



# Caribbean History: From Pre-Colonial Origins to the Present

By Toni Martin

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More centrally focused on the Caribbean than any other survey of the region, Caribbean History examines a wide range of topics to give students a thorough understanding of the region's history. The text favors a traditional, largely chronological approach to the study of Caribbean history, however, because it is impossible to be entirely chronological in the complex agglomeration of often disparate historical experiences, some thematic chapters occupy the broadly chronological framework. The author creates a readable narrative for undergraduates that contains the most recent scholarship and pays particular attention to the U.S.-Caribbean connection to more fully relate to students.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"I can't put that book down.... you fill so many gaps in my knowledge of the history of the Caribbean. You also do it in such graphic detail, yet it does not seem as if I am reading a history book...."

- Honorable Mr. Justice Selwyn Romilly, Supreme Court of British Columbia, Canada.

#### From the Author

In *Caribbean History: From Pre-colonial Origins to the Present* I have attempted to overhaul, as it were, the approach to a survey of Caribbean history. I have tried to reframe the way in which some at least of the subject is viewed and presented. I have tried to manage the delicate balancing act of a readable undergraduate narrative which nevertheless avoids the temptation of degenerating into a series of bland sound bites, some accurate, some not. I have tried to present a greater depth of information than is often the case in surveys. There is a modest sprinkling of new information here that has not appeared elsewhere, whether in monographs or in other surveys. There is also a fair amount of "virtually" new material, that is, material gleaned from a new look at old sources that have been around, sometimes for hundreds of years, but which have not been reexamined in depth for a long time. I have also benefitted, as all survey text writers must, from very recent scholarship. I brought to the writing of this book three and a half decades of teaching this course, mostly at the undergraduate level, and a lingering dissatisfaction with available survey texts.

Among the many topics covered in this book and new or practically new to survey texts the following may be mentioned - Arawak resistance to the Spanish conquerors; a full airing of the debate over the alleged "Black Legend" whereby Bartolomé de Las Casas accused the early Spaniards of genocide; pre-Columbian voyages to the Americas from Europe, China, North and West Africa; immigration in the 19th and 20th centuries (the longest chapter in the book, and a subject entirely or almost entirely absent from some other texts); the 1595 arrival of Trinidad's first East Indian immigrant; the rapid intellectual advance of the formerly enslaved in the 19th century, despite a concerted effort to frustrate their progress; post-Emancipation uprisings and disturbances such as the Angel Gabriel riots in British Guiana and the Contract Day riots of St. Croix; Caribbean-African interaction in the 19th century; African American-Caribbean interaction up to the early 20th century; the 1912 racial massacre in Cuba; competing Indian and African nationalisms; cultural survivals among the enslaved Africans; entrepreneurship among the enslaved. The vast incidence of rebellions by the enslaved and the Maroon proto-states in places like St. Vincent, Suriname and Dominica are significantly addressed. The narrative addresses such 2011 topics as the London riots of 2011 (of relevance to Caribbean emigrant communities) and the collapse of the Colonial Life Insurance Company (CLICO), Trinidad and the Caribbean's mega-conglomerate.

#### From the Inside Flap

**East Indian Immigration to the Caribbean Began in 1595, Says Professor Tony Martin in *Caribbean History: From Pre-colonial Origins to the Present***  
**243 Years Earlier Than Previously Thought to be the Case**

Tony Martin, Emeritus Professor of Africana Studies at Wellesley College, has made the surprising revelation that the first Indian immigrant to the Caribbean arrived in Trinidad on February 17, 1595. This was 243 years before Indian immigration to the Caribbean is usually thought to have begun. Indians arrived

as indentured laborers to Guyana in 1838 and to Trinidad in 1845. These are the earliest dates traditionally acknowledged and celebrated in "Indian Arrival Day" and similar observances in the region. Trinidad's first Indian immigrant was one of two apparently enslaved Indians who arrived on an English pirate ship engaged in exploring the "Wild Coast" of South America (Guyana) in search of El Dorado, the legendary empire of gold. These Indians had been captured earlier during a round-the-world voyage between 1584 and 1586 by English adventurer, Thomas Cavendish. The English fortune-seekers made Trinidad their base for a few months as they explored Guyana. It was in Trinidad that the region's first Indian jumped ship and made a dash for freedom. He may have joined the indigenous Caribs and Arawaks, or perhaps even made contact with the Spaniards, who had recently occupied Trinidad. His fate is however currently unknown. The only certain thing is that he escaped to Trinidad and his English enslavers left without him.

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