

PARADISE, SLAVERY, SUGAR, and the WIND

Tales of the Caribbean

Columbus may have been the first European to land at some of the Caribbean islands, but before him came the Ciboney, the Arawak, the Caribs, and the Taino, indigenous peoples from the Americas. Sea-faring explorers and traders from all over western Europe followed, Spaniards, English, French, Dutch and Danes. To work their colonies they brought hundreds of thousands of slaves from Africa. Industrial scale agriculture, based



on sugar and other commodities fed into the mercantile economies of Europe. Naval fleets based in the islands protected trade routes and ownership claims of the great countries, while the lesser powers of Europe and the neighboring colonies of North America provided trading stations. Unique cultural classes repopulated conquered islands, mixing Europeans with remnant natives and mulatto offspring of African descent to form permanent creole cultures, speaking languages that were sometimes unique to certain islands and spoken nowhere else. Meanwhile, throughout the island chain, for all its history, natural forces carried out geological reformations, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, while great atmospheric forces, fed by the temperature and currents of the surrounding oceans, visited hurricanes annually on the lands and peoples of the Caribbean. The island residents formed their own governments by revolutions, modeled on freedom movements in Europe and North America. The story of the islands continued to be told and preserved in prose, poetry, and art. Foreigners still continue to arrive with their dreams of Paradise, and many never leave.

CARIBBEAN READING LIST

REQUIRED for a survey history of the region, either:

DuBois and Turits, Freedom Roots, Histories from the Caribbean, University of North Carolina Press, or

B.W. Higman, A concise history of the Caribbean, Cambridge University Press, or

Eric Williams, From Columbus to Castro, the History of the Caribbean, Vintage/Random House,

SUGGESTED for the Indigenous Peoples and Columbian exploration:

Christopher Columbus, The Four Voyages, Penguin Classics

Samuel Eliot Morrison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, a Life of Christopher Columbus, Little Brown, 1991, or the 1942 original, or the Franklin Press bound edition, a beautiful volume. (Dated and biased, perhaps, but still the best story of Columbus's voyages

Bartolome de las Casas, A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies Or, a Faithful Narrative of the Horrid and Unexampled Massacres, Butcheries, and all Manner of Cruelties (16th C. account) available from Amazon in full and abridged editions. Casas was a primary source for much of Morrison's and other modern accounts. This abridgment contains Casas's accusations of Spanish brutality to indigenous people during Columbus's third and fourth voyages.

Irving Rouse, The Tainos: Rise and Decline of the People who Greeted Columbus, Yale University Press (excellent work for its time, but now out-dated by modern discoveries.)

Samuel M. Wilson, ed. The Indigenous People of the Caribbean, University Press of Florida

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