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ASPECTS OF AMERINDIAN ETHNOGRAPHY IN 17th CENTURY BARBADOS

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ASPECTS OF AMERINDIAN ETHNOGRAPHY
IN 17th CENTURY BARBADOS *

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I

From the late 1640's to 1834, the southeastern Caribbean island of Barbados had a society in which slaves were a crucial element, the vast majority of such persons having derived from Africa. But during the seventeenth century and part of the eighteenth as well, the island's slave population also included small numbers of Amerindians. Elsewhere [17] I have tried to describe the manner in which Amerindians were first enslaved in Barbados, the policies and procedures by which they were brought to the island, and their socio-legal position in Barbadian society. In this paper, I would like to sketch what can be ascertained about their way of life during the seventeenth century, and suggest the kinds of contributions they may have made to the island's early culture.

Briefly, when Barbados' first European colonists arrived from England in early 1627, no native population was encountered on the island. Shortly after the colonists' arrival, a small group was sent to the Dutch settlement in Guiana which, upon return to the island, brought back a new plant complex and about thirty free Arawak Indians who had voluntarily agreed to aid in the colony's development. Within two or three years of their arrival, the Arawaks were reduced to slavery. During subsequent decades of the seventeenth century, other Indians, invariably coming as slaves, were intermittently brought to Barbados from a variety of places, primarily the northern coastal areas of South America and neighboring islands in the Lesser Antilles, but also, on occasion, from new England.¹ Despite these importations, Indians

* Data for this paper were collected while doing research for a study of the social and cultural life of Africans and their descendants in Barbados during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. This research, supported by grants from the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and American Philosophical Society (Johnson Fund) was conducted in Barbados, the United States, Ireland, England, and Scotland. I am grateful to Neville Connell and David Watts, and especially Carroll L. Riley, for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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¹ North American Indians were sometimes shipped to the West Indies as slaves [48, *passim*] and some are definitely known to have come from New England to Barbados [17, pp. 57-58; 48, pp. 166-167]. However, present information concerning such Indians is so limited that ethnographic statements are prevented and the extent of their presence in Barbados is unknown.

probably never exceeded more than a percentage point or two of Barbados' total population; thus, their opportunities to make considerable contributions to the island's early culture were minimized. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, it was reported that no Indian slaves were on the island, although contacts between Barbados and Caribs of the Lesser Antilles probably continued for some time thereafter.

The social and demographic insignificance of Indians in Barbados undoubtedly accounts for the sparsity of references to them in the voluminous literature dealing with the island in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I can make no claims to having exhausted all of this literature, but after considerable search, it is apparent that any historical reconstruction of Amerindian culture on the island must rely heavily on conjecture. For purposes of this paper, I have tried to limit myself to those areas of life which seem to be readily or directly suggested by the written (printed and manuscript) sources. These sources, however, even if they mention Indians as such, rarely specify a cultural or tribal name such as Carib or Arawak.

II

In the mid-seventeenth century Henry Whistler [6 A] observed that Barbados' population included "Indians and miserable Negroes born to perpetual slavery, they and their seed." By the time of Whistler's visit, Indian slave importations had been regularly established in Barbadian life, although it is presently impossible to specify the total number of people involved. It is known, however, that during the late 1640's and early 1650's, the island's Amerindian population was a small one. Richard Ligon [25, p. 54] and another observer [42 A] note that Indian slaves were few in number, but neither writer offers any population figures. On the other hand, travellers visiting Barbados during this period omit any mention of Indians in their descriptions of the island. [Cf. 16; 30; 34], an indirect corroboration that their numbers were relatively few. Von Uchteritz' observation in 1652 [43, p. 9]² that the plantation where he lived "had 100 Christians, 100 Negroes, and 100 Indians in slavery" is unique for the period. Although these figures may be exaggerated, the suggestion of a large contingent of Indians on one plantation is difficult to account for in terms of other contemporary sources. A similar

² I am indebted to Charles H. Lange for his translation of this source. Von Uchteritz, a German adventurer, fought with the Royalists in the "Great Civil War." Captured after the Battle of Worcester, he was shipped to Barbados in 1652 as an indentured servant, and remained on the island for approximately sixteen to eighteen weeks. This account has been edited and translated. (See J. S. Handler and A. Gunkel, "A German Indentured Servant in Barbados in 1652..." *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, May, 1970).

difficulty is posed by Spoeri's observation, based on visits to the island in the early 1660's, that "...there are also many Negroes and Indians who are brought as slaves by the English..." [49, p. 16].³

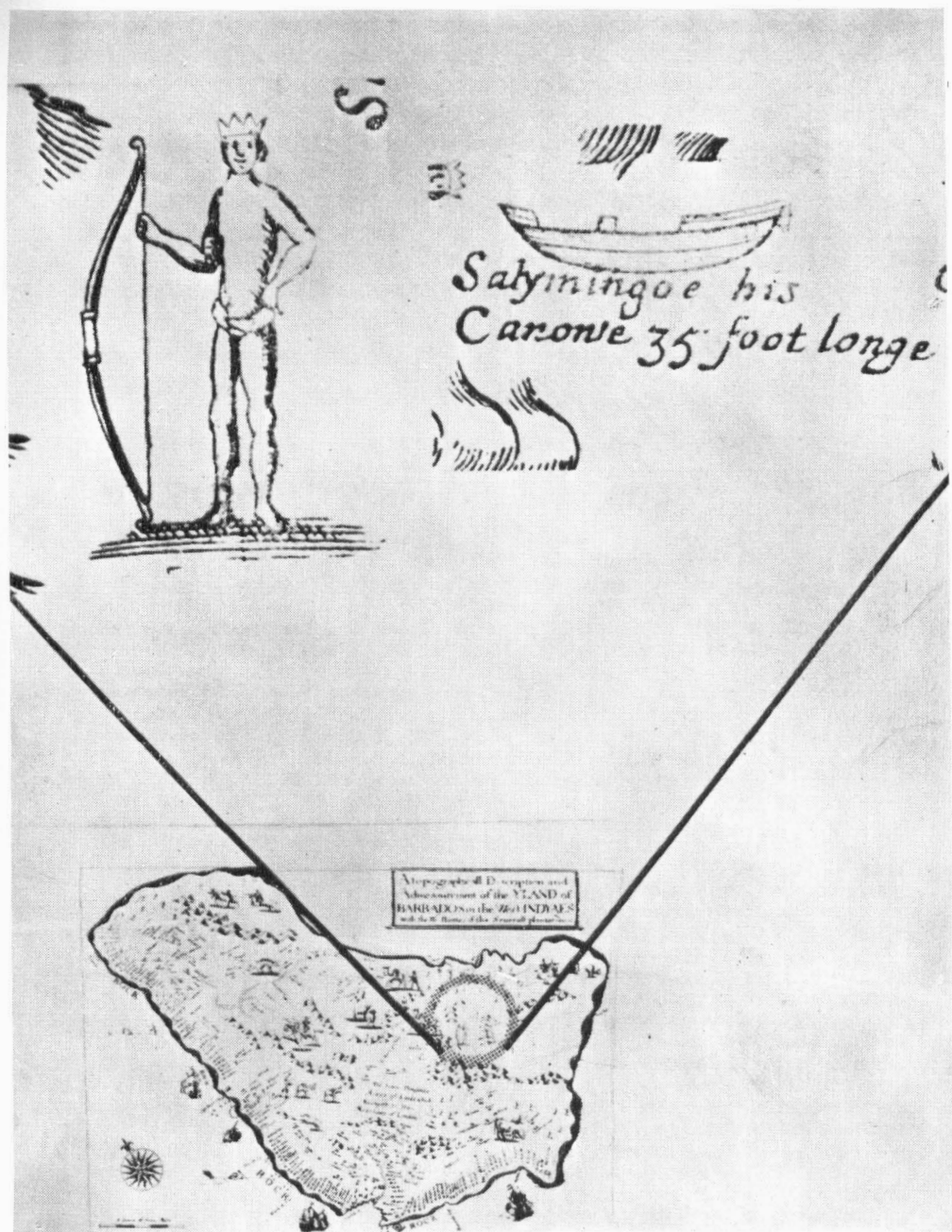
During this period (and later), Indian slaves seem to have been employed primarily in household and domestic chores, rather than as field laborers on sugar plantations, and they apparently were governed by the same legal code that was applied to African slaves. Some of the earliest Indians brought to the island, especially those from the Dutch areas of Guiana, may have been converts to Protestantism, and later in the seventeenth century other Indians may have been affected by Quaker doctrine and practice as well as by the Anglican church. Amerindians, it may be surmised, shared some broad and general cultural features with Africans, and, as with Africans, they suffered and died as a consequence of European diseases, were occasionally manumitted or escaped from the island, learned English,⁴ and were involved in mating relationships with Europeans. Evidence for most of the above assertions has been reviewed elsewhere [17], but, as indicated above, the distinctive socio-cultural characteristics of this Indian population are difficult to ascertain in any great detail; however, some of these characteristics can now be reviewed.

Despite the brevity of his description of Barbados' Amerindians, Ligon [25], who lived in Barbados from 1647 to 1650, offers more substantive details than any other contemporary source.⁵ He is impressed with the Indian men whom he finds to be active, clever, and quick to learn. On his map (the earliest known detailed map of Barbados) he includes a small drawing of a man identified by the name *Salymingoe* (see plate). This Indian is shown standing while holding a bow of approximately his own height. Large bows were characteristic of many South American forest peoples [39 K] and Antillean Caribs in particular employed bows of about six feet in length whose arrows were often dipped in a poison manufactured from the sap of the

³ Felix Christian Spoeri was a Swiss doctor who, during the early 1660s, voyaged on ships trading in the West Indies and visited Barbados a few times. His description of the island has been translated, with the collaboration of Alexander Gunkel, and published in the *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* (May, 1969).

⁴ Von Uchteritz, however, notes [43, p. 12] that Indians on his plantation did not speak English, but had "their own special language."

⁵ As is well known to students of British West Indian history, Ligon's book is a vital source for the study of Barbados as its economy was being transformed into large-scale sugar production. His description of the island during 1647-1650 also provides many details on the island's social and cultural life which are difficult to obtain elsewhere. Yet, he has a tendency to project his personal experiences into generalizations for the island as a whole. With respect to Indians, in particular, one cannot be entirely certain that these generalizations hold, but largely lacking other sources for ethnographic information one is forced to rely upon Ligon to a considerable degree.



LIGON'S MAP OF BARBADOS WITH AMERINDIAN SKETCH ENLARGED

manchineel tree (*Hippomane mancinella*) [39 N, p. 559].⁶ Although Ligon comments that the fruit of such trees is "said to be one of those poisons wherewith the Indian cannibals invenom their arrows" [25, p. 68], it is unclear if his discussion is meant to apply to Barbados' Indians as well. *Salymingoe*, on Ligon's map, is also depicted as wearing what seems to be a girdle or loin cloth, and his hair appears to be short, but whether it is cut or simply pulled up and tied is difficult to tell from the sketch itself. He is also shown as wearing a sort of crown which might easily be a feather headdress, an item common among the Island Caribs and other peoples of northern South America [33 D, p. 835; 39 H; 39 M, p. 546; 39 N, p. 552].

Ligon's comments [25, pp. 54-55] on Barbados' Indian women are more detailed:

.....[their hair] hangs down upon their backs as low as their haunches, with a large lock hanging over either breast, which seldom or never curls; clothes they scorn to wear, especially if they

⁶ The botanical name for this and other plants cited below is taken from Watts [45] unless another source is indicated.

The manchineel has a wide distribution in the West Indies as well as the coastal areas of northern South America [26, p. 276], but apparently had a much more restricted use as a source of aboriginal poisons. Metraux [39 K, p. 242] notes that some coastal Venezuelan Indians in the sixteenth century were reported to have used the juice of the manchineel fruit as an arrow poison, but he comments that "the statement has been doubted by modern authorities." However, Kirchoff, one such modern authority, reports [39 H, p. 489] the plant's use for the same peoples to whom Metraux is referring. Metraux [39 K, p. 242] also records, without comment, that Rochefort mentioned the Island Carib using the manchineel as an arrow poison in the seventeenth century, and Hodge and Taylor [21, p. 573], citing other early sources, remark that "Caribs were the only Antillean Indians versed in the use of poisoned arrows which they formerly daubed in the caustic milky sap of the manchineel." Yet, Levi-Strauss [39 I, p. 483], commenting on the South American-Caribbean area in general, states that "it is doubtful if the [manchineel] ... was ever used for arrow poison" — an overstatement which, nonetheless, attests to the restricted use for such purposes of this widespread tree. The manchineel, however, was employed as a fish poison in Barbados (see below). For those who have never experienced the poisonous qualities of this plant, the following comments from modern botanical sources might be of interest:

"The deadly manzanillo or manchineel ... ranks among the most famous poisonous plants in tropical America. The attractive palatable fruits cause serious illness or even death when eaten, and the milky sap is injurious both externally and internally ... The caustic milky sap is particularly irritating to the eyes and mouth, causing prolonged pain. It also produces severe inflammations and blisters on the skin of some persons ... Livestock have also been affected ... The fruits have poisoned hogs ..." [26, p. 274].

In the Grenadines, Howard described the effects of manchineel poisoning on humans as follows: "Serious nausea and diarrhea are usually followed by shock and by an appalling muscular weakness. Sloughing off of mucous membranes occurs within a day or two if even a small quantity of the fruit is eaten. The juice of the tree or the fruit in the eye will cause violent conjunctivitis and usually temporary blindness" [26, p. 276].

be well shaped. A girdle they use of tape, covered with little smooth shells of fishes, white, and from their flank of one side to their flank on the other side, a fringe of blue bugle which hangs so low as to cover their privities.

This description very closely resembles the one given of the hair and clothing styles of Island Carib (or Trinidad Arawak) women [39 M, p. 546; 39 N, pp. 552-553]. His comments on Indian women prompt Ligon to offer additional remarks on Yarico, his female Indian slave from "The Main", whose story of enslavement has become classic in Caribbean lore [17]. These comments might indicate that Indians lived apart from both African slaves and European indentured servants, and that miscegenation was not an unknown occurrence:

This woman [Yarico] would not be wooed by any means to wear clothes. She chanced to be with child by a Christian servant, and lodging in the Indian house, amongst other women of her own country,⁷ where the Christian servants, both men and women, came; and being very great, and that her time was come to be delivered, loath to fall in labor before the men, walked down to a wood, in which was a pond of water, and there by the side of the pond brought herself abed; and presently washing her child in some of the water of the pond, lapped it up in such rags as she had begged of the Christians, and in three hours came home with her child in her arms [25, pp. 54-55].

Sexual relations between Negroes and Indians are reflected in the case of *Tituba*, a half-Negro, half-Carib female slave from Barbados who, with her mate, John Indian, was taken by her owner to new England. In the early 1690's, *Tituba* achieved considerable notoriety and was a major figure in the events which led to the Salem witch hunts [38, *Passim*].

In his book, Ligon implies that Indian women were primarily, if not solely, employed in household tasks. On the other hand, the men

...we use for footmen, and killing of fish which they are good at. With their own bows and arrows they will go out, and in a day's time kill as much fish as will serve a family of a dozen persons two or three days, if you can keep the fish so long [25, pp. 54-55].

⁷ It is difficult to say what is implied here. Yarico presumably was not an Island Carib since Ligon had noted that she had derived from the coast, "upon the Main" [25, p. 55], but it is uncertain if Ligon means these other women came from the same area of the Main as Yarico, or if he is simply using the phrase "of her country" loosely to identify her with Indian women in general. Also it seems to be implied in this passage that the Indians lived apart from others. Elsewhere in his book, Ligon [25, p. 22] notes that his plantation, when first acquired in 1647, already included houses for Negro and Indian slaves, the plantation at that time having a contingent of 96 Negro slaves, 28 European servants, and 3 female Indian slaves "with their children" — the number of children not being specified.

Bow and arrow fishing is known from northern South America [39 D, p. 828; 39 H], but was a common technique among the Island Carib in particular who used long three-pronged arrows attached by strings to wooden floats [35, p. 1365; 39 N, p. 550]. In mid-seventeenth century Barbados, despite the concurrent utilization of fishing seines and presumably hooks and lines, fish was a highly-prized commodity, for a variety of social and technological factors combined to limit its supply [16, pp. 65-66; 25, p. 35] — even at this period Barbadians were buying salt and dried fish from New England [25, p. 113; 34].⁸ It is thus understandable that Ligon should speak so approvingly of the Indians' special talents in this endeavor, and this might also help to explain why he included a drawing of *Salymingoe* on his map, for it is hard to account for this inclusion unless the Indian was someone whose qualities Ligon admired. Although there is scant evidence, it may well be that Amerindian fishermen in Barbados comprised a "privileged slave subgroup," a pattern which has been established by Price [35, p. 1363] for, at least, the French islands of the Lesser Antilles.

This conjecture can be supported further by other information Ligon presents. Adjacent to his drawing of *Salymingoe*, he appends a sketch of the Indian's "35 feet long" canoe (see plate). The boat appears to have a planked hull with a raised bow and stern. An apparent center piece projects above the boat's sides, perhaps being a thwart against which rowers could rest their backs. Judging from Ligon's sketch and its dimensions, the boat was probably an Island Carib *pirogue*, i.e., a large dugout canoe with plank sides [24 in 40, p. 141; 28, pp. 5-7; 39 N, p. 551]. In ethnographic terms, it is not unreasonable to expect that Barbados' Indians had canoes of any type, for such items were common features of Amerindian material culture and were frequently employed in fishing by the Island Carib in particular [35, p. 1364]. However, the presence of canoes is more difficult to explain in light of the Indians' status as slaves. Canoes would have obviously facilitated escapes, unless it can be conjectured that 1) the "loyalty" of people such as *Salymingoe* was not in question, or 2) that the hypothesized special status enjoyed by Indian fishermen permitted their retention of canoes which, while employed in fishing, offset the risk involved in their being used for escape.

⁸ Such importations continued for many years, but, as a category of specialized fishing slaves evolved, the problem of fish acquisition from local waters apparently decreased. By the latter eighteenth century, it was observed that around Barbados "the supply of fish is, in general, various and plentiful" [10, pp. 428-429] and in 1814 it was noted that flying fish "were caught in abundance all around the island..." [19, p. 114]. In 1788, the island's Governor, reporting on occupational specializations among the island's slaves, noted that the "number of fishermen may be about 500," out of a slave population of about 62,000 persons [22, p. 22].

Price has noted [35, pp. 1367-1368] that Island Carib slaves "could be kept only under severely repressive conditions" and were prone to escape from their captors. That canoes might have been used to escape from Barbados is suggested by an oral tradition of a Negro slave family which Griffith Hughes records [23, p. 8] in his book, written sometime in the 1740's. This story relates to a group of Indians who might have voluntarily come over initially from some neighboring islands. According to this tradition

...these Indians could not for a long time be brought in subjection by the whites [but] the last attempt was so vigorous that it obliged all the Indian inhabitants of the town to make their escape in their canoes to the neighboring island; which they all did except one woman and her son, a young lad. The latter soon afterwards making his escape, also, his mother, in a short period, pined to death.

Whatever the case, it appears that the use of dugout canoes by non-Indians did not have much of an impact on Barbados' culture,⁹ but some other Indian devices employed in fishing may have. Fish poisons were very common in aboriginal America [20] and Island Caribs were known to have employed a number of them [21, pp. 564-566, 596, 614-615; 35, pp. 1366, 1380]. Although there is presently no direct evidence that such poisons were employed by Barbados' Indians, it can be suggested that they were not only using them, but also introduced them into the island's fishing technology. It is known that fish poisoning was practiced in Barbados, for in 1724 the Barbadian Assembly passed a law to control it, the law's preamble stating that

... divers ill-disposed persons, fishermen and others, have of late used the juice of the manchineel trees, and poison trees, and other poisonous juices and therewith have poisoned and destroyed great quantities of fish in and about the bays, creeks, and shoals of this island... [12, p. 281].

Although my research on this topic has been confined to secondary sources, I was unable to find any reference to the manchineel (*Hippomane mancinella*) or poison tree (*Sapium hippomane*) being used as a fish poison (Cf. 20; 35; 36; 39 E; 40). Gower [11, p. 27] remarks that the Island Carib employed the manchineel for such purposes, but Hodge and Taylor [21, p. 573] are dubious and suggest she may have confused the manchineel with another plant. The *Sapium hippomane* is not

⁹ Although seventeenth century English settlers in some of the Leeward islands are known to have employed the Island Carib canoe, present evidence makes it difficult to say whether or not this item was absorbed into Barbadian culture. I have only come across two references to canoes (for 1796 and 1798), but both of these simply mention the word and give no details other than noting that they were employed by Negroes [33, Vol. 2, pp. 148-149; 47, Vol. 1, p. 26].

mentioned in any context in Hodge and Taylor's comprehensive ethnobotanical work. However, various genera of the botanical family to which both trees belong (*Euphorbiaceae*) have been used for such purposes in the Antilles and northern South America [20, pp. 266, 269, 271], and the manchineel, as noted before, was reported as being used by the Island Carib for an arrow poison. I have been unable to identify the "other poisonous juices" mentioned in the law's preamble. In Barbados, the poisoning of fish continued on through the years, and in 1766 another law was passed imposing more severe penalties against those who continued "such a pernicious practice" [29, pp. 21-22].

Indians may have also introduced both Europeans and Africans to other fishing and marine collecting techniques. Although Ligon laments the paucity of sea turtles coming to Barbadian shores, noting these are "the best food the sea affords," [25, p. 36]¹⁰ efforts were apparently made to collect them; the method he describes involved the overturning of females as they came onto the beaches at night to lay their eggs, a procedure which was also commonly employed by the Guiana Indians and Island Caribs [35, p. 1365; 39 D, p. 827]. Hughes [23, p. 309] describes a similar method being employed in Barbados in the mid-eighteenth century, and late on an early summer's night in 1962 I participated in this type of a turtle hunt on a stretch of beach near the village of Chalky Mount, on the island's east coast. It is not implausible that such a technique is a survival of the contacts of the island's early culture with Amerindians.

A similar line of reasoning can be applied to crab collecting. Crabs were an important source of food among the Island Caribs, and they were often searched for by torchlight [39 N, p. 550; 41, p. 385], a technique also employed in lobster fishing [35, pp. 1366, 1380]; yet, the extent and degree of Amerindian influence in this area of Barbadian life is also uncertain. In 1631 Colt [8, p. 68] remarked that land crabs "are not good to eat," an observation also recorded by Spoeri in the 1660's [49, p. 27]. Ligon [25, p. 66] also noted that whites refrained from eating land crabs, but they were enjoyed by the Negroes, an observation repeated a century later by Hughes [23, p. 265]. Although neither author specifies the techniques employed in collecting land crabs, an American, temporarily resident on the island in 1814, described the technique then commonly employed as follows:

¹⁰ Ligon [25, p. 37] in discussing foods imported from other areas, remarks that "pickled turtle, we have from the Leeward Islands, but so uncleanly ordered as we could hardly find in our hearts to eat it for they gather the salt and sand together for haste, upon the island where it is taken up ... though we wash it never so well yet the grit cracks in our teeth ... but this kind of food is only for servants, sometimes the Negroes get a little ..."

The crabs are caught in the night. The catchers go with a torch and a stick. The light of the torch blinds the crabs, so that they cannot run; the catchers then turn them with a stick upon their backs. After having turned as many as they wish, they collect them in a basket. They are then put alive into a vessel of fresh water where they remain several days, after which they are taken out and cooked as they are needed [19, p. 107].

As recently as the summer of 1965, I observed land crabs being collected in a similar manner along Barbados' southwestern coast.

With respect to sea crabs, Spoeri noted they "are eaten just like cray fish" [49, p. 27] and close to a century later Hughes [23, p. 158] observed that Barbadian fishermen went fishing for them, as well as lobsters, at night and employed torches made from a local bush; I also participated in such torch-light expeditions among the coral reefs of Barbados' eastern coast during 1961-1962, the torch at this time being constructed of small squares of old automobile tires strung on a metal wire.

The presumed influence of Carib torch fishing techniques on Barbadian culture is seemingly made apparent in the following description of a method employed in catching flying fish, reported to a visitor to the island in 1802:

The Negroes take them after the example of the Charaibs [sic] very successfully in the dark; they spread, I was told, their nets before a light, and disturb the water at a small distance: the fish rising eagerly fly toward the light, and are intercepted by the nets [27, p. 5].

This method was also recorded by another writer twelve years later who noted that flying fish were caught "by being decoyed at night, by the light of a torch, into meshes, hung up above the sides of boats" [19, p. 114]. Aside from "a small scoopnet," nets were not a part of the traditional Island Carib fishing technology [35, pp. 1366, 1374], and the torch fishing methods noted above can easily represent an amalgam of Carib and Afro-European technologies. Hughes [23, p. 300] remarked that nets were frequently utilized in fishing and that a common type was "a small hoopnet;" since this net is not described, it is difficult to say to what extent, if any, it resembled or derived from the "scoop net" which Price reports as an aboriginal Island Carib device. Finally, Hughes [23, p. 300] mentions that a very common method of catching fish was by taking them "up with the hand," a technique also reported among the Island Carib [35, p. 1367] and which may have been derived from this cultural influence.

In general, it appears that the more important contributions

Amerindians made to the island's early culture were in areas closely related to the domestic arts and the exploitation of plant life.

When the first group of Amerindians (Arawaks from Guiana) arrived at Barbados in 1627, a complex of New World plants including potatoes (see below), tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*), maize (*Zea mays*), cassava or manioc (*Manihot esculenta*), and pineapples (*Ananas comosus*) was also introduced, the latter plant becoming "the most highly valued of fruit plants" [45, p. 48]. Indeed, a primary reason why a ship was sent to Guiana in the first place was not to bring Indians back to the island, but rather to acquire tropical subsistence and commercial crops which could be transplanted in the Barbadian environment. The above noted plants, as well as sugar cane, were mentioned by persons who had participated in the Guiana venture, but other plants brought back from Guiana at the same time seem to have included a variety of Old World ones such as various citrus fruits and plantains (*Musa paradisiaca*), and New World plants such as cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*), arnotta (*Bixa orellana*), and probably yams [17; 45].

Most of the New World plants were found widely distributed in the tropical areas of northern South America, the Guianas, and the Antilles [39 D; 39 H; 39 M; 39 N; 39 O; 41]. However, only two of the ones introduced into Barbados in 1627 seem to present any problem of botanical identification. Watts is doubtful about the identification of the yam. He suggests the possibility of its being either of South American or African origin, but leans towards the African identification of *Dioscorea alata*, noting that by 1627 African yams had a wide distribution in the northern coastal areas of South America, "being mixed with native yams at times" [45, pp. 47-48]. The native American yam, *Dioscorea trifida*, was extensive in tropical America from the Antilles through Brazil [39 O, p. 510; 41, p. 380]; it seems more likely that this was the yam which arrived in 1627, to which later on other varieties from the Old World were added; or, it may be, as Watts [45, p. 47] has suggested, that "more than one species of yam arrived" at this time.

The other problematical plant was the potato which Watts [45, pp. 47, 88] tentatively identifies as *Solanum tuberosum*, an identification I would disagree with on the following grounds: The *Solanum tuberosum* was native to the cool lands of South America, was apparently not found in the tropical areas, and is poorly adapted to tropical climates as well as low altitudes [D. Ugent, personal communication; 39 O, pp. 513-514].¹¹ The potato introduced in 1627 was

¹¹ Dr. Donald Ugent, Department of Botany, Southern Illinois University, is a specialist on the potato; I am indebted to him for assistance in evaluating the botanical evidence on this and some of the other plants.

probably the sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) which had an extensive distribution in the tropical areas—a distribution coinciding with, but being wider than manioc [39 O, p. 509]—and is specifically identified for regions such as the Guianas, northern South America, and the Antilles [Cf. 21, pp. 597-598; 39 D, p. 825; 39 H]. In addition, in the region from which the Arawaks came, the sweet potato, and not *Solanum tuberosum*, was used in making a native beer. This type of beer was also made in Barbados from the earliest days of colonization (see below).

Aside from the plants mentioned above, other New World Indian plants were brought to Barbados in subsequent years [45, *passim*], but, of the crops introduced for commercial purposes in 1627, cotton and tobacco became the mainstays of the island's economy until they were supplanted by sugar cane:

After having been a major plantation crop along the Brazilian coast for over one century previously ... was dispersed quickly by Indians into the Guianas as a valued chewing plant, and it was in this role that it reached Barbados; although the English were interested in its commercial possibilities ... they did not attempt to plant it widely. After a few years ... sugar cane fell into disuse, and eventually disappeared from the island, before being reintroduced as a commercial plant in 1637 ... It was not until the late sixteen-forties ... that cane cultivation became the predominant agricultural activity [45, p. 47].

Arnotta, one of the most important native dye plants in all of tropical South America [39 I, pp. 477-478] was to have little, if any, significance in the island's commercial economy [6 A].

Most of the food crops played a considerable role in the islanders' subsistence patterns, and, although direct evidence is tenuous, it might be reasonably assumed that the Arawak techniques of planting and cultivating such crops were of equal importance, especially in the colony's early days. This, at any rate, has been suggested by Watts who also points out that the early colonists were not only unaccustomed to the tropical environment and the ecological demands it imposed, but also that few of them had had any previous farming experience at all [45, pp. 39, 46; personal communication].

Among Amerindian root crops, the potato was of considerable importance. A visitor in 1634 noted that "this kind of root grows in such abundance that you can carry off whole wagon loads of it for nothing" [46, pp. 23-24], and four years later an island resident wrote that "it is the best provision we have in the land both for ourselves and servants, but chiefly for them, for they will not desire ... no other provisions but potatoes boiled ..." [7, p. 194]. By the mid-seventeenth century, potatoes were a standard part of the slaves', as well as indentured servants' subsistence allotments [6 B; 16, p. 66; 25, p. 37; 43, pp. 10-11].

A resident on the island summarized the plant's importance as follows: "[it] is the ordinary bread ... and is in such abundance that it may be termed at all times the staff and support, and in necessity the refuge of the island" [42 A].

From the potato was made *Mobbie* or *Mauby*, a common seventeenth century drink [7, p. 194; 30, p. 20; 34; 42 A; 43, p. 11; 49, pp. 25-26] which, according to Ligon [25, p. 54], was prepared by Indian women. The drink was made by taking the potatoes which "...after they are boiled are beaten to a mash [and] then strained with water through a bag and so drunk will not last above one day" [42 A].¹² Biet [16, p. 62], describing the lavishness of meals at the planters' homes, remarked how they "present whatever drink one wants: wines from Spain, Madeira, the Canaries; French wines, and sweetened mauby for those who do not want wine." And in 1652, Von Uchteritz noted [43, p. 11]. "The gentry make a drink of the Batata root, which they put in a sack, soak it in water, press in into a stone crock, and allow it to ferment. As with other drinks, they add sugar and lemon juice which is then a charming and lovely drink." There is no doubt that Europeans as well manufactured *Mauby* and in the mid-eighteenth century, sugar or molasses was added to the drink in order to increase fermentation [23, pp. 34, 228].

Cassava or manioc, another Amerindian plant introduced to the island in 1627, was used to make

Perino, a drink which the Indians make for their own drinking, and is made of the cassava root ... [by] their old wives, who have a small remainder of teeth to chew and spit out into water (for the better breaking and macerating of the root). This juice in three or four hours will work and purge itself of the poisonous quality ... This drink will keep a month or two being put into barrels [25, p. 32].

¹² Whistler [6 B] adds that drink must be made "...two times a day or else it will be too stale," but Ligon [25, p. 31] notes that Mauby, "if it be put up in small casks ... will last four or five days good." He also offers the most detailed description of the drink's manufacture. The process, as he describes it, involves either "red" or "white" potatoes being first put into a water-filled tub which is stirred until the potatoes are clean. Removed from the tub, the potatoes are then placed in a large "iron or brass pot" and enough water is poured in to cover about one-fourth of them. The pot itself is covered with a piece of canvas or cloth to contain the steam and a small fire is lit underneath so that the potatoes will cook slowly. When they are "soft," they are removed, placed in fresh water, hand-mashed into small lumps, and left in this water for an hour or two. The water and potato lumps are then dumped into a conical woolen bag which functions as a sieve, the liquid drops through into a jar, and "within two hours it will begin to work. Cover it, and let it stand till the next day, and then it is fit to be drunk." Ligon adds that "the drink ... being temperately made does not at all fly up into the head, but is a sprightly thirst-quenching drink," and Spoeri commented that mauby "satisfies like beer or wine," noting that molasses or sugar juice as well as "a bit of ginger" were added to the drink before fermentation started [49, pp. 25-26].

Perino or *Parranow* was very favorably compared to English beer [7, p. 194; 25, p. 32; 42 A], and the fermentation process was started in a typically Amerindian fashion [Cf. 21, p. 575; 39 C; 39 N, p. 561]. Although Barbadians continued to make the drink in the eighteenth century, the basic Amerindian technique of mastication was apparently dropped by this period. Commenting on the above quoted passage from Ligon, Oldmixon — whose account of Barbados in the early 18th century was based on eyewitness verbal reports as well as written materials — wrote:

As for the old womens' chewing the cassavy root, 'tis a falsity, or at least has not been practiced in Barbados in the memory of man, the *Perino* being made of the cassavy worked up with sugar, after it is baked [31, Vol. 2, p. 134].

Both *Mauby* and *Perino* were similar, if not identical, to the sweet potato and cassava beers common among the Island Carib in the seventeenth century [21, pp. 575, 598; 39 N, p. 561; 41, p. 386], and widely distributed in northern South America [39 C]. I am not sure about the derivation of the name *Perino*. However, the word *Mauby* seems likely to have derived from the Island Carib *má'bi*, meaning the red variety of sweet potato [40, p. 154], or *mábi*, referring to the "generic name for edible roots or tubers" [21, p. 597]. The word *Mauby* itself survives today in Barbados as the name of a popular bittersweet drink whose basic ingredient is not potato, but the bark of a tree.

Cassava became one of the staples of the early Europeans' diet [Cf., 6 B; 7; 25; 34; 42 A; 46; 49, pp. 24-25]. It was in teaching the colonists how to process the root, remove the prussic acid and render it into an edible food, that Amerindians made one of their most enduring contributions to the island's culture.

Ligon notes [25, p. 54] that female Indian slaves "who are better versed in ordering the cassava and making bread than the Negroes, we employ for that purpose." As usual, his account offers more details than that of others:

... [the Indians] wash the outside of the root clean, and lean it against a wheel, whose sole is about a foot broad, and covered with latine made rough like a large grater. The wheel to be turned about with a foot, as a cutler turns his wheel. And as it grates the root, it falls down in a large trough, which is the receiver appointed for that purpose ... [The grated cassava] being put into a strong piece of double canvas, or sackcloth and pressed hard that all the juice be squeezed out, and then opened upon a cloth and dried in the sun it is ready to make bread [25, p. 29].

The large trough, noted by Ligon, could easily have been modelled after an aboriginal manioc trough such as the one, carved from a single piece of wood, found among the Island Carib [41, p. 385]. But

the wheel-grater device was probably a non-Indian innovation and seems to be remarkably similar to a device more recently reported in Barbados and utilized in the processing of arrowroot (*Maranta arundinacea*). Arrowroot itself is an Amerindian plant which, in 1668, was introduced to Barbados from Dominica, and was a minor cash crop on the island until fairly recent times [15; 17, p. 50]. However, in processing the cassava, traditional Amerindian techniques generally involved first the scraping off of the skin and then the grating of the root with a grater made of thorny branches, coral, or wood and stone splinters set in a board [39 M, p. 523; 39 N, p. 551]. In squeezing the juice out of the grated cassava, a cylindrical basketry strainer or press (commonly known as a *matapi* or *tipiti* in the ethnographic literature) was employed. As described by Ligon, Indians in Barbados seem to have been employing at the time a mixture of native and European techniques in processing the root. Joshua Steele, a Barbados planter writing in 1785, describes a method of cassava preparation which further attests to the endurance of Amerindian influence on this process:

The common method of squeezing the cassava in Barbados, is twisting it up in a coarse towel, fastening one end of cloth to a hook or to the staple of a door, and again twisting up the other end, and keeping it extended by the hard labour of a strong handed cook or scullion, which wears out the towels very soon — but when this *Indian bag* was used by my domestics, they were delighted with it and a Negro servant remembered the like being used by her old master, whose estate ... was bought for me about 7 years ago; I found upon inquiry many of the white people in the island knew these bags very well, but made no use of them [quoted in 3, p. 96].

Cassava graters, sometimes made of copper, were common items in seventeenth century plantation kitchens [9], reflecting the widespread use of this plant as a basic subsistence item.

In making bread from the cassava, one observer reported that the grated root is baked "upon a stone or iron, as they bake oat cakes in England" [42 A]; Spoeri noted "the English bake the flour into cakes on a hot stone between two irons" [49, p. 25], but Ligon only mentions an iron-griddle, another European manufactured item, apparently modelled after the Indian device:

They have a piece of iron which I guess is cast round, the diameter of which is about 20 inches, a little hollowed in the middle ... about half an inch thick at the brim or verge, but thicker towards the middle with three feet like a pot, about six inches high that fire may be underneath. To such a temper they heat this pone (as they call it) as to bake, but not burn. When it is made thus hot, the Indians whom we trust to make it, because they are the best acquainted with it, cast the meal upon the pone, the whole breadth of it, and put it down with their hands, and it will presently stick together. And when they think that side almost enough, with a

thing like a battle-dore, they turn the other, and so turn and return it so often till it be enough, which is presently done. So they lay this cake upon a flat board, and make another, and so another till they have made enough for the whole family [25, pp. 29-30].

Ligon also points out that the settlers tried to adapt the cassava to the tastes of contemporary English society by using it to make pie crusts. He, in particular, did not have much success until "after many trials ... I learned the secret of an Indian woman who showed me the right way of it" [25, p. 29].

Aside from making the cassava into bread, the Indians also boiled "it with Guinea pepper, and make of it an excellent and wholesome sauce" [42 A]. A similar, if not identical, sauce was used in the seasoning of fish and meat by the Island Carib [39 N, p. 550; 41, p. 385], and boiled cassava juice as well as peppers were standard condiments among the Guiana tribes [39 D, p. 829].

Hammocks are often mentioned in seventeenth century plantation inventories [Cf. 9; 18] and were used by Europeans from the earliest days of Barbados' colonization [8, p. 65; 42 B; 46, p. 15]. Hammocks, an Amerindian invention and ubiquitous among northern South American and Antillean peoples, may have been directly introduced to Barbados as a result of contact with such peoples, but evidence for direct introduction is lacking. Also one cannot ignore the possibility that, as a result of extensive late sixteenth and early seventeenth century contacts with Indians in the Guianas, Englishmen themselves were the agents for the hammock's diffusion, and, consequently, the settlers who arrived in 1627 may have brought the item with them from England.

In Barbados, hammocks were made from at least three materials, but cotton seems to have been predominant. In the late 1630's one planter requested that among goods sent from England there should be included "strong canvas for to be hamakeres" [4, p. 11], but in 1634 White [46, p. 15] observed that the island's inhabitants had "beds [which] are coverlets woven artfully together out of cotton ... stretched by ropes to a couple of posts on each side." Twenty years later, Antoine Biet [16, p. 68], who had had considerable contact with Indians in the Guianas, also commented that hammocks "made in the Indian style" were constructed of cotton, an observation also recorded in the following decade by Spoeri who added that the hammocks are "four yards long and four yards wide ... are pulled tight at both ends like a fish net ... [and] are suspended at both ends inside a room, but out of ignorance some people suspend them to two trees under the open sky ..." [49, pp. 13-14]. Ligon [25, p. 72], however, describes hammocks as being made from the mangrove tree: "The bark of this tree being well ordered will make very strong ropes, and the Indians make it as

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 fine as flax and spin it into fine thread whereof they make hammocks." ¹³ Ligon [25, pp. 44, 93] and other sources such as plantation inventories [9] directly imply that hammocks were not used by Negro slaves, and although whites also used beds, hammocks had a distinct advantage, for by tarring the "... strings of our hammocks ... we avoid [ants] better in hammocks than in beds [25, pp. 63-64]. A similar advantage of the hammock was reported by Colt who, in 1631, remarked "You [the Barbadian colonists] have such abundance of small gnats by the sea shore [which] towards the sun going down ... bite so as no rest can be had without fires under your hammocks [8, p. 65]; a similar practice has been noted among South American Indians to ward off mosquitoes and other insects [39 A; 39 H], and it is not improbable that the practice in Barbados derived from an Amerindian source.

However, with respect to the type of hammock found in Barbados, and the materials and techniques employed in its manufacture, the source of Amerindian influence is difficult to ascertain. Also, it may well be that various types were being produced on the island contemporaneously or at different time periods. Ligon is the only writer to mention that hammocks were made from tree bark fibers. Tree fibers employed in aboriginal hammock manufacture are not reported for the Antilles but they are known for South America, while cotton hammocks are reported for both areas [Cf. 21; 39 A, D, F, H, L, M, N]. As noted above, Colt had reported the use of hammocks in Barbados (without mentioning the material out of which they were constructed). After leaving the island, he went to Dominica, inhabited at that time by Caribs, specifically to acquire a hammock for, as he said, "These people are thought to have the best" [8, p. 77] — thus suggesting that the hammocks made in Barbados were not Carib ones. ¹⁴ Connell [9, p. 8] quotes a mid-seventeenth century plantation inventory which mentions "six two breadth hammacoes [and] six three breadth hammacoes ..." — the breadths might simply refer to standards of measurement or might indicate that hammocks were made in strips. I have been unable to find reference to hammocks being made in this way aboriginally, but the latter method is pointed to in the description of Barbadian hammocks by Father Labat (who visited Barbados in 1700). His description can be taken to corroborate the view that these items derived

¹³ The mangrove noted by Ligon was growing on the island before 1627, but Watts has not been able to identify it botanically although he has identified three kinds of mangrove for this period [45, pp. 22, 27].

¹⁴ It is of interest to note that although Indians were in Barbados at the time of Colt's visit [17], they apparently escaped his notice. He neither mentions them in his description of the island, nor in his comparison of St. Christopher and Barbados, although he notes that the former island "has many naked Indians" [8, p. 93].

from a non-Antillean (or at least non-Island Carib) source, and/or to suggest that during the seventeenth century modifications had been made on basic Amerindian techniques:

There are some inhabitants of Barbados who employ their [Negro] slaves in spinning cotton and making hammocks. These beds are made of four breadths, or five if one asks for them to be made in this way. The cloth is perfectly well twilled, even, strong, and handsome. Those which are made in Martinique do not come close to [the size the Barbadian hammock]. However the Carib hammocks are more comfortable than the [Barbadian ones] because being all of one piece the cloth of which they are made is prepared equally throughout, whereas those which are of several breadths cannot be made so since the seams are always stiffer than the rest of the cloth; I bought two of these [Barbadian] hammocks at a cheap enough price; if I had been a merchant, I would have been able to make a considerable profit by buying a number of these hammocks which are sought after and are expensive in [the French] islands ... [24, pp. 414-415, my translation].¹⁵

Aside from using the mangrove tree to make ropes and hammocks, Ligon [25, p. 72] also reported that the Indians used it to make "divers other things they wear, and I have heard the linen they wear is made of this bark, as also their chairs and stools." Bark cloth is reported aboriginally for the Guianas [39 D, p. 835] and also for various tribes in the South American tropical forests [39 J, pp. 67-78], but Rouse [39 M, p. 525] specifically notes its absence among the Taino, and it is not mentioned for the Island Carib [39 N; 41]. With respect to the West Indies, however, Levi-Strauss [39 I, p. 475], commenting on plant sources for bark cloth, notes that "in the northern parts of the continent and in the West Indies" bark cloth was obtained from four different sources, but he does not specify which of these was used in the West Indies, none of these plants includes the mangrove, and none of them, as far as I can tell, has been identified for Barbados [*Vide* 45]. Further,

¹⁵ Hammocks were also a valued form of property in Barbados during the seventeenth century. Peter Strong [42 B], who was on the island between 1634 and 1641, noted that hammocks were often taken away by tax collectors in lieu of cotton and tobacco, the normal specie for taxes, and among goods confiscated from Quakers in 1659 and 1663 were noted hammocks valued at 100 pounds and 150 pounds of sugar, respectively [5, Vol. 2, p. 285]. Hammocks continued to be used by Barbados planters well into the eighteenth century and probably later as well. In 1724, it was reported that hammocks were a common item manufactured from the island's cotton [2, p. 16], and Dickson [10, p. XX] reports, in the following terms, the way in which hammocks were employed during the 1770's and 1780's: "Many country families in Barbados are provided with a number of white cotton hammocks of the texture of counterpanes, neatly fringed, and made large enough to fold over the body, and serve as bed-clothes in this hot country. Every apartment has one or more pairs of cleats to hang them on, so that, if a party too numerous for the standing beds, happens to be kept late, by rain, etc. they can be accommodated for the night ..."

the South American references I have consulted do not indicate if the mangrove was used for the manufacture of bark cloth.

Similar problems of identification are posed with respect to the manufacture of "chairs and stools." Wooden stools were common among aboriginals in the West Indies and northern South America [39 A, p. 25; 39 D, p. 833; 39 H; 39 N, p. 555], but Ligon's reference is too brief to be of much use. It might be that the red mangrove (*Rhizophora mangle*), which is widely distributed in the West Indies and the coasts of tropical South America [26, p. 384] and found in Barbados in the seventeenth century [45, p. 27] was utilized by native peoples for furniture construction and other purposes. The techniques employed by Barbados' Amerindians are unknown, and, although Ligon [25, p. 48] noted that African slaves also processed the mangrove bark into ropes, the extent, if any, of Amerindian influence remains problematical.

The use of the calabash (*Crescentia cujete*) or gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*) for the manufacture of household utensils and containers may have been — at least partially — the result of contact with Indians. In 1630, Captain John Smith [37, p. 56] reported the existence of "gourds so great as will make good great bottles, and cut in two pieces good dishes and platters." During Ligon's residence the fruit of the "calabash tree" was also being used in the manufacture of a variety of household items: "some for dishes, some for cups, some for basins, and some of the largest to carry water in, as we do gourds, with handles atop as that of a kettle, for they are smoother and much stronger than [the gourd]" [25, pp. 72-73].

Although neither Smith nor Ligon specifically mention Indians in this context, utensils made from the cultivated *Crescentia cujete* and *Lagenaria siceraria* were standard features of the technological kit of South American Indians in general [39 I, p. 475], and are specifically noted for, among others, Antillean and Guiana peoples [21, pp. 606-607; 39 D, p. 845; 39 M, p. 528; 39 N, p. 555]. The calabash, in particular, was a native American plant widely cultivated from the Antilles to southern Brazil [39 O, p. 542], and it is not unreasonable to assume that the Arawaks who arrived in 1627 introduced the settlers to the use of this plant which may have been growing on the island before Barbados' European colonization [45, pp. 88-92] — or which may have been brought with them. The gourd is clearly distinguished from the calabash by Ligon, and despite the gourd's Old World origin [45, p. 54], its widespread use by South American Indians may point to them as the agents for its diffusion (or use introduction), although the role of Africans in this respect cannot be discounted.

Other than the few items presented above, the written sources afford little else on the ethnography of Barbados' Amerindians although additional, albeit sparse, references are occasionally found. In 1710-1712,

an island resident remarked that "... most people in the West Indies are given to the observation of dreams and omens, by their conversation with Negroes or Indians ..." [44, p. 88], implying that this comment applied to Barbados as well. The same writer [44, p. 31] recorded the absence of "flint stones" in Barbados, and noted fire-making by the wide-spread rotary friction method, *viz.*, "The Negroes and Carib Indians rub fire out of two sticks, one being soft and the other hard." Ligon [25, p. 32] observed that the Indians were quite susceptible to "poxes" and that "they have many and the best cures for it,"¹⁶ but no details are offered on these curing practices. From various references Ligon [25, pp. 23-24, 42] makes to pottery on the island, one can infer that Indians were not making it. This absence is difficult to account for since pottery was such a characteristic trait of the Antillean and South American populations with which we are dealing. The technological aspects of Barbados' contemporary pottery industry seem to have evolved without any significant Amerindian (or African) influences [13; 14].

Other aspects of early Barbadian culture which may have been partially or wholly influenced by Amerindians (although Indians are not specifically mentioned in the sources) might include mortars, basketry, and the pepper-pot. Ligon [25, p. 31] mentions that mortars were used for the pounding of corn, but he neither comments on the material out of which they were constructed nor offers a description of them. Wooden mortars, common in West Africa, are also known for Amerindian populations [39 A, pp. 26-27], including the Island Carib [21; 41, p. 386]. Hughes [23, p. 242] identifies some native plants used in the construction of baskets, but descriptions of these baskets are not given. Dominica and St. Vincent Caribs were trading baskets, among other products, in Barbados during the 1730's [1, pp. 77-78; 23, pp. 5-6], and these may have had some impact on the local industry. But basketry is such a common trait among Amerindians that techniques and styles may have been introduced earlier; or, of course, the basketry made in Barbados (as well as the mortars) could have reflected no Amerindian influence at all. Finally, the idea of a "pepper-pot," reported under that name by Pinckard [33, Vol. 2, p. 117] in the late eighteenth century, and widely distributed among Amerindians, might have been introduced from that source. According to Pinckard, the pepper-pot was a "favorite dish of the [African] slaves" and was made "... by stewing various kinds

¹⁶ Ligon also admired the Indian women's adeptness at the removal of chiggers, a ubiquitous nuisance in the seventeenth century: "The Indian women," he writes, "have the best skill to take them out, which they do by putting in a small pointed pin or needle at the hole where he came in, and winding the point about the bag [of eggs] loosen him from the flesh and so take him out ... I have had ten taken out of my feet in a morning by the unfortunate Yarico ..." [25, p. 65].

of vegetables with a bit of salt meat, or salt fish, and seasoning it very high with ... some species of red pepper"; but, once again, by this late date the African derivation of this type of stew cannot be discounted.

III

It is by no means certain that those ethnographic traits discussed above were attributes of the island's Indian contingent as a whole over time or, indeed, for any given period. In addition, descriptive information for many of these traits is of too generalized or cursory a nature to permit their definitive identification with a particular ethnic group or tribal provenience. A number of these traits (or complexes) can, in fact, be attributed to the Island Carib, but many of them could be identified equally well with other Antillean and South American groups. Thus, on the basis of the ethnographic evidence reviewed above, it is difficult to make specific statements about either the provenience of Barbados' Amerindians or the ethnic composition of this group which, in any case, by the mid-seventeenth century was not localized but dispersed in various areas of the island. However, the ethnographic evidence and, more importantly, historical materials considered at greater length elsewhere [17] do make it seem that such Indians represented a variety of peoples who largely derived from neighboring islands in the Lesser Antilles and from the northern coastal areas of South America, including the Guianas.

Although Indian contributions to Barbadian early culture are often a matter of speculation, it has been shown (less tentatively for some culture items than for others) that this population did have a role to play in the adaptations that English and African colonists made to their new environment. The consideration of Indian contributions to Barbadian culture is important for another and broader reason. It has often been assumed that the African slaves coming to Barbados in large numbers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had virtually no part in shaping the contemporary life of the island and made little or no contribution to the enduring and characteristic aspects of Barbadian culture. However, if a relative handful of Amerindians could contribute to Barbados' cultural development, one might reasonably expect that the tens of thousands more of Africans (and their descendants) made more of an impact, both in direct perceivable areas and in more subtle ones such as aspects of social organization, values, and style of life. Only continuing intensive research into the documentary materials, of which the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have left an abundant legacy, will permit a delineation of the contributions made by Africans in this, the oldest of England's sugar colonies

(politically independent since November, 1966), often called Little England. Such research will also enable an assessment of how trans-cultural processes [*vide* 32, pp. 97-103] produced a society which, despite numerous institutional parallels with England, developed a distinct type of New World culture. The tap root of this hybrid culture lies in both northern Europe and western Africa, but its trunk sprouted in the socio-economic matrix of a plantation-colonial society based upon slave labor.

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