

limited contact with their children. (vii) Slaves' African names were changed to Christian names.

**(E)  
Psychological**

(i) The whites in the British colonies constantly emphasized that the Negro was inferior to the white man and that African societies were uncivilized. (ii) Slaves were ridiculed as stupid, lazy and lacking in basic intelligence. The whites laughed at their culture; it was described as barbaric and crude. Slaves came to believe the white's racism and they accepted white cultural values.

**(F) Physical  
control**

When other forms of control failed, force was sometimes used. This could mean placing the slave in stocks (a wooden frame in which the slave's ankles were held as he sat exposed to the ridicule of others), beating the slave severely, cutting off his/her limbs or even killing the slave.

**Reasons slave  
laws were not  
always successful  
in controlling  
slaves**

The brutality of the plantation system never succeeded in crushing the spirit of the slaves, neither did the presence of slave laws always succeed in controlling their actions. This was so because: (i) Laws could not deny the humanity of slaves who objected to the unjust system that kept them bound. (ii) The harshness of the laws and of the system often created conditions for revolt. (iii) The slaves' strong, basic desire for freedom impelled them to ignore/violate the laws which denied them their freedom. (iv) Laws could restrain the slaves but they could not eliminate their acts of resistance, for example, running away. Therefore, runaway slaves like the Maroons of Jamaica successfully resisted the laws and, ultimately, forced the government to sign a treaty with them in 1739. (v) In some of the smaller territories, for example, Barbados, control of runaways was sometimes impossible when they ran off to a neighbouring island for refuge. (vi) In some townships, runaways were often provided with refuge, for example among the Maya in Belize. (vii) Slaves were able to run away and avoid recapture because it was not always easy to determine whether a Negro was a runaway slave or a free person. (viii) The punishment for running away was not always administered

because it was not always sensible, materially, for masters to mutilate, maim or amputate their slaves. (ix) Sometimes slaves ignored the laws, for example laws forbidding the holding of fiestas, banning the use of the drum and the gathering of slaves. (x) Literate slaves, like Samuel Sharpe in Jamaica, were conscious of debates in parliament concerning freedom and often felt that the planters were intent on withholding from them what was legally theirs and thus they were prepared to take action to force the authorities to act on their behalf.

**■ Slave Protest**

**Conditions of  
slavery that  
encouraged  
slave protest**

The conditions of slavery that encouraged slave protest action included the following: (i) The slave laws, especially as they related to the restriction of slave mobility. (ii) The difficulty of securing manumission. This encouraged slaves to protest by running away or resorting to acts of violence in their bid to be free. (iii) The harsh treatment meted out to slaves, for example the physical and verbal abuse suffered by domestic slaves at the hands of white women. (iv) Inadequate medical care which was provided for slaves, especially for pregnant and lactating mothers. (v) The constant threat of being raped by white men (which was faced by slave women). (vi) The objection to being used as prostitutes for the economic gain of the whites. (Some females ran away to escape this). (vii) The loss of dignity because of being punished in the presence of other slaves and the socio-psychological dehumanization that they suffered. (Some slaves ran away to escape punishment or in response to punishment for a misdeed.) (viii) The difficulties of maintaining family life even in the slave villages and the break up of families and relocation of family members through hiring and sale. (ix) Long periods of absence from family, for example, in the timber camps in Belize. (x) Depression arising from loneliness and homesickness for Africa. (xi) The difficult

nature of field and gang labour. (xii) The suppression of their cultural practices. (xiii) The reduction in food rations, especially during shortages, droughts, and wars, for example, in Berbice in 1763. (xiv) The enticement from Maroon communities that managed to defy the whites and retain their freedom.

**Other factors contributing to slave revolts/protest**

There were other factors that contributed to slave revolts. These included: (i) The tradition of autonomy among African cultural groups and especially among the newly-arrived ones, and the presence of slaves from traditional militaristic regimes like the Akan slaves who objected to enslavement. (ii) The inefficiency, especially in military matters, and general complacency of the whites. Added to this was their lack of vigilance which led them to neglect providing themselves with adequate protection in the form of militias or other peace-keeping forces which would have presented a show of force to the slaves. (iii) The presence, in territories like Jamaica, of a higher proportion of slaves who were born in Africa as free men and were enslaved as adults. They exhibited a greater tendency to revolt than slaves who were born into the system of slavery and socialized in it, as African-born were unable or unwilling to adjust to the conditions of slavery. (iv) Anger, frustration against injustice and the death of children influenced female slaves to run away. (v) The geographical nature of some territories, for example the mountainous interior of Jamaica with its many gullies, precipices and forests provided ideal hideouts from which slaves could engage in guerilla warfare. This assisted the Maroons in resisting capture and in establishing their independence. (vi) The impact of certain social and political forces also contributed to slave resistance. Governor Balcarres of Jamaica insisted that professional revolutionaries from Haiti, France and the United-States were largely responsible for instigating the Second Maroon War of 1795. The abolition movement also played its part in inciting the slaves to revolt. Slaves misinterpreted the debates they heard

**(A) Less extreme (passive) methods**

**(B) More extreme (active) methods**

being discussed among their masters and, in a few cases, the reports some had read in local or foreign newspapers. Many of them believed that the British Government had granted their freedom but their masters were withholding it from them.

## Forms of Slave Protest

Although slavery was rigorous and severe and the slave master had total domination over his slave, the slave was never completely subdued. The result was that slaves, male and female, in one form or another, expressed their resentment of slavery, sometimes in a covert, indirect and relatively mild manner, and at other times, in open revolt. There were two basic forms of resistance to slavery; one passive (less extreme) and the other violent (more extreme). Less extreme methods included: (i) Refusal to work under various pretences, for example illness. Some slaves injured themselves by re-opening old sores, or by allowing 'chigga worms' in their feet to remain there, thus making them limp. (ii) Frequent requests for permission to 'go a bush' so as to perform basic bodily functions. (iii) Pretending to be stupid. (iv) The use of 'sweet mouth' to flatter and play upon the vanity of the whites. (v) Cultural resistance, that is retention of languages, folklore, religious beliefs including obeah and Islam; music, customs, crafts, the stick fighting dance of the Lesser Antilles. (vi) Reconstitution of kinship networks i.e. re-establishing family ties. (vii) Development of Creole languages. (viii) Use of Christian religion for their own ends. (ix) Marronage by sea, for example, fleeing from Barbados to Dominica; and by land, for example, the Maroons of Jamaica and the Bush Negroes of Surinam. (x) 'Going slow' in the fields. (xi) Lying and insolence. (xii) Suicide.

The more extreme methods used were: (xiii) Industrial sabotage, that is (a) arson / burning of the fields (b) killing of livestock (c) destruction of carts, mills, machinery, uten-

sils (xiv) Rebellion or revolt (xv) Murdering of whites and of other slaves to deprive the master of valuable property.

**Other methods  
used by female  
slaves**

Female slaves used many of the above-mentioned methods and they also used other methods peculiar to them as women, for example: (i) They used periods of child bearing to do the minimum of work and extract the maximum of concessions from their masters. (ii) They took full advantage of their menstrual processes for absenting themselves from work. (iii) They prolonged the period they spent as nursing mothers. A slave mother with a suckling infant was, by law, given extra food allowances, and was allowed to go to work an hour later and leave an hour earlier than other slaves. She took her baby to the field, placed him/her under the trees where he/she was looked after by an elderly woman, a 'nana'. The mother took regular intervals off from her work to feed the baby. Many women would prolong breast-feeding for as long as possible, even up to two years or more. (iv) They committed abortion. (v) They committed infanticide. (vi) Many women showed little fear of their superiors. They did not hesitate to answer back, they argued with the whites, using their tongue as an instrument of attack and defence. Their 'quarrelsomeness' was a nuisance to those who were forced to tolerate them. Many of them were guilty of using violent, abusive, threatening, indecent, insulting language to those in authority. (vii) They made up satirical songs which they used to mock the whites (including some white preachers whom they regarded as hypocrites, for they claimed that while these preachers pretended that their mission was to save the souls of the blacks, they were winking at the black girls.) The slaves often sang these songs of mockery loudly and without fear as they worked in the field. (viii) They appealed to the courts or councils of protection when they felt that their masters were depriving them of their few legal rights for example: (a) withholding the minimum amount of clothing and food allowance which they should be given (b) depriving them of holidays and time off from work during

**How masters  
deprived female  
slaves of their  
legal rights**

pregnancy (c) extending their working hours (d) punishing them excessively. When the courts regarded their complaints as sound, which was on rare occasions, they received some redress for their wrongs. In April 1823, for example, some slaves, including fifteen women, from Dallas Castle plantation in Portland, Jamaica, complained to the magistrate about the severe and cruel treatment of the overseer, Mr. John Stephens. Investigations made by the court revealed that two of the female slaves were given more flogging than was allowed by the Consolidated Slave Law. Stephens was fined twenty pounds for each offence, by the court. Although it was more likely that they would receive punishment rather than justice for daring to lodge a complaint, they were prepared to take the risk for the satisfaction of knowing that they had forced owners and overseers to appear in court to answer for their actions, and they themselves would be absent from work while the proceedings took place. (ix) By manipulating sexual relationships with white plantation officers, they sought to remove themselves as far as possible from the brutal lifestyle associated with field labour. They also cultivated intimate social relations with wives of plantation personnel in order to ensure favoured treatment within the white household. This careful cultivation of social relations with whites created the opportunity for these slaves to petition their masters for manumission. (x) Confiscation of property; for example, huckster slaves who sold goods on their owner's behalf often vanished with goods and money proceeds. (xi) The slave 'nannies' ill-treated the masters' babies. (xii) The domestic slaves deliberately over-starched the whites' clothes, making them stiff and uncomfortable. (xiii) The washerwomen used too much soap or blue on the clothes. (xiv) They harboured runaway slaves in defiance of the wishes of the owners.

(i) Female slaves who did not wish to reproduce the plantation's labour force used abortion as a form of resistance to slavery. (ii) Some slave owners penalized women for

**Reasons slave women deliberately tried to miscarry/ abort their babies**

becoming pregnant because of the loss of labour during their period of confinement, and the reduction of their resale price. (iii) Some slave women were impregnated by whites who had raped them and they did not want to carry the babies of men who had raped them. (iv) Pregnant women were not spared the whip when they broke the plantation rules, and there was always the strong possibility that slave women would have a miscarriage anyway. (v) Pregnant slaves had to continue to work until just before they gave birth, and some slave women may not have felt able to cope with that situation. (vi) Slave owners did not provide adequate diets for pregnant slaves. (vii) Before the 1807 abolition of the slave trade, not much attention was given to the care of infants, so infant mortality rate was high. Some slave women may not have wanted to have a baby only to see him/her die in infancy. (viii) Slavery did not always encourage family life and some women would not have felt that they were able to raise children on their own, without the help of the fathers. (ix) Slave mothers may not have wanted to endure the pain of separation from their children through sale and relocation. (x) Slave mothers may not have wanted to have their children subjected to the horrors of slavery. (xi) Some slave mothers thought that they were too young to bother with babies. (xii) Some women thought that it was difficult to care for babies. (xiii) Those slave women who planned to run away felt that it would be difficult/impossible to do so if they had children.

By protesting against their enslavement, female slaves managed to make others conscious of their presence. The result was that: (i) They earned concessions (ii) Some of them had their status changed when they were punished for their protest by being demoted from the Great House to the field. (iii) Protesters earned the respect of their masters and fellow slaves. (iv) Many were severely punished, others were put to death. (v) Many were victimized. (vi) Some obtained their freedom.

**Effects of protest on the lives of female slaves**

**Reasons slaves run away**

**Effects of running away on slave owners**

**Establishment of Maroon settlements**

## Running Away

See page 13 – ‘Conditions of slavery that encouraged slave protest.’

Running away or ‘pulling foot’, to use the jargon of the slaves, was very common throughout the period of slavery. Male slaves tended to run away far more than females because they were better able to bear the ‘ups and downs’ of such an undertaking.

Slave owners were seriously affected when their slaves ran away, for example, (i) they suffered a loss of labour. (ii) They lost the money they had invested in the purchase of the slave. (iii) They had to find funds to purchase replacements for those who had fled. (iv) They had to bear significant cost if they attempted to recover those who had fled; for example they had to pay for: (a) advertisements in the press (b) expeditions / search parties to track down the fugitive(s) (c) rewards to informants and captors. (v) They suffered losses as a result of attacks on their plantations by fugitives. Some stole food, tools and other slaves whom they encouraged to escape with them. (vi) Plantation operations were sometimes seriously disrupted when those who fled were specialist slaves upon whom key operations were dependent. (vii) Runaway slaves sometimes encouraged and supported slave rebellions and so their presence increased the planters’ feeling of insecurity. (viii) Some fugitives attacked and robbed whites on highways and so the whites lived in constant fear for their lives.

## The Maroons of Jamaica

The word ‘Maroon’, in Jamaica, came to mean a fugitive slave, one whose spirit could not be broken by man. When the English invaded and captured Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655, the Spaniards freed their slaves and left

them behind in the hilly interior to harass the English with irregular warfare until it was possible to collect an army and return to re-conquer the island. These freed slaves, along with others who had escaped from the Spanish, became the core of the Maroons. The most prominent of their leaders were Juan Lubolo (later called Juan de Bolas by the British) and Juan de Serras. The British sought to win over these leaders. They succeeded in coming to terms with Juan Lubolo who helped to defeat the Spanish.

### Juan Lubolo

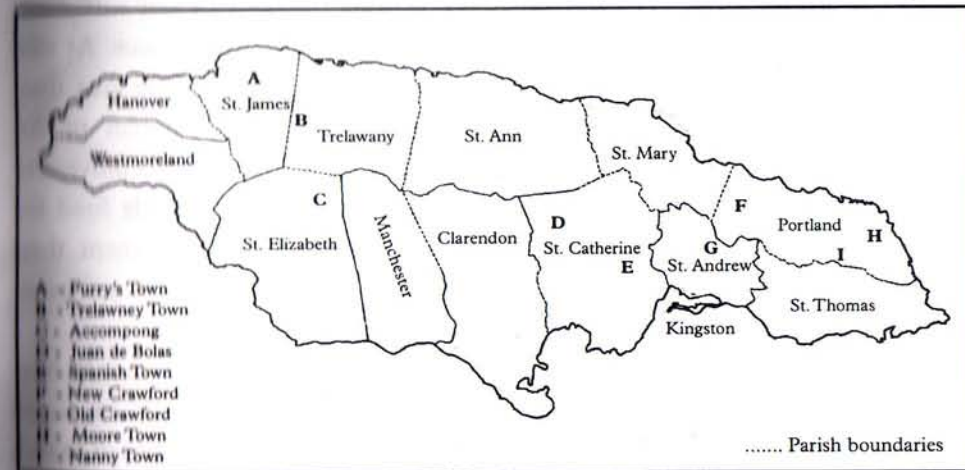
In 1663, when the civilian government was first established under the British, Lubolo (now called Juan de Bolas) and his people were granted the full rights of citizenship by the British and he was made a magistrate and a colonel of a black regiment of the militia. In coming to terms with the British, Lubolo agreed to turn against his fellow Africans who refused to follow his example. He was later killed when he fell into an ambush while on a mission to exterminate a band of old associates.

### Juan de Serras

Juan de Serras rejected any offer to come to terms with the British and many years after Juan de Bolas' death, he was still at large and unrepentant, striking hard blows at the increasing British settlements. Ultimately, he and his people were declared outlaws and a reward was offered to anyone who killed him or his second in command, but it was all in vain. When the British began to establish their plantations and to bring in slaves, many of the slaves fled from the plantations. By the 1670's, some of these began to join Juan de Serras and his people, thus the Maroon movement that was to influence the development of Jamaica had begun. Juan de Serras stands out as the father-figure of the movement.

The Maroons established communities primarily in the hilly country of eastern, central and western Jamaica. By the 1730's, Maroon settlements were established at Trelawney Town, Accompong, Crawford Town and Nanny Town. Strong Maroon communities developed as a result of the following factors: (i) The effective leadership provided by

### Factors which helped development of Maroon communities



The Maroons of Jamaica

people like the great-hearted Cudjoe, captain of the Trelawney Town Maroons and Nanny, leader of Nanny Town up in the Blue Mountains. She fought with the kind of courage and stubbornness that shocked their enemies. (ii) The topography of Jamaica with its dense forests, karst limestone features, caves and cockpits which provided ideal hiding places and assisted their movement. Camouflaged with leaves and branches, and using trees, rocks and the rugged terrain as cover, they ambushed and repeatedly defeated the troops that were sent against them. (iii) They set traps in the way of pursuing enemies and stationed look-outs at strategic points near their settlements and camps. They also perfected a signalling system with the use of cow horns called *abengs*, which could be heard for miles. Messages were conveyed by a series of code notes blown on the *abeng*. They were also able to communicate over long distances with the drum and with conch shell. (iv) They were expert trackers and skilled marksmen. They practised their techniques of forest warfare and tracking learned from Africa. (v) They were effective users of the bow, lance, machete and firearms that they stole from the whites. Many of them were hunters and cowboys, for an important part of the economy of Spanish Jamaica was the breeding and hunting of livestock. They were strong, immune to inclement weather and rough

country and they were very confident and self-sufficient. (vi) They planted provisions for their subsistence. At one time, the Maroons in Lubolo's settlement in the area that, today, is known as Lluidas Vale in the parish of St. Catherine, had about two hundred acres under cultivation. The crops that were cultivated helped to provide food for their resistance movement. They could supplement their provisions with meat from the wild cattle and hogs still available in the mountains.

The colonial government often brought pressure to bear on the Maroons, for example on Cudjoe in 1734, in an attempt to defeat him and his followers. A number of search parties with hunting dogs were charged with the job of finding and destroying the provision grounds and camps of the Maroons. (vii) The Maroons' knowledge of the countryside helped them to elude these search parties and avoid defeat. (viii) When food grew scarce because of being pushed from their settlements by forces advancing against them, or at other times when they felt the need to move, they were able to raid, successfully, plantations and slave provision grounds and then retreat to their hideouts. (ix) From time to time, they were joined by other runaway slaves and rebels.

From their arrival in the island, the English saw the Africans as the most aggressive and dangerous element of opposition. (i) British soldiers rambling carelessly through the southern plains in search of food would suddenly find themselves ambushed. One of the clauses included in the 1655 terms of surrender by the British said that all the slaves and Negroes were to appear on the savanna near the town, Villa de la Vega, now called Spanish Town, on the 26th of May, when General Venables would inform them about the favours that would be extended to them with regard to their freedom. (ii) Most of them ignored the treaty and took to the plains of Clarendon and St. Catherine to resist the invaders. (iii) They were the sworn enemies of the British. A period of fighting between them, known as the First Maroon

Relationship  
with the  
English

War, started in 1690 following a slave uprising on Sutton's estate in Clarendon. The fighting involved between three and four hundred slaves. This war ended with the signing of a treaty on March 1, 1739. (iv) The treaty brought to an end nearly eighty years of hostilities and guaranteed freedom for the Maroons in the form of semi-independent communities. In partial fulfillment of one of the terms of the 1739 treaty, the Scotts Hall Maroons joined forces with British militiamen and sailors from warships to crush the 1760 Tacky Revolt in St. Mary. (v) There was a kind of uneasy peace with the English after 1739. In 1754, an insurrection broke out in Crawford Town. Another period of fighting known as the Second Maroon War broke out in Trelawney Town in 1795.

The First Maroon war was fought because of the following reasons: (i) Slaves disliked the conditions of slavery and so they wanted their freedom. (ii) They wanted control over their own lives; they wanted to own land and to cultivate it themselves, rather than to work on plantations for slave masters. (iii) Slaves who had established their own freedom, fought to retain it, or to free their own kin. (iv) They were protesting against the dominant white power in the island, they wanted to end slavery and the plantation system.

In 1795 the Second Maroon War broke out when the Trelawney Maroons took up arms against the colonial government to: (v) protest wrongs and indignities that they claimed they had suffered at the hands of the authorities. In particular, the authorities had allowed two Maroons, alleged to have stolen pigs from a white farmer, to be publicly whipped and jeered by slaves. The Maroons objected to the indignity of being publicly whipped in the presence of felons and recaptured slaves, many of whom they had helped to bring in. This was an intolerable humiliation. (vi) The Maroons were angered by the removal of their favourite superintendent, James, and they wanted him back. They disliked the white superintendent, Captain Craskell, who had

Reasons  
Maroons  
fought against  
the English

The Second  
Maroon War,  
1795

been recently stationed in their settlement. (vii) They were dissatisfied with the land given to them in the 1739 treaty. It was rocky and inadequate. (viii) Angered by Captain Craskell's action that had humiliated them, the Maroons ordered that he should leave their settlement forthwith. The Earl of Balcarres, the newly-arrived governor and himself a soldier, believed in strong measures especially because he was certain that the real origin of the unrest was connected with the current St. Domingue Revolution. He declared martial law and called out troops against the Maroons and they fought back.

### **1739 Treaty Between the British and the Maroons**

By 1739, when it seemed obvious that the authorities could not defeat the Maroons, influential colonists urged Governor Edward Trelawney to make peace with them. A treaty was signed with Cudjoe on March 1, 1739, under a large cotton tree at the entrance to Petty River Bottom which lay near to the entrance to the Cockpit Country. On June 23 of the same year, Quao, who had retreated into the trackless forests of Portland where he led the Windward Maroons, signed a similar treaty.

Under the terms of the treaty, the Maroons gained benefits including the following: (i) Full freedom (ii) 1500 acres / 600 hectares of land lying between Trelawney Town and the Cockpits (iii) the right to hunt wild pigs anywhere except within a three-mile limit of towns and plantations (iv) They could choose their own leaders. Cudjoe was appointed Chief Commander and his successors named in order, beginning with Accompong and Johnny. The chief was empowered to inflict any punishment he might think proper for crimes committed by his people, except for those requiring the death penalty. Such cases were to be handed over to a justice of the peace. (v) They could make their own

**Benefits of  
treaty for the  
Maroons**

laws and they could keep their firearms. (vi) Two white men, named by the governor, were to live permanently with the Maroons in order to maintain friendly contact between them and the colonists. (vii) They could plant their crops and they could sell in the island's markets if they had a licence. (viii) They could rear cattle. (ix) They were guaranteed freedom from war after many exhausting years of fighting. (x) A decrease of the mortality rate among them with the end of open conflict. (xi) The right to retain their African cultural practices. After the Second Maroon War (xii) Maroon villages were allowed to co-exist with the plantations.

The Maroons had certain obligations under the treaty from which the whites were expected to benefit, for example: (i) They were to cease fighting. (ii) They were to harbour no more runaway slaves, but instead, they were to help to capture them. (iii) They were to stop raiding the plantations. (iv) They were to apply for a license to sell goods outside of their territory. (v) They were to help to suppress internal uprisings and to ward off foreign invasions.

The English were exhausted after several years of conflict. (i) They hoped to enjoy peace, to ensure the profitable development of the plantations that the Maroons had often raided. (ii) They wanted to expand the frontiers of the plantations that the Maroons had hitherto prevented. (iii) They wanted the Maroons to stop accepting runaway slaves who were needed for work on the plantations. (iv) They wanted the Maroons to assist them in suppressing slave rebellions and to ward off external attacks.

In addition to the benefits that the British expected to gain, they agreed to sign the treaty because of the following reasons: (i) They were unable to defeat the Maroons. (ii) They were suffering significant losses because of the destruction of their property by the Maroons. Their profits were seriously affected by these acts of destruction. (iii) They had to bear the expense of providing troops and equipment to fight the Maroons. (iv) The Maroons had

**Obligations of  
Maroons under  
the treaty**

**Benefits which  
the English  
expected from  
the treaty**

**Other reasons  
the British  
agreed to the  
treaty**

killed many of the whites and so the whites felt very insecure.

The Maroons had proven to be the “thorns in the sides of the English” that Major-General Robert Sedgewick had predicted in 1656. The Europeans were unable to defeat them because: (i) The Maroons outnumbered them. (ii) The location of the Maroons in the mountainous and forested interior of the island, including the almost impenetrable cockpit country and their use of sentries to inform them of imminent danger, made it almost impossible to surprise them. An approaching force was usually spotted several hours before it arrived and so the Maroons had ample time to prepare for confrontation or to go into hiding. It was also easy to defend this kind of location. (iii) The Maroons avoided open conflict, preferring to disguise themselves from head to foot with leaves and, cunningly concealed, they attacked from ambush. This was more effective than the conventional warfare practised by the troops. (iv) They launched surprise attacks against their enemies. The surprise, coupled with the accuracy of their shooting, brought them quick victory. (v) The European troops were unaccustomed to the territory, the climate and the method of warfare and so they suffered heavily in their clashes with the Maroons. (vi) The Maroons knew the territory well and were better acclimatized than the Europeans. (vii) The Maroons fought with courage and skill and were ably led by brave and skillful people like Cudjoe and Nanny. (viii) They cultivated crops and they hunted to sustain themselves during wartime, and if pushed beyond the regions of their ‘grounds’, they raided plantations and slaves’ provision grounds to provide themselves with food.

Up to 1738, the Maroons and the plantation slaves had maintained a good relationship demonstrated in the following ways: (i) Maroons often raided the plantations and carried off family members and friends. (ii) Maroons and plantation slaves often plotted together against the whites. (iii) Maroons

**Reasons  
Europeans  
could not  
defeat  
Maroons**

**Relationship  
between  
Maroons and  
plantation  
slaves**

carried out raids against the whites to avenge the abuse meted out to slaves. (iv) Maroons encouraged, and provided refuge for slaves who ran away from the plantations.

The slaves who longed for their freedom admired those who managed to secure freedom and so they saw the Maroons as heroes. They saw the Maroons as a great challenge to the authority of the whites and they admired their efforts to destroy the slave system.

Slaves wanted to join the Maroons for many reasons including the following: (i) to be free from bondage, and to be able to enjoy the kind of life that the Maroons lived. (ii) to take their revenge on the planters for depriving them of their freedom, and for the harsh treatment meted out to them. (iii) to undermine the system of slavery. (iv) to be able to practise their culture freely and to preserve it.

The First Maroon War eventually led to confrontation between the Maroons and the slaves. This affected their relationship negatively. During the war, some slaves allowed themselves to be used in fighting units against the Maroons, in the hope of obtaining freedom as reward. The peace treaties which guaranteed the freedom of the Maroons obliged them to hunt and destroy slaves who had broken out for freedom, and to return those who fell into their hands.

## **The Bush Negroes of Surinam**

These were slaves who had escaped from the plantations and established themselves in the forests of the interior. The settlements grew by natural increase as well as by other slaves escaping and joining those already in the villages.

Among the different groups of Bush negroes were the Aluku (ii) Djuka (iii) Kwinti (iv) Matawai (v) Paramaka (vi) Saramaka.

Common features of Bush Negro settlements were as follows: (i) The Bush Negroes lived in villages that were

**Slaves' view of  
Maroons**

**Reasons slaves  
wanted to join  
the Maroons**

**Bush Negro  
groups**

**Features of  
villages**



located in the thick forests of the interior that could only be penetrated by the rivers. Further into the interior, these rivers had rapids. It was beyond the rapids where they felt safe that they established themselves. (ii) They cleared sections of the land in a circle; they built their dwellings in the middle and planted their crops around it. The tallest plants, for example the banana, were at the outside of the circle, and the lowest growing crops were nearest to the huts. This helped to hide their village as well as provide them with food. (iii) Permanent settlements were surrounded by a moat hidden by grass and weeds, with sharp stakes in the bottom and sides below water level. False tracks led away from the villages to confuse the enemy. (iv) They were organized under leaders in a quasi-military life, with the lowest rank performing the menial tasks of planting the crops and raiding and robbing the plantations by nights. (v) Their economy was based on hunting, fishing, farming and craftwork.

### Way of life of the Bush Negroes

#### Food

They planted crops such as yam, banana/plantain, eddoe and rice and they hunted game in the forest. They used material that was readily available in the forest to construct their huts. These were built in circular clearings from wooden posts, stones and thatch.

#### Housing

#### Social Organization

They were organized in villages where there were usually more men than women. They practised matrilineal descent.

#### Political Organization

They had a quasi-military organization with a hierarchy of leaders at the top and with the lowest rank performing the most menial tasks. They were semi-autonomous and they signed treaties with the Dutch government in the 1760's. The government gave its approval of a paramount chief and a series of headmen who had both political and religious roles.

#### Religious belief

They retained their African beliefs in gods and spirits, though these were creolized by their plantation experience.

#### Reasons Dutch were forced to sign treaty with Bush Negroes

The Bush Negroes harassed the planters by their constant raids on the plantations, and they were a constant danger to them. Several expeditions sent after them failed to crush them. The Dutch authorities were eventually forced to sign treaties in 1761 and 1767 with the two main groups of Bush Negroes for the following reasons: (i) It was very costly to the Mother Country to send expeditions after the Bush Negroes. (ii) Planters lived in fear because of the danger they faced from the Bush Negroes. (iii) The Bush Negroes had killed many settlers. (iv) Their presence encouraged other enslaved Africans to run away from the plantations, as slaves whom the Europeans took with them on expeditions against the Bush Negroes learned of pathways through the bush. (v) Many soldiers lost their lives in expeditions against the Bush Negroes. (vi) The Dutch were unable to defeat them and they were losing prestige in the minds of the slaves.

#### Rights and obligations under the treaty

The Bush Negroes obtained the following rights under the treaty. (i) Freedom from slavery. (ii) The right to occupy the interior as long as they did not stir up slave revolts or raid plantations. (iii) A Dutch official known as a 'Post-Holder' was to live in the village of each Bush Negro chief. (iv) They were to return any runaway slaves. (v) They were not to approach any nearer to the European settlements than a two-day journey by foot, or ten hours by boat.

#### Factors which enabled Bush Negroes to retain their freedom

The Bush Negroes successfully eluded the Europeans and were able to retain their freedom because of the following: (i) Their geographical location. This was very difficult terrain for the whites to penetrate. (ii) Their settlement pattern. They settled in small compact communities scattered over a wide area. (iii) Their aggressiveness that created fear in the minds of the whites. (iv) Moats, with protective stakes, around the villages trapped the unsuspecting and protected the villagers. (v) The political structure with their semi-military organization provided leaders to effect planned strategies. (vi) The failure of the strategies used by the Dutch to try to defeat them.

### Similarities between Bush Negroes and Maroons

Bush Negroes and Maroons shared a number of similarities. (i) Both groups were started and maintained by runaway slaves. (ii) They were both hostile to the white masters; they constantly raided plantations and they made life difficult and unpleasant for the whites. (iii) They located their settlements in the remote sections of their territories. (iv) The whites found it impossible to defeat them. (v) They both signed treaties with the whites.

### Differences between Bush Negroes and Maroons

Some of the differences between Bush Negroes and Maroons were as follows: (i) Maroons began to establish themselves away from the plantation from the early days of Spanish colonization and so were earlier settlers to the region than the Bush Negroes. (ii) The Bush Negroes tended to retain more of their African customs than the Maroons because many of them deserted the plantations soon after their arrival. (iii) The social distinctions among the Bush Negroes were more marked than they were among the Maroons. (iv) They used different defence strategies. The Maroons camouflaged themselves to look like trees, while the Bush Negroes used false paths leading away from their villages and moats surrounding the villages. (v) The location of their settlements was different. The Maroons lived in the hilly areas and the Bush Negroes lived beyond the rapids in the forests.

### Measures used to deal with rebellious/runaway slaves

The whites always dreaded slave resistance and so they adopted strict measures to discourage or to deal with any act of resistance. The measures included the following: (i) The declaration of martial law and the mobilization of the local militia and the European troops. Planters in Jamaica and Surinam used these troops to track down Maroons. (ii) The mobilization of (a) Indians (b) slaves (c) free Negroes and mulattoes. Mosquito Coast Indians who were reputed to be good at tracking, as well as free Negroes and Mulattoes were

used in the fight against the Maroons in Jamaica. Even some slaves allowed themselves to be used in fighting units against the Maroons with the hope of obtaining freedom as a reward. In 1795, the Dutch managed to bring under control some Bush Negroes who had been raiding European plantations in West Demerara only after a large party of soldiers, slaves and Indians were used against them. (iii) The importation of tracker dogs (blood hounds) from Cuba to be used against the Maroons during the Second Maroon War. (iv) The signing of treaties and the granting of concessions to the Maroons. (v) The offering of rewards for the capture and return of runaways. (vi) Severe punishment (public), including: (a) flogging (b) mutilation (c) being put in the stocks (d) deportation (e) death, all awaited rebellious slaves who were captured.

### Slave Rebellions

Most of the revolts were reportedly instigated and carried out by African-born rather than Creole slaves. This was so because: (i) Among the African-born slaves were those from highly militaristic societies such as the Akan who were not prepared to accept enslavement. These slaves were skilled in forest warfare and guerilla type tactics and so, they used these skills in their bid for freedom. (ii) In territories like Jamaica, St. Domingue, Surinam and Berbice, the African-born population vastly outnumbered the Creoles, and so the majority group took the initiative to try to free themselves. (iii) Many of the African-born slaves in the Caribbean colonies knew freedom in Africa, and enjoyed the conditions of freedom in their native land. They resented the loss of this freedom, and so were determined to regain what they had lost. (iv) The obeahmen, who were often African-born, were community leaders among the slaves, and as a result, were in the forefront of the planning and execution of revolts. They were able to convince the

### Reasons African-born rather than Creoles insti- gated and carried out most revolts

African-born slaves that the ointment and potions administered before the revolts would make them immune to the weapons or invisible to the whites. This gave them the confidence that they would succeed against the whites, and be able to return to Africa, and they believed that if they died in battle, their spirits would return to their homeland. (v) The Creole slaves were often given lighter work than the African-born slaves and since these Creoles knew nothing other than slavery, they tended to be more content with their lot. (vi) The African-born individuals tended to maintain much of their cultural heritage while resisting the cultural imperialism of the European in every way, and so active resistance to their enslavement was an integral part of their philosophy of life.

The obeah man, as a leader in the slave community, was often instrumental in: (i) planning slave revolts (ii) administering the oath of secrecy (iii) distributing fetishes which he assured the slaves would make them immune to the bullets of the whites (iv) communicating secret messages to the rebels.

### ■ The Berbice Rebellion, 1763

In 1763, slaves in the Dutch colony of Berbice revolted. Among the reasons given for the outbreak of the revolt were the following: (i) The apathy of the whites. Slaves were underfed because their owners did not import enough supplies, and the planters did not grow enough provision on the estates. (ii) The desire for revenge because of harsh treatment and injustice. The estates were often left in the hands of cruel overseers who did not care about the welfare of the slaves. (iii) The desire for permanent freedom. (iv) The inspiration provided by a Maroon revolt in Surinam in 1762.

The revolt started on 23rd February 1763 at a plantation on the Canje River. By March, the rebellion had spread to

the Berbice River, and Cuffy/Coffy, the leader of the slaves, began to call himself governor of the slaves. The slaves were successful during the initial stage of the revolt because of the following reasons: (i) The quality of the leadership. The rebellion was initially well organized under the leadership of Cuffy (Coffy/Kofi), Akara and Atta, and there was cooperation between the Akan slave rebels and the Congolese/Kongolese and Angolans (Central Africans). (ii) The discipline and the military organization of the rebels were at first fairly strong, and so they were able to take control of almost the entire colony, leaving the whites in control of only the swampy and malaria-infested area at the mouth of the Canje River. (iii) The slave rebels outnumbered the whites. (iv) Many of the slaves in the colony were newly imported Africans who had not been socialized into the slave system, and so were anxious to opt out of it. (v) The rebellion took the whites by surprise. (vi) The planters were too complacent; forts were in a dilapidated condition, they were unable to stand up to any strong attack, and there were only twelve soldiers available to provide defence for the colony. (vii) The rebels were able to seize some arms and ammunition from some estates. (viii) A dysentery epidemic that had broken out between 1756 and 1765, had severely affected the whites, including the tiny armed force. They were weakened by disease and a shortage of food. (ix) There was disunity among the whites. Soon after the outbreak of the revolt, the whites panicked and many of them fled. They refused to go to the help of others who were under siege. The governor temporarily lost control of the situation, and he had to put up with instances of insubordination from all classes of whites. (x) The whites eventually forced the governor, Van Hoogenheim, to agree that the colony should be evacuated. (xi) Help from overseas was slow in coming. The first contingent of one hundred troops came from Surinam on a British ship in April. (xii) Many Amerindians on whom the whites had been depending for help had fled.

**The Obeah man's role in rebellions**

**Reasons for outbreak**

**Reasons for initial success**

**Reasons for  
failure of  
rebellion**

In the end Cuffy (Coffy/Kofi) lost the revolt because of the following reasons: (i) He began to 'play politics' by writing letters to the governor suggesting that they should divide the colony. He lost valuable time during this period of negotiation, and the governor managed to fool Cuffy into believing that his letters were being taken seriously, while he was simply stalling him until reinforcements arrived. (ii) While 'playing for time', the governor received help from outside Berbice. He received military assistance including six hundred men and six transport vessels from Europe; as well as assistance from Barbados and from nearby Demerara, courtesy of Governor Van Gravesande who helped to organize a counter attack. The one hundred troops from Surinam helped the governor to take over a plantation on the Berbice River and turn it into a military stronghold from which to defeat the rebels. (iii) The troops had superior weapons to those of the slaves, and they were better trained and were more skillful in warfare. (iv) The governor also got help from the Amerindians who assisted the Dutch troops. (v) After the initial successes, some of the slaves were unwilling to accept the discipline and hard work that Cuffy realized was necessary for the new black colony to succeed. Some turned to looting and pleasure instead of securing their position. (vi) A shortage of food led to discontent among the rebels. (vii) Some of the Creole slaves who had been coerced into joining the rebel ranks, willingly surrendered to the whites. (viii) A serious division of opinion emerged within the leadership ranks of the rebels. Cuffy preferred to negotiate with the whites, while Akara, Cuffy's second-in-command, preferred a more radical course in expelling the whites. (ix) Power struggle developed among the leaders. Cuffy faced a challenge for the leadership of the rebels from Atta, an extremist, and one of his deputies. This diverted Cuffy's attention from the struggle. (x) Cuffy was also troubled by other serious divisions within his own ranks, between the Congolese and Akan slaves, as well as between

African-born slaves and Creoles. (xi) In May, Cuffy killed his close followers and then committed suicide. This was a severe setback for the rebel slaves. (xii) Atta replaced Cuffy as the leader of the rebels, and he kept up the resistance movement, but he was later ambushed and captured by Akara. (xiii) In the end, the Europeans and their Amerindian allies proved to be too much for the slaves. In December 1763, a large force that arrived by ship travelling up the Berbice River, and a force from Upper Demerara attacked the slaves simultaneously. Most of the slaves ran away into the forests, and the others were hunted down and killed.

**Reasons Cuffy  
lost the leader-  
ship of the  
revolt**

Cuffy lost the leadership of the revolt because of the following reasons: (i) He was too accommodating. He was willing to facilitate Governor Van Hoogenheim who asked him to wait two months for a reply from Holland, to a letter he had written. He did not realize that the governor was merely delaying him in order to get reinforcements. (ii) Cuffy's procrastination and his failure to capitalize on the military advantage which he had at the start of the revolt. (iii) Divisions among the slaves robbed him of the support of everyone. (iv) There was the challenge to his leadership by younger militants like Atta.

**Reasons Cuffy  
was regarded  
as leader of  
major slave  
revolt in  
Berbice**

Cuffy was regarded as the leader of the major slave revolt in Berbice because of the following reasons: (i) He seemed to have been the one who led the other slaves to seize plantations along the Canje River in February 1763. (ii) Cuffy called himself governor of the slaves and the other slaves seemed to have acknowledged his leadership. (iii) He was the one who announced his intention to rule Berbice after the revolt that he hoped would have succeeded. (iv) He took the leadership role in writing to the governor suggesting that they should divide the colony, with the whites taking the coast and the blacks taking the interior. (v) After Governor Van Gravesande had started to get reinforcements, and had begun to advance against the slaves, Cuffy was the one who tried to regain the upper hand by leading an attack on Van

Hoogenheim's headquarters at Dageraad. (vi) Cuffy sought to ensure the preservation of the plantation-based economy and plantation grounds even during the revolt, by putting groups of Africans to work in the fields. (vii) Both slaves and whites regarded Cuffy as the mastermind behind the revolt. (viii) Cuffy sent other slaves on missions to spread the revolt throughout British Guiana in 1763. (ix) No other slave was acknowledged as leader during the revolt. Other ringleaders like Akara were simply called 'deputies'. (x) It was Cuffy's leadership that was challenged by one of his 'deputies', in the end.

### The Haitian Revolution, 1791-1804

In 1695, the Treaty of Ryswick between France and Spain gave the French a legal right to the western part of Hispaniola, which was called Saint Domingue.

In 1734, the colonists began to cultivate coffee. By 1788, there were 3,000 coffee plantations, 800 sugar plantations, nearly 800 cotton, and 2,950 indigo plantations. The colony supplied half of Europe with tropical produce. It was the world's premier sugar producer. The French, like every other government in those days, saw the colonies as existing exclusively for the profit of the metropolis (mother country). The government introduced a system called the 'Exclusive'. Under this system, whatever manufactured goods the colonists needed, they were compelled to buy from France. The goods were to be transported only in French ships. The raw sugar produced in the colonies was to be refined in France, and the French imposed heavy duties on refined sugar from the colonies.

Prior to 1789, Saint Domingue was made up of different classes. They included the following: (i) The first class included (a) the planters, (b) the top royal officials, that is, civil and military officers. These were the '*grand blancs*'. (ii) The next group consisted of the merchants and profession-

**Economic features of Saint Domingue before 1789**

**Social features before 1789**

al men who hated the planters. (iii) The lowest group of whites, the '*petit blancs*', included artisans, shopkeepers and bookkeepers. These three groups of whites numbered 35,000. (iv) Below them were the mulattoes/ free coloureds and the free Negroes numbering about 28,000. They possessed one third of the real estate, and one third of the personal property. They were denied social and political equality with the whites. Many of them were educated, and they were greatly resented by the '*petit blancs*'. Restrictive laws of 1776 robbed them of many privileges, for example (a) the law forbade them to hold public office or any legal position, or to be officers in the militia. (b) They were not allowed to carry firearms. (c) They had to wear different clothes from the whites. (v) At the bottom of the social ladder were the 450,000 slaves. They were divided according to their occupation, and they were of different ethnic origin. The slave laws of 1685, the Code Noir, dictated how they should be controlled and treated.

Officials sent from France governed St. Domingue. The head of the government were the governor and the Intendant. The governor was the official representative of the King. Next to him was the Intendant, who was responsible for justice, finance and general administration. Their staff included senior officials. In 1787, the island was granted an assembly made up of the richest and most powerful whites who were supposed to represent local opinion. The assembly was an advisory body, without any legislative function. The '*grand blancs*' sought for the opportunity to rule the colony themselves, and for the greater freedom of trade. The free coloureds sought equality with the whites. The free coloureds were debarred from participating, either as candidates or as voters, in elections to the assembly that was granted in 1787. The slaves sought freedom.

The 35,000 whites were not a united group. The *grands blancs* and the *petits blancs* were divided by the fact that the *grands blancs* had property and education and controlled

**Political features before 1789**

**Divisions within the Social groups (I) Whites**