Slave Resistance and Rebellion

Hayden Galloway, Alexis Ruiz, Andre Lief
Research Questions

In what colonial empires did slave rebellions and resistance happen?

How did slave resistance and rebellions change (influence) colonial societies in the Americas?

What influenced slave rebellions (masters, environment, etc)?

What role did women play in slave rebellions and resistance?

In what ways did slaves resist or rebel against their masters?

What was essential for a successful marronage or escape?

How did the Haitian Revolution affect the mindsets of slaves around the world?
Background Information

- Sense of identity: families established, children were educated, beliefs developed in society where controlled by whites
- Physical violence: level of fear and uncertainty for slaves
- Escape and rebellion only options when: slaves unable to conform, restrain individuality, or had no protection
- Around 10% of all slaves took action against masters
- Resistance/rebellion different for every location that practiced slavery - legal rights varied
- Actions of masters major influence
Types of Resistance

- Day-to-Day (refusal to work, arson/sabotage, breaking tools, faking illnesses)
- Suicide or self harm
- Escape (temporary or permanent)
- Cultural resistance
  - Religious and spiritual beliefs - understanding of the world and a reason to resist
  - Psychological support for slaves in process of resistance
  - Only thing to hold onto - slave system destroyed all ties
  - Women - passed down beliefs through generations
- Rebellions (violent or non-violent)
- Maritime
Maritime Slave Rebellion

- 1 in 10 of Atlantic Crossings had rebellions on ship
- Organized effort to take over ship - usually killed captain and forced seamen to guide ship back to Africa
- Encounters with other European ships
- Women played important role - more freedom on ship
  - Also engaged in infanticide and poisoning acts
- Slaves jumping off or committing suicide - believed dying would return them to Africa

Andre
Death of Capt. Ferrer, the Captain of the Amistad, July, 1839.

Don José Ruiz and Don Pedro Montez, of the Island of Cuba, having purchased fifty-three slaves at Hayana, recently imported from Africa, put them on board the Amistad, Capt. Ferrer, in order to transport them to Principe, another port on the Island of Cuba. After being out from Havana about four days, the African captives on board, in order to obtain their freedom, and return to Africa, armed themselves with cane knives, and rose upon the Captain and crew of the vessel. Capt. Ferrer and the cook of the vessel were killed; two of the crew escaped; Ruiz and Montez were made prisoners.
Iberian Codes

- Iberian Codes - slavery seen as necessary, minimal rights
- Most slave regimes (Latin America and Caribbean) attempted to provide protection for slaves - laws influenced by earlier Roman concepts
- Basic rights which defined a human under Roman Law non existent under slavery
- No Iberian code/municipal law assumed that slave was w/o basic rights of human
- Slaves same as lower-class free persons regarding punishment - served as witnesses to crimes
- Catholic Church granted all rights to sacraments to slaves
  - Time to worship / legitimacy of African practices of marriage and kinship with Christian doctrine
- All Iberian slave legal codes modified in New World
- Relationship between church and slaves - helped hold community together
Code Noir (1685)

- French West Indies colonies - oppressive slave code
- Slaves declared chattel without any rights of property/protection
- Masters could punish how they wish - minimal rights, sacraments, marriage, religious education and time all restricted and under will of master
- Manumission under code - slave given full legal rights of citizenship if freed by master - led to endless conflict between whites and free colored
- State had every right to interfere with masters and slaves “peculiar institution”
- Free colored in French possessions - one of the most econ. powerful and important classes in American slave society
LE CODE NOIR
OU
EDIT DU ROY,
SERVANT DE REGLEMENT
POUR le Gouvernement & l'Administration de Justice & la Police des IlesFrancoises de l'Amerique, & pour la Discipline & le Commerce des Negres & Esclaves dans ledit Pays.
Donné à Versailles au mois de Mars 1685.
AVEC,
L'EDIT du mois d'Aout 1685, portant établissement d'un Conseil Souverain & de quatre Sieges Royaux dans la Cote de l'Ile de S. Domingue.

A PARIS.
Chez la Veue SAUGRAIN, à l'entrée du Quay de Gévres,
du côté du Pont au Change, au Paradis.

M. DCCXVIII.
Self-Purchase

- Self-purchase (coartación) - major change in Ibero-American legal codes
- Became customary practice in Americas - Portuguese and Spanish crown early 18th century
- Rented slaves allowed personal property
- Self-purchase allowed growth of major free colored population before emancipation (especially Cuba and Brazil)
- Slaves able to make down payment on freedom - couldn’t be sold or transferred from normal residence
- Gave slaves chance to achieve control over own lives - rebellion not needed
Overall

- Despite customary and legal rights and protections - slaves still at will of master/overseer
- Minimal rights and fundamental principles don’t matter if master decides to lash out (harm or kill)
- Escape and violence only option for survival...
Marronage

- Marronage: Running away
  - Petit Marronage: Temporary Escape
- Petit marronage was the most common in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Petit marronage was done usually to negotiate better conditions with the masters.
  - If negotiations were not met, slaves sought permanent escape.
- Permanent escape depended on: Area for settlement, soil and climate for food production, and isolation from plantations.
Escaped Slaves

- Escaped Slaves had different options to remain free.
  - It was possible for an escaped slave to be absorbed into a free colored society.
  - Good option because large colored populations were hard to police and ideal for slaves on the run.
    - However, a large colored population required urban centers which were almost all in Spanish and Portuguese America.
- Another option was to join maroon communities
- A maroon community is made up of escaped slaves
Escaped Slaves-Goal

- An escaped slave had one main goal, to have a stable life in a community
  - In order for a stable life, there had to be seeds, jobs, resources, wife/husband, etc.
- Until those requirements were achieved, escaped slaves often raided white plantations and settlements.
  - Raided for food, ammunition, supplies, women, and burned crops.
  - Resulting in a large conflict with the White’s.
- Escaped Slaves formed Maroon Communities
  - Maroon Community: Community made up of escaped Slaves.
Maroon Communities

- Made by groups of escaped slaves
- Ideally established in very remote areas
- Some were successfully put down, however many were unable to be put down by local military.
- When they were not able to be conquered, the white’s/plantations made treaties with them
  - Treaty was that any future escaped slaves had to be turned away.
- Prior to the treaty, any escaped slaves that did not pose a threat were welcomed
Maroon Communities-Brazil

- Portuguese called escaped slave communities *quilombos*.
  - A *quilombo* was any community consisting of 5 or more runaway slaves
- Brazil was a great place for *quilombos* due to its massive frontier
  - The Brazilian frontier was full of escaped slaves and other fugitives of justice.
- The largest quilombos were near where sugar was being produced.
  - Majority of the escaped slave that made up the quilombos escaped from sugar plantations.
- Fugitive slaves would often raid plantations and settlements for supplies.
  - Raided for foodstuffs, guns, ammunition, and other supplies.
- However, some fugitives managed to trade with shopkeepers and small merchants instead of raiding.
- Quilombos also had interactions with indigenous groups.
  - Some were peaceful, others were violent.

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Maroon Communities-Palmares Republic

- Known as Palmares or Quilombo dos Palmares.
- Settlement of fugitive slaves established in the early 1600’s
  - Established 60 Kilometers from the northeast coast of Brazil
- Made up of bantos, or settlements of fugitive slaves.
  - Some Bantos include Macaco (capital) Andalaquituche, Aqualtene, Ambrabanga, Tabocas, Zumbi, and Arotiene.
- Palmares society replicated African society in many ways, including the African political systems and a complex social structures.
- Resisted conquer of the Dutch and the Portuguese until the 1694 when the Portuguese finally conquered the republic.

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Maroon Communities - Decline

- Maroon Communities had a sharp decline and almost entirely disappeared during late 17th-18th Centuries
  - Declined due to the loss of frontier areas and slavery.
- When plantations kept expanding into the frontier lands, the previous isolation of the maroon communities was lost.
Slave Rebellions Introduction

- Beginning in 1672, there had been reports of fugitive slaves assembling groups to harass the plantation owners.
- The first ever documented all-black slave revolt took place in Virginia in 1687, known as the Westmoreland Slave Plot.
  - Conspiracy claimed the participants had the intention to kill the whites and destroy property all throughout Virginia.
  - As fear began to rise within the county, lawmakers were forced to create a series of restrictions to prevent further revolts, one of the laws being giving the owners the ability to kill and slave resisting.
  - First conspiracy in British America not involving white participants.
Haitian Revolution: 1791-1804

- A series of conflicts between Haitian slaves, colonists, armies of the British and French colonizers, and a variety of other parties
- The Haitian society was fragmented by skin color, class, and gender
- Slaves were greatly discriminated by the white European Colonists (merchants, landowners, overseers, and craftsmen)
- Slaves had experienced a number of mistreatments by the Europeans that include being overworked (often would result in the death by injuries), diseases, malnutrition and starvation
- Due to this background of harsh mistreatment, a series of conflicts began to rise between the Europeans and affranchis, giving motivation to the slaves leading to the rise of the rebellion
- Vodou ceremonies would take place with the continuation of brutality against slave owners and wars between Europeans
- In May 1791, the French government would offer citizenship to the wealthier affranchis, and with constant battles with the Europeans, the government had granted citizenship to all affranchis
Haitian Revolution: Continued

- The country would soon get divided into rival fractions with the Spanish Colonists being established on the Eastern side of the island, or by British troops from Jamaica
- In 1793, a commissioner named Leger-Felicite Sonthonax was sent from France and offered freedom to slaves who joined his army, resulting in an outcome of abolishing slavery
- Late 1790’s, a military leader and former slave named Toussaint Louverture gained control of several areas and acquired the initial support of French agents
  - Ending up with a number of 500,000 slaves by his side
- Toussaint gave nominal allegiance to France while pursuing his own political and military ideas
- Napoleon Bonaparte wished to maintain control of the island, sending his brother in law General Charles Leclerc and his experienced force to obtain the wanted land
- Toussaint would struggle against this force for several months, until the forces came to an agreement to an armistice in May 1802
Haitian Revolution: Continued

- The French would soon break the agreement between the two forces and imprisoned Toussaint, dying on April 7th, 1803.
- In 1802, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henry Christophe would lead a black army against the French and defeated the French Commander (Napoleon) and a massive part of his army.
- In November of 1803, the viscount de Rochambeau surrendered from the expedition and the French withdrew from Haiti but kept a presence in the Eastern part of the island until 1809.
- On January 1st, 1804, the entire island of Haiti was declared independent.
- Many of the European power and Caribbean surrogates feared the spread of future slave revolts.
- Merchants from the free states hoped to trade with the Haitians rather than the European powers, and nearly the entire population of Haiti was completely free of slavery.
Haitian Revolution: Continued

- In October 1804, Dessalines took the title of Emperor from Jacquez I, but was killed several years later attempting to suppress a mulatto revolt
- It was not until 1825 that France realized Haiti's independence
Malê Revolt-Brazil

- Had been the most significant slave rebellion in Brazil, taking place on a Saturday before Ramadan in January 1835 in the city of Salvador of Bahia
- Being inspired by Muslim teachers, a small group of black slaves took a stand and rose up against the government
  - Participants knew about the Haitian Revolution and wore necklaces forming the image of President Dessalines, who declared Haitian independence
- Word got around the slave communities about the upcoming revolt, and multiple accounts of freed slaves telling their masters about this rumor, there was only one report reported to the authorities
- President Francisco de Souza Martins informed the Chief of police, alerted barracks, doubled the number of night patrols, and ordered boats to watch the bay
- Justices of the Peace searched the home of Domingos Marinho de Sa, and by going down to the basement the justices overheard the ringleaders discussing last minute details of the upcoming revolt, leaving the house and entering the stress, thus began the revolt
The revolt began to get violent out on the streets, as two slaves were injured and two more had been killed, and after securing the area, the slaves split up into groups to go into different directions throughout the city

Attempting to free a Muslim leader, Pacifico Licutan, the rebels began their first attack on the jail

The prison guards proved to be superior over the slaves, overwhelming the slaves with constant lines of fire coming from all directions

With an immense amount of shots being fired at the slaves, the slaves retreated to the Largo de Teatro and put up a good fight, but the soldiers were able to pull the gate guarding the barracks, with the outcome being a failed mission

Working their way up towards the Vitoria neighborhood where numerous Muslim slaves had lived, and regrouping at Merces Convent
Malê Revolt-Brazil Continued

- After the regrouping, the number of slaves had risen to 200, and began heading towards Cabrioto to meet up with slaves from plantations outside of Salvador.
- A dilemma within this goal was in order to get to Cabrioto, the slaves would have to pass the cavalry barracks.
- Once the rebels had reached Agua de Meninos at about 3:00 A.M., thus started the most violent battle of the entire revolt.
- The soldiers had retreated back to the barracks while the horseback stayed outside, weakening the number of slaves down to 60.
- The slaves attempted to seek a way around the barracks, but were soon met with a cavalry charge that was too powerful for the slaves to overcome.
- Moments after this incident more slaves arrived, but were met with another cavalry charge that had finished them off.
First Maroon War: 1728-1740

- Beginning in 1673 in Jamaica, a group of 200 slaves established a separate group known as the “Leeward Maroons” in St. Ann Parish,
  - Cudjoe would then lead a rebellion at Suttons Plantation, expanding the slaves to 400 involved in the Leeward Maroons
- In September of 1728, the British sent more troops to Jamaica to overthrow the Leeward Maroons
- In 1729, Jedd led a Maroon rebellion on the Northeastern town of Port Antonio
  - Lieutenant Soaper attempted to pursue the Maroons, but Soapers army were then met with an ambush
- The Maroons were known for using Guerilla tactics during warfare (armed civilians, ambushes, sabotages, hit and run tactics, ect.)
- In 1730, Soaper gathered a larger force to overthrow the Maroons, but was then met with another ambush, decreasing Soapers army significantly erasing the lives of half of his army
- In 1732, Hunter called in a variety of parties against the Maroons to occupy Nanny Town
  - The Maroons withdrew from the fight, but were then given back the land due to the expenses
First Maroon War: Continued

- The following year, Hunter sent a group of British seamen against the Maroons, but were then met with an ambush resulting in a devastating loss.
- In 1734, Maroons continued to inflict ongoing battles against the colonial forces in Portland Parish and St. George
  - Allowed slaves to continue to escape.
- With the death of Hunter, John Ayscough was appointed as the new governor, but had meaningless victories against the Maroons.
- In the same year, the Maroons defeated a party led by Captain Shettlewood, allowing a larger group of slaves to escape and continue on to overpower the British as the colonial powers were incapable of defeating the Maroons.
- In 1739, the British Government came to a realization their forces could not overthrow the Maroons, leading to signing a peace treaty with the Leeward Maroon.
- The peace treaty would involve the Maroons not being able to help runaway slaves, and allowing the Maroons to maintain their land to fight off intruders.
Second Maroon War: 1795-1796

- 8 month conflict between the Maroons of Cudjoe’s town (Trelawny Town) and the British colonials who owned the land
- Cause of the war was due to the Maroons feeling as though they were being mistreated under the terms of the peace treaty signed in 1739
  - Being irritated of all the complaints made by the Maroons, Balcarres approach led to a full scale war against the Maroons
- The British acquired a number up to 5000 troops, outnumbering the number of Maroons 10-1
  - Within the first two weeks of battle in Trelawny Town, the Maroons had killed up to 65 British troops without even having a member of the Maroons killed
  - The British troops had struggles against the Maroons, only having killed 32 Maroons and 16 Trelawny troops for a period of time
- Due to the past difficulties of defeating the Maroons, General George Walpole developed a cruel strategy of making it harder for the Maroons to have access to food, and water, leading to malnutrition and weakening the Maroons
Second Maroon War: Continued

- As governor Balcarras imported one hundred bloodhounds from Cuba, the Maroons would then surrender in December of 1795 under the condition of not being deported
  - Once the peace treaty was signed between the Maroons and Walpole, the Maroons were then forced to beg on their knees for the king to forgive them and to return all of the runaway slaves
- Walpole was frustrated by the governors decision of deporting all of the Maroons after Walpole made an agreement with them to not deport them
- In 1796, 581 Trelawny Maroons were exported to Nova Scotia
- Hundreds of runaway slaves were able to acquire their freedom by fighting or escaping, but would soon be executed or sent to Cuba
  - A couple hundred slaves would stay out in the forests of the Cockpit Country and join other runaway communities