

**The  
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Articles in French, Spanish or Dutch will be accepted and may be published either in the original language or in translation or in both. If a translation is made the author's approval of it will be sought before publication. In addition to articles, we invite the contribution of research notes and notices of books or theses in Caribbean History currently in progress.

Articles and book reviews (both text and notes) should be typed, double-spaced, and submitted on quarto (8½" x 11") paper. Endnotes (not footnotes) should be used. The footnote format included in most word-processing software should be avoided. Instead, footnote numbers should be generated manually, using superscript (i.e., as on a regular typewriter, so that the note numbers do not change automatically when a note is added or deleted). Do not use your computer software to generate tables. Type the tables as if you were using a regular typewriter. Otherwise, wherever possible, use the default settings in your software

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All articles and correspondence with the editor should be addressed to: Professor Alvin O. Thompson, *The Journal of Caribbean History*, Department of History and Philosophy, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. Books for review should be sent to: Dr Veront Satchell, *The Journal of Caribbean History*, Department of History and Archaeology, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston 7, Jamaica.

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# Contents

Remembering Walter Rodney . . . . .	123
Walter Rodney the Historian	
<i>Winston McGowan</i> . . . . .	126
Harry Hoetink 1931–2005	
<i>Anthony P. Maingot</i> . . . . .	136
Beyond United States Hegemony: Colombia’s Persistent Role in the Shaping and Reshaping of Panama	
<i>Steve C. Ropp</i> . . . . .	140
Revolts Among Enslaved Africans in Nineteenth-Century Cuba: A New Look to an Old Problem	
<i>Manuel Barcia</i> . . . . .	173
Forbidden Fruit: Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women’s Sexuality and Interracial Sex	
<i>Henrice Altink</i> . . . . .	201
A Comparison of the Colonial Laws of Jamaica under Governor Thomas Lynch 1681–1684 with Those Enumerated in the John Taylor Manuscript of 1688	
<i>Vicki Crow Via</i> . . . . .	236
British Guiana’s Contribution to the British War Effort, 1939–1945	
<i>Arlene Munro</i> . . . . .	249
Gender and <i>Marronage</i> in the Caribbean	
<i>Alvin O. Thompson</i> . . . . .	262



## BOOK REVIEWS

- E. Franklin Frazier and Eric Williams, eds., *The Economic Future of the Caribbean, with a New Introduction: "Eric Williams and the Anglo-American Commission, 1942-1944"*, by Tony Martin  
Selwyn H.H. Carrington . . . . . 290
- Howard A. Fergus, *Montserrat: History of a Caribbean Colony*  
Glen Richards . . . . . 294
- Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848*  
Henderson Carter . . . . . 296
- Selwyn H.H. Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775-1810*  
Pedro L. V. Welch . . . . . 299

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Omohundro Institute  
of Early American  
History and Culture

# Call for Papers

*“The bloody Writing is for ever torn”*

## DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FIRST GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS TO ABOLISH THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

On August 8–12, 2007, the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, in cooperation with UNESCO, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the W. E. B. Du Bois Center for African and African American Studies, the Reed Foundation, Inc., and the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, will convene a major international conference in Ghana, West Africa. The aim of the meeting is to examine the national and international contexts of the transatlantic slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century; the circumstances that led to decisions by some of the trade’s original instigators and greatest beneficiaries to outlaw participation in it; and the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences for all the inhabitants—slave and free—of the kingdoms and nations involved, of actions that ultimately abolished one of the pillars of Atlantic commerce.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the slave trade had become a vital engine of the Atlantic economy. Although voices in opposition to the commerce in human cargo had been raised as early as the sixteenth century, it was not until the 1780s that a constellation of humanitarian, economic, and ideological forces combined with the determined resistance of those in slavery to challenge its legitimacy. Acknowledging the inherent evil of this lucrative “traffick” and no longer able to ignore the struggles against bondage, such as that mounted in Haiti 1793–1804, the governments of several Atlantic world nations initiated policies, between 1787 and 1807, to make participation in the trade illegal. The goals of this conference are twofold: first, to explicate the domestic and international forces in play when the first decisions to end the transatlantic slave trade were made, and second, to examine and illuminate the short- and long-term consequences for Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America of these initial attempts to end further transportation of captives from Africa.

The conference’s thematic focus on transatlantic slavery should be understood to include the trade’s global reach. Hence, the topics to be addressed will include how the development and implementation of abolition in the Atlantic World affected the commerce in human beings in other regions, such as trans-Saharan Africa, the Indian Ocean littoral, and the Mediterranean. The consequences of the slave trade’s legacies for racism, colonialism, and other relevant political, economic, and cultural patterns will be examined as well.

The conference will be multi-disciplinary, and the program committee welcomes proposals from scholars in all appropriate fields—history, historical anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy, and social sciences. Please submit written proposals of three to five pages outlining the subject, argument, and relevance to the conference themes. Proposals for individual papers and for panels are welcome; submissions may be in English or French. Include curriculum vitae. Send five (5) hard copies or an email attachment to: **Ghana Conference, OIEAHC, P.O. Box 8781, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8781; ieahc1@wm.edu**. The deadline for proposals is June 30, 2006.

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## Remembering Walter Rodney

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The year 2005 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the death of Walter Rodney, one of the Caribbean's most renowned historians. On 13 June 1980, Rodney, who has been described as a radical or revolutionary intellectual, was assassinated in a car on a street in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana, his birthplace, by means of a remote-controlled bomb. Born in March 1942 in what was then the colony of British Guiana, he had a brilliant academic career. His achievements as a student included a first-class honours degree in History in 1963 from the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. He then went on to do graduate work at the School of Oriental and African Studies, a college of the University of London, where he obtained a doctorate in African history in 1966 at the age of twenty-four.

Rodney embarked on his career as a university lecturer with two stints at the University College of Dar-es-Salaam (later called the University of Dar-es-Salaam) in Tanzania between 1966 and 1974. His service there was broken by a year at his *alma mater*, the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, where he introduced the teaching of African history. This development came to an end in October 1968 when the Jamaican government banned him from the island because of its belief that his association with the poor and disadvantaged people of Kingston constituted a high security risk. This association was outlined by him in one of his more polemical works titled *The Groundings with My Brothers* (see below). In 1974 he returned to Guyana from Tanzania to take up an appointment as professor of History at the country's only university, the University of Guyana. However, his appointment was rescinded owing to interference by the Guyana government. Denied a job in his own country, he refused to leave, as the political directorate expected him to do. Instead, he lectured abroad periodically to maintain himself

and his family, but spent most of his time at home conducting research on Guyanese history and becoming increasingly involved in local politics.

By 1980 he had become the most strident and feared critic of the authoritarian regime under Forbes Burnham, president of Guyana, whom he dubbed a dictator. His political activism culminated in his assassination at the comparatively young age of thirty-eight. At the time of his death he was Guyana's most internationally acclaimed scholar and an increasingly popular figure in local politics. He was known for his advocacy of non-racist politics in a nation deeply divided by race since the late 1950s.

Rodney's life and work as a scholar and political activist were celebrated and evaluated this year in a number of commemorative events in the Caribbean, Europe, North America and Africa. Some of these events were organized by an international committee headed by Horace Campbell, a Jamaican scholar. The main event took place in Guyana in June and involved a variety of activities, including lectures, panel presentations, radio and television interviews, book launchings, cultural presentations, an interfaith service and a graveside visit. The activities were designed to embrace all classes and ages.

The official opening of the events was held in the auditorium of Queen's College, the nation's leading secondary school, which Rodney once attended. Dr Ralph Gonsalves, prime minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines, delivered the keynote address. He is a former student of Rodney's and was a leader of the student protests in Jamaica in 1968 against the government's ban on Rodney. The presence of Dr Pat Rodney, Walter's widow, and their three children graced the week-long activities. The main focus of the events was Rodney's ideas, in particular that of the new world that he hoped for and which he strove to create – a world distinguished by justice for disadvantaged peoples and nations, and free from the ills of capitalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Another commemorative event in Guyana was a two-day academic conference in August at the Turkeyen campus of the University of Guyana, organized jointly by the university's School of Education and Humanities, and the Faculty of Humanities and Education of the St Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. The theme of the conference was "Walter Rodney Twenty-Five Years Later: Facing the Challenges of History, Poverty, Underdevelopment and Globalization".

One of the contributions to the commemorative events in Guyana was an article in the *Stabroek News*, one of the country's newspapers, on 9 June 2005 by Professor Winston McGowan, a former classmate of Rodney's and the first and current occupant of the Walter Rodney Chair in History at the University of Guyana. We have reproduced that article below (with slight changes) with his permission, and added a bibliography of Rodney's writings, talks and interviews.

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## Walter Rodney the Historian

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WINSTON McGOWAN

This month, June 2005, may go down in Guyanese history as the time when the nation celebrated in a special way the life of Walter Rodney, one of its most outstanding sons. Twenty-five years after his assassination, on 13 June 1980, Rodney is being remembered in Guyana and abroad with a degree of honour and appreciation seldom extended to any other Guyanese, including past presidents. It is ironic that those, dead or alive, who were responsible for denying him a job at the national university and for his death are today either completely or virtually forgotten, or are held in much less esteem than this scholar and political activist.

Due to his active involvement in local politics in the final years of his life, many Guyanese remember Rodney primarily or exclusively as a politician. However, throughout most of his adult life his principal accomplishments were realized in his capacity as a historian, researching, writing and teaching the history especially of two areas, namely, Africa and the Caribbean.

The 5 June 2005 edition of the *Sunday Stabroek* contained an instructive account by Robert Moore, one of Rodney's early mentors, of the beginning of the formative period of his development as a historian. This was in the middle years of his secondary school career at Queen's College, where Dr Moore transformed history from being a boring subject into one of the most absorbing and enjoyable offerings on the school curriculum. His impact was instrumental in making Rodney and at least two others of his classmates (Professor Alvin Thompson and this writer) opt to pursue the study of history as a career.

Rodney was also influenced immensely several years later by Elsa Goveia, another distinguished Guyanese historian and the first female professor at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, who taught him during his brilliant undergraduate career there between 1960 and 1963. Rodney eventually not only became one of the Caribbean's most outstanding historians, but also one of the most renowned and internationally acclaimed Guyanese scholars of all time.

This enviable reputation stems largely from the nature, quality and quantity of his historical writing. By Caribbean standards Rodney was a very prolific writer. Thus, in his comparatively short academic career, which ended prematurely at the young age of thirty-eight, he produced three major books, one edited work on Guyanese sugar plantations in the late nineteenth century, several pamphlets and booklets and over seventy articles in academic and other journals. His acclaim as a historian was due mainly to two somewhat related factors, namely, his approach to history and the distinctive traits of his scholarship.

Rodney was essentially a revisionist historian, that is, a historian who sought to correct false or deficient statements and interpretations about historical events. One of his major specific objectives was, in his own words, "to uproot the numerous historical myths which have been implanted in the minds of black people".<sup>1</sup> He considered such myths, born of prejudice, ignorance, loss of memory and other factors, as formidable obstacles to the realization of urgently needed socio-economic change in Africa and the Caribbean. In his view mental liberation as a result of the acquisition of true historical knowledge was an indispensable, though not the only, precondition for the Black man's total liberation.

Rodney regarded history as a multidisciplinary subject. His historical writing profited considerably from approaches and insights that he derived from the social sciences, especially his knowledge of economics and political science. He also viewed history as didactic, providing guidelines for the proper understanding and solution of current problems. Thus, he sought to show that many of the serious problems, such as poverty and dependency, facing Africa today were the result of damage that the continent suffered during the long era of the notorious transatlantic slave trade and the much shorter period of European colonial rule. This was the focus of his second major publication and best-known book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (see bibliography below), written in Tanzania after his return following his ban from Jamaica in 1968. The work stemmed from what he described as "a con-



cern with the contemporary African situation".<sup>2</sup> In it he not only sought to give a historical explanation for current African underdevelopment, but also to present what he called "a correct historical evaluation"<sup>3</sup> necessary for determining an effective solution to the problem.

His conclusion was that "African development is possible only on the basis of a radical break with the capitalist system, which has been the principal agency of underdevelopment of Africa over the past five centuries".<sup>4</sup> This proposed solution was partly a reflection of the fact that Rodney's philosophy of history was essentially Marxist. His Marxist orientation caused him to be preoccupied with questions of class and economy and to devote inadequate attention to cultural history. It also prompted the strong anticapitalist and anti-imperialist character of his writings, expressed in his graphic description of colonialism as "a one-armed bandit".<sup>5</sup>

Rodney's scholarship was also marked by an approach that academics sometimes describe as "history from below", that is, history written from the perspective, and often for the benefit, of the disadvantaged or dispossessed. In some contexts this expression means history written from the viewpoint of the largely poor and non-White developing world, including Africa and the Caribbean, rather than from the standpoint of the wealthy White developed world, especially of Europe and North America. This approach is clearly evident in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

In other circumstances, "history from below" means history from the perspective of the working class, the masses, the ordinary people in the society, the poor and the powerless, rather than from that of the more privileged middle and ruling classes. This approach is particularly evident in Rodney's final book, *The History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905* (see bibliography), published posthumously in 1981 and, from the standpoint of the historian's craft, probably his finest work.

Rodney's historical writing is well known for its many distinctive traits. It was very diverse in content as well as character. Some of his publications were academic, while others, such as *The Groundings with My Brothers* (see bibliography) which focused on his experiences in Jamaica in 1968, were somewhat polemical. Furthermore, many of them were localized, dealing with specific issues in African and Caribbean history, whereas others were global in perspective, addressing more universal themes, such as the history of capitalism, socialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, pan-Africanism and Third World dependency and underdevelopment.

Rodney's works were generally marked by a great degree of dependence on original independent research. He seldom produced works of synthesis, based largely on the findings of other scholars. Rather his work was often pioneering and creative. It was usually distinguished also by clarity of thought, convincing logic, rigorous analysis of the ideas or events he was examining, and a concise, effective literary style. These traits were partly a result of the perceptive, critical, analytic mind he possessed and were pivotal to his achievements.

Among Rodney's achievements as a historian four stand out. First, through his doctoral thesis and his first major book, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800* (see bibliography), he established himself as one of the leading authorities in the world on the important subject of the transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the Americas. This book became the starting point or standard of reference for most subsequent studies on the subject. Second, as noted above, he produced *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the first major historical study of African underdevelopment, examining in depth its roots and consequences. Third, his final publication, was the first authoritative, detailed, systematic historical study of the working class in the Caribbean. It has made a major contribution to the knowledge of the history of the working class and racial division in Guyana.

Fourth, Rodney's work won him many prestigious prizes and other honours. For example, he was the first winner of the Elsa Goveia Memorial Prize, awarded by the Association of Caribbean Historians for the best work on Caribbean History published every triennium. Furthermore, he was invited to be a contributor to two prestigious projects designed to produce a multivolume history of Africa, one organized by UNESCO and the other by Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. He wrote chapters for both of these projects.

Walter Rodney was not an "ivory tower" historian. He believed strongly that teaching, research and writing should be accompanied by serious social involvement – that historical knowledge should be put to practical social use. It is this aspect of his work as a historian which is emphasized in the tribute given in his honour at the time of his death by the International Scientific Committee responsible for organizing the UNESCO General History of Africa. In its memorial the Committee stated: "In evaluating Walter Rodney one characteristic stands out. He was a scholar who recognised no distinction between academic concerns and service to society, between science and social commitment. He was concerned about people as well as archives, about the work

place as well as the classroom. He found time to be both a historian and a sensitive social reformer.”

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## NOTES

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2. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982 edition), vii.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 205.
6. We have made every effort to ensure that this bibliography is accurate. However, we realize that it may contain some errors because of the numerous reprints/republications of his works, often under different titles, and the various methods of citations that different authors use.



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## Harry Hoetink, 1931–2005

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ANTHONY P. MAINGOT

The Italian theorist of elites, Gaetano Mosca, once observed that animals are not classified according to the colour of their skin but by something rather more important, their anatomic structure. On the other hand, status among humans is often assigned not on essentials but on what he called “mere trivialities and appearances”. What, he asked, were the consequences of schemes inspired by altogether superficial criteria? I am not aware that Mosca ever fully answered the question. Harry Hoetink dedicated much of his intellectual life to an attempt to explain how and why trivialities such as skin colour and physical appearance became the dominant classificatory principle in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Hoetink came to this line of study by theoretical training and personal experience. Born in Groningen (Northern Netherlands) in 1931, he did a master’s degree in Social Geography at the University of Amsterdam and then, in 1958, a PhD in Humanities at the University of Leiden. It was arguably this “mixed genre”, as Pierre Bourdieu would call interdisciplinary work, that allowed Hoetink to escape the dulling effects of a sociology that had already been routinized into this or that “discipline” or – even more reductionist – “school”. His was an education based on Dutch culture historians such as Huizinga, Romein, Geyl, and Germans such as Weber, Simmel and Marx, all read in the original.

His dissertation, “*Het Patroon van de onds Curaçao samenleving*” (“The Pattern of Old Curaçao Society”), was never translated but much of it was incorporated into his next book, which appeared first in Dutch and

was then translated as *Two Variants of Caribbean Race Relations: A Contribution to the Sociology of Segmented Societies*.<sup>1</sup>

Hoetink argued that there were no racially homogeneous societies. All societies were characterized by the influence of somatic traits in the assignment of social status. This was especially true of “segmented societies”, which at their inception were both racially and culturally heterogeneous. These “somatic modalities”, as he termed them, are determined first by ideals and norms that are closely linked to the physical type of the dominant group. It is the aesthetic preferences of the elite (the “somatic norm image”) that set the standard for the whole society. While these standards can evolve over time, they have been dramatically persistent in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Hoetink argued that there have been two basic types of somatic modalities in the Western World, both responding to two types of socialization processes: Nordic/European and Latin/Mediterranean. Each established stratification systems based on their distinct somatic modalities. The argument was sustained by a formidable breadth of comparative history and sociology. He was not timid about speaking of “principles”, “dictums”, even “laws”. Thus, the “Law of Decreasing Deviation” partly explained the “Tendency to [ethnic] Homogenization”. The influence of Mannheim’s sociology is evident.

As was to be expected in an environment dominated by American positivist-empiricism and Marxist historical materialism, the reviews were not long in coming. Typical was that of fellow sociologist and Caribbeanist, Ivar Oxaal. He spoke of the “serious problem of the credibility of the evidence advanced in much of this book”. Typically, the critique was that Hoetink had not established statistically verifiable comparisons but merely built theory on “his own historical argument”. But then also typical was Oxaal’s admission that the book addressed a vital problem “with a breadth of scholarship and enthusiasm which was often missing in specialized monographs on the Caribbean”.<sup>2</sup> The utility of Hoetink’s daring and innovative hypotheses was recognized by even his most severe critics.

This seminal work was followed by another, *Slavery and Race Relations in the Americas*,<sup>3</sup> which again parted company with much of the literature on the topic. During this decade Hoetink published many other essays in Dutch, each advancing new and illuminating hypotheses.

It is an important personal note that while resident in Curaçao Hoetink married Ligia Espinal, a Dominican who had studied in a Dutch high school. Hoetink had found a formidable working companion.

Additional evidence of the vitality of this nexus was his decision to study the political culture of the Dominican Republic. The result was his fundamentally important book, *The Dominican People 1850–1900: Notes for a Historical Sociology*,<sup>4</sup> originally published in Spanish in 1971. The bulk of the study is a well-documented account of the structural changes that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially during the reign of Ulises “Lilis” Heureaux, 1882–1899.

Once again, Hoetink confronted a theoretical conundrum: how to explain that in the midst of a very traditional society and culture, the data revealed an expanding and diversifying stratification system, including high rates of social mobility. Even as the Roman Catholic Church reigned supreme, secularism was present in thought, and quite evidently had the organizational and institutional structures (schools, clubs, and Masonic lodges) to reinforce, proselytize and perpetuate secularism. The coexistence of these two visions of the world, classical-traditional and empirical-scientific, said Hoetink, needed further explanation and this was to be found in sociological theory. Hoetink concluded that Dominicans shared what Mannheim called an “aristocratic” culture. One of the fundamental characteristics of an “aristocratic” vision of society is the general culture’s stress on “social distance”, “formalism” and “narcissism”. Authoritarianism is as evident in the peasant family as it is in the urban bourgeois family. The Dominican’s approach to life (and thus to politics) was not a function of his objective status in the social structure, but rather a function of the culture which he shared with all others. This included an emphasis on that “trivial” element of which Mosca spoke: skin colour.

Rich in historical documentation, incisive in its sociological analysis and broadly humanistic in perspective, the Dominican book represents a model for research in the historical sociology of the Caribbean as a whole, since its utility extends beyond the time and space of the case study.

We are fortunate that Harry Hoetink’s generosity towards his graduate students was repaid while he still lived. In 1996 Gert Oostindie, one among an outstanding new generation of Dutch culture historians and Caribbeanists, edited *Ethnicity in the Caribbean: Essays in Honor of Harry Hoetink*.<sup>5</sup> It was, and remains, a worthy testimony to a man who helped to clarify the complexities of the Caribbean that he so cherished and took seriously. His scholarship and academic life are models worth emulating.

## NOTES

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# Beyond United States Hegemony

## Colombia's Persistent Role in the Shaping and Reshaping of Panama

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STEVE C. ROPP

### Abstract

*The central argument of this essay is that, despite the common view that the country of Panama has been historically shaped and reshaped by the hegemonic influence of the United States, it has been Colombian power, norms and culture that have had the most enduring impact. More specifically, forces emanating from the northern Caribbean coast of Colombia have given Panama its most enduring ideological feature (liberal nationalism), as well as its "essential" cultural attributes. In support of this argument, this essay traces the influence of Colombian power, norms and culture on Panama through three distinct periods: those of Colombian influence (1821–1903), suppressed influence under US hegemony (1903–2000), and renewed influence following the US departure (2000 to the present).*

### Introduction

Panama is both a state and a nation. As a state, we know it as the Republic of Panama, the small S-shaped country that lies between Central and South America. As a nation, we know it as a people (Panamanians) who inhabit the Isthmus of Panama, and who became associated during the twentieth century with a fiery brand of developmental nationalism. The nationalist impulses of Panamanians led to numerous clashes with the United States over what was viewed as the imperialist occupation of part of Panamanian territory (the Canal Zone) and eventually to the return of both the canal and the Zone to Panama in 2000.

Both the Panamanian state and Panamanian nation were shaped over the centuries in ways that have been described by historians, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists.<sup>1</sup> Many of the forces that have shaped both entities are domestic and relate to the concrete historical experiences of the various peoples who inhabited the Isthmus, the nature of material economic conditions, opportunities that they encountered in this uniquely situated geographical space, and additional factors such as climate and topography. At the same time, it is also true that Panama's openness to the world exposed it to a wide variety of external influences that also played an important, indeed some might say critical, role in shaping and reshaping both the Republic and the people.

The thesis of this essay is that, in spite of the general impression that the United States has been overwhelmingly influential on the Isthmus, Colombia has also been an extremely important and enduring external force, shaping and reshaping both the juridical entity that we call The Republic of Panama and the socio-cultural entity that we call the Panamanian nation. While the causal importance of US hegemony (particularly during the early twentieth century) should not be underemphasized, attention also needs to be paid to the historical role of Colombian influence over the broad sweep of time.<sup>2</sup>

More specifically, I argue the following four main points below:

1. Colombian *material power*, *norms* and *culture* played an important role during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in shaping Panama into a new liberal state and associated nation. During various phases of Panama's historical development, one of these forces may have been more important than the others and indeed some may have been occasionally absent. However, there has never been a period in Panamanian history where Colombian influence was not present in some important form or fashion.
2. Although Colombian state power (as influenced from the capital city of Bogota) shaped Panama in extremely important ways at certain critical historical junctures, more important and enduring normative and cultural influences came from Colombia's northern Caribbean coast and particularly from the old colonial city of Cartagena. Within the historically changing structure of the Colombian state (successively known as Gran Colombia, República de la Nueva Granada, Confederación Granadina, Estados Unidos de Colombia, and República de Colombia), the external constant in terms of Colombian influence over Panama was normative and cultural influences emanating from that country's Caribbean coast.

3. Panama's nineteenth-century independence movement was heavily influenced by northern Caribbean coastal (Costeño) liberal nationalism. Following Panamanian independence in 1903, the influence of these Costeño normative and cultural forces persisted well into the twentieth century in ways that both helped shape key institutions within the emerging "hard" Panamanian state and contributed to the national resistance movement against US military, political and cultural domination.
4. Following a century of United States ascendancy in Panama, Colombia is once again emerging in the twenty-first century as a critical external force in Panamanian affairs, a process in which power is being exercised and cultural influence renewed within a framework of what I will call *Colombianization*. However, this new period of Colombian influence is quite different from those of the past in terms of both the geographical sources of this influence (the mountainous interior provinces as opposed to the northern Caribbean coast) and the various ways in which this influence is being exercised.

In supporting this general thesis and its four corollary points, I use Colombian power, norms and culture as my independent variables. The concept of *power*, as used in the field of international relations, is associated with the so-called realist school. While realists recognize that power is a multifaceted concept under which many ways of influencing another state's behaviour are subsumed, primary influence is placed on material power in explaining the ability of strong states to coerce weaker ones into desired patterns of behaviour. Scholars who rely on this particular theoretical lens to examine the process by which Panama has been shaped and reshaped have tended to focus on the diplomatic relationship between the United States and the Republic of Panama and, more specifically, on the use by the United States of its material power (both military and economic) to force Panamanian compliance with evolving US goals and objectives. On the other hand, discussions of the role of *Colombian state power* in this regard are noticeably absent.

There has also been little discussion on the historical role of Colombian *norms*. During the past decade, students of both international relations and comparative politics have paid increasing attention to the question of exactly how ideas and associated norms spread from one country to another. Norms are simply expectations about what is right and wrong that exist within a particular community that adheres

to a commonly held set of values. As such, they help define that community's sense of group identity and thus give it internal coherence. As with the concept of power, scholars who talk about Panamanian norms (such as the norm of democratic governance) have tended to exclude Colombia when focusing on the external sources for these norms.

Of the three external forces that I wish to examine in relation to their ability to shape and reshape Panama, certainly Colombian *culture* is the least examined. Part of the explanation for this neglect probably lies in the fact that US foreign policy specialists and diplomatic historians who have traditionally studied Panama have focused on the impact of North American culture and/or the cultural forces associated with the US-supported importation of large numbers of immigrants from the Caribbean to help with construction of the Panama Canal. However, from the standpoint of this analysis, even more important was the fact that construction of an independent Panamanian state and nation required rejection of the proposition that the local culture was intrinsically Colombian. Conversely, it required acceptance of the premise that what appeared to be major elements of Colombian *Costeño* culture in Panama were actually Panamanian.

Why is it important for anyone to know that Colombia, and particularly the people of that country's northern Caribbean coast, have consistently played an important role in the shaping and reshaping Panama? First, it is important for those with an interest in the history of the Caribbean who wish to understand the complex ways in which the territorial landscape of the mainland was shaped and reshaped by Caribbean forces. Second, it is important to Colombians, who may not have a well-developed sense of the impact that their rapidly growing presence is having on this small neighbouring country, to comprehend more fully the nature of these processes. Finally, Panamanians who have historically minimized the importance of these Colombian influences in their understandable quest for a unique sense of national identity might themselves profit from a fresh look at the historical and current nature of this relationship.

This essay is divided into three sections examining different periods and types of Colombian influence. The first deals with the initial and longest period of direct influence that began in 1820 when Panama gained its independence from Spain and joined the new Bolivarian state of Gran Colombia. This period of Colombian influence lasted for more than eighty years, until 1903, when the Province of Panama seceded from the Republic of Colombia. The second section examines the period



from 1903 to 2000 when the United States was the hegemonic Great Power on the Isthmus. This was a time of suppressed but nonetheless sustained Colombian influence. It took the form of indirect influence over the norms governing state construction rather than direct influence applied via Colombian state material power. The third section deals with an emerging period of renewed Colombian influence from 2000 to the present that followed in the wake of the departure of US military forces and civilian government employees from the former Canal Zone.

## **The First Period of Colombian Influence (1821–1903)**

Throughout the nineteenth century, Panama was heavily influenced by Colombian state power, Colombian norms and Colombian culture. This degree of influence largely follows from the fact that the Isthmus of Panama was an integral part of a succession of Colombian states, beginning in 1821 and ending in 1903. However, such influence also predates Panamanian incorporation into the state of Gran Colombia in 1821. A major reason for Colombia's ability to shape the Isthmus was that it was building upon close racial, cultural, administrative and economic ties between the northern part of South America and the Isthmus that dated back hundreds of years.

Even in precolonial times, the Isthmus of Panama gravitated racially and culturally toward the northern part of South America.<sup>3</sup> For example, of all the various indigenous peoples who inhabited the Isthmus prior to the conquest, only the Guaymí who lived in the mountains near Panama's present border with Costa Rica appear to have been related to the Nahuatl and Mayan-speaking groups of Central America. Other groups, such as the Choco and the Cuna, who live in present-day Darien Province, have linguistic and cultural ties to South America. This is evidenced by the fact that Panama's Cuna people, who inhabit small islands along the Caribbean coast, have a creation myth that traces their origins back to a sacred mountain located near the mouth of the Atrato River in northeastern Colombia.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in the eighteenth century, these close ties that the Isthmus had developed with Colombia through a shared precolonial past were enhanced further when the Spanish Crown created the Viceroyalty of New Granada. The royal court (*audiencia*) in Panama initially claimed administrative jurisdiction over all the colonial territories in South America. However, this broad mandate of authority quickly ended and

Panama increasingly gravitated into the orbit of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Later, after the new Viceroyalty of New Granada was created in 1717, Panama was eventually included together with the present-day countries of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. It is thus by this highly circuitous administrative route that Panama, which had at one time claimed jurisdiction throughout most of South America, ended up as a small territory within a new viceroyalty headquartered in Bogota.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Colombia's ability as a state to shape Panama during the nineteenth century built upon strong economic ties that dated back at least as far as the Spanish conquest. During colonial times, the Isthmus served as a transit point for European commercial products moving to the Pacific ports of Spain's colonies in the New World. Moving through Panama back to Europe was the gold and silver of the Incas and eventually foodstuffs such as sugar, wine and cacao.<sup>6</sup> During the colonial period and into the early nineteenth century, Panama produced virtually none of the foodstuffs it consumed and even had to import the mules that were used to transport goods across the Isthmus. Many of these imported products came through Colombian ports such as Cartagena, Buenaventura and Tumaco.<sup>7</sup>

Conversely, as was the case in precolonial times, the Isthmus of Panama developed no important racial, cultural, administrative or economic ties with Central America during the three hundred years of the colonial period. As Panamanian sociologist Alfredo Figueroa Navarro put it: "[T]he communications network that stretched between Panama and the Pacific ports [of South America], excluded Central America whose transactions [with the Isthmus] seemed rather insignificant."<sup>8</sup>

These close preconquest racial and cultural ties and the fact of a shared colonial past supplied the natural base for the incorporation of Panama into the newly independent state of Gran Colombia during the early nineteenth century. Panama's independence from Spain in 1821 and its immediate adherence to Gran Colombia also seem to have been a response to a complex combination of push and pull factors. Panamanians were pushed into Colombia's orbit by both a fear of possible Spanish reconquest and by its economic exposure to the vicissitudes of regional trade, if it were to opt for complete independence. As for pull factors, many influential Panamanians were attracted by Bolivarian ideals and influenced by the social and business relationships that they had developed over the past century with the Viceroyalty of New Granada.

What can be said about the role of Colombian state power in shap-

ing or reshaping Panama during this first period of influence from 1821 until the Isthmus declared its independence in 1903? This is an extremely complicated question, as five different Colombian states existed during this time frame, and each of them affected Panama in different ways. It is also complicated by the fact that Colombia exercised its power with regard to Panama from the “inside” of state structures rather than from the “outside”. Unlike the situation in the twentieth century where the United States used its material power as a strong state to influence the behaviour of a weaker one within the context of the international system, the Colombian state shaped Panama as a juridical unit within Colombia’s own territorial borders. This fact raises difficult questions with regard to whether Colombia shaped or reshaped Panama during the nineteenth century primarily through the coercive use of its material power as a state or through the more legitimate influence of Colombian state norms.

Colombia shaped Panama during the nineteenth century through the instruments of five quite distinct state configurations. The first was Gran Colombia (1821–1832), which contained the present-day nation states of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama. After this confederation foundered on the rocks of distance as well as differences in national character among its peoples, the Republic of New Granada (1832–1857) was formed out of its remnants (present-day Colombia and Panama).<sup>9</sup> The short-lived Granadan Confederation that followed (1857–1863) was replaced by the United States of Colombia (1863–1886). Finally, a recentralizing turn in Colombian politics led to the creation of the Republic of Colombia (1886–1903).<sup>10</sup>

The accounts that Panamanian historians offer of Colombian influence over Panama during these years frequently stress the extent to which Colombian state weakness, and indeed the weakness of earlier colonial administrative structures, meant that Panama was shaped by larger extra-regional forces. For example, Panamanian historian Omar Jaén Suárez argues that “The viceregal administrations in Lima and Bogota, and later the Colombian governments, were often almost formal and symbolic intermediaries with regard to the direct dependence of the Isthmus on the European metropolis and finally North America.”<sup>11</sup>

Though Jaén Suárez’s observation may be correct in the most general sense, it is also true that even the weakest of Colombia’s five nineteenth-century states had *some* power, while the strongest ones had *considerable* power to shape Panama at certain critical junctures in the latter’s development. Perhaps most importantly, as Jaén Suárez’s own historical

analysis suggests, the policies of the Government of Gran Colombia during the early nineteenth century had a major impact in terms of shaping the multiracial character of the emerging Panamanian state and its bureaucracy.

During the eighteenth century, a rigid caste system based on race had been formally maintained on the Isthmus of Panama, even under liberal economic conditions that seemed to call for its elimination. Whites, Blacks and other racial groups inhabited different spheres that were clearly defined in terms of activities that were considered appropriate to each group as well as in terms of spatial aspects of these relationships. These spheres were considered to be the immutable reflection of underlying patterns of racial superiority and inferiority – a “natural” hierarchy. Within this hierarchical structure, Whites were considered most suited to commerce, while Blacks, Mulattos and other racial groups were considered most suited to manual activities.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Panamanian caste system had been incrementally breaking down during the late eighteenth century, it was still largely in place when the Isthmus became a part of the new state of Gran Colombia. At this point, Colombian state power was used to reshape Panama by greatly accelerating the trend toward the creation of a multiracial society on the Isthmus. For the first time, people of colour could occupy the highest positions in all of the local bureaucracies, whereas they had largely been limited in former periods to lower-level positions in the army and civil service. The use of Colombian state power to eliminate the Panamanian caste system through changes in legal provisions in turn set the stage for an explosion of new forms of racial and class politics thirty years later when the United States of Colombia was established in 1855.<sup>13</sup>

State-based theories of material power thus have some utility in helping to explain how Panamanian racial and class systems were reshaped at certain critical junctures during the nineteenth century. However, the fact that Colombian state administrative structures remained weak throughout this period and that the larger constitutional frameworks within which these structures existed were in a constant state of flux meant that their effect on Panama was somewhat limited. Given these facts, we have to turn to other sources of external influence to help explain some of the transformations that occurred on the Isthmus during this period.

If Colombian state power and material interests are of only limited utility in explaining changes on the Isthmus during the nineteenth cen-

tury, can the same be said of Colombian norms? Norms are simply views shared within a particular community about what is right or wrong. As such, they not only provide a common identity for that community but also allow for the legitimate regulation of community behaviour. Here, I will argue that Colombia (or at least significant territorial parts thereof) significantly shaped Panama during the nineteenth century by providing it with a coherent set of political, social and economic norms that were embedded in the ideology of Colombian liberalism. More specifically, I will argue that Panama's nineteenth-century independence movement was a lineal descendant of Colombia's distinct brand of Costeño liberal nationalism.

Colombian liberal nationalism, as a general ideological construct, was grounded in the ideals of the French Revolution, in the belief among young liberals that the newly independent states that emerged in the wake of the wars for independence should embrace the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. This translated into the view that the new democratic institutions should truly represent their people; public liberties and individual rights should be adequately guaranteed; laws should result from legislation rather than executive decree; justice should be swift and certain; and there should be complete separation of church and state. From here, it was only a short step to the more radical stance on liberalism adopted by some young Colombians: that liberties should be absolute, state structures should be decentralized to the maximum extent possible, and the state should exercise limited control over the economy.<sup>14</sup>

The Costeño liberal nationalism that so heavily influenced Panama during the nineteenth century was a variant of Colombian liberalism associated with the northern Caribbean coast. This is the region within Colombia that shared with the Isthmus of Panama a tropical climate, a racially mixed population, and a common material economic base related to outward trade with the Caribbean and inward trade with the Colombian highlands. The northern coast of Colombia thus constituted a unified racial-cultural area that, because of a common history and material conditions, shared a common commitment during the nineteenth century to a liberal national ideology and associated norms. Even though this shared commitment was often obscured by liberal infighting, Costeño liberals remained united by a common bond of racial and cultural characteristics that distinguished them from their highland neighbours. Their shared antipathy toward Bogota also resulted from feelings of neglect and a sense that officials there were more than will-

ing to expropriate financial resources generated by *their* local port and transportation facilities.<sup>15</sup>

While not entirely ignoring Colombian Costeño influence, prevailing accounts of the origins of Panamanian liberal nationalism tilt heavily towards *sui generis* explanations for its emergence (e.g., the unique commercial and geographic characteristics of the Isthmus) and/or external sources of influence other than Colombia's Atlantic coast. For example, most accounts of Freemasonry as a source of liberal ideas stress that Panamanian merchants imported it directly from British-controlled Jamaica and Danish-controlled St Thomas. Less frequently mentioned is the fact that considerable numbers of influential Colombians in Bogota and elsewhere practised Freemasonry during the early nineteenth century, and that Panamanian Masonic lodges operated directly under the authority of the Supreme Council in the northern coastal city of Cartagena.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, the Colombian city of Cartagena played an important role as a beacon for the liberal ideals and norms that so influenced Panama throughout the nineteenth century. The close connection between Panama and Cartagena dates back to early colonial times when only the Caribbean port cities of Havana (in Cuba), Nombre de Dios (in Panama) and Cartagena (in Colombia) were authorized to conduct trade between the Spanish possessions in the New World and Spain. Cartagena was an important "city state" during colonial times that served simultaneously as a significant ecclesiastical centre and military outpost.<sup>17</sup> A large military garrison became necessary in Cartagena because buccaneers visited the city and its bay regularly during much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Due to their special status within the Spanish colonial empire, Cartageneros had long harboured ambitious dreams of dominating the Caribbean coast of New Granada in material and (liberal) ideological terms. During the early nineteenth century, they strongly opposed efforts by Bogateños to gain control over the new state of Gran Colombia, and in the 1830s they attempted to create an independent state that would control the northern Caribbean coast.<sup>18</sup> However, these aspirations to create a new liberal Costeño state for which Cartagena would serve as capital were undermined by the city's gradual loss of control over trade with Colombia's interior along the Magdalena River.<sup>19</sup> In his excellent book entitled *Dominio y sociedad en el Panama Colombiano*, historian and sociologist Alfredo Figueroa Navarro notes that Panama's trade ties with Cartagena were more extensive than with

other regions within Colombia “due to its proximity and the fact that that city [Cartagena] bordered the Atlantic”.<sup>20</sup> He notes further that ties between families living in the two regions were also very common for the same reasons.<sup>21</sup>

The common characteristics of the Caribbean coastal region of Colombia and the many ties that existed among its peoples meant that Cartagena was in a position to influence Panamanian political leaders, businessmen and intellectuals through the power of its Costeño liberal political ideals and norms that flowed freely along the information highway that led from Panama City through Cartagena to the Colombian capital of Bogota. For, as David Bushnell notes, Panamanians could only reach the capital by first taking a ship to Cartagena and then spending a month on a smaller boat poling up the Magdalena River. Not only did people, but also new ideas and concepts about the right ordering of government and society, travel along this highway.<sup>22</sup>

For reasons that probably have to do with the tendency among all national historians to render a unique and transnationally unsullied account of their national origins, Panamanian scholars have devoted very little attention to examining the influence of liberals – particularly Costeño liberals – born in Colombia on the development of nineteenth-century Isthmian nationalism.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, at least one Panamanian historian has suggested that his compatriots had no clear sense of what key figures in the pantheon of Colombian liberalism had contributed to the course of Panamanian national development. Given the silence of most historical accounts concerning the implications of these human ties for the development of liberal norms on the Isthmus, my own account will necessarily point to a limited number of available sources.<sup>24</sup>

A good place to begin is with an examination of the career of Rafael Nuñez. The only Colombian president to have been born on the coast, he is most closely associated in the literature on Colombian history with the period known as the regeneration. Following the period of federalism from 1863 to 1886, he led subsequent efforts to restore the power and authority of the central government in coalition with the Conservatives. However, somewhat less well known is his early career as a politician within the Liberal Party, a period of time when he lived on the Isthmus and was a close associate of many prominent Panamanian liberals.

Rafael Nuñez was born into a military family in Cartagena in 1825. His father, who was a colonel in the Colombian army, would have preferred that his son follow in his footsteps, but Nuñez decided instead to

become a lawyer. After graduating with a degree in law from the University of Cartagena, he served briefly with the government in his home town as an advocate for the poor. Then, with help from his father, who had many prominent friends within the military and business elite in Panama, he moved in 1845 to the city of David where he held an appointment as a judge. It was from this base that the young Cartagenero launched his political career within the Liberal Party that was to take him eventually to the presidency of Colombia.<sup>25</sup>

For our purposes, what is important here is the extent to which the young Nuñez developed close personal and family ties to some of the most influential members of Panama's urban and rural liberal intelligentsia. He had initially been introduced to members of the Panamanian elite through his father, who had close personal ties to General Tomás Herrera. While in David, he became a good friend of José de Obaldía, a prominent merchant who, as a liberal politician, served on several occasions as governor of Panama and once as vice president of Colombia.<sup>26</sup> Nuñez's ties within this rural liberal establishment were further strengthened when he married the daughter of a local landowner who also happened to be the sister-in-law of José de Obaldía.<sup>27</sup>

As a Cartagena liberal who strongly believed in the virtues of a decentralized federalist system prior to his later conversion to the idea of centralized government, Rafael Nuñez's most intriguing personal ties were to Panama City's Arosemena family. Upon his arrival on the Isthmus, Nuñez immediately became close friends with Mariano Arosemena, his son Justo, and other members of the family. These were personal ties that were to remain strong throughout the 1850s, while all served in prominent positions in both the local government and the Colombian legislature when it met in Bogota.

Justo Arosemena was Panama's most prominent liberal nationalist and the person who in the mid-nineteenth century articulated a rationale for Panama's special status within the Colombian state that laid the groundwork for eventual Panamanian independence. In a brilliant presentation before the Colombian legislature, he argued for the creation of an *Estado Federal de Panama* (Panamanian Federal State) that could represent both the unique values and material interests of the Isthmus more adequately than did the existing state system.

In this regard, it is important to note that Arosemena believed that the Colombian people who lived along the northern Caribbean coast had a collective identity and interests that were different from those of



Colombians who lived in the mountainous interior, and that these differences needed to be reflected in the civil laws.<sup>28</sup> To the extent then that he recognized Costeño identity and interests as collectively distinct from those existing in the rest of Colombia, he must have been heavily influenced by Colombian Costeño nationalism and the liberal federalist thinking with which it was associated.

In sum, it seems reasonable to assume that Panamanian mid-nineteenth-century liberal thinking on the matter of federalism and other related issues flowed directly from the personal relationships that prominent Panamanians such as Tomás Herrera, José de Obaldía, Mariano Arosemena and Justo Arosemena developed with Colombian Costeño liberals such as Rafael Nuñez. Ideas and norms are the most portable of all commodities, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that they have both easily flowed along the Colombian information highway that ran through Cartagena as well as through the conduit of the many personal conversations that took place between Rafael Nuñez and his liberal colleagues and relatives on the Isthmus.

## **Suppressed but Sustained Colombian Influence under Conditions of US Hegemony (1903–2000)**

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the context within which Colombian state power, liberal norms and culture could potentially shape the Isthmus of Panama changed dramatically. Various late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century developments had led to an even more substantial reduction in both the Colombian state's *de jure* and *de facto* ability to influence events there. At the same time liberalism was distinctly on the defensive in Colombia for a number of reasons.

In the nineteenth century Colombia had exercised its power over Panama from within an existing set of state administrative structures (no matter how weak these structures might have been); now it had to exercise its power from the outside. This was made much more difficult, really to the point of impossibility, by the fact that the United States under President Theodore Roosevelt had engineered into existence a quasi-state on the Isthmus in 1903 that remained under its control in order to facilitate the construction of the Panama Canal.<sup>29</sup>

The reasons for the temporary eclipse of Colombian/Panamanian liberalism at the dawn of the twentieth century are a bit more complicated. First, there had been a strong reaction to the sense of weakness that Colombian Conservatives had felt when the country was configured

as the United States of Colombia (1863–1886). Led by the converted Cartagena Liberal Rafael Nuñez, conservative politicians and Catholic religious groups led a counterattack that recentralized the country in 1886 under the new name of the Republic of Colombia. Second, President Nuñez and his successor Miguel Antonio Caro led Colombia into a disastrous series of civil wars that lasted until 1903 and decimated the forces of liberalism throughout the country.<sup>30</sup> Third, the United States exercised its material power in such a way during the earliest years of the Republic of Panama as to prevent liberals from assuming political office.

However, in spite of the fact that the Colombian *state* was clearly eclipsed as a force for shaping Panama by the ascendancy of the United States, it could be argued that the long-term influence of Colombian liberal norms and culture actually increased or remained the same throughout the twentieth century. This apparent paradox could be explained by the fact that various Cartagenero/Costeño normative and cultural forces that were already in place within Isthmian society when Panama achieved its independence remained part of the Panamanian scene well into the twentieth century, and that these Colombian forces were responsible for shaping most of Panama's key political, social and economic institutions. For example, in the political sphere, while the United States tried rather unsuccessfully to establish a procedural democracy in Panama that was largely bereft of social content, Costeño liberals created the substantively liberal democracy and associated institutions that exist in Panama today.

This is not to say that the US role was unimportant or inconsequential. As the hegemonic political, economic and military power on the Isthmus throughout the twentieth century, the United States government became involved very early in attempts to shape outcomes in Panamanian politics.<sup>31</sup> For example, in 1908 US officials established an electoral commission in order to prevent what they viewed as highly irregular electoral practices by both Liberals and Conservatives.<sup>32</sup> However, because of the erratic and episodic nature of US commitment to defend procedural democracy in Panama and the fact that Panamanian conservatism was not a well-grounded political phenomenon, Liberals quickly reasserted themselves in the electoral arena. In this context, the "Cartagena connection" once again became a force to be reckoned with in shaping the substantive nature of the Panamanian state.

In order to strengthen this argument about substantial post-inde-

pendence Colombian influence on the Isthmus, I will briefly discuss the lives and twentieth-century impact of three prominent Panamanians with strong ties to Cartagena and the north coast. The first of these, and arguably the most important, is Belisario Porras, who was president of Panama three times during the early twentieth century. His father Demitrio Porras Carrero was born in Cartagena and first came to the Isthmus as a member of the Conservative government of Dr Bartolomé Calvo. The latter served as governor of the State of Panama from 1856 to 1858 and appointed his friend and fellow lawyer Demetrio Porras to the position of prefect of the Department of Los Santos in the Panamanian interior. While in Los Santos, Porras married and his son Belisario was born, but soon after he left his family in Panama to take up an appointment as prefect of the State of Magdalena.<sup>33</sup>

Belisario Porras was the product of the complex political forces that were at play in coastal Colombia (including the Isthmus of Panama) during the mid-nineteenth century. Although his father was a Cartagena Conservative – and he admits to having been tempted to follow in his father’s footsteps in this regard – he ultimately fell under the ideological sway of coastal liberalism. As a result, he began to build strong friendships with prominent Panamanian urban populists such as Buenaventura Correoso, and his liberal populist instincts were further strengthened when he joined his father in Bogota in 1869 to begin his higher education at the Colegio de San Bartolomé. In 1874 he moved to the National University where he came under the influence of some of Colombia’s foremost liberal thinkers.<sup>34</sup>

Although he struggled with limited success to free himself and his government from the overpowering US presence on the Isthmus during the first two decades following Panama’s independence, Porras’s role in shaping Panama’s new state institutions was nonetheless immense. As a journalist, he wrote extensively about the various problems that the newly independent country faced and would have to deal with in the future and thus set the agenda for the liberal state. And as a three-time president of Panama (1912–1916, 1918–1920 and 1920–1924), he presided over the initial construction of its institutions and infrastructure.<sup>35</sup> In sum, as the product of Costeño liberal political culture, Belisario Porras was one of the primary “norm carriers” for, and architects of, the liberal Panamanian state.<sup>36</sup>

José Dolores Moscote was another native Cartagenero who played a major role in shaping the early Panamanian state. He was born in Cartagena in 1879 and studied law and political science at the

Universidad de Bolívar where he received a doctorate in law at the age of twenty-one.<sup>37</sup> He was part of a whole generation of Cartagenian professionals who were faced with the prospect of extremely limited job opportunities in their home town because of the decline of their city as the main transportation point servicing interior cities such as Bogota via the Magdalena River.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, he and many of his compatriots who found themselves in similar circumstances headed for the Isthmus of Panama where French and later US activities related to construction of the canal provided many more professional opportunities.

Moscote was a quintessential Costeño liberal and quickly had an impact in the field of education. Upon arrival in 1903, he offered his services as an instructor in Spanish and Mathematics, and soon became a fixture within the public school system. However, more importantly for the future of the Panamanian state, he was a liberal reformer who believed that the government should use educational institutions for the active encouragement of political and social change. He therefore organized one of Panama's first teachers' associations and served from 1925 to 1931 as the rector of the Instituto Nacional, the country's most prestigious secondary school. He was also one of the co-founders of the Universidad de Panama (1935), an institution that, along with the Instituto Nacional, played a critical role in subsequent decades as a "social conscience voice" for Panamanian society as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the fact that José Dolores Moscote's professional career demonstrates the extent to which Costeño Colombians and their liberal values helped shape the fledgling Panamanian state, it is also important in that it suggests a high degree of ambivalence among native Isthmian nationalists with regard to the contributions to this endeavour made by Costeño "outsiders". Moscote himself suggests that there may have been certain racial barriers to his full acceptance within Panamanian society, and that the fact that he was not born on the Isthmus made him an object of suspicion. These suspicions may have been heightened by the fact that he did not request Panamanian citizenship until twenty years after his arrival in his new homeland.<sup>40</sup>

A third and final case suggesting the extent of the "Cartagena connection" in shaping the institutions of the new Panamanian state is that of Eusebio Antonio Morales. Born in 1865 in the small town of Sincelejo (located in the Province of Bolívar, between Cartagena and the Isthmus of Panama), Morales studied law for a short time at the University of Cartagena. However, his studies were interrupted by the civil war between Liberals and Conservatives that wracked the country. As a

committed Costeño ideological Liberal, he eventually moved to Panama to participate on the Liberal side in the War of the Thousand Days (1899–1902).<sup>41</sup>

As with José Dolores Moscote, Eusebio Morales presents an interesting case of a Cartagenero who made a substantial contribution to the formation of the liberal normative backbone for the new Panamanian state. As with Moscote, he wrote extensively and many of his ideas were incorporated into key texts, such as the Manifesto of the Revolutionary Junta and the 1904 Constitution. Having held virtually every ministerial portfolio that the Panamanian government had to offer before his untimely death in 1929, he was in a position to shape virtually every part of the new state's institutional apparatus through the power of his liberal ideas.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that the United States exercised overwhelming material power on the Isthmus during the early years of the Republic, and that Colombia and its state agents were in no position whatsoever to influence developments there, individual Colombians from the north coast and Panamanians with close Costeño family connections made a substantial (indeed critical) normative contribution to the construction of a liberal Panamanian state. In this regard, the three individuals, Belisario Porras, José Dolores Moscote and Eusebio Antonio Morales, formed something of a normative *troika*, each in his own way and all collectively, helping to shape a state that reflected the Costeño/Cartagenero liberal values that they embraced rather than the conservative ones that Rafael Nuñez had rejected.

Another characteristic of this second period of Colombian influence (1903–2000) is that it coincided with the conscious efforts of local elites on the Isthmus to create a cultural boundary between the emerging nation state and Colombia – particularly with regard to the racial groups lying along the northern Caribbean coast. This boundary was established rather quickly during the early twentieth century through a process in which Colombian Costeño cultural modes of expression (music, dress and the like) were first “expropriated” and then “naturalized”, so as to appear quintessentially Panamanian.

Examples are the Panamanian form of music known as the *tamborito* and the associated women's mode of dress called the *pollera*. Three or four drums made of hollowed-out tree trunks covered with a cowhide head serve as the instrumental base for the *tamborito*, a courtship dance that revolves around couples. The women, dressed in *polleras*, chant in a call-and-response fashion to the accompaniment of the rhythmic beat-

ing of drums and clapping of hands. Most accounts of the origins of the *tamborito* describe it as exclusively Panamanian and associate it with the variety of local cultural expressions found in the mountainous interior provinces of the country.<sup>43</sup> However, the cultural historian Rodrigo Miró traces its origins to groups of Costeño Blacks and Mulattos who lived in their own separate communities on the Isthmus during colonial times. Similarly, he suggests that the *pollera* was originally a plain white dress that Black and Mulatto women (*gente de color*) wore during the colonial era.<sup>44</sup>

It is clear from Miró's discussion of these Panamanian modes of cultural expression that their seemingly close resemblance to various Colombian Costeño modes of expression was (and still remains) a topic of some delicacy. Thus, Miró himself treats the subject by raising a set of questions: What is the relationship between the Colombian *bunde* and the Panamanian *tamborito*? Are there any similarities between Colombia's *cumbia* and the dance form having the same name in the tropical lowlands of Colombia? Is there really a national cultural history that Panama can claim as exclusively and essentially its own?<sup>45</sup>

As with the dance form called the *merengue* in the Dominican Republic, Panama's White urban upper class "expropriated" the *tamborito* and *pollera* from the Black and Mulatto lower classes of Colombia's tropical lowlands and quickly turned them into symbols of national identity that defined Panama as a *mestizo* country.<sup>46</sup> As upper-class women began to dress in *polleras* after 1903, these lower-class modes of cultural expression were stripped of their original association with various types of behaviour that were viewed as crude and *risqué*, and anointed with the sweet oil of upper-class respectability. Iconic status was attained by these modes of cultural expression in 1910 when "Pollera Sunday" became an officially recognized part of Carnival.<sup>47</sup>

The continuing influence of Colombian Costeño norms and culture in Panama during the latter part of the twentieth century is manifest in a number of ways. Although the United States remained the hegemonic power on the Isthmus during this period, and hence presumably the paramount external source of "local" political values and culture, this was not entirely the case during the last three decades of the twentieth century. For example, a Panamanian civilian government that reflected (albeit in somewhat distorted fashion) dominant US norms, such as the importance of democratic governance, was overthrown in 1968 by the military.

The populist authoritarian government that replaced it and that sur-

vived for more than three decades, until a US military invasion overthrew it, was dominated by Panamanian social classes and racial groups who were clearly the lineal descendants of those nineteenth-century forces that subscribed to the ideology undergirding Colombian Costeño nationalism.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, these social classes and racial groups were the same ones that had been “liberated” during the early nineteenth century when the newly created state of Gran Colombia used its power to abolish Panama’s rigid caste system. The Mestizo, Black, and Mulatto officers and enlisted men who led the 1968 military coup were building upon access to bureaucratic employment that had been granted them more than a century earlier through the juridical application of Colombian state power. The large civilian bureaucracy that served as the popular base for the ensuing authoritarian regime was filled with people of colour who adhered to the values of Colombian Costeño nationalism.<sup>49</sup>

In sum, it seems clear that the various forces on the Isthmus of Panama that were historically associated with Colombia’s northern Caribbean coast were barely suppressed by external US hegemonic impulses and indeed sometimes were even ascendant – such as during the last three decades of the twentieth century. Through the “Cartagena connection”, Costeños made crucial post-independence contributions to the construction of a liberal Panamanian state. The modes of cultural expression such as the *tamborito* and the *pollera* that are viewed as essential to defining Panama’s national cultural boundary are largely Costeño ones that have become “naturalized” as quintessentially Panamanian over time. The Costeño political norms and values historically associated with Cartagena and its particular brand of liberal nationalism undergirded the most durable and long-lasting Panamanian government of the twentieth century (1968–1989).

### **Colombianization: Renewed Influence Following the US Departure (2000–Present)**

In this third section of my essay I argue that Colombian power, norms and culture are once again emerging as an important force shaping Panama following the departure from the former Canal Zone of the United States.<sup>50</sup> I further argue that, while Colombian normative and cultural influence is not as extensive in Panama as its economic power, it is nonetheless substantial. This growing influence is the product of the ongoing civil war in Colombia that has led to a mass exodus of the coun-

try's middle class to neighbouring countries as well as of Panamanian desire for Colombian investment capital.

The currently fashionable concept of Colombianization to a certain extent captures the nature of the external forces with which my own analysis deals. However, this concept remains controversial because US politicians and diplomats have regularly used it for policy purposes: to stigmatize the behaviour of Latin American countries such as Mexico that were believed to be paying insufficient attention to the activities of drug cartels. For example, it was used in a 1997 report prepared within the US defence policy administration that examined various unattractive scenarios for Panama that might follow from the withdrawal of US military forces.<sup>51</sup> This is *not* the way I intend to use it in this analysis of recent Panamamian developments. I use the term Colombianization to describe the process by which Panama is gradually being reincorporated *de facto* into the economic, normative and cultural fabric of the neighbouring state of Colombia.<sup>52</sup> While part of this dynamic relates to illicit activities such as drug trafficking and money laundering, I do not view this as the heart of the matter. More important is the broader pattern of economic, political and cultural incorporation through everyday interactions, such as the formation of strategic business alliances, migration flows and cultural interchange. Many of these processes are related to the larger phenomena of globalization and transnationalization that are removing the regulatory barriers that previously made states much more autonomous political and economic units within the international system.<sup>53</sup>

This most recent period of renewed Colombian influence and the associated process of Colombianization have not been given serious attention by Panamanians, in part because of the negative connotations that the term carries, but also for a host of other reasons. Richard Millett has noted that the degree to which the Colombian presence has grown along Panama's eastern coastal frontier has been understated due to fears that a true picture of the situation might frighten away potential foreign investors, undermine the rationale for having abolished the Panamanian army, and create pressures for the return of US military forces.<sup>54</sup> In addition, serious discussion of this phenomenon by Panamanians is inhibited by a strong sense of national pride as well as a lack of reliable data.

Given that it was groups on Colombia's northern coast that most substantially influenced the Isthmus during the nineteenth century, it would simply be inaccurate to describe the current pattern of growing



economic relationships between the two countries as reflecting a process of re-Colombianization. Although Panamanians traded during this earlier period with Colombian merchants in port cities such as Baranquilla and Cartagena, they had few direct economic ties to major cities in the Colombian interior.<sup>55</sup> By way of contrast, what I describe here as Colombianization is more the result of *new* forces operating within Colombia and throughout the Americas than it is a return to the nineteenth-century patterns and practices that were discussed earlier.

The first of these forces is Colombia's ongoing civil war. At its core, this war is the product of a complex set of structural factors, including rural poverty and rapid population growth, which have led in recent years to a movement of peasants from the countryside to the urban areas. It currently manifests itself as a struggle that pits a besieged civilian government (and its regional allies) against an array of guerrilla and paramilitary groups that include the left-of-centre Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the right-of-centre United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). The ongoing efforts by the Colombian and United States governments to crush the guerrillas have led to a massive flight of capital, some of which has made its way into Panama.

In addition to the economic Colombianization of capital markets that Panama has experienced as an indirect consequence of the civil war, other forces are at work. One is the process of globalization and attendant regionalization, that is increasingly tying the national economies and the related economic infrastructure of neighbouring countries closer together.<sup>56</sup> This aspect of Colombia's growing material economic influence (what I call "Colombianization from Above") was highlighted during an official visit in December 2002 of President Álvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia to President Mireya Moscoso of Panama. During this meeting, the two heads of state announced their intention to negotiate three agreements that would integrate the economic infrastructure of their two countries much more tightly. The first of these agreements allowed for the construction of a natural gas pipeline that would link fields in northern Colombia to markets in Panama and Central America. The second would connect the electric power grids of the two countries, while the third would lead to the creation of more sea and land links.<sup>57</sup>

The rapid growth of Colombian economic influence (and hence material power) within Panama is simply not captured by existing data on direct foreign investment. In fact, much of this information is contradictory even when coming from the same source.<sup>58</sup> Take for example

**Table 1** Foreign Direct Investment in Panama by Country of Origin, 2000

Country	US\$ Millions	Percentage of Total
China	130.0	42
United States	90.0	29
Mexico	40.0	13
Taiwan	15.0	5
Others	32.4	11
Total	307.4	100

*Source:* "Panama Country Commercial Guide, FY 2002", International Trade Administration, US Department of Commerce, The US Commercial Service, [www.usatrade.gov](http://www.usatrade.gov)

some fairly recent figures from the US Department of Commerce (shown in Table 1).

Based on these data, one would think that Chinese economic influence was predominant today in Panama, and that the worst fears of opponents of the canal treaties about growing Asian influence were about to be realized. However, while we may never know the true extent of Colombian investment in Panama, it is surely much greater than the official figures would seem to indicate. Reasons for these discrepancies include Panama's use of the US dollar, the ease with which Colombians can enter Panama and deposit funds in local banks, and the widespread use of the Colon Free Zone by Colombians to launder profits from drug trafficking and other illicit activities into legitimate investments in real estate and other sectors of the Panamanian economy.

The leading sectors in terms of increasing Colombian influence over Panama's economy are the hotel business and construction industry. Although the building of hotels and shopping centres has long been a convenient way for Colombian criminal elements to launder their profits, it has more recently become a way for legitimate businessmen, fearing the escalation of violence in their country's major cities, to move investment capital abroad. For example, the president of two of Colombia's major airlines purchased the Hotel Contadora in 1999. Located on an island in the Pacific, it is probably best known as the home in exile of the Shah of Iran and his retinue for a brief period during the 1970s, as well as the site for the beginning of the so-called Contadora Peace Process during the 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

But today Colombian entrepreneurs are displaying more than just a narrow interest in purchasing individual hotels such as the Contadora and Hotel El Panama in order to move capital abroad. Rather, they are working toward integrating their Panamanian properties into a much broader network of tourist offerings and activities related not only to Colombia itself but also to Europe. With this in mind, they have worked to upgrade existing air transportation links both between Panama and major European cities, and also within Panama itself.<sup>60</sup> To the extent that they succeed in horizontally and vertically integrating the hotel, transportation and tourism sectors, they will have globalized a significant portion of Panama's service economy.

Perhaps most emblematic of the strong and growing Colombian presence in the construction industry was completion of a so-called Multi-Centre (MULTICENTRO) in 2004. Located in Panama City's most exclusive neighbourhood along the Bay of Panama, the majority of this project's \$200 million construction cost was underwritten by capital from Colombia. A major Colombian-based investment group administers the project, and a large Colombian construction company built it.<sup>61</sup>

Even more important in the long term is the fact that Colombian businessmen have moved to create new strategic alliances in Panama's industrial sector.<sup>62</sup> For example, the powerful Santo Domingo Group sought majority control of Panama's beer and soft drink business through the tender of a public offer by one of its subsidiaries to buy stock in Cervecería Baru, Cervecería Nacional, and Coca-Cola de Panama. These moves suggest that Colombian businessmen are seeking to control what have historically been the commanding heights of Panama's industrial economy.

All of the above-mentioned processes are what might be called "Colombianization from Above". I use this term because they result from a convergence of interests between Panamanian government officials, local business elites and various large business groups in Colombia. This convergence was facilitated by the fact that the Panamanian economy struggled during the first years of the new millennium. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) estimated that the gross domestic product rose only 0.4 percent during 2002, a growth rate that was far too low to compensate for Panama's population increase. Because of the economic difficulties that neighbouring countries such as Venezuela and Colombia have experienced, exports declined by some 13 percent. This included banana and coffee exports, and as a result Chiquita Brands, which operates the Puerto

Armuelles Fruit Company near the Costa Rican border, wanted to close that facility.<sup>63</sup> Although growth in world trade has supported more rapid economic growth more recently, domestic unemployment still exists at unsustainable levels.

Due to a struggling economy, Panamanian leaders continue to search for new sources of foreign investment, and Colombia's business elites are looking for new and safer locations for their capital. In this context, former President Mireya Moscoso charged Marcos G. Vallarino, the director of the Office for the Promotion of Production and Investment, with the task of aggressively seeking out new Colombian investors. In the last few years a number of business groups have visited Panama, particularly from the troubled northern areas around Bucaramanga and Medellín. Colombian businessmen have also been regular attendees at EXPOCOMER, Panama's major business promotion fair.<sup>64</sup>

Just as important in explaining Colombia's renewed economic influence in Panama is what might be called the process of "Colombianization from Below". For the past thirty years, and at an accelerating pace during the past decade, Colombians from all walks of life have been fleeing their country. They leave not only the rural areas and small villages that have been beset for decades by violence but also larger cities such as Medellín, Cali and Bogota. By the Colombian Government's own estimate, some 800,000 people abandoned the country between 1996 and the year 2000. Most of them headed to Spain, the United States or neighbouring countries in South and Central America that did not require them to possess visas.<sup>65</sup>

Since Panama does not require Colombians to have visas, many have come and never returned to their homeland. Reliable estimates of the total number of Colombians living in Panama are obviously hard to find. One US Department of State report simply observes that there are "large populations" of Colombians in Panama City and Colon, as well as in Darien Province.<sup>66</sup> Some indication of the size of the refugee population (10,000) and of those living in "refugee-like circumstances" (7,000) is given in the reports of various relief agencies.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps a more accurate overall estimate (50,000) is one that has apparently been made, but not publicly released, by the Panamanian government itself.<sup>68</sup>

This process of "Colombianization from Below" is noted in the streets around Panama City, particularly in the areas of San Miguelito, Calidonia, Santa Ana, Parque Lefevre, Pueblo Nuevo and Pacora. It is the case as well in the Atlantic-side city of Colon and in Chiriqui Province near the Costa Rican border. Colombian small business peo-

ple have moved rapidly into the restaurant and hair-dressing trades, and the distinctive Colombian accent is heard regularly in locations where these types of businesses are conducted. Other Colombians simply use Panama as a convenient and relatively safe base of operations, administering their businesses back in Colombia via the Internet and through locally based staff. They have not traditionally advertised their presence in Panama through such activities as forming local cultural clubs.<sup>69</sup>

Colombians are known to be some of the region's best business people, with an extremely well developed sense of customer service, so that they operate at something of a comparative advantage. The immigrant population comprises economic refugees, political refugees, rich people, middle-class people, poor people, legal and illegal residents, and so on. Their exact numbers are unknown, but their economic presence is being felt more and more every day. They are not only helping to transform Panama's economy but also gradually transforming the country's class structure.

While the renewed Colombian presence following the US departure can be construed as primarily economic, to view it only as such is to miss more subtle dimensions of what is happening in various parts of Panama. It can be argued that this new economic presence is also transforming Panama's urban middle class, as middle-class Colombians move into Panama City and Colon. Several indirect indicators of this transformation are rising demand for services such as health care and education, as well as growing demands for some form of Colombian political-cultural representation.<sup>70</sup> For example, Jorge Iván Mora, a candidate for the Colombian House of Representatives in 2002, proposed the formation of a new Colombian Foundation that would provide various social services to citizens living abroad. More specifically, this foundation would provide legal and health services to those Colombians who were either in foreign jails or otherwise living in marginal situations and conditions.<sup>71</sup>

It is important to note that Panama's Colombian immigrant population is to be found primarily within those parts of the country that have historical ties to the northern Caribbean coast. Most notable is Darien Province that lies along the border with Colombia. Some regions within that province are already part of a larger restored "Costeño Colombia" for all practical purposes, and they promise to become more so every day. As one former Panamanian administrative official put it more than a decade ago, "When in 1991, I flew to Port Obaldía in a Panamanian police helicopter, I felt that the Darien was Colombian and not

Panamanian. The radio stations, the music people listened to on the radio, the television – all were Colombian. The food people consumed was also Colombian because it was much easier to bring it there from the neighbouring country.<sup>72</sup>

While the case of the Darien is generally well known, not so well known is the renewed presence of Colombians along the Atlantic littoral from Puerto Obaldía through the San Blas Islands to the port city of Colon. This growing Colombian presence is partly the result of the extensive smuggling routes that lie along it, routes that have been actively used since at least the 1980s and the days of Central America's civil wars. Equally important, however, is that Colon has more recently become a convenient gateway for Colombians from all walks of life who are fleeing their country by sea to reach Panama.<sup>73</sup>

Given these broad trends and the continuing movement of large numbers of Colombians into Panama City and Colon, one can begin to talk about the cultural and spatial restoration of nineteenth-century Costeño Colombia. Thus, the more things have changed over the past several centuries, the more they seem to have remained fundamentally the same.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past two centuries, the socio-cultural and juridical entity that is called Panama has been shaped and reshaped by Colombian power, norms and culture. Although Colombian power played an important role in shaping Panama at various critical junctures during the nineteenth century, the fact that the Colombian state was generally weak and that there were frequent changes in the nature of constitutional regimes meant that the state played a lesser role in this regard than did other forces. More important were the normative and cultural forces associated with northern Caribbean Costeño liberal nationalism.

Although the United States was clearly the dominant political, economic and military power on the Isthmus throughout the twentieth century, there remained a persistently strong strain of liberal norms and culture that heavily influenced the nature of the newly emerging Panamanian state. Panama was also shaped during this period not only by US political and economic power but also by US norms such as those associated with procedural democracy. In fact, it could be argued that the political and economic tensions and conflicts that were present within Panama during the twentieth century were primarily the prod-

uct of the often competing norms and cultural forces emanating from both the “Colossus of the North” and the “Costeño South”.

The present historical period seems to bear some similarity to the nineteenth century in that the Colombian state is currently playing a rather minor role in the shaping and reshaping of Panama. More important than the influence of the Colombian state or Colombian norms is the dynamic role being played by Costeño peoples as well as those who have migrated to Panama from cities in the mountainous interior, such as Medellín and Cali. It remains to be seen whether the Colombian state will eventually play a more pronounced role in reshaping Panama – a role more in keeping with changing patterns of transnational cultural and economic influence.

## NOTES

1. Panamanian historian Rodrigo Miró commented on the seeming paradox that such a small country could have been shaped by such complex historical processes: “notwithstanding our territorial and demographic smallness, for geopolitical reasons the history of the Isthmus offers chapters of extreme complexity. The multiple richness of the factors in play demands of us finely tuned sensibilities and a singular talent for comprehension” (*Sentido y misión de la historia en Panama* [Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia: Biblioteca Cultural Shell, 1995], 15).
2. For a good recent account of the hegemonic role of the United States, see Peter M. Sanchez, *Panama Lost: Isthmian Democracy and the Canal in the Twenty-First Century* (University Press of Florida, forthcoming).
3. On colonial Panama, see Christopher Ward, *Imperial Panama: Commerce and Conflict in Isthmian America, 1550–1800* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993).
4. Ethnologists believe that the long valleys of present-day Colombia that run southwest to northeast through the Andes probably served as natural corridors for the migration of indigenous peoples in pre-Colombian times (Jan Knippers Black, “Historical Setting”, in Richard F. Nyrop, ed., *Panama: A Country Study* [Washington, DC: The American University, 1980], 5–6).
5. The reasons for this major reversal in the fortunes of the Isthmus from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century have been extensively discussed by historians. Among them were Panama’s increasing vulnerability to military attacks from English buccaneers, more liberal Spanish trade policies under the Bourbons that reduced the volume of legal transit trade, and growth in contraband trade that was quietly welcomed by everyone, including the Spanish Crown (*ibid.*, 11–13).
6. *Ibid.*, 10.

7. Alfredo Figueroa Navarro, *Dominio y Sociedad en el Panama Colombiano (1821–1903)* (Ciudad de Panama: Impresora Panama, S.A., 1978), 41–45.
8. *Ibid.*, 47–48.
9. With regard to the differences in national character that distinguished Colombians from their Venezuelan and Ecuadorian neighbours, Simón Bolívar may have had it right. He once suggested that Ecuador seemed like a convent and Venezuela like a military garrison. Colombia, to him, acted more like a debating society.
10. See Figueroa Navarro, 7. The fact that five quite different configurations of the Colombian state existed between 1821 and 1903 can be attributed to the extreme volatility of Colombian politics which centred around life-and-death struggles between members of the Liberal and Conservative parties and their followers. During this period, there were six civil wars, and the winners always changed not only public policies but existing constitutional structures when they came to power (see Harvey Kline and Vanessa Gray, “Colombia: Drugs, Guerrillas, Death Squads, and US Aid”, in Howard J. Wiarda and Harvey Kline, ed., *Latin American Politics and Development*, fifth edition [Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000], 205–6).
11. Omar Jaén Suárez, *La población del Istmo de Panama* (Panama, 1978), 9–10.
12. Figueroa Navarro, 84–88.
13. Suárez, 450.
14. Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 200; Baltazar Isaza Calderón, *El Liberalismo de Carlos Mendoza en la historia Panameña, Santa Fe de Bogota* (Colombia: Stamato Editores, 1994), 15–26.
15. On the common characteristics of Colombia’s north coast communities, see James William Park, *Rafael Nuñez and the Politics of Colombian Regionalism, 1863–1886* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 25–28. Park indicates (p. 27) that all three of the northern coastal states (Panama, Bolívar and Magdalena) were power bases for the Liberal Party from 1863 to 1874 within the United States of Colombia.
16. See Figueroa Navarro, 56–57, 219. This privileging of European (particularly English and Dutch) sources of “essential” national ideals is not uncommon among other peoples living along the Caribbean coast of Central and South America. For example, Edmund Gordon claims that this is the case among Nicaragua’s coastal Creole peoples who have traditionally seen themselves as “the torchbearers of Anglo Civilization” in a region dominated by Iberian values (Edmond T. Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African-Nicaraguan Community* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998], 45–46).
17. Cartagena was home to an Episcopal See as well as six monasteries and convents. During the seventeenth century this made it a natural choice to serve as a local headquarters for the Spanish Inquisition (Safford and Palacios, 48).
18. *Ibid.*, 89, 134.



19. Ibid., 16–17.
20. Figueroa Navarro, 40, 308.
21. Ibid., 316.
22. David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 18.
23. The work of Omar Jaén Suárez is particularly interesting in this regard since he is arguably Panama's best historian. Perhaps because he discusses Panamanian history from a strictly material and spatial perspective rather than as a history of ideas, he acknowledges Colombian nineteenth-century influence with regard to its impact on the formation of particular classes (administrative functionaries, merchants, marginalized peasants, the urban proletariat) but not on the ideological formation of the nation as a whole. This is clear in his conclusion where he states that "Europeans, overall Spanish and, in lesser numbers, Italians; Africans from the Gulf of Guinea principally; indigenous peoples, remnants of the Conquest and colonization; in addition some Chinese, French and English, found themselves in Panama for the purpose of organizing the space and exploiting the resources of the Isthmus" (Suárez, 552).
24. See, for example, Miró, 207–8.
25. On Rafael Nuñez's early life, see Park, 76–78; Isaza Calderón, 46–52.
26. On José de Obaldía and his son José Domingo Obaldía, see Ernesto Castellero Reyes, "José Domingo Obaldía", *Revista Lotería* 326–27 (1983): 17; J. Conte Porras, *Diccionario Biográfico de Panama* (Panama: Impresora Panama, S.A., 1975), 89. Nuñez's personal relationship with both Tomás Herrera and José de Obaldía is discussed in Park, 76–77.
27. Ibid.
28. Arosemena mentions specifically the need for different laws "en la Costa" with regard to marriage because of the presence of large numbers of foreigners who wanted to marry native Colombians (see *Estado Federal de Panama* [Panama City: Ediciones Librería Cultural Panameña, 1975], 48).
29. Here, I do not use the term "quasi-state" loosely. Article I of Panama's first constitution stated that "The United States guarantees and will maintain the independence of the Republic of Panama". Other provisions gave the United States complete power to maintain domestic order on the Isthmus and to make sure that the integrity of constitutional structures was maintained (Walter LaFeber, *The Panama Canal: The Crisis in Historical Perspective* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1979], 42).
30. Safford and Palacios, 247–48.
31. For a good general account of the historical relationship between Panama and the United States, see Michael L. Conniff, *Panama and the United States: The Forced Alliance* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992).
32. Steve C. Ropp, "Panama: Militarism and Imposed Transition", in Thomas W. Walker and Ariel G. Armony, eds., *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2000), 119.

33. Porras, 100; Isaza Calderón, 224.
34. Isaza Calderón, 226–27, 231–32.
35. See, for example, Ricuarte Soler, *Cuatro ensayos de historia sobre Panama y nuestra America* (Panama: Impresora de la Nación, 1985), 35.
36. It is clear that Belisario Porras was torn between his Colombian and Panamanian identities, and thus suffered from something of a split personality. In his own words, “I was born Panamanian but, at the same time, born Colombian. On the one hand, I am bound by my love for Colombia, for its glorious history, and by my profound conviction that the times call for . . . the creation of large nations; on the other hand, I am attracted by the seductive power of the mother, the native land, the cradle of my children, that is the centre of my affections. . . . [I am] tortured and enslaved between my longing for Colombia and my love for Panama” (quoted in Isaza Calderón, 421).
37. Miró, 125.
38. Cartagena’s population experienced a major decline from 1850 to 1870 and stagnated after that. At the same time, the coastal city of Baranquilla experienced rapid population growth because it was able to exploit its position at the headwaters of the Magdalena River (Safford and Palacios, 16–17).
39. Miró, 126–27.
40. *Ibid.*, 129.
41. Isaza Calderón, 236–37.
42. *Ibid.*, 243–45.

43. *Ibid.*, 126–27.

44. *Ibid.*, 129.

45. *Ibid.*, 129.

46. *Ibid.*, 129.

47. *Ibid.*, 129.

48. *Ibid.*, 129.

49. *Ibid.*, 129.

- see Margaret E. Scranton, *The Noriega Years: US-Panamanian Relations, 1981–1990* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991). The best discussions of various political developments in Panama since the invasion can be found in Orlando J. Perez, ed., *Post-Invasion Panama: The Challenges of Democratization in the New World Order* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000).
51. Tod Robberson, “Panama Canal a Terrorist’s Dream Come True Say Some Officials Worried About Security After the US Handoff”, *Dallas Morning News*, 4 July 1999.
  52. While I first intended to use the term “Re-Colombianization” to describe current processes, I decided that it suggested a return to a past relationship that inaccurately reflected the nature of contemporary realities. Indeed, the newly emerging relationship is one that promises to lead to much closer ties, particularly in an economic and cultural sense, than any that existed in the nineteenth century.
  53. On this liberal definition of the phenomenon of globalization, see Jan Aart Scholte, *Globalization: A Critical Introduction* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000), 45.
  54. Richard L. Millett, “Colombia’s Conflicts: The Spillover Effects of a Wider War” (Strategic Studies Institute, North-South Center, University of Miami, November 2002), 18.
  55. The well-known Panamanian scholar Alfredo Figueroa Navarro (p. 235) states that “Panama’s economy centred on commercial relations with the Antilles and the Pacific ports. Economic ties with Bogota simply did not exist.”
  56. The most ambitious of the regional development projects relating to these processes in Central America is the so-called Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) that is being promoted by Mexico’s President Vicente Fox. This plan aims to make the region a major trading hub that would link Europe with the United States and Asia. To be funded by private investment capital from the developed world, it calls for the creation of a series of new highways and electrical power lines that would stretch from Mexico to Panama.
  57. “Panama’s President Meets Colombia’s Uribe, Discusses Visas, Electricity”, in *Hoover’s Online*, 19 December 2002, [www.vnews.hoovers.com](http://www.vnews.hoovers.com)
  58. Data from the US Department of Commerce is particularly confusing in this regard. For example, while foreign direct investment numbers for Mainland China and Taiwan are included in earlier tables, they do not appear in later ones (see US Department of Commerce, “Doing Business in Panama: A Country Commercial Guide for US Companies”, [www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x\\_3748646.pdf](http://www.buyusainfo.net/docs/x_3748646.pdf))
  59. *Panama America*, 24 July 1999.
  60. *Ibid.*
  61. The construction company backing this project was Pedro Gómez y Compañía, S.A., one of the largest and most influential companies in Colombia. It has been responsible for construction of many such facilities

- in that country under the name UNICENTRO. The Grupo El Hayek that manages the facility is associated with the Colombia-based Decameron hotel chain (*La Estrella de Panama*, 11 July 2002; *Panama America*, 16 August 2001).
62. "Inversionistas de Colombia buscan alianzas estratégicas", *Panama America*, 14 January 2003.
  63. *El Siglo*, 4 January 2003; *El Universal*, 3 December 2002.
  64. *Panama America*, 2 March 2002.
  65. Larry Rohter, "Driven by Fear, Colombians Leave in Droves", *The New York Times*, 5 March 2000.
  66. US Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights: Panama, 2001", [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)
  67. "Country Report: Panama", *Worldwide Refugee Information*, 29 April 2000, [www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/amer\\_carib/panama.ht](http://www.refugees.org/world/countryrpt/amer_carib/panama.ht)
  68. These figures indicate that there are 20,000 Dominicans, 30,000 Central Americans from various countries, and 50,000 Colombians. Since these estimates appeared in the "gossip" column of a Panamanian newspaper, they might be treated with considerable scepticism. However, given the substantial ties of this particular newspaper to the government, as well as the specific nature of the figures, they may well be fairly accurate ("Los Extranjeros en Panama", *La Estrella de Panama*, 15 December 2000).
  69. *Panama America*, 18 October 2001.
  70. For example, in the educational sphere, the University of Santander opened an Internet-based branch campus in the Punta Paitilla neighbourhood of Panama City in 2001. This is an area with a heavy concentration of middle-class Colombians (*La Estrella de Panama*, 2 April 2001).
  71. This proposal grows out of recent changes in Colombia's electoral laws that grant representation in the Senate to citizens living abroad. Mora has proposed that this new foundation should have not only a social welfare function with regard to Colombian citizens living abroad but also cultural and political ones as well. It would be charged with encouraging a two-way flow of poets, folklorists, musicians and social scientists between the two countries. Work committees have already been established in the provinces of Colon and Chitre, and there are plans to establish others around the country. The ultimate goal would be to promote changes in Panamanian law that would lead to the regularization of the status of the many Colombians living illegally in Panama. As with the Mexican government's efforts to aid the Mexican immigrant population living throughout the United States, Colombian politicians are seeking changes that would make possible the issuance of consular licences granting certain legal rights and protections to Colombian citizens abroad (*Panama America*, 9 March 2002).
  72. Rogelio Cruz, "El Darien de Colombia", *Panama America*, 25 January 2003.
  73. Recent reports by humanitarian groups indicate that "the [Panamanian-Colombian] boundary is absolutely permeable to drugs, weapons, insurgents, and immigrant traffic in the two directions". Although many

Colombians have historically sought employment in Colon, particularly in its many night-spots, there have been increasing reports of mass arrests and repatriation. There has also been an increase in reports of small boats ferrying Colombian immigrants up the Atlantic coast to Colon (“The Humanitarian Situation on the Colombian Boundary Areas”, *Mama Coca Online*, January–September 2002, [www.mamacoca.org](http://www.mamacoca.org).)

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# Revolts Among Enslaved Africans in Nineteenth-Century Cuba

## A New Look to an Old Problem

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MANUEL BARCIA

### Abstract

*This article addresses revolts among enslaved Africans and other movements in which enslaved persons participated during the first half of the nineteenth century in western Cuba. By analysing the aims, characteristics and ethnic composition of the insurgents the study highlights some important issues and offers new conclusions about the meaning and symbolism of what has have often been called "slave rebellions".*

### Introduction

On 1 July 1840 Tranquilino, an enslaved person from the coffee plantation Empresa, killed his overseer during a quarrel. Moments later, more than fifty of his companions headed to the plantation owner's house and also killed him. Shortly before the killings, the owner, José Cantor Valdespino, had sent Julián, an enslaved person who was very loyal to him, to the nearby village of Ceiba del Agua in a desperate attempt to get reinforcements that would help him to survive the tumult. Julián ran as fast as he could to the office of Captain Sixto Morejón. However, by the time Morejón and his militiamen arrived in the plantation's *batey*, Valdespino was already dead and the insurgents, most of whom were Lucumís, were hiding behind a pile of stones or escaping across the coffee fields. Seeing the resolve of the insurgents who, "obeying the order of their captain" had attacked his men with stones, Morejón decided to open fire regardless of the consequences.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the day he

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counted the casualties among the enslaved people and their overlords, regretting the deaths of the plantation owner and his overseer, but saying nothing about the insurgents except that almost all of them were of the “Lucumí nation”.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for the revolt was the bad treatment that the overseer had meted out to the enslaved people under his command. Tranquilino, whose name curiously means in Spanish “Quiet One”, felt that he had a very good excuse for taking the overseer’s life. A few days before, while fixing the roof of a house, he had fallen to the ground and hurt himself very badly. The overseer, who had witnessed the accident, did not consider his injury particularly severe and therefore tried to flog him for refusing to work, thus triggering the beginning of the tragedy. Noting Tranquilino’s resolve, moments before the attack his owner intervened in a final attempt to get him to change his mind, asking him why he did not look for a sponsor to represent him, since he was so upset. Tranquilino’s answer was defiant and clever. He replied, “I did not do it because the only sponsor is God, because if I get a sponsor just for today, tomorrow you [referring to his owner] will not defend me [against the overseer].”<sup>3</sup>

The two killings and the revolt highlight the main issues I will examine in this article. How did homicides lead to revolts and how did revolts provoke more homicides? Why did these types of resistance, far from diminishing, multiply throughout the first five decades of the nineteenth century? And to what extent did issues such as ethnicity, language, leadership and previously acquired knowledge of warfare characterize these events? What were the differences between movements of enslaved persons and those led by free(d) persons but also involving enslaved persons? All these issues will be analysed with the aim of reaching a rational conclusion about the character of servile resistance on Cuban plantations during the first half of the nineteenth century.

## **Anticolonial Movements and Antislavery Moments Influenced by “Foreign Ideologies”**

Until the present, studies have focused mainly on the plots and revolts inspired or influenced by “international-revolutionary” ideologies, while largely ignoring or underestimating those organized and executed outside of the context of those ideologies. This circumstance has also led scholars to overlook several other acts of resistance that were more “African” and less “revolutionary”, such as homicides and sui-

cides. The fact is that in western Cuba enslaved persons introduced into the island directly from Africa were the main protagonists throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. They convened, plotted, organized and led the vast majority of the movements that constituted one of the main features of Cuban history during that period, with no ostensible reference to, or even awareness of, “international-revolutionary” ideologies.

When Captain-General Jerónimo Valdés wrote to the Spanish Minister of Overseas Affairs in September 1843 that the island “was still inalterably quiet”, he was aware of the fact that his words were totally false.<sup>4</sup> From the time that Valdés took control of the Cuban government two years earlier, a rapid and extremely dangerous succession of servile insurrections shook the western part of the island and threatened the very basis of the Spanish colonial system. The most remarkable features during Valdés’s years – and also during the preceding decades – were the African-led revolts, mainly planned and executed in plantation areas not far from Havana, the colonial capital.

Some of these movements were premeditated responses to the brutalities in the sugar mills and coffee plantations. Many others started as isolated acts of resistance against the various forms of injustice practised by owners, overseers and drivers. These were largely spasmodic and aimed at escape at any cost from daily punishments and hard work. However, together they constituted a series of acts of overt resistance that deeply troubled all the captain-generals who governed Cuba during the first half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, Valdés was prevaricating, and deep inside he was fully aware of the magnitude of the threat. From the time of his arrival in the island until his departure (1841–1843) there were at least eleven important incidents related to servile unrest with which he was acquainted. This fact strongly contradicted his letter to the Overseas Minister.<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of fact, the situation was so nerve-racking that barely a month after Leopoldo O’Donnell succeeded Valdés a vast plot was uncovered. It was organized and led by Free Coloured men but involved enslaved persons and was apparently supported by the British. This well coordinated movement had branches from Havana to Santa Clara, with Matanzas, Cárdenas and their countrysides as its main operational bases. In Cuba its name, *La Escalera*, became synonymous with repression and racial hatred, practically from the moment that the colonial authorities commenced executing its leaders behind the walls of the fortresses of Havana, Matanzas and Cárdenas.



La Escalera is undoubtedly the best-known and best-documented “slave conspiracy” in Cuban history. The paper-trail left by the trials against the plotters filled more than fifty bundles, today located in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba. Hundreds of additional documents are dispersed in libraries and archives in Cuba, Europe and the United States. The fact that the most comprehensive book written on the plot did not use any information from Cuban archives is perhaps the best indication of the widespread and abundant nature of the documentation.<sup>6</sup> La Escalera signalled a change of times for enslaved people in Cuba. The period 1843–1844 marked the peak of the Whites’ fears and the terminus of the longest cycle of servile revolts that ever occurred in the Americas. After La Escalera, the involvement of enslaved people in the island’s political and social movements decreased significantly and never returned to its previous levels.

La Escalera aimed to end the slavery system in the island and to establish a political regime similar to that in Haiti. This plot has been the focus of much academic discussion about its real or imagined existence, even after the seminal works of Robert L. Paquette and Rodolfo Sarracino on the subject. Whether or not a plot was actually unfolding in the underground worlds of Havana and Matanzas, it is certain that hundreds of Free Blacks and Mulattos were seeking to destroy the colonial system.<sup>7</sup> It seems also true that they were receiving at least moral support from the British consular officials who lived in Cuba at that time. After reading thousands of pages on this huge judicial process, one can suppose that the so-called leaders were aware of the international events of their time as well as the political ideology of the French and Haitian Revolutions.

Paquette rightly points out that La Escalera “has received uncommon attention in Cuba”.<sup>8</sup> Since the early 1880s several writers and politicians have brought different issues to debate. Among the writers involved were some respected intellectuals of the time, such as Manuel Sanguily, José de Jesús Márquez, Vidal Morales y Morales, and Joaquín Llaverías.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the twentieth century the discourse continued and new generations of scholars offered new perspectives on the same issues that their predecessors had debated.<sup>10</sup> Despite their divergent opinions about the aims and level of involvement of the main leaders, most scholars who have studied La Escalera agree that foreign “instigation” played no mean part in the planning.

Indeed, several testimonies mentioned these influences. Miguel Flores, one of the most important ringleaders, declared that British con-

suls David Turnbull and Joseph T. Crawford encouraged them to go ahead with their project.<sup>11</sup> Antonio Lucumí, a freedman from Gibacoa, deposed that his Mulatto friend José Antonio Ramos had visited three British ships and that the “English talked to him and told him that they would bring them guns, gunpowder, bullets and sabres”.<sup>12</sup> Basilio Pérez, a Free Black from Santa Clara, was even more specific when he testified in April 1844 that “the referred outbreak was the Englishmen’s idea, and that they [the British] should arrange everything with the people from Santo Domingo in order to send weapons and a general to command the rebels once the planned uprising had begun.”<sup>13</sup>

More remarkable is the fact that most of the alleged leaders of the plot were well-educated Mulattos from the cities of Havana and Matanzas. The supposed ringleader, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (Plácido), was one of the most well-known poets of his time in Cuba.<sup>14</sup> His comrades were all literate men, including musicians, artists and dentists. They used to read newspapers and discuss their ideas in cafés and at private meetings. They also travelled frequently and were learned in more than one language. Until the doomed moment that the repression began they were widely accepted in the most select gatherings of Cuban society and were regarded as an “adapted and civilized” segment of the people of African descent.

Were they planning a big revolt in the island? Were there several interconnected plots? These are difficult questions that still await credible answers. However, these men definitely had “something” arranged and, what is more important, they were well aware of the evils of the Cuban slavery system and convinced that it was possible to bring an end to it.

From the 1790s there were other plots and revolts involving enslaved people. They were influenced by the events of the time and mainly by news from Saint Domingue. As some historians have rightly pointed out, refugees and their servile charges as well as deported Blacks had been arriving in Cuba since the onset of the revolution in the neighbouring French colony.<sup>15</sup> This led the Cuban captain-general Luis de las Casas to ban the introduction of enslaved persons from French-speaking colonies as early as in 1796.<sup>16</sup>

The revolt on the estate Cuatro Compañeros, which occurred in July 1795, is one of the few in which enslaved persons who had been introduced into the island from French colonies played a leading role. One of the ringleaders of this movement was an enslaved individual known as José el Francés, “the Frenchman”, who probably had come from tur-

bulent Saint Domingue.<sup>17</sup> Again, in Puerto Príncipe, in June 1798, a revolt took place involving enslaved urban people, presumably with knowledge of the international events of the time, and one of the leaders was known as a “French”.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, the city of Trinidad and its countryside witnessed a large plot conceived both by freemen and enslaved persons. The name of one of the ringleaders was Josef Maria Curaçao, undoubtedly an individual related in one or another way to the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao.<sup>19</sup>

In 1806, just a few years later and not far from Havana, another movement involving both free and enslaved persons was uncovered.<sup>20</sup> On this occasion the plotters, most of whom were from the small village of Guara, near the southern port of Batabanó, planned to take the island’s capital. To achieve their goal they considered it important to talk to the “old Blacks” who had laboured years before on the construction of the fortress of La Cabaña, the city’s main defence. However, their strategy was not very sophisticated. They naively planned to send their men through the roads “killing people and stealing horses to ride, and taking all the weapons they could find”.<sup>21</sup>

This plot was hatched by two enslaved persons, one of them a Creole and the other a man born in Saint Domingue (later called Haiti). Both Francisco Fuertes and Estanislao gave similar declarations about the plan. In this case the Frenchman’s experience and the Creole’s abilities to read and write were combined to create a new threat to the peace and lives of the White neighbours of the region. Another significant peculiarity of this plot was that the masterminds were relying on the *contramayorales* (slave drivers)<sup>22</sup> to lead the enslaved people, since “those were the principals, whom all the slaves [should] obey”.<sup>23</sup>

A somewhat similar situation appears in the second largest movement that occurred in the island, the Conspiracy of Aponte. Uncovered in March 1812 after a series of servile revolts early in the year, this was probably the most dangerous uprising ever planned in Cuba. Following the revolutionary ideas of the time, some Free Mulattos and Free Blacks, supported by enslaved persons, plotted to terminate the slavery system in the island. One of the ringleaders of the movement, the Free Mulatto José Antonio Aponte, was an artist. Among their main accomplices were literate artisans, cabildo heads, members of the militia, and also a few enslaved urban people.<sup>24</sup>

The urban-based circle of Aponte’s close friends and collaborators maintained a close relationship with enslaved persons from the rural areas surrounding Havana. Their members travelled to the nearest plan-

tations, encouraging the enslaved people to participate in a general uprising against their masters. In these meetings they shared their ideas and knowledge about freedom. They also participated in dances and drumming in the most traditional "African" styles.<sup>25</sup> This combination of different cosmologies and cultural backgrounds was one of the main characteristics of the movement. While the enslaved people were being encouraged to kill all Whites and take over the land, the leaders of the plot had their sights on seizing control of the government.

The influence of the Haitian Revolution was important in this plot. The main evidence collected by the Spanish authorities was a book of drawings found in José Antonio Aponte's house. This book, unfortunately lost today, contained drawings of George Washington and the Black kings of Abyssinia. Even more revealing were the images of the most important figures of the Haitian Revolution, among them Toussaint L'Ouverture, Henri Christophe, Jean Jacques Dessalines and Jean François.<sup>26</sup> Jean Barbier, a French Mulatto and an active member of Aponte's circle, had begun to assume the identity of the deceased Haitian general Jean François.<sup>27</sup> The conspiracy was uncovered early in 1812 and many of the plotters were brought to trial and received sentences that ranged from lenient punishments to the death penalty.

## **The Greatest Sequence of Servile Uprisings in the Americas**

As intimated earlier, a large number of revolts, and plots to revolt, stemmed from the enslaved people's sufferings and their desire for freedom. If they were inspired by any foreign influences, it was those that they had brought with them from Africa. On September 1827 Rafael Gangá, together with five other enslaved persons, faced his overlord, another planter of the vicinity, their White employees, and one loyal enslaved individual. Just before noon Fermín, the loyal servile charge, threatened to release his dogs against the six labourers who had refused to work. According to Rafael Gangá, his comrade Francisco approached Fermín and asked him: "Hey you, son of a bitch, why are you going to release the dogs?" Fermín did not answer; instead he released the dogs without hesitation. Moments later everything was in confusion. The enslaved persons ran away, pursued by their oppressors. The outcome was bloodshed. Five of the six fugitives died during the actual fighting that ensued, while Rafael Gangá, the only survivor, died 20 or 25 days later as a result of his wounds. The overlord, Agustín Hernández, and

his fellow planter and neighbour, Domingo Luis, lost their lives in the fight, as did some of their employees, and also Fermín and his dogs.

After running away from the dogs, Rafael and his comrades hid behind a wooden fence and from there confronted not only their overlords and assistants, but also reinforcements sent from the neighbouring village of Catalina de Güines. To defend themselves they made use of two carbines, some bows and more than 200 arrows. According to Rafael, their only motive in fighting back was their commitment to follow their captain Tomás, to whom they were tied by military reasons since the time when they lived in Africa.<sup>28</sup>

In this case the six rebels, after openly revolting, took the lives of those who were directly oppressing them, causing more deaths and provoking serious alarm throughout the vicinity of Catalina de Güines. Some important elements highlight this event. In the first place, the sequence “homicides, revolt, more homicides” is apparent. In colonial Cuba there was an intriguing connection between homicides and servile revolts. They were often cause and consequence of each other. Homicides often ended in open uprisings and at other times revolts caused homicides. Second, the use of conventional and non-conventional (“African”) arms raises the question of the knowledge that enslaved people had of both types of weaponry. And last, but not least, the only (temporary) survivor’s testimony offered as the main reason for revolt was the respect of the insurgents for their “captain”, and the obligation to follow him into war.

These features were common to most of the African-led servile insurrections that occurred in Cuba during the first half of the nineteenth century. The life experiences of Rafael Gangá and his comrades were not extremely different from those of the thousands of *bozales* (African-born captives) who arrived on Cuban shores during this period. They had a profound sense of commitment and solidarity, and knowledge of how to make war against the Whites. In their African homelands many of them had become acquainted with European-manufactured weapons. They repeatedly showed obedience to their “African” leaders and displayed a dignity that often led them to die fighting for their freedom.<sup>29</sup>

The 1798 insurgents of Puerto Principe came mainly from the Calabar region in the Bight of Biafra.<sup>30</sup> Presumably, the revolts of 1817 and 1822, both on sugar plantations, also involved African-born individuals and African fighting techniques.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, these two events are poorly documented. The first servile uprising of the nineteenth century that was totally organized and commanded by African-born persons

took place in the valley of Guamacaro, near Matanzas, in June 1825. Between midnight and midday on 15 June, more than 200 enslaved persons revolted against their overlords and overseers. Without a sound plan, but relying on their knowledge of magical arts and warfare, these men provoked a real scare among the Cuban authorities and plantocracy.<sup>32</sup>

On this occasion a few details seemed to challenge their inherited knowledge about the behaviour of the servile population. Until that moment, the colonial authorities, slaveholders and Whites generally had based their domination on the belief that by mixing the different African ethnic groups they would avoid servile plots, due to ethnic rivalries and lack of understanding among the enslaved people. This time, however, their theory proved to be useless. The revolt of 1825 in Guamacaro was conceived and organized by three enslaved persons. Pablo Gangá, a coach-driver, was the mastermind and the most controversial of the leaders. Federico Carabalí was a respected diviner and one of the main figures among the enslaved population. Lorenzo Lucumí, the third and last protagonist, was an amazing character who took charge of the troops once the revolt began, and who was killed ten days later, after a magnificent battle against his antagonists. It seems that Lorenzo was well versed in warfare. He commanded the insurgents admirably and was defeated only because the enemy outnumbered his men and were better armed. Lorenzo, Federico and Pablo plotted over several months to end their miserable situation. A large majority of the insurgents who joined the uprising were of Carabalí origin, though the main leader was a Lucumí. The revolt had long-lasting effects. Soon after the insurgency was put down the governor of Matanzas issued a local code designed to ensure control over the region's large servile population.<sup>33</sup>

A sequence of other African-led revolts followed that of 1825. Most of them had a strong Lucumí presence, but Gangá and Carabalí also became favourite African ethnic groups to be blamed as the most dangerous and savage among their fellow Africans. Ethnic cooperation appeared again a couple of years later, on 22 October 1827, when enslaved persons on the coffee plantation El Carmen attempted to kill their overseer Ramón Viera.<sup>34</sup> According to several testimonies offered by enslaved persons and employees, some unsettled workers decided to ambush their overseer after he whipped a young Congolese named Nepomuceno. The enslaved people, led by Simón Mina, Celedonia Mandinga and Ventura Congo, pretended that one of them had com-

mitted suicide by jumping into a well; they aimed to take revenge when the overseer went to look. It seems that the real intention was to throw him into the well. Presumably, he sensed the danger and decided to ignore the calls for help, and instead ran inside the main house where he hid until the militia sent from Güira de Melena arrived on the plantation. The main leader of the attempted insurgency, Simón Mina, declared later that they decided to get rid of the overseer because he “used to give them a lot of whipping, as water falls from the skies”.<sup>35</sup>

Earlier that year a violent uprising took place not far from Havana. In January, fifty-seven enslaved persons belonging to the coffee estate Tentativa killed their overseer and administrator and rampaged across the area, causing other casualties among the neighbours. A general alarm ran through the region. The insurgents, most of whom were African-born and presumably included Lucumís and Carabalís, scared the neighbouring estates for over a week. On the day after the uprising began, three planters in the neighbourhood addressed a letter to Colonel Rafael O’Farrill, the highest local authority, emphasizing the need for an effective slave code, “especially in the coffee plantations, where thousands of Negroes and very few whites live altogether, within a small space of land”.<sup>36</sup> The uprising also presented another problem for the colonial authorities and planters. While a large number of troops patrolled the region, many of the insurgents decided to kill themselves in acts of collective suicide. Two days after suppressing the uprising, Gabriel Lombillo, owner of the Tentativa estate, complained that eighteen of his servile charges had been found hanged while the militia had shot five others.<sup>37</sup>

In 1830 a supposed plot was uncovered on the coffee plantation Arcadia, in the same region of Guamacaro. When informed about the plot, Cuban captain-general Francisco Dionisio Vives immediately recalled the 1825 uprising.<sup>38</sup> One of the captured insurgents, an African named Bozen Mandinga-Moro, recently arrived on the island, declared that “a long time ago . . . he was told about a war that took place in Limonar against blacks, many of whom were hanged in the docks of this city [Matanzas]”.<sup>39</sup> Lucumís struck again near Havana on September 1832, cementing their already growing reputation as “troublesome slaves”. Seventeen recently arrived Lucumí, bound to the sugar mill Purísima Concepción, rose up against their overseer and escaped to the woods. They were influenced to do so by Manuel Lucumí, one of their enslaved companions, who persuaded them through “their language” to escape from the plantation and start a new life in the mountains.<sup>40</sup>

Problems with Lucumís became worse year after year. In 1833 a *cholera morbus* epidemic broke out in the western part of the island. Throughout the plantation area the colonial authorities, overlords and overseers took all sorts of precautions to protect their enslaved charges from the ravages of the epidemic.<sup>41</sup> Francisco Santiago Aguirre, owner of the coffee plantation Salvador, located west of Havana, was one of those who did so; he provided his enslaved charges with better treatment than the average overlord. This was, no doubt, a case of enlightened self-interest, but it did not stop them from instigating one of the biggest servile revolts in Cuba. This revolt, involving an estimated 330 out of 375 servile labourers on Salvador plantation, most of them Lucumís, resulted in considerable damage to the neighbouring plantations and the town of Banes.<sup>42</sup>

Early in the evening the enslaved people began beating their drums and talking to each other in the Lucumí language. According to the overseer Diego Barreiro, the Lucumí song for the meeting, known as the *Ho-Bé*, and calls for freedom were heard all across the plantation.<sup>43</sup> The *Ho-Bé* was followed by a Lucumí war song, the *Oní-Oré*, and answered by the enslaved people with the *O-Fé*. The leaders, all Lucumís, threatened those who refused to join them. Eusebio Congo, one of the few enslaved persons who escaped the tumult, declared that the Lucumís were beating their drums, singing and dancing.<sup>44</sup> They were also wearing special clothes. Luis Lucumí, the driver and one of the leaders, was wearing a woman's dress and hat.<sup>45</sup>

The insurgents also communicated in the Lucumí language from the onset. During the interrogations that followed the putting down of the unrest, the public prosecutors referred to the insurgents by both their African and their new Christian names simultaneously, though the reason for this remains unclear. Some of the captured persons, among them Eguyoví and Ayai, recounted during the interrogations how their comrades had stuck to their honourable African military traditions. They told how Valé had carried the wounded Ochó on his shoulders during their retreat, and how Ochó had begged Valé to kill him rather than to try to save his life. They also recalled how, once their situation became desperate, Valé finally took the decision to shoot Ochó, and how moments later he put the pistol inside his mouth and terminated his life with a bullet.<sup>46</sup>

Again, in 1834, Lucumís revolted in the sugar mill San Juan de Macastá, not far from the Salvador. After the revolt was put down, the overseer declared that the driver had initiated the unrest with the inten-



tion of killing him. He also recounted how the enslaved people had communicated in the Lucumí language.<sup>47</sup> Depositions by some of the prisoners indicated that they had revolted because the overseer tried to work them all day, and did not allow them time to cultivate their own *conucos*. Tomás Lucumí, the driver who led the insurgents, declared that the overseer had threatened to give them reduced rations because he believed that they were all very fat.<sup>48</sup> This threat and the difficult of cultivating their *conucos* proved to be the proximate reasons for this Lucumí uprising.<sup>49</sup> The next year, four Lucumí died during two intense days of negotiation and fighting in the sugar mill La Magdalena, in the Santa Ana jurisdiction in Matanzas. They and others had been recently bought by the mill owner and were compelled to work after being forced to view the bodies of two of their companions who had committed suicide the day before, apparently in an attempt to intimidate them.<sup>50</sup>

On 18 June 1837, after an attempt to punish one of the Lucumís under his control, Guillermo Monroy, overseer of the sugar mill La Sonora, realized that his action was a total mistake. The enslaved people, who were tired of Monroy's violent behaviour, had been waiting for his next excess in order to take revenge. For that reason they had been hiding sticks, rocks, knives and machetes in the bushes, preparing for the right moment to carry out their plan. When Monroy decided to push Esteban, one of the recently arrived Lucumís, he offered resistance and called out to his comrades in the Lucumí language: “[C]ompanions, do not run away . . . what can whites do against us, let's fight them.”<sup>51</sup> The rest of the people began to scream in high-pitched voices and ended up furiously attacking all the Whites who were on the plantation at that moment. Fermín Lucumí, another relatively recent import into the island, declared afterwards that they had planned to revolt when “five moons ago” the overseer broke the head of one of them.<sup>52</sup> Although they did not kill anyone, the three main leaders of the revolt, Esteban, Martín and José, all Lucumís, were sentenced to death. They were executed by firing squad on the morning of 10 November 1837 in the yard of La Punta fortress.<sup>53</sup> During the trial most of the captured persons were forced to testify through an interpreter and under an oath to their own Lucumí god. Not surprisingly, their court-appointed attorneys based their defence on the argument that they were all in a “state of barbarism”, and that in their countries of origin they did not know “the laws and considerations that men should observe in society.”<sup>54</sup>

Less than three months later, on 10 September, twenty-five Lucumís

confronted their overseer and ensconced themselves in one of the houses of the sugar mill San Pablo, in Catalina de Güines. Then, armed with machetes, they fought back against the White employees of the estate. One of them was killed in the struggle, while two others escaped and hanged themselves in the forest.<sup>55</sup>

By this time African-led revolts were becoming familiar events in the Cuban countryside, and the Lucumís, who were at the centre of these developments, struck once again in May 1839. This time the location was the sugar mill La Conchita in the jurisdiction of Macuriges, not far from Matanzas. According to the overseer José González, nine enslaved persons had decided to sing, dance and brandish their machetes after work. When he tried to lock them inside their quarters they began to shout and attack him and his White employees. One of the survivors, Cleto Lucumí, gave the best description of their state of mind when he declared that what they were singing when the overseer tried to reduce them was a nostalgic song, because they were all homesick: “[We] don’t see father anymore, [we] don’t see mother anymore.”<sup>56</sup> In this case, too, the enslaved people needed a Lucumí interpreter to offer their testimonies during the trial.<sup>57</sup>

Other Lucumí revolts followed soon after. On 12 June 1840 ten Lucumís escaped from the sugar mill Banco in Güines and attacked the militia commanded by Lieutenant Inocencio López Gavilán. After a fierce and bloody battle three of the insurgents were killed and one injured, while López Gavilán himself was wounded three times before causing the rest of the insurgents to flee.<sup>58</sup>

Residents of the outlying areas around Havana had their own first-hand experience of what they had been hearing for some time about Lucumí insurgency. On 8 October 1841 nineteen Lucumís, recently arrived, who were employed on one of the most magnificent palaces of the city, stopped working and defied Valentín Toledo, the overseer, and Domingo Aldama, the owner and richest man in Cuba at that time, only to be ruthlessly repressed by the soldiers of the Havana garrisons.<sup>59</sup> Following orders from Aldama, the troops attacked them, killing six and wounding seven. Toledo and Aldama later declared that the “rioters” faced them with sticks and rocks, while beating their buttocks and touching their genitals. Aldama also declared that he and his men had tried to persuade the dissidents to surrender, while two of the survivors, Nicolás Lucumí and Pastor Lucumí, declared, with the help of an interpreter, that they never understood a single word uttered by the Whites who had seized them.<sup>60</sup>

The sugar mill La Arratía was the next place where Lucumís left their mark. Forty-two enslaved persons, most of them of this nation, beat their overseer and other White employees of the plantation. Armed with rocks, wooden sticks and torches, they took control of the property and burnt down one of its main buildings before escaping, while yelling, "Kill the whites." Five of the leaders were captured and executed soon after by the Military Commission.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the letter of Captain-General Valdés and the issuing of the new slave code, the year 1843 turned out to be the most dangerous one for the Cuban authorities and the White inhabitants of western Cuba. Between March and November some of the largest uprisings unfolded in the plantation areas around Matanzas and Cárdenas. Again, Lucumís led the first of these revolts, in the sugar mill Alcancía. The British consul, Joseph T. Crawford, who had informers in the area, related the story of the insurgency to the Earl of Aberdeen a few days later, remarking on the central role of the Lucumís:

On the 26th ultimo at two points close to each other Bemba and Cimarrones in the district of Matanzas, upon five estates contiguously situated insurrection broke out amongst the Negroes.

They were all of the Lucumie nation and are famed for being the most hardy of the Africans, warlike in their own country and the most hardworking here.<sup>62</sup>

As Crawford also stated, the Lucumís set fire to the buildings of some of the neighbouring plantations, caused some damage to the works on the railroad between Júcaro and Matanzas, and killed at least five Whites before being defeated by the Spanish army. The number of African casualties was exceptionally high. According to Crawford, around 450 insurgents from the Alcancía sugar mill perished, either being shot, executed or committing collective acts of suicide.<sup>63</sup> During the uprising the insurgents beat their drums and displayed their martial abilities, bringing back memories of Guamacaro in 1825 and Guanajay in 1833. They moved "in military order, clad in their festival clothes, with colours flying, and holding leathern shields".<sup>64</sup>

Later, in May, Domingo Aldama had to face two other revolts led by Lucumís, in his sugar mills Santa Rosa and La Majagua, both situated in the jurisdiction of Sabanilla del Encomendador. In June there were disturbances on Ácana and Concepción plantations. In the same month Guamacaro was the stage for the desertion of more than 300 enslaved persons from the sugar mill Flor de Cuba. Unfortunately, there is little information about these revolts. However, they seem to have comprised and to have been led by African-born persons. In July more than forty

Lucumís from the sugar mill La Arratía rose again, causing much damage to their overlord's property and spreading panic among the neighbouring planters.<sup>65</sup>

The last in this sequence of servile revolts began on 5 November 1843 in the district of Sabanilla, near Matanzas, when more than 300 enslaved persons, most of them Lucumís, provoked one of the most dangerous uprisings in the island. The sugar mills of Triunvirato and Ácana were the scenes of the insurgency that led to the deaths of several Whites and the burning down of mill houses and other buildings. After some hours of rampage and combat against the soldiers sent by the governor of Matanzas, the insurgents were defeated on the lands of the sugar mill San Rafael. Fifty-four were killed in the battle, while sixty-seven were captured. Less than one month later, the general alarm among the Whites became a sort of paranoia, with the discovery of the widespread La Escalera plot, involving Free Coloureds and enslaved persons (dealt with above).<sup>66</sup>

## **The "African Element"**

Throughout this article, relying on some uniquely illustrative documents, we have tried to address those acts of overt resistance that Cuban authorities and planters feared most: homicides and revolts. A careful reading of the sources reveals how African traditions and continuities influenced such developments. We shall now discuss in greater detail the most significant and frequent characteristics observed in the majority of these events.

Several studies are dedicated to the analysis of acts of overt servile resistance, some of which have remarked on the importance of African traditions and, as Paul Lovejoy notes, the African "continuities" in the Americas.<sup>67</sup> The art of war was part of this general inherited knowledge brought by thousands of Africans forced to cross the Atlantic Ocean during the centuries that the slave trade lasted.

African-born persons planned and led most of the revolts that occurred on Cuban plantations. Their military experience in their homeland was repeatedly mentioned in interrogations, as well as in the letters and documents that colonial officials produced. The military capabilities of the African-born population were well known among Cuban authorities, planters and the general public. Most Cuban residents were clearly aware of Lucumí, Gangá, Carabalí, Mina, Arará, Mandinga and Congo familiarity with guns, horses, and even western

combat tactics that they had learnt from encounters with the Europeans in Africa.<sup>68</sup>

This practical knowledge often proved to be very useful when plotting and executing revolts. According to some contemporary accounts and other sources consulted for this essay, the Gangás appeared to have been frequently embroiled in all sorts of plots and revolts. Despite his warrior heritage, Martín Gangá declined the offer of participating in a plot that Pancho Peraza Criollo had organized in Guamutas between 1843 and 1844. Martín recalled how, in order to drag him into the plot, Peraza had appealed to his sense of military honour, saying to him, “Martín! In your country your people are used to make war and consequently you should not be afraid here.” However, Martín did not hesitate to distance himself from that warrior past when he answered that “he had come here when he was a very small child and that consequently he did not know about these things [i.e., making war].”<sup>69</sup>

In the early 1840s, after such a magnificent sequence of Lucumí revolts as those noted above, it was widely believed that this ethnic group had decided that they were not going to live in slavery any longer and that they were ready to fight to the death to achieve their freedom.<sup>70</sup> Alejandro Gangá, an enslaved person in the sugar mill Coto near Matanzas, told the prosecutors that his comrade Pedro Carabalí was always saying that “the Lucumís were very brave and that they were not afraid to die.”<sup>71</sup> However, popular opinion among the servile population about Lucumí bravery did not prevent them from being mocked sometimes, and their aborted revolts often became the topic of those who made fun of them. According to Tomás Criollo, his friend Marcelino Gangá had once said that “if the Lucumís were so daring, how was it possible that they let others capture and sell them as slaves? That the Lucumís were always thinking of rebelling; only to end up being killed.”<sup>72</sup>

Many other “African” traditions played significant roles in servile revolts. During the planning stage secrecy was essential. For that reason, plotters resorted to secret pacts and especially secret oaths. The frequency with which this was done remains a moot point since very few recorded instances exist of plotters taking such oaths. Furthermore, the instances on record indicate that these were a mixture of African religious beliefs and Roman Catholic liturgy.<sup>73</sup>

José Gangá, an urban enslaved person from Matanzas, recounted the ritual surrounding his initiation into the plot of 1843–1844. Once he was sure that the plotters would provide him with weapons – and he

was only sure after making them swear that they had guns – he prayed the Catholic credo and after drawing a cross with a knife, he swore loyalty to God and the Virgin Mary. Finally, all initiated persons had a close haircut in the right side of their heads, next to their ears (probably a group identification mark).<sup>74</sup> Three other enslaved persons, who also made their vows that week, participated in similar ritual. They all recalled how the Free Black, Pedro Ponte, had drawn a circle on the ground and a cross inside it, and subsequently had told them to kiss it and to swear loyalty upon it. They had to eat dirt from inside the circle as the final affirmation of their commitment.<sup>75</sup> These rites were a combination of African traditions and Catholic beliefs, true samples of syncretism.

Leadership also played a significant part in the unfolding of the revolts. As we have seen, the post of *contramayoral* or driver served as a platform to launch some of the most daunting African-led revolts in the Cuban countryside. The revolt of 1833 in Guanajay, organized by three drivers, those at the sugar mills San Juan de Macastá in 1834 and Guaycanamar in 1840, and above all the great Lucumí uprising in the jurisdiction of Bemba in March 1843, are some of the best examples of the role played in some insurrections by the *contramayorales*.<sup>76</sup>

Some enslaved persons were born leaders, so to speak, or had acquired a reputation as brave men in the course of their military careers in Africa. Several enslaved persons who were being interrogated indicated that they revolted because of their commitment to their captains or kings from Africa. This was the reason Rafael Gangá offered his life in the revolt in which all his comrades and his “captain” perished in 1827.<sup>77</sup> Not infrequently the leaders were also the relatives of some of the insurgents, as happened in respect of the Carabalís from the coffee plantation La Hermita during the revolt of 1825 in Guamacaro, and the Congos from Cayajabos who killed their overlord Pedro Rodríguez in November 1812.<sup>78</sup>

Almost every African-led movement had leaders who asserted their leadership through the use of titles or specific costumes. On several occasions interrogated persons referred to their leaders as both captains and kings. A rather unusual case was that of José Antonio Ramos in Gibacoa, who was planning to become the “principal and bigger lord of his region”. According to Francisco Congo, one of his subordinates in the movement he was organizing, “there was not any agreement about the title he would bear [once they won], but it was clear that he would be the recipient of all the tributes”.<sup>79</sup>

Costumes were symbols of power and leadership. Sometimes they were stolen from their owners once the uprisings had begun. During the revolt of 1825 in Guamacaro, Cayetano Gangá stole and wore a green jacket, like those used by the lieutenants of the Spanish army.<sup>80</sup> In 1833 the driver Luis Lucumí stole some women's clothes, including a hat, from his overlord's house and wore them until he was shot in his chest later that day. All the interrogated persons later recalled seeing him riding his horse, dressed in this peculiar outfit while commanding the insurgents.<sup>81</sup>

On other occasions costumes were prepared in advance and carefully and secretly kept for months. In 1844 Roque Gangá declared that he was chosen to be the "king" of his enslaved companions in the sugar mill La Mercedita. Another enslaved person on the plantation, Dolores Carabalí, had been preparing his "royal" costume for such a special occasion. This costume consisted of laced blue trousers, a white shirt, and a blue woollen cap decorated with two black stripes and three red tassels, one in the front and the other two next to his ears.<sup>82</sup> His spouse, Gertrudis Carabalí, had her own clothing for the day she should be proclaimed queen. She declared that her clothing was composed of "a white muslin dress of short sleeves and a decorated silk bonnet with some holes".<sup>83</sup>

Drumming and singing were characteristics of most African-led revolts that occurred during the period under review. However, in the majority of cases the songs were not recorded, and while it is virtually impossible to understand fully the importance of the drums, the use of these instruments was reminiscent of or, better, a clear continuity from "African" military traditions. The *Ho-Bé* and the *Oní Oré Ofé* songs for assembly and war, which the Lucumís of the coffee plantation El Salvador sung in 1833 and that the colonial authorities documented, are perhaps the best example of the significance of singing for the African-born insurgents.

Another common feature of the African-led revolts was the use of African languages for communication among the participants. After all, there was no reason why they should plot and revolt using their overlords' language, which in most cases they did not speak fluently or comprehend fully. The fact that the Lucumí language was spoken by Carabalís and also at least partially understood by Gangás, Ararás and Minas, served to transform it into a sort of *lingua franca* among West Africans in nineteenth-century Cuba.<sup>84</sup>

Other "African" elements were used in servile insurrections. The

unorthodox ways of recruiting people is one of them. In many of the revolts that occurred during this period, recruitment was based on ethnic allegiance. Enslaved people from the same or a similar ethnic group proved to be more likely to plot and revolt together. Their common language, knowledge and cultural backgrounds played a significant role at the moment of deciding whether or not to enrol in a potentially hazardous adventure. Several testimonies of captured persons recalled how they had been forced to follow their insurgent companions against their own will. Those who refused to join in the insurgency often ran the risk of being considered traitors and hence placed their lives in jeopardy.

Once revolts had started, insurgents frequently raided their vicinities, invading neighbouring plantations and adding new forces to the original group. They went about destroying and plundering, sometimes using coloured flags, often marching to the rhythm of their drums and carrying all sorts of weapons, such as leather shields, rocks, spears, bows and arrows, knives, machetes and guns.

A final distinctive element that characterized African-led revolts in Cuba was the regular use of various magic charms to protect the insurgents during combat and to guarantee them victory. Numerous declarations by African-born persons referred to the close relationship between magic and warfare. African religious leaders were respected and feared. Campuzano Mandinga, dubbed the “Great Sorcerer of Matanzas”, was the spiritual leader of many enslaved persons in Matanzas. He not only became a celebrity among his comrades but also made a fortune selling all sorts of magic devices as protective amulets for the upcoming revolt.<sup>85</sup> Many others were doing the same thing. Pánfilo Congo, a diviner belonging to the sugar mill *Atrevido*, was feared by all who knew him and gained the scary nickname “Dreams Swatter”.<sup>86</sup> Not surprisingly, religious leaders often became ringleaders in plots and military “captains” in African-led revolts.<sup>87</sup>

Most of these magical preparations were destined either to stop the bullets and sabres of the Whites, or to make their bearers invisible to the eyes of their enemies. Antonio Criollo recalled during his interrogation how he saw the amulet of his friend Agustín Mina, who had “wrapped in a handkerchief frogs, snakes and many other things”.<sup>88</sup> Another enslaved Creole, a coach driver in the neighbouring sugar mill owned by Tomás Adan, offered a similar description. He recalled that Agustín and another enslaved person called Basilio had assured him that with their amulets they were protected against bullets and machetes. Agustín



had been carrying a bag filled with “many bones, snakes’ heads, frogs, chameleons, and powders”.<sup>89</sup>

The colonial authorities and slaveholders, noting the strength of African belief in charms, were keen to wean the practitioners from such “fetishes”. However, they were unsure about how to proceed. As late as 1848 the bishop of Havana, the captain-general of the island, and the minister of Finances (the Count of Villanueva), were embroiled in a four-year debate about how to do so.<sup>90</sup> The religious indoctrination of the enslaved people was always deemed a highly important matter, but relatively little success was achieved in changing the core of their belief systems during the slavery period.

In 1844 Apolinar de la Gala, the prosecutor attached to the Military Commission, expressed his opinion on the “African witchcraft issue”. He complained about the large number of “this kind of soothsayers”, who were roaming across the entire island, and about the even larger number of “believers” in their charms, declaring that “all came from the same part of the globe”.<sup>91</sup> He lamented that even if the government and planters should decide to indoctrinate them into Christian beliefs, “it would take several years to produce the healthy and desired effects we need for these people to renounce their native beliefs”. Finally, aware of the psychological potential of their amulets, he called on the government to take strong measures to suppress their use because they constituted a “diabolical inspiration, a formidable weapon” in servile insurrection.<sup>92</sup>

## Conclusion

The overwhelming majority of the revolts that occurred in Cuba during the “Age of Revolution” were not induced or provoked by external factors. As we have argued throughout this essay, African elements – cultural, military, religious and so on – rather than revolutionary ideas from elsewhere characterized their developments.

There were, indeed, movements organized and led by Free Blacks and Mulattos, mainly Creoles, aimed at fighting and destroying slavery. These movements were mostly urban-based and included large numbers of free people among their leaders. La Escalera, for example, was considered a “conspiracy” from the very moment it was uncovered late in 1843. However, a quick examination of the list of sentences reveals that enslaved persons made up only 25.45 percent of the convicted plotters, while Free Blacks and Mulattos accounted for 71.09 percent of the

men and women apprehended.<sup>93</sup> This figure hardly reflects a “slave conspiracy”. Rather, as in the cases of the plots in Guara in 1806 and Aponte in 1812, La Escalera was a well-planned insurrection organized by urban Free Blacks and Mulattos (mostly Creoles) who were aware of the sympathy that Africans were likely to feel for their cause, and who did not hesitate to invite them to join their movement. They were also aware of the fact that the large number of Africans could tilt the balance to their side once the war had begun. This support was too significant to be wasted.

It is totally inaccurate to suggest that most of the servile insurrections that occurred in Cuba during the “Age of Revolution” were determined by foreign influences and ideas. To endorse this statement is like saying that the reasons African-born men and women had to fight against their servile condition were not important or worthy because they were not truly “revolutionary”. Simply put, African cultural, religious, political and military continuities were the main characteristics of the servile plots and revolts that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century all over the island. Guara, Aponte, La Escalera and some other insurgencies that included enslaved persons can no longer be considered “slave conspiracies” and revolts since they were movements conceived by free men, and they need to be studied as such. Careful studies of the many, virtually unknown, Cuban insurrections carried out by enslaved persons during the period under review will no doubt change the view put forward by many scholars that such insurrections were inspired by philosophical ideas from outside the slave camp, and usually outside the colony. The fact is that thousands of enslaved Africans who fought against slavery in Cuba (and arguably elsewhere), and often lost their lives doing so, had never heard a word about the French and Haitian Revolutions, or about the British Abolition Movement.

## NOTES

1. Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), *Miscelánea de Expedientes* (hereafter ME). 595/Ap., Deposition of Captain Sixto Morejón y Rojas, Criminal proceedings against the insurgents of Cafetal Empresa, San Luis de la Ceiba, July 1840.
2. ANC, Gobierno Superior Civil (hereafter GSC) 939/33131, Joaquín de Urrutia to the Captain-General, San Antonio, 2 July 1840. He accounted for the deaths of two Whites (overlord and overseer), and one enslaved person

killed in the fight. Seven others hanged themselves, nineteen were arrested (two of whom were wounded), and between twenty-five and thirty were still at large.

3. ANC, ME 595/Ap., Deposition of Fernando Mandinga. San Luis de la Ceiba, July 1840.
4. ANC, Asuntos Políticos (hereafter AP) 41/60, Captain-General Jerónimo Valdés to the Minister of Ultramar. Havana, 3 September 1843. Some of the most important and biggest revolts that occurred in Cuba took place during Valdés's command. Among them were the two terrifying revolts of March and November 1843 in the plantations around Matanzas and Cárdenas.
5. For a chronology of the slave movements in Cuba see Manuel Barcia, "Slave Rebellions in Latin America during the 'Age of Revolution': Bahia and Havana-Matanzas from a Comparative Perspective" (MA thesis, University of Essex, 2002), iii–iv.
6. Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middlesex, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987). The conspiracy of La Escalera was uncovered in December 1843 and the proceas that followed lasted until 1846.
7. Ibid.; Rodolfo Sarracino, *Inglaterra: sus dos caras en la lucha cubana por la abolición* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1989).
8. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 4.
9. See, for instance, Manuel Sanguily, "Un improvisador cubano (el poeta Plácido y el juicio de Menéndez Pelayo)", *Hojas Literarias* 3 (1894): 93–120; "Otra vez Plácido y Menéndez Pelayo", *Hojas Literarias* 3 (1894): 227–54; "Una opinión en contra de Plácido (notas críticas)", *Hojas Literarias* 4 (1894): 425–35; José de Jesús Márquez, "Plácido y los conspiradores de 1844", *Revista Cubana* 20 (1894): 35–51; Vidal Morales y Morales, *Iniciadores y primeros mártires de la revolución cubana* (Havana: Cultural, 1901), 147–77.
10. An excellent approach to these discussions can be found in Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 3–28.
11. Miguel Flores operated both in Havana and Matanzas under the alias of Juan Rodríguez. Concerning his connections with British officials in the island see *ibid.*, 252–56, 264.
12. Archivo Histórico de la Oficina del Historiador de la Ciudad de la Habana (hereafter AHOHCH), Fondo General (hereafter FG) 117/1, Deposition of Antonio Lucumí, Gibacoa, May 1844.
13. ANC, Comisión Militar (hereafter CM) 36/1, Deposition of Basilio Pérez. Cárdenas, April 1844.
14. Plácido's two most famous poems are "Plegaria a Dios", written just before his execution by firing squad on the morning of 28 June 1844, and "A mi madre". The debate about La Escalera is far from finished. There are several recent works on Plácido and his role in the plot (see, for example, Enildo A. García, *Cuba: Plácido, poeta mulato de la emancipación, 1809–1844*

- [New York: Senda Nueva de Ediciones, 1986]; Walterio Carbonell, "Plácido, ¿Conspirador?", *Revolución y Cultura* 2 [1987]: 57–58; Sarracino, *Inglaterra: sus dos caras*; Manuel Barcia, "Plácido: Entre la realidad y el mito", *Bohemia* 91, no. 14 [1999]: 64–65).
15. David Geggus, "Slave Resistance in the Spanish Caribbean in the Mid-1790s", in David Barry Gaspar and David Patrick Geggus, eds., *A Turbulent Time: The French Revolution and the Greater Caribbean* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 133; Alain Yacou, "La présence française dans la partie occidentale de l'île de Cuba au lendemain de la Révolution de Saint-Domingue", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer* 84 (1987): 149–88.
  16. Matt D. Childs, "The Aponte Rebellion of 1812 and the Transformation of Cuban Society: Race, Slavery and Freedom in the Atlantic World" (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 79–80.
  17. Geggus, "Slave Resistance", 133–34.
  18. *Ibid.*, 138.
  19. ANC, AP 7/30. The plot was uncovered in April when the enslaved man Guillermo, from the *ingenio* Buenavista, told his *mayoral* about the plot. In October 1798 another outbreak took place on the Calvo estate near Güines (Geggus, "Slave Resistance", 151).
  20. This plot has not been seriously studied so far. The best analyses of the subject can be found in Gloria García, "A propósito de La Escalera: el esclavo como sujeto político", *Boletín del Archivo Nacional de Cuba* 12 (2000): 1–13, and Ada Ferrer, "Noticias de Haití en Cuba", *Revista de Indias* 63, no. 229 (2003): 675–94.
  21. ANC, AP 9/27, Deposition of Estanislao, enslaved Creole from Guarico (French Saint-Domingue), Güines, May 1806.
  22. The term *contramayoral* – Spanish for slave driver – was widely used in colonial Cuba to designate the immediate subaltern of the *mayoral* or overseer. Most of the time the job was performed either by Free Blacks and Mulattos or by enslaved persons (see Robert L. Paquette, " 'The Drivers Shall Lead Them': Image and Reality in Slave Resistance", in Robert L. Paquette and Louis A. Ferleger, eds., *Slavery, Secession, and Southern History* [Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000], 31–58; Manuel Barcia, "Un aspecto de las relaciones de dominación en la plantación esclavista cubana: Los contramayorales esclavos", *Boletín del Gabinete de Arqueología* 1 no. 2 [2001], 88–93).
  23. ANC, AP 9/27, Deposition of Francisco Joseph Fuertes, Güines, May 1806.
  24. Childs, "The Aponte Rebellion of 1812", 324–25.
  25. *Ibid.*, 325–26.
  26. ANC, AP 12/17. I would like to thank Matt Childs for allowing me to read such an interesting document, which he and the archivist Jorge Macle found after months of search in the Archivo Nacional de Cuba. A significant part of the explanations that Aponte gave about his book of drawings appears in José Luciano Franco's *La Conspiración de Aponte* (Havana:

- Archivo Nacional, 1963), 66–72, 74–97. Franco's work remained the most comprehensive analysis of the conspiracy until Childs's doctoral dissertation. See also José de Jesús Márquez, "Conspiración de Aponte", *Revista Cubana* 19 (1894): 441–54; Angel Augier, "José Antonio Aponte y la conspiración de 1812", *Bohemia* 54, no. 15 (1962): 48–49, 64; Alain Yacou, "La conspiración de Aponte", *Historia y Sociedad* 1 (1988): 39–58. The latest work on Aponte's role in the conspiracy is Stephan Palmié's *Wizards and Scientists: Explorations in Afro-Cuban Modernity and Tradition* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 79–158.
27. Palmié, *Wizards*, chapter 8, "Jean François to Juan Francisco: The Haitian Revolution and the Aponte Rebellion". Curiously, 36 years later, during the interrogations that followed the uncovering of La Escalera, an enslaved Creole from the sugar mill La Emilia in Matanzas declared that he had heard some time before that "the negroes from Guarico had won the war, and that consequently Jean François had come to Havana from Saint Domingue" (ANC, CM 36/1, Deposition of Juan Criollo, April 1844).
  28. ANC, ME 1069/B, Deposition of Rafael Gangá, Catalina de Güines, September 1827.
  29. On warfare and firearms in West and West Central Africa see John K. Thornton, "The Art of War in Angola", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988); Thornton, *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Thornton, *Warfare in Atlantic Africa, 1500–1800* (London: UCL Press, 1999); James Webb, Jr., "The Horse and Slave Trade between the Western Sahara and Senegambia", *Journal of African History* 34, no. 2 (1993): 221–46; Robin Law, "A West African Cavalry State: The Kingdom of Oyo", *Journal of African History* 16, no. 1 (1975); and R.A. Kea, "Firearms and Warfare on the Gold and Slave Coasts from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries", *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971).
  30. Geggus, "Slave Resistance", 138.
  31. We refer here to the slave uprisings that occurred in Cafetal La Esperanza in 1817 and in the sugar district of El Mariel on 3 May 1822 (Diario del Gobierno de la Habana, no. 68, 9 March 1817, 1–3; and ANC, AP 20/17).
  32. All the information referring to this uprising has been drawn from Manuel Barcia, *A Colossus on the Sand: The Guamacaro Slave Revolt of 1825 and the Atlantic World* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, forthcoming).
  33. ANC, GSC 1469/57999, *Reglamento de Policía Rural de la Jurisdicción del Gobierno de Matanzas* (Matanzas, 1825).
  34. ANC, ME 223/F, Proceedings against the insurgents from Cafetal El Carmen, Güira de Melena, October–November 1827.
  35. ANC, ME 223/F, Deposition of Simón Mina, November 1827.
  36. ANC, Real Consulado y Junta de Fomento (hereafter RCJF) 150/7436, Count of Fernandina, Antonio Bermúdez de Castro and Francisco Fesser to Colonel Rafael O'Farrill y Herrera. Havana, 11 January 1827.
  37. Lombillo's concerns were transmitted by Colonel Miranda y Madariaga to

- the Captain-General (ANC, RCJF 150/7436, Colonel Joaquín Miranda y Madariaga to Captain-General Francisco Dionisio Vives, Cafetal Reunión, 8 January 1827).
38. Archivo Histórico Provincial de Matanzas, Gobierno Provincial, 7/4, Francisco Dionisio Vives, "Circular á toda la Isla y Capitanías de esta jurisdicción", Habana, 13 July 1830.
  39. Bozen Mandinga Moro is probably the only enslaved Muslim referred to in Cuban contemporary records. Spanish-speaking people probably had used the term "Moro" broadly since the early fifteenth century in reference to Muslims. Islam was embraced by a large number of Mandingas in West Africa. Bozen was 35 years old in 1830. The region of Guamacaro was also known as Limonar (ANC, ME 713/B).
  40. ANC, ME 570/S, Criminal proceedings against 17 enslaved persons from the sugar mill Purísima Concepción, Sibanacán, Güira de Melena, September 1832.
  41. *Cholera morbus* had a reputation of being a disease of the Blacks, as it seemed that Africans and their descendants were far more susceptible to the disease (see Kenneth Kiple and Virginia Himmelsteib King, *Another Dimension to the African Diaspora: Diet, Disease, and Racism* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], 147–57; Kenneth Kiple, *The Caribbean Slave: A Biological History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 135, 146–48; Kiple, "Cholera and Race in the Caribbean", *Journal of Latin American Studies* 17, no. 1 [1985]: 157–77; Adrián López Denis, "El cólera en la Habana: La epidemia de 1833" [MA dissertation, Universidad de la Habana, 2000]; López Denis, "Higiene pública contra higiene privada: cólera, limpieza y poder en La Habana colonial", *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 14, no. 1 [2003], 11–34).
  42. This revolt is one of the few that have been the subject of at least one article (see Juan Iduarte, "Noticias sobre sublevaciones y conspiraciones de esclavos. Cafetal Salvador, 1833", *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí* 73, no. 24 [1982]: 117–52).
  43. Barreiro, who was badly injured in one of his arms, declared that Alejo Lucumí, an old enslaved man, was able to tell him in Spanish that they just wanted freedom. He said, "carajo, queremos libertad" (ANC, ME 540/B, Deposition of Diego Barreiro, Cafetal Salvador, August 1833).
  44. Eguyoví declared later that the drums they were playing were those that they used to play at parties (ANC, ME 540/B, Deposition of Matías Eguyoví Lucumí, Cafetal Salvador, August 1833).
  45. All the quotations about the 1833 revolt were taken from ANC, ME 540/B.
  46. ANC, ME 540/B, Depositions of Matías Eguyoví Lucumí and Pacual Ayaí Lucumí, Cafetal Salvador, August 1833.
  47. ANC, ME 451/F, Deposition of overseer Don Manuel Díaz, Bauta, 3 August 1834.
  48. ANC, ME451/F, Deposition of the *contramayoral* Tomás Lucumí, Bauta, 4 August 1834.

49. ANC, ME 451/F, Depositions of Antonino Lucumí and *contramayoral* Tomás Lucumí, Bauta, 4 August 1834.
50. ANC, ME 232/Z, Proceedings against the captured Lucumí insurgents of Ingenio La Magdalena, Jurisdiction of Santa Ana, Matanzas, July 1835. The events at La Magdalena are extensively examined in Manuel Barcia, "Domination and Slave Resistance on Cuban Plantations, 1808–1848" (PhD dissertation, University of Essex, 2004, chapter 5).
51. ANC, ME 1178/B, Deposition of Valentín Lucumí, Ingenio La Sonora, June 1837.
52. ANC, ME 1178/B, Deposition of Fermín Lucumí, Ingenio La Sonora, June 1837.
53. ANC, ME 1178/B, Sentence dictated by the Military Commission against the insurgents from Ingenio La Sonora. Havana, October 1837. Some of the enslaved persons of La Sonora were taken to witness the execution of their comrades in Havana.
54. ANC, ME 1178/B, Statement of Lieutenant José Vicente Torro, attorney of defendant Esteban Lucumí, Havana, 14 October 1837.
55. ANC, ME 1193/H, Proceedings against the insurgents of the sugar mill San Pablo, owned by Don Julián Zaldivar, Catalina de Güines, September 1837.
56. ANC, GSC 939/33130, Deposition of Cleto Lucumí of the sugar mill La Conchita, Güira de Macuriges, May 1839.
57. *Ibid.*
58. ANC, GSC 939/33130, Inocencio López Gavilán to the Captain-General, San Nicolás, 15 June 1840.
59. In fact, in 1836 several Lucumís had revolted at a sawmill in El Cerro, a suburb of Havana, less than forty minutes' walk from the centre of the capital (see ANC, ME 731/A, Proceedings against the Lucumí insurgents of the sawmill located in Cruz del Padre Street, owned by Don Juan Echarte, 1836).
60. ANC, GSC 940/33154, Depositions of Valentín Toledo and Domingo Aldama, Havana, October 1841.
61. ANC, CM 28/1, Proceedings against 26 Lucumí, 11 Arará, 4 Mina and 1 Congo from the sugar mill La Arratia, July 1842.
62. Public Record Office (London), Foreign Office (FO) 72/634, Joseph T. Crawford to the Earl of Aberdeen, No.15, Havana, 18 April 1843.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *British and Foreign Anti Slavery Reporter*, 31 May 1843, 82; see also John G. Wurdermann, *Notas sobre Cuba* (Havana: Ciencias Sociales, 1989), 272–73; Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 177–78. The most recent study on this plot is Daniel Martínez García's "La sublevación de la Alcancia: su rehabilitación histórica en el proceso conspirativo que concluye en La Escalera (1844)", *Rábida* 19 (2000): 41–48.
65. Wurdermann, *Notes*, 271–72; Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 178.
66. *Diario de la Habana*, 8 November 1843, 1–2; Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood*, 209–15. Polonia Gangá, an enslaved person on the plantation

- Santísima Trinidad de Oviedo, denounced the plotters. On this specific topic see María del Carmen Barcia y Manuel Barcia, "La Conspiración de La Escalera: el precio de una traición", *Catauro* 2, no. 3 (2001): 199–204.
67. Paul Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery", *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* 2, no. 1 (1997), <http://www2.hnet.msu.edu/~slavery/essays/esy9701love.html>
  68. See K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957); Jean Meyer, *L'Armement nantais dans la deuxième moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1969); Kwame Yeboah Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); Gavin White, "Firearms in Africa", *Journal of African History* 12, no. 2 (1971): 173–84; Philip D. Curtin, *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); Joseph. E. Inikori, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa, 1750–1807", *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 339–68; David Richardson, "West African Consumption Patterns and their Influence on the Eighteenth Century English Slave Trade", in Henry. A. Gemery and Jan. S. Hogendorn, eds., *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New Cork: Academia Press, 1979); W.A. Richards, "The Import of Firearms into West Africa in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980).
  69. ANC, CM 36/1, Deposition of Martín Gangá, Ingenio Amunátegui, July 1844.
  70. ANC, CM 37/1, Deposition of Perico Criollo, Matanzas, January 1844.
  71. ANC, CM 37/1, Deposition of Alejandro Gangá, Ingenio Coto, Matanzas, January 1844.
  72. ANC, CM 37/1, Deposition of Tomás Criollo, Ingenio Coto, Matanzas, January 1844.
  73. There are several published works about "African" oaths in the New World (see, for example, Barbara K. Kopytoff, "Colonial Treaty as Sacred Charter of the Jamaican Maroons", *Ethnohistory* 26 [1979]: 45–64; Kenneth Bilby, "Swearing by the Past, Swearing to the Future: Sacred Oaths, Alliances, and Treaties among the Guianese and Jamaican Maroons", *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 4 [1997]: 655–89).
  74. AHOHCH, FG 117/1, Deposition of José Gangá, Gibacoa, May 1844.
  75. AHOHCH, FG 117/1, Depositions of Juliano Gangá, Santiago Congo and Higinio Mozambique, Gibacoa, May 1844.
  76. For details on the revolt at Ingenio Guaycanamar, near the town of Jaruco, see ANC, AP 136/8, José María André to the Captain-General Prince of Anglona, Jaruco, 16 September 1840.
  77. ANC, ME 1069/B, Deposition of Rafael Gangá, Catalina de Güines, September 1827.
  78. For the case of the Carabalís of La Hermita see Barcia, *A Colossus*, chapter 7. For the Congos of Cayajabos see ANC, ME 743/LI, Deposition of José Angel Congo, Cayajabos, November 1812.



79. AHOHCH, FG 117/1, Deposition of Francisco Congo, Gibacoa, May 1844.
80. Barcia, *A Colossus*, chapter 8.
81. ANC, ME 540/B, Depositions of Ayaí, Fanguá, Chobó and Churipe, among many others, Cafetal Salvador, August 1833.
82. ANC, CM 36/1, Deposition of Roque Gangá, Ingenio La Mercedita, April 1844.
83. ANC, CM 36/1, Deposition of Gertrudis Carabalí, Ingenio La Mercedita, April 1844.
84. Thornton, *Africa and the Africans*, 184–92.
85. ANC, CM 37/1, Deposition of Tomás Criollo, Ingenio Coto, January 1844.
86. ANC, ME 37/1, Deposition of José Lucumí, Ingenio Toro, February 1844.
87. This happened, for example, during the revolts of 1825 and 1843.
88. ANC, ME 37/1, Deposition of Antonio Criollo, Ingenio Saratoga, January 1844.
89. ANC, ME 37/1, Deposition of Tomás Criollo, Ingenio Adan, January 1844.
90. On this debate see Barcia, “Domination and Slave Resistance”, chapter 5.
91. By “the same part of the globe” Gala meant Africa (ANC, CM 38/1, Final conclusions given by prosecutor Apolinar de la Gala, October 1844).
92. *Ibid.*
93. Barcia and Barcia, “La conspiración de la Escalera”, 200–201.

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# Forbidden Fruit

## Pro-Slavery Attitudes Towards Enslaved Women's Sexuality and Interracial Sex

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### Abstract

*This article analyses the pro-slavery debate about the sexuality of enslaved women in Jamaica in the period 1770–1834. It shows that two images of enslaved women dominated this debate and argues that these served primarily to displace fears about the viability of the plantation system. It also explores the link between the two images and the practices of interracial sex by comparing Jamaican attitudes towards interracial sex with those on the North American mainland. The conclusion links the analysis to the existing scholarship on pro-slavery discourse and describes some long-term effects of the two images of enslaved women's sexuality.*

## I

Enslaved women's sexuality has long held the attention of historians. American feminist scholars first explored this field of historical research in the early 1980s.<sup>1</sup> Their studies tried to dispel the myth presented by planters and their supporters that enslaved women were scheming Jezebels and easily prostituted their bodies, by providing evidence that enslaved women's sexual relations with White men were based more on force than consent. Using, among others, Foucault's idea that the "deployment of sexuality . . . engenders a continual extension of areas and forms of control", they argued that the sexual abuse of enslaved women by White men was as much, if not more, a means of control as the whip and hence that female bondage was worse than male bondage.<sup>2</sup>

It was not until the late 1980s that scholars of Caribbean slavery took an interest in enslaved women's sexuality.<sup>3</sup> Their focus was initially also on sexual coercion and enslaved women's resistance to it. It was much more difficult for them than for American scholars to undo the myth that enslaved women engaged in promiscuous and casual relations with both White and enslaved men because they lacked primary sources in which former enslaved women referred to their sexual abuse. They did succeed, however, in providing an alternative account of enslaved women's sexuality by comparing pro-slavery remarks about enslaved women's sexuality with abolitionist accounts and also with anthropological data. More recently, like some of their American counterparts, they have begun to examine critically the pro-slavery remarks about enslaved women's consensual sexual relations with White men. Rather than dismissing these remarks as "fables", they have accepted the pro-slavery writers' suggestion that many enslaved women engaged voluntarily in sex with White men and have argued that for many enslaved women, especially the lighter-skinned ones, this was an important survival mechanism because it could provide them with extra rations of food and clothing, a better job on the plantation, or even freedom for themselves and their children.<sup>4</sup>

This study tries to widen the debate about the sexuality of enslaved Caribbean women. It goes back to the pro-slavery remarks about enslaved women's sexuality, not to illuminate the lives of enslaved women, as earlier work has done, but to enhance our understanding of the workings of Caribbean slavery.<sup>5</sup> One of the main benefits of the work thus far done on enslaved Caribbean women's sexuality is that it has debunked the myth that the planters' control over their labour force depended solely on the use or threat of physical punishment. This study will unravel this myth further by arguing that the planters' power was also discursively constituted, that is, they provided representations of enslaved persons that exerted power because they informed or justified controlling plantation practices. It will argue that the images that planters and their supporters in the metropolitan society presented of enslaved women's sexuality helped to justify the planters' and their White employees' sexual abuse of enslaved women and to influence proposals to adopt laws and plantation practices that aimed to subject enslaved women's sexual lives to close scrutiny.

This study concentrates on images of enslaved Jamaican women's sexuality and relates them to the real sexual relationships between enslaved women and White men in Jamaica in the period 1770–1834.

The images were presented in a wide range of published materials, including histories of the island and novels, that were produced by planters and other local residents, visitors to the island and various people living in metropolitan society. All of these writers expressed a clear pro-slavery stance and some of them, such as the planter Bryan Edwards, even played a key role in the pro-slavery lobby.<sup>6</sup>

Section two of this study begins by pointing out that pro-slavery writers constructed enslaved women's sexuality as deviant by measuring enslaved women against the metropolitan, middle-class norm of female sexuality. It then goes on to examine in detail the pro-slavery debate about interracial sex. This examination adds to earlier work on enslaved Caribbean women's sexuality in that it shows that the scheming Jezebel coexisted with a more positive image of enslaved women's sexuality – the potentially virtuous enslaved woman – and that the debate about interracial sex changed over time and was inconsistent and contradictory. It provides not only information on the construction of the two images but also indicates the purposes that they served. It shows, for instance, that the two images expressed, and thereby mitigated a number of concerns of the pro-slavery lobby.

Section three demonstrates that the pro-slavery rhetoric on interracial sex contradicted the actual sexual behaviour of White men in the island. Supported by images of the scheming Jezebel and the potentially virtuous enslaved woman, proposals were put forward to regulate not just enslaved women's sexual behaviour but also that of White men in the island. Most of these, however, were never implemented. Jamaica contrasted in this respect sharply with the slave societies on the North American mainland. After a brief comparison of the extent of, and public opinion on, interracial sex in both localities, the section provides a number of reasons that might explain the striking contradiction between pro-slavery rhetoric and plantation practice.

The last section summarizes the findings and indicates how this study's detailed analysis of the pro-slavery debate about enslaved Jamaican women's sexuality and interracial sex has enriched our understanding of pro-slavery discourse, that is, the comprehensive set of utterances, sentences and statements that acted together to sustain or prolong slavery in the British Caribbean. It also poses the question whether the effects of the pro-slavery debate on enslaved women's sexuality were limited to the control of enslaved women.

## II

In the period under discussion, ideas about sexuality in British society underwent significant changes. While permissible sex remained confined to the married procreative couple, different norms of male and female sexual behaviour emerged.<sup>7</sup> In the eighteenth century men were attributed with excessive sexual desires. After the turn of the century, this idea was still adhered to but, rather than presenting it as a force that was beyond their control, men were enjoined to control their sexual passion. At the same time, the avenues through which they could discharge their powerful sexual energies were more closely circumscribed.<sup>8</sup> The changes in the norm of female sexuality were even more pronounced. For centuries, women had been regarded as the lascivious sex. It was argued that sexual lust originated with them and that men were victims of their wanton power. To facilitate the domestic ideology, that is, the set of ideas and practices that located women firmly in the home and defined them first and foremost as wives and mothers, from the late eighteenth century onwards women were increasingly urged to control their sexual passion both before and after marriage. By the early nineteenth century female chastity was seen as an inner quality rather than a discipline. It was assumed that women did not have an innate sex drive and that their sexual feelings were only invoked through love in marriage. As a result of this construction of the “naturally passionless woman”, women who displayed sexual passion, such as prostitutes, came to be seen as both unnatural and unfeminine.<sup>9</sup>

In their remarks about enslaved women’s sexual relations with both White and Black men, pro-slavery writers used various arguments to construct enslaved women as a deviation from the passive model of female sexuality: first, that enslaved women began sex at an early age; second, that they frequently changed partners; and third, that they preferred multiple partners. Bryan Edwards, for instance, mentioned in 1793 that enslaved women “would consider it as the greatest exertion of tyranny . . . to be compelled to confine themselves to a single connection with the other sex”.<sup>10</sup> However, the argument that lent most support to the construction of enslaved women as sexually deviant was that they easily prostituted their bodies. The main character in the pro-slavery novel *Marly* (1828), for example, was surprised about the readiness with which enslaved women offered themselves or their daughters to White estate officers:

He was incessantly importuned by the pickeniny mothers, to take a wife; and

there was not an individual among them, who had not some one of their young female friends to recommend for that purpose. Such recommendations were perpetually sounded in his ears. "Why mass Marly, not take him one wife, like oder buckra? dere is him little Daphne, would make him one good wife – dere is him young Diana – dere is him little Venus."<sup>11</sup>

Two theories were put forward to explain why enslaved women deviated from the metropolitan ideal of female sexuality. The first, primarily adhered to by those who resided in the island (hereafter, Jamaican writers), was that enslaved women were by nature promiscuous. Planter Jesse Foot, for example, referred to enslaved women's preference for multiple partners as a "natural passion."<sup>12</sup> Not all pro-slavery writers explained enslaved women's deviant sexuality in such a direct way. Local resident John Stewart, for instance, argued that years of exposure to missionary teachings had not improved enslaved women's sexual behaviour.<sup>13</sup> The second and less often articulated theory attributed enslaved women's lack of sexual restraint to various external factors. Planter Robert Hibbert blamed it on enslaved men. He was of the opinion that their innate desire for multiple wives had produced "incontinence" in their women.<sup>14</sup> Anthony Davis, a resident, attributed it to the most prominent symbol of reform, abolition and humanitarianism in the island: the nonconformist missionaries. He mentioned in 1832 the case of a missionary in Spanish Town who had told the enslaved women in his congregation to raise money to build a chapel in New Zealand by "the prostitution of their bodies".<sup>15</sup> Only a few pro-slavery writers argued that the conditions of slavery were responsible for enslaved women's promiscuity. Former bookkeeper J.B. Moreton expressed this view most clearly in his guide to prospective estate personnel, entitled *West India Customs and Manners* (1793):

I say if the most virtuous woman now in England had been tutored like blacks, a slave in like manner, she would be as lascivious and as common as any; and again, I say if blacks were tutored from their infancy in England, they would be as virtuous as white women.<sup>16</sup>

Moreton thus suggested that enslaved women were potentially virtuous women. Further on, we shall see that he also described enslaved women in his guide as scheming Jezebels. The coexistence of negative and positive images of enslaved women in his work illustrates, as much as the above-mentioned diametrically opposed theories, the ambiguity and complexity of the pro-slavery debate about enslaved women's sexuality.

The foregoing has indicated that the pro-slavery representations of

enslaved women's sexuality were framed in terms of the metropolitan model of female sexuality. The remainder of this section, which examines the pro-slavery discussion about interracial sex – as pro-slavery writers concentrated more on enslaved women's sexual relations with White men than enslaved men – will show that this was not the only factor that informed the construction of enslaved women variously as scheming Jezebels and potentially virtuous women. Equally important were the debates about slavery taking place across the Atlantic, and a number of economic and demographic changes that affected Jamaican plantations.<sup>17</sup>

Pro-slavery writers addressed two kinds of sexual relations between enslaved women and White men. The first was a short-term relation initiated by a Black or, as was more common, an enslaved Coloured<sup>18</sup> woman. This woman was generally referred to as a "prostitute" and it was argued that she initiated the relationship solely to obtain material favours. The second was a long-term liaison initiated by a White man that had the consent of the enslaved woman, who was referred to as the "housekeeper". All pro-slavery writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries presented not only the prostitute but also the housekeeper as a scheming Jezebel. Like the prostitute, the housekeeper was seen as having an innate appetite for material goods and it was suggested that this was the main reason she entered into the relationship. Planter and novelist Matthew Gregory Lewis mentioned, for instance, that Psyche had left her enslaved husband for one of his "white people because he . . . had a good salary, and could afford to give her more presents than a slave could".<sup>19</sup>

Several writers, mainly those residing in metropolitan society, regarded the housekeeper as more of a threat to Jamaican society than the prostitute.<sup>20</sup> They articulated four objections against housekeeper relationships. First, the relationships upset the social order because they led to "spurious offspring". By this they meant that a large percentage of enslaved Coloured people were set free in recognition of their White paternity or special services, and that these Free Coloureds upset the delicate balance of power in the island, which was based on skin colour. During slavery, a small number of Whites occupied the highest rung of the social ladder, although they were internally divided on the basis of wealth, education and occupation. The vast majority of enslaved persons were at the bottom of the ladder, while freemen – Black and Coloured – occupied the middle rung, even though many had economic positions similar to or even exceeding those of the Whites.<sup>21</sup>

Second, the relationships posed a threat to the productivity of the estates because “spurious offspring” were generally employed around the house rather than in the field.<sup>22</sup> Third, they were a danger to the stability of the estates because housekeepers managed to obtain “complete ascendancy and sway” over their White men and, as Moreton argued, were “intolerably insolent to subordinate white men”.<sup>23</sup> Finally, they posed a major obstacle to natural increase. It was argued that the housekeeper, like the prostitute, not only contracted venereal diseases that made her infertile but also aborted her offspring in order to maintain the favours of her White partner.<sup>24</sup>

The extensive public debate about the decrease of the enslaved Jamaican population, which took place both in the island and Britain at the time, explains why the last point was articulated more often than the others. In the 1770s, the enslaved Jamaican population declined by 2 percent per year. However, it was not until the emergence of organized abolitionism in the late 1780s that planters, including those who resided in Britain, began to express a concern about this demographic trend.<sup>25</sup> Abolitionists argued that the decline was caused by the wanton and improper exercise of power on the plantations. The planters responded by putting forward causes that placed the blame on the enslaved population. They emphasized, in particular, the sexual behaviour of enslaved women.<sup>26</sup> However, it was not only abolitionist accusations that led planters to address the decline but also a fear that the abolitionists might succeed in banning the international slave trade. A ban would have drastic effects on the output levels of their estates, as they would no longer be able to keep up the numbers of their labour force through imports. In their discussions about natural decrease, some planters therefore not only presented reasons for the decline of the enslaved population but also provided suggestions to increase the birth rate, such as offering enslaved women a material reward for every live birth and exempting women with six or more children from field work.<sup>27</sup> It could be argued, then, that the image of the housekeeper as a scheming Jezebel served to a large extent to contain this dual fear of natural decrease and declining output levels.

From the 1820s onwards, pro-slavery writers seldom mentioned the prostitute and presented the housekeeper less as a scheming Jezebel and more as a potentially virtuous enslaved woman. This shift in imagery was a direct response to the abolitionist attack on the sexual mores of White men in the slave colonies. Abolitionists contended that all interracial sexual relations were based on force and that married



enslaved women, in particular, were the victims of White men's inability to control their sex drive and discharge it through legitimate channels, such as marriage.<sup>28</sup> Several Jamaican writers tried to deny this charge. First of all, they pointed out that no force was involved. According to them, enslaved women eagerly agreed to become housekeepers because of the material and non-material benefits bestowed upon them.<sup>29</sup> Second, they mentioned that housekeeper relations did not undermine slave marriage. Planter Alexander Barclay, for instance, argued that housekeeper relations did not trespass on "the connubial rights of the slaves", as the women involved were young and single.<sup>30</sup> The strongest argument that the writers presented, however, was that housekeeper relations resembled the monogamous, stable relations of middle-class men and women in metropolitan society and were based on more than sexual passion.<sup>31</sup> One local resident, for example, argued that housekeepers were "faithful and attached, and, in hours of sickness, evidenced all the kindness and affection of wives".<sup>32</sup> Anthony Davis expressed the opinion that these relationships were often formed during a period of sickness. After recovery, the estate officer would ask the woman who had saved his life to live with him. To emphasize that it was love that underpinned these relations, he asserted that most of the officers went through great difficulty to have their housekeeper accompany them to a new place of employment; they often had to pay a great sum to compensate the planter for his loss of labour.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the late 1820s and early 1830s some pro-slavery writers argued that both enslaved women and White Jamaican men lived up to, rather than deviated from, the gendered metropolitan norms of sexuality.

The emergence of the potentially virtuous enslaved woman was not the only change that occurred in the pro-slavery debate about interracial sex in the 1820s. Another important change, which illustrates once more the ambiguity and complexity of the debate, was a stronger denunciation of interracial sexual relations which was accompanied by stronger admonitions to enslaved women and White men not to cross the colour line to gratify their sexual desires. Clergyman George Bridges, for example, wrote in 1826 that "the degeneracy of the white inhabitants has already bequeathed some of the largest proportion of coloured children, the evil, if such it be, is hourly increasing". Cynric Williams, a visitor to the island, suggested that White estate officers should bring "a wife from England" and that enslaved women should marry "black men rather than commit adultery with a white one".<sup>34</sup> Such condemnations of interracial sexual relations and proposals to counteract them did not,

like those in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, make references to natural decrease or the stability of the estates. Instead, they were solely informed by a fear that the relations would lead to Coloured offspring, which in turn would cause a rise in the free population, because enslaved Coloured persons were granted manumission, or freedom after their master's death, more often than enslaved Blacks in recognition of paternity or special services.

It was not so much the rise of the free population – from 7.3 percent of the total population in 1810 to 10.6 percent in 1830 – as the increased assertiveness of the free(d) men that led pro-slavery writers, especially those residing in the island, to denounce interracial sex strongly in the 1820s.<sup>35</sup> From 1815 onwards, free(d) men held regular meetings in Kingston and petitioned the House of Assembly (the local legislature) to enhance their rights. In 1816, for instance, they asked for representation as taxpayers in the Assembly. The assertiveness reached a climax in 1830 with the establishment of the free(d) men's newspaper the *Watchman*, which soon became the major organ to attack the social structure in the island which was based on skin colour.<sup>36</sup>

While the assertiveness of free(d) men threatened the social status of the White islanders, the increase in their numbers endangered their economic status. Planters disliked manumission because it caused a further decline in their servile labour force and hence a reduction in their profits. Other Whites wanted to combat the growth of the free population because free(d) men were their main competitors on the labour market. Several Jamaican writers were of the opinion that the social and economic dominance of the White population in the island could only be safeguarded by a legal ban on sex between White men and enslaved women. Some writers, however, argued that such a ban was insufficient to limit the growth of the free population because the slave law stipulated that those who were four or more generations removed from Black ancestors were legally White and enjoyed all the rights of Whites.<sup>37</sup> They advocated, instead, the endogamy of each of the six "races", or "castes", as they were commonly called, that made up Jamaican society: White, Quadroon (White and Mustee), Mustee (White and Mulatto), Mulatto (White and Black), Sambo (Mulatto and Black), and Black.<sup>38</sup> This not-so-common proposal was articulated in the anonymous novel *Hamel, the Obeah Man* (1827), which appears to have been written by Cynric Williams. The images of enslaved women in this novel indicate not only that pro-slavery writers both despised and desired Black female bodies but also the extent to which notions of race,

sex and gender were intertwined in the pro-slavery debate about enslaved women's sexuality.

The main character in *Hamel, the Obeah Man* is Roland, a White missionary. While he tries to incite some enslaved plantation workers to revolt and proclaim a Black king, he falls in love with Joanna, the White daughter of the plantation owner. His assistant Sebastian, a free Mulatto man, is in love with the enslaved Quadroon woman Michal, who is Joanna's personal servant. Michal, however, has set her heart on Roland.<sup>39</sup> It is especially the story of Sebastian's futile attempts to court Michal that reveals the novel's message that the colour line should not be blurred. Shortly after his first meeting with Michal, Sebastian realizes that all his hopes to win her heart are in vain:

Quadroon damsels do not look for beauty in the youth of their own colour; their first ideas of admiration or love are devoted to the genuine white breed, either native or imported, to which they are themselves indebted, as they think, for the charms of their own persons, and all the favour they find in the eyes of those who sigh for their affections.<sup>40</sup>

The author presents Michal's sexuality as a deviation from the metropolitan ideal, mainly by comparing her with her mistress. Whereas Joanna does not even consider Roland's advances, Michal actively tries to woo him in order to become his housekeeper. Like the turn-of-the-century pro-slavery writers, the author presents this move as one devoid of the love that middle-class girls in the metropolitan society entertained towards their suitors. Michal's love for Roland was not a genuine emotion but one triggered by ulterior motives and of a very physical character: "This young girl is in love with some white gentleman – for they always aspire: *ambition* goes hand in hand with love – ambition of distinction, of being above the pity at least of all their friends and rivals, if not of being an object of their envy."<sup>41</sup> However, this image of Michal as a dishonest temptress coexists with favourable descriptions of her physical appearance:

Her skin was nearly as white as that of any European, of a clear and animated hue, the roses glowing upon her cheeks. . . . [H]er forehead was shaded by some of the prettiest brown curls that ever graced the brows of a Quadroon damsel. . . . [T]he long black eyelashes which like portcullises, guarded those portals of her heart, or mind, or genius, . . . had been designed by nature with such attention to symmetry, and to what we have learned from our ancestors to consider beautiful.<sup>42</sup>

Michal is here not only presented as physically similar to White women but is also eroticized. It can be argued that the author eroticized

her in order to ease his sexual guilt. Coloured women, especially the most light-skinned, were far more often the object of White men's sexual desire than Black women, not only because they were seen as more aesthetically pleasing but also because they were considered to be more "refined", since they were usually employed in the house rather than in the field.<sup>43</sup> As a result of the growth of the Free Coloured population and to some extent also the shift in the metropolitan norm of male sexuality, by the mid-1820s a sexual desire for enslaved Coloured women had become a less acceptable one. The author therefore could express his sexual fantasies about light-skinned enslaved women by providing extensive accounts of their beauty. It is, however, also possible to read Michal's eroticization as a means used by the author to articulate his concerns about the political and social status of White Jamaicans. Quadroon women threatened Jamaica's social structure more than other Coloured women because they were so similar to White women that they could easily pass as White and also because their offspring of relations with White men were four generations removed from their Black ancestors and hence legally free.<sup>44</sup>

One could argue, however, that Michal's eroticization undermined rather than enhanced the author's argument that enslaved Coloured women, especially Quadroons, were given over to sexual excess. At the time, feminine beauty was strongly linked to virtue. It was assumed that a woman's virtue was visible on her face. The eyes of a virtuous woman, for instance, were said to be clear and transparent like water.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, a woman with irregular features was believed to be capable of deviant behaviour.

The author of *Hamel, the Obeah Man* was not the only one who juxtaposed pejorative images of enslaved Coloured women with favourable ones of their physical appearance. Many pro-slavery writers, both Jamaican and metropolitan, described their faces as "soft", "sweet" and "fine"; and their eyes as "bright", "brilliant" and "sparkling", while they admired their teeth for their colour and "regular shape".<sup>46</sup> In other words, pro-slavery writers gave enslaved Coloured women the transparent and regular faces associated in metropolitan society with virtuous women.

*Hamel, the Obeah Man* lends support to Patricia Mohamed's contention that by the beginning of the nineteenth century "black women's centrality in production and reproduction may have very well been shared or superseded by mulatto women".<sup>47</sup> Black women occupy a minor role in the novel. They only feature in the account of Roland's

attempts to incite some enslaved individuals to revolt, which is averted by the obeahman Hamel. Their representations compare unfavourably to those of enslaved Coloured women. Not only does the author omit descriptions of their physical appearance, he also rarely gives them a name and refers to them mainly in disparaging terms:

The missionary was no sooner left alone with the *black dame* than the latter asked him if he was hungry or thirsty, and offered him all she had to offer in the shape of refreshments. "Black woman," said he, "*mistress Hamel*, or by what other name shall I address you? *Negress! sister in the spirit!* . . . Tell me *mistress – mammy*, I should say – are you the only wife of Hamel?"<sup>48</sup>

Like their Coloured counterparts, enslaved Black women in the novel are presented as endangering the social order. Their danger, however, is not linked to their sexuality but to their submissiveness to Black men; they docilely obey their partners' orders to help overthrow the plantation regime. The last line of the quote above indicates most clearly that the author regarded Black men's sexuality as more of a danger to plantation society than that of Black women. In fact, he does not present the enslaved Black woman as an evil and immoral temptress but as a mere victim of Black men's excessive sexual lust.

Enslaved Coloured women therefore occupy a more important role than Black women in *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, and their sexuality is presented as more deviant and dangerous. The novel contrasts in this respect sharply with pro-slavery verse and fiction produced in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The latter generally presented the sexuality of both categories of enslaved women as a deviation from the metropolitan ideal of female sexual restraint. The popular song "Me Know No Law, Me Know No Sin", quoted among others in Moreton's guide, demonstrates most clearly that enslaved Black women, like enslaved Coloured women, were regarded as scheming Jezebels:

Alth'o a slave me is born and bred,  
my skin is black, not yellow:  
I often sold my maidenhead  
To many handsome fellow.<sup>49</sup>

This brief comparison of images of enslaved women's sexuality in turn-of-the-century pro-slavery verse and fiction with those in *Hamel, the Obeah Man* seems to suggest that pro-slavery writers gradually cast their ideas about the natural difference of enslaved persons in a discourse on race, that is, they not only compared enslaved persons to White, English, middle-class men and women, but also compared and

contrasted the behaviour of the earlier-mentioned six castes. They attributed to each of them innate characteristics, such as intelligence and laziness. These, together with visible (outward) differences, such as skin colour and hair texture, were used to put the castes in a hierarchy. This process performed a policing function as it assigned positions, regulated groups and enforced boundaries. For example, enslaved Black persons (who were at the bottom of the hierarchy) were regarded as physically strong and hence were assigned to the first field gang, that is, the gang that carried out the most arduous jobs. On the other hand, enslaved Mulatto people (who occupied a place slightly higher up in the hierarchy) were given jobs around the house because they were seen both as incapable of physically demanding work and as more intelligent than enslaved Black persons.<sup>50</sup> The fact that in *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, Mulatto and other enslaved Coloured women were placed above Black women, even though their sexuality was seen as more of a deviation from that of White women, seems to indicate that the racial hierarchy that pro-slavery writers described in the 1820s and 1830s depended more on visible than invisible markers.<sup>51</sup>

Two images of enslaved women therefore struggled for precedence in the pro-slavery debate about interracial sex: the scheming Jezebel and the potentially virtuous enslaved woman. We have indicated that the latter became more prominent in the 1820s but that throughout the period the scheming Jezebel dominated the debate. Considering the direct threats to their economic and social standing – first in the form of the abolition of the slave trade and later in the increase in the free population – it is not surprising that Jamaican writers were more likely to uphold the negative image of the scheming Jezebel than metropolitan writers. That the latter resorted more to the potentially virtuous enslaved woman was not only because they were more influenced than Jamaican authors by the metropolitan discourse on female sexuality, but also because they had a different opinion on how best to defend the institution of slavery against abolitionist attacks and other forces that affected the viability of the plantation economy.<sup>52</sup> They were convinced that large-scale amelioration of the condition of enslaved people, such as allowing them legal protection against excessive physical abuse, was the best solution. Local residents, on the other hand, were of the opinion that the survival of the plantation economy required not an extension but a further limitation of the freedom of enslaved people through such means as physical punishment.<sup>53</sup> These two different perspectives required different images of enslaved people: images that

stressed the similarities of enslaved people with men and women in metropolitan society versus those that emphasized their differences.

The two images served various purposes. First, they had to express and thereby contain two major fears that troubled the writers – the natural decline of the enslaved population and the growth of the free population – which were exacerbated by abolitionist attacks. The foregoing analysis of the pro-slavery debate about interracial sex lends support to an argument advanced by various scholars that times of social upheaval and instability, such as wars and large-scale immigration, witness a disproportionate public concern about female sexual morality.<sup>54</sup> Prior to 1770, planters and others whose interests were closely linked to Jamaican plantations did not express a concern about interracial sex or enslaved women's sexual excesses. While the majority glossed over these issues, there were some who actually presented enslaved women's sexuality as a positive rather than a negative feature, such as Isaac Teale, who praised enslaved women's beauty and sensuality in his 1765 poem "Sable Venus". Sonya O. Rose, who has examined various historical outbursts of negative pronouncements about women's sexual behaviour, has concluded that discourses about women's sexual morality intensify "when establishing unity of identity has become especially important to a community".<sup>55</sup> This explanation also seems to hold for the emergence of the pro-slavery remarks about enslaved women's sexuality after 1770. The extremely diverse group of pro-slavery writers were forced by the development of organized abolitionism to assume a degree of unity to avert legal action that could negatively affect their social and economic standing. The differences between the Jamaican and the metropolitan writers outlined in the foregoing suggest that the issue of enslaved women's sexuality did help to unify subgroups of pro-slavery writers but that it failed to unite them as a whole.

Another important purpose of the two images was to justify interracial sexual relations, which, as the following section will show, were a common and accepted feature of Jamaican society. By presenting the enslaved woman as a scheming Jezebel, White men could deny responsibility for casual sexual relations with her; she was inherently wanton and lured White men in order to fulfil her insatiable sexual appetite. The potentially virtuous enslaved woman, on the other hand, was used in the 1820s and 1830s to justify the practice of housekeeper relationships in the island; she was presented more as a surrogate wife than as a sensual mistress. In other words, the two images were in part shaped by loving or caring interracial sexual relations in the island. The section

that follows tries to assess whether the images also helped to shape interracial sexual relations. It does this by examining the extent to which proposals that were put forward to contain enslaved women's alleged excessive sexuality were put into practice.

### III

Throughout the period, but especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, proposals were put forward to regulate enslaved women's sexual behaviour. They aimed to encourage monogamous relations among enslaved persons and discourage cross-plantation unions.<sup>56</sup> In 1831 James Simpson, a manager of several absentee plantations, expressed the opinion that both objectives could best be achieved by "locking up and securing the female sex from all intercourse with the male sex at night".<sup>57</sup> His proposal was clearly based on, and also helped to reinforce, the idea that enslaved women were naturally promiscuous. However, far more common was the suggestion to offer enslaved couples a reward, such as a small sum of money or a fully furnished cabin, upon formal marriage, that is, marriage solemnized by an Anglican minister which was recognized as "valid in law".<sup>58</sup> Underlying this proposal was the image of the potentially virtuous enslaved woman. She would remain sexually pure if she was given a generous compensation for the loss of her trade in sexual favours.

Several pro-slavery writers were of the opinion that schemes to make enslaved women live with enslaved men from their own estate would not succeed unless they were accompanied by drastic measures to limit interracial sex. One measure proposed was the employment of married estate officers. By the late eighteenth century it was common policy to employ only single men as estate officers. This was one way in which planters tried to counteract their declining profits. The profit rates of sugar, the island's most important export commodity, dropped from 8.9 to 3 percent between 1763 and 1782.<sup>59</sup> The employment of married estate officers negatively affected the planters' costs as it necessitated the building of houses and other facilities to accommodate wives and children, and also led officers to demand higher wages. Planter and historian Edward Long, who suggested this measure as early as 1774, argued that its success depended on making the few White, single women in the island "more agreeable companions, more frugal, trusty and faithful friends" than enslaved women.<sup>60</sup> The image of the scheming Jezebel that underlay Long's proposal also supported the idea of



punishing enslaved women who had sex with White men. Planter James Adair, for example, was especially keen to see that planters meted out severe punishments on enslaved married women who offered sexual favours to White men.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, Moreton – and this again shows how much he contradicted himself – called for a law that would fine White men for having sex with enslaved women, so as to protect enslaved women’s “virtue and chastity” more effectively.<sup>62</sup>

Considering the concerns about natural decrease, productivity and social stability that informed these proposals, it is surprising that they were not widely adopted. Elsewhere I have argued that planters were reluctant to adopt a marriage reward scheme because formal marriage between enslaved persons constituted a contract that gave them a legal identity other than as chattels of the owner while the promise of husband and wife to protect and obey each other threatened further to divide the loyalty of enslaved persons.<sup>63</sup> Here I want to concentrate on the planters’ lack of action to combat interracial sex, which made Jamaican slave society stand out from slave societies on the North American mainland. By the early eighteenth century most of the colonies in North America had adopted laws that discouraged sexual relations between Whites and Blacks. Virginia was one of the first to do so. In 1662, it made “fornication with a negro man or woman” a crime punishable by a fine. Thirty years later, it passed an Act that made interracial marriage illegal by banishing the White partner from the colony.<sup>64</sup> Alongside this wave of legislation, there developed social norms that precluded, or at least frowned upon, White men’s sexual relations with Black women. Kirsten Fisher’s examination of slander suits in colonial North Carolina indicates that local gossip about casual sexual relations with enslaved women could severely compromise a White man’s reputation.<sup>65</sup> Other scholars have shown that White men who were so smitten by their enslaved partners that they made them their concubines and set up house with them were ostracized by their family and community.<sup>66</sup> As J.D. Rothman has shown recently, in spite of the legislation and cultural condemnation, by the early nineteenth century sex between White men and Black women on the North American mainland was tolerated and accommodated as long as it was kept out of public notice.<sup>67</sup>

Although the denunciations of interracial relations mentioned in the preceding section suggest otherwise, most White Jamaicans did not frown upon White men – married or single – who had casual sexual relations with enslaved women, or ostracize single men who were in

housekeeper relations.<sup>68</sup> Lady Nugent, the wife of the governor, mentioned in the diary she kept during her stay in the island between 1801 and 1805 various official occasions that single White men attended with their enslaved housekeepers. In 1801, for example, she attended an official dinner at Hope plantation where she was introduced to the overseer's housekeeper, who in turn proudly showed her their "three yellow children".<sup>69</sup> John Stewart's *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* (1823) suggests that the emergence of the potentially virtuous enslaved woman in the pro-slavery debate in the 1820s did not correspond with a decline in, or a stronger public disapproval of, housekeeper relations. He mentioned that "Every unmarried man, of every class, has his Black or his Brown mistress, with whom he lives openly; and of so little consequence is this thought, that his White female friends and relations think it no breach of decorum to visit his house."<sup>70</sup> Considering the absence of social norms in Jamaica that disapproved of long-term interracial unions, it is not surprising that it was mainly metropolitan writers who presented housekeeper relations as a problem in the late eighteenth century, and predominantly Jamaican authors who defended the relations against the abolitionist attacks in the 1820s and 1830s.

The Jamaican House of Assembly never issued a law that banned interracial marriage: White Jamaicans could marry Free Blacks and Coloureds;<sup>71</sup> nor did it, in contrast to the North American colonies and the Leeward Islands, adopt a law that fined White men for having sex with enslaved women.<sup>72</sup> The only Act that the Assembly passed affecting interracial sexual relations was the 1826 one that introduced the death penalty for the rape of enslaved females: "if any person or persons shall at any time after the commencement of this act commit a rape on any female slave, then and in every case every person thereof lawfully convicted shall be deemed guilty of felony, and suffer death without benefit of the clergy".<sup>73</sup> This was a very radical Act as none of the slave societies in the New World at the time allowed adult enslaved women legal recourse in the case of rape. In the slave states in North America, for instance, only enslaved girls under ten were legally protected against rape. The sexual abuse of an adult enslaved woman in these states could only come to court if the claimant was the woman's owner and the defendant another White man.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the 1826 Act made enslaved Jamaican women the only enslaved women in the New World who had the right to refuse sexual relations with White men. That not a single White Jamaican man appeared in court on account of rape after

1826 should not be seen as an indication that the Act proved effective in discouraging interracial sex. Rather, it reflects the complicated and lengthy process that enslaved women had to go through in order to have White men convicted of rape, a process that offered not only a very small chance of success but also involved the risk of corporal punishment if the complaint proved unfounded.<sup>75</sup>

It is important to emphasize that this radical Act was not a response to the calls articulated in the early 1820s by writers such as the Reverend Bridges to criminalize interracial sex in order to limit the growth of the free population. The underlying aim of the Act was not to prevent miscegenation, and hence social instability, but to please the abolitionists and the government at home. In May 1823, as a result of abolitionist campaigning, the House of Commons adopted a set of resolutions to ameliorate the condition of the enslaved population in the West Indies, with the wider intention to abolish slavery at as early a date as was compatible with the welfare and safety of the colonies. It included, among others, the proposal to admit the testimony of enslaved persons in courts of law, a programme to encourage religious instruction and marriage, and a ban on female flogging.<sup>76</sup> The Jamaican House of Assembly was asked in November 1823 to enact these reform proposals, but it declined to do so because it saw them as a step towards immediate emancipation.<sup>77</sup> Instead, it passed the 1826 Act as a token gesture. It had to convince the government that it was not unwilling to ameliorate the condition of the enslaved population, while simultaneously refuting the abolitionist contention that planters were inhumane and uncivilized because they did not elevate enslaved women socially or morally.

Historians have generally used the percentage of enslaved Coloured persons as an indicator of the extent of interracial sex.<sup>78</sup> In 1817 there were about 30,000 Whites in the island and 300,000 enslaved people, including 36,000 Coloureds.<sup>79</sup> A population of 24,000 adult White men, then, leads to a Coloured enslaved/White adult male ratio of 1.5. Compare this ratio to North America at the same time, which had a White population of 8 million and an enslaved population of 1.5 million, including 150,000 Coloured persons. An adult White male population of about 2.8 million meant that there were on average 0.05 Coloured enslaved persons to every White male.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the incidence of mixed offspring in relation to each available White father in Jamaica was almost thirty times that in North America.

The discussion about the prostitute and the housekeeper in the pre-

vious section might suggest that most of the interracial sex in the island was based on consent. However, the writers who articulated these views – and this shows again the inconsistent and contradictory nature of pro-slavery discourse – mentioned that forced interracial sexual relations were also common. Moreton, for instance, supported his proposal to fine White men who had sex with enslaved women with the remark that “the lives and properties of the women, are at the command of the masters and overseers”. He mentioned that it was common practice to provide attorneys, that is, the men who looked after the estates of owners who resided in Britain, upon their annual visit to a plantation with one or even several enslaved women to satisfy their sexual needs. The women in question were forced by the manager “in a pimp-like action” to “wash themselves in some river or pond, brace up their breasts, and meet at the great house”, where they first had to dance for the attorney and the high-placed White estate officers and were then “hastened to the different chambers” where they had to sleep with them.<sup>81</sup>

This brief comparison of public attitudes towards interracial sex in Jamaica and the North American mainland suggests that most White Jamaicans were not disconcerted about interracial sex and that a large proportion of its male population actively engaged in it. The relaxed attitude of the Jamaican planter class is the more surprising, considering that they faced more threats to their social and economic status, which were exacerbated by interracial sexual relations, than their North American counterparts. The latter, for instance, did not experience natural decrease or a significant decline in the profit rates of their cash crops.<sup>82</sup> The remainder of this section will suggest a few reasons why Jamaican planters did not actively try, either in the Assembly or on their plantations, to curb interracial sex.

Studies on colonial North America have shown that the criminalization of interracial sex was strongly linked to an increase in White women in the colonies. In 1625, there were four White men to every White woman in Virginia, or 80 percent males. By the time that the ban on interracial marriage was passed, men made up only 60 percent of the total White population.<sup>83</sup> The growing numbers of White women in the colonies was accompanied by a marked improvement in women’s status within the family and society. According to Carl Degler, the latter made it possible for a wife to keep her husband’s relations with enslaved women out of the public eye and also enabled her to refuse to acknowledge her husband’s illegal offspring.<sup>84</sup>

Throughout the period under discussion, there were four White men

to every White woman in Jamaica.<sup>85</sup> This skewed sex ratio was not only caused by the planters' policy to employ only single men as estate officers but also by the unhealthy climate of the island, which worked against the residence of planters with their families.<sup>86</sup> The shortage of White women, single and married, clearly limited the legitimate avenues through which White men could release their powerful sexual energies. Recent studies of White Jamaican society during slavery have shown that while their metropolitan counterparts increasingly began to control their sexual passions, many White Jamaican men continued to adhere to the interlinked ideas that it was essential to release the male libido in unrestrained relations with the other sex because it was a powerful and potentially destructive natural force, and sexual prowess was the main test of manhood.<sup>87</sup> This belief in their own animality, combined with the paucity of White women, largely explains why the members of the House of Assembly did not legislate against their own and other White men's sexual liaisons with enslaved women.

Another possible reason for legislative inaction is the decline of the White population from 30,000 in 1807 to 16,600 in 1834, which was caused by a depression that forced many planters to lay off White staff or even abandon their estates. This decline led to an overall decrease in White paternity.<sup>88</sup> This demographic change, and also the gradual realization that the growth of the free population was more the result of natural increase than increased manumission, made it less urgent for the planters to legislate against interracial sex.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, and most importantly, planters refrained from action because interracial sex could bring short-term benefits to their estates.<sup>90</sup> First of all, interracial sex could enable them to increase their servile labour force, though at the cost of rearing the children. Their own or their employees' offspring of sexual unions with enslaved women added to their labour force, because children took the status of the mother. This became, of course, an important reason not to legislate against interracial sex after 1807 when planters could no longer rely on imports to sustain their labour force. Charles Campbell, an overseer on an estate in 1813 and 1814, mentioned, for instance, in his memoirs that "Almost every white man . . . cohabits with a black slave. The offspring of these amours are the property of the slave's master. It is in his interest to encourage this practice; for a West Indian planter estimates his wealth by the number of his slaves."<sup>91</sup>

Second, it could guarantee them a supply of White estate officers. At a time when these officers were in short supply, a policy of allowing

them sexual access to enslaved women could serve as a means of keeping them on the estate.<sup>92</sup> Third, interracial sex could help planters to control their labour force. As several scholars have argued, forced interracial sex was “an efficient tool of female repression”.<sup>93</sup> Consensual interracial sex, on the other hand, could enhance the stability of the estates as it enlarged the divisions in the enslaved community. The jobs, clothing, housing and other gifts bestowed upon housekeepers and their Coloured children set them apart from the rest of the enslaved community.<sup>94</sup>

The sexual relations between enslaved Jamaican women and White men were thus not reshaped as a result of the pro-slavery debate about enslaved women’s sexuality. Most White men in the island did not internalize the idea that had gained prominence in the 1820s that Black women could be as virtuous as White women and continued to persuade or even force enslaved women into having sex with them. This poses the question, then, how we should interpret the remarks by local White residents that interracial sex endangered Jamaican society. It is possible to read them as an indication that, at least for some members of the local elite, by the early nineteenth century sexual crossings of the colour line had become incompatible with their notions of sexuality, race and gender, and hence publicly inadmissible. A more plausible reading is that, like metropolitan writers, local residents increasingly used representations of enslaved women’s sexuality to deflect blame for the socio-economic problems that they faced.

## IV

The debate examined in this article formed part of a wider discourse that sought to sustain or prolong slavery in the British Caribbean, which comprehended not only published writings but also statements before parliamentary committees, paintings, laws and official correspondence. It was a discourse that centred on enslaved women for various reasons other than the abolitionist charge that planters failed to elevate enslaved women.<sup>95</sup> It was not until the early 1990s that scholars began to examine this discourse seriously.<sup>96</sup> Most of the scholarship presents pro-slavery discourse as monolithic and static. Verene Shepherd’s study of pro-slavery representations of women and gender relations in Jamaica in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, for example, does not suggest that these representations changed over time and argues that all the representations expressed disdain and contempt for enslaved

women.<sup>97</sup> This article has suggested that pro-slavery discourse was far from static and that it was highly complex, inconsistent and contradictory. First of all, it has shown that images of enslaved women changed over time – from an emphasis on the scheming Jezebel to a focus on the potentially virtuous enslaved woman – and that these changes in representations were linked to economic, social and demographic changes that affected the socio-economic standing of the White islanders as well as the economic well-being of residents in Britain whose financial interests were largely bound up with Jamaican plantation culture. Second, it has pointed out that two groups, residents and nonresidents, presented at times very different images of enslaved women’s sexuality, mainly as a result of their different perspectives, which demonstrates not only the complexity but also the contradictory nature of pro-slavery discourse. Finally, this study has hinted at the inconsistency of pro-slavery discourse by indicating that individual participants undermined their arguments by presenting conflicting representations of enslaved women. *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, for instance, contained representations that articulated both a disdain and a desire for enslaved women, while Moreton’s guide presented enslaved women as both victims and perpetrators of sexual vice in the island.

This article has also tried to advance on earlier work on pro-slavery discourse by indicating the sources that informed this particular discourse. While earlier work has shown that pro-slavery discourse responded to the debates about slavery in metropolitan society and also to social and economic changes in the slave societies, it has paid little attention to its reliance on a number of metropolitan discourses, in particular those on gender, sexuality and race. This study shows that pro-slavery writings on enslaved women’s sexuality invoked these discourses mainly as a yardstick against which they measured enslaved women’s sexual behaviour and to a lesser extent also that of White men. In other words, pro-slavery discourse used metropolitan discourse to define, characterize and identify not only enslaved people but also White residents in the British Caribbean.

Pro-slavery discourse did not just rely on metropolitan discourse but also helped to shape them, that is, it brought to existing discourse elements which, along with other forces, helped to change them. The images of enslaved women’s sexuality examined here, for example, contributed to some extent to the racialization of the metropolitan discourse on sexuality. The construction of the “naturally passionless” White woman that emerged in the late eighteenth century depended on the

displacement of female sexual agency to other women. As Sander Gilman has shown, by the turn of the century it was no longer just the White prostitute that was used for this purpose but also the scheming Jezebel.<sup>98</sup> The images also went some way towards facilitating the “sexualization” of metropolitan discourse on race, that is, they helped to make sexual behaviour one of the key characteristics defining the inferiority of people of African descent.<sup>99</sup> These two processes, the racialization of sex and the sexualization of race, have thus far relinquished few of their powers. Various studies have pointed out, for instance, that Black women in Africa and the Diaspora are still regarded as naturally promiscuous and immoral, and as a result suffer rape and other forms of sexual abuse by White and Black men.<sup>100</sup> Accounts on the spread of HIV in Africa also demonstrate that sexual excess and racial inferiority are as firmly linked in the minds of politicians, scholars and journalists as they were in the minds of the pro-slavery writers mentioned in this study.<sup>101</sup>

The shaping of metropolitan discourse was a very important effect of pro-slavery discourse and one historians should examine in more detail.<sup>102</sup> However, a far more drastic effect of pro-slavery discourse was the control of the enslaved population. It has not been possible to pinpoint exactly the ways in which the representations of enslaved women’s sexuality examined here controlled the lives of enslaved Jamaican women. It has merely been suggested here that they were employed to justify the sexual abuse of enslaved women (and until 1826 also their lack of protection against sexual abuse), and that they informed practices on the estates that aimed to control sexual relations, such as locking up enslaved women at night.

## NOTES

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1. For pioneering studies in the field of enslaved women’s sexuality, see Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Bell Hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981). Until the mid-1990s, American scholars in this field concentrated on the Antebellum South, mainly because of the wealth of pri-



mary material. For example, Thelma Jennings's article, " 'Us Coloured Women Had to Go through a Plenty': Sexual Exploitation of African American Women", *Journal of Women's History* 1, no. 3 (1990): 45-74, which has done much to enhance our understanding of enslaved women's perceptions of forced interracial sex, is based on Federal Writers Project interviews with former enslaved persons. The first studies that examined enslaved women's sexuality in the colonial period focused mainly on the regulation of interracial sex (see, for instance, P. Finkelman, "Crimes of Love, Misdemeanors of Passion: The Regulation of Race and Sex in the Colonial South", in C. Clinton and M. Gillespie, eds., *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 129-38). More recently the focus has moved towards enslaved women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation and popular attitudes towards interracial sex (see, for example, K.M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996]; K. Fisher, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002]).

2. M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (London: Penguin, 1990), 106.
3. One of the first studies on the sexual coercion of enslaved Caribbean women was R.E. Reddock's "Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective", *Latin American Perspectives* 12 (1985): 63-80. The three monographs on enslaved Caribbean women that were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s have also paid considerable attention to the issue (see H. McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* [London: Zed Books, 1989]; B. Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* [London: James Currey, 1990]; M. Morrissey, *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratification in the Caribbean* [Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1990]). Trevor Burnard's work on the Jamaican slaveholder Thomas Thistlewood has also done much to enrich our understanding of the sexual abuse of enslaved women: "The Sexual Life of an Eighteenth-Century Jamaican Slave Overseer", in M.D. Smith, ed., *Sex and Sexuality in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 163-89; "Theatre of Terror: Domestic Violence in Thomas Thistlewood's Jamaica", in C. Daniels and M.V. Kennedy, eds., *Over the Threshold: Intimate Violence in Early America* (London: Routledge, 1999), 237-53; *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), chapter 5.
4. For a recent interpretation of consensual interracial sexual relations, see B. Bush, " 'Sable Venus', 'She-Devil' or 'Drudge?': British Slavery and the 'Fabulous Fiction' of Black Women's Identities, c.1650-1838", *Women's History Review* 9 (2000): 761-89.
5. The following studies have examined pro-slavery remarks about enslaved

women's sexuality with the aim of disentangling the truth from the myth: Bush, " 'Sable Venus' "; H. McD. Beckles, "Female Enslavement and Gender Ideologies in the Caribbean", in P.E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (London: Continuum, 2000), 163–82; V.A. Shepherd, "Gender and Representation in European Accounts of Pre-Emancipation Jamaica", in V.A. Shepherd and H. McD. Beckles, eds., *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 702–12.

6. The material has been selected on the basis of the contribution that it made to the pro-slavery struggle. Hence it excludes unpublished private journals and correspondence, and also writings published before 1770, as it was not until the emergence of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787 that planters and others felt the need to defend the institution of slavery in writing. The term "pro-slavery lobby" refers here to a varied group of people who defended the interests of Caribbean planters and merchants in institutions such as the Houses of Parliament and the West India Committee, a London-based society of West Indian planters and merchants. Bryan Edwards migrated to Jamaica in 1759, where he became a prominent planter, merchant and politician. Not long after his return to England in the late 1790s, he became a member of the House of Commons, where he defended the Caribbean planters against Wilberforce's attacks on the slave trade and slavery.
7. For a good overview of this shift in the norm of sexuality, see J. Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality since 1800* (Second Edition. London: Longman, 1993); T. Laquer, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
8. T. Hitchcock, *English Sexualities, 1700–1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), 100, 108; J. Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 45–46.
9. This summary of the model of female passive sexuality is based on G.J. Barker-Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 325–47, 366–73; L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 1992), 401–3; L. Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: Representations of Women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 33–34. It was especially their role as mothers that required women to be sexually pure. They had to provide their children with a proper moral grounding so that civilization could advance.
10. B. Edwards, *The History Civil and Commercial of the British Colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vols. (London: John Stockdale, 1793), vol. 1, 80.
11. *Marly: Or, a Planter's Life in Jamaica* (Glasgow: Richard Griffin, 1828), 133.
12. J. Foot, *Observations Principally upon the Speech of Mr. Wilberforce on his Motion in the House of Commons the 30th of May 1804* (London: T. Becket, 1805), 96.
13. [J. Stewart], *Account of Jamaica, and Its Inhabitants by a Gentleman Long*

- Resident in the West Indies* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1808), 276.
14. R. Hibbert, *Hints to the Young Jamaica Sugar Planter* (London: T. and G. Underwood, 1825), 12; see also *Evidence upon Oath Touching the Condition and Treatment of the Negro Population of the British West India Colonies, Part 1, Island of Jamaica* (London: Ridgways, 1833), 51.
  15. [A. Davis], *The West Indies* (London: James Cochrane, 1832), 26.
  16. J.B. Moreton, *West Indian Customs and Manners* (London: J. Parsons, 1793), 160. Similar remarks can be found in H. McNeill's *Observations on the Treatment of Negroes in the Island of Jamaica* (London: G.J. and J. Robinson, 1788), 41; F. Cundall, ed., *Lady Nugent's Journal: Jamaica One Hundred Years Ago Reprinted from a Journal kept by Maria, Lady Nugent, from 1801 to 1815* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1907), 118.
  17. The interracial sexual relations examined in this article are those between enslaved women and White men. These have thus far received more attention from scholars than relations between White men and Free Black or Free Coloured women. For a good introduction to the latter, see Sheena Boa, "Free Black and Coloured Women in a Whiteman's Slave Society" (MPhil thesis, University of the West Indies, 1988). Only recently have studies been published that examine sexual relations between White women and Black men during slavery (see, for instance, T. Burnard, "A Matron in Rank, a Prostitute in Manners': The Manning Divorce of 1741 and Class, Gender, Race and the Law in Jamaica", in V.A. Shepherd, ed., *Working Slavery, Pricing Freedom: Perspectives from the Caribbean, Africa and the African Diaspora* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), 133–52).
  18. The term "Coloured" in this article refers not only to the offspring of Whites and Blacks but to all mixed offspring.
  19. M.G. Lewis, *Journal of a West India Proprietor: Kept during A Residence in the Island of Jamaica* (London: John Murray, 1838), 78; see also Moreton, 77; McNeill, 41; Cundall, ed., *Lady Nugent's Journal*, 40.
  20. Throughout this article the term "metropolitan writers" will be used to denote those pro-slavery writers who resided in Britain, including plantation owners, merchants, former estate officers and men who had no direct interest in the plantations but were convinced that the prosperity of Britain depended on the continuation of the slave system in the Caribbean.
  21. [Stewart], *Account of Jamaica*, 200. For a good overview of the racial hierarchy in the Caribbean during slavery, see Gad Heuman, "The Social Structure of the Slave Societies in the Caribbean", in F.W. Knight, ed., *General History of the Caribbean* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), vol. 3, 138–68. The decreasing political and social importance of the White population after independence in 1962 did not coincide with a more fluid line between Whites, Coloureds and Blacks in Jamaica. There still exists today a three-tiered social structure of an upper class of mostly native Whites; a middle class of Coloured businessmen, government officials, members of the intelligentsia and an upwardly mobile group of Blacks; and a lower

- class overwhelmingly of Blacks (see H. Hoetink, “Race and Color in the Caribbean”, in S.W. Mintz and S. Price, eds., *Caribbean Contours* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985], 55–84).
22. See Cundall, ed., *Lady Nugent’s Journal*, 118; McNeill, 42; [Stewart], *Account of Jamaica*, 200.
  23. [Stewart], *Account of Jamaica*, 200; Moreton, 77.
  24. See, for instance, J.M. Adair, *Unanswerable Arguments against the Abolition of the Slave Trade with a Defence of the Proprietors of the British Sugar Colonies* (London: privately published, 1790), 121; Foot, 97; [Collins], *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves in the Sugar Colonies by a Professional Planter* (London: J. Barfield, 1803), 155–56; [Dr. Grainger], *An Essay on the More Common West India Diseases* (London: T. Becker, 1814), 14. Interestingly, none of the writers disapproved of house-keeper relationships on the grounds that they threatened White identity, that is, that they culturally tainted or “blackened” White men. This criticism of interracial sex was widespread in the British colonies in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (see, for instance, R. Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002], chapter 6).
  25. For a good introduction to the abolition movement and its campaigns, see R. Blackburn, *Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1988).
  26. The failure of the enslaved population to reproduce naturally has interested scholars on Caribbean slavery for a long time. They have not only examined the contemporary debate but also tried to explain the low fertility rate of enslaved Caribbean women. A good introduction into this field of study is B.W. Higman’s *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807–1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).
  27. B. Bush, “Hard Labor: Women, Childbirth and Resistance in British Caribbean Slave Societies”, *History Workshop Journal* 36 (1993): 87–88. The Jamaican House of Assembly enacted various pronatalist policies in the years leading up to the abolition of the slave trade. In addition, various planters adopted their own pronatalist practices. These policies and practices had little effect as it was not until after the abolition of slavery in 1838 that the Afro-Jamaican population began to reproduce naturally. North American planters adopted similar pronatalist practices after 1807. They also tried to increase the size of the enslaved population through “forced breeding”. Although Jamaican planters often criticized their enslaved charges’ choice of sexual partners, they rarely forbade relationships or forced partners upon their enslaved men and women. For more information on the highly debated issue of “forced breeding” in the Antebellum South, see Jennings, “‘Us Colored Women’”.
  28. The dominant image of enslaved women in the abolitionist discussion about interracial sex is that of the innocent victim of White men’s sexual lust. For strong abolitionist condemnations of interracial sex, see *The Speech of James*

- Losh, in the Guildhall Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the 31st of March 1824 (Newcastle: T. and J. Hodgson, 1824), 10; T. Clarkson, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Improving the Condition of the Slaves in the British Colonies: With a View to Their Ultimate Emancipation* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1824), iv; Rev. G. Whitfield, *Remarks on the Justice and Immorality of Slavery in Eight Letters* (London: John Stephens, 1830), 5.
29. See, for example, J. McQueen, *The West India Colonies: The Calumnies and Misrepresentations Circulated Against Them by the Edinburgh Review* (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1824), 230–33.
  30. A. Barclay, *A Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies* (London: Smith, Elder, 1827), 100.
  31. This argument was also used to respond to the abolitionist complaint that planters did not do enough to encourage their enslaved charges to marry. As the following section will show, the debate about enslaved women's sexuality was inextricably bound up with the debate about the marriage of enslaved persons.
  32. *Sketches and Recollections of the West Indies by a Resident* (London: Smith, Elder, 1828), 231.
  33. [Davis], 70.
  34. Rev. G.W. Bridges, *The Annals of Jamaica* (London: John Murray, 1826), 371; C. Williams, *Tour Through the Island of Jamaica from the Western to the Eastern End in 1823* (London: Edward Chance, 1827), 56, 310. Bridges was a rector in two parishes in the period 1816–1827 and wrote various tracts in defence of slavery. In the early 1830s, an indictment was filed against him for having excessively flogged and otherwise abused one of his enslaved females, but was thrown out by a grand jury. For a summary of this case, see W.L. Burn, *Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 62.
  35. Higman, 380–84.
  36. G. Heuman, *Between Black and White: Race, Politics, and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792–1865* (Oxford: Clío Press, 1981), chapters 2–3; Blackburn, 424–26.
  37. Higman, 147; Heuman, “Social Structure”, 145. Little is known about the extent to which planters adhered to this 1733 law.
  38. E. Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 167. Most of these pro-slavery writers did not object to friendships, business relations or political alliances across colour lines. They, however, did not want these to extend into family lives.
  39. The novel has generally been presented and analysed as an antimissionary tract rather than as a romance (see, for instance, B. Lalla, *Defining Jamaican Fiction: Marronage and the Discourse of Survival* [Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996]).
  40. *Hamel, the Obeah Man*, 2 vols. (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827), vol. 1, 77.
  41. *Ibid.*, 193. Emphasis mine.
  42. *Ibid.*, 195–96.

43. Patricia Mohammed has examined the tenacity of this link between skin colour and sexual desire in Jamaican society in her article " 'But Most of All Mi Love Me Browning': The Emergence in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Jamaica of the Mulatto Woman as Desired", *Feminist Review* 65 (2000): 22–48.
44. In recent years there has been an increase in studies on the passing of Black women as White. While most writers present passing as a transgressive practice, others point out that it can also secure and fix racial identities (see, for example, S. Ahmed, " 'She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned into a Nigger': Passing Through Hybridity", *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 87–106.
45. J. Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description", *Victorian Studies* 24, no. 3 (1998): 325–50.
46. See, for instance, *Marly*, 180; Lewis, 69; Williams, 324.
47. Mohammed, 43. Mohammed uses the term "mulatto" not in the strict sense of the word, that is, the offspring of White men and Black women, but to refer to all enslaved Coloured persons.
48. *Hamel*, 83–88. Emphasis mine.
49. Moreton, 154. The song was quoted in various pro-slavery writings throughout the period 1780–1834. Michael Scott mentioned it, for instance, in his novel *Tom Cringle's Log* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1836). His remark that "I scarcely forgive myself for introducing it here to polite society", suggests clearly that the song served to convince readers of enslaved women's deviation from the metropolitan ideal of female sexuality. On the various versions of the song and its popularity, see J. D'Costa and B. Lalla, eds., *Voices in Exile: Jamaican Texts of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 14.
50. The latter assumption also led various pro-slavery writers to suggest that enslaved Coloured women should be trained in midwifery to replace the elderly, enslaved African-born women who served as midwives within the enslaved community (see, for example, the midwife training scheme advocated by planter Gilbert Mathison in his *Notices Respecting Jamaica in 1808–1809–1810, 1811* [London: John Stockdale, 1811], 29). I have examined these and other proposals to improve enslaved women's childbearing and rearing practices and their underlying representations of enslaved women in " 'Belly-Women and Pickeniny Mummas': Language and Image in the Pro-Slavery Discussion about Jamaican Slave Motherhood 1780–1834" (Unpublished paper presented at the conference on "Discourses of Slavery and Abolition", London, April 2001).
51. The pro-slavery writers' classification, which put Whites at the top and Blacks at the bottom, was one of several attempts at the time to theorize the differences between human beings. For more information on the development of race theories in the first half of the nineteenth century, see M. Banton, *The Idea of Race* (London: Tavistock, 1977).

52. Their direct exposure to metropolitan discourses on gender and sexuality also explains why metropolitan writers were more critical of interracial sex than Jamaican writers. Like the abolitionists, they argued that White men adhered to an old norm of masculinity which regarded sexual prowess as an important marker of potent masculinity.
53. There is another reason that metropolitan writers favoured a different approach to the defence of slavery than their Jamaican counterparts. They had witnessed in person the strength of the abolition campaign to end the slave trade and thus realized that sooner or later slavery would end, and that to sustain the system as long as possible it was essential to meet some of the abolitionists' demands for amelioration of the condition of enslaved people.
54. K. Binhammer ("The Sex Panic of the 1790s", *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 3 [1996]: 409–34) and A. Woollcott ("Khaki Fever and its Control: Gender, Class, Age, and Sexuality Morality on the British Homefront in the First World War", *Journal of Contemporary History* 29 [1994]: 325–47) convincingly argue that wars provided a discursive ground in Britain for panics around sexuality. K. Irving's study, *Immigrant Mothers: Narratives of Race and Maternity, 1890–1925* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), is one of several recent publications that discuss the debate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about migration, and explain that it was dominated by negative remarks about the sexual behaviour of immigrant women.
55. S.O. Rose, "Cultural Analysis and Moral Discourses: Episodes, Continuities, and Transformation", in V.E. Bonnell and L. Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Culture and Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 231–32.
56. For a variety of reasons, which include, among others, uneven sex ratios, half of the enslaved couples in Jamaica lived on separate estates. To visit one another, the partners needed permission from their overlords to leave the estate. Most couples did so during the weekend but often visited their partners clandestinely during the week (Higman, 79).
57. See his statement before the 1832 Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery (*Parliamentary Papers* [PP] 1831–32, vol. 20, 393). In the 1780s, about one-sixth of the plantation owners resided in England. They left the management of their estates in the hands of managers who were paid a salary or, more commonly, a commission of the annual yield. These men, predominantly lawyers, clergymen and merchants, visited the estates only once or twice a year. An overseer was in charge of the daily management of the estate (O. Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* [London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1967], 23, 56–57).
58. See, for example, Adair, 161. It was not until a radical revision of the slave laws took place in the mid-1820s that Anglican marriages were accepted as "valid in law" (see *The Consolidated Slave Law, Passed the 22 December, 1826*,

- Commencing on 1st May, 1827 with a Commentary* [N.p., 1827] [hereafter, *The 1826 Slave Law*]). Contemporary accounts, however, suggest that from the turn of the century marriages performed by Anglican ministers were generally regarded as legal. Elsewhere, I have explained that “valid in law” did not mean that these marriages among enslaved persons mirrored the reciprocal, legal and voluntary contract that couples signed in metropolitan society, and I have demonstrated that more enslaved persons were married by nonconformist than Anglican ministers (see my “‘To Wed or not to Wed?’: The Struggle to Define Afro-Jamaican Relationships, 1834–1838”, *Journal of Social History* 38, no. 1 [2004]: 81–82).
59. J.R. Ward, “The Profitability of Sugar Planting in the British West Indies, 1650–1834”, *Economic History Review* 31 (1978): 197–213. The economies of the British Caribbean in the period 1780–1834 have been the source of many debates. Until recently, scholars argued that these economies witnessed a steady decline after the American War of Independence (1776–1783), which was speeded up by the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. Other scholars now argue that the colonies witnessed a temporary decline during the War of Independence but recovered quickly and even boomed during the Napoleonic Wars which led to the collapse of Saint Domingue, the largest sugar producer in the West Indies and the world. The inflation after the wars led to a slump in the sugar market with which older sugar colonies, in particular, such as Jamaica, found it difficult to cope, and hence profits declined at a rapid rate. For some early works that explore the link between the economic profitability of Caribbean estates and the abolition of slavery, see F.J. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism* (New Haven, CT: Yale Historical Publications, 1926); R. Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Butterworth, 1933); E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: André Deutsch, 1944). For more recent interpretations, see S. Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997); Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in a Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labour Versus Slavery in the British Emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); B.L. Solow and S.L. Engerman, eds., *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); S.H.H. Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775–1810* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).
  60. E. Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London: T. Lowndes, 1774; reprint, London: Frank Cass, 1970), 330.
  61. Adair, 161.
  62. Moreton, 155. It is remarks such as these that have led some scholars to argue that Moreton had abolitionist sympathies. However, the fact that he articulated these in a guide for prospective estate personnel and that they were outstripped by remarks which presented enslaved women as schem-



- ing Jezebels suggest that he was more an “enlightened” pro-slavery writer than an abolitionist.
63. See my *Indifferent Mothers, Adulterous Wives and Unruly Workers: Representations of Slave Women in Discourses of Slavery and Abolition* (London: Routledge, forthcoming), chapter 4.
  64. Finkelman, 127–31. The Virginian laws criminalized sexual relations not only between Whites and Blacks but also between Whites and Native Americans. The main concern of these laws, as well as those in other colonies, was to prevent the sexual pollution of White women. Of far lesser concern were the casual and long-lasting relations between White men and Black women.
  65. Fisher, 149–55.
  66. See, for example, C. Clinton, “‘Southern Dishonor’: Flesh, Blood, Race, and Bondage”, in C. Bleser, ed., *In Joy and Sorrow: Women, Family and Marriage in the Victorian South 1830–1900* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61–62; Godbeer, chapter six.
  67. J.D. Rothman, *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787–1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
  68. Using mainly plantation records and unpublished diaries, Godbeer has shown in his *Sexual Revolution* that this public attitude towards interracial sex also prevailed in the first half of the eighteenth century.
  69. Cundall, 40.
  70. J. Stewart, *A View of the Past and Present State of the Island of Jamaica* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1823), 173.
  71. However, social customs were such that few White men married their Black or Coloured mistresses (see A.A. Sio, “Marginality and Free Coloured Identity in Caribbean Slave Society”, in G. Heuman and J. Walvin, eds., *The Slavery Reader* [London: Routledge, 2003], 669–71). Marriage between Whites and enslaved persons was in practice possible. Like marriages between free and enslaved Blacks, those between Whites and enslaved persons fell under the slave law and thus lacked the crucial attributes of marriage in metropolitan society, such as protection against desertion.
  72. The Leeward Islands law of 1789 subjected White men to fines of up to one hundred pounds for having sex with enslaved married women. This seems to have been a compromise between those planters who were concerned about the morality and fertility of their servile charges and others who saw White estate officers’ sexual access to enslaved women as an important means to keep their staff contented (see Bush, “Hard Labor”, 87).
  73. *The 1826 Slave Law*, 10.
  74. Clinton, 65. Therefore, at stake in rape trials involving adult enslaved females were the property rights of the woman’s overlord.
  75. An enslaved woman had to lodge a complaint with a local justice. If he and two other justices, after an examination of her body and a brief interview, concluded that the complaint was founded, a so-called Council of

- Protection was formed consisting of the vestry and local justices. Its duty was to investigate the complaint by examining several witnesses and, if necessary, file a suit against the accused. This procedure mirrored that used by enslaved women to obtain legal redress in cases of excessive physical abuse. Only a few White men appeared before any Council of Protection and they were generally acquitted on the basis of “insufficient evidence”.
76. Blackburn, 422.
  77. PP 1824, vol. 24, 427, 452. The Assembly defended its refusal by stating that the reform programme was an invasion of what was “exclusively the province of the local legislature”.
  78. This is not a very accurate means to determine the extent of interracial sex as the category “Coloured slaves” includes any enslaved person with White ancestors. It is, however, the only quantifiable means available to gain an idea of the extent of the phenomenon.
  79. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy*, 139–53; Higman, *Slave Populations in the Caribbean*, 147–48.
  80. This is based on the assumption of a 50:50 sex ratio and a 30:70 child:adult ratio in the White population, and the figures employed are for 1820 (R.W. Fogel and S. L. Engerman, *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* [Boston: Little Brown, 1974], 132; W. Trotter, *The African American Experience*, vol. 1 [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001], appendix 13). The fertile enslaved female:White adult male ratio also supports the idea of a higher incidence of interracial sex in Jamaica than on the North American mainland. In Jamaica there were 3.6 fertile enslaved women to every White adult male, whereas in North America there were only 0.19.
  81. Moreton, 77.
  82. From the 1740s, the enslaved North American population managed to increase naturally. In the period 1780–1834, the main cash crops produced in North America with slave labour were tobacco, rice, indigo and cotton. Except for tobacco, which was a marginal crop, the others fetched high prices on the world market. Sugar, Jamaica’s main cash crop at the time, witnessed falling prices as well as increased export duties, both of which reduced planter profits.
  83. Finkelman, 127–31.
  84. C. Degler, *Neither Black nor White: Slavery and Race Relations in Brazil and the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 238–39.
  85. This estimate has been provided by Christer Petley and is based on late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century parish records. This source, along with slaveholder wills, forms the basis of Petley’s recent article on the ideology of Jamaican slaveholders (“Slavery, Emancipation and the Creole World View of Jamaican Colonists, 1800–1834”, *Slavery and Abolition* 26, no. 1 [2005]: 93–114).
  86. According to Trevor Burnard, high White mortality rates, exceeding even those of the enslaved population, prevented Jamaica from becoming a settler colony. In the mid-eighteenth century, about 36 percent of European

- immigrants died within five years (see his “Not a Place for Whites? Demographic Failure and Settlement in Comparative Context: Jamaica, 1655–1780”, in K. Monteith and G. Richards, eds., *Jamaica in Slavery and Freedom: History, Heritage and Culture* [Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2002], 80).
87. See, for instance, Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, chapter three. Recent studies on early modern masculinity have argued that sexual control of women was key to manhood (see, for instance, E.A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* [London: Longman, 1999]; A. Shepherd, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]).
  88. Higman, 77.
  89. *Ibid.*, 380–84. In the 1820s legislation was passed making manumission cheaper and easier to obtain. However, this contributed only slightly to the growth of the free population.
  90. Various scholars have concluded that overall Jamaican planters were driven more by short-term than long-term interests. Lucille Mathurin Mair (“Women Field Workers in Jamaica”, in R. Terborg-Penn and A. Benton-Rushing, eds., *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: A Reader* [Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1996], 167–79) has shown that planters realized that to ensure the survival of their enterprises they had to encourage natural reproduction, but that their short-term aim of increasing output levels led them to adopt work and punishment practices that had a profoundly negative impact on women’s ability to bear and rear children.
  91. *Memoirs of Charles Campbell at Present Prisoner in the Jail of Glasgow, including his Adventures as a Seaman, and as an Overseer in the West Indies written by Himself* (Glasgow: James Duncan, 1828), 18.
  92. The estate, Worthy Park, for example, employed a total of eighty-five officers between 1783 and 1796. Since there were usually between five and ten Whites on an estate at any one time, this suggests a very rapid turnover (see Heuman, “Social structure”, 154).
  93. S. Dadzie, “Searching for the Invisible Woman: Slavery and Resistance in Jamaica”, *Race and Class* 32, no. 2 (1990): 25; see also Bush, *Slave Women*, chapter 3. Interviews with former enslaved American women in the 1930s suggest that they (and, by extension, other enslaved women) perceived the sexual violation of their bodies as one of the most direct expressions of the slaveholder’s control over them (see, for instance, Jennings, “ ‘Us Colored Women’ ”).
  94. Forced interracial sex also had the potential to increase the instability of the estates as it could enrage the abused woman’s enslaved partner (see, for instance, Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny and Desire*, 162). However, some scholars have argued that enslaved men were incapable of preventing or avenging their partner’s abuse because of the severe punishments meted out to those who tried to defend their partner’s virtue by attacking the abuser or by complaining about the abuse to the owner or overseer. Punishment

- might even involve being sold to a distant plantation (see, for instance, Patterson, 167). Others have suggested that consensual interracial sex might have aided the stability of the estates because housekeepers often intervened on behalf the enslaved people (see, for example, Bush, “ ‘Sable Venus’ ”, 77).
95. The primary sources on which this article is based are only a few of the many published writings that were mobilized in this discourse, which devoted far more attention to enslaved women’s mothering abilities and the way that they carried out their work duties than to their sexual behaviour. On the centrality of enslaved women in pro-slavery discourse, see Beckles, “Female Enslavement”.
  96. For a pioneering work, see M.J. Steel, “A Philosophy of Fear: The World View of the Jamaican Plantocracy in a Comparative Perspective”, *Journal of Caribbean History* (1993): 1–20.
  97. Shepherd, 701–12. Both this article and Steel’s largely ignore the metropolitan defenders of slavery.
  98. S.L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985).
  99. Pamela Scully has shown that European colonizers in South Africa often drew upon the image of the scheming Jezebel to define African women as inferior (see her “Rape, Race and Colonial Culture”, *American Historical Review* 100 [1995]: 335–59). For the more long-lasting effects of these two processes, see E. Brooks-Higginbotham, “African-American Women’s History and Metalanguage of Race”, *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 251–74.
  100. B. Bush, “History, Memory, Myth?: Reconstructing the History (or Histories) of Black Women in the African Diaspora”, in S. Newell, ed., *Images of African and Caribbean Women: Migration, Displacement, Diaspora* (Stirling: Centre of Commonwealth Studies, 1996), 3–28. This and various other studies argue that the rape of Black women today serves not so much to put White women on a pedestal but to prevent Black women from moving up from their place at the bottom of society.
  101. See, for example, D. Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism and Travel Writing and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), chapter 5.
  102. Following the innovative work of Catherine Hall, some scholars working on pro-slavery writings and practices in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have recently begun to explore more fully the links between the colonies and metropolitan society (see, for instance, David Lambert, “Producing/Contesting Whiteness: Rebellion, Anti-slavery and Enslavement in Barbados, 1816”, *Geoforum*, 36 [2005]: 29–43).

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# A Comparison of the Colonial Laws of Jamaica under Governor Thomas Lynch 1681–1684 with Those Enumerated in the John Taylor Manuscript of 1688

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VICKI CROW VIA

## Abstract

*Colonial law illustrates the social values within a colony, the relationship of a colony to the mother country, and how those values and dependencies change over time. Colonists used the legislature as an instrument of political resistance to the "mother country", and local statutes often served to protect the relative independence of a colony. Laws and statutes often reflect the need to maintain the social and physical security of chosen individuals in society. The formulators define that security and the intent of the law. This analysis considers the colonial laws of Jamaica with a focus on the period 1681–1684.*

In 1661, with the restoration of Charles II to the throne, the government of Jamaica was changed from military to civilian control under a charter. That charter contained the power granted to the governor and the royal concession to the people, that is, calling Assemblies and assimilating their laws to those of England.<sup>1</sup> The colonists believed that they brought with them, as their right and heritage, the Common Law of England. They based their rights as Englishmen on the proclamation of 1661, which the new governor, Lord Windsor (1662), brought to Jamaica in August 1662. By that proclamation, Charles II had guaranteed: "That all Children of any of Our Natural born Subjects of England to be born in Jamaica, shall from the respective Births be reputed to be, and shall be free Denizens of England, and shall have the same privileges to all intents and purposes as Our free-born Subjects of England".<sup>2</sup>

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*The Journal of Caribbean History* 39, 2 (2005): 236–248

Lord Windsor's tenure lasted only two months. The first Assembly met in early 1664 at St Jago de la Vega under Lieutenant-Governor Lyttleton (1662–1664); and the second, under Sir Thomas Modiford (1664–1671), later that same year. Another Assembly did not meet until after Modiford was recalled in 1671, and Deputy-Governor Thomas Lynch (1671–1674) called an elected Assembly for early 1672. Unlike the Barbadian Assembly, "the Jamaican Assembly did not have the advantage of Commonwealth precedents in the formulation of its early claims and privileges. . . . No law or regulation governed the holding of these early Assemblies, to specify how many should compose them, what districts should elect them, or how long they should last".<sup>3</sup>

These early Assemblies passed laws that came into effect immediately but were sent to England for review by select plantation councils that would recommend their approval, modification or disallowance. If the laws were not signed by the Crown within two years, they would expire. According to Ralph P. Bieber, "Of the thirty-four acts signed by the governor of Jamaica on 14 May, 1672, three were approved and four were disapproved by the council between November 1672 and June 1673."<sup>4</sup> Though in theory laws from previous terms expired at the end of two years, in practice local courts honoured them until they were specifically repealed.

The main problem that led to the constitutional crisis in the last quarter of the seventeenth century centered on revenue bills and the collection of public funds. The Assembly of Jamaica refused to pass any permanent revenue bill. In part they feared that, without a recurring need for funds to support the government, the governor would have no need to call the Assembly and their power as a representative body would diminish. F.G. Spurdle suggests that

the Jamaican representatives [were] following the Interregnum example of other plantations such as Barbados and Virginia, where wide separation from England – coupled with the breakdown of the royal connection – had engendered the feeling that government was more a matter of local concern than of the King's, and the appointment of tax officials more the prerogative of the people than of the Governor.<sup>5</sup>

The government's constant need for funds also gave the members of the Assembly great leverage in having their laws approved by the governor. Thomas Martin of London, appointed by the Crown in April 1674 as receiver-general for all duties and fees collected in Jamaica, provided the catalyst for a modification of the system.<sup>6</sup> He petitioned the king when not only the Assembly, but also Governor Vaughan (1674–1678)

and the Council, refused to recognize his full authority. This matter attracted the attention of the Committee of the Privy Council, known as the Lords of the Board of Trade and Plantations (commissioned in 1675), which concluded that the Jamaican Assembly was acting in an increasingly independent manner.

The Lords of the Board of Trade and Plantations reviewed the laws sent by the Assembly in 1677, recommended against the king's approval of them, and attempted to introduce the system known as Poyning's Law, as it was applied in Ireland, to Jamaica. Under Poyning's Law, all laws would have originated in England, and the Assembly would have been called only under imperious necessity. The board wrote forty acts and sent them with the Earl of Carlisle (1678–1680), the new governor to replace Lord Vaughan.<sup>7</sup>

The Assembly convened by the Earl of Carlisle in July 1678, and subsequent Assemblies, strongly resisted this violation of their rights as Englishmen. They repeatedly failed to pass any law that did not originate in the Assembly. Resigned to his failure, Carlisle returned to England in May 1680, leaving his deputy-governor in charge until a replacement could be appointed. In October 1680 the Crown expressed its willingness to grant legislative autonomy to the colony provided that the "gentlemen of Jamaica were prepared to grant a perpetual bill for the payment of the Governor and another for seven years for the other charges of the government".<sup>8</sup>

To preserve their rights as a legislative body, in 1681 the Assembly passed *An Act for Raising a Publick Impost*, which finally granted the Crown an annual revenue with guaranteed minimum appropriations payable to the king's receiver-general for seven years.<sup>9</sup> Confirmation of the island's laws thus became a "bargaining card" for the Crown that, in turn, confirmed the 1681 laws for a similar period.<sup>10</sup>

Under extreme pressure from Whitehall, the laws of 1683 specifically repealed the revenue bill passed in 1681 and replaced it with *An Act for Raising a Publick Revenue for the Support of the Government of this his Majesties Island*, which was to continue in force for 21 years.<sup>11</sup> Other laws passed in 1683 were also confirmed for the same period. The two revenue laws were virtually identical, except that the appropriation for forts and fortifications increased in 1683 from £1,000 to £1,250 per year, and the amount of fines to be paid by the receiver-general, if securities were not posted in a timely fashion, also increased. Poyning's Law was never implemented in Jamaica, but the Crown moved closer to its goal of a permanent revenue act.

The Assembly passed the laws discussed in this article in October 1681 and November 1683.<sup>12</sup> According to Taylor, the laws enumerated in chapter VIII of his manuscript are “an account of the principle accts, laws and customs of the country, made and enacted by the body politick of the state, called the council of assembly”.<sup>13</sup> Taylor’s sources, however, and the accuracy of his transcription, have not been verified. He travelled to Jamaica in 1686 and returned to England in 1688, writing most of his thousand-page manuscript along the way. A comparison of the Taylor laws, which are undated, with available primary sources does not indicate whether or not these statutes had ever been enacted or enforced on the island of Jamaica.<sup>14</sup>

For clarity, laws from the Taylor manuscript are designated by statute number. For purposes of analysis, these statutes may be divided into several categories: Governmental (including revenue and municipal law), Servants and Enslaved Persons, Debt, Environment, Social Order, Land Grants, Trade, and Militia.

Four other laws that the Assembly passed are concerned primarily with the functioning of the colonial government, determining the number of Assembly representatives, empowering justices of the peace, establishing courts, and establishing a depository for government records. As early as the Magna Carta (1215), it was customary to set the time and location for civic meetings and judicial courts. Most importantly, the colonial laws guaranteed the citizens where and when their representatives would meet and that they could not meet in secrecy to determine laws or punishments. The requirements for some court sessions are embedded in laws, such as the *Act For Regulating Servants* (1681), that lay out penalties for certain offences.<sup>15</sup> In this case, Quarter-Sessions to be held in each precinct guaranteed that redress for property loss would be addressed in a timely fashion. In the Taylor manuscript, there is no law that corresponds to *Appointing the Number of the Assembly* (1683).<sup>16</sup> Under the new regulations imposed from England, instructions to the governor gave him authority to dismiss at will members of the Assembly, which negated the right of early Jamaicans to an elected representative government. As a result of these laws operational laws were not needed, except when dealing with matters concerning imperial revenue and control.

The physical and economic survival of the colonies depended on the regulation of servants and enslaved persons as labour and property. In the first decade after the conquest of Jamaica, the Crown gave freedom to all who swore allegiance, land grants to all inhabitants over the age



of twelve, and full English citizenship to those Black soldiers who were willing to fight against the Spanish. By the beginning of the English colonization of Jamaica slavery already had become well established in the Caribbean. Throughout the Caribbean early egalitarian conditions dissipated in the sugar boom. Three Assembly laws addressed labour in Jamaica: *An Act For Encouraging the Importation of White Servants* (1681), *An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681) and *An Act For the better Ordering of Slaves* (1683).<sup>17</sup> No other selection of laws, especially when compared to the eleven statutes in Taylor's manuscript that address "Christian servants", better illustrates the changing social conditions of Jamaica.<sup>18</sup> Because the indigenous Arawak were virtually eliminated by the Spanish prior to the English conquest, no Jamaican laws were written to regulate or control indigenous populations.

The impact of disease and mortality on the demographics of the West Indies surely justified the *Act for Encouraging the Importation of White Servants* (1681). The Assembly formulated this law to make the marketing of White servants more profitable to merchants and importers. At first glance, parts of the law give the impression that it might achieve just the opposite. White servants had to be kept aboard ship and in port for ten days before they could be sold, and steep fines were imposed for breaking this law. However, ten days' wait guaranteed that buyers could assemble from even the interior of the island and have equal opportunity to acquire the best "merchandise". It also weeded out those servants who had become mortally ill on the voyage, protecting the investment of the buyer. Ship commanders who imported at least fifty White male servants were exempted from port charges for their voyage. After 1681 the law also reserved certain occupations for Whites by denying enslaved Black persons access to some trades. *An Act For Encouraging the Importation of White Servants* (1681), like *An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681), was also intended for "the strengthening and better Defence" of the island.<sup>19</sup> Statute XVII of the Taylor manuscript continued the ten-day waiting period, but no longer offered a fee-waiver for the ships.

The statutes for servants and enslaved persons are unique to the plantation colonies. In Jamaica, the distinction between the two often overlapped prior to 1685. Many of the provisions for each remained the same, but the laws in Taylor's manuscript make much ado about Christianity. Earlier laws do not, although Jamaica was the first colony in the British West Indies to encourage the Christianization of enslaved persons. By the 1680s in both sets of laws there is a clear distinction, based on colour, between servants and enslaved persons.

It was more difficult to encourage White emigration and natural increase than it was to purchase enslaved persons. The attempt to maintain some balance in population contributed to the first paragraph of *An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681). This law required that for each five “Working Slaves” employed by a master, he must have at least one “white man servant”; for ten enslaved persons, two Whites; and another White for each additional ten enslaved persons.<sup>20</sup> The corresponding statute from Taylor, number XXII, simplifies this to one English servant for each nine enslaved Black persons.<sup>21</sup> While planters under Assembly law were responsible each six months for an accurate accounting of hired men, servants and working enslaved persons on their property, the Taylor statutes do not address this issue.

*An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681) regulated clothing for servants generally, and food specifically for White servants. Specifically acknowledging White servants for the food provision suggests that both enslaved persons and servants received clothing. It also reflects the lesser ability of White servants to feed themselves; planters usually allotted provision grounds for praedial enslaved persons to raise their own foodstuffs. *An Act For the Better Ordering of Slaves* (1683) required one acre of ground well-planted with provisions for each five Blacks. Statutes XXV and XXVI in the Taylor manuscript expanded those allotments for “English and other Christian servants”, while also giving the master an option to buy his way out of the obligation.<sup>22</sup> In the later statutes, XXVII required that Christian servants be given two suits of new apparel, eight Mexican dollars and a legal certificate of freedom at the end of their term of servitude. In addition, XXVIII granted fifty acres of land to all Christian servants when their servitude was completed. The Crown paid the fee of the surveyor-general, but the servants were responsible for annual rent (property tax to the king).

In the minute details of the law, degrees of social condition and change emerge. The Assembly laws forbade trade with servants without the master’s express permission. Not only did this keep servants from acquiring any independent wealth, it also helped to protect the master’s property from incidental theft. Restrictions against employing a servant without a certificate protected theft of the master’s time, a valuable point in a colony where labour was one of the scarcest commodities. Servants and enslaved persons were not allowed to ride or be carried on any conveyance owned by the master or to load it with their possessions. This protected the master’s status. It was socially degrading for any freeholder to walk and riding was a symbol of status. None

of these articles is mentioned in the 1688 statutes, although many of these habits were probably continued by custom, if not by law.

The concern of Assembly law with offences and punishments reflected the influence of the Common Law of England to which the lawmakers considered themselves subject and from which they benefited. According to the *Summary of the Common-Law of England*, "The parts of the Common Law are two, The one concerns Possessions . . . The other, the punishment of Offences."<sup>23</sup> Throughout the laws passed by the Assembly, grievances, debts and fines of less than forty shillings were reconciled by justices of the peace. Debts and fines of over forty shillings were recovered in the Court of Record.

The Assembly clarified the status of Blacks in *An Act For the Better Ordering of Slaves* (1683). Recurrent revolt on the island necessitated a strong response. Enslaved persons could leave the plantation only with a "ticket" or accompanied by a White servant.<sup>24</sup> Approved punishments became more severe. In one of the few religious references in the Assembly laws, *An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681) does demand an investigation into the deaths of servants before Christian burial, an indication of the suspected cruelty to servants and enslaved persons alike. Servants and enslaved persons in Jamaica had much in common. Custom may have been harsh before *An Act For the Better Ordering of Slaves* (1683), but this law authorized brutality in response to violence upon the master, stealing, revolt and a number of other crimes. However, in case of a crime committed by more than one enslaved person that merited capital punishment, only one of them was to be executed, as an example to the others.<sup>25</sup> The enslaved persons' owners jointly shared the loss of the value of the executed person. This law recognized enslaved persons as goods and chattels for satisfying debt, but although slavery had been in the Caribbean for over 150 years their legal status was not yet defined solely by colour.

Statute XXIII declared "that all such Negroe or Indian slaves which are bought and sold hither from Africa, or any part of Asia or America shall never have the benefit of freedom all their dayes" and that their children would be slaves in perpetuity, "or else set att liberty by their master's pleasure," without mention of Christianity.<sup>26</sup> However, statutes XXIV and XXV freed "all such Negroe or Indian slaves which are lawfully baptized by a Christian minister" at age twenty-one or seven years after baptism.<sup>27</sup> The birthplace or origin of the Christian was not specified, but this was at best a very limited concession, considering that the average enslaved person introduced into the island

(and, indeed, the Caribbean) did not survive much longer than seven years after his or her arrival; and, moreover, no evidence exists that these statutes were enacted or enforced.

The Assembly meted out severe fines for harbouring runaways and other offences that were construed as impinging on the time- or labour-rights of slaveholders. *An Act For the Better Ordering of Slaves* (1683) also fined the slaveholder if one of his servile charges stole wood or timber, recognizing that the master would benefit from the theft.

According to Assembly law, convicts who came to Jamaica served an indenture equal to their term of banishment, at the end of which they became free inhabitants of the island. Statute XVII later limited their indenture to seven years, but those who were indebted in England were still liable for that sum after three years on the island. Assembly law did not address indebtedness directly prior to 1685. Nine of the sixty statutes in the Taylor manuscript specifically address fines, courts and imprisonment for debt.

Environmental concerns were vitally important to the Assemblymen. Specific laws protected the resources of Jamaica. *An Act For Appointing the Prices of Meat* (1683) addressed price controls, but it also forbade the destruction of turtle nests and eggs.<sup>28</sup> Turtles were a valuable food source for islanders and seamen. Their destruction affected the welfare of the coastal inhabitants. *An Act For Preventing Damages in Plantations, Preserving of Cattle, and Regulating Hunting* (1683) not only protected the property rights of freeholders from incidental damages but also preserved food sources.<sup>29</sup>

Some acts imply information about early conditions on the island. A municipal law, *An Act For Clearing of Rio Cobre above and below Caymana* (1683), drew a graphic picture of environmental change and damage during early settlement.<sup>30</sup> The Act provided for a Commission to oversee clearing the Rio Cobre of felled trees and rubbish that had altered its course and blocked water-flow. Toxins from the leaves and bark of the Jamaican dogwood tree almost certainly contributed to fish-kills in this area. Depleted oxygen levels from organic decomposition in the sluggish water-flow would also have been a factor. Adjoining lands and Blacks were taxed to pay for the cleanup.

This Act undoubtedly influenced Statute LIII, which decreed a fine and imprisonment for poisoning any part of the natural water supply of Jamaica. In the shadow of the power struggle between the Committee of the Board of Trade and Plantations and the Jamaican Assembly, this statute invokes images of the king's prerogative during the time of King

John, whose abuses resulted in the Magna Carta. Statute LIV similarly protected the carrion crow from destruction. In a lighter vein, the consequences of violating the “No Smoking” laws of the twentieth century pale in comparison to the penalties for lighting a fire or smoking tobacco in the savannah, or the highway, or within any plantation, unless it was the personal property of the smoker (*An Act For Regulating Building and Preventing Fire*, 1683).<sup>31</sup>

Few laws in the frontier atmosphere of early Jamaica addressed social order and control. Statutes in the Taylor manuscript address social issues that were not mentioned in earlier laws. It was unlawful to sell liquor during church times, and debts over forty shillings incurred at food and drink establishments (where gambling often occurred) were not recoverable. One-third of most fines and penalties were directed to the parishes to maintain the poor and local government. Also, warrants (taxes) levied by elected freeholders within the parish maintained churches, ministers and the poor. Statute LV formalized the obligation of the parishes by requiring them to provide one dollar per week to each poor or infirm person.

Laws in the Taylor manuscript attempted to influence moral behaviour. In *An Act For Regulating Servants* (1681), pregnancy in servants translated into a loss of labour on the one hand, and care for the child on the other. Penalties compensated the master for his loss. Pregnancy in unmarried free women was not mentioned. Statute XLIV enumerated penalties for unmarried servants with child and the father had to compensate the master for his loss of labour. However, it also demanded sureties from the father of the child of an unmarried free woman. If he failed to give guarantees of support, he was subject to one year’s imprisonment. Statute XLIX made strumpets and prostitutes subject to the ducking stool (see endnote) and one year’s imprisonment at Bridewell, unless sufficient surety could be made for future good behaviour and “civil demeanour”.<sup>32</sup> These later laws echoed the Anglican laws of England and the North American mainland colonies rather than the concerns of Jamaicans. Statute IX granted religious toleration in the colony, even though Statute L banned Jews from owning land, planting or building. However, the 1661 Proclamation of Charles II had guaranteed religious freedom and it was accepted practice in early Jamaica.<sup>33</sup>

After the English conquest in 1655, Jamaica experienced a multiethnic, multicultural hodge-podge of outcasts and soldiers-turned-planters. Supplies came primarily from free trade with the numerous ships that arrived in Port Royal and the other superb bays around the island. The

first of the infamous Navigation Acts from England was passed in 1651. In 1660 these were greatly expanded, restricting trade to English ships and colonies and imposing heavy duties on enumerated commodities that could be traded and sold. Fortunately, the Navigation Acts were difficult to enforce; many colonies were dependent on smuggled goods for their survival. The only Assembly law pertaining to trade in the colonies was merely *For Ascertaining the Value of Foreign Coins, and Establishing Interest* (1683).<sup>34</sup> Several statutes in the John Taylor manuscript addressed issues that were not present in previous laws. Statute X prohibited all foreign trade, but Statute XI gave an exception to the Spanish factor who purchased slave imports from the Royal African Company. Statutes required vessels docking at Port Royal to register, to be boarded for inspection, and to show sureties for trading. Statute XIII authorized the use of Spanish money on the island, but no other foreign currency could be used.

Jamaica thrived for the first twenty-five years under English rule as a haven and a refuge for privateers and pirates who were openly supported by several governors. Not only did island merchants and officials share the booty of the enterprises, but the pirates and their ships also provided an informal navy-militia for a small colony with few fortifications and limited military support from the Crown. When the changing international political climate no longer endorsed privateering, the planters of the Assembly passed *An Act For Restraining and Punishing Privateers and Pirates* (1681), banning pirates from trading in Jamaica, under penalty of death.<sup>35</sup> Lucrative profits awaited sugar planters, but the instability of piracy endangered them. It threatened trade agreements and peace treaties, particularly with Spain, whose traders now bought enslaved persons from Britain's Royal African Company out of Jamaican ports. In the statutes from Taylor's manuscript, those who sheltered or gave relief to pirates were guilty of the treasonable act of piracy.

To end Jamaican reliance on non-English sources for protection, it was necessary for the Crown to provide security to the island. The Proclamation of 1661 required the island's inhabitants to serve under arms against any insurrection, mutiny or foreign invasion. For nearly twenty years that seemed sufficient to the inhabitants. However, the militia was inadequate to counter any serious rebellion or invasion, and so the Assembly passed more stringent requirements for the defence of the island in *An Act for Settling the Militia* (1681).<sup>36</sup> This required all men between fifteen and sixty years to arm themselves and provide their

own horses. The Act also protected troops from lawsuits arising from the execution of their duty. Five statutes from the Taylor manuscript mandated enlistment and procedure for the militia. These statutes also gave detailed instructions for warning the island of attack, exercising guard duty and engaging foreign ships.

The statutes for Jamaica in the last quarter of the seventeenth century illustrated the Crown's growing interest in maintaining social order and increasing revenue. The mercantile system valued colonies as sources of raw materials, rather than as markets, and Jamaica had great value as a supplier. Through the Committee of the Board of Trade and Plantations, the Crown tried to regain control of increasingly autonomous colonists. In response to the Assembly's challenge to the royal prerogative, municipal law and the internal maintenance of the island came under the scrutiny of the home authorities.

The perceived value of the West Indies explains the intense involvement of the Crown and the Board of Trade and Plantations in the enactment of laws pertaining to Jamaica, while little attempt was made to put the mainland colonies under the same degree of control. Confusion in approach reflects the inexperience of the Crown in colonization and the degree of internal unrest in England. The laws of 1681–1683 were transitional. Prior to the constitutional crisis in Jamaica, freeholders elected an Assembly that protected the property and rights of the planters.<sup>37</sup> The Crown, through the Committee of the Board of Trade and Plantations, had made several attempts to protect the royal investment.

The planters of Jamaica successfully resisted the imposition of Poyning's Law. The laws brought by the Earl of Carlisle to Jamaica in 1678 were never passed by the free will of the Jamaican Assembly. Although Jamaicans eventually capitulated to a permanent revenue act, they also preserved their rights as Englishmen to be protected by ancient custom and the Common Law of England.

## NOTES

1. *The laws of Jamaica passed by the Assembly and confirmed by His Majesty in Council, April 17, 1684: to which is added, The state of Jamaica as it is now under the government of Sir Thomas Lynch: with a large mapp of the island* (London: Printed by H.H. Jun. for Charles Harper, 1684 [Early English Books Online – EEBO]; reproduction of original in Harvard University Law School Library), iii. The preface (dated 1 October 1683) to this book of laws

has an excellent summary of the original charter for Jamaica. Despite the title, the printed laws encompass not only the new laws that were passed and confirmed by the Jamaican Assembly in 1683–1684, but also those from the Assembly of 1681–1682 that were chosen by the Lords of Trade and Plantations in 1684 to be continued in force for the new period.

2. Charles II, King of England, *By the King. A proclamation for the encouraging of planters in His Majesties island of Jamaica in the West-Indies* (London: Printed by John Bill and Christopher Barker, 14 December 1661; EEBO reproduction of original in University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Library). Most early English West Indian colonies were proprietary colonies granted to the first Earl of Carlisle in 1627, unlike Jamaica, which was chartered as a Crown colony after the Restoration.
3. Frederick G. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government: Showing the Progress of Government in Barbadoes, Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, 1660–1783* (Palmerston North, NZ: By the author, 1962), 70.
4. Ralph Paul Bieber, “The British Plantation Councils of 1670–4”, *English Historical Review* 40, no. 157 (1925): 104.
5. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, 26.
6. Agnes M. Whitson, *The Constitutional Development of Jamaica* (Manchester University Press), 57. For a good narrative of the period of constitutional crisis in Jamaica, see pages 70–109. Whitson identifies the crisis as occurring in 1678–1680, but I would argue that it began no later than 1675 when the attention of the Privy Council focused on the increasing arrogance and insubordination of the Jamaican Assembly and did not subside until after the confirmation of the Revenue Act in 1684.
7. *The Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica*, 22. These laws are listed without detail under the entry for 20 July 1678.
8. Whitson, *The Constitutional Development of Jamaica*, quoting from the Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series 1677–1680, no. 1559), 106.
9. *The laws of Jamaica passed by the Assembly, and confirmed by His Majesty in Council, February 23, 1683: to which is added, A short Account of the Island and Government thereof. With an Exact Map of the Island* (London: Printed by H. Hills for Charles Harper, 1683, EEBO, 198). These Acts were passed by the Jamaican Assembly in 1681–1682. The Revenue Act in this volume was not continued in force by the Council of 1684. Therefore, it is not available in the volume of laws from 1683–1684 previously cited. All page citations will refer to those continued and published in 1684, unless otherwise noted.
10. Spurdle, *Early West Indian Government*, 31.
11. *The laws of Jamaica*, passed in the Assembly in 1683 and published in 1684 (henceforth referred to in these Notes as *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684* – see Note 5 above), 129.
12. National Library of Jamaica, MS 105, John Taylor Manuscript of 1688.
13. Taylor, 555. Taylor calls the governor’s council “the council of assembly”. This is not the freely elected representative assembly represented by the



- Journals of the Assembly* and elsewhere. When referring to both bodies, Taylor calls them “the grand council and assembly.”
14. In addition to the statutes and acts referenced here, see Thomas Lynch, “Laws Military for the Island of Jamaica, Published By His Excellency, Sir Thomas Modyford”, *Interesting Tracts relating to the Island of Jamaica*, William Beeston, editor, St. Iago, 1800, 96–101.
  15. *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684*, 3–10.
  16. *Ibid.*, 2.
  17. *Ibid.*, 3–10, 33–34, 140–48.
  18. Taylor, chapter VIII, 555–77.
  19. *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684*, 33.
  20. *Ibid.*, 3.
  21. Taylor, 563.
  22. *Ibid.*, 563–64.
  23. Henry Finch, *A summary of the common law of England as it stood in force, before it was altered by statute or acts of Parliament / extracted (for the most part) out of the French and English copies of Sir Henry Finch, Kt., his learned treatise of the law, and digested into certain tablets for the help and delight of such students as affect method*, by E.W. (London: 1673, EEBO; reproduction of original in the British Library) Table 2.
  24. *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684*, 140.
  25. *Ibid.*, 145.
  26. Taylor, 563.
  27. *Ibid.*
  28. *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684*, 13–14.
  29. *Ibid.*, 26–31.
  30. *Ibid.*, 45–49.
  31. *Ibid.*, 49–53.
  32. Taylor, 573. The practice of subjecting primarily women who were deemed a public nuisance to the ducking stool was brought over from England. The contraption was constructed much like a seesaw with a bucket seat on one end that was suspended over water. The severity of the sentence determined the number of times that one was dunked by lowering the bucket into the pond, river or even a well.
  33. *By the King. A proclamation (1661)*.
  34. *The Laws of Jamaica 1683–1684*, 60–62.
  35. *Ibid.*, 19–23.
  36. *Ibid.*, 64–72.
  37. Discussion of this and comparisons to Barbadian laws can be found in Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 47–83, 153–65.

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# British Guiana's Contribution to the British War Effort, 1939–1945

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ARLENE MUNRO

## *Abstract*

*Like other Caribbean colonies, British Guiana made a contribution to the British war effort during the Second World War. It is common knowledge that Guianese recruits formed part of the South American Forces. In addition, Guianese volunteered to serve overseas with the British Navy, Royal Air Force and Women's Corps. For many young persons this was an opportunity to receive training and work experience, and some of them did not return home, either because they perished in the war or because they chose to remain in their new country of residence. The colony made small but important financial contributions to the war effort at a time when the economic plight of its people was great. It also became a place of refuge for Jews who were being threatened by the Germans.*

On 3 September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany.<sup>1</sup> The following day the colonial secretary of British Guiana, G.D. Owen, moved a motion of loyalty to the British monarchy in the Legislative Council. The motion stated: "That the Legislative Council of British Guiana on behalf of the inhabitants of the colony beg leave to lay before Your Majesty on the outbreak of the war with Germany an expression of our humble duty to your Majesty and our unfailing loyalty to the throne."<sup>2</sup> The motion was seconded by E.G. Woolford and was to be transmitted to the secretary of state for the colonies. Following this declaration other pledges of loyalty were made by the British Guiana Sick Nurses and Dispensers' Association. A resolution to this effect was passed at a meeting of the association held on 31 May 1940.<sup>3</sup> Other resolutions were passed by the employers and employees of the Town Hall, and the British Guiana Teachers' Association.<sup>4</sup>

British Guiana's financial contribution to the war effort started not long after the war commenced. Its contribution is significant when the economic conditions are taken into consideration. During the war Guianese and other Caribbean peoples experienced a number of hardships, including food shortages, increased cost of living and black-marketing. The factors responsible for these conditions were the disruption of shipping due to the war, the adoption of the imperial war policy of reduction of imports, and the Caribbean's long dependence on food imports which retarded local food production.<sup>5</sup> British Guiana experienced steep rises in the cost of living which caused severe hardship. Between 1938 and 1944, the cost of food rose by 54 percent in Georgetown and 68 percent on the sugar estates in the rural areas.<sup>6</sup> The cost of living index moved from 100 in 1938 to 161 in 1945 in the city, while in the rural areas, it rose from 100 in 1938 to 190 in 1945.<sup>7</sup> Imported goods and food were scarce, rationed and expensive due to hoarding practices of shopkeepers.<sup>8</sup> Despite these conditions, Guianese made a valiant attempt to contribute to the war effort.

Reginald G. Humphrey, merchant and proprietor of Humphrey Jewellery and Hairdressing Establishment, was the first to donate his collection of rare gold coins and a gold snuff box to the British Red Cross Mansion House Fund.<sup>9</sup> He requested that the fifty-five coins and snuff box be valued at Christies in London and sold for the benefit of the Fund.<sup>10</sup> The collection included South American, French, Spanish, American and British coins, and a medallion which was struck to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. In 1939, Boodhoo, a rice farmer of Windsor Forest, West Coast Demerara, donated nine thousand pounds of rice to the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> The rice was sent to His Majesty's Forces overseas and to destitute persons in London, the Army, the Red Cross and Moorfield Hospital, London, between 1939 and 1941.

The leprosy hospital remitted \$187 to the Mobile Canteen Fund in 1940. In 1941 the Public Servants also contributed \$2,070 for a canteen but this was later used to "furnish huts on anti-aircraft sites at Pembroke dock and Swansea".<sup>12</sup> The Young Men's Christian Association also sent five mobile canteens with \$8,468.06 to the United Kingdom through a Canteen Fund organized by Mrs W.S. Jones.<sup>13</sup> Mrs Jones was the wife of William Stanley Jones, a managing director of Booker Brothers, McConnell and Company Limited, and of several other local companies.<sup>14</sup> During 1942, the Guianese people continued to support the war effort by donating generously to various funds. R.G. Humphrey donated

Non-Governmental Contributions to the British War Effort in 1942

Organizations	Contributions (£)
British Red Cross	7,453
Bomber Fund	2,500
West India Committee War Services Fund	100
St George's Sailors' Fund	263
Young Men's Christian Association Mobile Canteen Fund	1,097
St Dunstan's for the Blind	1,546

*Source:* Guyana National Archives, C56/26, Governor Gordon Lethem to Lord O.F.G. Stanley, 31 August 1943.

£250 for the purchase of a mobile canteen, while children from the elementary schools offered £59 to the Overseas Tobacco Fund.<sup>15</sup>

Other funds to which Guianese contributed were the Bomber Fund, the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund, the Czechoslovak Red Cross Fund, the British Guiana Servicemen's Leave Fund, the Chinese Red Cross Fund, the Help the Children Fund, the King George's Fund for Sailors and the Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund. The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund received \$12,893.<sup>16</sup> The Czechoslovak Red Cross Fund which was started by Prokop and Krajca of the Bata Shoe Company received \$1,680.<sup>17</sup> The British Guiana Servicemen's Leave Fund was sponsored by Aloysius C. O'Dowd, managing director of William Fogarty Limited (and also the chairman of Briana Manufacturing Company Limited, and a director of the New Building Society Limited), and was used to support Guianese servicemen on leave.<sup>18</sup>

The Help the Children Fund was started in 1941 by the director of education who encouraged children to send used postage stamps to the fund.<sup>19</sup> These stamps were forwarded to Britain where they were resold and the proceeds were used to provide for children in the United Kingdom who were orphaned during the war. From 1941 to 1943, seventy-two thousand stamps were sent to Blackpool.<sup>20</sup> The Overseas League Tobacco Fund realized \$1,165 between 1942 and 1945.<sup>21</sup> The British Guiana Teachers' Association and the Education Department both collected money for this fund. The King George's Fund for Sailors was started in 1940 to provide for the war needs of seamen of the royal and merchant navies and fishing fleets. By 1944, \$6,385.02 had been raised.<sup>22</sup> In 1945, an additional \$2,179 was collected.<sup>23</sup> The secretary of this fund was Mrs J. Ogilvie, wife of John Ogilvie, a retired rancher who had served as an assistant censor in 1939.<sup>24</sup>

In October 1944, the Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund was started and this fund had received a total of \$932 by July 1945.<sup>25</sup> The Bomber Fund collected \$347,483 from June 1940 to November 1943.<sup>26</sup> This money was used to purchase bomber and fighter aircraft. The British Guiana Red Cross and War Services Appeal Committee was appointed in September 1939 by Sir John Waddington, acting governor of British Guiana, and realized the sum of \$224,913 by 1945.<sup>27</sup> British Guiana also gave financial assistance to the war effort in other ways. The secretary of state for the colonies sent a circular letter to the colonies admonishing them to make larger investments in the Post Office Savings Bank.<sup>28</sup> Another form of financial assistance recommended by that official in 1941 was the issuing of savings certificates.<sup>29</sup> The monies accruing from this venture was to be invested in the war effort. However, after consulting the colonial treasurer, the Executive Council decided not to implement the scheme at that time.<sup>30</sup>

British Guiana also provided a haven for some Jewish refugees from the Germans. In July 1942, the Executive Council agreed to accommodate fifty of those who had fled from Spain and had taken up temporary asylum in Curaçao.<sup>31</sup> As Curaçao had already agreed to shelter fifty Jews, the British Guiana Executive Council decided to accept another fifty for six months on condition that the imperial government provided funds for that purpose.<sup>32</sup> The refugees were housed at the quarters of the superintendent of the penal settlement in Mazaruni. In August 1942, the Executive Council also considered a request from the secretary of state for the colonies for the accommodation of eight Jewish families of Yugoslavian birth. They were residing in Spain but were being forced to return to their country. Once again, the Executive Council agreed to accept them provided the colony did not have to support them financially.<sup>33</sup> However, by November, only four families were showing any interest in seeking refuge in British Guiana.<sup>34</sup>

The Guianese people made a contribution to the war effort in other ways. Many young men volunteered for active service in the British army and navy. Acting Governor Waddington observed as early as November 1939:

I wish also to make special mention of the enthusiasm displayed by large numbers of our young men in volunteering for active service in any capacity. It has already been explained that increases in the fighting forces in the United Kingdom are being made according to an ordered plan, and that at the present time it would not be in the national interest to enrol volunteers other than those who have had some specialized training.<sup>35</sup>

In 1941 the British Air Ministry sent a copy of guidelines to assist the selection board in British Guiana as it chose "suitable candidates for enlistment into the Royal Air Force for employment on aircrew duties".<sup>36</sup> The selection board was advised to choose persons who exhibited courage, determination, keenness, mental alertness, initiative and a sense of responsibility. Those who displayed a greater degree of keenness and mental alertness, and had an acceptable educational background were to be recommended for training as pilots; the others were to be recommended for training as wireless operators (aircrew).<sup>37</sup> This correspondence also revealed that the first batch of five Guianese candidates had been accepted for training as pilots in Britain.<sup>38</sup>

By the end of 1941, Sir Gordon Lethem was reporting that 95 Guianese had joined His Majesty's Forces, of which 22 were in the Royal Air Force and 42 in the Royal Navy.<sup>39</sup> The remaining 31 had been recruited for "specialized work". These statistics did not include those Guianese who were working in the Merchant Navy. In 1943, 32 Guianese enlisted in the British Armed Forces. An additional 20 travelled to the United Kingdom to serve as munitions workers in factories, and 48 joined the Trinidad Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve.<sup>40</sup> Although the first batch of Guianese candidates had received training in Britain, other candidates were sent to be trained in Canada. A subsequent batch of 6 candidates was sent to Canada between 1942 and 1943, followed by another group of 5 in September 1943.<sup>41</sup>

When the Executive Council considered the request for skilled tradesmen to work as volunteers in the Army or in the munitions factories in Britain, it decided to "limit the number of volunteers in the first instance with the object of avoiding possible discontent and dislocation of industry".<sup>42</sup> At a subsequent meeting the Council agreed to issue a notice asking tradesmen to volunteer and stating that only the highly skilled and physically fit would be recruited.<sup>43</sup> Volunteers who were serving in important positions in "essential industries" would not be accepted. The applicants would have to undergo medical and technical examinations. A committee was to be appointed to handle the issue of volunteers who occupied important positions. A Reserved Occupations Committee was established to supervise the recruitment of "skilled tradesmen as volunteers for the army or for employment on munitions production in Great Britain".<sup>44</sup> The chairman of the committee was B.R. Wood, conservator of forests. Another committee was formed to interview volunteers for other skilled jobs.

The volunteer was required to sign an agreement to serve under cer-

tain conditions.<sup>45</sup> He had to agree to be trained at a government centre in Britain for a period of three to five months. He was to receive training in general precision fitting, machine tool re-conditioning, jig and tool fitting, centre lathe turning, milling, grinding, capstan operating, miscellaneous engineering, machine tool operating, shut metal working and panel beating, garage mechanics, and welding (electric and oxy-acetylene).<sup>46</sup> The manager of the centre, rather than the volunteer, normally decided which trade he should pursue. On completion of his training he was sent to work at a place determined by the Ministry of Labour. If he had successfully completed his course of study he was offered an engineering job; if not, he was placed in other kinds of employment. He had to purchase his own tools from the training centre after completing his training.<sup>47</sup>

On arrival in Britain he received a "settling-in" grant of one pound. Later, when he became a skilled worker, he received wages at the same rate as citizens of the United Kingdom and had to pay income tax. He also had to pay for his travelling expenses, but the Ministry of Labour undertook to pay a small compensation for any injuries sustained while travelling to Britain and to refund any local expenditure of over five shillings per week.<sup>48</sup> While in Britain, he was accommodated at a hostel or another place approved by the Ministry of Labour, for which he was required to pay. The government of the colony was supposed to pay an expatriation grant of one pound per week to his dependents while he remained in Britain.<sup>49</sup> He was eligible for a return passage paid by the Ministry of Labour at the end of his period of employment in the United Kingdom.

The secretary of state for the colonies and the Ministry of Labour in Britain agreed that two hundred male West Indian workers would be recruited to work in the United Kingdom under the conditions described above.<sup>50</sup> An appeal was made for "keen and adaptable men" with an aptitude for engineering, between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, who had received a fair elementary education.<sup>51</sup> They had to pass an intelligence test and a physical fitness/medical examination, especially to ensure that they were free from pulmonary tuberculosis and venereal diseases.

Conditions in Britain were sometimes worse than the volunteers had anticipated. In April 1943, Governor Gordon Lethem sent a letter to the secretary of state informing him that twenty Guianese recruits who had gone to Britain had not received their settling-in grants, but instead they had been given a loan which they had to repay.<sup>52</sup> Allegations were also

made in a letter that Lethem dispatched to the secretary of state in 1945 about racial discrimination against coloured volunteers.<sup>53</sup> While conceding that the allegations were both “scurrilous” and “unfair” to the Royal Air Force and the West Indians, he argued that there might be some basis of truth. It was alleged that coloured recruits were not allowed to establish friendly relations with members of the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force, could not attend the cinema or use the Air Station Transport, and were given menial tasks to perform. It was also alleged that men who had been recruited to work in one trade were being placed in other trades on their arrival in Britain. However, Lethem undermined his own position by enclosing a letter that B.R. Wood, chairman of the Reserved Occupations Committee, had written refuting the allegations and stating that none of the letters written by Guianese in Britain contained evidence to support the allegations.<sup>54</sup> Wood was perhaps attempting to disguise the truth in the interest of recruiting more persons for the imperial war effort.

An appeal was also made for skilled volunteers to serve in the Royal Air Force.<sup>55</sup> There was a need for radio mechanics, wireless operators, fitters, metal workers, and operatives. Generally, volunteers had to be between the ages of eighteen and forty-two. However, radio mechanics and wireless operators who were fifty years old or less could volunteer. Married men could also volunteer and they would receive a family allowance. On arrival in Britain, they would be required to take a test which would determine their rate of pay. Each candidate had to be certified by a government officer that he was skilful in his chosen trade.<sup>56</sup>

Women also made a contribution to the war effort. In February 1940 the *Daily Chronicle* (newspaper) reported that Mrs Marjorie Coates, sister of Mrs C.I. Franker (whose husband was an accountant and attorney at T. Geddes Grant Limited) was perhaps the first woman from British Guiana to “report for active duty”.<sup>57</sup> In December 1939, she travelled to Britain and joined an ambulance unit. Another issue of the *Daily Chronicle* reported that another Guianese recruit for service abroad was employed in the Women’s Land Army.<sup>58</sup> This was not surprising for many female Caribbean women became involved in the war effort, in spite of the prevailing sexist view that women should be debarred from dangerous work.<sup>59</sup> At this time it was generally felt that the woman’s place was in the home and that she was incapable of handling mechanical and similar kinds of work. During this period of history, women in the Caribbean and other parts of the world were becoming more adventurous and moving away from the traditional roles of housewife and



mother. Caribbean women, like their British counterparts, were eager to become involved in the war effort and the opportunity to travel to Britain served as a motivating factor. It is also possible that some of the recruits were considering the possibility of settling in Britain. In 1943, thirty Caribbean women travelled to Britain to serve in the British Transport Auxiliary.<sup>60</sup> They formed the first batch of one hundred women who were selected to serve in this organization.<sup>61</sup>

In 1943, the War Office in Britain began to recruit women from British Guiana for the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service. It planned to send a senior female officer to British Guiana to recruit women for service with this organization,<sup>62</sup> but this visit never materialized because the officer returned to Britain after visiting Trinidad.<sup>63</sup> Guianese women were asked to apply to the recruiting officer in Trinidad.<sup>64</sup> They responded to this call with alacrity. In August 1944, the *Daily Argosy* reported that ten more Guianese young women had been selected to serve overseas with the Auxiliary Territorial Service.<sup>65</sup> These women were Corporal Nathalie Johnson; Lance Corporals Gwendolyn Eytle, Molly Ouckama, Sheila Phillips; and Privates Olga McWatt, Jeanne Carter, Margot Sinson, Dorothy and Sheila Green, and Maisie Roberts.

From time to time, the *Daily Chronicle* and *Daily Argosy* provided information about Guianese serving in the war overseas. The *Daily Chronicle* reported in February 1943 that sixty-one Guianese airmen had seen active service and listed their names.<sup>66</sup> It also stated that four of them had been killed, while one had been taken prisoner. The newspapers revealed that Guianese from all classes joined the Royal Air Force. For example, in 1942, a policeman also joined the Royal Air Force,<sup>67</sup> and in 1943, D. Hoban, assistant superintendent of police, enlisted as an airman.<sup>68</sup>

The newspapers also reported on mishaps on the war front. For example, Cyril Grant, a Guianese airman in the Royal Force, was imprisoned in Germany, eventually released, and granted six weeks' leave to return home.<sup>69</sup> Stanley Roza, brother of Dr Charles Roza, died when a torpedo struck his ship in 1943.<sup>70</sup> It is not clear whether Roza was in the Navy or was a passenger bound for Britain. Mohamed Hosein was disabled during the war and had to return to Guiana.<sup>71</sup> T.R.R. Wood, son of B.R. Wood, conservator of forests and chairman of the Reserved Occupations Committee, received the posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross for services rendered as a pilot.<sup>72</sup> Another Guianese, Sergeant Pat Nobrega, sent a letter to his family from the Japanese camp where he was imprisoned. Captured by the Japanese

during the Battle of Malay Peninsula, he was eventually released in 1945.<sup>73</sup> Private Clarence Trim of the Canadian Army Corps died in the line of duty in Germany on 27 April 1945.<sup>74</sup> Leslie Augustus James, air-craftsman of the Royal Air Force, died in hospital in Britain on 19 May 1945.<sup>75</sup> These are just a few examples of casualties sustained during the war. To a lesser extent, the newspapers focused on those Guianese who were employed as technicians in Britain. It reported that H. Swamy and F. Hinckson were employed at one of the largest bomber factories in Britain.<sup>76</sup>

At the end of the war, the *Daily Chronicle* also reported on those Guianese who were planning to return home. One of these was Sol Sahadeo, chief petty officer, who had served three and a half years in the United States Maritime Service in the Mediterranean Sea, the Middle East, and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.<sup>77</sup> Royal Navy signalman, Marcus Griffith, son of Reverend J.F. Griffith, returned home, while Sergeant Francis Gonsalves of the Royal Tank Corps was expected home shortly.<sup>78</sup> Although some Guianese chose to return home, many decided to remain in Britain.

Some Guianese servicemen had the opportunity to become involved in the social activities related to the celebration of the Allied victory in the war. For example, Corporal Owen Rollins claims that during the V-J celebrations, he sang a solo at St Bride's Church and another at the African Churches Mission in Liverpool.<sup>79</sup> Aide-de-camp Lionel Texeira, nephew of Francis Dias, a prominent lawyer and member of the British Guiana Executive Council, sang at a concert where he won the first prize of a gold watch for his rendition of "Going Home" and "Don't Fence with Me".<sup>80</sup> The watch was presented to him by Princess Elizabeth.

British Guiana also contributed to the war effort by providing a haven for seamen who survived when their ships were destroyed by enemy action. In 1942 the Executive Council arranged for seamen who had survived from the ships which had been destroyed by enemy action to be looked after and returned to their respective homes.<sup>81</sup> A doctor was sent to meet survivors when they arrived at the harbour. The harbour master was responsible for these matters until the United Nations Mariners' Club was constructed and a port welfare officer was appointed. Minshall, a former information officer in Trinidad, was appointed port welfare officer with a salary of two hundred dollars per month.<sup>82</sup>

This action was necessary because from time to time survivors of

sunken ships arrived at the port. For example, in September 1942, thirty-two survivors from two ships which had been torpedoed in the Caribbean arrived at Port Georgetown.<sup>83</sup> They were accommodated at the Young Men's Christian Association and expressed their gratitude to the people of Georgetown.<sup>84</sup> At the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Brickdam, a Requiem Mass was scheduled for 28 September 1942 at 7:00 a.m. for the men who had perished when the ship was torpedoed. M. Perreira's house at Waterloo and New Market Streets was another residence for survivors who arrived in Georgetown.<sup>85</sup> This was used until the new Mariners' Club building in Kingston was finished. In 1943, the government of British Guiana allocated £416 for the maintenance of survivors in the colony when Red Cross funds began to be exhausted.<sup>86</sup> The government also received subscriptions from the public for this purpose.

Finally, British Guiana and Dutch Guiana were major suppliers of high-grade bauxite to the United States during the war years when there was an increased demand for this mineral.<sup>87</sup> The aluminum derived from it was used by the United States Army. Consequently, British Guiana's bauxite exports increased from 476,014 tons in 1939 to 1,901,969 tons in 1943.<sup>88</sup> The economy of British Guiana benefitted greatly from the revenue obtained through bauxite exports whose monetary worth rose from approximately \$2.9 million in the early 1940s to \$6.7 million in 1947.<sup>89</sup> New jobs were also created since the Demerara Bauxite Company opened two mines at Mackenzie, bringing to a total of three the number of mines that it operated.<sup>90</sup> The colony's income rose from \$50 million in 1942 to \$58 million in 1944, and to \$60 million by the end of the war partly because of the export earnings from bauxite.<sup>91</sup>

Many West Indians became part of the Allied effort to defeat Germany's forces in Europe. Some served in the Royal Air Force and others in the Merchant Marine. Local volunteer forces in various Caribbean colonies, including that in British Guiana, joined the South Caribbean Force.<sup>92</sup> Members of this force were trained, selected to serve overseas and travelled as far as Italy and the Middle East. However, the Second World War ended before some of them could participate in it.<sup>93</sup> British Guiana, like all other British colonies, was called upon to make a contribution in lives and money to the war effort. Many of its young men and women volunteered for service overseas to the Royal Air Force, His Majesty's Navy, munitions factories and other institutions. For many young persons this was an adventure, an opportunity to receive train-

ing and work experience. Some died and others did not return home. Although it is difficult to assess the extent and the impact of the colony's overall contribution, it is clear that its efforts were significant, taking into consideration its limited human and financial resources.

## NOTES

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3. Enclosed in Guyana National Archives (GNA), 140/24, Governor Jackson to Lord Lloyd Dolobran, 12 June 1940.
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5. F. Baptiste, *War, Cooperation and Conflict* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 144, 146; see also Colonial Office, *Development and Welfare in the West Indies, 1943–1944* (London: HMSO., 1945), 8; Lord Moyne, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governors, 29 September 1941, in *Daily Chronicle*, 7 January 1942; J.R. Ward, *Poverty and Progress in the Caribbean, 1800–1960* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 61.
6. *Daily Argosy*, 17 September 1944.
7. GNA, S329/1, W.L. Heape, Officer Administering the Government of British Guiana, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 September 1946. It contains statistics on page 11. It is not clear what the “S” preceding 329/1 signifies.
8. DLC, 13 March 1945, 1979–80; DLC, 23 December 1941, 546.
9. GNA, C140/42, Acting Governor E.J. Waddington to Malcolm MacDonald, 27 October 1939.
10. *Daily Chronicle*, 23 December 1945.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. *Who Is Who in British Guiana, 1938–1940* (Georgetown: Daily Chronicle, 1940), 297.
15. Ibid.
16. *Daily Chronicle*, 23 December 1945.
17. Ibid.
18. *Who Is Who in British Guiana, 1938–1940*, 411.
19. *Daily Chronicle*, 23 December 1945.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.

24. *Who Is Who in British Guiana, 1938-1940*, 411.
25. *Daily Chronicle*, 23 December 1945.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Minutes of the Executive Council (MEC), 15 November 1940. There is no record of the amount that clients invested in the Post Office Savings Bank.
29. Ibid., 18 March 1941.
30. Ibid., 16 September 1941.
31. Ibid., 7 July 1942.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., 25 August 1942.
34. Ibid., 3 November 1942.
35. DLC, 15 November 1939, 10.
36. GNA, GH48/50, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of British Guiana, August 1941. A note is enclosed, dated 31 July 1941.
37. Ibid.
38. The Christian names of the candidates were not recorded in the note dated 31 July 1941.
39. DLC, 3 December 1941, 7.
40. GNA, C56/26, Lethem to Stanley, 31 August 1943.
41. GNA, S140/113, Lethem to Stanley, 29 September 1943.
42. MEC, 21 January 1941.
43. Ibid., 28 January 1941.
44. Ibid., 4 February 1941.
45. GNA, 77, C140/161, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of British Guiana, 15 December 1941.
46. Ibid.
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49. Ibid.
50. GNA, 78, Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of British Guiana, 15 December 1941.
51. Ibid.
52. GNA, C140/161, Lethem to Stanley, 5 April 1943.
53. GNA, C263, Lethem to Stanley, 5 January 1945.
54. Ibid.
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60. Ibid.
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63. Ibid., 13 July 1943.
64. Ibid., 10 August 1943.
65. *Daily Argosy*, 27 August 1944.
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67. *Daily Chronicle*, 9 May 1943.
68. Ibid., 22 April 1943.
69. Ibid., 28 June 1943, 7 August 1943 and 7 July 1945.
70. Ibid., 8 July 1943.
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72. Ibid., 22 August 1943.
73. Ibid., 25 September 1945.
74. Ibid., 15 July 1945.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., 2 October 1943.
77. Ibid., 21 October 1945.
78. Ibid., 28 October 1945 and September 1945.
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80. Ibid., 4 November 1945.
81. MEC, 15 September 1942.
82. Ibid., 6 and 20 October 1942.
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# Gender and *Marronage* in the Caribbean

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ALVIN O. THOMPSON

## Abstract

*Over the last few decades scholars have focused increasing attention on gender issues in slavery studies and a number of excellent works have appeared on that subject. However, they have focused much less attention on gender as it relates to marronage. The relatively few studies that exist on the subject generally view female marronage as an appendage to male marronage. They also tend to reproduce the age-worn plantocratic view that female marronage was almost non-existent, and that what really happened was that the vast majority of females who became Maroons were really unwilling fugitives; in fact, that males generally abducted them and took them to the Maroon settlements. This essay will argue that, while there was a grain of truth in the statement about female abduction by males, the vast majority of women absconded willingly, sometimes as single individuals and at other times in small groups, with or without male counterparts. The essay will also examine the diverse roles of females in Maroon societies and will indicate that females, like males, played critical roles in maintaining the integrity of these societies in both their passive and aggressive profiles.*

## Introduction

Within the last few decades there has been a growing fascination with the Maroon experience in the Americas, and especially the Maroon struggle to achieve human dignity in the face of great adversity. An outstanding feature of Maroon communities is that many of them survived for several decades and some of them for over a century without capitulating to the military forces sent against them. Among the most durable were Palmares in Brazil, Saramaka and Ndjuka in Suriname, San Basilio in Colombia, Esmeraldas in Ecuador, Le Maniel (present-day San José

de Ocoa) on the Haitian–Dominican Republic border, and the Leewards and Windwards in Jamaica. As in most other aspects of New World history, the role of women in *marronage* has received only slight attention, and the general impression given in much of the extant literature is that they played largely muted, subservient and sometimes even peripheral roles in Maroon communities. While it is true that gender equality did not prevail in these communities, it is equally true that women played significant, and on occasion outstanding, roles in maintaining the integrity of these communities and contributing to the quality of life in them. Jean Fouchard, in his seminal work entitled *Les marrons de la liberté*, asserts that the role of women in *marronage* was as important as in colonial life in general.<sup>1</sup>

Interestingly, a number of Maroon communities were named after women. These included Magdalena, María Angola and María Embuyla (Colombia); Guarda Mujeres (Cuba); and Nanny Town, Molly's Town and Diana's Town (Jamaica). Though some of these names might have been mainly symbolic or honorific, it is likely that several of them speak to the significant role that Maroon women played in the particular communities. We know that this was the case with Nanny Town or "the Great Negro Town". While the debate still goes on as to whether Grandy Nanny (Granny Nanny, Nanny of the Maroons, Queen Mother Granny) was the maximum leader, or simply one of the leaders, in the Windward Maroon community in the 1730s, the fact that the main Maroon town was named after her underlines her role within the leadership ranks of the community. Equally significant is the fact that following the peace treaty that the Windward Maroons struck with the colonial authorities in 1739, the 500 acres of land that the colonial government allocated to them were (according to the official documents of transfer) given to "Nanny and the people now residing with her".<sup>2</sup>

## Ideology of Freedom

*Marronage* was born out of the desire for freedom. Luciano José Franco refers to the Maroons in Cuba as persons who led a vigorous protest against the infamies of slavery and were the guardians of the flag of liberation. Carlos Aguirre insists that *marronage* implied a radical questioning of the right of the oppressor to determine the life and work of the oppressed. However, as David Davidson notes, severely adverse circumstances intensified the human desire to be free, which was the common factor behind slave resistance.<sup>3</sup>



Fouchard mentions several enslavers who gained notoriety for their cruelty and adds a list of punishments meted out to enslaved women in Haiti, including burning their breasts and genitals, raping them in front of their husbands and children, and cutting up their children in front of them.<sup>4</sup> The sexual violation of women, both married and single, was one of the cardinal sins of the enslavers that led to frequent violence between them and their enslaved charges. It was often a reason for desertion, as illustrated by reference to the Venezuelan Maroon Juan Antonio, who declared that he had decamped because his overlord violated his wife (who presumably also absconded with him).<sup>5</sup> What do we make of the sexual sins of a manager in Suriname who stripped naked a young coloured girl about eighteen years old, tied her up with her hands suspended to a tree branch and gave her 200 lashes because she had refused to allow him to invade her body sexually? Jean Gabriel Stedman, who recorded this incident, declared that she was being “skinned alive” and that the manager’s anger boiled over when he intervened on behalf of the young lady; the manager determined that for that reason he was going to give her another 200 lashes! Stedman states that after the first whipping she was already dyed in blood from her neck to her ankles.<sup>6</sup>

Stedman recorded an almost unbelievable instance of brutality in Suriname to a woman who had broken a crystal tumbler. Although she was eight months’ pregnant, her overlord caused her to be whipped until her intestines protruded through her body.<sup>7</sup> Pregnant women were often worked in the fields up to the last day or two before the expected date of childbirth, and were sent back into the fields shortly after delivery. They were commonly whipped by placing their extended bellies in a special hole in the ground. Many miscarriages occurred because of the whippings that they received, and also because they were often placed in stocks, kicked in their bellies, and subjected to other brutalities. Women were also allowed little time to nurse their infants, who were commonly removed from them and placed under the care of nannies (usually superannuated women) during the day. The worst part of it was that children born to enslaved mothers legally belonged to their overlords, who could dispose of them as they saw fit, either by sale or gift, without the parents having any recourse to the law to reclaim them, until late in the slavery period when in some jurisdictions the separation of families by enslavers was deemed illegal.<sup>8</sup>

Women were concerned with the fate of their children actually born, or likely to be born, into slavery and this drove many of them into deser-

tion. Thus, *marronage* provided women with the opportunity not only of raising their children in slave-free environments but of producing children upon whom branding irons had never been placed as evidence of proprietary rights. Pregnant and lactating mothers, and those whose children were ill, must also have enjoyed greater freedom from work. A large number of children were born in Maroon communities, especially in those that remained in existence for several decades. Moreau de Saint-Méry mentions that among the Bahoruco Maroons on the Haiti–Dominican Republic border were persons sixty years old who had never lived anywhere but in the forests where they had been born.<sup>9</sup> According to Arlette Gautier, the demographic profile of that community in the 1780s showed that 80 of the 133 inhabitants were born there.<sup>10</sup> The Curua *mocambo* in Brazil that a military enterprise subverted in 1877 was said to include among its inhabitants children and grandchildren born there to long-time deserters.<sup>11</sup>

## Males' Abduction of Females

The gender imbalance in most Maroon communities has led some writers to conclude that women were not as interested as men in absconding. The common view is that the female adult population in Maroon communities comprised largely women who were abducted mainly to satisfy the biological and social needs of male Maroons. Gabriel Debien strongly implies that this was the case by stating that the most common “crime” was the abduction of Black women.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Stuart B. Schwartz boldly asserts that whenever Maroons in Brazil visited the urban areas these “parasitic” individuals not only “spoiled” the poor enslaved persons of their produce that they had brought to market, but in “traditional” fashion they carried off “the most appealing women”. However, he does not explain why they did not abduct sufficient women to meet their sexual needs, but rather “seemed to suffer from a chronic lack of females”.<sup>13</sup> Celsa Albert Batista and Paul Lokken are somewhat more discriminating in their analyses of the situation. They opine that the men usually carried off the women, or rather the women might have allowed the men to carry them off.<sup>14</sup>

We need to revisit the issue of women simply being abducted by men rather than joining Maroon settlements voluntarily. William Sharp states that females in the Choco region of New Granada, Colombia, seem to have absconded as often as men. Thomas Atwood declares that in Dominica in the latter part of the eighteenth century whole families

ran off into the mountains. Père Du Tertre states that in 1639 more than sixty enslaved persons absconded from Capesterre with their wives and children. He also states that in the French Caribbean women often ran off along with their husbands, while others did so on their own or with their children who were only seven or eight years old.<sup>15</sup> Stedman gives the impression that fleeing women was a common sight in Suriname in the 1770s. According to him, the community of enslaved persons – men, women and children – often rose up against their overlords, killed the White inhabitants, ravaged the plantations and fled as a group to the woods.<sup>16</sup>

Nicole Vanony-Frisch argues that the concern that mothers had for their children was not a deterrent to women becoming Maroons. Gautier declares that some women deserted while pregnant, which to her is a clear indication of their refusal to bring up their children under slavery.<sup>17</sup> Bernard Moitt likewise states that neither pregnancy nor the children's age appears to have hindered some women in the French Caribbean from absconding, though childless women were more likely to abscond. He provides several examples of pregnant and lactating women who absconded, including Coralie with chains and an infant no more than eight months old. When apprehended and placed in prison she asserted that she preferred to die, along with her infant, rather than return to her overlord.<sup>18</sup> Among the examples that Fouchard cites is Marie who took off with her children, aged seventeen, four and two years. He goes on to state that "The procession continues with babies of all ages. There were those born on slave ships, whose mothers attempted to snatch them from slavery, spiriting them away into marronage as soon as they arrived in port."<sup>19</sup> However, Moitt's statement cited immediately above, while emphasizing the degree to which some women went to recapture their freedom, tacitly recognizes the constraints of pregnancy and motherhood on certain women in respect of *marronage*.

Wim Hoogbergen recognizes the problem for the modern historian in simply accepting contemporary White opinion about Maroon abduction of large numbers of enslaved persons. According to him, the only meaningful way to deal with the problem is that whenever all enslaved persons disappeared with the Maroons after an attack we should view what happened as collaboration, even if the contemporary records employ the term "carried off" or "abducted". In his classification, it was an act of revolt on the part of the enslaved persons. However, if the Maroons only carried off women and children then we should conclude that this did not amount to revolt by the missing – and presumably

abducted – persons.<sup>20</sup> Even if we go along with his approach, we still have a wide grey area in which many small groups disappeared after Maroon raids for which he has no suggestion.

Several writers have rightly noted that the abduction of women, no matter how few, was a contradiction of the ideology of freedom that was supposed to imbue both male and female Maroons. Gautier states that to be owned by a White master or by a Black Maroon was really not much different, since in both cases the integrity of the woman was violated.<sup>21</sup> While this is undeniably so, we need to be careful not to read into the Maroons' actions the intention to transfer them from a White to a Black enslaver. Maroons wanted them as wives, homemakers and mothers of their children, not simply as labour hands and sexual objects.

## **Gender Composition of Maroon Communities**

Reliable figures for the gender composition of Maroon communities are extremely difficult to find, but the following is a sample of what is available. In 1693 a captured Maroon from the Matudere (Matadure, Matubere, Matubre, Tabacal) settlement<sup>22</sup> in Cartagena indicated that it comprised ninety-nine persons: fifty-four Black males, forty-two Black females and three Mulattos.<sup>23</sup> In the Bahoruco (Le Maniel) settlement<sup>24</sup> on the Haitian–Dominican Republic border in 1785 the population consisted of seventy-five males and fifty-eight females. In the late eighteenth century the male-to-female Maroon ratio in Guadeloupe was estimated at two to one.<sup>25</sup> Fouchard estimates that the number of women in Haiti who deserted was about 15 to 20 percent, but it is somewhat unclear whether these figures relate to the number of women imported or the persons advertised as runaways.<sup>26</sup> In the case of Suriname, Hoogbergen states that the deserters were mainly “men, in proportion often reaching 90 percent”.<sup>27</sup> In 1843 in the province of Santa Marta, Colombia, 89.16 percent of the runaways were males and 10.84 percent females.<sup>28</sup> Mullin states that in Jamaica between the 1730s and 1805 women constituted 24 percent of the total number of deserters (631 women and 1,981 men).<sup>29</sup> In Cuba, in the Todos Tenemos (Tó Tenemos, Bota) settlement around the mid-nineteenth century the number of women at least matched that of the men, while in El Frijol settlement in 1815 women might have exceeded men slightly.<sup>30</sup> According to the testimonies of two captured Maroons, in 1733 and 1734–1735 respectively, in the Windward settlement in Jamaica the women and children combined were much greater than the men.<sup>31</sup>

Often sex ratios of those who absconded are based on the records of those recaptured. Though these records frequently indicate a higher percentage of women than men being recaptured, such was not always the case, especially in urban communities. Mary Karasch, for instance, notes that between 1826 and 1837 in Rio de Janeiro one set of newspaper advertisements showed that some 25.9 percent of the runaways were females. However, females constituted only 15 percent of those recaptured.<sup>32</sup>

The extent to which the gender imbalance in the wider enslaved population influenced the gender ratio of persons who absconded remains uncertain but it must have played some role. In Caribbean plantation societies only Barbados realized a situation in which females outnumbered males. There the sex ratio is said to have evened out by the mid-eighteenth century and the data for the early nineteenth century show a slight female predominance.<sup>33</sup> However, statistics on the sex ratio among runaways in that colony still show a great imbalance in favour of males. Mullin indicates that between the 1730s and 1805 women constituted 34 percent of the deserters (148 women and 283 men), while Heuman suggests a figure of 36.5 percent in 1817.<sup>34</sup>

The statistics cited earlier, which show low percentages of women in nearly all the Maroon settlements surveyed, once again raises the issue of their alleged wide-scale abduction by men. It refutes the suggestion of Patrick Carroll that once the males had obtained their freedom the desire for women became a top priority.<sup>35</sup> Clearly, if the males had been bent on such abduction, as both Carroll and Debien (above) assert, they would have carried away a number large enough to ensure that each of them had at least one female. Carroll, in his study of the Mandinga-Amapa Maroons in Mexico, notes that the male-female ratio of the settlement moved from four to one in 1743 (some eight years after its foundation), to three to one in 1769 (the date of official freedom due to treaty arrangements with the Mexican government), and only evened out in 1827.<sup>36</sup> In very few settlements did the adult female population approximate to that of the adult male. This is the clearest evidence that the incidence of abduction of women has been grossly overstated in contemporary and modern literature. Perhaps it also indicates, as Ulrich Fleischmann suggests, that male Maroons were able to suppress their natural biological desires for the opposite sex because the self-preservation instinct is stronger than the sexual urge. He takes to task Alejo Carpentier who, in a short play entitled *Los fugitivos*, depicts Maroons as having basically the same instincts as dogs: a Maroon chases a

woman, while a dog chases a bitch; the Maroon reverts to the plantation to satisfy his craving for women and is finally caught.<sup>37</sup>

Stories like these as applied to the average Maroon were myths rather than realities. So also is the view of the sexual promiscuity of Maroons with the women in the Maroon communities. Díez Castillo buys into this myth without attempting to assess its credibility. Instead, he simply declares that marriage almost never existed among the Maroons in Panama and that polygamy was much more common than monogamy. He does not consider that for such a situation to exist the Maroon women would have had to outnumber the men significantly.<sup>38</sup>

Occasionally, Maroons abducted White women, as was the case with the Matudere and Palmares Maroons in Cartagena and Brazil, respectively.<sup>39</sup> It may be pointed out here that in spite of stereotypes about the sexual proclivities of Blacks, Raymond Kent informs us that Brazilian Maroons only carried off White women rarely and usually ransomed them without sexually molesting them.<sup>40</sup> The celebrated author Edison Carneiro found only one occasion in which the Palmarino (Palmarista) warriors were alleged to have raped some White women, as reported by Antonio Garro da Câmara, a Pernambucan soldier, in 1682. Orlando Patterson could not find a single recorded case of rape throughout the history of revolts and *marronage* in Jamaica, though several White women were killed.<sup>41</sup> This is not to suggest that no instances of rape occurred in Jamaica, but rather that such cases were also rare in that country.<sup>42</sup>

Gautier, while recognizing that enslaved women of almost all ages, colours and maternal circumstances absconded, insists that the lower incidence of female Maroons had nothing to do with a less acute desire for freedom but rather with the special circumstances relating to their condition. Among these were the need to take care of their very young children who might not have been able to undergo the rigours of the flight from slavery to freedom; much greater mobility allowed to males than to females, the former being assigned to such jobs as messengers, fishermen, traders, dockworkers, artisans to build military installations, military cohorts, scouts, baggage carriers and so on; the suspicion that would have attended a woman being seen alone in the bush or with very young children; the risk of being raped by men of all colours; and the greater difficulties that women might have had to negotiate their way through certain kinds of terrain. She also believes that the practice in Africa of men ranging much farther than women from their home base to hunt, fish and so on gave them greater confidence to venture

into the undiscovered bourn of the forests in the Americas.<sup>43</sup> All these were real impediments and provide a sound, if not a comprehensive, explanation for the relatively smaller female than male Maroon population.

## Urban and Rural Environments

Runaways took any and every route to freedom that lay open to them and created openings where these did not seem to exist. Urban *maroonage* was an important dimension of the struggle for freedom, but in spite of the large numbers especially of women who found the cities an attractive way out of their bondage, arguably they lived too close to the edge of slavery, too close to the enslavers, and often offered them secret service sometimes bordering on servitude. Many of them were exploited by their employers, who paid them very little for their labour because they recognized the fugitives' vulnerability and dependency on them, and could turn them out or, worse still, turn them over to the judicial authorities at any moment. On the other hand, although life in Maroon settlements in the deep recesses of the forests or mountains presented far more rigorous challenges than in urban environments, it provided the rural dwellers with a greater sense of freedom and independence, and liberated them from the subtle or open systems of exploitation to which their urban counterparts were usually still subject.

Received wisdom is that women were more disposed to flee to urban rather than rural environments because of the greater opportunities they had of earning a living and escaping the rigours of the forest or mountain terrain. Karasch surmises that females found it easier than their male counterparts to hide in the home of protectors, a view that Eddie Donoghue seems to corroborate in the case of the Danish West Indies.<sup>44</sup> Barry Higman implies this for Kingston (Jamaica) and Bridgetown (Barbados) in 1817.<sup>45</sup> However, Gad Heuman affirms a rural destination for most female fugitives in Barbados during the nineteenth century and, contrariwise, states that most males headed for Bridgetown or Speightstown, perhaps because many of them were skilled or semi-skilled persons.<sup>46</sup>

We cannot draw any firm conclusions on the urban or rural dispositions of female fugitives until much more work is done on the subject. However, we can say with greater assurance that many more enslaved females were Maroons in spirit than those who actually made a spirited attempt to escape the physical trammels of slavery. Anthony McFarlane,

commenting on those persons who did not make a formal bid for freedom through flight, argues that “this did not efface the vision of freedom, but made its pursuit more complex and variegated”.<sup>47</sup>

## Individual Deserters

Some Maroon women stand out as much as men for their efforts to escape bondage and create free communities. Sally of the Danish West Indies made her bid for freedom, though “far gone with child” and with one ear severed because of a previous attempt at running away.<sup>48</sup> Hazard, belonging to the same colony, though only twenty-two years old, was apparently a constant rebel and escapee. She was advertised in the colony’s *Gazette* as being lacerated “on her back with the whip in several places”.<sup>49</sup> The overlord of Isabel, a fugitive in Guatemala, sold her, dubbing her a “crazy runaway”.<sup>50</sup> Lise, a midwife and repeated fugitive in Haiti, fled wearing an iron collar and dragging a withered right leg. Rosette of the same country is perhaps the most frequent runaway on record. A doctor in 1783 declared that she had deserted for the hundredth time, brandishing a knife, though the number of desertions was most likely exaggerated.<sup>51</sup>

The story of Zabeth, who found herself constantly chasing after freedom, is worth repeating in abridged form. It is remarkable for its noble but sad eloquence. What makes it all the more striking is that she was a Creole, a category of enslaved persons whom some writers consider more reconciled to enslavement than persons born in Africa. The events described here took place in western St Domingue between January and April 1768, by which time Zabeth had become a regular deserter. From very early childhood, according to her manager, she had lived the life of a fugitive, and with age had become more prone to flight. Her manager had therefore chained her to prevent further escapes but had become anxious lest she should die from having been in such confinement for a very long time, and so he released her. Two days later she absconded again but was caught shortly after. On this occasion her manager let her off with a stern warning that if she should escape again he would put her back in chains for the rest of her life. She promised him solemnly that she would mend her ways, but in an instant she was off again. She was apprehended and returned to him shortly after, but not being in a physical condition to undergo punishment, he decided to send her to a place called Brouillet where, according to him, some disabled Blacks lived in virtual freedom.



She absconded again within two days. Caught again, he chained her this time in the sugar mill, where she remained for the next month when three of her fingers were crushed in the rollers. He therefore placed her in hospital without removing her heavy chains, but within eight days she had run off once again, having scaled a high fence that enclosed the hospital. Yet again she was caught and kept chained for about a month when she showed signs of being at death's door because of the long period in chains. He conspired with some persons to request that he should remove her chains, which he did after causing her grave to be dug, with her helping to remove some of the dirt. This did not deter her for long for she was soon off again. As before, she was apprehended, and seeing that she was at the point of death the manager indicated that he intended to chain her in the mill where it would be more convenient for her to die than in the hospital. He felt that in doing so he would make her a salutary example to others who might try to abscond. He declared that she had been of little value to the plantation and of late had been treated virtually as a free person.<sup>52</sup>

It is difficult to understand how a person from very early childhood, as noted above, could have developed such a strong urge for freedom. While it is ingrained in humanity, the expression of it through flight into unknown and hazardous terrain is not what we would normally associate with a person of such tender age. Her understanding of freedom and her quest for it must have sharpened as she grew older and developed a greater consciousness of the brutalities of slavery. Clearly, the manager did not tell the whole story of why she became such a persistent deserter, or of the trauma that she might have undergone at a very early age. Was she, for instance, raped, whipped cruelly or brutalized in some other way? Or did she observe such brutalities being meted out to her relatives? Whatever it was that triggered the urge to distance herself from the plantation on which she was born, it must have been traumatic. She had not honed her craft sufficiently for she was always caught within a few days or weeks of her escape. However, she was determined to obtain her liberty or die trying to do so, and from the manager's account she seems to have suffered the latter fate. The manager tried to present himself as humane, but in this instance the most humane act would have been simply to let her go without pursuing her. However, as with other maximum-security institutions, he felt that no one should be allowed to escape from his plantation.

Zabeth was one of many runaways who were blessed with a vision of freedom but cursed with the inability to bring it into reality. Coobah

and Sally of Jamaica found themselves in the same dilemma. Coobah, an Igbo who was purchased by Thomas Thistlewood in 1761 when she was just fifteen years old, was raped by him within a year and continuously harassed sexually and otherwise on several other occasions. She contracted venereal diseases within the next four years and was also afflicted by yaws. She ran away shortly afterwards and from 1769 became a repeated runaway, absconding eight times in 1770 and five times in 1771, in spite of very harsh punishments, including being placed in the stocks, whipped and branded on the forehead, and having a collar and chains attached to her for months at a time. Thistlewood deemed her to be unprofitable and eventually decided to sell her. She was transported to Georgia.<sup>53</sup>

Sally was another enslaved woman who refused to accept the fiat of slavery. A Congolese by birth, Thistlewood purchased her in 1762, but from the outset she showed an indisposition to work either as a domestic or a field hand, and a determination to resist every attempt to get her to comply with the dictates of her overlord. From the early days also Thistlewood began to rape her, doing so on at least thirty-seven recorded occasions. She, like Coobah, became afflicted with venereal diseases and yaws. She began her first known escapades at running away in 1767. Beatings and other forms of punishment and abuse did not dull her appetite for freedom, or at least some space of her own. On one occasion Phibbah, her overlord's servile mistress, stripped her naked and tied her hands behind her so that the mosquitoes could bite her freely. She managed to escape but was apprehended and punished by being tied up in the bilboes for a night. On another occasion her overlord raped her as a form of punishment. Almost every year she ran away a few times, on at least three occasions after her overlord had sex with her. On each occasion she was either brought back or returned of her own volition. It is unclear why she returned but one view is that she became so demoralized that she could not make the psychological break with the plantation and the bondage that had become so much a part of her life. Thistlewood's diary records that she became completely deviant as the years passed, stole repeatedly from any and everyone, refused to do any work, and was a kind of social pariah even among other enslaved persons. He finally sold her out of the country in 1784.<sup>54</sup>

## **Maroon Women in Military and Paramilitary Roles**

The examples above of extreme brutality and insensitivity towards

enslaved women should make it clear that, like their male counterparts, they chafed under the burden of slavery and sought ways of escaping from it. Those who managed to do so became part of a community that recognized them as human beings rather than chattels, and sometimes accorded them important leadership roles. Female Maroon leaders (who were also often major religious figures) included Romaine la Prophetesse, Marie-Jeanne, and Henriette Saint-Marc in Haiti, and Grandy Nanny in Jamaica.<sup>55</sup> Stedman tells us that both male and female religious leaders held complete sway over their adherents, claiming to have powers of divination. The female would whirl and dance around, and whatever she commanded to be done was dutifully performed by those assembled; so the séances were very dangerous because enslaved persons were often instructed to murder their overlords and flee into the woods. He goes on to say that the Ndjuka and Saramaka commonly performed these rituals, and that two White eyewitnesses had declared to him that they had seen them performed.<sup>56</sup>

The most outstanding of the female Maroon leaders and religious figures was the almost legendary Grandy Nanny. She has been declared a Jamaican national heroine within recent years.<sup>57</sup> Kamau Brathwaite and Mavis Campbell compare her to several female warriors in Africa and particularly Nzinga, the equally legendary figure in Angolan resistance to Portuguese rule in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>58</sup> Not least among her legendary feats is the one about her magical display at the signing ceremony in 1739 that brought an end to warfare between the Windward Maroons and the British. According to Colonel Harris's version:

At the end of the signing ceremony the Wonder Lady for the last time displayed her unusual capability of rendering harmless the bullets fired at her: she asked the British commandant to give the order for a volley to be fired at her. When the request was at last hesitantly granted, she rose from the stooping position she had taken up and handed him all the bullets fired at her, as a memento of the occasion.<sup>59</sup>

Nanny stamped her presence and influence so clearly on the Windward Maroons of Jamaica that their old headquarters still bears the name Nanny Town.<sup>60</sup> Though a somewhat shadowy figure in contemporary European accounts of the Windward Maroons,<sup>61</sup> she looms large in the oral history and legends of Maroon struggles in Jamaica. Her role as diviner and exorcist earned her the respect of senior male members of the community who seem to have depended heavily on her for good augury and to ward off evil. The fact that the Windward Maroons,

though often pressed out of measure by their enemies, were never actually defeated in an engagement must in their own minds have had as much to do with her spiritual powers as with the group's military capabilities.<sup>62</sup> Philip Thicknesse, the only British military officer who ever saw her, declared that she did not actually take part in the treaty negotiations and stated that she wore "a girdle round the waist and . . . nine or ten different knives hanging in sheaths to it, many of which I have no doubt, had been plunged in human flesh and blood".<sup>63</sup> Campbell believes that Thicknesse exaggerated her appearance, apparently in respect of the many knives that she had hanging from her side, and indeed seems to be uncertain that the elderly lady whom the writer described was the famous Nanny.<sup>64</sup> However, the extant information is sufficiently persuasive to lead us to conclude that he did encounter the real Nanny and that she took an active part in military engagements, at least in her youthful years.

In 1826 members of the Urubu ("Vulture") Maroon settlement in Bahia, comprising about fifty men and a few women, attacked and killed a number of Whites, and were themselves eventually attacked by a detachment of regular soldiers. All the Maroons fought fiercely, though using much more rudimentary weapons than their enemies. Zeferina was one of the heroines of this deadly encounter. João José Reis, who researched the incident, declared that she had resisted, though having only a bow and some arrows. During the contest she displayed great leadership skills, urging on the fighters and keeping them on line. The provincial president, in a sudden outpouring of praise, alluded to her as "Queen".<sup>65</sup> Around the end of the sixteenth century in Cartagena, Pedro Ordóñez de Ceballos declared that in one of the engagements his men encountered 150 Black women who fought more valiantly than the men.

Other female Maroons took part in important noncombatant roles in aggressive or defensive activities. In 1733 in Jamaica, many women went along on the Windward Maroons' attack on plantation Hobby in order to assist in carrying off the spoil. About the same time, expecting an assault from an expeditionary force, the Maroons left many women to burn their settlement at Nanny Town if the male warriors, who had occupied various strategic positions, could not hold on to it.<sup>66</sup>

Apparent flight was often the prelude to a more aggressive strategy in which women often played an important role. On one occasion the Maroons of Guy's Town (part of the Windward group), whose headquarters was located on Carrion Crow Hill, faced with an apparently

sudden attack by an armed expedition, “ran away”, leaving about fifty women to burn the town before evacuating it. The expedition, oblivious to the fact that doom lurked down the road, entered the partially burnt-out town and found all evidence of sudden flight. But they were in for a huge surprise. The Maroons had previously piled up on the hilltop a great heap of large stones against which they had placed props. As the expeditionary force moved closer to the spot, they removed the props and sent their own form of brimstone raining down on their enemies. The official report on the expedition recorded that many soldiers were killed, others fled in panic leaving their arms and ammunition behind, and the Maroons captured three of them.<sup>67</sup>

In an equally clever operation, the Suriname Maroons were able to outwit a military expedition that had discovered their habitat and were preparing to attack them on the following morning. A night attack was out of the question since the expedition, though including Black soldiers, was completely unable to make its way in the darkness through the maze of bush and swamp that surrounded the settlement. The Maroons kept up a constant noise throughout the night, by shouting, singing and firing rounds of ammunition. This noise camouflaged their preparations for retreat that involved cutting off the enemy’s access to the passes and preparing food for the evacuation. During the entire night the women and children were engaged in preparing rice, yams, cassava and other provisions for this purpose. On the following morning all that the members of the expedition found was a lifeless settlement and evidence of the hasty preparation of food, to their great and “inconceivable astonishment”.<sup>68</sup>

The protection of noncombatant women and children was a cardinal aspect of Maroon strategy. In times of hasty retreat it usually meant hiding these members of their community in specially prepared hide-outs, but this had as its main drawback the possibility, and even likelihood, of the children crying or making some other noise.<sup>69</sup> The Todos Tenemos (Tó Tenemos) settlement in Cuba had one of the best evacuation plans; it entailed retreating to another settlement specially prepared for protecting the womenfolk. The settlement, known as *Guarda Mujeres* (Protect Women, or Hiding Place for Women), was strong enough to resist the only attack so far found by historians against it. It was surrounded by ditches filled with pointed stakes and in an area that allowed for superb defence. Several members of the expeditionary force that attempted to capture it were injured by the stakes and eventually gave up the effort to do so.<sup>70</sup>

## Women in the Maroon Economy

The main occupational divisions that scholars have identified in Maroon communities, based on their dominant economic activities, are agriculturalists, miners, fisherfolk, traders, manufacturers, livestock keepers, bandits and service providers (in the urban centres). It must, however, be recognized that such divisions are not rigid since many communities became heavily involved in more than one of these activities. Banditry, of course, is not usually classified as an “economic activity”, but some scholars seem to think that since many small communities earned a living in this way such a classification is suitable in this context. Also, urban Maroons cannot properly be termed a “community” in the same sense as their rural counterparts, for no evidence exists that they actually formed a coherent group or even directly associated with each other.

The contemporary literature on this subject deals with Maroon communities in general terms and only occasionally discriminates between gender roles. However, from the little that we can glean from that literature and from recent studies on the economic activities of women in slave society in the Americas, we can make some pertinent observations. We know, for instance, that in slave society women usually did most of the agrarian or field work, and this also appears to have been the case in those Maroon societies where there was a large number of women and where most or many of the men were engaged in war.<sup>71</sup> The activities of the post-treaty Maroons in Jamaica, where the women outnumbered the men (in 1773) and did nearly all the agricultural work, was hardly typical of Maroon communities as a whole.<sup>72</sup> Given the fact that there were relatively few women in most Maroon communities, it is logical to conclude that men were also heavily involved in the agrarian sector of the economies. Apart from the plantation staples such as sugarcane, cocoa and coffee, among the crops that the Maroons planted, depending on their location, were cassava (manioc), maize (corn), rice, bananas, peanuts, pistachio nuts, pigeon peas, sweet potatoes, yams, eddoes, squashes, beans, okras, pineapples, melons, oranges, chillies, taros, tobacco and cotton.<sup>73</sup>

In those communities where cattle-herding, hunting and fishing were major occupations,<sup>74</sup> these activities seem to have been largely the preserve of men. The animals they hunted included monkeys, armadillos, agoutis, rabbits, lizards, opossums, porcupines, deer, anteaters and peccaries (wild hogs). Some of them kept chickens and occasionally cows,

sheep and pigs. Grassy plains and fresh- and salt-water resources provided the Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose Maroons in Spanish Florida with a rich supply of deer, buffalo, wild cattle, rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, turtles, wild fowls and a large variety of fish.<sup>75</sup> The Jamaican Maroons, with much less abundant fauna, nevertheless hunted extensively for game and set traps covering some twenty miles to snare wild hogs and other animals.<sup>76</sup> They provided their communities with jerked meat<sup>77</sup> that has become quite famous in that country. Francisco Estévez, a Maroon hunter, came across a settlement in Santa Cruz de los Pinos in eastern Cuba that contained much food, including beef, pork and smoked rodents.<sup>78</sup> The Tulate Maroons in Guatemala had sufficient iguanas and fish not only to supply their needs but also to conduct a lucrative trade in those products with far-off settlements.<sup>79</sup> Fishing in the rivers would probably have been carried on by both sexes, but oceanic fishing (including pearl-diving) would have been another exclusive preserve of males.

Dos Santos Gomes describes the economy of the Maroon communities in the Grao-Para captaincy of Brazil as consisting of “salting meat, dying [sic] clothes, planting crops, herding cattle, and making bricks to build French forts”.<sup>80</sup> Whereas dyeing and planting would or could have been conducted by both males and females close to or within the Maroon settlements in this heavily forested area of Amazonia, salting meat and building forts would have taken the Maroons far from their home base, and would probably have been exclusively the work of males. Some of them went across the border into French Guiana to do construction and other work. Artisans in all Maroon communities must have been invariably males, as was the case in Africa and the slave communities of the Americas.

La Rosa Corzo cites Pérez Landa and Jústiz del Valle who imply that at least some of the larger communities in Cuba practised a high level of labour specialization – some of the young men cultivated the soil, fished or hunted, while another set felled trees in order to build canoes, piles, mallets, stakes and palisades. The women generally cultivated the land and raised sheep. However, he is sceptical that such a division really existed since he found nothing in the contemporary records that he consulted to support such a conclusion.<sup>81</sup> Davidson states that Padre Juan recorded a clear division of labour among the Cofre de Perote Maroons of Mexico, with half the population looking after the crops and cattle, and the other half comprising the military guard and the guerrilla fighters.<sup>82</sup> We must recall that labour specialization existed to

a fair degree in the plantation societies of the Americas, and was even more highly developed in Africa, the original homeland of the majority of enslaved Blacks.

In Jamaica, Maroon women were the main pioneers of bark-lace and bark-cloth production. Steeve Buckridge explains that in that country lace-bark forests were found mainly in Maroon areas, and noted that the product resembled fine lace but could also be mistaken for linen or gauze. In time these products became widespread in Jamaica, both among enslaved and free persons. Since the laghetto or lace-bark tree was native to Jamaica, Hispaniola and Cuba, and since the local cloth production was derived from West African precedents, we should logically assume that production of lace-bark was also quite common in these other Caribbean islands.<sup>83</sup> In the André Maroon settlement in French Guiana the women spun cotton, while the men wove it. They made skirts and loincloths, but we are not told whether the men or women did this task. They obviously used the small spindle common in West Africa at the time; the Maroon Louis testified that the cotton material was woven in small pieces and then put together.<sup>84</sup> In the Dominican Republic, and perhaps elsewhere, both women and men were involved in mining gold from the streams.<sup>85</sup>

While not always being able to discriminate between men's work and women's work in the Maroon communities, we can say assuredly that together they produced a wide range of goods and services. They produced salt, butter (from the fat of palm-tree worms and pistachio nuts), palm wine and soap (from dwarf aloes). They manufactured mortars to separate the rice grains from the husks, sieves for sifting grain, giant clay pots for cooking, clay jugs and clay pans (for preserving water and wine), cups, bottles, basins, dishes and other ceramic utensils. Other items included candles from local wax, powder horns from calabashes (gourds), conch-shells or other blowing horns, and drums.<sup>86</sup>

Archaeological digs at various sites are improving our knowledge of the material culture of these societies. Digs at Jose Leta in the Dominican Republic (and also a few other sites in that country) have unearthed a wide range of artefacts, including metal arrow and spear tips; copper sheet plates of some technical refinement; various iron objects, such as parts of knives, lances, tongs and pincers; numerous other metal objects of various sizes which were used as bracelets, fish hooks and so on; slag that confirmed that metal working had been carried on at the site; clay pipes, some of which were incised; wooden mortars and pestles; wooden ornamental combs; fragments of ceramic water



pots, vases and other utensils (some of them displaying Indian and European motifs); and ceramic bowls and plates displaying designs adapted from those introduced by early Spanish settlers. Some of the objects resembled those found in archaeological digs in Cuba.<sup>87</sup> While several of these objects might have been acquired through seizure from European settlements, the Maroons obviously manufactured quite a number of them.

## **Betrayals**

A constant theme that emerges in slavery studies in the Americas and finds its way occasionally into Maroon studies is the “frequent” betrayal by females of plots to revolt. It does not seem that any empirical work has been done on this subject to demonstrate the comparative frequency with which females and males betrayed their colleagues, and this article does not attempt to do so. However, several examples exist of both men and women betraying the Maroon cause. A classic case of defection and betrayal with deadly consequences for the particular Maroon community – a major one in the Bahoruco region – occurred in the Dominican Republic in 1666. It all happened over an age-old problem: two men vying for the affection of the same woman. The individual who lost the contest (which was both verbal and physical) against Pablo, the leader of his community, fled and eventually found his way to Government House. The governor treated him as a guest of honour and he responded by divulging information critical to the security of the community. This led to two major expeditions in short sequence against the Maroons (the governor heading the first one), at the end of which they agreed to accept peace terms that required them to quit the Bahoruco region in return for recognition of their freedom.<sup>88</sup> An equally unusual occurrence transpired in regard to the Pajarito Maroons in Panama in 1768. A female whom they had abducted some time earlier managed to escape and serve as a guide to a military expedition sent against the settlement.<sup>89</sup>

Not all persons who betrayed Maroon communities managed to keep their heads, as Princess Orika, daughter of Domingo Bioho (King Benkos), leader of the famous Matuna Maroon community in Colombia in the early seventeenth century, found out. She was caught assisting in the escape of Captain Alonso de Campo, her former White lover (before she became a Maroon) who had been captured during a military expedition that the Colombian government had dispatched against the

Maroons. For this act of treason her father sentenced her to death.<sup>90</sup> This decision must have been very hard for her father to make, but it underlines the fact that at least in some Maroon societies betrayal would not be condoned, no matter who was the culprit.

## Punishments

For Maroons, the price of freedom, or rather capture, was often very dear. Harsh punishments underlined the slaveholders' resolve to stamp out desertion by almost any means. Female Maroons suffered as brutal punishments as males but some writers believe that this was proportionately less frequent with women than men. Sometimes, the authoritarian state made no attempt to discriminate punishments based on gender. Moitt informs us that in 1724 the Conseil Supérieur of Martinique condemned a woman to death by hanging for a third act of *marronage*, but that while the sentence was being carried out the cord broke and the executioner decided to strangle her, in spite of pleas for mercy from the onlookers.<sup>91</sup> In 1814, when Governor George Robert Ainslie of Dominica declared all-out war on the Maroons, he is said to have announced that he had instructed his officers to take no prisoners, but to execute men, women and children.<sup>92</sup> At other times some discrimination existed, though this did not necessarily mean greater leniency for females. In 1665 the Jamaican government declared that any persons locating and assaulting the Karmahaly Maroon settlement would be rewarded with all the women and children that they should capture, in addition to whatever booty they should acquire.<sup>93</sup>

Some punishments, if not more physically exacting, were far more callous. In the French Caribbean certain overlords retaliated against persons who had taken flight by placing in irons near relations, such as their fathers, mothers and sisters. They were chained together in twos and worked under this constraint even on Sundays, and slept in the lockups until their relatives returned. Captured women with small children ran the risk of seeing heavy chains being placed around the necks or feet of these infants, some only six years old, which weighed them down and, in the view of one government official, always led to severe bruising.<sup>94</sup> In 1832 magistrate Xavier Tanc of Guadeloupe observed "a little girl about six years old dragging this heavy and irksome burden with torment as if the crime . . . of the mother was justification for punishing this young child in such a barbarous manner. At that age, her fragile frame and delicate flesh were all battered."<sup>95</sup>

Although the colonial governments were themselves known to mete out extremely harsh punishments, they did not always concur with such vicarious punishment. In 1846 the Royal Court of Guadeloupe imposed a fine of 500 francs on Crosnier, a plantation administrator, for punishing Hermine and Belonie because their children had absconded. In 1827 the judiciary in French Guiana convicted the planter Achille Wermin d'Aigrepon of excessive cruelty for chaining the mother and sisters of runaways, and further punishing two of them, Marie Thérèse and Denise, with up to 200 lashes daily until the runaway relatives should return. The elderly Denise expired due to the punishment, but the perpetrator claimed that she had poisoned herself in desperation. To compound his crime, he had ordered that her head be severed and placed on a pole outside her dwelling, in like manner as her seventy-five-year-old husband Jacinthe, who had previously been punished for *marronage*. The criminal received the rather light sentence of banishment from the colony for ten years.<sup>96</sup>

Certain judicial sentences are chilling simply to read about them. The following sentences relate to two Maroons whom the French colonial government apprehended in 1752:

Copena, charged with and convicted of marronage; of bearing firearms; of invading and pillaging, along with other maroons, the house and plantation of Berniac from which they stole furnishing, silver and a musket, and carried off many of his slaves; of mistreating him; and of committing other excesses. Copena is sentenced to having his arms, legs, thighs, and back broken on a scaffold to be erected in the Place du Port. He shall then be placed on a wheel, face toward the sky, to finish his days, and his corpse shall be exposed. Claire, convicted of the crime of marronage and of complicity with maroon Negroes, shall be hanged till dead at the gallows in the Place du Port. Her two young children Paul and Pascal, belonging to M. Coutard, and other children – François and Batilde, Martin and Baptiste – all accused of marronage, are condemned to witness the torture of Copena and Claire.<sup>97</sup>

## Conclusion

This article has touched briefly upon a number of aspects of *marronage* and more particularly gender roles in regard to that phenomenon. Clearly, much more work needs to be done before we can affirm or reject a number of the observations, suggestions and conclusions at which this author has arrived. However, it is clear that women were not on the periphery of Maroon societies, but rather were at or close to the centre of action. Their roles in regard to certain activities were obvi-

ously limited, both by reason of their usually small numbers, socialization in specific gender roles, and perhaps the cares and concerns of motherhood. Arguably, it was particularly in relation to this last aspect that they played their most important role, as only women can play. They gave birth to and nurtured a number of children in Maroon communities on whom the shackles of slavery had not been placed. But they also played a significant role in the agricultural activities of many communities, and perhaps also important roles in the rearing of small animals around the settlements, manufacturing household items, fishing and mining gold.

This article has focused largely on rural *marronage* and has touched only very lightly on urban *marronage*. This is mainly because of the paucity of specific information at the disposal of the author to deal with that subject. However, few critics would perhaps disagree that urban Maroons could hardly be viewed as a coherent group, still less a community, and this must have limited severely their capacity for joint action. Most writers seem to believe that male and especially female Maroons in urban environments melded quite easily with the free Black and Coloured populations in the large urban tenements. Females, they believe, were readily protected by male and female slaveholders, free(d) persons and others because they proved useful for a variety of domestic and other purposes. Their contribution to *marronage* remains obscure, at least to this author, and a more probing study will be necessary to bring their activities into full view.

## NOTES

1. Jean Fouchard, *Les marrons de la liberté* (Paris: Editions de l'École, 1972), 289.
2. Mavis Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655–1796. A History of Resistance, Collaboration and Betrayal* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), 50, 164–65, 174–75. It is also interesting that one of the main states in the Palmares confederation in later seventeenth-century Brazil was named after and governed by Aqualtune (Arotirene), the Queen Mother (Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* [New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983], 369).
3. José Luciano Franco, "Maroons and Slave Rebellions in the Spanish Territories", in Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Second Edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 42, 48; Carlos Aguirre, *Agentes du su propia libertad: los esclavos de Lima y la desintegración de la esclavitud 1821–1854* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1993), 243; David M.

- Davidson, "Negro Slave Control and Resistance in Colonial México, 1519–1650", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 89.
4. Fouchard, 116–17.
  5. Fedricio Brito Figueroa, *El problema tierra y esclavos en la historia de Venezuela* (Segunda Edición. Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca de la Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1985), 241.
  6. John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (Originally published 1796. Edited, and with an Introduction and Notes, by Richard and Sally Price. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 264–66.
  7. *Ibid.*, 495.
  8. Alvin O. Thompson, *A Documentary History of Slavery in Berbice 1796–1834* (Georgetown: Free Press, 2002), 218–19; *British Parliamentary Papers (Accounts and Papers)*, 1825, vol. 25 (476): 13, 25–27, 36–37, 63, 66, 85.
  9. Moreau de Saint-Méry, "The Border Maroons of Saint-Domingue: Le Maniel", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 140.
  10. Arlette Gautier, *Les Soeurs de Solitude: La condition féminine dans l'esclave aux Antilles du XVII<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Editions Caribéennes, 1985), 231.
  11. Conrad, 392–93.
  12. Gabriel Debien, "Marronage in the French Caribbean", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 109.
  13. Stuart B. Schwartz, "The Mocambo: Slave Resistance in Colonial Bahia", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 218–19.
  14. Celsa Albert Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo* (Santo Domingo: Centro Dominicano de Estudios de la Educación, 1990), 41; Paul Lokken, "A Maroon Moment: Rebel Slaves in Early Seventeenth-Century Guatemala", *Slavery & Abolition* 25, no. 3 (2004): 52.
  15. William Frederick Sharp, *Slavery on the Spanish Frontier: The Colombian Chocó 1681–1810* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976), 156; Thomas Atwood, *The History of the Island of Dominica* (Originally published in 1791. London: Frank Cass, 1971), 226–27; Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les François* (Paris: Thomas Iolli, 1667–71), vol. 1, 153; *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 498, 534, 529.
  16. Stedman, 80.
  17. Gautier, 237.
  18. Nicole Vanony-Frisch, Nicole, "Les Esclaves de la Guadeloupe à la fin de l'Ancien Régime d'après les sources notariales, 1770–1789", *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Guadeloupe* 63–64 (1985): 135; Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635–1848* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 133–35.
  19. Fouchard, 285.
  20. Wim Hoogbergen, "Marronage and Slave Rebellion in Surinam", in Wolfgang Binder, ed., *Slavery in the Americas* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1993), 175.
  21. Gautier, 233.

22. Some confusion exists in relation to the Tabacal and Matudere settlements. Borrego Plá and Navarrete agree that the two settlements were one and the same under different names, though Landers appears to be less explicit on the point. Some other writers treat them as separate settlements (María del Carmen Borrego Plá, *Palenques de negros en Cartagena de Indias a fines del siglo XVII* [Sevilla: Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos. Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1973], 86; María Cristina Navarrete, *Cimarrones y palenques en el siglo XVII* [Cali, Colombia: Universidad del Valle, 2003], 96, 103; Jane G. Landers, "Cimarrón Ethnicity and Cultural Adaptation in the Spanish Domains of the Circum-Caribbean, 1503-1763", in Paul E. Lovejoy, ed., *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* [London: Continuum, 2000], 38, 51n27).

32. Mary Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 30–56.
33. B.W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 116, 413. Curaçao was apparently the only other Caribbean colony in which there was a natural increase of the enslaved population by birth (H. Hoetink, “Surinam and Curaçao”, in David W. Cohen and Jack P. Greene, ed., *Neither Slave nor Free: The Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972], 67).
34. Mullin, 289–90; Gad Heuman, “Runaway Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Barbados”, in Gad Heuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 98.
35. Patrick J. Carroll, “Mandinga: The Evolution of a Mexican Runaway Slave Community, 1735–1827”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (1977): 489.
36. *Ibid.*, 500.
37. Ulrich Fleischmann, “Maroons, Writers and History”, in Binder, ed., *Slavery in the Americas*, 573.
38. Luis A. Díez Castillo, *Los cimarrones y los negros antillanos en Panamá* (Segunda Edición. Panamá: Impr. J. Mercado Rudas, 1981), 50.
39. Borrego Plá, 81; Edmundo Marcano Jiménez, *Los cumbes: visión panorámica de esta modalidad de rebeldía negra en las colonias americanas de España y Portugal* (Caracas: Academia Nacional de la Historia, 2001), 53.
40. Raymond K. Kent, “Palmares: An African State in Brazil”, in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 182.
41. Edison Carneiro, *Guerras de los Palmares* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1946), 108; Orlando Patterson, “Slavery and Slave Revolts: A Sociohistorical Analysis of the First Maroon War, 1665–1740”, in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 286.
42. In other jurisdictions we sometimes encounter charges of Maroons raping both White and Black women. For instance, William L. Hill, head of a militia unit in Onslow County, North Carolina, complained in 1821 that the runaways had “ravished a number of females” (cited in Loren Schweningen, “Maroonage and Flight: An Overview” [Paper presented at the Fifth Annual International Conference at the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, Yale University, 2002], 6).
43. Gautier, 229, 235–38; see also David Geggus, “On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Slave Runaways in Saint-Domingue in the Year 1790”, in Heuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage*, 117–18; Karasch, 307; Campbell, 4–5; Moitt, 134–35.
44. Karasch, 305–6; Eddie Donoghue, *Black Women White Men: The Sexual Exploitation of Female Slaves in the Danish West Indies* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2002), 154–55.
45. Higman, 389.

46. Heuman, 99–101. Newspaper advertisements of runaways in South Carolina indicate that the enslavers believed that about twice as many females as males were headed for some urban area, but, perhaps strangely, they considered that more females were headed for a rural than an urban destination (Philip Morgan, “Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their Significance for Slave Culture”, in Heuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage*, 67–69).
47. Anthony McFarlane, “Cimarrones and Palenques: Runaways and Resistance in Colonial Colombia”, in Heuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage*, 149.
48. Cited in Donoghue, 150.
49. Cited in *Ibid.*, 151.
50. Lokken, 47.
51. Fouchard, 391–92.
52. Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux antilles françaises (XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* (Basse-Terre: Société d’histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974), 434.
53. Trevor Burnard, *Master, Tyranny, and Desire. Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 217–18.
54. *Ibid.*, 218–21.
55. Fouchard, 365n1; Campbell, 122–23.
56. Stedman (521; see also 457) identified these rituals as including the *watra mama* (*water mama*) or mermaid ritual, involving divination and exorcism. It was deemed the most dangerous ritual in many slave societies. For one instance when this ritual was carried out see *British Parliamentary Papers*, 1825, vol. 25 (476): 29–30.
57. Col. C.L.G. Harris, “The True Traditions of my Ancestors”, in Kofi E. Agorsah, ed., *Maroon Heritage: Archaeological Ethnographic and Historical Perspectives* (Kingston: Canoe Press, 1994), 46.
58. Kamau Brathwaite, “Nanny, Palmares and the Caribbean Maroon Connexion”, in Agorsah, ed., *Maroon Heritage*, 122; Campbell, 51.
59. Harris, 48.
60. Old Nanny Town was taken and occupied by a British force between 1734 and 1735. After the treaty was signed with the British in 1739 a New Nanny Town (subsequently named Moore Town) was built at a different site (Campbell 164–65; Kofi E. Agorsah, “Archaeology of Maroon Settlements in Jamaica”, in Agorsah, ed., *Maroon Heritage*, 174).
61. See Tuelon (1973) for a short discussion on this subject.
62. Campbell, 50–51.
63. Cited in Campbell, 123. See also Barbara K. Kopytoff, “Jamaican Maroon Political Organization: The Effects of the Treaties”, *Social and Economic Studies* 25, no. 2 (1976): 90; Brathwaite, 122. The fact that she did not participate in the treaty negotiations should not lead us to conclude that the men sidelined her. As the spiritual head of her community she might have considered it more appropriate to give advice to the officers on matters relating to the negotiations rather than being present at the actual event.



Another perspective on her attitude to the negotiations is that she rejected the first British overtures because she distrusted them. However, she later became convinced that her enemies genuinely desired to make peace and thus accepted the terms (Harris, 47; Campbell, 122–23, 177–78).

64. Campbell, 123.
65. João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Translated by Arthur Brakel. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 55–57.
66. Kopytoff, 89.
67. Campbell, 71.
68. Stedman, 410–11.
69. Mullin, 51.
70. La Rosa Corzo, 182.
71. A common but erroneous view among modern scholars is that women generally did all, or nearly all, the agricultural work in African societies. This is no doubt based upon the observation of what has happened since the colonial period on that continent, though it is also largely incorrect, since men participated in cultivating a number of the cash crops. In the precolonial era the dominance of a particular sex in agriculture depended upon the specific society and sometimes the specific crop (see Gloria Ifeoma Chuku, “Women in the Economy of Igboland, 1900 to 1970: A Survey”, *African Economic History* 23 [1995]: 39–40; Reuben K. Udo, *A Comprehensive Geography of West Africa* [New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978], 34, 37, 66; Margaret Haswell, *The Nature of Poverty: A Case Study of the First Quarter-Century After World War II* [London: Macmillan, 1975], 84–85). Depending upon the particular crop, men engaged in digging up roots, ridging, burning, manuring, planting seeds, tree-top cutting, weeding and harvesting, though women also undertook some of these tasks (Elliot J. Berg, “The Economics of the Migrant Labor System”, in Hilda Kuper, ed., *Urbanization and Migration in West Africa* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965], 169).
72. Richard B. Sheridan, “The Maroons of Jamaica, 1730–1830: Livelihood, Demography and Health”, in Heuman, ed., *Out of the House of Bondage*, 158, 164–65; Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (London: John Stockdale, 1801), vol. 3, 321–23; R.C. Dallas, *The History of the Maroons* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1803), vol. 1, 108–10.
73. See Andrés Pérez de Ribas, *Crónica y historia religiosa de la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús de México en Nueva España* (México: Imprenta del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, 1896), vol. 1, 286–90; José Luciano Franco, *Los Palenques de los Negros Cimarrones* (Habana: Departamento de Orientación Revolucionaria del Comité Central del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1973), 26; Aquilas Escalante, “Palenques in Colombia”, in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 80; Stedman, 402, 404, 409–10, 449, 562; Campbell, 47, 50; Thompson, 132; La Rosa Corzo, 177, 180.

74. For instance, in the case of the Saramaka Maroons see Richard Price, "Subsistence on the Plantation Periphery: Crops, Cooking, and Labour among Eighteenth-Century Suriname Maroons", *Slavery & Abolition* 12, no. 1 (1991): 114–17. See also Stedman, 409–10.
75. Landers, "Cimarrón Ethnicity", 48.
76. Campbell, 38–39.
77. Sheridan, 166.
78. Cirilo Villaverde, *Diario del rancheador* (Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1982), 46–47.
79. Lokken, 51.
80. Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "A 'Safe Haven': Runaway Slaves, Mocambos, and Borders in Colonial Amazonia, Brazil", *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 3 (2002): 485.
81. La Rosa Corzo, 15–16.
82. Davidson, 94–95.
83. Steeve O. Buckridge, *The Language of Dress: Resistance and Accommodation in Jamaica, 1760–1890* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2004), 50–52; see also Edward Long, *History of Jamaica* (London: T. Lowndes, 1774), vol. 3, 747–48.
84. Louis, "Rebel Village in French Guiana: A Captive's Description", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 317.
85. Jane G. Landers, "Maroon Ethnicity and Identity in Ecuador, Colombia and Hispaniola" (Paper presented at the Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Hyatt Regency, Miami, 16–18 March 2000, <http://136.142.158.105/Lasa2000/Landers.PDF> 4
86. See Stedman, 409–10, 413; Price, "Subsistence on the Plantation Periphery", 117; Johannes King, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Bush Negro View", in Price, ed., *Maroon Societies*, 298–99; Carneiro, 28–29.
87. José Juan Arrom and Manuel A. García Arévalo, *Cimarrón* (Santo Domingo: Ediciones Fundación García-Arévalo, 1986), 48–74.
88. Esteban Deive, 86–89.
89. Roberto de la Guardia, *Los negros del Istmo de Panamá* (Panamá: Ediciones INAC, 1977), 104–5. It is also said that in Haiti in 1758 Makandal, the feared Maroon leader, was betrayed by an enslaved female whom he had approached to get her to kill her master (Gautier, 226).
90. Escalante, 78.
91. Moitt, 137–38.
92. Cited in Basil E. Cracknell, *Dominica* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles Holdings, 1973), 67.
93. Patterson, 255; Campbell, 27.
94. Gautier, 229–30, 237.
95. Cited in Moitt, 139.
96. Moitt, 139.
97. Cited in Price, *Maroon Societies*, 319.

## Book Reviews

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E. Franklin Frazier and Eric Williams, eds., *The Economic Future of the Caribbean, with a New Introduction: "Eric Williams and the Anglo-American Commission, 1942–1944", by Tony Martin*, The Majority Press: Dover, MA, 2004, xxxvii + 101 pp.

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This edited book by E. Franklin Frazier and Eric Williams first appeared in the early 1940s and seems to have been initially published between Williams's first book, *The Negro in the Caribbean*,<sup>1</sup> and his most famous work, his *opus magnum*, *Capitalism and Slavery*.<sup>2</sup> It basically contains much of the material that formed the core of the presentations at the Social Science Conference at Howard University on the Economic Future of the Caribbean, held in June 1943. Perhaps, we need more daring publishers as the Majority Press, Massachusetts, to venture on the republication of such stalwart works as *The Economic Future of the Caribbean*. It is a small book in size, but it is certainly a heavyweight in content.

Erica Williams Connell aptly notes in her foreword that because publishing is regulated/determined by the "bottom line" many stalwart publications have disappeared from the view of scholars, in particular, and the public in general. I could list several important works that, if republished, would add greatly to the ongoing historiography of the Caribbean. They would help academics and policy-makers to recognize that many of the issues affecting the Caribbean today are rooted in its history of slavery and colonialism. Erica Williams Connell thus states, "The more things change, the more they stay the same" (p. 4). In fact, the groundwork has been clearly laid in the history of the region and should serve as guides to historians and other scholars today and in the future.

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*The Journal of Caribbean History* 39, 2 (2005): 290–293

Tony Martin should be commended for editing this volume and for publishing an incisive Introduction that clearly delineates Williams's activities in the period 1939–1943. Martin's Introduction depicts Williams as establishing his own prominence as a writer and scholar at Howard University while at the same time attempting to enter one of the bureaucratic institutions that was intended to play an important role in guiding the destiny of the Caribbean.

The Preface demonstrates a uniqueness that is reflective of the Caribbean region; the participants were experts of Caribbean history, of its diverse heritage and of its various ethnicities. The presenters were White, Black, American and Caribbean, yet they had a well-grounded view of the Caribbean and its problems. Although in 1943 it was stated that the single theme, "The Economic Future of the Caribbean", was agreed upon because of the region's historical development and its then present conditions, the organizers could not have predicted that the conference theme's relevance would have stretched well into the future and highlight many of today's Caribbean issues.

The first presentation was an historical contribution on the importance of sugar to the socio-cultural and political development of the region. Sugar is far less important in the islands' economies today but Professor Leland Junks rightfully claimed that for a long time sugar determined the external link between the Caribbean and the outside world, and that it was "enlaced in the history of modern capitalism" (p. 11). While modern capitalism is no longer rooted in the sugar industry, many societies continue to produce sugar, and the fundamental features of the plantation system that guided its production can be found in the structure of dependency and capital flight in the modern tourist industry, which unfortunately is engrossing most of the islands, as did sugar.

In the chapter on "The Economic Development of the Caribbean up to the Present", Eric Williams demonstrated the domination of sugar *vis-à-vis* the limited land resources, which prohibited any significant diversification, and hence the dependence on imported food and other supplies. This has continued and remains a major feature of the Caribbean economy. Widely regarded as the nerve cord of the economy, it was difficult to envisage this cord being broken. Yet, as indicated previously, modern capitalism has established the tourist industry, which contains all the features of its predecessor, a viewpoint probably best developed in Lloyd Best's critical essay titled "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy".<sup>3</sup>

One theme that Williams elucidated quite clearly is the need for linking the islands in some form of federation or union. This is more urgent today, given the international linkages occurring among larger countries. Williams wrote that “the Caribbean, if it is to survive and prosper, must be fitted as a whole into the Caribbean”, and that “Trinidad by itself, Puerto Rico by itself, Cuba by itself can only continue at the economic mercy of the more advanced and powerful countries of the world” (p. 24). Sixty years later, it is clear that the same problems exist, and probably that they have gotten worse.

In the general discussion, E. Franklin Fraser presents a most insightful paper on “Race Relations in the Caribbean”. While not overlooking the presence of class consciousness with racial overtones, Frazier concludes that Black etiquette regulating “relations with whites prevent[s] the emergence of racial hostility” (p. 29). Changes have emerged especially in Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, and race plays an important role in most aspects of life. Tensions have reared their ugly heads in both places between the people of Indian descent and those of African descent over the last decade.

Many of the issues on the future of the Caribbean, including those relating to Cuba, Puerto Rico and a Caribbean federation, continue to hold relevance for the region. Several changes have occurred. Puerto Rico has become a welfare state almost totally dependent on the United States; Cuba has developed greater stability in government but its political system has pitted it against the United States with repeated threats of US interference, mainly for its own domestic political gains. A British West Indian federation was established in 1958 but it lasted only four years. Some of the countries initiated the Caribbean Free Trade Area (CARIFTA) in 1966, which evolved into the Caribbean Common Market (CARICOM), established by the Treaty of Chaguaramas in Trinidad and Tobago on 4 July 1973.

CARICOM has survived and is painfully attempting to integrate the Caribbean not only economically but also culturally and otherwise. Its greatest danger lies in the parochialism so clearly reflected in the discussions and other writings in *The Economic Future of the Caribbean*. Overall, the republication of this work has appeared at a most fortuitous time and should be compulsory reading for both undergraduate and graduate students.

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## NOTES

1. Washington, DC: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1942.
2. London: André Deutsch, 1944.
3. *Social and Economic Studies* 17, no. 3 (1968): 283–326.

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Howard A. Fergus, *Montserrat: History of a Caribbean Colony*, Second Edition, Oxford: Macmillan Caribbean, 2004, x + 268 pp.

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*Montserrat: History of a Caribbean Colony* by Sir Howard Fergus is in some respects a welcome addition to an increasing number of micro-histories on the hitherto neglected smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean. A much anticipated follow-up to his earlier brief history, entitled *History of Alliouagana: A Short History of Montserrat*,<sup>1</sup> this extensive and detailed study of one of the smallest British colonies in the Caribbean draws from a wide variety of sources. These include the personal experiences of Sir Howard who himself has played a key role in the recent political history of the island. This work is useful for any person searching for historical information on British colonialism in Montserrat, on the evolution of British education in the island and on the gradual move to self-government in the colony after 1946. Sir Howard also provides a very detailed picture of folk culture and social activities on the island, particularly the folk traditions that have been systematically erased in the twentieth century in the face of “Judeo-Western Christianity” and the quest for modernity.

The critical reader may, however, put down this book with a sense of disappointment that it tells largely the traditional story of British colonial rule in the Caribbean. He provides interesting details about the operation of the system of slavery in Montserrat, including the ownership of enslaved persons by Free Coloureds. But the focus is on slave control by the slaveholding planter class and the enslaved Africans never rise from the page. We do not get a sense of the vibrancy and complexity of slave life and culture on the island, and the African and Creole-born enslaved persons remain largely objects in his account. Similarly, his chapter on Irish and African emancipation offers a descriptive recounting of the major historical and legal signposts on the way to civil equality and freedom for these two ethnic groups. However, there

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*The Journal of Caribbean History* 39, 2 (2005): 294–295

is no real attempt to explore the parallels in the racial oppression of both groups by the dominant English. The racism directed against the Irish poor by their English overlords and the constant effort by the Irish community in both the Old and New World to assert their European heritage, as depicted in Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish became White*,<sup>2</sup> goes unmentioned by Sir Howard. The role of African slavery in Montserrat in providing the opportunity for respectability to the Irish and the social basis for their claim to "whiteness" are certainly topics worthy of discussion in this history.

Perhaps the most disappointing feature of Sir Howard's work is his discourse on the more modern period, particularly the post-1946 political life of the island. His explanation for the fall of Robert W. Griffith, the island's first major political leader, sounds incomplete. That Griffith was "a flamboyant demagogue" and lacked "a profound vision of development" would have been no handicap in a West Indian political climate that produced many similar leaders, such as Alexander Bustamante and Eric Gairy. Moreover, Sir Howard makes no real effort to explain the roots of the oedipal political struggle between P. Austin Bramble and his father W.H. Bramble that is so atypical in the contemporary dynastic politics of the wider Caribbean region. The disappointment at these shortcomings is more acute since Sir Howard, as someone who knew personally many of the political figures discussed, could have been expected to have deeper insights into their political motivations and the political manipulators who surrounded them.

On the positive side, as noted already, Sir Howard's book is detailed, well researched and easily accessible. It will be welcomed by anyone with an interest in the history of this small Caribbean island, especially local Montserratians and their overseas descendants.

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## NOTES

1. Plymouth, Montserrat: University Centre, 1975.
2. New York: Routledge, 1996.



Within the last few decades historians have focused increasing attention

Moitt uses a range of sources, including newspapers, plantation records, official correspondence and contemporary histories found in colonial and metropolitan depositories. He concludes that during the slavery period the French Antilles were largely dependent on the labour of enslaved Black women who performed “a disproportionate amount of hard labour”, a position not unlike that of Hilary Beckles, Barbara Bush and other recent historians in their studies on enslaved women in the Anglophone Caribbean. Moitt argues that their roles in the plantation economy often permitted them to engage in “specific forms of resistance”, capped by armed struggle and *marronage*.

In dealing with the labour issue, Moitt highlights the role of women in the back-breaking tasks of holing and cutting, and the dangerous tasks of feeding the mill. Women did most of the weeding and were chosen to work as distillers in the rum distillery. These occupations that placed them generally at the bottom of the slave hierarchy, exposed them to the most vicious punishments meted out to enslaved persons. As Moitt puts it, “slave owners and others in authority punished female slaves as harshly as they did male slaves, but the slave women, being more directly in the line of confrontation with the system than men due to their subordinate position within the slave occupational hierarchy, were apt to be punished more frequently and quite often, with more venom”.

The text reveals that the slaveholders gave little consideration for womanhood, stripping women in front of their children, and administering whipping in a most humiliating manner. Enslaved men were generally powerless to protect enslaved women from the wrath of the plantation management. Such treatment, however, did not reduce enslaved women to a docile, accommodating labour force. Rather, as Moitt asserts, it produced a range of multidimensional forms of resistance, particularly in St Domingue and Guadeloupe. In these colonies they formed part of the rebel stronghold, transporting weapons, acting as messengers, caring for the sick and chanting revolutionary slogans to keep the spirits of the fighters alive. He notes, too, that during the St Domingue Revolution and parallel uprisings in sister colonies, women entered the camps of the French soldiers to exchange sexual favours for ammunition. As a consequence, many women found themselves before military tribunals established after the revolts in Guadeloupe and Martinique.

While Moitt’s study supports the view that more males than females participated in *marronage*, he finds many cases of women taking flight

and eluding the authorities for some time. In addition, the text provides interesting examples of enslaved women who resisted unpopular plantation personnel by poisoning (or attempting to poison) them. His study also highlights several cases in which enslaved women challenged plantation management through recourse to the law, particularly after the 1830s. In his view, they exhibited a keen awareness of the changes in local and metropolitan ordinances affecting their condition. Though the courts generally upheld the decision of the estate managers, enslaved women nevertheless pursued these cases in a bid to secure certain rights and privileges in the context of slavery.

Moitt's study has opened new research directions in areas such as the relationship between enslaved Black women and women of mixed race, as well as forms of manumission that were peculiar to the French colonies. However, one regret is that his study does not examine sufficiently the issue of enslaved women in the urban context to discover whether differences in occupational roles had an effect on their treatment. Nevertheless, Moitt's well-written study helps to rescue enslaved women from the shadows of the plantation, detailing their contribution to the development of plantation society and economy. His examination of the activities of several enslaved females highlights the role of women as active and dynamic agents pursuing change in the context of slave society and attempting to opt out of the system altogether. His work represents an important contribution to the historiography of the region by a Caribbean scholar.

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Selwyn H. H. Carrington, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775–1810*, Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2002, 362 pp.

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A few years before the bicentennial celebration of the abolition of the British slave trade, Selwyn Carrington has further stimulated the debate that has been raging since the publication of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*,<sup>1</sup> based on his DPhil dissertation,<sup>2</sup> "The Economic Aspect of the Abolition of the West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery" (1938). The detailed and painstaking research that informs Carrington's publication, *The Sugar Industry and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1775–1810*, has sent a strong signal to Williams's detractors that the "decline thesis" in Caribbean historiography is alive and well. As most historians of Caribbean economic history have acknowledged, the publication of Lowell Ragatz's *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British West Indies*,<sup>3</sup> had marked a significant departure from the conventional wisdom. Eric Williams built on the base provided by Ragatz and others and asserted that there was a causal relationship between the decline of the British West Indian sugar industry and the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807. Williams's work dominated the historiography of Caribbean abolition until the pendulum swung slightly to scholars who asserted quite opposite conclusions. In particular, we might note Roger Anstey's *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760–1810*<sup>4</sup> and Seymour Drescher's *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*,<sup>5</sup> with the latter being the most influential challenge to the decline thesis. Carrington's response to this onslaught has been to launch a virtual *blitzkrieg* of his own. Following on his own PhD dissertation, he has published a number of articles and one major work defending the legacy of Williams.<sup>6</sup> His more recent book, which is the subject of this review, represents a continuation of the debate.

Carrington begins his investigation by exploring the dependence of the British Caribbean sugar planters on external markets over the

period 1769–1776. This first section of his book is amply supported by several statistical tables that provide the basis for his assertion that “the development, growth, and economic progress of the British Caribbean islands depended on their unrestricted commercial intercourse with the continental American colonies”. Herein lies the core of Carrington’s argument for a decline in the British West Indian sugar industry. From his perspective, any interruption in this trade would threaten the viability of the British West Indian plantation system and reduce investment in the Caribbean. Indeed, in the following chapter he mines the data on commodity prices to show that the American Revolution dealt an enormous blow to the economic fortunes of the British Caribbean planters.

In illustrating the extent of the damage caused by the American Revolutionary War (1776–1783), Carrington shows that for the Leeward islands, prices for staves, an essential element in the manufacture of hogsheads and puncheons, increased between 253 and 296 percent over the period 1775–1784. In the case of Jamaica, the prices for hogshead staves increased some 289 percent, while those for puncheon staves increased 285 percent. In St Vincent prices rose even higher, reflecting, perhaps, greater freight costs. Prices for other vital commodities showed similar steep increases. This picture is offset by the increase in sugar prices during the 1780s. In fact, the doubling of sugar prices might easily have scuttled Carrington’s carefully prepared platform. However, he counters by showing that the increases in sugar prices were undone by sharp increases in all of the major inputs, for example, wages and other domestic goods and services. Rum sales to America were an important source of income to the estates between crop times and the loss of this market was particularly devastating to the Caribbean estates. Another problem that he identifies is that planters were forced to divert some labour from sugar production to the production of staples normally imported from the American colonies.

Carrington’s investigation continues by taking us variously through several discussions that include issues of British policy towards the sugar islands, the vagaries of the world sugar market, debt and decline, new management techniques and reforms by planters, the growth of the market for hired enslaved persons as the cost of replacing slave labour rose, and the impact of natural disasters on the British West Indian economies. Of particular interest is his discussion of the attitudes of British metropolitan officials to the abolition of the slave trade. As he notes, these officials felt that the abolition of the slave trade was

in the best interests of British West Indian planters, especially since they faced problems of a glutted market. However, it is on this point that Carrington's thrust requires strengthening. If, as he further observes, the officials felt that the abolition of the slave trade was unlikely to have an immediate effect on the interests of the sugar colonies and, moreover, that the planters would experience greater security in more careful attention to the "husbandry" of the existing slave population, several issues need to be addressed.

In the first place, if British officials were equally sure that the sugar industry was in decline, was the decision to abolish the slave trade a measure to stimulate and consolidate the colonial economies, or was it a case of abandonment of a lost cause? Second, where are the specific statements of British officials that demonstrate unequivocal awareness of the decline in the sugar economies as a major factor in the decision to abolish the slave trade? The answer to these questions may well require greater attention to British foreign policy issues than is dealt with in Carrington's work. In short, to focus on the British decision to abolish the slave trade mainly on issues of decline in the economies of the British Caribbean economies might run the risk of excluding the wider picture of international trade. These include the perceptions of some British officials that the abolition of the slave trade carried on by competitors might be another (and perhaps a better) way of dealing with an important threat to the viability of its colonies. Indeed, the actions of the British Navy in the post-1807 years might well tell a story of British intentions on the international scale and the way that abolition might have fitted into these intentions. These issues, at least, required some attention.

Notwithstanding the observations in the previous paragraph, Carrington's meticulous research of the various strands of evidence, garnered from multiple contemporary sources, provides a convincing defence of the decline thesis. Simply put, the evidence for decline is overwhelming. There is little doubt that the author's investigations and findings constitute a formidable response to the opponents of the decline thesis. The opponents will need to return to the drawing board to recover the substantial ground that they have lost. In any case, the historiography of abolition in the British West Indies is all the more enriched for the continuing debate. We are indebted to Carrington for his persistence in furthering that debate and we must admire the systematic and painstaking attention to detail that pervades his work. This book is a must read for those interested in studying the economic

and political fortunes of the British West Indies during the era of abolition.

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## NOTES

1. London: André Deutsch, 1944.
2. Oxford University, 1938.
3. New York: American Historical Association, 1928.
4. London: Macmillan, 1975.
5. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977.
6. See Carrington's book *The British West Indies During the American Revolution* (Dordrecht, Holland: Foris Publications, 1988).