

Yet the agents were not wholly blameless in the difficulties faced by Jamaican smugglers. Edward Manning, in particular, was quite ruthless in attempting to put an end to his competitors. Motivated perhaps by the declining opportunities for profit from the *asiento*, Manning was far more aggressive than his predecessor Pratter in pursuing avenues of wealth, and a gout-ridden Merewether increasingly left the Company's affairs to him. Among other schemes, Manning convinced the Royal Navy commander at Port Royal to recall a warship escorting smugglers to Panama in order to prevent them from competing with the factory there. Then, upon learning that

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<sup>105</sup> George Ware to Peter Burrell, September, 1738; and Edward Manning to Peter Burrell, July 1, 1739, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

the contrabandists had done some trading but had not had time to receive payment from their Spanish contacts, he offered “to give them the opportunity of its return by the Company’s vessels” in return for a sizeable commission.<sup>106</sup>

In 1737 Manning went so far as to sell a 14-gun sloop and an 18-gun bark to the newly formed *compañía de armadores* at Cartagena for patrolling that coast against contrabandists. The sale outraged both Jamaican merchants and the Court of Directors who were becoming increasingly concerned by the growing popular outrage against *guardacostas*’ depredations against Anglo-American shipping. Even Manning’s private correspondents and silent partners in his illicit trade warned him of his excesses, cautioning that his “business is to furnish ye Spaniards with negroes and nothing else.” Manning remained unrepentant, however, arguing, just as with contraband trade, “if we had refused they would have bought them elsewhere”<sup>107</sup>

Yet at the same time as they were supplying the Spanish with *guardacostas*, the Company’s factories were sources of aid and succor to the Anglo-Americans who were their victims. The Cuban factories were most active in this regard due to the high number of prizes brought into those ports. When a prize was brought in, factors frequently represented the victims before the governor, arguing that any Spanish coin aboard came from dealings with the Company’s agents in Jamaica—but to no avail. In 1737, for instance Havana factor Anthony Weltden “expostulated” with the governor regarding the capture of the *Loyal Charles* and the *Dispatch*, both innocent traders, but was dismissed out of hand.<sup>108</sup> On the frequent occasions when a vessel was condemned, the factors provided food, shelter, and travel to Jamaica out of

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<sup>106</sup> Manning to Peter Burrell, September 5, 1737; and John Merewether to Peter Burrell, September 5, 1737, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>107</sup> Edward Searle to Edward Manning, August 11 and 15, 1737, MS 130, JNL; Lance Grahn, “Guarding the New Grenadan Coast: Dilemmas of the Spanish Coast Guard in the Early Bourbon Period,” *The American Neptune* LVI (1996): 19-28.

<sup>108</sup> Anthony Weltden to Peter Burrell, August 27, 1737, Shelburne Papers vol. 44.

their own pockets. In one 1731 example, a crew of nine captive mariners and passengers were brought into Santiago de Cuba by the *guardacosta* Juan León de Fandiño. To secure their release from prison Jonathan Dennis paid a hundred and fifty pesos; he then spent another thousand pieces of eight providing for them and sending them to Jamaica. And that was but one of three captive crews he aided that year.<sup>109</sup>

### Conclusion

In his determination to make his fortune, Edward Manning did not just target his fellow merchants; he also defrauded the South Sea Company of money from the slave trade and attempted to embezzle at least a portion of the value of his predecessor's estate.<sup>110</sup> As a result of his ruthlessness, by the end of the 1730s, Manning had acquired a small fortune as well as shares in several Jamaican sugar estates. The merchant-cum-planter had proven himself successful socially as well; integrating into planter society through his marriage to Elizabeth Moore, the daughter of a prominent planter family, and ingratiating himself with the newly arrived Governor Edward Trelawney.<sup>111</sup> Thanks to the *asiento* Manning, still in his thirties, had become one of the wealthiest and most influential men in Jamaica.

However, Manning was the last South Sea Company employee to earn his fortune from the *asiento*. Much to the pleasure of its many enemies in both Spain and Jamaica, the Company became embroiled in the diplomatic crisis that erupted between Britain and Spain beginning in 1737 over the latter's militant anti-smuggling measures in the Caribbean. These measures, which

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<sup>109</sup> Jonathan Dennis to Sir Joseph Eyles & Peter Burrell, November 2, 1731, Shelburne Papers vol. 44.

<sup>110</sup> Edward Searle to Edward Manning, September 11, 1736, and February 3, 1736/7, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>111</sup> Trevor Burnard, "A Matron in Rank, a Prostitute in Manners': The Manning Divorce of 1741 and Class, Gender, Race, and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," in *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa, and the African Diaspora*, ed. Verene Shepard (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), 133-52.

particularly impacted Jamaicans, were given added impetus by Spanish authorities enraged by the blatant corruption carried on under the cover of the *asiento* and gave cover to Cuban corsairs who targeted Anglo-Americans indiscriminately.

Yet during the twenty-seven years the South Sea Company traded with Spanish America, it had proven highly successful at integrating itself into the inter-imperial commercial world of the Caribbean. This achievement had never proven profitable to the Company's shareholders, but for the clique around Sir John Eyles and for individual agents and factors in the West Indies it certainly did. Not all Company employees succeeded in enriching themselves however. Nicholas Holloway and John Eden, for example, who replaced Wargent Nicholson and Hugh Tassel as Havana factors both died within months of their arrival.<sup>112</sup> Yet for those like Richard Farril, Jonathan Dennis, Wargent Nicholson, Edward Pratter, and Edward Manning who succeeded in avoiding the deadly disease environment of the early modern Caribbean the *asiento* was a path to wealth.

Despite official hostility and frequent wartime disruptions, they succeeded not only by providing Spanish-Americans with the goods they desired, but also by integrating themselves into existing inter- and intra-imperial networks. Jonathan Dennis facilitated the legalization and re-export of African captives illegally purchased in Cuba to South America. Wargent Nicholson, not only provided *habaneros* with foodstuffs and manufactured goods, but also cooperated in their shipment to New Spain and elsewhere within Spanish America. And the factors also proved invaluable as intermediaries between the two empires, creating avenues of communication, providing succor to Anglo-American prisoners, and contesting the validity of British prizes taken

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<sup>112</sup> Minutes of the General Court, February 28, 1733/34, Add MS 25506, BL.



into Spanish ports. In many ways they effectively acted as informal representatives of the British government, precursors of the consular officials of the nineteenth century.

Although it fell far short of its obligations, the Company's slave trade contributed to the ever-increasing slave-based economies and societies of Jamaica and Cuba. Its employees forcibly carried nearly sixty-four thousand captives to Spanish America, including over eight thousand to Cuba. These slaves were an invaluable source of labor in the fields and mines of the Spanish empire. At the same time, the position of the Company as a near-guaranteed buyer of African captives almost certainly induced slave traders to send more vessels to Jamaica with their human cargoes than they would have otherwise during the island's decade-long economic depression in the 1730s. Thus, despite the vociferous complaints of the Jamaican Assembly the South Sea Company benefitted them as well. Only the island's smugglers suffered from the *asiento* being settled on outsiders, and even then their trade continued at a steady rate throughout the 1720s and 1730s.

The South Sea Company failed in its stated purpose, but it nevertheless succeeded in bringing Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists yet closer together by providing a consistent, fixed avenue of commerce and communication between the two neighboring empires. At the same time, however, the illicit trade carried on with such abandon by its employees contributed to the increasing hostility and outright conflict between those same empires. The origins of the War of Jenkins' Ear's can be laid squarely at the feet of the Company. That decade-long conflict would not only destroy the *asiento*, but also lead to a fundamental reordering of the inter-imperial economy of the Caribbean. In forging that new economy the relationships forged by the Company's employees in the name of their own profit would prove vital.

## Chapter 4

### “Rumbos Sospechosos” and *Guardacostas*, 1710-1740

In early 1738 Captain Jason Vaughan’s vessel rounded the westernmost tip of Cuba only to be confronted by a Spanish *guardacosta* demanding that Vaughan’s ship halt and be searched. Compelled to obey the more heavily armed vessel, the furious captain was forced to watch his ship be ransacked until its Spanish captors discovered a half-dozen pieces of eight and a stick of logwood in one of the cabins. This they announced sufficient to declare that “she was the King of Spain’s lawful prize.” On this seemingly flimsy pretext the Englishmen were seized and carried to Havana aboard their captor’s craft to be tried as smugglers who had broken the treaties of trade and amity between the two monarchs. Upon their arrival in port, however, Vaughan’s outrage deepened when he discovered that during his captured vessel’s journey to Cuba “they had found the money that I had hid in a water cask,” and even more outrageously presented to the governor only 2,700 of the 4,500 pieces of eight (£1,000 sterling). “The officers & men stole the rest.” On this new and considerably greater evidence Vaughan and his crew were swiftly found guilty of smuggling and shipped in irons to Cádiz. His last sight of Havana was of a sloop and two half-galleys fitting out in the harbor “to hunt the English as they term it.”<sup>1</sup>

The flood of contraband that flowed into Spain’s American territory from foreign colonies and the South Sea Company was deeply resented by Spanish officials for many reasons. Economically, it not only siphoned off the wealth of the mines and fields of America, but, in a

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Vaughan to George Packer & Company, December 4, 1738, Add Ms 32800, BL; and Deposition of Jason Vaughan, December 14, 1738, Indiferente, 1597, AGI.

second injury, cheaper foreign goods also undersold those provided by Iberian merchants and undercut royal efforts to foster Spanish manufacturing industries. Politically, contraband trade was viewed as a threat with the potential to undermine Spanish sovereignty in the American colonies. The experience of the War of the Spanish Succession, when efforts to convert colonists to support the Habsburg claimant were carried on through Anglo-Dutch smugglers, was still fresh in policymakers' minds, and Spanish officials feared that such offers would be renewed in the event of another Anglo-Spanish conflict—and this time perhaps find willing ears.

For all these reasons, Spanish officials were determined to put an end to contraband trade and reassert the commercial primacy of the peninsula in the Americas by any and all means.<sup>2</sup> Yet, due to the protections offered by the *asiento*, officials were unable to eliminate the massive illegal trade carried on by the South Sea Company's employees. They could only lobby the Court of Directors for the dismissal of individual captains and factors. However, no such legal protections existed for the smugglers operating out of Jamaica and elsewhere. In the early eighteenth century, the policy of "still no peace beyond the line" was still tacitly accepted by every European power regarding the struggle over access to Spanish American markets. The result was an ongoing quasi-war that ranged throughout the Caribbean basin, stretching as far north as the Chesapeake and even New York.

Partly this violence arose from the constraints faced by Spanish imperial administrators in curtailing illicit trade; the sheer size of Spain's American territories and the limited financial resources available to policymakers precluded relying on the army and navy as the primary

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<sup>2</sup> This primacy was to be through the reestablishment and perfection of the annual fleet system which Spanish reforms were rhetorically and practically committed to, due both to international treaties and to Spain's own multi-faceted traditionalism. Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), chap. 5.

means to combat smuggling. To implement their exclusionary imperial policies, Spanish ministers were forced to rely heavily on a permanent force of privateers: the *guardacostas*. Initially created to combat the buccaneers and pirates of the seventeenth-century, by the 1700s *guardacostas*' purpose was primarily the pursuit of contrabandists. In theory, these privateers combined a measure of private capital with public management, but, in reality, they were given a largely free hand in pursuing suspected smugglers. The result was frequent seizures and plundering of Anglo-American shipping, often on the flimsiest of pretexts such as the presence of Spanish coins or a few sticks of logwood. The scale of Anglo-Spanish trade in the region and the widespread practice of using dyewoods as ballast on European-bound voyages meant that almost every vessel carried at least one of those damning commodities—even if they had never been near a Spanish colony. In the three decades following the peace of Utrecht, over two hundred Anglo-American vessels—as well as dozens of French and Dutch—were seized throughout the West Indies and along the North American seaboard.

Although there were never more than twenty *guardacostas* operating simultaneously in the West Indies, they were nevertheless the terror of merchants and seamen of the other Atlantic empires. To non-Spaniards, they were considered the same as the Anglo-American pirates who had emerged following Lord Archibald Hamilton's schemes in 1715: "vermin who are the enemies of all mankind."<sup>3</sup> And they treated the *guardacostas* as such whenever they were captured or confronted; at least three *guardacosta* crews were executed in Port Royal during the 1720s, while others were hung in the Bahamas and New York.

While undoubtedly a danger, *guardacostas*—and violent resistance to them—were nonetheless accepted by Cubans and Jamaicans as an unfortunate part of the inter-imperial world

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, March 19, 1731/32, Adm 1/231, TNA.

in which they operated. Yet as the value and scale of Britain's Atlantic trade grew in the period following the Peace of Utrecht, the policy of "no peace beyond the line" became increasingly untenable in Europe as the complaints of the ever more vocal and influential London merchant and West Indian lobbies became impossible for British policy-makers to ignore. When thirty-six Anglo-American vessels were seized in the months following the formal end of the Anglo-Spanish war of 1727-29—many by the Cuban corsair Juan León de Fandiño—the *guardacostas* for the first time became a major diplomatic issue. Orders were issued by the British Ministry for the general seizure of Spanish vessels in retaliation. This "reprisals crisis" nearly led to renewed war, but in 1732 the Spanish government for the first time reined in the *guardacostas*. For the next four years, there was relative peace in the Caribbean. But it was not to last, for Spain's fundamental determination to maintain its territorial and commercial preeminence in the Americas had not altered. When the able and feared Minister José de Patiño died in 1736 the *guardacostas* again ran rampant, seizing sixteen Anglo-American vessels in a matter of months. Despite sincere efforts in both nations to preserve peace, the outcry in London and the opposition in Parliament could not be quieted, and, with the intransigence of the South Sea Company adding fuel to the fire, both nations slid into war in 1739. For the first time, violence in the Americas led to war in Europe.

### **A Policy of Piracy**

The Spanish conquest of America in the sixteenth-century had brought nearly an entire continent under the rule of Madrid, but the sheer success of the invasions also presented to imperial policy-makers almost insurmountable obstacles as they sought to impose control over their vast American territories. This was particularly true when it came to enforcing the Iberian

commercial monopoly and preventing illicit trade with foreigners. The sheer extent of the territory claimed by the Spanish Crown and the thousands of miles of coastline to patrol provided a plethora of opportunities for evasion of imperial laws. Moreover, with an imperial administration in Madrid focused on economizing expenses as much as possible to provide funds for projects in Europe, there was no question of supporting garrisons of sufficient size to patrol it all, by land or sea. The army in Spanish America was miniscule, if war erupted colonial militias were expected to defend their homes until disease and reinforcements from Europe defeated any invaders.<sup>4</sup> Troops could patrol cities and the countryside, but, as a defense against smuggling, they were almost completely ineffective. Similarly, the *Armada de Barlovento*—Spain’s permanent naval squadron in the Caribbean—was too small to effectively patrol the waters around her colonies.

As a result, Spanish ministers were compelled to rely on *guardacostas* to combat contrabandists. These “coast guards” had been first established in the Americas in 1674 to combat the threat of English, French, and Dutch privateers—pirates to the Spanish—and their original structure and instructions were maintained into the following century, even as their focus became the war on smuggling. Their instructions gave *guardacostas* wide leeway in where and when to sail, as well as granting them the coveted *fuero militar*—legal protection from civil courts. Their freedom was reinforced by imperial policy regarding territorial claims in the Americas, for Madrid maintained that the various treaties of the previous century had ceded only specific territories in the Americas. The remainder—including the seas themselves—still belonged to Spain. Any foreign vessel that strayed from those extremely narrow cessions into *rumbos sospechosos* (literally “suspicious courses”) was considered a legitimate target for search

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<sup>4</sup> Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 4-5.

and seizure. The limited resources available to colonial officials joined with an aggressive and unbending policy of economic exclusivity and territorial aggrandizement opened the door for unscrupulous Spanish-Americans to plunder foreign shipping, and even their fellow Spanish colonists, at will.

Despite the military reforms of the 1710s, the Spanish army in the Americas was still largely non-existent. The reforms promulgated by Cardinal Alberoni called for the amalgamation of the formerly independent companies that guarded Spanish-American ports into single fixed battalions, but this policy was implemented only slowly. Cartagena did not receive its fixed battalion until 1736, Santo Domingo until 1738, Veracruz until 1740, and Panama and San Juan de Puerto Rico until 1741. The strategic key to Spanish America, Havana had received its reorganization in 1719, after which the city's garrison officially consisted of seven hundred-strong infantry companies, each with four officers and two sergeants. They were joined by a hundred artillerymen and a company of cavalry; the latter of which was expanded in the 1730s to three companies of dragoons.<sup>5</sup> This was a tiny force to patrol an island of over forty-thousand square miles. Furthermore, the garrison was chronically understrength and unfit for serious duty. In 1739, for example, the governor of Santiago de Cuba reported that of the five companies in his garrison, all were under half-strength and only three possessed commanders; all of whom were in their sixties or older.<sup>6</sup>

In peacetime, these troops were used to guard the ports and search the countryside for illicit traders. Seizures of smuggled goods by them were frequent, but made little dent in the flood of contraband. There were simply too many paths for illicit traders to follow.<sup>7</sup> Nor could

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Francisco Cajigal de la Vega to the King, November 2, 1739, Santo Domingo, 363, AGI.

<sup>7</sup> This problem brought an end to an innovative scheme in New Grenada to save expenses by stationing troops at strategic points in the countryside around the city to interdict contraband goods after they had been landed.

land forces interdict foreign traders hovering off the coast, unless under exceptional circumstances. One of the few exceptions to this was the seizure of the British naval frigate *HMS Greyhound* by an army patrol near Havana while it was trading with locals. But, even then, the arrival of another smuggling vessel caused the patrol to abandon their prize and retreat.<sup>8</sup>

The *Greyhound* incident was exceptional. Normally foreign traders were immune to the efforts of the Spanish army. Furthermore, troops who had long served in Cuba often developed close ties with locals, enmeshing them in local communities and weakening the impetus to track down smugglers. One Governor estimated that to put an effective stop to smuggling in the towns of eastern Cuba would require stationing a hundred soldiers in every village and rotating them out every two months so they did not form attachments with the locals.<sup>9</sup> With the limited resources made available by the Crown such a system was clearly impossible.

Similar issues bedeviled the Spanish Navy in the Caribbean. The *Armada de Barlovento* had been reestablished following the War of the Spanish Succession, with its main headquarters alternating between Havana and Veracruz. In theory, naval vessels were a more efficient tool against contraband as they could cover much more territory in their patrols and seize an entire cargo of contraband in a single capture. And at times that proved to be the case, such as when in 1737 the frigate *Triunfo* sailed from Havana on a patrol along Cuba's north coast to Puerto Rico

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Illicit traders simply passed around the checkpoints. G. Earl Sanders, "Counter-contraband in Spanish America; Handicaps of the Governors in the Indies," *The Americas* 34 (1977-78): 62-3 and 66.

<sup>8</sup> "Testimonio de los autos sobre las opresa de una fragata Inglesa nombrada *El Galgo*," 1722; Petición de Joseph Ramón, 1722; Relación de Edward Smith, May 7, 1722; and Don Gregorio Guazo de Calderón to Don Andres de Lepide, November 25, 1722; Santo Domingo, 379, AGI; Log of the Ship *Greyhound*, ADM 51/417, TNA; Journal of Lt Edward Smith, Adm 51/4206, TNA; and Journal of Lt. Samuel Tilly, Adm L/G/130, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England.

<sup>9</sup> Celestino Andres Arauz Monfante, *El Contrabando Holandes en el Caribe durante la primera mitad del Siglo XVIII*, vol. 2 (Caracas: Biblioteca de la Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1984), 200.



and then back along Cuba's southern coast during which it seized two British and two Dutch smugglers.<sup>10</sup>

But the Spanish Navy in the Caribbean was simply too small to effectively patrol more than a tiny fraction of the region at any one time. In the early 1730s the force consisted of only four ships. While sufficient for the *Armada's* main employment of transporting *situados*—silver used for the payment of garrisons and governmental expenses in Spain's West Indian colonies—and escorting the treasure fleets across the Atlantic during peacetime, those obligations consumed the entirety of its meager resources.<sup>11</sup> Efforts to bolster the *Armada's* efforts proved futile and costly. Between 1724 and 1732 officials dispatched two warships from Spain to patrol the coast of Colombia and Venezuela for smugglers. The cost of maintaining this small squadron was over a quarter-million pesos annually (£56,250 sterling), yet the total value of seized goods that entered the royal coffers in Cartagena from 1712 to 1761 was only 1.3 million pesos (£292,500 sterling).<sup>12</sup> Spain simply could not afford to fight smuggling in that manner.

As a result, Spanish policymakers were forced to rely on colonists to bolster their anti-smuggling program. And apart from the occasional informer, the primary way colonists contributed was by outfitting vessels as *guardacostas*. For the first century and a half following the Spanish invasion of America, colonists had been forbidden from outfitting their own warships by a Crown worried over possible rebellion. In the latter half of the seventeenth-

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<sup>10</sup> Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to the Marquis de Torrenueva, August 23, 1737, Santo Domingo, 498, AGI.

<sup>11</sup> Bibiano Torres Ramírez, *La Armada de Barlovento* (Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos de Sevilla, 1981), 206.

However, the *Armada de Barlovento* at times even failed in the task of transporting the *situados*. In 1718, due to the lack of available Spanish shipping the Viceroy of Mexico was forced to ask Captain Thomas Jacob of the Royal Navy to transport the *situado* from Veracruz to Santo Domingo. Jacob promptly made off with the entire sum, and, as war between the two nations erupted shortly afterwards, successfully pocketed the whole amount. David Templeman, *The Secret History of the Late Directors of the South Sea Company* (London, 1735), 56-9.

<sup>12</sup> Lance Raymond Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 188.

century, however, as Spain's fleet languished, foreign buccaneers infested the Caribbean plundering dozens of settlements and seizing hundreds of Spanish vessels. The Crown's American revenues plummeted and, in response, reservations over possible revolts were abandoned. On February 22, 1674, the Queen Regent of Spain, Mariana of Austria, issued a Royal Instruction authorizing Spanish-Americans to outfit privateers to sail "in search of any other nations committing piracy and commit hostilities upon them."<sup>13</sup>

To encourage the outfitting of privateers, the instructions were generous and flexible in their restrictions. An *armador* (outfitter) was to provide a sufficient—unspecified—security to the local Governor or Viceroy for his good behavior and in return was granted a *patente del corso* (letter of marque) to outfit a ship or ships. They were allowed to take military supplies from the armories of the ports they fitted out from, and all royal officials were ordered to aid them. Two-thirds of the value of any prizes were to go to the *armador* and crew, the Crown waving its normal claim to a fifth of its value. The remainder went to local officials. Nor did the captor have to pay customs or import taxes on the goods they seized and sold in Spanish ports. When he seized a foreign ship, the captain was to carry it into the port from whence the *guardacosta* sailed to be tried. In principle, this requirement served as a check on corsairs, for if the prize was determined to have been improperly taken, the *armador* and his security would be close at hand to make proper restitution.

But, creating a massive loophole, the Crown also granted that, if the captors were unable to easily carry a prize into their home port, they could instead sail it to the nearest Spanish harbor. That is, it allowed *guardacostas* to carry their prizes to a port where they knew they

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<sup>13</sup> "salir al corso en busca de otras cualesquiera naciones que andan pirateando y haciendo otras hostilidades a ellos." "Copia de la Instrucción Real de la Reina gobierna del año de 1674 sacada de un testimonio de autos que se remitió por el Gobernador y oficiales reales de la ciudad de Santo Domingo en la Isla Española," Indiferente, 1828, AGI.

could find sympathetic judges—ones willing to ask few questions about the legitimacy of a prize in return for a share of its value. Such practices made the port of Trinidad in southern Cuba, and later Baracoa on its northeastern coast, major bases for *guardacostas* despite their small sizes. Furthermore, the Instruction's Article 11 granted civil and criminal jurisdiction over the *guardacosta* and its crew during the voyage to the *armador*, removing the danger of the crew being tried in court for any crimes they committed while aboard the privateer.<sup>14</sup> Commissions were normally granted for six months at a time and, while enjoining the privateer to act against enemies of the Spanish Crown, they gave no specific guidelines to who such enemies were.<sup>15</sup>

By the dawn of the eighteenth century, the threat of buccaneers had largely faded, although the outbreak of piracy in the 1710s provided further work for these corsairs. The *guardacostas'* role then switched to focusing on combating smuggling. Yet, finding an illicit trader was a difficult task among the vast numbers of vessels traversing the Caribbean Sea. But Spanish claims to primacy in the Americas came to the aid of *guardacostas*. Although foreign powers, particularly the British, maintained that a vessel could be stopped and searched for illicit trade only if it was found immediately off a Spanish shore and actively trading, Spanish officials maintained a much more expansive view of when and where a vessel could be seized.<sup>16</sup> In 1494,

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<sup>14</sup> “Desde el día que el armador hubiere dado las fianzas referidos, y presentaré la patente, en que se le permite armar y salir al corso ha detener jurisdicción civil y criminal sobre la gente de guerra que hubiere alistado y alistaré para la armaron y podrá conozca en primera vez a los delito que cometieren en tierra y mar, otorgando las apelaciones de las sentencias de todas causas, y en los casos que de derecho hubiere lugar para la Audiencia del distrito, y no para otro ningún Tribunal, pero esto no se ha de entender con la persona que hubiese cometido delito antes de ajustarse en los navíos,” *ibid*.

The legal protections granted to *guardacosta* crews was akin to, but actually surpassed, the *fuero militar* granted to soldiers and militia, which gave them the right to be tried in military rather than civil courts, as well as protection from imprisonment for debt and other civic obligations. For studies of the *fuero militar* in the Americas, see: Lyle N. McAlister, *The "fuero militar" in New Spain, 1794-1800* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1957); and Ben Vinson III, *Bearing Arms for His Majesty: The Free-Colored Militia in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Morales' commission left the month of its issue blank, a seeming oversight that Jamaicans claimed was a common practice allowing captains to cruise as long as they wished. Commission of Captain Diego de Morales, 1739, Shelburne Papers vol. 44, CL.

<sup>16</sup> Points to be Considered with regard to the Depredations of Spain, January, 1738, Add Ms 9131, BL.

the Treaty of Tordesillas had divided the world between Spain and Portugal, granting to Spain all the lands and seas in the Americas, apart from Brazil.<sup>17</sup> Over the course of the seventeenth century, military defeats and fiscal exhaustion had forced Spain into a series of unequal treaties with foreign powers acknowledging their right to occupy certain lands in the Americas.<sup>18</sup> These treaties had also granted foreign nations' vessels the right to sail between Europe and their colonies. But Spain maintained that everything not specifically ceded to foreigners by treaty remained the possession of the Spanish Crown—including the sea itself.<sup>19</sup> The Caribbean in Spanish official circles remained a sort of *mare nostrum*, completely under their jurisdiction except for specific allowances. Any foreign vessel found not travelling directly to or from its colonies was considered suspicious, particularly if within sight of Spanish lands. Such a voyage was considered to be undertaken in *rumbos sospechosos*. The vessel could therefore be stopped and searched by any Spaniard official. The policy took no account of travel between foreign colonies, and almost as little to the vagaries of wind and weather. As late as the 1730s, the policy was repeated in a series of royal instructions, even as it was becoming a major diplomatic issue.<sup>20</sup> To clarify where foreign vessels were allowed to travel, maps were sent to colonial governors in

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<sup>17</sup> "Treaty between Spain and Portugal concluded at Tordesillas; June 7, 1494," in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States*, vol. 1, ed. Frances G. Davenport (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 84-100.

<sup>18</sup> These cessions were granted in the Treaty of Munster with the Dutch in 1648, the Treaty of Madrid with England in 1670, and the Treaty of Ryswick with France in 1697.

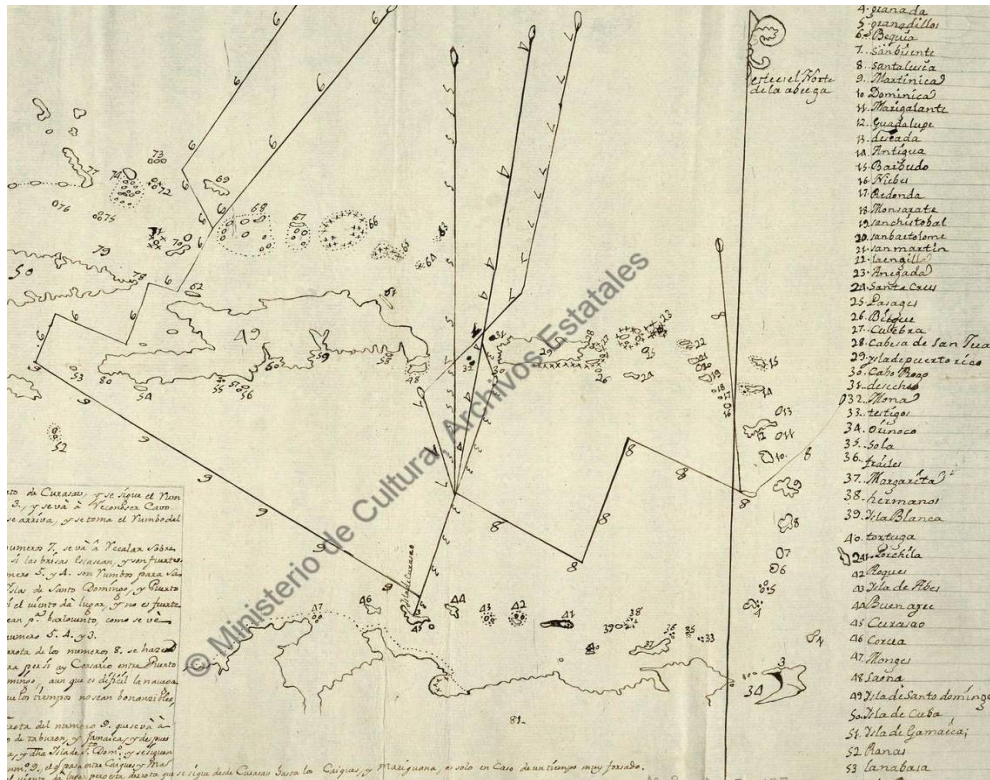
<sup>19</sup> Article 15, of the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1670 stated that "the present treaty shall detract nothing from any pre-eminence, right or dominion of either ally in the American seas, straits, and other waters; but they shall have and retain them in as ample a manner as is their rightful due." As the Spanish had claimed dominion over all the Americas and their seas by the Papal Donations of the 1490s, Spanish officials used this vague language as justification for their right to search vessels in the open sea—as those waters still belonged to Spain.

Article 15 also stated "it is always to be understood that the freedom of navigation ought by no means to be interrupted, provided nothing be committed or done contrary to the genuine meaning of these articles." Thus, Spain acknowledged that England possessed some unspecified rights of navigation in an unspecified part of the American seas, without committing itself to recognizing the validity of those rights in all cases. "Treaty between Great Britain and Spain, concluded at Madrid July 8/18, 1670," in *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies*, vol. 2, ed. Frances G. Davenport (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1929), 196.

<sup>20</sup> Copia de la ordenanza de corso de 17 de noviembre de 1718, Indiferente 1828, AGI; Real Cedula, May 30, 1734, Santo Domingo, 492, AGI; and Real Cedula July 20, 1738, Santo Domingo, 498, AGI.

1734 illustrating, for instance, the specific routes Dutch vessels were permitted to sail in the Caribbean. Any deviations from these channels was deemed suspicious.

**Figure 13**  
 Acceptable Dutch Sailing Routes in the Caribbean, 1734  
 MPD, 5, 177  
 Archivo General de Simancas, Simancas, Spain



When it stopped a foreign vessel, generally with a warning shot, the *guardacosta* would dispatch a small boat to board and examine the foreigner for contraband goods. The captain’s cabin, the hold, and the personal lockers of crew and passengers were all searched for items that could have come from Spanish territories. Silver coins, cochineal, cacao, and, most commonly, logwood or “brazil wood” were all considered evidence of potential illegal trade, even if the vessel’s papers revealed it had last sailed from a non-Spanish colony. Such claims meant little,

for, culturally and legally, Spanish officials believed that items possessed something akin to a *vitium reale*—an inherent taint characteristic in the item itself.<sup>21</sup> In their view, a product was forever marked by its country of origin; once a Spanish product always a Spanish product.<sup>22</sup>

The means by which such goods were acquired were irrelevant, their mere presence was enough to justify seizing the vessel and carrying it to a Spanish port for trial. In principle, if the captain or supercargo could prove that they had purchased the cargo in their own colony or that the goods originated there, they would be found innocent and released. But such was rarely the case. It was well known that no other nation's colony had silver or gold mines—and they certainly would not have minted Spanish coins. Similarly, it was denied that cacao or dyewoods grew in foreign colonies. It naturally followed that they could only have arrived aboard the vessel as a result of illicit trade. Thus, even if Captain Vaughan had received the pieces of eight in Jamaica, they were still legally admissible as evidence of smuggling.

As a result of budgetary constraints and the vast size of its American territories, Spanish officials committed to maintaining their supposedly autarkic imperial commercial system were unable to effectively curb smuggling using the army or navy. Instead, they continued to rely on a body of privateers to lead the struggle. Originally created as a cheap but effective means of combatting the perpetual warfare of raid and counter-raid in the 1600s, the attitudes and policies

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of this policy, see: Hugh Hume-Campbell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Marchmont, *A State of the Rise and Progress of our Disputes with Spain* (London, 1739); and Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), 39.

The legal definition of *vitium reale* is most commonly used today in cases of forgery; its effect is that the instrument to which it refers is null and the person who acquires such an instrument will not acquire any right from the instrument. <https://definitions.uslegal.com/v/vitium-reale/> (Accessed May 9, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> In modified form, this policy would later be adopted by Britain's Royal Navy in the 1750s under the concept of "continuous voyage" as a means of targeting neutral Dutch vessels suspected of trading with the French during the Seven Years' War. Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), 39; and Pares, *Colonial blockade and neutral rights, 1739-1763* (Philadelphia, PA: Porcupine Press, 1975).

under which *guardacostas* operated had not changed substantially by the following century. They were granted maximum flexibility and protection by authorities to encourage colonists to fight smuggling, rather than join it. Yet that same flexibility, when joined with Spain's continued grandiose claims to sovereignty over the Americas, created a system ripe for abuse by *guardacostas* more committed to making their fortunes than maintaining Cádiz's commercial monopoly.

### **To Hunt the English**

The vagueness of the instructions regulating *guardacostas* joined with the vast quantity of non-Spanish shipping in the Caribbean presented plentiful opportunities for those seeking their fortune through privateering. In many ways, the *guardacostas* were a Spanish eighteenth-century equivalent of the English buccaneers of the previous century. They constituted a permanent force of privateers ostensibly targeting pirates—for so Spanish authorities considered illicit traders—but who in practice targeted anyone they could capture with few questions asked by officials. Operating primarily out of ports in Cuba and Puerto Rico, *guardacostas* were a diverse and multi-national force. Although largely captained by Spaniards or Spanish-Americans, their crews included men of all nations including free Africans and even runaway slaves from British America.

The crew aboard a *guardacosta* worked not for wages, but for shares of prizes. This created incentives to seize any vessel they encountered. Although bloodless captures were the norm, under such pressure violence and torture were a not uncommon way to convince captured crews to reveal hidden cargo or personal effects. Even a few coins in a captain's chest were held as sufficient evidence to bring a vessel in for trial and condemnation. Spanish judges, particularly

in the “piratical ports” of Trinidad and Baracoa, and at times Havana and Santiago de Cuba as well, were themselves often investors in *guardacostas* and were not likely to view seized vessels with much criticism.<sup>23</sup> They were aided by the fact that *guardacostas* commonly abandoned most of their prisoners at sea before returning to port—leaving fewer voices to testify. After condemnation, the seized vessel and its cargo were sold, or taken by the privateers to replace their own vessels, and the captured Anglo-Americans left to find their own way home—often with the help of South Sea Company factors. Despite the histrionics of the London press, few British sailors were put to hard labor on Spanish fortifications or rotted in Spanish prisons.

*Guardacosta* commanders came from diverse backgrounds. In a letter penned by the South Sea Company’s Santiago de Cuba factors in 1731 they informed Jamaica’s Governor Robert Hunter that Spanish sources informed them that there were currently at least thirteen *guardacostas* at sea—nine from Puerto Rico, two from Havana, and two more from Santa Marta in Venezuela. Of their captains, a number were born in Spain, primarily in Galicia and Andalusia, but had married and settled in the Americas. Diego de Morales, for instance, “a little man as to size” had been born in Port St Maria and was married to a “negro woman” in Puerto Rico. According to the factors’ intelligence he commanded a twenty-gun sloop with over a hundred men owned by the infamous Puerto Rican *armador* Miguel Henríquez described as a “mulatto” and former shoemaker. Others hailed from Havana or Puerto Rico.<sup>24</sup> Many non-Spaniards also served as commanders of *guardacostas*. Diego de Piña was an illiterate Dutchman born in Tenerife.<sup>25</sup> Mateo Luca was an Italian and commander of a Puerto Rican *guardacosta*,

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<sup>23</sup> This term was used to describe Baracoa and Trinidad in: Charles Stewart to Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, September 12, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to Robert Hunter, August 18, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>25</sup> Declaración de Diego de Piña, in “Testimonio de los Autos sobre la Presa del navío Ingles nombrado *la Galera* remitidas al Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias por la Real Audiencia de Santo Domingo por mano de los Interesados,” 1721, CO 388/89, TNA; “Humble Petition of Samuel Bonham & others owners and insurers in behalf of themselves and others concerned & suffered by ye loss of the Ship *Anne Galley*,” January 22, 1729/30, Adm



before he was caught by the British Navy and hung along with forty-one of his men at Port Royal in 1722.<sup>26</sup> Even Anglo-Americans commanded *guardacostas*; two of Governor Hamilton's privateers—Nicholas Browne and Christopher Winter—later accepted commissions from the *alcaldes* of Trinidad.<sup>27</sup>

The most famous Cuban *guardacosta* captain—Juan León de Fandiño—had similar origins. Born in Spain, Fandiño first received a privateering commission in 1719 during the War of the Quadruple Alliance. But it was a decade later that he emerged as a major privateering figure. By that time, Fandiño, a tall and “dark-complexioned” man, was in his mid-forties and commanded the sloop *Casara* commissioned by the governor of Havana and fitted out by a man named “Graña.”<sup>28</sup> Operating first out of Havana, and later out of Baracoa, Fandiño captured over a dozen British and Dutch vessels in the spring of 1731, earning a reputation for violence and cruelty. Although hunted by the British Navy and at times repudiated by Spanish officials, Fandiño remained elusive; lying low during times of official displeasure and re-emerging when official attitudes towards privateering were more permissive.

The fact that Fandiño's sloop named was recorded as having only a single owner—and that owner having but a single name—illustrates the falsehoods and corruption undergirding the *guardacosta* industry. Under the Royal Instructions of 1674, Spanish governors could grant *patentes de corso* to colonists upon their providing proof of sufficient security for the good

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1/231, TNA; and “Extract of a letter from Rear Admiral Stewart Dated on board the *Lion* at Port Royal September 14, 1731 to Mr. Burchett,” Add Ms 32775, BL.

<sup>26</sup> Two of Luca's crew were pardoned in return for giving evidence and another seventeen were sent to England for trial there. Sir Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, May 18, 1722, CO 137/14, TNA. Unfortunately, the trial record has not survived.

<sup>27</sup> Hieronimo de Fuentes and Benito Alfonso del Manzano to Nicholas Lawes, February 20, 1720, reproduced in Charles Johnson, *A general history of the robberies and murders of the most notorious pyrates, and also their policies, discipline and government, from their first rise and settlement in the island of Providence* (London, 1724), 43.

<sup>28</sup> Capt. Thomas Frankland to Secretary of the Admiralty, June 16, 1742, Adm 1/1781, TNA.

behavior of the privateer. Often these outfitters were Spanish officials. For instance, Don Cristobal Quintero was an official in the Cuban tobacco monopoly and was recorded as having fitted out Diego de Piña's *guardacosta* sloop when it seized the *Anne Galley* and its cargo of over two hundred slaves as it sailed from Africa to Jamaica in 1728.<sup>29</sup> Yet precious little can be uncovered about the identities of most *armadores* for the common practice was to use agents acting in the name of the true owners. This was to protect the investors in case the seizure was overturned by the Council of Indies; for in such instances the goods of the *armador* were to be seized and sold to repay the owners of the seized vessel and its cargo. The use of a frontman, or *prestanombre*, who signed his name to the *patente de corso* hid the true owners from this possibility. When the owners of the *Robert Galley* sought to recover its value in Santo Domingo, for instance, their agent there reported that although the president of the *audiencia* and some of the judges were concerned in the *guardacosta* that made the capture, they were not recorded as its owners. Instead the "pretended *armador*" was "a mulatto, a man of no substance and altogether incapable of making any restitution."<sup>30</sup>

The crews recruited and commanded by such men were as diverse in their origins as their commanders. Fandiño's lieutenant in 1731 was a Frenchman named Durell, and he had at least one Englishman in a crew of ninety "mulattos and negroes."<sup>31</sup> In another instance, when a *piragua* fitted out as a *guardacosta* was captured in 1732, its crew of eleven included three seven people of color and four Europeans.<sup>32</sup> Non-Spanish Europeans were frequently present among

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<sup>29</sup> Leonard Cocke to William Hayman and John Hynes, July 12, 1730, SP 94/101, TNA; and Hubert Tassel to Samuel Bonham, January 12, 1732, Add Ms 32776, BL.

<sup>30</sup> Memorial of Henry Lloyd, Edmund Saunders, Henry Tongue, and Richard Farr of Bristol, and the Master and Crew of the *Robert Galley* 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>31</sup> "Breva Relación de la presa de la chalupa *Thomas* patrón Guillermo Keeling y también de la presa de la chalupa *el Príncipe Guillermo* patrón Guillermo Ivy," Santo Domingo, 498, AGI; Deposition of Robert Turner, January 10, 1731/32, Add Ms 32776, BL; and Case of the Brigantine *Hanna Hope*, William Ammis Master, n.d., Add Ms 32769, BL.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett; April 21, 1732, Adm 1/231, TNA.

crews. Members of the Irish diaspora, in particular, were often claimed to be prominent members. Irishmen were prized recruits, for, among other services they served as interpreters and could even pretend to be British crewmen from a prize and “confess” to their involvement in illicit trade in court.<sup>33</sup> Slaves too served aboard *guardacostas*. Juan Silvestre, for instance, was an enslaved African from Trinidad in Cuba, who, when captured and brought to trial in Nassau, claimed that his master “ordered him out with [Captain Augustín Blanco] and crew, and that his master was to have his share (except jewels and rings).”<sup>34</sup> When the *Hannah and Lydia* was captured, its commander left a vivid description of the diversity among his captors. They included a Dutchman named Nicholas who spoke decent English; a “mulatto remarkable for his scars about the neck, chin and breast, received by a shot of a blunderbuss;” a Mustee, “a lusty pox broken man, who seemed to have a second command on board the Spanish sloop,” and “a negro run away from Cape Fear” in North Carolina who spoke English and worked as a cook on the vessel.<sup>35</sup>

Generally hailing from poor backgrounds, crewmen did not sign on to serve as *guardacostas* for wages. Rather they did so for shares in the value of any prizes taken. This put intense pressure on their commanders to take vessels.<sup>36</sup> In one instance, when a Spanish captain doubted the legitimacy of a potential prize, his prisoners (hardly likely to be sympathetic to their

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<sup>33</sup> Deposition of Bernadus Smith, Samuel Harper, Garret Burger, and Balton Dehart; July 26, 1731; and Deposition of William Griffith, Samuel Pye, and Frances Smith, October 28, 1737,” *Indiferente*, 1597, AGI.

<sup>34</sup> Proceedings of the Court of Admiralty held in New Providence the 11th of October 1722 for the Trial of Richard Hancock & others for Piracy, HCA 1/99, TNA.

The use of free and enslaved Africans as sailors was a common phenomenon in the West Indies. For an account of their live and the information networks that emerged from such service, see: Julius Scott, “The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University 1986).

<sup>35</sup> Protest of Edward Sunderland, September 16, 1732, Add Ms 32780, BL.

<sup>36</sup> “Testimony of Nicholas Calliaud, Trial at a Court of Admiralty”, July 10, 1724; and “Testimony of Elias Bolt and Richard Jackson, Commission by James Concamen Esq. Register of the said [Vice-Admiralty] Court duly appointed and Sworn against Gersham Collins for Piracy,” June 8, 1738, HCA 1/99, TNA.

captors) described how the crew “rose against [him], drew their knives and threatened to kill him if he would not let them take the sloop.”<sup>37</sup> Yet hunting illicit traders was dangerous. Jamaican smugglers were heavily manned and well-armed. And although they competed fiercely with one another for profit, there existed a sort of international solidarity among contrabandists in the face of Spanish efforts to curtail their trade. In 1736, for instance, while on a trading voyage to southern Cuba, Peter Bedlow learned from his Spanish customers of the seizure of a French trader on the same coast. He proceeded to attack the captors, free the vessel, and return it to the Frenchmen.<sup>38</sup> In another incident, a *guardacosta*’s lieutenant was captured and taken aboard a Jamaican smuggler at Matanzas who transferred him to a Dutch vessel where he was whipped to death and his body thrown into the sea.<sup>39</sup>

Even on land, *guardacosta* crews were not safe. In 1726, Nicholas Browne was ambushed by the smuggler John Drudge and his men, and the former-Jamaican privateer’s head was cut off and preserved in rum so that Drudge could claim the £500 reward offered by the Jamaican Assembly.<sup>40</sup> The Dutch were particularly notorious for their aggressiveness against *guardacostas*, often fitting out vessels to pursue them and rarely taking prisoners.<sup>41</sup> Even when a *guardacosta* emerged successful from a fight with a smuggler, it was not without cost. In a three-hour battle with a Dutch trader off Matanzas, the victorious Spanish suffered three dead and four

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<sup>37</sup> Deposition of Bernadus Smith, Samuel Harper, Garret Burger, and Balton Dehart, July 26, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>38</sup> The Spanish authorities put a warrant out against Bedlow for piracy and sent it to Jamaica, but the British authorities seems to have paid it no mind. John Merewether to Peter Burrell, July 7, 1736, n.d. 1736, and December 27, 1738, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>39</sup> Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to Edward Trelawney, January 12, 1738, CO 136/56, TNA.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes of Council, March 3, 1726/27, 1B/5/3/11, JNA.

<sup>41</sup> Copy of a Letter from William Matthew Jr. to the Board of Trade, June 14, 1737, Add Ms 32795, BL; and Sir Benjamin Keene to the Duke of Newcastle, January 27, 1738, SP 94/130, TNA.

wounded, while the Dutch had lost sixteen killed and twenty wounded out of a seventy-man crew.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the risks, *guardacostas* did attack smugglers when opportunity offered. The same Peter Bedlow, for example, was seized off Cuba in 1738. Along with Bedlow's vessel, the corsair seized a cargo of dry goods worth over £6,000 sterling—"the greatest loss the illicit traders have met with for a great many years."<sup>43</sup> But it was more common to attack any foreign vessel one might meet, and far safer. Merchantmen tended to be less heavily armed and manned, and more likely to surrender without a fight. Indeed, one Jamaican observer complained that "never having been able to take one of the illicit traders at the South Keys," Spaniards' constant complaints of smuggling were merely "to find pretenses to be fitting out their *guardacostas*" in order to prey on British shipping.<sup>44</sup>

In pursuit of prey, *guardacostas* ranged far and wide. In the 1720s, Cuban corsairs were recorded taking vessels as far north as the Chesapeake.<sup>45</sup> Normally, however, they concentrated their activities in high traffic areas of the Caribbean. Cuban-based *guardacostas* concentrated on the Windward Passage between eastern Cuba and Saint Domingue and the Florida Channel; the main routes by which vessels departing Jamaica travelled. They also patrolled the Bahamas, which Spain still laid claim to, frequently seizing salt gatherers at Turks Island.<sup>46</sup> Puerto Rican privateers terrorized the Leeward Islands, and frequently cruised along the southern coast of Hispaniola, seizing vessels coming from Europe to Jamaica. When it came to *guardacostas*, Jamaica's position—"in the Spaniard's bowels and in the heart of his trade"—so valuable for

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<sup>42</sup> Gregorio Guazo y Calderón Fernández de la Vega to Don Andrés del Coro Barrutia y Le Pide, December 27, 1723, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI.

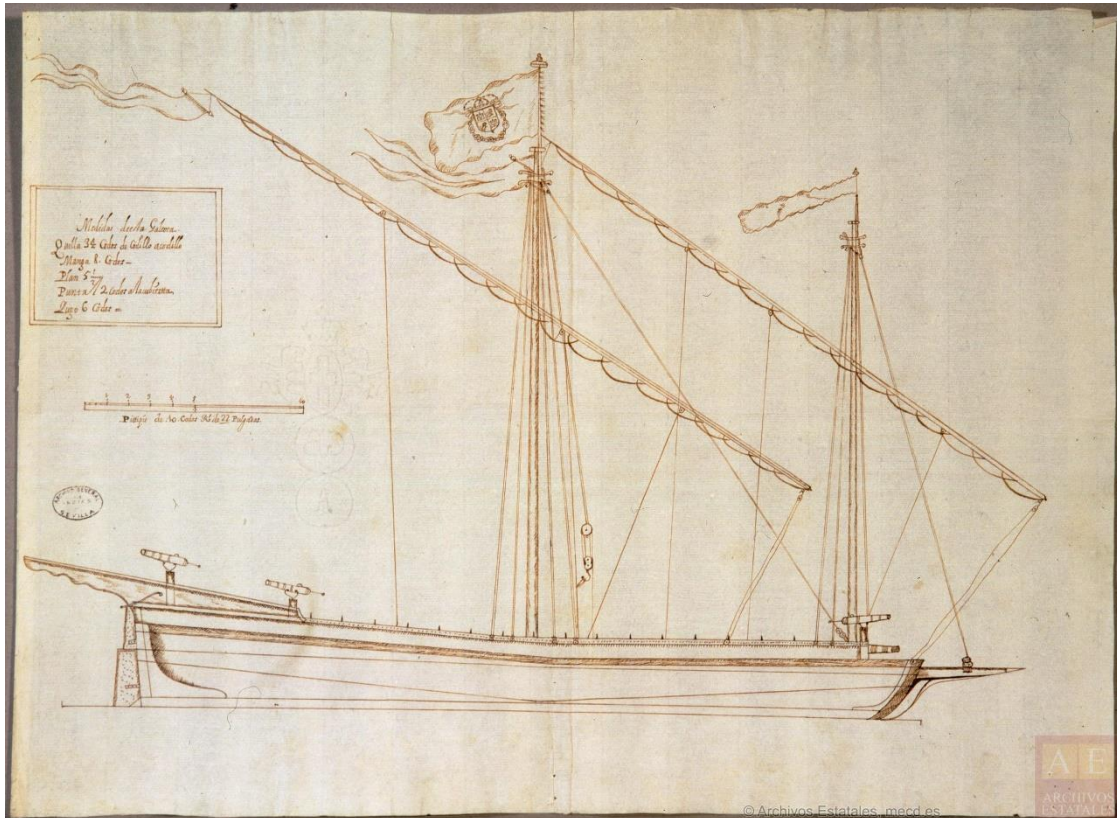
<sup>43</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, December 27, 1738, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>44</sup> John Merewether to Peter Burrell, July 7, 1736, Shelburne Papers, vol. 44.

<sup>45</sup> Consulta, May 4, 1723, Santo Domingo, 325, AGI; and Trial at a Court of Admiralty at New York, July 10, 1724, HCA 1/99, TNA.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, November 19, 1731, Add Ms 32776, BL.

inter-imperial trade, also made its shipping particularly vulnerable.<sup>47</sup> In the years 1713-39 (excluding the war years 1718-20 and 1727-28), 123 of the 211 Anglo-American vessels seized by *guardacostas* were either sailing to or from Jamaica. (**Appendix C**).



**Figure 14**

Cuban *guardacosta*, 1695

The use of oared vessels such as this *galeota* were common among *guardacostas*, allowing them to pursue their prey even in calm winds.

MP-Ingenios, 14, Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain.

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<sup>47</sup> Edmund Hickerlingill, *Jamaica Viewed: with all the ports, harbours, and their several soundings, towns, and settlements thereunto belonging together, with the nature of it's climate, fruitfulness of the soile, and its suitability to English complexions. With several other collateral observations and reflexions upon the island* (London, 1661), 16.

Fandiño followed this pattern when, in the spring of 1731, he began patrolling between Havana and Cape Antonio on Cuba's far western tip.<sup>48</sup> During this cruise he made his most famous capture: the *Rebecca* commanded by Captain Robert Jenkins. According to Jenkins' account, a becalmed *Rebecca* was approached by the *Casara* which was under oars and flying a black flag. As it drew nearer, it supposedly lowered the black flag and raised a red one—signifying no quarter would be given if there was resistance—while simultaneously firing several warning shots. Jenkins was ordered via speaking trumpet to come aboard the *guardacosta* with his papers to demonstrate his innocent intentions. Jenkins sent his mate across with his clearance and bills of lading from Jamaica to demonstrate his innocence of any illicit trade. The boat returned, however, without the mate, but instead with a boarding party “who told [Jenkins] they were come to visit his ship for money, logwood, hides, or tallow.” The boarders broke open all the hatches, chests, and lockers. They found nothing but a few doubloons.

Unsatisfied with the results, Fandiño's French lieutenant ordered rope tied around the necks of Jenkins and the ship's boy, “hoisting them up to the foreyard” to strangle and then dropping them to the deck. When Jenkins' still refused to admit to carrying hidden goods, the Frenchman damned Jenkins and his crew as “obstinate heretics” and threatened to burn their vessel. When Jenkins still refused, the French lieutenant “took hold of his left ear and slit it down with his cutlass (and another of his gang tore it off) and ordered him to be scalped.” The severed ear was thrown into Jenkins' lap, and his captors bid him to give it to George II and tell the British monarch they would do the same to him if he ventured into Caribbean waters. The

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<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to Robert Hunter, August 18, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

Spaniards then stripped the crew of their personal possessions, including the clothes they wore, as well as the navigational instruments. They then quit the ship, leaving the cargo undisturbed.<sup>49</sup>

Fandiño's seizure of the *Rebecca* bore many of the hallmarks of a typical seizure of a merchantman at sea by pirates, privateers, and *guardacostas*. The use of false colors to approach a target covertly was a particularly common tactic. When the *Loyal Charles* was seized in 1737, the Spanish vessel approached first under an English ensign, but, as they drew near, raised a Spanish one before dispatching a boarding party. The ship was then searched and twenty tons of logwood were found, sufficient for her to be taken into Havana and condemned.<sup>50</sup> Torture was not uncommonly used in such attacks to elicit confessions of illicit trade. In one incident, a Spanish crew reportedly "put lighted matches" between the fingers of a captive to elicit a confession of illicit trade.<sup>51</sup> Invariably, even if a vessel was released, it would be plundered; crewmen and passenger's clothing was especially vulnerable—a sign of the value and shortage of European textiles in Spanish Caribbean islands. But it was the smallest presence of any good that originated in the Spanish colonies that mattered. Logwood, silver, gold, cacao, and hides were all considered evidence of smuggling and made the capture legitimate in the eyes of a

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<sup>49</sup> Deposition of Robert Jenkins, June 17, 1731; and Deposition of Robert Brown and Hammond Butler, June 17, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Way to Edward Manning, August 26, 1737, CO 137/48, TNA.

Logwood was a perennial issue between the Spanish and British courts. Anglo-Jamaicans had settled in Central America in the second half of the seventeenth century, and erected "logwood camps" to harvest the valuable wood. The British argued that, since the area had not been settled by the Spanish, they were free to settle and claim it, while the Spanish maintained that the British were trespassing on Spanish territory. As a result, the presence of logwood in a ship's cargo was, in Spanish eyes, proof of smuggling, even if it had been purchased in Jamaica. For overviews of the issue, see: Lawrence Henry Gipson, "British Diplomacy in the Light of Anglo-Spanish New World issues, 1750-1757," *The American Historical Review* 51 (1946): 627-648; Gilbert M. Joseph, "British Loggers and Spanish Governors: The Logwood Trade and Its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part I," *Caribbean Studies* 14:2 (1974): 7-37; Joseph, "British Loggers and Spanish Governors: The Logwood Trade and Its Settlements in the Yucatan Peninsula: Part II," *Caribbean Studies* 15:4 (1976): 43-52; and Geoffrey L. Rossano, "Who's Afraid to Go to the Bay?: Colonial Shippers and the Central American Logwood Trade, 1670-1770," in *Global Crossroads and the American Seas*, ed. Clark G. Reynolds (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories, 1988): 19-27.

<sup>51</sup> Deposition of Lane Whitehall, September 12, 1729, Adm 1/231, TNA.



*guardacosta* crew. At other times, the mere presence of a vessel near territory the Spanish claimed was considered sufficient reason to seize the vessel.

Following his 1731 capture of the *Rebecca*, Fandiño continued to cruise the Florida Channel. In May, he chased the *Nymphet* for six hours. But she outsailed him and reached Jamaica safely.<sup>52</sup> By June, he was back in Havana, refitting his vessel, and boasting to the South Sea Company factors there that he had stopped eleven foreign vessels, but could find no evidence of illicit trade so released them all. A Company sloop was then in port, and Fandiño repeatedly threatened to seize it, causing its captain to refuse to sail until another Company ship arrived to sail in consort. The resulting loss of tobacco to spoilage due to the delay was not appreciated by either the factor Wargent Nicholson or the Court of Directors.<sup>53</sup> After leaving Havana, Fandiño cruised amidst the Bahamas, which run along Cuba's northern coast. On July 21, he seized the sloop *Dolphin* sailing from Barbados to North Carolina which had stopped to collect salt at Turks Island on the north coast of Cuba.<sup>54</sup> Upon boarding the *Dolphin*, Fandiño's men stripped the men aboard of all their clothing, locked the two white women passengers in the cabin, where his French Lieutenant was said to have "debauched a negro wench." Making for the small town of Baracoa on Cuba's north coast, both ships reached it five days later. Fandiño ordered his prize there, rather than Havana, because he could be sure of condemnation in the smaller settlement, and of being able to plunder the vessel without the oversight of officials eager to claim the Crown's share.

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<sup>52</sup> Case of the brigantine *Hanna Hope*, Add Ms 32769, BL.

<sup>53</sup> Extract of a letter from Messrs. Nicholson & Tassel to the Court of Directors, July 15, 1731, Adm 1/3810, TNA; and Deposition of Robert Turner, January 10, 1731/32, Add Ms 32776, BL.

<sup>54</sup> "An Account of what happened to Henry Allen, John Earle, Mary Earle, Rebecca Shute, and Rebecca Shute an infant, of about three years old, in their intended voyage from Barbados to Cape Fear in North Carolina," November 10, 1731, Add Ms 32776, BL; and Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, November 19, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

In the 1710s and early 1720s, Trinidad had been a popular *guardacosta* haven for the ease of getting a prize condemned there. Its *alcaldes* granted commissions and condemnations with few questions asked, and the port played host to corsairs “in a more open manner than ever the Governors of Jamaica [who] formerly sheltered them.” By 1720, the British Navy claimed that over two hundred Anglo-American ex-pirates lived there as well as large numbers of French and Dutch who served aboard the corsairs.<sup>55</sup> In the decade following 1713, at least twenty-three Anglo-American vessels were condemned in Trinidad, while the town’s privateers also made frequent descents on Jamaica’s northern coast, plundering plantations and stealing slaves.<sup>56</sup> However, Trinidad’s prominence as a *guardacosta* nest faded in the 1720s. In 1721, many of the town’s leaders were arrested for smuggling—clear evidence that the contraband trade and the sponsorship of privateers were not seen as mutually exclusive investments.<sup>57</sup> Then, when in 1725 the town asked the Governor in Havana for permission to issue a half dozen *patentes de corso*, they were summarily refused, because, as the Governor explained the town was notorious for its privateers raiding Spaniards as well as foreigners. Even worse, the *alcaldes* consistently failed to supply the Governor with information regarding the vessels fitted out or seized, nor did they dispatch the Crown’s share of prizes to Havana.<sup>58</sup> This prohibition against the *alcaldes* issuing patents continued for some time, and there is no record of an Anglo-American vessel being taken into Trinidad in the next two decades.

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Vernon to Josiah Burchett, November 7, 1720 and January 27, 1720/21, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>56</sup> “A List of some of the many ships, sloops, and other vessels taken from the subjects of the King of Great Britain in America by the subjects of the King of Spain since the conclusion of the last peace contrary to the treaties of peace and commerce concluded between their said Majesties,” n.d., CO 137/12, TNA.

For accounts of privateering in Trinidad, see: Karelía Cadalso Echenagusía, “Particularidades del Corso en Trinidad durante el siglo XVIII,” *Siga la marcha* 3, 4, 5 (1994): 37-42; and Hernán Venegas Delgado, *Trinidad de Cuba: Corsarios, azúcar y revolución en el Caribe* (La Habana: Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Cultura Cubana Juan Marinello, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Edward Vernon to Josiah Burchett, January 27, 1720/21, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>58</sup> Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to the King, July 22, 1725, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI.

Baracoa soon replaced Trinidad. At the time of the *Dolphin's* arrival, Baracoa was a town of around sixty houses and was chiefly supported by the plunder of *guardacostas* such as Fandiño. Little commercial agriculture was pursued, and, according to one English prisoner, “there [was] scarce a man there who [was] not or hath not been a privateer.” There the *Dolphin* was condemned by the *alcaldes* with little fuss, for Turks Island was regarded as part of Spain; and the Anglo-Americans’ presence there constituted clear proof of their illicit designs. The vessels’ goods were unloaded for local consumption, the ten slaves aboard sold, and the remainder of the cargo sent to Santiago de Cuba for sale.<sup>59</sup>

Before a prize and its cargo could be properly sold, and the captors assured of their protection from any foreign complaints, it had to be legally condemned at trial. In this process, the ship was to be carried to port, the cargo inspected and inventoried by officials, and depositions taken from both captors and prisoners. Then the judge would make his decision. The trial took the same broad form everywhere, but in smaller settlements variations were endemic and abuses were widespread. Such was the case when the *Westbury Galley* was taken into Baracoa by Rodrigo de Castro in 1721. The ship, on a voyage from Bristol via Guinea to Barbados and then Jamaica, was carrying nearly two hundred African captives when it was seized along the southern coast of Hispaniola. De Castro dispatched the prize under his Flemish quartermaster Diego de Piña to Baracoa, and during the voyage, as was normal, most of the captive sailors were deposited ashore in French Saint Domingue; only three were carried to Baracoa. This not only prevented a revolt by the prisoners, but made it easier for the captors to control the judicial narrative. When the prize arrived in Cuba, the *alcaldes* examined the ship

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<sup>59</sup> Alexander Cupples to Charles Stewart, December 8, 1729, SP 94/101, TNA; and “An Account of what happened to Henry Allen, John Earle, Mary Earle, Rebecca Shute, and Rebecca Shute an infant,” November 10, 1731, Add Ms 32776, BL.

without taking an official inventory—no doubt to facilitate private plundering—and opened the case. They began by publishing an order banning anyone from purchasing anything from the *Westbury Galley* until it was properly condemned. Next, de Piña gave his testimony, stating that he had found proof of the prize’s intention to trade. When asked what proof he had, he claimed his men had found “letters of traffic and contract with the inhabitants of Puerto Príncipe.”<sup>60</sup> These letters, written in Barbados, ordered the *Westbury Galley*’s captain to sail to Kingston and meet with the merchant Henry Lloyd who was to supply him with 48,000 pesos worth of dry goods and then to sail on to Puerto Príncipe to trade. One of the three crewmen, Josiah Curtin, corroborated the story and the vessel and her cargo were condemned.

While seemingly an iron-clad case, the other British mariners claimed that the *guardacostas* had fabricated all of their evidence to ensure a condemnation. When they eventually returned to England, the other two crewmen claimed that they had been kept aboard the *Westbury Galley* in hopes that one could be convinced “to make oath that the said ship was designed to trade and did trade on the Spanish coast.” When they arrived in Baracoa they had been offered two hundred pieces of eight each to testify. Furthermore, Nicholas Browne, who had been serving as pilot aboard the *guardacosta*, had forged the incriminating letters using the name of an old acquaintance in Jamaica.<sup>61</sup> The truth of the crewmen’s counter-testimony complaints seems verified by the Governor of Santiago’s anger at the *alcaldes* of Baracoa for

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<sup>60</sup> “por haberle cogido cartas de tráfico y contrato con los del Puerto de Príncipe,” in Declaración de Diego de Piña, 1721; and “Testimonio de los Autos sobre la Presa del navío Ingles nombrado *la Galera* remitidas al Real y Supremo Consejo de las Indias por la Real Audiencia de Santo Domingo por mano de los Interesados,” 1721, CO 388/89, TNA.

<sup>61</sup> “Deposition of Jabez Biglon, John Turner, Thomas Gibbs, Joseph Wakeley, Whitechurch Phippen, and Henry Parker,” November 26, 1723, CO 388/89, TNA.

This practice was very common among *guardacostas* and the witnessed were often augmented by one of the captors who happened to be English, or more commonly Irish, claiming to have been a crewman on the prize and that it had come to trade illegally. See, for example: Deposition of Moses Gardiner, 1727, Adm 1/230, TNA; and “The Jamaica Merchants Memorial to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle,” February, 1737, Shelburne Papers vol. 43, CL.

overstepping their authority in condemning the ship, instead of dispatching it to Santiago for trial, and additionally, by his rebuke of the town's leaders for allowing the captive Africans aboard to be distributed and sold without allowing either the Governor or the South Sea Company factors in Santiago to claim them under the *asiento*. Diego de Piña and several of the *alcaldes* were even briefly imprisoned for overstepping their authority, although the slaves and the *Westbury Galley* remained in the hands of their purchasers.<sup>62</sup>

Yet Governor Juan del Hoyo's anger over the abuses involved in the condemnation of the *Westbury Galley* stemmed not solely from principles of legal fairness. When in 1728 the slaver *Anne Galley* was taken into Santiago de Cuba with a cargo of over two hundred captives bound for Jamaica, the Governor condemned her as a smuggler in return for a gift from the captors of twenty-five Africans.<sup>63</sup>

Still, Spain's expansive definition of contraband—particularly regarding agricultural products—made smuggling cases almost impossible to defend. The *Prince William* for example, was captured en route from St Kitts to London in 1737 and taken to Havana. In this instance, its cargo was preserved and the entire crew carried into port to testify. They claimed that the brazilwood they carried had been purchased from a merchant at Providence in the Bahamas, rather than from the Bay of Honduras. However, although the Spanish accepted that Providence was a British territory due to the settlement there, the rest of the islands remained Spanish territory. Furthermore, after the judges consulted with several *habaneros* about the issue, they declared that Providence itself did not have any brazilwood growing on it, but the island of

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<sup>62</sup> Diego de Piña had taken three of the captive Africans for his own, using one to pay a debt he owed in Baracoa, selling another for a horse, and giving the third to his Captain Rodrigo de Castro to sell along with the seven the latter had claimed for himself. The *armador* received six. Testimonio de los Autos sobre la Presa del navío Ingles nombrado *la Galera*, CO 388/89, TNA.

<sup>63</sup> Hubert Tassel to Samuel Bonham, January 12, 1732, Add MS 32776, BL.

Santa María elsewhere in the Bahamas did. Therefore, the *Prince William*'s cargo came as the result of smuggling and she was condemned.<sup>64</sup>

Even in major ports, *guardacostas* were accused of underhanded tricks to ensure a condemnation, while Spanish officials looked the other way. When the *Penelope* was seized off the Chesapeake in 1727, for instance, it was carried into Havana. While the crew was ashore testifying before the Governor, their captor, who “seemed to doubt whether he could get her condemned or not,” ordered his men to hide several pieces of logwood “under the ballast.” These were then “discovered” the next day.<sup>65</sup> In another case, when the slaver *Robert Galley* was seized and taken into Santo Domingo, the captors supposedly snuck aboard a bag pieces of eight, while simultaneously stealing the ship's papers—which they claimed had been thrown overboard by the British when they were captured—to provide “pretended proof” of her illicitly trading.<sup>66</sup>

The fight against contraband lay at the heart of the Spanish imperial presence in the Caribbean and the broad definitions and expansive powers granted to *guardacostas* attracted men from all areas of the Atlantic world in search of fortune. In the quest for profit and for their own safety, these corsairs preferred not to target smugglers, but instead pursued any foreign vessel they met on the seas. Using tactics akin to pirates, they approached their prey under friendly colors before revealing their true identities and boarding them. The slightest evidence was seized upon to label the prize a smuggler and, thanks to the pervasiveness of inter-imperial trade, items such as Spanish coins or logwood were pervasive in the shipping of all nations. Once carried to port, sympathetic judges or corrupt officials ensured condemnation. In a world, with such official

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<sup>64</sup> “Autos hechos en el año de 1737 por el gobernador de la Habana y sus oficiales Reales con acuerdo de Asesor sobre la presa hecha por el Capitán Don Domingo Lopez de Aviles de una fragata inglesa llamada *el Príncipe Guillermo*,” 1737, Santo Domingo, 498, AGI.

<sup>65</sup> Affidavit of William Johnson and Robert Townsend, n.d., CO 388/89, TNA.

<sup>66</sup> Story King to unknown, July 9, 1729, SP 94/101, TNA; and Petition of Edmund Sauders, Henry Tonge, and Richard Farr, 1737, SP 94/129, TNA.

support, the *guardacostas* terrorized Anglo-American, Dutch, and French mariners. The British state, however, did not allow Spanish privateers to go completely unchallenged.

### **The Empire Strikes Back**

Even after attacking the *Rebecca*, threatening the South Sea Company, and seizing the *Dolphin*, Fandiño's cruising was not yet over. In August 1731, his men seized a French vessel and plundered several small Spanish fishing craft. In September, he seized the *Prince William* (a different vessel than the one previously noted as captured in 1737) in the Bahamas and had it condemned in Baracoa.<sup>67</sup> In November, he seized a New England vessel on its way to Jamaica; plundering it of its cargo of salted fish before releasing it at Baracoa.<sup>68</sup> Unsurprisingly, such outrages could not be tolerated and Rear-Admiral Charles Stewart, the commander of the Jamaica station, ordered several of his warships to search for the *guardacosta*—going so far as to order them to attack and destroy Baracoa if they found him there.<sup>69</sup> Even more ominously for future Anglo-Spanish relations, upon learning the news of the torture of Robert Jenkins, the Duke of Newcastle, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, ordered Britain's minister to Spain, to demand of it to “deliver up this pirate to His Majesty, and to punish their Governors for countenancing such violences.”<sup>70</sup>

Apart from the orders to destroy Baracoa, Stewart's orders to the squadron under his command were not new, but in keeping with the accepted response of British—as well as Dutch

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<sup>67</sup> Deposition of William Ivy, October 15, 1731; Deposition of James Robinson, October 16, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA; Declaración de William Ivy, James Robertson, and Thomas Wise, October 15, 1731; and “Breve Relación de la presa de la chalupa patrón Guillermo Keeling y también de la presa de la chalupa *el Príncipe Guillermo* patrón Guillermo Ivy,” Santo Domingo, 498, AGI.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Hunter to the Duke of Newcastle, November 13, 1731, CO 137/53, TNA.

<sup>69</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, January 14, 1731/32, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>70</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Sir Benjamin Keene, October 14, 1731, Add Ms 32774, BL. The order was renewed in December. Duke of Newcastle to Sir Benjamin Keene, December 9, 1731, Add Ms 32775, BL.

and French—colonial officials to *guardacosta* incidents. That response was two-fold. Upon news of a captured vessel, authorities drafted letters that demanded justice and the release of the ship, and sent them to officials at the Spanish port where condemnation occurred. Almost without exception, Spanish officials would refuse to release the ship, because either there was in their view clear evidence it was an illicit trader, or, more commonly, they needed orders from Spain to do so. The expense and time of waiting for such orders—if they ever appeared—meant that most Anglo-American traders soon abandoned such efforts for redress. Simultaneously, the British Navy waged an unofficial war against *guardacostas*. Branding them as pirates no different than their more famous Anglo-American contemporaries, they held trials of captured *guardacostas* in Port Royal, Nassau, and even New York. Upon conviction, they either hung the captured Spaniards or sold them into slavery if they were of African descent.

In the years following the Peace of Utrecht, a common pattern had emerged. When an Anglo-American vessel was seized in the Caribbean by *guardacostas*, its crew, who had either been deposited on non-Spanish islands or been allowed to depart Spanish territory with the assistance of the South Sea Company's factors, would make their way to Jamaica or Antigua. There, they petitioned the local magistrate for aid. Along with a letter from the Governor demanding redress, their depositions were passed on to the local naval commander who, in turn, then ordered one of his ships to sail to the port in whose jurisdiction the vessel had been condemned and demand the release of the vessel and restitution for the owners' losses.<sup>71</sup>

These missions of redress almost invariably ended in failure. That of *HMS Phoenix* was a typical case. In 1719, the frigate was dispatched to Havana to demand the release of a sloop taken by a Trinidadian corsair. Upon its arrival, the Captain delivered his papers to the Governor

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<sup>71</sup> This meant that vessels condemned in Trinidad, for example, were complained of both there and in Havana, while vessels condemned at Baracoa were protested in Santiago de Cuba.



Gregorio Guazo y Calderón who had them translated by his Irish chaplain. That took a week. After reading the translation, the Governor replied to the Englishmen that he would allow no more vessels to be condemned in Trinidad, but rather order they be sent to Havana for trial. That resolution, however, “could not help with the past” he stated. Nor did it imply any support for British complaints, for Governor Calderón claimed to believe that the *alcaldes* of Trinidad would not have condemned the sloop in question “without some reason.” Since the proceedings had already been sent to Spain, as the centralized Spanish bureaucracy required, he explained that could now only wait until he heard from Europe. After two weeks of futile waiting, the *Phoenix* was ordered to leave port empty-handed, without even copies of the trial.<sup>72</sup>

While missions like the *Phoenix*'s failed in their stated goals, they were not totally fruitless; naval captains who were charged with them frequently used them as opportunities to carry an illicit cargo to Spanish ports.<sup>73</sup>

Frequently, the merchants who owned a seized vessel would also take their complaints to England where their case would be forwarded on to the British Minister in Spain for redress. This, too, was futile. Spanish Ministers usually refused to take any action until they received copies of trials from America.<sup>74</sup> This was not just obstreperousness, of course, for the statements presented by the merchants in London were often very different from those in Cuban trial

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<sup>72</sup> “The Whole Proceedings of Captain Dennis’ Expedition to the Governor of the Havana; being a Memorial or Journal of what occurrences happened during his stay there,” 1719, CO 137/13, TNA.

Such excuses and equivocations were very common. See, for example: José Antonio de Mendizabal y Azcue to Henry Reddish, January 31, 1730/31, Add Ms 32773, BL; and Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to Edward Trelawney, January 12, 1738, CO 137/56, TNA. In other cases, Spanish authorities claimed to have no knowledge of a prize complained of such as in the case of the *Dolphin* seized in 1718. Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to the King, December 23, 1726, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI; and Consulta, December 22, 1728, Santo Domingo, 325, AGI.

<sup>73</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, May 10, 1730, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>74</sup> In two separate letters of the same date José de Grimaldi, Spain’s Secretary of State, argued that no consideration of the seizures of the ships *London Oak* and *Crane* could be considered until the records of their trials arrived from Santiago de Cuba and Puerto Rico respectively. José de Grimaldi to the Earl of Stanhope, July 21, 1723, SP 94/92, TNA.

records, and it was often impossible to reconcile the two.<sup>75</sup> Exasperated by such discrepancies, Minister Plenipotentiary Benjamin Keene is known to have exclaimed upon receiving a bundle of such questionable claims: “my God what proofs!...Are the oaths of fellows that forswear themselves at every custom-house in every port they come to, to be taken without any further enquiry or examination?”<sup>76</sup>

One of the cases so exasperating to Keene was that of the *George*. Its commander, Henry Weare swore that the vessel taken on a voyage from Jamaica to Bristol was seized in the Windward Passage. When searched, the Spanish found “some bar gold” received from the South Sea Company agents in Jamaica and, at that the crew “cried out bonna prize!” Upon this slight evidence, the vessel was condemned in Havana as a smuggler.<sup>77</sup> However, the trial in Havana also revealed that over fifteen hundred pesos had also been found aboard the vessel hidden in barrels of *bacalao* (salted cod) and that, as the Spanish approached, the crew was seen to be frantically dumping cacao overboard. When the *guardacosta*’s men climbed aboard, the deck was reportedly strewn with cacao seeds.<sup>78</sup> Even if the trial reports were untrue, the case of the *George* demonstrates the difficulties Spanish Ministers faced in trying to sort through competing claims of illicit trade in a Caribbean where such commerce was pervasive and all involved in a seizure had incentives to lie. At the same time, the British Ministry defended all seized ships even if there was clear and undisputable evidence of illicit trade on the part of the British.

Even on those occasions when Spanish officials ordered the restitution of a vessel and its value, little was achieved. When the *Anne Galley* was seized while on a slaving voyage and

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<sup>75</sup> Earl of Stanhope to John Carteret, May 3, 1723, SP 94/92, TNA.

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies*, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Short state of the capture of the *George* brigantine, Henry Ware Master, 1737; and Affidavit of Thomas Harris, October 19, 1737, SP 94/129, TNA.

<sup>78</sup> “Testimonio de la primera pieza de los autos formados sobre la presa de un Bergantín de la nación inglesa hecha por el teniente de Navío Don Domingo Lopéz de Aviles comandante de la fragata *El Triunfo* Guardacostas de SM y balandra de refuerzo del cargo de Juan de León Fandiño,” 1737, Escribanía, 60B, AGI.

condemned in Santiago de Cuba in 1728, for instance, it took five years before Ministers in Madrid ruled that it had been unjustly seized and ordered its restoration.<sup>79</sup> However, long before that, the South Sea Company factor in Santiago de Cuba, reported that “there is not one *rial* relating to that prize” in Santiago’s Treasury and the *fiador*, who should have been responsible for paying the indemnity if the *guardacosta* had illegally seized a ship, was bound for only two thousand pesos (£450 sterling) when the value of the ship and cargo was fifty thousand (£11,250 sterling).<sup>80</sup> Jamaican merchants complained with real justification that “in these parts, if you obtain twenty *cedulas* for the restitution, the Spanish governors will mind them no more than blank paper.”<sup>81</sup>

Simultaneous with efforts to secure restitution for depredations, the Royal Navy operated under standing orders “for the taking of [Spanish] piratical vessels” operating under the “color of commissions or pretended commissions.”<sup>82</sup> On at least two occasions, naval vessels sank *guardacostas* with all hands. They captured several other crews and brought them into Anglo-American ports to be tried for piracy.<sup>83</sup> In these trials, the captured Spaniards adopted defenses similar to those of Anglo-American pirates. They frequently claimed that they had been forced aboard the *guardacosta* before it sailed, rather than serving willingly. For example, while on trial in New York in 1724 for the seizure of a British vessel off Virginia, sailor José Rivera claimed that the privateer’s commander had bound him with ropes and carried him aboard, and that

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<sup>79</sup> The arrival of the order for restitution in Santiago de Cuba issued in February 1733, was noted in Pedro Ignacio Jiménez to the King, July 6, 1734, Indiferente, 1597, AGI.

<sup>80</sup> Leonard Cocke to William Hayman and John Hynes, July 12, 1730, Add Ms 32770, BL; and “The Humble Memorial of Samuel Bonham, Christopher Astley, Benjamin Weale & Joseph Croucher of London, Owners of the Ship *Ann Galley*,” October 7, 1731, Add Ms 32775, BL.

<sup>81</sup> William Hayman and John Hynes to Samuel Bonham, July 24, 1739, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>82</sup> Edward St Lo to Josiah Burchett, January 3, 1728/29, Adm 1/230, TNA; and Orders to Captain Charles Crawford of the sloop *Shark*, July 27, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Stewart to the Duke of Newcastle, April 28, 1732, Add Ms 32777, BL; and Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, May 25, 1732, Adm 1/231, TNA.

during the voyage he “was very quiet and did no harm to any of [the captives], nor never intended to kill anyone.”<sup>84</sup> Similarly, when the crew of the *guardacosta* commanded by Agustín Blanco were tried in Nassau in 1722, Ambrosio Pérez claimed that he was a poor soldier in Cuba and had travelled to Baracoa to receive some money and was there forced aboard the corsair. Accused of being among those who plundered Cat Island and tortured several residents, he denounced the charge as false, for “he took nothing but victuals.”<sup>85</sup> Normally, such claims were met with skepticism. Rivera and his compatriots were executed, as was the majority of Blanco’s crew. Similarly, at a trial in Jamaica’s Vice-Admiralty Court it was ruled that the Puerto Rican *guardacosta* Mateo Luca and his crew “had taken two English vessels,” Luca and forty-one of his men were hung in Port Royal.<sup>86</sup>

If a captured *guardacosta* crewman was able to convince their captors that he was a forced man they were spared the gallows. But, if he was African or Indian, he was instead sold into slavery. Similarly, if no witnesses appeared against a captured *guardacosta*, the prisoners would be put to hard labor on bread and water at the fortifications of Port Antonio, on Jamaica’s north coast, until witnesses did appear—or they died.<sup>87</sup> Spanish officials complained of such treatment, particularly the sale of free Spaniards as slaves, but were generally ignored.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Trial at a Court of Admiralty in New York, July 10, 1724, HCA 1/99, TNA.

<sup>85</sup> “Proceedings of the Court of Admiralty held in New Providence the 11th of October 1722 for the Trial of Richard Hancock & others for Piracy,” HCA 1/99, TNA.

<sup>86</sup> Seventeen others were spared; two turned King’s evidence on their fellows, eight were “young *raza* lads” granted mercy, and seven others were found innocent. Sir Nicholas Lawes to the Board of Trade, July 9, 1722, CO 137/14, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, March 19, 1731/32, Adm 1/231, TNA; Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, February 24, 1734/35, Add Ms 32787, BL; and Deposition of Juan Antonio del Rosario, 1737, Shelburne Papers vol. 43.

<sup>88</sup> Gregorio Guazo y Calderón to the King, March 16, 1722, Santo Domingo, 379, AGI; and the Duke of Newcastle to Sir Benjamin Keene, February 24, 1734/35, Add Ms 32787, BL.

For an account of this practice and Spanish complaints about it during wartime, see: Alejandra Dubcovsky, “The Testimony of Thomás de la Torre, a Spanish Slave,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70:3 (2013): 559-580.

This undeclared quasi-war had subsisted through both peace and war since the sixteenth century providing a constant backdrop to inter-imperial trade. But in the early 1730s, it erupted onto the stage of European diplomacy. The seizure of over forty Anglo-American vessels in the three years following the Treaty of Seville in 1729 thrust this endemic conflict into the center of English domestic politics. Responding to public outcry, the Duke of Newcastle in September 1730 took the unprecedented step of ordering reprisals on *all* Spanish shipping in the West Indies as retaliation for *guardacosta* depredations.<sup>89</sup> Such orders effectively made all Spanish shipping accountable for the seizures, and was tantamount to declaring war on Spain in the Americas.<sup>90</sup>

Rear-Admiral Stewart received the orders in December, at the same time that news reached Kingston of the seizure of the sloop *Mary* on its voyage from Liverpool to Jamaica and of her condemnation in Puerto Rico. According to Stewart's orders, before he could make reprisals victims first had to present "authentic proofs of the damages & losses" they had suffered before a magistrate and receive a Declaratory Sentence.<sup>91</sup> After receiving this sentence from the Jamaican Vice-Admiralty Court, Stewart dispatched a warship to San Juan to demand the sloop's release. But the Governor refused, citing the need for orders from Spain.<sup>92</sup>

Before taking the fateful step of ordering the seizure of Spanish shipping, Stewart consulted with the leaders of the Kingston merchant community. Here, however, public sympathy and the outcry of the English West Indian commercial interests met determined

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<sup>89</sup> Duke of Newcastle to the Lords of the Admiralty, September 25, 1730, Add Ms 32770, BL.

<sup>90</sup> Although reprisals had originated in the late Middle Ages as a means of avoiding open warfare between two states by satisfying grievances of an individual against a foreign power without incurring an open international conflict, by the eighteenth century they invariably became a major diplomatic issue. Colonial Governors had been restrained from granting letters of marque and reprisal for precisely that reason. See: Grover Clark, "The English Practice with Regard to Reprisals by Private Persons," *The American Journal of International Law* 27:4 (1933): 694-723.

<sup>91</sup> Duke of Newcastle to the Lords of the Admiralty, September 25, 1730, Add Ms 32770, BL.

<sup>92</sup> Extract of a Letter from Henry Reddish to Governor of Port Rico, January 30, 1730/31, TNA; José Antonio de Mendizabal y Azcue to Henry Reddish, Feb. 13, 1731; and Declaration of Lt Masters and William Benson June 2, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

resistance from Jamaica's own merchants—and especially from the South Sea Company's factors—who were determined to avoid another war. Every merchant Stewart consulted warned the admiral of the dangers to British shipping, as well as to the Company's factories and the annual ship *Prince William* at Portobello, which would undoubtedly be seized if reprisals were made. In the face of public opposition, Stewart made the decision not to order reprisals.<sup>93</sup> In his own defense, the admiral explained how ships under his command seldom saw “one Spanish ship or vessel” while at sea, which made the possibility of restoration through reprisals “very uncertain;” at the same time, making reprisals would place large numbers of Anglo-American vessels at great risk.<sup>94</sup>

Although Stewart's caution was initially approved by the Ministry in London, Newcastle renewed the orders for reprisals following Fandiño's actions in the summer of 1731.<sup>95</sup> By then, Stewart was in a virtual “state of war” with Jamaica's merchant community over his unwillingness to exact retribution. Kingston merchants, many of whom had signed the Representation against reprisals the previous March, now declared that they had sought reprisals on “all Spanish effects” since the initial orders had been issued, and that Stewart's reluctance to enforce them reflected pressure from the South Sea Company. With Fandiño's depredations fresh in their minds, they complained they “cannot be in a worse situation than when we are in...even in case of open rupture.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, March 8, 1730/31; Representation of Edward Pratter and James Rigby, March 4, 1730/31; Edward Pratter to Charles Stewart, March 4, 1730/31; and “A copy of a letter from several merchants in Kingston,” March 5, 1730/31, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, May 30, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>95</sup> Duke of Newcastle to the Lords of the Admiralty, October 29, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>96</sup> A Copy of a letter from several Merchants in Kingston to Charles Stewart, September 24, 1731; A copy of a Letter from the Honorable Charles Stewart to several Merchants in Kingston, September 25, 1731; Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, October 2, and October 14, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

Even so, despite “all the clamors raised” by the merchants, when the renewed orders for reprisals arrived in Jamaica, Stewart found there was no “claim or inclination to make any.” Indeed, only with difficulty could he convince three victims to apply for Declaratory Sentences: the owners of the *Dolphin*, the *Saint Michael*, and the *Woolball*. The last of these ships had been seized by a *guardacosta* operating out of Campeche and condemned there. Stewart displayed considerable sympathy for the Spanish, noting in a letter that it was difficult to blame them of their aggressive attitudes when the Jamaicans were “robbing them daily” through illicit trade. But he nevertheless prepared to execute his orders.<sup>97</sup> He sent directives to *HMS Deal Castle* to sail to Campeche and demand restitution for the *Woolball*. When he arrived in the Yucatan, however, Captain Aubin seized the Spanish merchant ship *Dichosa* without even waiting for a response to the Declaratory Sentence from Spanish officials.<sup>98</sup>

Immediately, the crisis deepened and Spanish Governors throughout the Caribbean threatened to seize the South Sea Company factories and to begin issuing general reprisals of their own.<sup>99</sup> In Spain, José Patiño, Minister of the Navy and the Indies, complained of the seizure at the highest diplomatic levels.<sup>100</sup> Out of fear of broadening the crisis, the British backed down, and in October the *Dichosa* was ordered released and the reprisals order cancelled.<sup>101</sup> The crisis

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<sup>97</sup> Charles Stewart to the Duke of Newcastle, April 28, 1732, Add Ms 32777, BL.

<sup>98</sup> Charles Stewart to Captain David Aubin, April 1, 1732; From on board His Britannic Majesty’s Ship the *Deal Castle*, riding at anchor near Campeche, April 23, 1732; Copy of a letter from Don Antonio de Figueroa, Governor of Yucatan to Captain David Aubin, April 1732; David Aubin to Don Antonio de Figueroa, May 1, 1732; David Aubin to Don Joseph Desaravia, Town Major of Campeche, Deal Castle at Campeche, May 4, 1732; Translation of Don Joseph Desaravia to David Aubin; May 15, 1732; David Aubin to Messrs. Campbell & Orne (the South Sea Company factors at Campeche) May 4, 1732; David Aubin to Don Joseph Desaravia, May, 5, 1732; and Extract of a Letter from Captain Aubin to Josiah Burchett, June 30, 1732, Add Ms 32778, BL.

<sup>99</sup> Auto, June 11, 1732, Grupo Documental No. 68 Marina, Jamaica in Mexico, JNA; Richard Lestock to Josiah Burchett, n.d.; and Memorial of Edward Pratter and James Rigby, August 26, 1732, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>100</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, October 12, 1732, Add Ms 32778, BL.

<sup>101</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Sir Chaloner Ogle, October 12, 1732, Add MS 32778, BL; and Duke of Newcastle to Sir Benjamin Keene, October 30, 1732, Add Ms 32779, BL; and Robert Hunter to the Duke of Newcastle, January 18, 1732/33, CO 137/54, TNA.

had ended, but for the first time the constant violence between Anglo-Americans and Spanish-Americans had spilled into the diplomatic circles of Europe.

Apart from fear of an open conflict, the primary reason for the orders' cancellation was the willingness of Patiño to curtail *guardacosta* activities. Such willingness had two main sources. The first source was the decline in the trading activities of the South Sea Company in the early 1730s. With the replacement of Sir Joseph Eyles as Sub-Governor and Spanish efforts to purchase the *asiento* seemingly gaining steam (see Chapter 3), the most blatant and provocative instance of English commercial penetration of Spanish America appeared to be ending. The second source arose from concerns in Europe, particularly over the ambitions of Spain's Queen Elisabeth Farnese. The Queen was determined to have her son Don Carlos (the future Charles III) placed on the throne of Parma, which the Treaties of Seville (1729) and Vienna (1731) had guaranteed. In them, the British had promised to provide troops and a naval escort to deliver the young Don Carlos to Italy and to secure his kingdom. The near-bankrupt Spanish Court was eager to see that pledge fulfilled.<sup>102</sup> The prospect of a war erupting over the Polish succession also made the Ministers in Madrid eager to keep Britain neutral.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, restraining the *guardacostas* perfectly matched the reforming desires of Patiño, generally considered by historians to be the most able Spanish Minister of the first half of the eighteenth-century.<sup>104</sup> As part of his efforts to spur colonial trade and rebuild the Spanish

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<sup>102</sup> Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire* (New York, NY: Allen Lane, 2007), 212-21.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 9; and "Points to be considered with regard to the depredations of Spain," 1738, Add Ms 9131, BL.

<sup>104</sup> Only one full biography of this important figure exists, Ildefonso Pulido Bueno's *José Patiño: el inicio del gobierno político-económico ilustrado en España* (Huelva, I.P. Bueno, 1998). For English-language accounts of Patiño and his career, see: Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 3; Jean O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940) Appendix; and Adrian Pearce, *The Origins of Bourbon Reform in Spanish South America, 1700-1763* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chaps. 2-4.



Navy, Patiño was eager to rein in officials at all levels whom he saw as failing in their duty. Spain's American corsairs could not avoid his gaze. In 1730, the commander of the *flota* had discovered the existence of a conspiracy to undermine anti-smuggling efforts in Cartagena. The city's *guardacostas* neglected the pursuit of smugglers in order to seize ships on the high seas. Additionally, they cooperated with Dutch traders to monopolize illicit goods entering the city. Patiño reacted furiously. The New Grenadan *guardacostas* were disbanded and no commissions were allowed to be granted for several years.<sup>105</sup> To further rein in abuses of the *guardacosta* system, Patiño also relieved the Governors of Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo—notorious for tolerating the indiscriminate plundering of Anglo-American shipping—of their positions.<sup>106</sup> In turn, the dismissal of corrupt officials led to the downfall of the infamous Puerto Rican privateer Miguel Henriquez, who was arrested in 1732 for tax evasion and died nearly penniless.<sup>107</sup>

In Cuba, no similar dismissal of governors occurred; Governor Don Juan del Hoyo of Santiago had already been imprisoned following the 1729 revolt in Puerto Príncipe. The appointment of a new Governor in Santiago, Don Pedro Ignacio Jiménez, nevertheless brought about drastic changes in official attitudes towards privateering in that city. Shortly after Jiménez's arrival, a Puerto Rican *guardacosta* brought in the *Joseph and Ana* seized on a voyage from Jamaica to Britain. Whereas in the past, the *Joseph and Ana* would have been condemned, upon its arriving in the city the crew met with "all justice imaginable." Within a day of the prize's arrival, the new Governor had inspected her cargo, found no contraband, and ordered her released. Jiménez then went even further, arresting the *guardacosta*'s commander and selling his

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<sup>105</sup> Lance Grahn, "Guarding the New Grenadan Coast: Dilemmas of the Spanish Coast Guard in the Early Bourbon Period," *American Neptune* 51 (1996): 20; G. Earl Sanders, "Counter-contraband in Spanish America; Handicaps of the Governors in the Indies," *The Americas* 34 (1977-78): 62-64; and Geoffrey J. Walker, *Spanish Politics and Imperial Trade, 1700-1789* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 179.

<sup>106</sup> Sir Benjamin Keene to the Duke of Newcastle, July 26, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>107</sup> Angel López Cantos, *Miguel Enríquez: Corsario boricua del siglo XVIII* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 1998), 358-98.

vessel and goods to make restitution for damages to the British.<sup>108</sup> Governor Jiménez continued his campaign the following year, seizing the *Dolphin* after it was brought into Santiago from Baracoa to hold for its owners and arresting two more *guardacosta* crews for overstepping their commissions.<sup>109</sup> In a letter to Admiral Stewart, he swore that he would not “suffer any corsair to sail from hence.”<sup>110</sup> He kept his promise. No *guardacosta* would be fitted out from Santiago for the remainder of the decade.

With an unfriendly administration in Santiago and the Royal Navy increasingly patrolling the Windward Passage, several *guardacostas*, including Fandiño, shifted their hunting grounds to the Florida passage in late 1731.<sup>111</sup> But just as in Santiago, they found in Havana a Governor increasingly unwilling to countenance and protect them. Under Patiño’s orders, Governor Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega had taken “all necessary measures” to ensure that *guardacostas* did not “ill-use” English vessels they encountered.<sup>112</sup> When reports of Fandiño’s treatment of Jennings reached the city, de la Vega exploded, “not from any disapprobation to the cruelties practiced, but rather from resentment that they should have so abused [de la Vega’s] confidence in them and thereby expose him to such reproach” from Madrid.<sup>113</sup> His anger only deepened when he received orders from Spain to bring the perpetrators of the *Rebecca* atrocity to justice.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> The *guardacosta*’s lieutenant and most of the crew promptly left for Baracoa, where they fitted out another vessel and in the next two months seized two French vessels, one Rhode Island sloop, and three Boston sloops supposedly bound from Cap Francois to Boston. Alexander Cupples to Robert Duckingfield, October 12, 1729; Don Tomás Antonio Cortes to Charles Stewart, December 5, 1729; Alexander Cupples to Charles Stewart, December 8, 1729; and Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, December 30, 1729, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>109</sup> Pedro Ignacio Jiménez to Charles Stewart, December 7, and December 8, 1731; and Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to Charles Stewart, January 30, 1731/32, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>110</sup> That the Governor was serious in his claim was testified to by the South Sea Company factors in Santiago, though they noted that unless they had clearly violated their commissions he could do nothing about *guardacostas* who arrived there from other jurisdictions. Translation of a letter from Don Pedro Ignacio Jiménez to Rear-Admiral Charles Stewart, March 6, 1731, Add Ms 32773, BL; and Jonathan Dennis and Leonard Cocke to Robert Hunter, August 18, 1731, Add Ms 32775, BL.

<sup>111</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, September 14, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>112</sup> José Patiño to Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, May 16, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Stewart to Josiah Burchett, December 20, 1731, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>114</sup> Marquis de la Paz to Sir Benjamin Keene, November 20, 1731, SP 94/101, TNA.

However, when another of Fandiño's seizures—the *Dolphin*—was examined by a Havana tribunal, the initial condemnation was proclaimed “well founded according to Spanish laws” due to the vessel's presence at Turks Island—Spanish territory— and the lack of any defense witnesses to the seizure. The case could only be appealed to Spain.<sup>115</sup> With no clear evidence regarding the *Rebecca*, all the Governor could do was force Fandiño to turn in his commission and quit privateering. No doubt grateful to escape with such a light penalty, the corsair was soon reported to be living with his family in the village of Cayo, two hundred miles to the east of Havana, which was “inaccessible to ships, being shoal water off it,” and thus relatively safe from any potential British or Spanish retribution.<sup>116</sup>

Patiño reaffirmed his commitment to reigning in the *guardacostas* in February 1732, when the two Crowns made an agreement by which the security demanded of potential *guardacostas* was increased to recompense any unlawfully seized victims. Philip V further promised “not to suffer His Viceroy, Governors, or other officers in America, by their commissions, or otherwise to encourage, protect, or authorize such pernicious practices, but that, on the contrary, the strictest orders shall be sent them to do everything in their power that nothing of that kind be done.” In return, George II pledged to “forbid and effectually prevent His ships of war from countenancing, convoying, and protecting under any pretense whatsoever, ships carrying on an unlawful trade.”<sup>117</sup> In effect, the British promised to end official protection of smugglers, although they had no intention of honoring the agreement.

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<sup>115</sup> Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to Charles Stewart, May 26, 1732, Grupo Documental No. 68 Jamaica in Mexico, JNA; Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to Charles Stewart, May 26, 1732 (English translation); Extract of the proceedings of Capt. William Douglas of *HMS Phoenix* to the Havana; and Wargent Nicholson to Charles Stewart, 1732, Adm 1/231, TNA.

<sup>116</sup> Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega to the Marquis de Casafuerte, June 19, 1732, Grupo Documental No. 68 Jamaica in Mexico, JNA; Extract of the proceedings of Capt. William Douglas of *HMS Phoenix* to the Havana, Adm 1/231, TNA; and Extract of Messrs. Nicholson and Tassel's Letter to Mr. Keene, July 8, 1732, SP 36/26, TNA.

<sup>117</sup> “Declaration which we the underwritten Ministers of their Britannic and Catholic Majesties make, by virtue of the orders we have from the Kings our respective masters,” February 8, 1732, SP 94/111, TNA.

Four years of relative peace ensued. That is not to say that either smuggling or the seizure of Anglo-American ships stopped entirely. But depredations declined steeply: only two British ships were reported seized in 1734, and only ten in the following two years. Moreover, the South Sea Company's leadership increasingly lost interest in the *asiento*, and its slave trading dramatically declined. Its last annual ship sailed in 1732. Jamaicans did continue to trade with Spanish America, but their island was economically weakened by the depression in sugar prices of the 1730s and simultaneously convulsed by the costly and seemingly futile conflict with the maroons. Illicit trade likely declined as well.

Even so, the fundamental Spanish official attitude towards both illicit trade and Spain's territorial preeminence had not changed. Cédulas issued in May 1734 and 1738 reiterated to colonial officials Spain's claims to all the lands and waters of the Americas not specifically granted to foreigners by treaty, as well as authorizing the stopping and inspection of foreign vessels found following *rumbos sospechosos*—even those found out of sight of Spanish lands.<sup>118</sup> Given that official policies and popular attitudes among Spanish American privateers remained largely unchanged, all it would take was the loss of a driven powerful administrator for the fragile peace to be shattered. That is precisely what happened in 1737. What resulted—with a little assistance from the South Sea Company—was open war.

### **The Road to War**

In November 1737 the Duke of Newcastle informed Benjamin Keene, Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Spain, “that the violences and depredations committed upon the persons and properties of his Majesty's subjects trading in the West Indies, have increased of

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<sup>118</sup> Real Cédula, May 30, 1734, Santo Domingo, 492, AGI.

late.”<sup>119</sup> This was a remarkable understatement. In that year alone, seventeen British vessels had been seized in the Caribbean, primarily by Fandiño and other *guardacostas* operating once again from Havana. Furthermore, confirmation had reached London that the Spanish had organized a secret invasion of the young colony of Georgia the previous year. The renewed violence threw the influential West Indian lobby in London—along with colonial merchants and the opposition press—into an uproar; an outcry which was harnessed by the growing political opposition to Sir Robert Walpole’s Ministry. Inaccurate popular depictions of innocent British mariners being treated as slaves by the Spanish permeated the English press and popular rhetoric. Demands were presented to Spain for immediate release and restitution for the depredations of the *guardacostas* and the saber was thoroughly rattled.

Neither the Spanish Court nor the British Ministry desired war, however, and heroic efforts were made to prevent one. The result, after frantic negotiations, was the Convention of the Pardo which sought to settle all issues between the two Crowns over Georgia, depredations, and the South Sea Company’s *asiento*. But at the last moment, the Company’s directors refused to uphold their agreement with Philip V and the Convention collapsed, leading to war.

On November 3, 1736, Minister José Patiño had died from an unknown illness. In a prescient letter after his passing, Ambassador Keene warned of the “liberty the [*guardacostas*] and Governors think they may give themselves under the present Government. Patiño...did nothing in our favor to terrify them, it is true, but they feared and trembled at him.”<sup>120</sup> Indeed, Patiño had proven himself no friend to the British in the Americas. The very year he had died Patiño had sponsored an audacious expedition led by the renegade South Carolinian John Savy to invade the new colony of Georgia in an expedition from Havana. The scheme was only

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<sup>119</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Sir Benjamin Keene, November 4, 1737, SP 94/129, TNA.

<sup>120</sup> Sir Benjamin Keene to the Duke of Newcastle, November 18, 1737, Add Ms 32796, BL.

discovered upon Savy's arrival in Cuba when the South Sea Company factor Leonard Cocke, wondering at the deference shown to the Englishman, invited Savy to dinner at the factory and "finding him a free and facetious gentleman and that loved his glass, plied him home" with alcohol until he confessed the reasons for his journey to Cuba.<sup>121</sup> The expedition had assembled an impressive force in Havana consisting of six galleys, three man-of-war, forty-five transports, and nearly two thousand troops.

However, even as panic erupted in Jamaica and Georgia the expedition began to disintegrate. Following Governor Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas' meeting with Savy, the Governor decided the Englishman had no credibility in his claims to be able to guide the force to Georgia or secure Native American allies. The Governor ordered the expedition delayed while he wrote to Spain of his concerns and awaited further orders. But before his letter reached Europe, Patiño died. The new Minister knew nothing of the scheme, so tightly had Patiño concealed it, and instructions were sent from Madrid ordering its cancellation. But it had been a close thing and caused considerable panic in both Jamaica and in the southern mainland colonies.<sup>122</sup>

Simultaneously, Patiño had maintained his determination to end contraband trade, though he compelled Spanish governors to keep a close reign on the *guardacostas*. They issued fewer commissions and those only to trusted and wealthy individuals who provided adequate security. This was complemented by the creation of several royal *guardacostas* supported by special taxes. In Spain, these taxes were a four percent tax on all bullion and cochineal imported from

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<sup>121</sup> Leonard Cocke to Digby Dent, November 3, 1736, Add Ms 32794, BL.

<sup>122</sup> "An Exact Account of the Expedition that was carried on by the Spaniards at Havana and Intended against the Colony of Georgia," 1736, Shelburne Papers vol. 3; John Merewether to Peter Burchett March 26, 1737; Extract of a letter from Mr. Leonard Cock to Court of Directors, April 18, 1738; Extract of Anthony Weltden to Court of Directors, April 22, 1738, Shelburne Papers vol. 4; Copy of Mr. John Savy to the Trustees of Georgia, October 22, 1737, Add Ms 32796, BL.

For a full account of the planned expedition, see: James Robertson, "The Spanish Plan to Invade Georgia in 1737: The Cuban Missile Crisis of the 1730s?" (Manuscript, 2017). Copy courtesy of the author.

the Indies, while in Cuba recipients of special privileges, such as permission to construct a tobacco mill, often paid for the favor by providing funds for the local *guardacostas*.<sup>123</sup> In Havana, these funds supported a single frigate *el Triunfo*, commanded by naval officers, which was supplemented by privateers. These royal *guardacostas* were more easily controlled and more likely to focus their efforts on contrabandists. In September 1736, for example, *el Triunfo* sailed in consort with a small sloop commanded by Fandiño and seized the *Bricklayer* off Matanzas with a cargo of over seventeen hundred illicitly purchased hides. Although he had returned to privateering, Fandiño's reduced circumstances and tighter leash are clear from the fact that he commanded a small sloop of only ten men and sailed only in company with a royal warship.<sup>124</sup>

However, following Patiño's death, old habits swiftly reasserted themselves. Seventeen Anglo-American vessels were seized in 1737, almost all by privateers operating out of Puerto Rico and Havana, as well as a number of Dutch vessels.<sup>125</sup> Fandiño himself seized at least one of them, the *George*. These seizures, most of whom were not conducting illicit trade but carried logwood as part of their ballast, caused panic in Jamaica and outrage towards the South Sea Company who had recently provided two vessels for the royal *guardacostas* of Cartagena.<sup>126</sup> The Company's factor in Havana "expostulated" with Governor Horcasitas that the same wood grew

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<sup>123</sup> John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 89; and Pearce, *The Origins of Bourbon Reform in Spanish South America*, 84.

<sup>124</sup> "Testimonio de la Segunda presa de los autos formados sobre el apresa de una Balandra Ingles nombrada *el Alarife* hecha por Don Antonio Castañeda comandante del Guardacosta de esta Isla," 1737; and "Testimonio de la primera presa de los autos formados Sobre el apresa que el Capitán Don Antonio de Castañeda Torre hizo con la fragata *el Triunfo* Guardas Costas de S.M. y balandra de refuerzo, de otra balandra inglesa nombrada *el Alarife* su Capitán Jacob Phennis," 1737, Santo Domingo, 492, AGI.

<sup>125</sup> In a letter written while a prisoner in Havana Henry Ware wrote there were currently four British and two Dutch prizes in the harbor there. Henry Ware to unknown, September 5, 1737, CO 137/22, TNA.

<sup>126</sup> Peter Gregory to the Duke of Newcastle, November 17, 1737; and Memorial of the Merchants of Kingston, CO 137/56, TNA.

in Jamaica. But the Governor dismissed him with a smile, proclaiming that “all but *asiento* ships which have any of it on board are lawful prizes, and the same with respect to pieces of eight or gold.” Disgusted, the factor described the Governor in a letter as “more of a privateer than a merchant and, fearing to be made [to] refund 81,000 pesos value of the Dutch prize condemned here last year, is willing to reimburse himself by the English.”<sup>127</sup>

When news of this fresh round of seizures reached Britain, merchants trading to both the Caribbean and North America were enraged. Insurance rates between England and Jamaica more than doubled to nearly ten percent and the powerful West India lobby went into an uproar.<sup>128</sup> By early 1738 the situation had reached a crisis-point. Merchants and ship-owners from London, Bristol, Glasgow, Lancaster, Liverpool and Edinburgh, as well as a number of other outports in Scotland and England, bombarded parliament and the Board of Trade with memorials addresses and petition demanding redress.<sup>129</sup> The opposition press such as the *Craftsman* and the *London Evening Post* picked up the cry, using it as a tool to bludgeon the increasingly unpopular Walpole Ministry. In a series of Memorials delivered to the Spanish Court in October and December 1737, Minister Keene demanded the release of all the vessels seized that year. But Spanish officials could only respond that they needed to wait until the court records reached them from the Americas. Once word of the cases reached them from the West Indies, the Spanish Ministry did everything in its power to placate the British. In a royal order dated May 6, 1738 three of the vessels taken by Havana *guardacostas* were ordered restored, even though they had

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<sup>127</sup> Anthony Weltden to Peter Burrell, August 27, 1737, Shelburne Papers vol. 44.

<sup>128</sup> “Affidavit of Thomas Hackett and Manasseth Whitehead officekeepers for insuring of ships, goods &c belonging to the city & port of Bristol,” October 24, 1737, SP 94/129, TNA.

For an account of the rise of the West India Lobby in Parliament, which was becoming increasingly powerful in the 1730s, see: Lillian M. Penson, *The Colonial Agents of the British West Indies; A Study in Colonial Administration, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (London: F. Cass, 1971).

<sup>129</sup> Kathleen Wilson, “Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon,” *Past & Present* 121 (1988), 78.



all carried logwood.<sup>130</sup> The *George*, however, was not released due to the clear evidence of smuggling—cacao and hidden silver—though as part of their efforts at reconciliation the Spanish promised that if the owners appealed they would be heard.<sup>131</sup>

Unfortunately for the prospects of peace, the conciliatory Spanish responses were not dispatched until late May 1738. In the meantime, outrage and popular anger continued to build in Britain. Opposition members in Parliament, sensing an opportunity to weaken Walpole's Ministry, demanded—and surprisingly actually examined—all the papers exchanged between Keene and the Spanish Court as well as the correspondence of the South Sea Company, which many members viewed as a dangerous Tory monopoly. Famously, the Commons even summoned Robert Jenkins to appear and testify before the House.<sup>132</sup>

Popular anger with the Walpole Ministry rose yet higher when it was discovered that thirty-one British sailors had been sent from Havana to Cádiz and were supposedly rotting in chains fed on nothing but rotten bread and *bacalao*. The prisoners were swiftly released, but the incident put yet more pressure on the Ministry.<sup>133</sup> Representations and demands for restitution for ships seized by the Spanish flooded into Parliament with some dating back as far as the early

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<sup>130</sup> The three vessels were the *Dispatch*, *Loyal Charles*, and *Prince William*. Real Cedula, May 6, 1738, Indiferente, 1597, AGI.

<sup>131</sup> Translation of Sebastián de la Quadra to Benjamin Keene, May 26, 1738, SP 94/130, TNA.

<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, the Journal of the House of Commons for March 28, the day he was to appear, only records that the House went into committee to consider the depredations crisis. However, in a letter the Spanish Ambassador reported to Madrid that Jenkins had indeed appeared and testified regarding his lost appendage, though no complaint of it was made in any of the Memorials or correspondence between the two Crowns. *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 23 (London: Order of the House of Commons, 1803), 130; and McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain*, 106.

Since the loss of his ear Jenkins had taken up employment with the East India Company, and was governor of Saint Helena in 1740-41. Following that, he took command of a Company ship bound for Asia where he fought off at least one pirate vessel before disappearing from the historical record. Thomas Henry Brooke, *History of the Island of St Helena, from its Discovery by the Portuguese to the year 1823* (London: Kingsbury, Parbury, and Allen, 1824), 251-52.

<sup>133</sup> Unknown to his mother and father, January 22, 1737/38; Copy of a letter from Cádiz, February 1, 1737/38; From a place called Carteris near Cádiz, February 6, 1737/38; Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, March 2, 1737/38, Add Ms 32797, BL; and Marquis de Torrenueva to Don Tomás Geraldino, March 24, 1738, Santo Domingo, 498, AGI.

1720s. The Spanish sought to be accommodating, and promised to investigate the cases they could, but many records had been lost in a palace fire in 1731. Only in the case of the *Woolball* did they categorically refuse. Officials claimed that following the issuance of orders to release the vessel an English warship had sailed to Campeche, ostensibly to receive her, but in reality to sell its cargo of 150,000 pesos (£33,750 sterling) worth of goods. This voyage had been repeated three times.<sup>134</sup> This was too little to appease British popular opinion and on June 1, the Duke of Newcastle ordered a fleet to the Mediterranean.<sup>135</sup>

Yet neither nation's leaders wanted war. Over the next few months, frantic negotiations seemingly secured a way out of the impasse with the signing of the Convention of the Pardo (named for the palace where it was signed) in January 1739. By its terms, the two Crowns agreed that all British claims regarding seizures by the Spanish in the West Indies prior to December 10, 1737 would be settled by a payment of £95,000 within four months, and that two commissioners from each nation would meet to settle all outstanding disputes including the boundaries of Florida and Carolina and navigation in the Caribbean.<sup>136</sup>

The Convention was significantly weakened, however, by Spain's attaching to it a declaration that the agreement had been signed only on condition that the South Sea Company pay the £68,000 sterling it owed to Philip V from the duties on both the slaves introduced under the *asiento* and on the king's quarter share of the profits of the annual ships which had sailed since 1720.

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<sup>134</sup> Translation of Sebastián de la Quadra to Benjamin Keene, May 26, 1738, SP 94/130, TNA.

<sup>135</sup> McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain*, 114.

<sup>136</sup> Georgia was not mentioned by name at the insistence of the Spanish who denied its legal existence. *Convention between the Crowns of Great Britain and Spain, concluded at the Pardo on the 14th of January 1739*, NS (London: Samuel Buckley, 1739).

It was here that the dangers of the South Sea Company's position as a private corporation with no official oversight, yet a party to international treaties bore its full fruit. For the Company's Directors sought to use this opportunity to increase their own profits. In a meeting of the Company's General Court, they resolved not to pay any of the £68,000 until the Company was reimbursed for the losses of the two seizures of 1718 and 1727, which the Directors assessed at the ludicrously high value of £340,000.<sup>137</sup> Spain, whose Treasury was dangerously empty, had been relying on the Company's payment to provide the bulk of the funds the Convention had stipulated for reparations, and refused to pay reparations until the Company had done so. The Duke of Newcastle, under growing popular pressure following the news that yet more British prisoners had arrived in Cádiz from Cuba made the fateful decision in March to countermand the orders recalling the fleet from Gibraltar.<sup>138</sup> Spain protested that it could not possibly pay the sum demanded by the Convention as long as the British squadron remained off their coast; to do so would be seen as surrender to foreign threats. But Newcastle remained adamant.<sup>139</sup> As a result, the four-month deadline passed with no payment. On June 14, George II declared that, "having determined, upon the behavior of Spain, by the breach of the Convention, on their part, immediately to pursue hostile measures for doing Himself & the Nation justice." He ordered Ambassador Keene to warn all British merchants and vessels to leave Spain, while in London he gave orders to begin making general reprisals.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> The Company refused to provide any receipts or other proofs of the supposed losses suffered by the various factories during the *represalias*. Minutes of a Special Committee, October 13, 1737, Ad MS 32797, BL; and Court of Directors to Benjamin Keene, March 17, 1738/39, Add Ms 32800, BL.

<sup>138</sup> Jason Vaughan to George Packer & Company, December 4, 1738; Deposition and affidavit of Jason Vaughan, December 14, 1738; Letter from the Merchants at Bristol to the Duke of Newcastle, January 3, 1738/39; and Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, March 20, 1738/39, Add Ms 32800, BL.

<sup>139</sup> Benjamin Keen to the Duke of Newcastle, June 9, 1739, Add Ms 32801, BL.

<sup>140</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, May 31, and June 14, 1739, Add Ms 32801, BL.

It seems doubtful that the Convention of Pardo could have prevented war for long, the differences between the two empires were simply too great. The continued devotion of Spanish officials to a policy of territorial claims over all of America not specifically ceded by treaty—and the connected right to stop foreign vessels at sea—was not likely to have been abandoned. Furthermore, the incentives for Spanish-Americans like Fandiño to seek their fortunes by preying on non-Spaniards remained strong. For as long as the British tolerated illicit trade, either by Jamaicans or by the *asiento*'s holders, the weakness of Spanish imperial institutions would force Madrid to rely on privateers and others to implement state policy. In short, the British government would not stop their smugglers, and the Spanish government could not stop them. As a result, conflict was inevitable. Its specific time was the combination of chance and the self-centered decision-making of the South Sea Company.<sup>141</sup>

## Conclusion

The *guardacostas* emerged as an instrument of state policy at perhaps the lowest point of the Spanish empire prior to the revolutions of the nineteenth-century: the second half of the seventeenth century. Then, the buccaneers of Jamaica and French Tortuga as well as the Dutch

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<sup>141</sup> The historiography of the outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear is an extensive one and the account presented here is necessarily abbreviated. For more detailed accounts of the coming of the war, see: Bob Harris, *A Patriot press: National Politics and the London Press in the 1740s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); E.G. Hildner, "The Role of the South Sea Company in the Diplomacy Leading to the War of Jenkins' Ear, 1729-1739," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 18:3 (1938): 322-341; Sylvia Lyn Hilton, "El conflicto anglo-español sobre derechos de navegación en mares Americanos (1729-1750)," *Revista de Indias*, 38: 153-154 (1978): 671-713; MchLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain*, chap. 4; Trevor R. Reese, "Georgia in Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy, 1736-1739," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 15:2 (1958): 168-190; Harold W.V. Temperly, "The Causes of the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739)," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 3 (1909): 197-207; Kathleen Wilson, "Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon," *Past & Present* 121 (1988): 74-109; Philip Woodfine, "Horace Walpole and British Relations with Spain, 1738," *Royal Historical Society, Camden Miscellany* 32:3 (1994): 289-328; Phillip Woodfine, "'Suspicious Latitudes': Commerce, Colonies and Patriotism in the 1730s," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century culture* 27 (1998): 25-51; and Woodfine, *Britannia's Glories: The Walpole Ministry and the 1739 War with Spain* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998).

from Curaçao ravaged Spanish America, seizing ships and plundering towns and cities with abandon. Simultaneously in Europe, Spain itself was exhausted and bankrupted after a century of warfare, and simultaneously suffering from a leadership crisis under a series of weak rulers, particularly Charles II.<sup>142</sup> In such circumstances, official sanction for Spanish colonists to arm themselves against foreign intruders seemed like a brilliant and practical innovation. It would not only help combat the assaults of other powers, but also cost the Crown relatively little.

By the early 1700s, apart from Governor Archibald Hamilton's schemes, support for piracy was no longer British state policy in the West Indies.<sup>143</sup> Yet Spain's new Bourbon regime continued the policy of supporting *guardacostas* under the old system of limited oversight. It was determined to reinstate Spain's historic commercial and territorial monopoly over the Americas, with the consequent right to restrict foreign shipping. Royal instructions issued in 1717, 1734 and 1738 repeatedly enunciated the right of Spanish corsairs to stop any foreign vessels they deemed to be following "suspicious routes"—*rumbos sospechosos*—in Caribbean waters. This policy, joined with nearly a quarter-century of open warfare in the Caribbean, created an atmosphere of permissiveness in which the goals of the *armadores* who fitted out privateers and the men who manned them was the same: to make a profit by any means necessary. Commanders such as Juan León Fandiño seized foreign vessels with abandon, carrying them to ports where sympathetic officials were willing to condemn them on the flimsiest of evidence. Piracy under the guise of privateering was the main economic activity in

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<sup>142</sup> For accounts of the nadir of the Spanish empire following the humiliating treaties of mid-century, see: Mark A Burkholder and D. S. Chandler, *From Impotence to Authority: The Spanish Crown and the American Audiencias, 1687-1808* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977); Henry Kammen, *Spain in the Later Seventeenth Century, 1665-1700* (New York, NY: Longman, 1980); John Lynch, *The Hispanic World in Crisis and Change, 1598-1700* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); and Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*.

<sup>143</sup> For an examination of the decline of Anglo-American piracy in the Americas, see: Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005); and Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570-1740* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), chaps. 9-10.

Trinidad and Baracoa in Cuba for years, as well as in San Juan de Puerto Rico. These areas, as much as the more infamous port of Nassau in 1715-18, could truly be called “piratical ports.”

Anglo-American and Dutch smugglers as well as the British Navy hunted Spanish corsairs mercilessly. But by the 1730s, the impact of the activities of the *guardacostas* and Anglo-American smugglers were felt far beyond the Caribbean basin. Although the maxim of “no peace beyond the line” continued as the *de facto* policy of both Britain and Spain, as well as the Dutch and to a lesser extent the French, the increasing importance of Atlantic trade and the political power of the British trading community made the policy increasingly untenable by the 1730s. The outbreak of the War of Jenkins’ Ear in Summer 1739 demonstrated that events in America could no longer be divorced from diplomacy in Europe. What resulted was a war that neither nation’s political leadership had sought, but which both were unable to prevent, in the face of public pressure and the short-sighted selfishness of the South Sea Company. The conflagration that resulted would dramatically alter the inter-imperial world of the Americas.

## Chapter 5

### **The Transformation of Inter-Imperial Trade during the War of Jenkins Ear, 1739-1748**

The war that broke out between Great Britain and Spain in the fall of 1739 came as little surprise to colonists and officials in the Caribbean. As news slowly arrived from Europe of the increasing possibility that the Convention of the Pardo would fail, the summer became a time of tension and rising fears. The previous decade's worth of invasion scares and violent clashes had primed each empire's inhabitants for the possibility of a rupture, and both Jamaicans and Cubans were terrified that those on the other island would strike first and before their victims even knew that official hostilities had begun. Neither colony's inhabitants could have predicted, however, the extent to which the coming conflict would destroy the inter-imperial trading regime of the previous half-century and forge a new one that would transform the relationship between the two islands.

The arrival of Admiral Sir Edward Vernon from Europe with his squadron of nine ships in mid-October with orders to "commit all sorts of hostilities against the Spaniards" inaugurated the formal opening of the war in the Americas, although in fact hostilities had already commenced months before. Vernon's three-year command in the Caribbean, from the fall of 1739 to the summer of 1742, has received far and away the most attention from scholars of the conflict writing in both English and in Spanish.<sup>1</sup> This is understandable for those years witnessed

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<sup>1</sup> Vernon's orders are Quoted in Sir Herbert W. Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-48*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 40.

For studies of the conflict, see: Jorge Cerdá Crespa, *Conflictos coloniales: La Guerra de los Nueve Años, 1739-1748* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 2010); Richard Harding, *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth*

the largest clashes of the war in the Americas, beginning with Vernon's capture of Portobello in December 1739 and culminating with the great West Indian expedition of 1741—the largest force ever sent to the Americas by any European power with two hundred ships and twenty thousand men.<sup>2</sup> The expedition launched a disastrous siege at Cartagena and after failing there attempted further feckless assaults on Santiago de Cuba and Panama. The major battles at Portobello and Cartagena have been deeply and exhaustively examined, the reasons for British victory in the one and abject failure in the latter spelled out in considerable detail.<sup>3</sup> Yet more than a year separated the capture of Portobello from the arrival of the expedition, a lull that has caused much criticism at the ministry of Sir Robert Walpole both at the time and among later historians, and the war continued for another six years after the attempt on Panama was abandoned in early 1742.

This chapter focuses not on the major campaigns of the conflict but on the “everyday” nature of the war and how it reshaped the ties that bound British and Spanish America together. This “everyday” experience is vital for understanding the significance of the War of Jenkins' Ear for, as Richard Pares accurately summarized, it was “unmistakably a war of trade. Its effect was to protect and increase certain branches of illicit commerce with the Spanish dominions.”<sup>4</sup> The war's origins lay with British imperial officials, who, enamored with the flow of silver bullion

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*Century: The British Expedition to the West Indies, 1740-1742* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1991); Harding, *The Emergence of Britain's Global Naval Supremacy: The War of 1739-1748* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2010); Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936); Richmond, *The Navy in the War of 1739-48*, vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For discussions of the popularity of Vernon in Britain and British North America following the capture of Portobello, see: Gerald Jordan and Nicholas Rogers, “Admirals as Heroes: Patriotism and Liberty in Hanoverian England,” *Journal of British Studies* 28:3 (1989): 201-224; Kathleen Wilson, “Empire, Trade and Popular Politics in Mid-Hanoverian Britain: The Case of Admiral Vernon,” *Past & Present* 121 (1988): 74-109; and Wilson, *The Sense of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 140-165.

<sup>3</sup> Harding's *Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century* is at present the fullest account of the nature of the British operations from 1739 to 1742 but it has also received lengthy accounts in practically every history of the conflict, see fn. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Pares, *War and Trade*, 126.



from Spanish America and unable to control the politically influential South Sea Company, had refused to crack down on illicit traders in Jamaica and elsewhere whose actions provided the impetus for the aggressive Spanish anti-smuggling policies about which British politicians complained so loudly. And in 1739 Britain had gone to war confidently expecting to pry open the markets of Spanish America directly, bypassing the indirect trade via Cádiz.<sup>5</sup>

While the predictions of the London press were to prove disastrously overconfident, Anglo-Spanish trade in the region nevertheless flourished during the war. However, this new inter-imperial commercial system did not arise either immediately or smoothly. In the conflict's first years, inter-imperial trade was thrown into disarray, and both Anglo- and Spanish-American colonists were compelled to reassess their connections with their erstwhile international partners. The destruction of the South Sea Company's factories in Spanish America put an end to a major channel through which Anglo-Spanish trade had been channeled for three decades, while the treachery of former smugglers turned privateers severely strained the bonds of trust necessary for international commerce.

Yet by then the two empires were too integrated and mutually dependent for trade between them to remain closed for long. Although raiding and privateering continued until the return of peace in 1748, trade between the two erstwhile enemies soon resumed. Key to the reconstruction of the transnational economy were interactions between imperial administrators and the increasingly self-confident and powerful creole merchant communities in Kingston and Havana. In Jamaica, traders in Kingston and Port Royal convinced officials and Royal Navy

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<sup>5</sup> For a criticism of this policy, see Jean O. MachLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy*, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940). Popular pamphlets confidently predicting British success were printed in great numbers in London; examples include: "Captain Jinkins," *Spanish Insolence Corrected by English Bravery, Being an Historical Account of the Many Signal Naval Achievements Obtained by the English over the Spaniards from the Year 1350 to the Present Time* (London, 1739); Anonymous, *A State of the Rise and Progress of our Disputes with Spain* (London, 1739); and Anonymous, *The merchant's complaint against Spain* (London, 1738).

commanders that they would not export contraband goods—a pledge not always honored—while at the same time including them in the profits of trade with the enemy. At the same time, Cubans took advantage of the war’s disruption to receive royal sanction for the creation of the Real Compañía de la Habana (hereafter Royal Havana Company), which gave them an unprecedented voice in the governance and trade of their island. And they used that new influence to full advantage. By 1745 they were able to successfully convince Governor Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to dispatch an agent to Jamaica to purchase the goods—above all African captives—their own empire could not provide. To fulfill the proposed contract they turned to the man they had spent years trading with both legally and illegally: Edward Manning.

The decision by Cubans to contract directly with their nation’s enemies not only represented a pragmatic repudiation of mercantilism that reflected the constraints of reality, but also helped inaugurate a fundamental transformation in the nature of Anglo-Spanish trade. Although nearly derailed by Manning’s rivals, the contract between erstwhile enemies was a great success. Inspired, other Spanish-American merchants also forged wartime contracts with Jamaicans; ultimately nearly ten thousand captive Africans would be peacefully contracted for during the conflict. With the reconstruction of inter-imperial networks and the support of local officials in both empires, trade between the two warring nations’ colonies ultimately reached such heights that nearly a third of the silver mined in Spanish America and shipped to Europe during the war was destined for Britain.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Spain and its allies received a reported 28,644,366 pesos (£6,445,000 sterling) during the years 1741-45 out of a total of 41,454,336 pesos (£9,327,000 sterling) arriving in Europe. The remaining 12,810,000 pesos (£2,882,000 sterling) went to Britain. Michel Morineau, *Incroyables gazettes et fabuleux métaux: les retours des trésors américains d'après les gazettes hollandaises (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1985), 377.

## Breaking the Bonds of Trade

It had been clear to the Duke of Newcastle and other members of the British Government since the late spring of 1739 that the Convention of the Pardo was likely to fail; warnings were therefore dispatched in June to Britain's colonial governors warning them of the likelihood of a break with Spain.<sup>7</sup> Still hoping to avoid a complete break with Spain, however, Newcastle also informed colonial officials that, while they were to prepare for hostilities, they were only authorized to grant letters of reprisal to those who had suffered losses at the hands of the *guardacostas*.<sup>8</sup> But in Jamaica Governor Edward Trelawney went further and, after consultation with Commodore Charles Brown, began issuing general letters of marque.<sup>9</sup> At the same time Brown swiftly took all six ships of his squadron and sailed for the Florida Channel, hoping to capture the Spanish treasure fleet as it sailed to Havana. He failed (the galleons remained at Cartagena), but would blockade Havana for the next three months. This left Jamaica almost wholly undefended.<sup>10</sup>

Fortunately for the colony, the Spanish were wholly unprepared to mount a serious assault on Jamaica. In the summer of 1739, much of the Spanish fleet in the Caribbean was at Cartagena guarding the precious galleons, its ships decayed and supplies depleted by its three-year stay in that port. At Havana, the *Armada de Barlovento* mustered only three frigates and a

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<sup>7</sup> For correspondence concerning the collapse of the Convention of the Pardo, see: Benjamin Keene to the Duke of Newcastle, April 24, 1739, and May 5, 1739; Keene and Philip de Castres to Newcastle May 18, 1739; and Newcastle to Keene, May 8, 1739 in Add Ms 32800, BL. The final abandonment of the Convention occurred in mid-June. See: the Duke of Newcastle to Benjamin Keene, June 14, 1739, Add Ms 32801, BL.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, August 8, 1739, CO 137/56, TNA.

<sup>9</sup> An example of the instruction to privateers Trelawney began issuing at this time can be found in: J. Franklin Jameson ed., *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 347.

<sup>10</sup> For accounts of Brown's cruise, see: The Proceedings of Charles Brown Esq. Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed at and about Jamaica between the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1739 & the 28<sup>th</sup> of October following, Adm 1/232, TNA.

small pink, far too weak a force to challenge Brown's fleet.<sup>11</sup> However, Brown's blockade of Havana ensured the final destruction of one major element of British commerce in the West Indies: the factories of the South Sea Company.

Notices had already been sent to the *asiento*'s various factories from the Company's agents in Jamaica, Edward Manning and James Merewether, warning them of the possibility of a break with Spain. In a letter written to the factor Leonard Cocke at Santiago de Cuba, Manning warned that war was inevitable with the arrival of the orders for reprisals and ordered Cocke to secure as many of the Company's goods as possible, collect on all debts owed him, and load all that he could onto the brig currently at Santiago immediately. The letter was sent in total secrecy. In order not to arouse suspicions among Spanish officials at the arrival of another vessel from Jamaica, it was carried by a smuggler to a Cuban contact in Bayamo who then passed it on to Cocke.<sup>12</sup> However, the factor faced interminable delays in preparing to flee the city. In a letter written in the secrecy of the night in late September Cocke lamented the slowness in collecting the debts owed him, particularly the sugar promised which was now impossible to receive, for guards had been placed at the warehouses.<sup>13</sup> Despite the delays, the factor had loaded a hundred and sixty cases of sugar, nearly five hundred hides, and 3,000 pesos (£675 sterling) onto the brig and hoped to sail before news of war arrived. It was not to be however, for upon hearing that

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<sup>11</sup> J.C.M. Oglesby, "Spain's Havana Squadron and the Preservation of the Balance of power in the Caribbean, 1740-1748," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 49 (1969), 474.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of Council, October 2, and November 7, 1739, 1B/5/3/13, JNA.

<sup>13</sup> "Por lo que toca a los Azucares que quedan en las Bodegas es imposible por ahora moverlas de adonde están para asegurarlas en otra parte por una Guardia de Soldados." Copia de traducción de Carta de la Factor del Asiento de Negros de Cuba, September 30, 1739, Santo Domingo, 363, AGI. Despite the title, a copy of Manning and Merewether's initial letter of August 10<sup>th</sup> is also included in this bundle.

Brown's squadron had bombarded Havana, Governor Francisco Cajigal de la Vega immediately seized both the brig and factory, imprisoning the Englishmen in the castle guarding the harbor.<sup>14</sup>

Similar seizures were made at every other South Sea Company factory in the Caribbean, just as they had been in 1718 and 1727. In Havana the seizure of the factory along with the Company sloop in the harbor yielded nearly eight thousand pesos in specie and goods (£1,800 sterling) in the first sweep alone, and further goods that the factor had deposited with *habaneros* for safekeeping were seized in the following months.<sup>15</sup> Both Vernon and Trelawney wrote repeatedly to Spanish Governors demanding the release of the factors and their goods in accordance with Article 40 of the *asiento* treaty, which guaranteed the Company six months after the opening of any hostilities to safely and peacefully remove their goods from Spanish territory. But, though the factors were released or exchanged over the following two years, just as they had in previous conflicts, Spanish officials refused to release the seized goods.<sup>16</sup>

The South Sea Company's General Court had anticipated this, and with the *asiento* already due to expire in 1743, decided to abandon the unprofitable slave trade even before the seizures had been carried out. In early October, the General Court voted that the Company's agents in Jamaica and the various factors be informed that, with war inevitable: "the Company

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<sup>14</sup> Francisco Cajigal de la Vega to the King, October 12, 1739, Santo Domingo, 363, AGI. The South Sea Company's brig was swiftly converted into a privateer. Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, February 25, 1739/40, SP 42/85, TNA.

<sup>15</sup> Cuentas de repesalia de Ingleses Corriente desde 18 de Septiembre de 1739 hasta 12 de Diciembre de 1742, Contaduría, 1170, AGI.

<sup>16</sup> For examples of British demands that the South Sea Company's factors be released, see: Edward Trelawney to Don Francisco Cajigal de la Vega, August 5, 1740, CO 137/56; and Edward Vernon to Don Francisco Cajigal de la Vega August 5, 1740, SP 42/85. De la Vega would grant Cocke his release in the summer of 1740, but Cocke refused to go, claiming that the "circumstances of my affairs," presumably the collection of debts owed him from private trade, would keep him in Cuba another four months. De la Vega to Vernon August 24, 1740; and Leonard Cocke to Vernon, August 24, 1740, SP 42/85.

When he captured Portobello in December, Vernon demanded the release of the factors there or he would destroy the town. In response, Governor Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega released them. Edward Vernon to Don Dionisio Martínez de la Vega, November 24 and December 1, 1739; de la Vega to Vernon, December 9 and December 15, 1739, SP 42/85. Discussions of the imprisonment of the factors at Veracruz and Cartagena can be found in Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, January 31, 1739/40 and October 7, 1740, SP 42/85.

can have no further service for them, and that therefore they are at liberty to dispose of themselves as they shall judge best for their own interest.”<sup>17</sup> The Company’s trade, which had been such a concern and vexation for Spanish officials for nearly three decades had ended and would never reopen. Still, one element of the private trade conducted by the Company’s factors was not yet over, for it was of too much value to the Spanish: the flour trade between Jamaica and Cartagena.

In Cartagena the factors’ imprisonment did not impact the three contracts they had signed to supply the city and Admiral Don Blas de Lezo’s fleet with flour and other foodstuffs. Rather, it was Trelawney’s decision in late September to ban all provision exports from Jamaica that spoiled the agreement. In a furious letter to Vernon after he confirmed the decision, the two factors, supported by Edward Manning, defended their contracts to supply the Spanish “in time of war, as well as in peace,” motivated (they claimed) “by the many precedents we had of vessels coming hither from Jamaica in time of war, without any impediment” as well as an Act of Parliament dating to Queen Anne’s reign which permitted trade to the Spanish colonies during the War of the Spanish Succession. Furthermore, they argued that if only the trade had been allowed to continue

not only this city and province, but all this coast; would in a small course of years, have been entirely dependent upon the English; for we gave the flour at so low a rate, that all ranks of people began to make use of that, instead of maize or Indian corn. The husbandmen in Santa Fe, which is the only place in all this Kingdom, that produces wheat, began to neglect their tillage, for they could not afford to sell the quintal of flour, for less than near double what we sold it for...so that in two or three years more, we may safely affirm, no other flour would have been consumed in all this province, but what was introduced from our colonies...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Minute of the General Court of the South Sea Company September 21, 1739, Add Ms 25510, BL.

<sup>18</sup> James Ord and John Gray to Edward Vernon, November 20, 1739, SP 42/85; and Edward Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, November 5, 1739, CO 137/56, TNA.

Trusting in the law and what they claimed were the self-obvious benefits to the British nation the factors had given a deposit of 15,000 pieces of eight (£5,400 sterling) to carry out the contracts which was now lost, and they darkly threatened to sue both Trelawney and Vernon for their losses. Vernon was uncertain how to respond to the factors' complaints for, while trading with the Spanish was to be encouraged according to his orders, the seized flour was technically intended for the support of the Spanish fleet and was therefore contraband. To deflect their threats Vernon forwarded the factors' protests to the Duke of Newcastle and then ignored further complaints.<sup>19</sup>

The outbreak of war also severely disrupted the intricate bonds of trust that supported the extensive contraband trade between Jamaica and Cuba. But unlike the South Sea Company's commerce, illicit trade was threatened not by British and Spanish officialdom but by "the most vile and treacherous actions" of its own practitioners. In a petition to Vernon and Trelawney, the merchants of Kingston presented the affidavit of the trader Richard Lee who in August 1740 had sailed in the sloop *Mary* to Cuba's southern coast. There he encountered a sloop commanded by Christopher Edzery that had sailed as a privateer from Jamaica but who "used to go, mate, master, or merchant of trading vessels." Edzery bragged to Lee that Edzery's vessel had a few days before "sent letters to several merchants of Puerto del Príncipe (whom he had formerly been acquainted with)" as well as a "manifesto of a pretended cargo of goods he had, and gave them an invitation to come on board his sloop to trade, as he...had formerly done & as other merchants always used to do, upon their first arrival on the coast." The unsuspecting Cubans

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<sup>19</sup> Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, January 31, 1739/40, SP 42/85. The two factors also accused Trelawney of refusing to sanction their trade while conniving at similar agreements with his favorites. Although they were forced to withdraw their accusations by the Jamaican Council, that proves little regarding their truth. Minutes of Council, August 7, August 8, October 2, and November 6, 1739, CO 140/30.

travelled from town to the waterside where they rowed out to Ezery's vessel. After they came on board, he seized them and their goods which amounted to "upwards of 3,000 pieces of eight."

Lee claimed that he had immediately remonstrated with Edzery that such acts would "ruin our trade with those people, who notwithstanding the war, put such confidence in our honor and honesty as to venture their persons as well as their money on board our vessels," and drive them into the arms of Jamaica's French and Dutch competitors. Upon realizing this, Edzery had supposedly repented of his actions and left the coast so that other traders might be at liberty to trade without the threat of his presence.

Several days after Edzery left, several of the Cubans he had robbed came aboard the *Mary* complaining of Edzery's actions "which they looked upon as a very great piece of treachery, they having put an entire confidence in his honor being formerly acquainted with them." But the Cubans' travails were not yet ended: while they were aboard Lee's vessel, one John Ford arrived from Jamaica in a "privateering piragua," a large open flat-bottomed sailing canoe, and demanded that Lee hand the Spaniards over. When Lee refused, Ford lingered nearby and followed Lee's vessel as it attempted to trade along the coast "thereby occasioning a very great detriment to his trade, those merchants that were on board the sloop, not daring to go on shore, nor others from the shore to go on board to lay out their moneys for fear of falling into the hands" of Ford. Upon his return to Kingston Lee was informed that Ford had threatened before leaving Jamaica to seize his sloop by force as well as those of all other traders he met in the South Keys.

These incidents caused Kingston's merchants to complain that "an opinion is at this time encouraged amongst the commanders of the private vessels of war that they have a right by His Majesty's Proclamation [of war] not only to visit but in a hostile manner to take as prize or



plunder any British ships or to imprison any subjects they shall meet with dealing with the Spaniards” and that, if a speedy stop was not put to it, would “too soon, if not already, be carried into execution, either by our own or by other private vessels of war, commissioned from adjacent colonies much to the detriment of this island.”<sup>20</sup> Their words proved prophetic. When Captain Boscawen of the *HMS Shoreham* escorted a group of Jamaican traders to Cuba’s southern coast later that year, he reported “few of the principal traders will venture which gives but little prospect of a good trade” and, what was still worse, the convoy found “two Dutchmen that have been near two months in the Keys” and who had already traded with the Spanish for goods amounting to over two thousand pesos (£450 sterling).<sup>21</sup>

Anglo-American privateers committed other acts of hostility which, although legal acts of war, were nonetheless seen by traders in both English and Spanish America as indefensible breaches of trust. One Jamaican privateer attacked Portobello following its surrender to Vernon—who had destroyed the fortifications and made it a virtual “free port” for British traders—hoping to loot it. The Spanish garrison had salvaged a few cannons from the ruined fort, however, and forced the privateer to surrender. Still damage had been done and a number of Peruvian traders who had come with money to trade returned in fear to Panama.<sup>22</sup> Other English privateers raided the coasts of Cuba, in one instance raiding a hacienda near Puerto Príncipe and making off with two prisoners and several slaves.<sup>23</sup> Such raids only further strained the

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<sup>20</sup> Copy of a petition from the Merchants of Kingston in Jamaica to Edward Vernon; Representation of the principal merchants, factors, and adventurers to the several parts of the Spanish Dominions; and Affidavit of Richard Lee, September 26, 1740, SP 42/85. Edzery did not have long to lament his actions, according to rumors, Vernon gloated to the Secretary of the Admiralty that the “scoundrel is since castaway, and drowned off Cape Catoche.” Edward Vernon to Josiah Burchett, January 4, 1740/41, Adm 1/233.

<sup>21</sup> Capt. Boscawen of *HMS Shoreham* to Vernon, November 27, 1740, SP 42/85. To rub salt in the wound, the two Dutch traders then put into Port Royal for provisions before sailing to Europe. Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, April 5, 1740, SP 42/85.

<sup>22</sup> Edward Manning to Sir Charles Wager, March 25, 1740, CO 137/56.

<sup>23</sup> Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to the Conde de Montijo, August 28, 1740, Santo Domingo, 386, AGI.

commercial ties between the two warring empires and would continue throughout the war. In the summer of 1745, for example, the Havana merchant Don Gregorio Franco was in a canoe sailing to meet the perennially unlucky Richard Lee when he was captured along with 17,000 pesos (£3,825 sterling) by a Jamaican privateer.<sup>24</sup> The actions of the Royal Navy also posed a threat to illicit trade. According to complaints published in the London press by Jamaican traders, the Spanish demand for goods in Panama had entirely ceased since news of Commodore George Anson's entry into the Pacific reached the isthmus, causing the Spanish merchants to flee inland with their silver and goods.<sup>25</sup>

Although illicit Anglo-Spanish trade continued, the outbreak of open warfare—as opposed to the endemic legal and extra-legal violence of the previous three decades—placed the inter-imperial networks through which it was carried out under intense strain by the dawn of 1741. The extent of which can perhaps most easily be captured by examining the number of slaves exported from Jamaica. In 1738 the island's merchants forcibly exported over two thousand slaves, the vast majority to Spanish colonies. In the next four years, the average annual export figure was barely over six hundred souls (**Appendix B**). And the conflict had just begun: at the dawn of 1741, the largest military force the Americas had ever seen arrived in the Caribbean.

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<sup>24</sup> Memorandum in relation to four Spaniards brought in by Andrew Stewart, September 1745, in Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4 (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1811), 30.

<sup>25</sup> "Extract of a letter from Jamaica dated February 11, 1742," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. XII (London, 1743), 218.

## The Real War

Vernon's West Indian expedition remains the most famous part of the entire war and overshadows all other events, but as far as the colonists in Jamaica and Cuba were concerned the disastrous campaign ultimately mattered little. Rather, it was issues of impressment, convoys, and privateering, both their own and their enemies', that primarily concerned them. Jamaicans were constantly at odds with the Royal Navy which they denounced for failing to adequately defend the island and even of actively weakening it by wantonly impressing sailors. In Cuba, however, the privateering trade proved highly profitable, particularly during the war's early years, and the island's corsairs brought a steady flow of prizes into Cuban harbors. Even after the British Navy successfully curtailed Cuban privateering, Jamaica's proximity meant that the island's sugar plantations were still vulnerable to Spanish raiders.

Jamaicans were largely uninterested in the prospect of major conquests in Spanish America, fearing the rise of new, competing sugar colonies.<sup>26</sup> Upon news that the contingent of troops from Britain's mainland colonies were on their way to the island in January 1741, Governor Trelawney swiftly urged the Assembly to focus their efforts not on supporting the expedition, but on convincing the North Americans to settle in Jamaica to increase the white population.<sup>27</sup> And though urged by London to raise five hundred "negro men" to bear arms and serve as auxiliaries to the expedition from among the island's slaves, the Assembly made little to

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of these fears, see Pares, *War and Trade*, 77-85.

<sup>27</sup> Governor Trelawney's Speech to the Council and Assembly, December 2, 1740, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3 (Jamaica: Alexander Aikman, 1811), 540. For accounts of the role of North American troops in the West Indian campaigns of 1741-42 and the lingering bitterness the experience left in the northern colonies, see: Albert Harkness Jr., "Americanism and Jenkins' Ear," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 37:1 (1950): 61-90; and John Tate Lanning, "The American Colonies in the Preliminaries of the War of Jenkins' Ear," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 11:2 (1927): 129-155.

no effort to do so.<sup>28</sup> Instead, the island's elites launched into the first of what would be many bitter quarrels with the Royal Navy in the coming years, over the import of large quantities of duty-free rum from Barbados for the use of the navy. The Assembly was furious at this flood of spirits that competed with the produce of their own plantations and vainly attempted to force the navy to purchase Jamaican rum, which was considerably more expensive.<sup>29</sup>

By early May, the expedition's assault on Cartagena had collapsed in bloody failure. Vernon's forces then attempted to capture Santiago de Cuba, believing it an easy target and attractive to potential settlers. The landing at Guantanamo Bay (christened Georgestadt by the invaders) initially sent panic across the island, but the campaign swiftly descended into farce as the expedition's leaders bickered while their troops sat on the beach dying by the hundreds. After four months that effort too was abandoned, and the survivors limped back to Jamaica. With their departure from Cuba major military operations in the Caribbean effectively ceased for the remainder of the war.<sup>30</sup> The remnants of the force attempted a half-hearted assault on Panama in January 1742, but the effort was called off due to weather and disease before it even began.

The survivors remained in Jamaica until July with Vernon, the army commander Brigadier General Thomas Wentworth, and Trelawney increasingly hostile to one another as they each attempted to avoid blame for the disaster. The acrimony climaxed when, during a fierce

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<sup>28</sup> If raised, Newcastle wrote that the contingent "shall be rewarded out of the booty" taken from the enemy, but were still to be returned to Jamaica, and presumably their masters, who were also to be paid their full value in case of their deaths. The Duke of Newcastle to Edward Trelawney, July 7, 1740, CO 137/56.

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, December 9, December 11, December 12, and December 17, 1740, and April 28, and May 7, 1741, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3, 542-548, 565, and 572.

John McCusker claims that Jamaican rum was more expensive than other colonies due to the island's planters' habit of "double-distilling" it to raise the alcohol content, 153. Although comparative price information for 1740-41 is unavailable, McCusker notes the wholesale price of a gallon of Barbadian rum in 1749 was 1.2 shillings per gallon, while a gallon of Jamaican rum cost 2.04 shillings. *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), vol. 1 153, and vol. 2, 1136.

<sup>30</sup> Harding claims that among the 14,195 soldiers on the expedition 10,126 died, with only 600 of those to combat, during the two landings. Losses among the naval crews are uncountable. *Amphibious Warfare*, 149.

argument, Rear-Admiral Sir Chaloner Ogle, Vernon's second-in-command, and Trelawney attempted to assault each other. The situation was only saved by the fact that both men's swords had rusted to their scabbards and that Vernon bodily seized the governor to prevent him and the Rear-Admiral from coming to physical blows. Although Ogle was convicted in absentia of assault by a hostile Jamaican jury, no sentence was levied, and he succeeded Vernon as commander of the naval forces there following the latter's recall to London. Nevertheless, the incident put additional strain on relations between the civil and military authorities in Jamaica, even as Cuban privateers were becoming increasingly effective and war with France loomed.<sup>31</sup>

Despite their long experience in outfitting *guardacostas*, Cuban privateering got off to a slow start during the war. After six months of hostilities it was reported that only a single Anglo-American vessel had been captured, and even then, it was suspected that the loss was only a cover for illicit commerce with French colonists.<sup>32</sup> But that was soon to change. Over the course of 1740 Santiago de Cuba fitted out numerous privateers, including several French vessels whose commanders accepted Spanish commissions, and by 1745 over a hundred and thirty ships had been commissioned from Santiago and Havana.<sup>33</sup> Santiago de Cuba is ideally placed to intercept

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<sup>31</sup> Copy of His Excellency Governor Trelawney's relation of what Passed between him Vice-Admiral Vernon and Sir Chaloner Ogle at the King's House at Spanish Town, July 22, 1742, Adm 1/233; Edward Trelawney to George II, July 29, 1742, CO 137/57; and Matthew Concanen to Sir Chaloner Ogle, August 27, 1742, OGL/5, NMM. The minutes of the trial can be found in: Sir Chaloner Ogle, *The Tryal of Sir Chaloner Ogle ... for an assault on the person of his excellency Mr. Trelawney the governor, committed in his own house in Spanish town, on the 22d day of July last. With authentic copies of the several letters that passed on that occasion, between Mr. Concanen, now attorney general of the island Sir Chaloner Ogle, the governor, and A\_\_\_L V\_\_\_\_\_* (London, 1742/43).

<sup>32</sup> In a letter to the Duke of Newcastle, Vernon reported that "a sloop of this island that was on the clandestine trade with negroes upon the Coast of Hispaniola was taken there, by a sloop with Spanish colors, who they say was going to burn their sloops, but on their entreaty, gave it them to come down to Jamaica in, and only took out all their negroes and kept the master; from these circumstances of it, and from some of our northern colony vessels having come safely in since without seeing anything in their way, and the *Falmouth* coming in yesterday who has been cruising off Santiago and the East End, I am inclined to think this trick has been played them by the French under Spanish Colors, and I almost suspect the Captain may have had some share in the collusion." Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, January 31, 1739/40, SP 42/85.

<sup>33</sup> Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, February 25, 1739/40, SP 42/85; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Playor 1974), 111.

vessels trading to and from Jamaica, located as it is at the mouth of the Windward Passage, the channel between Cuba and modern-day Haiti, through which most vessels sailing to or from Jamaica passed. And while the vessels sailing between Europe and Jamaica usually travelled in well-protected convoys, the same was not the case for the North American vessels carrying provisions to the island, which generally travelled alone and without fixed schedules.<sup>34</sup> These were much more vulnerable to capture by Spanish privateers. In the first few months of 1743 alone, privateers based in Santiago brought in a dozen prizes, nine of which belonged to New England and another two to Virginia.<sup>35</sup>

While Santiago's privateers focused their attentions on the waters around Jamaica, those sailing from Havana ranged from Florida to New England. The most dangerous region for Anglo-American vessels was the area stretching from Georgia to the Chesapeake and eastward to Bermuda.<sup>36</sup> So numerous and effective were these Spanish predators—seventeen Havana privateers ranged the North American coasts in the summer of 1746 alone—that vessels were even taken within sight of the Virginia Capes.<sup>37</sup> Others, such as the infamous “black sloop” of

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<sup>34</sup> The value of a convoy for vessels sailing to and from Jamaica is clearly seen through insurance rates; in the fall of 1744 vessels sailing from London to Kingston with a convoy were offered insurance at a five and a half percent premium while those sailing without faced a premium of fifteen percent. Henry Lascelles and George Maxwell to Robert Watts September 8, 1744; and Lascelles and Maxwell to Alexander Crawford, September 8, 1744, in Simon David Smith, ed., *The Lascelles and Maxwell Letterbooks* (East Ardsley, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, UK: Microform Academic Publishers, 2002), folios 191 and 194.

<sup>35</sup> The twelfth vessel was sailing to Jamaica from Glasgow. *Relación de las presas hechas a los enemigos ingleses por los corsarios de este Puerto de Santiago de Cuba, Santo Domingo, 264, AGI*. Vernon blamed the privateers' success on “Irish papists” in Jamaica, who he claimed provided intelligence to their Spanish co-religionists. Edward Vernon to Thomas Corbett, August 3, 1742, ADM 1/233.

<sup>36</sup> Edward Vernon to Thomas Corbett, October 31, 1741, Adm 1/233.

<sup>37</sup> Joyce Elizabeth Harman, *Trade and Privateering in Spanish Florida, 1732-1763* (St. Augustine, FL: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1969), 35; and “The Deposition of Diego de Prada y Nieto, August 3, 1745,” in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Privateering and Piracy in the Colonial Period: Illustrative Documents* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 508-510.

Prada y Nieto in his testimony was most concerned with demonstrating that a crewmate of his named “Limeña” was a free person of color and not a slave, so should not be sold into slavery. This was a common fear among African sailors in the period, see Eliga H. Gould's account of the debate over the fate of Francisco Menéndez in New Providence in 1741 in “Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery,” *American Historical Review* 112:3 (2007): 764-786.

the *habanero* privateer Don Pedro de Estrada, cruised within sight of Charleston.<sup>38</sup> As a result of these cruises, in the war's first six years captured vessels worth over 2,000,000 pesos (£450,000 sterling) carrying six hundred slaves and a thousand English prisoners entered Havana.<sup>39</sup> Over the course of the war over six hundred Anglo-American vessels were captured in the Caribbean and along the North American seaboard.<sup>40</sup>

The profits and dangers inherent to Cuban privateers are evidenced from the fate of the man who had served as a symbol in the call for war: Juan León de Fandiño, the man who severed Robert Jenkins' ear in 1731. Fandiño's war was a busy one; he commanded three galleys instrumental in defending Saint Augustine from the attack by Georgians in 1740 before returning to his old profession of privateering.<sup>41</sup> He was equally successful in that until June 1742, when, while escorting three prizes he had taken from the Maryland tobacco fleet to Havana, his small flotilla encountered the *HMS Rose*. Fandiño and his eighty-man crew fought for over three hours until their vessel was torn "almost to rags." Even then, Fandiño surrendered only after his crew abandoned the deck of the ship to hide in the hold.<sup>42</sup> Shortly afterward, Captain Thomas Frankland took another Havana privateer captained by Fandiño's son.<sup>43</sup> Rather than keep father and son as prisoners of war in South Carolina where he was stationed, Frankland dispatched them to England.

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<sup>38</sup> "Journal of the Sloop *Revenge*, June 5-Oct. 5, 1741," in Jameson, ed., *Privateering and Piracy*, 399.

<sup>39</sup> Julio le Riverend, *Historia económica de Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985), 118.

<sup>40</sup> Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 6, 111; and Swanson, "American Privateering," 380.

<sup>41</sup> Edward. W. Lawson, "What Became of the Man Who Cut Off Jenkins' Ear?" *Florida Historical Quarterly* 37 (1958), 36-38.

<sup>42</sup> Frankland also reported that Fandiño had taken another four prizes on that cruise, in addition to the three he was captured with, evidence of both his skill as a privateer and the rich hunting grounds the southern continental seaboard were for Spanish privateers. Capt. Thomas Frankland to the Secretary of the Admiralty, June 6, 1742, Adm 1/1781, TNA.

<sup>43</sup> Frankland to the Secretary of the Admiralty, August 12, 1742, Adm 1/1781.

There the Admiralty found itself in a dilemma, whether to treat the “bold, dangerous man” as a prisoner of war or as a pirate for his depredations as a *guardacosta*. The general impulse was that he should be tried and, “if there is not evidence to hang him in England, only send him to Jamaica, Martinique, or the Havana, and at either of those places there is evidence enough.” However, perhaps out of concern over the precedent of hanging a man carrying a letter of marque, there is no record of Fandiño being tried as a pirate. Rather, he and his son were kept “close confined in irons” aboard various ships in Portsmouth harbor throughout the fall of 1742 as the admiralty pondered what to do with him.<sup>44</sup> Whether they were eventually sent to Dartmoor prison with other prisoners of war or whether they died of disease in Portsmouth is unknown. The logs of the two vessels in which they were confined make no reference to Fandiño or his son being placed aboard or leaving either vessel, and there are no surviving records of prisoners at Dartmouth from the 1740s, leaving both men’s fate a mystery. But whatever Fandiño’s ultimate fate, while his capture did not bring an end to the privateering war in the Caribbean, the War of Jenkins’ Ear did, at least, bring an end to the career of one of the most notorious marauders whose actions had helped precipitate it.

Still, in the early years of the war, the Royal Navy could do little to stop the losses to privateers. There were occasional successes, such as the capture of Fandiño and the destruction in 1741 of a Santiagan privateer under the command of a Frenchman named Bartolomé Valladon which had been trapped against the Cuban coast; a hopeful Vernon reported that Valladon himself had been “shot in the knee” as he fled ashore.<sup>45</sup> But such successes proved short-lived. After recovering from his wounds, Valladon resumed privateering and was responsible for a

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<sup>44</sup> Capt. Thomas Frankland to the Commissioners of His Majesty’s Dockyard at Portsmouth, June 21, 1742; Admiral Phillip Cavendish to Thomas Corbett, August 1, September 8, and September 11, 1742, Adm 1/906, TNA.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Vernon to the Duke of Newcastle, May 30, 1741, SP 42/90.



half-dozen captures in the first half of 1743. But the easy times for Cuban privateers did not last the whole war. Beginning in 1746, the Royal Navy adopted a new strategy of closely blockading the Cuban port. Not only did this make it harder for privateers to slip out, it also greatly increased the likelihood of recapturing prizes before they reached their captors' home.<sup>46</sup> The perils of such a policy to Cuban interceptors were described in a letter by Governor de la Vega, recounting how a privateer had been forced to wage a fierce two-day battle to enter the port and had lost both prizes taken on his cruise in the effort.<sup>47</sup>

This blockade strategy proved largely successful and by 1746 the Havana Company reported that its losses to the British far outstripped the prizes brought in by Spanish vessels.<sup>48</sup> Cuban privateers were forced to adopt a new approach. Rather than cruise the seas around Jamaica, these *picarones*, as Jamaicans termed them, “turned their manner of privateering chiefly into making descents on [Jamaican] coasts with small crafts in the night, & robbing the seaside settlements of considerable numbers of negroes.”<sup>49</sup> These raids were small-scale affairs with parties of Spaniards landing in the night to raid a plantation and make off with what slaves and plunder they could before retreating to their vessel.<sup>50</sup> The lack of small naval vessels to patrol the coasts of Jamaica forced the Assembly to repeatedly fit out a “guard sloop” which by itself was too little to patrol such a long coastline. At the same time, the colonists along the north coast

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<sup>46</sup> This shift in naval strategy is discussed in John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 99.

<sup>47</sup> Francisco Cajigal de la Vega to the King, August 31, 1743, Santo Domingo, 364, AGI.

<sup>48</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 99.

<sup>49</sup> Edward Trelawney to the Board of Trade, January 19, 1747/48, CO 137/25. The workings of similar raids during the American Revolution are described in detail in Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis, *Journal of Don Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis during the commission which had in his charge from 25 June 1780 until the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month of 1783*, ed. Francisco Morales Padrón, trans. Aileen Moore Topping (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1989), 46-47.

<sup>50</sup> For accounts of such raids in petitions for relief to the Assembly, see Minutes of the Assembly, April 10, 1744, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3, 69; and Minutes of the Assembly, May 15, 1747, June 1, June 6, June 7, and June 8, 1748, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 93, 128, and 130-131.

complained that they could not be expected to defend themselves as they lacked sufficient numbers of white men.<sup>51</sup>

Jamaicans' anger at the Navy's failures to protect them was exacerbated by its incessant demand for men and its ruthless impressment of sailors. Britain's Navy, in both Europe and the Americas, faced a perpetual shortage of manpower, from both disease and rampant desertion—the wages offered by merchantmen and privateers were vastly preferable to life on a man-of-war—and commanders ruthlessly sought seamen. Jamaicans complained constantly of the use of the press gang and the kidnapping of men off vessels as they entered Kingston harbor. The practice proved almost debilitating to vessels preparing to return to Europe as “the rule in the West Indies was to take one sailor in five, except from slave traders who were to contribute one in three, because a great part of their crews was superfluous after they had arrived in the islands.”<sup>52</sup> The challenges of impressment and desertion can easily be seen in the log of the brig *Friendship* which sailed from London to Jamaica with three officers and a crew of nineteen in 1741. Of the men hired in England, five were pressed into the navy at Portsmouth and another three at Port Royal, while another sailor deserted in Plymouth and five more abandoned the ship in Kingston seeking higher wages from desperate Europe-bound captains. Only five of the original crew were left to carry the ship back to England, forcing the captain to offer exorbitant wages to attract new seamen.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Admiral Thomas Davers to Thomas Corbett, August 5, 1745, Adm 1/233. Four vessels were fitted out as defense sloops over the course of the war, Account of Governmental Expenses, Add Ms 12435, BL. See also, Minutes of the Assembly, April 4, April 23, May 13, 1746, April 15 and May 8, 1747, and April 22, 1748, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 10, 26, 53, 69, 87, 116. The complaint about the lack of white men to form an effective guard can be found in Edward Trelawney to the Board of Trade, January 19, 1747/48, CO 137/25.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Pares, “The Manning of the Navy in the West Indies, 1702-63,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (1937), 42.

<sup>53</sup> Journals kept by John Ramsay, 1738-1743, Log/M/83, NMM.

Jamaica's merchants did everything possible to avoid the press. A common practice was for vessels leaving Kingston "to carry out a great number of negroes...[and] afterwards touch at some of the ports to leeward or windward contrary to their instructions where the men are sent over by land to meet them, [and] at their return such men are set ashore in the same manner & the vessel comes in short of complement for which any pretext will serve."<sup>54</sup> Kingston tavern-keepers were notorious for seducing men to desert at the behest of island merchants and facilitating their escape to the outports.<sup>55</sup> Further impetus to such schemes came from naval commanders continually breaking their word that they would press no men from privateers and North American vessels, who brought badly needed foodstuffs to the island, unless they were deserters.<sup>56</sup>

Such was the fear of impressment among British seamen that even the Spanish were aware of it. Governor de la Vega mockingly wrote to Ogle that the reason he had not dispatched a group of English prisoners from Santiago de Cuba to be exchanged was because the last such group he had sent had attempted to mutiny "for fear they should be obliged to serve in the men of war." That fear induced him "not to run a second hazard, as I consider the crew of the vessel which I send, not sufficient to quell such an attempt."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Admiral Thomas Davers to Thomas Corbett, August 5, 1745, Adm 1/233, TNA.

<sup>55</sup> Vernon complained that he had lost over five hundred men out of the naval hospital in Port Royal to desertion as a result of such practices. Edward Vernon to Thomas Corbett, September 5, 1742, Adm 1/233.

<sup>56</sup> Such a promise was made in Sir Chaloner Ogle to Edward Trelawney, June 3, 1744, recorded in the Minutes of the Assembly, June 5, 1744, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3, 662. The promise is also reported in Edward Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, June 12, 1744, CO 137/57.

<sup>57</sup> Extract of a letter from the Governor of Santiago de Cuba to Sir Chaloner Ogle, June 22, 1743, CO 137/24. Trelawney, in a letter to the Lords of the Admiralty, used this incident as evidence of the evils of pressing Jamaican and "American" crews, arguing it was "notorious that the seamen raised in, and used to the trade of the West Indies, are of little or no use aboard the Men of War" Nor, he argued, should ships from England have their men taken upon their arrival in the West Indies for it caused the merchant and captains "to the abominable practice of inveigling seamen from his Majesty's ships, which he pretends to justify by the law of retaliation and necessity, that the ship and cargo of his owners may not rot in the harbor." Edward Trelawney to the Lords of the Admiralty, December 21, 1743, CO 137/57.

Privateers, raids, and impressment were the main concern of colonists in both islands during the war. For while the grand drama of Vernon's West Indian expedition cost the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers and sailors they ultimately had no lasting impact on either Cuba or Jamaica.<sup>58</sup> Instead, it was the perils to their trade and livelihoods that primarily animated Jamaicans and shaped their attitudes towards the conflict. In Cuba, the profits of privateering were welcomed, but the disruptions to the island's trade with both Europe and the rest of Spanish America proved an increasing burden.

### **Reforging the Inter-Imperial Economy**

Notwithstanding the success of its American privateers, the outbreak of war completely disrupted Spain's transatlantic commercial system. Although innovative new policies were enacted to replace the cumbersome fleet system with vessels sailing individually to different destinations, Spain was still unable to adequately supply its colonies with European manufactured goods, foodstuffs, and slaves. Local arrangements with neutral French, and to a lesser extent, Dutch colonies provided temporary relief but after several years of conflict necessity, and profit, required a return to Anglo-American traders. And Jamaican merchants were eager to oblige, aided by a British imperial policy that openly supported trade with the Spanish, but not French, enemy. Beginning in 1743, Anglo-Spanish trade was re-established on a large and steadily-expanding scale as hundreds of Jamaican smugglers sailed to Spanish shores.

With the news of war in 1739 the *flota* preparing to sail to New Spain was abruptly cancelled by officials who then demanded a million pesos in forced loans from the merchants

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<sup>58</sup> One impact Vernon's assault on Santiago de Cuba did have, was the Spanish Crown's allowing that city to erect a Royal Treasury and the creation of a *situado* from New Spain specifically to pay the garrison's expenses separate from that in Havana as thanks for defeating the invaders. Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 8, 31.

invested in it. The practice of forced loans had been the bane of merchants involved in the Spanish-American trade since the mid-sixteenth century, but in 1739 it sparked a decade and a half-long experiment in quasi-free trade between Spain and the Indies—the first major reform to the Iberian commercial system since the establishment of the galleon system in the 1560s. Forced loans were demanded in exchange for the Crown’s licensing of individual merchant vessels to sail unescorted to the colonies. These *registros* (register ships) were not a completely new phenomenon; they had been serving Buenos Aires since 1720 and occasionally travelled to Cuba as well. But never before had they been granted such free access to all of Spanish America.<sup>59</sup> It is uncertain how many individual *registros* sailed for the Americas during the war; estimates range from the low nineties to over a hundred and twenty. But as an imperial measure the *registros* have almost universally been hailed, both by contemporaries and scholars, as a great success, for the amount of silver and agricultural produce reaching Spain *increased* dramatically during the war.<sup>60</sup>

However, this policy innovation did little to help Cuba, Spain’s most important West Indian colony, weather the disruptions of war, for the island’s commerce had been placed in the hands of the Royal Havana Company in 1740. The Company’s formation was a momentous event. Not only did the Company’s charter bypass the centuries-old monopoly of the merchant

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<sup>59</sup> Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*, 191-193. Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien hail this decision as “a major step in the reformist transitions from the Project of 1720 to the deregulation that would be effected under Charles III,” in *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 154.

<sup>60</sup> Morineau lists ninety-three individual vessels returning from the Americas to Europe during the war, but includes several from the Caracas and Havana Companies in the list which were not actually *registros* licensed in Spain. Morineau, *Incroyables gazettes*, 373-4 and 384-91. Kuethe and Andrien’s *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century* claims that a hundred and twenty *registros* sailed for New Spain and the Indies during the war, 154. George Robertson Dilg’s “The Collapse of the Portobello Fairs: A Study in Spanish Commercial Reform, 1720-1740” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1975), Appendix I, states that thirty *registro* ships reached South America, excluding Venezuela. For an overview of the increase in silver and agricultural produce reaching Spain, see Dilg, “Collapse,” 275-276.

*consulado* of Cádiz, but half of its stock was held by *habaneros* giving them an unprecedented official voice in the economy of their island and its relations with Europe. This joint Iberian-Cuban enterprise received a monopoly over Cuba's trade to Spain in exchange for an agreement to provide the peninsular tobacco monopoly with the quantities of leaf demanded and to oversee naval construction in the Havana shipyard. However, although the Company would successfully construct three seventy-gun frigates at Havana during the 1740s, it failed to supply the quantities of tobacco demanded.<sup>61</sup> During the war a mere eighteen vessels sailed from Havana to Spain under the Company's auspices carrying tobacco and other island products.<sup>62</sup>

During the same period of 1739-48 only twenty-six ships left Iberia for Cuba. This average of not even three ships a year was nowhere near enough either to provide a market for the island's products or to supply the island with necessities.<sup>63</sup> Apart from the low level of shipping, this failure took two additional forms. The first involved destination. Every one of the Company's ships sailed either to or from Havana. This left the entire central and eastern portion of the island almost completely cut off from Europe. And while this had long been the case due to the neglect of Santiago de Cuba and its environs within the fleet system, it was made even more acute during the war because the trade between that region and elsewhere in Spanish

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<sup>61</sup> Oglesby, "Spain's Havana Squadron," 481. For accounts of the Company's foundation see: Charlotte Cosner, *The Golden Leaf: How Tobacco shaped Cuba and the Atlantic World* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014), 76-80; Montserrat Garate Ojanguren, *Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración: La Real Compañía de la Habana* (San Sebastian: Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del Pais, 1993), 17-48; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad*, vol. 7 (Madrid: Playor 1978), 102-116.

<sup>62</sup> Levi Marrero recorded twenty ships dispatched by the Havana Company from Spain during the war, but one was shipwrecked and at least one other captured by the English. *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 6, 144. For an English account of the captured Company vessel, see *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. XII (London, 1742), 218.

<sup>63</sup> This figure comes from "Table 7.5: Registro Traffic between Havana and Spain, 1713-1762," in McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 195. McNeill in the same table records fifty-seven ships sailing for Spain from Havana during the war, but it seems likely that, due to the Havana Company's monopoly, most were sailing from Veracruz or elsewhere on the mainland and had simply stopped at Havana on their homeward bound voyage.

America, particularly Cartagena and Panama, was severely curtailed by the activities of Anglo-American privateers.<sup>64</sup>

The second failure involved cargoes. The Company's ships upon their return from Spain carried overwhelmingly European goods, primarily textiles and metalwork. What they did not carry were two commodities vital to the island's economy: provisions and African captives. The former was central because the island, particularly the major cities of Havana and Santiago de Cuba, were unable to feed themselves from the surrounding countryside. This was especially true of Havana which had the added burden of hosting over a thousand sailors continually in port. At the same time, the demand for slaves for the tobacco and burgeoning sugar industries, which saw a boom during the war years, grew steadily, aided by an annual death rate among slaves of up to ten percent.<sup>65</sup>

The French in Saint Domingue were eager to provide everything Cubans needed. In the early years of the war, when France was still neutral, the French governor the Marquis de L'Arnage eagerly courted his Spanish neighbors' commerce. According to documents captured by Jamaican privateers, he allowed French merchants in Leogane to contract to carry eighty thousand pesos from Santiago de Cuba to Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico to pay the garrisons in those colonies. French merchants agreed to carry the money over the course of four voyages for a ten percent commission. Such a small charge and the demand for four voyages suggests the

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<sup>64</sup> Anecdotal evidence of this can be found in a letter written by Pedro de Barranco from Cartagena to his wife in Havana and intercepted by the British. In it he explains that, due to the British Navy, he could not send the letter directly from Cartagena, but is instead sending it via sloop to Veracruz in hopes it can reach her from there. A translation of a letter from Pedro de Barranco to his wife in Havana, July 25, 1740, SP 42/85. Communication at least between Havana and Veracruz remained largely intact throughout the war which allowed the Barlovento Squadron to repeatedly carry out its most important duty, escorting the *caudales*, the collected income of Mexico, to Spain. See Oglesby, "Spain's Havana Squadron" for details.

<sup>65</sup> Franklin Knight states that nineteenth century observers estimated slave mortality at 5-10 percent annually. *Slave Society in Cuba during the Nineteenth Century* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970), 82.

trader's main goal was to open an avenue to sell their merchandise in Cuba. But the scheme was ruined when the sloop was captured on its first voyage, while carrying twelve thousand pesos. Although it had been registered under the French flag, the sloop was seized and condemned because the captain foolishly carried papers showing it was originally an English prize purchased in Santiago, as well as letters from English prisoners there to French correspondents in Saint Domingue.<sup>66</sup>

L'Arnage also gave permission for Spanish agents to purchase flour in Saint Domingue for the galleons at Cartagena, and other French traders were given permission to import foodstuffs directly to Havana.<sup>67</sup> But perhaps the most ambitious French effort involved the slave trade. In 1741, the Havana merchant Don Martín de Olivari y Gamboa obtained an *asiento* from Philip V to import eleven hundred slaves into Havana over two years. The contract stipulated that he was to first attempt to obtain the slaves from Puerto Rico and if that failed he could turn to Saint Domingue and even use French vessels to transport the captives. The inability of Puerto Rico to supply so many slaves must have been well known, and the *asiento* was effectively permission to trade with the French. Olivari y Gamboa promptly sold his contract to Don Joseph Fernández Romero, who, in company with Don Martín de Aróstegui, the president of the Havana Company, hired vessels to purchase slaves in Leogane and Cap François.<sup>68</sup> Given such close ties

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<sup>66</sup> The remainder of the eighty thousand pesos was carried to Europe in two French warships, and most of it likely ended in French hands. Translation of a letter from the Governor of Leogane to the Governor of Santiago de Cuba, March 1, 1741; Translation of a letter from the Governor of Santiago de Cuba to the Governor of Leogane, March 26, 1741; and Translation of an extract of a letter from the Governor of Santiago de Cuba to Don Joseph de la Quintana, March 22, 1741 in CO 137/57.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739-1763* (Philadelphia, PA: Porcupine Press, 1975), 227; and Francisco de Güemes y Horcasitas to the King, September 28, 1743, Santo Domingo, 386, AGI. Pares notes that much of the flour, the provision most sought by the Spanish almost certainly originated in the British colonies and the French thus effectively served as middlemen between the two warring sides.

<sup>68</sup> Copy of the Royal Schedule translated, April 4, 1741; Translation of a Public Declaration, Havana, September 12, 1741; Copy of the Contract Translated; and Copy of the Passport translated, April 27, 1742, CO 137/57. These papers were captured by the Royal Navy in a ship, presumably the one hired by Romero and Aróstegui, and it seems unlikely the contract was fulfilled in the two years stipulated.



between the two colonies it is little wonder that Admiral Vernon repeatedly complained to London about the French. Seeking permission to seize neutral ships, he detailed the assistance Saint Domingue offered in numerous letters. Whitehall, he hoped, would “see what a Spaniard [he had] to deal with in this M. L’Arnage.”<sup>69</sup>

However, Spanish-American trade with the French fell dramatically when France entered the war as a belligerent in 1744 as part of the struggle over the Austrian Succession in Europe.<sup>70</sup> The Dutch might have supplied the needs of the Spanish colonies, but their long history of illicit trade meant that Spanish officials tended to be deeply hostile.<sup>71</sup> The way was thus opened for renewed and expanded trade with the British colonies, a shift presaged by the Viceroy of New Grenada’s refusal in 1743 to allow French traders access to Cartagena. Instead the Viceroy offered emergency trading privileges to the Jamaican James Christie, who had been smuggling on that coast and who charged considerably less for flour than the French, to supply two thousand barrels of flour.<sup>72</sup> While in Cuba, one of the Havana Company’s Directors proposed letting Cubans import slaves from Jamaica upon paying an *indulto* of fifty pesos for each *pieza de india* so imported as early as 1742.<sup>73</sup> Although the proposal was rejected by the Council of the Indies, the Company’s directors, among whom the Governor of Havana was listed, did not forget it.

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<sup>69</sup> Quoted in Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, 228.

<sup>70</sup> As evidence of this, the French island of Martinique, the center of trade between the French and the Spanish Main saw its imports from Spanish colonies fall from nearly three million livres in 1743 to less than half that amount in 1744, Pares, *Colonial Blockade*, 229, fn.2.

<sup>71</sup> For accounts of the widespread smuggling activities of the Dutch in the Caribbean, and Spanish hostility towards them, see: Cornelis Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580-1680* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971); Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680-1791* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1985); Wim Klooster, *Illicit Riches: Dutch Trade in the Caribbean, 1648-1795* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1988); and Linda Rupert, *Creolization and Contraband: Curaçao in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Petition of the Merchants of Kingston, April 2, 1744; Deposition of James Christie, April 7, 1744, SP 42/89; and Kuethe and Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century*, 158.

<sup>73</sup> Leví Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y sociedad*, vol. 6, 23.

Jamaican traders were eager to take advantage of such opportunities, and fortunately the state of war between Britain and Spain allowed them to do so. The declaration of war issued by George II in 1739 did not forbid all commerce with Spain, but rather only forbade British subjects from transporting “any soldiers, arms, powder, ammunition, or other contraband goods” to any Spanish territory.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the 1740 Act of Parliament forbidding trade with Spain, specifically applied only to “Old Spain,” a clear hint that trade in the Americas was allowed. In his orders Vernon was commanded to do all he could to protect it.<sup>75</sup> It had only been concern about what constituted “contraband” that had caused Trelawney and Vernon to cancel the South Sea Company’s flour contracts in 1739, as they feared foodstuffs were to be considered a military store since a large Spanish fleet was anchored at Cartagena.<sup>76</sup>

Trelawney eventually received reassurances from Jamaica’s Attorney General that there were two types of goods forbidden to trade with the enemy during wartime: military stores which were expressly forbidden, and contraband stores which “are to be determined contraband or otherwise, from the circumstances of time & place and the use they may be of to the parties sold to, either as enemies or merely in a private capacity.” Furthermore, it was argued that the King desired his “subjects might reap as much benefit from supplying the private wants of His enemies.” Therefore, unless the destination port was under direct assault, provisions and other

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<sup>74</sup> “Copy of the Declaration of War against Spain,” William Cobbet ed., *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England*, vol. XI, 1739-1741, (London: T.C Hansard, 1812), 6.

<sup>75</sup> “An Act for Prohibiting Commerce with Spain,” *A Collection of All Such Statutes and Parts of Statutes, as Any Way Relate to the Admiralty, Navy, and Ships of War, and Other Incidental Matters: In which the Officers Or Other Persons Belonging to the Said Offices, Or Employed in His Majesty's Sea-service, May be Concerned: Down to the 14th Year of King George the Second, Inclusive. To which is Added, a Table, by Way of Abstract, of All the Said Statutes, Digested Into Alphabetical Order* (London: Admiralty, 1755), 440-447.

<sup>76</sup> Edward Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, November 5, 1739, CO 137/56.

goods sold them could not be considered illegal. The only exceptions were goods that Trelawney as the King's representative declared contraband.<sup>77</sup>

Under these legal protections, the trade with Spanish America eagerly pursued by Kingston traders during the war took three primary avenues: smuggling, trade under the cover of flags of truce, and, beginning in 1745, negotiated contracts between Kingston and Spanish-American merchants. The returns were primarily in bullion, but during the war Jamaicans also purchased over six thousand mules and nearly a thousand horses from Spanish America to labor on the island's plantations.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, in the early years of the war Anglo-Spanish trade was at a low ebb. This was due to the disruptions of inter-imperial networks by the seizure of the South Sea company's factories and the actions of Jamaican privateers, joined with the overstocking of Spanish-American markets by the galleon fleets of the late 1730s. The poor state of Spanish-American markets was not helped by the intrusion of Dutch and French contrabandists eager to take advantage of the outbreak of war. Thomas Pitts, one of Jamaica's most prominent smugglers, reported from near Portobello in late 1741 that there were a dozen vessels at anchor there: three French, four Dutch, and four English sloops in addition to Pitts' own brig.<sup>79</sup>

Unfortunately, the Naval Office Shipping Lists that recorded vessels entering and clearing Kingston have not survived for the period 1737-1742. It is therefore impossible to estimate the number of voyages from Jamaica to Spanish colonies during the early years of the war. However, the sharp decline in slave exports from 1739 through 1742 suggests relatively few vessels sailed for Spanish America in those years or that those who did had unprofitable voyages.

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<sup>77</sup> Trelawney would order that, in addition to military stores, tallow, canvas, and butter could not be exported without a license. Robert Penny to Edward Trelawney, November 9, 1745, Adm 1/233.

<sup>78</sup> Livestock Imports, Add Ms 18273, BL.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Pitts to Edward Trelawney, December 28, 1741, CO 137/57.

However, trade with the Spanish colonies increased substantially beginning in 1743, as the end of major military operations coincided with an increased demand for European goods, foodstuffs, and slaves throughout the region. Jamaican slave exports climbed to over thirteen hundred in 1743 and for the rest of the war averaged nearly nineteen hundred souls annually—nearly a quarter of the African captives imported into the island in those years (**Appendix B**). That same year, the *HMS Litchfield* arrived in London with £100,000 sterling in Spanish silver aboard.<sup>80</sup> The surviving Naval Office Shipping Lists, a nearly complete run of which survives from October 1742 through December 1748, also reveal the considerable size of the Spanish trade in 1743, when at least ninety-eight vessels sailed to Spanish colonies.

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<sup>80</sup> Henry Lascelles and George Maxwell to Robert Watts, March 7, 1743/44, *The Lascelles and Maxwell Letterbooks*, folio 133.

**Figure 15**  
Destinations of Jamaican Smuggling Vessels, October 1742-December 1748

Year	Spanish Coast <sup>2</sup>	Portobello	Cartagena	Rio de la Hacha <sup>3</sup>	Truxillo	Rattan	South Keys	Havana	Annual Total
1742 <sup>1</sup>	13	1	0	8	2	0	8	0	32
1743	43	7	5	16	3	0	24	0	98
1744	48	5	3	4	0	4	5	0	69
1745	38	0	2	2	2	2	7	0	53
1746	34	3	1	1	0	0	6	7	52
1747	28	10	3	0	0	0	12	2	55
1748	22	6	1	2	0	0	13	1	45
Total	226	32	15	33	7	6	75	10	404

Calculated from Walter E. Minchinton ed., *Naval office shipping lists for Jamaica, 1683-1818* (England: EP Microform, 1976).

Note: For voyages whose entrances only were recorded, if they entered within the first three months of the year they were counted as having departed the previous year. This was based on the average length of voyages, whose entrance and exit was recorded, was normally slightly over three months.

<sup>1</sup>The surviving Shipping Lists from 1742 cover only the period of October through December.

<sup>2</sup>"Spanish Coast" appears to have been a catch-all term for Spanish-American destinations. Frequently, the Naval Officer recorded a vessel as departing Kingston for the "Spanish Coast" while elsewhere in the Shipping Lists the vessel was reported as having returned from that same voyage from Cuba, Cartagena, Portobello, or Rio de la Hacha. Voyages included in this category are those who were recorded only as entering or clearing for the "Spanish Coast," but, in reality, may have been trading at any location in Spanish-America.

<sup>3</sup>This category also includes vessels sailing to Maracaibo, which lay nearby Rio de la Hacha.

Most of the contraband trade organized by Jamaican merchants during the war was done under the direct protection of the Royal Navy. When several merchants had prepared their vessels for a trading voyage they would petition the senior officer in the island to "beg the favor

of [their] protection in granting [them] a convoy.”<sup>81</sup> The increased risk of Spanish privateers and *guardacostas* during a period of open hostilities made such convoys very attractive to traders, and it saved considerable expenses as well.<sup>82</sup> It was calculated that sailing under convoy allowed the crew size—and accompanying wages and provisions—to be halved, as well as shaving three percent off the insurance premium, normally eight percent. In total, it was estimated that there was an immediate savings of over £600 sterling on the costs of the voyage.<sup>83</sup>

Naval commanders were quite happy to order vessels to convoy smugglers for several reasons. The most public one was the collection of intelligence. In 1742, Captain Broderick of HMS *Shoreham* wrote to Vernon that, “by intelligence received from Spanish merchants at the South Keys of Cuba, who had lately come from the Havana,” the Spanish fleet was still in that port and “in very bad order” for want of supplies and desertion. Another time, Admiral Ogle ordered a captured Spaniard, who “seemed to have an air of ingenuity,” be set ashore on the South Keys “to make himself master of the latest intelligence” from Havana.<sup>84</sup>

The captain in charge of a convoy was ordered to protect their charges from any harassment by either Spaniards or Britons, and “in no sort to concern [themselves] in trade in His Majesty’s ship.”<sup>85</sup> But even if that order were obeyed, there were other rewards that made convoy duty very attractive. For a convoy commander normally charged a five percent

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<sup>81</sup> Merchants of Kingston to Edward Vernon, January 21, 1739/40, SP 42/85.

<sup>82</sup> For example, in the fall of 1742 two Jamaican vessels were captured off the South Coast of Cuba with the loss of fifty thousand pesos which was blamed on their refusal to wait for a convoy. Sir Chaloner Ogle to Thomas Corbett, November 7, 1742, Adm 1/233.

<sup>83</sup> Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica from the breaking out of the war with Spain in 1739 when the *asiento* contract was stop’t to the present times, WWM/R35/1, Rockingham Papers, Sheffield City Library, Sheffield, England.

<sup>84</sup> Capt. Broderick to Edward Vernon, July 8, 1742, Adm 1/232; and Sir Chaloner Ogle to the Duke of Newcastle, February 19, 1743/44, SP 42/89. Other discussion of intelligence from illicit traders under the cover of convoys can be found in Sir Thomas Davers to the Duke of Newcastle, February 18, 1742/43, SP 42/89; and Capt. Policarp Taylor to Sir Chaloner Ogle, February 2, 1743/44, Adm 1/233.

<sup>85</sup> Orders from Admiral Vernon to Capt. Maynard of *Sheerness*, October 1, 1740, SP 42/85.

commission on the gross sales from every vessel under his protection.<sup>86</sup> Such a commission was directly contrary to the orders issued by the Admiralty, but was disguised under the legal fiction of being a voluntary freight charge paid by the owners of the illicit traders on the profits they earned and “voluntarily brought on board [naval] ships in bullion, and that [the naval officer] have (for this consideration) given receipts for the same, and made themselves accountable for all losses, danger of the seas and enemy excepted, in the same manner, as they do for money brought from Lisbon, Jamaica, and other place the freight whereof has ever been allowed them.” It was thus, “a contract of a private nature, rather than any matter relative to the public.”<sup>87</sup> This “convoy duty” could add up to a very substantial sum for the escort, especially when received from multiple traders on a single voyage. Whether the charge was always paid voluntarily seems doubtful however. On at least one occasion when two sloops under the convoy of Captain Policarp Taylor sought to return to Jamaica without informing him, the naval commander pursued and boarded them, forcibly returning them to anchor under his stern. The two vessels were allowed to depart—unescorted—the next day after paying the captain his “freight.”<sup>88</sup>

Naval escorts provided vital services to illicit traders. Captain Taylor during the same four-month cruise in the South Keys frequently sent men ashore to guard the five traders under his protection and assist them in loading mules and other goods. He also pursued Spanish privateers in the area, in one case pursuing a galley into a lagoon so shallow he was forced to place artillery on board one of the smugglers’ vessels to draw within range. Men were also provided to contrabandists to assist them when damaged or to help navigate treacherous shoals.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica, WWM/R35/1.

<sup>87</sup> Lords of the Admiralty to the Duke of Newcastle, September 29, 1746, SP 42/31, TNA.

<sup>88</sup> Captain’s log of *HMS Fowey*, entry for January 9, 1743/44, Adm 51/340, TNA.

<sup>89</sup> Captain’s log of *HMS Fowey*, entries for December 27, 1743, January 9, January 14-16, January 28, February 7, February 27, and March 6, 1743/44, Adm 51/340, TNA.

Similar services were provided by other commanders to convoys off both Cuba and Portobello, the two regions where most convoys were sent.<sup>90</sup>

The illicit trade carried on from Jamaica under the cover of the Royal Navy's guns during the war was not a monopolistic one. The more than four hundred recorded voyages launched from the island were carried out in vessels registered to nearly two hundred different individuals. Nor was the trade carried on solely by Jamaicans; ships registered in London, Bristol, Liverpool, New York, Boston, Rhode Island, Philadelphia, New Providence, and Bermuda were also involved. Most ship owners were recorded as carrying out only a single voyage to the Spanish colonies, and this was especially true for non-Kingston traders. Two men, however, played a key role in wartime inter-imperial trade: Thomas Pitts and Edward Manning. Both had been former employees of the South Sea Company—Pitts as commander of one of the Company's sloops and Manning as one of the Company's agents in Jamaica—and used their prior connections to facilitate contraband trade.<sup>91</sup>

Edward Manning, in particular, achieved a dramatic increase in his fortunes during the war. 1739 had been a disastrous year for the twenty-eight year old merchant; the rupture with Spain had cost him his lucrative position with the South Sea Company, and he had been publicly humiliated when his wife, Elizabeth Moore, abandoned him. Manning was forced to petition the Assembly for a divorce, the only time such a request was made in any eighteenth-century British West Indian colony. He accused the planter and assemblymen Ballard Beckford of running away with his wife. After a raucous series of witnesses testified before the Assembly, an Act of

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<sup>90</sup> For additional accounts of convoys to illicit traders, see: Captain's log of *HMS Biddeford*, Adm 51/110; Captain's log of *HMS Enterprise*, Adm 51/319; Captain's log of *HMS Montague*, Adm 51/615; and Captain's log of *HMS Seahorse*, Adm 51/903, TNA.

<sup>91</sup> Pitts had apparently been involved in illegal activity during his time with the Company, as Don Tomás Gerardiño, the Spanish ambassador in London, had called for his dismissal for illegally transporting two Spaniards to Jamaica. Minutes of the South Sea Company Committee of Correspondence, September 30, 1735, Add Ms 2554, BL.



Divorce was voted and Beckford was expelled from the legislature. But the divorce was later rejected by the Privy Council for lacking clear proof of adultery.<sup>92</sup> Both Manning and his wife ignored the rejection, however, and Manning followed the common white Jamaican pattern of taking up residence with a free woman of color.<sup>93</sup>

Manning's luck improved considerably after 1739. Despite his dismissal from the South Sea Company, he never returned any of the Company's goods in his care, and he quickly ingratiated himself with Trelawney upon the Governor's arrival.<sup>94</sup> He was elected to the Assembly as Kingston's representative in 1744 and by the end of the conflict his firm, which he operated in partnership with Thomas Ord, was the largest merchant house on the island. Manning also managed to befriend Admiral Vernon who named him not only his prize agent, but also the executor of his will in case he were to die in the Caribbean.<sup>95</sup> All of these developments brought profit to Manning, but none were as profitable as the trade with the Spanish colonies. He developed a close relationship, if not outright partnership, with Thomas Pitts, perhaps stemming from their earlier employment in the South Sea Company, and together they dispatched at least forty-eight voyages to Spanish America between 1743 and 1748.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Manning's petition for divorce can be found in Minutes of the Assembly, April 13, 1739. Witnesses were examined and debates held on the bill on April 27, April 28, May 1, May 5, May 7, May 8, May 9 and May 12, 1739, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 3, 472-473 and 478-483. For the rejection of the Act, see Francis Fane to Board of Trade, May 12, 1740; and Order in Council, June 16, 1741, CO 137/23, TNA. See, also: Trevor Burnard, "A Matron in Rank, a Prostitute in Manners': The Manning Divorce of 1741 and Class, Gender, Race, and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa, and the African Diaspora* ed. Verene A. Shepard (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), 133-52.

The Privy Council frequently rejected divorce bills from the North American colonies for similar reasons, see: Nancy F. Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 33:4 (1976): 591.

<sup>93</sup> The woman, Elizabeth Pinnock, outlived Manning and he left her both property and slaves in his will. Will of Edward Manning December 22, 1756, T 1/368, TNA. Elizabeth Moore returned to England and her family. Edward Searle to Edward Manning, December 19, 1739, and June 9, 1740, MS 130, JNL.

<sup>94</sup> Pares, *War and Trade*, 121, fn. 2; and George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729-1783* (London: Longmans, 1965), 85.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Vernon to Messrs. Manning, John Merewether and Sickell, January 18, 1741/42, Adm 1/232; and Edward Manning to Sir Charles Wager, March 25, 1740, CO 137/56.

<sup>96</sup> Manning was recorded as the owner of fourteen voyages in the Naval Office Shipping List, while Pitts dispatched thirty-four. The close relationship between the two men can be inferred from two voyages in 1744 where

Many of Manning's and Pitts' voyages were traditional smuggling cruises. Others involved sailing under a flag of truce to Spanish ports, normally laden with prisoners to be exchanged but occasionally with letters between imperial officials. Such voyages were a normal and accepted practice of colonial officials in all Early Modern empires: for financially strained colonial administrations, it was far better to exchange prisoners than to maintain them. Furthermore, colonial governments bore no desire to pay the masters of vessels for the costs of such voyages. The normal practice was to allow the master to carry trade goods on board the vessel as recompense for their costs. Britain's North American colonies were notorious for such practices, at times carrying only one or two prisoners to justify their voyage or even "purchasing" French prisoners from nearby colonies to provide legal cover for the illicit trade to the French sugar islands.<sup>97</sup> Jamaicans also undertook such voyages to Spanish and French colonies, although they never approached the scale of their North American counterparts. As Jamaica's Governor acknowledged in 1746, his government had granted only twenty-two flags of truce during the war to exchange prisoners: five to Havana, two each to Cartagena and Saint Augustine, and one each to Campeche, Santiago de Cuba, Portobello, and Santa Martha. The remainder were issued for Leogane in Saint Domingue.<sup>98</sup>

The reasons for this small number are uncertain. Possibly the Royal Navy presence in the island and the consequent danger of loss of seamen to the press gang discouraged privateers from

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they were recorded as joint-owners of two different vessels dispatched to the Spanish colonies. Moreover, both men, along with Thomas Ord, were partners in the contract with Don Pedro de Estrada in 1745. See, Minutes of the Assembly, April 17, 1746, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 21.

<sup>97</sup> This discussion of the rationale and operation of flags of truce draws heavily on Pares, *War and Trade*, 447-55; and Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), chap. 6.

<sup>98</sup> "A list of vessels that have been commissioned by His Excellency to wear flags of truce," in Minutes of the Assembly, April 12, 1746, *Journal of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 20. The list records twenty vessels, though admits that prior to bonds of £1,500 being required of such vessels the records are incomplete. In an accompanying letter, Trelawney makes reference to an additional sloop being commissioned to sail to Santa Martha.

dispatching their prizes to Jamaica, thereby lowering the number available to exchange. Another possible reason emerges from the practice of sending Spanish and French prisoners to England as additional crewmen on merchant ships carrying sugar to Europe.<sup>99</sup> Jamaica's contraband trade to Spain's colonies may also have dampened enthusiasm for attempting to trade directly in enemy ports without the protection of the Royal Navy.

Such risks were exemplified by John Bell's ill-fated voyage to Santiago de Cuba in 1745. When Bell proposed the voyage in Jamaica, he was met with skepticism; but he entered into it regardless, sailing to Santiago with twenty-eight Spanish prisoners. Upon arrival, he claimed his water had become tainted and needed refilling before he could sail. An inspection by Spanish officials confirmed his claim and, furthermore, that the ship was in such bad condition it could not return to Jamaica without being careened. The vessel's cargo was unloaded and placed in warehouses, but during that process officials discovered a number of bundles of dry goods and excessive quantities of foodstuffs—possibly because Bell failed to offer a sufficient bribe.<sup>100</sup> Bell, his lieutenant, and an English merchant traveling with the vessel were interrogated on whether they had been warned against carrying additional cargo on their voyage. Charges were then brought against the three men and the cargo, crew (which included eleven slaves) and vessel were seized. Bell found himself joining the English prisoners waiting to be exchanged.<sup>101</sup>

Jamaicans were not alone in carrying on illicit trade under flags of truce; Cubans too sailed for British ports to exchange prisoners and trade. In early 1748, for example, two Havana

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<sup>99</sup> Mention of this practice can be found in Thomas Davers to Thomas Corbett, November 24, 1745, Adm 1/233.

<sup>100</sup> On other occasions vessels from Jamaica had been allowed to sell cargoes of foodstuffs in the city during Governor de la Vega's term, such as Abraham Pereira did when he travelled to Santiago bearing dispatches from Europe, and who de la Vega had allowed to sell his cargo. This suggests that Bell had failed to grease the correct palms sufficiently, or had in some other way failed to properly negotiate with Spanish officials. See, Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to the King, April 10, 1748, Santo Domingo, 366.

<sup>101</sup> Francisco Cajigal de la Vega to the King, February 28, 1746, Santo Domingo, 365; and Thomas Davers to Edward Trelawney, October 24, 1745, Adm 1/233.

merchants entered Santiago's harbor carrying a load of foodstuffs they had purchased in Jamaica during a prisoner exchange. The new Governor, Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno, allowed them to land their cargo and sail again to Jamaica with sixty English prisoners. But after they had departed, it was discovered that the goods in fact belonged not to the two *habaneros*, but to two Jamaican traders. Upon their return and subsequent arrest the pair confessed that they had been prisoners in Kingston and rather than be sent to London agreed to pretend the cargo of foodstuffs was theirs, oversee its sale in Santiago, and then remit the proceeds to Jamaica.<sup>102</sup>

More controversial to many Jamaican planters and naval commanders was trade with the French under flags of truce.<sup>103</sup> One such voyage was that of the sloop *Mayflower*, owned by Edward Manning. It reveals the highly organized and formal nature such trade could take. In July 1745, the Frenchman Joseph Derbet landed in Jamaica from a French flag-of-truce vessel carrying letters from the Governor of Saint Domingue to Trelawney and a license to trade from the Marquis de L'Arnage. While awaiting a response, Derbet formed a partnership with one Captain Grenou, a prisoner there, to purchase merchandise in Jamaica and load it onto a British vessel for transport to Leogane. The pair received permission from Trelawney and Admiral Thomas Davers, who had succeeded Ogle as commander of the Jamaican squadron. They then agreed with Edward Manning, James Ord, and Thomas Pitts as well as with the Jamaican Jewish

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<sup>102</sup> Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to the King, April 10, 1748, and Consulta de Consejo de Indias, October 3, 1748, Santo Domingo, 366.

<sup>103</sup> Although Jamaica's planters resented the flag-of-truce trade to Saint Domingue carried on by their fellow islanders, they were infuriated by that carried on by the mainland colonies. Commodore Charles Knowles railed in a 1748 letter about "the base and illegal trade" carried on by North American vessels with the French, noting that at the time of writing Saint Domingue had over forty vessels from the mainland colonies anchored there—each carrying only one to three prisoners—purchasing sugar and molasses they intended to smuggle into the mainland colonies under the pretense of it being from the British sugar islands. In an effort to curtail such abuses, Knowles wrote to the governor of Cap François proposing that no flags of truce should be admitted that carried fewer than forty prisoners. The French Governor, whose colony depended on supplies from North America, saw no reason to limit the trade. Charles Knowles to John Cleveland, April 6, 1748, and Charles Knowles to the Governor of Cap François, January 23, 1747/48, Adm 1/234, TNA.

merchant Aaron Barou Lousada to purchase dry goods worth nearly £6,500 sterling including claret, “brind, a French linen for clothing negroes,” shoes, handkerchiefs, calicoes, Holland cloth, candles, tallow, butter, and herrings. In return, they promised to ship their Kingston partners “good and merchantable indigo at four *rials* per pound.” The agreement for payment in indigo was crucial, for although sugar and molasses could not be imported from the French islands as being “contrary to the interests of Jamaica,” indigo, a key ingredient for the English cloth industry, was allowed.<sup>104</sup>

The *Mayflower* departed in late July, sailing to Leogane where it loaded a cargo of indigo, cotton, indigo seed, and at least five casks of sugar. On October 10, the sloop sailed for Kingston but a storm forced it into a bay on Jamaica’s northern coast. The supercargo then travelled overland to Kingston to request a naval escort around the island. The *Basilisk Bomb* was duly dispatched, but when the vessel reached the *Mayflower*, rather than assist her, it seized the vessel for illegally trading provisions with the enemy. A witness claimed the *Bomb’s* captain exclaimed that he wished he had taken them in the Bahamas for there “he should make no doubt of her being a prize, but there was too much law in Jamaica.”<sup>105</sup> Upon returning to Kingston, Davers attempted to have the *Mayflower* condemned, claiming that it had been seized for transporting canvas, tallow, and candles, which could be used for the fitting out of privateers, as well as butter, which was expressly forbidden to be exported due to its scarcity in Jamaica. When it became clear that no condemnation would issue from the island’s Vice-Admiralty Court, he released the vessel and blamed the *Bomb’s* commander. Davers claimed that he always intended

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<sup>104</sup> Deposition of Joseph Derbet; An Account of Cash lent and goods sold by Manning, Ord & Pitts to Derbet in July 1745; Account of cash lent and goods sold by Aaron Barou Lousada & Co to Messrs. Grenou in July 1745; Account of cash and orders paid by Aaron Barou Lousada on account of Messrs. Grenou and Sandour; and Obligation, July 17, 1745, Adm 1/233; the Petition of Edward Manning and others merchants in the town of Kingston, CO 140/31; and Pares, *War and Trade*, 417-418.

<sup>105</sup> Deposition of David Shaughnessy, November 7, 1745; and Deposition of John Spencer, Adm 1/233.

to release the *Mayflower*, having seized her purely “to show [his] dislike of an underhand commerce” and to serve as a warning to those involved in it.<sup>106</sup> The Admiral’s critics disagreed. Claiming that Davers had agreed to the *Mayflower*’s voyage because it would raise the price of prize goods sold in the island, and then attempted to seize her on her return to “make a double advantage.”<sup>107</sup>

### **Contracting with the Enemy**

While a revealing anecdote about the workings of the flag-of-truce trade and the tensions that emerged from it, the true importance of the *Mayflower*’s voyage is that it helped spark a controversy that came close to unraveling the third, and most revolutionary, avenue of commerce connecting Jamaica and Spanish America: the Royal Havana Company’s decision to approach the Kingston merchant community to supply it with slaves and other goods. Although nearly derailed by political factionalism and commercial rivalry in Jamaica, the contract forged between the Company’s representative and Edward Manning was the most significant innovation in Anglo-Spanish trade arising from the War of Jenkins’ Ear, presaging a major shift in the nature of illicit trade. With the Havana Company’s success as a model, in the years following the war, Spanish-American merchants would increasingly travel to Jamaica themselves to trade rather than rely on the uncertain arrival of a smuggler on the horizon.

Facing growing shortages in Cuba, the Royal Havana Company’s Cuban directors, which included Governor Horcasitas, decided in the summer of 1745 to approach their nation’s enemies

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Davers to Edward Trelawney, October 24, 1745; and Davers to Thomas Corbett, December 4, 1745, Adm 1/233.

<sup>107</sup> James Smith, *A letter from a friend at J-- , to a friend in London: giving an impartial account of the violent proceedings of the faction in that island* (London: John Creole, 1747), 15. Davers was notorious for his habit of seizing any vessel he could conceivably term a prize; in 1746 he had been reprimanded by the Admiralty for seizing several neutral Dutch ships. Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights*, 72.

to provide the goods their own could not. They chose one of their own members, Don Pedro de Estrada, to negotiate with Kingston's merchants. Estrada was an obvious choice for the assignment. Born in France, he had married a Spaniard and been naturalized. He had lived in Havana since the 1730s, working as a ship's captain, privateer, and merchant. Estrada had also done business with the English, both through the South Sea Company's factory in Havana and when travelling to Georgia to negotiate a prisoner exchange during the war.<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, he was already in Jamaica.

Estrada had travelled there the previous year via a flag-of-truce sent from Havana to the Bahamas, "where he frankly confessed that his real business was to treat with the merchants of [Kingston] touching the ransom of prize goods" that he planned to ship to Veracruz. Estrada hoped to purchase two items that New Spain desperately needed: quicksilver (mercury) for use in the silver mines and "papal bulls" for the remission of sins. "To manifest [his] inclination for maintaining a good correspondence with the Spanish nation in all things relating to commerce," Trelawney gave Estrada permission to live in Jamaica under the care of Trelawney's friend (and some claimed business partner) Manning and treat for the captured goods with any merchant. What made Estrada especially worth cultivating was the fact that, contraband trade to Panama and New Granada had temporarily "come to almost nothing," and he would pay in "hard dollars" for the goods.<sup>109</sup>

The scheme ultimately came to nothing when the Viceroy of Mexico refused entry to the Jamaican vessel Estrada hired to transport the ransomed goods. Estrada had returned to Kingston to settle accounts with Manning and his partners when the orders from Havana arrived on a ship

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<sup>108</sup> James Comerford to Wargent Nicholson, July 7, 1752, C 111/200, TNA; and "Testimony of Don Pedro de Estrada," in Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, in *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 30.

<sup>109</sup> Edward Trelawney to Duke of Newcastle, August 16, 1745, and Copy of Mr. Trelawney's license of commerce to Don Pedro de Estrada, 1745, CO 137/57, TNA.

carrying a letter from the Governor of that city to Trelawney in the fall of 1745. According to his instructions, Estrada was to arrange for the purchase of “2,000 negroes, flour, rice, hams, sheet lead, tin, pictures, linseed oil, window glasses, cordage, sailcloth, several sorts of merchandise & other effects, as household furniture, diamond sets, looking glasses and other small things.” He was also sent blank passports granting safe passage to British vessels transporting the goods to Havana. Furthermore, the proposed contract had the promise of being carried on even after the war’s end.<sup>110</sup> Governor Trelawney confessed that it was “a delicate part of my duty that of allowing [such a] trade with the enemy...yet it seems to be His Majesty’s intentions (as far as we can presume to collect from the Declaration of War) that His subjects should be allowed liberty to trade in things not contraband.”<sup>111</sup> For confirmation of his view, and political cover, Trelawney ordered that Estrada and Manning meet with Admiral Davers to receive his acquiescence to the proposed contract. Despite his recent clash with Manning over the *Mayflower* Davers responded politely, stating that he thought the sailcloth and cordage should be forbidden, as it could be used to outfit warships, but, as for the rest, as long as Jamaica was experiencing no shortage of foodstuffs he had no objections.<sup>112</sup>

But even as Estrada was finalizing the contract with the firm of Manning and Ord, the endeavor became entangled in the byzantine factional struggles of Jamaican politics. At the same time that Manning was seeking Davers’ approval for Estrada’s scheme, he was also circulating a petition in Kingston to be sent to Trelawney to forward to the King. Eventually signed by fifty-one traders, it condemned Davers on three counts. First was the seizure, even temporarily, of the

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<sup>110</sup> Don Pedro de Estrada’s report on the trade he is commissioned on, 1745, CO 137/57.

<sup>111</sup> Edward Trelawney to the Duke of Newcastle, November 15, 1745, CO 137/57.

<sup>112</sup> Edward Manning, John Ord, and Thomas Pitts to Admiral Davers, n.d.; Davers to Manning, Ord, and Pitts, November 14, 1745; and Davers to Edward Trelawney, November 10, 1745, in *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 20.



*Mayflower* for reasons the petitioners claimed to not understand; it argued that if the goods carried outward were contraband it was not Manning or the other owners' faults, as they had been "only furnishing the money" and there was nothing on the return voyage "but what was enterable," conveniently forgetting the casks of sugar. Uncertainty as to the reasons for the seizure, they claimed, greatly dampened all trade in the island. Secondly, the petitioners complained that the seizure was all the more injurious due to the "heavy tax" Davers imposed on traders to Spanish America by demanding "five per cent on the sales of cargoes" "taken without the knowledge of His Majesty." And third they protested his habit of pressing men out of smuggling vessels. This last was all the more onerous due to the difficulty traders had in manning their ships with sufficient crew for protection when the navy's own shortage of vessels prevented a convoy from sailing. Two of Manning's own smuggling sloops had recently had four men taken out of each, including the pilot Ignacio Clara (whose career was discussed in Chapter Two), without whom the voyage could not proceed "from their being ignorant of the creek they were to go up" on Cuba's south coast.<sup>113</sup>

A furious Davers defended himself in a letter to London, refuting each point in detail. It was obvious, he argued, that Manning and "the Jews" knew of the butter exported in the *Mayflower* "contrary to the Governor's express prohibition." In Davers' view, "the point in contest [was], whether the petitioners & their adherents shall carry on a trade with the French colonies & furnish them with provisions & stores to distress this island and enable them to fit out privateers to prey upon the fair trade". He rebutted Jamaica's Attorney General's arguments which put "the French and Spanish trade on the same footing," arguing the former trade should be disallowed completely. The seizure, he averred, had been intended merely as a warning; if the

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<sup>113</sup> The Petition of Edward Manning and Other Merchants in the Town of Kingston, 1745, CO 140/31; and Thomas Smith, *A Letter from a Friend at J\_\_\_\_\_* (London: 1747), 21.

owners had come to him privately, he would have dealt with them with “tenderness.” He dismissed Manning’s complaints about the five per cent as the traditional custom of his predecessors, claiming that Manning’s anger actually stemmed from Davers’ refusal to grant a convoy only to Manning’s own vessels. As to the pressed men, they were all deserters; anyway, there had only been five.<sup>114</sup>

Not one to let Manning’s petition go unanswered, Davers also circulated his own petition, signed by fifty-two men, including five who had previously signed Manning’s petition. Many signed under pressure from Davers who controlled the contracts to supply the navy. The first to sign, tellingly were Alexander MacFarlane, Davers’ prize agent and fierce rival to Manning in the Spanish trade, and John Gray, the victualling agent. While one of those who recanted attaching their name to Manning’s petition later admitted he had done so only upon being promised his sloop would be hired to carry provisions for the navy if he supported the Admiral. Others were small traders, who feared an engrossment of the Spanish trade by Manning through private convoys or a legal trade to Havana.<sup>115</sup> Davers’ counter-petition praised the Admiral’s care in protecting Jamaica’s trade and condemned Manning’s petition as written “more to gratify their private resentments for your justly disappointing them of their selfish views and monopolies than from a principle of public good.”<sup>116</sup> A friend of Manning’s, Trelawney was dragged inextricably into the dispute.

Into this rift were also drawn the leading opponents of Trelawney in the island’s Assembly and judiciary: the planter Rose Fuller, Chief Justice John Guy, the Irish lawyer

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<sup>114</sup> Thomas Davers to Thomas Corbett, December 4, 1745; and Davers to Edward Trelawney, October 24, 1745, Adm 1/233.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Pares suggested that Davers tended to take the side of the small merchants against Manning and Ord who were favorites of Trelawney. *War and Trade*, 122-123.

<sup>116</sup> Merchants of Kingston to Admiral Thomas Davers, November 23, 1745, Adm 1/233; and Smith, *A Letter from a Friend*, 22.

Andrew Arcedeckne, and his fellow Irishman Dennis Kelly. While the four men all despised one another, they loathed Trelawney and the loss of their political power under his administration even more.<sup>117</sup> Kelly was a longstanding friend of Davers and approached him to denounce Estrada as a Spanish spy. As Estrada was in Jamaica under Trelawney's personal protection, such an accusation would be a powerful tool against the Governor. At the same time, in another petition to Trelawney and the Council in December 1745 Manning along with forty-nine other signatories, including thirty-seven from the initial petition, warned of the "Panegyric Address" circulated by Davers and his new allies and the accusations it made regarding Estrada's mission. Along with the petition came a letter from Estrada claiming that "the principal promoters of this Address," Alexander MacFarlane and the firm of Thomas Hibbert & William Tongue, "endeavored (but without effect) to establish a contract" with Estrada after he sought additional proposals for the trade following a disagreement with Manning a mere four days before Davers' address appeared. If they truly suspected him of spying, Estrada claimed, why would they have attempted to enter into business with him?<sup>118</sup>

There the matter stayed until the sitting of a new Assembly in the spring of 1746, by which time Manning had already dispatched at least three vessels to Cuba carrying over five hundred captives.<sup>119</sup> The opposition, which now styled itself the "Admiral's Party," attempted to have Arcedeckne elected Speaker. Charles Price, a supporter of Trelawney, was chosen instead. A vote of thanks was passed for Davers' service in "protecting the sea coast," primarily out of

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<sup>117</sup> Metcalf's *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica*, chap. 4, is an invaluable guide to the personalities and shifting political loyalties in Jamaica during this period.

<sup>118</sup> Petition of the principal Merchants and Traders in Kingston presented to his Excellency and the Council, December 2, 1745; and Pedro de Estrada to James Ord, December 5, 1745, CO 140/31.

<sup>119</sup> These voyages were the sloop *Peachy*, Thomas Hyndman master, which made two voyages in December 1745 and March 1746 carrying a hundred and sixty captives on each voyage and the *Diamond*, Thomas Thresher master, which sailed in January with two hundred slaves. *Naval Office Shipping Lists for Jamaica, 1683-1818*.

concern he would take a “revengeful neglect” in providing convoys if it did not. But the curtness of the letter did little to appease the Admiral, especially after the House adopted Manning’s proposal to fit out a vessel to guard Jamaica’s coast.<sup>120</sup> The opposition struck on April 11, when the majority of the government’s supporters were absent from the House. Fuller arose and whispered into Chief Justice Guy’s ear. Guy immediately stood and proposed that Estrada, “being suspected of giving intelligence to our enemies, and...concerned in several Spanish privateers,” be arrested and interrogated. Fuller warmly seconded the motion. But the Governor’s party managed to have debate adjourned until April 17.

On that day, rival motions were presented. Davers’ allies proposed demanding of Trelawney why he had allowed Estrada to stay on the island even after intelligence had been received of his being a spy, while the Governor’s supporters proposed merely inquiring of Trelawney whether he had received any such intelligence. After a spirited debate, during which Manning presented a number of documents regarding Estrada’s mission and Trelawney’s and Davers’ approval of the proposed contract, the issue was carried in favor of the latter, along with a request that the Governor order Estrada to appear before the House.<sup>121</sup>

On Saturday April 19 there occurred the culmination of the plotters’ scheme. Davers came to Spanish Town for the first time in over a year, sitting outside the doors of the Assembly in his “chariot” and glaring threateningly at every representative who entered. The session opened with Manning and Ord “voluntarily” swearing that they “had never been involved in importing any French sugars” since the war began, a clear lie but one that was accepted by the

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<sup>120</sup> Smith, *A Letter from a Friend*, 29-30; and Minutes of the Assembly, April 4, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 14.

<sup>121</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, April 11 and April 17, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 15 and 20. A good overview of the drama in the Assembly can be found in Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica*, 95-100.

Assembly which resolved that claims to the contrary were “malicious and false.” Chief Justice Guy then presented his key witness: Ignacio Clara, a major middleman for inter-imperial trade on Cuba’s southern coast.

The previous September, Clara along with Joseph Urbano and one “Blanco alias White,” decided to travel to Jamaica and offer their services as pilots to smuggling vessels. Clara was hired by Manning as a pilot for the two trading sloops that Davers had then stopped, and was one of the crewmen pressed out of them and imprisoned aboard the Admiral’s flagship for the last seven months.<sup>122</sup> Clara’s written testimony stating that while in Cuba he had seen correspondence between Estrada and the captains of Spanish privateers was presented to the Assembly. When asked to confirm its truth, however, Clara “declared on oath, that the answers were false, and were extorted from him, and that he made the same in hopes of procuring his liberty, which was promised him by the admiral in case he informed against Don Pedro.” The statement threw the House into an uproar. While Fuller and his co-conspirators attempted to postpone the examination, other members were eager to continue. Clara testified that Davers repeatedly beat him and threatened to hang him unless he testified against Estrada, forcing Clara to sign the answers the Admiral had written himself. Clara wept on his knees before the Speaker, begging not to be sent back to the Admiral. The opposition frantically attempted to cast Clara as a traitor, claiming he was an Englishman by birth, had served in Spanish galleys, and guided privateers to where English traders were anchored on the Cuban coast. But the damage was done.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Memorandum in relation to four Spaniards brought in by Stewart, September 1745; Mr. Reed’s Declaration; Examinations of Capt. R. Chadwick, J. Horton, Capt. William Smee, Aaron Touro, Edward Ellis, Abraham Pereira Mesquita, and Joseph Ciberon, in Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 30-32.

<sup>123</sup> Minutes of the Assembly, April 19 and 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 25-37.

Although Clara's testimony was ultimately dismissed, the opposition was still able to force Estrada to be examined by the House. There Estrada confessed to having commanded a privateer off Florida earlier in the war, but claimed that when he left for Jamaica nearly two years earlier he had "left her a trading." Fuller and his allies sought to paint Estrada as having provided information to the *Golga*, a privateer built and commissioned by the Havana Company, which had seized five Jamaican smuggling vessels off Panama the previous summer. However, the testimony of two traders who had been captured that day and since escaped from Cuba demonstrated that the Spaniards' stumbled across the trading flotilla by chance.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, other sympathetic merchants testified that Estrada's enterprise had opened a new avenue of trade to Havana where none had existed before and that the contract had not harmed the illicit trade to the southern coast of Cuba for, "within twelve months last, there has been a greater demand among the Spaniards in general, for negroes, than there was before."<sup>125</sup> With the collapse of the prosecution's key witness and the wealth of supportive testimony the opposition was routed. Governor Trelawney's allies were easily able to pass a unanimous resolution vindicating Estrada and his Jamaican partners, and even sent an Address of Thanks to the Governor "for promoting a trade so beneficial to the island."<sup>126</sup>

The victory was complete for Trelawney, Manning and Estrada. Trelawney was able to remove John Guy and Rose Fuller from the judiciary while Davers' died of yellow fever in September, breaking the back of both internal and external opposition to the Governor's

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<sup>124</sup> Examinations of Antonio de Costa Bared, Joseph Polander, and Aaron Barou Lousada, in Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 32-35.

<sup>125</sup> Examinations of Robert Sterling and Joseph Polander, in Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 33

<sup>126</sup> The House also resolved that £100 should be paid to the clerk and £50 to the messenger for the "extraordinary trouble" they had been to contacting witnesses and recording testimony for that session. Minutes of the Assembly, April 26, 1746, *Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, vol. 4, 37.

administration.<sup>127</sup> At the same time, the contract between enemies was highly successful. Over the next two years, Manning dispatched over thirty-seven hundred slaves to Havana and a similar number of barrels of flour as well as dry goods to Cuba.<sup>128</sup> The profitability of the contract to Manning is uncertain, however. Although Manning in a letter wrote that the Company paid for the slaves in "heavy dollars", the great London sugar factors Henry Lascelles and George Maxwell, who did not look kindly on the doings of the Havana Company or its creditworthiness, later advised one correspondent to avoid the Company for "Manning and Ord have introduced many negroes into the Havana, where we are informed, a huge balance is due to them, and although Manning has often gone there since the peace, he has not been able to recover the payment."<sup>129</sup> The trade was certainly profitable for the Cuban Directors of the Havana Company, who made a profit of over 400,000 pesos (£90,000 sterling) on the sale of African captives to their fellow colonists between 1740 and 1752.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, even if the Company was slow in paying its debts, the contract was most likely profitable for Manning. Otherwise, it is hard to credit his decision to sign a new contract with the Havana Company in the 1750s.

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<sup>127</sup> Minutes of Council, May 14, 1746, enclosed with Edward Trelawney to Board of Trade, May 15, 1746, CO 137/24. See also Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica*, 97-98.

<sup>128</sup> The contract expired in August 1747, and was not renewed until after the peace. Edward Manning to the Court of Directors, October 4, 1748, William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, CL.

<sup>129</sup> Henry Lascelles and George Maxwell to Dominick Lynch, January 10, 1753, quoted in Pares, *War and Trade*, 123. For accounts of the firm and its importance in the London-West Indian trade, see: Richard Pares, "The London Sugar Market, 1740-1769," *Economic History Review*, 9:2 (1956), 254-70 and Pares, "A London West-India Merchant House, 1740-1769," in Richard Pares and A.J.P. Taylor eds., *Essays Presented to Sir Lewis Namier* (London: Macmillan, 1956), 75-107.

<sup>130</sup> The Company paid 718,000 pesos (£161,550 sterling) for slaves in that period, and sold them for 1,111,000 pesos (£250,000 sterling). Montserrat Garate Ojanguren, *Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración: La Real Compañía de la Habana* (San Sebastian: Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del Pais, 1993), 109.

## Conclusion

Estrada's mission to Jamaica and the War of Jenkins' Ear together inaugurated a fundamental shift in the nature of Anglo-Spanish trade in the West Indies. This was part of a larger transformation that reshaped both Jamaica and Cuba between 1739 and 1748 as the sugar economy dramatically expanded in both colonies.

The outbreak of war coincided with a protracted period of rising sugar prices in Britain and Europe stimulated by a rising consumer demand.<sup>131</sup> Spurred on by this price increase, and by the peace treaty concluded between Trelawney and the Maroons in 1739 which opened the interior and northern parts of the island to settlement in relative safety, the war years witnessed a dramatic expansion of Jamaica's sugar industry. In 1740, the island produced approximately 538,000 pounds of sugar. Despite the disruptions of wartime, such as the loss of nearly two-thirds of the Jamaican sugar fleet in 1745, Jamaica's sugar fields produced some 696,000 pounds of muscovado sugar by 1750.<sup>132</sup> In 1737, Jamaica possessed 428 sugar plantations; by 1768 the island had 648. By then the plantations were also larger, producing nearly 1,800 hundredweight in muscovado sugar each as opposed to only 1,100 hundredweight produced on average in the 1730s.<sup>133</sup> The great Jamaican sugar boom began during the war. By 1756 as the naturalist Patrick Browne noted, the island was "not only the richest, but the most considerable colony at this time under the government of Great Britain."<sup>134</sup> This massive expansion in the colony's

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<sup>131</sup> Between 1734 and 1738 the price of muscovado sugar fluctuated between 19s and 24s 9d per hundredweight, while in the postwar period 1749 to 1755 sugar price ranged from 27s 9½d to 38s 7¾d or forty-six percent above prices in the 1730s. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, 417.

<sup>132</sup> These values are taken from: McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 152.

<sup>133</sup> Account of Sugar Plantations in Jamaica, 1739, Add Ms 12434, BL. McCusker persuasively argues that Edward Long in his notes misdated the census he took the date from and that the correct date is 1737, *Rum and the American Revolution* vol. 1, 145. The data on sugar production in 1768 is found in McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution*, vol. 1, 145 and 149.

<sup>134</sup> Patrick Browne, as quoted in Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 9.



economic fortunes had a dark side, however. In the six decades following 1740 over six hundred thousand Africans would be forcibly landed in Jamaica to fulfill the planters' insatiable demand for labor.<sup>135</sup>

Although Cuba did not experience the same prosperity that Jamaica did during the war, the 1740s were equally transformative. The Royal Havana Company was a revolutionary institution. Its formation was proposed by Havana's elite and one of their own Martín de Aróstegui y Larrea was named its president. Cubans owned half the stock in the Company and governed much of its daily operations. This relatively novel arrangement between the Spanish Crown and Havana's *cabildo*, or town council, demonstrated the rising confidence of the city's elites and Madrid's willingness to incorporate them into decision-making regarding imperial policy—a theme that would only accelerate over the second half of the century.<sup>136</sup> The 1740s also witnessed the acceleration of efforts to foster a full-blown sugar industry in the island. Convinced that it was impossible to prevent the illicit sale of tobacco, efforts were made by imperial authorities to limit production of the leaf, while sugar was incentivized by a royal *cedula* in 1740 that relieved Cuban sugar of all import duties in Spain.<sup>137</sup> Although the war limited exports to Europe, Havana was beginning to experience a sugar boom by 1749. In that year, sixty-two *ingenios*, the mills required for processing sugarcane, stood outside Havana and another twenty-one were under construction.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Calculations made from *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <http://www.slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates> (March 5, 2016).

<sup>136</sup> The role of Havana's elites in forming imperial policy has been primarily studied in the period following the city's 1762 occupation by the British, see: Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); and Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>137</sup> *Copia de la Real Cédula de Su Majestad expedida para que en la ciudad de San Cristóbal de la Habana se forme una compañía* (Madrid, 1740), articles 34–35. Cuban hides were also granted the same exemption.

<sup>138</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 164.

The war also created new opportunities that upended the commercial world uniting the Anglo-Spanish Caribbean. Although “traditional” smuggling in which Anglo-American vessels sailed to Spanish-American coasts to trade had always been present, the South Sea Company’s *asiento* had provided an equally important avenue of exchange for the previous three decades. With the outbreak of the war, that channel of commerce was extinguished. War breathed new life into illicit trade, as seen in the flowering of voyages from Jamaica. But the transnational networks created under the *asiento* remained. Nearly three decades of extensive, direct, and peaceful trade had created strong bonds of trust between traders in Spanish America and Company employees. Thus, when the Royal Havana Company’s directors made the bold decision to turn to foreigners to supply their island with goods and slaves, it was natural they would contact the merchant who had done so for years—Edward Manning. The successful negotiation and fulfillment of a contract between warring nations stands as a testimony, not only of the strength of the inter-imperial relationship, but also of both Cubans’ and Manning’s ability to outmaneuver rivals and convince imperial officials to open trade with the enemy. And with their success, other Spanish colonists soon followed in Pedro de Estrada’s footsteps. Manning’s rival Alexander MacFarlane soon signed his own contract to supply Cartagena and Panama with captive Africans. Though Manning would later force MacFarlane to include him in the arrangement.<sup>139</sup>

Estrada’s mission was, thus, but a precursor to a major shift in the workings of illicit trade. Spanish colonial merchants increasingly travelled to British ports to negotiate for dry goods, foodstuffs, and African captives with their British counterparts, and then transported them

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<sup>139</sup> Edward Manning to the Court of Directors, October 4, 1748, Shelburne Papers vol. 44; and Francis Bright to Henry Bright, April 7, 1746, in Kenneth Morgan, ed., *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol-West India Connection, 1732-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 199.

back to Spanish territory in their own vessels. This pattern only accelerated with the return of peace in 1748. Cubans, due to their proximity to Jamaica, were among the most eager adopters of this practice, especially as the development of sugar plantations on Jamaica's northern coast led to the development of ports easily accessible in a single day's sail.

This shifting commercial pattern also altered Spain's anti-contraband efforts. As the trade between Cuba and Jamaica was increasingly carried on by Cubans in Cuban vessels the seizures of British vessels by *guardacostas* declined dramatically, although they did continue. Moreover, those that were seized elicited little outrage from either the British public or officials, who were eager to keep Spain from intervening in the developing clash with France. Thus, although the War of Jenkins' Ear failed to seize major Spanish colonies or throw Spanish America open freely to British traders, as was loudly predicted in 1739, the conflict that began over Spanish depredations and extra-judicial violence, did, at least, succeed in beginning to finally bring peace "beyond the line."

## Chapter 6

### The Continuing Revolution in Inter-Imperial Trade, 1748-1762

Shortly after the news of the signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle arrived in Jamaica in October 1748, Kingston merchant Edward Manning drafted a fawning letter to his former employers in the South Sea Company. Since being dismissed in 1739, Manning had actively avoided the Company's Court of Directors. He had refused to answer their letters, and adamantly rejected returning the goods, slaves, and even accounts belonging to the Company in his possession. With the uncertainty regarding what the peace would mean for Anglo-Spanish trade, however, Manning was eager to return to the Company's good graces in case its *asiento* was reopened. Hence the letter, sent along with what Manning claimed was a complete set of the Company's Jamaican records.

To further ingratiate himself—and to demonstrate his value as a potential agent in a reopened *asiento*—Manning also gave a detailed report on Jamaica's trade with Spanish America over the preceding years. Manning explained how he “had the contracts (jointly with other merchants of this place) during the war for the supply of negroes to Portobello, Cartagena, & the Havana,” sending the Spanish “Angola & Calabar Negroes without a mixture of the Gold Coast.” On the mainland, Don Joseph Ruiz de Noriega of Cartagena had contracted with Manning and Alexander MacFarlane for five thousand slaves to be delivered to Panama, and Cartagena. But, by 1748, the Jamaicans had only delivered nineteen hundred. Simultaneously, Manning's firm had provided captive Africans to the Royal Havana Company, though that contract had expired in August 1747. Nevertheless, under it, Manning's firm had had forcibly transported over thirty-

seven hundred captives to Cuba. As an enticement to the Directors to reopen their slave trade, he claimed that “not a negro has been introduced since, except as prize” and, as a result, Cubans were “now in great want & are daily wishing for the reestablishment of the *asiento*.”<sup>1</sup>

Manning’s attempts to return to the Directors’ good graces were wasted effort. Neither the South Sea Company’s shareholders nor Spanish ministers had any intention of reopening the Company’s *asiento*. The regional transnational economy of the Caribbean would not return to its pre-war form. Building on the changes inaugurated during the War of Jenkins’ Ear, all three of its pillars—the slave trade, smuggling, and privateering—were transformed in the years following 1748. Together, these concomitant revolutions not only brought British and Spanish America closer than ever before, but also succeeded in drastically decreasing the amount of violence that had marked the two empires’ relationship for the previous two hundred years.

The first pillar of transformation concerned the slave trade to Spanish America. Spain’s new monarch, Ferdinand VI, and his ministers were determined never again to grant foreigners a monopoly of the slave trade to all its American territories. Instead, for the next two decades it would continue the policy inaugurated during the war of granting local *asientos* to prominent Spanish-Americans to provide their colonies with African captives. Yet Spain still lacked a trans-Atlantic slave trade of its own, and those *asentistas* in Cartagena, Havana, and elsewhere were forced, once again, to turn to foreigners. And considering the Spanish Crown’s open hostility to the Dutch and the failures of the French slave trade to supply even their own colonies, *asentistas* were compelled to sub-contract with their Anglo-American neighbors in Jamaica. At the center

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Manning to Court of Directors, October 4, 1748, in William Petty, 1st Marquis of Lansdowne, 2nd Earl of Shelburne Papers, vol. 44, CL.

For complaints from the Company regarding Manning’s refusal to return its property, see: W.S. to George Arnold and Mr. Truman, November 28, 1745; W.S. to Robert Manning and William Bury, November 28, 1745; and W.S. to Messrs. Drake and Long, September 28 and November 3, 1748, Add Ms 25558, BL.

of this was Edward Manning who became the figure at the center of the Anglo-Spanish slave trade.

The second element of the post-war period transformation in Anglo-Spanish trade occurred in the realm of smuggling. The explosive expansion of sugar production in Jamaica that had begun during the war only picked up speed following the peace. This spread sugar cultivation into new areas of the island, particularly in the north and west, which, in turn, spurred the emergence of a number of new ports in those regions: Savannah-la-Mar, Montego Bay, Lucea, and Port Antonio. These harbors were far easier for Spanish-Americans—and especially Cubans—to travel to than Kingston. Taking advantage of this, beginning around 1750, Spanish colonists “brought money and mules into almost every port round the island [of Jamaica]” to trade for slaves and European goods, rather than merely wait the arrival of foreign vessels off their coasts.<sup>2</sup> The growing trade with Spanish America proved a boon to the plantations these outports serviced, but also provided unprecedented opportunities for slaves to escape their bondage. However, the very success of the outports in the sugar and Spanish trades sparked the jealousy and resentment of the Kingston merchants who had previously dominated the island’s trade. Their efforts to reclaim their predominance in 1754 would nearly tear the island’s white society apart.

These two changes in the organization of Anglo-Spanish commerce—Edward Manning’s slave trading contracts and the rise of Jamaica’s outports—had the unanticipated effect of dramatically decreasing the number of “depredations” committed by *guardacostas*. For although Anglo-Americans (and the French and Dutch as well) continued to travel to Spanish-American coasts to trade, the fact that an ever-increasing amount of inter-imperial trade was being carried

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<sup>2</sup> “Mr. Kerr’s Reasons for opening the port of Lucea, under restrictions, in preference to Montego Bay answered with observations thereon,” 1765, WWM/R/35/24, SCL.

on in Spanish bottoms meant that *guardacostas* increasingly targeted their fellow countrymen rather than foreigners. Considering their crews often hailed from those same communities, they had little incentive to pursue their prey with much vigor. The drop in seizures was further prompted by Spanish Ministers led by José de Carvajal y Lancaster and his successor Ricardo Wall y Devereux who exhibited what the historian Jean McLachlan has described as “a new spirit of friendship for England.”<sup>3</sup> Both ministers hoped that, by effectively winking at one nation’s illicit trade, Spain could use that nation as an ally against the smugglers of other nations. Considering Britain’s maritime strength, and the sense of betrayal felt in the Spanish Court over France’s separate peace negotiations at Aix-la-Chapelle, the decision to favor Britain was made. The result was a decade-long decrease in tensions between the two powers, even as the globe-spanning conflict between Britain and France reignited.

### **The New *Asientos***

Nothing outwardly seemed to have changed for either the British or Spanish in the Americas under the terms of the 1748 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Apart from conceding that the South Sea Company’s *asiento* had a further four years to run due to the disruption of the war, it touched on none of the issues that had so bedeviled British and Spanish policymakers in the 1730s. Nothing was said about freedom of navigation, *rumbos sospechosos*, or the “right of search.”<sup>4</sup> But a great deal had in fact changed in the preceding decade of war. One such change

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<sup>3</sup> Jean O. McLachlan, “The Seven Years’ Peace, and the West Indian Policy of Carvajal and Wall,” *The English Historical Review* 53:211 (1938), 457.

<sup>4</sup> *The definitive treaty of Christian, universal and perpetual peace, friendship and union, concluded at Aix-la-Chapelle, on the 7/18th of October, 1748. Between the crowns of Great-Britain and France, and the states general of the United Provinces; and afterwards acceded to by the powers interested in the war* (Boston: Reprinted by J. Bushell and J. Green for D. Gookin in Marlborough-Street, 1740). For accounts of the negotiation of the Treaty, see: Matthew Smith Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (New York: Longman, 1995), chap. 9; McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain*, 132-136; and Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), 517-33.

was the end of the great treasure fleets. For, although the *flotas* to Veracruz were eventually reestablished, the galleon fleets that had supplied South America for two centuries never resumed. The *registro* system of individual ships sailing on their own times would continue to supply both the southern continent and Spain's West Indian colonies.<sup>5</sup>

Another transformation concerned the slave trade to Spanish America. Although the sixteenth article of the peace treaty confirmed that the South Sea Company could enjoy the final four years of the *asiento* it had lost as a result of the war, the Company's shareholders had no real interest in reopening the unprofitable slave trade.<sup>6</sup> They were eager, however, to revive their claims against the Spanish Crown for the Company's goods seized in 1718, 1727, and 1739 in a naked quest for a payoff. And in 1750 they succeeded, settling their claims for £100,000 sterling (less than a third of what they had demanded in 1739). In return, the Company renounced all claims to the *asiento*.<sup>7</sup> Both parties left the agreement satisfied.

Spanish reformers were thrilled to rid themselves of the foreign company. Yet, conscious of the fact that no Spanish merchant firm could hope to supply slaves to all of Spain's vast American territories, ministers were forced to find a new approach to the problem of supplying their colonies with captive labor. Expanding the system begun during the war, they chose to grant *asientos* to Spanish colonists to supply captive Africans to their respective *audiencias*.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For debates over the continuation of these reforms in Spanish government circles, see: Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien, *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chap. 6; Adrian Pearce, *The Origins of Bourbon Reform in Spanish South America, 1700-1763* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), chap. 6; and Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), chaps. 6 and 8.

<sup>6</sup> Article 16, *The definitive treaty of Christian, universal and perpetual peace, friendship and union, concluded at Aix-la-Chapelle*, 1748.

<sup>7</sup> Jean O. McLachlan, *Trade and Peace with Old Spain, 1667-1750: A Study of the Influence of Commerce on Anglo-Spanish Diplomacy* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940), 137-39.

<sup>8</sup> James Ferguson King, "Evolution of the Free Slave Trade Principle in Spanish Colonial Administration," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 22:1 (1942): 35; and David Marley ed., *Reales Asientos y licencias para la introducción de esclavos negros a la América Española (1676-1789)* (Mexico: Rolston-Bain, 1985), Documento Número VII.



Thanks to its royal monopoly, in Cuba these *asientos* continued to be awarded to the Real Compañía de la Habana.<sup>9</sup> These *asentistas*, in turn, promptly turned to foreign merchants to provide the captives demanded by their *asientos*. The most practical foreign colony to sub-contract with was Jamaica, a hub of the slave trade and long-experienced with trading to Spanish colonies. More specifically, they turned to the Jamaican who had already successfully completed several such contracts: Edward Manning. Between 1748 and his death in 1756, Manning signed three contracts to supply Cuba with captives, and delivered as many as eight thousand Africans to the island. His vessels provided Cubans not only with captive labor, but also with foodstuffs and other goods. In return, Manning received silver and the opportunity to forge lucrative private agreements throughout the Spanish Caribbean.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Montserrat Garate Ojanguren, *Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración: La Real Compañía de la Habana* (San Sebastian: Real Sociedad Vascongada de los Amigos del País, 1993), 107-111.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to the *asiento* to supply Cuba with slaves, Manning, along with the Jewish merchants David and Jacob Bravo, held the *asiento* to supply Cartagena with captive Africans in the same period. For details of this contract, see the cases of the *Isabella*, Joseph de Micolta master, 1762, HCA 42/76, TNA; and *Nuestra Señora del Carmen y las Animas*, Joseph Rapalino master, 1762, HCA 42/83, TNA.



**Figure 16**  
Edward Manning Funeral Mounment  
Kingston Parish Church, Kingston, Jamaica  
(Author's Photograph)

Manning likely negotiated the first of these post-war *asientos* during his visit to Havana in the late Spring of 1750. Manning travelled to the Cuban capital because, thanks to his extensive contacts in Spanish America, he had been appointed as the agent of the London merchants whose vessels had been seized by Spanish privateers after the peace agreement came into effect.<sup>11</sup> While Manning was unsuccessful in retrieving the eighteen vessels or their value from their captors during this visit and in a succeeding one to Santiago de Cuba, he did negotiate

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<sup>11</sup> George Townshend to Thomas Corbett, April 15, and May 13, 1750, Adm 1/234, TNA; Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega to Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno, n.d., and November 22, 1750, Capitanes Generales, 5, ANC.

a new contract to supply the island with captives.<sup>12</sup> His agreement with the Royal Havana Company called for the to delivery of fifteen hundred *piezas de india* over the following two years. The majority were to be landed in Havana, but one to two hundred were to be delivered to Santiago de Cuba as well. These captives were ostensibly imported for the promotion of tobacco cultivation, but many would labor in the shipyard of Havana, domestic servitude, or the island's growing sugar estates.<sup>13</sup>

Upon his departure from Havana, Manning carried with him not only the new contract, but also passports that would allow British vessels to enter Spanish ports with African captives and foodstuffs. Over the following two years, Manning dispatched at least nineteen hundred captives to Cuba from Jamaica, landing them at Havana or Santiago de Cuba.<sup>14</sup> Most arrived on the *Diamond*, whose captain Thomas Thresher had been Manning's preferred contraband captain during the war. Upon arrival, adult captives were sold for 280 pesos (£63 sterling), while teenagers (*mulecones*) sold for 250 (£56), and children (*muleques*) for 210 (£47). Manning was paid in silver upon each delivery.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Six of the prizes had been taken to Havana, eight to Santiago de Cuba, and three to Saint Augustine. An additional vessel had been plundered by a Havana privateer. "List of ships claimed by the British nation from the Court of Spain by virtue of the preliminary articles of Aix-la-Chapelle they being taken under pretense of the duration of the war, after the time prefixed for the cessation of hostilities; with the particular values of some of them, according to the accounts given by the proprietors," SP 94/142, TNA.

Despite the efforts of Manning and his Cuban agent Don Pedro de Estrada, the final repayment for these captured vessels did not occur until 1756, do to various delays, counter-claims, and lack of available funds in Cuban treasuries. For a concise overview of the course of this issue, see: McLachlan, "The Seven Years' Peace, and the West Indian Policy of Carvajal and Wall," 462-65.

<sup>13</sup> The details of the *asiento* are described in Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega, October 8, 1750, Capitanes Generales, 5, ANC.

<sup>14</sup> This number is calculated from the correspondence between Governor de la Vega in Havana and Moreno in Santiago de Cuba, who reported to each other on the arrival of slave traders and their cargoes. It is almost certain that reports on additional voyages have not survived. Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega to Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno, July 29, 1751, Moreno to de la Vega, January 19, January, n.d., August, 30, and November 21, 1751, Capitanes Generales, 5, ANC; de la Vega to Moreno, January 14, February 7, July 4, August 24, September 23, November 17, 1752, and July 16, 1753, Capitanes Generales, 6, ANC.

<sup>15</sup> Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega, January 19, 1751, Capitanes Generales, 5, ANC.

Just as under the South Sea Company's *asiento*, Manning's vessels were also permitted to import flour into Cuba. According to the contract, this was allowed so that local food supplies would not be strained by feeding hundreds of newly arrived captives. In reality, the flour was destined for sale to Spanish colonists for their own consumption. Cuba's cities could not feed themselves solely from the surrounding countryside and, in any case, Spanish-Americans strongly favored bread rather than cassava or other fruits grown in the island.<sup>16</sup> Although the Royal Havana Company was supposed to purchase flour from New Spain, mainland harvests were often insufficient or the prices demanded exorbitant.<sup>17</sup> As a result, Cubans eagerly purchased from anywhere, including foreigners. Although the contract stipulated that the Jamaican vessels could only carry one barrel of flour per slave, this was often ignored. On one voyage to Santiago de Cuba, for example, Thresher's *Diamond* carried a hundred captive Africans and over five hundred barrels of flour.<sup>18</sup> Nor did all barrels contain flour; frequently the bottom halves were filled with contraband textiles, while the top half had flour. As long as the workers and officials unloading the cargo did not notice any discrepancy in weight—a barrel of flour normally weighed two hundred pounds—this subterfuge went undetected. Since ships normally carried hundreds of barrels, few officials were interested in the lengthy ordeal of weighing them all.<sup>19</sup> Upon departure, silver could be smuggled out the same way.

Manning's *asiento* ended in 1752, a year the Havana Company underwent a massive reorganization. Concerned over the Company's unprofitability and perceived excessive

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of this culinary preference, see: Leví Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 3 (Madrid: Playor 1975), 240.

<sup>17</sup> James A. Lewis, "Nueva España y los esfuerzos para abastecer la Habana, 1779-1783," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 33 (1976): 501-526.

<sup>18</sup> Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega, August 30, 1751, *Capitanes Generales*, 5, ANC.

<sup>19</sup> This system is described in James A. Lewis, "Anglo-American Entrepreneurs in Havana: The Background and Significance of the Expulsion of 1784-1785," in Barbier, Jacques A. and Allan J Kuethe eds., *The North American Role in the Spanish Imperial Economy, 1760-1819* (Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1984), 120.

independence, the Spanish Crown ordered its Cuban president Don Martin de Aróstegui be arrested for fraud. With Aróstegui gone, the Company was restructured, with a new Body of Directors in Cádiz given much more power over its operations, even as Cubans continued to be the majority shareholders.<sup>20</sup> Among other changes, the Company was relieved of the burden of supplying the Spanish settlements in Florida with provisions and of constructing vessels for the Spanish Navy in Havana.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the reorganization meant that a new contract needed to be settled for supplying the island with slaves.

In October 1753, a *guardacosta* belonging to the Havana Company arrived in Kingston harbor bearing letters desiring to arrange the purchase of “a number of negroes for the use of the said Company and provisions for them.” Although the island’s new Governor Admiral Charles Knowles “most readily granted” the request, complications arose over the *guardacosta*’s commander, Don Francisco Almirón. In 1751, the Cuban had seized the sloop *Elizabeth* belonging to the Kingston merchant and Assemblyman Nehemiah Skelding under suspicion of smuggling, carried it to Cuba, and had it condemned. Upon hearing of Almirón’s arrival, Skelding brought a lawsuit against the Cuban for the value of the sloop, its cargo, and the four “male slaves” that had crewed it, estimating their combined value at £1,000 sterling.<sup>22</sup> Almirón was arrested and placed in Spanish Town’s gaol, from which he appealed to Knowles for protection.

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<sup>20</sup> For accounts of the Company’s reorganization, see: Garate Ojanguren, *Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración*, 123-36; and Levi Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7 ((Madrid: Playor 1978), 128-46.

<sup>21</sup> The changes in Florida provided added impetus to that colony’s already heavy reliance on Britain’s mainland colonies for foodstuffs and manufactured goods. See: Joyce Elizabeth Harman, *Trade and Privateering in Spanish Florida, 1732-1763* (St. Augustine, FL: St. Augustine Historical Society, 1969); and John Jay TePaske, *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1964).

<sup>22</sup> In his original complaint, Skelding claimed that his losses totaled £2,850 sterling, but when Almirón landed in Jamaica he had lowered the figure to £1,000. Deposition of Nehemiah Skelding, n.d., Deposition of Manuel de Balas Pino, n.d., and Petition of William Bradley, 1764, CO 137/48, TNA.

At a loss as to how to proceed, Knowles consulted the Attorney General, the judges of the island's Supreme Court, and the Council. All gave highly contradictory advice. The Attorney General proved the most persuasive however, for he offered a legal way out of the situation without offending the prickly Assembly. The lawyer noted that "the supposed taking or pretended depredation was committed in the high seas" and, therefore, the island's Supreme Court had no jurisdiction over the case. Since the writ of arrest had originated from that bench, it was a "nullity" and could be dismissed. Furthermore, he argued that as Almirón had come to Jamaica "in a public character & with a very important embassy from a neighboring nation presently at peace," he was, according to the legal theorist Grotius, protected as if an ambassador. The Council eventually agreed, claiming that, if the Cuban "had at the time of taking Skelding's goods no legal commission, the act would have been piratical; [but] as the contrary appears, we apprehend he is not answerable in his person to any [subject] of His Britannic Majesty for any act he did under his sovereign's lawful commission." Such attitudes were a far cry from those of preceding decades when *guardacostas* were routinely hung as pirates in Port Royal.<sup>23</sup>

Almirón swiftly concluded a new contract with Edward Manning that called for the delivery of four thousand African captives to Cuba over the next two years.<sup>24</sup> Manning evidently did so to the satisfaction of both parties, because in 1755 he was approached by the Havana Company for a third contract for fifteen hundred more captives, each to be accompanied by a

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas Knowles to Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega, October 8, 1753; Knowles the Earl of Holderness, October 16, 1753, CO 137/60, TNA; and Minutes of Council, August 27, October 3, and October 7, 1753, 1B/5/3/15, JNA.

Knowles later claimed that he had proof from Havana that Skelding's claim was "entirely false," that he had been indeed smuggling when caught, and that the Governor hoped that, upon reporting this to the Jamaican Assembly, the merchant would be appropriately reprimanded. Knowles to Holderness, December 1, 1751, CO 136/60, TNA.

<sup>24</sup> Garate Ojanguren, *Comercio Ultramarino e Ilustración*, 137.

barrel of flour. However, this time the Havana Company's royally-granted *asiento* stipulated that the captives could be carried to Cuba only in Spanish vessels.<sup>25</sup> Knowles consulted with the Council once again, who proclaimed that the Governor could not grant such a license, "it being directly contrary to the Acts of Trade and Navigation" to allow foreign vessels to enter the island. Knowles appealed to London for special dispensation, arguing that the trade would involve only a few vessels with small crews and "could not materially affect the British navigation," even while it brought great profit to Britain; it would also prevent the trade falling into the hands of the French.<sup>26</sup> Although no permission was granted from London, an agreement was nonetheless reached between the two parties, and Manning embarked on the third slave trading contract, which lasted until his death in December 1756.<sup>27</sup>

Manning's reputation as an experienced and trustworthy inter-imperial trader led to additional opportunities for the Jamaican beyond the slave trade, though not all proved profitable. In 1753, for example, the Governor of the Spanish province of Guatemala issued a passport to Manning to dispatch a ship to the colony with foodstuffs and other materials. However, by the time Manning's ship arrived in the port of Omoa—with the Cuban Pedro de Estrada aboard as supercargo—the Governor had died. His interim successor objected to using foreigners to supply the colony and ordered the vessel and cargo seized. The cargo, consisting of five hundred barrels of flour, fifty barrels of salt pork and another fifty of beef, as well as two hundred pieces of canvas and rigging, was sold to local colonists, and the vessel dispatched to

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<sup>25</sup> Marques de Ensenada to Francisco Rubio, March 21, 1754, Capitanes Generales, 18, ANC.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Knowles to Thomas Robinson, August 23, 1755, CO 136/60, TNA; Thomas Robinson to Benjamin Keene, November 13, 1755, SP 94/149, TNA; Licencia, May 14, 1755, Capitanes Generales, 7, ANC; and Marques de Enseñada to Francisco Rubio, March 21, 1754, Capitanes Generales, 18, ANC.

<sup>27</sup> The ultimate details of the agreement are currently unknown. Manning's award of the contract is discussed in George Townshend to Secretary to the Lords of the Admiralty, January 22, 1757/58, Adm 1/234, TNA.

Havana for condemnation. Although the vessel itself was released, Manning was never reimbursed for the cargo.<sup>28</sup>

The slave trade also served as cover for other private trading ventures—for both Manning and Spanish Americans. Spanish colonists commonly entrusted bullion to Manning’s slave ships, to be remitted to Europe on their behalf. In 1750, for instance, the Marchioness of Premio Real and Don Juan de Arecheduella of Cartagena, operating in partnership under the fictitious name of Don Juan de Rotalde, took advantage of the return of a slave ship from that city to Jamaica to entrust 21,000 pesos (£4,750 sterling) to Manning who was to dispatch the money to his partner James Ord in England.<sup>29</sup> Ord was then to transfer that amount to Spain either in specie or in merchandise as directed by the Marchioness’ agent. The two Spaniards would thus avoid having to pay the onerous taxes levied in Cádiz on precious metals returning from the Americas. In return, Manning and Ord were to receive a commission of fourteen percent (£665 sterling).<sup>30</sup>

Manning’s inter-imperial trade not only made him wealthy, but also helped him rise to the top of Jamaica’s power structure. Elected to the Assembly in the 1740s, he joined the Governor’s Council in 1753.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, thanks to his wealth and influence, he became a member of the shadowy group known as the “Jamaica Association” organized by Governor Edward Trelawney in 1751 to support his chosen successor, Admiral Knowles. The twelve

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<sup>28</sup> Don Pedro de Estrada to Don Joseph Vásquez Prego, January 17, 1753; Don Juan Antonio Velarde y Cienfuegos to Don Francisco Antonio Cagigal de la Vega, July 12, 1753, de la Vega to the Marquis de Enseñada, October 20, 1753; Unknown to de la Vega, February 26, 1754; Antonio Velarde y Cienfuegos to the King, February 27, 1754; and Testimonios de los autos fechos sobre recaudan de la Real Hacienda Don Tomás Thresher Capitán del bergantín ingles nombrado *el Joven Eduardo*, 1753, Guatemala, 448, AGI.

<sup>29</sup> The Marquis de Premio Real was a title of nobility first conferred on Don Domingo José de Miranda y Llanos, President of the Real Chancillería del Reino de Santa Fé de Bogota, in 1741. The Marchioness was his widow. Joseph Berni y Català, ed., *Creacion, antiguedad y privilegios de los titulos de Castilla* (Valencia: 1769), 463-4.

<sup>30</sup> In this instance, however, the Spaniards were defrauded by Manning’s partner James Ord who kept the entirety of the money rather than forwarding it, ostensibly in payment of Manning’s debts to him. Two decades later their heirs unsuccessfully attempted to sue in Jamaica’s Chancery Court. James Provost vs. Don Pedro Joachim de Rotalde, 1770, 1A/3/50, JNA.

<sup>31</sup> Order in Council, November 28, 1753, CO 137/25, TNA.



signatories of the Association were the leaders of every major political faction in the colony and included the planters—previously bitter enemies—Rose Fuller and Charles Price, the merchants Phillip Pinnock, Henry Archbould, and Edward Manning, and both groups' principal lieutenants. The members drew up a "Treaty" by which they swore to support Knowles, and in matters of policy to debate the issue and abide by a majority decision—which they would then see carried out through the Assembly and Council.<sup>32</sup>

Despite never having learned Spanish himself, over the course of his two-decade career in the inter-imperial slave trade, Manning mastered the art of navigating the mercantile and official worlds of two empires. At the cost of the freedom of thousands of Africans, he earned great wealth and political power. In Jamaica, he owned three sugar estates, two cattle pens, and nearly seven hundred slaves in addition to his mercantile operations.<sup>33</sup> He had become one of the wealthiest and most influential men on the island by 1754. However, that same year Manning's determination to maintain his preeminent place in Jamaica's trade with Spanish America would draw him deeply into a crisis over the location of the island's capital, one that would nearly tear the colony apart.

### **The Transformation of Inter-Imperial Trade**

Even as Edward Manning's slave contracts granted his vessels access to Cuban ports, a new system of international trade emerged in the Anglo-Spanish Caribbean. In a reversal from centuries-old patterns, Spanish Americans—especially Cubans—began sailing to Jamaica in

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<sup>32</sup> This agreement can be found in: Anonymous, *The Jamaica Association Develop'd* (London: 1757), 5-7. For an account of the formation of the group and Trelawney's motivations for doing so, see: George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729-1783* (London: Longmans, 1965), 101-06.

<sup>33</sup> The value of his Jamaican estate, not including what was owed him from the Royal Havana Company, was over £45,700 sterling. Edward Manning Probate, 1757, 1B/11/3/36, ff. 211-19, JNA.

ever-increasing numbers, not to raid, but to trade. The same commodities continued to be exchanged as in “traditional” smuggling—silver and mules for manufactured goods and human lives—but now the transactions occurred in Jamaican ports rather than on deserted Spanish-American coasts.

This trade was certainly illegal under Spanish law, and—unlike “traditional” smuggling—was also forbidden by Britain’s Navigation Acts, which sought to exclude foreign shipping from its colonies. However, Jamaican authorities were willing to turn a blind eye to such a profitable commerce. Planters, too, were pleased with the new system for it gave added impetus to the development of Jamaica’s outports, Montego Bay, Lucea, and Savanna-la-Mar, allowing them to export sugar and import African slaves, Cuban mules, and European manufactured goods more conveniently. For these ports all lay in the western end of Jamaica, the new center of the island’s sugar industry.<sup>34</sup> Such developments, however, threatened Kingston merchant’s monopoly of Jamaica’s commerce. By 1754 their resentment and anger had grown so strong, that, led by Edward Manning, they launched an ambitious scheme to move the colony’s capital from Spanish Town to Kingston in a bid to seize control of the island’s government. Their coup attempt failed, but it resulted in chaos as central government effectively collapsed and near anarchy erupted among the island’s white settlers.

The 1740s witnessed the beginning of a massive and prolonged economic boom in Jamaica. High wartime sugar prices and the 1738 peace treaties with maroons that opened up the northern parts of the island to European settlement led to a massive expansion of the island’s sugar economy. In 1740, Jamaica exported three hundred million pounds of sugar to Europe and

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island, with reflections on its situations, settlements, inhabitants, climate, products, commerce, laws and government*, vol. 2 (London: 1776), 85.

North America, despite the war by 1748 the volume had risen to four hundred million, and by 1760 nearly seven hundred million pounds.<sup>35</sup> The greatest growth occurred in the northwestern parishes of the island, particularly Saint James. In 1739, the parish contained only a single sugar plantation, but by 1756 it had seventy-nine—more than any other parish on the island.<sup>36</sup> Saint James also became the largest center of African slave labor in Jamaica: by 1768 over twenty-two thousand slaves worked its plantations, more than any other parish, and an eighth of the colony's total enslaved population.<sup>37</sup>

To service the western parishes and their growing sugar production several small ports developed: Montego Bay in Saint James and Lucea in Hanover, both on the northern coast; and Savanna-la-Mar in Westmoreland to the south.<sup>38</sup> These ports served as regional harbors. Ocean-going vessels could easily anchor there, deliver cargo, and load local plantation produce that had been carried to the small port towns by mules or small coastal vessels known as “drogers.” Thanks to the vast expansion of sugar in the parish, Montego Bay, in particular, experienced spectacular growth. In 1740 only two huts existed on the bay, but by 1760 the town had grown to

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<sup>35</sup> John J. McCusker, *Rum and the American Revolution: The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1989), 905-06.

<sup>36</sup> The other western parishes were also among the largest sugar producers by this time. Hanover had 71 sugar plantations and Westmoreland 69. “State of Jamaica in the year 1739 at the time of the pacification of the maroon blacks,” Add Ms 12435, BL; and Jack Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s: A Social Portrait*. (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016), 52.

<sup>37</sup> Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica, or General Survey of the Ancient and Modern State of that Island, with reflections on its situations, settlements, inhabitants, climate, products, commerce, laws and government*, vol. 3 (London: 1776), 218.

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of the development of these outports, see: Nadine Hunt, “Expanding the Frontiers of Western Jamaica through Minor Atlantic Ports in the Eighteenth Century,” *Canadian Journal of History* 45 (2010): 485-501.

include over two hundred houses.<sup>39</sup> Drawn by opportunity, factors and merchants flocked to these outports, independent of the major Kingston merchants. Many were Scots.<sup>40</sup>

The hitherto dominant Kingston merchant community deeply resented the rise of the western parishes and their outports, for it inflicted a “severe blow” to their power.<sup>41</sup> Kingston merchants clung to the fact that they remained the colony’s only legal ports of entry and defended that position zealously. Under the 1660 Navigation Act, vessels sailing to or from a colony were legally obliged to first drop anchor in a colony’s officially designated port of entry, where their captains would deliver documents detailing their cargo and destination with imperial and local officials before unloading or continuing onward to another port in the colony. In Jamaica, the ship’s master would anchor in Kingston harbor and present himself and his ship’s papers to, in order, the Governor, the Island Secretary, the Comptroller of Customs, the Naval Officer, the Receiver General, and finally the Collector of Customs, with whom the certificates were filed. These officials worked in either Spanish Town or Kingston, requiring numerous twelve-mile trips between the two towns to visit them all. Only after he completed this process—which often spanned three days—and paid all the requisite fees, could a captain begin unloading his cargo. Even if his final destination was another part of the island, such as St James nearly a week’s sail away, he was obliged to anchor in Kingston first; likewise, he had to return to Kingston after loading his outbound cargo in the island’s outports before he could legally sail.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Answers to Mr. Kerr’s Reasons for opening St. Lucea, by Mr. Vaughan, who resided sixteen years in Jamaica, and hath been in, and is acquainted with every parish in the Island: with some observations thereon,” 1765, WWM/R/35/24, SCL.

<sup>40</sup> Nearly a third of the Scots resident in Jamaica were merchants. They were heavily concentrated in the western parishes. Alan L. Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 11 and 123-31.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 215.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed description of how this system operated, see: Charles Knowles to the Board of Trade, November 18, 1752, CO 137/25, TNA.

Given this cumbersome process, it is hardly surprising that many vessels never went to or returned to Kingston. If they did anchor there, captains frequently entered only an estimate of their intended return cargo with officials, along with a small bribe, before continuing on their way.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, ship and cargo owners resented the system. So, too, did planters in the western parishes, and they repeatedly attempted to have the outports designated official ports of entry and clearance by the Assembly. But at every turn Kingston's representatives and their correspondents in Britain fiercely resisted the change.<sup>44</sup>

While frustrating to planters, the lack of customs officials in the outports proved beneficial to Spanish-American colonists. Around 1750, Spanish-Americans, especially Cubans, began travelling to Jamaica in their own vessels to trade, rather than wait for Anglo-Americans to come to them. The reasons for this reversal in practice are several. Structurally, the general economic depression that followed the Spanish commercial reforms of the war years and the end of military conflict in 1748 depressed British trade and encouraged Spanish commerce.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, thanks to the hundreds of Anglo-American vessels captured by the Spanish and their French allies during the long war, the Spanish colonists acquired more sloops and other small vessels with which to carry on inter-colonial trade. Simultaneously, thanks to their raiding of Jamaica's northern shore, the Spanish gained experience navigating around the island.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Jamaica's new western ports were much more conveniently reached by Spanish-

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<sup>43</sup> Charles Knowles to the Board of Trade, January 10, 1753, CO 137/25, TNA.

<sup>44</sup> As early as 1749 the island's Assembly passed an Act making Port Antonio on the island's northeastern coast a port of entry. Edward Trelawney to the Board of Trade, September 4, 1749, CO 137/25, TNA.

<sup>45</sup> These are the reasons suggested by Adrian J. Pearce, *British Trade with Spanish America, 1763-1808* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 29.

<sup>46</sup> Over six hundred Anglo-American vessels were captured in the Caribbean and along the North American seaboard during the war. Carl E. Swanson, "American Privateering and Imperial Warfare, 1739-1748," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 42:3 (1985), 380.

Americans than was Kingston. Finally, this form of trade simply proved much more profitable for all concerned.

Cubans sailed primarily to Montego Bay and Lucea, while Spanish-American traders from Central America made for Savannah-la-Mar.<sup>47</sup> These merchants and shippers generally travelled around Christmas, during Lent, and during the Summer, but before “the hurricane months, their small craft requiring fair weather as also to avoid detention by [north winds] as a length of absence would subject them to detection.”<sup>48</sup> Discovery was a concern because these ventures normally disguised themselves as coasting voyages, and too long an absence would raise suspicions among Spanish authorities. As one Spanish trader described the system, “the constant custom from Trinidad (the most westerly port on Cuba from whence mules are brought to Jamaica) is to sail about 4 o’clock in the afternoon, and coast it with the land wind to Cape Cruz, from whence they take their departure to any part of Jamaica.”<sup>49</sup>

A one-way passage from Cuba to Jamaica could be completed in as little as twenty-four hours, as Montego Bay is barely ninety-five miles from Cape Cruz, and Lucea lay only another twenty-five miles west of Montego Bay. When they reached Jamaica, Cubans could trade much more quickly than when their Anglo-American counterparts came to their coasts, for they did not have to anchor in hidden coves and wait for the clandestine arrival of traders; but instead, they could anchor openly off Montego Bay or Lucea. They could thus unload and make their purchases in less than a month, as compared to the three months it took a Jamaican smuggler along the Cuban coast. Furthermore, unlike the uncertainty an Anglo-American smuggler would

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<sup>47</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 200.

<sup>48</sup> “Consideration whether Montego Bay or Lucea be the properest port to open to the Spanish trade from Messrs. Hall, Vaughan, and Irwin,” 1766, WWM/R/35/23, SCL.

<sup>49</sup> “Answers to Mr. Kerr’s Reasons for opening St Lucea, by Mr. Vaughan, who resided sixteen years in Jamaica, and hath been in, and is acquainted with every parish in the island: with some observations thereon,” 1766, WWM/R/35/24, SCL; and Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 85.

face with respect to Spanish-American markets, “the Spaniard is very sure in laying out the whole of his” in Jamaica as the demand for mules and silver never stopped. Additionally, mules smuggled this way were considerably cheaper than when purchased by Anglo-American smugglers in Cuba, as the costs to Spanish shipowners to ship them were lower. For, it was said, that Cuban traders fed their crew “jerked beef and cassava bread,” and provided only “a cow hide apiece to sleep upon.”<sup>50</sup>

The voyage of Juan de Dios Rodríguez in 1754 shows this trade in motion. That year, Rodríguez loaded a dozen mules onto his small sloop in Puerto Príncipe as well as several hundred pounds of tobacco, a few crates of sugar, and more than a thousand pesos in silver. Ostensibly, he was bound for Santiago de Cuba. For a crew, he hired two brothers who had recently emigrated to Cuba from the Canaries and two local fishermen. The vessel glided along Cuba’s southern coast before putting out to sea at night, bound for Montego Bay. There, Rodríguez sold his goods and livestock in exchange for a cargo of textiles. On returning to Cuba, the Canary Islanders then left the ship with eight muleloads of cloth, while Rodríguez began transferring the remainder to canoes to be carried clandestinely to Puerto Príncipe. Unfortunately for the contrabandists, a *guardacosta* owned by the Havana Company discovered them while unloading. Rodríguez and the two fishermen were captured, and their goods seized. A few months later, they were condemned to hard labor in the galleys of the Mediterranean.<sup>51</sup>

The development of this new form of inter-imperial trade did not entirely eliminate the practice of Anglo-Americans cruising off Spanish coasts, but it did diminish it considerably. In

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<sup>50</sup> “Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica from the breaking out of the War with Spain in 1739 when the asiento contract was stop’t to the present times,” 1766, WWM/R35/1, SCL.

<sup>51</sup> An order for the arrest of the two Canary Islanders was also issued, but it does not appear they were ever apprehended. “Extracta del expediente formado tocante a dos presas ejecutadas en Boca Chica y Caoba de la jurisdicción de Santi Espíritus por un esquife de la Compañía de la Habana, 1754,” Santo Domingo, 397, AGI.

1753, apart from Manning's slave ships, only four or five Jamaican vessels sailed to South America to trade and a similar number travelled to Cuba for mules. The new system had not only proven cheaper and faster, but also safer. Fewer Anglo-American vessels cruising off Spanish-American colonies meant fewer British vessels seized. At the same time, the decline in opportunities for hire on lucrative contraband voyages contributed to the continued decline of Jamaica's maritime strength as white mariners left the island in search of work. By the mid-1750s, it was estimated that the island possessed barely fifty coastwise craft, mainly drogers or turlers, and only five hundred seamen—four-fifths of whom were slaves or free people of color.<sup>52</sup>

While cheaper, faster, and safer, the new trade was forbidden under the Navigation Act of 1660 because it was carried on in Spanish, rather than British vessels. That law forbade any goods being imported into or exported from a British colony except in British vessels with crews that were three-quarters British.<sup>53</sup> Officials in Jamaica were keenly aware of the prohibition and Governors, the Council, and the Assembly all repeatedly petitioned for a relaxation of the law in the interest of encouraging this trade. But their pleas were in vain.<sup>54</sup> In response, local officials

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<sup>52</sup> "Report of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations on the present state of the island of Jamaica presented to the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled," February 22, 1754, Ms 040, JNL.

<sup>53</sup> *An Act for increase of Shipping, and Encouragement of the Navigation of this Nation*, 1660, in John Raithby, ed., *The Statutes Relating to the Admiralty, Navy, Shipping, and Navigation of the United Kingdom: From 9 Hen. III to 3 Geo. IV Inclusive* (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1823), 42-46.

While illegal under the Navigation Acts, this form of Anglo-Spanish trade was actually *legal* in British eyes under the Treaty of 1670. For Article 8 of the Treaty stipulated only that the "Subjects and inhabitants...of either king respectively, shall abstain and forbear from trade and navigation to the ports and places provided with forts, warehouses, or castles, and all others which either party occupies in the West Indies." Since it was Spanish, and not British subjects breaking the Treaty by sailing to foreign ports, British officials claimed to have no basis to arrest them. "Treaty between Great Britain and Spain, concluded at Madrid, July 8/18, 1670," in Frances G. Davenport, ed., *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies*, vol. 3 (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1934), 195.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Knowles to the Board of Trade, November 18, 1752; The Humble Address and Representation of the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, November, 1752, CO 137/25, TNA; and "Report of the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations on the present state of the island of Jamaica presented to the Honorable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled," February 22, 1754, Ms 040, JNL.



largely turned a blind eye to their violations, allowing the trade to proceed unmolested. The outports' lack of official port of entry status worked to their advantage, since customs officers were not stationed there. Occasionally however, British officialdom intervened, but only when the interests of the island's planters were harmed. In 1754, for example, the *HMS Weasel* seized a sugar-laden Cuban vessel which it suspected "had a design of running it on shore" in violation of both the Navigation Acts and Jamaica's own laws against the importation of sugar.<sup>55</sup>

The prominence of Spanish traders in western Jamaica is attested to by the diary of Thomas Thistlewood, who served as an overseer in Westmoreland beginning in the 1750s. His journals are replete with mentions of "Spanish cattle" and livestock in the region, while in one entry he described crossing a bridge "almost covered with goods Mr. Thomas Brown had brought up the river in a canoe by the Spaniards."<sup>56</sup> Thistlewood frequently entertained visiting Spanish traders at the estates he worked on, providing them "dinner and [rum] punch."<sup>57</sup> At other times, he allowed Spaniards to rest their cattle and mules in his pastures as they made their way to market in Savanna-la-Mar.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, although not a merchant or great planter, Thistlewood demonstrates that even middling Jamaicans could engage in international trade. His diaries

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This was not the first time that this stipulation has caused difficulties between Jamaicans and London. In 1716 the Assembly had passed an Act making Port Morant, Old Harbor, Black River, Bluefields, and St Mary's ports of entry and also granted foreign vessels the liberty to trade in those ports. The Act was immediately disallowed in London, and not taken up again. "An Act for ascertaining the number of ports of entry in this Island and obliging officers to keep deputies at such ports, and to prevent all clandestine trade," 1716; Charles Carlisle to William Popples, April 3, 1719; and Extract of a letter from John Wright, Collector and William Norris Naval Office at Jamaica, July 26, 1716, CO 137/13, TNA.

<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately, there are no surviving records from Jamaica's Vice-Admiralty court in this period so it is impossible to know if the Spaniard was condemned. Admiral Thomas Cotes to John Cleveland, June 29, 1754, Adm 1/235, TNA.

<sup>56</sup> Entries of December 1, 1756, January 18, 1763, June 13, 1763, May 3, 1765, May 7, 1765, July 25, 1765, September 3, 1765, Thistlewood Family Papers, Mss. Film.1461, APS.

<sup>57</sup> Entry of April 2, 1753, Thistlewood Family Papers, APS.

<sup>58</sup> Sometimes these imported herds were over fifty animals. Entries of January 19, 1763, October 25, 1765, and July 12, 1766, Thistlewood Family Papers, APS.

include references to sending rum to the coast to be sold to visiting Spaniards and, in one case, the sale of a saddle Thistlewood claimed had originally been made for the Prince of Wales.<sup>59</sup>

However, despite their rising profits and continual expansion of their sugar holdings as a result of their direct trade with Spanish America, planters along Jamaica's northern coast were not completely satisfied with this new relationship. In fact, they repeatedly and loudly complained of their slaves being "inveigled by the flattering assurances of...strolling Spanish traders" to flee to Cuba.<sup>60</sup> As long as slavery existed in Jamaica, its captives sought to escape it. Indeed, the maroon communities that the white colonists had warred against for decades had their origins as fugitives from slavery. However, while Jamaica's plantations had been primarily located along the southern coast, most runaways had little chance of escaping the island.<sup>61</sup> But, with the massive increase in the number of plantations along the island's north coast beginning in the 1740s, the same proximity that made it tempting for Cubans to sail there to trade also made it more feasible for slaves to escape from the island altogether.

Whether or not Cuban merchants, many of whom were slave purchasers themselves, actually encouraged Jamaican slaves to escape their masters is doubtful however. But certainly the increasing numbers of Spanish-Americans in Jamaica's outports gave slaves an opportunity to learn of the potential protections offered to foreign runaways in Spain's colonies. This welcome, according to a Spanish royal *cédula* (decree) of September 1750, commanded officials to grant protection and freedom to slaves that fled from British or Dutch (but not French)

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<sup>59</sup> Entries of March 22, 1755, and February 16, 1758, Thistlewood Family Papers, APS.

<sup>60</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 85.

<sup>61</sup> White Jamaicans constantly feared that the maroons would make the short voyage to Cuba in order to seek aid from the Spanish, particularly during the First Maroon War. But, apart from scattered rumors, there is no evidence that the maroons attempted to escape the island. Deposition of John Tello, June 10, 1730; and Deposition of Captain William Quarrel, June 23, 1730, CO 137/47, TNA.

settlements, so long as they expressed the desire to convert to Catholicism.<sup>62</sup> Jamaican planters saw in the decree a fiendish papist plot to encourage slave rebellion and desertion and protested it. But the Spanish Crown refused to alter its policy.<sup>63</sup>

It is impossible to know how many enslaved Africans fled Jamaica to Spanish colonies, though the planter-turned-historian Edward Long estimated that “several hundred” had fled from St Ann’s parish alone in the 1760s.<sup>64</sup> One such escape can stand for many—and reveals the networks of communications and knowledge that free and enslaved Africans constructed across imperial boundaries. In August 1750, Governor Edward Trelawney informed his counterpart in Santiago de Cuba, Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno, that a group of slaves from two plantations near Lucea had stolen canoes and fled the island, presumably for Cuba. The following February, Moreno responded, informing Trelawney that twelve Africans had been captured near Bayamo. The runaways, some born in Africa and others in Jamaica, were led by a man named Talbeys and had been interrogated by an English-speaking slave named Francisco Xavier. Xavier informed Spanish officials that the fugitives had unanimously declared that they had fled Jamaica due to the overseers’ cruel treatment following their owners’ departure for England, and also out of a fervent desire to become Christians—something Talbeys claimed to be impossible in the British colony.

Nevertheless, perhaps because he disbelieved Xavier’s translation or out of a desire to maintain good relations with Jamaica, Moreno agreed to return the fugitives. But, within a week,

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<sup>62</sup> This reiterated previous orders from 1680, 1693, 1733, and 1740. Real Cédula, September 24, 1750, CO 137/59, TNA.

<sup>63</sup> Charles Knowles to Earl of Holderness, November 6, 1752, CO 137/59, TNA. When the British Government complained of this policy, the Spanish Ministry offered a spirited defense of it, not in the name of religion, but on the grounds that a slave once escaped from their master and in a place “out of his reach, sight & knowledge” was no longer under the dominion of their former master, but rather had recovered his liberty even before reaching a Spanish colony and thus could not be reenslaved. José de Carvajal y Lancaster to Sir Benjamin Keene, September 14, 1753, SP 94/144, TNA.

<sup>64</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 2, 85.

Moreno changed his mind: he would no longer return any of the slaves. This change of heart arose because the Catholic Church had intervened. Urged by Xavier a priest interviewed the runaways as they awaited a vessel to carry them back to Jamaica, During these interviews the fugitives testified that they had learned from a Cuban-born free man of color named Carlos, who had been captured by a Jamaican privateer during the war, of Spain's beneficence in bringing Christianity to slaves in its empire. Talbeys, in particular, emphasized how he knew that when they died "the baptized would see the face of God and the unbaptized would go to the flames."<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, when asked if they truly desired to receive baptism, their answers mirrored that of Talbey's partner Rosa who "responded with such speed and such enthusiasm, that [the priest] had not finished asking the question" before "in clear Spanish" she exclaimed "si señor, si señor."<sup>66</sup> It is impossible to know whether the captives story was true, or whether Francisco Xavier and the priest had coached them on how to answer, but the result was the same. The Catholic Church placed its protection over them. The furious Trelawney could do nothing but complain to London, while the dozen former slaves were baptized and freed.<sup>67</sup>

While such incidents angered Jamaica's planters, they also recognized the value of the expanding trade with Cubans. No records were kept of the number of Spanish-American vessels

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<sup>65</sup> "dijo que lo que tenía entendido es que en muriéndose los bautizados irán a ver la Cara de Dios y los no bautizados en muriéndose que iban a los infernos." Declaración de Talbeys, "Testimonio de Autos fechos sobre el amparo y protección de unos negros que pidieron las sagradas aguas del bautismo los mismos que se remitían a la Isla de Jamaica por el Señor Gobernador de esta Plaza," 1751, Santo Domingo, 368, AGI.

<sup>66</sup> "Respondió con grandísimo eficacia, y aceleración tanta, que no dejo acabar de hacer la pregunta y el idioma de español claro: Si señor, Si señor." Declaración de Rosa, Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> This incident was the subject of considerable correspondence and produced a sizeable amount of legal paperwork in Cuba. Edward Trelawney to Don Alonso de Arcos y Moreno, August 15, and December 23, 1750; Moreno to Trelawney, February 23, and February 26, 1750/51; "Testimonio de Autos fechos sobre el amparo y protección de unos negros que pidieron las sagradas aguas del bautismo los mismos que se remitían a la Isla de Jamaica," 1751; Autos y Testimonio sobre los Esclavos de Jamaica, 1751; Moreno to the King, March 27, 1751; Don Manuel Francisco Calzado y Cadeñas to the King, April 2 and December 19, 1751; and Respuesta del Fiscal, April 5, 1753, Santo Domingo, 368, AGI.

In not every case did sheltered runaways receive their freedom. At other times they were sold as slaves in Spanish colonies by local officials. For a discussion of these variegated responses, see: Jane Landers, *Black society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), especially 24-28.

travelling to Jamaica in this period, yet it was undoubtedly a considerable number. Over two thousand mules were imported annually through the northern ports in the 1750s.<sup>68</sup> According to contemporary estimates, the slaves sold to Spanish territories by Edward Manning and his Kingston compatriots were worth £112,500 sterling a year, and at least that much again was used to purchase textiles and other manufactured goods in Montego Bay and the other western harbors.<sup>69</sup> So much silver flowed into the island, that in 1751 the Assembly passed a bill—with no opposition from the planters—repealing the 1683 law that legalized the payment of debts in sugar; in its stead, silver and gold became the only legal tender in the colony.<sup>70</sup>

Despite the general trade boom, the outports became an object of increasing resentment amongst the Kingston merchant class. Their opposition came to a boil in 1752 with the arrival of Admiral Charles Knowles as the new Governor. An irascible career naval officer, Knowles had served as Admiral Edward Vernon's chief engineer during the ill-fated siege of Cartagena; later, he had captured Port Louis in Saint Domingue, and led a failed assault on Santiago de Cuba. Then, in 1748, he had commanded a naval squadron that attacked a Spanish fleet off Havana. The action was inconclusive, and Knowles and his captains blamed each other for the debacle. Several court martials and at least two duels between Knowles and his subordinates resulted.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, and perhaps this was a warning of his future term as Governor, the Admiral had threatened to bombard Boston in 1747 when riots broke out over his impressment of sailors.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Report of the State of the Island of Jamaica anno 1763 in answer to Queries from the Lords Commissioners for Trade & Plantations," 1763, CO 137/33, TNA.

<sup>69</sup> Long, *History of Jamaica*, vol. 1, 530.

<sup>70</sup> Frank Wesley Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies 1700-1763* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917), 153.

<sup>71</sup> For an overview of Knowles' career, see: Sir Sidney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 31 (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1892), 292-95.

<sup>72</sup> For an overview of the riots and Knowles' response, see: Denver Brunzman, "The Knowles Atlantic Impressment Riots of the 1740s," *Early American Studies* 5:2 (2007): 324-366.

During this same period, Knowles had befriended Governor Trelawney and when the Governor decided to step down from his position in the early 1750s, he lobbied the Ministry that Knowles succeed him. The Jamaica Association had been fostered by Trelawney in part to harness their correspondents in England to lobby for the Admiral's appointment.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 17**  
Vice-Admiral Charles Knowles, ca. 1748  
John Faber engraver, Thomas Hudson artist  
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England  
(Public Domain)

Knowles arrived in the island in October 1752 and at first governed quietly with the support of both Manning's Kingston faction and the island's planters led by Charles Price and Rose Fuller. But repeated clashes with the Assembly over funding the Government, especially

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<sup>73</sup> Edward Trelawney to Earl of Holderness, November 6, 1751, CO 137/59, TNA. See also: Metcalf, *Royal Government*, 101-5; and Pares, *War and Trade*, 182-84.

over whether the Crown-appointed Receiver-General or the legislature should possess the funds raised by taxes prior to their disbursement, swiftly ended the mutual goodwill. Within two years the Admiral was at his wit's end. This made him easily recruited by Manning and the Kingston faction. The two men had known each other for over a decade, and considering Trelawney's involvement as a "silent partner" in both Manning's Spanish-American slave trade and Knowles' post-conquest commercial agreements with the French planters in southern Saint Domingue, they may have been business partners as well.<sup>74</sup> As a result of both these personal ties and Knowles' frustration with the planter-dominated Assembly, the Governor was ready to throw his whole support behind Manning when in January 1754, the merchant organized a petition to be sent to the Board of Trade asking that the capital of the island be shifted from Spanish Town to Kingston.<sup>75</sup>

Kingston had long resented that the capitol of the island was not located in its main port, as it was in every other British colony except Virginia.<sup>76</sup> Merchants and shipowners complained of the burden on captains having to travel the dozen miles to wait on the Governor and present their paperwork. Merchants also provided much of the courts' business, and the courts' sitting in Spanish Town engendered considerable costs.<sup>77</sup> Their anger had increased greatly in the previous few years as the dramatic expansion of the western parishes and the rise of the outports put an

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<sup>74</sup> Pares, *War and Trade*, 183.

<sup>75</sup> The petition was signed by over six hundred persons with Manning's name at the very top. "The humble petition of the merchants, factors, and agents residing in the island of Jamaica in behalf of themselves and their constituents and all others the merchants of Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies in North America," January, 1754, CO 137/26, TNA.

<sup>76</sup> The proposal to move the capitol had been repeatedly suggested by earlier governors, see, for example: "Reasons Humbly offered for removing the Records and Courts of Justice from Santiago de la Vega to Kingston and making it the Seat of Government," 1710(?), Add Ms 22676, BL.

In 1747, Edward Trelawney had argued for the shift to Kingston, but demonstrated his better grasp of island politics than his successor by adding, that the move "must be done by an Act of Parliament"; "it will never be done by an Act of Assembly," he predicted, for the planters were too attached to Spanish Town. Edward Trelawney to Board of Trade, November 14, 1747, CO 137/24, TNA.

<sup>77</sup> Kingston merchants claimed that Spanish Town serving as the capitol cost them over £17,000 sterling annually. "Memorial of the Merchants, Factors, & Agents residing in Jamaica," January, 1754, CO 137/26.

effective end to their monopolies, not only of the island's sugar trade, but also of the Spanish trade. That expansion led Manning—not the largest merchant in the island, but certainly the most important figure in its inter-imperial trade—to launch his campaign to move the capitol. If the Assembly sat in Kingston rather than Spanish Town, then the merchants might become the principal party in it as the planters were currently; the inconvenience of traveling to Kingston might discourage the latter from attending in large numbers.

Eager for any chance to weaken the opposition in the Assembly and believing that humbling the legislature would be met by approval in London, Knowles threw his full weight behind the proposal.<sup>78</sup> The planters led by Rose Fuller and Charles Price acted quickly, recognizing this move as a threat to both their political dominance and increasing economic independence from Kingston. In a revealing letter to fellow planter Richard Beckford written immediately after he had received news of the petition, Fuller warned that “the consequences of such a project, if it meet with success, will be...the depriving the landed interest of this island of the authority they do and ought to bear in the community and transfer the same to the factors of Bristol, Liverpool, and the noble Kingdom of Scotland.” The increasing “number of captures of mules and money” by naval officers in the northern parishes at the behest of the Kingston merchants he saw as “part of a system to get every branch of trade to Kingston.” He closed with some advice to Beckford. To encourage the leeward parishes to support Spanish Town in the contest, Beckford should repeatedly remind their inhabitants that “Kingston petitioned against making Savannah-la-Mar a port of entry.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, January 20, and February 15, 1754; Knowles to the Merchants of Kingston, January 20, 1754, CO 137/26, TNA; and Minutes of Council, February 5, 1754, 1B/5/3/15, JNA.

<sup>79</sup> Extract of a letter from Rose Fuller to Richard Beckford, February 1, 1754, CO 137/27, TNA. Similar warnings of the motives behind both the petition and the seizures can be found in: “Copy of a letter from Major E. Clarke to several gentlemen of the parishes of Hanover, Westmoreland, St James, St Elizabeth, &c,” 1754, CO 137/27, TNA.



Tensions escalated quickly. In the first week of February, while Knowles sat as judge of the Chancery Court in Spanish Town, Fuller harangued a group of several hundred colonists, including a number of slaves and free people of color, across the street. Knowles later claimed that, if not for the company of soldiers standing guard, there would have been a riot.<sup>80</sup> In the following weeks, petitions from every parish flooded into Spanish Town regarding the capitol controversy.<sup>81</sup> Adherents of both sides, notably Richard Beckford and Knowles himself, gave speeches across the island. While he was away, the Governor's home was broken into and the ceremonial mace of office smashed across his doorstep. At the same time, the town's physicians refused to treat his sick children. In response, the Governor asked the few Council members willing to meet whether he was obliged to hold Court sessions in Spanish Town or even to reside there. The majority argued that as Governor he could hold court and reside anywhere he chose.<sup>82</sup> Accordingly, Knowles promptly moved to Kingston, and took up residence in the old South Sea Company House, courtesy of Manning.<sup>83</sup>

Safely ensconced in Kingston, Knowles promptly vetoed a Bill passed by the Assembly making Montego Bay a port of entry, much to the joy of Kingston's merchants.<sup>84</sup> Despite

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<sup>80</sup> Knowles to Board of Trade, February 15, 1754, CO 137/26; Knowles to Board of Trade, October 7, 1754; and "The Humble Answer of Rose Fuller Esq. to a complaint lodged before your Lordships against him by his Excellency Charles Knowles Esq.," 1754, CO 137/28, TNA.

<sup>81</sup> "Petition of the Justices and Vestry and the rest of the Planters and Inhabitants of St. Andrews"; "Petition of the Justices and Vestry and the rest of the Planters and other inhabitants of St. Thomas in the East"; "Petition of the Justices and Vestry and the rest of the Planters and other Inhabitants of the parishes of St. Mary's and St. Georges"; "Petition of the Inhabitants of Santiago de la Vega in the island of Jamaica and of the planters, and others proprietors and occupiers of lands and settlements in the neighborhood of the same, June 24, 1754"; "Petition of the Justices and Vestrymen of the Parish of Clarendon in behalf of themselves and others the freeholders & inhabitants of this said parish"; "Petition of the Justices and Vestrymen of the Parish of St. Johns in behalf of themselves and others the freeholders & inhabitants of this said parish; Petition of the Justices and Vestrymen of the Parish of Saint Katherine in behalf of themselves and others the freeholders & inhabitants of this said parish"; "The Humble petition of the Justices and Vestrymen of the Parish of Vere," 1754, CO 137/27, TNA; "Petition of the Justices, Planters, Merchants and Inhabitants of the County of Cornwall," 1754, CO 137/28, TNA.

<sup>82</sup> Knowles to Board of Trade, May 12, 1755; and Protest of President John Gregory, Sir Simon Clarke, and Henry Archbould Esq., CO 137/29, TNA.

<sup>83</sup> Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, May 7, 1754, CO 137/27, TNA; and Minutes of Council, April 17, 1754, 1B/5/3/15, JNA.

<sup>84</sup> Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, January 20, 1755, CO 137/28, TNA.

Kingston's seeming victory, however, government in the colony effectively collapsed over the next several months. In an effort to create a compliant legislature, Knowles called for three separate elections between October 1754 and March 1755. The third election occurred amidst massive fraud, but secured Knowles a majority of five out of the forty-one members. Edward Manning was voted Speaker, and the Assembly immediately began drafting a bill to formally move the capitol and all the government's records from Spanish Town to Kingston.<sup>85</sup> Knowles promptly gave his assent.<sup>86</sup> Even so, the Assembly remained riven by divisions. Fights broke out frequently, and it was not uncommon for Manning's party to force opposition members to remain in their chairs at swordpoint to ensure a quorum. By mid-November 1755, Knowles had imprisoned nearly every member of the Planters' Party, and the House was forced to repeatedly lower the number needed for a quorum.<sup>87</sup> In one instance, Manning even convened a meeting in the Kingston house where two members lay sick and bedridden to maintain it.<sup>88</sup> Outside of Kingston, however, the machinery of government ground to a halt. Taxes were not collected in the parishes, or, if they were, were not paid to the central government. The courts also closed as Knowles dismissed both the Attorney General and the clerk of the Vice-Admiralty Court.<sup>89</sup>

Despite his tenuous victory, Knowles' realized that his enemies among the planters were feverishly working against him in England and that he had no supporters in the Ministry there.

As early as the summer of 1755, Knowles wrote to London asking to be relieved in order to

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<sup>85</sup> A List of the Members of the Present Assembly in Jamaica which met April 8, 1755, CO 137/29, TNA.

<sup>86</sup> Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, May 12 and May 19, 1755, CO 137/29, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> "Petition of Charles Price, Andrew Arcedeckne, Thomas Fearon, William Winter, Samuel Whitehorne, William Lewis, Henry Dawkins, Roger Hope Elletson, James Prevoost, Edward Morant, William Gale, Charles Price Jr., William Nedham, Thomas Beach, Zachary Baily, Nathaniel Bayly, George Bonner, Arthur MacKenzie, Thomas Hope Elletson, and Norwod Witter Esquires Members of the General Assembly of your Majesty's Island of Jamaica," November 11, 1755, CO 137/28, TNA.

<sup>88</sup> Metcalf, *Royal Government*, 133.

<sup>89</sup> Extract of a letter from Charles Knowles to the Board of Trade, June 25, 1754, Ms 485, JNL; John Reed to John Morse, July 17, 1754; and Order in Council, May 18, 1754, Ms 1032, JNL.

serve at sea in the looming conflict against France. He renewed his request the following January, plaintively writing: “I find myself driven to desperation for want of proper support, and entirely unable to discharge the duty of the trust reposed in me.”<sup>90</sup> Under increasing pressure from Charles Price and other planters’ representatives, and desperate to calm the colony on the eve of war with France, the Ministry accepted Knowles resignation in January 1756. The Board of Trade simultaneously vetoed the Act for moving the capitol to Kingston on the technical grounds of lacking the suspending clause; a clause every piece of colonial legislation was supposed to include suspending the enforcement of the Act until the London government had assented to it.<sup>91</sup>

The coup attempted by Kingston’s merchants to seize control over the island’s legislature and maintain their near monopoly position over Jamaica’s trade had been decisively defeated. The island’s records were returned in a triumphant parade to Spanish Town, where they remain to this day, and the Governor burnt in effigy.<sup>92</sup> The Kingston party was crippled politically, and Edward Manning its leader and most effective spokesman was dead by the end of the year.<sup>93</sup> It was this victory that truly marked the ascendancy of the “plantocracy,” which would dominate the colony until emancipation in the nineteenth century. This dominance also ensured the continued growth of the outports, and in 1758 Savannah-la-Mar, Port Antonino, Lucea, and Montego Bay were formally named ports of entry and clearance.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, July 25, 1755, and January 2, 1756, CO 137/29, TNA.

<sup>91</sup> William Murray and Richard Lloyd to Board of Trade, December 27, 1755; Order in Council, January 27, 1756; and Representation and Address of the Assembly of Jamaica, September 2, 1756, CO 137/29, TNA.

For a discussion of the Suspending Clause and Jamaicans’ refusal to use it, see: Leonard W. Labaree, *Royal Government in America: A Study of the British Colonial System before 1783* (New York, NY: F. Ungar Publishers, 1958), 224-27, and 255-60.

<sup>92</sup> Order in Council, June 29, 1758, CO 137/31, TNA.

<sup>93</sup> Edward Manning Probate, 1757, 1B/11/3/36, ff. 211-19, JNA; and Admiral George Townshend to Secretary of the Lords of the Admiralty, January 22, 1757/58, Adm 1/234, TNA.

<sup>94</sup> Order in Council, June 29, 1758, CO 137/31, TNA; and Henry Moore to Board of Trade, October 3, 1758, CO 137/30, TNA.

The failures of Kingston's merchants meant that their efforts to crush the new form of Anglo-Spanish trade emerging in the outports were doomed. And although the "traditional" form of smuggling organized by Kingston merchants in their own vessels never completely ended, it was increasingly overshadowed by the "new" trade carried on by the Spanish themselves. As a result of this increase in Anglo-Spanish trade, the thirteen years that followed the end of the War in 1748, found Jamaica sending £1,342,000 sterling in bullion to the Bank of England.<sup>95</sup> In reality the value was probably much higher; a Spanish report estimated that Jamaicans received £2,700,000 or £200,000 sterling a year in the period 1747-61.<sup>96</sup> This was in addition to the thousands of heads of livestock and an unknown amount of tobacco and other agricultural products. The sheer scale of this trade, and the brazenness of Spanish colonists in sailing openly to foreign shores marked a new epoch in Anglo-Spanish relations in the Americas.

### **The Best of Friends**

The War of Jenkins' Ear had brought Don Zenón de Somodevilla y Bengoechea, Marques de Ensenada to the forefront of Spain's government. A determined, albeit cautious reformer, he held the Ministries of Finance, War, the Navy and the Indies all at once and had given serious thought to the troubles facing Spain and its empire. He once remarked to the British ambassador in Madrid that "the most beneficial thing that could happen to this country would be to burn all the laws of the Indies" and begin entirely anew.<sup>97</sup> And while no friend of Britain, Ensenada was deeply committed to keeping Spain neutral in the brewing struggle

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<sup>95</sup> "Account of Bullion imported and brought to the Bank of England from Jamaica & the other West India islands & the British Colonies in North America from the year 1748 to the year 1765," WWM/R/34/5F, SCL.

<sup>96</sup> Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759-1789* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 153.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in McLachlan, "The Seven Years' Peace," 464.

between Britain and France. He knew that a period of peace was required to provide time for Spain's finances to recover and the nation's economy to grow. As a result, while he was unwilling to "depart, in a public way...from the antiquated notions of a general right" over the American seas, he asserted new restrictions over *guardacostas* and colonial officials.

When joined with the revolution in the workings of Anglo-Spanish trade, the result of these new restrictions was the dramatic decline in the number of seizures made by *guardacostas*. In Cuba, the army—not the privateers—increasingly constituted the forefront of the struggle against contraband. Although officials still proffered harsh punishments to those caught engaging in illicit trade, their efforts did little to stem the tide of British goods and African captives flowing into the island. The result was the emergence of a relative peace between the two empires for the first time in two centuries, even as British America became embroiled in the globe-spanning Seven Years' War.

The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 and the subsequent Anglo-Spanish commercial treaty had, apart from formally ending the South Sea Company's *asiento*, seemingly settled none of the two Crowns' disputes in the Americas. The "right of search" which the Spanish claimed in the American seas, and which had been the immediate cause of the outbreak of war was not even mentioned in either treaty, let alone relinquished. Indeed, in a discussion of the issue between Enseñada and the Council of the Indies, it was decided that things should be allowed to tacitly continue under the Regulation of 1738, for if the Spanish were to openly continue that policy it would provoke war, but if they were to prohibit it altogether they would be voluntarily conceding what England had not been able to extort by a long and bloody war.<sup>98</sup> Both nations' rulers also quietly agreed that, in the future, they would not discuss the seizure of Anglo-American shipping

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<sup>98</sup> The 1751 debate was recounted in: Dictamen de Don Manuel Pablo de Salcedo, February 7 1755, Santo Domingo, 2171, AGI. The debate is also discussed in McLachlan, "The Seven Years' Peace," 465.

in terms of “rights” but rather on a case-by-case basis. This approach was encouraged by the negotiations regarding the return of vessels captured by both nations in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, where the Spaniards successfully proved several ships had indeed been guilty of illicit trade.<sup>99</sup> As Enseñada confided to Keene, the British “must not give entire credit to what [their] own people allege; nor [the Spanish] to their Governors, and the interested in those captures. The truth may be between the allegations of both parties.”<sup>100</sup>

Still, to lessen complaints, Enseñada was willing to reform the *guardacosta* system to some extent. In 1751, he ordered that the privateers’ must ensure “the careful collection of all papers at the time of capture” and that the original papers—rather than translations—must be sent to Spain along with the *autos* of the case, “because colonial officials might be misled and mistake forgeries by some pirate for real passes.”<sup>101</sup> Further reforms followed a year later. In June 1752, a *real cédula* ordered that, when a prize was condemned, the proceeds of the sale were not to be distributed until the King had confirmed the judgement. A few weeks later, the Crown decreed that in older cases whose condemnations had been overturned, restitution was to be made from colonial treasuries when the supposed owners of the *guardacosta* could not repay the value or be found. Subsequently, it was ordered that colonial governors would be held responsible if commissions were granted to those with insufficient security.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> An analysis of the shift can be found in: Pares, *War and Trade*, 533-37.

The negotiation of the return of vessels was greatly hampered by Admiral Knowles’ obstinacy in returning the *Anna Maria y San Felix*, which he had captured after the time fixed for the end of hostilities and improperly distributed her value to himself and his crew. Just as Spanish Ministers claimed with vessels seized by *guardacostas*, the British Ministers could do nothing until an appeal had been properly lodged and ruled on; they then had to decide whether to apply to Parliament to pay the value or to prosecute Knowles for his share. The money does not seem to have properly been granted until 1756, the same year that Spain paid the last of the money owed on vessels seized since the peace. Pares, *War and Trade*, 537, n. 4

<sup>100</sup> Benjamin Keene to Duke of Bedford, February 11, 1751, SP 94/139, TNA.

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in McLachlan, “The Seven Years’ Peace,” 465.

<sup>102</sup> Real Cedula, June 26, 1752, Capitanes Generales, 6, ANC; Real Cedula, July, 1752; and José de Carvajal y Lancáster to Benjamin Keene, August 16, 1752, SP 94/142, TNA;

These changes had a marked effect on *guardacosta* activity in the Caribbean, particularly in Cuba where they augmented reforms already introduced to the island's *guardacostas* in 1740. Under Article 33 of the Royal Havana Company's charter, the monopoly was obligated to fit out vessels to patrol the coasts of Cuba against illicit trade.<sup>103</sup> These vessels were to be maintained at the Company's expense. As a result, the Company's Cuban Directors kept them as small and lightly armed as possible in order to save money. In 1751, they maintained two small squadrons: one patrolling the north side of the island and another the south. The former consisted only of three small galleys each of which carried only fourteen men and a single cannon, and a single schooner. The latter was no stronger, with only five galleys.<sup>104</sup> Even augmented by the occasional *guardacosta* privately commissioned from Santiago de Cuba to patrol the city's environs, the Company's force was far smaller and weaker than the *guardacostas* of the 1720s and 1730s.<sup>105</sup> Nor was it likely to stray far from the coast in search of prey as Fandiño and his compatriots had.

Joined with the changes in the workings of illicit Anglo-Spanish trade, their weakness encouraged the Havana Company's *guardacostas* to be less than zealous in their duty. As one Jamaican merchant observed:

When the Spaniards found this [new form of] trade encouraged by our colonies, they soon contrived means of carrying it on with a

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<sup>103</sup> "Armará la Compañía a su costa las embarcaciones menores con que pueda traficar y transportar sus géneros y frutos de unos puertos a otros de la Isla de Cuba, a fin de que cruzando unas y otras costas de la parte del Sur de ella, embarquen el comercio ilícito." Article 33, Real Cedula de Constitución de la Real Compañía de la Habana, December 18, 1740. The cedula can be found in its entirety in Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 214-22.

<sup>104</sup> An account of ships of war and *guardacostas* at and around the Havana, January 1751, Adm 1/234, TNA.

<sup>105</sup> The Governor of Santiago de Cuba would occasionally fit out *guardacostas* to patrol the eastern part of the island, claiming the Havana Company's vessels neglected it entirely. These *guardacostas*, however, in their commissions were strictly limited in where they could patrol—only to windward or leeward of Santiago. "Testimonio de autos obrados sobre una goleta de vacío apresada por el Capitán *guardacostas* Amaro de Cabrera en Cayo de Damas a sotavento de este puerto," 1757; and "Testimonio de autos obrados sobre la aprehensión de una goletilla en playa del oeste del Bacanao, a sotavento de Guantnamo, por el Capitán *guardacostas* Don Francisco de la Rocha Gallardo," 1757, Santo Domingo, 373, AGI.

safety from their own King's officers, for this purpose they entrusted the Governors and the principal clergy in the trade; after which the *guardacostas* readily understood that there was no crime in neglecting their duty.<sup>106</sup>

And while the seizure of Anglo-American vessels did not stop, their number declined dramatically (**Appendix C**). Furthermore, most seizures were clearly caught in the act of illicit trade and not merely on the open sea. Such was the case of the *Minerva* which was captured off Manzanillo in 1755 with a cargo of dry goods: its crew confessed they had sailed from St Anne's parish in order to purchase mules from Bayamo.<sup>107</sup> Such incidents were relatively rare however. More often, when a *guardacosta* reported that it had found a smuggler, the vessel had already been abandoned. No doubt because it had either been forewarned of the privateer's approach or had worked in collusion with the patrol.<sup>108</sup>

The decline in seizures of Anglo-American ships was mirrored by a changing attitude among British officials regarding the status of *guardacostas* and their crews. Although Governor Trelawney continued to fulminate that they were "nothing less than licensed pirates," Jamaican officials increasingly displayed more caution when dealing with them.<sup>109</sup> Shortly after his arrival in Jamaica in 1752, Governor Knowles presided over two trials of *guardacosta* crewmen from two different vessels. In both cases, the Spaniards were found guilty and condemned to death. Although they presented their commissions, Knowles dismissed them as invalid for being issued by an "inferior officer," and not by a Spanish governor. Yet Knowles refrained from carrying out

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<sup>106</sup> "Remarks on the Spanish Trade at Jamaica," WWM/R35/1, SCL.

<sup>107</sup> "Extracto del expediente formado con motivo de la Presa dos balandras Ingleses que el Corsario Don Juan Casado y Valdez hizo en las costas de Manzanillo y en cabo de Cruz de la Jurisdicción de [Santiago de Cuba]," 1755, Santo Domingo, 370, AGI.

<sup>108</sup> In one such incident, a French hide smuggler was found abandoned on the north coast and its crew escaped into the mountains. In another, an English mule smuggler's crew escaped ashore while the *guardacosta's* crew looked on. Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to the King, June 28, 1753, Santo Domingo, 369; and "Extracto de una carta del Gobernador de Cuba en que da cuenta de haber aprehendido un Guardacostas de aquella Isla, diferentes efectos y de los insultos cometidos por unas embarcaciones ingleses," 1757, Santo Domingo, 373, AGI.

<sup>109</sup> Edward Trelawney to Earl of Holderness, December 1, 1751, CO 137/59, TNA.



the sentence, instead pardoning two of the “ignorant wretches” immediately and waiting for “particular directions” from the Ministry in London on the others.<sup>110</sup>

When Knowles’ report on the trials reached London, a horrified Ministry ordered that the King’s pardon be issued to every Spaniard and that the prisoners be immediately released.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, it strongly reprimanded Knowles for writing an insulting and threatening letter to Governor Cajigal de la Vega in Havana and to other Spanish Governors in the West Indies regarding the trials. In the letter the Admiral-turned-Governor had warned that, if the Spaniards “intend His Catholic Majesty’s subjects shall wage war against the King my Master’s...I am resolved to imitate you.” Humiliated, Knowles promised that “nothing like it will happen again.”<sup>112</sup> The chastisement undoubtedly influenced his later treatment of Francisco Almirón and increased his sense of isolation and frustration with his position, allowing Manning to more easily convince the Governor to join in his scheme to move the capital.

The increasing ineffectiveness of Cuba’s *guardacostas* caused the Spanish army to play a larger role in combating illicit trade. On paper, the island’s forces looked formidable: over two thousand infantrymen, a hundred and seventy artillerymen, and nearly three hundred dragoons garrisoned the island. The reality, however, was quite different. The infantry regiments were chronically understrength, made worse by the posting of a sizeable fraction of their men to Florida. At the same time, the majority of the remaining garrison was stationed in Havana—in

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<sup>110</sup> All five of the men had been taken off Spanish-American vessels that had sailed to Jamaica to trade, and there been recognized by their former victims. Charles Knowles to Earl of Holderness, November 18, and December 13, 1752; “Proceeding of the Court of Admiralty against Simon dea Cuenca and Domingo dea Cuenca,” November 6, 1752; “Proceedings of the High Court of Vice-Admiralty at Spanish Town,” November 13, 1752; “Translated extract of the Spanish Commandant of Port Omoa’s orders for *guardacostas* to go in search of wrecks and take any English vessels,” March 22, 1752, CO 137/59, TNA; and Minutes of an Admiralty Trial, November 6, 1752, CO 137/60, TNA.

<sup>111</sup> Earl of Holderness, to Charles Knowles, May 24, 1753, CO 137/60, TNA.

<sup>112</sup> Charles Knowles to Francisco Cajigal de la Vega, November 13, 1752, CO 137/59, TNA; Marques de Enseñada to Benjamin Keene, December 2, 1753, SP 94/144, TNA. Earl of Holderness to Charles Knowles, May 26, 1753; and Knowles to Holderness, September 15, 1753, CO 137/60, TNA.

case of foreign invasion. The rest of the island was only thinly manned. For example, Santiago de Cuba and the eastern third of the island only possessed four hundred infantrymen and thirty artillerymen.<sup>113</sup> The Havana Company's charter mandated that it was to supply provisions to garrisons of forty dragoons in Bayamo and twenty in Puerto Príncipe to help combat smuggling. But, such small forces could do little to halt the flow of contraband goods.<sup>114</sup> As for the island's militia, it proved worse than useless against smugglers.<sup>115</sup>

Normally, the troops engaged in combating smuggling would embark on wide-ranging patrols with orders to seize any goods they found, and occasionally they met with success. In January 1756, for example, a patrol seized eighty mules being clandestinely marched to the coast near Bayamo.<sup>116</sup> Three years later, another patrol under Sergeant Francisco Ortíz seized thirty mules laden with illicitly imported textiles on a beach eight leagues west of Santiago; the haul was worth over 2,400 pesos (£540 sterling), of which the patrol received a quarter.<sup>117</sup> Sergeant Ortíz was still patrolling three years later when, in the space of two months, he and his men made six separate seizures of clothing, rum, foodstuffs, and even of an abandoned schooner laden with flour.<sup>118</sup> Such a haul was unusual, however. Most captures were small. Of the twenty-three

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<sup>113</sup> The garrison at Saint Augustine was officially supposed to be maintained at a strength of three hundred and ten infantrymen, forty artillerymen and fifty dragoons. Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 13.

<sup>114</sup> Article 33, Real Cedula de Constitución de la Real Compañía de la Habana, December 18, 1740, in Marrero, *Cuba: Economía y Sociedad*, vol. 7, 214-22.

<sup>115</sup> The militia were supposed to patrol for contraband, but considering their lack of training and close relationship with traders in the community they only rarely "discovered" smugglers. For an example of orders for the militia to fight smuggling, see: Carta firmada por Lorenzo de Madariaga y Nicolás Escudero, pasando al Alférez de Milicias Francisco de la Sosa a la jurisdicción de Bayamo para combatir el comercio ilícito, February 5, 1757, Capitanes Generales, 7, ANC.

<sup>116</sup> Documento firmado por Lorenzo de Madariaga confiriendo comisión al cabo Alejandro Duarte, San Luis de los Caneyes, 1756, Capitanes Generales, 7, ANC; and Unknown to Don Ignacio Moreno, January 14, 1756, Capitanes Generales, 8, ANC.

<sup>117</sup> Don Alonso de Arcos Moreno to the King, June 30, 1753; "Testimonio de autos de los obrados sobre la aprehensión hecha por el Sargento Francisco Ortiz con la Guardia Volante de su cargo," 1753, Santo Domingo, 369, AGI.

<sup>118</sup> "Informe de contaduría que comprende los nueve comisos remitidos a el Gobernador de Cuba con carta de 16 de febrero de 1756," April 25, 1757, Santo Domingo, 372, AGI.

seizures of smuggled goods made around Puerto Príncipe between 1754 and 1758, more than half consisted only of a single *negro de mala entrada* or fewer than a half-dozen mules.<sup>119</sup>

Such paltry successes did little to slow the tide of contraband. Furthermore, the Cuban smugglers transporting seized goods almost invariably escaped capture. When Ortíz and his patrol seized the mules and goods in 1753, for instance, their four guards fled safely into the forest. Such was the case with nearly all smugglers: they had been either forewarned of the army's approach or were simply more motivated to escape than the troops were to capture them. If and when they were caught, however, the sentences were harsh, with exile and hard labor the usual punishment. When a sloop under the command of Don Juan Miguel de Paz was seized for illicitly trading with French Saint Domingue, he and his crew were sentenced to ten years exile of hard labor in Apalachee in the Florida panhandle.<sup>120</sup> While judges sentenced most condemned smugglers to Florida, some were consigned to service in the Spanish Navy if they were skilled mariners, or to hard labor in the citadel of Oran in North Africa.<sup>121</sup>

Table 6.1 summarizes the seizures made by the *guardacostas* and the army in the 1750s.

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<sup>119</sup> Listo de aprehensiones en Puerto Príncipe, November 29, 1754 through September 15, 1758, Santo Domingo, 374, AGI.

<sup>120</sup> Don Lorenzo de Madariaga, to the King, October 20, 1758, Santo Domingo, 374.

<sup>121</sup> "Extracto del Expediente formado sobre la aprehensión de algunas mercaderías que quiso introducir en la Habana Marcos de Torres en su Goleta," 1750, Santo Domingo, 390.

**Figure 18**  
Value of Contraband Goods seized in the Jurisdiction of Havana, 1749-1759<sup>1</sup>

Year <sup>1</sup>	Seizures (Pesos)	Seizures (£ sterling)	Estimated Appraised Value of Contraband Seized (pesos)	Estimated Appraised Value of Contraband Seized (£ sterling)
1749	15,399	3,465	23,691	5,330
1750	18,925	4,258	29,115	6,551
1751	12,380	2,786	19,046	4,285
1752	40,166	9,037	61,794	13,904
1753	13,261	2,984	20,402	4,590
1754	33,474	7,532	51,499	11,587
1755	336	76	518	116
1756	35,185	7,917	54,130	12,179
1757	1,558	351	2,397	579
1758	-	-	-	-
1759	1,995	449	3,069	690
<b>Total</b>	<b>172,679</b>	<b>38,853</b>	<b>265,660</b>	<b>59,813</b>

Note: Normally, the Spanish Crown through various taxes and the royal share of seizures received approximately sixty-five percent of the value of seized goods. For a detailed breakdown of the procedure, see: “Demostración práctica del método y reglas observadas por los Oficiales Reales de la Ciudad y Puerto del Cartagena de las Indias, y demás parajes de la Costa de Tierra Firme en observancia de las Leyes de la recopilación de aquel los Reinos y demás posteriores reales órdenes para la distribución del valor de los efectos de mercaderías, oro y plata labrado Chafalonía y Amonedada que como respectivos a el ilícito comercio son incursos en la pena de comiso,” Santo Domingo, 369, AGI.

Source: The first row is from John Robert McNeill’s *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 199. The conversion from to pounds sterling is based on the exchange rate in John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1660-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 7

Together, the data suggests that the value of illicit trade was far higher than official reports admitted. Three caveats become important when interpreting the table. First, it includes only the seizures made in Havana, not those in Santiago de Cuba and the eastern part of the island. Secondly, the sums consigned to the royal treasury arose from the proceeds of the sale of seized goods at public auction. Frequently at such auctions the captured goods were sold at only

half, or even less, of their real value.<sup>122</sup> As a result, perhaps half again should be added to the value of seizures listed to gain a sense of their real value. Finally, it is unlikely that officials seized even a quarter of the illicit goods entering the island. Taken together, these caveats make it quite possible that over two million pesos (£500,000 sterling) worth of illicit goods were introduced into the western portion of the island alone during the 1750s. Almost certainly, the actual value was far higher. In 1768, one official estimated that Jamaica and Saint Domingue together imported over seven thousand mules and horses from Cuba each year, worth 350,000 pesos (£80,000 sterling).<sup>123</sup>

An anonymous letter to the Marques de Enseñada in 1753 from Havana reported on the complete failure of efforts to curtail illicit trade:

in this city and throughout the island an absolute freedom is experienced in the introductions of clothes and other goods maintained by the colonists...with the English of Jamaica, so without moderation or modesty, that through the ports, coasts and springs of the island, through the bay, customs and gates of this city, illicit goods enter without embarrassment in such abundance, that of these goods there are different stores in which they are sold to merchants and neighbors, and even on the streets publicly, in wheelbarrows.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Such frauds were widespread in British America, and it seems unlikely that Spanish officialdom was immune to them. See: Alan L. Karras, "'Custom Has the Force of Law': Local Officials and Contraband in the Bahamas and the Floridas, 1748-1779," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80:3 (2002): 281-311; and Thomas Truxes, *Defying Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 47-48.

<sup>123</sup> Mules cost 50 pesos in Havana and horses 70 pesos. John Robert McNeill, *Atlantic Empires of France and Spain: Louisbourg and Havana, 1700-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 200.

<sup>124</sup> "No obstante las providencias que el Gobernador de la Habana ha dado contra el ilícito comercio, no han conseguido extinguirlo, porque abusan de ellas sus asistentes y confidentes, y no tiene de quién fiarse. Y se experimenta en esta ciudad y en toda la isla una relajación absoluta en las introducciones de ropas y todos géneros del trato que mantienen los vecinos con el Guárico y demás colonias francesas, y con los ingleses de Jamaica, tan sin moderación ni recato, que por los puertos, costas y surgideros de ellas, por la bahía, aduana y puertas de tierra de esta ciudad, entran sin embarazo en tanta abundancia, que de estos géneros hay distintos almacenes en que se venden a mercaderes y vecinos, y aun por las calles públicamente, en carretillas..." Quoted in Cesáreo Fernández Duro, *La Armada española desde la unión de los reinos de Castilla y León*, vol. 6 (Madrid: Tipográfico Sucesores de Rivadeneira, 1900), 392.

The continued expansion of illicit trade and the thousands of captive Africans imported into the island by Edward Manning and the Royal Havana Company contributed to, and helped accelerate, the shift in Cuba's economy towards sugar. According to the first census of Cuba, taken by the Archbishop Pedro Agustín Morel de Santa Cruz between 1754 and 1757, Cuba had three hundred and fifty sugar plantations.<sup>125</sup> Although sugar mills dotted the island, the largest stood near Havana, thanks to the access to capital, the slaves supplied by Manning, and an overseas market that the city offered. Between 1751 and 1760, the average Havana planter increased their sugar production from seventy-five thousand pounds a year to a hundred thousand. Those plantations in the eastern areas of the island were smaller, averaging only around twenty thousand pounds of clayed sugar a year.<sup>126</sup> By 1760, Cuba was exporting nearly ten million pounds of refined sugar to Spain every year.<sup>127</sup> At the same time, Cuba's tobacco production continued to contract, from an average of nearly three million pounds in the first half of the decade, to barely more than one million pounds in 1761.<sup>128</sup>

By 1760, Cuba was already well down the path of developing into a full-fledged sugar colony, though it would take another two decades before the "Sugar Revolution" exploded in the island. Licit and illicit trade with Jamaica played a key role in facilitating that transformation by providing Cubans the captive Africans so necessary for the operation of plantations and the cultivation of sugarcane. The changes in inter-imperial trade's structure further contributed to this economic expansion. Edward Manning may have provided slaves and foodstuffs to Cuba's growing cities and their hinterlands, but Cubans' increasing freedom to travel to Jamaica's northern coast allowed colonists in the central and eastern parts of the island to purchase foreign

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<sup>125</sup> Visita del Obispo Pedro Agustín Morel de Santa Cruz, 1757, Santo Domingo, 534, AGI.

<sup>126</sup> McNeill, *Atlantic Empires*, 126-27.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

manufactured goods and slaves on an ever-greater scale. Furthermore, international trade became increasingly secure and lucrative as the decade went on. Kingston's efforts to maintain its monopoly of Anglo-Spanish trade had failed, while policies drafted in Madrid to curtail administrative costs and avoid conflict with Britain had further weakened already overstretched and ineffective anti-smuggling measures. The two colony's economies were more intertwined than they ever had been before.

### **Conclusion**

In the decade and a half after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, a new inter-imperial trading regime emerged in the Anglo-Spanish Caribbean. The South Sea Company's slave trading activities were replaced by a series of private *asientos* issued to prominent Spanish-American colonists around the Caribbean basin, who, in turn, looked to Edward Manning and his partners to help fulfill them. Simultaneously, the massive expansion of Jamaica's sugar plantation regime fostered the development of a series of outports across the island that undermined Kingston's traditional monopoly of the island's trade and made it possible for Spanish-Americans—and particularly Cubans—to travel to Jamaica clandestinely themselves to trade rather than passively wait for an Anglo-American vessel to appear off their shores. These changes nearly tore Jamaica's political system apart, but also allowed for the massive increase in trade between the neighboring islands needed to fuel the continuing expansion of both colonies' sugar industries.

These developments were supported by a change in imperial policies from the ministers in both London and Madrid, where rulers in both nations were eager to maintain a friendly relationship with the other. In Britain, officials sought to placate Spain wherever possible in order to keep that nation out of the Seven Years' War with France. While in Spain, although they

maintained a rhetorical commitment to their historical preeminence in the lands and waters of the Caribbean, ministers had no interest in actually attempting to enforce those claims. As a result, the *guardacostas*, which for decades has been the terror of Anglo-American shipping in the region, faced much greater scrutiny in their activities and were increasingly ineffective. Combined with an ongoing retrenchment in spending on colonial defense, Spanish officials in the West Indies found it nearly impossible to combat contraband—when they even tried. These twin developments allowed the revolution in inter-imperial trade the time it required to develop and solidify. As a result, even when renewed warfare broke out between the two Crowns in 1761, the structures of inter-imperial trade forged in the 1750s could not be undone.



## Conclusion

In 1759 a new monarch, Charles III, ascended the Spanish throne. Horrified by Britain's sweeping triumphs around the world in the Seven Years' War and determined to put an end to the illicit Anglo-Spanish trade that he considered one of the worst threats to his empire, Charles took his nation into a war it was ill-prepared to fight.<sup>1</sup> The result was the greatest feat of British arms in the Caribbean since Henry Morgan's seizure of Panama nearly a century before: the capture of Havana in August 1762.

Although the occupation of Havana and western Cuba was short-lived, lasting barely a year, its reverberations echoed long afterwards. Spanish officials were determined to prevent such a humiliation from happening again and instituted a massive series of reforms in the island following its return to Spanish control. Chief among them was the granting to Cuban elites yet more say in their island's governance in return for accepting a more active role in defending the colony. In particular, Cubans won a host of commercial reforms favoring the sugar industry, lowering both taxes and shipping costs. These reforms culminated in the 1765 *reglamento de comercio libre* which opened the island to free trade with every major port in Spain and broke Cádiz's commercial monopoly over the Spanish Caribbean. They helped set the stage for the great sugar revolution that reshaped the island in the last decades of the century. Joined with the

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<sup>1</sup> For studies of the role of trade in leading Charles III into war, see: Allan Christelow, "Economic Background of the Anglo-Spanish War of 1762," *Journal of Modern History* 18 (1946): 22-36.

trade boom that occurred during the occupation, they ensured Cuban elites ultimately had little to complain about concerning Charles III's disastrous war.<sup>2</sup>

The same was not true in Jamaica, however. For the conquest of Havana had opened Cuba to the trade of other Britons—particularly North Americans—bypassing Jamaicans' historical role as middlemen between the larger British Atlantic community and Spanish America.<sup>3</sup> In the face of such “foreign” competition and the disruption of Cuban trade to their northern ports, for perhaps the first time since the 1655 English conquest of the island, Jamaican merchants and planters were eager for a war with Spain to end. Their voices, along with those concerned that Cuba would become a competitor in the British sugar market, were among the loudest in calling for peace and Havana's return to Spain. The Peace of Paris in 1763 granted those wishes. By its terms, the British agreed to return Havana to Spain, receiving in exchange not only Florida, but also formal Spanish acceptance of the logwood settlements in Central America.<sup>4</sup> The Treaty was met with joy by Jamaica's planters and merchants eager for the

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<sup>2</sup> Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); Allan J., Kuethe and G. Douglas Inglis, “Absolutism and the Enlightened Reform: Charles III, the Establishment of the Alcabala, and Commercial Reorganization in Cuba,” *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* 109 (November 1985): 118–43; Allan J. Kuethe and Kenneth J. Andrien *The Spanish Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century: War and the Bourbon Reforms, 1713-1796* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), chaps. 7-8; and Stanley J. and Barbara H. Stein, *Apogee of Empire: Spain and New Spain in the Age of Charles III, 1759-1789* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), chap. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Allan Christelow, “Contraband Trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main, and the Free Port Act of 1766,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 22 (1942): 314, n. 11.

The occupation of Havana has been the subject of considerable exaggeration, partly stemming from the once-common view by scholars, particularly Cubans, that it was the occupation that introduced sugar cultivation and chattel slavery into the island. For example, Hugh Thomas claimed that over seven hundred British merchantmen entered the harbor, while estimates that as many as 100,000 slaves were imported during the occupation have often been quoted based on the claims of the nineteenth-century historian Hubert Aimes. Both figures are ludicrously high. Hubert Aimes, *A History of Slavery in Cuba, 1511–1868* (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1907), 33; and Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1971), 49.

In reality, only around four thousand captives were sold under the monopoly granted to the Liverpool merchant John Kennion. License to John Kennion Esq. for importing slaves into the Havana, October 23, 1762, CO 117/1, TNA. The concession can also be found in Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, 153-31, Appendix 4.

<sup>4</sup> *The definitive Treaty of Peace and Friendship between his Britannick Majesty, the Most Christian King, and the King of Spain. Concluded at Paris the 10th day of February, 1763* (London: Printed by E. Owen and T. Harrison, 1763).

resumption of their pre-war trading patterns with Spanish America. Determined to reclaim their preeminent position in Anglo-Spanish trade, Jamaicans turned to their powerful Parliamentary lobbyists. And after two years, they secured passage of the Free Port Act of 1766.<sup>5</sup>

The Free Port Act was a revolutionary piece of legislation, partially repealing the Navigation Acts—the foundational legislation of Britain’s empire—and allowing foreigners to legally trade in a British colony for the first time in over a century. In doing so, it placed the system of inter-imperial trade that had developed in the previous decades on a secure legal footing for the first time, opening the ports of Kingston, Savanna-la-Mar, Montego Bay, and Lucea to foreign vessels.<sup>6</sup> The Act not only legitimated the rogue empire that had been forged by Jamaicans and Cubans, but also wove inter-imperial slave trade into the very fabric of the British Empire. The importance of Anglo-Spanish trade to Britain’s single most valuable colony, and to the larger British Empire was at last formally recognized. This stood in stark contrast to London’s reformist attitude to the rest of American territories. Everywhere else, the Navigation, Sugar, and Customs Acts all remained firmly in place. Indeed, naval officers and customs officials enforced them with greater vigor than ever—much to the fury of merchants in the Thirteen Colonies who felt betrayed by London’s clear preference for their West Indian counterparts.

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<sup>5</sup> Free ports were by no means a new innovation. The Dutch had long maintained free ports in Curaçao and Saint Eustatius, as had the Danes in St Thomas. The French experimented with them in their Leeward Island colonies in the early 1760s as well. Dorothy Burne Goebel, “The ‘New England Trade’ and the French West Indies, 1763-1774: A Study in Trade Policies,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 20:3 (1963): 331-72.

<sup>6</sup> The Act opened Prince Rupert’s Bay and Rouseau in newly conquered Dominica to foreign vessels as well. The Act also contained a number of restrictions to appease sugar planters. Non-British vessels sailing from American ports could import into Jamaica bullion and any American produce of non-British origin, with the exceptions of tobacco, sugar, coffee, pimiento, ginger and molasses which were forbidden entry. In return, foreigners could export enslaved Africans and any goods of British origin which had been legally entered, with the exception of naval stores and tobacco. *An Act for opening and establishing certain ports in the islands of Jamaica and Dominica for the more free importation and exportation of certain goods and merchandise, for granting certain duties to defray the expense of opening, maintaining and securing said Ports, for ascertaining the duties to be paid upon the import of goods from the said island of Dominica into this kingdom, and for securing the duties upon goods imported from the said island into any other British colony*, 6 Geo. III, c. 49.

While revolutionary, it nevertheless took some time and a combination of events for the free ports to prove a success. For their first several years, relatively few foreign ships were recorded as entering Jamaica's harbors. Not until 1773, when the duty on African captives leaving the island levied by the Act was lowered from thirty shillings per captive to two shillings six pence did trade in Jamaica's port boom.<sup>7</sup> In that year, Jamaicans exported 800 African captives; the following year, the number tripled to over 2,500 (**Appendix B**). Simultaneously a renewed *asiento* negotiated between Jamaican and Cuban merchants was signed, resulting in the dispatch of an average of one ship a month from Jamaica to Cuba during the 1770s. Each carried nearly two hundred slaves and often twice that in barrels of flour.<sup>8</sup> By 1780, one Spanish visitor to the island estimated that Jamaica's trade with Spanish America was worth 1,500,000 pesos (£340,000 sterling) a year.<sup>9</sup> The trade between the two colonies had never been more valuable or reliable.

The outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775 transformed Britain's overseas empire, but had little impact on its ties with Spanish America. Nor did the wars of the following decades; conflict was not permitted to interfere with inter-imperial trade. It was simply too important to each empire's colonists. By the end of the 1780s, it was estimated that Jamaica's exports to Spanish America were worth as much as £500,000 sterling annually.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, between 1784 and 1787 over 12,000 African captives were exported from Jamaica's free ports.

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<sup>7</sup> Bryan Edwards, "Thoughts on the Spanish *asiento* contract," December 20, 1773, Dartmouth Ms 2135, BL; and Frances Armytage, *The Free Port System in the British West Indies: A Study in Commercial Policy, 1766-1822* (London: Longmans, Green, 1953), 50.

<sup>8</sup> Sherry Johnson, *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 114.

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of Don Francisco Saavedra de Sangronis during the commission which had in his charge from 25 June 1780 until the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month of 1783* Francisco Morales Padrón ed., Aileen Moore Topping trans. (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1989), 84.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Taft Manning, *British Colonial Government after the American Revolution, 1782-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1933). 279.

The majority went to Cuba, which provided over forty-percent of the foreign shipping to Jamaica during the same period.<sup>11</sup> Trade only expanded further in 1789 with the promulgation of a *real cédula* issued by Charles IV permitting Spanish vessels, both peninsular- and creole-owned, to sail legally to foreign colonies in search of slaves and opening Havana to all foreign vessels carrying slaves.

Even during the French Revolutionary Wars of the 1790s the free ports continued to do well, though as the course of the conflicts waxed and waned there were years of boom and stagnation. During this period, a major shift in the free ports' trade emerged as Jamaica's inter-imperial trade became increasingly less centered on the slave trade. For over a century inter-imperial trade has been dominated by the exchange of African captives. But beginning in the last years of the eighteenth century, that changed. Partly this was due to restrictions and "reforms" to the British slave trade, but it was also due to Cubans trading directly to Africa. Manufactured goods, particularly cloth from the newly industrialized cities of northern England, were increasingly the focus of the free ports' commerce. And that trade flourished in the nineteenth century, even as more free ports were opened, revolutions swept Spanish America, the sugar industry in Cuba blossomed, and Jamaica's plantations began to stagnate. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Jamaica's free ports were estimated to be worth £3,375,000 sterling annually.<sup>12</sup>

This study has revealed the origins of that trade, narrating how the inter-imperial economy emerged and became increasingly important to colonies in British and Spanish America alike. These bonds were not static. Rather, they changed considerably over the course

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<sup>11</sup> Calculated from Helen M. Allen, "British Commercial Policy in the West Indies from 1783 to 1793" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1933), chart VII, after p. 185.

<sup>12</sup> Export Trade from Jamaica to South America generally called the Dry Good Trade, 1818, Ms 698, Jamaican National Library, Kingston, Jamaica (hereafter "JNL").

of the century, becoming increasingly safe, legal, and ever larger. At the dawn of the century, British and Spanish America were deeply enmeshed in a regional economy centered on illicit trade, privateering, and piracy—often carried on with the connivance of officials in both empires. Following the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, ministers in London and Madrid sought to reform their Atlantic empires by limiting colonial autonomy, ending illicit trade, and curtailing extra-legal violence. But in less than a decade their agendas lay in ruins, defeated by a combination of colonial intransigence, corrupt officialdom, and European warfare. The only survivor was the South Sea Company's *asiento* which, while greatly weakened, continued to provide legal access for British traders engaged in the slave trade.

For the next two decades, three principal pillars of inter-imperial “trade”—smuggling, the *asiento*, and privateering—co-existed in uneasy competition with one another. Each proved highly profitable to their participants and provided the lifeblood of colonial communities. Small vessels crisscrossed the water between Jamaica and Cuba, exchanging African captives and manufactured goods for Spanish silver and, above all, mules. In Cuba, smuggled captives were central to the early development of the island's sugar industry, while illegally imported textiles clothed the population. In Jamaica, Spanish silver paid the island's debts to Europe and North America, while Cuban mules powered the mills and transported the sugar for which the island was famous. Yet, despite the large-scale contraband trade conducted between the two islands, the ties were uneasy and often short-lived. Traders could never be sure they would see one another again after a smuggler's sloop disappeared over the horizon. The same was not true for the agents and factors of the South Sea Company whose *asiento* allowed them open access to Cuban cities. The *asentistas* were able to forge strong personal relationships with Spanish-American traders and elites, and to build networks cultivated not in the service of the Company, but for

their own private trade. Combined, the South Sea Company and private smugglers carried over ninety thousand African captives—over forty-percent of those that arrived in Jamaica in those years—to Spanish America in the first four decades of the eighteenth century.

Although Jamaican smugglers and South Sea Company employees deeply resented one another, they were united in their hatred of Spain's anti-smuggling force, the *guardacostas*. These privateers operated with a broad remit and limited oversight, seizing Anglo-American vessels at will—even those far from Spanish-American coasts and well up the eastern seaboard, well over two hundred of them in the years of peace between 1713 and 1739. Such seizures constituted yet another source of imported goods for Spanish-American communities, albeit from plunder. In turn, the *guardacostas* were hunted by both British colonists and the Royal Navy, who viewed them as no more than pirates and treated them as such. What resulted was a continuing atmosphere of violence, legal and extra-legal, in the Americas, which, while still tacitly accepted as part of the centuries-old policy of “no peace beyond the line,” became increasingly impossible to separate from domestic politics and diplomacy in Europe.

By 1739, however, officials in Madrid or London could no longer tolerate the international economy of smuggling and privateering. The result was the War of Jenkins' Ear. Although most well-known for the disastrous British assault on Cartagena, the conflict also inaugurated a fundamental transformation of inter-imperial trade. Spanish colonists, particularly Cubans, had become increasingly reliant on foreigners to supply their island with goods and, above all, slaves over the previous decades to labor in their expanding sugar fields. Bolstered by their newfound voice in their colony's governance provided by the Royal Havana Company, Havana's elites took the bold step to reach out to their nation's enemies to provide the goods their own could not. Building on the networks formed under the South Sea Company's *asiento*,

they contracted with Kingston merchant Edward Manning to peacefully supply them with thousands of captives, even as war continued to rage.

Following the return of peace in 1748, the revolution in inter-imperial trade continued and expanded. Manning signed additional contracts with Cubans and other Spanish colonies' inhabitants to supply them with slaves, and in so doing became the center of a vast inter-imperial trading network that stretched outward from Jamaica to every surrounding colony and even across the Atlantic to Europe. Simultaneously, the massive expansion of Jamaica's sugar industry beginning in the 1740s created new ports around the island that allowed Cubans and other Spanish Americans to travel to the island to trade directly, rather than merely await the arrival of contrabandists off their coasts. Although the rise of these outports precipitated Jamaica's greatest political crisis to date, it also greatly facilitated international trade. Their emergence also had the unintended but beneficial effect of greatly lowering levels of Anglo-Spanish violence. For as an ever-expanding fraction of illicit trade was carried on either legally or in Spanish vessels, the *guardacostas'* independence was increasingly curtailed by officials eager to keep Spain out of the war between Britain and France.

Spain's disastrous entry into the Seven Years' War in 1762 and the subsequent fall of Havana to an invading British force did not bring an end to Anglo-Spanish trade—it merely opened up new avenues for it for other British Atlantic trading communities. Eager to reclaim their preeminent position in inter-imperial trade, Jamaicans secured the passage of the 1766 Free Port Act which, for the first time in over a century, opened British America to foreign traders. In the fifty years following its passage, the British West Indies reached the height of their wealth and fame, while Cuba witnessed the dramatic expansion of its own sugar industry. Much of that was founded on the enslavement of hundreds of thousands of African captives, many of which



stopped in Jamaica prior to being carried to their final destinations. But the free ports were important for far more than just the sale of human beings: they continued their vitality even after the ending of the British slave trade in 1807. They became the main avenue through which the goods produced by Britain's "industrial revolution" flowed to Spanish America and to its rebellious colonies.

The successful integration of the colonists of two empires was vividly captured by one visitor's description of Kingston in 1812: "merchants of the place, active, sharp-looking men," he noticed, "were seen grouped under the piazzas in earnest conversation with their Spanish customers, or perched on the top of the bales and boxes just landed, waiting to hook the gingham-coated, Moorish-looking Dons as they came along with cigars in their mouths, and a train of negro servants following them with fire buckets on their heads, filled with *pesos fuertes*." As one gleeful merchant boasted in a letter from those years, the opening of Spanish American markets "which had long occupied the attention of our most able British statesmen, has been silently achieved by the impulse of commerce"—and not, in the end, by the force of arms.<sup>13</sup>

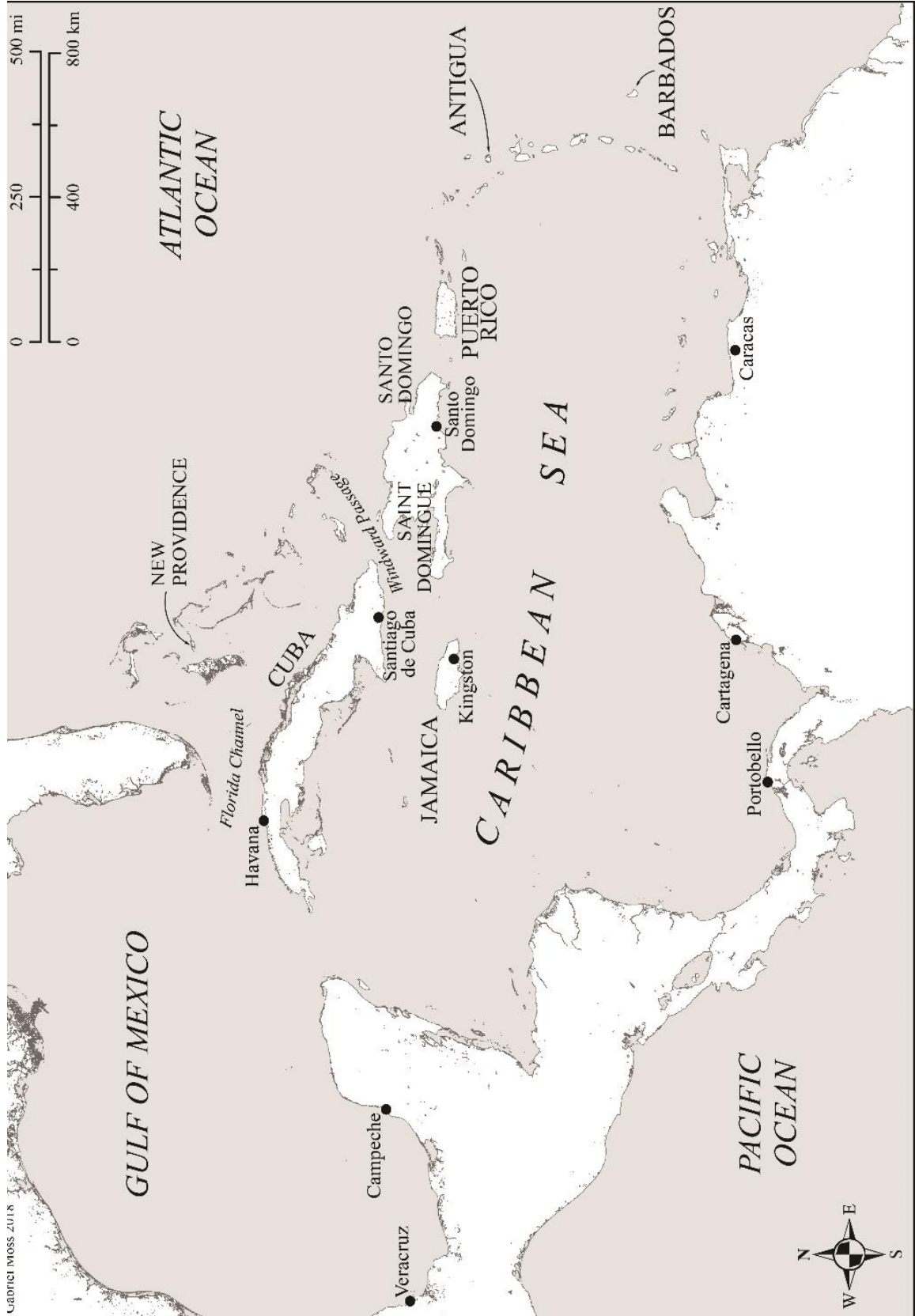
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<sup>13</sup> Michael Scott, *Tom Cringle's Log* (New York, NY: Wallis & Newell Publishers, 1835), 86; and Dick, Parke & Co to Admiral Sir Home Riggs Popham, February 8, 1818, Ms 698, JNL.

## **Appendix A**

### Maps

**Figure A.1**  
The Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century



**Figure A.2**  
Jamaica and Cuba in the Eighteenth Century



## Appendix B

### Figure B.1

Slaves Imported Into and Exported from Jamaica, 1702-1775

Year	Number Imported <sup>i</sup>	Number Reexported by South Sea Company <sup>ii</sup>	Number Reexported by Private Traders <sup>iii</sup>	Number Reexported (Total) <sup>i</sup>	Percentage of Slaves Reexported (Total %)	Number Retained
1702	843		327	327	38.8	516
1703	2,740		481	481	17.6	2,259
1704	4,120		221	221	5.4	3,899
1705	3,503		1,669	1,669	47.6	1,834
1706	3,804		1,086	1,086	28.5	2,718
1707	3,358		897	897	26.7	2,461
1708	6,627		1,379	1,379	20.8	5,248
1709	2,234		1,275	1,275	57.1	959
1710	3,662		1,191	1,191	32.5	2,471
1711	6,724		1,532	1,532	22.8	5,192
1712	4,128		1,903	1,903	46.1	2,225
1713	4,378		2,712	2,712	61.9	1,666
1714	5,120		3,507	3,507	68.5	2,282
1715	2,372	759	330	1,089	45.9	1,283
1716	6,361	1,793	1,079	2,872	45.2	3,489
1717	7,551	2,277	876	3,153	41.8	4,398
1718	6,253	2,407	-	2,247	35.9	4,006
1719	5,120	30	3,131	3,161	61.7	1,959
1720	5,064	0	2,815	2,815	55.6	2,249
1721	3,715	0	1,637	1,637	44.1	2,078
1722	8,469	810	2,453	3,263	38.5	5,206
1723	6,824	2,761	1,886	4,647	68.1	2,177
1724	6,852	3,202	367	3,569	52.1	3,283
1725	10,297	3,860	-	3,368	32.7	6,929

1726	11,703	1,787	2,325	4,112	35.1	7,591
1727	3,876	942	613	1,555	40.1	2,321
1728	5,350	0	986	986	18.4	4,364
1729	10,499	392	4,428	4,820	45.9	5,679
1730	10,104	2,970	2,252	5,222	51.7	4,882
1731	10,079	4,520	1,188	5,708	56.6	4,371
1732	13,552	3,297	1,991	5,288	39.0	8,264
1733	7,413	2,184	2,992	5,176	69.8	2,237
1734	4,570	1,481	185	1,666	36.5	2,904
1735	4,851	1,787	473	2,260	46.6	2,591
1736	3,913	1,891	-	1,647	42.1	2,266
1737	8,995	979	1,261	2,240	24.9	6,755
1738	7,695	688	1,382	2,070	26.9	5,625
1739	6,787	288	310	598	8.8	6,189
1740	5,362		495	495	9.2	4,867
1741	4,255		562	562	13.2	3,693
1742	5,067		792	792	15.6	4,275
1743	8,926		1,368	1,368	15.3	7,558
1744	8,755		1,331	1,331	15.2	7,424
1745	3,843		1,344	1,344	35.0	2,499
1746	4,703		1,502	1,502	31.9	3,201
1747	10,898		3,378	3,378	31.0	7,520
1748	10,430		2,426	2,426	23.3	8,004
1749	6,858		2,128	2,128	31.0	4,730
1750	3,587		721	721	20.1	2,866
1751	4,840		713	713	14.7	4,127
1752	6,117		1,038	1,038	17.0	5,079
1753	7,661		902	902	11.8	6,759
1754	9,551		1,592	1,592	16.7	7,959
1755	12,723		598	598	4.7	12,125
1756	11,166		1,902	1,902	17.0	9,264
1757	7,935		943	943	11.9	6,992
1758	3,405		411	411	12.1	2,994
1759	5,212		681	681	13.1	4,531
1760	7,573		2,368	2,368	31.3	5,205
1761	6,480		642	642	9.9	5,838
1762	6,279		232	232	3.7	6,047
1763	10,079		1,582	1,582	15.7	8,497

1764	10,213		2,639	2,639	25.8	7,574
1765	8,951		2,006	2,006	22.4	6,945
1766	10,208		672	672	6.6	9,536
1767	5,278		923	923	17.5	4,355
1768	5,950		485	485	8.2	5,465
1769	3,575		420	420	11.7	3,155
1770	6,824		836	836	12.3	5,988
1771	4,183		671	671	16.0	3,512
1772	5,278		923	923	17.5	4,355
1773	9,676		800	800	8.3	8,876
1774	18,848		2,511	2,511	13.3	15,937
1775	9,292		1,629	1,629	17.5	7,663
<b>Totals</b>	<b>497,726</b>	<b>41,104</b>	<b>95,863</b>	<b>136,967</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>360,759</b>

<sup>i</sup> These figures are taken from “Appendix to a memorial from Stephen Fuller, Agent for Jamaica, to the Board of Trade,” January 30, 1778, CO 137/38, TNA. The list was drawn from records kept by the colony’s government to assess the import and export duties levied on slaves by the Assembly, though it probably underreports the number exported as likely traders sought to avoid paying the duties. The report is quite accurate in the picture it gives of the Jamaican slave trade. According to the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org>) 498,197 slaves were imported into Jamaica in the period 1702-1775 while Fuller’s report lists 497,726, a difference of only 0.09%.

<sup>ii</sup> These values are taken from Colin Palmer, *Human Cargoes: The British Slave Trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 120, Table 20. Those years, such as 1718, when the Company is listed as exporting more slaves than were re-exported in total were years when the Company had successfully avoiding paying duties on the slaves in Jamaica. They were thus not recorded in the island’s records.

<sup>iii</sup> Calculated by subtracting the South Sea Company’s recorded slave exports from the total number of exports provided by Fuller.

## Appendix C

### Figure C.1

British Ships seized by *guardacostas* and the Spanish Navy in peacetime, 1713-60

#### Spanish-American Port Taken To

	Havana	Santiago de Cuba	Trinidad	Baracoa	Sancti Spiritus	Puerto Rico	Santo Domingo	Cartagena	Other <sup>i</sup>	Plundered	Unknown/ Burnt	<b>Total</b>
1713 <sup>ii</sup>			1			1	1		1			4
1714		5						1	1	1	1	9
1715		2	4				2	2	2			12
1716	21	4	10		1			1	2		21 <sup>iii</sup>	39
1717	3		2						2	3		10
1718 <sup>ii</sup>			1					1				2
1720 <sup>ii</sup>	3		2								2	7
1721			2	1							1	4
1722	2		1	1		1	1				1	7
1723						1			1	3		5
1724									1		1	2
1725	1						2	1		1		5
1726												0
1727 <sup>ii</sup>					1						1	2
1728						1	1				3	5
1729		1		4		2	1		1		14	23
1730		1				1			1	7	3	13
1731				3		1			2	8	1	15



1732						1				1		2
1733		1				1		4	2	3	1	12
1734						1				1		2
1735	1					3				2		6
1736	2									2		4
1737	6	2				3				6		17
1738	3											3
1739 <sup>ii</sup>									1			1
												0
1748 <sup>ii</sup>	1	6				4			2			13
1749	2		1									3
1750	6		1				4	4	3	2	5	25
1751			2				3				1	6
1752	3	3	1					1	2		3	13
1753	1		2				1	1			2	7
1754	1								1			2
1755						5						5
1756	2	1				4			1		3	11
1757		1	1					1			2	5
1758	1										1	2
1759	1								1			2
1760								1	1			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>307</b>

<sup>i</sup> Included in the category of “Other” are Veracruz (2), Campeche (6), Portobello (3), Rio de la Hacha (3), Venezuela (10), Margarita (2), and Saint Augustine (2).

<sup>ii</sup> For these years, only the captures made either before war was declared or after the peace treaty reached the Caribbean have been included.

<sup>iii</sup> Twenty of these vessels were seized when the Spanish raided the logwood cutting camps in the Bay of Campeche in August of 1716. A number were burnt, and the port to which the rest were carried is unknown.

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