



A HERANÇA AFRICANA NO BRASIL
E NO CARIBE

THE AFRICAN HERITAGE IN BRAZIL
AND THE CARIBBEAN



MINISTÉRIO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES



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A Herança Africana no Brasil e no Caribe

*The African Heritage in Brazil
and the Caribbean*



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ALEXANDRE
DE GUSMÃO

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Apresentação

A Herança Africana no Brasil e no Caribe

A herança africana no Brasil e no Caribe é obra coletiva que busca identificar e examinar traços comuns à formação das sociedades brasileira e caribenhas. Por meio de artigos preparados por especialistas do Brasil e de cada um dos membros da Comunidade do Caribe – a CARICOM –, a publicação visa contribuir para o conhecimento mútuo entre nosso país e seus múltiplos vizinhos caribenhos: os países insulares anglófonos do Caribe – Antígua e Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Granada, Jamaica, Santa Lúcia, São Cristóvão e Névis, São Vicente e Granadinas, Santa Lúcia e Trinidad e Tobago –, além de Haiti, Belize, Guiana e Suriname.

São significativos os aspectos históricos, culturais e demográficos compartilhados pelo Brasil e pelas nações caribenhas. Parcelas importantes do litoral brasileiro, mais especificamente os quase 300 km do litoral do Amapá e a porção setentrional da foz do Rio Amazonas, estão localizadas ao norte da linha do Equador, constituindo fronteira lateral com o mar das Guianas. Historicamente, são consistentes os indícios de que, no século XVII, teria ocorrido transferência significativa de capital humano e tecnologia oriunda do Nordeste brasileiro para territórios no Caribe, em momento caracterizado por crise de produção do sistema açucareiro nacional. Tanto o Brasil quanto o Caribe absorveram, ademais, na constituição de suas sociedades, importantes afluxos de populações de origem africana e ameríndia, muitas das quais de raízes e tradições semelhantes.

Apenas nos últimos anos, porém, o estreitamento dos laços que nos unem à vizinhança caribenha vem-se sedimentando como ponto destacado da agenda externa do Brasil. Marco fundamental nesse processo foi a decisão do Governo brasileiro, em 2004, de participar – e liderar o componente militar – da Missão das Nações Unidas de Estabilização do Haiti (MINUSTAH). Precedida de amplas consultas com os países membros da CARICOM, a presença do Brasil na MINUSTAH, desde então, sinaliza maior engajamento no relacionamento que mantemos com o conjunto da região caribenha.

Expressão simbólica e, ao mesmo tempo, fator de impulso político do aprofundamento das relações com o Caribe são as visitas de alto nível a países da região, a exemplo de Guiana, Suriname, Jamaica, Trinidad e Tobago, Haiti, Barbados e Granada. Alguns desses países receberam, nos últimos oito anos, a primeira visita de um Chefe de Estado ou Chanceler brasileiro.

A abertura de representações diplomáticas residentes nos países da região constituiu etapa adicional no processo de ampliação da presença do Caribe na política externa brasileira. Desde 2005, foram estabelecidas Embaixadas residentes do Brasil em oito países membros da CARICOM, o que faz com que hoje tenhamos representações diplomáticas em todos os países da Comunidade.

A aproximação política encontra complementaridade nos planos econômico e de cooperação. Verificam-se crescimento e diversificação significativos nas relações comerciais do Brasil com os países do Caribe. A corrente de comércio entre 2002 e 2008 quase decuplicou, passando de US\$ 657 milhões a US\$ 5,2 bilhões, e atualmente recupera seu dinamismo, uma vez superados os efeitos mais agudos da crise econômica internacional de 2009. As relações econômicas também avançam no campo financeiro: a conclusão do processo de adesão do Brasil ao Banco de Desenvolvimento do Caribe, como membro não tomador de empréstimos, certamente ampliará as condições para maior interação econômica com os países da CARICOM.

O exercício de integração abarca, ainda, uma diversificada agenda de cooperação técnica. Nos últimos anos, o Brasil enviou a todos os países da CARICOM missões preliminares e prospectivas de cooperação, conduzidas pela Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC). Como resultado, constatamos que o Caribe hoje absorve cerca de 10% da crescente cooperação prestada pelo Governo brasileiro em escala global.

Em paralelo, sobressai o relacionamento entre o Brasil e os principais organismos de integração da região caribenha. O Brasil acedeu à categoria dos “terceiros Estados associados” tanto da CARICOM como da Organização dos Estados do Caribe Oriental (OECS), com a acreditação de seus Embaixadores em Georgetown (Guiana) e Castries (Santa Lúcia), respectivamente, junto às duas organizações.

Com o objetivo estratégico de consolidar um marco político-institucional para os renovados esforços de aproximação entre brasileiros e caribenhos, realizou-se, em Brasília, no dia 26 de abril de 2010, a I Cúpula Brasil-CARICOM. Reuniram-se 10 dos 14 Chefes de Governo da região (Antígua e Barbuda, Dominica, Granada, Guiana, Haiti, Jamaica, Santa Lúcia, São Vicente e Granadinas, São Cristóvão e Névis, Suriname), ademais do Secretário-Geral da CARICOM.

A Cúpula, para além de estruturar e sistematizar as iniciativas que conferem sentido concreto às relações entre o Brasil e os países da CARICOM, produziu avanços no diálogo político, consubstanciados na Declaração de Brasília. A Declaração reitera o compromisso do Brasil e da CARICOM com a integração latino-americana e caribenha, com a coordenação de posições em foros internacionais e com a intensificação da cooperação em temas como mudança do clima, educação, cultura, agricultura, saúde, energia, defesa civil, turismo, comércio e ação conjunta no Haiti. Sobre essas e outras áreas, foram firmados, no encontro de Brasília, 48 acordos entre Brasil, CARICOM, OECS e diversos países membros da Comunidade. Firmou-se, ainda, Protocolo que estabelece mecanismo de consultas políticas entre o Brasil e a CARICOM.

Os diversos compromissos emanados da Cúpula encontram-se em etapa de implementação. Já se observam resultados, entre outras vertentes, em cooperação técnica, coordenação política em foros internacionais (por exemplo, no que tange à agenda do G20 financeiro), assistência humanitária (realização de contribuição financeira do Brasil à “Associação Caribenha de Controle de Desastres” – CDEMA) e transportes (inauguração de voo direto entre Brasil e Barbados).

Constata-se, no entanto, que ainda é escasso o conhecimento mútuo entre brasileiros e caribenhos. Os líderes presentes à Cúpula Brasil-CARICOM, sensíveis a essa circunstância, dirigiram, a seus respectivos Governos, orientação clara para que se incentivem o estudo e a divulgação

de nossa história comum. No tocante à herança africana compartilhada, incluíram mandato específico na Declaração de Brasília:

“Reconhecendo a importância da herança africana em suas sociedades, os Chefes de Estado e de Governo decidiram incentivar a realização de estudos sobre o fenômeno da escravidão e seu impacto na formação de suas identidades nacionais, com vistas a valorizar adequadamente a participação dos afro-descendentes em sua história comum”.

A herança africana no Brasil e no Caribe responde a esse mandato. A publicação, ao reunir artigos de autores do Brasil e de cada um dos países da CARICOM, privilegia enfoque diversificado e multidisciplinar. Como ponto comum, encontra-se a ênfase depositada no exame de processos históricos que resultaram na afirmação de raízes africanas na formação das identidades nacionais do Brasil e dos países caribenhos. Os artigos – publicados nos idiomas em que foram recebidos – sinalizam a persistência de influências comuns em diferentes domínios da realidade: composição étnica da população, práticas religiosas, manifestações da cultura popular, culinária, idioma, práticas esportivas.

Ao trazer a público os textos aqui coligidos, o Itamaraty põe ao alcance do leitor, com o apoio da Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão e de seu Instituto de Relações Internacionais, o primeiro volume do que será a “Coleção Caribe”, integralmente dedicada a temas afetos à região. A iniciativa reflete a convicção de que a aproximação entre o Brasil e o Caribe, em suas dimensões política, econômico-comercial e de cooperação, é decorrência natural de um sólido patrimônio de afinidades históricas e culturais do qual muito nos orgulhamos e que seguiremos trabalhando para sempre cultivar.

Brasília, janeiro de 2011

*Embaixador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota
Ministro das Relações Exteriores*

Presentation

The African Heritage in Brazil and the Caribbean

The African Heritage in Brazil and the Caribbean is a collective work that seeks to identify and analyze common traits in the identity of Brazilian and Caribbean societies. With articles prepared by experts from Brazil and from each member country of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), this book is aimed at contributing to the mutual understanding between our country and our various neighbors in the Caribbean region: the English-speaking island countries of the Caribbean—Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago—as well as Haiti, Belize, Guyana and Suriname.

The historical, cultural and demographic aspects that Brazil shares with the Caribbean nations are significant. Important portions of the Brazilian coast, specifically the nearly 300 km of the State of Amapá's coastline and the Northern portion of the Amazon River's mouth, are located above the equator and share lateral borders with the Guyana Sea. There are consistent historical indications that in the 17th century significant transfer of human resources and technology took place from the Brazilian Northeast to areas in the Caribbean, at a time marked by a production crisis in the Brazilian sugarcane sector. Both Brazil and the Caribbean also received within their societies important inflows of African and Native American populations, many of whom with similar traditions and roots.

However, it was only over the last few years that the ties that unite us as neighbors have been strengthened and consolidated as an important dimension in the Brazilian foreign policy agenda. A fundamental benchmark in this process was the Brazilian government's decision in 2004 to participate—and lead the military component—in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Preceded by extensive consultations with CARICOM member countries, the Brazilian presence in MINUSTAH signals a greater degree of engagement in the relationship we maintain with the Caribbean region as a whole.

A symbolic expression of and, at the same time, a factor in political momentum intensifying our relations with the Caribbean were the high-level visits which recently occurred to different countries in the region, such as Guyana, Suriname, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti, Barbados, and Grenada. Over the last eight years, some of these countries have welcomed for the first time a visit by a Brazilian Head of State or Foreign Minister.

The opening of new permanent diplomatic missions in the region constitutes yet another step in the process of enhancing the Caribbean presence in Brazilian foreign policy. Since 2005, Brazilian Embassies have been established in eight member countries of CARICOM, which means that today we have diplomatic representation in every single country of the Community.

This political convergence is complemented by the economic and cooperation spheres. Trade relations between Brazil and the Caribbean countries have significantly increased and diversified. From 2002 to 2008, trade flows have increased almost ten-fold, from US\$ 657 million to US\$ 5.2 billion. It is now regaining its dynamics pace, since the most acute effects of the world economic crises of 2009 have been overcome. Economic relations have also moved forward in the financial area; Brazil's accession to membership in the Caribbean Development Bank, as a non-borrowing member country, will certainly enhance the conditions for greater economic interaction with CARICOM countries.

The integration process also includes a diversified technical cooperation agenda. Over the last few years, Brazil has sent prospective cooperation missions to all countries of CARICOM, carried out by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC). As a result, today the Caribbean accounts for about 10 percent of the growing cooperation that is provided by the Brazilian government worldwide.

Also noteworthy is the relationship between Brazil and the major organizations for Caribbean integration. Brazil has acceded to the category of associated third State both at CARICOM and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), with Ambassadors accredited with these two organizations, respectively in Georgetown (Guyana) and Castries (Saint Lucia).

With the strategic goal of consolidating a political and institutional framework for renewed convergence efforts between Brazil and the Caribbean, the 1st Brazil-CARICOM Summit was held in Brasília, on April 26, 2010, gathering 10 of the 14 Heads of Government in the region (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vicente and Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname), besides the Secretary General of CARICOM.

In addition to structuring and systematizing initiatives that reflect the concrete results of the relations between Brazil and CARICOM countries, the Summit has contributed to progress in terms of political dialogue, as stated in the Brasilia Declaration. The Declaration reiterates the commitment of Brazil and CARICOM to Latin- American and Caribbean integration, political coordination in international fora, and intensified cooperation in topics such as climate change, education, culture, agriculture, health, energy, civil defense, tourism, trade and joint actions in Haiti. Among these and other areas, 48 agreements were signed in Brasilia between Brazil, CARICOM, OECS and several member countries of the Community. A Protocol was also signed establishing a political consultation mechanism between Brazil and CARICOM.

The various commitments arising from the Summit are currently at the stage of implementation. Results are becoming visible in areas that include technical cooperation, political coordination in international fora (such as with regard to the agenda of the Financial G-20) humanitarian assistance (financial contributions by Brazil to the CDEMA, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency) and transportation (direct flights between Brazil and Barbados).

However, mutual knowledge between Brazil and the Caribbean is still limited. Leaders at the Brazil-CARICOM Summit, fully aware of this circumstance, have provided their respective governments with clear guidelines to encourage the study and public promotion of our common history. With regard to our shared African heritage, they included a specific mandate in the Brasília Declaration:

“Recognizing the importance of African heritage in their societies, the Heads of State and Government agreed to encourage the conduct of studies on slavery and its impact on the formation of our cultures, so as to assign the proper value to the participation of Afro-descendants in our common history.”

The African Heritage of Brazil and the Caribbean is a response to this mandate. By compiling articles by authors from Brazil and each one of CARICOM’s member countries, the book features a diversified and multidisciplinary approach. A common thread throughout the book is the focus on analyzing the historical processes that resulted in the affirmation of African roots in the creation of national identities in Brazil and the Caribbean countries. The articles, which are published in the languages they were originally written, demonstrate the persistence of these common influences in different domains of our realities: the ethnicity of our populations, religious practices, manifestations of popular culture, cuisine, languages and sports.

By publishing the articles compiled in this book, the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations makes available to the public, with the support of the Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation and its International Relations Institute, the first volume of what will become a “Caribbean Collection,” fully dedicated to Caribbean-related topics. This initiative reflects the conviction that the convergence of Brazil and the Caribbean, in all its political, economic, commercial, and cooperation aspects, is the natural outcome of a solid heritage of historical and cultural affinities, which we are very proud of and will continue to cherish.

Brasília, January 2011

*Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota
Minister of External Relations of Brazil*

1. Antigua e Barbuda

Africa's Legacy on Antigua's Shores: The African Presence in Antiguan Cultural Identity

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Approximately 200 years have passed since the closing of England's slave trade, which in turn ended a massive influx of Africans to Antigua and its other colonies in the Americas. Assessing the African roots of modern Antiguan culture thus proves a complicated task of historical recovery, as all traces of "Africanity" have been deeply transformed over time. The current culture of Antigua reflects not only Africa but myriad other influences that have infiltrated this small island in the wake of an increasingly globalized world. In addition, European technological innovation, economic monopoly and political dominance have long been centered within traditional histories of Antigua and the rest of the Americas. Conversely, the historical records of Africans are scant and problematic, as these actors often entered history as chattel laborers or social deviants rather than as valued members of society. Yet as anthropologist Sheila Walker observes, the demographic, intellectual, economic and cultural foundations of the Americas were provided largely by Africans, who were the single largest group to populate the hemisphere for the majority of post-Columbian history.¹ The story of Antigua's national culture thus cannot

¹ Sheila Walker, "Introduction: (Re)Writing/Righting the Pan-American Discourse" in *African Roots/American Cultures: Africa in the Creation of the Americas*, ed. Sheila Walker (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 2. She notes that for the first 300 of the roughly 500 years since Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas, migration and demographic totals for Africans far outpaced any other group in this hemisphere, due to the slave trade.

be understood without an examination of Africans' multifaceted and lasting contributions.

The early history of slavery offers key details regarding how "Africa" formed the basis of Antigua's cultural landscape. African people's arrival onto Antigua's shores occurred within a context of considerable duress that involved brutal captivity, separation from kin, and forced labor in a foreign land. According to recent research on transatlantic slave trading, roughly 138,000 Africans were imported into Antigua between 1670 and 1820. The peak years of the trade, 1700-1760, found Antigua receiving anywhere from 10,000-25,000 Africans per decade.² Yet Antigua's population never rose above 40,000 persons in any given year during this same period,³ which reveals the extreme violence of slavery, and the difficulty African communities had of reproducing themselves naturally while enduring such harsh labor conditions. However, this also meant a constant renewal of African culture at its source; as thousands of African men, women and children were absorbed into the voracious labor market that drove sugar production on the island. Hence Africa was constantly arriving in Antigua during this 150 year period of demographic transformation, which had indelible effects on local development.

Historically Antiguan sugar planters expressed preference for importing slaves of certain "ethnicities." These ethnicities were really identities coined by Europeans which mainly correlated to slave trading ports. They only partially corresponded to actual communities within Africa's various polities on the western coast. Antiguan slave traders principally sought Coromantee, Fanti and Popo slaves; many of the slaves subject to the first two of these three nebulous labels tended to be of Akan descent.⁴ The British controlled slave trading in the Gold Coast (modern-day Ghana) which largely supplied the more than a million Akan forcibly transported to the Americas between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The Akan presence was thus quite prominent especially in the British colonies in the Caribbean, Antigua included.

² See Table 1.8 in David Eltis and David Richardson, "A New Assessment of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, in *Extending the Frontiers: Essays on the New Transatlantic Slave Trade Database*, eds. David Eltis and David Richardson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 51.

³ For population totals in this period, see Vere Langford Oliver, *The history of the island of Antigua, one of the Leeward Caribbees in the West Indies from the first settlement in 1635 to the present time...* (London: Mitchell & Hughes, 1894).

⁴ David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 84-85.

Yet Antiguan planters purchased any available slaves hailing from ports well beyond those of their above preferences, and also, as many scholars of the trade have observed, the coastal slave ports assembled captives of various origins within the interior of West and West-Central Africa. So a sense of the ports most heavily represented in the slave trade to Antigua still does not provide a certain account of the ethnic and cultural origins of all African people imported to its cane fields. Moreover, any examination of Akan culture should highlight its multilingual and hybrid cultural character well before Europeans began sustained commerce and established written records on the continent. Europeans' singular focus on finding and carving nation-state formations in West Africa led to their sure misunderstanding of the people whom they encountered. Africans organized themselves and viewed their worlds in much broader and culturally complex ways than Europeans comprehended.⁵ But at the very least the historical evidence of ancient Akan social formations provides a crucial starting place for clues to Antigua's African-based culture.

A brief essay cannot encapsulate the entirety of Akan cosmology and customs but certain key facets, evidenced since ancient times, deserve particular attention. At base, an Akan was identified by shared matrilineal descent in the ethnic group, shared knowledge of the Twi language and shared belief in core Akan spiritual concepts.⁶ The most prominent of Akan spiritual beliefs concerned ancestors. The Akan believe in the sacredness created by the community of deceased relatives who were often buried in proximity to the living. Funereal rites are thus a central aspect of spiritual practice among Akan people. The closeness of family graves are a complement to the ideological dimensions of ancestral worship, as the Akan see death as a passage to a hallowed ancestral homeland where all the deceased dwell. And thus ancestral worship has remained a signature facet of Akan spirituality. In Akan cosmology, ancestral spirits, *abosom*, guide and protect the lives of the living in order to guarantee their eventual ability to join this sacred community in the beyond. In addition, Akan belief in and continued homage not just to ancestors, but also to other revered spirits fosters communication with their creator, *odomankoma*, the all-powerful being who created the universe. Connecting to this network of spirits allows for the building of knowledge that helped to

⁵ Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 13-14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

organize the community of the living, and guaranteed passage to the homeland upon death.⁷

Other aspects of Akan social life and spiritual formation offer important details to understanding Antiguan Africanity. In particular the importance of Akan women, socially, spiritually and politically, in their communities begs further discussion. As mentioned, Akan clans trace their origins through maternal lines of descent. But also, in ancient Akan settlements, high-ranking women of a clan, the *ohemmaa* (usually the sisters or mothers of the high-ranking male hunters that defended the clan, the *ohene*) played critical roles in demarcating both arable and sacred land space, and maintaining the land and social order of the clan. Women are often credited in oral histories of various clans as being the founders and first governors of their settlements, although in most cases, males eventually assumed clan leadership. In the later period of trade with Europeans, while men of wealth, often of the merchant class, occupied the ultimate seats of power in a given clan, their female relatives still wielded political importance within the clan order.⁸

Indeed, the Akan historically crafted a complex set of fascinating customs and mores that while not enduring completely intact, certainly remained strong enough to leave recognizable traces in the Americas. Despite the devastation of exile, enslavement, and cultural devaluation that colonialism wrought, Akan culture was clearly manifest within the community of descendants in Antigua. The island-wide 1736 slave conspiracy offers the earliest historical record of the extensive Akan presence in Antigua. The plot sought to ambush the local plantocracy as they attended an October ball in celebration of King George II's coronation. This foiled plot, replete with Akan cultural symbols and spiritual practices, serves as convincing evidence that the African-born and the first few generations of Antiguan-born enslaved people had actively built an Akan social order that had long eluded their white owners. The plot was mainly constructed and led by two men, one African-born, Court, and one Creole, Tomboy, who together collaborated with a group of eight other men, mostly Creole, on the recruitment and initiation of several hundred enslaved and free men and women to their effort. These "deputies" as Gaspar called them,

⁷ Konadu, *Akan Diaspora*, 19-20 offers a thoughtful discussion of key features of Akan cosmology; *odomankoma* is defined on p. 238; also Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, 244-45 asserts the critical importance of funereal rites and connection to ancestral spirits among Akan in Antigua during the 1730s, which became an important aspect of the historic 1736 slave plot.

⁸ Konadu, *Akan Diaspora*, 40-43.

assumed similar roles to the *ohene*, the men of power in Akan matriclans. The wealthy and trusted slave Court enjoyed a public announcement of his leadership in the plot via a grandiose and distinctly Akan ceremony known as the *ikem*, in which he was crowned “king of the Coromantees.” Thousands attended the ceremony in St. John’s, both plot participants and other unaware viewers, black and white, simply there for the spectacle.⁹

All initiates to the plot had to take an oath, which involved ingestion of a mixture that included grave dirt, rum and chicken blood. The oath ceremony featured the phrase “we should drink the *abosom*.” Both the consumption of grave dirt and the invocation of the *abosom* suggest that the ritual venerated Akan spirits and the ancestral world overall and also revered the knowledge that familiarity with such spirits was supposed to engender. Oaths in pre-colonial Akan culture were generally sacred statements whose utterance was restricted due to the negative consequences that could follow, hence the gravity associated with oath-taking. Certainly the slaves’ 1736 plot with its intentions to overthrow their masters and end their bondage required the ultimate of secrecy, which made a sacred oath an appropriate form of initiation. Also the oath-taking in Antigua’s 1736 conspiracy paralleled oaths required to join Akan-based maroon societies in Jamaica, French Guiana and Suriname around this time.¹⁰ Truly the spiritual and the political were merged in Akan societies in Africa and the same was true of their derivative in Antigua.

In addition, certain African-born women played principal roles in the conspiracy, highlighting further just how Akan the 1736 plot was. The woman Obbah was clearly an Akan culture bearer in Antigua, as she oversaw the initiation rites of many participants during a feast at her house, where she herself prepared the sacred drink. Also the Akan woman Queen, an elderly woman enslaved on Pares Estate who often sold goods for Court, has been interpreted as his trusted advisor; aptly, the name “Queen” connotes that she most likely fulfilled the role of the *ohemmaa* in the Akan formation unfolding

⁹ See Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, Chapter 11, for details on the organizational structure of the plot and its heavy Akan basis, and p. 252-3 for his specific interpretation of Court’s *ikem* ceremony as a preparation for war. Also see Konadu, *Akan Diaspora*, 133-140, for his reinterpretation of Gaspar’s take on the details, including the *ikem*, that Konadu asserts was rather only a ceremony for establishing Court’s nobility due to his wealth and elder status. While the intent is debatable, it is clear that Akan elements coursed throughout the ceremony, including the use of the shield as a sacred object sealing the coronation.

¹⁰ Konadu, *Akan Diaspora*, 61, 135.

in the context of the plot.¹¹ The plot, though upended just before its execution, which resulted in several death and transportation sentences for hundreds of participants, remains a testament to the underlying cultural richness of the slave community. Yet the failure of this community in 1736 did not lead to the dwindling of Akan culture on the island; as nearly a century later, evidence of similar practices surfaced in historical records pertaining to Antigua.

From the second half of the eighteenth century onward, British colonial authorities allowed for various Protestant sects to proselytize the enslaved community in Antigua and the rest of the Caribbean region. This missionary influx was intended to produce not only devoutness, but obedience among slaves through rejection of African religious and cultural practices for Christianity. In Antigua, while the planters and other whites of means attended the Anglican Church, the Methodist and Moravian Churches competed to attract the attention of slaves. However, these missions did not just compete with each other, as they also still had to contend with an enduring set of Akan customs prevalent among enslaved people. Missionaries seeking to whittle the Africanity of enslaved people especially had to combat obeah, a system of spiritual expression and healing widely practiced in the British Caribbean and usually engaged on an individual basis rather than in groups. A healer, or an obeah man or woman, would perform rituals for clients seeking to find order in their lives, to produce particular ends whether positive or negative, or often the truth about a perplexing issue. British authorities decried obeah as “witchcraft,” and deemed it illegal during the entire colonial period. Scholars have heralded obeah as a multifaceted and vital institution during and after slavery in the British Caribbean.¹² Obeah functioned as a galvanizing force in

¹¹ Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, 248.

¹² Many scholars have investigated obeah’s multiple significances in varying detail. Mindie Lazarus-Black, *Legitimate Acts, Illegal Encounters: Law and Society in Antigua and Barbuda* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 43-45 presents obeah as a multi-faceted phenomenon facilitating both hidden forms of everyday slave resistance, like poisoning or crop ruination, and notes obeah’s role in the emergence of a system of government and justice among slaves. Diana Paton, *No Bond But the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 184-186, sees obeah as an Afro-Caribbean system for alternative justice and settlement of disputes in slavery and well after freedom, upholding the connection that Lazarus-Black establishes between obeah and social order among Afro-Caribbean communities. Margarite Fernandez Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santeria, Obeah and the Caribbean* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 6-7, posit obeah as a repository of African cultural beliefs about the supernatural and as do the other aforementioned scholars, view obeah practitioners as community leaders.

the 1736 plot, as three known African-born obeah men played critical roles in recruitment and oath-taking, along with the woman Obbah, whose very name seems an allusion to the practice of obeah.¹³ Also the historian Kwasi Konadu notes that while scholars previously attributed the etymology of the term “obeah” to the Igbo language (the Igbo had an overwhelming presence in the transatlantic slave trade and hailed from an area corresponding to modern-day Nigeria), the possibility remains that the term could have Akan linguistic roots as well.¹⁴ Ultimately, obeah's practice during Antigua's late slavery and early post-emancipation periods reflected the continued strength of Akan culture even as an African-born majority was replaced by an Antiguan-born one over the 1800s.

In 1804, after several decades of missionary work in Antigua, the free colored woman and Methodist enthusiast Anne Hart Gilbert penned a letter to a Methodist missionary in which she laments the continued practice of obeah. Her details on obeah believers in Antigua at the time reflect the aforementioned core principles of Akan communities that prevailed centuries before European contact. Specifically, rites around burying the dead bore unmistakable marks of Akan cultural roots. According to Gilbert, obeah funerals involved lengthy processions in which the life of the deceased was recounted in song accompanied by the rhythm of a pebble-filled calabash. In addition, yearly on Christmas Day cemeteries were crowded with obeah believers hosting extensive feasts in honor of deceased loved ones at the foot of their graves. Gilbert noted that participants in such funereal rituals were found “invoking a perpetuation of [the deceased's] friendship from the world of the Spirits with their Surviving friends and relations & praying them to deal destruction among their enemies, especially if they thought their death had been occasioned by the power of Witchcraft...”¹⁵. Indeed the *abosom* were still being venerated by early nineteenth century enslaved Antiguan, who used such ritual to ensure the divine protection of ancestors against evil for the community of living believers. In the same letter, Gilbert also notes that local whites in Antigua are also prey to such “superstition” as she calls it, observing that for “every trivial loss,” whites could be found “sprinkling grave-dirt &

¹³ Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, 246-248.

¹⁴ Konadu, *Akan Diaspora*, 140.

¹⁵ Anne Hart Gilbert to Rev. Richard Pattison, 1 June 1804, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, West Indies General Correspondence [fiche-text], Yale Divinity School, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, CT, Fiche 3-4.

mixing it for the people about the house to drink.”¹⁶ The use of grave-dirt to right a wrong seems to evoke a parallel to the drink that the 1736 conspirators had to consume, which may be another testament to the potency of Akan cultural influence upon Creole Antiguan not only of African but also of European descent as well.

In the mid-nineteenth century, after slavery’s end in 1834, colonial authorities and white upper class observers registered continued alarm about obeah’s prevalence in Antigua’s African-descended community. The records contain less specific reference to Akan symbols in the details offered on the rituals practiced, a possible result of cultural dilution over time or just merely lacking attention to such details among observers. However the sources confirm that obeah continued to galvanize the African-descended community. The documents also reveal the persistence of the belief in Akan cosmology that the living must communicate with and seek guidance from ancestral spirits. For example, Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, a pair of American Quaker missionaries charting the progress of West Indian emancipation, visited Antigua in 1837, and noted that the Christian missions had resulted in “elevation” of ex-slaves to greater intelligence. Yet they noted that “A belief in the Obeah, and other superstitions, is not quite worn out, even among the members of churches.”¹⁷ In their tour of the countryside in the company of a local minister, they also happened upon a village woman who was at least nominally Christian but yet had placed an “obi” necklace of horse hair around her child’s neck, due to its “limber” nature. While she was in the presence of the minister, he chastised her and had her remove the necklace; the possibility remains, however, that she could have restored its use after the group left.¹⁸

An 1844 treatise on Antiguan history and society written by a planter’s wife, Mrs. Lanaghan, offers a flood of details confirming that belief in obeah was still widespread despite nearly a century of Christian evangelism on the island. Her discussion of these facets of Antiguan black life carries obvious condescension, but fascinating details can still be gleaned. Lanaghan notes the expert familiarity of obeah men and women with local roots and plants,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey, *The West Indies In 1837; being the Journal of a Visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbadoes, and Jamaica; undertaken for the purpose of ascertaining the actual condition of the Negro Population of those islands* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1838), 27.

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

with the potential to heal or harm.¹⁹ She also outlines a number of obeah rituals involving people suspecting themselves to have been wronged by an enemy for which they seek out obeah men or women to get protection or redress. For example, Lanaghan overheard her servant telling the story of his wife, who after a consultation with an obeah woman for both a persistent illness and a missing garment, was the subject of “many mysterious rites.” After those were performed, according to Lanaghan, “the necromancer proceeded apparently to draw out of the sufferer’s arms and legs, pieces of the gown she had lost, various sized pieces of glass, parts of an old shoe, and many other similar articles.”²⁰

Lanaghan also dedicates several pages to a discussion of Antiguan’s beliefs in “jumbies” or the spirits of deceased people that roamed the earth and interacted with the living, often in harmful ways. She notes that

*It is also a very prevalent opinion among the negroes that if they beg one of their dying friends to “trouble” anyone they dislike, (that is for his spirit or jumby to appear to him) the jumby, which they expect to rise on the third day from death, will do their bidding, and that the person so haunted can never take rest until he himself dies. Their opinion respecting the immortality of the soul is, as far as I can understand it, this—that if a person die one day and is buried the next, during the succeeding night, the spirit, or, as they term it, the “jumby,” rises, and either goes to heaven, or, if during life they have committed any crime, or met with a violent death, wanders about the earth, until by prayers, fumigations, or something of the kind, it is laid to rest.*²¹

The jumby, still invoked by present-day Antiguan to denote the spirits of the dead in the land of the living, might be a variation on the *abosom*, the protective ancestral spirits key to ancient Akan worship.²² The effects of

¹⁹ Mrs. Flannigan [Lanaghan], *Antigua and the Antiguan: A full account of the colony and its inhabitants from the time of the Caribs to the present day*, vol. 2, (London: Saunders & Ottley, 1844), 51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

²² See Mali Olatunji, “African Aesthetics in Motion: The Probability of a Third Jumbie Aesthetic in Antigua and Barbuda,” in *The CLR James Journal: A Review of Caribbean Ideas*, 13:1 (Spring 2007), 79 for a definition of jumbies, and the entire essay for a fascinating discussion of the development of the island’s “jumbie aesthetic.”

Christian influence may have transformed local Antiguan understandings of such spirits by the nineteenth century to carry more negative connotations, and may also explain the sense that jumbies appeared after a three-day respite of the deceased, paralleling the Easter resurrection of Jesus Christ home to Christian tradition. But the Akan concept of the worlds of the dead and the living as intertwined had yet to be abandoned by the people. Also the sense still prevailed that the spirits of the dead played a protective role for their relatives and friends left behind, and that communication with the spirits had certain efficacy to achieve desired ends in this life.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century village life in Antigua also bore the markers of Akan cultural antecedents, as described by estate laborer Samuel “Papa Sammy” Smith in his memoir. He was born in 1877, and came of age in the early 1900s, when Antiguan culture was largely creolized; yet his recollections still hint at the persistence of African roots. He grew up in one of Antigua’s many impoverished but independent “free villages,” established after abolition in 1834 by newly liberated black communities seeking an existence off the sugar estates and away from the eyes of their former masters. In a chapter entitled “Village Life,” we learn from Smith that funereal rites still remained a strong tradition among Antiguan working people, where they would be memorialized in an all-night wake complete with song and food. This parallels Anne Hart Gilbert’s observations of what enslaved believers in obeah did to remember and communicate with the dead at gravesites at the start of the 1800s. However, as Smith retells it, this tradition was also Christianized, as he says that hymns were sung and makes no mention of songs relating the life story of the deceased. One can only imagine though, that such wakes also involved family and friends recounting stories about the deceased. According to Smith, villagers of the early 1900s also felt that jumbies still haunted the living. He noted that during the wake of a deceased person, the corpse was usually held at the home of surviving relatives until burial, as there were no undertakers at that time in Antigua. If an infant was in the household, the infant would have to be tossed three times over the dead body to prevent the jumby from “coming back to interfere” with the child.²³ Jumbies by this time apparently had evolved into entities inspiring fear in their believers.

²³ Keithlyn and Fernando Smith, *To Shoot Hard Labour: The Life and Times of Samuel Smith, an Antiguan Workingman 1877-1982* (Toronto: Edan’s Publishers, 1982), 67.

In other remembrances of village life, Smith conveys the central importance of village doctors, who were always women, and who had the knowledge of local roots and plants to heal a multitude of ailments. He lists several disorders and their corresponding herbal cures, and notes that comparatively “bakkra” doctors “never could do that job better than the women that serve as village doctors. Those women do everything to lessen the sufferings of our poor people.”²⁴ Early twentieth-century women village doctors evoke the centrality of women to ancient Akan social formations (the *ohemma*), and the herbal knowledge of obeah men and women Mrs. Lanaghan observed in nineteenth century Antigua. However Smith’s memoir suggests that the work of healing and of spiritual communication, once united in the singular function of obeah men and women, may have become separate as obeah believers were increasingly prosecuted and forced into hiding during the era of Christian missions. As early as the 1850s during a moment of socioeconomic distress due to a lagging sugar industry, obeah was feared to be surging among black communities in Antigua and was being heavily policed by colonial authorities. In 1851 Antigua’s legislature introduced as an amendment to an older vagrancy act, a bill against obeah, with harsher punishments to its practitioners, including up to a year’s jail time with hard labor and public whipping of offenders.²⁵ Fifty years later, the village doctor had evolved into a distinct position from the obeah man or woman. Nevertheless, despite persecution and continued cultural devaluation of African ways, Smith says that obeah men and women could still be found in every village during the early twentieth century. He insists that “It was no joke. The people believed in the superstition and the rituals.”²⁶

He also remembered with enthusiasm the sartorial choices of women at social events, also evocative of Antigua’s African roots. To adorn their dresses,

²⁴ Ibid., 65. “Bakkra” is a colloquial phrase used throughout the Anglophone Caribbean to refer to whites.

²⁵ British National Archives, Kew, London, United Kingdom, Colonial Office Series 7/98, “An Act to repeal a part of the Second Clause of an Act, entitled, “An Act for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons, Rogues and Vagabonds, incorrigible Rogues or other Vagrants in this Island...,” 27 March 1851; also see the House of Assembly Minutes, 9 January 1851, reprinted in the *Antigua Weekly Register*, 14 January 1851 for lawmakers’ debate over the issue. The original Vagrant Act, passed just after August 1, 1834, was aimed at ensuring that the newly freed would return immediately to plantation labor, an act with only mixed success in achieving its goal.

²⁶ Smith, *To Shoot Hard Labour*, 69.

women were said to wear “jumbie beads and warry beads around the neck to help them beautify themselves.” The popularity of women in beaded necklaces suggests that an African-based aesthetic prevailed among village people at this time. “Jumbie beads” had no direct function associated with jumbie spirits in Antigua, but were seeds from a tree used in many decorative ways.²⁷ But Smith’s mention of “warry” beads in particular connotes a specific African-based practice existent among current-day Antiguan. The “warry” beads refer to a game still played in Antigua today, popular since the earliest days of slavery and firmly African in origin. This game, designed to challenge the mathematical skill of its players through counting, distributing and capturing pebbles on a board with two rows of circular pits, is known as “warri” among West African populations as well as those in the modern Anglophone Caribbean. It is popularized globally by its Arabic name, “mancala,” and is said to originate in ancient Egypt, dating to the period before 1000 BCE. The game likely traveled with traders along the Nile River through sub-Saharan Africa and across the Atlantic with captives in the slave trade.²⁸ Indeed Africa in pre-colonial times evidenced a large degree of cultural intermixing. Warri’s infiltration into Antigua reflects the cultural hybridity of the African antecedents upon which the island’s modern culture is based, inclusive of, but not strictly limited to, Akan customs.

Mid-twentieth century Antigua featured further dilution and yet endurance of African cultural practices. In particular, the festival at Christmastime, the antecedent to Antigua’s current carnival in August, was replete with African customs and aesthetic production though an observance of a central Christian holiday. The art of masquerading, or “playacting” as it was termed by older generations, was especially prevalent in Antigua between the 1920s and 1950s. Artist Mali Olatunji vividly describes how masquerading engaged the entire community of black working class Antiguan, and combined detailed costume making, dance, and storytelling in a call and response fashion, all of which rest on African foundations within and beyond the Akan cultural nexus.²⁹ During this high period of the year, street parades were laden with artistic products that flowed from Antigua’s cultural imagination. Colorful masks hand designed

²⁷ Author’s conversation with Mali Olatunji, 15 November 2010.

²⁸ Sally E. D. Wilkins, *Sports and Games of Medieval Cultures* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002) 22.

²⁹ Olatunji, “African Aesthetics in Motion,” 82-87.

from clay, calabash shells, or wire, were worn by street performers in the hopes of evoking fear of onlookers.

Masks rarely appear in Akan cultural and religious ceremonies. Yet for other African ethnic groups heavily represented in the African slave trade to the Caribbean, including the Igbo and Yoruba of modern-day Nigeria, masks were an intrinsic part of their spiritual and cultural praxis, as masks accompanied both communal entertainment and sacred rituals.³⁰ The possibility remains that not only Akan, but also Igbo and Yoruba cultural influences were transferred to Antigua during the era of the slave trade. The Caribbean was full of Africans on the move and their cultures were in motion as well, via both captives traded directly from Africa into the region, and slaves coming into Antigua from other islands, as slaves frequently traversed the Caribbean basin both by force and by choice. In addition the continued intermixing bred by an ethos of migration in the Caribbean region after slavery, where Antiguan as well as others traveled from their home islands in search of labor and returned with new cultural imprints, could explain the origins of masking in mid-twentieth century Christmastime festivals.

A signal feature of the Christmas festival was the Jambull (John Bull), whose name conjures the yoke of centuries of English colonialism, but who bears a wide range of African cultural influences. The Jambull remains a central figure to working class festivities that captured the imagination of several generations of twentieth-century Antiguan; as Olatunji recalls “the Jambulls were the children’s favorite.” Jambulls were horned devil figures portrayed by men, whose bodies were covered in fiber trimmings (see Fig. 1 below). Jambulls chased children in the streets, performed a signature call-and-response ditty sang along with the crowd, and danced in a zig-zag fashion with an accompanying band of drums, fife, and triangle. Jambulls can still be found in Antigua’s carnival at present although their interactive mid-century performance no longer continues. Many men were famous in the 1950s for their skill in interpreting the Jambull figure, including two men known as “Arthur 16,” described by journalist and statesman Selwyn Walter as a “serious” Jambull that never smiled but was an expert “rhythmic dancer,”

³⁰ Jubril Adesegun Dosumu, “Masks and Masques in Yoruba Ritual Festivals,” in Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, eds., *Orisa: Yoruba Gods and Spiritual Identity in Africa and the Diaspora* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Victor Ukaegbu and Osita A. Okagbue, *The Use of Masks in Igbo Theatre in Nigeria: The Aesthetic Flexibility of Performance Traditions* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).

and “Pharaoh,” who was apparently “evil” but in contrast smiled and laughed quite frequently.³¹

Antiguan playwright Edgar Lake locates the Jambull within the Bilmawn folkloric tradition of North Africa, which featured two men turned into monsters after breaking into a sanctuary and raping a group of women.³² The monsters subsequently come into the villages at night to ask for food and frighten children. These bilmawn, often represented as hairy creatures, can be found in current masquerade festivals in the Maghreb, where they also chase children in the streets.³³ But the late Antiguan journalist and political activist Leonard “Tim” Hector, postulates that the Jambull has a sub-Saharan origin, after extensive discussion with a Congolese friend about the Jambull’s dance in particular.



Fig. 1: Jambulls in Antigua’s carnival parade, August 2005 (photo courtesy of author)

³¹ Selwyn Walter, *Bank Alley Tales, Book 1* (St. John’s, Antigua: Benjies’ Printery, 1995), 8.

³² Interview of Edgar Lake by Wallace Williams, March 2001, <http://www.virginislandspace.com.cnchost.com/PlaywritingLake1.htm> [date accessed, 15 November 2010].

³³ Abdellah Hammoudi, *The Victim and Its Masks: An Essay on Sacrifice and Masquerade in the Maghreb* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Chapter 4.

Hector, like Walter, also venerated the skill of Arthur 16 and Pharaoh's performances. He recounts that he was corrected by his Congolese friend of the assumption that the Jambull was based in Yoruba tradition. After Hector demonstrated the zig-zag dance of the Jambull, his friend insisted that "[the dance] was part of the worship of Damballah, an African God, who in the Congo, is the God of the Forest. The Zig-Zag ensures that the enemy cannot be scented downwind and captured. ... the entire ritual we called Jam Bull, presumably a corruption of the English John Bull, was a religious ritual which taught the young how to overcome fear."³⁴ The Jambull can clearly be traced to a wide range of origins, which reinforces the multifaceted nature of the African antecedents on which Antiguan culture is based. If African cultural roots are hybrid, then, so too are their offspring in modern-day Antigua.

Currently, Antiguan national culture bears a thoroughly diverse character, boasting a globalized mixture of traditions and new forms of cultural production. Akan customs still exist, including the continued strength of women as community leaders, the ongoing importance of funerals as a central event for socializing and preserving public memory of ancestors, and even the very limited practice of obeah still on the island.³⁵ Akan cultural facets appear in even more diffuse forms, such as speech patterns and sayings of Twi origin,³⁶ or in foodstuffs such as yams, okra or ducana (grated sweet potato and coconut boiled in banana leaves) home to Antigua's national palate and also staples of the modern Ghanaian diet.³⁷ Alongside these snippets of Africa however, English and European religious influence and colonial domination still shape

³⁴ Leonard "Tim" Hector, "Antigua's Creators and Innovators in 20th Century Culture," in *Fan The Flame*, <http://www.candw.ag/~jardinea/ffhtm/ff000107.htm>, January 7, 2000. [date accessed 15 November 2010].

³⁵ See for example Monica Matthew's detailed memoir of her experience in the Antigua of the 1970s on the eve of the island's 1981 independence. She was raised by her surrogate mother Mama May, whose life story and struggles especially highlight the themes of womanhood and mothering as central to the community, death and funerals as an intrinsic part of the culture, and the continued tensions between Protestant religion and folk practices and traditions. *Journeycakes: Memories with My Antiguan Mama* (New York: Grays Farm Publishing, 2008).

³⁶ For example, a number of Antiguan phrases are listed on the Museum of Antigua and Barbuda's website, as well as their origin in Twi and other West African languages. <http://www.antiguanmuseums.org/cultural.htm> [date accessed, 15 November 2010].

³⁷ See Jessica B. Harris, "Same Boat, Different Stops: An African Atlantic Culinary Journey," in Walker, ed., *African Roots*, 170, 178. On 178, she retells the story of a Jamaican visitor to Ghana who identifies the "dokono" that women are preparing in the market as the same delicacy home to much of the Anglophone Caribbean.

Antigua's culture quite distinctly; for instance the island's overwhelming number of Protestant Christian churchgoers, and nation's subscription to Westminster-style Parliamentary governance well after independence. Furthermore, American cultural and economic hegemony of the last fifty years, combined with the advent of the internet, which has allowed for vivid, detailed, and rapid exposure to the customs of the globe, equals a radically changing character for Antiguan culture at present.

Ultimately, though the present article attempts to define it in a singular essay, Antiguan culture defies encapsulation. As a rule, all modern culture is enduring yet fleeting; Antigua is no exception. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot aptly described the Caribbean as having had "nothing but contact" since 1492. Antigua's cultural dilution has been ongoing since Europe arrived in Africa and the Americas, and well before, since Africa's cultural transformation has been underway for the course of several millennia. So while Africa's past surely lingers in Antigua's present, in light of the constant flow of outside influences, this essay only scratches the surface of Antigua's complex cultural contours.³⁸

³⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "**The Caribbean Region: An Open Frontier** in Anthropological Theory," in *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (October 1992), 22.

2. Bahamas

The African Heritage's Influence on the Formation of the National Identity of the Bahamas

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African heritage in the Bahamas, Jamaica, Trinidad and the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean was important in the formation of national identity. Caribbean colonies and territories suffering from “fragmentation” and the “legacy of a heritage of separation and shattered identities” had to create new identities and societies against a background of the dehumanizing effects of slavery, indentureship, colonialism and imperialism¹. Anthropologist Nicolette Bethel argued that “in new nations, cultural development is the bedrock of the creation of a national identity”. Following Benedict Anderson, she observed that a “nation is a group of people brought together by an idea and set of symbols. There is nothing natural about this. The only thing that holds them together is the territory and symbolism that is the nation. There is very else they have in common”². Benedict Anderson defined the nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”³.

¹ 1 Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity. The Case of Jamaica. An Essay in Cultural Dynamic*, Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, Jamaica and Princeton, New Jersey, 2003, x, xiii.

² 2 Interview with Nicolette Bethel, Director of Culture, February 7, 2008. See also Nicolette Bethel (Director of Cultural Affairs) *Report on Bahamian Cultural Development, 2007. The Way Forward for the Development of Culture in The Bahamas in the 21st Century.* Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture, May 8, 2007.

³ Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London and New York, 1991, 6. Imagined because even people who live in small nations will never know most of their fellow members; limited because even the

Without cultural “rootedness” it is impossible to develop a nation especially with such a diversity of people. Culture draws the nation together and the two “tend to be inextricably linked”⁴.

Rex Nettleford also stressed the importance of cultural identity in the process of decolonization seeing it as “a sense of belonging, a psychic ease, the valuing of our contributions, a space in which to grow and the natural acknowledgement of our worth and dignity as human beings. It is indeed an important part of nation building and national development”⁵.

The search for cultural identity in Jamaica, Trinidad and the Bahamas probably began at the same time. However, in the Bahamas the emphasis was not as critical to the importance of finding a national identity, but as a means to boost the economy, especially tourism. This paper will give brief descriptions of the progress towards the search for a cultural and national identity made in Jamaica and Trinidad around the time of Independence. A more detailed examination will be given of the Bahamian situation.

At the time of Jamaica’s Independence in 1962, there existed a vibrant National Dance Theatre Company (NDTC), and a flourishing theatre movement encouraged and supported by the University of The West Indies Extra-Mural Department. The Little Theatre Movement, the Jamaican Community theatre movement spearheaded and established the “national pantomime” a folk-musical which, by the 1950s, attracted actress and folklorist Louise Bennett (Miss Lou), and comedian Ranny Williams who transformed the theatre into a “genuine people’s theatre”. Out of pantomime emerged other artists including numerous actors, singers, dancers, directors and playwrights who “convinced many of the acceptability of an indigenous Jamaica theatre”⁶.

The plastic and fine arts also flourished in Jamaica, influenced largely by artist Edna Manley from the late 1930s to the 1970s. Her husband, Norman Manley, during the late 1930s, before he became deeply involved in politics, promoted the development of creative arts and crafts in his Jamaica Welfare

largest nations have “finite if elastic boundary beyond which lie other nations; sovereign as the concept “was born in an age in which the Enlightenment and Revolution” were replacing dynasties; and community as a nation is conceived as a fraternity and “millions are willing to die for limited imaginings.” Benedict Anderson, 7.

⁴ Interview with Nicolette Bethel, February 7, 2008.

⁵ Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity*, xxi.

⁶ Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity*, 26.

Ltd. Later in 1959, as Chief Minister, he established a Ministry with responsibility for cultural affairs.

With the coming of Independence, the new administration led by Bustamante, included a young Edward Seaga who promoted an “aggressive cultural policy as part of the Five-Year Plan” making certain that the “popular and traditional arts” were promoted.⁷ Future administrations of different political parties continued to develop a cultural policy including Michael Manley in the 1970s, who set up an Exploratory Committee on Arts and Culture which was to “form the basis” of cultural policy dating from 1973. Culture, which is heavily influenced by Africa, is still given keen attention, being usually placed within the Prime Minister’s Office since 1977.

Trinidad, as in Jamaica around the time of its independence, also in 1962, experienced a cultural renaissance and “an upsurge of popular creativity that developed a new cultural identity which was Creole and national in orientation”⁸. As Bridget Brereton also demonstrated, Trinidad, during the 1930s also experienced a surge in “creativity in art, poetry, fiction, drama, music and dance...”. Beryl McBurnie was in the vanguard of this renaissance having researched West Indian folk dances in the late 1930s. She later opened the Little Carib Theatre (1948) and promoted folk and African inspired dances. This was unpopular among the majority of middle class blacks who felt ashamed of African derived music and dance. McBurnie, with the support of Albert Gomes, was not deterred; she presented steel bands on stage in the very early days of the pan. Steel band music originated in black working class areas in Port-of-Spain in the late 1930s and early 1940s and at the time was not appreciated by the middle class who were critical of the noise and “hooliganism” of the pan men.

Attitudes would change by the late 1940s, and in 1949, the Government appointed a committee to “investigate” the development of the steel band. At the same time a Steel Band Association was established. Increasingly, “influential people” offered their support and protection to the steel bandsmen. By the late 1950s the steel band also “was on its way to becoming an important part of the national culture...”⁹.

⁷ Rex Nettleford, *Caribbean Cultural Identity*, 31.

⁸ Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad 1783-1962*, Heinemann, Kingston, Port of Spain, London, 1981, 223.

⁹ Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad*, 227.

Calypso, which had emerged “in its modern form at about the turn of the century”, soon developed into a respected art form¹⁰. Calypsonians attacked injustice and were critical of ‘the mighty’. During 1930s and 1940s particularly, singers lambasted colonialism. Like Attila the Hun and The Roaring Lion, while singing abusive lines or mocking one another, they also attacked colonialism. Influenced by the Second World War and the American occupation in Trinidad, calypso gained international fame.

Sparrow (Francisco Slinger) is perhaps the most internationally known Calypsonian. He dominated the movement using calypso as an expression of “black nationalism and pride”. He was a strong supporter of Eric Williams and the PNM which represented “the rise of Creole nationalism”¹¹. Calypso rose to “new levels of sophistication and wit, becoming an important cultural form” and a mean of comment on social and political issues. No concrete cultural policy emerged in the post-independence years but Eric Williams, brilliant academic historian and leader of the PNP and first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, between 1956 and 1981 made his anti-colonial feelings clear in his *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (1962) and asserted that “people of African or part-African descent – creoles in local terminology – were the most important constituent group in the nation... and the core Trinidadian culture was ‘creole culture’ associated with that group”. The rise of Williams and the PNP ushered in a cultural renaissance including music, dance and carnival, all representative of African-Trinidadians¹². Williams’ Afro-creole narrative of the nation’s history was challenged soon after it appeared.

The Bahamas attained Majority Rule in 1967 bringing the predominantly black party, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), to power. Winning the next two General Elections held in 1968 (after the death of Uriah McPhee a PLP MP) and in 1972, Prime Minister Pindling and his Cabinet decided that Independence should follow the 1972 Election. The Speech from The Throne in June, 1971, announcing that they would seek Independence from Great Britain, made it official¹³. The British Government accepted the PLP’s victory in 1972, as “evidence” that the

¹⁰ Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad*, 224.

¹¹ Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad*, 225.

¹² Bridget Brereton, ‘Contesting the Past: Narratives of Trinidad and Tobago History’ *New West Indian Guide*, Vol. 81, 20, 3 and 4, 2007, 176.

¹³ *Nassau Guardian*, June 15, 1971.

Bahamian people agreed with the proposals for Independence which was set for July 10, 1973¹⁴. Plans were put in motion and a minute after midnight on July 10, 1973 Independence became a reality witnessed by a crowd of about 50,000¹⁵.

But how important was cultural development and national identity to the new nation? Howard Johnson argued that three main elements were important to the “formation of a collective self-image” in the Bahamas, “a sense of place, a sense of history and a heightened awareness of the African origins of the nation’s black majority”¹⁶. Geographically, the Bahamas, an archipelago, stretching from off the coast of Florida to the north of Haiti, was distinct from the rest of the Anglophone Caribbean. Historically the Bahamas’ economic and social development differed from most Caribbean territories where the plantation system thrived while Bahamians relied heavily on the sea for their survival¹⁷. In racial terms, the Bahamas’ development was not typical of the Caribbean colonies. Race relations there, resembled more those in the United States which recognized two major categories, ‘black’ and ‘white’. Historically, the Bahamian intermediate coloured class was small and not politically influential as a group. A small white majority dominated Bahamian society for almost 250 years, marginalizing the black population until Majority Rule in 1967. Race rather than class was the dominant feature in Bahamian society in early to mid-20th century.

Some progress had been made in the creation of black pride. It is necessary to discuss the African presence and its impact on the Bahamas. During the late nineteenth Century Bahamas population was predominantly African or African descendants. It comprised the former enslaved (10,000) and liberated Africans from foreign slavers who were landed in the Bahamas following the abolition of the slave trade in 1807, totaling about 6,000. In 1838, liberated Africans, originally indentured, and the former enslaved were made “fully free”¹⁸.

¹⁴ Nassau Guardian, March 4, 1972.

¹⁵ Colin Hughes, *Race and Politics in the Bahamas*, St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1981, 193.

¹⁶ Howard Johnson, ‘National Identity and Bahamian Culture’, *Yinna, Journal of Bahamas Association for Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, Guanima Press, Nassau, 13.

¹⁷ Nicolette Bethel, ‘Navigations: National Identity and the Archipelago’, *Yinna*, Vol. 1, 28-29.

¹⁸ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in The Stream. A History of The Bahamian People*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, Vol. 2, 1998, 11.

Liberated Africans were settled in free black villages outside of the town of Nassau. These included Headquarters (1824), the precursor of Carmichael (1832), Adelaide (1831), and Gambier (1830s). Africans also lived in the suburbs south of the city of Nassau, namely Grant's and Bain's Town. According to a Report on the Bahamas 1861-1876, "seven distinct races are known viz: the Yorubas (Yoruba) called Nangoes... the Congoes or Nangobars with a few Eboes (Ibo), Mandingoes, Fullalis (Fulas) and Hausas". The Report praised the Yorubas as "intelligent, hardworking and honest" and came down hardest on the Congo, describing this group as "decidedly inferior". As Rosanne Adderley demonstrated, there was "ethnic community building among these liberated Africans"¹⁹. Some Africans, the more recently arrived, spoke in an African language. In a section of Fox Hill, in eastern New Providence, known as Congo Town, people scarcely knew a word of English²⁰.

African Bahamians worked very hard at farming, sponge fishing, salt production, and marketing. Some were also employed in boat building and the manufacture of rope, hats, and baskets made of palmetto thatch. Black women were employed as seamstresses and laundresses. Liberated African were also recruited into the Second West India Regiment, the local detachment of the Royal Artillery²¹.

African Bahamians combined work with pleasure. This was particularly evident in the market places, especially the Nassau Market. As Patrick Bryan demonstrated for Jamaica, markets were used for meeting friends, entertainment and catching up on gossip²². African-Caribbean women also used the marketplace for organizing the Yoruba derived 'Asue' (also known as 'sou sou' 'partner' or 'meet and turn'), an informal or folk system of saving money²³.

Friendly Societies and later Lodges, established as early as 1834, when slavery was abolished, served as insurance plans for African Bahamians,

¹⁹ Patrice M. Williams (ed.), *Colonial Secretary Papers. Report on The Bahamas 1861-1876*, Department of Archives, Nassau Bahamas, 2002, 7-9. Rosanne M. Adderley, *New Negroes From Africa. Slave Trade Abolition and Free African Settlement in Nineteenth Century Caribbean*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2006, 25.

²⁰ Gail Saunders, 'The Social History of The Bahamas 1890-1953,' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1985, 116.

²¹ Patrice Williams (ed.), *Colonial Secretary Papers. Report on The Bahamas 1861-1876*. 10 and 18.

²² Patrick Bryan, *The Jamaican People 1880-1902*, London and Basingstoke, 1991, 209.

²³ Cleveland W. Eneas, *Bain Town, Nassau*, 1976, 17.

providing Africa cultural values, that “were directly in line with traditions underlying similar African origins. The societies existed mainly to provide funeral and sickness benefits but served to express grievances and protest giving African Bahamians “an extended political role”²⁴.

In the Bahamas, as in the Caribbean generally, religion was fundamental and central to social life. It was indeed a “major link” between African-Bahamian and Euro-Bahamian. In the late nineteenth century most Bahamians were at least nominally Christian. The majority attended the Anglican, Methodist or Baptist Church. There was also an African Episcopal Methodist or “Shouter Chapel” in Over-the-Hill New Providence. Most African-Bahamians attended those churches in the black Over-the-Hill area being particularly attracted to the Anglican High Church Ritualism with its use of candles, vestments, incense and processional marches. Rituals included the adoration of the Virgin Mary and Confession²⁵.

Even more attractive to African Bahamians was the Baptist faith which had been introduced to the Bahamas in the 1780s by freed slaves during the Loyalist influx from America. Early black preachers included Brother Amos (William) who had served with George Liele, the founder of the Baptist Church in Jamaica²⁶. Brother Amos established the precursor of Bethel Baptist Church. Other early Baptist preachers included Sambo Scriven, a runaway slave from St. Augustine, Florida and Prince William who spearheaded the building of Bethel Baptist Church. He later severed connections with Bethel and established St. John’s Particular Church of Native Baptists less than a mile from Bethel.

The black Baptist Church with its emphasis on spiritual freedom and the opportunity to worship in one’s own way, attracted few whites and the church soon became almost exclusively black. It was particularly strong in Cat Island and Andros which had largely African populations. Indeed, as Father Kirkley Sands stated: “Bahamian slave spirituality was essentially West African spirituality adapted to the conditions of Chattel slavery in the Bahamas”²⁷.

²⁴ Howard Johnson, *Friendly Societies in The Bahamas, 1834-1910, Slavery and Abolition*. A Journal of Comparative Studies, Vol. 12, No. 3, Dec., 1991, 184-186.

²⁵ Gail Saunders, ‘The Social History of The Bahamas 1890-1953,’ 89-90.

²⁶ Whittington Johnson, *Race Relations in The Bahamas 1834-1865*, University Press of Florida, 2006, 77.

²⁷ Kirkley C. Sands, *Early Slave Spirituality. The Genesis of Bahamian Cultural Identity*, The Nassau Guardian Ltd., Nassau, 2007, 26.

African Bahamians combined the “traditionally evangelical and fundamentalist forms of Christianity with revivalism and spiritualism”. Their God was more “accessible to direct persuasion” and they believed “both in salvation by faith and in a spirit world where the dead possessed supernatural powers and mediated among the living”²⁸.

In the Baptist and AME Churches, women were particularly moved by the emotional sermon, rhythmic anthem singing traditionally accompanied by hand-clapping to the phenomenon of spirit possession, the “supreme religious experience for the person of African origins”²⁹.

Herskovits, who noted similar possession rites among black communities in Guiana, Brazil, Haiti, Trinidad, Jamaica and the United States, believed, as did Dale Bisnauth, that these practices owed their existence in the ‘New World’ to a common source in Africa³⁰.

The African inspired ‘Rushin’ similar to the ante-bellum ‘ring shout’ in the Southern United States and revival services in Jamaica was and is still, to a certain extent, practiced in the Bahamas. Retention of other African features in religious practices was evident in the Bahamas in the early twentieth Century. The practice of obeah, a combination of superstition, medicine and worship, and the use of ‘bush’ medicine were an integral part of the lives of the black laboring class.

African-Caribbean and African-Bahamian Customs relating to death and burial differed from those practiced by Europeans. A tradition of “holding wakes and ‘setting up’ meetings over the dead was observed by African Bahamians.

As Clement Bethel has stated, music was an integral part of African-Caribbean and African-Bahamian life. Religious music, anthems or religious hymns, closely resembled the American ante-bellum slave songs and were brought to the Bahamas by Loyalists. They were heavily influenced by Africa, and came almost exclusively by way of the United States mainland. Secular music, on the other hand, with its strong emphasis on drumming and dancing, emanated more directly from Africa. Survival of the African based traditions

²⁸ David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies*, Oxford University Press, 1972, 91.

²⁹ Clement Bethel, ‘Music in The Bahamas: Its Roots, Development and Personality, M.A. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1978, 55-56.

³⁰ Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of The Negro Past*, Gloucester, Mass., 1970, 215-216. Cited in C. Bethel, ‘Music in The Bahamas’.

were partly due to the isolated and black settlements and the continued practice by men and women both in New Providence and in the Out Islands.

Bethel also noted that dance was another popular form of entertainment. Three distinctly different types of African derived ring dances were frequently practiced, especially in the black settlements. The holding of the Ring dances, Fire dance, the Jumping dance and the Ring Play was held to the accompaniment of the goatskin drum (the chief instrument throughout Africa), perhaps a concertina and two pieces of iron, was a favourite form of recreational activity³¹.

A popular form of leisure among the Bahamian black laboring population was the telling of traditional folk-tales. Folklorists Edwards, Parsons and Crowley pointed out that 'Ole stories, for example the B'Rabby and B'Booky tales and B'Anansi West African spider trickster, were told in the evenings in 'yards' or in a house inhabited by families or individuals who had much in common. The telling of Riddles and stories usually followed³².

Tales were divided into 'old stories' and fairy tales which had roots on Europe and Africa. Many came by way of the American South and the West Indies. Crowley argued that so many of the traditional Bahamian structures, themes and stylistic devices are shared with other "New World' Negroes," it seems to indicate that they came to the New World together as a part of the same cultural heritage, and that "... Africa still remains the most likely source of the old stories"³³.

According to Crowley in the 1960s, story-telling, although less frequent in New Providence, survived the "advent of radios, motion pictures, and extensive literacy"³⁴. Indeed, in 1994, several story-tellers, including some women, accompanied the Bahamian contingent to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

Emancipation Day was celebrated throughout the Bahamas on or around August 1st in various ways in different settlements. Powles observed in Nassau that every August, some of the Africans elected a queen (perhaps similar to

³¹ Clement Bethel, 'Music in The Bahamas: Its Roots, Development and Personality, 125-128.

³² Charles L. Edwards, *Bahama Songs and Stories*, New York, 1942, reprint of 1895 Edition, 17; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Spirituals and Other Folklore from the Bahamas*, *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 41, No. 162, Oct-Dec, 455-56.

³³ See also Daniel Crowley, *I could Talk Old Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966, 129.

³⁴ Daniel Crowley, *I could Talk Old Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore*, 1966, 14.

the Shango Cult in Trinidad) whose will was law on certain matters. Fox Hill has to this day celebrated Emancipation Day and this was followed a week later by Fox Hill Day. Festivities included recitations, music, drama and church attendance. It also included the British inspired plaiting of the Maypole, ring play and singing. Traditional African foods such as moi-moi, agidi and foo-foo were served³⁵.

The Festival of Junkanoo, now held on Boxing Day and New Years Day, is believed to have originated in West Africa and in some form existed in North Carolina, Belize, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis and the Bahamas. Bermuda has a similar celebration known as Gomba or Gombey.

There are many theories as to the origin of Junkanoo. A popular belief is that the festival celebrated the memory of an African merchant, John Conny, who ruled over several trading forts on the coast of Ghana in the early eighteenth century. It is possible that it was associated with West African festivals, for example, the Yam harvest of a secret society of the Igbo or the Yam festival of the Ga people. It may also have had connections to the festivals held by the Egungun secret society of the Yoruba people³⁶.

In the modern Bahamas, Junkanoo has become and remains “the essential expression of Bahamian identity” with deep roots in Africa with some influence from Europe, namely the mumming tradition of masked playacting. Its music using “goombay drums, conch shell, cowbell, whistle and bugle” and increasingly elaborate costumes - along with dance and rushing in down town Nassau - has now become a carefully regulated event and “a distinctly Bahamian episode of social, political, and cultural theatre rather than mere folklore survival”³⁷.

Traditional popular culture also remained strong in black rural settlements on New Providence and in the Out Islands. The performances of Bahamian tradition bearers at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in 1994 in Washington are evidence of the survival of traditional African Bahamian culture. Research for the Festival revealed that relative isolation and poverty preserved the traditional popular culture with its strong African influence which through a

³⁵ L.D. Powles, *The Land of The Pink Pearl*, London, 1981, 147. Cleveland W. Eneas, *Bain Town*, 32-33.

³⁶ Kirkley C. Sands, *Early Bahamian Slave Spirituality. The Genesis of Bahamian Cultural Identity*, 59-60.

³⁷ Michael Craton and Gail Saunders, *Islanders in The Stream. A History of The Bahamian People*, 488.

process of creolization had developed a distinctly Bahamian style. The settlement of thousands of liberated Africans in the Bahamas between 1811 and 1860 reinforced African-derived culture.

In post-emancipation years, Bahamians lacked a strong tradition of violent protest. Garveyism and the Pan-African movement, the influence of West Indians and the return of soldiers from the First World War and Bahamian workers from the Southern United States, all had an impact on Bahamian society.

Garveyism, which praised blackness and gave dignity to the African heritage, filtered through to many black West Indian leaders, some of whom passed it on to the ordinary people. Garvey visited Nassau, Bahamas in 1928 and encouraged blacks to feel some racial self-respect³⁸.

West Indians who were brought to the Bahamas, some as policemen and many as skilled artisans to assist in building the Hotel Colonial, made their homes in Nassau. They were clearly dissatisfied with the oppressive conditions especially the blatant discrimination in the Bahamas. By 1931, there was a "sudden appearance of racial consciousness and group consciousness" which had never manifested itself before³⁹.

Politically, the movement towards self-determination by the majority black population began with the Nassau Riot of 1942, which can be described as "the first in a series of events that spoke to Black dissatisfaction against an oppressive system"⁴⁰. The black liberation struggle, although delayed, continued with the establishment of the Progressive Liberal Party (1953), the 1956 demonstration centered around the tabling of the Resolution Against Racial Discrimination in Public Places (1956), the General Strike (1958), the Enfranchisement of Women (1961), the Black Tuesday Mace Incident (1965) which culminated in attainment of Majority Rule in 1967.

It was therefore not surprising, in light of the struggle, the still existing severe race relations and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, that at a Youth rally on July 4, 1971, Prime Minister Lynden Pindling, while giving assurance that the governing party "The PLP is for everyone," stated "I hope the white population have realized this and have no fears," the dominant culture

³⁸ Gail Saunders, *Bahamian Society After Emancipation*, Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, 2003, 158.

³⁹ *The Tribune*, July 1, 1931.

⁴⁰ Nona P. Martin and Virgil L. Henry Storr, 'I'se a Man': Political Awakening and the 1942 Riot in the Bahamas,' *Journal of Caribbean History*, Vol. 41, 1 and 2, 2007, 87.

he emphasized, was African-centered. He further urged Bahamians to “find out who you are and where you came from” and in referring to Goombay Summer, a programme introduced by the Ministry of Tourism, Pindling stated that it was more than “just a tourist promotional experience,” it “will turn out to be a cultural renaissance and “will fill a deep psychological void and satisfy centuries old yearning. At long last, the Goombay Drum and Jump dance have been elevated to the level of national art”⁴¹.

Economic issues, namely the failure of various Bahamian industries such as pineapple and citrus production and sponge fishing, led the Bahamian government to embrace tourism, a fledgling industry in the early twentieth century, as the mainstay of the economy. The attraction of mainly white North Americans negatively impacted race relations in the Bahamas. Additionally, Bahamians traveled to America as labourers and to seek higher education encountering the severe segregation there, thus encouraging “the identification of all but the fairest coloureds as “black”⁴². While mass tourism was introduced in the Bahamas in the late 1940s and early 1950s, in Jamaica it did not become entrenched until the 1980s. Caribbean intellectuals stressed the negative effects of tourism to the government of Jamaica, but because of the severe economic situation it also embraced tourism trying to “use it as a tool for social and economic development”⁴³. Prime Minister Michael Manley during his first administration in the 1970s stressed that the island was ‘More than a beach, we’re a country’ and made a “national appeal to Jamaicans to have pride in their own identity”⁴⁴. Trinidad, with a more diversified economy, did not embrace tourism, at least not in the immediate pre and post Independence era.

Tourism growth also stimulated the development and commercialization of local black entertainment in the Bahamas, and greater organization of festival of Junkanoo and the local straw work industry. Just as in Jamaica and Trinidad, the Bahamas experienced an awakening of cultural creativity during the late 1920s through the 1950s, years which could be termed the “golden years for African-Bahamian Development”⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Patricia Roker (ed.) *The Vision of Sir Lynden Pindling. In His Own Words. Letters and Speeches 1948-1997*, Nassau, Bahamas, 2003, 23 and 34.

⁴² Nicolette Bethel, ‘Navigations: National Identity and the Archipelago,’ *Yinna*, Vol. 1, 25.

⁴³ Polly Patullo, *Last Resorts. The Cost of Tourism in The Caribbean*, Ian Randle Publishers, Kingston, 11.

⁴⁴ Polly Patullo, *Last Resorts. The Cost of Tourism in The Caribbean*, 151.

⁴⁵ Hartley Saunders, *The Other Bahamas*, Nassau Guardian, Nassau, 1991, 195.

Nassau gained a reputation as a tourist destination and also a seasonal resort for the wealthy. This had a significant impact on the life and heritage of the black majority. Tourism growth stimulated the development and commercialization of local black entertainment and indigenous crafts. Two outstanding nightclubs, The Silver Slipper and the Zanzibar were built in Grant's Town in the 1930s. The Zanzibar was owned by local black Bahamian entrepreneurs, Milo Butler, Bert Gibson, Preston Moss and Felix Johnson. Local black orchestras usually played at the clubs and native floor shows were performed to please tourists. While benefitting the population economically, tourism further eroded the self-esteem of black Bahamians still suffering from centuries of exploitation brought by slavery and colonialism. Black Bahamians performed to please tourists, often with little thought of authenticity. Indigenous culture was "packaged" for tourists in a strictly controlled 'social space' in a segregated city where non-whites including musicians were banned from working in hotels, except as servants. Blacks in fact, in Krista Thompson's view, were rendered 'picturesque'. "While local elites benefitted from the 'plums' of tourism, mingling with travelling elites, the black majority struggled to make ends meet in the increasingly segregated resort city of 'white Nassau'⁴⁶. Promoters of tourism failed to portray seriously and honestly the rich African inheritance of the majority of its people the celebration of self and the true spirit of the Bahamian people, thus giving way to minstrelsy⁴⁷.

Two exceptional musicians, Joseph Spence ("Youngie") and Tony McKay (The Obeah Man), better known abroad than in the Bahamas, failed to fall into the tourist trap. Joseph Spence, born on Andros Island in the Bahamas in 1910, had a varied career as a sponge fisherman, migrant farm worker in the United States, stonemason and night watchman. He was above all a musician, having been given a guitar at the age of nine. Teaching himself to play it, he developed a unique style, comprising African inspired rhyming religious and a "variety of dance rhythms that included quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, and calypso pieces". This great folk guitarist and singer was hardly known in the Bahamas but the outside world took note and in the 1930s Folklorist Alan Lomax

⁴⁶ Krista Thompson, 'The Tropicalization of the Anglophone Caribbean: The Picturesque and the Aesthetics and Politics of space in Jamaica and The Bahamas, Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 2002, 237.

⁴⁷ See Patricia Glinton Meicholas, "32 Past '73. Time to Assess who we were, who we are and who we can Become. The Sir Lynden Pindling Memorial Lecture, 22 March, 2005.

recorded Joseph Spence releasing these recordings on the Smithsonian Folkways label⁴⁸.

Mcfarlane Gregory Anthony Mackey (Tony McKay), who recorded as 'Exuma', was born on Cat Island in 1942. At the age of seventeen, he moved to New York to study architecture. He was lured by his love of music and began performing with a number of American artists including Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrick and Barbra Streisand, who later became famous during the 1970s and 1980s. Tony McKay released a number of albums including "Exuma, The Obeah Man". His records however, did not receive "much exposure". Not deterred, he performed at Heritage Festivals, Bars and toured with other well-known musicians. After suffering a mild heart attack in the late 1980s, he "devoted much more of his time to painting, his other great talent". He died in 1997 and was described by Bahamian lawyer and politician, Alfred Sears as "A Bahamian visionary... His life and art reflect the wonderful cultural heritage and personality of Bahamians, drawing on the roots of Africa and the branches of the Amerindians, Europeans and Americans"⁴⁹.

Recently Doongalik Studios Art Gallery, in conjunction with Carter Marketing and other entities, sponsored an exhibition celebrating the music, art and memorabilia relating to Joseph Spence and Tony McKay. Both artists were better known abroad than in the Bahamas. Their art is a celebration of Bahamian heritage richly influenced by its African inheritance.

During the pre-independence era, it was clear that the black majority government understood the 'role of creating a nation'. They made a conscious effort to establish the necessary mechanisms. In 1972, the Cultural Affairs Division was added to the portfolio of the Ministry of Education with the mandate to 'collect, arrange' and highlight Bahamian traditions, music and folklore which necessitated the holding of festivals. Attention was also given to Art, Civics, Audio-Visual recordings and also to the establishment of the National Archives.

During the late 1960s, the Bahamas Festival of Arts, which later included drama, was established to encourage indigenous performance. Winston Saunders and Clement Bethel, who produced and directed the Independence show "Pages in Bahamian History" utilized dance instructors Alex Zybine, Hubert Farrington and Shirley Hall Bass in presenting and show-casing the

⁴⁸ "<http://www.answers.com/topic/joseph-spence>.", Unctad (2008 e 2009) e BIS (2008).

⁴⁹ "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/exuma-\(musician\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/exuma-(musician))".

best of Bahamian talent in singing, acting and dancing, with emphasis centred on African heritage, highlighting the slave experience and black liberation.

Perhaps the most ambitious project to showcase Bahamian indigenous culture, was Jumbey Village, the brainchild of Edmund Moxey, Member of Parliament and Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Community Affairs, who, two years before Independence, was made responsible for coordinating the Independence activities in the Ministry of Education, and Culture. Mr. Moxey represented the Coconut Grove Constituency, where, in 1969, he had established a festival named Jumbey, after a Bahamian plant. Mr. Moxey's idea was visionary. He planned to display traditional Bahamian village life focusing on Bahamian heritage including music, its material and artistic heritage, food and crafts. Not only would the Village showcase Bahamian indigenous culture, it would attract tourists and supply jobs for crafts people, artists, musicians and curators. Moxey's idea corresponded with government policy in the sense that aspects of indigenous Bahamian culture should be preserved and promoted.

Indeed during the early years after the establishment of Jumbey Village, inspiring festivals, with throbbing drumming, music and dance, in addition to exhibitions and other activities, were held. Money was raised from children in public schools to finance the museum, but additional financial help for some reason, was not forthcoming. Moxey pressed the government for financial support to further develop Jumbey Village, but it was cut out of the 1974 Budget and, after protesting, Mr. Moxey was asked for his resignation.

Why did Jumbey Village fail? Its location was not ideal. It was some distance from the centre of Nassau and the hotels 'off the tourist beat'⁵⁰. Additionally, Bahamian support outside of the Coconut Grove area was not generally overwhelming – not enough people shared Moxey's vision. While funds were denied for Jumbey Village, finances were made available for a "Goombay Summer", a new programme – a thirteen week festival staged in downtown Nassau and Freeport intended to boost tourism arrivals.

By the mid-1980s, Jumbey Village had deteriorated and was finally demolished in 1987 to make way for the National Insurance headquarters. While Jumbey Village failed, Junkanoo succeeded like Carnival in Trinidad. Following the hiatus of the parade enforced after the 1942 riot, during the politically turbulent 1950s, the black population "became more conscious of

⁵⁰ Interview with Keva Bethel, Nassau, February 14, 1998.

its power in society”, and its activity in Junkanoo was transformed”⁵¹. While the parades and costuming became more sophisticated and Junkanoo lost “some of its roughness”, it became more attractive to spectators. The PLP’s victory in 1967 sparked more intense interest in black African heritage, and during the 1970s “Junkanoo would come to represent the very core of their culture, present and past”⁵². In Trinidad, efforts to commercialize Carnival, “at the expense of the street calypsonians and road marchers” was challenged and today carnival “remains at the centre of the nation’s psyche, an expression of Trinidad’s nationhood”⁵³.

Between Majority Rule and the late 1970s, there was a conscious effort to promote a sense of cultural identity in the Bahamas. The introduction of television (1977) was probably the ‘highpoint’ in this process. Emphasis was placed on African inspired culture and the majority of Bahamians proudly identified with this development. During the years leading to the Quincentennial of Columbus’ landfall in the Bahamas, emphasis was placed instead on the indigenous Amerindians and the African past. The Pompey Museum of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation, established in 1992, was the first museum dedicated solely to enslavement in the region. A Junkanoo Expo was also organized to preserve and showcase the best Junkanoo costumes and the Antiquities, Monuments and Museums Corporation with the mandate to preserve and manage historic sites and monuments, establish and manage museums and oversee archaeological excavations and research in the Bahamas was established in 1998.

Much has been achieved historically by Jamaicans, Trinidadians and Bahamians in their search for cultural identity. Efforts have been stymied, in some cases, by race relations, the profound impact of tourism, the influence of American popular culture, the drug trade and crime. Tourism especially has had a pervasive effect on the Caribbean and the Bahamas particularly. Liberated Africans enriched Bahamian society intellectually, creatively and business-wise. What is evident, according to Rosanne Adderley, is that “the liberated Africans from the start exhibited consciousness of themselves as a community, consciousness of their role in the politics of black freedom and

⁵¹ E. Clement Bethel and Nicolette Bethel (ed.), *Junkanoo Festival of The Bahamas*, London and Basingstoke, Macmillan Caribbean, 1991, 79.

⁵² E. Clement Bethel and Nicolette Bethel (ed.), *Junkanoo Festival of The Bahamas*, Macmillan Education, London, 1991, 84.

⁵³ Polly Pattulo, *Last Resorts. The Cost of Tourism in The Caribbean*, 151.

unfreedom, and engagement with the wider population of people of African descent, including the enslaved”⁵⁴. There is today a growing urgency among Bahamians to learn more about their history and culture and the legacy of their African heritage.

⁵⁴ Rosanne M. Adderley, *New Negroes From Africa*, 41.



3. Barbados

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and its Legacy for Barbados: some cultural issues

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About a decade ago, a distinguished African scholar called for a proper confronting of the unfinished business associated with the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Delivering an address in December 2000 at the Africa Centre in Covent Gardens in London, J.F.A. Ajayi suggested that development in Africa remained elusive not only owing to the misrule of many African leaders “but because Africa had been damaged severely, first by the slave trade, then by the colonialism which grew out of the slave trade.” It should, therefore, come as no surprise that Ajayi averred that the characteristics of the trans-Atlantic slave trade distinguished it from other related forms of trade or slavery and had long-term deleterious effects on Africans and their descendants in the Americas, all of whom were victims and not beneficiaries of this odious commerce. For Ajayi, the critical consequences of the trans-Atlantic slave trade were the unfortunate equation of ‘black’ with ‘slave’ and the failure to treat enslaved blacks (and their descendants) as human beings¹; and both continued to be applied even after abolition of slavery in the Americas.

While Ajayi’s comments were delivered as part of an argument for the awarding of reparations to Africa, the trans-Atlantic slave trade remains central to any discussion on the lives of blacks in the Americas. In this chapter, we

¹ J. F. Ade Ajayi *Unfinished Business: Confronting The Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism* Calcutta: CSSSC/SEPHIS 2002.

will examine the impact of the trade on the cultural evolution of Barbados. To do so, we must first examine the trade to Barbados and its role in effecting the socio-economic transformation of the territory. An important point of this discussion is to recognise and pay some attention to the ratio of African-born versus Barbados-born enslaved persons before 1807. This factor, we suggest, cannot be discounted when discussing the issue of culture in Barbados.

Introduction

Barbados' role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade was clearly shaped by its geographical location. As the most easterly island of the Antilles archipelago, it was often the first port of call for slave-trading vessels from Africa and this helped Barbados to emerge as an important *entrepôt* for the Eastern Caribbean and the *audiencia* of Caracas. Karl Watson estimated that for the period 1788 - 1804, Barbados exported approximately 21, 500 slaves.² Indeed, the scholar of the history of Barbados' port has suggested that merchants abused this position as a trans-shipment point for he cites the frequent complaints from the Leeward Islands planters that they were getting inferior but high-priced slaves from Barbados.³

Welch cites slave prices in Barbados for the first decade of the 18th century when prices ranged from a low of £20 per slave in 1701 to a decade high £35 15s in 1705. As the first port of call, Barbados had little difficulty in acquiring its labour force – the primary concern of the planter elite – although local idiom suggests another advantage deriving from this status.

In the popular view, Barbados' role as the point of first call clearly influenced the character and demeanour of its population. Thus, the difference between the supposedly conservative, peaceful, law-abiding Barbadian and the radical, violent, gun-toting, knife-wielding Jamaican is explained – not by reference to different historical trajectories/paths taken – but by the simple fact that when the slave ships stopped in Barbados, local planters took the quiet, well-behaved Africans and sent the violent ones westward! Such popular myths are, of course, without historical

² Karl S. Watson "The Civilised Island, Barbados, A Social History – 1750-1816" PhD dissertation University of Florida 1975; estimate found in Table VI on p. 133.

³ P L V Welch *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834* Kingston and Miami: Ian Randle Publishers; Oxford: James Currey Publishers 2003 pg 64.

foundation and ignore the role of the environment – physical and social – in shaping national identity.

Barbados is an outstanding example of a territory reshaped by trans-Atlantic slave trading. Settled by the British after 1627, Barbados initially relied on the use of European indentured labourers to cultivate tobacco and other products but after 1640 made a dramatic switch to an economy dominated by sugar cane cultivation and a labour force comprising mainly enslaved Africans. The upshot was that by 1660, Barbados had virtually become a sugar monoculture, its sugar planters were among the wealthiest throughout the British empire in the Americas, and enslaved Africans formed the majority element in the population. Estimates indicate that Africans formed as little as 3 *per cent.* of the Barbados population in 1629 but as much as two-thirds by the 1680s and 75 *per cent.* by the mid-1720s.⁴ There was an increase in the enslaved population as well as a decline in the number of whites. Thus population estimates for Barbados for the period 1655 – 1712 show a white population of 23,000 in 1655 but this figure had declined to 12,528 in 1712. Corresponding figures for those categorised as “negro slaves” were 20,000 and 41,970 respectively.⁵

Several estimates of the number of Africans imported into Barbados have been attempted in the three decades beginning with Phillip Curtin in 1969 and ending with the more comprehensive study which appeared on Cd-Rom in 1999.⁶ With figures suggesting as many as almost 400,000 Africans imported into Barbados up to 1807, it is clear that Africans must have had a significant impact on the social landscape of Barbados. Yet two important points about the enslaved population in Barbados need to be emphasised at the outset which have implications for the overall trajectory of this chapter. The sources suggest that a very high mortality rate was exhibited among

the island's enslaved Africans. Indeed, Galenson argues that the island's extremely high mortality rates quickly led planters to the realization that they would not raise their holdings of slaves through

⁴ See Richard Dunn *Sugar and Slaves: the rise of the planter class in the English West Indies 1624-1713* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1972.

⁵ R. Dunn ‘The Barbados Census of 1680: profile of the richest colony in English America’ *The William and Mary Quarterly* vol xxvi, no.1, Jan 1969 pp3 - 30. See Table I on page 7.

⁶ P. Curtin *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press 1969; D. Eltis, S. Behrendt, D. Richardson and H. Klein eds *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A database on CD-ROM* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999.

*natural increase of the population, and convinced them of the need to rely on the transatlantic slave trade to prevent their labor force from dwindling. The result was a massive continuing importation of African slaves.*⁷

Yet the 1680 census, viewed by Dunn as “the most comprehensive surviving census of any English colony in the seventeenth century”, is relatively silent on mortality rates of the enslaved Africans. However, Dunn indicates that in the first half of the 18th century, Barbados planters imported 3,000 Africans per year “but they worked their slaves so hard and fed them so skimpily that they died off as fast as new ones were brought in.”⁸ Not surprisingly, the enslaved responded to this inhumane treatment by threatening to rebel (1683 and 1686) and by outright rebellion (1675 and 1692). It should be pointed out that this observation in respect of very high mortality combined with fresh imports does not hold true for the entire period of trans-Atlantic slave trading before British abolition in 1807.

Figures provided by Higman point to an increase in the total population of Barbados from 93,040 in 1810 to 102,150 in 1830. Further, Higman states that Barbados alone of the major sugar colonies in the British Caribbean experienced “an absolute increase” in the slave population in the period 1807 - 1834⁹, the period commencing with the Act of Abolition of trans-Atlantic slave trade and terminating with the coming into effect of the Act for the abolition of slavery. This leads us to a second critical point: Barbados managed to reproduce its enslaved population by natural means before the slavery system was abolished in 1838. Barbados was unlike other British Caribbean territories in that from the start of the 18th century there was a larger number of enslaved women than enslaved men. The upshot was that the island reached a situation whereby the locally born enslaved population was greater than the imported enslaved population by the late 18th century and Barbados managed to reverse the trend of very high mortality which was so marked in the 17th century.¹⁰

⁷ D. W. Galenson “The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Barbados Market, 1673-1723” *The Journal of Economic History* xlii.,3, September 1982 pp 491-511; extract taken from p. 492.

⁸ Dunn ‘Barbados Census of 1680’ pp 25 - 26.

⁹ See Table 4.2 and pp 75 - 77 of B. W. Higman *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807 - 1834* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press 1984.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* For a discussion of the demographics of the enslaved in the British Caribbean, this text has few peers.

How did those imported from Africa reshape Barbados? How did the emergence of a predominantly creole-born element shape the culture of the island?

Cultural impact of the enslaved

More than a quarter of a century ago, culture was described as “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language”; a clear indication of the contested nature and character of culture.¹¹ The term ‘culture’ has numerous meanings, ranging from elitist to more or less “ordinary” conceptualisations and is central to all definitions of cultural studies. ‘Culture’, argued Williams, was initially used to describe cultivation of crops (e.g. agriculture) but was subsequently extended “to encompass the human mind or ‘spirit’.” During the 19th century, a more anthropological concept of culture emerged in which culture was viewed as a whole and distinctive way of life and in which ‘lived experience’ was emphasised. In this period, Matthew Arnold conceptualised culture in terms of ‘high culture’, an elitist perspective in which culture and civilisation were intertwined and “counterpoised to the ‘anarchy’ of the ‘raw and uncultivated masses’.” In contrast to Arnold, it stood the views of Raymond Williams. Williams emphasised the everyday lived character of culture as a whole way of life and was concerned with the experience and active construction of culture on the part of the working class. It is worth quoting Williams’ definition at length:

A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of culture: that it is always both traditional and creative; that it is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings. We use the word culture in these two senses: to mean a whole way of life — the common meanings; to mean the arts and learning — the special processes of discovery and creative effort. Some

¹¹ Much of the discussion on the conceptualisations and perspectives of the term culture is taken from Chris Barker *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* 2nd edition London and Delhi: Sage Publications 2003 Chap 3.

*writers reserve the word for one or other of these senses; I insist on both, and on the significance of their conjunction. The questions I ask about our culture are questions about our general and common purposes, yet also questions about deep and personal meanings. Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind.*¹²

The cultural studies guru, Stuart Hall, defined culture as “the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society.” Hall further contends that ‘culture’ encompasses “the contradictory forms of common sense which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life.”¹³ Translated from the jargon, culture may be said to refer to all aspects of a people’s life, including – but not limited to – customs, traditions, language, religion and beliefs, dance and music, food, etc.

The issue of the cultural identity of the Barbados population is a much contested issue among both the scholarly and lay public. The debate may be summed up as follows: on the one hand are those who assert that Barbadian identity and culture are predominantly English; and on the other stand those who insist on assigning the primary cultural influence to those of African descent. In an article which first appeared in 1993 and was republished in 2007, one Barbadian commentator sought to define the Barbadian character and culture in which ‘Englishness’ was central to the definition. Ralph Jemmott first posed the question “what then are the essences of the Barbadian character, the sometimes barely definable qualities that distinguish the ‘Bajan’?” In his view, the Bajans – the popular local term for Barbadians – were marked by social conservatism, respect for “Sacred-Reverential values”, a strong work ethic and, above all, “[p]erhaps the dominant characteristic of the Barbadian as he emerged in the 1950’s and 1960’s was his Anglicization, his almost Caribbean Englishness.” Jemmott insists that it is impossible to deny the influence of three centuries of English influence on Barbados but simultaneously, unwittingly makes the critical point that this ostensible Englishness is more visible to the outsider than it is to the Barbadian.¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.* Quote is found at p. 59.

¹³ S Hall ‘Gramsci’s relevance for the study of race ethnicity’ in D. Morley and D.K Chen eds *Stuart Hall* London: Routledge 1996.

¹⁴ R.A. Jemmott *An Uncommon Currency: a collection of essays on educational, social and political issues* Barbados: published by the author 2007. See therein chapter 19 ‘The Barbadian Identity: the way we were – the way we are’.

The position adopted by Jemmott and others that Barbadian culture is essentially English seems to rest on the idea that as the English dominated Barbados for more than three hundred years, including two centuries when they held unrivalled power as masters over the enslaved Africans, their values must have been and remain dominant. It is an argument that has to be challenged on the grounds that by 1830, Blacks accounted for more than 80% of the island's population and it is difficult to believe that this numerical majority – whatever the limits of the political and economic power of its members – had no overall influence on the path and direction of Barbados' cultural evolution. Indeed, one historian has found that the transmission of cultural values was not unidirectional, from white to black. In support of this line of argument, Karl Watson pointed to the comments of outsiders as far back as the 18th century who frowned upon the practice in Barbados whereby whites adopted African/black practices. Watson found that “travellers to the island in the eighteenth century noted these changes, especially on the white population, who were accused of ‘lipping the language of the Negroes’ or ‘adopting the Negro style’.”¹⁵ Moreover, the evidence suggests that African cultural influences were not negligible in Barbados slave life. On the contrary, African values and beliefs influenced matters from birth to death, from joy and happiness to pain and sorrow.¹⁶

Moreover, those in favour of an English cultural predominance suggest that as the number of blacks born in Barbados had outstripped the number of those imported from Africa, then the extent of African cultural influence must have declined in direct proportion to their decreasing numerical strength. This position was eloquently stated by Karl Watson as follows: “Diminishing numbers of Africans in the population made cultural retention more difficult than in other Caribbean islands where cultural reinforcement from Africa was guaranteed by additional yearly inputs of African slaves in the population ... In fact, the available evidence indicates that Barbadian blacks looked down with some contempt on Africans whom they regarded as salt water Negroes.”¹⁷ Again the argument is flawed on several grounds; although to be fair to Watson,

¹⁵ [Http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/britishempire_seapower/barbados_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/britishempire_seapower/barbados_01.shtml) ‘Slavery and Economy in Barbados’ by Dr Karl Watson; accessed 2010 - 11 - 03.

¹⁶ For a general discussion of African cultural influences on Barbados during slavery see J. Handler and F. Lange *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: an archaeological and historical investigation* Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press 1978 pp 171 - 215.

¹⁷ Watson ‘The Civilised Island’ pp 134-135.

he clearly states that retaining African culture was made more difficult rather than impossible. Indeed, Watson argues that in spite of the many and varied pressures placed on those desirous of retaining African norms and values, “African folkways persisted either in the form of direct survivals or accretions and from the mass of the population, filtered up to all layers of society, affecting and influencing all segments of Barbadian society.”¹⁸

Firstly, it is worth pointing out that a decline in the numbers of African-born persons did not automatically mean that they lacked the ability to exert influence over other enslaved persons, a fact borne out by the last statement from Watson. Secondly, the argument that fewer Africa-born persons would result in a predominantly Anglicised culture ignores the factor of continuity. That is, enslaved persons born in Barbados would have already been socialised into and experienced African cultural traditions and practices in spite of a declining ratio of persons brought from Africa. It seems useful, therefore, to restate the argument about the alleged Englishness of the Barbadian culture, especially when we consider that several observers point to the post-slavery period as the start of the process of Anglicisation, a process which Jemmott makes central to the understanding of the evolution of Barbadian cultural dynamics.

Watson is clearly of the view that it was only after Emancipation that one witnessed organised efforts to acculturate the formerly enslaved to European practices and the Anglican Church was critical to these efforts. This latter development would surely explain the characteristics identified by Jemmott as having pride of place in our analysis and understanding of the Barbadian character. Yet Watson makes a case for the dominance of a mixed system; a creolisation process in which African and English cultural practices interacted to produce a hybrid. A major debate has ranged over creolisation within the context of trans-Atlantic slave trading. The Barbadian scholar and poet, Kamau Brathwaite, developed the idea of creolisation in which two cultures had to adapt to each other in a process that was at once cruel and creative and which produced a society that was polarised and divided rather than plural. This would appear to be a challenge to the argument of M. G. Smith that plural societies had been created in the New World.¹⁹ While Brathwaite’s ideas have not received universal acclaim – Paul Lovejoy argued that the

¹⁸ *Ibid* p 135.

¹⁹ Brathwaite’s ideas may be followed in his *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770 - 1820* Oxford University Press 1971.

creolisation model tended to confuse the end result with the beginning – this chapter proceeds on the assumption that African culture was not eradicated in the face of a brutal, dehumanising regime of slavery and oppression.

In an as yet unpublished thesis, Marcia Burrowes has argued that in order to understand the dynamics of Barbadian cultural space, it was necessary to, *inter alia*, apply Brathwaite's theory of the submerged mother, i.e. Africa.²⁰ Similarly, Kathleen Drayton found that since the English were the dominant group for three hundred years in Barbados, "...the loss and *concealment* of cultural practices and forms of the majority African population were more evident here than in any other territory of the region."²¹ Drayton's suggestion of a dynamic situation of loss and concealment of cultural practices is more readily acceptable than any notion of complete English domination of the cultural landscape for both the enslaved and their successors would have preferred to hide their culture and allow it to survive for later re-birth and re-emergence. Such survival strategies have been a feature of oppressed communities throughout human history. Watson went much further than this and stated that during slavery, the slave masters recognised the value of allowing the enslaved to retain their culture although he readily concedes that this was done only in so far as it aided the masters in their quest to maintain overall control. Such practices have been an integral part of the survival of the capitalist/bourgeois elements in the face of the threat posed by the working class. Whether enslaved Africans and their descendants were allowed to maintain their culture by the white master or they concealed it in order to ensure its survival, Barbados has been clearly shaped by this culture. We turn now to highlight the manifold cultural influences of the African element in Barbados.

Language and Religion

Barbados remains one of the underdeveloped terrains in the field of African language research in the Americas. This may be partially explained by the absence of very strong African religious retentions in Barbados in comparison to the outstanding examples of Cuba and Brazil. According to Maureen

²⁰ M. P. A. Burrowes 'History and Cultural Identity: Barbadian Space and the Legacy of Empire' PhD (Cultural Studies) Warwick 2000 pg 8.

²¹ K. Drayton 'Art, Culture and National Heritage' in Trevor Carmichael ed *Barbados: Thirty Years of Independence* Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers 1996 pp 197 - 237.

Warner-Lewis, writing with respect to the Caribbean islands, there is a clear link between religion and language research:

*Retentions and adaptations of ethnically identifiable African religions in Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad, Grenada and (to a much lesser extent) in St Lucia have prompted several anthropological studies which have provided useful linguistic data. The maintenance of Yoruba-based religious ceremonial has served as a cradle for studies ... on the language used by practitioners of the religion called in Cuba santería or regla de ocha and on the Yoruba number system as recalled in Cuba ... More recently, a very small corpus of Yoruba words still in use among descendants of the post-emancipation Nago and Etu (Yoruba) communities in western Jamaica has been given their etymological foundation by a Yoruba linguist. Important song and recited poetic traditions connected with Yoruba sacred and divinatory systems have been collected in Cuba, in particular.*²²

While the quote refers specifically to the Yoruba, Warner-Lewis is acutely aware of the influence of religion of other ethnic groups on language research. Thus, she cites the religious vocabulary of *vodun* in Haiti bequeathed by the Fon and the language research on the *abakwa*, a secret society in Cuba of Efik (Old Calabar) origin. No similar work has been attempted for Barbados. This is not to suggest, however, that there are no African linguistic influences on the syntax and morphology of Barbados language or that there are no identifiable African traits in Barbadian belief systems.

The late Guyanese scholar, Elsa Goveia, concluded that slave laws were the most ubiquitous form of public control and their purpose was to maintain the slave system by entrenching the social, economic and racial subordination of the enslaved.²³ Acculturating the enslaved towards acceptance of European values or, to be precise, away from practising African customs was a key

²² M. Warner-Lewis "Research on the African Language Presence in the Caribbean" in R. Goodridge ed *Caribbean Perspectives on African History & Culture* Bridgetown, Barbados 2004. Quote may be found at p 38.

²³ E. V. Goveia *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands* New Haven: Yale University Press 1969. For a general discussion of law in Barbados and other former British territories see R-M. B. Antoine *Commonwealth Caribbean Law and Legal Systems* 2nd edition Oxford: Routledge-Cavendish 2008.

objective of the slave laws and this was clearly seen in the campaign against obeah and similar practices in places like Barbados. Thus, the powers in Barbados in the early 19th century deemed it prudent to continue to pass laws to punish those practising obeah or to enhance the better prevention of the practise of obeah as the June 1818 law was entitled. While Handler argues that obeah cannot be considered a religion and never developed into a well-defined system with an integrated set of beliefs and practices of cult groups comparable to *santeria* in Cuba or *vodun* in Haiti, he nevertheless acknowledges that what whites called obeah “was probably composed of different, albeit broadly related, beliefs and practices deriving from several West African ethnic traditions” and that the major etiological beliefs of Barbadian slaves were similar to those of many West African groups, especially the belief in the spiritual causation of disease and death. Moreover, the practice and concept of obeah was modified as the numbers imported from Africa steadily declined and an Afro-creole population dominated.

In these changed circumstances, Handler found that “...obeah evolved into a loosely defined complex involving supernatural practices related to healing and protection and centered on the role of the obeah practitioner.”²⁴ Yet in the popular mindset in Barbados, obeah is about religion; and this is reinforced by my own investigations and experiences. The popular formulation to describe those alleged to be dabbling in obeah is to say that “Mr/Miss-so-and-so believes”. Similarly, when one suffers misfortune, the popular explanation is that someone else has prayed for you! Many Barbadians would have grown up hearing of some of their neighbours who believed in obeah - especially in the obeah man - and who had the requisite books used in obeah rituals. In addition, popular thinking holds that obeah was used to buttress supplication to the Christian deity, especially in personal matters.

Preliminary research suggests that while the number of those alleged to be practising obeah has declined, Barbadians still associate those who “believe” – as distinct from those who believe in the Christian God and/or Holy Trinity - with witchcraft, and that this is linked to the religious rituals and belief brought to Barbados centuries ago from Africa. While Barbadians publicly distance themselves from obeah – the legal ban on obeah was recently lifted – the important point for our discussion is the idea that African culture has had a

²⁴ Jerome Handler “Slave Medicine and Obeah in Barbados, circa 1650 to 1834” *New West Indian Guide* vol 74, no 1 & 2, 2000, pp 57 - 90.

major, long-lasting impact on Barbados. Given the stance adopted by Handler – that obeah was primarily about medicine rather than religion – it is not surprising that the kind of linguistic research into religious-based activities in places like Cuba has not been produced in Barbados. This is not to suggest, however, that there has been no linguistic research.

The discussion on obeah in Barbados was forced to confront the origins of the practice and this meant some consideration of the linguistic roots. Scholars tend to acknowledge the African language origins of the term obeah, with a concentration on West African languages as the most likely source. The Jamaican sociologist, H. Orlando Patterson, suggested Twi, the language of the Akan of modern-day Ghana, as the source for obeah but Richard Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* was reluctant to present a precise origin although he was sure that there was a West African linguistic connection.²⁵ Allsopp's *Dictionary* has also contributed to the discussion on the local language spoken by Barbadians today.

For the most part, little linguistic research on Barbados was conducted apart from the attempts by Turner to determine the origins of the Gullah language of the islands off the South Carolina, Florida and Georgia coast which was found to contain many words borrowed directly from many African substrate languages.²⁶ Given the paucity of linguistic research, it is hardly surprising to learn that modern-day Barbadian language was frequently described as “broken English”. Yet Allsopp suggests that greater attention ought to be paid to African languages as the source of the vocabulary and sentence structure of modern Barbadian speech. Thus, for example, Allsopp traces the Barbadian word “wunnuh” (= You plural) to the Igbo word *unu* (=You plural) and he further suggests that the practice of rendering in the active voice what in standard English is rendered in the passive voice is best explained with reference to West African languages. More importantly, Allsopp argued that the way forward was not to concentrate on the number of African loan words, but to focus on the influence of sub-Saharan African “talk”.²⁷ This means paying attention to the manner in which sentences are constructed, phrases employed, etc. The time has surely

²⁵ H. Orlando Patterson *Sociology of Slavery* London: MacGibbon and Kee 1967; S. R. R. Allsopp *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996.

²⁶ M. Wade-Lewis Lorenzo Dow Turner: *Father of Gullah Studies* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press 2007.

²⁷ Allsopp *Dictionary*. Allsopp's work is not restricted to Barbados but he makes general observations about the role and extent of (West) African languages in Caribbean English usage.

come for sustained research into the African linguistic contribution to Barbados to go beyond the initial work produced by Allsopp.

Perhaps, such future research could take as its starting point – and one used in a limited way by Allsopp – the frequent use of proverbs by Barbadians, especially those now advanced in years. It is true that research into the use of proverbs has focused on the link between proverbs and social interaction. However, it is the view of the present writer that both paremiography (the collection of proverbs) and paremiology (the study of proverbs) can be usefully employed to shed greater light on the cultural legacy of the enslaved Africans in Barbados. Firstly, the similarity or otherwise of proverbs in Barbados and West and Central Africa would go some way towards determining the extent of links between these places. Secondly, the study of proverbs cannot be isolated from linguistic research and linguistic data are crucial to establishing the African origins of the slave population and Barbados' modern culture. While paremiology is an underdeveloped field in Barbados, archaeology has been extensively used to unearth the cultural legacy.

Archaeology

In the early 1970s a major archaeological project at a dozen or so Barbadian plantations was designed to yield specific information on plantation slave life that was not available or barely mentioned in written sources, and to provide a more objective check and another perspective on the ethnocentric and racist biases of these sources. It was also hoped that the project would provide “a new diachronic perspective to enhance exploration of issues in culture change.” This project aimed to excavate plantation slave village sites and recover data on, *inter alia*, settlement patterns, house size and construction, culinary practices; as well as excavate burial areas to obtain data on mortuary practices which might provide insights into the religious beliefs of the enslaved including conceptions of the afterlife and changes over time to these beliefs.²⁸ In spite of subsequent archaeological excavation

²⁸ See p 93-94 of J.S. Handler “An African-Type Healer/Diviner and His Grave Goods: A Burial from a plantation slave cemetery in Barbados, West Indies” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* vol 1, No 2, 1997 pp 91 - 130; J.S. Handler with M.D. Conner and K.P. Jacobi *Searching For a Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies: A bioarchaeological and ethnohistorical investigation* Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University (Carbondale) 1989 Research Paper No 59.

projects, only one slave cemetery – unearthed at Newton Plantation in Christ Church during the first project – has been found. Yet the skeletal remains from Newton help us to make several tentative conclusions about the contribution of Africans brought to Barbados by the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The work of the American anthropologist, Jerome Handler, is important in the Barbadian context. Whether describing African influences and practices in general or paying attention to individual life histories, Handler has produced an invaluable corpus of work. His discussion of the grave goods derived from Burial 72 at Newton helps us to understand African-influenced slave culture. Handler found that, based on the literature from West Africa, grave goods were common throughout the sub-region and “were interred only with persons who were positively regarded by their communities.” What further enhanced the significance of burial 72 is that some of the grave goods were African in origin and interment had been influenced by African customs and beliefs.²⁹

Music and Dance

Discussions of culture in Barbados accept that there was an African influence in the fields of music and dance. Patterson concluded that music and dance – as evidenced by the Saturday night festivities on Caribbean plantations – were clear areas of African cultural manifestation during the slavery period and this position has received near unanimous assent. One musical instrument which is undeniably African is the drum and this is present in that distinctly Barbadian musical ensemble the tuk band. There has been much debate about modern cultural festivals in Barbados and their African origins. One scholar has demonstrated that rebirth of a Crop Over festival in the 1970s was motivated by considerations that had little to do with the original version of the slavery period. Yet the central features of that earlier festival – i.e. music, dance, enjoyment and the masquerade – were reproduced even though the material conditions that had given rise to them had been considerably altered. Moreover, the scholar is quick to acknowledge the African elements of the original.³⁰ The modern Crop Over festival is dominated, at least in the public’s view, by the calypso competition. This musical form – modified over the years and rapidly so since the 1970s – is widely acknowledged as being African.

²⁹ Handler “An African-Type Healer/Diviner” pp100 - 104.

³⁰ Burrowes chapter 5.

Indeed, Warner-Lewis affirms that *kaiso*, one alternative expression for calypso, is itself an Efik (Old Calabar) word; thereby affirming the importance of linguistic research. Any understanding of modern festivals in Barbados must start with a reconnaissance of the “plays” organised by the enslaved in Barbados.

Foods

Food – in terms of what is actually eaten as well as how it is prepared/presented or preserved – is one of those areas in which there has been significant modification of African practices in Barbados since the 17th century. At the same time, it is still possible to identify the African influence. It is true that such practices as marinating meat, chicken or fish in lime and salt before cooking appear to be prime examples of the development of an Afro-creole culture in Barbados and the high levels of salt consumed is clearly a legacy of the fact that the diet of the enslaved featured salted fish and meats. Yet we can see Africa in the Barbados national dish of coo coo – the ingredients of which are okras and corn meal – which closely resembles fufu and similar foods of West Africa; starchy food boiled and pounded and served in a round lump or ball. Coo coo combines the West African practice of serving food in paste form/in a round lump with the use of West African ingredients, in this case the okra. Similarly, at Independence, Barbadians make a sweetened delicacy called conkies which are made from several ingredients including corn and pumpkin and stewed in banana leaves. The research has not been conducted but one notes the existence of *kenkey* among the modern Asante which is made from corn and stewed in leaves but which – unlike its Barbadian counterpart – is neither seasonal nor sweet. Clearly, the similarity in name and key ingredient between conky and *kenkey* is hardly coincidental.

Yet we must be careful about the extent to which we assign a purely African origin to foods used by black Barbadians. Food is one of the important areas in which cultural exchange and borrowing among peoples takes place. Secondly, we must distinguish between a unique method of preparation and the adoption of similar methods across time and place which have been determined by underdeveloped technologies and/or material progress. That is, methods of preservation of food are influenced by cultural values as well as by the availability or otherwise of refrigeration.

Conclusion

The inauguration of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to Barbados had tremendous impact on the island's demographic profile, on the nature and characteristics of its economy, and on its social system. Development of a system that was designed to reduce those imported from Africa and their descendants to impotence has been analysed by historians and others with a view to describing the material structures and the overarching superstructure. No one can deny that trans-Atlantic slave trade had long-lasting cultural resonance. In the face of an attempt to brand Barbados' culture as English, this chapter calls for greater research especially by disciplines not reliant on written sources. The chapter concludes that the argument about Barbados' culture being primarily English must be reformulated as follows. Barbados did develop an Afro-creole culture at an earlier stage than elsewhere in the Caribbean and this did have an impact on the development of Barbadian culture. Yet, since many of the elements of culture present in the other islands may also be found in Barbados, it is a highly debateable assertion that African culture survived elsewhere in the Caribbean but not in Barbados.

4. Belize

The African Influence on the National Identity of Belize, Namely the Creoles and the Garinagu

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Belize, a relatively young (29 years old) and independent nation in Central America, is a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual society that forms a bridge with the Caribbean Community.

Among the people that make up the Belizean milieu are the *Mestizo*, the **Creole**, the Maya groups – *Kekchi*, *Mopan* and *Yucateco*, the **Garinagu**, *East Indians*, the *Hindus*, *Chinese*, *Mennonites*, *Lebanese* and *Caucasians*.

Before I proceed further with the task on hand – that is, focus on the **Creole** and the **Garinagu**, our Belizeans of African Heritage, it is only proper and fitting that I briefly describe the other members of the Belizean Nation.

Belizeans and visitors alike are impressed by the high degree of racial tolerance, harmonious interaction and cultural dynamism that is so strong and a unique feature of this young nation. We are very thankful for the beautiful blend of peoples, and concerted efforts are being made to keep it that way. Hence, Music, Art, Folklore are sponsored periodically as a way of promoting and preserving this culturalism.

The Settlers of Belize:

The Maya Indians – Native American Indians were the original and indigenous settlers of Belize which then formed part of the Maya Civilization

of Central or Meso-America. The Maya Empire included the entire Yucatan state of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

The Maya civilization flourished in this area from 300 B.C. to 1450 A.D. The impressive Maya temples of Chichen Itza, Xunantunich, Tikal, Palenque and Copan are remarkable achievements of their era. In addition to their architecture, the Mayas were outstanding agricultural farmers; they were the first to practice the milpa terracing and hanging gardens, as Hernan Cortez observed in Mexico. Their staple food was corn, which they cultivated. They were also great artists and craftsmen. They invented their own system of writing and they also developed an elaborate mathematical system with “five” as the base number. The Mayas invented a calendar as accurate as the Roman Calendar with 18 months to the year, 20 days to the month, and 5 unlucky days in the year (Thompson 1973). They believed in many gods, and the temples served as centers for communal ceremonial worship. But for some unexplained and mysterious reason, the Maya civilization collapsed and the natives simply scattered throughout the Central American region.

Belize Indigenous People – The Maya: Yucateco, Mopan and Kekchi

As mentioned earlier, there are three groups of Maya in Belize—Yucateco, Mopan and Kekchi. The Yucateco Mayas inhabit the western and northern regions of the country; this group never left Belize. However, following the collapse of the Maya ancient civilization about 1500 A.D., the Yucateco Mayas merely moved from the coastal area into the highlands where they remained. They were there when the Scottish buccaneers arrived in the 17th Century (Krohn 1987).

The Mopan and Kekchi Mayas moved to Belize in 1980 from San Luis Peten and Alta Vera Paz, both Departments of Guatemala. They chose to take refuge in Belize to escape unjust exploitation and massive oppression at the hands of Ladinos—the Guatemalan ruling elite. Much of their suffering took place while working in German coffee plantations operated and controlled largely by Guatemalan Ladinos. After settling in southern Belize, they peacefully resumed the cultivation of their staple food—corn, beans and rice, and raised their domesticated pigs, fowl and cattle (Wilk 1988).

The Coming of the East Indians and Chinese

Lastly, in 1865, a number of East Indians and Chinese were brought over to Belize as indentured servants to work in the northern sugar plantations of a British company, the Belize Estate and Produce Company. When the Sugar Industry folded at the turn of the Century, many East Indians travelled to southern Belize and engaged in the cultivation of their private fields of rice, beans and corn crops. The Chinese, on the other hand, migrated to Belize City and there they established themselves first into small grocery shops, then gradually into large hardware businesses (Zelma Jex in Krohn 1987).

The Arrival of the British and African Slaves

The slaves who were brought to the Bay of Honduras were imported through the West Indian Islands. One early 19th Century account stated that “these have been mostly imported from Africa by the intercourse with Jamaica, no direct importation having ever taken place; but many of these people are Creoles of the different West Indian islands, and several have been brought into the Settlement by their owners from the United States” (Bolland 1988).

In 1638 a party of shipwrecked British pirates and buccaneers of Scottish origin landed and settled on the coast of Belize. Later, from 1670, they became involved in the logwood trade which lasted one hundred years. Initially, they tried to capture the native Maya Indians in the interior for forced labor, but this attempt proved futile. Then in 1724, African slave labor was introduced into the colony and this marked the beginning of the permanent settlement of the territory, with the formation of a specific racial and ethnic population called Belize Creole (History of Belize 1982).

Following a decline in the demand for logwood, used as dye in Europe for its infant textile industry, Mahogany became the more viable alternative. With the extraction of Mahogany logs and the production of timber came the stratification of the society into two major groups: slave (Creole) and master (British). The slave society was African; the masters were European “whites” and, then, their bastard colored children with these black African slave women.

The slaves enjoyed no rights, thus they were brought and sold and regarded as cattle; they had no soul, they could not marry nor raise a family. The Creole population, descendants of African slaves and British admixture, lived beside the English masters and a new form of relationship evolved, i.e. a closer affinity

to things that were British for the slaves came to adopt the master's way of life – his values, tastes and attitudes – to the total exclusion and derision of the Creole's African heritage (History of Belize 1982; Bolland 1988).

“Slavery was the possession of one man against his will by another man” (Buhler: readings Belizean History 1987, p. 52.)

The occupation of slaves in Belize was timber extraction from the forest. From 1670 – 1770, this was concentrated mainly in the logwood industry but, following a decline in the demand for the logwood during the period 1770 to 1960, it was eventually replaced by Mahogany and Cedar. This was different from the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, Barbados and Hispaniola, where sugar became the economic base of slave occupation. It was in 1518 that the first group of African slaves arrived in Hispaniola, West Indies from Guinea in West Africa. From then onward, the slave trade became a triangular trade; ships sailed from Europe to Africa, loaded their human cargo, then sailed for the Americas and then back to Europe. The voyage across the Atlantic became known as the Middle Passage, during which an estimated 15 – 20 million Africans were transferred to the New World. Treatment of slaves and conditions aboard those sailing ships were so harsh that one-third of the slaves perished on the voyage, while others drowned by jumping overboard when allowed on deck for washing and sunbathing. In Africa, there existed various tribes and tribal wars were common. The victims of these wars became war prisoners, and the tribal chiefs took great pleasure in exchanging their prisoners for prized European goods such as gunpowder, guns and other items. Most of the Africans who reached the Americas came from the region of West Africa, namely – Benin, Nigeria, Niger, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Angola. Among the tribes represented were the Congoes, Nangoes, Mongolas, Yoruba, Eboes, Ashantas and several others. In the case of British Honduras – Belize, the slaves came from two regions and were either Creoles or African born. The Creoles came from Southern United States and from the islands of Jamaica and Barbados whilst the other group came directly from West Africa. In 1823, of a population of 2, 300 slaves in Belize, 1,500 were African born, whereas 800 came from America and the islands. The largest single tribe represented by Africans among the slaves in the colony was the Ibo tribe. Because of this, a thriving Ibo community known as Ibo Town emerged in Belize.

Males comprised the greater number that crossed over to the settlement, with only about half the number being women. This meant that there were three males to every female. In view of this shortage of women, both slaves and white masters had to compete for the African women. Europeans also used those women as concubines, thereby producing a colored segment of the population.

Whenever the ship arrived with its cargo, the slaves were taken off and confined in baracoons where they were kept until the buyers were ready. On a signal given at the beat of a drum, the buyers rushed into the yard where the slaves were confined to make their choice of that parcel which they liked best.

The noise and the clamor with which this is attested and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers served not a little to increase the apprehensions of the terrified Africans. In this manner without scruple are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. In such a state of mixed fear and grief, ill health and terror, the Africans are taken away by their masters, strangers in a strange land (History of Belize, 1982, p. 18).

Occupation of the Slave Population of Belize – male and female:

Male slaves were employed as woodcutters, waiting boys, laborers, carpenters, plantation men, sailors or boatmen, cattlemen, footmen, washerwomen, housemaids, servants, chambermaids, cooks, tailors, drudges and subsistence plantation for family upkeep. Females, on the other hand, were occupied as concubines, waiting girls, plantation women, washerwomen, housemaids, servants, domestics, chambermaids, cooks, seamstresses, drudges and other minor occupations.

The Process of Timber Extraction:

In the colonial settlement, timber works developed in unsettled areas along rivers, creeks and lagoons. By 1770, the transfer was made to mahogany, which meant more money, more land and a bigger gang of workers were needed. Mahogany trees had to be found, cut, trimmed, squared, and formed into rafts for floating downstream during the height of the tropical rainy seasons.

The logs were floated from riverside – Barquadier to a log gathering place called ‘boom’, where logs were squared and prepared for shipment to England. The process demanded men with several skills, among them a *hunter*, whose job it was to find and mark the trees; then the *axe-men* cut down the trees. To do this, sometimes, he had to stand on a barbecue-scaffold some twelve to fifteen feet high above the tree roots, wielding his axe until the tree was cut. Other gang members trimmed the tree after it fell, while some members cleaned the path to the riverside for the dragging of the logs by oxen. The *cattlemen*’s responsibility was to have the cattle pull the logs to the riverside. The *foreman* supervised the gangs who numbered from ten to fifty workers. The women and youths prepared food and provisions for the camp. The whip-wielding drivers of the sugar plantations were unknown in Belize where slaves carried axes, guns and machetes to do their jobs. Despite this, the British found ways to “divide and conquer” to keep the slaves under total subjugation. The slaves had no choice and little freedom.

The Stratification of Society: Master – Slave Relations

Class and color were clearly but not absolutely correlated in the late 18th century settlement society; the process of creolisation was to lead to the growth of a local born elite which was to be augmented in the following century by 400 new arrivals from Europe (Foster 1987 p. 15).

In 1770, twenty estates owned, each one, over 100 slaves, while one-fifth of the settlers had no slaves. Most masters invested their money in the slave business because of the big profits involved. Regarding master and slave relationships, Superintendent Arthur of British Honduras reported in 1820 that several slave masters treated their slaves with extreme inhumanity, cruelty and increasing severity. At that time in Belize, the Superintendent headed the colonial administration and also supervised the slave system. Very often he and the masters disagreed, but when the slaves revolted, the British Navy was called to suppress the rebellion. The slaves were controlled socially and by psychological tactics of “divide and conquer” (History of Belize 1982 p. 23). The practice of “divide and conquer” was effectively used by most of the European slave-holding powers. This kept the enslaved people from uniting in defense of their own freedom and life itself. In Belize

the strategy was utilized to its maximum among the Creole and African slaves, then later between the slaves and the free newcomers – the Garinagu (1802) and the Mestizo (1848).

Care was exercised to make sure that no single plantation had an excess of slaves from one particular tribal or language group. The masters played on tribal jealousies and language differences in this way to keep the slaves from uniting into a single force. It should be pointed out that this was probably the cruelest of all forms of human exploitations because the slaves were effectively deprived of their cultural heritage, language and group identity. The “divide and conquer” principle was carried further to create rivalries between second, third and fourth generation slaves and those newly arrived from West Africa (Buhler 1987; Readings in Belizean History p. 50).

The colonial society was divided into twelve categories, with the British at the top and the slaves at the bottom of the scale. Creoles were set apart from African born, as were the others in the following order: blacks from brown, skilled from unskilled, favored from unfavored and converted Christians from heathens. Freed blacks were given enough privileges to identify with Europeans, free people of color were given more privileges than freed blacks because they were the sons of the masters with their African slave women. These were ranked as Second Class or next to the whites.

The British white settlers controlled the Legislative Assembly. They called ‘Public Meetings’ in which they expected the free colored to take their side over the slaves. Freed blacks and colored were denied any commission in the military. Their economic activities were restricted; they could not be jurors or judges; their loyalty and whiteness was stressed at all times, and their masters kept them separated from the black African slaves who, although being the majority, were refused and denied any kind of rights whatsoever. Ironically, the African culture was denied and its practice was banned and regarded as inferior. It was this action, which showed preference to the creoles, that pressured the Africans to eventually become creolized. With the creolization of the settlement for over a century, numerous aspects of the African culture and language from West Africa were obliterated. Interestingly enough, whatever evolved was essentially European-British in taste, style, outlook and orientation. Somehow, the African element was suppressed. The Creole

language, culture and tradition, with its heavy borrowings from the British ancestry, emerged as the dominant and acceptable societal class and status. This was also espoused by the Creole elite that surfaced in late 19th Century Belize. Consequently, today in Belize there are creolized (light skin groups) and the black group. This distinction based now on skin color is still cause of prejudice, even between Belizean creoles, and the prejudice is still worse towards the Mayas, Mestizos, and the Garinagus. The British masters may be gone, but they left the indelible legacy of “divide and conquer”, which still continues to plague the present generation.

The Response of Slaves to their Situation:

The slaves' own actions tell us how they viewed slavery. They took drastic and dangerous actions such as abortion, suicide, murder, desertion and staged four revolts to escape slavery (History of Belize, 1982, p.24).

During the economic crisis of the 1760's and 1770's when the logwood trade was severely depressed but not yet superseded by Mahogany, the slaves who were undoubtedly forced to bear a good deal of the hardship engendered by the crisis, rebelled at least three times. In the absence of any police power, even the small scale revolts of 1765 and 1768 exposed the helplessness of the settlers and threatened the existence of the settlement (Bolland 1987; Readings in Belizean History, p.74).

Throughout the period from 1745 to 1832 and beyond, the population of the colony remained and stabilized with 75% African slaves, 14% Blacks and coloreds and a tiny European white minority of 10%. Yet this small number ruled and controlled the settlement with the ever increasing fear of slave rebellion. Indeed, the slaves launched four revolts, a clear indication of their unhappiness and rejection of the system. In addition, to the rebellions, the female slaves aborted their babies to ensure they would not be born into slavery for the rest of their lives.

Other drastic measures were undertaken by slaves to escape their plight: suicide, murder, desertion, runaways and escapes to Mexico, Peten in Guatemala and by canoes across the Gulf into Honduras Trujillo. The slave revolts in the settlement occurred in 1765, 1768, 1773 and as late as 1820. The leaders of the 1820 revolt were Will and Sharper

who revolted because of the unnecessary harshness meted out by their masters. In 1791, the arrival of a French ship carrying 200 rebels from Haiti frightened the European settlers who refused their landing in the colony. Five years later, in 1796, the British magistrate prevented the landing of five Jamaican slaves because they were suspected of being “maroons” and could mean danger in the otherwise relatively peaceful settlement. Because Belize was situated on the mainland, runaway and escapes were common and frequent. In 1816, slaves ran away from their masters and formed settlements in the Blue Mountains to the north of Sibun within the colony.

The Abolition of Slavery and the Emancipation of Slaves: Britain – June 1833; West Indian Colonies – 1834; Belize 1838

Even before all the slaves were set free, the settlers had the custom of setting free one slave for the year and this act became known as manumission. In Belize, because female African slaves had mothered sons and daughters for the white masters, a further effort was also made to free these mothers. Hence, the majority of slaves manumitted were females. Furthermore, slaves in the colony were also known to have bought and paid for their own freedom with the price as much as \$400.00.

The last ship to arrive in Belize with human cargo was in 1807, but the British Parliament Act of Slave Emancipation to abolish slavery was only proclaimed in England in June 1833. Among the humanitarians who fought vehemently for the eradication of human beings trafficking was William Wilberforce, an English churchman. There were also other religious people who joined the struggle to end slavery.

Despite the proclamation of liberty for the slaves, Belize, like the other British colonies, lasted as a slave society until 1838 when slaves were emancipated throughout the British Empire.

The Abolition Act, however, did not produce drastic changes. Slavery was abolished but land and labor were still controlled by Europeans. The Act included the introduction of the “Apprenticeship” system, which was used to maintain control over the workers and condition them to accept this control. Under this system, all slaves over the age of six years were to become apprenticed laborers, who were forced to

continue to work for their ex-masters without pay. This system lasted from 1834 to 1838 when it was finally abolished (History of Belize 1982 p.24).

The irony of the abolition act was that slave owners were paid compensation by the British Government for the loss of their slaves. But the slaves were not entitled to anything, not even the freedom that had been proclaimed because they had no other resource or any other choice but to continue working for free under their former masters. The British Colonial Secretary ensured that the situation remained as it was, when in 1838 he declared that Crown land in Belize, which prior to emancipation was simply grabbed and self-allotted by the white settlers, was no longer to be thus granted. His argument was that the former slaves, if they obtained land, might discourage labor for wages. Land was now to be purchased by slaves at £1 per acre. In 1838, twelve families owned all of Belizean private land. As was seen from the very beginning, slavery was an economic system of labor control, especially in Belize and was intended primarily for timber extraction. Agriculture was prohibited and utterly discouraged by the big landowners and the merchants. Land was denied to all Belizeans of non-white origin, namely African Blacks, Garifuna Mayas and Mestizos. This legacy of alienation from the land still exists today among the Belizean Black population. It had just begun to create the serious problem of a poor people in a rich land. To exacerbate an already serious crisis, employers kept wages very low for another century, 1836 – 1936. Mahogany workers received a monthly wage of \$12 - \$15, plus weekly rations of quarts of flour and 4 pounds of salt pork.

The system where the employer would pay a worker some of his wages before he started working was called the “advance system”. The worker would agree, by contract, to work for a certain period of time – nine to eleven months. The contracting was done just before Christmas in Belize Town. The workers would use their advance money to spend Christmas with their families, and then they would return to the Mahogany camps (History of Belize 1982 p.41).

This system was another form of labor control and it kept the workers in perpetual debt and servitude for a further period of fifty years until 1888. Inequality was so blatantly practiced that nothing was beyond its reach,

especially when dealing with former slaves. The Labor Laws of 1852 and 1885 known as “Master and Servants” laws were created to favor the employers. There was nothing in the law to protect the workers. Employees were fined or sentenced to three months imprisonment for going missing, were fined or sentenced to three months imprisonment for missing a day’s work, for leaving a job unfinished or for disobeying an employer or supervisor. These wicked and unjust laws remained in force until the 1940’s. District Magistrates were appointed to enforce these laws. In 1869, the magistrate at Corozal supported 286 cases decided by him under the labor laws for “absenting themselves from work without leave”. Not a single decision was made in favor of the workers.

Throughout this period of oppression of the former slaves, the merchant class also played an active role. The merchants’ activities go back as far as the beginning of the logwood industry in 1670. At that time, British settlers imported everything needed to live and work. Especially needed was flour and pork with which the slave population was fed. Since then, the merchants and traders became rich and powerful in Belize. Because of the likelihood of success in agriculture, which might reduce the importation of food and cut into the merchants’ profits, there was a tendency for persons to be disparaging about local agricultural efforts. Even today, this legacy is still strong in the Belizean society despite the fact that so much land can be used for food production to at least enable Belizeans to become self-sufficient in food.

Gradual Changes in the Plight and Conditions 1838 – 1949:

The various church denominations were active also in improving the lives of slaves and former slaves. Among the leading church reformers were the Roman Catholic, Baptist, Wesley and Anglican Churches, although the Anglican clergy was established in Belize in 1794. Even at this early stage, the Anglican Church avoided the slaves. It became the recognized state church, and Anglican clergy didn’t begin the baptism of slaves until 1812. Between 1812 and 1829, a number of 3, 000 slaves were baptized by the church, and between 1812 and 1823 only three slave marriages were known to have been performed.

The Catholic Church appeared on the scene in 1816 and immediately began the task of opening schools in the cities, towns and villages. The first Jesuit High School was opened in 1887. The first Roman Catholic native bishop – Bishop O.P. Martin, a Garifuna (Black Carib) of Dangriga Town –

was ordained on October 7th, 1982. Upon Bishop Martin's retirement in 2007, having served twenty-five years, he was replaced by Bishop Dorick Wright, a Belizean Creole.

The Catholics were later joined in the settlement by Baptists in 1822 and Wesley in 1825. All these churches focused their attention on the plight of the poor enslaved brethren, but again, except for the Catholic Church, the other three were confined to urban areas. The Anglican Church finally ordained its first native Belizean bishop in 1988 after a prolonged, bitter and divisive strife, an almost bloody confrontation between the two Creole groups – the working and the middle black classes against the Creole light skin (fair complexion) elites. This time the Black triumphed, after heavy lobbying with Jamaica.

From 1784 to 1829, the Belize settlement was organized on European institutions – economic, political, military, legal religious, social and educational. Throughout this process the slaves and free coloreds in Belize Town were excluded, although they formed the majority in the colony. Strange as it may seem, today's South Africa is a living reminder of that era.

In 1890, four hundred white Britishers arrived in the colony to assume control over land, commerce and administration. These were mostly of Scottish background. They intermarried into twelve Creole elite families who were descendants of the old settler elites (Shoman 1987) (Foster 1987).

In due course, the European oriented Creoles and Mestizos replaced the expatriates, especially in the elective constitution from which slaves and the other ethnic groups were excluded. In the colony, political influence was equated with wealth and was maintained that way up to 1936 and 1945.

Working class resistance first manifested itself through the riots of 1894 and 1919. Landowners discouraged agriculture because labor was needed in forestry operation, this ideology was supported by merchants so that they might continue to maintain their profits.

When World War One broke out in 1914, many Belizeans were recruited and joined the armed forces. Many were sent to Scotland and parts of Africa to defend the British Empire. While in England, several Belizean soldiers were badly discriminated against by their white British counterparts. After the war they returned to the Belize settlement and perceived that the plight of the African population was because of race; that sparked a racial riot in 1919 led by Samuel Haynes who had joined the British war efforts in Egypt. Also emerging around this time was the popular Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.),

which had galvanized millions of Black supporters in the U.S., England, the Caribbean and Belize. The Colonial Governor made the mistake of banning a Black magazine – “The Negro World” – which was the official organ of Marcus Garvey’s U.N.I.A. This too helped incite the race riot. In 1920, a local branch of the U.N.I.A. was established in the colony headed by middle class blacks H. Cain, L.D. Kemp, B. Adderly and S. Haynes. On July 1st, 1921, Marcus Garvey made his first official visit to Belize from the US. This time the Governor kept his composure and expressed no hostility; however, the Creole elite felt threatened by his visit. By 1929 world depression had set in and unemployment was already rampant. Then on September 10th, 1931, a hurricane struck Belize killing 2,000 people and leaving behind incalculable devastation. The Blacks were the most severely impacted by the hurricane. On February 15th, 1934, Antonio Soberanis from the working class formed the Labor and Unemployment Association (L.U.A.). L.U.A questioned the colonial system and extended the struggle from African Creole to Garifuna, Maya and Mestizo in the towns and rural areas. By 1939, the workers movement had grown to a point that when the Governor decreed the legalization of unions in Belize in 1943, this same organization was renamed “General Workers Union” and became officially registered in June 1943. Original membership in 1943 was approximately 350, but by the trade union had reached a membership of 3, 000 persons. After all this time, a change had occurred in the Creole middle class and an educated class had also surfaced under the nurturing of Catholic Jesuits. A white Creole millionaire, Robert Sydney Turton, a native born Mahogany and Chicle contractor, resented the economic and political dominance of the expatriates, so he ran in the municipal elections of 1936 and defeated the manager of Belize Estates and Produce Company who at that time owned over one million acres of Belize surface land of a total of five million acres of surface land. It was Robert Sydney Turton who sponsored Mestizo George Price into politics. Price became the father of the Belizean Independence struggle and on September 21st, 1981 he became Belize’s first Prime Minister.

During George Price’s post as Prime Minister, two prominent Creole persons were awarded high positions. Honorable Carl L. B. Rogers became Deputy Prime Minister and Dr. Dame Minita Gordon became the first female native Belizean Governor General of Belize – a post she held for twelve years. At her retirement, she was succeeded by another Creole person, Dr. Colville Young Sr. – a post he has held for the past seventeen years. At the time of

Belize's Independence, Dr. Theodore Aranda, a Garifuna Psychologist, became leader of the opposition – the United Democratic Party.

Though George Price became the People's United Party's first Prime Minister and leader of the country, Honorable Philip Goldson was important in the founding of the People's United Party. Mr. Goldson was famous and very vocal against Guatemala's unfounded territorial claim to Belize. This was a reason why he later broke away from the party he helped found in 1950 to form the National Independence Party in 1957. Philip Goldson fought hard, alone at times, to keep democracy alive in Belize. His political motto was 'the time to save your country is before you lose it'. In 1979, Philip Goldson's National Independence Party along with two other parties – the People's Democratic Movement and the Liberal Party – was merged into the United Democratic Party under the leadership of Honorable Dean Lindo.

In 1984, during national elections, George Price was defeated at the polls and replaced by Manuel Esquivel who became the country's second Mestizo Prime Minister, while Honorable Curl Thompson (a Creole man) was made Deputy Prime Minister. Manuel Esquivel of the United Democratic Party won a second term in political office (1993 – 1998). He later resigned from politics following his defeat. Thereafter, a young vibrant Creole lawyer, Dean Oliver Barrow, took up the UDP's mantle of leadership. In the 2008 National Elections, the United Democratic Party under the new leadership of Dean Barrow won as Belize's new government. Consequently, Dean Oliver Barrow became Belize's first Black Prime Minister – a position he is expected to hold until 2013 when the next election is due. Though the previous administration, People's United Party, was predominantly Hispanic, Dean Barrow's party proved to be predominantly black from both the Creole and Garifuna populations.

Today, the Bar Association of Professional Lawyers, which yields immense political clout in Belize is predominantly a Black operated profession with members mostly from the Creole population.

The Garinagu: Historical Background:

The Garinagu, Black Caribs of Belize, Central America and the Eastern Caribbean have for four centuries been the focus of numerous studies by anthropologists, linguists, sociologists and ethno-historians.

The Arawak-Carib struggles on these islands and the ensuing European struggles and centuries of conflict with the Caribs have been well documented by various sources. But for the purpose of this study, the emphasis will be on the Linguistic History of the Garifuna People (Black Caribs) of Belize and surrounding areas in Central America and the Caribbean (West Indies) from 1220 A.D. to the present.

The so-called New World had been populated by migrants from Asia for perhaps thirty millennia, their descendants expanding throughout the hemisphere. Still, those Amerindian pioneers who moved out of South America to successively populate the Caribbean islands began to do so no earlier than about 5,000 B.C. and probably reached the Greater Antilles – the end of these northward movements – no earlier than about 2, 000 B.C. (Rouse 1964). During the final phases of such movements from the South American mainland through the islands, apparently only a few centuries before Columbus, Karina (Cariban) speakers conquered the Arawakan speaking and culturally different predecessors and in the process acquired the language of their defeated enemies in modified form (Taylor 1977).

There are some factors in the Black Carib culture which, taken for granted by Garinagu-Black Caribs present themselves for questioning to other groups; for example, the origin of the designation “Black Carib” and of the language, which up to today maintains some division along sexual lines (Palacio 1987, Hadel 1972).

The Origin of the Arawaks and the Caribs: The Arrival of the Caribs on the Lesser Antilles

The Arawaks and the Caribs first settled in Guyana, Surinam and Venezuela along the Orinoco and Magdalena. Throughout their stay along these rivers, the Arawaks and Caribs survived on fishing and hunting, which were male occupations, while the women undertook the task of gathering well known roots and fruit crops. Around 160 A.D. perhaps due to reasons of overpopulation and food scarcity along the Orinoco River, the Arawaks began their emigration to the offshore islands of the Greater Antilles, namely Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Hadel 1972).

Then, in 1220 A.D., the Caribs invaded and conquered these islands but chose to settle on the Lesser Antilles, namely the smaller islands of Guadeloupe,

Martinique, Dominica, St. Lucia, Grenada, and Trinidad and Tobago. The Arawaks and the Caribs were extremely capable seamen who built and sailed their canoes carrying up to sixty (60) fighting men in times of war and enemy raids (Kirby and Martin, 1985). The Caribs used their canoes for trading and raiding Arawak islands. During these raids the Arawak males were killed, but the Arawak women were carried away to become wives of the Caribs.

In due course the Carib-Arawak offspring evolved a spoken language with two versions: the female Arawak version and the male Carib version, each distinct yet mutually understandable by both. This pattern had survived to this day in the Central American Garifuna language.

When Christopher Columbus landed at Puerto Rico in 1492, he met a group of Indians who were different from the predominantly Taino population. At that time the Taino, of Arawakan stock, occupied all the Greater Antilles. They told Columbus that they had come up from South America about one hundred years earlier and had been fighting from island to island, subduing the Arawakans as they proceeded. They called themselves “Kalinaku” or “Kalipuna”, names which were then and still are used by various Carib speaking tribes of Northeast South America (Taylor, 1977).

1492: Christopher Columbus – Arawaks, Callinago: Garifuna:

On October 12th, 1492 Columbus made his historic landing on the shored of Watling Island in the Caribbean. Cristóbal Colón and his crew of prisoners were the first Spaniards to receive Arawak hospitality. The Arawaks had unknowingly and mistakenly welcomed these strangers in fear that they were the white gods referred to in their Arawak and Carib mythology. So the Indians gave Columbus and his men gold and silver in all shapes and sizes; they gave them food and water, and even assisted the Spaniards in the rebuilding of the flagship Santa Maria. Little did the Arawaks realize that their generosity and docility would be interpreted by the European strangers as a sign of weakness. It was the false perception of the Caribbean indigenous peoples as weak, primitive, inferior and savage, which contrasted with the Europeans’ false assumption of “racial superiority” and “civility” that was to characterize the ensuing relationship between the two for the next five centuries. Be that as it may, there can be no justification for the inhuman, barbarous, savage and ruthless cruelties meted out subsequently to the docile Arawaks by the supposedly advanced, and so called “civilized” Europeans. The arrival of

Columbus put an end to the Carib practice of raiding the Arawak Islands of women. Rather than suffer European subjugation, the Caribs who had an elaborate militaristic system now turned their energies to self-defense. During his visit with the Arawaks, Columbus was told horrifying stories about the flesh eating Caribs and on the basis of that information only; Columbus labeled the Caribs as canibale, caribale and cannibals (Palacio 1987:111).

But it's not certain whether the Caribs were really as aggressive and hostile as the Spanish chroniclers made out. Spanish law permitted the enslavement of cannibals. There is some evidence that the Caribs, maybe even the Arawaks did practice a form of cannibalism, but as done in many other cultures including the Maya cultures of Central America. But this was purely a religious ritual act, not a culinary one. Consuming another's flesh transferred their essence, their admired qualities; it is a widespread idea, reflected even in the Christian Eucharist (Smith, S.J. in Taylor 1987).

In contrast, the Caribs had considered themselves Callinago, meaning manioc eaters and derived from the word Karina, Galibi or Carinaco, prior to Columbus' arrival in the region (Taylor, D. 1977).

From the root word *Karina*, we have derived *Callinago*, *Garinagu* and *Karifouna*. Hence, today the Caribs of Dominica refer to themselves as *Karifouna*, while the Black Caribs of St. Vincent call themselves Callinago, and the Central American Black Caribs of Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Nicaragua have always believed themselves to be ***Garinagu*** – the people – speaking ***Garifuna***, the language.

Three Hundred Years of Carib struggles against European Powers from 1500 – 1796: The Spanish, French, and British – *The Spaniards meet Caribs in the Lesser Antilles*

The population of the West Indies in 1496 is estimated to have consisted of 1,100, 000 Arawaks and Tainos. By the year 1535, only 500 remained. The English pirate, Francis Drake, visited Hispaniola in 1585, at that time not a single Arawak could be found on the island (Jenkins, 1982).

In less than a century, the Taino-Arawak population had become extinct due to the cruelties and forced labor meted out by the Spanish and British colonizers, and the result of European diseases such as smallpox and syphilis against which the Arawaks had no immunity. As was stated earlier, unlike the docile Arawaks, the island Caribs had developed an advanced militaristic

system, a practice to which they adhered from early times, involving the induction of children at a very early age. The Carib males acquired the skills of using bow and arrow both on land and on sea. They learned to hunt and to fish with the arrow as well as to use it in battle as the need arose.

Twice, in 1515 and 1520, the Spaniards attacked the Carib Islands with the aim of subduing the inhabitants for a supply of badly needed labor. Both invasions were repulsed as the Caribs fought valiantly to defend their island homes. Consequently, the Spaniards now left them alone, but soon after they had to face the military might of France and Britain. Yet, in the battles that ensued, Britain was able to claim victory only after the assassination of the Paramount Carib Chief Joseph Chatoyer in 1795, followed a year later by the capitulation of his brother Duvalle in October 1796 (Kirby and Martin, 1985).

The French and British Carib Wars of 1625 – 1660

In 1625, both France and Britain sailed to the West Indies to join Spain or even to rival her in the search for gold, spice and colonies. At this time neither Britain nor France respected Spanish Sovereignty in the Caribbean and these two Europeans intruders were even prepared to go to war with Spain over her colonies. At the time of the French and British intervention in the Caribbean region, apparently only the islands of the Lesser Antilles remained uncolonized. The French then made a bold attempt to colonize those Carib occupied islands, but to each attempt the Caribs fought back vehemently, thereby preventing French encroachment on their territories. Occasionally the British joined forces with the French against the Caribs, but that too proved futile. The French, realizing that they could not defeat the Caribs agreed to and signed the Treaty of 1660 with the Island Caribs. According to the treaty both France and England agreed that Caribs would be granted perpetual ownership of Dominica and St. Vincent. This satisfied France but not the British. As a result, eight years later Britain broke the treaty and began a series of wars against the Caribs.

The Final British Carib War of 1795: The Assassination of Chief Joseph Chatoyer, March 14th, 1795

In March of 1795, the paramount Chief of the Carib chiefs in St. Vincent, Joseph Chatoyer, at the instigation of the French, summoned his Carib soldiers

and decided to launch an all-out war to remove the British intruder from their island. At this time St. Vincent had been designated the capital of the Carib Republic. Thus, began the final war that was to end all Carib conflicts with the Europeans. Dr. Earl Kirby writes in 'Rise and Fall of Black Carib of St. Vincent' (1985) that Chief Chatoyer and his fighting men were well on their way to victory when pride took over the better part of the valiant leader Chatoyer. The Chief was challenged to a sword duel with the seasoned British soldier, Major Leith. Legend has it that King Chatoyer entertained the belief that no man born of woman could kill him. So he accepted the challenge and in the ensuing sword fight was fatally wounded by Major Leith. Joseph Chatoyer, Chief of chiefs and freedom fighter, died on March 14th, 1795. Following his death, his brother Duvalle continued fighting from the hills of Yurumein, adopting the strategy of guerilla warfare. Their battle dragged on until the following year, until June 1796, when Duvalle and his followers finally surrendered to the British.

Upon the surrender of Duvalle and his men, the British rounded up 5,080 Garinagu men, women and children for an exile, this was to have been in two phases. The first stage was to have them relocated to an inhospitable island, Balliceaux, off the coast of St. Vincent where they languished for six months. At the end of the six months from October 1796 to March 1797, 2,500 of the Garinagu refugees perished of malnutrition, disease and exposure to the elements. The survivors were placed upon eight British war ships and taken on a one month (March 11th - April 12th 1797) journey into exile to Roatan, Honduras. It wasn't until five years after their displacement to Roatan that they arrived on to the shores of Belize in 1802. Later in 1823, 150 Garinagu men, women and children were brought from Honduras to escape massacre and Spanish military reprisals. Under the leadership of Garifuna Captain Alejo Beni they established the first Belizean Garifuna settlement of Dangriga.

Upon their arrival to Belize, the British colonizers welcomed the Garinagu refugees with grave suspicion after having heard of the atrocities the Garinagu had committed against the British while defending their homeland, Yurumein - St. Vincent. The British sowed the seeds of prejudice and racial discrimination in the minds of the Creoles against the Garinagu who share a common African ancestry to ensure that the two would not unite against the British colonizers, a common divide and conquer rule technique.

Regrettably, the tactic worked despite numerous interactions between the Creoles and the Garinagu in the Mahogany camps of Bomba and Maskal villages in the Belize District. However, thanks to the Jesuit priests who recognized the Garifuna intelligence, giftedness and versatility in languages and the disposition to work with other people. As a result the Garinagu males were recruited and trained as teachers and evangelists in the Catholic schools throughout Belize. By 1955, Garinagu teachers had become the backbone of the teaching profession throughout Belize.

The participation and involvement of the Garinagu in the educational field facilitated their acceptance into the Belizean society, first as neighbors then, ultimately, as citizens. Though only seven percent of Belize's population, the Garinagus account for most Ph. D's in Belize. Today, the Garinagu people can be found widespread in many professions throughout the country as teachers, educators, nurses, civil servants, lawyers, judges and in the security forces as well as politicians, religious and social leaders. Of note among these are two internationally renowned artists/musicians – Pen Cayetano and Benjamin Nicholas, both from Dangriga Town.

The struggle for social acceptance has been so intense, and we have made our contribution to the point that our great visionary leader – Thomas Vincent Ramos - was able to approach and convince the governor of the day in 1941 to give us a National Holiday commemorating our arrival to Belize. Consequently, November 19th, 1943 was declared a public and bank holiday for Garinagu in the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts. It was not until 1977 that the People's United Party Government made the November 19th Garifuna Settlement Day a National Public and Bank holiday in Belize.

Aside from founding the 19th of November as a commemoration of Garifuna Settlement Day, Thomas Vincent Ramos was also a cultural activist, a Methodist preacher, and managed to organize Carib Development Society and the Carib International Society. He later passed away peacefully on November 13th, 1955.

In 1981, Garinagu cultural activists founded the National Garifuna Council, an organization to champion and give voice to the causes of the Garinagu people of Belize. Thanks to the efforts of the National Garifuna Council for submitting a candidature file, in 2001 UNESCO – the United Nations Educational and Scientific Corporation – proclaimed the Garifuna Language, Music and Dance a *Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*.

Later, in 2007, one of its great musician, educator and cultural ambassador – Andy Palacio – was again recognized by UNESCO with the *Artist for Peace Award*. Again, later that year, Andy Palacio received the *Womex Award* for his classic album, *Watina* – I called out.

In a recent effort to preserve, promote and document the Garifuna Culture and its rich heritage, there has been the opening of three Garifuna Museums throughout the country; the first being the Luba Garifuna Museum founded by Mr. Sebastian Cayetano and family on November 5th, 1999. This was later followed by the Gulisi Museum of Dangriga in 2004, which was opened by the National Garifuna Council. Last was the Lani Barangu Luba Garifuna Museum in Barranco Village, Toledo, which opened in 2005 by Mrs. Rita Enriquez.

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5. Brasil

Aspectos Culturais e Linguísticos de Africania no Caribe

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O conhecimento das costas de África pelos navegadores europeus em busca de fortunas e conquista territorial e, do outro lado, o encontro das Américas e seu processo de colonização ao longo dos meados do século XV ao final do século XIX impulsionaram o comércio de mão de obra escravizada através do tráfico transatlântico destinado aos portos do Novo Mundo. Calcula-se entre 10 a 12 milhões, o contingente negroafricano proveniente da África Subsaariana que conseguiu sobreviver às agruras da travessia marítima por suportar todo tipo de crueldade e de maus tratos para a desgraça de finalmente chegar e ser desembarcado na condição de escravo nos portos da América e do Caribe durante quatro séculos consecutivos.

No Caribe insular, se bem que esteve sob o domínio de potências europeias (Espanha, França, Inglaterra e Holanda) durante os séculos XVI a XIX, sua população é majoritariamente de origem africana. Com exceção de Cuba, República Dominicana e Porto Rico, o chamado Caribe Espanhol, onde houve em larga escala uma mestiçagem biológica, os povos caribenhos são predominantemente pessoas negras: 100% da população do Haiti, 80% na Jamaica, 42% em Trinidad e Tobago, 80% em Barbados, 92% em Guadalupe e 89% na Martinica. De outra parte, aquele contingente de negros escravizados que deu ao Caribe uma feição própria, coube à antiga colônia portuguesa da América a importação estimada em quatro milhões de indivíduos que tornou o Brasil a segunda maior potência melano africana do mundo,

segundo o último censo demográfico, de 2010, entre os mais de cento e setenta milhões de brasileiros cerca de 49% são classificados de pardos, o que significa dizer, afrodescendentes e mestiços.

Caribe geográfico

Do ponto de vista geográfico, o Caribe é a região da América situada próxima à América Central e entre a América do Sul e do Norte, formada por mais de quarenta ilhas banhadas pelo Mar do Caribe e pelo Oceano Atlântico, entre elas, as Antilhas Maiores e as Antilhas Menores. De acordo com sua localização territorial, a região ainda se divide em Caribe Insular e Caribe Continental, esse último denominando aqueles países que também pertencem à América do Sul e do Norte e formam o chamado Arco do Caribe, dos quais não trataremos aqui para não alongar este trabalho introdutório ao assunto.

Nas Antilhas Maiores encontram-se Cuba, São Domingos, Jamaica e Porto Rico, que foram domínio espanhol até meados do século XVII. A partir de 1655, a Jamaica fica submetida ao poder dos ingleses e, em 1678, mediante o tratado de Nimega, a Espanha tolera a presença dos franceses na parte ocidental de São Domingos, área que levará o nome de Colônia Francesa de Saint Dominique, o atual Haiti, enquanto a parte oriental fica denominada de Colônia Espanhola de Santo Domingo, a atual República Dominicana. As Antilhas Menores são parte das Antilhas que, em conjunto com as Grandes Antilhas, as Bahamas, as ilhas Caymans e as ilhas Turks e Caicos, formam as Índias Ocidentais, na denominação dos ingleses. São uma longa cadeia de ilhas dispostas ao longo da extremidade oriental do mar das Caraíbas, separando este mar do oceano Atlântico, começando a leste da ilha de Porto Rico ao norte, e terminando ao largo da Venezuela, ao sul. Ainda no mar das Caraíbas estão as Antilhas Neerlandesas, constituídas pelas chamadas ilhas ABC, Aruba, Bonaire e Curaçao, ao norte da costa da Venezuela, territórios do Reino dos Países Baixos.

Caribe cultural

Cada uma dessas ilhas foi submetida ao domínio social e econômico de colonialistas europeus que ali se estabeleceram, numericamente inferiorizados, frente ao contingente negroafricano que eles importavam e exploravam como

mão de obra escravizada para as plantações de tabaco e de cana-de-açúcar, para os trabalhos nos engenhos e na prospecção nas minas, para afazeres domésticos e diários. Em contrapartida, a exemplo do que ocorreu no Brasil com os milhares de quilombos que se instalaram no país durante o regime escravagista, entre eles, o maior e mais importante, a República de Palmares ao final do século XVI, que logrou resistir à sua destruição pelos portugueses durante 50 anos (MOURA, 1959)¹, também no Caribe a “cimarronagem” de negros fugidos e amotinados foi uma expressão organizada de resistência e defesa cultural na opressão, uma forma legítima de luta pela reapropriação de sua liberdade e identidade sociocultural. O levante de maior impacto teve lugar na ilha de São Domingos em 1522, onde se calcula ter havido 7.000 “cimarrones” ao final daquele século (Williams, 1978).

Como testemunho dessa resistência heroica, fora o processo de mestiçagem biológica que não cabe nessa interpretação, mas é importante salientar, pois ainda se verifica no Caribe, como no Brasil, que em todo o arquipélago essa presença humana não foi apenas a base social para a criação de riqueza, naturalmente apropriada pelos plantadores e aristocratas. Ela impôs profundas marcas socioculturais e linguísticas de identidade e identitárias afrocaribenhas que se evidenciam nas manifestações culturais e artísticas, na tradição oral, na culinária, nos cantos e cânticos, nas crenças religiosas, na medicina, em usos e costumes e nos aportes linguísticos que, por um lado, enriqueceram o universo simbólico das línguas europeias com que o negroafricano entrou em contato, e, por outro, deu lugar aos falares crioulos que emergiram em várias partes.

Em torno das origens

As culturas caribenhas são distintamente Afro-Europeias, ou seja, estão divididas em esferas de influência Afro-Iberoamericana, Afro-Francesa, Afro-Inglesa, Afro-Holandesa, embora possuam muitos aspectos em comum, especialmente no campo dos falares crioulos e das manifestações populares fundamentalmente originárias de tradições negroafricanas, às quais se incorporaram traços de tradições europeias e influências asiáticas, sobretudo de hindus e chineses em Trinidad e Tobago que recebeu um grande contingente

¹ A área na Serra da Briga, no atual estado nordestino de Alagoas onde se localizou Palmares, foi tombada pelo Governo Brasileiro como patrimônio nacional.

de imigrantes asiáticos a partir de 1833, para substituir o trabalho escravo negroafricano.

A África não é um país, como popularmente costuma ser imaginada. É um continente pluricultural onde são faladas mais de 2.000 línguas pertencentes a quatro grandes famílias etnolinguísticas, segundo a classificação de Joseph Greenberg (1966): Afro-Asiática, Nilo-Saariana, Koissã e Nígero-Congolesa (Cf. mapa anexo). Com exceção dos Koissã (hotentotes e bosquímanos) que se encontram principalmente no deserto de Kalahari, na Namíbia, e que não são negroides, a África subsaariana concentra a população negra africana do continente em seus territórios, região que, portanto, pode ser chamada de África Negra, uma denominação que vem sendo refutada pelos africanistas atuais, ainda mais quando aplicada inadequadamente para todo o continente africano.

A partir da documentação histórica existente sobre o tráfico transatlântico acrescida das evidências encontradas no estudo dos aportes lexicais africanos apropriados pelas línguas europeias correntes como línguas oficiais nos países do Caribe, tanto quanto nos topônimos (Matamba, Cambute), antropônimos (o líder Juan Sebastián Lemba) e etnônimos locais (Mandinga, Mayombe) e na linguagem religiosa dos diversos cultos afrocaribenhos que ali são praticados², todos denunciam uma procedência subsaariana Nígero-Congolesa, marcada por traços históricos da presença humana banto de Congos, Angolas e de oeste-africanos, da maneira como se passou também no Brasil (Cf. CASTRO, 2005). Entre os primeiros, encontram-se os falantes de Kikongo e de Kimbundo, línguas étnicas muito assemelhadas, de povos, como muitos outros, trazidos pelo tráfico dos antigos reinos do Congo e do Ndongo na atual República de Angola, enquanto os oeste-africanos foram tomados em territórios que vão do Senegal à Nigéria onde, ao contrário da zona banto, encontra-se uma centena de grupos etnolinguísticos diferenciados. Entre eles, aparecem com mais frequência aportes de línguas do grupo ewe-fon ou gbe do Benim (fon, mina, adjá, gun), Togo (ewe) e Gana (akan, twi, fante, axante), do iorubá, igbo e do calabari da Nigéria. Se assim foi, a população negra escravizada e sujeita a intensa exploração teve uma origem comum, Nígero-Congolesa, através da área caribenha. (Cf. FABELO, s/d;

² Diferentemente do Caribe, no Brasil, a documentação oficial sobre o tráfico transatlântico foi mandada ser queimada em 1891, por ordem do Ministro das Finanças, com o objetivo, embora não declarado de evitar que os senhores de escravos fossem indenizados, desde quando os escravizados eram considerados propriedade particular.

CABRERA, 1957; ALLSOPP, 1996; COLLYMORE, 1977; ACOSTA, 2002; ORTIZ, 1990, entre outros autores).

A invenção dos estereótipos

É claro que formas específicas de uma determinada cultura predominaram em certas regiões e influenciaram outras, sem que isso significasse superioridade cultural de um povo africano frente outros, como pareceu a alguns diante do bem organizado sistema de crenças e panteão da Santeria de matriz iorubá e do culto Arará de matriz ewe-fon, que são produtos da interpenetração de orientações religiosas negroafricanas e aportes do cristianismo, e desde cedo despertaram a atenção dos pesquisadores. Com a divulgação de que “não existe religião com um panteão de deidades comparável com a base iorubá, Orixá ou Santeria de Cuba, Trinidad e Granada, ou o Vudu com base ewe-fon do Haiti e Republica Dominicana – diga-se de passagem, que são povos concentrados em territórios vizinhos, entre a Nigéria e o Benim e sempre mantiveram uma troca de empréstimos culturais mútuos, principalmente no campo da religião –, esses determinados cultos começaram a ser concebidos equivocadamente como se fossem os únicos modelos de religiosidade afrocaribenha a merecerem atenção por se tratar dos “mais autênticos” frente às manifestações do Palo Monte ou Regla Congo, de matriz congo-angola, igualmente autênticas em suas recriações. Nelas, as divindades ou inquices são forças da natureza, ao contrário dos orixás e voduns, em cujo panteão se sobressaem os ancestrais reais com representações antropomórficas e uma mitologia bem elaborada³. A partir desse tipo de visão etnocêntrica, criaram-se os estereótipos quanto à pretensa inferioridade cultural do povo banto em relação aos oeste-africanos à semelhança do que aconteceu no Brasil com a concentração dos estudos no modelo mais prestigiado de candomblé de tradição nagô-queto (iorubá), mas de estrutura religiosa conventual ewe-fon (jeje-mina, na denominação brasileira) que se encontram localizados na cidade do Salvador da Bahia (Cf. CASTRO, 2005).

³ Gema Valdés Acosta, no estudo sobre *Los remanentes de las lenguas bantúes en Cuba* (2002), à página 35, faz a seguinte observação: “Este panorama científico es valido para nuestro país en donde el elemento yoruba há sido considerado com más importancia e interés tanto en los estudios lingüísticos como etnológicos”.

No clássico *Glosario de Afronegrismos* de Ortiz, “angola” e “congo” (s.v.) são tidos como termos depreciativos, o primeiro para rotular alguém de “pouco inteligente”, e “congo”, com o significado de “baile de gentalha”, enquanto Allsopp, no extraordinário *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage*, não registra “angola”, mas traz “congo” (s.v.) como um termo insultuoso, usado na esfera anglocaribenha para taxar alguém de “negro, iletrado e estúpido”, no sentido depreciativo dos termos. Também Fabelo, no seu importante *Diccionario de la Lengua Conga residual em Cuba*, justifica os lexemas “lele” e “congo lele” (s.v.), significando “abobado”, ao fato de que “o ‘povo Lele’, povo banto do antigo Congo Belga, levado para Cuba pelo tráfico, tinha um baixo desenvolvimento cultural e mental”. Acontece que no português popular brasileiro, ocorre também “lelé”, com e a variante “bobo lelé”, retardado, idiota, bantuísmo de base kikongo “lele” com o mesmo significado (Cf. CASTRO, 2005, s.v.), que possivelmente tenha ainda uma correlação com a figura do “bobolee” do carnaval de Trinidad e Tobago, registrado por Allsopp (s.v.)⁴.

Esse tipo de visão preconceituosa, inadequada sobre povo banto, desenvolveu uma orientação metodológica de visão etnocêntrica quando exalta e atribui, de maneira equivocada, a superioridade cultural do povo iorubá em detrimento de outras culturas negroafricanas, a ponto de se procurar uma origem iorubá para os aportes lexicais negroafricanos nos falares locais, mesmo quando não o são. O glossário de Ortiz (s.v.) registra uma origem lucumi (iorubá) para o lexema banto “bilongo” (remédio, poção mágica), enquanto o dicionário de Allsopp (s.v.) vai buscar uma explicação na língua iorubá para o bantuísmo “mariboune” ou “maribunta”, vespa, corrente em Trinidad e Tobago, e sob a forma “marimbondo”, no português brasileiro (Cf. CASTRO, 2005, s.v.). A propósito, esse tipo de abordagem “nagocêntrica”⁵ teve lugar no Brasil a partir da publicação, em 1933, de *Os Africanos no Brasil*, obra póstuma de Nina Rodrigues que inaugurou os estudos afrobrasileiros e imprimiu um tal continuismo metodológico ainda hoje seguido por muitos pesquisadores de fama internacional (Cf. VERGER, 1968).

⁴ “Bo-bo-lee, a scape goat, an innocent and patient victim of ridicule”.

⁵ Nagô, de anagô, denominação porque ficaram tradicionalmente conhecidos no Brasil os iorubás, segundo o apelido que recebem no Reino de Ketu, no Benim, região fronteira aos territórios da Nigéria ocidental onde se concentram os falantes iorubanos.

Religião e línguas

As línguas negroafricanas deixaram de ser faladas como línguas plenas no Caribe, mas ficaram resguardadas em um sistema lexical de uso litúrgico entre as manifestações afrorreligiosas caribenhas e provocaram a emergência dos falares crioulos em contato com as línguas europeias na região, ao contrário do ocorreu com o português em contato com a língua portuguesa no Brasil.

As mais conhecidas religiões afrocaribenhas nascidas na escravidão são genericamente chamadas de Santeria ou Regla de Ocha, de matriz iorubá, Palo ou Regla de Palo Monte, de matriz congo-angola, na esfera hispanofalante, principalmente em Cuba, Vudu ou Vodou, de matriz ewe-fon, na esfera francófona, principalmente no Haiti, à semelhança da divisão entre as “nações” de Candomblé no Brasil que, de acordo com suas matrizes tradicionais, intitulam-se jeje-mina ou ewe-fon, nagô-queto ou iorubá, congo-angola ou banto. Cada qual é um tipo de organização sociorreligiosa baseada em padrões comuns de tradições negroafricanas, em um sistema de crenças, adoração e língua. Língua, nesse contexto, compreende um repertório linguístico que descreve a organização sociorreligiosa do grupo, objetos sagrados, a cozinha ritualística, costumes específicos, cerimônias e ritos litúrgicos, transmitido por tradição oral e apoiado em um tipo consuetudinário de comportamento bem conhecido dos participantes por experiência pessoal (Cf. CASTRO, 2005; ACOSTA, 2002).

Essas religiões sobreviveram a toda sorte de perseguição pela sua força de coesão social e pela liderança religiosa assumida por suas mulheres, e desempenharam um importante papel político em vários países. Acredita-se que o Vudu foi fator preponderante ao sucesso da revolução que libertou a população negra do Haiti em 1793, o primeiro país da América a abolir a escravidão (Cf. POLLACK-ELTZ, 1977; MILHET y ALARCÓN, 1998). Hoje, o Haiti possui 90% que se dizem católicos e 11% de praticantes do Vudu e seu mais famoso ditador Francois Duvalier, o Papa Doc, fazia uso de preceitos do Vodou na política durante sua ditadura. Espalhou o medo com os lendários zumbis (mortos-redivivos) o povo acreditava que ele tivesse poder de ressuscitar os mortos, e usava os serviços dos sanguinários “tontons macutes” (bichos papões), uma força paramilitar criada em 1959 e só destituída em 1986, quando seu filho Jean-Claude, o Babe Doc, foi deposto. Considerando que os termos “macute e zumbi” são bantuisismos, o último de uso corrente nas Américas, acreditamos que no apelido Papa Doc, que era

médico de profissão e também ocupava o posto de “hungan” na hierarquia sociorreligiosa do Vudu (SIMPSON, 1978), um título honorífico entre o povo ewe-fon que lhe conferia poderes de natureza político-religiosa e de caráter místico⁶, o segundo elemento provavelmente é o vocábulo banto “ndoki”, feiticeiro, médico curandeiro ou “medicine doctor”, que foneticamente se confunde e passa como forma reduzida da palavra “docteur” em francês, língua oficial do país. Tais lexemas também são registrados, com o mesmo significado, na linguagem litúrgica dos candomblés da Bahia, o primeiro, entre as “nações” jeje-mina, enquanto o outro, entre as “nações” congo-angola (Cf. CASTRO, 2001 e 2005).

Os falares crioulos

Quanto aos falares crioulos que emergiram e se estabeleceram nos países do Caribe de língua oficial inglesa (Jamaica) e francesa (Haiti), a pergunta que há muito intriga os linguistas é o fato desse tipo de falar não ter logrado êxito na esfera dos países hispano falantes (Cuba, República Dominicana, Porto Rico e Colômbia), uma questão que também diz respeito ao Brasil (Cf. REINECKE, 1938; CHAUDENSON, 2001).

Não resta dúvida de que, em ambos os casos, houve uma confluência de motivos favoráveis não só de natureza extralinguística (densidade populacional, condições socioeconômica, históricas, sistema colonial de plantação, etc), como também de ordem linguística subjacente àquele processo de interpenetração de línguas e culturas nígero-congolesas com línguas europeias. Esse tipo de preocupação é que tem orientado minha pesquisa em relação ao português brasileiro, cujos dados obtidos até agora demonstram que, se, por acaso, esse processo não contar com uma proximidade relativa entre a estrutura linguística das diferentes línguas em contato, certamente surgirá entre elas um conflito por falta de inteligibilidade da parte dos seus utentes, e a necessidade de comunicação faz emergir um outro falar um crioulo que, com o passar do tempo se cristaliza, passa a ser do domínio geral, podendo alcançar a estatura de língua nacional, a exemplo, da língua nacional caboverdiana (CARREIRA, 1982). Quando tal conflito não existe, sucede-se a imantação, por um lado, dos sistemas linguísticos das línguas

⁶ Huga também é um tratamento altamente respeitoso dado às pessoas mais idosas da comunidade sociorreligiosa.

negroafricanas em direção ao sistema das línguas europeias, e, em direção oposta, um movimento das línguas europeias em direção ao sistema linguístico das línguas negroafricanas em situação de contato. Este parece ter sido o caso que ocorreu com o português brasileiro e o espanhol caribenho frente às línguas do grupo banto e do iorubá, cujos falantes foram relativamente majoritários nessas regiões, os quais, em contrapartida, como mais uma expressão de resistência cultural na opressão, africanizaram a língua do colonizador europeu, dando-lhe um caráter próprio.

Não podemos ignorar o fato de que as línguas europeias foram impostas como segunda língua e, segundo alguns teóricos, por transmissão irregular, a uma população majoritária de falantes negros africanos por mais de três séculos consecutivos no Caribe, como aconteceu no Brasil, país que é, hoje, a segunda maior potência melano africana do mundo. Por outro lado, também em Angola e Moçambique onde, a exemplo do Brasil, foram as mesmas línguas que entraram em contato, não se registram falares crioulos do português, mas um português angolizado e moçambicano. No entanto, em Cabo Verde e na Guiné-Bissau, onde o português entrou em contato com línguas oeste-africanas de estruturas tipologicamente diferenciadas entre si e do próprio português, deu lugar à emergência e ao estabelecimento de falares crioulos, como outra forma de resistência e preservação da sua memória cultural (CASTRO, 2005 e 2010).

As manifestações populares

As manifestações populares caribenhas são fundamentalmente de origem subsaariana. No caso da música, da dança e dos instrumentos musicais predominam marcas culturais e linguísticas da presença histórica de negros bantos na região. Entre os ritmos mais conhecidos estão a rumba e o mambo, acompanhados pelas batidas dos bongôs (membrafones), pelo toque das maracas e das marimbas (vibrafones), todos de larga utilização também na música popular brasileira que ainda conta com cuícas e reco-reco, idiofones que são parte integrante das baterias das escolas de samba do carnaval, e com o berimbau, o cordofone emblemático da capoeira. Essa música caribenha foi mostrada ao mundo por meio de produções cinematográficas holywoodianas e discográficas dos anos sessenta, através da famosa orquestra de Xavier Cougat, um catalão que se pensava ser cubano, o que contribuiu para aquele tipo ritmo passasse a ser compreendido como símbolos de identidade nacional cubana, assim como o calypso em Trinidad e Tobago, o

samba no Brasil e o tango na Argentina. Além disso, a calinda, uma dança de bate-pau popular em Trinidad e Tobago (Cf. CORDALLO, 1983; ALLSOPP, 1996, s.v) tem seu equivalente no maculelê da região do Recôncavo da Bahia (CASTRO, 2001).

Entre todas essas manifestações, o Carnaval é celebrado em quase todas as ilhas do Caribe. Começa no domingo seguinte à Epifania e termina na quarta-feira de cinzas, exceto na República Dominicana onde termina em 27 de fevereiro, quando comemoram o dia da independência do país. É um rito de passagem, segundo análise do antropólogo Roberto da Matta em *Carnavais, malandros e heróis*, durante o qual podem ser rompidos os comportamentos sociais e éticos culturalmente postulados por uma determinada comunidade, que nessa época se liberta dos preconceitos, ultrapassa as barreiras limítrofes de gêneros e “abre as suas asas, solta as suas feras, cai na gandaia, e entra nesta festa”, como aconselha a letra da canção do compositor brasileiro Lulu Santos. As marcas negroafricanas estão nas fantasias criativas, nas máscaras amedrontadoras, no ritmo musical, na percussão dos antigos “congo drums” e na invenção moderna das “steelbands” em Trinidad e Tobago.

Concluindo

Caribe é o centro de um macro sistema cultural, um universo plurilíngue e étnico onde as populações negras que foram ali escravizadas imprimiram traços marcantes e profundos no processo de desenvolvimento da configuração dos modelos de identidades nacionais. A propósito, é oportuno transcrever, na conclusão deste pequeno ensaio, a brilhante análise feita pela saudosa Dra. Nina Friedmann em relação à presença negroafricana na Colômbia:

“Se há llamado huellas de africania al bagaje cultural sumergido en la organización social, la musica, la poesia, la ética social, la religion o en el teatro do carnaval y sus descendientes, elementos que se han transformado a lo largo de siglos y se han convertido en raíces para los nuevos sistemas culturales de la población afrocolombiana” (FRIEDMAN, 1988, pág. 52).

No entanto, para complementar esta argumentação, que é verdadeira para toda a área caribenha e para onde o negro africano foi

feito escravo nas Américas, falta acrescentar o mais fundamental entre todos aqueles elementos cogitados, ou seja, as línguas subsaarianas que sobreviveram sob diversas formas de resistência subjacente ou declaradamente frente à imposição das línguas e das culturas do colonizador europeu, a partir do ensinamento de um provérbio angolano em kimbundo que sentencia: *Kifua o dimi, mwenyu u fua we!*, morre a língua, a alma morre também.

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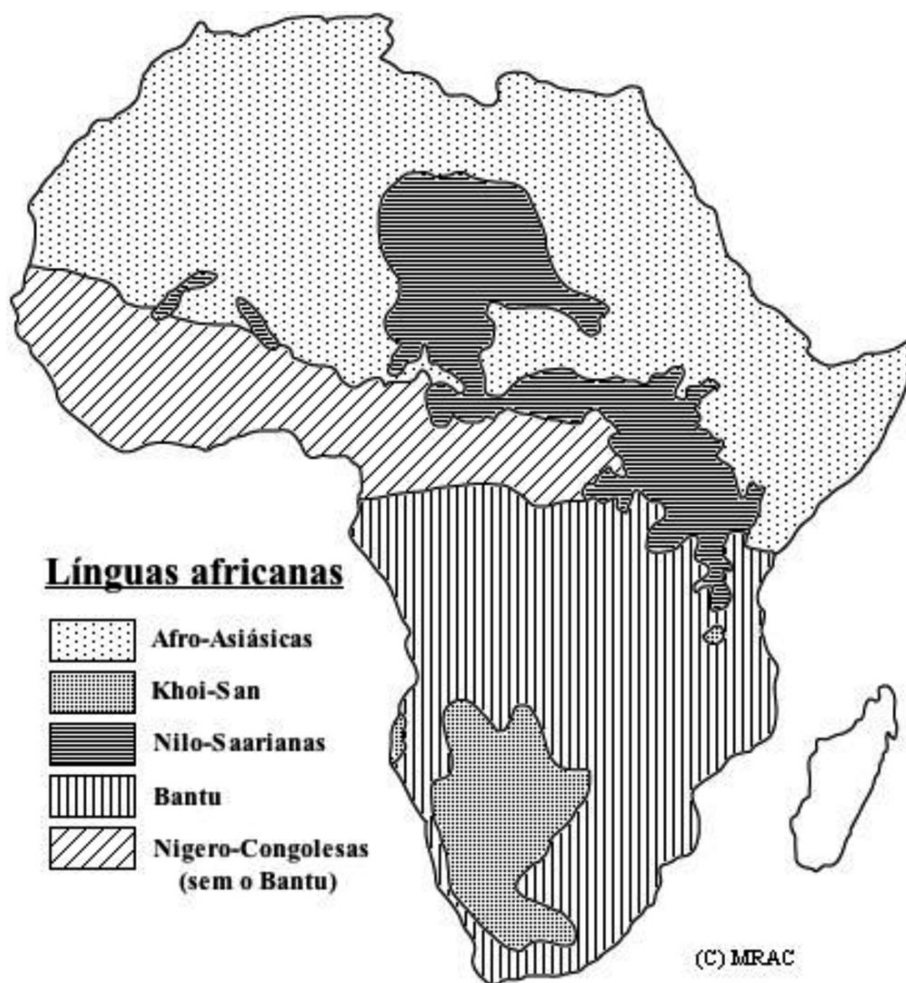
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Brazil - Translated version

Cultural and Linguistic Aspects of Africaness in the Caribbean

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The knowledge about the coasts of Africa by the European navigators in search of wealth and territorial conquest, on one hand, and the discovery of the Americas and their colonization process from the mid-fifteenth century to the late nineteenth century, on the other hand, boosted the trade of slave manpower through the transatlantic traffic destined for ports in the New World. It is estimated between 10 and 12 million the black African contingent originating from the sub-Saharan Africa who survived the hardships of the sea passage enduring all kinds of cruelty and maltreatment only to undergo the sorrow of being unloaded as slaves on arrival at the American and Caribbean ports of slaves for four consecutive centuries.

In the insular Caribbean, despite its having been under the dominance of European powers (Spain, France, England, Holland) through the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, its population is mostly of African origin. Except for Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, known as the Spanish Caribbean, where there was a large-scale biological mixing, the Caribbean people are predominantly black: 100% of the population of Haiti, 80% of Jamaica, 42% of Trinidad and Tobago, 80% of Barbados, 92% of Guadeloupe and 89% of the Martinique. Now, whilst that contingent of African slaves accorded the Caribbean its peculiar feature, it fell to the former Portuguese colony of America to import an estimated four million individuals, which made Brazil the second biggest black African power in the world, according to the

latest census, of 2010. Among the over one hundred and seventy million Brazilians, about 49% are classified as brown, which means afro-descendants and mestizos.

The Geographical Caribbean

From the geographic point of view, the Caribbean is the region of America situated adjacent to Central America and between South and North America, comprising more than forty islands washed by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, among them the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles. According to their territorial location, the region is divided into Insular Caribbean and Continental Caribbean, the latter indicating those countries that also belong to South America and North America and form the so-called Caribbean arch, which will not be discussed here in order not to extend too much this introduction to the subject.

The Greater Antilles comprise Cuba, Santo Domingo, Jamaica and Puerto Rico which were under Spanish rule until the mid-seventeenth century. In 1655, Jamaica was subjected to the English dominance, and in 1678, by the Treaty of Nijmegen, Spain tolerates the presence of the French in the western part of Santo Domingo which will be given the name of the French colony of Saint Dominique, the current Haiti, while the eastern part is called Spanish Colony of Santo Domingo, the present Dominican Republic. The Lesser Antilles are part of the Antilles, which together with the Greater Antilles, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands form the West Indies, according to the British denomination. They are a long string of islands arranged along the eastern side of the Caribbean Sea, separating this sea from the Atlantic Ocean, starting east of the island of Puerto Rico, to the north, and finishing off the coast of Venezuela, to the south. Also in the Caribbean Sea are the Netherlands Antilles, consisting of the so-called ABC islands Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, on the north coast of Venezuela, constituting a territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The Cultural Caribbean

Each of these islands has been submitted to the social and economic dominance of the European colonizers who have settled there, numerically inferior to the black African contingent, they imported and exploited as slave

labor for the plantations of tobacco and sugar cane, for jobs in the mills and mines exploration, and for everyday domestic tasks. On its turn, as it has happened in Brazil with thousands of *quilombos* which settled there during the slavery regime, among them the largest and most important, the Republic of Palmares, in the late sixteenth century, which, for 50 years managed to resist its destruction by the Portuguese (MOURA, 1959)¹, also in the Caribbean the “cimarronaje” of runaways and rebels was an organized expression of resistance and defense against the cultural oppression, a legitimate form of struggle seeking the repossession of their freedom and socio-cultural identity. The uprising of greatest impact took place in 1522, on the island of Santo Domingo, where an estimated 7,000 “cimarrones” lived at the end of that century (WILLIAMS, 1978).

As a witness of this heroic resistance, leaving out the biological process of mixing which does not fit in with this interpretation, despite being important to note, for it still happens in the Caribbean, as in Brazil, one may notice that throughout the archipelago that human presence was not only the social basis for wealth creation, of course appropriated by planters and aristocrats. It imposed deep socio-cultural and linguistic traits of African-Caribbean identity that are evident in the cultural and artistic events in oral tradition, cuisine, song and chants, religious beliefs, medicine, customs and linguistic contributions that, on the one hand, enriched the symbolic universe of the European languages with which black Africans got in touch, and, on the other hand, gave rise to the creole dialects that emerged in many parts.

Regarding the origins

The Caribbean cultures are distinctly African-European, that is, they are divided into African-Spanish-American, African-French, English-African, and African-Dutch spheres of influence, although they have much in common, especially in the area of the creole dialects and of popular manifestations originating mainly from black African traditions, to which some traces of European traditions and Asian influences are incorporated, mainly of Hindu and Chinese in Trinidad and Tobago which received a large contingent of Asian immigrants as from 1833 to replace the black African slave manpower.

¹ The area in the Serra da Barriga in today's northeastern state of Alagoas, where Palmares was located, was recognized by the Brazilian government as a national heritage.

Africa is not a country, as it is usually popularly imagined. It is a multicultural continent where more than 2,000 languages, belonging to four major ethnolinguistic families are spoken, according to Joseph Greenberg's classification (1966): African-Asian, Nilotic-Saharan, Nigerian-Congolese and Koissan (See attached map). With the exception of the Koissan family (Hottentots and Bushmen) who lives mainly in the Kalahari Desert, Namibia, and is not Negroid, Sub-Saharan Africa concentrates the black African population of the Continent in its territories, a region, therefore, that may be called Black Africa, a name that has been refuted by current africanists, especially when improperly applied to the entire African continent.

The existing historical documentation about the transatlantic slave trade, plus the evidence found in the study of African lexical contributions appropriated by European languages as official languages in the Caribbean, as well as in place names (Matamba Cambute), anthroponyms (the leader Juan Sebastián Lemba) and local ethnonyms (Mandinga, Mayombe) and the religious language of the many African-Caribbean cults that are practiced there², all denounce Sub-Saharan Niger-Congo origin, marked by historical traits of human Bantu presence of Congos, Angolans and West Africans, likewise it happened also in Brazil (see Castro, 2005). Among the former are the speakers of Kikongo and Kimbundo, ethnic languages very similar, of people, like many others, brought by the trafficking of ancient kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo, in the current Republic of Angola, while the West Africans were taken in areas stretching from Senegal to Nigeria, where, unlike the Bantu area, live a hundred different ethnolinguistic groups. Among them, one finds more frequently contributions from languages of the Ewe-Fon group, or Gbe of Benin (Fon, mine, Adja, gun), Togo (Ewe) and Ghana (Akan, Twi, Fante, Asante), Yoruba, Igbo and Calabari from Nigeria. Such being the case, the black population enslaved and subjected to intense exploitation has had a common origin, Niger-Congo, through the Caribbean area. (See FABELLO, undated; CABRERA, 1957; ALLSOPP, 1996; COLLYMORE, 1977; ACOSTA, 2002; ORTIZ, 1990, among other).

² Unlike the Caribbean, in Brazil the official documentation about the transatlantic slave trade was burned in 1891 by order of the Minister of Finance, with the aim, although not stated, of preventing slave owners from being compensated, since slaves were considered private property.

The Invention of Stereotypes

Of course, specific forms of a particular culture prevailed in certain regions and influenced others, without that meaning a cultural superiority of an African people regarding others, as appeared to some people, in view of the well-organized system of beliefs and the pantheon of Santería, of Yoruba matrix, and the Arará cult, of Ewe-Fon matrix, which are products of the interpenetration of black African religious orientations and of contributions from Christianity which soon attracted the researchers' attention. With the announcement that "there is no religion with a pantheon of deities comparable to the Yoruba, orisha, or Santería basis in Cuba, Trinidad and Grenada, or voodoo based Ewe-Fon of Haiti and the Dominican Republic" — Let us say in passing that they are peoples concentrated in neighbouring territories, between Nigeria and Benin, and that they have always maintained a mutual exchange of cultural borrowing, mainly in the field of religion —, these cults began to be mistakenly conceived as if they were the only models of Afro-Caribbean religion to call for attention due to their being the "most authentic" in view of the manifestations of Palo Monte or Regla Congo, of Congo-Angola matrix, equally authoritative in their recreations. In them, the deities or forces of nature are *inquices*, unlike the deities and voodoo, in whose pantheon royal ancestors stand out with anthropomorphic representations and a well-elaborate³ mythology. From this kind of ethnocentric viewpoint, stereotypes were created regarding the presumed cultural inferiority of the Bantu people in relation to West Africans, likewise in Brazil, with the studies concentrating in the most prestigious model of Candomblé of keto-nago (Yoruba) tradition, but with Ewe-Fon conventual religious structure (jeje-mine, according to the Brazilian nomenclature) which are located in the city of Salvador, in Bahia (see CASTRO, 2005).

In the Ortiz' classical *Glosario de Afronegrismos*, "angola" and "congo" (sv) are taken as derogatory terms, the first to label someone as "stupid", and "congo" to mean "scum ball", whilst Allsopp, in his extraordinary *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* does not register "angola," but records "congo" (sv) as an insulting term used in the Anglo-Caribbean region to call someone

³ Gema Valdés Acosta, in the work *Los remanentes de las lenguas bantúes en Cuba* (2002), at page 35, make the following observation: "this scientific picture is valid for our country, where the Yoruba element has been considered with greater importance and interest, both in linguistic and ethnological studies."

“black, uneducated and stupid” in the derogatory sense of the words. Fabelo, also, in his important *Diccionario de la Lengua Conga Residual en Cuba*, justifies the lexemes “Lele” and “lele Congo (sv), meaning” dumb, as due to “the fact that” the “Lele people, Bantu people of the former Belgian Congo, taken to Cuba by the traffic of slaves, had a low mental and cultural development.” In popular Brazilian Portuguese, however, there is also “lelé”, and the variant “bobo lelé” (*silly Lele*), retarded, idiot, bantuism of Kikongo basis”, “lele” “with the same meaning (cf. CASTRO, 2005, sv), which possibly still has a correlation with the figure of Carnival “bobolee” of Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival, recorded by Allsopp (s.v.)⁴.

This type of inappropriate and biased view on the Bantu people developed a methodological orientation of an ethnocentric kind, exalting the Yoruba people and assigning them, ineptly, cultural superiority regarding other African black cultures, up to the point of one seeking an Yoruba origin for black African lexical contributions in local languages, even when they are not. Ortiz’ glossary (sv) reports Lucumi (Yoruba) origin for the Bantu “Bilongo” (medicine, magic potion) lexeme, whilst Allsopp’s dictionary (sv) seeks an explanation in the Yoruba language for “mariboune” or “maribunta” bantuism, Wasp, common in Trinidad and Tobago, and, in the form “marimbondo” in Brazilian Portuguese (Cf. CASTRO, 2005, sv). By the way, this kind of “nagocentric”⁵ approach took place in Brazil as from 1933, with the publication by Nina Rodrigues of *Os Africanos no Brasil*, his posthumous work, which inaugurated Afro-Brazilian studies and provoked a strong methodological continuity still visible in works by many researchers of international reputation (See VERGER, 1968).

Religion and languages

The black African languages are no longer spoken as full languages in the Caribbean, but they have been safeguarded in a lexical system for liturgical use of the Caribbean African-religious manifestations and caused the emergence of the Creole dialects in contact with the European languages in the region, unlike the Portuguese in contact with the Portuguese language in Brazil.

⁴ “Bo-bo-lee, a scape goat, an innocent and patient victim of ridicule”.

⁵ Nagô, from anagô, a designation by which the Yoruba became traditionally known in Brazil, following the nickname they are given in the kingdom of Ketu, in Benin, border region to the territories of western Nigeria where the Yoruba speakers are concentrated.

The best-known Afro-Caribbean religions born in slavery are generically referred to as Santería or Regla de Ocha, of Yoruba matrix; Palo or Regla de Palo Monte, of Congo-Angola matrix, in the Spanish-speaking area, especially in Cuba; Voodoo, of Ewe-Fon matrix, in the francophone region, especially in Haiti, like the division between “nations” of Candomblé in Brazil, which, in accordance with their traditional matrixes, call themselves jeje-mine or Ewe-Fon, Nago-keto or Yoruba, Congo-Angola or Bantu. Each is a kind of socio-religious organization based on common standards of black African traditions, a system of beliefs, worship and language. Language in this context includes a linguistic repertoire that describes the socio-religious organization of the group, sacred objects, ritualistic cookery, specific customs, liturgical rites and ceremonies, transmitted by oral tradition and based on a customary type of behaviour, well-known to participants from personal experience. (See CASTRO, 2005; ACOSTA, 2002).

These religions have survived all sorts of persecution thanks to their strong social cohesion and the religious leadership assumed by their women, and played an important political role in many countries. It is believed that voodoo was a major factor to the success of the revolution that freed black population of Haiti in 1793, the first country in America to abolish slavery (cf. POLLACK-ELTZ, 1977; MILHET y ALARCÓN, 1998). Today, 90% of the population in Haiti call themselves Catholics and 11% are practitioners of Voodoo, and its most famous dictator, François Duvalier, the Papa Doc, used to resort to the precepts of voodoo in politics during his dictatorship. He used to spread fear through the legendary zombies (revived dead) % people believed he had the power to resurrect the dead % and to resort to the services of the bloodthirsty “tontons Macutes” (boogeymen), a paramilitary force created in 1959 and only dismissed in 1986, when his son, Jean-Claude, the Babe Doc, was overthrown. Taking into account that the terms “macuto and zombie” are bantuisms, the latest in current use in the Americas, we believe that in the nickname Papa Doc, who was a doctor by profession and also held the rank of “hungan” in the voodoo socio-religious hierarchy (SIMPSON, 1978), an honorific title among the Ewe-fon people that gave him powers of a political-religious and mystical character⁶, the second element is probably the Bantu word “Ndoki”, sorcerer, doctor, healer or “medicine doctor,” that phonetically

⁶ Hungan is also a highly respectful treatment given to older people in the socio-religious community.

becomes mixed up and is taken for a reduced form of the word “docteur” in French, the official language of the country. Such lexemes are also registered with the same meaning in the liturgical language of the Candomblé of Bahia, the first among the jeje-mine “nations”, while the second, between the Kongo-Angola “nations” (see CASTRO, 2001 and 2005).

The Creole dialects

As to the creole dialects which emerged and established themselves in the Caribbean official English-speaking (Jamaica) and French-speaking (Haiti) countries, the question that has long intrigued linguists is the fact that this kind of speech has not been successful in the sphere of Spanish-speaking countries (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Colombia), an issue that concerns Brazil too (see REINECKE, 1938; CHAUDENSON, 2001)

There is no doubt that in both cases, there was a confluence of favorable factors of not only extra-linguistic nature (population density, socio-economic and historical conditions, colonial system of plantation, etc.) but also of a linguistic order underlying that process of interpenetration among Niger-Congo and European cultures and language. It is this kind of concern that has guided my research in relation to Brazilian Portuguese, whose data obtained so far show that if, by chance, this process does not rely on a proximity between the linguistic structure of different languages in contact, certainly a conflict will arise between them due to lack of intelligibility on the part of their users, and the need for communication brings out another dialect % a Creole % that crystallizes over time, becomes the general area and may reach the stature of the national language, like the Cape Verdean national language (CAREER, Antonio, 1982). When such conflict does not exist, the magnetization, on the one hand, of the linguistic systems of the black African languages toward the European languages system takes place, and in the opposite direction, a movement of the European languages toward the linguistic system of the black African languages in contact situations occurs. This seems to have been the case regarding Brazilian Portuguese and Caribbean Spanish when faced with the Bantu group of languages and Yoruba, whose speakers were relatively in greater number in these regions, which, however, as one more expression of cultural resistance to the oppression, *africanized* the European colonizer’s language, granting it a peculiar character.

We cannot ignore the fact that the European languages were imposed as a second language, and according to some theorists, by irregular transmission to a majority population of black African speakers for more than three consecutive centuries in the Caribbean, similarly to what happened in Brazil, which is today the second biggest black African power in the world. On the other hand, also in Angola and Mozambique, where, like in Brazil, the languages that came into contact were the same, there are no records of Creole dialects of the Portuguese, but an *angolized* and Mozambican Portuguese. However, in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau, where the Portuguese came into contact with West African languages of structures typically differentiated among themselves and with respect to the Portuguese language, one could see the emergence and establishment of Creole dialects, as another form of resistance and preservation of their cultural memory (CASTRO, 2005 and 2010).

Popular manifestations

The Caribbean popular manifestations are largely of Saharan origin. In the case of music, dance and musical instruments, the cultural and linguistic features of the black Bantu historical presence in the region dominate. Among the best-known rhythms are the rumba and mambo, accompanied by the beating of bongos (membraphones), by the touch of maracas and marimbas (vibes), all also widely used in Brazilian popular music which includes yet cuícas and reco-reco, idiophones that are integral part of the samba schools batteries of Carnival, and the berimbau, the emblematic chordophone of capoeira. This Caribbean music was shown to the world by Hollywood record companies and film productions of the sixties through the famous orchestra of Xavier Cugat, a Catalan who was believed to be Cuban, contributing to that kind of rhythm known as a symbol of Cuba's national identity, likewise calypso in Trinidad and Tobago, samba in Brazil and tango in Argentina. Moreover, the calinda, a stick-beat dance popular in Trinidad and Tobago (See CORDALLO, 1983; ALLSOPP, 1996, sv) has its equivalent in maculelê, in the Recôncavo da Bahia (CASTRO, 2001) region.

Among all these events, the carnival is celebrated in almost all Caribbean islands. It begins on the Sunday following the Epiphany and

ends on Ash Wednesday, except in the Dominican Republic, where it ends on February 27, when they celebrate the Country's independence. It is a rite of passage, according to an analysis by the anthropologist Roberto da Matta in *Carnavais, malandros e herois*, during which social and ethical behaviours culturally postulated by a particular community, which then is free from prejudices, breaks through the barriers surrounding gender and, "opens up its wings, loose its beasts, falls in idleness, and enters this party," as the lyrics of the Brazilian composer Lulu Santos advise, can be disrupted. The black African traits can be seen in the creative costumes, in the frightening masks, in the musical rhythm, in the percussion of the old "congo drums" and in the modern invention of "steelbands" in Trinidad and Tobago.

Conclusion

The Caribbean is the center of a cultural macro system, a universe where the black multilingual and ethnic populations that were made slaves there printed striking and deep marks in the development process of models configuration for the national identities. Incidentally, it is advisable to transcribe, at the conclusion of this short essay, the brilliant analysis by Dr. Nina Friedmann, of blessed memory, regarding the black African presence in Colombia:

"Se ha llamado huellas de africanía al bagaje cultural sumergido en la organización social, la música, la poesía, la ética social, la religión o en el teatro de carnaval y sus descendientes, elementos que se han transformado a lo largo de siglos y se han convertido en raíces para los nuevos sistemas culturales de la población afrocolombiana" (FRIEDMAN, 1988, pág.52).

However, to complement this argument, which is true for the entire Caribbean area where black Africans were made slaves in the Americas, it is necessary to add the most fundamental of all those elements contemplated, i.e., sub-Saharan languages that have survived in various forms of overt or underlying resistance against the imposition by the European settlers of their languages and cultures, recollecting the teaching of an Angolan kimbundo proverb that goes: *Kifua o dimi, mwenyu u fua we!*, if the language dies, the soul dies too.

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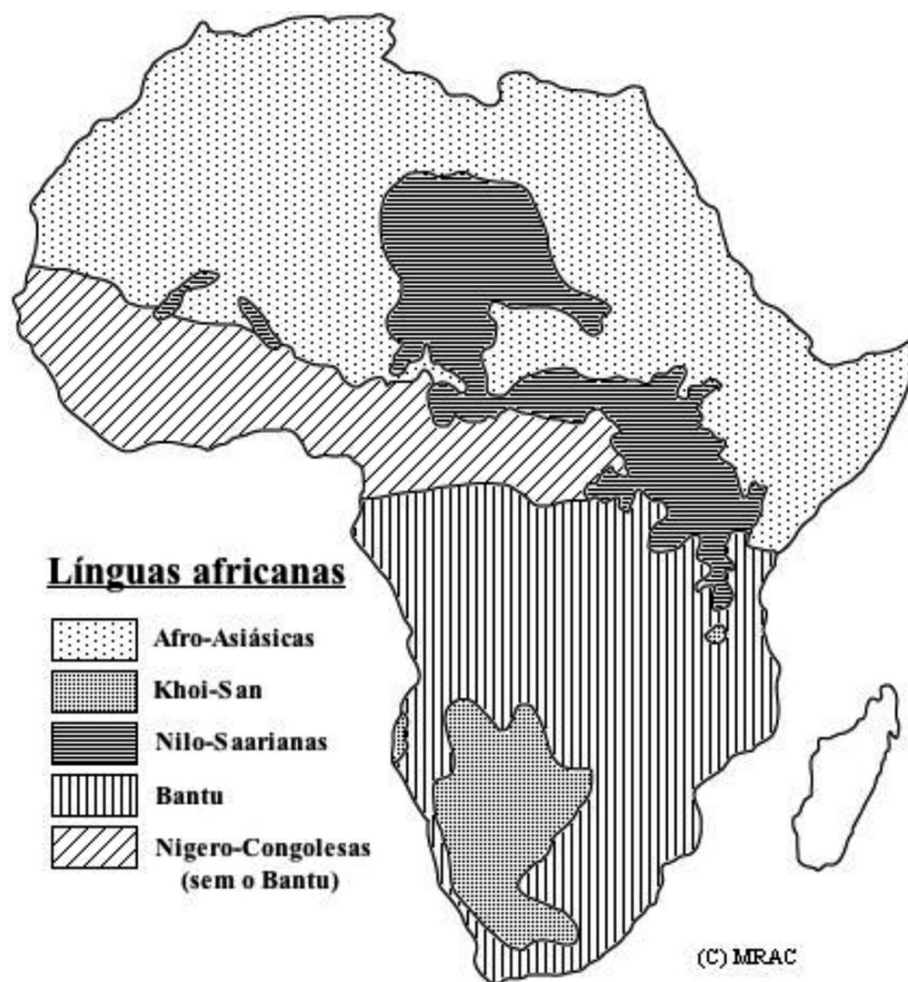
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6. Dominica

An Introduction to the African Heritage of the Caribbean

Lennox Honychurch

The majority of the people of the Caribbean are the descendants of West Africans originating from a wide range of tribal groups, whose members were captured along the West African seaboard and from the interior. They were exchanged for trade goods, enslaved, and transported across the Atlantic to work on the plantations of the islands and mainland colonies of the circum Caribbean. The cultural variation was as immense as the geographical area from which these people were drawn. It spread from present-day Senegal in the north, southwards along the Gulf of Guinea to Angola.

This range included as many as fifty main cultural groups and their numerous related sub-groupings. The diversity of language reflected this complex merging of cultures as people whose origin on the coast could be as much as two thousand miles apart were thrust together in small controlled communities in the Caribbean. Tribal languages that appear here and there in the Caribbean speech range from Hausa, Kru, Ibo, Edo, Bini, Nembe, Yoruba, Ashanti, Ibibo and Ijo to Fulani, Ewe, Kikongo, Efik, Kwa, Fon and Twi and a couple dozen others. The shreds of cultural patrimony transported in the mind across the terrifying waters of the Middle Passage were pieced together on the shores of the Caribbean into a patchwork of cultural practices, traditions and skills. Their origins became blurred, they were picked up and pinpointed here and there during the twentieth century by linguists, folklorists and the early anthropologists of the region.

Traces of what was Igbo, Ibo or Ibibo lingered in a word here, a song pattern there, or a character of the spirit world, whose African roots had survived but had acquired a French or a Spanish name in the process of Creolization. The destruction and recreation of the shattered cultures of West Africa in the form of a variegated collage of influences is the main feature of the African cultural remnants in the region. For much of the five hundred years, ever since the first Spanish ship transported the first boatload of Africans direct from the Guinea coast to Hispaniola in 1518, the validity of this African remnant has been rejected. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries its presence was seen as a socially negative undercurrent of West Indian society, that was better suppressed, covered up or denied. Only in the latter half of the twentieth century, during a period of great social and political transformation, did the African element in the Caribbean culture have its renaissance, manifesting itself in the work of academics, artists, dancers, writers, cultural activists and the Rastafarian movement.

Stripped of everything but the contents of the mind, the African who arrived in the Caribbean carried only memories and skills. And yet, it was from these intangible possessions that a new world was recreated, transformed and reordered. For all of its apparent confusion, it was anchored by key lifelines of cultural security that helped to give stability, aid survival and to make sense of a world gone mad. The plantation system and the regimen of work and mental stress and personal degradation associated with the enslavement did not allow the replication of the structured, tribally determined, patterns of life as it had existed in Africa. Despite their condition, they wove these lines of survival wherever possible into their plantation existence. Spaces of cultural opportunity were taken advantage of at every available turn. Subterfuge, sarcasm, innuendo and bitter humour became the antidotes to the circumstances in which they had found themselves. In folktales, songs and dances these threads were woven, providing a pliable ever-changing mask to the reality that laid beyond. The scraps of religious beliefs, once rigidly defined from tribe to tribe became a composite. Some elements were stronger on one island than another, depending on the majority of influence from one group of Africans rather than others. But there were general themes associated with a spirit world where good and evil were in contest, and whose balance had to be maintained. Spiritual possession and respect for the ancestors ran through it all in spite of the variations.

Religion

The African religions and beliefs were outlawed from the earliest days of plantation slavery, not merely because they were seen to be pagan, primitive and generally unchristian but more so because the plantocracy feared these practices were a cover for revolt. Paranoia against any form of African religious spiritualism rose sharply after the Haitian revolution, during which messages and plans of insurrection were passed on during such gatherings. But despite these restrictions certain forms of traditional religious practices survived under a blanket of secrecy. Those who professed to control spiritual powers were respected, and there existed a network of shamans whose skills were called upon to cast spells, make charms and call up the spirit world. They were consulted for their knowledge in the use of herbs to cure illnesses and to destroy enemies. These ‘obeah’, men or women, were visited for help and advice. Legislation survives on the islands up to today criminalizing obeah and those associated with the practice.

There is a certain degree of historical continuity in the ceremonies linked to these religious beliefs. A few are still practiced in the different forms of *voodoo* that survive in Haiti, in the *shango* of Trinidad and in the *pocomania* of Jamaica. Voodoo, for instance originated from Dahomey, based on the worship of the good, poisonless serpent spirit, Dangbay. The priest or *voodun* communicates with this spirit, and makes Dangbay’s will known to others. Dances such as the *Kalenda*, *Chica* and *Voodoo* are part of these religious rites where spirit possession accompanied by intense drumming and chants forms the climax of worship. Transformation has taken place over time, and voodoo has been exported with the Haitian Diaspora to New York, Miami and other cities in North America. In the tourist enclaves of Haiti itself, voodoo ceremonies are presented as floorshows and as such have been stripped of all of their original meaning.

A host of tribal languages were quickly lost as people from one part of West Africa were mixed with others on the plantations. Soon, slaves of each European colony were speaking their own form of English, French, Spanish or Dutch, depending from which nation their colonial masters originated. In cases where islands changed hands regularly between opposing European powers, and where colonists from both Britain and France were resident, as in the case of Dominica, St. Lucia, and later Trinidad, parallel Creole languages developed in the same place. Many of the ‘patois’ or Creole forms of speech

still exist. One can tell which island someone is from by listening to his or her accents.

Gradually the old African folk tales were being remodeled and retold in these new languages. Here and there particular African words or the names of spirits and folktale characters survive. The spider hero of the Akan people, Ananse, lives on in the Anansy stories. Tales involving magic, forests and rivers were also common. But here the spirits had merged with European folklore and had Europeanized names. One hears of the River Mama or Mama D'leau, the water spirit, and the forest spirit Papa Bois. Such characters are common in the former French colonies along with the Loupgarou, a male werewolf, and the La Diabless, the she-devil.

Changes in belief systems over time can be exemplified by a study of the currently used word, Jumbie or Duppy as applied to an evil spirit. The word Jumbie or Jombie originates from a branch of the Bantu language, especially of the *kongo-ngola* group in which there is the good *nsambi* 'God' and the evil *nsumbi* 'Devil'. Carried across from Africa to the Caribbean in various Central and West African language sub-groups, *nsumbi* became Jumbie, or Jombie in its Creole form. Good and evil were under the same spiritual power, that is constantly tussling for a balance between the two. Songs and religious practices celebrated the contest, but over time only Jombie, the evil spirit, was remembered. In early folklore this Jombie could affect your health while you were asleep at night, or wreck your good fortune. Practitioners of Obeah were supposed to be able to drive the spirit out or make it affect others. The Jombie is now largely used as a bogeyman in stories to frighten children into obedience.

Music

Music traverses language and so it survived more strongly than other art forms. It was also incorporated into work, periods of festivity and lamentation, and so had a continuity that evolved over time from slavery into freedom, and further into the twentieth century – emerging in forms of reggae, calypso, zouk and soca. Holes for sugar cane planting were dug to chants and the beat of drums. There were songs of sadness, joy, worship and revolt. Later, in the post-emancipation period, hauling of boats, sawing of wood, moving of houses and gathering of fishing nets was done to song. Much of the music was accompanied by dancing, some of these, like the bele and kalenda, had strong

African retentions, whereas European dances such as quadrilles, polkas, reels and lancers were given an African transformation, speeded up and choreographed anew, with a flare which transformed them into something distinctly Caribbean.

The tunes for such dances incorporated fiddle, accordion and banjo with a variety of drums and percussion instruments, which had their roots in Africa – Flutes, rattles, ‘shack-shacks’, scrapers, tambourines and ‘bamboo-tamous’ were among them. Goatskin was stretched across hollow, wooden frames carved from tree trunks and casks from the sugar factories were utilized to form drums, the tamous or ‘gro kas’ of the French territories. The Spanish islands of the Greater Antilles and influences from Venezuela added an Iberian flavour to the African rhythms, and were complimented by brass instruments, guitars and quartos. In the British Caribbean, the island of Trinidad was particularly influenced by this, transforming the back-up music for its calypsos and it is even more strongly evident in the ‘parang, music of certain communities’.

Festivals

The times of great celebration and festivals were Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and ‘Crop-over’ when the last canes were brought to the mills for crushing. In the French influenced colonies, the Roman Catholics celebrated Carnival for two days before Lent. From this there developed a lively tradition of street bands with colourful characters dancing and singing in costumes. The songs that accompanied these revelries often told of some recent scandal or some momentous event, and this custom lives on today in the calypsos which are composed and sung during these occasions.

The image of carnival and masquerade is an appropriate analogy to use when reflecting on Caribbean society in the first decades of the 20th century. As the major cultural group, the patterns set by the African Creole working class permeated the cultural expressions of Caribbean society. This was despite the efforts of the dominant class of Europeans and the influential professional sector, made up of the descendants of ‘free people of colour’, to maintain the colonial *status quo*. It was concerned with maintaining the longstanding connections of government and commerce with the world economy, and particularly with the culture of each colony’s respective mother country. In effect, there existed a rigid facade aimed at ‘keeping up appearances’, while the undercurrent of the mass culture flowed vibrantly on beneath the mask.

Political and social change from the 1920s slowly tipped the balance, as Caribbean nationalism and self-discovery made manifest in the arts on several levels, and gave birth to a form of cultural liberation that allowed reality to surface and reveal itself from the 1950s. In many parts of the Caribbean this cultural manifestation had been given added dimensions by the arrival of Asian and Iberian immigrants from the middle of the 19th century.

As the prospect of full emancipation in the British colonies loomed before the Caribbean plantocracy in the 1830s, there was concern about a shortage of labour to work the cane fields, particularly in the ‘new colonies’ of Trinidad and British Guiana and for the Dutch in Surinam. For a brief period in the 1840s some agents in the islands encouraged Africans from the Gambia and Sierra Leone to come over as wage labourers, but the numbers were small and their cultural impact was only really felt in parts of Trinidad where they refreshed some of the more Creolized African retentions remaining from the period of slavery.

Rastafarian

In 1930 a tribal warlord from a remote corner of Ethiopia, named Ras Tafari Makonen, was crowned the 111th Emperor of Ethiopia in a line traced back to the union of King Solomon and Queen Makeda of Sheba. His new title was His Imperial Majesty the Conquering Lion of The Tribe of Judah, Elect of God. Tafari took a new name: Haile Selassie – ‘Power of the Holy Trinity’.

Several preachers in Jamaica began to pray to Haile Selassie as the living God and the hope of African redemption. Worshipers of Selassie became known as Ras Tafari, Rastamen. The Rastas wore long hair and beards because of an order on the Old Testament that no razor shall touch the head of the faithful. They became known as Locksmen, or Dreadlocks, and in some places they were simply called Dreads.

There is no definite creed for the Rastas. Some smoke large amounts of ganja or marijuana, while others shun it. Their members are in the forefront of repeated calls on the governments of the region to decriminalize the use of marijuana, which has now become a virtually uncontrollable weed in the forested zones of several islands and is claimed by all of its advocates to have valuable medicinal qualities. Most of them are vegetarians, avoiding shellfish and meat, particularly pork. Processed or salted food is suspect and they prefer ‘I-tal’.

natural grains, fruit, roots and vegetables. Some do not work while others are fine woodcarvers artists and craftsmen. The corruption of modern society is 'Babylon', and they hope to find peace in 'Zion'.

Reggae music, which was influenced by and popularized the Rastafari, spread from Jamaica and influenced youth elsewhere in the Caribbean especially from the early 1970s. During that decade, many adopted the lifestyle, rejecting the prevailing establishment value system and turning to a more 'rootsy' lifestyle living off the land. The circumspect society and the traditional, even if 'socialist', political establishment of the region reacted warily to this new movement that erupted in their midst. The question of hairstyle, dress, the cries of 'down with Babylon' and the declaration of novel perceptions of the Caribbean worldview caused a tide of reaction and response which shook island communities into new directions of social transformation.

The foremost exponent of this movement that swept the Caribbean was Bob Marley who was for many the embodiment of Rastafarian culture as he was the best-known ambassador of reggae to the world. By the time of his death, in May 1981, he was internationally acclaimed and for many the climax of his career was his performance at the Zimbabwe Independence celebrations in April 1980. It was in this sphere that the African Diaspora in the Caribbean gave to Africa a new cultural dimension distilled in the region from numerous ingredients emerging from the colonial experience, transferring a Caribbean perception of an almost totally mythical Africa back to the 'homeland' itself. The influence of Rasta philosophy, as carried in the lyrics of Bob Marley's songs, has been taken up by groups as far removed from each other as urban youth on the African continent, New Agers in Europe and Aborigines in Australia.

Post-War United States Influence

After the Second World War the traditional European powers in the region, except for France, gradually turned their attention inwards towards building a European community. This was first to form a strong western alliance as a bulwark against Soviet influence during the Cold War, but later, after the fall of communism in the late 1980s, it moved towards establishing a global power group to offset the unilateral dominance of the United States of America. As Britain embarked on its policy of relieving itself of its colonies in the region, the United States filled the vacuum. France made its colonies into overseas

departments of its continental state and the Dutch gave its islands greater autonomy within a form of associated status with the Netherlands. Surinam became fully independent and the Spanish had lost her last colonies in the Caribbean since 1898.

The close proximity of the powerful northern neighbour made itself more effectively felt from 1940, when it established military bases on several British islands. The agencies of US popular culture in the form of radio and the cinema were already taking root on the islands. As the century progressed technology provided greater avenues for contact. There was increased tourism from North America following the Cuban Revolution and the US embargo on visits to Cuba. This was evident as US tourism investment shifted into the Bahamas, and then into the Eastern Caribbean after 1959. This was coupled with the introduction of passenger jet aircraft on Caribbean routes, and the increase in the size and numbers of cruise ships touring the region. As the Cold War progressed, the Caribbean became a sensitive area in the geopolitics of the 1960s to 1990s, receiving greater US attention. The Black Power and Civil Rights era from the 1960s galvanized Caribbean attention as a new generation of intellectuals was influenced by the ideas of Black Pride and Pan-Africanism – first espoused by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s. The black presence in US media, sport, politics and show business provides strong feelings of shared identity between the Caribbean and the US. This intensified as television and Internet connections became widely available by the end of the century. The media blitz emanating from North America was embraced by Caribbean people despite the pockets of resistance and the warnings coming from vocal, but outnumbered, advocates of ‘Caribbean cultural identity’. However, for a society that had absorbed so much, that had in fact been created by the process of adopting and reworking cultures, the flood of US popular culture into the region can be viewed simply as another addition to the ‘melting pot’ that will be reworked in its own time. A form of Creole nationalism, which attempts to maintain national pride and cultural awareness in the face of these manifestations of globalization, has emerged in response to these changes.

Creole Nationalism

There was in all the states of the Caribbean a middle-class intelligentsia who were largely responsible for articulating the adolescent nationalism of the fledgling English-speaking territories in the early 20th century. They regarded

the accumulated Creole “folk ways” as representative of a type of idyllic proto-nationalism, one that was less touched by the five-hundred-year long intervention of colonialism from which the islands were emerging. Here were symbols of survival, evidence of resistance, and examples of social and cultural self-determination. When the nationalist politicians of the 1960s and 1970s sought symbols for the stimulation of a nationalist identity it was to this “folk culture” that they turned. Here were the “roots” which provided the framework for an “indigenous” tradition, which would be revitalised, promoted or preserved in cooperation with Departments of Culture. By Hobsbawm’s definition, such programmes are classed as “the inventing of tradition” and it is essentially a process of formalisation and ritualization, characterised by references to the past, if only by imposing repetition:

We should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated (Hobsbawm 1992:4).

In Oostindie’s view, “The contemporary efforts of intellectuals of various ethnic backgrounds to substitute creole culture for earlier counter-discourses, such as *négritude*, therefore seems to address the project of bringing together the remaining ‘coloured’ and black segments of the local population no less than the attempt to insert the local culture as a unique entity into the outside cultural world” (Oostindie 1996:10). Parallels may be found in the ideas of such West Indian intellectuals as Stuart Hall and Rex Nettleford. Nigel Bolland (1992) argues that one of the reasons why the creole-society model has been so attractive in recent years is its nationalistic insistence on the validity of creole culture and its potential role in national integration in societies that have recently become independent.

To link cultural activism and identity, with tourism, is becoming less of a contradiction in terms, as the small vulnerable economies of these islands become increasingly dependent on this form of trade. “Cultural experiences” form a major part of the commodity, while at the same time sustaining the ideological perception of some kind of unique cultural emblem, which manifests national identity in the midst of the tide of globalization. This is the new reality.

Baud (1996) has illustrated that the symbols and historical interpretations, which are chosen to bolster ethnic or national identities are not completely arbitrary, nor is their emotional appeal:

It may be true that these symbols are distorted, exaggerated, sometimes invented, but even in this latter case, such inventions do not fall from the sky. They originate in the history or culture of a given group of people and are only accepted when they do not deviate too far from existing cultural perceptions and social memories. These memories are not necessarily true themselves, but they are social facts at the moment of their general acceptance (Baud 1996:121).

Bolland emphasises this in his study of creolization (1992), for it is a process in which the identity of each group which composes the Creole society is continually being reexamined and redefined in terms of the relevant oppositions between different social formations at various historical moments. Quite simply this has been the survival technique of the Caribbean societies through the last five centuries: a continual reworking and appropriation of what comes its way. It is a form of cultural Darwinism that is continually renewing, reordering and strengthening the resilience of its people.

Revealing direct links

Examples of following through direct links between African Caribbean people now living in the region and the descendants of families who remained in Africa are very rare. The following case found in Dominica was found due to a series of coincidences that connected a 21st century family to its 19th century roots in Dahomy, now part of the country of Benin. During annual independence celebrations in Dominica much is heard of our African heritage and the part it plays in the 'Kweol' culture of Dominica, the result of a mix of influences mainly African, European and Amerindian. But for those tracing their African roots the attempt becomes very difficult, well near impossible, as one goes further back into the 19th century and beyond.

The reason is the condition of slavery: the absence of surnames when people were merely recorded as Bessie of Geneva Plantation or Johnny of Hampstead Plantation without any surname to further identify them. The paucity of records in the days before compulsory registration of births is another

issue. Going back even further, there was the total confusion and anonymity of landing from a slave ship and of losing your own name and being given a new name in the language of the colonizer on the plantation.

As the African American author Alex Haley found when he was researching his groundbreaking book “Roots” in the 1970s, trying to piece together a continuous line of relationships from a village in Africa to a plantation in the Americas is very challenging indeed. But a recently published book about a slave ship which ended its life sunk off the coast of Western Australia has revealed a direct connection between a family in Dominica and the port of Ouidah in Dahomey on the coast of West Africa.

The book, ‘Redemption of a Slave Ship’, tells the fascinating story of a vessel named Don Francisco which was built for transporting slaves. It was captured off of the island of Dominica in the British West Indies, and its captives were freed at Roseau, the capital. The ship was then sold by the British government to a company that carried cargo and immigrants to Australia. It was renamed the James Matthew and it eventually sank near Freemantle, Australia. It has been explored by marine archaeologists and researched by the author Graeme Henderson to produce this outstanding book. The information he has compiled is also used in an exhibition of the artifacts found aboard the ship at the Western Australian Maritime Museum at Freemantle. Mr. Henderson was director of the museum from 1992 to 2005 and his research brought him to Dominica in his quest to find the descendants of one of the people held captive on that ship when it was a slaver.

In 1807 the British parliament passed a law which made the Atlantic Slave Trade illegal. However, over the next fifty years, millions of Africans continued to be transported unwittingly to the Americas, to those places such as Brazil, Cuba and Santo Domingo, where the slave trade was still ‘legal’. The British Royal Navy was directed to police the seas and to capture all slave ships and free the people held on board.

To combat the assault on the slave trade, the illegal traders began to construct ships specially designed to evade capture. It also created a new class of unscrupulous entrepreneurs who stopped at nothing to deliver their kidnapped human cargoes to the sugar and cotton plantations of the Americas. Such a ship was the Don Francisco that was captured by the Royal Navy cruiser HMB Griffon off Dominica in 1837. The ship was in such an appalling condition that it could not be sailed back to Africa, so the 433 captives on board were liberated at Roseau and, after some disputes among the authorities,

began a new life as free people. In the weeks ahead, groups of these Africans were dispersed to outlying estates such as Soufriere, Geneva, Castle Bruce, Woodford Hill and around Portsmouth where they settled. Most of the men were pressed into service as soldiers with the West India Regiments.

Slavery had been abolished in Dominica and in all other British colonies three years before, in 1834, and full freedom was granted in 1838. When the Don Francisco arrived at Roseau on 27 April 1837 the townspeople were stunned. Thirty years had passed since such a ship had entered the harbour. Many had never seen such a ship before. The captives on board were all naked and as news spread, within half an hour the people of Roseau found clothes for them all. After the ship was disembarked, hundreds of sight seers went out in canoes and rowboats to look inside the squalid vessel; the narrow shelves, the low headroom, the stench and the claustrophobia.

One girl among those freed, later took the name Fanny Firmin. She settled at Soufriere village in the south of the island. Luckily for researchers, Fanny appeared before a commission of enquiry in 1893 and told part of her story. Thanks to that entry and to an exhibition that was put on some years ago, Mr. Alfred Leevy a senior public official of Dominica, noted that the woman was his great great grandmother. When the author, Mr. Henderson, visited Dominica researching his book, he was directed to Mr. Leevy. As a result the link was revealed to Fanny Firmin and to the ship the Don Francisco, the port of Ouidah, the devious Portuguese trader, Francisco Felix de Souza, and the unscrupulous Gezo, King of Dahomey, who sanctioned the sale of Fanny Firmin and thousands of others. Like a modern drug lord he cared nothing about the lives he was ruining once he got his bling.

Thanks to this liberation, and other such circumstances, there are still a few families in Dominica that maintain their African surnames such as Popo (towns in Dahomey), Sango, Ackie, Mingo, Cuffy (Kofi), Quamie, Carbon (Gabon) and those who simply took the surname Africa after their homeland. Like Alex Haley's book 'Roots', Graeme Henderson's book 'Redemption of a Slave Ship' brings all of the mass of historical information on Africa, slavery and the Caribbean inheritance to a moving personal story. It is a story that was only uncovered by combing underwater research with archival work in libraries, travels across the world and interviews with the descendants of those associated with the ship, both African captives and Australian immigrants. In doing so he has made an important contribution to Dominican history and to an understanding of the culture of Caribbean people.

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7. Granada

The Influence of African Heritage on the Formation of the National Identities of Brazil and the Member States of CARICOM

Christopher DeRiggs

National Identity is the collective consciousness of belonging to the same group, sharing a common culture or lifestyle, usually among people of a defined region. Factors like common ethnicity, common religion, common language, and shared history all help to define national identity. The concept of national identity, though at times the subject of abstract debate, has taken on more concrete proportions with the coming of nation states as a specific form of the organization of human societies. Heritage refers to traditional beliefs and customs.

In looking at the influence of African Heritage on the formation of National Identities of the Member States of CARICOM and Brazil, this paper will examine how two seemingly disparate regions are linked by a common thread of history that even today impacts their sense of being as nation states.

The paper will show that:

1. Brazil and CARICOM have shared common historical experiences like slavery, the plantation economy and ethno-social blending.
2. In the case of both regions, African heritage has had a strong defining influence in the formation of their national identities.

The paper will cover the following:

1. The Current Demographic profiles of Brazil and CARICOM, showing the relative share of African Descendants .
2. The History of the African infusion in the populations of Brazil and CARICOM.
3. The Plantation System and the matter of Identity .
4. Creolization and Identity.
5. The Amazing Resilience of African Heritage in Religion, Culture, the Entertainment Arts and sports in Brazil and CARICOM.
6. The African Factor in the Politics of Brazil and CARICOM.

Two Different World Profiles

Traditionally known as the king of world football and the home of the world famous Rio carnival, Brazil is now emerging as a new world industrial power and a major force in global trade negotiations, having asserted leadership roles in the Doha round of WTO negotiations. Along with other emerging world powers like China and India, Brazil continues to command major influence in the Trade Bloc known as the Group of 20 (G20).

The CARICOM nations, former British, French and Dutch colonies, are generally an archipelago of micro-island states, with the exceptions of Guyana and Suriname on the South American mainland and Belize on the Yucatan peninsula. These territories have acquired a world profile of being unspoilt tropical holiday destinations. As members of the World Bank's Small States group with populations of less than 1.5 million, except in the cases Haiti and Jamaica, they project an image of vulnerability, and have sought to advocate their concerns about Climate Change and Natural Disasters at the Alliance for Small Island States (AOSIS). The English speaking members consolidated themselves into CARICOM (Caribbean Common Market) by virtue of the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973, in the attempt to gain critical mass in global affairs.

At the level of resource endowments, sheer physical size, flora and fauna, as well as population size, Brazil and the CARICOM countries are worlds apart. Brazil's population is hovering around the two hundred million mark. The combined populations of CARICOM States barely cross 13.5 million.

What, then, do these two seemingly disparate regions have in common? A closer look at the demographics of Brazil and CARICOM provides some interesting answers to this question.

Demographic Profile showing the relative share of African Descendants

(Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook.)

Country	Population	African Descendants
Brazil	191, 908, 598	44.7%
Haiti	7, 482,000	95%
Jamaica	2,804, 332	97.4%
Trinidad & Tobago	1,047,366	58%
Guyana	770, 000	36%
Suriname	492, 829	47%
Belize	307, 899	29.8%
The Bahamas	307, 451	85%
Barbados	281, 968	90%
St. Lucia	172, 884	82.5%
St. Vincent & The Grenadines	118, 432	85%
Grenada	107,818	95%
Antigua and Barbuda	78, 000	94.9%
St. Kitts & Nevis	39, 619	98%
Turks and Caicos Islands	26, 000	34%
Montserrat	5,118	

The above classification, “African Descendants,” does not seek to delineate between different shades and grades of African genetic content. In this regard, it is a broad classification of the populations under consideration. The writer is aware how sensitive race classification can be, and acknowledges that in the case of Brazil, the mulatto factor, that is, the mixture between white and black, has been put at around 38%, with blacks at just over 6%, which add up to the 44% African descendants in the above table. Whites are estimated to be about 53% of the Brazilian population (Central Intelligence Agency, Brazil).

The profiles of the CARICOM countries, with the exception of Guyana, Trinidad, Belize and Suriname in which there is significant racial diversity, reflect a more homogenous demographic pattern, with the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of these countries being African Descendants.

The African Infusion

Most of the people of the CARICOM area and a significant part of the population of Northern Brazil originate from West Africa. They are the descendants of the Ashanti, Dahomey, Ibo, Mandingo, Fon, Twi, people from tribal groups who were captured and enslaved, then subsequently transported as part of the trans-Atlantic trade in human cargo that went on for centuries. They came from places that have now evolved into nation states and carry names such as Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea, Togo, and Burkina Faso. A few areas still bear their ancient names, like Ghana and Mali, although not covering the same areas as their old empires (Honychurch). Most of Brazil’s slave population came from the Bantu regions of the Atlantic coast of Africa, where Congo, Angola and Mozambique are located.

The first recorded shipment of African slaves directly from the African West Coast to the Caribbean was in the year 1518. By the time slavery was abolished in the mid to late 19th century, eleven million persons had already been forcibly transported into slavery, the vast majority to become the labour force in the plantation economy. This does not include those who died during the infamous middle passage from Africa to the Caribbean. Four million of them went to Brazil and two million were landed in the British West Indies, the area largely referred to as CARICOM. The rest was delivered to the French, Dutch and Danish West Indies, North America and Europe, including Portugal, the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores (Thomas).

Brazil became the first large-scale slave colony by virtue of the early start Portugal had in the slave trade, through the establishment of forts and trading posts along the West Coast of Africa, including the Gold Coast. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese had been conducting regular trade with the Spanish colonies and Brazil, where large-scale sugar plantations had been organised (Claypole).

The Plantation System and the Matter of Identity

The Plantation System constituted the dominant socio-economic institution in both CARICOM and Brazil. The enclave-like nature of plantations earned for them the characterisation, “total institutions.” These were defined as organisations, having well-defined boundaries with a marked internal hierarchical structure approaching an internal caste system.(Geoffman). The Plantation constituted the nerve centre of the early colonial society. Raymond Smith argues that the plantation acted as a peculiar instrument of re-socialisation of those who fell within its sphere of influence. People who were already socialised into a culture of their own were reprocessed and “seasoned” (Smith 90). The slave was forcibly put into a new and alien form of social organisation that deprived him of the fruits of his labour, his family, his religious practices and his general sense of who he was. These were the conditions that the early African inhabitants of Brazil and the CARICOM faced. The intention was to strip the slave of his identity and force him to assimilate that of Europe.

The plantation system has often been described as a social pyramid, with the white minority planter-class at the top, supported by white managers, overseers, followed by poor whites in lesser positions of authority, such as the bookkeepers and carpenters. The blacks made up the base of the pyramid, generally outnumbering the whites. On the periphery of the plantation were the white functionaries of the colonial state, headed by the governor, the clergy, a few men of the professions, members of the military and policemen. There were increasing numbers of mulattoes or free coloured who were having a hard time climbing the social ladder.

Creolization and Identity

Plantation socialisation was only the beginning of a broader process of assimilation and ethno-social blending that would later on impact national identity

in both Brazil and CARICOM. This process, experienced as Creolization, was a phenomenon that occurred during and after the era of slavery. Slavery was abolished in 1834 in the British territories, and in 1888 in Brazil.

The term Creoles was originally used by the Spanish to describe persons of European parentage, born in the so-called New World, but eventually was adapted to broader usage to cover persons of mixed parentage in all of the newly colonised lands.

Consolidated social blending made it increasingly difficult to make distinction between the ethnic groups in post-slavery society in the Caribbean and Brazil, and would persist as a type of social conundrum even up to the present time.

In an attempt to put the Creolization experience in historical perspective, Rex Nettleford said the following:

For the Caribbean shares in the great drama of the Americas of which it is an integral part, whereby new societies are shaped, new and delicately tuned sensibilities are honed, and appropriate designs for social living are crafted through the cross-fertilization of disparate elements. The process has resulted in a distinguishable and distinctive entity called the Caribbean. The process is intensely cultural (Nettleford xi.)

Professor Nettleford paints a graphic picture of an encounter of Africa and Europe on foreign soil, and these in turn with the indigenous Native Americans on their long tenanted estates and all in turn with later arrivals from Asia and the Middle East. He points out that this resulted in a culture of texture and diversity held together by a dynamic creativity severally described as creative chaos, stable disequilibrium or cultural pluralism. He concludes that an apt description for the typical Caribbean person is that he or she is part African, part European, part Asian, part Native American, but totally Caribbean. To perceive this, according to Professor Nettleford, is to understand creative diversity in shaping the cultural identity in the Caribbean.

Creative diversity notwithstanding, it is an undeniable fact of history that Caribbean people of African descent found themselves at the bottom of the social ladder, poor and marginalised, even after the demise of the explicitly socially demarcated system of slavery gave way to later forms of colonialism.

This condition, in itself, formed the basis for a movement for social change that would intensify in the post-war era.

Brazil too, faced its post-slavery challenges related to cultural mix. With the racial mosaic of its population made up of different Europeans (mainly Portuguese and Germans), Africans, Indians and Japanese, as well as various types of Mestizo, Brazil became an interesting field to observe the extent and importance of the race factor in socio-economic structure and national integration. Studies done by UNESCO as late as 1950-51, focusing on the northeastern municipality of Salvador da Bahia, which represented the greatest concentration of Afro-Brazilians, came up with some noteworthy results (UNESCO).

Some of the findings of these studies were as follows:

1. In some communities in the North of Brazil, a remnant of white aristocratic caste was found, membership of which was closed to Negroes, Mestizos or anyone presenting marked negroid features.

2. In rural North Brazil, people were acutely conscious of racial differences, as was shown by the multiplicity of racial categories that were recognised; but these distinctions were not accompanied – as in other countries – by discriminatory measures. They were used rather as a means of identification, as a way of diagnosing a person's probable social position, and as a mechanism by which coloured people could avoid being classified as Negroes.

3. Prejudice against Negroes, Mestizos and other Amerindians was mainly manifested verbally, hardly ever in behaviour. Other factors (wealth, occupation, education, etc.) were of greater importance in determining the patterns of interpersonal relations than race.

4. Although Brazilian society had a rigid class structure, conflict between social classes were relatively subdued. Instead, individuals strove to improve their status by moving “as individuals” into a higher class, without questioning the value of the existing social structure.

5. While acknowledging that there has existed in Brazil discrimination against people of visibly negroid features, the study points to the generally

accepted policy that the process of bleaching would be the best possible solution to the ethnic heterogeneity of Brazil's population (Bleaching referred to the progressive whitening of the population through miscegenation or racial interbreeding.).

The conclusion to be drawn from the UNESCO study is that the African in post-slavery Brazil, while not subject to openly manifested discrimination, based on racial intolerance or colour prejudice, found himself at a significant social disadvantage, stigmatised on the basis of pigmentation.

The Amazing Resilience of the African Heritage

This paper has already shown the role the Plantation system played as a "total Institution" in the remoulding of the enslaved Africans. The plantation defined the physical and social limits of their existence. It has been established that the transported people had, prior to their transportation, already been socialised into a culture of their own. In the new world they were reprocessed or "seasoned" into the ways of their new masters. It was a question of how fast they could assimilate.

The assimilation process was, however, not devoid of resistance. Historians and sociologists have documented and analysed the significance of the many slave revolts and resistance movements, from Haiti in the north to Guyana in the south. The leaders of these movements have become folk heroes in their respective territories, whether it is Toussaint in Jamaica, Cudjoe the Maroon leader in Jamaica, Bussa in Barbados, Chatoyer in St. Vincent, Coffy in Guyana or Fedon in Grenada. The political significance of these slave revolts will be dealt with later on in this paper.

Religion and Identity

Of course, the resistance was not limited to the arena of physical struggle. Examining the matter of religious retentions, Roucek and Kiernan speak of the slaves resolutely clinging to their non-material Africanisms (Roucek and Kiernan).

In their souls, they had brought Africa's animistic beliefs, cosmic metaphysics and occult magics; and in their selves, a love of life

and a sense of dignity, equanimity, and of destiny (Roucek and Kiernan 291).

These African retentions were, however, not unadulterated. The need to forge cultural cohesion among tribally different slaves and the pressure of plantation socialisation led to the formation of new cultural amalgams.

In each colonial area, they homogenised their different cults and languages on the basis of those of the numerically dominant tribal group. The unified religions also borrowed from the Christianity of the masters some symbols, rituals and dogmas, such as the sign of the Cross, Roman liturgy and litanies, a few Biblical parables and concepts, and the names and personalities of many Catholic saints to whom were identified their African Gods. A few elements were also incorporated from the equally animistic religion of the aborigines. In such syncretised forms, the Yoruba-Bantu religions of Sudan, Ghana, Guinea and Angola became the Macumba and Candomble of Brazil, the Lucumi of Cuba and the Shango of Trinidad, Tobago. The Fanti-Ashanti sects of the Gold Coast were maintained in almost pure form by Surinam's Bush Negroes, but were modified into Cumina by Jamaica and other islands. The Ewe-Arada cults of Dahomey, Nigeria, and the Congo Basin were transformed into the Rada and Petro rites of Haiti's Vodun (Roucek and Kiernan 292).

One high-profile manifestation of what Professor Nettleford called the African soul-force among Jamaicans is the Rastafarian movement. Generally regarded as a religion, Rastafari has gone beyond and has asserted the profile of an entire culture. In this religion the Rastas consider themselves to be Black Israelites, the Emperor of Ethiopia is God, Ethiopia is the Black man's Promised Land, and the West (especially Jamaica) is Babylon. Nettleford describes the Rasta religion as a cultural response to social and economic deprivation in Jamaica, taking on the makings of a profoundly insightful religion, challenging in serious ways the theology of Christian orthodoxy, the religion of status and power (Nettleford).

It should be pointed out that this African soul-force that is the Rasta movement in Jamaica, has long become a powerful cultural phenomenon in the rest of CARICOM, and has gained synergies with major contemporary

trends in Caribbean music, especially Reggae music, as well as art. This phenomenon is one of such great social vitality, that it is difficult to conceive of a Caribbean identity without throwing this potent factor into the blend.

African Retentions in the Arts

The African heritage in music, dance and other arts constitute powerful areas of national endeavour in CARICOM and Brazil and have in fact become colourful symbols of national identity in both regions. These aspects of the African heritage have proven to be the most resilient against the reprocessing of colonialism. According to Roucek and Kiernan, the African artistic background was the part that has been least withered by slavery.

Speaking of the former slaves, he said “they also transported their onomatopoeic languages, unwritten literature, aesthetic forms, and the complex cadence of African song and dance” (Roucek and Kiernan, 291).

The Samba music and dance of Brazil and the Reggae music of Jamaica have transcended their national boundaries and have become cultural industries, making their mark in the entertainment markets in North America, Europe and even as far as Asia.

Samba is a Brazilian dance and musical genre with African roots, traced back to Rio de Janeiro in the 19th century. It is said to have originated from batuque, music and dance from Cape Verde. This art form has been recognised as a Cultural Heritage of Brazil, and has been elevated to the status of Humanity Heritage by UNESCO. Samba has, in fact, become a worldwide cultural movement, associated with the internationally famous Rio de Janeiro Carnival, as well as Brazil’s highly admired football team.

Reggae is to Jamaica what samba is to Brazil, although it is a more recent musical form. Reggae grew out of Ska and Rocksteady in the 1960s, but has been influenced by African American jazz, as well as Rhythm and Blues. Part of Reggae’s special appeal was the fact that it expressed the woes of the poor and “downpressed” of Jamaica. As in the case of Samba in Brazil it became a unifying national symbol.

Not unlike reggae in Jamaica, calypso in Trinidad and Tobago has been regarded as an expression of resistance to social injustice, originating, as some cultural historians have claimed, as a protest against slavery. Some have put the origins of calypso as far back as Africa. As with Samba in Brazil, calypso is associated with the biggest national cultural event, namely carnival. The

calypso musical genre has attained national acceptance in the rest of CARICOM, and calypsonians have assumed the profile of Spokesmen of the People.

Another outstanding musical creation that represents a rich contribution by African Heritage to national identity in CARICOM is the steel band. This musical instrument was invented in Trinidad in the twentieth century, evolving from an earlier form of percussion instrument, known as the Tamboo-Bamboo, which used musically tuned bamboo sticks to beat the ground, building on the African tradition of drumming as a means of communicating. The subsequent addition of automobile brake hubs and the use of biscuit tins to create a metallic sound cleared the way for the use of the 55-gallon oil drum that was available in large quantities in oil-rich Trinidad. The profile of this instrument in the national identity of Trinidad and Tobago is so great that it is argued by some that it is more recognisable than the nation's Coat of Arms.

African dance forms have survived the acculturation process. Dr. J. D. Elder, in his study, entitled *African Survivals in Trinidad and Tobago*, identifies the dance forms practiced by different African nations, the so-called Nation Dances, as well as the areas in that territory where these nations are located. Among these nations he identifies the Yoruba in Bona Venture and Gasparillo; the Hausa in Mayo Town and Manzanilla; Congo including Kimbundu in Caratal, Belmont and Diego Martin; Ibos in Bona Aventure and Indian Trail; Radas in Belmont Valley Road; and Mandingo in Mandinga Road (Naparimas). He identifies the island of Carriacou (of the state of Grenada) as the source of the Temne and Kromanti that migrated to Trinidad. These dances all have their ritualistic significance and are practiced at feasts, celebrations and other such rituals.

Similarly, African retentions can be found in the craft of communities where significant concentrations of African populations were located.

The African Factor in Sports

The significance of sportsmen of African descent as inspirational and unifying figures in both Brazil and CARICOM should not be underestimated either. The exceptional achievements of soccer legend, Edson Arantes do Nascimento, or Pelé, as the world knew him, was a great source of national pride to Brazilians across the ethnic and social divide in that country. In

recognition of his contribution to national development, Pelé was declared an official National treasure and an ambassador for sports.

Jamaica is producing a seemingly endless reservoir of world-beaters in track events, which include the likes of current world sprint kings, Usain Bolt and Asafa Powell. The people of Barbados have celebrated the success of track star, Obadele Thompson, while other achievers in the area of athletics across the CARICOM area are feeding national and regional pride. As a region, CARICOM has punched above its weight in the field of sports. The achievements of the West Indies cricket team is another example of this, with its glorious record of humbling the mightiest competitors throughout the British Commonwealth. In its best days this group of athletes, largely of African descent, was easily the greatest unifying symbol, even within some of the most cosmopolitan or racially diverse territories in CARICOM, like Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, where the ethnic split between descendants of India and Africa is most pronounced. CARICOM nations identified with cricket in the way the people of the vast and diverse nation of Brazil identifies with football.

The African Factor in the Politics of CARICOM and Brazil

The political struggles of former colonial territories all over the world have generally been linked to a move to forge national identities, affirmed at some point by the formal attainment of independence. It has already been shown how post-slavery societies of Brazil and CARICOM were confronted with the problem of seeking to create common identity among racially plural groups and the way African cultural retentions, creations and symbols, in a word, African Heritage, helped to serve this cause in a very positive way, although this has not always been a smooth process.

Political factors have, in fact, also been a driving force in the fostering of national identities in Brazil and CARICOM.

Slave revolts were the earliest form of the political struggle in colonial times, driven by a very simple agenda, man's irrepressible urge to be free. The slaves who led these struggles and in many instances died in the process, have become symbols of the loftiest ideals of CARICOM nations, as is the case with Coffy, who the government of post-independence Guyana named as a national hero or Sam Sharpe, a national hero of Jamaica, who was hanged in 1832 after leading a slave revolt.

The phenomenon known as the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1803 was not just a revolt against the pernicious system of slavery. It was also a struggle for the independence of this French colony, known as St. Domingue, an assertion by African slaves, of a separate and distinct national identity from that of colonial masters. Their epic defeat of the imperial army of Napoleon Bonaparte makes their achievements even more towering. Notwithstanding the long hard years of tribulations this nation of former slaves was due to go through, Haiti occupies high moral ground as being the first territory in CARICOM to achieve independence. The rest of the area we know as CARICOM had to wait for more than one hundred and fifty years before breaking the shackles of colonialism.

Brazil has had its share of slave revolts. Many such uprisings were recorded in Bahia between 1807 and 1837, some of them coinciding with the Brazil's Independence War with Portugal (1821-1825). There is, however, the contention that the Brazilian Independence War was fought more by the Brazilian Creoles and mulattoes, and that the relative non-participation of the blacks had to do with the mistrust of them by these two groups. However, some participated, allegedly with the expectation that they would be freed after independence was won (Mohammed Shareef bin Farid).

In making reference to the Bahia revolts, Mohammed Shareef identified two types of slave insurrections, namely, Secondary and Primary. He defined Secondary to be "those revolts that were executed, using the ideals, culture and mores of the slave master." (Mohammed Shareef bin Farid 64). The reason for this type, according to him is "the historical conscience, linguistic factor and psychological temperament had been successfully eradicated through the process of slavery forcing the slave to revolt, using the master's frame of reference" (Mohammed Shareef bin Farid, 64). In other words, this is the revolt of the "seasoned" slave.

The Primary revolts, he said, were "revolts which happened in the Americas where the African slave rallied around its own culture, linguistic unity and psychological temperament. This cultural cohesiveness was most unified under the banner of African Religion" (Mohammed Shareef bin Farid, 64). Shareef made the claim that the slave revolts in Bahia exemplified this type of resistance. He identified Candomble, Yoruba/Ewe religion, as well as Islam as driving forces behind these occurrences in Bahia. If Shareef's analysis is correct, then the institutional re-orientation process of the slave plantations in Bahia was not as thorough as might be assumed.

Considering Mr. Shareef's analysis of the state of affairs in Northern Brazil during the first half of the 19th Century, and remembering the findings of UNESCO in the 1950s, it would seem that race relations in Brazil has made considerable progress.

Race featured prominently in the Caribbean in post-war politics. The assertion of higher social ground was driven, in part, by the newly acquired sense of being among soldiers of African descent, as a result of their war-time experience. Having overcome the resistance of the British War Office to their plea to serve the Motherland, volunteers from the British West Indian colonies were in for a rude awakening to discover that colour divisions prevailed even on the field of battle. They were prevented from serving as officers and subjected to menial tasks. Discrimination even extended to the matter of compensation for the war dead.

There was another side to the war experience and this was elucidated by Beverley Steele, as she dealt with how it impacted Grenadian servicemen.

The experiences Grenadians had of colour prejudice in the military service of Britain and simultaneous exposure to literature and alternative ways of living in societies relatively free of racial prejudice, such as France, was to stimulate a profound desire for change, not only among the soldiers, but all in the society with whom they shared their experiences (Steele 285).

She further made reference to what must have been a spiritually empowering experience for them, to visit Africa, the land of their ancestors and to see the glories of Africa in places like Egypt with their own eyes. She asserts that many of these soldiers developed an identification with Africa, which would have made them receptive to the doctrines of Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey, later on.

Marcus Mosiah Garvey emerged as the foremost spokesman of a movement that proudly held up the African Heritage of the Caribbean and the rest of the African Diaspora and even encouraged blacks to worship a black deity. He drew a connection between the anti-colonial struggle in Africa and that of the Caribbean and Latin America. He founded the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), in 1914, to press for Pan-Africanism, including repatriation with Africa. In commenting on the significance of Garvey, Rupert Lewis said that Garvey had that foresight and drive which allowed him

to launch an international organization, publish newspapers and develop an arsenal of opposing political and cultural organisations geared to defeating the dominant colonial system. In spite of the failure of many of Garvey's schemes, Lewis indicated that Garvey put forward ideas which were central to the process of decolonisation (Lewis). Garvey became a symbol of the national identity of Jamaicans and a great source of inspiration for Black Nationalism.

African Heritage, National Identity and Contemporary Politics in CARICOM

The post-war era was one of decolonisation. In Africa the walls of colonialism were crumbling, while in many of the CARICOM territories, this was a period which saw the accelerated changing of the political landscape. It was for some territories the time of birth and rapid growth of the Trade Union movement, as well as the start of party politics and the granting of universal suffrage to the formerly disenfranchised poor black masses.

This process culminated with the achievement of independence. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago led the way in 1962, followed by Barbados and Guyana in 1966. Then came the Bahamas in 1973, followed by Grenada in 1974. Suriname became free of Dutch control in 1975. St. Vincent and the Grenadines and St. Lucia gained their independence in 1979, while Antigua and Barbuda achieved that status in 1981, to be followed by St. Kitts and Nevis in 1983. Both the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos remain under British control. Montserrat, whose population was decimated by an active volcano, also remains an overseas territory of the UK.

These former colonies can now boast of having their own constitutions, national flags and other trappings of independence. However, as individual territories and as a region, they all continue to grapple with the matter of self-definition, or identity, especially as they struggle to chart a coherent direction in a vast global sea, where hostile and powerful cultural currents prevail.

The drive for self-determination in the former British colonies gained synergies from the Civil Rights movement that had become a powerful force in the USA, with Cultural Nationalist movements attracting large following among people of African descent in Trinidad and other CARICOM territories. Organisations such as National Joint Action Committee (NJAC) helped to inject a new pride in Afro-Trinidadians in their African heritage. They donned the ceremonial robes of their ancestral homeland, West Africa, held African

naming ceremonies and celebrated African Liberation Day in solidarity with their African brothers and sisters, who were locked in liberation wars in various corners of Africa. Intellectuals from the University of the West Indies, as well as some returning from metropolitan centres of learning helped to inject an ethnic awareness among the student masses and fire their imaginations with notions of radical change in governance.

Some of this resulted in concessions of greater democratic governance on the part of some fairly conservative regional governments, and in the remarkable case of Grenada, resulted in a short-lived revolution.

In the current period, CARICOM seems to be less attracted to major social experimentation and less caught up with the matter of self-definition, being more preoccupied with living through the global recession, while the nation that is Brazil, by virtue of its economic muscle and cultural profile, seems confidently poised to take a place of greatness as a player in world affairs.

Conclusion

Brazil and CARICOM have evolved into stable, modern ethnically diverse democracies. The experience of colonisation, the plantation system, creolization and nationalism in post-war and more recent times have challenged the ability of these societies to forge common national identities. The racial and social disparities that accompanied these historical processes took on antagonistic proportions, at times resulting in open civil hostilities. The rich African Heritage that is common to both Brazil and CARICOM has proven itself to be amazingly resilient and continues to be a potent factor in defining national identities in these regions. In this regard both Brazil and CARICOM have much to gain from sharing experiences and building dynamic relationships of cooperation in the field of culture and historical research. This kind of collaboration will be a natural extension to the synergies that Brazil and CARICOM are already fostering bi-laterally and in multi-lateral areas of common endeavour.

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8. Guiana

The African Influence on the Formation of the National Identity of Guyana

Alvin Thompson

Guyana (known before independence in 1966 as British Guiana) is the only English-speaking country on the South America continent. It is roughly 214,969 square kilometers in size; it is also the largest English-speaking country geographically in the Caribbean, and the third largest one in the Americas (after the United States and Canada). Although, as noted above, it is not an island, it actually shares many of the features common to the Caribbean islands. These include a history of precolonial Native American (Amerindian) settlement, plantation sugar production, African slavery, East Indian indentureship, European rivalry, racism, and the struggle for independence for European domination. However, this essay will focus attention specifically on the Africans and their contribution to the formation of a Guyanese national identity.

Though present research indicates that there was an early Portuguese presence in part of Guyana, the Dutch were the first European colonizers to introduce Africans on a large scale, primarily as enslaved persons. This began in the third decade of the seventeenth century, first in Essequibo and Berbice, and then in Demerara (which were amalgamated in 1831 to form British Guiana). However, the various Dutch settlements remained small-scale in comparison with what was taking place in such Caribbean islands as Barbados, Jamaica, Martinique, and Guadeloupe, and notably in Brazil on the mainland. It was not until the British took over the colonies from the Dutch in the early nineteenth century that the sugar culture spread rapidly and displaced the other British

sugar colonies in the region as the premier Anglophone producer of that commodity. By the late nineteenth century this development was being facilitated by the introduction of a large number of East Indians who filled the role that the Africans had filled during the slavery period. Though the new arrivals came as indentured or contract workers, their condition and treatment replicated many of the features associated with African slavery in the pre-emancipation era.

Over time, other ethnicities migrated to Guyana, but in rather small numbers. These included Chinese, Syrian/Lebanese and Portuguese (the latter, though regarded in popular Guyanese culture as non-Europeans were in fact lower-class Europeans who were not acknowledged as Europeans by the White ruling class). Today, the 'official' ethnic mix of the country is designated as Amerindians, Europeans, Africans, East Indians, Chinese, and Syrian/Lebanese. It is almost impossible to obtain accurate data for the ethnic composition of the country's population, since the last census was conducted in 1991, nearly two decades ago. Many writers simply reproduce the statistics for that year, while others produce completely unscientific estimates. One estimate gives the following statistics for 2000: "East Indian origin 49%, African origin 32%, mixed 12%, Amerindian 6%, White and Chinese 1%."¹ Almost all authorities agree that there has been a sizable population shift, with the East Indians gaining significant ground on the Africans, and perhaps numbering as much as fifty-five percent of the total population.

The Europeans, in view of their dominant political, military, and economic positions, and their long stay in the country, were able to impose their culture and identity in a much more deliberate and significant way than other ethnicities, at least during most of the colonial period. They did so in two basic ways. First, they deliberately suppressed large elements of the identities and cultures of the subordinate groups, and superimposed their own identities and cultures on them. This was done through legal and extra-legal means (legislation, practice, and coercion). As the subordinate groups became more creolized, especially after the abolition of slavery and indentureship, they tended to embrace increasingly the culture of the ruling class. However, the numerical growth of the 'free' population, and the fact that Africans were in the country

¹ Fact Rover <<http://74.6.238.254/search/srpgcache?ei=UTF-8&p=population+census+guyana&xa=TbKzRkRjLz85nI9KYr2Q7g—%2C1291140428&fr=yfp-t-701&vdata=0%2C0%2C0%2C0&u=http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=population+census+guyana&d=4626852451845959&mkt=en-US&setlang=en-US&w=78ba2daa,d6f97733&icp=1&.intl=us&sig=FtsQOO.XryqlcD112C2x.w>> (accessed November 29, 2010).

much longer than East Indians, and the Europeans and Amerindians have largely disappeared, suggest that the African element is stronger in terms of the formation of the country's present national identity than any other group.

African labor was critical to the foundation and early development of the plantation sector which has always dominated the nation's economy. For most of the historical period it has been largely sugar, though coffee, cocoa and cotton were also produced, especially before the nineteenth century. In more recent years, rice (produced largely by East Indians) has become an important commodity for local consumption and export. Today, it is largely the East Indians who are engaged in sugar production. However, the foundation of that industry was built on the backs of Blacks/Africans. They were assigned draconian tasks: clearing away the primeval forest; digging the canals so necessary to channel water to various parts of the plantation areas; building the dams, sluices and sea walls in order to prevent the overflowing of the plantations by water that resulted from the heavy and frequent rainfall for which the country is known; and building and rowing the canoes and other boats that were needed to transport the canes to the factories, and the semi-processed sugar/syrup to the ships berthed some distance away from the coast (because of the silt from the rivers which prevented large vessels from approaching the coast). It can therefore be stated without contradiction that it was African labor that laid the foundations for the development of the sugar industry and, by extension, the economy of the country. Africans were also responsible for building and maintaining the Great (plantation) Houses, the forts and other structures necessary for the development of settled communities in the country, or more precisely the areas which the European settlers controlled. While East Indians came later on and also made solid contributions to plantation expansion, it was the Africans who were the foundation forces, so to speak, behind the nation's economy. Therefore, any study of the formation of the country's national identity in economic terms must take into account the seminal contribution of the Africans.

Africans have also played the main role in the foundation and early development of the urban communities. Indeed, they dominate numerically the two main urban centers, Georgetown and Linden.² Georgetown has been

² "Guyana – SOCIETY," <<http://74.6.238.254/search/srpsache?ei=UTF-8&p=guyana+new+amsterdam+ethnic+composition&fr=yfp-t-993&u=http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=guyana+new+amsterdam+ethnic+composition&d=4513847570465735&mkt=en-US&setlang=en-US&w=61d33db,11d31004&icp=1&.intl=us&sig=fCvkF7.Vh2i9yM9sKzbrhQ>> (accessed November 30, 2009).

the main city in the country since its foundation in the late eighteenth century.³ It lies close to the mouth of the Demerara River, the most important river commercially and the focus of much of the export and import trade of the country from the early nineteenth century, when the colonial economy really began to expand. This city was occupied largely by persons of African descent from its foundation, and though East Indians are now much more visible there, Africans still constitute the majority of the population. It is said that “Of the 134,497 people accounted for by the 2002 Guyanese Census, about 70,962 (53%) listed themselves as Black/African; 31,902 (24%) as mixed; 26,542 (20%) as East Indian; 1,441 (1.1%) as Amerindian; 675 (0.5%) as Portuguese; 475 (0.35%) as Chinese; 2,265 (1.7%) as ‘don’t know/not stated’; 196 (0.15%) as white; 35 as ‘other’”.⁴ The Parliament, the main law courts, the main cultural center, the major and most prestigious secondary schools, the main business houses, the police and military forces, and so on, are located there. It was largely African labor that built the various structures, reclaiming land from the sea, and erecting the sea wall or sea defence that kept the city from being flooded during high-water tide from the Atlantic Ocean. (The Demerara coastline is some twelve feet below high-water level and the sea wall is critical to keeping out the water during that period. Without this wall, settled life would be jeopardized).

The African contribution to, and influence on, the character of the city is perhaps seen most clearly through the existence of Stabroek Market, which all writers seem to agree is the defining structure in the capital city. It is the building/site that tourists most commonly photograph, and which almost without exception locals and foreigners agree is the most alluring structure. It is important to point out here that when the market was founded in the early nineteenth century, it did not bear the characteristics described above. In fact, it was a typical open-air market where enslaved people sold their produce, both to other Africans and to Europeans. However, it was during the foundation years that this site gained popularity as a place where various nationalities met to buy and sell all sorts of items – vegetables, fruit, fish, meat, ground provisions, household furnishings, pottery, cosmetics, jewelry, clothing – and over time almost every conceivable item of daily household usage. In time, the

³ For a short discussion on the foundation and history of this city see “Georgetown, Guyana,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgetown,_Guyana#History> (accessed November 30, 2010).

⁴ Ibid.

Government enclosed the area, established more comprehensive market regulations, appointed a market administration and law-enforcement staff, and imposed market taxes on vendors. The present structure, known also as “Big Market”, was erected in 1880-1881. It is made of cast iron and galvanized steel, and occupies some 128 square meters of land. It is said that it ranks among the largest all-metal markets in the world. Today, it boasts of being the only real “supermarket” in the country. It is an amazing hive of activity during the weekend, especially on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. It has also spawned a number of ancillary business houses, and is the main terminus for transportation networks to various parts of the country. Increasingly, East Indians have set up stalls in the market, and engage in a number of other activities associated with what we would call the Stabroek Market Complex, but the African influence on this very important center of the nation’s economic life cannot be denied.

The town of Linden (amalgamated in 1970 from three smaller entities known as Wismar, Mackenzie, and Christianburg), named after Burnham, is the second town that we have identified as a major area of African influence on the country’s development. The origins of this settlement as an important economic and social enterprise date back to 1916 when Canadians leased lands in Mackenzie and set up the Demerara Bauxite Company. Guyana bauxite soon became a prized commodity, due to the fact that it was one of very few areas around the world with calcined (high-grade) bauxite ore. The activities of the company spawned a community of workers, their families, and a number of small business enterprises largely owned and dominated by persons of African descent (as is still the situation at present). Bauxite brought in much-needed money into the economy, at a time when the sugar economy was failing, embattled as it was by cheaper sources of sugar and a surfeit of that commodity on the world market (which was only temporarily relieved by the high prices that were paid for that commodity during the First World War). Today, Linden does not hold the same pride of place in the national or international economy, because of new and more extensive sources of that quality bauxite (especially from China), and arguably several mistakes in the local management of that sector of the economy. Nevertheless, Linden remains an important production centre for one of the few minerals that the nation produces on a large scale. The African influence on this aspect of the country’s development remains indelible.

Within the Caribbean, Guyana has gained the reputation of being a land of gold, and many individuals from the region (and often the Diaspora) who visit the country seek out the jewelers to obtain “a piece” of Guyana gold – usually in the form of chains, earrings, bracelets, and so on. However, in reality Guyana has always been a small-scale producer of gold by world standards, has never experienced a “gold rush”, and has never rivaled sugar in export earnings. Nevertheless, from the 1880s, when “pork knockers” (local gold miners) began to produce the commodity on a large enough scale for export, that commodity has always played an important part in the nation’s overall export, and arguably played a critical role as an export earner at various times, for instance, in the late nineteenth century during the economic depression of that period, and again during the late twentieth century when the Government sought to obtain export earnings from that commodity through rigid controls on its unauthorized sale abroad. While some companies have engaged in gold mining in the country for over a hundred years, it was largely the African “pork knockers” who kept the industry alive. With little capital, rudimentary tools, and a heart full of gold, they braved the hazards of jungle life to win that mineral from the rivulets and surface deposits in the country’s interior. More than this; they also constituted the core of that group of badly-paid workers for the several companies that have engaged in more sophisticated mining of that commodity. They have also been largely responsible for the diamonds that the country has produced over the years, very small as the quantity is by world standards.

African influence was felt not only in the economic life of the nation, but also in its political life. Here we shall use the term “political”, not in its narrow sense of activities related to acquisition of a seat and or/ power through parliamentary elections, but rather in its broader sense of activities that sought to influence the Government to institute or revoke various laws or take certain kinds of action, which the agitators conceive to be conducive to the good of their own group, or to the nation as a whole. In this wider sense, the resistance activities of the enslaved Africans to the draconian laws that the authoritarian forces imposed on them must be view as political ones. The high points of these activities were the establishment of Maroon communities and the staging of armed insurrection against the enslavers. Guyana and several other mainland communities (and also some island ones) offered attractive conditions for the establishment of Maroon communities. Heavy jungle terrain, and a host of micro and macro parasites, made it very difficult for the enslavers and their

armed cohorts to track down and destroy the denizens of these communities. Though Guyana did not become a large-scale Maroon society, as for example Suriname, Jamaica, Haiti, and notably Brazil, it offered a haven for a number of runaways who sought their freedom from the draconian institution of slavery, and sometimes even attacked the enslavers in hope of undermining the slavery system. They kept up the struggle for autonomy and dignity until the last days of slavery.

The second important group of resisters was those who carried out armed revolt within the plantation complex. The most noteworthy case of such resistance was that carried out in Berbice (a separate colony at the time) in 1763, under the leadership of Cuffy (Kofi), an African from the area of modern Ghana. The revolt at one stage aimed at destroying the entire system of slavery within the colony, and came very near to doing so. However, dissension within the ranks of the insurgents, some indecisiveness on Cuffy's part, and the arrival of European troops from abroad resulted in the revolt being put down, with the usual cruelties and brutalities by the enslavers following such a circumstance.

In 1823, another important revolt took place, this time in Demerara. It was intended as a non-violent protest on behalf of several enslaved persons, demanding their freedom that they thought the Imperial Government had decreed but which the colonial legislators had refused to implement. As a result of their refusal to heed the latter's command to return to their homes, they were fired on and many persons lost their lives. In the judicial trials that followed, which were largely a mockery of justice, some persons were sentenced to death and several others were sentenced to receive as many as 1,000 lashes!

In 1834, on the eve of the legal abolition of slavery in the country, which however instituted a period of Apprenticeship that bound the enslaved people to labor for their enslavers for a further period of four to six years, a group of persons in Essequibo, under their leader Damon, protested against the continuation of a system which was essentially slavery in everything but name. However, the colonial authorities proceeded against him and his followers with fire and sword, and put down the resistance with great ferocity. Damon was hanged on the lawns of the Parliament Buildings in Georgetown.

In the instances mentioned above and several others, the Africans gave their lives for the cause of freedom. They were not the first freedom fighters that the colony produced: that distinction belongs to the Amerindians, many of whom had fought the European intruders with tooth and nail to maintain

their freedom and the integrity of their domains. However, the activities of the African freedom fighters are written in more vivid relief in the annals of the country, perhaps because their story has been preserved more carefully. Whatever the reasons, the African resistance factor in the quest for freedom forms part of a larger and longer record of resistance to oppression and the quest for a national identity in which each person is regarded as equal in the eyes of the law, and a fundamental part of being human. Today, such equality is written into the laws of the country, though not always honored in practice.

Hamilton Green (an individual of African descent, a former Prime Minister under the People's National Congress Government led by President Linden Forbes Burnham, and now Mayor of Georgetown) has sought to underline the importance of Black persons and their struggles to the formation of the country's national identity. He declared that the martyrdom of Damon was significant not only for its testimony to his commitment to freedom, but also to the evils of racial bigotry, ethnic cleansing, social inequality, hate, poverty, cultural aggression, ideological arrogance, and oppression in general, some of which he views as still present in more muted forms in present-day Guyana.⁵ On a wider plain, he asserted that slavery was the most significant and pervasive event in the life of the nation and that "all other events that followed explain contemporary Guyana".⁶

President Burnham, a leader of African descent who led the country to independence in 1966, chose February 23, 1970, a date that commemorates the beginning of the Berbice revolt, to declare the change of the country from a monarchy to a republic, thus severing the last symbolic ties with the British Government. He recognized Cuffy as the country's first national hero and declared him as the ideological symbol of independence and freedom, and the person whose deeds and attributes need to be emulated in building the new nation. He also asserted that the reason why the Cuffy "revolution" failed was because of dissension among his followers, thus placing the blame for the aborted revolt not on the leader himself, but on his subalterns. This interpretation of what happened in 1763 laid the groundwork for Burnham's stance (more

⁵ Linda Rutherford, "Prime Minister Creates Stir at Libation Ceremony," *Guyana Chronicle* August 2, 2002; "Colonial Slavery was the Most Significant, Pervasive Experience – Says Mayor Hamilton Green," *Guyana Chronicle*, August 3, 2000; "Emancipation Vigil at Public Buildings Tonight," *Guyana Chronicle*, July 31, 2001.

⁶ "Colonial Slavery was the Most Significant, Pervasive Experience – Says Mayor Hamilton Green," *Guyana Chronicle*, August 3, 2000.

implied than stated explicitly) that the greatest threat to the social revolution that he was attempting to bring about was disunity among the Guyanese population – especially ethnic and political “tribalism” among dissident segments of the Guyanese community.

T. Aston Sancho, at that time a People’s National Congress Member of Parliament, gave the widest interpretation to the 1763 revolt, asserting that it not only preceded the Haitian Revolution but pointed the way towards that revolution and, by implication, to liberation in the Caribbean. In his words:

*With the rebellion the first flicker of light glowed across a dark frontier. The beams of its light gleam[ed] brighter in the deeds of the Haitian Revolution, in the eyes of Toussaint L'Overture [sic] and his men. Toussaint and his men understood perfectly dialectics and the science of revolution. But it is the Berbice Rebellion that points the way. ... They were the first slaves who from the midst of the filth and misery in which they lived dreamt of Independence.*⁷

The Burnham regime invested Cuffy with a number of other virtues. The fallen rebel was raised to the dignity of an exemplary leader. He became at once “Slave, Rebel, Diplomat, Visionary”.⁸ The citation of Cuffy on a mural in the Guyana Bank of Trade and Industry included (and still includes) the statement:

*Sensitive and imaginative, blessed with a diplomat’s shrewdness and a statesman’s vision, he planned to set up an independent state in Upper Berbice, conceived in protest and dedicated to the proposition that all men were created free. Frustrated in 1763, his dream was fulfilled in 1966 when Guyana became independent and thus completed the job he began. In 1970 he was declared Guyana’s first national hero and the honour denied him in life was paid to him two centuries after his death.*⁹

⁷ T. Anson Sancho, *Highlights of Guyanese History* (Georgetown, ca.1966), 12.

⁸ Alvin O. Thompson, “The Symbolic Legacies of Slavery in Guyana,” *New West Indian Guide* 80. 3 & 4 (2006): 197-198.

⁹ <http://www.gbtibank.com/art_dome_murals.html> (accessed November 29, 2010).

Under Burnham, Cuffy was also viewed as the ideologue of the new revolution which the President claimed was unfolding. In order to promote this transformation, the Government laid the foundation stone for the Cuffy Ideological Institute in 1974 and started instruction there on August 1, 1977 (Emancipation Day).¹⁰ P.H. Daly, a local historian, had pointed the way to the establishment of such an institute as the main pedagogical instrument to promote the cultural revolution that the new era would spawn: “The cultural revolution needs ... a spiritual home – an intellectual and artistic centre as the focal point for generating cultural activity. Such a centre should be set up by government and named the Institute of Guyana.”¹¹

Burnham erected a monument to him, not in Berbice, the locale of the revolt, but in Georgetown, over seventy miles away. The monument (statue and plinth) stands about 10 meters tall, along Vlissingen Road, one of the main thoroughfares in the capital city, about half a mile from the National Cultural Center, a quarter mile from the Botanical Gardens and National Zoo, and a shorter distance from the official residence of the President. He hoped that the monument would be not only a lasting testimony to the revolutionary leader but also serve as a rallying point for Guyanese of all nationalities. During the regime of Desmond Hoyte, Burnham’s immediate successor, Damon, whom we have mentioned above, became another hero. A monument was also erected to him in Essequibo in 1988, and an annual commemorative ceremony was initiated by private persons on the very site of the Parliament Buildings where he was hanged. Quamina, leader of the 1823 passive revolt, also saw Murray Street, formerly named in honor of a British Governor, being renamed after him.

In the larger perspective, the Black nationalist leaders sought both to give new life and authenticity to the leaders of various servile revolts, and at the same time remove the old colonial heroes, such as William Wilberforce and Fowell Buxton (British antislavery campaigners), and Sir Benjamin D’Urban (Governor in the early 1830s). Thus, the Government was attempting, in a very purposeful way, to create a specific kind of national identity or at least to ensure that the efforts of enslaved peoples were not lost sight of in the definition of the country’s national identity. In this respect, the national politicians of

¹⁰ Office of Prime Minister, Economic Liberation through Socialism. Leader’s Address – 2nd Biennial Congress of the P.N.C. August 12-20, 1977 (Georgetown, 1977), 10.

¹¹ P.H. Daly, *Revolution to Republic* (Georgetown: Daily Chronicle, 1970), 97.

African descent might have been a bit naïve, or they might have been speaking and acting without firm conviction. They must have realized that the path to acceptance of these individuals as national heroes was strewn with ethnic debris, produced during the racial strife between Africans and East Indians that engulfed the nation in the mid-1960s, and was still not cleared away two decades later. As it was, Cuffy and others of the slavery period have remained almost exclusively African heroes and, even then, we cannot say that all persons of African descent embraced them as such. Deborah Thomas refers to the competing identities of “Blackness, Africanness and Jamaicanness” in forging a national identity among all Jamaicans.¹² In the case of Guyana, the situation is complicated by the added variable of ethnicity, primarily between the two principal groups in the country. For instance, Paul Nehru Tennessee provides one of the most strident criticisms of Burnham’s interpretation of the Berbice revolt. According to him, Burnham used the distorted interpretation to mold and deepen the ideology of racism, and to give historical credibility to his dictatorial stance on a number of national issues.¹³

Seminal to maintaining and articulating African national identity in the country is the celebration of Emancipation Day, which originally took place on August 1, 1834. Unlike some other parts of the Anglophone Caribbean, where the celebration of this day fell into desuetude for some years before being revitalized, Guyana has always celebrated such a day, at least in my own living memory. However, within recent years it has gained new importance, and is accompanied by sacred rituals and quite a bit of fanfare. On the night before Emancipation Day an Emancipation Vigil is held on the lawns of the Parliament Buildings. As also noted above, Damon’s “sacrifice of himself” for the cause of freedom is memorialized, and libations are poured out to the ancestors. Various dignitaries and other important personalities of all ethnicities are invited to the Vigil which also involves speeches, historical recollections, poetic readings, African drumming, dancing, and so on. Other groups in other parts of the country commemorate the event in other ways. For instance, in Essequibo in 2002, a number of persons mainly of African descent commemorated the “martyrdom” of Damon on the eve of Emancipation Day. One writer who recorded the events on that occasion stated: “Dressed in

¹² Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

¹³ Paul N. Tennessee, “The Race Problem. III. Who was the Architect of Independence?” <http://www.guyanajournal.com/race3_pt.html> (accessed November 30, 2010).

traditional African styles and holding bottle lamps, the participants sang old-time African folk songs in an atmosphere of joy, peace, love and togetherness as they slowly made their way to Damon's Square, where a grand cultural show was held". The writer goes on to state that "On Thursday, Emancipation Day, scores of persons attended a church service at the Anna Regina Anglican Church and then participated in a cultural street fair at Damon's square."¹⁴

The libation and other ceremonies were not directly associated with the African members of the National Government, though they and persons of other ethnicities were invited to attend, and sometimes did attend such occasions. It was largely non-governmental organizations that promoted such activities, and on some occasions pressured the Government to act in particular ways to keep alive the heritage left by their African ancestors. They were mainly the ones who were seeking to affirm and reaffirm the heritage of Africans in the country's national identity. Some of them viewed this situation as the more urgent since Africans lost control of the National Government in the general elections of 1992, which saw the People's Political Party under Dr. Cheddi Jagan coming to power and retaining control up to the present (although Jagan is now deceased). That Party is controlled mainly by persons of East Indian descent, with very little hope by the cognoscenti that the ethnic composition of Parliament would ever oscillate in favor of persons of African descent; or that the President would ever be such a person; or indeed that there would be a coalition Government between the present political party that heads the Government and the People's National Congress, now the official Opposition party.

At the extreme are several persons of African descent who believe that they were, or deserve to be, the natural inheritors of power from the Europeans, that their ancestors shed their blood in laying the foundations of the country, and that they have been robbed of their heritage, if not their identity. For instance, in March 2004, when the nongovernmental organization called the Kingdom of Manumitted Africa (founded originally as the Descendants of Africa) held a ceremony commemorating "African Martyrs Day" in honor of Cuffy and 209 of his fallen comrades, the organizers have made it clear that the event was intended to ensure that the Government and the wider society recognized the contribution of Africans to the country's development.¹⁵ In

¹⁴ Rajendra Prabhulall, "Colourful Emancipation Celebrations held in Region Two", Guyana Chronicle, August 3, 2002.

¹⁵ "Cuffy and 209 Others Remembered", Daily Bulletin, Guyana Government Information Agency, March 31, 2004.

2010, Eric Phillips, an executive director of the African Cultural and Development Association (ACDA) sounded a note of caution (perhaps even a veiled warning) to the Government when he spoke about the lack of power-sharing in the running of the country. According to one writer, he called on all right-thinking individuals to jettison “the pernicious winner-take-all system” and adopt a more inclusive approach which gives to all Guyanese an equal share in the political and other areas of the country’s life. He went on to say that “we are supposed to have a motto that says ‘one people, one nation, one destiny’, that means we are equal. And a winner-takes-all system is the opposite of that”. On the same occasion, Lennox King, of St. Peter’s African Methodist Episcopal Church, opined that the leaders of the country had to do what was necessary to protect the people they have sworn to lead.¹⁶ East Indians, on the other hand, are equally expressive of the view that they labored to build the country at a time when Africans deserted the cause through withdrawing their labor from the plantations, that they are now the majority population, that the Africans have had their day in the corridors of political power, and that the East Indians’ time has come.

African non-governmental organizations have existed since the early post-emancipation period but since independence a growing number of them have emerged. Among the most noteworthy of them are the Pan-African Movement (Guyana Branch), the African Cultural and Development Association (ACDA), the National Emancipation Trust, the Kingdom of Manumitted Africa, the House of Nyabinghi (Guyana Branch) and the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA). The various organizations are collectively involved in commemorating local and international events relating to the African Diaspora, such as the African Holocaust Day (Maafa Day), African Civilization Day, Black History Month, and the UNESCO Slave Route Project. These activities are carefully crafted into the local ones, stressing freedom, liberation and emancipation from the residual legacies of enslavement and the need to reaffirm the African identity in national life and discourse.

ASCRIA, founded in 1986, is the most well-known and arguably the most respected of these organizations. Its founder, Eusi Kwayana (formerly known as Sydney King), was at different times a member of both the People’s

¹⁶Rabindra Rooplall and Abena Rockcliffe, “Hundreds pay homage with prayers, libations and floral tributes” *Kaitetur News*, October 13, 2010 <<http://www.kaiteturnewsonline.com/2010/10/13/hundreds-pay-homage-with-prayers-libations-and-floral-tributes/>> (accessed November 29, 2010).

Progressive Party and the People's National Congress. It has played a seminal role in the development of a Black or African Diaspora consciousness and identity in the country. The main activity of the National Emancipation Trust has been the organization of the Emancipation Vigil mentioned above, which it has succeeded quite well in doing. It has managed to bring together politicians from the various political parties in the country both as spectators and participants. It has also engaged in an annual Miss Guyana African Heritage Beauty Pageant since 1994.¹⁷

ACDA has been involved since 1995 in the organization of Emancipation Day celebrations at the National Park in Georgetown, where thousands attend annually.¹⁸ The association is also the main local organizer of African Holocaust Day (or Maafa Day), commemorated annually on October 12, the date of Columbus's advent in the Americas. The events usually include a libation ceremony invoking the ancestral spirits on the Atlantic coastline. Bishop Atu Balon Gemu, who presided over the proceedings in 2003, explained that "Libation is a ceremonial outpouring and an exercise of atonement with our ancestors. This exercise is a sacred act; it helps us realise our kinship with our ancestors and must be done as the occasion warrants."¹⁹ Participants were provided with the opportunity of washing themselves, thus symbolically cleansing their spirits in order to be able to pay acceptable tributes to their forebears who had perished during the transatlantic crossing. Among the overseas invited guests in 2003 were Maulana Alhassan Bashir Annan, a visiting Ghanaian missionary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, who was the guest speaker on the occasion; Shabaka Kambon of the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago; and David Commissiong, Director of the

¹⁷ Linda Rutherford, "Prime Minister Creates Stir at Libation Ceremony," *Guyana Chronicle*, August 2, 2002; "Emancipation Vigil at Public Buildings Tonight," *Guyana Chronicle*, July 31, 2001; "African Heritage Pageants," *Emancipation* 1. 10 (2002-2003): 64-65.

¹⁸ On the recognition and celebration of Emancipation Day in the Anglophone Caribbean, see Bridget Brereton, "The Birthday of our Race: A Social History of Emancipation Day in Trinidad, 1838-88", in B. W. Higman, ed., *Trade, Government and Society in Caribbean History 1700-1920: Essays Presented to Douglas Hall* (Kingston, Jamaica: Heinemann Educational Books Caribbean Ltd., 1983), 69-83; Bridget Brereton, "A Social History of Emancipation Day in the British Caribbean: The First Fifty Years", in Hilary McD. Beckles, ed., *Inside Slavery: Process and Legacy in the Caribbean Experience* (Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press, University of the West Indies, 1998), 79-95; B.W. Higman, "Slavery Remembered: The Celebration of Emancipation in Jamaica", *Journal of Caribbean History*, 12 (1979): 55-74.

¹⁹ Linda Rutherford, "Never Again! The Rallying Call as Ancestral Spirits Energise African Holocaust Celebrations", *Guyana Chronicle*, October 19, 2003.

Barbadian Government's Commission for Pan-African Affairs²⁰. In 2009, according to one writer, "After a ceremony filled with prayers, drumming and singing, floral tributes are placed into the ocean in memory of our African brothers and sisters who perished on the slave ships."²¹ Another writer, recounting the ceremony in 2010, stated, "As part of the 17th observance of African Holocaust, there was energetic drumming accompanied by songs of resistance and spirituals as the African Cultural & Development Association (ACDA) held its annual African Maafa Day at the Kingston seawalls. For the past 19 years, October 12 has been set aside to remember the thousands of Africans who were captured as slaves but died in the Middle Passage to the New World."²² These events are usually accompanied by other cultural practices, such as dancing, story-telling, craft exhibitions, drumming, playing African games, and partaking of foods of African origin. The day is truly one of African remembrance, and guests are invited from neighboring countries such as Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, and as far afield as Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Overall, there has been a renaissance of African cultural expressions and representations in the country since independence, fostered in part by the Government during the Presidency of Forbes Burnham, but deriving most of its energy from among the ordinary people of African descent. We have looked mainly at what has been taking place in Georgetown, the capital city, and its immediate environs. However, similar events take place in other parts of the country, notably in Berbice where arguably the strongest African cultural retentions have been evident for a long time. International communications

²⁰ Ibid.; Linda Rutherford, "At Colourful African Holocaust Day Ceremony Reparation Calls for Slave Trade Atrocities Predominate", *Guyana Chronicle*, October 13, 2002.

²¹ "In Memory of African Holocaust Day 2009" <<http://74.6.238.254/search/srpcache?ei=UTF-8&p=african+holocaust+day+guyana&fr=yfp-t-993-s&u=http://cc.bingj.com/cache.aspx?q=african+holocaust+day+guyana&d=4825932774899830&mkt=en-US&setlang=en-US&w=ffd9a3f0,b701e87d&icp=1&.intl=us&sig=1BZBsPVB7LnJ2.xBcDe98A>> (Accessed 29, November 2010).

Rabindra Rooplall and Abena Rockcliffe, "Hundreds pay homage with prayers, libations and floral tributes" *Kaiteur News*, October 13, 2010 <<http://www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2010/10/13/hundreds-pay-homage-with-prayers-libations-and-floral-tributes/>> (Accessed November 29, 2010).

²² Rabindra Rooplall and Abena Rockcliffe, "Hundreds pay homage with prayers, libations and floral tributes" *Kaiteur News*, October 13, 2010 <<http://www.kaiteurnewsonline.com/2010/10/13/hundreds-pay-homage-with-prayers-libations-and-floral-tributes/>> (Accessed November 29, 2010).

(such as air travel and the Internet) have no doubt fostered a greater consciousness and a better understanding of the African contribution to New World society, of which Guyana is a part. It has also allowed various African groups to link up more firmly with other Africans of the Diaspora. Another influence in affirming (or reaffirming) African identity in the country is probably UNESCO's heightened interest in promoting a more comprehensive study of the transatlantic slave trade, slavery, and the African contribution to New World culture. Locally, the interest seems also to be propelled by a parallel East Indian cultural renaissance in a wide variety of areas, the growing economic power of the East Indians (both of which are large subjects which space would not permit us to explore here), and the perceived intention of that ethnic group to hold on to the political power that it has acquired through the present electoral process.

9. Haïti

Quelques Specificités de l'influence de l'Héritage Africain sur la Formation de l'Identité Nationale Haïtienne / Nécessité d'une Approche Ethnopsychologique Pertinente dans les Prises en Charges Scolaires et Académiques des Strates Populaires Haïtiennes

Viviane Nicolas

Je remercie le Gouvernement Brésilien et le Centre Culturel Brésilien, en la personne du Dr. Normélia Parise, pour l'action dynamique et fraternelle d'aide à Haïti. Je les remercie aussi de me fournir l'opportunité d'articuler ces perspectives en faveur de la reconstruction d'Haïti et de la promotion éducative à toutes les communautés intéressées.

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Ethnopsychiatrie, Anthropopsychiatrie, Ethnopsychologie, Anthropopsychologie, sont des locutions agencées, combinées et créées pour définir l'étude soit psychiatrique, soit psychologique, des populations en fonction de leurs groupes ethniques et culturels d'appartenance.

Ces acceptions s'opposent nettement aux notions d'Universalité du Savoir et aux généralisations des études effectuées sur une population donnée, à toutes les civilisations et cultures du monde. Dans son livre « Méthode des Sciences Sociales » (11^e Edition Dalloz, Paris, 2011, p. 203), Madeleine Grawitz cite dans cet ordre d'idées, Martine Segalen et spécifie qu'avec l'anthropologie, « La société occidentale n'apparaît plus comme l'étape ultime du développement linéaire des sociétés, mais comme une des formes possibles situées dans le spectre des cultures ».

L'Ethnopsychologie ou l'Anthropopsychologie étudie le comportement humain dans le prisme des croyances, mentalités, dans les configurations de l'institué et des valeurs établies au sein des groupes ethniques concernés. Traditions, coutumes, caractéristiques diverses des sociétés humaines font ainsi l'objet des préoccupations et des recherches de ces sciences. Si l'anthropologue se définit selon Madeleine Grawitz, comme « connaisseur de la société » qu'il peut « comprendre et faire comprendre ce qui s'y passe », (11^e Edition Falloz, Paris, 2011, p. 203) l'Anthropo ou l'Ethnopsychologue, utilise ces connaissances de la société pour une vision et une lecture plus adéquate des processus psychologiques et conduites humaines.

Nos travaux exploratoires tant en Haiti, dans différentes régions du pays, qu'à Montréal, avec des milliers d'immigrants originaires de centaines de localités d'Haiti, nous permettent d'affirmer que les strates populaires haitiennes ont, au fil du temps et de l'histoire, évolué principalement dans les bassins culturels constitués d'une africanité reconvertie dans des alliances culturelles et politiques fortes et pérennes entre nos Ancêtres Tainos – origines Arawaks, Ciboneys, Caraïbes, etc., – dits Indiens ou Amérindiens et nos Ancêtres Africains.

Leurs discours idéologiques et pratiques, leur parolisme, se sont perpétués dans le « Vodou » haitien. Cette Africanité et cette Indianité reconverties se sont soudées et recréées dans les luttes courageuses et déterminées menées par ces Ancêtres, contre l'opresseur esclavagiste européen (en l'occurrence espagnol, anglais et surtout français).

Les Tainos décimés sous la fêrule des envahisseurs, leurs descendants et autres populations dites « Indiennes » d'Haiti, se sont fondus dans la majorité noire et métissée du pays. « Le chroniqueur Mendieta rapporte que le dernier Taino d'Hispaniola meurt en 1541, ultime victime de cette immolation de masse où furent sacrifiés un million et demi d'individus » (« Art Taino – Les Grandes Antilles Précolombiennes », Paris Musées, Numéro Spécial de

Connaissances des Arts, H.S. no 50, 1994, Société Française de Promotion Artistique, 25 Rue de Ponthieu 75008 Paris).

Les élites haïtiennes, plus occidentalisées que les strates populaires, se sont, au cours des années, « à l'ombre des pouvoirs¹ occidentaux », et dans les visées assimilatrices héritées de l'ère coloniale, démarquées des valeurs nationales afro-amérindiennes sans pour autant pouvoir et vouloir s'en départir entièrement.

Les strates populaires ont par contre, sciemment et volontairement affiché et affirmé, dans leur espace propre, leur lieu de retrait, le « Vodou » d'Haïti, leur refus des valeurs individualistes et hégémoniques occidentales et la prééminence de leurs cultures d'origine.

- I -

Parler de la « Nécessité d'une Approche Ethnopsychologique Pertinente dans les Prises en Charges Scolaires et Académiques des Strates Populaires Haïtiennes », revient à parler de la nécessité d'une approche Haïtianocentrique contrairement à l'approche Eurocentrique de valeurs coloniales hégémoniques en décrépitude qui ont toujours traversé les prises en charges scolaires et académiques de l'Education Nationale en Haïti. Ces valeurs coloniales aux ferments tenaces visualisaient et visualisent encore souvent les apprentissages scolaires et l'académisme comme une démarche de civilisation des noirs et des amérindiens, considérés dans une perspective impérialiste et raciste, comme sauvages, débiles, infantiles, et par surcroît paiens aux pratiques démoniaques et sorcières. Ces valeurs préconisaient et préconisent encore le piétinement

¹ En référence à l'ouvrage de Patrick Bellegarde-Smith : « A l'Ombre des Pouvoirs – Dantès Bellegarde dans la Pensée Sociale Haïtienne » – (« In the Shadow of Powers, Dantès Bellegarde in Haitian Social Thought »): ce livre « analyse le développement intellectuel Haïtien du 19^{ième} siècle, interprété à travers le prisme du conditionnement du système international, la pensée intellectuelle Occidentale, les relations étrangères Haïtiennes et plus spécifiquement à travers la pensée et la carrière de Dantès Bellegarde, (1877 – 1966) Bellegarde fut l'une des deux figures les plus marquantes de la pensée du début du 20^{ième} siècle en Haïti, et est étudié comme le meilleur synthétiseur et continuateur de la pensée sociale du 19^{ième} siècle ».

Cet ouvrage analyse « (...) la nature de la contribution d'Haïti au développement intellectuel qui produisit la conscience du Tiers Monde au sein des dynamiques des dimensions internationales et domestiques » « (...) et dans laquelle l'émulation culturelle Occidentale semblait être la seule tendance à exploiter pour le développement national » (Humanities Press International, Inc., Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1985, Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, U.S.A.).

et l'abandon des valeurs identificatoires Afro-Amérindiennes d'Haiti au profit de standards et de normes appréhendés comme les « Lumières » et « l'Élévation » émanant d'un occident mythique désuet, illusoire..., « noblesse vieille France », érodé et ébréché dans la grisaille de surenchères fugaces d'une identité noire parfois arrogante et supérieure.

Les perspectives centrées sur l'Haitiannité que nous recommandons, devraient s'articuler dans l'analyse, le questionnement et les « rencontres » avec les luttes identificatoires et libératrices, les progrès des Amériques Afro-Amérindiennes, de l'Afrique, mais aussi dans une « rencontre » mature et saine avec les sociétés modernes et leurs réalisations progressistes.

Le Psychologue Clinicien noir américain, Robert V. Guthrie dans son article « The Psychology of African Americans : An Historical Perspective » (« Black Psychology » Edited by Reginald L. Jones, Third Edition, Cobb & Henry * Publishers, Berkeley, California, 1991, page 41) considère la Psychologie des peuples Noirs Américains « (...) comme une étude scientifique du comportement tentant de comprendre la vie telle qu'elle est vécue (...) elle ne devrait pas seulement tenter de comprendre le comportement, elle devrait s'acharner à répandre ses recherches scientifiques directement à la communauté aussitôt que possible, de façon à être mise en application ». Il devrait en être de même des champs Ethnopsychologiques haitiens. En ce sens, ils constitueraient une perspective de systèmes Haitianocentriques qui prendrait en ligne de compte l'expérience de notre peuple et divulguerait ses recherches et les résultats de leurs mises en pratiques, tant en Haiti que dans sa diaspora, les soumettant aussi à la critique avisée et à l'adaptation éventuelle, sur la base de critères appropriés, aux communautés du monde partageant certains aspects de leurs teneurs.

Il nous est impossible d'effectuer en ces quelques pages, l'analyse des rapports statistiques récents sur l'enseignement éducatif en Haiti dont les résultats, malgré quelques avancées, sont nettement déficients. Il n'en demeure pas moins que l'exclusion totale des standards, cadres idéologiques, normes, valeurs, interdynamismes et incidences, renforcements et valorisations de l'Afro-Indianité y siège flagrante, et patronne en grande partie, dans la bonne foi du leurre, l'échec scolaire et académique de la majorité de sa population, amplifiant les divisions et incompréhensions entre classes sociales.

Cette approche Ethnopsychologique nécessaire et obligatoire dans la reconstruction d'Haiti devrait avoir pour phare éclairer, conducteur et mobilisateur ce chant prégnant, vibrant, qui depuis la colonisation d'Haiti/

Hispaniola, dans la polyphonie intense et profonde des timbres, des voix et du Dire, retentit sur toute l'étendue du territoire d'Haiti, au « Centre Profond » de l'Être National et Universel, dans l'orgie tourbillonnante de Lumière Créatrice et Vitale, à la Barrière de l'Absolu et de l'Infini qui à date, reste et demeure fermée à cet appel, au plus « profond » de l'Espace rituel Vodou et de notre terre Ancestrale. Enchassé dans un Egrégore de foi, d'espérance, de certitudes, d'amour et de victoire, dans la musicalité synchronique du sitar indien et du tambour africain, ce cri qui déchire la nuit, transperce le jour, irradie l'Être, tenace et pérenne, attend, que les racines de l'Accomplissement National enfouies dans les abysses de l'oubli, la géhenne « Moitrinaire », recoivent de l'aura des pères et mères fondateurs du pays, les clefs des Ouvertures Premières et Futures:

<i>²« Anonse O Zanyo nan dlo</i>	<i>Annoncez ô Ancêtres des Eaux Sacrées,</i>
<i>Oba Kosou Miwa Lawe Lawe</i>	<i>Grand Roi Oba du Royaume des Morts, Venez à moi Loas et Esprits</i>
<i>Nan La Vil O Kan e</i>	<i>Dans L'Ifé Mythique, la Ville, l'Espace, Centre de Lumière Ancestrale, e,</i>
<i>Kriyòl Mande Chanjman »</i>	<i>Les Créoles, esclaves hier, ...piétinés du bas de l'échelle Aujourd'hui, réclament le Changement.</i>

La visée de changement qui ne s'est jamais concrétisée dans les strates populaires haïtiennes, est partie intégrante, intense et diffuse, de la pulsation vitale des communautés très africanisées d'Haiti, un ferment vivace du « Moi Collectif » National et rituel Au Nouveau Monde, la « Nation » s'est substituée à la « Tribu » et aux « Familles Lignagières » d'Afrique, mais les

² Le vodou haïtien possède des milliers de chants où survivent mots africains et amérindiens d'Haiti. Ce splendide patrimoine datant souvent de la colonisation, recensé en grande partie par Ati Max Beauvoir a été publié dans le « Grand Recueil Sacré ou Répertoire des Chansons du Vodou Haïtien ».

préoccupations de réalisation communautaire, caractéristiques de l'Alma Mater, se sont insérées dans la « Nation », le « Lakou », le « Bitasiyon », le « Démembré », le « Dentu » Familial, ... (Lakou, Bitasiyon, Demembre et Dentu sont des termes régionaux d'Haiti aux significations proches qui qualifient l'agglomération de maisons familiales /rituelles, sur une même propriété – par famille, nous entendons regroupements consanguins autour de leurs pratiques religieuses Vodou ou regroupements rituels autour de ces mêmes pratiques).

Le projet colonisateur de l'école haïtienne de former des élites hégémoniques dépourvues de leur identité propre, déportées d'elles-mêmes, méprisantes des cultures et valeurs nationales, ce projet d'exclusion et de piétinement de l'Afro-Indianité doit disparaître, qu'il vienne d'habitudes irréflechies ou de politiques sciemment concues, venant de la droite, de la gauche ou d'un quelconque horizon.

L'école haïtienne nous assène son discours idéologique de démocratisation de l'enseignement, d'accessibilité des chances pour tous. Des écoles sont créées de plus en plus dans régions rurales ou urbaines, mais les visions du monde des strates populaires y sont occultées, diabolisées. Les apprenants scolaires et universitaires ne s'y retrouvent pas et n'y survivent en général pas longtemps. L'assimilation culturelle et l'homogénéisation aphone sont les normes de l'éducation nationale en Haïti.

La Notion de Centre, la Notion de Personne

La praxis des civilisations dites « Vodouisantes » d'Haiti, entrevoit comme en Afrique, comme chez les Amérindiens, tous les aspects de l'institué sociétal, tous les éléments constitutifs du cosmos, l'Intelligence Universelle, la personne humaine, l'Esprit, à travers le prisme physique, hautement spirituel et sacré, d'un ordre basique de l'univers matériel et spirituel... instance « Centre » d'énergie ondulatoire, Lumière motrice en gravitation vibratoire et circonvolutionnelle, Particules incandescentes, Force Vitale, condensée à des degrés, des ordres chromatiques et des niveaux accoustiques divers, dans la création Universelle.

La Notion de Centre s'opérationnalise dès les origines du monde dans une irradiation rayonnante qui concilie ainsi les polarités initiales duelles et antagoniques en un troisième terme qui est Effectuation, Harmonie, Vie, Divinité.

Cette énergie, Principe Créateur, investie et mue par l'Essence Divine Suprême, le « Grand Maître », régit, rythme, agence et harmonise la sphère universelle, dans le rapport synthétique de l'homme et de la nature.

Substrat métaphysique, l'Energie Centre nantit le sémantique, participe du signifié et du signifiant, onde créative, elle vitalise, grâce à son investissement abyssal et total de l'Image Symbolique, la faconde du dire, du non-dit et du ressenti.

Les concepteurs des civilisations en cause visualisent, pour leurs sociétés, au Centre de l'ontologie Universelle, l'humain, Etre Corporel (« kadav ko »), et Etre Profond, dans ses diversités spirituelles composites.

Selon le Chef Suprême du Vodou, Ati Max Beauvoir, ces corps spirituels, sont des forces, énergies, particules, au nombre de sept (7) :

« Le Gwo Bon Anj » ou particule divine qui maintient la vie.

« Le Ti Bon Anj », immortel et indestructible qui constitue l'intellect.

« Le Nanm » ou « siège des génétiques »

« Le Zetwal » situé en dehors du corps, dans une étoile.

« Le Lwa Mèt Tèt » ou Esprit Principal assigné à une personne, l'un des 401 esprits qui « soutiennent » l'univers et « vibre à des fréquences qui sont caractéristiques de la personne ».

« Les Lwa Rasin » du lignage présents dans l'inconscient, les liens avec les ancêtres.

« Le Wonsyon », plusieurs esprits qui ajoutent leurs propres fréquences à la fréquence du Lwa Mèt Tèt.

Reginald O. Crosley, Physicien, Médecin et Poète, dans une étude sur la tribu du Dagara au Burkina Faso et sur des Vodouisants d'Haiti (« Haitian Vodou – Spirit, Myth, & Reality », Edited by Patrick Bellegarde-Smith and Claudine Michel, Indiana University Press, Bloomington/Indianapolis, 2006, Published under the auspices of KOSANBA, a Scholarly Association for the Study of Haitian Vodou and the Center for Black Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara) constate que la notion de personne en Occident, est « oversimplifiée » par rapport aux récentes découvertes de la physique moderne:

« Les enseignements Occidentaux identifient un corps et un esprit dans la constitution d'une personne, mais non comme entités séparées capables d'exister indépendamment l'une de l'autre ».

S'agissant des ontologies des Afro-Haitiens et du peuple de la tribu Dagara, le Dr. Crosley précise que « Dès le début, ces peuples ont reconnu la structure complexe de l'individu. Ils ont maintenu que chaque composante physique et spirituelle peut mener une existence indépendante.

La Notion de Centre et la Notion de Personne dans le Vodou n'établissent aucune dichotomie manichéenne entre l'Esprit et la Matière, comme en Occident, mais prônent plutôt l'équation de l'Energie et de la Matière.

L'Être Profond, la Personne/Personnalité, participent de la Lumière Universelle et s'insèrent de façon synchronique, dans le Grand Tout de la Création, dans la Globalité cosmogonique. L'opposition fondamentale en Occident, de l'objet et du sujet, de l'esprit et de la matière, n'existe pas dans les civilisations Vodoues où la culture instaure plutôt des rapports communautaires, sociaux, symphoniques.

La Notion de Centre implique l'unicité de la création et requiert de la communauté, du groupe, de la personne, l'harmonisation subtile, l'interpénétration avec les énergies de leurs affinités, plantes, couleurs, « Lwas » etc., la tradition conçoit ainsi l'ego, le moi, l'Être, dans une perspective collective, universelle, globale, où l'individualité n'existe pas.

L'individualisme est une dérive dangereuse et coupable de cette unicité. Dans son livre « Psychiatrie Dynamique Africaine », (Payot, Paris, 1977, p. 28, 29), le Dr. I. Sow précise « (...) que les processus d'identification intervenant dans la genèse et dans le développement de la personnalité se font, en Afrique, plus essentiellement dans la Synchronie (...) » « La notion de destin strictement individuel, au sens occidental, fait problème et on s'en rend compte au premier entretien clinique. Dans ces conditions, l'approche du type psychanalytique pur est pratiquement impensable. (...) On constate bien plus souvent que les Africains, en milieu traditionnel, cherchent, le plus possible, à se rapprocher plutôt des normes culturelles. Par ailleurs, il est aisé de faire l'expérience qu'ils considèrent comme peu valorisant, sinon indécent, de se « raconter » à la manière des patients occidentaux » (p. 73). Il en est de même des populations haitiennes faisant l'objet de la présente, patients souvent pénalisés par psychologues, travailleurs sociaux québécois face à l'absence d'insight de leurs clients, les modes d'objectivation étant différents et spécifiques, dans les cadres d'une Relation d'Objet Extérieure.

L'objectif ultime de l'« Accomplissement », du Cheminement de vie, est la Communication graduelle, l'identification progressive aux Energies Lumières (conscientes ou pas) en concordance avec les caractéristiques propres de la

personne ou du groupe concerné; la voie initiatique est ainsi privilégiée où pratiques et enseignements savants, mènent aux états, niveaux et degrés les plus élevés en vue de l' « Accomplissement » de la personne, du groupe communal et national.

Quelques Elements de la Cognition, du Savoir et de l'Experience du Vodouisant

Les visions du monde et notions premières fondamentales qui sous-tendent les hauts savoirs des Vodouisants, confèrent à ces réalités, leur congruence et connotations culturelles et devront être intégrées au cursus scolaire et académique d'Haiti. Les apprentissages imposés aux élèves et étudiants partent de champs sémantiques inconnus et nouveaux et déportent les apprenants Vodouisants et leurs collatéraux, de l'expérience transgénérationnelle commune.

Des enfants de cinq (5), sept (7) ans possèdent souvent déjà dans ces communautés, surtout en milieux paysans, de solides connaissances ainsi qu'une expérience appréciable, dynamique et opérationnelle de lois physiques et chimiques, de consensus culturels, artistiques, épistémologiques, philosophiques, psychologiques, de définitions et d'assignations sociologiques et politiques du vécu.

Ces élèves doivent cependant attendre les classes terminales du secondaire, quand d'occasion « ils finissent par y parvenir », pour appréhender ces matières élaguées des perspectives et valeurs dénominatives que leur attribuent la culture « Vodoue ». Le prisme perspectif de ces savoirs, qu'ils réfèrent à des instances physiques, chimiques ou autres, étant très différent de celui de l'école et de l'université, les étudiants évoluent alors dans deux ordres notionnels s'articulant parallèlement et couvrant des lieux et espaces de même nature, sans jamais en établir les liens et points de convergences, de divergences, les similitudes et les spécificités sémantiques.

La Praxis Vodoue

La praxis des populations dites « Vodouisantes » d'Haiti, pérennise comme en Afrique, et chez les Amérindiens, l'unicité principielle du « Verbe », du Souffle Créateur qui fertilise la semence imaginaire et psychique, l'émergence et la prévalence ainsi que la restitution de systèmes de pensées, de

concentrations, de visualisations, soudés, dans leurs représentations culturelles, à la tautologie ontologique.

Le Dr. I Sow affirme dans son Livre « Psychiatrie Dynamique Africaine » (p. 33, 34) qu'en Afrique, « (...) toute vérité est d'emblée synthétique et non pas analytique. En effet, toute réalité – ou tout phénomène – est d'emblée, totale, une et pleine, dans la mesure où elle n'est pas réductible uniquement à l'un de ses éléments considéré comme le plus « originaire »: imaginaire, ou réel symbolique.

Plus fondamentalement, cela veut dire, selon la pensée africaine, au niveau épistémologique le plus général, que la vérité ne s'établit jamais grâce à la « simplicité de ses constituants, à la manière de la méthode cartésienne. Selon la rationalité africaine, la structure de base – des choses, de la connaissance, des êtres etc., – est toujours et d'emblée complexe, synthétique, globale »

Le « Verbe » est, dans la Kabbale « Vodoue », nous le répétons, Souffle Créateur, plénitude universelle et Esprit. Il est pensée, dire, manifestation de la Force Vitale qui vient de Dieu. Il est aussi Volition chez les Yorubas traditionnels; l'un de ses aspects est « ase » (« Aoshé » en Haïti) ou « pouvoir de provoquer des choses » (« Flash of the Spirits » de Robert Farris Thompson – 1984: 5) ou encore « la force de Caractère Intérieur », le caractère étant « une force infusant la beauté physique » (Thompson, 1984: 9, II).

« Aoshé » nomme quand il est appellation, il habite, consacre, confère l'existence et attribue la caractéristique profonde et sacrée ainsi que la destinée et la réalité de l'Être.

Le signe et toute l'activité graphique, le point, le trait, la courbe, le cercle, l'angle, le triangle, etc., sont aussi ce dire symbolique, philosophique et physique, toujours constitutifs du Centre d'Energie Lumière en vibration sphérique, avec des connotations spécifiques attribuées à leurs formes et représentations diverses. L'effectuation avec « ase » ou (« aoshé » en Haïti) est immédiate, dès la production graphique en cause et suscite des états de personnalité identificatoires aux valeurs symboliques tracées impliquant selon le cas, plénitude parfois plénitude extatique en des voies synthétiques, élevées, abstraites et subtiles.

Il est alors facile d'imaginer la desséchante déconvenue et les troubles mentaux graves occasionnés chez de nombreux vodouisants où leurs

collatéraux culturels catholiques et surtout protestants, (notamment le « Brain-Fag Syndrome » dont nous parlerons plus loin) habitués dès leur petite enfance à la pratique extrêmement fréquente de modes et styles cognitifs particulièrement subtils, empreints d'artisticité et de « aoshé » desséchante déconvenue et troubles mentaux graves, nous disons, lors des séances de lecture et d'écriture à l'école où l'activité graphique est un exercice de construits linéaires ne comportant que de plates connotations lexicales, orthographiques, grammaticales, numériques ou géométriques.

Dans le « Vodou », l'image géométrique, les nombres et autres signes graphiques sont souvent considérés comme la réfraction synthétique prototypique et allégorique de corps célestes dans leurs rapports spirituels ontologiques et dans l'ordre des lois de la création. Ces mêmes images revêtent aussi et de façon coutumière, des valeurs philosophiques interrelationnelles et sociétales empreintes de mysticisme, tous ces éléments physiques, symboliques ou conceptuels, induisant des modes de vie hautement portés vers l'Esprit (en unicité certes avec la matière qui comme l'Esprit, est considérée comme constituée de particules énergétiques Lumière en vibration sphérique et en des états de condensation bien spécifiques) et des états de personnalités diffus, liés à l'indicible et d'une variété très étendue.

Pour les Vodouisants, l'image graphique peut aussi être un idéogramme, un cosmogramme bi-dimensionnel d'un concept dit « chargé », « chajé », vivant, (« vitalisé » comme disent certains mystiques du monde, face à des pentacles symboliques) visualisé tri-dimensionnellement et spatialement dans le mouvement vibratoire sphérique du « Centre » Universel qui est Unicité, Accomplissement, Amour, Plénitude, « Caractère ».

Personne Personnalité et Poteau Mitan

La Personne/Personnalité pour le Vodouisant est aussi une métaphorisation vibrante du Centre Axial du Monde. Symbolisé souvent (comme dans de nombreuses mythologies anciennes du monde), par l'Arbre qui assure la jonction Universelle du tréfonds des abysses de la Matérialité au faite de la Spiritualité la plus abstraite, des plans célestes les plus élevés.

La neutralisation du chaos, installée par la chute dans la sphère matérielle, est une préoccupation incessante du Vodouisant, Mourir à l'antériorité négative, mort symbolique et reviviscence, étaient ainsi dans une diversité inouïe, la trajectoire et le vécu du Vodouisant.

Le « Poteau Mitan », « Centre » Axial des Temples Vodous et de la Cosmogonie, est implicite à toute visualisation de l'espace. Comme le Poteau Mitan », la personne dans son anatomie, son psychisme, son monde symbolique et imaginaire est aussi le canal de circulation des Esprits et de la Force Vitale à des plans et niveaux variés, selon les degrés d'évolution et/ou d'initiation mystique.

La personne/personnalité sont ainsi et aussi le devenir et l'anticipation de cet Être Emblématique, Modèle d'Elévation, de sagesse et de Spiritualité qui travaille à l'Accomplissement National comme le préfigure le « Palmiste de la Liberté » situé au « Centre » axial du Drapeau National haïtien, fondé par les Ancêtres d'Haïti, après la victoire de la guerre de l'Indépendance.

Voir le dessin représentant un houmfor ou temple du Vodou. Un « Poteau Mitan y est représenté avec les sept (7) nœuds ou points de force Lumière équivalents aux chakras asiatiques.

- II -

Nous sommes heureux de vous présenter ici Couqui, ou Jeanne Eugène. Elle vivait jusqu'au début des années 1980, dans un « batey » de la République Dominicaine où les haïtiens subissaient un vécu voisin de l'esclavage.

A la mort de sa mère, Couqui rejoignit sa grand-mère en Haïti. Elle rencontra alors un couple de français sympathiques, Geneviève et Phillip Bécoulet. Le courant passa entre eux et Couqui fut intégrée dans cette nouvelle famille, comblée d'amour, laissant, sur les brisées de ses nouveaux parents français, libre cours à sa créativité et à son artisticté.

Sa nouvelle maman, Geneviève tenta de l'inscrire à l'école, agée de douze (12) ans, n'ayant jamais fréquenté d'institution scolaire, la meilleure solution adoptée par ses nouveaux parents, fut de la garder à la maison, et Geneviève se constitua son professeur.

Malgré sa grande intelligence, Couqui présentait de sérieux problèmes d'apprentissage.

Nous étions nous-même, souvent confrontée à Montréal au même syndrome que des étudiants et élèves d'origine haïtienne, des bassins culturels les plus proches des civilisations « noires » d'Haïti éprouvaient:

Les activités de lecture et d'écriture dans la plupart des écoles québécoises donnaient souvent lieu à un véritable supplice pour ces jeunes: amnésies

partielles ou totales, fortes migraines, sensations d'avoir des insectes ou autres rampants dans la tête, sensations de brûlures dans la tête, larmoiement excessif, difficultés de vision, douleurs des yeux, difficulté de rétention de l'information, inhabileté à capter le sens des symboles écrits et souvent des mots parlés, inhabileté à lire, difficultés de concentration, somnolence et fatigue importantes, ensommeillement ou franchement sommeil, difficulté à épeler, positionnement de certaines lettres, proche des b, m, n, p, etc., des dyslexiques (cet ensemble de symptômes, ne se présentant pas toujours en même temps, chez les sujets atteints, est le « Brain Fog Syndrome », un trouble TRANSCULTUREL – passage des cultures traditionnelles afro à l'école, dans ses champs occidentalisés, provoqué par l'inadéquation des approches scolaires – recensé souvent en Afrique dans des proportions autour de 60% dans les communautés traditionnelles. En Haïti, pareil constat. La psychiatrisation pouvant s'ensuivre, spécialistes de la santé mentale en Afrique, recommandent aux apprenants de quitter l'école. Les hounngans et mambos haïtiens prescrivent les mêmes solutions sachant l'incompatibilité de l'école avec les cultures traditionnelles noires).

Avec M. Paul Déjean, du Bureau de la Communauté Chrétienne des Haïtiens de Montréal, je fus la principale conceptrice d'un projet d'école de transition pour jeunes haïtiens dans les deux plus importantes commissions scolaires de Montréal (la Protestante et la Catholique); je dirigeai aussi l'encadrement de ces projets dans leur application, dans des conditions épouvantables venant surtout d'un personnel haïtien d'origine qui n'avait jamais osé y prendre le contrepied officiel de l'inadéquation des approches scolaires québécoises face à l'échantillon de population haïtien en cause et qui, en transfert de classe et de valeurs (celles de l'université occidentale), n'avait jamais osé afficher, face à l'administration québécoise, un quelconque lien avec le Vodou haïtien ou l'Afro-Indianité d'Haïti, encore moins affinités et allégeances.

L'approche psycho-pédagogique recommandée dans ce projet d'école était une valorisation de l'identité noire, du Vodou, dans ses champs positifs, comme dans les cérémonies Vodoues, la pratique intense de l'artisticité et la libération de la parole. À l'instar des civilisations africaines et amérindiennes des origines, les savoirs élevés et l'art étant des conditions essentielles de l'accomplissement, les meilleures compétences d'origine haïtienne étaient prêtes à assurer des sessions éducatives et d'information aux jeunes, souvent bénévolement (ce que ne purent malheureusement pas assumer les enseignants

de l'école, il en fut de même pour le matériel didactique spécial pour ce projet qui devait être élaboré en « étroite collaboration » avec le BCCHM, où les spécificités de la problématique et de l'approche seraient prises en considération, transmises et enseignées aux intervenants et inscrites et enregistrées dans ces documents pour leur utilisation etc., au service de toutes les communautés concernées. Les savoirs devaient être dispensés à travers le truchement de l'art, ce que les enseignants évacuèrent aussi.

La plupart des approches psychopédagogiques fondamentales du vodou, rarement considérées de la scientificité, que j'avais étudiées pendant plus de vingt ans, dans mon observation intensive et globales des rituelles, formes d'articulations diverses, valeurs symboliques, types de phraséologies, spécificités des types de discursivité et d'abstraction, des modes et styles cognitifs, modes de gestion de l'image allégorique, etc., jonctions critiques et comparatives entre standards occidentaux et afro-amérindiens d'Haiti, dans leurs spécificités et particularités propres, ne purent ainsi être intégrés au processus.

Si ce projet d'école a pu sauver des centaines d'apprenants du spectre des classes spéciales à Montréal, les résistances au changement et autres limitations ne permirent pas aux enseignants concernés d'apprendre – comme cela se devait, les principales approches indiquées, (en témoignent les rapports qu'ils brandirent forts de leurs demi-victoires). Le Brain Fag Syndrome n'y fut donc pas éradiqué. Ce projet me permit même de suivre de façon détaillée, dans les deux écoles en cause, le spectacle de la genèse de ce syndrome, chez des jeunes arrivés « sains dans les écoles », genèse s'actualisant malgré les efforts de M. Déjean et les miens, pour éviter de telles incidences et porter les commissions scolaires à introduire les compétences que nous recommandions à cet effet. Ce projet, à la Commission des Écoles Catholiques fut évalué comme l'une des meilleures écoles de Montréal – les enseignants y placèrent le maximum de leurs compétences et de leur dévouement, mais les aspects du refus des apprentissages nouveaux requis pour la réussite totale du projet restent et demeurent une ombre malheureuse pour des milliers d'apprenants noirs de Montréal, d'Haiti et du monde, toujours victimes du Brain Fag Syndrome.

(Le Brain Fag Syndrome étudié surtout en Afrique noire, ref., « Transcultural Aspects of Affective Disorders in Adolescents; The Brain Fag Syndrome in African Students » de Raymond Prince, ancien Chef de Psychiatrie Sociale et Transculturelle de l'Université Mc Gill de Montréal).

Geneviève Bécoulet, non seulement instruite, mais aussi cultivée, artiste au plus profond de l'Être, tout comme Philip Bécoulet, réussit par contre son pari avec Couqui.

Lors d'un de mes passages en Haiti, une amie commune nous mit en contact. Exprimant mon chagrin face à la situation de Montréal, Couqui m'entendit la relater et me dit: « Montres leur mes dessins, ils comprendront que nos cultures ne sont pas pareilles » (elle avait alors treize -13- ans).

Geneviève et Couqui rassemblèrent les croquis et Philip s'empessa d'aller en faire des photocopies qu'il me remit immédiatement.

Merci à vous trois pour Haiti, merci aussi à Odile Latortue, artiste et patriote haïtienne qui insista pour nous mettre en rapport.

Je tiens encore à préciser que les mêmes jeunes qui présentaient le Brain-Fag Syndrome à Montréal, dans leurs écoles, vivaient des situations d'apprentissage scolaires normales au BCCHM, même quand les sessions de cours duraient une journée et consistaient en des rencontres étendues sur plusieurs mois. Le « Brain Fag Syndrome est un trouble situationnel qui s'actualise et se développe face à des approches psycho-pédagogiques inadéquates de l'école, nous le répétons.

Les dessins de Couqui parlent d'eux-mêmes et illustrent les standards des civilisations afro-amérindiennes d'Haiti dont j'ai tenté de broser quelques traits en la présente. Les constantes sont les mêmes avec l'importante collection de peinture afro-amérindienne d'Haiti (fin XIXe siècle et XXe siècle) du Musée d'Art de Milwaukee. Les constantes sont encore les mêmes avec les nombreuses autres populations des mêmes bassins culturels que j'ai rencontré pendant plus de trente ans.

Vive la Différence !!!

Sachant la grandeur et le raffinement de sa culture populaire, informée de la difficulté de compréhension et d'évaluation de sa différence culturelle à Montréal, Couqui (Jeanne Eugène), haïtienne, te destines expressément ses croquis qu'elle réalisa en 1987 à l'âge de 12 ans....

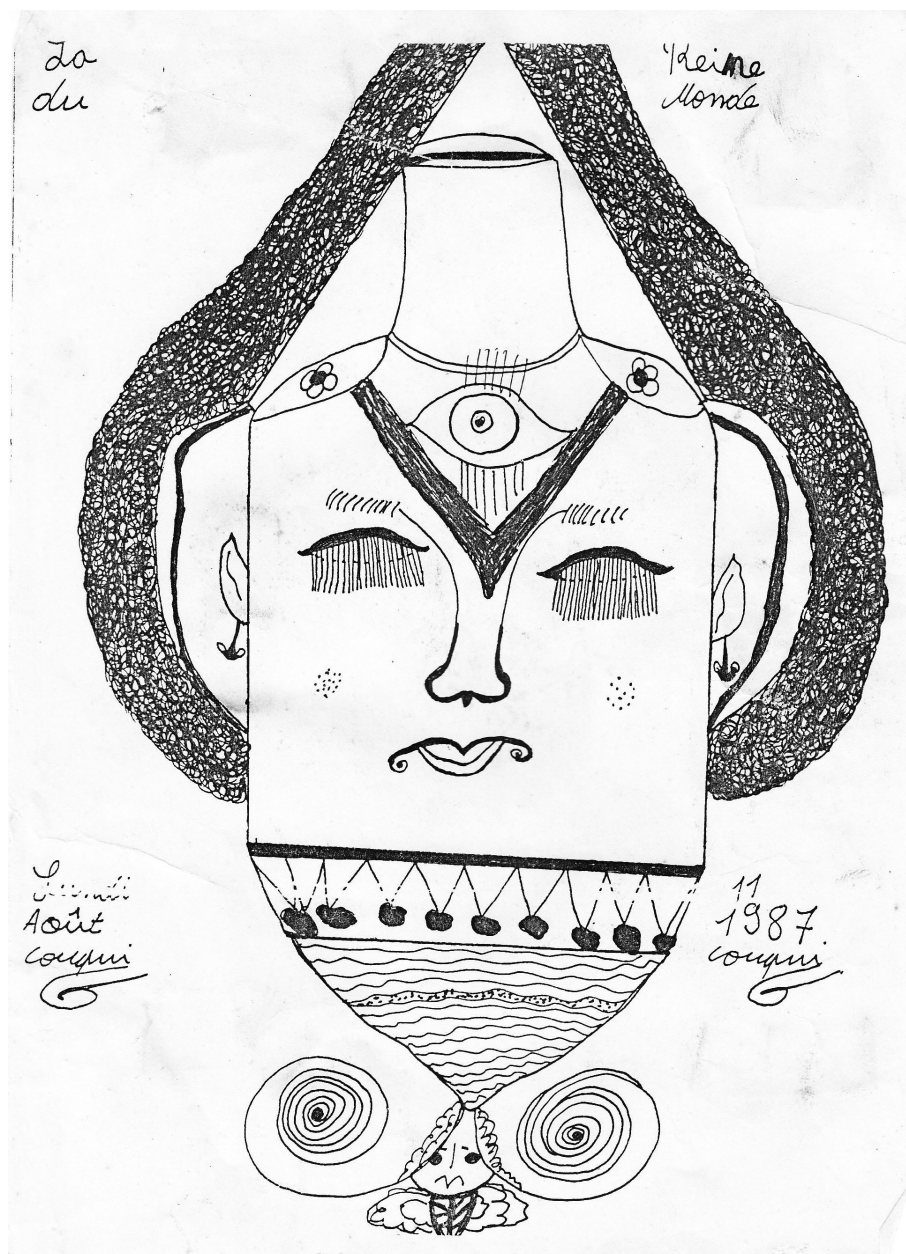
Elle aimerait que tu apprennes à la comprendre, que tu apprennes à l'évaluer dans ses spécificités anthropologiques ¹.

Ces images sont l'expression profonde du "MOI COLLECTIF" et de l'imaginaire socio-culturel dans les communautés les plus afro-haïtiannisées d'Haïti.

¹ (sociologiques, philosophiques, culturelles, PSYCHOLOGIQUES, historiques... religieuses

QUELQUES SPECIFICITÉS DE L'INFLUENCE DE L'HÉRITAGE AFRICAIN





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10. Jamaica

Enslaved Africans and the Transformation of Society in Brazil and the Caribbean: A View from the Churches

D.A. Dunkley

In 1886, two years before the abolition of slavery in Brazil, the evangelical newspaper, *Imprensa Evangélica*, published a series of six articles written by Eduardo Carlos Pereira. He was a Presbyterian pastor who had been ordained to preach in Brazil in 1881. Pereira himself became an abolitionist campaigner and while he was editor of *Imprensa* during its initial years in São Paulo, he paid close attention to the publishing of articles exposing the damages caused by the slave system. Pereira used his continued close association with the newspaper after leaving the editorship as an avenue for his own abolitionist views. The articles which he wrote himself were eventually collated by the newspapers and republished under this provocative title: “The Christian Religion and its Relation to Slavery”.¹ Not since then had Brazilians seriously contemplated the contradictions between their enunciation of Christian beliefs and the realities of the slave system. Thanks to this evangelical pastor, those issues and the others which were most important for the future of African-Brazilians were given attention during the decade and a quarter before the end of the nineteenth century. Along with Spanish colonies such as Cuba,

¹ The version of Eduardo Carlos Pereira’s “The Christian Religion and its Relation to Slavery” that I am using was reproduced in the Appendix of this book: José Carlos Barbosa, *Slavery and Protestant Missions in Imperial Brazil*, trans. Fraser G. MacHaffie and Richard K. Danford (Lanham: University Press of America, 2008), 139-56. The page numbers for all references to the compiled version of Pereira’s article in this book will henceforth appear in brackets in this text.

Portuguese Brazil became one of the last countries to abolish slavery. The longevity of the system in that country has been suggested as one of the principal causes of its race problems in the twentieth century, leading to overly simplistic propositions that race mixing is perhaps the only way for Brazil to fully overcome the problems created by its past in slavery.²

Pereira, writing in the late nineteenth century, was similarly concerned about Brazil's future condition. But this concern had come as a significant break with tradition as well. Since the start of the evangelical presence in the country, their impact on slavery had been rather passive. They operated in the same way that Protestant missionaries, such as the Moravians, had been operating in the Caribbean since the 1730s, where they tolerated slavery and even became the owners of slaves themselves.³ We saw a similar development taking place in the Anglican Church in the Caribbean, where scores of clergymen were allowed to own slaves.⁴ But like the missionaries and established clerics in the British West Indies, the evangelicals in Brazil in due course broke away from their toleration of slavery to become one of the most virulent critics of the institution. These criticisms have left insights into some of the important contributions made by the enslaved Africans to society in Brazil and the Atlantic World more generally. The missionary presence in Brazil reached its highest point during the imperial age, when the Portuguese Court had taken up residence in the colony. Starting from that point, the idea that slavery was connected with social progress had slowly gained a foothold on the public imagination and in the discussions of the institution. African slaves were seen as vital to the regeneration of society towards freedom. In fact, this notion had been around since the time of Ancient Greece and Rome, as Orlando Patterson has eloquently shown in his work, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*.⁵ Freedom became

² See the work of Gilberto Freyre, but especially *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. Samuel Putman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956).

³ Joseph E. Hutton, *A History of the Moravian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), 128.

⁴ The Society for the Propagation of the Gospels in Foreign Parts, for instance, owned slaves in Barbados, which they inherited from the will of Christopher Codrington, a former governor of the Leeward Islands, in 1710. See Shirley C. Gordon, *A Century of West Indian Education* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1963), 11.

⁵ Orlando Patterson, *Freedom, Vol. 1: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991). See especially parts 2 and 3.

a fundamental pursuit in the West precisely and partly because of the legacy of its negation by enslavement, and Pereira's contribution to this discussion was to show the various ways in which freedom was materialising in the context of Brazilian slavery.

His arguments, of course, lodged the evangelical church in the centre of the debate about abolishing slavery. Pereira argued, for instance, that slavery had no Biblical basis. The so-called curse of Canaan used to justify the institution was a corruption of the intentions of the Biblical story. And Pereira thus dismissed those who had used that story to profit from enslavement, stating that the greater sin was in fact that enslavement "arouse[s] in mankind the instincts of a beast, obliterating the most basic human feelings". Those who adhered to the curse of Canaan were really just the perpetrators of injustice, hence "woe to those by whose hand Noah's terrible prediction has been and continues to be carried out!" (140) The idea that slavery affected not only the slaves but also their masters was new at the time, but it has become one of the accepted truths about the effect of the system. Rex Nettleford, speaking in the twentieth century about the slave system in the British Caribbean, stated bluntly that its function was similar to that of a jail in which "both the jailor and the jailed are, after all, in jail."⁶ This paradox is a cryptic reminder that evil can adversely affect both its perpetrators and victims. Therefore, to save each of them from further moral and cultural deprivation, Pereira joined the call for the abolition of the source of the contradiction: slavery. The church's lead in abolition was therefore indisputable. It was one of the institutions which should undertake the emancipation project. But, as Pereira pointed out, it should not act on its own, since its effort would be easier to resist and overcome if its actions were perceived as attacks by an isolated body. To show that it spoke for the country as a whole, the press needed to support the church and Pereira made this point in his first article. He stressed that "the press", as part of the counteraction of slavery, must "declare frankly to slave owners how offensive slavery is to the laws of God and humanity". It should join the church whose return to its own pious underpinning should demonstrate that it was "the voice of Jehovah" and as such "the voice of justice". Because mankind was created in God's image and likeness, it was the duty of both church and press to remind slaveholders

⁶ See Rex Nettleford, "Emancipation: The Lessons and the Legacy," *Caribbean Affairs* vol. 5, no. 4 (1992): 35-41.

that they should reflect God's "infinite justice and compassion" in all of their dealings with their fellow humans. (141)

Pereira had clearly learned from the example of England's abolitionists, who had made use of the press in their counteractions of the slave-owning people. Through newspapers and magazines such as the famous *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, English abolitionists reported some of the most gruesome stories of injustices against the slaves. These would have remained buried if it were not for this effort, stories which included the accusation by the enslaved woman, Kitty Hilton, that her master, an Anglican clergyman at that, Rev. George Wilson Bridges, had given orders for her to be brutally beaten and then confined in a cell without medical attention. With the scars still fresh on her back, Hilton escaped confinement and walked for almost an entire night to the nearest magistrate in the parish of St. Ann, Jamaica, in 1828 to complain about her master, the reverend. Bridges was reprimanded and publicly disgraced by his removal from the commission of the peace in the parish. He was, however, allowed to retain his office as a clergyman.⁷ These kinds of revelations, though they achieved small victories, did a great deal of damage to slaveholders, helping to transform them into "pariahs" of the British Empire from their previously exalted position as "ornaments of empire" in the eighteenth century.⁸ Pereira's own efforts in Brazil showed the deep root which slavery had in that society, a basis that was misconstrued as having Biblical justifications, such as the claim that Moses, the deliverer of the Jewish slaves, had allowed men to divorce their wives and through this contradictory decision, which returned the former wives to lonesomeness and its suffering, he had legitimised their captivity. Pereira's response was that "God did not institute divorce for any cause whatsoever; He tolerated it, preparing the people for the reestablishment of original purity and justice. Thus, for slavery of any degree, God did not create the black in order to cultivate the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve; they cultivated it with their own hands." This extrapolation from Genesis 2: 6,

⁷ See "The Rev. G.W. Bridges and his Slave Kitty Hilton," *Anti-Slavery Reporter* vol. 3, nos. 16 and 18 (1 September 1830): 374-82; and House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 1830-31 (231), Jamaica. Copy of Information which may have been received from Jamaica, respecting and Inquiry into the Treatment of a Female Slave, by the Reverend Mr. Bridges, Rector of St. Ann's in that Island, 12 May 1830, 13.

⁸ Trevor Burnard, "Powerless Masters: The Curious Debate of Jamaican Sugar Planters in the Foundational Period of British Abolitionism", Paper Presented at the Elsa Goveia Memorial Lecturer, Department of History and Archaeology, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, March 2010, 1.

7, 18, established that slavery was not God's creation but humankind's, who had fallen from God's grace because of "Pride, cupidity and indolence", the "deep root to slavery in the customs of all peoples". (142)

But surely slavery had other origins and this was where the experiences of the slaves themselves proved to be most useful in attacking the validity of the institution. Pereira called attention to the point that the source of slaves was kidnapping, which, as Moses himself had stated, was "a crime" and "Whoever kidnaps a man and sells him...is guilty...and must be executed." This was harsh punishment and Pereira considered it unwise to add any further immorality to the "legalised" and "infamous robbery and hideous traffic in Africans" by convicting and executing the slaveholders. No doubt he felt that they deserved some kind of punishment, but he was more interested in pursuing freedom for the slaves. His recommendation was to adopt Exodus 21: 2 and Deuteronomy 15: 13, both of which directed slave owners to free their slaves after "six years" of bondage and "not" to send the slave "away empty handed." (143) Their bondage for much more than six years was accompanied by beatings and mistreatment, which made immediate freedom and compensation more necessary. The cruelty of the Brazilian slaveholders was matched only by those in the British West Indies. Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, for example, was one of the most sadistic masters who, during the period 1750-1786, had regularly raped enslaved women and killed both enslaved women and men to punish them for resistance such as running away.⁹ But these decisions made by the slaves only further proved their eagerness to obtain the freedom denied to them by persistent enslavement. Pereira's suggestion, which he again adopted from Exodus, this time using chapter 23, verse 15, was that slaves who resorted to running away and succeeded in doing so should be automatically granted their freedom.

Historians continue to be puzzled by the fact that numerically fewer whites could maintain the enslavement of thousands upon thousands of black slaves. One of the answers offered was the use of terror by masters which appeared in most slaveholding societies in the Americas, including Brazil and certainly the British Caribbean. Its effect was always in question, however, since slave rebellions were a frequently feature of slavery. But following these outbreaks

⁹ Presently, the most comprehensive work on Thomas Thistlewood is Trevor Burnard's *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and his Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004). See page 150 for Thistlewood's punishment of a runaway slave.

the slave owners resorted to harsher punishments and more brutal measures to suppress the slaves and prevent future rebellions.¹⁰ The result desired was always only temporary, since slave revolts continued to occur until the institution was fully abolished. Richard Sheridan records that these revolts were “nearly endemic in seventeenth – and eighteenth – century Jamaica”. The country had a rebellion almost every “five years” and usually these involved up to “400 slave participants.”¹¹ Pereira seemed to have realised that terrorising slaves only made them worse enemies of the slaveholders and the society was adversely affected. The slaveholders became more morally degraded as they resorted to more gruesome tactics hoping to keep the slaves passive. This fostered greater animosity and resentment between blacks and whites, signalling that as long as slavery continued the society would sink deeper into disrepair. Only immediate abolition could save it, and this was shown by the slaves themselves, who used various forms of resistance (including becoming maroons) to invite slave owners to participate in the building of a future for Brazil that was based on equality and justice for everyone.

Pereira’s use of the principle of equity provided an interesting turn in his discussion of slavery. He recorded that equity demanded, as stated in Matthew 7: 12, that people should “In everything do to others as they would have them do to you.” (145) In short, if slave owners saw slavery a suitable for blacks, they should also see the institution as suitable for whites. They should be prepared to become white slaves who would perform the same uncompensated work which as masters they had extracted from black slaves. Pereira seemed to have forgotten that a form of enslavement had existed for whites known as indentured servitude.¹² Of course, this was short-lived and was by no means as terrible of the later enslavement of blacks. For one, white indentured labourers were bonded by contracts which they had the choice to renew after serving for periods of five to seven years. Nonetheless, the experience of this system had given slave owners some of the knowledge that they applied to black slavery, which they invented after. White servitude played a role in the development of black slavery, which linked the two systems in a curious relationship of which it can be argued

¹⁰ Ibid., 149.

¹¹ Richard B. Sheridan, “The Jamaican Slave Insurrection Scare of 1776 and the American Revolution”, *The Journal of Negro History* vol. 61, no. 3. (July 1976): 291.

¹² See Hilary Beckles, *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

that one had caused the other. Perhaps in this sense Pereira's point was historically valid, since his appeal for white enslavement if black slavery was permitted signalled that the former system had also assisted in the construction of the latter one. In other words, because of the failure of white servitude, black enslavement was invented as its replacement, and the models of brutal suppression started during white servitude were applied with greater force to the system of enslaving blacks.

Pereira then turned his attention to gradual freedom, an idea which was adopted in British Caribbean colonies during the last decade of the eighteenth century. Pereira proposed practically the same policy that appeared in the Caribbean, where masters with encouragement from the Colonial Office had decided to make improvements to the condition of the slaves. The problem was that masters did not see Amelioration in the same light as the abolitionists who had been proposing the policy had seen it. The latter viewed Amelioration as a preparation for freedom, and important voices such as Beilby Porteus bishop of London and head of the Anglican Church in the Caribbean. Along with Porteus Amelioration was proposed by clergymen who had worked in the colonies, such as James Ramsay, who was a cleric and surgeon mainly in St. Kitts during the period 1762-1788. Important to Pereira's view of Amelioration, however, was the use of the gospels which stated in Colossians 3: 22 and 4: 1 that 'Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything ... Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.' (147) Pereira had seen where masters made use of this passage to implement improvements to slavery but not with the objective of ending the institution, but rather to strengthen it and prolong its existence. However, assessing this interpretation, Pereira cautioned slave owners that God's intention was to obtain better treatment for the slaves, while at the same time granting masters the chance to revive their own morality which had been destroyed when they entered the business of enslavement. To help him explain this point, Pereira drew on the arguments of fellow pastor Rev. Houston, whom he said "offers a wise observation on this point" which was this:

Saint Paul could not expect the harvest before first scattering the seed. It was first necessary to scatter the seeds of justice, kindness, absolute equality of all social conditions and positions, through Christ crucified; of universal brotherhood through the only God of all the Earth, the common Father of all humanity, so that the bright harvest

of freedom could be secured. It was necessary for Christ's spirit to first penetrate the impure Gentile masses. (147)

Slaveholders understood the last sentence which stressed the point that Amelioration was a preparation for the slaves through Christian conversion and an increase of their knowledge of God. However, Pereira feared that slave owners did not understand that Amelioration was also a transition which they had to make. It is still indeed common for historians to depict Amelioration almost exclusively with the effects it had on the slaves, meanwhile we have been told almost nothing about how it might have also transformed the slaveholders.¹³ Nonetheless, as Pereira pointed out, using fellow pastor Rev. Houston, the policy would help to plant and “scatter the seeds of justice, kindness, [and] absolute equality” to promote “universal brotherhood” which facilitated the transformation of masters in the same way that it was also designed to affect the slaves.

Pereira realised that ending slavery was a wider project that required not only petitioning for justice for the slaves. It also involved changing the mentality of slave masters as the creators and main beneficiaries of the system. But how do you end an institution that made profits not only for Brazilian planters, but also for a wide range of commercial and industrial interests in imperial Portugal? This was the question that made proposals such as Amelioration vital to abolitionists such as Pereira. The gradual approach which the policy projected asked the slaves, as Pereira did, to simply “Have patience; the seed of the Gospel is germinating, and soon you will harvest the sweet fruits of freedom”. (148) This proposition showed both the moral and economic bankruptcy of slaveholding, but it also presented the various stakeholders in slavery with a compromise in which they too were allowed time to adjust to freedom. During this phase, there was to be planning for the employment of the ex-slaves who, as salaried workers, would require fair wages, just treatment from employers and good working conditions. If there was doubt about the capacity of former slaves anywhere, including Brazil, to assert their rights as wage earners, then

¹³ Robert E. Luster, *The Amelioration of the Slaves in the British Empire, 1790-1833* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995). Seven out of Luster's nine chapters in this book examine Amelioration from the point of view of its effects on the slaves. About masters we learn in his concluding chapter only that those who resisted the Amelioration policy were hard to prosecute in court, while this same system of Amelioration supposedly had a great effect on Jamaican history. See pages 163-165.

British Apprenticeship stood as a glaring example of the failure of the planters to coerce their former slaves.

The strategies and systems that the planters designed to dominate the ex-slaves in the British colonies had started before 1838 and were among the main causes of the failure Apprenticeship. But the resistance of the apprentices to this domination had also resulted in the premature ending of Apprenticeship, which had lasted only for the four-year period of 1834-1838.¹⁴ Apprenticeship was designed as a transitional phase between slavery and full freedom, but those apprentices who had enough money saved from their commercial pursuits during slavery had used this to purchase small plots of land on which they built houses and started peasant farms. They reserved most of their labour power to work on these farms and after full freedom was obtained, the growth of the peasantry signalled a further resistance of the ex-slaves to the domination by former masters. Indeed, a noticeable feature of the period after full freedom was the rise of the peasantry, though recent scholarship on the subject has shown that the peasantry also shrank over the course of time, mainly due to the acquisition and consolidation of larger acreages of land by an also shrinking group of big plantation owners.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this displacement of the peasantry put them in further opposition to the planters, which resulted in protests with popular support from the masses, as was seen in Jamaica in 1865.¹⁶

That Pereira wanted to spare Brazil the failure of an Apprenticeship system was obvious. To do this, he focussed on showing how the laws of God prohibited enslavement in any form. On this topic, he stated that those who benefitted from slavery should know that they did so “under the terrible curse of divine law.” “Slavery”, he continued, “is a sacrilegious robbery because freedom is a fundamental gift from God, essential to the full achievement of the highest destiny of human nature.” (149) Part of that destiny in Brazil’s

¹⁴ For the notion of domination after full freedom, see O. Nigel Bolland, “Systems of Domination after Slavery: The Control of Land and Labour in the British West Indies after 1838”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 23, no. 4 (October 1981): 591-619.

¹⁵ See Veront M. Satchell, *From Plots to Plantations: Land Transactions in Jamaica, 1866-1900* (Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1990).

¹⁶ The 1865 upheaval in Jamaica is known as the Morant Bay Rebellion. See Gad Heuman, *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); and Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete: Native Baptists of Jamaica* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2010).

case and indeed in all colonies of Britain and Western Europe was the breakdown of colonial rule. Anti-colonialism was inseparable from abolition. Brazil had already obtained its political independence from Portugal in 1822, yet for more than six decades afterward it had still retained remnants of that exploitative relationship in the form of slavery. Pereira saw that, for Brazil to be fully independent, another war needed to be fought to overturn slavery, or those “ruins that litter the deserted soil of the old world” and that “lie there in the eloquence of their silence, bearing witness to the veracity of the Prophet.” (153) Putting an end to those ruins was part of the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy, part of establishing the “Righteousness” that “exalts a nation” and eradicating the sin of slavery, since “sin is a reproach to any people.” Brazil could not expect to move ahead with its self-reliance without first abolishing those forces which opposed it, such as the sinful institution of slavery. (154)

Sadly, the leaders of Brazil’s independence movement had never fully acknowledged that the slaves had played a part in it, since among the mercenaries who had fought under “The Sea Wolf”, Thomas Cochrane, to cripple the Portuguese naval presence along the Brazilian coast, between 1822 and 1823, were thousands of released slaves. These brave Afro-Brazilians aided in their country’s resistance campaign against Portuguese colonial rule. Nevertheless, many years after the achievement of independence, men and women of African were still trapped in enslavement. This was one of Brazilian society’s most troubling contradictions in the aftermath of colonialism. The war fought to end colonial exploitation had not also ended other forms of exploitation, such as slavery. But there was more about the participation of slaves in Brazil’s acquisition of independence, which the clerics, such as Pereira, knew about. The enslaved had contributed to the country’s independence through their culture of resistance. By counteracting social death, as Walter Hawthorne has shown, slaves were able to established bonds with other slaves similar to their social bonds as free people in West African societies. Slaves brought to Rio de Janeiro in 1821 aboard the slave vessel *Amelia* forged ties which “reveal much about how captives from one slave ship created very personal bonds with one another while at sea ... and fostered a strong and enduring community in an oppressive and racial stratified society.”¹⁷ Henry

¹⁷ Walter Hawthorne, “‘Being now, as it were, one family:’ Shipmate bonding on the slave vessel *Emilia*, in Rio de Janeiro and throughout the Atlantic World”, *Luso-Brazilian Review* vol. 45, no. 1 (2008): 53, 54.

Koster, whom Hawthorne quotes, confirmed the validity of this observation by stating that slaves in Brazil in the early nineteenth century demonstrated “much attachment to their wives and children, to their other relations if they should have any, and to their *malungos* or fellow-passengers from Africa.”¹⁸

Also remarkable were the stories about manumission which showed, as James H. Sweet records, that, “Kinship ties, and the anchor of identity that they represented, remained strong in the historical memory of those affected by slavery, no doubt providing hope, sustenance and a basis for self-definition, even as new kinship structures were forged in the Americas.” Family members left behind in Africa sent money to purchase their relatives in Brazil out of slavery. This was the way that an enslaved Angolan woman in Rio, Lucrécia de Andre, was manumitted when her owner, Fr. João Rodrigues Pina, received payment for Andre’s “*carta de alforria* (freedom letter)” in 1751. The money, which amounted to “110 mil-réis”, was received “from one Manuel Rodrigues de Freitas Silva, a ship’s captain who arrived in Rio from Angola.” However, Silva himself had received the payment from one “Captain Félix José Nogueira, resident of the city of Luanda” in Angola, who had also “remitted the money on behalf of one Manuel da Costa Perico, the brother of Lucrécia de Andre.” “Thus,” as Sweet summarises, “Lucrécia’s freedom was purchased, in a four-man relay across the Atlantic, by her Angolan brother, whom she had last seen more than 20 years earlier.”¹⁹ These familial bonds were seen in any slave societies in the Atlantic World. David Chandler examined colonial Colombia where he found the survival of slave families on the haciendas. Part of the reason was the insistence of the Catholic Church “that slavery was a contractual arrangement whereby the slave placed his time and labour at the disposal of his master, but that he remained a human being with rights to life, limb, body, and reputation.”²⁰ A modified version of this stance, adopted by the evangelical missionaries in Brazil during the 1880s, and which appeared in the writings of Pastor Pereira, asserted that slavery itself was also illegal based on the teachings of the Bible.

¹⁸ Ibid., 55. See also Henry Koster, *Travels in Brazil*, ed. C. Harvey Gardiner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966): 182.

¹⁹ James H. Sweet, “Manumission in Rio de Janeiro, 1749-54: An African Perspective,” *Slavery and Abolition* vol. 24, no. 1 (April 2003): 54, 55.

²⁰ David Chandler, “Family Bonds and the Bondsman: The Slave Family in Colonial Columbia,” *Latin American Research Review* vol. 16, no. 2 (1981):108.

But there were slaves in Brazil who, when presented with the option to become manumitted from enslavement, chose instead not to do so, and their decisions revealed the urgent need to abolish slavery completely. These slaves made their choices on the basis that freedom within the context of a slave society was still very limited and restrictive, especially for its black people. One such case had involved the seaman Gorge, who had declared that he was owned by the King of Portugal in his testimony “before a commission of white judges” in Rio de Janeiro in July 1821. Gorge had been presented by his legal counsellors with the option of declaring that he was free by stating that he was a British subject, but Gorge chose not to take that option.²¹ This refusal to survive as a free person during slavery reveals Brazil’s inability to protect the freedom that was granted to persons who were formerly enslaved. This indictment of a society that would only one year later enter political independence raised questions about the validity of that transition towards greater self-determination. Pereira’s point on this matter was that the survival of slavery was a real threat to Brazil’s accomplishment of full independence. The system of legalised slavery exposed the country’s contradictory relationship to freedom. Its negation of this freedom for thousands upon thousands of Brazilians, through legalised bondage, was a paradoxical situation, one which essentially prevented the further development of freedom of any kind in Brazil.

It seems the slaves in Brazil were engaged in a silent campaign against slavery, alongside their open resistance through rebellion. This silent resistance constituted what E.P. Thompson might call the “moral economy” of the enslaved people. In this campaign, there were no “marauding bands, who scoured the countryside with bludgeons, or rose in the market-place,” but instead the slaves had adopted a political strategy of silently suffering to further expose the weaknesses of the society caused by the moral bankruptcy of enslavement.²² The more that they suffered, the more the slaves revealed about the stains that were left by slavery on the collective conscience of Brazilian society in general. Suffering without vocalising any objections was, for sure, a legitimate, politically-driven type of resistance, one which James C. Scott has identified as one of the *Weapons of the Weak*, or one of those *Everyday*

²¹ Walter Hawthorne, “Gorge: An African Seaman and his Flights from ‘Freedom’ back to ‘Slavery’ in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Slavery and Abolition* vol. 31, no. 3 (September 2010): 412-13.

²² E.P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* vol. 50, no. 1 (1971): 79.

forms of Peasant Resistance, which proves that even when the oppressed appears to do nothing about their oppression, they are, at all times, acting against it.²³ Viewing the slaves in this way, did more for Brazil than the slaveholders had imagined, Pereira opined. These actions (or in this case, more precisely, these forms of apparent inaction) of the enslaved indicated the ways in which personal autonomy was being acquired by slaves without bloodshed or loss of life. This was a contribution to the Brazilian culture of freedom, which was further formulated after that country's 1822 acquisition of independence from Portugal.

Pereira did not discuss the survival of African cultural forms in Brazil as it related to the churches. This discussion would have helped his attacks on slavery, it would have provided to his audience proof of the ability of the slaves to engage in their own cultural activities. The remarkable survival of these in spite of enslavement was additional evidence of the slaves' resilience as humans and thus their right to equal treatment by whites. But Pereira belonged to a church which had for a long time objected to the traditional customs of the slaves, especially those which came from their religious traditions. Slaveholders could use this objection to raise questions about the veracity of the claims which the missionaries were now making for the abolition of slavery. They could ask quite bluntly why a change of stance when the slaves had always been Africans who showed a strong affinity to their cultural habits? It is true that in Brazil and elsewhere in the Americas, slaves were barred from participation in Protestant churches. Evandro Camara observes that the resistance to allowing the slaves immediate entry into these churches was mainly due to the differences between the structure and content of African and Calvinistic beliefs and practices. Therefore, "the Protestant influence on African secular and sacred customs was almost always a negative one." The "dogma and ritual of evangelical Protestantism" dictated that "the latter could only react adversely to the aboriginal religious behaviour of the slaves", which was seen most clearly in "[t]he vigorous and unceasing attempts on the part of missionaries to suppress this behaviour".²⁴ José Carlos Barbosa indeed records that in Brazil during the imperial era the Protestant churches were "A

²³ See James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Ithaca: Yale University Press, 1987).

²⁴ Evandro M. Camara, "Afro-American Religious Syncretism in Brazil and the United States: A Weberian Perspective", *Sociological Analysis* vol. 48, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 309.

Closed Garden”, which had for many years prevented entry by the slaves as long as they held on to their African customs.²⁵

Meanwhile the slaves were kept out of the Protestant churches, the slaveholders in Brazil could point to the fact that the imperial Roman Catholic Church, to which most slaveholders subscribed, was always opened to the slaves, and allowed them membership and even equal participation with whites in sacred and social institutions such as marriage. The slaves, therefore, had always enjoyed varying degrees of freedom, which was visible, for instance, in their opportunities to established stable families and to enter formal marriages which were solemnised in the church. These developments took place because the slave owners themselves had not objected to the slaves’ participation in the church.

It was true that this participation was allowed, but it was due partly to the “fertile terrain for syncretism and retention of” their “native heritage,” which the slaves found in Catholicism, and partly to imperial insistence on the application of modified versions of the Roman Slave Laws in the American colonies. The syncretism with Catholicism resulted from its own “structural affinity with West African religious practice”, seen in slave ceremonies in Brazil such as “*congada*,” which celebrated “the symbolic coronation of the King of the Congo,” and which was “incorporated in to the yearly [Catholic] festival of Our Lady of the Rosary, who became a patroness of the blacks.” Slave participation in other Catholic celebrations, such as the festivals “of the Holy Ghost, Good Friday, and Palm Sunday,” were recorded by several observers during the mid 1800s. Among the aspects which African and Catholic religions shared were those that twentieth-century researchers, such as Herskovits, Mbiti and Raboteau, have all mentioned: their “Collectivism” or their communally-oriented nature; their “Pragmatic orientation” that was “geared to the resolution of earthly problems”; their “Sacrifices and offerings”; and their “Elaborate ritual and sacramental structures”.²⁶ Herbert Klein also records that the stance of the Catholic Church was always that enslaved blacks “were to be considered part of the New World Church,” and provisions were put in place for the slaves to be incorporated into that church. In Spanish colonies, for example, laws such as the *Siete Partidas*, which were based on Roman Slave Laws, granted the slaves a number of guarantees, such as “the right to

²⁵ Barbosa, *Slavery and Protestant Missions*, see chapter one.

²⁶ Camara, “Afro-American Religious Syncretism,” 303, 304-05.

full Christian communion, and through the sanctity of the Church, the right to marriage and parenthood.” In areas where these laws were applied, namely Santo Domingo and Cuba, slave marriages increased to numbers which were almost equal to the number of marriages among whites.²⁷

Most slaves in Brazil had some kind of relationship with the Catholic Church by the 1830s, when the Protestants began to open their “Closed Garden” to allow the slaves to enter. And this new venture was pursued while the missionaries still carried on their objections to African cultural and religious traditions, labelling these as heathen practices, which signalled the slaves’ backwardness, the same as their fellow Protestant missionaries did in the United States, in areas such as Georgia, South Carolina and parts of Alabama, Mississippi and the Border States, during the same period of 1830-1850. And the same as Pereira would later do, the Protestant evangelicals in the United States also blamed the slave masters for not allowing the slaves to participate in the churches. Haven P. Perkins states that one of the difficulties identified by Protestants in the Southern states was that “Nothing was done among the slaves except by the master’s permission. Apparently even in the case of baptising children it had always been taken for granted in the South that the master (not the parents, relatives, or friends) was to present and sponsor them.” In addition, white Southern pastors continued to raise objections to slave practices, identifying sexual conduct as one of the most difficult obstacles that they faced. Perkins thus notes that, “The author of an article in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* thought that three fourths of all the cases of church discipline arose in connection with slave sex relations.” The missionaries experienced difficulties also because of their rejection of black pastors and their insistence that only white missionaries should preach to the slaves. It was stated, for instance, that “Since the major part of the ministry to slaves must be undertaken by whites, a special effort must be made to build up Negro missions, and clergymen who minister to whites must be permitted and encouraged to give a large part of their time to slave instruction.”²⁸

The history of keeping the slaves out of the church was abandoned by the Protestant missionaries in Brazil after about 1830, and was replaced with a policy of encouraging slave conversion and abolition. Pereira became one

²⁷ Herbert S. Klein, “Anglicanism, Catholicism and the Negro Slaves,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 8, no. 3 (April 1966): 297, 298, 304.

²⁸ Haven P. Perkins, “Religion for Slaves: Difficulties and Methods,” *Church History* vol. 10, no. 3 (September 1941): 228, 229, 234, 237.

of the voices of this new dispensation. In his final article, he outlined some eight reasons why the slaveholders should immediately end their relationship with slavery. Most of these merely reiterated earlier points made in the other articles. However, the introduction of the economic results of abolition for the former slave masters was something new, and addressing this issue directly, Pereira pre-empted the slaveholders with this question: “You will perhaps object, ‘And what about my interests, how will I live afterwards?’” (153) His initial answer showed little originality in its assertion that emancipation was a righteous decision for which the slave masters would receive God’s richest blessings. But even a pastor knew that emancipation was also an economic decision, and the slaveholders would have to be shown how freedom and profitability could be compatible. The example Pereira used was the United States, where slavery was abolished in 1863, and after the country sank into “more than four years of a dreadful civil war”, its “wealth and prosperity” had returned. Even the former slaveholders in the Southern states had “no reason to envy the North’s prosperity.” (154)

Clearly, the thought that Pereira gave to abolition was wide-ranging. It included not only his moral concerns, but also some of the important temporal issues that were raised by the slaveholders. This combination of the moral and secular, the most vital element of the churches’ anti-slavery campaign, also appeared in the references that the pastors had made to the slaves’ participation in establishing the principle of freedom, both in Brazil and the Caribbean.

11. Santa Lucia

A Brief Respite: Female Runaways and their Survival in the Caribbean

Dr. June Soomer

The paper sheds light on all the forms anti-slavery activities undertaken by female slaves. Whether it was withdrawal of labour, refusal to reproduce, assisting others in escaping or running away themselves, female slaves demonstrated that like their male counterparts, they refused to accept the condition that was imposed on them. From enslavement to emancipation, they would be a formidable source of resistance. It also gives glimpses of the female identity that would emerge in the region as we can all still visualize the defiance of Caribbean woman in the strong maternal societies that have emerged, the strong peasant societies that have outlived the plantations, the migration patterns and their survival instincts.

Female slaves had an anti-slavery ideology that has not been adequately addressed by the literature on slavery. This was conditioned by their position at the bottom of the societal pyramid in the Caribbean, which forced them to initiate adjustments which would ensure some respite from the oppression of slavery. Labeled as chattel, these women found both their production and reproduction exploited and manipulated for the benefit of their owners or other males and females in the slave society.

The focus of the available data is on male maroons with a few interjections on some female runaways. One of the main reasons for this deficiency is the perception that volume is more important than the ways in which freedom was acquired and maintained. The fact is that no clear picture of the number

of female runaways can be developed by a simple head count assisted by slave advertisements. Neither should a value be placed on *petit maroonage* in which more women participated as opposed to *grand maroonage* in which more male slaves participated. The data will show that men were facilitated in their bid for permanent freedom by many of the networks established by female slaves. Moreover, this deficiency is significant as it prevents focus on the identity of African women in slave societies and the evolution of that identity since slavery.

A Brief Respite: Female Runaways and their Survival in the Caribbean

The position of slave women at the bottom of the societal pyramid in the Caribbean forced them to initiate adjustments which would ensure some respite from the oppression of slavery. Labeled as chattel, these women found both their production and reproduction exploited and manipulated for the benefit of their owners or other males and females in the slave society. Advertisements for runaway females often describe numerous bruises and scars on their bodies. There was no doubt that their brief forays away from the plantations was a means of asserting their own identity and resistance to a system that forced them to create their own freedom spaces in a highly stratified society.

Much of the already published literature on female maroons points to women running away to visit family members in other parts of the island for brief periods. These women would eventually return to their owners long before advertisements for their return had been published. Undoubtedly, these situations often resulted in women running away or staying away from the plantations for various lengths of time. The lack of attention to brief forays points to the insignificance that writers have placed on these movements away from oppression and the breathing space that was a mark of defiance that helped to shape the character of Caribbean women.

Despite the popular belief that planters placed more advertisements out for male slaves because of their economic value and because more men run away, the data also points to the fact that many planters did not place advertisements for female slaves because these women had returned to the plantations long before the advertisements were placed. Consequently, the advertisements which eventually appeared were for female maroons who had declared their intention not to return to the plantations. This paper will show that in many cases these females were engaging in employment which would

ensure their survival as freed persons. In other words, because women had a variety of reasons for running away, they stayed away for various lengths of time and when they decided to stay away permanently they put in place survival mechanisms to ensure their freedom. One of the survival techniques involved an integrated network of facilitators who were located both locally and regionally and which cut across colonial boundaries. In many ways these networks were laying a foundation for a form of regional integration to which present pursuers of that objective merely pay lip service.

The focus of the available data is on male maroons with a few interjections on some female runaways. One of the main reasons for this deficiency is the perception that volume is more important than the ways in which freedom was acquired and maintained. The fact is that no clear picture of the number of female runaways can be developed by a simple head count assisted by slave advertisements. Neither should a value be placed on *petit maroonage*¹ in which more women participated as opposed to *grand maroonage* in which more male slaves participated. The data will clearly show that men were facilitated in their bid for permanent freedom by many of the networks established by female slaves. While much of the literature stressed that more men than women ran away, it is interesting to note that they sought refuge from a wife, lover, mother or sister who was willing to harbor them in the interim. These women participated at great expense to themselves, especially as laws were passed ensuring grave punishment for those who aided fugitives.

Advertisements often revealed that planters were aware that male runaways had relatives on certain plantations and that these persons would be watched closely. For example, advertisements in The Barbados Gazette and The Barbados Mercury revealed that the planter knew that Jack Charles had visited his wife in St. Philip and that Bob, an escaped carpenter, had a sister in the same district.² According to Heuman, “nearly a third of all the slaves who were harboured by wives had more than one of them; in several cases, owners mentioned three wives for their runaways.”³ Clearly, the large number of men

¹ According to Michael Craton in Testing the Chains, more women participated in *petit maroonage* which was “running away by an individual or group [sic] for only a short term” 61.

² Advertisements in The Barbados Gazette and The Barbados Mercury 19 Oct. 1805 and 8 Aug 1815.

³ G. Heuman, “Runaway Slaves in 19 Th Century Barbados” in Gad Heuman (ed.) Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Maroonage in Africa and the New World. (London: Frank Cass Co.1986) 107.

who escaped and the length of time they stayed away were very dependent on women, slave and free, as well as white women who employed these slaves on the estates. Maroonage was not simply running away. Rather, it involved a more complex process with established networks which ultimately led to maroon societies in one island or another. When women did not run away, they were facilitators in the process.

Ages of Runaway Females

Heuman contends that, “most of runaways were relatively young, if young is defined to include those under 30 years of age.”⁴ This statement is expanded by H. Beckles in Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados where he notes that, of the females who escaped, “... 75% were generally under the age of 30 years, which suggests that runaways were generally young, ambitious persons.”⁵ Examination of advertisements reveals that to a large extent these statements are correct. As mothers usually run away with their children, it is very difficult to determine the actual age range of females who escaped. For example, an advertisement in The Barbados Mercury, 21 June 1788, was for “a negro girl ... named Rosetta ... 12 years old with a very large mouth.”⁶ Her owner, Henry Cheeks was offering two pounds for her return. In this case Rosetta was in the company of an older female named Hannah. Young females rarely escaped alone, but there are advertised cases. This was the situation for another 12-year-old named Marie-Catherine who runs away from her owner David Delile of Gros-Islet, St. Lucia. He indicated that she ran away on her own and was offering four gourdes for her return.

Older women also participated in maroonage. The Supplement à La Gazette de Sainte-Lucie, 15 December 1789, had a published advertisement for “la negresse Zabeth, native du Cap-Vent âgée d’environ 45 ans...”⁷ This female had escaped with her 21-year-old daughter. The owner was offering 132 liv for the mother and 66 liv for the daughter. It was obvious that this woman was valuable to the planter as was indicated by the price being offered

⁴ G. Heuman, 98.

⁵ H. Beckles, Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados (London: Kanak House, 1988).

⁶ The Barbados Mercury 21 June 1788, No 2363, Vol *iii*.

⁷ Supplement ‘a la Gazette de Sainte-Lucie, du Mardi 15 Decembre 1789.

for her return compared to the reward for her younger daughter. This was not an isolated case as many older women had accumulated money and were well known enough to establish extensive networks which would aid in their escape and that of their children.

This was obviously the case with the female being sought in the following advertisement in The Bahama Gazette:

*A negro wench named Nancy about 40 years old, lusty ... she is well known among the free crew that come from the Carolinas by some of whom she is supposed to be harboured: being a tolerable washer and ironer.*⁸

This advertisement also gives more insight into one of the occupations pursued by escapees and also helps to support the view that skilled women had a greater chance of maintaining their freedom. This was especially true if someone benefited from that skill and was willing to provide protection for them.

No matter what the age of the female who escaped, planters suffered a loss, even if it was for a short time. Since the majority of females who escaped were in their prime child bearing years, as well as their prime productive years, the loss would have been felt twice as much.

As much of the recent literature on slave society indicates, women worked just as hard as men in the fields. This was the reason for so many females in the field gangs in Barbados. With abolition of the slave trade approaching and planter attempting to balance their populations in most of the islands, it is not surprising that many of the advertisements promised that no harm would come to the female slaves who freely returned to the plantations. Planters also suffered a loss because women often took their children with them. Some even had children after they had escaped, a sign that they fully intended to remain free. This was the case with Pothenah, “a stout well-made yellow-skin negro woman...”⁹ Her owner knew that she had a child since she ran away and was working as a washer. His advertisement shows that when she escaped he lost a good washer, a good field worker as well as another slave. The value of female slaves clearly rested with the multiplicity of tasks which they performed on the

⁸ G. Saunders, Slavery in the Bahamas 1648-1838 (Nassau: The Bahama Guardian, 1823) 183.

⁹ The Barbados Gazette, Sat, 25 Aug- Wed, 29 Aug 1787, No 68.

plantations. They may not have been skilled in specific areas as some of their male counterparts, but the numerous jobs performed on the estates gave them a certain versatility which they would deny to the plantations with their escape.

Maritime Maroonage

David Greggus in, “On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Slave Runaways in Sainte Domingue in the year 1790”¹⁰ contends, that maritime maroonage was not a regular occurrence among females. He points out that there were only two colored women from foreign colonies in the jails of Sainte Domingue at the time. The problem with using this particular time period to make a generalization about female maroonage into Sainte Domingue is that the colony was in turmoil and that it was difficult to maintain records. Further, slaves would not have found Sainte Domingue a desirable destination at this time. In fact, there is a decline in the number of published advertisements from the prisons and the planters in relation to fugitive slaves in all of the French colonies at this time.

There is however a clearer picture of how both the French Revolution and the upheavals in Sainte Domingue affected the planters in the other French territories of Saint Lucia, Martinique and Guadeloupe. Gazette de Sainte Lucie and its various supplements of 1789 showed that many slave women from the neighboring islands were suspected to be in Saint Lucia and vice versa. Planters from the French colonies recognized that female runaways would participate in maritime maroonage. They therefore advertised in all of the various colonies. In many cases these women remained free for many years. An example of someone who fitted all of these areas was a female slave from Martinique who escaped in January 1789. The first advertisement for her appeared in the papers one year after her departure. It read, “la negresse Jeanette, creole de St. Pierre, ci-devant appartenante, 17 de ce mois ... Elle est parti avec un fer au pied ...”¹¹ A subsequent advertisement published in May of that year listed her age as twenty-five. Unfortunately, with the advent of

¹⁰ D. Greggus, “On the Eve of the Haitian Revolution: Slave Runaways in Sainte Domingue in the year 1790” in G. Heuman (ed.) Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World. (London: Frank Cass Co. 1986) 114.

¹¹ Supplement ‘a La Gazette de Sainte Lucie du Mardi 26 Janvier 1790.

the Haitian Revolution the advertisements ceased making it difficult to continue to trace this case.

A similar publication was made for Marthe, a thirty-year-old female from Martinique who escaped on 12 May 1790. The 27 July 1790 advertisement indicated that this slave was a vender who was very mobile and worked between Campagne and Fort Royale. Women who were hucksters or vendors would have found it easier to participate in grand maroonage and maritime maroonage, than would field women. They had the mobility and also sold food on the wharves or participated in the inter-island trade. In Barbados, hucksters found it easier to merge into the free population because "... nearly 70 per cent of whom were coloured."¹² The majority of these women were also creole and that also facilitated their movement among the free population. They spoke the language and had special clientele who would be willing to help them escape.

One of the most interesting cases of maroonage appeared in The Barbados Gazette, Saturday, 27th October 1787. This advertisement was for:

*A stout well made negro wench named Quasheba with scar on her left hand Harboured in or around Scotland ... Frequently seen in Bridgetown where She is well known.*¹³

Her owner repeated these advertisements for the next three weeks and then they stopped. No mention was made of this female for the next two years.

This case becomes interesting when an advertisement from the jail in Castries, St. Lucia in 1789 revealed that they had in custody an African female:

*...âgée d'environ 30 ans... a déclaré se nommer Quaffiba¹⁴... Elle a été adoptée, de la Barbade, à Sainte Lucie; elle parle anglais et un peu de français...*¹⁵

¹² G. Heuman, "Runaway slaves in 19th Century Barbados," 100.

¹³ The Barbados Gazette, Saturday, October 27th-Wednesday 31st October 1787, No.86, Vol. iv.

¹⁴ This is the French spelling for the name Quasheba. In 19th century documents the letter "s" is written as "f".

¹⁵ La Gazette de Sainte- Lucie 17 March 1789, No. xi, Vol iii.

From this advertisement it is obvious that Quasheba had managed to elude recapture in Barbados and was able to make her way to Saint Lucia where she resided, in the Micoud area. Although there is no indication of the length of time she had spent in this island, the evidence suggests that for almost two years, she had maintained her freedom. The fact that she was able to survive in an island where little English was spoken indicates her resourcefulness and her anti-slavery ideology. She was determined to remain free and survive wherever she found refuge. The fact that she was facilitated by persons from a French colony is also very significant as it demonstrates that slaves in the region empathized with their fellows slaves in the other islands and would assist them in maintaining their freedom. While Quasheba's case was unusual, it is obvious that female slaves also attempted to stay away as long as possible. This was a difficult prospect because of the assumption within slave society that all black women were enslaved. Those females with the ability to blend in with the free population, as well as those with a skill took full advantage of their new situation and went to great lengths to make it permanent.

With the development of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, as a free port, many slaves in the Danish West Indies¹⁶ worked on the wharves or on the many ships which sailed through to Puerto Rico or the British Virgin Islands. In Neville Hall's Slave Society in the Danish West Indies, he states that "the relatively great concentration of the slave concentration of the slave population in the busy seaports of the Danish West Indies ... provided opportunities for escape to other islands¹⁷. Like Jamaica, Barbados and the French West Indies, the majority of slaves who participated in maritime maroonage in the Danish islands, were men.

Hall's explanation is two fold. He states firstly, that women "lacked access to the male world of the wharves."¹⁸ Although many women in these islands lived in the urban areas they did not have the freedom of the male slaves and were usually confined to the houses. The only women who frequented the wharves were the prostitutes who serviced the numerous sailors who passed through the free port. The second explanation is similar to that provided by

¹⁶ The Danish West Indies included the islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix. They are presently known as the United States Virgin Islands.

¹⁷ Neville Hall, Slave Society in the Danish West Indies (Baltimore: John's Hopkins University Press) 124.

¹⁸ Neville Hall, 125.

many other writers. They posit that the more creolized women became the more unlikely they would be to leave their families. This reasoning to a great extent limits the definition of creolization to one of acquiescence and accommodation. A broadening of the definition to include adaptation and survival techniques will fully accommodate a more realistic explanation of female behavior. Firstly, it has been pointed out that females generally escaped with their children. With this in mind it is unlikely that they would run away without a certain amount of assurance that their networks were reliable and that they would not put their children in danger. Secondly, it has also been argued that women who were more creolized, who spoke English reasonably well and who had a skill were more likely to blend in with the free society and maintain their freedom for a much longer time. It should be stressed that like men, female slaves took every opportunity to resist slavery and that maritime maroonage was also one of their avenues. The number of female slaves who took advantage of the opportunity to escape during the French and Haitian Revolutions testify to this fact.

A few women in the Danish islands attempted to participate in this type of maroonage especially after the emancipation of slaves in the British West Indies.¹⁹ The proximity of British islands like Tortola and Virgin Gorda provided the opportunity for maritime maroonage after 1838. Hall informs that in 1819, one Danish female slave also participated in over throwing of a ship. He writes that:

*... seven men and one woman – probably crew on the 17– ton inter-island schooner Waterloo stole the ship when it arrived in St. Vincent in the British Windwards.*²⁰

Slaves did not only participate in maritime maroonage by escaping to other islands, they also attempted to take over ships on which they worked. It was unusual for females to be part of a crew, but it is essential to recognize that they were not all confined to the traditional jobs carried out on the plantations.

Maritime maroonage may not have been the normal avenue sought by women in their bid to escape slavery, but it provided another alternative which they did not hesitate to use when the opportunity arose. It took them

¹⁹ Slaves in the British West Indies received their emancipation a decade before those in the Danish West Indies.

²⁰ N. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies*, 125.

away from their families and from the familiar. Nevertheless, during the Haitian and French Revolutions maritime maroonage was increasingly used by women in the French West Indies. This reaction cannot be divorced from the ideology of resistance which developed within slave society. All slaves took the opportunity to escape enslavement anytime the power structure exhibited any weakness. These instances provided moments for the type of creativity which would ultimately lead to freedom.

Destinations of Runaway Females

The literature on the destinations of fugitive females suggests that a higher proportion of women stayed away for a shorter period because they simply wanted to visit with their relatives in different parts of the various islands. The fact that more women were caught and returned to the plantations is no indication that their initial intent was to participate in *petit maroonage*. Examination of the careful organization and planning undertaken by these women points to the intent to stay away for as long as possible. Their established networks suggest that their destinations were varied and also dependent on the reasons for their escape.

It is difficult to prioritize the destinations of escapees. Advertisements indicated that planters thought that they were visiting family, especially husbands and children. This was the case with a female slave named Katy who left with her son Tackey. She was suspected to be with her husband Tacky who lived near Great Market.²¹ Most slaves sought refuge from family members. This was not peculiar to women. Those who had established other sources of help would move on quickly. This was not always possible for women who had children with them.

Females in Barbados were more likely to run to the country than to the urban areas. As many of them were field workers, it was easier to find employment from whites who were willing to harbor them. Sometimes planters indicated that they knew of these possible destinations. An advertisement in The Barbados Gazette indicated that:

²¹ The Barbados Mercury, 21 June 1788.

*... a stout, squat middle aged, black wench, with thick lips, named Hannah Mingo, well known in town and country ... [was] harboured either at the estate of Mrs. Ann Walker at St. George to whom she formerly belonged or by her sister belonging to Mrs. Fee.*²²

Women like Hannah were extremely mobile and would seek employment on many estates, making it more difficult to be found. Molly was also supposed to be harbored. Her owner Mrs. Louisa²³ Freeman believed that she was at Mrs. Sater's plantation who sent her to town on errands. The following table helps to illustrate that female slaves in Barbados usually escaped to the country.

Table: 1
Destinations of Runaways by Sex

	Town	Country	Pass as Free	Abroad
No.	68	55	17	10
M%	71.6	60.4	77.3	90.9
No.	27	36	5	1
F%	28.4	39.6	22.7	9.1

Source: G. Heuman, "Runaway Slaves in Nineteenth Century Barbados", 101

This table also indicates that a large number of female slaves also made their way to the urban areas. While more men may have made their way to urban areas, the evidence suggests that it was also a very important destination for women. As Gail Saunders suggests in her writings on the Bahamas, women in the urban areas had a higher chance of being manumitted. Naturally, in these islands women would attempt to make their way to such areas where they could mingle with the free population.

Whether these females gravitated toward the towns or the country, the ability to find employment and shelter were both crucial factors in the length

²² *The Barbados Gazette*, 6 Oct-10 Oct 1787.

²³ The spelling in *The Barbados Gazette* is Louifa. The letter "f" is used in the names of persons, throughout the newspaper in place of the letter "s".

of time in which they maintained their freedom. Pothenhah's owner, John Fayerman, advertised that she was a vender of plantain and had made contact with a free person who hired her out as a field worker. Many advertisements indicated the general area where these women had been seen, yet they were able to elude capture for many months while being very visible.

The ability to maintain freedom in the towns was dependent on two primary factors. Women who spoke the language of the white colonists found it easier to interact within the urban setting. These women would most likely be creole slaves, as African female would always be suspected as runaways. Freedom was also very dependent on complexions. Those with lighter complexions found it easier to get lost within the free colored population. They had the options of participating in the huckstering trade, becoming mistresses, taking on skilled jobs such as laundering or working as prostitutes. Heuman agrees that "by virtue of their colour and their occupations, women generally would have had a more difficult time merging into the free community. The exception to this was runaway hucksters, nearly 70 per cent of who were colored."²⁴ There is clearly a need to pay close attention to the ways in which women managed to adapt in such a setting, especially when their chances of survival were considerably less than that of men.

Slave advertisements suggest that some female slaves who run away would sometimes seek employment as prostitutes. This was the case with Mary, "a new negro wench ... between a black and yellow complexion ... [who] speaks tolerably good English ... Frequently seen at the Pier Head and up the Bays."²⁵ These areas were noted red light districts. The taverns and brothels located there were usually owned by colored women. They were frequented by sailors, soldiers from the British Garrison, transient personnel and the planters. The actions of these women must be viewed as part of a determined effort to maintain their freedom. It cannot be viewed within the confines of universal morality. It also demonstrates that women would seek ways of maintaining their freedom once they escaped from the plantations.

Prostitution was a well-established part of colonial society. In Natural Rebels, Beckles states that "... slave owners considered the prostitution of women more lucrative than 'breeding'. During the 'hard season' the number of slave women. Placed on the urban market as prostitutes by sugar planters

²⁴ G. Heuman, "Runaway Slaves in Nineteenth Century Barbados" 100.

²⁵ The Barbados Gazette 24-27 Oct. 1787. No 85, Vol. iv.

would rapidly increase ...”²⁶ The market for prostitutes was certainly encouraged and exploited by planters. Females who run away were simply taking advantage of an already established market. They probably had been part of that market and their running away only eliminated the middle man. Prostitution also helped to make this anti-slavery activity more viable and sustainable.

The destination of female slaves was also determined by the location of established maroon societies. David Greggus in his examination of maroons on the eve of the Haitian Revolution posits that “... maroonage in the colony was directed towards the mountains and the forests, rather than the towns and slave quarters of nearby Plantations, and that this increased the predominance of males.”²⁷ Clearly, the accessibility of maroon societies would to a large extent determine whether or not women gravitated towards them. The following section will demonstrate that despite the predominance of men within these societies, women still managed to become very important parts of these communities. Moreover, the contributions they made to the continued viability of those societies are immeasurable.

Women and Maroon Societies

There are two main limitations with the published data on women in maroon societies. Firstly, the data is scanty and used primarily to demonstrate that men were more attracted to these communities because they were better survivors. Secondly, there is a lack of analysis of the available data. Much of the material fails to examine maroon societies on the continuum. It therefore limits women’s participation in these communities to specific periods. This failure to document the evolution of maroon societies has therefore only marginalized women, and neglected to show their economic, political and social importance.

In all early maroon societies men outnumbered women. Barry Gaspard states that in Antigua in 1687 the number of males was almost double the number of females. He also argues that many of the women in these early societies did not become members freely. Instead, they were kidnapped by the male maroons and forced to live on the periphery of the plantations. He is

²⁶ Hilary Beckles, *Natural Rebels* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 142.

²⁷ David Greggus, 118.

supported by Richard Sheridan who states that, “moreover since they were predominantly male communities they raided plantations to acquire women. It should be pointed out that male slaves were also kidnapped. This was one of the ways in which the maroons maintained their numbers. They also raided the plantations for food. These communities were new and were trying to ensure their survival. It should also be noted that many women willingly became part of these communities.

In order to show the difference in numbers Sheridan presented the following table:

Table: 2
Maroon Populations of Jamaica 1749

	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
Trelawny Town	112	85	40	39	276
Crawford Town ²⁸	102	80	26	25	233
Accompong Town	31	25	13	16	85
Nanny Town ²⁹	28	21	9	12	70
Total	273	211	88	92	664

Source: Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (London, 1774) 11, 347³⁰

This table shows that there are more men than women in most maroon societies in Jamaica in 1749. To a large extent this disparity is also reflected in the wider slave society. What is significant is the fact that the number of young females is larger than the number of young males. If this trend continued, it would be feasible to predict that as maroon societies in Jamaica evolved there would eventually be more females than males present.

²⁸ Crawford Town is also known as Charles Town.

²⁹ Nanny Town is also known as Moore Town.

³⁰ R. Sheridan, “The Maroons of Jamaica, 1730-1830: Livelihood, Demography and Health.” in G. Heuman (ed) *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World*, 158.

Sheridan adds that because “there were 62 more men than women in 1749 may go far to explain why the men cohabited with slaves on the plantations.”³¹ These views have been supported by other writers who have also neglected to add that women made a viable contribution to maroon communities even when they did not have a physical presence in the societies. These women also provided food to the male maroons, as well as information on the daily activities of the plantations. This peripheral participated meant that they placed themselves at great risk. They however recognized that they were an important link. Maroon societies were seldom able to survive without vital links with the plantation.

The following table will demonstrate that women would eventually outnumber men in some maroon societies.

Table: 3
Maroon Populations of Jamaica

Towns	Men	Women	(Breeding Women)	Boys	Girls	Children	Total
Trelawny	121	140	n.d	27	11	115	414
Charles	55	80	n.d	14	21	49	219
Accompong	32	52	n.d.	4	11	2	143
Moore	29	39	n.d	4	11	20	103
Scott Hall	14	17	n.d.	4	2	12	49
Total	251	328	(289)	53³²	56³³	219	928

It is significant to note that by this time there is a major increase in the population in maroon societies in Jamaica. Sheridan notes that, “presumably this was a natural increase in the population because the Maroons no longer

³¹ R. Sheridan, 157.

³² Note that the addition in the article is incorrect. It shows 71 instead of 53.

³³ Note that the addition in the article is incorrect. It shows 59 instead of 56.

harboured runaway slaves.”³⁴ This is different to most plantations where there was no natural increase.³⁵ This shows that women had come to recognize these societies as their homes and were comfortable enough to reproduce.

It is also very significant that by this time women outnumber men in these maroon societies. Presumably, this increase was also due to the more women running away and choosing these maroon societies as their destination. The fact that there was natural increase meant that the standard of living in these societies was improving. Sheridan states that, “the Maroon birth rate was higher than the death rate; the plantation slaves had a higher death rate than birth rate.”³⁶ This would naturally attract women who might have chosen other destinations during the early days. They were looking for better living conditions and it seemed that these societies could now provide that improvement as well as added security.

Conclusions

The literature demonstrates that women in the Caribbean had clearly made a conscious decision that they would seek their freedom whenever the opportunity arose. Their sense of self was not simply governed by an ideology that placed them at the bottom of a stratified society that deemed women of African descent on the lowest rung of the ladder. Instead, they defined themselves as freedom fighters and the builders of societies.

Clearly, the large number of men who escaped and the length of time they stayed away were very dependent on women, slave and free, as well as white women who employed these slaves on the estates. Maroonage was not simply running away. Rather, it involved a more complex process with established networks which ultimately led to maroon societies in one island or another. When women did not run away, they were facilitators in the process. Further, it is obvious that female slaves also attempted to stay away as long as possible. This was a difficult prospect because of the assumption within slave society that all black women were enslaved.

Women of all ages expressed their anti-slavery ideology by running away. No matter what the age of the female who escaped, planters suffered a loss,

³⁴ R. Sheridan, 158.

³⁵ Hilary Beckles notes in *Natural Rebels* that Barbados is the only slave society where there was natural increase by the eighteenth century.

³⁶ R. Sheridan, 167.

even if it was for a short time. Since the majority of females who escaped were in their prime child bearing years, as well as their prime productive years the loss would have been felt twice as much.

There is evidence that in the days leading up to the French and Haitian Revolutions, female slaves in neighbouring French islands increased maritime maroonage, as did female slaves from Barbados. Their destination was St. Lucia, where many remained in residence for many years.

With abolition of the slave trade approaching and planter attempting to balance their populations in most of the islands, it is not surprising that many of the advertisements promised that no harm would come to the female slaves who freely returned to the plantations. Planters also suffered a loss because women often took their children with them. Some even had children after they had escaped, a sign that they fully intended to remain free.

There is a need to rethink and reexamine the ideology of a docile female slave who simply waited for freedom to be granted. Women in slave societies chose to define themselves differently, as is evident with their role in the establishment of maroon societies. To neglect that reality is to neglect the evolution of the character and identity of the Caribbean woman of African descent.



12. São Cristovão e Nevis

African Influence on Nevis

Hanzel F. Manners

About Nevis

Nevis is the smaller of the two islands that make up the twin island state of St. Kitts Nevis, and is separated from its larger sister isle by the Narrows, a water way just two miles wide. It is part of the larger geographical group called the Leeward Islands, and is a volcanic and rocky island, whose topography is dominated by Nevis Peak, a mountain of approximately 3,600 ft. in height, which rises majestically from the centre of this circular speck of land. The area of the island is just fifty square miles.

Nevis is one of the islands ‘discovered,’ or as Nevisians would prefer to put it, ‘visited’ by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1492. Because of its small size, and the attractions of the larger islands claimed by the Spanish, it was left unattended until it was colonized by a group of English settlers led by Anthony Hilton in 1628, who decided to part company with a larger group of settlers in St. Kitts which had been established by Thomas Warner in 1623.

As far as current knowledge of history goes, Nevis has been exposed to the culture of three main racial cultural groups. First there were the indigenous peoples, the Caribs, who Columbus met on the island in 1492. Later, the English colonized the island and dominated its politics and economics for the

next 350 years, until St. Kitts Nevis gained its independence from Britain in September, 1983.

During the period of English occupation, African slaves were introduced to the island to work the sugar plantations, and slavery became a way of life for just under 200 years. In Nevis, as in the other British West Indian islands, slavery was abolished in 1834, following on the ending of the African slave trade twenty seven years earlier (1807).

Importation of African slaves to Nevis

The early colonists on Nevis planted tobacco, indigo and other small crops. The idea of converting to sugar production, and using African slaves as a main source of labor was first introduced to the English settlers in the West Indian islands, by Dutch planters who had operated in Brazil for some time. During the first half of the 17th century, the main source of labor on the plantations in Nevis was indentured or bonded servants imported from England. Many of the small estates had to be amalgamated to benefit from economies of scale, and many of the small settlers abandoned Nevis and moved to other island such as Jamaica. Those who remained tapped into the slave trade to supply their labor needs on the island.

The use of African slave labor in Nevis began as early as 1649, but gathered momentum in the second half of the seventeenth century. During the sixteen fifties, life was harsh for the English settlers who turned very slowly to sugar production because they lacked the capital, credit required to invest heavily in land, equipment and slaves. In the sixteen sixties English planters in the Leeward Islands took up sugar production in earnest, and of these, Nevis was the first to make the switch from the growing of tobacco.

During the period 1665-1672, approximately 300 slaves were imported into Nevis, and by 1672, the African population on the island had increased to almost 1,800. Barbados had forged ahead in the production of sugar, and the slave traders took most of their cargo there. The Royal African Company established its Leeward Islands base in Nevis and supplied Antigua, St. Kitts and Montserrat from there. The Nevisian planters had first choice and selected what they regarded as the best slaves, and this led to complaints from the other islands about Nevis' unfair advantage. In the next forty years, almost 15,000 slaves were delivered to the Leeward Islands through Nevis. By 1675 the population in Nevis had grown to 8,000, approximately half white and half

African. As sugar production on the island increased over the next one hundred years, and the importation of slave labor increased, the population mix on the island was altered significantly, and by 1774, in a population of approximately 11,000, Africans and colored people outnumbered whites by ten to one.

Significantly, the population of Nevis has not grown over the past three hundred years. According to the Nevis Slave register of 1817, there were almost 10,000 slaves on the island at the time, while the population census of 2001 put the number at just over 11,000 (See table below). The main reason for this lack of growth in the population growth is emigration. Ever since Emancipation, and the hard times and colonial neglect that followed, Nevisians have moved overseas in large numbers to seek a better life, with the bulk of them going to the neighboring island of St. Kitts, the United States Virgin Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, Britain and the United States of America. It is interesting to note the high percentage of Kittitians (natives of St. Kitts) whose parents and grandparents were born in Nevis, evidence of the huge numbers that crossed the Narrows to seek employment from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards.

The influx of East Indians from the Indian sub continent to other West Indian islands after 1850, did not extend to Nevis, and the main additions to the local population since then has been a sprinkling of Arab settlers, and more recently, immigrants from Guyana and the Dominican Republic seeking better economic prospects. Today the population of Nevis consists overwhelmingly of people of African descent.

The tables below show a comparison between the population of Nevis in 1817 and 2001.

Table 1 - Slave Population of Nevis - Slave Register of 1817

	Total	Black	Mixed
St. Thomas Parish	1,790	1,593	197
St. Pauls Parish	1,798	1,399	399
St. Johns Parish	2,105	1,789	316
St. Georges Parish	2,119	1,729	390
St. James Parish	1,852	1,662	190
	9,664	8,172	1,492

Table 2 - Population of Nevis by Ethnic, Racial or National Group - Census 2001

	Number	Per Cent
African Descent	10,026	90.26
Indigenous (Amerindian/Carib)	5	0.05
East Indian	440	3.96
Chinese	4	0.04
Portuguese	6	0.05
Syrian/Lebanese	1	0.01
White/Caucasian	295	2.66
Mixed	270	2.43
Other	61	0.55
	11,108	100.00

Most of the slaves brought from Africa to the West Indian islands came from Western Africa, an area stretching from Senegambia in the north, to Angola in the south, and encompassing the Gold Coast (Ghana), modern Liberia, and the Slave Coast (Togoland, Dahomey and western Nigeria). While the writer has not examined any data on the source of the slaves that were bought by Nevisian planters, it is safe to assume that they also originated in this part of Africa.

Life of African slave in Nevis

Slavery was introduced into the West Indian islands for the sole purpose of producing sugar at the lowest possible cost, and while the original basis for the practice was economic, various arguments were advanced to support it. The English settlers categorized the slaves as heathen and subhuman, and treated them as chattels to be bought, sold or mortgaged as they saw fit. The English West Indian planters had no previous experience of this kind of relationship to guide them, and created their own rationales, made up their own rules, and developed their own social code to suit their purposes as they went along. Thus they created one of the most cruel systems of human servitude in the western world, much harsher than slavery practised on the African continent, and in the English colonies of North America.

During two hundreds of slavery, the Africa slaves on the West Indian plantation were forced to work without pay, and were set free thereafter to create a new life and to develop a future for themselves and their descendants. Compensation was paid to planters for the loss of their ‘assets,’ rather than to the newly freed for unpaid service during that period.

It is quite difficult to find original written accounts of the exploits of the slaves in Nevis. **Vincent K. Hubbard**, however, in his book. **‘Swords, Ships & Sugar’** recounts several incidents of slave resistance in which they fought both for their masters, and on their own account. The first took place when a French fleet attacked and sacked Nevis in 1706.

“It was the intention of the French to sack the island and a major part of the expected booty was slaves. The French quickly rounded up 3,200 of the 6,700 slaves in Nevis and placed them on ships to be transported to bondage in Martinique. A majority were women and children. The odyssey of some kidnapped slaves did not end in Martinique, however. Records indicate that at least six, possibly more, were ultimately transported to New Orleans in the French colony of Louisiana and were the first slaves of African descent to be brought there. Governor Bienville took three for himself, and another leading citizen took the other three.

“However, about 1,000 poorly armed and militarily untrained slaves made their way up to Mount Nevis and there established a defensive position on what is called today ‘Maroon Hill.’ French troops ventured up the hill to capture them, but met with fierce resistance. The French ‘were driven back time and time again by their murderous fire.’

“The slaves held for 14 days until the French departed from Nevis. An account of the action written by an English militiaman at the time, declared ‘...their brave behavior and defence there shame what some of their masters did and they do not shrink to tell us so.’ The courage of the Nevisian slaves was to become a legend in the Caribbean.”¹

The French, who sacked the island, were unhappy at the outcome of this skirmish on the mountainside, demanding that the Nevisian planters turn over 1,200 slaves to them or pay them 30 pounds per slave. However, “The slaves never surrendered and the planters refused to turn them over to the French upon the cessation of hostilities”².

¹ Hubbard, Vincent K.: *Swords, Ships & Sugar*, pp.91-92

² Hubbard, Vincent K.: *Swords, Ships & Sugar*, p.93

Many years later, the Governor of St. Kitts would encourage his fellow governors to allow slaves to serve in the island militia, but this was never agreed to, for fear of a slave insurrection.

Hubbard recounts two other incidents. Nevis was so badly devastated by the French attack that for the next 20 years the economy declined and many planters left the island with their slaves. He writes, "The situation was so severe that two slaves recently arrived from the Gold Coast of Africa (Nigeria), hanged themselves out of desperation, and a number who ran away perished of starvation in the mountains."

Soon after, "...A plot for a slave rebellion was discovered in the parishes of St. James and St. Johns. Governor John Hart, formerly the Governor of the North American colony of Maryland, called up the militia and executed two of the alleged ring leaders of the rebellion by burning them alive. This stopped the rebellion before armed violence occurred. A witness wrote of the execution of the slaves, declaring that '...both dying deny themselves to be guilty.'"³

Finally he relates an incident which may be more legend than fact, and which evokes a chuckle from the reader. In preparation for the wedding of Horatio Nelson and Frances Nisbet at Montpelier Plantation on March 11, 1787, "an ox was being fattened for the wedding feast in a special pen at Montpelier, but on the night before the wedding, a hungry band of runaway slaves came upon it, took it and ate it themselves."⁴

Social Organization after Emancipation.

In 1834 slaves in Nevis, as in all the other British West Indian colonies, were freed by an Act of the British Parliament. The following conditions outlined in the Act were harsh, and condemned the ex-slaves to a life that was little better than slavery for the next four years:

- All slaves under six years old were to be completely free.
- Slaves over the age of six would be apprenticed to their former owners before they were granted complete freedom.

³ Hubbard, Vincent K.: *Swords, Ships & Sugar*, pp._96-97

⁴ Hubbard, Vincent K.: *Swords, Ships & Sugar*, pp._115-116

- The apprenticeship for field slaves was to last six years, and, for house slaves, four years.
- Full emancipation would not be achieved before 1838 or 1840.
- During the period of apprenticeship the apprentices would be required to put in 40 ½ hours of free labor for their owners.
- Beyond that, they had to be paid wages for their labor, and they could opt to work for employers other than their masters.
- The owners were required to continue to provide basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter and medical care as they were required to do during slavery.
- Apprentices might not be sold unless the estate they belonged to was also sold.
- The owner no longer had the right to order punishment for the slaves.
- The apprentice had the right to buy his freedom before 1838 or 1840 at an agreed price.
- The former owners were given the right to request compensation for all their slaves at the time of full emancipation.

The apprenticeship system eventually lasted just four years, ending in 1838.

The colonies had different reactions to these proposals. The Antiguan legislature, for example, opted for full emancipation in 1834. The legislature of Nevis, like all the other British West Indian colonies, adopted the apprenticeship system. There was concern and unrest in some colonies at the introduction of the new system. “In Nevis there was dissatisfaction, but no overt trouble”⁵. Whereas the British government saw the period of apprenticeship as of adjustment to full freedom for both master and slave, the

⁵ Hall, Douglas: *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870*, p.25

Nevisian planters were more concerned with having a continuing supply of cheap labor. In Nevis, apprenticeship brought a reduction in labor available to the estates, and attempts by the planter to introduce farm machinery were handicapped by the rocky nature of the Nevisain soil. "Thus even in the dull seasons, planters in Nevis felt more acutely than did their counterparts in St. Kitts the new 'scarcity of labor' introduced by apprenticeship."⁶

The period immediately following emancipation was a difficult one for the ex-slaves in Nevis. According to Douglas Hall, during the seven year period from 1839 to 1846, over 2,600 people emigrated from Nevis to Trinidad, compared to 963 from St. Kitts and 203 from Antigua. Of the four Leeward Islands, Nevis experienced the greatest exodus.⁷

The planters in Nevis continued to provide housing for the former slaves after emancipation and this ensured that they had a regular supply of labor, since withdrawal of labor would inevitably result in eviction from estate housing. The freed workers found this restrictive, because it limited their freedom to offer their labor to whomsoever they wished. The planters were encouraged to set up independent villages by offering land for sale to the workers, but many of them balked at the idea, because it reduced their control over the workers, and increased wage rates.

The records indicate that in 1845-46, there were no black Nevisian workers living in independent villages, compared to 9,273 in Antigua and 5,671 in St. Kitts. This explains in part the exodus of Nevisian workers from the island during the same period. Nevisian freedmen also emigrated in numbers to the nearby island of St. Kitts. As indicated elsewhere, the rocky soil of Nevis did not facilitate the widespread use of farm machinery. "In December 1845, when reports from Antigua and St. Kitts told of the general and successful introduction of agricultural machinery, there was still not a plough to be seen in Montserrat or Nevis."⁸ The planters found it more difficult to produce sugar and wages were lower. As a result, workmen were tempted away by the higher wages in St. Kitts.

The Nevisian planters tried to counter these hardships by introducing the Metairie or crop sharing system. Instead of being paid cash wages for daily or weekly work, or for job work, a worker on the estate would be given a plot of land to work rent free, in return for which he would share

⁶ Hall, Douglas: *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870*, p.30

⁷ Hall, Douglas: *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870*, p.41

⁸ Hall, Douglas: *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870*, p.109

the produce of the land with the estate owner. This benefitted both parties. The estate owner did not have to find scarce cash to pay for labor, and the worker was on his own to develop his spirit of independence and enterprise.

This system persisted in Nevis until the 1960's. Many children born in the 1930's or 1940's, including the writer, grew up relishing the belief that their parents owned acres and acres of land, only to be jolted into the realization later in life that all those lands belonged to a single estate owner who usually lived somewhere overseas. The stomping grounds of their youthful days were suddenly lost to them.

After emancipation in 1938, there was no attempt to widen the franchise to include the ex-slaves. The right to vote was based on property qualification, and this by definition in 1838, excluded the newly freed ex-slaves. When they and their descendents began to acquire property some did qualify for the franchise by simply meeting the property qualifications. The whites were understandably in a dominant position, and created obstacles to the upward mobilization of the blacks or coloreds. Unfortunately, when they (the blacks and coloreds) moved up the ladder, they tended to try to associate themselves with the planter class, rather than the people of their own color and background.

As long as the white planters remained in control of the land, opportunities for advancement for the black and colored workers were extremely limited. The situation was exacerbated by the introduction of laws designed to control the ex-slaves and to bind them to estate labor. The planters complained that the ex-slaves were lazy, and unwilling to work because they did not have total control over the pool of labor. Contract laws were passed to force them to work for the estates, Vagrancy laws to punish those wandered away from the estates, and Licensing laws to bar them from entering certain trades and occupations.

During the years after emancipation, the Nevisian economy declined, as did the fortunes of the working class. The local assemblies, controlled by the propertied class, were regarded as too powerful and too focused on the narrow interests of the planter class, but at the same time, inefficient and wasteful. The British government still regarded the ex-slaves as too undeveloped, irresponsible and unsophisticated to be elevated to the status of voter or member of the Assembly. In an attempt to strengthen their control over the colonies, including, Nevis, and on the basis of the biases and prejudices

noted above, the British Government abolished the Assemblies in the 1850's, and introduced Crown Colony government, through which it assumed direct control of the government of the colonies.

Politics and Economic Development.

As noted earlier, the population of Nevis is predominantly African, or people of African descent. Over the years there has been intermarriage and mixing between different races, and this is reflected in the faces that one sees on the island. There is no doubting, however, the overriding African presence in the make up of the population. It is not surprising, therefore, that the politics and economics of the island are dominated by people of African descent. Apart from the tourism sector, where most of the hotel stock is owned and operated by people of other races, most other businesses are owned and operated by people of African origin.

Nevisian families have had a history of land ownership over the last one hundred years. Because of the rocky nature of its soil, its small size and its resultant inability to adapt to changes in the sugar economy in the 19th century, Nevis abandoned the production of sugar much earlier than many of the other West Indian islands. By the early 20th century, Nevis had become an island of small farmers and land owners, with most families owning 'a piece of the rock'. A significant portion of land is vested in government, which over the years has initiated programmes to ensure that Nevisians are able to acquire a piece of land.

During the period of colonial occupation, Nevis was governed by Britain, first through the Old Representative System in which political power was held by big land owners on the island, most of whom were English, and later through the Crown Colony System through which control of the island was vested in the Crown and its appointees to the island, most, if not all of whom, were people of non-African origin.

That has all changed, however, and from the 1950's onwards, the political leaders, and the aspirants to political office, have been people of African extraction. Nevis became an autonomous unit within the state of St. Kitts Nevis when the country attained independence in 1983. Since then, it has had its own House of Assembly, and Nevis Island Government which manages the affairs of Nevis, with the exception of foreign affairs, security and the judiciary which are handled by the Federal government.

The three Premiers (leaders of government) who have held office since then have been men of African descent, as have been all of the candidates who have vied for political office, or have been members of government. At the time of writing, a news article was published highlighting the fact that both the Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Court, and the newly appointed Chief Justice of the Caribbean Court of Justice have their roots in Nevis. The former, Justice Hugh Rawlins was born in Nevis, and the latter, Mr. Dennis Byron is the son of a Nevisian father who emigrated to St. Kitts. They are both black.

Consistent with the make up of the population, our sporting teams have always been dominated by blacks. Indeed, Nevis has the distinction of having possibly the highest ratio of selectees to the senior West Indies cricket team per '000 of population, of all the Caribbean islands from which such selectees could be drawn. They have all been black.

There is a small expatriate population living on the island, made up mainly of retired Americans or English who own houses and other property. These along with a recent influx of people from other Caribbean islands, mainly Indians from Guyana, make up the non-African section of the population. There is little evidence of racial tension on the island. All races coexist quite peacefully together. Nevis has no class structure. Rich and poor, black, white, Indian, and others live very peacefully together.

Culture and Behavior

There are many examples of African influence on the culture and customs of the people of Nevis. Some influences were always obvious, but there has been a resurgence of things African during the last half of the twentieth century. Before 1950, there was a strong influence on the Nevisian thinking and way of life, of the culture and traditions of the old colonial masters. This is not surprising, because of the effect of an English educational system, school text books produced in Britain and written by English writers, and a government run and controlled by Britain.

The black power movement of the nineteen sixties created an interest in African history and culture, and encouraged a realignment of the thinking of the younger generation from things European to things African. There was rush to read books on black historical figures both in Africa and in the New World and to explore to the rich African history and heritage.

Names were changed. As people became more enlightened about their past, they became more sensitive to the import of their 'English' names, and moved quickly to change the *status quo*. Before 1960, almost everyone on Nevis had a name with an English or European origin. So fast has been the change, that in 2011, it would be difficult to find a school child who does not have a Christian name with some connection to his or her African past. There has been no similar movement to change surnames.

The writer discussed this phenomenon with the chairman of WASET, a local group dedicated to the promotion of education (see below), who has himself replaced his original 'English' christian name with an African one, but who still carries his 'English' surname. His explanation was that there are legal and other practical complications in changing one's surname, not least of which is losing the connection with one's family and more recent ancestors. One is linked to family by surname (not christian name), and as Africans value family life, it would be difficult to give up that link. He sees this as a trap, from which Africans in the Caribbean find it difficult to extricate themselves.

Though European dress is still the order of the day, African dress has become popular and is worn, albeit only on special occasions, with pride and a sense of identification with the African heritage.

Extracts from journals of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteen centuries⁹ show in some detail the behavior and customs of the African slave on the West Indian plantations. Nevisians display many of these traits in their daily life.

Broken English and a dialect that in many ways is peculiar to Nevis are the order of the day. Words such as 'arbee' (we), and 'um' (it), and "hinting" (the thing) are heard almost nowhere else. And there are many others that a non-Nevisian would need the help of a local to decipher or interpret. Nevisians, like all other Caribbean people of African descent, love to talk, and spend a lot of time, maybe too much, in this activity. The use of nicknames, some of which are born of the most extraordinary and humorous circumstances, and the use of proverb to make a point, are all habits identified with the African slave on the West Indian plantation.

⁹ *AFTER AFRICA: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals of the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries concerning the Slaves, their Manners and Customs in the British West Indies* - Introduced and edited by Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed, assisted by Leslie Baker and Adrian Stackhouse.)

Nevis is noted as a place where the African influence on music, dance and Christmas celebrations has been very strong. There are several performing arts which were practised in Nevis up to the nineteen sixties during the Christmas season, and there has been a constant call to revive these activities as reminders of our African past.

There was the **Giant Despair** troupe that got together at Christmas time, and ‘played’ for the various homes in the community, by depicting a bible story (eg. David & Goliath), or some story from Greek mythology, while being accompanied in their dance routine, by a three piece band consisting of a big drum, a ‘kettle’ drum and a fife made of bamboo. Then there were the **Masquerades**, dressed in bright colored clothing and a head piece of turkey feathers, that moved from home to home to perform their dance routine. They topped off their performance with a dance in which they were expected to bend backwards and touch the ground with their head piece without losing balance, or falling over (similar to a limbo dance). They also wore masks which added an air of mystique, which sent the little children scattering in fear as the dancers approached. By popular demand, the tradition of the **Masquerade** troupe has been kept alive on Nevis, and is quite evident during the annual Culturama celebrations, and other festive occasions.

The **Bazod** troupe is another relic of the period of slavery. Groups of boys or young men would get together at Christmas time to visit homes at their villages at night, to perform rhymes that usually captured, in a humorous and lively fashion, incidents that were common knowledge in the community, or simply created fun and laughter. They ended each rhyme with the shout of “Hol’ on, Hol’ on. (Listen, listen):

Examples:

Hol’ on, Hol’ on:

I went to hell one year
The devil was not dere
I hired a train to bring me back
An’ the devil was the engineer.

Hol’ on, Hol’ on:

Charlie Brown married a wife
But she couldn't cook rice, nor corn
Charlie scratch he head an' say
Ah never had so much trouble since Ah barn.

The "Bazod" troupe created its own band by using old tins and pans, or anything that they could beat upon to create a back drop to their raucous performance.

Another traditional musical form very popular on the island, is worthy of mention. The **String Band** would include two or three guitars, a four stringed instrument called a mandolin, and a banjo, the last two usually locally made. A **Bar Ho** provides the bass. It is made of a length of PVC pipe, or bamboo, and produces a low booming sound when the 'player' puts one end to his mouth, and with a heave of the chest and the rhythmic puffing of the cheeks, sends streams of warm air hurtling through its length. It produces only one note, but this is hardly noticed once the band strikes up.

The main percussion instrument is the 'shack, shack', made of a young fruit from the calabash tree, (a calabash) emptied of its pulpy interior and packed with dry seeds or pebbles. Grab the stick handle which is passed through a hole at either end of the calabash, and shake away, and the rhythm section of the band is ready for business. The 'triangle' adds a special touch to the percussion section of the band. It is basically a piece of elongated iron, bent into the shape of a triangle. It produces a sweet tingling sound when it is held with the fingers of one hand, and hit with a piece of metal held in the other. A string band is not complete without the fife, which for many is the highlight of the band. It is made from the bamboo stalk, and is similar in design and use to the flute. When put into the hands of an experienced player, the fife is difficult to match. The string band continues to be a popular form of music on Nevis, and is enjoyed by both native and visitor alike.

There has also been a resurgence in interest in African drumming. This has been promoted by the government's Cultural Department which holds classes in drumming, and has started several groups throughout the island. Though not as widespread as it was twenty years ago, the Rastafarian religion has taken root in the society, and small groups of adherents preach and practise the merits of their views of the African way of life.

The strong African influence is also evident in other areas such as music and church worship. The musical rhythms that are popular are fusions of African and other musical genres. The lively nature of church worship also bears strong resemblances to the practices of the African slave on the West Indian plantation, as is the current belief in the efficacy of bush medicine, and bush tea. Older Nevisians are quick to recommend a 'bush' solution to any medical problem, and are never at a loss to remember exactly which bush cures a particular disease.

There is a small group on the island, the WASET Education Foundation, Inc. which has dedicated itself to the promotion of education of our African culture and heritage. Two excerpts from its promotional brochure indicate their mission:

Objective: Reclaiming our African Ancestral heritage.

Philosophy: WASET members believe that the cultural background of most African people in the Caribbean has been strongly affected by the Afrikan (*sic*) Slave trade and as a result, our perception of our Afrikan (*sic*) identity is often influenced by colonial/imperialist teachings and theories, with no direct connection to our cultural heritage.

The Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS) has decided to widen its scope to put more emphasis on the links between the Nevisian and our African heritage.

Though the housing stock on Nevis has shown considerable improvement over the past thirty years, there are still pockets of the small movable wooden hut throughout the island. Up to fifty years ago, the practice still persisted of loading these houses on to a truck, and moving them from village to village, to the site of a new owner, or to the site of a newly purchased plot of land.

Public perception

In order to gauge the public perception of Africa and the African influence on life and culture in Nevis, the writer conducted a small survey, which, though not altogether scientific, was adequate to test current thinking. Questions were put to twenty six Nevisians of with obvious signs of African blood in their veins, thirteen of whom were secondary school children ranging from ages thirteen to eighteen, and the remainder being office workers between the ages

of twenty-five and forty-five. The survey included both males and females, and the respondents were advised that they could choose more than one possible answer. The results are summarized below:

How would you describe yourself?

African 8
West Indian 11
Caribbean 15
American 1

Which culture do you think has had the greatest impact on your life and behavior?

English 5
American 11
African 8
West Indian 8

Which country or continent do you consider your motherland?

Nevis 5
U.S.A 1
Africa 17
England 4
Other 4

It is quite clear that most of the respondents understood and appreciated their link with Africa. This is quite understandable, since West Indian history is included in the school syllabus at the primary and secondary school levels, and the subject is taken by many students at the Caribbean Examinations Certificate (CXC) level as part of their school leaving qualification. What is noteworthy, however, is that while many acknowledged Africa as their motherland, a significantly lower number saw themselves as African. It is interesting to note too the choice of America as the biggest influence on their lives and behavior. Again this is understandable, because of the relative proximity of the United States,

the frequent travel between Nevis and that country, the relatively large number of Nevisians living there, and the presence of 24 hour TV showing almost all American programmes. It is unfortunate that of the almost one hundred stations offered by the local cable TV provider, not even one is African.

The social studies curriculum for primary schools on the island includes a module on culture, which is taught at the Form 5 level (age 10-11). This module has as its objective, “to define our cultural heritage... and (to) identify the contribution that various cultures have made to our heritage in terms of food, dances, language, religion...” It is the writer’s view, however, that African heritage is not given any extraordinary prominence. It was interesting to note that the curriculum also included a reference to ‘Japanese.’

The identity dilemma

The average Nevisian seems hesitant to regard himself or herself as African, and one is forced to address the issue. The Guyanese of obvious Indian origin, who live in Nevis, the descendants of Indians brought to Guyana in the latter half of the 19th century are referred to by Nevisians in general as ‘Indians,’ a term associated with the racial origin of the individual.

At the same time, Nevisians of obvious African origin, brought to Nevis in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are hardly ever referred to as ‘African,’ and, in most cases, would disclaim the tag, preferring to be called West Indian or Caribbean, which are names associated with geographical regions, rather than racial origin.

The following are the possible reasons for this:

- A subliminal desire to escape the past and the unfortunate legacy of slavery.
- An education system, and a media presence that does little to engender pride in Africa past and present.
- A more significant reason which must be addressed in more detail. Nevisians come in various shades of black, brown—from the very dark to the very fair in complexion. Some are of pure African stock while others

are obviously mixed, the offspring of a combination African, English, Portuguese, Arab, Spanish and many other racial groups. Some Nevisians would argue, therefore, that there is no proper basis for categorizing them as African. If a person is the offspring of a mixed marriage, or a mixed liaison at the parent or grandparent level, or even further back, then why is that person classified as African, as opposed to the other half or piece of his ancestry. The dilemma is highlighted by the story of one of the survey respondents, a young sixth former, who explained to me that her grandmother was Indian, her grandfather was African. Her parents were regarded as African. She herself is very dark in complexion, and claimed African ancestry, but offered that her 'straight' hair was due to her Indian connection.

Some try to disassociate themselves from slavery, and the description of African, by believing that all Africans are dark in complexion, and that all the slaves on the West Indian plantations were also black. On this basis, they use their complexions as evidence that their ancestors were neither Africans nor slaves. But Africans also come in various shades of complexion. Some are dark, some brown and some fair. The slaves on the plantations were not all black either. The Slave Register of Nevis of 1817 records descriptions of the slaves, as black, mulatto, sambo, mustee, yellowish, and even 'mongrel' (unbelievable but true), all terms that refer to different complexions, colours and racial mixture. Complexion alone, therefore, cannot be used as evidence of racial origin, or historical background.

Conclusion

The influence of African heritage is evident and strong in Nevis. For Nevisians, however, the categorization as African is not always accepted, and sometimes vigorously denied. Not many Nevisians would deny their African heritage, but many would argue that any claim to being African has been diluted over time. This is not an attempt to deny their heritage or history, but simply an expression of what they see as a fact of life. In the writer's view, it is fair to say that, excluding those who are obviously of non-African origin, most Nevisians would readily and gladly lay claim to their African origin and heritage.

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Mr. Manners trained as a teacher at the Leeward islands Teacher Training College in Antigua. He graduated from the University of the West Indies in 1972 with a degree in Economics and History, and later spent just under 2 years in England pursuing studies in Accountancy. He qualified as a professional Accountant in 1982. He has also studied banking and is an associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers (ACIB), now the Institute of Financial Services (IFS-School of Finance). He also holds a diploma in Theology from Codrington College, Barbados.

He started his working life as a teacher at the New River Primary School. Later, Mr. Manners spent over thirty years in the private sector as an accountant and banker, both in St. Kitts and Nevis. He was the first Chairman, and founding director of the Bank of Nevis Limited, and served that institution as a director for twenty-three years.

Mr. Manners is a keen student of History and the Arts. He writes poetry, plays the guitar, and is a member of two choirs on the island. He is currently researching the history and contribution of the African population of Nevis, with a view to writing a book on the topic in the future.

Mr. Manners is now retired from full-time work, and is currently President of the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS).

São Cristovão e Nevis

Reflections on the African Influence in St. Kitts

Eartha Vanessa Cassius

This text is an overview of how St. Kitts became one of the Caribbean's dominant leaders in the sugar industry and how the continuity of this notorious industry in that era moulded and wove the African traditions and influences into the cultural centre piece of present day St. Kitts.

A brief and historic examination of recounted events from as early as the 15th Century exploration and colonization juxtaposed with the fundamentals of West African history; relating to customs, habits and character of the enslaved will be exposed to make you even more conscious of the quotidian on our tiny island of just 68 square miles. Situated in the northern part of the Lesser Antilles chain in the eastern Caribbean, St. Kitts is in close proximity to the neighbouring islands of Antigua, St. Martin, St. Barth's, Saba and of course our sister island Nevis.

According to history, Christopher Columbus sighted and landed on St. Kitts in 1493. Thus began the inevitable change to life on this tiny Caribbean gem called "Liamuiga" which was the Carib name for the island. "Liamuiga" means fertile land, an accurate description of the soil on the island to date. Conventionally, Columbus' arrival is usually referred to as a discovery but I prefer a meeting of two worlds. It is obvious to all that the Caribs were the original settlers on the island previous to Columbus' invasion along with his fellow Europeans.

Columbus named the island after the patron saint of traveler, San Cristobal (St. Christopher). It was affectionately called St. Kitts by the English as Kit is an endearment for Christopher; and of course the French referred to it as St. Christophe. Both St. Christopher and St. Kitts are the official legal names of this small island paradise.

The arrival of the British in 1623 led by Sir Thomas Warner, and later followed by the French who fought for ownership of the island resulted in a decrease of the indigenous population on St. Kitts. The effects of this warfare, was detrimental to the Caribs existence along with the many diseases the Europeans brought to the island which the Caribs' immune systems were not strong enough to fight.

The Europeans saw the New World as a source of income from either natural resources or agriculture. St. Kitts had no gold or silver, so the Europeans tried agriculture. Initially, the chosen crop was tobacco. After its short success, Depoincy, the French Governor on St. Christophe, agreed with Thomas Warner to restrict the production of tobacco on St. Christopher when prices were jeopardized by a glut on the European markets. He personally then experimented with a sugar estate which did well. After further exploration, sugar became the cash crop of the island for many decades. Sugar production was somewhat successful but the labour required remained an obstacle as the number of people willing to work for wages was insufficient... Those who had land of their own, or who were losing their land to more prosperous neighbours, were not attracted to the idea of field-work. The independent cultivator, however small, can decide when he wants to leave his work and take a rest in the shade. The habit of independence is hard to lose and European immigrants were certainly reluctant to act as hired labourers in other people's field,¹ (although it was for their fellow Europeans).

In St. Kitts the high yielding profits from sugar in the 17th century encouraged the rapid growth of the slave trade. The sugar planters were rated as the best customers, and the increase of the African population on St. Kitts during that era paints a vivid picture of how they became the dominant population.

¹ The Making of the West Indies, F R Augier, S C Gaucon, D G Hall, M Reckord, Longman Caribbean, 1960.

YEAR	WHITES	SLAVES
1672	---	352
1678	1,234	1,436
1707	1,416	2,861
1720	2,740	7,321
1729	3,677	14,663
1734	3,881	17,335
1756	2,713	21, 891
1774	1,900	23,462
1787	1,912	20, 435
1807	---	26,000
1834	1,612	15,667

Fig 1. Population of St. Kitts during the slave Era, Deer, The History of Sugar II, 279 Oliver Caribbean

The above table reflects the increase in slaves due to the success of sugar and its demand for physical labour.

In “The People Who Came” Norman’s investigation reveals that most slaves came from West Africa. St. Kitts forefathers came predominantly from the African Kingdom of Ghana which experienced a similar system of government like that which was present in Europe...*in which rulers attempted to maintain stability with their territories through a system of mutual rights and duties. However, the African ruler was bound by customs and could, in no way, defy the traditions of the tribe which would anger the ancestors. The elders formed the civil service and they were also the military leaders who were also responsible for supervising the collection of taxes and ensuring that all officials were paid and supervised assistance to the poor. As important as the chiefs and elders, were the priests. They were not only advisers to the king, interpreters of the law, and the doctors; they were the guardians of the religious life of the people, without it the tribe could not survive.*²

In West African communities everyone shared the community development and, just like present day society, there were rules and consequences if rules were broken. *Responsibilities were dependent on community role...a fisherman provided dried fish and farmers a certain*

² The People Who Came, Book 1, Longman Caribbean pg. 72- 73.

*amount of their produce.*³ African communities had their own “slaves” but close examination shows that they were more likely to be prisoners. Many can and have raised the argument that slavery had already existed or it was a lifestyle that Africans were used to but, in African society, *People became slaves’ as a result of lawbreaking, or by capture in war, and sometimes these slaves were sold to Arab traders and taken along the trans-Sahara routes for sale in North or East Africa... However the slaves in Africa were sometimes able to earn enough to pay off their purchase price and buy themselves out of bondage. They could also marry into their owners’ families, and some, who engaged in trade, became quite rich. It was even possible for a freed slave to become a chief.*⁴

On the other hand and in my opinion, the slavery that our ancestors experienced in St. Kitts offered no hope. The only valid rules were those established by the white masters, and they had no interest in offering any way out of slavery. The possibilities and the reality of being a “slave” in ancient African society in no way reflected what happened during slavery.

Riots

*During the 1890’s the St. Kitts sugar industry, like that of the entire West Indies, was experiencing a severe depression...After weeks of smouldering resentment, occasioned by the refusal of a Portuguese Sugar Estate proprietor named Joaquin Farara to grant the workers on his estates of Needmust and Pond in the Basseterre Valley an increase in wages, disturbances broke out in Basseterre on 17 February 1896 and the shops of Portuguese merchants were set on fire and looted. The “Portuguese Riots” were a form of blind protest against the conditions of poverty and deprivation under which the workers laboured.*⁵ This proves that the estate owners still did not respect the rights of the Africans after slavery and did everything possible to oppress them wherever possible. *In the late 19 century, wages were reduced from 25 to 20 per cent in these small colonies during serious depression periods of 1884 and 1894, without serious incident except in St. Kitts in 1894,*

³ The People Who Came, Book 1, Longman Caribbean pg. 72.

⁴ The People Who Came, Book 1, Longman Caribbean pg. 72 - 73.

⁵ Forty years of Struggle”, The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery, pg. 1.

*where a riot broke out over the introduction of large clarifiers – with no increased remuneration task work.*⁶

According to Bonham Richardson, in 1901 St. Kitts had fifty four estates in operation. Most producing muscovado sugar in their antiquated steam factories that retrieved as little as 50 per cent of the potential sugar that came to the mill. *By 1926 the railway that collected the cane from the various plantations encircled the island which contributed to the cane arriving at the factory in a more efficient manner.*⁷ This was possible due to the fact that the mountain range on St. Kitts is located toward the island's centre and gentle slope outwards fringing the flat planes of the coastline.

Health, housing and other social conditions of the working class remained appallingly poor. By end of the 1920's, St. Kitts held the unhappy record of the highest death rate and the second highest infant mortality rate in the entire British West Indies... between 1897 and 1929 the island's population fell by 43%, 131,900 – 13,300. The general conditions in St. Kitts were so much worse than elsewhere in the West Indies that in 1929 The Royal Commission headed by Lord Oliver made the island subject of a special priority report, but no action was taken on it by the Imperial Government.

*A few years later, on 29 January 1935 a riot erupted in Buckley's Estate located in Western Basseterre. The Defence Royal was called out; it opened fire killing three persons and wounding several others.*⁸

Sir Probyn examines that both riots occurred during a period of economic depression due to the virtual collapse of the international sugar market which left the workers feeling frustrated in their efforts to obtain higher wages and better living conditions from their employers. *Both followed a commission of inquiry by the Imperial Government to inquire on conditions in the West Indies as a whole. Both riots were disorganized as no clear leader was identified; it was the disgruntled workers who took matters into their own hands.*

In the Buckleys riot 11 defendants, 5 of whom were women were charged. Mr Clement Mabre appeared for the Defence. He challenged the credibility of the police witnesses and the judge advised the jury to

⁶ "Forty years of Struggle", The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery, pg. 2.

⁷ Caribbean Migrants, Environment and Human Survival on St. Kitts and Nevis, Bonham C. Richardson, The University of Tennessee Press, 1983, pg. 63.

⁸ Forty years of Struggle", The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery pg. 8.

return a verdict of “not guilty” in favour of the accused. The other 13 persons were arraigned and 13 witnesses appeared before the crown and the defendants had 26 witnesses. After six days of trial, two defendants were convicted. The trial Judge, Chief Justice Sir James Rae criticized the manner in which the jurors had discharged their duties. Of the thirty-nine persons the following six were convicted and sentenced.

The convicted	Years sentenced
John Palmer	5years
Simeon Prince	5 years
Albert Sutton	3 years
James Liburd	3 years
Thomas Fergus	2 ½ years
Thomas Saddler	2 years

Palmer and Prince received the most severe penalty because Mr. Todd, the manager/proprietor of Lodge estate had been wounded by them.

Chief Justice expressed displeasure in the verdict as he found it peculiar that even though the facts in the riots cases were all quite simple, jurors had deliberated for hours in some instances, while in others, fifteen to thirty minutes was the time needed to arrive at a verdict.⁹

This revealed inconsistencies and thus raises questions regarding the justice system that was present as well as establishes that the social organization “status quo” was much more important than the simple truth, as Sir Probyn’s investigation of this proves that...Traditionally the plantocracy had been able to rely on the questioning compliance of the middle-class persons such as merchants, estate managers and the like when they served on the jury. These persons, even when they were black, tended to possess the same attitudes and prejudices as the resident Europeans. Providing that it did not affect them personally, they did not usually question the existing socio-economic structure or the inferior role and status within it assigned to black people. Generally speaking the middle-class conformed to and were supportive of the status quo.¹⁰

⁹ Forty years of Struggle”, The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery pg. 8.

¹⁰ Forty years of Struggle”, The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery, Unity Printers Ltd 2005.

The Moyne Commission reported in the 1930's that there was considerable middle-class antipathy towards the whites... The discontent of the middle-class was essentially political and related to their exclusion from the political process which was the right to vote.

Approximately 28,000 acres were devoted to sugar which was profitable to the island, but left no lands available for distribution. The arable lands were monopolized by plantation owners most of whom were foreigners living abroad. Whenever an estate failed... a larger neighbouring plantation bought it. Although there were only 61 estates in 1896 there was no advancement in development of a peasantry system which was the recommendations of the Norman Commission of 1897. Nevis developed a successful peasantry system as a result of failure of plantation sugar production.¹¹

Today the African presence is still very vibrant in our Kittitian culture and we will examine the influence in some areas such as religion, music, food, dress, language and behaviour. Interestingly Christine Hatt raises some questions about the influence of the African slaves family structure on some of the existing behavioural patterns plaguing today's Kittitian society. *As long as it was cheap and easy to import slaves from Africa, planters in the Caribbean discouraged slaves from marrying and having children. Young children were of no use to them on the plantation, and in any case huge numbers of slave children died within weeks of birth from disease and lack of food. However, in the late 18 century planters became worried that the supply of slaves from Africa was about to end, so they began to encourage men to marry on their 'home plantation' and to father the next generation of slaves¹². Our ancestors were forced to breed for the convenience of their owners'; their children were obligated to slavery even before birth. Children inherited their mothers' status as slaves. Some slave children were out to work as early as four years of age, doing jobs such as picking up rubbish or pulling out weeds. Older children were expected to look after the younger children during the day, while mothers were at work*

¹¹ Forty years of Struggle", The Birth of the St. Kitts Labour Movement, Sir Probyn Inniss, Sir Probyn Inniss, R.W. Beachery, Unity Printers Ltd 2005.

¹² History in Writing, Slavery from Africa to the Americas, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothers Ltd, London 1997, pg. 26.

*in the fields. Between about 10 and 14, children became full-time domestic slaves or field labourers. Many were sold to other plantations and never saw their mothers again.*¹³

In North America and the British Caribbean slave marriages had no legal status and slave families were not officially recognized. Nevertheless slaves struggled against all odds to preserve the family network. Most planters did not think twice about separating members of a slave family. Male slaves were often sold to another estate, leaving wives to bring up their children alone. Could this have been the origin of the current wide accepted trait in our society of single mothers?

Ethnic Origins

Clearly the Kittitian population is of African descent but it would be inaccurate to rule out the obvious influence of the Europeans specifically the Portuguese, French, English and the Lebanese who migrated here throughout the past centuries. One of my visits to the St. Christopher Heritage Society revealed that after the abolition of slavery in 1834 indentured Portuguese labour was imported and plantation owners had to deposit, in the Treasury, an amount equivalent to the cost of a return passage for each labourer. However, the Portuguese remained after they had served their time and the repatriation monies stayed in the Treasury. With time, plantation owners donated the money to the Government for building of a new Treasury, which is now home to the National Museum and the St. Christopher Heritage Society. Beside the relatively minute numbers of Portuguese, the French initially shared the island with the British and then left their mark in the names of national landmarks such as our capital Basseterre, basse in French means low and terre means land. Also the slave market was initially named Pall Mall Square and was renamed Independence Square on the celebration of our independence from Great Britain, 19 September 1983. The Portuguese influence is visible in surnames such as Pereira, Farara and Dias. The most recent census of 2001 paints a true picture of the ethnic dispersa present in today's Kittitian society.

¹³ History in Writing, Slavery from Africa to the Americas, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothers Ltd, London 1997, pg. 26.

ST. KITTS (CENSUS 2001)		
ETHNICITY / RACE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
African Descent/Negro/Black	32,799	93.1
Indigenous People (Amerindian/Carib)	11	0.0
East Indian	271	0.8
Chinese	40	0.1
Portuguese	48	0.1
Syrian/Lebanese	23	0.1
White/Caucasian	690	2.0
Mixed	1,125	3.2
Other	99	0.3
Don't Know/ Not Stated	111	0.3
Total	35,217	100.0

Religion

*Africans were polytheistic – believing in many Gods... and as they depended upon agriculture for their life, they worshipped Gods of the earth, sky and sun. They also practiced ancestor worship, as it was believed that the ancestors would watch over the tribe and their goodwill could help the tribe – or their enmity could harm it.*¹⁴ Religion was a vital part of daily life although the similarities and differences spread throughout Africa. The priests were just as important as the chiefs and the Africans were influenced by the religion that their owners followed on that particular island. Here in St. Kitts the church had 3 segments; the aristocrats and planters who sat in the seats which cost six pence. When the planters went to purchase their seats, if they were any left they would purchase them to ensure that their friends had seats and no one else had the opportunity to sit there. The middle class sat in the four pence section and they imitated the same behaviour as the upper class. This was not the case with the Africans who were used to worship and sat in the two pence section at the back, if the seats were sold out they had to stand and if the church was considered full to capacity, they humbly stood outside to try to be a part of this service

¹⁴ The People Who Came, Book 1, Alma Norman, Longman Caribbean, pg. 72.

to receive their blessing. This proves that the church supported a social structure that encouraged class separatism as in comparison to the African priests who, *attired in their awesome masks, invoked the blessings of the gods and the ancestors by dancing in the midst of reverent worshippers.*¹⁵

In Christine Hatt's *History in Writing* she discusses how, *"In some parts of the Caribbean, African beliefs developed into a religion known as obeah. Male and female obeah priests used their powers to contact the spirit world in order to influence events in the material world, for example curing a sick person or causing sickness in an enemy. Many planters were terrified of obeah priests, fearing their ability to harm whites and to rouse slaves to rebellion. As a result, punishments for practicing obeah were severe, often including the death penalty."*¹⁶ If the results of obeah practice were as true as the author believed why did slavery last for so long? Was it that the Africans were so mentally enslaved that they accepted this lifestyle or did they choose to use the ancient weapon of fear against themselves, keeping them in this harsh reality?

Let us compare the role of religion between British and Portuguese/ Spanish colonizations which were controlled by the Catholic colonial powers. *Slaves were baptized as Christians from the earliest days of slavery. But in the British-controlled, Protestant Americas, planters showed little interest in converting their slaves. Many feared that to accept slaves as Christians was to acknowledge that black slaves were equal to their white masters - a dangerous message as far as the planters were concerned.*¹⁷ The obvious lack of desire to fully embrace the Africans to share in religion left a void in the Africans spiritual life. *'The Great Awakening Christian Movement' introduced a new style of preaching based on the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian ministers in North America whose message emphasized that **all people, black and white alike, were sinners, but that all could be saved by Christianity.** This gave slaves a message of freedom and equality... many slaves converted. This message was also spread through the Caribbean by missionaries and in the late 18 and 19 century, blacks developed their own churches, where the singing, dancing*

¹⁵ *The People Who Came*, pg. 74.

¹⁶ *History in Writing, slavery, From Africa to the Americas*, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothrs Ltd, London 1997 pg. 26.

¹⁷ *History in Writing, Slavery, From Africa to the Americas*, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothrs Ltd, London, 1997 pg. 28.

*and preaching were influenced by African forms of worship.*¹⁸ The religious life in St. Kitts today still reflects our variety in forms of worship. There are still active Anglican churches in all the parishes along with several Methodist, Moravian and Roman Catholic. These structured churches are referred to as “big churches” because of their physical size and established European history. The Baptist style influenced churches have been referred to as “jump up and clap me” because of their physical style of worship or “side way churches” because they were not derived from the traditional style churches.

Our faith on the St. Kitts is predominantly Christian with a tiny infusion of many others. Please see chart below from the last recorded census from the Ministry of Sustainable Development, which reflects our growth and variety in religion.

Population by Religion

ST. KITTS (CENSUS 2001)		
RELIGION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Anglican	7,256	20.6
Baptist	1,899	5.4
Bahai	13	0.0
Bretheren	517	1.5
Church of God	2,092	5.9
Evangelical	1,095	3.1
Hindu	147	0.4
Jehovah Witnesses	460	1.3
Methodist	6,592	18.7
Moravian	2,511	7.1
Muslim	64	0.2
Pentecostal	2,800	8.0
Presbyterian	46	0.1
Rastafarian	617	1.8
Roman Catholic	2,620	7.4
Salvation Army	61	0.2
Seventh Day Adventist	1,457	4.1
Other	1,994	5.7
None	1,788	5.1
Not Stated	1,188	3.4
Total	35,217	100

¹⁸ History in Writing, Slavery from Africa to the Americas, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothers Ltd, London 1997.

Language

The size of Africa and the languages throughout the continent were also reflected culturally in the languages originally spoken by the slaves when they were brought to St. Kitts. In order to communicate with whites and other blacks, the slaves had to use the language of the colonial power then controlling the island. As the British ultimately retained control of St. Kitts, with time English became the sole language spoken by all slaves in the island. As expected from any living language, the English spoken by the slaves became different with the passing of years.

The African slaves had to create dialect to understand each other as they were not all from the same tribe. The creole that they established would have been a mix of their language and broken English with their accent, hence influencing our Kittitian dialect with phrases such as “me aint no” (I do not know), “gi me sum” (give me some). The strongest influence in language is the wisdom which has been passed down and what we normally refer to as “Ole People Say”. Very often you would hear a parent or an adult give advice by saying, “Tomorrow sun may never shine” (Do what you can today), “Moon run till day catch it” (If you keep doing wrongs, it will eventually be revealed). There are numerous expressions which we use, and to introduce “Ole people say”. This is in no way to be disrespectful or discriminatory, but, on the other hand, serves the purpose of expressing, that the phrase has been “alive” for a long time passed down through generations of elders. The local Kittitian dialect is enriched with many idioms and slang that represent the strength of our West African roots.

Food

During slavery it was cheaper to feed slaves with large quantities of carbohydrates and some protein, which usually was in the form of salted cod fish, because land animals meat was too expensive. This was imported instead of the meats that any of the African slaves were used to. Saltfish is now a luxury, a delicacy and a national dish among many, particularly here in St. Kitts, as on Sunday mornings the breakfast choice for some Kittitians is still saltfish and Johnny cakes. In conversation with African students living on the island, they reveal that they saltfish is also part of their diet but theirs is dried without being heavily salted like the one we are used to. I had the opportunity to taste it and it was just as good.

The staple diet for the Africans was cassava root as... *Agriculture was the basis of their life, with the men clearing the land and the women planting and tending the crops chief of which was cassava, a starchy root which could be boiled roasted, or dried and made into flour; plantain, beans and peanuts.*¹⁹ A cassava mill is used to grate cassava to make cassava bread, powder to make flour and starch. It is important to know how to use the mill as the juice is poisonous. The bread is flat unleavened and sometimes coconut is added to it, or coconut can be stewed and be placed in the middle of two whole pieces of bread and this would be the meat. This was referred to as a book. This is still made and sold by local vendors now referred to as “Agro processors”. During a visit with Ms Ismay Sweenie affectionately known to all as “Momma Maysie” and who will celebrate her 100 birthday this year, her children talked about how they preferred the book to the plain bread. This is an absolute treat, it is also filling and nutritious as this is a healthy carbohydrate. There are many different varieties of cassava but when cooked can be eaten just like any other root plant. Most Kittitians use a grater to grind the cassava and use the meal to make dumplings and conchie. Momma Maisie talks about how sweet the “coco dumplings” were. These were made from cassava and pieces of pork were inserted before cooking. Momma Maysie says that you could tell they were cooked when you saw the pork jumping up at you.

Breadfruit is also a staple and is used just like the cassava when cooked, but can also make a salad just like the potato as well as fritters or simply roast it which would be the traditional use of it. The same would be for the sweet potato, which is another root plant that was used and is still consumed for its natural flavour but ole people say that it is good for eye sight. Momma Maisie contributes her longevity to “de ground food”. The selling of theses local provisions from her backyard was how she earned her living. Local farmers would deliver to her by donkey and cart and she would also purchase from the local market and she bought coals from the Nevisians when they came down to sell on the local ferry. This method of buying and re-selling is locally referred to as “ton han” and even the vendors were described in this term. This was also the feeling of Ms Adeline Samuel – who was as affectionately as Ms Phoebe who recently passed at 102 and constantly replied when asked

¹⁹ History in Writing, Slavery from Africa to the Americas, Christine Hatt, Evans Brothers Ltd, London 1997.

about her longevity – said it was “de good ground food.” These ground foods such as plantains, sweet potatoes, eddoes, tania and dasheen are still very much a part of our diet.

Africans of course fished just like the Carib Indians and they were more net fishermen and would catch large amounts of sprat (small fish of the herring family) on their trips. This would be kept by frying it dry and keeping it cool overnight. In the past, it was possible to purchase fresh fish almost every day. There were no refrigerators so the fishermen would go out several times per week. Sometimes little children would be referred to as sprat. You would often hear when little children are seen in groups, “*Look at dem young sprat no.*” This was just to comment on their size, or usually if someone thinks that you are physically small for your age they would say, *well you big like a sprat.*

Herbs

The use of herbs is still very present in our daily lives and Kittitians use them as infusion for tea, or for healing purposes. Roots, barks, seeds, leaves and some whole plants are used to treat many types of ailment before we seek advice from a professional doctor. The tradition of using these herbs both come from our African ancestors, but also from our Carib native inhabitants. This fusion of cultures gave birth to the “bush tea” which is simply made by pouring hot boiling water on the leaves of these plants and allowing it to seep for a few minutes. The tea can be consumed on its own or sweetened with sugar or honey. Additionally lemon/lime juice can be added for flavour.

Some roots are used as natural anti-depressants, stimulants, sex drive enhancers, painkillers, weight loss and much more. Some Kittitians always try to find out, “wha de ole people say” before seeking professional medical advice. Roots such as mauby bark, sarsaparilla and ginger are also present in the form of “local drinks”. Both mauby and sarsaparilla are thought to be sexual stimulants, and mauby is also known to relax you and make you sleep, while ginger is used to make “ginger beer”, a favourite local drink and is used as a seasoning in certain foods.

Coconut oil is made and sold locally and is used in hair, on skin and is also consumed by drinking a small quantity regularly perhaps a teaspoon and is also used in cooking.

Music

The musical heartbeat of St. Kitts is a vibrant and rich rhythm that echoes the sounds of West Africa. This African influence is grounded in the types of instruments, the art form of song and the various dance Kittitians engage in. *During slavery, each craft and trade and occupation had its own songs, and recreation largely took the form of story-telling accompanied by singing and mime. Often the audience itself made up the choruses as the tale unfolded. The type of singing called leader and response, in which one person starts a song and the group sings a reply typically African. A development of this type of singing, called antiphonal, was characteristic of medieval European church music, and it is thought that this might have been influenced from Africa.*²⁰ This is still practised in the Baptist style churches, which were originally influenced by the Great Awakening Movement. The current members of these churches may feel it is American as they are influenced by this culture through our Cable Television; but it is truly African as they always have a leader and a response. They may not be consciously aware of its origin as they even tend to practise singing with an American accent. The negro spirituals are song in this format.

In all African communities, music held a very special place for it was felt to have its own magic, which helped to bind all members of the community together. In West Africa, the most characteristic was (and is) the Drum, which has many different kinds, used on different occasions... The great talking Drums are used in pairs and which imitate the sound of the African Speech, one drum producing a high note, and the other a low one. Using relays of drummers, messages could be quickly sent a hundred miles or more in this way. Nowadays, we use a variety of drums in our cultural music which have all been influenced from our African heritage.

The Kettle Drum was originally made from wood and is now made of metal/copper and is locally made in St. Kitts by Mr Zack Nesbitt the self proclaimed Doctor of Culture. The Base Drum is made from the keg used from shipping rum made by Mr Nesbitt and sheepskin is also used in the centre over the wood which helps to protect it as well as create the sound.

Other musical instruments used are the fife, the banjo, the quatro and the tambourine. They are all used in our local folklore string bands which can play

²⁰ The People Who Came Book 1, Alma Norman, Longman Caribbean.

without electronic support, which is the beauty and authenticity of this music. There are several of these String bands on the island and they play at all varieties of events and are most often seen at Port Zante welcoming the cruise ships.

As singing and dancing were favourite past times, they used flutes and banjos, a box filled with pebbles which was shaken like a tambourine, corrugated strips across which the player rubbed a plain stick, the rookaw and the scraper.”²¹

The fife originated from Africa and was originally made from bamboo and is now made from metal PVC.

The Banjo is made from tree trunk and sheepskin is used to cover it. There are two types: the tener banjo made from metal and can be bought ready-made; the Eucalily banjo is made from wood and is still made in the federation. The best are made by Owen Hendrickson, Banjo Productions in Nevis according to Zack Nesbitt.

The Quatro is no longer made locally; it is now made in China, but is still used.

Tambourine is made from wood and cheesebox is now ready-made and uses metal. The rim is made from Tamarind rods from the tamarind tree.

In some parts of Africa drums played a very minor role, and other instruments were widely used, made from materials readily available. Bamboo strips made xylophones; horn, wood, tusks, were fashioned into trumpets; calabashes and other gourds were turned into rattles.”²²

Folklore groups

Masquerades are a combination of African & Carib indian culture. The costume is a long sleeve pretty shirt and pants. A vest is worn over the shirt which is adorned with many different types and variety of ribbons. This kaleidoscope of colours reflects the originality of this art form. The headpiece which is adorned with peacock feathers and small mirrors represents power and mirrors to reflect the sunlight. The peacock dances to entice the pea hen and shows its beauty. The pale pink coloured mask represents the white man who had the power. During slavery the Africans had to dance to impress the

²¹ “Canes and Chains, A study of Sugar and Slavery, Elizabeth M. Halcrow.

²² The People Who Came, Book 1, Alma Norman, Longman Caribbean , pg. 73.

white man to possibly change their status on the plantation as it was thought that the slaves who worked in the Great House had an easier life, compared to the field slaves. The whining rhythmic dance was to entice the planter and, to some extent, amuse him as they were always intrigued at how fast the African could move their waist to the echo of the drums. Kittitians refer to this movement as, “wuking up.” When they throw the axe in the air and vibrate backwards to the ground they are calling out to their God. The masquerades also have a whip which is made from cow hide and it has a wooden handle. It is used only by 3 persons who are the chief and the two persons directly under him. During the dance, when they look up to the sun they are appealing to their God. The music which accompanies this is referred to locally as “Big Drum Music” it consists of the kettle drum, base drum & fife. The masquerades are very active in our cultural celebrations throughout the year. They can sometimes be seen performing at Port Zante welcoming our cruise ship guests and they also perform at national functions. They have several troupes around the island and anyone can join as they range from ages 5 and up. It just depends on your interest and if your body can keep up with the intense performance as very often they perform in the hot sun.

Clowns

They wear a big loosely fitted colourful overall decorated with bells and tinkles. Their pale pink masks represent the white Europeans and their hat is adorned with ostrich feathers. Their whip represented control and power and is also made from cow hide with steel in the handle. Their music is a combination of the piano accordion, concertino, shack pan and morroccos.

The Bull

This is an original plantation story which took place at Belmont Estate located in St. Paul’s. The bull is usually dressed in red because the bull that Mr Arthur Davis imported was a “red pole” expensive prize bull. The bull was bitten by dogs and contracted rabies. When Mr Davis went to visit the bull, he realized that it was kicking and butting very aggressively. He sent for his two brothers and they still could not get the animal under control. He sent for vet, Dr Jordan, because although Dr Jordan was deaf, he was very good with animals. They only sent for the veterinarian if it was absolutely necessary.

Dr Jordan examined the bull and gave him an injection which sent the bull into frenzy. It jumped in the air and started prancing around. This is still depicted in the present day folklore troupe. The bull, the dog, the doctor and the planter who is always addressed as Mr Davis are always represented. The person depicting the bull is usually dressed in red with a head piece original bull horns. A tail is usually attached to the rear of the pants to give the impression of a real bull. This scenario is played out live and the bull usually rushes into the crowd prancing around and the music sends it into frenzy and it whines its waist into a rhythmic motion as it encounters the onlookers. The band that accompanies this folklore troupe is made up of the chopping wheel, which is made from tree trunk, a tambourine, bar-jo or long pipe made from wood but is now made from PVC as it can tolerate rain; the shack pan made from metal filled with fine stones or jumbie beads and the fife is made from bamboo.

Macca jumbies

They get their name from the Macca tree which has a lot of prickles. The jumbies are restless spirits and are afraid of being pricked. It is thought that once you have a macca tree planted in your yard no jumbies will disturb you. The macca jumbies represent the witch doctors, they wear cone shaped hats and the dresses with stiff kang kang. The drawers are big, knee length and very frilly. They dance on stilts to indicate levitation. Originally after serious meditation and chanting for many hours the witch doctors would rise in the air because of the spirits which they invoked. Currently the men, who train to play in this art form, train to be more skilful on stilts dancing on leg and also with their legs behind their backs and in the air. Their music is very similar to that of the bull but they must know when to increase the tempo of the music as the chant and meditation rises to fervor.

Actors

The actors are both of French and African influence and originated from Poincey, the knight of Malta and Admiral to French fleet and governor of several small islands including St. Kitts. They are named from the physical performance that they do. The French soldiers used to sector over different sized pitch forks to show fearlessness to the world. The pounding of the stone is to prove their physical strength. They lived on Fountain Estate which is part

of St. Peter's Parish. The present day actor's troupe always comes from this parish. The French had brought Nigerians to the island as they believed that they were stronger. The French and Nigerians would compete and the Nigerians would provide the music which consists of a base drum, kettle drum and fife. The drumming is spiritual and the tempo rises and must be in synchronization to the actor's speed. They usually start running from about 12 – 15 yards or more but the tempo of the music is what is believed to take them successfully over the pitch fork. It is thought that to suddenly slow or stop the tempo can cause someone ill fate.

All the cultural groups used to compete for a large cake which was donated by the plantation owner. This was referred to as the "cake walk" and it was introduced to the island by Sir Thomas Warner when he brought the Welch colonists

Education

...Children's education was centred around learning the tribal customs and traditions so that they would live in a way which was pleasing to their ancestors. This training was in the hands of the priests. The children's education started very early and continued until they were about thirteen. At that time they went through a rigorous and secret initiation ceremony which tested their fitness to take part in all the activities of the community, and to accept the responsibilities of adulthood. Those who passed through this successfully were allowed to take part in the religious life of the people and, eventually they too became elders whose voice was heeded with respect.²³

Education is very important in Kittitian life and children are taught to contribute to the family life by helping with the domestic chores. If a family has a self employed parent, more than likely the child or children would be seen assisting in this business. This may have been influenced from our ancestry as children had to help from as early as four years old on the plantations.

Evidently the Africans primary education was to learn manual labour and create a language for survival. Missionaries who visited the island encouraged education primarily from preaching Christianity. This helped to influence, "The Negro Education Grant" which came into effect after the Abolition of Slavery where the British Government used the missionaries and other religious bodies

²³ The People Who Came, Book 1, Alma Norman, Longman Caribbean pg. 74.

to establish schools through this fund. *“They were at first well supported by the apprentices, who thought that if their children could read they would be able to rise in life beyond the hated position of field labourers.”*²⁴ Setting up small plantation schools throughout the island was successful but the need for a centralized school system was obvious. The lack of local former slave representation in government made it more difficult for this need to be given the required attention. It was usually a governor and the appointees were planters which meant that there was still “no voice” for the freed slaves. Eventually the school improved and they continued to be government controlled. This leads to our present day education system where Education is compulsory for all children under age 16. The majority of schools are public which means that they are government operated. This system of operation has been very successful in St. Kitts as Kittitians do believe that Education is the Key to success.

In closing, discussions with fellow Kittitians reveal that some feel that we are truly African, whilst others are against this idea and say I do not look African, but how do Africans look? Do they understand that on this motherland Africans are varieties of shades of black? To be African, is it to be black in skin colour, then close self- examination of our culture is necessary. We must remember that even though some of our forefathers were spermed by Europeans, we were never considered to be white. The life experienced was that of the black slave. This culture represented in the food we eat, the way we speak and how we love rhythm... is it black? Culture has no colour; it is history infused with our present interpretation. Do we realise the gifts of this heritage, or the freedom of education makes it easier to disassociate ourselves from the past. This colourful past has given us all these rights (free speech, the right to vote), what about the right to live freely and choose a career path.

Although St. Kitts soil remains fertile, the Sugar Industry is now closed. Is it not possible to use all these sweat blood and tears from sugar cane and turn this into a profitable future of renewable energy? We should now use this “sweet cane” for 21st century sweet profits to stay in our land. We need to take this cane and empower ourselves. If our ancestors had not had this experience, where would we be?

²⁴ The Making of the West Indies, F.R. Augier, S.C. Gordon, D.G. Hall, M. Reckford, Longman Caribbean.

I do agree that present day St. Kitts is not a hundred per cent ethnic African origin but for those who do not physically share in this past, they do enjoy with us “de good ground food” local drinks and our love for “de riddim” of the drum. Our people are Kittitians and Kittitian culture is seasoned with African influences. Our culture still shines through all current ethnicities and we all savour in these lasting flavours.

The author, Eartha Vanessa Cassius, is Kittitian born to parents from St. Kitts and St. Lucia. She was educated in St. Kitts. She began her professional career as a teacher at the former St. Theresa’s Convent School, now the Immaculate Conception Catholic School. In 2000 Eartha decided to further her education and migrated to England where she got accepted to The University of Birmingham where she pursued a joint honours Bachelors degree in French and Spanish, which included a minor in Portuguese. Eartha also studied British Sign Language as she wanted to work as volunteer with persons with hearing difficulty. Her dedication to this field offered her the opportunity to work permanently with persons with hearing difficulty and this provided her the opportunity to work for the South Birmingham Mental Health Trust, at Denmark House, (an inpatient care facility with deaf persons with mental illness) during her time at University. After her return to St. Kitts, Eartha worked with the University of Medicine & Health Sciences and International University of Nursing. She is now employed by the Brazilian Embassy in Basseterre where she coordinates several technical cooperation projects offered by the Brazilian government to nationals of St. Kitts and Nevis.



13. São Vicente e Granadinas

The African Heritage influence on the formation of National Identity in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Curtis M. King

Introduction

There is always a challenge when one is asked to write or speak on any topic on Africa in a region where many still feel a sense of shame when called an African. It is perhaps our collective fault, in that, we have too often failed to acknowledge the Priceless heritage that is ours to celebrate. Then again if we do not know of its existence, how can we celebrate? This proposes to explore, albeit only briefly, the influence of the African influence of the African Heritage in the formation of National Identity in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The rest of this introduction and the section that follows provide background information on St. Vincent and the Grenadines to help the reader to understand the context in which the formation of identity was and continues to take place.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is one of the four Windward Islands which, together with the Leeward Islands, comprise the organization of East Caribbean States, a sub-grouping of CARICOM.

It is located at longitude 60° 56' west and latitude 13° 15' north. Saint Vincent lies approximately 100 miles west of Barbados and 167 miles north of Trinidad. The island is 18 miles long and 11 miles wide. It has a land area of 133 square miles. Inland, the island is very mountainous with many rivers and fertile soil. Agriculture is naturally the major industry in St. Vincent. Bananas, ground provisions, and arrowroot are major crops.

The Grenadines consist of 32 islands and Cays stretching for 45 miles south of St. Vincent. They are 17 square miles in land area. The largest Grenadine islands are Bequia, Union Island, Canouan, Mustique and Mayreau. The Grenadines are tourist havens at the center of the country's tourism thrust.

The population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is very small. The 2001 Report of the National Population Census put the number at 106,253 of which 77,390 (72.8%) was black.

The Table below gives a breakdown of the ethnic groups in the country according to the census report.

ETHNIC GROUPS	NUMBERS	%
African/negro/black	77390	72.8
Mixed	21303	20
Carib	3347	3.6
East Indian	1436	1.4
White/Caucasian	870	0.8
Portuguese	608	0.6
Syrian/Lebanese	69	0.06

St. Vincent was discovered and settled long before the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Archeological evidence seems to suggest that St. Vincent was settled around 5000 B.C. by a group of South American people called the Siboneys (Ciboneys). They were followed by two other South American groups; the Arawaks who came around the time of Christ and the Kalinago (misnamed "Caribs") whose entry is placed at 1200 A.D.¹ It is believed that the more militaristic Kalinago conquered or chased away the more peaceful agrarian Arawaks. Thereafter, the Kalinago enjoyed a period of unmolested settlement of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that lasted close to 500 years.

This peaceful sojourn of the Kalinago was shattered with the arrival of the Western Europeans in the late 15th and early 16th century. In the initial stages, the Kalinago's stout defense of the island won them a temporary reprieve. Spain was the first to attempt to wrestle the territory from the Kalinago. After her initial contact with the Kalinago in the early 15th century,

¹ Adams, Edgar: People On The Move (Kingstown,2002) p. 3.

she had no desire to be tied down in a protracted conflict with an elusive enemy over small islands that lack precious minerals and adequate land space for her enterprise. She therefore abandoned her colonial ambitions for the island in favour of more attractive alternatives in the Greater Antilles (larger Caribbean islands) and the American mainland.

The French and British found the Kalinago in such an impregnable position that they deferred their conquest for a later period. They later engaged in a protracted struggle for control of the Islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the early period, however, they adopted a hands-off policy which regarded the territory as neutral grounds, not-to-be subjected to European Colonization. This unwritten policy was subsequently formalized in 1648 at the treaty of Aix La-Chappell. The signatories were of course the two most powerful European nations at the time, England and France.

These unique set of historical circumstances delayed St. Vincent's "wholesome" incorporation into the European Colonial System and its attendant sugar-plantation-slavery nexus.² They also facilitated the birth of a new ethnic group, one that can boast of being the true natives of St. Vincent. This new group was a consequence of the union between the Kalinago and the Africans.

Enslaved Africans on hearing that the island was a bastion of resistance to European colonialism, escaped to the island from sugar plantations in Barbados and St. Lucia. Their numbers were augmented by other Africans who sought and gained refuge after the occasional shipwreck which resulted in their freedom. The subsequent unions between the two people produced a people called the Garinagu (Black Caribs). They fused African, Kalinago and French customs to produce the Unesco acclaimed "Garifuna Culture". Today these people are popularly referred to as the Garifuna people.

Conflict between the Kalinago and Garifuna opened the gate to European colonization. The French were the first to arrive. They were invited by the Kalinago to assist them in their fight against the now populous Garifuna. After suffering defeat, the French wisely decided to befriend the Garifuna. They negotiated a peaceful settlement between the groups.

² McDonald, Roderick A. (ed.): *Between Slavery and Freedom: Special Magistrate John Anderson's. Journal of St. Vincent Apprentice*: University of West Indies Press (Kingston, 2001) p. 3.

That settlement resulted in the division of the island between the two. The West (Leeward) went to the Kalinago while the East (Windward) went to the Garifuna. The French lived among both groups but favoured the leeward side of the island. The French brought slavery to the island. They employed slave labour in the production of cotton, tobacco, indigo and a small quantity of sugar.³ The Garifuna flattened their foreheads to distinguish themselves from enslaved Africans brought by the French.

The French sly maneuvering did not fool the British. The island was no longer neutral territory. The British therefore sought to wrestle the island from the French. The culmination of the “seven-year war” between the two great European rivals in 1763 settled the issue of “ownership” of the island. St. Vincent was ceded to the British at the treaty of Paris in that year. Of course, the island was ceded to the British without regards for those people who lived on it. The Kalinago and the Garifuna were naturally angry while the French settlers, in obvious defiance of their government, remained on the island until 1763 when the Treaty of Versailles secured their departure.

The British settlers, in the meantime, moved into the island to make good their country’s claim on the island. There was indeed continued conflict between the French and British with the French conquering the island for a short period (1779-1783) but the major resistance to the British claims was conducted by the Kalinago and more so the Garifuna.

The match that lit the spark that resulted in open hostilities was the British appropriation of the Garifuna Lands on the Windward side of the island. These were the most suitable lands for sugar cane cultivation, given the mountainous nature of most of the other areas. The British were determined to replicate in St. Vincent their success in sugar production enjoyed in some of the other islands. They were not about to allow any barriers to stand in their way.

Some writers refer to the resultant hostilities as the “War of the Brigands”, and others, the “two Carib Wars”. Whatever the nomenclature, in essence, the hostilities (1763-1797) were the latter part of the protracted conflict between the Europeans and the early settlers of the island for ownership and control. Despite brilliant leadership and superb military tactics and the general heroics of the Kalinago and Garifuna peoples, there was only one victor, the British with their superior technology and weapons.

³ Bobrow, Jill: *St. Vincent and the Grenadines A Plural Country*: Concepts Publishing (New York, 1985) p. 2.

The Garifuna people (over 5000 of them) who surrendered were exiled. They were sent to Roatan Island, off the coast of Honduras. Today their descendants can be found in Belize and several Latin American countries where they continue to preserve the Garifuna culture. Joseph Chatoyer, the Garifuna Chief at the time, was elevated to the First (and only) National Hero of Post Independent St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2001. Those Garifuna people who refused to surrender found refuge in the mountainous interior region of the Massarica Valley, in the area that is today called Greiggs.

The Kalinago were “relocated” on lands almost to the northerly tip of the island called Sandy Bay and Morne Ronde, far removed from the British settlements. Most of the descendants of these people still lived in that part of the island.

The British, by 1797, was in absolute control of the island. It was from this period that St. Vincent was incorporated “wholesomely” in the British Colonial Empire. Thus “by the early nineteenth century, sugar production peaked at over 20,00 hogsheads in some years, while the slave population increased dramatically reaching some 2,500 by 1808, the year the slave trade was abolished.”⁴ Consequently, St. Vincent never enjoyed the 18th century suffer boom experienced in the other islands. Slavery was short lived effectively lasting only thirty seven years, from 1799-1834.

Moreover, the lack of suitable lands for sugar cane cultivation attracted only a small number of whites to the island. In 1834, the population was estimated to be around 26,550. Of this figure 22,550 were former enslaved Africans, 3,000 (free coloured/Mullato) and 1,300 whites.⁵ Most probable this figure did not include the Kalinago and Garifuna people who resided outside of the reach of the Europeans.

In the post-emancipation period there was an exodus of the newly freed African workers from the plantation. To fill the void the British imported through immigration schemes, small numbers of Portuguese (2,001), East Indians (2,475) and an even smaller number of Africans. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, at the turn of the 20th century, had a “cosmopolitan population that grew out of the matrix of a pluralistic group became fully integrated into the Vincentian Society”.⁶ Their combined input has given the Vincentian society its distinctive identity.

⁴ McDonald: Between Slavery and Freedom, p. 3.

⁵ Ibid p. 246.

⁶ Bobrow: St. Vincent and the Grenadines, p. 6.

From here onwards this paper explores the influence of the African heritage in the formation of that identity.

What is meant by National Identity?

It is argued that the Nation-State cannot survive “in a state of anomie, it needs an identity to provide a psychological frame of reference in which to function”.⁷ This argument posits that identity helps to define the values and priorities of the State. These values and priorities combined with several objective factors to influence the conduct of both domestic and foreign policies.⁸ Thus, National Identity can be seen as “process occurring at subjective level like moral, esprit de corps or mood” with the exception of course “that it is far more complex and includes myth and epistemology”.⁹ Consequently, National Identity as used in this paper refers to what Sidney W. Mintz described is “a subjective and shared feeling of belonging in the Nation-State and regarding it as one’s own”.¹⁰ Thus, there is national awareness and acceptance of the society’s culture and traditions. Embedded in the culture and traditions are the values and priorities that enjoy national consensus and which help to guide our conduct among ourselves and with others.

In light of this definition it is now opportune to revisit the conclusion drawn at the end of the previous section of this paper. It stated that the various groups, by the turn of the 20th century, had fully integrated themselves into the Vincentian Society and gave it its distinctive national identity. This is indeed a loaded conclusion which requires more elucidation in light of the definition of National identity adopted for this paper.

Firstly the term “Vincentian Society” presupposes the existence of a common culture that was distinctively Vincentian at the turn of the century. This, however, could not have been the case. What Mintz (1971) postulated about the wider Caribbean can be applied with little difficulty to St. Vincent. That is, the “diverse nature of the origins of population; the complicated European cultural impositions and the absence ... of any firm continuity of

⁷ Bostock, William W. And Smith, Gregg W.: On Measuring National Identity Social Science Publishers Vol4 No.1(September,2001) pp. 1-6 access @ <http://www.allacademic.com>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Mintz, Sydney: “The Caribbean as a Socio-Cultural Area” Quoted in Peoples and Culture by Michael M. Horowitz: The Natural History Press (New York, 1971) p. 33.

culture of the colonial power have resulted in a very heterogeneous cultural picture”.¹¹ This, however, does not negate the fact that there were and continues to be efforts at integration and that the development of a Vincentian persona was already in progress.

Similarly, the “Vincentian identity” at best could only have existed in its embryonic stage given that St. Vincent at the time lack the freedom (independence was only obtained in 1979) and the institutions upon which to build a strong national consensus on what should constitute an identity. In such absences the collective memory as articulated through the historiography and literature provides both the basis for the formulation of and the evidence to support, regardless of how immature, the presence of an identity. For, in reality the formation of a national identity starts long before the attainment of independence. Thus, despite the obvious weakness inherent in the conclusion, it is nevertheless useful as a starting point for difficult task of discussing a topic that presupposes the presence in St. Vincent and the Grenadines of a developed and distinct Vincentian culture and identity.

The Role of the African Heritage in the Formation of National identity

In this short paper only a few categories of the African heritage will be explored. They include the demography, language, religion, the arts, ceremonies (festivals), and social organization.

It is very difficult to establish for certain the specific (West) African peoples that settled on St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The commercial records gleaned from ship logs and publications of the day, advertising enslaved Africans to be sold, provide some information on the issue. Very useful data for this paper was also gathered from J.D. Elder¹² and E.I. Kirby¹³. More indepth historical and anthropological research will in the future provide more comprehensive and accurate assessment of the situation. It is however safe to conclude from the sources mentioned above

¹¹ Ibid p. 19.

¹² Elder, DR.J.D: *African Survivals in Trinidad and Tobago*: Natural History Press (London, 1988).

¹³ Kirby, I.E.: Quoted in *Caribbean Sunseekers: St. Vincent and the Grenadines* by Don Philpott: MPC (England, 1995) pp. 14-15.

that the foreparents of the vast majority of Vincentians include the Mandingo, Yoruba, Hausa, Congo and Ibo. No attempt will be made to establish the specific location of these people. This will be virtually impossible given that these groups had no control over their settlement patterns and in cases where they had some room to maneuver, survival strategies negated the practice of living as separate ethnic people as was done in Africa. Overtime, these people, through the integration of those cultural practices that they were able to retain, came to be regarded as one: the Africans.

Their cross-fertilization with the Kalinago has produced a new group of people, the Garinagu. The Garinagu's culture, Garifuna, began in St. Vincent but was transferred to Central America, where it matured. This culture gained international recognition in 2001 when it was proclaimed an indigenous culture. The loss of this culture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has however, not prevented Vincentians from accepting the Garifuna people as a product of Vincentian Culture. Their heroic struggles against British colonialism have become immortalized in the Vincentian culture. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, the first and only National Hero of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the Garifuna Paramount Chief, Joseph Chatoyer.

Moreover, great efforts are being made by the state, historians, and practitioners of the expressive artforms to satisfy the growing interest among the Vincentian Community in this native Culture. Correspondingly, greater appreciation for the descendants of this culture continues to grow. There are now regular contacts between the exiled community and that in the 'motherland'. There are also organizations in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that are dedicated to retrieving those elements of the Garifuna culture that are no longer practice on the island.

The spoken language provides undeniable evidence of the influence of the African heritage. The different West African groups brought their Language with them. Their circumstances however, forced them to develop a common language in order to communicate. Over time their African language was replaced by a 'Creole' language which meshed lexical and other elements of the various West African languages with the dominant European language present at the time.

Consequently, the new language, although dominated by English, contained a number of African words that are used to describe religion, customs, food

and folk tales. These are nationally accepted and easily understood by the Vincentian masses. Some of the more common words include:

- (i) Food – Yam, Eddo, Okro, Guinea pepper, callaloo
- (ii) Customs – ananse (annacy) stories
- (iii) Religion – Shango, Obeah
- (iv) Personal names – Kwame (Quammie), Kwasi (Quashie) and Kofi (Cuffy).

Religion has been identified as a fundamental element in the formation of moral codes in traditional African cultures. These cultures have given the Afro-Caribbean people a “cosmogony which made the concept of Fate, the Afterlife and Judgment central in their morality system.”¹⁴ It is argued that Christianity, despite its cloak of colonial authority and power, did not completely replace traditional religious beliefs in the African Converts.

Several researchers have argued that the African retained much of the religious ideas and practices. Some of these people have created “their own brand of religion usually a syncretism of African and Judastic theological practices.”¹⁵ Others have created their own religion independent of Christianity, for example Rastafarianism. There is general agreement that the cultural expression in the Caribbean that bears the closest resemblance of the African traditional culture is the religious practices of the Afro-Caribbean people.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines the best example of such practices is the Penitents, also called the Shakers and Spiritual Baptists. Interestingly, the followers of this religion were called Shakers because of their very African trait of ‘spiritual healing’ and possession or trance which caused them to ‘catch the spirit’ and shake (dance) in an uncontrollable manner.

This religion enjoys mass support among the rural working class people. Attempts to prohibit shakerism in the early 20th century failed.¹⁶ The offending legislation was eventually removed in 1965.¹⁷ Today, the Spiritual Baptist Religion is a bonafide religious practice throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

¹⁴ Elder: African survivals in Trinidad and Tobago p. 96.

¹⁵ Ibid p. 42.

¹⁶ Adams: People On The Move p. 144.

¹⁷ Ibid.

It is said that the Afro-Caribbean retained very little of the Arts and crafts practiced in Africa. Technology is blamed for the low retention. It is argued that the enslaved Africans brought to the Caribbean to participate in an economic enterprise found that the dominant technology of the Europeans was superior in content, organization and function to that which existed in their homeland. Hence, the production of traditional Arts and crafts were relegated to domestic situations; to independent communities with little or no European influence such as maroon communities or small enclaves in the post Emancipation period.¹⁸

Research has nevertheless identified several areas in which traditional African art and craft forms have survived. These include the culinary Arts; music and dance; and handicraft. One of the reasons for the success of the African labourers was the familiarity of these people with many of the crops grown in the Caribbean. Cocoa, Sugar cane, plantains bananas and ground provision such as sweet potatoes, Coco (dasheen) were found in Africa. Thus, many of the styles used to prepare food from these crops have survived with only moderate modification based on the unavailability of the complementary goods. The void created, for example, by the absence of palm oil was filled by coconut oil called “Lard oil” in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Callaloo Soup, in which the dasheen leaves is prominent, is a famous soup throughout the country. Cassava bread (bam, bam) and farine (made from the cassava flour) are also very popular and especially prominent in Heritage Month (March). Corn is said to be eaten as it is done in Africa – in the form of boiled corn. Another popular dish is the “duccuna” made from ground sweet potato (coconut and flour) and cooked in banana leaves. This delicacy is called by several names throughout the Caribbean and West Africa.

Traditional herbal medicines are in vogue for such maladies as the common cold and gastroenteritis, internal bleeding caused by a fall or heavy blow to the body. Some of these herbs have been immortalized in Vincentian folk songs, calypso and reggae music. There is a growing body of knowledge on herbal medications as more people embrace a life of few chemicals. Many economic enterprises have therefore developed around the production and sales of herbal medicines. The challenge for these small businesses is to move their operations to large scale operations where they can take advantages of the many opportunities that are available in this area.

¹⁸ Elder: African Survivals in Trinidad and Tobago p. 45.

The annual carnival festival observed in Caribbean countries is a mixture of cultural expressions reflecting several influences including of course the African Influence. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines the carnival character “Moko Jumbie” is said to be a derivation of God “Moko” coming straight out of West African Tradition. It is claimed that the word “jumbie” was added by field slaves.¹⁹ Another ceremony that is especially common to the people of the southern Grenadines is the “Big Drum Dance” or the maroon festival. This dance is performed at the end of the dry season and is intended to make the rain fall. The dance is said to have its roots most likely in Mali, Africa.²⁰

Finally, a few words on the African heritage and the social organization in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Aspects of the key elements – kinship, social ranking on the basis of blood, family type, residence and descent rules are derivatives from West Africa. Patriliney (where descent is reckoned through the male lineage), the patrilineal extended family unit and the incorporation of the non-blood relatives (godparents and nannies) in the family unit are still common practices in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. J.D. Elder describe the situation in Trinidad and Tobago, “The extended family comprising of man’s wife, his unmarried sons and daughters and some of his grandchildren resident in the old primary family household is an undying social institution that urban migration has reinforced.”²¹ This is a depiction that is very similar to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Moreover, the support structure of the extended family does not only provide emotional solidarity and economic stability for members but it also encourages social cohesion and co-operative self-help projects in the wider society. The co-operative movement is vibrant and has a high penetration rate among the working population.

Conclusion

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a unique component of a wider Caribbean civilization. Its histography indicated that it was settled by persons of diverse origins all of whom brought with them their cultural practices. Despite

¹⁹ Peters, Michael: Our Cultural Heritage: Department of Culture, Ministry Of Culture and Tourism(SVG) p. 1.

²⁰ Ibid p. 8.

difficult and challenging circumstances they were able to retain and later fused many of their cultural practices that gave rise to a creolized culture that has much in common with its Caribbean neighbours while remaining uniquely Vincentian in many respects.

The African heritage has played a significant role in the process. In many respects we cannot speak about a Vincentian identity without recognizing the outstanding contribution of the African Heritage in the process. This paper provided a cursory glance at the link between the two. It focused more attention at the level of the individual rather than at the level of the broader society. However it is recognized that the Nation-State to be successful must be able to mobilize its members to work towards the attainment of clearly defined priorities aimed at enhancing both their material and non-material lives. The presence of a strong national identity – members will make this task so much easier.

14. Suriname

Maroons in Suriname and National Identity: Contributing to the Construction of National Identity in Suriname

Salomon Emanuels

1. Introduction

Suriname is a multiethnic, multicultural society made by human hands. Currently, the country consist eight to ten ethnic groups with different language groups and religious denominations. All these ethnic groups live peacefully together while maintaining their cultural particularities. This unique community is in fact the intended or unintended consequence of colonialism, slavery and immigration in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. In fact, colonialism, slavery and immigration were processes to suppress the identities of the colonized, the slaves and immigrants. Fortunately, the oppressed are not always helpless victims of their oppressors. By self-identification through to hark back to their origin and history or historiography the oppressed were able to keep up their identities. In the course of history these identity have been continually adapted to the circumstances. Colonialism, slavery and immigration were also a meeting of cultures and ethnicities (Europeans, Africans, Asians and others).

At that meeting, each participant was looking for identification, and because of the diversity there was a constant struggle of national recognition which was expressed in issues such as language, political representation, education, specific group rights, natural resources, national anthem and national holidays. The struggle for national recognition can be in fact seen as a reflection of the process of the construction of group identity. Simultaneously with the

construction of group identity, consciously or unconsciously, different ethnic groups worked on the construction of a proposed “hybrid Surinamese national identity”.

This article examines the cultural and political role Maroons play in the shaping of national identity in Suriname. My point here is that the Maroons have made and still make a not inconsiderable contribution to the process of national identity construction in Suriname. I hasten to add immediately that this process is continuous and that any ethnic group in Suriname made here unique contribution. This is in fact a hybrid Surinamese national identity. In this context, the liberation struggle of the slaves, , in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, known as *marronage*, is viewing as a historic act that greatly affected the sense of national identity of the Afro-Surinamese descendants in the interior of Suriname.

Directly linked to the liberation struggle of the ancestors is the participation of Afro-Surinamese descendants of the interior, in the 20th century to the struggle for national recognition. I refer to this political struggle as *maronization*, which means that everything is reduced to the freedom struggle of the ancestors and used to mobilize people of the own group to claim their rights to national recognition. It is a political process in which people also trying to rewrite Suriname’s history by a different interpretation of the negative connotation that the white colonial power was given to the liberation struggle. Their participation in education, politics (including elections, civil war and national government) as well as to cultural and religious, civil society and private sector is placed in the light of *maronization* and its significance for the construction of national identity in Suriname. This brings me to the question whether the Maroons are well aware of their contribution to the construction of the Surinamese national identity. However, do they have a sense of national identity? I hope to answer these questions in this article.

I want to first say that the Maroons are not very excited for national holidays such as Emancipation (July 1) and Independence Day (November 25). These days are associated more with other peoples, especially Creoles, then with their own ethnic group. The underlying idea is that Maroons have little or no share in forming those days and that they are not affiliated with their own group history of the Maroons. On the other hand Maroons don’t deny the Suriname national identity, but they don’t support it openly in a conscious way. With this attitude Maroons consciously or unconsciously underestimate

the progress of processes of identity construction and its own contribution to these.

2. Maroons in Suriname

The Maroons of Suriname and French Guiana (formerly known as “Bush Negroes”) have long been the hemisphere’s largest Maroon population. They are the most culturally, politically, and economically independent of all Maroon peoples in the Americas¹. Between the mid-17th and late 18th centuries, large numbers of slaves escaped from coastal plantations in the Dutch colony of Suriname, in many cases soon after their arrival from Africa. They fled into the forested interior, where they regrouped into small bands and began forging a viable existence in this new and inhospitable environment. This daunting challenge was made even more difficult by the government’s persistent and massive efforts to eliminate the threat they posed to the colony’s thriving plantations.

The colonists reserved special punishments for recaptured slaves – hamstringing, amputation of limbs, and a variety of deaths by torture. The organized pursuit of Maroons and expeditions to destroy their settlements date at least from the 1670s, when a citizen’s militia was established for this purpose. During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, numerous small-scale military expeditions were mounted, sometimes at the personal expense of particular planters. But these rarely met with success, for the Maroons had established and protected their settlements with great ingenuity and had become expert at all aspects of guerrilla warfare. It was between the 1730s and 1750s, when “the colony had become the theater of a perpetual war”, that such expeditions reached their maximum size and frequency.

The increasingly costly warfare culminated in a decision by the colonists, during the late 1740s, to sue their former slaves for permanent peace. But peace proved elusive, and in 1754-55 they decided to mount yet another massive expedition consisting of 500 men against the Saramakas. In the 1760s, peace treaties were at last successfully concluded with the two largest Maroon groups, the Ndyukas and the Saramakas, and with the much smaller Matawai.

¹ The historical information processed in this section comes from an article by Richard and Sally Price, entitled “Maroons in Suriname and French Guiana under Assault” (2001), which is extracted from Cultural Survival, Inc.

New slave revolts and the large-scale war of subsequent decades, for which an army of mercenaries was imported from Europe, eventually led to the formation of the Aluku (Boni), as well as the smaller Paramaka and Kwinti groups.

Today, there are six politically distinct Maroon peoples in Suriname with a total number of 72,500 people, consisting 14.5% of the Suriname population. Beside their traditional territories, large numbers of Maroons live today outside of these areas, in Paramaribo or the Netherlands, and, increasingly, in the coastal towns of French Guiana. Although these societies were formed under broadly similar historical and ecological conditions, they vary in everything from language, diet, and dress to patterns of marriage, residence, and migratory wage labor. The greatest cultural differences are between the Maroons of central Suriname (Saramaka, Matawai, and Kwinti) and those of eastern Suriname and western French Guiana (Ndyuka, Aluku, and Paramaka). Languages divide similarly, with variants of Saramaccan spoken by Saramakas, Matawais, and Kwintis, and variants of Ndyuka spoken by Ndyukas, Alukus, and Paramakas.

Over the past four decades, the world of these peoples has undergone dramatic transformations. The first major incursion came in the 1960s, when the colonial government of Suriname, in collaboration with Alcoa, summarily dispossessed (without consultation or compensation) some 6,000 Saramakas of lands that had been guaranteed under the 18th century treaty in order to construct a hydroelectric dam and lake. The period of the 1960s-1970s also witnessed relatively gradual modernization – out-board motors that facilitated mobility within and beyond the interior, the construction of airstrips in the interior, radios and tape recorders that allowed closer communication with the coast, gasoline-powered generators in some of the villages that brought electric lights and the occasional refrigerator, and an increase in the missionary schools that prepared boys and sometimes girls – for contacts with Creoles and other non-Maroons. All of these changes were monitored by public consensus, and through community meetings and the consultation of gods, ancestors, and local divinatory instruments such as oracle bundles.

In the 1970s, there were more dramatic transformations. Suriname moved away from its ties to Europe, becoming an independent republic, and French Guiana moved closer, as Paris targeted it for rapid development in connection with the establishment of the European Space Center in Kourou. These shifts eventually had profound consequences for Maroons in terms of territorial sovereignty, political independence, cultural integrity, and economic opportunities,

not to mention basic issues of health and personal dignity. Since independence in 1975, Suriname has been pursuing an increasingly militant and destructive policy against Maroons, stripping them of their rights to land and its potential riches and endangering their right to exist as distinctive peoples. In 1980, the army seized power in a coup d'état, and the country began a downward spiral from which it has never recovered – a plummeting economy, a massive brain drain, and a notable increase in poverty, drugs, and crime. In 1986, civil war broke out between Maroons and the national military, sending thousands of Maroons fleeing across the border into French Guiana. The fighting that raged from 1986 to 1992 pitted Maroons against the national army of Suriname, bringing back to life many of the horrors of their early ancestors' struggles for freedom. African medicine bundles that had lain buried for 200 years were unearthed and carried into battle. Maroon men and boys, often armed with shotguns, confronted the army's automatic weapons, tanks, and helicopter gunships dropping napalm. Whole villages, particularly in the Cottica Ndyuka region, were razed as soldiers killed hundreds of women and children with machetes and bullets (Polimé & Thoden van Velzen, 1988; in Price & Price, 2001).

From the termination of the civil war in 1992 and due to the international support for reconstruction and development of the inland, the process of modernization under the Maroons in Suriname has increased in severity. With support of various city NGOs, there are dozens of community organizations in the villages established. These community organizations mainly focus on improving living conditions in the villages.

In the past 15 years, hundreds of small projects were implemented in areas such as health, education, agriculture, sanitation, drinking water and income generation. Several foreign and domestic donors have made available funds for this purpose. Furthermore, there are a rapidly growing number of young Maroons who through education, sport and music integrated in the Surinamese society. Maroons have in recent years also focused more on small business and earn money as prospectors, market vendors or service providers. However, these positive developments have not resulted in stopping the migration to the city under the Maroons. The official statistics show that about half of the Maroons are now live outside the traditional areas mainly in Paramaribo and the surrounding area². Maroon migrants often live under poor conditions

² General Bureau of Statistics Suriname. Seventh General Population and Housing Census in Surinam. National Results Volume I, Demographic and social characteristics. August, 2005.

where there is poor housing, lack of water, sanitation and electricity and unemployment. Many Maroons in the urban environment, especially the “newcomers”, are living in poverty.

3. Definitions of concepts

In the introductory concepts such as multi-ethnic, multicultural, identity, national identity and self-identification used as if everyone knows what I mean. In the social sciences there are regularly discussions about the meaning of concepts. Although social scientists often do not agree with each other about the concepts, there is agreement among them that used terms should be defined. I will in this article also follow that social scientific tradition.

Multi-ethnic and multicultural society

A multi-ethnic society can be defined as a society in which different ethnic groups, despite differences in culture, race and history coexist (see Welsh 1993). A multicultural society characterized by tolerance mainly by the absence of racism and racial discrimination, and guarantees freedom of belief and religion. Suriname can in that sense be regarded as multicultural society.

What makes an ethnic group says Verkuyten (1999), is the reference to common ancestry and origin. This is the core of ethnicity and can be found by various authors (1999:43). The origin does not actually have to be, but for the individuals concerned it is plausible and they perceived it as real. Barth (1969) did not close his eyes to the importance of origin, but he summarizes ethnic groups and social groups as the result of self-definition and definition by others. Ethnicity is for him a principle of social organization and ethnic identity is a matter of marking and demarcation towards others. For him there is ethnicity when people are classified in terms of their “basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background” (1969:13).

Barth’s approach marked a break with, until the sixties prevailing thinking in terms of cultural groups. It was not only used a relatively static concept of culture, but ethnicity and culture were also identified. Such identification implies *inter alia* that any culturally distinct group, such as Rastafarian culture, gay culture or social class, should be understood as an ethnic group (see Verkuyten 1999).

Barth, was criticized by some authors for a primordial and static approach to ethnicity. This criticism follows the debate in anthropology about whether a primordial ethnic identity or more situational in nature. Both approaches were primarily a reaction to the assimilation thinking in the United States. The essence of that thinking was the idea that ethnic-cultural differences are temporary and will eventually disappear in the crucible (melting pot). In reality, ethnic and cultural differences proved to be persistent. After several generations, many people continue to see themselves in ethnic terms, and prefer their own ethnic group.

Of both primordial and situational approaches there are called variants. The extreme, primordial variant sees ethnicity as more or less innate. This approach has hardly any supporters in the social sciences. Generally in this variant much more emphasis is on the idea of ancestry and origin. Ethnicity is a central principle of social structure which is given from the earliest age. Knowing which ethnic group they belong and what this means, is taught at a young age (Verkuyten 1999:51). Maroon children in the interior who are in constant and close contact with their people, know that certain stereotypes about Maroons are not correct. Moreover the value and positive aspects of the Maroon culture and tradition are transmitted Maroon children while the negative side rather be mitigated or ignored, as happens with other groups.

It is also true that children build up their ethnic identity and culture in interaction with their parents and significant others (e.g. traditional and religious leaders, uncles, aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers) from the social environment they grow up. Especially language and cultural characteristics become intertwined with intimate personal relationships between relatives and children learn to which group they belong. Young people learn e.g. specific religious and secret languages, dance and song and the idea of individuality and sense of ethnic identity, understanding, development and retention which pass to later generations. Their own ethnic background acquires thereby a basic emotional significance and that is not easy to change or ignore. As Verkuyten says, "the ethnic group is intertwined with the individual and made the choice to limit" (ibid.).

In fact, a primordial approach drew attention to the proof, intuitive and ineffable nature of ethnicity. This is likely why ethnicity often evokes strong emotions and why people cling to their ethnic identity, even if that is economically and politically, rather than after-benefits. And the bondage of attachment to their ethnic group, the group which is believed to be tribes, giving a close and

emotional foundation to the question of whom and what they are. This is given an ethnicity its own autonomous meaning whereby membership of an ethnic group in itself is meaningful (see Verkuyten 1999).

A limitation of primordial approaches is that changes and variations are difficult to understand. The variable, conscious and dynamic nature of ethnicity is excluded. The various situational approaches, emphasizes these aspects. Therefore, this article rather than a primordial uses a situational approach. Emphasis is placed on the structural conditions, but also on the interests that people have. In the first case it is assumed that the role of ethnicity depends on the existing ordering principles in society.

The emphasis is on external factors and conditions that shape ethnic boundaries. Maroons, as ethnic group, are in this approach considered in two ways: 1) as the product of political, social, economic and legal conditions such as colonialism, slavery and legal imposition in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries; 2) as an interest group which ethnicity is included in the struggle for scarce goods, positions, rights and status in the period from the early 20th century. The starting point is a socio-cultural conception of conflicts of interests and power relations.

Identity and Identification

Identity and identification are terms frequently used in the same breath. According to Wentholt (1991), the relationship between identity and identification can take at least four forms. First, is identification to join an existing social classification. This is the fore instance the case when one begins to identify with the Maroon's case and everything of the Maroons. In practice it means that in the Surinamese society Maroons are very aware of his or her background and Maroons are strongly identified with the Maroon culture. Second, identification with the group to which one must be rejected. In that case someone wants to know nothing of membership and remains aloof. There is a departure from the group and resistance is provided against the expectations and requirements connected to identity. From the own group there will be criticism.

Thirdly, it is possible to identify with a group other than the own group. This does not change the identity to which one simply stuck. As example, a Maroon can still identify with a Creole Surinamese but he will not as recognize such. And that is the point: social identities are determined at grant. Maroons

remain in the example an outsider and that is the same for Creoles. Fourth, identification can exist independently of social classifications. One can identify with a particular case or person, such as musician or sports hero.

In that case there is no question of identity, but of identification based on admiration and involvement. Identification must be not simply an extension of identity. These are distinct phenomena. Identification, Verkuyten says, “is primarily psychological in nature, identity is directly dependent on existing social structures” (1999:54). This brings me directly to question of how identification can be understood.

The term identification in the social sciences was introduced by Freud. He had particular regard to the role of identification in the development of the child. However, identification is not limited to a specific person or a certain age. For example, most people identify with an ethnic or national group and feelings of belonging and pride in this result.

Ethnic and national symbols in early childhood are presented in such way that a child will identify with the ethnic group or nation and all those belonging to (Verkuyten 1999:55). In that case, Maroons in Suriname do identify with the freedom struggle of their ancestors, their history and heroic characters. In that respect intellectual Maroons express themselves regularly in terms of “I am a Maroon” or “I am a Fiiman”, indicating connections with and proud of the ancestors and their struggle for freedom. This can sometimes be emphasized during certain situations such as cultural festivals and dance battles.

Self-identification by Maroons

Self-identification by the Maroons in the approach of Freud is more than placing yourself in the same category as those you identify with. This is completely identification, to be one with the others. The failure of the person with whom one identifies is its own failures, just as his or her own success is his or her success. Identification implies a redesign of the household feeling. Here, all kinds of emotions are involved, such as pity, compassion, sorrow and anger, but also commitment, satisfaction, pride and self-esteem. This emotional aspect is largely responsible for the power and intensity that often accompanied with identification. The process of self-identification is already quite strong for some years in the Maroon community in Suriname.

This is because young Maroons, whose parents in the seventies, because of poor economic conditions in the interior, have moved to the city, completed

higher and academic education and get good jobs. Young people who because of the civil war (1986-1992) were forced to move to the city, also complete higher or university education, and get good jobs in government and the private sector. Furthermore, the advent of the Maroons in the political arena by win seats in parliament and get government responsibility encourages the process of self-identification. The commitment, pride and self-esteem among Maroons are now also expressed by organizing lectures by members from their own group. There are also emotions of sadness and anger as when a minister of Maroon descent has had to resign because public money could not adequately justify or when a lawmaker from the same group has fought with a member of another party in parliament.

National identity

Another term to be defined is national identity. Keillor and Hult (1999) for their research into the international marketing environment in five countries developed a model of national identity which I will use in this article for the examination of a sense of national identity among Maroons. As I said, knowingly or unknowingly Maroons contribute to the construction of national identities in Suriname. However, members of this ethnic group don't realize enough how important this contribution is because they have an ambivalent attitude towards the national identity which they don't reject, but not openly and consciously support.

Keillor & Hult indicate that a definition of national identity might be that perhaps describes as a "feel" of culture. That is, national identity is "the degree to which a particular culture recognizes and identifies itself with its unique characteristics" (1999:67). This description leads to the important issue of the components of national identity, a structure that is closely related to "cultural" focus, which "...designates the tendency of every culture to exhibit greater complexity, greater variation in the institutions of some of its aspects than others. So striking is this tendency to develop certain phases of life, while others remain in the background, so to speak, that in the shorthand of the disciplines that study human societies these focal aspects are often used to characterize whole cultures" (Herskovits, 1948, in Keillor & Hult).

Thus, national identity is the "set of meanings" in the possession of a particular culture and which distinguishes it from other cultures. The basic

components of national identity, derived from Herskovits (1948) and Huntington (1996, 1993), which Keillor & Hult distinguished are: beliefs, cultural homogeneity, national heritage and ethnocentrism.

Belief structure: This dimension were defined as “the role which religion or supernatural beliefs play in facilitating cultural participation and solidarity and which have an impact on the magnitude to which a culture actively identifies with a unique national identity” (Keillor & Hult, 1999:68). For example, Middle Eastern nations embrace Islam and exhibit, in many cases, open hostility toward other religions. A belief structure’s role in culture is seen as multifaceted. It can serve to promote cultural participation, provide a mechanism for conflict resolution, or a means through which psychological tensions and distortions can be reduced or eliminated. In general, a belief structure makes it possible to make a psychological bridge between individual attitudes and the overall social structure of an ethnic group. Differences in emphasis placed on certain aspects within a culture may affect such a moral reasoning process in an interpersonal context, resulting in differences in intercultural relations (see Spiro, 1967; Husted et al ..., 1996; in Keillor & Hult 1999:68).

National heritage: The other closely related component of national identity is national heritage. Defined in terms of the importance to historical figures and events in history, the national heritage component reflects the given culture’s sense of their own unique history. For example, the colonization period which many African nations experienced at the hands of the Europeans in the nineteenth century has left many of these nations negatively predisposed toward the West. Obviously, there are innumerable similar incidents from history which could be applied. Thus, as an illustration, while the belief structure may be similar in the various nations, the differing histories, or national heritages, of the individual nations may produce differing national identities.

Cultural homogeneity: The next component is cultural homogeneity. The number of subcultures within a given set of national boundaries is hypothesized to have an inverse relationship to the “strength” of national identity. In the United States a wide variety of subcultures exist (e.g. Hispanic, Asian, European, Latin American, African, etc.) which may tend to reduce the strength of American national identity. In short, the cultural homogeneity component deals with the cultural uniqueness of a given society’s sense of national identity.

Ethnocentrism: The final component of national identity is ethnocentrism. An ethnocentric tendency is generally considered to be one in which individuals, or societies, make cultural evaluations and attributions using their own cultural perspectives as the base line criteria. Ethnocentrism is included in the national identity framework as a means of accounting for the importance placed on maintaining culturally-centered values and behaviors. In a multi-ethnic setting, the presence of ethnocentrism and patriotism can significantly affect choices of interethnic relations, place to live or participation in social and cultural activities.

4. Measuring Suriname Maroons sense of national identity

By using these components of national identity, I tried to search for a sense of national identity among Maroons in Suriname. I did this, based on personal experiences in some concrete social contexts. It was to participate in informal discussions about concrete situations. The information I received so, I later incorporated into the national identity framework.

If we look at belief structure, than there are a few things to mention about the Maroons in Suriname. At first, they appear to be quite tolerant towards other religious while they are generally regarded as sympathetic nature religion. In the 19th century, many Maroons converted to Christianity by missionaries. At the end of 20th and beginning of the 21st century the Maroons experienced a half wave of repentance. Likewise, it became possible for Maroons to participate in other forms of meeting together. In both cases this led to feelings of connectedness with others inside and outside their own ethnic group, but also sadness and anger at the loss of part of one's own tradition. This development has divided the Maroon community from the 19th century until now into religious camps of Christians and pagans. It affected not only the intra- and intergroup relationships but also the relationships with the rest of the surrounding society. Central to this is that institutions and organizations from the surrounding society and their bridgeheads in the Maroon community are blamed for the loss of traditions and customs. An ambivalent attitude towards religious from outside the community and any association of this with the Surinamese national identity will be distorted. On the other hand, it is increasingly becoming a tradition to translate and present Christian songs in different Maroon languages. During church meetings Maroon dance and musical instruments are also shown. The influence of the Maroon culture and

its contribution to religious tolerance as part of the Surinamese national identity is so noticeable. But of course, there are disgruntled noises as it so often is with any process of change in each culture.

As one Maroon traditional Maroon leader put it: *“They break our community because they lure our people with beautiful words about God to their churches. The people who go to the new churches are no longer willing to sacrifice together to pray at the place of the ancestors. Even the women of these churches do not want to marry men. They seek only men of their church, while doing all sorts of sinful things. They think we do not know. They will be punished by their own god and our ancestors. Wait and you will see”*.

With regard to national heritage, there is also a degree of ambivalence by the Maroons. First, important historical figures and events from the Surinamese history are not well known to most of the Maroons. Even highly educated Maroons have trouble keeping historical events and names of persons and places to mention. In most cases they start naming persons and events from their own group history. If Maroons refer to names of historical figures and events from the Surinamese history, it takes some effort to indicate whether one is proud or not. Maroons explain their own attitudes towards the national heritage by saying that they have little information on the Surinamese history. Simultaneously, some Maroons also stressed that other people have little or no knowledge of their group history. The Maroons’ stated explanation for their attitude towards the national heritage indicates that the national identity is valued differently than their own ethnic identity, while the ethnic identity is actually one of the constituent parts of the hybrid Surinamese national identity.

It seems that here the issue of knowledge in the Surinamese historiography arises. The description and interpretation of the Surinamese history from independence has a colonial character. In these colonial historical writing, events and personalities of the Maroons are negatively portrayed. Thus, freedom fighters such as Boni, Baron and Joliceur were listed as criminals. In addition, certain events and persons knowingly omitted or otherwise suggested, while others are listed in a marginal role. Several Afro-Surinamese freedom fighters from the 17th, 18th and 19th century in colonial reports are often portrayed as uncivilized, rude beings who did not wish to obey the master.

After independence and especially during the military period (1975-1985), one has been tried sporadically to correct this negative image of the historiography of the Maroons. During the military period, the Afro-Surinamese

freedom fighters from the interior and their actions were portrayed as examples for the fight against post-colonialism. However, these heroes have not automatically become part of national historical consciousness and identity; witness the current struggle for recognition of a national Maroons holiday honoring those freedom fighters from the past centuries.

The tendency of groups to omit or distort elements of national historiography and the emergence of certain ethnic groups for recognition of a national holiday, show clearly the link between politics and power on the one hand and identity on the other hand [see Verkuyten (1999:32)].

When it comes to cultural homogeneity, it appears that the strength of national identity is weakening. Individual ethnic groups emphasize their ethnic identity and therefore have no sense of a proposed national identity. As I've so far tried to indicate, Maroons are not really busy with the construction of a Surinamese national identity. They are much more focused on highlighting their own ethnic identity. This trend can weaken the existence of a Surinamese national identity. That does not happen, because elements of the ethnic identity of the Surinamese Maroons are added to the construction of the national identity by others. I have already mentioned the situation with regard to belief structure. Similar examples are found in areas such as health and hygiene, dress and marketing. In the field of health and hygiene one can observe that traditional knowledge of the Maroons on medicinal plants and herbs are commonly used in Suriname. The Maroons known vaginal cleansing herbs are now also used by women from other ethnic groups. In the field of costume and fashion clothing patterns from the Maroon tradition are increasingly nationally presented at such fairs. In marketing you see regularly on television commercials with Maroon images and people. It is now advertised in Maroon languages.

The conclusion is that the Maroons ethnic identity contributes to strengthen national identity, but that's not a deliberate and purposeful strategy of the Maroons themselves. This process is much more led by others on which the Maroons have no control.

With regard to ethnocentrism, I indicated earlier that this may affect e.g. inter-ethnic relations, choice of homes and participation in social and cultural activities. From interviews and observations it is clear that Maroons in Suriname generally go to places and activities not directly related to their ethnic group. In the Surinamese context this seems to coincide with universal values such as friendliness and hospitality. Maroons are therefore

likely to be found at festivals and parties and share those values with other groups in the Surinamese society. That does not mean Maroons are not aware that members of other ethnic groups could make comments about it.

5. Conclusions

From the above it can generally be concluded that Maroons today mostly admire important people from their own group history than from the country's past. They emphasize events of historical importance which they recognize their self. Even Suriname's historical heritage is not strongly recognized by Maroons. Suriname possesses certain cultural attributes that other people do not possess and which are derived from the specific ethnic identity of the Afro-Surinamese in the interior. Furthermore, the Maroons feel in general that they come from a common historical background with other ethnic groups in Suriname and they should be proud of their nationality. They therefore are frequently engaged in activities that identify them as Surinamese. It is also clear that Maroons have a specific religious philosophy what makes them unique. They tolerate other religion and contribute to religious tolerance in Suriname. We can also make the conclusion that, although many Maroons involved in their own ethnic group they participate with others in activities from which the underlying values are identified.

On the other hand, Maroons are insufficiently aware of their contribution to the construction of the Surinamese national identity. Some elements of their ethnic identity and cultural traditions and customs added to the national identity without them having control.

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15. Trinidad e Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago: Influence of African Heritage on National Identity

Maureen Warner-Lewis

In situations of migration and diaspora, the issue of self-identity and national identity become problematic. “Home” is no longer simplistically identified; indeed, “home” may be recognized as more than one place. This has been the experience of Caribbean peoples whose ancestors have moved, both voluntarily and forcibly, from several countries in the eastern hemisphere to land in the archipelago of islands that stretch from Florida in the southern United States to Venezuela on the South American continent. Apart from forming sites of new diasporas of Africans, Europeans, and Asians, Caribbean peoples have to face identity issues created by the experience of colonialism. Colonialism has been accompanied by the imposition of notions of superiority and inferiority, and the psychoses associated with the desire of weaker groups to align themselves with more powerful alliances. The result is self-contempt, imitation, the denial of the human rights of those deemed second – or third – class citizens. Further to these already identified factors, Caribbean peoples have had to contend with the fact of their personal ethnic hybridity: each person is an amalgam of several African ethnicities, and beyond this, these pan-African ethnicities have been fused with some quantum of European and/or Asian “racial” strains.¹

¹ See Stuart Hall, Caribbean Identities, *New Left Review* 209, 1995, 3-14 for an elaboration of these points.

These realities have affected the self-perception of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad even more so than Tobago. Whereas the Tobago population is almost homogenously of African descent, the residents of Trinidad are ethnically more varied. In a total population of 1,230,000, the 2000 census of the two islands estimates that 40% are East Indian (that is, from the Indian sub-continent), 37.5% are African, 20.5% may be classed as Mixed, with 1.2% accounting for Chinese, Lebanese/Syrian, and European.²

Like other islands in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago were initially claimed in the closing years of the fifteenth century by Spanish adventurers who eventually decimated the Amerindian population. To work their tobacco farms, the Spanish then imported manpower in the person of Africans, as had become the practice in the Antilles. But as the Spanish were not interested in cultivating plantations but rather in mining gold and silver, the Trinidad lands were not significantly developed until the close of the eighteenth century. Profiting from the social and political upheavals of the French and Haitian Revolutions, the opportunity was taken by the new British administration which had seized the island from Spain in 1797 to invite planters from neighbouring French islands to settle Trinidad with their African slaves and develop sugar and later cacao estates. African slavery therefore reached its high-point in the early nineteenth century, before the British outlawed the slave trade as of 1809 and eventually abolished slavery in its colonies in 1838. Meanwhile, Tobago's fertile lands were used to cultivate sugar, cotton, and indigo by the French, Dutch, and British, using African manpower, until it was seized by the British in 1814. In 1888, it was joined administratively to Trinidad and together the islands gained independence from Britain in 1962.

After the emancipation of the slaves, Indians were brought from the East between 1845 and 1917, Portuguese from Madeira and Fayal in the 1830s and 40s, Chinese in the 1850s and 60s, while Spaniards and their descendants surged into Trinidad in the 1810s and thereafter, whenever there was civil unrest in Venezuela seven miles to the immediate southwest of Trinidad. Europeans, that is, mainly British and French in Trinidad, and these in addition to the Dutch and Latvians in Tobago occupied positions of economic, social, and imperial privilege. This meant that their official institutions, religions,

² See www.CIA.gov/library/publications/the_world_factbook/Trinidad_and_Tobago.

languages, and ideologies held sway, while the cultures and epistemologies of Africa and Asia were overlooked, dismissed, or denigrated. Because of the long historical connection among Indo-European languages and cultures, the European overlords considered Asians as “exotic” and sometimes savage in their religious practices, but the Africans received no such accommodation. Europe having laid claim to Egypt, Hegel had opined that Africa lacked history and social formations.³ In addition, it was believed that Africans had no concept of a transcendent divinity but rather worshipped natural objects. Their religious practices were considered devil-worship and witchcraft. From time to time, drumming was banned as this was recognized as a means of transmitting messages. African singing was weird and noisy, their dancing was wild and lascivious.

Under this ideological pressure, colonialism meant for Africans and their descendants the abandonment – at least in public – of African folkways and epistemologies, in all, mental severance from Africa. Official indoctrination painted Africa as the seat of barbarity, and convinced many Africans and their descendants to regard the experience of slavery as a punishment which had to be undergone in order to free Africans from ignorance of God and animal-type existence. The impact of this ideology on identity was to cause blacks to avoid the ascription “African”, and to adopt the term “creole” as their self-reference. In slavery times, Africans from Africa were dismissed as “bozal”, which carried the inference of ‘untamed’, ‘not acculturated to European ways’.⁴ This term was used both by Europeans and by Creole blacks. The tension between the two black groups is evident in this song from Trinidad where the singer threatens to commit suicide in order to return in spirit to Africa since he is oppressed in his new location:

Ba mbale

Vini wè mwè

Mwè kale na mule

*Mwè kale na peyi **Koongo***

Mwè kale na Gine

Listen, people

Come and see me

I am going into the flames

I am going to Koongo country

I am going to Guinea (Africa)

³ Georg Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007 (1899), 99.

⁴ Maureen Warner-Lewis derives this term from Kikoongo *busalala* meaning ‘immature, non-discerning’. See her *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures*, Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2003, 323.

E! E! *Mwè kale na mule*
Piti kyol a vole pula
 Mete **Koongo** *duvã*

I am going into the fire
 The little Creole has stolen that chicken
 (And) put the Koongo in front (to take
 the blame)⁵

When new groups of Africans began to arrive in the islands as indentured rather than enslaved labourers from the 1840s to 60s, they called themselves by umbrella terms such as ‘Yaraba’, ‘Hausa’, ‘Congo’, ‘Angol’, ‘Chimbundu’, much as the enslaved Africans had done. But they called their children ‘African Creole’, in acknowledgement that the Trinidad and Tobago-born generations were culturally different from continental Africans. All the same, African Creoles tended to retain some of the cultural identifiers of their African parents: religious practices, food preferences, songs, dances, even African language names. The persistence of these cultural markers among elderly African Creoles in Trinidad allowed this researcher to recover fragments of African languages in prayers, songs, laments, greetings, and statements during field-trips in urban and rural areas in the late 1960s and into the early 1980s. A notable attitude among the twentieth-century African Creoles was their positive image of Africa, an Africa which had been described for them by their grandparents and parents. These elderly African Creoles no longer lived in clusters of known ethnic groups as their foreparents had done, and their language facility in African tongues was but a memory they were happy to recall and revive. The languages they knew included Yoruba, Kikongo, Hausa, Fon, and Arabic.

This genetically recognized relationship to Africa did not obtain for most of the society, however. Most blacks could not trace their blood kinship to an African or Africans, as the personal historical knowledge of the majority in the Caribbean is shallow. And the further blacks moved up the social ladder, the more they became acculturated to European mannerisms and practices, and the more they tended to ignore or disparage Africa and Africans. This apathy and hostility towards things African became characteristic of the general affect and values of the middle-class black, and coincided with the psychological comfort blacks derived from being, until the latter half of the twentieth century, the strongest demographic grouping in the society.

But while this was a general truth, there still existed persons who remained conscious of their African heritage, who even wished to return to Africa, who

⁵ The song uses Creole French and Kikoongo words. See Warner-Lewis, op. cit., 313.

longed for the liberation of Africa from colonial rule, and who felt resentful of the disadvantages which blacks suffered under slavery and colonialism. For instance, there was distress that at emancipation it was white owners who were paid compensation by the British government for the loss of their “property”, that is, the slaves, while the slaves themselves received no compensation for their years of unpaid labour, their physical and psychological suffering, and no provision of land was made to provide them with an economic footing. The ambition and achievement born out of an Africa-conscious attitude is to be read in the writings of John Jacob Thomas (c.1840-1889), the son of Africans. He became a head-master, and wrote in defense of black intellectual and administrative ability in his book *Froudacity* (1889) which refuted the negative portrayal of blacks by the English professor of Modern History at Oxford, James Anthony Froude. Thomas punned on Froude’s surname to suggest his ‘audacity’ at alleging black incompetence. In the interest of rendering the language of the masses accessible to European judges and court officials, Thomas also wrote a grammar of Trinidad Creole French, and listed a number of Creole French proverbs with their interpretations.

Later in the nineteenth century Trinidad produced another Africa-conscious activist in the person of Henry Sylvester Williams (1869-1911). He became a lawyer who went to work in South Africa, but before that he had founded the African Association to promote and protect the interests of all people of African descent. This led to his organizing the first Pan-African Conference in England in 1900. In the dawning years of the 1900s, another pan-Africanist was born, like Henry Sylvester Williams, in Arouca in northern Trinidad. George Padmore became a formidable journalist and penned several books on the topic of the decolonization of the African world. He was a painstaking organizer and helped launch the 1945 Pan-African conference in Manchester, England, attended by several persons who would later become presidents of independent countries in Africa. And at Ghana’s independence in 1957, he was named as advisor to one of his protégées, Kwame Nkrumah, who had become Ghana’s first head of state. Later yet African ethnic heritage was to be the focus of Tobago’s Jacob Delworth Elder (1914-2003) who began his career as a teacher and folklorist and eventually became a qualified anthropologist. By the 1960s, he discovered the remnants of Yoruba and Hausa communities in central Trinidad and wrote papers on their ancestral ceremonies and death rituals. Dr. Elder also went as a university lecturer to Nigeria where he deepened his understanding of African religious and social life. His radio programmes in

the 1970s on the impact of Africa on the culture of Trinidad and Tobago played a significant part in the reactivation of interest in Africa and its cultural retentions in the Caribbean.

While one may argue that Henry Sylvester Williams and Padmore were individual exemplars of Africa-consciousness and that the larger part of their work was accomplished abroad, a sure proof of the affective response of the islanders to Africa is evidenced in the widespread appeal of the Garvey movement in Trinidad and Tobago during the 1920s and 30s. Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was a Jamaican journalist who, in 1912, launched the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. The organization spread to the United States, Central America, Africa, and the Caribbean. Its aim was to unify the black race both in Africa and in its diaspora, to uplift the condition of blacks, to instill race pride, to stimulate economic projects among blacks, and to agitate for the freedom of Africa from colonialism. The movement was organized in Divisions, and in Trinidad during the 1920s there were at least thirty divisions, and the interconnection between Garveyites and the main trade union movement in the colony was close.⁶

But by mid-twentieth century, generally speaking, Africa had taken a back seat in the consciousness of the population when national attention began to be focused on the road to self-government and the formation of nationalist political parties. Using their demographic advantage, the political party strongly supported by blacks in alliance with Indian Muslims came to power in 1956, led by Dr. Eric Williams, a historian-turned-politician. His ethos was that of the black middle class, and he advocated the creole notion that citizens owed their first loyalty to the islands which nurtured them, so that there should be no "Mother Africa" or "Mother India".⁷ While there appeared to be only a minority of blacks who acclaimed Mother Africa, Indians attended films from Bollywood, a majority maintained Hinduism as their religion, their food culture was so strong that some aspects of it spread to other ethnic groups, men trained as Hindu priests, Hindu marriage and burial rites were recognized,

⁶ See Tony Martin, Marcus Garvey and Trinidad, 1912-1947, *Garvey: Africa, Europe, the Americas*, eds. Rupert Lewis and Maureen Warner-Lewis, Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1994 (1986), 47-77.

⁷ "There can be no Mother India for those whose ancestors came from India.... There can be no Mother Africa for those of African origin, and the Trinidad and Tobago society is living a lie and heading for trouble if it seeks to create the impression or to allow others to act under the delusion that Trinidad and Tobago is an African society." Eric Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, Port of Spain: PNM Publishing Co. Ltd., 1962, 281.

Hindu prayers were held on occasion at Indian homes, and Indian villages contained Hindu temples and Muslim mosques.⁸ Blacks resented the overt strength of Indian culture and wished Indians to distance themselves from their ancestral mores. They also envied the strong home and family ties which existed in the Indian community, and felt they themselves lacked the social mechanisms to change their own fractured family structures.

Meanwhile the black youth were becoming disillusioned with the promises made at political independence and they realized their weak economic position vis-à-vis whites and Indians.⁹ The Black Power movement in the United States, led by the Trinidad-born Stokely Carmichael, later Kwame Ture, answered to the vacuum which the youth sensed. They drew attention to the white symbols of saints in the Catholic churches, to the exclusive employment of whites in banks and commercial establishments, to the general Eurocentric ethos into which they were being acculturated, the absence of African History from the university curriculum. They wished these elements of Creole life replaced by an Afrocentric aesthetic and economy. 1970 therefore saw a series of mass demonstrations and marches, the army mutinied in solidarity with the protesters, and the government was almost toppled. One of the sequels of this upheaval was the revalidation of African heritage. Apart from the reintroduction of elements of African apparel such as headties and bubus for women, and the adoption of danshikis and Kariba suits by men, there was a revival of corn-row hair plaiting and natural, that is non-processed, hair became fashionable. The 'afro' was popular among both men and women.

But the most significant element of African heritage in Trinidad and Tobago lay in religion: the religious rites called "Shango" had always been known as "African work" and it had been recognized that these rites derived from the Yoruba people of West Africa. "Shango" was practiced all over the islands at private shrines built on to the backs of houses. Its membership was largely working class and peasant, and the religion was not recognized on the census.

⁸ Hindus constitute 22% of the population, Muslims 6%.

⁹ "...although Blacks and Indians comprise over 80 percent of the population, together they control only about 30 percent of the private sector. Moreover, out of this minority sector of the bourgeoisie, Indians own more than seventy five percent of the businesses. Blacks therefore, as members of the bourgeoisie, own and control less than ten percent of the 'means of production'." Bishnu Ragoonath, *Religion and Insurrection: Abu Bakr and the Muslimmeen Failure in the 1990 Attempted Coup in Trinidad and Tobago*, *Identity, Ethnicity and Culture in the Caribbean*, ed. Ralph R. Premdas, St. Augustine: School of Continuing Studies, University of the West Indies, 1999, 413.

After 1970, the number of its adherents rose as people sought to identify with their African heritage, and the religion began to attract members of the middle class, the intelligentsia, and the artistic community. It was also renamed the Orisha religion. Sections of the membership also agitated for the purging of Christian elements in Orisha such as the recitation of Catholic liturgical prayers and the rosary. Links were forged with members of the related religions, santería in Cuba and North America, and candomble in Bahia, Brazil. Contacts with the Orisha religion in Nigeria resulted in well-publicised visits from officials of the faith, and the pilgrimage of adherents to Nigeria to learn the Yoruba language and also to acquire the painstaking skills of the diviner.

Another religion which underwent a revival was that of the Shouter Baptists/Spiritual Baptists. Whereas Christian belief may be understood as marginal to Orisha, it is a fundamental tenet of the Shouter and Spiritual Baptist faiths. All the same, some of the rites employed in the Shouter faith and Spiritual Baptism are borrowed from African religious practice, and indeed there is an overlap in membership between the two religions. Among the African elements in Spiritual Baptism are: the officiant ringing bells at the corners of the sacred space, females and males wrapping their heads, the use of drums and hand-clapping to accompany melodies, the encouragement of physical movement and dance as a form of worship. According to the Euro-creole ethos, both these religions (or 'cults' as they used to be called) were deemed undesirable. The colonial government of 1917 even banned the Shouter Baptist religion, but this prohibition was repealed in 1951. Furthermore, acting in concert with the Indian-led government which came to power in 1995, the profile of both these religions was enhanced as they were granted official holidays to offset the tradition of Christian holidays in the calendar, and a Spiritual Baptist elder was selected as a senator in the parliament.¹⁰ The alliance between the Indian-led government and the African-dominated Orisha and Spiritual Baptist religions emerged from a perception on both sides that the Euro-creole elements in the society had marginalized them both.

It was in this new cultural environment that Maureen Warner-Lewis' *Guinea's Other Suns: the African Dynamic in Trinidad Culture* appeared

¹⁰ An analysis of the relationship between the Orisha, Shouter, and Spiritual Baptist religions and governments of the 1980s and 90s is to be found in Frances Henry, *Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: the Socio-Political Legitimation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths*, Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2003, Chapter 3.

in 1991. This collection of essays profiled several of the African Creoles the researcher had encountered in areas which J.D. Elder had studied as well as in other parts of Trinidad. In addition, various essays pointed to the influence of African language structures and vocabulary items on Creole English speech, the re-cycling of melodies from Yoruba laments and religious chants in early minor-key calypsos, the reproduction of West African masquerade-types in the traditional masks of the annual carnival, the resurgence of West African mythical creatures in the folklore of the island, and the various ways in which the traditional religion of the Yoruba had been reinterpreted in its new locale. This publication met with a receptive audience, coming some two decades after Trinidad had erupted in a revolution of thought and perception which had occurred in 1970. The specificity of the heritage items that the work had identified and its broad cultural spread were factors which aided its appeal, and its epistemological impact has been affirmed by the fact that it has inspired two dramas, by the playwrights Rawle Gibbons and Eintou Springer respectively.

Another socio-religious impact of the changed episteme was the growth in the influence of the Rastafari religion. This influence was not unconnected with the salience of reggae music out of Jamaica and the international profile of Bob Marley, reggae's best known exponent. Adoption of the Rastafari lifestyle of acknowledging the divinity of Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, eating a salt-free vegetarian diet, nurturing the environment, avoiding the cutting of hair, and smoking marijuana as a sacramental act has attracted many adherents. Another religious outcome of the post-1970 period has been the conversion of Africans to the Muslim faith. Recent research had uncovered the fact that several of the enslaved and indentured Africans had come from Muslim areas of Africa. The memory of this historical detail had been largely lost, so that by mid-twentieth century Islam appeared to be a religion of India, one of the elements that had been transported to Trinidad in the Indian migrations of 1845-1917. Now, no doubt also influenced by the rise of Black Muslims in the United States, Islam in Trinidad and Tobago began to assert itself as a cosmopolitan religion which counted Africans among its membership. Under the aegis of the Jamaat al Muslimeen, African Muslims have come to play a troubling role in the politics of the territory, most overtly since its military attack on the Parliament and other state institutions in 1990.¹¹

¹¹ See Ragoonath, *op. cit.*

In the secular field, there has been the formation of several Africa-centered organizations whose work is to raise ethnic knowledge and awareness, to sponsor talks by overseas-based scholars on afrocentric themes, to promote tours to Egypt, to invite performers of the calibre of Miriam Makeba in the run-up to the annual celebration of Emancipation Day, 1st August. There is in fact an Emancipation Support Committee which has successfully held concerts, fairs, award functions, and marches since 1988. These secular groups have popularized “Africans” and “blacks” as politically correct terms to replace “negro” and “coloured” and even “Creole”.

Given these post-1970 developments, it is not surprising that in recent years the theme of African heritage has figured in Trinidad and Tobago’s annual pre-Lenten carnival. For one thing, leaders of the art world have revived the “old mas” or traditional elements of carnival in which African epistemology and aesthetics are more evident than in the French and Venetian court aesthetics of the “pretty mas” segment of the festival. On one of the days of the festival, a separate parade and judging is held for the old mas’ characters and bands. These characters also function as symbols in plays and dance performances put on at other times of the year. The matter of ethnic heritage has also received attention from the singers or calypsonians who compete during the carnival season. Whereas calypsos during the colonial era attacked Shango and Spiritual Baptism as outlandish, the calypsos of this current period speak approvingly of these religious rites, coopting some of their chants into new musical renditions, promoting ethnic consciousness, or debating the contest of ethnic loyalties faced by some individuals who are ethnically mixed. In the late 1990s, a number of calypsos attracted attention and debate over the approaches they took to ethnicity. The main calypsonians promoting black ethnic purity were “Sugar Aloes” and “Cro-Cro”, while “Brother Marvin” in his song *Jahaji Bhai* promoted ethnic assimilation and harmony.¹² That ethnic integration has been configured in new forms of dance choreography, musical composition and instrumentation, and in calypso genres such as “chutney” and “soca chutney” which use a mixture of Hindi and Creole English languages and melodic phrasing from Indian popular music and from calypso.

The highlighting of ethnic belonging in a multiethnic society like Trinidad and Tobago is a delicate issue. The rights of each ethnic group need to be

¹² For discussion of these issues, see Anton Allahar, Popular Culture and Racialisation of Political Consciousness in Trinidad and Tobago, in Premdas, op. cit., 246- 281.

recognized and respected, and to do this there need to be research and focus on the history and culture and contribution of each ethnicity. This awareness encourages feelings of psychological validation on the part of members of each group at the same time that it enhances the cultural and historical stature of each group in the eyes of others. Meanwhile, miscegenation has never been ideologically promoted, except in a few calypsos of the 1990s period where African-Indian assimilation has been mooted.¹³ But mating across all ethnic groups has taken place in the past and continues to occur despite subtle censure or harsh resistance on the part of relatives and communities. In the colonial era, assimilation concerned African-European amalgamation, and again this was a popular *modus operandi* though never officially supported. Events of the last forty years have shown that “race”, as it is popularly referred to in Trinidad and Tobago, continues to be a troubling social and political issue capable of destabilizing the country. Accusations, debates, and compromises continue to be made, while the two major ethnic groups demand greater and more favourable visibility, in the media, in the public services, in the economy, and in the country’s cultural projection.

¹³ See Rhoda Reddock, Jahaji Bhai: the Emergence of a Dougl’a Poetics in Contemporary Trinidad and Tobago, *in* Premdas, *op. cit.*, 185-210.



Trinidad e Tobago

Influence of African Heritage on the Formation of National Identity (Trinidad e Tobago)¹

*Selwyn R. Cudjoe*²

Although Christopher Columbus encountered the islands of Trinidad and Tobago at the end of the fifteenth century, it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the island republic felt the African presence. Africans came to these islands as a result of the Cedula of Population (1783) and in the aftermath of the Haitian revolution. Situated on the southernmost tip of the Caribbean archipelago, Trinidad and Tobago did not have a large-scale sugar economy and thus did not have a large African population. Between 1784 and 1797, approximately 7,000 enslaved Africans were brought into Trinidad, many coming from St. Vincent and Grenada. The revolutionary turmoil in Martinique in 1792 resulted in another 4,000 Africans coming to the island.

When the British captured Trinidad from the Spanish in 1797, 15,000 of the 18,627 inhabitants were Africans and people of color. Ten thousand of them were enslaved Africans. By 1803, the slave population had grown to 21,000 persons. Most of them came from St. Domingo, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other British colonies between 1797 and 1805. The 1813

¹ A paper prepared for the Alexandre de Gusmao Foundation (FUNAG) and its International Relations Research Institute, November 11, 2010.

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census counted 13,984 enslaved Africans of which 2,863 were Ibos; 2,450 were Congo; 2,240 were Moco; 1,421 were Mandingos; 1,068 were Fanti and Ashanti. Anthony de Verteuil observed that Africans who came to Trinidad “were generally all young, well formed and healthy, as their importation took place subsequent to the Act of Parliament which regulated their treatment in the Middle Passage.”³

Pierre McCallum, a Scottish gentleman, visited Trinidad from February to April 1803. He offered one of the earliest observations of the conditions under which Africans in Trinidad lived. In a revealing account, he offers two conceptions of the Africans living in the country. First, he describes a scene in which a couple of female slaves “with heavy iron chains, which hung all around them, [were] riveted to an iron collar round the neck, and again to their ankles.” M’Callum says that “the chains were so weighty that the poor unfortunate creatures were almost sinking under the grievous load, fastended on by the wicked followers of Christianity.”⁴

McCallum also described a visit he made to the prison, the Bastille. In an area of about twenty square feet “were lodged no less than one hundred negroes, with large ugly heavy chains riveted about their necks, waists, &c, and, to my great astonishment, several British seamen [were] confined in the same filthy hole of an apartment along with them.”⁵ In another scene, he described an enslaved African whose ears were cut off and a free man who was imprisoned because he asked his employer to repay him part of the money the former had borrowed from him.

In early December 1805, when Governor Thomas Hislop discovered a well-organized plan by Africans to take over the island and to annihilate the whites after the Haitian example, three of them (Sampson, Baptiste, and Carlos) “were sentenced to be hanged and their heads severed from their bodies; the latter had to be hanged in chains, and their heads stuck up.”⁶ The ears of some of the enslaved associated with the plot were cut off and flogged; still others were flogged and had ten-pound irons affixed to their legs, while others were flogged and banished from the colonies. Salivating in their

³ Anthony de Verteuil, *Seven Slaves and Slavery, Trinidad 1777-1838* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: Scrip-J Printers, 1992), p. 22.

⁴ Pierre M’Callum, *Travels in Trinidad* (Liverpool: W. Jones, 1805), pp. 35-6.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 130.

⁶ “Threatened Revolt of the Slaves,” *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, February 1, 1806.

anticipated revenge, the slaves sang: “‘Bread is white meat, wine is white blood. We are going to eat white bread: we are going to drink white blood,’ and their companions responded with the refrain: St. Dominique.”⁷

M’Callum outlined several “negro stereotypes” that eventually populated colonialist literature as he contrasted the degenerate, lazy, malingering, good-for-nothing African with the white man, “the archetypal worker and provident profit-maker,” the builder of cities and the harbingers of a new civilization.⁸ It is this conception—the inevitable colonialist strategy—in which M’Callum characterized African interests and joys as negative and local while those of the white people as universal and positive: a theme Europeans pushed with great gusto well into the twentieth century. Part of the claim was that Africans brought nothing to these islands. They learned everything they knew from the white man. European culture and its people were superior; African people and their culture were inferior and unworthy of serious scrutiny.

In spite of the brutality that was unleashed against African peoples in the island, they survived by drawing upon their religion and culture that they brought with them from Africa and which sustained them during these difficult times. M. Dauxion-Lavaysse, a landed proprietor in Trinidad during the first fifteen years of its existence as a British territory, noted that “of a thousand [Africans] transported from Africa, grief or ill-usage destroys one third, in the first three months after their arrival; and at the end of six or seven years, seven or eight tenths of the others are dead!” In Trinidad, Tobago and Grenada, it was “considered very fortunate when of thirty young negroes brought in the course of a year, there may be six in good health five years afterwards.”⁹

Once they obtained their liberty, the Africans were able to practice their religion almost without restraint. They were also able to dance and sing as they pleased. They bargained for wages, formed new villages, and constructed a new way of life. Many of them formed “new plantations, and some of them, by dint of labour and economy, become greater proprietors in the end. Others act as extensive traders, and such are seen in all the colonies, especially in Trinidad, where they often become considerable merchants.”¹⁰

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 37.

⁹ M. Dauxion-Lavaysse, *A Statistical, Commercial, and Political Description of Venezuela, Trinidad, Margarita, and Tobago* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1820), p. 389.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 394-5.

Since the Africans came from various ethnic groups, the island had to accommodate a plurality of cultural, social, religious, and philosophical practices that they brought with them to the islands. Prior to 1833, Trinidad consisted of a number of isolated, self-contained communities. After emancipation these communities began to reach out to one another. As a result, a more consolidated group of Africans emerged and set in place a new dynamic group within the society. Emancipation not only allowed for the freer movement of peoples throughout the country; it also allowed Africans to know and understand their brothers and sisters better. Together with the free people of colour, they created a new force within the society, a social aggregation that was most visible in the annual carnival celebration that had been of French-Creole origins.

Before emancipation carnival consisted mainly of masked balls and was practiced by the upper classes of the French-Creole society. The immersion of Africans into carnival transformed this practice into one that fitted in with their indigenous ways and consolidated the African ethnic in the island. R. P. M. Bertrand Cothonay, a French Dominican father who visited Trinidad in 1883, made the following observation in his journal: "Following emancipation, which took place on August 1, 1833, they [the ex-slaves and sons of slaves] resolved annually to celebrate this day by a solemn festival for perpetual memory. The festival began at daybreak with a high mass, loud music, consecrated bread, a procession, etc. and it continued for three days during which, in the course of festivities, there were indescribable dances and orgies, reminiscent of African life."¹¹ Camboulay or cane burning, the opening act of the carnival celebrations, became symbolic of the liberating possibilities of the people. The use of the flambeaux signaled the burning away of the old slave ways, a purification of a corrupted past, and the illuminating light of the future.

Masking or the use of masks which the Africans practiced/adopted after they took over carnival became a predominant feature of the festival. It signified a commitment by the Africans to continue "the traditions of his predecessors" and to maintain "the reputation of his lineage."¹² At the heart of African culture, masks represent "the revelation of divinities and spirits to the world of men which at the same time is animated by a supernatural and metaphysical

¹¹ R. P. M. Bertrand Cothonay, *Trinidad: Journal d'un missionnaire deomincaïn des Antilles anglaises* (Paris: Retaux et fils, 1893), p. 62.

¹² Onuora Enekwe, *Igbo Masks* (Lagos: Department of Culture, Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 1987), p. 59.

breath.... The aesthetic truth of the African mask puts art at the service of the sacred.... It allows men to make their imagination communicate while addressing the gods and things.”¹³ Such a practice was a fit reminder that much of African rituals and culture informed their everyday lives.

Carnival was also a time for Africans to reconnect with their former societies and an opportunity to find their rhythm and place within a new social environment. It was a time when the talents of native artists, poets, musicians, actors, craftsmen, and dancers were on display. Tejumola Olaiyan has observed that “the former slaves, appropriating carnival with their own forms, insisted on the connectedness of histories by their cultural eclecticism, [while] the whites violently clung to difference and purism, even at the cost of giving up and labeling inferior a form they had evidently enjoyed so much.” Through “playing mas/masks,” another appellation for carnival, Africans were able to recreate, reassemble, and restructure a way of life that slavery attempted to stifle. It allowed Africans to use their imagination and to signify the new world they were creating.

After 1838 the society began to form itself into a distinct entity as it absorbed the newly freed slaves, representing various ethnic groups and nationalities. The development of a proper road service undertaken by the Public Works Act of 1854, the implementation of a telegraph service, the establishment of a railway system in the 1870s, and the establishment of a lively press served to consolidate a national community. In this context, literary texts played an important part in shaping the consciousness of the society. Just as “literary texts helped to sustain the colonial vision, giving reinforcement to an already insular colonial vision,” texts produced during this period articulated a concept of an evolving national self.¹⁴ The various narratives (fictional, creative, and particularly journalistic) produced during the last sixty years of the nineteenth century signified how Trinbagonians imagined themselves during that critical period of nation-making. The functional, as well as the creative, texts of that period articulated an evolving national sensibility, asserted a people’s humanity, combated negative stereotypes, and insisted on the humanity of the African person.¹⁵

¹³ Yaciyba Konate, *Cote d’Ivoire Contrasts* (Abijan: Edipresse, nd., p. 59).

¹⁴ Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*.

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson’s thesis that nation-making always involves an imaginary leap is a useful way to think about Trinidad’s development. A nation exists insofar as its citizens experience that state via its varied printed narratives. My grandfather who was born in the 1870s and lived

The Africans in Trinidad came predominantly from West Africa, and brought their religion with them. As a result, the Yoruba religion, particularly Shango, played a vital part in consolidating the group and shaping black identity in the island. Developed mainly by the Yorubas during the nineteenth century, the shango cult “combined traditional tribal beliefs and practices with elements of Catholicism.” In its theology and rituals, it bore a “considerable resemblance to the Afro-Christian cults in the Catholic countries of Haiti (Vodun), Cuba (Santería), and Brazil (Xango). All of these syncretistic cults retain the names of prominent African divinities, include animal sacrifices, feature drumming, dancing, and spirit possession, and utilize thunder stones and swords as ritual objects.”¹⁶

These religious and cultural practices were central to the formation of African identity in the island and, as Stuart Hall reminded us, lived on “in an underground existence.”¹⁷ Because they adopted these practices to their native setting, it gave them the spiritual fortitude to survive in a hostile environment, particularly when the dominant powers were intent on destroying their way of life and forcing Christianity upon them. It is no wonder then that Africans had to inculcate aspects of Christianity — a feigning device — to survive in Trinidad and Tobago. In this context it is wise to heed Hall’s advice when he urges us to think of identity “as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”¹⁸

By the 1860s, Trinidad had to absorb several different cultures and ways of life into a contiguous pattern. Apart from the heterogeneous nature of races and ethnicities (Europeans, Africans, and Asians, plus the varied ethnic groups among the Africans and Indians), the society also had to come to terms with linguistically diverse groups of persons. European languages such as Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese; African languages such as Ibo, Hausa, and

in Tacarigua, a country district, visited Port of Spain, the capital of the island, only once in his lifetime. He relied on gossip and the newspapers to experience Trinidad in its most expansive sense of the term. He also kept a notebook in which he recorded some of the events of his life. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). See also Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Traditions of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (Wellesley: Calaloux Publications, 2003).

¹⁶ George Eaton Simpson, *Religious Cults of the Caribbean: Trinidad, Jamaica and Haiti* (Rio Piedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 1980), pp. 13, 11.

¹⁷ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” p. 227.

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in Jim Pines, *Framework* (No. 36).

Akan; and East Indian languages such as Tamil and Hindi were all spoken in the island. Such an interesting mixture of languages and cultures made for an exceedingly rich and variegated society. When, however, the English authorities chose to restructure the society through religious and secular education, the inhabitants resisted their oppression by maintaining their own forms of storytelling, holding to their own religious and cultural beliefs, performing their own musical forms, and following their own ideas of family organization.

To achieve their ends, the colonial authorities forbade the practice of Shango and other religious practices, exacting tremendous penalties against violators; banned the playing of African drums; and outlawed the magio-religious practice of Obeah, ordering practitioners to be jailed and flogged.¹⁹ They also attempted to deligitimize African forms of marriage and concubinage (the predominant form of marital union during slavery and colonialism until 1880) by promoting European forms of marriage. In 1868, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon hired Patrick Joseph Keenan, chief inspector of schools in Ireland, to evaluate the education system in the island. In his *Report*, he alluded to what he called “the notorious prevalence of concubinage, which characterize the domestic lives of the people” and called it “the darkest form of immorality”²⁰ even though it was “a relatively durable [union].”²¹ By 1946, approximately forty percent of the adult African population “adhered to this form of marital organization which is the distinctive feature in the development of the West Indian family from the disintegration of slavery and the plantation.”²²

¹⁹ On June 30, 1800, Governor Thomas Picton proclaimed an ordinance that read as follows: “Any Negro who shall assume the reputation of being a spell doctor or obeah-man, shall be found with an amulet, a fetiche, or any customary attributes and ingredients of the profession, shall be carried before the Commandant of the District, who shall take cognizance of the accusation; and provided the crime not be capital, inflict proper punishment, but should it appear that the culprit has been the cause of death of any person by his prescriptions (as very frequently happens), the Commandant will then transmit him to the common gaol, as a criminal, to be prosecuted and dealt with according to the law.” Gertrude Carmichael, *The History of the West Indian Islands of Trinidad and Tobago, 1498-1900* (London: Alvin Redman, 1961), p. 382. Simpson also discusses reports of the practice of obeah in Trinidad during the 19th century. (See *Religious Cults of the Caribbean*, pp. 15-6.)

²⁰ Patrick Joseph Keenan, *Report Upon the State of Education in the Island of Trinidad* (Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1869), p. 29.

²¹ Dom Basil Matthews, *Crisis of the West Indian Family* (St. Augustine, Trinidad: Extra Mural Department, 1953), p. 4. Concubinage or the nonlegal union, in principle a monogamous arrangement, is a union “between two unmarried by marriageable folk people living under one roof, originating in the New World plantation economy, relatively durable, and entered into without any form of [Christian] religious, civil, or social ceremony.” *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²² Matthews, *Crisis of the West Indian Family*, p. 1.

The end of slavery called upon Africans to mobilize their resources to secure their well-being. In the language of Hall, their exile unified them across their differences which meant they had to band together to stay alive. At the end of slavery, they had effectively formed themselves into a solid association for self-help. L. A. A. De Verteuil, one of Trinidad's writers and legislators, says of them:

Newly imported Africans are, generally speaking, industrious and laborious, but avaricious, passionate, prejudiced, suspicious, and many of them still adhering to heathenish practices. The Yarribas or Yarrabas deserve a particular notice. They are a fine race, tall and well-proportioned; some of them with fine features, intelligent, reflective, and seeming to appreciate the benefits of civilization and Christianity. . . . In character, they are generally honest, and, in disposition, proud and even haughty; so that the cases are rare in which a Yarraba is brought before a magistrate for theft, breach of contract, or other misdemeanour. They are besides guided, in a mixed degree, by the sense of association; and the principle of combination for the common weal has been fully sustained wherever they have settled in any number. In fact, the whole Yarraba race of the colony may be said to form a sort of social league for mutual support and protection."²³

Many forms of association and self-help characterized the African population. One example is the money-saving arrangement called "susu." The Yorubas of Nigeria call this practice Esusu, whereas Jamaicans refer to it as partners.

The Friendly Society was another form of financial self-help that Africans created for their well-being. Dom Basil Matthews argued this organization acted as "an insurance of the liberated slave against the hazards of a free and unevenly competitive social order."²⁴ It provided health and death benefits for its members. In 1841, twenty Friendly Societies were established in San Fernando "amongst the different trades and labourers, comprising of 2,800

²³ L. A. A. de Verteuil, *Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural Resources, Administrative, Present Condition and Prospect* (London: Ward and Lock, 1858), p. 175.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

members, most of whom are heads of families who pay from 5d (10 cents) 10 1/8 (40 cents) sterling per month, amounting in the aggregate to L1,750 per annum, from which funds they received, when sick, subsistence, medicine, and occasional medical attendance; and funeral expenses in case of death.”²⁵ By 1944, 300 Friendly Societies were operating in the island. Significantly, there was not one white Friendly Society in the island. The Europeans did not need them.

Cooperative work was another aspect of self-help among this newly freed populace. Needless to say, housing existed in its most rudimentary state since the enslaved lived on the plantation of the master at his beck and call. Emancipation called upon the skilled craftsmen and village co-mates to work together to provide housing for their people. *Gayaps* or festive working together brought several villagers together to construct the homes of fellow villagers. This was one of the means Africans used to solve their housing problem.

The cooperative spirit among Africans was also replicated in agriculture in a form of team planting called *gaiapa*. In this exercise the entire village worked together to plant their fields. The following excerpt captures this teamwork in action and demonstrates how Africans used music and rhythm to spur them on to work:

Four a.m. next day, the clarion call from the blowing of conch shells and the ringing of bells gave notice that the village was astir.

In the middle of an acre or two of land to be planted there stood a large timite-covered tent or ajoupa, in which were an accumulation of pots and pans, improvised benches made of manaca plans and bamboo.... A heavy stock of yams, cush-scush, plantain, and a half bag of rice stood in one corner of the ajoupa, whilst above, several agoutis, half a deer and best of all, a full grown lappe, all ready and prepared to be served along with the provisions, pointed out that that this was to be a great day. Several women were busy preparing the wood fires, the little children of all the workers being entrusted to the care of their elder sisters

The men worked steadily, planting the corn seen in holes of three feet apart, the usual number of seed to each hole being five. Next followed

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 98-9.

*the women planting red beans, between the spaces. Part of the ground was taken up for tancias, bananas, cassava and pumpkins. While they planted, the men took up African refrains which were given a chorus by the women and the boys.*²⁶

Even as they worked and played together, Africans sought to reconnect with Africa to make a psychic truce with their past as it were. The commemoration of Emancipation, commenced in 1887, allowed Africans to reflect on their past and to salve the psychological scars that the slave experience created. Long before Frantz Fanon's work in the area, Philip Douglin, a Barbadian who had worked in Rio Pongo, West Africa, discovered a yearning amongst Africans in Trinidad to know more about their ancestors when he settled in Trinidad as a pastor in 1887. Apart from sharing his Rio Pongo experience with them, he also spoke of the psychological impact of European slavery on the colonized. In a memorable emancipation speech delivered on August 1, 1888, on the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation, he offered this remarkable insight:

There are secret agonies, known only to God, which are far more acute than any external torture. Oh! It is not the smiting of the back, until the earth is crimsoned with the streams of blood—it is not the pursuing of human beings with blood hounds—it is not the branding of the person, or the amputation of the limbs—it is not the killing of the body—it is not these that are the keenest sufferings that a people can undergo. They affect only the outward man and may leave the majestic mind untouched. But those inflections which tend to contract and destroy the mind—those cruelties which benumb the sensibility of the soul—those influences which chill and arrest the currency of the heart's affection—these are the awful instruments of real sufferings and the degradation; and these have been made to operate on the Negro."²⁷

Between 1887 and 1902, when he died, Douglin turned out to be a major intellectual influence on African intellectual thought in the island. J. J.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁷ P. H. Douglin, "Jubilee of Emancipation," *San Fernando Gazette*, August 11, 1888.

Thomas drew upon his work when he wrote *Froudacity* (1889), a response to James Anthony Froude's calumny of African people in the Caribbean. Douglin also emerged as one of the most devoted followers of Henry Sylvester Williams when he (Williams) returned to Trinidad in 1901 to preach his gospel of Pan-Africanism after the first Pan African conference in London the previous year. Stephen Nathaniel Cobham, another follower of Williams and a regular spokesman on his platform, captured the Pan African sentiments in his novel *Rupert Gray: A Tale in Black and White* that was published in 1907.

At the end of nineteenth century, Africans in Trinidad and Tobago began to clamor for self-rule and saw their future as being tied up with the fortunes of Africans outside of their immediate environment. This sense of fraternity gave them the impetus to break out of their narrow isolation and to comprehend issues within their larger Pan African perspective. Needless to say, the relationship between the colonial master, the emerging middle class, and the internal antagonism within the black community would be subjected to a much more thorough examination. Further, the principle of racial uplift would be placed on the national agenda as the next barrier to overcome.

The twentieth century ushered in a new phase in the struggle for African advancement in the society. It also coincided with the end of indentureship and the rise of what can be termed a form of Indian nationalism. The formation of the Trinidad Working Men's Association, the participation of West Indians in World War I and the great depression of 1929 led to a more defiant challenge to the hegemony of white rule in the society. Eric Williams has noted that "the discovery of oil, the abolition of indentured servitude, and the organization of the Trinidad Labour Party formed the background to intensification for constitutional reform at the end of the war."²⁸ Such were the pressures from the common man for social and political transformation that the British was forced to inaugurate the first Legislative Council that included elected representatives in 1925. The first national election was held on February 7 1925.

The great depression of 1929 had severe consequences for labour relations for the country. It led directly to a reduction of wages in the sugar and oil industries as the cost of living was rising. In 1935, in pursuance of the International Labour Convention a minimum wage ordinance was passed by

²⁸ Eric Williams, *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 216.

the Legislative Council but not much was done about it. This ordinance did not relieve the growing pressures the working people of the island (both in the oil and agricultural belt) felt at their deteriorating condition. These economic and social pressures led to a major strike among the oilfield workers in 1937 that was led by Uriah Butler, an African champion of the masses and the leader of Oilfields Workers' Trade Union. Butler's emergence emphasized that "the working class leadership had passed from the hands of [Captain Arthur] Cipriani and Port of Spain"²⁹ to the African and Indian working people, particularly those in the rural areas. In the process, "Butler had become a national hero."³⁰

The unrest of the 1930s led to further constitutional changes. Universal adult suffrage was passed in 1945 and the first election under this new mandate was held in 1946. By then Butler's hold on the people began to weaken and the West Indian National Party that was led by Dr. Patrick Solomon and Dr. David Pitt emerged to fill the vacuum. Their agitation for further constitutional reform led to the adoption of the 1950 constitution that allowed for the first Ministerial system in the country and what Dr. Solomon characterized as the people's "need and desire [for] Responsible Government."³¹

Whether they knew it or not, Cipriani, Butler, and Solomon were paving the way for the arrival of Dr. Eric Williams and the People's National Movement (PNM) that came onto the national scene in 1956. Informed by the demands of the Bandung Conference, PNM located its fortunes within the rising tide of black and brown nationalism and the desire of "the wretched of the earth" to control their affairs. During this period Ghana, Nigeria, and other African countries became independent. Britain's hold on its colonies was dwindling and the national forces in the world were taking their rightful place in history. It was a time when the black and brown man was on the rise, cries of Black Power and Black consciousness filled the air and reverberated everywhere throughout the colonial world where colonial peoples were held in oppression.

In 1962, after one hundred and sixty-six years, Africans and Indians in the island could hold their heads up high and say in the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Free at last! Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

²⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 235.

³¹ Ibid., 24.

Throughout this long journey for freedom, Africa and its customs were central in the formation of the national consciousness of the majority of Trinbagonians who were first in the struggle against slavery; first in the struggle against colonialism; and leaders in the struggle for national independence. There can be no doubt that the struggle against slavery gave them the fortitude to struggle for what became their national patrimony; their struggle against colonialism forced them to come together as a people united in one battle; and the struggle for national independence compelled them to make alliances with the various groups and nationalities that formed the national polity.

Living with others made Africans more tolerant and respectful of the rights of others. This may account for the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is one society in the world that has been free of ethnic, racial, or religious conflict. In other words, it has taught Trinbagonians to “live and let live” and be mindful of the freedom of others.

In the process we have become a happy go lucky people who “likes to fete.” Some have even argued that Africans in Trinidad live from one fete to another, from one carnival to another. Yet in a strange way, it is the transcendence that carnival offers that allows us to enjoy life and to take it easy. This love for a fete and a party can be interpreted as a direct result of our Yoruba heritage. It is well-known that Yoruba people like to celebrate and give thanks for their being in this world. In drinking their alcoholic beverages (preferably rum), they always give the first drink to the spirits.

Africans have also excelled in academics and possess a desire to transform the world. The intellectual and revolutionary successes of persons such as Jean Baptiste Philip; Michel Maxwell Philip; L. B. Tronchin; J. J. Thomas; Philip Douglin; Sylvester Williams; C. L. R. James; Oliver Cromwell Cox; Eric Williams; Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure) are only a few of the names who have left an indelible mark on the international stage particularly as it has had to do with the liberation of African people. Our artists and painters—such as the Mighty Sparrow; Lord Kitchener; Merle Hodge, Le Roy Clarke—and sports personalities such Brian Lara and Mc Donald Bailey have also done their bit to shape and define our national identity and speak of our uniqueness in this world.

Ours has been a long struggle. African people of Trinidad and Tobago can be proud of their achievements in the world. The late Rex Nettleford of Jamaica once said: “We are the foundation upon which the nation has been built.” We have been the freedom fighters and the artists. In short, we have

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been the leaven of the society. Even our creation of the steel band, a direct precursor of the tamboo bamboo, has been ranked as a major contribution to the music of the twentieth century.

We have come a long way. In the process, we have left our mark upon the nation. And while it is true that our culture has not remained pure — no culture does — we have transformed it to fit our needs and make us the responsive, creative people that we have become.







<i>Formato</i>	<i>15,5 x 22,5 cm</i>
<i>Mancha gráfica</i>	<i>12 x 18,3cm</i>
<i>Papel</i>	<i>pólen soft 80g (miolo), duo design 250g (capa)</i>
<i>Fontes</i>	<i>Times New Roman 17/20,4 (títulos), 12/14 (textos)</i>