# BUILDING THE BANZA:

# TRANSATLANTIC ADAPTATIONS OF MUSICAL MEMORIES TO MEET THE NEEDS AND RESTRICTIONS OF THE NEW WORLD

by

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## ABSTRACT

My MA thesis explores the journey of spiked lutes from their genesis in West Africa, throughout the Middle Passage, and finally, to destinations in Jamaica. This thesis not only examines the physical evolution of what would become to be known as the Jamaican banza; it also evaluates what it meant to retain knowledge of and play the banza in colonial Jamaica. The Jamaican banza was a new world iteration of an ancient West African folk instrument—passed down a patriarchal line to among specific families and areas. While constructed of similar materials, the instrument physically evolved during its Trans-Atlantic journey—adding western technologies and implements. The functions of the instrument were also reinterpreted in the New World. Drumming was the most common type of music-making among enslaved west Africans; it was the closest thing to a common language unifying culturally disparate kinship groups. Because of colonial fears associated with enslaved rebellions, drumming was outlawed and further restrictions were enacted so enslaved musicians could not gather in large numbers for fear of communicating insurrections. Many enslaved individuals sought to appease these colonial mandates while also drawing from personal or inherited memories of African folk instruments. West African instruments like the akonting, which evolved into the banza in Jamaica, designated for specific musicians and specified purposes evolved into instruments of personal expression, accessible to anyone willing to play the banza within larger colonial society. Playing the banza in colonial Jamaica was an active decision and it carried varied consequences subjective to the performer, performance, and intention of the music. Studying the evolution of the banza from a historian's point of view answers significant ethnomusicological questions concerning the journey of the American banjo from its conception in West Africa in the fourteenth century; to

its gestation in the colonial Caribbean throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries; to its eventual presence in the American Colonies.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## THE CURRENT STATE OF THE STUDY OF TRANSATLANTIC AND CARIBEEAN MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG ENSLAVED AND MAROON SOCIETIES

When enslaved peoples first arrived in colonial Jamaica, they divided into two groups. While most individuals remained enslaved, some individuals fled bondage to join free communities of former formerly enslaved people of West African origins in their communities hidden in Jamaica's inhospitable mountains. These free people were called Maroons by colonials. Both Maroon and enslaved societies in Jamaica were based upon their colonial status, not ethnicity or association to a specific kinship group. Maroons and enslaved societies expressed their status and associated membership to each group through specific types of instrumentation and music making. Uninhibited by colonial restrictions on how and when they could use music, Maroons used drumming as a musical and cultural unifier while enslaved societies created a new instrument based off memories of West African lutes. This new instrument was a lute called the banza.

Modern historiography established that the Jamaican banza was an instrument created in the Caribbean based off the lutes of West and Central Africa. These contemporary publications established that the banza was a popular instrument among enslaved peoples of Jamaica. It established [repetitive] that ethnically Maroon [define] communities existed at the same time and did not play the banza. What has yet to be explored and what this thesis will investigate is *why* enslaved individuals created the banza and incorporated it into their music making and *why* Maroons did not accept the instrument into their sonic societies. The areas of Atlantic history this

thesis explores are extremely specific and may seem irrelevant to the larger subject; however, the creating and playing the banza was a deliberate decision that had consequences. The banza represented a larger theme of musical appeasement and cultural change as African-ness was adapted and became something new, used as both a tactic of survival, keeping individuals alive and as an avenue to continue to express oneself through a creative musical outlet. This thesis argues that the need for music in daily life and creative expression was a scientific control. It was intrinsic and undaunted by the traumatic experiences witnessed during the Transatlantic slave trade. This thesis argues that musical needs ands restrictions were variables that shaped how enslaved and Maroon societies created and used music during enslavement and following emancipation and eventual decolonization of Jamaica. The creation of the banza was key to this process because it created unity for enslaved Jamaicans as most had some familiarity with West African lutes and the different types of people who played them. This familiarity would be key to establishing a centralized enslaved culture in a new physical and social environment.

The publication of recent anthropological scholarship has helped uncover the various cultures of Jamaica that have been hidden within the general history of the island. Early historians and chroniclers of Jamaican history were limited by their time, and especially by the scope of their traditionally-sourced history. Prior to the application of social and subjective Marxist interpretive frameworks, historians were limited by the "official" sources of the time which left out testimonies of the middling classes and other marginalized groups. Colonial court records, assembly meeting minutes, letter and diaries of white elites, ship manifests and captain's logs, enslaved bills of sale, and writings of physicians and naturalists became the foreseeable sources available to investigate and compile a body of work concerning the island's history and cultural development. As one might suspect, these primary sources reflect the time and

socioeconomic climate of eighteenth and nineteenth century colonialism and though some were written by abolitionists, they are limited to the colonial perspective only. The primary sources are wrought with ethnocentrism, xenophobia, racism, classism, and rationalizations for enslaving hundreds of thousands of West Africans. Sadly, because the vast majority of enslaved and Maroon individuals were systematically kept illiterate, these one-sided records represent the bulk of available primary sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Moreover, reports of music making among enslaved and Maroon societies were not seen as noteworthy and worth evaluating by the average colonial naturalist or political historian. Despite making up the majority of the island's population, descriptions of culture, especially music, are rarely found in colonial sources. The references to music making from the colonial period are found in happenstance, among the records of naturalists like Sir Hans Sloane. Such precious but marginal music-specific sources are quite limited. Most researchers have found writings on musical culture in colonial Jamaica were associated with punishments administered on plantations for violating restrictions on music, and within the ostensibly mundane recollections of daily life in journals and correspondence.

## Progress is Progress: Adding Cultural History to Atlantic History

During the early 1930s, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier and anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits began to broaden the field of Atlantic studies, specifically examining enslaved and Maroon populations of the Caribbean. Frazier and Herskovits invigorated the field of Atlantic studies by focusing of a specific place and time. Previously Atlantic or Caribbean studies were so fledgling, no specific focus could be explored because the groundwork and interpretive frameworks of the field was just being established. Though these academics made huge strides in studying the Caribbean in specific times and places, one question divided the potential fruitful

and collaborative research. This question was at the heart of the developing field of cultural history in the Atlantic. The divisive question was one of cultural retention: whether or not individuals transported from Africa to the Americas retained any of their West or Central African culture, or as Frazier asserted, "…the ordeal of slavery in the United States had been so traumatic that it completely destroyed African Cultural Heritages in North America and that any distinctive culture African Americans developed was of necessity acquired after their arrival and derived from European and American components."[1] Herskovits refuted Frazier's claims, as he asserted that "direct continuities existed between African cultural regions and the Americans as survivals traceable to specific areas of West and Central Africa."[2] These transatlantic transmissions of African culture were difficult to connect using the usual interpretive frameworks and using traditional sources. However subsequent historians, using cross-disciplinary approaches, which combined traditional history with sociology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, archeology, and other humanities were able to discover the specific ways in which West African customs and cultural elements had changed over decades of habitation in the Caribbean. What was initially a heterogenous African collection of cultures and customs, rapidly creolized to become two ostensibly homogeneous separate Jamaican cultures which were distinguished by colonials in the ways each group made and used music. This transformation eluded scholars until evolved frameworks were assigned by the likes of Edward Brathwaite (*The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1829)* and Orlando Patterson (*The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*). However, Patterson followed Frazier's line of thought, asserting that enslaved peoples "were formed of and made by

[1] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States,* rev. ed. (Chicago, 1948), 1-69; Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston, 1941).

[2] Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States,* 1-69

the world in which they resided—a world of bondage and oppression bent on the obliterating their personal histories."[3] Brathwaite, on the other hand, argued that African culture had crossed the Atlantic, but was hidden within enslaved societies. Brathwaite wrote, "The African influence remained even if increasingly submerged, as an important element in the process of creolization."[4] Finally, the transmission of African culture in the Americas was verified by comparisons to historical and contemporary corroborations of the same cultural, especially musical practices taking place in West and Central Africa. Subsequent researchers and historians would not be plagued arguing whether or not West African culture existed in the Americas; these postulations were verified by place and time specific studies and comparisons began to be conducted. Despite the headway made in the twentieth century, historians and ethnographers had not even begun to evaluate the musical traditions of Africans in the Caribbean, let alone evaluated the distinct musical traditions that existed in Jamaica, traditions which contributed to the colonial, and subsequent historical characterization of enslaved and Maroon societies.

**Fading Colonialism: Jamaican History Created by Jamaicans**

If there is a golden age of banjo research in the Caribbean, it began in the mid-twentieth century. Following the decolonization of the Caribbean during the 1960s and Jamaica's declaration of independence in 1966, graduate students, professors, and independent researchers began to examine the hidden histories of the island's past, understanding that these hidden histories contributed to the nation's contemporary identity and culture, particularly its distinct music. Prior to Jamaica's independence, the island was considered the prize of British holdings

[3] Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of the Negro Slave Society in Jamaica,* (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1969), 10, 74, 80-86, 284.

[4] Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 96-101, 212-239, 298, 306-311.

in the Caribbean, first as a lucrative sugar colony and strategic naval center spanning conflicts from the American War for Independence to World War II. British ownership of the island meant the permeation of British history, filled with exaltations of British themes and individuals while marginalizing the contributions to history and culture by "others" outside of the Empire. British flight from the island provided the opportunity for Jamaicans to showcase their own contributions to the history and culture of the island. Reggae, Mento, and Dance Hall music, Rastafarianism, and celebrations of Maroon founding days were all products of this cultural reconquista following decolonization. From the 1960s onward, Jamaicans from all walks of life were allowed to write their national history based on their own paradigms and experiences, some of which were distillations of the memories and experiences of enslaved individuals and Maroons.[5]

Though Jamaican independence catalyzed new, domestically-bred works of cultural history and ethnomusicology, the instrumentation of enslaved and Maroons was not initially addressed by scholars for many reasons. Firstly, mentions of enslaved and Maroon music in the colonial records of the island were sparse, making them an already illusive subject of 1960s Jamaican historiography. Furthermore, generations of cultural creolization in Jamaica and other areas of the Caribbean divorced Caribbean instruments like the banza from their West African origins. Well into the 1970s, instruments used by enslaved and Maroon populations, especially the banza, were believed to be entirely Caribbean. Misdirection of colonial histories, like those written by British, French, and Dutch subjugators surrounding the origins of the banza, were

[5] Kenneth Bilby and Diana Baird N'Diaye, "Creativity and Resistance: Maroon Cultures in the Americas," part of *Background Information* Section of the 1992 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The article references performances from descendants of Jamaica's original Maroons, evidencing that this religious and secular music was inherited not created prior to and during the twentieth century, accessed October 7, 2020, https://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/Maroon/educational_guide/10.htm#History%20and%Maroon%20Identity%in%20tje%Present.

challenged one at a time, but such corrections took time; specializations needed to be developed, available primary sources had to be re-analyzed through cultural frameworks, and national historians needed to inject personal and hereditary experiences into Jamaica's national and cultural history.

Despite the similarities in physical appearance, Most scholars of the mid-twentieth century (and many of the late twentieth century) did not think to connect West African lutes to lutes found in the records of the Americas. Additionally, the banza had virtually disappeared in Jamaica during the mid-twentieth century further complicating tracing its West African roots. Consequently, examining its history on the island was akin to searching for a ghost. This inability to trace the path and evolution of West African lutes to the Caribbean banza stagnated the cultural studies of the banza because scholars were looking at the wrong sources. The early writings of enslaved music from the United States seldom mentioned or investigated the cultural origins of enslaved individuals. In developing a national narrative to separate themselves from British colonialism, many generations of enslaved people had to create new cultures and erase or alter older ones. Therefore, much of the writings on the culture and music of West African slaves in the Caribbean fell into obscurity. Without a historical link or sources to instrument's precursors, ethnomusicologists and historians could not explain how the banza and similar lutes sprang up in the Americas. Consequently, the West African musical cultures that most influenced the Caribbean creation of the banza were lost, but only for a time.

### *The Librarian and the Banjo*

If the 1960s were the onset of the golden age of banza and banjo studies, then Dena Epstein can be considered the golden age's most significant contributor. Epstein, a trained librarian, became bored with her daily routine and raising her children as a homemaker. She

sought solace in potential research projects, beginning at her local public library in Linden, New Jersey. Epstein was first intrigued by the work of William Francis Allen's whose professional position in the 1860s was teaching music to the emancipated people of the South Carolina sea islands. However, Allen's greatest contributions were his annotations and writings on the music of the inhabitants of the islands. Allen's records peaked Epstein's interest and set her on a course that would alter American musicology and ethnomusicology as well as set the foundation for the modern study of the American banjo and its West African and Caribbean predecessors.

Through a myriad of inter-library loans and frequent trips to the New York Public Library, Epstein began to challenge the predominant notion that there was little or no evidence of enslaved music making prior to the American Civil War.[6] She was determined to uncover any mention of enslaved music colonial and early American sources to not only prove that this music had existed, but also to give historical agency back to the people who created it within the status of slavery. She succeeded, "[she] found a lot!"[7]

As Epstein noted, her undertaking would not be an easy one and it would require diligence in canvassing primary sources and compiling similar research materials for future scholars. Epstein argued,

> For generations black folk music has had enormous popular appeal in the United States and around the world. Understandably it has inspired many writers to expound its meaning, significance, and aesthetics. Tracing its history, however, has been more difficult because of the lack of historical evidence. This lack puzzled me, since there was a historical record of slavery which should throw light on the development of music that

[6] *The Librarian and the Banjo,* (56 min.), directed by Jim Carrier, Ranger Media, released 2013. In the film Epstein says, "As late as 1959 a book was published that said there was no historic record of black music before the Civil War [any kind?] it said there is none. And I couldn't believe that, you know there's a record of slavery and in that record, there must be some information about the music. And I was raising two young children and I wasn't working at the time and I wanted something interesting to think about so I thought maybe I can find this information that nobody else has been able to uncover."

[7] *The Librarian and the Banjo*.

> originated therein. As far as I could learn, no systematic search of this material for its musical content had ever been made. It would not be an easy task, for such a search would involve the examination or a heterogeneous literature made up of slave narratives, travel accounts, memoirs, letters, novels, church histories, and polemics on slavery, but no other approach seemed likely to provide the source material so badly needed. About 1953 I decided to make the attempt, limited the search to the period which seemed most in need of documentation: the earliest era that ended in 1867 with the appearance of the first published collection, *Slave Songs of the United States.*[8]

An extremely astute Epstein formulated her theory that the banjo was not an American instrument, but instead it was an iteration of West African lutes. This assertion was avant-garde to say the least and being a woman in a field of men didn't make things easier for Epstein and her revolutionary theory. Like her male peers, Epstein's research was limited due to the availability of discovered primary sources and the difficulty in connecting the banza to the Caribbean. She answered the question of why one of the most popular instrument among enslaved populations during the colonial era had virtually disappeared not only in twentieth century Jamaica, but throughout the entire Caribbean. Instead of shuffling the same old library catalog cards and using the same, tradition primary sources, Epstein sought to reevaluate primary sources of the Caribbean in hopes of finding musical topics that may have been overlooked by her predecessors, who considered such pursuits ancillary to political and military histories. [9] Epstein's drudgery through colonial records produced a litany of new sources for her colleagues and future historians and ethnomusicologists to devour.

## The Emergence of Maroon Historiography

Though the two unsuccessful Maroon Wars for independence were a prominent topic in Assembly meeting notes, military correspondence, personal diaries, slave ship manifests, and

[8] Dena Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War,* "Preface to the 1977 Edition," (Chicago, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[9] *The Librarian and the Banjo*.

letters, little of Maroon culture, especially reasonings behind their instrumentation and musical performances appears in these sources. As the wounds of colonialism healed, native Jamaicans began to write the history of the island and Maroon culture became one of the prominent groups in the field of Jamaican cultural history, particularly in the fields of ethnomusicology and religion and ethnomusicology. By the 1980s, many followed Epstein and other cultural historians' lead. Authors Bob Winans, Barbara Kopytoff, Paul Lovejoy, Kenneth Bilby, Richard Cullen Rath, and later, Laurent DuBois, and Kathleen Wilson uncovered the silenced musical past of Jamaica's Maroon and enslaved populations by evaluating available sources. Through their specialized frameworks, they uncovered new sources by identifying and often comparing Jamaica's diverse cultural and musical groups to both their West African origins as well as other parts of the Caribbean.[10]

Because of Kenneth Bilby's investigation of the Maroon communities of Jamaica in the late 20th century, cultural outsiders now know more than ever about the music of elusive and creolized cultures. As a trained anthropologist and ethnomusicologist, Bilby differentiated himself from the antiquated interpretive frameworks and biases of his predecessors whose work only revolved around the political, military, and economic histories of the island. He did not

[10] Kathleen Wilson, "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 66 No. 1 (January, 2009), 52-53.; Paul E. Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery." *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition, and Emancipation,* II, I, (1997). ; Kenneth Bilby *True-Born Maroons.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008.; Richard Cullen Rath, "African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition." *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 50, No. 4 (1993): 700-726.; Robert B. Winans, "Black Instrumental Music Traditions in the Ex-Slave Narratives." *Black Music Research Journal,* Vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 43-53.

assume to know anything as an outsider, nor did he limit his reception of Maroon life and culture to the ethnocentric lens of British colonial records. His first-hand exposure to and subsequent writings on the Maroon's spiritual dancing, called the Kromanti dance, revealed that communal Maroon musical performance was seldom leisurely, or happenstance.[11] Maroon communal drumming was invariably purposeful, directed at a specific goal or function, and had not drastically changed from how it was performed at the end of the eighteenth century. Bilbey witnessed that among Maroons, drumming and the abeng, a hollowed-out cow horn used for signaling, are still the primary instruments. Evidencing that Maroon's sonic space is like an untouched time capsule, plainly put, Maroons make and use music nearly the same ways they did in colonial times. By stark contrast, there is no way to fully understand how and why enslaved music changed because it was so different during the 20th century and virtually gone today. Without Bilbey's extensive research and writings on 20th century Maroon musical culture, contemporary scholars would not be able to understand that some musical traditions, like those of the Maroons, stayed the same while enslaved music, and the vernacular music of Jamaica changed so rapidly.

It was the job of the historian to then closely examine these records for consistencies and incongruities and apply new frameworks and cross-disciplined approaches. For example, Kathleen Wilson realized that the ways white colonials wrote about the specific music of Maroon

[11] Harcourt Fuller, "Maroon History, Music, and Sacred Sounds in the Americas: A Jamaican Case," *Journal of Africana Religions,* Vol. 5, No. 2 (2017): 275-282. Exploring Maroon music and its association to the group's spirituality, Fuller writes, "At the heart of the Jamaican Maroon verbal arts, particularly their music and ritual complex, is the 'Kromanti Dance' or 'Kromanti Play,' a ceremony that incorporates a variety of dance and musical styles. During a Kromanti Play, Maroon participants are possessed by the spirits of their ancestors, an experience termed 'Myal.' The purpose of the spirit possession is often to heal ailments that have been attributed to other spirits. Jamaican Maroon dance and music traditions include 'heavier' or 'deeper' songs, which incorporate a higher percentage of African-derived words and phrases. These songs are used mainly to invoke the possession of living dancers by Maroon ancestral spirits, and to accompany the ritual specialist and guardian of the communal ancestral knowledge and music of the community."

and enslaved societies was starkly different and each was associated with emotions. Wilson's article, "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound" explores how Maroon and enslaved music and its performance was different in colonial Jamaica. Most importantly, Wilson investigated why Maroon and enslaved music was so differentiated. Wilson argues that by creating music that satisfied colonial restrictions on music making, by making music that was quieter and calmer, and less militaristic, enslaved musicians solidified their status as enslaved, operating and making music in similar capacities as their enslavers including incorporating Christian themes into their music. Even though Christian themes were forcefully introduced to enslaved music, they were adapted to withstanding West African sacred music and the situations of bondage enslaved religious music focused around similar groups found in the Bible.

Wilson argues that enslaved music making was written about comically, with gaiety, lack of concern, and a paternalistic tinge. Wilson reasoned that enslaved music making was presented in this manner because enslaved musicians feared punishment if their music did not meet the standards of their enslavers. Wilson argued that "…the ostentatious cruelty of slave punishment above all sought to maintain the gulf between slave and free; … the protocols of slave ownership demanded the episodic performance of white supremacy and black [enslaved] abjection."[12] Meanwhile, the music of ethnically similar Maroon societies was invariably recorded with a sense of fear or foreboding awe; it scared colonists and other outsiders, or at the very least, made them uncomfortable and concerned. Wilson described Maroon musical performances and accompanying dances, noting "…. Though tailored to the white gaze, the Maroon was dance

[12] Kathleen Wilson, "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 66 No. 1 (January, 2009), 52-53.

exhibited hierarchies, inventions, and memories that were only partially legible to that gaze and that simultaneously marked difference, rather than sameness, as the grounds for Maroon inclusion as British subjects in the colonial community"[13] Hebrews in exile, persecuted Christians, and even the sacrificial nature of Jesus became themes that enslaved musical societies could incorporate into their music when required. Even though many enslaved individuals didn't prescribe to Christianity, these themes became universal balms to a population required to convert to and follow their enslavers religions and general uses of music. Their appeasement was viewed as prostration before the British Empire and through this view of passivity and surrender, British colonizers cemented their status of sameness and solidified their low status within colonial society.

Conversely, the frenetic musical performances of the Maroons perpetuated a different-ness, or other-ness from the British colonials, and in a strange turn of events, appeasement strategies boded negatively for enslaved musicians while non-European, differentiated Maroon musical performances and instrumentation had a seemingly positive consequence for that group and its musicians. Wilson summarized these consequences of musical appeasement and obstinance. She writes, "In the cultural heteroglossia, where mimesis threatened to undo the supposed gulfs between enslaved and free and skin color alone was never sufficient to demarcate status, the performance of difference, of origin and destiny, was both theatrical and performative, establishing and substantiating social hierarchies of entitlement and subjection through the practices of everyday life."[14] Wilson breaks new ground in the field of Jamaican cultural history by asserting that the ways in which music was made in colonial Jamaica were

[13] Wilson, "The Performance of Freedom," 47-48.
[14] Ibid., 51.

intentional, shaped by various causalities both internal and external to the island, and that the music made, in either way, had consequences. This thesis picks up where Wilson leaves off, asserting that the banza was central to representing enslaved music and distinguishing that music from Maroon music.

Enslavers attempted to erase any element of cultural or kinship group connection among individuals transported to the New World. They believed in an enslaved individual felt alone and isolated, unable to communicate and connect with others, that they would be less likely to attempt insurrection and escape. One thing that enslavers did not account for was West Africans' ability to build new cultural, especially musical relationships and comradery based on similar experiences and memories. Michael Theodore Coolen asserts that "To begin with, most slaves, at least those from Western Sudan, could see that this was a very common African instrument. More important, it was an instrument associated with some of the most important aspects of traditional culture…Indeed, it would not be presumptuous to state that the plucked-lute was in some ways far more important and intrinsic African instrument than any of the membranophones from the Western Sudan."[15] Therefore it is paramount not to ignore nor underplay the cultural significance of the creation of the banza, a Caribbean invention based off African lutes, and incorporated into enslaved society in similar functions as comparable lutes had been in West and Central Africa.

## Developing Themes and Topics for Areas for Future Exploration

Like the layers on an onion, researchers and authors continue to peel back the coatings of Caribbean history, examining various marginalized or silenced narratives and evaluating British,

[15] Michael Theodore Coolen, "Archetypes of the American Folk Banjo," *Western Folklore,* Vol. 43, No. 2 (April, 1984): 131.

French, and Dutch colonies subjectively in order to present a more specified picture of the historical, and more importantly, cultural development of each colony.

Further investigation to the banza's absence within Maroon musical societies, prevalence in enslaved sonic spaces, and its virtual disappearance after abolition in Jamaica will undoubtedly give insight into the mentalities and societal consequences associated with the playing the instrument. Differences in the religions of Maroons and enslaved populations were as pronounced as the instrumental differences that accompanied both their secular and religious music. Maroon's uninhibited Kromanti dances and West African spiritualism were juxtaposed by enslaved populations forced incorporation of Christian themes, religious figures, and dogma. Enslaved societies' adaptations of Christianity were best represented via syncretism of West African spiritualism, or what colonials termed Obeah, and Christian principles. In colonial Jamaica, religion creolized and adapted in enslaved society in many of the same ways instrumentation and functions of music did. Though music and religion are not directly linked, nor can they be directly compared, their similar processes of creolization can show how the banza and syncretive religious practices like Obeah, Voudou, and other cosmopolitan cultural practices formed on a island devoid on an indigenous population and influence but inhabited by West African and British aliens. Religion and music were undoubtedly linked first in West Africa, and subsequently in the New World. Investigating how each changed during the phases of Transatlantic creolization will help invigorate a field of study with limited primary sources.

# CHAPTER TWO

## SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE JAMAICAN BANZA: THE FIRST TWO PHASES OF TRANSATLANTIC MUSICAL CREOLIZATION

Musical creolization was unavoidable in colonial Jamaica. Changes in the forms and functions of West African music informed and influenced broader cultural change beginning in West Africa and continuing upon arrival in colonial Jamaica. The island necessitated cultural assimilation and change to meet the demands of recently altered social hierarchies of both tenured and newly arrived inhabitants of colonial Jamaica. To make these changes possible, West African traditions as well as the Middle Passage paved the way for the banza to appear.

Individuals, primarily British, Scottish, and Irish who found themselves on the lower rung of their native social ladders held positions of power and authority in Jamaica; West Africans from varying geographic and social backgrounds were now enslaved. Once these enslaved individuals disembarked on the island, some of that population remained enslaved while others escaped their bondage and joined autonomous communities hidden within the inhospitable geography of the island. Maroons, as they were called by colonials, enjoyed more freedom than their enslaved contemporaries, but this freedom came at a cost as Maroons were constantly required to defend their freedom through force and intimidation of colonials. This force and intimidation required Maroons to appear as an entirely unified group capable of organizing and resisting colonials as a collective. Subsequently, Maroon culture shied away from appearing as conglomerate and instead sought to appear to colonials as a unified ethnic group. Therefore, Maroons decidedly made their new musical culture homogenous, militaristic, and unaccommodating to colonial preferences.

Enslaved culture did not need to appear as a unified front. Though most enslaved individuals that arrived in Jamaica were from the Gold Coast, there was a broad range of kinship groups among them. Enslaved society celebrated these differences by looking for shared cultural experiences, especially shared musical traditions that would meet the new restrictions on making music on Jamaican plantations. Enslaved music did not need to be intimidating or militant, but it did need to meet requirements, most importantly the laws which forbade large communal performances and drumming, which colonials feared would be used in insurrections and revolts.[16]

It is important to understand that this organization of enslaved or Maroon was a new distinction, one created by the colonial environment, not by West African culture and kinship group association. These new social distinctions were molded by the European inhabitants of the island. Eventually even member of Maroon and enslaved groups would come to view themselves as distinct and separate from one another despite their sharing of a common ancestry. Culture, status, and ethnicity were ever-changing and adapting elements of life in colonial Jamaica and they were expertly used to meet the needs and restrictions of specific communities.

To get to this point, however, this chapter argues that three distinct phases of creolization shaped and adapted West African music to accommodate a new, colonial Jamaican environment. This process of musical creolization began in the Gold Coast (Ghana) and continued to re-shape itself and evolve during these three phases. These phases were: enslavement and transportation to coastal prisons; aboard slave ships during the Middle Passage; and again, in Jamaica, where individuals from the Gold Coast (Ghana), other areas of West Africa, and those born in Jamaica

[16] *Negro Act of 1740,* Provincial Congress of South Carolina, 1740.

continued to adapt to yet another new environment of Transatlantic slavery. Understanding these various iterations of creolization is crucial in tracking how West African music changed to become Jamaican music, existing in two distinct formats in colonial Jamaica: enslaved music and Maroon music. After surviving the Middle Passage, enslaved peoples of varying backgrounds sought comradery and solace by altering existing musical traditions and creating new forms of instruments and musical roles in order to experience the joy of sonic kinship and to cope with the horrors of Transatlantic slavery. The banza was the physical manifestation of these West African kinship and cultural creolization in an entirely New World.

## Phase One: Enslavement and Transportation to Coastal Prisons

Following the work of pioneering scholars like Dena Epstein, Eric Charry, Shlomo Pestcoe, Greg C. Adams, and others, this section examines primary sources surrounding the construction and use of various spiked lutes within West African societies. Fourteenth century Berber trader Ibn Battuta; sixteenth century Cape Verdean chronicler, André Alvarea d'Almada; and nineteenth century musicologist Carl Engel described the physical form of spiked lutes throughout much of West Africa. Examining these early descriptions of West African lutes, this chapter, like the work of the aforementioned scholars, argues the banza did not exist anywhere in Africa. It was a musical instrument constructed in the Caribbean during the mid-seventeenth century. But this chapter argues that the changes in structure and functions of lutes which were primordial in the development of the Jamaican banza, began in West Africa during the sixteenth century following contact with Europeans and the initiation of the Transatlantic slave trade. Establishing distinctions in physical form and function between the two types of West African lute are central. Primary sources like Ibn Battuta's chronicles show that during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries, lutes (among other instruments), were introduced to West Africa by

outsiders. Arabic lutes were first introduced into the highest echelons of West African society and soon adapted into two specific traditions of lute playing throughout West Africa. Griot and non-griot lutes became the backdrop of oral history performances, weaving themselves into the formal and informal historic and cultural fabric of West African societies. This change was external: it came from cultural outsiders seeking parlay with the brokers of West Africa's rich natural resources.

The descriptions of West African lutes found in primary sources like those of Batutta, d'Almada, and other explorers and merchants prove that West African lutes were not the lutes that began to appear throughout the Americas during the Transatlantic slave trade; nor were they played by the same musicians; nor were they used in capacities entirely similar to their West African antecedents. In order to evaluate the physical and functional creolization of West African lutes during the three phases of the Transatlantic slave trade, it is first necessary to establish the uses and physical composition of the instruments before the process began. Establishing a scientific control is necessary in order to better evaluate the evolution brought about by exposure to alien cultures, forced association with other tribal groups, access to new building materials, and new needs and functions of music necessitated by the status of slavery or Maroonage.

According to Ibn Battuta, spiked lutes were introduced to West Africa in the 10$^{th}$ century by Islamic Berber traders from the Middle East. These Muslim traders first moved through Saharan trade routes and then moved further southwestwardly into areas populated by a multitude of kinship groups predominately organized under the control of sprawling kingdoms ranging from present day Senegal to Angola. First incorporated into the music of royal courts, lutes enhanced performances that venerated rulers and community accomplishments. Lutes and their practitioners were highly prized assets of these illiterate kingdoms because their songs

served as the historical record of both kings and their kingdom's history. As time progressed and Islam and Islamic music traditions spread throughout West Africa, these lutes eventually permeated the entire West African musical landscape, varying in both physical form and popularity. In some areas with a larger Muslim population like Senegambia, the lute flourished and was adopted into vernacular music at a high rate. Further south, in areas like the Gold Coast and the Ivory Coast, lutes were relegated to specific roles while drumming served as the music of the common people, regardless of kinship group.[17]

These lute-playing musical record keepers were called Jeli in Mali and Gewel in the Wolof-speaking areas to the north of Mali. Later, in the 17th century, French colonists called these bards griots, a term many present-day Jeli and Africanist scholars condemn as Eurocentric.[18] As sprawling African kingdoms declined in the fifteenth century, giving way to more localized kinship and tribal control, priestly castes were created and these individuals were given lutes to compose musical narratives and oral histories for both the king in remaining centralized cities as well as community members living in fragmented rural settlements. At the same time, amateur musicians began to master lutes and to incorporated them into their vernacular music, bringing them as entertainment on hunts, while traveling on trade routes, and into individual homes and social gatherings. Similarly to any professional musical community, some griot and non-griot lute players were more talented than others; some connected with their community more successfully; but it can generally be stated that West Africans from every socioeconomic and sociopolitical level would have, at some point in their life, encountered one

[17] Eric Charry, "Plucked Lutes in West Africa: An Historical Overview," *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol. 49 (March 1996): 9-14, accessed June 30, 2020, http://www.jstor.com/stable/842390.

[18] Charry, "Plucked Lutes in West Africa: An Historical Overview," 9.

of these traveling troubadours, either in the form of a professional griot or hobbyist non-griot lute player.

As time passed, powerful West African kingdoms became less centralized and the concentration of Islam waned outside of Senegambia. Consequently, European encounters with West Africans began to outnumber encounters with Muslim emissaries and in areas like the Gold Coast and Ivory Coast, West Africans returned to their familiar, localized spiritualities. The success of each localized kinship group was reliant upon favor with ancestral and divine spirts. African spiritualism and its accompanying music was very important in this religious real. Drumming was present in the majority of these religious ceremonies and because of its importance and association with prosperity, drumming solidified its popularity within music making in West Africa. Despite remaining marginally esoteric and niche during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, lutes still represented a specific musical tradition, first alien, then accepted by West Africans. Two categories of West African lute player evolved in seventeenth-century West Africa: griot lute players, who continued to restrict their musical knowledge within their own familial units, performing only for specific purposes, and non-griot lute players, who made music to accompany hunts, and leisurely performances in non-religious or heraldic contexts.[19]

Eric Charry's article, "Plucked Lutes in West Africa: A Historical Overview," organized fragmented research on West African lutes from a wide range of disciplines, including the earliest Arabic and European descriptions of spiked lutes in West Africa, creating a collaborative collective for researchers concerned with West African and African diasporic music. Of

[19] Ibid.

particular importance, Charry was the first scholar to categorize West African lutes distinguished by their physical structure, geographic location, and access to play a specific lute. Charry characterizes two general types of West African lute and its respective musician: the Griot lute and the non-Griot Lute. The Griot lute is described as:

> One category of lute has a V- or fan shaped bridge that slips onto the end of the neck (which is exposed by a hole in the sound table) It is played exclusively by professional musical/verbal artisans called griots by non-Africans. Its body is made of hollowed-out wood in the shape of a trough or canoe. Griot lutes are localized in the western Sahel and northern savannah region (Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali,) and are played primarily by Moslem peoples who for the most part were empire builders. It is probably no coincidence that these peoples—Maninka/Mandinka, Bambara, Xasonke, Wolof, Soninke, Fulbe, and Moor—All come from a larger geopolitical region that was under the influence of ancient Ghana…the earliest known empire in West Africa.[20]

These lutes are comprised of four esstential parts: the headstock, where strings are attached by leather thongs or tuning pegs; the neck, which is comprised of a round dowel or flat plane that extends the through the resonator; the resonator, a large wooden trough or gourd used to collect and amplify noises made by plucking or strumming the strings; and a tailpiece, the terminal end of the instrument where strings are attached. This tailpiece can protrude through the resonator greatly, as seen in West African lutes, or terminate at the outside of the resonator as seen in Hans Sloane's ethcing of the Jamaican banza. (Figure 3).

[20] Ibid., 3-37,


FIG. 1. *Morphological features of West African plucked lutes:*
*(a) Bambara* ngoni*: griot lute, wooden trough resonator, fan-shaped bridge (after Frobenius 1921, facing p. 40);*
*(b) Hausa* molo*: non-griot lute, wooden trough resonator, cylinder-shaped bridge (from Krieger, p. 406);*
*(c)* Kwamsa *from Sokoto Province, Nigeria: non-griot lute, half-calabash resonator, cylinder-shaped bridge (from Harris, p. 124).*

6

Figure 1. Eric Charry's Diagram of West African Lutes

Source: Eric Charry, "Plucked Lutes in West Africa: An Historical Overview", *The Galpin Society Journal,* March 1996, Vol. 49, (March 1996): 33-37. These are examples of West African griot and non-griot lutes. It is important to note the round neck, leather strips used to attach the strings to the neck and tune the strings, and the shape, size, and composition of the resonators.

The second type of lute described by Charry was the non-griot lute which:

> has a cylindrical bridge that sits on top of the sound table. It does not appear to have any hereditary restrictions on who may play it, and it may have a wide variety of social usages, one of the more common being music for hunters. The body may be a wooden trough, a half calabash, or some kind of metallic container like a sardine tin. In general, calabash-resonator lutes have only one or two strings; wooden trough-resonators lute have more.[21]

…Charry differentiated the two fundamental types of West African lutes, noting:

> [Griot lutes] are all wooden-trough lutes with fan-shaped bridges, and all are primarily the same instrument with minor variations in size. The other type of wooden-trough lute, the non-griot lute, has a cylinder-shaped bridge…Lutes with calabash bodies are found throughout West Africa. They have cylinder-shaped bridges and fewer strings than the wooden-trough resonator lutes (usually one or two.)…Although there is little concrete evidence, one might speculate that calabash-resonator lutes reflect an older West African plucked lute tradition, predating the availability of iron implements which could carve out wooden troughs.[22]

If lutes built with a calabash gourd resonator were the oldest types of lutes used throughout West Africa, their physical presence, memories of their functions within society, and their distinctive sounds were part of the collective memory of enslaved West Africans, especially those from Gold Coast, who eventually found themselves in colonial Jamaica.

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

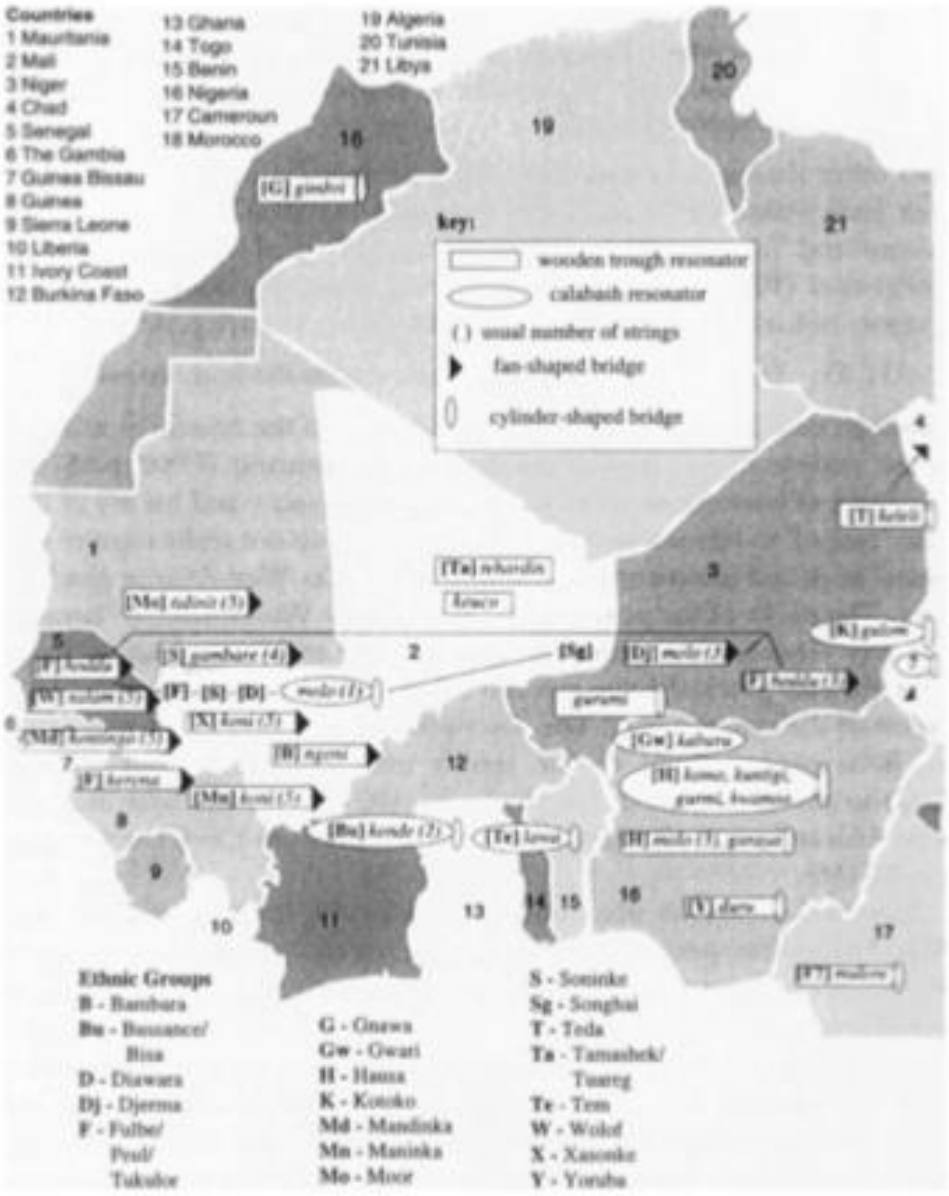


Figure 2: Distribution of plucked lutes in West Africa

Source: Eric Charry, "Plucked Lutes in West Africa: An Historical Overview", *The Galpin Society Journal*, March 1996, Vol. 49, (March 1996): 33-37. This map of the distribution of the griot and non-griot lutes show that in areas where Islam was the predominant religion, areas like Senegal and Gambia, the griot lute remained very popular. In areas where traditional West African spiritualism was prevalent, the non-griot lute was more popular.

Evaluating the physical and functional changes in West African lutes only tells one side of the creolization story. In order to fully understand the causalities of this Transatlantic musical creolization, it is also necessary to evaluate the social and political factors that caused West Africans, especially those from the Gold Coast, to rethink and reshape their musical paradigms. The Gold Coast's rich natural resources enticed outsiders to frequently visit coastal trading centers which, in turn, caused the Gold Coast to creolize with Europeans faster than other areas of West Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries. Musical exchange and collaboration were often the product of this creolizing phase in the development of the Jamaican banza. Rebecca Shumway describes the propensity for cultural assimilation and creolization in her book, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, "For more than two hundred years, in the context of a gold-oriented Afro-European trade on the coast, Africans participating in the Atlantic trade on the Gold Coast accumulated a set of skills that gave them an advantage compared to other coastal African societies in dealing with the conditions that would come with the full-fledged Transatlantic slave trade."[23] This penchant for international diplomacy with European and Middle Eastern slave traders affected how enslaved individuals from the Gold Coast interacted with their enslavers, other enslaved West Africans from different kinship groups and cultures, and eventually Jamaican Maroons, further contributing to cultural reorganization and changes often made starkly apparent or strikingly homogenous as they were manifested in music.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, British presence in the Gold Coast toppled centuries-held hierarchies based on associations with cultural and kinship groups and the musical culture of these people followed suit. An example of this tumult is expressed in the

[23] Rebecca Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, (Rochester, NY: Rochester University Press, 2011), 52.

powershift concerning Akan-speaking Asante and Fante tribal hegemony. The British were already in league with the Fante tribe, having established the Coastal Coalition during the height of the gold trade in the seventeenth century. As slaves became the primary export of the Gold Coast, the British equipped the Fante with advanced weapons and supported them in their conquests to obtain Asante prisoners of war to sell into servitude. The colonial hand that rocked the cradle was fickle. Once the Fante ceased to meet British demands for slaves, the British aligned themselves with other, competing Akan-speaking kinship group like the Asante or Igbo in order to fulfil the demands of their bustling Caribbean sugar plantations.[24] Kinship identity expressed through instrumentation and musical performance became less distinct as the Transatlantic slave trade cause fractures within groups and while creolizing disparate musical cultures into one seemingly homogenous tradition. This restructuring of musical ideals and practices was caused by larger sociopolitical and cultural realigning cause by contact from Europeans seeking enslaved labor. Thus the first process of musical creolization that created the banza began in West Africa and the onset of European contact and shifted to the second phase as West Africans, mostly those from the Gold Coast were separated from their natural musical environments and forced to adapt and make due however they could during the Middle Passage.

People from the Gold Coast comprised the largest proportion of the enslaved and Maroon populations in colonial Jamaica. Rebecca Shumway's research on the reactions of the Gold Coast's Fante and Asante people to British presence gives insight on how initial contact with the British empire led to the broad cultural changes expressly exhibited in music innovations witnessed in the Americas. Though Shumway did not explore lute playing specifically, she did not lump all West African cultures together, making it easier to understand how West African

[24] Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 13, 84.

cultural practices changed beginning with enslaved, evolved during the Middle Passage, and then again upon disembarkation in the Caribbean. One must, as Shumway astutely did, analyze specific kinship groups in order to better understand how creolization during this first phase changed West African culture, especially how they made and used music once they were isolated from their ancestral homes, subsequently regrouped with strangers during the Middle Passage, and finally were thrust into an alien landscape upon arrival Jamaica. Shumway wrote on the importance of her Gold Coast & Gold Coast diaspora-specific evaluations, "Until recently, the relative importance of the Gold Coast in the Atlantic slave trade was underestimated…According to the slave trade database, the British were dominant in the overall Gold Coast slave trade, sponsoring 81 percent of the voyages that were recorded as trading or intending to trade on the Gold Coast. The major destination for enslaved people from the Gold Coast was Jamaica, which accounted for 36 percent of arrivals (about 352,000 people)."[25]

If the banza physically materialized in colonial Jamaica based upon memories retained before and during the Middle Passage, the process of its physical and functional change began as the Transatlantic slave trade was initiated in Gold Coast. Therefore, evaluating banza's antecedents in the Gold Coast and how older lutes evolved in response to the indoctrination of Islam and subsequent European colonial contact gives insight to the specific changes in structure, functions, and uses of the instrument, and what exactly, the process's final product, the banza was and what it represented in colonial Jamaica.

[25] Ibid., 55.

During the mid-twentieth century, African scholar J.H. Nketia, wrote on the three types of folk musical change in Ghana (Gold Coast) caused by internal and external casualties. Nketia noted,

> First, there is the change resulting from the cumulative effect of the creative efforts of individuals (largely anonymous) or groups of individuals within a given society of a fairly homogenous character. Second, there is the change resulting from the interaction of such homogenous African societies through geographical contiguity facilitating economic or other pursuits, through religion, or in the past, through war. Third, there is the change resulting from the impact of an alien culture-Western or Oriental -on the practice of African folk music.[26]

Changes in folk music shaped and influenced instrumentation and musical change in the Gold Coast, but Nketia's third change is the most apparent when examining the evolution of West African musical culture.

The Transatlantic slave trade forced cultural creolization and broke down existing means of cultural expression, especially through musical performance. It altered how kinship groups interacted with one another as well as how differing groups thought about one another and their status in colonial eyes. Though these competitive and xenophobic factors may have predated European contact, they were exacerbated by the divisions and survivalist instincts imposed by the Transatlantic slave trade and colonialism. As long-held cultural organizations in West Africa toppled in the wake of the first phase of Transatlantic creolization, elements within larger cultural constructs like music were also altered. Though unique musical traditions existed among enslaved people, stylistic distinctions became blurred as individuals were forcefully grouped together under these stereotypes. These new associations of people formed new musical societies buttressed by a wide range of musical experiences and traditions.

[26] J.H. Nkentia, "Changing Traditions of Folk Music in Ghana," *Journal of International Folk Music Council*, Vol. 11, (1959): 31-36.

new unifying modes of communication through musical performance, built upon musical similarities, were created as a universal language understood by insiders and extraneous to enslavers.

Europeans feared the unifying power of drumming and collective singing, the most fundamental musical language among West Africans, and obstructed their natural state in the Gold Coast. A creative collective emerged to resist the restrictive mandates placed on singing and drumming, and musicians met these restrictions by reorganizing existing musical traditions and creating new ones. Rebecca Shumway concluded that, "In spite of the pervasive violence associated with the slave trade in southern Ghana, a creative process unfolded there in the eighteenth century that is representative of the universal human ability to form cultures and communities under almost any circumstances. Alongside the brutality and suffering that made the Atlantic slave trade and the formation of the African diaspora possible ran a remarkable process of cultural adaptation and community formation."[27] The creative creolization described by Shumway was a means of survival, necessary to meet the changes brought about by Britain's newly acquired need for enslaved labor. Musical creolization was an essential element of learning to cooperate in order to survive the experience of enslavement.

Akan-speaking kinship groups of the Gold Coast were essential to the success of plantation farming in the Americas, and their enslavement and exportation across the Atlantic was the paramount goal of British-held sugar plantation in the Western Hemisphere. In his book, *Africa in the Americas*, Michael Mullin described the preference for enslaved peoples from the Gold Coast, "If a people were singled out in evidence of this type, they were usually

[27] Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave* Trade, 13.

Coromantee, the most conspicuous and important nationality in Anglo-America. Written on the border of a slave register was a special count of Africans imported from the Gold Coast, followed by a note that in 1765 and 1766 the number halfed because of 'the War between the Asantees & Fantes." The Gold Coast Coromantees were both feared and revered for their militaristic and dauntless determination. In volatile and unpoliced colonies like Tobago, importation of enslaved Coromantees was prohibited for fear of their predilection of revolt and reputation for running away and joining Maroon communities.[28] These stereotypes were created and perpetuated in the Americas due to the European presence in the Gold Coast. These slave traders sought specific characteristics suited for work on sugar plantations in the Caribbean. The British stereotyped Gold Coast people as having physical strength and being militant consequently making them prime targets.

The first phase of creolization that led to the invention of the Jamaican banza ended as enslaved West Africans were forced to board slave ships headed to Jamaica. These individuals were representative of specific cultures and musical practices which were first stifled due to enslavement and then reconfigured during the Middle Passage to yet again be reconfigured upon arriving in Jamaica.

## Phase Two of Transatlantic Musical Creolization: The Middle Passage: New Musical Needs and Restrictions

Some scholars may argue that the banza emerged during the Middle Passage, but this supposition is unlikely for many reasons. First, African instruments were allowed to accompany dancing and drumming would have likely been the common choice for the enslaved aboard the

[28] Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and British Caribbean 1736-1831*, (Urbana, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 27.

slave ship. Unencumbered by the hereditary restrictions and the difficulties of lute playing, drums were easier to learn and play and were by far the popular mode of music-making in West Africa during early 18th century. Second, the banza was a relatively quiet instrument and its music would not have projected sufficiently during dancing on slave ships. Thirdly, the banza, and all West African griot and non-griot lutes, were not sturdy instruments. They were quite fragile and comprised of meticulously crafted wooden resonators or fragile hollowed-out calabash gourd resonators. Such instruments also required frequent maintenance and tuning. If any lute resembling the banza was allowed aboard the slave ship, chances are it would not have lasted long during the voyage.

The trip across the Atlantic began with a forceful march to the coast where the new slaves were held in large prison structures lining Ghana's southern coast that Europeans termed "castles," many of which are still visible today. Built in the 17th century by the Europeans and their Fante allies, these compounds were the first place many newly enslaved individuals were exposed to individuals outside those most proximal to their own kinship groups.[29] Though instruments and other implements that might have been used as weapons or tools of escape were surely considered contraband, musical exposure between cultures was exchanged while awaiting the Middle Passage in the enslavers' castles. Rhythms and songs were central to West African spiritualism and Islam, and such musical elements were a primary comfort and release for those now enslaved in coastal castles, uncertain of their present and their future.

Fundamental commonalities of music making among enslaved West Africans continued to create unity, acting as means of cultural retention through memory and a bridge between

[29] Shumway, *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, *3*-6.

disparities in language and communication. Though West African lutes did not accompany enslaved West Africans during the Middle Passage, the memory of playing lutes unified groups culturally. Maureen Warner-Lewis suggests that West African lutes were instead figuratively compartmentalized in the memories of some enslaved West Africans. She asserts that, "The *tradition* of this African instrument is said to *survive* in the 'banza' (banza nèg Guinée)."[30] West African lutes were not needed by enslavers nor by most of the enslaved during the Middle Passage. The instrument served neither group. Still, the lack of need of the instrument repressed and stagnated the tradition and skill of West African lute playing during the Middle Passage. As skilled lute players were restricted from playing their instruments, memories of how to play the instrument, how to build the instrument, and the role of lutes in various West African societies were reconfigured: the physical environment no longer provided the same tools to build West African lutes, and the role of lutes and lute players changed as music making was now mandated by enslavers.

Atlantic history author and professor Laurent DuBois describes the banza as "The Child," or product of the creolization that took place among enslaved peoples during the Middle Passage.[31] This thesis argues that the Middle Passage did not bear the Child, but instead it was a gestation period blending many West African musical practices. The "Child" of this gestation period was born when enslaved captives arrived on Jamaican soil where either Maroon or enslaved as Africans had to once again reassess their musical needs and capabilities in a new environment.

[30] Maureen Warner-Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures*, (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 259.

[31] Laurent DuBois, *The Banjo: America's African Instrument*, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2016), 52.

During the early stages of the Transatlantic slave trade, slave ship captains feared transporting enslaved peoples from the same kinship groups. If the enslaved captives could communicate either verbally, by gesticulating, through instrumentation, or through song, they could plan insurrections and revolts more easily. To avoid this cooperation, slave ships often followed the coast of West Africa, offloading European goods in exchange for tribally different enslaved captives. In his book *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, Atlantic Studies author Marcus Rediker, who specializes in the nautical elements of the Transatlantic world, wrote, "The captain usually made initial contact with an enslaved person at the moment of inspection and purchase, whether in a fortress, in a factory, in a coastal village, or on the ship…He would also 'read' that person's 'country marks,' ritual scars distinctive to each West African cultural group, and he would, based on experience, ascribe likely behaviors rooted in stereotypes—Igbos, the wisdom among captains went, were people prone to suicide…Coromantees were rebellious…Angolas were passive and need not be chained."[32] These stereotypes were first created in West Africa and permeated the centuries of the Transatlantic slave trade, further obscuring the actual characteristics of specific kinship groups and the individuals who lived and made and used music within them.

Similarly to the creolization that materialized during imprisonment in coastal castles, individuals and groups began to voluntarily or forcibly creolize aboard slave ships both while awaiting embarkation and during the Middle Passage. Though enslavers and slave ship captains tried to suppress any form of consensus building among the enslaved, the frantic nature of the Transatlantic slave trade made it virtually impossible to personally select individuals who would not have any natural or cultural comradery or commonalities. This commercial pragmatism was a

[32] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History*, (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing, 2007), 212-213.

horrible reality of the slave trade. Regardless of their preferred type of human cargo, captains were soon forced by the demands of the American colonies and despite antiquated stereotypes, sought to load their vessels with as much human cargo as possible in order to maximize the profits of the voyage while still limiting, to whatever degree within their agency, possibilities of intercommication that could lead to insurrections. As agricultural production in the Americas grew, the need for enslaved labor burgeoned. Soon, male warriors no longer met the needs of European colonies in the Caribbean, and women, the elderly, and children were also captured, displaced to the coast and sold into slavery. Many of these enslaved peoples did not survive the arduous journeys to the Americas. Those who survived the journey would find themselves surrounded by the horrors of colonial slavery in Jamaica and similar Caribbean colonies.

It is important to note that although slave ship captains had fewer opportunities to diversify their enslaved human cargo to prevent potential communication and cooperation for insurrections, the demographics of the slave ship were by no means homogenous. Enslaved individuals might have found some same language speakers from similar kinship groups, but the vast majority of enslaved people found themselves culturally isolated. Proof of the cosmopolitan population of the slave ship can be found in ship manifests and other primary source documents. Liverpool-based slave trader John Matthews noted the variance in rations given to specific enslaved groups aboard the slave ship. He wrote, "Around ten o'clock the sailors began to serve the morning meal, which usually consisted of African food according to the region of origin of the enslaved: rice for those from Senegambia and the Windward Coast, corn for those from the Gold Coast, yams for those from the Bights of Benin and Biafra."[33] Evidence of the multiethnic

[33] Rediker summarizing John Matthews, "The History of Journal of One Day" *Substance*. 44, from *The Slave Ship,* 237.

makeup of the human cargo of the slave ship was also evident in mandated exercising, or "dancing," that took place daily during the Middle Passage. Rediker writes that "Africans would be required to dance (and also to sing, on many ships). This could take many forms, from something more or less freely chosen, accompanied by African instruments (more common among the women), to the dreary, forced clanking of chains (more common among the men)."[34]

The enslaved peoples aboard the ship represented a wide range of musical traditions: harp players from the Gold Coast, Arabic lute players from the Senegambian region, and drummers from all West African kinship groups found themselves in devastating proximity. However, every enslaved person was not allowed to bring an instrument or song representative of their respective culture on board and when they were allowed, women were assigned to play them because enslavers considered women to be meeker and less volatile than men and the music they produced was calmer and less catalyzing of rebellion. The instruments and songs of African origin that were used during "dancing" likely became healing balms during the Middle Passage, creating a multinational unity while also acting as a means of agency, helping to retain any West African culture and history through songs and instrumentation. Senegambians and Gold Coast peoples unable to play their griot and non-griot lutes sought musical solace in the more prevalent drums on slave ships as an avenue to express their African-ness during the Middle Passage. Whether coastal or in the hinterland of West Africa, most kinship groups had some form of griot who lived within the community. Most songs performed by griots and musicians on non-griot lutes were melodically based, and most individuals can more easily remember melodies than

[34] Ibid., 237-238.

rhythms. This new need to remember cultural history through melodies and whatever music was allowed is also a possible reason for the popularization of the out-of-vogue griot lutes.

Rediker described that this musical restrictions aboard the slave ship necessitated brutality. He writes, "During this long stretch of time, the captain and indeed any member of the crew assumed that the people brought on board were held against their will and that they would do anything possible to escape captivity. The captain's power depended first and foremost on brute force."[35] The brutal treatment by the slave ship captain and crew was generally distributed equally among enslaved peoples aboard the ship. However, Rediker noted that, "Paths and experiences varied from region to region in Africa, depending on the kinds of societies from which both slaves and slave traders came. Who the enslaved were, where they came from, and how they got to the slave ship would shape not only how they would respond once they got there but how those who ran the slave ships would attempt to control them."[36] It is important to treat each Transatlantic experience subjectively; however the musical restrictions experienced during the Middle Passage was a universal experience for all enslaved individuals.

Musical commonalities may have sufficed as a form of communication among enslaved peoples speaking different languages. Though many enslaved West Africans on slave ships could not speak the same "traditional" languages, they could often communicate musically due to similarities in song structure, rhythm, and instrumentation. If allowed by the slave ship captain and crew, this language was often used to subvert the captain and crew of the slave ship, enabled individuals and groups to communicate, and possibly experience a semblance of unity while in isolation and imprisonment aboard the slave ship. One example of music as a reinforcing

[35] Ibid.„ 212-213.
[36] Ibid.,75.

cleavage comes from William Butterworth's memoir. Published in 1822, Butterworth's memoirs, entitled, *Three Years Adventures Of A Minor, In England, Africa, The West Indies, South Carolina and Georgia*, gives specific insight to the role of creolized music on the slave ship. In 1785, Butterworth wrote about an enslaved woman transported from the southern coast of "Old Calabar," or present-day Nigeria. Sarah, as she was renamed by the Captain, was a captive aboard the Liverpool-based slave ship, the *Hudibras.* Sarah was hailed by the captain and crew as an extremely talented vocalist and her songs were often demanded to accompany the "dancing" or exercises conducted to prevent muscle atrophy and stifle disease during the Middle Passage. An infatuated Butterworth, wrote that "Spritliness was in her every gesture, and good nature beamed in her eyes," and "[she] appeared to great advantage as she bounded over the quarter-deck, to the rude strains of African melody."[37] Butterworth summarizes that "she was the best dancer and best singer on the ship." Sarah may not have only been using her musical prowess as entertainment for the dancing on the quarterdeck of the ship. In fact, Rediker echoed Butterworth's account that "Soon the enslaved men on the *Hudibras* erupted in insurrection. The goal was to 'massacre the ship's company and take possession of the vessel.' The rising was suppressed, bloody punishments dispensed. Afterward Captain Evans and other officers suspected that Sarah and her mother (who was also on board) were somehow involved, even though the women had not joined the men in the actual revolt." After noticing the enslaved women's reaction to the failed insurrection, Butterworth wrote that "…Sarah and her mother not only knew about the plot, they had indeed been involved in it. Sarah had likely used her privileged position as a favorite, and her great freedom of movement that this entailed, to help with the planning and perhaps even pass tools to the men, allowing them to hack off their

[37] William Butterworth, *Three Years Adventures of A Minor, In England, Africa, The West Indies, South Carolina, and Georgia,* (Leeds, England: Edwin Baines Publishing, 1823), 79-83.

shackles and manacles."[38] Sarah was not executed for her participation in the plot. Instead Butterworth's chronicles noted that she was sold in Grenada, with almost three hundred others, "In 1787…When she went ashore, she carried African traditions of dance, song, and resistance with her."[39]

If traditional language was the common denominator among enslaved human cargo, then why would Sarah have waited until her performances to pass along her subversive and clandestine messages? The evidence presented by the crew of the ship supports that instrumentation as well as Sarah's talents of dance and singing were far more capable of linking different people as a means of fundamental communication. Sarah's singing and dancing were likely full of clandestine communications used to signal the enslaved males that could see and hear her performances. Sarah's performances were also accompanied by African musicians and instruments, which signal the possibility that the instructions of insurrection might have very well been hidden in the instrumental performances of the enslaved while Sarah distracted the captain and crew from the subversive meaning of the music. Therefore, the instrumentation which accompanied Sarah's dancing was likely the coded messaging responsible for the insurrection.

Though conditions and punishments during the Middle Passage were unimaginable, they did have one positive consequence: they established a cooperative communal musical language where none had previously existed in West Africa ship by ship. Where African cultural and ethnic divisions created cross-cutting cleavages before European contact and enslavement, the mentalities of enslavers catalyzed enforcing cleavages that broke down long held grudges and

[38] Ibid.,, 19-20.
[39] Ibid., 20.

rivalries among enslaved groups and individuals. This collective "us" versus "them" dichotomy helped creolize various individuals into a tightly knit community aboard the microcosm of the slave ship.

Marcus Rediker summarized the effect the Middle Passage had on the creolization and polarization of ethnicity in the Atlantic world, "At the beginning of the voyage, captains hired a motley crew of sailors, who would, on the coast of Africa, become 'white men.' At the beginning of the Middle Passage, captains loaded on board the vessel a multiethnic collection of Africans, who would, in the American port, become 'black people' or a 'negro race.' The voyage thus transformed those who made it."[40] Though Rediker's theorizations provide insight on the status of enslaved and enslavers before, during, and after the Middle Passage, they fail to acknowledge the ethnic or culturally agency enslaved people were able to maintain during the this second phase of creolization. Once the ship reached its destination in Port Royale, Falmouth, Montego Bay, and other colonial Jamaican ports, enslaved individuals once again had to reevaluate cultural practices, social associations with fellow enslaved individuals and their enslavers as well as other individuals living on the island. The mandates of enslavers could only limit the cultural practices of the enslaved to a degree. It was up to the enslaved individuals to determine what elements of their African musical culture they would like to remember, reinvigorate, or stifle, or abandon.

By the eighteenth century, drumming became the prominent form of musical expression throughout West Africa. As musical preferences and the meaning behind certain instruments changed, the Islamic-introduced lutes of West Africa became relegated to the musical sidelines

[40] Ibid., 10.

of the region. Colonialization forced music to become localized and regional preferences leaned towards drumming, a musical form more representative of West Africans' history, not the history that Islamic influences encouraged centuries earlier. However, after the 10th century, most communities retained some type of resident or itinerant griot that would have kept the chronicles of that community in song. Additionally, many griot and non-griot lute players were unable to transmit their musical knowledge to future generations in West Africa as they were deported from their communities. They also were denied access to materials needed to build spiked lutes on the Middle Passage. It was not until they reached colonial Jamaica that West African lute players of both types had the opportunity to build new types of instruments with new materials and share their feelings and personal and communal histories through musical expression. Chaos can stifle musical expression and creativity, but chaos can also catalyze musical creativity and expression.[41]

[41] Shlomo Pestcoe, *"Strum Strumps" and "Sheepskin Guitars": The Early Gourd Banjo and Clues to its West African Roots in the Seventeenth-Century Circum-Caribbean*, (Urbana, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 115-119.

## CHAPTER THREE

## PHASE THREE OF TRANSATLANTIC CREOLIZATION: BIRTHING THE BANZA IN COLONIAL JAMAICA: ADAPTING TO THE NEEDS AND RESTRICRIONS OF A NEW ENVIRONMENT

The first two phases of Transatlantic creolization helped set the stage for a dynamic shifts in musical cultures and instrumentation that happened in the third stage, once the enslaved arrived in Jamaica. In this third phase of Transatlantic creolization two divisive musical adaptations took place among the arriving individuals. Once they disembarked in Jamaica, some of the individuals remained enslaved and were purchased for various roles on Jamaica's many sugar plantations. Others chose to risk their lives to avoid enslavement and fled to join Maroon communities isolated in the Windward and Leeward mountains of the island. Each group created new musical traditions to meet their musical needs and the physical and social restrictions of their environment.

The enslaved created a cultural unifier based off shared musical experiences with lute playing traditions. They created the banza to serve as a musical and cultural rallying point. This new instrument met the restrictions of music making on plantations because it was not feared as drumming was and because it made colonials more comfortable because they more closely resembled European instruments. The Maroons communities that escaped bondage in the mountains of Jamaica created an idea. This idea was that all Maroons came from very similar West African kinship groups, primarily the Coromantee of the Gold Coast. Eventually this newly created cultural identifier would simply be known as Maroon culture. It too, acted as a rallying point and tool or "instrument" of a different kind to help exist in a colonial environment where the risk of losing autonomy and independence lay around every corner.

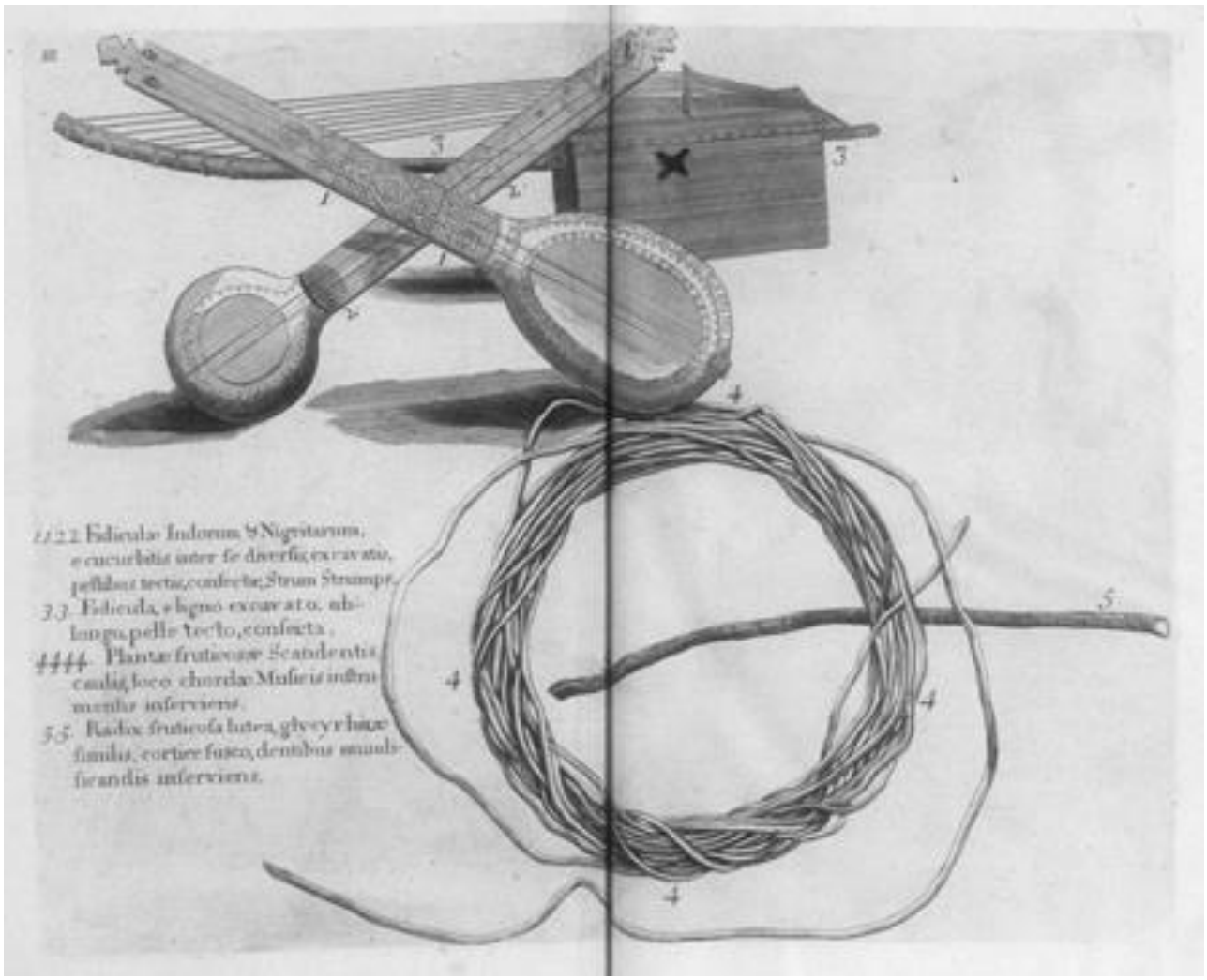


Figure 3: Plate III etching of Jamaican banza, Sir Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves…and the islands of America* (London, 1707), vol. 1.

Source: Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the islands Madera, Barbados, Nieves…and the islands of America* (London, 1707), vol. 1, plate III. These etchings were made in reflection of Sloane's written descriptions. Sloane was unfamiliar with West African lutes and consequently did not see the physical and sonic connection between West African griot and non-griot lutes and their newer, Caribbean cousins.

The lute that materialized in Jamaica was not an instrument of West Africa, though its shape and function would have been recognizable to enslaved West Africans arriving on the island. The Jamaican banza was an amalgamation of the two different types of West African lutes. Sir Hans Sloane's drawing of the instruments he witnessed enslaved peoples playing in 1680s. Sloane's drawing clearly shows two examples of modified griot, or canoe-shaped resonator lute and a non-griot calabash resonator lute. The canoe-shaped resonator griot lute featured a long calabash as the resonator. Griot lute resonators in West African were built from wood, Sloane's etching shows a longer time of gourd used in place of the wooden trough used in West African griot lutes. Whether access to a better types of gourds in Jamaica, or a simple instance of convenience are explanations for this alteration in established lute-building traditions, this adaptation of lute instrument building shows that the structure, and possible the function of both types of West African lutes were changing in colonial Jamaica as early as the 1680s. The neck of the instrument is flat neck and the headstock features tuning pegs and lacks any bridge. As described by Eric Charry and banjo historian Shlomo Pestcoe, necks of both types of West African lute were round, not flattened, and leather ties were used at the headstock to tune the strings of the instrument, not the European style turners that appear in Sloane's 1680s depiction of what inhabitants of the island were now calling "the banza." These adaptations were not present in the West African iteration of similar lutes.[42] Since no primary sources of a West Africa lute surviving the Middle Passage are yet available, one must assume it was the memory of the instrument that survived the Middle Passage, to be reinterpreted and reinvigorated in a new setting.

[42] Shlomo Pestcoe, *"Strum Strumps" and "Sheepskin Guitars,"* 115-119.

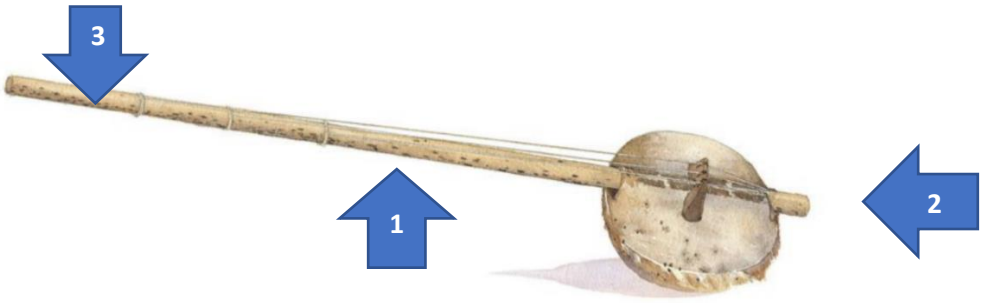


Figure 4: Distinguishing components of Akonting

Source: Photo by Chuck Levy, used in “Rhiannon Gidden’s 21st Century Sound Has a Long History,” by Justin Davidson, *Smithsonian Magazine* (March 2019), accessed August 30, 2020, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/rhiannon-giddens-american-music-history-21st-century-sound-180971449/. This image of a Senegambian Akonting shows: (1.) a round dowel-style neck going above the sides of the sound table, not through it. It also features a (2.) dowel protruding from the terminal end of the instrument, used as a primitive tailpiece. Finally, (3.) the strings are attached to the neck with leather thongs, moved, tightened, and loosened to tune the instrument.

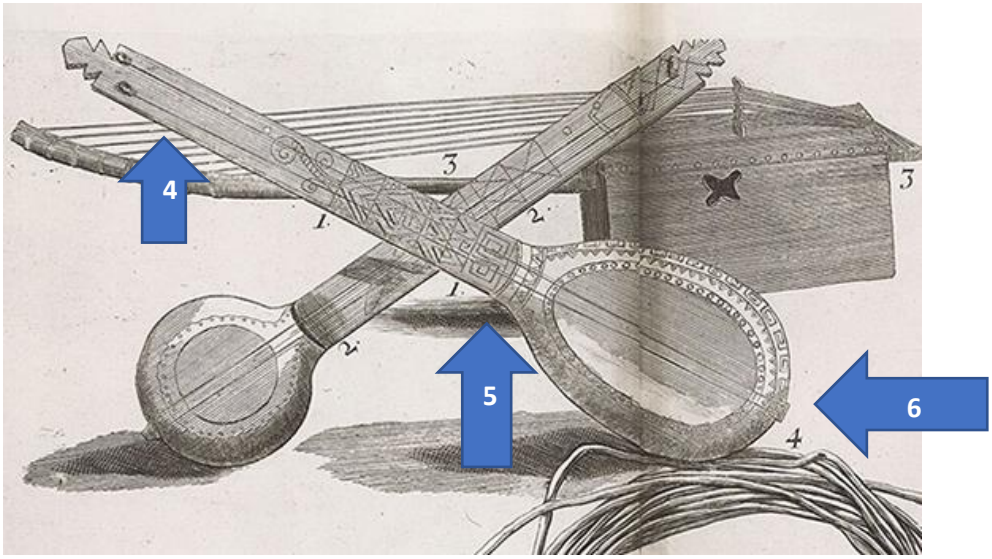


Figure 5: Distinguishing components of the Jamaican banza
Source: Sir Hans Sloane found enslaved Africans playing gourd instruments with wooden necks in Jamaica between 1687-1689. A drawing of the "Strum Strum" was published in his *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica* (1707), Public Domain. Unbeknownst to Sloane, the instrument he witnessed was an altered form of a West African lute. This Caribbean iteration features: (4.) A flattened neck, a headstock, and tuning pegs for the strings. (5.) The dowel, or neck of the instrument completely penetrates the resonator and (6.) The excess dowel protruding at the terminal end of the instrument has been shortened.

The newly presented Jamaican banza was a musical instrument but it was also an instrument of change, one that created unity and focused on the commonalities of enslaved populations and individuals that found themselves stripped of their worldly possessions, families, and their culture in Jamaica. The banza was a sonic and physical manifestation of creolization between a wide range of cultures which altered enslaved West Africans, especially those from Ghana, first during enslavement, while enduring the Middle Passage, and then finally upon arriving in Jamaica, where new cultural identities were created and existing cultural identities were altered.[43] Sloane's drawings of the Jamaican banza show us griot and non-griot lutes changed physically to accommodate instrument building in a new natural environment. Sloane's images of Jamaican lutes show that West African griot and non-griot lute had the ability to change in physical form. Sloane's drawings do not date this change, nor do they give the viewer insight to how the functions or meanings of these instruments changed. Sloane's drawings are a only starting point in interpreting the creation of a new instrument based off existing memories of West African griot and non-griot lutes. Sloane witnessed these lutes in the 1680s and it is reasonable to posit that creolization of the memories of West African lutes continued to re-shape and reform the physical structure of the Jamaican banza. Using comparative sources like paintings and other primary source recollections from similar Caribbean and American sources assists researchers in following the physical changes of lute construction in the Americas. If lutes like the one represented in the John Rose's 1790s painting, *The Old Plantation*, made their way to South Carolina in a certain form, they likely existed in the Caribbean at the same time and in the same form. This comparative study helps fill in the gaps in the description of the Jamaican banza's physical evolution and diaspora in the Americas. If the banza looked a certain way

[43] Michael Theodore Coolen, "Senegambian Archetypes for the American Folk Banjo," *Western Folklore*, Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 1984): 130-132.

throughout other parts of central, Southern, and North America, it is likely that it first took this form in Jamaica before Caribbean slaves were sold into the southern British colonies of the Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Maryland.

It is also important to note that while enslaved individuals chose to reposition an instrument both new but also based on similar griot and non-griot lutes essential to the cultural fabric of West Africans, Maroon communities hidden in the mountainous regions of the island neglected any form of either lute entirely. In their new environment, the Maroons opted for more naturally occurring and common musical unifiers opting for instruments like West African drums and signaling horns called abengs.

Figure 6: Photograph of Akan drum

Source: Africa: Arts and Cultures, Akan Drum, Drum made of wood, root (cedar), skin (deer), asset number: 522556001 © Trustees of the British Museum, accessed August 31, 2020, https://sites.google.com/site/100objectsbritishmuseum/home/akan-drum. Drums like this one from the Gold Coast were taken aboard slave ships during the Middle Passage and used to accompany dancing. It is likely that drums such as this one survived the Middle Passage and penetrated the sonic environment of the Americas.

Figure 7: Photograph of Jamaican Maroon abeng

Source: Jamaican Maroon Abeng, photo by Richard Belto, *The Gleaner* newspaper, publishing March 2, 2018, accessed August 31, 2020, http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/art-leisure/20180304/celebration-jamaicas-heritage. Maroons used abengs like this example to communicate over long distances. The abeng not only helped Maroons signal the threats of infiltrators, they also came to signify Maroons and were added to religious and secular Maroon music.

Maroons used a synchronization of various West African religions and ancestors as the primary form of their unifying cultural creolization. Jamaican Maroons effectively described their ethnic makeup as Coromantee, a diminutive classification of enslaved peoples from the Gold Coast. Though other ethnicities existed among the Leeward and Windward Maroons settlements, a common Maroon culture was encouraged to celebrate similarities, instead of distinguishing differences. The Kromanti Play was an expression of this syncretism, with syncretized West African drumming as the performance's backdrop. The Maroons' Kromanti Play was a communal dance which involved the invocation of ancestral spirits, divination of good and evil spirits which protected the community. Like enslaved populations during the Middle Passage, Jamaican Maroons had to cooperate to survive and aggressive, collective musical performances were one way to present their powerful, unified, militarized, and organized front to potential threats from British colonials and enslaved individuals.

Figure 8: *The Old Plantation* painting by John Rose, circa 1790.

Source: John Rose, *The Old Plantation*, circa 1790 South Carolina Courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg, Rockefeller Library. The artist may have captured a John Canoe celebration or perhaps a cousin to the Kromanti Play of the Jamaican Maroons.

Playing the banza in colonial Jamaica was a conscious decision and that decision was divisive. Maroons had left the tradition behind and aggressively grappled with the colonizing forces that brought them to the island while enslaved peoples from differing parts of West African chose to embrace memories of griot and non-griot lutes and create the banza, based off these musical experiences and memories. The ways in which enslaved populations and Maroon communities creolized contributed to the instruments each group repurposed and invented in their new environment. Music was central to both groups and was derived from common ancestries; but the performances of each group had to mean something and do something. For Maroons, their music needed to be intimidating to outsiders, unifying to insiders, militaristic, loud, and forceful. For enslaved individuals, musical performance needed to be calm, collected, it did not necessarily need to be unifying, and most importantly, it needed to meet the restrictions on instrumentation, number of individuals allowed to group together, and time and place.

The next chapter explores the highly specialized, and often coded functions and uses of each group's musical performances and instrumentation.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

## CREOLIZING AND DIVIDING INTO MAROON AND ENSLAVED COMMUNITIES AND CREATING NEW MUSICAL TRADITIONS BASED UPON NEW MUSICAL NEEDS AND RESTRICTIONS

Some memories of home had been extinguished by the unimaginable treatment throughout enslavement and the Middle Passage. Other memories of home and ancestral music burned like embers, hidden but still quietly adapting to the musical needs and restrictions of their new environment. During this third stage of Transatlantic creolization, arrival in British-controlled colonial Jamaica, there were dynamic shifts in the way enslaved individuals associated with one another, articulated culture, and developed their own social hierarchies representative of the tumultuous social frontiers of the island. As enslaved West Africans arrived in Jamaica, their environment forced them into new and distinct cultural groups. Regardless of the group an individual associated with, music and instrumentation were one of the biggest ways individuals and groups expressed their values and culture. The ways groups made and used music was also recognized by colonials who characterized individuals not by their ethnicity, but rather by interpreting the music they witnessed. As the importation of enslaved peoples from the Gold Coast reached its zenith in the mid-eighteenth century, enslaved individuals divided into two distinct which were groups not necessarily based on ethnic or cultural associations but instead based on the status of enslavement. Being a part of either enslaved or Maroon society was an extremely complex and subjective decision for every person transported against their will to an entirely new and socially cruel environment. The choice of whether to remain enslaved or flee to the Windward and Leeward mountains of the island and join established Maroon

communities signified one of the most fundamental differences among West Africans and their descendants born in Jamaica.

Musical performances in colonial Jamaica had consequences and instrumentation and performance styles determined how colonials felt about their status on the island. Colonials feared Maroons and their music because they could not control it. They rightfully thought that Maroon drumming and blows of the abeng signaling horn were signaling tools. These tools were intrinsic to the disparate groups that shed personal affiliations and collectively called themselves Jamaican Maroons. Despite the need to mitigate differences to appear as a united front against colonial oppression, common understanding and ancestral experiences with the instruments easily established drums and the abeng as essential musical instruments of Maroons. Legislation like the Negro Act of 1740 outlawed communal drumming and colonials could control what instruments enslaved musicians could play and the contexts of when and how they could make music. Reacting to these inhibitions, enslaved musicians created the banza, a lute which served multiple purposes including colonial appeasement and acted as a unifying and creative outlet for enslaved musicians. Meanwhile, Jamaican Maroons created their own musical culture that satisfied the needs and restrictions of their physical and sociopolitical environment.

Barbara Kopytoff summarized how alignment with Maroon life or enslavement necessitated indoctrination into a specific culture reflective of the environments and restrictions of each division. Regardless of status in colonial eyes, strength laid in numbers and collectivism benefited any population that resisted colonial pressers. Kopytoff writes, "…they [Enslaved individuals from the Gold Coast] had to develop common norms and means of communication among themselves, to adjust the differences in their languages and cultures, to resolve their diverse customs into a common culture. This process could start as soon as they came into

contact with one another, and was continued on the slave plantations of the New World and in the bush where Maroons encountered one another."[44] As individuals from the Gold Coast aligned themselves as enslaved or joined Maroon communities, they began to creolize to their new natural and social environments. Cultural divisions like remaining enslaved or becoming Maroons were new creations, based on shared experiences during the three phases of Transatlantic creolization and steeped in commonalities of West African cultural heritage.

Newly arrived enslaved West Africans entered colonial Jamaica with a culturally "clean slate" having been reorganized with community outsiders during enslavement and transportation to coastal prisons, robbed of cultural identifiers like language, dance, and music during the Middle Passage. Enslaved individuals could redefine their culture as they saw fit, meeting the needs of plantation society or Maroon communities.[45] These two group's distinct musical traditions shared a common parentage, but became starkly different after mere decades. As each distinct group creolized to their environment, connections to the West African instruments and functions of music obscured. Enslaved communities developed the banza based off shared musical experiences, meeting the needs and restrictions of their status. Maroons created music to perpetuate their autonomy and created West African ancestry. Instrumentation, not status or ethnicity further distinguished displaced West Africans' adaptation into either group. Not only were Maroons and enslaved communities creating new musical societies and spaces, colonials were also reacting to the sounds and performances they witnessed.

[44] Barbara Kopytoff, "The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity," *Caribbean Quarterly,* Vol. 22 No. 2/3, Essays on Slavery (June-September, 1976): 35.

[45] Ibid., 36-39.

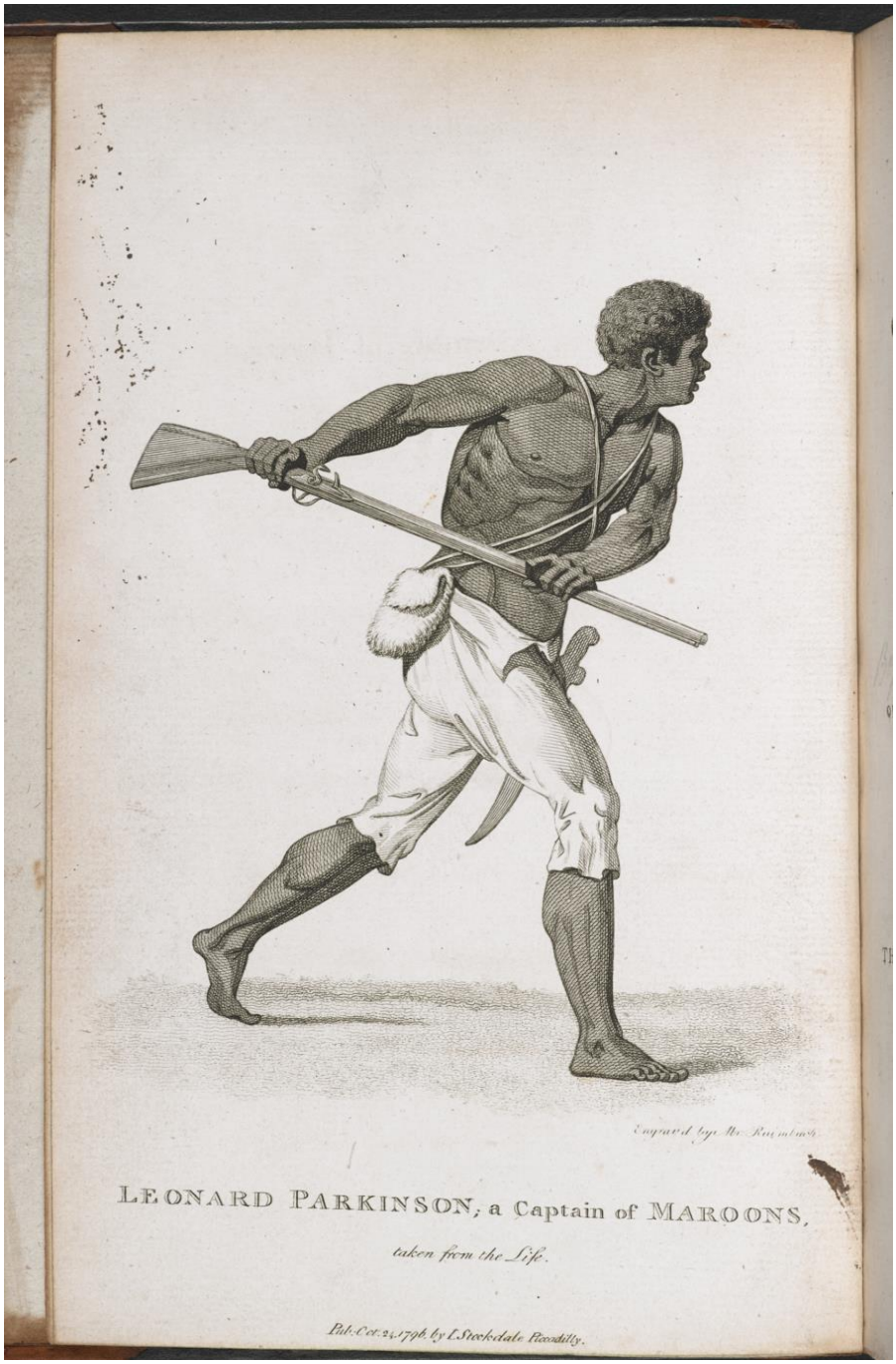


Figure 9: Etching of *Leonard Parkinson, A Captain of the Maroons, Taken from the Life* by Abraham Raimbach, October 24, 1796
Source: Abraham Raimbach, *Leonard Parkinson, A Captain of the Maroons, Taken from the Life*, published October 24, 1796, British Library Collection 279.h.14. Public Domain. The subject is a Maroon leader, rendered as physically strong, aggressive, and fluid in motion. Colonials and enslaved populations cited similar characteristics and emotions associated with Maroon musical culture, emotions not present or associated with enslaved and colonial musical performances.

## Maroon Music: Defiant Drums

Many enslaved individuals saw an opportunity to escape bondage and colonial control. These refugees joined the remaining indigenous Arawak and Taino settlements that survived European and West African disease. In their free settlements, Maroons accepted newcomers after various levels of vetting, like indoctrinating them into their free communities. Because Jamaican Maroon settlements were not entirely homogeneously Coromantee, old rivalries and ethnic divisions threatened to fracture the autonomy and freedom of these settlements. For Maroon civilizations to survive, their inhabitants had to creolize to a unifying culture built from disparate West African and indigenous experiences. Because the majority of enslaved peoples that arrived in colonial Jamaica were from the Gold Coast, it was easiest for Maroon communities to creolize to this predominant ethnicity and its respective culture. Barbara Kopytoff writes,

> Many of the Jamaican reports of African ethnic uprisings state that most of the slaves in the rebellion were Coromantees; the group that rebelled also included others who were not Coromantee, but who shared with them the common culture of their plantations. Thus, groups of newly escaping slaves, even when the product of ethnic rebellions, had already begun to integrate into their numbers others who did not share the same African background, and this integration would continue in the bush.[46]

Maroon societies, though based off memories of the various cultures of the Gold Coast, were new creations, actively evolving to safely indoctrinate new arrivals and ever-changing to defend their autonomy in the eyes of both potentially threatening over-indoctrination of enslaved asylees and military threats from British colonizers. Cultural unifiers of Maroon communities were best exemplified to outsiders in musical performances reflective of Maroon's retention of African music traditions.

[46] Ibid., 36-39.

Jamaican Maroons' musical performances were communal, consisting of loud and intense group drumming and they included the occasional blow of the abeng, a cow horn used for signaling over long distances and in music. Dancing was also central to Maroon musical performances. Dancers showed their organization and military prowess through rolls, dives, jumps, and tumbling to the background of their intimidating drumming. Posing with and firing of European muskets often accompanied these lively performances, furthering the notion of military skills and the multifaceted uses of music within Maroon society. To Maroons, music could be a cultural expression, it could also be used to organize military attacks and defenses. Colonials feared the power of Maroon music because they had seen its effectiveness during their campaigns against the Maroons during the eighteenth century.[47]

Although they were ethnically similar, Maroons developed a musical culture that was starkly different from that created by the enslaved Coromantees. The enslaved's banza never made its way into Maroon music. Its creation and permeation were essential to enslaved life in colonial Jamaica, dissimilar from the musical needs and restriction of Maroons. Kopykoff noted, "It is among these Maroons, uninhibited by plantation rule, that African ethnicity had the freest rein, to shape and be shaped by the Maroons it united or divided."[48] This is not to say that Maroon culture was more West African that enslaved culture, but it does suggest that Maroons had more freedom to express their West African-ness through their culture, especially in the ways they made and used music.[49]

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[47] Jamaica Assembly, 1795-1796. *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica in Regard to the Maroon Negroes*. Sacramento, California: Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2015, 67.

[48] Kopytoff, "The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity,":35

[49] The Jamaica Assembly, 1795-1796, *The Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica: In Regard to the Maroon Negroes,* (John Stockdale Publishing: London, 1796), xxvii. "Concerning the Maroons, they are in general ignorant of our language and all of them attached to the gloomy superstitions of Africa (derived from their ancestors) with such enthusiastic zeal and reverential ardor, as I think can only be eradicated with their

The successful resistance of Maroons during the Maroon Wars in the mid-eighteenth century caused more societal upheaval in colonial Jamaica. Unable to admit their defeat at the hands of their opponents, the British rationalized their adversaries' capabilities. In British eyes, there was no way a group that shared a common heritage with their slaves could have successfully resisted their military superiority. Consequently, the British elevated Maroon communities above enslaved communities based on criteria of intelligence, organization, and military prowess. Although enslaved and Maroon societies were not entirely cooperative prior to the Maroon Wars, the conditions of the treaties solidified the two groups as competitors, seeking to supplant the other for a higher status within colonial society. Maroons had to be smarter than their counterparts who remained subjugated, and so the myth of superiority was created and was perpetuated even among contemporary Maroons of the twenty-first century. The consequences of the Maroon Wars were numerous, but generally the results elevated Maroon reputation and status while it lowered enslaved reputations and status. Because each group's needs and restrictions surrounding music were so different, music became a way for each group to distinguish themselves from one another. Maroons loudly played drums and violently danced as an expression of their freedom while enslaved musicians seemingly excepted the restrictions of their status on the plantation, adapting west African traditions to the requirements of sophistication which permeated the patriarchal and paternalistic planter society.[50]

lives." This passage reveals that some colonists believed Maroons had retained more of their African-ness that enslaved populations who were forced at greater levels to assimilate into colonial life.

[50] Long, *An History of Jamaica*, 345. Terms of the Maroon Wars treaties were that Maroons could own slaves and land. In return for these abilities, they were required to muster military units at the request of the British as well as required to form search parties for escaped slaves. This requirement of policing on ethnically similar Black contemporaries further divided the gulf of status, which this work argues was the distinguishing factor in the methods and motivations for music making among Maroon and enslaved musicians in colonial Jamaica.

Maroons knew their music intimidated colonials and they used this to their advantage both to scare British colonials and to distance themselves from enslaved music culture, which used different instruments and functions of music. Using guerilla tactics and cooperation among disparate kinship groups and marshal and musical traditions, they successfully resisted British subjugation resulting in the Maroon Treaty of 1739. Despite this success of their guerillas revolts in the mid-eighteenth century, Maroons were constantly at risk of losing their sovereignty to colonizing forces or by being overrun by enslaved refugees unwilling to perpetuate the outwardly homogenous Coromantee culture that made their resistance to British rule successful in the first place. Furthermore, the terms of the treaties further divided Maroon and enslaved populations and their cultural representation via instrumentation and musical performance.[51] Thus, Maroons had to be on their guard at all times, especially when interacting with and admitting outsiders in their communities.

To maintain their autonomy, Maroons believed that even their music needed to have an air of aggressiveness and militancy in order to remind outsiders that they were not to be trifled with. In order to maintain their elevated status above enslaved society, Maroons also had to creolize their various ethnicities and allegiances to kinship groups into one homogenous Maroon ethnicity.[52] Maroons unified under the initial guise and subsequent adapted belief of universal Coromantee heritage. Self-described as entirely Gold Coast Coromantee, this presentation of militaristic hegemony elevated Maroons above enslaved society based on colonial's perceptions and divisive tactics. This societal division, created by colonials, was based on status, not

[51] The Jamaica Assembly, 1795-1796, xxvi. As part of the Maroon Wars treaties, Maroons were required to track down and return escaped enslaved individuals, pitting the formerly collaborative populations as rivals who fought over the favor of colonials by undermining one another.

[52] Edward Long, "ROADS," In *The History of Jamaica*, 464-90. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. Accessed October 17, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130hbfp.20. Double check this citation formet.

ethnicity and would come to characterize the main differences between Maroons and enslaved populations. Though this societal divide was initially based on status, it was subsequently be expressed culturally, enforced by the ways each group made music and used music.[53] Maroon-ness began as a status and evolved into an ethnic identifier and music was one of the most important ways they expressed this newly established ethnicity and societal elevation over enslaved groups and individuals.[54]

Maroons prided themselves on their military skill, having never surrendered to the British. They used that distinction to position themselves above enslaved populations on the social strata of the island, despite many Maroons and enslaved individuals sharing a common ancestry. Drumming was central to Maroon religious ceremonies and they likely saw the enslaved's acquiescence of drums for the banza to appease their enslavers as the ultimate shameful capitulation. This thought process would explain why the banza never entered Maroon music and to this day is still is not present in their sonic landscape.[55] The sight and sound of the

[53] Jamaica Assembly 1795-1796, xxiv. Concerning the intentional dividing strategies of Maroons, enslaved, and freed individuals, the colonial assembly wrote that "The Maroons. Instead of being established into separate hordes or communities in the strongest parts of the interior country, should have been encouraged by all possible means to frequent the towns and to intermix with the negroes at large. All distinctions between the Maroons and the other free blacks would soon have been lost; the greater number would have prevailed over the less: whereas the policy of keeping them a distinct people, continually inured to arms, introduced among them what the French call an *spirit de corps,* or a community of sentiments and interests: and concealing from them the powers and resources of the whites, taught them to feel, and at the same time highly to overvalue, their own relative strength and importance."

[54] Kopytoff, "The Development of Jamaican Maroon Ethnicity,": 35.

[55] Moore Town Granny Nanny Cultural Group, *Granny Nanny Come Oh: Jamaican Maroon Kromanti and Kumina Music and Other Oral Traditions,* recorded live, mixed and mastered at the Jamaican Music Institute Recording Studio and Certification Laboratory (JaMIN) in Trench Town, Kingston, Jamaica, copyright 2016, Moore Town Granny Nanny Cultural Group, CD, 2 Discs. The instruments listed in the liner notes are the: Abeng, Kumina Drums, Kromanti Drums, Grater, Shaker, Iron (Adawo/Wadda), and Bamboo. Spiked lutes of any kind, West African nor Caribbean are present on any other this two-disc collection.: Various Artists, *Drums of Defiance: Maroon Music from the Earliest Free Black Communities of Jamaica,* Smithsonian Folkways CD SF 40412, copyright Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings 1992, CD. No Caribbean nor West African lutes appear of this album which is representative of all the existing Maroon communities of Jamaica.

banza was an insult to the Maroon psyche, believing that enslavement constituted mentally and physically weaker inhabitant of the island.[56]

Maroons created a new musical culture that greatly resembled drumming traditions of various West African ethnicities, especially the Coromantee. Maroon music presented the individuals as a unified front. It was intimidating and militant and it made colonials nervous; it also separated Maroons from their enslaved counterparts who had to create new modes and situations to make music. By establishing themselves as an unconquered other, Maroons placed themselves above enslaved populations and expressed this societal superiority constantly through their drums and abengs.

[56] Jamaica Assembly 1795-1796, xliv. "A conference however ensued; in which it was observable that the Maroons complained—not of the injustice or severity of the punishment which had been inflicted on two of their companions; but—of the disgrace which they insisted the magistrates of Montego Bay had put on their whole body, by ordering the punishment to be inflicted in the workhouse by the black overseer or driver, and in the presence of fugitive and felon negroe slaves, many of whom they had themselves apprehended." The Second Maroon War reportedly began in reaction to Maroons being punished by enslaved individuals, people they deemed their societal inferiors. This transgression could not be forgiven and the whether or not it was a natural reaction or a directed response to perpetuate their 'otherness' and help maintain their autonomy.


Figure 10: *Martial Law in Jamaica* cartoon by Abraham James, November 10, 1801 or 1803

Source: Abraham James, *Martial Law in Jamaica*, November 10, 1801 or 1803, courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. The presence of an enslaved individual playing the banza in the far-right bottom section of this cartoon evidences both the banza's proliferation among enslaved musical society in Jamaica as well as proof that colonists tolerated the addition of the instrument as well as its use in enslaved music making.

**Enslaved Music: Building the Banza to Meet the Needs and Restrictions of a Status**

Enslaved music evolved or creolized around the needs and restrictions in colonial Jamaica, needing to make a unifying music to survive the conditions of slavery. The music needed to unify enslaved individuals did not naturally occur. Instead, enslaved musical culture was shaped by the restrictions placed upon the amount of people who could gather, restrictions surrounding instrumentation, and restrictions placed on when and why music could be made and used. Just as Maroon communities creolized to form a new culture and musical tradition based on similarities directed towards the needs of their social and natural environments, enslaved individuals also created new cultures, especially musical ones of which cultural outsiders took notice. This newly created enslaved culture was based off the many diverse West African cultures, experiences of enslavement and transportation to the New World. Enslaved culture was not dominated by any specific West African ethnicity, though the majority of enslaved individuals did come from the Gold Coast. Instead, enslaved culture represented the specific needs of the group's social status in colonial Jamaica and the restrictions on music making within the plantation. These new enslaved cultures had to appease British enslavers as well as their societal superiors, the Maroons. Enslaved society expressed their lived experiences by adapting culture using what they had available and operated within the strictly enforced borders created and maintained by colonial society. Making use of the materials available and agencies allowed, enslaved societies in Jamaica to create the banza. Though the banza was a Caribbean creation, Michael Theodore Coolen writes that the banza's sonic and physical resemblance to a myriad of West African lutes helped position the instrument at a similarly important position in enslaved musical culture in Jamaica. Coolen writes, "To begin with, most slaves, at least those

from the Western Sudan, could see that this was a very common African instrument. More important, it was an instrument associated with some of the most important aspects of traditional culture: genealogy, rites of passage (personal identity), healing and divining, and other functions which are still a vital part of African culture."[57] Atlantic Studies historian Kathleen Wilson argues that because practitioners of newly formed enslaved cultures did not need to appear distinct as an "other," capable of greater levels of autonomy as required by newly created Maroon cultures, enslaved groups and individuals were able to create new elements within culture, especially in their musical instruments. Wilson notes, "The performance of difference as Maroon or Coromantee, then, channeled the powers of this indomitable history and made clear that the Maroons' inclusion as British subjects occurred on the basis of distinctiveness rather than a putative sameness."[58] Therefore, through a seemingly outward strategy of appeasement, enslaved musicians were able to create a new instrument that looked like European lutes, but was used it in different ways. Enslaved individuals and groups used the instruments as a means of resistance in refusing to totally creolize to musical desires of their enslavers while maintaining elements of their West African musical heritage.

Because their musical instruments and music did not take on the functions of Maroon drums and signaling horns, enslaved musical culture was considered less West African or Gold Coastal by colonials and Maroons alike, and more creolized to the new social status and physical environment. Despite the allowance of boisterous musical performances during annual holidays, colonists and enslavers desired enslaved musicians play instruments that closely resembled and European instruments in at least physical form, if not also sounding similarly. New forms and

[57] Coolen, "Senegambian Archetypes for the American Folk Banjo," 131.

[58] Kathleen Wilson, "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound," *The William and Mary Quarterly,* Third Series, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Jan., 2009): 68.

functions of music were also thrust upon enslaved peoples, who had to seemingly accept them while the ethnically similar Maroons were able to continue to create music unencumbered by the rules of British enslavers. Consequently, enslaved music is recorded in primary sources as more passive, more controlled, humble, and enterprising than Maroon music.

The banza was the outcome of these differences. It represented many things to various groups in colonial Jamaica and it had various consequences. It satisfied British enslavers and colonials because it physically resembled European instruments. The banza also ostensibly followed enslavers' hopes to creolize enslaved peoples to a more European mode of music making, which they deemed more controlled, sophisticated, and cultured. The banza was quieter and symbolized appeasement when compared to communal drumming. Instead of the large-scale groups, the banza was played by individuals or small ensembles.[59] To enslaved populations, the banza was an instrument that connected musicians and those who heard it to the lutes of their West African past. Playing the banza was not meant to be offensive to Maroons, nor was it an act of prostration to the British patriarchy. Instead, it was a pragmatic use of musical memory. It looked and sounded like West African lutes, and it fulfilled restrictions of the plantation. Simultaneously, it unified individuals without totally obscuring West African ethnic and kinship group affiliations while allowing musicians and their communities a creative outlet for individual and group expression.

[59] *Negro Act of 1740,* Provincial Congress of South Carolina, 1740. Following the 1739 Stono Rebellion in South Carolina, the Negro Act was passed to discourage future insurrections by forbidding enslaved individuals to congregate without express permission. It also forbade collective drumming, which enslavers believed was used to subvert signal rebellions while forbading enslaved from making money as exchange for goods or services, proscribed the allowance to grow personal crops, and permitted enslavers to capitally punish slaves as a disciplinary action. The consequences of communal drumming were greatly feared in colonial Jamaica, as in the rest of British colonies in the Americas and enslaved musicians were only permitted to drum during certain events like their annual John Canoe celebrations during Christmastime.

The process of Transatlantic creolization beginning in West Africa and ending in Jamaica changed enslaved populations' musical traditions. These traditions first began to shift to meet the needs and restrictions of their status during the first phase, imprisonment and transportation to coastal prisons awaiting the Middle Passage. During this first stage musicians were encumbered and restricted by when, why, and how they could make music. During the second phases, the Middle Passage, enslaved musicians were further limited in their opportunities to make and use music. Needs and restrictions changed during this phase to from those of the coastal prisons and were used to suit the environment of the slave ship. Dancing, on-ship rebellions and subversive communication through music came to signify the needs and restrictions of this second phase. The third phase, arrival in Jamaica was the phase that most changed how enslaved individuals made and used music. Arrival in Jamaica presented enslaved individuals with a new society and new opportunities and outlets to make music either in enslaved communities on plantations or as a Maroon. At this juncture, two separate musical cultures were created, each with their own needs and restrictions.

The cultural group an individual belonged to meant everything concerning the ways they would make and use music. The banza was the principal example of this stark change in enslaved music. These musical adaptations, which were representative of changing cultures, were seen by colonists as appeasement and rejection of primitive cultural histories that existed prior to arrival in Jamaica. They were tolerated because controlling music and the creation of the banza, an element so central to enslaved communities, was a victory, one which they could not impress upon Maroons.

Although other instruments from the eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean have been discovered in European archives, researchers have not yet found an example of a Jamaican banza

or comparable lute. This is most likely because banzas were predominately composed of organic materials which have long since decayed and disappeared from the reach of history.[60] Without a physical instrument to analyze, scholars have consequently relied on written evidence and used anthropological and ethnomusicological approaches that include analyzing previously ignored colonial records and interviewing descendants of enslaved and Maroon societies. With these tools, scholars have been able to reconstruct some of the physical components of the banza and approximate geographic locations based on its presence in enslaved communities.

Because there are no physical remants of the Jamaican banza to investigate, this chapter uses primary sources recorded by individuals ranging from the wives of colonial governors to British military and government officials first waring, then ultimately in league with Maroons. This chapter argues that Maroon music was based in drumming traditions similar to those most popular in West Africa, specifically the Gold Coast. Furthermore, this chapter argues that Maroon musical performances were deliberately aggressive, emotive, intimidating, and physical. The intensity conveyed in Maroon music making was a warning to outsiders. Maroons did not adopt the banza because such an instrument was not needed in their culture.

## Evaluating Primary Sources to Understand the Banza's Physical Form and Role in Enslaved Society.

The following primary source evidence shows that eighteenth and nineteenth century observers of Maroon and enslaved musical performances saw Maroon music as aggressive and intimidating while the enslaved's banza and music was viewed as passive, appeasing, calmer,

[60] Kristina Gaddy, *Instrument Interview: The Creole Bania, the Oldest Existing Banjo,* September 20, 2018. Accessed October 17, 2020, https://www.birthplaceofcountrymusic.org/instrument-interview-the-creole-bania-the-oldest-existing-banjo/

and quieter. The banza is central to the ways colonials understood and reacted to the non-European music they witnessed. Colonials were simply more comfortable with the banza because they believed it was a response, or consequence of their hegemony over not only the actions of the enslaved but also their ability to display culture. Enslaved memories of musical culture and instrumentation proved differently. The lute the restricted enslaved communities produced resembled the various lutes of West Africa and it was adapted to a new physical environment as well as the musical needs and restrictions of enslavement in the New World.

Lady Maria Nugent was married to colonial governor Sir George Nugent, who held the office from 1801-1805. Lady Nugent, like many women of high status of the period and location, found herself with ample free time to experience the many cultures of the island. Nugent diligently recorded the sights and sounds of her time in Jamaica. Like many similar sources from the same time and place, Nugent's journal gives insight to how society was organized and how culture was expressed among the noncolonial inhabitants of the island. Upon an initial reading, Nugent's journals appear reflective of her time, however, one quickly notices the detail that she describes her surroundings. Whether intentional or a happenstance product of her astute and detailed descriptions, Nugent's journals are prime examples of a proto-cultural and socially focused history. Though Nugent summarized her husband's political and military endeavors in detail, she mainly focused on less official topics and more often wrote about the culture of enslaved and Maroon populations on the island. Nugent wrote about the Maroon music and dances she witnessed while traveling and like her European peers, she feared the sounds and spectacles she witnessed,

> The Maroons received us as if they were much pleased with our visit; the women danced, and the men went through their war exercises for us. The dancing was exactly like that of the negroes at Christmas, and their military maneuvers seemed to consist entirely of

> ambuscade; taking aim at their enemies from behind trees, leaping up, and rolling about, to avoid being wounded themselves. Altogether it was so savage and frightful, that I could not help feeling a little panic, by merely looking at them…
>
> …Their band was composed of all sorts of rude instruments, neither very musical , nor with much variety of cadence.[61]

Lady Nugent describes the performance as "savage and frightful." The instruments she heard, and saw did not resemble European instruments. They were loud and raucous, and she had no control over how and where the performance was conducted.

Nugent also recorded the enslaved music in her journal. In 1804, Nugent not only recorded the presence of the banza, but she also wrote about the levity and joviality she associated with the musical and emotional atmosphere of the performance. Annually most enslaved populations were allowed instrumental freedom and reprieve from work to revel in their annual John Canoe celebration, a carnival-like revelry which ranged from Christmastime to the first weeks of the New Year. Nugent was possibly calmed by the enslaved appeasement to only congregate in large numbers and drum during specified times. She was possibly calmed by the incorporation of Christian imagery in the enslaved's parades; she may have been comfortable with the inclusion of the banza in these musical performances because it resembled European lutes like guitar, which she associated with sophistication, control, and African concession to more refined artistic pursuits. Nugent deliberately described,

> Nothing but bonjoes, drums, and tom-toms, going all night, and dancing and singing and madness, all the morning.—The Hortsfords, the Grandjeans, &c. at second breakfast, and to see the sports at the King's House. Some of our blackies were most superbly dressed, and so were several of their friends, who came to join in the masquerade; gold and silver fringe, spangles, beads &c. &c. and really the most wonderful expense altogether. General N. gave the children money, and threw some himself among them from the gallery, and in the scramble all the finery was nearly torn to pieces, to my great vexation. However, they seemed not to mind it, but began dancing with the same spirit as if nothing

[61] Lady Maria Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805,* (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2002), 75.

> had happened, putting their smart clothes into the best order they could…for the short time we are with them, we will make them as happy as we can.[62]

This goes back to the assertion that the status of enslavement, not ethnicity was the determining factor in ways that music was made among enslaved and Maroon societies in colonial Jamaica. Enslaved music revolved around the banza. Consequently, colonials reacted to its inclusion comfortably. They associated control, or at least the semblance of control, with both the instrument and its performances and the banza was often viewed comically or with a paternalistic aura. Enslavers thought they could control the ways the enslaved were able to make music and that made them comfortable. Maroon music was feared because not only did colonials not understand it, they could not control it, and they intensely feared its unifying and signaling powers.

In Robert Renny's 1805 publication, *An History of Jamaica*, enslaved music making is recorded without the fear and anxiety his peers recorded their encounters with Maroon music and instrumentation. Despite being an abolitionist, Renny's chronicles of enslaved music making were very similar to his colonial Jamaican contemporaries; they present the music as whimsical, simplistic, and nonthreatening. In *An History of Jamaica*, Renny wrote,

> But when the land-wind slowly descends from the mountains, both the eye and the ear are delighted with the verdant tops of the bamboo-cane, which bends with reluctant timidity before the wind, and submits its picturesque and lovely plumes to the soft intrusions of the breeze; the gentle rustling of the tall grass; the plaintive whispers of the sugar-cane, the platain and the the palm; while the smell is lusciously regaled with the odours which the zephyrs, gently violent, rifle from the perfumed blossoms of the coffee, the shaddock, the orange, and the lime, from the double tuberose, the Spanish and Arabian jessamine, the numberless other shrubs of the inexpressible fragrance; while to add to the beauty and variety of the scene, the contented Negroe, enjoying himself after the fatigues of the day, and sitting in the door of his hut, thrums his two-stringed instrument, from which,

[62] Nugent, *Lady Nugent's Journal of Her Residence in Jamaica from 1801 to 1805,* 219.

> eliciting rude harmony, he draws delight, and oft with notes untutored, selling the simple chorus, sheds o'er his wearied soul, a calm delight…[63]

Renny's description is similar to many others written by individuals of similar status at analogous times. Despite his endorsement of abolition and his disdain for the unimaginable workload of the enslaved in Africa, he still downplays, or passively talks about music played on the banza. One may even interpret Renny's recording of the event as paternalistic or pedantic, as it intentionally simplified "untutored notes," and the "simple chorus" "thrummed" on a simplistic, instrument. Renny was neither frightened nor intimidated by the instruments and music he witnessed.

These emotions and descriptions assigned to these examples are commonplace when one reviews primary sources surrounding enslaved and Maroon music making in colonial Jamaica. The banza is present in enslaved communities' nonthreatening music and it is absent in Maroon's threatening music. Therefore, the creation and subsequent proliferation of the banza, a lute that to colonists, resembled European instruments represented appeasement and submission, it represented safety and a pseudo-omniscience of the colonial elite. Though they knew nothing of the banza's West African predecessors, not the West African meanings assigned to various spiked lutes, colonists were satisfied to let enslaved musicians play what they deemed as an instrument of appeasement.

It is clear that playing the banza was an active decision that starkly divided musical cultures of people of West African origins on the island. Playing or avoiding the banza had

[63] Robert Renny, *An History of Jamaica with Observations on the Climate, Scenery, Trade, Productions, Negroes, Slave Trade, Diseases of Europeans, Customs, Manners, and Dispositions of the Inhabitants to Which is Added an Illustration of the Advantages, Which Are Likely to Result from the Abolition of the Slave Trade,* (London: J. Cawthorn, 1805), 98-99.

multiple consequences for Maroons, enslaved individuals, and colonists. These consequences were various perceptions of appeasement, cowardice, and subversive re-culturation, all created, perpetuated, and maintained by playing music in certain ways. These consequences existed despite the true intentions of playing or not playing the banza and it is the consequences, not the intentions which exist in the limited records surrounding the sonic landscape of colonial Jamaica.

# CONCLUSION

## CHANGING WITH THE TIMES: EVOLVING MUSICAL NEEDS AND RESTRICTIONS

The banza was an instrument that looked and sounded like many West African lutes. Therefore, it was generally familiar to all enslaved people in colonial Jamaica. This new instrument served as a unifier instead of a divider as similar West African lutes had acted to distinguish kinship associations and demarcate physical boundaries as well as barriers of culture and class prior to the onset of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Though lute playing had fallen out of popularity with enslaved people from the Gold Coast, it developed as one of the widespread modes of music making among enslaved peoples in colonial Jamaica. This New World lute was the banza. It was created in and became universal among enslaved peoples of Jamaica. The banza was not merely a musical instrument but also a unifier of the initially disparate musical cultures that existed among enslaved communities. The banza represented coming together and celebrating old cultural, historical, and religious elements of while creating a new, blended musical culture. The banza was not created out of total compliance to colonial mandates on music making and instrumentation. The banza was a compromise. While satisfying the musical and cultural needs of enslaved communities, it also met the imposed restrictions of colonials with the least amount of adaptation and appeasement to colonial and environmental causalities of the New World.

By the end of the seventeenth century in colonial Jamaica, the banza became an extremely popular instrument among demographics that were originally familiar with but not passionate about it. How then did an esoteric instrument become one of the most popular and

venerated instruments among the same people in a new environment? The popularization of the Jamaican lute is directly connected to the transformation of musical needs and restrictions on music making that took place during the three phases of Transatlantic creolization. The popularization of the banza did not occur naturally. Instead, the instrument and its popularity developed due to musical needs and restrictions enforced by new external forces. Furthermore, if the banza was the product of three phases of musical and instrumental creolization that spanned two continents, the Atlantic Ocean, and centuries of the status of enslavement, then why is the banza not more pronounced in Jamaican musical history? The answer is a complicated one, but just as the invention and permeation of the instrument reflected the needs and restrictions of enslaved Jamaicans, so too does its disappearance from both the sonic and written history of the island. Once the banza was no longer needed, it fell into obscurity during the late nineteenth century. Comparing the trajectories of Maroon music with music created by enslaved and subsequently emancipated communities provides evidence that the banza was no longer needed in Jamaica in the centuries following emancipation and the removal of colonial restrictions on music making. The banza existed to fulfil a need during a time when drums and performing drumming in large groups was prohibited by colonials. When these restrictions were lifted following emancipation in 1834, the banza slowly disappeared from the musical landscape of free Blacks in Jamaica. Maroon communities never needed to create the banza because they were less restricted in the ways they made and used music. Therefore, if the groups remained essentially similar throughout the three phases of Transatlantic musical creolization they acted as a control and the status of enslavement and its associated musical needs and restrictions were variables.

An additional comparison to help answer the question of why the banza fell from popularity in Jamaica, one could compare the development and journey of the Jamaican banza to that of the American banjo. The banza and the banjo were initially musical instruments of adaptation motivated by external forces. Both instruments developed simultaneously though American evidence of the instrument would appear after Hans Sloane's mention of the Jamaican banza in his 1707 publication. Both the banza and the banjo were created to meet the needs and restrictions of new environments in the New World, environments created and restricted by the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Once these instruments were no longer needed to meet the needs and restrictions imposed on Black Americans and Jamaicans, they fell out of fashion within Black musical societies for a time.

The mid-nineteenth century ushered in the end of slavery in both the British colonies and in the United States. It also meant the removal of musical restrictions that now allowed emancipated peoples to create and use music unencumbered by the external mandates. The banza and banjo remained popular among Black musicians for decades following emancipation, but free to choose their own modes of instrumentation, free Blacks began to reclaim instruments like drums that remained central to the West African diaspora despite centuries of attempted musical and cultural conditioning at the hands of American and British colonials. Free Blacks in Jamaica and the United States also incorporated chordophones like the guitar and violin and developing genres like ragtime and blues. Eventually, woodwinds and brass instruments made their way into Black music, laying the foundations of jazz and rhythm and blues while further distancing themselves from the banza and the banjo.

Over time the banza lost popularity among Jamaican people as musical needs and restrictions ebbed and flowed. While the exact reason is indeterminable, it is likely due to the

naturally evolving musical trends. Another possible reason is that it was never the preferred instrument of the island's enslaved inhabitants. Even so, the Jamaican banza virtually disappeared during the late nineteenth century. In the United States, Black musicians began to disregard the banjo in favor of other instruments as white musicians appropriated the banjo by playing it in stereotypical, racist settings such as the Minstrel stage. Minstrelsy became the most popular mode of musical entertainment in America during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While simultaneously appropriating Black musical instruments, blackface minstrels degraded Black American culture. They created and perpetuated false narratives of the idyllic antebellum south in which Black Americans accepted their enslavement and cooperated with their white masters. In *That Half-Barbaric Twang,* Karen Linn argued,

> Both popular and scholarly literature (what little scholarly literature deigned to mention the instrument) of the time always placed the southern white banjo in the mountains, ignoring the piedmont. In doing this, the southern white banjo not only imaginatively resided in the most mythologized section of the South, but also in the most Anglo-Saxon part of the country. Placing it in a mentally segregating zone, the banjo lost some of its African-American meaning. The association of the banjo with black culture, however, would not begin to truly disappear until the twilight of the minstrel stage, simultaneously ushering in the twentieth century avoidance of the image of the black banjo player.[64]

Regardless of national music trends, Black musicians in both Jamaica and the United States would continue to distance themselves from the banza and the banjo, instruments that once constituted the foundations of their musical traditions in the New World.

As minstrelsy fell out of national favor and technological evolutions in sound recording allowed consumers broader options of musical options, Black musicians in America continued to distance themselves from the banjo and its association to enslavement. During the late 1920s and early 30s music marketing executives developed unsubstantiated racial distinctions to categorize

[64] Karen Linn, *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* (Urbana, Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press,1994), 135.

and market music to exclusively white and black consumers. White musicians, their music, and the appropriated banjo were generalized as "Hillbilly" while Black musicians were entirely organized under the moniker of "Race" records. Hillbilly musicians placed the banjo at centerstage in white-dominated old time, country, bluegrass recordings and the banjo's connection to Black musicians and ancestral West African lutes was replaced with images of overalls, hayseeds, and white hegemony.[65]

In the 1960s, the American banjo's and Jamaican banza's West African roots and role in Black culture were further obscured during the Civil Rights Movement and decolonization. In America, the banjo was appropriated by white musicians and their audiences. This resulted in the instrument's association with white music. The limited references to Black banjo playing in the America were relegated to two categories. The first being documented evidence of enslaved peoples playing the banjo prior to and directly after the Civil War. The second category included the racist false narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries perpetuated by the Minstrel stage. Despite the intrepidness of the instrument's past, it was still seen as capitulation, even during a time of expanding civil rights and liberties. Throughout the Caribbean, the banza now represented a product of colonialism. Black Jamaicans removed the instrument from musical spaces in order to create a new musical culture divorced from the complicated past of colonialism.[66]

In an attempt to streamline the cultural past, much of the historical record of banjo playing by Black Americans and banza playing by Black Jamaicans was overshadowed by the massive shifts in political and economic history, especially surrounding European decolonization

[65] Carl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow,* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 190-193.

[66] Linn, *That Half-Barbaric Twang,* 135-145.

throughout the Caribbean. When Jamaica achieved its independence in 1962, native historians were able to research and write new cultural and social histories that deviated from the country's previous history written by British colonials. However, cultural topics were still largely marginal as scholars instead documented the political and economic foundational history of the island. During the 1960s, it was easier for some historians of the emerging field of cultural history to simply ignore any mention of potentially problematic revisionist writings on the origins of the American banjo and Jamaican banza. The field of banjo and banza studies had also been so polluted with misinformation that was difficult to accurately trace both the physical trajectory and symbolic transformation of West African lutes into the banjo and banza.

Though many of the island's Black residents could trace a common ancestry from the Gold Coast, populations were starkly differentiated on the island. While the yoke of colonialism and enslavement was lifted from the island, changing the music of formerly enslaved individuals, Maroons continued to guard their cultural secrets, and to a degree, isolate themselves from the larger hegemony of post-colonial Jamaican nationalization. Maroons guarded the lessons they learned under colonialism and were emboldened to resist any potential control after the island gained independence. In a sense, Maroons became an entirely separate culture in Jamaica following decolonization. Maroons kept themselves distinct from the rest of the musical landscape of Jamaica by safely guarding their traditions in order to maintain their status as an "other" as they had successfully done during colonization.

Scholarship of the twentieth century has validated that the banza and banjo were both Black instruments and that they were both based off similar West African lutes. This same scholarship has helped contemporary musicians, especially Black musicians, reclaim the instruments that their ancestors were encouraged to disassociate from. Twenty-first century

musicians and authors like Dom Flemons, Rhiannon Giddens, Justin Robinson, Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton, Clifton Hicks, and Kristina Gaddy have corrected the banjo and banza's pasts through their musical performance and scholarship. Contemporary luthiers specializing in fully functional recreations of colonial banjos and banzas like Baltimore, Maryland's Pete Ross and Jamaica-based banjo luthier Jeff Menzies have reclaimed the agency of the instrument and reasserted its true history relying on recently invigorated primary sources ranging from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. These talented craftspeople have created reproductions of seventeenth and eighteenth-century lutes for some of the leading historic sites of the colonial Americas. Ross's instruments are either used by interpreters, on exhibit, or housed in the archives of sites including Colonial Williamsburg, the Musical Instrument Museum, George Washington Historic Birthplace National Park, Appomattox State Courthouse National Park, and the National Museum of African American Music among others. In addition to pursuing a PhD at the University of the West Indies, Menzies works with Jamaican artisans and materials to create his unique lutes. Menzies' research can be found in both American and Jamaican institutions and archives including the Musical Instrument Museum and Jamaican Music Museum. Menzies encourages Jamaican musicians to discover the history of the banza through scholarship, lutherie, and performance by working with organizations such as the Alpha Boys Institute. Founded in 1880 by Jesse Ripolli, a Jamaican woman of "Portuguese parentage," the institute is sponsored by the Catholic Sisters of Mercy who seek to provide at-risk youth in Jamaica educational and creative outlets including their award-winning music school.[67]

[67] "Selected Milestones" Alpha Boys Institute website, accessed January 18, 2021, https://alphaboysschool.org/timeline/


Figure 11: Photograph of Dom Flemons holding 5-string gourd banjo.

Source: Twitter, U.S. Congressmen Jamin Ben "Jamie" Raskin, Maryland's 8th congressional district twitter account, posted October 2, 2019, accessed September 7, 2020, https://twitter.com/repraskin/status/1179462548783075330. The image shows musician Dom Flemons holding his personalized gourd banjo while performing for Maryland politicians in 2019. Though slightly different from the Jamaican banza, this banjo, used by Flemons during live performances shows the musical continuity which began in the Caribbean and continues to influence musicians throughout the world.

Figure 11: Pete Ross's reproduction Jamaican banza based off etchings by Sir Hans Sloane's *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica* (1707). This photo may need to be in the previous chapter.

Source: Pete Ross, *Sloane Strum Strum* banza based off Sir Hans Sloane's drawing of the "Strum Strum" published in his *A Voyage to the Islands of Madera Barbados, Nieves, S. Christophers and Jamaica* (1707). Ross is a banjo historian and master luthier based out of Baltimore, Maryland. Ross builds chordophones based off of primary source documents ranging from Sloane's 1687 descriptions of the instrument to Minstrel-style banjos of the late nineteenth century, and stands as yet another example how modern scholarship and in this case lutherie helps invigorate the study of the development of the American banjo. Accessed September 7, 2020, http://www.banjopete.com/strum-strum.html

Though musical needs and restrictions continue to change in Jamaica, it is safe to say that the banza and the preservation of the banza's legacy are safely guarded among a new cadre of musicians, historians, and preservationists. The true history of the instrument is being uncovered as new sources are found and old sources are reinterpreted. Thanks to the pioneering work of historian Dena Epstein, contemporary scholars are able to more easily access the primary sources that need further analysis and investigation. This new generation of scholars are also discovering new sources in repositories previously deemed as unlikely places by the traditional-leaning scholars of colonial Jamaica.


Figure 12: Photograph of two unidentified men from the Alpha Boys School holding Jeff Menzies's gourd banjo and banza.

Source: Two unidentified musicians from the Alpha Boys Vocational School pose with a gourd banjo (left) and a Jamaican banza (right) in Kingston, Jamaica, August 13, 2020. The instruments were built by Jeff Menzie, who specializes in historic reproductions of chordophones, some of which are based off Sir Hans Sloane's images of Jamaican instruments. Used with permission from Jeff Menzies.

Figure 13: Photograph of unidentified student resident of Jamaica holding one of Jeff Menzies's banzas.

Source: Photograph by Jeff Menzies. An unidentified student and resident of Jamaica poses with one of Menzies's banzas in Bull Bay, Saint Andrew, Jamaica. Photograph is used with permission and courtesy of Jeff Menzies.

This colonial Jamaican analysis of instrumentation hopes to provide new and exciting frameworks for examining the emergence of banzas throughout the entire Caribbean. Hopefully, island or nationally-specific narratives will come to light to help individualize nations that historically were lumped together and falsely stereotyped as a collective. The Caribbean is a sonic landscape just now being explored. The complex history of colonialism and slavery pushed musical exploration to the sidelines of topics being investigated by historians and sociologists. This study of Jamaica's musical history and the complex external causalities that shaped music on the island is merely a jumping off point. However, this study hopes to inspire interest in the subject of individual Caribbean nations and peoples with specific musical identities represented through musical instrumentation reflective of the needs and restrictions of time and place.

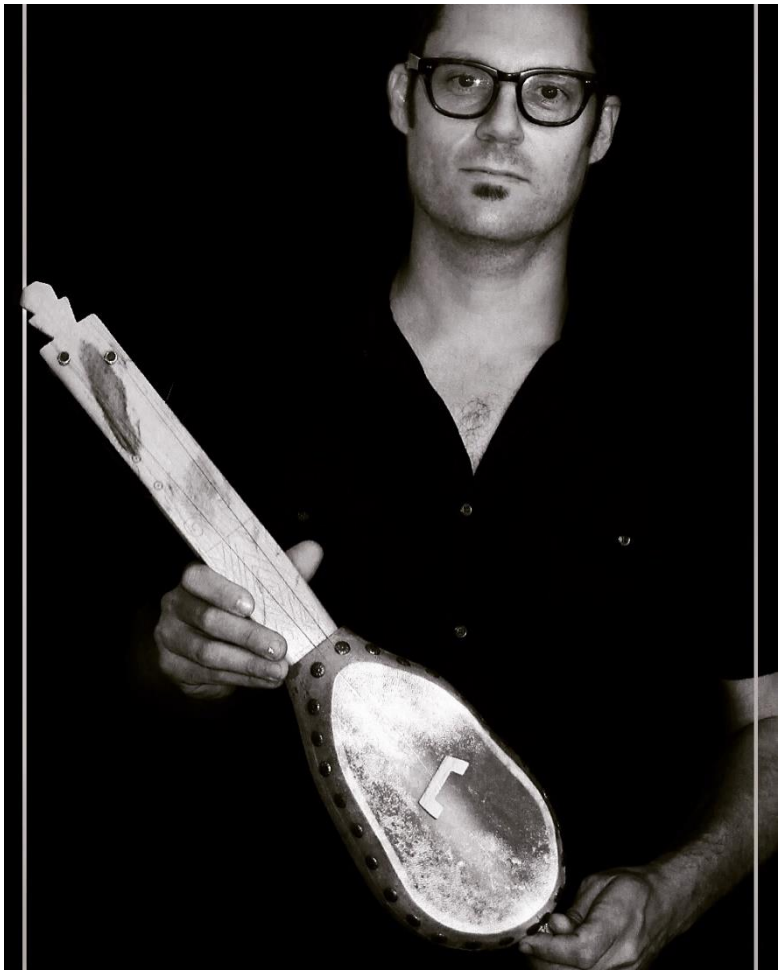

Figure 14: Photograph of Jeff Menzies holding one of his Jamaican banzas.

Source: Jeff Menzies poses with one of his Jamaican banzas built from materials available on the island, including authentic Spanish goat skins for the resonator covering. Photograph is used with permission and courtesy of Jeff Menzies.

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