

ABSTRACT

The Jews in Jamaica 1780 - 1831

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The Jews had been migrating to Jamaica from the time of the Spaniards and had continued after the colony was captured by the British in 1655.

This thesis examines their role in the Jamaican slave society during the period 1780 to 1831 when they attained their full civil and political rights.

Jewish ethnicity had been enhanced by the establishment of special schools, charitable organisations and the operation of the synagogue. Their ethnicity had served to separate them from the wider society.

This study suggests that by the 1820s, the Jews were being gradually integrated into the wider society. Such a state of development opposes the pluralist model of society which sees the society as being rigidly segmented into separate units based on culture. The Jamaican slave society is presented as having a degree of dynamism which generated a creative process in which people increasingly tended to share values.

Property ownership and other related economic activities, resulted in the Jews building working relationships not only among themselves, but with other members of the society, leading to a commonality of interests. This explains how

both groups were able to join forces to protect their economic interests which had been threatened by the campaign of the humanitarians to end slavery. It also explains why the Jews were supported by members of the wider society in eventually gaining their civil and political rights.