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_____Making Rum in the Caribbean: A comparative study of distilleries in Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada from early 18th century to early 19th century_____

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TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT – Making Rum in the Caribbean: A comparative study of distilleries in Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada from early 18th century to early 19th century

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ABSTRACT

The title of this thesis is “Making Rum in the Caribbean: A comparative study of distilleries in Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada from early 18th century to early 19th century”. The thesis focuses on the British Caribbean islands of Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada to highlight the development and impact of the rum industry in the Caribbean and to the wider world. Through quantitative research and qualitative analysis, the socio-cultural and economic effects of the aforementioned islands as pioneers in the industry are closely examined. The introduction of new technology and manufacturing processes to the region is outlined and the extreme competition across the British territories is heavily discussed, supported by numerous statistics from customs books and planter accounts. The integration of the spirit as a fundamental part of maritime culture, international commerce and pirate debauchery has also been outlined. The work makes reference to several notable distilleries in the islands who best reflect the unique experiences in the rum industry of each territory. The thesis establishes the critical connection between the rum industry and the Caribbean historical identity while also emphasising the need for further, streamlined study of the industry in the region.

Key words: Rum, Barbados, Jamaica, Grenada, Piracy, Economic history

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this thesis is "Making Rum in the Caribbean: A comparative study of distilleries in Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada from early 18th century to early 19th century". Contributing to both Caribbean economic and social history, this study will add to the existing historiography on the development of rum production and distilleries within the West Indies. Just as sugar entrenched itself as a pillar of colonial civilization in the New World from the 17th century onwards, so too rum is characteristic of Caribbean society. A rich spirit usually distilled from the molasses of sugar cane juice, rum as a commodity bears a vibrant and extensive history within Caribbean society. Molasses was nothing but a waste by-product of the sugar cane obtained through sugar production before the 1600s (Curtis, 2006, 36). While the presence of rum can be identified in earlier historical periods, particularly in Asia as a medicinal aid, rum was not actively distilled and commercially produced until about 1630 in Barbados (Curtis, 2006, 20). It is widely believed by historians that the name rum comes from the expanded name 'rumbullion' which was used in Barbados to describe the fiery liquid, often being alternatively referred to as 'kill-devil' (Curtis, 2006, 38). While the initial production was crude and small-scale, the rum industry exploded commercially as increased industrialisation, market demand and profitability occurred in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Review of Literature

Several historians and anthropologists have discussed the significance of sugar to the region. However, few actively examine rum and distillation within the Caribbean exclusively. Wayne Curtis attempts to establish a relatively linear chronology to the development of the rum industry in the New World. He introduces the topic by identifying the socio-cultural importance of rum to

America specifically before elaborating on what the spirit actually is and its historical origins. He notes the various starting points of the product as offered by historians, ranging from the belief that rum was created in 15th century Europe as alchemists searched for the secret to immortality, or that rum was actually created in India many centuries prior (Curtis, 2006, 17). The author attributes the inception of rum as a commodity in the New World to Barbados during the 1600s. He describes extensively, the rapid growth of the industry across the West Indies. His book is written in a very descriptive and narrative style which is engaging and comprehensive. He also relies heavily on anecdotal accounts from the colonial period, as well as letters and reports. While this approach provides useful qualitative data, there is a lack of balance with quantitative data such as statistics across the region. The figures that he does offer, mainly relate to Barbados. Nevertheless, his work will be helpful to this thesis as he also examines the general distillation procedure for the region from the mid-17th century into the early 19th century.

Richard Foss chronicles the rich history of rum throughout the world. Using an anthropological approach, he assesses the socio-cultural significance of rum production to the Caribbean region. His work looks at how the commercial profitability of rum and distilleries in the British West Indies, and particularly in Jamaica, has also contributed to lucrative businesses in the region from increased tavern establishments to smuggling and piracy (Foss, 2012, 30). Foss also establishes the larger role of Caribbean rum as a form of currency in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, while also identifying the dominance of distilleries over previously prioritised enterprises. This is useful to the thesis as Foss highlights both the external and internal power of Caribbean rum production. The author presents succinct but comprehensive information on all elements of rum production such as types of rum, markets for the product and the effects of its production. Similarly to Curtis, Foss does not focus on quantitative data as much as anthropological discussion. However, his work

is quite essential as he presents comparative analysis of distillation practices, trade prioritisation and levels of success with the product across the New World.

It could be argued that no one has studied more intently the development of alcohol, and more specifically rum in the Caribbean, than Frederick H. Smith (2001). Smith's tertiary dissertation analyses in extreme detail, the introduction of the spirit to the region, the emergence of distillation process, the recognition of rum as a viable, consumable alcoholic beverage, and the life of rum as a trade commodity from the 17th to the 20th century. He also establishes the various factors responsible for the product's success and decline in various islands. Not only does Smith provide technical and archaeological support for his research, but his work also contains diverse quantitative data on product output, export rates, financial statistics and even resultant demographic data from rum production. While it could be argued that more details could be given on specific distilleries in each island, Smith's research is a deep and exhaustive compilation on Caribbean rum.

Much like Foss, Smith's book entitled *Caribbean Rum: A Social and Economic History*, expounds on the socio-cultural contributions of rum to Caribbean society, legacy and identity. While Smith's book is quite extensive, there exists a large scholarship of literary reviews on Smith by several historians. As reviewed by Sidney W. Mintz, Smith's book links the growth of both rum production and consumption to the daily activities on the plantations as well as the individual cultures of each social group (Mintz, 2007, 553). The alcoholic beverage's importance increased as population did, with Smith noting rum's "ability to provide a temporary respite from the challenges of everyday life" (Boyer, 2006, 145). While several writers commend Smith's archaeological and ethnographical dimensions to the progress of the rum industry and its role in society, Reinaldo L. Román criticizes Smith, claiming that his analysis "does not connect

production to consumption as seamlessly" (Román, 2007, 257) as former historians have done with sugar production. While Smith's work is undoubtedly one of the leading sources on the topic, it is imperative that this thesis also consult contrasting viewpoints found in reviewers of his work as they also provide rich and diverse analysis on the topic.

While Smith's works allow one to better envision the volume and scale of rum production specifically, David Eltis' examination of Caribbean economies presents a wider comparative study. Eltis (2007) notes the developments of the sugar industry and the growth of each by-product as a commodity. By evaluating the rates of production for sugar, molasses, rum and non-sugar related products, he tracks the real social and economic contribution of rum to each island at a specific time period. His research contains quantitative data through which the economic priorities on sugar plantations for each European power can be compared. Additionally, Eltis pays attention to the Caribbean's role as a raw supplier of molasses and rum to North America who then proceeded to re-sell the product (Knight, 2003, 110). Eltis' research also hints at the effects of these economic activities in terms of infrastructural development and increase in slave population, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Rationale

While there exists a seemingly endless pool of research on the sugar industry in the Caribbean, there is a noticeable paucity of information on the production of rum and distilleries in the region. This is considerably disappointing from an academic perspective as rum continues to be a product of longstanding commercial value and socio-cultural relevance to the West Indies. In addition to this, the literature that documents rum in the Caribbean, scarcely examines the internal history of distillation, often barely making reference to individual distilleries throughout the region. Given

the historical significance of rum and distilleries to piracy, slavery, early industrialisation and commercial framework in the Caribbean, there lies an immense gap in historiography which makes this thesis vital scholarship.

Objective and Parameters

The aim of this study is to examine the various facets of rum production such as distillation processes, production and export rates and the factors and effects of rum and distilleries, in order to evaluate the historical importance of rum to Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada and by extension the wider Caribbean region. While rum has been present in the New World since the 1500s, this study is narrowed to the early 18th to 19th century when rum was firmly established as a colonial commercial enterprise. By focusing on Barbados, Jamaica and Grenada, this study will be able to examine some of the largest contributors to the product's history in closer detail, while also allowing a considerable array of research sources. These chronological and geographical parameters will assist in streamlining the research of the thesis without overextending this work. Due to the word limits of this study, it is even more critical to finetune the scope of research that best allows for specification and deeper analysis.

Methodology

This study will utilise an empirical approach as the thesis is guided by the quantitative and qualitative data identified through various documentation. The thesis can be considered a literary study as there will be a heavy reliance on secondary documents such as books, journal articles, scholarly websites and other written sources, in addition to primary documents such as reports and

historical records, as well as letters. This will allow for a solid balance between qualitative and quantitative assessment despite using primarily written sources.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 of this study will focus on Barbados as the pioneer of rum production as a large-scale commercial enterprise in the New World. Briefly tracing the island's economic development in the 17th century, the chapter shall mainly examine the initial distillation process, types of rum produced, rates of export and production and the socio-cultural significance of rum to the colony and wider British West Indies. Reference will be made to Mount Gay Barbados Rum Distilleries as an example for supplementary information.

Chapter 2 shall examine the development of Jamaica as a growing competitor and its eventual overtaking of Barbados as the region's largest rum producer. The chapter will identify the development of rum, with reference to the Appleton Estate distillery, as well as the socio-cultural significance of the rum industry to Jamaica's legacy of piracy and to international trade.

Chapter 3 centres on the former French colony of Grenada which experienced lesser development in the rum industry compared to Barbados and Jamaica. The chapter identifies the contrasting historical development of the French rum industry with the later British developments in the island once the colonial authority changed to the British. The distillery operations will also be identified with special reference to River Antoine Rum Distillery which continues usage of pre-industrial conventions of rum making to modern times.

Rum production and the emergence of distilleries bear massive historical consequence to the region as a great abundance of wealth was generated through refined distillation practices, further

elevating the profitability of the Caribbean colonies, however, it also impacted the region's slave population and increased unsavoury activities among the islands.

CHAPTER ONE

Situated most easterly of the Caribbean island archipelago, Barbados was one of the first established colonies of the British in the New World. While the island was initially encountered by Christopher Columbus in 1492, it was neglected and relatively unpopulated by both the indigenous Amerindians and the European settlers (most likely as a result of Barbados' outlying geographical location). Only in 1624-1625 did Barbados undergo transformation from an abandoned, virgin land to an economically profitable colony that served as a trailblazer for the British Caribbean empire. Through the efforts of British planters, Barbados experienced diverse agricultural growth as they produced "tobacco, cotton, ginger, and indigo, with a [labour] force composed predominantly of white indentured servants" (Galenson, 1982, 491). As economic prospects increased so too did the population. In the early 17th century, Barbados was the "foremost English possession" (Eltis, 1995, 631) due to their various export goods, strategic military position and dominating tobacco cultivation as a cash crop.

Unfortunately, "in the late 1630s, Barbados [faced] serious economic difficulties" (Heuman, 2019, 39) as tobacco profits declined and the colony faced major competition from Virginia who was able to produce higher quality tobacco, in greater quantities. By the mid-17th century, Barbados was forced to adopt a new cash crop. This came in the form of sugar cane. According to Heuman, sugar was used:

> "As a replacement for honey and as a sweetener for the food and drinks of working people…[and] it helped that Barbados and much of the rest of the Caribbean was ideally suited to the cultivation of sugar. The climate and the terrain, especially of a relatively flat and compact island such as Barbados, facilitated sugar production" (Heuman, 2019, 40).

These developments provided Barbados with the foundation for the colony's prosperity in the 18th and 19th centuries as the Sugar Revolution emerged and 'kill-devil', better known as rum, cemented itself as the beverage of the Caribbean domestic market.

The wealth that sugar brought to the West Indies has been well recorded by historians, and the resultant social consequences of African chattel slavery which facilitated the crop's economic growth have also been extensively discussed. However, one crucial facet of Caribbean colonial history which has arguably been underappreciated is the early industrial development of the sugar estates. The distillation of rum particularly emphasizes the relative scientific and mechanical complexity of the plantations. Unlike brandy and whiskey which were made from distilled wine and beer respectively, rum was the product of "the distilled essence of fermented industrial waste" (Curtis, 2006, 35). It was made from the unwanted molasses of the sugar manufacturing process. Made in what was referred to as the still house, according to the planter Samuel Martin, the rum distiller began the process of rum making by:

> "Mixing in a large cistern a liquid mess composed of three ingredients: the blackish scum that rose to the surface during the sugar-boiling process; the dregs remaining in the still after a previous batch (called lees or dunder); and water used to clean out the sugar-boiling pots between batches. This mixture – called wash – was then left to stand in the tropical heat. Since it was contaminated with yeasty bits of stalks and dirt, the stew would begin to ferment and bubble. Once the first bubbles appeared, the distiller would feed the fermentation by mixing in six gallons of molasses for every one hundred gallons of wash… The temperature of the wash had to be closely monitored…windows in the still house were opened and closed to regulate the air temperature… When the wash temperature fell and the bubbles stopped after a few days, the mildly alcoholic brew was ready for distillation. The wash was conveyed to the still via taps placed several inches from the bottom of the fermenting cisterns, a technique to leave the sediment behind… A low and even fire was applied to the main vat of the pot still, and the steam generated would rise and progress through a bit of copper tubing called a worm. The worm had to be constantly cooled to get the steam to condense…as was the case on water-scarce Barbados, the steam-warmed water had to be refreshed with water cooled in the yard, a chore performed by slaves with pails, or, later, by [wind-powered] pumps. The spirit that came out of the first distillation could be drunk as is or run through the still a second or even third time" (Curtis, 2006, 40-42).

While the early rum making process was quite rudimentary, this distillation methodology demonstrates the resourcefulness of the British planters as they utilised the tropical climate to make a marketable product out of the sugar cane waste.

Without a doubt, Barbados was a pioneer of rum-making in the New World. The island has been credited for having the "oldest-known continuously produced rum – from the Mount Gay distillery" (Curtis, 2006, 39), which officially dates back to 1703 (although records of a still house existing since 1663 have been noted). The plantation on which Mount Gay Barbados Rum Distilleries resided was originally owned by John Sober and his family in the St. Lucy parish. At that time, the estate was known as Mount Gilboa and given the fact that rum was an entirely new venture for the colony, it is understandable why the distillery was quite small in size (Malin, 2019). Throughout the 18th and into the 19th century, however, the rum industry would expand into a large-scale West Indian enterprise with Barbados leading the way for most of the 1700s. This was certainly due to the technological advancements that were made in the distilleries. As profits from the sugar industry increased, planters were able to reinvest in the still houses and machinery for larger production output with more efficiency, thereby generating an economic cycle as rum also earned further profits for the planters. The Sober family distillery experienced such growth when they employed Sir John Gay Alleyne to handle the distillery, resulting in rapid expansion in productivity through expertise and clever innovative investments. This was on such an immense level that the estate was renamed Mount Gay in honour of him (Malin, 2019).

There was also another factor which propelled Mount Gay, and by extension Barbados, into international commercial acclaim. Malin notes that the water and geological formation of Barbados set the island apart from the rest of the Caribbean and directly influenced the quality and taste of sugar and rum. He states that "Barbados is actually the product of accumulated and uplifted coral limestone" (Malin, 2019). Housing a large reserve of underground water in a 300-plus-foot well, the limestone functions as a natural filtration system which makes the water "a key element in what makes Mount Gay unique…The water drawn from this well is still used for the distillate and

dilution of the rum" (Malin, 2019). It is because of these factors that rum making exploded as a trade entity domestically, regionally and internationally despite the expensive cost of still houses, with "each [costing] about the same as constructing and outfitting a sugar-boiling house" (Curtis, 2006, 39).

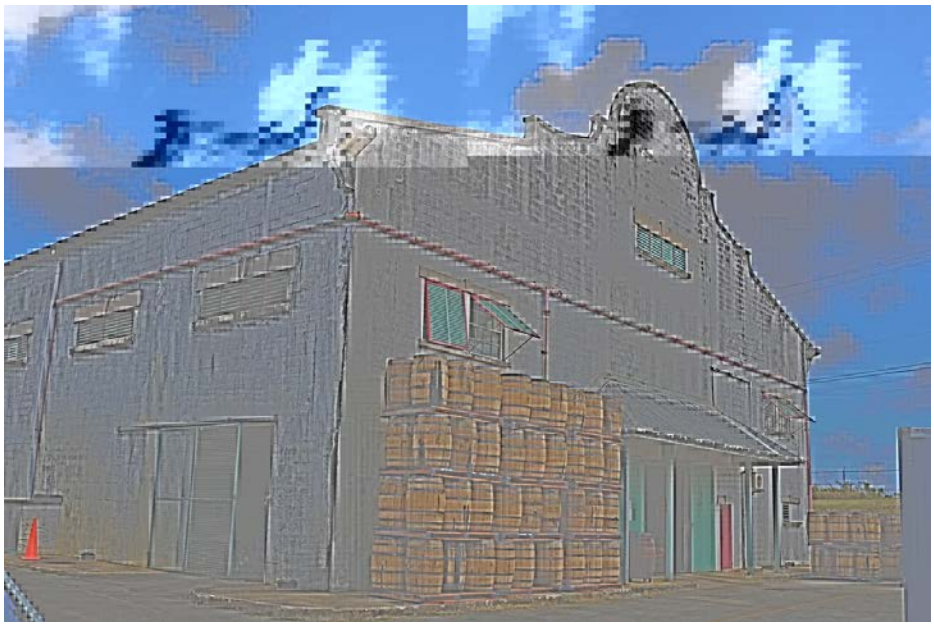

Figure 1: Modern-day Mount Gay Rum Distillery

Source: Shannon Kircher (2019)

Barbadian rum was heavily consumed both locally and internationally. As sugar exports grew so did the rum yields. At the mid-17th century, Richard Ligon estimated the expected rum yields of Barbados to be about "4.3 gallons of rum per cwt. of sugar, not counting the rum used by the inhabitants of the plantation" (Smith, 2001, 91), with 'cwt.' referring to hundredweight. However by the 18th century, it was recorded that "at least 20 gallons of rum per cwt. of sugar was common" (Smith, 2001, 91). Utilising records from the *Barbados Customs Books*, economic historian David Eltis also noted that at the beginning of the 18th century, Barbados had exported 2,256,960 litres of rum, or approximately 596,226 gallons of rum (Eltis, 1995, 638). The colonist George Frere

wrote in his work *Short History of Barbados, from Its First Discovery and Settlement, to the End of the Year 1767*, that general annual export of rum from Barbados in the 18th century totalled to around 1,543,000 gallons of rum (Frere, 1768, 114). This was shipped to London, Liverpool, Bristol, other regions of Great Britain, Ireland, the American colonies, Newfoundland and the Bermudas (Frere, 1768, 114). Through these figures it can clearly be identified that Barbados experienced rapid growth in the rum industry as the commercial value of the product increased, resulting in major growth in export.

Most certainly, with the increased economic value of rum as a commodity, there was also growing social significance attached to the beverage. Rum started to be used as a local means of payment with Smith stating that "plantation managers were often paid in rum" (Smith, 2001, 95). The rum obtained upon first distillation was referred to as 'low-wine' or 'new-rum' and this was consumed by the African enslaved and the poor whites (Handler et al., 1986, 416). The product often exported was the more preferred rum however, with the upper planter class consuming what was known as 'old rum' or 'aged wine'. This referred to rum that was distilled two or even three times, as well as rum that was left to ferment and age in casks over a very long period of time, thereby producing a more palatable taste of rum compared to the new-rum. Handler et al. identified that:

> "Slaves consumed rum in a number of religious and recreational contexts. In addition, although masters often frowned on rum drinking, especially in social situations they could not easily control, it became a common practice for plantations to allocate small portions of rum (or rum mixed with water) and molasses as part of regular food rations, as special treats, in damp or chilly weather, or even as medicaments" (Handler et al., 1986, 416).

Given the widespread usage of rum among the large, poor white and slave population, there was also a noticeably high mortality rate which was further exacerbated by poorly regulated rum consumption. Evidently, the new-rum particularly, was a great contributor to 'dry bellyache' which was rampant and also quite fatal (Handler et al., 1986, 416). Notwithstanding the dangerous nature of alcohol and spirits as strong as rum, another factor that increased the beverage's propensity for

disease, was the distillation equipment, or more specifically the material of which the tools were made. Handler et al. noted that the cisterns and boilers for sugar and rum production were soldered with lead (Handler et al., 1986, 415). As the equipment was heated, the products became contaminated with lead, resulting in lead poisoning. However, by the late 18th century "lead was increasingly eliminated from distilling machinery and replaced by tin" (Handler et al., 1986, 417) resulting in lowered deaths by lead poisoning and rum.

Without a doubt, the drastic emergence of rum as a profitable commodity in Barbados, catapulted the New World into a large-scale rum frontier. This generated socio-economic and cultural repercussions that rippled internationally. As the industry expanded to other colonies, Barbados would face serious competition in the rum industry, with Jamaica being their number one rival in the West Indies in both financial profits and export rates, and socio-cultural significance.

CHAPTER TWO

Originally a Spanish colony following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1494, the island of Xaymaca (indigenous name) or St. Jago (name given by Christopher Columbus) was taken as a British possession in 1655 (Martin, 1836, 1-13). Henceforth known as Jamaica, the island would become a key colony for Britain due to its natural resources and geographical location. Located strategically in the Greater Antilles near Haiti, Cuba and Central America, according to Heuman, "[Jamaica] was thirty times the size of Barbados and the Leeward Islands combined and almost totally undeveloped" (Heuman, 2019, 49). In addition to this, the island's soil was quite rich and fertile, with varying types of terrain allowing for "more agricultural diversity than other sugar-dominated islands" (Kenny, 2010, 47-48). Unlike Barbados which was mainly flat land, Jamaica's inner region was mountainous and forested, and therefore produced more humid, temperate conditions compared to the outer coastal areas. Due to these factors, Jamaica planted not only sugar but also coffee, cocoa and various fruits. Nevertheless, in the 18th century, sugar was still the main industry that sustained Jamaica much like the rest of the British West Indies. Just as Barbados introduced rum as a viable commercial product in the New World, Jamaica would go on to refine the manufacturing processes, elevating not only the economic value but also the socio-cultural significance of the spirit on a global scale.

Compared to Barbados, Jamaica's rum industry was relatively small prior to the 18th century. According to Smith, "Jamaican rum exports averaged a little more than 5,000 gallons per year and rum represented only 1% of the total value of Jamaica's export trade" (Smith, 2001, 50). It can be suggested however that this was simply due to the fact that rum was still very new to the Caribbean as a spirit and as a commodity. The 18th century brought various changes and advancements to the production methods and technology of rum, with Jamaica particularly expanding the industry.

While the rudiments of rum-making had not changed significantly, Jamaica utilised different ratios in their mixtures and altered distillation techniques which produced alternative qualities of rum that separated it from Barbados.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the fermented wash that would then be distilled for rum consisted of scum, dunder, water and later incorporated molasses. Scum referred to the impurities skimmed at the top of the cauldrons in the sugar boiling process, as opposed to molasses which was a thick, dark syrup obtained from refining the muscovado sugar and cane juice. Dunder was the remaining waste of prior distillations (Smith, 2001, 77-78). Following the practices of Barbados, for a long time the British Caribbean utilised a wash ratio of equal parts scum, dunder and water to produce a 100-gallon mixture (so 33.33 gallons of each component) with a further six gallons of molasses added for increased sucrose content needed for the yeast fermentation (Smith, 2001, 81). However, by the late 18th into the 19th century, Jamaica particularly experimented with varying wash ratios to produce different tastes and alcohol content. According to Jamaican planter Bryan Edwards, by 1794 “the average 100-gallon wash contained 50 gallons of dunder, 6 gallons of molasses, 36 gallons of scum, and 8 gallons of water” (Smith, 2001, 82). Evidently there was a reduction in the water content of the wash and an increase in scum and dunder. This may have been done to use the waste products of sugar manufacturing more resourcefully.

Another motive behind the wash experimentation was the delicate maintenance of the sucrose level. Referred to as ‘sweets’ by planters, the sucrose from the various sugar compounds in the wash directly altered the rate and levels of fermentation as yeast was attracted to the carbohydrate. This then also affected the taste and alcohol levels of the rum. Different wash ratios often produced varying quantities of rum, however, there was a general consensus among the planters that the wash needed to contain an average of 12% ‘sweets’ regardless of how the ratio was distributed

(Smith, 2001, 82). With Barbados and Jamaica setting the trends of the industry, by the late 18th century, the British Caribbean had "regional variations among distillers" (Smith, 2001, 87) in terms of wash recipes and distinctive flavours of the spirit.

Due to their early start in the industry, coupled with their natural advantages as the only coral landscape in the Caribbean, Barbados was able to produce an astounding quantity of rum during the 17th and early 18th centuries that Jamaica only matched around the mid-18th century. In terms of pure rum production output, Barbados and Jamaica were continuously in close competition throughout the 18th century. Jamaica relied on its land mass to simply harvest more cane and resultantly more molasses, however Barbados had honed technique to extract greater rum yields. Smith identified that Barbadian planters used a skill called 'claying' which "consisted of capping the sugar molds with wet pads of clay. [This] leached out more molasses than purging alone" (Smith, 2001, 91). This allowed them to use the by-products more efficiently compared to Jamaica who did not really clay their sugars. Interestingly however, from 1770 to the 1800s especially, Jamaica surpassed Barbados in terms of exports and monetary value of rum.

Even though Jamaica did not necessarily produce larger quantities of rum, there was a noticeable shift in the market preferences which resulted in Jamaica exporting a greater amount of rum. This was especially seen with trade to the mother country. Anglo-Irish author and civil servant Robert Montgomery Martin wrote in 1836 that Jamaican rum was being regularly exported in vast quantities with "the annual average exportations to England [being] taken at 3,500,000 gallons, which may [have been] estimated in value to 1,000,000*l*. sterling" (Martin, 1836, 74). There were several factors to explain this boost in Jamaica's rum enterprises. Firstly, Jamaica was able to overtake Barbados as Britain's leading exporter due to the explosion in domestic rum production. Gust and Matthews noted that "there were 769 distilleries in 1791 and more than 1,000 just a few

years later" (Gust and Matthews, 2020, 14). Compared to Barbados which lacked land mass, it was easier for Jamaica to make up for insufficient sucrose extraction and poor wash maximisation, by simply having more distilleries.

Secondly, and contestably most importantly, Jamaica produced a rum with more concentrated alcohol content, that is, they manufactured with a higher proof. The proof denoted the strength of the rum, with 100 proof or proof spirit being taken as the standard unit of measurement that the distillation was weighed against. A proof spirit contained 50 gallons of water to 50 gallons of alcohol. The higher the ratio of alcohol to water, the higher the proof of the spirit being distilled. The more that rum was distilled, the higher the concentration of the spirit. Both Barbados and Jamaica practised a double distillation of rum, thereby producing both low-wine and aged rum. However, there was a distinctive difference in methodology which resulted in Jamaica producing a stronger alcohol. It was observed that:

> "Jamaican distillers distilled a wash and the resulting low-wine was re-distilled separately to produce a ['hot'] spirit with a high alcohol-content…In contrast, Barbadian distillers ran off a single wash and the resulting low-wine was returned to the following wash compound. The entire batch was, then, re-distilled to produce a ['cool'] proof spirit" (Smith, 2001, 101).

This was the more expedient method where it concerned strengthening the spirit as it afforded more control, as opposed to constantly redistilling the entire wash which had more impurities that could have made it more difficult to extract and monitor. It could be argued however that Barbados' method allowed for a more flavourful and unique rum as distilling the low-wine with the original wash resulted in better flavour retention.

Capitalising on the shift of market preference in Britain and even North America for more concentrated rum, the world's second oldest commercial rum was produced at the Appleton Estate (Tortello, 2002). With their rum continuously in production since 1749, the Appleton Estate is "located in the fertile Nassau Valley on either side of the Black River in southwestern Jamaica"

(Tortella, 2002). The sugar plantation was given to Captain Francis Dickinson following Britain's successful capture of the island in 1655 (Bruce-Gardyne, 2018). While the estate had been well established for its rum making since 1749, like the rest of Jamaica's industry, consumption of the spirit was dominated by external markets. However, domestic consumption would expand greatly in the early 19th century with the creation of 'The Shakespeare Tavern' in Jamaica's capital, Kingston (Tortella, 2002). Created by the wheelwright, John Wray, according to Tortella:

> "Aware that Kingston was home to one of the most renowned theatres in the New World, the Theatre Royal, which since the 1770s had played host to countless English touring companies who made their first calls in Kingston en route to Boston and New York, Wray built his tavern right next door…The area, known then and now, as Parade, was a popular meeting place for locals. The Parish Church and a large market were also nearby. By 1860 Wray had become a successful rum merchant and he brought his 22-year-old nephew, Charles James Ward, into the business. By 1862 he had made Ward his partner and the business was known from then on as J. Wray and Nephew" (Tortella, 2002).

It could be suggested that these historical developments between rum merchant and distillery actually formed the foundation for the relationship that the estate would go on to have with J. Wray and Nephew in modern day (with the latter purchasing the distillery).

Figure 2: A Painting of the Shakespeare Tavern from a J. Wray and Nephew flyer

Source: Barrel Aged Thoughts (2012)

Figure 3: A painting of Appleton Estate in 1894 from a J. Wray and Nephew flyer

Source: Barrel Aged Thoughts (2012)

In any case, Appleton Estate would reign as Jamaica's premier rum producer for centuries. This in turn resulted in the cultivation of a rich rum culture throughout Jamaica that would ripple outwards across the region and the wider world.

Rum contributed much to the maritime culture and international trade during the 18th and 19th centuries both regionally and globally. While in the 17thcentury, the spirit was mainly consumed by the poorer classes as a substitute for more expensive alcohols like wine and brandy, by the time Jamaica took the lead over Barbados, rum was critical to trade, war and piracy. According to Foss, rum fuelled the Triangular Slave Trade "in which molasses was exported to New England to be made into rum; rum to Africa to trade for slaves; and slaves to the Caribbean and South America to produce sugar for molasses" (Foss, 2012, 40). Jamaican rum was especially prized by the British market and the North American colonists (who often retailed the spirit domestically). Smith noted that "the average price of Jamaican rum on the London market was 3.250 shillings and Barbadian

rum was 1.875 shillings, a difference of 1s.4-1/2d per gallon. The price difference was less extreme in the Continental colonies, where, although Jamaican rum brought a higher price, the difference between Jamaican and Barbadian rum was only 3-1/2 pence" (Smith, 2001, 104). Due to rum being prohibited in majority of the Spanish and French Caribbean, American colonists also acted as smugglers, purchasing the spirit from Jamaica and reselling across the region.

When one is influential in trade, so too they are significant to naval culture. Both pirates and the royal navy depended on rum regularly for their duties. According to Ming and Arnold:

> "soldiers of the British Royal Navy were served a daily ration of Jamaican rum. This ration was issued as a daily tot, consisting of 71 millilitres of 95 per cent ABV rum, which was diluted one to four and served as a watered-down version called a grog. This rum ration was served twice daily, once between 11 a.m. and 12 noon, and again between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m." (Ming and Arnold, 2019, 4).

Rum was highly important to the navy not just as a form of entertainment and a cheap substitute for brandy, but it also served health purposes. Rum warmed up the body which was quite helpful for men at sea and according to Jamaican sugar planter Edward Long "when used with due moderation, and not too frequently, [rum was] antiseptic, or antiputrescent" (Long, 1774, 537). Grog also benefitted pirates who added lime juice to the mixture and other citrus fruits. By doing so, they observed a noticeable effect on the presence of scurvy among their crew. Rum also had psychological effects which allowed for apparently braver men in times of war and heated conflict. As such, rum swiftly became invaluable.

Rum, piracy and Jamaica had a very close-knit relationship, so much so that it has survived as part of the island's historical legacy today. As the British conquered the island from the Spanish, administration was concerned about the looming threat of Spanish recapture. According to Pestana, "Colonel Edward Doyley, who had risen to command of the army by dint of his experience and his longevity, hoped to establish Jamaica's main [harbour] as the region's foremost pirate base to protect the island from an anticipated Spanish invasion" (Pestana, 2014, 321). The

town known as Cagway Point would later be renamed as the infamous Port Royal. From the 1600s onwards, Jamaica's towns would be cemented as tavern towns "formed around the need to service pirates, with rum shops and other businesses benefiting from the infusion of their ill-gotten gains" (Pestana, 2014, 321). It is because of this connection that rum would commonly be associated with debauchery. Nevertheless, the spirit was so integral to the lives of sailors, seamen, the navy, pirates and buccaneers that even sea shanties were created where rum was a key feature. The British Caribbean certainly dominated the rum industry during this time, but not all of the region was able to partake in and experience the developments in rum as Barbados and Jamaica did.

CHAPTER THREE

Many islands in the British Caribbean were conquered during mid- to late 18th century from the Spanish and the French. With regards to the rum industry, unfortunately, the latter world powers were not keen on the spirit which meant that these territories experienced a very different growth when compared to Barbados and Jamaica. Arguably no island shows the transition in the rum industry from French-controlled to British-administered more acutely than Grenada and the Grenadines (Carriacou, Petit Martinique and the other southern Grenadine islets). Smallest of the Windward Islands with an area of 76,888 acres, the island of Grenada is the southernmost of the Lesser Antilles (Steele, 1974, 5). Encountered by Christopher Columbus in 1498, the Spaniards were unable to settle permanently in the island due to the indigenous population who fiercely defended their territory. According to Martin:

> "In 1650, the French governor of Martinique, Du Parquet, collected 200 hardy adventurers, for the purpose of seizing on the island…The native received and entertained the French with the utmost kindness and cordiality. Pretending to open a treaty with the chiefs of the Charibs, for the purchase of the country, the latter gave the natives 'some knives and hatchets, and a large quantity of glass beads, besides two bottles of brandy for the chief himself,' and then asserted that the island was fairly ceded to the French nation, by the natives themselves, in lawful purchase" (Martin, 1836, 247).

The French would experience constant struggle against Britain who progressively heightened efforts to capture the island. Through the Treaty of Paris in 1763 Grenada capitulated to Britain, although there would be clashes with the French who had governance over the territory temporarily. Only in 1783 with the Treaty of Versailles did Britain secure their control over the island. Needless to say, the governance of Grenada was extremely unstable and similarly their main economic enterprises constantly changed, making their rum industry particularly volatile.

Grenada was a mountainous volcanic island whose valleys were particularly fertile for a wide range of agricultural production. Under French authority, Grenada's production was focused on indigo, cotton, coffee and cocoa. There was relatively little development in sugar in the 17th and

early 18th centuries, especially when one considers the explosion of sugar occurring in the rest of the Caribbean. Martin notes that "in 1700…there were found on the whole island only sixty-four horses, 569 horned cattle, three plantations of sugar, and fifty-two of indigo" (Martin, 1836, 266). This would increase towards the mid-18th century as trade connections to Martinique were established and colonists initiated several economic and infrastructural developments independently of major assistance from French authority.

France governed her colonies with a more direct and mercantilist approach which severely stifled sugar production and trade in the French Caribbean. Settlers therefore had to resort to contraband with North American and Dutch merchants to bring in goods and gain expertise on sugarcane. Through this, French planters learnt of distilling sugar cane juice and molasses to produce rum. From the 17th to early 18th century, rum made from the distillation of sugar cane juice was known as 'guildive' (now known as rhum agricole), and rum made from scum and molasses was referred to as 'tafia' (Smith, 2001, 106). Tafia, while not as preferred compared to guildive, was commonly drunk among the poorer classes and the enslaved Africans in the French Caribbean. In 1713, the French government in Paris would ban the production of rum within the colonies however. This of course, stunted the growth of the industry in Grenada. At this point in time Barbados was mastering their craft in distillation and flavouring of the rum, while Jamaica was quickly catching up in experimentation of recipes and methodology.

Grenada was in a unique position in the latter half of the 1700s once it became a British colony however. When discussing the fate of the French Caribbean following the ban of 1713, Foss stated that:

> "This failure to legalize and encourage trade had long-lasting effects. The technology of rum manufacturing improved by leaps and bounds in places ruled by the British, thanks to improved stills and experience of ageing techniques, but other colonies turned out the same liquor that was so vilified when it was first invented. It sold cheaply and illegally, when it

> sold at all, and taxes were not collected by colonial administrations. They were consequently poorer [than] their British competitors, and destined to fall even further behind as the rum trade increased. It was a deliberate abandonment of an obviously lucrative business, a blunder of vast proportions" (Foss, 2012, 50).

This holds especially true for Martinique and St. Domingue which were demonstrating massive potential in the industry. France, and to an extent Spain as well, most likely restricted rum production due to firstly, being of Roman Catholic faith; secondly, opposing the illegal smuggling with other European powers; and lastly, due to knowing the great health risks of tafia which was especially crude in the French Caribbean when compared to the more developed rums of the British Caribbean.

Grenada however, arguably avoided this situation when it was ceded to Britain in 1763. It can even be further suggested that this time was an opportune moment for Grenada regarding the rum industry, as Britain had not one, but two effectively leading rum colonies in Barbados and Jamaica, where the foundations of good rum making had been tested and near completed. According to Sheridan:

> "Grenada was by far the most productive of the new islands. Before 1763 considerable progress in plantation development had been accomplished by the French inhabitants and their slaves. On this base the British erected an island economy which stood second only to that of Jamaica in the British Caribbean and rivalled that of Guadeloupe. In 1772, the island contained 334 plantations…Sugar estates occupied 32,011 acres" (Sheridan, 1994, 458).

Grenada swiftly became one of Britain's main exporters of rum. It regularly exported upwards of 600,000 gallons of rum annually. It was noted that in 1776 Grenada exported 818,700 gallons of rum; in 1787, 670,390 gallons; and in 1823, 11,288 British puncheons of rum (100 to 110 gallons per unit) were exported, making that well over 1 million gallons exported in one year (Martin, 1836, 272-273).

Notwithstanding Barbados' decline in the rum industry during the early 19th century, Grenada had to improve on rum production even further in order to effectively compete with the older and larger

rum colonies. Grenada, like many of the smaller and newer islands, changed designs of the equipment slightly to increase efficacy in the rum manufacturing process. According to Smith, in an attempt to lower evaporation of the alcohol during the fermentation process before distillation, “for example, the low flat fermenting cisterns of the seventeenth century gave way to larger and taller fermentation vats that were made wide at the bottom and narrower at the opening. This decreased the amount of air reaching the wash and, therefore, reduced evaporation” (Smith, 2001, 80). Additionally Grenada adopted various technological practices, along with experimentation with flavours which further propelled them as competitors in the international market.

Through the River Antoine Rum Distillery, the above factors that set Grenada apart from the rest of the Lesser Antilles, could be observed in near exact form. Distilling since 1785, according to Slawych, “the River Antoine Rum Distillery continues to function largely as it has over the past two centuries” (Slawych, 2010, 4). At the distillery, it was observed that cane crushing was powered by a watermill “acquired in 1840 from George Fletcher & Co. of London & Derby, a firm that specialized in sugar processing machinery. The wheel portion [was] partially encased in a masonry. A trough along the structure’s top [deposited] water from the nearby river onto the wheel, [which caused] it to move” (Pietrek, 2020).

Figure 3: Watermill at the River Antoine Rum Distillery in Grenada dated 1840

Source: Marco Graziano (2020)

A cart which ran on metal tracks carried bagasse away from the mill to the ground to be used as a fuel for the boiling house. The tanks in which fermentation occurred were left open which allowed for not only yeast fermentation but also bacterial fermentation. This then produced varying flavours which were even further increased by spices to create rum punches. Grenada, like Jamaica, practised double distillation where the low-wine was distilled separately to produce a highly concentrated spirit. The distillery continues to produce such strong rums that it sometimes even goes to higher than 150 proof. These practices increased desirability of Grenadian rum internationally, resulting in the British market even paying more than was paid for Barbadian rum. Evidently, it was much harder for the new colonies to break into the established rum industry of the late 18th and early 19th centuries however. It therefore required creativity in the technology and methodology to produce not only as good a rum as Jamaica did, but also an entirely unique blend as seen in Grenada.

CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, the sugar industry has been a heavily researched area of Caribbean economic history, and yet, its by-product rum remains so severely ignored. This thesis aimed to help bridge that lacuna through the analysis of various texts and primary sources. It should be evident that rum has played an extremely crucial role in the economic development of not only the Caribbean but even more significantly, in the metropole nations. Focusing on the British Caribbean specifically, the birth of the industry as a commercial enterprise was analysed through the example of Barbados and its Mount Gay Rum distillery. The growing socio-economic import of the spirit to the lower classes and maritime culture was observed through Jamaica and the Appleton Estate. Grenada offered a unique perspective as a British Caribbean island which entered the rum industry considerably late when compared to the former islands, and through the River Antoine Rum Distillery, the ways in which the newer colonies competed against Jamaica in the industry were also exhibited. Grenada's history as a French territory prior to its capture also portrayed the backwardness of the French administration where it concerned rum and its failure to capitalise on a rapidly emerging business. It can be argued that the present field of sugar history is saturated; now the scope must be deepened to analyse the growth and impact of rum which remains central to the fabric of Caribbean history.

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