CHAPTER 1

Madeiran Migration to British Guyana: First Remarks[1]

MARCELO MOURA MELLO

In an article in honour of Harry Hoetink, author of *Two Variants of Caribbean Race Relations*, Sidney Mintz suggested that white/non-white is 'the global underlying distinction in Caribbean societies, even when it not referred to' (Mintz 2005, 45). For Mintz, ethnic labels such as 'Potogee' (Portuguese) in colonial British Guyana and 'Jew' in Jamaica might serve two classificatory purposes: 'it [the label] not only says members of the group are not simply white; it also seems to imply on social grounds that they are something less than whites' (Mintz 2005, 47).

Although it is not one's objective to discuss at length Hoetink's thesis (but see Giovannetti 2006, Mintz 1971, Oostindie 2005), Mintz's insights seem a valuable starting point for understanding how the assignation of racialized terms to a migrant group of European origin that was considered neither fully white nor completely European was undertaken in the context of a profound reconfiguration of labour and racial hierarchies in the Caribbean. The aim is to stress that a changing set of features and a shifting criterion

[1] This article constitutes a first attempt to rethink Madeiran migration in British Guyana. It is based on secondary sources. Primary sources will be analysed elsewhere. The author's reflections are the result of participation on the 'The Colour of Labor: the racialized lives of migrants' research project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC 2015-AdG 695573) and coordinated by Cristiana Bastos (Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Lisboa).

of assessments (Stoler 2016, 244), as well ethnic stereotypes (cf. Williams 1991), underlined the process of racialization of Portuguese migrants from the island of Madeira in British Guyana's post-emancipation society. In order to conduct analysis, I will first give some background on Madeiran migration to British Guyana will be given. Then, the specialized scholarship on the subject will be reviewed.

MADEIRAN MIGRATION TO BRITISH GUYANA: BEYOND PLANTATION

From the second half of the seventeenth century the island of Madeira gained some importance for the British, not just as a consumer market for British manufactures—as were Lisbon and Porto—but as a valuable port for merchant and naval ships on their way to the Americas and to India (Gregory 1988, Silbert 1997). British commercial interests gravitated towards the production of wine and its export to British colonies in the West Indies and in North America. In the first half of the nineteenth century, several factors contributed to an economic depression of the island and the impoverishment of its population. The wine trade—the main exporter on the island—had been declining since the last quarter of eighteenth century. The outbreak of disease on the vines from 1814 onwards (Vieira 2015) made things even worse,[2] and the finances of the island collapsed, turning Madeira's economic situation 'calamitous', to quote a contemporary observer, Ornellas e Vasconcellos (1855, 4).

As a parallel, internal crises in the Portuguese kingdom reverberated in Madeira (Caldeira 2010). Religious persecution forced Protestants to migrate, especially to Trinidad and Tobago (Ferreira 1996, Vieira 1990). In the context of overpopulation, economic

[2] Among these plagues, the 1852 vine plague was particularly severe. It was the object of a study conducted *in situ* by João de Andrade Corvo (1854), a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Lisbon. Corvo wrote the play *O Demerarista*, which denounced the nefarious consequences of Madeiran migration to British Guiana.

depression (Ribeiro 1992, Teixeira 2009), labour scarcity, famine and epidemics (it is estimated that more than 7,000 persons died from a cholera epidemic in 1856 (Câmara 2002, 22), migration became the best, if not the only, option for Madeirans. Given that, due to the island's geography and topography, only 25 per cent of the island's surface was arable (Caldeira 2010), the life conditions of peasants deteriorated fast. It was no accident, then, that the population of the island decreased by 10 per cent between 1835 and 1861 (Câmara 2002, 22-3). While migration was not a novelty to the Madeiran population in 1835 (Rodrigues 2015), the economic, social, and political conditions of the island in the first half of the nineteenth century consistently changed migration patterns.

According to official records, 30,501 Madeirans migrated to British Guyana between 1835 and 1882 (Menezes 1992, Nath 1950, Roberts & Byrne 1966, Wagner 1975).[3] The majority of them arrived between 1841 and 1858, while far fewer immigrants disembarked in the country between 1835 and 1840 and 1860 and 1882. If Madeiran migration was negligible from 1860 onwards (Rodney 1981, 63),[4] that was definitely not the case in the previous two decades.[5] In the 1840s, 16,764 Madeirans arrived

[3] The voyages from Madeira to British Guyana lasted around four weeks. Little information is available regarding the experience of this other sort of middle-passage of the Portuguese, but see Caldeira (2010, 88-99) and Bastos (2020).

[4] Between 1861 and 1882, around 4,000 Madeirans arrived in British Guyana, while in 1841, 1846, 1847 and 1853 alone, respectively, 4,297, 5,975, 3,761 and 2,539 individuals disembarked in the British colony.

[5] See also Laurence (1965) and Mota de Vasconcellos (1959), who estimated that a total of 36,724 immigrants were introduced into British Guyana. Schomburg (1922 [1844], 23-4) stated that there were 10,000 Portuguese living in British Guyana in 1844. According to the Immigrant Office's records, between 1835 and 1843, 5,203 Madeirans were introduced into British Guyana. Besides illegal immigration, one of the reasons for the discrepancies in the colonial records is related to the fact that many Madeirans disembarked in British Guyana through private agents (Caldeira 2010).

in British Guyana, accounting for 38.61 per cent of the total number of immigrants introduced into the colony. In the 1850s, Madeirans accounted for 24.12 per cent of immigrants, numbering 9,487 individuals. Overall, in the course of the nineteenth century, 86 per cent of all Madeiran emigrants went to the Caribbean, and 70 per cent of them specifically to British Guyana (Newitt 2015, 170).[6]

Even so, it is impossible to know the exact number of Madeirans introduced into British Guyana. The main reason for this is illegal immigration, which was so widespread that Madeiran authorities were fully aware of it (Caldeira 2010, Costa Leite 1987, Dalton 1855, v. II: 462-3, Newitt 2015, 170, Vieira 1990). However difficult it would be to estimate precise numbers, one can assume the pervasiveness of illegal immigration by analysing official records other than those provided by the Immigrant Office. For instance, while official records registered the entrance of only 429 Madeirans in the colony between 1835 and 1840, the census for the year of 1841, whose data were collected prior to 1 January 1841, registered 2,219 Madeirans living in the colony (Dalton 1855).

Madeiran migrants came from a variety of backgrounds. While many of them had some familiarity with agriculture, many other did not. Some lived in urban areas, others were small scale farmers or businessmen (Bastos 2018). Contrary to other immigrants, such as those from India and China, many Madeirans migrated with their families. An abstract for the census of 1851 shows that of British Guyana's total population of 127,695 people, 7,928 (*c.* 6 per cent of the total population) were natives of Madeira. Among the adults, 3,897 were men and 2,490 were women; among the

[6] Throughout this entire period, the recruitment of Madeirans was not steady. In the 1830s and 1840s, a great number of them fell sick, mainly with yellow fever and malaria. The high mortality rates among Madeirans in the first two decades of indentureship was the main cause for the Portuguese government's temporary suspension of immigration schemes. From the 1860s onwards, the colonial government secured the importation of labourers from other countries, especially from China and India.

children (under 15 years old), males accounted for 829 and females for 712 of them (Dalton 1855, v. II, 555-64).[7]

But how representative were the Madeirans in British Guyana's population? In the *Local Guide of British Guyana*, published in London by *The Royal Gazette of the Colony* in 1843 (1843, x-xviii), the population was classified according to the following categories: Creoles of British Guyana; Africans; Creoles of West Indies; Portuguese from Madeira; Scotch, Irish and English; French, Dutch, Germans; Coolies; North Americans; and a number of 'not stated'. In total, the population of the colony in 1841 was 97,553. The Madeirans, already classified as a distinct group, neither European nor white, accounted for 2.27 per cent of the population, as already mentioned. In 1851, 1861, 1871, and 1881, they accounted for, respectively, 9.26 per cent, 6.62 per cent, 4.09 per cent and 2.69 per cent of the total population of British Guyana.

Some factors explain the fluctuation of Madeiran representativeness in the colony through the years. First, the waves of immigrants from the West Indies, Africa, China and especially from India changed British Guyana's demographic profile. Although it is clear that planters depended heavily on Madeiran labourers in the 1840s and 1850s, numerically, Indians became the most representative immigrant group in the colony (Look Lai 1993). Second, a great number of Madeirans perished from diseases such as yellow fever and dysentery,[8] while many others left the colony

[7] Through an analysis—which I am still conducting—of the records available in the House of Common Papers (Parliamentary Papers) for the period of 1846-58, I have been able to gather information about more than sixty voyages from Madeira to British Guyana. In this period, both British and Portuguese vessels transported 10,587 individuals. Out of this number, 7,431 were identified by sex and age. According to this analysis, 45 per cent of the passengers were men, 27 per cent women, while another 25 per cent were under 15 years old, and 3 per cent were infants. This data provides clear evidence that family migration was indeed a pattern among Madeirans.

[8] The high mortality rates amongst the Madeirans, denounced by Madeiran authorities early in the 1840s, was made crystal clear in Dr. Bonyun's report on

for other places, such as Brazil, French Guyana, and some returned to Madeira. Finally, over the years, children born of Madeirans, like those from other immigrants, were classified as natives of British Guyana in the censuses.

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The introduction of Madeirans to British Guyana followed the formal abolition of slavery by the British in 1833, which was implemented on 1 August 1834. Emancipation did not mean the immediate liberation of the approximately 90,000 individuals who had the legal status of slaves in British Guyana (Adamson 1972, Josiah 1997). Emancipation was followed by the apprenticeship system, which required the former enslaved to work without pay for their former masters for 45 hours per week for up to six years (Green 1969). For planters, the apprenticeship system was, as Heuman (2011) noted, an additional form of compensation, complementing the indemnities paid after abolition. Moreover, the apprenticeship system was based on a temporal assumption: it was designed as a necessary stage of transition from slavery to freedom, in which Christianization, instruction and the incorporation of British moral values, especially those concerning labour, would instil new values in subjects who had also gained new obligations and responsibilities (Holt 1988). It is important to remember also, as remarked by Lightfoot (2015), that colonial authorities and Christian missionaries very often expected that abolition would turn male subjects into waged workers and heads of nuclear households managed by reformed women, 'domesticated dependents' who could serve as models within their own community, setting an example of good conduct for their offspring.[9]

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the health conditions of the labouring population in British Guyana. Bonyun estimated that, up to 1847, 6,668 of the 15,699 Madeirans that arrived in the colony had died as a result of climate and from epidemics (Aickin 2001, 33).

[9] Women had formed the majority of the field labour force during slavery, and they withdrew from plantation work in large numbers. After abolition, many of them worked on provision grounds and in marketing their produce (Heuman 2011).

In the case of British Guyana, the colonial government's expectations for the emancipated population were frustrated, while the planters found them inconvenient (Trouillot 1992). For planters, the former enslaved lacked the moral qualities required by their new condition, thanks to their presumed natural inclinations and vices. Moreover—and this is fundamental—instead of becoming employees, many former enslaved collectively purchased abandoned or ruined plantations. Dozens of African villages were founded, and a nascent black peasantry emerged in the coastal region of British Guyana (Cruickshank 1921, Farley 1954, Mohamed 2008, Rodney 1981, Smith 1962).[10]

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[10] Greenidge (2001, 11) considers it erroneous to assert that the former enslaved fled the plantations *en masse* after 1838 (see also, Craton 1994, 47). For Greenidge, most of them remained in the 'confines of the plantation economy'. By 1840, some 20,000 Africans and Creoles were still residents of sugar plantations (Greenidge 2001). However, the so called 'village movement' resulted in the acquisition of some $2.5 million worth of property between 1838 and 1850.

[11] Ibid.

[12] As Michel-RolphTrouillot (1989) remarked, the very use of categories such as 'peasantry' and 'peasant' became indicators of competing views

The British Crown and the planters considered immigration as the best solution to the chronic shortage of labour they experienced in the post-emancipation context.[13] Intense debates over the financing of immigration schemes took place, including in the British Parliament and at the Colonial Office, revealing the existence of divergent interests and perspectives among the planters, the colonial government and metropolitan agents. Nevertheless, despite some private initiatives, it was the colonial government that financed most of the costs associated with immigration of indentured labourers until at least 1857 (Connolly 2018, 2019). Gradually, indentured labour was legitimized, both politically and in the public sphere and was sustained by the belief that indentured labour would set an example to the Creole labouring population.

What is most striking regarding the Madeirans in British Guyana is the fact that, within a few years, they were able to leave the plantations and establish themselves as shopkeepers, securing a relative monopoly over petty retail trade (David 1994, Khallel 1977, Menezes 1992, Moore 1975, 1995, Newitt 2015, Rodney 1981, Smith 1962, Wagner 1975, 1977, Williams 1991) even if they never monopolized the huckstering trade.[14] Although some authors have suggested that the Madeirans' previous experience in

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associated with the independence of small-scale farmers, especially when they were contrasted with other categories, such as 'labourer'. Trouillot (1989, 709) also remarks that, whereas English scholars accepted the peasantry in 'abstract rather than in real life', metropolitan bureaucrats (colonial officers) 'acknowledged the existence of Caribbean peasantries in practice, but deferred its conceptual recognition'.

[13] Around 340,000 individuals migrated to British Guyana between 1835 and 1918. Indians comprised more than 60 per cent of the labour force recruited to work on plantations (Adamson 1972).

[14] According to Khallel (1977, 45), in 1852 the Portuguese held 238 of the 618 licences for huckstering in the rural regions of Demerara and Essequibo (no numbers were presented for Berbice). Thus, 'when it is mentioned that the Portuguese had monopolized the whole retail trade of the colony, it probably really meant that the retailing of imported items had fallen mainly into the hands of the Portuguese' (Khallel 1977, 45). Menezes (1992) has shown that early in the 1840s, the Portuguese imported goods such as potatoes, wine and salt-fish from vessels owned by their countrymen in Madeira.

commercial activities in Madeira played an important role in this process (David 1994, Menezes 1986, 1992, Moore 1975), it must be remembered, as Wagner remarks (1977, 406), that the rise of the Portuguese as shopkeepers was not 'the result of mere chance but the result of deliberate elite policy'.

According to Khallel (1977, 34-6), prior to emancipation, the petty commerce of the colony was in the hands of coloured women. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, whites and manumitted slaves had begun to compete with them. Similarly, the rise of huckstering licence fees resulted in a lapse of an effective expedition of licences to the Creoles, who did not have the means to pay for them. By contrast, the Portuguese found 'relaxed attitudes toward contractual regulations for huckstering' (Khallel 1977, 49). British colonialists advanced credit to Madeirans, in contrast to the Creoles, who did not obtain credit at all (Moore 1975, Wagner 1975, 1977). Maybe it is not a coincidence, then, that many Portuguese shops were established in villages located on the east coast of Demerara, a region in which great African-Guyanese clusters, such as Plaisance, Friendship and Buxton, were funded in the aftermath of abolition, through collective purchases of abandoned plantations (Khallel 1977, 51).[15]

In parallel, state subsidies for indenture indirectly transferred wealth from former slaves back to the plantations, helping to restructure the post-slavery economy. From 1844, the colonial administration of British Guyana enacted a series of laws regarding payment for labour recruitment. Costs for the indentured—which included, besides transportation, debts to private recruiters and fixed expenses with salaries for immigrant officers—represented nearly 29 per cent of the total budget of British Guyana government in 1846. Between 1841 and 1845, before the establishment of an effective structure for recruiting Indian indentured labourers, the colony spent more than £100,000 on the recruitment and transport of immigrants from neighbouring Caribbean colonies, the Cape Verde islands and Madeira.

[15] As Rodney reminds us (1981, 108), it is far less recognized that Portuguese pre-eminence in shopkeeping was matched by their ability to buy land in the villages, as well as in urban areas.

Figure 1.1: St. John the Baptist, Catholic Church, which was funded by the Portuguese in the second half of the nineteenth century. Plaisance, Guyana. Photo by the author (October 2018)

Connolly (2018) shows that, before abolition, local revenue depended largely on taxes paid by slaveowners.[16] After abolition, these taxes were repealed and export duties reduced. To compensate for these losses, the duties on imported common goods were increased. Insofaras the colonial administration raised the price of basic items such as food and clothing, 'import duties fell indirectly on the general population, the majority of which was formerly enslaved. In other words, after abolition, the colony's tax burden shifted significantly, from planters to former slaves' (Connolly

[16] It must be remembered that the British government paid £20,000,000 compensation to slave owners after abolition (Connolly 2019, Draper 2007, Quinault 2009). John Gladstone (father of the prime minister William Gladstone), who was one of the largest slave owners in the British West Indies, including in Demerara, received £93,000 compensation for more than 2,000 slaves (Quinault 2009, 370). Gladstone financed the arrival of the first Indian immigrants in British Guiana.

2019, 9). In sum, state subsidies were 'redistributive and regressive: they funnelled money from emancipated populations and new laborers back to the plantation' (Connolly 2019, 14).

Although Connolly is concerned mainly with Indian indentured labour, his remarks are important because they address the relationships between slavery and indentured labour not in terms of continuity and discontinuity—i.e., the extent to which indenture reassembled slavery—but in a context in which state policies were informed by contingent debates over race and labour. As I will demonstrate in the next section, Portuguese experiences in British Guyana are generally framed in terms of the Portuguese's supposed racial affinity with the British, which is contrasted with their economic rivalry with the population of African origin.

PORTUGUESE AS A WHITE BUFFER CLASS?

In seeking to understand the social objectives of the ruling classes after emancipation, Brian Moore (1975) postulates that the Portuguese occupied a middle role designed to foster and bolster 'white supremacy,' preventing Creoles from thriving socially and economically. For Moore, Portuguese immigration into British Guyana was but one manifestation of the extent to which the white-dominated plantation system in the colony dictated the development of the society even after the vast majority of the enslaved population was freed. Given their 'racial affinity' with the dominant white class, the Portuguese enjoyed a social importance out of proportion to their numerical position. For Moore, race was the overriding determinant of the social status of the Portuguese immigrants in nineteenth-century British Guyana. This criterion was dictated by the need to preserve and bolster the social supremacy of the small but dominant white minority in the face of the new challenges occasioned by emancipation.[17] I will not analyse Moore's

[17] Mary Noel Menezes contested Moore and Michael Wagner's interpretations as follows: 'their arguments rest mainly on the view that the Portuguese were given preferential treatment in their commercial efforts by the colonial authorities in order to offset the Negroes and Coloureds in the field. This

interpretation at great length here.[18] Suffice it to say that one does not contest the fact that, in the aftermath of abolition, the plantocracy sought to control the movement—and the labouring options—of the former enslaved. However, it seems clear to me that this supposed racial affinity was not so clear cut.

Brackette Williams (1991) has remarked that the Portuguese did indeed adapt to the plantation labour regime. Yet, from the beginning, these immigrants exhibited a lack of interest in long-term plantation labour. They also showed little inclination to establish themselves as small farmers. Williams (1991, 142) questions why the planters, in spite of these clearly demonstrated tendencies, and the subsequent direct refusal of Portuguese immigrants to be bound by any labour contract, continued to support the payment of a bounty for the introduction of Portuguese.

For Williams, the European elite's efforts to support the Portuguese must be understood in relation to the shifting, but continual, need for a buffer population—in this, Williams agrees in part with Moore's hypothesis. But Williams shows that two other factors were relevant: (1) the ideological rationalizations that accounted for the assignment of specific roles to the Portuguese and European population of the colony; and (2) the efforts the Portuguese made on their own behalf, which were not entirely congruent with Anglo-European expectations (Williams 1991, 143). Indeed, the high status of the Portuguese was evident only in the last third

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preferential treatment was given to the Portuguese in the early years but by the 1860s, when the Portuguese began to supplant the Europeans in the commercial sphere, they suffered many a rebuff; the honeymoon of the Portuguese as "favoured nation" had come to an end'. (Menezes 1992, 55).

[18] Moore (1975, 8-9) also states that the Portuguese, 'mainly single individuals [. . .] could hoard their earnings and invest in the retail trade. The Creoles, on the other hand, *with wives and families to maintain*, could not save to the extent of the immigrants' [my emphasis]. Moore not only ignores that family migration was common among the Portuguese, but also presupposes that *men* were the only ones responsible for providing homes.

of the nineteenth century.[19] Their habits, customs and religion (Catholicism) were despised by British elites. Therefore, 'though racial affinity and a hope for European solidarity in conflict situations played a role in the continuation of Portuguese importation', this factor alone does not explain the success of the Portuguese in commercial activities, nor the European elite's response to them (Williams 1991, 142-3). As a consequence, to presume that past experiences and innate abilities in commerce were the main reasons for the Portuguese monopoly over retail trade is to ignore the fact that this success was consistent with the needs of English merchants and the perpetuation of the plantation system. Again, Williams (1991, 145) offers a more nuanced view:

> What must be kept in mind is that the actual complex of conditions resulting in the commercial success of the Portuguese was obscured by ideological emphases on differences in cultural background and stereotypes of behavior. Such emphasis deflected attention from the interplay between these factors and the constraints and conditions directly rendered into law and into notes of credit, and those indirectly engendered by rationalizations the European elite ultimately used to explain Portuguese success.

If, as Moore (1975, 4) states, planters' racial interests took priority to preserve 'white social supremacy' in the colony, it is necessary to admit that whiteness was considered a privilege of the British.[20] That means that the physical resemblance between the British and the Portuguese, based on skin colour, should not be taken as the only factor in play—in part because the Portuguese were not considered white, nor European, as the census categories make evident. By the same token, Madeirans were not considered as white even by the Creole population (Dalton 1855). It is true that the way in which the colonial elite classes manipulated

[19] Consequently, the 'attribution of meanings to ethnic identity' by the Europeans through the 'rationalization' of their dominant condition (Cf. Williams 1991, 127-8) is dependent upon shifting historical conditions.

[20] As in the case of Hawaii, 'Portuguese disputable whiteness was manipulated by the authorities and ideologues according to the occasion' (Bastos 2018, 79).

their culture to create a consensus of values throughout the society received much more attention in an important and sustained book written by Moore (1995). But, in the end, Moore conceives whiteness as something *given*, not as something that is *made* in specific contexts. To presuppose that the British and the Portuguese had a racial affinity[21] ignores the fact that whiteness was not only embodied in physical complexion.

That does not mean that colonialists did not put in motion deliberate policies for controlling the Creole labouring population. The failure of the Creole strikes in 1848, for example, was in large measure due to the existence of an alternative labour force, whose migration from Madeira and India, the colonial government supported. The (desired) effects of the introduction of large numbers of immigrants into British Guyana were also clearly formulated in a report presented to the governor of the colony in 1850 (apud Dalton 1855, v. II, 490-521), which stated that:

> The immigrants of Madeira, of whom there are upwards of 5,000 in the country, are a very useful class of people. Excellent field labourers themselves, they also exercise an indirect influence upon the price of labour, by cheapening the commodities in use among the working classes, for a great number of them are hucksters—petty shopkeepers and traders. The Portuguese seem for the most part to prefer these occupations to field labour; and their ambition is generally to save enough money to buy a licence, stock a pack, and turn peddlers (apud Dalton 1855, v. II, 511-12).

The commissioners of this report—all of them, as far as one was able to determinate, merchants or plantation-owners—divided the labouring population into two 'classes': 'Creoles' and 'Immigrants'. They considered the former to be the 'best adapted for raising the colonial staples'. But, due to what they called the 'vicious practice of squatting' (i.e. the settlement of abandoned sugar estates),[22]

[21] See also Lightfoot (2015, 171-3), who assumes too that the Portuguese were regarded as white in Antigua.

[22] Dalton (1855, v. II, 6), citing the numbers of the 1851 census, reports that at this date there were a total of 11,152 houses possessed by Negroes in villages and hamlets in the regions of Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice.

the majority of Creoles withdrew from plantation labour (apud Dalton 1855, v. II, 509). For the commissioners, African indentured labourers would, 'undoubtedly, be the best immigrants', but since the recruitment from Sierra Leone was too uncertain and the Africans 'too readily fall into the bad habits of the idle native population' (idem.: 512),[23] other sources of labourers needed to be sought out, and India provided a ready supply.

The ascendancy of the Portuguese in commerce, contrasted with the lack of financial support from the colonial government for Creoles, was at the basis of the riots against the Portuguese, which occurred as early as 1846 (Wagner 1977). In 1856, far more serious outbreaks occurred. Disturbances motivated by anti-Catholic speeches by John Sayers Orr, known as 'Angel Gabriel', spread from Georgetown,[24] the capital, to the entire colony. Almost 300 Portuguese owned shops, and some of their houses, were sacked (Doyle 2016). The value of the properties destroyed was estimated to be £60,000 (Garner 2007, 123). Authors such as Chan (1970), Khallel (1977) and Wagner (1977) considered that economic competition was the main cause for the outbreak of the riots. The 1856 riots were defined by the governor of the colony at the time, Philip Wodehouse, as a 'strife of races' (Khallel 1977, 107), and were followed by similar episodes, particularly in 1889. The very fact that the Creoles resorted to violence, which was directed primarily against the Portuguese, seems to indicate not only the Creoles contempt for the Portuguese but also deep grievances against the colonial administration.[25]

These socio-economic factors need to be complemented by an analysis of how racialized values were assimilated and reinterpreted

[23] African migration to the West Indies was, as Roberts (1954, 237) aptly put it, 'an essential by-product of the nineteenth-century slave trade'. Between 1841 and 1867, 13,970 Africans arrived in British Guyana (Roberts 1954, 254).

[24] By 1851, the vast majority of Madeirans were already living in Demerara and Georgetown, according to Clementi (1937).

[25] I do not have space here to analyse these episodes at more length; they will be objects of analysis, based on primary sources, in another place.

by subordinated groups. As Raymond Smith (1967) remarked many years ago, the problem of immigration involved the creation of a framework within which more restricted identities (in the Caribbean case, African, East Indian, Javanese, Chinese, Syrian, Portuguese, etc.) could be accommodated and transcended by an integrative framework created by colonial rule—a framework based on assigning racial groups in a system of status group differentiation. The main implication of this process was that the plantation acted as a peculiar kind of instrument of resocialization for those who fell within its sphere of influence. For Smith, the moral conceptions of the English were inculcated by a deliberate effort to create a set of common values, an 'ideology for the whole society' (Smith 1967, 235).

The historical formation of what Williams (1991, 127-8) called 'Anglo-European hegemony in British Guyana' was indeed marked by racialized values, but this process was much more complex than authors such as Moore assume. I agree with Williams when she proposes that, in order to understand how the Guyanese think using symbolic conceptions of ethnicity—and I would add, how they think about history and national belonging in terms of ethnicity and race—it is necessary to examine interrelated aspects of the socio-economic history of Guyana, and three in particular. The first is the historical conditions that made it possible for ethnically identified groups to share the same space and participate in the same sociocultural and economic order. The second is how European elites attributed meanings to ethnic identity through the rationalization of their dominant condition. Finally, the third is how, in different circumstances, subordinated ethnic groups incorporated and reinterpreted the ideological frame of society to position themselves in the face of dominant and other subordinated groups.

In this process, the unequal distribution of economic resources and the allocation of 'roles' to each ethnic group in the labour sector were impacted by several waves of migrants from different backgrounds. But, the interpretation of the meanings of racial and cultural differences should not be conceived as an outcome of economic factors only, since this interpretation was constructed—

and reinforced—in a framework constituted by sociocultural, economic and political hierarchies in which Anglo-Europeans retained the higher positions. One key aspect of the attribution of status and values was religion, and religion is an important element in understanding the 1856 riots against the Portuguese. The adherence to Christianity was an important factor in the evaluation of individual status and in the ordering of ethnic groups in colonial Guyana (see Drummond 1980, Smith 1967, Williams 1991 for further development). As a matter of fact, religion, perhaps more than other cultural elements, became one of the most important criteria employed by the European elite to classify non-Europeans as racially, morally and intellectually inferior (Williams 1991, 201). The Victorian tendency to treat religion as metonymic of culture and civilization (Khan 2012) channelled Europeans' visions of their differences from their subjects, both Africans and Indians—especially with their 'corresponding religions' (Islam, African-based practices and Hinduism)—and Portuguese, who were Catholics.

Thus, to understand the experiences of Madeirans, and their racialization, in nineteenth-century British Guyana, it is necessary to analyse several factors, other than their economic role in the colony. To understand racialized hierarchies demands an analysis of the connections between racial and ethnic labels, labour occupation, class status, religion and morality. To understand the racialization of Madeirans is fundamental to understanding the racialization of the Creoles, and vice versa.

RETHINKING THE PORTUGUESE IN BRITISH GUYANA

> The Portuguese have shown themselves for ages as a restless and roving people; enterprising in spirit, and adventurous in their habits, one has already seen them, along with the Spaniards, exploring and visiting this country; behold them again now, but in a different capacity. Formerly they came to be masters; now they were satisfied to be servants and labourers. Formerly they came with the sword and the spear; now they were to wield the shovel and the cutlass.
>
> HENRY DALTON, *The History of British Guyana*, v. I, p. 455.

This concluding section starts by quoting Dalton because the images that he offers about the Portuguese are full of contrasts. Conquerors in the past, the Portuguese landed on South American shores as field workers who wielded the tools for the cultivation of crops, mainly sugar cane in nineteenth-century British Guyana. Indeed, as Bastos (2018, 66) remarked, 'the identification of the Portuguese as intrepid sailors crossing oceans [. . .] has been central to a historical narrative that merges sea travel, conquest, knowledge, empire and nation.' Yet, as Bastos stresses, sailing 'was also about a variety of endeavours other than opening the way to empire.' In the nineteenth century, many Portuguese-born men and women, most of them from Ilha da Madeira, 'were the ones being racialized, traded and contracted'.

It is no accident that the historiography of the Portuguese empire has paid little attention to massive flows of Madeiran workers to plantations in the Caribbean (and Hawaii, but see Bastos 2018, 2020). In the narrative of the Portuguese empire, and Lusophony discourses, *other* Portuguese remain 'an understudied group' (Bastos 2018, 72), in part because their experiences do not fit into the mainstream Portuguese historiography, which leaves 'aside the geographies of exile and labour migration' (Bastos 2018, 91). Indeed, many people that lived in the Atlantic basin were connected to 'countless other communities outside the formal boundaries of empire' (see Cañizares-Esguerra 2018, 3).[26]

Malyn Newitt (2015, 169) refers to what he calls the 'subtle ironies' of the establishment of Portuguese communities in the Caribbean, since it was from Portugal, a country that played a decisive role leading the slave trade and that was the last European nation to finally abandon the trade in 1850, that 'poor Portuguese found themselves substituting for the black slaves on Caribbean plantations' after the abolition of slavery in British territories. But despite this irony, what remains to be explained is how the Portuguese were placed in racial hierarchies alongside other groups, such as the Creoles.

[26] As Bastos (2018, 66) reminds all, around 1900, there were more Portuguese living in foreign plantations and cities in Caribbean and in Hawai'i than in the African countries subjected to Portuguese colonial power.

Racialized identities are produced by particular practices, in particular places, according to heterogenous forms of governance of colonial subjects. 'Creoleness' and 'Whiteness' make sense only when one considers the mutual constitution of colonizers and colonized (Cooper & Stoler 1997), the differential statuses associated with labour, and the construction of ethnic and racial boundaries, which are relational and contingent. Thus, it is not only a question of the racialization of the Madeirans, or of the black Creoles, *per se*, but of a process in which languages and perceptions, inherited from slavery in an historical moment in which the 'problem of freedom' (Holt 1988) was pervasive, were reconfigured through the assignment of different labour occupations to racially identified groups.

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