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# Slave Names and Naming in Barbados, 1650–1830

Jerome S. Handler and JoAnn Jacoby

**T**HIS article draws on a sample of Barbados slave names in order to examine the principles and significance of naming practices among North American and British Caribbean slaves in general and on Barbados plantations in particular. Analysis of plantation slave lists and other primary sources that record slave names, especially within the context of genealogical relations, provides insight into slave naming practices. These, in turn, can “reveal the extent to which concepts of family, lineage, and kinship were retained beyond the Atlantic crossing”<sup>1</sup> and can also shed light on other domains of slave life, such as adjustment or resistance to enslavement, the nature of slaves’ kin networks, the perpetuation and modification of African practices, and creolization.

## *The Study of Slave Names and Naming Systems*

The study of slave naming practices presents special problems because it depends on limited data from a very sparse historical record,<sup>2</sup> rather than on

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Handler’s research has been supported since 1965 by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the American Philosophical Society, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the John Carter Brown Library, the Social Science Research Council, and the National Humanities Center. Preliminary analyses of the slave name data took place during the summer of 1979 while he was a research associate at the Research Institute for the Study of Man, New York City; he is grateful to RISM’s late director, Vera Rubin, and the congenial atmosphere that she and her staff made possible. More recent analyses, the collection of comparative materials, and preliminary drafting of this article were aided by grants from the Office of Research and Development of the Graduate School, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Final revisions were made while Handler was a Scholar in Residence at the Virginia Center for the Humanities, Charlottesville. Ronald Hughes and John Rickford offered comments on an earlier draft, and we have incorporated some of the very thoughtful suggestions of Michael Craton and Barry Higman. David Buisseret graciously made available his biographical notes on John Taylor, prepared for his forthcoming publication of Taylor’s little-known 17th-century manuscript account of Jamaica.

<sup>1</sup> John Thornton, “Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 50 (1993), 727.

<sup>2</sup> Compare B. W. Higman, “African and Creole Slave Family Patterns in Trinidad,” *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1978), 176, and “Terms for Kin in the British West Indian Slave

the rich data obtainable from ethnographic fieldwork; thus the inquiry often relies on a great deal of conjecture. For example, it is virtually impossible to determine what ritual beliefs and practices may have been associated with the bestowal of names, whether slaves had naming ceremonies, the possible occurrence of secret names, whether "ritually significant information" was "coded" in personal names,<sup>3</sup> or the use of nicknames or other informal names. Moreover, some fundamental and elementary questions concerning naming procedures—e.g., who was responsible for bestowing slave names and the criteria employed—cannot be answered with certainty. Nonetheless, the study of slave names and naming practices offers a view into aspects of slave life that are often obscured in the historical record.

Most earlier studies of slave names in North America and the British Caribbean were simply descriptive examinations of names culled from plantation records and similar sources. These studies attempted to trace, for example, the persistence of African lexical items or the increased use of anglicized names or surnames,<sup>4</sup> but were limited by their emphasis on lexical items rather than on underlying systemic rules. Such approaches, which "focus on the names themselves and not the pattern of naming,"<sup>5</sup> fail to resolve the questions asked by the investigators, such as degree of "acculturation" or persistence of African practices, since slaves sometimes employed English-derived names quite differently from whites. "To dwell exclusively upon" plantation name lists, Herbert G. Gutman contends, "obscures the fact that a slave child with a quite common Anglo-American name often carried it for reasons rooted in the developing Afro-American culture."<sup>6</sup> Approaching slave names as lexical items further divorces the names from their sociocultural contexts and use in daily life, curtails insight into the crucial domain of name giving and name use, and "would seem to bear little necessary relationship to the principles of name giving used by the members of the community."<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to discern the principles governing names-in-use from a historical record that has largely obscured and ignored slave attitudes and practices. Yet some studies of names, mostly of North American slave communities, in the context of genealogy and kinship suggest an approach that can uncover some of the significance that names may have held for the

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Community: Differing Perceptions of Masters and Slaves," in Raymond T. Smith, ed., *Kinship Ideology and Practice in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 61.

<sup>3</sup> F. Niyi Akinnaso, "Yoruba Traditional Names and the Transmission of Cultural Knowledge," *Names*, 31 (1983), 139.

<sup>4</sup> E. g., Newbell N. Puckett, "Names of American Negro Slaves," in Alan Dundes, ed., *Mother Wit from the Laughing Barrel: Readings in the Interpretation of Afro-American Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1973), 156–74, and *Black Names in America: Origins and Usage*, ed. Murray Heller (Boston, 1975); Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago, 1949); J. L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York, 1972).

<sup>5</sup> Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Practices," 731 n. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York, 1976), 186.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Price and Sally Price, "Saramaka Onomastics: An Afro-American Naming System," *Ethnology*, 11 (1972), 359.

slaves themselves.<sup>8</sup> This approach provides a means to examine previously inaccessible dimensions of slave life, such as who was responsible for naming the slaves, what factors influenced the choice of names, and how kin networks functioned within slave communities.

Gutman pioneered this approach in his monumental study of North American slave family and kinship patterns. He argued that slave naming practices can provide "evidence about what slaves believed, how Africans and their descendants adapted to enslavement, and especially how enlarged slave kin networks became the social basis for developing slave communities." Taking a similar approach, Cheryll Ann Cody found that slave children on the Ball plantation in South Carolina were named after extended kin, with namesakes spanning as many as four generations; she suggests that slave names give insight into the development of a distinct historical consciousness: "the selection of an African 'day-name,' for example, would give a child a name used solely by blacks in the community and would serve also as a reminder of an African past. Sharing a kin name was a useful device to connect children with their past and place them in the history of their families and communities."<sup>9</sup>

The scholarly literature on British Caribbean slave-naming patterns and practices is very limited, and no major studies are exclusively devoted to the topic. Barry Higman has examined children's surnames for evidence of the stability of unions at Montpelier and Shertlewood plantations in nineteenth-century Jamaica, and Michael Craton has found similar evidence for serial monogamy at Worthy Park. Philip D. Morgan has recently provided data on names and naming practices on a mid-eighteenth-century cattle pen in Jamaica. Higman conducted a limited analysis of parental namesakes in Trinidad but found the available family records insufficient to draw definitive conclusions.<sup>10</sup>

Sources for slave names in the West Indies include ads for runaways, letters from slavemasters to foreign correspondents, plantation inventories, wills and deeds, and the slave registration returns. The information recorded in these sources is often minimal, usually only a slave's name and sometimes a specification of age and sex category (e.g., "grown girls" or "old women")

<sup>8</sup> E. g., Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*; Cheryll Ann Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal: Notes on Slave Family Life on a South Carolina Plantation, 1786 to 1833," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 39 (1982), 192–211; Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations: Slave-Naming Practices in the South Carolina Low Country, 1720–1865," *American Historical Review*, 92 (1987), 563–96.

<sup>9</sup> Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 185; Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations," 573; see also Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal."

<sup>10</sup> Higman, "The Slave Family and Household in the British West Indies, 1800–1834," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 6 (1975), 261–87; Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man: Slaves and Plantation Life in Jamaica* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 159; Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica: Vineyard Pen, 1750–1751," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 52 (1995), 47–76; Higman, "African and Creole Slave Family Patterns," 163–78. Little information exists on modern Afro-Caribbean names and naming practices. This paucity is especially surprising given the considerable research on the family that social scientists, particularly social anthropologists, have conducted in the Caribbean since the 1950s.

and occupation. Occasionally, the sources indicate mother-child relationships, but there is rarely sufficient information for even a partial reconstruction of collateral and lineal kin. Indeed, the absence of fairly detailed genealogical data has been a major barrier to understanding naming practices and slave kin networks in the Caribbean.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Barbados Data*

One of England's oldest New World colonies, Barbados was the first to develop a system of plantation sugar production dependent on African slave labor. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth, this 166-square-mile island was the wealthiest and most populous colony in English America. When Barbados reached the zenith of its prosperity in the 1670s, its population of African birth or descent was about 32,800—almost double the combined total in England's five other Caribbean colonies and close to six times the total number in all of England's mainland colonies. During the late seventeenth century, blacks averaged about 65 percent, if not more, of Barbados's population, and by the late eighteenth century the slave population of around 70,000 constituted approximately 80 percent. Even after Jamaica preempted Barbados's prominence in England's sugar empire around the 1730s, Barbadian society continued to be dominated by plantation sugar production and slave labor, and for most of its history, the island had a larger percentage of whites than any other British West Indian territory. There were about 17,000 whites during the late eighteenth century, and during the 1820s and early 1830s whites averaged around 14,700, roughly 15 percent of the island's population. Although most whites were neither plantation owners nor wealthy, the plantocracy (a high percentage of which was resident, not absentee) controlled the island's political, legal, ecclesiastical, and economic institutions and "ardently defended the institution of slavery on which the Barbadian social order rested."<sup>12</sup>

Our analysis of Barbados slave names and naming practices is based on 2,229 names gathered intermittently during the course of a wider study of Barbadian slave life.<sup>13</sup> These names come from plantation inventories and slave lists, newspaper advertisements, legal documents, and similar primary

<sup>11</sup> Higman, "African and Creole Slave Family Patterns"; Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean 1807-1834* (Baltimore, 1984), 24, 25; Higman, "Terms for Kin in the British West Indian Slave Community," 70-71. Compare Herbert S. Klein, *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York, 1986), 173.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome S. Handler and Frederick W. Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 41. Early population sources are cited in John R. Rickford and Handler, "Textual Evidence on the Nature of Early Barbadian Speech, 1676-1835," *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 9 (1994), 225, 230, 238, and Handler and John T. Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 41 (1984), 391. Compare Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill, 1972), 84.

<sup>13</sup> Handler, *From Africans to Creoles: The Social and Cultural Life of Barbados Slaves, 1627-1834* (Cambridge, Mass., in preparation).

sources spanning the period from the 1650s to the 1820s.<sup>14</sup> Eleven percent of our sample is from the 1650s to the 1690s, 28 percent from the 1720s to the 1760s, 22 percent from the 1780s to the 1810s, and 39 percent from the 1820s. By the mid-eighteenth century, most slaves in Barbados were born on the island, and by the 1820s well over 90 percent were creoles. Although we make no claim for the statistical representativeness of the sample, it comprises 51 percent females and 49 percent males (only twenty-one individuals could not be identified by sex), corresponding to the approximately 52 percent female and 48 percent male distribution that obtained in Barbados's wider slave population throughout most of the period of slavery.<sup>15</sup>

### *African Naming Practices*

We contend that in the earliest periods of slavery in Barbados, slaves followed certain principles and practices of African naming procedures even though these procedures were torn from the social and ritual contexts that had existed in Africa. We also contend that creole slaves generally named themselves, although the vast majority of those names were never recorded and many or most of them were not the names by which the slaves were

<sup>14</sup> The 2,229 names in our sample were held by 1,612 individuals. There are more names than individuals in the sample because slaves often were known by more than one name; George might also be called Cudjoe and David, Quashey. Double names, such as Mary Ann, were counted as one name. When variant spellings and derivations or diminutives, such as Kate/Katey/Katherine/Kathy and Quashey/Quash, are taken into account, the sample is reduced to 626 names shared among the 1,612 individuals. We are aware of the shortcomings of this "sample of convenience"; for example, it was not collected to ensure statistical representativeness by time period. Yet the sample is large and does provide information on slave names and naming practices for the earlier years of slavery in Barbados. Moreover, it covers a great deal of variation in slave names, permits discerning naming patterns, and raises a number of issues that other scholars can test against more systematically drawn samples. Some background may clarify some issues. During the early years of his research on Barbados slave life, Handler collected slave names as a by-product of collecting many other data; there was no immediate thought given to the analyses of the names per se. When a decision was made to analyze the name sample, the names were transferred from handwritten notes on primary sources or photocopies of these sources to individual data sheets. These sheets are on deposit in the Barbados Department of Archives. The primary sources from which these data sheets were derived are listed in the appendix.

Cody's analysis of slave names is based on a comparably sized sample, but her data were drawn from more uniform sources, the records of the Ball family's South Carolina plantations from 1720 to 1865. This data base gives Cody greater continuity and genealogical richness, although it loses some of the statistical comprehensiveness of our sample. John Inscoc's study of Carolina slave names is based on 11,000 names drawn from a number of different plantations spread throughout the slave period from 1670 to 1865; his sample more broadly resembles ours in terms of time period and the number of plantations from which data are derived. (It is relevant to point out that in the 17th-century many Carolina slaves came from Barbados.) Charles Joyner's analysis of South Carolina names is based on 700 names drawn from 19th-century sources, while Allan Kulikoff's very limited analysis of the renaming of newly arrived Africans by their masters in the 18th-century Chesapeake is based on a sample of 465 youths. Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations," 566; Inscoc, "Carolina Slave Names: An Index to Acculturation," *Journal of Southern History*, 49 (1983), 527-54; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana, 1984), 217-22; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Culture in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill, 1986), 325-26.

<sup>15</sup> See Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery*, 29, 67-68.

known to the masters. The names the masters knew are the names that appear in the primary sources, and it can be misleading to assume, as scholars sometimes do, that these were the only names that slaves possessed. The data on slave life provided by modern scholarship make clear that Africans carried with them across the Atlantic a variety of ideas and practices that were reinterpreted or continued, in whatever attenuated fashion, under the harsh restrictions of the plantation,<sup>16</sup> and it is reasonable to expect that various dimensions of naming practices also continued in the New World. Moreover, there are ample, albeit scattered and often superficial, examples of African or African-type naming practices (described below) from various New World slave societies. In Barbados, legacies of African cultural patterns were manifest in mortuary behavior, medical practices, music and dance, body ornamentation, weaning patterns, religious beliefs and practices, speech, food preparation, the spatial arrangement of houses in early slave villages, and house construction techniques and architectural styles.<sup>17</sup>

West African cultures displayed considerable variation in naming practices. West Africans usually bore several names, in some cases many names. Some names were given at birth, others during the course of a lifetime; some were nicknames employed casually among friends and family, others were more formally employed and were conferred during rites of passage or less formally to mark important life transitions. Sometimes the names given at birth were replaced later in life, or names were added to ones given earlier—the latter usually associated with the individual's personality traits or some key events in his or her life. "There is no stop to the giving of names in many African societies," John S. Mbiti writes, "so that a person can acquire a sizeable collection of names by the time he becomes an old man."<sup>18</sup>

In some areas, children received a name or several names soon after birth, but more important names were given at naming ceremonies. These ceremonies, which were virtually universal in West Africa, usually occurred one week or more after the child's birth. They could be quite elaborate, judging from reports by Europeans who visited or lived on the west coast of Africa in

<sup>16</sup> E. g., Joseph Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington, Ind., 1990); Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (Cambridge, 1992), 206–11; Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans, circa 1600–1780," in Bernard Bailyn and Morgan, eds., *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 203–14. See also Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston, 1992), and Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, 1941).

<sup>17</sup> E. g., Handler, "Slave Medicine and Obeah in Barbados" (unpublished paper, 1996); Handler, *Africans to Creoles*; Handler, "A Prone Burial from a Plantation Slave Cemetery in Barbados, West Indies," *Historical Archaeology* (forthcoming); Handler, "An African-Type Healer/Diviner and His Grave Goods," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* (in press); Handler and Charlotte J. Frisbie, "Aspects of Slave Life in Barbados: Music and Its Cultural Context," *Caribbean Studies*, 11 (1972), 5–46; Handler and Robert S. Corruccini, "Weaning among West Indian Slaves: Historical and Bioanthropological Evidence from Barbados," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 43 (1986), 111–17; Handler and JoAnn Jacoby, "Slave Medicine and Plant Use in Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 41 (1993), 74–98; Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery*, 171–215; Rickford and Handler, "Textual Evidence of Early Barbadian Speech."

<sup>18</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York, 1970), 154.

the early periods of the transatlantic slave trade as well as in more recent times.<sup>19</sup>

The criteria used in assigning names varied widely. Aside from names of Christian or Islamic origin, children could be named after the day, time, or place of their birth or for their birth order in a family (e.g., the first born son might receive one name, the second born another, and so forth; daughters could also have their own set of names); sometimes children received deprecatory names (to mislead evil spirits, especially if an older sibling had died), were named after an event or incident that occurred during pregnancy or birth, such as an annual festival, a market day, or a stormy day; they could be named for the circumstances of birth or special physical characteristics (e.g., albino, twins, six fingers, how loudly the infant screamed at birth) or a personality trait. Children could also be named after male or female relatives, including living grandparents, ancestors (if, for example, a child was considered a reincarnation), or even friends of the parents or prominent persons attending the birth. These criteria were not always mutually exclusive, and several could be operative in the same culture at the same time or at different points in a person's life, because it was not uncommon for names to change during the course of a lifetime.<sup>20</sup>

### *Name Givers*

Who assigned names to the slave children born on Barbadian plantations? Were the names we find in primary sources given by the masters, by parents

<sup>19</sup> See Adam Jones, ed., *German Sources for West African History, 1599–1669* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 88, 218; Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa . . .*, 2 vols. (London, 1966; orig. pub. 1853), 2:202–03; David Gamble, *The Wolof of Senegambia*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part XIV* (London, 1957), 62–63; Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Structure and Meaning in Igbo Names* (Buffalo, 1974), 29–30; and Madeline Manoukian, *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples of the Gold Coast*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part I* (London, 1950), 89.

<sup>20</sup> On West African naming practices see Akinnsaso, "Yoruba Traditional Names"; Alexander Alland, Jr., *When the Spider Danced: Notes from an African Village* (Garden City, N. Y., 1976), 94; William Bascom, *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (New York, 1969), 55–56; Laura Bohannan and Paul Bohannan, *The Tiv of Central Nigeria*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part VIII* (London, 1953), 64; R. M. Connolly, "Social Life in Fanti-Land," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 26 (1896), 140; Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2:203; Daryll Forde, *The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part IV* (London, 1951), 27; Forde and G. I. Jones, *The Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part III* (London, 1950), 77; Meyer Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage among the Ashanti," in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, eds., *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage* (London, 1950), 266; Richard Austin Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman* (London, 1967; orig. pub. 1898), 286–88; Gamble, *Wolof*, 62–64; Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 190–91; Jones, *German Sources*, 88, 218; M. McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone Protectorate*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part II* (London, 1950), 74, 84, and "The Tikar of the British and French Cameroons," in Forde, ed., *Peoples of the Central Cameroons*, *Ethnographic Survey of Africa, Western Africa, Part IX* (London, 1954), 44; Madubuike, *Structure and Meaning in Igbo Names*; Manoukian, *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples*, 51; Manoukian, *The Ewe-Speaking People of Togoland and the Gold Coast*, *Ethnographic Survey of*



or other kin, or by nonkin members of the slave community? The way in which slave names in the historical record are to be understood hinges on this question. Whether or not slaves carried additional names during their lifetimes, if they themselves chose the names that appear in the primary sources, then the names have vastly different import and afford greater insight into slave life than if assigned by masters. This is a key issue in the study of slave naming patterns throughout the New World. The scholarly literature on Anglo-American slavery implies and sometimes explicitly argues that naming was the master's domain. Writers on the West Indies have usually maintained that slave names were imposed or at least approved by plantation authorities, but the direct evidence for such assertions is very slim and often equivocal.<sup>21</sup> Speaking of Jamaica, John Taylor, an Englishman who lived on the island in 1687, mentions that when slaves "are born the [white] overseer names them," but his experience with plantation slaves was limited, and his comment does not preclude the possibility that slaves also named themselves or, at any rate, had names that were only used among themselves. In a similar vein, Matthew "Monk" Lewis, a nineteenth-century Jamaican planter, seems to have named slave children on his plantation, but he may have allowed some input from the parents; even so, there is no way of telling whether Lewis's slaves developed other names for each other over which Lewis had no control. Even Thomas Thistlewood's diary, a rich source of information on mid-eighteenth-century Jamaican slave life, does not make explicit whether blacks or whites had primary responsibility for naming on the cattle pen he managed. Morgan conjectures that it was "a combination of the two," although "over time, slaves probably began to assume some of the responsibility for naming" their children. All in all, we agree with Higman that there is insufficient evidence to decide this issue definitively.<sup>22</sup>

For North America, scholars have reached different conclusions, which may reflect not only interpretations of the evidence but also variations in time, place, and the practices of individual slavemasters. Allan Kulikoff surmises that slaves in the Chesapeake "almost never gave their children African

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Africa, Western Africa, Part VI (London, 1952), 42; Mbiti, *African Religions*, 154–57; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns"; Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, passim; Victor C. Uchendu, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria* (New York, 1965), 60; H. A. Wieschhoff, "The Social Significance of Names among the Ibo of Nigeria," *American Anthropologist*, 43 (1941), 212–22.

<sup>21</sup> E. g., J. Harry Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1712–1838* (Berkeley, 1958), 34; Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, 156, 198; David Barry Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels: A Case Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua* (Baltimore, 1985), 131.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor was 23 when he arrived at Jamaica in early 1687. He spent close to 5 months on the island, but for about 3 of those months he was ill in Port Royal. He barely traveled in Jamaica although for about a month he was a bookkeeper on a sugar and indigo plantation in Clarendon Parish, to the west of Port Royal on Jamaica's southern coast; Taylor, "Historie of His Life and Travels in America, Containeing a Full Geographical Description of the Island of Jamaica," 3 vols. (1688), 2:542 (Ms., National Library of Jamaica, Kingston); Lewis, "Journal of a West India Proprietor" (1834), in Roger D. Abrahams and John F. Szwed, eds., *After Africa: Extracts from British Travel Accounts and Journals . . . in the British West Indies* (New Haven, 1983), 100; Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock," 75, 53; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 16.

names, but apparently had to accept the names masters chose for them." The patterns discerned by Kulikoff do not eliminate the possibility that slaves gave names to their children that were unrecognized by plantation authorities or not recorded by them. Other studies of North American slavery dispute, as John Thornton phrases it, "the old idea that masters assigned names to slaves or that slaves imitated masters' systems of naming." In studies of Carolina slave names, John Inscoc and Cody infer that, whereas African-born slaves were renamed by plantation authorities, most slaves in subsequent generations freely chose their children's names. Similar conclusions have been reached for the antebellum southern states by Eugene D. Genovese and Gutman; the latter also observes that "the names given to most children make it improbable that owners busied themselves naming newborn slave children." John W. Blassingame more equivocally writes that, "while most nineteenth-century slave children were named by their parents, many were named by their masters and mistresses."<sup>23</sup>

The Barbados sources offer no direct evidence on "how far slave names were chosen by the slaves themselves and how far they were imposed by the masters,"<sup>24</sup> although inferences can be drawn from them. There, as elsewhere, many newly purchased Africans were probably given English names by their first owners. This pattern is indicated in Barbadian newspaper announcements of missing slaves or captured runaways: in one form or another these state that the slave is an African and give the slave's name—for example, an African teenager who "does not understand English, but answers to the name of Katy"; "an African man [who] . . . says his name is James"; another African man "who answers to the name of Ceasar [sic] speaks English so imperfectly as not to be understood"; and "an African man named Smith [who] speaks very little English" (but who had blacksmithing skills, indicating the reason for his name). Clearly, these persons were given English names (though they may have retained their African names on the plantations or in the slave quarters), even as other African-born slaves bore African names.<sup>25</sup>

Although explicit evidence on this issue is lacking, data from the Codrington plantations on Barbados, owned after 1710 by the Church of England's Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, pro-

<sup>23</sup> Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 326; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 727; Inscoc, "Carolina Slave Names," 529; Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations," 564; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974), 447; Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 188–89, quotation on 194; Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, 2d ed. (New York, 1979), 182. See also Puckett, *Black Names in America*, ed. Heller, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Higman, "Terms for Kin in the British West Indian Slave Community," 61.

<sup>25</sup> *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, Jan. 10–Feb. 14, 1807. At Vineyard, a typical mid-18th-century Jamaican cattle pen, a little more than half of the slaves in July 1750 were African-born. According to Morgan, they were known by English (e. g., George, Betty) or African (e. g., Accubah, Phibbah) names, but recently purchased "New Negroes" were "each known by an African as well as an Anglo-Jamaican name" that was "almost certainly" given by either the pen's owner or an earlier manager; Morgan does not clarify whether the African name was also bestowed by the white authorities; Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock," 52, 53.

vide a direction in seeking the answer. With respect to plantation organization and slave treatment, these plantations did not differ significantly from other medium-to-large eighteenth-century Barbadian plantations; however, from early in the eighteenth century the church emphasized slave baptism and, in what was a unique practice at the time, assigned a catechist to plantation slaves. Most, if not all, of the baptized slaves at Codrington in 1741 were creoles; although all had Anglo-European Christian names, about 45 percent also possessed African "plantation names" (names slaves used among themselves, in contrast to baptismal names or names given by masters) or nicknames (Table I). African or African-type plantation names can be assumed to have come from the slave community itself. African names occasionally occur in the Barbados baptismal registers during the later years of the slave period. The persons involved are usually adults, but several entries have been discovered of infants or small children with African names. In 1827, Ruthy's son Cudjoe, an "infant slave," was baptized, as was Betsy Mingo, an "infant slave" whose mother was Princess; in 1826, Hannah Quash, aged five, and Betsy Mimbah, aged three, were baptized.<sup>26</sup>

Namesaking patterns, including genealogical data compiled from the 1796 slave lists at Newton and Seawell, both fairly typical Barbadian plantations, indicate that naming children after kinsmen, including extended kin, was common.<sup>27</sup> This practice points to the role slaves played in their own naming. It can be assumed that plantation authorities had little interest in formally recognizing slave kin ties or the emotional or social value that slaves placed on those ties. It is thus unlikely that the authorities named slave children after kinsmen. The occasional naming of children for their fathers and other paternal relatives, thereby acknowledging a "blood" tie that was of little importance to masters, is compelling inferential evidence that slaves named their own children.<sup>28</sup> Further, as Cody argues for South Carolina, the duplication of names created by namesaking seems at odds with the need for authorities, whose primary imperative was to distinguish between individual slaves, "to simplify the allocation of tasks and provisions." Higman also argues that, because names were used as identifiers, masters would tend to avoid duplicating names on the same property, but, he notes, such duplication "could arise through sale or removal or through the recognition of slave preferences." At Newton, however, with all but six slaves having been born on the plantation, the high incidence of kin namesakes suggests that, even if authorities held ultimate responsibility for naming, slave preference was a major, if not an overriding, consideration in the choice.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, passim; Parochial Registers, Slave Baptisms, St. Joseph Parish, 1825-1834, and St. George Parish, 1826-1834, RL 1/30, 52, Barbados Department of Archives (hereafter referred to as BDA).

<sup>27</sup> Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery*; cf. Handler, "Sources for the Study of Pre-emancipation Sugar Plantations in Barbados: Manuscripts Relating to Newton and Seawell Plantations," *Caribbean Archives*, 5 (1976), 11-21.

<sup>28</sup> See Stephen Gudeman, "Herbert Gutman's 'The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925': An Anthropologist's View," *Social Science History*, 3 (1979), 56-65.

<sup>29</sup> Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations," 571-72; Higman, *Slave Populations*, 16.

TABLE I  
BAPTIZED SLAVES ON CODRINGTON PLANTATIONS, APRIL 6, 1741

<i>Christian Name</i>	<i>Plantation Name</i>	<i>Christian Name</i>	<i>Plantation Name</i>
Men		Women	
Joseph	Cuffey	Frances	Frankey
Alexander	Sandy	Phillis	Occo
Sampson	Swan	Jane	Adjubah
John	Jack	Ann	Nanny
Christopher	Kitt	Elizabeth	Little Betty
William	Will	Mary	Molley
Jeffrey	Jeffery	Hannah	Murreat
Samuel	Etto	Elizabeth	Occo
Robert	Robin	Margaret	Fattimore
Samuel	Sambo	Lucretia	Josebah
Milen	Milen	Susanna	Sue
Richard	Dick Sober	Jane	Jiba
David	Quashey	Mercy	Occo
Thomas	Quoffey	Joanna	Joan
Peter	Peter	Hannah	Arnotte
John	Drummer	Jane	Jiba
Timothy	London	Diana	Dada
John	Mayfangoe	Ruth	Guando
John	John		
Thomas	Quashey		
Jack	Quashey		
Boys		Girls	
Thomas	Tuma	Martha	Matty
Anthony	Tong	Jane	Johntoe
John	Maffungo	Mercy	Gong
Anthony	Anthony	Penelope	Jobbah
Willoughby	Bacchus	Mary	Wawdey
Daniel	Quaccoe	Pheoby	Affiba
Jonah	Issue	Orrinda	Occobah
Abraham	Deway	Issabella	Jobbue
Richard	Quobina	Elizabeth	Betty
Christopher	Christmas	Orrinda	Obah
Edward	Cuffey	Triphena	Fattimore
		Thomasin	Tomsin
		Mary	Mary

Twelve persons had among them the same baptismal and plantation names. Males: John/Drummer (two [one man, one boy]), Thomas/Quashey (three [two men, one boy]), John/John (three [one man, two boys]). Females: Frances/Frankey (two women), Jane/Adjubah (two [one woman, one girl]). We cannot explain these duplications and have no way of knowing if any of the people were related to one another.

Source: Sampson Smirk, "A List of Negroes that are Baptized and Not Baptized on the Honble & Revnd Society's Estates in Barbados," Apr. 6, 1741, Letter Books, vol. B. 8, Nos. 54-55, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London.

In light of indications that in established communities of creole slaves, the slaves themselves, and not the plantation authorities, usually named their children, the question arises as to who gave the names. In discussing naming practices in the United States, Gutman makes suggestions that may be relevant to Barbados. Maintaining that historians overemphasize the role of slaveowners, he proposes focusing on "grandparents and other elderly kin. Some evidence hints that they played that role, and it is well known that grandparents did so in many West African societies." Gutman, however, generalizes from very limited data and misinterprets the one source he cites.<sup>30</sup> We have been unable to acquire much West African ethnographic data that identifies precisely the name givers and their relationship to the newly born. Some authors vaguely mention the household head, implying a senior male; others might specify the father or another paternal relative. Where specific data are available, they show a range of practices. For example, among some Angolan peoples, depending on circumstances, the mother or father named the child. Yoruba children received names from a number of relatives, including the father's parents, but the name most commonly used was the one preferred by the father and mother, and, according to William Bascom, this was "often the name suggested by one of them in the first place." Ibo names were independently proposed by "the families of the father and mother," although the "family with the greater social prestige" usually determined the final selection, or Ibo naming was performed by the "head of the household." Among the Igbo, parents chose the names, as did the Tiv, although it appears the Tiv father gave the most important name at birth. In some areas of the Cameroons, fathers named the newborn infant; in other areas, mothers usually named daughters while fathers named their sons. Among the Asante (Ashanti) and neighboring Gold Coast peoples, the father named the child, usually after his ancestors on either side.<sup>31</sup> As in other features of naming, there was evidently considerable variation among West Africans, but parents, not grandparents, seem to have been the main name givers.

In Barbados, although we have no specific information on this point (and information in the scholarly literature on the West Indies is similarly wanting), it is quite possible that the slave parents, particularly mothers, were largely responsible for naming their children, although grandparents resident on the plantation where the child was born may have played some role. From earliest times, Barbadian slave mothers gave birth in their houses in

<sup>30</sup> Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 195. His only source for this sweeping generalization on West African practice is Fortes's "Kinship and Marriage," 276. Although Fortes stresses the great importance of grandparents on both sides, particularly the maternal grandmother's "special position," he says nothing about a grandparental role in naming, but see Joyner, who shows that "at least some" slaves in South Carolina had "children named by their grandparents," in *Down by the Riverside*, 221.

<sup>31</sup> Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, 37, 40; Bascom, *Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, 56; Forde and Jones, "Ibo and Ibibio-Speaking Peoples," 24; Wieschhoff, "Social Significance of Names," 212-13; Uchendu, *Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 60; Bohannan and Bohannan, *Tiv of Central Nigeria*, 64; McCulloch, "Tikar of the British and French Cameroons," 44; Fortes, "Kinship and Marriage," 266. See also Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast*, 2:202.

the quarters with the help of female neighbors, friends, or kin.<sup>32</sup> Although plantation authorities may have bestowed names that were ultimately recorded in the slave lists, slaves may have often named their own children and continued to use these names within the slave community without regard to names bestowed by their masters.

### *African Names*

Although West Africans employed a variety of criteria in bestowing names, scholars of New World slavery have been attracted to names given for the day of birth. Day names are usually gender specific and often exist in conjunction with other names. West African (including west-central African) day names have been relatively easy to identify in the primary sources, but it should not be assumed that they were the only naming survivals in New World slave communities. Moreover, day names were not universal in West Africa and were only one pattern among many.<sup>33</sup>

The Barbados sample has quite a few African or African-derived names. As seen in Table II, the most common are day names such as Cuffey (Friday) and Quashy (Sunday) for males and Phibah (Friday) and Juba (Monday) for females. Interestingly, Cubenah, a male name in West Africa, occurs several times as a female and never as a male name in the Barbados sample, and Quashy, although mainly a male name, occasionally appears as a female second name. These examples suggest that day names could be perpetuated without an awareness of, or concern with, their specific West African meanings. An Anglican priest who spent about a year in Barbados during the late 1860s (several decades after emancipation) remarked how "the ancient African names still linger" and recorded a number of such names; he contended, however, that some features of African naming patterns had "died out in Barbados, and the names are applied indiscriminately."<sup>34</sup> With respect to the slave period or later, our data preclude verifying African day names against the day on which a person was born; for example, we have no way of knowing how many Cuffeys or Phibahs were actually born on Friday.

Most African names in the Barbados sample are easily determined because of their variation from English or European names; in some cases an unusual spelling variation or an uncommon name makes derivation difficult to establish. Although we have disregarded these borderline cases, we are also mindful of Thornton's warning in his innovative and illuminating study of early Angolan and west-central African naming patterns that "it is not always so

<sup>32</sup> Sometimes white midwives were also hired; Handler, *Africans to Creoles*.

<sup>33</sup> On day names in West Africa and the New World, including the Caribbean, see Connolly, "Social Life in Fanti-Land," 140; Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2:203; David DeCamp, "African Day-Names in Jamaica," *Language*, 43 (1967), 139-49; Dillard, "The West African Day-Names in Nova-Scotia," *Names*, 19 (1971), 257-61; Dillard, *Black English*, 123-35; Freeman, *Travels and Life in Ashanti and Jaman*, 286-88; and Puckett, *Black Names in America*, ed. Heller, 17-18.

<sup>34</sup> Greville John Chester, *Transatlantic Sketches in the West Indies, South America, Canada, and the United States* (1869), in Abrahams and Szwed, *After Africa*, 101.

TABLE II

MOST COMMON AFRICAN NAMES AMONG BARBADOS SLAVES,  
WITH VARIANT SPELLINGS<sup>1</sup>

<i>Male names<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>	<i>Female names<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>
Cuffey Cuffy Cuffee Caffy Quoffey	24	1	Phibbah Pebbah Phebbah Feba, Febah Phibah Affiba	21	
Quashy Quashey Quashee Quash	16	2 (and 6 females)	Juba Jubah Jubba Jubbah Jobbah Jubboe Yobbah Adjubah	17	4
Quamin Quamina Quominah, Quamingo Quamino Quomino Quaminting	11	1	Mimbah Mimbo Mimboe	13	4
Sambo Samboe <sup>3</sup>	10		Cubah Cubbah Coobah Occubah Occobah Acubbah Caba	14	
Cudjo Cudjoe	9	1	Auba Aubah Obah Obbah Hawbah Taubah	12	1
Mingo Mingoe <sup>4</sup>	6 (and 3 females)	4	Occo Occoo Occow Aucoo Aco Ogoo Augoe <sup>5</sup>	10	

MOST COMMON AFRICAN NAMES AMONG BARBADOS SLAVES,  
WITH VARIANT SPELLINGS (cont.)

<i>Male names<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>	<i>Female names<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>
			Benneba	9	
			Bennebah		
			Bennybah		
			Bennytah		
			Bennah		
			Cubenh	9	
			Cubbenh		
			Cubbinah		
			Cabbannah		
			Cobenh		
			Cobbino		

<sup>1</sup> The most common names are those associated with 9 or more individuals; names with fewer than 9 individuals constitute a small and nonrepresentative portion of the African sample.

<sup>2</sup> The following (and their variant English spellings) are West African male day names: Cuffey (Friday), Quashy (Sunday), Quamin (Saturday), and Cudjo (Monday); female day names are Phibbah (Friday), Juba (Monday), Mimbah (Saturday), Cubah (Wednesday), Auba (Thursday), and Benneba (Tuesday). Although Cubenh (Tuesday) is a male name, it is only associated with females in the Barbados name sample. The male names Quaco (Wednesday) and Quao (Thursday) and the female name Quasheba (Sunday) do not appear in the sample.

<sup>3</sup> Sambo became associated with negative stereotypes in some New World areas but is a "widespread West African personal name" (Joseph E. Holloway and Winifred K. Vass, *The African Heritage of American English* [Bloomington, 1993], 147) with several identified etymological roots (see Newbell N. Puckett, *Black Names in America: Origins and Usage*, ed. Murray Heller [Boston, 1975], 442, and J. L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* [New York, 1972], 130–32, for an extended discussion). Sambo first appears in our Barbados sample in 1663 but was used earlier. Richard Ligon refers to a slave who was curious about Ligon's compass as "this Negre Sambo" and reports how "poor Sambo desired much to be a Christian." Sambo may have been the slave's name, or Ligon may have been using it as a conventional name for a slave whose name he did not know and did not bother to learn (*A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* [London, 1657], 49, 50, 54).

<sup>4</sup> Puckett notes that the name Mingo had "a relatively high frequency of usage" among slaves and free southern blacks during the colonial period and continued in use, albeit in decreased frequency, in later times. He identifies Mingo as an African male name (among the Bobangi, a group of Bantu speakers in West and west central Africa (*Black Names*, ed. Heller, 17, 24, 53, 422; see also George Peter Murdock, *Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History* [New York, 1959], 279). Although Mingo, which first appears in the Barbados name sample in 1643, is mostly associated with males, some women also possessed the name. We are not convinced about its African etymology, and it may not be an indigenous African name. Perhaps it is a diminutive of Domingo (Sunday). It has been suggested that Mingo possibly derived from St. Domingue and commemorated the late 18th-century slave revolt in Haiti, but the name appears in our sample several times in the 17th and early 18th centuries, long before the Haitian revolt.

<sup>5</sup> Puckett lists Accoo (and variant spellings, e. g., Ako) as a female name and identifies it with a number of West African peoples (*Black Names*, ed. Heller, 348–49). According to Lorenzo Turner, Occo and its variant spellings are also found as a female name ('Okó) in Gullah and may be of Yoruba origin (*Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* [Chicago, 1949], 143). Oko was a Yoruba village or town in western Nigeria during the period of the slave trade; P. C. Lloyd, "Osifekunde of Ijebu,"



easy to recognize African names or naming patterns, since not all Africans followed the Akan pattern [of day names] and not all African names are readily recognizable as foreign." The problem of recognizing and identifying African names or naming patterns "is compounded," Thornton writes, because African naming patterns have changed over time so that "a modern African or an anthropologist with experience among modern Africans might not recognize the older names or pattern as African."<sup>35</sup> Thus it is likely that our sample underestimates the frequency of African and African-derived names.

The frequency of African names in our sample remains fairly high until the very end of the slave period. From the mid-seventeenth century to the close of the eighteenth, an average of about 34 percent of the slaves had African names; in contrast, by the closing decades of the slave period (1816–1820s), the incidence of African names falls to only 14 percent. These numbers, especially for the later years, are somewhat higher than some other West Indian estimates.<sup>36</sup> Low incidences of African names may reflect the refusal of plantation officials to use and record African names or may result from misunderstandings of African pronunciations; plantation officials may have arbitrarily assumed an English-sounding equivalent when, for example, Phibba/Fiba was recorded as Phoebe or Quaco was listed as Jack.<sup>37</sup> Such misunderstandings or deliberate distortions may also explain the slightly lower incidence of African names in the Barbados sample during the colony's earlier years. From the 1650s to the 1690s, when many slaves were African-born, approximately 28 percent had African names, and about 37 percent had African names during the 1780s and 1790s, when approximately 90 percent of the island's slaves were creoles.<sup>38</sup> Because of these factors—as well as multiple name use (see below) and the possible reluctance of slaves to use their African names in the presence of plantation authorities—it is likely, as

<sup>35</sup> Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 728. Using African ethnographic evidence collected during the late 19th and 20th centuries may affect our interpretations of slave naming practices. However, we are assuming a slower rate of change in African customs relating to naming and try to rely on sources that date or utilize materials from the precolonial or the early colonial periods.

<sup>36</sup> In 16 estate inventories from 18th- and 19th-century Jamaica, DeCamp found that "the proportion of day-names among the slave names listed varied from plantation to plantation, from less than three percent up to twenty percent." However, he looked only at day names and did not include other names of possible African derivation, in "African Day-Names in Jamaica," 142. While Craton found a remarkably high percentage of African names in the 1730 Worthy Park list (53%, including 27 of 54 estate-born slave children with Akan day names), the occurrence in subsequent years was considerably lower than in the Barbados sample: 6.8% in 1793, 6.6% in 1817, and 1.3% in 1838 (*Searching for the Invisible Man*, 160).

<sup>37</sup> DeCamp, "African Day-Names in Jamaica," 129–30; Dillard, "West African Day-Names," 259; Dillard, *Black English*, 129; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York, 1974), 182–84; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 218–19; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 731. Thornton also observes how ascertaining African influences in naming patterns is further complicated by the fact that Congolese pronounced European baptismal names according to their own phonology and thus "such names may not always have been intelligible to Americans who recorded them, and they may have been further altered in the records."

<sup>38</sup> Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery*, 29.

J. L. Dillard observed for Nova Scotia, "that there were many more West African names which went unrecorded than were ever put on paper."<sup>39</sup>

Although the African-born in Barbados are often identified in the documents by English- or European-language names, there is clear evidence that some were known by African names. Coffee, for example, was an elderly slave from the Gold Coast in the 1670s; Combah was an "African woman" who had escaped from her master in the 1780s.<sup>40</sup> We have no islandwide data for the frequency with which the African-born were known by African names,<sup>41</sup> but the sharp decline in African names toward the end of the slave period probably cannot be explained entirely by the absence of new arrivals from Africa after the abolition of the slave trade in 1808 or even by undercounting in our sample. For example, the 1796 slave lists at Seawell plantation designate whether a slave was African- or Barbados-born. Only 20 percent of the individuals with seemingly African names were African-born, and the remaining 80 percent with African names were all born in Barbados; a considerable number of the latter were the children of parents born on the plantation. On Newton plantation, only one of approximately fifty individuals with African names was from Africa. Newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves also present occasional examples of creoles bearing African names; in 1808, for example, Cuffy, a creole, absconded, as did a girl called Betty Cubbah.<sup>42</sup> In 1833, at the twilight of the slave period, when all the Codrington slaves were creoles and had been systematically exposed to Christianity longer than any other group of Barbadian plantation slaves, the bishop of Barbados, reporting on a recently manumitted woman, Betty Occo, emphasized how "our names still savour a little of Africa."<sup>43</sup> The use of African names did not depend on reinforcement from newly arrived Africans; it seems to have reflected a cultural practice or tendency that placed some value on African names and, as noted above, continued for many years after the slave period had terminated. In particular, as we discuss below, some African names may have been perpetuated through namesakes, a prac-

<sup>39</sup> Dillard, "West African Day-Names," 260. See also Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 193.

<sup>40</sup> Anon., *Great Newes from the Barbadoes* (London, 1676), 9; *Barbados Mercury*, Aug. 28, 1787.

<sup>41</sup> Such data, however, are obtainable for the later periods of slavery from the slave registration returns in the Treasury Office papers (T. 71) at the Public Record Office, London. "These returns," Higman observes, "provide names for the entire Barbados slave population of 77,000 in 1817, and the names of the 30,000 children born between 1817 and 1834. These data could . . . solve the question of how many African slaves had African names at the island level . . . at least for 1817"; Higman to authors, Aug. 1, 1995. Summaries of the slave registration returns have been published in the British Parliamentary Papers, but the manuscript papers, which list the names of slaves by individual plantations, were not consulted when Handler originally gathered the name data (see note 14). Utilizing these returns would be a very large research undertaking, but they certainly could provide a basis for further exploration of some of the issues raised in this article. For materials relevant to Barbados in the Treasury papers and Parliamentary papers see Handler, *Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* (Carbondale, Ill., 1971), 108-15, 151-52.

<sup>42</sup> Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation, July 16, 1796, Newton Estate Papers, Ms. 523/292, University of London Library, and "Report on the Negroes," Newton plantation, July 2, 1796, *ibid.*, 523/288; *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, Nov. 5, 1808.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 128.

tice that could have served the dual purpose of linking children to their ancestors as well as to the African homeland.

The decline in African names during the final decades of the slave period was probably related to the infusion of European practices and ideas and to the process of creolization, evident in various aspects of slave life including language.<sup>44</sup> Christian missionizing activities contributed to the wider creolization process, and the 1741 Codrington slave list suggests how baptism may have specifically contributed to the anglicization of slave names. Approximately 45 percent of the plantation names of the Codrington baptized slaves in 1741, most or all of whom were creoles, are African, while by the late eighteenth century most youngsters at Codrington, including the unbaptized, had common European names. As Craton argues for Jamaica, in a passage that is probably also applicable to Barbados, "the gradual, and almost certainly voluntary, shift in the types of names—from a majority of African names to an increasing number of single English names, and to the first Christian names with surnames—provides a telling index of the decline of African influences and the increasing influence of Creole, Christian, and status norms."<sup>45</sup> In addition, African day names and birth-order names may have begun to assume negative meanings vis-à-vis European society. In Jamaica all fourteen day names had taken on pejorative meanings by the nineteenth century, and this may be why their use declined. A similar depreciation of African names seems to have occurred in Barbados, at least among the island's whites; by the late 1830s, a Barbadian white creole wrote that Quashy was being used as a "general term for a Negro."<sup>46</sup> In Barbados, where the white population was proportionately larger than in Jamaica and European culture exerted a stronger influence, a similar devaluation of things African may have contributed to the decreasing use of African names toward the end of the slave period.

With the possible exception of the last few decades of the slave period, the continued and relatively common use of African names in Barbados (most strikingly among the children of estate-born parents at Seawell) indicates that slaves could assign names to themselves that were recognized and accepted by plantation authorities. It is highly unlikely that a slave master would have the knowledge or desire to give a child a day name or a birth-order name or any name that is lexically identifiable as African. Thus slaves' perpetuation of African names (and refusal to abandon them) in North American and Caribbean areas<sup>47</sup> may have been a means of maintaining ties

<sup>44</sup> Rickford and Handler, "Textual Evidence," and sources cited in note 17.

<sup>45</sup> Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 34; Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, 156.

<sup>46</sup> DeCamp, "African Day-Names in Jamaica"; Theodore Easel, *Desultory Sketches and Tales of Barbados* (London, 1840), 154. Easel was a pseudonym; see Handler, *Supplement to A Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* (Providence, 1991), 43.

<sup>47</sup> Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 181-83; Cody, "Naming, Kinship, and Estate Dispersal"; Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations"; Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, 156-57; DeCamp, "African Day-Names," 142; Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 186, 242, 590 n. 31; Inscoc, "Carolina Slave Names"; Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 217-22; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole*

to their "ancestral culture and homeland. . . [in] an act of resistance against total domination by slaveowners and their alien culture."<sup>48</sup> Even so, our data show that the incidence of African names sharply declined (but did not disappear) toward the end of the slave period and that slaves were increasingly using, or being referred to, by European- or English-language names.

### *European- and English-Language Names*

The Barbados data show a small number of names distributed among a large number of people and a tendency toward particular names, mostly of European or English derivation, such as John/Johnny, Sam/Sammy, Betty/Betsy/Bess, and Mary/Mariah (Table III).<sup>49</sup> Inscoc also found on Carolina plantations a standardized set of largely Anglo-American names perpetuated over many generations. He concludes that this small set resulted from a process wherein newly arrived Africans were given Anglo names when purchased and that this name pool was subsequently reduced to a smaller set of names in succeeding generations. The name pool used by later slave generations, he maintains, was further supplemented by practices from African tradition as well as distinctive names and naming systems related to their experiences as slaves.<sup>50</sup> Although explicit corroborating evidence is lacking, it seems likely that a similar process operated in Barbados.

Approximately 75 percent of the names in the Barbados sample are Anglo-European. The most common names are listed in Table III. The twenty-two most common male names or name clusters (the latter defined as variant spellings and derivatives or diminutives of one name), as noted above, were held by 458 males, more than half of whom shared but six names. Similarly, twenty-four names were distributed among 525 females, with six names shared by over half of these individuals. Further, most of the names in Table III also appeared as the second name in double names, confirming their prominence.<sup>51</sup> Some of the most common male names listed in the table—John, William, Thomas (and their derivatives)—were also the most common names in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>52</sup> Other

*Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 166; R. L. Hall, "African Religious Retentions in Florida," in Holloway, ed., *Africanisms in American Culture*, 101–02; Morgan, "Slaves and Livestock"; Wood, *Black Majority*, 181–85; Puckett, *Black Names in America*, ed. Heller, passim.

<sup>48</sup> Gaspar, *Bondmen and Rebels*, 132; cf., for example, Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, 222.

<sup>49</sup> Sixty-one percent of the individuals shared but 44 names among them. See also note 14 above.

<sup>50</sup> Inscoc, "Carolina Slave Names." See also Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations."

<sup>51</sup> Ann occurs with considerable frequency as a second name in double names but seldom alone or as the first part of a double name. Only 8 females had Ann as a first or only name, and 40 possessed Ann as a second name. Thus Ann (which also was one of the 3 most common names in 17th- and 18th-century England) can be added to the list of the most popular European- or English-language names. Although other names, such as Thomas and William, were very popular as second names, they could also have been used as surnames. See Elizabeth G. Withercombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1977), xxviii.

<sup>52</sup> The most common female names in England at this time were Mary, Elizabeth, and Ann; *ibid.*, xxviii. In one form or another, these also were very common slave names (see Table III).

TABLE III

MOST COMMON ANGLO-EUROPEAN NAMES AMONG BARBADOS SLAVES<sup>1</sup>

<i>Male names</i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>	<i>Female names</i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>
John Johnny	46	8	Betty Betsy Bess, Bessy	78	15
Sam Sammy Samuel Sampson	43	5	Mary Maria Mariah	72	7
Will William Billy	42	33 (may be a surname)	Sarah Sarey	40	4
Tom Tommy (see Thomas below)	33	5	Nanny Nan Nancy	39	2
Harry Henry	32	8	Margaret Peg, Peggy	25	2
Jack Jackey Jacko	31	2	Hannah	24	8
Dick Dickey	26	2	Molly Moll	22	5
James Jamey	21	6	Jane Jenny	20	16
Tony Toney Anthony	21	3	Joane Joanna Joanny Joney	20	4
Charles	18	1	Sally	20	0
George	17	3	Judy Judith	19	3
Bob, Bobby Robert	16	11	Bella Bell	17	12
Ben, Benny	15				
Peter	13	4	Grace Gracey	13	12
Joe Joseph	13	2	Kate Katey Katherine	13	4
Ned, Neddy	13		Philly Philis	12	4

MOST COMMON ANGLO-EUROPEAN NAMES AMONG BARBADOS SLAVES  
(cont'd)

<i>Male names</i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>	<i>Female names</i>	<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>	<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>
Robin	12	1			
Nicholas Nick	10		Rose Rosey	11	10
Frank	9		Fanny	11	2
			Rebecca Rebec Beck Becky	10	3
Jefferey	9	1	Doll Dolly	10	3
Kitt	9	1	Diana Dinah	10	5
Tim Timothy	9		Nelly Nell	9	1
			Polly	9	
<i>Male and female names</i>		<i>Individuals with name as first or only name</i>			<i>Individuals with name as second name</i>
Kitty		15			3
Thomas		12			33 (may be a surname)
Matty		11			

<sup>1</sup> The most common names are those associated with 9 or more individuals; names with fewer than 9 individuals constitute a small and nonrepresentative portion of the Anglo-European sample.

very common slave names such as Sam and Jack may, in fact, be derived from African names: for example, Quaco became Jack and Sambo became Sam. In his study of South Carolina, Peter Wood argues that changing African names into similar sounding English ones, along with direct translations of event or day names, arose from linguistic accommodation and represented a kind of compromise between slave and master. Dillard, on the other hand, seems to imply that slaves used such anglicizations to disguise their own practices from whites. Genovese also suggests that slaves themselves were responsible for anglicizations in attempts to "live their own lives in

their own way.”<sup>53</sup> The Barbados data do not indicate whether these derivations were African survivals in an altered form or incorporations from European sources into slave naming practices. Naming after the day or circumstances of one’s birth was also common until the seventeenth century in England; “children were often christened with names [e. g., Christmas, Nowell, Easter, Whitsun] referring to the day of their birth.” English practice may have influenced some of the names found in Barbados, while other day names, particularly those referring to the days of the week, although given in the English language (and represented by only a few cases in our sample) were probably, as Thornton contends, “related to the African past.”<sup>54</sup>

As a result of contact with Europeans, west and west-central Africans sometimes voluntarily adopted Christian names whether or not they were Christian converts; thus many Africans are likely to have borne Christian names before they were shipped across the Atlantic.<sup>55</sup> For example, a Swiss based at Fort Nassau (the first Dutch fort on the Gold Coast) in the early 1600s reported that, because of prolonged contact with Europeans, Africans in the neighborhood began to give their children “Christian names, such as Peter, Paul, John. . . . They now give their children Christian names of their own accord.” A similar observation was made in the mid-1600s at another part of the Gold Coast by a German who had arrived at Fort Elmina two years after its capture by the Dutch from the Portuguese: although local Africans gave day names to their children, “some . . . have been persuaded to give them Christian names by the Portuguese.”<sup>56</sup> Similar practices existed on the Angola coast where Christianity was established by the 1490s and early 1500s. Africans in that area used baptismal and saints’ names, usually in a Portuguese form, from a period that antedated the transatlantic slave trade. Modern scholars, Thornton concludes, might erroneously assume that the names found on New World slave lists were given “by masters or as slaves’ imitations of their masters’ names,” when, in reality, they may have had these names before they were enslaved. Moreover, although many enslaved central Africans did not come from Christian areas, some had adopted Christian names in Africa, and others, once in the Americas, “may well have adopted Christian names, already possessed by many of their co-nationals and familiar to many non-Christian central Africans.”<sup>57</sup> The name Maria (and its variant spellings Marriah, Mariah) in

<sup>53</sup> Wood, *Black Majority*, 182; Dillard, *Black English*, 129–30; Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 450.

<sup>54</sup> Withycombe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary*, xxxvi; Thornton, “Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns,” 728.

<sup>55</sup> We are indebted to Thornton for this important idea; “Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns,” 731–32.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Jones, *German Sources*, 88, 109.

<sup>57</sup> Thornton, “Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns,” 729, 730. “In studying family genealogies” among the Ibo, Wieschhoff also discovered that “following the period of European contacts there was a tendency to substitute English for Ibo names”; “Social Significance of Names,” 221.

our Barbados slave sample (Table III) may be an illustration of this point,<sup>58</sup> and Mingo, although tentatively identified as an African name, may, in fact, be a contraction for Domingo (Sunday [Table II, note 4]).

### *Plantation Names and Nicknames*

It was (and is) customary in West Africa to have a number of names. Nicknames, in particular, are widespread; they are also ubiquitous features of Afro-American naming systems, including the contemporary Caribbean.<sup>59</sup> In the West Indies, this pattern has been documented for many years. In the late nineteenth century, for example, decades after emancipation, George Hawtayne (writing under the pseudonym X. Beke) observed that "every" working-class black person "in some of the West India Islands" had, in addition to a "lengthy and romantic" baptismal name, "a play-name, or name for common every day use, which is as a rule, short and so to speak, handy."<sup>60</sup>

The practice that attracted Hawtayne's attention was a continuation of cultural norms that were prevalent features of earlier periods: all evidence indicates that plantation names and multiple names in general were widespread among North American and Caribbean slaves. In the 1840s, for example, "an employee of two South Carolina planters tried to make an inventory of their slave holdings according to age and skills"; he found it difficult, however, "to get a satisfactory list of them" because they were "called by so many different names among themselves." A French Guiana (Cayenne) plantation inventory in the late 1600s includes the slaves' Christian names as well as plantation names and indicates which ones were used by blacks, whites, or both. Although most slaves on this plantation had baptismal names, Thornton reports "they were called by various African names among their comrades." Plantation names were also fairly common among slaves in the French colony of Guadeloupe and in French Louisiana, where, Gwendolyn Midlo Hall observes, "many slaves who were listed in documents under French names actually used African names, which were sometimes listed in court records as second names." DeCamp notes that some Jamaican slaveowners "were aware that the slave parents had a different set of names by which they called their children." Blassingame reports that in the antebellum South, a slave would

<sup>58</sup> Although Maria and its variant spellings are grouped with Mary in Table III, Maria appears as a first name 14 times in the sample (the earliest dates being 1643 and 1654); Mary appears as a first name 58 times.

<sup>59</sup> Keith E. Baird and Mary A. Twining, "Names and Naming in the Sea Islands," in Twining and Baird, eds., *Sea Island Roots: African Presence in the Carolinas and Georgia* (Trenton, N. J., 1991), 37-55; Daniel J. Crowley, "Naming Customs in St. Lucia," *Social and Economic Studies*, 5 (1956), 87-92; Michael G. Smith, *Kinship and Community in Carriacou* (New Haven, 1962), 91-92; Price and Price, "Saramaka Onomastics"; Frank E. Manning, "Nicknames and Number Plates in the British West Indies," *Journal of American Folklore*, 87 (1974), 123-32; Martha Warren Beckwith, *Black Roadways: A Study of Jamaican Folk Life* (New York, 1969; orig. pub. 1929), 59; Puckett, *Black Names in America*, ed. Heller, passim.

<sup>60</sup> X. Beke [George Hawtayne], "West Indian Yarns" (1890), in Abrahams and Szwed, *After Africa*, 102.



answer "to one name when called by his master" and use his preferred or "actual name in conversations in the quarters."<sup>61</sup>

Direct evidence that Barbadian slaves had multiple names occurs early in the island's history, a practice that confused Europeans. A clause in a 1709 law stressed how slaveowners found it "very difficult to prove a right to Negroes" in contested ownership cases, "their names many times being unintelligible, and many going under two names, and others under one and the same name."<sup>62</sup> The wording of this law and the context of the phrasing indicate a common, not an unusual, practice on the island. The "unintelligible" names were undoubtedly African or of African derivation, and "going under two names" implies the use of plantation names—rather than English double names such as Mary Ann or John Andrew. The great likelihood that slaves used plantation names among themselves has important implications for the study of slave names in general. Since the overwhelming majority of these names were never recorded by plantation authorities, they are absent from the historical record.<sup>63</sup> A crucial dimension of day-to-day name use among the slaves thus remains obscure.

The best evidence for plantation names in Barbados is contained in the 1741 slave list at Codrington compiled by Sampson Smirk, the catechist; the list contains 202 names and distinguishes between the unbaptized ( $N = 131$ ) and the baptized ( $N = 71$ ). Both Christian and plantation names are identified for each of the seventy-one baptized slaves, who comprised about 35 percent of the 202 slaves, and approximately 45 percent of their plantation names are readily identifiable as African—e.g., Quashey and Occo—even though most, if not all, of the baptized slaves were creoles (Table I).<sup>64</sup> Many of the names that are not lexically African seem to conform to the West African pattern of naming a child after a special day or event, a personality trait, a personal or physical characteristic (e.g., Drummer), or a place name (e.g., London).<sup>65</sup> Since the Codrington slaves were all recently baptized

<sup>61</sup> Leslie Howard Owens, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (New York, 1976), 175; G. Debien and J. Houdaille, "Les Origines des Esclaves aux Antilles," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire*, Ser. B, 26 (1964), 168–93, cited in Price and Price, "Saramaka Onomastics," 361; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 731; Jacques Adelaide, "Demography and Names of Slaves of Le Moule, 1845 to May 1848," in *Papers Presented at the 3rd Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, Guyana, 1971* (Cave Hill, Barbados, 1974), 90; Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 166; DeCamp, "African Day-Names in Jamaica," 142; Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 183.

<sup>62</sup> "An act to secure the peaceable possession of negroes and other slaves, to the inhabitants of this island," June 24, 1709, in Richard Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados. From 1643 to 1762, Inclusive* (London, 1764), 192.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Puckett, *Black Names in America*, ed. Heller, 43.

<sup>64</sup> Smirk, "A List of Negroes that are Baptized and Not Baptized on the Honble & Revnd Society's Estates in Barbados," Apr. 6, 1741, Letter Books, vol. B. 8, Nos. 54–55, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London. The reason why so many of Codrington slaves were unbaptized, Smirk reported, was "they cannot speak English . . . most of them being of full age and Guinea Negroes."

<sup>65</sup> Akinaso, "Yoruba Traditional Names"; Bascom, *Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*, 55–56; Forde, *Yoruba-Speaking Peoples*, 27; Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 191; Jones, *German Sources*, 88; Mbiti, *African Religions*, 154; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 727–28, 741; Uchendu, *Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, 60; cf. Baird and Twining, "Names and Naming in the Sea Islands."

when the list was compiled, it is likely that they had recently acquired their Christian names and that the plantation names were the names that had been, or were still being, used by the slaves among themselves as well as in their dealings with the plantation authorities. The adoption of Anglo or European names following baptism may indicate, as Craton concludes for Jamaica, that conversion to Christianity probably influenced the anglicization of slave names.<sup>66</sup> Few slaves in Barbados, with the notable exception of those at Codrington, were baptized until the 1820s.<sup>67</sup> In our name sample, the incidence of African names remained at about 35 percent until 1816–1820, when it dropped to 14 percent, suggesting a correlation between conversion and the adoption of anglicized baptismal names. Moreover, although not within our data, it is likely, as indicated by modern Barbadian (and West Indian and West African) practice, not only that nicknames were given to children but also that, as they matured, they acquired additional names (sometimes dropping the earlier ones) as they developed new characteristics, skills, or personal attributes.

Further evidence that Barbadian slaves had several names, even in the absence of baptismal ones, comes from the 1796 slave lists of Newton and Seawell, compiled by Sampson Wood, the plantations' manager from 1796 to 1803.<sup>68</sup> In some cases, an individual is listed with an alias, such as George (a.k.a. Cudjoe) and Cubbenah (a.k.a. Would come), and in others the same individual is listed differently in different places in the lists: for instance, Polly Amelia is also listed as Pamela, Bob is sometimes referred to as "Bob the Cooper," and Mimbah Jubbah is also called Mimbah Judy. Some of these examples may reflect transcription errors or unwitting inconsistencies in the source. However, recording of aliases provides unquestionable evidence of the use of multiple names, some of them probably plantation names.

Other, scattered, references suggesting that names originated in the slave community include an 1819 runaway advertisement that reports the absence of "a mulatto man . . . named William" but emphasizes that he "calls himself Morris"; another refers to a "Negro girl slave named Ariadne, who also answers to the name of Mary." Parish baptismal registers contain similar evidence. In 1823 and 1824, for example, the St. Joseph register records that James Clarke was "also called Mingo," that Benjamin was "commonly called

<sup>66</sup> Craton, *Searching for the Invisible Man*, 157–58. Thornton raises another possible explanation for the presence of English slave names by observing that "researchers have no way of knowing how many apparently Euro-American slave names were actually the names of Angolans given in Africa from a long tradition of giving baptismal names." In the New World, "recognizable baptismal names," he argues, "may well have been translated from one language to another—a custom widespread in Europe—and thus it is reasonable to assume that a Kongolese name like João lurks behind many New World Johns or Johnnies or that Diogo might well have become James or Jimmie in America." In a similar fashion, Thornton conjectures, many apparent Spanish names in Anglo-America, e.g., Juan, Manuel, Pedro, "may rest on a Portuguese or Angolan base name. Even retaining a certain diversity in names—that is, having both 'Johns' and 'Juans'—may have helped owners to distinguish slaves with otherwise similar names" (Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 730–31).

<sup>67</sup> Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore, 1974), 161–65; Handler and Lange, *Plantation Slavery*, 175, 311 n. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Sampson Wood, "Report," Newton, and "Report," Seawell.

Cobennah," and that John Edward was "commonly called Cuffee."<sup>69</sup> Among modern Afro-Caribbean populations, individuals commonly have both a Christian or baptismal name and one or more nicknames. The latter are more commonly known within the community, often to the exclusion of the baptismal name. The way nicknames are used and given today may supply some indication of how the plantation name system worked in slave communities. In the Barbados village of Chalky Mount in the early 1960s,<sup>70</sup> one author found that most adult villagers had at least one baptismal name and that many, if not most, also had nicknames, which were the names in daily use. Sometimes neighbors who had known each other all of their lives were unaware of the baptismal names and knew each other only by the nicknames. Villagers often commented with a certain humor that the anthropologist was the only one who knew everyone's "true" name. For example, a well-known villager was Tommy to everyone, and virtually no one knew that his baptismal name was Samuel. Similarly, Chilley Smith's baptismal name was Alfonzo, a fact unknown to most of the villagers, including his close co-workers at a nearby sugar plantation. Although Clifford Goodman's Christian name was widely known, he was nonetheless most often referred to by one of three nicknames, Goody, Maxie, or German—the last two referring to Max Baer, the 1930s German heavyweight whose boxing style Goodman emulated when he was a young man.

Observing that nicknames are used in the contemporary British West Indies to the exclusion of formal baptismal names, Frank Manning postulates that they distinguish people in a small, insular society who share a small number of surnames and a small repertoire of first names and have a high incidence of namesakes; "formal names are nonfunctional from the standpoint of individuating persons; alternate designations are needed."<sup>71</sup> These conditions also existed in West Indian slave communities, including Barbados plantations where, as discussed above, small sets of English first names were shared by large numbers of individuals, almost none of whom had differentiating surnames.

Within the context of enslavement, the plantation names slaves used among themselves were more than just a means of "individuating persons." Melville J. Herskovits has suggested that "names given by the slaveowners were most likely regarded as but an added designation to which one responded. . . . being accepted with the reservation that different, 'real' names were to be used in the cabin or on other occasions when none but fellow slaves were present." This pattern of using different names among outsiders and community members may have grown out of the slave experience wherein African naming practices, which had been tied to ritual and identity, took on a more practical adaptive function in a situation of subjugation.

<sup>69</sup> *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, Feb. 2, 1819, Jan. 24, 1807; Parochial Register, St. Joseph Parish, Slave Baptisms, RL 1/30, pp. 132, 137, BDA.

<sup>70</sup> Handler, "Land Exploitative Activities and Economic Patterns in a Barbados Village" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1964).

<sup>71</sup> Manning, "Nicknames and Number Plates," 128.

Calling names “strong metaphors for power relations,” especially in the context of slavery, Richard and Sally Price argue that, “in this adaptive use of the naming system, motives such as fear and deception, which play little part in patterns of name use within communities, become relevant.”<sup>72</sup> In multiple names, both African-born and creole slaves found a means of maintaining self-esteem and establishing an identity that transcended enslavement. By retaining features of African naming systems, slaves were “often successful,” as Hall phrases it for French Louisiana (where African names regularly appear in official records), in their “resistance to socialization” to the slave system.<sup>73</sup>

### *Namesaking*

As in other aspects of the naming process, West Africans showed variations in namesaking. Sometimes children were named after close friends of either or both parents;<sup>74</sup> more frequently, they were named after relatives, living or dead. An Asante child was usually named after its father’s “forebears on either side of his parentage” or “after a male or female relative on the paternal side,” including grandparents. The Temne of Sierra Leone usually named the first child after the father or a paternal relative and the second after the mother or a maternal relative, and the Tikar of the Cameroons named a male child after his grandfather or the oldest male of his lineage. The Kongolese of present-day west-central Africa, according to Thornton, name their children first after the grandparents; “once the four grandparental names are exhausted, children receive their parents’ given names.”<sup>75</sup> Where children were named after relatives, the ethnographic literature is often unclear as to whether the relatives were living or dead. Ancestors played an important role in many West African religions, and where cultural practices established that a child was the reincarnation of a particular ancestor, the child received the name of that ancestor, who might be a grandparent. Such practices may also have informed some of the kin-naming practices of New World slaves. Monk Lewis relates that a slave on his Jamaican plantation requested that his son’s name, Oscar, “be changed for that of Julius, which (it seems) had been that of his own father. The child, he said, had always been weakly, and he was persuaded that its ill-health proceeded from his deceased grandfather’s being displeased because it had not been called after him.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past*, 193; Price and Price, “Saramaka Onomastics,” 358. The system of multiple names in modern St. Lucia is similarly instrumental and provides “an effective means of passive resistance to unpopular, or unsympathetic administrative influences, political, religious, and legal”; Crowley, “Naming Customs in St. Lucia,” 92.

<sup>73</sup> Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana*, 166.

<sup>74</sup> Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2:202; Madubiike, *Structure and Meaning in Igbo Names*, 106.

<sup>75</sup> Fortes, “Kinship and Marriage,” 266; Manoukian, *Akan and Ga-Adangme Peoples*, 51; McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone*, 74, and “Tikar of the British and French Cameroons,” 44; Thornton, “Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns,” 740.

<sup>76</sup> Akinnaso, “Yoruba Traditional Names,” 151–53; Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2:202; Madubiike, *Structure and Meaning in Igbo Names*, 29, 106, 115; Manoukian, *Ewe-Speaking People of Togoland*, 42; Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, 31, 37, 38, 40; Lewis, “Journal of a West Indian Proprietor,” 100.

The 1796 Newton and Seawell slave lists offer insight into kin-related naming practices, some of which may have been greatly influenced by West African traditions. The lists record each slave by name, place of birth, occupation, sex, and age group and often include information on the number and names of children and the names of mothers, fathers, spouses, and, occasionally, siblings. Although British Caribbean slave masters often compiled lists that detailed the characteristics of their slaves, "they were rarely concerned," writes Higman, "to record the slaves' relationships to one another."<sup>77</sup> The Newton and Seawell lists enabled us to compile genealogical charts (Figures I-VIII) from two to four generations deep (there is only one case of the latter) for forty-nine kin groups or "families."<sup>78</sup> These groups include 137 adults with children, approximately 85 percent of the total number of slaves on the two plantations.<sup>79</sup> In 1796, about 98 percent of Newton's 255 slaves were born on the plantation (about 1 percent was born elsewhere in Barbados and another 1 percent in Africa). Although Seawell had a larger African population (approximately 6 percent of its 182 slaves; the remainder were born at Seawell), only a few Africans, all older people, "intermarried"—that is, cohabited on a continuous basis and were recognized as a stable union by plantation authorities—with the estate-born slaves or had children.<sup>80</sup>

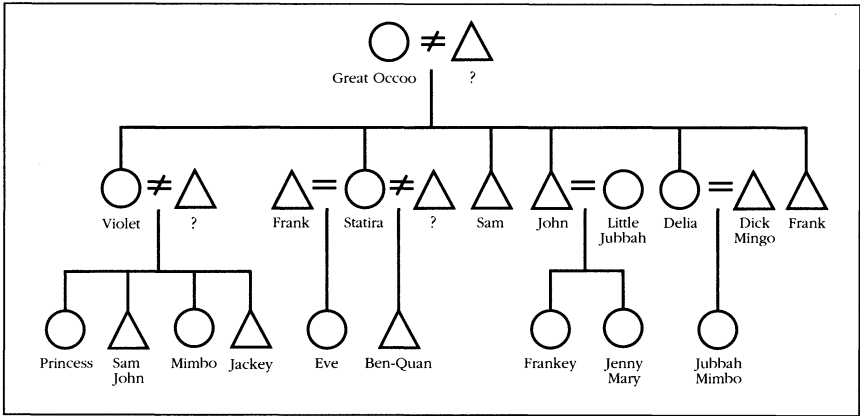
The genealogical charts show that children could be named after either parent. Of the thirty-six adult males indicated as fathers, nine had a child with the same name; all but one of these namesakes were male (in the exception, Bristol's daughter was Coobah Bristol; Figure VIII). Of the 101 women

<sup>77</sup> Sampson Wood, "Report," Newton, and "Report," Seawell; Higman, "Terms for Kin in the British West Indian Slave Community," 70.

<sup>78</sup> Hilary McD. Beckles has produced genealogical charts for the families of Great Occoo, Great Phebe, Great Sarey, Bess, and Old Doll. Of the genealogies we have in common with Beckles, only that of Bess's family is identical to ours. Beckles's greatest errors are with Great Occoo's family. For example, he shows Little Jubbah as John's daughter when she was John's wife; he omits the offspring of John and Little Jubbah; he shows Sam, John, and "twins" as three separate children of Occoo, but Sam and John were the twins; he omits Violet's son Jacky; and he lists Sam and John as two of Violet's children when "Sam John" was the name of one child. Beckles also makes errors, albeit minor ones, in the charts of Great Phebe's, Great Sarey's, and Old Doll's families; with respect to the last, for example, he omits Hercules's son Billy Thomas and adds a daughter named Dorothy to Betsy's family. We have rechecked the accuracy of our charts several times and are confident that our versions are correct (Figures I-V). See Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London, 1989), 124–25, 127.

<sup>79</sup> Our analysis of the Newton data places 221 (87%) of the plantation's 255 slaves into family units. These figures are slightly higher than Higman's; he tabulated 201 individuals with family resident on the plantation. This discrepancy can be explained by our inclusion of individuals listed as someone's child as part of the parent's family unit even if the parent was not recorded under the individual's own entry. Higman presumably only counted the individuals with family specified in their entries and did not cross-reference entries; thus a number of individuals were omitted, although they may have appeared as family members in another person's entry; Sampson Wood, "Report," Newton; Higman, "Slave Family and Household," 269.

<sup>80</sup> Sampson Wood, "Report," Newton, and "Report," Seawell. In his account of Seawell, Wood reported that its Africans were "in general, old and none have been bought for many years"; he seems to imply that at least some of the Africans had spouses and probably, in the case of the men, children on other plantations not listed in the Seawell records.



Key to symbols used in figures

- : female
- △ : male
- ? : below gender symbol: unidentified or unnamed in source
- ( ) : (name in parentheses): alternate name for same person
- = : referred to as "husband" and "wife" in source
- ≠ : relationship not specified or terminated

FIGURE I

Great Occoo's family, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation.

with children, eleven had children of the same name, all female. However, we cannot assume that the information given for each slave is complete. There is internal evidence that a number of kin relationships are unrecorded, and the records contain inconsistencies. Because genealogical information is given only for slaves who belonged to Newton or Seawell, children who were fathered by Newton or Seawell slaves but whose mothers belonged to other plantations do not appear on the lists. As Sampson Wood explains for Newton, "all women whose husbands names are not mentioned, having children, their husbands are men who do not belong to the estate." In addition, because only living parents are recorded, it is possible in only one case, Old Doll's family (Figure V), to chart relatives four generations deep.<sup>81</sup> Our charts are usually restricted to two generations or to just a mother and her children.

Despite deficiencies, the Newton and Seawell records yield a general pattern of parents with single names having children with double names that incorporate a parent's name; for example, Jack's son was Jack Thomas,

<sup>81</sup> Old Doll's father was white. Her very large and atypical family, some of whose members had a variety of privileges and were also involved with white men, is described in detail in Sampson Wood's "Report on the Negroes," from which the above quote is also drawn, made to Newton's owners in England; Sampson Wood, "Report," Newton.

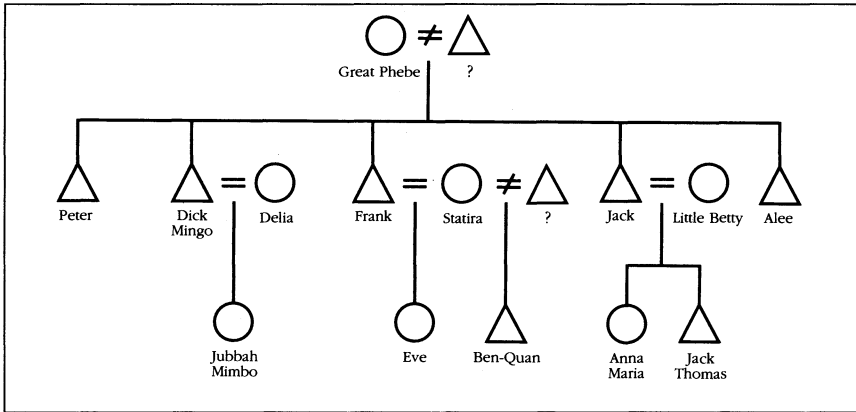


FIGURE II

Great Phebe's family, From Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation.

Quasheba's daughter was Molly Quash, and Bristol's daughter was Coobah Bristol (Figures II, VII, VIII).<sup>82</sup> Parents with double names have children with single names that are one of the parents' names; Old Doll's daughter was Dolly, and Little Harry's son was Harry (Figures V, VI). This naming pattern served to differentiate individuals who shared the same name, both in plantation records and, it seems likely, among the slaves themselves. Elaine G. Breslaw presents similar examples from late seventeenth-century Barbados plantation inventories: some children with the same name as either parent had a diminutive placed in front of the name, e.g., Young Mingo, Little Bessie, Little Jug, and Little Moll; in other cases there was more explicit namesaking, e.g., Jackoe's daughter was called Mariah Jackoe, and Tony's son was Dickie Tony; Mingo Pharrock's son had the same names as his father, as did Mingo Cormante's son. J. Harry Bennett discerned a similar practice on the Codrington plantations, where "children quite often kept the names of their mothers as surnames"; from this he concluded that the reiteration of the mother's name in the second part of a child's name was equivalent to a matronymic surname or family name.<sup>83</sup> In the Newton data and other examples, however, this reiteration is just as common among sons and fathers as among daughters and mothers. Whatever the case, such naming patterns emphasize individual descent, suggesting that slave naming practices are more similar to West African double-naming systems than to the European system of family surnames.

<sup>82</sup> This is very similar to a nicknaming practice found in modern Barbados. At Chalky Mount, for example, Bea Murray's son was Clyde, but he was most commonly known as Bea Clyde.

<sup>83</sup> Breslaw, *Tiruba, Reluctant Witch of Salem: Devilish Indians and Puritan Families* (New York, 1996), 53–54; Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 34.

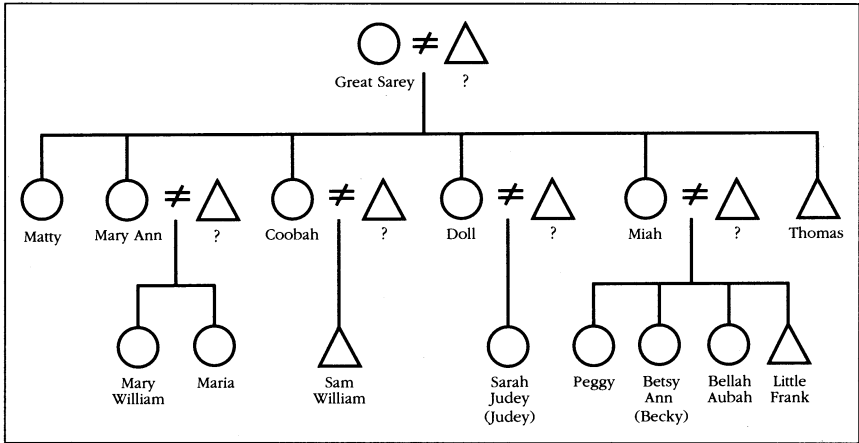


FIGURE III

Great Sarey's family, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation.

Although only 15 percent of the Newton and Seawell parents had children who shared their names (this percentage would probably be larger if the lists were absolutely accurate and complete and if children at other plantations were taken into account), this seems to reflect a wider practice of naming children after members of a kin network that incorporated more distant relations such as grandparents, affines, and maternal and paternal aunts and uncles. In South Carolina, "slaves may have extended back beyond grandparents to confirm ties to more distant kin,"<sup>84</sup> but the Barbados data lack the genealogical depth needed to trace such distant namesakes and rarely show family relations beyond immediate "blood" kin. In any case, at Newton and Seawell it was common to name granddaughters after their maternal grandmothers (of the twenty-five women listed with female grandchildren, eight had granddaughters named after them); slightly less common was naming nieces after maternal aunts (five cases) and nephews after maternal uncles (four cases). In contrast to the frequency of matrilineal namesakes, there were only four namesakes for paternal relatives other than the father.

The relatively high incidence of granddaughters who bore their maternal grandmothers' names, coupled with the comparatively strong tendency for children with double names to be named for other maternal relatives, may point to a matrilineal emphasis. On the other hand, the much smaller number of kin named after paternal relatives may simply result from under-representation of the father's family in the slave lists. As discussed

<sup>84</sup> Cody, "There Was No 'Absalom' on the Ball Plantations," 594.



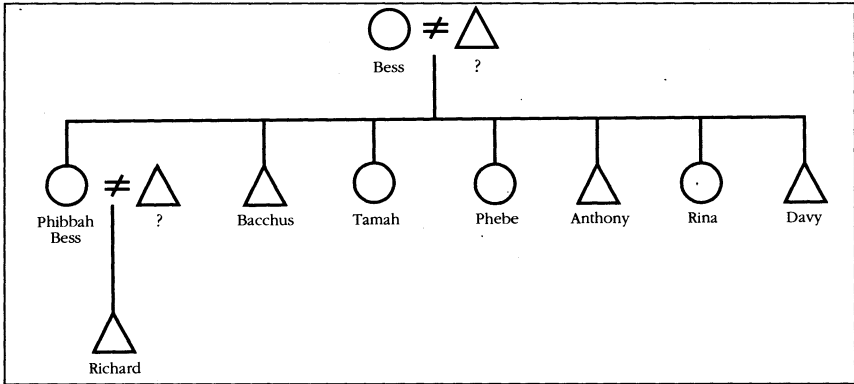


FIGURE IV

Bess's family, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation.

above, plantation authorities recognized more mother-child relationships than father-child relationships, since children born of mothers on other plantations but fathered by Newton and Seawell men were not recorded.

Namesaking for kin seems to have been a fairly common pattern. It is also possible that children bore the names of elders or other respected members of the slave community who were not necessarily blood relations. Groups in the Gold Coast sometimes named their children after close personal friends or "some other person dear to the family," and similar practices may have occurred in the New World. In Jamaica, for example, Bryan Edwards commented favorably on the "high veneration in which old age is held"; elderly people (surely continuing an African terminological practice) were addressed as "*Ta* Quaco and *Ma* Quasheba; *Ta* and *Ma*, signifying Father and Mother, by which designation they mean to convey not only the idea of filial reverence, but also that of esteem and fondness."<sup>85</sup> Such an extension beyond the blood line may mean, to take an example from Seawell plantation, that Celia's granddaughter, Betty Dido, may have been named after her grandmother's contemporary, Dido, as well as Dido's daughter Betty.<sup>86</sup> At Newton, Coobah's daughter Sue may have been named after her grandmother Daphne's contemporary, and Bristol's son Dublin seems likely to have been named after Bristol's contemporary, Great Dublin.

<sup>85</sup> Madubiike, *Structure and Meaning in Igbo Names*, 106. See also Cruickshank, *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, 2:202; and Edwards, "The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies" (1793), in Abrahams and Szwed, *After Africa*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> Sampson Wood, "Report," Seawell.

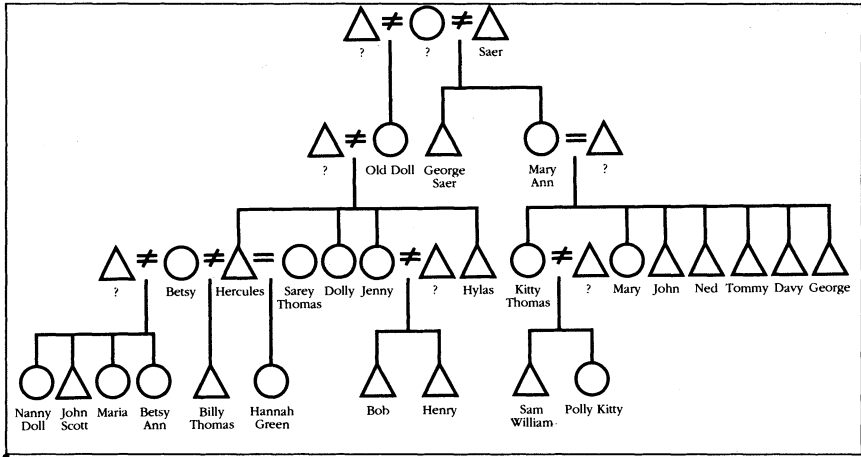


FIGURE V

Old Doll's family, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Newton plantation.

Naming after affines or fictive kin (e.g., godparents) may be common in the modern Caribbean,<sup>87</sup> and this naming practice fits well with speculations on the development of "fictive kin networks" among New World slaves.<sup>88</sup> Naming after elders may have been a means to express respect and deference. It also may have imparted to the child some of the desired characteristics of his or her namesake as, for example, in modern Jamaica, where "children are given names of powerful people who it is felt will protect them."<sup>89</sup> Although the evidence is inferential, the naming of children after nonblood kin also may have been an important aspect of Barbadian naming practices.

### *Surnames*

West African traditions also seem to have been reflected in the adoption of surnames, an aspect of naming that scholars have conventionally attributed solely to European influences on slave culture. Surnames are a second name added to the given name, baptismal name, or forename. In contem-

<sup>87</sup> Crowley, "Naming Customs in St. Lucia," 87; Melville J. Herskovits and Frances S. Herskovits, *Trinidad Village* (New York, 1947), 118-19.

<sup>88</sup> Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London, 1967), 169-70; Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 7; Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society 1650-1838* (Kingston, Jam., 1990), 105.

<sup>89</sup> Fernando Henriques, *Family and Colour in Jamaica*, 2d ed. (London, 1968), 129. See also Raymond T. Smith, *The Negro Family in British Guiana* (London, 1956), 132.

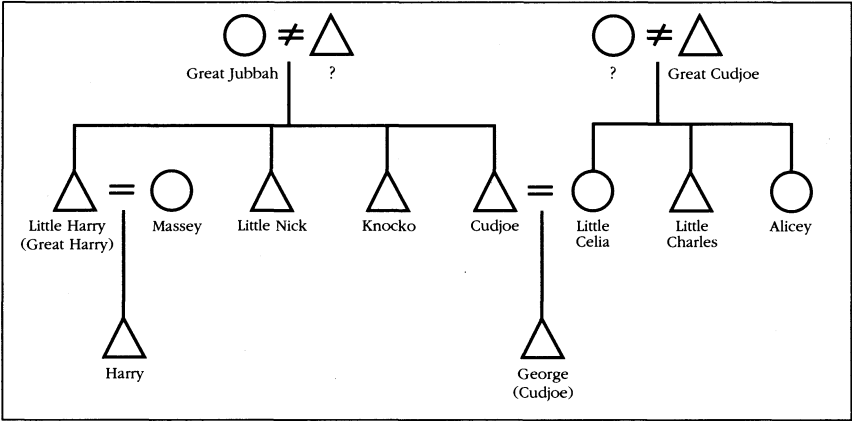


FIGURE VI

The families of Great Jubbah and Great Cudjoe, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation.

porary Anglo-American usage, surnames identify family membership through the father's line, but this is only one of many conventions. In England, for example, surname use among all classes was not common until the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Although many English surnames "were patronymics, even more were place-names indicating the residence or place of origin of the bearer"; others were descriptive of the trades or occupations, and some were "nicknames, sometimes descriptive, sometimes derisive."<sup>90</sup>

Surnames existed in West Africa but were usually not family names in the European sense, and the method of assigning surnames varied from group to group. Some peoples of Sierra Leone replace names given at birth with new names, including a surname: a boy's surname could be the surname of his mother or some female relative; a girl's could be her father's or that of a male relative. Such surnames indicated descent but were not family names.<sup>91</sup>

In Barbados, most slaves were identified by a single name, e.g., Bob, Jack, Doll, Cuffey, or Phebah. Of our total 2,229-name sample, 66 percent were single names and 34 percent were double names, e.g., Judy Bell, Mary Prudence.<sup>92</sup> Some double names involved a first name and what in European practice would be a family surname; others comprised two first names and no family name (although slaves may have viewed a second first

<sup>90</sup> Withycombe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary*, xxix.

<sup>91</sup> McCulloch, *Peoples of Sierra Leone*, 84. See also Alland, *When the Spider Danced*, 94; Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns"; and Mbiti, *African Religions*, 154-55.

<sup>92</sup> More than one Christian name in double names (e.g., John William, Mary Anne) became common in England by the 1600s; Withycombe, ed., *Oxford Dictionary*, xliii.

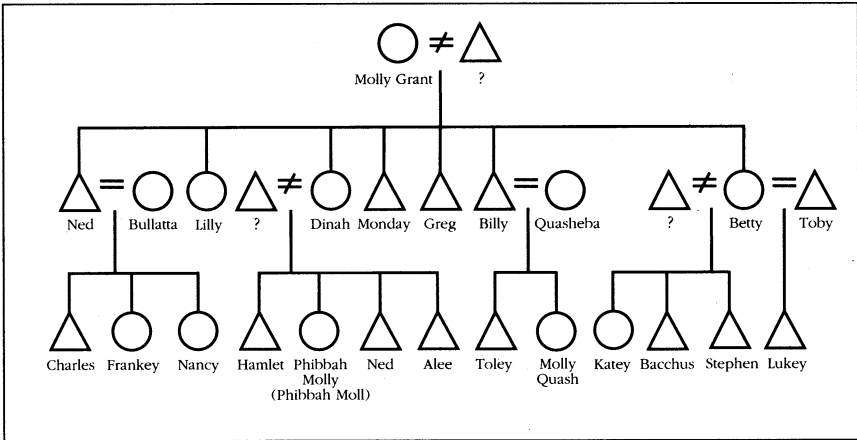


FIGURE VII

Molly Grant's family, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Newton plantation.

name as a surname). Since the second name in a double name is sometimes a name such as Francis or Thomas that could as easily be a first name as a family surname, there are difficulties in positively identifying all surnames. It was impossible for us to be certain when these second names were a type of surname. Erring on the side of caution, we did not count double names that could also have been two first names as surnames unless they were held in common by at least two potentially related individuals, i.e., contemporaries at the same plantation. Nonetheless, 190 persons (12 percent) are identifiable with what may have been surnames. These share 112 surnames, the most common being Thomas (33 individuals), followed by Green (6), Moore (4), and Rocheford (4).<sup>93</sup> Most of the people with Anglo or European surnames also had Anglo or European first names; only a small minority (11 persons) possessed African first names as, for example, Coobah Bristol, Bennebah Moore, Phibbah Nurse, and Cuffey Jones.

Surnamed individuals are disproportionately represented in the later slave period and overwhelmingly so during the pre-emancipation decades of the nineteenth century. Whereas 11 percent of the sample derives from seventeenth-century sources, a little less than 2 percent of the 190 surnamed individuals are listed during that century; 28 percent of the total sample is from the early to mid-eighteenth century, but only 3 percent with surnames are listed in this period; 22 percent are in late eighteenth-century sources, but 17 percent of the surnamed fall within this period. In

<sup>93</sup> Three individuals each were represented by Bignall (or Bignal, Bignald), Bynoe, Grant, Harper, Nurse, Rogers, and Welch. Thomas, Green, and Moore are very common family names in Barbados today; Rocheford, though present, is rare.

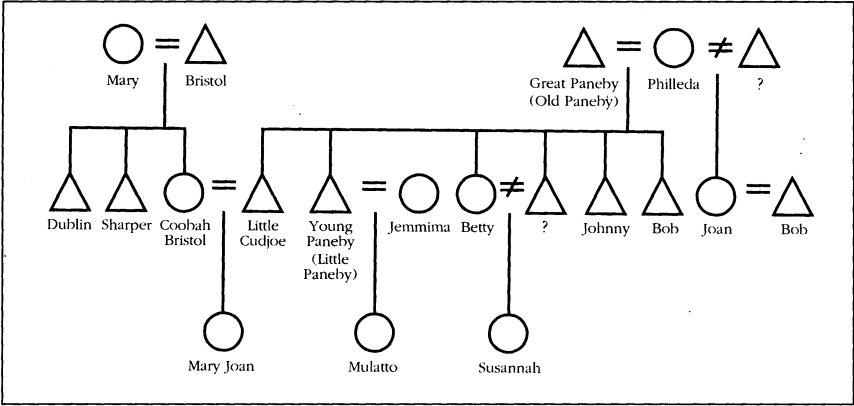


FIGURE VIII

The families of Mary and Bristol, Great Paneby and Philleda, from Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes, Newton plantation.

contrast, although 39 percent of the total sample is from the pre-emancipation nineteenth century, 78 percent ( $N = 149$ ) with surnames are from this period. Since Barbados registration returns (unlike those of some other West Indian colonies) did not require surnames, it is unlikely that the increase in surnames toward the end of the slave era results from more complete records. Instead, coming at a time when Christian missionary activities among slaves were expanding and ameliorative measures in slave laws and treatment were being taken, the increase may be another reflection of creolization and, perhaps, of changes in the slave system that allowed slaves to form relatively stable multigenerational family groups.

How slaves adopted or were assigned surnames is another issue. Writing in the early nineteenth century about the growth of the freedman population (free blacks and mulattoes) in Barbados, J. W. Orderson, a white creole, reported that most slaves who purchased their freedom were already baptized; when they were manumitted, they added "to their Christian name that of their owner's family."<sup>94</sup> Illustrations of Orderson's observation can be found in the Newton plantation records. Several manumitted or about to be manumitted slaves seem to have adopted the names of Newton owners, though the records are unclear as to whether these names were legally recognized or informally acknowledged by plantation authorities. For example, Dolly refers to herself as Dolly Newton in an 1807 letter to Thomas Lane who, with his brother John, owned Newton and Seawell,

<sup>94</sup> Orderson, *Cursory Remarks and Plain Facts Connected with the Question Produced by the Proposed Slave Registry Bill* (London, 1816), 15. On manumissions in Barbados see Handler, *Unappropriated People*, 48-51, and Handler and Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions."

requesting that her manumission be “executed.”<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Ann, a manumitted Newton slave, appears with two surnames (Miler and Newton) in another document. Another woman is referred to as “Jenny Lane, a slave,” in a document prior to her manumission and calls herself Jane Lane in a letter to John and Thomas Lane; she is referred to as “Jenny, a free black woman” in the deed by which the Lane brothers sold to Jenny her two sons, whom she hoped to manumit herself.<sup>96</sup> Such examples apart, it must be emphasized that only a minute fraction of Barbadian slaves were manumitted—far below 1 percent of the total slave population—and an even smaller percentage gained freedom through self-purchase.

There was no clear tendency for slaves with surnames to bear the names of their owners or other slave masters. For example, at Newton and Seawell during 1796, some fourteen slaves had second names that may have been surnames, e.g. Banton, Knight, Spencer, Rogers, Straker, Scott, and Saer, none of which was the name of an owner or a known manager. George Saer carried his white father’s names, and, although his father may have been connected to Newton,<sup>97</sup> he had not been an owner; none of the other possibly surnamed slaves had the same name as any of the plantations’ seventeenth- or eighteenth- century owners. Moreover, all of these slaves had been born at either Newton or Seawell. Likewise, the 1791 Seawell list contains some six slaves with possible surnames (e.g., Williams, Thomas, Sergeant), but none of these names could be associated with any of Seawell’s owners or managers.<sup>98</sup>

We sought data on slave surnames by sampling hundreds (out of thousands) of slave baptism registrations for five parishes from the mid-1820s to 1834. The registers give the names of the slave, the mother, the plantation, and the slaveowner. Most of the slaves had single names, but double names—e.g., Sarah Kitty, John Thomas, Mary Patience, Betty Frances, Mary Ann—were not uncommon. Some of these double names were possibly or probably surnames, but rarely were these the name of the slave’s owner. Very typical examples include: Henry Barrow was owned by Samuel Ramsey, James Lewis was owned by Alice Squires, Samuel Livingston by David Hall, John Alleyne by Benjamin Hinds, and Charlotte Holder by John Higginson. Only Elizabeth Cobham bore the surname of her owner, Catherine Cobham; Hester Cadogan was baptized as an infant, and her mother’s owner was Ward Cadogan. The registers undoubtedly contain more

<sup>95</sup> Dolly Newton to Thomas Lane, Mar. 4, 1813, NEP 523/652; it cannot be ascertained whether she chose this name after the plantation on which she lived or consciously identified herself with former plantation owners.

<sup>96</sup> Petition of Elizabeth Ann Miler [or Newton] to Thomas and John Lane, May 25, 1801, NEP 523/441; “Jenny Lane, a slave” to Thomas Lane, 1804, NEP 523/579; Jane Lane to John and Thomas Lane, Mar. 4, 1813, NEP 523/690; Indentures between John and Thomas Lane and “Jenny, a free black woman,” May 8, 1818, NEP 523/976. See also Handler, *Unappropriated People*, 37.

<sup>97</sup> Sampson Wood, “Report,” Newton, and “Report,” Seawell.

<sup>98</sup> “List of Negroes on Seawell,” Apr. 15, 1791, NEP 523/276.

cases of this kind, but the sample indicates that slaves generally had surnames that differed from those of their owners.<sup>99</sup>

Scores of runaway ads in several newspapers during the late 1700s and early 1800s yield similar results. Most of the slaves mentioned were known only by a single Christian or Anglo-European name and less often by a double name, and rarely is the second of these double names identifiable as a surname; in such cases, the name is always different from that of the owner who is advertising for the runaway. Thus, as with the parish registers, the newspaper ads offer no evidence that surnames were taken from the names of the masters who owned the slaves in question.<sup>100</sup>

The adoption of surnames increased toward the end of the slave period and accelerated after emancipation, when the ex-slaves required surnames for such legal purposes as land titles, marriages, and death certificates. Ex-slaves took the Anglo-European names available on the island, including those of slaveowners, plantation overseers, or other whites. We have no systematically collected data to establish the frequency of this practice or the criteria employed in selecting surnames. In all, there seems to have been no marked tendency for Barbadian slaves to bear their owners' surnames, but the criteria used in adopting or assigning surnames remain beyond the ability of our data to resolve.<sup>101</sup>

Even if surnames did exist as family names among Barbadian slaves, they would have had specific meanings and functions for the slave community and could not have served the politico-legal functions of surnames among free people. Further, many slaves, particularly the African-born in the ear-

<sup>99</sup> Slave Baptisms, Christ Church Parish, St. Joseph Parish, St. Andrew Parish, St. Peter Parish, St. George Parish, 1822–1839, RL 1/17, 30, 33, 39, 52, BDA. Data were also gathered from the registers for the Apprenticeship period (1834–1838), when thousands of ex-slaves were baptized. In the vast majority of cases, neither the baptized apprentices nor their parents are listed with surnames. In the few cases where the second name of a double name may be a surname, the possible surname is occasionally the same name as a planter in the parish, but rarely can it be established with certainty that the planter in question was the apprentice's master. Ronald Hughes, a Barbadian historian with considerable knowledge of plantation history, has discovered through detailed genealogical research several cases wherein the surnames of owners were adopted, but he admits to not having comprehensive data to establish the generality of this pattern; Hughes to authors, March 1995.

<sup>100</sup> See Gutman, *Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 253, and Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 445–46, for the antebellum South.

<sup>101</sup> It is possible that slaves sometimes adopted the names of poor or other classes of whites, such as plantation militia tenants, hucksters, tradesmen, town dwellers, or even British military or naval officers or men with whom they were in contact. Females may have adopted the names of white men with whom they had continuing sexual relations—a practice not uncommon on plantations with lower-echelon whites as well as the slave masters themselves and in the towns. Rachael Pringle-Polgreen, a legendary late 18th-century tavern owner who had been born a slave, rejected the name of her biological white father, who owned her when she was a child and who mistreated her, and took the last names of two white benefactors-lovers, one of whom had been a British naval officer. See Handler, *Unappropriated People*, 134–35; Handler, “Joseph Rachell and Rachael Pringle-Polgreen: Petty Entrepreneurs,” in David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash, *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley, 1981), 376–91; and Handler, “Freedmen and Slaves in the Barbados Militia,” *Journal of Caribbean History*, 19 (1984), 1–25.

lier periods, were likely to have reckoned descent through the maternal line. In the early eighteenth century, children on the Codrington plantations, for example, "quite often kept" as surnames their mothers' names, a practice that may have reflected the African system of double naming with an emphasis on descent and genealogical relationship to a parent. Similarly, evidence from the United States and Jamaica indicates that slave surnames may have been matronyms, although at Worthy Park in Jamaica in the decade before emancipation a shift occurred and children "were normally given their father's adopted surname, in line with English custom."<sup>102</sup> Using the mother's surname is also common in the modern West Indies when the parents are unmarried.<sup>103</sup> This practice may have been at least partially influenced by West African matrilineal traditions and naming patterns that emphasized descent. Whether or not African practices played a role in this naming pattern, the conditions of enslavement in the British Caribbean would certainly help account for them. For example, when children were fathered by men from other plantations, paternity might be recognized by slave masters, but, because slave status descended through the mother's line, a child belonged to the mother's owner; slave children were thus more likely to live among their mother's kin than their father's, further heightening the importance of the maternal line.

Another line of reasoning may account for at least some of the surnames among Barbadian slaves. We have mentioned the occurrence of double names, but some of the surnames that in Anglo or European usage may be identifiable as family names for slaves may have been double names in the African tradition. Thornton notes that elites (possibly also commoners) among some Angolan peoples during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries had a "double naming pattern" that used a "fairly standard set of given names" that were arranged to show the individual's descent. These names were "not family names or surnames" but baptismal or Christian names as well as traditional African names. Thornton suggests that the Angolan system of double naming "may be the origin of a common pattern in the Caribbean basin today in which people have what normally are given names as surnames, among them Charles, Joseph, Pierre, and François. These names are transmitted as surnames in European naming systems, but their origin as last names may well reflect the pattern so widely seen in central Africa." The double naming system described by Thornton was used to show the individual's descent in a fashion similar to "the

<sup>102</sup> Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops*, 34; Gudeman, "Herbert Gutman's 'The Black Family,'" 60. Craton indicates that initially slaves at Worthy Park took the names of white men, later the names of their own slave fathers; he implies that mothers' names were sometimes taken as surnames, in *Searching for the Invisible Man*, 159.

<sup>103</sup> Henriques, *Family and Colour*, 128; Crowley, "Naming Customs in St. Lucia," 89; Hyman Rodman, *Lower-Class Families: The Culture of Poverty in Negro Trinidad* (New York, 1971), 79; M. G. Smith, *Kinship and Community in Carriacou*, 269; R. T. Smith, *Negro Family in British Guiana*, 133; Mindie Lazarus-Black, "Why Women Take Men to Magistrate's Court: Caribbean Kinship Ideology and Law," *Ethnology*, 30 (1991), 127.



Arabic and Hebrew patterns in which the father's first name is given in each generation as a second name.<sup>104</sup> The use of second names to indicate descent may also help to explain Barbadian namesaking after kin or other persons who had a close personal relationship to the child or its namer.

### *Conclusions*

Although the evidence for slave naming practices is often ambiguous and superficial and deficiencies in the statistical representativeness of our sample may have obscured variations in time and place as well as some broader trends in naming practices, our data indicate that Barbadian slaves played a larger role in naming themselves and their children than has been supposed by scholars of Caribbean slavery. For much of the slave period, slaves probably named their children or had some influence on the names by which their children are identified in the documentary sources; the child's parents, particularly the mother, probably exercised the largest role in naming, although grandparents may also have had some input.

Plantation authorities may have assigned many of the Anglo or European names that appear in the sources, but our data preclude determining the extent to which such names were used in the slave community. An excellent chance exists that slaves did not extensively use such assigned names but rather bore additional or alternative names that they gave themselves or were given by other slaves. Many had multiple names, including nicknames or plantation names (the vast majority of which are lost to the record), that undoubtedly played a greater role in daily interactions than the names given them by slavemasters.

Most slaves in our sample are listed with Anglo or European names. Although some Africans may have acquired these names while still in Africa, newly purchased slaves usually received Anglo or European names from masters. While some Africans may have adopted their new names and used them regularly, others continued to use their African names in their own communities. Creole slaves also bore African names. The great majority of Barbadian slaves were creoles by the mid- to late 1700s, and well over 90 percent were born on the island by the last fifteen years preceding emancipation in 1834–1838. These demographic facts, combined with the frequency of African names for most of the slave period, provide another indication that slaves played a major role in their own naming, since it is highly unlikely that slavemasters or plantation authorities would have given African names to slave children born on their New World plantations; moreover, these names were usually recognized and accepted by plantation authorities.

<sup>104</sup> Thornton, "Central African Names and African-American Naming Patterns," 732, 733, 737–38.

African or African-derived names continued in use throughout the era of slavery (and well into the nineteenth century), although their numbers diminished over time and dropped significantly in the two or three decades before emancipation, more or less coincident with the appearance of surnames. Both changes reflected creolization and the impact of European practices and ideas on slave life, but only a minority of slaves in our sample possibly had surnames. We do not know the criteria employed in choosing these names, but our data show that slaves did not generally bear their owners' names. It requires stressing, too, that some English names (e. g., Francis, Thomas, Moore, Green) that we have identified as possible surnames may not have been viewed by the slaves as family names (or as identification with a family, even that of an owner or another white) in the European tradition but rather as double names that emphasized descent and genealogical relationship to a parent in keeping with African usage.

An additional factor is that there was no unitary system of naming, either over the approximately two centuries of slavery in Barbados or at particular times during this period. It is quite likely that a variety of practices existed especially during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when many slaves were either African-born or first-generation creoles and when the impact of different West African ethnic or wider regional cultural traditions would have been greatest.<sup>105</sup> Our data indicate variations over time, such as in the decreasing proportion of African names, the adoption of surnames, and even occasional gender references in day names that were not traditionally African (e.g., an African male day name associated with a female) that are consistent with wider changes in Barbadian slave culture by the early nineteenth century. Slave culture evolved and became increasingly creolized as fewer Africans arrived and as the influences of European and Eurocreole culture became more pronounced.

In addition to time factors, naming practices may have varied because of differing plantation management styles and island customs within the same time period. The situation in naming practices may have been analogous to the development of Barbadian speech patterns; in these, there was "greater variability . . . than most commentators/scholars normally postulate or assume," and there were several "varieties" of speech, some of which were creole.<sup>106</sup> Thus, with respect to slave naming practices (as well as other areas of slave life), there probably was no single universal pattern. Rather, the diversity of practices reflects the shifting influence of individual preferences, local plantation conditions, and broader historical changes.

The West African heritage was plainly present in naming practices as it was in other areas of Barbadian slave life.<sup>107</sup> African influences are evident not only in the use of African names (including day names as well as the continuing presence of African names among creoles) but also in namesak-

<sup>105</sup> See Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 196–99.

<sup>106</sup> Rickford and Handler, "Textual Evidence," 244.

<sup>107</sup> See note 17 above.

ing, the use of multiple names and nicknames, the role of kin in naming, and probably in the adoption of double names with their emphasis on individual descent. Drawing on West African naming traditions reflected a tendency to place some value on identity with Africa; in so doing, African-born and creole slaves found a means for maintaining self-esteem and establishing an identity that transcended enslavement.

# Appendix

## Primary Sources for Barbados Slave Name Sample<sup>108</sup>

### Newspapers

*Barbados Gazette*, May 3, 1735, Dec. 19, 1761 (2 names), Feb. 10, 17, 1816 (3 names); *Barbados Mercury*, Apr. 19, 1783, Sept. 11, 1784, Jan. 23, 30, 1816, Feb. 3, 4, 10, 13, 17, 1816, Mar. 9, 1816, May 7, 1816 (53 names); *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, Feb. 9, Apr. 9, 1805 (4 names).

### Plantation inventories and accounts, manuscript

Guinea plantation, St. John. Inventory, 1820, and lists of slave births and deaths, 1823, 1826, 1829. Privately held manuscripts in Barbados (291 names).

Lowther plantation, Christ Church. "The Barbados plantation—accounts. Commencing January 1st 1756 and ending December 31, 1756," Add. Ms. 43507, fols. 1–5, British Library, London (133 names).

Pasfield plantation, St. Philip. Inventory, containing list of slave names, Oct. 29, 1720. Ms. U.I.21., No. 29, Boston Public Library (50 names).

Newton and Seawell plantations, Christ Church, Newton Estate Papers, Ms. 523, University of London Library. "A List of the Slaves Belonging to the Estate of Samuel Newton Esquire, Taken the 8th day of June 1740," NEP 523/970 (167 names); "List of Negroes on Seawell," Apr. 15, 1791, NEP 523/276 (187 names); Sampson Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Newton plantation, July 2, 1796, NEP 523/288 (255 names); Wood, "Report on the Negroes," Seawell plantation, July 16, 1796, NEP 523/292 (182 names); Wood to Thomas Lane, July 20, 1797, NEP 523/315 (3 names); Land and Stock Accounts, Newton plantation, 1797–98, NEP 523/116 (7 names); "Disposition of the Several Fields of Seawell plantation," 1797–98, NEP 523/119 (7 names); "An Account of the Several Fields According to the Plot, of Newton plantation," 1799, NEP 523/128–1 (9 names).

<sup>108</sup> The number of slave names taken from each source is given in parentheses after each citation.

Published transcriptions of early manuscripts containing plantation materials

G. H. Hawtayne, "A Cavalier Planter in Barbados," *Timehri*, 7 (1893), 20, 34 (transcriptions of plantation deeds of sale, 1643 and 1654; 16 names).

Nathaniel Lucas, "The Lucas Manuscript Volumes in the Barbados Public Library," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, 33 (1956), 74-75, 125, 181, 186-87 (transcriptions of deed of sale of Hothersall plantation, 1658 [30 names]; inventory of Locust plantation, 1663 [127 names]; list of slaves sold by William and Abell Gay, 1663 [21 names]; deed of sale of Black Rock plantation, 1663 [20 names]).

Manuscripts, miscellaneous

"To his excellency Collonel James Kendall . . . [report on slave plot]," Nov. 3, 1692, C. O. 28/1, fols. 202-05, Public Record Office, London (30 names).

Sampson Smirk, "A List of Negroes that are Baptized and Not Baptized on the Honble & Revnd Society's Estates in Barbados" Apr. 6, 1741, Letter Books, vol. B. 8, nos. 54-55, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London (273 names).<sup>109</sup>

Published, miscellaneous

Parliamentary Papers, *Papers and Returns Relating to the Slave Population in the West Indies*, "Return of Slaves Levied on and Sold in Execution for Debt, 1821-1825," vol. 28, rept. 353, No. 8, pp. 18-36, London, 1826 (359 names).

<sup>109</sup> There were 202 slaves at Codrington, but 71 had both baptismal and plantation names; thus a total of 273 names for 202 individuals.