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THE CARIBBEAN AS A SOCIO-CULTURAL AREA[1]

THE Caribbean islands, a scattering of some fifty inhabited units spanning nearly 2,500 miles of sea between Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula and the north coast of South America, constitute the oldest colonial sphere of western European overseas expansion. By the second decade of the sixteenth century, these territories were circumnavigated and explored, their aborigines had been dominated and Spanish colonies established on the largest islands, and the entire area had been thrust into the consciousness of European monarchs, philosophers, and scientists. As the primordial sphere of Spain's Atlantic imperium, the Caribbean region symbolized the world's beginnings of what Konetzke[2] properly called "planetary" empires, spanning whole oceans; the massive shift from a "thalassic" (Mediterranean) to an "oceanic" (Atlantic) orientation,[3] that would govern Europe's expansive designs for so long thereafter, began with the Caribbean. And when López de Gómara, adressing himself to Charles V in 1552, asserted that, after the Creation and the coming of Christ, the most important event in history had been the discovery of the New World, he was not claiming more than what many informed Europeans of the time would have conceded.[4]

Soon after their discovery, the Caribbean islands became a springboard for the Spanish conquest of the American mainland, and a testing-ground for Reconquista political designs, readapted for use in the administration and control of colonial peoples. After the subjugation of highland Mexico and the Andes, the importance of the islands as areas of settlement in the Spanish imperial system declined swiftly. Then, in the seventeenth century, Spain's north European rivals began to carve out overseas empires of their own within the Caribbean area; by the

latter part of that century, the importance of the islands to Northern Europe had reached a zenith. After 1800, however, the Caribbean played a less and less significant role in the European scheme of things; only recently has this area taken on new meaning for the West, this time much more political and strategic than economic.

One of the ways to clarify the contemporary importance of the Caribbean islands is to limn their social and cultural characteristics against a backdrop of regional history; much of their commonality, their meaning as a bloc of societies, is the result of demonstrably parallel historical experiences during more than four centuries of powerful (though intermittent and often whimsical) European influence. It can probably be shown that the special distinctiveness of the Caribbean area within the sphere of the "underdeveloped world" inheres in its ancience as a cluster of colonies; what is more, the societies of the Caribbean are only superficially "non-western," taking on their particularity precisely because they are in some ways, and deceptively, among the most "western" of all countries outside the United States and western Europe.

Useful attempts to classify the Caribbean area as a sub-category of some larger culture-bloc have not succeeded either in fully defining its distinctiveness, or in grouping it convincingly with those portions of the Latin American mainland exposed to similar social-historical influences.[5] In spite of certain common historical experiences, the societies of the Caribbean do not form an undifferentiated grouping; and mainland

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[1] The writer is grateful to Jacqueline Wei MINTZ and to Peter J. WILSON, who read and criticized an earlier version of the manuscript. The materials presented here will appear in more elaborate form in a book on the social history and ethnology of the Caribbean islands, now being prepared by the writer.

[2] Richard KONETZKE, El Imperio Español (Madrid, 1946), p. 9.

[3] Albert G. KELLER, Colonization (New York, 1908), p. 69.

[4] Lewis HANKE, Aristotle and the American Indians (London, 1959), p. 2-3, 124.

[5] Classifications of the Caribbean islands have placed them within such typological categories as "Afro-America" and "Plantation America," both of which only partially describe the island societies correctly. See John GILLIN, "Mestizo America," in Ralph LINTON (Ed.), Most of the World (New York, 1941); Werner J. CAHNMAN, "The Mediterranean and Caribbean Regions: a Comparison in Race and Culture Contacts," Social Forces, 22 (1943), pp. 209-214; Gilberto FREYRE, The Masters and the Slaves (New York, 1946); Charles WAGLEY, "Plantation America: a Culture Sphere," Caribbean Studies: A Symposium, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1957, pp. 3-13; John P. AUGELLI, "The Rimland-mainland Concept of Culture Areas in Middle America, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 52 (1962), pp. 119-129; Eric R. WOLF and Sidney W. MINTZ, "Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles", Social and Economic Studies, 6 (1957), pp. 380-412. See also the pathbreaking paper by Rudolph A.J. VAN LIER, "The Development and Nature of Society in the West Indies," Mededeling No. XCII, Afdeling Culturele en Physische Anthropologie No. 37, Koninklijke Vereeniging Indisch Institut (Amsterdam, 1950). To lump the islands indiscriminately with "Latin America" is especially misleading; some foreign area programs for Latin America even have difficulties in deciding whether a fellowship candidate who intends to work in the non-Spanish-speaking (and particularly English-speaking) portions of the Caribbean area really should be considered a "Latin Americanist." Where French (or a creole language of predominantly French lexical origin) is spoken, a feeble argument for "Latin" culture might be made; but "Latin" is not the same as "Latin American," and no tortured logic can justify the inclusion of such societies as Jamaica or Curaçao, for example, within "Latin America." Similarly, the Cayman Islands are hardly part of either "Afro-America" or "Plantation America," and the same could be said of many other parts of the Caribbean area.

societies similar to those of the islands have not undergone all of the same historical processes. This essay does not propose to replace previous classifications with yet another; in fact, it builds to a large extent on previous work. But perhaps several more points can be made about the societies of the Caribbean, in order to understand better both what sets this area apart from other areas, and what gives it a particular and somewhat distinctive cast; the major points are socio-historical in character. A good general statement of historical relevance comes from M. G. Smith: [6]

> The historical conditions which define the area from Brazil to the United States as the broad comparative context of Caribbean studies are well known. They consist in the expansion of Europe to the New World, the common historical patterns of conquest, colonization, peonage or slavery, and the development of multi-racial and multi-cultural societies throughout this area. Regional differences of a contemporary or historical nature are of obvious significance for comparative work within so vast a frame of reference. For present purposes the differences of habitat, economy, population composition, political history and status are the most useful general guides in a preliminary subdivision of this wider area.

An attempt will be made here to build on this statement, with the emphasis on the societies of the islands themselves and, only secondarily, on those of the mainland sharing some of the same features. It would undoubtedly be correct to say that each of the characteristics outlined in the following presentation also applies to some other non-Caribbean society or region. Yet whatever utility this classification possesses does not depend upon the uniqueness of any one of the defining features, but rather, upon their collective significance for Caribbean social history. Furthermore, each society within the Caribbean area is of course in some important regards unique; no attempt to generalize about the entire area can deal adequately with the distinctive features of any single component society. But the argument rests on the hope that the generalities that follow will, when taken in aggregate, clarify the extent to which the Caribbean region forms a socio-cultural bloc of some kind. The presentation of relevant data may also make clear some of the principal ways in which the societies of the Caribbean differ among themselves, since they have been subject in different degree to the very forces that have tended to make them similar. It is perhaps particularly important to keep in mind, however, that no one of the points to be made, so much as their interrelated effect, is significant in the following presentation.

In order to advance the argument, one must stress the difference between " culture" and "society," as the terms are employed here. To begin with, it is inaccurate to refer to the Caribbean as a "cultural area",

[6] M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley, 1965), p. 19.

if by "culture" is meant a common body of historical tradition. The very diverse origins of Caribbean populations; the complicated history of European cultural impositions; and the absence in most such societies of any firm continuity of the culture of the colonial power have resulted in a very heterogeneous cultural picture. And yet the *societies* of the Caribbean—taking the word "society" to refer here to forms of social structure and social organization—exhibit similarities that cannot possibly be attributed to mere coincidence. It probably would be more accurate (though stylistically unwieldy) to refer to the Caribbean as a " societal area," since its component societies probably share many more social-structural features than they do cultural features. Pan-Caribbean uniformities turn out to consist largely of parallels of economic and social structure and organization, the consequence of lengthy and rather rigid colonial rule. That many of them also share similar or historically related *cultures*, while important, is treated here as secondary.

According to this analysis, Caribbean regional commonality is expressed in terms of nine major features as follows:

(1) lowland, sub-tropical, insular ecology;

(2) the swift extirpation of native populations;

(3) the early definition of the islands as a sphere of European overseas agricultural capitalism, based primarily on the sugar-cane, African slaves, and the plantation system;

(4) the concomitant development of insular social structures in which internally differentiated local community organization was slight, and national class groupings usually took on a bipolar form, sustained by overseas domination, sharply differentiated access to land, wealth, and political power, and the use of physical differences as status markers;

(5) the continuous interplay of plantations and small-scale yeoman agriculture, with accompanying social-structural effects;

(6) the successive introduction of massive new "foreign" populations into the lower sectors of insular social structures, under conditions of extremely restricted opportunities for upward economic, social, or political mobility;

(7) the prevailing absence of any ideology of national identity that could serve as a goal for mass acculturation;

(8) the persistence of colonialism, and of the colonial ambiance, longer than in any other area outside western Europe;

(9) a high degree of individualization—particularly economic individualization—as an aspect of Caribbean social organization.

No excuses will be made for the incommensurability of these various points; whatever heuristic value they may have for explaining the special nature of Caribbean societies inheres in their combination. In each case, their combined effects have been somewhat different, so that the various

societies of the Caribbean area may be viewed in terms of a multi-dimensional continuum, rather than in terms of some single abstract model. Furthermore, it is clear that some of these points might be considered "causes" and others "consequences." Since the main objective here is to suggest why Caribbean societies are as they are, no attempt is made to supply any elaborate chronological or causal schema of a sort intended for a more detailed exposition of the same argument.

(1) The Caribbean islands, stretching from the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles in the north, to Trinidad and the Dutch Leeward islands off the Venezuelan coast in the south, are climatically sub-tropical and oceanic, warm in temperature, with few extremes, and with considerable local variation in rainfall. Though some parts of the Greater and Lesser Antilles are ruggedly mountainous, and tropical rain forests are to be found in some interiors, nearly all of the islands possess coastal flatlands. Especially in the Greater Antilles, central mountains are girded by alluvial floodplains, generally well watered along the northern coasts, but sere and dry along the southern littorals. The bigger islands, such as Puerto Rico and Jamaica, have fertile inter-montane valleys, often ringed by mountains high enough to support coffee cultivation. The southwestern portions of the Greater Antilles also have uplands and savannas, suitable for cattlegrowing and the production of industrial fibers. The Lesser Antilles fall into two geographical group-ings, one of flat, dry, and relatively infertile islands, the other of ruggedly mountainous, better watered islands.

The very fact that the Caribbean, as defined by its early western explorers and conquerors, was a sea containing an archipelago, was of course also of considerable importance. The conquest of the Caribbean area took the form of island-hopping, each island a steppingstone to new conquests. Political control of any island or group of islands had to depend on control of the sea, and the sea inevitably played a significant part in the culture of the settlers. Islands define themselves geographi-cally, so to speak; for the Europeans, each island in turn was a new frontier, until its local aboriginal population was conquered or elimi-nated, and its total area effectively occupied. On the smaller islands, effective total occupation proved to be relatively easy, though the mountainous character of some—particularly when combined with abo-riginal resistance—slowed European expansion. In the larger islands, however, where interior mountain ranges were extensive (and, to judge by what is known, very heavily forested in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), European influence tended to be concentrated in coastal settlements, and opportunities for subcultural differentiation were greater.

These few facts, though dangerously over-general, carry considerable significance for the understanding of the Caribbean area. To begin with, all or nearly all of the islands were suitable for commercial tropical

agriculture, including the production of food staples for foreign markets, such as sugar, coffee, rum, cocoa, and spices. Where local conditions did not make possible such production, a controlled water supply could sometimes be engineered, in order to put previously uncultivated but fertile lands to agriculture. Moreover, where alluvial floodplains or inter-montane valleys were common, such agriculture could be conducted on big estates, since flatness of terrain made possible large-scale organization of enterprise with massed labor, massed machines or both. Finally, the distinction between coastal plain and rugged highland foretold a sharp divergence of enterprise that has typically marked Caribbean agriculture, with plantations concentrated on the coasts and in inland valleys, and small-scale enterprise and some hacienda forms occurring in mountainous sectors. On the smallest and most arid islands, plantations never devel-oped; on those small islands better suited to plantation agriculture, small-scale or "peasant" enterprises have usually remained very marginal; and on the bigger islands, these two differing agricultural systems have competed or co-existed for most of Caribbean history.

Underlying physical conditions thus provide a context within which the differing economic adjustments of the colonists took place. But colonial enterprise, from the very first, also had to take account of the human element in local ecology—that is, of the aboriginal populations of the islands. The Greater Antilles, first discovered, explored, and conquered by Spain, were relatively densely occupied by Island-Arawak peoples practicing slash-and-burn agriculture, and living in settled villages.[7] These peoples caught the full brunt of Spanish power; they were sub-stantially eliminated or genetically absorbed by their conquerors in less than half a century. In the Lesser Antilles, and in a few isolated interiors of the bigger islands, Indian communities survived until the late seven-teenth or even eighteenth century. Island-Carib resistance in the smaller islands and the scarcity of metallic resources there limited European interest until the mid-seventeenth century; but even so, the aborigines ceased to be a force to be reckoned with seriously by 1700 in most places, and before 1800 in all.[8]

During the contact period, many aboriginal cultural features were stabilized as parts of new, synthetic cultures—but cultures in which the native peoples themselves were to play ever less significant roles. Thus the acculturational process in the islands contrasted quite sharply with

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[7] Irving ROUSE, "The Arawak," in Julian H. STEWARD (Ed.), *Handbook of South American Indians*, Bureau of American Ethnology, The Smithsonian Institution, Bulle-tin 143, Vol. 4 (1948), pp. 507-546 ; William C. STURTEVANT, "Taino Agriculture," in Johannes WILBERT (Ed.), *The Evolution of Horticultural Systems in Native South America* (Caracas, 1961), pp. 69-82.

[8] Douglas TAYLOR, *The Black Carib of British Honduras*, Viking Fund Publica-tions in Anthropology, 17 (1951), pp. 15-26.

that characteristic of the European colonizing experience in the highland regions of the New World mainland, and in most of Asia and Africa. For the Spaniards, the early contact situation provided an opportunity to develop administrative and extractive techniques to be reapplied in Mexico, the Andean region, and elsewhere; but it did not require a lenghty, ongoing series of adjustments to a bulking and persistent aboriginal population. Spain's later rivals—Britain, France, Holland, etc.—dealt summarily with the Island-Carib in the smaller islands, not so much assimilating as killing off these aboriginal predecessors. Thus the confrontation of cultures in the islands was one in which European colonizers were able to work out the problems of settlement, adjustment, and development to a very large degree *as if the Antilles were empty lands*. The psychological meaning of this state of affairs—not to mention its economic, social, and political significance—is exceedingly complex. Mannoni, in his psychological analysis of colonialism, tells us that Robinson Crusoe, as the fictive prototype of the European colonizer, feared solitude, but also desired it—what Mannoni calls "the lure of a world without men." [9] As his model, Mannoni deals with Madagascar; but surely the Antilles would have provided him with a better case. For the European experience on the islands was in fact that of creating a world without men soon after original contact. This scourging of the human landscape enabled the Europeans to set the terms of their future colonialism in the Caribbean area in ways very different from those available to them in the densely occupied areas of the non-western world. The significance of this distinction is real; the next stage in Antillean history was set in the absence of subject peoples, for the European colonist had transformed himself from guest into host simply through having eliminated his native predecessors.

(3) The very early development of plantation agriculture can be credited to the Spanish colonists in the Greater Antilles who, in response to the decline in mining enterprises, cast about for alternate sources of livelihood. Small plantations worked with African slave labor were successfully producing sugar for European markets in the Greater Antilles within less than fifty years of the Discovery.[10] Though other staples were also tried, sugar most dramatically demonstrated its importance by its success on the European market. Almost insignificant in Europe's diet before the thirteenth century, sugar gradually changed from a medicine for royalty into a preservative and confectionery ingredient and, finally, into a basic commodity. By the seventeenth

[9] O. MANNONI, *Prospero and Caliban* (New York, 1956), p. 101. I am grateful to Professor Bruce Mazlish for pointing out to me the relevance of Mannoni's argument.

[10] Fernando ORTIZ, *Cuban Counterpoint* (New York, 1947), pp. 254-283 ; Mervyn RATEKIN, "The Early Sugar Industry in Española," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 34 (1953), pp. 1-20.

century, sugar was becoming a staple in European cities; soon, even the poor knew sugar and prized it. As a relatively cheap source of quick energy, sugar was valuable more as a substitute for food than as a food itself; in western Europe it probably supplanted other food in proletarian diets. In urban centers, it became the perfect accompaniment to tea, and West Indian sugar production kept perfect pace with Indian tea production. Together with other plantation products such as coffee, rum, and tobacco, sugar formed part of a complex of "proletarian hunger-killers,"[11] and played a crucial role in the linked contribution that Caribbean slaves, Indian peasants, and European urban proletarians were able to make to the growth of western civilization.

But in the first period of Spanish overseas experimentation with sugar-cane and the plantation system, western Europe had barely begun to demand tropical commodities, and the early successes in Santo Domingo, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica were soon eclipsed by the immense metallic wealth flowing to the metropolis from the mainland, after 1520. Spanish interest in the islands waned, and the major Hispanic colonies there—Cuba, Española, Puerto Rico and, much less importantly, Jamaica—became fuelling stations and bastions for the treasure fleets. It was Spain's rivals in the Caribbean, especially Britain, France, and the Netherlands, who would revamp and expand the plantation system on a grand scale, beginning about 1640.

The nature of the plantation system was exceedingly complex, and only a few general statements about it may be made here. To begin with, it developed from the outset in a context of scarce labor supply; the plenitude of land relative to labor, and the ability of free laborers to become yeomen in unclaimed land areas, required agricultural entrepreneurs in the Antilles to rely on various forms of forced labor in order to be able to undertake commercial production.[12] Though a variety of forced and contract labor arrangements were employed, the most important labor basis was slavery. Between 1501, when Governor Ovando of Española was first advised to import African slaves to that island,[13] and 1886, when slavery was terminated in Cuba, the Caribbean islands depended almost exclusively on slavery as a source of plantation

[11] It has been fashionable to refer to these items as "dessert crops," but it would be difficult to find another label so ludicrously misleading as this. Coffee, tea, rum, sugar (and tobacco) were the "staple diet" of Europe's proletarians for centuries, and to call them "dessert crops" is to misread a crucial aspect of the Industrial Revolution and of European colonialism. See Sidney W. MINTZ, review of Stanley Elkins, *Slavery*, in *American Anthropologist*, 63 (1961), p. 580.

[12] H. J. NIEBOER, *Slavery as an Industrial System* (The Hague, 1900), pp. 420-422 ; Sidney W. MINTZ, review of Stanley Elkins, *Slavery*, in *American Anthropologist*, 63 (1961), pp. 579-587.

[13] José Antonio SACO, *Historia de la Esclavitud* (La Habana, 1937), t. IV, p. 63 ; Arthur P. NEWTON, *The European Nations in the West Indies* (London, 1933), p. 62.

labor. The numbers of enslaved involved were staggering; though no attempt will be made here to specify, Antillean slavery constituted one of the greatest demographic phenomena in world history.

It was entirely reasonable, according to the political and ideological currents of the time, that the main source of slaves was Africa. Though the enslavement of American Indians in the Antilles was important for a brief period after the Conquest, this resource soon disappeared. European indentured labor was also important, particularly in the early development of the British and French settlements in the Lesser Antilles; but by 1650, this labor supply had diminished sharply, since European labor needs had begun to rise. Furthermore, indentured servants eventually secured their freedom and became yeomen, thus rivalling the plantations, rather than serving them. After the Haitian Revolution and the emancipation acts of the North European powers, other sources of labor besides Africa would reemerge; yet the years 1650-1800 were not only the "core period" for the classic plantation system, but also those during which African slave labor dominated the Caribbean scene.

The irregular development of the plantation system in the Hispanic colonies and its more limited relevance in the smallest, driest, and most mountainous islands signified that these locales would be subject to less "Africanization" than the non-Hispanic islands and those better suited to plantations. As a result, it is not surprising that the distributions of persons of African origin are heavier in some Caribbean islands and countries than in others.[14] In Nevis and Barbados, for example, early settlement by European indentured servants who became yeomen after their terms of service were completed, was followed by a rapid plantation expansion and the virtual end of settlement by Europeans.[15] In such islands, and in Jamaica (seized by Britain in 1655), rural communities of persons of European extraction survived only as tiny enclaves within populations of predominantly African origin. In the remaining Hispanic colonies—Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Santo Domingo—large European populations were stabilized before the reexpansion of the plantation system in the late eighteenth century, and this is still reflected in the populational character of these countries.

The African origin of the populations of many Caribbean islands has had important cultural effects. Though the distribution of cultural forms of African provenience is irregular and in many cases problematical, it is clear that the African cultural impact has been much greater in

[14] Wilbur Zelinsky, "The Historical Geography of the Negro Population of Latin America," *The Journal of Negro History*, 34 (1949), pp. 153-221.
[15] Ramiro Guerra, *Sugar and Society in the Caribbean* (New Haven, 1964) ; Herman Merivale, *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* (London, 1841), pp. 75-76 ; Sidney W. Mintz, "The Question of Caribbean Peasantries," *Caribbean Studies*, 1 (1961), pp. 31-34.

Haiti, say, than in Puerto Rico; this difference in culture-trait distributions reflects plantation history with some fidelity. At the same time, it should be remembered that the "African cultural impact" did not consist of the diffusion of some undifferentiated, uniform body of beliefs, attitudes, linguistic forms, or other cultural materials. While Herskovits has argued that the majority of New World slaves were drawn from a relatively restricted area of Africa, and while many specific culture elements can be traced with confidence to Africa, it would be extremely difficult to attribute a significant part of the culture of any contemporary Caribbean people to specific African cultures. Moreover, the cultural heterogeneity of the enslaved Africans who reached the islands was apparently reinforced by plantation practices, since attempts were made to prevent any substantial number of slaves of a common tribal background from being concentrated on the same plantation. Hence, while it is perfectly correct to claim that some island societies were more "africanized" than others, the introduction of large numbers of African slaves into one island probably says more about the resulting *societal* arrangements than it does about *cultural* content.

(4) The plantation system was, first of all, an agricultural design for the production of export commodities for foreign markets—a means for introducing agricultural capitalism to subtropical colonial areas, and for integrating those areas with the expanding European economy. But because this system possessed an inner dynamic, in those Caribbean islands where it flourished, it also led to the creation of social and political relationships of a distinctive—and very rigid—sort. Since the populations of "plantation islands" were substantially or predominantly composed of African slaves whose destinies and activities were powerfully controlled by numerically insignificant minorities of European freemen, a fundamentally similar type of social and political system gradually took shape, in one island society after another. Thus the plantation system became much more than an agricultural form; it became in effect the basis of a societal model of a kind.

Plantation growth and spread in the Caribbean area was intimately connected to ecological and physiographic factors, as well as to forces of an economic and political kind, and it is possible to specify in a preliminary way the basic conditions under which plantations spread and grew. First of all, they were confined largely to lowland alluvial floodplain and intermontane valley areas, and their initial expansion occured in the parts of these areas that also possessed adequate rainfall. Second, their growth was restricted in the Hispanic colonies where they first flourished, declining in the mid-sixteenth century and only reappearing there in strength in the late eighteenth century. Plantations waxed and waned, not only in accord with the competitive spread of colonial power in the hands of European nations and the vagaries of the international

markets for tropical commodities, but also in line with changing imperial policies. Third, plantation growth before the mid-nineteenth century was closely linked to questions of labor supply. As we have seen, the major source of labor in the period 1650-1800 was Africa, and the basis for relating that labor to the land was slavery. The production of tropical commodities necessitates large supplies of labor for relatively short periods during the year; the plantation regime hinged on the ability to exercise requisite discipline over the labor force, and slavery facilitated this arrangement.

But as has been suggested, the plantation system was not only an agricultural device; it also became the basis for an entire societal design. This design involved the perpetuation of societies sharply divided at the outset into two segments, one large and unfree, the other small and free, with a monopoly of power in the hands of the latter. The necessity of concentrating a substantial proportion of the available capital of the plantation entrepreneur in human stock—slaves—apparently introduced a certain rigidity into plantation operation. This rigidity was partly economic, especially since plantation demands for labor were so sharply seasonal in character; but the social implications of capital investment in "human machines" were even more serious. The inability of free men to compete in any local sphere with slave labor complemented and intensified a sort of manorial self-sufficiency in plantation areas, sharply inhibiting the development of occupationally diverse communities of freemen in the same region. In the absence of slave buying power, or slave opportunities for education, religious instruction, medical care, and the like, plantation regions tended to consist of uninterrupted series of manor-like (but *capitalistic*) estates, each with its tiny complement of free European overseers and its massive but politically inert slave population. Since neither the masters nor the slaves were able to transfer to the Caribbean setting any adequate version of their ancestral cultures, and since the slaves in most situations had insufficient opportunity to use the masters' cultural tradition as a model, the cultural forms typifying plantation life were usually contrived out of what the slaves themselves could transfer from Africa and were permitted to retain, combined with those features of European culture that they could learn about as part of the plantation regimen itself.

Especially characteristic of these unusual socio-cultural adjustments to the plantation system was a sexual code that had to take into account the greater proportions of male to female slaves in most cases, the relative lack of free European women, and the sexual defencelessness of the slave female before the master class. Concubinage, informal unions between free Europeans and slave women, and the stabilization of a "mistress pattern" in many Caribbean societies inevitably led to the growth of a group intermediate in physical appearance and, in many

cases, in social status as well. Only rarely, however, did this group serve to cement the topmost and bottommost ranks of the social order; much more commonly, the socially intermediate category tended to affiliate itself as best it could with those in power.

The Hispanic colonies deviated to some extent from this generalized picture, allegedly because slaves were better integrated legally and religiously into insular social systems. Of equal or perhaps greater importance, however, was the strength of Spanish overseas control of local policy, the growth of substantial non-African (and non-slave) creole populations, and the very tardy reemergence of the plantation system. Also important was the establishment of creole planter groups in the Hispanic islands, who could provide their slaves with familial and acculturational models of a sort largely lacking in the Caribbean plantation colonies of the north European powers. The Hispanic Caribbean colonies, more than any others, were settled by Europeans who had come to stay and to become "creoles"; nowhere and at no time in the Hispanic islands did African slaves ever outnumber freemen of European origin. The significance of this pattern for the acculturation of the slaves, and for the growth of ideologies of nationhood in the Spanish islands, is very considerable.

(5) The plantation system did not evolve in a vacuum, however. In island after island, this system had to take account either of the pre-existence of other economic adaptations, or of local variations that developed within the sphere of plantation operation. The complementary profile of the plantation system was the precedence, co-occurrence or subsequent development of classes of small-scale cultivators, who either accommodated their style of life to the existence of the plantation system, lived in open opposition to it, or occupied areas where the plantation had flourished, only to wither due to changes in the political or economic scene. In all such cases, the yeoman or peasant adaptation was "artificial," in the sense that there were no autocthonous peasantries upon whom the plantation system was engrafted. The early yeoman communities of the north European settlements in the Lesser Antilles emerged from the groups of indentured laborers there who completed their contracts and became freeholders;[16] the peasant villages of Jamaica were a post-Emancipation development, largely the creation of the missionary churches and composed of ex-slaves who had learned their subsistence skills while still enslaved;[17] the peasantry of Haiti won its security of

[16] Sidney W. Mintz, "The Caribbean," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, in press.

[17] Sidney W. Mintz, "Historical Sociology of the Jamaican Church-founded Free Village-System," *De West-Indische Gids*, 38 (1958), pp. 46-70 ; Sidney W. Mintz and Douglas Hall, "The Origins of the Jamaican Internal Marketing System," *Yale University Publications in Anthropology*, 57 (1960), pp. 8-26.

tenure in revolution;[18] and the runaway slave communities that took up agriculture in such societies as Jamaica, Cuba, and Puerto Rico had to live under daily peril of attack and destruction by the planters.[19] In most of the Lesser Antilles, the early European yeoman villages were eliminated by the spread of the plantation by or before 1700.[20] In the Hispanic Antilles, the reemergence of the plantation at the close of the eighteenth century, and the accompanying repressive labor legislation, undermined highland squatter and peasant adjustments.[21] In these cases and in others, then, the counterposition of plantation and peasantry was essentially negative—a struggle between two differing modes of economic organization:

> It might be convenient for some purposes to view the rise of Caribbean peasantries as occurring in three different contexts. First there were the colonists who, early in the settlement of individual possessions, engaged in small-scale agriculture as yeoman cultivators. To a very variable degree, this sort of peasantry took shape in all early settlement of the Antilles, and not merely in the Spanish Antilles. Second, there was—for lack of a better term—the 'protopeasantry' which evolved under slavery, because of the particular circumstances which permitted or compelled the slaves to grow much of their own food, to produce many of their own necessities and, very importantly, to sell their surpluses and dispose more or less freely of their profits. Jamaica is perhaps the best example. Finally, there were the peasantries that evolved during slavery, but in open opposition to it. I refer here to the experiments of Os Palmares, the Bush Negro settlements in British and Dutch Guiana, the Maroons of Jamaica, and the 'palenqueros' of Cuba, among others. Since the slave owners and the metropolitan governments carried out repeated attempts to destroy these settlements, their inhabitants lived under the constant threat of war, and their economic integration with the outside world was correspondingly impaired. To the extent that they were compelled to maintain complete isolation, these settlements were not, typologically speaking, 'peasant communities.' But the history of such groups was one of extermination, or of transformation into peasantries. This division into three categories is makeshift, and surely does not cover many important variations. Yet it may suggest a preliminary way to fit the description of early Antillean peasantries to the particular social and economic history of that area.[22]

Plantation domination of the most fertile alluvial areas in all of those islands where it flourished has generally persisted up to the present, the major exception being Haiti, where the plantation system never recovered after 1804 and where, even today, the peasant economy

[18] James G. Leyburn, *The Haitian People* (New Haven, 1941).
[19] See, for instance, Francisco Perez de la Riva, "El Negro y la tierra, el conuco, y el palenque," *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, 58 (1946), pp. 97-132 ; Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York, 1941), p. 94.
[20] Herman Merivale, *op. cit.*, 1841 ; Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, 1944).
[21] Sidney W. Mintz, "The Role of Forced Labour in Nineteenth-century Puerto Rico," *Caribbean Historical Review*, 2 (1951), pp. 134-141 ; Sidney W. Mintz, "Labor and Sugar in Puerto Rico and Jamaica, 1800-1850," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 1 (1959), pp. 273-283.
[22] Sidney W. Mintz, "The Question of Caribbean Peasantries," *Caribbean Studies*, 1 (1961), pp. 31-34.

dominates the rural landscape.[23] Elsewhere—and again excepting those islands where aridity, low soil fertility, or rugged topography precluded plantation spread—the plantation-yeoman balance continues to this day.

Because the plantation system has invariably received official support and protection while peasant systems have only rarely been supported or protected, the differences between these two sectors in most island societies have always been noticeable on other than purely economic grounds. Generally, transportation and communication, irrigation facilities, and many other benefits are preferentially accorded to plantation enterprises.[24] Caribbean peasantries, meanwhile, have always been regarded as the "backward" and "conservative" sectors of insular economies; because they are also labor-intensive and capital-poor sectors, backwardness and conservatism are in fact characteristic, but not always for the reasons that are conventionally adduced. The origins of Caribbean peasantries in revolution and emancipation, their confinement to the less favorable ecological zones, and their poverty have also meant that they generally perpetuate more cultural materials from the past, perhaps particularly from the African (and much less so, American Indian) past. During the transformation of the plantation sectors into modern factories in the field, particularly after 1900, the peasant sectors fell farther behind, as modern roads, communications systems, and company stores developed in the coastal zones. Thus the contrast between peasants and plantations has to some extent become even sharper in this century.

The particular "balance" of plantation and peasant sectors varies very significantly from country to country; Haiti, for instance, remains a thoroughgoing peasant country, while Puerto Rico has hardly any agricultural producers who could still qualify as "peasants."[25] What distinguishes the Caribbean area in these regards is not a specific mix of two agro-social adaptations, but the fact that nearly every island society has such a mix, engendered by the special social history of the region.

(6) Between 1838, when the British West Indian slave population was manumitted, and 1886, when Cuba freed ist slaves, the Caribbean area experienced labor shortages in the sugar industry. These shortages were not absolute, but relative to the wages plantation owners were prepared to pay. In many island societies (though not in all), the solution to labor "shortage" was the massive importation of additional laborers. Though some free Africans came to the Caribbean area on contract, and

[23] Paul Moral, *Le Paysan Haïtien* (Paris, 1961).
[24] Sidney W. Mintz, "Yeoman Cultivators and Rural Proletarians in the Caribbean Regions," *C.N.R.S. International Colloquium on Agrarian Reform in Latin America*, in press.
[25] *Ibid.*

many laborers were imported from Portugal, the Canary Islands, Madeira, and other parts of Europe, the main new source of labor was Asia. During one century, over 135,000 Chinese and nearly 250,000 Indians were introduced to the Caribbean area. Other laborers came from Indo-China, Java, and elsewhere; the societies most affected by these migrations were Dutch Guiana (Surinam) and British Guiana, Trinidad, Cuba, and Jamaica; but smaller migratory streams reached other Caribbean territories as well. What is more, the shifting destinies of the world sugar industry successively led to new "labor shortages" elsewhere; in thirteen years (1912–24), almost 250,000 Jamaicans and Haitians were imported to Cuba, where the burgeoning sugar industry, under North American tutelage, had created a sudden dearth of sufficiently willing workers.[26] New banana plantations in Central America, and the building of the Panama Canal, created other labor needs on the mainland, which West Indians were to fill. By 1939, Dutch Guiana had received 33,000 Javanese; and Indians shipped to the British islands had begun to drift into the French Antilles and into Dutch Guiana as well.

The effects of these quite massive movements of peoples upon Caribbean societies and cultures are striking. To begin with, it must be noticed that each such migration meant the introduction of persons of differing culture and, frequently, physical type. Moreover, many such migrations consisted mainly or entirely of males, so that the migrants were usually able to maintain only selected portions of their ancestral cultural forms. But perhaps most important, these migrants were moving into long-established societies still divided for the most part into two major socio-cultural segments: a small class of owners, managers, and professionals, mainly European in ancestry, and a very numerous class of landless people, mainly non-European in ancestry. The bipolar structures of these societies were especially confining to the newcomers, since few opportunities for higher education, development of entrepreneurial skills, or acculturation to the metropolitan culture were available. Hence migration to such societies generally implied a confinement to long-term occupance of working-class status, with very few rewards for special effort or native excellence of any kind. Since the migrants found themselves, willy-nilly, in active competition with their predecessors for the employment opportunities available, it was almost inevitable that mutual acculturation among such groups would be minimal, and ethnic identification would become intensified to some extent. Such has turned out to be the case perhaps particularly with the "East" Indians (that is, Indians—but called "East Indians" to distinguish them from "Amerindians" and from "West Indians") in British Guiana; but similar

[26] Ramiro GUERRA, *op. cit.*, 1964.

processes are apparent in other Caribbean lands, and with other ethnic groups.[27]

Comparable migrations have occurred in other areas, such as Southeast Asia and Oceania, and with some parallel consequences. Perhaps one criterion of comparability is that of the extent to which such migrant groups have found themselves jostling others whose pedigrees were not much longer; in the Caribbean region, the lack of a native host population with a homogeneous culture developed *in situ*, has probably slowed down the process of acculturation to a marked degree. The implications of this should become clearer, after the next point is made.

(7) Four parallel historical factors of unequal weight have served both to make Caribbean societies similar and to create detailed socio-cultural differences among them. The processes of ethnic succession and aggregation have varied considerably from one island or territory to another, increasing socio-cultural diversity at a more rapid rate in some cases. At the same time, nearly every Caribbean society has experienced one or more phase of the plantation cycle, though the intensities of plantation development and its particular local forms have varied. Another parallel historical force, also with differentiating sociological consequences, has been the varying length and character of metropolitan political control. Thus, while Haiti became independent at the start of the nineteenth century, Santo Domingo in the middle of that century, and Cuba at the start of the twentieth, Trinidad-Tobago and Jamaica were granted their political independence only a few years ago, and the remaining islands and territories are still linked in relations of dependence to their metropolises by a variety of political arrangements. Moreover, the political presence of the United States has been far more pervasive in some societies—such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Haiti—than in others. Finally, the cultural patterns of the controlling powers, though conveyed through a grossly uniform colonial design, have differentially affected the nature of local society in these various lands—Dutch, English, French, Spanish, North American and other imperial societies by no means have had the same impact on their respective colonies. These sources of difference, along with other considerations (such as the size, ecology, strategic location, and natural resources of each unit), have created a complex socio-cultural mosaic. It is in the light of this complexity that

[27] Michael G. SMITH has applied Furnivall's concept of "the plural society" to the study of the Caribbean, first in his essay "A Framework for Caribbean Studies," *Caribbean Affairs* Series, Extra-Mural Department, University College of the West Indies (n.d. [1955]), and since then in numerous other publications, including his *Stratification in Grenada* (Berkeley, 1965), and *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley, 1965). Van Lier was the first social scientist to attempt a general theoretical statement concerning the common structural attributes of Caribbean societies (*op. cit.*, 1950) ; Smith has carried the theme somewhat further.

one seeks to assess the presence of a sense of national identity in any Caribbean society. By "national identity" is meant here a subjective and shared feeling of belonging in the nation-state and regarding it as one's own. Such a feeling in a Caribbean society cannot easily depend, it seems to the writer, on containment within a metropolitan tradition and culture, though it may of course employ that tradition itself. The inhabitants of a Caribbean society, in other words, have a national identity to the extent that they feel themselves to form a separate and independent entity.

Because Caribbean societies are immigrant societies, the ways in which immigrants could become assimilated to local life—their successes and failures in becoming Cuban, Jamaican, British Guianese, etc.—have proved immensely important in affecting the character and strength of national identity in each case. At the same time, whether some national identity had emerged early in the history of a particular island or society, before massive additional migrations occurred, very much affected subsequent processes of assimilation. The assimilative power of a national identity—that is, of a national culture and ideology—hinges upon the presence of a body of values and behaviors that can serve to unite a people in spite of social and economic differences (phrased in terms of class, color, language, and other differentiating variables). A high degree of likeness of conventional understandings, expressed both in the behavior and in the values of a people, ought to signify the existence of a more "solid" or "integrated" national identity than in cases where the degree of likeness is much lower.

But national identity is extremely difficult to specify, largely because the values it carries are fully articulated only rarely, and because different sectors of a national population often make different (though concordant) symbolic uses of the culture. From the perspective of a newly-arrived and massive migrant group, the national culture and ideology can function best as a means for acculturation and assimilation when there is some group or groups within the receiving society that can serve as their model. [28] Hence the initial emergence of a national culture and ideology in Caribbean societies seems to have depended to a great extent on the possibilities for growth of a "creole" group (i.e. of Old World origin, but born in the New World) whose primary identities were with the new society, rather than with their ancestral cultures of origin. Such creole stabilization occurred most clearly in the Hispanic Caribbean, where colonists came to stay and, early on, creole Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans—in sharp contrast to Spanish visitors

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[28] Ease of assimilation is also increased by a receiving society's capacity to assist newcomers in an upward economic direction—as has often happened in the United States, for instance—or by a society's possession of so pervasive an ideology that one's acceptance of the values of the culture does not depend on the achievement of social and economic mobility, as seems to be the case in the United Kingdom.

or *peninsulares*—began to create genuine insular cultures. These cultures represented the intermixing of Hispanic, Amerind and African elements in entirely new and distinctive blendings. To some extent, they were frontier cultural adaptations, and represented simplifications of the cultures of their peoples' pasts. Yet these "simple" cultures were suited to local needs, and were not merely "dilutions" or "deculturations"; descriptions of Cuban and Puerto Rican societies in the eighteenth century, for instance, make clear that the national cultures of these islands, each with its special flavor, had emerged in strength. [29]

Something of the same process occurred in the French possessions, but with some significant general differences: the Amerind cultural contribution to French Caribbean creole culture was negligible; the plantation system developed early and in strength, and confined the growth of insular cultural identity to the plantation mold for several centuries; and opportunities for consolidation of new frontier cultures in areas marginal to the plantation system—which were common in the Hispanic Caribbean—were more limited in the French possessions.

The British and Dutch Caribbean, in marked contrast to the Hispanic Caribbean, lacked all of those forces most important in the growth of new cultural identities in the islands. They lacked a missionizing religion, into which slaves could be introduced and through which they could be partly acculturated; they lacked strong overseas control over local decisions affecting the slaves, hence enabling local holders of power to exercise harsher and more arbitrary domination of slave populations, which also slowed acculturation; their planter groups were less likely to come to settle, more likely to regard their lives in the islands as temporary exiles, and—to the extent that there were illicit sexual liaisons with women of the slave group—less responsible as fathers to their bastard offspring. Intermediate social groupings hence grew more slowly in

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[29] I have avoided dealing with the question of languages in the Caribbean area in this essay. No aboriginal languages are spoken in the islands; the few remaining Island-Carib of Dominica no longer use their ancestral tongue (which was Arawakan, not Cariban). On many islands, Creole languages are spoken by some segments of the population; in Haiti, a Creole is spoken by all classes, and only an upper-class minority employs French as well. In the French and some former French islands, Creole languages of basically French lexical character, but possessing a distinctive syntax, are employed; in the British and formerly British islands, non-standard dialects of English are used by some classes; and in Curaçao, Aruba, and Bonaire, a lexically Spanish/Portuguese Creole called Papiamento is used, as well as Dutch. Sociolinguistics will eventually have much to say concerning the national cultures of the Caribbean from the linguistic point of view, but the study of such problems in the islands is still in its infancy. It may be significant that only in the Hispanic Caribbean are Creole languages or distinctive non-standard dialects of the national languages entirely lacking. See William A. STEWART, "Creole Languages in the Caribbean," in Frank A. RICE (Ed.), *Study of the Role of Second Languages* (Washington, 1962), pp. 34-53; Douglas TAYLOR, "New Languages for Old in the West Indies," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 3 (1961), pp. 277-288.

these islands, and when they did, they were not creoles of the Hispanic
sort. By the middle of the nineteenth century and thereafter, as the flows
of culturally and/or physically different migrants to the Guianas, Tri-
nidad, Jamaica, Cuba, and the Dutch and French islands began once
more, these societies differed markedly in their absorptive and accultura-
tional capacities.

Put in these terms, it will be seen that a negative correlation between
colonial and plantation regimes and the growth of national identities
and ideologies is posited. Such a formulation is admittedly much too
simplistic to explain the many variations in contemporary Caribbean
societal structure; but it may help to explain why cultures such as those
of Cuba and Puerto Rico on the one hand, and those of societies such as
Jamaica and Surinam on the other, convey such significantly different
total impressions to the foreign observer.

(8) The Caribbean picture, then, is very different from that of Nige-
ria, say, or of India, where the problem of national integration is one of
cementing culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse groupings
whose existence much predates political independence, into a viable
structure. The ethnic groups of the Caribbean have felt the effects of
colonial control imposed from afar, implemented more or less literally by
small, powerful minorities, often culturally or physically different from
themselves; all have experienced the tendency to mesh ethnic and class
identities in situations of constricted mobility; all have remarked the
relative inaccessibility and alienness of the norms governing the behaviors
of the controlling minorities. One way to put the dilemma of creating
a national identity in many Caribbean societies is to note that, in certain
cases, the more one acculturates to the governing norms of the con-
trolling group, the more one is *alienated* from local national consciousness
and transformed into a quasi-European in exile:

> For it is that mutual experience of separation from their original ground
> which makes both master and slave colonial. To be colonial is to be in a state of
> exile. And the exile is always colonial by circumstances : a man colonised by his
> incestuous love of a past whose glory is not worth our total human suicide ;
> colonised by a popular whoredom of talents whose dividends he knows he does
> not deserve ; colonised by an abstract conscience which must identify its need
> with another's distress through a process of affection called justice ; colonised
> by the barely liveable acceptance of domestic complaint ; colonised, if black in
> skin, by the agonising assault of another's eye whose meanings are based on a
> way of seeing he vainly tries to alter ; and ultimately colonised by some absent
> vision which, for want of another faith, he hopefully calls the Future. [30]

It was not, then, some undifferentiated, monolithic "colonialism" that
gave birth to the problem of Caribbean identity. The Caribbean colonies
were not European imperial possessions erected upon massive indige-
nous bases in areas of declining great literate civilizations, as was true in

[30] George LAMMING, *The Pleasures of Exile* (London, 1960), p. 229.

India and Indonesia; they were not mere ports of trade, like Macao or
Shanghai, where ancestral cultural hinterlands could remain surprisingly
unaffected in spite of the exercise of considerable European power; they were
not "tribal" mosaics, within which European colonizers carried on their
exploitation accompanied by some curious vision of the "civilizing"
function, as in the Congo, or New Guinea; nor were they areas of intense
European settlement, where new forms of European culture provided an
acculturational "anchor" for other newcomers, as in the United States
or Australia. They were, in fact, the oldest "industrial" colonies of the
West outside Europe, manned almost entirely with introduced popula-
tions, and fitted to European needs with peculiar intensity and pervasi-
veness. It is extremely important to note that in the Caribbean region,
the plantation system was a capitalistic form of development, (a fact
partly concealed by its dependence on slavery); that its organization was
highly industrial, (though this is difficult to discern because of its basis in
agriculture) that the notion of "citizenship" generally did not form part
of the imperial intent of the colonizers; and that *with or without political
independence*, the formation of any cultural integrity always lagged behind
the perpetuation of traditional bipolar social and economic structures,
usually established relatively early in the period of settlement of each
territory.

Hence the colonial ambiance of the Caribbean region is probably
distinctive and, when all of its component features are enumerated, may
even be unique in the modern world. While very significant differences
mark off the Hispanic Caribbean from the rest, and while early political
sovereignty (as in the case of Haiti) may qualify any generalization one
sets forth about the Caribbean as a whole, there are some fundamental
ways in which the region may be contrasted usefully with such areas as
West Africa, Southeast Asia, or the highland portions of Latin America.

(9) The argument is advanced here that Caribbean societies are
among the most westernized of the modern world. Westernization in
these cases is connected with the ancience of Caribbean societies as
colonies; the very early introduction of a capitalistic, agro-industrial
form of economic organization; and the break-up both of aboriginal
societies and of the ancestral cultures of those migrant groups who sup-
planted them. "Westernization" is, of course, a term with very imprecise
meanings. As it is used here, it refers primarily to the effects of lengthy
contact, of the principal mode of economic organization, and of the
elimination of the "primitive" from the cultures of Caribbean peoples.
This "westernization" has been difficult to perceive, to some extent
because Caribbean societies have remained preponderantly poor, rural
and agrarian—characteristics commonly associated with the non-
western world. But the poverty of the region did not originate in the
rudimentary technical order of aboriginal peoples, coming instead as an

accompaniment to highly-organized agricultural enterprise with a commercial mono-crop orientation, worked by slaves and forced laborers. While the plantation dominated the alluvial plains and intermontane valleys, reconstituted peasant adaptations usually had to take on their typical forms in the less favored agricultural zones in the absence of integrated agricultural traditions, and in the face of plantation (and often, even governmental) resistance. The ruralness of the region, then, is not the ruralness of tribal horticulturists, or of ancient agricultural civilizations, but the consequence of an industrial system that happened to be based on agriculture rather than on factories. Thus the Caribbean region makes clear what is well-enough known for retarded agricultural zones within more obviously western societies, as in the United States South: any absence of "westernization" is in fact the by-product of the particular sorts of western control imposed on the inhabitants.

But there is more to the argument. If one attempted to assign Caribbean communities to a continuum such as that developed by Robert Redfield,[31] with the most isolated, homogeneous, and technically retarded community at one pole, and the most urban, heterogeneous, and technically advanced community at the other, it would probably be erroneous to make a city such as Basse-Terre or Pointe à Pitre, Guadeloupe, or Kingston, Jamaica, represent the urban pole. For many Caribbean societies, the most "urban" communities are not cities but plantations.[32] The panoply of modern services—roads, communication, electricity, medical facilities, etc.—and the industrial pattern of life are likely to be as "urban" (if not more so) on a sugar plantation outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as they will be within the city itself. In other words, the Caribbean region has been both "urbanized" and "westernized" by its plantations, oil refineries and aluminum mines, more than by its cities; and the very lengthy history of plantation enterprise in the region has made for a very intense and particular sort of westernization.

So far as social interaction is concerned, the processes of urbanization and westernization—at least in some important regards—have hence advanced much further in the plantation countryside than elsewhere, in Caribbean societies. An extremely important aspect of these processes is the extent to which they have individualized Caribbean peoples, particularly with regard to their economic lives. The theoretical implications of this assertion are very serious, and cannot be dealt with adequately in the present paper; but at least some elucidation of this point is required. Many research workers in Caribbean societies have been struck by the relative absence of community-based activity in

[31] Robert REDFIELD, *The Folk Culture of Yucatan* (Chicago, 1941).
[32] Sidney W. MINTZ, "The Folk-urban Continuum and the Rural Proletarian Community," *American Journal of Sociology*, 59 (1953), pp. 194-204.

daily life; such institutional centers as the church, the school, the social club, and the political party office are likely to be entirely absent or at least very unimportant in rural community social life. It seems reasonable to argue that the weakness of community organization in the Caribbean area originated at least in part in plantation domination of island societies, and the long-range effects of this organizational form upon local life. Perhaps particularly important in this connection was the strength of the plantation system in maintaining the division of society into two substantially different segments, and the relative inability of the system to produce or to attract intermediate social groupings that could serve as links between the powerful and the powerless in local community life.[33] We have seen that the growth of creole culture, and the periodic absence or decline of the plantation economy, contributed to the development of national identity in some Caribbean societies, but in many others, these processes have remained retarded. On both the national and local levels, then, forced labor, forced immigration, and the plantation system exacted their toll.

The lack of a developed community life or community spirit, however, is but one aspect of the individualization of Caribbean peoples. Another aspect of such individualization seems to be revealed by the special kinship, mating and domestic forms that typify rural life. Many research workers in the Caribbean area have noted that among rural lower-class persons, consensual or common-law unions are often statistically predominant; that sexual unions are "fragile," and frequently terminated; that serial consensual unions are common; and that uninterrupted and civilly sanctioned monogamous marriages are the exception in many communities. Accompanying these mating practices are kinship systems of a noticeably shallow sort; few relatives are recognized terminologically, and kinship groups acting in concert on issues of common interest, so typical of many non-western or "underdeveloped" societies, are extremely rare, indeed. This very gross and general rendering of the Caribbean situation does serious violence to local variation in form, and evades the technical anthropological issues that are raised; but it is probably correct as far as it goes.[34]

[33] Dr. Peter Wilson has suggested that I am overemphasizing the plantation system and underemphasizing the sexual code that governed its social relations in my interpretation. It is certainly correct that the relative weakness of family structure among the slaves in most plantation situations greatly hampered the development of any viable community structure—since community relationships are commonly built outward from the core of the family unit. But I believe the underlying circumstances in the Caribbean area are attributable to the plantation system itself, and the limitations it imposed upon the growth of *any* institutional nexus for community life.
[34] The literature on Caribbean social and domestic organization and mating practices has grown very rapidly in the past 15 years. While any attempt to provide a complete bibliography, would be unpractical in a brief paper of this sort, the following are some of the principal recent works on these subjects: Rémy BASTIEN, *La Familia*

Rural Haitiana (Mexico City, 1951) ; Rémy BASTIEN, "Haitian Rural Family Organization," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 478-510 ; Judith BLAKE, "Family Instability and Reproductive Behavior in Jamaica," Milbank Memorial Fund, *Current Research in Human Fertility*, 1955, pp. 24-41 ; Judith BLAKE, *Family Structure in Jamaica* (New York, 1961) ; Edith CLARKE, *My Mother Who Fathered Me* (London, 1957) ; Yehudi A. COHEN, "Structure and Function : Family Organization and Socialization in a Jamaican Community," *American Anthropologist*, 58 (1956), pp. 664-686 ; Suzanne COMHAIRE-SYLVAIN, "Courtship, Marriage and Plasaj at Kenscoff, Haiti," *Social and Economic Studies*, 7 (1958), pp. 210-233 ; Suzanne COMHAIRE-SYLVAIN, "The Household at Kenscoff, Haiti," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 192-222 ; George E. CUMPER ,"The Jamaican Family : Village and Estate," *Social and Economic Studies*, 7 (1958), pp. 76-108 ; George E. CUMPER, "Household and Occupation in Barbados," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 386-419 ; William H. DAVENPORT, *A Comparative Study of Two Jamaican Fishing Communities* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1956) ; William H. DAVENPORT, "Introduction," *Caribbean Social Organization, Social and Economic Studies* (special number), 10 (1961), pp. 380-385 ; William H. DAVENPORT, "The Family System of Jamaica," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 420-454 ; William J. GOODE, "Illegitimacy in the Caribbean Social Structure," *American Sociological Review*, 25 (1960), pp. 21-30 ; William J. GOODE, "Illegitimacy, Anomie, and Cultural Penetration," *American Sociological Review*, 26 (1961), pp. 910-925; Sidney GREENFIELD, *Family Organization in Barbados* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1958) ; Sidney M. GREENFIELD, "Socio-economic Factor and Family Form," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1960), pp. 72-85 ; Fernando HENRIQUES, "West Indian Family Organization," *Caribbean Quarterly*, II (1952), pp. 16-24; Fernando HENRIQUES, *Family and Colour in Jamaica* (London, 1953) ; Chandra JAYAWARDENA, "Marital Stability in two Guianese Sugar Estate Communities," *Social and Economic Studies*, 9 (1960), pp. 76-100 ; Chandra JAYAWARDENA, "Family Organization in Plantations in British Guiana," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, III (1962), pp. 43-64 ; Morton KLASS, *East Indians in Trinidad : A Study of Cultural Persistence* (New York and London, 1961) ; Miriam KREISELMAN, *The Caribbean Family : A Case Study in Martinique* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1958) ; Peter KUNSTADTER, " A Survey of the Consanguine or Matrifocal Family," *American Anthropologist*, 65 (1963), pp. 56-66 ; Dom Basil MATTHEWS, *Crisis of the West Indian Family* (Trinidad, 1953) ; Sidney W. MINTZ, "A Final Note," *Caribbean Social Organization, Social and Economic Studies* (special number), 10 (1961), pp. 528-535 ; Sidney W. MINTZ and William H. DAVENPORT (eds.), *Caribbean Social Organization, Social and Economic Studies* (special number), 10 (1961) ; John W. MURRA, Discussion of Raymond T. SMITH, "The Family in the Caribbean," *Caribbean Studies : A Symposium*, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1957, pp. 75-79 ; Keith F. OTTERBEIN, "The Household Composition of the Andros Islanders," *Social and Economic Studies*, 12 (1963), pp. 78-83 ; Keith F. OTTERBEIN, "The Courtship and Mating System of the Andros Islanders," *Social and Economic Studies*, 13 (1964), pp. 282-301 ; Keith F. OTTERBEIN, "Caribbean Family Organization: a Comparative Analysis," *American Anthropologist*, 67 (1965), pp. 66-79; George W. ROBERTS, "Some Aspects of Mating and Fertility in the West Indies," *Population Studies*, VIII (1955), pp. 199-227 ; George W. ROBERTS, *The Population of Jamaica* (Cambridge, 1957) ; George W. ROBERTS and Lloyd BRAITHWAITE, "Fertility Differentials by Family Type in Trinidad," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 84 (1960), pp. 963-980 ; George W. ROBERTS and Lloyd BRAITHWAITE, "Mating among East Indian and non-Indian Women in Trinidad," *Social and Economic Studies*, 11 (1962), pp. 203, 240 ; George E. SIMPSON, "Sexual and Familial Institutions in Northern Haiti," *American Anthropologist*, 44 (1942), pp. 655-674 ; Michael G. SMITH, "Kinship and Household in Carriacou," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 455-477 ; Michael G. SMITH, *West Indian Family Structure* (Seattle, Washington, 1962) ; Michael G. SMITH, *Kinship and Community in Carriacou* (New Haven, 1962) ; Raymond T. SMITH, " Aspects of Family Organization in a Coastal Negro Community in British Guiana," *Social and Economic Studies*, 1 (1953), pp. 87-111 ; Raymond T. SMITH, *The Negro Family in British Guiana* (London, 1957) ; Raymond T. SMITH, "The Family in the Caribbean," *Caribbean Studies : A Symposium*, Institute of Social and Economic

Hence Caribbean communities are noteworthy for their relative lack of two of the most important bases of social assortment: community-based institutional nexuses (such as those provided by churches, schools, political affiliations, etc.) and kinship-group nexuses. It would be entirely incorrect to contend that such bases of group action are wholly missing or inoperative; but the contrast Caribbean rural communities provide, both to western (i.e. European and North American) rural communities on the one hand, and to non-western (i.e. Asian and African) rural communities on the other, is highly provocative. At the same time, to emphasize the feebleness of local institutions and of kinship as assortative and integrative forces in Caribbean rural life is not the same as saying that nothing serves to interrelate local people socially. Probably the main basis of social interaction among rural lower-class people—who make up the bulk of the population in Caribbean societies—is to be found in their ability to establish short- or long-term dyadic social relationships with those around them, either along lines of common interest, or to satisfy particular individual needs. In other words, rather than forming themselves into "groups" around some institution or in terms of kinship rights and obligations, these folk create radial sets of two-person linkages, and at the center of each such series is a single individual. The phrasing of this hypothesis should not be taken too literally; it would be ludicrously inaccurate to contend that there are, in effect, no social groups in Caribbean rural lower-class life other than those based on dyadic ties. But a few examples may give more substance to the argument.

The Catholic custom of selecting godparents for one's children is still socially important and enthusiastically practiced in rural communities in such societies as Puerto Rico and Haiti. This institution— *compadrazgo* in Spanish—gives some protection and security to the new-

Research, University College of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1957, pp. 67-75 ; Raymond T. SMITH, "Culture and Social Structure in the Caribbean ; Some Recent Work on Family and Kinship Studies," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, VI (1963), pp. 24-46 ; Raymond T. SMITH and Chandra JAYAWARDENA, "Hindu Marriage Customs in British Guiana," *Social and Economic Studies*, 7 (1958), pp. 178-194 ; Raymond T. SMITH and Chandra JAYAWARDENA, "Marriage and the Family amongst East Indians in British Guiana," *Social and Economic Studies*, 8 (1959), pp. 321-376 ; Nancie L. SOLIEN, "Household and Family in the Caribbean," *Social and Economic Studies*, 9 (1960), pp. 101-106 ; Nancie L. SOLIEN (DE GONZÁLEZ), "Family Organization in five Types of Migratory Wage Labor," *American Anthropologist*, 63 (1961), pp. 1264-1280 ; J. Mayone STYCOS, *Family and Fertility in Puerto Rico* (New York, 1955) ; Lionel VALLÉE, *The Negro Family of St. Thomas : A Study of Role Differentiation* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Cornell University, 1964) ; Lionel VALLÉE, "A propos de la légitimité et de la matrifocalité : tentative de ré-interprétation," *Anthropologica* (n.s.), 7 (1965), pp. 163-177 ; Peter J. WILSON, *The Social Structure of Providencia Isla, Colombia* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1961) ; Peter J. WILSON, "Household and Family on Providencia," *Social and Economic Studies*, 10 (1961), pp. 511-527.

born child, and to its parents. It could easily be interpreted as a basis for the formation of a "network" or "web" of social ties, uniting many individuals in a group alliance.[35] But this network or web does not, in fact, create a social group in which each participant is actively related to every other. Rather, a father who chooses consecutive sets of *compadres* for his children stands at the center of a radial system, maintaining individual dyadic relationships with each such *compadre*. Again, the market women of Haiti enter into personalized economic relationships with series of clients *(pratik* in Haitian)—both those from whom they buy, and those to whom they sell. These relationships provide a certain amount of security of supply and of demand in situations of glut or scarcity, and are validated by small concessions in profit margin, credit extensions, and the like. Once again, one might suppose that a series of such *pratik* forms a network or web, a social group the individual members of which are drawn together out of common interest.[36] But again, the truth is that each such woman stands at the center of a radial system of clientage ties, and the system is different, consists of a different "group", for each participant in it. Hence the distinctive quality of Caribbean rural social structure may be its heavy emphasis on individual dyadic ties, as opposed to membership in social groups having some corporate institutional or kin basis.[37] Space limitations prevent the citation of other examples to reveal more fully the functioning of social relationships based on ties of this sort. Again, the point is not that group-based or community-based activity does not occur in Caribbean lower-class life, but that the patterns and traditions for such activity differ significantly from what might be expected by observers of poor, rural, agrarian communities in "underdeveloped" societies.

To carry the argument a step further, one must stress the importance of differing cultural traditions, social histories, and contemporary economic and political conditions in affecting the degree of individualism operative in specific cases. Horowitz, in comparing a number of Caribbean communities in terms of their "integration," has suggested that small-scale, private land ownership and operation makes for greater community integration, and contrasts peasant villages with rural proletarian villages in support of his position.[38] It might also be contended that societies which have enjoyed lengthy isolation and possess long-

[35] Sidney W. MINTZ and Eric R. WOLF, "An Analysis of Ritual Coparenthood (compadrazgo)," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology,* 6 (1950), pp. 341-368.

[36] Sidney W. MINTZ, "Pratik : Haitian Personal Economic Relationships," *Proceedings of the Annual Spring Meetings of the American Ethnological Society,* 1961, pp. 54-63.

[37] This part of the argument owes much to discussions with my colleague, Dr. Peter Wilson.

[38] Michael M. HOROWITZ, "A Typology of Rural Community Forms in the Caribbean," *Anthropological Quarterly,* 33 (1960), pp. 177-187.

established peasantries, such as Haiti, will probably show less of such individualism than those having lengthy careers as plantation colonies; and that the highland subcultures of countries such as Cuba or Puerto Rico may exhibit less of this sort of individualism than the proletarian subcultures of their coasts. But these assertions will remain almost entirely hypothetical until additional research on such problems is carried out.[39]

Whether these concluding contentions pinpoint some unique quality of Caribbean social organization is doubtful. The view espoused here is that dyadic social forms of the *compadre* and *pratik* sort, as they operate in Caribbean social life, are an adaptive response to the intense westernization, lengthy colonial trajectory, heterogeneous populational origins, and the rather special economic history of the Caribbean area. Furthermore, it can be contended that many other societies, only recently propelled in a "western" direction, are likely to take on more and more similarity to the Caribbean mold, at least in certain sectors of their social systems. Whereas Europe and the United States have been able to develop a heavily individualistic emphasis in social relations, they have done so from the vantage-point of long-established institutional forms of group integration. It is perhaps of some interest, then, that those aspects of modern western society regarded as most depersonalizing and "anti-human"—the view of persons as things and as numbers, interchangeable, expendable, and faceless—have a very lengthy history in the Caribbean area, and developed there in a context of very imperfect transfers of European social institutions.

[39] In a provocative paper, George M. FOSTER writes : "The model suggests that where a society is conceived as a network of social relations based on dyadic contracts, in which no two people have exactly the same ties, there can be no blocks to serve as the basis for either positive or negative action." Though written to summarize the description of a Mexican highland peasant village, this phrasing well fits many Caribbean rural communities. The major difference may rest with the extent to which Carribbean peoples lacks any very elaborate constitutional and kinship forms as social-structural background against which dyadic interaction takes place—perhaps making them extreme cases of the sort the author is describing. See George M. FOSTER, "The Dyadic Contract," *American Anthropologist,* 63 (1961), pp. 1173-1192, 65 (1963), pp. 1280-1294.