

THE CONSPIRACY OF 1735 –

Fueled by severe depression, drought and an earthquake in 1735, a century before emancipation and several decades before the Haitian Revolution, many of the planter class of Antigua had no choice but to cut costs, which included their refusal to feed and house their slaves. The unrest that followed was further stoked by the successful slave rebellion in the Danish Virgin Islands and amidst all this, the slaves on Antigua's plantations found a leader in the Akan slave (from Ghana) Kwaku Takyi, or as he was called by the planters, Prince Klass. Takyi was identified as one of the masterminds behind a plot to overthrow colonial rule on the island in late 1735. The alleged plot involved a large number of slaves from many of the island's plantations and their efforts to destroy the colony's planter class, beginning with a single explosion. The plan was for the slaves to smuggle a large barrel of gunpowder into the building that would house the island's gathering of whites at the St. John's Ball, which was to be held in early 1736. The explosion was to be the indication for the slaves to begin rebelling by murdering their masters and progress towards the capital, where a general massacre would then follow. Takyi would then be made leader of a new black kingdom on Antigua. The alleged plot was discovered when the ball was postponed and when slaves dropped so called hints. After official inquiries and the testimony of least 32 slaves, authorities began making arrests. Subsequently, Takyi along with 131 others were convicted and were tortured and kill to set an example for what would happen to others should they decide to revolt against their masters.