Caribbean Slave Women in Rebellions, War, Mothering, and Leadership

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This book is dedicated to all my female ancestors
from Africa to the New World

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CHAPTER ONE

CARIBBEAN SLAVE REBELLION HISTORY

Caribbean slavery began in 1492 with the arrival of Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) and his crew on Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic) where an eager Columbus left thirty-nine crew persons to establish a permanent settlement. Columbus and his crews' arrival ushered in an age with European countries seeking ways to expand their geographical boundaries and increase their countries' wealth. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Caribbean was a mineral rich and agriculturally astute area that countries such as Spain, France, Portugal, Denmark, and England exploited for their own economic gain. For approximately two hundred years, European colonialism monopolized the Caribbean beginning in the sixteenth century with exploitation of the islands indigenous people (e.g., Tainos, Arawak, Ciguayos) and the commodification of their islands' natural resources (e.g., gold, silver, gems). This non-reciprocal relationship between Spanish colonizers and aboriginal populations erupted into unsuccessful rebellions and revolt conspiracies which was reignited with the arrival and enslavement of African-born human beings. The first documented rebellion in which African-born human beings engaged in the New World was the Santo Domingo 1521 Slave Revolt.

On December 25, 1521, in Hispaniola, a slave rebellion began on Diego Columbus' (1479-1526) sugar plantation in *Nueva Isabela* and spread towards Azua, a village on the island's south-central coast. The Santo Domingo 1521 Revolt, which lasted for a week, is the earliest documented slave rebellion in the Caribbean. Planned by Maria Olofa and Gonzalo Mandinga, it was conducted by enslaved ethnic Wolof from Senegambia, Africa, who wished to overthrow the Spanish colonial government, abolish slavery, and claim the island for themselves. Oral history presents Olofa and Mandinga as devout Muslims and lovers who planned their insurgence on Christmas to symbolize their disdain for Spanish colonists, Christians, and their forced religious conversion.

Enslaved rebels included twenty enslaved Wolof who were practicing Muslims and Taino living on the island "raided estates, stole gold, and other valuable items, and recruited other enslaved insurgents on their way to Azua."[1] Unfortunately, Spanish colonists suppressed this rebellion on January 6, 1522, and its aftermath led to the passage of the earliest Slave Codes implemented in the New World. Even though the Santo Domingo 1521 Revolt was the first documented slave rebellion in the Caribbean, this insurgence overlapped with one led by Enriquillo (1500-1535), a Taino *cacique* (or chief) joined by enslaved African-born human beings in Hispaniola. Unfortunately, Francisco de Valenzuela (1528-1599) and Francisco Hernandez de Toledo (1515-1587) purchased and enslaved Enriquillo. As an adult, Enriquillo married Mencia, a young, enslaved Taino. Andres de Valenzuela sexually assaulted Mencia before stealing Enriquillo's horse during his escape. Although Enriquillo publicly protested his wife's sexual assault and filed a complaint with Pedro de Vadillo (1484-1554), the settlement's Lieutenant Governor, Vadillo sided with Valenzuela and punished Enriquillo. Angry Enriquillo marooned or ran away taking refuge in the Baocruco Mountains where he established a community of Taino and African-born human beings.

Beginning in 1519, Enriquillo and a group of "enslaved Wolof, African Muslims from the Senegambia region" and "Baocruco maroons" began planning a rebellion that lasted four years which they launched against Spanish colonists. On Hispaniola, the Wolof, a West African ethnic group comprised the largest number of African-born human beings enslaved on the island having purchased and transported to the Caribbean as early as 1505. Enquillo ended his part in the rebellion following a peace agreement he negotiated with Spanish colonists in 1534 that granted him and his family land and their freedom. This treaty, however, made no provisions for the maroon rebels who "abandon[ed] their maroon outpost, and relocate to Sabana Buey and also capture new runaways."[2] Although Enquillo withdrew from the insurgence, others including maroons continued engaging in their freedom struggles against their European enslavers and colonizers. One such maroon leader was Sebastian Lemba (fl. 1540s), a Kongolese-born rebel who migrated to Hispaniola in the 1520s where he took refuge among the maroons living in the Baocruco Mountains. Following Enriquillo's withdrawal from the rebellion, Lemba

[1] Ana Ozuna, "Feminine Power: Women Contesting Plantocracy in *The Book of Night Women*," *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 82.
[2] Ozuna, "Feminine Power," 85.

and his followers "broke ranks with Enquillo and continue[d] their maroon activities" with the relationship between Lemba and Enquillo remaining estranged for fifteen years.[3] Additionally, maroon leaders such as Diego Guzman, Diego de Ocampo, and Juan Vaquero joined Lemba along with thousands of maroon rebels continued to resist and undermine Spain's colonial authority in Hispaniola. The Spanish colonial government attempted to negotiate a peace treaty with Lemba and his supporters, in 1545, which was immediately rejected. For unknown reasons, an unnamed African-born soldier assassinated Lemba, which resulted in Governor Cerrato authorizing military action against the maroons in 1547 with the Spanish militia successfully suppressing the rebel's insurgence. Tensions between Spanish colonists and the maroon subsided in 1548 with "over twenty sugar cane refineries closed and only ten remaining operational as a direct result of the sustained maroon activity island wide during the first half of the sixteenth century."[4]

Unlike Enquillo and Lemba, Padre Jean, with twenty-five supporters led an unsuccessful slave rebellion in Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) at Port-de-Paix in 1676. This insurgence began with Padre Jean murdering his Spanish owner and his supporters killing their owners in Port Margot before taking refuge in the mountains. Unable to overtake French colonial forces, Padre Jean and a few of his supporters retreated and fled to Tortuga Island. Betrayed by marooned spies, Padre Jean and his supporters were captured, on Tortuga Island, and executed by Spanish colonists in 1679. Their actions however added a layer to the growing tensions between enslaved persons and French colonists on Saint-Domingue as well as those on other Caribbean islands (e.g., St. John, Cuba). Investigating the relationship between enslaved persons and their owners in the Caribbean, Arthur L. Stinchcombe's "Freedom and Oppression of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean" (1994), determined that enslaved persons created their freedom in this region via daily resistance, insurgence, or revolt conspiracies. These acts varied from island to island and were contingent upon its European colonizers and the island's enslaved population (e.g., Akwamu, Kongolese, Wolof, Mende).

Previously, Caribbean slave rebellions in my mind had conjured images of muscular men armed with brute strength and weapons engaging in vigorous combat against their common enemies. Rarely in scholarship does the contributions that enslaved females made to such uprisings

[3] Ozuna, "Feminine Power," 85.
[4] Ozuna, "Feminine Power," 85.

appear, instead, their narratives were either marginalized or erased from historical accounts. The Santo Domingo 1521 Revolt was the first insurgence that I encountered that mentioned a woman (Maria Olofa) as a co-leader, planner, and participant. In the Caribbean, enslaved women and their immediate descendants possessed a tenacity that separated them form their enslaved counterparts in the United States and South America. As I began considering rationales for the roles that enslaved Caribbean women assumed before, during, and after their respective insurgences, I recalled Angela Davis' essay "The Black Woman Role in the Community of Slaves (1971) in which she explores the unique position these women held as warriors, mothers, and leaders. Davis identified black matriarchy, in American slavery, as a site where enslaved women became empowered through their social interactions with other slaves as well as owners and overseers. Viewing enslaved women through a matriarchal lens, Davis suggests that these individuals created cyphers that enabled them to transgress intersections (e.g., gender, geography) previously occupied by patriarchy. I expanded Davis' research to include enslaved Caribbean women who maintained a consciousness that enabled them to ensure their communities survival and endeavors towards obtaining freedom.

Armed with this current information, I began focusing on Caribbean slave rebellions in which women played pivotal roles in planning and executing these insurgences. During my research, I located accounts regarding slave rebellions on various Caribbean islands between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Most of the scholarship that I reviewed for this book featured slave women in revolts in subservient positions to heroic male figures (e.g., Bussa, Sam Sharpe). Unlike these works, this book situates Caribbean slave women who led rebellions at the forefront of these discourses by situating their actions independently of their male counterparts. In this book, I explore the multiplicitous roles that enslaved women in the Caribbean played in rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders.[5] The women selected for this book are Breffu (St. John), Suzanne "Sanite" Bélair (Saint Domingue), and Carlotta Lucumi (Cuba). These maroon, free, and enslaved women played an active role in the insurgences that occurred on their respective islands. I focus on rebellions that occurred across gender lines and in three geographical locations in the Caribbean. I specifically isolate this book to uprisings such as the St. John 1733 Revolt, the Haitian Revolution, and the Triunvirato 1843 Rebellion. Each revolt rebellion I selected feature enslaved Caribbean women as warriors, mothers, and leaders.

[5] Mother: represents the parent-child relationships between enslaved women and their biological as well as non-biological kin.

Scholarship in this area has focused on the men who led rebellions and has only provided an honorable mention regarding the enslaved women who supported their efforts. Researchers have yet to transition these enslaved women narratives from their subservient positions into one that highlights their contributions to such dissidences as warriors, mothers, and leaders. I, like Rhoda E. Reddock in "Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective" (1985), I consider slavery "a crucial aspect" in the "historical" experienced of these women "whose existence and legacy are not confined to the distant past."[6] In this book, I attempt to fill this gap in knowledge by inserting enslaved Caribbean women who engaged in revolts lived experiences as warriors, mothers, and leaders into these larger discourses.

Furthermore, I geographically unearth these narratives by excavating their lives before, during, and after their respective slave rebellions. In a twenty-first century context, the feats accomplished by Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi remain a marvel current scholarship has only just begun investigating. The goal/aims in this book are trifold: the first introduces Caribbean slave women who defied traditional expectations for their race and gender in not only their plantation communities, but also in their maroon societies as well. Next, inserting Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi's narratives into larger Caribbean insurgency conversations by situating them in the sociopolitical climate and geographical location each inhabited. Lastly, emphasizing how Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi's actions enabled them to redefine the roles that enslaved Caribbean women played in rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders.

Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Caribbean, and New World Practices

My love of slave rebellions stems from movies such as *Sankofa* (1993) and *Roots* (2016) and grew into a search for historical accounts featuring women in non-traditional insurgent roles. A common thread in these cinematic offerings was the transatlantic slave trade, the Middle Passage, and the harsh conditions African-born human beings endured as they traveled from Africa to the New World. Those that survived the journey disembarked from their respective ships and placed in holding cells where they were prepared for auction. Enslaved African-born human beings,

[6] Rhoda E. Reddock, "Women and Slavery in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective," *Latin American Perspectives* 12, no. 63 (1985): 63.

once purchased went to their respective plantations where they received new names and began their indoctrination into slavery. Caribbean plantations provided "seasoning" placements for newly acquired African-born human beings which made these islands ripe locations for slave rebellions and revolt conspiracies. The first Caribbean slave revolt I learned about was the Haitian Revolution which occurred on Saint-Domingue, a French colony under the leadership of Dutty Boukman (1767-1791), a Senegambian-born maroon leader previously enslaved in Jamaica, a British colony. Boukman a Vodou priest received assistance at the Bois Caïman ceremony by Cécile Fatiman (1771-1883) and Edaise (fl. 1791), two Kreyol-born Vodou priestesses. In scholarship, Bois Caïman serves as a location and a catalyst for the Haitian Revolution. This rebellion was more than a merely an uprising led by rebel slaves who indiscriminately murdered plantation owners, overseers, and their families in the name of freedom.

Instead, the Haitian Revolution was an insurgence against slavery (e.g., African, European) and the transatlantic slave trade in the New World. Many Haitian Revolution insurgents had been African-born human beings from ethnic groups such as the Ewe, Yoruba, Togolese, and Kongolese had experienced or possessed knowledge of slavery in Africa. Their respective kingdoms (e.g., Benin, Yoruba, Kongo) played pivotal roles in the perpetuation of slavery in the New World. I encountered such accounts while reading "African Participation" (2021), in *Captivating History* which acknowledges that slavery had been practices in Africa long before the first Europeans arrived. Additionally, this essay described the differences that existed between African slavery and European New World colonial slavery which the author narrowed to how each executed the institution in their geographical locations. For instance, in Africa, enslaved persons received indoctrination into their owners' homes as domestic servants rather than used as beasts of burden performing laborious intensive tasks such as sugarcane planting, harvesting, and cultivation. Slavery in Africa was commonplace with systems in place for capturing, selling, and transporting slaves when Europeans began exploring the continent in the fifteenth century. Whereas the European colonial slavery system purchased African-born human beings from African Kingdoms or European slave brokers. Once acquired these African-born human beings sailed from Africa to the New World where their enslavement began under harsh (and sometimes deadly) conditions. Portugal was the first European country "to start trading with Africans on the West Coast" and the first to

obtain permission to capture and enslave African-born human beings for their mines and in the service industry (e.g., porters, domestic servants).[7] Slowly, Portuguese explorers began colonizing uninhabited islands near Africa such as the Azores, Madeira, Cabo Verde, and Sao Tome as well as establishing sugar plantations on these lands. Soon, the Portuguese realized that to make their venture a success, a required ready supply of free labor; hence, contributing to their decision to enslave African-born human beings to perform these tasks. Later, the Portuguese expanded African slavery to the New World, specifically Brazil.

In the early sixteenth century, European countries like Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and Denmark had begun sending explorers to the New World to claim lands and its citizens to establish permanent settlements. These developing colonies found that their economic success was contingent upon the use of free laborers who laid a foundation for slavery in the New World. The introduction of African-born human beings into the Caribbean began in 1502 and marked the beginning of slave rebellions in the region. These early African-born transplants resisted their enslavement through suicide and maroonage before engaging in armed physical combat. Even in its infancy, the transatlantic slave trade was a point of contention between European countries whose governments endeavored to gain new territories, international prestige, and wealth. Slavery, by the 1520s had become an international business in which African-born human beings, specifically males, were in high demand. These African-born males were war captives or tribal raid victims sold or traded to European slave brokers. Even though African-born females enslaved as well; however, they usually remained with their captors who added them to their households as either servants, concubines, or lesser wives. This practice changed for African-born females when European slave brokers realized their dual economic value (e.g., physical labor, reproduction); hence, transforming them into the coveted enslavement group. Driven by European countries New World colonial labor demands the transatlantic slave trade was born.

The first sugar plantation built in Hispaniola, occurred 1516, with Taino laborers, but New World slavery officially began in 1518 with the arrival of the first African-born human beings arriving in the region aboard Portuguese cargo ships. Soon, Spain had instituted slavery in its New World colonies with Britain instituting the practice in their colonies during

[7] Carrie Gibson, *Empire's Crossroads: A History of the Caribbean from Columbus to the Present Day*, (New York: Grove Press, 2015), 95.

the seventeenth century. African-born human beings arrived by the thousands in the Caribbean where they entered the chattel system that equated them to property for purchase or resale. Originally, enslaved African-born human beings worked mining for gold, silver, and other minerals before European colonizers shifted their focus to agricultural productivity. Eventually, large sugar, coffee, cotton, and indigo plantations emerged which led to an increased need for free African-born laborers. In 1700 slavery had been an institution in the Caribbean for two hundred years. Caribbean slavery brought disease and harsh working conditions to the New World that refashioned African-born human beings into chattel. The transatlantic slave trade was the primary catalyst for later rebellions planned and executed by enslaved persons in the New World. African slavery provided European countries with a free labor economic system predicated on the capture, transportation, and forced servitude of African-born men, women, and children in the New World. However, African-born human beings enslaved, specifically women, in the Caribbean adopted strategies for challenging their enslavement. The transatlantic slave trade was profitable for African kingdoms and European countries vying for social positioning in the New World through colonization and financial accruement the eighteenth-century slavery existed in the Caribbean for over "200 years[s]," however, the nineteenth century witnessed an increase in rebellions involving ten or more enslaved persons. Even though these revolts were quickly suppressing, plantation owners and overseers dispensed harsh punishments (e.g., torture, mutilations, beatings) to discourage further rebellions. These colonial interventions failed to impact their island's enslaved population's desire to regain their lost freedom and moved enslaved women to the forefront of these uprisings.

Women, Resistance, Conspiracy, and Outward Rebellion

Prior to the 1800s Caribbean slaves were African-born males, but by the mid-1800s African-born females became the primary group transported to the Caribbean as slaves and procreators. Beginning his investigation in West Africa, Hilary McD. Beckles in "Female Enslavement and Gender Ideologies in the Caribbean" (2000) found that patriarchal gender role expectations for European women underwent revisions with regards to African-born women. Enslaved Caribbean women owners and overseers expected them to perform labor intensive tasks like their male counterparts, while enduring the additional burdens such as sexual assaults, concubinage, and forced reproduction. Beckles concluded that these dynamics statically redefined enslaved women identities and

modified their gender expectations on their respective plantations as well as in their maroon communities. For instance, in West African slave societies had a larger number of females because non-African slave markets such as those in the New World placed emphasis on purchasing African-born males. As a result, African-born females performed agricultural duties once deemed masculine tasks to ensure their communities survival. They "planted and harvested crops, looked after animals, and engaged in all labor-intensive work such as crafts and domestic violence" (defending their communities) under the new designation of "woman work" in their communities.[8]New World slavery, however, restructured the gender roles of African-born women and their descendants by situating the in the chattel slavery system.

Stories regarding Caribbean slave rebellions exposed how African-born human beings were active in their own liberation well before the abolitionist movements in the Caribbean began. These African-born human beings and their immediate descendants spent their lives endeavoring to dismantle the chattel slavery system which they held responsible for their physical and mental separation form their homeland and kin. Yet their self-determinism was too strong which prevented them from passively accepting their enslavement which was particularly true for enslaved Caribbean women who participated rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders. Early resistance by African-born human beings in the New World was maroonage or running away from their plantations to live free in their own communities. Such enslaved women challenged slavery suing their natural desire for freedom and survival to subvert the plantocracy, in the Caribbean. Analyzing the pivotal roles that enslaved women played in Jamaica's slavery system, Lucille Mathurin Mair in *The Rebel Women in the British West Indies* (2007) explores the gendered nature of British Caribbean slavery. Mair scrutinizes the various resistance strategies enslaved women invoked in their daily lives and as insurgents. Enslaved Caribbean women were more obstinate than their male counterparts which Mair demonstrates through her verbal illustrations and biographical sketches featuring Queen Nanny and Cubah "Queen Akua" Cornwallis. For example, Queen Nanny (1686-1733), an Akwamu-born, Obeah practitioner enslaved in Jamaica, led the First Maroon War (1728-1739) against British colonists. In Central and West Africa, many women bore the title Queen and held leadership positions in their communities,

[8] Hilary McD. Beckles, "Female Enslavement and Gender Ideologies in the Caribbean," in *Identity in the Shadow of Slavery* (pp. 163-182), (New York: Continuum, 2000), 167.

Nanny's Akwamu origins contributed to her receiving this distinction in Jamaica. Additionally, many African-born women enslaved in the Caribbean had been warriors who served in slave armies or all female platoons where they trained in guerilla warfare as well as hand to hand combat skills. Such women later used this knowledge to train rebels and engage in physical confrontations during rebellions as well as organize and initiate insurgences under the watchful eyes of owners and overseers.

A maroon slave, Queen Nanny with Accompong, Cudjoe, Cuffy, Johnny, Quao, who were also ethnic Akwamu created a maroon community known as Nanny Town (1700-1734), which as located on the island's windward side. This maroon community modeled after Queen Nanny's West African Akwamu village prospered from its citizenry farming, raising animals, and bartering with their nearest neighbors for weapons, clothing, and other necessities. British colonists referred to Queen Nanny's community as Windward Maroons. This group was infamous for freeing enslaved persons from nearby plantations; hence, causing economic hardships for owners and labor shortages for overseers who unsuccessfully appealed to the island's colonial government for a legal remedy. Additionally, Queen Nanny assumed responsibility for training the Windward Maroons in hand-to-hand combat and guerilla warfare, as well as organizing slave liberation campaigns that her supporters successfully executed.

During the First Maroon War which began as a dispute between Jamaica's maroon slaves and Jamaica's colonial government regarding their mistreatment by colonists. The Windward Maroons rebellious actions (e.g., physical retribution, freeing slaves) prompted Jamaica's colonists to form mobs to capture and execute the Windward Maroons. But Queen Nanny and her supporters were able to successfully allude them and continue their liberation campaigns. The British government sent soldiers led by Captain William "Captain Sambo" Coffee (1802-1863) to Jamaica, to suppress Queen Nanny and the Windward Maroon's uprising. The First Maroon War ended in 1739 followed by a formal treaty in 1740 which was a jointly brokered agreement between Queen Nanny, Quao, and the British colonial government with the latter granting the Windward Maroons land and limited freedom. Upon Queen Nanny's death in 1733, Nanny Town became Moore Town; yet it remained home to the Windward Maroons until the early 1800s when they relocated to other parts of Jamaica which led British soldiers to officially destroy this village. Unilaterally, enslaved Caribbean slave women like Queen Nanny, became emersed by their "cir-

cumstances into the center of their community" where in many instances they thrived as warriors, mothers, and leaders[9]

Like Queen Nanny, Breffu's, Bélair's, and Lucumi's lived experiences and contain layers in which resistance and rebellion overlap in nuanced ways. Hence, illustrating the innate abilities inherent among enslaved women who engaged in rebellions. In *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (1990), Barbara Bush analyzes stereotypical representations regarding enslaved Caribbean women in Western historical studies over a one-hundred-and-eighty-year span. Bush's case study deconstructs "the complex relationships race, class, and gender" as it existed in the Caribbean during slavery.[10]Using enslaved women daily documented struggles as data, Bush recasts their roles in their communities (e.g., plantation, maroon) against a Eurocentric patriarchal backdrop through a comparative analysis of these ideologies and traditional African cultural values and practices. Although Queen Nanny participated in liberation campaign and taught her supporters how to physically defend themselves, she stopped short of taking up arms with her supporters as a combatant. Through re-reading Beckles' and Bush's works I determined that enslaved Caribbean women employed strategies ranging from resistance (e.g., feigning sickness, sabotaging equipment) and rebellion (e.g., physically fighting). Enslaved Caribbean women who chose resistance faced limited pathways to having their voices heard and challenging slavery on a larger scale. Conversely, Mary Prince (1788-1833), for example, found an avenue for exposing the atrocities she endured as an enslaved woman in Bermuda and later, Antigua, while gaining her individual freedom. Prince, an illiterate woman, published her autobiography *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) and she became the first Africana woman to have an autobiography published in Britain. She was able to escape slavery by accompanying her owner John Adams Wood, an Antiguan-merchant, and his family to Britan in 1828 and refusing to return to Antigua. This made Prince a free person of color in Britain but prevented her from every going back to Antiqua because of her fugitive slave status.

Prior to legally running away, Prince had endured years of physical abuse, body damaging work in salt mines, and multiple resales before Wood purchased her in Bermuda. While living in Antigua, Prince joined the Mora-

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[9] Angela Davis, "The Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves," *The Black Scholar*, (1971): 5.
[10] Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 5.

vian Church and married Daniel James, a free man of color, who worked as a carpenter and a cooper. In Britain, Prince, with aid from Thomas Pringle (1789-1834), petitioned in Parliament for the abolition of slavery in Britain's New World colonies and her emancipation. Wood refused to liberate Prince, but she remained determined to maintain her freedom by staying in Britain where she testified in two court cases related to her autobiography in 1833. This was the year that Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act emancipating approximately 800,000 enslaved persons in Britian's New World colonies. Even though Prince chose non-violent resistance to obtain her freedom, her efforts dispelled for me the myth that enslaved Caribbean women passively accepted their enslavement which Bush also addresses in *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838*. Instead, Prince actions illustrates alternatives ways that enslaved Caribbean women protested their enslavement and advocated for their freedom. Investigating how enslaved women used their lived experiences to challenge and resist their oppression, Jessica Zlotnik in "Women Seeking Freedom: Gender, Oppression, and Resistance in Caribbean Slave Society" (2012), determined that these women used "smaller acts of resistance" such as refusing to work, feigning illnesses, and marooning. Still there were enslaved women who participated in "large scale revolt[s] or rebellion[s]" as resistance to their enslavement and in defiance of the plantations system.[11]These are the women whose narratives I visit in this book through an exploration of Breffu's, Bélair's, and Lucumi's involvement in slave rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders.

Whereas Cubah "Queen Akua" Cornwallis, an Obeah practitioner, rebellion activities were unremarkable because she performed various tasks (e.g., domestic duties, concubine, fieldwork) in their plantation communities. Cubah, like other enslaved Caribbean women, occupied multiplicitous spaces in which patriarchal expectations limited their freedom; yet they were able to transcend these "invisible barriers" as insurgent leaders and revolt participants.[12] In 1760 Jamaica, for instance, Cubah became "Queen of Kingston" following Takyi's unsuccessful rebellion. She emerged as an untraditional rebel slave in that she used an alternative pathway to acquire her personal liberation. An African-born woman enslaved in Jamaica, Cubah became Captain William Cornwallis, her owner, concubine, and plan-

[11] Jessica Zlotnik, "Women Seeking Freedom: Gender, Oppression, and Resistance in the Caribbean Slave Society," *Caribbean Quilt*, (2012): 155.
[12] Tayayo Mukai, "Learning from Women's Biography" (pp. 152-161), in *All Sides of the Subject: Women and* Biography, edited by Teresa Ile, (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), 154.

tation mistress. In this role, Cubah oversaw the estate's daily household affairs such as the cooking and cleaning. Once, Captain Cornwallis returned to Britain, after freeing Cubah, who then relocated to Port Royal where she used her African-derived medicinal skills to care for infirmed British service personnel in Jamaica. Additionally, Cubah lay nursing skills to treat the British royal family which made her popular among Jamaica's colonists. Even though, Cubah's approach to insurgence was non-violent, her actions created cyphers for enslaved Caribbean women to use their knowledge or skills to acquire their freedom.

Enslaved Caribbean women like Queen Nanny, Mary Prince, and Cubah "Queen Akua" Cornwallis navigated the multi-tiered terrains that New World slavery presented from the early eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, which Marietta Morrisey's *Slave Women in the New World: Gender Stratifications in the Caribbean* (1989) investigates as hybrid practices. Morrissey determined that enslave Caribbean women used their social positions (e.g., cook, servant) to organize and implement daily resistance activities that protested slavery in their plantation and maroon communities. The avenues the aforementioned women employed cause a paradigmatic shift in my understanding regarding how enslaved Caribbean women such as Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi planned and participated in rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders. I began realizing that these women lived experiences varied across plantation settings (e.g., house servant, fieldhand) which provided them with opportunities to interact with their fellow slaves (e.g., plantation, maroon) as well as owners and overseers in nuanced ways. Such women I discerned possessed deeply rooted ideas knowledge that propelled them to the forefront of their respective rebellions. Despite their enslavement, Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi among other rebelled not only physically, but also psychologically against the institution of slavery in ways that made them modernist innovators in the New World.

Finding My Place in Other Spaces

Across the Caribbean enslaved women worked unknowingly in concert with one another on their journey towards freedom. These women assumed diverse roles (e.g., warrior, mothers, leaders) in their plantation and maroon communities that enabled them to ensure not only their personal survival, but also that of their fellow enslaved persons. Perplexed by these enslaved women innate abilities to plan, organize, and carry-out similar insurgences on different islands several years apart I began

contemplating a theoretical framework that would enable me to explore these underpinnings. I must admit this question piqued my curiosity until I read Hilary McD. Beckles' *Natural Born Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (1989) in which he deconstructs the overlapping roles that plantation slavery played in the economic, social, and cultural exploitation of African-born human beings in Barbados. Using newspaper articles, letters, and archival records, Beckles reconstructs the roles that enslaved women played on plantations in Barbados. Beckles found that enslaved women in Barbados possessed a natural survival skill that enabled them to engage in resistance activities in protest against their enslavement while working covertly towards obtaining their freedom. This study concluded that enslaved women in Barbados subverted the chattel slavery system as warriors, mothers, and revolt leaders. Like Beckles, I agree that enslaved Caribbean women possessed a survival instinct that enabled them to resist or revolt against their enslavement as warriors, mothers, and leaders. Unlike Beckles, however, I questioned the origins of these women inner resilience and outward strength (e.g., intellectual, physical) in the context of how chattel slavery varied based on the European country colonizing their respective islands.

Although Beckles investigation centered on Barbados his findings and conclusions are amendable to my exploration because it enables me to view the resistance strategies employed by enslaved Caribbean women intertextually. This realization led me to James E. Porter's "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" (1986) in which he defines intertextuality as "the bits and pieces of texts which writers or speakers borrow and sew together to create new discourses" across time and space.[13]I use Porter's description of intertextuality to theorize how enslaved Caribbean women such as Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi were able to communicate the same thematic desire for freedom without ever meeting one another. I began considering how their lived experiences may have contributed to metaphorically communicate with their African ancestors and tap into the survival skills that Beckles references in his book. This ideation led me to consider Trinh T. Minh-ha's work *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (1989) in which she views intertextuality as orally narrated intergenerational texts that enable succeeding generations to derive meaning based on their lived experiences and social realities. This perspective enabled me to view Breffu's, Bélair's, and Lucumi's

[13] James E. Porter, "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," *Rhetoric Review* 5, no. 1 (1986): 34.

roles in their respective rebellions as interdependent evolving narratives that engage in conversation with one another despite chronological time and geographical locations. The use of Intertextuality Theory enabled me to connect narratives regarding Breffu's, Bélair's, and Lucumi's involvement in Caribbean slave rebellions as a pattern transcending time and geographical locations. These interconnected objectives arose from a common source (e.g., New World slavery; European colonialism) with the enslaved Caribbean women chosen for this book juxtapositioning against their collective experiences as enslaved persons.

In Dutch Curacao, for instance, Maria an enslaved women living on St. Maria Plantation, an estate owned and operated by the Dutch West India Company, organized the 1716 Curacao Rebellion. Maria was a cook tasked with preparing newly disembarked African-born human beings for auction which gave her limited mobility to gather information which she used to plan this revolt. Beginning on September 15, 1716, with the murder of Dutch colonist by enslaved rebels, the Curacao Rebellion moved for plantations towards the island's capital with more enslaved persons joining along the way. Unfortunately, the Dutch militia stationed at Willemstad were able to intercept the enslaved rebels and quickly suppress their uprising. Spanish colonists captured and interrogated Maria, other leaders, and co-conspirators who had been betrayed by Tromp. While other enslaved rebels endeavored to liberate themselves, Maria's motives however stemmed from a desire to avenge her husband's tragic murder by Dutch colonists. For her real or suspected role in the rebellion, Maria received a death sentence executed on November 9, 1716. Whereas Adelaide "Buzzotter" Dyson, a free woman of color in the French colony of Trinidad and Tobago participated in a rebellion in 1850 that began on Shands Estate, in Diego Martin. Monikered the "Queen of the Macaque Regiment," by her supporters, Dyson poisoned owners, overseers, and their families. Like Maria, Dyson received a less severe punishment for her insurgence role, and conviction. Dyson's sentence, unlike Maria's, enslaved Dyson, who lived the remainder of her life working in chains. Externally, Maria and Dyson narratives appear unrelated to one another beyond their role or suspected role in a rebellion; yet they are intertextually related in their lived experiences and desire to free themselves and/or others.

Drawing Maria's and Dyson's rebellions as intertextual stories in which these smaller narratives enable researchers to excavate the underlying reasons that each chose to engage in a rebellion (e.g., actively, passively) as warriors, mothers, or leaders. I use the relatedness present in narratives

regarding enslaved Caribbean women involvement in revolts to analyze and interpret Breffu's, Bélair's, and Lucumi's actions during their respective rebellions to construct how their stories and vision related to one another. I place their discourses in the context of the larger social conversations prevalent on their islands; hence, disrupting the traditional ways in which their stories appear in documented accounts. Once I determined the most appropriate conceptual framework for this study, I realized that I need not only a compatible qualitative research methodology, but also one that enabled me to use story texts (e.g., oral histories, songs) as data. For that reason, I opted to use Case Study and Narrative Inquiry as my combined research design because it enabled me to view Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi lived experiences, social realities, and rebellion activities from multiple points of view simultaneously.

In *The Art of the Case Study* (1995), Robert L. Stake describes this investigative approach as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a singles case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances" which I employ to study the intertextual relationships that exist between the women selected for this book.[14]A social science research method, Case study permits researchers to conduct intensive analytical assessments regarding a particular experience, event, or phenomena across contexts. Case Study is a qualitative research method that enable researchers to analyze the intertextual relationships that exist between an experience, event, or phenomena (e.g., oral, written) in isolation. This enables researchers to deconstruct a given story by analyzing the language and meaning attached to the words chosen for inclusion in the text. Employing Case Study as this book's combined research technique enables me to use sources such as oral histories, diaries, letters, and so forth as data to explore the relationship between these women and their rebellions.

Skeletal Blueprints and Textual Configuration

Chapter one briefly overviewed Caribbean slave rebellion history specifically those featuring enslaved women as warriors, mothers, and leaders. I explained the goals/aims of this book in conjunction with related scholarship. Additionally, I discussed the book's conceptual framework and qualitative research methodology. I presented the geographical locations and enslaved women chosen for this exploration as well as the

[14] Robert E. Stake, *The Art of the Case Study*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), xi.

rationale for the selected rebellions. In chapter two, I describe the Danish (Dutch) colonized West Indian island of St. John (present-day U. S. Virgin Island). I introduce slavery in this locale and explore the gender role expectations for enslaved women in the island's plantation and maroon communities. From this discussion, I present the narrative of Breffu, highlighting her early known life, her role as an insurgent leader in the St. John 1733 Revolt, as well as her impact on the unscripted gendered policies present in the Danish West Indies. Next, in chapter three, I review French colonization and slavery in Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti). I describe the strategic battles in which enslaved women assumed leadership positions and participated as active combatants. I introduce Suzanne "Sanite" Bélair by discussing her contributions to the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) as an *affranchis* or ex-enslaved woman, her role(s) in this revolt, and how her participation served as a symbol of equality for women of color (e.g., *affranchis*, maroon, enslaved) in Haiti.

Chapter four examines slavery in Cuba during Spanish colonialism. I explore how gender roles underwent reconstruction in enslaved communities (e.g., plantation, maroon). I then, introduce Carlotta Lucumi's, a Yoruba-born woman, biographical information, describing precipitating events that contributed to her participating in the Triunvirato 1843 Rebellion, and discuss how her involvement changed perceptions of slave women in Cuba. In chapter five, I restate the book's thesis, goals/aims, conceptual framework, and qualitative research methodology. I revisit and accentuate the key points that I developed in each chapter. finally, I offer suggestions for further research on this topic. I begin this exploration in St. John with Breffu, an Akwamu woman who led a full-scale rebellion and made the ultimate sacrifice to prevent her re-enslavement or a worse fate. I then travel to Saint-Domingue where I join the Haitian Revolution to examine the role that Bélair, a Kreyòl -born woman, played as a lieutenant in Toussaint Louverture's army. I conclude this investigation in Matanzas, Cuba with Lucumi, who has launched a short-lived insurgence. Collectively, Breffu, Bélair, and Lucumi represent enslaved Caribbean women who assumed active roles in their islands' rebellions as warriors, mothers, and leaders.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DUTCH WEST INDIES, BREFFU, AND THE ST. JOHN 1733 SLAVE REBELLION

The smallest of the three islands presently comprising the United States Virgin Islands. Located in the Caribbean Sea, St. John is positioned four miles from St. Thomas and Tortola islands. St. John largest population lives in Cruz Bay. These earliest inhabitants were the Taino who inhabited Cinnamon Bay. Still, Christopher Columbus claimed St. John on his second voyage, the island remained uncolonized until 1717, even though the British had annexed St. John into the Leeward Islands in 1684. St. John was eventually leased to two Barbadian merchants who were later evicted from the island by British Governor William Stapleton (d. 1686). The Dutch laid claim and began colonizing St. John in 1718 which was highly contested by the British. Undeterred, the Dutch sent colonists to St. John who began farming the land growing sugarcane, cotton, and other crops. The first plantation was built in Annaberg, in 1731 and by the nineteenth century St. John had become one of the Caribbean's largest sugar producers. By the 1733 rebellion, St. John had one hundred and nine plantations twenty-one of which were sugarcane producers. After years of mismanagement, St. John became a British Crown colony and in 1762 ownership was transferred from Britain back to Denmark who later sold St. John, St. Thomas, and St. Croix to the United States in 1917 for twenty-five million dollars.

In the Caribbean, the Dutch West Indies included three islands—St. Thomas, St. John, and later, St. Croix. Founded in 1672 by Dutch explorers landed on St. Thomas which they claimed for Denmark by placing their country's flag on the island. Traveling back to Denmark these individuals reported their findings to the Dutch Republic, who desired to expand their New World territories sent an expedition east which landed on St. John. These men found St. John mountainous but its soil suitable for growing sugarcane. Soon, laborers were transported to the Danish West Indies mostly African-born human beings, who were brought directly from Africa to St. John and other European New World colonies. Approximately 110, 000 African-born human beings were brought to the Caribbean

aboard ill-equipped vessels where they were malnourished and received rationed hydration. Moreover, these African-born human beings were exposed to diseases such as dysentery, yellow fever scabies, and malaria with one out of five perishing before reaching their final destinations. Initially, St. John was a Spanish territorial acquisition having been claimed on this country's behalf by Christopher Columbus. Like he had done on other islands, Columbus instituted *encomienda* in which he enslaved these regions' aboriginal inhabitants.

By the seventeenth century, the Spanish had decimated St. John's indigenous population (e.g., diseases, physical abuses, harsh labors) and its colonist had abandoned the island. The Dutch laid claim to St. John, in 1718, and began colonizing the island despite the land having been claimed years earlier by the British. Like other New World colonies, St. John was presented with unique challenges ranging from labor shortages to economic uncertainty, to weather conditions and rebellion. St. John's most well-known rebellion occurred in 1733 and one of its leaders was an enslaved woman named Breffu. In this chapter, the Dutch colonization of St. John is discussed with the introduction of transatlantic slavery to the island. Additionally, gender role expectations for enslaved females are explored and relevant comparisons are drawn to these dynamics in plantation and maroon communities. From these narratives, Breffu is presented with descriptions of her early life, her participation in the rebellion, as well as her impact on the unscripted gendered policies on St. John. This book's exploration into Breffu's life before and during the St. John 1733 Rebellion began in West Africa and continued into the New World.

Africa, the Dutch, and Competing Europeans

During the fifteenth century, Portuguese explorers arrived in the Bonoman Kingdom (southern Ghana) where they established colonies and began trading with the Bonoman population. The Portuguese began purchasing African-born human beings from Benin and the Kongo who brought to Europe and sold. By1482, the Portuguese had built Elmina Castle, a strategically located post where they traded European goods for African gold, ivory, peppers, and later people. In West Africa, the Portuguese had monopolized "the Guinea trade" which the Dutch infringed upon and garnered for themselves.[15] When these Europeans arrived slavery was already a widespread

[15] Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule, 1671-1754*, (Independently Published, 2019), 137.

practice among African kingdoms which had acclimated these African-born human beings into the institution. This indoctrination insufficiently prepared these African-born human beings for "planation life" in the New World.[16] In 1598, Dutch explorers arrived in Africa and began establishing trading posts and colonies along the continent's west coast. The Dutch presence in Africa challenged the monopoly that Portugal held for one hundred and sixteen years. Seizing an opportunity to expand the Dutch Republic land claims in Africa, the Dutch invaded West Africa, in 1617, by capturing and occupying Elmina Castle.

The Dutch continued their mission of claiming Portuguese strongholds in Africa by capturing and occupying the Axium, in 1642, and building their own forts (e.g., Komenda, Kormantse) along the Komenda River. This Dutch land grab contributed to the Bonoman Kingdom's economy shifting from trading gold, peppers, and ivory towards African-born human beings. Along West Africa's gold coast, the Dutch began trading goods with and later, purchasing people from the Bonoman Kingdom, which was comprised of a large number of ethnic Akwamu (alias Amina) people. In Ghanian the word "Akwamu" means "warrior" and this term was applied to enslaved persons who rebelled in 1733, on St. John. The Akwamu, originally monikered Akwamuman, had initially been affiliated with the Akan Kingdom, before being incorporated into the Bonoman Kingdom. Like many African societies, the Akwamu was a monarchal system ruled by kings or chiefs with Queen Ohemaa Afrakoma I, being the only exception. The Akwamu, until 1730, resided in small communal villages and survived by farming as well as by conquering and enslaving other tribes. By the seventeenth century, the Akwamu had established an economic system in which they traded African-born human beings for European goods and weapons. The Akwamu's financial success and territorial expansion was halted in the 1720s by civil war that resulted in their king's death and his supporter's capture. These individuals were sold as slaves to the Dutch West India Company who transported them to the Dutch Caribbean colonies, namely St. John. On these islands, the Akwamu worked on large plantations owned by Dutch West India Company members. A warmongering ethnic group, the Akwamu were skilled warriors who possessed a variety of strategic fighting styles such as guerilla warfare tactics and ambush techniques which they employed during the St. John 1733 Slave Rebellion.

[16] Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies*, 138.

Returning to Africa, the Dutch Republic had authorized the creation of the Dutch Guinea West India Company, an association comprised of Dutch merchants and foreign investors. These individuals inspired by the Portuguese's economic success entered the intercontinental African slave trade in 1637 with the capture of the Portuguese fort—Elmina Castle, on Africa's Gold Coast. By occupying Elmina Castle, the Dutch was able to capture and transport African-born human being to their New World colonies. By the 1640s, the Dutch had become the primary exporters of African-born human beings to the Caribbean. After the Dutch were expelled from Angola by the Portuguese, in 1660, the Dutch relocated to Africa's west coast where they established the Dutch slave coast sometimes referenced as the Dutch Gold Coast. Hoping to establish a successful and profitable settlement, Dutch colonist assumed control of existing plantations and began seeking a labor force for clearing the land for planting and tending agricultural products.

Dutch colonists, initially, petitioned the Dutch Republic who responded by sending young, male Dutch citizens, convicted criminals, and indentured servants to meet labor demands. These individuals as workers proved unsuccessful with many dying from diseases or exhaustion, some running away, and others returning to the Dutch Republic. The loss of this labor source contributed to the Dutch Republic's decision to purchase and transport African-born human beings to the region directly from the African continent. Enslaved persons brought to St. John had been captured in and transported from Accra (present-day Ghana) and were of Akwamu ethnicity. Accra had been a Dutch trading center whose African inhabitants had a reputation for dealing harshly (e.g., raiding, enslaving, executing) with nearby tribal groups. These individuals usually sold the males, including children, into slavery, but kept the females whom they either married (lesser wife) or entered into concubinage. This remained a widespread practice until 1730, when the Akwamu king died, and rival tribes invaded Accra and defeated the Akwamu, who were sold to Dutch brokers. These capture Akwamu, including Breffu, were enslaved and transported aboard Dutch vessels to St. John where they were purchases as workers for the island's budding plantation economic system. The Dutch Republic's growing involvement in the transatlantic slave trade contributed to the formation of the Dutch West India Company an entity designed to manage this institution and the country's New World colonies.