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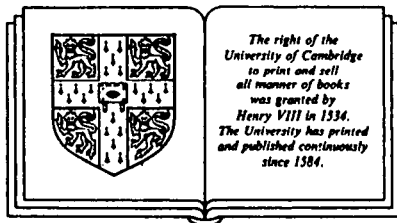
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THE CARIBBEAN SLAVE

A BIOLOGICAL HISTORY

KENNETH F. KIPLE

Department of History, Bowling Green State University



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For My Parents
JANE AND FRANK KIPLE

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**God hath made of one blood all nations to dwell
on the face of the earth.**

St. Paul, Acts 17:26

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PREFACE

This book is the second in a projected trilogy of studies on the biological history of the black in the Americas. In its predecessor, *Another Dimension to the Black Diaspora*, coauthored with Virginia Himmelsteib King, the reader will find a preface containing an apologia of sorts for attempting to unite the research of the biological and social sciences on the one hand, and to bring the findings to bear on black history on the other. Given the historical record of mistreatment of blacks by scientific and pseudoscientific racists, an initial statement of this nature was rightly *de rigueur*. A second would be redundant, and quite possibly presumptuous, for the reception of *Another Dimension* has made clear the existence of a methodologically sophisticated audience of scholars that needs no lecturing from me on either the obscurantism of old nature–nurture arguments or the value of cross-disciplinary research.

If, however, no one spied evil intent in *Another Dimension*, a few were disquieted by the speculative or conjectural nature of some of its arguments, and because portions of the book that follow are similarly vulnerable to such criticism, I feel compelled at this point to say a few words in defense of conjecture.

Broadly defined, the term means to infer from insufficient evidence. Thus, historians in particular, but social scientists as well, who are invariably faced with insufficient evidence are by definition conjecturers every time they assign meaning to a phenomenon or link two or more phenomena into an inferential chain of reasoning. Most historians, however, would not respond kindly if their works were tagged with the label “conjecture” and would respond (perhaps with some heat) that because their inferences were based on the best evidence available, only the reasonability of the inferences should be at issue. And, indeed, at bottom this is all that historians whose data have traditionally been mostly soft and impressionistic can seriously demand of one another—that their inferences be reasonable and derived from the best evidence available.

The plight of those working in what is sometimes called “biohistory” is that much of the data generated by ongoing research in the medical

and biological sciences is also soft and many hypotheses are tentative; moreover, there are countless obscure corners and contours in man's recent biological pathway, let alone his distant evolutionary journey. Consequently, like their more traditional counterparts, biological historians find themselves having to make inferences from the best available, often incomplete evidence, which is to say that they are conjecturing. Surely when this occurs they too might ask to be judged on the reasonability of their inferences rather than on the fact that they are making those inferences in the first place.

One of the more useful methods of generating inferences to illuminate man's biological past is to shine the light of modern medical, biological, nutritional, and demographic knowledge upon it. This method is used frequently in the study that follows; that it is laden with some danger should be noted at the outset for in nature little remains static, and certainly not the relationship of a people with their nutritional and epidemiological environment. A related danger is that today's knowledge can easily distort the lenses through which the past is scrutinized.

I have tried to keep these pitfalls in mind and to sidestep them as they came to my attention, but in a work of this nature, covering unfamiliar terrain, I must have inevitably missed a few. For this reason, I have done my best throughout the text, notes, and introductions to indicate clearly what is conjecture and what is fact. Readers will also note that I have taken great pains (which are sometimes unorthodox ones, such as presenting factual information in introductory sections) to add new information as it is needed, while reminding them of numerous old threads of fact and inference that tie together with the new. This inevitably means some repetition here and there, which I hope will prove more helpful than annoying.

If I have done all of this correctly, however, the reader will be able to follow arguments smoothly in both the conjectural and factual realms, and will perhaps come to believe, as I do, that both have important places in cross-disciplinary research and that both can be powerful tools in generating new insights as well as evaluating old tenets.

São João do Estoril,
Portugal

K.F.K.

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I am enormously indebted to the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies for a research grant that made possible several research visits to the Caribbean during the years 1977 through 1979. I have an indebtedness of like magnitude to the Bowling Green Faculty Research Committee for research fellowships and travel grants, which have both supported research and permitted full attention to writing for extended periods of time. Indeed Thomas Barry Cobb, Carol L. Davis, and Ronald J. Etzel of Bowling Green's Research Services office have all made so many contributions to my research efforts over the years that it is impossible to express my appreciation adequately. Thanks go as well to the Rockefeller Archive Center for a grant to visit its fine collection in Pocantico Hills, New York, and to the Committee on Research of the American Philosophical Society, whose partial support of an ongoing Brazilian project enabled me to add important materials to this study.

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Kenneth F. Kiple