

Chapbook song about the riot in 1878

The text below is a so-called chapbook song published in Denmark shortly after the riot in 1878. Chapbook songs were a kind of tabloid of that time, meant to entertain (and perhaps inform). They often reached a large audience. Translated from Danish.

A Woeful Ballad

In 20 verses.

About the terrible events which have taken place on Sant Kroa, where the black negroes wanted to kill the white people. The ballad is sad but almost true. [...]

1. Over on the other side
Over by America
Lies, we all know
The negro island Sant Kroa
It can be called a garden
For it is a lovely land
2. On the little isle there lives
A flock of verily black men
There are also whites but,
Most plentiful is the negro
Recently there has been a war
And it was so terrible
3. At a white farmer's there was
A negro called Sjang
Imagine, one night he ran off
To dance all night long
And when he returned
It was late morning

4. When they brought the milk porridge
The fellow didn't want it
He only wanted the cream
The rest they could take away
And then he fooled around
And finally he got rough

5. Fontaine (the planter) got angry
And then he chased him (Sjang) away
But now the negro blood boiled
Uh! Sjang was quick
And he swore: I will get my revenge
In blood for this!

6. Sjang headed off to his friends
And then he gathered a group
Of blacks, and only their teeth
Were white, strangely enough.
They agreed that they wanted to
Go out to plunder.

7. So they went off to Fontaine's
And dragged him out of bed
They pulled the knife from its sheath
And stabbed him in his heart
He quickly gave up the ghost
And was released from this life

8. The troop of negroes howled
Now they wanted the wife
Fontaine's wife's name was Maren
And she fled in the dark of night
She took both the little children
To a secret hiding place

9. In the shadows of the sugar field
She ran with her little ones
There she wanted to build a home
Until she could find help
O! Here you can see them all
God knows if they are still alive

10. Then the negroes got hold
Of a cask of gasoline
And now they set the house on fire
drinking old rum to gather strength
And then they went out to plunder
All whites were stabbed with the knife

11. And they pillaged the entire island
And they burned down every house
They destroyed anything in their way
Every single building was wrecked
Then they went off to Frederiksted
Which was also going to burn to the ground

12. Look here how it burns
Father, mother, taking flight
The child raises his hands
Towards a negro who is black
But the tears the little ones to pieces
Oh! He is vile!

13. Up to the citadel now
The whole troop heads for the stand
While the flames blaze
The white man is to be killed
The governor says "Stop"
And stands proudly on the stand

14. Imagine all the wild ones
Shooting everyone
But it boded ill for them
In the end they took a knock
When Ostermann took control
On the Lord Master governor's orders

15. At the plantation Anna Hope
He confronted all the men
And he yelled at them "Men!
Surrender, all of you
Or I will shoot you down
Yes, I swear I will"

16. But they didn't do as they were told
And they continued to brawl
Despite herr Ostermann's calm
He got angry and shouted "Fire"
When the soldiers fired away
The negroes shivered with fear

17. And they ran around and away
And they were covered in their own blood
Ostermann told them to come back
And do penance
Otherwise they would get another bashing
And that was no joke

18. So they handed in the man
Who was the cause of all this foolery
Sjang, he beat his forehead
"that was vile" he said, ashamed
Sjang was convicted, you can see him here
He was hung for ridicule and scorn

19. Now peace has returned
The danger is all over
But the negro widow with her daughter
Grieves by the corpses of the fallen
They do still cry, you know
Their tears are black as ink

20. Friends, learn from this song
How things pan out in life
And remember that you are lucky
To stand here amongst whites
We might well have negroes
But they do not wish to kill