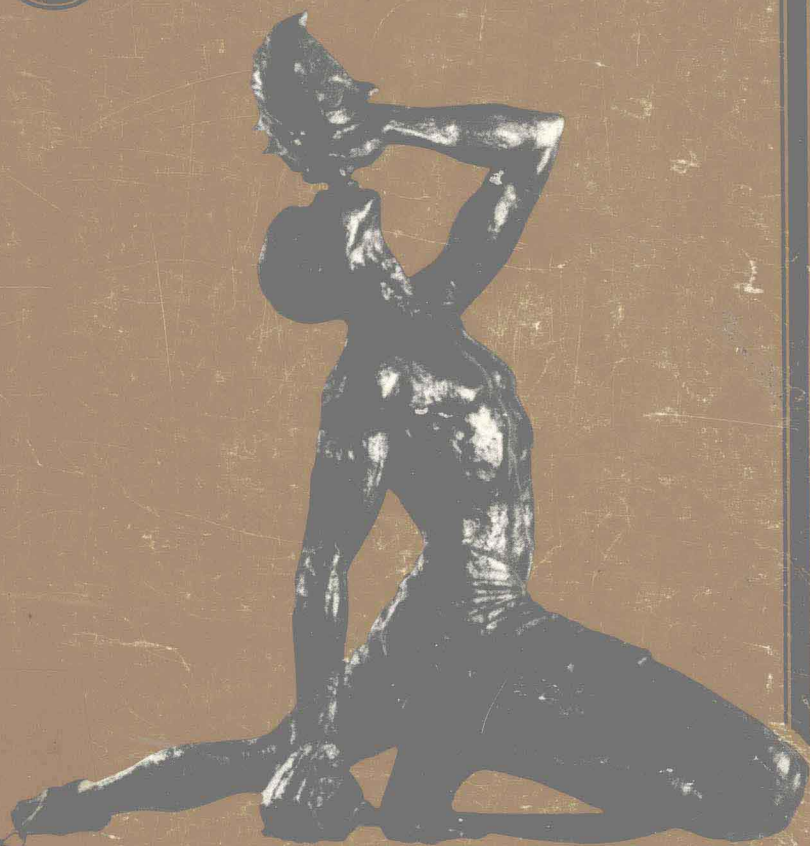


# MARCOON SOCIETIES



Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas

edited, with a new afterword, by **Richard Price**

# ***Maroon Societies:***

REBEL SLAVE COMMUNITIES IN  
THE AMERICAS

Edited by Richard Price

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## *Maroon Societies*

Also by Richard Price

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*First-Time*

*To Slay the Hydra*

*For the Saramaka, and their children*

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

During the six years since the original publication of *Maroon Societies*, the study of slave resistance has begun to come into its own. The hemispheric, comparative approach advocated in the Introduction has now gained wider acceptance, and there has been growing recognition of the central importance of studies of resistance, rebellion, and marronage for the general understanding of slave societies.

In preparing this new edition, I faced a practical dilemma—several of the more recent studies of maroons seemed appropriate as additions to the selections in the original volume, yet the expense of resetting the type and increasing the number of pages would have raised the cost of the volume substantially. Because the book is intended primarily for students, as an introductory overview of maroon societies, I have opted to hold down the price by leaving the body of the text unchanged. However, in the new Afterword, I review the main studies that have appeared in the intervening years and point to some of the issues they raise for students of the Afro-American experience.

For bibliographical advice for the Afterword, I would like to thank Scott Parris, Sally Price, Louis Rojas, Stuart Schwartz, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Stuart Schwartz was also kind enough to make the initial contacts that have led to a Spanish-language edition of the book, currently in preparation in Mexico. Finally, I would like to dedicate this edition of *Maroon Societies*, like its predecessor, to the Saramaka people of Suriname, whose guests we have so often been.



Cudjoe making peace with Guthrie. See Chapters 14 and 15. From Dallas, R. C., *The History of the Maroons*. London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees (1803).

A Cuban hunting the maroons with dogs. See Chapters 3, 14 and 15. From Dallas, R. C., *The History of the Maroons*. London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees (1803).



Surinam: Eighteenth-century war scenes. See Chapters 16 and 17. From Stedman, J. G., *Narrative of a five-years' expedition, against the revolted Negroes of Surinam . . . from the year 1772, to 1777*. London: J. Johnson and J. Edwards (1796).

A maroon warrior.

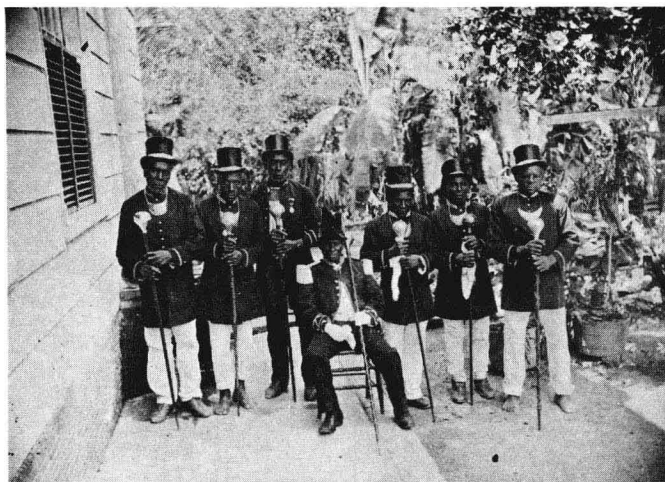




A Coromantee ranger (antimaroon soldier).



European troops pursuing maroons through a swamp.



Amakti, chief of the Djuka from 1916 to 1931, flanked by village headmen. See Part Six. Courtesy of Silvia W. de Groot.

The four "Bush Negro" chiefs (in suits) visiting Chief Apétor II in Palimé, Togo, during their trip to West Africa. See Chapter 21. Courtesy of Silvia W. de Groot.



## INTRODUCTION

### *Maroons and Their Communities*

With the fleet of Governor Ovando, bound for Hispaniola in 1502 to reinvigorate the faltering colony that Columbus had left behind the previous year, sailed "a few Negroes . . . brought out by their masters" (Parry and Sherlock 1965:16). Among them was the first Afro-American maroon, an anonymous slave who "escaped to the Indians" in the mountainous interior soon after setting foot in the New World (Guillot 1961:77). Today, some 470 years later, there still lives in Cuba a man named Esteban Montejo, who escaped from slavery in his youth and lived for years in the forests, and who must be the last surviving exemplar of this desperate yet surprisingly frequent reaction to slavery in the Americas—flight or *marronage* (Montejo 1968; Salkey 1971).

For more than four centuries, the communities formed by such runaways dotted the fringes of plantation America, from Brazil to the southeastern United States, from Peru to the American Southwest. Known variously as *palenques*, *quilombos*, *mocambos*, *cumbes*, *ladeiras*, or *mambises*, these new societies ranged from tiny bands that survived less than a year to powerful states encompassing thousands of members and surviving for generations or even centuries. Today their descendants still form semi-independent enclaves in several parts of the hemisphere, remaining fiercely proud of their maroon origins and, in some cases at least, faithful to unique cultural traditions that were forged during the earliest days of Afro-American history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The English word "maroon," like the French *marron*, derives from Spanish *cimarrón*. As used in the New World, *cimarrón* originally referred to domestic cattle that had taken to the hills in Hispaniola (Parry and Sherlock 1965:14) and soon after to Indian

During the past several decades, historical scholarship has done much to dispel the myth of the "docile slave." The extent of violent resistance to enslavement has been documented rather fully—from the revolts in the slave factories of West Africa and mutinies during the Middle Passage to the organized rebellions that began to sweep most colonies within a decade after the arrival of the first slave ships (see, for example, Herskovits 1958:86–109; Mannix and Cowley 1962: 104–30; Pope-Hennessy 1969; Genovese 1967; Kilson 1964; Moura 1959; Schuler 1970b; and Synnott 1971). And we are finally beginning to appreciate the remarkable pervasiveness of various forms of "day to day" resistance—from simple malingering to subtle but systematic acts of sabotage (see, for example, Bauer and Bauer 1942; Blassingame 1972; Bryce-Laporte 1971; Fredrickson and Lasch 1967; and Mintz 1971). Flight or *marronage*, however, has received much less attention, at least from North American scholars—in part no doubt because so much of the relevant data are in languages other than English but also because publications on maroons and their communities have so often been couched in what Curtin has called the "parochial tradition of ethnocentric national history" (1969:xv).

Yet maroons and their communities can be seen to hold a special significance for the study of slave societies. For while they were, from one perspective, the antithesis of all that slavery stood for, they were at the same time everywhere an embarrassingly visible part of these systems. Just as the very nature of plantation slavery implied violence and resistance, the wilderness setting of early New World plantations made *marronage* and the existence of organized maroon communities a ubiquitous reality. Throughout Afro-America, such communities stood out as an heroic challenge to white authority, and as the living proof of the existence of a slave consciousness that refused to be limited by the whites' conception or manipulation of it.

From a European perspective, *marronage* appeared to be "the chronic plague" of New World plantation societies (Peytraud 1897:373). Within the first decade of most colonies' existence, the most brutal punishments had already been

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slaves who had escaped from the Spaniards as well (Franco 1968:92). By the end of the 1530s, it was already beginning to refer primarily to Afro-American runaways (Franco 1968:93; see also Guillot 1961:38), and had strong connotations of "fierceness," of being "wild" and "unbroken" (Friederici 1960:191–92).

reserved for recaptured runaways, and in many cases these were quickly written into law. An early eighteenth-century visitor to Surinam reported that

if a slave runs away into the forest in order to avoid work for a few weeks, upon his being captured his Achilles tendon is removed for the first offence, while for a second offence . . . his right leg is amputated in order to stop his running away; I myself was a witness to slaves being punished this way [Herlein 1718:112, translated in R. van Lier 1971:133].

And similar punishments for *marronage*—from castration to being slowly roasted to death—are reported from many different regions in the selections included in this book.

Yet *marronage* did not have the same meaning in all colonies at all times. As long as the numbers of slaves who took to the hills remained small, only the least skilled slaves were involved, and they did not interfere directly with plantation life, the maroons' existence might be tolerated or largely ignored, as Debién suggests for some of the French islands (1966b:7–9). Moreover, throughout the Americas, planters seem to have accepted as part of the system the common practice of *petit marronage*—repetitive or periodic truancy with temporary goals such as visiting a relative or lover on a neighboring plantation. For example, temporary flight of this type was clearly an everyday part of plantation life in the southern United States; the pattern is vividly brought to life in several of Faulkner's stories (for example, "Was," "Red Leaves"), and is more dryly attested to by Mullin's statistics on the "motives" of Virginia runaways (1972:108–9).

It was *marronage* on the grand scale, with individual fugitives banding together to create independent communities of their own, that struck directly at the foundations of the plantation system, presenting military and economic threats that often taxed the colonists to their very limits. In a remarkable number of cases throughout the Americas, the whites were forced to bring themselves to sue their former slaves for peace. In their typical form, such treaties—which we know of from Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Hispaniola, Jamaica, Mexico, and Surinam—offered maroon communities their freedom, recognized their territorial integrity, and made some provision for meeting their economic needs, demanding