

Some early creole-like data from slave speakers: the island of St Helena, 1695-1711

1. British Library India Office G Factory Record Series MS G/32/2 St Helena Consultations 1676-1696, mostly no foliation, <> = matter that is not legible; punctuation as in manuscript. fo. 13v. 10 April 1682

Whereas many Blacks of the sayd Island Doe in their travelling to and fro p^{rs}ume to enter into mens houses, p^rtending some slight occasions, such as a stick of Fire, or the like, when phapps the Own^{rs} are not within, or not att home or none but Children in the sayd house./ It is Ordered That from and after the publication hereof, Noe Black, Man or Woman, doe p^{rs}ume to enter into any mans house on the sayd Island by day or night, without first calling att some distance, from the sayd house, vnto the Owner or Occupyer of the same, and obteyneing Leave to have admittance; But if vpon calling noe answee bee made, nor any of the Inhabitants doe give the sayd Blacks leave to Enter their house or houses, They are hereby strictly forbidden to goe into their house or houses; Or if there be none but Children in the sayd houses, Noe Blacks shall dare to adventure to enter into the sayd house or houses, vpon the penalty of being most severely punished

2. Monday 9th 7ber 1695¹

C:P Mich^{ll} Isaack stand at The barr and heare thy Charge which he did

C:P Mich^{ll} Isaack Thou art Charged heare at this barr: by the name of Mich^{ll} Isaack of This Island of S^t helena: single man: for y^t That Thou Michell Isaack not haueing y^e feare of god before Thine Eyes: didst by the Instigation of the divell and wickednes of thine one hart w^h some others as yet unknowne betwixt y^e 6th of 9^{br} and y^e 7th of Apr^{ll} last past: feloniously and trayterously draw or assist feloniously and Trayterously To draw powder or amunition out of five peeces of ordnanc<e> viz^e 4 of the nature of Demy Culvering: and one of the nature of 12 pound^r belonging to the line before Fort James Which was charged for the Securyty of the saide Fort and Garrison: and the defence of the saide Island: for y^e safety and securyty of his Mag^{ts} Leige Subiects: against anny foraigne Enemy: feloniously converting the same: to thine one Use or Uses by w^{ch} felonious act thou didst what in thee lay as a faulle traytor to our soueraigne Lord the Kings Mag^{ts} Crowne and dignity: Endeuer to betray this Island Into y^e hands of its Enemyes: As also betraying the Intrest of the Lords prop^r of this place which Intrest thou didst then and at that time recover Pay and Sallary from them to doe In what In thee lay According to thy station: to protect and defend: which act and acts of you and yo^r Confederats are Contrary to y^e known Lawes of the kingdom of England: and the Constitution of the Lords prop^r of this Island. what sayst thou Mich^{ll}: Isaac<> art thou Guilty of the Crimes Layd to thy Charge: or not Guilty

3. Monday 9th 7ber 1695

... Jurry Guner doe you remember in what month it was you found this gunn To be drawne

Guner: No I doe not remember it

Judge The day that y^e guner told me he found y^e gunns drawne was y^e 6th of Apr^{ll} last: but I sopose y^t other persons will giue you satisfaction

Rob^t Addis y^e Guners Chife Mate sworne sayeth y^t of a Saterdag he was Calld by y^e guner: to draw a gunn upon the East battery: and thear found a gunn of the Nature of 12 pound^f To be drawne and the Cartridge thearof to be tyed and soe wth a little powder ramed in againe: and upon further examinatio<n> foure more of the nature of Demy Culvering to be drawne

Jury Was y^e guns Loaden by you before

R: Addis As for y^e gunn on y^e East battery it was certainly Loaden but as for the other foure gunns I Cannot be Certaine for on y^e 5th of Nouemb^{re} Last past: I was ordered to draw tow of them by reason of a bonfire made nigh to y^t place: which I did but did not Charge them againe

Jury Rob^t: Addis doe you rememb^r in what month it was y^t you and the Guner found the guns drawne

R: Addis It was the Saterdag before King will~s Coronation day: for that day most of the Contrey was alarmed by some noise: which after it was Conjectured to be Thund^r: and Certaine I am y^t it was y^e Saterdag before: which must be y^e 6th of Apr^{ll} last ...

... Charles Warrall sworne saith that as he was In prison wth Michell Isaack who was then allso suspected to be a confederate in the drawing of the s^d gunns: haueing seuerall times discoursed wth y^e s^d Isaack: concerning what he knew: and that on y^e the 16th of May last y^e s^d Isaack told him y^t he had: or had bin at the drawing of one of the gunns upon the line: and as he was a purging of him: he said I believe you haue a mind to be a wittnes a gainst me/ I Replied noe they will not believe me: nay replied the s^d Michell: I know if you shold come To wittnes agst me what I haue saide to you wold doe me an injury

4. Tues 12 March 1705/6, pg 23

Daniel Griffith Church Warden for this p^rsent hour Informed the Governo^r and Coun^{cl} That Hatton Starling singleman being moved by the Instigation of the Devill Attempted to Deflower Elizabeth the Daught^r of Henry ffrancis Aged three years or there abouts./

Upon which the said Hatton starling was Summoned to Appear before us this day who accordingly did and being Asked whether he was Guilty of y^e Crime afores^d or Not, made Answer he was Not and was as Innocent of the Matter as the Child unborn/

Then Margaret ffrancis mother of the said Child was sworn and Declared as followeth./

That on Thursday the 19th Day of ffebru^{ry} Last past The said Hatton Starling Came home from fishing, and some time after Dinner my husband and the s^d Hatton sterling went Into the Hall, to snude some fish Hooks as I suppose; a little while after my Husband went Up to ffrancis

Wranghams house, and Left Hatton sterling Lying Down upon the Bed, where my little Girle Named Elizabeth Run to him and play'd to and fro in the Room, a little time aft^r I being setting in the kitchin, I heard the Child make a noise as tho: she had been pulling away from him (as I believe she was) and heard him say Come here betty No said she I wont I'le go to my Mumm and Came Runing to me, and said Mum Hatton put his Cock to my Cock, whereupon I pusht her away, but she would not go, saying over again as before, Then I got Up and took her a one side, and Lookt Upon her secret parts, where to my Great amaze and Greif saw the sign of his Lustfull Nature, and some spots upon her shift, whereupon went wth the Child in my hand to the s^d Hatton starling as he Lay Upon y^e bed, and said you beastly Dog what have you done to my child why what have I done M^{rs} ffrancis said he, what says I, Aske the Childe, who made answer Immediately, You did put yo^r Cock to my Cock, No says he Indeed M^{rs} ffrancis I never did, with a Great many Protestations, Yes M^r Hatton you did put your Cock to my Cock replied the Child and pist in me to, and would have pist more but I would not Let you, Then I puld off the Childs shift and threw it at him, saying if you wont believe me Look there your self, Then be (sic) began to Curse and swear he never did any such thing, No says I, I wonder how you Can haue the Impudence to Deny it, If you dont go away Ile send for M^r Hoskison and make you a Lyer; whereupon he went Into the shopp, but I was not willing to Let (pg 24) him stay, biding him begone, No M^{rs} ffrancis I begg yo^r pardon and if I was to stay here a hundred years I would never Do so any more, Pardone says I, such a thing as this Cant be pardoned, so went Into the house again, where I had not been long before my husband Came home, who seeing me Look out of humour, Askt me what was the Matter, what says I this beastly Dogg Hatton would haue Debaucht your Child./

Further saith That about six weeks or two months before, the Child Came in from the shop, and said That Hatton had put his Cock to hers, but did not take any notice of it then.

Wittness my hand. Marg^t ffrancis

5. Monday 2 December 1695

Hannah a slave of M^r Tho^s Goodwins: Examined saith: that Beivans Will told her last thursdday night: that he wod doe something: said shee What will you doe Oh said Will you will see by an by: soe she urged and prayed him to tell her: but he wold not: at length shee gott: the day after being Fryday some English Tobacco From her M^r though unknowne either to her M^r or Mistres: and then told y^e s^d Beivan Will she wold giue him some English tobacco if he wold tell her: at length he tooke the English Tobacco and told her: that he with gargens: alias Joⁿ Gurlings Jack: firebrass and severall others: [this fierbrass was a slave of greentrees Orphans] wold kill all the white people on this Island upon which she Replied y^t she thought the whites weare to strong: for y^e Blackes: Oh saide Will wee will venter y^t: for we will kill them at night: and y^t first they wold goe to lemond Valley: and kill y^e 2 sold^{rs} there: and that he wth firebrass wold kill his Master and Mistres: and Gargens Jack wold kill his M^r and Mistres: and y^t others shold be sent to kill Mad^r Johnson and her Children and each black concerned was to kill his Respective M^r and M^{rs}: and Will Told her allso that he was to be Gouverno^r and Jacob a slaue that run a way from Cap^t Nynns shipp: now In the posetion of Mad^r Johnson by assignement of the s^d Cap^t Nynns: was to be Cap^t: and further told her: that after they weare become Masters of the Island: that when a shipp came: as soone As y^e Cap^t come on shore: they wold take him prisoner and goe A way wth the shipp as Jackson did

6. Monday 2 December 1695

Garret a slave of Elizth Gurling who dwelles at M^r Goodwins: Examined saith That y^e 28th of 9ber last past Fortune a slaue of Sam^{ll} Taylers: and will A slave of Owen Biivans weare a talking to gether: and in theare discourse the Laughed: soe the s^d Garrett saide to them: whats you laugh at: cannot you tell me: no replied will you are a Rogue: you haue no good hart and I cannot trust you: soe Garrett asked y^e s^d fortune: what twas that² will had told him: well said Fortune Ile tell you to Morrow: who accordingly did: Will being then in company though seemingly dubious: of him: this night if youle be a good boy and not tell noe body Ile tell you: soe Told him that they wold kill all the white people: and asked him if he cold deale wth his M^r: yeas said Garrett I can deale wth him well enough: well saide will and Ile deale wth My M^r and M^{rs} well enough: but said he to Garr<> If you think you cannot deale wth yo^r M^r you shall haue some body to help you: and saith will after wee haue don that: wee will goe to Lemmon Valley: kill the two sold^{rs} thear: and take what amuniton and gunns They cold find thear: And soe become Masters of this Island: and y^t Beivans Black will was to be Gouvern^r: and Jacob a slave that run away from Cap^t Nynns shipp: and now by his order dwells wth Mad^r Johnson and Gargens Jack weare to be two of the head: and that he shold find hand enough to assist them: and named 2 slaves of Tho^s Allissons: and one of Mad^m Johnsons & one of Boxes: and y^t Fryday y^e 29th of 9ber was y^e day the designe was to be executed: and y^t Gargens house and Madam Johnsons: weare to be theare Randevvouse: all which he told to hannah A slave of y^e afores^d Tho^s Goodwin: In order that shee might Make her Mistres acquainted wth it: the which she did In his presence

7. Tues 12 Feb 1705/6³

Sam one of the R^t Hono^{rb}le Comp^{as} slaves, says that Comeing from Man and horse, he mett Mr Nichols son Edmond, who askt him where the Dog named Porter was I told him at home, No sure I heard Mr Bagley shott him, for his son told me so at schoole, No says I again, it is another dogg. further saith That being upon Do<> Moores plain one Evening about Seven of the clock, and Going home, Mett Mr Bagley, who askt me what I did there at that time of night with a dogg not tyed in a string, I told him I was about my Master<> business./ Capt Goodwin Interrupts the Governo^r for Examining a black against a white Man; The Governo^r says he dont take him as an Evidence any more than to know y^e more circumstances having presidents of this Nature before.

8. 6th December 1707 [pg 135, Christopher Harling's declaration]

That as my Landord Stewards black Robin and I, being at Work in his Plantation Last Wensday Morning, Joseph Foxes Tobey a black, Came to the Plantation Wall, and Called Robin, and askt him for a Pipe of Tobacco, Robin bid him Come there and he would give it him, and as Tobey was filling his Pipe, he ask'd Robin if he heard the News, No says Robin what is it, Tobey Replied I dont Care to tell because Kitt is here for he would tell it further, No says Robin Kitt wont tell, tell it on, No says I, if its No harm, it shall go no further for me, says Tobey the blacks will be had of, for says he there is Eleaven Island blacks, besides the New Fellows at the Fort, Designs a Musterday for to kill the White Women and Children while the Men were a Mustering, and as the Men Come up, One by One, or fudled to knock them on the head, Robin made Answer what is that to me, why do you tell me of it, Tobey answerd I Came to tell you, that you may take Care to keep yo^r selfe out of all bad Company, and I would have you tell

Robinson Tobey of it allso, No says Robin if you'l have him to know of it, tell him your selfe what's to me.

9. Tues 12 Feb 1705/6

Matthew Bazett being sworn saith That being in Sandy-bay ameasureing some Land, he hard Mr Gargen aske a black wench of James Vesseys named Jenny, why she pulld Down his fences, she made answer her Mistris ordered her to do it, did she says Mr Gargen, But if you do so again I'le kick you, Upon that she clapt her hands upon her britch, as much as to say you may kiss there, and Gave him very saucy Language, so went away.

10. Monday 2 December 1695

Hary Madam Johnsons slave Examined saith: y^t ab^t a month agoe: Hemp cam<> To him in the plantation as he was at worke: and told him y^t Powells Jack sent him to aske him: if he wold make one to help to kill the white people to which he rep<> how can y^t be done: wheare must I then live: noe not I wont make one: then said <> to him what is the matter Jack sent to me: me noe save spake English

Hemp Examined saith that he never was made acquainted wth the s^d designe untill last Fryday nor never spoake to madam Johnsons Hary for saith he though Jack and I live together he wold not trust me: for I allwayse tell talles of him to my Master: and Jack noe such foole to trust such a boy as I

Jack speaking to hemp saide you saucy Rouge: how can you denye before the Gover^{rs} that you noe savy this thing before last fryday: I noe tell you a great while agoe: and sent you to hary: and you told me Hary said he wold goe wth all his hart soe at length hemp confessed he had knowledg of it some time since but wold Confess nothing else

11. Monday 2 December 1695

Sarrah Gurling a seruant of M^r Tho^s Goodwin: saith that ab^t a day or 2 before this designe was discovered: Joⁿ Gurlings Jack: Bivans: Will: and Roger M^r Tho^s Goodwins slave: weare talking together In there one country langua Laughing and pointing severall wayse: y^e s^d Sarrah saide unto a slave of y^e Afores^d Goodwins y^t was an Indian black: I doe not understand what they say nor I saide the other: no s^d Gurlings Jack dont you understand us: noe replied they Then y^t Is very good said he

12. Monday 6th January 1706/7

Caesar Henry Francis black says he was at M^r We<>leys, where Mingo said in Portugeeze he would break open the Powder Room, and bid him say Nothing of it, Neither to White, nor black, and that he had some Powder already hid amongst the Rocks.

...

Caesar says Tobey told him so, Tobey says he Never di<> and that Caesar and Mingo talkt Portugeeze about half an hour Together.

...

In the Kitchin, at .9. at Night a Monday she says that .3. blacks Viz^{ll} Clause, Phill, and Tobey, went out and talk'd portugeeze together

...

13. Monday 6th January 1706/7 [John Clavering's report of Mingo's speech]

That on Tuesday Last, the Portugeeze Captain and .2<> Gentlemen more dined at their House, about an hour after Mingo Came and askt for a Dram, and some punch, but would not give him any whereupon he made Answer and said, if you wont you may let it Alone, its better you did and said you shall Never be the better for it, so went away and saying he did savey something.

14. Wednesday 9 January 1711/12

Cap^{tn} Hoskison having Reported that the Hon^{ble} Company being forced to buy Yams the Old and Vseless Blacks and Children are a great Charge to them. Wherefore Ordered That all the Young blacks from Three years of Age be put Out to any of the Inhabitants that will take them Maintaining them for their service till they Come to the Age of Ten Years and that Notice be given Accordingly.

Island S^t Helena

These are to give Notice to all the Inhabitants that the Governour and Council design to sett Out the black Children belonging to the Hon^{ble} Company from Three Years of Age to any that will take them for the Term of seven Years Or till they Attain to the Age of Ten Years, Maintaining them Onely for their service, but with this Caution not to Vse them Barbarously or Ill. Wherefore any person that has a minde to take any of the Aforesaid Children may Repair to the plantation house and Conferr with Cap^{tn} Hoskison about the same. Dated at the United Castle in James Vally this .9th day of January 1711/12 Signd by Order of Govern^r & Council Thomas ffree
Clk Coun

15. 11 October 1715

M^r Tovey According to an Order of Council of the 26th July last further Reports that he has taken Account of the Hon. Companys Blacks Lett out to the severall Persons following (viz^t) To Doctor Thomlinson a black fellow called Will aged about 18 years, had him for no Certain time Mr French a black Girle called Sarah aged ab^t Eleven years, had her for 3 years of which above one is Expired, Doctor Porteous. One wench Named Margarett aged 16 years. had her for no Certain time, but upon his Petition he being sickly, she is to live wth him One year longer. John Bagley one Girle called Ellin aged Ten years. had her for no Certain time. John Robinson a black boy Named Harry aged about Ten years. had him for no Certain time.

Notes

1. 7ber = September; 9ber = November. C:P = Captain Poirier, Deputy Governor and Assistant Judge.
2. Looks like *shall*, perhaps a mistake for 'that'.
3. Doctor Moore's Plain is a place-name; Man and Horse is at the South West part of the island.

References

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