

Security, Taxation, and the Imperial System in Jamaica, 1721–1782

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ABSTRACT White Jamaicans paid relatively high rates of taxation to support a powerful and assertive imperial state in schemes of settlement and security. They paid such taxes willingly because they were satisfied with what they got from the state. Furthermore, they believed they had a significant stake in the processes by which taxes were collected and spent. The power of the colonial state depended on the empire being a loose fraternal alliance. Nevertheless, what worked for imperial and colonial Jamaica did not necessarily work elsewhere. Jamaica provides a case study of how the imperial state worked satisfactorily for imperial rulers and those colonists whom they ruled when both the state and colonial settlers shared common beliefs and when negotiations made it clear that the interests of all parties coincided.

Jamaica was a jewel in the imperial crown in the eighteenth century. On the eve of the Seven Years' War, Dr. Patrick Browne declared that the island was "not only the richest, but the most considerable colony at this time under the government of *Great Britain*," so much superior to "the *main continent*, that it has been for many years looked upon, as a magazine for all the neighboring settlements of *America*." It was also a colony in which the relationship between the imperial state and colonists worked well.¹ An examination of the ways in which the state worked in Jamaica contributes to an ongoing

1. Patrick Browne, *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* (London: T. Osborne, 1756), 9. For modern accounts, see Trevor Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves: Plantation Societies in British America, 1650–1820* (Chicago: University of Chicago,

historiographical reassessment of the place of the imperial state in colonial British America.² Attitudes toward the state in Jamaica and other colonies were protean and shaped by circumstances and by negotiations between the imperial center and individual polities at specific times, and dependent on these polities' spatial location and social character and value to the imperial project.³

The benefit of the pre-1763 imperial system was that it accommodated diversity. By contrast, imperial policy after 1763 was more centralized and homogenous, which suited a colony like Jamaica more than others.⁴ An examination of how its imperial structure operated from the 1720s to the 1780s reveals that Jamaica in fact *depended* on an active and interventionist imperial state provided that it could be controlled by an equally engaged colonial state, which *benefitted* from the centralizing and homogenizing policies adopted in the 1760s. Success depended on British statesmen understanding both the limits of their authority and the need to negotiate with local elites, and on local elites recognizing that some degree of increased taxation was necessary if such negotiation was to be effective. Such was the case in Jamaica after 1763, in stark contrast to North America. The accommodations made in Jamaica between a strong imperial state and an assertive colonial state demonstrate that the problems of taxation, which vexed

2015), chap. 4; Jack P. Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s: A Social Portrait* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016).

2. Stephen Conway, *The American Revolutionary War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013); Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000).

3. Kathleen Wilson, "Rethinking the Colonial State: Family, Gender, and Governmentality in Eighteenth-Century British Frontiers," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011): 1294–322; P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America ca. 1750–1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Suditpa Sen, "Uncertain Dominance: The Colonial State and its Contradictions," *Neplanta: Views from the South* 3, no. 2 (2002), 392–406; Jack P. Greene, "Britain's Overseas Empire before 1780: Overwhelmingly Successful and Bureaucratically Challenged," in *Creating the British Atlantic: Essays on Transplantation, Adaptation, and Continuity* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 113–39. On seventeenth-century Jamaica, see Carla Gardina Pestana, "State Formation from the Vantage of Early English Jamaica: The Neglect of Edward Doyley," *Journal of British Studies* 56, no. 3 (2017): 483–505.

4. S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire: How Britain Imagined America before Independence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017). The Board of Trade signaled its intentions to transform colonial governance in a massive 1721 report. See Craig Yirush, *Settlers, Liberty, and Empire: The Roots of Early American Political Theory, 1675–1775* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 183–87.

colonists in British North America and helped facilitate a revolution, did not apply universally throughout the British Empire, where places like Jamaica, Ireland, and Scotland established a strong fiscal-military state devoted to ensuring white security.⁵

THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF EMPIRE

Between 1690 and 1763, Britain developed a workable imperial “system” in which component parts of the empire were treated differently according to imperial conceptions of their value to Britain irrespective of local circumstances rather than the same rules applying to each territory.⁶ A study of fiscal-military operations in eighteenth-century Jamaica illustrates the relationships between colonists and the imperial state beyond “salutary neglect” before the Seven Years War and followed by a disastrous period of attempted centralization in the lead-up to the American Revolution.⁷ Whereas in many British North American colonies the imperial state had a limited presence, there was, as Elizabeth Mancke has argued, “another British America” in Canada, in Florida, and most of all in parts of the West Indies,

5. Theorists term this historical entity the “fiscal-military” state. See Aaron Graham and Patrick Walsh, eds., *The British Fiscal-Military States, 1660–c.1783* (London: Routledge, 2016).

6. British statesmen like Lord Halifax and Charles Townsend, who knew the workings of the imperial center intimately, used the word “system.” See Andrew Beaumont, *Colonial America and the Earl of Halifax, 1748–1761* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Patrick Griffin, *The Townshend Moment: Two Brothers and the Making of Empire and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018), 23; and James Henretta, “Salutary Neglect”: *Colonial Administration Under the Duke of Newcastle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972).

7. “Salutary neglect” is something of a misnomer: Walpole’s policy recognized that the colonies contributed to national prosperity; his ministers and officials insisted on colonial adherence to imperial sovereignty, but believed that arguments between metropole and colony were counterproductive and that accommodation worked better than confrontation. See Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 45–47; Daniel J. Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire: New York and the Transformation of Constitutionalism in the Atlantic World, 1664–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 82–87; and Ian K. Steele, “The Anointed, the Appointed, and the Elected: Governance of the British Empire, 1689–1784,” in P. J. Marshall, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 114–19.

where “the state had considerable presence, acquiring new territory through conquest and state-funded exploration.”⁸

The fiscal-military state in Britain and its empire matured over a century of British conflict with other European states, notably France.⁹ This time of near-constant warfare required Britain to raise money through taxation or borrowing not just at home but elsewhere in the British Atlantic world—like Jamaica, which it relatively heavily taxed, conspicuously militarized, and intensively governed.¹⁰ In this respect, Jamaica’s tax structure more closely resembled Britain’s than that of many British North American colonies. The fiscal-military state in Britain in the second quarter of the eighteenth-century, and its extension into Scotland and Ireland, was of course much larger than its embryonic manifestations in British America, yet there were similar structures and aims, with state power in Jamaica operating primarily through the mobilization of revenue via taxation and the deployment of military power.¹¹

This tension between imperial ambitions for a more integrated empire and settler insistence on the imperial state recognizing local particularities was important in defining the early eighteenth-century British Empire.¹² The Board of Trade, for example, embraced a consistent policy aimed at

8. Elizabeth Mancke, “Another British America: A Canadian Model for the Early Modern British Empire,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25, no. 1 (1997): 1–36.

9. Max M. Edling, “A Mongrel Kind of Government’: The U.S. Constitution, the Federal Union, and the Origins of the American State,” in Peter S. Onuf and Peter Thompson, eds., *State and Citizen: British America and the Early United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 150–77.

10. On the fiscal-military state, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Lawrence Stone, *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689–1715* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Patrick O’Brien, “The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660–1815,” *Economic History Review* 41, no. 1 (1988): 1–32. For recent updates, see Stephen Conway, *War, State, and Society in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Graham and Walsh, *The British Fiscal-Military States*.

11. Graham and Walsh, *The British Fiscal-Military States*; Patrick Walsh, “The Eighteenth-Century Fiscal-Military State: A Four Nations Perspective,” in Naomi Lloyd-Jones and Margaret Scull, eds., *Four Nations Approaches to Modern “British History”: A (Dis)united Kingdom?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 85–109.

12. Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Background of the American Revolution: Four Essays in American Colonial History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, [1924] 1961), 12–13; Jack P. Greene, *The Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Justin du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence* (New Haven,

consolidating imperial control of colonial affairs and operating colonies within a common plan. The working assumption was that an overarching system under Crown scrutiny would replace the proliferation of jurisdictions and provincial interests that had prevailed in colonial politics since 1607. In times of war, more powerful political actors superseded the Board of Trade's authority over colonial affairs, but in peacetime, the colonists' disregard of trade regulations and determination to make their own laws—coupled with the reluctance in many colonies (though notably not Jamaica) to provide troops in time of war—limited state control.¹³

In the thirteen colonies that became the United States of America, the battle between the demand that colonists obey the imperial state's authority and settler colonials' insistence that they be allowed to control their own destiny had been deferred before 1763, in part because most colonies, like New York and Virginia, had been providing for their governmental needs with their own resources. In the end, however, as Justin du Rivage has insisted, disagreements over Britain's imperial design were irreconcilable, and every proposal for reconciliation after 1765 “ultimately foundered on radical colonists' demands for fiscal self-determination, and authoritarian reformers insistence on a reliable source of colonial revenue.”¹⁴ As John Murrin has argued, this enduring difference of opinion between British imperial statesmen and American colonists remains the enigma at the core of the American Revolution—though only on the British North American mainland, not elsewhere such as Jamaica. Between the 1720s and the 1760s, the growing power of the British state and its fiscal-military system created an ever more tightly integrated empire in terms of migration, the imperial economy, social, religious, and political cultures, and anglicization. Thus, as Murrin has maintained, the American Revolution was a countercyclical event—a crisis of imperial *integration* that the British state could not handle.¹⁵

Conn.: Yale University Press, 2017), chap. 1; Edelson, *New Map of Empire*; Griffin, *The Townshend Moment*.

13. Richard Pares, *War and Trade in the West Indies, 1739–1763* (London: Cass, 1936); Adrian Finucane, *The Temptations of Trade: Britain, Spain, and the Struggle for Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Thomas M. Truxes, *Defying the Empire: Trading with the Enemy in Colonial New York* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008); Jack P. Greene, “Of Liberty and of the Colonies’: A Case Study of Constitutional Conflict in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century British American Empire,” in *Creating the British Atlantic: Essays on Transplantation, Adaptation, and Continuity*, 140–207.

14. du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire*, 10–11.

15. John M. Murrin, *Rethinking America: From Empire to Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 162–63.

It was different elsewhere. The British fiscal-military state had more purchase in Scotland and Ireland than in colonial British America, where security needs persuaded local stakeholders that a stronger state accompanied by increased taxation was a necessary price to pay for imperial protection.¹⁶ This was true also in Jamaica, where local legislators saw a need for imperial action to increase white population levels and to keep that population secure from external and internal attack—especially the latter—through both the deployment of military force and the use of state powers. Traditional Whig views on curbing executive power by a representative assembly equivalent to the British parliament coexisted with the conviction that state power, when deployed under the advice of local agents, was vital to the prosperity of the island and the wider British Atlantic.

Writings about empire dated before the start of the Seven Years' War display this attempt to moderate between competing imperial imperatives. In 1746, James Knight pointed out that although the colonial government had given considerable sums for the "Support of the Government of the Island," the cost of settling and protecting the island was much less than the £60,000,000 that Knight believed Jamaica had provided to Britain in the time since settlement in 1655 as "almost clear Proffit." He thought that Britain needed to compensate Jamaicans with substantial metropolitan subsidies, noting that "when the Affairs of the Nation are settled" in the mid-1740s, after war was concluded, "We have great Reason to Expect" that British money would remove the "Difficulties and Obstructions" that had inhibited the expansion of trade. Increased white immigration would then make full settlement of the island possible, which in turn would allow whites "to Strengthen and Secure their possessions."¹⁷

Whether Jamaica was a net profit or loss to the empire has been a long-standing historiographical debate, but recent research has tended to endorse Knight's conclusions. At midcentury Jamaica's total wealth was very large—over £7.6 million. The island produced £634,670 in commodities per annum around 1750 and made an average annual contribution of £579,649 to the British economy. Such large sums—which rapidly increased between 1760 and 1783, when Jamaican wealth stood around £28 million—exceeded the

16. Walsh, "The Eighteenth-Century Fiscal-Military State."

17. James Knight, *The Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica and the Territories thereon depending, From the Earliest account of time to the Year 1742*, vol. 2, ed. Jack P. Greene with Trevor Burnard (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, forthcoming).

expenses of empire.¹⁸ Klas Rönnbäck has estimated that the value-added contribution of all British activities associated with the plantation complex was 4 percent of GDP in 1721 and 7.5 percent in 1772, before dipping to 6 percent of GDP by 1782.¹⁹

Key to this wealth was the tariff protection offered by enforcement of the Navigation Acts that protected Jamaican planters from competition from better and cheaper French sugar, as well as the security provided by the Royal Navy.²⁰ White Jamaicans also understood the threats to their security posed by Maroons (communities of ex-runaway slaves) before 1739, by enslaved people throughout the eighteenth century, and by the Spanish and French after midcentury, and would pay large taxes to keep themselves safe, with the proviso that the Jamaican Assembly had authority to spend such money. This system of security, carefully crafted in 1739 and again in 1760, would work until the 1790s, when it unraveled in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, which put the Caribbean and the institution of slavery at the center of global consciousness. The British imperial government in the 1790s prioritized global geopolitics over the need to continue old practices of negotiating security concerns with settler elites.

This change in imperial decision-making toward policies being made in London and then implemented in the colonies *without* colonial input also coincided with the calamitous Second Maroon War in 1795–96—a Pyrrhic victory for the imperial state, albeit one achieved at an enormous cost, nearly bankrupting the colony while weakening protection that the Maroons provided against slave revolt, as part of the 1739 agreement whereby they acted as a police force, returning absconded enslaved people to plantations.²¹ Military protection was a key part of Jamaica’s system of security, but white

18. Richard B. Sheridan, “The Wealth of Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century,” *Economic History Review* 18, no. 2 (1965): 292–311; Trevor Burnard, “‘A Prodigious Mine’: The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution Once Again,” *Economic History Review* 54, no. 3 (2001): 505–23; Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s*.

19. Klas Rönnbäck, “On the Economic Importance of the Slave Plantation Complex to the British Economy during the Eighteenth Century: A Value-Added Approach,” *Journal of Global History* 13, no. 3 (2018): 325.

20. R. P. Thomas, “The Sugar Colonies of the Old Empire: Profit or Loss for Great Britain?,” *Economic History Review* 21, no. 1 (1968): 30–45; Phillip R. P. Coelho, “The Profitability of Imperialism: The British Experience in the West Indies, 1768–1772,” *Explorations in Economic History* 10, no. 3 (1973): 253–80.

21. Christer Petley, “Slaveholders and Revolution: The Jamaican Planter Class, British Imperial Politics, and the Ending of the Slave Trade, 1775–1807,” *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 1 (2018): 53–79; Helen McKee, “From Violence to Alliance: Maroons and White Settlers in Jamaica, 1739–1795,” *Slavery & Abolition* 39, no. 1

Jamaicans knew well that demographic problems imperiled their safety (although at least until the end of the American Revolution, some hoped that concerted government action might rework the basic demographics of the island).²² Meanwhile, the enslaved population had ballooned from 7,768 in 1673 to 96,946 in 1730 and to 150,000 in 1750, whereas the number of whites barely increased from 8,000 to 10,000. By 1782, a white population of no more than 15,000 presided over an enslaved population of 240,000.²³

Max Edling's contention that the first half of the eighteenth century was "an age when the central government gave little in return for the subjects' tax money" held for some parts of British North America, such as Virginia, but certainly not for Jamaica.²⁴ Most government expenditure in eighteenth-century Britain, as elsewhere in Europe, focused on the narrow if important matter of making war. But much of this investment was linked to larger imperial projects for securing Britain's geopolitical position in the Atlantic and dominance in Europe.²⁵ It is thus difficult to distinguish monies spent on colonial matters from money spent on maintaining Britain's naval and military might while Britain also invested, as Steve Pincus and James Robinson argue, directly in imperial development.²⁶ The colonial state, of course, was not the same as the imperial state. And indeed, the imperial state differed in every imperial possession, both before and after attempts at

(2018): 27–52; David Geggus, "The Cost of Pitt's Caribbean Campaigns, 1793–1798," *Historical Journal* 26, no. 3 (1983): 699–706.

22. May 4, 1731, *Journals of the House of Assembly of Jamaica*, 7 vols. (Kingston, Jamaica: A. Aikman, 1798), 3:3–5 (hereafter cited as JHA).

23. Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*, 161.

24. Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55. On Massachusetts, see Julian Gwyn, "Financial Revolution in Massachusetts: Public Credit and Taxation, 1692–1774," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 17, no. 33 (1984): 59–77; William Pencak, "Warfare and Political Change in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 8, no. 2 (1980): 51–73; and Stephen Mihm, "Funding the Revolution: Monetary and Fiscal Policy in Eighteenth-Century America," in Edward G. Gray and Jane Kamensky, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 328.

25. For most of the eighteenth century, "a forward policy in Europe best secured Britain's maritime predominance." See Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 514–15.

26. Steve Pincus and James Robinson, "Wars and State-Making Reconsidered: The Rise of the Developmental State," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales—English Edition* 71, no. 1 (2017): 9–34.

imperial reform from 1763 onward intended to lessen colonial differences in favor of imperial uniformity.

Before 1763, the British American colonies operated essentially as a fraternal alliance, structured by parliamentary sovereignty and shared judicial, military, and administrative institutions. Mutual trust and affection between people with a common British heritage and a shared constitutional inheritance cemented this alliance.²⁷ Colonies faced varying needs, however, and received different treatment. Virginia and New York got little in return for low levels of taxation, as did many of the smaller islands in the British West Indies. There, colonial self-autonomy was largely realized. By contrast, Jamaica, Antigua, and Massachusetts, which had greater strategic and economic value, enjoyed higher levels of imperial spending, becoming much larger “colonial states” that collaborated with the imperial government for common aims. In these colonies, local needs necessitated much more careful negotiation between the imperial state and its needs and the local elites’ desire to restrict those needs to local interests.

From the 1720s to the 1780s, the imperial system operated in Jamaica as a complementary interaction between an imperial fiscal-military state, focused on defense and warfare undertaken by imperial troops and funded by high taxes paid on sugar and rum, and the colonial fiscal-military state controlled primarily by the Jamaican Assembly. The latter subsidized a series of imperial garrisons, raised funds to pay for superintendents in Maroon territories, invested in economic development through public works, and underwrote schemes to attract white settlers. Between 1721, when they began financing plans to settle Jamaica’s undeveloped interior, and 1782, when the demands of the American Revolutionary War changed the nature of colonial government, white Jamaicans reaped substantial benefits from the hefty taxes they paid to *both* the imperial and colonial states.²⁸ With the exception of Tacky’s Revolt in 1760, when a rebellion among the enslaved raised significant security concerns for white Jamaicans, the arrangements between the imperial and colonial states kept the island safe. At least three conspiracy scares in Jamaica occurred between 1760 and 1776, two of which were quickly put down (in Saint Mary in 1765 and in

27. For colonial views on constitutional matters, see Jack P. Greene and Craig Yirush, eds. *Exploring the Bounds of Liberty: Political Writings of Colonial British America from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution* (Carmel, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 2018).

28. Aaron Graham, “The Colonial Sinews of Imperial Power: The Political Economy of Jamaican Taxation, 1768–1838,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 2 (2017): 188–209.

Westmoreland in 1766); one in Hanover, which took place after the Fiftieth Regiment was sent to British North America in July 1776, did not come to fruition, but its planning suggests that it could have been as extensive as Tacky's.²⁹ The imperial state's ability to prevent or quell slave rebellions justified the cost of maintaining an elaborate security apparatus in the minds of Jamaica's white elites.

THE COLONIAL JAMAICAN STATE

In Jamaica, the colonial and the imperial states were in constant interplay. White Jamaicans' relationship with the imperial state was shaped by the unavoidable fact that they lived in the middle of a Caribbean Sea surrounded by hostile European powers and in the midst of a harshly treated and numerically dominant enslaved population.³⁰ As Richard S. Dunn has argued, the British West Indies and British North America took separate pathways after the Glorious Revolution. For the latter, 1688 suggested the uselessness and danger of administrative centralization. The remarkable dynamism of those colonies in the early eighteenth century validated for powerful elites the wisdom of a set of arrangements with the Crown that made them semi-autonomous entities.³¹ By the 1760s, many Americans who declared for revolution were committed to a concept of negative liberty, meaning "freedom from a number of political and social evils, including arbitrary government power," and a tendency to see "government as malevolent."³² As James Knight noted in the 1740s, American colonies were meant to pay their way, raising money and supporting "Themselves by Their own Prudence and labour to the Condition and Circumstances They are now in without any

29. James Robertson, "Tackey Plus 5? The Slave Uprising in St. Mary's in 1765: The Experience and Imagination of a Slave Revolt in Jamaica" (unpublished manuscript, presented to the Association of Caribbean Historians meeting, Kingston, Jamaica, May 2007); Claudius Fergus, "'Dread of Insurrection': Abolitionism, Security, and Labor in Britain's West Indian Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (2009): 757–80.

30. Aaron Graham, "Slave Codes and Panel Laws in Eighteenth Century Jamaica and Ireland: A Comparative and Historiographical Survey," *Jamaican Historical Review* (forthcoming 2020).

31. Stephen Saunders Webb, "William Blathwayt, Imperial Fixer," *William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1968): 3–21.

32. John Phillip Reid, *The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 56; Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10. The best recent interpretation of the American Revolution's long-term ideological causes is Greene, *Constitutional Origins of the American Revolution*.

Assistance from the Crown.” Such self-sufficiency, he argued, may have been appropriate for some colonies, but not for Jamaica.³³

In the British West Indies, planters were frightened by how their control over their islands’ politics had been severely challenged before the Glorious Revolution. They knew that their power could only be preserved through assistance from an interventionist imperial state; they needed both to defend their economy from slave revolts and to protect their trade from foreign competition. Each of these ambitions “crystalliz[ed] their economic dependency.”³⁴

From the 1720s onward, colonists accepted that they needed to pay their fair share of taxes to ensure their safety.³⁵ They were willing to do so because they believed that they controlled the disbursement of funds collected for the government.³⁶ Jamaican taxation increased in both absolute terms and relative to wealth and population during the eighteenth century.³⁷ Revenues and spending increased most rapidly during periods of warfare, with major spikes during the First Maroon War in the late 1730s, again in 1760–61 in the aftermath of Tacky’s Revolt, and then again during the American and French revolutionary wars. Government spending outstripped growth in population and wealth. The burden of taxation rose from 1–3 percent of national income to 6–8 percent, peaking in moments of crisis such as 1761 and 1782. The main taxes were on estates not having the required numbers of white employees (the deficiency tax); on individuals (poll tax); and on land. In the 1780s, direct taxes accounted for 31.8 percent of government revenue. Indirect taxes—duties on cattle, horses, and rum, taxes on imports and exports, stamp duties, and customs—accounted for 27.7 percent of revenues. The permanent revenue of £8,000 Jamaica

33. Knight, *Natural, Moral, and Political History of Jamaica*.

34. Richard S. Dunn, “The Glorious Revolution and America,” in Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. I: The Origins of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 465. See also Ian K. Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration, 1696–1720* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

35. Burnard, *Planters, Merchants, and Slaves*.

36. On Jamaican politics, see Jack P. Greene, “The Jamaica Privilege Controversy, 1764–66: An Episode in the Process of Constitutional Definition in the Early Modern British Empire,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 1 (1994): 16–53. For arguments that emphasize both an activist imperial government and ideological differences over what empire should be, see Steve Pincus, *The Heart of the Declaration: The Founders’ Case for an Activist Government* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016), 1–50; and du Rivage, *Revolution Against Empire*, chap. 1.

37. Graham, “Colonial Sinews of Imperial Power.”

currency under the Revenue Act of 1728 was 12.5 percent, and arrears of taxes from previous years stood at 28.2 percent.³⁸ The collection costs were low. Edward Long calculated that it took less than £1,785 to collect revenues of more than £40,000. The average amount of taxation paid per free person varied considerably depending on circumstances but ranged from between £2 and £4 in times of peace. Jamaicans spent around 60 or 70 percent of this money on defending the island from slave insurrections and foreign invasions. These expenditures confirmed the central concerns of the ruling elite and helped to subsidize a growing imperial military and naval presence.³⁹

Table 1 shows high levels of taxation in Jamaica by colonial standards, even if they were miniscule in imperial terms. Britain paid by far the most taxes in the empire, with revenues of over £10 million in 1774 compared with just under £1 million in Ireland and only £125,207 in the six most important colonies of British America.⁴⁰ Jamaica's white population paid comparatively high taxes: the island's cost of living was very high, debt levels were probably much higher than anywhere else in the British Atlantic world, and the expenses of running estates were large. Nevertheless, these levels of taxation would have been bearable for most white Jamaicans, even in years like 1782 when per capita taxes levied by the imperial state rose above £8.⁴¹

In short, Jamaica's white residents enjoyed a blended colonial and imperial state system that offered them real benefits, although they did occasionally grumble about high taxes. For example, Thomas Thistlewood, a resident small planter, complained in 1772 that "such enormous taxes" that he had paid that year were "never known in Jamaica before." His tax bill had risen from £3.26 in 1766 to £8.30 in 1772, but then rose again to £9.41 in 1778, and to an unprecedented £24.98 in 1781 in the wake of a devastating hurricane that destroyed his house and wrecked most of the wider parish he lived in. He reserved his chief complaints, though, for residents who

38. George Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica, 1729–1783* (London: Longman, 1965), £140 Jamaica currency was worth £100 sterling.

39. Graham, "Colonial Sinews of Imperial Power," 197; Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica; or, A General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: with Reflections on its Situation, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, commerce, Laws, and Government*, 3 vols. (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), 1:67–68.

40. Alvin Rabushka, *Taxation in Colonial America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), 729–30.

41. Trevor Burnard, Laura Panza, and Jeffrey Williamson, "Living Costs, Real Incomes and Inequality in Colonial Jamaica," *Explorations in Economic History* 71 (2019): 55–71.

Table 1
The Fiscal-Military States of the British Empire, 1774

REGION	Population, 1774	Tax revenue, 1774 £	£ per capita	£ per white capita
Jamaica	241,718	38,571	0.16	2.30
Barbados	87,974	9,023	0.10	1.66
Massachusetts	251,967	31,374	0.12	0.13
New York	186,731	6,318	0.03	0.04
Pennsylvania	283,681	23,449	0.08	0.09
Virginia	492,510	16,472	0.03	0.05

Sources: Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 17; Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1998), 369; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 2:1168; Strachey Papers, Dartmouth Volumes Series, vol. 2, Queries relating to His Majesty's Islands in America (1774), 30–65 (Jamaica) and 68–98 (Barbados). Courtesy of William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

paid less tax than they should have. He submitted proposals to the local parish vestry that would have produced, in his opinion, fairer taxation of large estates.⁴²

Thistlewood's grievance was not over taxation by a colonial state, or even imperial taxation, but with his fellow planters who shirked their duties to the "public" of the island by withholding the resources that this blended state system needed to function. He had witnessed Tacky's Revolt in 1760 and had met the Maroons who helped to protect white planters in return for the subsidies formalized in the treaties of 1739, so he knew what would happen if the relationship between the imperial and colonial states broke down.⁴³ On a broader level, Jamaican planters recognized that control of the colonial state and its powers of taxation enabled them to dictate how the imperial state operated. A political compromise in 1729 gave the governor a permanent revenue in return for confirmation that the laws

42. Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750–1786* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 270–71.

43. Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Table 2
The Jamaican Fiscal Military State over Time, 1725–1782

Year	<i>Taxation revenue</i> (£ sterling)	<i>Total</i> <i>population</i>	<i>£ per capita</i>	<i>Slave</i> <i>population</i>	<i>£ per free</i> <i>capita</i>
1725	22,501	103,500	0.22	94,000	2.37
1728	31,000	104,000	0.30	95,000	3.44
1730	27,107	105,000	0.26	96,946	3.16
1731	40,000	107,000	0.37	98,500	4.71
1734	22,221	109,000	0.20	100,970	2.77
1737	20,344	123,000	0.17	114,000	2.26
1745	31,044	140,000	0.22	131,166	3.51
1749	35,714	158,000	0.23	149,000	3.97
1750	20,167	160,000	0.13	150,000	2.02
1760	71,428	184,000	0.39	172,000	5.95
1761	53,571	183,500	0.29	171,273	4.38
1763	35,714	185,000	0.19	172,000	2.75
1774	38,571	241,718	0.16	224,918	2.30
1782	171,858	261,000	0.66	240,000	8.18

Sources: Long Papers, Add. Mss. 18,275, British Library; CO 137/22 ff. 60v–62r; CO140/23/ 486–7; CO 137/27/40–52, National Archives, Kew, London. Slave population figures are from David Beck Ryden, *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783–1807* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 293–94.

and statutes—and liberties—of England applied to Jamaica. Though planters complained continually about this grant, which was unique in British America, they recognized that it also gave them massive financial leverage over how government money was to be spent, as well as the ability to exert wide authority over both the colony’s internal polity and the imperial state itself.⁴⁴ This financial leverage explains why white Jamaicans saw no contradiction between their fervent defense of colonial prerogatives and their reliance on imperial protection. They shared many similar ideological biases with North Americans, especially with slaveholders in plantation societies,

44. Agnes M. Whitson, *The Constitutional Development of Jamaica, 1660–1729* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1929), 70–158; Jack P. Greene, “Liberty and Slavery: The Transfer of British Liberty to the West Indies, 1627–1865,” in Greene, ed., *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 56–57.

but they did not share the common cause that united North Americans after 1763—the hatred of imperial taxation without representation—because they saw firsthand the benefits that this taxation offered. By contrast, North Americans considered this violation of colonial rights as an example of tyranny, likely to lead to further attacks on colonists’ liberty.⁴⁵

SETTLEMENT AND SECURITY

Relatively high taxation rates worked well to keep Jamaica secure from internal and external invasion, but less well during this period to increase white settlement. Even though white Jamaicans were happy with government expenditure attempting to attract white settlers,, the dearth of Europeans was compounded by a malign disease environment where yellow fever and malaria were rampant killers, and a population in which white demographic decline already exceeded enslaved plantation workers’ death rates..⁴⁶ A collaboration between the colonial state and the imperial government, both of whom shared the concerns of local planters for economic development and strategic security, confronted the problem of a cohort of white men too small to staff large sugar estates, which had hamstrung the expansion of plantation agriculture into Jamaica’s unsettled areas outside the southeast coast and parts of central Jamaica. As Governor Robert Hunter commented to the assembly in 1731, “Nothing can prevent the growth of the evils you labour under, but the speedy peopling of the unsettled part of the country.”⁴⁷

Initial efforts focused on reforming a series of Deficiency Acts passed from the late seventeenth century onward, which fined estate owners when the ratio of whites to blacks slipped below set levels, with the funds they raised often diverted toward subsidizing military needs such as fighting Maroons in the First Maroon War (1731–39).⁴⁸ In practice, these acts rarely succeeded in their demographic aims. Meanwhile, the cost of providing white overseers frequently exceeded the fines, so the Deficiency Acts were generally viewed simply as one more cost of doing business on sugar estates. Planters adjusted their management practices to employ “privileged blacks”

45. Robert A. Becker, *Revolution, Reform, and the Politics of American Taxation, 1763–1783* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1980).

46. Trevor Burnard, “‘The Countrie Continues Sicklie’: White Mortality in Jamaica, 1655–1780,” *Social History of Medicine* 12, no. 1 (1999): 45–72

47. May 4, 1731, JHA, 3:3–5.

48. For an excellent recent account of the First Maroon War, see Edward B. Rugemer, *Slave Law and the Politics of Resistance in the Early Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018), 121–54.

as drivers. These drivers supplemented the limited number of paid white overseers and bookkeepers working as supervisors of the enslaved work force.⁴⁹ As early as 1715, the Board of Trade had argued “that if all Mulattoes and Indians were declared free, it would be another help toward the peopling of the island.”⁵⁰ However, as Daniel Livesay has demonstrated, establishing the place of free people of color within Jamaica’s intricate class and racial structures was a delicate question for white Jamaicans. On the one hand, incorporating them within free society helped expand Jamaica’s settler base, since it would be easier and cheaper for wealthy, anglicized, mixed-race Jamaicans to transition to being thought of as white than it would be to bring over “boys and girls, of seven years upwards . . . at the public expense.” On the other hand, advancing mixed-race people to be legally considered as white people diluted a fundamental understanding within white Jamaican society—namely, that the advantages of “belonging” needed to be confined solely to them. Progress depended on finding measures that soothed white colonial fears while serving imperial interests.⁵¹

The response of governors and the assembly to the problem of limited white settlement was to use state power to open up more of the lands still vested in the Crown for European immigration, noting that “nothing can conduce more to the security, wealth and defense of this island than the giving proper encouragement to white people to come over and settle the uncultivated lands thereof.” Their plans included offering white settlers three hundred acres of land upon establishing residence; constructing barracks for the military; raising white and black troops; and imposing levies on planters to provide enslaved labor to construct roads, as well as

49. William and Edmund Burke noted that plantation owners “find it more easy to pay the penalty . . . than to comply with the law.” See William and Edmund Burke, *An Account of the European Settlements in America . . .*, 2 vols. (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), 2:113–14. Historians are divided on when the Deficiency Acts started to be revenue earners for the government. Frank Pitman thinks it happened in 1736; Neville Hall thinks it was in 1763. Daniel Livesay thinks it occurred as early as the 1720s. See Frank Pitman, *Development of British West Indies, 1700–1763* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1917), 50–54; Neville Hall, “Some Aspects of the ‘Deficiency’ Question in Jamaica in the Eighteenth Century,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1975): 11; and Daniel Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733–1833* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 27.

50. K. H. Ledward, *Journals of the Boards of Trade and Plantations*, 23 March 1715 (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1924), 3:1–15.

51. Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune*, 30–32, 48–52.

fortifications that would become military posts. Possibly, these forts were modeled on Roman *coloniae*: they would settle loyal whites in strategic points and thus redress the demographic imbalances on the island. The posts would also help with conflicts against the Maroons by interrupting their movements across the island.⁵² Fiscal, military, and civil power would simultaneously support military action against the Maroons, correct the demographic imbalance between whites and blacks, and establish new economic resources that could be tapped through taxation. None of these plans succeeded, however, because it was difficult to attract settlers to remote areas where high mortality rates prevented population growth. Governor Charles Knowles, a vociferous critic of the efforts, estimated in 1754 (although his figures seem inflated) that in the late 1740s and early 1750s the colony had spent as much as £30,000—all raised through taxation—trying to bring seven hundred English families to Jamaica.⁵³ By the early 1760s, after the shock of Tacky's Revolt, Jamaica had given up on settlement plans.

Other forms of collaboration between the colonial and imperial fiscal-military states, however, had borne fruit and provided some of the same benefits. These collaborations focused on the Maroons, who had established themselves in autonomous fiefdoms in the rugged countryside of the Jamaican interior by the late seventeenth century.⁵⁴ They first became a threat to white rule in the 1720s, preventing the spread of the large plantation system to northern regions of the island, as Governor Nicholas Lawes mentioned in an address to the assembly in 1722. Between 1723 and 1738, the assembly authorized at least twenty-four acts to raise parties to suppress the Maroons, compared with six between 1699 and 1719. Jamaican officials

52. Fergus Millar, "The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East: A Study of Cultural Relations," in Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, Vol. 3: *The Greek World, the Jews, and the East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), chap. 8.

53. Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, 3 December 1754, Colonial Office Papers 137/28/43, National Archives, Kew, London (hereafter cited as C.O.).

54. White Jamaicans did not name these groups as Maroons until after 1739, terming them "rebellious or runaway Negroes." Philip Wright argues for 1,000 Maroons in 1736, of whom perhaps 500 were fighting men, but censuses of population taken after 1739 noted only 664 Maroons, of whom 273 were men. Possibly the difference is accounted for by the Maroons handing over to white authority runaway slaves who had joined them between 1736 and 1739. See Philip Wright, "War and Peace with the Maroons, 1730–1739," *Caribbean Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1970): 5–6; and R. C. Dallas, *The History of the Maroons . . .*, 2 vols. (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1803), 1:26.

failed repeatedly in their efforts, although they occasionally killed a few individuals in raiding expeditions. The Maroon settlements provided a refuge for runaway slaves and also challenged white Jamaicans' precarious dominance over a growing slave population.⁵⁵ Tensions led to warfare following the Anglo-Spanish War of 1727–29, when colonists thought foreign invaders might combine with Maroons and possibly to provoke a slave rebellion.⁵⁶ Dealing with Maroons was expensive, with Edward Long calculating that raiding parties had cost £240,000 over ten years, accounting for the bulk of tax increases for those years. Meanwhile, Governor John Ayscough estimated that between 1729 and 1734, the assembly had expended £105,000 to pay for expeditions against the Maroons.⁵⁷ Planters also used the colonial state to secure manpower to assist the effort. For example, in October 1734, the assembly passed an act putting martial law into force and levying black and white labor to support military deployments, while in 1730, the imperial government made its own contribution by stripping the garrison at Gibraltar of eight companies (or about six hundred) men for service in Jamaica against the Maroons.⁵⁸ The assembly and the colonial state reluctantly subsidized this expanded Jamaican garrison through a raft of new taxes that raised total revenues from £31,000 in 1728 to £40,000 in 1731.⁵⁹ The economic burden was thus large, and the political burden even larger.

These expenditures did not defeat the Maroons in battle, but they did alter the balance of forces sufficiently to enable Jamaica's powerful mid-eighteenth-century governor, Edward Trelawney, to negotiate a peace with them in 1739 that held for nearly sixty years until the Second Maroon War of 1795–96. The Jamaican state was the major beneficiary of this settlement, even more than individual white colonists, which channeled the Maroons into a new imperial role as policemen and military auxiliaries, funded by colonial taxes.⁶⁰ One contemporary, probably Chief Justice

55. Wright, "War and Peace with the Maroons," 5.

56. Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune*, 33; Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict in Jamaica*, 33–57.

57. John Ayscough to the Duke of Newcastle, October 21, 1734, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1734–1735*, vol. 41 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1953); Long, *History of Jamaica*, 2:340.

58. Metcalf, *Royal Government and Political Conflict*, 46–51; Mary-Lou Lustig, *Robert Hunter, 1666–1734: New York's Augustan Statesman* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1983).

59. C.O. 137/22/ 60–62 [n.d., ca. 1731].

60. Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 92.

Thomas Fearon, praised Trelawney's "mild Government" of the Maroons for transforming white Jamaicans' greatest internal foe into a considerable supporter of the plantation regime. Maroons, he claimed, "opened the Highways, [and] prevented or suppressed all Insurrections of the Negroe and other Slaves." In addition, they "never failed to bring back all runaway Slaves to the Service of their respective Masters" and "kept the Peace, and found Ease and Prosperity under the Protection of the Laws." The result, he believed, was a dramatic increase in "new Settlements . . . in all the extreme Parts of the Country," which, he argued, contributed "very greatly towards the Security of the Island" and provided "a most immediate Safeguard against the Depredations of foreign or Domestick Foes."⁶¹

The treaty of 1739 enabled planters to open the rich sugar lands of the northern extremities of the island to plantation agriculture and profit. For example, the parish of Saint James in northwest Jamaica, which had been marginal in 1734 due to the Maroon threat, was Jamaica's wealthiest and most productive parish by 1768, with the largest enslaved population (21,749) and the second highest number of cattle (15,137). These totals marked the island's highest increases by parish since 1739 in both categories (847 percent and 1,277 percent, respectively).⁶² Indeed, almost 60 percent of the sugar produced in Jamaica in 1768 came from seven parishes on the eastern and western peripheries of the island, all of which had opened up after the Maroon treaties concluded in 1739, and they poured increasing revenues into British coffers via sugar duties.⁶³ The expansion of the sugar frontier in Jamaica happened therefore not by settling white people but through the same mixture of fiscal and military state power that had been deployed earlier.

THE SLAVE REBELLIONS OF 1760–1761

The overall relationship of imperial and colonial governance and taxation in Jamaica had, therefore, been established well before 1760, but it was sealed in April and May that year, when a series of violent revolts by rebellious slaves in Kingston and in northern and southwestern Jamaica rocked the island. A combination of the skilled leadership of Jamaican Governor Henry Moore, who received a baronetcy for his efforts, the effective deployment of

61. Veridicus [Thomas Fearon], *The Merchants, Factors, and Agents Residing at Kingston at the said Island, COMPLAINANTS, Against the Inhabitants of Spanish-Town . . . THE RESPONDENTS CASE* (London, 1754), 60–61, 65–66.

62. Greene, *Settler Jamaica in the 1750s*, 11–38, 177–94

63. Statistics of Jamaica, 1739–1775, Long Papers, Add. MSS 12,435, f. 41, British Library, London.

British troops, sailors, and soldiers resident on the island because of the Seven Years' War, and the military strength of Maroons managed to quash the rebellion. But the revolt revealed the danger settlers faced in a society with a majority enslaved African population laboring under extremely oppressive conditions. It also highlighted the failure of efforts to redress the demographic imbalance.⁶⁴

Funds for white immigration and settlement had totaled about £12,045 between 1745 and 1754, about 4 percent of the £297,494 allocated for disbursement by the assembly in this decade, compared with the £180,668 allocated for defense and policing. Funds for white settlement now dried up entirely.⁶⁵ By contrast, colonial expenditure on the imperial military soared. Local parishes spent between £35,000 and £45,000 sterling per annum on building inland barracks, with the sums reaching over £70,000 sterling in 1774.⁶⁶ The vestrymen of St. Dorothy, a small, mostly inland parish, complained in 1767 that all its parish taxes barely met the cost of quartering a company of troops. In 1773, the cost of maintaining an expanded imperial garrison in Jamaica stood at £18,000, or nearly two-thirds of what the total government revenues had been in 1750.⁶⁷ The planters received protection, while the British government could not only secure a vital economic and strategic asset but also, as in Ireland, move part of the unpopular standing army out of Britain.⁶⁸

64. Long, *History of Jamaica*, 2:447–72; C. Roy Reynolds, “Tacky and the Great Slave Rebellion of 1760,” *Jamaica Journal* 6, no. 2 (1972): 5–8; Craton, *Testing the Chains*, 125–38; Trevor Burnard, “Slavery and the Enlightenment in Jamaica and the British Empire, 1760–1772: The Afterlife of Tacky’s Rebellion and the Origins of British Abolitionism,” in Damien Tricoire, ed., *Enlightened Colonialism: Civilization Narratives and Imperial Politics in the Age of Reason* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 227–46; Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 122–36; Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 129–56.

65. Edward Trelawney to Board of Trade, January 12, 1754, “Annual contingent charges of the government of the island of Jamaica, exclusive of the revenue law,” C.O. 137/27/23–24.

66. *Ibid.*

67. Strachey Papers, Dartmouth Volumes Series, vol. 2, *Queries relating to His Majesty’s Islands in America* (1774), 30–65, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

68. Charles Ivar McGrath, *Ireland and Empire, 1692–1770* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016), 107–66.

This decision to increase considerably imperial military expenditure reflected how the slave rebellions of 1760–61 had tested the security arrangements of the 1750s and found them wanting. Vincent Brown created a website on the revolt with a day-by-day guide to events, which shows that the Maroons wavered before supporting the troops and militia whom Governor Moore ordered to attack the rebels in Westmoreland. The Maroons perhaps wanted to assess the rebels' chances of success before committing to honoring the terms of the 1739 treaty that enjoined them to help capture escaped slaves. On May 29, 1760, according to Edward Long, the rebels had a major success over white troops at an inland wooded area called Rebel's Barricade, where a party of militia was "struck with terror . . . thrown into confusion and routed." The survival of the island stood in the balance, but possibly because Jamaica was well garrisoned and had lots of troops in the area, the Maroons decided to support Moore's assault.⁶⁹ On June 2, a detachment of the Forty-Ninth Regiment and militia (horse and foot) from three parishes, along with two detachments of Maroons, attacked the rebels, killing a great number of them and thus averting the crisis. This combination of troops, militia, and Maroons, operating within a well-garrisoned state and forming a mutually supportive military system, became the preferred option for Jamaican defense after 1761. The imperial garrisons helped to maintain the loyalty of the Maroons; the formidable military skills of the Maroons helped the garrisons to husband their resources by taking on the business of internal security; and both served to strengthen the colonial militia.⁷⁰

White Jamaicans and Britons thus increasingly supported a strong imperial and colonial state because they knew that an imperial state operating powerfully in white Jamaican interests served them both best. Both gained a deepening appreciation of the need for the imperial government to have enough revenue, and white Jamaicans stood ready to appropriate even larger amounts of money between 1760 and 1775 to support military and policing measures intended to strengthen internal security than they had between

69. Kathleen Wilson, "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound," *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2009): 46–47.

70. Vincent Brown, "Slave Revolt in Jamaica, 1760–1761: A Cartographic Narrative," accessed July 6, 2020, <http://revolt.axismaps.com>; Long, *History of Jamaica*, 453. For an example of this system's operation in the early nineteenth century, see Aaron Graham, "A Descent into Hellshire: Safety, Security and the End of Slavery in Jamaica, 1819–20," *Atlantic Studies* 17, no. 2 (2017): 184–205.

1739 and 1760. Jamaicans accepted heavier taxation not only because it was spent on popular measures and could be paid for by growing prosperity but also because the system of raising revenue worked within the ambit of local politics, which suited the interests of the planters and merchants who paid most of the costs of defense.⁷¹

Jamaican planters supported an increased tax burden in large part because they could oversee the expenditures and because most of the additional revenues went to internal security demands that the planters supported.⁷² And because officials were prepared to work out these various compromises on a bilateral and relatively ad hoc basis, this relationship with the imperial state could work within the same imperial system that structured Britain's connections to other colonies such as Barbados, Virginia, and New York.⁷³ Jamaica's relations with the Crown had suffered various moments of strain before 1760, and would continue to do so thereafter, but the risk of political contagion was low because neither the island nor the mother country saw the relationship as a definitive model for other colonies. As part of a process of political negotiation, both sides could afford to grandstand, to engage in political and financial brinksmanship, and to make extravagant demands, since this political agitation was relatively contained and isolated from other colonial negotiations.⁷⁴

THE CHALLENGE OF THE 1780s

This system whereby white Jamaican planters shouldered relatively large taxes in return for imperial protection survived into the 1770s. The wealth that the white elites made from plantation agriculture and trade with Spanish America and Africa allowed them to pay the considerable costs of maintaining detachments of regular soldiers, a militia increasingly composed of free blacks, and Maroon establishments throughout the island. Unlike planters in British North America, white Jamaicans willingly armed black

71. Graham, "Colonial Sinews of Imperial Power."

72. Mihm, "Funding the Revolution," 328–31.

73. On North America, see Rabushka, *Taxation in Colonial America*. On the West Indies, see Frederick G. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government, Showing the Progress of Government in Barbados, Jamaica and the Leeward Islands, 1660–1783* (Palmerston North, New Zealand: F. G. Spurdle, 1962), 76–93, 147–65.

74. Sarah Yeh, "Colonial Identity and Revolutionary Loyalty: The Case of the West Indies," in Stephen Foster, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series: British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 195–226; Greene, "Of Liberty and of the Colonies."

men as soldiers. As long as black troops were kept under the close control of colonial officers, Jamaican elites condoned the intensive use of free blacks and even enslaved men in the service of imperial strategic aims designed to overcome West Indian demographic realities. Epidemic disease, especially yellow fever, caused enormous losses of European soldiers and sailors during the siege of Cartagena in 1741–42, the siege of Havana in 1762, the disastrous San Juan expedition to Nicaragua in 1780, and the threatened French invasion of Jamaica in 1782. It was thought better to use black soldiers as cannon fodder in dangerous Caribbean warfare than to risk supposedly more valuable white regulars.⁷⁵

The early 1780s, after France and Spain entered the Revolutionary War in North America, brought some of the worst years that Jamaican planters had ever faced. The slave trade, which was crucial to maintaining and increasing the number of coerced laborers in a relentlessly oppressive plantation system, fell to its lowest levels; 1780 marked the nadir with just 3,763 enslaved Africans arriving on the island, a fraction of the 15,000 annual arrivals of the early 1770s. Prices for slaves—when any could be obtained—increased dramatically. Such inflation caused difficulties for white enslavers and resulted in starvation and destitution for enslaved people. The hurricane of October 1780 magnified this privation, especially among the enslaved. Meanwhile, the British defeat at Yorktown in October 1781 led to preparations in Saint-Domingue for a full-fledged assault on Jamaica. These preparations led public expenditures to increase by 445 percent over the modest expenditures of 1774, which were 241 percent higher even than 1760, the last year of major crisis on the island.⁷⁶ Between May 1779 and June 1783, the Jamaican Assembly spent at least £60,000—equivalent to the entire prewar annual budget—on repairing the forts and fortifications commanding the approaches to Kingston Harbour, which was the

75. Maria Alessandra Bollettino, “‘Of equal or more service’: Black Soldiers and the British Empire in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Caribbean,” *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 3 (2017): 510–33; Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); John Robert McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Philip D. Morgan and Andrew O’Shaughnessy, “Arming Slaves during the American Revolution,” in Christopher Leslie Brown and Phillip D. Morgan, eds., *The Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), 180–208.

76. Burnard and Garrigus, *Plantation Machine*, 212–18, 226–28; Richard B. Sheridan, “The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies during and after the American Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1976): 615–41.

equivalent of about 269,245 days of work by enslaved labor.⁷⁷ The colonial state also cut deeper into the fabric of Jamaican economy and society: it passed an order in June 1780 that all the parishes in the central and eastern districts of the island “allot one Negro out of each and every hundred Negroes in their respective parishes to work on the forts and fortifications, furnished with hoes, bills and baskets.” This order allowed for a *corvée* that would have raised some two thousand people and temporarily expropriated from enslavers perhaps hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of enslaved property.⁷⁸ Not since the First Maroon War of the 1730s had the colonial state intervened so directly in the property of its constituents.

Jamaica, however, survived the crisis months between October 1780 and April 1782 surprisingly well. Admiral George Rodney’s victory over a strong French fleet at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782 saved the island from invasion from neighboring Saint-Domingue. Relief at their escape from invasion sent white Jamaicans into deliriums of excitement: The island authorized a magnificent statue of Rodney, resplendent in a Roman toga, and located it in a prominent position in the colonial capital of Saint Jago de la Vega, where it still stands today. The assembly paid at least 2,000 guineas to the sculptor and spent almost as much transporting the statue to the island and building an appropriate setting for it, all paid for by taxes.⁷⁹ In addition, Kingston merchants raised £1,500 to put on a dinner and “grand entertainment” for Rodney when he visited the island. The money that Jamaicans had authorized for military expenses, including the 1774 purchase of a property near Kingston—the Admiral’s Pen, where the senior Royal Navy officer in the western Caribbean could live and entertain when he was in station—was being put to good use. Along with a series of gifts to major figures, these initiatives yoked together and reinforced the connection between the colonial and imperial states. The Jamaican state could associate itself with the victories of imperial Britain and affirm the combined interests of the two. The unprecedented decision by

77. Based on Jamaica Archives, 1B/5/15/2, Minute Book of the Commissioners of Forts and Fortifications, 1776–83, Jamaica Archives and Records Department, Kingston, Jamaica.

78. Jamaica Archives, 1B/5/15/2, Minute Book, ff. 100r–v, Jamaica Archives and Records Department, Kingston, Jamaica.

79. John McAleer, “‘Eminent service’: War, Slavery and the Politics of Public Recognition in the British Caribbean and the Cape of Good Hope, c. 1782–1807,” *Mariner’s Mirror* 95, no. 1 (2009): 33–36; Holger Hoock, *The King’s Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 237–39; JHA, 7:559; JHA, 8:212, 262, 533.

Parliament to grant £40,000 to Jamaica in 1781 as an act of imperial charity in the wake of the devastating hurricane of 1780, and as “testimony of the tender regard of government, for the faithful subjects of the King, in all parts of his majesty’s dominions and of the good will borne them by the people of this country,” again showed how the imperial and colonial states could work together even during a moment of grave imperial crisis occasioned by the American War for Independence.⁸⁰ The Jamaican state itself handled the business of distributing the grant—albeit contentiously, by favoring planters over poorer whites and excluding free people of color entirely—further strengthening the sense of shared interests and complementary spheres of activity already established in fiscal and military matters since the 1720s.⁸¹

The travails of the 1780s highlighted the delicately blended colonial and imperial state that had existed since 1760, in which white Jamaicans willingly paid high taxes for a functioning security settlement. The deployments of regular troops on the island, encouragement of the Royal Navy, and reliance on well-compensated and well-supervised Maroon communities stood up well under immense pressure.⁸² Jamaica benefitted in 1782 from having a skilled governor, Archibald Campbell, who, like Henry Moore during Tacky’s Revolt, proved adept at keeping Jamaican residents calm, ensuring that restless and starving slaves did not rebel, and managing a complicated military situation.⁸³ Yet it was intention—the carefully worked out relationship between settlers, the imperial state, and semiautonomous Maroon communities—rather than luck that preserved Jamaica in a time of great peril. And prosperity soon returned to the island economy. Following Saint-Domingue’s great slave rebellion of 1791, by 1793, the Jamaican plantation system boomed as never before (or after): the public debt, which had reached £114,608 in 1782, dropped to £11,657.⁸⁴

80. Lord George Germain to John Dalling, February 28, 1781, JHA, 7:369.

81. Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624–1783* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 167–68, 174.

82. Siân Williams, “The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society during the Eighteenth Century,” in John McAleer and Christer Petley, eds., *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World c. 1750–1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 27–50; McKee, “From Violence to Alliance.”

83. One sign of enslaved restlessness was an increase in brigandage, with the most notorious example being Three-Fingered Jack (a.k.a. Jack Mansong), who was active in 1780–81 before being subdued.

84. Graham, “Colonial Sinews of Imperial Power,” 202.

CONCLUSION

The island-wide survey Edward Long included in his impressive three-volume *History of Jamaica* indicates that white Jamaicans accepted and welcomed a strong imperial state. Long was a fervent Whig, but not of the radical antigovernment kind found in Massachusetts, and his work offers an impressive—if opinionated—guide to elite understandings of the relationship between colonists and the imperial state.⁸⁵ He was contemptuous of the “hirelings, fools and sycophants” whom Britain sent out to become governors, but mainly complained that they were men of undistinguished background out for the main chance. He did not share the disdain felt by radical British North American Whigs for strong government.⁸⁶ He was, instead, a proud Patriot who believed that Jamaica had progressed wonderfully in the 120 years since English settlement in 1655, and he believed that the island had the potential, if various obstacles were overcome, to continue an ongoing upward trajectory.

Those improvements could only occur under the influence of a strong and assertive imperial state, attuned to colonial interests and respectful of gaining elite Jamaicans’ consent before embarking on schemes to improve settlement and security.⁸⁷ When Long reviewed the history of the Jamaican state, he did not criticize the assembly for exceeding its powers in attempting to plant internal settlements, but rather the effort’s ineffectiveness. White settlement, he thought, was practical if properly done, even though it might require the colonial state (with the help of the British governor) to harm the rights of individuals in serving the common good, through appropriation of property. “I am not without hopes that the legislature of Jamaica will in time be roused into a serious attention to the further improvement of their country,” he stated, “by a few easy measures which require only judgment in setting them on foot and unabated perseverance

85. Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772–1774* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

86. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 43.

87. Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Jack P. Greene, “Independence, Improvement and Authority: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Histories of the Southern Backcountry during the Era of the American Revolution,” in Ronald Hoffman, Thad W. Tate, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va.: U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 1985), 16–21.

in conducting them to a happy effect.”⁸⁸ Long therefore celebrated a powerful and assertive state that in responding to local circumstances was genuinely participatory, at least for that narrow section of the population who belonged to the political nation.⁸⁹

This well-placed Jamaican’s attitude differed from prevailing opinion in island colonies such as Barbados, where the imbalance between white and black was less skewed, where a powerful colonial state was less necessary, and where the imperial government had less to offer, and therefore less right to expect the planters to give anything in return.⁹⁰ Long’s Jamaican perspective also differed from many colonies in British North America, although not those in Florida or Canada, where many people “cast a suspicious eye on even their own colonial governments . . . [as] remote and unrepresentative.”⁹¹ But it was certainly in line with evolving British ideas of an empire predicated on a strong state that would ensure security and promote economic development. It was also congruent with the experience of Britons in Bengal and Ireland, the two other most strategically and economically important imperial territories from the 1763 Treaty of Paris. These regions were alike in having serious defense concerns, and in depending for their future prosperity on expensive economic development plans that required substantial governmental underwriting. In all three, ruling elites accepted a degree of imperial intervention from London and relatively high taxation rates to ensure British rule over restive indigenous populations.⁹² As imperial structures altered after 1763 to accommodate the new reality of power in the colonies, and as statesmen tried to impose some kind of uniformity on a complex and heterogeneous collection of imperial possessions, this tradition of colonial state-building in Jamaica,

88. Long, *History of Jamaica*, 1:408, 410–11, 426.

89. Jessica Choppin Roney, *Governed by a Spirit of Opposition: The Origins of American Political Practice in Colonial Philadelphia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

90. Neville A. T. Hall, “Governors and Generals: The Relationship of Civil and Military Commands in Barbados, 1783–1815,” *Caribbean Studies* 10, no. 4 (1971): 93–112; Selwyn Carrington, “West India Opposition to British Policy: Barbadian Politics, 1774–82,” *Journal of Caribbean History* 17 (1982): 26–49.

91. Thomas P. Slaughter, *Independence: The Tangled Roots of the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014), xvi.

92. H. V. Bowen, *Revenue and Reform: The Indian Problem in British Politics 1757–1773* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Lucy Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952); McGrath, *Ireland and Empire*; C. A. Bayly, “Ireland, India and the Empire: 1780–1914,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6, no. 10 (2000), 377–97.

Ireland, and Bengal therefore fit comfortably with new (or old) metropolitan expectations and models. It did so even as key groups within British North America moved increasingly out of step with Britain, building on their own divergent understandings of the Glorious Revolution legacy that distrusted rather than welcomed a strong state.

In the historiography of the British Empire in the eighteenth century, the assumptions held by the generation that “lost” America still dominate perceptions about how empire worked, both before the American Revolution and in places that did not join the rebellious thirteen colonies. Looking at how the imperial and colonial states interacted in Jamaica offers a different perspective on these matters. Furthermore, examining the operations of the imperial state from a broader perspective answers important questions about its relationship with colonists throughout British America in the eighteenth century.⁹³

The integrity of the British Empire, which had been strong in the first half of the eighteenth century and had reached a peak with the fruits of victory in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War, shattered in the second half of the century.⁹⁴ By the late eighteenth century, all European powers—and probably Britain most of all—struggled to transform what Lauren Benton has called the porous “fabric” of imperial sovereignty, almost string-like in its composition, as Patrick Griffin has noted, into something cohesive.⁹⁵ Such uniformity as had emerged by the 1760s proved to be a major policy error. The power of the eighteenth-century British imperial state and its manifestation in colonial legislation and spending *depended* on the empire being a loose fraternal alliance. It worked before 1763 because allowances had been made for local circumstances in ways that the imperial reformers of the 1760s—flushed with victory after the end of the Seven Years’ War, obsessed with cutting costs, and determined to impose a common order on a diverse set of possessions—could not comprehend.

Jamaica provides an eighteenth-century case study of how the imperial state worked for imperial rulers and those colonists who shared common

93. Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013).

94. Jack P. Greene, “A Posture of Hostility’: A Reconsideration of Some Aspects of the Origins of the American Revolution,” *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 87, pt. 1 (1977): 27–68.

95. Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Griffin, *The Townshend Moment*, 76.

beliefs and, more importantly, agreed on how to implement government actions only after careful negotiations in which the interests of both parties coincided.⁹⁶ Though an extreme example, by virtue of its exposed strategic position, the demographic imbalance between whites and blacks, and its economic importance, Jamaica differed in degree rather than kind from other colonies and territories in the British Atlantic. Eighteenth-century statesmen as different as Charles Townshend, Benjamin Franklin, and Edmund Burke understood these imperial realities.⁹⁷ Less sophisticated thinkers like Lord North and George Grenville, however, were seduced by plans that forced the empire into one colonial model and thought that the same solutions were applicable to the problems throughout the empire.⁹⁸ The American War for Independence resulted from a failure to understand this fundamental reality about the need to treat colonies within an imperial framework according to their local circumstances. It is therefore not surprising when we look at how white Jamaicans viewed the imperial and colonial states that residents of this island chose not to join their northern cousins in rebellion.

96. Jack P. Greene, *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994); P. J. Marshall, "Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 1–18; 9 (1999): 1–16; 10 (2000): 1–16; 11 (2001): 1–15.

97. Griffin, *The Townshend Moment*; P. J. Marshall, *Edmund Burke and the British Empire in the West Indies: Wealth, Power, and Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015); Daniel I. O'Neill, *Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

98. O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America*.

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