

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes "Attitudes to Death" in Jamaica from the seventeenth century to the present. Study is limited to the attitudes of Jamaicans whose responses have been conventionalized into Anglo/Western forms; and to Afro-Jamaican attitudes. Anglo-Jamaican attitudes to death include fear, grief, a sense of loss, and acceptance. These attitudes are expressed in tombstone inscriptions and symbols, newspaper memorials, poetry, art, other literary sources and at funerals. Religious beliefs usually give meaning to these attitudes and influence expression. Over the past three centuries there has been much change in the expression of attitudes to death. Anglo-Jamaicans have followed styles in Britain, and in the 20th century, Britain and the United States.

Afro-Jamaicans share many of the attitudes to death with Anglo-Jamaicans. These attitudes are expressed in funeral rites, folk tales, proverbs, and to a lesser extent, grave decoration. Afro-Jamaican styles of expression differ from those of Anglo-Jamaicans. The influences of slavery, colonialism and missionary efforts on Afro-Jamaicans have produced folk attitudes to death, which includes Afro-Christian styles of response, and also an acculturated Western-orientated stream which uses Anglo/Western forms to a significant degree.