

Abstract

The Hosea Riots of 1884 were qualitatively different from all previous expressions of Indian resistance in Trinidad. When viewed in the context of the then prevailing social realities, the riots were the most significant political expression of the process of economic and social transformation which was then taking place among the Indian population. Spurred on, in part, by the crisis in sugar, this process was considerably accelerated from 1885. The Hosea Riots of 1884 thus mark the break with the old and heralded the ushering-in of a new economic and political relationship between the Indians and the rest of colonial society on the basis of which the Indians were to emerge as an established community and as an increasingly significant political force in Trinidad.

The central issue which characterized the events was of an intensely political nature since it revolved around the suppression of the legitimate rights of the Indians to cultural self-expression.

By 1884 it was clear that the Indians were in Trinidad to stay. At the same time, the events surrounding the Hosea Riots forcefully demonstrated that they were not prepared to stay at any price. They were determined to continue in their militant tradition of struggle and sacrifice in defence of their basic rights.