Learning outcomes

On completion of this section you should be able to:

- name and locate the various subregions on a map of the Caribbean
- identify the countries that make up the different subregions of the Caribbean
- recognise the potential definitions assigned to the Caribbean
- explain the reasons for the multiple definitions of the Caribbean.

Did you know?

As Caribbean people migrate to countries such as Canada, United States and England, they also carry elements of their culture. In Toronto (Canada), there are many Caribbean people from different territories such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. In Miami (US), there is a heavy Hispanic influence from people who migrated from Cuba and Puerto Rico. In London (England), there are large communities of people from the Caribbean.

Table 1.1.1 Territories in the Caribbean region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subregions</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Greater Antilles</td>
<td>Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lesser Antilles</td>
<td>Grenada, St Martin, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, the US Virgin Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Windward Islands</td>
<td>Dominica, Martinique, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Grenada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Leeward Islands</td>
<td>St Martin, St Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, the Virgin Islands, Antigua and Barbuda, Guadeloupe, Dominica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands Antilles</td>
<td>Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Caribbean Islands</td>
<td>The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos and the Cayman Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mainland Territories</td>
<td>Belize, Suriname, Guyana and French Guiana (Cayenne)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defining the Caribbean

Geographical definition

The Caribbean region is an area that is considered in traditional terms as ‘washed by the Caribbean Sea’. Sometimes it is called the West Indies. The archipelago, from the Bahamas in the north all the way to Trinidad and Tobago in the south, is surrounded by the mainland territories of Central America and South America.
America and the north coast of South America. The Caribbean region extends to Central America, with the territory of Belize, and the north-east coast of South America, which includes the Caribbean states of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana, an overseas department of France.

Some definitions are more limited, and do not give a complete picture of the Caribbean – excluding the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana.

**Geological definition**

The Caribbean lies on the Caribbean Plate and partially on the North American, South American, Cocos and Nazca plates. A plate is a piece of the earth’s crust which is affected by tectonic and seismic activities. As a result many territories experience similar seismic activity such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Geological activity extends to the west to include Central American territories such as Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama.

**Historical definition**

The Caribbean region is a socio-economic and historical area characterised by migration, ‘discovery’, colonialism, European rivalry, enslavement, capitalism, plantation systems and **indentureship**. The region has experienced genocides, oppression, responses to oppression and revolutions such as the Haitian Revolution and various Maroon wars and slave uprisings. The migration of various groups into the region created a rich, multifaceted society and culture found nowhere else in the world.

**Political definition**

Politically, the region is defined as moving away from colonial rule to legislative independence. In the Caribbean Region, the British Monarchy with the Queen as head of state and parliamentary democracy dominates the politics of most states in the region. However, political pluralism exists as there are also different government types such as the presidential (Guyana) and the dictatorial (Cuba). In the region, there are independent states, republic states, associated states and dependency states. There are also several political blocs that have formed the Caribbean political landscape, for example the West Indies Federation, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

**Diasporic definition**

The Caribbean has a long-enduring history of migration through periods of colonialism, enslavement, indentureship and post-independence. The Caribbean diaspora relates to the movement of people from the Caribbean to metropolitan regions in countries such as the US, the UK and Canada, where they established Caribbean communities. The people nevertheless still practise their culture, which may have an indelible impact on the extra-regional society in which they now live. The Caribbean itself is a diasporic community formed out of the migration of people into the region, starting with the Amerindians followed by the Europeans, Africans, East Indians, Chinese, etc.

**Concepts of the wider Caribbean**

For many, the concept of the Caribbean transcends geography, history and politics and can be found in socio-economic relationships that have been forged with the people of North, Central and South America. These people are engaged in Caribbean relations in a way that makes other people see them as a part of one big region.

---

**Did you know?**

Guyana and Suriname are not normally included in the definition of the Caribbean, since they are not ‘washed by the Caribbean Sea’. Guyana, Suriname and Belize are also not situated on the Caribbean Plate. Guyana, Barbados and the Bahamas are not located within the Caribbean Sea, thus they are not geographically accepted as Caribbean countries, but historically they are because of slavery, indentureship and colonialism.

**Key points**

- The Greater Antilles are large land masses in the Caribbean, while the Lesser Antilles are smaller. The Lesser Antilles are divided into two parts: the Windward Islands and the Leeward Islands.
- Even though Belize is on the Central American coast, it is still considered Caribbean.
- The Southern Caribbean consists of territories that are at the lowest end of the Caribbean island chain and border the north coast of South America. Two Caribbean territories are found on the south American continent: Guyana and Suriname.

**Key terms**

- **Indentureship**: a form of contract labour for white servants, English prisoners, East Indians and Chinese labourers.
- **Diaspora**: this word has been derived from the Greek word which means ‘to scatter.’ It can be used to explain how culture is transmitted as people move from one area or region to another.
1.2 Historical processes I: migratory groups

Learning outcomes

On completion of this section you should be able to:

■ give a detailed account of the various groups that migrated to the Caribbean from pre-Columbian times to 1838
■ describe the pattern of migration into the Caribbean from 1838 to the present day
■ locate the various groups and their settlements in the Caribbean.

Did you know?

The Portuguese and the Spanish began a bitter feud in 1492, causing the Pope to intervene and settle the dispute in a written papal bull, known as the Treaty of Tordesillas. This treaty gave all land found east of the imaginary line at 50° longitude to Portugal and all land found west of that line to Spain, with the exception of Brazil, which was given to the Portuguese.

Exam tip

Migration is a common feature of Caribbean society and so your knowledge of the various push and pull factors must be highlighted. Emphasis must be placed on the impact of migration on Caribbean society and culture.

Did you know?

Other minority groups migrated to the region as indentured contractual workers. Among them were the Javanese, who came from Dutch Indonesia and mainly settled in Suriname. Relatively few Vietnamese were brought to Guadeloupe by the French and some Jews fleeing Nazi oppression settled in the Dominican Republic and Trinidad.

The Amerindians

The earliest groups of people to arrive in the region were the Amerindians. Some Amerindian groups were semi-nomadic, such as the Tainos. It is believed that some Amerindian tribes came into the New World via the Bering Strait, between the Asian continent to the North American continent, and made their way down to the Caribbean and Central America.

The Mayans settled mainly in the Yucatan peninsula states of Quintana Roo, Campeche and Yucatan. They also settled in the area where Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador and Honduras are now situated. The Incas settled in South America, for example in Cuzco (Peru) and present-day Bolivia. The Tainos migrated from the South American coast and eventually settled in the Greater Antilles.

The main reasons for which the Tainos migrated were:

■ to search for food
■ to evade to attacks of the Kalinagos.

The Kalinagos occupied the islands of the Lesser Antilles and engaged in farming as a way to sustain their villages. There were many other groups who settled in the region, such as the Ciboney, who settled on the Western tip of Cuba and parts of Hispaniola; the Lucayans in Bahamas and the Igneri group, who settled mainly in Trinidad and Tobago, British Guiana and Barbados.

The Europeans: the interlopers

The Italian sailor Cristobal Colon (Christopher Columbus) brought the Old World into contact with the New World. In 1492, after 33 days at sea, he arrived at the island that the natives called ‘Guanahani’. He took possession of it in the name of the King and Queen of Spain, calling it San Salvador (Holy Saviour), part of what is now The Bahamas.

Other European nations became envious of the small amounts of gold found in the Caribbean by the Spanish and the eventual developments in agriculture. The major European powers that came to the Caribbean were the Spanish, British, French and Dutch. They came mainly to set up colonies to produce sugar and other products that would make money for Europe.

The British, French and Dutch settled mainly in the southern and eastern Caribbean. The Spanish, occupied mainly the Greater Antilles islands of Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and the Central American countries.

The Africans

African migration to the Caribbean was a forced migration. In 1501, the Spanish King granted his subjects in Hispaniola permission to import enslaved Africans. The Africans first came to the New World under the Spanish as replacements for the dying Amerindian labour force. They were taken mainly from areas of West Africa. The slaves were seen as ideal for carrying out planting and they settled in all Caribbean nations, producing sugar, cocoa, cotton and tobacco. According to the Europeans, the Africans were better able to cope with the tropical climate and to survive the diseases of the region.
As the sugar industry began to grow, many more European nations settled in the Caribbean, leading to a huge increase in the importation of slaves. Gold, sugar and slaves represented the major wealth of the region, hence the Caribbean was bitterly contested.

**The East Indians**

The great wave of Indian immigration began in 1838, when 396 Indian immigrants arrived in Guyana on the ships *Whitby* and *Hesperus*. In 1845, the *Fatel Razack* arrived in Trinidad from Calcutta with 225 immigrants on board. In the same year, the first group landed at Old Harbour Bay, Jamaica, on board the *Blundell Hunter*. Arriving from northern India there were 200 men, 28 women under the age of 30, and 33 children under the age of 12. At that time in India there was economic and social turmoil, including the threat of droughts, famine and poor harvest, massive population growth and political instability, which prompted the Indian people to take up the labour contract of indentureship. Many of the East Indians in the Caribbean originate from Bengal, Bihar, Fyzabad, Orissa and parts of the Madras Presidency.

**The Chinese**

Chinese immigrants were brought to Trinidad under an indentureship scheme on 12 October 1806 aboard the *Fortitude*. Even before that, Chinese from Spanish Manila in the Philippines had arrived in the New World as sailors on trading ships. The immigrants came from Penang, Macao and Calcutta in India. The British were anticipating the inevitable emancipation of the African slaves, since in 1806 the slave trade had been abolished. The first group of Chinese immigrants arrived as part of an experiment to introduce peasant farming in the region. It was not until 1852 that large-scale migration of Chinese immigrants began from the Portuguese colony of Macao. In the British West Indies, British Guiana (Guyana) received 15,720 immigrants, there were 4,845 immigrants in Jamaica and 2,502 in Trinidad. In the French West Indies, Martinique and Guadeloupe each received 500 immigrants. The largest number of Chinese immigrants went to Cuba, and by 1861 there were 34,834 immigrants. Chinese workers opened small shops in many villages. The Chinese also brought their culture, in particular their lantern festival.

**The Portuguese**

Portuguese immigrants began to arrive in Trinidad from the Azores in 1834. Later many Portuguese immigrants arrived from Madeira. These immigrants also made their way to Guyana, Grenada, St Vincent, Dominica, St Kitts, Nevis, Antigua and Jamaica. In Trinidad, they became dissatisfied with working on the plantations and started opening small shops.

**The Syrians and the Lebanese**

This was the latest group to come to the region, arriving in the 1890s. Unlike most of the other immigrants, they were not recruited as plantation labourers. They came individually and then in groups, and settled in territories such as Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Most were Christians although some were Muslims. Many of them began to sell household items and cloth, and gradually they opened large department stores.

---

**Did you know?**

In his thesis titled ‘They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America’, Ivan Van Sertima provides evidence suggesting Africans had arrived in the Caribbean long before Columbus.

---

**Did you know?**

Even though the Indians were not considered slaves, the conditions onboard their ships were almost as bad as those that carried the Africans to the Americas.

---

**Did you know?**

The name Fatel Razack came from the original Arabic name Fath al Razack, which meant ‘Victory of Allah the Provider’.

---

**Key points**

- The great migrations into the region started with the Amerindians who were either hunting for food or evading capture from enemies.
- The European interlopers’ quest for gold and spices brought them to the region, which became known as a ‘cockpit’ of Europe.
- Chinese and East Indian indenture workers came under a contract system. While the Chinese left the fields and opened shops, the East Indians stayed and toiled and in many cases acquired the same land.
Learning outcome
On completion of this section you should be able to link the various aspects of Caribbean society and culture to different migratory groups:
- assess the impacts of the migratory groups on Caribbean society and culture
- explain how various historical processes have made the Caribbean a diasporic community from major places in the world and how they have created Caribbean diasporas elsewhere.

Did you know?
Amerindians are to be found in significant numbers in Caribbean territories such as Belize, Guyana, Dominica, St Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago.

Amerindians
The Amerindians cultivated a number of ground provisions, such as potato and cassava. Maize was also a staple crop. These have been used throughout the Caribbean, and even today the cultivation of these crops is widespread.

The Amerindians fished from the Caribbean Sea, built extensive rock-faced terraces to make steep land suitable for farming, and planted fruit trees in the tropical forest to supplement a diet already rich in proteins and carbohydrates.

The farming practices consisted of slash and burn, which allowed for Amerindian tribes to move their villages from one place to another. They used urine mixed with the ash from burnt stumps to fertilise the soil.

The hunting techniques that they used are still practised in some form. Most people hunted and fished to supplement farming. The primary hunting weapon was the bow and arrow.

Their clothing also had an impact on the culture of the Caribbean and it differed according to region. In the hot tropical lowlands, women wore apronlike garments around the waist, while the men wore breechcloths. Most of the people wove cotton on ‘backstrap’ looms, a type of loom in which the warps (vertical strands) are strung between two sticks.

Europeans
The influence of European cultural institutions is still present in Caribbean society, for example in religion, politics and education. These institutions were established according to the cultural values and ideologies of the colonisers.

The various colonisers brought their different languages into the region. English, Spanish, French and Dutch are spoken in the Caribbean. These languages have often been infused with African and even East Indian languages to form Creole.

Many leisure activities practised by the Europeans are now found within Caribbean culture, such as ballroom dancing and the masquerade balls that are part of Trinidad and Tobago’s carnival celebrations. The carnival celebrations mimic the dances and balls of the old slave masters.

The colonisers introduced foods that are used prominently in the Caribbean today, including rice, citrus, ginger, tamarind and breadfruit.

Africans
During the plantation era, in an attempt to minimise communication between Africans for fear of revolts taking place, slaves from different regions of Western Africa speaking different languages were mixed. However, the slaves managed to create their own form of communication through language and this can still be witnessed today in the contemporary Caribbean, for example in place names and the dialects spoken.

African-derived religions have become part of Caribbean culture. Traditional African-derived religions from the Congo, Nigeria and Dahomey have been influenced by Christianity to form syncretic religions. Rastafari, Kumina, Pocomania, Orisha and vodun/voodoo are examples of this.
Music is also a significant aspect of African culture that is practised in the Caribbean today. Drums have always been an important musical instrument in African culture. The tamboo bamboo is used in funeral services in rural areas in Caribbean territories.

The heritage of food, such as yam, cassava and ackee, is deeply rooted in African culture. Ackee was also a staple food in Dahomey, West Africa, and it became a staple food for enslaved Africans on the plantations. Ackee is now popular in Jamaica. Coo coo, which is a meal of cornmeal, was also widely eaten by African slaves. Foods such as ackra, a combination of fried salted fish and flour, were regularly eaten by slaves. These foods display a rich African heritage and still have an important place in modern Caribbean kitchens.

**East Indians**

Religious beliefs and doctrines are a major influence on Caribbean society and culture. Hinduism and Buddhism both originated in India and are now practised in the Caribbean. A number of the indentured Indians were Hindus. Significant differences exist within this Hindu majority, arising not only from divisions of caste, but also from differing religious beliefs. One great divide is between devotees of the god Vishnu and devotees of the god Shiva. A smaller percentage of the indentured Indian population practised Islam, which is also divided into several different denominations.

The culinary practices of the East Indians have also contributed to Caribbean society and culture. Curries and spices play an important part in cuisine, and firesides or ‘chulhas’ are used to prepare flat floured breads called rotis. Another East Indian dish that is consumed by many is ‘doubles’, which comprises two floured patties served with curried chickpeas.

Traditional East Indian clothing includes items worn on religious occasions and in places of worship or associated functions. The clothes worn may include the ‘sari’, ‘shalwar’ and ‘kurta’. This loose-fitting clothing was worn in the hot regions of India, so it suits the Caribbean climate.

East Indian music has impacted greatly on Caribbean society and culture. Traditional musical instruments are used in worship and sometimes for celebrations and festivals. Typical instruments include the ‘tassa’, ‘dholak’, ‘majeera’ and ‘sitar’. In Trinidad and Tobago, African drumming is often played alongside East Indian instruments to make a new form of music.

**Chinese**

Chinese influence in the region can be seen in culinary practices and traditional wear. Chinese food is well loved and appreciated in the region. Wontons, dumplings and stir-fried noodles are pleasing to the palate and also widely available. The utensil commonly used in food preparation is the wok, a bowl-shaped frying pan. Chopsticks are used for eating. The traditional clothing includes ‘t’ai chi’ clothing and ‘yukata’ robes. The famous Chinese festivals celebrated include the the Chinese lantern festival, dragon boat racing and Double 10 celebrations. Musical instruments include the ‘guzheng’, ‘jinghu’ and flutes.

---

**Did you know?**

Tamboo bamboo is the combination of two words: ‘tamboo’ coming from the French word tambour, meaning drum, and bamboo, a member of the grass family. Sticks are used to hit the bamboo to get a variety of sounds.

---

**Did you know?**

On 30 May 1995, Trinidad and Tobago were granted a public holiday, called Indian Arrival Day, to commemorate the first arrival of East Indians aboard the Fatel Razack in May 1845.

---

**Did you know?**

The extent of Chinese influence in the Caribbean is more than just food and restaurants. The Chinese have contributed significantly to several aspects of Caribbean culture and society, including martial arts like karate, gambling, dress and leisure activities like kite flying.

---

**Key points**

- The migratory groups to the region have left significant impacts on aspects of culture such as food, clothing and religion.
- As the groups came to the region, cultural hybridisation occurred and this altered the various cultures.
Learning outcomes

On completion of this section you should be able to:

- state how the major systems of production in the Caribbean developed
- explain how the systems impacted on the lives of Caribbean people at the time
- discuss how the systems of production impacted the evolution of Caribbean society and culture.

1.4 Historical processes III: systems of production

Systems of production

A system of production refers to the ways in which an economy is organised to yield results from the input of capital and labour.

Early systems of production

The Tainos produced agricultural surpluses in order to sustain their growing communities. They practised crop rotation on a subsistence basis, with a little surplus. The men would look for a suitable plot to cultivate. Then they would cut down trees and burn the roots, mixing the ash into the soil to make it more fertile (known as ‘slash and burn’). The women would finish preparing the land. A plot would be cultivated for 3–5 years in total, undergoing crop rotation in an attempt not to exhaust the soil. They planted cassava, sweet potatoes, yams, maize, squash, arrowroot, beans and pineapples.

The Tainos used small domesticated dogs called ‘alcos’ for hunting. Occasionally the alcos were fattened with maize and eaten as a delicacy. The Kalinagos were excellent at hunting and fishing. They fished from canoes and used spears, baskets and traps, as well as poison to immobilise the fish.

The Kalinagos did not practice as much farming as the Tainos, and the little they did was carried out by the Taino women they captured. Their economy was based mainly on fishing, hunting and raiding. The Mayan economy was well advanced, compared to the Tainos and Kalinagos. They practiced large scale agriculture and carried out extensive trading.

The encomienda system

In 1498, the Spaniards began the practice of encomienda. A settler was granted a number of Amerindians and was entrusted with educating them and converting them to Christianity. The natives who made up the encomiendas were overworked and treated inhumanely. Most of them died, while others refused to work and were killed or committed suicide. The encomienda, or protection system, was meant to safeguard the Amerindians from being abused, but the system became a form of enslavement.

White indentureship

Following the genocide of the Taino civilisation, the Spanish needed another labour force to work on the plantations. The first indentureship scheme involved white immigrants, particularly from Great Britain. The immigrants came to the West Indies because of economic hardship in their own countries. The indentureship contract indicated that they would work for 4–5 years and, if after this they chose to return home, they would be paid. If they chose to stay in the Caribbean, they were told, they would be given a plot of land, tools and materials to start their own farms. However, many of them died due to disease, overwork or ill-treatment.

African slavery

As a result of the genocide of the natives and the failure of white indentureship, the Europeans needed to replenish their stock of labourers. Consequently, they turned their eyes to Africa. The West African coast was closer to the Caribbean than other European territories and it was easy to cross the Atlantic from east to west due to the north-east trade winds. The
Spanish were the first to introduce slaves in large numbers to the Caribbean in the 1550s, although African slaves were already in Portuguese colonies.

Stimulated by the emerging sugar industry which later engulfed the Caribbean (known as the Sugar Revolution), millions of Africans were captured and transported permanently to the Caribbean and enslaved. The transatlantic slave trade, also called the ‘middle passage’, was a horrific experience. The Africans were mistreated, mutilated, abused and murdered. Men were often shackled below deck in cramped, dark and unhygienic conditions. The captives needed exercise in order that they remained fit for sale, so to get their blood circulating they would be brought and whipped to make them move, in the form of a dance. Women were regularly raped so sailors could assert their dominance, and young boys were also used for the pleasure of the sailors.

**Indentureship as a system of production**

Anti-slavery movements in Britain and slave resistance in the Caribbean succeeded in bringing about the abolition of the slave trade (1807–1808), and after the full emancipation of the African slaves in 1838, a new labour force was acquired through a contractual labour scheme called the Asian Indentureship/Immigration Scheme. This set in motion another wave of migration into the region: the Chinese, East Indians, Syrians, Javanese, Madeirans, Lebanese, etc. These new labourers were ushered into their new homes – the plantations abandoned by the Africans, especially in the larger Caribbean territories where lots of unused land was available. Indentured labourers were free to return home after the period of the contract.

While Chinese workers were accustomed to plantation life, many did not stay on the plantations. Chinese immigration was too expensive, hence India was a preferable option. The East Indian indentured workers faced many inhumane conditions. On the ships, there were reports of female Indians being sexually assaulted by the sailors. Many babies died along the way, while men committed suicide. Other causes of death included the spread of disease aboard the vessels, such as mumps, pneumonia and dysentery. The indentured immigrants faced similar working and living conditions to those of the African slaves. However, they were allowed to practise their culture.

**Plantation systems**

Caribbean sociologists George Beckford and Raymond T. Smith analysed the societies in the West Indies and claimed that the base of these societies was the economy. The economy was driven by whatever was planted in a specific territory. Hence, plantation society grew out of the plantation economy.

In the system of stratification, position was based on race and ascription (e.g. skin colour, birth right or blood line). For example:

- **upper class** or caste, or ruling elites (traditionally white) – with their own wealth, means of production and political power,
- **intermediate class** (mulatto/browns) – usually educated, with some wealth, but lacking political power, though they aspired to this
- **working class** (blacks) – slaves, uneducated, lacking wealth and power.

The plantations relied on the Atlantic slave trade for their supply of slaves, and they also provided rum, molasses and sugar for countries such as England, France and Holland. This plantation system was later used by the Europeans. They exploited the slaves, and the raw materials extracted from the Caribbean were shipped to Europe where they were converted into finished products and then exported. This helped Europe to become economically superior.

**Did you know?**

Prior to the encomienda system, Columbus introduced the *repartimiento* system that allowed the apportioning of Indians among the Spanish settlers to provide labour.

**KEY TERMS**

*Repartimiento*: a forced labour scheme used to enslave the people of Spanish America and the Philippines.

**Upper class**: a social group with the highest status. During the plantation era, this was based on skin colour.

**Intermediate class**: the group between the upper and lower (or working) class. As merchants, they had economic wealth but lacked political power.

**Mulatto**: a person with both black and white ancestry, or one black and one white parent.

**Working class**: the social group employed for wages, especially in manual or industrial work.

**Key points**

- Historically, the systems of production used on the Caribbean plantations were mostly made up of forced labour.
- The plantation economy was seen as the base of the society, which influenced all of the social institutions such as the family, education and religion.
- Even though the various migratory groups such as Amerindians, Africans and East Indians were faced with some form of forced labour, they forged ahead to work and develop Caribbean societies.
1.5 Passive responses to oppression

Learning outcomes
On completion of this section you should be able to:

- understand what is meant by ‘passive revolt’
- state the various types of passive revolt
- assess the impact of passive revolts on Caribbean society and culture
- analyse the impact of the peasantry groups on Caribbean society and culture.

Non-violent resistance

What is non-violent resistance

Non-violent or non-insurrectionary resistance (passive revolt) can be described as the act of non-violent defiance to authority. Passive resistance also comes in the form of active passive resistance, which is defying authority openly in a non-violent manner. The slaves themselves fought for their freedom. They hoped to win their freedom and the privilege of practising their cultures and traditions, as well as living their own lifestyles. This form of resistance has origins in the pre-Columbian period and continues even today.

Types of passive revolt

Amerindians

The Tainos had their unique ways of revolting against the colonisers. These included running away, committing mass suicide and inflicting wounds on themselves. They pretended that they could not understand the colonisers, and parents practised infanticide rather than letting their children grow up and become enslaved. The Kalinagos were expert canoeists and evaded capture by escaping in dugout canoes.

Africans

The enslaved Africans revolted passively in various ways such as refusing to eat or drink anything given to them by the slave masters. They opened up old wounds and inflicted pain on themselves. They also feigned illnesses or deliberately prolonged sickness. They created their own language so that they could communicate without the slave masters understanding them. There were also instances of enslaved Africans sabotaging machinery and poisoning slave owners. African women were instrumental in resisting oppression. Like the Taino women, the enslaved African women practiced gynaecological resistance. They would use herbal concoctions to induce abortions and infanticide. They were convinced that their babies would be transferred to the afterlife, which would be better than a life of slavery in an unfamiliar world.

Maroons

Those who ran away and established small settlements in the mountainous areas of Jamaica, British Guiana and Suriname were called Maroons. In Jamaica, the practice of maroonage (running away) began with the Tainos who fled into the mountains as part of a strategy to resist Spanish colonialism. Maroon villages were established in mountainous and forested territories such as Dominica, Belize, Cuba, The Guianas/Suriname, Jamaica and some former territories of the Danish West Indies such as St Croix, St Thomas and St John.

The Maroon community had a tremendous impact on the entire slave system. The whites lived in fear of the Maroons, and could not establish plantations in some areas. The Maroons would attack the whites, raid and destroy plantations, steal property and incite enslaved people to revolt. They posed a constant danger to the plantations and were seen by those still in bondage as heroes. Unable to control the Maroons, the whites had to sign peace treaties with them, e.g. in Jamaica, 1739. Treaties were also signed with the Maroons of Suriname, commonly referred to as the Bush Negroes.

Did you know?

The word ‘maroonage’ came from the Spanish word *cimarrón* meaning ‘fugitive or runaway’, or ‘living on mountain tops’. There are two types of maroonage:

- grand maroonage – where large numbers of people ran away from plantations
- petit maroonage – describes individuals and small groups who ran away from plantations
- maritime maroonage – describes the act of escaping by sea.

Exam tip

You are required to know about the events surrounding the revolts, and also to assess critically the implications of the revolts on Caribbean society and culture.
Reasons for the success of Maroon communities

The Maroons were very successful in evading capture and setting up communities for the following reasons:

- they used the topography of the land to hide and also to attack intruders, such as in the mountainous region of Cockpit Country in Jamaica
- the Maroons established well-planned communities and their own systems of government
- they became self-sufficient communities
- they established symbiotic relationships with other indigenous peoples such as the Tainos
- they were good at guerrilla warfare and espionage
- the Maroon leaders, like Nanny, were very effective.

Impact of Maroon communities on Caribbean society and culture

The Maroons established their own communities and this led to the cultural retention of many previously suppressed African traditions and practices. Also, they intermarried with Tainos and that led to a more complex society. The Maroon communities became a place of refuge for future runaways. Finally, maroonage was seen as the voice of independent Africans, a form of resistance against oppression. The culinary practices of the Maroons are very popular in the everyday cooking of Jamaica, and are a big attraction for tourists. The famous jerk meat (pork and chicken), along with the spices used to season the meat, was invented by the Maroons and has developed into major food festivals, creating hundreds of jobs for Jamaicans.

East Indians

The passive response of East Indian indenture workers included refusal to sign contracts, and often they engaged in ‘go slow’ action, i.e. they deliberately worked slowly.

In Trinidad, Guyana and Suriname, various groups were formed to protect the rights of East Indian indentured workers such as the East Indian National Association (EINA) in Trinidad. During indentureship, in British Guiana a literate indentured worker named Bechu wrote letters of complaint to the colonial authority and newspapers. In Suriname, Munshi Khan did the same. The East Indians continued to practise their religions, cultures and traditions secretly, in a Christian society intolerant to any other beliefs.

The peasantry

- The peasantry founded and established villages and communities.
- The peasants added to the diversification of the economies of many territories. They diversified the mono-crop culture of many plantations.
- Informal cooperatives were established, such as former slaves pooling resources to buy land.
- The peasants developed the interior of many territories, for example by building tracks and creating houses and communities.
- Peasants helped to feed the nation.
- Peasant communities revived many lost traditions and practised their culture without fear of persecution.
- Caribbean peasants established important trade routes.
Active responses to oppression

Learning outcomes
On completion of this section you should be able to:

- identify and describe the insurrectionary/active forms of resistance to oppression by the various ethnic groups in the Caribbean
- assess the impact that these insurrectionary activities had on shaping Caribbean society and culture.

Insurrectionary/active resistance
Insurrectionary responses to oppression have been a feature throughout Caribbean history. They often came in the form of revolts, rebellions and revolutions and in most instances they caused economic loss and fatalities.

Active resistance by various groups

Tainos
Caciques such as Hautey (Cuba), Guarocuya (Hispaniola), Guama (Cuba) and Uroyoan (Puerto Rico) engaged Spaniards in warfare. They sabotaged the plantations. The Taino rebels hid in mountains and caves, and they established the Jamaican Maroon heritage. They were later joined by the Africans.

Kalinagos
This group has always been described as ‘warlike’. They engaged in guerrilla warfare. The women fought with bows and arrows, for example in Guadeloupe in 1496. Columbus and his men were attacked while the men were out hunting. The Kalinagos raided Spanish and European settlements.

Africans
The Africans damaged and destroyed owners’ property by acts of industrial sabotage ranging from breaking farm appliances/machinery to burning mills and sugar plantations. Domestic slaves would poison their masters and other whites oppressing them on the plantations. Maroons in Jamaica formed guerrilla bands and attacked plantations. Enslaved people would maim, mutilate and kill the plantation animals, especially horses and mules, which were essential to the smooth functioning of the plantation. There were major slave revolts and rebellions and rebellions occurring throughout the Caribbean, for example the Tacky Rebellion, the Haitian Revolution, the Bussa Rebellion, Demerara and the Christmas Rebellion/Sam Sharpe Revolt (1831). In this last example, several whites were killed and over 100 sugar fields and plantation buildings were razed to the ground.

The British were forced to abolish slavery in 1834 – much earlier than they intended – as a result of the Christmas Rebellion.

The Haitian Revolution, 1791–1803
The Haitian Revolution has its roots in the French Revolution of 1789. Beginning in 1791 and ending with the declaration of independence in 1804, the Haitian Revolution represents the crowning achievement of all the struggles of the enslaved people in the Caribbean. The revolution represents the crowning achievement of all Maroon struggles and rebellious activities of the enslavement period in the latter part of the 18th century. Prior to the revolution, the Haitian society was stratified in the following hierarchy: the ruling white population or ‘grands blancs’ and then the lower-level whites or ‘petits blancs’. Then came the free coloureds/mulattoes or ‘gens de couleur’, and lastly the enslaved Africans. Free coloureds had economic means and education. However, because they were not fully white they were prevented from moving up the echelons of society. In September 1789, a mixed-race delegation asked St Domingue whites for equal rights and was denied. The French people rallied around the Declaration of the Rights of Man, with its slogan, ‘Liberty, equality, fraternity’, and overthrew the monarchy and nobility. The new government also issued the decree to the grand blancs in St Domingue to apply to the gens de couleur, but they rejected it. Angered by this decision, the free coloureds declared war.

Did you know?
During the 1930s riots that swept the Caribbean, 800 East Indian sugar workers from Trinidad protested, on 6 July 1934. This was a demonstration against the problems facing workers such as high rent for barracks and exploitation of female sugar workers who were paid low wages. The protests gained momentum and almost 15,000 Indian sugar workers joined the strike, which erupted into clashes with police. This strike struck fear into the colonial authorities.

In 1938 riots broke out on the Frome sugar estate in Westmoreland and police opened fire on workers.

KEY TERM
Cacique: the name given to a chief or leader of an Amerindian tribe.
Key elements of the revolution

For the Haitian revolution to occur, a number of factors had to come together, such as the collapse of the French monarchy. As a result, local plantation owners (planters) had lost the political power they relied on from the crown. Other contributing factors were the existence of a large mixed-race class and the intelligent and strong-willed leader Toussaint L’Ouverture.

The revolution begins

The tensions in the society of Saint-Domingue led to civil war and revolution between 1791 and 1803. In August 1791, Zamba Boukman, a vodun priest, rallied thousand of slaves to revolt. They massacred every white man, woman and child. Toussaint L’Ouverture, a free coloured, was a major advocate for the revolution. He joined it in September 1791. With his charisma, experience and intelligence, he became the leader of the revolution. The activities of the free coloureds began the revolt against the whites and provided the opportunity for enslaved Africans to join. The revolution resulted in an estimated 350,000 deaths before Haiti was declared free in 1804.

Effects of the Haitian Revolution

On 1 January 1804, Haiti was declared the first independent state in the West Indies. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who had commanded the black and the mulatto forces during the final phase of the revolution, became the leader of the new country and Haiti’s first president. He ruled under the dictatorial 1801 constitution. Haiti became the second independent state in the western hemisphere and the first free black republic in the world.

Post-revolution Haiti was divided into small plantations that gave rise to the Caribbean peasantry. The population shrank as whites left and slaves died. Plantations were destroyed, leaving agriculture in ruins, and sugar production reduced.

Maroon wars

A period of bitter warfare between the English and the Maroons, referred to as the First Maroon war occurred between 1729 and 1739. The conflict ended with the signing of the 1739 peace treaty which gave the Maroons the right to their independent communities. Responding to a renewed bout of oppression, another major conflict called the Second Maroon War took place from 1795 to 1796. Similar responses to oppression took place between the Maroons of Suriname and the Dutch settlers.

Responses after emancipation

Even though slavery ended in 1838 with Emancipation, the oppression of former slaves did not end. The newly freed Africans were refused land to work and live, overworked, underpaid, terrorised by the local militias and mistreated by a justice system that was in the hands of their former masters. They were not provided with housing, they lacked education and healthcare facilities and could not vote. In response to their oppression the Morant Bay War erupted in 1865 in Jamaica. In 1862 an island-wide Labour Protest erupted in St Vincent and in 1876 the Confederation Riots broke out in Barbados.

East Indian indentured immigrants

The indentured workers revolted in their own ways such as running away, setting fire to plantations and sabotaging machinery. There were also strikes and boycotts because they refused to accept poor wages, unfair treatment and poor work conditions.

Exam tip

You are expected to have background knowledge of the revolts, but more importantly be able to assess the impact of these revolts on Caribbean society and culture. It is also imperative that you recognise the oppression faced by Caribbean people today, its forms, and the forms of response used.

Did you know?

The Haitian revolution of 1791 was an expression of protests against slavery and against the oppressive class structure.

Key points

- The revolts in the region were numerous and drew massive support from the oppressed people.
- The purpose of every revolt was to show that the oppressed could successfully retaliate.
- The revolts had a significant impact on Caribbean society and culture.


### Learning outcomes

On completion of this section you should be able to:

- explain the concept of political enfranchisement
- assess the issue of adult suffrage to the achievement of political enfranchisement
- evaluate the impact of historical events on the movement towards independence.

### Prelude to independence

Prior to the 1960s, there were many conflicts and changes in the Caribbean region. The West Indies Federation (1958–1962) had just failed, and the region's first attempt at self-government was stalled. Even before the West Indies Federation, key persons from various territories in the region were advocating political enfranchisement or adult suffrage.

In Jamaica, adult suffrage was granted in 1944, and was pioneered by Norman Manley of the People's National Party, while in Trinidad and Tobago, adult suffrage was granted in 1945. Soon people across the Caribbean became aware of the power of adult suffrage, which ultimately meant some freedom from colonialism.

During the 19th century, in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago there was a type of governance called the 'Crown Colony Government'. Here, a governor and legislative council controlled the colony. This type of governance was considered to be oppressive to the ex-slaves and ex-indentured servants. Many of them felt oppressed since they were not part of the decision making and were considered to be lower-class citizens.

### Independence

The British West Indies' movement towards independence was an evolutionary process rather than a revolutionary process, as in Haiti and Cuba.

#### Jamaica

When the West Indian Federation did not live up to the expectations of Sir Alexander Bustamante, he declared that it was against the interests of the workers in Jamaica. He called for a referendum and Jamaican prime minister at the time, Norman Manley, agreed to it. The electorate voted to opt out of the Federation in September 1961. Subsequently, the date for independence was set as 6 August 1962, and Bustamante became the first independent prime minister in the British West Indies.

#### Trinidad and Tobago

Dr Eric Williams introduced the cabinet system of government to Trinidad and Tobago. In 1961, he achieved full internal self-government for the country; in 1962, he achieved independence. The country became a republic state in 1976.

#### British Guiana

In 1961, after the failure of the Federation, British Guiana under Mr Cheddi Jagan had decided it wanted independence the following year. However, due to political turmoil, this was not achieved. In 1964, Jagan won the election with 24 seats, but later he was superseded by Mr Forbes Burnham. On 26 May 1966, the country gained independence and Mr Forbes Burnham became its first Prime Minister. British Guiana eventually became a republic state in 1970.

#### Barbados

After Sir Grantley Adams left Barbadian politics to be the prime minister of the West Indian Federation, Errol Barrow became prominent in politics. At that time Barbados had a strong government and was able to have full internal control. However, Barbados was still part of the Federation and was
Module 1 Caribbean society and culture

associated with the Little Eight. The Little Eight were the eight remaining states that were part of the West Indian Federation.

Even though Errol Barrow was instrumental in the independence drive for Barbados that was celebrated on 30 November 1966, he eventually lost the elections on 3 November 1966.

Belize

Under George Price, British Honduras (or Belize) gained full internal self-government on 21 September 1981.

CASE STUDY

The case of British Honduras

Universal adult suffrage came to British Honduras in 1954. The colony was renamed Belize in 1973 after a battle with Guatemala. Self-governance could have been achieved earlier, in the 1960s, but there were land disputes with neighbouring Guatemala. Guatemala threatened to use force against Belize if it became independent without first settling the claim. Britain even tried to appease the Guatemalans by ceding some of the country to Guatemala. Britain stated that it would help to defend Belize against Guatemala.

In November 1980, the United Nations called for Belize to be made independent. Guatemala refused to recognise Belize as an independent state until 1991.

Did you know?

Dominica became an independent republic state on 3 November 1978. The prime minister of Dominica, Patrick John, introduced an economic policy called ‘New Socialism’ that fostered a dictatorship.

Exam tip

You are required to apply your knowledge of historical patterns of politics in the region and the significance of these in achieving independence.

Key points

- The notion of legislative freedom or independence in the Caribbean came long before the establishment of the West Indies Federation.
- Jamaica was the first territory in the federation to withdraw and become independent, followed by Trinidad and Tobago.
- Independence is significant to a country as it indicates a level of legislative freedom.

Belize

Under George Price, British Honduras (or Belize) gained full internal self-government on 21 September 1981.

Bahamas

The Bahamas became truly independent on 9 July 1973 and Lynden Pindling became the first prime minister. After constitutional changes took place in the Bahamas in 1969, the country was called ‘The Commonwealth of the Bahamas Islands’.

Grenada

Grenada gained independence on 7 February 1974. When Grenada gained independence under Eric Gairy, it came after general strikes, riots and bloodshed. Many who opposed Mr Gairy thought that after independence the country’s constitution would allow for dictatorship.

Other states

St Lucia gained independence on 22 February 1979 and John Compton was the prime minister. St Vincent gained independence in October 1979 and Milton Cato became the first prime minister. Antigua and Barbuda achieved independence in 1981, while St Kitts, Nevis and Anguilla became sovereign democratic federal states in 1983. Montserrat, Turks and Caicos, the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands all preserved their ties with Britain.

The significance of independence

Independence shows that a territory has legislative freedom or the right to make its own laws. Citizens can practise their adult franchise, which is the right to vote. Many countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Jamaica have their own constitution that is used to guide the governance of the land.
Learning outcomes

On completion of this section you should be able to:

- identify the major attempts at self-government in the Caribbean
- state what is meant by economic enfranchisement and explain its role in the development of Caribbean society and culture
- describe the development and significance of republicanism in the Caribbean.

Self-government

Self-government in the Caribbean has always been a long-fought-over goal as many countries in the Caribbean region have their historical foundations in colonisation. The issue of self-government is still a burning issue, as many have argued that even though the region has come a long way there is still a lot more to do in relation to self-government.

CASE STUDY

Internal self-governance for Tobago

Internal self-governance relates to the ability of a nation or state to control or govern its own affairs and citizens in a democratic way.

Presently, there is the issue of internal self-governance with the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Tobago is seeking internal self-governance.

In 1899, Tobago was joined with Trinidad and they were given one governor and one set of general laws and codes. Tobago has always had its own treasury. Over the years, various governments have tried to give Tobago some level of autonomy over its affairs. Many bills and documents have been debated, but Tobago has not been given full internal self-governance.

Studies found that Tobago felt neglected, discriminated against and marginalised due to its size, while Trinidad was favoured at an international level for its resources and economic activities.

In 2013, the chief secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), the Honourable Orville London, held discussions with Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar concerning self-governance. Self-governance for Tobago would mean that it would have its own legislature and be able to pass laws on matters such as health, education and tourism. There would also be a THA Fund, which is proposed to contain 6.9 per cent of the national budget.

Many have argued that Tobago is too small to govern itself, while others believe that if Tobago wants internal self-governance it should not be entitled to any budgetary allocations from Trinidad.

Entrepreneurial activities

Individual level

Movement from the plantations involved not only freedom from the system but freedom in earning for oneself. With help from missionaries and from their savings during slavery, the newly-free Africans established free villages and peasant farming. Many became hucksters (or higglers, see 1.5), further developing the internal market system in every major Caribbean town.

For the African slaves, trading at the slave market was integral for their economic survival. On plantations such as in Antigua, the limited free time slaves had for themselves would be used to engage in subsistence farming. Any excess was traded at the slave markets usually held on Sundays,
commonly called ‘Sunday market’. In 1823, the official market day was changed to Saturday as a measure in the Amelioration Proposals. Even after emancipation, this weekend market continued to grow and it contributed significantly to the economy of that territory. Africans in the towns did fishing, washing, tailoring and cooking – as well as working as butlers and petty traders. The ex-slaves thus continued and expanded on economic activities they were actively engaged in during slavery. Saving schemes contributed to the economic independence of the peasants, allowing them to educate their children who by the mid-1930s started to influence governance in the Caribbean.

For the indentured Chinese workers, economic enfranchisement came via the retail, shopkeeping, gaming/gambling and restaurant industries. Also, East Indians established their market gardens, horticulture, rice farms and the distribution of the produce to be sold. They used their skills to advance economically.

**National level**

During the 1960s, governments tried to diversify the important agriculture sector and other areas with the intention of gaining economic independence. Efforts included developments in forestry, mining, manufacturing and tourism.

Agricultural diversification included lime cultivation in Dominica, cocoa in Trinidad, nutmeg in Grenada, arrowroot in St Vincent and rice in Guyana. Other territories diversified, for example the mining of bauxite in Jamaica and Guyana, oil and asphalt in Trinidad and natural gas in Barbados, and salt production in St Kitts and Anguilla. Many territories went into manufacturing, production and tourism.

**After the 1960s**

From the 1960s practices such as sou-sou became more common. Sou-sou is when a group of individuals come together to raise money by pooling a fixed amount. Each individual has to pay a fixed sum at a particular period. Everyone involved then picks a number to see the order in which they will receive their money. Sou-sou usually occurred between people who trusted each other, such as family members, close friends, co-workers and church members. The upper classes continued to use banks and at a national level, people used credit unions. However, the emerging middle class combined traditional forms of savings such as sou-sou with saving in credit unions. In Jamaica this type of savings is called ‘partner’.

Credit unions in the Caribbean have deep roots in the region’s culture and history as a result of the post-enslavement and post-indentureship experience. The practices of the credit union were similar to what the former enslaved and ex-indentured workers practiced during and after slavery.

**Republicanism in Trinidad and Tobago**

On Sunday, 30 January 1977 the Trinidad and Tobago Guardian reported that ‘The historic moment severed the last of our monarchical links that began in the fifteenth century, when the Caribs discovered Columbus, planting a flag of Spain on our southern shores’.

Countries where the monarch has been replaced by a president as the head of state are called ‘republics’. Republicanism has always been seen as the final step in the severance of political dependence from a coloniser.
Society is not merely a group of individuals who live in an area over a long period of time; it is a much more complex phenomenon. The framework upon which a society is built is formed or exists is dependent on social institutions (i.e. beliefs, ideas and conventions) and social organisations (i.e. family, religion, economy).

Societies are often defined by the lifestyle of the people within them, the appearance of which can sometimes be dominated by those with more power or wealth. Therefore, our understanding of a particular society may be inaccurate; our ability to accurately interpret a society might be hindered by this, or by generalisations, stereotypes and historical biases.

What are the characteristics of a society?

A shared common purpose or shared value

From a functionalist perspective, any group of individuals who intend to advance need to have common goals and a collective purpose. These individuals and their institutions need to work together to ensure that the goals are achieved. The functionalist view states that all social structure exists to create harmony, stability and effectiveness. This can only occur when the institutions of society all work together to achieve this goal. Values help to promote order, stability, consensus and continuity. There are several values that are shared and are common right across the Caribbean especially because all Caribbean countries have shared similar historical experiences.

A defined territorial space

Many people can identify themselves as belonging to a particular ‘society’ based on geographic borders as a societal limit. Many claim that there is a Caribbean society. However, each Caribbean member will identify his/her Caribbean society on the basis of his/her own country or geographic area. For example, Trinidadian society would be different from Jamaican society.

Continuity over time and space

A characteristic of society is that it is able to survive throughout time, space and location. In relation to this characteristic, a society and its culture may evolve over time. In fact, it can be argued that the culture of a society is not really erased, rather it is transformed. These aspects of culture include languages, religious beliefs and values. An example of this would be the syncretic religion of vodoo or vodun in Haiti. This religion evolved out of its African base to include elements of Roman Catholicism. This characteristic feature also includes people who have formed communities in extra-regional countries and maintain strong Caribbean traditions, cultural ties and practices.

Citizenship within a space

Citizenship may sometimes be considered as a social contract that contains the rights and responsibilities of a person living in a particular area. The citizenry are the people who reside in a particular location and enjoy the rights and privileges of that society. Cultural citizenship is a socio-cultural approach that examines the diversity in the region with regard to the variety and the contribution of each group to the culture of the Caribbean.

The Caribbean as a society has been influenced by various ethnic groups and their contributions.
Africans

Africans have influenced Caribbean society in the following ways:

- They make up a large part of the population on many Caribbean islands, e.g. Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago.
- They have had an impact on Caribbean cuisine, e.g. the variety of uses for ground provisions, salted meat. African foods also included konki, metagee and foo-foo.
- In Jamaica, Africans greatly impacted the formation of reggae music, which is widely heard and recognised today.
- They have contributed to various existing religions in the Caribbean, e.g. voodoo in Haiti, Spiritual Baptism in Trinidad.
- They have assisted in forming cultural links to their homelands, i.e. industrial, economic, technological and cultural linkages.

East Indians

East Indians have had an impact on the society of countries like Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Barbados in the following ways:

- They form a large part of the populations. Approximately half of the population in Trinidad is East Indian.
- East Indians introduced many agricultural practices that are still present today.
- Their music (bhajans, Indian songs and even mixed forms like chutney) is widespread in countries like Trinidad and Guyana.
- They have contributed the main religions of Islam and Hinduism.
- The Indian shalwar, dhoti and sari are still worn today.
- Many festivals associated with the East Indian religions are celebrated today (Divali and Eid in Trinidad and Guyana).
- Indian cuisine is a large part of Caribbean society, e.g. roti, channa, dahl, talkari, puris.
- They have formed cultural, industrial and economic linkages to India, e.g. the Bank of Baroda, and food outlets such as Daawat that imports commodities from India.

Chinese

Even though they make up a small minority of the populations of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Trinidad and Jamaica, they have had a significant impact on the region's culture and economy, for example:

- In contemporary society, Chinese cuisine has become popular and widely used.
- In countries like Trinidad and Tobago, the Chinese have established small businesses and groceries. They provide employment for hundreds and since they pay taxes this is a significant contribution to the country's economy.
- In Guyana, the Chinese have established large clothing stores. They are also involved in forestry operations and gold mining.

Syrians

The Syrians have had an impact on Caribbean society by engaging in business activities and many entrepreneurial activities such as huge clothing stores and department stores. These stores contribute to the local economy by hiring workers and help to reduce unemployment.

Key points

- Even though societies differ, they all have some basic characteristics that make them common in some ways.
- Every major migratory group to the region has influenced Caribbean society.