

# In Between Brutality and Rebellion: An Analysis of the Role of Slaves on Ten Tharp Properties in 1805 Trelawny, Jamaica

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## Introduction

In this presentation, I have attempted to organize data of close to 3000 enslaved people from 10 Tharp properties predominantly in Trelawny. The data is taken from “John Tharp Details of Inventory Volume 104 Folio 33 April 24, 1805” located at the Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town, Jamaica. I have analyzed the data to understand how labor was deployed on these estates and by extension similar estates across Jamaica. Many publications on the enslaved population elaborate on the better known aspects of slave revolts and rebellions consequent to the brutality of owners and the injustices of slavery, and the general economy of the estates. Fewer publications describe and analyze how enslaved personnel were deployed on estates that allowed these estates to function as efficient industrial complexes. This analysis of the John Tharp property inventories provide an insight into this stage of an enslaved person’s life - between brutality and rebellion.

The Tharp properties at the time of John Tharp’s death included seven plantations and three pens. These plantations were sugar estates comprising residential buildings for owners, senior staff and the enslaved population as well as factory buildings comprising the works for the production of sugar, molasses and rum from the sugar cane. These factory buildings included aqueducts, millhouses, boiler houses, distilleries, and other structures associated with the process of manufacturing sugar. The main acreage of the sugar plantation

properties were used for the growing of sugar cane. However, some sections were assigned for use by the enslaved population for production of their own food and small livestock. Other parts were kept as woodland as a lumber resource for the estate, and quarries for the mining of limestone for property buildings, roads and other structures. The sugar estates owned by Tharp at his death were Covey (787 acres), Good Hope (965 acres), Lansquinet (860 acres), Merrywood (480 acres), Pantrepant (2384), Potosi (1100 acres), Wales (870 acres), all located in the parish of Trelawny and close to the largest river in the parish, the Martha Brae.

Pens were properties established for the rearing of livestock which included cattle, horses, mules, pigs, sheep, and fowls. These pens supplied the sugar estates with animals used for conveyance of people and equipment and goods, as well as meat for estate population. Pens owned by Tharp at his death were Windsor (6545 acres), and Top Hill (300 acres) in Trelawny, and Chippenham Park (1508 acres) in St. Ann.

In regard to land size, the estates and pens listed in Trelawny number 14,291 acres. With the addition of Chippenham Park Pen in St Ann the total acreage becomes 15,799. Nonetheless, even properties with acreages noted may have had additional acreages of land associated with them as mountain lands for sourcing lumber.

The inventory of enslaved people listed their names, country of origin, age, occupation, condition and value. This data provides a basis for understanding the relationship between occupation and age, condition and value. To this end, the study classifies and groups related occupations, and outlines how John Tharp deployed his enslaved population.

I have grouped 63 occupation-types into six categories for analytical purposes. The pre-work age versus the working age have been determined and quantified. Within the

workforce the division of labour represented the needs of the properties, the vast majority being field workers who were selected on the basis of physical strength. I have determined that the value of occupations played a major role in determining the value of the worker, but their condition, that is, health, primarily and age secondarily, impacted on this value. The country of origin played no obvious part in value or occupation.

As nine of the ten properties were located in close proximity within the same parish, and the tenth was located in an adjoining parish and could have benefitted from shared human and technical resources, I chose to combine the data of their enslaved populations. Furthermore, as the objective of the analysis was to understand how Tharp deployed his workers to operate successful properties, and to understand his formula for success, the combined data proved helpful. Taken singly, each property reflected its own productivity but such a unitary approach ignored the synergy provided by services that quite likely were provided by adjoining properties. Therefore, to view them as productive entities isolated from one another would underestimate the value of the symbiotic relationship between pens and estates.

This research has laid the groundwork for further study of the population of the slave society.

### **The Tharp Properties and the Enslaved Population**

The productivity of 2973 enslaved people on ten John Tharp properties in Trelawny (see figure 1) and St. Ann circa 1805 contributed to the status of Trelawny being one of the top manufacturing sugar parishes of the island at a time when Jamaica was a leading producer of sugar worldwide.

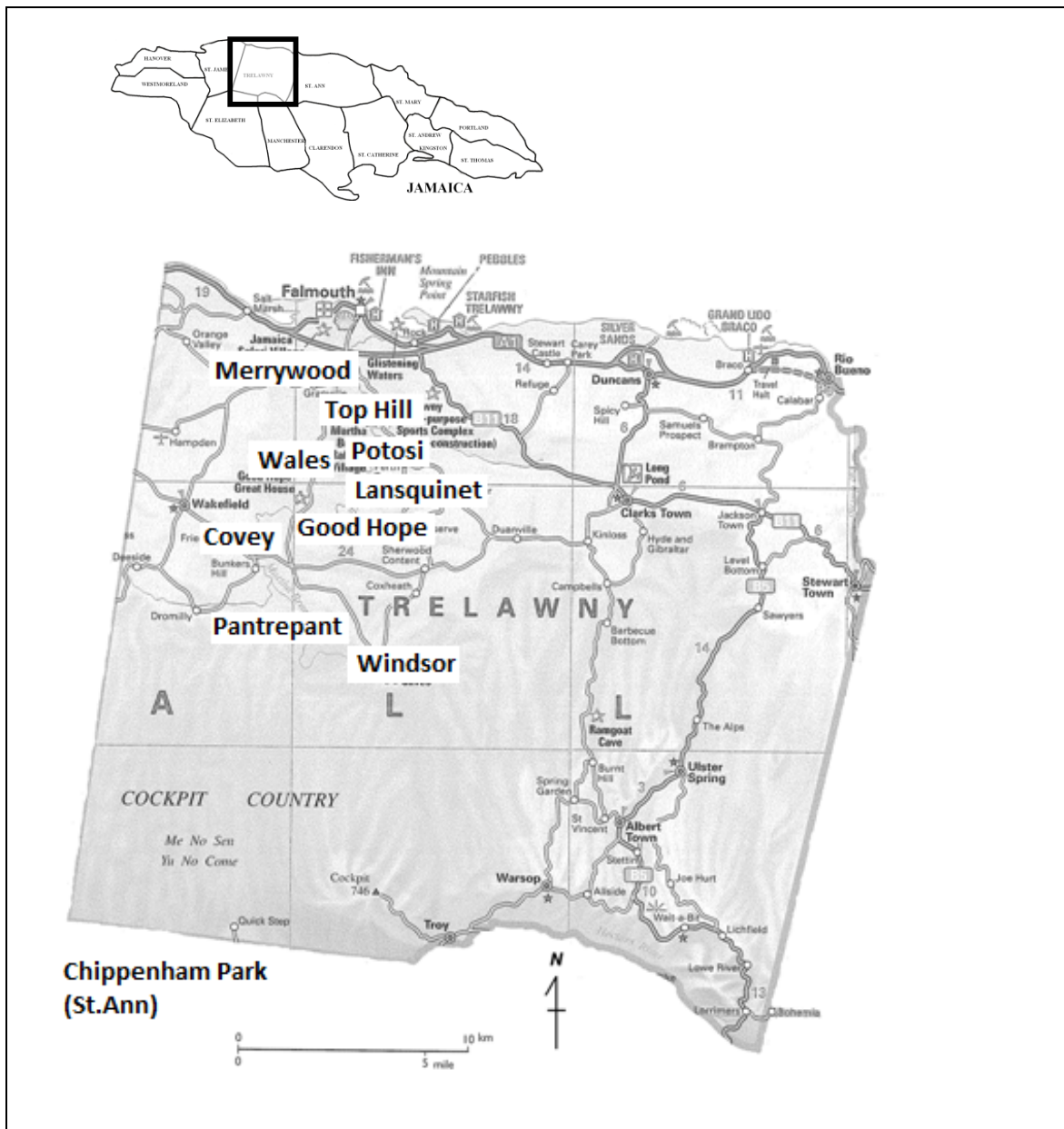
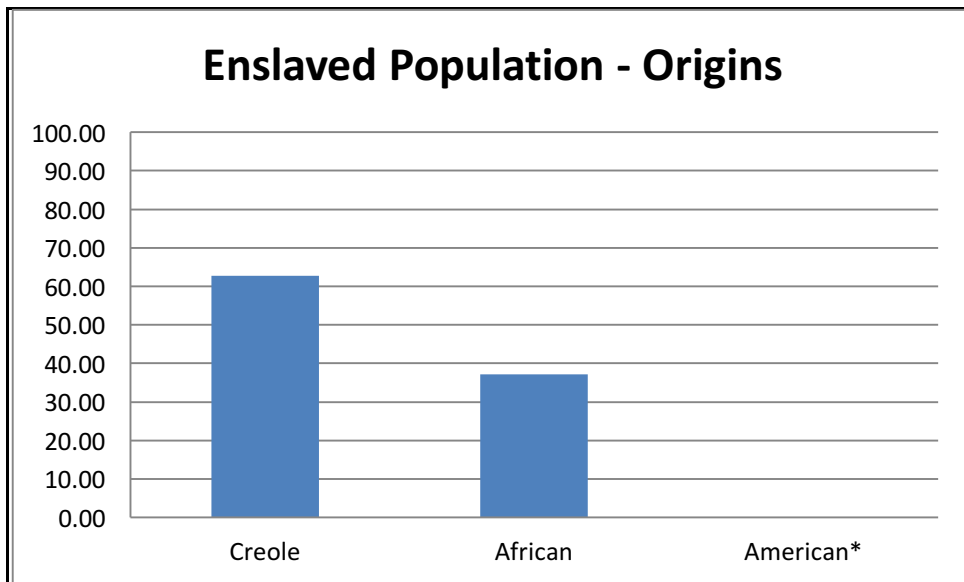


Figure 1. Jamaica and Parish of Trelawny – Tharp Properties

This achievement resulted from careful planning and the effective deployment of the labour force on these properties by John Tharp, Jamaican-born white resident planter, who managed a mix of pens and plantations to attain success in the sugar industry. No clear evidence has been found from the data to indicate that skills brought by the African population were used on the John Tharp properties. However, the enslaved African and

creole populations were retrained in skills required for the properties and contributed to skill sets they would (when later enfranchised) find helpful to live in a British-structured society.

There is no evidence that their original skills were used. The combined labour population on three pens and seven sugar estates comprised approximately 40% of African labour sourced circa mid-1700s from places throughout the continent of Africa from the Songhai Empire just south of the Sahara to the southern part of the continent in South Africa and around the Cape to Mozambique. The other 60% comprised a “Creole” population born in Jamaica of mixed forebears predominantly black with an ancestry of previously transported Africans. A small fraction of the enslaved population, also likely of African extract were “Americans” – enslaved people brought by their Loyalist masters fleeing the consequences of defeat in the American War of Independence circa 1783 (see fig. 2).



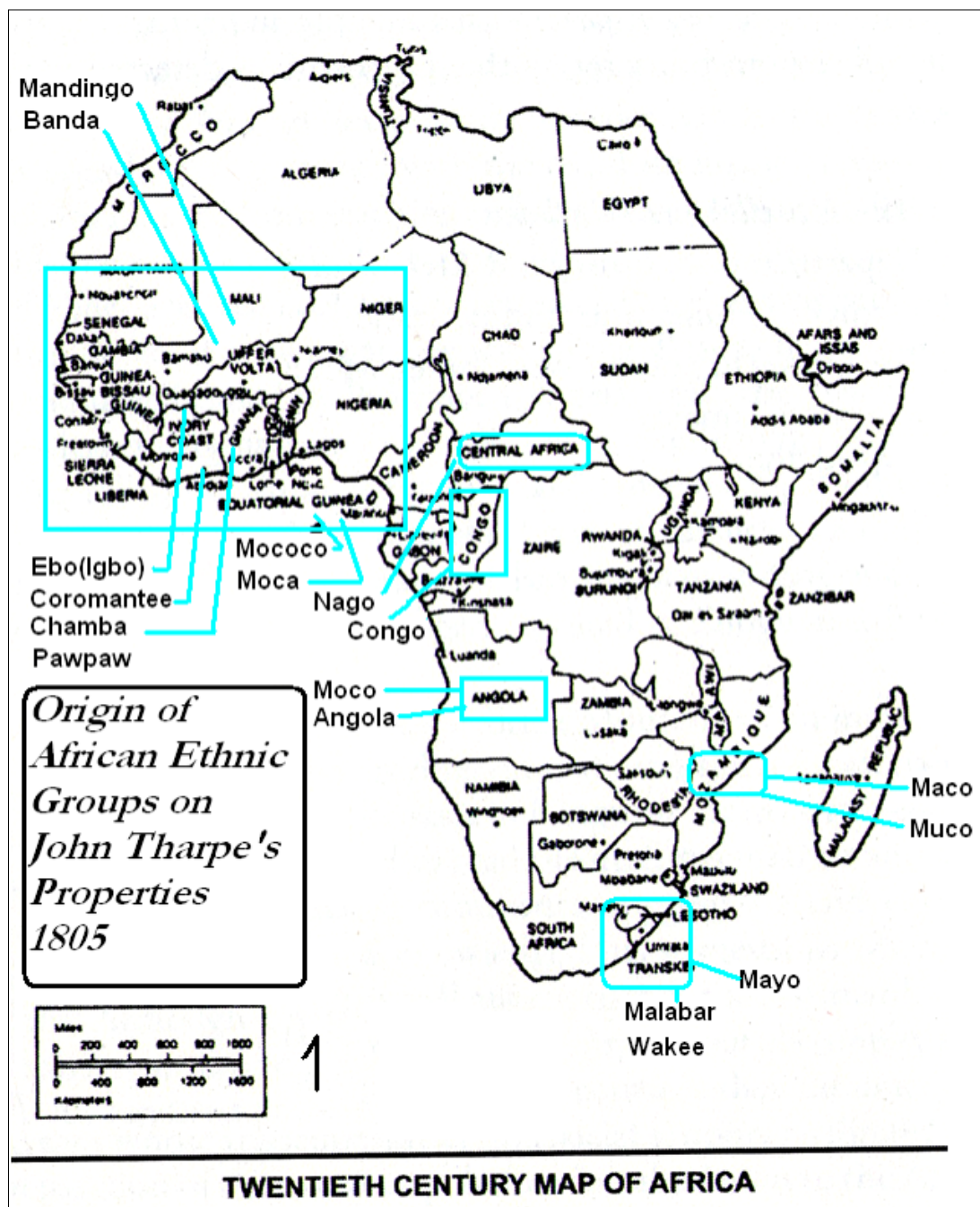
Key to Figure 2

Origin	Actual Numbers	%
Creole	1860	62.73
African	1100	37.10
American*	5	0.17
Total	2965	100

**Figure 2. Source of Enslaved Population on Tharp Properties**

The labour force from Africa included several ethnic groups from Mandingo in the north to Malabar in the south east including Coromantee, Chamba, Moco, Nago, Angola, Wakee, Chago, Banda, Pawpaw, Canya and Congo (see fig. 3). Their ages indicate that they were taken from their homeland after the mid-1700s. This further indicates that their departure from their continent occurred in the later stages of slavery when the demand for labour in the Americas was high. This means that they were likely kidnapped and sold and were not, themselves, slaves in Africa. During the earlier periods of the European trade in Africans, the slave trade involved people already enslaved in their towns and cities in Africa. This early structure of the business involved a trade in slaves per se. Later, however, as demand outstripped supply the business model shifted from a trade in slaves to the capture

of free Africans. This shifted the demographics to people with a wider range of social and economic backgrounds and people with perhaps a higher technical skill set.



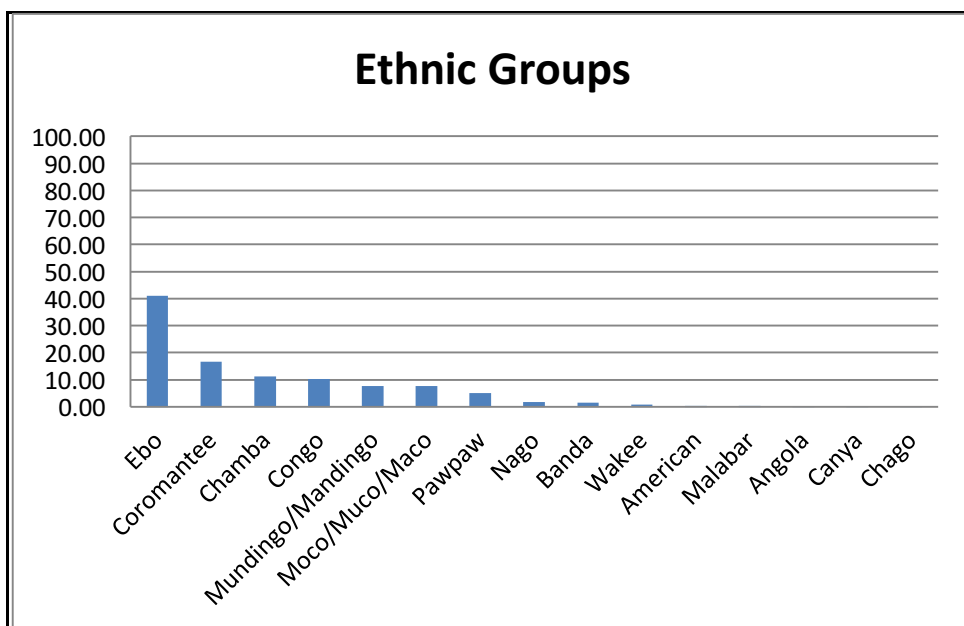
Map from *Ruined by Race* Waibinte Wariboko P Xii adapted by Conolley  
Figure 3. Origin of Workers on the Tharp Properties

Many Africans were taken from areas of high social and political development (throughout Africa, especially west Africa – Coromantee), from kingdoms and empires with knowledge of agriculture (throughout the continent), metal works (throughout Africa, especially west and central Africa –Ebos), construction (throughout Africa, especially areas with monumental stone structures as South Africa – Mayo, Malabar, Wakee, Maco Muco), medicine (areas in North Africa in the region of Timbuctu – Banda and Mandingo) and scholarship (also areas in North Africa in the region of Timbuctu – Banda and Mandingo). While it is not clear what skills they brought with them as individuals, it may be assumed that up to the time of their capture they led productive lives, engaged in activities requiring expertise, knowledge or experience suited to their way of life. What is clear, however, is that there is no evident relationship between the occupation of the workers on the Tharp properties and occupations which, based on area of origin, these workers may have had – agriculture excepted.

While independent evidence is lacking to confirm the social and behavioural characteristic attributed to various African ethnic groups, certain presumptions held by planters governed their selection of and purchase of Africans presented for sale. It may be that the wide ethnic range of Africans on the Tharp properties afforded him the opportunity to understand the propensities of the various ethnic groups, and his business in slave trading provided him the opportunity to source his labour in Africa as he saw fit, possibly based on his interpretations of their social and personal proclivities. Such analysis, if reliable, would assist him in promoting one or the other ethnic group of Africans. Dunkley (1995, 9) indicates that Tharp imported Ebo slaves. Long (1774, 403) describes Ebo women as good labourers, and Ebo men as lazy. Perhaps Tharp accepted Long's understanding which in turn might have been gained by prevailing thought of the time and used this information by



drawing his main workforce from the supposedly more 'pliant' Ebo (Ibwu) who represented 39% of his African population (see fig. 4). If we are to accept that Tharp's knowledge in this regard was not prejudicially founded, but based on observation of human traits, it is ironical that his next highest category was the militaristic and strong Coromantee workers from Akan ethnic groups such as Ashanti, and Fanti, supposedly known for their rebellious nature, and high temper, described by Long (1774, 403) as "haughty, ferocious and stubborn". They made up 16% of the African population on the properties (see fig. 4). If we follow the logic of Tharp's method of selection, it may be argued that he considered Coromantee good/strong workers.



Key to Figure 4

American	5	0.45
Angola	1	0.09
Banda	16	1.45
Canya	1	0.09
Chago	1	0.09
Chamba	119	10.77
Congo	108	9.77
Coromantee	176	15.93
Ebo	431	39.00
Malabar	3	0.27
Moco/Muco/Maco	80	7.24
Mundingo/Mandingo	81	7.33
Nago	19	1.72
Pawpaw	56	5.07
Wakee	8	0.72

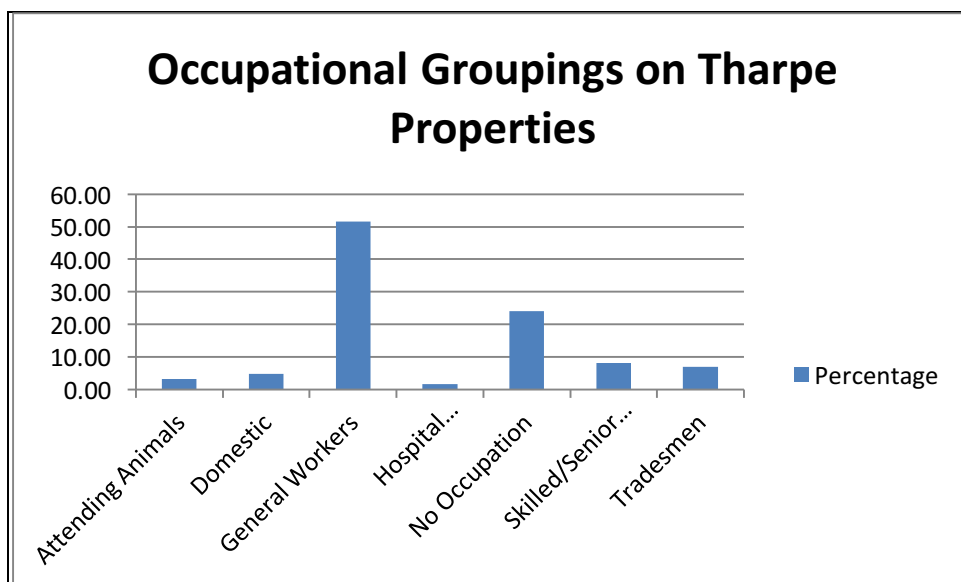
Figure 4 African Ethnic Groups on the Tharp Properties

This judicious selection of his labour force likely played a part in the profitable operations of his properties. How he deployed this workforce may also be seen as a template for his success<sup>1</sup>.

From a total enslaved population of 2973, the workforce itself, based on those listed with occupations, totalled 2260. This meant that 24% of the total population were not actively engaged in work on the properties (see fig. 5). Therefore, the needs of close to a quarter of the enslaved population needed to be met by the production of three quarters of the population. It is evident that the productivity of 75% of the population fulfilled the needs of the remaining 25% of the population. Nonetheless, the pressure on property management to supply all the needs of the population was alleviated by policies allowing the enslaved to “own property”. The enslaved people were encouraged to keep small livestock and plant crops for themselves, the excess of which they were permitted to sell for personal gain at “Sunday Markets”.

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<sup>1</sup> It is of interest to note that in this year of Tharp’s death, 1805, the enslaved population in Trelawny numbered 28,480 (Higman 1995, 255). Of all parishes in the island Trelawny had the dubious distinction of being the parish with the highest enslaved population in the island at the time. Tharp’s enslaved population represented 10.4% of the parish total.



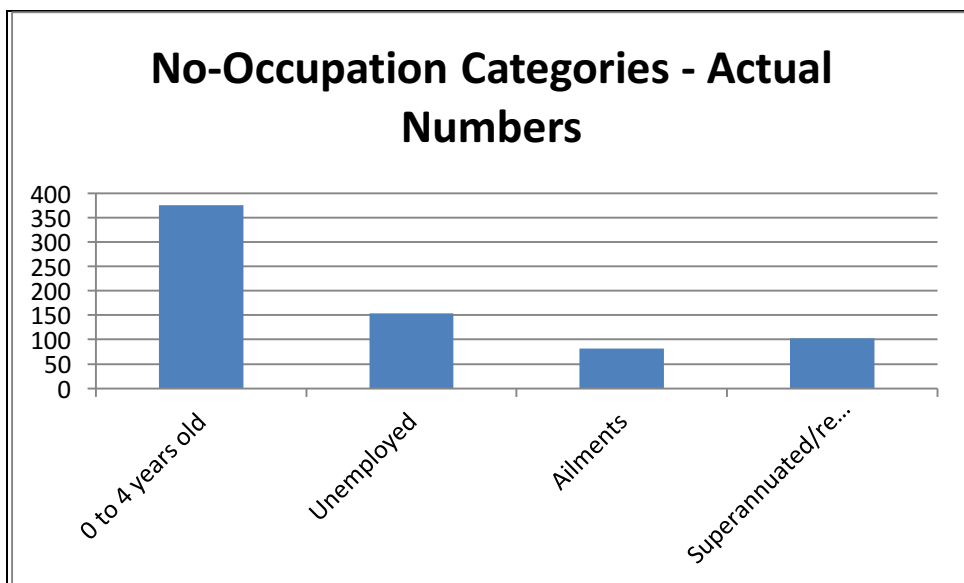
Key to Figure 5

Occupation Groups	Percentage
Attending Animals	3.26
Domestic	4.74
General Workers	51.51
Hospital Workers/Health Workers	1.51
No Occupation	23.99
Skilled/Senior Position Workers	8.14
Tradesmen	6.83

**Figure 5. Occupational Grouping on Tharp Properties**

The group above listed as having no occupation (see key to fig. 5), that is, a quarter of the enslaved population, comprised ages 0 to 4 numbered 376 (52.73%); those retired 102 (14.31%); those with ailments 81 (11.36%); and those unemployed 154 (21.6%). I have included an 'unemployed' category as persons listed as having no occupation but who are nonetheless in healthy condition\* (see fig. 6). It appears that the employment of these people varied with the labour needs of the properties in which event they functioned as a reserve labour source, available for exigencies. This also indicates that the Tharp properties were not under pressure at this time to purchase additional labour or use jobbing slaves. Besides, this

category of unemployed persons represented only 6.8% of the workforce or 5.2% of the total enslaved population.



Key to Figure 6

No Occupation	Actual Number	%
0 to 4 years old	376	52.73
Unemployed*	154	21.60
Ailments	81	11.36
Superannuated/retired	102	14.31
Total	713	100

\*5 years old and over recorded as healthy but without occupation are classified as unemployed. I am assuming that they were available for employment but there was no work for them to do at the time - like our unemployed of today.

**Figure 6. Persons not Employed**

Table 1. Groups not Employable

Not Employable	Number	%
0 to 4 yrs old	376	67.27
Retired	102	18.25
Sick	81	14.49
Total Unemployable	559	100

Of those employed, that is, 2260 workers, close to 70% were general labourers.

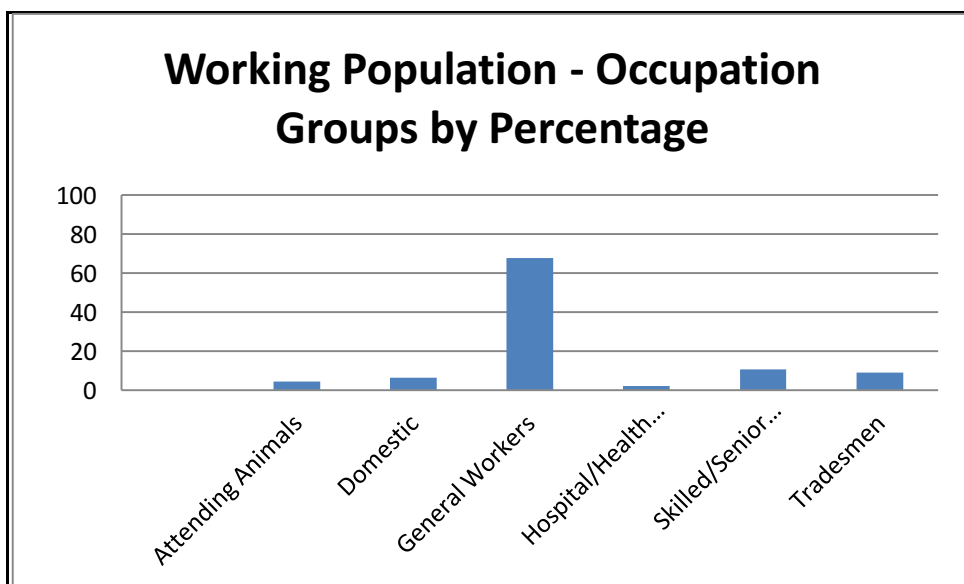
General labourers included Field Worker, Garden Worker, Grass Cutter, Laborer, Stableman,

Watchman, Mason's Laborer, Laborer, Different Small Jobs, and Carrying Hogs meat. On the pens

they were classified as 'labourers' and on the estates 'field workers'. The core of the sugar

estate business was growing the cane and processing it into sugar, molasses and rum. Most of the labour required, however, was employed in the cane field whether planting, nurturing, weeding or reaping the cane. Data demonstrates that the stronger workers were placed in the field where the demand was greatest. Once the cane was reaped and transported to the factory, the processing of the cane into various products was the work of skilled trade's people, also a part of the enslaved population, such as Boilers, Coppers, Distillers, and Leyal Boilers who oversaw this operation.

Approximately 9% of the workforce were tradespeople/artisans which category included the above mentioned Boilers, Coppers, Distillers, and Leyal Boiler. Also within this category were Sawyers, Blacksmiths, Coopers/Coopersmiths, Breadnut Coopers (likely these were artisans who made cartwheels from breadnut lumber), Carpenters, Masons, Plumbers, Tailors, Fishermen, and Lime Burners who supported the work of the property. About 11% of the workers on the properties were skilled or semi-skilled/senior position workers who included Gardiners, Pen Keepers, Drivers, Driveresses, Wharfingers, Sadlers, Mulemen, Cartmen, and Cartboys. Domestics comprised 6.24% of the working population and comprised Cooks, House Girls, House Boys, Domestics, House Wenches, House Women, Washerwomen, Waiting Men, Waiting Boys, and Attendants. 4.3% of the employed attended animals with titles such as Attending Cattle, Attending Hogs, Attending Fowls, Attending Sheep, Attending Small Stock, and Attending Stables. Hospital and Health Care Workers made up only 2% of the working population and included Doctors, Attendants, Assistants, Hospital Men, Hospital Women, those Attending Yaws Children, those Attending Yaws Negroes, Field Nurses, Nurses for Children Swelled Knees, Nurses for Children, those Nursing Children, Midwives, and those Attending Children (see fig. 7).



Key to Figure 7

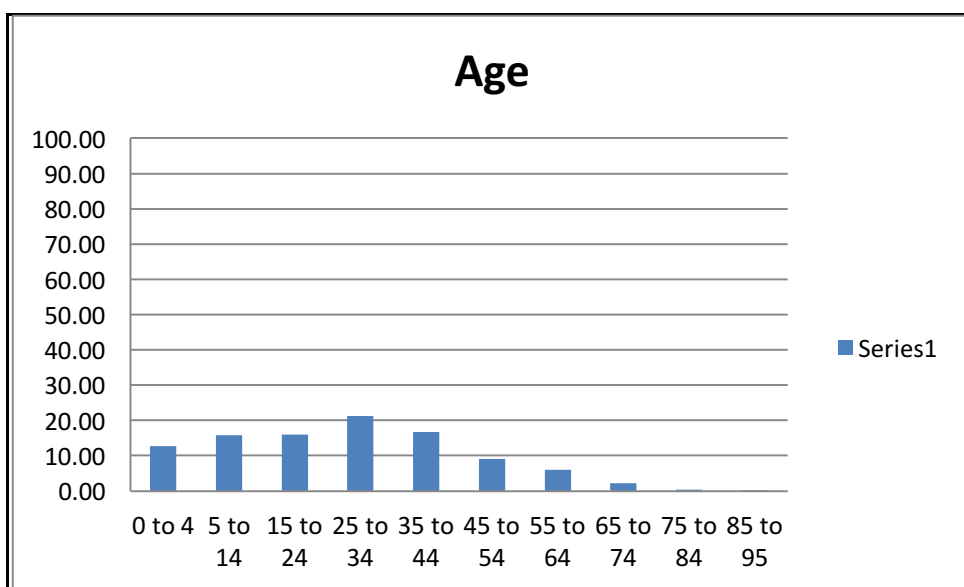
Occupation Groups Pens and Estates		
Attending Animals	97	4.29
Domestics	141	6.24
General Workers	1531	67.77
Hospital Workers/Health Care	45	1.99
Skilled/Senior Position Workers	241	10.67
Tradesmen	204	9.03

**Figure 7. Employed Workers on the Tharp Properties**

Table 2. Classification of Occupational Groups

Occupation Groups – Classification
<b>Attending Animals:</b> Attending Cattle, Attending Hogs, Attending Fowls, Attending Sheep, Attending small stock, Attending stable
<b>Domestics:</b> Cook, House Girl, House Boy, Domestic, House Wench, House Woman, Washerwoman, Waiting Man, Waiting Boy, Attendant
<b>General Workers:</b> Field Worker, Garden Worker, Grass Cutter, Laborer, Stableman, Watchman, Mason's Laborer, Laborer, Different Small Jobs, Carrying Hogs meat
<b>Hospital Workers/Health Care:</b> Doctor, Attendants, Assistants, Hospital Man, Hospital Woman, Attending Yaws Children, Attending Yaws Negroes, Field Nurse, Nurse for Children Swelled Knees, Nurse for Children, Nursing Children, Midwife, Attending Children
<b>Skilled/Senior Position Workers:</b> Gardiner, Pen Keeper, Driver, Driveress, Wharfinger, Sadler, Muleman, Cartman, Cartboy
<b>Tradesmen:</b> Boiler, Sawyer, Blacksmith, Cooper/Coopersmith, Breadnut Cooper, Carpenter, Copper, Distiller, Leyal Boiler, Mason, Plumber, Tailor, Fisherman, Lime Burner

Also impacting the operations of the properties and that of the entire population on the estate were the health and age of the workforce. Age group 25-35 comprised the highest working population. The pre-work age, up to age 4, comprised close to 13% of the population (see fig. 7a).



Key to Figure 7a

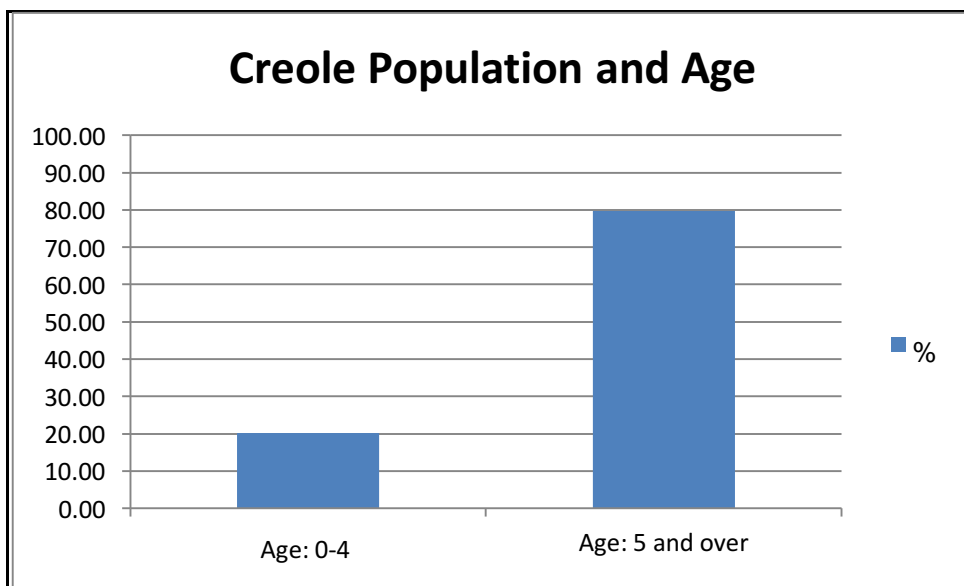
0 to 4	376	12.71
5 to 14	465	15.71
15 to 24	471	15.92
25 to 34	630	21.29
35 to 44	493	16.66
45 to 54	267	9.02
55 to 64	176	5.95
65 to 74	65	2.20
75 to 84	13	0.44
85 to 95	3	0.10

**Figure 7a. Age Ranges of Enslaved Population on Tharp Properties**

As noted before, the Creoles comprised the highest population group. Of their number, 376 or 20% were in the 0 to 4 age group. It is not clear if this percentage reflects a vibrant emerging Creole population or a Creole population that is not replacing itself (see



fig. 8). That 63% of the population was born locally means, however, that the Tharp properties reliance on imported labour was diminishing and his properties could possibly manage without further imported labour, a matter that would be of importance when the transatlantic trade in Africans was outlawed in 1807.



Key to Figure 8

Age	Actual Number	%
0-4	376	20.22
5 and over	1484	79.78

**Figure 8. Age of the Creole Population on Tharp Properties**

As noted before, while some of the population listed as superannuated, having passed the age of 50, were still active on the workforce, most (96%) superannuated were over 50 and valued at zero. Only 4% were superannuated at an age below 50, specifically at ages ranging between 38 and 49 (two Ebos and two creoles, including an Ebo female age 38 (see table 3).

Table 3. Ages at Which Workers are Superannuated

Superannuated Ages	Actual Number	%
38-49	5	4.27
over 50	112	95.73

There were 15 persons or 13% of the superannuated category with a listed occupation – 7 grass cutters, 1 carpenter and 7 watchmen. All the grass cutters were female and all but one had a value of 20 pounds. All the watchmen were male with zero value. The carpenter strangely also had zero value. Of the total superannuated population, 87% were superannuated without a listed occupation (see table 4).

Table 4. Superannuated Workers with and without Occupation

Superannuated	Actual Number	%
Superannuated Without Occupation	102	87.18
Superannuated with Occupation	15	12.82

Also, there was a nil value on 83% of all superannuated persons (see table 5).

Table 5. Value of Superannuated Workers

Superannuated value in Pounds	Actual Number	%
0	97	82.91
10	4	3.42
20	10	8.55
30	2	1.71
40	3	2.56
50	1	0.85
Over 50	0	0
Total	117	100

Notwithstanding figures suggesting that persons were superannuated at age 50, the workforce actually comprised 226 persons who were past the age of 50 but still active. The eldest worker not superannuated was 79 years old listed simply as ‘weakly’. He was Oxford, a Coromantee Copper with a value of 100 pounds. The eldest workers (2) were 85 (albeit both listed as superannuated – Congo watchmen). It appears that there was no policy governing age of superannuation but each case was determined individually, on its own merit.

“Value” is usually understood as the money paid for the enslaved worker and what that worker could be sold for. However value goes beyond that. “Value” was not only the cost of changing ownership but also the importance of the position to the estate and efficiency of the incumbent carrying out the task. In this regard a mason would attract a greater value than a labourer, but among masons those who were more productive (their word “able”) would have a greater value. Similarly those who were healthy were more valuable to the estate. Additionally, although age may reflect value, job, and health were more important. As noted above, the Coromantee Copper had a value to the estate of 100 pounds though he was at age 79, the third eldest on the 10 properties. This is borne out by other cases. A carpenter, 48 years old, a Coromantee from Lansquinet, with incurable sores (possibly diabetic) had a value of 50 pounds. On the other hand, another carpenter, a Creole, George, from Good Hope Estate, described as able was valued much higher at 180 pounds though he was even older at 55 years old. Also, Billy, a Creole at Lansquinet estate, age 45, is the highest valued carpenter at 220 pounds.

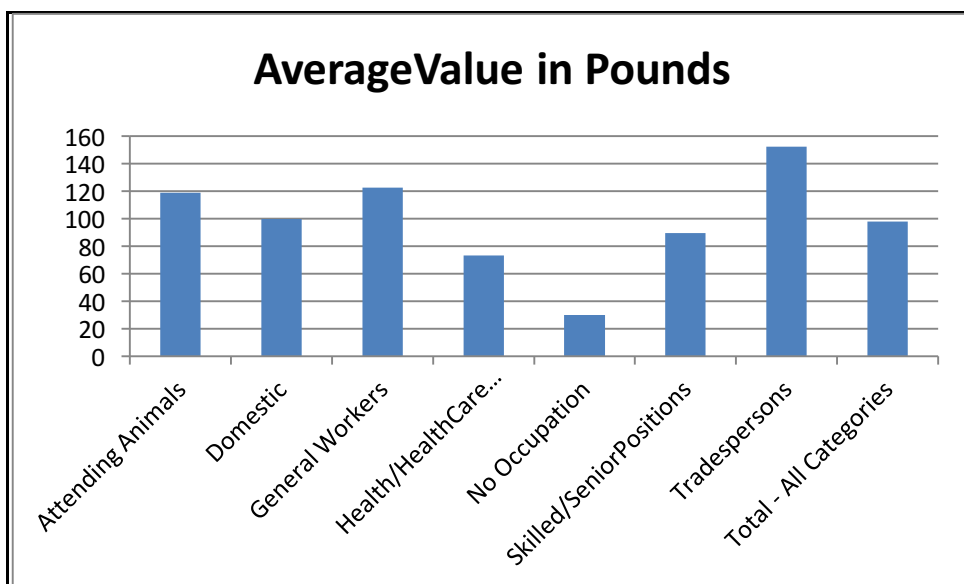
Generally, however, age is of some consideration. The youngest carpenter is John from Merrywood Estate 13 years old valued at 120 pounds and described as able. The average age of carpenters is 32 and the average value is 152. It is not surprising therefore to find that tradespeople as a category are valued higher than other categories of workers. Neither is it surprising that the category listed as ‘no occupation’ should represent the lowest value, as this group did not belong to the income-earning categories of the properties.

Jobs in the category of General Workers averaged 122 pounds per person, Attending Animals valued an average of 119 pounds, and Domestics averaged 100 pounds. It is surprising to note, however, that Skilled/Senior Position Workers and Health Workers both fell below 100 pounds on average. This may be attributed, however, to widely fluctuating

values within their categories. Within the health care category, for example, workers seemed to have been given positions at the hospitals because they themselves were not fit for laborious tasks and, unfortunately, their value reflected their condition. Nonetheless, in the same category were doctors who were valued at 180 pounds in the same value range as tradespeople. The highest valued doctor at 250 pounds was Will, a Creole, from Wales estate aged 25. Midwives, surprisingly, were poorly valued ranging from a high of 100 pounds to a low of nil. There were two valued at nil. One was listed as 'weakly' and the other, most peculiarly, was Beli, 30 years old from Chippenham Park Pen, who was listed as 'insane'.

As with Health/Hospital Workers, there were persons in the Skilled/Senior Position Workers category who were highly valued. Workers in this category, however, varied widely in their value depending on their condition. For example an able watchman, an Ebo, Derby, age 23, from Chippenham Park Pen was valued at 180 pounds while a 'weakly' Ebo watchman Swift, 48 years old from Windsor Pen was valued at nil. The highest valued people in this category were drivers. For example, Kingston, a Creole, 34 years old from Windsor Pen listed as able, and a head driver from Good Hope Estate, Quaco, 45 year old Creole also were each valued at 250 pounds. The lowest valued driver at 60 pounds was Creole, Anthony from Covey Estate, 42 years old who suffered from a sore leg. Yet another driver with a sore leg, Hector, 35, a Creole from Lansquinet Estate had a value of 220 pounds. The only female driver (driveress) listed was Elsie, 55 years old, weakly, a Creole from Covey Estate valued at 100 pounds. Most drivers were as highly valued as tradespeople.

The total value of the enslaved population on the Tharp properties was over 290,000 pounds (see fig. 9).



Key to Figure 9

Employment Categories	Sum Value	Number in Set	Average Value
Attending Animals	11670	98	119
Domestic	14090	141	100
General Workers	187615	1532	122
Health/HealthCare Workers	3290	45	73
No Occupation	21485	714	30
Skilled/Senior Positions	21420	239	90
Tradespersons	30910	203	152
Total - All Categories	290480	2972	98

**Figure 9. Occupation Categories Values**

In regard to the properties themselves, they were in close proximity to one another facilitating exchanges in persons with different labour skills between them as the need arose. On the one hand, the pens provided livestock for the estates and on the other hand, the estates helped to finance the pens, grew sugar cane, and manufactured and exported sugar to the benefit of the economy of the properties, both pens and estates.

Additionally, another component of the estates' success was their proximity to the Martha Brae River which allowed them the convenience of water wheels to turn the mills thereby providing a reliable and cheap power source.

### **Possible Uses of This Research**

This basic information and preliminary analysis of the Tharp inventory of enslaved people may provide the basis for comparative work on similar estates within the parish as well as in other parishes across the island. In this way a clearer understanding may be derived of how the workforce was organized and where efficiencies and inefficiencies within the ‘slave society’/enslaved culture arose.

It may also provide insights into hierarchies within the enslaved population based on their skill, worth and contribution to the properties. It may also be used to demonstrate that the plantations and pens, a virtual closed community, self-sustaining in many ways, provided a model of subsistence which the later freed population could adopt in their own newly found communities thereby lessening their need to resort to full reliance on the estates. It may be used as the basis for a discussion on the emerging middle class comprising the free Creole population that had the skill set in masons, carpenters, farmers, blacksmiths and others to support this self-sustaining community.

Furthermore, by using this study, later research may build on it to answer questions such how ready were the Tharp properties for the discontinuation of the slave trade in 1807; then the further question, given the skill sets of the enslaved population, how ready were these workers for enfranchisement 1838.

It may also provide the basis for comparing workforces of freed populations to that of enslaved populations to explore the thesis of the efficiencies versus inefficiencies and profitability versus non-profitability of slave labour.

Unfortunately, the records provided in the Tharp inventory did not differentiate the gender of the enslaved population. Any attempt to use this record to discuss gender differentiations on the properties would therefore have to be on the basis of names. In this

regard, many names were not gender specific, such as 'Tamarind Tree', 'Trelawny', and many other names and therefore could not be used reliably to differentiate male and female. Nonetheless, recognizing this limitation useful information may be garnered at a later stage by use of this data as most of the names clearly indicate gender.

Furthermore, garnering additional information on total property acreages (including mountain lands) specifying areas under cultivation would provide data for the investigation of the relationship between property acreages and profitability. A final point relevant to buildings, specifically structures used by enslaved persons, is that this study may provide an insight into and a launch pad for the investigation of the occupants of the buildings in the enslaved village.

The Tharp properties, therefore, provide a valuable insight into plantation life in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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