

PERSISTENT POVERTY

Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World

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the conclusion that the consolidation of the plantation system in all areas of the world over the past few decades has been really a lengthening of the cycle as a result of the factors listed above, *c* in particular.²⁰ But then it is difficult to explain why the plantation has failed to disintegrate in places where the phase of closed resources has long since passed—Barbados and St. Kitts, for example. It would seem instead that even where a peasantry emerges in the cycle, its existence depends in large measure on the plantation and there are in fact no social forces leading to the disintegration of the system. The analysis in the present study supports this theory and concludes with the general hypothesis that the social forces inherent in the plantation system serve to perpetuate its existence and indeed to increase continuously its hegemony over the economies those social forces dominate. The disintegration of the system cannot result from evolutionary processes—a hypothesis to be confirmed or rejected when we arrive at a general social theory of the plantation.

3. Plantations and economic development

Imperialism, mercantilism, and slavery ensured that all the benefits of plantation production up to Emancipation accrued to the metropolis. In economic terms the plantation colony was simply an overseas extension of the metropolis. Nineteenth-century British economists were quite correct in describing the West Indies as a place "where England finds it convenient to carry on the produc-

20. This would be a generous interpretation because Thompson himself views the appearance of peasant farms in the West Indies and the U. S. South as evidence of the end of the plantation system in these areas. On the other hand, one might argue that it is necessary for the plantation to engulf the economy so much that it then sets up the social conditions for its own destruction. In this case the present phase of deepened entrenchment coinciding with newly won independence is a prelude to the subsequent disintegration. Haiti and Cuba, which are among the few plantation colonies that have been independent for some time, have indeed experienced a disintegration of the system in some way. But what about Brazil and the United States South?

tion of sugar, coffee, and a few other tropical commodities."²¹ The income generated from plantation production served to promote industrialization and development in the metropolis.²² The plantation colony was not an economy in any meaningful sense. It consisted of a number of units, each of which was generally a self-sufficient economic entity. The plantation unit was organized to produce an export staple and almost all its resources were deployed to that end. Insofar as production of the staple did not utilize all the resources all of the time, some were used to produce goods and services required to maintain the unit. The balance of inputs for staple production and consumption requirements were met by imports. Merchants and bankers in the metropolis played an important role. The merchants provisioned the plantation with supplies of consumption and capital goods and handled the sale of staple output in the metropolis; and the bankers provided the necessary credit to lubricate these transactions.

The character of the slave plantation was such that it created only subsistence income for the residents of the plantation colony and it could not generate spread effects for economic development in the colony because of the almost total absence of linkages outside of the unit itself. Lloyd Best has described the situation exceptionally well in his "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy."²³ What follows draws from that exposition. The slave plantation economy has three important structural characteristics which determine the pattern of development. First is that it is structurally a part of an "overseas economy" consisting of a metropole which is the locus of initiative and decision, of product elaboration and disposal, and of the provisioning of capital, technical and managerial skill, and other services. This means that the

21. This quotation from John Stuart Mill is cited by Greaves in "Plantations in World Economy," Pan American Union, *Plantation Systems in the New World*, p. 16.

22. See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London, 1964) for an indication of this relationship between the West Indian plantation colonies and Britain during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

23. Lloyd Best, "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy," *Social and Economic Studies*, September 1968; see in particular pp. 287-92 and 301-11.

plantation colony is simply a locus of production of the export staple. The second characteristic is that the slave plantation economy is really a "segmental economy" consisting of a number of firms, each of which is a self-sufficient unit almost completely independent of the rest of the economy. The individual units are held together by "little more than a system of law and order." (Each plantation even supplies its own civil government.) The earlier description of the plantation as a total institution applies as well to the economic structure. The third characteristic is what Best describes as "incalculability." As a result of the first two characteristics, "the commodity flow from stage to stage does not involve any considerable money flows. Accounting takes the form of imputing prices. There is thus a large measure of price indeterminacy."²⁴

A number of consequences follow from these characteristics. First, an analysis of adjustments and resultant development in the plantation colony is meaningful only within the context of analysis of the whole overseas economy of which it is a part. Second, because linkages are confined to activity on each plantation unit and its corresponding metropolitan connection, there are no significant spread effects from staple production within the plantation colony. And since the product elaboration takes place in the metropolis the lion's share of the value added accrues there. Third, the nature of the transactions involved in production and sale of the staple is such that money flows in the plantation colony are kept to a minimum. So far as the colony is concerned then, very little money income is available to its residents from plantation production and the plantation does not provide the impetus for development. As Best indicates:

The economy can be complexified and diversified only to the extent first, that Maroons gain legitimacy and together with settlers gain land, create intermediate and final demand linkages between and among themselves and with the urban trades; and secondly, to the extent that the embryonic domestic monetary and banking system . . . is able to create money to lubricate these exchanges.²⁵

24. *Ibid.*, p. 308.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 307. The reader should refer to the accounting framework presented by Best for a dramatic pictorial exposition of the structure of the slave plantation economy.

The dynamic for economic development is therefore not within the plantation sector but outside of it. Economic progress in the plantation colony can come only from the efforts of those outside the direct orbit of the slave plantation.

We need now to consider the pattern of economic development in the plantation colonies in the period after Emancipation to identify the dynamic forces and, of course, to bring our focus back to consideration of the present-day structure and dynamics of the plantation economies. Again the West Indian case is used to illustrate the pattern so as to maintain the link here with our discussion of social and political change in the preceding section. In the period since Emancipation, two general economic trends need to be noted. The first is the establishment and growth of a peasantry and the second is the evolution of the multinational plantation enterprise. After the experience of the brutality of plantation, the ex-slaves sought every opportunity to secure an existence for themselves as independent of the plantation as possible. Where land of whatever quality was available they established subsistence plots which eventually were able to produce marketable surpluses. A considerable degree of diversification of the economies was the immediate result. In addition to production of foodstuffs for sale in the domestic market, the ex-slaves also introduced new export crops, such as bananas. Because the plantations had engrossed all of the best land, this peasant activity was restricted to the poorer hillside lands which nevertheless yielded enough for peasant subsistence as well as surpluses for sale. The money economy expanded, an infrastructure of footpaths (rudimentary roads) developed in the mountainous interiors, an internal system of marketing emerged, a rudimentary domestic banking and credit system gradually took form, and linkages between the different production and service sectors were established.

The plantation sector continued to concentrate on production of the export staple, mainly sugar. Fluctuations in prices, competition from other sugar-producing countries, and technological changes made it increasingly difficult for individual planters to survive. And the corporate plantation enterprise emerged to consolidate the plantation sector. These enterprises consistently evolved into multinational firms operating in several plantation

* countries and in the metropolis where decision making and product elaboration are centered. In addition, these firms have grown into vertically integrated enterprises supplying much of the inputs of goods and services required in plantation production and carrying out the processing and marketing of the plantation output as well. These phenomena are of direct relevance to the present development problems of plantation economies.

The emergence of the vertically integrated corporate plantation enterprise has really served to preserve the character of the slave plantation system. The three characteristics of that earlier institutional environment—appendage in overseas economy, total economic institution, and incalculability—have been preserved and strengthened in the period since Emancipation. On the other hand, the growth of the peasantry was equivalent to an expansion of the Maroon sector of the slave plantation economy. It is this expansion which has been the chief source of economic development of the West Indian economies since Emancipation. However, the plantation still dominates the economic life of the region. It owns and controls the use of the best land, has access to credit and technology, owns all the factory capacity for the rudimentary processing of plantation crops in the islands, provides services for the marketing of the export staples (shipping, insurance, overseas distribution, and so forth), and influences government policy in fundamental ways. In addition, the legacy of life on the plantation is reflected in the economic behavior of the peasants. For example, the taste for imported foodstuffs (like saltfish and flour) is well established and this pattern of consumption influences the effect of consumption spending on the economies. And finally the peasants still rely to a large extent on wage work on the plantations to supplement their own production, a substantial part of which consists of export crops which involve dependence on the plantation in one way or another (for example, processing or marketing).

Grand plantation
What we have, therefore, are what the economists call "two sector" economies in which the dynamic sector for growth (the peasant sector) is bottled up by the other sector (the plantation sector), which contributes more to growth elsewhere. The development problem is therefore essentially one of breaking the constraints bottling up the dynamic peasant sector. The extent to which peas-

ant production is constrained by plantations varies from place to place according to circumstances. But it does seem, from information provided in the last chapter, to be of general occurrence in most of the plantation economies. Our conclusion here regarding the nature of the economic development problem in plantation economies (based on the historical experience of the West Indies) is so significantly different from that depicted by the existing literature on economic development that it is necessary briefly to review some of those contributions in the light of the present study.

The two-sector models of the development literature depict a situation in which there is a "modern" sector, in which inheres the dynamic for development, and a "traditional" sector, which is stagnant. And the development problem is seen as one of transferring resources from the traditional to the modern sector. In the underdeveloped countries to which these models refer the modern sector is usually comprised of either plantations or mines. The implicit assumption of these models is that because the so-called "modern sector" utilizes production techniques that are similar to those found in the more advanced countries of the world, it offers development possibilities akin to the development patterns of those countries. And the problem is really one of transferring all resources—in particular, labor—to this sector. It is further assumed that the expansion of the modern sector is facilitated by unlimited supplies of labor from the traditional sector.²⁶ Any seri-

26. The original statement of this position is to be found in W. A. Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour," *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies*, May 1954. Lewis subsequently extended the discussion in "Unlimited Labour: Further Notes," *The Manchester School* . . . , January 1958. And the model has been refined, extended, and garnished by numerous writers among whom Ranis and Fei perhaps deserve particular mention so far as the garnish is concerned. See Gustav Ranis and J. C. H. Fei, "A Theory of Economic Development," *American Economic Review*, September 1961, and *Development of the Labor Surplus Economy: Theory and Policy* (Homewood, Illinois, 1964). The Lewis two-sector model is the foundation for much of the existing economic formulations of the development problem. In all these formulations "modern" and "traditional" are defined in terms of production techniques. The modern sector utilizes relatively capital intensive techniques which contrasts with relatively labor intensive techniques of the traditional sector. Thus we have a high-income,

ous analysis of the history of plantations will reveal that the main problem of plantation agriculture from the outset to the present day has been and is one of securing adequate labor supplies (see Chapter 4). In all the plantation economies today a shortage of labor for plantation work co-exists with massive unemployment and underemployment. This suggests that those who make up this pool of unemployed labor services have a higher reserve price for plantation work than can be met by existing plantation wages. Far from facing a situation of unlimited labor supplies, the plantation sector is actually constrained by extremely limited labor supplies.

However, our contention with the two-sector models in vogue does not end there. We need seriously to question the assumption that the plantation (modern) sector provides the dynamic for development and that, therefore, the development problem resolves itself simply into bringing more resources into that sector. Again history is instructive here. If the West Indian case is a good example of the general case, and it seems to be as the rest of this study will indicate, then the development problem would seem to be the reverse of what is suggested by the two-sector models. The reason for this is that, as we have already suggested, the plantation sector dynamizes development elsewhere than in the plantation economies. This is a proposition that is developed and substantiated in much of what follows (see, in particular, Chapter 7). The two-sector models that place the plantation sector at the center stage of development in the countries with which we are concerned are therefore misleading.

The legacy of the two-sector models of economic development has also served to inform current thinking on the problems of *agricultural* development. In this more restricted field of inquiry everything tends to be cast in terms of the same classification of modern and traditional. Modern agriculture is said to be in a state of continuous disequilibrium in which rates of return on investment are sufficiently high to consistently generate improved technology and encourage the use of new inputs. Traditional agricul-

high-productivity sector on the one hand and a low-income, low-productivity sector on the other hand. The development problem is essentially one of expanding the high-productivity sector at the expense of the low-productivity one.

ture is said to be in a low-level equilibrium trap in which returns to investment are so low that farmers cannot be induced to adopt new inputs and new techniques. And the problem facing underdeveloped (or traditional) agriculture is simply one of breaking out of this equilibrium trap.²⁷ So far as the plantation economies of the world are concerned this formulation is grossly inadequate. The plantation sector of these economies fits the characteristics of modern agriculture but that does not guarantee a developed agriculture so far as the countries involved are concerned. Furthermore, it would appear that one of the chief obstacles to increased investment in the peasant sectors of plantation economies is that the rates of return on new investment and improved techniques are low because of the poor quality of land which is available to peasants as a result of the monopoly of good land by the plantations. And, in addition, the banking system and other financial intermediaries are too geared to servicing plantation needs to provide sufficient credit for peasant production. Insofar as peasant production in this setting fits the characterization of traditional agriculture the agricultural development problem must be seen in strictly structural terms, not in the marginalist tradition of the Schultz model and its derivatives.

In general, only a small portion of the existing literature on economic development adequately portrays the development problem in the plantation economies of the world. A few contributions have dealt with certain aspects relevant to the plantation but there are none that embody sufficiently the structural characteristics of plantation economies to really fill the bill. Identification of the problems of the general class of "export-propelled economies" and formulations of models of "open economies" and "dependent economies" have been on the whole quite useful.²⁸ But the more

27. The original formulation of this position was advanced by T. W. Schultz in his *Transforming Traditional Agriculture* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1964). Like the Lewis model of economic development this contribution has stimulated much extension and refinement and is the foundation of most current theorizing on agricultural development.

28. Among these, the contributions of Levin, Watkins, and Seers deserve special mention. See J. V. Levin, *The Export Economies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960); Melville Watkins, "A Staple Theory of

significant contributions have come from a very small number of scholars who have treated the plantation case as a special type in the general category of export economies. Baldwin, North, and Myint are the chief people involved here.²⁹ These writers have indicated that in addition to the general problem of export dependence, special problems of development derive from the special character of the production function, the unequal distribution of income, the limited development of linkages, and the low skill content of labor, all of which characterize plantation agriculture.

However, we need to expand on this limited base: to consider why the characteristics just mentioned inhere in the plantation structure; to introduce into the picture other economic aspects of plantations (the influence of the multinational enterprises, for example); and to integrate all that with sociological, psychological, and political considerations. That is precisely what this book is about.

Economic Growth," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, May 1963; and Dudley Seers, "The Mechanism of an Open Petroleum Economy," *Social and Economic Studies*, June 1964. For an interesting and recent application of the export model to a plantation economy, see Donald Snodgrass, *Ceylon: An Export Economy in Transition* (Homewood, Illinois, 1966). The limitations of the general export model for analysis of development in plantation economies are revealed by Snodgrass's study which naïvely equates constitutional independence with a change in the traditional institutional order.

29. The references we have in mind are R. E. Baldwin, "Patterns of Development in Newly Settled Regions," *The Manchester School* . . . , May 1956, and more recently "Export Technology and Development from Subsistence Level," *The Economic Journal*, March 1963; D. C. North, "Agriculture and Regional Economic Growth," *Journal of Farm Economics*, December 1959, and his book, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1961); and Hla Myint, "Mines and Plantations," Chapter 4 of his book *The Economics of the Developing Countries* (London, 1964, and New York, 1965).

3

Social and political dimensions of plantation society

In Appendix II is described, in some detail, the nature of the economic organization of different types of plantations as can be found in various parts of the world. It is clear from those descriptions that all types of plantations have certain things in common: they cover relatively large areas, numerous unskilled workers are involved, decision making is highly centralized, the pattern of management organization is authoritarian, and workers and decision makers are separated by social and cultural differences. The particular pattern of economic organization associated with any one type is a variant of a general pattern which ensures effective communication from the decision makers at the top to those below who must implement the decisions. Authority and control are inherent in the plantation system.

Geographical isolation of the plantation unit reduces the extent to which those who live and work in it can have intercourse with other people outside its boundaries. In the least extreme cases this outside intercourse is mostly a weekend business whereas in the more extreme cases it may be virtually non-existent. On account of this isolation, people living and working on a plantation make up a distinct community which derives its full flavor from the system itself. Thus, in addition to being a system of production, the plantation is a community.

Since the community owes its being to the unit of production, it follows that its social structure and the pattern of interpersonal re-

lations will be a reflection of the type of economic organization that governs production. The authority structure that characterizes the pattern of economic organization extends to social relationships. So we find that the plantation community is one with an inherently rigid system of social stratification—normally with white European-stock owners or managers at the top, culturally mixed skilled personnel in the middle, and culturally different unskilled laborers at the bottom. There is virtually no mobility in either direction within this system of stratification, and every aspect of life on the plantation reflects the social structure. Housing is perhaps the most obvious to any visitor; on a tour of any plantation the differences in quality of housing provided for owner or general manager, staff, and workers are quite dramatic. Recreational facilities, social group activities—everything is in tune with the pattern of stratification deriving from occupational status on the plantation.

Plantation work does not alone determine the social structure. For those living on the plantation, the institution is not just a place of work; it is their whole life. It is more normal than not that the plantation runs a store for selling supplies to workers and provides the only link between them and the outside world. In a sense the institution affords them the very means of survival, so that regardless of cultural or ethnic differences, the plantation is a binding force that welds people on it together. It is unifying. Everyone owes his existence to it. To rebel against it is to threaten one's own survival, for alternative opportunities are normally hard to find.

So far as concerns the plantation owner, the *primum mobile* is to extract as much labor services as possible out of the labor force available. This naturally leads to a pattern of exploitive authoritarian management organization which was at a peak on the slave plantation. Since the abolition of slavery, however, the pattern has become less exploitive and more benevolent. And the modernization of plantations in more recent times has given rise, in a few instances, to less benevolent and more consultative patterns of management. Benevolence and paternalism have been a necessary part of the strategy of plantation owners to keep the plantation community welded together. And this became so ingrained in

many of the older plantation areas that modern corporate enterprises which have taken over planter units inherited a legacy of paternalism which is difficult to dislodge. Foster and Creyke noted this as one of the problems confronting Bookers after they acquired the Jamaican plantation described in Appendix II. And Hutchinson notes the same phenomenon in his study of a similar situation in Brazil as follows:

The present social system tends to follow the old, traditional, family-oriented, slaveholding complex. The pattern of face-to-face interpersonal relations, developed during centuries of sugar-cane monoculture based on slavery, persists in modified form. . . . there is still the highly personal, intimate relationship based upon mutual rights and obligations and a sense of the obligations of nobility. Even the *usina* system perpetuates this paternalism to a high degree.¹

It is easy to change the characters in the system but hard to change the system itself.

The plantation is a total economic institution. It binds every one in its embrace to the one task of executing the will of its owner or owners. And because it is omnipotent and omnipresent in the lives of those living within its confines, it is also a total social institution. Social relations within the plantation community are determined by the economic organization that governs production. Now imagine an economy composed of only plantation producing units. In such a case, the social structure and distribution of political power in the country as a whole would merely be a larger reproduction of that existing on the individual plantation. No country is purely an aggregation of plantations, in fact. But, as the discussion in this chapter indicates, the plantation economies and sub-economies of the world reveal social and political characteristics almost identical to those found within the individual plantation community. Thus we can appropriately define plantation society as a particular class of society with distinguishing characteristics of social structure and political organization, and laws of motion governing social change. The rest of this chapter develops this point.

1. H. W. Hutchinson, *Village and Plantation Life in Northeastern Brazil* (Seattle, Washington, 1957), p. 8.

1. Demographic characteristics of the plantation economies

The present-day composition of population in all the plantation economies of the world is a direct result of the movement of labor which the plantation system effected in the past. All the black people in the New World were brought here by the plantation. So also were all the East Indians now living in this hemisphere and in other plantation economies of the Indian and Pacific oceans and Southeast Asia (including Ceylon). Cultural plurality is a characteristic feature of all plantation societies because the plantation brought together people of different races and cultural backgrounds to carry out the task of production. Everywhere in the plantation world today we find national population groups that consist of people and sub-groups different in race. We are not here concerned with the fact that differences in racial composition of population exist in countries where plantations are not dominant. The argument is simply that the dominance of plantations in any particular situation is *alone* a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a mixed population base.

Before the arrival of the plantation, the plantation areas of the New World had been peopled by the red Indians. The plantation brought white Europeans at first, then brought black people from Africa as slaves, then brought the East Indian people as indentured laborers. The indigenous Indians never managed to survive the European conquest. And today black people, East Indians, and white people make up the populations in the New World plantation economies—roughly in the same proportion as existed on an individual plantation. Throughout the West Indies, for example, white people are a very small percentage while black people make up the bulk of the population because numerous workers were associated with individual plantations which normally have one or a few white families as owners or managers. Similarly, the relative importance of Negroes and East Indians in a particular country and the distribution of these two races throughout the region are linked directly with the plantation. For example, plantations in the smaller West Indian islands did not need to rely on indentured labor after Emancipation because the ex-slaves there had

little choice but to continue working on the plantation as all the land had already been alienated. But in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana, indenture was necessary and East Indians were brought in. East Indians are a relatively small percentage of population in Jamaica as compared to the proportion in Trinidad and Guyana, and this reflects the fact that resource situation was far less open in Jamaica after the abolition of slavery. The sugar industries of Trinidad and Guyana developed rather late and, for the most part, after slavery had been abolished. Consequently, the plantation need for indentured East Indian labor was greater there. These workers were brought in during the period 1836–1917; at present East Indians are more than 50 per cent of the population in Guyana and roughly 40 per cent in Trinidad.

Elsewhere indentured migration of East Indians also rapidly transformed the composition of populations. In Mauritius, this migration began in 1835; ten years later Indians made up a third of the island's population and by 1861 had reached two-thirds, remaining about the same up to the present time. In Fiji, indentured migration of East Indians lasted from 1879 to 1916; at present Indians outnumber the indigenous Fijians, being about one-half of the total population. The same pattern obtains for Ceylon, Malaya, and to a lesser extent Indonesia. The Ceylon plantations drew large numbers of contract indentured workers from the south of India—mainly Tamils. Today these Indians are over 10 per cent of Ceylon's population and they are roughly 70 per cent of the labor force working on plantations. Malaya also recruited plantation labor from the same part of India beginning in the late nineteenth century. Between 1911 and 1920, these laborers were brought in at the rate of 90,000 a year. Although the indenture system was ended in 1910, the *kangany* or gang system of recruitment from India continued until the Government of India terminated it in 1938. Today the Indians are over 10 per cent of the population in Malaya, and most of them work on rubber and tea plantations.²

In the plantation sub-economies, population composition can

2. William Morgan, *Economic Survey of the Tea Plantation Industry* (International Federation of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers, Geneva, 1963), pp. 28 and 46–47.

also be directly linked with the plantation influence. The predominantly black population of the Caribbean lowlands of the Central American republics came from the Caribbean islands in the service of the plantation. And the substantial percentages of black people in the populations of the United States and Brazil are a legacy of the slave plantation. In these two countries, the percentage of black people in the plantation sub-economies is much less than would normally have been because of internal migration to other parts of the country. Today, black people make up more than 10 per cent of the total population of the United States. If all these people were still concentrated in the plantation South they would represent well over half of that region's total population. In Brazil, black people are about a third of the total population which is equivalent to more than half the population of the plantation Northeast.³ It should be pointed out, however, that these two areas differ somewhat from the other old plantation areas of the New World. In the United States South numerous "poor whites" had been involved in the plantation system (or were within its pale), whereas in Northeast Brazil, the indigenous Indians remained a relatively important group since they were able to minimize contact with Europeans in the vast territory available. Consequently, black people do not constitute as large a portion of the population of these two areas as in the West Indies.

In general, then, we can conclude that the basic population characteristics of all the plantation economies of the world reflect the plantation influence very significantly. Different races that comprise the plantation work force in different countries represent significant shares of national or regional population. The presence of Negroes and East Indians in the New World, and East Indians in most other plantation areas, is a direct legacy of the plantation. So also is most of the European presence. In addition to these two groups, we should also expect to find a sizable percentage classified by the censuses as "mixed." These people represent the out-

3. There are about 22 million black people in the United States as a whole, whereas the figure, given in Chapter 1, for the plantation South is about 39 million. In Brazil, race is officially an elusive concept. The estimate of one-third is based on what the census defines as "black" and "pardo," which includes black people of mixed ancestry.

come of a natural union between the white plantation owners and managers and non-white women from the plantation work force. The actual percentage distribution between these three basic ethnic groups will of course vary from place to place; but these variations can be explained in terms of the relevant history of the plantation system in particular places.

It is clear that the plantation can take credit for the original adjustment of population composition in the countries under study, for it actually transplanted people. What is not so clear is whether over time differential rates of population growth can be associated with groups directly within the plantation orbit and those without (that is, growth rate of plantation population vs. total non-plantation population in a country); and between the different racial groups within the plantation community. We can offer a few hypotheses in this connection. First, it is to be noted that plantations resorted to the importation of labor partly because of a shortage in the host environment but also partly because people far from home and their families are easier to control than indigenous people in their own home environment. And after it became increasingly difficult to secure imported labor, plantations had to rely on the labor services of the children of people imported earlier.⁴ Plantation owners, therefore, have a vested interest in encouraging plantation workers to have many children and may employ incentives to this end. Woofter's studies of plantations in the United States South suggest that something of the sort was operative there. He points out that plantation owners would assign acreage to tenant workers "on the basis of the family labor available" and concludes that "the plantation system by placing a premium on large families perpetuates a high rate of natural population increase in the South, and that this high rate of increase by producing a surplus labor supply in turn tends to perpetuate the plantation system."⁵ From these considerations it does not seem

4. Edgar Thompson makes this point in his "The Plantation: The Physical Basis of Traditional Race Relations," in Edgar Thompson (ed.), *Race Relations and the Race Problem* (Durham, North Carolina, 1939).

5. T. J. Woofter, *Landlord and Tenant on the Cotton Plantation* (U.S. Works Progress Administration, Research Monograph V, Washington, D. C., 1936), p. 7.

too unreasonable to speculate that, generally, population growth is likely to be more rapid among groups engaged in plantation work than among others in plantation society. And barring migration, we should expect to find the plantation worker group increasing in relative importance over time.⁶

The population mix that derives from the influence of the plantation system directly influences the character of society in many ways. For one thing, the different races bring with them different cultures and cultural plurality is the result. In every plantation society in the world we find two or more racial and cultural groups living side by side but having a minimum of cultural intercourse. Black people throughout the New World plantation belt have a cultural identity distinct from that of the white plantation owner and manager groups. In Trinidad and Guyana the East Indian and Negro groups live together with different cultural traditions. The same is true of the "Fijians" and the Indians, the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Ceylon, the Indians and the white-planter class in Mauritius, and the Malays, Chinese, Indians, and white people in Malaya. However, in spite of these basic differences in cultural traditions among the groups, they manage somehow to live together. And, as will be argued subsequently, this welding influence can be attributed to the plantation system. In every instance, however, the weld is continuously under pressure because of the underlying inherent social and cultural differences.

2. Social organization and structure in plantation society

The plantation influence can be traced almost directly in every important aspect of social life in the plantation societies of the world. As with plantation community, plantation society derives an ordering of social status of different groups and individuals within a country which is directly correlated with occupational status and rank in the authority structure of the plantation itself. Of course, correlation alone does not establish causality. To establish this we need to explore the historical legacy somewhat to determine what forces have molded the pattern of social organization

6. This seems to be the case with East Indians in Guyana, Trinidad, and Fiji.

which we find today in these societies. The New World experience perhaps provides the clearest illustration of plantation influence on social structure. Since this area has the longest history of continuous plantation influence, the experience there should provide useful insights into the general phenomenon.

The slave plantations of the New World brought together a few white people from Europe as owners, and large numbers of black people from Africa as forced laborers. The black people came from different parts of the west coast of Africa and were generally an odd mixture of people from different tribal and cultural backgrounds who, most often, did not speak the same language; the slave groups were mixed in terms of sex but men usually outnumbered the women, as more of them were required for the arduous task of sugar- and cotton-plantation work. On the other hand, the white Europeans who came were chiefly plantation owners, managers, and skilled laborers; and these were mostly males who viewed their association with the plantation as a temporary affair. The two groups were thrown together with one single purpose—production of the plantation crop. This meant, therefore, that the structure of authority established for this exercise would influence the entire social order on the plantation. We have already established that the slave plantation had the character of a total economic and social institution. Raymond Smith describes such institutions in the following way:

... "Total institutions" are organised groups with well-defined boundaries and with a marked internal hierarchical structure approaching an internal caste system. Examples would be asylum inmates and staff, prisoners and wardens, officers and men on board a ship at sea, slaves and masters. . . .

It is characteristic of total institutions that people enter them as already socially formed human beings with a culture and a set of attitudes which need to be reformed so that the inmate can be "handled" as a lunatic, a monk, a prisoner, a slave or whatever it might be. Mechanisms are brought into play designed to effect a clean break with the past and a destruction of the inmate's old self so that a new set of attitudes—a new "identity"—can be imposed.⁷

7. R. T. Smith, "Social Stratification, Cultural Pluralism and Integration in West Indian Societies," in S. Lewis and T. G. Mathews (eds.), *Caribbean Integration* (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, 1967), p. 230.

The slaves were put through a process known as "seasoning" to adjust them for work on the plantation. And since then, right up to the present, the black experience in the New World has been a continuous process of acculturation and socialization to the norms of the plantation system.

The social structure of the slave plantation took shape from the social organization necessary for production. White European planters and administrators stood at the top and were separated by a system of caste which placed the black slaves firmly at the bottom. An intermediate group of skilled white people also existed. And among the black people there emerged a group of racial and cultural half-castes resulting from the exploits of white males with black females. This group was generally more privileged than the pure blacks and frequently made up the staff of house servants whose tasks were less arduous than those of other blacks.⁸ Slave plantation society as a whole was simply made up of individual plantation communities. As Smith suggested, "one may say that this was a segmentary society with the plantations constituting a simple linear series of segments having little or no organic interrelation."⁹ The society as a whole was therefore rigidly stratified by race and color directly correlated with occupational status on the plantation and without any kind of social mobility whatever.

On each plantation, the white owner or administrator was lord and master and his mansion was the center of social life for all within the community. All decisions affecting the lives of the black people emanated from there. No church, state, or other social institution had direct access to the slaves. Church facilities were provided on the plantation by the master who also exercised juridical and state functions. The political order was despotic with commands issued by the master to the slaves through an

8. The structure described here is a simplification of what obtained in fact. But the abstraction is fairly representative of the situation in most cases. For a detailed exposition on the social structure of the slave plantation, see H. Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery* (London, 1967). For modifications of the general pattern described here, see, for example, W. E. Moore and R. M. Williams, "Stratification in the Ante-Bellum South," *American Sociological Review*, June 1942.

9. R. T. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

overseer. Slaves were herded together as an undifferentiated mass in compounds that had a kind of village character. Because the slaves were drawn from different cultures, they had to develop a language on the plantation in order to communicate with each other. And a common language was also necessary to facilitate the chain of command from master to slave. In the circumstances what emerged was a language which was a simplification and modification of the tongue of the masters. These are the so-called creole languages of the plantation societies today. This pattern of acculturation was to have a lasting effect on the lives of black people. For, as Thompson pointed out,

... Language is bound up with the system of social control. With its acquisition there tends to develop at the same time an acceptance of the situation. The meanings of the terms of the language develop in the general atmosphere of authority and against the background of co-operative activity involved in agricultural production. As this takes place, authority and obedience are determined more by moral and less by material factors.¹⁰

In the process, black people were increasingly emasculated culturally and socialized toward the culture of the planter class. However, they did succeed in retaining some of their original culture, and this was blended with the other to create what is now a clearly distinct sub-culture in plantation society today. Slave plantation society, therefore, had certain distinctive features: a caste system based on race, rigidly stratified social structure based on occupational status on the plantation and divided along race and color lines, and cultural plurality with integrative elements deriving from the common destiny to production of the crop for everyone in the plantation community. This last feature of the system is one which has largely escaped the notice of most plantation scholars. Yet it is one that is of great importance in explaining certain aspects of plantation societies today. The different groups on the slave plantation interacted with each other in one main area of activity—production of the crop—and from day to day, season by season, year in and year out, this was the chief bond between

10. Edgar Thompson (ed.), *Race Relations and the Race Problem*, p. 211.

them. Because production of the crop was the only reason why these groups were brought together, it is not surprising that this dominated their lives. For the white masters who owned the slaves and governed the plantations, the pattern of tolerable social organization was one that would maximize profits on production. Rigid control of the labor supply was critical and this involved control over the movement of slaves in space and status.

Although slavery has been formally abolished for about four generations or so, the basic structure of plantation society in the New World is very much what it was during slavery. The reasons for this are not very hard to find. The white-planter class monopolized the means of production on the land and were therefore in a position to maintain their dominant position. In addition, their ranks were reinforced with the arrival of non-agricultural enterprises owned and managed by their kith and kin in more recent times, so the means of production were further concentrated among that group. On the other hand, there was little that black people could do to improve their lot. Scarcity of land limited independent peasant production which meant continued dependence on the plantation. Barring emigration, the only significant scope for social mobility open to them was education. During slavery educational opportunities had been restricted. Slaves were trained only in skills useful to the plantation—artisan skills which could make the slave a more productive and contented servant. Illiteracy was almost universal among them because their masters believed that skills of reading and writing would not increase their productive value, and might even put ideas of insurrection in their heads. After Emancipation, educational opportunities for the slaves opened up somewhat. But the assimilation of what was being offered served further to acculturate black people to the culture of the dominant white class. And this served simply to expand the ranks of the intermediate social group rather than to effect any significant change in the general social structure.

Among the ranks of black people educational opportunities opened up more for the half-castes than for the rest. What limited social mobility they could achieve as a result depended in large measure on the extent to which they could succeed in divorcing the culture of black people and assimilate that of the whites. This

set the stage for a dynamic process by which black people sought social mobility by aspiring continuously to a European way of life. Education, residence, manners of speech and dress, religious beliefs and practice, social values and attitudes, and general life style all served to distinguish the blacks who had "made it" from those who had not. The white sub-culture of plantation society was thereby reinforced by the joining of the club by some of the blacks. But even so the caste line still prevents their total acceptance by the dominant white class.¹¹ The sub-culture of the rest of the black people has remained basically that which they developed on the slave plantation. Consequently, plantation societies today maintain the traditional features of stratification by color and race, as well as a certain degree of social integration. All black people in these societies regard the white European culture as superior and, in a dynamic sense, they all aspire to it. Those still fully immersed in the plantation sub-culture aspire to getting their children away from it, even if they see no possibility of getting "out" themselves.

We find therefore that the plantation societies of the New World have the rather unique characteristic of exhibiting both cultural pluralism and social integration. This curious blend derives from the fact that cultural pluralism is operative in a static sense while the motivations and aspirations of people exhibit a kind of social integration. In terms of analyzing the dynamics of social change the social-integration concept is appropriate. But in describing the social structure at any point in time cultural pluralism seems more relevant. Our general conclusion that the basic structure of plantation society in the New World today remains much the same as that of the slave era finds support in numerous studies by sociologists, social anthropologists, and historians.¹² And of course those who live in these societies know it well.

11. As will be argued below, the caste line still exists in all New World plantation societies. The distinction between the caste system now operative in the West Indies and Brazil as compared with that in the United States is simply one that reflects differences in the definition of race.

12. In this connection, see the following: for the West Indies, R. T. Smith, *op. cit.*, and his *British Guiana* (London, 1962); Lloyd Braithwaite, "Social Stratification in Trinidad," *Social and Economic Stud-*

In the plantation economies outside the New World, the influence of the plantation system on social organization and social structure in the national society was just as strong, even though there may not have been a legacy of slavery. Mauritius and Ceylon provide two good examples of this. Benedict, in his study of the plural structure of Mauritius, noted:

The pattern and nature of immigration to Mauritius produced a system of social stratification in which certain occupations tended to be the province of certain ethnic categories. The French were the estate owners. The British were the senior civil servants, the Creoles were the junior civil servants and artisans, the Chinese were the retailers and the Indians were the labourers. . . . in general the Mauritians did not amalgamate to form a homogeneous society. Each ethnic section preserved its own language, religion and social customs.¹³

The plantation influence on occupational and social status there seems clear. Benedict also indicated that the indenture system left a legacy of distrust and dislike between Franco-Mauritians and Indo-Mauritians and noted that attitudes and social structure prevailing in 1959 were similar to those noted by a Royal Commission of 1872. And in spite of the distrust of the two main plantation groups, there is this common bond of economic interdependence producing the same kind of dynamic social integration just noted for the New World plantation areas.

Slavery, as practiced in the New World and in Mauritius before Emancipation, had not been a part of the plantation history of Ceylon. Nevertheless, the character of the plantation there serves to color the over-all social organization and structure. The general

ies, October 1953; M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965); and Elsa Goveia, *Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the end of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1965). For the Spanish Caribbean, see Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris, "A Typology of Latin American Sub-cultures," *American Anthropologist*, June 1955, and Julian Steward (ed.), *The People of Puerto Rico* (Urbana, Illinois, 1957). For Brazil, see H. W. Hutchinson, *op. cit.* And for the U.S. South, see W. E. Moore and R. M. Williams, *op. cit.*, and Morton Rubin, *Plantation Country* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1951).

13. Burton Benedict, *Mauritius: Problems of a Plural Society* (London, 1969), pp. 27 and 66.

social relations between the white European planter and the Indian Tamil work force on the plantation "can be summed up as a gruff paternalism, deepening often into respect and even affection on both sides; the planter, with perhaps 2,000 souls living a completely self-contained life on his estate, had to act towards them in the mixed capacity of commanding officer, labour manager, business adviser, peacemaker and Dutch uncle." ¹⁴ At present the general social structure in Ceylon consists primarily of four population groups which are defined basically in terms of the relationship of each to the land. In descending order, the social structure consists of (1) the white European commercial and planting community, (2) the native Sinhalese who are the officials, the lawyers, and the independent farmers, who rarely work on the plantations, (3) the Jaffna Tamils, old immigrants from south India, who are also independent farmers, and (4) the Tamils who make up the plantation labor force. The characteristic cultural pluralism, blended with social integration via a common European value system, is very much a part of the scene here as well. Everywhere else, the same basic pattern obtains.

3. Race, caste, and class

The predominant social characteristic of all plantation areas of the world is the existence of a class-caste system based on differences in the racial origins of plantation workers on the one hand and owners on the other. This is an inherent feature of the plantation system. In every instance, the system was introduced by white Europeans who had to rely on non-white labor for working the plantations. Race, therefore, was a convenient means of controlling the labor supply. Edgar Thompson, in his extensive studies of the United States South, argues that for the planter to establish continuing authority over the labor force, control must be founded on a "body of ideas and beliefs common to all. In the South such a principle of control was supplied by the idea of race the validity of which, once established, was denied by none, not even by mem-

14. T. M. Forrest, *A Hundred Years of Ceylon Tea* (London, 1967), p. 112.

bers of the subject race."¹⁵ Thus we find that throughout the New World, race became the moral justification of slavery. At first, white people had justified slavery on the grounds that the black Africans were heathens. But when they had been converted to Christianity, that justification could no longer stand. And so the theory of the racial inferiority of black people was advanced.

Racial characteristics determined the caste line that separated masters from slaves in slave plantation society. And it is being argued here that, for all practical purposes, this caste line still exists in New World plantation society. It separates the superordinate white planter and commercial classes and other white people in these societies from the subordinate class of black people. All that has happened since Emancipation is that the caste line has shifted from a basically horizontal position which kept all black people more or less in the single class category of plantation laborers. Since Emancipation, increasing educational opportunities for black people and diversification of the structure of the plantation economies have made some modification in the class structure of these plantation societies. But in every instance race has been an important factor in the class divisions.

The proposition we have advanced concerning the persistence of a caste line in all the ex-slave plantation societies requires further discussion, particularly since there is some disagreement among scholars whether this is in fact so in all cases. The disagreement has arisen largely because of observed differences in the interaction of race and class in the United States on the one hand, and Brazil and the West Indies on the other. The real difference derives from the fact that the caste line is more rigidly defined in the United States than in the other two areas. In the United States, an individual is socially defined as black so long as there is an identifiable trace of Negro ancestry. In Brazil and the West Indies, the individual is defined as black only when his black ancestry is clearly evident from physical and social appearance. The differences between the two situations rests largely on whether one is concerned with race as a physical or genetic condition on the one

15. Edgar T. Thompson, "The Planter in the Pattern of Race Relations in the South," *Social Forces*, December 1940, p. 245.

hand, and as a social condition on the other. These two conceptual possibilities can be described as "physical race" and "social race." As concerns the first, there is a difference between the United States, and Brazil and the West Indies. But for the second, there is no difference at all. The situation in Brazil and the United States is described in what follows, as an attempt to illustrate the point.

For Brazil as a whole, Wagley informs us, the caste system of the slave plantation era has been supplanted by a system where social race is said to be one of a set of determinants which includes dress, manner of speech, education, income, occupation, family. Yet he observes that "it is still the general rule throughout Brazil that the people of the upper class are almost exclusively Caucasian in appearance, and the majority of the 'people of colour' are found in the middle and lower classes."¹⁶ Wagley goes on to note that, in rural communities, competition for membership in the local upper class and for social ranking within it is intense, and that it is at this point in the social hierarchy that the criterion of race becomes most crucial in determining social position. Evidence is also provided to indicate that individuals have strong preferences for physical appearances that are closer to the European model and have derogatory attitudes to those that are like the African.¹⁷ And, in a study of a sugar-plantation area of the Northeast, Hutchinson noted that race prejudice finds its strongest expression at the point of marriage into the upper class and concluded that whereas in the United States a distinct line is drawn between white and "Negro," in the Brazilian area studied this line is recognized rather than drawn. In his words, "A distinction between Negro and white is always kept in mind when classifying an individual. Everyone knows who is 'pure' white and who is not. Classification by color is one of the most important aspects of local culture. . . ." ¹⁸ The over-all picture for the Caribbean is identical to that described for Brazil.

16. Charles Wagley (ed.), *Race and Class in Rural Brazil* (UNESCO, New York, 1963), p. 145.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 149. On this last observation, see the interesting article by Errol Miller describing a similar situation in Jamaica, "Body Image, Physical Beauty and Colour among Jamaican Adolescents," *Social and Economic Studies*, March 1969.

18. H. W. Hutchinson, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

As already hinted the situation is somewhat different in the United States, particularly in the plantation South. There, "social race" and "physical race" are identical, and the caste system is therefore more rigidly enforced. After Emancipation, the role of the planter simply changed from master to landlord. But the effect on black people was the same. Land then became important in social relationships and social organization in a different way than under slavery. And race was important in this connection. Monroe Work informs us that legal attitudes toward sharecropping and tenancy were strictly on the basis of race. For example,

It is dangerous for a Negro tenant to sue his landlord for non-settlement, and in some instances to even consider doing this.

Negro farmers, owners and tenants, pay a higher average rate of interest than white farmers. . . . Negro tenants pay a higher rent than white tenants. . . . Negro tenants who paid cash rent averaged 10.3 per cent of the value of the land. Whites in the same districts paid cash rents that averaged only 6.9 per cent of the value of the land.¹⁹

He goes on to point out that, in addition, Negroes were discriminated against by crop settlements, lien laws and "more important than any of these the regulations compelling him to 'keep his place.'" These regulations include all kinds of laws concerning the social behavior and life of Negroes; these include regulations affecting their residence, education, and use of various public facilities and conveniences. The situation approximates the better known *apartheid* in South Africa.

That the caste system is more rigidly enforced in the United States than in Brazil and the West Indies is the legacy of one important difference in the pattern of settlement of the plantation regions involved. In the United States South there were substantial numbers of white people who were not directly connected with the plantations. These were Europeans who had gone to the South to settle in independent subsistence ("yeoman") farming. In Northeast Brazil and the West Indies, on the other hand, such groups of poor white people were insubstantial. As a result, even before the

19. Monroe Work, "Racial Factors and Economic Forces in Land Tenure in the South," *Social Forces*, December 1936, p. 214.

abolition of slavery, it was necessary for the planters in the U.S. South to emphasize the race-caste system. Because one sure way of keeping the poor whites on their side in the battle against those arguing for abolition was to indicate that the poor whites would suffer economically from job competition if the Negroes were freed. When Emancipation finally came, race continued to be emphasized in order to ensure that Negroes would continue to be available for plantation work. Both the planters and the poor whites realized that the caste system was essential for maintaining the status quo. And since the planters monopolized the legislature, it was easy for them to introduce appropriate regulations.²⁰ In the West Indies and Northeast Brazil, on the other hand, there was no potential competition between black people and an intermediate group of whites, so there was less need there for race to be given as much emphasis.

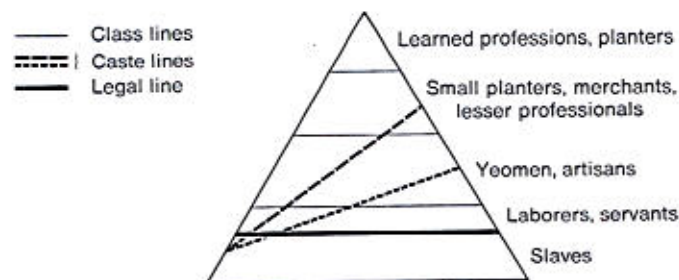
Another consideration in explaining the observed differences in the relative emphasis given to race is that, on account of the difference in settlement pattern, the sex ratio among white people in the U.S. South must have been more balanced than that in Northeast Brazil and the West Indies. So that miscegenation was more widespread in Brazil and the West Indies, resulting in relatively larger percentages of people of mixed ancestry. Since members of the white-planter class had parental links with the people of mixed blood, their attitude toward them was likely to be tempered somewhat and this may partly explain the lower tone given to "physical race" in those societies. Marvin Harris argues this point by indicating that in the Brazilian slave plantation society the white Portuguese planters "were compelled to create an intermediate free group of half-castes to stand between them and the slaves because there were certain essential economic and military functions for which slave labor was useless and for which no whites were available."²¹

The conclusion we draw from this comparison between Brazil and the United States is that the caste line in the latter case is

20. Marvin Harris develops the thesis advanced here in his *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York, 1964).

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

Figure 3.1. Diagrammatic representation of class, legal, and caste lines in slave plantation society



Source: Adapted from W. E. Moore and R. M. Williams, "Stratification in the Ante-Bellum South," *American Sociological Review*, June 1942, p. 349. The adaptation made here is the insertion of a more nearly vertical caste line than the one in the original diagram, to represent the situation in Brazil.

closer to being horizontal than that in the former case. Figure 3-1 summarizes the position for the two slave plantation societies. For the two societies today, the position of the caste lines in relation to each other remain unaltered. However, some modification of the over-all structure shown in the figure has occurred. First, the legal line is no longer relevant since slavery has been abolished. Second, the class designations have changed somewhat as the economics became more diversified; but only different labels are required in a few instances. And, third, both caste lines have made an equidistant swing toward the vertical, indicating that race is not so much of a barrier to higher occupational status as it was in slave society. The fact remains, however, that race is still an important factor in the determination of class in both cases. Harris summarizes the Brazilian-U.S. comparison in this way: "In both cases, the fundamental heritage of the slave plantation was the creation of severely handicapped minorities, darker in color than the rest of the population."²²

An important aspect of the post-Emancipation evolution of class structure throughout the New World plantation areas is that

22. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

among the underprivileged black people, there developed within the caste group a class structure which placed those with most physical and cultural likeness to the superordinate white classes at the top and those with the least at the bottom of an internal class hierarchy. Consequently, within this group, race is supplemented by the degree of assimilation of white culture patterns in determining class positions.

Again, we find that in plantation societies elsewhere in the world race has been, and remains, an important factor in defining caste and class systems. Burton Benedict notes the correlation for Mauritius and informs us that class differences there grew up within each ethnic section of the population; these are "based on wealth and occupation, and followed by differences in behaviour. This does not necessarily diminish the pluralism of Mauritius. It can create an upper, middle and lower class for each ethnic section rather than single classes cutting across all sections."²³ In Ceylon, the caste line is between the white planter and commercial class and all other racial groups in the country, whereas the class structure is generally along racial lines with whites at the top, Sinhalese in the middle, and Tamils at the bottom. As elsewhere, however, racial class lines tend to be blurred slightly by other factors, such as occupation, income, education, family, and general life style. The over-all conclusion, it would seem, is that race has always been, and continues to be—along with color—an important determinant of class and caste in every plantation society in the world.

4. Political organization and distribution of power

As in other aspects of social life already considered, the nature of political organization in present-day plantation societies can be linked directly with the plantation. Political organization and state power are based upon principles of authority and control (law). So is the plantation. Again Thompson provides a good summary of the position when he states that "in no other way except through authority and law can a group whose members represent different

23. Burton Benedict, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

racial and cultural backgrounds be made to act as a unit. . . . In fact, the plantation is best defined not in terms of territory or of agriculture but in terms of the authority of the planter."²⁴ We have noted already that the individual plantation is an authoritarian institution in which power is centralized in the hands of the plantation owner or manager. This power involves decision making relating not only to production within the territory but also to all aspects of the life of those in the community. Consequently, in societies which consist largely of plantation communities, we should expect to find the same characteristics of political organization on the individual plantation reflected in the larger society. The thesis which this study advances in this connection is that all plantation societies have in common the following features: concentration of power among a small planter class and highly centralized political administrative structures (government).

This thesis can be substantiated by reference to the actual situation existing at present in the plantation societies of the world. But first it will be instructive to describe the evolution of patterns of political organization for one of the older plantation societies of the world. We draw here from the historical experience of the United States South. The earliest U.S. plantation colony was perhaps Jamestown. Under charter, the soil of Virginia had been given by the Crown to the Virginia Company and was held by the company at its disposal. The colony, "as maintained by Delaware and his deputies, had the following characteristics; absence of private property, agriculture as industrial basis, union of proprietorship with jurisdiction, government for economic ends chiefly, and discretionary administration."²⁵ The subsequent parceling out of land to colonists removed the "absence of private property" condition but the opening up of new company plantations is said to have given rise to colonial and local government structures designed to preserve political unity among the settlements in particular plantation areas.

L. D. Scisco, looking at the Virginia experience, points out:

24. Edgar T. Thompson, "The Plantation: The Physical Basis of Traditional Race Relations," *op. cit.*, pp. 192-93.

25. L. D. Scisco, "The Plantation Type of Colony," *American Historical Review*, January 1903, pp. 260-61.

The governments of the early plantation colonies had in them the elements of both general and local control, managing as they did the actual interests of single small settlements and yet holding the powers necessary for governing the whole region in which a settlement lay. At first these colonial governments were essentially local in nature. When settlements multiplied, the extensive powers of the several executives, which had been possessed from the beginning, were utilized to enforce political unity. The change brought no break in the sequence of colonial administration.²⁶

This example illustrates a general phenomenon in the evolution of political administration of a plantation colony. Since each plantation unit is already a political entity in itself, it is natural that the political administration of a geographical region consisting of several plantations could best be effected by merging existing unit administrations—that is, all the planters in a region would administer the political affairs of the region. In like manner, political unity of these individual regions can best be effected by merging the existing centralized regional (local) administrations. In this way state power becomes concentrated in the hands of planters who already have authority and control over groups on their individual plantations and, at the local level, within plantation regions.

The Virginia pattern was more or less duplicated later throughout the plantation South of the United States. And this has largely influenced the present political organization and distribution of power, not only in the South but in the rest of the United States as well, for the demands of the South had to be met in order to secure the Union. The whole business of states' rights in the political organization of the United States emanated, in part, from the demands of the plantation South. What appears to be a well-developed system of local government for the federal territory as a whole reflects in part the system of strong central government in the plantation South, and this is directly linked to the plantation influence. Walter Wilbur summarizes this association, in reference to the slave period when the master of the plantation was ruler of his principality, in the following terms:

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 267-68.

There . . . developed throughout the South innumerable "independencies," united by family and social ties but not by an interweaving of functional economic relationships. Under such a system it was inevitable that the political bias of Southern leadership, vested almost exclusively in the "master" class, should be violently centrifugal. The functions of state and local government were reduced to a minimum. *The emphasis on state rights was in essence the fight to restrict the unit of political authority to dimensions possible of local control. It was not the sovereignty of the state, but the plantation . . . that was at stake.*²⁷

So long as political power was monopolized by individual plantation owners the scope of popular participation was limited. This is an inevitable consequence of the fact that within plantation society, economic and social power is concentrated among a small planter class and that, outside of the master's house, social organization within the plantation community tends to be poorly developed.

This legacy of the plantation persists everywhere we find plantation societies, and strong central government is characteristic of all of these places. Given the distribution of economic and social power, local government can emerge only if there is adequate social organization at the local level, but it appears that plantations created loose and weak local communities everywhere they existed. The primary reason for this is that strong community organization tends to emerge only in situations where smaller units of people are bound firmly together. The family is such a unit. But the plantation system is generally not based on family units; indeed, if anything, the tendency is more toward family-less people. The only unifying element within plantation community is the authority of the planter. Studies have revealed that Caribbean societies generally follow the pattern just described. The link with the plantation system is summarized by Wagley as follows:

The lack of a strong and well-defined local community in the Caribbean region is the result of slavery and a plantation economy. The dec-

27. Walter Wilbur, "Special Problems of the South," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1934, p. 50. Emphasis added.

imation of the Indians in the region precluded any possible aboriginal basis for local community life. The transferred population of African slaves from many tribes and nations were unable under conditions of slavery to form communities, although it is notable that escaped slaves in Jamaica and on the mainland found a basis for community organization. . . . While paternalism and common residence often united the slaves of a particular plantation into a neighborhood, they were unable to develop a full community life. Even after abolition the plantation system continued to exert an influence unfavorable to the development of a strong and cohesive local community. . . . Brazil, and to a certain extent the southern United States, share this historical heritage of the plantation and slavery and the resulting weak, divided, and amorphous community. *One is tempted to generalize that wherever the plantation and slave system were present, the rural community could not become an efficient and cohesive social unit.*²⁸

We advance the hypothesis that the tentative conclusion reached by Wagley in the above applies not only to plantation societies with a legacy of slavery but to all plantation societies, for the reasons indicated above.

In spite of considerable diversification in the New World plantation economies since Emancipation, in spite of major constitutional changes in the political status of individual countries, and in spite of dramatic changes in procedures of selecting governments (involving the enfranchisement of black people who earlier had no vote), highly centralized government administration is in evidence everywhere. Part of the reason for this is that economic and social power has remained in the hands of the white-planter and commercial classes which more recently have been reinforced by industrialists of the same ethnic origin. Therefore, in those areas where full enfranchisement of black people has been delayed, legislatures still are predominantly comprised of people of the new planter class. Such is the case in the U.S. South and Brazil. For example, Taylor, in a study of a Brazilian sugar plantation region, notes: "In 1965, every one of Pernambuco's twenty-nine usineiro

28. Charles Wagley, "Recent Studies of Caribbean Local Societies," in Curtis Wilgus (ed.), *The Caribbean: Natural Resources* (Gainesville, Florida, 1961), p. 199.

families had a close relative or family member in *both* the federal congress and the Pernambuco assembly."²⁹

Where full enfranchisement of black people came earlier and where these people make up the bulk of the population, there is a different pattern of racial composition of legislatures; but the basic structure of political organization remains the same. Since the 1940's black people in the West Indies have had the right to vote in government elections. At first, the white-planter class directly faced the electorate but it met with resounding defeat as the tide of the black vote overwhelmed it. The strategy then adopted was withdrawal from direct political involvement to an indirect role of providing financial backing for black political aspirants in what emerged as black political parties and trade unions. So today throughout the West Indies we find government administrations comprised of black people who essentially exercise authority and control on behalf of their financial backers—the white-planter, commercial, and industrial classes that remain for the most part in the background of political activity.³⁰ Given the terms of social mobility for black people in the system, as earlier described, the alliance between the dominant power group and the deculturated blacks has been easy and natural. For the deculturated blacks have as much contempt for the "unrefined" masses of black people as the dominant group.

The two patterns of racial composition of government administration described for the West Indies on the one hand, and Brazil and the United States on the other, are representative of the situation in all the plantation societies of the world at present. Wherever there is full enfranchisement, the subordinate racial group has its representatives in government legislatures but these representatives do not rely financially on the group they represent and have to depend on support from the superordinate economic and social group. This constrains their freedom to represent the inter-

29. Kit Sims Taylor, "The Dynamics of Underdevelopment in the Sugar Plantation Economy of Northeast Brazil" (unpublished thesis, University of Florida, 1969), p. 147.

30. This phenomenon and its development are described by Trevor Munroe in *The Politics of Constitutional Decolonization: Jamaica 1944-1962* (Mona, Jamaica, 1971).

ests of the subordinate group fully. Where complete enfranchisement has not been yet achieved, the superordinate groups still directly control the legislative process. The result in either case is the same—real political and legislative power still resides with the superordinate group among whom economic and social power is concentrated. As in all societies, the distribution of real political power is identical to the pattern of distribution of economic and social power.

5. Plantation society: a synthesis

The structural features of plantation society, outlined in the foregoing sections, indicate sufficient uniqueness that it seems necessary to treat plantation society as a particular type of society. Plantation society has properties which distinguish it clearly from, say, peasant society, feudal society, urban society, and other such types which social scientists have isolated for particular study. Its own special type of social and political organization sets it apart from other kinds of societies in the world today.

Plantation society is a plural society. It consists of different racial and cultural groups which are brought together only in the realm of economic activity. This single common bond provides the integrative element. The particular nature of this common economic activity determines the force and character of what social integration exists. On the plantation itself the common economic activity is production of the plantation crop. The plantation owner or manager is the immediate embodiment of the superordinate group in the wider society and the plantation workers of the subordinate group. The economic welfare of each depends on the other. The two groups are therefore in a mutually dependent economic relationship. And since decision making resides with the owner or manager, it is the plantation "great house" that symbolizes the integrating force. In addition, because the social structure pyramids to the planter class, the social aspirations of lower status groups in the society are directed toward the social achievement of that class. One element of social integration in the society as a whole is, therefore, to be found in the area of achievement motivation.

Another element of social integration is nationalism. Plantation economy is dependent on metropolitan economy. The crop that binds different groups together in plantation society is destined for sale in metropolitan markets. Consequently, the fortunes of all groups in plantation society are bound up with relationships between plantation economy and metropolitan economy. Common attitudes concerning relationships with the rest of the world, and in particular with the relevant metropolis, are to be found among all groups that make up plantation society. Although the planter class monopolizes power internally, it needs to marshal the support of other groups to face any outside threat to its economic interest. And since its interests in this connection coincide with that of other groups, the society usually stands together in these matters.³¹

The elements of social integration in plantation society, then, are to be found in three main areas: economic production, achievement motivation, and nationalism. The question that now arises is whether the degree of social integration provided by these forces is strong enough to withstand the disintegrative elements that derive from social and cultural plurality. The answer to this must be equivocal: that it depends on the nature of the pressures on or within the society as a whole at any particular point in time. Whenever pressures emanating from outside are light, internal conflict is more likely to occur. But heavy external pressure may or may not stimulate the integrative mechanism; it all depends on the nature of these pressures. For example, a prolonged period of low prices for the plantation crop is likely to heighten workers' mistrust of the plantation owners; in addition, it makes their already low levels of living worse.³² Internal social tension is likely to increase in such circumstances. All that we can say with cer-

31. An illustration of this is to be found in the present-day composition of national delegations to international commodity conferences. In most instances, the delegations from plantation economies are made up partly of people representing plantation owners and partly of those representing plantation workers.

32. The question of mistrust is important. Since plantation owners have such great power and control over plantation society, workers are not going to be easily convinced that these seemingly omnipotent people have no control over the prices they receive for the plantation output.

tainty is that plantation society will necessarily exhibit a condition of underlying social tension at all times and that internal crisis will be a recurrent feature in the development of this kind of society. These crises are also likely to involve racial divisions. This follows from the particular grouping of production into castes as well as from the consideration that as the society as a whole is threatened with disintegration each component finds greater security within its own racial contingent.

Furnivall arrives at similar general conclusions in his study of Indonesia, which he describes as a plural economy and society. He notes that plural economy differs from homogeneous economy because (1) whereas social demand in homogeneous economy is common to the whole society, there are two or more distinct and rival complexes of social demand in plural economy; (2) production in plural economy is grouped into castes; and (3) in plural economy, further sectionalization of demand follows when each of the constituent social demands ceases to embrace the whole scope of social life and becomes concentrated on those aspects relating only to the separate province. The difficulty of achieving social integration is posed in the following way: "This distribution of production among racial castes aggravates the inherent sectionalism of demand; for a community which is confined to certain economic functions finds it more difficult to apprehend the social needs of the country as a whole."³³ Furnivall goes on to note that the basic consideration is: "In a plural society . . . the community tends to be organized for production rather than for social life." As contrasted to the situation in a homogeneous community, this results in abnormal conditions which create a kind of nationalism in each section that "sets one community against the other so as to emphasize the plural character of the society and aggravate its instability, thereby enhancing the need for it to be held together by some force exerted from outside."³⁴

The argument is heightened by the observation that nationalism in plural society is itself a disruptive force which tends to disintegrate, rather than consolidate, the social order. It is instructive to

33. J. S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India—A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 451–52.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

quote Furnivall at some length on this score because he highlights a fundamental problem confronting all plantation societies today.

Democratic principles imply that the preponderance of voting power shall be entrusted to the people; yet economic power remains with the other classes, and chiefly with the Europeans. . . . we have the economic rivalry of town and country, capital and labour, industry and agriculture, aggravated by racial difference; and with economic power on the one side and voting power on the other side, the future of the country under the accepted principle of Nationalism can hardly be envisaged with composure. The principle of Nationalism provides no solution in itself, for, in a plural society, nationalism is in effect internationalism.³⁵

This generalization seems applicable to all plantation societies of the world today. This is not surprising because Furnivall arrived at these conclusions from a study of Indonesia which is one of our class of plantation society. In every such society, we find the recurrent feature of serious internal conflict existing alongside rampant nationalism. The conflict situations between Indians and Negroes in Guyana (and to a lesser extent Trinidad); Tamils and Sinhalese in Ceylon; Indians and Fijians, and Indians and the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in Fiji; Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Europeans in Malaya; Indians and Europeans in Mauritius; and between white people and black people throughout the New World are examples of the universality of this phenomenon among plantation societies.

Exceptions to this general phenomenon are to be found perhaps in those plantation societies where state ownership of the producing units is dominant—Cuba, for example. In such instances, the distribution of economic, social, and political power has been altered from the traditional pattern described in the present chapter. Because the state monopolizes power, sectional social demands are more likely to be integrated and internal conflict less likely to occur. Even so conflict can hardly be avoided. Much depends on the manner in which state power is manipulated. For example, if state power is used to redress the traditional distribution of power this will alienate the traditionally dominant group and thereby

35. *Ibid.*, p. 468.

generate internal conflict. This has been the case in Cuba and the former dominant group there has been forced into exile but continues to fan the flames of internal conflict in various ways. It seems then that every type of plantation society fits the general pattern of internal social conflict in spite of the presence of nationalism.

We must conclude, therefore, that the strongest elements of social integration in plantation society are to be found in the areas of economic production and achievement motivation. Individuals in every group are bound by their dependence on each other for economic survival. Their source of bread is the same. And they all want the same things in life. So they make common demands for social services, such as education and health, and common aspirations for material things associated with a Great House life style, such as housing and consumer durables. This level of social integration becomes tenuous during periods of crisis, but otherwise it provides a sufficient base for holding the society together.

The basic problem goes much deeper than this. The nature of social and political arrangements create several biases toward a continuous state of underdevelopment. Inherent social instability impedes investment; the rigid pattern of social stratification restricts mobility; the concentration of social, economic, and political power prevents the emergence of a highly motivated population; and racial discrimination inhibits the fullest use of the society's human resources. These and other aspects of the social economy of underdevelopment are considered in more detail in Chapter 7.