



# Shade-Grown Slavery: The Lives of Slaves on Coffee Plantations in Cuba

*William C. Van Norman*

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Within the world of Cuban slave-holding plantations, all enslaved people had to negotiate a life defined by forces beyond their control, and indeed beyond the control of their masters. Slaves on coffee farms survived in ways that allowed them to marry, have children, and maintain and redefine cultural practices that they passed on to their children. Slaves were an important factor in creating a nascent Afro-Cuban culture and identity.

In this broad, interdisciplinary study, William Van Norman describes how each type of plantation and the amount of manual labor it required directly influenced the nature of slave life in that community. Slaves on coffee plantations lived in a unique context in comparison to that of their fellow slaves on sugar plantations, one that gave them greater flexibility in cultural and artistic creativity. To gain a deeper understanding of plantation slavery in Cuba, Van Norman explores what life and labor was like for coffee slaves and how it was different from what sugar slaves experienced. *Shade-Grown Slavery* reconstructs their world and in turn deconstructs the picture we now have of Cuba in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Ultimately, *Shade-Grown Slavery* reveals the lives of enslaved Africans on Cuban coffee plantations and shows how they were able to maintain and transform their cultural traditions in spite of slavery.

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