

# Slavery and the Service Economy in 1673 San Juan<sup>1</sup>

DAVID STARK

Grand Valley State University  
Departamento de Historia

## RESUMEN

Nuestro conocimiento sobre la esclavitud en sectores urbanos del Caribe español colonial es en general limitado, y prácticamente inexistente sobre ciudades como San Juan. Debido a su localización y la naturaleza de su economía, San Juan era distinta a muchas otras ciudades del Caribe, notablemente en asuntos de raza y relaciones de género. San Juan era una ciudad con una gran economía de servicio dirigida a satisfacer las necesidades de la guarnición militar. Esto brindaba unas oportunidades económicas a los esclavos que no estaban disponibles en otros lugares. El censo de San Juan de 1673 nos permite precisar la situación de la población civil de la ciudad, identificar su composición racial, y calcular la proporción de los sexos dentro de varios segmentos de la ciudad. Los datos censales también se prestan para un análisis residencial detallado y de composición de hogares, así como para patrones residenciales. Existía una desproporción de género entre blancos, negros libres o personas de raza mixta y segmentos esclavizados de la población donde las mujeres superaban a los hombres. Las cifras de mujeres (esclavas y libres) eran altas en el terreno social y las áreas económicas. Más aún, blancos y no-blancos vivían juntos en las mismas calles y hogares. Las diferencias raciales no eran tan marcadas, lo que tuvo implicaciones para las relaciones raciales. [*Palabras clave*: San Juan siglo XVII, esclavitud urbana, economía de servicio, demografía].

## ABSTRACT

Our knowledge of slavery in urban settings throughout the colonial Spanish Caribbean is limited at best; for cities such as San Juan it is virtually non-existent. Because of its location and the nature of its economy San Juan was different from other cities throughout the Caribbean, most notably in terms of race and gender relations. San Juan was a city with a large service economy catering to the needs of its military garrison. As such it afforded slaves with greater economic opportunities not available elsewhere. Information contained in the 1673 San Juan census allows one to ascertain the civil status of the city's population, identify its racial composition, and calculate the sex ratio within the various segments of the population. Census data also lends itself to a detailed analysis of residential unit and household composition as well as residential patterns. In addition, it is possible to reconstruct urban slave ownership patterns. A sex-ratio imbalance existed among the Whites, Free Blacks or persons of mixed race, and enslaved segments of the population, with females outnumbering males. Women (free and unfree) figured prominently in the social landscape and economic arenas. Moreover, Whites and non-Whites lived side by side on the same street and together in the same household. Differences based on race were not as marked, with lasting implications for the tenor of race relations. [**Key words:** 17<sup>th</sup> century San Juan, urban slavery, service economy, and demography].

*Slaves became a permanent presence in the life of the port city, a precondition and function of its growth, and a reminder that there was no Atlantic World without Africa and its peoples.*

De la Fuente

When one thinks of slavery in the Caribbean the thought that often comes to mind is not of slaves actively engaged in the life of a port city, but of slaves toiling away under the close supervision of a cruel overseer on a sugar plantation. This image has been indelibly imprinted in our popular imagination. Slavery was equated with sugar, and both came to be synonymous with Caribbean societies. Little consideration, if any, was given to the diversity of economic activity or variety of life experience of enslaved populations. However, sugar cultivation and production was not ubiquitous, neither did it prevail throughout the colonial period. Moreover, the plight of slaves was not uniform, as living and working conditions varied across the Americas. Consequently further research is needed; in particular with regard to slavery in urban settings, and more specifically within colonial Spanish Caribbean cities.

Whereas sugar and slavery were the driving force behind the origins and development of cities throughout much of the non-Hispanic Caribbean, cultivation of this commodity using enslaved labor was not as important in the growth and prosperity of their Hispanic counterparts. Thus, not all cities were alike. Some like San Juan functioned as military presidios and therefore relied upon a large service economy providing goods (food) and services (lodging, entertainment, cooking and cleaning etc.) that catered to the needs of the military garrison (Stark, 2008, p. 258). Although slaves figured prominently in urban settings such as San Juan, until recently scholars have overlooked the peculiar demographic characteristics of slavery in relation to the service economy. Studies on urban slavery in the colonial Caribbean have focused almost exclusively on Havana (the largest city in the Hispanic Caribbean) and Bridgetown (the largest city in the non-Hispanic Caribbean) and to a lesser extent on Spanish Town (former capital of Spanish Jamaica) (De la Fuente, 2008; De la Fuente & García del Pino, 1996; Welch, 2003; Robertson, 2005). What follows seeks to broaden our understanding of the ways in which urban settings, such as San Juan, afforded slaves with greater economic opportunities and social mobility often not available elsewhere.

Owing to the scarcity of demographic data and historical records the study of San Juan's enslaved population has long been neglected. But, thanks in part to the census that Juan Guilarte de Salazar, a priest

assigned to serve the cathedral of San Juan, conducted in 1673, one can reconstruct diverse aspects of slavery during a period of history for which such information is particularly scarce. The 1673 San Juan census allows us to identify the size of the city's enslaved population and calculate the sex ratio within this segment of the population. Census data also lend themselves to a reconstruction of the spatial distribution of enslaved men and women throughout the city and to discern residential patterns. In addition, the enumeration of enslaved persons permits an in-depth examination of slaveholding patterns. The analysis of these facets of slave life enables one to draw inferences on the tenor of master-slave relations and the very nature of slavery itself. As we shall see, slavery and the lived experience of enslaved populations in San Juan was affected by the limited role of sugar cultivation and production in the agricultural economy as well as the diversity and flexibility of a large service economy serving the needs of a military garrison.

### The Emergence of a Service Economy in San Juan

San Juan was established in 1521 on the islet of San Juan Bautista, located at the mouth of the harbor, and connected to the mainland by a bridge.<sup>2</sup> Throughout its history, the city's inhabitants have had to protect themselves against the threat of foreign incursions. The first such danger was that posed by the attacks of Carib Indians. This was followed by the threat of French corsairs, beginning in the 1530s and continuing through the 1550s, which prompted initial efforts to fortify the city. The city's defence was first entrusted to local militia, but as the Crown became increasingly concerned with foreign interlopers a garrison of professional soldiers was assigned to defend San Juan in 1582. Funds, known as the *situado*, were also allocated for the upkeep of the garrison, as was common practice in other fortified cities throughout the circum-Caribbean (Picó, 2006, pp. 79-81). It was not long before the city's rudimentary fortifications and military garrison were tested. Sir Francis Drake and George Clifford, the third Earl of Cumberland, attacked the city in November 1595 and in the summer of 1598, respectively. Clifford occupied the city for 65 days and, were it not for an epidemic that severely depleted his forces, the island may have remained under English control. Clifford seized as booty all the ginger, hides, and sugar in San Juan and the surrounding countryside, and then burned most of the houses in the city. This escapade forced the Crown to improve the city's fortifications and increase the size of the garrison.

The next test of the city's defence came in September 1625 with the attack of a Dutch squadron under the command of General Boudewijn Hendriksz. Although unable to occupy the city as Clifford had done, the Dutch forces looted and laid waste to it. In the words of Fernando Picó, this was "the worst disaster in the history of the city" (Picó, 2006, p. 87). Hendriksz's attack prompted the Crown to undertake the construction of a series of fortified walls encircling the city to protect against future attacks. Construction began in 1630 and work continued intermittently until the 1780s (Picó, 2006, p. 88). In the process, San Juan was transformed into a military outpost much like Portobelo, Cartagena, Havana, and Saint Augustine (Castillero-Calvo, 1999, p. 201). As was the case in these cities, the construction of military fortifications had a stimulating effect on the local economy. Local inhabitants--both free and unfree--not only provided building materials, but also the requisite labor force (De la Fuente & García del Pino, 1996, p. 8). As demand for goods and services in San Juan increased, both the city's population and economy became geared toward satisfying these needs.

Meanwhile, throughout the early years of the seventeenth century the Hispanic Caribbean became increasingly marginalized from commercial traffic between Spain and the Americas. A variety of factors, including changes in navigation routes, difficulties associated with the fleet system of trade, and a prohibition on merchants from the Canary Islands trading with the Spanish Caribbean, led to a virtual paralysis of legal commercial trade (Andrews, 1978; Morales Padrón, 1955). From 1625 to 1650, the levels of maritime traffic between Puerto Rico and Seville declined to less than one-fifth of that of the previous quarter-century. A similar situation prevailed in Havana during the first half of the seventeenth century, with the infrequency of trade being particularly acute during the 1640s (Macías Domínguez, 1978, p. 143). However, the situation was worse in San Juan if we are to believe contemporary accounts; from 1651 to 1662 not a single registered ship from Spain arrived at the island, and from 1651 to 1675 there were only eight ships that departed Seville for Puerto Rico (Picó, 2006, p. 75). With few legal outlets for their goods, island residents were increasingly drawn into the complex web of intra-Caribbean trade. As they did so, the focus of Puerto Rico (and San Juan's) trade shifted away from Spain and the Hispanic Caribbean to the nearby Danish port of Saint Thomas, the British Virgin Islands of Tortola and Virgin Gorda, and the Dutch possessions of Saint Eustatius, and Curaçao. Illegal trade not only flourished in San Juan, but it was openly

conducted along the island's coastlines as well (Stark, 2007; López Cantos, 1985). Thus, despite the decline in legal commercial traffic, there was still a need to provision ships as well as their crews and passengers, which contributed to the proliferation of the local service economy.

The island (and city's) dependence on the *situado*, which provided the largest supply of specie for the island, also impacted the service economy. No *situado* arrived from Mexico in seventeen of the years between 1650 and 1700, and only fifty-three percent of the total that should have arrived actually reached the island in these years (López Cantos, 1975, pp. 135-37). Such shortcomings in the *situado* meant that months or years might pass without official salaries being paid, which forced individuals in the Crown's employ to rely on credit or loans from local residents. This resulted in periodic economic downturns. However, in the years when the *situado* arrived it provided a much-needed infusion of capital that helped fund the local market, and generated greater demand for goods and services.

Four points must be made about late seventeenth-century San Juan in order to understand the demographics of city life during the period. First, this urban enclave differed from the rest of the island (López Cantos, 1975, p. 55; Giusti Cordero, 1993). Not only was it the island's capital and seat of military, political and judicial authority and power, but also its economic hub. Because of these factors it became home to a number of officials and their respective families and/or households. Furthermore, the presence of the military garrison created an on-going demand for the provision of food, lodging, entertainment, and other services, giving rise to a service economy that was not present in other island communities.<sup>3</sup> Second, though legal trade between Spain (Seville) and Puerto Rico (San Juan) was minimal, illegal trade thrived. As Joseph Dorsey noted, "from approximately 1670 to 1765, Puerto Rico was the center of international contraband trade in the Caribbean" (Dorsey, 2003, p. 24). San Juan's inhabitants were active participants in inter- and intra-regional trade; especially don Francisco Calderón, his siblings, and in-laws, whose extensive land holdings and involvement in clandestine trade made them one of the wealthiest and most powerful families on the island (Murga Sanz & Huerga, 1990, pp. 64-65). Third, situated as it was on the small island of San Juan Bautista, at the mouth of the harbor, and connected to the main island by a bridge, living space within the city was at a premium, and the population spilled over into adjacent areas. In addition, land scarcity, coupled with the poor quality of the sandy soils, made it dependent on

provisions from the main island and, to a lesser extent, from abroad. It also created opportunities for vendors, many of who were typically females, to peddle their wares and services. Fourth, sugar was grown, albeit in small quantities, in outlying areas of San Juan, and only here do we find labor-intensive agriculture. Owners of sugar *ingenios* (mills) such as Juan de Amézquita, María de los Ríos, and Constanza de Torres, figured prominently among the city's elite and were also its largest slaveholders. These four factors shaped the contours of slavery and the service economy in 1673 San Juan.

### The Demographic Profile of Slavery in San Juan

The 1673 census grouped the inhabitants of San Juan by *casa*, or household. This term encompassed all residents who inhabited a particular dwelling or property.<sup>4</sup> Thus, a household might consist of people of different race and civil status including Whites, Enslaved, and Free Blacks or persons of mixed race, all living together under one roof. For instance, the household residing at number 13 Calle de la Fortaleza included don Agustín Guilarte (White), doña Leonor de Valdés, his wife (White), María (enslaved by them), and Silverio de Saucedo, Felipa de Toro, and Ana de Saucedo (Free Blacks or persons of mixed race) (Stark & De Castro Sedgwick, 1997, p. 29).<sup>5</sup> The census identifies the head of the household and the relationship of the people living in that house to its head. For example, the household residing at number 240 Calle de la Plaza y Santiago comprised seven members: María de Martín, her children Joseph, Josepha (his wife), and Juan; Anna Martín, Gerónimo Espinosa (her husband) and their son Melchor, all of whom were Free Blacks or persons of mixed race (Stark & De Castro Sedgwick, 1997, p. 60).<sup>6</sup> Here we have three generations living under one roof. More importantly, we can see from this example that neither a white inhabitant nor men headed all households. Finally, it should be noted that some inhabitants of San Juan, especially wealthy ones, possibly also had residences and/or property in the countryside. During the seventeenth century a number of the city's inhabitants probably resided in outlying areas and traveled to the city on weekends and whenever there was a civic or religious celebration that required their presence there.<sup>7</sup>

Individuals aged ten or over enumerated in the census total 1,794. Of these, 820 or forty-six percent were Whites, 662 or thirty-seven percent were enslaved Blacks, and 312 or seventeen percent were Free Blacks or free persons of mixed race (Stark, 2008, p. 262). Unlike the British, Dutch, and French sugar-producing islands, Whites comprised the largest share of San Juan's (and probably the island's)

population. By comparison, according to a 1680 census of British-controlled Barbados, the most densely populated Caribbean island, there were 32,473 enslaved persons or sixty percent of that island's total population (Dunn, 1969, p. 7). Sugar production declined in the mid-seventeenth century throughout Puerto Rico, leading to the rise of the *hato* economy (in which animal husbandry and cattle ranching were combined with the export of hides, dyewoods and hardwoods or other cash crops like tobacco or cotton). With the demise of sugarcane cultivation, more land was devoted to raising livestock and other less labor-intensive cash crops, which did not require a large labor force or one dominated by young adult males. A decline in the trafficking of human cargo to the island ensued and subsequently led to a decrease in the proportion of enslaved persons both in San Juan's and the island's overall population (Stark, 2009, p. 495). Economic conditions and demographic circumstances on the island therefore evolved in ways different than those in sugarcane-growing areas of the non-Hispanic Caribbean. This had lasting implications for the tenor of race relations. Differences based on race were not as marked in the city or on the island, and the social distance between enslaver and enslaved was relatively small prior to the nineteenth-century resurgence of sugar production, especially in the case of small holdings (Scarano, 1984, p. 41; San Miguel, 1988, p. 86).

Of the 1,794 individuals enumerated by the census, 585 or thirty-three percent are males and 1,209 or sixty-seven percent are females. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1. Sex-Ratio Distribution among San Juan's Population, 1673**

Category	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Whites	269	32.8	551	67.2
Enslaved Persons	218	31.4	444	67.1
Free Blacks or Persons of Mixed Race	98	31.4	214	68.6
Totals	585	32.6	1209	67.4

Source: AGI, *Santo Domingo, 173*.

Women outnumbered men in San Juan by a ratio of more than two to one. It is worth noting that the city's population remained skewed in favor of women for much of the next two centuries. For example, the



1846 San Juan census reveals that males comprised thirty-three percent of the population, whereas females amounted to sixty-seven percent; thus, the proportion of males and females was identical to that in 1673 (Mayo Santana, Negrón Portillo & Mayo López, 1997, p. 32).

Another particularly striking aspect of the 1673 census is the apparent uniformity (or lack of variation) in the proportion of men to women among the city's population of Whites, Enslaved, and Free Blacks or persons of mixed race. It is unlikely that a similar shortage of men existed in other Caribbean cities at this time. We know, for example, that there were more men than women in Bridgetown in 1680; while Arlette Gautier describes the seventeenth-century French Antilles as a "masculine" society (Gautier, 1985, p. 31-32; Moitt, 2001, p. 8). In this regard, San Juan was very different from both its English and its French counterparts. The abundance of women coupled with the scarcity of men in San Juan created a sex-ratio imbalance and resulted in a prolonged demographic crisis. Therefore, one is left wondering to what we may attribute the large number of female inhabitants in San Juan.

As a port city, there was a demand for certain services (such as cooks, seamstresses, vendors, washerwomen and prostitutes) in San Juan that did not exist on a similar scale elsewhere on the island. Enslaved females actively participated in the service economy as *ganadoras*, hiring themselves out as part of an informal arrangement in which the slave was free to seek her employment in exchange for a daily or weekly rent paid to their owners. In doing so, they acquired knowledge about market transactions as both buyers and sellers of goods and services, the workings of the monetary economy in handling their owners' money as well as their own, and the dominant culture through greater social and economic interaction with whites (De la Fuente, 2008, p. 160). The economic life of the city afforded slaves a degree of freedom and mobility not often experienced by their counterparts in rural settings.

Slaves' participation in the urban job market also allowed them to pursue their own material interests and entrepreneurial activities. It provided them with what Pedro Welch, who studied slave society in Bridgetown, denotes as "urban departure" or "room to maneuver options" (Welch, 2003, pp. 89, 149). Consequently, cities such as San Juan (and Bridgetown or Havana) with a large service economy afforded enslaved females greater opportunities than elsewhere to accumulate capital on their own and acquire necessities not provided by the owner or small luxuries, or even to purchase their freedom.

One more factor to consider is that females were also probably more readily manumitted than males in San Juan, as was the case

elsewhere in Latin America (Ingersoll, 1999, p. 226; Welch, 2003, p. 97; Bowser, 1975; Schwartz, 1974, p. 612; Karasch, 1987, pp. 534-52; Nishida, 1993, pp. 374-76). According to Jay Kinsbruner's study of free people of mixed race in nineteenth-century San Juan, females in San Juan were indeed more readily manumitted than males and had longer life expectancies, both of which aggravated the gender imbalance (Kinsbruner, 1996, pp. 84-85). Along these same lines, Michael Craton argues that females lived longer than males, positing that enslaved females in the British Caribbean "lived at least five percent longer than men on the average" (Craton, 1997, p. 207).

The sex-ratio distribution among San Juan's enslaved adult population also reflects the extent of the gender imbalance. (See Table 2.)

**Table 2 . Sex-Ratio Distribution among San Juan's Enslaved Adult Population, 1673**

Size of holdings	Male		Female		Totals	Percent of total enslaved population
	No.	%	No.	%		
1 - 5	58	26	164	74	222	34
6 - 10	105	38	169	62	274	41
11 - 15	33	33	66	67	99	15
16 >	22	33	45	67	67	10
Totals	218	33	444	67	662	100

Source: Compiled from AGI, *Santo Domingo, 173*.

As we can see, the proportion of women to men was two to one, with smaller holdings of between one and five persons having the lower, and holdings of between six and ten persons having the higher, number of males. This may be the result of smaller holdings consisting primarily of domestics. Larger holdings contained domestics but engaged enslaved persons in a greater variety of activities and possibly more specialized activities as well, and therefore needed more males. A further possibility is that slaveholders exhibited a preference for enslaved females. According to Pedro Welch, females tended to be cheaper, they offered prospects of increasing the initial investment through childbirth, and they provided the 'start up' capital, which could be bequeathed to children, particularly daughters (Welch, 2003, p. 99).

However, domestic slaves furnished owners with services that often had nothing to do with generating revenue. As an expression of their owners' status and prestige, the acquisition of slaves for household use was one of the few available forms of conspicuous consumption, and may have therefore increased demand for female slaves. These were no doubt important reasons for the predominance of females among San Juan's enslaved population.

That slave owners in San Juan probably expressed a preference for female slaves is supported by evidence of slaveholding patterns elsewhere on the island. Such information exists for Coamo, a community located along Puerto Rico's southern coast, from the year 1685. (See Table 3.)

**Table 3. Sex-Ratio Distribution among Coamo's Enslaved Adult Population, 1685**

Size of holdings	Male		Female		Totals	Percent of total enslaved population
	No.	%	No.	%		
1 - 5	44	55	36	45	80	71
6 - 10	21	64	12	36	33	29
Totals	65	58	48	42	113	100

Source: Compiled from AGI, Escribanía de Cámara, 124A, Pieza 25.

The difference in the sex-ratio distribution between enslaved populations in San Juan and Coamo is salient. Whereas the ratio of women to men in San Juan was two to one, in Coamo it was not as sharp: the proportion of women to men nearly equal. Slaveholders in Coamo had domestics, like their counterparts in San Juan. However, those in Coamo most likely expressed a preference for males whom they engaged in more demanding agricultural endeavors. This also seems to have been the case on larger holdings of between six and ten enslaved persons, where the proportion of males was slightly higher. Slaveholders in San Juan had greater interest in female domestics and possibly in utilizing ownership to denote conspicuous consumption, as opposed to slaveholders in Coamo, who probably were less concerned with such matters and instead required more male laborers for tasks associated with the agricultural economy. Such differences clearly reflect a dichotomy in slave holding patterns between urban (San Juan) and rural (Coamo) areas.

Let us turn our attention to the consequences of San Juan's sex-

ratio imbalance. With so few males present, the city could not sustain its population; much less grow, without in-migration (Kinsbruner, 2005, p. 113) Herein lays the importance of foreign-born male immigrants, in particular soldiers, who played an important role in populating the city and preventing further population declines. Though low salaries and irregular pay limited their buying capacity, soldiers constituted an important pool of potential consumers and thus their presence in the city contributed to the local service economy. Another outcome arising from the scarcity of males was the prominence of single, female-headed households, in contrast to the ideal Spanish model of a patriarchal family (Kinsbruner, 2005, p. 113). Although the census does not provide information on occupation as noted, women were active participants in the city's economy and may have exercised a degree of independence in their activities not available to their counterparts in other colonial Caribbean cities at that time. Furthermore, in locations where high mortality existed, resulting in truncated marriages oftentimes typified by early widowhood, females likely enjoyed greater familial authority. Such was probably the case in San Juan, where there were a number of female-headed households among the free and unfree inhabitants. Although the presence of women in Caribbean populations, especially among those who were enslaved, has long been underplayed (Beckles, 1989, p. 19), the situation in San Juan in 1673 allows us to see some of the ways in which they figured in the social and economic landscape.

**Table 4 . Racial Composition of Households in San Juan by Street, 1673**

	White	FPMR*	White & FPMR	White & FPMR & Enslaved	White & Enslaved	Totals	Percent
Fortaleza	18	8	3	8	40	77	29.7
Sta. Catalina	17	1	9	7	15	49	18.9
Sto. Domingo	5	0	3	4	5	17	6.6
San Cristóbal	4	0	1	6	6	17	6.6
Sta. Iglesia	15	6	0	1	16	38	14.7
La Plaza	17	6	5	10	23	61	23.5
Totals	76	21	21	36	105	259	
Percent	29.3	8.1	8.1	13.9	40.6		100

\*Free People of Mixed Race

Source: AGI, Santo Domingo, 173.

Census data also lend themselves to an analysis of household composition and residential patterns. Distinct trends begin to emerge upon closer examination of the racial composition of households by street. (See Table 4.)

As we can see, it was common for free and unfree individuals to live together in one household, however the census does not tell us about living arrangements within the house. Nevertheless, this afforded slaves with opportunities to interact on a daily basis not only with members of their owner's immediate and extended family, but also with the local free black population. Such contacts possibly mitigated the unrestricted coercive power of the master and probably enabled enslaved men and women to build potentially valuable social networks, which ultimately might have facilitated manumission.

Calle Fortaleza had the largest concentration of both white inhabitants and enslaved people. Undoubtedly, a number of officials and their families resided on this street, in close proximity to the offices of the royal bureaucracy and town council. Enslaved people, most likely domestics, would have figured prominently in their households. On Calle Fortaleza we also see the largest concentration of households, including Free Blacks or persons of mixed race, and enslaved people. That main street held most of the principal and larger residences, in order to accommodate so many individuals.

Perhaps some Free Blacks or persons of mixed race who resided on Calle Fortaleza and Calle de la Plaza were engaged in activities associated with serving the needs of the city's elite who lived nearby. Alejandro de la Fuente and César García del Pino noted in their study of late-sixteenth century Havana, that women--especially black women--were active participants in the local economy, providing food and lodging to soldiers serving in the military garrison (De la Fuente & García del Pino, 1996, p. 103). A similar situation prevailed in San Juan in the case of several individuals living on Calle Fortaleza who might have taken on boarders, as was probably the case with Cathalina Bruseñaz, a *parda libre*, or free person of mixed race, who had seven unrelated individuals living at her house (Stark & De Castro Sedgwick, 1997, p. 33).

The sheer lack of space within the city made it almost impossible to physically segregate the black and white population. Free and unfree individuals lived side-by-side on each street and in many cases together as one household. Although slaves lived on their masters premises, they often lived apart in their own buildings in what Pedro Welch refers to as "intra-mural segregation" whereby masters maintained control and discipline over their charges (Welch, 2003, p. 49). Residential

patterns in late-seventeenth century San Juan were similar to those that Jay Kinsbruner observed for the mid-nineteenth century (Kinsbruner, 1996, pp. 54-86). The city does not appear to have been residentially segregated, either in 1673 or during the period that Kinsbruner studied.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the spatial distribution of enslaved men and women throughout the city likely tended to reduce racial divides and possibly social distances as well.

What about slave ownership patterns in San Juan? Of the 259 households in the city, 142 or fifty-five percent contained at least one enslaved person, and had an average of nearly five such persons per household. Slaveholding appears to have been fairly common, and widespread enough to have been part of the economic and social lives of large sectors of the population. However, the distribution of enslaved persons among the households was not uniform. (See Table 5)

**Table 5. Distribution of Ownership of Enslaved Adults in San Juan, 1673**

Adult Unit Size	Number of Owners	Percent of Total Owners	Number of Enslaved Adults	Percent of Total Enslaved
1	35	24.7	35	5.3
2	24	16.9	48	7.2
3	16	11.3	48	7.2
4	9	6.3	36	5.4
5	11	7.8	55	8.3
6	13	9.2	78	11.8
7	7	4.9	49	7.4
8	4	2.8	32	4.8
9	5	3.5	45	6.8
10	7	4.9	70	10.6
11 - 15	8	5.6	99	15
16 - 20	1	0.7	19	2.9
21 - 25	2	1.4	48	7.3
Totals	142	100	662	100

Source: Compiled from AGI, Santo Domingo, 173.

Two-thirds of all owners had fewer than five slaves, yet they collectively controlled only one-third of the enslaved labor force.<sup>9</sup> Most owners (fifty-three percent) had between one and three enslaved

persons. By way of comparison, seventy-three percent of owners (thirty-three out of forty-five) in Coamo in 1685 had similarly sized slave holdings. Such holdings in this rural community were small, with an average size of 2.6 individuals as opposed to an average size of 4.7 in San Juan.<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that three individuals, comprising a mere two percent of all masters held fifteen or more enslaved persons. These holdings included those of Juan de Amézquita with twenty-five enslaved persons, María de los Ríos--the widow of Luis de Coronado--with twenty-three, and Constanza de Torres with nineteen (Stark & De Castro, 1997, pp. 69, 99, 106). To be sure, these were among the city's wealthiest residents; each of them owned an *ingenio*, which might explain why they commanded a disproportionate share (ten percent) of the city's enslaved labor.<sup>11</sup>

As San Juan was the island's capital and only true city, it is likely that many of its enslaved charges were employed in the household as domestics. Nevertheless, as observed by Raúl Mayo Santana, Mariano Negrón Portillo, and Manuel Mayo López, in their analysis of the 1846 San Juan census, not all slaves were domestics, especially males. For example, 33 percent of males were artisans and 16 percent were day laborers (Mayo Santana, Negrón Portillo, & Mayo López, 1997, p. 34). It is not known whether similar trends prevailed in 1673; but the Crown in the construction and upkeep of military fortifications and the city walls employed enslaved persons. Seventeenth-century Contaduría records denote payments made to owners who hired out their charges for work in the *reales fábricas*, or royal works. For instance, Manuel Nuñez Chaves and Pedro de Aranguren were reimbursed in September 1663 for work performed in the service of the Crown by their slaves as *aserradores*, or sawyers, and *hacheros*, or woodcutters (AGI. *Contaduría* 1078). Both individuals appear in the 1673 census as slaveholders, with ten and 9 enslaved persons respectively, and likely continued hiring out slaves to the Crown, as work continued in various facets of military construction (Stark & De Castro Sedgwick, 1997, pp. 48, 28).<sup>12</sup>

The enumeration of San Juan's inhabitants in 1673 may not have accurately reflected the extent of the city's population. It should be noted that the census was conducted to underscore the extent of San Juan's depopulation and therefore a number of the city's inhabitants were omitted. A careful review of San Juan's oldest surviving baptismal register for Free Blacks or persons of mixed race and enslaved people (dating from 1672 through 1706) confirms this hypothesis. For example, we can identify at least nineteen enslaved persons who appeared either

as parents or as godparents in the baptismal register from 1672 to 1674, but whose names were not included in the enumeration of the city's inhabitants.<sup>13</sup>

Some of these individuals might have died before the census was undertaken or may have been absent from the city at the time of the census. Regrettably, death registers for this period no longer exist, so it is impossible to determine if the speculation above regarding mortality has any merit. That some of these individuals may have been absent from the city is certainly possible, as a number of the city's wealthier inhabitants owned property or residences in the surrounding countryside. For example, don Francisco Calderón's land holdings were extensive and included the *ingenio* San Luis, located inland near the juncture of the Río Grande de Loíza and the Río Canóvanas. He also owned the Hacienda Canóvanas, located near the coast in an area known as Buenavista, adjacent to Piñones lagoon and encompassing parts of what is today Canóvanas, Carolina, Loíza, and Río Grande (López Cantos, 1994, p. 203; 1975, pp. 263, 375, 378-79). It is unlikely that enslaved persons on the Calderón holdings were counted in the 1673 census of San Juan.

As for the enslaved people who should have appeared in the census, their omission may be because some slaveholders wished to conceal their illegally acquired chattel. In the years following the cancellation of the Portuguese asiento in 1640, the slave trade to the Spanish Americas declined. The years between 1663 and 1674 may well represent the nadir of the slave trade to the Spanish Americas. Direct trade from Africa ended and a total of 15,210 slaves were introduced – an annual average of 1,382; while one can only speculate, few were likely destined for Puerto Rico (Almeida Mendes, 2008, p. 77). The only recourse for planters wishing to purchase slaves was to rely upon contraband trade, which is precisely what they did (Morales Carrión, 1995, p. 66). Both the Dutch operating out of Curaçao and Saint Eustatius, and the English operating out of Tortola and Virgin Gorda, sought to capitalize on the decline in such a traffic, clandestinely bringing human chattel to Puerto Rico who were eagerly purchased by residents despite the illegality of their actions.

### Slavery and the Service Economy

San Juan had much in common with its Hispanic and non-Hispanic counterparts yet, it also differed in several respects, most notably in terms of its enslaved population. In part this stemmed from the city's role as a *presidio*. Both the presence of a military garrison and the city's strategic location at the hub of informal trade networks oriented



toward the eastern, non-Hispanic Caribbean islands gave rise to a large service economy. San Juan's slave population was small, though slaveholdings were common. Moreover, the demise of cane cultivation and sugar production on the island subsequently entailed a decline in the introduction of slaves, mainly males, to the island. We see this reflected in the gender imbalance among the enslaved segment of the population, with females greatly outnumbering males. This was to be expected since, in the absence of sugar, there was less need for adult males. However as the service economy expanded, it prompted greater demand for female domestics, whose service as cooks, seamstresses, and washerwomen, was essential to San Juan's households. As the transition from an agriculturally based economy to a service-based economy unfolded during the middle part of the seventeenth century, masters undoubtedly became more reliant on the entrepreneurship of their slaves in order to survive during periodic economic downturns.

In port cities throughout the Caribbean the presence of military garrisons and maritime traffic created a pool of potential consumers as well as a demand for services not found elsewhere. Enslaved men and women played a prominent, albeit frequently overlooked, role in the provision of food, entertainment, and other services needed by the city's inhabitants. The existence of service economies therefore created windows of opportunity for individual autonomy and improvement among enslaved populations not characteristic of the rural scene. Slaves might use the proceeds from such activities to acquire necessities not provided by the owner or small luxuries, or even to purchase their freedom. Furthermore, living and working conditions in port cities such as San Juan may have provided greater opportunity for slaves to marry and establish family lives of their own.

Enslaved males and females frequently interacted with free members of the population in urban households and through their active participation in the service economy. Such interactions may have blurred racial boundaries and social hierarchies, modifying the traditional master-slave stereotype. Ultimately this probably fostered greater flexibility and fluidity of relations between, as well as within, racial and social classes in urban settings with large service economies. We see evidence of this in the spatial distribution of the city's inhabitants, which suggests the absence of residential segregation patterns; Whites and non-Whites lived together in the same household and side-by-side on the same street. This had lasting implications for the tenor of race relations, as differences based on race were not as marked and the social distance between enslaver and enslaved was

relatively small. Thus, a unique set of demographic circumstances and economic conditions differentiated slavery and the lived experience of enslaved populations in seventeenth-century San Juan from that of their counterparts in most other cities (and regions) not only throughout the Caribbean, but also much of Latin America.

NOTAS

1. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers who made helpful suggestions for the article's improvement.

2. The first European settlement on the island was established in 1508 and given the name of Caparra. It was located three miles inland from the Bay of San Juan, close to the gold mines and farms of the Toa valley. However, it soon became clear that Caparra's location was inhospitable. After careful consideration the decision was made in 1521 to abandon the site and relocate to the islet of San Juan Bautista.

3. A similar service economy also existed in Havana (De la Fuente & García del Pino, 1996, p. 8).

4. My usage of the term "household" is based upon that of geographer Linda Greenow, who states that a household is comprised of "a co-resident kin group, either on its own or together with other residents such as servants, slaves, boarders and lodgers ..." (Greenow, 1977, p. 4). Alejandro de la Fuente also uses Greenow's definition of household in his study of sixteenth-century Havana, as do both Antonio Gutiérrez Escudero in his analysis of Santo Domingo's eighteenth century population history, and Jay Kinsbruner in his study of nineteenth-century San Juan as well as Spanish-American cities during the colonial period (Gutiérrez Escudero, 1985; Kinsbruner, 1996; 2005).

5. Archivo General de Indias [hereafter AGI], Censos de población, *Santo Domingo 173*, Ramo IV, ff. 838-852v., Cartas y expedientes de los Obispos de la isla de San Juan de Puerto Rico vistos en el Consejo – Años 1647-1698, folio 839v. A complete transcription of this census appears in Stark and De Castro Sedgwick 1997.

6. AGI, Censos de población, *Santo Domingo 173*, Ramo IV, ff. 838-852v., Cartas y expedientes de los Obispos de la isla de San Juan de Puerto Rico vistos en el Consejo – Años 1647-1698, (folio 851v).

7. According to Fray Agustín Iñigo Abbad y Lasierria, "Aunque los pueblos están comunmente desiertos sin más habitantes que el

cura, los domingos y días festivos, acuden a ellos a oír misa” (Abbad y Lasierra, 1979, p. 192). (“Although the towns are commonly deserted without any more inhabitants than the priest, on Sundays and holy days people come to them to hear mass.”).

8. It is possible that spatial segregation existed on some streets, with Free Blacks or persons of mixed race concentrated at the street corners potentially giving rise to micro neighborhoods. However without a map of San Juan from the period, it is impossible to determine if indeed this was the case.

9. There is very little information available on the distribution of slave holdings during the mid- to late-seventeenth century throughout the Americas. According to Allan Kulikoff, the size of slave holdings on plantations in Anne Arundel County, Maryland (1658-1699) was small. Kulikoff found no plantations with more than twenty enslaved persons during the latter seventeenth century in Anne Arundel County, yet nearly half of all owners held eleven to twenty slaves (forty-seven percent). This is much higher than what was observed in San Juan (eight percent), while the proportion of owners with five or fewer enslaved persons in Anne Arundel County was thirty-six percent, as compared with sixty-seven percent in San Juan. Finally, the percentage of individuals with six to ten enslaved persons was seventeen percent in Anne Arundel County and twenty-five percent in San Juan (Kulikoff, 1986, p. 331).

10. AGI, *Escribanía de Cámara, 124A, Pieza 25*.

11. All three of these slaveholders possessed an *ingenio* in 1660 and may have grown sugar at the time of the census.

12. For more information on the construction of military fortifications and the labor demands associated with it, see Lizardi Pollock (1999), *Palimpsestos y heterotopias: El espacio y sus prácticas en el Viejo San Juan, Revista Mexicana del Caribe*, 8, pp. 90-127, pp. 110-12.

13. There were at least nine white couples that were not enumerated in the census and probably should have been. These couples were married in San Juan between 1672 and 1674 (Stark and De Castro 1997:16-18).

14. To ensure an accurate comparison between Coamo and San Juan, enslaved individuals under the age of ten in Coamo were omitted from consideration.

15. I am very grateful to Teresa de Castro Sedgwick for bringing this document to my attention.

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