

PERSISTENT POVERTY

Underdevelopment in plantation economies
of the Third World

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1

Plantations in third world economy

The plantation economies of the world are found chiefly in tropical America and tropical Asia. (There is only a sprinkling of them among the countries of tropical Africa.) In these areas the plantation has been the dominant economic, social, and political institution in the past, continues to be in the present, and from all indications will continue to be in the future. It was an instrument of political colonization; it brought capital, enterprise, and management to create economic structures which have remained basically the same; it brought together different races of people from various parts of the world to labor in its service and thus determined the population and social structures now existing in these places. As Edgar Thompson has said, ". . . Elements of the present problems of many interracial societies, such as those of the American South and South America, were set up in an older plantation order."¹ The plantation introduced new crops to many countries and the cultivation of many of these still represents the chief means of livelihood (however tenuous) of high percentages of the populations of these countries. In short, it has fashioned the whole environment which the people of these countries have inherited.

1. Edgar T. Thompson, *The Plantation—A Bibliography* (Washington, D. C., 1957), p. iv.

PLANTATIONS AND DECOLONIZATION

PERSISTENT POVERTY

The era of political colonization is said to be at an end. Since World War II, numerous colonial countries have achieved independent *constitutional* status. Winds of change were said to have swept through the Third World. On closer examination one sees that though the winds may have swept, they have not swept clean. The plantation system was an integral part of the political colonization of tropical America and tropical Asia. It was set up for the benefit of the metropolitan colonizers and therefore it is not surprising that it was also an integral part of the process of decolonization. Plantations were a major target in the independence struggle of many colonial peoples. As a result of their hegemony of scarce land in some places and the depressingly low level of wages and living conditions everywhere, the pressures which they created on the peoples of plantation economies gave rise to peasant movements and labor unions. These were the basic organizations which served initially to mobilize the colonized peoples and ultimately provided the basis for the organization of parties and revolutionary movements that whipped up the winds of change. It is ironic that although plantations were one of the main sources of conditions that generated the winds of change, have managed to withstand the winds of change, the main Most of the postwar literature on plantation agriculture speculated that the days of the foreign-owned plantation would soon be ended as the plantation colonies secured their independence. Given the background outlined above it was what independence was supposed to have been about. However, the plantation withstood the test everywhere it was threatened after independence. In Ceylon, the political party with a program for nationalization of the foreign plantations soon found itself occupying the opposition benches in the national assembly with the government offering guarantees of non-nationalization to the government offering In Indonesia, the Sukarno government to the foreign plantation offering Dutch-owned plantations but eventually Sukarno managed to take over the the Dutch owners invited back. In Guatemala, the same pattern existed. And elsewhere—in the Caribbean, for example—inde-

PLANTATIONS IN THIRD WORLD ECONOMY

pendent governments have introduced all kinds of incentive legislation to encourage foreign plantation (and other) investment. And so the plantation remains entrenched in all of these countries.² Either the plantation was too solid an institutional structure for the force of the winds of change or the winds were in fact only a breeze. It might of course be both. And so it seems. As the next few chapters indicate, the plantation has become deeply rooted in the environment of many underdeveloped countries, and to shake it may well threaten the entire economic and social order. On the other hand, the so-called winds of change have brought constitutional independence to many countries but have left them with a legacy of economic, social, psychological, and indeed even political dependency.³ Again, as the discussion in the rest of the book will show, this continued state of general dependency can also be traced to the plantation influence.

1. The plantation system and plantation economy

The plantation has many dimensions. It is a system of agricultural production and a social institution as well. The term "plantation" has fallen into such widespread use that it will be useful for us to look briefly at the meaning attached to it in the present study. There will be occasions when reference is made to plantation production, that is, as a type of agricultural organization; on other occasions, reference will be made to the plantation system; and on still others, reference will be made to plantation *economies*. In considering the economic aspects of the plantation as an ag-

2. Although Cuba is not one of the newly independent countries it should be noted here that this is the only country which has successfully taken over the foreign plantations. But even here the structure of the plantations has remained intact. The change has been from foreign-owned private plantations to government plantations maintaining their specialization in sugar production.

3. The distinction between "constitutional" and "political" independence is one that is important to recognize. The former refers to the trappings of independence—constitutions, flags, anthems, a seat in the United Nations, and so on. Real political independence derives from the ability and power to control and manipulate the environment for the benefit of the people of the independent state. It derives in large measure from the degree of control of the economic resources of the country.

ricultural producing unit (that is, plantation production), our definition here follows that of Jones:

A plantation is an economic unit producing agricultural commodities (field crops or horticultural products, but not livestock) for sale and employing a relatively large number of unskilled laborers whose activities are closely supervised. Plantations usually employ a year-round labor crew of some size, and they usually specialize in the production of only one or two marketable products. They differ from other kinds of farms in the way in which the factors of production, primarily management and labor, are combined.⁴

It bears emphasis that the special factor combination that distinguishes plantation production from other kinds of farming is the bringing together of as many unskilled laborers as is economically profitable with each of the few highly skilled supervisor-managers who direct production. As Jones succinctly puts it, "the plantation substitutes supervision—supervisory and administrative skills—whose principal skill is to follow orders."⁵ We would wish therefore to exclude from our constituency of observation certain large-scale, highly capitalized farms where field operations have become so mechanized that only a small number of skilled machine operators comprise the labor force. Examples of these are fruit and vegetable "plantations" of California in the United States.⁶

On plantations, production of the crop (or crops) is undertaken solely for sale. In most of the underdeveloped countries the sale is in an overseas market so that export production is the objective. However, we do not wish to restrict our definition to these plantations since production for the home market is important in some cases. (The Southern plantation in the United States is a case in

4. W. O. Jones, "Plantations," in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 12 (1968), p. 154. Emphasis added.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 156. Edgar Thompson somewhere in one of his several contemporary agricultural.
6. For other examples of these enterprises found mainly in the advanced countries, see H. F. Gregor, "The Changing Plantation," *Economic Geography*, June 1965.

point.) However, even in these cases the markets for the plantation output are normally located outside the regions of plantation production so that in terms of the regional (as distinct from the national) economy, production for export is still the objective. Wolf and Mintz have argued that export-oriented production is an important characteristic of plantations and that this is one factor which distinguishes them from certain other large-scale, centrally directed farming units like the hacienda.⁷ However, in the present exercise we do not wish necessarily to maintain the distinction emphasized by Wolf and Mintz. But it will be used as one of the characteristics by which we differentiate different types of plantation agriculture. In the plantation regions of Brazil and the United States, production is partly for the home market and partly for export. Elsewhere in the world, it is predominantly for export (defined in the usual way).

It may be useful to classify types of plantation agriculture on the basis of ownership of the producing unit. Various types of ownership patterns exist; among these we can identify private individuals, families, limited liability companies, partnerships, cooperative societies, and state ownership of one kind or another. The three main types in world agriculture are the limited liability companies, private family and individual plantations, and government plantations. Historically, there has been a dramatic shift in the relative importance of these three types. Private family and individual plantations have systematically been transformed into limited liability companies and today they are the dominant types in world plantation production.⁸ Government plantations exist in many places but they constitute the dominant type in very few countries. Cuba is the most outstanding of these. In the underdeveloped countries, the plantation companies are predominantly foreign-owned with shareholders, directors, and centers of decision making located in a metropolitan country—usually the one which initially exercised political control over the plantation colony.

7. E. R. Wolf and S. W. Mintz, "Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles," *Social and Economic Studies*, September 1957.
8. Sir Bernard O. Binns, *Plantations and Other Centrally Operated Estates* (FAO Agricultural Studies No. 28, Rome, June 1955), p. 33.

There is a relatively high degree of vertical integration in the plantation company. The company owns facilities for processing its own plantation output and for supplying many of the inputs in its plantation production. This has been the result of certain historical forces which are described in Chapter 5. And the effects of this vertical integration of production and services are significant for the patterns of resource use and the development prospects of plantation economies, as the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7 indicates.

When we use the term *plantation system* we refer to the totality of institutional arrangements surrounding the production and marketing of plantation crops. To understand the systemic dimensions of the plantation it is necessary to review briefly its historical development. The colonization activities of the metropolitan countries took three general forms, the establishment either of colonies of "settlement," of "conquest," or of "exploitation." In the first case, people migrated (individually, as families, and as groups) from the metropole and settled in the colony. In the second case, metropolitan interest was simply in the colony. In the second case, metropolitan interest was simply in establishing sufficient administrative and military organization to facilitate the transfer of wealth (chiefly precious metals) from the colony to the metropole. In the third case, metropolitan interest was in production for trade. North America, Australia, and New Zealand were representative of colonies of settlement; mainland Spanish America of colonies of conquest; and the Caribbean Islands and those of Southeast Asia of colonies of exploitation. The plantation was the institution best suited to metropolitan needs in colonies of exploitation.

The plantation is one type of settlement institution. According to Thompson, "It is one of that class of institutions that pattern the relationship of people to the land and largely determine how people shall live on the land and with one another."⁹ As a settlement institution the plantation was the means of bringing together enterprise, capital, and labor from various parts of the world into

9. Edgar T. Thompson, "The Plantation Cycle and Problems of Typology," in Vera Rubin (ed.), *Caribbean Studies—A Symposium* (University of the West Indies, 1957; reissued University of Washington Press, Seattle, Washington, 1960), p. 30.

a new location where land was available to be combined with these for the production of a particular staple. In the nature of the case a system of authority and control was vested in the institution. As Lloyd Best puts it:

Where land is free to be used for subsistence production, the recruitment of labour exclusively for export production imposes a need for "total economic institutions" so as to encompass the entire existence of the work force. The plantation which admits virtually no distinction between organization and society, and chattel slavery which deprives workers of all civil rights including the right to property, together furnish an ideal framework.¹⁰

R. T. Smith in the original application of the Goffman concept of "total institution" to plantation society describes it as a "bureaucratically organized system in which whole blocks of people are treated as units and are marched through a set of regimentation under the surveillance of the small supervisory staff."¹¹

From the very outset then the plantation began as a unit of authority with control over all aspects of the lives of people within its territory. Because it had to rely on immigrant labor of different ethnic and cultural origins it also provided the locus and rules of accommodation between these different groups. "The resulting power structure . . . gives the plantation all or many of the characteristics of a small state with a classification of people into different statuses together with a formal definition of the relationship between them."¹² Thus caste became an important aspect of the slave plantation society and it still persists in some plantation areas such as the United States South.¹³ And wherever plantations exist at present we find the phenomenon of plural societies of a

10. Lloyd Best, "Outlines of a Model of Pure Plantation Economy," *Social and Economic Studies*, September 1968, p. 287.

11. 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. Smith attributes the general concept to Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (New York, 1961).

12. Edgar T. Thompson, "The Plantation Cycle . . . , *op. cit.*, p. 31.

13. As far as the United States is concerned, although the caste system originated in the plantation South it has subsequently become an integral feature of the entire U.S. social order.

type in which the only common elements of social values and aspirations can be traced directly to the influence of the plantation, ¹⁴ Chapter 3 will provide further elaboration on this and other aspects of the social and political organization of plantations.

To view the plantation as a system we need to identify, at least for the purpose of exposition, two of its systemic dimensions. First, the plantation as a social system in the territory in which it is located (the internal dimension) and, second, the plantation as an economic system both in the territory of its location and in the wider world community (the external dimension). The two are of course interrelated but are separated here to make it easier to discuss them. By "system" we simply mean a set of relations governing the component parts that make up the whole. In any such network of relations there is a coming together of the component parts at some point and for some common purpose. It is this organization that makes the set of relations a system. The institution which provides the organization governs and gives character to the whole—the system. ¹⁵

From what has been said in the last few paragraphs, the contours of the internal dimension of the plantation system should be sufficiently clear although there are other aspects, such as the usual monopoly by the plantation of the means of livelihood for population groups within its territory, which will emerge in due course. For the time being we will draw directly from Thompson to summarize the all-pervasive character of the internal dimension of the plantation system.

The plantation is an institution in just as real a sense as the Catholic Church. It arises to deal with certain seemingly eternal problems of an ordered society. . . . It is made up of people but, like the

14. The concept of plural societies originally formulated by Furnivall in his examination of Dutch Indonesia has more recently been revived by M. G. Smith in his studies of social structure in the West Indies. See J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (Cambridge, 1944), and M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965).
15. See Edgar T. Thompson, "The Plantation as a Social System," in Pan American Union, *Plantation Systems of the New World* (Social Science Monographs, VII, Washington, D. C., 1959), p. 26.

church, it is an impersonal and implacable automatism having a set of norms which control all the people who constitute it, planter and laborer alike, who "belong" to the estate, as though the estate were something existing apart from its people: the plantation demands and dictates. The individual members acquire particular beliefs and ways of participating which become part of the very fibre of their lives. Further, they acquire from the plantation that firm element of assured behavior which all institutions give to their members and which contribute toward social order and stability. ¹⁶

The external dimension derives from two characteristics of plantation production—its export orientation and foreign ownership in most of the cases in which we are here interested. Mention was made earlier of the fact that plantations were, and are, the product of metropolitan capital and enterprise. This and its orientation to overseas markets ties it to the wider world economic community in very precise ways. Plantations are only one part of a much wider economic system consisting of a set of relations which meet at a metropolitan and industrial center far removed from the plantations. The locus of discretion and control usually resides at this center on which the plantations are dependent. ¹⁷ Control may take several forms: property ownership, political connections of one kind or another which influence prices and tariffs, financial control through the branch banking system, or the specificity of raw-material export to metropolitan refining capacity, shipping, and so on. The degree of metropolitan control of plantations will of course vary according to the type of plantation. Thus we would expect metropolitan control to be greatest for the foreign corporate plantations and least for the state plantations, at least at the level of the plantation producing unit. However, regardless of the type of ownership the external relations are always of consequence and need to be recognized.

In the course of our discussion the term *plantation system* will be applied in some instances to what we have described as its internal dimension and on other occasions to the external dimension just described. However, the specific context in which the term is

16. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

17. I. C. Greaves, "Plantations in World Economy," in Pan American Union, *Plantation Systems of the New World*, p. 15.

used will make it clear to the reader what is meant at the particular point.

Plantation economy is the term we apply to those countries of the world where the internal and external dimensions of the plantation system dominate the country's economic, social, and political structure and its relations with the rest of the world. We have argued above that the plantation is all-embracing in its effect on the lives of those within its territory and community. We have that wherever several plantations have come to engross most of the arable farm land in a particular country which is predominantly agricultural, that country can be described as a plantation economy or society and its social and economic structure and external relations will be similar to those described for the plantation system.

In some cases the community of plantations in a particular country will consist of units owned by different individuals, families, and companies. This is so in most of the tropical island economies—all of the Caribbean excluding Cuba; Mauritius and Réunion in the Indian Ocean; Ceylon, Malaya, Mauritius and Philippines in Southeast Asia; and Hawaii, Fiji, and certain other islands in the Pacific. In other cases the community of plantations may be substantially owned by a single company as is the case in Guyana, British Honduras, and Liberia. In either case the plantation system pervades all aspects of life in these countries and the development problem must be viewed in this light.

Elsewhere in the world the plantation is of lesser significance except for its dominating influence in certain regions of larger economies. The chief of these regions are the United States South, the Northeast of Brazil, and the Caribbean lowlands of Central America. In the first two, most of the producing units are owned by nationals whereas in the last case they are for the most part foreign-owned. These plantation regions of wider national economic communities display characteristic features of the plantation system and have followed a development path different from the paths of the rest of the national economies of which they are a part. It will be useful therefore to include them in our field of observation although we must recognize that we are dealing with sub-systems in this particular class of plantation economy. These

sub-systems are of particular interest in the study of plantations because they provide a unique opportunity to isolate the effects of plantations on the development pattern. Since they are part of a larger system which, in the United States's case at least, is not dominated by the plantation, a comparison of the development experience of the sub-system with that of the rest of the larger system will help to isolate the plantation influences.¹⁸

We may note in passing that the dominating influence of plantations in our class of economies is not measured simply by the number of such units in relation to other farming units in the particular country. In most cases the number of peasant farms in these places exceed by a wide margin the number of plantations. However in terms of quantity and quality of land (and other agricultural resources) the peasants come nowhere near the plantations. And indeed in most cases the peasants themselves are dependent in one way or another on the plantations. The peasant sectors of these economies are really sub-sectors within the general framework of the plantations. And the development of the peasantry is interwoven with that of the plantation.

2. Plantation economies of the world

Plantation agriculture exists in numerous countries of the world. However, its influence on national economies varies quite widely from a degree where it is insignificant to one where it pervades all aspects of national life. The present study is concerned primarily with its wide-ranging influence.

Our criteria for identifying the plantation economies of the world is based on the following considerations: plantation share of national economic aggregates, such as total output, capital, land area in cultivation, income, and employment; plantation contribution to government revenues, and the country's foreign exchange earnings; evidence of effects of the plantation on social and political

18. An interesting initial attempt at this was made by Douglass North in "Agriculture and Regional Economic Growth," *Journal of Farm Economics*, December 1959, and in his book, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1961).

cal structure and organization; and evidence of what, for want of a better term, we describe as a general plantation psychology—in other words, the extent to which the national community reflects the over-all plantation characteristics already described. Sufficient data (quantitative and qualitative) are not available on all these aspects to permit what one could claim to be an exhaustive survey of all the Third World countries that are likely candidates. However, we have managed to assemble sufficient information on the greater number of these. This information is presented in Appendix I. The following is a summary listing of the plantation economies and their population base (in thousands):¹⁹

A. The plantation economies of the world	
I. The Caribbean and Latin America	
1. Cuba	5,830
2. Jamaica	1,610
3. Haiti	3,098
4. Dominican Republic	3,048
5. Puerto Rico	2,350
6. Antigua	55
7. St. Kitts	57
8. Guadeloupe	284
9. Martinique	291
II. Africa	
19. Liberia	1,017
20. Portuguese Guinea	522
21. Rio Muni	184
22. (Cameroon)	(5,017)
23. (Congo-Kinshasa)	(12,769)
24. (Angola)	(5,400)
25. (Mozambique)	(7,200)

19. The data on population are recent estimates (mainly in the early 1960's) and are derived principally from United Nations, *Demographic Yearbook, 1967* (New York, 1968), Table 2. Figures are all rounded upward. Data on Hawaii and the U.S. South are from U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1969*. For the U.S. South the figure shown is the total for the "South Atlantic" region, excluding Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D. C.; all of the "East South Central" region; and Washington, Louisiana in what is described as "West South Central."

III. Indian Ocean	
26. Mauritius	682
27. Réunion	349
28. Comoro Islands	184
IV. Asia	
29. Ceylon	10,591
30. Malaya	6,279
31. Indonesia	96,319
32. Philippines	27,088
V. Pacific	
33. Fiji	477
B. Plantation sub-economies	
1. Brazil/Northeast	25,000
2. Caribbean Lowlands of Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama	633
3. U.S. South	38,907

The table shows that the greatest concentration of plantation economies is to be found in the Caribbean but the greatest concentration of population is in Ceylon and Southeast Asia. It also indicates that the countries and regions concerned vary substantially in respect of size of population and in area as well, although area is not shown. The countries listed are those with which this study is primarily concerned. The common plantation influence gives the set of countries a certain homogeneity: each is fundamentally similar to the other, in terms of not only economic structure and economic problems but also social structure, political organization, and other aspects of human life.

The plantation influence is more pervasive in some countries than it is in others. In most of the countries we have identified, the influence can be traced to virtually all aspects of human life because plantations are fully integrated in the economic and social order. For these, "plantation economy" is an appropriate description. In certain cases, however, the plantation sector is more or less cut off from the rest of the economy and society—as in Liberia. Such cases may be better described as "enclave plantation

economy." There are even different kinds of enclave plantation economy. In Kenya, Rhodesia, and South Africa, European plantations exist, but these are kept so separate from the African sectors of those countries that it seems best to ignore them in the present study. For the most part, we are concerned with the more prevalent cases where the plantation influence affects the entire social order.

A brief word now about what we have described as plantation sub-economies. The two most important are those of the United States South and the Northeast of Brazil. Although by definition these sub-economies are part of larger national economies, it appears that their economic relationship with the rest of their national community is very much akin to that between plantation economies and their metropolitan counterparts. Writing about the United States South, for example, Johnson *et al.* indicate that "Even under slavery the chief capital supporting cotton cultivation was not available in the South, a situation which kept the whole area in secondary slavery to the capital of the North."²⁰ And Rupert Vance in *Human Geography of the South* has advanced the thesis that the U.S. South is a "colonial economy" because (1) finance capital from the North was responsible for the development of the South; and (2) southern manufactures (for example, textiles) were exported to be finished and marketed in the North. And the result was that accumulation of capital and utilization of technology was retarded in the South. As James Allen summarized the position, "... The chief point of resemblance between southern economy and a present-day colonial economy... is the plantation system with its slave survivals" and "the most important social expression of the existence of the plantation is the oppression of the Negroes."²¹

The pattern described above is similar to that which obtains in the Northeast of Brazil in the sense that it was the surpluses generated in that earlier established plantation region which provided much of the stimulus for industrialization of the Center-South (the São Paulo-Rio de Janeiro axis) in much the same way that the

20. C. S. Johnson, E. R. Embree, and W. W. Alexander, *The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1935), p. 25.
21. James Allen, *The Negro Question in the United States* (New York, 1936), p. 131.

West Indies provided stimulus for the industrialization of Britain (and to a lesser extent, France). And like the plantation economies of the world, the plantation sub-economies of the United States and Brazil have lagged behind their internal "metropolitan" centers in the process of industrialization and structural transformation. The Brazilian Northeast, for example, is an area of great relative poverty. Per capita income levels are only one-half of the national average and only one-third of that of the industrialized Center-South. The Northeast "is the oldest, the poorest, and until recent years the most populous of Brazil's major regions." It has 18 per cent of the land area of Brazil and 32 per cent of the country's population but it produces only 16 per cent of the national income. (Its population of 25 million is greater than that of any other South American country except Brazil itself and its land area is surpassed only by Argentina and the rest of Brazil.)²²

The other significant plantation sub-economies are the Caribbean lowlands of the Central American countries. There the pattern is somewhat different from the two just considered. Whereas the sub-economies of the Brazilian Northeast and the U.S. South are integrated in important ways to the national economies because of the internalization of "metropolitan" connections, those of the Central American lowlands are not. The metropolitan center which provides the capital, management, technology, and a market for these banana plantation sub-economies is located outside their borders—in the United States. The sub-economies in this case are therefore enclaves within those national economies and have very limited connection with the larger national community apart from revenue payments to the national government. For all practical purposes, these are really not sub-economies at all but plantation economies in their own right. However, legal convention regarding nation states forces us to consider them as plantation sub-economies.

PLANTATION AMERICA

Finally we wish to note that the spatial continuity of plantation economies in the New World has led the social anthropologists to

22. Stefan Robock, *Brazil's Developing Northeast* (Washington, D. C., 1963), pp. 2, 21, and 45.

recognize a community of nation states, territories, and regions of two nations as representing a culture sphere. Charles Wagley has labeled this culture sphere plantation America. According to Wagley: Briefly, this culture sphere extends spatially from about midway up the coast of Brazil into the Guianas, along the Caribbean coast, throughout the Caribbean itself, and into the United States [South].²³ In Wagley's scheme, the rest of the New World consists of two other culture spheres: Euro-America and Indo-America—both labels reflecting the character of the dominant races. For consistency Wagley could have described plantation America as Afro-America or black America because black people are the majority of the population in this culture sphere. This is of course not surprising because the black presence in the New World derives from the plantation. We should therefore approach the study of black dispossession in the New World through the medium of plantation economy.

In his article, Wagley elaborates on some of the common features of plantation America and describes a series of cultural characteristics common to the region. Among the common features are "monocrop cultivation under the plantation system, rigid class lines, multi-racial societies, weak community cohesion, rigid peasant proprietors involved in subsistence and cash-crop production, and a matrifocal type family form." While the common cultural characteristics are reflected in similarities of the peasant crops, production techniques, and marketing arrangements; the cuisine; the music and dance; the folklore; religious cults; and a series of traditions, values, attitudes, and beliefs.²⁴ As implied by the label used by Wagley, all these similarities can be traced back to the common experience which black people in the New World have undergone as a result of the pervasive influence of the plantation on their lives.

3. Peasants in the political economy of plantations

In most of the countries in which plantations are important they coexist with peasant producers who normally are engaged in farm-

23. Charles Wagley, "Plantation America: A Culture Sphere," in Vera Rubin (ed.), *Caribbean Studies—A Symposium*, p. 5.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

ing cash crops (sometimes the same crop as the plantation) in addition to providing for their own subsistence. These peasant farmers are affected by the plantations in at least two important ways: competition for land and other resources and the provision of wage work on the plantations to supplement their incomes from the main pre-occupation of farming on their own account. What evidence there is suggests that normally peasant farmers are reluctant to undertake wage work on plantations. This is clearly the case in the West Indies (and other ex-slave plantation areas) where the legacy of slavery has resulted in a high premium being placed on an existence independent of the plantation. It also appears to be the case in plantation Asia as well. For example, Boeke writing on Indonesia asserts that

A man who takes service on a plantation does so because he finds it impossible to make a living as an independent cultivator. Contrariwise—and the Outer Provinces furnish proof positive of this assertion—anyone who can manage to earn a living as an independent cultivator refuses to hire himself out as a wage laborer on a plantation.²⁵

And Blake writing at a later date notes that the existence of labor shortage for plantation agriculture alongside substantial unemployment and underemployment in both rural and urban areas is attributable to the fact that Sumatran peasants prefer own-account farming even if it involves squatting on prepared plantation land. According to Blake the Sumatran regards plantation work as "inferior if not degrading."²⁶ It would seem then that as concerns the welfare of peasants the more important consideration is the effect of plantations on the availability of land and other resources for peasant production.

Competition for resources is particularly intense in certain countries where land is in relatively short supply and the intensity has substantially increased in recent decades with the accelerated rate of population expansion. Very often this has resulted in increasing social tension and political conflict, as the following examples indicate.

25. J. H. Boeke, *The Structure of the Netherlands Indian Economy* (New York, 1942), p. 135.

26. D. J. Blake, "Labour Shortage and Unemployment in Northeast Sumatra," *Malayan Economic Review*, October 1962.

