From violence to alliance: Maroons and white settlers in Jamaica, 1739–1795

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ABSTRACT

During the First Maroon War, violent battles between Maroons and British colonists were frequent and violent. How then, after the peace treaties, did former enemies negotiate their new positions as allies? How did colonists accept this new status quo while balancing it with racial beliefs of the era? This article examines Maroon and colonist efforts to progress in a physically difficult and socially charged environment while living side-by-side with a large enslaved population. Ultimately, some influential planters, as opposed to poorer settlers, came to recognise the mutual benefits this uneasy peace provided. That is not to say these colonists were not fearful of the Maroons but that they recognised the usefulness of the Maroon communities.

In 1795, shortly before the Second Maroon War, a Jamaican planter called Vaughan, whose estate adjoined Maroon lands, told a fellow planter, Isaac Lascelles Winn, that a group of Trelawny Town Maroons wished to attack their superintendent, Thomas Craskell, without any apparent provocation. Whilst we may have expected such a claim to spread throughout planter society, there actually is little evidence of it doing so. Instead, men such as Winn branded Vaughan’s assertions as ‘totally repugnant’ made only to inflame the tensions with Maroon communities. In Winn’s eyes, Vaughan was an ‘ignorant incredulous babbling creature’ on whose report ‘no confidence can be placed.’

The exchange between Vaughan and Winn brings to light a previously unexplored area of Maroon history: the often uneasy but enduring alliance of certain local planters and Maroons between the First and Second Maroon Wars. The Maroons of Jamaica, rather than being a homogenous group, were and still are situated in several towns, chiefly Trelawny Town, Accompong, Charles Town, Scotts Hall, and Moore Town. Their origins as distinct from the rest of the Jamaican population can be traced to the pre-British era of Jamaican history. Most scholars place their inception as more coherent communities at
1655 – when the British took control of Jamaica from the Spanish. Often fleeing with their Spanish masters, these former slaves took to the mountainous interior and formed groups which survived British colonisation. What followed was an ongoing battle with the British for the next eight decades. Unable to defeat the Maroon communities militarily, the British sued for peace in 1739 (Figure 1).

As part of the peace treaties, one signed with Cudjoe in the west and another subsequently signed with Quao in the east, Maroons agreed to hunt and return future runaway slaves and, amongst other things, aid the suppression of internal and external threats. In return, the British recognised Maroon freedom, granted the communities land in the interior and allowed Maroons to sustain themselves through small-scale trading at markets supplemented by the hunting of wild boar. The exploitative terms of the treaties mask reality: it was the British who sued for peace and while many Maroons may have been war-weary, they did not submit as a defeated people. This article suggests that many colonists were very much aware of this and came to rely on the Maroons for protection as mutual recognition of the benefits of an alliance emerged.

Much previous work on Maroon history, whether discussing Jamaican communities or otherwise, tends to focus on the so-called betrayal of the slaves. Alternatively, many studies address the pre-treaty years and the ongoing warfare between Maroons and colonists, alliances with enslaved populations and the ethnogenesis of Maroon societies. Whilst all are relevant and necessary topics to examine, this article analyses a different aspect of Maroon life: one which is not a tale of resistance, or at least not in its traditional form, or of a betrayal of the so-called brethren of the Maroons. This article brings to light the encounters and alliances between Maroons in Jamaica and local white settlers who lived near their territories from the time the peace treaties were signed.
signed in 1739 until the Second Maroon War in 1795. This work differs from many others since it investigates why a historical experience, in this case violence, was lacking rather than analysing why it was present.

This article argues that, despite the previous warfare and the inflammatory terms of the peace treaties, certain Maroons and influential local white planters created a relationship in these inter-war years. Unlike on other frontiers, such as that between the United States and indigenous communities of North America or that between settlers and indigenous communities in Australia, encounters between Maroons and whites were notable for their lack of violence and, on several occasions, could even be amicable and social. There is no evidence of violent clashes over land, no instances of kidnapping, and retribution for crimes was seemingly non-existent. What did occur was increased security for local whites, both for themselves and their property, mutual curiosity of cultures, Maroon children named after local whites, and local white intervention in the colonial government’s control of the Maroons. This lack of violence is particularly surprising for two reasons. The first is that many similar interactions between white European colonists and free, non-white communities in other regions have been characterised by violence. The second is that Jamaica has been shown to have been a particularly violent society in the eighteenth century, characterised by severe punishment, armed skirmishes and a strikingly high mortality rate.

Outside Jamaica, Flávio dos Santos Gomes has argued that Brazilian Maroons, as well as Maroon communities in general, preferred to make alliances with impoverished white overseers rather than wealthy estate owners. Similarly, N.A.T. Hall contends that poor whites in the Danish West Indies provided shelter for so-called maritime Maroons as opposed to wealthier Danes. The evidence presented here contradicts these arguments. Consistently throughout the examples in this article, it is a group of extremely wealthy and influential Jamaican planters, such as John Tharp, who had the closest relations with Maroon communities. It is not hard to understand why Maroons may have been more eager to form alliances or relationships with these planters rather than overseers, or indeed with slaves themselves. Amicable interactions with white society, and with wealthy planters in particular, would have helped to achieve the goal of creating a unified Maroon identity. By allying with local white planters, Maroons distanced themselves from their former identities as the enemies of the colony and re-characterised themselves as associates of the elite of Jamaican society. Likewise, established planters in Jamaica with several estates had far more to lose from unrest on the island than overseers and managers.

However, whilst the vast majority of the documentary record supports the hypothesis that wealthy planters allied with Maroons, one reason for this was that such men were more likely to leave behind a written trail. Further, whilst there was clearly sustained support from such a group of men, there is also
evidence that whites of slightly lower social status, such as Thomas Thistlewood and Job Williams, participated in non-violent interactions. Geography was also important. Support for Maroons seems to have come largely from colonists in the west of the island, particularly in the northern parishes of St. James and Trelawny.

Before discussing these interactions, it is necessary to explore the typical contexts in which Maroons and white Jamaicans found themselves in contact. These situations were many and varied. In the early years following the formal conclusion of hostilities, non-violent disputes over land featured regularly and often involved one side contacting the colonial government for mediation. For example, in the mid-1750s, an internal dispute led Trelawny Town, situated in the western Cockpit Country of the island, to split into two communities. One faction, led by Furry, left with him to establish a new settlement called Furry’s Town while the rest stayed in the original town. However, Furry’s Town was said to be on the property of a white man, Dr Hardyman, who demanded in an appeal to the colonial government that Furry’s Maroons vacate his property. Furry and his followers agreed to do so and returned to land within the boundaries of Trelawny Town, setting up a ‘New Town’ to stay distinct. In compensation, Hardyman offered Furry a rather generous sum of £50.11 This inflammatory matter was handled without violence and a solution was found, albeit one that involved Maroon submission. However, the fact that compensation was given to Furry’s Maroons suggests that the situation was different than the usual exploitation of non-whites by whites in Jamaica and that the horrors of the First Maroon War were still fresh in the memories of many Jamaican colonists. It is possible that Hardyman hoped to avoid bloodshed by compensating the splinter group.

One of the few examples of violence occurred in 1754 in Crawford Town, the community which became Charles Town in the east of the island. The account of this event is rather fragmentary but mentions Crawford Town being burnt by ‘rebellious Negroes,’ and one of the white officers, Edward Crawford, was killed. William Kennedy and Richard Godfrey, both whites, made claims for losses they sustained in this affray. The superintendent, John Kelly, swore that after the murder of Crawford, when the town was burnt, he also sustained losses amounting to £63.4.6.12 This violence, however, was borne out of an internal Maroon dispute in which a Maroon, Quao, attempted to overthrow the leadership of Captain Ned Crawford and was not directed towards white society. The colonial government certainly did not take this as an act of violence towards the colony and quickly pardoned Quao and his followers.13 This move perhaps highlights the fear that many colonists and the colonial government still had of the Maroons. The attempted coup occurred only a few years after peace was concluded and the government had thus far little guarantee of the Maroons’ allegiance.

Following the Crawford uprising, Maroons from what became Charles Town settled on lands in the east of the island where there were no white settlers
adjoining them, hence ‘they were able to raise large quantities of goats, hogs and other stock, so as to live very comfortably.’ However, this tranquil setting was to change. Writing in 1776, George Gray and ‘other Maroon Negroes of Charles Town’ stated that within ‘these few years past,’ several sugar works and other plantations had been settled near their town, and upon the lands where their stock used to range. Consequently, they could not raise stock of any kind without encroaching on the neighbouring plantations, as the land allotted to them was ‘steep and hilly.’ According to Gray, this resulted in disputes between them and white settlers. Maroon stock trespassed on the cane pieces, while the cattle of the white settlers ruined Maroon provision grounds.14 The Charles Town Maroons claimed to strive for a peaceful end to this particular dispute, saying they did not wish to put the country to further expense. A ‘run of land’ on either side of the Spanish River, about six miles from their present town, was offered to them in exchange. Situated as it was, the Maroons felt this land would enable them to raise stock without inconvenience to themselves, and there would be no trespassing on their neighbours’ land. They pointed out that this would remove every cause of ‘murmurings and disputes’ about stock trespassing which is ‘now too frequent between them and the white settlers in their neighbourhood,’ which had not yet turned violent but could have done had the ‘murmurings’ continued.15

The petition of George Gray highlights how white settlement had moved inland as the mid-eighteenth century progressed and placed increasing pressure on the borders of Maroon territory. Wandering stock was a difficult problem as both sides seemingly used lands outside of their official territory for grazing. However, rather than this descending into a situation which provoked violent retaliation, as was so often the case in other contexts, a solution was found which seemed acceptable to both the Charles Town Maroons and the affected colonists.16 This case suggests that, in the years directly after the conclusion of formal hostilities, both local whites and Maroons were determined to preserve the tranquillity of their relations. The petitioning Maroons do not seem to have taken the trespassing as the first step in the acquisition of their lands by local whites, as was the case in other societies.17 At this point, both government representatives and local settlers seemed to work together to solve disputes with Maroon communities. Indeed, the claim of ‘disputes and murmurings’ could have been a Maroon strategy to gain more valuable land whilst promoting good relations with neighbouring colonists, rather than provoking violent retaliation.

Non-violent dispute resolution was once again utilised in 1770 when Tre-lawny Town complained that a ‘great part of that [their land] which was run out for them, is rocks and cockpits.’18 Therefore, according to the source, they had taken to encroaching on the lands of a nearby planter. Apparently, the dispute was settled by the intervention of another white man, the custos of St. James, John Palmer, and some other gentlemen, even though in the eyes of the English, ‘there is no doubt that Maroons were encroaching.’19 In a further
incident, when a survey of Charles Town was taken, it was discovered that the
town was occupying 94 acres of land belonging to the Kildair property. The
Maroons, having possessed it, were ‘unwilling to give [it] up, having their pro-
visions chiefly upon that land; therefore,’ the superintendent wrote, ‘in order to
pacify the Maroons, I was under the necessity of stopping [stopping] Mr. Graham,
the surveyor, from proceeding upon the lines, till a fair statement of their claims,
should be laid before Your Honour.’ The archival evidence does not reveal how
this event ended but Mavis Campbell has claimed that it was likely that a local
man helped to settle it peacefully. What is evident from these examples,
however, is that the relationship between the colonial government and
Maroons was growing increasingly strained, and it often fell to local planters
to intervene to prevent disputes turning violent.

Planter negotiation was also evident into the 1780s. In 1781, a group of
Maroons settled on lands belonging to Charles Douglas. Douglas objected to
this and talks were opened to resolve the issue. Douglas said that he would
give the lands up if, in return, the Maroons would give him an equal quantity
to the northeast where he had another plot – to which the Maroons agreed.
Two surveyors were appointed, one by the colonial government and, impor-
tantly, one by the Maroons. The Douglas case is yet another example of nego-
tiation between Maroons and settlers to find a solution beneficial to both sides.
In this example, Maroons were even allowed to appoint their own surveyors to
assess disputed land boundaries and surveyors were not simply imposed upon
them by government officials. It is important to note, however, that such
planter negotiation was not likely to be for altruistic reasons. If planters could
see more of a benefit from removing Maroons from the land, then they would
more often than not have attempted to do so.

The year 1781 also marked the time when certain Maroons became less
willing to negotiate disputes with planters. In December 1781, John Cosens
lodged a petition explaining that he wanted to clarify the boundaries of his
land. He employed surveyors to ascertain the limits but a group of Moore
Town Maroons prevented them from proceeding. It seems that this could
have been more a result of necessity than of belligerence. A committee employed
to review the case said it appeared that Moore Town was entitled to 1000 acres in
the peace treaties but only 500 had been granted and laid out. Clearly, Moore
Town believed this land belonged to them and they were willing to prevent it
being taken. However, as the formation of the committee shows, the whites
who investigated the dispute did not simply take Cosens’ word. The committee
ruled that the Maroons were encroaching but recommended no action be taken
because they had been living on those lands for 40 years. Yet again, there is a
situation which was investigated and, whilst not accepting of the Maroon rights
to the land, there was no attempt to remove them from the disputed territory.

Even into the 1790s, when, following the outbreak of the Haitian Revolution,
planters may have had more reason to fear the Maroons, violence still did not
characterise land disputes. However, some Maroons continued to act more bellicerently by refusing to find solutions to disputes. In 1793, David Schaw complained that the Maroons’ stock was continually trespassing on his and his slaves’ provision grounds. Schaw claimed that, thus far, he had not been able to procure the assistance of the Maroons in making a dividing fence, and he was obliged to ‘throw up the whole of those grounds to the material injury of himself and slaves.’\(^{25}\) Once again, this was a case which did not turn violent. Schaw’s response to the Maroons’ apathy regarding the fence was to write a petition, but no Maroon assistance was acquired in building a fence. That neither the colonial government nor Schaw himself was able to procure their assistance shows that it was becoming difficult for some planters to negotiate disputes with the Maroons. As will be shown later in the article, it was increasingly only a select group of planters who were able to talk with the Maroons.

It is clear that land disputes, albeit ones which did not result in violence, occurred between Maroons and local whites throughout this period but what caused them? Aside from certain individuals not recognising the boundary lines of other groups, one of the primary causes was the confusion over the size of the land granted in the peace treaties. Cudjoe’s treaty explicitly stated that he and his followers were to be given 1500 acres but Quao’s said only that they were to be given a ‘certain quantity’ of land to raise the same cash crops as stipulated in Cudjoe’s.\(^ {26}\) This ambiguity lent itself to flexible interpretations by both the Maroons and the authorities.\(^ {27}\) On a more individual level, it is also possible that certain planters came to an agreement with Maroon towns over the informal boundaries between settlements. Maroons and whites alike may then have assumed these agreements were valid with other estates.

A further cause was that surveys ordered to ascertain territorial boundaries could be delayed for decades, meaning neither side knew who the land truly belonged to. For example, in 1751 a motion was passed by the Assembly recommending that the lands adjoining Scotts Hall be used for the settling of white families. By the following month, an agreement had been made to purchase ‘nearby land called Scotts Hall,’ some 500 acres, for £600. This was executed in November 1751, but the land was not officially surveyed until 1775.\(^ {28}\) For almost 25 years, no one knew whom the land was allotted to and thus disputes easily occurred. This implies that land encroachment was not a pre-meditated policy of white settlers or Maroons to gain more land but was perhaps more a policy of the colonial government to indirectly put pressure on Maroon communities by refusing to properly survey lands granted to the Maroons in the treaties. It may have suited the colonial government to have confusion over land boundaries as small-scale, non-violent disagreements kept the Maroons occupied and therefore less of a threat. However, such disagreements may have also suited the Maroons as they could use the lack of clarity to negotiate and swap lands for areas more useful to them – as was the case with the Charles Town Maroons.
Perhaps a more pertinent question is why did these disagreements over land never escalate to the scale seen in other areas across the colonial world? Violent clashes did not break out over land because, despite Alvin O. Thompson’s claim to the contrary, it appears that white settlers after the peace treaties generally did not place much emphasis on gaining the land that Maroons actually held. Clearly, Jamaican whites wished to colonise and settle the vast majority of the island. Indeed, General Walpole stated in the 1790s that sugar plantations nearly encircled the Trelawny Town lands and ‘every where encroach upon the base of these mountains.’ However, the lands that Maroons held were of poor quality for growing many crops, and colonists most likely felt that the protection Maroons provided to the island was far more valuable than acquiring some rocky outcrops.

In addition to this, Jamaican whites still had plenty of available land in Jamaica to expand into rather than strip their Maroon allies of what little land they held. Bryan Edwards claimed that Jamaica had 4 million acres of land, of which 3 ¾ million was cultivable, yet only one-quarter was actually under cultivation. Edward Long further stated that 80,000 acres in St. Elizabeth and 100,000 acres in St. James, both parishes bordering Maroon territory, were still not being cultivated in the mid-eighteenth century. This shows that Jamaica had an abundance of land available if the planters desired it. The land that was desirable to the white planters was the low-lying, flat land good for sugar cultivation, not the mountainous rocky interior the Maroons inhabited. Maroon lands were not even particularly useful for other purposes, such as plantation provision grounds, being in such an over-worked and exhausted condition.

The evidence of Edwards and Long contradicts Michael Craton’s theory that the Maroons were hemmed in, or at least leads us to question the extent to which that was the case. Parts of the island which were supposed to have been settled extensively following the peace treaties with the Maroons still had not seen significant expansion by the 1770s. The colonial government deemed the situation to be unsatisfactory enough that Acts had to be passed encouraging settlement of the vacant lands. For example, in Portland in 1776, the colonial government agreed to grant each person a quantity of land ‘not exceeding 500 acres,’ in proportion to the number of slaves and white men they were willing to bring with them. An Act such as this would have been redundant if the area had been settled to the extent that the colonial government had envisioned. The same was true in the west of the island. Following the American Revolution, Loyalist planters fled the 13 former colonies, with many arriving in Jamaica. The colonial government debated how to provide for them and it was suggested that they be given lands in St. Elizabeth. There were rumours of unclaimed crown lands stretching across 20,000 acres or more – land which would be perfect for growing sugarcane. Undoubtedly, there had been an expansion of sugar plantations across Jamaica; prior to the peace treaties, St. George had only four small sugar plantations but 60 had been established by the 1750s. However, the
evidence suggests that the image of Maroons being confined to their land like ‘reservations’ seems inaccurate.\(^{37}\) Local whites had acres of land to expand into if they so wished without taking Maroon land.

Despite this abundance of land, white Jamaicans would most likely have still advocated stripping Maroons of their small landholdings if they had not been turned into an effective security force. As it was, Maroons often provided such protection to white Jamaicans that the colonists wanted to avoid any event which would remove this protection. The importance of this is demonstrated by Edward Long who remarked that when Moore Town moved to new territory in 1768, it was ‘much better situated’ for giving ‘speedy protection’ to the estates on each side of the Rio Grande.\(^{38}\) In fact, Long went on to claim that some planters went as far as making secret deals with the Maroons, paying them a sort of retainer to protect their properties.\(^{39}\) Lord Balcarres, Governor of Jamaica during the Second Maroon War, echoed Long in identifying planters as paying ‘protection money’ to the Maroons to safeguard their properties.\(^{40}\) This reliance on the Maroons was unsurprising given the precarious position of the sugar islands. The sugar islands’ free populations were too small to provide an adequate militia, thus leaving them vulnerable to attack.\(^{41}\) The planters looked for alternative solutions and realised that the Maroons could offer something which was hard to find elsewhere – defence against the large enslaved population. Once the peace treaties had been signed, enough land was opened up to satisfy the colonists. More important in the inter-war period was ensuring those lands were safe to grow sugar and to live on.

A further reason which may have contributed to certain planters and Maroons negotiating disputes is that Maroons and local whites interacted in a social context as well. According to Michael Mullin, whites witnessed Maroon dances and other ceremonies, enjoyed their hospitality and slept with and married some of their women.\(^{42}\) Mullin further claims that white visitors were aware that they would be welcome in Trelawny Town whilst Cudjoe was alive because ‘A rule with Cudjoe was, “always, never to provoke whites.”’\(^{43}\) It seems unlikely that this was because Cudjoe was fearful of the whites, but rather that he could see the benefits of non-violent co-existence with them. Some whites were even said to have responded to this amicable stance by learning the Maroons’ Kromanti language.\(^{44}\)

In addition to these social interactions, some Maroons named their children after prominent planters in the area. For example, the leader of the Trelawny Maroons at the outbreak of the Second Maroon War was Montague James. Other examples of Maroon names are found in a letter signed in 1796, following the conclusion of the war. Names of prominent colonists from Trelawny and St. James, including Shaw, Bayley, and James, feature throughout.\(^{45}\) Carey Robinson argues that this act could have been a client’s acknowledgement of the patron or it could have been a mere ploy: an attempt to flatter prominent colonists into supporting the Maroons and becoming their advocates.\(^{46}\)
Campbell posits that this practice can be traced back to Africa where a common tradition was to choose the name of an authority figure or that of a respected individual as a sign of respect. Conversely, Trevor Burnard has argued that freed slaves frequently chose to abandon African names in favour of English ones upon their manumission. Names of African origin had generally lost their connection with Africa and become more associated with slavery in both black and white minds. African names, notably Quashie and Sambo, became reminders more of their humiliations than their proud African past. If Maroons felt the same, it is likely they too would abandon African names, particularly as the ethnogenesis of the communities led them to distance themselves from an enslaved status. However, it is notable that Maroons chose the names of prominent local planters from areas close to their territories. Whether Maroons were doing this to curry favour with local whites or as a genuine sign of respect, the act demonstrates a certain degree of familiarity between the two following the First Maroon War and a desire to promote mutually beneficial relations.

The majority of the other interactions uncovered in the archival record are also notable for their lack of violence. Thomas Thistlewood, the infamous Jamaican planter, frequently came across the ‘wild Negroes’ in search of prize money on the roads of Westmoreland parish and described an encounter with Cudjoe in May 1750 on the road to St. James. He wrote he ‘met Colonel Cudjoe, one of his wives, one of his sons, a Lieutenant and other attendants.’ Cudjoe shook Thistlewood by the hand ‘and begged a dram of us, which we gave him. He brought to my memory the picture of Robinson Crusoe.’ Again in early 1751, Thistlewood met another Maroon leader, Accompong. The Maroon wore ‘a ruffled shirt, blue broad cloth coat, scarlet cuff to his sleeves, gold buttons, & he had with [that] white cap, and black hat, white linen breeches puffed at the rims.’ Maroon captains in military dress were familiar sights around the island, even into the 1790s and 1800s. R.C. Dallas noted that chiefs ‘wore a kind of regimentals,’ and ‘some old military coat finely laced … with this … a ruffled shirt, linen waistcoat and trousers, and a laced hat.’ Thus dressed, Kathleen Wilson states, Maroon captains and their men became distinctive figures, roaming across plantations with their rifles in hand, selling their game in the markets of Kingston and Spanish Town or sailing to offshore islands to search for runaways.

On another occasion in 1753, Thistlewood met with Cudjoe ‘just by the Styx Bridge and shook him by the hand.’ Later, Thistlewood wrote of a time at his plantation, Egypt, when two of Cudjoe’s men who, on a furlough for nine days, stopped in and drank some punch. These instances show the extent to which Maroons were integrated into colonial society. Interactions were not just limited to hunting slave runaways but took place on a social and personal level as well. Maroons were even said to spend the night at plantations near to their lands. Two Maroons stayed the evening at Thomas Thistlewood’s plantation, being allowed to ‘sleep in the cookroom for the night.’ Thistlewood even dined
with some Maroons on his estate. In 1760, at the height of the terror caused by Tacky’s rebellion, he entertained Colonel Witter, Mr Cope, and four other white men alongside Cudjoe and Quao. Thistlewood’s interactions with Maroons are fascinating in light of his brutal treatment of slaves. It is hard to understand how Jamaican planters reconciled their deep-seated racism with their behaviour towards Maroons. Thistlewood liked to consider himself as an enlightened thinker and possibly thought of his interactions with Maroons such as Cudjoe as part of his scientific curiosity. He may also have entertained the famous Maroon leader to express his interest in the exotic. Short of any statement from such planters, we will never know. These examples, however, do show that Maroons, in the eyes of some colonists, were distinct from the enslaved population and warranted different treatment.

In other ways, it is unsurprising that powerful white men in Jamaica negotiated with powerful Maroon leaders; after all, this was a process replicated in many encounters with African kings, tribal leaders and wealthy merchants in African trading zones. In a time when slavery was not yet thought of as scientific, and therefore Africans were not considered congenitally inferior to Europeans, many colonists across the empire were willing to work with influential Africans in order to make economic and political gains. What is surprising, however, is that this negotiated alliance did not break out into violence in over half a century. When compared to similar interactions in African contexts, the Jamaican Maroons’ uneasy alliance with colonists is all the more remarkable. For example, absent are the violent skirmishes that broke out between the Ndebele and Rhodesian colonists after a period of alliance.

It was, of course, not just Maroon men with which colonists interacted. The archival record also offers fleeting mentions of times European men and Maroon women were in contact. As with most records dealing with African women in the Caribbean, the references available stem from sexual relations between the two groups. Following the outbreak of the Second Maroon War, the colonial government offered Maroons the opportunity to relinquish their Maroon identity and live as free people in Jamaica. Following this call, 10 Maroon women gave up their rights. With them, 10 mulatto children and 4 quadroon children relinquished their identity. Mavis Campbell lists a further 22 people who gave up their Maroon status in 1796. Of those 22, all except 7 women were mixed blood. Of those seven, three had liaised with white men and had produced mulatto children. Such examples demonstrate the sexual contact between colonists and Maroon women. These women may not have been coerced into these sexual relations in the same way that slave women were, but it is still most likely that they were pressured into these acts, whether by Maroon and/or colonial society, their economic situation, or by members of their own family. It is clear that simply being a free woman, whether black or white, did not curtail the opportunities for men to exploit and coerce women into sexual relations. Scholars must not only look to other examples of rape and sexual exploitation
in colonial settings to understand that a woman ‘voluntarily’ leaving her community to live with a white man may actually have been coercion.61

Personal interactions did not just take a sexual form; they also took place in the context of employee and employer. The most notorious was that of hunting runaways. The details of this have been discussed elsewhere but it is necessary to briefly explore how these acts were perceived by whites in order to assess their relationships with Maroons.62 There is certainly evidence from white settlers themselves that they relied on the Maroons for this activity throughout the eighteenth century. Thomas Thistlewood wrote in February 1754 that a white man with ‘wild negroes “armed” called to beg refreshment because they were hunting “Woodcock’s Negroes.”’63 This in itself is interesting because it reveals that white men also went out on the hunt with the Maroons – further evidence of the closeness of contact between Maroons and settlers.

Maroons were not only called out to hunt small groups of runaways, but were also summoned when slave revolt broke out. This was the case in 1760 when a large number of slaves, led by Tacky, rose in rebellion in St. Mary in the north central part of the island. The rebellious slaves caused terror throughout colonial society by killing whites across the parishes.64 On 10 April, the Lieutenant Governor wrote that he ‘had sent Expresses to the Commanding Officers of Crawford Town, Nanny Town, and Scots Hall with Orders to March Immediately a company from each place.’65 The Maroons were mustered and headed straight to the scenes of the battles.66 They encountered Tacky and his band apparently wandering in the woods and the Maroons ‘immediately pursued’ the slaves in ‘full cry.’ The chase was of ‘no long duration’ and Tacky was shot through the head.67 Tacky’s rebellion represented one of the largest threats to Jamaican society and it is widely accepted that it was a Maroon who nullified that threat.68

Planter-historians are divided over whether the Maroons played a significant role in quelling other skirmishes during Tacky’s revolt. Edward Long believed that the Maroons were the ‘principal instruments’ in suppressing the insurrection.69 On the other hand, Bryan Edwards claimed that the Maroon role in parts of the 1760 rebellion has been overstated.70 He does not dispute the fact that Tacky was killed by a Maroon but contends that, on other occasions, parties of Maroons arrived ‘two or three days’ after an outbreak, leaving it to colonial troops to defeat the rebels in skirmishes such as one at Heywood Hall. Regardless of which view was most representative of wider colonial society, the actions of the Maroons in Tacky’s Rebellion demonstrated their adherence to the treaty terms in what was the first real threat to Jamaican society since the peace treaties. It not only proved to colonists that Maroons would ally with them in times of rebellion, but that they also would do so when the threat came from the enslaved population.

Following Tacky’s Rebellion, Maroons were employed to hunt runaways so extensively by white Jamaicans that the Maroons came to be used almost as a police force. In 1763, Cudjoe’s men chased 11 runaways, killed three and took
the rest who were tried at Savanna-la-Mar. Some of the runaways were hanged and others burnt alive ‘by a slow fire behind the Court House’ because they allegedly confessed to the murders of a Mr Wright and Mr Grizzle at Round Hill in Hanover. Further examples of Maroons hunting runaways in the eighteenth century can be found throughout the archives. However, white settlers were not just reliant on the Maroons’ martial assistance; on occasion, Maroons were even said to provide them with information on slave runaways or uprisings. Thislewood claimed that, long before one small rebellion, Colonel Cudjoe ‘wrote to Col. Barclay & the Gentlemen of this parish … to warn them of this that has happened.’ The relationship between some planters and Maroons seems to have gone beyond employment to one of providing intelligence on the enslaved population. In the process of uniting under a Maroon identity, it seems clear that Maroons were aligning themselves closest to local whites. Indeed, when Three Fingered Jack threatened the colony between 1780 and 1781, it was a Maroon who captured and killed him, eventually claiming £200 as a reward.

Maroons were also employed by colonists in other ways: for example, some Maroons hired themselves out to planters to clear and plant large tracts of land. This began to happen so often that a law was enacted to ensure payment to the Maroons. Bryan Edwards remarks that a Mr Gowdie hired one of the Trelawny Town Maroons to work for him, showing no difference in wages to those that he would have paid to a white overseer. The Maroon historian, Bev Carey, points out a similar circumstance when she says that Maroons offered themselves for hire to planters, settling on their back lands as an act of convenience to be near their employment but being selective as to what kind of work they undertook. These examples show a degree of interaction with white society but, perhaps more importantly, they suggest a labour relationship which was not based on compulsion.

Despite all of these peaceful negotiations over land, social interactions, and assistance in hunting runaways, some white settlers were becoming increasingly wary of the Maroons. In 1791, one planter feared that ‘It is equally in the power of a few Maroons as of the whole body of them, to burn down the cane pieces.’ Tensions were clearly beginning to rise after numerous inflammatory laws were introduced earlier in 1791 to curtail the freedom of Maroons. The fire finally ignited when two Maroons were whipped by slaves on the instruction of magistrates for the stealing of hogs. After open hostilities broke out in the form of the Second Maroon War, planters continued to express concern at the potential actions of the Maroons. One wrote that the Maroons’ power of ‘doing mischief is almost unbounded and I do not see that an army of 20,000 men could prevent it.’ Even after all the years of putting down slave rebellions and seemingly cordial relations, many planters still feared the Maroon threat.

There was, however, a certain group of planters who had continued their close relations with some Maroons and intervened when hostilities did break out in the Second Maroon War of 1795. The local whites of St. James said that they
thought it best to appease the Maroons by promising that their causes of complaint would be enquired into by the Legislature. The fear rampant in other parts of colonial society did not prevent four local magistrates from travelling to Trelawny Town to talk with the Maroons in an attempt to prevent further conflict in the days leading up to the Second Maroon War. Various magistrates in St. James proposed to send ‘four … justices to meet four chosen Maroons’ to settle all disputes. However, the Maroons did not welcome the magistrates in the cordial manner that was expected. James Merody, who was assistant to Thomas Craskell, then superintendent of the Trelawny Town Maroons, deposed that the local men pleaded with the Maroons to surrender themselves early on but the younger Maroons refused and said the militia were fools to think of coming into their woods to fight with them. The Maroons did not appear to be overly aggressive towards the magistrates but their refusal to back down and negotiate shows the extent to which the Maroons had been aggrieved. However, their willingness to meet peacefully with these local magistrates, despite their feelings of discontent, suggests their quarrel was possibly more related to their treatment by the colonial government rather than by individual local planters.

The apparent mutually beneficial alliance between white settlers in nearby parishes and the Maroons was called into question by the events that followed. On 20 July, the Maroons threatened to burn Vaughan’s estates and the estate of Fairfield where their beloved former superintendent Colonel James lived, stating that they desired nothing more than to fight the St. James’ regiment. However, this letter is suspect because one of the initial reasons for the hostility was the desire to reinstate Colonel James as their superintendent; yet, apparently, a few days later they were willing to burn the estate where he lived. Whether the letter was authentic or not, the colonial government took it as a reason to order five regiments of the Cornwall county militia to hold themselves in readiness. Balcarres, then Governor of Jamaica, further claimed in a subsequent letter that ‘They have threatened the destruction of the two plantations nearest them.’ We cannot be sure whether this was a ploy by Balcarres to justify hostilities against the Maroons. Perhaps his statements were true but it is also possible that he claimed that local plantations were under threat in order to gain their alliance in the fight against the Trelawny Maroons.

Even after their attempts to talk with the Maroons were rebuffed, some local whites continued to try and advise the Trelawny Town Maroons. They strongly recommended that the Maroons comply with the Governor to prevent ‘those terrible evils.’ This support shown by a group of local white settlers is repeated throughout the archival evidence. For example, James Palmer, the custos of St. James, regarded the decision to send dragoons to the area as provocative. Further, on 25 July, a senior magistrate about to sail with the fleet from Negril wrote urging that the Maroons’ demands, which he termed ‘not unreasonable,’ be satisfied. Finally, the gentlemen of the area around the Maroon
territory assembled, formed themselves into a council of war and heard the story of the Maroons. They described them as a ‘quiet innocent people’ and said the colonial troops ought to retire. This backing of the Maroons by local whites was sustained throughout the Second Maroon War apparently out of a genuine desire to avoid hostilities.

In private, Balcarres acknowledged there was a split in white society regarding the Maroons. In fact, he was concerned that men such as John James, the former superintendent of Trelawny Town, aimed to lead the Maroons in rebellion to reap rewards for himself. Balcarres said, ‘I think the soul and heart of the country is with me, excepting the two parishes of Trelawny and St. James who are under the absolute sway and dominion of a Major James.’ He claimed that James was a man of considerable property connected by relationship with all of the men in those two parishes. Balcarres accused him of being rebellious but ‘clear sighted enough to perceive that the Maroons with himself at their head, and supported by the negroes, were to give law to this country.’

This split in white society continued even after the conclusion of the Second Maroon War, when there was further support from local settlers for the plight of the Trelawny Town Maroons, despite the violent fighting that had taken place. According to Richard Hart, the decision to transport the ‘Trelawny Maroons out of the island ‘in breach of the treaty’ occasioned ‘surprise and disgust among many white residents.’ This attitude came from some of the most powerful men in Jamaica. John Tharp, for example, one of the largest slave-owners in Jamaica, expressed his disagreement with the deportation. At his death in 1805, his personal estate was worth over £362,000 including 2990 slaves, meaning support for the plight of the Trelawny Maroons came from the very elite of Jamaican society. General Walpole, leader of the colonial forces, also mentioned the ‘violent opposition party’ in Jamaica which asserted that the colonial government had ‘broken faith with the Maroons,’ a view Walpole agreed with. Walpole was so disgusted by the treatment of the Trelawny Town Maroons that he refused a ceremonial sword and 500 guineas granted to him for his achievements, and promptly resigned his commission.

What makes this situation remarkable is that those planters who seemed to recognise the mutual benefits of an alliance were mostly planters from a certain sector of Jamaican society. This contradicts Scott V. Parris’ assertion that the partners of the Maroon societies were underdogs in the economic and political struggles against greater labour and capital-intensive European interests, or what has been called ‘exploitative’ forms of colonial enterprise.

For example, Isaac Lascelles Winn was from an elite family with interests in North America, England, and the Caribbean. His relations, Edward and Henry Lascelles, held seats in the British House of Commons. Winn did not just show an interest in the Maroons. In 1788 he hired the African American Baptist convert Moses Baker to undertake a Christian mission amongst the slaves in western Jamaica. Another colonist who formed relationships with
Maroons was John Palmer who had connections to Rose Hall estate in St. James and also owned other properties on the island, including Palmyra estate. Palmer was not just a landowner; he was also custos of St James. It was such men who voiced the most concern for the plight of the Trelawney Maroons during and after the Second Maroon War.

However, the divide between support and objection was not clearly defined along class lines. Some of the colonists discussed in this article were far removed from the striking wealth of John Tharp. Take, for example, Thomas Thistlewood who was in frequent contact with Maroons. Thistlewood arrived in Jamaica in 1750 and, for the first 17 years, worked primarily as an overseer on a sugar plantation. In 1767, he made the move to plantation owner with his property, Brednut Island Pen. Thistlewood was not from the lowest echelons of society but he was certainly not on a level with men such as John Tharp and John Palmer when it came to wealth and influence. A further example of tolerance of the Maroons from men lower in colonial society comes from the 1730s. The minutes of a meeting of the Assembly held on 7 July 1737 reported that Job Williams, a poor man of St. Ann’s, had refused refreshments to a party from the barracks at Cave River, in Clarendon, who were on the hunt for Maroons declaring that ‘the rebels never hurted him, and that he would not relieve any party sent in pursuit of them.’ Clearly, not all white settlers were in favour of waging war against the Maroons, even in the context of the First Maroon War. Williams and the Maroons had apparently worked out a means of peaceful co-existence. A similar situation occurred in the early 1790s when a letter was written that stated, ‘my brother’s residence bordered on Trelawny Town and his intercourse with the Maroons was always of a friendly nature.’ The author implies in the letter that his brother was not a man of powerful influence and wealth.

Other scholars who have mentioned this local support of the Maroons, albeit briefly, speak of the geographic divisions of the whites. Carey Robinson claims that, at first, some of the colonists on the northern coast of Jamaica who had not been infected by the new wave of panic thought that the Trelawny Maroons had been unfairly treated, but in the general hysteria which soon gripped the island, all voices eventually became united in the belief that they must be brought low. Bev Carey disputes Robinson’s claim that it was the northern colonists who showed initial support to the Maroons. Carey suggests that those on the south coast found the Maroons harmless and opposed the declaration of martial law, but those on the north coast felt threatened. This contrasts with most of the archival evidence which suggests that it was the planters of St. James and Trelawny, both northern parishes, who supported the Maroons and opposed action against them. The view that whites in the northern parishes, rather than the southern parishes, were more sympathetic to the Maroons is supported by a letter written by Balcarres in 1795. He wrote that there is ‘an imperium in imperio, and that is the parishes of St. James and
Trelawny, who at first opposed and thwarted every thing that was done.’ Bal-
carres raged that at all times those planters had opinions of their own, not regu-
lated by those of the Legislature and the other parishes.99

As stated earlier, the motivations for these men’s actions may have been the
security Maroons provided to them, the lack of interest in Maroon lands, or
scientific curiosity, but this would have been true for many other colonists of
the time. Why, then, in the 1790s when the Maroons had lost the support of
the colonial government and other white Jamaicans, did this group of men
from St. James and Trelawny actively argue on behalf of the Maroons? Unfortu-
nately, none of these men have left records explaining their actions. Most likely it
was because of their proximity to the Maroons which meant the security
Maroons provided, in terms of hunting runaways and quelling rebellions, was
most important to them. The mere presence of Maroons in the region would
have had an impact not felt in more urban areas like Kingston and
St. Andrew. According to Richard B. Sheridan, violent protest was nearly
endemic in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Jamaica where outbreaks
occurred on an average of every five years.100 Orlando Patterson termed it a
little more conservatively when he wrote that ‘hardly a decade went by
without a serious, large-scale revolt threatening the entire system.’101 As outlined
elsewhere, the planters certainly had the Maroons to thank for killing notorious
slave leaders such as Tacky and Three Fingered Jack.102 The presence of the
Maroons meant that colonists had a fairly reliable defence force which only
incurred costs when it was actually called out, rather than the running costs
of a standing army. Further, as can be seen in later discussions on the formation
of the West India Regiment, difficult decisions had to be made about whether
former slaves were soldiers and under which conditions and laws they would
serve.103 The benefit of using the Maroons as a defence force was that these dis-
cussions were not as critical. There was no debate as to whether Maroons were
behelden to military law or slave court jurisdiction, as there was with slave regi-
ments.104 In other words, Maroons as soldiers did not present the same social
problems as West India regiments and provided the most effective protection
to plantations closest to their territories.

When it comes to the wealthier, local landowners who had relatively peaceful
interactions with Maroons, it is likely that such men, who were profiting mas-
sively from a stable Jamaica, would have likely recognised that Maroons contrib-
uted significantly to the position they found themselves in. As Barry Higman has
shown, many whites arrived in Jamaica to earn their fortune, making enough
money to move back to England and place the running of their estates in the
hands of managers and overseers.105 In contrast, the men who supported the
Trelawny Maroons were men who had settled in Jamaica and may have felt
they owed more to the Maroon presence than their absentee counterparts. Tran-
siency continued to be a fundamental feature throughout the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries. Jamaica was a place for sojourners, a land in which to
make a quick fortune before heading home to Britain.\textsuperscript{106} Perhaps these planter-settlers held a grudging affinity for Maroons who also called the island home.

This split in white society, whether along class or geographic lines, is not out of character for other areas of Jamaican colonial society. Edward Long spoke of Jamaican colonists ‘wilfully seeking occasions’ to quarrel with their Governors.\textsuperscript{107} Indeed, since there were no real political parties in Jamaica, politically the island was a free-for-all: factions of various groups vying against each other continuously.\textsuperscript{108} Splits in white society were frequent, whether planters fighting for power with merchants, or Spanish Town residents competing with Kingston residents for influence A split in opinion in how to deal with the Maroons is therefore not surprising, but it does highlight another division within colonial society – that of St. James and Trelawny colonists against representatives of other parishes.

The deep-seated racism of many planters, including those wealthy settlers in St. James and Trelawny, at first seems at odds with their behaviour towards Maroons. However, as has been seen in other contexts, certain groups of Europeans were ready or compelled to overlook their partners’ former slave status in forming alliances against common enemies. For example, Robert Nelson Anderson showed how Brazilian Maroons traded with their Portuguese neighbours, exchanging foodstuffs and crafts for arms, munitions, and salt.\textsuperscript{109} White men frequently overcame their differences with black men in other colonial contexts and this was also the case in Jamaica. Aba Karama argued that there were two possible routes that colonial policy could follow: pacification and containment, or suppression and extermination.\textsuperscript{110} It seems that Jamaican society was increasingly split between the two policies, with the St James and Trelawny planters leaning towards pacification and containment. As the population ratio rose to 16 blacks for every white person by the end of the eighteenth century, white fears of black Jamaicans increased and led many to fear the Maroons as well. The St. James and Trelawny planters, however, chose to put their faith in the Maroons who had quelled slave rebellions and contained the communities within their lands.

Such a situation was also likely to have been satisfactory to the majority of Maroons. The Maroons had endured constant warfare from at least 1655, and arguably even longer because of their origins as runaways from Spanish settlements. Theirs was a society that had never had the opportunity to flourish. They had always been free, but it was an uncertain freedom: their settlements constantly had to move and population decline was a recurring problem.\textsuperscript{111} Peace with local whites brought an opportunity to end the persistent strain of being a society incessantly at war. It brought opportunities to solidify their freedom, have safer access to resources, and the chance to form a more stable environment to encourage natural reproduction. Indeed, even after the conclusion of the Second Maroon War, Maroons petitioned the colonial government to request that they be allowed to settle in ‘other parts of his Majesty’s
dominions’ if they were to be transported from the island so that they ‘might again obtain an opportunity of proving the sincerity of their repentance.’

Whilst this statement cannot be taken at face value, it is evidence of the Maroons’ continuing desire to be set apart from the enslaved population and be more allied with colonial society. This article does not discuss the so-called betrayal of the slaves by the Maroons but it is worth noting here that even if Maroons harboured a desire to free all the slaves, evidence has shown that they were pragmatic if nothing else. Allying with the enslaved population and fighting the colonists would only bring more war as Britain would pour its army into Jamaica to try and keep hold of the colony and, if successful, the Maroons would lose the acknowledged freedom they had fought so hard for. That is not to say that the Maroons were not willing to defend their interests if threatened but that, from both the Maroon and white side, there seems to have been little motivation for violence.

A factor not to be over-looked is the apparent blood oath which was concluded between the Maroon representatives and colonists in 1739. Kenneth Bilby has presented convincing evidence that this occurred, using both archival evidence and oral traditions. It is alleged that during the ceremonies in which the paper treaties were signed, Colonel Guthrie and Cudjoe mixed their blood with some rum and drank it as a sign of the new alliance. If true, this would provide another reason why Maroons were willing to negotiate difficult situations with local white planters rather than resort to violence. Indeed, Barbara Kopytoff has posited that contemporary Maroons view their treaties as ‘sacred charters’ which underpin and assure their very existence as separate people. These sacred charters acted as a springboard for Maroons to redefine themselves and their role in Jamaica. Maroons began to shed their former identity as former slaves, and all the connotations that entailed to create a new one as Maroon societies. Burnard argued that freed people’s escape from the stigma of slavery was more complete if they had both forenames and surnames, particularly ones not common in slavery. If Burnard is correct in his assertion, then it is possible that Maroons believed that their freedom was ‘complete’ by associating with powerful slave-owners and forming a new identity.

In conclusion, this article has demonstrated the non-violent relations between Maroons and Jamaican planters in the inter-war period. The most important point from this analysis for scholars of different regions or colonies is that none of these interactions were characterised by violence. This is somewhat surprising because violence as a standard between white settlers and free, non-white communities can be found in numerous settings. From the American West to colonies across Africa, Australia, and Latin America, examples of violent interactions are highlighted time and again in the archival record. There are, of course, examples throughout the colonial sphere which also point to the diplomatic negotiations, cultural exchange, and tentative alliances found throughout borderland contexts. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that this article
has uncovered examples of closeness between Maroons and planters in Jamaica, but what is significant is the lack of any violence between the two sides until the Second Maroon War. The situation is even more surprising considering the violence of colonial Jamaican society. Violent rebellions were frequent in Jamaica. Michael Craton has even claimed that the island experienced almost as many slave rebellions as all the other British colonies put together. However, violence was not just inherent throughout enslaved groups resisting slavery; it was also synonymous with how those enslaved people were subsequently punished, by both individual planters and the state. Yet violence was not a feature of the relationships formed between Maroons and local planters.

This lack of violence requires us to re-think the Maroon position in Jamaica, and the position of wealthy colonists within the British Empire. The findings in this article highlight that the ending of formal hostilities with a colonial empire did not necessarily mean the ending of Maroon or indeed other free, non-white communities’ power. The peaceful handling of what the colonists’ deemed Maroon land encroachments brings to light the reliance local Jamaican planters had on Maroon communities when it came to expanding and consolidating the society they were creating. It further encourages us to recognise that peoples of different cultures could avoid violence when they shared common goals or at least were not obstacles to the goals of the other party. In other words, violence in a region, in this case Jamaica, did not automatically equate to violence in every context in that region. The mutual recognition of the benefits of an alliance between Maroons and local planters reminds us that interactions and relationships on frontiers and borderlands were shaped as much by free, non-white communities as by colonial forces.

Notes

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3. For further discussion of the clauses in the peace treaties, see Richard Hart, Slaves Who Abolished Slavery: Blacks in Rebellion (Kingston: University of the West Indies Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2002), 118–26; Campbell, The Maroons of Jamaica.
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11. *Journals of the House of Assembly (JHA)*, 29 September 1758, Vol. V, C.S.O (1B/5), National Archives of Jamaica (NAJ), Jamaica.

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23. *JHA*, Vol. VII, Petition of John Cosens and others, 18 December 1781, NAJ.

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28. *JHA*, Vol. IV, 16 October 1751; 14 November 1751; Vol. VI, 8 December 1775, NAJ.

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43. Ibid., 54.
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