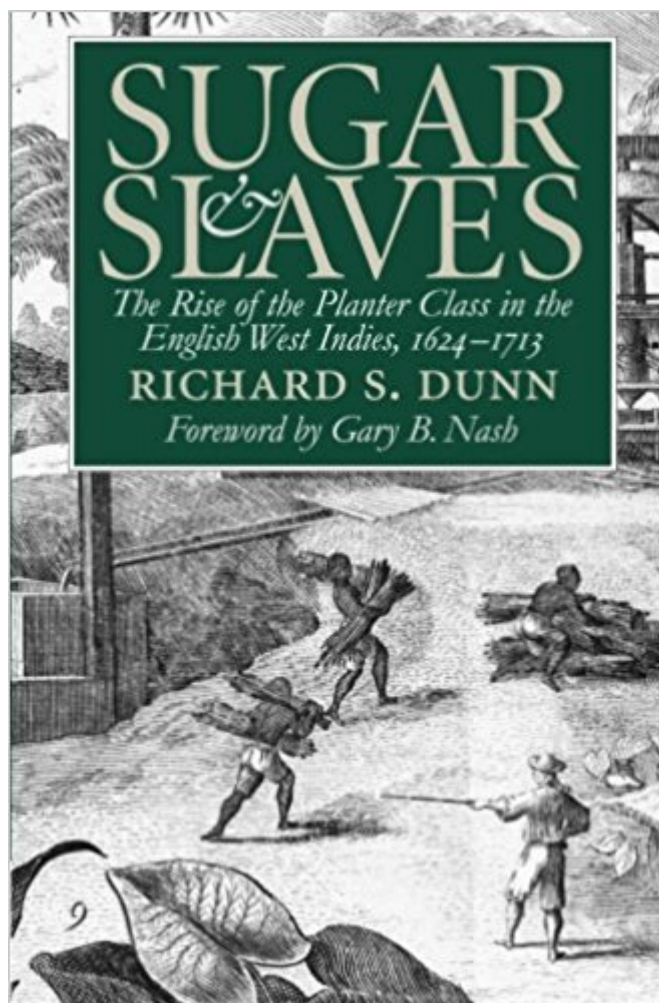


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# Sugar And Slaves: The Rise Of The Planter Class In The English West Indies, 1624-1713 (Published By The Omohundro Institute Of Early American History ... And The University Of North Carolina Press)





## Synopsis

First published by UNC Press in 1972, *Sugar and Slaves* presents a vivid portrait of English life in the Caribbean more than three centuries ago. Using a host of contemporary primary sources, Richard Dunn traces the development of plantation slave society in the region. He examines sugar production techniques, the vicious character of the slave trade, the problems of adapting English ways to the tropics, and the appalling mortality rates for both blacks and whites that made these colonies the richest, but in human terms the least successful, in English America. "A masterly analysis of the Caribbean plantation slave society, its lifestyles, ethnic relations, afflictions, and peculiarities.--*Journal of Modern History*" "A remarkable account of the rise of the planter class in the West Indies. . . . Dunn's [work] is rich social history, based on factual data brought to life by his use of contemporary narrative accounts.--*New York Review of Books*" "A study of major importance. . . . Dunn not only provides the most solid and precise account ever written of the social development of the British West Indies down to 1713, he also challenges some traditional historical cliches.--*American Historical Review*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dunn's work is a model of contemporary historical research. He writes with admirable clarity. "London Financial Times" "Professor Dunn has written an excellent book: not only is it informative, it is also readable." "Business History Review" "[This] elegantly written book is easily the

finest on the subject and a major addition to colonial scholarship."Journal of Economic History""A masterly analysis of the Caribbean plantation slave society, its lifestyles, ethnic relations, afflictions, and peculiarities."Journal of Modern History""Dunn's is rich social history, based on factual data brought to life by his use of contemporary narrative accounts.Willie Lee Rose, "New York Review of Books""Professor Dunn has written an excellent book: not only is it informative, it is also readable."Business History Review"•This•" elegantly written book is easily the finest on the subject and a major addition to colonial scholarship."Journal of Economic History"A masterly analysis of the Caribbean plantation slave society, its lifestyles, ethnic relations, afflictions, and peculiarities."Journal of Modern History"Dunn's is rich social history, based on factual data brought to life by his use of contemporary narrative accounts.Willie Lee Rose, "New York Review of Books"

A study of major importance: the first systematic and extended account of the emergence and character of an elite group for any of the English colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. . . . Dunn not only provides the most solid and precise account ever written of the social development of the British West Indies down to 1713, he also challenges some traditional historical cliches.--Jack P. Greene, American Historical ReviewA remarkable account of the rise of the planter class in the West Indies. . . . Dunn's is rich social history, based on factual data brought to life by his use of contemporary narrative accounts.--Willie Lee Rose, New York Review of BooksDunn's work is a model of contemporary historical research. He writes with admirable clarity.--London Financial TimesA masterly analysis of the Caribbean plantation slave society, its lifestyles, ethnic relations, afflictions, and peculiarities.--Journal of Modern History[This] elegantly written book is easily the finest on the subject and a major addition to colonial scholarship.--Journal of Economic HistoryShould be necessary reading for those concerned with slavery and slave societies, as well as colonial development in the Western Hemisphere in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Professor Dunn has written an excellent book: not only is it informative, it is also readable.--Business History Review[Features] lively and well-informed discussions of the West Indian economy, society, culture, and political organization in the seventeenth century.--Elsa V. Goveia, William and Mary Quarterly

An excellent and informative book. We were all taught in elementary school (in the US, anyway) about the Pilgrims at Plymouth and about the Virginia colony. But before those came Barbados, the Windward Isles and Jamaica. The initial English effort for new world colonies was the Caribbean rather than the mainland to the north. The history of that area is colorful -- pirates, privateers,

buccaneers, fast money and early death. In comparison New England and Virginia were cake walks. The social, political and economic development of those islands took a different course from the thirteen colonies best described as as down right brutal. The English who went there didn't come so much to create a new society but to get in, get rich and get out. Life expectancy was low even for those at the top of the social hierarchy. For indentured servants and slaves it was even lower. And speaking of slaves, the Caribbean was where the English first began using slave to any significant degree. The motivation was sugar. Sugar was the get-rich-quick commodity of the 16th and 17th century. Tobacco, indigo and cotton were also cash crops but the profit margin was lower and it does not appear that utilizing slave vs indentured or free labor had as distinct an economic advantage. If you wanted to get rich fast in 1630-1750 you invested in a sugar plantation (don't forget the byproducts molasses and especially rum) and after the land itself the the most essential asset you had to buy were people. The author, Dunn, was faced with a major difficulty when writing this book -- there is sparse documentation from the period. Profits more than prosperity drove the early English settlers in islands. Despite this the author has been able to construct a reasonably convincing narrative of the development of the English planter system from inception to maturity by the early 18th century. While little is known about the lives of the English in the time and place even less is known about the slaves. This in itself probably tells you something about the conditions of the slaves. If the reader is interested in how and why black slavery in the Americas came to be this book is a good place to start. However, many questions will remain open and may never have an answer we can comprehend.

As I have just done a major research project on the history of slavery here in my county on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, this book has been enormously helpful with the background and connections of the Caribbean slave trade to that of the Chesapeake Bay. I am most thankful for this scholarly work!

A must read

Very good book

This is a great wealth of knowledge that anyone could ask for when studying Latin American history. Highly recommended. Note: There is no need to read in order. Fell free to jump around in the book.

This book is the go to reference for the history of Barbados and the other islands and has well documented findings. Very interesting read.

The early English-speaking colonies in the Caribbean were founded around the same time as those in Virginia and New England. These colonies: 1) Barbados, 2) the "Leeward Islands", a small group of four, and 3) Jamaica developed very differently than the mainland colonies. All the Caribbean colonies quickly became class-stratified, far more so than any of the mainland colonies on the Eastern Seaboard. Moreover, slavery became the dominant form of labor much earlier on the Caribbean islands. In spite of these differences, there was enormous commercial trade between what would later become the diverse economies of the USA (especially New England) and the slave economies of the Caribbean. One of these island economies, Barbados, wound up influencing one Atlantic state, namely South Carolina. The crude and violent societies of the Caribbean were formative for American slavery generally, the author believes; upper class Englishmen held their lower classes in contempt; these were indentured servants who did the hard work. This contempt would be transferred to the African slaves, once sugar production became the dominant industry. And a certain fully capitalist production model, involving division of labor, prevailed in the English slave plantations; this was different from the Catholic latifundia that were their own all-encompassing kosmos (in Brazil for example). The English colonists had no interest in religion, most of them; they tried to prevent the Quakers and others from proselytizing among the Africans, whom they considered hopeless brutes. In fact, the English in the Caribbean killed their slaves, by overwork or savagery, and continued to import newly kidnapped Africans throughout the early colonial period to replace those they had murdered. Mainland Americans would be more careful of their property; consequently, more Africans survived there. The Caribbean slave economies could reasonably be described as hellholes, and not just for African slaves. Life expectancy was short, much shorter than in New England, family life was absent or much more limited than in the American coastal regions. It was very much like the case in much of Spanish America; young men wanted to get their fortune in America, then go back to the mother country. They rarely had any intention of setting up a new life for themselves. Not long after colonization, lower class English and Irish immigrants to the Caribbean would leave for the Old World or mainland America; there was nothing in the Caribbean for anyone other than the big planters. Each of the regions mentioned above (given separate sections in the book) varied somewhat in its history: Barbados was the earliest and "most English", most secure. The Leewards were battlegrounds among the colonial powers (virtually a violent symbiotic with France) and inter-ethnic rivalry was strong there: many

Irish, for example. Jamaica got started later (further from slave supply in Africa, 1000 miles more to England to unload sugar and other salable commodities) and only after a formative buccaneering period; the English were of course violent people in those years and preyed on Spanish and other shipping. Moreover, Jamaica was the only place with significant slave rebellions: there were plenty of places to hide on the big island, and in fact there were "maroon" colonies, escaped slaves, when the English stole Jamaica from the Spanish. The author approaches his topic with an eye to economics and culture. He says somewhat less about governance, but then the islanders really didn't govern themselves; there were assemblies, but they represented the planters nearly exclusively, a very different situation than that in New England and really in Virginia as well. In addition to the chapters on the Anglo-Caribbean regions, there is an excellent general introduction as well as chapters specifically discussing the sugar industry and the institution of black chattel slavery. As a previous reviewer indicated, the chapters can be read separately; I read through the Barbados chapter, skipped those on the Leewards and Jamaica, and went back to them after reading the rest of the general material. Readers with little time would find the introductory chapter valuable in itself, I think. It seems to me that those interested in US history need to know something about Anglo-Caribbean history, just as they need to know something about Canada. Things developed differently in the various areas, with more or less happy results.

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