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The Maroons and freedom in Jamaica

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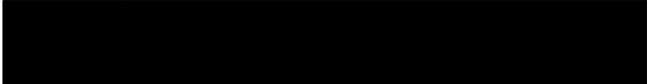
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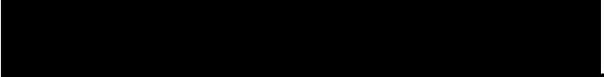
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APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


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The purpose of this essay is to present a history of the Maroons from their earliest rebellions to their present role in contemporary Jamaican society. Also of importance will be the conditions under which the Maroons received freedom from the British and to what extent these conditions continue to persist in an independent Jamaica. A secondary purpose is to provide material and information which may contribute significantly to the dearth of printed expertise in this area.

When the British captured Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655, they failed to subdue numerous Negro slaves who were no longer content to be slaves. These slaves escaped from their plantations to become mountain dwelling fugitives. The name 'Maroon' was given to these fugitives, and for many years they harassed the British Colonial Government of Jamaica.

Having tasted of freedom, these Maroons were determined, at any cost, to preserve it. Their major tactic may be described as the forerunner of modern guerrilla warfare. This type of warfare lent itself beautifully to the rugged terrain of Jamaica, much to the irritation of the British. The conflict between the British and the Maroons dragged on for many years. Not only was it becoming very expensive for the British, but also, their soldiers were growing weary. Finally in 1739 the British Government offered favourable terms of peace to the Maroons.

The treaty of 1739 was broken once in 1795, and fighting broke out for approximately one week. Reconciliation was immediate and Maroon offenders of the treaty were exiled to Nova Scotia, Canada. Life in Nova Scotia was unbearable to these Maroons and in 1800 they were sent to Sierra Leone, Africa. The Maroons who remained in Jamaica coexisted peacefully with the British. However, they continue to live in their

mountain villages enjoying the terms of the treaty of 1739.

One of the primary problems involved in the writing of this essay was the difficulty in procuring information. For one reason or another scholars have never been highly motivated to take the time and effort necessary for such a study. Also, because of Jamaica's former colonial status, most important documents were kept in the British Museum or the Colonial Office in England. These documents which are not for publication must be observed and studied in their place of deposit. Another factor contributing to this difficulty is that access to the Maroon settlements is not easy, nor is the establishment of a relationship.

In preparing the essay I contacted primary, secondary and tertiary sources for pertinent data. I spent the summer of 1968 collecting data in Jamaica and the U.S.A. After the collection of the data, they were assembled in a logical order to form the content of the text. Although the data were used to support my primary and secondary purposes, no conscious effort was made to interpret them. The conclusion contains recommendations which are very subjective.

The findings of this essay pointed to the colourful role played by the Maroons in the history of Jamaica. The data seem to indicate that the great

political victory, which had far reaching implications for the entire island, did not disseminate to the other areas of Maroon society, namely the social, political and economic. Consequently, the Maroons continue to enjoy their political freedom in a sub-culture which is very marginal.

THE MAROONS AND FREEDOM IN JAMAICA

by

LENNON CLAUDE HENRY

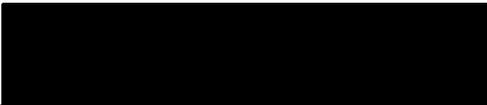
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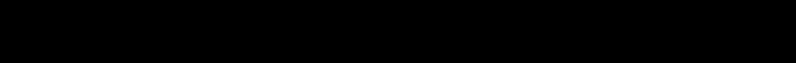
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TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	111
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
II A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF JAMAICA	6
III JAMAICA RELINQUISHED BY THE SPANIARDS	13
IV ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAROONS	20
V THE FIRST MAROON WAR (1728-1739)	29
VI FREEDOM IS WON	38
VII THE SECOND MAROON WAR OF 1795	46
VIII THE MAROONS IN NOVA SCOTIA	56
IX THE MAROONS AND FREEDOM	62
X CONCLUSION	72
SOURCES CONSULTED	79

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To Colonel Wright, Maroon Chief; Clinton Black, the famous Jamaican author and Public Archivist; Alvin Mundell, Assistant Attorney General of Jamaica; and the many staff members of the Jamaican Information Service, the Institute of Jamaica, and the West Indian Reference Library; I acknowledge my appreciation for their helpfulness. Expressions of appreciation also go to Melbourne W. Henry for his technical assistance and helpful suggestions.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This essay has developed out of my interest in the role of one minority group in the political history of Jamaica. Personal interest in this group can be traced back to a history course, History of Jamaica, which I took in 1963 at Mico Teacher's College in Jamaica. For the first time, I, as a Jamaican, realized the tremendous contribution the Maroons had made to the political and cultural history of Jamaica as they struggled to gain their freedom from the British, resulting in partial political autonomy for them in their hill settlements in Jamaica.

While still in college, I began to wonder why scholars had not devoted more attention to what seemed to be a most fascinating and colourful episode in the history of Jamaica. Some time later, while in search of a topic for the master's essay, I concluded that there could be no more interesting subject than the Maroons and Freedom.

When the English captured Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655, they failed to subdue numerous Negroes who were no longer content to be slaves. Consequently, these slaves escaped from the plantations to become mountain dwelling fugitives, and for many years they harassed the British Colonial

Government of Jamaica.

Having tasted freedom, these Maroons were determined at any cost to preserve it. Their major tactic may be described as the fore-runner of modern guerrilla warfare. Because of the mountainous terrain of Jamaica, guerrilla type warfare was efficient and successful. The British, who were schooled in conventional military warfare, found this type of an enemy was most difficult for them to fight.

The conflict between the British and the Maroons dragged on for many years. Not only was this type of warfare very expensive for the British Government, but also demoralizing for the soldiers (who had grown weary). Finally, in 1739 the British Government offered the Maroons favourable terms of peace.

The treaty of 1739 brought many years of peace. However, in 1795 the treaty was broken and fighting began again, but this war was shortlived. Approximately one week after the war started, there was an end to it, and the Maroon offenders who were primarily responsible for the breaking of the treaty were sent to Halifax in Nova Scotia, Canada. In Nova Scotia, the Maroons, who were accustomed to a warm tropical climate and a rural type of existence, found life unbearable. The situation worsened until 1800 when they were finally sent to Sierra Leone in Africa.

The Maroons who remained in Jamaica coexisted peacefully with the British. Today, their descendants continue to

dwell in the mountainous terrain as a separate people enjoying the rights and privileges of the treaty of 1739.

The primary goal of this essay is to present a brief, scholarly history of the Maroons from their earliest rebellions to their present role in contemporary society. Also of importance will be the conditions under which the Maroons received freedom from the British and to what extent these conditions continue to persist in an independent Jamaica.

The essay's secondary goal is to provide material and information which may contribute significantly to the dearth of printed expertise in this area. Hopefully, this fresh treatment may stimulate greater interest and awareness of the Maroons.

Because of the dearth of written information on the Maroons, the task of supporting my essay with documentary evidence was not easy. For one reason or another, scholars have never been highly motivated to take the time and effort necessary for such a study. Another difficulty was that of record keeping and gaining access to these records. Because of Jamaica's former colonial status, most important documents were kept in the British Museum or the Colonial Office in England, the mother country. These documents, which are not for publication, must be studied at their place of deposit.

Geographically, the Maroons are isolated from the main stream of Jamaica. Access to their settlements is very difficult. In the past this has been a prohibitive factor in the

gathering of primary documents from the villages. After physical access is gained, it should be remembered that this does not necessarily mean that honest, positive and friendly communication will result. The Maroons are rather suspicious of strangers and are very cautious in forming instant relationships. Brief contacts with these people will not facilitate as free a communication as could possibly have been gained from actually living with them for an extended period of time.

In preparing this essay, I utilized primary, secondary and tertiary sources for pertinent data. After the collection of the data, it was assembled in a logical manner to form the content of the essay. The conclusion contains some recommendations which are my own subjective impressions based on the conditions which I observed.

The collection of data was exciting, adventurous and highly educational. During the summer of 1968, a visit with the Maroon Chief in the settlement at Accompong provided first hand information about the past and contemporary life of the Maroons. Other sources in Jamaica which provided significant information were the Jamaican Public Archives, Jamaica Institute and Library Services, the West Indian Reference Library and the Jamaica Attorney General's Office. A visit to the New York Public Library in New York City also provided useful information.

Through correspondence with the University of Halifax,

Arcadia University, the Provincial and Public Archives of Nova Scotia and Ottawa, Canada, I secured invaluable information on various aspects of Maroon life not available in Jamaica.

The findings of this essay point to the colourful role played by the Maroons in the history of Jamaica. Unfortunately, however, their great political victory, which had positive and far-reaching implications for the entire island, did not disseminate to the other areas of their society, namely, social, educational and economic. The deprivation in these areas is by far the worst to be found in the island.

As long as the Maroons and the Government of Jamaica continue to accept the terms of the treaty of 1739, they will continue to live a marginal existence and become more and more separated from the main-stream of Jamaican society. The Maroons' past glory has blinded their intellect to present needs and opportunities. The Government of Jamaica should make every attempt to integrate these people into the main-stream of society. However, caution must be taken to preserve their coveted role in Jamaican history.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF JAMAICA

Lying in the tropics between 17.7° and 18.5° N. latitude, Jamaica forms part of the string of Caribbean islands stretching in an arc from Florida to Venezuela. It is the largest of the English speaking West Indian islands, with an area of 4,411 square miles. Jamaica with Cuba, Hispaniola (i.e. Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and Puerto Rico form a natural group of islands known as the 'Greater Antilles'.

Jamaica is dominated by its mountains which form a natural backbone running from East to West. These mountains reach their maximum height of 7,402 feet at Blue Mountain Peak. More than half of the country is above 1,000 feet in elevation. Jamaica is a mountainous island and rises quickly from a flat coastland to relatively high mountains. This fact is reflected in great variations of temperature within a few miles; e.g. the average temperature in Kingston, the capital located on the southern coast, is 75° and twenty-five miles away at New Castle it is 45° .

The greater part of the country is a part of the central upland plateau. In the south, the low lying coastal fringe includes broad, flat, alluvial plains while the north is dominated by mountain ranges with the Blue Mountain in

the northeast, Dry Harbour Mountain in north central, and Dolphin Head Mountain in the northwest.

The island is divided into three counties; namely, Cornwall, Middlesex and Surrey. It is further subdivided into fourteen parishes; namely St. James, Trelawney, St. Ann and St. Mary in the north; St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon, St. Catherine, St. Andrew and Kingston in the south; Portland and St. Thomas in the east; and Hanover and Westmoreland in the west.

Intricately woven into Jamaica's past are historic events which have been greatly influenced and determined by certain geographic conditions. Although these geographic characteristics were far more in evidence in the past, they are no less important today.

It is interesting to note that as of yesterday and even today, Jamaica still exploits her historical geographical features in shaping the island's destiny; e.g. Port Royal (a long strip of land lying at the entrance to Kingston's Harbour) remained a haven for the buccaneers until it was destroyed by an earthquake in 1692. Today the island enjoys economic advantages from the U.S.A. as a result of the economic sanction placed upon Cuba since 1962. Jamaica's trade with the U.S. has increased greatly with the demand for more sugar and tobacco (which was once obtained from Cuba).

For the most part, the historical geography plays a great role in the creation of the island's image at home and abroad. This was no less true of the rebellious runaway

slaves who defied every attempt made by the English to recapture and re-enslave them.

These black fugitives (later to be called Maroons) harassed the English and were never conquered before an agreement of peace was made and many acres of land were given to them in the parishes of St. James and St. Elizabeth, where they were to establish settlements of their own. The Maroons were also given the right to control their domestic affairs in their settlements.

A look at the former Maroon settlement of Trelawney Town (in the parish of St. James) and the present Maroon settlement of Accompong (in the parish of St. Elizabeth) show to what extent the geographical conditions of a country can determine national, political and historical significance.

Most of the rebellious slaves on the plantations of the southern plains had escaped frequently to seek membership with the Maroon bands of the northwest. This area being mountainous and precipitous made good their escape. Though the English troops were persistent in their pursuit, it was the natural terrain which assisted the Maroons on the one hand and discouraged the English troops on the other.

These Maroons concentrated lightly on the northern slopes of the Blue Mountains and more heavily in the forested interior. Later, they occupied the eerie and almost impenetrable 'cockpit' country which became a great fortress for them.

It was the geography which gave protection to these Maroons as they hid themselves in and between the mountain ranges and deep dissecting valleys. British troops, unaccustomed to the country, the climate, and the jungle method of warfare, suffered heavily in their clashes with the Maroons. Often they (the English) were tired, weary and fatigued by long marching in the tropical sun, thereby losing much energy that was badly needed to stand up against the Maroons.

At the conclusion of the first Maroon war in 1739 by a treaty which gave the Maroons free crown lands to live on, along with other provisions for their existence, two major Maroon settlements were established in the northwest named Trelawney Town (now called Maroon Town) in the parish of St. James and Accompong in the parish of St. Elizabeth.

Only a few Maroons were scattered in the mountainous northeastern region of the Blue Mountains; they were never able to organize themselves into a formidable fighting force. In addition to the sparse Maroon population in this apparent havenly territory, other environmental conditions mitigated against their effectiveness as a fighting force; i.e., (1) The area did not attract many runaway slaves as it was so far away from the towns and the plantations; (2) The Blue Mountain area (while it is highly favourable for the growing of coffee) was not suited for the growing of staple crops on which the natives survived, such as cassava, yams, cocoa, potatoes, corn and bananas; (3) As the British were bent on colonizing this island, their defense network was extended

to insure adequate protection of the island. Consequently the strategic Blue Mountain Peak, being over 7,000 feet and with a view which covered the island, was chosen as the chief defense site. New Castle was the name given to this defense headquarters which housed the British Battalion (and now houses the Jamaica Defence Force). The knowledge of the British troops who were stationed permanently at New Castle was a deterrent to the Maroon activities in that immediate area.

On the other hand, the Maroon settlement of Accompong in the northwest had been almost ideal in terms of natural defense. Situated in the parish of St. Elizabeth, it is so remote and the mountains are so precipitous, the British troops were not able to infiltrate this territory. The region is an extension of the weird cockpit country where the mountains are broken and irregular. (A 'cockpit' is a glen enclosed by perpendicular rocks and accessible only through a narrow defile or gorge.) The outlets from the cockpit were so few that the English troops could always find a footpath which led them to the mouth of the defile, but beyond the mouth they could not go.

The Maroons at Accompong were secured in an impregnable fastness. Its rear was barred by a succession of other cockpits and its flanks protected by lofty precipices. This settlement was to remain the headquarters for the defense of freedom against the authorities and colonists. The settlement was also a strategic site in that the Maroons had the

contiguous parishes open to them for plunder. Unlike the Maroon settlement of Accompong, the Trelawney Town settlement in the parish of St. James was rendered vulnerable mainly because of geographical conditions. Despite the fact that there was a larger body of Maroons at Trelawney Town, they were to suffer defeat by the British because their settlement was more accessible than that of Accompong.

In addition to its accessibility, the Maroon settlement of Trelawney Town was much closer to the seaport town of Montego Bay, whereby the British troops in pursuit were easily reinforced with equipment, supplies and men.

The statement holds true that roads and railroads follow the line of least resistance. There is a conspicuous absence of roads and railroads in the region of Accompong while Trelawney Town can be reached by roadways which extend from the nearby towns of Montego Bay and Anchovy (both in the parish of St. James).

The second confrontation which involved mainly the Maroons of Trelawney Town in 1795 ended with victory for the English. Better communications enabled the British troops to penetrate inland to the settlement. In the case of the Accompong settlement, such a feat remained but an idle dream in the minds of the British. When the British troops had surrounded the Maroons of Trelawney Town, they sent messengers to the Maroon chiefs ordering them to surrender or be destroyed. The Maroons complied with the government's demand

and were banished from the island in 1796 to Nova Scotia in Canada.

It was mainly the geography of the country which gave protection to the Maroons of Accompong in St. Elizabeth as they hid themselves in and between the mountain ranges. While on the other hand, this same geography played a great role in assisting the British troops in seeking out and defeating the Maroons of Trelawney Town. Nevertheless their operations of over 200 years ago still stand colourful in the island's historical geography.

CHAPTER III

JAMAICA RELINQUISHED BY THE SPANIARDS

In August, 1962, a leading newspaper reported on Jamaica's independence celebrations:

Through the centuries an exciting if somewhat cruel history has been Jamaica's heritage. Nearly five hundred years ago, Christopher Columbus discovered this tropical island paradise (1494). It was inhabited by a peace loving Arawak Indians who tilled the fertile soil and harvested the fish abundant sea. The Spaniards wiped out the peaceful Indian population.¹

In support of the above condition, The West Indies and Caribbean Year Book of 1968 reports the following:

Jamaica was discovered on 4th. May, 1494, and occupied by the Spanish between 1509 and 1555. The Arawaks, the original inhabitants, quickly died off from European diseases against which they had no immunity, cruelty by the Spaniards, and self-destruction; and slave labour was imported from Africa.²

When Jamaica was conquered by the English in the year 1655, most of the Spanish inhabitants retired to the island of Cuba; but the English, who were not sufficiently numerous to do more than occupy the principal towns on the south side, were aware of the Spaniards and their Negro slaves who

¹Theodore Sealy, "Jamaica: Birth of a Nation," The New York Times, August 19, 1962, pp. 3-11.

²The West Indies and Caribbean Year Book, 1968, p. 209.

continued to inhabit the remote parts of the northern section of the island. In this situation, the Spanish kept up an intercourse with their countrymen, who, on abandoning Jamaica, had settled themselves on the southern side of Cuba.

The local Spaniards made several attempts to regain possession of the island. The last attempt in 1663 was led by Don Arnolfo de Sassi, "the old Spanish Governor," who landed at Rio Nuevo in the parish of St. Ann. The attempt, however, failed as the English Governor, Colonel Doyley, was successful in defending the island.

The attempt, however, was rendered abortive by the vigorous measures pursued by Colonel Doyley, the English Governor, who with a body of five-hundred men marched from the south side, attacked the Spaniards, forced them, after a warm contest, to abandon their settlements, and finally compelled all of them to seek refuge in Cuba.³

According to one authority, the Spanish inhabitants are said to have possessed, before attack, about one-thousand, five-hundred enslaved Africans. On the surrender of their masters, most of them retreated to the mountains, from whence they made frequent excursions to harass the English.

Previous to the final embarkation of the Spaniards, large bodies of the Spanish slaves had fled to the woods in different parts of the island, and a very formidable number had collected in the mountains on the northern and eastern sides which afforded them secure retreats. To these they

³R. [obert] C. [harles] Dallas, History of the Maroons, Vol. I, p. 24.

fled, as they sought protection from the hills against their new masters. Of their activities, Dallas wrote:

...it is supposed that for some time they were instigated by their former masters to commit hostilities against the new possessors of the country; a supposition by no means improbable, as the Spaniards, being so close at hand and so well acquainted with the sea coast, might purposely have kept up a communication.⁴

Despite the fact that the Spaniards were forced to relinquish the island to the English, they had designs of regaining it by freeing their slaves with the hope that they in turn would wear the English down.

The Spaniards, however, did not give up their hope of recovering Jamaica. They had freed their slaves and left them behind in the mountains to harry the English with irregular warfare until it was possible to collect an army for the reconquest of the island.⁵

When the first Jamaica House of Assembly met in 1663, one of the most pressing problems that had to be dealt with was the rebellions of the slaves in the island. As a result, a committee was appointed to examine this matter. The Committee agreed that speedy and effectual care should be taken for the suppressing of runaway and rebellious Negroes.

After the relinquishing of the island by the Spaniards, the English soon came to realize that their full control over the island was not yet complete. The large number of runaway

⁴Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁵Clinton Black, History of Jamaica, p. 50.

slaves who for a while were in the service of Spain roamed the island, especially along the northern and southern slopes, as they plundered and destroyed all that was in their path. The deadly activities of the rebellious freedom fighters were the main source of fear among the English who viewed the situation with grave concern as they sought means and ways to crush the rebels.

The black fugitives in the south of the island, particularly in the parish of Clarendon, came together under the leadership of Juan de Bolas (the Spanish governor of the island at the arrival of the British), but this group did not prove effective for too long a period of time as their leader was slain in an attempt to assist the English in crushing other fugitives in other regions. According to Dallas:

This body the Governor soon found means to conciliate, and they surrendered on an acknowledge of their freedom, and an amnesty for all offences.... At first they readily engaged to act against the other fugitives in the island; but being defeated, and their leader slain, their ardor cooled.⁶

Edward Long sums up beautifully what could easily have been a confusing situation:

After the decisive victory gained over the Spaniards in Jamaica, their Negroes had still continued very troublesome. When they perceived their old friends and masters were no longer able to keep footing on the island, they murdered the governor placed over them and chose a leader from their own gang. Such was the hard necessity of the Spaniards, that, unable to command they were constrained to

⁶Dallas, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

implore and court protection of these blacks. The captain elect was the famous Juan de Bolas. The English procured some blood hounds and hunted these blacks like wild beasts; still, grown weary at length of this uneasy life, and being in danger of perishing from lack of provisions, they sent a deputation to D'Oyley, who promised to receive into favour on surrendering their arms. The submitting Negroes as an earnest act of their fidelity, became extremely sedulous in discovering the hiding places of the Spaniards, and readily assisted the English in pursuing them and the other Negroes who had refused to come to terms.⁷

Although the venture with Juan de Bolas failed, the movement had significance as it resulted in making distinctions in terms of different classes of inhabitants. The first class was the English who had the distinction of being the new possessors. Secondly, there was the class of slaves who remained in the plantations as possessions of their masters. The third class was that of the runaway slaves who had fought under Juan de Bolas but who surrendered to the English on terms of pardon and freedom. The fourth class was the fugitive Negro who was still in rebellion and defense of his freedom.

In describing the situation of the group under Juan de Bolas which came to terms with the English, Richard Hart wrote:

The major part of them accepted the terms; but some others refused to submit, and withdrew to secret recesses in the midland parts, with which they were perfectly acquainted. Here they settled for several years, until they grew numerous enough by breeding and the accession of run-away slaves, to

⁷ Edward Long, History of Jamaica, Vol. I, pp. 278-279.

repeat their ancient hostilities of which I shall give some account hereafter.⁸

Bryan Edwards in supporting the above shows the consequences which resulted as some accepted the terms while others refused.

A large party, however, remained in their retreats within the mountains, where they not only augmented their numbers by natural increase, but, after the island became thicker sown with plantations, they were frequently reinforced by fugitive slaves. At length they grew confident enough of their forces to undertake descent upon the interior planters, many of whom they murdered from time to time without the least provocation; and their barbarities and outrages intimidated the whites from venturing to considerable distances from the sea coast.⁹

In their mountainous haven, this strange community of mountain outlaws was to remain a source of constant trouble to English settlers. They had broken from slavery and had shown a strong determination to maintain their new status, preferring death to bondage. But as the years went by, the black fugitives, who later acquired the name of Maroons, became more and more formidable as a fighting force. They soon organized themselves with chiefs and other officers, annexing with other groups in order to swell their numbers.

In their mountain roost, this strange community of black warriors, whose ancestors in breaking from slavery had defied the British arms, soon developed an effective warfare against the Colonists and were given the term 'Maroons'.

⁸Richard Hart, Cudjoe and the First Maroon War in Jamaica, p. 3.

⁹Bryan Edwards, An Historical Survey of Santo Domingo, pp. 304-5.

Of the Maroons, Katherine Dunham said:

When the British took over Jamaica, these wild bands were joined by the most bold and venturesome of the British slaves, and the slave rebellion of 1690 added considerably to the population of these wild mountain tribes. The Maroons as they were called, developed their hunting and farming economy based on African patterns and supplemented by frequent and successful raids upon the British plantations.¹⁰

¹⁰Katherine Dunham, Journey to Accompong, Introduction, VII-VIII.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAROONS

The term 'Maroon' is yet to be clarified, for there are a number of explanations as to its derivation. In general, it is the name given to that unique group of negro fugitives who successfully defended their freedom against the English.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Maroons were described as descendants of negro slaves with the connotations of wildness and fierceness. As described by one authority:

Their name derives from the Spanish 'cimarrón', meaning wild, and they are chiefly descendants of Negro slaves who ran away from the Spaniards during Spain's 150 year occupancy of the island.¹

Another reliable source in describing them wrote, "The word signifies, hog-hunters; the woods abounding with the wild boar, and the pursuit of them constituting the chief employment of fugitive Negroes."² The second edition of Webster's New Twentieth Century dictionary gives the following definitions of 'Maroon':

1. Spanish cimarrón, wild, unruly...

¹James Carruti, "Jamaica Goes It Alone," National Geographic, Vol. 132 (Dec. 1967), p. 854.

²Edwards, An Historical Survey of St. Domingo, p. 304.

2. Originally a fugitive Negro slave living upon a West Indian island.³

In spite of the varying shades of definitions given to the word 'Maroon', it is the accepted appellation given to those rebellious Negroes who harassed the English and were never conquered before an agreement of peace was established by means of a treaty.

Today, the term 'Maroon' designates a cultural group within the Jamaican society. If the term (Maroon) must be understood in the twentieth century, it becomes necessary to examine the early history of its origin and development.

When Cromwell's soldiers took possession of Jamaica in 1655, few or none of the descendants of the warlike Indians who had given Columbus so much trouble were left. In their place were about two thousand Negro slaves and those who had fled to the mountains in an act of defiance against their new possessors, and "...there they remained in freedom, though the English did their best to coax them to come down and enjoy the blessings of slavery again."⁴

Ever since the English gained possession of Jamaica, they were fully occupied with the task of attempting to subdue gangs of black fugitives who were determined to maintain their liberty. Fortescue described them thus:

They seem to have scattered themselves over a large extent of country, and to have kept themselves in at

³Webster's Dictionary.

⁴Charles Morris, Historical Tales, p. 199.

least two distinct bodies, those in the North holding no communication with those in the South.⁵

Throughout the country, especially in areas which provided natural havens for the freedom fighters, the English troops were constantly deceived by their attacks to the point of frustration.

On the arrival of troops in force, they disappeared: still, however, lurking in ambush near the settlements, and acquainted with the country, they not only harassed the English by perpetual alarms by setting fire to buildings remote from the garrison, and in one of their excursions, even to houses in the capital itself; but they actually massacred without pity almost every individual that ventured to ramble in the country, and stragglers continued in jeopardy for some time after the conquest of Jamaica.⁶

Until 1690 there existed two centers of Maroon resistance (although other rebellious bands were scattered elsewhere), operating in the north and south of the island. The number of Maroons continued to increase as they were joined by slaves who had made good their escape. But in 1690, there was an insurrection of the slaves in the parish of Clarendon (on the south side) who found a secure retreat in the interior of the country, where they occasionally recruited their numbers from among the plantation Negroes, with whom they kept up communication, and from whose grounds they were often supplied with provisions. By degrees they became very

⁵Hon. John William Fortescue, History of the Maroon War in Jamaica, p. 74.

⁶Joseph Williams, The Maroons of Jamaica, Vol. III, p. 396.

formidable, and in their predatory excursions greatly distressed the settlers by plundering their houses, destroying their cattle and carrying off their slaves.

This party for many years retarded the settlement of that side of the country and obliged the planters, who had made some progress in their estates, to live in a continual state of alarm and preparation for defense.⁷

The body of Clarendon rebels (made up mainly of the revolted slaves) were unconnected with the original fugitives, and were not included in the general distinction of Maroons. The activities of the brigandage were so distressing that the government was determined to take immediate action to put it down with a strong hand.

During this epoch (1690-1700), gangs of marauding Negroes wandered under the direction of different leaders without any overall leader or chief. But the time had come when it was expedient to elect a popular leader if they were to survive the anger and might of the English arms. It was indeed a herculean task to unify the various gangs, as they were scattered in hilly pockets over the entire island. But as the pressure increased on them, they sought unity and solidarity in the form of capable leadership. Dallas in describing the situation wrote:

But now finding that the colonists had determined to suffer themselves to be annoyed no longer by a lawless band of plunderers, and that parties were fitted out to attack them wherever they could be found, they concentrated their force, and elected a chief whose name was Cudjoe, a bold, skillful and

⁷Dallas, op. cit., p. 27.

enterprising man, who, on assuming the command, appointed his brothers Accompong and Johnny leaders⁸ under him, and Cuffee and Quao subordinate captains.

The idea of Cudjoe becoming leader in the south of the island was also supported by Fortescue:

At the outset the attacks of the whites on these marauding gangs met with some success; but soon came a new departure. A man of genius arose from among these revolted slaves, one Cudjoe by name, by whose efforts the various wandering bands were welded into a single body, organised on a quasi-military footing, and made twice as formidable as before.⁹

As a result of the rebellion in the parish of Clarendon, many rebels were killed and captured, but it seems that their leaders withdrew a large force intact to the mountains of Clarendon and there, as free men, Negroes who had been brought to Jamaica as slaves by the British formed their first effective settlement. The existence of this large and formidable body of free Negroes was a constant threat to the slave system which was the basis of British colonization in this period. The Governor, therefore, decided to commence a great campaign with all the armed forces at his disposal, to enslave or annihilate them. In addition to the regular troops and the militia who were employed in this campaign, special laws were passed to encourage and reward adventurers who would lead well armed and equipped parties in pursuit of 'the rebels'. In the House of Assembly of Jamaica, on September 27, 1718, the following message was read:

⁸Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁹Fortescue, op. cit., p. 74.

I am commanded by His Excellency to deliver to the House a letter he lately received from Colonel John Clarke, signifying, that the rebellious negroes of late appear at many of the plantations to windward, and have taken several negroes from thence: His Excellency desires the House to take the same into their consideration, that proper remedies may be applied to prevent any mischief that may attend the island; the measures lately taken by the parties having proved ineffectual.¹⁰

Now that there was an organized body of Maroons to the south under a capable and respected leader, much more interest was displayed in terms of uniting the various rebellious factions.

The Maroons of the north, who from the beginning had never left their strong-holds nor ceased their depredations, heard the fame of Cudjoe, joined him in large numbers and enlisted under his banner. Yet another tribe of Negroes, distinct in race from both the others, likewise flocked to him, and the whole mass thus united by his genius grew, about the year 1730, to be comprehended, though inaccurately, by the whites under the name of Maroons.¹¹

Russell in describing Cudjoe and his staff declared:

Cudjoe and his staff were leaders of the Clarendon rebels; his prowess was so considerable that he was joined by a whole tribe of Maroons from the east, known as Cottawoods, who were truant English slaves, mostly originally of the Coromanti (Ashanti) tribe. This powerful amalgamation took place in 1730. It is from the time of Cudjoe's ascendancy and the consequent amalgamations that the English settlers began to apply the name Maroon to all groups of militant free Negroes; hitherto they had only used the term¹² for the descendants of the original Spanish slaves.

Dallas also describes the unification of various Maroon bands under the leadership and guidance of Cudjoe:

¹⁰Journals of the House of Assembly, Vol. II, p. 266.

¹¹Fortescue, op. cit., p. 74.

¹²N. Russell, The Maroons of Jamaica, p. 3.

On learning that a considerable body of slaves had quitted the upper settlements in Clarendon, and were carrying on a war against the white inhabitants, under a Negroe called Cudjoe, a brave and enterprising man; (and having probably had some previous communication with him by means of emissaries), about a hundred of them, consisting of men, women and children, contrived, by long marches through a wild and unexplored country, to join the Clarendon rebels, and put themselves under the command of Cudjoe. At subsequent periods, smaller bodies of the Cottawood party attached themselves to this chief, and by degrees the whole party was united under him.¹³

As the Maroons increased in number, they began to establish themselves in areas which provided them with sound natural fortresses. The main settlements were: (1) Accompong in the parish of St. Elizabeth; (2) Trelawney Town (named after the governor of the parish); (3) Scot's Hall in the parish of St. Mary; (4) Charles Town, also in St. Mary; and (5) Moore Town and Nanny Town in the parish of Portland.

Quoting a report in 1733 which described the various Maroon settlements of the island, Bryan Edwards writes:

...that the Maroons had, within a few years, greatly increased, notwithstanding all the measures that had then been concerted, and made use for their suppression; in particular, that they had grown very formidable in the northeast, northwest and wouthwestern districts of the island, to the great terror of his Majesty's subjects in those parts, who had greatly suffered by frequent robberies, murders, and depredations committed by them; that in the parishes of Clarendon, St. Ann, St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Hanover, and St. James, they were considerably multiplied, and had large settlements among the mountains and least accessible parts.¹⁴

¹³Dallas, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

¹⁴Bryan Edwards, Introductory Account in The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica in Regard to the Maroon Negroes, (IX-X).

Now that the Maroons were organized into quasi-armed forces, the English troops were to experience increased hostilities and more effective fighting tactics and strategy. Cudjoe had introduced a very skillful and successful system of warfare, which became traditional among all Maroon chiefs.

Cudjoe and his warriors took up a central position in a 'cockpit', i.e. a glen enclosed by perpendicular rocks and accessible only through a narrow defile. A chain of such cockpits runs through the mountains from east to west. These glens run also in parallel lines from north to south, but the sides are so steep as to be impassable to any but a Maroon.

Such were the natural fortresses of these black mountaineers, in a country known to none but themselves...the outlets from these cockpits were so few that the white men could always find a well-beaten track which led them to the mouth of the defile; but beyond the mouth they could not go.¹⁵

Nevertheless the English troops were sufficiently persistent in their pursuit of Cudjoe to force him to abandon the Clarendon district. But this was to make matters worse, for inasmuch as it drove him to an impregnable fastness, there was no hope of dislodging him, in the Trelawney district farther to the northwest. Its rear was barred by a succession of other cockpits and its flanks protected by lofty precipices. Here Cudjoe made his headquarters in defense of freedom against the colonists. "The Maroons lived in indolent savagery while their provisions lasted, and in

¹⁵Fortescue, op. cit., p. 75.

active brigandage when their wants forced them to plunder."¹⁶

Cudjoe from his new position (the inaccessible cockpit in Trelawney) had the parishes of St. James, Hanover, Westmoreland and St. Elizabeth open to him.

Here he joined up with his brother Accompong, who had established the town that bears his name. The strife between Maroons and settlers continued with renewed fierceness and destruction.¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Russell, op. cit., p. 3.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST MAROON WAR (1728-1739)

As was shown in chapter III, in the first thirty years of the 18th century various attempts were made to subdue the Maroons. These would probably have succeeded in a smaller island, but they merely drove the rebellious runaways of Jamaica to unite in self defense and explore the interior fastnesses of the island.

For eight years the soldiers repeatedly dismantled cannons and dragged the pieces up precipitous slopes in order to shell the mountain settlements of the Maroons; parties of militia moved along forest trails from block house to block house with tracker dogs...¹

The struggles between the Maroons and the British intensified greatly and culminated in what became known as the First Maroon War. The war may be said to have commenced in or about 1728.

Previous to this they the Maroons had no general leader or chief of the body, but wandered in gangs under the direction of different leaders...but now finding that parties were fitted out to attack them wherever they could be found, they concentrated their force and elected a chief whose name was Cudjoe.²

After the election of Cudjoe, Dallas records:

They began at that time to pursue a more regular

¹A. E. Furness, The Jamaica Historical Review, p. 31.

²Dallas, op. cit., p. 28.

and connected system of warfare, and, in their frequent skirmishes with the troops sent out against them, acquired an art of attack and defence...³

The arrival of two regiments of regular troops in 1730 permitted a more thorough campaign to begin against them; and this is often known as the First Maroon War, although it was merely a strengthening of earlier measures.

Bryan Edwards in describing the rebels wrote:

In 1730 they were so formidable under a very able general named Cudjoe, that it was found expedient to strengthen the colony against them by two regiments of regular troops, which were afterwards formed into independent companies, and employed with other hired parties and the whole body of the militia in their reduction.⁴

As the hostilities were intensified, the extraordinary success of the Maroons was due in great measure to the character of the land in which they fought. The Maroons proved very elusive and

...when they expected an attack, took up their stations in the rocky walls of the glen, and were thus able to swoop down on the soldiery, who, by nature of the narrow defile, were obliged to march in single column. There appears also to have been an advanced system of scouts; at least, they always managed to receive advance information of the approach of English troops.⁵

As early as 1723, the government of Jamaica was made to realize the positive danger to the settlement from the Maroons. Legislation, however, appears to have been remarkably

³Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴Edwards, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵Russell, op. cit., p. 4.

slow. Consultation of Assembly documents reveals a reluctance to come to grips with the problem on a united front. By 1730, the position had become intolerable. The following words of the governor, Robert Hunter, give some idea of the English settlers' predicament:

I hope the care and diligence of your commissioners has been such as may facilitate such measures as you think fit to enter into, for the more effectual reducing of the slaves in rebellion, who, by some late depredations, and barbarities, and the bad success of our ordinary parties, seem to be increasing in numbers and audacity: by which your island settlements must either be abandoned or kept in perpetual alarm, and the danger in all probability spread further.⁶

The following years witnessed the enactment of a tortuous series of acts, bent on taking action in certain areas as soon as Maroon trouble occurred there. Volunteer forces were formed but the arduous marches entailed in reaching trouble spots invariably left the men exhausted, and so easy prey for Cudjoe and his warriors.

An Act of October 17, 1733, finally implemented a realistic measure. The Act provided for the building of fortified barracks in the main trouble spots so that soldiers would be permanently near the scene of action.

The spot chosen for this post was on Cave River, at the western extremity of a very singular flat about seven miles long and three wide, surrounded on all sides by very high mountains... Here a large range of barracks was built within a high wall, flanked with four regular bastions. Other posts, on a smaller scale, were raised in different parts of

⁶Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, Vol. II, pp. 698-699.

the island. By thus advancing forces and supplies closer to the Maroons, long marches were avoided, and a communication being kept up between different posts by small foot-paths purposely opened, the operations of the parties employed to wage a constant and harassing war upon them, were facilitated.⁷

January 26, 1731, it was reported to the Assembly that the King (George II) had ordered "two regiments of foot soldiers to be immediately transported hither from Gibraltar."⁸ In the same message the King requested the Assembly to make adequate provision for their support. The year 1732 opened with bad news for the assembly of Jamaica. On January 4, the Governor's speech reported defeats and indicated fear of a general uprising:

There never was a point of time which more required your attention to the safety of this island than the present: your slaves in rebellion, animated by their success, and others ready to join them on the first favourable opportunity; your militia very insignificant; the daily decrease of the numbers of your white people and increase of the rebel slaves; these circumstances must convince you of the necessity of entering upon more solid measures than have been hitherto resolved upon for your security; all former attempts against these slaves having been either unsuccessful, or to very little purpose. It has been suggested at home to his majesty's ministers and the lords commissioners of trade, that a treaty with the rebels by which they are to agree to be transported to some of the Bahama Islands, or the employing again of the Mosquito Indians against them, may be of use: I only mention this and leave it to your judgment and consideration whether either of these methods be practicable.⁹

Two days later, on the 6th of January, 1732, the

⁷Dallas, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

⁸Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, Vol. II, p. 757.

⁹Ibid., Vol. III, p. 47.

Assembly sent a message to the governor:

The defeat of the regular forces under the command of Captain Robert DeLemelier has given the inhabitants here great uneasiness, and put them under just apprehensions of a general insurrection of the slaves: as all or most of them want but a favourable opportunity to withdraw from their servitude, and that they may be probably spirited to such a disposition by the success of the rebel slaves from whom they may expect more ease and freedom than we can allow them.

In this crisis, we hope your excellency will, with your wonted goodness, make the best use, for our advantage of the two regiments and the independent companies, while they continue together and order such detachments out of them as your excellency will think sufficient to reduce the slaves in rebellion, particularly those in the northeast parts of the island where, by all accounts, they have formed themselves into formidable bodies.¹⁰

In his message of October 2, 1733, Governor William Hunter informed the Assembly that he had "ordered all hands to be employed in building a good barrack at the place called breast-work and securing the isthmus of Titchfield against sudden attacks or surprises."¹¹

All the measures taken, though many and varied, were only partly successful. The few regular troops on the island (and even the additional supplies) were not sufficient to deal with the Maroon menace. On February 21, 1734, the Assembly made a plea of desperation to Britain for more aid:

The terror of them spreads itself everywhere: and the ravages and barbarities they commit have determined several planters to abandon their settlements. The evil is daily increasing; and their success has had such influence on our other slaves, that they are

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Ibid., p. 198.

continually deserting to them in great numbers; and the insolent behaviour of others gives us but too much cause to fear a general defection; which without your majesty's gracious aid and assistance, must render us prey to them.¹²

The petition cites other matters to show the desperate situation of the white slave holders if aid is not forthcoming and concludes:

Your grace will from thence perceive how impracticable it will be for us to suppress them or even to defend ourselves should the defection become more general: which we have too great reason to apprehend, from the encouragement they meet with, the affinity between them, and above all, the hopes of freedom.¹³

The British government responded. This was reported to the Assembly as follows:

His Majesty, being much concerned at the distress of his people, hath graciously ordered six independent companies of one hundred men each, to be drafted from his troops at Gibraltar, to be immediately embarked and sent for our relief, and has also directed the lords of the admiralty to send the proper orders to Sir Chaloner Ogle to give us all the assistance he can from the squadron of his majesty's ships under his command.¹⁴

Eight or nine years had now elapsed since Cudjoe's renown had united all the fugitive Negroes in the island, of whatever origin they were, in a general interest. Force after force had been employed to subdue them in vain; their hostile operations against the inhabitants were carried on with unremitted vigour. At length the colonists resolved to

¹²Ibid., p. 226.

¹³Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 254.

make every effort and use every exertion to put an end to so harassing a war.

All who could carry arms volunteered their service, and a large body of the people were assembled under the command of Colonel Guthrie of the militia, and Captain Sadler of the regulars. Amidst these formidable preparations, there were great apprehensions entertained of the uncertainty of the most vigorous measures, the failure of which would not only encourage the enemy...but might operate on the minds of the slaves, who would be convinced of the powers of the Maroons to maintain a successful opposition against the government.¹⁵

It appeared that unless some form of treaty were agreed upon, perpetual war would be waged on the island. It was also feared that continued success of the Maroons would affect the docility of the slaves who still worked on the plantations. At the end of 1738, the war dragged on, but peace was soon to come, as both sides grew tired of fighting. Many of the leading citizens were exerting their influence as they urged the governor, Edward Trelawney, to sue for peace. "The governor, Edward Trelawney, was therefore urged by the principal persons of the country to offer them terms of peace."¹⁶ Naturally enough, the sincerity of the government was doubted by Cudjoe's party, but they too were tired of war. They finally decided to meet in deputation. Dallas reports that:

Guthrie and Sadler were accordingly directed to communicate the offers to Cudjoe as speedily as

¹⁵Dallas, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

¹⁶Ibid.

possible. They could not but be acceptable to the Maroons, who were equally tired of war, and to whom the objects of their hostilities were conceded.¹⁷

The Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica record that on April 12, 1739, John Guthrie was very instrumental in bringing about a treaty which had proved most advantageous by venturing to go with great risk among the rebellious Negroes with the first proposal to Captain Cudjoe.

On March 1, 1739, representatives of both sides were summoned to a special location and Dallas tells us:

Governed by this motive, the cautious Cudjoe collected his force, and waited the approach of the peace-makers, on a spot the most favourable to action in his mode of war, and on which his people might defend themselves, were treachery intended on the part of the Government.¹⁸

In describing the representative of the Government in offering terms of peace, Frank Cundall wrote, "...and they were authorized to make the best terms of peace they could with Cudjoe, highly desirable conditions being pointed out to them."¹⁹

As the soldiers advanced towards the meeting place, their location was relayed by Cudjoe's scouts on blasts of their cow-horns. The main terms of the treaty were discussed and agreed upon and, with due ceremonies, concluded. The treaty provided for the immediate cessation of all hostilities,

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹⁹ Frank Cundall, The Governors of Jamaica in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century, p. 173.

guaranteed freedom to the Maroons and their descendants,
secured them lands and the right to hunt in the surrounding
country, and gave them the right to their own courts.

CHAPTER VI

FREEDOM IS WON

As is the case with some major historical tales, confusion has risen over the actual date of the peace treaty between the British and the Maroons. As one authority puts it:

There is some dispute among historians as to the actual date of the treaty. Many claim that it was made in 1738. But the correct date is 'March 1st, 1739'. This is due to the fact that March 25th was the old English New Year, and it is only with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1752 that the new year became January 1st. The former practice was to give both the old and new years when reporting or recording a date in the first three months of any year. This probably confused one historian and the others then copied from him. Finally the Maroons themselves were confused and celebrated their centenary of the signing of the treaty in 1938.¹

Joseph Williams in his book, The Maroons of Jamaica, reports the colonel of the chief Maroon settlement as saying, "There was no more war between the Maroons of Accompong and the Whites. From after the treaty of 1738, the Maroons of Accompong and the Whites became friends."² Williams further points out the error of the above date (i.e. 1738) when he wrote that "Colonel Rowe has here fallen into

¹Richard Hart, Out of the House of Bondage, p. 87.

²Williams, op. cit., p. 389.

a natural error regarding the date of the treaty, which, as will be shown in due course, was actually signed in 1739 and not in 1738, as is supposed."³

The Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica record the treaty as having been signed on March 1st, 1738-39. It also records the articles of pacification in Vol. III (1731-45). Dallas in Letter II gives an account of the articles of pacification, which he recorded as being signed in 1738. Hart's explanation of the error made by those historians who recorded the date of the treaty as 1738, is supported by the Journals of the Assembly* and is becoming widely accepted.

The treaty, therefore, was made in 1739 at Trelawney Town, the Maroons being represented by Captains Cudjoe, Accompong, Johnny, Cuffee and Quaco and a number of their followers, "...who have been in a state of war and hostility for several years past against our sovereign lord the King and the inhabitants of this island."⁴

By the terms of the treaty, freedom was guaranteed the Maroons, who in turn had to make a number of concessions. They were guaranteed full liberty, to be granted a large tract of land in the mountains (between Trelawney Town and the cockpits), and the right to hunt wild pigs anywhere

* Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, pp. 457-459.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Morris, op. cit., p. 202.

except in the towns and on plantations. Cudjoe was appointed chief commander in Trelawney Town and his successors named in order, beginning with Accompong and Johnny.

The chief was empowered to inflict any punishment he might think proper for crimes committed by his people, except for those requiring the death sentence: such cases were to be handed over to a justice of the peace. Two white men, named by the governor, were to live permanently with the Maroons in order to maintain friendly contact between them and the colonists.⁵

The Maroons on their part were to cease all hostilities; to receive no more runaway slaves but instead to help recapture them, a reward being paid for each so returned; and were required to keep the peace by assisting the government in suppressing any local uprising or foreign invasion.

The Governor, Edward Trelawney, in a moving speech to both Houses of the Assembly on March 13, 1739, delivered the following message:

A party of the militia, under the command of Colonel Guthrie, together with a detachment of soldiers under that of Lieutenant Sadler, having drove the rebellious negroes, that were situated in the leeward parts of the island, out of their town, and obliged them to sue for terms, I empowered those gentlemen to grant them such as should be reasonable, and for the welfare and tranquillity of this island: they have accordingly entered into articles of agreement which I will now communicate to you...

'At the Camp near Trelawney-Town
March 1st, 1738-39.

In the name of God, Amen. Whereas captain Cudjoe, captain Accompong, captain Johnny, captain Cuffee, captain Quaco and several other Negroes, their

⁵Black, op. cit., p. 87.

dependents and adherents, have been in a state of war and hostility for several years past against our sovereign lord the king, and the inhabitants of this island; and whereas peace and friendship among mankind, and the preventing the effusion of blood, is agreeable to God, consonant to reason, and desired by every good man; and whereas his majesty George the second, king of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, and of Jamaica lord, has, by his letters patent, dated February 24th, 1738 in the twelfth year of his reign, granted full power and authority to John Guthrie and Francis Sadler, esquires, to negotiate and finally conclude a treaty of peace and friendship with the aforesaid captain Cudjoe, the rest of his captains, adherents and others his men; they naturally, sincerely and amicably, have agreed to the following articles.

- 1st. That all hostilities shall cease on both sides for ever.
- 2nd. That the said captain Cudjoe, the rest of his captains, adherents and men shall be forever hereafter in a perfect state of freedom and liberty, excepting those who have been taken by them, or fled to them, within two years last past, if such are willing to return to their said masters and owners, with full pardon and indemnity from their said masters and owners, for what is past; provided always, that, if they are not willing to return, they shall remain in subjection to captain Cudjoe, and in friendship with us, according to the form and tenor of this treaty.
- 3rd. That they shall enjoy and possess, for themselves and posterity forever, all the lands situated and lying between Trelawney-Town and the Cockpits, to the amount of fifteen hundred acres, bearing northwest from the said Trelawney-Town.
- 4th. That they shall have liberty to plant the said lands with coffee, cocoa, ginger, tobacco, and cotton, and to breed cattle, hogs, goats or any other stock, and dispose of the produce or increase of the said commodities to the inhabitants of this island; provided always, that when they bring the said commodities to market, they shall apply first to the Custos, or any other magistrate of the respective parishes where they expose their goods to sale, for a licence to

vend the same.

- 5th. That captain Cudjoe, and all the captains, adherents and people now in subjection to him, shall all live together within the bounds of Trelawney-Town, and that they have liberty to hunt where they shall think fit, except within three miles of any settlement, crawl, or pen; provided always that in case the hunters of captain Cudjoe and those of other settlements meet, then the hogs be equally divided between both parties.
- 6th. That the said captain Cudjoe and his successors, do use their best endeavour to take, kill, suppress or destroy, either by themselves, or jointly with any other number of men commanded on that service by his excellency the governor, commander in chief for the time being, all rebels wheresoever they be throughout the island, unless they submit to the same terms of accomodation granted to captain Cudjoe and his successors.
- 7th. That in case this island be invaded by any foreign enemy, the said captain Cudjoe, and his successors herein after named or to be appointed, shall then, upon notice given, immediately repair to any place the governor for the time being shall appoint, in order to repel the said invaders with his or their utmost force and to submit to the orders of the commander in chief on that occasion.
- 8th. That if any white man shall do any manner of injury to captain Cudjoe, his successors, or any of his or their people, they shall apply to any commanding officer or magistrate in the neighbourhood for justice; and in case captain Cudjoe, or any of his people, shall do any injury to any white person, he shall submit himself or deliver up such offenders to justice.
- 9th. That if any Negroes shall hereafter run away from their masters or owners, and fall into captain Cudjoe's hands, they shall immediately be sent back to the chief magistrate of the next parish where they are taken; and those that bring them are to be satisfied for their trouble as the legislature shall appoint.
- 10th. That all Negroes taken, since the raising of

this party, by captain Cudjoe's people, shall immediately be returned.

- 11th. That captain Cudjoe, and his successors, shall wait on his excellency, or the commander in chief for the time being, once every year if thereunto required.
- 12th. That captain Cudjoe, during his life, and the captains succeeding him, shall have full power to inflict any punishment they think proper for crimes committed by their men among themselves, death only excepted; in which case, if the captain thinks they deserve death, he shall be obliged to bring them before any justice of the peace, who shall order proceedings on their trial equal to those of other free Negroes.
- 13th. That captain Cudjoe, with his people, shall cut, clean and keep open, large and convenient roads, from Trelawney-Town to Westmoreland and St. James and if possible to St. Elizabeth's.
- 14th. That two white men, to be nominated by his excellency or the commander in chief for the time being, shall constantly live and reside with captain Cudjoe and his successors, in order to maintain a friendly correspondence with the inhabitants of this island.
- 15th. That captain Cudjoe shall, during his life, be chief commander in Trelawney-Town; after his decease, the command to devolve on his brother, captain Accompong; and, in case of his decease, on his next brother, captain Johnny; and failing him, Captain Cuffee shall succeed; who is to be succeeded by captain Quaco and, after all their demises, the governor, or commander in chief for the time being shall appoint, from time to time, whom he thinks fit for that command.

In testimony of the above presents, we have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and date above written.

John Guthrie (L.S)

Francis Sadler (L.S)

The mark ^L_W Captain Cudjoe.⁶

⁶Journals, Vol. III, p. 458.

Despite the fact that freedom and peace were achieved by the Trelawney body of Maroons, rebellious windward Maroons in Portland continued their depredations in the eastern section because there had been no communication between Cudjoe and them for some time. However, peace was to come to them not long afterwards, as Dallas noted, for

...subsequent to the treaty with Cudjoe, a party of three hundred soldiers, under the command of captain Adair, was ordered to go in quest of the Windward Maroons, for the purpose of making similar terms with them. One of Quaco's men, a hornman, having been taken prisoner, consented to accompany captain Adair, and undertook to lead him to the principal town, where it happened that a soldier, who had been taken prisoner by some of them, had informed them of the peace Cudjoe had made. This was the first intimation they had had of it, which shows that the communication between the different bodies had not been regularly kept open.⁷

In 1740 a similar treaty was signed between representatives of the Governor and Quaco, the leader of the Windward Maroons in Portland, and lands were allotted to them at Moore Town, Charles Town and Scots Hall. The compact was solemnly sealed on both sides, thus giving autonomy to the various groups of Maroons. Curtis Ashcroft in his article, "A Race Descended from Runaway Slaves Celebrate Their Freedom", wrote, "The treaty with the Maroons was an outstanding document...it gave to the Maroons complete independence within the Empire."⁸

⁷Dallas, op. cit., p. 70.

⁸Curtis Ashcroft, "These Men are Maroons", The Jamaica Standard, Feb. 26, 1938, p. 25.

The Rev. J. W. Graham in his article, "Treaty for Maroons", described the Maroons after their treaty as "...a colony within a colony---a law unto themselves."⁹

Since other treaties were made with other groups, Maroons all over the island were to enjoy the freedom and concessions (which still holds good) given to them, excepting where they fail to observe specified articles. As the Maroons grouped themselves, five settlements were established in which they were free to exercise the rights and privileges which were theirs. The settlements were Trelawney-Town, Accompong near the cockpits, Scots Hall, Moore Town and Charles Town.

It is maintained that this segmentation of independent units in the body politic caused much subsequent trouble, including the Maroon War of 1795.

⁹J. W. Graham, "Treaty for Maroons", The Daily Gleaner, Sept. 10, 1938, p. 17.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECOND MAROON WAR OF 1795

The main body of Maroons in the west of the island, which had originated in the great Clarendon Slave Revolt of 1690, and had so ably defended their freedom under the leadership of Cudjoe during the first Maroon War (1728 to 1739), was by the end of the 18th century divided into two groups---the "Trelawney" Maroons and the "Accompong" Maroons. The former, the larger body, lived at Trelawney Town near the border of St. James and Trelawney, at a place known as "Maroon Town". Trelawney Town itself consisted of a new town. The other group, the descendants of the band which Cudjoe had dispatched under his brother Accompong to guard his southern flank, lived at a town in the parish of St. Elizabeth which bears the name of "Accompong" to this day.

For a period of some fifty years, it seems that the Maroons were left unmolested and "the Maroons, with few exceptions, were scrupulously loyal to the terms of their treaties."¹ The residence clause of the treaty which required a white man to live among them was not enforced and Major James and his son who succeeded him as superintendent lived at their estate some twenty-five miles from Trelawney Town.

¹Russell, op. cit., p. 6.

In 1795 this serenity was disturbed. Of this, Dallas wrote,

This turbulence among the Trelawney Town Maroons came at a time when all the West Indies were in ferment. War had broken out between England and France in 1793. The principles of the French Revolution of 1789 against which England was fighting, had penetrated to the West Indies.²

In further describing the situation, Dallas said,

Little attention had been paid to the spirit of the treaties made on the surrender of the Maroons in the years 1738 to 1739. They had been suffered to indulge in idle excursions through the country in small parties, without their officers or any responsible men, under the various pretexts of seeking for runaway slaves, trading in tobacco, and vending the products of their hunting and fowling.³

In 1794, both James were dismissed for non-residence, and Thomas Craskell was sent to be superintendent. To the Maroons of Trelawney Town, however, he was a poor substitute for John James and they became more discontented.

To men who prided themselves on their physical strength, James was an idol; and when after nearly thirty years of bullying and dazzling them, he ceased to reside at Trelawney Town...they were disconsolate.⁴

At about the same time two Maroons, who were in Montego Bay for the purpose of trading, were taken before the magistrates in violation of the treaty. No Negroe testified in evidence on their behalf and they were sentenced, on the evidence of two white men, to receive 'lashes at a cart's tail' in a common work house at the hands of a slave.⁵

²Furness, op. cit., p. 34.

³Dallas, op. cit., p. 124.

⁴Furness, op. cit., p. 33.

⁵Hart, op. cit., p. 52.

These two events and other grievances angered the Maroons to the point where they could restrain themselves no longer. They drove Superintendent Craskell from the town and warned him not to return to their settlement. In July the Maroons summoned certain magistrates from Trelawney and St. James to their town and submitted to them a list of grievances which were recorded and forwarded to the governor as follows:

1. They complain of certain ill treatment suffered by two of their young men, by a whipping inflicted on them at Montego Bay by the hands of a slave (ordered by the magistrates), which they say is an infringement of the treaty.
2. That the lands granted them originally by the country for their subsistence, being worn out by long and repeated productions, are not sufficient to afford the provisions necessary for their support: they therefore claim from the island an additional quantity of land, and say that the adjoining lands, the properties of messieurs Vaughan and David Shaw, would suit them: and also the lands commonly called and known by the name of Crews, now Robert Kenyon, would be convenient to them.
3. They complain against the conduct of Captain Thomas Craskell the superintendent appointed to regulate the Maroon-town: and say that he is not qualified to discharge the necessary duties of the office...and as they have experienced the disposition and abilities of captain John James (their late superintendent), they are desirous of his reappointment to the office, and are averse to the appointment of any other person.⁶

On the 18th of July, 1795, the Magistrates of the Parish of St. James wrote a letter to Lord Balcarres (successor of Governor Trelawney) informing him that

⁶Journals, Vol. IX, p. 370.

...a serious disturbance was likely to break out immediately among the Maroons; that they had driven their superintendent away, threatened to destroy some neighbouring plantations with the white inhabitants on them, called in their people and sent their women into the woods; and that they designed to kill their cattle and their children who might be an incumbrance to them.⁷

The Magistrates had summoned representatives of the Maroons to Montego Bay in an attempt to reduce the tension which was building up. At the time when the small body of Maroon captains was making its way to the capital, the government and the white population generally was in a state of considerable alarm.

The island of St. Domingo was in a state of revolt and troops were ready to sail there... The fear of revolution which evoked so much oppressive legislation in the 18th and early 19th century decided the governor to declare martial law on the island, which was done (August).⁸

The government now acted swiftly. The 83rd Regiment, which was stationed on the island, and which had been about to sail to St. Domingo, was sent to Montego Bay, whence it penetrated inland. The Governor, Lord Balcarres, leaving the exercise of martial law in the hands of the Lieut. Governor, left Spanish Town to assume command of the troops himself. On arriving at Montego Bay, he dispatched a messenger to the Maroons, informing them he had surrounded them with troops and ordering them to submit to him at the capital. During this time, thirty-nine Maroons, led by their old chief

⁷Russell, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

⁸Dallas, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

Montague, surrendered at Spanish Town, in accordance with Lord Balcarres' proclamation made at Montego Bay. They were treated with such harshness that the Maroons of Trelawney set fire to their town and fled, thus putting the country in a state of alarm. A column of native troops under captain Hamilton was ambushed on the way to join Balcarres at Vaughan's Field, though only a few were lost. Hostilities occurred in earnest. Despite the stringent measures taken by the government (in an attempt to crush the impending rebellion) the failure of the Maroons of Accompong to support the rebellious Trelawney Maroons left them in a very precarious position.

The commander in chief, however, previous to any hostile movement, was determined to try once more to effect an accommodation.

...his Lordship, on the 8th of August, sent into their town a written message or summons in the following words:

TO THE MAROONS OF TRELAWNEY TOWN

You have entered into a most unprovoked, ungrateful and most dangerous rebellion.

You have driven away the superintendent placed over you by the laws of this country.

You have treated him your commander, with indignity and contempt. You have endeavoured to massacre him.

You have put the magistrates of the country, and all white people, at defiance.

You have challenged and offered them battle.

You have forced the country, which has long cherished and suffered you as its children, to consider you an enemy.

Martial law has in consequence been proclaimed.

Every pass to your town has been occupied and guarded by the militia and regular forces.

You are surrounded by thousands.

Look at Montego Bay, and you will see the force brought against you.

I have issued a proclamation, offering a reward for your heads; that terrible edict will not be put in force before Thursday, 13th of August.

To avert these proceedings, I advise and command every Maroon of Trelawney Town, capable of bearing arms, to appear before me at Montego Bay, on Wednesday, the 12th of August instant, and there submit themselves to his majesty's mercy.

On so doing, you will escape the effects of the dreadful command, ordered to be put into execution on Thursday, the 13th day of August; on which day, in failure of your obedience to this summons, your town shall be burnt to the ground, and forever destroyed.

And whereas it appears that other Negroes, besides the Maroons of Trelawney Town, were there under arms on the day that town was visited by John Thorp, Esq. and several other magistrates of the parish of Trelawney, you are strictly commanded and enjoined to bring such stranger Negroes to Montego Bay, as prisoners, on or before the before-mentioned Wednesday, the 12th day of August instant.

'Balcarres',⁹

Despite the many proposals and entreaties, hostilities broke out nevertheless, in which Lieutenant Colonel John Sanford was ambushed and killed. Mary Carley, in describing the overall scene, wrote,

Balcarres, the governor at the time, took drastic steps to quell this revolt, using large numbers of soldiers, and even detaining troops on their way to

⁹Edwards, Op. Cit., p. 335.

Santo Domingo, for this purpose. About 1,520 troops from the 13th, 14th, 17th, 18th, and 20th Light Dragoons and the York Hussars took part in this attack.

The authority's show of force, and the added threat of the use of bloodhounds imported from Cuba, caused the Maroons to sue for peace, with the stipulation that they should not be executed nor transported.¹⁰

The decisions and activities of the Earl of Balcarres defeated the projects of the Trelawney Maroons, whereby the strong feeling existed that all attempts by them at resistance would be frustrated.

The Maroons themselves became divided in their councils. Many of the old and experienced among them, over in Trelawney Town, the headquarters of sedition; recommended peace, and advised their companions to postpone their vengeance to a better opportunity; and the whole of the Accompong people declared in favour of the whites. It was determined, however, by a very great majority of the Trelawney Maroons, to fight the 'Bucras' (meaning the white people).¹¹

During this time, General Walpole, who was in charge of operations against the Maroons in Jamaica, was granting concessions to the Maroon chiefs in exchange for peace. Contact was established with this party and terms were agreed upon. In return Walpole sent a message guaranteeing assurance to the Maroons that they would not be transported from the island. From this time onward, hostilities lessened and, although there were sporadic incidents, it was plain that the Maroons were coming to their senses.

Difficulty in contacting the Maroons and inaccessibility

¹⁰Carley, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹Edwards, op. cit., p. 334.

forced a number of them to surrender days after the final date on which they were summoned, and as the last of these were not brought in until March 21st, he (Balcarres the governor) considered the terms to have been broken.

'Wednesday, 20th April, 1796

...that all the Maroons who surrendered after the first of January, ...not having complied with the terms of the treaty, are not entitled to the benefit thereof, and ought to be shipped off the island; but the joint committee are of opinion that they ought to be sent to a country in which they will be free, and such as may be best calculated, by situation, to secure the island against the danger of their return; that they ought to be provided with suitable clothing and necessaries for the voyage, and maintained at the public expense of this island for a reasonable time after their arrival at the place of their destination.¹²

Despite Walpole's assurance to the Maroons that they would not be banished, the government reversed this, and the Trelawney Maroons were banished to Nova Scotia.¹³

'(Private) March 11th, 1796

My Dear Lord,

I must trouble your lordship with a few words in privacy and confidence.

For some days past, I have been in a state of considerable uneasiness at a report, which seems to gain ground, that the legislature mean to infringe the capitulation accepted by me and ratified by your lordship.

My lord, to be plain with you, it was through my means alone that the Maroons were induced to surrender, from a reliance which they had in my word, from a conviction impressed upon them by me, that

¹²Proceedings of the House of the Assembly, p. 52.

¹³Russell, op. cit., p. 13.

the white people would never break their faith.

All these things strongly call upon me, as the instrumental agent in this business, to see a due observance of the terms, or, in case of violation, to resign my command; and if that should not be accepted, to declare the facts to the world, and to leave them to judge how far I ought or ought not to be implicated in the guilt and infamy of such a proceedings. So much the more strong is this call upon me as there was no occasion to ratify the terms; for your lordship will well recollect, that I told you at Castle-Wenys, that the time appointed by me for fulfilling them was expired, and the terms therefore null and void; but your lordship then thought, that there was so much of advantage to the country in those terms that it would be best not to give them up.

As the great object of the war is now declared to be accomplished, I shall shortly solicit your lordship for permission to return to England, with an intention to retire from the service.

I am your lordship's most faithful and obedient

G. Walpole¹⁴

Carley further adds,

It is said that General Walpole, of the 13th Dragoons, who was in charge of the government troops, refused to accept the sword of honour he was offered for his services, as he considered faith had been broken with these men.¹⁵

The Second Maroon War reduced considerably the number of freed Blacks on the island. Of the Trelawney Maroons themselves nothing remains save a legend of how they ambushed and annihilated a party of the Falmouth Militia at a place called 'Dragon Hole'.

The Maroons of Accompong, Charlestown and other small settlements were not deprived of any rights and privileges

¹⁴Proceedings of the House of the Assembly, p. 43.

¹⁵Mary M. Carley, Jamaica: The Old and the New, p. 46.

given to them in the Treaty of 1739. Hart, in describing the position of the Accompong Maroons, wrote, "The Accompong Maroons, as a body, observed a strict neutrality, probably through fear of the consequences."¹⁶ He also added, "A body of Charlestown Maroons, when called upon to aid the Government, refused to do so."¹⁷

As a result of the Second Maroon War of 1795, it was decided by the Jamaica House of Assembly that the Maroons would flourish in a cold climate; accordingly they were deported to Nova Scotia, Canada, in 1796.

¹⁶Hart, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 64.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAROONS IN NOVA SCOTIA

In the beginning of June, 1796, there was an exciting stir in Jamaica as the Trelawney Maroons prepared to embark for their strange expedition. His majesty's ship, the *Dover*, with two transports in company, having on board the Trelawney Maroons (in number about six hundred), provided with all kinds of necessaries, as well for their accomodation at sea as for the change of climate, sailed from Blue-fields in Jamaica for Halifax in North America.

They were accompanied by William Davies Quarrell and Alexander Ouchterlouw, Esquires, commissioners appointed by the Assembly with authority and instructions to purchase lands in Nova Scotia, Lower Canada or where-else his majesty should please to appoint for the future establishment and subsistence of those Maroons as a free people.¹

They arrived at the port of Halifax on July 22, after a voyage of six weeks from the West Indies. The Duke of Kent (who was commander-in-chief at Halifax) was greatly interested in them, and went on board the transports to inspect the fierce freedom fighters who had caused so much terror and inflicted so much loss in the island of Jamaica. The Maroons received him, all dressed in neat uniforms, with a guard of honour and martial music.

¹Edwards, History of the West Indies, p. 394.

He found them a much finer class of men than the ordinary Negroes. They saluted him with much respect, and in every way tried to show their appreciation of his visit. They addressed him as 'Massa Prince' and 'Massa King's Son'. Their fine appearance and evidence of great strength, pleased the Duke so much that he at once offered them work on the new fortifications then being erected on Citadel Hill, and they set to work with a will, and the fortifications were revised with rapidity, the Maroon Bastion of the old fortress being a reminder today of this strange episode in the history of a strange people.²

The Maroons gave a good impression in performing their first task. There was widespread satisfaction in terms of their service and behaviour. Dallas wrote of this, "In a short time this dreadful banditti were considered as a great acquisition to the country."³ However, this spirit of optimism and delight was not to remain much longer.

The Maroons who were temporarily quartered in homes were soon to be settled on estates purchased for them at Preston (about two miles from Halifax).

Most of them were settled on lands at Preston; some families were removed to Boydville... Sir John Wentworth asked for a grant of Two Hundred and Forty Pounds (£240) per annum, to be applied in religious instruction and education.⁴

Two years passed and the people had made little progress in civilization or religion. They did, however, succeed fairly well in settling disputes among themselves as they had a

²Mary Lawson, History of the Townships of Dartmouth, Preston and Lawrence, p. 163.

³Dallas, The History of the Maroons, p. 210.

⁴James C. Hamilton, The Maroons of Jamaica and Nova Scotia, p. 6.

kind of court, held by the two commissaries (Messrs. Quarrell and Ouchterlouw) in the presence of at least three Maroon captains, to try small offences.

The Maroons soon became discontented as they were to experience one of the bitterest winters Nova Scotia had ever experienced. Unacclimatised and unused to winter living, they suffered terrible hardships.

Whatever solicitations of being settled for life in the Province, might have been made by them in the summer of 1797, their desire of a removal was revived during the winter, and afterwards in the spring, clearly expressed in a farewell address, written to the Commissary General, when they heard he was about to leave Halifax.⁵

When spring came again, it was noticed that the Maroons showed no desire to work for the king or anyone else. If they refused to work they would be sure to be removed to a warmer climate, they believed. Despite efforts by the authorities to make them comfortable, year by year they became more and more turbulent and troublesome. They began to complain of the treachery which had been practiced upon them at the time of their surrender. "There was too much ground for this complaint, and no doubt the uneasy spirits among them used it with great effect to increase their discontent."⁶

Sir John Wentworth (Governor of Nova Scotia) had raised a Regiment in Nova Scotia for the service of the crown, and

⁵Thomas C. Haliburton, An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia, Vol. II, p. 290.

⁶Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Vol. 7, p. 152.

now he found use for it at home. "He was obliged to send a detachment of fifty men to Preston to put down a serious disturbance that had occurred there, and to restore order."⁷ On April 21, 1797, Sir John Wentworth, in a letter to the Duke of Clarence, said of the Maroons, "From my observation of them, neither Jamaica or any other island would be long at peace, nor secure from insurrection, were these people among them."⁸

In addition to the discontentment and complaints of the Maroons, the cost of providing for them was becoming so great that Sir John had to apply to the governor of Jamaica to send additional funds for their maintenance until they could support themselves.

This led to a disagreeable contest between the governor of Nova Scotia, the Assembly of Jamaica, and the Ministry in England. The legislature of Jamaica would not yield to this decision, and the altercations between the two colonies led to a misunderstanding between Sir John Wentworth and Colonel Quarrell. The governor accused the other of fostering insubordination among the Maroons and endeavouring to weaken his authority over them. The result of the difficulty was that Colonel Quarrell resigned his commissaryship and returned to Jamaica. The lack of funds and proper care worsened living conditions, as these already restless Negroes were constantly relapsing into idleness and discontent. Their complaints were frequent and loud against the dullness and poverty of their homes in Preston.⁹

It soon became evident that these people could not remain here, and shortly afterwards negotiations, at the

⁷Ibid., p. 152.

⁸Hamilton, op. cit., p. 7.

⁹Ibid., p. 173.

instance of the Nova Scotia government, were opened between the Imperial authorities and the Sierra Leone Company, which led to an arrangement to send the Maroons to join their predecessors from this province on the coast of Africa.

"In August, 1800, they left for their new home, lessened in numbers and not improved by their four years' residence in Preston. Five hundred and fifty-one left in the 'Asia' for Africa."¹⁰ They arrived at Sierra Leone one month later to experience new living conditions and customs but still harboring a desire to return to Jamaica.

On their arrival, what were called the Nova Scotia blacks (a number of Negro loyalists who, about eight years previous to the arrival of the Maroons, had been removed to that settlement from Nova Scotia where they had proved extremely turbulent) were in open rebellion. The Maroons proved faithful and fought so bravely in support of British authority that the rebellion was speedily extinguished. The following quotation from a report made in the year 1802 by a Committee of the House of Commons, throws light on the character of the Maroons after they left Nova Scotia:

The Nova Scotians (the colored immigrants) are much awed by the Maroons, and look up to the Europeans for protection. The Maroons are active and intrepid, prodigal of their lives, confident of their strength, proud of the character of their body and food, though not jealous of their independence.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 176-176.

¹¹ Duncan Campbell, Nova Scotia in its Historical, Mercantile and Industrial Relations, p. 205.

Although the Maroons were well received in Canada and Africa, they usually harboured a desire to go back at some period of their lives to Jamaica and therefore were difficult to induce by prospects of future benefits to labour for improvement of their habitations.

The Maroons continued to maintain the good character given them by the committee of the House of Commons, but their determination to return to Jamaica continued unabated. A number of them finally returned to Jamaica after overcoming the vicissitudes of transportation to foreign lands. Duncan Campbell records their repatriation as follows,

In the year 1836, they had increased to six hundred and eighty-one souls, and in the following five years they returned to Jamaica, leaving only in the year 1841 seventy of their number in Sierra Leone.¹²

The Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society describe their return as follows:

In the interests of African civilization it is not perhaps to be regretted that the new settlers never abandoned the idea of a return to their old home. They seemed to have longed, as did the native Acadian French that we drove from our shores, for a return to the land of their birth and early associations. They spent in the African colony about the same period of time that the Israelites passed in the wilderness and forty years after their arrival, the great bulk of them returned to Jamaica. Today only an inconsiderable number of their descendants remain in the African Settlement.¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 208.

¹³Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society, Vol. 7, pp. 154-155.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAROONS AND FREEDOM

In 1938, the Jamaican Daily Gleaner published an article entitled, "Maroons Celebrate Two Hundred Years of Freedom." In this article Colonel Rowe of the Maroons said that the "...Peace Treaty entered into in 1738 by Cudjoe, Accompong, Quaco, Johnny and Cuffee with the then governor still 'holds good' [today]."¹ Even in his article, "Maroons Celebrate Bicentenary of Freedom," wrote,

Over 200 years ago they indicated beyond the shadow of a doubt that they were going to be a free people. They refused to be enslaved, fought to the finish for their freedom and won that freedom. They had preserved that freedom and showed in every way their determination to live as free men should.²

In January, 1968, the Maroons of Accompong celebrated the 231st anniversary of the peace treaty with Britain. In covering the celebration, the Jamaican Daily Gleaner reported,

The Maroons of Accompong celebrated the 231st anniversary of their treaty with the British on January 8 with the ancient music of the 'gumbe' and famed 'abeng' which once rang out through the hills warning the warriors of the approach of British forces.³

¹"Maroons Celebrate Two Hundred Years of Freedom," Jamaican Daily Gleaner, March 4, 1938, p. 1.

²"Maroons Celebrate Bicentenary of Freedom", ibid., March 7, 1938, p. 21.

³"The Maroons 231st Anniversary", ibid., Jan. 28, 1968, p. 16.

The function was presided over by Colonel Wright and short addresses were given by ex-colonel J. W. Robertson, Major Arnold Anderson, and Mr. Joseph Salmon, Secretary of the Maroon Council.

The present Chief or Colonel of the Accompong Maroons is Mr. Martin Luther Wright, a 50 year old grocer and farmer, who was elected to the post in November, 1967, and will rule for the next five years, when new elections may be scheduled.

There are texts of interesting documents to prove that the British Government did give freedom and concessions to the Maroons long before slavery in general was abolished in Jamaica in 1838. However, since the signing of the treaty in 1739, a number of historical events have occurred which have in one way or another affected certain concessions, thereby affecting Maroon freedom to the extent that it has become necessary to examine the present status of the Maroons in Jamaican society as a whole. Ever since the abolition of slavery in Jamaica (August 1, 1838), the natives have expressed in different forms a proclivity towards nationhood, proudly achieved on August 6, 1962. The constitutional changes and developments which were essential parts of the machinery used in the process of achievement affected all inhabitants of the country. Despite the fact that the Maroons were given special considerations, yet as citizens they were to be subjected to the rule of law which is the supreme power of the land.

By virtue of the Jamaica Independence Act, 1962, Jamaica will attain fully responsible status within

the Commonwealth on the 6th August, 1962. This order makes provision for a new constitution for Jamaica with effect from that date, including provision for the executive government, the legislature, the judicature and the public service. The Constitution also contains provision relating to citizenship of Jamaica and fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual.⁴

A closer look at the laws of Jamaica as they relate to the Maroons will reveal the true nature of the existence or non-existence of the Maroons' autonomy in an independent Jamaica. A few months after the treaty was signed with the Maroons, legal affirmation was given to it by a legislative act of May 12, 1739. This Act recited and ratified the articles of agreement which had been concluded at the camp near Trelawney-town on March 1, 1739, and thus made these articles part of the general law of the island and subject to repeal and modification by subsequent legislation. Despite the legal gesture of the government to incorporate the Maroon Treaty in the general laws, it gave itself legal powers to make null and void previous laws, thereby bringing the Maroons under greater control by the Jamaican political administration.

Further enactments (1837-42) by the Jamaican government were to set limitations on the rights and privileges of the Maroons, thereby restricting their freedom.

Section 2 of 5 Vic. (fifth year in the reign of Queen Victoria), Ch. 49, provided that the Maroons:

⁴The Jamaica (Constitution) Order in Council, p. 90.

...shall be entitled to and enjoy all the rights, privileges, and immunities of British subjects, as fully and completely as the same are enjoyed by any of her majesty's subjects in the island.⁵

As the laws of Jamaica were revised from time to time with appropriate modifications, the Maroons' rights and privileges became more and more limited and restricted. Consequently they were forced to take on more general responsibilities as Jamaican citizens, as shown by Section 2 of 5 Vic. Ch. 49.

In the evolution of the island's constitutional development, it was clear that effective and deliberate measures were taken in the passing of statutes to reduce the distinction and separateness which existed between the Maroons and the other inhabitants. Statute of 1832, 2 Wm. IV Cap. 34 (second year of William the fourth, Caption 34) entitled, "An Act to Repeal Certain Laws Respecting the Maroons and to Render Them More Serviceable to the Island"⁶ was enacted.

The effect of the revision of the laws and the enactment of statutes regarding the Maroons was to make them subject to the jurisdiction of the ordinary court. Provision was made to protect the right of the Maroons to preside over minor offences in respect of which jurisdiction was given to the superintendent and his officers as stated by the treaty and ratified by the government as a part of the general law of the land.

⁵Jamaica Law Reports, Vol. V, p. 162.

⁶Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 52.

In revising the laws of Jamaica up to 1938, further measures were taken by the legislature to assume a greater degree of control over the affairs and welfare of the Maroon settlements.

Whereas by an Act passed in the fifth year of the reign of her majesty, chapter forty-nine, entitled "An Act to Repeal the Several Laws of this Island Relating to Maroons;"⁷

the crown appointed Commissioners (giving them the authority) to allot lands belonging to the several Maroon Townships and Settlements, and for other purposes. All lands theretofore allotted and granted to or for the use of the Maroons were revested in her majesty for the purposes of being allotted and granted under the provision of the above Act.

The Maroon Townships Lands Allotment Law enacted in 1856 and re-enacted in the Revised Edition of the Laws of Jamaica 1938 gave complete authority to her majesty's Commissioners in the granting, conveying and allotting of all lands used and enjoyed by the Maroons. The law, in addition, gave the Commission the power to settle all disputes arising between rival claimants as indicated below:

In case any dispute shall arise between the parties desirous of obtaining a grant and conveyance of the same land, it shall be lawful for the said Executive Committee or any two of them, to determine such disputes and to grant and convey the land in dispute to such one of the parties as they in their discretion shall think fit.⁸

⁷Laws of Jamaica, p. 4121.

⁸Ibid., p. 4124.

It should be noted that the smaller Maroon settlements in the eastern section of the island, e.g. Moore Town in the parish of Portland, had merged fully in the society as a result of legislative actions. By Act 2 Wm. IV C. 34:

Under this act all Maroon reserves were subdivided except the Accompong's one thousand acres which were then vested in the crown and all Maroons became legally merged in the general population.⁹

It is certainly a difficult task to determine to what extent the Maroons enjoy freedom in a society which makes certain demands and duties of them. It is evident that the liberty enjoyed during the 18th century and even the earlier part of the 19th century has been reduced to the extent that what were once privileges have become limitations and liabilities today. However, a look at the Maroons in today's society (after surviving the vicissitudes of constitutional changes and legislative acts) should supply greater information as to whether or not their freedom can be justified.

In 1856 the Colonial Secretary of Jamaica had a proposal of removing all privileges and disabilities from all the Maroons and to merge them in the general population. In his address to the Rev. W. Graham, clerk of the Presbytery, he wrote of the Maroon:

...if he relies on the treaty and also pleads immunity from taxation, forego the following benefits: (1) The privilege of voting; (2) That of being treated in hospital; (3) That of sharing in the benefits of the poor law; (4) That of receiving medical aid; (5) That of having a school or sending his children to school; (6) That of having

⁹The Jamaica Gazette, Vol. XXIX, p. 186.

police protection.¹⁰

Today the Maroons of Accompong still rely on the treaty in claiming immunity from taxation and the right to land allotments of crown lands. The Maroons somehow manage to get exemption from taxation while sharing in most of the benefits enjoyed by other citizens of the State, i.e.: (1) That of voting in the islands' general elections; (2) That of being treated in hospitals; (3) That of having a school and sending their children to school; (4) That of having police protection; and (5) Sharing generally in the benefits of the state where possible. The Maroons, in addition to being exempted from taxation, invest power in their chief or colonel with his cabinet made up of ex-colonels, the Secretary of the Maroon Council, senior members of the society, and one person who resides outside of the settlement, who is responsible for settling disputes and offences committed by Maroons on Maroon settlements. The chief or colonel is elected by the ballot and is expected to remain in office for a period of five years. At the time of elections, qualified staff from the electoral offices give assistance in carrying out the elections.

Despite the judicial function of the colonel and his cabinet regarding the trial of specific offences (as stated by the treaty) among the Maroons, they are subject to the general law of the land and have been punished by the proper authorities when found guilty of crimes committed against

¹⁰Ibid., p. 187.

the state. The famous Man O. Rowe case of 1956 gives a clear indication as to the distinction of powers between that of the Maroons and that of the government.

Reg. v. Man O. Rowe

The appellant (a Maroon) was convicted by the Resident Magistrate for St. Elizabeth on the 19th March, 1956.

The evidence showed that on the 23rd January, 1956, the police went to the home of the appellant at Accompong in St. Elizabeth; they searched his house under the authority of a search warrant and found ganja marijuana in two paper parcels as well as ganja seeds. Two prohibited publications were also found.¹¹

The court in clarifying overlapping powers cited the following:

Held: the clause of the agreement of 1738-39 granting to the captains of the Maroons and their successors the power to impose punishment for offences committed by the Maroons among themselves was not a right or privilege which was saved by 5 Vic. Capt. 49 Sec. 5, but was a limitation on the rights and privileges granted to the Maroons and that the Resident Magistrate's Court had jurisdiction to try offences committed by persons residing in former Maroon settlements.¹²

The court was in fact saying that the arm of the law could be extended into the Maroon settlement to bring offenders against the law to justice. (The Maroon treaty is a part of the general law of Jamaica, and as citizens they must act within the framework of the law of the land.) The government of Jamaica has indeed limited the actions of the Maroons (and of all its

¹¹Jamaica Law Reports, p. 45.

¹²Ibid., p. 45.

citizens) by investing itself with the power and authority to control all groups.

The court made the following statement in its final judgment. Per curia:

There is today no difference or distinction whatever in the rights and obligations as defined by the law of this island between the persons residing in the former Maroon settlements and those of any other British subject in Jamaica.¹³

In a commentary of the Daily Gleaner regarding the trial of Man O. Rowe, Secretary of the Maroon government at Accompong, it reports the following: "Are Maroons exempt from Jamaica law? No, says Resident Magistrate."¹⁴ The treaty of 1739 did give to the Maroons a great degree of freedom in relation to the other Africans who were still slaves under the British. But in 1842 following the abolition of slavery:

...the Statute 5 Vic. Cap. 49 repealed all previous laws dealing with the Maroons and provided that they shall be entitled to all the rights, privileges and immunities of British subjects. Section 5 provided that the rights and privileges granted to the Maroons by all the repealed acts shall not be lessened or affected in any way but shall remain as if the acts granting the rights and privileges remained in force.¹⁵

The above statute does not hold true today, as the Maroon history of legislation has subjected the Maroons to much greater limitations while at the same time granting to them greater privileges and duties shared by other citizens

¹³Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴"Are Maroons Exempt from Jamaica Law?", The Daily Gleaner, March 13, 1956.

¹⁵Jamaica Law Reports, pp. 45-46.

of the island. There is no doubt that the freedom of the Maroons today is greatly determined by the Jamaican government. However, all indications point toward a final merging of the Maroons in the general population. There is communication between the Maroons, the government, and the rest of the population. A friendly relationship exists between the various groups that could prove useful in bringing about such a merging. Despite these favorable conditions, there are many (including some of the Maroons) who still boast of the freedom of the Maroons. To what extent they (the Maroons) are really free is anybody's guess. The colonel of the Maroons appropriately described the situation. When he was asked if the Maroons were free, he said, "We have partial freedom."

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

There is a popular misconception in Jamaica today that the term Maroon has connotations of: (1) wildness, (2) uncivilized, (3) fierceness, (4) separateness, and (5) a distinction in physical appearance. There is also the conception that they have achieved apparent success which, of course, is somewhat of an illusion today.

The Maroons of Jamaica today have the distinction of: (1) living on Crown (government) lands, (2) being exempted from taxation, (3) having the right to try minor offences committed on their settlement.

They share the same heritage of most of the native inhabitants, that of having basically African ancestors. A Maroon outside of the settlement loses the identity of a Maroon. They also lose their distinction in sharing in certain benefits of the state, e.g. as they associate with the outside in buying and selling goods and in receiving service from the postal agency which is located a few miles outside the Accompong settlement.

Beyond the rights granted to the Maroons as a result of the treaty, they could be described as Jamaicans living on former Maroon settlements. The concessions won by the Maroons by the Treaty of 1739 were undoubtedly an achievement coveted

by enslaved 'blacks' throughout the West Indies. The treaty, therefore, during the 18th century and most of the 19th century, was an asset to these people. But a look at their position today in relation to the other inhabitants reveals that their reliance on certain provisions of the treaty is a liability not only to themselves, but to the nation as a whole.

On October 31, 1968, I visited the Maroon settlement of Accompong in the parish of St. Elizabeth. Such shocking social conditions were evident that I cannot help but believe that these people have been intoxicated with the past. Nevertheless, as a Jamaican citizen, I trust that they will be stirred and motivated by government incentives to build a better future. They need to recognize that in this modern era they must be able to capitalize on advantages by transforming achievements of the past into greater possibilities for the future.

The social and economic deprivations which exist at Accompong are among the worst in the entire island. The Maroons are lacking in the basic essentials of livelihood in a civilized society. The following conditions exist:

1. There is no proper water supply system.
2. There is no health center or service in their community.
3. There are not sufficient schools or vocational training opportunities for the youth.
4. The only road (unpaved) leading to the settlement is almost impassable.
5. They lack the kind of industry that could provide

work for the many unemployed in the area.

6. There are no recreational facilities.

Simon Harcourt-Smith, in his article, "Maroons Altered Jamaican History," has described how a Maroon colonel charged the government with neglect of Maroon needs. He added,

When he appealed for a decent road to Accompong I suspected him of treading upon shaky ground, seeing that by the treaty, the maintenance of good communications with the outside world seems to be a Maroon responsibility; but if the colonel is right in his accusations of medical neglect, then perhaps, on the grounds of humanity alone, the government should increase their aid.¹

The writer was under the impression that there was stagnation because neither the Maroons nor the government was willing to take over the other one's duty and responsibility (in accordance with the treaty) but I discovered differently when the colonel told me that, while he was speaking for himself, he was prepared to surrender the rights of the treaty in order to get the assistance from the government that would make life more secure and attractive in the community.

A very meaningful and significant article appeared in the Daily Gleaner entitled "Let's Make a Fresh Start." The governor tells Maroons:

Hope for a new approach to the consideration of the problems existing between the Jamaican government and the Maroons has been expressed by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Hugh Foot. 'In a letter to Colonel T. J. Crawley, Chief of the Maroons, the governor has stated that there should be no need for wrangling about the past, but that measures

¹Simon Harcourt-Smith, "Maroons Altered Jamaican History", The Daily Gleaner, May 9, 1964, p. 3.

should be worked out together whereby the Maroons may look to a better life in the future.²

There is widespread discontentment among the Maroons concerning their social conditions.

I met the Secretary of the Maroon Council, Mr. Man O. Rowe, who introduced himself as Secretary of State for the Maroons. Then I inquired of his duties. "My office," he declared, "is similar to that of Dean Rusk of the United States." He seized the opportunity to complain about the deplorable social conditions and suggested that I should do what I could to render some kind of assistance to the Maroons of Accompong.

I agreed with Colonel Martin Luther Wright when he said that the government should play a greater role in spearheading the development of the Maroons. However, this would necessitate taking from the Maroons the remaining rights they now claim and replacing them with civic obligations, e.g. paying taxes. The words of the colonial secretary (in reference to merging them into the population) place the responsibility and power in the hands of the government in order to resolve the issue. The colonial secretary in a letter to the Clerk of the Presbytery stated in his conclusion in reference to the Maroons:

I am to explain in conclusion that while a treaty between two sovereign powers is usually regarded as

²"Development Plans for Maroons", ibid., October 6, 1953, p. 1.

immutable except by special agreement between parties, an arrangement between a Sovereign and one of his subjects in the shape of a treaty or arrangement (like the celebrated Magna Carta between King John and his Barons) is always liable to such changes as the Sovereign Authority may hereafter, from time to time, enact in a constitutional manner.³

The Assistant Attorney General of Jamaica supported the above idea when he said that if the law cannot be implemented because of obstacles (in the form of previous agreements) and obsolete laws, then they must be repealed and new laws enacted for effective functioning. He went on further to say that if government thinks there is integration on the basis of marriage, business or any other form of interaction and that the Maroons appeared no longer a separate and distinct people, then government can legislate that there should not be separate laws.

All other Maroons, those at Heath Hall, Charles-town, Mooretown and elsewhere, have become merged in the general population and the inhabitants at Accompong would have long ago followed their example if it had not been for the bad advice and for the mistaken indulgence of the government which has allowed them all the rights of taxpayers and ordinary citizens...⁴

The writer trusts that the revised edition of the laws of Jamaica (which are currently under study) will contain appropriate legislation to hasten the merging of the Maroons in the population. This was the recommendation made previously, as recorded as follows:

The words of the Colonial Secretary, 5 Vic. Ch.

³The Jamaica Gazette, Vol. XXIX, p. 188.

⁴Ibid., p. 187.

49 were passed with the object of removing all privileges and disabilities from the Maroons and to merge them in the general population.⁵

Colonel Wright, in pointing out that a number of public amenities would be concomitant with the government's assistance, concluded in a most convincing manner that there would undoubtedly be more advantages and benefits if there were a merging of peoples. As the colonel is representative of the Maroons, his opinions should indicate a willingness on their part to negotiate, if need be, with the government in an attempt to iron out long standing conflicts and contradictions involving two separate societies in an effort to make them one.

It is my judgment that, since the Maroons, by virtue of legislative acts, have had their status changed as follows:

- a. They have been made citizens of Jamaica;
- b. They participate in the election of Parliament;
- c. They are subjected to the general law of the land;
- d. They share in the benefits and prosperity of the state where possible;

in the interest of all the parties involved, there should be negotiations for the purpose of mutual agreement on terms to solve the precarious social gap. If this fails, then the government should use its authority on the basis of social evidence, i.e. integration and the degree of association, to

⁵See Jamaica Gazette, March 15, 1906, p. 186.

so legislate that the following court pronouncement (which was made by a Resident Magistrate at the trial of a Maroon) will be a reality to the Jamaican people:

There is today no difference or distinction whatever in the rights and obligations as defined by the law of this island between the persons residing in the former Maroon settlements and those of any other British subject in Jamaica.⁶

⁶Jamaica Law Reports, pp. 45-46.

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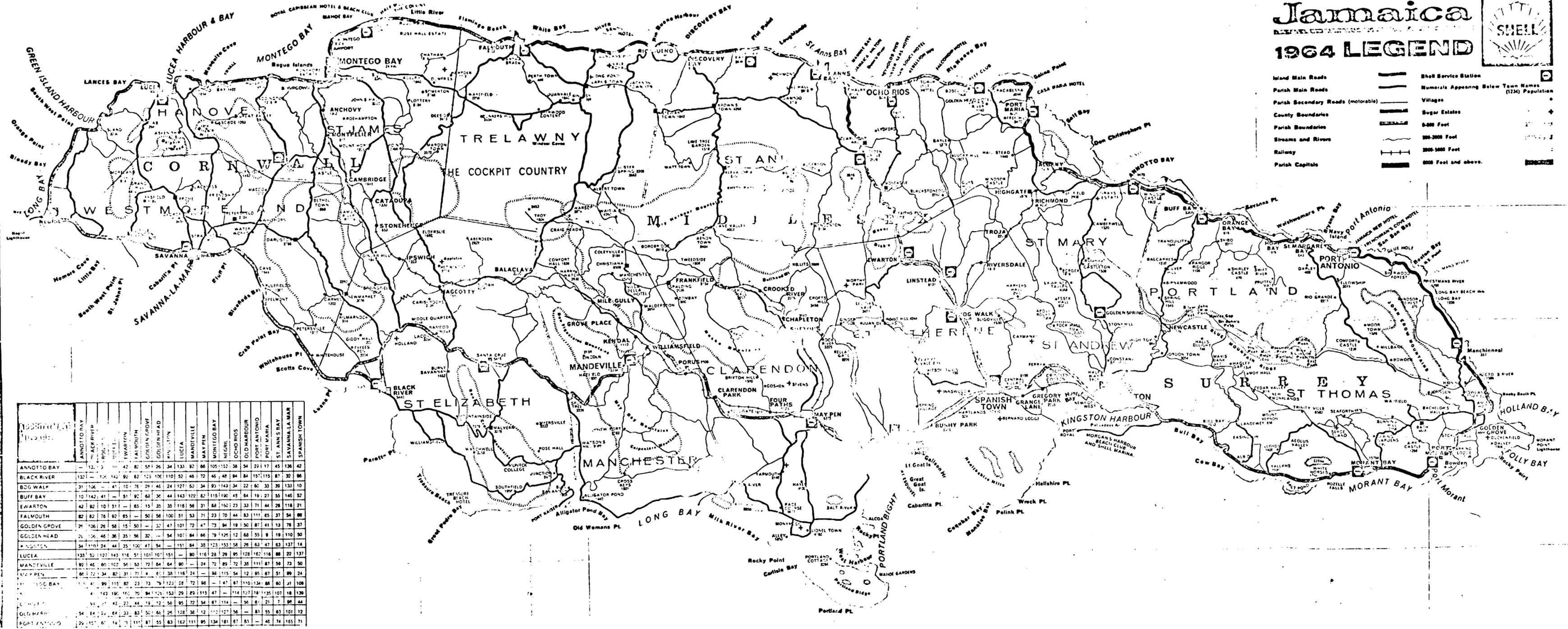
Wright, Martin Luther: Chief or Colonel of the Maroons at Accompong, Jamaica.

Jamaica

1964 LEGEND



- Island Main Roads ———
- Parish Main Roads ———
- Parish Secondary Roads (motorable) ———
- County Boundaries ———
- Parish Boundaries ———
- Streams and Rivers ———
- Railway ———
- Parish Capitals ———
- Shell Service Station ———
- Numerals Appearing Below Town Names (1234) Population ———
- Villages ———
- Sugar Estates ———
- 0-500 Feet ———
- 500-2000 Feet ———
- 2000-5000 Feet ———
- 5000 Feet and above. ———



ANNOTTO BAY	BLACK RIVER	BOG WALK	BUFF BAY	EWARTON	FALMOUTH	GOLDEN GROVE	GOLDEN HEAD	MANDEVILLE	MAY PEN	MONTEGO BAY	NEGIL	OCHO RIOS	OLD HARBOUR	PORT ANTONIO	PORT MARIA	ST. ANNS BAY	SAVANNA LA MAR	SPANISH TOWN	
12	106	31	10	42	82	26	34	133	86	105	152	34	54	23	17	45	136	42	
132	106	142	92	62	123	106	110	52	46	72	46	48	84	84	157	115	87	32	90
31	106	41	10	76	24	46	24	127	52	34	92	142	34	22	60	33	39	133	10
10	142	41	51	92	68	36	44	143	102	82	115	190	48	84	19	27	55	146	52
42	92	10	51	65	15	35	35	118	56	31	88	162	23	31	71	44	28	118	21
82	82	76	82	65	50	56	100	51	53	71	23	70	44	83	111	65	37	54	86
26	106	26	58	15	50	32	47	101	72	47	73	94	19	50	87	41	13	78	37
26	106	46	36	35	56	32	54	107	84	66	79	125	12	68	55	8	19	110	50
34	101	24	44	35	100	47	54	151	84	38	123	153	58	28	63	47	63	137	14
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29	157	67	19	11	117	87	55	63	162	111	95	134	181	87	83	41	74	165	71