

2/

Contraband, free ports, and British merchants in the Caribbean world, 1739-1772*

Nadine HUNT *

This article examines the evolution of contraband to legitimate trade in the eighteenth century Caribbean world during the War of Jenkins' Ear and Seven Years' War. It focuses on the informal networks of the British South Sea Company and the trade of informal actors. The article explores how British legislators shifted Jamaican and Dominican colonial economies away from contraband trade by opening free ports in 1766. The British Parliament passed the Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica following Danish and Dutch colonial efforts to crack down on contraband trade in the Caribbean world. This transition from contraband to legitimate trade enabled British merchants to engage in free trade by importing and exporting an assortment of commodities and enslaved people to and from Jamaica to other colonies in the Caribbean world.

1. Introduction

The struggle for land, natural resources, and economic markets by Britain, Denmark, France, Spain, and the United Provinces allowed for the development of a competitive economic system that took shape in the eighteenth century Caribbean world. Earlier historians presented a rigid framework that must be reanalysed in order to show the reality of trading life within the region. Scholars have shown that in times of peace Caribbean colonies traded and in times of war, trade exchanges slowed, since privateers and neutral carriers disrupted

pre-war trade patterns¹. Much of this went undocumented, since the early organizers of this trade were pirates². Europe took an increasing interest in establishing official ports with naval officers, forts, and warehouses in the colonies to regulate and tax this expanding trade. Europe's interest in Caribbean trade became more evident following the eradication campaigns against piracy in the 1730s³. Several historians acknowledge the pitfalls in studying contraband trade, namely that written records do not exist or survive, because commercial transactions were illegal. The people who carried out these illegal transactions are known as contrabandists, informal actors, and smugglers. Unlike merchants, these individuals took little interest in documenting their activities, because they did not wish to pay taxes and sought to undermine mercantilist laws governing colonial trade in the Americas⁴. However, *The Naval Shipping Lists of Jamaica* illustrate how before and after the passing of the Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica; Atlantic and Caribbean merchants utilized Jamaica as a trading *entrepôt* to transport goods and enslaved Africans to other circum-Caribbean ports. Subsequently, the names of ships, arrival and departure dates, the name of the owner(s) and master of

* I thank the editors of this issue and anonymous reviewers for their comments.

¹ BRIDENBAUGH, Carl, BRIDENBAUGH, Roberta, *No peace beyond the line: the English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1972; GOSLINGA, Cornelis Christiaan, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the wild coast, 1580-1680*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 1971; CRATON, Michael J., *The Caribbean vice admiralty courts 1763-1815: indispensable agents of an imperial system*, Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, Hamilton, 1968; HARING, Clarence H., *Trade and navigation between Spain and the Indies in the time of the Hapsburgs*, Gloucester, Peter Smith, 1964; PARES, Richard, *Yankees and creoles: the trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution*, London, Longmans, Green and Co, 1956; PARES, Richard, *War and trade in the West Indies, 1739-1763*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1936.

² PÉROTIN-DUMON, Anne, «The pirate and the emperor: power and the law on the seas, 1450-1850», in PENNELL, C. Richard (ed.), *Bandits at sea: a pirates reader*, New York, New York University Press, 2001, pp. 25-50; STARKEY, David J., *Pirates and markets*, in PENNELL, C. Richard (ed.), *Bandits at Sea*, cit., p. 108.

³ BROMLEY, John S., *Outlaws at sea, 1660-1720: liberty, equality, and fraternity among the Caribbean freebooters*, in PENNELL, C. Richard (ed.), *Bandits at Sea*, cit., pp. 169-194.

⁴ PRADO, Fabrício P., *In the shadows of empires: trans-imperial networks and colonial identity in Bourbon Rio de la Plata (c. 1750 - c.1813)*, Ph.D. thesis. Emory University, Atlanta, 2009; RUPERT, Linda M., *Creolization and contraband: Curaçao in the early modern Atlantic world*, Athens and London, University of Georgia Press, pp. 163-211; KARRAS, Alan L., *Smuggling: contraband and corruption in world history*, Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield, 8-9; KARRAS, Alan L., «Transgressive exchange: circumventing eighteenth-century Atlantic commercial restrictions, or the discount of Monte Christi», in BENTLEY, Jerry H., BRIDENTHAL, Renate, WIGEN, Káearen, *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2007, p. 122; ARAUZ MONFANTE, Celestino Andrés, *El contrabando Holandés en el Caribe durante la primera mitad del siglo XVIII*, Caracas, 1984.

ships provide further insight into the shipping industry on Jamaica during British colonial rule⁵.

This article examines the contraband trade of the British South Sea Company (SSC)⁶, while seeking to understand why two British colonies, Jamaica and Dominica, were granted free port status in 1766⁷. The Spanish crown awarded the *asiento de negros* to the Company between 1713 and 1748. The *asiento* (or *assiento*) refers to the legal contract awarded by the Spanish crown to individuals or foreign-chartered companies to transport enslaved Africans to Buenos Aires, Cartagena, Porto Bello, and Vera Cruz⁸. The *asiento* also prohibited an annual carrying trade with Spain's American colonies, but Company officials regularly engaged in contraband trade on most of the slaving voyages by selling food stuff and other items. In Jamaica, the SSC had disintegrated by 1748 with the expiration of the Spanish *asiento*⁹. Between 1748 and 1766, contrabandists dominated the Caribbean trade via Jamaica. The Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica enabled British merchants to revive a legal trade that resembled earlier commercial efforts established by the SSC, but allowed for trade with neighbouring Danish, Dutch, French, and Spanish Caribbean colonies.

2. The Contraband Trade of the South Sea Company, 1713-48

The Company performed as a dual enterprise between its incorporation in 1711 and 1748, utilising Jamaica's central location in the Caribbean world as its main centre in the Americas. The first purpose of the Company was to secure the *asiento*, which was awarded to the British crown after the signing of the *Peace of Utrecht* in 1713. Following Queen Anne's War (1702-1713),¹⁰ the SSC established factories on Jamaica

⁵ MINCHINTON, Walter E., WAITE, Peter, *The naval office shipping lists for Jamaica, 1683-1818 in the public record office*, in *Introduction to the microfilm collection*, London, Microform Academic Publishers, 2006.

⁶ In Spanish, the SSC was called «Compañía Inglesa de Comercio de Negros y Esclavos en las Indias».

⁷ GREAT BRITAIN, *A collection of all the statutes now in force, relating to the revenue and officers of the customs in Great Britain and the plantations*, vol. II, London, Charles Eyre and William Strahan, 1780, pp. 1247-1253.

⁸ HUNT, Nadine, *Scattered memories: the intra-Caribbean slave trade to Spanish America, 1700-1750*, in ARAUJO, Ana Lucia, CANDIDO, Mariana P., LOVEJOY, Paul E., *Crossing memories: slavery and African Diaspora*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2011, pp. 105-127; HUNT, Nadine, *A weh dem a go? The slave trade of Jamaica*, in WILMOT, Swithin R., *Freedom: retrospective and prospective*, Kingston, Ian Randle Publishers, 2009, pp. 3-15.

⁹ CARSWELL, John, *The South Sea Bubble*, Stroud, Gloucestershire, Sutton Publishing, 2001; SPERLING, John G., *The South Sea Company: An Historical Essay and Bibliographical Finding List*, Boston, The Kress Library of Business and Economics and Harvard University Printing Office, 1962.

¹⁰ This war is also called the War of Spanish Succession.

and Barbados, which were used as «refreshment stations» for the enslaved Africans forced to make the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean¹¹. The *asiento* was a legal document binding the Company to specific practices and conditions in regulating the trade¹². However, the SSC falsely advertised the possession of four ports at Buenos Aires, Cartagena, Porto Bello, and Vera Cruz. Great Britain had asked for these concessions during peace negotiations, but Spain refused several demands. As a result, the SSC had no rights at these Spanish American ports; they were expected to deliver enslaved Africans to the Company's warehouses and collect payment. The Company's sailing vessels were under Spanish jurisdiction and help to explain why vessels engaged in illegal activities were seized by *guardas costas*¹³. The Company's contract allowed for a time period of thirty years and a guarantee of 4.800 enslaved Africans to be delivered annually. An annual fair was granted to sell British merchandise at either Cartagena or Porto Bello, therefore commercial transactions carried out at other times of the year were deemed illegal¹⁴. Lastly, the Company had access to carry out their business at Buenos Aires, Cartagena, Porto Bello, Vera Cruz, and eventually Rio de la Hacha.

The second purpose, which was really the first motive of the founding directors, was to gain the task of managing the national debt of England, which was accomplished in 1720. The first Governor and a founder of the Company was Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford¹⁵. Harley's vision was to rival the Bank of England by managing England's national debt. Harley collaborated with members of the Sword Blade Company (SBC), which was a chartered enterprise and founded in 1691, to make hollow ground blade swords. By 1702, John Blunt, George Caswall, Jacob Sawbridge, and Elias Turner controlled the SBC. By 1712, the men integrated the SBC into the Sword Blade Bank. The Bank became the banker for the South Sea Company, overseeing its stocks and assets¹⁶. From its incorporation, four major problems plagued the SSC and its relationship with the Spanish crown. First the SSC did not always supply enslaved

¹¹ RUDNYANSZKY, Leslie I., *The Caribbean slave trade: Jamaica and Barbados, 1680-1770*, Ph.D. thesis, Notre Dame University, Notre Dame, 1973.

¹² See Document 18, «Project of the asiento for negroes made between England and Spain, 1707» in DONNAN, Elizabeth, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. II, New York, Octagon Books, pp. 16-21.

¹³ The Spanish *guardas costas* patrolled the Caribbean Sea in search of contraband ships. CRUZ BARNEY, Oscar, «El regimen juridico de los guardacostas novohispanos en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII», in *Revista de Historia Naval*, 16, 60, 1998, pp. 45-62.

¹⁴ SORSBY, Victoria G., *British trade with Spanish America under the asiento, 1713-1740*, Ph.D. thesis, University of London, London, 1975.

¹⁵ First board of directors included, Sir John Bateman (Sub-Governor); Samuel Ongley (Deputy Governor); Henry St. John (Lord Bolingbroke, member) and Robert Benson (member). See DONNAN, Elizabeth, «The early days of the South Sea Company, 1711-1718», in *Journal of Economic and Business History*, 2, 1929, p. 423.

¹⁶ SPERLING, *South Sea Company*, cit., pp. 5-6.

Africans from Angola or West Africa. Rather, the SSC purchased enslaved people on Jamaica or Barbados. Second, SSC ships constantly flooded Spanish America with British goods, according to Spanish officials, they participated in contraband trade. Third, the payment of duties and taxes to the Spanish Crown were never prompt or accurate¹⁷. Finally, the directors of the SSC were corrupt and participated in various money laundering schemes in England and the Spanish Americas, which resulted in the infamous South Sea Bubble¹⁸. These four matters were constantly causing disputes between Britain and Spain and would eventually lead to the War of Jenkins' Ear in 1739.

It is believed that many of the slave traders that transported enslaved people from West Africa to Jamaica had a connection to Britain, because of the agreement reached between the SSC and the Royal African Company and the implications governing trade set out in the English Navigation Acts¹⁹. For example, the Acts required that vessels involved in the carrying trade operate in English-owned ships, with an English Master and a three quarter English crew in matters of colonial trade²⁰. Naval shipping lists show that ships from the North American colonies and other English colonies such as Bermuda were involved and were hired out to transport goods and enslaved Africans to the Spanish Coast or elsewhere in the circum-Caribbean. Furthermore, there were informal actors pretending to be under contract with the SSC, who appeared at the Spanish Coast with enslaved Africans. Arthur Aiton suggests that these informal actors were not necessarily Jamaican residents, but came from as far as Bristol, New England, and the Lesser Antilles, referring to Curaçao and St. Christopher²¹. To combat this problem, the Spanish crown announced that the SSC would have to buy illegal enslaved people captured by the *guardas costas* for 118 pesos for each *pieza de Indias* and illegal enslaved people were counted towards the annual total that the Company was obligated to deliver²².

British naval ships were hired to escort many of the authorized as well as illegal ships to Spanish America. As a result, the war ships also transported contraband goods

¹⁷ DONNAN, Elizabeth, «The early days», cit., pp. 419-450.

¹⁸ WALSH, Patrick, «The Bubble on the Periphery: Scotland and the South Sea Bubble», in *Scottish Historical Review*, XCI, 231, 2012, pp. 106-124; CARSWELL, John, *South Sea Bubble*, cit.

¹⁹ DONNAN, Elizabeth, *Documents illustrative*, cit., II, pp. XXXVI.

²⁰ BARROW, Thomas C., *Trade and empire: the British customs service in colonial America, 1660-1775*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1967, p. 5.

²¹ AITON, Arthur S., «The asiento treaty as reflected in the papers of Lord Shelburne», in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 8,2/1928, p. 175.

²² PALMER, Colin A., *Human cargoes: the British slave trade to Spanish America, 1700-1739*, Urbana, University of Illinois, 1981, p. 89.

in their bottoms. Juan Carlos Solórzano found that English contraband items included textiles, metal instruments for the kitchen and agricultural use such as a hoe, guns and paper. In exchange for these items, Costa Rica transported cocoa from Cartago and Matina to markets at Porto Bello and Cartagena in exchange for enslaved people and British goods²³. However, Solórzano argues that English and Dutch ships began to arrive at Matina during the eighteenth century, engaging in contraband trade with the locals²⁴. Other types of illegal goods included food items from Europe and the thirteen North American colonies such as butter, wine and beer sold to Spanish American coastal traders²⁵.

The SSC factories at Cartagena, Porto Bello, and Vera Cruz received enslaved people mainly from Jamaica. The factories were organized with a president, accountant, warehouse keeper, secretary, a surgeon and an administrator. «Salaries ranged from 5.000 pieces of eight, paid to the president at Panama, to 400 for the lesser assistants»²⁶. Instructions to agents at Spanish ports were sent from the directors in England or from agents at Jamaica. Vera Brown's work showed that two Company spies, assumed to be British nationals, offered the Spanish monarchy valuable information on the illegal business transactions at the factories in colonial Spanish America. For example, Matthew Plowes produced several documents to the Marquis de Barrenechea. These documents included financial statements, but more importantly letters and correspondence between local Company agents and Spanish officials in the Americas. The bribes were not petty. Plowes produced a note showing that one bribe included «a sword garnished with diamonds and a very exquisite musical clock» Another bribe was made with 118.000 pesos paid out to various officials. Not only were the ship captains bribing officials, but Plowes testified that the British men went to the richest mines and supplied workers with goods in exchange for gold and silver, and did not declare the metals to Spanish officials in order to avoid duties. Brown assessed that «half of the silver exported through» Porto Bello was not registered, which she believed was the result of the British securing an order from the governor of Panama forbidding any re-examination of chests leaving the port. The other spy, Dr. Burnett, stated that English goods were distributed in Spanish America as «galleon goods or merchandise

²³ BRENES CASTILLO, María Eugenia, «Matina, bastion del contraband en Costa Rica», in *Anuario de estudios centroamericanos*, 4/1978, pp. 393-450.

²⁴ SOLÓRZANO, Juan Carlos, «El comercio de Costa Rica durante el declive del comercio Española y el desarrollo del contraband ingles: periodo 1690-1750», in *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, 20, 2/1994, pp. 71-119.

²⁵ ARMYTAGE, Frances, *The free port system in the British West Indies: a study in commercial policy, 1766-1822*, London, Royal Empire Society Imperial Studies, Longmans, 1953, pp. 13-27.

²⁶ DONNAN, Elizabeth, «The early days», cit., p. 431.

from the English permission-ship»²⁷. Whether these men offered truthful statements to please the Spanish Crown, their accounts are incredible.

3. The Smuggling Trade: Molasses, Rum, and Sugar, 1748-1766

The smuggling trade between Kingston merchants shifted from the Spanish American colonies to the French Caribbean colonies following the collapse of the SSC. The Spanish Crown attempted to regain control of its intra-Caribbean slave trade by employing the *Compañía Gaditana de Negros* to deliver enslaved Africans to Spanish America via Puerto Rico²⁸. By 1763, naval officers recorded in the *Naval Shipping Lists of Jamaica* that the island imported and exported goods and enslaved peoples from Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Domingue, and the port of New Orleans. The shipping logs record that sailing vessels left from ports in Saint-Domingue to Kingston with provisions and prisoners, presumably captives from the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). In some cases, naval officers recorded specific details of the cargo, showing that provisions consisted of herring, barrels of beef and pork, butter, Madeira wine, bottled beer, and soap. Items exported from Jamaica to the French Caribbean colonies included alcohol, candles, earthen ware, enslaved Africans, and food²⁹.

An illegal trade in molasses and rum developed between Saint-Domingue and Jamaica during the Seven Years' War. Before the passing of the Free Port Act in 1766, all tropical goods such as rum and sugar had to be shipped to and redirected through Britain to non-British colonies or territories. John McCusker argues that North American distillers and merchants obtained French Caribbean molasses and rum, since France banned imports of French rum, promoting an exclusive spirit trade in French brandy.³⁰ Yu Wu demonstrates that North Americans also received the bulk of

²⁷ BROWN, Vera Lee, «The South Sea Company and contraband trade», in *American Historical Review*, 31, 4/1926, pp. 665, 673-674.

²⁸ TORRES RAMIREZ, Bibiano, *La Compañía Gaditana de Negros*, Seville, Escuela Hispano-Americanos de Sevilla, 1973.

²⁹ The National Archives of Kew, *Colonial Office: Shipping Returns, Jamaica*, 142, 18 (1762-1765); GARRIGUS, John, «Blue and brown: contraband indigo and the rise of a free colored planter class in French Saint Domingue», in *The Americas*, 50, 2/1993, pp. 233-263.

³⁰ MCCUSKER, John J., *The business of distilling in the Old World and the New World during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the rise of a new enterprise and its connection with colonial America*, in MCCUSKER, John J., MORGAN, Kenneth, *The early modern Atlantic economy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 215-219; MCCUSKER, John J., *Rum and the American Revolution: the rum trade and the balance of payments of the thirteen continental colonies*, New York-London, Garland Publishing, 1989, pp. 320-327; HOULETTE, William D., «Rum-trading in the American colonies before 1763», in *Journal of American History*, 27, 1934, pp. 131-132.

«Jamaica Molasses» from 1719 through 1769³¹. It is plausible that merchants on Jamaica aware of the demand for French Caribbean molasses purchased it on Saint-Domingue and transported it to English-speaking North America. It is likely that Jamaican planters argued that the illegal importation of French rum was to taste and make comparisons between competing products. A mercantilist policy did not make it easy for Jamaican planters to obtain French rum or molasses from Britain. However, it is unclear the scale of this illegal trade, so it is difficult to learn the quantity of molasses or rum involved³². Frederick Smith argues that by 1755 improved techniques employed by British Caribbean planters and their managers resulted in increased quantities of rum. Smith notes that French competitors believed that they needed larger stills, the recipe of the «improved Jamaican wash», and raising the proof of rum in order to compete with islands like Jamaica³³.

4. Integrating Free Trade Systems in the British Caribbean: The Free Port Acts of Jamaica and Dominica

In the eighteenth century, free ports were established in several Caribbean colonies. These colonies followed the Dutch Caribbean model whereby the Dutch West India Company had granted Willemstad, Curaçao a free port in 1675. The free port status allowed Dutch merchants to engage in a contraband trade with nearby Spanish colonies³⁴. The Danish colonies, Saint Thomas and Saint John opened free ports in 1763³⁵. In the French Caribbean, free ports were opened on Martinique and Guadeloupe in 1763 and on Saint Lucia and Saint-Domingue in 1767³⁶. The growing movement within the Caribbean colonies to introduce free ports is an indicator of liberal and free trade policies were introduced to allow for merchants to trade beyond colonial boundaries. Clearly, Britain desired free trade laws, recognizing that residents

³¹ WU, Yu, *Jamaican trade: 1688-1769: a quantitative study*, Ph.D. thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, 1995, p. 100 (Table 2.16).

³² GEGGUS, David, *The major port towns of Saint Domingue in the later eighteenth century*, in LISS, Peggy K., KNIGHT, Franklin W., *Atlantic port cities: economy, culture, and society in the Atlantic world, 1650-1850*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1991, p. 99.

³³ SMITH, Frederick H., *Caribbean rum: a social and economic history*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2005, pp. 48-55; MCCUSKER, John J., *Rum and the American Revolution*, cit., pp. 153-154.

³⁴ RUPERT, Linda M., *Creolization and contraband*, cit., p. 10.

³⁵ CHRISTELOW, Allan, «Contraband trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main, and the free port act of 1766», in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 22, 2/1942, pp. 334-335.

³⁶ KARRAS, Alan L., «Custom has the force of law: local officials and contraband in the Bahamas and the Floridas, 1748-1779», in *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 80, 3/2002, pp. 286-287; ARMYTAGE, Frances, *Free port system*, cit., pp. 54-55.

of Jamaica, especially, had previously engaged in a contraband trade with Spanish and French colonies. In Jamaica, four free ports were declared at Kingston, Lucea, Montego Bay, and Savanna-la-mar³⁷. Although Barbados was used as a refreshment station for the South Sea Company, the British Parliament did not legislate for this island to have a free port following the expiration of the *asiento*. Post-1748, the shift from Barbados to Dominica enabled British merchants to concentrate on trading with French colonies such as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Saint Lucia³⁸.

The brainchild of the Freeport Act of Jamaica and Dominica was Lord Rockingham, who was born Charles Watson-Wentworth in South Yorkshire and was the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham. Lord Rockingham's father, Thomas Watson-Wentworth, first Marquis of Rockingham organized volunteers, including Lord Rockingham, to fight against the Scottish Jacobites in 1745³⁹. Lord Rockingham became a sympathiser of Scots, whom he believed wanted to form a British identity. Improvement projects appeared around Scotland following the Battle of Culloden, enabling many Scots to recover from several Jacobite risings in the first half of the eighteenth century⁴⁰. Lord Rockingham lobbied the British Parliament to return confiscated lands to Scots who wished to earn a livelihood in agriculture⁴¹. Lord Rockingham was largely responsible for introducing a number of acts that regulated colonial trade in the Americas that benefitted Scottish merchants. For example, he supported the Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica, which enabled many Scottish merchants to progress in regional trade by operating from Jamaican ports⁴². In 1765, a Scottish merchant, Richard Oswald, supported the passing of the Free Port Act⁴³. Based on the hearings carried out by the British Parliament Lord Rockingham believed that the Free Port Act of Jamaica and Dominica was supported by English and Scottish commercial interests. The collapse of the South

³⁷ HUNT, Nadine, «Expanding the frontiers of western Jamaica through minor Atlantic ports in the eighteenth century», in *Canadian Journal of History*, 45, 3/2010, pp. 485-501.

³⁸ MARSHALL, Bernard, *Society and economy in the British Windward Islands, 1763-1823*, Ph.D. thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1972.

³⁹ FARRELL, S. M., *Wentworth, Charles Watson, second marquess of Rockingham (1730-1782)*, in GOLDMAN, Lawrence, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online)*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008; HOFFMAN, Ross J. S., *The marquis: a study of Lord Rockingham, 1730-1782*, New York, Fordham University Press, 1973, pp. 3, 15.

⁴⁰ MACINNES, Allan I., *Clanship, commerce, and the house of Stuart, 1603-1788*, East Linton, Scotland, Tuckwell Press, 1996, p. 218; ROBERTSON, Iain A., «The Earl of Kinnoull's bridge: the construction of the bridge of Tay at Perth, 1763-1772», in *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 6, 1/1986, pp. 18-32; SMITH, Annette M., *Jacobite estates of the forty-five*, Edinburgh, John Donald Publishers, 1982; SMITH, Annette M., «State aid to industry: an eighteenth century example», in DEVINE, Tomas Martin, *Lairds and Improvement in the Scotland of the Enlightenment*, Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, 1978, pp. 47-58.

⁴¹ HOFFMAN, Ross J. S., *The marquis*, cit., p. 11.

⁴² *Ibidem*, pp. 116-121.

⁴³ HANCOCK, David, *Oswald, Richard (1705-1784)*, in GOLDMAN, Lawrence, *op. cit.*

Sea Company after 1748 left a major commercial gap in Jamaica's trade with Spanish Caribbean colonies. The emerging Scottish merchant community seized the opportunity to reorganize trade within the Caribbean world through Jamaica. Scots who had settled in Jamaica and other British Caribbean colonies before 1766 welcomed the Free Port Act because of the opportunities it seemed to offer⁴⁴.

5. Conclusion

Generally, historians have explored contraband, which is a curious issue, as it concerns trade within the Caribbean world. While Europeans demarcated the Americas, beginning in 1492, by mid-eighteenth-century resident populations began to treat the Caribbean as an extension of Europe. Focusing on the eighteenth century, the literature has focused heavily on the illegal trade between Spanish America and British colonies, such as Jamaica, leaving little room for discussion of Jamaica's trade with Danish, Dutch, and French colonies⁴⁵. The SSC was designed to violate English navigational laws and mercantilist policies, because it allowed Jamaica to become a transfer point for exchanging enslaved people and contraband in the Americas⁴⁶. The *Shipping Lists* arrived at London in a timely manner usually arriving within several months after each quarter's end. Whether the British monarchy or government were aware or even upset with growth of inter-colonial trade in the Caribbean world warrants further attention. More importantly, recent scholarship on the role of women and enslaved Africans engaging in contraband needs to be addressed in Caribbean history⁴⁷. There is much more to learn about contraband activities in early modern Caribbean history. In the case of Jamaica and Dominica, the Free Port Act of 1766 was an important piece of legislation. Britain desired free ports, recognizing that residents

⁴⁴ ARMYTAGE, Frances, *The free port system*, cit., p. 7.

⁴⁵ GRAHN, Lance, *The political economy of smuggling: regional informal economies in early Bourbon New Granada*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, pp.15-30; CHRISTELOW, Allan, «Economic background of the Anglo-Spanish War of 1762», in *Journal of Modern History*, 18, 1/1946, pp. 22-36.

⁴⁶ HARPER, Lawrence A., *The English navigation laws: a seventeenth century experiment in social engineering*, New York, Octagon Books Inc., 1964.

⁴⁷ PIJNING, Ernst, 'Can she be a woman?' *Gender and contraband in the revolutionary Atlantic*, in CATTERALL, Douglas, CAMPBELL, Jodi, *Women in port: gendering communities, economies, and social networks in Atlantic port cities, 1500-1800*, Leiden, Brill, 2012, pp. 215-250; BIALUSCHEWSKI, Arne, «Pirates, black sailors and seafaring slaves in the Anglo-American maritime world, 1716-1726», in *Journal of Caribbean History*, 45, 2/2011, pp. 143-158; KINKOR, Kenneth J., *Black men under the black flag*, in PENNELL, C. Richard (ed.), *Bandits at sea*, cit., pp. 195-210; REDIKER, Marcus, *Liberty beneath the Jolly Roger: the lives of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, pirates*, in PENNELL, C. Richard (ed.), *Bandits at Sea*, cit., pp. 299-320; DEPAUW, Linda Grant, *Seafaring women*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

of Jamaica, especially, had previously engaged in inter-colonial trade, as determined by shipping patterns recorded in the *Shipping Lists* and the early commercial efforts initiated by the SSC.

*** The author**

Nadine Hunt teaches African History at York University, Canada. She is co-editor, with Olatunji Ojo of *Slavery in Africa and the Caribbean: a history of enslavement and identity since the 18th century*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2012.

URL: < <http://www.studistorici.com/progett/autori/#Hunt> >

Per citare questo articolo:

HUNT, Nadine, «Contraband, free ports, and British merchants in the Caribbean world, 1739-1772», *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea: Contrabbandieri, pirati e frontiere: per una storia delle pratiche informali nell'America Centrale (XVII-XXI secolo)*, 29/04/2013,
URL:< http://www.studistorici.com/2013/04/29/hunt_numero_13/ >

Diacronie Studi di Storia Contemporanea  www.diacronie.it

Risorsa digitale indipendente a carattere storiografico. Uscita trimestrale.
redazione.diacronie@hotmail.it

Comitato di redazione: Marco Abram – Jacopo Bassi – Luca Bufarale – Alessandro Cattunar – Elisa Grandi – Deborah Paci – Fausto Pietrancosta – Matteo Tomasoni – Luca Zuccolo



Diritti: gli articoli di *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea* sono pubblicati sotto licenza Creative Commons 2.5. Possono essere riprodotti a patto di non modificarne i contenuti e di non usarli per fini commerciali. La citazione di estratti è comunque sempre autorizzata, nei limiti previsti dalla legge.