

Bush negroes



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Columbus' discovery of the New World in the late 15th century led to the establishment of colonies by European powers in that area. Eventually, the introduction of sugar in the Mid-17th Century gave rise to what would be known as the Sugar Revolution. A massive influx of slaves from Africa was seen during this period, as sugar required a substantial labour force.

However, with hundreds and thousands of slaves being imported and only a few thousand whites to match them, the use of repressive measures through legal, psychological, cultural and physical means to control the slaves' movement and to keep them on the plantation was of utmost importance in order to make up for this deficit. The horrors of slavery were so great that, even though they risked severe punishment, some slaves attempted to flee from their plantations. In fact, entire communities were established by runaway slaves in British Guiana and Jamaica.

Moreover, these slaves, known as the Bush Negroes of Surinam and the Maroons of Jamaica, were able to survive despite the efforts of the Europeans to bring them back under their control. These two groups shared many similarities as well as differences, whether it both communities fighting with and making treaties with the Europeans or the fact that they defended their settlements differently. Also, there were differences between the social and political structure of these two settlements.

To start with, both settlements fought with and made treaties with the Europeans. Also, both of these treaties were broken at some point in time. With the Maroons, two wars took place, the first after which the British Government in Jamaica came to an agreement with them. This treaty gave the Maroons freedom and possession of all the lands lying between

Trelawney Town and Cockpit Country. In return, the Maroons' promised not to attack white planters, help return all runaway slaves and assist the Government against external enemies or internal revolt.

The second war came about in 1795 as the Maroons felt they were being mistreated under the treaty that ended the first war. Eventually, the Maroons surrendered to end the war. The Maroon leaders and Major-General George Walpole established that the Maroons would beg on their knees for the King's forgiveness, return all runaway slaves, and be relocated elsewhere in Jamaica. On the other hand, The Bush Negroes of Surinam made a treaty with the Dutch that granted them freedom and the right to occupy the interior, in exchange for them not stirring up slave revolts or raiding plantations. The Bush Negroes complied for thirty years, but eventually they resumed their raids on the European plantations. Despite their similarities, however, the settlements of the Bush Negroes of Surinam and the Maroons of Jamaica were different in many aspects, especially in terms of how they were defended. The Bush Negroes lived in circular clearings, with their dwellings being in the centre and their crops surrounding them.

Their settlements were built in such a way that the lowest growing crops were closest to their dwellings and their highest being at the circle's exterior. This was done for cover as well as food. More permanent settlements were surrounded by a " moat" (a deep, wide ditch surrounding a castle, fort or town that is usually filled with water). The thick forest of the interior was perhaps the greatest protection that the Bush Negroes had, as it could only be penetrated by the use of rivers which, further into the interior, had rapids.

The Maroon Settlements, like those of the Bush Negroes, were constructed with security foremost. The Maroons lived in the mountains, with the lower levels being more easily accessible and the upper levels more inaccessible. Few, if any British soldiers reached the upper levels of Maroon settlements. However, the Maroons also developed camouflage and ambush techniques in order to defend their settlements. For example, "bushing up" was a commonly used method of camouflage, as it would make them impossible to spot against the trees and plants that surrounded them.

The Maroons would also bathe in a mountain stream, scrubbing their bodies with the leaves of a certain plant that gave them a fresh lemon scent. Then they would lie in wait in the brush that emitted the same odour, which would camouflage their scent. Additionally, there were differences in the political structures of these two settlements, as exemplified by the fact that the Bush Negro settlements were more politically and socially structured than those of the Maroons. The Bush Negroes were organised under leaders in a quasi-military (i. e. having some resemblance to the military) life, with the lowest ranks performing the jobs that required little or no skill, such as subsistence (i. e. to maintain or support with provisions) and plundering the plantations on a nightly basis. On Maroon settlements, however, political and social structures such as these were non-existent. In conclusion, The Bush Negroes of Surinam and The Maroons of Jamaica were communities that consisted of slaves who, after enduring the horrors of slavery, took the risk of fleeing their plantations and established free communities.

These two groups shared many similarities and differences, whether it was in their battles and treaties with the Europeans or the way in which they

protected their settlements. The focus of this extract was to show the similarities and differences between two settlements that consisted of slaves from who fled their plantations to escape the horrors of slavery, even though they risked severe punishment while doing so. From their battles and treaties with the Europeans to the way in which they protected their settlements and their political and social structures, these two groups were very similar, and at the same time, different.