

Cutting Across Space and Time: Obeah's Service to Jamaica's Freedom Struggle in Slavery and Emancipation

by

Kofi Boukman Barima
kofi.r.barima@jsums.edu
Assistant Professor, Department of History
Jackson State University
Jackson, MS

Abstract

The antagonistic racial, economic and cultural climate Afro-Jamaicans faced during and following enslavement led to numerous revolts, plots and conspiracies. Whereas numerous studies on Jamaica's revolts, from the 1820's onward, credits the fight for social change to missionary based religions, of the Baptists, Moravians and Methodists, I highlight contrary to this view that *Obeah*, the target of missionary disdain, was the driving force in Afro-Jamaica's fight for justice and freedom. Supporting this view are the various plots and revolts that occurred between the 1820's and 1860's. Within these events *Obeah* specialists and rituals were indispensable. To illustrate *Obeah's* primacy the article features Guinea Jack, a renowned *Obeah* man in the 1820's with a prominent role as spiritual doctor and diviner for the 1824 Boxing Day Conspiracy. And for the emancipation period the paper examines Paul Bogle and his Morant Bay War. Bogle in most studies is typified as a Baptist minister however he performed *Obeah* rituals Guinea Jack had used in the 1820's. Doing so enshrines *Obeah* as a coherent religious cultural system inherited between generations rather than a hodgepodge free for all superstitious practice as white missionaries had implied. Exposing this aspect in Paul Bogle's spirituality challenges previous assumptions where he is strictly viewed through Christian lens. Interrogating Bogle's association with African spirituality showed that as late as 1865 *Obeah* for many Afro-Jamaicans remained valuable in the fight for freedom. And to explain *Obeah's* contribution in struggles to combat the evils of slavery and colonization, between the 1820's and 1860's, the article discusses oath rituals, herbal baths, animal sacrifices and divinations.

Introduction

Afro-Jamaicans' (Jamaicans of entirely or predominantly African descent) cultural and spiritual universe, between the 1820's and the 1860's, was more similar than different. And although 1834 and 1838's emancipation assigned greater freedoms, politically it's without question they remained an oppressed and despised majority.¹ Being deprived as Afro-Jamaicans were of wealth, elite connections and high social status religion offered avenues whereby they fought racial, political and economic oppression. Turning to religion fitted how Afro-Atlantic communities overall addressed problems and African peoples' religious strands covered a wide spectrum of faiths. Within this corridor Sterling Stuckey, Rachel Harding, Walter Rucker and others identify African spiritualists' contributions to liberation in the nineteenth century.² While spiritualists safeguarded Black communities in ways Black clergymen could not, their Christian counterparts however mostly are credited for shuttling Black people through troubling times. Dianne Stewart similarly recalls how African spiritualists called *Obeah* man, in Jamaica, are marginalized in the literature on Jamaica's anti-slavery and anti-colonial movements.³

Restoring the *Obeah* man to his rightful place in Jamaica's Black resistance hierarchy is how to correct *Obeah's* demonization in Jamaica where it is common for Afro-Jamaica's mid nineteenth century religiosity to either be stamped with a Methodist, Baptist or Moravian label. While Christian conversion occurred overall there was devotion inconsistency to any particular creed.⁴ Mary Turner and Robert Stewart caution us against misreading Jamaica's mid nineteenth century space as Christian driven.⁵ Obsessed as much as they were with emphasizing *Obeah* as *Myal's* (*Myal* is linked to *Obeah* traditions) evil opposition in overstretching the distance between the two traditions they encounter Afro-Jamaica's cravings for West and Central African spirituality. Unwavering faith in ancestral practices or as Monica Schuler defines as the "stubborn attachment to and need of African rituals" is actualized in *Obeah* and *Myal* and explains why under the banner of these two traditions African rituals proliferated in face of growing missionary belief that Afro-Jamaicans in the mid nineteenth century corridor abandoned African religious identities.⁶

Expanding missionary reach failed to dislodge *Obeah* and *Myal*; this failure to eclipse African spirituality reveals the deep seated theological and cultural divide separating Afro-Jamaicans and European missionaries. Before and after emancipation Christian converts retained rather than purged many African theological concepts as European missionaries and Afro-Jamaicans theological differences reflected West and Central Africa's continued polytheistic influence. As their ancestors sensed Afro-Jamaicans felt multiple spirits were responsible for good and evil.⁷ Additionally, they believed good and evil was manufactured and controlled in the physical realm through human agents. It was further felt similar to how a person's good aura could improve one's prosperity that a person's negative vibrations were a source of illness, poverty, job loss and other debilitating conditions specific to the material world. Surviving these ordeals hinged on being spiritually fortified and Christianity's outer worldly emphasis apparently seemed more possible to accept when buffered with *Obeah*, a tradition seemingly more designed to navigate the concrete world.

Failure to totally insulate Afro-Jamaicans against the nineteenth century's challenges prevented *Obeah's* eradication, a central focus in the missionary thrust to spread Christianity. Irrespective of how the ungodly tag was pegged to *Obeah* or *Myal*, these traditions withstood criticism as they offered Afro-Jamaicans avenues to respond and challenge their adversaries. Its usage in offensive or preventive attacks while it occurred for leverage in domestic and community squabbles, Afro Jamaicans were conscious that their problems was deeper than a red eye neighbor or band minded relative.⁸ Much of their troubles stemmed from the system and this body constituted large landowners, assembly men and their black and brown allies.⁹ How they used power to keep the Black majority oppressed made them the targets of *Obeah* and I draw attention to two rebellions, in this study, where *Obeah* was directed against the system. And considering our second priority is to demonstrate cultural commonalities between the pre and post-emancipation period of the rebellions discussed that reflects the two socio-political extremes. For the pre-emancipation period Guinea Jack is used to measure *Obeah* shortly before slavery ends. He was a resourceful *Obeah* man in the 1820's, and he received island wide attention for his spiritual leadership in the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy in the parish of St. George. His activities and mentorship occurred at a point where missionary undertakings had quadrupled proving that Christianity's dispersal did not equate to *Obeah's* demise. Similarly, the post-emancipation rebellion in 1865's Morant Bay reveals similar findings regarding *Obeah's* lasting power. I explore while Paul Bogle is typified as a Baptist minister that did not dissociate himself from pre-emancipation's cultural practices such as *Obeah*.¹⁰ And by comparing rebellions through the pre and post-emancipation space it shows Christianity's failure to marginalize *Obeah*.

Both *Obeah* and *Myal* are fusions of diverse West and Central African rituals, spiritualisms and herbalism. Edward Seaga, Dianne Stewart and others suggest mid-nineteenth century Afro-Jamaicans were straddled between *Obeah*, *Myal* and Western Judeo-Christianity.¹¹ Sourcing power from multiple religions identifies Afro-Jamaicans as omni-religious. Additionally, their religious flexibility reveals unbroken connections with West and Central African religious ethos. Similar to Afro-Jamaica's spiritual elasticity, West and Central Africa's religious fluidity reveals itself where numerous gods are petitioned and Islamized Africans used talismans, divination and spirit possession.¹² Viewing Afro-Jamaica's religiosity through an African lens makes it easier to understand why many Christian converts continued practicing *Obeah* and *Myal*. Harnessing favors from both African spirituality and Christianity represents West and Central Africa's lasting ontological imprint on Jamaica's mid nineteenth century religious space. Controlling how they absorbed Christianity insulated *Obeah* and *Myal* from being overshadowed. Where Christianity immersed into Afro-Jamaica's cultural space via *Obeah* and *Myal* as herbal and spirit possession arts, largely remained unaffected and in wars for freedom, between the 1820's and 1860's, thus, *Obeah* and *Myal's* longstanding association with Afro-Jamaica's military science continued as they opposed white power.

Obeah's Historical Antecedents

The association between *Obeah* and resistance predates *Obeah's* existence as a term to describe West and Central African medicinal and metaphysical sciences. This knowledge entered Jamaica as early as African captives were imported to the island. In the sixteenth century the African captives Jamaica received were sourced by the Spanish from Portuguese merchants attached to trading stations in the upper Senegambia, Gold Coast and Central Africa. The African captives bought from these regions introduced African herbalism, mediumship and divination into the island. Such practices constitute *Obeah's* basic structure and were cultural essentials found wherever African captives were settled.¹³ These cultural dimensions and recognition of its early presence in the Americas is acknowledged in numerous places as in Sterling Stuckey's *Slave Culture* or *The River Flows On*, Walter Rucker's recent study. *Writing on Brazil*, William Hawthorne exposes the numerous spiritual and herbal dimensions Central Africans, Senegambians, and Gold Coasters introduced into Brazil.¹⁴ These were the same African groups Jamaica received that more than likely had similar spiritual and herbal traditions that found its way into Jamaica.

Afro-Jamaica's socio-cultural and religious zone expanded rapidly following the British takeover of the island. The subsequent importation of West and Central Africans into Jamaica swiftly increased towards the close of the seventeenth century. These batches of African captives continued to include Gold Coasters, Senegambians and Central Africans. Other African groups were imported as more trading pipelines for African captives were opened and integrated into the Atlantic system towards the end of the seventeenth century. This includes trading stations at the Bight of Biafra, Grand Popo, Little Popo, and Ouida in West Africa; and in East Africa Madagascar was the central exist point for the small number of East Africans brought to Jamaica.¹⁵

The expanding spatial radius where African captives were purchased, injected new deities, rituals, dances, rhythms, drums and other material and spiritual cultures into the Afro-Jamaican space. And Hans Sloane is heavily credited for documenting late seventeenth and early eighteenth century African culture in Jamaica. His observations confirmed African herbalists, diviners, musicians and mediums shaped Jamaica's social and cultural life.¹⁶ In the early maroon and plantation wars it is further noticed that West and Central African healers, herbalists, spiritualists and artists banded their trades together to attain their freedom. Maroon oral history recalls how Nanny, Kojo, Qao, and other fighters fused military arts with African spirituality.¹⁷ Memories as these shows that the enslavement of people as more than an avenue whereby captive Africans entered Jamaica, this system transferred along with people cultural and spiritual knowledge. And inadvertently the system through several early laws illegalized drumming, dancing and other African expressions notwithstanding its negative consequences are additional reminders that a distinct Afro-Jamaican cultural and religious space existed and threatened the social order.¹⁸ It is however following the 1739 and 1740 treaties between Maroon towns and the British that *Obeah* is used as a catchall phrase to describe a wide breadth of African spiritual culture.

Tacky to Bogle: Rum and Gun Powder, Obeah War Ritual

Tacky's 1760's war is credited for popularizing *Obeah* as a descriptive for Afro-Jamaica's herbal and spiritual culture.¹⁹ How Tacky appended *Obeah* to his military science projects differently from how Stewart, Turner and others view *Obeah* as the "poster child" of evil.²⁰ Exploring linkages between *Obeah* and Afro-Jamaican military science is less of an attempt to discard its other usage, rather it is more of an effort to investigate its functions as it relates to resistance, rebellions and other ways towards freedom. *Obeah's* war rituals survived the erosion of time and were passed like heirlooms between successive generations of freedom fighters as in the practice of consuming rum mixed with gunpowder. Rebels throughout enslavement when they took oaths to pledge their loyalty to each other and their revolt drank this liquid admixture to seal their pact. Binding oaths with liquid concoctions occurs in several West and Central African societies, for instance, in *Fanti* swearing ceremonies for *Omanhene*, *Asafohene* and other leaders this was an essential rite that summoned "the gods to witness" the proceedings and if the person dishonored their pledge "the drink would cause injury or death".²¹ Apparently for its spiritual function it was perceived as important to perform when planning rebellions. Staging this ritual occurred as late as 1865 when Paul Bogle served this cocktail to his own followers.²² There was very little deviation in how Tacky and subsequent pre-emancipation rebel leaders administered this spiritual drink and Bogle's own usage of this very distinct *Obeah* war ritual.

Bogle's association with rum and gunpowder rituals counters prevailing assumption where he is rigidly fixed as a Baptist minister. Within his mystique Bogle showed through action his familiarity with West and Central African powers and his knowledge of its potency. So it is not heretical to suggest Bogle's flirtation with *Obeah* was far more substantive than popularly believed. Common protocol for preparing and hosting rum and gunpowder rituals always demands an adept *Obeah* man as master of ceremony. The necessity for an *Obeah* man to mix and serve the drink is an interesting finding revealed during the trials for enslaved Africans indicted for their roles in the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy. At the trial it was discovered that the leaders following several failed attempts to properly prepare the beverage and perform the ritual recruited, for this task, Guinea Jack.²³ This revelation encourages deeper exploration of Bogle's true religious identity. Bogle only could effectively perform rum and gun powder rituals if he was similarly trained as Guinea Jack.

Numerous opportunities existed in the St. Thomas space where Bogle would have learnt of *Obeah's* war rituals so as to qualify him to perform rum and gunpowder rituals. The parish was steaming at that time with a very large population of very recent African "immigrants", most of whom were Central Africans, they reenergized and expanded the Afro-Jamaican spiritual space as their Central African practices resembled *Obeah* and *Myal*.²⁴ And Paul Bogle was extremely close to St. Thomas's Central African community and his relationship led to an apparent learning of *Kikingo*, the dominant language spoken by their community.

It was recalled that a number of them were part of Bogle's entourage and based on their bonding where the record noted Bogle communicated to them in "another language" it is more than likely this other language was *Kikongo*.²⁵ Whereas these Central Africans transferred language to Bogle they also certainly through their devotion to *Nzambi*, *Nkisi* and other *Kikongo* spirits influenced his own spiritual beliefs. And this community is more than likely the location where Bogle immersed in African spirituality which in turn was useful for performing the older rum and gun powder rituals which also resembled how *Kikongo* people commissioned and sealed oaths.

Similarities between the indentured Central Africans' spiritual system and *Obeah* are very striking. In both traditions heavy emphasis is placed on manipulating spiritual forces to achieve predetermined objectives and also on curing maladies with leaves, barks, and roots.²⁶ And *Obeah* in 1865 was still highly regarded as an effective healing system. The widespread practice where Afro-Jamaicans resorted to *Obeah* for healing so gravely concerned white authority that at the Royal Commission convened in 1866 to investigate factors that triggered Morant Bay's war also spent time interrogating *Obeah*. Several examinees explained to the commission that *Obeah* addressed their medical needs in ways that Western medicine failed. Usually such explanations were insufficient or unsatisfactory and led to intense cross examinations as Charles Walker faced on February 13, 1866. When interrogated Walker's response indicates Afro-Jamaicans questioned Western medicine's alleged superiority when he informed the Commission that "after they (Black people) call in the medical men who are doctors and can't cure them, then they call the bush doctor (*Obeah* man)".²⁷ Through this and other statements it is evident that *Obeah's* legitimacy was determined by its practical function, and not based on white officialdom approval.

Obeah: A Pathway to the African Gods

One would think considering *Obeah's* pragmatism mixed with its non-elite's status that it would receive consideration as a non-conformist religion. It has not been the practice to represent *Obeah* within the non-conformist religious stream. This reveals the extent to which Christianity's chauvinism has monopolized how post-emancipation culture is framed. Increase in church buildings, attendance, and conversion far too often is twisted to suggest Afro-Jamaicans turned their backs against *Obeah* and other overt African-religious expressions. Greater numbers in followers or churches insufficiently proves Afro-Jamaicans desisted from finding solutions in *Obeah* and other African religious expressions in the post-emancipation space. At that point non-conformist churches had yet to fully churchify Afro-Jamaicans and where they were effective in developing housing solutions and offering basic education; in other areas of Afro-Jamaican life their presence was almost non-existent. Those other realms, in Afro-Jamaican life, that fell outside the sphere of their influence largely were in many ways regulated with *Obeah*.

Its resources were heavily tapped to cure minor and extreme illnesses and Charles Walker while explaining *Obeah's* medicinal benefits described diverse herbs and their preparations.²⁸ Addressing illnesses and knowing curative plants, barks, and roots were important in the *Obeah* mans' trade. Healing however for the *Obeah* man was defined more broadly that correcting physical ailments.

This highly knowledgeable, reclusive individual and Jamaica's earliest expression of the *Black Heart Man* were important in distributing spiritual justice and protection. Whereas this service is often portrayed as anti-social, individualistic and destructive it however was not all sinister and troubling. This strain of *Obeah* was used to punish and dissuade thieves. To injure thieves or curtail the theft of crops, medicines, charms, and other devices were planted on properties.²⁹ The *Obeah* man's arsenal in pre and post-emancipation times also included wooden effigies. These objects referred popularly as *Obeah piccanini* challenges how *Obeah* is perceived as lacking a pantheon of deities as found in *Santeria*, *Candomble* and *Voudun* where worship revolves respectively around *Legba*, *Ogun*, *Shango* and other *Orishas* or *Lwas*. And the *Orishas*, *Lwas*, and other similar pantheons have deities that are portrayed as wooden effigies, and this practice is traced to several West and Central African societies. At temples, shrines and household altars effigies are incorporated into worship, healing, and protection or distributed to individuals wishing to have a replica of a particular deity.³⁰ With the proliferation of African religions in Brazil, Cuba and Haiti this practice was preserved and Jamaica with its pronounced West and Central African heritage suggest that the *Obeah piccanini* in fact was an *Orisha*, *Lwa*, *Abosom*, *Nkisi* or another African spirit. Attaching greater significance to the *Obeah piccanini* redefines *Obeah* within a much broader religious paradigm, suggesting *Obeah piccanini* were empowered with an equal spiritual value to an *Orisha*, *Lwa* or *Nikisi* has merit based on how their usage compared with how Guinea Jack healed, divined and prophesized with four wooded effigies. Along with other sacred objects these four carvings were found on his person when he was arrested for plotting the St. George's Boxing Day conspiracy.³¹

Are these wooden effigies evidence that African gods played significant roles in the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy and the Morant Bay War? In the aftermath following both events effigies were confiscated and as iterated above, these carvings represented West and Central African deities. And the effigies are receptacles where the spirits they represent are contacted. Custodians or owners of these vessels, in West/Central Africa, communicated with the indwelling spirit through clay pots filled with water, cowry shells, kola nuts, and sand to name a few of the substances diviners use to contact spirits. Guinea Jack used a mirror to summon and see the spirits residing in his wooden effigies.³² Ways in which Guinea Jack consulted his African gods forces us to confront the fact that post emancipation *Obeah piccanini* likewise were conduits whereby West and Central African gods were made tangible with distinct personalities, preferences and specializations.

The *Obeah* man as custodians for these spirits cultivated relationships with these beings that was akin to how *Okomfo* interacted with the *Abosom*.³³ Traditional priests right across Africa, as the *Okomfo*, cherished intimacy with their spirits and the same could be said where the *Obeah* man was concerned. The stronger the *Obeah* mans' spiritual relationships enhanced how they counseled, cured and protected their communities. Their involvement in struggles against oppression in 1823, 1865 and at other times intertwined sacred and social obligations as folk healers and mediators between the spiritual and living community. Offering access to supernatural powers was how *Obeah* countered the psychological effects implicit in white minority rule and Black majority subjugation. Unequal racial relationships in the power dynamics between white and Black people mentally conditioned Afro-Jamaicans to accept whiteness as superior. Reversing white superiority's lingering impact was induced through spiritual exercises where *Obeah* rituals were pedaled as confidence boosters or as Paul Bogle stated at Stony Gut on October 10, 1865 while serving rum and gunpowder to "raise...spirits up".³⁴

Uplifting the spirit as Bogle stated captures exactly how *Obeah* specialists bragged about their rituals, and boasting was part of how the *Obeah* man won trust, loyalty and further convinced people that he can fix their broken spirits. All types of justifications helped to bolster their reputation and for instance, Guinea Jack attributed his spiritual gifts to the fact that he was born in Africa where he studied and mastered "every sort of bush".³⁵ Emphasizing that he was knowledgeable cemented his position and reassured that the *Obeah* he plied would succeed where other types would fail. Using charisma to draw clients resonates with how modern Pentecostal preachers bombastically energizes their congregations and was inseparable from the actual ritual.³⁶ Fusing their personality with their talents enriched the spiritual renewal process and demonstrated how they similarly to Pentecostal preachers understood its value to oppressed and downtrodden people hungry for a spiritual lift. Their directing *Obeah* towards salvaging fractured souls repositions how *Obeah* should be measured and *Obeah* specialists are viewed.

Racism or Christianity's chauvinism ultimately continues to militate against affording the *Obeah* man with the same status extended to priests in the Judeo-Christian tradition. When the doctrinal differences are separated, both the *Obeah* man and the Christian priest wrestled with safeguarding their community against evil. For the *Obeah* man, the evil was colonialism and the mental imprint it etched on the souls of Afro-Jamaicans and whereas a book is a tool that Christians pastors use whereas the *Obeah* man chiefly turns to herbs, mediumship and other metaphysical exercises to exorcise the evil he confronted. Within their healing universe *Obeah* and Christianity's similarities are undeniable; Guinea Jack's own routine involved using water - for Christians and for *Obeah* workers, water symbolizes renewal, protection and cleansing - and the two baths Jack administered to purge doubt to spiritually fortified the enslaved men planning the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy. To activate the water's spiritual vibrations, *Obeah* specialists added other substances and recited incantations; both baths Guinea Jack washed the enslaved men with were prepared differently and speaks to *Obeah*'s complex routines.

Sage was the main ingredient in the first bath Guinea Jack gave and this herb is widely used in Jamaican bush medicine and it has a number of usages, however, it is heavily noted for treating spiritual weaknesses.³⁷ Guinea Jack's sage bath as the first herbal treatment he does to suggest that he prioritized strengthening the men's inner spirit before proceeding with other rituals. Such cleansing uplifted their souls and in the next ritual bath Guinea Jack mix connected them with the African gods and ancestors. He led the enslaved rebels through this spiritual door firstly by sacrificing a fowl; animal sacrifices were routine ceremonies West and Central African peoples performed before going to war.³⁸ African captives transferred this practice to the Americas and *Bwa Kayiman* is a most illustrative example as to why animal sacrifices were important in liberation wars.³⁹ Its symbolism reinforced the living community's covenant with African gods and ancestors. And soliciting the intercession of gods and ancestors through the sacrificed of fowl Guinea Jack linked Afro-Jamaicans to a power outside white supremacy's narrative and then washing the enslaved rebels with the water used to boil the sacrificed carcass which sealed the pact between the gods and 1823's Boxing Day Conspiracy.

Detailed African rituals involving gods, ancestors in ways Guinea Jack displayed convincingly shows *Obeah* also operated as *Candomble*, *Santeria* and *Voudun*. With its own liturgy, spiritual hierarchy and herbal repository *Obeah* clearly is more than a simple remnant of West and Central African religion. And heavy grounds exists to further argue that *Obeah* was more African than *Candomble*, *Santeria*, and *Voudun* -in the mid nineteenth century space -for whereas syncretism occurred in those practices, *Obeah* largely remained free from borrowed symbols, rituals and other practices belonging to the church. There commonality nonetheless are still striking and they were all criminalized, an experience that led to the African Diaspora constructing peripheries so as to culturally express and spiritualize themselves as they deemed appropriate.

Interrogating the Periphery: Obeah's Place in Marronage, Quarters of the Enslaved , and Black Churches

Afro-Atlantic spiritual systems as *Obeah* thrived within the periphery, and for places as Jamaica the periphery represented any location where Black people converged without white authoritative interference. How far away Afro-Jamaicans escaped to create peripheries depended on the activity they pursued. Certain actions as *grand-marronage* was associated with the bush, backlands, gully banks and river heads as these spatial zones were most fitted for maroons. *Marronage* encampments separateness allowed enslaved Africans unrestricted free space and the freedom offered in rugged and remote terrains was a major factor why after 1739's and 1740's treaties, *grand-marronage* continued.⁴⁰ Away from slavery's curtailments post-treaty *marronage* was a path towards economic empowerment as post-treaty maroons' economies generated profits from *Obeah*, trading, stealing and farming. How they produced was impressive and equally startling was how post-treaty maroons concealed their farms.

The features in Jamaica's topography-gullies, caves, mountains, precipices and natural terraces-explains how post-treaty maroons developed agricultural enterprises on the periphery of the plantation system as post-treaty maroon farms where discovered, located at extreme and hard to reach places. Major James following his assault on a Manchester post-treaty maroon settlement to paint a good picture of the distances post-treaty maroons travelled to execute their agricultural pursuits as he reached this site with difficulty, hence:

“after going over vast rocks and precipices” he “found an open and well cultivated country, at least an hundred acres of land in high cultivation in corn, cotton, and provisions, and the quantity of small stock was amazing”.⁴¹

Agriculture was partially how post-treaty maroons supported their way of life. Hosting bush markets was another important venture and was an outlet for crops produced on underground farms and provisions the enslaved planted. In the 1820's post-treaty maroons in Trelawney kept weekly markets. Thus it is without question that Afro-Jamaicans, both outlaws and enslaved, had established social spaces outside the gaze of white power. And *Obeah* was very much connected to this world. *Marronage* as much as it gave coverage to illicit agricultural ventures, it also provided the same protection for worshiping African gods, selling treatments and miracles.

The seclusion associated with *marronage* offered *Obeah* workers unrestricted space for their activities and being able to freely practice helps us to understand why Guinea Jack lived for extensive periods as a maroon. And although he did forge ritual space in St. Georges backlands, his influence extended outwards towards plantations where enslaved people developed profound respect for his healing capabilities.⁴² Hence, similarly to how *Candomble's Terreiros* retained ties with enslaved people, Guinea Jack floated between St. George's forest zones and the quarters for the enslaved. Moving between *marronage* and the plantation world reflects the extent to which enslaved people subverted quarters for the enslaved to their interest. More importantly the links between the quarters and post-treaty maroon towns attest to social, cultural and economic connections between enslaved peoples, post-treaty maroons, runaways, gamblers and other social undesirables. Relationships between undesirables and enslaved peoples established corridors or channels with all types of manifestations. In every enslaved society similar zones existed, America had the Underground Railroad and John Hope Franklin discusses runaways and enslaved peoples' networks in the American South.⁴³ These linkages he mentioned were similar to what outlaws, social misfits and enslaved peoples developed in Jamaica. The aforementioned underground farms and markets was a part of this social universe. Submerged as well into this space were African spiritualists. How spiritualists and medicine men defined this cultural space forces us to reconsider to what extent did quarters for the enslaved play in the plantation structure.

Physically the quarters for the enslaved were attached to the plantation and owned by holders of the enslaved; however its cultural connections with *marronage* and other subversive activities pegged the quarters with additional allegiances. Collusions between these worlds were the avenues whereby African spiritualists wielded influence within the quarters of the enslaved and the extent to which they exercised leadership was tied to the spiritual access they granted enslaved peoples.

And wherever African spiritualists were found they had this power over the quarters of the enslaved. William Wells Brown discusses how wide their influence stretched when he recounted his flight to freedom and he attributes his successful escape to supernatural assistance received from Uncle Frank, a healer and diviner.⁴⁴ Their relationship reveals how closely aligned the quarters of the enslaved were to *marronage*. Uncle Frank belonged to the latter universe and William Wells Brown noted most African spiritualists lived outside of the plantation formal controls. And the similarities shared between Uncle Frank and Guinea Jack is very telling of how Jamaica's *Obeah* workers followed patterns common to healers in other Afro-Atlantic communities. Ways in which they straddled between *marronage* and the quarters of the enslaved strengthened the impression of their invisibility. Healers that evaded capture or avoided punishment for extensive periods acquired legitimacy for their medicines and cures. The fact that they were believed to be unstoppable validated their spiritual gifts and it is suggestible that the 1823 Boxing Day conspirators assumed Guinea Jack's medicine could provide success for their intended revolt in ways that it aided Guinea Jack's *marronage*. His maroon success in addition to the favorable results he gained while doctoring with herbs apparently is why he assisted the 1823 Boxing Day conspirators; and where his spiritualization occurred (in the quarters of the enslaved), showed that post-treaty maroons and enslaved Africans redefined the structures designed to acculturate them to Eurocentric norms.

Spiritualizing with *Obeah* in the quarters of the enslaved has much in common with the Africanizing of the churches introduced by the missionaries as both represent ways enslaved Africans contested European hegemony. The Africanization of the church was also useful to the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy. The conspirators raised money to buy guns under the pretext that the money collected was earmarked for prayer meetings.⁴⁵ Towards the mid nineteenth century church gatherings were identified as strategic places to organize plots without raising alarm. African-Americans arrived at this conclusion around the same time that Afro-Jamaicans recognized church meetings were valuable to their liberation struggle. And *Obeah* was not abandoned in this Africanizing process. Denmark Vesey, leader and organizer of the 1822 Charleston conspiracy led a church and while using church meetings to spread his political message, he enlisted Gullah Jack, a medicine man from the Congo to spiritualize the recruits.⁴⁶ How the 1823 Boxing Day conspiracy entwined *Obeah* and Christian meetings share much similarities with Denmark Vesey's Africanizing of the church and Gullah Jack's ceremonies.

And Paul Bogle fits very much within this stream. His Stony Gut chapel, as it was identified as a Native Baptist church shows that Paul Bogle's Christianity was Africanized; the church's location was at a distance like how *marronage* placed settlements deep in the bush and this church embraced *Obeah* through Bogle's performances of the gunpowder and rum ritual.

Consequences and Conclusions

Paul Bogle's 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion and Guinea Jack's 1823 Boxing Day Conspiracy as anti-colonial and pro-Black movements irritated the system and became excuses to slaughter Black people. *Obeah* specialists were hunted and executed in large numbers as they were leaders, cultural custodians and healers. The system regarded *Obeah* specialists as hindrances to colonialism's economic, political and social objectives. And the violence used was delivered with the intention to scare Afro-Jamaicans away from *Obeah*. Both the system and the missionaries worked to eliminate *Obeah* and the only difference is that the system had the legal, and more importantly the military means to crush *Obeah*. How violence was directed towards *Obeah* was part of a larger colonial narrative where indigenous peoples in Africa, Asia and India were subjected to cruel punishments when they resisted *Christianization* and other expressions of white power.

Executing *Obeah* specialists was perceived as the best route to rid Jamaica of its African religions. The system believed *Obeah's* existence started and ended with *Obeah* specialists and this logic influenced many of the killings. When Arthur Wellington a known *Obeah* man and a Paul Bogle supporter was executed, Colonel Thomas Hobbs justified the killing as a way to "show the people that their belief (in *Obeah*) was without foundation".⁴⁷ Owing to the erroneous view that killing *Obeah* workers would stunt *Obeah's* growth led to many fanatical murders. Irrational explanations were used to excuse calculated violence against *Obeah* workers and it was widely accepted as Colonel Alexander Fyfe explained "that no person that were executed during the rebellion ever deserved their fate more thoroughly than the *Obeah* man".⁴⁸ How *Obeah* workers were gunned down when the system suppressed the Morant Bay rebellion is telling of ways *Obeah* workers were killed throughout pre-emancipation times and Guinea Jack's 1824 execution belongs to this larger theater of violence against *Obeah* workers. Emancipation clearly brought no relief for the *Obeah* man; the laws remained unchanged and were continually revised. If *Obeah* was truly meaningless why then were the authorities hell-bent on suppressing *Obeah*? What the violence truly communicated was that authorities fear for *Obeah*. Its rituals, herbs, and other dimensions were effective tools for organizing, and all of Jamaica's major revolts and revolution conspiracies occurred when *Obeah* was involved. To prevent rebellions, they had to turn people against *Obeah*; both the missionaries and the state, although they approached suppressing *Obeah* differently, but they pursued the same agenda.

End Notes

¹ In England's Caribbean colonies to which Jamaica belonged there were two emancipations. The first occurred on August 1, 1834 and it was followed by a system of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship was designed in the interest of large land owners and there were widespread abuses under the system information, Douglas Hall's *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865* sheds valuable insight on apprenticeship's origins, problems and demise.

² Liberation as used in the study is in reference to political, spiritual, mental and other areas of human concern where African peoples fought for emancipation. And the term spiritualists is reserved for practitioners of African derived traditions such as *Voudun, Candomble, Santeria, Winti, Obeah*, and their counterparts.

³ Dianne Stewart *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 pp.40-44.

⁴ Monica Schuler *Alas, Alas, Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1980 p.86.

⁵ Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834* Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press 1998 pp. 57 -81 and Stewart, Robert J. *Religion and Society in Post-emancipation Jamaica* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press pp. 137-139.

⁶ Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* p.86.

⁷ John Mbiti *African Religions & Philosophy* p.74.

⁸ Thomas Holt *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain Race, Labor And Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1932-1938* Baltimore: John Hopkins Press 1992 pp. 91-96.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Paul Bogle was extremely vocal and politically active in the 1860's and he was based in St. Thomas in Stony Gut a town adjacent to Morant Bay after which the rebellion was named. Being extremely discontent with emancipation's promises and the legal system's abuses he led many of St. Thomas Blacks in a resistance struggle against white rule. This Morant Bay rebellion started on October 11, 1865 and Gad Heuman's *The Killing Time: The Morant Bay Rebellion* is a comprehensive study on the event..

¹¹ Dianne Stewart *Three Eyes for the Journey* pp.36-49 and Edward Seaga, "Revival Cults in Jamaica", *Jamaica Journal* Vol 3 no. 2 1969.

¹² Geoffery Parrinder *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe* London: Epworth Press, 1961 pp. 13-37.

¹³ Stewart *Three Eyes for the Journey* pp. 36-38.

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- 14 William Hawthorne *From Africa to Brazil: Culture, Identity, and an Atlantic Slave Trade, 1600–1830* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010 pp. 237-232.
- 15 Kofi Barima Without treaty: Runaways and Maroons in Jamaica, the Foundation of Opposition to the State Howard University, 2009, pp. 47-50.
- 16 Richard Cullen Rath “African Music in Seventeenth-Century Jamaica: Cultural Transit and Transition in *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol.50, No. 4 (October, 1993) pp.700-715.
- 17 Kenneth Bilby *True-Born Maroons* Gainesville: University Press of Florida 2008 pp. 232-262.
- 18 John Lunan *An Abstract of the Laws of Jamaica Relating to the Slaves* Spanish Town: Sain Jago De La Vega Gazette 1819 pp. 124-142. And for Post-Emancipation Obeah laws see Hon C Rib ton, Senior Pusine Judge of the Supreme Court of Jamaica *The Statutes and Laws of The Island of Jamaica: Vol.IV 1857 to 1865* pp.44-46.
- 19 Diana Patton *The Cultural Politics of Obeah* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2015 pp. 30-40.
- 20 Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*.
- 21 Rebecca Shumay *The Fante and the Transatlantic Slave Trade* Rochester: University of Rochester Press 2011, p. 114 .
- 22 Governor Eyre Jamaica Disturbances: Papers Laid Before the Royal Commission of Inquiry June 1866 p. 435.
- 23 “Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823” in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) pp. 93-110.
- 24 Schuler, *Alas, Alas, Kongo: A Social History of Indentured African Immigration into Jamaica, 1841-1865* pp. 70-80.
- 25 Governor Eyre Jamaica Disturbances: Papers Laid Before the Royal Commission of Inquiry June 1866 p.34.
- 26 Stewart Three Eyes for the Journey pp. 40-62.
- 27 Charles Walker Examination at The Royal Commission February 13, 1866 in *Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission* 1866 pp. 307-308 .
- 28 Ibid.

29 Elizabeth Millet Examination at The Royal Commission March 10, 1866 in Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission 1866 p. 979.

30 Jean Allaman *Tongnaab: The history of a West African God* Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2005, pp 143-170.

31 “Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823” in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) pp. 93-110.

32 Ibid.

33 There are a number of monographs and articles that explains the *Okomfo* relationship with the *Abosom*. Anthony Ephirim-Donkor’s *African Religion Define* offers excellent insight into the bond between the *Okomfo* and the *Abosom*. He has written a number of other important studies regarding Akan spirituality. And R. Sutherland Rattray’s *Ashanti* although it is a 1920’s study it still has value to this conversation regarding relationships between the *Okomfo* and the *Abosom*.

34 James Foster Examination at The Royal Commission February 3, 1866 in Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission 1866 pp. 134-136.

35 “Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823” in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) p. 103.

36 Amos Yong *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000 pp. 183-190.

37 “Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823” in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) p. 103.

38 Ibid.

39 Gerdes Fleurant *Dancing Spirits: Rhythms ad Rituals of Haitian Vodun, the Rada Rite* Westport: Greenwood Press 1996 p. 21.

40 In 1749 and 1740 the British signed treaties with certain maroon states in Jamaica. In light of this fact and to distinguish *marronage* occurring after 1740 I used the term post-treaty *marronage* for the process and the people I call post-treaty maroons.

41 *Cornwall Chronicle* Saturday February 23, 1788.

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- 42 Guinea Jack treated a range of ailments; John Charles, a slave at Lafitte's plantation, said Jack "dressed the sore arm" of his wife. "Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823" in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) p. 108.
- 43 John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the plantation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp. 124-135.
- 44 William Wells Brown *Narrative of the Life of William W. Brown: An American Slave* London 1850 p.91.
- 45 "Copy of all Judicial Proceedings relative to the Trial and Punishment of Rebels, in the Island of Jamaica Since the 1st of January 1823" in *The Manumission Government and Population of Slaves in the West Indies; 1822-1824* (London: House of Commons, 1825) pp. 93-110.
- 46 David M. Robertson *Denmark Vesey: The Buried Story of America's Largest Slave Rebellion and the Man Who Led It* New York: First Vintage Books 2000 pp.67-68.
- 47 Colonel Thomas Hobbs Examination at The Royal Commission March 7, 1866 in Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission 1866 p. 771.
- 48 Colonel Alexander Gordon Fyfe Examination at The Royal Commission March 14, 1866 in Report of the Jamaica Royal Commission 186, 899.