

# European and African Influences on the Culture of the Virgin Islands

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# European and African Influences on the Culture of the Virgin Islands

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## PREFACE

Once again a new idea is herein presented where, through a bi-lateral approach to the study of the history of the islands, efforts will be made to show African and European influences on the economics, philosophy, and total way of life of the Virgin Islander. Through this study the young Virgin Islander also becomes aware of his common bonds with children of his entire geographic area - i.e., ancestry, struggle for freedom, economic stability.

Prior to this study, resource material on this topic was rather scanty. The paucity of this data posed frustrating problems to teachers, especially those of the social sciences who searched fruitlessly for such data to instruct the young Virgin Islander in the skills and understandings he needs in order to relate constructively to his geographic area through an adequate understanding of his history.

The study is divided into three major divisions beginning with a bi-lateral study showing African and European influences on the history of the islands. Because geographic factors aided in shaping the history of the area, the second section (under separate cover) deals with the geography of the West Indies with focus on the U. S. Virgin Islands. The third and final section is a series of maps (under separate cover) to facilitate this study.

This second printing offers as a new feature, related activities or exercises intended as tools to stimulate the upper elementary or junior high school student to think about or to react to the material presented. It is hoped that the teacher will expand on these suggestions with effective techniques and share them with fellow workers and with this office.

Finally, this edition also includes a bibliography which offers sources for additional study on the topics presented.

## INTRODUCTION

To the young Virgin Islander, the Seventies can be identified as the "age of protest". As he gazes into the future he sees an age of advanced technology, an age of competition for jobs; he may also see an influx of newcomers who monopolize and control industries, trade and the economy of his island. In deep thought he ponders: "Where am I heading? What is it in my past that accounts for my anxieties?"

The following account of his origin and the events that molded his destiny may aid him in coping with the future, for, if he accepts himself, he will either challenge or understand the performance of his leaders. Then with periscope vision he will strive to improve local conditions and to contribute to the future development of his island.

Questions to think about:

Do you think your education thus far is preparing you for the future?

Are you learning the skills that are needed for new machinery?

What new subjects do you think should be included in your curriculum?

When you speak with someone your age from another country, do you feel inferior? superior? on equal terms?

## CHAPTER I

### The Concept of Culture

The concept of culture which is primarily the work of the sociologist and the anthropologist has been defined in so many ways. Anthropologists speak of the whole way of life of a people - the body of techniques, behaviors and generation to another, and sociologists refer to culture as all the achievements of a group. In these respects then we can compare culture to a steady stream or flow of ideas being passed on from generation to generation.

Most West Indians are proud of their culture, for unique as it is, our culture sets us apart and distinct from members of our race. In crowds or groups away from home, a West Indian can easily identify another from his region.

Even though feelings of insularity do exist among groups, there are common bonds through which empathy can be established. Calypsonians sing of male superiority in contrast to their American counterpart. West Indian women possess the natural grace and body movements which their mainland counterparts pay large sums of money to acquire. In addition, creole dialects, culture aspects as folktales are links that in some fashion bind West Indians as a group.

Is there an identifiable Virgin Islands culture? So far as evidence indicates, there is none, for only recently a few books have been in print and a few artists have attempted to illustrate our way of life. There is, nevertheless, common heritage or regional homogeneity. Since the Virgin Islands share so much in common with the rest of the West Indies, it can be further argued that there is no identifiable, specific culture that can be called Virgin Islands but regional culture traits are keenly discernible.

The culture of the West Indies is a mixture of African, Asian, European, and American patterns. One advantage of this fusion is that the West Indian can adjust quite easily to his surroundings, yet, remain unique - he employs his folktale hero's, Bru Anansi's, witty personality - (one eye on his new culture, the other eye on his old). Very few places in the world offer a potpourri of races, culture, and politics as the islands of the West Indies. Blessed with strategic positions, they have always attracted European nations seeking wealth and/or power. The Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch, English and Danish have at some time or the other colonized or exploited these islands or their people and left their imprints. Indications of these influences can be observed collectively as in island groups or on individual islands wherein strong national loyalties and roots are revealed.





THE GUINEA COAST ABOUT THE YEAR 1700

From the map in Churchill's *Collection of Voyages*, engraved by R. W. Seale

Reproduced from G. F. Dow's *SLAVE SHIPS AND SLAVERY*;  
 Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

The greatest influence on West Indians, however, has been made by their ancestors, the Africans. This is evidenced by the fact that, with the exception of a few countries, Negroes comprise the largest racial group.

### The Acculturation Process

Among the major types of acculturation listed in several reliable sources, the one that suits our study best appears under the heading "assimilation", a process by which one culture is replaced. Many cases of assimilation are recorded in the histories of various countries - chief among them is the case of Negroes carried from Africa to other parts of the world. Efforts will be made to show how an African culture was superimposed by European cultures and produced a West Indian culture.

Through the complicated method of sales, especially in the New World, the tribal customs, family units, languages, religious beliefs and economic status of the slaves were lost. However, having enough wits they perceived ways of incorporating fragments of their former culture into their newly acquired way of life. This was especially true of their religion. As will be explained in a later section, they accepted Roman Catholicism readily because they observed ways by which they could incorporate their ceremonies (i.e. voodoo) into this new religion.

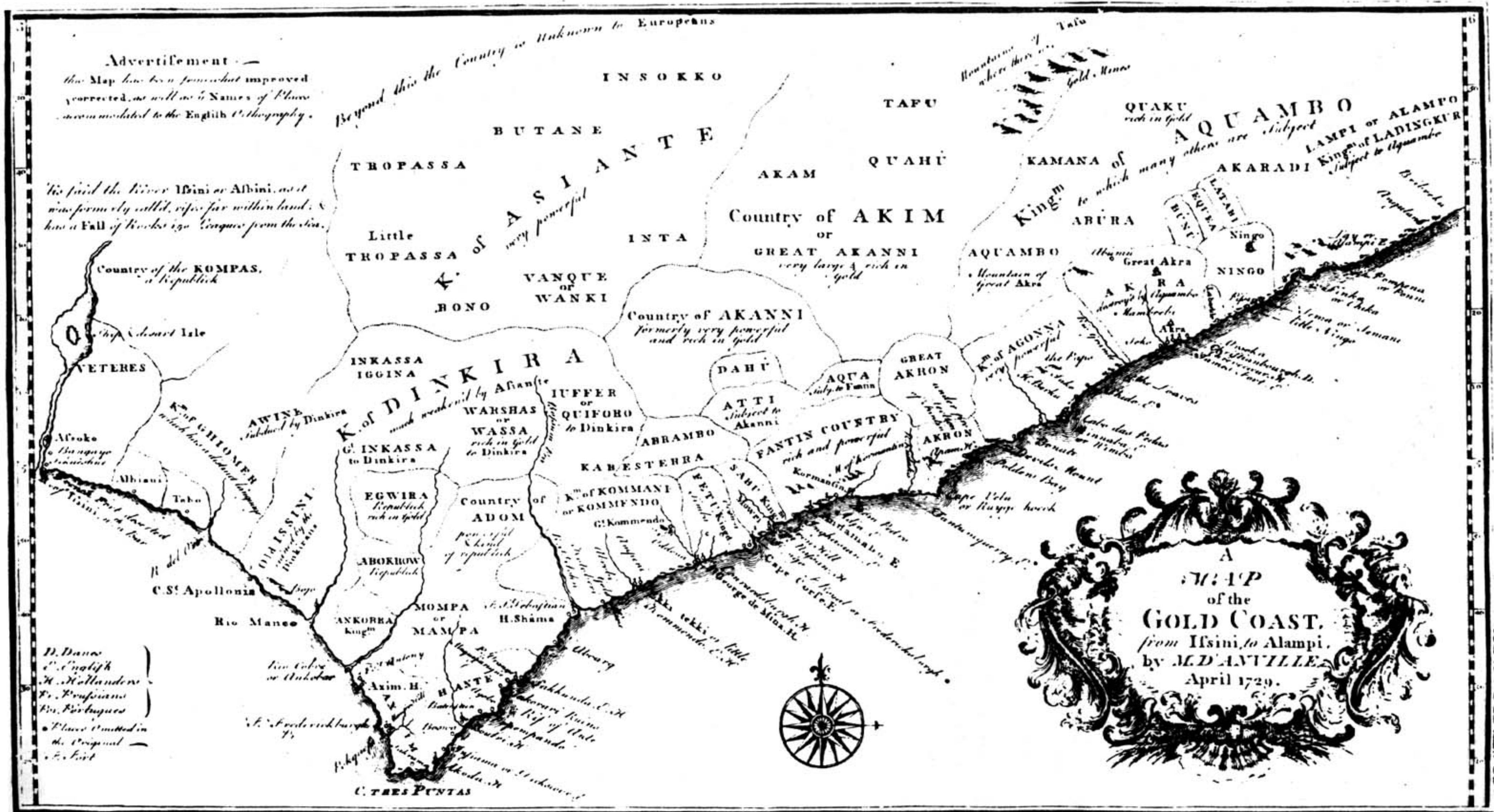
This study, therefore, shows how geography blended with history to produce what is known today as the Virgin Islander or in broader terms, the West Indian, and begins with a look at the land of their origin.

### Land of Origin

West Africa is that part of Africa which is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and south, by the Sahara Desert on the north, and on the east by a line corresponding approximately to the present eastern boundary of Nigeria. The climate is composed of two distinct characteristics - the desert receives little rainfall and there is no permanent vegetation. At the other extreme, the southernmost part receives large amounts of rainfall and much of the coast is covered with thick forests which can be farmed to secure employment.

The area is populated by men and women who are essentially Negroes. West Africa is the land of Negroes. Because the Negroes of West Africa did not keep written records, history





A map of the Gold Coast.

Reproduced from G. Norregade's DANISH SETTLEMENTS IN WEST AFRICA; Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

depends on verbal reports about their traditions. It appears that they lived in small descent groups which were led originally by the oldest male member and eventually chieftaincy would be held by a suitable male member. Their worship included the belief in a supreme God who was the creator of the universe. Of course there were lesser gods, who because they were closer to man than to the Creator were often thought to be more efficacious.

The members of the group usually lived in a number of villages scattered around the larger village where the chief lived. The houses were built of sun-baked mud and usually roofed with thatch. Gold and iron were mined and worked, and cloth was made from the bark of trees. Gradually descent groups merged and large communities came into being with a chief who was recognized by larger groups of people.

Until the fifteenth century West Africa had been connected to and influenced only indirectly by the outside world through its relation with North Africa. Between 1434 and 1482 seamen from nations of Western Europe, mainly Portugal and Castille, began to explore West Africa. This exploration was quickly followed by the establishment of European trading stations and, by the sixteenth century, West Africa was deeply involved in European trade and also with the newly discovered continent of America.<sup>1</sup> It was from West Africa that millions of her native-born people were transported to become human beasts of burden.

#### West Africa - The Gold Coast

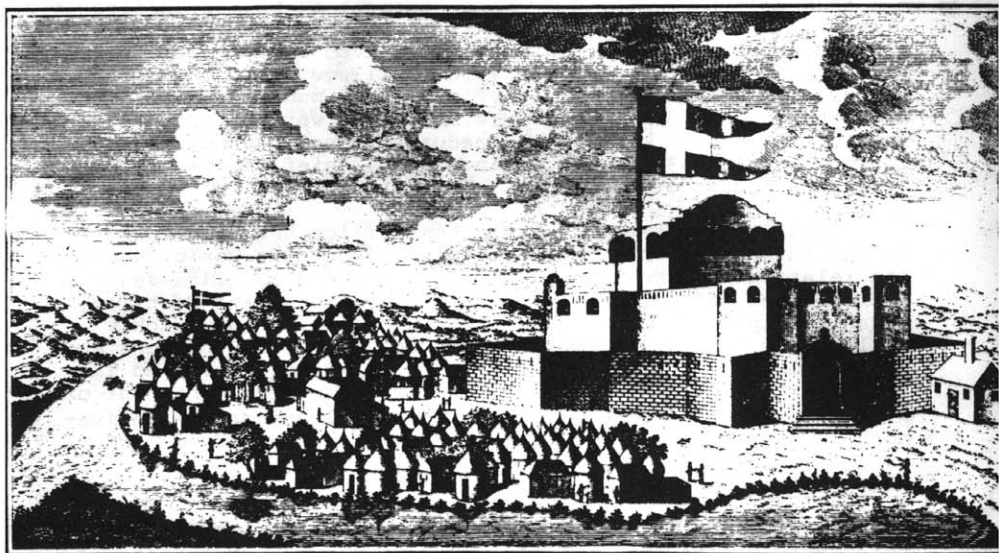
Known since 1957 as Ghana but earlier as the Gold Coast, this strip of land in West Africa gave to the West Indies and America millions of people who were later renamed slaves.

The strip was also the scene of political competition among several European countries. As early as 1471 the Portuguese controlled the area. In their explorations they found that between the mouths of the rivers Ankobra and Volta lay a country in which gold and gold dust were evident in such abundance that they gave it the name of Mina, "the mine" or as we now say, the Gold Coast. In 1482, Portugal successfully built its fort called Sao Jorge da Mina. Besides the Portuguese other European nations jostled for control of the area.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century there were as many as thirty strong, well-garrisoned European forts, together with a number of smaller trading posts or lodges. Both the Dutch West Indies Company and the English Royal African Company had their headquarters there; the Dutch at Elmina Castle which

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<sup>1</sup>J. D. Fage, An Introduction to the History of West Africa, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 1-8.



*Fredensborg, eighteenth-century sketch.*

Reproduced from G. Norregade's DANISH SETTLEMENTS IN WEST AFRICA;  
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they had taken from the Portuguese in 1637 and the English, only some ten miles away at Cape Coast Castle, which they had captured from the Dutch in 1554. The Dutch had ten other principal forts on the Gold Coast, two of which, Asam and Shama, had originally been Portuguese. The English had nine more which they had erected themselves around 1660 and 1690. The Danes, who had expelled the Swedes from the Gold Coast in 1657, concentrated their activities to the east of Accra while the Brandenburgs maintained two forts in the West between 1685 and 1709.

The largest number of European forts, built on the Gold Coast during the century after 1640, was intended to serve as bases for the slave trade. The Dutch and English companies competed strongly to secure the largest share of the trade of the Gold Coast. By 1785, when the Gold Coast was exporting about 10,000 slaves a year, more than half the trade was in English hands while the Dutch share was less than half.<sup>2</sup>

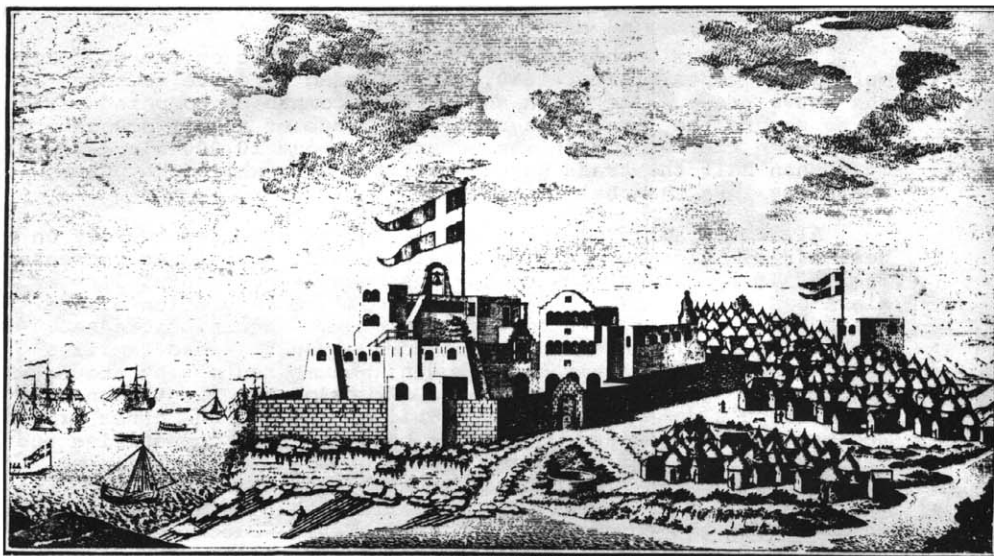
All the plantations of the West Indies depended heavily on West Africa for slave labor as their demands for slaves increased. The demand for slaves was continuous because the useful life of a slave was at most thirty years and the slave population of the plantations did not maintain its numbers by natural increase. The state of servitude did not encourage men to raise families and to marry and, in any case, women outnumbered men by about two to one. Along with the demand for slaves on the plantation came also Europe's demand for sugar, tobacco, indigo, and other crops. Because of these demands the trade became rather competitive and merchants from other countries became engaged in the business. These included men from Sweden, Denmark, and Brandenburg. Disadvantaged by a late start, they realized that to deal effectively in the trade and to compete with the powerful Dutch, they well needed to form national companies variously called West African companies or West Indian companies.

A final note on European colonization of the Gold Coast may very well center on a comparison between the influences of the two powers enjoying longest control of West Africa - Portugal and Denmark.

The Portuguese held the area from 1471 until 1637 when they lost control to the Dutch. Denmark's supremacy lasted from 1658 to 1850, the longest in the history of the strip. Yet, looking back at existing evidences, one would assume that the Portuguese made lasting impressions not only on the history but on the people as well. The Portuguese have left as reminders their language, numerous buildings, monuments and place names. Denmark left nothing but names of streets and family names.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 70.



*Christiansborg, eighteenth-century sketch.*

Reproduced from G. Norregade's DANISH SETTLEMENTS IN WEST AFRICA;  
Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

This same characteristic is evidenced in the Danish West Indies, an area controlled by Denmark for over three hundred years. The only evidences of Danish occupation in the now U.S. Virgin Islands are street addresses and some architecture.

The Gold Coast proved to be a "magic pot" for these early adventurers. It produced slaves as rapidly as they needed them. Ships had only to dispatch their human cargo from this region to the Caribbean, pick up rum, tobacco, and spice for Liverpool or Copenhagen and return to the Gold Coast to find another shipment awaiting them. With such supplies available, other countries watched and followed close on each other's heels in a race to colonize the Caribbean and vie with each other for control. Chapter II deals more with this movement.

#### Exercises

I agree (do not agree) with the statement:  
"There is no Virgin Islands culture".

Composition:

Write a report on one of these topics:

I am an American first and a Virgin Islander second.

I am a Virgin Islander first and an American second.

The greater influence on life and culture of West Indians was made by Africans.

#### Vocabulary

culture  
acculturation  
insularity

tribe  
exploitation  
generation

Use these six words to play the game "free association", a technique used to produce or diagnose feelings. A leader writes one of the words on the board and invites members of the class to give a new word which comes to mind in reaction to the initial word. The reactions are also listed. In conclusion these terms form the basis of an underlying attitude towards the topic previously discussed or presented.



## CHAPTER II

### The Spread of Commercialism, Nationalism and Religious Zeal to the Caribbean

Spreading with gigantic strides throughout Europe and the New World during the early fifteenth century were three great movements - commercialism, nationalism, and religious zeal. Several countries rivaled each other for supremacy of the sea or for political power or merely for survival. Included among these countries were Portugal, Spain, England, Holland, Brandenburg (a small German state), Denmark and France.

#### Portugal

Along with the Spaniards, the Portuguese, in the fifteenth century, monopolized the sea trade. The Portuguese, great navigators as they were, learned from the Italians the art of accurate navigation and of mapping the coastlines they discovered. Portugal, small as she was (65,414 square miles, a little larger than the state of Maine), had two major purposes in undertaking the exploration of West Africa. According to Fage, they were: to direct the trade first of West Africa and then of the Indian Ocean into channels which would not be under the control of the Muslims, but which would bring it directly to Europe to the profit of Portugal, and to find or convert and create Christian allies in Africa to join with Europeans in a joint onslaught against Islam.

Under the leadership of Prince Henry the Navigator, who devoted his time, wealth and his influence to explorations, the Portuguese ventured far into the Atlantic. As Grand Master of the Order of Christ, Prince Henry had at his disposal the great wealth of that Order taken over from the Knights Templar from which he defrayed the expenses of his exploration. He made over to the Order the revenues he derived from the Azores and Madeira. He sent out ships to explore the coast of West Africa of which little was known beyond Cape Iven, and he encouraged his sailors to face the imagined terrors of tropical seas, where, apart from the monsters reputed to exist, it was believed that the sea was so hot that human beings must perish if they ventured there in ships.

However, the Portuguese did not reach the Gold Coast until around 1470 and it was in 1471 that the first Negro slaves were brought to Portugal. Along with this trade and the traffic in gold, pepper and ivory, Portugal enjoyed an envious reputation.

When, therefore, Brazil was discovered in 1500 by Pedro Alvarez Cabral, Portugal had secured a stronghold in the Caribbean in which she could continue her existing slave trade. In order to avoid competition, the Portuguese further secured papal sanction through the Bulls Romantics Pontifex, on the 8th of January, 1455. Briefly, this bull was an effective means of ensuring that Portugal should reap where she had sown and should maintain the territory she had discovered and conquered by arduous efforts.<sup>3</sup>

Their expansion into Africa was initiated by the first venture in 1418 to the island of Porto Santo. This was followed by a call at the Canaries in 1427 and in 1431 to the Azores. In 1444, Cape Verde was explored and Sierra Leone in 1460.

In 1480, Bartholomew Diaz de Novaes rounded the Cape of Good Hope and when the news of Columbus's discovery in 1492 reached them, King John II ordered the preparation of an expedition to India by way of Cape of Good Hope. Many other significant expeditions followed, but Portugal's discovery of Brazil is all that is of significance at this time. Portuguese treatment of slaves and their colonists is explained in detail under another topic.

The Portuguese found that the slave trade was a lucrative one and soon established a fort at Elmina. Conversely, the Africans who traded slaves with the Portuguese for cloth, ammunition, and other commodities, left their tribes to settle in new towns that began to grow up beneath the walls of the fort. In turn, their men chose wives from among them and new communities sprang up.

By the end of this time, the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were not the only Europeans anxious to explore West Africa. Soon to follow were the Spaniards, the English, Dutch, Danish and many other smaller countries.

### Spain

Simultaneously, Spain, the "Queen of the Sea", through efforts of Queen Isabella, furnished ships for Christopher Columbus who claimed to have discovered America in 1492 and the West Indian archipelago in 1493. Soon she had to her credit such lands as Mexico, Central America, Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

However, prior to these discoveries, Spain (Castile) and Portugal were at war (1475 and 1479). Outstanding differences between the two countries were officially settled in 1479 by the Treaty of Alcacouas, by which, in return for Portugal's renunciation of claims to Castile and the Canaries, the Castilian authorities agreed not to dispute Portuguese possessions in West Africa.

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<sup>3</sup>

Alan Burns, History of the British West Indies (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), pp. 58-60.

Possessing the mainland of South America, the southern tip of the United States, and Caribbean lands, Spain was becoming an extremely rich nation. Since there was no gold as expected by Columbus on the islands he discovered, the Spaniards now resorted to a second choice - the sugar industry. But where was the labor? Realizing the inability of the whites to cope with tropical heat and the decimation of the native population of the islands by ill treatment or disease, the Spaniards now turned to West Africa for Negroes to till the soil and add to their high rising revenues. Sir Alan Burns reports that as early as 1502 a few Negroes had been taken to Hispaniola from Spain but in 1503 Ovando, then Governor of Hispaniola, issued an order that no more Negro slaves were to be sent to the island as they ran away and joined the Indians and encouraged them to resist the Spaniards.

The same reference accounts that in 1510 the King of Spain gave authority for Negroes to be taken to Hispaniola to work in the mines and by 1513 the numbers had increased sufficiently to fix an import tax levied on all slaves imported into the island.

The beginning of the slave trade is also recorded by Sir Alan Burns. He informs us that the license to supply African slaves, tax free, was granted by the King as a favor to one of his courtiers, Laurent de Gouvenot. When de Gouvenot's license expired in 1538, the King sold to two German merchants the right to supply slaves to West Indian colonies and this was the beginning of the monopoly in the slave trade in the Spanish colonies.<sup>4</sup>

From then on the slave trade grew and along with the numbers came problems such as illicit traders, high prices, revolts. These topics are discussed in a subsequent chapter. The early invasions of the Moors who had captured Spain and the Mediterranean area for a while prompted both the Portuguese and Spaniards not only to reclaim their properties but to beat the Moors on their own soil. Rulers of Spain and Portugal waged warfare, advanced explorations to unexplored lands. The hard battles of reconquest or subduing the Moors lasted for centuries.

In 1492, Columbus discovered San Salvador, an island in the Watling group off the coast of Cuba, then he sailed to Santo Domingo and established a colony there, the first in the Western Hemisphere of which the West Indies is a part. In 1493, his second voyage, he discovered more islands by sailing farther south: Dominica, Marie Galante, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, St. Christopher,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

Nevis, Antigua, St. Croix, the Saints, Las Islas Virgenes. In Puerto Rico at Mayaguez and San German, Spain established herself in the New World as an overseas extension giving them her form of government, her religion, her language, her culture and establishing universities connected with the churches. This relationship as we shall discover later led to sharp distinctions between her slaves and those of other European powers.

Other Spanish explorers were Diego Valasquez who conquered Venezuela in 1511, Cortes who conquered Mexico between 1517 and 1524 and Balboa who reached the Pacific in 1513. Consequently Queen Isabella found herself proprietress of half the world.

Ponce de Leon was the first governor of Puerto Rico (1508); his bones as well as those of his family lie buried in Puerto Rico. It was from Puerto Rico that Ponce de Leon went across the Caribbean to Florida in search of the "Fountain of Youth". He lived in what is now Caparra; then after his death (1521) the family moved to La Casa Blanca, built in 1525. His remains were brought from Cuba by a grandson of the same name to Puerto Rico and laid to rest in 1559 first in San Jose Church and later in San Juan Bautista Cathedral in San Juan on August 12, 1908.

The fortification of Puerto Rico was spearheaded by the Spaniards. La Fortaleza was finished in 1540 and El Morro Castle was built during 1539 and 1591. On November 22, 1595, Drake attacked San Juan and was beaten off (he died that year in the Caribbean).

On September 25, 1652, the Dutch under Hendricks attacked and leveled San Juan, but after weeks of fighting they were driven off. In 1630, Governor Soto Mayore started the wall surrounding San Juan city and that work took 150 years to complete. Between 1630 and 1771, San Cristobal was built. Then came attacks by the British. The 1790 British attack on San Juan was repulsed.

On October 18, 1898, after the famous battle of San Juan Hill, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Cuba became United States protectorates. Before leaving the Spaniards, one very important note should be emphasized. Spain as a nation was very passive in the slave trade; therefore, slavery as a national movement did not receive her endorsement. She relished her position as Queen of the Seas.

Finally, with no expected dangers from the Muslims, she began to concentrate on exploration of the African coastline from Cape

Bojador to the north of the Congo and beyond. By the beginning of the sixteenth century direct commercial relations between West Africa and Europe, and West Africa and the newly discovered American continent were established.

### England

From discovery until the second half of the sixteenth century, Spain had the monopoly on territories in the West Indies. Then, by constant wars or raids, her powers weakened and other nations, England and France, loomed as threats to her control. Through the voyages of John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, England ventured into the Caribbean waters. Hawkins, through a series of raids, subdued the Spaniards, Drake circumnavigated the world and Raleigh subdued the Spaniards. Enjoying the power of these discoveries, England finally embarked on colonizing this area. In 1595, Sir Robert Dudley laid claim to Trinidad. Sir Anthony Shirley arrived in Dominica in 1596 and claimed Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1597. St. Kitts was settled by Thomas Warner and by the French in 1624. Later (1625), he colonized Nevis, Montserrat and Barbados.

### Holland

Encouraged by the conquests of the Portuguese and Spanish, the Dutch concentrated on entering the Atlantic trade. By 1610, the Portuguese naval power in the Indian Ocean had been destroyed and the Dutch had secured complete mastery of the trade. By 1621 the Dutch West Indies Company was formed. This company remained the strongest European power on the coast of Guinea. It was the most active and best organized agent in the Atlantic slave trade. Gradually the Dutch claimed those West Indian islands that were either unoccupied or thinly populated by the Spaniards. They taught the islanders how to grow sugar for export.

By 1623, the Dutch are said to have had about 800 ships regularly in the West Indies, some of them ships of war engaged in harrying Spanish settlements and shipping, but the majority was engaged in the slave trade and piracy on a small scale. In 1628, a Dutch fleet is reported to have dealt a most devastating blow to the Spanish treasure fleet when it captured two richly loaded galleons bound from Honduras to Havana. The total loss of this fleet is estimated at four million ducats; this was the greatest defeat suffered by the Spaniards and brought their prestige in the Caribbean to its lowest level.

Through raids and other forms of conquest the Dutch finally colonized Curacao, St. Eustatius, Aruba and Bonaire. Saba was settled in 1640. St. Martin was first settled by the Dutch in

1638 but a Spanish raid destroyed the colony and in 1648 it was divided between the French and Dutch. This division still exists.

Thus with possessions as markets for the slave trade, the Dutch joined the ruling countries in bringing black gold from Africa. Curacao and other Dutch possessions in the Caribbean became bases for a flourishing Dutch trade with the European colonists in the West Indies.

#### The Brandenburgs (1685-1715)

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) was the last of the great religious wars of Europe. The conflict was really a series of wars which began as a civil war between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics in the German states. Before the war was over, most of the nations of Europe had become involved and there ensued a struggle for territory and power. As a result of this war, Germany was in a pitiful condition. More than half the people were killed; villages, cities and farms were destroyed. Industries suffered and thousands left home for America to build new homes.

In due time, Brandenburg, a small German state that was recovering from the horrors of this war, began to scrutinize European colonization. It attempted to form a company in East India land but without success. One Benjamin Raule, director-in-chief for naval affairs, was instructed to secure a fort on the Guinea coast. A man of restless activity and bold imagination, he was brimful of schemes for promoting the Brandenburg-Prussian commerce and was successful in achieving this. Having acquired a fort just east of Elmina, the Brandenburgs now turned their attention to a port where they could dispose of the human part of their Guinea cargo. Here they met with strong opposition, violence and threats from the Dutch West India Company since Raule's idea was to colonize St. Thomas as evidenced by this letter he wrote to the Elector on October 26, 1685:

Everyone knows that the slave trade is the source of the wealth which the Spaniards bring out of the West Indies and whoever knows how to furnish them slaves, will share their wealth. Who can say by how many millions of hard cash the Dutch West India Company has enriched itself in this slave trade.<sup>5</sup>

Still possessed with this obsession to buy or lease St. Thomas, Raule traveled to Copenhagen. Through trickery and scheming, a loosely drawn provision went into effect.

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<sup>5</sup>Waldemar Westergaard, The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1917), pp. 71-88.



The Brandenburgs did not waste time. Their first director was one Laporte who was well suited for the job. Under the pretext of waiting for instructions from home before taking up plantations they kept the Danish officials in suspense until their impatience was turned into a suspicion that the Brandenburgs were looking for a chance to seize the entire island.

The vigor with which the Brandenburg authorities pushed their business in procuring slaves and disposing of them on St. Thomas and surrounding islands aroused fear in the Danes. Two early Brandenburg slave ships which arrived in St. Thomas brought to the island more than two thousand one hundred pieces of human freight.

### Denmark

Denmark's occupation of African territories is of greatest significance to Virgin Islands history since it shows the emergence of the Danish West Indian Company out of the former East Asiatic and the Gluckstadt (African) companies. The Danish West Indian Company was authorized to colonize St. Thomas. Thus fortified, Denmark was able to introduce slavery across the Atlantic to the Danish West Indies.

An historic review of events preceding the slave trade will explain Denmark's interest and participation in this trade as well as her subsequent expansion on both sides of the Atlantic and her political involvement therein.

A relatively small country, Denmark had quite an historic past. She was the first nation to attempt to control the Baltic Sea, which turned out to be the scene of many battles. In 1397, Queen Margaret united Denmark, Norway and Sweden. This union was not easy to manage, and there were many disputes. After a long series of wars the Danes tried to force the Swedes back into the union under the Danish King. For another century, Denmark fought Sweden to regain the lost provinces. It was also during this period that Denmark acquired her tropical colonies.

Meanwhile the feeling of nationality was gradually developing in Europe. During the reign of Christian IV, the humanistic movement gained considerable headway. When the University of Copenhagen (founded in 1479) was reorganizing in accordance with new ideas, the Lutheran reformation especially was a symbol. But sixteenth century Denmark was in an economic decline. Her resources were scant, her trade unsuccessful. King Christian IV then developed keen interest in sending exploration groups to regain lost colonies such as Greenland.

While Denmark fought for her existence as a nation, Danish and Norwegian merchants were beginning to think seriously of securing a chartered company to trade with America (i.e. the West Indies).

The first expedition to the West Indies was captained by Eric Nielsen Schmidt who was selected for his previous knowledge of West Indian waters and conditions. He is referred to in a contract dated June 8, 1665. It is known that he died in St. Thomas in 1666. The first Danish West India Company received its charter which conferred very large powers on the company. The Danish West India Company was authorized by Christian V to take possession and to occupy the island of St. Thomas, also other islands near the mainland of America that were uninhabited or suitable for plantations. The company was also authorized to build forts in its defense in case of attack. The Danish West India Company, under its charter, remained in effect (with changes) for eighty-four years.

#### Colonization of St. Thomas - 1671

Of significance to us is the fact that it was under this charter that the settlement of St. Thomas was begun in 1671. George Iversen was elected first governor of the new colony. Two ships were dispatched to St. Thomas: the "Gilded Crown" set sail on August 30, 1671. "The Fero" met with tragedy and unforeseen difficulties. Springing a leak, it was delayed in Bergen for several months. After leaving Bergen eighty-six persons of both sexes died on the journey. "The Fero" arrived in St. Thomas on May 25, 1672, three months late. Its arrival is vividly described by Dr. Westergaard:

"The Ship with a cargo valued at \$18,172, arrived in St. Thomas harbor on May 25, 1672 just three months after its departure from Bergen. The pioneer band went ashore on the following morning, raised the Danish flag and took formal possession. They found an island that seemed to them, as the Governor expressed it, well suited and large enough for their purposes. No one was there to dispute ownership, the English who had occupied having left six or seven weeks earlier after burning off the roof of the store house. The land had to be cleared of bush and forest before it could be planted".<sup>6</sup>

Having thus established her powers in the West Indies, Denmark concerned herself with the task of recruiting labor. Indians, white indentured servants, white convicts all succumbed to the tropical heat. The answer seemed to be African slaves. To do this, however, a charter was necessary and Christian V passed an edict which merged the African Company of Gluckstadt into the West India

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

Company and allowed it to trade on the Guinea coast.

#### Acquisition of St. John - 1717

St. John had been claimed by the Danes as early as the first administration of Adolph Esmit. In a letter written early in 1684, mention is made of an attempt through two moneyed merchants from Barbados to set up "work" (forts) on St. John; but the English governor, Stapleton, sent two sloops over to the island thus driving away forty men sent over by Barbados merchants. On his return to St. Thomas in 1688, Esmit was instructed to attempt the settlement of St. John by placing from four to six men and to encourage them to begin planting, but it was not until 1717 that the project was actually carried out. One year earlier Governor Eric Bredal of St. Thomas wrote the directors that many of the inhabitants of St. Thomas were willing to settle on St. John, but that they were held back solely by fear of the English who were unwilling to let any nation go there and cut down the timber. On the twenty-fifth of the following March, the Governor had a vessel loaded with guns, ammunition and provisions from a recent visiting ship, to take him to St. John with twenty planters, sixteen Negroes and five soldiers. In his report he wrote:

"I have planted there the flag of our most gracious king and fired a salute, and then we feasted and drank to the health, first of our sovereign and then of the company. Later I selected a place on which to build a fort, a convenient location which commands the inlet of the harbor as well as the harbor itself, and a level space beneath it on which a village can stand. The harbor is quite secure and when a person is within it he sees land all about him."

The fort was then called Fort Frederiksvaern. They set about to develop the island. Estates were laid out and soon there were almost a thousand Dutch settlers. In spite of the heat and fever the island developed; coffee, tobacco, indigo and sugar reaped high dividends. After a series of depressing episodes such as drought, a plague, a severe hurricane and disappointed Negroes, a severe revolt occurred on St. John which ended in loss of property and lives.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Westergaard, Ibid., pp. 127-130.

### Acquisition of St. Croix - 1733

St. Croix had a rich and colorful history. The only one of the three islands with two towns was occupied by both Dutch and English as early as 1652. They were later joined by some French refugees from the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts). A civil war between factions ensued which resulted in the expulsion of the Dutch and French before 1652. In August of that year, a Spanish expedition from Puerto Rico drove out the English. The Spaniards had hardly settled there when De Poincy, the general of all French islands in America, bought St. Croix and turned it over to the Knights of Malta for colonization (1651-1654).

During the periods of 1657-1665 the island was further developed by the French; then in 1665 it was bought by the French West India Company. In 1674, the King of France took possession of the island. In 1733, after the slave rebellion on St. John, several planters from that island got disgusted and started looking elsewhere for possible settlements. The Danish West India and Guinea Company then bought St. Croix from the French Crown and dispatched a band of men to make the island ready for occupancy.

They arrived on January eighth in the harbor of Basin. After saluting the Danish flag which was planted on a point of land near the fort, they read the King's commission to the new governor, Moth, and fired a salute.

Optimistic about their new acquisition, the Danes set about making the island provide some revenue for their declining treasury. They sent over their best engineers including Moth who was later to be the island's first governor. They chopped trees, built a fort on the north side and named it Christians Waern. A sermon was preached and full authority was officially conferred on Governor Moth. He and his soldiers marched to the fort under arms and fired a cannon as the Danish flag waved overhead. He then extinguished the symbolically lighted candle and relit it in the name of the Danish Crown. Plants and herbs were pulled out of the ground, water was tasted, stones were thrown and all acts were performed to indicate the free, full, perpetual possession of the island which had been taken in the name of the Danish king. The Danes now turned to agriculture by attempting at tobacco and cotton. Inadequate labor supply caused the crops to decline and the slave trade was the next best answer for the Danes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

## French in the West Indies<sup>9</sup>

### St. Christopher (St. Kitts)

Struggle for supremacy in the West Indies was mainly between the English and the French. Spain is said to have been a passive on-looker, while the Dutch concentrated on their possessions. Almost all islands were at one time or the other controlled by England and/or France. At some time there was dual control as in the case of St. Christopher and St. Croix.

In 1620, Thomas Warner (English) joined an expedition under captain Roger North which was sent out by a small group of wealthy men to found a settlement on Guiana. On reaching his destination, North landed some of his passengers among whom were Thomas Warner and Captain Thomas Painton. Designing a scheme of their own, Warner and Painton set sail from Guiana in 1622 for the island of St. Christopher. They concentrated on making the place livable and productive. Houses were built and crops planted. By so doing, he granted to St. Christopher the prestige of being England's first colony in the West Indies and earning the title of the "Mother Colony". Along with another partner, John Jeafferson, Warner was granted governing powers over the colony. With this leadership the colony flourished.

At this time other daring young men had thoughts of the West Indies. Two such men were D'Esnambuck and Du Roisey. These two men undergoing recovery from a sea battle with the Spanish were seeking shelter to repair their ships and regain their confidence. Quite by chance they sailed into the waters of St. Christopher. They landed and after looking over the land, decided to stay. They joined forces with the English in efforts to fight the raiding Caribs.

Content with their settlement D'Esnambuc and Du Roissey decided to return to Paris with great plans. They persuaded Cardinal Richelieu the newly self-appointed Grand Master of Navigation and Commerce, to close a deal with them. This deal involved the formation of a corporation known as the Company of St. Christopher in which Richelieu was the largest shareholder. Its primary purpose was to colonize the islands of St. Christopher, Barbuda and "other islands at the entrance to Peru between the eleventh and eighteenth parallels not possessed by any Christian prince".<sup>9</sup>

A second purpose was to instruct the natives in the Roman Catholic faith and to cultivate the resources of the land for a period of twenty years. To avoid trouble due to the dual ownership, a treaty of partition was drawn up on May 13, 1627 whereby the English reserved the middle section and the French the two extremes.

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<sup>9</sup>Nellie M. Crouse, French Pioneers in the West Indies (New York: Columbia University, 1940), pp. 10-57.

D'Esnambuc took the northern section or Capesterre portion.

The colonists lived not in total harmony, but at least without open warfare. The French government after nine years, replaced the company of St. Christopher with a new company which was called the Isles of America. Under the new company, new possessions were added to the French Crown. These new colonies included Martinique, St. Lucia, Grenada and Guadeloupe. Basseterre became the capital of the French West Indies.



## Guadeloupe

The slave trade began on St. Christopher by coincidence. A privateersman named Pitrecotte arrived on the island with a ship-load of Negroes captured from a Spanish trader. The slaves were sold at handsome prices; but best of all, these slaves were welcomed in the French sector since there was a shortage of population on this side of St. Christopher. The English, he noted, imported thousands of their fellowmen as indentured servants prior to blacks.

Of course, the slave system almost came to an early end in the French islands because of an early edict of the King of France which claimed that "all those who reached the domains of the King of France became free". However, those nearest to the king, Louis XIII, besought him to abrogate this law in favor of the West Indies, claiming that this was the only way Christianity would be brought to these "savages". With approval granted, the French concentrated on buying slaves from English, Dutch and Danish interlopers. The French Guinea Company obtained slaves from the coast of Benin where the men were supposedly suited for labor in the fields. Upon arriving on the islands the slave trader put his slaves for sale. They were then taken to the plantations and distributed among old workers who taught them the routines and some mode of communication. Very early on the islands the slaves were prepared for baptism for they were considered inferior by their fellow blacks unless they were baptized. With prosperity now a reality, the French considered further exploration of new islands.

Receiving a patent from Cardinal Richelieu, two adventurers, Monsieur de L'Olive and Duplessis, were assigned to colonize Guadeloupe and to strengthen the Catholic faith in the island by importing men, women and children into the colony. Three months after Richelieu had signed the charter, de L'Olive and Duplessis set out with their followers. In passing Martinique, they were attracted by its beauty and anchored near Riviere du Carbet. Here they performed the ceremony of annexation of the island to the crown of France. They planted a rudely-fashioned cross near the shore, and to it was fastened the coat of arms of His Majesty. They then set sail, passed by Dominica and about three days later anchored on Guadeloupe. The process of colonization was long and slow. They experienced ill health, lack of food and the masters treated their servants with great hostility. Indian raids on the colony added to their distress.

D'Esnambuc in the meantime, distressed over the fact that L'Olive had captured Guadeloupe which had been his secret plan to colonize, traveled to Martinique and took possession of that island,

not knowing the others had already done so. D'Esnambuc did not remain long in Martinique; as he passed by Dominica he realized this was an opportunity to take possession of another large island for France. He landed at some unknown spot.

He continued on to Guadeloupe which had been colonized in 1635 by Monsieur de L'Olive and Duplessis. Duplessis died soon afterwards and de L'Olive remained and is reported to have committed acts of cruelty to the Caribs in order to expel them from Guadeloupe.

Internal struggles and financial deficits soon pushed the French company into bankruptcy and as the Government was unwilling to assume any direct responsibility for the colonies, the Governor of each island was allowed to purchase it and maintain it on a proprietary basis. Hovel bought Guadeloupe, and Du Parquet, a nephew of D'Esnambuc who had succeeded Du Pont, bought Martinique and St. Lucia.

Jean du Pont, a former lieutenant finally became governor of Martinique, and after years of struggle with the Caribs finally engaged the friendship of the Indians. He was later captured by a Spanish vessel and put in prison for three years.

With the death of Pierre D'Esnambuc, the French West Indies were now without a governor-general. After a long list of possible successors was exhausted, the name of Phillippe De Lonvilliers De Poincy, Knight of Malta was suggested and met with immediate approval by the King and all concerned. He is considered one of three great governors of the French West Indies and when he died at the age of seventy-five he left the French in command of a large portion of the West Indies. His demise also marked the end of the pioneer era in the region, for shortly after the French West India Company was given control of the possessions.

## Martinique

Belain D'Esnambuc took possession of Martinique on behalf of the Company of the American Islands in 1635. It was only under the administration of Jacques Du Paraquet, governor, the seigneur - proprietaire of the island (1637-1658), that any real colonial development began. Besides food crops and Petun (tobacco), sugar cane was planted. It was introduced by the Dutch who had been expelled from Brazil. These early times were a troubled heroic period for the first French colonists who had to be constantly on the lookout for the British and the Dutch.

The outstanding event of the period was the gallant defensive action of some one hundred colonists retrenched in Fort Royal, who kept the 40 battleships and 8,000 men of the Dutch admiral De Ruyter at bay (1674). Under Du Paraquet the only populated area was on the Caribbean coast where Fort St. Pierre and Fort Royal were built. These forts were later developed into the towns of St. Pierre and Fort de France.

### *Suggested Readings:*

*For additional information on the colorful history of the French in the West Indies, continue reading the source of the preceding passages.*

In conclusion, mention can be made of other small countries that attempted to colonize the West Indies or sell slaves to European planters in America. Among these were the Swedes. In order to compete with the strong nations, they needed the strength of a company. Subsequently, one sees the formation of several companies granting permission to deal in West Africa or the West Indies, thereby affixing these areas in the name of the company. The first effective English company was chartered in 1660 and was called the Company of Royal Adventurers. In 1672, this was succeeded by the Royal African Company. The first effective French company was the French West India Company, chartered in 1664. The slave trade was restricted to the monopoly companies because only large and powerful companies could afford to have more and larger ships.

#### *Questions for Discussion*

*The slave trade was a lucrative one for most of the European powers of which you just read. Are there any advantages of this for the descendants of slaves on various islands?*

#### *Composition*

*Write a report comparing early Spanish and English explorers in the West Indies. Discuss personalities (bravery), fleet, daring expeditions.*

#### *Vocabulary*

*What relevancy do these terms give to this chapter?*

*navigation  
papal*

*decimation  
illicit  
lucrative*

*raids  
fleet*

## CHAPTER III

### Slavery

The term slavery applies to the social sanctioning of the involuntary servitude imposed by one person or group upon another, so defines Encyclopaedia Britannica.<sup>10</sup>

#### Early Practices

The practice existed from antiquity and sources were supplied principally by warfare, piracy, kidnapping, purchase or breeding. The histories of early Greece and Rome, Babylon, Egypt, Spain and Portugal as well as other countries, reflect the practice and the role of slavery.

Negro slaves (our area of interest) were imported in ever increasing numbers into southern Portugal and neighboring regions of Spain where Seville became an important slave market. These regions had greatly suffered from wars between Christians and Muslims and their populations were largely depleted. Imported Africans were employed not only for service in wealthy households, but also for work in the fields as well as a variety of tasks in the cities, especially stevedores in the harbors. Because the Portuguese, and to a lesser degree the Spaniards as a result of many conquests, had little race or color consciousness, the various elements of the population mixed relatively freely and ultimately merged. This fact is expanded in a later chapter of this study. As early as 1474, large numbers of Negro slaves were in Spain and Portugal. By the middle of the sixteenth century, Algarves was almost populated by Negroes and they outnumbered the whites in Lisbon. In Spain in 1474, Ferdinand and Isabella empowered the Negro Juan de Valla-dolid, known as the "Negro Count" as the mayoral of the Negroes to settle their quarrels and to enforce the King's justice among them.

Research shows that even though among Columbus' crew on his trip to the New World there were Christianized Negroes, there was no intention to introduce slavery in the New World.

Years later when Europeans colonized the islands, they attempted to use the Indians as labor force on the plantations, but they lacked the strength and succumbed in large numbers to diseases brought over by the Europeans.

Some scholars on the subject of slavery account for the introduction of slavery to the New World on the efforts of Bartolome' de Las Casas, Roman Catholic Bishop of Chipas who, as a subtle defense of the Indians, approached the new King, Charles I, with the proposal that each Spanish settler should be permitted to bring over a certain number of Negro Slaves. In 1517

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<sup>10</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 20, p. 628.

this idea was accepted, although in somewhat modified form. Thousands of Negroes were therefore brought in, not only to Hispaniola but to other islands in the Caribbean and later to the mainland.

The source cited above claims the English were the most important importers of slaves although the French, the Dutch and others took part in the commerce to supply their own colonies or larger and richer Spanish possessions. The trade was usually triangular (as was the Danish trade). Ships went out first from a home port as Liverpool or Bristol for the Atlantic coast of Africa. They carried liquor, firearms, cotton goods and various trinkets that were exchanged for slaves. Then came the middle passage from Africa toward the West Indies -- this was the slave trade proper -- after the slaves were delivered the last leg of the voyage began. Loaded with molasses and other staples, they went home.

As mentioned earlier, slaves were supplied through many sources; for our interest, however, some attention will be drawn to the methods employed in recruiting slaves for the New World.

J. D. Fage, formerly professor of history at the University of Ghana, devotes an entire chapter to the conduct of the slave trade in West Africa. He reports:

Except in the very early days of the slave trade, or occasionally on parts of the coast where trade was not very well developed, it was exceptional for the European slave owners themselves to capture and enslave Africans. The great majority of the slaves carried across the Atlantic were purchased from the merchants and chiefs of the peoples living on the West African coastline.

Raids on the coastal peoples by European traders in search of slaves were to antagonize those who were willing to sell slaves already.<sup>11</sup>

The coastal peoples were willing to sell their fellow Africans into slavery primarily because they wanted European goods and had discovered that the best way to get them was to sell to the Europeans what they wanted and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries what Europeans wanted from West Africa above all else were slaves. They therefore began by selling domestic slaves in their own tribes and soon found that the slave trade was quite

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<sup>11</sup> Page, op. cit., p. 77.

profitable. When, however, the demands exceeded the supply of domestic slaves, the merchants and chiefs began to cast about for ways to secure more slaves. They then sold those in debt, prisoners of war or kidnapped victims.

### The Trading Process

The business of buying and selling of slaves is interesting enough to be mentioned here. The trade was done completely through the process of barter, and even though there was no common currency, to avoid complications certain mediums were used as exchange. Dr. Fage explains that iron bars were used on the Windward Coast, pieces of cloth on the Ivory Coast, gold dust on the Gold Coast, iron and copper bars on the Slave Coast, cowrie shells on the region between Accra and Keta and lastly brass basins on the Oil River.<sup>12</sup>

An interesting side observation that could be used for a colorful study or debate is: Can Virgin Islanders trace their lines of ancestry i.e., Ashanti or Amins? The policy of collecting slaves, the cooperation of African chiefs and standard characteristic techniques of divide and conquer, all mitigate the unification and identification of tribes transported across the Atlantic. Tribal disintegration or destruction was further secured by storing slaves in separate groups, at the forts constructed mostly to facilitate trading. Situated near the river beds, these forts were used as protection from enemy attacks. After examination the slaves were chained and awaited a full shipment before they were transported across the Atlantic.

Most of the slave trade was centered around the Slave Coast, the Gulf of Guinea, the Gold Coast and Upper Guinea. Around the Gold Coast and Upper Guinea large national companies monopolized the trade, whereas along the other areas mentioned, the trade was in the hands of individual European merchants and small companies.

By about 1785 more than half of the West African slave trade was in the hand of British merchants. The French had the second largest share of the trade. Even though it may be difficult to state a definite number of slaves brought across the Atlantic, it has been estimated that no less than fifteen million or no greater than twenty million actually landed on America.

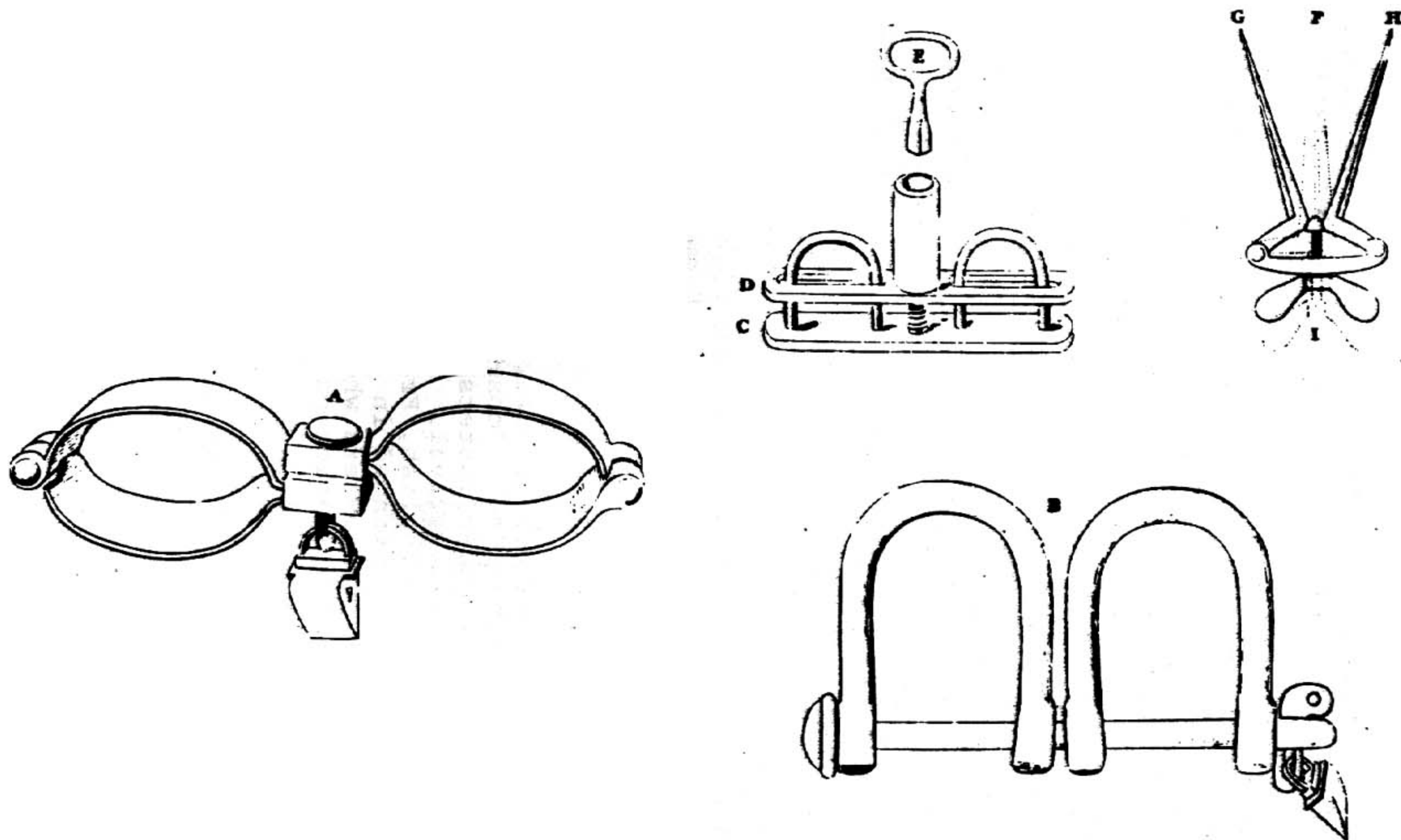
### Branding

Before being put aboard the ships that would take them to the West Indian islands, the slaves were collected and examined by a surgeon. The healthy and strong ones were put aboard a ship while the sick or defected in any way (the Magrones) were returned. Those that were taken were put to kneel in groups at a time, while the right shoulder was greased with palm oil and branded in the middle with an iron that bore the initials C-AB-C (Churfurstlich Afrikanisch-Brandenburgische Campagnie).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>13</sup>Westergaard, op. cit., p. 142.



(A) HAND-CUFFS FOR SLAVES; (B) LEG SHACKLES. (C-E) THUMB SCREW  
 (F-H) "SPECULUM ORIS," TO OPEN CLOSED JAWS.  
 From Clarkson's *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, London, 1808

Reproduced from G. F. Dow's *SLAVE SHIPS AND SLAVERY*;  
 Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.



## The Middle Passage

For a detailed description of a major important phase in our drama of acculturation, Tannenbaum's Slave and Citizen gives a vivid explanation:

On the ship itself the men and women crowded between decks with little air. For about fifteen or sixteen hours a day they experienced poor sanitary conditions, naked, chained about their ankles. Allowed a space barely larger than five or six inches long, sixteen inches wide and about two or three feet high, not high enough to sit up. The men and women were kept apart on the voyage and if the weather was clear and calm they were allowed out on deck about eight in the morning until five in the afternoon. But if it was stormy and rough then they lived in the stench beneath deck, dark steaming, slimy and wet. When the weather cleared away and the hatches were opened, the stench was impossible to stand near the hatch for few minutes. <sup>14</sup> Additional research proves that physicians who accompanied the ships were unable to cope with the violent outbursts of illnesses.

All the Negroes transported across the Atlantic did not survive the voyage. Many lost their lives by battles or surprise attacks; some fell by the wayside during the endless marches along the narrow paths through forests and bush, down to the coast. Next, some died in forts and some died on the ships. Finally, some died after landing due to the exhausting voyage they had undérgone.

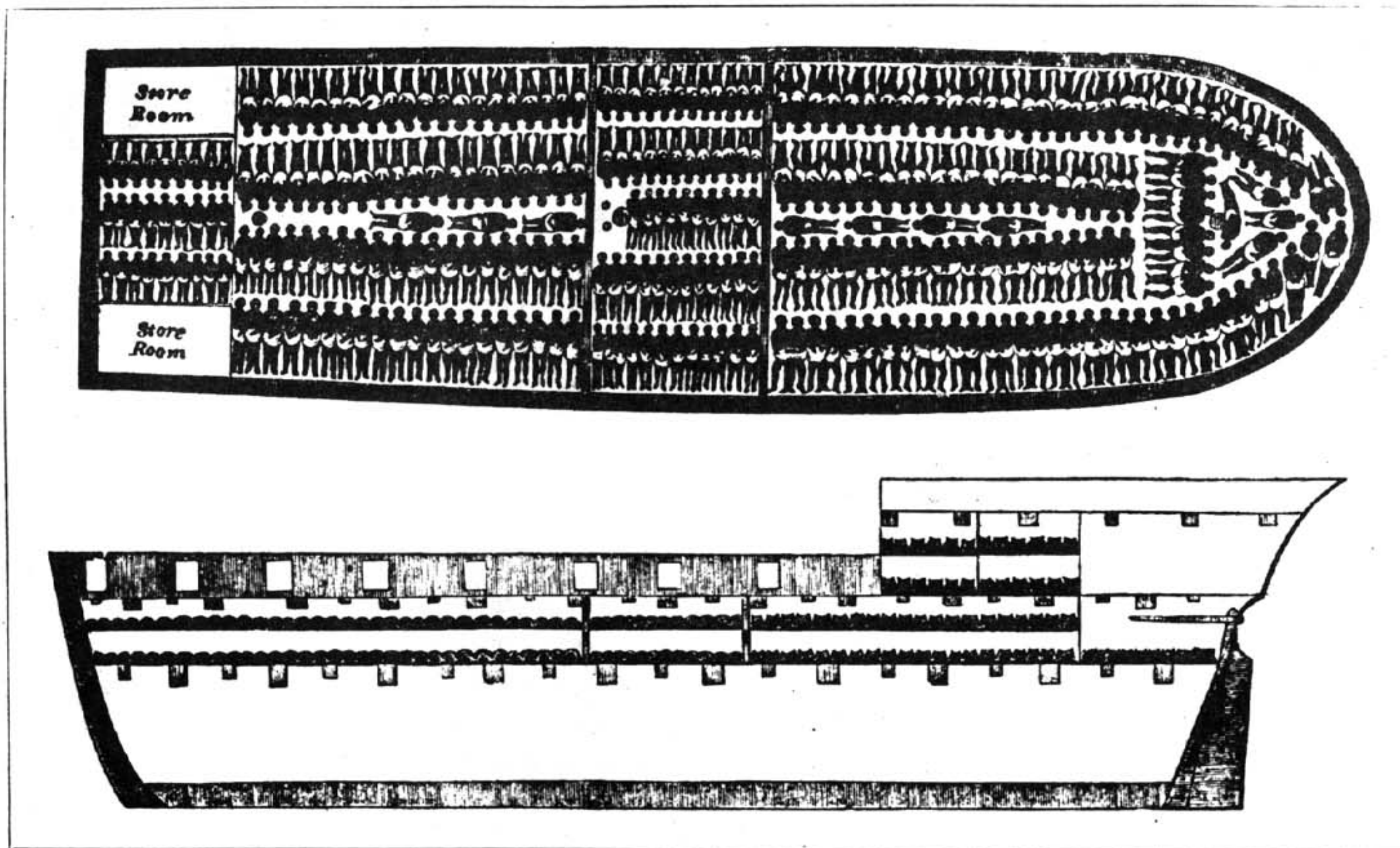
What happened to the ancestors of present-day West Indians when they reached their destinations? Soon to be the source of wealth and power for their European masters, the Africans passed into the hands of Europeans upon arrival. Now what fate awaited them? Parceled out to Spanish, English, French, Portuguese and Dutch masters, their treatment depended in large part on the policies and personalities of the owners whose personalities also played an important role in the behavior patterns of the slaves.

### Division of Labor

A word may be mentioned on the tasks or duties of the slaves in their new home. They were divided into field slaves, trades, and domestic slaves. But in Brazil, as previously mentioned,

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<sup>14</sup> Frank Tannenbaum, Slave and Citizen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), pp. 22-25.



SECTION SHOWING METHOD OF STOWING SLAVES, IN 1786, ON THE SHIP "BROOKE"  
OF LIVERPOOL

From Clarkson's *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, London, 1808

Reproduced from G. F. Dow's *SLAVE SHIPS AND SLAVERY*;  
Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

their tasks encompassed a wider scope. Those in domestic service were usually a kind of privileged elite although here again there were many classifications depending on the nature of the job, the character of the master and personal qualities of the slaves themselves. The next category was that of slaves engaged in various trades. Third, and most numerous, were those working on plantations.

A glance at a day on the plantation is interesting. The following passage gives a vivid description:

"Shortly after the slaves reached their destination they were given a small portion of land to raise their own food".

At this time, sugar cane and cotton were the leading crops, since tobacco was on the decline. The sugar cane was cut by Negroes with a sort of hatchet called Kapmesser and was carried to the mill or sugar works. Power was furnished mainly by windmills which were supplemented by treadmills turned by mule power. At least ten Negroes were required to keep one mill working. Two, who were called rollers, fed the cane stalks between the upright wooden cylinders. Others carried fresh stalks and removed the crushed ones.

An axe always lay near at hand with which to amputate the arm of the careless Negro whose hand might get caught by the revolving cylinders, for when help was scarce even three-quarters of a Negro was better than none. The noon intermission from 12 to 1:50 gave them a chance to prepare meals. The day's work ended at sundown but during harvest, chores lasted until eight or eight-thirty when they fed the livestock or carried water to cisterns or distilleries. Saturday afternoons and Sundays were free to enjoy themselves.<sup>15</sup>

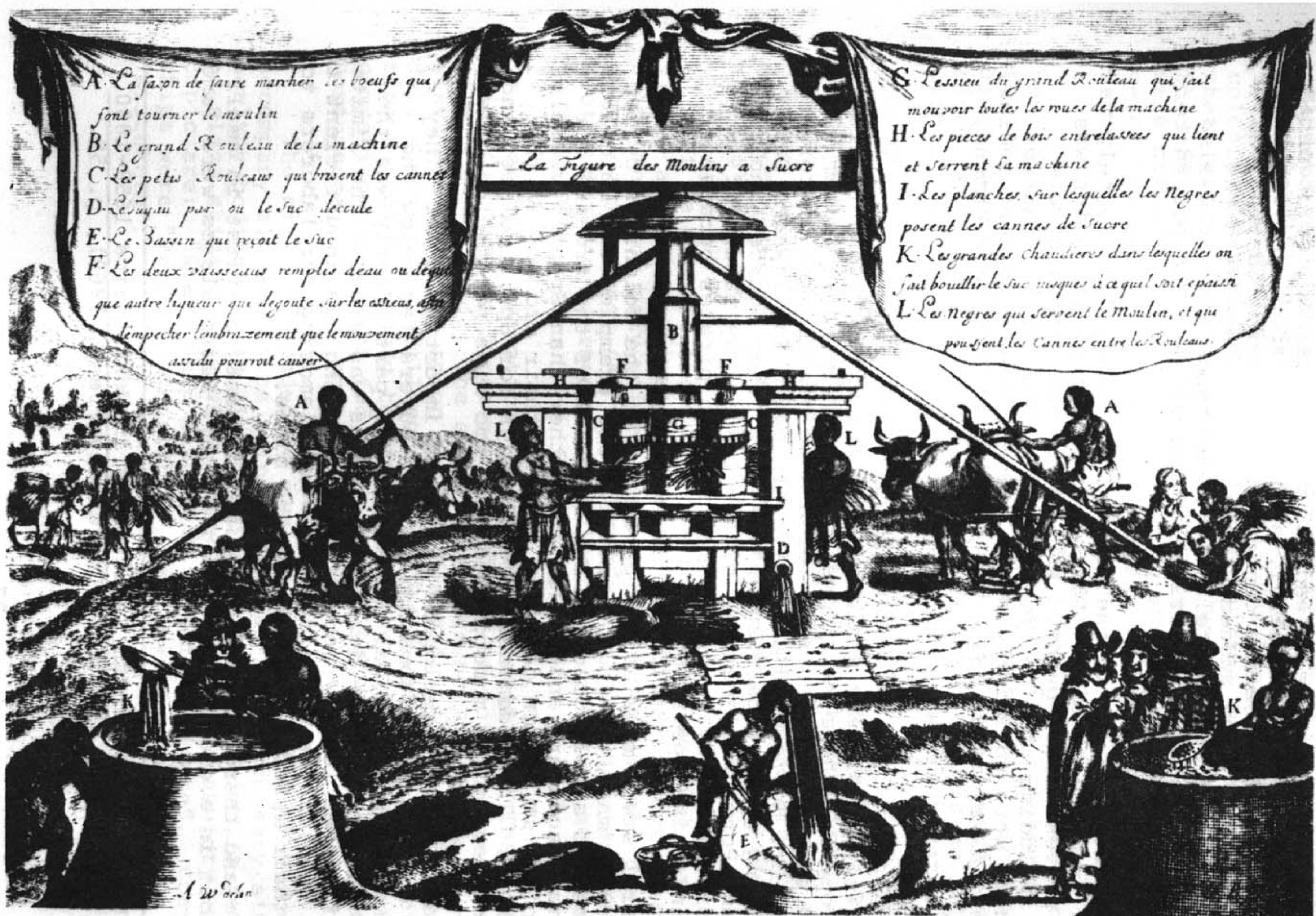
Another worthwhile side observation centers around the error of some European masters who under-estimated the native intelligence of their slaves. The masters felt secure in their practice of tribal disintegration thereby preventing strengthening of family ties, but group dynamics prevailed and through subtle ways slaves planned revenge or methods of escape.

Over the years the blacks became aware that through their labor masters acquired wealth and power. Along with this affluence came harsher laws and inhumane treatment. Finally, when this

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<sup>15</sup>Westergaard, op, cit., pp. 125-141.





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treatment could no longer be endured the natural action occurred: they revolted and gained control, even if for short periods. The slave owners then became concerned with saving their lives and their wealth. They suddenly came face to face with the realization that these chattels did have brains and could also use them for planning, organizing and executing. The modern term is leadership qualification.

To subdue them, as in the case of St. John, (1733), help was recruited from the outside. Furthermore, stringent action was taken to prevent recurrences. But other group revolts were planned, including that on St. Croix in 1848. In the United States there were uprisings led by Denmark Vessey, a West Indian, Nat Turner in Virginia, 1831, and Gabriel in 1800 in Richmond, Virginia.

### Interlopers

No study on slavery would be complete without some reference to interlopers. Their relationship to slavery was a rather close one. The term interloper in reference to West Indian history is defined by Dr. Norregaard as "privately owned English and Dutch ships trading without permission".<sup>16</sup> But other sources include Spanish and Portuguese members of the trade. By nature of definition alone they rate by comparison to pirates because of their clandestine operations.

Several stern regulations passed on to the colonists by the Spanish crown made trading difficult. For example, the colonists were forced to supply gold and raw material of the tropics for Spanish manufacturers and to use none other than Spanish vessels. The colonists in return demanded to sell their produce in the best markets. These demands were too high for Spain to meet and the prices set by the monopolists were too high for the colonists.

Here is where interlopers played an important role. They smuggled goods past customs and sold to buyers far below the prices charged by the legal sellers. This particularly was the case of slavery when the demand for slaves was great. The limited number of slaves legally permitted by the King was insufficient to meet the need of the colonists who were clamoring for laborers to develop their estates and work in the mines.

Here and there along the unguarded coast, at first in small numbers but in a gradually growing stream, Negro slaves were land-

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<sup>16</sup>Georg Norregaard, Danish Settlements in West Africa 1658-1850 (Boston: University Press, 1969), p. 59.

ed from small vessels which had no license to trade. Many skippers were Portuguese who were able to obtain slaves from Portuguese settlements in West Africa. The interlopers sold their wares comparatively cheaply and became popular with the colonists especially as they were willing to take payment for their slaves in pearls, cattlehides and sugar rather than cash. The officials themselves often wanted slaves and in other cases were bribed to turn a blind eye to what was going on. In many cases the authorities were powerless to intervene even if they wanted to.

Public opinion sided with the smugglers and with those who bought from them and the accepted breach of a single law led to the more general disregard for all authority. Punished with great severity when they were caught, the interlopers soon learned to resist by force any attempt by the officials to interfere with their business. From smugglers they became pirates.

What about the type of ships that bore our ancestors across the Atlantic? - what took place on them? An excellent source on this topic is Slave Ships and Slavery. Using excerpts, let us take an imaginary trip aboard the "Albion Frigate". We first observe how the slaves are lodged; the two sexes are apart by means of a strong partition. The forepart is set aside for the men and behind the mast for the women.

If we compare this with the Portuguese we will note that slaves aboard Portuguese ships had the added comfort of mats, which were not only softer but healthier because the planks retained dampness. We will also observe that quarters were kept neat and clean because some of the crew were assigned especially to this task.

Mess time we notice was rather interesting. The slaves ate twice daily. The first meal consisted of boiled beans cooked with moscovy lard. The second was peas or Indian wheat. Each slave had a wooden spoon to feed himself. After meal time every day, slaves had a full coconut shell of water and from time to time a dram of brandy to strengthen their stomachs. By way of comparison the Dutch fed their slaves three times a day, while Portuguese fed them mostly manioc meal.

The sick or wounded we see are visited daily by surgeons who accompany slaves on the trip. This was most necessary since healthy bodies netted higher prices. In conclusion, a few names of slave ships we may wish to include in our vocabulary on this topic are: "Slave Ship Hannibal", "Albion Frigate". Company's ships were "Princess Charlotte", "Kelleys Amalie", and "Elizabeth".

It is not to be assumed that all went well aboard the ships. The slaves were wary and distrustful of the traders. Some entertained the idea that they were being carried away to be eaten. This thought made them rather desperate. Therefore, care was taken to avoid mutiny, and destruction of the ships but despite efforts, mutiny did occur. Punishment for mutiny included some of the cruelest acts. The leaders were maimed limb by limb in the presence of all slaves and finally the body was raised on a post for all to see and to bear in mind.<sup>17</sup>

#### Learning Experiences

Using the chart below as a guide, draw pictures or use real or simulated objects to show things used as money exchange during the slave trade.

<i>Slaves were valued</i>		
<i>Place</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>Picture or sample</i>
<i>(1) On the Gold Coast</i>	<i>Gold Dust</i>	
<i>(2) On the Ivory Coast</i>	<i>Pieces of cloth</i>	
<i>(3) On the Slave Coast</i>	<i>Metal bars</i>	
<i>(4) On Accra</i>	<i>Cowrie shells</i>	

#### Suggested Readings

<sup>17</sup> For detailed description of mutinies on slave ships read: George Francis Dow, Slave Ships And Slaving (Salem: Marine Research Society, 1927), ch. VI.

## SLAVE LAWS

How appalling it is to note that in the early years of slavery Africans far out-numbered the whites on most islands (i.e., French and British colonies, Danish West Indies): But despite this monopoly the plantation owners ruled as superiors. What does this reflect of the slaves' mentality or of the mentality of the planters?

We know that slaves were physically fit to assume control of the islands for they were the only ones to survive the heat and therefore comprised the only source of labor. (The Indians died under the strain and heat while the white prisoners who were imported also succumbed to the heat). It is assumed that the slaves lacked the capacity to lead, but research proves that fear of retribution was responsible for this. Furthermore, the ruling class, in order to insure permanent prosperity, devised and enacted stringent laws which, rather than protecting life and property as laws are intended, reduced slaves in the British and Danish colonies to personal property. However, Spanish and Portuguese slaves fared better as having rights and status. The following sets of laws are offered for comparative study: Las Siete Partidas and the Justinian Code depict status of slaves on either Spanish or Portuguese soil while King Frederick the V's Slave Code shows treatment of slaves in the Danish West Indies.

### KING FREDERIK den 5tes SLAVEREGLEMENT for de Danske vestindiske Øer

#### Summary of

(King Frederik V's Slave (Black) Code of the Danish West Indian Islands).

#### 1. Deals with religious instruction of the slaves

It is prohibited to prevent anybody from joining the teaching of the Gospel.

Sundays, Christmas Day (December 25), Three King's Day (January 6), Ascension Day, and Lady Day are to be celebrated by the slaves and they are free from working.

.. There shall be no markets on Sundays and on the above mentioned Holy Days.

#### 2. Deals with looseness and persons frequenting slave women

Slaves can only marry with the consent of their owners. Polygamy is prohibited.



Slave women's children by slaves belong to the mother's owner.

A free Negro woman's children are free whether the father is a free man or a slave.

Slave children who have been christened shall be considered as Christians and are entitled to receive a Christian burial.

No slave is allowed to carry a gun or a big stick.

Crowds of Negroes are prohibited under severe penalty.

### 3. Black Code

Deals with punishment of owners who tolerate (do not prevent) slaves to crowd on their plantations.

Slaves are prohibited to sell sugar cane.

Slaves are forbidden to sell or offer anything for sale without the consent and supervision of their owners.

Concerning the nourishment of the slaves

It is prohibited to give the slaves rum instead of the stipulated provisions or to give them a day off to work for themselves.

The clothes to be given to the slaves.

The owners have to support and provide for decrepit slaves.

Slaves can neither own nor acquire anything without the permission of their owners.

The owners are responsible for actions carried out by the slaves on the request of the owners, especially in cases involving trading.

Slaves cannot be in charge of shops or public services, nor can they be witnesses in court, but their testimony can be used to obtain more information.

Slaves can neither bring civil cases before court against anybody, nor can civil or criminal cases be filed against them.

However, a slave can be brought before the Court and punished without involving his owner in his case if the owner himself has had



**BRANDING A NEGRESS AT THE RIO PONGO**

From a wood engraving in Canot's *Twenty Years of an African Slaver*,  
New York, 1854.

Reproduced from G. F. Dow's **SLAVE SHIPS AND SLAVERY**;  
Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

nothing whatsoever to do with the misdeeds of the slaves.

A slave has to be punished with death if he hits his owner or proprietress or his owner's wife or children in the face or elsewhere until the blood flows.

Deals with slaves who lay hands on free people.

They will be severely punished and according to the circumstances punished with death.

Slaves committing thievery are to be punished with whipping at the whipping post and sometimes with branding.

Owners have to compensate the person or persons who have suffered by their slaves' thievery or let the sufferer have the slave.

Punishment for slaves having been marooned for more than one month and punishment for repeated marooning.

Punishment for free coloured who assist run aways by housing them.

If a slave is punished with death according to information received from the slave's owner, the owner will receive the appraised value as compensation.

To provide this money a head tax is levied on every slave.

In cases against slaves nobody is entitled to prerequisites or fees.

Deals with the owner's, the manager's, and the over-seer's rights of punishment of slaves.

He who kills his slave will be punished according to the demands of the situation.

Married slaves and minor children cannot be separated from each other or from their parents by sale.

No slave can be taken away from his plantation except in cases where the purchase sum has not been paid.

Usufructuaries of plantations shall not compensate Negroes lost by fatalities nor do they have the right to slave children born during the period they use the plantation.

Owners who are of age can give their slaves their freedom without having to give the reason for the freedom.

Slaves who are appointed heirs, executives, or guardians in a will, will in such a capacity be considered as free.

Emancipated slaves should always be respectful to their former owners, their widows and children, but otherwise have no obligations towards them.

Emancipated persons should enjoy all the same rights as persons born free and be entitled to the same respect and consideration.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>King Frederick V of Denmark, Black Code for Danish West Indies, February 3, 1755.

## Las Siete Partidas

Las Siete Partidas, a body of Spanish laws which protected the Negro as a human being, provided:

### Marriage

1. The slave might marry a person if the slave status was known to the other party.
2. Slaves could marry against the will of their master, if they continued serving him as before.
3. Once married they could not be sold apart except under conditions permitting them to live as man and wife.
4. If the slave married a free person with the knowledge of his master and the master did not announce the fact of the existing slave status then the slave by that mere fact became free.
5. If married slaves owned by separate masters could not live together because of distance the church could persuade one or the other to sell his slave. If neither of the masters could be persuaded, the church was to buy one of them so that the married slaves could live together.

### Children

The children followed the status of their mother and the child of a free mother remained free even if she later became a slave.

### Corporal Punishment

In spite of all his full powers over his slave, the master might neither kill nor injure him unless authorized by the judge, nor abuse him against reason or nature nor starve him to death. If the master did any of these things, the slave could complain to the judge, and if the complaints were verified the judge must sell him, giving the price to the owner and the slave might never return to the original owner.

### Manumission

Provisions as outlined in Las Siete Partidas for manumission were numerous and detailed.

1. A master might manumit his slave in the church or outside of it, before a judge or other person by testament or by letter, but he must do so in person.

2. A slave became free against his master's will by denouncing a forced rape against a virgin, by denouncing a maker of false money, by discovering disloyalty against the king, by denouncing the murderer of his master.
3. A slave might become free if he became a cleric with the consent of his master or in some cases without the consent, providing another slave takes his place. And if the former slave became a bishop he had to put up two slaves each valued at a price that he himself was worth while he was a slave.
4. A slave could appeal to the courts if he had been freed by will and testament, and the document maliciously hidden.
5. Slaves could be witnesses even against their masters in accusations for treason against the king, in cases of murder of either master or mistress or in cases of adultery against the mistress.

This body of law did not operate only on the Iberian Peninsula. When slavery was introduced in the New World the laws were also transferred there. In the Cuban market, freedom was the only commodity which could not be bought untaxed; every Negro against whom no one had a claim of servitude was deemed free.

Furthermore under these laws a slave was free to buy his own freedom through installments. This was especially true in Cuba. A slave worth six hundred dollars could buy himself out in twenty-four installments of twenty-five dollars each, and with every payment he acquired one twenty-fourth of his freedom. On delivering his first installment, he could move from his master's house and continue to pay interest on the remaining sum.



### Employment

Slaves were often encouraged to hire themselves out and bring their masters a fixed part of their wages, keeping the rest.

Skilled artisans, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, tailors, musicians were special beneficiaries of this arrangement. Ordinary laborers were allowed to organize themselves into gangs. They offered themselves as carriers on the wharves of the city or to do any of the heavy work that came to hand. Women often hired themselves out as wet nurses and both male and female slaves peddled a thousand wares through the streets.

In Brazil and Cuba, especially, slaves were allowed to sell products from their own plots and save their money toward their freedom. It should be made clear that slavery as an institution was cruel and brutal wherever it existed, and the slaves of Spain and Portugal were not exempted from this treatment.

In spite of whatever cruelty or abuse that existed on Catholic dominated soils, the slave was considered equal in the sight of God. The master had an obligation to protect the spiritual integrity of the slave and to teach him the Christian religion. The slave had a right to become a Christian and to be baptized. Baptism was considered his entrance into the community.

In 1680, the assembled bishops in Cuba urged that all Negroes attend church. From the very beginning the Catholic churches in America insisted that masters bring their slaves to church to learn the doctrine and participate in communion. The assembled bishops in Mexico in 1555 urged all Spaniards to send the Indians and especially Negroes to church; similarly in Cuba in 1680. In fact, Negroes were baptized in Angola before leaving for the Atlantic journey to Brazil. As a Catholic, a slave was married in the church and the bans were regularly published. It gave the slave's family a moral and religious character unknown in other American slave systems. It became a routine for slaves and masters of the same plantation to attend mass on Sundays, and regularly before retiring the slaves assembled at the masters house for his blessings. Religious fraternities sprang up among the slaves. These were influential and honorific institutions with elected officers and funds subscribed to by the slaves out of their meager savings.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Tannenbaum, op. cit., pp. 48-60.



Reproduced from VORE TROPEKOLONIER;  
Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

### Marriage under British Laws

Legally, the British slaves could not marry and the religious unions could be dissolved at any time. The wife had no legal status and the family as such was not a unit. Under an act of the British Parliament slaves could be sold by the sheriff in the execution of all debts. It was not uncommon to break up the families of the slaves for the satisfaction of debts as well as taxes.

Similarly, slaves in America received the same inhumane treatment. Owners were hostile to manumission. The slave was not regarded as human but merely as property, and was denied the right to Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

In St. Thomas, several churches still retain balconies which were erected especially for seating slaves who were compelled to attend but were not allowed to participate in services.

Mr. Darwin Creque cites that in 1711, the Lutherans under Frederik IV established a mission church especially for Negroes.<sup>21</sup> However, in modern organized religions of the West Indies there is no segregation of churches. Trend is toward church unity as exemplified in the Council of Churches.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-86.

<sup>21</sup>Darwin Creque, The United States Virgin Islands and the Eastern Caribbean (Philadelphia: Whilmore Publishing Company, 1968), p. 32.

## The Justinian Code<sup>22</sup>

The practice of slavery as an institution provides many areas for interesting discussion. Among these is the topic dealing with the slave laws and how these laws shaped the psyche of the slaves.

The Justinian Code, a set of laws governing the rights of the slaves, was elaborated by Alfonso the Wise between the years 1263 and 1265. Throughout this code there was the inherent belief in the equality of men under the law of nature and man. In 1474, there were large numbers of Negro slaves both in Portugal and Spain. By the middle of the sixteenth century Algarves was almost entirely populated by Negroes, and they outnumbered the whites in Lisbon. In Spain in 1474, Ferdinand and Isabella empowered the Negro Juan de Valladolid (known as the "Negro Count") as the "mayoral of the Negroes" to settle their quarrels and to enforce the King's justice among them. By way of contrast, under the British West Indian laws, the Negro slave could not hope for freedom. The slaves in the British West Indies were almost completely denied the privileges of Christianity. The plantation owners opposed the preaching of the Gospel on the grounds that it would interfere with the management of the slaves, make them recalcitrant and put notions of rebellion into their minds. Churches did little indeed for the thousands of West Indian Negro slaves. The Episcopal Church confined its own activities to the whites and left the Negroes to different denominations. In contrast to Spanish laws, the British set up no requirements for religious training of the slaves and it was not until 1816 that the Assembly of Jamaica ordered the vestries to provide chapels and made provisions for instruction of the Negroes.

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<sup>22</sup>Tannenbaum, op.cit., pp. 44-45.

## CHAPTER IV

### Religion

#### The Reformation

Amidst all this commercialism and national zeal movements, there was another dynamic movement spreading through and affecting the same European nations involved in the colonization of the West Indies. Known in history as the Reformation, the movement split the Christian empire into several divisions. Initially religious unrest, it enveloped social and political areas.

In medieval European history there were underground movements against the concept of the Pope as the spiritual head and the Holy Roman Emperor as the secular head. This eventually led to schisms and constant wars. The dissenters claimed that "the papacy was a network of interests involving diplomatic and military adventures as well as a jungle of administration and law in which was embodied an ugly element of chicanery and graft".<sup>23</sup> It was further claimed that the papacy was in possession of immense wealth and in some countries owned large portions of land; others attacked the perversion of the doctrine of grace and the externalizing of the sacrament of penance. This diversity of beliefs resulted in the spreading of various religious doctrines. From England came Presbyterianism; Lutheranism became the national religion of Denmark, Spain remained predominantly Roman Catholic. From Saxony or Herrnhut, came the Moravians. From France came the Huguenots; from the Netherlands, after a series of religious conflicts, came the Netherlands Reformed Church or Calvinists. The Dutch Reformed Church was the first church of continental European background to establish itself in the United States. As a result of mass immigration into the United States divisions of major religions were formed and spread throughout the country and eventually reached the West Indies.

Religion has always played an important role in the lives of Virgin Islanders and, in broader terms, of most West Indians. Their young come in contact with religion very early in life since almost every activity from birth to death receives prayers for divine favor. Furthermore, most public gatherings, civic or otherwise, are conducted in such a manner that the religious phase must be included. This is especially true of weddings, baptisms, graduations, club assemblies, funerals.

Religion, therefore, is another regional homogeneity from which the young West Indian may derive some answers about his past. This chapter in our drama of acculturation attempts an historic review of African and European influences on religion in the West Indies.

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<sup>23</sup>"The Reformation," Encyclopedia Britannica (1970), XIX, pp. 37-52.

"Naked they were born and  
Naked they were sold".

When the Africans were forced from their homeland to become slaves, they traveled empty handed -- that is they were not allowed to carry personal belongings or family mementos. However, they brought the intangibles -- their memories, beliefs, and superstitions. In modern jargon -- they brought soul.

As previously mentioned, Saturdays and Sundays were free from menial work. This time was spent in recreation and religious activities.

History reveals that Roman Catholicism was the initial official religion of the islands and was practiced by the Spaniards. Columbus brought the religion of Spain to the New World. Africans, therefore, were introduced to Roman Catholicism upon their arrival in the New World. They readily accepted the religion because they were able to observe symbolisms within the faith with which they could identify and probably supplement their fetishism.

John Hope Franklin in his scholarly work From Slavery to Freedom reports that the early form of religion among Africans was ancestor worship, and other writers on the subject claim the earliest form of worship as practiced by Africans was serpent worship, in which the pythons acted as messengers of the god or the spirits. They alone could interpret the feelings of the gods. Prior to voyaging across the Atlantic, voodoo was their principal cult in West Africa. Voodoo as a worship or cult has been a source for many writers and it is interesting to note reasons why the voodoo practicing slaves readily accepted the Roman Catholic religion as their official worship.

#### Catholicism and Voodoo<sup>24</sup>

A reliable source on this topic is "Haiti: Black Peasants and Voodoo", in which the author cites areas of common identity between Roman Catholicism and voodoo. First, voodoo liturgy is fashioned from Catholic liturgy. Standing before a lace bedecked altar with lighted candles, the priest or priestess recites Paters, Confiteors and Ave Marias, followed by hymns to the Virgin and Saints. The famous African prayer (Priere Guinin), which opens the solemn ceremonies begins with Catholic prayers and interminable invocation of saints. Their own loa (saints) are summoned afterwards.

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<sup>24</sup>Alfred Matraux, Haiti: Black Peasants and Voodoo (New York: Universe Books, 1960), pp. 59-70.



Secondly, voodoo has appropriated the use of holy water with which the devotees are sprinkled from a leafy branch. They even use it as a drink which will guard them against any spell that is cast on them.

Thirdly, looking at religious posters or pictures, voodooists are able to interpret common symbolisms. An example is the picture of St. Patrick standing with snakes at his feet. St. Patrick is identified with Damballah Veido, the snake god. In the same way, in another poster, Our Lady of the Sorrows represents to them Ezili-Freda-Dahomey because the jewelry she wears and the sword transpiercing her heart evoke the riches and love which are attributes of the voodoo goddess.

Next, St. Jacques le majeur (James the Elder) who is shown as a knight encased in steel has naturally been identified with Ogufferaille, the blacksmith and warrior god.

Lastly, Roman Catholic saints are accepted as being comparable to loa. Candles, too, are used during ceremonies, especially when they invoke their god.

Dr. Metraux lists the following voodoo gods: (1) Legba, the interpreter of the gods. Only he can translate men's prayers and transmit them to visible powers. In Africa his symbol, which is seen outside every hut, is a heap of earth surmounted by a phallus. (2) Agwe has jurisdiction over the sea, its fauna, flora as well as those who make a living from its bounty. He is invoked under the names of "Sea Shell", or "Eel" or "Pond Tadpole". His emblems are miniature shells, blue or green paddles, and sometimes small metal fish. (3) Zanka, is the minister of agriculture. He is always dressed peasant fashion: a straw hat, rough blue smock, a straw satchel slung over his shoulders, and a short clay pipe in his mouth.

One of the most famous of the voodoo deities is Damballah - Wedo, the snake god who long gave rise to the idea that the Haitian peasants were ophiolaters. As a snake god, Damballah particularly haunts springs, lakes and ponds of which he is a guardian. Like his wife, Aida-wedo, he is compared to the rainbow which in voodoo cosmogony is nothing more than a heavenly serpent.

As previously mentioned, Christianity existed in the West Indies before the exodus of Africans to this area and Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion in most of the islands.

A. Selon l'âge, le sexe &c.

L'âge	à St. Croix				à St. Thomas				à St. Jean				Total selon l'âge				Total de Libres et d'Esclaves.	
	Libres		Esclaves		Libres		Esclaves		Libres		Esclaves		Libres		Esclaves			
	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin	sexu masculin	sexu féminin		
	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.	liv.		
de 1 à 10 ans	779	823	2,039	2,238	915	964	898	564	58	58	217	173	1,750	1,845	2,754	2,975	9,324	
de 10 à 20 ans	567	661	1,667	1,690	752	1,042	550	586	40	59	182	189	1,359	1,760	2,399	2,465	7,983	
au dessus de 20 ans	1,566	2,409	5,747	6,495	1,976	3,060	1,206	1,911	134	183	589	593	3,676	5,654	7,542	8,999	25,871	
<u>Total</u>	<u>6,805</u>	<u>10,876</u>	<u>8,707</u>	<u>5,315</u>	<u>532</u>	<u>1,943</u>	<u>16,044</u>	<u>27,134</u>	<u>43,178</u>									

C. Selon les différentes confessions.

Le lieu	Luthériens, comprenant la paroisse dans le et celle de la mission		Membres de la communauté des frères moravians		Membres de l'église anglaise, comprenant les Episcopaux et Presbytériens		Membres de l'église réformée, hollandaise et calviniste		Méthodistes		Quakers		Catholiques		Brevelites		Noirs baptisés		Total de Libres et d'Esclaves		Total
	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	Libres	Esclaves	
	à St. Croix	2,120	1,904	276	6,244	3,363	5,111	.	.	.	.	1	.	916	6,433	42	.	87	184	6,805	
à St. Thomas	1,748	461	447	1,895	1,534	398	373	17	51	28	7	.	4,056	2,265	425	.	66	251	8,707	5,315	14,022
à St. Jean	80	86	237	1,369	146	118	43	14	1	3	.	.	19	46	.	.	6	307	532	1,943	2,475
<u>Total des trois îles</u>	<u>3,948</u>	<u>2,451</u>	<u>960</u>	<u>9,508</u>	<u>5,043</u>	<u>5,627</u>	<u>446</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>.</u>	<u>4,991</u>	<u>8,744</u>	<u>467</u>	<u>.</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>742</u>	<u>16,044</u>	<u>27,134</u>	<u>43,178</u>
<u>Total de Libres et d'Esclaves</u>	<u>6,399</u>	<u>10,168</u>	<u>10,670</u>	<u>447</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>13,735</u>	<u>467</u>	<u>901</u>												

Le nombre d'affranchissemens enregistrés depuis jusqu'au 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1838 a été

à St. Croix 160, à St. Thomas 102,

Note. Nous ceux, qui ont été achetés à l'encan, pour

la publication du rescrit royal du 22 novembre 1834,

à St. Jean 19 Total 281

être mis en liberté, ne sont pas compris à ce nombre.

Today it retains this status among most French and Latin oriented islands.

Protestantism entered at various stages and for various reasons. The Jews were some of the early settlers of the islands and some were in the employ of the Danish West Indies such as Oliver Pauli Frank. The number of Jews grew steadily, especially when Rodney attacked the island of Saba in 1781. Many fled to St. Thomas seeking protection.

Jews have been assimilated into the Virgin Islands community and generations of the faith have been born here. To date several members of this sect have been governors of the United States Virgin Islands. Governor Gabriel Milan is recognized as first. According to Westergaard he was of reputable family which had connections in Portugal, Flanders and Hamburg. His family was related by marriage to the well-known Portuguese-Jewish Houses of Da Costa and De Castro. Other Jewish governors include Morris F. De Castro and Ralph M. Paiewonsky.

Moravians arrived on St. Thomas around 1732 and on Antigua and Jamaica in 1754. Their chief contribution is best described in the introductory lines of the publication The Moravian Mission to the African Slaves of the Danish West Indies 1732-1828: "During the 252 years (1665-1917) that the United States Virgin Islands were under Danish sovereignty, the religious instruction and general education of the Negro population which numbered approximately ninety percent of the inhabitants of the islands, were left exclusively in the hands of missionaries of the Moravian or United Brethren Church. During the first years of settlement the Negroes received no education or religious instruction and it was not until the arrival of the first Moravian missionaries in 1732 that they became the beneficiaries of a serious missionary effort".<sup>25</sup>

While it is admitted that Moravians were the first to contribute and work zealously toward the education and advancement of slaves, it is also true that other sects at subsequent times worked for the spiritual and educational welfare of the Africans.

The enclosed chart reveals some interesting figures. Submitted by Governor Peter Von Scholten, the table shows that in 1834 (about 100 years after the Moravians) Roman Catholics in St. Croix were 916 free men and 6,430 slaves. In St. John, 19 were free men and 46 slaves, while in St. Thomas there were 4,056 free men and 2,265 slaves. Compared with Moravians the count of the same year reveals a grand total of 13,735. Roman Catholics had 3,267 more than the Moravians whose figure was 10,268.

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<sup>25</sup>Patricia Shaubah, The Moravian Mission to the African Slave of the Danish West Indies (St. Croix: Prestige Press, 1969), Introduction.



The other denominations conducted worship with plain, formal liturgies. Their code of conduct was rather stern and rigid. Naturally then, because of the restrictions placed on them, the slaves took to secrecy in order to carry on their native practices or cult.

The relationship between master and slave was characterized as the governing and the governed. Cruelty was oftentime reason enough to create the major problem of the day -- the runaway slave. What was most perplexing to the masters was the fact that those slaves who actually escaped successfully to a Latin (Catholic) dominated island as Puerto Rico often returned to St. Thomas or St. Croix a baptized or free Negro and no penal action could be administered.

Baptism was one ceremony that played an important role in the life of the slave. When he left Africa, according to Dr. Freyre, he was trained in the rituals of his new religion, and as in the case of Brazil the unbaptized slave felt inferior to his baptized companions and looked forward to this ceremony.<sup>26</sup>

Religion in the West Indies today includes a representation of almost every known or practiced faith. A breakdown of some of the more predominant ones reveals Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism as the most predominant. An historical explanation for Roman Catholicism's influences is that Catholics allowed more freedom of expression yet maintained a "big brother" attitude with their parishioners. Still another reason for this stronghold in the Caribbean is the fact which World Book explains: twelve priests went with Columbus in his second voyage in 1493 and in 1512 the first Episcopal church was set up at Santo Domingo. The creeds and doctrines of Roman Catholicism governed the parishioner's way of life.<sup>27</sup>

Information taken from the Caribbean West Indies Yearbook 1972, shows the following distribution in the West Indian islands:

Trinidad-Tobago

Roman Catholics	299,649
Anglican	175,042

Barbados

Anglicans	25,000
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Roman Catholics are predominant in Dominica, Antigua,

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<sup>26</sup>"Roman Catholic Church," World Book Encyclopedia (1960), XV, p. 379.

Montserrat, St. Kitts, Nevis. In the Netherlands Antilles, 80% are Catholics. In the Leeward Islands, Anglicanism has the greatest number of adherents. In Jamaica, Anglicanism outnumbers other faiths but there is a large percentage of Baptists, Church of God, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Moravians. In the United States Virgin Islands almost all religious faiths are represented but Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and Lutherans are greatest in number.

There seems to be a link between religious control and the personality traits exhibited by slaves brought to the Caribbean. This can very well be a topic to be undertaken for further study. However, for our purpose, the young West Indian may be inspired through the following comparative report of behavior patterns as they were influenced by religion:

#### Laws and Attitudes

Throughout research on this study a marked difference in attitude and laws governing Negro slaves has been most evident. It is most interesting since it has been revealed that these laws and attitudes shaped the personality and psyche of the slaves which in turn influenced the socio-economic quality of the governing country.

The Masters and the Slaves identifies the role of the slave in Portuguese colonies as the heart and soul of Brazilian life. Because of the stern and rigid personality of the Portuguese, life in the Big House or plantation was usually dull and cold; but it was the Negro's happy laughter that brought new life to the plantations.

All praise and credit for the economy, the social life and the prosperity of Brazil was further attributed to the cooperation and performance of the slaves.

Dr. Freyre attributes this freedom of spirit to the close ties between the church and the slaves.

Not that the priests ceased to exercise control over their subjects but there was a sharing of beliefs. The slaves were allowed to publicly display their fetishes, beliefs and customs at certain festivals. Practice of their cult was never denied them and so resentment in this area was at a minimum.<sup>28</sup>

A second source which documents this difference in attitudes is Slave and Citizen by Dr. Frank Tannenbaum. The source reveals attitudes towards manumission, punishment, marriage, religion and many areas affecting the lives of slaves.

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<sup>28</sup>Freyre, op. cit., pp. 373-374.

To better analyze the over-all conditions under which slaves existed in the New World, Dr. Tannenbaum categorized the slave system in this area under three major groupings. The British, American, Dutch and Danish were at one extreme, and the Spanish and Portuguese at the other. In between the two fell the French. The first group is described as having no effective slave tradition and whose religious institutions were little concerned about the Negro. The Spanish and Portuguese, however, believed that the spiritual personality of the slaves transcended his slave status. In between were the French who had no slave laws, but did have the same religious principles as the Spanish and Portuguese.

Unlike other European dominated religions, the Jesuits allowed Portuguese slaves to participate in religious ceremonies. The format of these ceremonies is interesting. There was no edifice built especially for this purpose. Ceremonies were held in the Big House, and there was complete freedom of expression -- clapping of hands, drums, and musical instruments made by these people.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly enough, modern day Roman Catholic ceremonies in their new mass, are returning to this country atmosphere by use of guitars, clapping of hands, even themes of hymns are emphasizing togetherness, brotherly love, freedom songs and dignity of work.

*Exercises:*

#### *Composition*

*In addition to the contributions to the spiritual welfare of the slaves, Moravians were also pioneers in educating slaves. In the 1800's the Moravians were given full responsibility for education in the public school system of the then Danish West Indies. Frederick Martin was a pioneer in this movement and worked both on St. Thomas and on St. Croix. Write and present a report tracing public education in the U.S.V.I. and including names of pioneer educators.*

#### *Topics for Discussion*

*The following are related topics on witch-craft. From conversations with senior citizens, try to find answers for the following questions.*

- 1. What is a talisman?*
- 2. Where does it find its origin?*
- 3. Our funeral rites are quite ceremonial. Many of the ceremonies, however, are modified and modernized.*
  - a. What are "wakes"?*
  - b. Trace their origin in voodoo cult.*

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<sup>29</sup>Tannenbaum, op. cit., p. 78.

4. *In some islands it is believed that on the third night the deceased pays a visit to his home where food and water are prepared for this visit. Read Mettraux's Haiti: Black Peasants and Voodoo and compare early African funeral rites with the above.*



## CHAPTER V

### Beliefs and Superstitions

An excerpt from J. D. Elder serves as the punch line for introducing this topic.

Human history shows that mankind no matter what his culture, has traditionally turned to witchcraft for answers to his anxious questions about misfortune, failure in life and uncertainty about the future of his family, his crops and his own life.<sup>30</sup>

And so West Indians are not unique in their belief and/or practice of obeah as the prevailing superstition of the area. Furthermore, Dr. Elder explains, witchcraft is not the invention of colored people. The Celtic peoples whom the Roman legions encountered in Iberia and later drove to the hinterlands of Britain left behind them countless urn-fields and megaliths like Stonehenge -- evidences that they practiced a highly developed system of magic and witchcraft. Practitioners of magic and ritual in West Europe were mostly of the cult of druidism. The word druid derives from continental Celtic according to the writings of Caesar and Cicero who translated it to mean "knowledge of the oak".

In Ireland druidism was highly developed. The druids claimed they possessed the ability "to see" the invisible, to obtain prior knowledge and to produce magic through the means of trance, frenzies or stimulated inspiration. Continuing the trace of patterns of witchcraft as practiced by European countries, Dr. Elder cites the invasion of Spain by hundreds of witches who were assigned to make disciples of the women of Aragon. At the trial, the witches confessed participating in orgies until they came face to face with Satan himself.<sup>31</sup>

The young West Indian may find it interesting to learn that the practice of obeah is on the decline. As will later be discussed, legislation in some islands has been enacted to consider such acts illegal and/or harmful but Guyana has been recently considering legislation to legalize obeah as an important part of the culture.

The following reliable references are cited as sources for the definition, origin, practice and decline of obeah. J. Antonio Jarvis defines obeah as "the study and practice of unorthodox medicine combined with witchcraft". "Obosom", Jarvis reports, "was the guardian spirit of the Ashanti and therefore obeah was the involved result".<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> J. D. Elder, The Roots of Witchcraft (Mona: University of the West Indies, 1969), p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid; pp. 6-7.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio Jarvis, The Virgin Islands & Their People (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Company, 1944), p. 126.

Still another detailed definition is found in Dr. Joseph Williams' work:

Obi (obeah), a system of sorcery prevalent, though not to so great an extent as formerly, among the Negro population of the West Indies colonies. It appears to have been brought from Africa by Negroes who had been enslaved and to these obeah men (or women) the blacks used to resort for the cure of disorders, obtaining revenge, conciliating favor, the discovery of the thief or adulterer and the prediction of the future. The practice of Obi had become general towards the close of the last century both in the West Indies and the United States and there is little doubt that the obeahmen exercised vast influence and that they carried on a system of secret slow poisonings, the effects of which were attributed by their more ignorant fellows to Obi.

The system resembles other superstitions of savage peoples. It may have originated in ancient religious practices in which sorcery bore a large part.<sup>33</sup>

So very often the terms voodoo and obeah are mistakenly thought to be synonymous. A trace of origins, places of concentration and practices involved may clarify the lines of demarcation.

One major point they share in common is their place of origin. Both beliefs were brought to the New World by Africans for the most part. Dr. Elder reminds us that what we find in the Caribbean today is definitely nothing but a cross fertilization between African, Asian and European systems of witchcraft cultures.

From thereon the lines of departure widen, for obeah is reported by several writers on the subject to have been brought to the New World by the Koromantin (Ashanti) while voodoo was brought by the slaves from Dahomey and was practiced on the island of Haiti.

Joseph Williams lists the following major differences between the two practices:

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph Williams, Voodoo and Obeah (New York: Dial Press Inc., 1932), p. 136.

1. Voodoo involves the shedding of blood, either the sacrifice of a white goat or cock (called white sacrifice) or the human sacrifice (called the red).
2. Voodoo requires the celebration of its rites, participation of a priest and priestess.
3. Obeah can be worked alone and in secret and is not tied to the presence of the snake as is the case in voodoo.
4. Lastly, obeah, which kills only by poison, does not show the blood at all. It does not attach the religious intonations as voodoo.<sup>34</sup>

Volumes can be written to list reasons why people resort to the practice of obeah. A few examples follow: to cure diseases, obtain revenge for injuries or insults, predict future events, security in one's job, promotion on jobs, to receive the favor of a loved one, to influence superiors.

For no reason other than the ample availability of resource material, obeah on Jamaica will be used as additional information on obeah in the West Indies. Dr. Williams' accounts for the origin of obeah in Jamaica out of the suppression of the myal dance. Obeah then gained ascendancy and developed into a quasi-religion with hatred for the white man and the ultimate overthrow of the white masters as an object. Myalism, it should be explained, was a different practice from obeah. Though somewhat similar, myalism was the old tribal religion of the Ashanti and its powers lie in the fact that the myal men or women were the people who cured those whom the obeah man had injured.

The practice, which derived its name from a dance that it featured, occupied great status among the slaves. The obeah man introduced a dance called myal dance and formed a secret society, the members of which were to be made invulnerable or if they died, life was to be restored. Belief in this miracle was secured by trick.

A mixture of rum was given of a character which presently induced sleep so profound as by the uninitiated and alarmed to be mistaken for death. After this had been administered to someone chosen for this purpose the myal dance began and presently the victim staggered and fell, to all appearances dead. Mystic charms were then sold; the body was rubbed with some infusion, and in process of time, the narcotic having lost its power, the subject of the experiment rose up as one restored to life, a fact for which the obeah man claimed the credit for finding the causes of

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 118.

illness.<sup>35</sup>

Obeah often takes the form of poison and in many islands legislation was passed forbidding the practice. A look at the tools and utensils of the obi or obeah man is interesting or even amusing. Oftentimes the chief instruments are dried bones, bottles and vials, string, feathers (large and small) herbs of all descriptions, powders for love potions, colored liquid and other paraphernalia.

Many adults still remember the frightening moments when as children they were confronted with the obeah man. The trade seems to have been almost exclusively the male's prerogative, and rather lucrative. Most times these men were unshaven, unbathed and totally unkempt. Some disfiguration was also a physical characteristic-bulging eyes, swollen lips, enlarged goiters, sores or warts and restless eyes.

However, these deficiencies were deceiving for beneath this imppecunious condition was the cunning personality of one who was able to deceive the gullible or ignorant patient.

No attempt will be made to list examples of the activities of the obeah man, but the references listed, i.e., Williams, Metraux, Elder, offer excellent readings on this.

#### Voodoo Ceremony

Once defined as a dance, voodoo has evolved into a strong religious belief in a supernatural being in the form of a snake, on whom depends whatever goes on in the world. The ceremonies or services of which voodoo worshipers must acquaint themselves in order to find favor with the loa and have their sins forgiven them are known as "manger-loa" or the feeding of the loa. The gods are not addressed without being given a taste of their favorite dishes. Though the ritual meals are based on Haitian recipes, the nature of the dishes, their preparation, and the manner in which they are served, are all governed by rules it would be dangerous to break, for the loa are most sensitive in culinary matters.

The blood sacrifice is the culmination and climax of the long succession of rites included in every ceremony. At big feasting of the loa not only a considerable number of fowls, but even billy goats are sacrificed. The goats are covered with silk or velvet mantle and wear a scarf tied at the roots of their horn as head gear.

The color of these adornments symbolizes the god to whom the victim is dedicated. Those who persistently regard voodoo as a

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

kind of witchcraft attach satanic significance to the lighted candles fixed to the horns of the goats. In voodoo practice, a candle or taper is lit every time communication is made with the spirit.

The victim must eat or drink a sacred kind of food or liquid. Refusal to do so indicates the animal does not accept its own death and must be replaced by another one since it fails to be acceptable to the gods.

The identification between sacrifice and victim goes so far that the former begins to behave as if he himself is to be immolated. He rails at his faith and pretends to be desperate. The faithful often bestride the animal before it is killed. Its blood is collected in a gourd and tasted by the officiating priest and the "servants of the Gods" in turn.

In conclusion, the reader may wonder what is the present status of voodoo. Should it be regarded as a practice of the uneducated or superstitious adherent? Metraux answers these thoughts in rather an objective manner. He states:

Voodoo should not be examined as a collection of folklore and beliefs. It is a religion of singular complexity which has lost none of its creative energy and "functions" in the technical anthropological sense of that term.

Voodoo is not only fervently believed in, but its adherents never cease to enrich it with fresh liturgical contributions -- voodoo belongs to the modern world and shares its civilization. Its ritual language is contemporary and its duties have their being in our industrialized universe.

Despite the color of its adherents it is a Western paganism to be discovered with joy or horror according to one's disposition or upbringing.<sup>36</sup>

#### Terms Associated with Voodoo

Zombies - Zombies are the living dead, or more accurately persons who are considered to have died, who were buried within full view of all but have been brought back to life by a sorcerer who has enslaved them. The resurrection is only partial. Zombies

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<sup>36</sup>Metraux, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

remain in a very dazed condition and are incapable of the exercise of will power. They resemble those who "have been given ether". They can be identified by their air of stupidity and their nasal voices. Their masters lock them up in a room of their temples all day and there they stay mute and immobile.

Zombies have to be fed but care must be taken never to allow them to taste salt, one grain is enough to dispel their lethargy and renew their will power. Many educated Haitians share the peasants' belief in zombies but they account for the existence of these living corpses through use of drugs known only to the houngans. Sometimes flesh and blood zombies are exposed but they generally are only idiots or lunatics.

Zobop is one who, wanting to get rich quickly and without effort, has acquired a "burning charm" from a sorcerer. As a result of his intercourse with evil spirits such an individual loses all his scruples and acquires a taste for evil as such. Zobops form gangs and frequent country roads and paths after dark to attack solitary travelers whom they "eat" figuratively and sometimes even literally.

Werewolves - female vampires who suck the blood of little children at night. The werewolf preparing for one of these nocturnal sorties divests herself of her skin, by rubbing her neck, wrists and her ankles with an infusion of magic herbs and then hides it in a jar or some other secret cache where nobody can find it, burn it or smear it with red pepper.

In her raw condition the werewolf flaps her arms and legs to prepare herself for the flight she is about to begin. Flames gush from her armpits and her groin and a turkey's wing sprouts from her back. She rises into the air suddenly, right through the thatching of the roof. Luminous tracks -- shooting stars, no doubt -- mark her flight through the heavens. A law of the supernatural world stipulates that a vampire cannot eat a baby unless it has been offered to her by its own mother. A vampire having alighted near a house where a child lies sleeping, first enters the kitchen, which in the country is a small shed at some distance away from the house itself.

From there she softly calls both mother and child. The mother, only half awake, answers "Yes". "Will you give me your child?" If the mother is drugged with sleep and answers "Yes" again, all is lost. It is, therefore, the mother who clears the way for the vampire. In order to suck the child, the vampire enters the house in the form of a cockroach or another kind of insect or else inserts a long drinking straw between chinks in the wattle

walls. Not all the blood is drunk at once but the vampire returns every evening until the child dies, sucked completely dry.

The only way of protecting a child from vampires is to "spoil its blood" by bathing it in a solution of evil-smelling substances.<sup>37</sup>

### Beliefs and Superstitions of Neighboring Islands

Although deeply attached to the Roman Catholic Church, Martinique still clings to some Indian and African traditions or superstitions. The silk cotton trees are haunted by zombies, the quiablasses are at the best on moonless nights and out of the way huts are inhabited by quimboiseurs.

The zombies - these are ghosts from beyond the graves, they avenge themselves for wrong done them during their life time and plague their forgetful families. Many houses are said to be haunted by zombies and only seanciers have the power to drive them away.

The Quiablasses - irresistible female apparitions. They lure to their destruction those who walk alone in the night.

The Quimboiseurs - the quimboiseurs actually exist, whereas zombies and quiablasses are imaginary. By appointment (and for cash) they practice their good or evil magic by means of all but miraculous recipes, quimbois a sorcerer, a medicine man and a mesmerizer; the quimboiseur will enable you to rid yourself of an enemy or win a lover by means of a love potion.

The Gens Gage's - people said to be in the pay of the devil. Being in league with the devil, the gens gage's have the power of turning themselves into animals.

Funeral Wakes - when someone dies, the family and friends hold a wake. While the kneeling women pray by the corpse, the men recount the life of the deceased. With the help of rum punch they soon forget the mournful aspect and tell stories or riddles.

#### *Five Common Superstitions concerning Good Friday*

- (1) Drop the white of a freshly laid egg into a glass of clear water at noon on Good Friday and one's future activities will be revealed. For example, if the white of the egg forms a church with steeple, etc., a wedding will take place in the near future. If, however, the white assumes the shape of a ship, travel to some distant shore is forthcoming.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 96-99.



- (2) *An egg laid on Good Friday never decays; instead, it dehydrates and shrinks to the size of a nutmeg. This is considered medicinal.*
- (3) *Digging around the roots of a thistle plant at noon on Good Friday will yield bits of coal which are considered medicinal.*
- (4) *Animals communicate with each other on Good Friday.*
- (5) *Sharp objects such as pens, needles, knives and scissors are never used on Good Friday.*

## CHAPTER VI

### Language

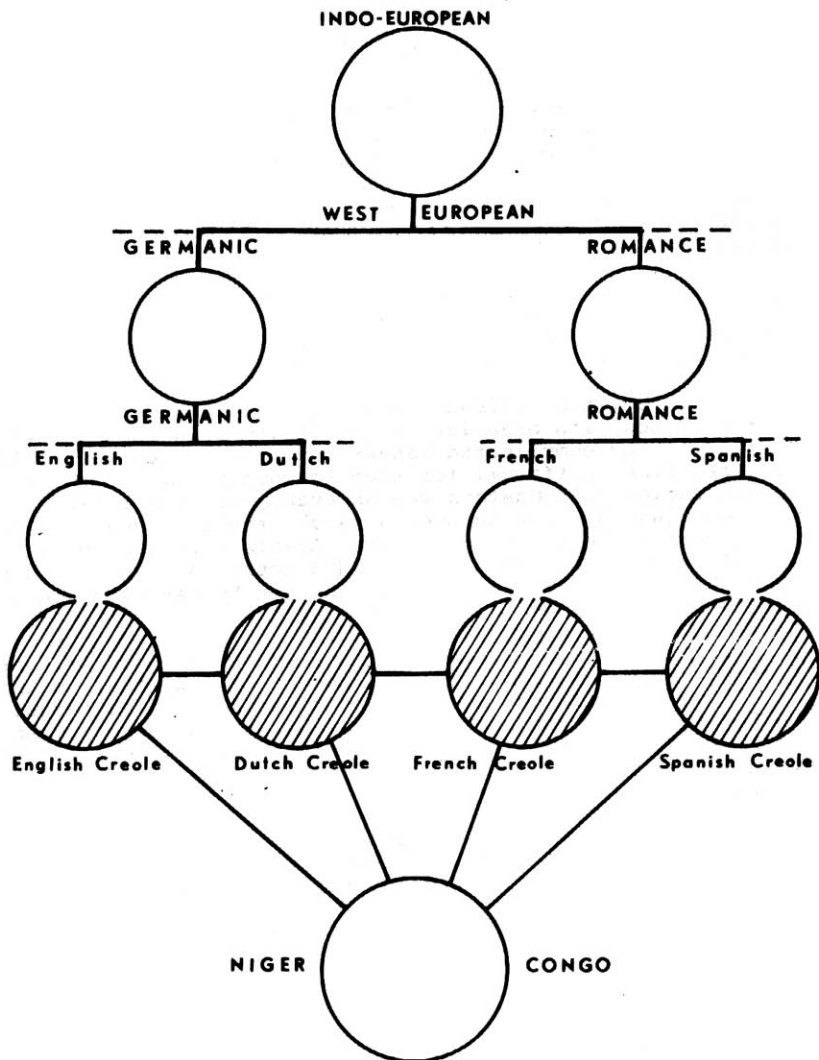
Language is the skill that distinctly separates human beings from lower forms of animals. Through communication culture is disseminated, generations are educated, deeds and events are recorded. Unlike the disciples at Pentecost we do not all understand each other's tongue; however, foreign languages can be learned and some individuals can communicate fluently in several languages. Such people are called linguists.

In the West Indies, language has an interesting evolutionary history. There is ample evidence, written and otherwise, which reveals that the earliest inhabitants, Caribs and Arawaks, communicated in a structural language.

Then came the Africans, members of either descent groups or larger tribes with organized forms of communication. However, because of the complicated manner in which slaves were sold, it was oftentimes difficult for them to communicate among themselves. Communication with masters was an even more frustrating situation. Through planning, the Europeans taught their slaves a dialect which came to be known as Creole. Creole contained part of the formal language and part African dialects. With this medium there was a breakthrough in communication whereby master-slave communication developed.

It has often been said that the speech of West Indians reflects the rhythm as outlined in the contour of their mountains or hills. This rhythm is a combination of tonal patterns, voice inflections and accents. Each area has its distinct accent which to the stranger is difficult to be identified. West Indians are proud of their accent which can also be rather helpful when on distant shores.

These accents are the results of European colonization. In addition to Africans, several European countries have influenced the language of these islands -- Spain, France, England and the Netherlands.



Topological Chart Showing the Relationship of the Creole Languages to Each Other, and to the Indo-European and Niger-Congo families respectively.

Chart reproduced from B. L. Bailey's CREOLE LANGUAGES OF THE CARRIBEAN AREA; Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.

## European Influences

Following is a distribution of European influences on language of the West Indies:

### Spanish Influence

Cuba  
Santo Domingo  
Puerto Rico

### French Influence

Haiti  
Martinique  
Dominica (in part)  
St. Maarten (in part)  
Guadeloupe  
St. Lucia

### Dutch Influence

Aruba  
Saba  
St. Eustatius  
St. Maarten (in part)  
Curacao  
Bonaire

### English Influence

Dominica  
Jamaica  
St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla  
Antigua  
St. Lucia  
Montserrat  
British Virgin Islands  
Barbados  
Bermuda  
U.S. Virgin Islands

### Danish Influence

United States Virgin Islands

### Scotch-Irish Influence

St. Croix  
Barbados

English the official language on St. Thomas

The British occupations of the islands must have had a bearing on making English more important than any other language. With the declining demand for sugar in the early nineteenth century, many Dutch planters packed up and left St. Thomas. In 1839, only 27 plantations out of 65 were under cultivation, and only about one fourth of these grew sugar, while the others were given over to dairying and raising crops. The last Dutch-speaking pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church left in 1811; after 1828 the pastors for that church were English-speaking Americans. These factors effectively indicate the decline and lingering death of Creole Dutch.

A creole language is not the attempt of "simple" people to speak a language beyond their comprehension; it is a language with a European vocabulary welded on an African way of building meaning. The West Africans who were brought to the West Indies as slaves shared the same morphological structure on which to build their language. The slave owners supplied the rest. Creole was what was happening in the New World, a mixture of elements from the Old World.

The decline of Creole Dutch was due mainly to the fact that St. Thomas was open to a heavy British influence. St. Thomas, in the 1700's, was a renowned port. Americans came to trade lumber and salt fish for molasses. English merchants let other people learn their languages, but insisted (and succeeded) in having business records kept in English. Official proclamations were published both in Danish and in English. The slaves who worked on the docks and in the warehouses learned English. It became the town language; Dutch Creole became the country language of the St. Thomian plantation slaves. Hence, English became a status language associated with a better life and greater opportunities. The Moravian missionaries often received requests from slaves to teach them English.

## Jamaican Folk Tales

Almost every West Indian is bi-lingual, since he has at his command his official language plus a private language unique to each island. This "private language" enables him to identify with his countrymen or to communicate privately. Ably assisted with gestures, facial expressions and intonations it is a whole language in itself. At times colloquialisms express most adequately when formal language cannot. In most islands the term Creole is applied to this private language. The term Creole suggests a person as well as a language.

Beryl Loftman Bailey in her book Creole Language of the Caribbean Area, traces Creole as a language of Africans, who on their arrival found themselves in mixed tribal groups. Having no common means of communication they learned their masters' languages. There was little pressure on them to give up their particular structural patterns, so naturally out of this fusion there emerged a new language structure.<sup>38</sup>

Jens Larsen traces the origin of the Negro Dutch Creole to St. Thomas from where it spread to St. John then to St. Croix. Even though Danish, French, German, Spanish and Portuguese were all spoken on St. Thomas, Dutch became the base of this dialect. This was due in part to the fact that the Dutch were the largest number of slave owners at that time and they taught slaves their language. Slaves who already knew this language were used to teach the new arrivals. Thus it was that Africanism became part of the Creole. Through the years phrases and/or expressions were added or deleted until it was polished to the stage where it was spoken by Negroes and Europeans. Eventually, it became a written language.<sup>39</sup>

Various dialects are still spoken on many West Indian Islands. Two popular ones are papiamento, a mixture of Spanish, French and Dutch, and Patois, a broken French. Jamaica has its Jamaica Creole.

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<sup>38</sup> Beryl L. Bailey, Creole Language of the Caribbean Area (Columbia University 1963), p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Jens Larsen, The Virgin Islands Story (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1950), pp. 103-106.

The following story, a Jamaican folktale, is an example of Jamaican Creole.

"Bull As Bridegroom"

Deh is one woman get a daughter. One day in de yard "he saw a man, big stout man. He put co'tin'ship to her. De woman said yes. When de man come to de yard breakfas'time he didn't eat; always went away where some clean grass is. 'he got a brudder watchin' him all de time. When he go, de man begin to sing,

"See me, Nancy, a wind,  
T'ink a me, Nancy, me come"

De man tu'n bull and eat his belly ful o' grass. When he eat done, he sing again,

"See me, Nancy, a wind,  
T'ink a me, Nancy, me gone"

Den he tu'n de shap a de man back.

When day of de wedding, de boy said, "Sister, you know wha' dat man coming here is? Dat man a bull". His sister said, "O bwoy, go 'way! Where you ever hear cow can tu'n a living soul? Day come home from church, sit roun' de table, everybody giving toast. Dey call upon de woman brudder to give toast. De brudder said, "I won' give toas", but I wi' sing". De man said, "No, give toast; so de little boy commence to sing.

"See me, Nancy, a wind  
T'ink a me Nancy, me come"

De man begin to bawl out an' knock his head, call out fe toast. De boy begun to sing again,

"See me Nancy, a wind  
T'ink a me Nancy me come".

De ha'r of de cow grow, an' de four foot, and de big bull began to jump and buck down all de people in de house, an' he gallop an' dey never see hom no more again.<sup>40</sup>

French Creole

Creole is spoken on Martinique. It is closely related to the Creole languages spoken in Guadeloupe, Haiti, French Guiana the neighboring British Islands, Reunion and Mauritius. It originated as the first African slaves were introduced being the only means of expression between masters and slaves. Creole still contains some African forms in its syntax (from the languages of Dahomey and the Gold Coast) but the vocabulary is mainly of French origin with contributions from the Caribs, English and Spanish tongues. When spoken slowly enough it is easily understood by people from France. A few French Creole expressions follow:

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<sup>40</sup>Marthaw Beckwith, *Jamaica Anansi Stories* (New York: G. E. Strchert & Company, 1924), pp. 108-109.



## Creole Expressions

Fout' ka fai cho - how hot it is

La pli ka vini - it is going to rain

Jou ouve - it is daylight

Ca oule - what do you want

An nous alle - let's go

Couman ou ye - how are you

Moin pas save - I don't know

Tout' i bel ti fia - Gee what a pretty girl

An ti brin - some - a little

## CHAPTER VII

### Folklore

Folk tales are sometimes defined as myths or legends handed down to other generations. This is considerably true of folk tales of the West Indies. Similarly, as other aspects of the culture of the West Indies, folk tales, too, can trace their origin to African influence.

A natural setting for the advent of folk tales to the New World was at the bed side of the master's daughter when nannies told bedtime stories to the drowsy youngster. More than likely these tales were about African ancestors or their gods. Very often they told about animals who took the shape of men or who could communicate with men.

Here we see then the introduction of the father and son team, Anansi and Bru Tocoma, into the New World. These two characters directly derived from the Ashanti were principals in almost all West Indian tales. Interestingly, Joseph Williams in his book Voodoo and Obeahs cites a comparison of Anansi, the spider, as not having the importance in African superstitions as the snake in voodoo. Dr. Williams reports also on the characteristic elements of Anansi's tales. In West Africa, spider tales are very amusing and must be told through the nose while the story teller crawls about. In Dahomey, his equivalent is a turtle and his tales are not half so amusing.<sup>41</sup>

Many islands boast of their folk tales and islanders take pleasure in narrating them to the young and/or off-island friends. Time was, when this was the only source of recreation. Before the advent of radio or television in the islands, story telling kept families and friends together. The scene was in the back yard, and especially on "moon light nights" when families and friends gathered together to listen to "obeah stories", "jumbi stories", and "Bru Nancy" and "Bru Tocoma" tales; these sessions often lasted until midnight.

Today, famous writers have recorded tales especially for children. An excellent example is West Indian Folk Tales by Phillip Sherlock, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies.

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<sup>41</sup>Williams, op. cit., p. 119.

Witty and humorous, the tales tell of animals, birds, trees and events with which young West Indians can identify and which they can appreciate.<sup>42</sup> Besides folk tales, the West Indies also have contributed to the literary field as the works of famous writers depict. Topics range from the obvious, as on being West Indian, to in-depth studies of local or world wide topics.

#### Regional Authors

The following list is by no means complete, but offers a sampling of regional authors. The field of poetry includes names as Derek Walcott's In a Green Night and The Castaway; Corey Emanuel's Reflections; Edwin Braithwaite's Right of Passage; Arthur Seymour's Over Guiana Clouds; Cyril Creque's Trade Winds and Panorama.

Anthologies include those of G. R. Coulthard (Ed.), Caribbean Literature; O. R. Darthorne's Caribbean Narrative; Barbara Howes, From the Green Antilles; Edna Manley (Ed.) Focus; Kenneth Ramchand (Ed.) West Indian Narrative; Andrew Salkey (Ed.), West Indian Stories from the Caribbean.

In the area of fiction the following names are offered: P.S. Allfrey, The Orchid House; Jan Carew, Black Midas; John Hearne, Under the Window; Lamming, On Age of Innocence; Mais, The Hills Were Joyful Together.

Drama - Jose Antonio Jarvis, The King's Mandate is outstanding. Resource material is offered through the works: Valdemar Hill Sr., Golden Jubilee; Darwin Creque, The U.S. Virgin Islands and the Eastern Caribbean; Eric Williams, The Negro in the Caribbean; K. Norris, Jamaica: The Search for an Identity. Enid M. Baa, The Sephardic Jews; V.S. Naipaul, The Middle Passage; C.L. R. James, The Black Jacobins; David Caengata, St. Croix at the Turn of the Twentieth Century; Folk literature is represented in the works of: Louise Bennett, Jamaica Labrish; F. G. Cassidy, Jamaica Talk; E. Connor (Ed.), Songs from Trinidad; Sir Phillip Sherlock, Anansi the Spider Man; J. Antonio Jarvis, Bluebeard's Last Wife.

Historians include Eric Williams From Columbus to Castro; V. Hill Rise to Recognition.

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Note: Most of the listing of authors mentioned above were taken from The Islands in Between, edited by Louis James.

For examples of Virgin Islands folk tales, Project Introspection has previously prepared a booklet entitled "Here and There in the Virgin Islands".

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<sup>42</sup>Phillip Sherlock, West Indian Folk Tales (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

## CHAPTER VIII

### Dance

#### African Origin

Volume 4 of the World Book Encyclopedia describes dance as the "language of the body . . . the movements may interpret religious history or beliefs or they may interpret things in every day life".<sup>43</sup>

With West Indians, dance is definitely a language of the body; rhythm is reflected in the musical quality of the voice, in the speech patterns which are fast or boisterous like the rushing waves or soft and musical like the light breezes. Walking or dancing are accented body movements and laughter carries the rippling patterns of the hills. Babies respond to music naturally. Very early they can be observed clapping hands to a catch tune or attempting to imitate dances. This gift of natural rhythm is a combination of African and European influences.

Many known dances may be of African origin, among them the caruso, the bamboula, the chica, the calenda, Don Pedro, and the Leghia. The caruso is a dance done in pantomime, used to express feelings. The theme usually depicts any situation of sensational quality, as illicit love affairs, cruelty of masters or neighborhood gossip. Unfortunately, the accompanying songs were passed on by word of mouth and original lyrics were never recorded.

The bamboula, so named because the drums were made out of thick bamboo, was another popular dance in some islands. The drummers sat astride two drums that were covered with goat skin. Using fingers and wrists the drummers would strike one slowly and the other rapidly. Other instruments used in this dance were what are known today as maracas -- little calabashes or gourds filled with small stones or grains of corn. These were shaken by striking them on the hands by means of a long shaft. The dancers, forming a circle, regulated the tempo of the music by clapping their hands or by their chants. One quality which the Negroes possessed was improvising, a characteristic used wittily today by many calypsonians. The Negroes improvised as they danced in circles or challenged each other to do "his thing".

The Don Pedro, which was prohibited in some islands, was closely related to voodoo practices. During this dance, participants partook of a drink that was spiced with ammo. The dancer usually collapsed dead.

Europeans, too, left their influence on dances of this area. The masters performed dances of their homeland. At social gather-

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<sup>43</sup>The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. IV (1960).





Reproduced from K. Larsen's DANSK VESTIDEN 1666-1917;  
Courtesy of the St. Thomas Public Library.



ings they danced the lancers, minuet, waltz, polka, mazurka. These were eventually adopted by the Negroes and passed on. Today in some of the islands these dances are performed on special occasions. In St. Croix, Virgin Islands, wide efforts are made to retain these dances and to encourage young people to accept them. However, in the counterculture movement that has engulfed this area, modern American dances take precedence. Pre-schoolers can compete with their older siblings in doing the "Funky Chicken", the "Rubber Band", the "James Brown", the "Boogaloo" or the "Break Down". But, nonetheless, regional dances also stimulate young and old as the Reggae, the Jamaica Ska, and Calypso. The music of the West Indies also reflects African and European qualities.

### The Calypso

The calypso music, the exclusive product of Trinidad, is a rich Afro-West Indian combination. William Attaway gives an historic account of the calypso. The following is offered as information for the young West Indian:

Basically, it (calypso) can be called the music of Afro-West Indian natives who make up the majority of Trinidad's population. Its rhythm is in two/four and four/four time and its pattern is strongly African.

Originally, as the Spanish influence dominated large portions of the Caribbean, calypso acquired some types of all Spain.

As arresting as the drums might be and as moving as the music undoubtedly is, it is the lyrics which make calypso popular throughout the Western Hemisphere. The lyrics are always witty, full of double entendre and satire and are frequently improvised on the spot to comment on some pressing topic of the day. Verse and chorus are sung by a leader called a calypsonian.<sup>44</sup>

The following lines are quoted from the same work to throw more light on what was previously mentioned under both topics: "Slavery" and "Language".

Most calypso heard today can be traced back musically to the eighteenth century Trinidad. The African slaves were not permitted to speak as they worked, but they were allowed to sing. The calypso sung in a patois to baffle the ears of the masters was their way of plotting revolt,

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<sup>44</sup>William Attaway, Calypso Song Book (New York: Mc. Graw Hill Book Company, 1957), p. 7.



conveying the local news or simply getting a corroded hatred out of their system.

Mr. Attaway gives an interesting comparison with original calypso to the present-day type:

Life in the West Indies has changed greatly since the days of slavery and the calypso has changed with it.

The old melody was simple. Archaic calypso was virtually monotonous with a background chorus supplying a simple call and response accompaniment. In the early 1900's singing and dancing were accompanied for the most part by drums and sticks. Through the years increasing use of melody has brought calypso to its present form. As far as can be ascertained calypso was never sung in English until the turn of the century. At first it was only accepted at the bottom of the stratified island society. Only at carnival time were the Negroes allowed to blow off steam publicly with homemade instruments and homemade songs. As it rose from obscurity to respectability the calypso art was accompanied by the rise of a new order of musical ability, the self-created peerage of the Calypsonian. The flamboyant artists have adopted witty, imaginative and bizarre official names. Some are historical, some use folksy appellations and some place emphasis on nobility.<sup>45</sup>

Today the calypso, both as song and dance, is used as a tourist attraction and the songs are so composed, thus losing their true flavor. However, at carnival time in the various islands, the activity known as Calypso Tent affords an opportunity to see and hear the artists at their best. Under a brilliant array of lights and color, the calypsonians sing of current issues, local and abroad, and compete for the title of Calypso King.

In his characteristically clever approach, Sparrow recently composed the popular "Zinah", sung completely in patois, the song generated much interest in the dialect and was overwhelmingly accepted by the patois speakers residing away from their native home.

Closely associated with the calypso is the steel drum. Also a product of Trinidad, the idea was originated in the oil refineries

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

by the workers. The oil drums are cut at different heights and hammered to get different tones. The drums complement the calypso, but skillful players have rendered with proficiency selections from classics as Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" or Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus". The steel drums are the heart beat at carnival time in most of the islands and all within hearing sway automatically to the beat of the drums.

## The Caruso

The caruso was a popular dance style on St. Croix around the early part of the twentieth century. Comparable to the bamboula of St. Thomas, the only instruments used were drums. The drummers sat back to back as the chorus sang. The songs accompanying this dance took the form of local newspapers or gossip columns. This technique is similar to that employed by slaves who as they worked in the fields sang and planned revolts or plotted murders. The caruso was used to report some sensational topic. It was also a method used to censor a neighbor for some wrong doing or to praise a citizen for an achievement. The following words are taken from the song "Judge Jackson, King of the Islands". They depict the feelings of the citizens towards Judge David H. Jackson of St. Croix for his efforts and achievement in gaining freedom of the press which was granted to the people by the Danish Crown around 1915.

Judge Jackson was the King of the island  
Let my people go.  
He told his people beware of the white man  
Let my people go.  
He went to Denmark to plead for the black man  
Let my people go.  
Oh Hamilton Jackson was King of the islands  
Let my people go.  
The war ship was in the harbor  
Let my people go.  
It fired a salute as he approached the harbor  
Let my people go.  
Oh Hamilton Jackson was the King of the islands  
Let my people go.

### THE WORDS OF THE FOLK SONGS

Dr. Hugo O. Bornn in his work on teaching music in the classroom offers excellent material on words and influence of folk music which we have used for clarification.

"The Virgin Islands folk song is obviously music for dancing, and the words are often fragmentary or non-existent. One reason for the failure of the words to survive along with the melodies may be the fact that early songs were sung in Creole, a language which was widely used until well into the nineteenth century when English gradually displaced it as the dominant language.

Creole was derived mainly from the Dutch language with contributions from many other European tongues and African dialects. It boasted a published grammar and Bible. Creole has vanished along with other aspects of the old culture, but its inflections and accents may be traced in the speech of the people of today and in the folk songs.

Another reason for the loss of the words of the songs may lie in their earthy, often bawdy character. In the nature of folk songs many of them had several versions. Queen Mary was a plantation worker who became a legend in a worker's insurrection in 1878. With a genius for leadership, she led guerilla bands in a savage, bloody struggle. Several songs came out of this incident, including Queen Mary which was adopted as a marching song by the insurgents.

Players on solo instruments took turns embellishing the melody and some, notably flautists, delighted in showing their virtuosity by improvising florid variations of ever-increasing brilliance with each repetition of the song.

The "scratch-band" was a rhythm band, pure and simple, and each instrument carried an independent pattern which would be kept throughout the piece. The resulting complexity of rhythmic counterpoint was sometimes overwhelming, and, caught up in the hypnotic spell of the rhythm, the dancers were driven to more and more frenzied attempts to match the music with the abandon of their movements."

#### INFLUENCES THAT HAVE SHAPED THE FOLK MUSIC

"Since its birth on the plantations of the seventeenth century, many and diverse influences have shaped the folk music of the islands. Among the most significant are the African bamboula drum, music of the various European settlers, inter-island culture, and the Afro-Cuban habanera.

#### European Settlers

"Other musical influences reflect the checkered history of the islands which were occupied at various times by the English, Dutch, Spanish, French, Knights of Malta and Danish. Thus, European influences were brought to bear on the native music. Songs such as Alai, Alai, Bru Matty, Bru, and the singing game Brown Girl are reminiscent of English quadrille and lancer figures, popular square dances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and Queen Mary, ironically, has the flavor of Danish marching songs sung by the very soldiers against whom it was directed.

#### Inter-Island Contacts

The influences that shaped the native music did not come solely from successive waves of conquerors. Another source was the lively inter-island commerce which existed throughout the nineteenth century. Songs were carried from one island to another by migrant workers, by ships' crews and cargo workers, and occasionally by political refugees. Some of the songs may still be discovered in different versions in many islands and generally it would be impossible to decide which is the original version."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Hugo Bornn, Resources for a Program in Music Study (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1965), pp. 108-115.

## CHAPTER IX

### Food

Many factors influence attitudes, preferences, preparation, utensils and even serving of food in the West Indies. Grouped into several categories the most prominent factors may be geographical, political and cultural. As with other segments of this region, one factor having influenced the other, none can hardly be singled out as predominant. For example, cassava, introduced by the Caribs (political) who bequeathed to us cassava bread, and the utensils needed to make this dish (cultural). The Carib probably followed the old adage that what was edible for the birds was also edible for him, as he ate and experimented with the luscious tropical fruits and the healthy roots and leaves. They learned to extract poison from the cassava before grinding it into flour. They hunted and ate agouti and other animals indigenous to the area.

Spice, a favorite condiment for West Indian dishes, was brought in by traders from Africa. Used to give taste and relish to dishes, pepper, cloves, garlic, cinnamon, and nutmeg are used abundantly.

Our African culinary heritage includes such dishes as fried fish with spicy sauce, roast lamb, nuts in sauces, rice, couscous, a starchy meal used with meat. Besides meat, much of soul food is directly from Africa. The mortar and pestle, a must in every West Indian kitchen, came directly to the area from Africa. Used for pounding meal and spices, the utensil is made of wood or even stone. Today this favorite is replaced by electric blenders, but it is still kept in homes as a collector's item.

The homemade ovens constructed from large galvanized tins and placed over the famous charcoal pot are also considered archaic and replaced by push button gas or electrical stove and oven combinations.

Culturally, each island has its own mode of preparation, and one may find ingredients of kalaloo, for example, quite different from place to place.

Because of the abundance of certain crops, West Indians have experimented with and have produced a variety of dishes. For example, bananas, the leading crop of Dominica, can be turned into fritters, bread, puddings, pancakes, ice cream, casseroles, omelettes, meringue, flambees, pies, banana celestes and even roasts.

The visitor while island hopping down the West Indies will realize that meals are not only influenced by geographical factors but by cultural differences as well. A meal composed of the seven requisites may include one or more dish which will reflect political influences. Meat dishes on Jamaica may include curried goat, while on Haiti stuffed guinea hen may be the main course and on Puerto Rico, roast pig will be the special of the day. Vegetables, more than likely, will be indigenous to the area - these may include dasheens, yams, sweet potatoes, tancias, pigeon peas, plantains. Fish is a favorite food in the area, and is prepared in numerous ways. It is boiled, fried, baked and Jamaica has its own escovitch fish dish; the flying fish is almost the national dish on Barbados. Turtle is considered a delicacy on most of the islands. Fruits in various styles form the base for most dessert dishes. These include bananas, coconuts, mangoes, soursops and several others.

Special dishes play an important role during holidays. For example, Christmas is incomplete in the United States Virgin Islands without "guavaberry", a native liquor made from a berry, syrup, spices, with an alcoholic base. On Dominica and several other islands the favorite Christmas drink is sorrel. Sweetbread, a yeast sort of fruit cake, is another Christmas delicacy in the islands.

At Easter, especially on Good Friday, fish dishes are served including gundi, made from herring, salmon or codfish. Again religion is seen as a great influence on the lives of West Indians since the practice of abstaining from meat on Good Friday and days of obligations is common practice.

In Puerto Rico the favorite holiday meat is barbecued pig (lechon asado) and the popular holiday desserts include: pasteles which is offered to singers as they serenade homes-pasteles de arroz or rum omelette. Two favorite beverages on most of the islands are maubi, a fermented drink, and ginger beer.

To the Europeans goes the credit of introducing sugar and its by-products, molasses and rum. Even the pirates have left their contributions on the art of West Indian cooking. Pirates were branded with the name "buccaneers" by the Europeans because of the way they cured the meat which they hunted by cooking it over slow open fires. Today we barbecue or charcoal broil meat, a modification of the buccaneers' technique.



From the Chinese and East Indians, many of the islands have learned to cook rice, curried dishes and hot sauces.

Finally, coffee, the end of all meals, was reportedly introduced into Europe around 1615, reached the West Indies during late seventeenth century and has remained an important item on shopping lists.

## A Century After

Considered a blessing by its advocates, slavery was finally abolished after a long and slow process. Introduced into the New World by the Portuguese and the Spaniards the practice subsequently proved to be such a lucrative business for the English, Dutch, French and other European nations that manumission was met with opposition and reluctance.

Furthermore, supporters of the trade claimed that the Africans were happier in the West Indies than in Africa since most of them who were sold as slaves were prisoners and would have eventually been killed. They were even considered more fortunate than poor whites in England who were victims of poverty and unemployment despite their Bill of Rights and the Magna Carta.

The Emancipation Bill in the British Colonies was passed on August 28, 1833, but freedom was granted gradually. One year after, house slaves were considered as freed men while field slaves were last to be released from bondage.

Children fared best of all since they were immediately granted liberty. On July 31, 1834, all slaves in the British colonies heard the words: "You are free". It is said there were mixed reactions - some prayed and sang hymns with great feeling yet others were jubilant and sang and danced. A momentous occasion for 715,000 West Indians now free people. In the French colonies, freedom was given in 1848. That same year after a serious uprising in St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, Governor Peter Von Scholten read his famous Emancipation Proclamation: "From this moment . . ."

The Dutch freed their slaves in 1863. Those in Puerto Rico were emancipated in 1873 while Cuba dissolved the system in 1886. An apprentice period bridged the gap between slavery and freedom. This process psychologically prepared both slave and master for the changes.

One hundred years have passed since emancipation. West Indians have traveled steadily up the ladder of progress and success. Through the years some islands have made progress while others stood still in their tracks. Such inertia may be attributed to the ratio of supply and demand and/or ineffective leadership.

The twentieth century has produced a new breed of West Indians far removed from the acquiescence of their progenitors. They know that slavery is still alive today in many forms. One only needs to read the newspapers to find that in Saudi Arabia slavery is alive; in India one is destined to remain a slave throughout life; Peru and Pakistan practice slavery. In our backyards, we find political

leaders who choose to keep their people poor and illiterate. Finally, if we take a close look within our community we observe other subtle forms of slavery. The West Indian's goal then is to be a man among men.

No longer oriented to saluting or nodding to the wealthy land owners, they understand and accept the mandate that while the Past is of historic significance, their time is the Present and they must be prepared to "DO IT" in the Future. This is why they are enrolled on college campuses at home or abroad; this is why they are attempting to perpetuate their culture through various forms of expression; this is why they question what to their minds seem to obstruct progress. Through the years they have overcome and now they are preparing to be in command.

*Concluding Exercises:*

*Composition: The following quote is taken from the Tannenbaums' Slave and Citizen, pp. 39-40:*

*"Without the Negro, European and American, life could not have been the same. Despite the cost of life, sorrow and broken bodies the Negro was the base of European colonization. It was the Negro who was the laborer; it was the Negro who filled every occupation, skilled and unskilled. They were cooks, laundresses, masons, nurses, skilled artisans."*

*There are several documents which protect the rights of the individual. Among these are the Bill of Rights, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of the United States constitution.*

*Exercise: Write a paper showing how members of minority groups can use the previously mentioned documents as protection against unfair practices.*

Appendix A

Courtesy of Mrs. Marva Browne for  
Project Introspection-Teachers Workshop  
St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

December 2, 1971

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Theme: Relating Local Foods to the Culture

Songs About Foods

Miss Marie Richards of Frederiksted, St. Croix is author and composer of the following songs entitled "Crucian Kalaloo", "Mauffay" and "Okra Fungi and Fish". These songs are caruso-styled.

Crucian Kalaloo

Yo' talk about yo' peas and rice  
Yo' like yo' fish an stew  
But dere's no dish so sweet  
and nice  
Like a Crucian Kalaloo

Wha ah we goin do  
Wid out a bowl ah kalaloo  
Don tell us eat no rice  
Kalaloo an rice aint nice

Some like ah dish ah good  
mauffay  
Wid plenty ah salt meat, too  
Wen we hungry, we put it away  
But we wan Kalaloo

CHORUS

O, tis good, we all like it,  
De babies like it, too,  
We eat ev'ry bit, it keep us  
fat  
Crucian Kalaloo

Mauffay

If you want to learn to cook  
Get a pencil and a book  
If you want to cook mauffay  
Listen good to what I say.

Mauffay that's the stuff  
Ah! we never can get enough  
strangers say  
Crucians like a good mauffay.

CHORUS

If you want to cook it right  
Soak the salt thing over  
night  
Put it on until he biles  
Season, stir he for awhile  
No forget the tomato them  
Make the Mauffay taste like  
ahem  
Stir, the flour pon the spot  
Mauffay done, take off the  
pot.

### Okra Fungi and Fish

Have you heard the news  
Santa Crucians got the blues  
The story goes like this  
We like okra fungi and fish

OPA came to town,  
Cornmeal was rationed down  
When you talk bout calamity  
That was flour scarcity

Cook it any style  
Stirred, fried, or biled  
Turn the fungi soft  
Ah! one will clean the plate  
          them off.

#### CHORUS

Okra Fungi and Fish  
What a dish  
Do you wish  
Okra Fungi and Fish  
Aint got not better dish  
          than this.

#### "The West Indian Weed Woman"

One day I met an old woman selling  
And I wanted something to eat  
I thought I was going to put a bit in her way  
But I take back when I meet  
I thought she had bananas, oranges or pears  
It 'twas nothing that I need  
For when I asked the old woman what she was selling  
          She said she was selling weeds.

She had her dress tied up over her waist  
And was wriggling down the street  
She had on a pair of old slaps on her feet  
And was wriggling down the street  
Just then she started to name the different weeds  
And I really was more than glad  
Although I can't remember all that she called  
These are a few she had:

Man tiabba, woman tiabba  
Tantan fall back and lemon grass  
Ninny root, gully root granny backbone  
Bitter payee, lime leaf and toyo  
Coolie bitters, corilah bush  
That ah the old time iron weed  
Sweet broom, sprout and wild daisies  
Sweet fate and even toyo.

She had bitter gomma, portogee bomba  
Conga Laura and twelve o'clock broom  
Sarsparilla, wild tomato, soursop leaf  
And Papa bitch weed  
Wild bush, wild cane, wild leaf, monkey liver  
That's bitterer than wild bay root  
Action stands and even monkey liver  
And all the rest you may need.

When I hear how much bush she had  
I was dumb I couldn't even talk  
She started to call from Capry Corner  
And never stop 'till she reached Orange Walk.  
The woman has me so surprised  
Taht I didn't know what to do  
That my girl came and give me  
A cuff in my eye and I didn't even know who was who.

Sweet broom, sweet fate, and lemon grass  
I hear them good for making tea  
And then I hear bed grass and wild daisy  
Is good to cool the body  
The woman's tongue was even lispig  
But she was calling out all the time  
She even had a little canawa eye  
And the other that left was blind.

She had pap bush, elder bush, black pepper bush  
Then soldier, corporal and carpadulla  
Fabian leaf, money bush, soldier posely  
Pumpkin blossom and even devil doer  
Demon congo, grass in galore  
Physic nut, and lily root  
In fact the only bush she didn't have  
Was the bush for the every day soup.

## Appendix B

In the West Indies the first governor who took possession of the island of St. Thomas on May 25, 1672 was:

Jorgen Iverson who was succeeded by Nicoloi Esmit, who received his appointment on September 10, 1679 and was desposed by Adolph Esmit, his brother who was to have been relieved by Jorgen Iversen, who again started out (for West Indies) in November 1682 on the ship Hafmanden (Merman) where he was killed by mutineers; whereupon the said Adolph Esmit was supplanted by: Gabriel Milan who was appointed in 1684 but because of bad conduct Gabriel Milan and Adolph Esmit were sent home as prisoners by Commissioner Michel Michelsen and (they) arrived here in October 1686 and meantime Christopher Heins was Vice Governor until March, 1688 when Adolph Esmit again arrived in St. Thomas and took command. Christopher Heins became Vice Governor and was succeeded by John Lorensen. In that year (1690) the lesseeship of St. Thomas began under Jorgen Thormohelen who installed Frans De La Vigne as governor of St. Thomas but John Lorentz remained in the meanwhile as vice governor and looked out for the Company's interest and remained as vice governor until February 19, 1702 when he died.\*

\*This is a direct quote reprinted from Westergaard's, The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule, 1671-1754 and is offered as data for among other things, the first five governors of St. Thomas during Company Rule.



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