

AN "EMPIRE OF NECESSITY": CAPITAL ACCUMULATION ON WEST INDIAN  
PLANTATIONS AND THE PROBLEM OF ARTISAN MANUFACTURING, 1620-1880

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation comprises the first of a projected series of studies based on twenty-seven months of research, including fifteen months of ethnographic and historical research in Guyana, South America. It argues that various features of early colonial plantation organization led to the suppression of local manufacturing activity. Chapter One describes the unusual development of artisanry in one region of Guyana's plantation economy, and outlines the theoretical and historical dimensions of the relations between artisan manufacturing and plantation agriculture.

Chapter Two reviews the essential characteristics of plantation agriculture and identifies the formal conditions for the original accumulation of capital on New World plantations. Chapter Three demonstrates that coercive labor practices, the structure of product markets, and other features of capital accumulation effectively suppressed artisan trades in Barbados, Jamaica, and the erstwhile British Guiana. Chapter Four notes that slave-based plantation economies still had to incorporate some kinds of manufacturing activities, though they did so in different ways, and it shows how slave emancipation had varying implications for artisan activities in West

Indian plantation economies. Finally, the findings here are placed in a wider comparative perspective with evidence that the accumulation of capital in other forms of colonial agriculture--on New England farms and Mexican haciendas--did not always stifle local artisanry, although on plantations in other areas, such as Virginia, it did.

Overall, with its focus on the much-neglected topic of artisan manufacture, this dissertation helps improve anthropological understanding of the ways in which agriculture and manufacturing are related. Within a comparative and historical framework, it indicates how early New World planters enfeebled local manufacturing, and it provides some of the necessary theoretical and historical background for further detailed ethnographic and historical studies in the Caribbean of the organization and development of particular artisan trades.

## PREFACE

The image of the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker--a conception of independent artisans producing and exchanging their wares--has for long captivated social philosophers and social scientists concerned with economic activity. Early theorists, from Plato and Aristotle to the physiocrats, relied on features of artisan production to illustrate aspects of the state's political and ethical constitution. Later, when the economy itself became the subject of systematic investigations, Adam Smith, the classical political economists, and many subsequent scholars attributed to the artisan crucial, transitional roles in the expansion of wealth.

Butchers, bakers, and other artisans may be defined as persons who possess special skills, and who arrange to combine their skills with small investments in tools and equipment for the production of manufactured, rather than agricultural goods. In general, artisans contribute to the wealth of nations craft items of distinctive quality, depending on their skills, and of restricted quantity, depending on the technical means they have available. Of course, within limits, the investments made in skills relative to the technical means required for artisan production vary and change. Under certain conditions, investment in technical means may increase, as it did most notably during the so-called Industrial Revolutions of both England and the United States, to the point where output advances quantitatively, and

production based in artisan skill shifts to a new qualitatively different basis in factory wage-labor.

For a particular branch of artisan manufacture eventually to give way to the leavening action of factory production, however, many ingredients have to combine favorably. Industrialization is thus never a certain outcome. Indeed, most people of the world labor in economies that are, or have been until relatively recently, deeply biased against the development of local manufacturing activities, and slanted steeply in favor of agriculture. The region of the world with which I am most familiar, the Caribbean, is no exception to this rule.

The growth of manufacturing depends, at least in part, on the relations of interdependence between artisans and producers in other branches and sectors of the economy. These relations create potentially expanding markets for artisan products and help determine the ability of artisans to expand their production. Study of Caribbean political economy is especially instructive with regard to the role of artisans in a wider institutional setting, because in that region the historical development of a single agricultural institution, the plantation, largely accounts for the general impoverishment of local manufacturing.

This dissertation reports some of the results of more than twenty-seven months of research on the relations between plantation agriculture and artisan manufacture in Guyana and other parts of the English-speaking Caribbean. It is intended as a contribution both to the anthropology of artisan production in general, and to the comparative historical and ethnographic study of Caribbean artisanry in particular. For the flaws and shortcomings of the argument in the

present volume, I am alone responsible. But for whatever merits this study may have, I am pleased to acknowledge the generous assistance that I have received from a variety of sources.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I began my research on this project as a graduate fellow of the National Science Foundation. Historical and ethnographic research in Guyana was made possible by a further award from the National Science Foundation (BNS77-25180), and by grants-in-aid from Sigma XI and the Yale University Concilium on International and Area Studies. A Yale University Fellowship supported an additional year of library research in New Haven, and I produced this document using the splendid facilities and services of the Yale Computer Center.

The results of my work in Guyana are only briefly reported in the first chapter of this volume. So full acknowledgment of the help I received in that country must await a subsequent publication. But here I do want to express my sincere appreciation for numerous courtesies extended to me and my wife by the Guyana government especially through the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Regional Minister for Courantyne and New Amsterdam, and the Mayor, Town Council and staff of Rose Hall Town. Harold Davis, chairman of the Guyana Sugar Corporation, showed a profound interest in my work and used his good offices to make an extraordinary amount of information available to me concerning sugar production throughout the country, and especially on the Courantyne Coast. Professor Leslie Cummings of the University of Guyana kindly served as my local academic advisor. Professor Lesley

Potter, a geographer in the University of Guyana, offered a number of timely suggestions and assisted me in a number of ways that greatly improved the course of my work. Michael Parris, a sociologist also at the University of Guyana, and Percy Hintzen, now at the University of California (Berkeley), both exerted uncommon amounts of effort to introduce me and my wife to Guyana life. And during our stay, we were succored by the legendary hospitality of the Guyanese, and particularly by the fast friendship of Mrs. Vera Hintzen, Mr. Emmanuel Chase, Mr. and Mrs. Suresh Ragnandan, Mr. and Mrs. Chandridat M. Persaud, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Chinapin, and all their families.

While drafting the chapters that comprise the present volume, I have benefited enormously from the help and encouragement of numerous other friends and associates, but I have been especially fortunate to receive the assistance and support of three gifted teachers. Harold Scheffler has graciously acted as my principal advisor throughout my graduate career, and he has been an unfailing source of insight, good sense, and friendship. His acute ear for sound argument, and his willingness to share his wide learning have made him my best critic. Keith Hart helped introduce me to the field of economic anthropology, and is perhaps most responsible for my decision in this volume to try to set the relations between West Indian plantation agriculture and artisan manufacture in a broad historical perspective. And Sidney Mintz has followed this project attentively and sympathetically since its inception. He has patiently answered many queries about matters Caribbean, he has thoughtfully responded to various portions of the present argument, and he has kindly let me see related portions of his own work in progress.

In addition to professors Scheffler, Hart and Mintz, I should like also to thank John Blassingame, David Levine, Harold Conklin, John Cole, Susan Bean, Harvey Blustain, and Michael Raber for reading and commenting on earlier versions of parts of this dissertation. Doss Mabe, Susan Matchett, and William Cahoy also made useful suggestions at various stages. M. G. Smith offered valuable criticisms of several chapters and, during the late stages of composition, William Kelly and Timothy Weiskel both made several insightful suggestions that greatly improved the overall organization of the text.

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Seeking to conquer a larger liberty, man but

Extends the empire of necessity

-- Herman Melville, "The Bell-Tower"

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION: ARTISANRY IN A PLANTATION ECONOMY

Handicraft stands on golden ground  
-- A German proverb

Guyana is the westernmost of the three Guiana countries that perch on the northeast shoulder of South America, north of Brazil and east of Venezuela. Early Dutch traders, the first Europeans to establish enduring settlements in the Guianas during the early seventeenth century, referred to the low-lying shore of this region as the Wild Coast of the entire continent. The shoreline is almost indistinct but for the growth of mangrove trees and courida bush. Indeed, at high tide, much of the land lies below sea level. The sea itself churns with silt swept northwestward by Atlantic currents from the mouth of the Amazon. And, because of the lay of the land and the sediments in the water, one encounters "a shallow sea, turbid and dirty" (Davy 1854: 338), as from the north one approaches this, the reputed home of the legendary gilded man, El Dorado.

One of the supposed roots of the word "Guiana" is an Indian term meaning "land of many waters." Of the numerous rivers that course through the Guianas, those that empty north into the dreary seas of the Atlantic include the Essequibo, the Demerara, the Berbice, and the Courantyne Rivers. On the Essequibo and Berbice Rivers, the Dutch first began colonizing the Guianas; a settlement on the Demerara followed in

the eighteenth century as an offshoot of the older colony on the Essequibo. From their inception, these three small river settlements maintained close social and economic ties with some of the West Indian colonies, such as Barbados, in the Caribbean Sea. Then, in 1803, Great Britain actually acquired by conquest the Dutch colonies on the Essequibo, Demerara, and the Berbice Rivers. Thereafter, despite the geographical and ecological differences that separated the mainland from the island territories, these settlements became incorporated politically, economically, and in many other respects as part of the British West Indies. In 1831, Britain united the three river colonies to form a single entity named British Guiana (as distinct from Dutch and French Guiana to the east) and, in 1966, the colony gained its political independence and became the sovereign nation of Guyana.<sup>1</sup>

The Courantyne River marks the boundary between Guyana and Suriname, the erstwhile Dutch Guiana. The fertile, coastal region that stretches some 60 kilometers west into Guyana, from the Courantyne to the Berbice River, comprises what Guyanese regard conventionally as the Courantyne Coast and, somewhat more formally, as East Berbice (see Figure 1). Between 1960 and 1970, the population of this region increased at an average rate of 3.5 percent per annum, a significantly higher rate than the 2.5 percent per year growth registered for the country as a whole over the same period. Assuming the same rates of increase during the next decade, there were, by 1977, approximately 150,000 people residing on the Courantyne Coast, and this figure

<sup>1</sup> On the need, for various reasons, to count Guyana among the West Indies, see, for example, M. G. Smith (1955: 21), Lewis (1968: 15, 257-259), Parry and Sherlock (1971: v), Mintz (1974b: 46), and Cross (1979: 1-3). For the meaning of "Guiana," see Smith (1962: 4).

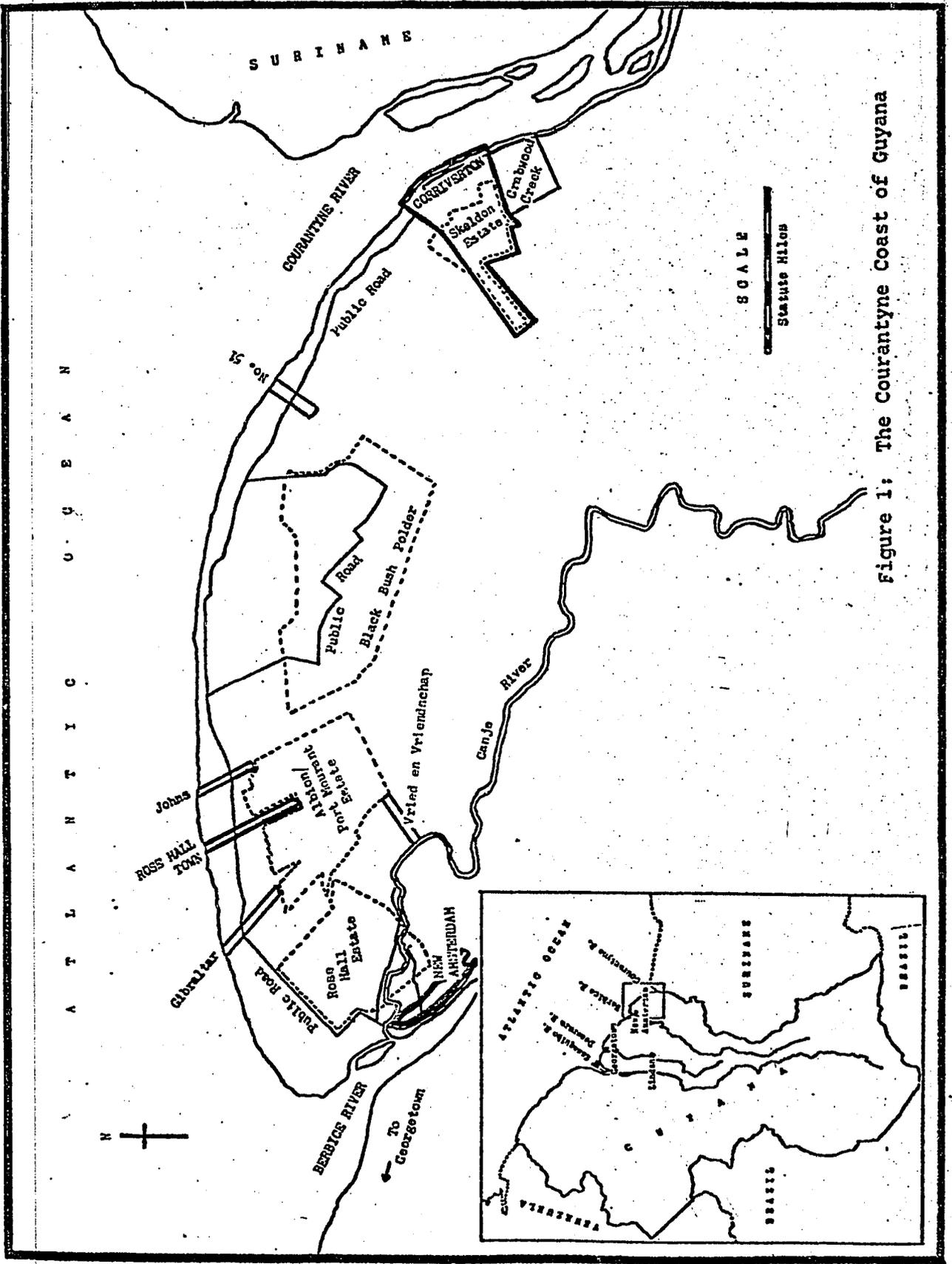


Figure 1: The Courantyne Coast of Guyana

represented about 18 percent of Guyana's total population.<sup>2</sup>

The extraordinary rate of population growth on Guyana's Courantyne Coast between 1960 and 1970 resulted largely from agricultural expansion in the region following the opening, during the early 1960s, of a new land settlement scheme, called Black Bush Polder. But local urbanization and the corresponding development of employment opportunities in the manufacturing crafts also accounted, in part, for the high rate of population increase on the Courantyne. In all of Guyana, there are only five towns. Two of them lie on the Demerara River, which drains into the Atlantic 90 kilometers farther west of the Berbice River: Georgetown, at the mouth of the Demerara, on the river's eastern bank, is the capital and principal port of the country; Linden, a mining town, is located 100 kilometers upstream. The other three urban areas in Guyana, however, all stand on the Courantyne Coast.

Each of the three Courantyne towns caters, in part, to the population of a major sugar plantation. Corriverton, serving Skeldon Estate workers on the Courantyne River, and New Amsterdam, on the Berbice River supplying laborers of nearby Rose Hall Estate, are also minor ports. But Rose Hall Town, which is neither historically nor geographically related to the plantation of the same name, is not riverbound. Situated 18 kilometers east of New Amsterdam on the

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<sup>2</sup> There were 560,330 people living in British Guiana in 1960; by 1970, 699,848 people lived in the newly independent country. Given the same rate of annual growth--2.5 percent per year--the population in Guyana at the end of 1977 exceeded 822,000 people. Between 1960 and 1970, in the five census districts that comprise the Courantyne Coast, the population had increased from a total of 89,371 to 120,367 people. See Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office (1964: Table 1) and University of the West Indies, Census Research Programme (1973: Table 3).

frontlands of Albion/Port Mourant Estate, the largest sugar plantation in the country, Rose Hall is Guyana's smallest town. And in 1977-78, as part of a broadly-conceived investigation into the role of artisans in plantation economies of the Caribbean area, I conducted fifteen months of ethnographic and historical research in Rose Hall Town and its immediate environs.

### 1.1 ARTISAN MANUFACTURING IN ROSE HALL, GUYANA

Rose Hall Town rests in the midst of a densely populated area, known as the Lower Courantyne, which straddles the public road and extends from Gibraltar to Johns (see Figure 1). Between 1960 and 1970, the population of this portion of the Courantyne Coast increased at an annual rate of 2.8 percent, a rate only slightly higher than that for the entire country; by 1977, given the same growth rate per annum, there were about 42,000 souls living in the area. By contrast, from 1960 to 1970, Rose Hall grew at a rate of 3.8 percent per year, which was much higher than the annual rate for the immediately surrounding area, and higher even than the rate for the Courantyne Coast as a whole. The town continued to grow in succeeding years, but even assuming the same annual rate of increase, Rose Hall contained only about 6400 residents by the end of 1977.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> There were 27,431 people in the Gibraltar-Johns district during the census of 1960, and 35,080 during the census of 1970. Based on the number of registered births and deaths, the management of the local sugar estate calculated the population each year from 1970 to 1975 for this entire district, except Rose Hall Town, Gibraltar and its neighboring village, Fyrish. The figures suggest a slightly lower rate of increase--2.7 percent per annum--than the one I projected from the census returns (Guyana Sugar Corporation, Albion/Port Mourant Estate 1970-75). But growth in the population of Rose Hall Town undoubtedly accounts for the difference in rates. In 1960, there were

Formally incorporated as a town in 1970, Rose Hall still retains many features of rural life. Indeed, of the 800 acres formally enclosed within its boundaries, fully 519 acres, or 65 percent of the total, comprise farm land. For more than two decades, however, most of the farms have been poorly cultivated in either rice or sugar cane, or they have lain completely idle. During that time, Rose Hall grew rapidly in population, and achieved its urban status largely because of the bustling growth of its commerce, and as a result of the expansion of related manufacturing activity.

The Lower Courantyne area, which surrounds Rose Hall, provides a large core of consumers who stimulate and sustain the business of the town merchants. In one important respect, however, the Rose Hall marketplace is not limited to local shoppers. The town has become a major center for Guyana's trade in cloth and clothing, and the wide selection of these items attracts customers from all over the country. They come to this small, but appealing, little town for cloth and then shop the stores of the other merchants for additional goods.

Rose Hall's commercial district includes over forty various-sized shops. Of these, eight of the largest sell cloth for garments almost exclusively, and some retail well in excess of one million Guyana dollars worth of goods each year.<sup>4</sup> Two of the other stores, doing somewhat less business, sell only ready-made clothing. Still another is a large tailoring establishment.

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3627 people living in Rose Hall; in 1970, the population numbered 5018. See Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office (1964: Table 5), and University of the West Indies, Census Research Programme (1973: Table 3).

<sup>4</sup> In 1977-78, G\$1.00 equalled approximately US\$0.40.

This kind of concentrated commerce in cloth and clothing, with over one in four stores devoted to the trade, is duplicated nowhere in the country, not even in Georgetown. Rose Hall is thus properly renowned for its highly visible and prosperous cloth merchants, and it is worth noting that of the major shirt factories in the country, the first was established in Georgetown by one of these local Courantyne businessmen. But with so much cloth locally for sale, it should not be surprising that the Rose Hall area itself also boasts a significant proportion of manufacturers who fashion the available material into clothing.

In the early years after World War II, according to the 1946 census returns, Georgetown possessed the largest proportion of working people employed in manufacturing in what was then British Guiana. By 1960, however, all the major subdivisions of the country, except the westernmost and sparsely settled county of Essequibo, had nearly equal proportions of workers in this type of employment. In Demerara and in Berbice, the proportion had increased, while in the other major divisions of the country, it had declined. Moreover, in 1960, on the portion of the Courantyne Coast that includes the so-called Lower Courantyne, in the area surrounding Rose Hall, the ratio of people working in manufacturing had actually advanced to exceed the ratio of people so employed in Georgetown (see Table 1).

Based on my research, I have concluded that garment-making undoubtedly formed the cornerstone for the growth of the Lower Courantyne area as a manufacturing center in the wider Guyanese economy. The master tailor and his five journeymen assistants, who keep shop in

TABLE 1

Persons Employed in Manufacturing as a Percentage of the Total Working Population(a), British Guiana (1946-1960)

Region	1946	1960
Georgetown	25.6	19.6
New Amsterdam	23.1	16.7
Demerara(b)	12.9	16.6
Berbice(c)	12.2	16.1
Courantyne Coast(d)	13.4	17.4
East Coast and Lower		
Courantyne Coast	15.1	21.3
Essequibo	9.7	8.1
British Guiana	15.9	16.3

SOURCES: Jamaica, Central Bureau of Statistics (1950: Tables 41 and 42), Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office (1964: Table 16).

- NOTES: (a) Here, the category labelled "Working Population is here assumed to be equivalent to the category labelled in 1946 as "Gainfully-Occupied Population."  
 (b) Does not include Georgetown.  
 (c) Does not include New Amsterdam.  
 (d) As specified here, the Courantyne Coast is a category derived from the aggregation of several census subdivisions in Berbice County. For 1946, the category consists of (1) the East Coast (of the Berbice River) and the Lower Courantyne Coast, which roughly corresponds to the 1960 subdivisions of Borlam-Vried en Vriendschap and Gibraltar-Johns; (2) Central Courantyne Coast, which is nearly equivalent to the Bloomfield-No. 51 subdivision in 1960; and (3) Upper Courantyne Coast, which approximates the area covered by the 1960 category, No. 52-Crabwood Creek.

the heart of Rose Hall's shopping district, are easily the most visible garment-makers in the region. But the total number of active seamstresses and tailors in and around Rose Hall constitute fully 5 percent of the Lower Courantyne's working population. Although this number may seem small in absolute terms, it represents at least one-fifth of all the people locally occupied in manufacture, and this is by far the largest proportion of people employed in any single craft.<sup>5</sup>

These garment workers are highly productive and the clothes that they manufacture are, as one might expect, widely varied. There are those, for example, who produce ready-made wear for children, others who tailor pants, shirts, dresses, blouses, and skirts to fit, still others who manufacture fine and fancy wear and, of course, those who can work up a number, if not all, of these different kinds of garments. Whatever bits of clothing they produce, however, the garment-makers in the Rose Hall area do qualify, in all the essential features of their productive organization, as artisans.

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<sup>5</sup> My estimate of the ratio of garment-makers to members of the working population is based, in part, on my calculation that the percentage of people employed locally in manufacture has increased since 1960 at a slightly faster rate than it did between 1946 and 1960 (see Table 1). My estimate is also based, in part, on a fuller analysis of the 1946 and 1960 census returns. In 1946, 4.9 percent of the workers in the Lower Courantyne reportedly were occupied in "Textiles and Apparel;" in 1960, 3.1 percent of the workers in this area were counted as being occupied in "Textiles and Leather" [see Jamaica, Central Bureau of Statistics (1950: Table 42), Trinidad and Tobago, Central Statistical Office (1964: Table 15)]. I believe that the more recent category--Textiles and Leather--although similar to the earlier one, did not fully cover the garment-workers in this region. Moreover, even if it did, the figures 4.9 percent and 3.1 percent for the Lower Courantyne as a whole both understated the higher concentrations of garment-workers in the more narrowly defined region that surrounds Rose Hall.

In general, artisans may be distinguished from other kinds of producers insofar as they make relatively small investments in manufacturing tools and equipment, insofar as they depend on accumulated skills, and insofar as they actually participate in the labor process instead of merely directing others to work for them. On the Lower Courantyne Coast of Guyana, garment-makers first of all employ only limited amounts of technical equipment. Some garment-makers stock their own cloth and accessories, but they are few in number; most require no more than a sewing machine and ask their clients to provide thread and other materials. Although those with access to electricity may purchase sophisticated Touch-and-Sew machines costing several thousand Guyana dollars, pedal-driven models are far more common, and used ones can be had sometimes for less than G\$100.<sup>6</sup>

Given such limited technical investments, all Rose Hall area tailors and seamstresses are, second, dependent largely on their accumulated skills. There is considerable variation here too, however. Some can do no more than stitch pieces "put out" to them by a skilled cutter. But at the other extreme, there are thoroughly-trained craftsmen known widely for their skill and flair, and they are sought after not only for their work, but also for their ability properly to train apprentices.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For these garment-makers, as for craftsmen in general, "not only are the tools simple but the capital outlay is low" (Lloyd 1953: 32). See also, for example, Unwin (1904: 2), Kahn (1975: 141), and Long and Richardson (1978: 179). For some of the general variation in what constitutes a "low capital outlay" in artisan materials and tools, see, for example, Rabinowitch (1928: 834-835), Nadel (1942: 289-290), Staley and Morse (1965: 47), and Lebrun and Gerry (1975: 22).

<sup>7</sup> Among the distinctive characteristics of artisanry, Hermine Rabinowitch counted the artisan's display of "manual skill" and

Finally, the third feature of organization that qualifies these garment-makers as artisans is that all of them actually labor on the cloth itself, either cutting or sewing, in the production of garments. There is much variation in the organization of groups in which tasks are divided and specializations carefully developed. Some work alone, some set up small shops with family members or journeymen and apprentices, and others organize elaborate putting-out arrangements. But it is no one's function in any of these cases simply to boss or supervise those who work on the cloth.<sup>8</sup>

As producers who skillfully apply their own labor, and perhaps that of a few assistants, to a minimal amount of equipment, the tailors and seamstresses in and around Rose Hall require only small investments of capital in labor and technology, and so they engage in a relatively simple form of manufacturing. But although their investments may be

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"creative work" (1928: 819-820). Indeed, as Marx pointed out, an artisan may use his skills "as a virtuoso" and create veritable works of art (1967, 1: 761). On the artistic dimension of artisan production, see, for example, Johnson (1937: 259-277), Laloire (1961: 250), Shetty (1963: 5, 52-53), Staley and Morse (1965: 66-69), and a number of more recent works: Cooper (1980: 34-52), Silver (1980), and Eshelman (1981). Whether or not artisan products have artistic merit, however, they are invested with individual skill. The objects of handicraft thus "are produced for the most part one at a time with individual variation," and this method of production distinguishes artisan from factory products (Staley and Morse 1965: 6, 47). See also Lenin (1908:335-336) and especially Bücher (1901: 170): "All the important characteristics of handicraft may be summed up in the single expression custom production" (italics in original). Peil (1970), Verdon (1979), Cooper (1980: 23-33), and Silver (1981) have focused specifically on the transmission of skill from artisans to apprentices. Unwin (1904: 2-3), Dobb (1947: 71-72, 84-85), Orlove (1974: 198), Kahn (1975: 142), Lebrun and Gerry (1975: 25), and Olton (1975: 7-8) all have treated various aspects of the distinctions among master craftsmen, journeymen and apprentices.

<sup>8</sup> An overview of the distinctions between workshop, putting-out, and other forms of artisan organization is contained in Staley and Morse (1965: 58). See also Bücher (1901: 154-173), Herman (1956), the

small, Rose Hall garment-makers nevertheless contribute various needed commodities to the local economy. Moreover, the vigorous rise of artisan manufacturing in one region of this generally poor country has surely stimulated local population growth, in part at least, because such activity is a hopeful sign of advancing wealth.

Like other countries in the Caribbean area, Guyana is industrially impoverished and, during 1977, the Gross Domestic Product per capita in the country totalled only G\$1367 (US\$536). In other places, however, especially in parts of Europe and in the United States, the historical development of artisanry has facilitated the growth of forms of manufacturing that are more sophisticated both technologically and in their divisions of labor, and it has thereby contributed significantly to an expansion of capital capable of supporting a growing

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comment by Spengler (1957) and Herman's reply (1957), Long and Richardson (1978: 188-200), and Novelo (1981: 201-206). For further discussion of the relation between putting-out industry and mercantile activity, see, for example, Shallcross (1939: 1-20), Bythell (1968: 12-19) and Malowist (1981: 667-669). See Marglin (1974), who argues that the function of "bossing" is a characteristic feature of the political economy of factory manufacture as opposed to artisanry. According to Rabinowitch, "the function of the handicraftsman" is to take "an active part in the execution of the work itself" (1928: 820). If an artisan is thus a producer who labors himself, it is sometimes correct to assert that he is, in the words of the old Marxist dictum, a laborer who owns the means of production. Indeed, scholars often cite this dictum as definitive of artisan production. See, for example, Arnould (1981: 62), Cook (1976b: 398, 400), Dobb (1947: 71,85), Ennew, et al. (1977: 309), Lenin (1908: 41), Mandel (1968, 1: 66), Mann and Dickenson (1978: 467-468), Kahn (1978: 113-114) and, of course, Marx (1967, I: 761).

Labor and the various materials and tools that enter into the production of a craft good all qualify as means of production. But the rights of an artisan to these means may vary widely without affecting his identity as such. Although a craftsman may legally own all the means, there are many artisans who are enslaved, enserved, and in other forms of dependence, and who thus produce craft goods without

population.<sup>9</sup> The economic developments in Rose Hall thus merit further, careful study, and they deserve attention not only in respect of the intrinsic, or essential, features of artisan organization outlined above, but also in respect of the relations of artisanry to other elements in the local political economy, and in respect of the history of those relations.

## 1.2 THE WIDER DIMENSIONS OF ROSE HALL ARTISANRY

Like other social actors, artisans are not entirely self-determining. Indeed, a considerable portion of the existing literature on artisanry is devoted to a defense of the proposition that the intrinsic features of artisan organization are themselves partly dependent on the structure and history of the wider political economy in which craft producers participate. Thus, in his recent book, Joel Kahn asserted that artisans

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fully "owning" the rights in their own persons much less in a set of materials and tools. Equally, there are artisans who produce craft goods while legally owning some of the means of production, but who have only rights of usage in the other means, such as the cloth that a client may consign to a tailor for manufacture. All these variations are covered in the general notion that an artisan is a producer who takes "an active part in the execution of the work itself," and does not simply function as a boss. To define an artisan as a laborer who owns the means of production is to take one of the variations and to raise it, quite arbitrarily and misleadingly it seems to me, to the level of a general distinguishing trait.

<sup>9</sup> I computed Guyana's per capita Gross Domestic Product for 1977 using data recently published by the World Bank (1980: 94-95). Sivard (1980: 24) put Guyana's per capita income in terms of the Gross National Product for 1977 at US\$515 and, with respect to this figure, ranked Guyana 87th in a total of 140 countries.

For the transformation of artisanry into so-called industrial forms of manufacturing, see, for example, the studies of Europe by Unwin (1904), Mantoux (1928), Dobb (1947: 123-319), Ashton (1948), and Kellenbenz (1976), and the recent studies of the United States by Thomson (1976), Wallace (1978: 4-239), Hirsch (1978), Montgomery (1979: 9-31), and Mulligan (1981).

take on "specific social forms" in production because they "stand in a particular social relation to other classes in the social formation" (1981: 102).<sup>10</sup> But Adam Smith, too, defended a similar, though somewhat narrower, version of this argument as early as 1776. He referred to the organization of production among carpenters, blacksmiths and others, and asserted that their "division of labor . . . must always be limited . . . by the extent of the market" (1937: 17).

As producers, artisans are immediately locked into a wider economy by their need for some form of mercantile relation: they must sell or exchange their own products for goods that they need but do not themselves produce. Providing artisan wares to a consumer is, of course, the role of a merchant, and artisans may themselves undertake this role or they may largely consign it to someone else. But in either case, artisan manufacturing depends on the ability of merchant activity to locate and secure a regular body of customers for craft products.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Kahn's argument here is phrased in terms derived from the influential work of Althusser and Balibar (1970). The key phrase is "social formation," and it is conceptually linked to a number of other terms, including "mode of production," "forces and relations of production," and the "articulation" of modes of production. Analysis of the possible significance and presumed interrelation of the concepts designated by these terms has provoked considerable discussion and disagreement among so-called Marxist anthropologists. But however inconclusive these debates have been, they have at least made other anthropologists more aware of the need to analyze carefully the effects of wider economic, political and social relations on particular forms of productive organization, such as artisanry. For arguments in the Althusserian tradition on this general point, see, for example, Terray (1972: 95-186; 1979), Rey (1973; 1979), O'Laughlin (1975: 346-348, 354-364), Hindess and Hirst (1975: 1-78; 1977: 1-6, 46-72), and Foster-Carter (1978).

<sup>11</sup> For some of the general effects of the development of product markets on artisan manufacturing, see Rao (1965: 29), Shetty (1963: 52) and Staley and Morse (1965: 22). Chuta and Liedholm (1979: 22-30) distinguish between foreign and local demand, and note that local markets comprise both consumer and producer demand. Anderson and

In several ways, the Rose Hall case nicely illustrates how the role of merchants affects artisan organization. Until the end of World War II, the market for clothing in the Rose Hall vicinity was small and fragmented. Local tailors and seamstresses sewed for themselves, their families and perhaps for a few neighbors, and they rarely had enough business to keep them occupied for more than part of a week. After the war, however, large quantities of cheap, synthetic fabrics became available on the world market to the major cloth merchants in Rose Hall. Seizing the opportunity, these merchants assembled a small army of peddlers to hawk the material throughout the region, and thereby to make the cheap fabric readily available even to the poorest consumer. As sales of the cloth expanded, so too did the need for artisans to fashion the material into garments, and both the peddlers and the larger merchants vigorously competed to train and to organize local tailors and seamstresses to manufacture clothing as efficiently as possible. Some individuals continued to work for themselves. But numerous artisan shops arose at this time, with tasks divided sometimes among family members,

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Lieserson (1980: 236-237) invoke similar distinctions. Bücher argued that artisans generally produce for a market comprising "a locally limited circle of customers" (1901: 151). Herman (1956: 367) and Laloire (1961: 250) have taken similar positions. In such cases, the artisan typically makes his product to the special order of each individual customer, and thus acts as his own merchant. See Bücher (1901: 170), Unwin (1904: 2), Lenin (1908: 335-336), Lloyd (1953: 32), Laloire (1961: 248), and Lebrun and Gerry (1975: 21-22). As Cook (1970, 1976a,b, 1981) and Kahn (1975, 1980: 86-92) have recently made clear, however, artisans may also depend for the sale of their products in local markets on rather intricate relations with local merchants. Similarly, Cooper (1979, 1980) and Littlefield (1976, 1978, 1979) have each provided detailed studies of artisans who deal with merchants in an export trade. These various mercantile relations give rise to complex and varied organizations of production, sometimes under a single roof in a workshop, and sometimes in putting-out arrangements.

and sometimes among a master and his or her trained assistants and apprentices. In addition, some tailors and seamstresses began to "put out" cut material to other garment-makers and thus to fashion large quantities of ready-made apparel. The activity of merchants who eagerly sought to expand the local sales of cloth and clothing during the post-war era thus accounted directly for many of the forms of productive organization, which in 1977-78 characterized the Rose Hall garment industry.

But if the intrinsic features of artisanry in Rose Hall depended, at least in part, on the role of merchants in the local economy and, indeed, on the integration of those merchants within the world trade in synthetic fabrics, then any local political changes that served to promote mercantile activity and to protect the relative positions of artisans and merchants in the wider economy also shaped local artisan organization in important ways. Additionally, the characteristics of such organization hinged on the ability of local consumers consistently to afford new items of clothing. This ability, in turn, depended not only on the availability of cheap fabric, but also on the earnings of consumers from employment in other sectors of the local economy, particularly in agriculture.

In England, the locus classicus of the so-called Industrial Revolution, the development of manufacturing from an artisan base depended heavily on the growth of income in agriculture. Increased agricultural earnings apparently heightened various sorts of local demand for manufactured goods, including the demand for cloth and clothing. Under the stimulation of an expanding home market rooted in

agriculture, forms of manufacture thus advanced, and did so during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution in a pattern that closely resembles the advance of the garment industry on the Lower Courantyne Coast of Guyana.<sup>12</sup> But what makes the Rose Hall case so unusual and so deserving of close examination is that the local artisans have developed and prospered in a local economy grounded largely in plantation agriculture, a form of cultivation that is supposed, by its very nature and since its inception in the New World, to have stifled the development of manufactures, even in their most simple forms.

### 1.2.1 Guyana's Plantation Economy

The Courantyne Coast of Guyana may be noted for its "lively commerce" and for the thriving development of certain forms of artisanry (Jayawardena 1963: 8). But the region is only the easternmost portion of Guyana's entire coastal area, which reaches no more than 20 miles inland, and on which 90 percent of the country's population lives and works. Overall, the coast is laced with thousands of miles of man-made canals and earthen dikes that serve to reclaim this low-lying, but richly fertile, soil from the continuous encroachment of the sea. And in Guyana's coastal economy, especially in that branch of it on the Courantyne Coast, the primary source of economic wealth is agriculture.

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<sup>12</sup> The literature is huge on the development of agriculture and of the home market for industry in England. See, for example, E. L. Jones (1965, 1967, 1968) and Eversley (1967). For the place of these advances in the development of the wider European economy, see, for example, the recent series of articles in Past and Present that featured discussions of Brenner (1976).

For more than two centuries, the principle engine of agricultural production in Guyana has been the plantation, an institution designed to cultivate staple crops for large, centralized foreign markets.

Provisioning consumers in Britain, plantations in the erstwhile colony of British Guiana have produced mainly sugar. Indeed, over time, the sweetener has steadfastly comprised Guyana's leading export.

By 1886-1890, sugar and its by-products (rum and molasses) accounted, on average, for over 93 percent of the total value of the country's outgoing goods. Since that time, Guyana's exports have diversified somewhat to include primary products other than sugar. For example, mining in the sparsely settled, interior regions of the country has earned a growing proportion of foreign exchange: around the turn of the century and again during the 1920s, the production of gold was important; after the 1930s, and especially during the 1960s and 1970s, bauxite grew to become the most valuable mineral export of interior Guyana. Moreover, on the coast, where agriculture predominates, the number of peasant farmers has grown sharply since the 1880s, and many of these producers cultivate rice not only for their own consumption and for the local market, but also for consumers abroad. By 1971-1975, rice comprised, on average, fully 9.0 percent of the value of Guyana's annual exports. During the same five-year period, however, sugar still provided the backbone of Guyana's foreign trade. Earning extraordinarily high prices in 1974 and 1975, this plantation commodity (and its by-products) constituted 45.5 percent of the total value of the country's exports.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For the relative values of sugar, gold, bauxite, and rice in Guyana's exports from 1880 to 1975, see Great Britain (1897, Appendix B: 160;

Sugar and the two other major prongs of outgoing foreign trade--bauxite and rice--accounted for 40.3 percent of Guyana's gross domestic product from 1971 to 1975; during that time, sugar alone accounted for 22.5 percent of the GDP. Guyana thus depends heavily for its wealth on exports, particularly on a single plantation commodity, and it does so even more than other former British colonies in the region, such as Jamaica.<sup>14</sup> As a result, according to Gordon Lewis, the distinguished Caribbean historian, Guyana retains the region's "colonial export economy par excellence" (1968: 262).

In the agricultural sector of that economy, Guyana's Courantyne Coast has contributed substantially to the total production of both rice and sugar. Between 1971 and 1975, for example, Courantyne farmers harvested exactly one-third of all the padi reaped in the country. But in this area where garment-making has also expanded and flourished, nothing represents the predominance of agriculture more than the sugar plantation. Estates in Berbice, of which the Courantyne forms the major

1930, Part 4, Appendix 2: Table and Diagram for British Guiana, facing p. 82), Nath (1970: Table 16), and Bank of Guyana (1979: 110). For more detail on the structure of Guyana's economy since 1945, see also International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (1953: 113-159, 351-355), O'Loughlin (1959: 25-46) and David (1969: 84-231).

<sup>14</sup> See Jainarain (1976: 86-88, 172-174), who compiled the data to show the percentage contribution of exports to the National Income of both Guyana and Jamaica as follows:

	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1971
Guyana	58.2	52.1	63.0	75.1	76.4	77.8
Jamaica	30.6	38.7	48.1	48.7	50.7	48.9

Jainarain also provides similar data for Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados (ibid.: 131-133, 205-207).

portion, produced nearly half (49.3%) of the country's total sugar output.<sup>15</sup> And Rose Hall Town, the center of local artisan activity, is and has long been dwarfed by what lies behind it: Plantation Albion/Port Mourant, "a sugarcane estate of flat, hideous vastness, miles long and miles deep" (Naipaul 1962: 133).

### 1.2.2 A Comparative and Historical Perspective

Plantation agriculture displays an imposing economic presence not only in Guyana and on the Courantyne Coast, but also in many other economies of the Caribbean area. It has done so for years, with the result, according to some scholars, that these economies are almost uniformly "lacking an industrial base" in manufacturing (Cross 1979: 28). As early as 1873, one witness noted that sugar plantations generally seemed to discourage alternative activities: "The shadow of the sugar cane," wrote Richard Whitfield, "kills all other vegetations and chills all other industries" (quoted in Potter 1977: 2). Even earlier, two thoughtful observers of conditions in British Guiana and the British West Indies had already concluded that, amidst the plantations, investments in artisanry and in other more advanced forms of manufacturing had little hope of growing to provide a diverse and prosperous economic environment.

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<sup>15</sup> Again, this figure covers the period 1971-1975. It is derived from data kindly supplied to me by the Guyana Sugar Corporation. I calculated the portion of total padi that was harvested on the Courantyne Coast from the final detailed Spring and Autumn estimates of the Guyana Rice Board for the years 1971-1975.

In 1840, Robert Schomburgk, an explorer in British Guiana and, later, an historian of Barbados, bluntly argued that "the British possessions in the Western hemisphere are agricultural countries, in which manufactures do not thrive" (1840: 120). By 1854, John Davy, a doctor and the younger brother of famed chemist, Sir Humphrey Davy, had completed a three-year period of residence and travel in the West Indies and British Guiana. He analyzed many of the local societies in fine detail, and he briskly amplified Schomburgk's earlier assertion about the sad state of manufacturing in the so-called plantation economies of the region: "Here we do not see, as even in the wildest parts of Asia, any traces of trades, of crafts, that have come down from remote ages, descending from father to son, any specimens of delicate handiwork or even of coarse, peculiar to the people" (Davy 1854: 104).

Insofar as he overlooked, for example, the subtle heritage of African crafts in the traditions of ex-slaves in the Americas, Davy undoubtedly carried his own rhetoric too far.<sup>16</sup> But otherwise his argument, like that of Schomburgk and of Whitfield, was penetrating enough that his insight about the deep agricultural bias of West Indian economies still applied more than a century later. For the most part, plantation economies today depend on imported manufactured goods and, in some cases, they may even attract foreign-based firms to open a local branch factory. But indigenously-organized manufacturing has rarely

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<sup>16</sup> Melville Herskovits (1941) was one of the first scholars to try systematically to refute the argument that slaves retained little of their African heritage in the New World. Among more recent scholars, Richard and Sally Price have investigated with much care and imagination, the subtle ways in which various African traditions, particularly in the arts and crafts, became incorporated in and transmitted through New World cultures. See, for example, Price (1966), Mintz and Price (1974), and Price and Price (1980).

succeeded and, according to Malcolm Cross, the persistent failures of such activity merely have demonstrated "the inflexibility and intractability" of rural economies that are so thoroughly dominated by plantations (1979: 39). George Beckford, a Jamaican economist, has been even more emphatic on the subject, insisting that plantation agriculture, by its very nature, inhibits the rise not only of peasant agriculture, but of artisan manufacturing as well: "The existence of open unemployment and underdevelopment as revealed in peasant production and the petty trades in all plantation economies is a reflection of a structural condition that inheres in the system" (1972: 179).<sup>17</sup>

If, as Whitfield, Schomburgk, Davy, Cross, and Beckford have all asserted, plantation agriculture has persistently enfeebled manufacturing in the Caribbean area, then the rich elaboration of artisan organization among Rose Hall garment-makers is truly an

<sup>17</sup> See also Beckford (1979: 48), and compare the assertion that a group, known as New World Associates, made with specific reference to Guyana: "The Sugar Industry has traditionally been, and remains today, the main prop of the colonial economy. The character and structure of the economy and society have been molded to suit its needs. . . . The structure of production (ie., the limited importance of production for domestic consumption) and the structure of demand (ie., the overwhelming importance of demand for imports) can all be explained in terms of the history of the sugar industry" (New World Associates 1963: 244). The recent arguments by Cross, Beckford, the New World Associates and others, that Caribbean economies need to be analyzed in terms of the alleged dominance of a form of agriculture that is dependent on foreign demand, is closely related to arguments about the dependence of Third World economies in general on more advanced, industrialized economies. For some useful reviews of the generalized literature on dependency, see, for example, Chilcote (1974), O'Brien (1975), Leys (1977), Palma (1978), and Henfrey (1981). For reviews and criticisms of the dependency arguments made with respect to Caribbean plantation economies, see Girvan (1973), Benn (1974), Bernstein and Pitt (1974), Brown and Brewster (1974), Cumper (1974), Oxaal (1975: 37-48), and Morissey (1981).

The dependence in the Caribbean for manufactured goods that are imported or the product of local, but foreign-based, branch

extraordinary phenomenon that cries out for explanation at several different levels of generalization. One must of course account for the interaction of local manufacturing and agriculture in terms of the particularities of local social and economic history, and varying trends of demographic growth and of urban development, for example, can help indicate the nature of local economic change. But in a wider sense, one must also understand how, and with what specific variations, Caribbean plantations in general originally achieved their ascendant position over artisans and over the commercial and political activities that might have led to the unimpeded development of artisan manufacturing. Indeed, only with such a general, comparative understanding can one begin to isolate more precisely which factors within local patterns of change and variation contributed to the rise of a case of artisanry that is exceptional, not only within the Guyanese economy, but also within a broader pattern of interaction between plantation agriculture and artisan manufacturing. Thus, in this dissertation, the first of a projected series of studies on the role of artisan manufacturing in Caribbean plantation economies, I examine how the features of early plantation organization led variously to the active suppression of local manufacturing activity.

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factories has been widely noted in the post-war era. See, for example, Lewis (1950), Voelker (1961: 2-4), Demas (1965: 90-91, 103-105, 115-118), Brewster and Thomas (1967: 58-96), Jefferson (1972: 125-147), Girvan (1973: 2-9, 15-24; 1979), van Houton (1973), Levitt and Best (1975: 43, 52-55), Girling (1976), Jainarain (1976: 296-306), Odle (1979), Ayub (1981), and Garrity (1981).

### 1.3 PLAN OF WORK

Central to Caribbean economies since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the region first became a major theater of European colonization, plantation agriculture has not only differed from place to place; it has also changed considerably over time. To help provide an adequate framework for conceptualizing the change and variation, anthropologist Eric Wolf has broadly distinguished between "old-style" and "new-style" plantations (1959b: 138-146). According to Wolf, new-style plantations typically depend on the employment of free wage-laborers. By contrast, the so-called old-style institutions exploited coerced laborers, such as peons, indentured servants and slaves.

For decades in many parts of the Caribbean area, slavery constituted the most widespread form of coercion that owners and managers applied on old-style plantations. Certainly, it was the cruellest and most extreme form and, in some respects, it may even be appropriate to compare slave plantations to "total institutions" (R. T. Smith 1967: 228-233). Because slave plantations controlled the local laboring population so rigidly at both the societal and personal levels, they could easily subordinate any incipient activities, including the growth of artisan manufacturing, to the primary, agricultural goal of the institution, that is, to the large-scale production of a staple crop for export. As a result, in the view of Raymond Smith, the heritage of slavery on plantations in the Caribbean goes a long way toward explaining "the peculiar impoverishment of local culture with its almost complete absence of arts [and] crafts" (ibid.: 231).

Unfortunately, beyond the general assertion that the politics of slavery on plantations choked the growth of alternative economic activities, there are no detailed studies that show some of the specific ways in which the owners and managers of slave plantations worked to block opportunities for the advance of manufacturing. Some studies of the role of manufacturing in early plantation economies do exist for other areas, however, particularly for the American South and Brazil.<sup>18</sup> These studies largely confirm that the politics of plantation slavery prevented any significant diversification in local plantation economies. But they emphasize also that an account of plantation labor organization does not exhaust the sources of the problem. As economic institutions, plantations also depend for their structure on the level of technical investment, and on the facilities available to market plantation products and, evidently, consideration for each of these factors also weighed heavily in the decisions of plantation owners and managers to oppose the growth of manufacturing and of other economic activities.

If studies elsewhere thus are any indication, subtle changes and variations with respect to labor organization, and also with respect to technical investment and to the structure of the markets for staple products all helped give rise at the very earliest stages of Caribbean economic development to a varied array of plantations. Undoubtedly, the owners and managers of these institutions had correspondingly varied

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Bateman and Weiss (1981) and Graham (1981: 621 n.5, 630-655). Handler's brilliant and suggestive essay (1963a) on the development of pottery-making in Barbados still stands as the most striking exception to the rule that historians have neglected to focus on the role of artisan manufacturing in early Caribbean plantation economies. See also Handler's note (1964) concerning the possible African origins of the pottery techniques practiced on early plantations in the Caribbean island of Antigua

abilities and incentives to control independent artisanry and other forms of manufacturing. So, in order to examine the early and various effects of plantation agriculture on the development of manufacturing in the Caribbean area, and to do so in the broadest theoretical and historical terms, it is necessary to concentrate on more than the relatively total nature of coercive labor controls within the old-style plantations. Instead, for the purposes of this discussion, I try to build on the work of Raymond Smith, Eric Wolf and others by incorporating the distinction between old and new kind of plantations into a distinction between at least two periods of economic change: During the first period, plantations made their initial accumulation of capital and made it in forms of political economy where they could balance specific kinds of investments in technology and in coercive labor organization against the sale of their products in specific kinds of markets; during the second period, plantations endeavored, politically and economically, to consolidate their capital.<sup>19</sup>

In Guyana, the period of accumulation on plantations extended roughly from the middle of the seventeenth century to the 1880s. In this dissertation, I seek to assemble some of the available evidence concerning the suppression of local manufacturing activity in Guyana during this period, and to view the evidence within the comparative framework of West Indian colonial history and, even more generally, within the framework of early New World colonial history. I begin in the next chapter by reviewing the essential characteristics of plantation agriculture and by identifying the formal conditions for the

<sup>19</sup> See Levine (1975: 51-67) for a discussion of the general features of periods of capital accumulation and concentration.

original accumulation of capital on New World plantations. Chapter Three consists of my demonstration that coercive labor practices, the structure of product markets, and other features of capital accumulation on colonial plantations in Guyana, Jamaica and Barbados had the effect of suppressing artisan trades. In Chapter Four, I note that slave-based plantation economies in these places still had to incorporate some kinds of manufacturing activities, though they did so in different ways, and I examine how slave emancipation had varying implications for artisan activities in Caribbean plantation economies. Finally, before concluding, I place my findings for the Caribbean in a wider comparative perspective by showing that the accumulation of capital in other forms of colonial agriculture--on Mexican haciendas and New England farms--did not always stifle local artisanry, although on plantations in other areas it did.

Given the absence of detailed studies on the relation between artisan manufacturing and capital accumulation in Caribbean plantation agriculture, the present work obviously stands as a preliminary investigation. Much more work is required to confirm, extend, modify, and correct the generalizations advanced here. In my view, as an anthropologist of the Caribbean, such work will broaden and deepen the essential theoretical and historical background needed for detailed ethnographic and historical research in the region on the organization and development of particular artisan trades during the later periods of plantation change, including particularly the period of capital consolidation. Indeed, given an understanding of the various ways that capital accumulation originally stifled artisanry in the British West

Indies, I have already begun work on a sequel to the present volume, which will focus specifically on changes in the plantation economy of Guyana since the 1880s. It will show how the concentration of sugar production in certain areas of the country combined with the related expansion of rice farming in the Rose Hall area to broaden the market for such consumers' goods as clothing, and it will examine how local merchants and artisans rapidly exploited that market through the sale of cloth and the production of garments.

But, in addition to laying the foundation for further study of later periods of change, this dissertation, and the work to which it makes a preliminary contribution, also bears an intrinsic value of its own. To the extent that it improves our knowledge of the ways that early plantations restricted the scope of manufacturing in the Caribbean colonies, it adds an important dimension to our understanding of what Herman Melville aptly called the "empire of necessity," which arose in parts of the New World when Europeans first came "seeking to conquer a larger liberty" for themselves.

## Chapter II

### PLANTATIONS AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION IN NEW WORLD COLONIES

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord--  
    . . . nature should bring forth,  
Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,  
To feed my innocent people.

-- Shakespeare, The Tempest: II,i (136, 156-158)

For broad comparative purposes, scholars have frequently linked the islands in the Caribbean Sea, and the closely related mainland countries of Belize, French Guiana, Suriname, and Guyana, to an area of much wider scope. The wider region, including the Caribbean and extending from Brazil to the southern United States, has provided the setting for some very general historical processes. According to M. G. Smith, these processes "consist in the expansion of Europe to the New World, the common historical patterns of conquest, colonization, peonage or slavery, and the development of multiracial and multicultural societies throughout the area" (1955: 19).

Also citing the feature of European competition for overseas empire, Philip Curtin has argued that Caribbean societies have long rested at the heart of a so-called South Atlantic System, "a complex organism centered on the production in the Americas of tropical staples for consumption in Europe, and grown by the labor of Africans" (1969: 3).<sup>1</sup> Because the plantation was the principal means for organizing

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<sup>1</sup> See Curtin (1955: 4-5) for his introduction of the concept of "South Atlantic System."

enslaved African laborers to supply Europe with tropical staples, the development of this institution is one of the criteria for identifying the Caribbean (including the Guianas) as part of the South Atlantic System. Indeed, so common and influential was the plantation from Brazil to the southern United States that one scholar has referred to this area as "Plantation America" (Wagley 1957: 5-6).

Of course, the plantation and the features associated with it do not fully define any New World society. With respect to the Caribbean proper, Sidney Mintz has noted that such features "only partially describe the island societies correctly" (1966: 913n). Still, the plantation is a crucial element in any definition of the Caribbean as a socio-cultural area, and any analysis of political economy within Caribbean societies, including the Guianas, must account for the influence of this institution.<sup>2</sup>

In the Caribbean, plantation agriculture generally appears to have had a deleterious influence on the development of artisan manufacturing. To determine how plantations originally hampered the development of artisanry in the British West Indies, I turn first to the general defining features of the plantation. Then, I identify those specific characteristics that distinguished the institution during the period of early European efforts to colonize the New World, when the plantation served as one of the primary means for the accumulation of capital.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Mintz (1966: 915, 919-925; 1968: 306, 310-313) and Cross (1979: 1-8).

## 2.1 THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF PLANTATION AGRICULTURE

According to Sidney Mintz, "the plantation is a distinctive form of agricultural organization and may, accordingly, exhibit distinctive social characteristics" (1953b: 139). Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize that "the formal structure of the plantation is not the same as the social and cultural behavior of its population" (Mintz 1959: 48).<sup>3</sup> An adequate conception of the plantation thus must distinguish primary, or distinctive, features of plantation organization from the secondary features that may include the social and political mechanisms through which the owners and managers of plantations act to control local economic forces, such as artisan manufacturing. Moreover, it is important to realize that the significant features of the plantation are themselves subject to considerable variation.

The formal structure, the set of primary features, of the plantation comprises the attributes of its economic organization. Lewis Gray, writing of the plantations in the antebellum American South,

<sup>3</sup> See also Rubin (1959: 1), Greaves (1959: 14), and McBride (1937: 152). Mintz has generalized his argument in a way that he has tried cautiously to develop elsewhere: "Many of the features of life generally associated with 'urban,' 'Western,' or 'modern' society, such as a wage-labor pattern, standardized wage rates, and industrialization, are introduced through plantation organization and seem to produce particular sociocultural effects" (1953b: 138). For an elaboration, see, for example, Mintz (1974b: 42-52).

Compare the cautious approach of Mintz, however, with the bold assertions of George Beckford, who has argued that "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 administrative structures (government)" (1972: 74). For telling criticisms of Beckford's work on this point, see, for example, Lipton (1973), Hagelberg (1974: 2-3), and Benn (1974: 256-258).

defined these characteristics as follows: "The plantation was a capitalistic type of agricultural organization in which a considerable number of unfree laborers were employed under unified direction and control in the production of a staple crop" (Gray 1933, 1: 302).<sup>4</sup> This definition is a useful preliminary characterization, but its stress on coerced labor is somewhat misleading. As an economic organization, the plantation has a dynamic nature in all its features. It takes different forms under different conditions and coercion is only one aspect of labor employment, which in turn is only one of the formal attributes subject to variation.

As a capitalistic enterprise, the plantation "was sparked into life by the market relationship itself" (Thompson 1975: 20-21). Settlers in the New World first established the institution with the aim of responding profitably to a large-scale demand for certain staple crops. Characteristically, planters found the large product market overseas in Europe, but the extent of the foreign demand differed depending on the crop and it fluctuated over time in size and intensity for each kind of crop. To meet the large agricultural demand, planters engrossed land rights and formed large landed estates. Furthermore, they participated in external capital markets to secure financing, technology and labor, although the degree of participation frequently waxed and waned. Finally, the planters were concerned mainly with the

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<sup>4</sup> For works that focus on economic attributes as the primary features of plantation organization, see Courtenay (1965: 52), Greaves (1935: 67), Gregor (1965: 228-235), W. O. Jones (1968: 154), McBride (1937: 148), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 396-407). See also Mintz (1953a: 224-225; 1959: 43-44), who has made some useful comments on Gray's definition. For broader definitions of the plantation, see Bacon (1625), Scisco (1903) and Thompson (1975: 31-40).

production of crops for export, although they did not preclude the possibility of producing an assortment of other crops in addition.<sup>5</sup> In relation to these features, the organization of plantations varied widely. As competitive conditions changed in the external markets, plantation organizations altered to achieve needed economies, and the most important of these shifts focused on investments in the employment of labor and on investments in technology.<sup>6</sup>

Economies in the employment of labor varied from the "old-style" use of coerced labor to the "new-style" of using free labor (Wolf 1959b: 137). In the shift from one style of employment to the other, however, the separation between management and laborers remained sharp. The plantation "did not lose its distinguishing feature of unified supervision over the choice of crop, the method of cultivation and the marketing of the yield" (McBride 1937: 149). Under such supervision, the new-style plantations have frequently kept large numbers of unskilled laborers who, because of their lack of skill and organization, afford a cheap labor supply. So cheap, in fact, that "when it is desirable to introduce a new technology requiring a radical change in cultural practices, the plantation substitutes supervision--supervisory and administrative--for skilled, adaptive labor, combining the supervision with labor whose principal skill is to follow orders" (W. O.

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<sup>5</sup> For enumeration of these general features, I have drawn primarily from the following sources: Courtenay (1965: 7, 51), Greaves (1959: 14-15), Gregor (1965), McBride (1937: 148), Mandle (1972: 57), Mintz (1953a: 225), Thompson (1939: 89; 1940: 216-217; 1957: 30; 1975: 20-22, 31, 34), Waibel (1941: 157), Wickizer (1958: 73), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 396-407).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Courtenay (1965: 52), Greaves (1935: 170), Mandle (1972: 57), and Mintz (1953b: 139; 1959: 44).

Jones 1968: 156). The scope of management's ability to depend on cheap but closely supervised laborers, however, has been limited, and in some cases curtailed, by laborers who have organized themselves and successfully bargained for higher wages. Growing labor costs, in turn, have stimulated plantations to rely on technological countermeasures that require fewer but more highly skilled and socially mobile laborers. Thus, plantation investments in laboring skills and wages have differed and, similarly, plantations have varied in organization from those with small investments in stagnant technology to those highly capitalized structures identified with scientific cultivation, mechanical progress and operational efficiency.<sup>7</sup>

Whether old-style or new-style, labor intensive or heavily capitalized, plantation organizations have also depended on various other economies to take advantage of changing conditions of profit-taking. Characteristically, plantations have been organized to achieve economies of both specialization and scale. The large demand for certain crops has given planters special opportunities to concentrate on the production of a single crop, and to do so on a large-scale. Indeed, the tendencies to monocrop production and large scale have frequently appeared as distinctive features in definitions of the plantation. But like other efficiency measures, economies of specialization are not irreversible. Given certain conditions, such as depression in the product market or favorable government incentives,

<sup>7</sup> For specific discussions of the distinctions in labor and technology that various authors posit to be relevant for an adequate conception of the plantation, see Greaves (1959: 16), Gregor (1965: 227. 236-237), W. O. Jones (1968: 154-155), McBride (1937: 148-157), Mintz (1953a: 225; 1953b: 139; 1959: 44), Waibel (1941: 156-157), Wolf (1959b: 138), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 399-407).

plantation managements may diversify rather than specialize their production.

Economies of scale, of course, sometimes limit the capacity of the plantation management to shift production from one crop to several. Large investments in capital stock, for example, may make such shifts uneconomical. The organization of the plantation based on considerations of scale do vary, however, because size is a relative feature. For certain crops in particular markets, the plantation may be large and economical compared to other forms of agricultural organization. Yet when compared to other plantations in light of such criteria as the size of the labor force, the size of the capital stock, and the relative portion of the market held, a particular plantation may be relatively small and its production relatively unprofitable.<sup>8</sup>

Given a basic definition of the plantation, then, one can plot changes along several significant dimensions. An agricultural creature of foreign markets for certain staple crops, the plantation varies with changing competitive conditions, shifting relationships between labor and technology, and differing economies of specialization and scale. Varieties of plantation organization, of course, need not each be distinguished by significant variation in all dimensions of change at one time. Nor are the changes of any particular dimension unidirectional and irreversible in relation to the other dimensions. But technical investments, labor organization, the structure of product

<sup>8</sup> Greaves (1935: 181-184; 1959: 14), Gregor (1965: 227), Mintz (1953a: 225), Thompson (1957: 30; 1975: 22, 31, 34), Waibel (1941: 156-157), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 398) all discuss economies of specialization. For work that focuses in part on economies of scale, see Greaves (1959: 14), Gregor (1965: 237), W. O. Jones (1968: 157-158), Waibel (1941: 157), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 396-397).

markets, and the other primary features of plantations all are interrelated, and many changes in these dimensions occur systematically in an historically ordered, step-by-step fashion. Thus, for certain analytical purposes, types of plantation organization may be identified by reference to certain stages, or periods, in the development of plantation agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

Assertions about developmental stages, or periods, posit the "lawful conditions" of plantation organization (Mintz 1959: 46). To move from such assertions and to investigate, for example, the development of artisanry in plantation economies is to begin to examine the secondary features of plantations, that is, the possible effects of plantation institutions. But plantation organization varies widely enough in its general defining features that arguments about the possible secondary characteristics demand immediate qualification: the effects of which plantations, where, and in what stage of development? Proper understanding of the role of artisanry in the early plantation colonies of the British West Indies, thus depends, at least in part, on the conclusions of a careful and rigorous typology of various kinds of plantations, a typology that facilitates comparisons of the social and political structures of the wider societies in which the institutions are incorporated.<sup>10</sup> For purposes of this discussion, I distinguish types of plantations engaged in the initial accumulation of capital in the New World from those that subsequently acted to consolidate their capital, and I focus specifically on the features of plantation organization

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<sup>9</sup> See Gregor (1965: 236) and Mintz (1974a: 55).

<sup>10</sup> Gregor (1965: 222), Mintz (1953b: 139; 1959: 48), and Wolf and Mintz (1957: 380-386, 408-411).

during the long and difficult period of capital accumulation.

## 2.2 THE PLANTATION AS A MECHANISM FOR CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

With the expansion of European interests to the Americas, to Africa, and to the Far East beginning in earnest during the fifteenth century, the plantation quickly emerged as a distinctive organization that facilitated the colonization of the New World. Moreover, as Sidney Mintz has observed, "from the perspective of post-Roman European history, the plantation was an absolutely unprecedented social, economic, and political institution" (1964b: xiv). Generally, one can distinguish the plantation as a large-scale agricultural organization designed to produce staple crops for large, foreign markets. But to the extent that the institution was historically "unprecedented" and contributed to a new and major colonization effort, one must further distinguish early plantations in the New World by the common foundation on which they all had to build: the need to establish new, original, or "primitive" accumulations of capital.

The period of accumulation for New World plantations varied in length from institution to institution, from colony to colony, and from region to region. Plantations have entered production at different times, with different levels of investment and metropolitan support, and under differing competitive pressures.<sup>11</sup> On sugar plantations, for example, in the British West Indies, including the erstwhile British Guiana, the period of accumulation lasted for more than two centuries,

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<sup>11</sup> For some of the problems in conceptualizing these differences in terms of general periods of change, see Mintz (1977: 260-261, 1978: 85-90, and 1979a: 215-216, 220-221, especially n.12).

from the mid-seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. When increasing supplies of beet sugar drastically altered conditions in the world sugar market during the 1880s, the owners and managers of estates in the region then began to consolidate and concentrate their capital in earnest. In particular, they tried to enhance their competitive edge by relying on growing investments in sophisticated technical changes and on the employment of wage-laborers.

During periods of capital accumulation, however, producers characteristically lack sufficient capital to invest either in expensive and dynamic technology, or in the employment of wage-labor. Instead, such producers depend for their gains on relatively meager and stagnant quantities of materials and tools, and on a variety of alternative devices for organizing and controlling the application of labor-power to their technical stock. Artisans and peasant farmers--small-scale producers respectively of manufactured and agricultural goods--are typically constrained by the need to accumulate capital. To control labor, they resort to self-discipline: they themselves participate actively in the labor process. They may also, for example, appeal to the privileges of kinship and thereby secure help from close relatives at relatively little expense. By contrast, in the newly established European colonies, particularly those in the Americas, large-scale producers, such as those who owned or managed plantations, resorted to various forms of physical coercion both to obtain cheap labor, and to apply it to available technical stocks. During the early phases of development, owners and managers of plantations often found it necessary and convenient to enslave potential laborers, and thereby to apply the

harshest possible form of coercion.<sup>12</sup>

Slavery, by definition, is distinct from indenture by the length of an individual's term of bondage, and is different from serfdom and peonage in the extent to which a master may freely dispose of the bondsman's person and abilities. Within the scope of New World plantation development, slavery was directed specifically to the control of labor-power and thus it served as one of the distinguishing features of the period of accumulation. But, of course, slavery in general cannot be viewed solely in these terms.

Across the broad canvas of time and place, slaves have been confined only occasionally to agriculture, and even more rarely to plantation agriculture. In some cases, they have served quite different economic functions. Slaves have, for example, mined gold, ferreted diamonds and smelted iron. In still other cases, they have bolstered armies, entertained royalty, cared for children, and thus met needs that do not directly pertain to the production and circulation of wealth, and thus are not even economic in nature. Yet despite all these other possible slave functions, most New World slaves still were removed from Africa largely for economic purposes, to labor for life under pain of coercion on plantations. That is, New World slavery matured in conjunction with the needs of capital accumulation on New World plantations, and so its growth must be viewed primarily as a particular phenomenon, in terms of plantation development, which, in turn, began as

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<sup>12</sup> With respect to the Caribbean area, Sidney Mintz has especially emphasized the point that slavery was only one of a variety of coercive devices applied to potential plantation laborers. See Mintz (1977: 260-263, 1978: 85-90, 1979a: 222-225, 1979b: 561-566). Also see Bolland (1981: 592-593, 614-618).

but one aspect of a wider process of European colonization.<sup>13</sup>

As one of the forms of coercion pressed into the service of capital accumulation, New World slavery rested on the force that masters needed to dictate the work routines of people within their plantation domains. At the very least, owners and managers of plantations thus exercised the control needed to determine the course of productive activity, including participation in artisan trades, on their individual estates. But in many places, early New World planters also sought to extend their control beyond the boundaries of their own plantations. To preserve the economy of having their products processed cheaply in the overseas market, and to eliminate any attractive economic opportunities that might have induced their slaves to escape or revolt, plantation owners and managers particularly endeavored to narrow the employment options of freemen in the local societies.

Where planters obtained control over the external economy, the impoverishment of local arts and crafts tended to be deep and lasting. How the owners and managers of plantations came by such power is by no means obvious, because all the oppressive measures that benefited these early colonists appeared under varying circumstances in different places. But it is clear that an analysis of the links between the processes of coercive labor control and of artisan impoverishment hinges theoretically on a preliminary analysis of the conditions of capital

<sup>13</sup> See Patterson (1979: 37, 47-67) on the importance of distinguishing the economic from the non-economic functions of slaves. For a general review of the comparative literature on slavery, see Patterson (1977a). Also compare Kopytoff and Miers (1977) and Watson (1980). And see, for example, Padgug (1976: 15-22) and Mintz (1977) on the need to emphasize the relation between New World slavery and plantations, and the role of both in the development of the so-called European world economy.

accumulation on plantations in the colonial New World. The most salient of these conditions include the broad types of investments that Europeans mobilized to accumulate colonial riches, the elementary economic relations of investment in production, specifically the relations that minimally served to distinguish farms from plantations in periods of primitive accumulation and, finally, aspects of the wider colonial political economy that bore on the problems of controlling labor during these periods.

### 2.3 THE CONDITIONS OF ORIGINAL ACCUMULATION ON PLANTATIONS IN NEW WORLD COLONIES

Andre Gunder Frank has written pungently of the "predatory needs" of the Europeans who began expanding to the Americas in the late fifteenth century (1972: 23). But each European who preyed on the New World did so no doubt for intensely personal motives. One of the characters who swaggered onto the Caribbean stage, Sir Henry Colt, intended to prove himself a proper man: "For rest we will nott untell we have doone some thinges worthy of ourselves, or dye in the attempt" (quoted in Dunn 1972: 9). Other, less grand reasons also moved Europeans to venture from home. "Men wished, perhaps, to strike the infidel a blow, to strengthen their native state, to ascertain the shape and nature of the earth, to gain great wealth, or to escape from a humdrum existence--or perhaps a mixture of these things" (Rich 1967: 302). But if colonists were not moved simply by greed to acquire new riches, they surely sought wealth in support of the New World ventures that they conceived to satisfy various other motivations. Thus, as Rich went on to note, "seldom was the hope of access to the trade goods, the spices and the

silks and cottons of the sophisticated East far from their minds" (ibid.). Whatever their other interests, then, Europeans in the New World, from the initial moment of contact, could scarcely contain their pressing demand for wealth.

Perhaps no myth better captures the spirit of this demand than the legend of El Dorado, the man reputedly gilded in gold. Few Europeans of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could have found a greater happiness if, by their adventures in the New World, they discovered wealth so plentiful that they, like El Dorado, could cover themselves with turpentine, roll in gold dust, and then afford to wash off the mineral by plunging exuberantly into a nearby lake. Thus, according to C. L. R. James, "Christopher Columbus landed first in the New World at the island of San Salvador, and after praising God enquired urgently for gold" (1963: 3). And when Hernan Cortes addressed the first Mexica noble he met, he affected a tone of cynicism, but effectively made the point: "The Spainards are troubled with a disease of the heart for which gold is the specific remedy" (quoted in Wolf 1959a: 161).

Despite all the particular, personal motives prompting Europeans to adventure in the New World--and their particular interests often bitterly and violently divided them--a common mission thus linked them, or at least many of them, a mission to accumulate material wealth. Settlers eventually did accumulate much wealth in the colonies by supplying various special commodities to Europe. The colonial branches of production included, in the early period, production of precious metals in Spanish America. Later, they included production of furs,

fish, and tobacco in North America, and the production of sugar in the Caribbean and Brazil. But, of course, such specialized productions did not arise immediately, nor could their effects on European economy be felt all at once.<sup>14</sup> The various settlers in the New World first had to create their colonies and then, within them, they had to struggle to mount for themselves new and original accumulations of capital.

The notion of colonizing the Americas developed in the Old World as the new one became known, and as this knowledge stimulated interest in investment. Europeans had begun exploring the Americas more or less haphazardly as part of the search for ways to enter the East Indies spice trade. Of course, once settlements appeared, colonists required more systematic exploration so they could assess both their defensive needs and the possibilities of expanding their settlements. As exploration proceeded, knowledge of the New World gradually advanced. Politicians in Europe became more and more aware of the New World as a source of substantial financial support, while merchants saw potential for considerable profit in trade. In the interaction of Crown and mercantile interests, funds became available for colonization. Given financial investments, however, the colonists had at least to strive to pay back the ventured stock and, if possible, to make a positive return on it. Europeans with colonial interests certainly would not send good money after bad and, if interest from the metropolis dissipated, the colonists would be left alone to brave the New World. In view of this stark alternative, the colonial search for wealth, predatory from the

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<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the effects of colonial production and trade on European economic developments still have not been wholly calculated, and are subjects of important ongoing research. For a helpful overview of the salient questions in such research, see Minchinton (1977).

start, became even more intensely pressing.

To hold metropolitan interest and to provide creditors with a return on their investments, the colonists in the New World had to generate a steady, if not steadily increasing, fund of capital. The colonists were limited, however, in their abilities to do this. As E. G. Wakefield has argued, colonization was above all a process by which territory was "peopled and settled" (1849: 16). Whether or not a territory was already occupied, it became a colony when it was made subject both to the immigration of new people and to the institution of new government.<sup>15</sup> The limitations on generating a capital return, although specific to each colony, thus derived, in general, from the dual processes of "peopling and settling" each colony.

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<sup>15</sup> I have here identified the process of settlement as the institution of government. In so doing, I have departed slightly from Wakefield's original conception. He wrote that "unquestionably, the process of colonization comprises government" (1849: 16). In a later passage, however, he explicitly argued that colonial "settlement" had to be distinguished from colonial "government." He asserted that government is a political matter, while immigration and settlement depend on economic considerations: "The politics of a colony--that is, all things relating to colonial government as there is government in the old country--are totally distinct from the economy of a colony--that is, all things relating only to immigration and the disposal and settlement of waste land . . ." (ibid.: 62).

For Wakefield, the concept of settlement presumably denoted only the process of setting up economic institutions. But institutions arise in a world of other institutions, and one generally refers to the world of institutional interaction as a political world, the regulation of which is the field of government. The institution of government, therefore, covers the process of institutionalization in general, and includes economic institutions in particular. When I identify settlement with government, I widen Wakefield's sense of the process of settlement to include this general process of institutionalization. And with this broadened sense of the term in mind, I reject Wakefield's argument that the

The process of "peopling" the New World required that prospective colonists have the means to subsist in their new settlements. That is, they had to have the means to meet the full range of their everyday needs. Because wealth, or capital, is composed of the elements with which needs are met, it follows that the colonists needed a preliminary investment of wealth just to subsist.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps once they were settled, they could produce valuable items and exchange some of them to obtain needed goods that they did not produce. But until then, any would-be colonial producer had to have a source of capital, in Adam Smith's words, "to maintain him and to supply him with the materials and tools of his trade" (1937: 259).

The colonists in the New World subsisted on condition of several kinds of investment. They subsisted by means of investments in force, investments in trade, investments in direct production, and by investments in various combinations of these means. The conditions of

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"settlement of waste land" be kept distinct from the institution of government.

On the definitions of "colonization" and "colonies," see, besides Wakefield, Smith (1937: 531-532), Heeren (1829, 1: 30-32), Lewis (1841: 170-176), Merivale (1861: xii), Roscher and Jannasch (1885: 2-32), Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 564-68), Morris (1904, 1: 6-7), and Keller (1908: 1-2). For more recent discussions in this tradition, see Best (1968: 283-287), Hicks (1969: 49-54), and Knight (1978: 23-66). For a somewhat different approach to the processes of colonization, by those who profess the theory of so-called "colonial modes of production," see, for example, Banaji (1972) and Cardoso (1975).

<sup>16</sup> Merivale (1861: 161-169) discussed the dependence of emigration on accumulated funds of wealth. See also Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 569-573) and Morris (1904, 1: 17). Although each scholar referred to these funds of wealth as capital entering production, they did so in the sense of capital as a financial investment seeking a return, not in the sense of expanding technical means. Financial investments in colonial production were high, but investments in technical means were relatively small. I argue this point more fully below.

such ventures set immediate limits on the abilities of the colonists to generate and accumulate their own stock of wealth. Moreover, as people actually began "settling" in each particular colony, they interacted with all parties having substantial interests in the venture.

Institutions formed as a result to govern and to regulate the affairs of the colony, and these institutions also constrained the colonists in their attempts to create their own original accumulations of capital on, for example, a plantation.

### 2.3.1 Types of Colonial Investment

With reference to instances when colonists subsisted by means of force, some scholars have written of "colonies of conquest."<sup>17</sup> Such colonies, it is claimed, originated in the New World when European states invested colonists with military force and the colonists subjected either Indians or other European colonists, and seized their territory. But having made their conquest, and barring other kinds of investment, the colonists had only a limited potential for generating wealth steadily and in amounts sufficient both to subsist and to make an adequate return on the investments of force made by the Crown.

Of course, it is entirely possible that the conquest of a specific colony could be justified on strategic or military grounds alone, without any regard for a possible economic return. The British seizure of Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655 certainly was so justified. Indeed, the island was virtually uninhabited and devoid of

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<sup>17</sup> See Roscher and Jannasch (1885: 3-9), Morris (1904, 1: 8-9), and Best (1968: 285). Keller maintained that conquest properly establishes a colony only if it provides for the emigration of "non-official members of the state's population" (1908: 2).

desirable wealth. But assuming the existence of local wealth in a vanquished territory, Europeans could secure a capital return by plundering local riches. Or, they could claim proprietary rights over the wealth and then appropriate the goods they wanted as regular tribute.<sup>18</sup>

Plunder, however, simply exhausted the wealth and in no way provided for its replenishment. Once the colonists consumed the spoils, they could generate more only with additional investments of force and the conquest of additional territory. Under such conditions, colonies of conquest were, in the words of Henry Morris, "the least productive, the least happy, and the least enduring; they are the most exposed to the risk of abandonment or of war" (1904, 1: 11).

By appropriating tribute, on the other hand, colonists, interacting with Crown forces, could institute an administrative structure to assure the flow of wealth on a steady and regular basis. For additional controls on the quality and quantity of wealth, they had only to extend their administrative institutions. With regulation of production, they could achieve direct control over the generation of wealth. They could also exert more indirect controls by administering the facilities of commercial exchange.

In colonies created simply by investments in the force of conquest, then, tribute and plunder were the principal options available for the generation of colonial wealth. In the absence of local wealth or of an easily subjugated population to provide it, other kinds of investment became necessary to keep the possession economically solvent.

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<sup>18</sup> Force "may be used for conquest, the economic objective of which is revenue or tribute--or just plunder" (Hicks 1969: 52).

Given the need, as well as the opportunity and wherewithal, European colonists in the New World thus often sought the rewards of trade or of direct production.

In addition to colonies of conquest, scholars have also distinguished "colonies of trade" and, in so doing, have drawn attention to instances when colonists met their subsistence needs through the exchange of commodities.<sup>19</sup> If people representing the interests of European states did not directly invest in attempts to people the New World, they usually supported mercantile efforts to do so. In fact, merchants played a primary role in the search for new trade routes to the East, and they were quick to express an interest in the New World as a potential source of great wealth. Indeed, in the view of some scholars, colonies of trade were the first to have been established in the New World.<sup>20</sup>

Certainly, colonial traders were relatively free from the problems encountered by colonists who had to meet their needs either by force of conquest or by direct production. Because investments in trade were not restricted to geographically limited markets, traders did not have to make forceful claims on territory as a necessary condition of their existence. Nor were traders necessarily restricted to fixed lines of products and, in this respect, they escaped the dilemmas of direct producers who struggled to keep down costs of production while expanding

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<sup>19</sup> Heeren (1829, 1: 31-32), Roscher and Jannasch (1885: 10-18), Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 564-565), and Morris (1904, 1: 9). See also Hicks (1969: 49-54).

<sup>20</sup> Roscher and Jannasch (1885: 16). Of colonization founded on trade, Leroy-Beaulieu wrote: "Rien n'est simple comme cette colonisation" (1902, 2: 565).

their sales.<sup>21</sup> Still, however freely merchants could move from one territory to another or from one product to another, they did have to deal in some specific products and in some specific territory. When European merchants set up trading posts in some part of the New World, they began "peopling" a colony there, subsisting in it, and, of course, they soon encountered particular dilemmas of their own.

"Bargain buys" and "dear sales": these were the axioms of colonial merchants seeking a return on their investments in the New World. To achieve a favorable margin between purchase and sale, merchants had to control prices. To achieve such control, they often established some form of monopoly to create commercially dependent trading partners. They tried to position themselves so they were not competing against other purchasers for the goods they wanted to buy from Indians, or against other sellers for the goods they wanted to offer back home in Europe. With respect to European markets, merchants in each metropolis struggled to secure state sanctions against competition from merchants of other nations. They won this general struggle as mercantilism gradually became Crown policy in Europe.

But then, within the framework of state protection of merchant interests, particular merchants had to wage much narrower struggles to curry favor and preference for their particular lines of merchandise. In the colonial markets, merchants could, perhaps, enlist Crown forces to limit, if not eliminate, other contenders for such Indian wealth as peltry. But even if certain merchants controlled the Indian trade in a given area, they often had little recourse when native Americans

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<sup>21</sup> Levine (1975: 55) remarked these advantages as general features of capital invested in trade.

encountered the limitations of their own forms of production and could no longer meet the demand. Apart from abandoning their interests in the colonies altogether, they could only attempt to intervene directly in the production of Indian wealth, or else they could support and stimulate the production of wealth by other sources, specifically by other colonists.<sup>22</sup>

When Europeans at last began to "people and settle" the New World as direct producers, they shouldered what proved to be the really decisive and portentous struggles of the early colonial period. The process of colonization tended to confine conquerors and traders to a specific territory. These colonists had to admit, although for different reasons, that being so confined limited their means of supplying sufficient wealth to meet their own needs and to make adequate returns to those who invested in their activities. To overcome the inherent limitations of colonies of conquest and trade, Europeans turned to the direct production of colonial wealth. Referring to instances when colonists did actually engage in production, scholars have mainly distinguished "farm" and "plantation" colonies.

Some scholars have used other labels, and some have found it necessary to distinguish still other types of colonies. But all concur that colonial production required land and was preeminently agricultural. And, although there is no consensus on all of the features necessary and sufficient to differentiate these two types, most scholars agree that farm and plantation colonies provided settlers with two very different alternatives to the payment of high wages for labor

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<sup>22</sup> For a brief, but useful, discussion of the relationships among trade, military force, and production in colonies, see Hicks (1969: 51-54).

during the period of accumulation: in the first, producers were farmers who labored "with their own two hands"; in the second, they were planters who forced others to work for them.<sup>23</sup>

### 2.3.2 Investment in Direct Production: Colonial Farms and Plantations

European producers in the New World could gain a steady return on colonial investment when the value returned for their output consistently exceeded the value they advanced. To assure a steady return of wealth, therefore, colonial producers strove to keep their costs of production to a minimum. Because in all production processes labor has to combine with some technical means to create a specific object of value, a colonist could only assume an identity as a producer when he could afford the costs of joining at some specific place both labor and the technical means of labor.

As an essential ingredient of production, labor has the unique feature that it may be applied to any kind of technical stock. By contrast, the technical means of production differ in composition for each kind of production process. Materials and tools serve to divide and particularize the general laboring activity, which thereby becomes a specific process turning out specific goods of value.<sup>24</sup> The ability to

<sup>23</sup> I have labelled the contrast set with the terms used by Keller (1908: 4). I do not thereby endorse his argument that climatic features are essential to the distinction. Other labels have been used for various purposes by Heeren (1928, 1: 31); Merivale (1861: 260-276), Roscher and Jannasch (1885: 18-23), Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 564-568), Morris (1904, 1: 9), Best (1968: 285-287), and Knight (1978: 50-66). The principal alternative form of production besides agriculture, which requires technical investment in land, and which scholars have distinguished, is mining. See Heeren (1829, 1: 31) and Smith (1937: 529).

<sup>24</sup> For an elaboration of these points, see Levine (1978: 157-181).

employ labor thus helps to distinguish the role of producer in general from the role, say, of a landlord. But the ability to afford the technical means of labor is especially important because possession of those means identify him as a producer of a particular kind. Tools of the trade help single out different kinds of artisan producers, for example. The employment of a hammer and lumber distinguishes carpenters, use of a loom and thread sets apart weavers, and possession of a forge and iron identifies blacksmiths. Different kinds of cultivators, too, are distinguished by the technical means they employ. In particular, different kinds of seed identify cultivators of different kinds of crops. Agricultural producers are also distinguished by their use of such implements as plows and sickles. But, as a group, cultivators are especially identified by their employment of such technical features of the land as its mineral and moisture characteristics.

Regardless of the particular distinctions that separate them, and whether they are cultivators or not, all producers are, like still other kinds of individuals, attached to land in a general way. They need somewhere to live and to make a living, and so they have or must acquire a set of rights against others that gives them access to some delimited piece of territory. These rights may, of course, vary considerably, being encumbered with all sorts of differing obligations. Depending on the particular nature of the rights of access and of the corresponding duties, land thus surely affects a producer and his organization of production. But land as a general object of access must be distinguished from land as a technical factor of production. Strictly

speaking, technical means are commodities that are renewable as products of a labor process. To the extent that it is an object of access, however, land is simply "not the commodity product of a particular firm and is equally not the product of a labor process" (Levine 1977: 248). As an object of access, land thus does not affect production in any narrow economic way; rather, it is an object of a determined process in which constituents, including producers as well as other parties, all lay claim to property and try to secure it politically against rival claims.<sup>25</sup>

Of all producers who necessarily have a political interest in gaining access to land, agricultural producers are among those who also express a more narrow interest: they need land not only as a location for their activity but as a technical ingredient of it. That is, they need the arable qualities of a tract of soil, just as they need seed, plows, hoes, and other implements, as technical means of production. Because agricultural producers thus have both a general interest in the political security of their claim to a portion of territory and a narrow economic interest in its particular, renewable features, they have a special, binding attachment to land. And because such allegiance is necessary if a territory is to be "peopled and settled" for any length of time, agricultural producers are often regarded as colonial producers par excellence.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The distinction argued for here between land as a political object of access and land as an economic object of technical means is based on Max Gluckman's important but much overlooked distinction between "estates of administration" and "estates of production." See Gluckman (1965: 86-91).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Morris who notes that the term "colony" itself "conveys the idea of a landed possession, wherein agriculture is the

Unlike land in the sense that it is a political object of access, land in the economic sense of being the technical features of the soil is, in principle, renewable through the application of such labor processes as irrigation and fertilization. Land thus has a value in respect of its technical features that varies with the costs required to produce or improve them. Moreover, because these properties enter as technical means into the further production of crops, their value, in turn, has a significant effect in determining the value of final agricultural products. In the European colonies of the New World, however, potential cultivators found that land was exceedingly cheap. They considered colonial land as virgin territory and, in part, this meant that they took the technical features of the soil as given to them by nature, and not as the product of any previous and indigenous labor process. In other words, land technically had so little value for agricultural producers in the colonies that they practically discounted it from their own costs of production. And in so doing, they often tended to use the land until they used it up, and then they moved on to some new frontier.<sup>27</sup>

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chief occupation of the inhabitants; a colonist, in the true meaning of the term, is essentially an agriculturist" (1904, 1: 6):

<sup>27</sup> Besides being technically cheap, colonial land was also cheap in the sense that colonists found the land to be easily accessible: native peoples used systems of shifting cultivation and, against the onslaught of European immigrants, had difficulty defending the territory which they administered but did not physically occupy. Although Wakefield seems not to have distinguished the two ways in which land may be cheap, he nevertheless conveyed the value in which the original colonists must have held New World land in his vivid descriptions of it as "waste land" (1849: passim). See also Smith (1937: 531-533). For ways in which some colonists confronted the problem of soil exhaustion, see, for example, Craven (1926).

Leaving aside, for the moment, the expenses that cultivators incurred to attract laborers, and the wider issue of how they politically secured their landed property so they could employ the technical features of virgin colonial soil, there is also the question of investment in other technical means. Some colonists, like Mr. Peel, whom Wakefield and Marx have made famous, invested quite heavily. Indeed, settlement planners often advised prospective colonists to venture sufficient technical means so they could employ specialists in tasks, or aspects of tasks, ranging from exploration and defense, to clearing and cultivation, to house construction and trade. Unfortunately for those who succumbed to such advice, the actual routine of settlement seldom gave technical specialists enough work to keep them busy in their particular occupations. Consequently, the risks were great of losing substantial investments in technical means and Mr. Peel, for want of laborers, lost his entire venture.<sup>28</sup> Until they could achieve a regular return of wealth from their activity, colonial producers thus had few sound reasons to invest heavily in technical means, either as soil improvements or otherwise, and most producers, moving very cautiously, deliberately kept such investments to a minimum. This prudent opposition of colonists to the establishment of capital in the form of technical means turned out to be, in Karl Marx's opinion, "the secret both of the prosperity of the colonies and of their

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<sup>28</sup> On the plight of Mr. Peel at Swan River in Australia, see Wakefield (1834: 217-219) and Marx (1967, 1: 766-768). Richard Pares (1960: 1, 6-11) has an excellent analysis and brief discussion of the variety of tasks required for colonization. Richard Hakluyt (1584: 165) was one of the first settlement planners to advise prospective colonists to take with them a large concentration of artisans. Morgan (1975: 85) discussed one colony in which artisans had little to keep them busy in their special occupations.

inveterate vice" (1967, 1: 768).

The colonies prospered as people settled to produce wealth. Colonists could freely enter most lines of production because they were not technologically barred from doing so. That is, they did not have to find expensive technical means. The easy access to production perhaps encouraged the somewhat grand dreams of colonists who hoped to share in a prosperity like that of El Dorado. But easy access for one colonist implied easy access for many, each of whom competed for his fair share.

The vice of the colonies, therefore, followed from their prosperity. Easy access to production meant a prosperous colony, but also vicious competition among producers for markets and profits. In the competitive struggles, individual dreams surely lost some of their grandeur, if they did not degenerate to nightmares. In any case, stiff competition made it extremely difficult for colonial producers to accumulate capital in sufficient amounts to improve the technical conditions of labor.

When production as a whole became more concentrated and firmly established, some producers could perhaps afford rapid and continuous improvements in the technical means of labor. The value of investment in technical change relative to the value advanced in the employment of labor could then favorably affect the accumulation of wealth. But until then, the colonies prospered and suffered in the competition that took place among producers "outside the firm basis of capitalist production in the absence of technical change." There was, in other words, "'primitive' or 'prior' accumulation," a principal feature of which was

small investments in relatively stagnant technology (Levine 1975: 52).<sup>29</sup>

Given that their expenses for technical means, such as soil properties and tools, were already miniscule, individual producers competed with one another to keep down their other costs of production. These other costs consisted mainly of the price needed to bring laborers to the production process. In any period of accumulation, the costs of labor limit the margin between costs and return on output. But in periods of primitive, or original, accumulation, labor costs are especially critical because producers cannot risk the great expense of technological improvements that are designed to reduce labor costs relative to output.<sup>30</sup> Small investment in technical means thus confronts primitive producers with a special problem.

Referring to such producers in the colonies, Wakefield identified their dilemma as the "separation and inconstancy" of laborers (1849: 179). On the one side of this problem, laborers are "separated," unable to afford producers any economies of scale. Without a firm organization of technical means, producers can give laborers no opportunity to specialize and so to "combine their labor" in a single overall process. On the other side of the problem, laborers are "inconstant" to

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<sup>29</sup> Keller held that the colonies were "primitive" in a wider sense, because of the simplicity of their institutional structures in general: ". . . [C]olonies are, at least in their beginnings, societies of relative simplicity, as yet unendowed with that accumulation of relationships, institutions, and so on, through which older human groups appear to have rendered themselves, to some extent, independent of natural conditions" (1908: 3). Leroy-Beaulieu went even further, referring to colonization as "une transformation . . . d'un pays barbare" (1902, 2: 710). Periods of primitive accumulation are sometimes identified with so-called "natural economies," on which see, for example, Bradby (1975).

<sup>30</sup> See Levine (1975: 52).

producers. Because of the small cost of technical means required for entry into production, laborers do not have to labor constantly for a living. On the contrary, they can easily afford to disappear from the labor market and become producers themselves.

In the colonies, both sides of this problem found particular expression in the chronic shortage of laborers. To attract free laborers to new settlements, producers had to pay high wages. As Adam Smith observed, for example, colonial producers were "eager . . . to collect laborers from all quarters and to reward them with the most liberal wages" (1937: 532). According to Wakefield in the Art of Colonization, the high wages, "which put the colonial laborer at his ease," existed because, "in colonies, laborers for hire are scarce." As a matter of fact, "in every stage of his endeavors," the colonist met the "difficulty of inducing a number of people to combine their labor for any purpose." So serious was the problem that "the scarcity of labor for hire" was "the universal complaint of colonies" (1849: 169-170).

Colonial producers made the complaint with considerable force. The scarcity of laborers drove them, under pressure of severe competition, to seek, if not actually to adopt, measures for lowering their labor costs of production. In general, they had two alternatives to the payment of high wages for scarce laborers, both of which were, as Wakefield argued, "great and injurious" (ibid.: 340). A producer could, as one option, "depend upon himself for the continuance of the labor which his own hands are capable of performing." In this case, according to Wakefield, the producer submitted to "drudgery" and "degradation."

Otherwise, if a producer wanted to obtain laborers and to keep them cheaply, he had to use force to do so and thus he succumbed to a "great evil." Having identified these two options and the nature of the injuries they caused, Wakefield then correctly posed the crucial question: Under what circumstances were colonial producers driven to adopt the "drudgery" of laboring for themselves or the "evil" of forced labor as alternatives to the payment of high wages (ibid.: 174-180).<sup>31</sup>

If producers control the prices they receive for their products, they may have no interest at all in possible alternatives to high wages. They may simply absorb excessive labor costs by raising the price they receive on output from merchants and direct consumers. The price returned on output, however, generally lay well beyond the control of colonial producers. In relation to merchants, for example, who purchased colonial products and then resold them in Europe, New World producers held a decidedly poor bargaining position.

It was a central tenet of the doctrines of mercantilism that national economic policies should aim to protect the market of favored products and so aim to control and maintain the price of these goods against foreign competition. Colonial merchant syndicates typically formed to cultivate these policies and the commodity price supports they implied.<sup>32</sup> And, to a degree, colonial producers also depended for their

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<sup>31</sup> For a full and general understanding of the various forms of independent farming and of the different kinds of agriculture by force that arose in the American colonies, it is essential to keep in mind the broad context of labor scarcity in which both these types of organization had their common origins. A number of scholars have recently reiterated this point. See Parker (1969), Curtin (1977), and Hirschman (1978: 94).

<sup>32</sup> On "Mercantilism as a System of Protection," see Heckscher (1955, 2: 53-172). For further discussion, see, for example, Coleman (1969)

existence on nationalist efforts to control prices against foreign competition. But in the context of a protected national domain of colonies, producers seldom thrived under mercantile policies; in most cases, those few who prospered were also traders. Although merchants were protected, the small technical costs of most productive activities in the colonies allowed new producers to enter the market freely and thereby to stiffen considerably the competition among producers as a whole. As additional production increased supply, stiff competition prompted a decline in the prices merchants paid to producers for their product, especially in many branches of agriculture. Tobacco planters in Barbados, for example, were completely eliminated from production by competition from planters entering the British market from Virginia. Similarly, Barbadian sugar planters later suffered in the British market when Jamaican planters entered production.

As they strove for a steady return of wealth, colonial producers thus had little or no recourse to price control. Under this constraint, excessively high wages became more than a nuisance. The competitive interaction of colonial producers in relation to merchants made reduction in the costs of labor an absolute necessity. But merchant relations with producers varied and, with that variation, the options open to producers for achieving profitable operations also varied.

Herman Merivale, one of Wakefield's early and distinguished students and critics, identified two ways in which merchants integrated colonial producers and their products into the world market. In some

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and Minchinton (1969). The Dutch East India Company is perhaps the best example of the trading companies that formed during this period. For an overview of the chartered trading companies in Europe, see Coornaert (1967); but see also Heckscher (1955, 1: 326-455).

settlements--the so-called farm colonies--producers could find "no peculiar advantages for the production . . . of articles of value in the foreign market." It was not that farmers could find no market for their goods, but that the market was small. In such narrow and competitive markets, producers could not expect a sufficient return to make it worthwhile to employ laborers. Instead, their "first impulse" was "generally to spread themselves over the country, each taking possession of whatever spot of fertile land he may secure, and each tilling his own farm" (1861: 260-261).

In so-called plantation colonies, however, producers raised "staple articles of produce for foreign markets." And for planters, "it is obvious that the necessity for an ample supply of laborers is of a far more urgent character." If a narrow and competitive market for goods impelled producers to drudgery, each tilling his own farm rather than paying high wages, then a wide, expansive and no less competitive market gave producers compelling reason to have "want of compulsory labor," to insure an ample and cheap supply of laborers by force (ibid.: 269).<sup>33</sup>

Within the scope of each of these general alternatives to the payment of high wages, the value needed to employ labor in a production process was still subject to wide fluctuation. If a colonial settler produced all or part of the items required to satisfy his own needs, he would have little or no use for a fund of value to sustain his own

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<sup>33</sup> Large and small product markets were the general alternatives in which colonial production developed. But such markets could differ along dimensions other than size, with corresponding differences in production organization. Haciendas arose in Mexico, for example, partly in response to highly irregular product markets. See below, Chapter 5.

capacity to labor. However, a producer would require increasingly greater funds of value to the degree that he had to purchase all or part of the goods he needed, to the degree that he had to provide directly for the needs of his laborers who were indentured, enslaved, or in some other way forced to work for him, or to the degree that he had to advance value to his laborers in the form of a wage. A lesser fund may have been required if a settler had his forced laborers produce all or part of the items they needed. Similarly, to the extent that wage laborers produced their own items of need, a producer might have some leverage to bargain down his wage fund. Finally, a settler who had to purchase necessary goods would require a lesser fund of value if the people producing those items, in turn, produced all or part of their own subsistence goods and could offer the items at a cheaper price.

During a period of accumulation when capital had no firm basis, these and other fluctuations in the value needed to employ labor in a production process were "subject to historically specific factors" (Levine 1975: 56). Given assumptions about the low value that colonial producers invested in both tools and the technical features of the soil, and given assumptions about broad variations in the size of the market for crops, one can reasonably deduce two broad classes of agricultural solution to the difficult problem of acquiring cheap labor in the colonies. These solutions were embodied in farms and plantations.

But what particular adjustments did colonial producers in agriculture have to make to institute a version of one or the other solution? How, for example, did those who wished to farm with their own two hands manage to resist producers who tried to force them to do other work? In cases where there was severe economic pressure to stop bidding up wages and to employ laborers under physical duress, how did producers successfully overcome resistance to their force?<sup>34</sup> And further, besides these questions concerning the various responses of producers to colonial labor shortages, there also remains the problem identified earlier but then momentarily set aside: how did colonial producers in general, and cultivators in particular, acquire and secure various kinds of access to land in the first place? From an economic point of view, the answers to all these questions "appear to be theoretically problematic" (Levine 1975: 56). The appropriate answers, and with them, a fuller understanding of the conditions of capital accumulation on New World plantations seems to require an appeal beyond strictly economic factors to the wider struggles for power in colonial politics.

### 2.3.3 The Politics of Land and Labor in the Development of Colonial Plantations

Producers and merchants, as well as Crown, military and other administrative bodies, all interacted to advance European colonial efforts in the Americas and elsewhere. The perspectives and motives of each of these various participants were not always identical and, as a

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<sup>34</sup> See Evans (1970: 862): "The essential element which is required in order for a labor shortage to lead to the use of coerced labor is the failure of other sectors of the economy, those from whom the workers will be taken, to protest."

result, conflicts often erupted in colonial political arenas. Religious bodies, like those in some of the Spanish colonies, for example, who were secure in their ministry to the spiritual needs of settlers, sometimes tried to extend their prerogatives and administer the wider concerns of the body politic. In cases like New England, where religious bodies already claimed wider rights of administration, they often had to struggle tenaciously against persistent assaults on their pre-established jurisdiction. Other matters, too, were subjects of considerable conflict in colonial politics, and the issues of land and labor surely ranked among the most important of these.

• Like all other settlers, producers in the European colonies had to gain access to some designated area of territory, and so they entered the political struggle to secure their individual rights of access against the claims of other interested parties. Similarly, all colonial producers needed to obtain labor. They all needed also to obtain and secure the right to property in technical means. But because investments in technical means were relatively insignificant in value during the early periods of colonial accumulation, investments in labor carried the principal burden in the generation of profit and, given various market pressures, all colonial producers vigorously struggled in the political realm to secure the right to obtain labor-power in the cheapest possible way, including, in many places, the right to use force on plantations.

Because the two distinct political struggles--the one for land, and the other for labor--so widely aroused the shared passions of colonial producers, the contests evidently were interrelated. Indeed,

such well-known scholars of colonial political economy as Adam Smith and E. G. Wakefield have argued for a direct causal relationship. In their analyses of European colonization, Smith and Wakefield, among others, have made much of a presumed relation between the high wages that colonial producers offered to attract laborers and the availability of so-called "cheap land" in the colonies.

According to Smith, "those liberal wages, joined to the plenty and cheapness of land, soon make the laborers leave [their landlords], in order to become landlords themselves" (1937: 532). Wakefield, for his part, elaborated the same argument: "With these high wages, the imported laborers soon save the means of acquiring and cultivating land. In every colony, land is so cheap that emigrant laborers who save at all, are able to establish themselves as landowners, working on their own account" (1849: 328). And if "cheap land" in the colonies thus made laborers scarce, then it follows that the struggle for such land led directly to the struggle for labor in which, according to Wakefield, colonial producers tried to institute such evils as slavery, "that makeshift for hiring" (ibid.: 324).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Those who have defended in some form the general proposition that cheap land gives rise to scarce laborers include, besides Smith and Wakefield, Merivale (1861: 260-276), Loria (1899: 2-3), Nieboer (1900: 305-315, 348-350, 387-391), Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 376-380, 375-387), Thompson (1940: 219-223), Williams (1944: 4-5), Kloosterboer (1960: 1-2, 206-215), Domar (1970: 19-21), Engerman (1973: 56-65; 1977: 65-67), and Mintz (1974a: 65; 1977: 257). More critical stances have been adopted by, for example, Marx (1967, 1: 765-774), Macleod (1925: 380), Siegel (1945: 357-363), Patterson (1977b), Pryor (1977: 30-35), and Bolland (1981: 612-614). Bolland's argument is particularly noteworthy in this context, because it insists that the theoretical relationships which Smith and Wakefield originally posited to exist between colonial land and labor still inform many modern accounts of West Indian colonial development. Bolland's criticism of the posited relationship is cogent, but does not refer specifically to Smith and Wakefield, nor to the extensive

Wakefield, in particular, was so convinced of the direct causal relationship between the political conflicts between land and labor in the colonies that he proposed, in one fell swoop, to alleviate the colonial labor shortages and to eliminate the need for producers to find alternatives for the payment of high wages. Because "cheapness of land is the cause of scarcity of labor for hire," he reasoned that the converse was also true: "Of plentifulness of labor for hire, the cause is dearness of land" (ibid.: 325). The colonial government, therefore, had only to "pass a law for making land dearer" (ibid.: 344). Wakefield felt sure that such a proposal would achieve an orderly, "systematic" process of colonization. Expensive land, he thought, would surely quell the turmoil brought about by excessive labor mobility. Given a high price for land, laborers would now have to work for a long time before they could earn enough to even think about buying land. By proposing to legislate an end to the colonial struggles for land, Wakefield thus attempted, as Karl Marx wryly put it, "the manufacture of wage-workers in the Colonies" (1967, 1: 766). But the plan to end thereby the colonial struggle for labor was as simplistic as Wakefield imagined it would be effective.<sup>36</sup>

Wakefield's scheme was faulty in at least three ways: it was based on reasoning from an oversimplified assumption about the identity of landholders in the colonies; it turned on an ambiguous idea of "cheap land"; and it displayed a serious misapprehension of the nature of the

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theoretical literature they spawned, in which the relationships are explicitly articulated and defended.

<sup>36</sup> For a helpful analysis of Wakefield's theory of "systematic colonization" in the context of the theory of classical political economy, see Winch (1965: 73-168).

political struggle for access to colonial territory. First, when he asserted, with Smith, that the cost of colonial land was so attractive that laborers quit the labor market to become "landowners," Wakefield clearly assumed that colonial landlords were also colonial cultivators. Thus, for example, he spoke of landlords as "working on their own account" (1849:328). Undoubtedly, many colonists in the New World did indeed leave the labor market to become at once landlord and producer. But in most social circumstances, the relationships among these kinds of roles are more complex, and the colonies proved no exception. To grasp that complexity and, with it, the nature of the connections between colonial struggles for land and labor, it is therefore essential to keep distinct the roles of landlord, producer, and laborer.

By definition, landlords control access to land and their role is opposed to that of tenants. Producers, on the other hand, join labor to technical means, and this function is distinct from the narrower role of laborer, who works the stock of technical means, but does not control that stock. In the colonies, although some producers were landlords, many did not control access to land and thus they had to become tenants. Conversely, some landlords were not producers. They either let their land to people who did produce, or they altogether prevented their land from being used for production by restricting it to residential or commercial purposes. In cases where a landlord was not also a producer, he stood in no necessary relation to hired laborers, and may even have been one himself. As for the laborers, if access to land in the colonies was so cheap that it attracted their savings, they could hardly have expected to turn around and, as landlords, suddenly find rents

alone high enough to sustain them. And assuming that they continued to earn wages for a living, then the attraction of cheap access to land did not automatically drain the labor market, and the proposition that cheap land is the cause of a scarcity of labor for hire is false. But if colonists found the wherewithal, not necessarily to become landlords, but to become producers, then labor scarcity did follow.

On the one hand, if colonists became producers and worked with their own two hands, they themselves withdrew from the labor market and thereby tightened the supply of laborers. On the other hand, if they became producers and tried to hire laborers, they also squeezed the labor market by increasing the demand on it. Thus, it was the attraction of being a producer, not necessarily of being a landlord, that caused labor scarcity in the colonies. In particular, because cheap technical means made entry into production relatively easy, it was, strictly speaking, the expense of these means that drew laborers from the market and created the shortages in supply. Of course, technical investment in the soil was one aspect of all technical expenses; but it was not the only one. And, unless a producer cultivated the soil, it formed no expense at all. In other words, an expense for land was not the only cause, nor even necessarily the chief cause of labor scarcity in the colonies.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Some defenders of the land/labor argument have been more sensitive to this point than others. Engerman, for example, cited the importance of considerations other than the availability of cheap land in the decisions of colonial laborers to leave the labor market and to enter production: "The basic issue is really that of a potential surplus above 'subsistence'. . . . The necessary condition would, in general, be surplus income, with or without free land" (1973: 58).

By failing to distinguish landlords and producers, Wakefield failed to see clearly and in the most general terms, which features of which category lured laborers out of the colonial market. But even granting that most colonists became cultivators, and that land bulked large in their considerations to leave the labor market, Wakefield's argument on the relationship between colonial struggles for land and labor contained a second, further weakness. Justifiably or not, he identified landlords and cultivators and, in so doing, he did not distinguish their different interests in land. Landlords are interested in access and, although cultivators share this interest to some extent, they are particularly interested in the technical features of the soil. Because he did not sharply distinguish these different interests, he did not separate the corresponding differences in land expense, and thus did not specify the different ways that land may be cheap. In other words, he articulated an essentially ambiguous notion of "cheap land," and this ambiguity is the second fault in his argument.

Land in the colonies was cheap in one sense because it required very little technical investment. As I indicated earlier, colonial cultivators took the soil as virgin territory, as land in which the mineral and moisture characteristics did not require the expenses of economic improvement, but were left to be renewed by nature. Joined with the small costs of investment in other technical means, the small expense required to use the technical features of the soil attracted producers who then had to depend almost entirely on investments in labor to make a profit in commodity markets over which they largely had no control. But cheap technical requirements made it generally easy for

laborers and others to enter production, and as laborers thus disappeared, those who remained bid up the wage and drove producers to demand reliable alternatives for obtaining labor. Colonial producers who wanted the right to use either self-discipline or force over others began withdrawing the offer of a wage. As a result, laborers lost their incentive to come to the colonies, and they became even more scarce and expensive. Clearly, land that was technically cheap to use was a cause of the the scarcity of labor for hire, and it had a direct bearing on the political struggles for labor.

Moreover, if small investments in such technical means as the mineral and moisture characteristics of the soil leads to a scarcity of labor, then a greater technical investment may lead to a more plentiful supply. More expensive capital requirements no doubt make it technically more difficult for laborers and others to afford entry into production. Thus denied their mobility, laborers less readily disappear. And as the number of laborers increase, wages presumably fall and producers may eventually find it more attractive to hire workers than to apply self-discipline or to exercise force over others.

Increased technical investment and a growing pool of potential laborers, however, still may not make producers realize the advantages of employing hired help. A purely quantitative rise in technical investment brought about, for example, by a legislated tax levy on the use of the technical features of the soil may prohibit laborers from trying to become cultivators, but it may also discourage cultivators themselves from trying to produce a crop and from employing labor in any form. Wage labor is available under contract for a limited period of

time at a specified price, and what makes the use of this form attractive is a technical investment that not only grows quantitatively but that also qualitatively improves the production process by making a given amount of labor more productive. To the degree that investment improves the technical qualities of production, to the extent, for example, that investment in chemicals improves the fertility of the soil, producers can better afford to risk the payment of the wage; by changing the technical means, they can regulate the labor process so that laborers produce commodities worth more than the costs of production. Technical improvements of this kind, however, are primarily improvements of economy and, although they may be encouraged by sophisticated and selective forms of political regulation, they derive primarily from the economic interaction of producers competing for cheap supplies, lucrative markets, and high profits.

When Wakefield called for a "law to make land dearer," he did not speak narrowly of regulating technical investment in land; rather, he spoke of land in the second, broader sense, as an object of access, and he explicitly declared his wish to create, through taxation, a "hurtful impediment to the acquisition of new land" (1849: 344; my emphasis). To be sure, the costs of access are determined politically in the bargains between, for example, tenants and landlords, and they are subject to further political determination by the imposition of taxes and government regulation. But the costs of access to land, whether excessively low or, as Wakefield proposed, uniformly high, do not necessarily affect the scarcity or abundance of labor for hire. Assuming, for example, that laborers seek to use part of their wages to

gain control over access to land and thus to become landlords, and assuming further that these laborers have freedom of movement, they surely would have no reason to people and settle a colony where access is more expensive in relation to their wages than it is elsewhere. Indeed, as Marx pointed out, in specific cases where Englishmen had already made access to land uniformly dear, "the stream of emigration was only diverted from the English colonies to the United States" (1967, 1: 773).<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in colonies with expensive and scarce access, just as in colonies with cheap and easy access, producers found laborers disappearing and had reason to search politically for alternative means of dealing with the expenses of attracting more.

Because Wakefield reasoned from an ambiguous notion of "cheap land," he misjudged the complexity of the problem of scarce labor in the colonies. As a solution to the problem, he sought politically to raise the cost of "cheap land" and became trapped in logical dilemma. On the one hand, he could easily increase the costs of access to territory because such expenses are directly susceptible to political determination; unfortunately for Wakefield, these expenses are not directly linked to the demand for labor. On the other hand, the amount of investment in the technical features of the soil is directly linked to the demand for labor, but it is not so easily subject to political manipulation. Of course, political regulation of the costs of access to land may aid indirectly in both the growth and qualitative improvement

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<sup>38</sup> Subsequent scholars have taken Marx's point and, in studies of land and labor in particular countries and regions, now demand an analysis of the possibilities for external labor migration. Among the more recent works that emphasize this point, see Domar (1970: 18-19), Engerman (1973: 57), and Mintz (1977: 257).

of technical investment in the soil. Indeed, under favorable economic circumstances, subtle regulations can certainly favor access to land by those producers most willing and best able technically to improve methods of cultivation. But to formulate such policy measures, it is necessary to realize, as Wakefield did not, that there is a fundamental distinction between the expenses for gaining access to land and the expenses for technical investment in the soil, and that landlords and cultivators have different interests in land. In addition, it is necessary to distinguish the differences among cultivators who themselves participate in the regulation of access to land. Wakefield's failure to pursue fully this last distinction comprised a third defect in his argument.

Producers found access to land relatively cheap in the colonies because at least some of them organized to oppose those who wanted to limit access, or those, like the Crown, who wanted to assess a greater tax on it. In all fairness to Wakefield, it is to his credit that he appreciated some aspects of producer organization in respect of colonial land. He referred, for example, to the "history of those colonies," as "the history of many struggles between the dependencies and the imperial power" (1849: 260). In those struggles, he argued, "the greediness of colonists" for access to land was "equal to the profusion of governments" in granting that access (ibid.: 333). He took this state of affairs as evidence for his assertions that colonial governments "exercised no control" and were "careless and corrupt" (ibid.: 334; 1834: 285). But Wakefield then narrowed his focus by ignoring the ways that colonial producers themselves interacted to constitute the colonial

governments, and he urged simplistically that those governments be stronger, shake off the presumed corrupting influences, and legislate a rise in the price of access to land.<sup>39</sup>

The greed of colonists, however, which Wakefield's strategy was meant to oppose, did not always manifest itself as an unqualified thirst for cheap access to land.<sup>40</sup> Colonial producers, for example, had interests in the price of access that differed from place to place, and varied with their particular organizations of production. All of them no doubt entered production expecting a high return on their investments. The principal condition of their entry was that the application of labor could achieve a high output with little or no advance in technical means. Assuming that producers expected a high output because of the natural fertility of the soil, regardless of the labor investment and barring other considerations, they probably had an absolute interest in cheap access: a low price facilitated movement of producers to new, fertile soil as soon as they exhausted the old soil. And no doubt such producers worked hard politically to guarantee their mobility. But assuming that the output of agricultural production depended substantially on the application of labor and on the forms of cooperation among laborers, producers had relative interests in the price of land, and surely they struggled politically to protect their various interests.

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<sup>39</sup> Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 380) sharply criticized the simplistic notion of colonial government underlying Wakefield's proposal. Also, see above, note 15.

<sup>40</sup> On this point, see, for example, Merivale (1861: 260-276) and Leroy-Beaulieu (1902, 2: 376-380, 575-587).

Those producers who, perhaps, could not afford a large investment in labor may have been interested in maintaining access to fertile land, and in keeping the costs of such access to a minimum. But those producers who invested in intensified labor sought to protect their investments by making it relatively more difficult for potential competitors to obtain fertile land. Similarly, producers with large investments in labor found it economical to work larger plots of land and sought to establish a favorable price for large plots, as opposed to smaller ones, or they sought favorable terms for joining together smaller plots. A high cost for access to land in some places thus did not necessarily lead to the demise of "makeshifts for hiring"; instead, sometimes it actually served to protect the interests of producers who had invested in such alternative means of securing labor-power as the use of force.<sup>41</sup>

In light of the foregoing analysis of Wakefield's familiar, important and often-invoked argument, it would certainly be wrong to deny unequivocally that "cheap land" contributes to a scarcity of labor for hire; cheap investment in the technical features of the soil is surely a condition for such scarcity.<sup>42</sup> But it can be ventured with some

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<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Kloosterboer (1960: 214), who cites cases where expensive access to land, which "was largely the result of a deliberate land policy on the part of the governing group," still led to patterns of forced labor.

<sup>42</sup> Recently, in independent studies, Orlando Patterson and Frederic Pryor both purported to demonstrate that, by itself, the relation between land and labor has little merit in explaining the development of slavery. Patterson promised to "lay the ghost" of the supposed explanation and spoke conclusively of its "spuriousness" (1977b: 13, 32); Pryor argued that he found "no validation whatever" for it (1977: 37). Each author argued their respective conclusions from similar statistical tests of selected cross-cultural data, which they each coded with "operationalized" definitions of key terms. But both

confidence that policies concerning the ease of access to territory in general do not enter directly into the struggle for labor. Determined policies regarding the value of access to land do not necessarily determine the plentifulness or scarcity of labor. Nevertheless, policies established in struggles for access to land do have a bearing on struggles for labor, if only to the extent that the disposition of such policies helps form the social order in which producers must also seek support for various methods of acquiring and using labor power, and of protecting their labor investments. In the colonies, therefore, various land policies figured crucially in the labor considerations of all kinds of producers, but only because those policies built up a significant part of the ground on which producers moved to fashion a stable and secure system of labor exaction.

In the early European colonies of the New World, wealth accumulated primitively, and the characteristics of such accumulation included meager investments in technical means, a scarcity of labor for hire, and rough assessments of the size of the markets for produced goods. Each of these economic factors were themselves determined, at least in part, by the European search for wealth in the fifteenth, sixteenth and

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scholars clearly appreciated the problematic nature of defining complicated ideas for statistical study, and neither pretended to have exhausted all the relevant senses of such elemental, but richly ambiguous and polysemous notions as "land." Careful and thorough as they tried to be, therefore, both Patterson and Pryor issued conclusions with a finality that was somewhat at odds with the tentative, "operational" framework within which they each worked. And, in a rebuttal of Patterson's essay that might equally have applied to Pryor's article, Stanley Engerman justifiably insisted that, quite apart from the results of statistical analysis, the land/labor relation posited by Wakefield and others for the study of slavery still could yield much "useful insight" (1977: 66-67).

seventeenth centuries, and by the interaction of various sources of colonial investment; in turn, these factors provided colonial producers the principal terms for deciding whether to work for themselves or to force others to work for them. The demand for staple products led producers in the British West Indies and elsewhere to try to set up plantations based on coerced labor. Of course, whether or not the owners and managers of these historically "unprecedented" institutions could arouse common approval for, and, beyond that, a firm commitment to protect investments in a specific form of coercion depended on where they stood generally in relation to the wider social order, and particularly in relation to such colonial political struggles as that for access to land. But given the social orders in which potential planters were politically articulated, it thus was the political support they mustered for their economic practices that finally determined the nature of the coercive labor system they used--be it indenture, peonage, slavery, or some other form--and, ultimately, it determined the course of capital accumulation on their estates.

Moreover, although the evidence at this stage is by no means exhaustive, my research suggests that in the British West Indies, as in the American South and Brazil, the owners and managers of early plantations not only obtained sanctions for the various kinds of force they needed to command bondsmen to labor within their individual estates. They also managed to secure a basis for executing even more extensive measures of control: during the early development of plantations and of slavery as a system of forced labor exaction, they helped shape specific policies for discouraging alternatives to

plantation production, including possible alternatives in local arts and crafts.

### Chapter III

#### EARLY PLANTATIONS IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES AND LIMITATIONS ON CRAFTS AND TRADES

Our chiefest sufficiency is, to apply ourselves  
to divers fashions. It is a being but not a life,  
to be tied and bound by necessity to one only course.

-- Montaigne, Essays, III, 3

Beginning in the earliest stages of colonization, European agricultural producers in the New World accumulated their wealth with only small investments in largely stagnant technology. The ability of these producers to generate a profit depended primarily on how effectively they could economize on the costs of labor. When the market for their products was small, they economized by laboring for themselves, and so became farmers. In other cases, when they aimed to produce staple crops for large, centralized, foreign markets, New World producers forced people to work for them, and so they became planters. And provided that the owners and managers of colonial plantations had a supply of slaves and the sanctions to make such bondsmen obedient for life, they particularly applied the force of slavery to afford the labor they needed on demand.

Slavery is an extreme form of political subordination based on the power of masters to compel the obedience of slaves in perpetuity. The wide establishment of coercive measures, such as slavery, for the purpose of meeting a scarcity of labor in a specific kind of agricultural institution precipitated deep and lasting changes in all

realms of social life in plantation colonies of the New World. Coercive labor practices especially set off grave economic repercussions, not the least of which dramatically affected the development of local manufacturing activity.

Now, some observers of colonization have noted that, in eastern North America, the very development of regular, large, and concentrated markets for staple products tended to militate against the emergence of varied crafts and trades in plantation colonies. When farm products were shipped widely to small, diverse markets in Europe, the Caribbean and elsewhere, it made good economic sense not to scatter the trading operations and all the allied processing and service industries in the receiving ports, but to center them in the shipping colonies and to take advantage of, among other things, possible economies of scale. Urban areas thus sprouted throughout places like New England. Trade was directed from those centers, and local manufactures thrived beside farm cultivation both to process the agricultural goods and to service the various entrepreneurs. But when large quantities of staple products began to be shipped to central destinations in Europe from plantation regions, like Virginia, it became accordingly more economical to manage the trade and its associated industries in the receiving ports abroad. Virginians and other southern colonists thus tended to be relatively deprived of the support of local urban conveniences, particularly the development of industry in the artisan trades.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed discussion of the general relations between colonial product markets and urban development in eastern North America, see especially Rothstein (1967), Price (1974), and Earle and Hoffman (1976).

Plantation colonies in the British West Indies, the Guianas, and elsewhere suffered similar effects, which can be attributed, at least in part, to the structure of the product markets for plantation crops. But the story of capital accumulation on New World plantations and of the effects of such accumulation is, of course, much more complicated. For example, the markets for agricultural products themselves were not immutable; they depended on the varied and constantly changing interaction of Crown forces, merchants, various kinds of producers, other colonial settlers, and consumers both in the colonies and abroad, all of whom had differing interests and perspectives.

Moreover, assuming that the processing of plantation products did tend, for good economic reasons, to gravitate abroad to the metropolitan centers of trade, and that plantation colonies thus tended to lack the attraction of urban economic opportunities, then these colonies simply did not lure enough able-bodied settlers to form an adequate pool from which planters could freely hire laborers to produce goods for a large and lucrative export market. And joined to the general ease with which settlers could, in any case, technically afford to enter production in the colonies on their own accounts and could thereby leave the colonial labor force, the particular unattractiveness of plantation colonies made it all the more necessary for planters to use force in their enterprises. But, as is evident, for example, in the cases of Virginia and Barbados, the concentrated trade in staple products that almost by nature diminished employment opportunities in plantation colonies was not sufficient to lead planters directly to take most of their laborers as slaves.

Although slaves were recognized among the categories of bondsmen since the early days of colonization, the owners and managers of plantations in Virginia and Barbados initially acquired many of their laborers for a fixed number of years under terms of indenture. Provided they lived long enough to take up their freedom, however, few servants desired to continue working on the estates to which they had been bound. Those who could do so quickly struck out on their own and, if they had the means, they entered local trade as petty merchants, or they obtained the necessary technical implements and worked hard on their own accounts as farmers producing food crops mainly for themselves, their families, and the local market, or as artisans producing locally needed craft goods. Some prospered in these ways, and even ventured to obtain servants of their own and to enter agricultural production as planters. Competing now against their former masters, they increased the supply of the staple crop and, other things being equal, drove down its price and their profits.

As a result of these various developments, indenture did not always prove to be a satisfactory means for coercing people to labor on plantations. The owners and managers of these agricultural institutions still had to replenish their labor supply when individual terms of indenture expired. Moreover, given the relative ease of entry into plantation production, planters faced increasingly stiff competitive pressures. Even the efforts of ex-servants and others to develop petty trade, farming, and craft manufacturing outside plantation boundaries presented a crucial complicating factor. Such efforts helped diversify the local economy and so opened potentially attractive employment

opportunities that could make bondsmen on plantations increasingly dissatisfied with their coerced state, and more easily tempted to seek removal of the chains that forcefully prevented them from pursuing a better life.

To insure that their coerced laborers continued to work and did not flee or rebel, owners and managers of colonial plantations typically sought to institute measures that would enable them to tighten security on their estates, to stiffen punishments, to lengthen the terms of indenture and, when possible, to shift to the use of slaves, those servants for life. In addition the concern of planters to protect their estates drove them even further, to try to hinder the development of diverse activities in the wider economy outside the plantation. Colonial political realities did not always favor their efforts, but to the extent that they achieved any success in limiting local economic diversification, they made life for their fellow settlers generally more servile and slavish in its commitment to the returns of various staple crops.

In New World plantations, then, the conditions of capital accumulation--the structure of product markets, the meager and stagnant investments in technology, the demand for coercive labor practices, and the struggles for political influence--all contributed to help limit the expansion in the wider economy of petty trade, of small-scale agriculture, and of artisan manufacturing. But, just as the nature of the markets sought, the kinds of crops produced, the forms of bondage used, and the political battles joined, all differed from place to place, so too did the mechanisms by which planters restricted the wider

development of individual colonial economies. And it is to the variation in these restrictions, particularly in the British West Indies and in the Guianas, that I now wish to turn.

In some places, like the Dutch colonies of what now comprises the country of Guyana, the limitation was comprehensive and was achieved in response to a general propagation of diverse crafts and trades. In other places, the owners and managers of early plantations managed to exercise a more narrow restraint upon economic alternatives. In Jamaica, planters responded specifically to the lively urban economy fostered by the buccaneers, while in Barbados planters moved principally to check the rise of diversified agriculture and its associated trades and crafts.

### 3.1 BARBADOS: THE REDUCTION OF DIVERSIFIED AGRICULTURE

Early in 1627, two shiploads of English settlers waded ashore in Barbados, an uninhabited island lying on the outer eastern perimeter of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean Sea. Under the employ of a merchant syndicate that was related through one of its principals, William Courteen, to a large Anglo-Dutch trading house, the colonists began to form a clearing in the Barbadian forest. Meanwhile, one of their ships proceeded to the Essequibo River on the Guiana coast of South America. There, from a colony that was also partly sponsored by members of the Courteen firm, the ship's captain, Henry Powell, obtained a variety of seeds and recruited a group of Arawak Indians. When Powell returned to Barbados, the Indians helpfully instructed the newly-settled Englishmen in the finer points of tropical agriculture, a service in

return for which they were eventually reduced to slaves.<sup>2</sup>

The Courteen firm sank about 10,000 pounds sterling into its Barbadian venture. But before it could secure a rightful claim to the island from the English King, the Earl of Carlisle, a court favorite of Charles I, acted on behalf of a rival group of merchants, and acquired a proprietary patent in respect of Barbados and nearly every island in the Lesser Antilles, except Trinidad and Tobago. When Sir William Courteen protested, Charles promptly withdrew his grant from Carlisle, awarded the patent to Courteen, and even added Trinidad and Tobago to it. Then, in an act of sheer duplicity, the King again reversed himself and returned to his original grant. Carlisle accordingly appointed a Governor for his new colonies and he dispatched settlers to the islands. In Barbados, rival colonists squared off and soon raised arms against one another. In London, however, Courteen and Carlisle lodged formal appeals and counter-appeals in efforts peacefully to decide the vexed question of jurisdiction. In 1629, an extra-judicial tribunal found in favor of Carlisle, left Courteen without redress, and so ratified a series of intrigues against the first European settlers of Barbados that, in the hindsight of historian Vincent Harlow, amounted to "barefaced robbery" (1926: 10).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Powell's account of his voyage to the Essequibo is contained in Harlow (1925: 36-38). The motive for the voyage is convincingly deduced in Edmundson (1901: 655-661). For a sensitive analysis of the fragmentary evidence concerning the subsequent history of the Arawaks whom Powell brought to Barbados, see Handler (1969: 38-47).

<sup>3</sup> For more details on the Carlisle-Courteen dispute and its resolution, see Williamson (1926: 21-63) and Cambell (1977).

Beginning as early as 1628, Barbadian settlers sought and obtained grants of land under the Carlisle proprietorship. Apparently, a minimum of ten acres was awarded to each settler, with an additional ten acres for each servant. Many received small awards of between thirty and fifty acres. Others, however, qualified for one hundred or more, indicating that they were sufficiently enterprising to maintain numerous indentured servants. And in discharging a substantial debt to his merchant backers, Carlisle awarded them a free grant of 10,000 acres. By 1640, nearly all the arable land in Barbados had been distributed, and by that time also a pattern of marked inequality had emerged, at least with respect to land holdings.<sup>4</sup>

Barbadian settlers originally seized on tobacco as their principal crop. Virginia was their model, and they imagined that the island colony would become, like its mainland counterpart, a plantation colony in which planters would exploit the large tobacco market using the forced labor of a body of indentured servants. Several powerful agencies, however, induced the Barbadians quickly to forego complete dependence on tobacco production. Under pressure, large landholders, who had hoped to engross the trade, increasingly leased their lands to subtenants, many of them time-expired servants, who then produced varied crops for a wide range of markets. During the first decade of settlement, there thus emerged in Barbados a rather substantial body of yeoman farmers. Much uncertainty about the population in Barbados at this time still exists, of course, and so one should neither exaggerate

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<sup>4</sup> On the early distribution of land, see Williamson (1926: 136), Innes (1970: 4-13), Dunn (1972: 51), Sheridan (1974: 83), and Cambell (1977: 170-172).

the percentage of smallholding cultivators, nor neglect the great number of bound servants in the colony. But enough is known to suggest that the opportunities for attaining agricultural prosperity were sufficiently varied and alluring that immigrants, free and bound, came by the thousands. Although Carlisle did almost nothing to promote the colony, Barbadian population appears to have increased roughly sevenfold in the short span of time between 1635 and 1639.<sup>5</sup>

One of the leading pressures moving Barbadian settlers to cultivate crops other than tobacco came at the prompting of the King. Like his father, James I, Charles detested tobacco, and he abhorred the Barbadian leaf no less than any other. Charles agreed with his Privy Council that "the great abuse of tobacco, to the great innervation of both body and courage" was "notorious" and, throughout the thirties, he persistently tried to halt its production in Barbados, Virginia and elsewhere (quoted in Innes 1970: 15). Production continued to increase, however, and if he could not halt the spread of the weed, Charles was determined to make money from it. Tobacco duties filled the King's treasury but, in respect of the taxes, Barbadian and Caribbean producers suffered more than others, for Charles was persuaded to favor the early producers in Virginia and Bermuda over latecomers elsewhere. Moreover, in addition to being handicapped at customs, Barbadian planters endured the reputation of producing tobacco of uniformly poor quality. In the words of one colonist, local tobacco was "A Commodity of Noe Better

<sup>5</sup> For the development of early tenant relationships in the island, see Innes (1970: 10-13). Mintz has reemphasized the significance of yeoman farmers in early Barbados (1979a: 228). See Batie (1976) for a detailed discussion of the general economic promise of the island from the initial attractiveness of tobacco production. And see Dunn (1972: 54-55), for the early population figures.

Estimation, not worth Anything, for it is worst of all tobaccos . . . ." (quoted in Bennett 1965: 15). The declining price of the leaf, which was brought about over the decade by the continually growing supply on the world market did little to sustain the confidence of Barbadian planters. After a particularly severe depression in the market during 1638, so many producers in Barbados were ready to leave the industry that the King was actually able to enforce a cessation of tobacco production in the island and in the other English Caribbees for two full years beginning in 1639.<sup>6</sup>

Although general royal opposition to the leaf, together with the specific disabilities of Barbadian tobacco combined eventually to convince island cultivators that they should diversify production, another major influence that undoubtedly added to their conviction was the arbitrary nature of the local proprietary government. Carlisle cared little for the welfare of his subjects except insofar as they served to fill his purse. His agents dunned the colonists with great vigor and they often pursued their tasks with intentions of satisfying their own greed. The islanders thus came to scorn Carlisle's rule for its rapacity, and in Barbados, the levy of a poll tax was the most important and perhaps the "best hated" of all the proprietary actions (Harlow 1926: 16). Because it was exacted equally upon all adults in the colony, regardless of status, the masters had to pay the rate on their servants, and this kind of regressive tax of course tended to discourage the use of forced laborers. It especially intimidated the

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<sup>6</sup> For further discussions of the quality of Barbadian tobacco, of its relative favor at English customs, and of the tobacco cessation, see Harlow (1926: 39), Williamson (1926: 98-99), Bennett (1967: 360), Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh (1972: 53-54), and Batie (1976: 11).

poorer planters whose ability to accumulate depended most on the economies afforded by such laborers. The colonists also had to contend with a host of other demands for fees, fines and oaths of loyalty that were imposed without their consent and seemingly at the self-serving whimsy of the proprietor or his agents.<sup>7</sup> In such unfavorable and uncertain political circumstances, most Barbadian cultivators dared not risk their entire investment in the use of forced laborers to plant tobacco. Some turned to different staple crops, while others sought safer, sometimes smaller and immediately less profitable outlets in which they had little or no use for forced laborers at all.

For a time, the owners and managers of Barbadian plantations, who became disenchanted with tobacco production, and who turned to other large staple markets, found cotton production the most rewarding alternative. Like tobacco, cotton was neither complicated nor expensive to raise and, by 1634, "the planters of Barbados had installed in their island, whole and intact, the cotton culture as it was then known" (Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh 1972: 57). So many cultivators turned to cotton, however, that "in 1639 the extra supply forced the bottom out of the English market" (Batie 1976: 12). Some planters then began raising ginger, but the many proprietary pressures impinging on the plantations were not thereby much relieved, and planters seemed destined to continue switching from one staple to another. By 1640, one observer warned that "unless some New Inventions be founde oute to Make A Commoditye on the Inhabitants are noe wayes able to subsist" (quoted in Bennett 1965: 16-17). Even then, however, there were budding candidates for such a

<sup>7</sup> For more details, see Harlow (1926: 12-17, 97) and Williamson (1926: 83-95, 219). Compare Bennett (1965: 12).

"New Invention," and among the most promising were indigo and sugar.

Individual planters in Barbados had begun systematic production of these two crops during the mid-thirties. Both indigo and sugar, however, required immediate processing at harvest to preserve their yield. Indigo leaves had to be steeped and the precipitate oxidized, while cane had to be milled and the resulting juice boiled and refined to produce a crystalline substance. Because both crops thus required a substantially greater investment of technical equipment than did either tobacco, cotton or ginger. Few cultivators thus could easily afford to produce them on a commercial scale. Even with easy credit facilities, potential producers of these crops had to come to the island already endowed with wealth. Otherwise, they had to accumulate sufficient capital during their stay in the island, for example, by successfully producing other crops that did not require such a large initial outlay. As it turned out, so many cultivators in the island shifted to indigo or sugar after having first built a capital base in other lines of agricultural production that prospective sugar planters elsewhere were subsequently best advised to build their plantations according to this, the "Barbados custom" (Bennett 1964: 59). The production of indigo in Barbados became especially lucrative between 1640 and 1642, when the European market suffered a severe shortage of the dye following the collapse of the Spanish convoy system, which brought supplies from Guatemala. In the following years, however, as Barbadian planters acquired the needed skills for its production, sugar became increasingly more attractive. Spanish supplies of indigo resumed and bid down the price of the dye, while the Portuguese struggled to evict the Dutch from

Brazil, thereby disrupting European supplies of the sweetener and driving the Dutch to facilitate its production elsewhere, particularly in the island of Barbados.<sup>8</sup>

Many Barbadian cultivators thus reacted to royal pressure to diversify production by abandoning tobacco and moving to plant other staple products. In addition, by shifting, somewhat restlessly, from one staple to another in a constant search for the highest profits, they aimed to meet and overcome the various fiscal demands of the proprietor, particularly the regressive tax policy, that tended to discourage the use of forced labor. Many other cultivators in the island, however, succumbed both to royal and to proprietary measures. They abandoned tobacco production and began developing products for markets that were neither large nor concentrated enough to drive them to invest in forced labor. In particular, they began farming provision crops, including corn, cassava, plantains, and yams. After a brief period of transition in 1630-1631, known as the "starving time," Barbadian farmers began producing for the home market of the island, and by 1634, they had expanded their markets to such an extent that the island was being called "a granary of all the rest of the charybbies Isles" (quoted in Dunn 1972: 54).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Batie (1976) has provided the most thorough account of the market conditions under which early Barbadian planters shifted from one staple crop to another. But see also Innes (1970: 13-22). See Edel (1969) for a complementary view of the forces that led Dutch merchants to promote sugar production in the West Indies.

<sup>9</sup> See Sheridan (1974: 84). Also see Batie (1976: 8, n.25): "Food shortages were common during the 1620s, but as tobacco prices fell settlers began raising their own eatables, and Barbados apparently even started exporting foodstuffs to the other Caribbees." On the profusion of small peasant-like farmers during this period, see, for example, Harlow (1926: 43) and Sheridan (1974: 124).

Had the sturdy class of yeoman farmers in Barbados continued to develop, the island may have taken on many of the features of colonies such as those in New England. Catering to a diverse supply of crops and seeking broad outlets to dispose of them, local merchants may have grown in importance, found it necessary to establish their base of operations in the island, and mobilized the resources to promote needed manufacturing and service industries. A local shipping industry may have emerged, for example, as it did in New England, giving rise to various crafts and other attractive opportunities for budding entrepreneurs. Such developments surely would have lured workers from local plantations and made it even more difficult for planters to subsist in profitable circumstances, no matter how lucrative the staple markets may have become. Such a scenario was not to be, however, for the Earl of Carlisle died in 1636, and in the next decade the English Parliament revolted against the King. Support for a farm economy in Barbados and for the possible development of associated crafts and trades thus eroded, and the owners and managers of plantations in the island soon found themselves in the position to undermine even further the conditions favoring such an economy. Indeed, they promptly took advantage of the weakened state of affairs in Barbados to construct a framework much more congenial to the profitable exploitation of large, foreign markets with crops produced by laborers forced to work on their estates.

Shortly before his death, the Earl of Carlisle placed Barbados and the other islands of his Caribbean proprietorship in the hands of trustees. These agents were to administer the colonies and use the

proceeds to settle the Earl's many outstanding debts. The proprietorship then was to devolve upon the Earl's son. In Barbados, the trustees seem to have continued Carlisle's pattern of rather arbitrary and self-serving rule. The Barbadian Governor under Carlisle, Henry Hawley, continued his despotic administration, and the trustees appointed a Receiver General named Peter Hays who collected the poll tax and other funds due the proprietor with such diligence that he "systematically alienated the rulers and the ruled in Barbados" (Bennett 1965: 18). Meanwhile, Carlisle's son, the second Earl, grew quickly impatient of being excluded from the proprietorship that he considered his by right of birth. He appealed to the king to void the trusteeship his father had formed, and he took various other measures to frustrate the business of his rivals in the islands.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, his actions served more to divide and weaken the proprietorship than to wrest control of it for himself from the trustees.

The rift within the Carlisle proprietorship was not lost on the numerous parties interested in Barbados. The Earl of Warwick, for example, who ultimately wanted to settle Trinidad and Tobago, offered to purchase the proprietary rights to Barbados. But before he even closed the deal, he apparently went so far as to enlist the aid of Hawley, the Barbadian governor, to begin recruiting local settlers to leave the island and to open the new colonies. When the trustees discovered this intrigue, they refused the sale to Warwick, and they promptly removed Hawley from office. Hawley thought more could be made of the divided proprietorship, however, and in 1639, he misrepresented himself to the

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<sup>10</sup> Harlow (1926: 15-17), Williamson (1926: 103-109) and Bennett (1965: 19-20).

King and obtained a commission to supervise that year's cessation of tobacco planting in the islands. Bearing the King's seal, he returned to Barbados and reclaimed the office of Governor. To obtain the support of the local settlers, Hawley now played champion of democracy and summoned the colony's first elected assembly. This petty tyrant was finally removed from power in 1640, but the assembly, composed of the island's leading planters, refused to disband.<sup>11</sup>

The trustees and the second Earl of Carlisle managed to fashion a temporary compromise in choosing Hawley's successor. The trustees accepted Henry Hunks, Carlisle's nominee, as Governor, in return for the Earl's promise not to interrupt the trustees in the "quiet collecting and enjoying the said rents, etc., of the said island" (quoted in Bennett 1965: 21). Carlisle, however, did not promise to leave untouched the basis on which the various taxes and fees were assessed, and so, through his man Hunks, he made a decisive play for the support of the wealthiest inhabitants of the island, the plantation owners, against the trustees.<sup>12</sup> In particular, he proposed a change in the principle of tax assessment, to which the planters were so opposed. Instead of a levy per poll, Hunks agreed with members of the elected assembly to resettle the proprietary tax on a per acre basis. Plantation owners thus managed to overturn the policy that had long discouraged their use of forced labor. In addition, by paying a tax regularly per acre, they hoped to obtain a clear basis from which to

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<sup>11</sup> Harlow (1926: 17-20), Williamson (1926: 109-111, 136-145) and Bennett (1965: 20-24).

<sup>12</sup> For an elaboration of the following account, see Bennett (1965: 24-29).

confirm titles to their lands. Peter Hay, the Receiver General for the trustees, was quick to appreciate how severely this action challenged the authority of his employers. He tried to portray the new policy as unpopular, and indeed it was, but only with the large body of farmers who worked with their own two hands, without benefit of forced laborers, and in virtue of various kinds of informal tenant relationships. These farmers now had the security of their tenancies endangered, and some of them rose up and marched on the Governor, demanding that he "change not o[u]r old tenure, by w[hi]ch we have paid o[u]r former Rent" (quoted in *ibid.*: 27). But Hunks was willing to back up the new policy with force. He apprehended the rebels "in a ryotous way," and when the Receiver General himself openly opposed the policy change, Hunks had him too "elapped . . . up in close prison" (quoted in *ibid.*: 28).

The forcefulness that Hunks displayed in Barbados, however, could not ultimately prevent his recall to London. By 1641, the trustees had not only replaced him with a new Governor, Philip Bell, they had also overturned the tax reform that the Carlisle and Hunks had promoted in the interest of the Barbadian planters.<sup>13</sup> Carlisle's strategy of seeking the support of a disaffected class of island cultivators thus did not afford him full recognition as the proprietor; but it did provide clear evidence of the continuing rupture between him and the trustees. And with the direction of proprietary rule now seeming to vacillate without end, the plantation owners grew increasingly assured that such rule was now especially vulnerable, and that they held a unique vantage from which openly to defy and perhaps even to topple it. Having their

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<sup>13</sup> Bennett (1965: 367).

representatives legitimately deployed in the colony's Assembly, the planters awaited only a suitable occasion for defiant action. As it turned out, an opportunity came quickly during the following year, and the planters did not hesitate to exploit it.

In 1642, the Long Parliament convened in London, exercised its control of the royal purse and challenged the authority of the King. Civil War broke out and, as the King came under escalating military attack at home, his powers declined abroad. Not only was he unable, for example, to sanction the proprietary rule of Barbados, he also lost the capacity to enforce broad measures of colonial policy, including his encouragement of agricultural diversification. In Barbados, colonists thus began to take control into their own hands. With the outbreak of hostilities in England, Barbadians of all kinds began refusing to pay rents and taxes, and the Assembly of planters asserted that no fees could be imposed or collected without its prior approval. In June of 1643, with Governor Bell's assent, the Assembly acted formally to intermit all taxes, and then in September, again with the Governor's approval, it enacted a new tax measure that placed assessments finally on a per acre basis and called for settlement of titles.<sup>14</sup>

Having decisively overturned a policy that discouraged the use of forced labor and that encouraged the rise of diverse economic alternatives, and with royal calls for agricultural diversification effectively muted by civil war, the owners of Barbadian plantations acquired favorable grounds on which now to concentrate the expansion of their estates. By 1643, they had begun such development in earnest and,

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<sup>14</sup> Bennett (1967: 368-369).

with the technical assistance, cheap slaves, easy credit, and a ready market all supplied by Dutch merchants, they focused specifically on sugar.<sup>15</sup> Competition to enter cane production was immediately brisk, and prominent among the contenders were the established planters of the island who had accumulated their capital from the successive cultivation of various lesser staples. But there were also members of the English gentry, who came to the island in flight "from the noise and oppressions of England" and now saw a lucrative opportunity for investing their wealth, and there were the numerous yeoman farmers of the island, who now dreamed of participating in the rewards of plantation agriculture (Harlow 1926: 45, 29).<sup>16</sup>

As sugar cane took root in Barbados, planters there in no way relaxed their determination to be free from the vexatious interference of the proprietor, the King, and even Parliament. By 1644, proprietary rule continued to flounder. The trustees had resigned themselves to the new fiscal policy that favored plantation growth and, in recognition of the dramatic changes in staple production, asked only that taxes now be paid in money rather than in tobacco or cotton. But Carlisle meanwhile continued his dogged and unsuccessful search for full recognition as the proprietor. For a time in 1645, he courted Parliament and, when that proved unsuccessful in 1646, he promised personally to go to the island and assume his rightful position. For reasons that still are not fully

<sup>15</sup> Williamson suggested that Bell and his Council "made the advancement of prosperity their chief object," and that they identified prosperity "with the encouragement of the Dutch traders" (1926: 159).

<sup>16</sup> Pares (1960: 4, n. 15) emphasized that large planters vied with much smaller competitors in the early days of sugar production. On the significance of exiled gentry among the larger planters, see Williamson (1926: 162-163), Dunn (1972: 78) and Batie (1976: 20-21).

known, however, he never did go. In 1645, the King too tried to assert his control over the Caribbees and sent the Earl of Marlborough to represent him. But the Barbadian planters defied the royal authority and turned Marlborough away. And when Parliament tried to establish its control by appointing the Earl of Warwick as governor-in-chief and admiral of all colonies, the Barbadians were no less defiant. They insisted on a policy of neutrality and, in the words of Governor Bell, affirmed that "if we should partake or declare ourselves on eyther side we wer undone: for against the kinge we are resolved never to be, and without the freindshipe of the perliament and free trade of London ships we are not able to subsist" (quoted in Bennett 1967: 373).<sup>17</sup>

By 1645, Barbados thus constituted virtually an independent nation, and sugar producers were so assured of their position that they boldly expanded production. One contemporary observer proclaimed of the process that "the like Improvement was never made by any People under the Sunne" (quoted in Thornton 1956: 26). Such enthusiasm, however, did not quite speak to the wrenching transformations that accompanied the early crowning of sugar king in the island. Countless farmers and planters, for example, were "wormed out" of the colony, and, beginning in 1646, successful planters began consolidating smaller agricultural enterprises to form larger and more efficient estates for the production of sugar (Handler and Shelby 1976: 118, 120). Many of the settlers lost out simply because their tenancies were temporary or insecure. The yeomen farmers, however, first watched their fortunes decline as

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<sup>17</sup> For more details on the Barbadian policy of neutrality during this period, see Harlow (1926: 28-34), Williamson (1926: 114-122, 159-161) and Bennett (1967: 369-377).

planters maneuvered to change the policy of assessing rent. Then, the colony's provision trade was opened to the venturesome merchants of New England, and many of the Barbadian farmers succumbed before the low bulk prices that their competitors offered. Other farmers joined small and middling planters and gambled their earnings in sugar and, when misfortune struck, they found either their neighbors eager to buy them out or their creditors all too willing to foreclose.<sup>18</sup>

The forced laborers on the plantations also suffered greatly during the ascendance of sugar in Barbados. Under Dutch influence, the owners and managers of local plantations had come to accept the advantages of cheap slaves over indentured laborers. Slaves were bound for life and they could be made to live more cheaply than people who accepted their bondage only for a short period of time by the terms of an agreement. But then, in the aftermath of the English civil war, planters managed further to demean the status of laborers. Cromwell consigned thousands of convicts and prisoners of war to the island and, for planters to find it worthwhile to accept these new arrivals onto plantations where laborers already worked slavishly, they made conditions even harsher. And they did so to such an extent that the threat of being "barbadosed" during that time carried the same menacing

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<sup>18</sup> Pares dates the aggregation of smaller properties into larger ones from 1646 (1960: 4, n.15). For general discussions of the process, see Davis (1887: 80), Harlow (1926: 306-307), Williamson (1926: 119), and Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh (1976: 21). On the insecurity of some tenant relations, see Innes (1970: 10) and Sheppard (1977: 13-14). In Barbados, according to Sheridan, "as more and more land was planted in canes, the islanders became increasingly dependent upon outside sources of foodstuffs, building materials and draft animals" (1974: 139). On the provision trade between Barbados and New England, see especially Harlow (1926: 268-291).

connotations as the promise of being "shanghied" did in a later age.<sup>19</sup>

Already by 1647, the owners of plantations in Barbados had amassed truly formidable political and economic power. And through their agents in London, they now pressed Carlisle directly to yield the proprietorship. Carlisle made one last play for the support of the colonists. He offered grants of lands in his other Caribbean islands to the thousands of displaced settlers in Barbados. The gesture had little impact, however, for the exodus from Barbados to the other islands in the English Caribbees was already well underway. Although he apparently realized the futility of his continuing efforts, Carlisle still refused to sacrifice his claims. But he did lease the proprietorship to Lord Willoughby and thus left the struggle largely to another man. An ardent royalist himself, Willoughby came to Barbados in 1650 and made some headway in securing the rights of the proprietorship by appealing to the considerable royalist sentiment in the island among the exiled gentry and the captives of war. He declared Barbados for Charles II as the King of England. But this extreme maneuver hardly made inroads into the power of the Barbadian planters. When Parliament dispatched a fleet to blockade the island and to reduce to obedience the colonies under Willoughby's rule, the planters acted as a moderating force and obtained

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<sup>19</sup> On the dumping of convicts and prisoners in Barbados, see, for example, Harlow (1926: 294-299) and Sheppard (1977: 18-20). For a more general treatment of the practice, see Smith (1947). The peculiar relationship between penal labor and slave labor that emerged in Barbados at this time surely helped to establish the long tradition of harsh treatment for which planters in the British West Indies came to be so well known. In a recent and suggestive review article, Mintz (1979b) has compellingly argued for a closer look at this relationship and its implications. For a good start in such a study, see Beckles (1981: 8-11, 14-15), who has tried to document the joint actions of resistance taken in Barbados by Irish servants and African slaves.

significant concessions from the fleet's admiral, Sir George Ayscue. In return for submitting to the authority of Parliament, the planters acquired, among other things, guarantees of continued self-government. And in the next decade, when they were dealing with the restored King, the planters were able to preserve these concessions and, in addition, to secure both a protected market in England for their sugar and a favorable duty at customs.<sup>20</sup>

At the Restoration in 1660, the golden age of sugar in Barbados had largely passed. So, according to historian Richard Dunn, "having gained their wealth, [the planters] now set about trying to conserve it" (1972: 82). As they consolidated their power and came to rely almost exclusively on black slaves from Africa, they appreciated the continuing dangers of labor uprising. By driving out the farmers, they had prevented the development of alternative occupations and thus eliminated one potentially attractive lure that may have spurred the slaves on to seek their freedom. Then, for further protection, they imported white tenants to serve in the local militia, and they took other measures to favor the impoverished whites in the island as a buffer force against the black slaves. Still, the exodus of whites from the island continued. Those displaced farmers and failed planters who could do so looked for new opportunities. Even fabulously successful planters searched for additional outlets to invest their profits and to amass even greater wealth.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For full accounts of these events, see Harlow (1926: 33-36, 44-131) and Williamson (1926: 120-134, 164-187, 198-214). Also see Dunn (1972: 79-81).

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Harlow (1926: 117-118, 156-157) and Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh (1972: 23-25). Beckles (1981: 17-19) discussed the

After 1655, one of the first places such migrants looked was to Jamaica, which in that year fell from Spanish control and became the latest of England's New World colonies. But if restless settlers who cast off from Barbados had witnessed the emergence of plantation slavery on the island following the planters' successful struggle to overturn a policy that favored small-scale provision farming and that may eventually have given rise to more diverse crafts and trades, those who landed in Jamaica, and who there aspired to install plantations based on slave labor, had to contend with the buccaneers, whose activities not only stimulated provision farming but actually provoked the vigorous development of associated crafts and trades.

### 3.2 JAMAICA: PLANTER OPPOSITION TO PROVISION AGRICULTURE AND URBAN ECONOMY

England grabbed Jamaica in 1655 and held it initially as a colony of conquest. The victory enhanced no one's military reputation, however. In pursuit of Cromwell's grand "Western Design" for an American empire, Admiral Penn and General Venables had launched an offensive against Spanish-held Hispaniola. They were soundly rebuffed and, reeling south in defeat, poorly-led and ill-provisioned, the tattered remains of the expedition stumbled ashore in Jamaica. Had the weary and broken soldiers been required to muster any substantial display of tactical skill, they surely would have suffered further humiliation. Instead, they met almost no resistance. Spain had regarded the island

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importation of military tenants and its effects, and Sheppard (1977: 27-65) analyzed some of the various measures taken in Barbados to favor the poor whites over the slaves. For a view of white privilege in Barbadian slave society from the perspective of black freedmen, see Handler (1974: 66-116).

periphally, had settled it thinly, and had defended it lightly. The inhabitants, mostly cattle ranchers and cacao planters, and their slaves, yielded easily before the astonished English forces. Pushed to the mountainous interior, the Spaniards emerged periodically to conduct half-hearted guerrilla actions before they were finally expelled five years later in 1660.<sup>22</sup>

The seizure of Jamaica thus came as an afterthought in a more ambitiously conceived plan of conquest. Although Cromwell chafed at not having achieved a nobler prize, he appreciated the strategic location of the island at the heart of the Caribbean, well within striking distance of the Spanish Main. Moreover, Jamaica was evidently as fertile as any of the plantation colonies in the Eastern Caribbean--and much larger. Cromwell thus decided to make the best of his new colony, and he issued a proclamation to give "encouragement to such as shall transport themselves to Jamaica" (quoted in Whitson 1929: 5). Because one of the first steps in making the island attractive for settlement was to secure its government, he commissioned one of General Venables' officers, Colonel Edward D'Oyley to take command of the occupied territory. Ruling by martial law, D'Oyley granted land to his troops and prodded them to raise much needed provisions. He judged merchant disputes, established markets, licensed craftsmen and tradesmen, and in other ways initiated regulatory measures to stabilize the new economy and to stimulate commerce. He organized a militia with his soldier-farmers at its core. And, lacking naval protection from England, he enticed

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<sup>22</sup> On the conquest of Jamaica, see Taylor (1965). Also see, for example, Haring (1910: 85-92), Whitson (1929: 1-5), Dunn (1972: 151-152), and Webb (1979: 151-172).

English buccaneers to transfer their headquarters from Tortuga to Port Royal. With D'Oyley's sanction, these sea rovers continued their unrelenting attacks on the Spanish Main and, in so doing, they helped shield the fledgling colony from Spanish attempts to recover the island.<sup>23</sup>

By the time Charles II climbed the restored throne in England, D'Oyley had finally ejected the Spaniards from Jamaica, the buccaneers were firmly entrenched in Port Royal, and London-based merchants were now clamoring for decisive action to encourage the development of plantation agriculture. Charles agreed to retain control of the colony and he appointed Lord Windsor as its new governor. In addition, the King swayed to a vision in which the planting of staple crops rested at the foundation of Jamaica's economy and in which the duties on the commerce of such crops filled the royal purse. To attract planters to the new colony in the Caribbean, Charles thus generously conceded to forego taxes on grants of land in the island for a period of seven

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account of D'Oyley's administration, see Webb (1979: 172-210). Webb's chronicle of early Jamaican political history is thorough and well-researched, but it must be used with caution. It is part of a larger study in which the author seeks to establish that "from the beginning, English colonization was at least as much military as it was commercial" (ibid.: xvi). The Jamaican case is, of course well-suited to advance such a thesis for, as Webb shows in great detail, local administrators devoted much attention, first, to securing the island militarily as a colony of conquest and, later, to using it as a staging ground for raids on the Spanish Main. In respect both of its acquisition and of its subsequent use, however, Jamaica was peculiar among the English colonies. Unfortunately Webb has so far made little effort to compare and contrast these distinctive features of Jamaica's constitution with those in the other English colonies, particularly in the Caribbean. As a result, it is not at all established, at least in this, the first of a planned series of volumes, that Jamaica did indeed fit a broader pattern in which the Crown made systematic and calculated use of military force, or the threat of such force, as a matter of imperial policy to insure that colonists acquiesced to royal prerogatives.

years. In addition, by the terms of Windsor's commission, he made it plain that Jamaicans were to enjoy the same rights of legislative assembly that settlers exercised in other English colonies, such as Barbados and Virginia.<sup>24</sup>

By January 1664, when the first Assembly convened in Jamaica, plantation owners predominated among the elected representatives. They quickly asserted the power of the Assembly to enact all the laws binding on the colonists, and they brazenly challenged the King's authority even to grant tax concession, insisting instead that it was the sole right of the Assembly to levy taxes and to collect and disburse funds.<sup>25</sup> As the planters thus mobilized to wriggle free of Crown control, they overlooked the action of the buccaneers and apparently agreed with the assessment of Charles Littleton, the island's deputy governor, who wrote that "the attempts . . . upon the Spaniards and Privateering had let out the many ill humours, and those that remained were in ways of thriving and by that made Peaceable and Industrious" (quoted in Webb 1979: 219). If the planters indeed shared such a complaisant attitude, however, they were not well-advised, because the buccaneers soon posed a more immediate threat to their abilities to secure slave-based plantations than did the imperial aspirations of the King.

Lord Windsor conducted a whirlwind tour as Governor of Jamaica, remaining only two months in the island before losing interest and returning home to England during 1662. Littleton acted in the office until June 1664, when Sir Thomas Modyford arrived as the new Governor.

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<sup>24</sup> Whitson (1929: 8-19), Bennett (1964: 54), Dunn (1972: 153-154), and Webb (1979: 214).

<sup>25</sup> Whitson (1929: 23-29) and Webb (1979: 221-223).

At first, Jamaican planters must have regarded Modyford as the ideal candidate to promote their agricultural interests. A resident and former governor of Barbados, he was an established planter himself and, when he came to assume his new post, he brought nearly a thousand settlers with him. He also managed to lure planters from elsewhere, including four hundred refugees of the English colony in Suriname, which had recently fallen to the Dutch. Moreover, he encouraged the planters who were already in Jamaica to expand, assuring them that "planting is a happy and innocent way of thriving" (quoted in Bennett 1964: 59). Modyford's own plantation in the island was huge, embracing nearly 10,000 acres and including four hundred slaves; altogether the Modyford family owned twenty-two tracts of land in eight parishes of the island. During his seven years in office, Modyford granted 300,000 acres of land, or triple the acreage of Barbados, and he watched the population of the island increase by two hundred per cent.<sup>26</sup> But if, in all this, Modyford made himself the good friend of Jamaican planters, he proved by further action that he was a true ally of the buccaneers--and his friends suffered the consequences.

Modyford became notorious for his support of the buccaneers. Soon after he constructed his own superb plantation, he resolved to promote privateering as Jamaica's premier industry, and he was determined that no one would deter him. Among his first steps, he easily trampled the new found power of the island's other plantation owners. He ousted them from appointed offices and installed members of

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<sup>26</sup> According to Whitson, Modyford "was popular with the planters because they felt he was one of themselves" (1929: 36). See also Dunn (1970: 58; 1972: 154-155), and Webb (1979: 227-228).

his own family. Otherwise, he ruled by proclamation. He convened only one Assembly, briefly, at the end of 1664. In it, he made sure the buccaneers were well-represented. The Speaker of the Assembly was himself a buccaneering captain and, in the partisan words of a planter, a thoroughly "malicious, beggarly, debauched fellow" (quoted in Whitson 1929: 32). Whatever his true character, the Speaker directed the Assembly to revoke all previous legislation. Modyford's packed house then granted all levies raised in the colony to the King's government on the warrant of the Governor, after which it reenacted the remaining laws. Thus satisfied, Modyford disbanded the Assembly. When he left office in 1671, he still had not convened another and professed that "there is no assembly in being--nor that I know urgent occasion for any" (quoted in Webb 1979: 230)<sup>27</sup>

Having stifled the planters and secured for himself the disposal of the island's revenue, Modyford favored the buccaneers, in part to satisfy his own greed. No doubt he saw the privileges of his office--to issue licenses and to tax goods--as means to share in the fabulous loot that the buccaneers returned to the island from their raids. But Modyford was also genuinely concerned about the defense of Jamaica and about the imperial designs of his mother country. When England went to war in 1665 against the Dutch and the French, he commissioned the sea rovers as privateers to patrol the island's coast, to collect military intelligence and to raid the commerce of the enemy. Moreover, by encouraging the buccaneers, Modyford endeavored to make Jamaica "the scourge of Spain" and the "center of English empire in the Indies" (Webb

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<sup>27</sup> Whitson (1929: 32-36) and Webb (1979: 230-233).

1799: 233). He sent Henry Morgan on a series of spectacular raids and, even as Spain and England concluded a treaty of peace, he countenanced the most sensational foray of all: the sacking of Panama at the heart of the Spanish Main. Between 1664 and 1671, when Modyford was recalled to London, the buccaneers thus wildly enjoyed the heyday of their colonial influence.<sup>28</sup> And those who prospered in their revelry were not Jamaica's planters, but its provision farmers, and the people occupied with a wide range of associated crafts and trades in the bustling new town of Port Royal.

Despite the early assurances of Deputy Governor Littleton, the initial encouragement of Governor Modyford, and even a heady moment of legislative power, the Jamaican colonists who settled down to a life of planting staple crops for European markets with the help of forced laborers remained few in number. The shifting nature of the military threat to the island required Jamaica's leaders frequently and unpredictably to mobilize the local militia. Given their obligations to the defense of the island, most colonists had neither the time nor the resources to supervise a labor force and to apply themselves regularly to the day-to-day details of operating a profitable plantation. Most thus were content to work on their own account. Many farmed provision crops and they depended closely on the fortunes of the buccaneers, who primed the island's commerce with their stolen loot. The buccaneers traded captured prize for goods at easy rates and, among other things, they demanded enormous quantities of food to stock the privateer fleets.

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<sup>28</sup> For a full description of Jamaican buccaneering under Modyford, see Haring (1910: 120-199). Also see Whitson (1929: 30-31), Thornton (1956: 84-85, 92-95, 100-102, 108-123, 149), Bennett (1964: 58-59), Dunn (1970: 58; 1972: 156), and Webb (1979: 238-249).

Wonderful rates of return induced the hawk-eyed New England merchants to try to muscle in on the provision trade in Jamaica, as they had in Barbados. But local peasant farmers held their own and thrived by the sale of their crops in the Port Royal markets.<sup>29</sup>

The buccaneers had various other needs besides the desire for provisions, however, and, based in Port Royal, they stimulated a booming development of local trades and crafts to supply those needs. When they returned from their jaunts at sea, the sailors first had to dispose of their loot. As a result, those who flourished best in Port Royal happened to be the big merchants, those engaged in international trade, who alone could afford to advance the large sums needed quickly to fence the stolen prize of the buccaneers. But also thriving mightily were the bakers and the bartenders, who fed and watered the large numbers of seamen while they remained in port. In many ways, indeed, the town was a sailors' dive. Life was boisterous and rowdy. Liquor was in especially high demand, and the tavernkeepers did such a business that, according to Modyford, visitors "wondered much at the sickness of our people, until they knew the strength of their drinks, but then wondered more that they all were not dead" (quoted in Webb 1979: 240). Still, not everyone squandered their wealth in the simple pleasures. Prosperous residents demanded fine goods in splendid homes. The cabinetmakers, the pewterers and the glaziers of the town thus all did well, as did the craftsmen--the coopers and tanners, for example--who

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<sup>29</sup> Whitson observed the effects of military maneuvers on the ability of colonists to establish plantations (1929: 31). According to Dunn, "most colonists" in Jamaica at this time "were subsistence farmers" (1970: 55). See also Bennett (1964: 55-56) and Webb (1979: 185). Thornton (1956: 98), Pawson and Buisseret (1975: 31) and Webb (1979: 244) all noted the development of New England competition.

supplied goods needed in bulk by the sailors and the townspeople. Doing less well perhaps, but working in greater numbers were those engaged in the dozens of lesser crafts required to outfit a locally-based fleet of ships and to service its supporting population: the blacksmiths, the sailmakers, the masons, the cordwainers, the carpenters, the shoemakers, and the tailors, to name just a few. As a business center with a wide range of crafts and trades, Port Royal emerged to resemble a New England coastal town and, indeed, of the English towns in America by 1680, only Boston ranked larger in population.<sup>30</sup>

As Port Royal boomed, the owners of Jamaican plantations were squeezed out of the island spotlight and they looked on from the gallery with increasing distaste. They rejected the supposed benefits to the island of the rapid economic developments. They disagreed that support for provision farming would free planters to concentrate on sugar production, that petty merchants and craftsmen added valuable entrepreneurial talent to the colony, and that privateering stimulated immigration. Rather, they argued, if privateering continued as the leading industry, then the colony was destined for certain ruin. The planters observed the aggressive recruiting tactics of the buccaneers, the easy entry of people into subsistence farming, and the many attractive opportunities to practice crafts in Port Royal. Then, with undisguised attention to their own interests, they contended that all these factors lured overseers and indentured laborers away from the plantations, and thus left behind a large body of slaves who lacked proper supervision and who had increasing evidence to suppose that the

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<sup>30</sup> Dunn (1972: 178-182) and Pawson and Buisseret (1975: 81-119, 175-185). See also Whitson (1929: 31) and Bennett (1964: 54-55).

prospect of freedom in the local economy might merit the risk of trying to shed the oppressive fetters of bondage. More generally, the planters asserted that unrelenting plunder by the buccaneers hampered peaceful commerce with the island. Not only Englishmen but also friendly merchants of other nations feared indiscriminate privateering attacks and were reluctant to pursue a course of trade, or if they did dare to trade they charged prohibitively high freight rates.<sup>31</sup>

As early as 1663, the English Crown acted, at least in part, on the planters' complaint that privateering made their labor force unstable. The King explicitly sanctioned the employment of the buccaneers for the naval defense of Jamaica, but only on the condition that the privateers not be permitted to recruit their crews from among the inhabitants. But the King's proviso was unenforceable and almost totally ineffectual because, as historian A. P. Thornton has since observed, "where His Majesty expected these ships to recruit themselves can only be surmised" (1956: 82). As long as the King agreed to depend on the privateers for Jamaica's security, the planters thus found little remedy for their labor problems. But then in 1670, with a treaty of peace already signed between England and Spain, Morgan's wild excursion to Panama thoroughly embarrassed the King. The treaty did not establish formal trade relations between the two European countries, but it was supposed to bring peace "beyond the line" to the Caribbean, and so it impelled the King to recognize the more general objection of Jamaican

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<sup>31</sup> Modyford provided the economic defense of buccaneering. For a discussion of his argument, see Webb (1979: 244-245). For the objections of the planters, see also Thornton (1956: 58, 79), Dunn (1970: 59, 61; 1972: 150), and Pawson and Buisseret (1975: 21-22, 32).

planters concerning the buccaneers: that the sea rovers persistently disrupted the peace that was essential for normal trade relations of any kind to develop. With the immediate recall of Modyford to London, Charles withdrew his official sanction of the privateers, and the planters breathed a great sigh of relief.<sup>32</sup> But the freebooting spirit in Jamaica did not thereby simply dissipate. It took the planters fully twenty more years of bitter factional strife before they quashed the buccaneers, undermined the local yeoman farmers and Port Royal tradesmen, and thus established the conditions for a more satisfactory solution to the labor problems. By the end of the century, they had extended their control to the wider Jamaican economy and had thereby obtained great leverage in their attempts to protect an ever-increasing investment in slavery against the attractions of local freedom that always threatened to spark the slaves into flight or rebellion.

To take command of Jamaica from Modyford, King Charles dispatched Sir Thomas Lynch. A loyal and competent military officer, and a former president of Sir Charles Littleton's governing council in Jamaica, Lynch put down the buccaneers, and he looked favorably upon the owners of the colony's plantations. He promised them, for example, that under his rule "peace and an easy government will in a short time make it a most flourishing Country" (quoted in Webb 1979: 256). True to his word, he called an assembly of elected representatives who, for the most part, were planters, and he insisted only that they authorize some kind of levy to finance the administration. The planters complied and taxed not

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<sup>32</sup> For full background to the 1670 treaty between Spain and England, see Thornton (1956: 67-123). On some of the consequences of the treaty, see Dunn (1970: 59) and Webb (1979: 186).

their land, but merchants' imports. Lynch and the legislators then worked together to fashion a legal code, during which time the Assembly gained control over its own members, ordered its own business, and otherwise became independent of the Governor in the conduct of its own internal affairs. In addition to giving them a free reign in the colony's legislation, Lynch in other ways also tried to protect the planters' interests. He conducted careful land surveys, issued new rights of access only to cultivators, and saved the choicest tracts of soil in the colony for prospective planters, that is, for those aiming to produce staple products for large, centralized, foreign markets. Given these various assurances of their political standing under Lynch's rule, Jamaican planters had begun confidently to follow the "Barbados custom." They started out cultivating minor staples and worked gradually up to sugar, for in the words of one plantation owner, it was "no new thing nor any adventure, but a known and experienced truth" that investment in cane would "make a sweet business" (quoted in Bennett 1964: 67). With the buccaneers officially out of commission as privateers for the colony, plantation owners and managers, chiefly those cultivating sugar, stepped up the importation of slaves, and they did so at such a rate that, by the early 1680s, about 1500 slaves entered the colony each year.<sup>33</sup>

Although Jamaican farmers and craftsmen had lost their principal outlets when the buccaneers were outlawed in the island, these producers, who aimed at the small, local markets for products that they could produce with their own labor, did not readily abandon the colony.

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<sup>33</sup> Whitson (1929: 39-54), Bennett (1964: 59-60), Dunn (1972: 156-157, 166-170), and Webb (1979: 252-258, 262-263).

Indeed, they and the buccaneers still retained considerable strength and their power extended even to the royal court in London. Thus, in 1674, they watched the leading buccaneer, Henry Morgan, knighted for his exploits and returned in triumph to Jamaica as lieutenant to the newly appointed governor, Lord Vaughan. The buccaneers, the yeoman farmers, and the craftsmen were back in business. But if, through an alliance with Morgan and the threat of a resurgence in privateering and in the diversified home market for provisions and associated trades, Vaughan was meant to bully the aggressive and increasingly assertive planters into submission, then he failed utterly. Vaughan intensely disliked Morgan and refused to cooperate with him. As for the planters in the Assembly, they consolidated their control under Vaughan's equivocal administration and now claimed for themselves all the legislative and taxing powers of the House of Commons in England. By 1677, the Governor had isolated himself from both the planter and buccaneer factions of the island and, during the following year, he left his office in total frustration.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, the King resolved to tolerate no longer the insolence of the Jamaican planters. If Jamaica was to be a proper colony, "and not a Christian Algiers," it would have to be properly subordinated to the Crown (quoted in Dunn 1970: 60); and the King supposed that to him, not to the Jamaicans, belonged the prerogatives of colonial legislation. He thus had royal authorities draft for Jamaica, as they had for Ireland, an entire body of acts, including one law that granted the King a permanent revenue. In 1678, the King placed the acts in the hands of

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<sup>34</sup> Whitson (1929: 54-69), Dunn (1972: 157-158) and Webb (1979: 263-275).

the new governor of Jamaica, the Earl of Carlisle, and demanded that the colonial Assembly ratify them at once. Of course, by placing the island's monies under royal control and by enacting the royally approved laws, such action implied that a further assembly would no longer be necessary and that the troublesome representatives of the planters could at last be disbanded. Carlisle himself publicly expressed reservations about the King's new hard line policy, however, and so he was less than enthusiastic about his duties when he approached the Jamaican Assembly. Moreover, the Earl was greedy and he quickly compromised his administrative position by succumbing to the charms of the buccaneers, who plied him with shares of the loot in return for his tacit approval of their continued operations of plunder. Aware that Carlisle thus took a relaxed and self-serving view of the Governor's responsibilities, the Assembly of planters buffeted him with denunciations of the King's imperial policy, adamantly refused to accept the acts he proffered, and eventually used his illicit association with the buccaneers to blackmail him into advising the home government that the King could never overcome the opposition in Jamaica, and that His Majesty would do better to restore the legislative privileges the Assembly had earlier assumed.<sup>35</sup>

Blocked in the attempt to emasculate the Jamaican Assembly by the double-dealing of its own agent, the Crown had to concede the power of legislation to the colonists, and aimed now to obtain the more narrow goal of a permanent revenue. The experience with Carlisle, however, convinced the King that he needed a Governor whom he could trust, and who enjoyed the confidence of the planters in control of the Jamaican

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<sup>35</sup> Whitson (1929: 70-109), Thornton (1956: 172-178, 195-199), Dunn (1972: 158-159), and Webb (1979: 276-312).

Assembly. He thus turned once again to the able Sir Thomas Lynch. Lynch immediately warmed to the difficult task ahead of him and decided to pursue the strategy that Lord Vaughan had been unable to follow a few years earlier: he opted to play off the opposing parties in Jamaica against one another to the King's advantage. As the planters and the buccaneers continued to struggle for supremacy, neither wanted the power of the Assembly curtailed. But the planters were currently in control, and Lynch judged correctly that they would rather yield some ground to the King than to be altogether replaced by supporters of the buccaneers. Lynch promised favorable action towards the planters, therefore, if their representatives would agree to reserve a guaranteed sum of money for the administration of the colony for the next twenty-one years. Aware of the evident consequences for their own claims to power, the buccaneers bitterly opposed this proposition. But the planters were now eager to put down their rivals once and for all, and the Assembly passed the measure. Lynch then put Morgan and his supporters out of all command and announced that the "little, drunken, silly party of Sir Henry Morgan" was now rendered harmless (quoted in Cundall 1936: 53).<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately for the planters, Lynch died in 1684. He had finally driven them to a rapprochement with the Crown. But with the loss of his inspired leadership, the planters over the next five years watched as the power and self-confidence that they had so painstakingly accumulated over the previous fifteen years rapidly eroded. Lynch's successor, Sir Hender Molesworth, was the colony's agent for the Royal African Company, which held a monopoly on the English slave trade.

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<sup>36</sup> Whitson (1929: 106-127), Cundall (1936: 68-70), Thornton (1956: 196-203, 207-210), and Dunn (1970: 60-61; 1972: 159).

In that capacity, Molesworth had frequently run afoul of the owners and managers of local plantations, who wanted a good supply of slaves at cheap, not monopoly, rates. As Governor, he did his best to regulate closely the importation of slaves and to check the smuggling trade along the coast of the island. Then, to make matters worse, Parliament doubled the sugar duty during Molesworth term in office, and this "drastically cut the planters' profits" (Dunn 1972: 160). Finally, the King renewed the policy of confrontation with the planters by appointing the Duke of Albemarle. A dissolute fortune hunter, Albemarle opposed the planters in the island and sought out Morgan and his supporters. Using the force of his position, he turned the plantation owners out of power and installed in office representatives of the buccaneers, the farmers, and the craftsmen of the island. Stunned and appalled, the planters protested vehemently to the King, charging that Albemarle upset the Jamaican social order with "needy and mechanick men such as tapsters, barbers and the like" (quoted in Dunn 1972: 162).<sup>37</sup> In 1689, however, it was now the planters, not the buccaneers, who had the proper connections at Court.

In one of his last gestures as King, James II cancelled Albemarle's proceedings and restored the planters to power in Jamaica. William III confirmed this action, and so the Glorious Revolution in England marked the final repudiation of the buccaneering-farming-artisan alliance in Jamaica. A year earlier, in 1688, Sir Henry Morgan died and the Duke of Albemarle followed him to the grave a few months later. Leaderless and out of favor at court, and excluded from local power, the

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<sup>37</sup> Whitson (1929: 129-131), and Dunn (1970: 61-62, 65-67).

buccaneers abandoned Jamaica and stationed themselves in St. Dominique and the Bahamas. White provision farmers on the island also left or became planters by purchasing slaves and converting to the cultivation of staple crops. And these farmers were not replaced as the number of indentured servants coming to Jamaica rapidly declined. Then in 1692, the ground shook violently in Jamaica and the better part of Port Royal, the erstwhile haven of the buccaneers and the burgeoning center of the island's artisans and tradesmen, slid off the face of the earth into the surrounding sea. With that act of God, no one could doubt that sugar was now king in the island.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of the seventeenth century, Jamaican planters entered their golden age. With victory in the long and bitter conflict against the interlocking pursuits of the buccaneers, yeoman farmers, and artisans, they finally gained political ascendance in the colony and extended their control beyond the immediate boundaries of their own plantations and into the wider economy. Politically, they managed to hinder employment in once flourishing branches of both agriculture and manufacturing and, by dampening these opportunities for free persons in the economy, they lessened the chance that the slaves on their estates would find local freedom attractive enough to attempt to escape, one way or another, from bondage. Jamaican planters thus grew more and more confident that they had greatly enhanced the security of the plantation regime of slavery. Indeed, so confident did they become that when the market for slaves was opened to free trade, they embarked on a huge buying spree and, by 1700, Jamaican planters were importing 4000 slaves

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<sup>38</sup> Whitson (1929: 131-132) and Dunn (1972: 162-164, 186-187).

a year, nearly triple the rate just two decades earlier.

When Jamaican planters obtained undisputed control of the island's government, they also began to cultivate more cordial relations with the King who, in turn, provided ample military support for the colony, and who protected plantation products against foreign competition. Moreover, given the huge new influx of slaves, the incidence of slave runaways climbed, the dangers of wholesale slave revolt became more pronounced, and planters had to retool thoroughly their earlier procedures for keeping the swelling body of forced laborers under control. Compared to Barbados, where the ratio of blacks to whites was only three-to-one, in Jamaica the ratio quickly reached a staggering eight-to-one, and there the problems of social control were compounded by the increasing number of planters who left the island for England where they retired as absentee owners. Those who managed Jamaican plantations thus had to take extraordinary security precautions against slave runaways and against the threat of wholesale slave revolts. Unable to rely on a buffer force of poor whites as fully as planters did in Barbados, white Jamaicans instead made more active use of poor but free blacks. In particular, they tried to pacify the maroon colonies of ex-slaves in the Jamaican hills and to enlist their aid for internal security.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Dunn (1970: 74; 1972: 162-165). On the enlistment of free blacks to the Jamaican security forces, see Sio (1976: 90-91). Patterson (1970) and Kopytoff (1976) discussed English efforts to pacify the Jamaican maroon colonies, and to turn them against rebellious slaves. The causes and consequences of absentee ownership by planters in the Caribbean still have not been wholly assessed. But for some helpful suggestions, see, for example, Pares (1960: 34-37, 42-44), and especially Hall (1964).

All these various actions, of course, prove that political restrictions on local economic diversity were not the only measures that Jamaican planters adopted to protect their agricultural investments. But once allowance is made for the additional efforts, the evidence certainly seems to confirm that in Jamaica, as in Barbados, the active limitation of employment opportunities in the wider economy outside the plantation, including opportunities in the crafts, provided a central element in the early efforts of plantation owners and managers to secure a stable system of production based on forced labor. And, by the time English planters joined the Dutch along the Guiana coast during the middle of the next century, they had grasped the point of wider economic control so well that they were prepared to squelch even the vaguest suggestion that their colony would benefit by the promotion of crafts and trades outside the plantation boundaries.

### 3.3 THE GUIANA COAST: PLANTER REJECTION OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE CRAFTS AND TRADES

Although Spain and Portugal had divided South America between them, neither country had settled the Guiana region of the continent, which stretched from the Amazon to the Orinocco River. Known as the Wild Coast, Guiana was, according to Sir Walter Raleigh in 1595, "a Country that hath yet her Maydenhead, never sackt, turned nor wrought" (1595: 73). And Raleigh confidently supposed such land to be well worth taking. Explorers had spent years searching feverishly for El Dorado. The lands to the west, however, had failed to yield either the legendary king, his capital city of Manoa, or his "mighty, rich and beautiful Empire" (ibid.: 4). Raleigh deduced that the elusive country of fabulous wealth

had to lie in the hitherto unexplored hinterland of the Wild Coast, and he argued that, when found, El Dorado would prove to be the formidable ally needed to turn the tide decisively against Spain, and to overturn her conquest of the New World. The English and the Dutch, Spain's greatest enemies, attended Raleigh's speculations with much interest, and their excitement grew when his lieutenant, Lawrence Keymis disclosed evidence that Manoa rested, in all likelihood, at the headwaters of the Essequibo river.<sup>40</sup> The Dutch subsequently established several colonies in the region, and then they even took control of the one settlement that the English, after many false starts had finally managed to form. By 1740, further explorations had finally convinced most Europeans that El Dorado did not exist after all. But by that time, Guiana had become valuable for quite a different reason. It was the site of prospering plantation colonies, and Englishmen had begun again to look for ways to acquire influence in the area.

Francis, Lord Willoughby, of Parham, settled the English colony of Suriname in 1650. Willoughby may have had designs on the reputed kingdom of El Dorado, and he certainly professed his intention to establish a base from which "a strength may bee easily conveyed into the bowells of the Spaniard at Peru" (Harlow 1925: 182). But he formed the core of his colony with hopeful planters from Barbados, and in thirteen years four thousand people, including slaves, had settled into the production of staple crops on some five hundred plantations. Under the terms of the Treaty of Breda, which calmed hostilities that had broken

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<sup>40</sup> For a detailed account of the search for El Dorado, see Harlow (1928). See Hakluyt (1600, 7: 358-400), for Keymis' account of his voyage to Guiana.

out in 1665, Suriname passed into Dutch hands in 1668. Planters there then repaired the destruction incurred during the war, solidified their position, and the colony resumed its flourishing state.<sup>41</sup> But with all of its plantations, Suriname in 1668 stood in sharp contrast to the older Guianese colonies of the Dutch, which were located to the west between the Corentyne and Orinocco rivers, in the land that was supposed to be the gateway to Manoa. Despite repeated efforts at planting, these colonies remained devoted largely to the Indian trade for more than a century following their original foundation.

In 1616, the first permanent Dutch colony in Guiana took shape on the Essequibo River under the able leadership of Aert Adriaansz van Groenewegen. Apparently Groenewegen had much previous experience in the West Indies. He labored in the employ of the Anglo-Dutch merchant house of the Courteen family, which a decade later helped settle Barbados, and which carried salt from the great deposits of Araya near Cumana in Venezuela. Soon after, he served the Spanish in the Orinoco River, where he learned to trade with the local Indians. When he arrived on the Essequibo River, he acted on behalf of a company of Zeeland merchants formed by his old employer, Peter Courteen, and an influential burgomaster, Jan de Moor. At the confluence of the Essequibo, Cuyuni and Mazaruni rivers, he established a fortified trading post. There he bartered European knives, hardware and cloth for Indian tobacco, annatto (Bixa orellana), cacao, and hammocks. And evidently he turned a profit

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<sup>41</sup> Williamson (1923: 153-184) gave an account of Willoughby's colony in Suriname. Harlow (1925: 132-222) reprinted several pertinent manuscript sources. A useful starting point, in English, for the subsequent history of Suriname under Dutch rule is Nassy, et al. (1788).

for, when the Dutch West India Company formed in 1621, de Moor and Courteen sought and obtained an exclusive concession to continue their private venture. Indeed, the petition of de Moor and Courteen must have made the colony look exceedingly attractive. In 1624, their fellow merchants in the Zeeland Chamber of the wider Company decided to create an official trading settlement on the river to parallel, though not replace, the private one, and to emulate similar trading activity undertaken by the rival Amsterdam Chamber on the banks of the Hudson River in North America. Moreover, in 1627, still another colony of a permanent character was begun in Guiana, but further to the east on the Berbice River, and under the proprietorship of a merchant named Abraham van Pere.<sup>42</sup>

Not much is known in detail about any of these early colonies. But the surviving evidence of those on the Essequibo suggests that the Zeeland settlement languished while Groenewegen's blossomed. In 1632, the returns of the official Essequibo outpost were so depressed that the West India Company as a whole elected to ignore Guiana and to concentrate its efforts instead on the slave trade and on sugar production in Brazil. Zeeland refused to abandon Essequibo entirely, however, and for its loyalty to the region, the Chamber continually pressed the Company for recognition of its monopoly on local trade and navigation. The other Chambers never officially relinquished their

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<sup>42</sup> See Edmundson (1901: 655-675) for discussion of the evidence concerning both Groenewegen's background and, more generally, the establishment of the Dutch colonies on the Essequibo. On the foundation of the Dutch West India Company, and on the rivalry between the Zeeland and Amsterdam Chamber, see Bachman (1969: 25-55, 97-109). On the items exchanged in the Indian trade, see Rodway (1891, 1: 2-3), and for the charter of the Berbice colony, see Rodway and Watt (1888: 95-99), but compare Goslinga (1971: 409, 413-415).

rights to enter the region, but for many years they gave Zeeland virtually no competition in Guiana, and it was not until 1750 that they even seriously questioned Zeeland's pretended monopoly. As for Groenewegen's settlement on the Essequibo in the 1630s, the man proved gifted in his relations with the local Indians. He cemented some of his alliances by marrying a woman from one of the local tribes, and he tapped deeply into the Indian trading networks. These networks were well-established and probably of considerable antiquity. Through them, Groenewegen received various dyes, oils, precious woods and other valuable native products, and he spread Dutch goods and influence far into the continent. Indeed, while the West India Company withdrew its support from the region, Groenewegen's industrious activity "kept the Spanish and Portuguese inhabitants of the Orinoco region in constant alarm" (Goslinga 1971: 416). When Jan de Moor died in 1644, his heirs did not surrender the valuable private concession to the Essequibo trade. But, unhappily, they did lose the services of their most able employee, Groenewegen, who agreed to act officially on behalf of the Zeeland Chamber of the West India Company, and did so until his death at a great age in 1664.<sup>43</sup>

It is likely that Groenewegen continued his success in his new position. But whatever benefit he brought to Zeeland paled into insignificance before the losses that the West India Company endured as it struggled to protect its investment in Brazil. By 1650, Zeeland could not even afford to pay their commander in Guiana his salary.

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<sup>43</sup> Rodway and Watt (1888: 104), Edmundson (1901: 654-655, 661), de Villiers (1911: 9), and Goslinga (1971: 415-418). On the antiquity and extent of the Indian trading networks in this area, see Lathrap (1973: 170-173) and Boomert and Kroonenberg (1977: 10-11, 37-39).

Nevertheless the declining position of the Dutch in Brazil afforded Zeeland its first real chance to shift the focus of its Guiana colonies from trade to production. Under Portuguese pressure, a number of Dutch and Jewish planters retired from Brazil in 1651 to form a settlement on the Pomeroon river between the Essequibo and Orinoco. Unfortunately, the Anglo-Dutch war in the following year cut off overseas communications and the colony perished. But then in 1655, as they despaired of retaining control in Brazil, the Dutch threw all of Guiana open to settlement. Zeeland drew up a prospectus granting political liberties and special exemptions for settlers and, in 1657, ships again arrived in the Pomeroon now bearing an even larger number of refugee planters from Brazil. The new colonists praised the quality of the soil, planted sugar, constructed mills and, although they complained about the lack of slaves, they fashioned a colony that even the English governor of Suriname acknowledged was the "greatest of all" the Dutch settlements in Guiana (Harlow 1925: 199). This colony also succumbed to the ravages of war, however. When a new round of Anglo-Dutch hostilities broke out in 1665, the English captured the Pomeroon and destroyed its plantations.<sup>44</sup>

By the time peace returned to the Wild Coast with the signing of the treaty of Breda in 1668, the West India Company was virtually bankrupt, Essequibo was in a shambles, and private planters, ruined and despondent, moved to nearby Suriname to make a new start in relative security. By 1674, after investors refinanced the West India Company,

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<sup>44</sup> See especially Oppenheim (1907, 1909) for discussions of these plantation settlements. But see also Rodway and Watt (1888: 133-137, 167, 187-190), Burr (1897: 191-197, 215-216), Edmundson (1901: 650-651), and Goslinga (1971: 420-425).

the Zeeland Chamber was prepared to inject renewed vigor into its settlement on the Essequibo. But it now adamantly refused to provide more than token support for investments in production. Instead, it made the Indian trade, which Groenewegen had done so much to foster, "the chief source of income and the object of its most jealous care" (Burr 1897: 203). The Chamber valued the letterwood, the carap-oil, the balsam copaiba, and especially the annatto, a food dye, that it gained through the Indian trade, and it continued to collect these goods through employees called outrunners (uitlopers). These factors, like Groenewegen, stirred the Indians to bring their wares to the Dutch fort, and sometimes they ventured on expeditions to raise trades by carrying sample European goods to barter in the bush. After 1675, however, additional agents were stationed throughout the countryside in permanent posts, usually along principal transportation routes. Called outlyers (uitleggers), these postholders served to keep open the channels of trade. They prodded and coaxed the Indians to produce desired commodities and, with their assistance, the Company fort was transformed from the endpoint of Dutch trade to a higher order center supported by a fan of lesser points of collection and distribution. Many of the outlyers were ruthless and avaricious men, and they often provoked more trouble than trade. But when they did their jobs, they generally helped keep tribal peace and peeled a watchful eye for the incursion of foreigners. They thus furthered Dutch interests not only in native goods, but in the security of the country itself.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Rodway (1891, 1: 10-13, 41), Burr (1897: 203-208), and Goslinga (1971: 428-429).

Given the paucity of evidence, it is difficult to say for sure, but during the first fifty years of its existence, it appears that the van Pere settlement on the Berbice River followed much the same lines of development as the Zeeland colony on the Essequibo. After a slow start, by 1675, the settlers had erected a fort on the Berbice River, stationed trading posts along the Canje River, a Berbice tributary, learned to manipulate the local Indians to their own advantage, and managed even to plant some sugar on a commercial scale for export. During the Anglo-Dutch war in the mid-60s, they fared slightly better than their Essequibo colleagues: they repulsed an English attack and they struck leading blows in the successful Dutch effort to dislodge the English captors from the Pomeroun. Yet, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, as the colony gradually expanded and as the number of plantations rose, inadequate defense proved to be its Achilles' Heel. French privateers captured the settlement in 1689 and again in 1712, and both times held it for ransom. The second time, van Pere's company refused to pay, ceded the colony to the captors, who then sold it to another company of Zeeland merchants. The new company lacked the means to rebuild the colony, however, and, in 1720, the Berbice Association, a joint-stock company, formed to raise the needed capital and to take control of the Guiana settlement.<sup>46</sup>

In Essequibo, too, during the 1680s and 1690s, agriculture slowly expanded as the Indian trade grew. Although the Zeeland Chamber of the West India Company admitted no one but Zeelanders to the region, in 1686, a few planters broke ground in the Pomeroun for the third time.

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<sup>46</sup> Rodway and Watt (1888: 98-100, 185-186), Rodway (1891, 1: 6-7, 14-15, 18, 28-31, 45-46, 54-62, 85-92), Goslinga (1971: 413, 429-430).

By the end of the century, the Chamber itself had several plantations stocked with slaves to produce sugar, and these were important enough to have separate managers who together formed a Council of Policy for governing the day-to-day affairs of the Colony. But here, as in Berbice, the planters suffered the woes of inadequate defense. In 1689, French privateers destroyed the Pomeroon settlement, and no planters dared venture in that coastal area again. Not even the riverain settlements near the Company fort were safe. In 1708, the French captured the entire colony until it was ransomed; then, in the following year, they returned at will to attack and plunder the estates of the remaining colonists.<sup>47</sup>

When peace broke out in 1713 at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, the immediate threat to the security of the Berbice and Essequibo colonies diminished. But the issue of defense continued to press on the colonists. The Essequibo settlers, in particular, debated about whether or not they should move their fort downstream to the mouth of the river, where they could better protect both the coastal and riverain areas. They were unwilling to take such a drastic step, however, in part because the land at the estuary was completely undeveloped and rather far removed from the present locus of settlement. But in 1721, the Commander of the colony acted decisively to remove this obstacle. He laid out a new Company plantation in the fertile lowland near the sea, and so initiated what was to become "a slow but almost general migration towards the coast" (Rodway 1891, 1: 66). Indeed, as cultivation of the newly opened land began to yield attractive returns,

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<sup>47</sup> Rodway (1891, 1: 35-36, 45-53), Burr (1897: 219-222), and Goslinga (1971: 427).

additional planters trickled into the colony. By the mid-1730s, the settlement had grown large enough for the owners of private plantations to form a local militia. Finally, in 1739, the Commander moved his offices to one of the islands in the mouth of the Essequibo and began erecting a new fort.

The Directors of the colony thus demonstrated their commitment to protect the investments of Essequibo planters. But then they went even further. They gave private planters a voice in the administration of the colony by admitting one plantation owner to the Court of Justice, a body that had earlier been added to the Council of Policy, and which acted to settle the conflicts that increasingly arose between free planters and the Company's Indian agents, and among the planters themselves. Moreover, the Directors boldly opened the Essequibo River to settlers of all nations and granted a ten year exemption from head taxes for everyone who took up a new plantation. Given Zeeland's former jealous refusal to admit anyone but Zeelanders to the colony, this concession "was so novel that it amounted almost to a revolution" (Rodway 1891, 1: 104). Indeed, this dramatic change of policy quickly transformed Essequibo from a colony of trade to a colony of production.

What may have induced Zeeland to chart this novel course for its Essequibo colony after it had resisted the temptation for so long is not altogether clear. There are reports that by 1737 the Indian trade, particularly in the most valued product, annatto, had fallen off sharply. Apparently, Suriname agents made such lucrative offers for supplies of Indian slaves, and possibly for assistance against militant and runaway slaves, that local tribes became "sluggish about dye

gathering" (Burr 1897: 232). Thus, it may be that the overwhelming competition from Suriname for Indian attention drove Zeeland to make the Essequibo a colony of production. But whatever caused the new policy, the Chamber pursued it with a vengeance and, in some respects, with a breathtaking lack of caution. The Directors, for example, hastily called for a "great reform" of the Company's own plantations (Gravesande 1911, 2: 410). Sugar was the object and, in subsequent years, everyone was pressed to increase its production. Company artisans were dismissed or sent to the fields, though without care to distinguish those who processed the declining supply of Indian trade goods, from those who maintained the Company facilities. Sugar cane thrived, but skills consequently were lost or forgotten and, by 1769, the commander, Laurens Storm van's Gravesande, had great cause for alarm at the rapid deterioration of the Company's buildings, especially the fort.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, as news spread that Essequibo was open for settlement, colonists came from Suriname, Barbados, Antigua, and elsewhere, often with their own supply of slaves to set up plantations. The Company eagerly welcomed them with huge individual grants of land that sometimes amounted to awards of two thousand acres. In addition, the Directors improved the settlers participation in colony affairs. The militia was bolstered, and plantation owners now could select a body of representatives who, in turn, would nominate a fellow planter to serve

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<sup>48</sup> On the decline of the Indian trade, see Rodway (1891, 1: 131-132, 145-146). Gravesande reported in 1763, a time of widespread slave revolts in the Guianas, that "the Indians have neglected or cut down all their dye trees" (1911, 2: 412). For more details on the Company's "great reform" and its consequences from the point of the colony's governor, see (ibid., 1: 282, 328-329; 2: 402-403, 412, 621-622).

on the Colony's Court of Justice and would advise the Court in its decisions. By 1745, planters had grasped all the best locations in Essequibo, and Gravesande, who became Commander in 1743, applied for and received permission to open up the Demerara River, nearby to the east. There too, colonists rapidly seized the choice land and set up large plantations. In 1748, Gravesande noted "the success, far beyond all expectations, of Demerara" (1911, 1: 237). In 1750, he was appointed Director-General of the two rivers, and he returned to the Netherlands personally to deliver a comprehensive report on the progress of his employer's fledgling plantation colony.<sup>49</sup>

In his report, Gravesande applauded the success of the Essequibo and Demerara planters in advancing the settlement. Interest, he said was keen, the population was growing at a great rate, and the crops of sugar were so plentiful that much of the cane rotted in the fields because producers could not assemble mills fast enough to grind it all. Gravesande did not offer all glowing praise, however. He observed the destitute state of the colony's lesser planters and traders, and he attributed their plight to regulations of the parent company, particularly with respect to shipping rates, that worked to the unfair advantage of the big sugar planters. He urged his superiors to redress this imbalance, but then went on in a far sighted set of recommendations to warn that the West India Company ultimately could not afford to favor the interests of a single group of planters. Noting that success often breeds complaisance, he suggested that "through rooted habit" the owners of local sugar plantations "strongly cling to their old ways", and that

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<sup>49</sup> Rodway (1891, 1: 105-134, 138-139) and Gravesande (1911, 1: 204-205, 211, 216). For the full text of the report, see (ibid., 1: 252-276).

really there were "among them no industrious and enterprising persons" (1911, 1: 262). He thus argued that his superiors should support the cultivation of other staple crops, such as cotton, coffee, and tobacco. In addition, Gravesande strongly urged the Company to take advantage of the numerous other resources of the country. He advised the Directors, for example, to encourage cattle-ranching, to promote the industry of shipbuilding with Guiana hardwoods, and to stimulate the crafts needed to process local drugs and wares.

Gravesande's vision for the colony awakened the long dormant interest of many members of the parent company. The Amsterdam Chamber, which until now had found little use for the Wild Coast and had yielded control of it largely to the rival Zeeland Chamber, became particularly excited. Members of the Zeeland Chamber, however, naturally viewed this sudden interest as an infringement on its prerogatives, and there erupted, within the Company as a whole, a bitter dispute over colonial jurisdiction that lasted for nearly twenty years. During this time, none of Gravesande's recommendations escaped the withering effects of the controversy, and only a few were implemented. Meanwhile, the Commander's report, supposedly submitted in confidence, found its way back to Essequibo and Demerara. The major sugar planters were annoyed with Gravesande's support for manufacture and trade, and they were particularly incensed at the implication that their own efforts in production were somehow not sufficiently industrious for the continued prosperity of the colony. In Gravesande's own words, these colonists ridiculed his report "in every possible way in order to provoke general hatred towards me" (1911, 1: 283). Receiving no support from his

superiors, who were themselves quarrelling and internally divided, and seeing that "my suggestions did not meet with the same favor as before" in the colony, the Commander rapidly abandoned his position: "I preferred to give way and no longer interfere in those matters" (1911, 2: 429). Instead, while the West India Company tried to resolve its internecine struggle, Gravesande became careless about shipping produce to Zeeland, he overlooked the illegal smuggling of slaves into the colony, and in other ways he lent the power of his office to protect the interests of the powerful sugar planters, of whom he now considered himself one.<sup>50</sup>

With equal vigor, the the owners and managers of plantations in Berbice also joined together to block even the merest hint of a rise in manufacture and minor trades outside their domains. In 1730, the Berbice Association entered an agreement with the West India Company to keep the colony supplied with slaves. Plantations rapidly multiplied and, in 1738, the colony's directors and planters entertained an application from the Moravian Brethren to minister to the slaves. They reluctantly admitted several missionaries, but soon discovered that the Brethren received no salary and instead practiced handicrafts to earn their living. Evidently, the missionaries did their best to teach the slaves to "obey their masters in all things" (Rodway 1891, 1: 164). But they still earned the deep suspicion of the owners and managers of local plantations who feared that artisan activity might invest the slaves with undue confidence about their ability to leave the estates and work independently. The planters thus adamantly refused frequent pleas

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<sup>50</sup> See Rodway (1891, 1: 135-138, 146, 221-224, 230-233) and Gravesande (1911, 1: 299; 2: 561, 573, 582-583, 594, 631, 644-646).

from the missionaries for special privileges to enlarge their work. Then, during the 1750s and 1760s, the colonists of Berbice received a number of requests from Jewish merchants to inhabit the colony. Some obviously meant to set up plantations and they were welcomed. But others, who were destitute and apparently desirous only of plying petty trades, were repeatedly and resolutely turned away.<sup>51</sup>

So thoroughly did the planters of Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo limit the development of alternatives which might have lured the slaves out of their control that, for over forty years, they refused, even for administrative purposes, to lay out urban areas where artisan and tradesmen might possibly congregate. Thus in 1782, when plans for a capital in Demerara were finally announced, the proclamation noted that "this is perhaps the only instance of a European colony, among thousands throughout the world, which has arrived at some magnificence without the establishment of either town or village" (Rodway 1891, 2: 7). And if the planters' fear of crafts and trades in the wider economy was enough to hinder urban development in Guiana, it could not help but also alter the Dutch relations with the local Indians. As planters accumulated wealth and their plantations became well-entrenched, the Indian trade upon which the Dutch had originally founded their settlements was not entirely curtailed. But slaves increasingly rebelled against the harsh

<sup>51</sup> For an account of developments in Berbice, see Rodway (1891, 1: 91-99, 153-170) According to Rodway, poor Jews were also denied residence in Demerara because "they had no knowledge of planting and could only be traders, and very poor ones too, going about among the negroes and colored people, and inducing them to pilfer from the planters." In short, "they were quite useless in an agricultural settlement" and "would only become a burden to the colony" (ibid.: 248) For more background on the Moravian missions, and for a brief discussion of Moravian activities in nearby Suriname, see Danker (1971: 13-75); see also Furley (1965, 1968) and Rackord (1968a).

conditions of intensified plantation production, and Company postholders in the bush now were expected, in addition to their previous responsibilities, to watch for slave deserters and to enlist the aid of Indians in tracking them down. As early as 1743, Company agents officially rewarded local tribes for the capturing or killing runaway slaves. In Berbice, roving bands of Indians were instrumental in suppressing the great slave rebellion of 1763 and, during 1767, Gravesande dispatched an eager squad of Caribs to attack and destroy a palisaded encampment of escaped slaves in Demerara. Given such action, the local tribes soon became less the trading partners of the Dutch and more the allies of the planters against deserted slaves, and a formal system of annual presents from the Guiana colonies to the local chiefs eventually came to sustain this alliance.<sup>52</sup>

But even the assistance of neighboring Indians was not enough to suppress the plantation uprisings. Slaves in the three river colonies of Guiana were among the most rebellious in the Americas--by one estimate, slaves in these colonies averaged one major revolt every two years from 1731 to 1823. And surely not all of the factors that contributed to this restiveness were subject to Indian influence. Indeed what most emboldened the slaves in the three river colonies was undoubtedly the deep national divisions among the European rulers themselves. When Zealand opened the colonies, English planters flooded the country. By 1760, Gravesande reported that Englishmen constituted

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<sup>52</sup> Rodway (1891, 1: 159-160, 197-198, 207-208; 1896: 15-16) and Gravesande (1911, 1: 206-207, 287; 2: 424, 430, 438, 440n, 443, 561-563, 573, 575-577). A detailed chronicle of events during the Berbice Rebellion may be found in Hartsinck (1958-60). For the subsequent history of the system of Indian presents, see Menezes (1977: 44-72).

the majority of settlers resident in Demerara; and by 1813, according to Rawle Farley, "British capital and British subjects bore a proportion of nineteen in twenty to the Dutch" in all of the three rivers (1955a: 56). Meanwhile, during the era of international wars that lasted from 1780 to 1815, the colonies swung back and forth between Dutch and English control and, as they did, the growing number of English planters increasingly chilled at the thought that if they did not lose their investments to the Dutch, they would certainly lose them to the slaves. They thus mounted an intense campaign for a quick and favorable settlement of the question of national control. Finally, in 1814, Britain acquired the colonies, and so the land that originally excited the English imagination in the time of Raleigh, but that had since been held by the Dutch, passed into the firm clutches of the British empire.<sup>53</sup>

In 1600, Guiana had offered perhaps the last best hope for the discovery of Manoa, the imagined site of unparalleled riches, the city of El Dorado. But, by the late eighteenth century, the land on the Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo rivers was instead contributing mightily to the spread of the plantation, that historically "unprecedented" institution for the production of New World agricultural commodities. As in Barbados, and Jamaica, planters on these rivers accumulated their wealth primitively. They started with the smallest possible investments in technical means and, given a scarcity of labor for hire, and large

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<sup>53</sup> Genovese (1979: 33-35) counted the slave revolts. On the growing English majority, see Rodway (1891, 1: 222, 230-231) and Gravesande (1911, 2: 379). Farley (1955a) recounted in detail the transfer of the three rivers to British rule under planter pressure.

centralized, foreign product markets, they forced laborers to work for them. In particular, they purchased slaves and used their labor in the production of staple crops for export.

On plantations in early stages of accumulation, planters did not always rely on slavery as the principal form of labor exaction. The economic conditions under which early colonial planters existed--the limited technical means, the labor scarcity, the large product markets--impelled them to seek laborers by force. But whether or not they could resort to slavery, to indenture, or to some other means of force ultimately depended on political considerations, on where planters stood in relation to other settlers and to the mother country, and on the kinds of political support they could expect to obtain for their coercions in specific colonial settings.

Slavery was undoubtedly the harshest form of coercion, and everywhere this institution cast its dark shadow in the colonial world of the Americas, slaves, by definition, had to obey their masters for life--or else attempt somehow to escape or revolt. Assuming there was a ready supply of such bondsmen, the owners and managers of plantations who wanted to put them to work thus needed, to begin, the political sanctions of force that would enable them to make slaves do as they were told for as long as they lived. Even quite considerable investments in force, however, were always at great risk as long as slaves found it at all expedient to resist planter authority. So, in order to make the peculiar institution more secure, more enduring and perhaps somewhat cheaper to maintain, planters also sought to parlay essential political support for the application of force into such a deep and loyal

political commitment to slavery that slaves would despair of ever giving the options of flight or rebellion much chance of success. And in Barbados, Jamaica, and the three river colonies of Guiana, planters tried to implement this broader political strategy, at least partially, by extending their control beyond the domain of their own plantations, and into the wider local economy, where they variously made the prospect of economic freedom for the slaves as dismal as possible. They discouraged peasant agriculture that might have fostered diverse crafts and trades, they fought those, like the buccaneers, who did spawn such occupations, and they squashed general proposals for the development of alternative employment.

In colonies where slaves found allies among the maroons, and where planters had to contend with internal divisions among themselves generated by the passions of European rivalries, such actions could never wholly suppress the will of slaves to resist planter oppression. And even if, by obtaining a broad commitment to the peculiar institution from supporters in the wider society, planters did discourage slaves from fleeing the plantation or from rising in rebellion, these particular actions did not quite address the possibility that slaves could also engage in subtler forms of resistance, including what one scholar has dubbed "subversive accomodation" (Mintz 1974b: 61). Still, whatever immediate effects planters thus may have had on the political will of their slaves, wherever they tried to enhance the security of plantation slavery and did so specifically by obtaining control over the wider local economy, one consequence has been almost certain: they cut a wide and lasting swath from the growth of local economic diversity.

## Chapter IV

### THE CHANGING BASIS OF PLANTATION AGRICULTURE IN THE WEST INDIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISANRY

Finally, it is an empty and contradictory convention that sets up, on the one side, absolute authority, and, on the other unlimited obedience.

-- Rousseau, The Social Contract, "Slavery."

Given what can only be called at this stage a preliminary survey of the available evidence, there is apparently good and ample reason to suppose that capital accumulation on plantations in the British West Indies, and in the Guianas, systematically diminished the extent of local economic diversity, and particularly enfeebled artisan manufacturing. The very structure of the product market for staple crops generally favored the development of many processing trades and crafts, not on New World plantations, but in the central receiving ports of Europe. And when the potential arose for the growth of petty trade, of peasant farming, and of related crafts in the colonies outside plantation boundaries, the owners and managers of individual estates typically joined their common interests and endeavored politically to drain the wider local economies of these and other diverse employment opportunities.

In the absence of sufficient capital to invest in changing technology, plantation owners and managers in the Caribbean area, as elsewhere, depended heavily for their profits on coercive labor practices. Thus, they sought anxiously to suppress any developments, such as the growth of independent artisan trades, that might have

emboldened their bondsmen to seek freedom either by flight or rebellion. Indeed, so intensely did planters in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Guiana colonies try to crush alternative branches of trade and industry during the earliest and most difficult stages of capital accumulation that it is no wonder that anthropologist Raymond Smith would have been moved to remark generally on the region's "peculiar impoverishment of local culture, with its almost complete absence of arts [and] crafts" (1967: 231).

Such broad assertions, however, require careful qualification. Above all, one needs to observe the considerable variation both in the conditions under which planters in the Caribbean area acted to manipulate the wider local economies, and in the corresponding effects of planter responses to those conditions. Although plantation owners and managers in Barbados, Jamaica, and the Guianas all acted to suppress alternative activities, the efforts of those in Essequibo and Demerara, for example, were so effective that a town was not incorporated, even for administrative purposes, until more than thirty years after local plantations began to expand in earnest. By contrast, farming and crafts outside the plantation became firmly entrenched in Jamaica almost immediately after the colony became an English possession. As a result, Jamaican planters had a more difficult time altering the wider economy to suit their needs and, by 1700, the control they had finally acquired still was far from secure.

In addition to noting these crucial variations, on at least two other points, one must also qualify the general argument that capital accumulation on New World plantations led to the active suppression of

artisan manufacturing. First, the sweeping actions of plantation owners and managers to limit local economic diversity did not totally eliminate the market for manufactured goods; their efforts only reduced product demands to the very limited needs that existed on their own plantations and thus were almost completely under their own control. However, the ways in which plantation owners in the British West Indies and British Guiana responded to these limited product demands sometimes produced quite unexpected consequences for the development of local forms of artisanry. Indeed, bondsmen and ex-bondsmen in some of these colonies actually faced the prospect of making an independent living in a potentially more diverse economic environment.

Second, when planters lost support for coercive labor practices, such as slavery--and they did by different means in different places at different times--they lost important measures of control both over their labor force, and over the wider local economy. Rapid changes in the political climate of the British empire and in the world sugar market between 1830 and 1880, for example, prompted plantation owners and managers in Barbados, Jamaica, and British Guiana to begin reconstituting their businesses on a slightly altered foundation.<sup>1</sup> Many planters in these places did go out of production in the process but, whenever possible, others began to concentrate their capital by investing it in changing technology. The gradual shift in emphasis on West Indian plantations from accumulation to concentration continued to depress the local markets for manufactured goods, at least initially,

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<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, of course, more radical changes occurred. Thus the republic of Haiti appeared in 1803 after slaves violently overthrew the plantation regime. In that former French colony, white planters succumbed to the successful revolution and all but disappeared.

but here again the effects varied widely.

In this chapter, I expand each of these two points in turn. As I do, I continue to apply some of the more relevant arguments that have emerged in the highly developed debate concerning the effects of plantation agriculture on manufacturing in the antebellum American south. I want to reiterate, however, that our knowledge about similar effects in the British West Indies (including British Guiana) is still so limited that the assertions which follow must be regarded as tentative, not definitive. I invoke the regional comparison only to help generate plausible hypotheses and to help stimulate more thorough investigations about the lesser-known conditions in the British Caribbean. Any final statement on the subject, of course, will ultimately have to account for the significant differences that separate the antebellum South from the British plantation colonies in the West Indies. And among these differences one will undoubtedly have to include the much higher ratio of blacks to whites in the West Indian colonies, the fewer number there of native-born slaves, and the much larger size of individual plantations.

#### 4.1 FROM SLAVERY TO EMANCIPATION: THE MARKET FOR MANUFACTURED GOODS

Limited needs for manufactured goods appeared from various sources within the domains of New World planters. For the most part, the economy of shipping crops, such as tobacco, cotton and sugar, to large centralized foreign markets for processing and resale severely curtailed the various processing trades and crafts. Still, the estates needed routine maintenance, their cultivations required cheap implements, and

some of their crops had to receive at least some preliminary processing. So, simply to conduct the essentials of their businesses, planters regularly demanded the products of some assorted tradesmen, including carpenters, blacksmiths, sugar boilers, and so on.

Moreover, planters and bondsmen all required consumer goods. As they profited from their estates, planters often desired conspicuous luxury items. But the demand, say, for a richly custom-tailored suit, or for a finely crafted piece of furniture made to accompany a specific decor was highly individualized. In any case, it had a strictly limited effect in stimulating manufacturing because wealthy planters usually formed only a small proportion of the total population of any plantation colony. As for the most populous segment of such colonies, the slaves, their demands too were limited in effect, though for a different reason. Because "the employer of slaves has absolute power over his workmen," planters controlled what was needed "to maintain the slaves in health and strength" (Cairnes 1862: 38-39). Indeed, according to Edgar Thompson, "plantation agriculture may be described as military agriculture" because "the planter possesses power not only over the laborer's job, but also over his home, his recreation, and his daily relations with others" (1940: 217). By their power as masters, planters thus could forcibly keep their bondsmen "at a lower level of existence" than other people (Parker 1969: 134). They could reject the demands of slaves for many manufactured goods and restrict their demands for other items to the cheapest kinds available.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> According to Genovese, "plantation slavery so limited the purchasing power of the South that it could not sustain much industry" (1967: 173). He maintained that "planters needed increased Southern manufacturing, but only for certain purposes" (ibid.: 165), and he

In plantation colonies that depended on a system of slavery, and particularly in places like Guiana where planters dampened opportunities for development in the wider economy, the demand for various kinds of manufactured goods thus was strictly limited, though not absent, and planters controlled such demand, though by different means, at each of its principal sources.<sup>3</sup> To satisfy the operating requirements of their plantations, and to meet their own consumer needs and those of their slaves, planters could, of course, try to buy their tools, hire the assorted tradesmen, and purchase both the luxuries and the humbler grades of personal furnishings. But in addition to seeking supplies on the open market, planters always retained still another option. As masters, they could readily command some of their slaves to train in craft skills and thereby to take over the business of supplying at least a portion of the various needs for manufactured goods that sprouted within the boundaries of the plantations. In other words, if concern for the security of the peculiar institution drove planters in some places to impair employment opportunities outside their domains, then consideration for the inherent powers of slavery everywhere afforded them the ability of retreating from the open market to a state of

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cited their particular needs for agricultural implements (*ibid.*), for luxuries for themselves (170), and for cheap articles for their slaves (165-166). See also Parker (1970: 117), who emphasized the control that planters exerted under slavery over the disposition of total income; and see Bateman and Weiss, who have suggested that such a peculiar structure of demand implied the existence not of a single limited market, but of "a series of smaller, localized markets" composed of the limited needs of individual planters (1981: 155).

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Engerman has suggested that planters "used their leverage" to keep nonagricultural activities "restricted to what they could control" (1978: 157). Although made originally with reference to planters in the southern United States, this assertion applies equally to the West Indian planters.

relative self-sufficiency.<sup>4</sup> And whether individual planters actually made such a retreat or not, the potential of doing so inevitably placed a distinctive stamp on the ways that free producers organized to supply needed manufactured goods in slave-based plantation colonies.<sup>5</sup>

On one side, the open market for manufactured goods comprised the free artisans and businesses that supplied the New World planters and their estates; on the other side, the demand side, the market consisted of the multitude of plantations. Because the demand on each individual plantation was strictly limited, free producers of manufactured goods could only expand by incorporating a number of plantations in the market they supplied, and the most enterprising producers, of course, tended to subsume the estates of an entire colony and, indeed, of several colonies. The well-known result logically followed that New World planters had to import a goodly number of their necessities from abroad.<sup>6</sup> In some cases, and for certain kinds of products, suppliers of manufactured goods did establish narrower markets and remain within the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Hall (1962: 308): "Compared with the other livestock, and even moreso with the tools and buildings and machinery of the estate, slaves were useful in many ways and, consequently, highly desirable." See also Pinchbeck (1926: 11-14, 26-27, 32-36, 41-42), Mullin (1972: 10-12, 87), Genovese and Fox-Genovese (1979: 16, 20).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the argument of Anderson and Gallman (1977: 45): "What differentiated the South from the other regions of the country was not so much the structure of demand as the means by which the demand was supplied. Southern organization permitted a much narrower scope to local and intra-regional exchange, based on specialization at the level of the enterprise."

<sup>6</sup> Imports included not only luxury items for the planters, but also the mass-produced articles for the slaves. See, for example, the comments of Genovese (1967: 24), Parker (1970: 117, 120), Engerman (1970: 129-130, Genovese and Fox-Genovese (1979: 20), and Bateman and Weiss (1981: 37-41, 49-69).

realm of a particular colony. But these producers tended to monopolize the supply of their products. Potential competitors well-appreciated that the composition of a given market could quickly shrink if any planters found it necessary or convenient to become self-sufficient, and so they hesitated to risk joining in the production. And without the stimulus of competition, existing producers tended to stagnate.<sup>7</sup> Thus, insofar as planters participated in the wider economy, their demands for manufactured goods either helped stimulate production abroad, or it provided narrow and parochial markets for local producers, who monopolized sales and who had little opportunity or incentive to expand and develop.

Neither the emergence of fragile monopolies within the plantation colonies, nor the development of production abroad conflicted with the aims of those planters in some places, who sought to secure the regime of slavery by restricting the growth of employment opportunities outside the realm of the plantation and its immediate requirements. Indeed, depending at least in part on the power of planters to retreat to a position of relative self-sufficiency, these responses to the quite specific and limited needs for various manufactured goods on colonial estates added little, if any, diversity to local economies. Consequently, they gave little cause for alarm that bondsmen might find local economic freedom attractive enough to flee or revolt. But the ability of planters to become more self-sufficient hinged on their decisions, as slaveholders, to compel their bondsmen not only to labor in the production of the staple crop, but also to service some of the

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<sup>7</sup> See, especially, Bateman and Weiss (1981: 143-156).

accumulated needs within the estates. And, ironically, to the extent that they exercised their very power as slaveholders in this way, planters did not always preserve the security of their regime, but at times actually made it more vulnerable.

To practice some form of self-sufficiency, planters had to distribute various economic roles among their bondsmen. Given such a promotion of internal differentiation within the plantation, especially in parts of the British West Indies, slaves began to contribute not only to the demand of certain goods, but also to their supply. It became increasingly possible for them to provide for themselves and, if bondsmen did not thus find the means to secure their liberation, then at least they became better conditioned to a key aspect of free social life, and better able to raise their demand for previously restricted material goods. Moreover, in the British West Indies, when the force of bondage finally fell at Emancipation, the needs of the ex-slaves expanded still further under pressure of the relatively high wages they now received on the plantations, and the local market for manufactured goods began to demonstrate its potential for internal growth and development.

#### 4.1.1 Planter Self-Sufficiency and Liberalization of the Slave Regime

In respect of their accumulated wealth, their political stances, their agricultural savvy, their lines of credit, and their merchant connections, the owners and managers of West Indian plantations differed enough among themselves so that they all did not always, or equally, find it necessary to use their own slaves to supply various goods needed

within the boundaries of the plantation. Some plantation owners, for example, were exceedingly wealthy, or drew on ample credit facilities, and could easily afford to depend almost wholly upon the open market. Others found compelling reasons for participating in the market whether it was advantageous for them to do so or not. Considerations of status often prompted plantation owners or managers to purchase prestigious goods, such as fine furniture, from the metropolis, regardless of the expense that they incurred, and despite the ability of their own slaves to produce comparable items.

Moreover, in places like Jamaica and Barbados, where economic policies had restricted opportunities for freemen, and where black slaves greatly outnumbered free whites, colonial legislators went so far as to prohibit planters from employing their slaves in certain crafts on the plantation. By reserving these occupations legally for white artisans, they meant to encourage a greater settlement of whites in the colony, and thus to halt the rapid and politically dangerous tilt of racial imbalance.<sup>8</sup> Still, these and other various considerations to the contrary notwithstanding, most plantation owners and managers in the West Indies and Guiana did try, at some time and to some degree, to become more self-sufficient, and those who did commonly responded to one or more of at least three powerful motives.

After the flurry of intense activity that was required initially to set up a new plantation, the process of cultivating a staple crop for export took on its own seasonal rhythms, just like any other form of agriculture. The use of force, particularly the force of slavery,

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<sup>8</sup> Dunn (1972: 242-243).

always assured planters an adequate number of laborers during the most difficult seasons, such as the harvest. Indeed, slaves were assumed by definition to be a kind of permanent fixture on plantations and, in this sense, they always represented a ready economic asset. But what about the times of the year when the cultivation was not so pressing, and the slaves' labor became agriculturally redundant?

Busy in the production of staple crops or not, they still had to be maintained. And, from the planters' point of view, periods of easy idleness in the rhythms of staple crop production not only drained expensive resources for provisions and wasted potentially valuable labor, but also provided ample opportunity for slaves to share their discontents, and to incubate and hatch plots of rebellion. It thus often made good political sense for plantation owners and managers to keep their slaves as busy as possible throughout the year, and good economic sense to maximize the return of ready labor by keeping them occupied in other forms of employment on the estate, especially in those jobs that could supply goods, which otherwise had to be purchased.<sup>9</sup>

But, again, because of varying circumstances, not all planters who owned slaves necessarily appreciated the economic and political advantages of "keeping all hands occupied at all times" (Genovese 1967: 49). Nor, of course, did those who developed such an appreciation always direct their slaves from the strictly agricultural tasks of staple crop production to activities that would make the plantation

<sup>9</sup> Mintz (1974a: 74) and Craton (1974: 127). Also see, for example, Green (1973: 449) and Ward (1978: 201). Though made with reference to the U.S. South, a full and useful treatment of this aspect of plantation self-sufficiency is contained in Anderson and Gallman (1977); but compare Stavisky (1920: 196; 1947: 185-186) and Jernegan (1920: 225-227, 239).

economically more self-sufficient. For the owners and managers of plantations to focus specifically on the economies of subsistence production, many needed the added pressure of stiffened competition in the markets where they sold their staple products, and one persistent and vexing source of competition regularly emerged on the colonial frontiers, including those within already settled plantation colonies and at the foundations of new ones.

Fledgling planters in frontier areas usually reaped the benefits of rich, virgin soil and offered plentiful supplies of staple crops on the market at less than customary prices. As a result, prices for plantation products tended to fall over the long term, and the owners and managers of older plantations had to struggle constantly to keep their estates in line with fresh competition. Sometimes, they adjusted merely by intensifying the output of labor drawn from their slaves. But increased competition for depressed product markets also frequently required attention to the various operating expenses of the estates. "A large share of the factors of production was thus diverted to maintain the inhabitants" on plantations in the older colonies of the West Indies such as Barbados, while in new and rapidly expanding colonies like British Guiana, a large part of the income from exports "was taken up for the purchase of imported plantation supplies" (Levy 1959: 332).<sup>10</sup>

But if pressures from competitive producers still did not impel plantation owners and managers to fall back to a relative position of autarky in the midst of an export economy, then perhaps only an

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<sup>10</sup> See also Mintz and Hall (1960: 12). Genovese has advanced a similar argument concerning regional differences in the U.S. South (1970: 146; 1974: 369-390); see also Genovese and Fox-Genovese (1979: 10, 17, 20).

uncertain supply of manufactures and other needed goods on the open market could finally persuade them. War, and the threat of it, undoubtedly contributed most to the indeterminacy of supply markets in plantation colonies, and it especially affected imported supplies. In a long period of rapid international expansion to the New World that was marked by frequent hostility and conflict, the American Revolution, for example, severely disrupted the subsistence leg of the so-called Triangular Trade to the West Indies. And later, when war between England and France continued to disorganize Atlantic shipping, legislators in plantation colonies, such as Jamaica, formally resolved to give every encouragement to the local production of food crops, and the owners and managers of individual plantations typically made wider use of their own slaves and became more self-sufficient in both agricultural and manufactured provisions.<sup>11</sup>

For one or more of several reasons, then, plantation owners and managers in the West Indies depended on their bondsmen to supply various goods and services needed on their estates: planters acted to keep their slaves busy, to cut costs in the face of stiff competition in the markets where they offered their own products for sale, and to contend with vagaries in the markets that provided the various supplies they themselves needed. But just as various considerations could figure in their motives, so too individual planters actually moved toward self-sufficiency along routes that varied in coverage from time to time and place to place. In the British West Indies alone, the variation was

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<sup>11</sup> Parry (1954: 33-34). See also, for example, Davy (1854: 127), Mathieson (1926: 70-71), Bennett (1958: 93-94), Mintz and Hall (1960: 3), and Hall (1962: 314).

extensive and complex, and here I can only outline the principal features of such variation before turning to a few of the more relevant implications.

When the owners and managers of plantations in the British West Indies tried to approach a position of autarky on the estates, they either made use of the skills that slaves already possessed, or they endeavored to train their slaves to produce some of the manufactured goods that were essential for the production of the staple crop. Slaves brought many skills with them from Africa, and there is some evidence that in Nevis, Antigua and Jamaica they practiced African pottery techniques to turn out the vessels that planters needed to boil down cane juice to sugar; on the Codrington estates in Barbados, however, slaves apparently learned and used European techniques of pottery-making. In addition, on other plantations like the Worthy Park estate in Jamaica, managers found that they could obtain considerable savings in time and money, if they had slave blacksmiths to fashion needed hinges and nails, special tools, replacement parts for machinery in the mills and boiling houses, and even the shackles needed to restrain or punish recalcitrant bondsmen. Well-managed and economical estates also saved much by acquiring slaves skilled enough to make the barrels needed to transport sugar to its foreign markets.<sup>12</sup>

As plantation owners and managers in newer colonies, such as those in Guiana, quickly learned, the opportunities to enjoy a self-sufficient economy in the provision of needed crafts thus were

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<sup>12</sup> Bridenbaugh and Bridenbaugh (1972: 302), Handler (1963a: 130-139; 1964), Mathewson (1972; 1973), Bennett (1958: 18-20), and Craton (1978: 229, 232).

numerous, and West Indian planters on the expanding frontier of sugar production brought skilled slaves from the older islands to train local bondsmen not only as potters, blacksmiths, and coopers, but also as carpenters, bricklayers, millrights, and so on. Moreover, whenever plantation managers imparted craft skills to their slaves, some of the trades proved especially adaptable and promised to fulfill needs beyond those directly connected to the prosecution of plantation business. Responsible for constructing simple buildings to shelter machinery for the sugar mills, slave carpenters, for example, could also be directed to erect humble abodes for their fellow slaves, and trained to fashion the most luxurious mansions for their masters, complete with louvered windows, bannistered stairways and decorated porches.<sup>13</sup> In other words, plantation owners and managers could also make their estates autarkic in respect of their own consumer needs and those of their slaves. As a result, the catalog of slave craftsmen on West Indian plantations often was extensive, and could include, in addition to those already mentioned, bakers, cobblers, coppersmiths, millers, plasters, seamstresses, tailors, thatchers, and weavers, among still others.<sup>14</sup> But the compulsion by which planters directed their slaves to supply some needed consumer goods, including certain craft items and especially articles of food, did not always consist of the straightforward application of force that one might expect in a system of bondage where

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<sup>13</sup> Bolingbroke (1807: 211), Brathwaite (1971: 235-236), and Craton (1978: 227-228). See Handler (1963a: 139-147), for another example of the transfer of skills from the prosecution of plantation business to the production of consumer items.

<sup>14</sup> See Brathwaite (1971: 154-155, 160-161), Goveia (1965: 131-141), Higman (1976: 37), and Patterson (1967: 59).

masters exacted unlimited obedience from their slaves.

Some West Indian planters, it is true, integrated the production of food, craft items, and other provisions directly into the regular, supervised activity of the estate. Plantation managers in Barbados, for example, who assumed responsibility for food production, commonly reserved a portion of land and adapted the harsh discipline of the slave regime to supply provisions in common for a later distribution, which they strictly controlled. Slaves of such masters thus worked under the whip to produce goods that were meant to enter their bellies and their homes, just as they labored to cultivate the staple crop that entered the world market. The resulting produce was rarely enough to maintain slaves in an adequate state of health, however, and plantation managers who took such an exacting route toward self-sufficiency often permitted slaves to raise fowl, to maintain a kitchen garden near their houses, to manufacture minor items, and to do all these things on their own time. In this way, the slaves could supplement the consumer goods allocated to them from within the estate. In addition, plantation managers in these colonies also permitted their bondsmen to take whatever surplus they might accumulate and trade it in the local market. Slaves eagerly took advantage of such opportunities to act on their own, and they fueled local markets with locally-produced provisions, including the craft items needed by their fellow bondsmen, and by planters and other freemen. Indeed, by 1806, one observer in Barbados reported that "the markets of the island depend almost wholly on this mode of supply"

(Pinckard 1806, 1: 370).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See also (ibid.: 287, 368), Bennett (1958: 22-24, 37-39, 93-94, 101), Handler (1971: 79-81), and Levy (1980: 9-10). Planters

In colonies, however, where land was given over to the staple crop less entirely than it was in such islands as Barbados, owners and managers of West Indian plantations went still further in making slaves responsible for the supply of certain needed consumer goods. By refusing to buy food and manufactured provisions in bulk on the market, they too forced slaves to produce such items themselves. But rather than to supervise closely the main provisioning activities and then to allow the slaves to supplement the products on their own, they found it useful and convenient--apparently from the earliest days of settlement--to induce their slaves to provide the bulk of their provisions on their own time. They allocated unused parcels of land, usually in the hilly or less fertile sections of the estates, and they set aside the evenings and part of the weekends to give bondsmen time to go to their fields. There, slaves produced food and craft materials largely for domestic use. But eventually, they also acquired the rights to market their produce and to inherit both the use of the provision land and whatever proceeds may have accumulated therefrom.<sup>16</sup>

It is well-documented that this approach to plantation self-sufficiency, based on the efforts of planters to induce their slaves voluntarily to grow or manufacture most of the goods the bondsmen needed, flourished well in Jamaica. Of course, if they had sufficient access to suitable land, the owners and managers of plantations

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elsewhere--some in Demerara, for example--adopted a similar strategy. See M'Donnell (1825: 149-150) and Rodway (1891, 2: 42-43).

<sup>16</sup> The classic reference here, of course, is Mintz and Hall (1960). But also see, for example, Mathieson (1926: 71-73), Parry (1955), Hall (1959: 19; 1962: 314), Patterson (1967: 216-230), and Aufhauser (1974a: 63).

elsewhere also adopted a similar strategy. And when they did, their slaves invariably invested great energy in the production and sale of provision goods and thus demonstrated a great passion for "money-making." Indeed, in the colonies of Guiana, for example, there is good evidence that slaves on at least some estates had "as much ground as they choose to till" and "often half a day and sometimes a day" for independent work (M'Donnell 1825: 159); that "seasoned negroes keep fowl, pigs, goats and grow garden stuff," while the tradesmen among them "employ their spare time in making those articles of their several trades which they can sell to advantage" (Bolingbroke 1807: 112); that the weekly markets were "entirely supplied with ground provisions and feathered stock from the private allotments of the slaves" (Rodway 1891, 2: 100); and that bondsmen acquired rights of inheritance whereby "one old woman is reported to have died with fifteen hundred dollars, which was distributed among her children" (ibid.).

In general, then, whenever slaveholding planters tried to establish a more self-sufficient estate, they diverted some of their bondsmen from toiling on the staple crop in the fields. Whether they moved the slaves into the production of goods needed for the further prosecution of plantation business, or into the production of consumer items, it follows that the plantation owners and managers promoted a wider division of roles among the bondsmen and made the members of the plantation population functionally more interdependent. The divisions of labor among field, artisan, and domestic slaves for purposes of running the master's estate and producing the staple crop are well known and, no doubt, in many cases, slaves also became sufficiently differentiated

and mutually dependent enough in respect of their own needs, that they could well have existed freely outside the control of the planters.<sup>17</sup> But, it must be remembered, the implication that the development of autarky meant a liberalized slave regime, if not liberated slaves, followed only from certain particular ways that plantation owners and managers channelled slave labor toward a goal of plantation self-sufficiency.

Thus, when a West Indian planter specifically required his slaves on their own time to supplement their allocations of food and provisions, or to provide a major portion of these consumer goods, he not only fostered a greater interdependence. From the standpoint of the slaves, such a planter actually eased the burden of slavery: he gave them the opportunity to afford a better diet, to acquire a small income, to feel a sense of proprietorship, and to accumulate a patrimony deserving of heirs. Within a system of bondage, then, that was noted for being harsh and debilitating, West Indian slaves derived from at least one pattern of plantation self-sufficiency some liberal incentives to live, to work, and even to reproduce. Yet to the plantation owner or manager, any bondsmen who would labor industriously without expensive supervision on their own time to provide some or most of their own needs seemed thoroughly to accept a stake in the peculiar institution: they freed the owner or manager to concentrate the force of his authority in other areas of social life, and so they effectively contributed to their own continued bondage. Indeed, because bondsmen drew tangible benefits while apparently also yielding control, they seemed to ally themselves with the planter in "a happy coalition of interests" to perpetuate the

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Brathwaite (1971: 152-159), Goveia (1965: 131-142), and Patterson (1967: 57-65).

institution of slavery, albeit a somewhat liberalized one (Edwards 1793, 2: 131).<sup>18</sup>

The development of such a coalition became especially significant for owners and managers of plantations in the British West Indies after 1807, when the slave trade ended. Under mounting religious and humanitarian pressure against slavery, and without a cheap supply of slaves, planters could no longer work their bondsmen to death as they pleased, and then simply buy new ones. Instead, they had to demonstrate to their opponents that slavery could have its alleviations, that as masters they could encourage their slaves to work with vigor, while preserving their health and inducing in them the desire to reproduce. Many plantation owners and managers in the West Indies found that they adequately served these purposes, and approached their primary goal of plantation self-sufficiency as well, by giving their slaves the opportunity to supply voluntarily at least part of their own needs. But for planters in these circumstances to reach what they regarded as the best possible outcome--a genuine coalition with their slaves to preserve and maintain a somewhat ameliorated institution of bondage--they had to cement a truly wide "breach" in the slave regime (Lepkowski 1968, 1: 59), and one that was caused by nothing less than the very efforts they made to make their estates more autarkic. As Sidney Mintz has persuasively argued, when slaves produced food and craft items on their own time for themselves and others, they worked "without supervision," they organized in "groups of their own choosing," and they made

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<sup>18</sup> Pinckard (1806, 1: 368), Rodway (1891, 2: 293), Mathieson (1926: 73-74), Farley (1954: 88-89; 1964: 54-55), Bennett (1958: 91, 95-96, 111, 136), Mintz and Hall (1960: 11-12), and Mintz (1964a: 251-253).

calculations--what to produce and how much--that "nourished their own sense of autonomy." All these actions "ran entirely counter to the whole conception of how the slave mode of production was supposed to operate," with the result being that, across the gap between their ideal and the reality of plantation slavery that had emerged, the owners and managers of West Indian plantations truly confronted the worst possibility: that their slaves had been able "to transform what had begun as a coercive form into something else" (Mintz 1978: 93-94).<sup>19</sup>

Plantation owners and managers undoubtedly had great difficulty forming a genuine coalition with their slaves and, equally, by satisfying some of their own needs on their own time, West Indian bondsmen may not have been able to liberate themselves fully from the compulsions of slavery. But the contributions that slaves thus made to plantation self-sufficiency implied at least that they enjoyed the benefits of a somewhat looser regime of bondage. More specifically, it meant that they could gain valuable experience in farming, craft production, and marketing.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, many slaves actually accumulated a

<sup>19</sup> There were, of course, other "breaches" in the ways that the system of plantation slavery was supposed to work. Some of these I have already mentioned. Despite their interest in stifling the growth of artisan trades in the wider economies, for example, planters sometimes encouraged the immigration of white artisans to help control a racially imbalanced society. Freed slaves and free coloreds in the West Indian plantation colonies also put a dent in the planters' ideal of slavery by vigorously plying various trades and crafts, particularly in such urban areas as Bridgetown, Kingston, and Georgetown (see Handler 1974, Hall 1972 and Farley 1955b). Although these developments are certainly germane, limitations of space prevent me from fully integrating them into the present argument. For further discussion of the so-called "peasant breach," compare Mintz (1977: 261 and n.36; 1979a: 226, 240-241) and Hall (1962: 314-315).

<sup>20</sup> These activities were vital for the successful adaptation of bondsmen to free peasant life. But under a slave regime, subsistence

monetary profit by their experience in producing certain items and in disposing freely of the produce on local markets. The process did not make them rich by any standard, but as their wealth grew under an autarkic slave regime moving toward Emancipation, so too did their demands, and reports are numerous in the literature that refer to the steady expansion of slaves' buying power. With their accumulated earnings, according to an observer in the Guiana colony of Demerara, they particularly developed a taste for the "luxuries" and "extravagancies" of life (M'Donnell 1825: 163). Of course, these labels applied only by comparison to the cheap and simple goods that were the slaves' usual fare. Nevertheless, they always covered manufactured goods, and included, for example, what that same observer in Guiana described as "clothing of the best description" (ibid.: 165).<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1.3 The Expansion of Local Needs at Emancipation

Formed in Guiana and elsewhere in the British West Indies under the strict control of slaveholding planters, the market for manufactured goods thus first expanded under the influence of a particular approach to plantation autarky. That pattern of self-sufficiency greatly tempered some of the harsh realities of the slave regime and, by 1838,

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production and marketing, although unsupervised, still were ultimately subject to the command of the master, and so they qualified the slaves only as members of an emergent category, which Mintz has designated as the "proto-peasantry" (1961: 34; 1974a: 151-152). See also Parry (1954: 35), Farley (1954: 88-89; 1964: 54-55), Mintz (1958: 49), Mintz and Hall (1960: 9, 18, 23), and Handler (1971: 48-49, 84-86).

<sup>21</sup> See also, for example, Bolingbroke (1807: 51, 113), Mathieson (1926: 73), Bennett (1958: 104-105), Mintz and Hall (1960: 17), and Brathwaite (1971: 232-234).

when slavery in the British colonies was finally abolished the ability of bondsmen to profit on their own time from the production and sale of food and handicraft items had already well elevated the level of local consumer demand. As the ex-slaves then took on the privileges and responsibilities of freedom, and particularly as they consumed the wages that plantation owners and managers now had to pay for labor, their supply of goods and their corresponding demands did not alter much in character, but it received fresh impetus and continued to grow.

According to Mintz and Hall, who referred specifically to circumstances in Jamaica: "After Emancipation, many new markets would appear and the scope of economic activity open to the freedmen would be much increased. But Emancipation, insofar as marketing and cultivation practices were concerned, widened opportunities and increased alternatives; apparently it did not change their nature substantially" (1960: 18).

Freedom for West Indian slaves in 1838 of course meant that they no longer had to submit before another class of men and women with unlimited obedience. Instead, they could set about constructing their own self-generating communities. Some observers suggested that they did so merely by mimicking the behavior of their former masters. In the words of one planter in Demerara, "the negroes at once assumed, as much as possible, the manners of the white man" (Landowner 1853: 14). But more subtle and less explicitly racist investigators revealed that whether or not the freed men and women imitated whites, they now married, educated their children, prayed to their gods, organized for better working conditions, conducted their own internal political affairs, participated in seasonal fetes, and performed the countless

other tasks of community-building all with a mounting sense of public respectability, which often was viciously denied them during slavery. Thus an Anglican bishop remarked as early as 1839 that "I have been much struck, as I passed from parish to parish [in British Guiana], with the appearance of the people, with the respectability of their dress, and with the quietness and propriety of their demeanor" (quoted in Schomburgk 1840: 139). And as they lived up to the various aspects of their new life of freedom, the ex-slaves undoubtedly expanded their economic needs, not only for respectable attire, but also for foodstuffs, buildings, furnishings, and recreational materials.<sup>22</sup>

But just as freedom opened the bondsmen to the possibility of leading a respectable life, it also meant that the plantation owners and managers lost their ready and cheap source of labor. No longer able to force people to work for them, they had to pay wages. Emancipation thus implied a dramatic shift of income in each affected plantation colony, from profits formerly accruing to the plantation owner, to wages presently earned by the ex-slaves. And if, before Emancipation, without any wages and solely on the basis of earnings from subsistence production and sales, slaves had managed to expand their demands for various goods, then this shift of income after freedom greatly enlarged the buying power of the ex-slave population as a whole, and particularly of those who returned to work for wages on the plantation, while

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<sup>22</sup> See also the remarks of a leading merchant, whom a colonial office report quoted on the condition and prospects of British Guiana: "For some time after emancipation, up to, I may say, 1845, the laboring classes . . . evinced an eagerness for articles of improved comfort, and a desire to appear respectable (Great Britain 1851: 14; emphasis in original). See also, for example, Marshall (1968: 254, 260), Dalton (1855, 1: 437), Farley (1964: 58), Green (1969: 42), and Rodney (1979: 285-286).

continuing to produce and sell provisions. Indeed, joined with the widened need for goods to lead a fitting and respectable life, it was the relatively high level of wages on plantations that was largely responsible for the further expansion of local markets in the West Indies following 1838, and for the increase of local economic activity.<sup>23</sup>

Ex-slaves, particularly in such West Indian colonies as Jamaica and British Guiana responded vigorously to the "rising taste and culture" of their fellows after Emancipation (Lewis 1936: 12). Widened expectations, fueled with money put in circulation by estate employment, created numerous opportunities for local economic advancement. With savings accumulated from slave times, for example, some freed men and women tried to secure not just use rights, but ownership of land suitable for farming, and they expanded their investments in the production of food and other crops. Artisans, too, flourished as they manufactured various goods to satisfy the wants of ex-slaves who, in the words of Governor Metcalfe of Jamaica, were very "fond of Luxuries, and Smart Clothes, and good Furniture" (quoted in Hall 1959: 159). In addition, a growing class of astute local merchants directed the rapid circulation of agricultural and manufactured goods, and helped establish new marketplaces to service better the areas of free settlement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Davy (1854: 101), Dalton (1855, 1: 438), Cropper (1912: 256), Hall (1959: 167-170), and Moohr (1972: 598).

<sup>24</sup> Riviere (1972: 2-4). For some of these developments in British Guiana, see Dalton (1855, 1: 483), Rodway (1891, 3: 53), Cropper (1912: 257-258), Farley (1954: 91-102; 1964: 56-60); Moohr (1972: 597), Adamson (1972: 34-41) and Roberts and Johnson (1974: 69).

But all this prosperity had a dramatically short life in the post-Emancipation period of the British West Indies. The general promise of continued economic advancement in diverse industries outside the plantation pivoted all too sharply on the wages gained in estate employment. The owners and managers of plantations throughout the region were scarcely pleased when they lost control of their source of labor at Emancipation and, during the next decade, they suffered from a severe crunch in world market competition. Under considerable economic pressure, they looked in earnest for ways to reduce the level of wages, while retaining a reliable supply of laborers. Planters in different colonies were variously situated to take such action, their strategies differed, and so the effects on the local economies were not at all uniform. But, allowing for the variation, planters almost everywhere in the West Indies upset the precarious balance of post-Emancipation growth in the local economies and, for the newly freed participants in those economies, the results were largely depressing.

#### 4.2 PLANTER RESPONSES TO THE LABOR PROBLEMS AFTER EMANCIPATION

Following the peace of 1815, supplies of sugar rose on the London market and the price of the commodity embarked on a steady decline. Within the British West Indies, increased supplies from newer colonies, such as British Guiana and Trinidad contributed to the lower prices and helped squeeze the profits of older producers in Barbados and Jamaica. Added to this level of competition, owners and managers of West Indian plantations also had to jockey for position in the wider British Empire, against their counterparts in Mauritius and the East Indies, and in the

world market, against cane producers elsewhere in the New World. Planters in Brazil and Cuba, for example, posed especially severe threats because they continued to enjoy the economies of slave labor after British Emancipation. The West Indians thus were stiffly arrayed against competitors in more favorable circumstances and, by 1842, they sorely felt the financial burdens of having to pay high wages to attract a steady source of free laborers. And the pain only increased in 1847, when Britain began to withdraw the imperial preference for West Indian sugar, thereby placing the commodity on a more equal footing at customs with sugar traded from elsewhere in the world market.<sup>25</sup>

As economic pressures rapidly mounted to crisis proportions, plantation owners in the British West Indies feared for their very survival. Everywhere in the region, marginal plantations ceased production and others had their cane stands pulled back to the most productive land. Moreover, after more than a century and a half of almost no technical progress, and now beset by vicious competition, by assaults on their primary source of labor, and by a growing profit squeeze, owners of West Indian plantations at last began thinking about technical improvements. In order to offset rising costs with productivity increases some who could afford it did introduce the plow, or the steam engine, or special fertilizers, such as guano. But even given sufficient capital, few of the resident plantation owners in the West Indies were themselves competent enough in all the various facets of plantation administration to integrate technical innovations into the

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<sup>25</sup> Deerr (1949-50, 2: 362-378, 431-448), Sheridan (1961, 1976a), Lobdell (1972: 31-32, 39-41), Aufhauser (1974a: 46-48) and Green (1976: 35-64, 229-244).

agricultural routine and to insure that laborers did not abuse them. Nor could many plantation owners, resident or absentee, boast of managers and overseers in their employ who were significantly adept in these administrative skills. Lacking either adequate finances or managerial competence, or both, the owners of West Indian plantations generally resisted committing their estates to the costs of technical change.<sup>26</sup> Instead, most of them focused on ways of controlling their labor supply, and when their wage bill rose so enormously at freedom, they specifically concentrated on making their laborers more reliable and less expensive to employ.

As it turned out, some plantation owners and managers, like those in Barbados, manipulated the newly freed slaves with relative ease and set wages virtually as they pleased. By contrast, Jamaican planters struggled with considerable difficulty for a solution to their post-Emancipation labor problems. Similarly, plantation owners and managers in British Guiana found it hard at first to obtain a steady and cheap supply of laborers. But although a conservative labor policy in Barbados made technical reorganization largely unnecessary, at least for some time, and although the prolonged uncertainty in Jamaica about the labor supply chased away potential funds for capital investment, planters in British Guiana managed both to articulate a crushing answer to the labor question and to establish a firm basis for a program of continued technical change. And if, in all these places, the development of the local market for various kinds of agricultural and

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<sup>26</sup> For discussion of these barriers to technical change and of the early attempts to overcome them, see Landowner (1853: 35), Davy (1854: 13, 113-115), Hall (1964: 21-25), Barrett (1965), Aufhäuser (1974b) and Green (1976: 51-64).

manufactured goods was effectively tied to the actions of planters to depress wages, in Guiana, it was also linked specifically to the pattern of technical change within the sugar industry.

#### 4.2.1 Post-Emancipation Labor Control in Barbados and Jamaica

By Emancipation, Barbados had long weathered political and economic storms. The oldest sugar-producing colony in the British West Indies was, in the words of Daniel Defoe, the "Garden of the Caribbean" (quoted in Sheridan 1974: 121), and it had given rise to a firm, deeply-rooted, highly resistant breed of plantation owners and managers. From the earliest stages of cane cultivation in the Caribbean in the seventeenth century, Barbadian sugar producers had divided among themselves virtually the entire settled expanse of this small, gently rolling island and, in the years following Emancipation, they reportedly had almost 100 in every 106 of the colony's densely populated acres under cultivation.<sup>27</sup> In respect of the shocks that curled through the West Indian sugar industry in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Barbadian planters thus stood in an extraordinary position of strength. Indeed, Emancipation itself appears to have concerned them only slightly, if at all. Because there were few places for newly freed slaves to take up residence outside the plantation domains, the majority of the ex-bondsmen remained on the estates and, to insure that they continued to work regularly in the cane fields and at a reasonable wage, the planters simply flexed their collective muscle. In particular, they

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<sup>27</sup> Sewell (1861: 33-34). See also the general remarks of Lewis (1936: 4, 10-11), Marshall (1968: 254; 1970: 2; 1972: 32) and Marshall, et al. (1975: 85-86), and Levy (1980: 72).

instituted an especially severe system of tenancy for their former slaves.

After Emancipation, the owners and managers of Barbadian plantations generally forbade ex-slaves to continue residing in houses and cultivating gardens on estate property unless they also continued to labor in the production of the staple crop. To retain a roof over their heads, many ex-slaves thus had to work on the plantation and, at first, the plantation owners and managers fully exploited the predicament of the freedmen. They refused even to pay wages and, instead, accepted the labor service of their tenants in lieu of rent. The outcries from the laboring population and from British officials, all protesting that such a system merely resurrected slavery under a different name, eventually persuaded some plantation owners and managers to relent--but not by much. The new practice that they adopted, which was in force as late as 1862, distinguished rent and wages, and it provided an estate laborer with a house and an allotment of land for a stipulated rent; but, as a condition of renting, the tenant still had "to give to the estate a certain number of days' labor," and to do so "at certain stipulated wages, varying from one sixth to one third less than the market price" (Sewell 1861: 32).<sup>28</sup> Only much later, apparently, did it become commonplace for Barbadian planters to charge rent for a house and garden and to leave the tenant completely free to find employment where he or she pleased.

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<sup>28</sup> See also Davy (1854: 148-149), Riviere (1972: 7), Marshall, et al. (1975: 86-87), Hall (1978: 21), and especially Levy (1980: 78-80, 87-89, 99-100, 110-111, 129-130, 135-137).

As a group, the owners and managers of Barbadian sugar plantations were well-organized. They controlled the local assembly, and they spoke with a voice that was broken by discord only on relatively minor issues: they either gave little ground to the ex-slaves, or they gave some grudgingly and exacted a great price. Distinguished for their meticulous, labor-intensive cultivations before Emancipation, they kept laborers readily and cheaply available afterwards, and attained a level of solvency unparalleled in the British West Indies. By 1869, none of the colony's 608 estates had been abandoned, and Barbados was reputed to be "pre-eminently the most prosperous of the sugar colonies" (Beachey 1957: 42). By dint of a tough and conservative labor policy after Emancipation, management practices in all realms of plantation administration changed little from those in force during slave times, and Barbadian sugar estates continued specifically to avoid investments in changing capital stock, at least until after the major depression of the 1880s. As for the laboring population, with only meager wages to its credit, it could scarcely prime the pump of local demand. Consequently, the local production of agricultural and manufactured goods developed at a snail's pace. Indeed, if the ability of peasant farmers to afford their own land is any indication, significant growth in the local market of the island did not occur until after the turn of the next century.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> On the political organization of the Barbadian planters, see Davy (1854: 153), Hall (1959: 105-106), and Marshall, et al. (1975: 87-88). For the continuity and success of their economic practices, see Sewell (1861: 59-66), Beachey (1957: 93), Green (1973: 402; 1976: 201-202, 257-259), and Levy (1980: 93-96, 103-112, 122-129, 136-137). And compare Riviere (1972: 16-17, 24, 28), Marshall, et al. (1975: 88-101), Mintz (1979a: 229-230), and Levy (1980: 78, 91, 96-98, 129) on the development of local production and trade in Barbados.

In contrast to Barbados, Jamaica did not blossom as a sugar-producing colony until the early eighteenth century and, even by the nineteenth century, cane did not nearly cover the island. Early plantation owners settled primarily on the coast and in some of the more easily accessible intermontane regions of the island. At later stages in the early history of the colony, new planters thus had plenty of room to enter production by moving into the other fertile valleys of the interior. As they did so, the older producers, in turn, fought to withstand the competition and, at Emancipation, the Jamaican sugar industry was still in a state of considerable flux and change. Being so unevenly developed, the industry simply could not boast that its producers were, as a group, as well-established as those in the so-called "Garden of the Caribbean". Some planters operated at a loss, others barely broke even, and many were in debt on heavily mortgaged estates.<sup>30</sup>

Nor, by comparison to Barbados, could Jamaica in 1838 accord its plantation owners and managers an unrivaled position in the local political economy. As the ex-slaves themselves well-knew, there was considerable profit to be made from production in the hills and on marginal estate lands, and from the sale of produce that did not always directly further the prosecution of plantation business. Moreover, a small, but steadily growing party of local merchants insinuated itself into the Jamaican assembly and promoted the various trades, which, if developed, could potentially occupy the freedmen independently of work

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<sup>30</sup> For some of this background, see the discussion in Sheridan (1965, 1968, 1976a) and Thomas (1968). See also Sewell (1861: 169-173, 230-242), Curtin (1955: 108-109) and Hall (1959: 81).

in the canefields and could thereby conflict with the immediate interests of the sugar producers.<sup>31</sup> At Emancipation, Jamaican planters thus were not only internally divided by differences in financial status; they also faced the emergence of sources of potentially serious political and economic opposition. Given these particular difficulties, they proved themselves a resourceful and imaginative lot. But they were somewhat less than successful when they attempted specifically to recruit a reliable body of laborers from the newly freed population, and tried to do so without paying ruinously high wages.

At first, many owners and managers of Jamaican plantations adopted tactics similar to those applied by their Barbadian counterparts. Some instituted rent-for-labor schemes. Others, who paid wages, lowered the rate and then tried to recover even those payments by exacting ridiculously high rents, which, at times they charged not against the property occupied, but against the number of people in a particular tenant's family! Still other plantation owners and managers went further than the Barbadians and, acting on the belief that cheap labor would be more readily available from a landless proletariat, they simply ejected their laborers from residence on the estate and from rights to use their provision grounds.<sup>32</sup> The reactions of the Jamaican freedmen, however, clearly demonstrated that, to be manipulated as plantation laborers, they merited more subtle approaches than these.

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<sup>31</sup> Hall (1959: 97-98) and Green (1976: 357-359).

<sup>32</sup> Paget (1945: 33-36), Curtin (1955: 128-129), Hall (1959: 20-23), Riviere (1972: 5-8), and Knox (1977: 387-388).

If the freedmen were not thrown off the estates, they soon began to leave in droves, rather than submit to the aggressive and vindictive conditions that the planters imposed for them to stay. They bought available land when they could and squatted when they could not. Many settled haphazardly, but others were attracted by the schemes of Baptist missionaries to settle freedmen in organized villages, particularly on ruined estates. In all cases, by leaving the plantations, the ex-slaves burdened the sugar producers with a lack of "continuous labor" (quoted in Curtin 1955: 127) and, to provide any labor at all, they still could command a relatively high wage. The funds that ex-slaves received for laboring on plantations, moreover, continued to fuel the local market, and did so to such an extent that the relative share of independent production in the island's total output increased sharply in the quarter century after Emancipation. Unfortunately for everyone, the gross product of the island declined, largely because of the persistent troubles in the sugar industry.<sup>33</sup>

The hefty wage bill that sugar producers paid to hire much needed laborers after 1838 magnified the high costs of sugar production in Jamaica, and forced more and more plantation owners to abandon their estates. Between 1836 and 1865, the number of operating plantations in the island declined from 670 to 300, and this sharp contraction in the sugar industry could not help but to reduce the total wages put in circulation, and eventually to depress the local consumers' market.

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<sup>33</sup> On the independent settlements of the freedmen, see Paget (1945: 36-48), Curtin (1955: 110-116, 121), Mintz (1958: 48-65), Hall (1959: 17-18, 23-26; 1978: 14-17), and Riviere (1972: 9, 15). For the development of independent production in the island after Emancipation, see Knox (1977: 386-387), Riviere (1972: 12, 21-24), Hall (1959: 119-120), and Beachey (1957: 43)

Moreover, although some plantation owners could afford the economies of increased investments in capital, and although many sugar producers certainly became more attuned to the benefits of scientific agriculture, the Jamaican sugar industry as a whole had great difficulty attracting sources of investment for technical improvements. The nearby islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico, which both still profited from slave labor, lured funds that might otherwise have gone to Jamaica. And not until 1861 did the Jamaican Assembly institute the Encumbered Estates Act, which made it much easier for heavily mortgaged estates to pass unburdened into the hands of buyers with capital to advance in the production of Jamaican sugar. As a result, in the decades immediately following Emancipation, "the technological backwardness of Jamaican planting was only slightly remedied" (Curtin 1955: 145), planters had to redouble their efforts to conserve the freed slaves as cheap plantation laborers and, to the extent that they forced down wages, the local consumers market began noticeably to falter.<sup>34</sup>

From their early acts of ejection and from their harsh tenancy requirements, the owners and managers of Jamaican plantations turned during the 1840s and 1850s to a variety of other tactics. For example, many planters obtained a core of relatively cheap and reliable laborers by bringing several thousand people under contracts from India, Africa, Madeira, and China. Such immigration was expensive, however, and the parties in the Jamaican Assembly who were not directly associated with sugar property did not particularly support measures aimed at spreading the costs over the entire community. This solution to the labor problem

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<sup>34</sup> Beachey (1957: 6-8, 43-44), Hall (1959: 32, 75-76, 116-119), Green (1976: 234-245, 250-251, 255-256), and Knox (1977: 386-387).

thus did not take the plantation owners and managers very far, and it meant that they still had to draw the bulk of their laborers from among the ex-slaves on the island. So the planters endeavored to make all the alternatives to plantation labor as unattractive as possible for the freedmen. They moved the Assembly to make import and export duties, as well as the direct taxes on local property, bear more heavily on the independent producers in the free population than on the plantations. Then, to intensify the pressure, they channelled the tax receipts toward road construction and other projects that specifically favored, not the ex-slaves, but the sugar industry. In addition, they sponsored "vagrancy" acts to keep potential estate laborers in line, and they supported an education system designed to train the freedmen in obedience, humility and other qualities suitable for work in a plantation regime.<sup>35</sup>

Given these various measures persuading them to give up local production for a life of plantation labor, and competing in markets progressively weakened by downward pressure on the wages that sugar producers were willing to put into circulation, freed artisans, cultivators and merchants in Jamaica struggled to stay in business. Indeed, as Sidney Mintz has suggested, "the real wonder is the ability of the Jamaican peasantry to have survived at all" (1979a: 232). But conditions for independent production in the island, ultimately were not as severe as those in Barbados. During the decades following Emancipation, the local consumers' market deteriorated in both colonies

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<sup>35</sup> Beachey (1957: 106-107), Hall (1959: 21, 52-56, 85, 176-180, 202-206), Green (1976: 243-244, 248-249, 346-348, 394-395), Knox (1977: 393-384, 388-392), and Mintz (1979a: 231-232).

after an initial burst of strength, though it did at a much faster rate in Barbados; in Jamaica, however, the sugar industry also changed considerably, particularly in the approach of plantation owners and managers to the labor problem. After 1865, cane production was confined more and more to the western portion of the island. Moreover, as financially troubled estates succumbed to ruinous competition, many fell into the hands of British merchant houses with funds to invest in labor-saving technical innovations. A new class of estate managers thus appeared in the colony, who were scientifically oriented and technologically progressive. And with this overall pattern of concentration and reorganization--a pattern that differed fundamentally from the course followed by Barbadian planters during the same period of time--the potential for development in other sectors of the Jamaican economy correspondingly varied: the small-scale producers among the freedmen, supported by the local merchant party, began to refocus their attention and to concentrate on the production and sale of goods--such as coffee and ginger--that were in demand beyond the confines of the local provision markets.<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.2.2 British Guiana: The Beginnings of Capital Concentration

In general, the owners and managers of plantations in post-Emancipation British Guiana resembled those in Jamaica by the variety of devices they brandished to depress wages and to obtain a ready supply of laborers. They brought in contract laborers from overseas. In addition, they resorted to a variety of fiscal and legal measures to manipulate the

<sup>36</sup> Beachey (1957: 38, 43, 123-124), Hall (1959: 115, 185-189), Green (1976: 259-260), and Knox (1977: 383, 386).

ex-slave population. But in all this they performed with an effectiveness similar to that which the owners and managers of Barbadian plantations achieved in much more limited actions; by comparison with the Jamaicans, for example, Guianese planters thoroughly saturated their colony with indentured immigrants. Yet the Guianese plantation owners and managers may also be distinguished, in general, from those in both Jamaica and Barbados because their solutions to the labor problem were tied to a much higher level of technical innovation--of mechanization--in the production of sugar. And to the extent that planter efforts to obtain cheap labor after slavery in British Guiana affected the local markets for agricultural and manufactured goods, then these markets also depended directly on the continuing pace of capital concentration in the sugar industry.

In 1800, the three river colonies of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice, which later joined together in 1831 to become British Guiana, comprised one of the frontier regions of sugar production for British planters. Compared to the long-established estates in Barbados, and to much of the cultivated land in Jamaica, soil along the Guiana rivers and coast offered settlers the superb fertility of freshly opened territory. Being new and holding land relatively unencumbered of debts, owners of Guianese plantations easily attracted credit on favorable terms, and they used it to equip their young estates with the latest technology. They installed steam engines and large boiling houses to process the cane, and they readily adopted various innovations, such as the plow, improved fertilizers, and better drainage techniques, all to advance their field cultivation. By 1838, British Guiana led the British sugar

colonies in the introduction of machinery, and its plantation owners and managers seemed perhaps "best fitted to respond to the challenge" of labor scarcity at Emancipation (Tinker 1974: 25).<sup>37</sup>

Largely established on the basis of early and rather considerable investments in capital stock, Guianese plantations were later able to avoid the long and painful effects of breaking away from more primitive habits of sugar production. But even given this comparative advantage over plantations in other parts of the British West Indies, the owners of Guianese plantations suffered dearly when they freed their slaves. With or without technical change and access to labor-saving innovations, they could not produce at all unless they had a guaranteed supply of cheap laborers. Like plantation owners elsewhere, they thus had to deal immediately with the possibility that ex-slaves would find it more rewarding to work in occupations outside the sugar industry. Although owners and managers of Guianese plantations were generally in a better position than other West Indians to attract free labor by paying high wages, they still moved desperately to cut their labor costs. Some tried to tie laborers cheaply to their estates by granting them tenancy on plantation land in exchange for free labor, or labor at a reduced rate. Others took the reverse course and tried to cut costs by lowering their wage offer and then by withdrawing various benefits, such as housing and access to provision land. In both cases, in Guiana, as in Jamaica, the freedmen vigorously protested the early and harsh response of the planters to Emancipation, and they began to flee the plantations

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<sup>37</sup> Davy (1854: 359-361), Dalton (1855, 1: 493, 496-497, 500-501), Hall (1959: 106), Marshall (1968: 254), Green (1969: 45; 1976: 193, 203-205, 210-214), Lobdell (1972: 34-35, 38-39, 41-42), Mandle (1973: 61-62), and Drescher (1977: 92-96).

in great numbers.<sup>38</sup>

Some ex-slaves in British Guiana moved upriver totally out of range of the plantations, purchased or squatted on Crown land, and lived what one partisan observer described as a "savage sort of life" (Dalton 1855, 1: 437). Many others, however, who left the sugar estates, stayed within striking distance and participated in a "singular spectacle to be witnessed in no other part of the world" (Landowner 1853: 63). They purchased, without assistance, vast amounts of land, some individually to form proprietary villages, others jointly to establish communal villages. By the end of 1842, nearly 16,000 people, or 20 percent, of the ex-slave population had settled in the new villages founded since Emancipation. By 1854, this number had nearly tripled, and still more left the estates to live in the towns of Georgetown and New Amsterdam. But wherever they went, they took advantage of their freedom and pursued a variety of occupations in which they fulfilled expanding local needs. They did domestic work, they farmed, they fished, they manufactured handicrafts and they entered petty trade. Their activity on the internal market replaced imported goods with locally-produced products and, by 1842, imports of consumer items to British Guiana had fallen by almost 40 percent, from 762,503 pounds sterling to 474,503 pounds.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dalton (1855, 1: 435-438), Beachey (1957: 38-39), Roberts and Johnson (1974: 72), and Hall (1978: 8-9, 11-14, 16-18, 21-24).

<sup>39</sup> Dalton (1855, 1: 483), Rodway (1891, 3: 57-54, 84-85), Cruickshank (1921: 69-70), Lewis (1936: 7-8), Farley (1954: 93-94, 96-102; 1964: 56-60), Adamson (1972: 35-38), Moohr (1972: 595-598), Riviere (1972: 15, 17-24), Mandle (1973: 22-23), and Roberts and Johnson (1974: 71-72).

Against these various kinds of independent activity, the ex-slaves balanced the advantages of working for relatively high wages on the sugar estates. Many continued to perform plantation work, and they fueled the expanding local consumers' market with purchasing power. But from the planters' point of view, such labor "was costly and inefficient because it was intermittent, unpredictable, arbitrarily withdrawn" (Adamson 1972: 40). Indeed so costly was it that the weaker planters could not survive: between 1838 and 1846, fifty-seven, or 18.5 percent of Guiana's 308 plantations abandoned cultivation.<sup>40</sup> As for the remaining plantations, their owners and managers intensified their efforts to control an adequate supply of labor, and perhaps the most significant development after their early failures with the ex-slaves was the ultimate success they had in securing laborers by immigration.

The owners and managers of Guianese plantations sought a body of immigrants to provide the ex-slaves with potential competitors for plantation jobs. Above all, the sugar producers hoped that job competition would drive down wages. In addition, they felt it would help to discipline laborers to appear regularly for work and to perform their assigned tasks without quarrel, under pain of being replaced and of losing needed income. But because the ex-slaves could support themselves with only occasional work on the estates, plantation owners and managers rightly expected that the immigrants would scarcely work with any more regularity unless they were somehow prompted to do so. The planters thus sought to bind the newcomers by legal contract to work for them at a fixed rate for a certain period of time. Obviously, the

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<sup>40</sup> Noohr (1972: 598-600) and Riviere (1972: 11-12, 23-24).

more immigrants they could obtain in this way, and the longer the period of indenture, the greater the pressure on other plantation laborers to become competitive and to work more cheaply and under a stricter discipline.<sup>41</sup>

Immediately after Emancipation, indentures that extended for any prolonged period smacked too much of slavery, and the British colonial office prohibited contracts that lasted for more than one year. But under pressure from the owners of West Indian plantations the metropolitan government soon began making exceptions. Plantation owners in Guiana were especially persistent. Unlike their Jamaican counterparts, who were in deeper financial straits and who encountered local political opposition, they eventually received long-term support for subsidized immigration, as well as sanctions for rigid labor contracts that covered five-year terms. Between 1834 and 1890, 228,805 people came to British Guiana as indentured laborers. Of these, nearly 90 percent came from just two places. The largest and, by far the most important segment, comprising fully 74.1 percent of the total, came from India. But, in addition, 32,216 Portuguese came from the Maderia Islands, and they played an especially crucial, if somewhat indirect, role in the struggles of British Guiana planters to resolve their post-Emancipation labor problems.<sup>42</sup>

The Maderia Islands were among the earliest sources of immigrant labor tapped by the owners and managers of plantations in British Guiana. The Portuguese were generally favored with short-term

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<sup>41</sup> Lawrence (1965a: 50), Adamson (1972: 46-49), Lobdell (1972: 41), and Moohr (1972: 602). See also Mintz (1979a: 234-235).

<sup>42</sup> Lawrence (1965b) and Roberts and Johnson (1974: 73).

contracts. But when their terms expired, very few of them stayed on the estates to endure the rigors of the plantation regime. They gravitated to the internal trade of the colony and, with their accumulated wages, they opened shops and bought stock to engage in peddling. As a group, they received preference over others, particularly the ex-slaves, in obtaining the licences required to conduct local merchant activity. In addition, large wholesalers in Georgetown made goods available to the Portuguese shopkeepers and peddlers on easy credit terms, while they afforded black ex-slaves either severe terms or no credit at all. As a result, "the retail trade rapidly became a Portuguese stronghold, and by 1844 they were effectively driving the Creole [black freedmen] hucksters out of the market" (Moore 1975: 9). By 1865, to take only one measure of their commercial success, the Portuguese controlled 90 percent of the rumshops in the entire colony. With their near monopoly in the retail trade, the Portuguese cut into the profits of the ex-slaves acting as local producers and, through high markups, shifted the burden of their own costs forward to the freedmen acting as local consumers.<sup>43</sup> Thus, if planters did not bolster their labor force directly with Portuguese immigrants, then in a more roundabout way, they chipped away at the body of ex-slaves, who now had their employment options in commerce considerably reduced, and who found themselves more impoverished and in an increasingly desperate situation.

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<sup>43</sup> Landowner (1853: 59), Dalton (1855, 1: 454-466), Lawrence (1965a), Adamson (1972: 68-72), Moore (1975), Wagner (1977) and Bartels (1977: 400).

The saturation of British Guiana with East Indians, however, ultimately provided local plantation owners and managers the direct supply of cheap and reliable laborers they desired and, in addition, it firmly prepared the ground for further measures against the ex-slaves. Beginning as a trickle in 1838, coming in spurts during the 1840s and early 1850s, and flowing regularly after 1855, the stream of East Indian immigrants originated from the ports of Calcutta and Madras. In exchange not only for their transportation to British Guiana, but also for a suitable dwelling in the colony, for medical care, and for rations during their first three months of residence, the new arrivals were generally obliged to work on a specified plantation for six days a week at a fixed wage for five years. Plantation owners and managers often evaded their side of the bargain by taking advantage of the illiteracy of many immigrants and of the administrative confusion generated by the introduction of people speaking a foreign language into an unfamiliar country. On the other side, however, the planters stringently enforced the labor obligations of the East Indians: they set work tasks on the plantations at exhausting levels and legally prosecuted those who failed to perform them. They thus could compel their bound laborers to work even if ex-slaves refused to turn out and remained occupied elsewhere.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, in the face of a large-scale and increasingly intensive program of immigration, former slaves who did labor on the estates could no longer sustain high wage demands. Local purchasing power diminished and the freedman, who formerly "had a taste for luxuries in food and dress, and would willingly work to earn the means of gratifying his

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<sup>44</sup> Dalton (1855, 1: 447-448, 467-475), Adamson (1972: 41-56, 109-132), Mandle (1973: 28-29), and Green (1976: 276-286).

desires," now had to be "content to go about with the least amount of clothing consistent with decency and to be satisfied with the coarsest fare" (Davy 1855: 363).<sup>45</sup> Independent cultivators and manufacturers consequently began losing their markets and their incentives to expand production. Residents of the free villages also suffered serious problems in the administration of their own internal political affairs. Keeping the villages drained of water, for example, proved especially vexing. In the proprietary villages, small, private holdings gave rise to an extreme individualism by which neighbors refused to join in the maintenance of common drains; in the communal villages, members lacked the managerial expertise to delegate and to supervise drainage work.<sup>46</sup>

Softened thus both economically and politically, the ex-slaves became more and more vulnerable to the direct assaults of the sugar producers. Indeed, seizing the initiative, plantation owners and managers moved more effectively to halt the spread of the free villages. They sponsored legislation in 1852 that prohibited more than twenty persons from buying land collectively. Ordinance Number 33 of 1856 then further discouraged the purchase of land by freedmen with the stipulation that acreage bought by more than ten people had to be partitioned and each slave made subject to compulsory monthly rates. In

<sup>45</sup> During 1951, a leading merchant in British Guiana reported that "in the last three or four years various circumstances have combined to reduce the demand and consumption of articles not of luxury only, but of ordinary comfort. The laborers now usually confine their purchases to the very few and indispensable articles of clothing, and to articles of necessary food. The other portion of the community have also contracted their wants into a much narrower compass than in former years" (Great Britain 1851: 14). See also Moohr (1972: 590, 603-604).

<sup>46</sup> Cruickshank (1921: 70-71), Adamson (1972: 58-62, 87), Moohr (1972: 600-601), and Rodney (1981: 332-333).

1861, legislation finally doubled the price of Crown lands and limited purchase to no less than one hundred acres. And if these measures, which thoroughly restricted access to land, were not enough to ensnarl them, then the freedmen became immobilized under the weight of a disproportionate share of the colony's tax burden. The planter-controlled government granted the plantations special exemptions on import and export duties, while it strictly enforced village rate collections, and then specified the headings under which the collected revenue would be spent.<sup>47</sup>

By the 1860s, the promising efforts of the ex-slaves in British Guiana to achieve a richly independent life had all but failed. The freedmen's villages did not disappear, but everywhere they "presented a picture of widespread desolation and sorry neglect" (Farley 1954: 102). As for the sugar producers, though they accomplished in two decades a victory as complete as that which the Barbadians achieved in a few years, they did not emerge unscathed. The struggles of the post-Emancipation years weakened them compared to the planters in Barbados, and many could only limp along in their production. But their very weakness, joined to the decisive resolution of the labor question, strongly attracted the interest of British merchant houses, who saw an opportunity to make significant inroads in the hotly competitive world sugar market. These companies bought up faltering estates and rejuvenated the local sugar industry with considerable savings by consolidating some estates and amalgamating others. Between 1853 and 1884, the number of plantations dropped from 173 to 105, while, at the

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<sup>47</sup> Adamson (1972: 57-58, 75-76, 80-84, 88-89), Moohr (1972: 596, 604-605) and Mandle (1973: 28).

same time, the average area on each estate actually increased sharply from 256 to 757 acres. To manage these bigger estates, the merchant companies replaced the old class of plantation managers with a new breed consisting of specialists in business who were "junior members of respectable families and young men of education and refined habits" (Landowner 1853: 37). Under such management, and using the creditworthiness that their non-estate assets gave them, these companies then invested their plantations with the latest capital equipment.<sup>48</sup>

As the immigration of contract laborers and the institution of measures specifically designed to hamstring the ex-slaves all combined to create a cheap and abundant source of wage labor in British Guiana, the colony's sugar industry clearly recovered its reputation in the British West Indies for technological leadership. The long era of primitive accumulation in the local industry thus gradually came to a close. Two of the defining features of the period--stagnant technology and scarce and expensive wage labor--both disappeared. Then, in the 1880s, the world market for sugar, which had long sustained the accumulation of capital on New World plantations radically changed, and a new era of production began.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, heavily subsidized beet sugar from Europe flooded the world sugar market, and sharply undercut the price of cane sugar, which originated largely on plantations. In British Guiana, in the West Indies, and elsewhere, sugar profits disappeared as sugar prices sank to record lows.

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<sup>48</sup> Beachey (1957: 41-42, 62-65, 68, 76-78, 118-121) and Adamson (1972: 160-167, 199-213). See also Farley (1955: 132), Lobdell (1972: 41-45), Mandle (1973: 61), and Tinker (1974: 25).

plantations survived only by consolidating and amalgamating their capital invested in land and equipment with that of weaker competitors. Long accumulated capital thus became more and more concentrated in large firms, and the great expense now required to set up a competitive plantation effectively limited the appearance of new sugar producers. Indeed, at least within the sugar industry of British Guiana and the British West Indies, if not within the wider world market, competition among sugar producing plantations no longer hinged on the threat of new producers starting cultivation, increasing the supply of sugar, and driving down the price of the commodity. Instead, competitive pressures gradually shifted to focus on the relative abilities of existing firms to cut costs both by incorporating weaker producers when possible and by instituting innovative technical changes.<sup>49</sup>

Most of the technical innovations subsequently adopted in British Guiana contributed to the mechanization of the sugar industry. The changes were essentially labor-saving and decreased the overall demand for labor; according to Alan Adamson, they "allowed the ratio of labor costs to total income to be reduced from 53 percent in 1851 to somewhere between 35 and 45 percent in 1882-84" (1972: 206). From the dire straits of labor scarcity immediately after Emancipation, the plantations thus moved to circumstances of labor surplus. The number of people employed as agricultural laborers steadily dropped in the colony after 1861. Even time-expired East Indian laborers began to have

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<sup>49</sup> For a theoretical treatment of periods of "absolute concentration" in the growth of capitalist economies, see Levine (1975: 58-67). On the swift and radical changes in the composition of the world sugar market during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, see, for example, Deerr (1949-50, 2: 471-508) and Tache, et al. (1963, 2: 3-60).

difficulty retaining employment on the sugar plantations.<sup>50</sup> These conditions continued to depress the local consumers' market and to diminish the opportunities for local employment, especially in the artisan trades. But the emergent processes of capital concentration on Guianese plantations also had other, somewhat contradictory, implications.

Sugar producers no longer had difficulty finding laborers at all; now they confronted the problem of stabilizing a restless and overpopulated labor force, of encouraging laborers to reside peacefully near the plantation and of tying those laborers closely to the various capital components in the field and the factory. In short, sugar producers now had to carve out a select group of people, endow them with the skills needed to operate plantation machinery, and duly reward this narrowed body of workers. As they did so, they established a geographically concentrated and relatively well-paid segment of the population that comprised a potentially lucrative market for the local production and sale of various agricultural and manufactured goods.

The concentration of capital in the sugar industry of British Guiana thus created, above all, sharp regional distinctions in the colony's landscape. Where, during slavery, relatively small plantations appeared throughout the colony, by the end of the nineteenth century, sugar production was increasingly confined to fewer, albeit larger, areas. Correspondingly, the local markets for consumer goods began to differentiate into regions marked, at least in part, by the presence or absence of settlements of plantation laborers. Areas, like the

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<sup>50</sup> Adamson (1972: 134, 137-138, 146-149) and Mandle (1973: 30-33).

Courantyne Coast, which surrounded such settlements, experienced a gradual increase in the proportion of artisans in the local working population and, beginning in 1891, artisan employment actually began to rise in the colony as a whole. The development of artisan production, and particularly of garment-making in areas like Rose Hall thus depended, at least in part, on the pattern of concentration in the sugar industry.

In a subsequent volume, I will examine some of the complicated relationships between artisan manufacture and plantation agriculture during the period of capital concentration in the local sugar industry of British Guiana, and I will account, at least partially, for the growth of the garment-making industry in and around the town of Rose Hall on the Courantyne Coast. But before concluding the present volume, I want to advance one further argument in support of the thesis that capital accumulation on West Indian plantations generally stifled the growth of artisanry. In the next chapter, I widen the scope of the present inquiry to demonstrate that capital accumulation in other forms of colonial agriculture, on the haciendas of Mexico and the farms of New England, for example, did not necessarily inhibit manufacturing, although the early development of plantations in other areas, such as Virginia, apparently did.

## Chapter V

### AGRICULTURE AND MANUFACTURING ELSEWHERE IN NEW WORLD COLONIES

Hither also may be referr'd that Separation which is made,  
when People by one Consent go to form Colonies.

For this is the Original of a New and Independent People.

-- Grotius, De Jure Belli et Pacis, II, 9

As they set foot in the New World, most settlers preoccupied themselves with the eminently practical question of their survival. Given the vicissitudes and dangers of transatlantic travel, could the provisions they brought sustain them until new supplies arrived from the mother country or until they developed alternative stores? Often, settlers quickly turned for help to the native populations, but invariably they considered producing needed goods on their own. Some entered subsistence production so they could diminish their overseas dependence and decrease the expense of purchasing supplies from abroad. Others produced items demanded at home in the mother country, and thereby generated enough currency to purchase the supplies they needed in the colony. And still others produced both a regular and cheap source of subsistence goods and a stock of exports in an effort to earn enough to generate a profit and eventually to improve their social position.

Whatever course they settled upon, most colonists did eventually decide to enter production to accumulate needed wealth. Because their investments in technical means were initially so small, however, their abilities to turn a profit depended in large measure on how economically

they organized their use of labor. Did they hire or did they force others to work for them? Or, did they work for themselves? Producers made their decisions, however, only in specific social settings; the kind of enterprise they established and the form of labor organization they created depended on a host of particular and highly variable social relationships. Producers, for example, had to contend with government officials who regulated the affairs of colonists and sought to command the resources to do so by various peaceful devices and, when necessary, by force of conquest. In addition, they had to deal with merchants who sold dear and bought cheap. They had to compete for markets, labor-power and technical means against other producers. And, for various kinds of access to land, they had to struggle with other inhabitants of particular colonies, including the indigenous peoples. When one begins to examine how colonial producers actually interacted in settings of such political and economic complexity, it becomes evident that New World conditions of capital accumulation were not always ripe for the development of plantations, nor, therefore, for the elaboration of coercive labor practices on them, such as slavery. Indeed, plantation development was a highly specific phenomenon and proceeded, as Harman Merivale indicated, only where circumstances generated large, concentrated and reliable markets for certain staple products.<sup>1</sup>

In some places, colonial advancement eventually spawned markets that were not at all regularly accessible. Where Spain established colonies of conquest in the New World, for example, the conquistadors used various non-market devices, including particularly the institution

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<sup>1</sup> Merivale (1861: 260-261); see above, p. 61.

of *encomienda*, to extract the wealth of native civilizations. Then, as the colonists themselves directly entered production, they accumulated capital by servicing markets that were often large, but proved more often to be highly irregular and unpredictable. In response to such trade, the colonists typically formed haciendas, not plantations. Within these institutions, they often employed indebted wage laborers, or peons, not slaves. And though by various means, such as *encomienda*, they incorporated and reorganized native agriculture and crafts, they did not eliminate these activities.

Elsewhere in the New World, European nations formed colonies under the influence of merchants who worked actively to open markets for settlers and to keep trade flowing. In northeastern North America, Dutch, French, and English colonists vied for native furs and established colonies of trade to obtain a steady supply of the pelts from local Indians. New England settlers, however, soon displaced resident tribes and began setting up farms to produce goods for quite different markets. They built towns that were particularly designed to resist administrative intrusions, including those that might direct productive efforts to large-scale and potentially coercive enterprises. From these towns, New England merchants developed regular markets for farm products, but markets that were small and diverse, and that typically gave rise to a host of locally-based artisans who processed the goods and serviced the trade.

Within the broader framework of capital accumulation in New World colonies, then, settlements grew on the basis of conquest, trade and production, the markets for colonial products developed slowly and

irregularly in some places if they developed at all, and in other places regular markets emerged but were small and diverse. Only within such a wide framework did some colonists manage to find reliable markets that were large and concentrated, and in response to which they could seek to establish plantations. Their efforts often met with difficulties, but settlers in Virginia, like those in the West Indies, thrived with a steadily growing demand for staple crops. In contrast to conditions of capital accumulation in the Spanish colonies and in the New England colonies, conditions in Virginia favored the spread of plantations and, as this colony received increasing supplies of slaves whom planters coerced to work for them for life, local political attempts to diversify the economy by creating other alternatives in agriculture, in the crafts, and in the trades all persistently failed. In what follows, by comparison to conditions in Mexico, New England, and Virginia, I move further to establish that the conditions of primitive accumulation on plantations in the West Indies enfeebled local artisanry. I survey the development of haciendas in Mexico and of farms in New England to show that, although investments in technical means were generally small and stagnant throughout the colonial New World, product markets and political circumstances differed widely and did not always favor the rise of plantations. In the absence of plantation agriculture, independent artisanry survived and, in places like New England, even flourished. In this chapter, I also review the Virginia case to confirm that in other areas, besides the British West Indies, where conditions spawned plantations, capital accumulation on these agricultural institutions generally had an adverse effect on the development of independent manufacturing activities.

Although the scope of my analysis here does not permit me to do justice to all aspects of each of these institutions in each of the colonial regions surveyed, I certainly do not mean to minimize the enormous social and cultural complexity of colonial development. For convenience of presentation, for example, I do not fully consider the mixture all institutions of production in each area nor, at this level of analysis, do I discuss the wide variation in the organization of the institutions I do consider. But I am fully aware that, as historian William Taylor has observed, haciendas formed only a "narrow slice of the spectrum of colonial estates" in Mexico, and the features of such estates were often "much too varied to be subsumed under a single label" (1974: 392-393). I have already issued similar cautions about the analysis of plantations in Chapter Two above and, for a detailed investigation of agriculture in New England, much the same no doubt could be said of farms.

#### 5.1 THE SPANIARDS IN MEXICO: CONQUISTADORS, PRODUCTION AND THE RISE OF THE HACIENDA

The Spanish Crown, seeking new sources of wealth, undertook the formation of its American colonies late in the fifteenth century by arousing the interest of its subjects in the possible rewards of military conquest. Soldier-peasants in Spain, for example, wanted unencumbered land while Spanish aristocrats, oriented to gaining riches by warfare, wanted open range for sheep and cattle, or land for dependent cultivators. Prodded by eager rulers, and united in the hope of achieving their individual goals, these and other Spanish adventurers came to the New World. They found it populated with people who, though

speaking strange languages and behaving in peculiar manners, nevertheless lived by organized and settled routines.<sup>2</sup> To satisfy their own needs and the needs of the Crown, the settlers applied military and political pressures upon the Indians they conquered. They reorganized Indian routines to transfer wealth to Spanish hands "in a procedure that was more orderly than the outright looting of spoils" (Gibson 1966: 67). By appropriating wealth from the Indians, the conquistadors bore virtually no costs of production and, assuming they could meet the administrative costs of collection and enforcement, they found themselves in the enviable position of having access to what must have seemed like unlimited amounts of wealth.

The conquistadors first developed their methods of appropriation in the Caribbean, and then they refined them in Mexico and in Central and South America. As rewards for their military successes, the conquistadors came to expect, and the Crown came to authorize, awards of *encomienda*. These awards entitled a conquistador to tribute and labor services from a conquered Indian population that was defined by its residence in a specified area. In return, the *encomendero* had the obligation to protect and Christianize the Indian population entrusted to him. Through the *encomienda* the settlers incorporated native communities under Spanish rule, and relegated the Indians to the status of part-time laborers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On the motives of the Spaniards who came to the New World, see Wolf (1959a: 157-162) and Chevalier (1952: 23-35). On some of their perceptions of the Indians they met, see, for example, Zavala (1943: 33). Wolf (1959a: 49-151) has also provided a lucid overview of the Indian cultures of Middle America.

<sup>3</sup> Discussion of the principal features of the *encomienda* may be found in Zavala (1943: 69-75, 80-81, 84-85), Simpson (1950: 6-10), Wolf (1959a:

Within his area of entitlement, an encomendero usually placed tribute and labor service obligations upon a native local community as a whole. He would use native officeholders to exact his charges and, burdened with a community obligation, the Indians, in turn, tended to respond corporately. Upon their local leaders, they conferred "the right and duty to collect tribute, organize corvee labor, and to exercise formal and informal sanctions in the maintenance of peace and order" (Wolf 1957: 10). Furthermore, community members often devised corporate procedures to insure that no individual would be so impoverished by encomienda obligations that he could not meet his subsistence needs. The Indians redistributed local wealth, particularly through the religious system, and they maintained and distributed a body of rights granting minimum access to community possessions such as land. In these and other ways, members of native corporate communities bore the burdens of encomienda. They supported the bulk of Spanish settlement, they furnished the labor force required for Spanish enterprise and, above all, they provided the mineral wealth that served as the "driving force" of Spanish colonization (Wolf 1955: 456).<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately for the conquistadors, the development of Spanish rule on these terms encountered a number of obstacles. First, native Americans often resisted Spanish demands, or simply fled. In addition,

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189), Gibson (1964: 58; 1966: 49-50), and Lockhart (1969: 414-416, 420-422).

<sup>4</sup> For more details on the changing structure of Indian communities after the Conquest, see Chevalier (1952: 186-206), Wolf (1959a: 213-226), Gibson (1964: 127-135, 211-222; 1966: 148-149), Taylor (1972: 35-56, 70-73; 1974: 405-407), and MacLeod (1973: 326-328). Some Indians considered the resulting community pressures too severe and escaped them when they could. See Chevalier (1952: 198), Wolf (1959a: 206), MacLeod (1973: 296-297).

Indian populations were fatally susceptible to the diseases that the Spaniards carried and many of their communities disintegrated with the spread of virulent epidemics. Finally, the Spanish Crown sought politically to counter the increasing power of the conquistadors, and introduced some compelling obstacles of its own.

In the Antilles, where the Spaniards first attempted settlement, some Indian groups had resisted the appropriation of tribute by refusing to produce anything at all, even for themselves. Others succumbed to the new and unfamiliar diseases. By the time the colonists began turning to the mainland, the production of wealth in the islands had declined dramatically and the Indian population had virtually disappeared. In Mexico and Peru, on the other hand, the conquistadors found advanced civilizations that were more tractable to the demands of tribute and labor service. Indeed, the Aztec and Inca empires had such well developed systems of tribute that some of the more attentive conquistadors tried to approximate their own demands to those of the pre-conquest political order. Still, the mainland Indians were no less susceptible to disease. Between 1519 and 1650, for example, six-sevenths of the Indian population in Mesoamerica was wiped out.<sup>5</sup>

Given the enormous loss of human life, the imposition of the *encomienda* burden upon communities, rather than upon individuals, became increasingly important to the Spaniards, and all the more traumatic to the Indians. Regardless of individual losses, *encomenderos* still

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<sup>5</sup> On the Spanish colonies in the Antilles, see, for example, Simpson (1950: 1-55). Zavala (1943: 88) and Gibson (1966: 57) discussed Spanish adaptation to native tribute systems; but for some of the many difficulties the Spaniards had, see Gibson (1964: 66-76, 194-196). On the decimation of native population, and for some of the causes, see the summaries in Wolf (1959a: 195-199) and Gibson (1966: 63-64).

expected surviving members of native communities to meet their obligations, and this expectation drove the Indians to compensate for their losses in various ways. When it was possible to do so, for example, some Indians took up wage labor. But more characteristically, they emphasized the production of goods in which their particular community as a whole exercised some comparative advantage over other communities. And undoubtedly, for Indian villages to profit from specialization in the regional economies during the colonial period, they depended to a large extent on the continued existence of specialized classes--the hereditary nobles, traders, mayagues, slaves--and especially the artisans--the artists, builders, metal and stone workers, and weavers--all of whom had already emerged in the Pre-Conquest period.<sup>6</sup>

As long as the conquistadors could thus manipulate the existing Indian political economy through the twin controls of the encomienda, tribute and labor service, they held the possibility of steadily increasing their wealth at little or no cost, and this despite the precipitous decline in Indian population. The Spanish Crown, however, had recognized almost immediately that the encomenderos posed a severe threat to its own control over the colonial wealth. Acting in their trusteeships without restraint, the encomenderos became not only wealthy but powerful, and they gained an independence of the Crown much as the feudatories in Europe had acquired. To curtail this growing power, the Crown appointed royal governors and gave them, instead of the conquest

<sup>6</sup> Taylor (1974: 401), Wolf (1955: 460; 1959a: 226-228) and Gibson (1964: 198). The Indians also displayed a special facility for learning and developing new crafts and trades in the Spanish towns. See, for example, Wolf (1959a: 185-186).

leaders, the responsibility for assigning new encomiendas. In addition, the monarch began sending his jurists and lawyers to replace the conquistadors in all other important bureaucratic positions.<sup>7</sup> Then, in a series of actions culminating in the 1540s, the Crown urged its representatives to whittle down the prerogatives of the encomenderos with the goal of finally restoring royal authority.

Because, royal intervention initially met strong resistance in the colonies, the Crown moved quickly and deliberately to build its power base. To its goal of reinstating royal authority, it added the further intention of defending the Indians against the arbitrariness and harsh treatment of the encomenderos, and it thereby gained the alliance of those segments of the Catholic Church that had been lobbying for administrative reform. With Church backing, the Crown in 1542 promulgated the famous New Laws. These regulations abolished Indian slavery, forbade the granting of new encomiendas, ordered ecclesiastics and royal officers to relinquish their holdings, and allowed others to keep their grants only on the condition that they did not bequeath them. The colonists raised a general outcry against these radical measures, which clearly were calculated to destroy the encomienda within a generation. Open rebellion erupted in Peru and threatened elsewhere. In 1545, the Hapsburg Emperor himself recognized the unenforceability of many of the provisions and specifically repealed the prohibition on inheritance of the encomienda.<sup>8</sup> The settlers claimed victory in the

<sup>7</sup> On the growing power of the encomenderos, see Simpson (1950: 73-83), Chevalier (1952: 33) and Wolf (1959a: 189-190). For some of the early countermeasures: Simpson (1950: 84-122), Zavala (1943: 90-91), Chevalier (1952: 43), Wolf (1959a: 189-190), and Gibson (1966: 55-56).

<sup>8</sup> Simpson (1950: 123-144), Zavala (1943: 75-77), Chevalier (1952:

dispute, but the Crown promptly responded by endeavoring, somewhat more realistically, to regulate existing encomiendas and to control the behavior of the encomenderos.

First, from 1549 on, royal regulation managed to disrupt the connection between labor service and tribute. Encomenderos were no longer entitled to labor service and could only assess commodity tribute. Only later did the Crown then refuse to allow encomienda grants to extend into perpetuity. As individual encomiendas expired, the tribute taken was directed to the depleted royal treasury where it became an important part of the Crown's income until the end of the colonial era. In other words, against the aspirations of the encomenderos, Crown policy explicitly favored the native political economy, with its already highly developed specializations in trade, agriculture, and the crafts. Indeed, the Spanish monarchy came to depend crucially on these forms of economy and, through the continued exactions of tribute, preserved them to suit its own needs. Meanwhile, without benefit of labor services to advance the production of goods, the encomenderos found that the administrative costs of collecting tribute and the expense of paying clerics increasingly squeezed their profits. The encomienda had become "a precarious source of wealth" (MacLeod 1973: 288).<sup>9</sup>

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44-45), Gibson (1966: 58-59, 75-77), and MacLeod (1973: 107-119).

<sup>9</sup> See also Simpson (1950: 145-158), Zavala (1943: 78-79, 85-86), Chevalier (1952: 44-45, 119), Wolf (1959a: 190-191), Gibson (1964: 80-81; 1966: 59-65, 143).

Although depopulation and royal interference had combined to tame the encomienda, and then to eliminate it as a perduring institution, settlers did not give up their attempts to gain wealth in the colonies; they simply sought other means. Even before the encomienda privileges expired, in order to escape the obstacles that seemed destined to deprive them of a relatively free and comfortable level of living, many settlers had taken up rural land for ranching and for semi-subsistence farming. On the northern frontier, where vacant land was abundant, settlers purchased titles from the indigent Spanish Crown. Close to the great silver mines of the area, they supplied resident workers with much needed food and hides. In central Mexico and in the highlands to the south, Spaniards also obtained access to land, and they serviced nearby urban areas with grains that the declining Indian population found it increasingly difficult to provide. Despite the continuing drop in the number of Indians, however, these southern regions still were well-populated, and the colonists thus had to settle their land in coexistence with local Indian communities, many of whose members had wisely confirmed their rights of access to land in Spanish titles soon after the Conquest, and who now jealously defended, both at law and by force, their rights of access to land and their rights to continue practicing traditional forms of agriculture and crafts.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For the drive to take up land as the encomienda declined, see, in general, Borah (1951: 32-33) and Brading (1978: 7-8). Lockhart (1969: 416-418) outlined some of the structural implications of the encomienda for the processes by which Spaniards later obtained land. For the processes in northern Mexico, see Chevalier (1952: 54-56, 165-169) and Wolf (1959a: 191-192). For central and southern Mexico, and for Central America, see Chevalier (1952: 119-122, 134-146) and MacLeod (1973: 217-224). On the resistance displayed by Indians in the populous regions to the south, see, for example, Chevalier (1952: 196-198), Gibson (1964: 271, 285-288) and Taylor (1972: 77-84; 1974:

Unfortunately for the Spanish cultivators and ranchers in all these areas, the silver mines began to fail early in the seventeenth century. Largely because the operators lacked sufficient supplies of mercury, an essential ingredient in the extraction process, many of the mines closed. Settlers in the north lost the prime market for their produce. Moreover, as silver exports dwindled, and as the Indians continued to die, the need for administrators in the towns and cities to the south lessened, and a growing number of Spaniards there sought rural land. Competition among Spanish producers thus stiffened, prices fell and profits began to vanish.<sup>11</sup>

North and south, Spanish farmers and ranchers had little recourse to export markets. Overseas travel along the Spanish Main suffered persistent attacks by privateers of rival European nations. Transportation from the interior to the coast was difficult and costly. And, except for service provided to cultivators in easily accessible properties along the coast, the merchants whom the Crown had authorized to monopolize the colonial trade refused to handle anything but mineral wealth. As a result, in northern Mexico during the seventeenth century, settlers largely abandoned the land, although some remained to "vegetate in mere self-subsistence" (Brading 1971: 13). In central Mexico and in the southern highlands, the economy fragmented into small markets surrounding the local urban centers. Spanish producers in these areas, especially cultivators of wheat, did not do particularly well, for they

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402-403, 408).

<sup>11</sup> Borah (1951: 43-44) and Brading (1971: 9-12; 1978: 8-9) have outlined some of the main reasons for the failures of the Mexican silver mines. For some of the consequences, see Chevalier (1952: 66, 178-181), MacLeod (1973: 217-224, 282-302) and Brading (1978: 9).

competed not only against other Spaniards, but also, in the grain market, against Indian maize cultivators. Indian production of corn fluctuated widely from season to season, however, and Spanish producers soon realized that they could profit greatly only if they could be prepared, when Indian production failed, to exploit the large, normally self-sufficient market of Indian communities. So they devised a productive institution, the hacienda, that was uniquely suited to markets that occasionally grew large, often were small and, during the times when the Indians did exceptionally well, all but disappeared.<sup>12</sup>

Spanish producers had little capital. So to generate wealth, they had to economize their labor costs. For the ability to expand periodically to meet large markets, they specifically had to have ready access to cheap labor-power other than their own and, simultaneously, so they could contract efficiently when markets shrunk, they had to have no

<sup>12</sup> Chevalier (1952: 48-49) and Mörner (1973: 204-205) reviewed some of the problems with Spanish overseas trade from Mexico. Indigo was an important export from Central America at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but it too declined, in part, because of these trade problems. See MacLeod (1973: 176-203). On the fragmentation of the local internal markets, see Chevalier (1952: 291-292), MacLeod (1973: 291-292, 311) and Taylor (1974: 394, 397). Wolf (1959a: 178-182) surveyed the variety of crops produced for local consumption. For the competitive pressures, especially in the grain market, see, for example, Chevalier (1952: 51-52, 59-65), Gibson (1964: 310-312, 322-334) and Brading (1978: 10-11). Taylor (1972: 140-142) discussed the economic instability among the Spanish producers in the Valley of Oaxaca at this time. For various definitions of the hacienda, and for discussions of the conditions from which they generally sprang, see Wolf and Mintz (1957: 380, 386-395), Taylor (1972: 121-123; 1974: 391-393) and Mörner (1973: 185-186, 188-192, 203-205). Also see MacLeod (1973: 227-228), who argued that Spaniards in the countryside of Central America "had neither the resources, the manpower, nor the capital to mount large-scale agricultural enterprises. Above all, there was a lack of internal markets." The disappearance of markets was only temporary, however, and haciendas arose as "asylums to which the Spaniards had reluctantly retreated to await better days." It thus seems that the irregularity of local markets, not necessarily their small size, was

lasting and costly commitments to their laborers. Although the benefits of labor service under the encomienda system could have met these requirements, any encomenderos who remained among the Spanish farmers and ranchers had long since lost the privileges of Indian labor. Under another system known as repartimiento, however, the Spanish Crown had reserved to itself the right to demand Indian labor service, and it conducted an official exchange to allocate the available workers. A fixed percentage of the able-bodied males of each community formed a pool of laborers who were liable to be drafted in rotation. By Crown authorization, many owners of landed estates were entitled to receive a number of Indian workers for a designated period, for particular tasks, and with the only obligation being the payment of a minimal wage.<sup>13</sup>

Repartimiento labor helped the struggling Spanish hacendados to some extent. But the ever-diminishing Indian population and the Crown's own demands on the drafted laborers for royal projects gradually made the private allocations irregular and unpredictable. In any case, the estate owners had no great desire to remain under the restrictive umbrella of the Spanish Crown, so they resorted to other means of recruiting laborers for the times when they needed them most. Some leased portions of their land to Indians who could then double as estate workers when required. Others simply paid a daily wage to Indians from nearby villages and dismissed the laborers as soon as markets turned

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one of the essential conditions underlying the development of the hacienda.

<sup>13</sup> For discussion of repartimiento, see Zavala (1943: 94-97), Borah (1951: 35-36), Chevalier (1952: 66-69), Wolf (1959a: 191), Gibson (1964: 224-236; 1966: 143-145), Taylor (1972: 144-147), and MacLeod (1973: 208-209, 295-296).

sour. But many others secured a ready and cheap body of workers by advancing Indians sums of money that the natives could never pay back. Legally tied to the estate by their debts, the Indians were in no position to pressure for increased wages. Moreover, in the event that the market contracted and the estate could no longer offer employment, the hacendado could enjoy the privilege of watching his indebted laborers, or peons, fend locally for themselves in petty trade, subsistence agriculture, or native crafts, and yet still remain obligated to him whenever he needed them.<sup>14</sup> With their various complements of cheap laborers, haciendas thus afforded their owners the unique ability "to retrench in times of adverse markets" and "to increase production if demand rose" (Wolf 1959a: 210). Bearing only a small labor cost in a time of primitive accumulation, these institutions enriched their owners, and became one of the characteristic features of Spanish colonial settlement in the region.

Much as they envied the mineral wealth that Spain first extracted from its colonies of conquest in the New World, none of the other European nations were able to duplicate the Spanish achievement. But then neither did other European colonists in the New World find comparable native civilizations whose great wealth, which was based in part on the practice of local crafts, they could readily extract, and whose people they could readily exploit to resolve the persistent

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<sup>14</sup> For discussions of the various methods of labor recruitment used by the colonial hacendados, see Zavala (1943: 98-99), Borah (1951: 36-43), Chevalier (1952: 69, 277-278), Gibson (1964: 246-256; 1966: 146-147), Taylor (1972: 143-152), MacLeod (1973: 224-226, 296-297), and Brading (1978: 9-10). On status relations within the hacienda, see, for example, Chevalier (1952: 292-299), Wolf and Mintz (1957: 387), and Wolf (1959a: 207-210).

problem of colonial labor scarcity. Nor did settlers from other European nations suffer the irregularities and weaknesses of local markets.

Elsewhere, New World colonists depended on their own labor or on that of immigrants from abroad, and they did so in the context of colonial markets that generally were steady and regular, although some markets were rather narrow and small, while others proved quite wide and large. The eventual development of production on haciendas in the New World thus remained, like the extraction of gold and silver, largely a Spanish phenomenon. Still, the differences of other European colonies in the New World from the colonies of Spain did not simply begin with differing endowments of mineral wealth, nor end with market differences.

Occasionally, other Europeans set out like Spain to create a colony by conquest. But when they did, their object was most often the land held by other Europeans. Given growing evidence that native states similar to the Aztec and Inca empires did not exist elsewhere in the New World, European colonists accordingly modified their aims for establishing colonies in other areas, such as eastern North America, and they varied their treatment of the native people. Thus, Englishmen acquired their colonial foothold in the northeast part of the continent not by conquest but by cultivating the Indian trade, and in Virginia they settled by forming as soon as possible a colony of production.

## 5.2 EASTERN NORTH AMERICA: INDIANS AND EUROPEAN TRADE

While they were developing their settlements in the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, and South America, the Spanish did not totally ignore the eastern North American continent. Until 1561, they actively explored as far north as the Chesapeake Bay in efforts to gauge the wealth they might procure from the region. However, the potential of North America for development began to lose much of its attraction as French encroachments in the New World increasingly threatened the safety of the Spanish fleet that transported goods to and from already established colonies. Moreover, when John Hawkins appeared in the Caribbean in 1562, he marked the arrival of a new threat to Spanish America, the English. From that point on, Spanish interest in eastern North America tended to focus on settlements established for defensive, not expansionary, reasons. Spaniards sought to pacify the Indians in Florida, primarily through missionary activity, and to control thereby the Florida coast, from which they could then protect the passage of the Spanish fleet through the vital Bahama Channel.<sup>15</sup>

French and British pirates persistently harassed the Spanish fleets in the Caribbean during the latter half of the sixteenth century and, in this, they were supported by Dutch and Portuguese interlopers. But European opposition to Spain was not confined to arenas in the New World. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 off the coast of England dealt Spain a particularly stunning blow. In 1609, Holland gained independence from Spain. A class of merchant businessmen subsequently rose to power in the new Dutch state and, in 1621,

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<sup>15</sup> For details of the Spanish expansion along the North American coast, see, for example, Sturtevant (1962: 46-49, 54-64).

established the formidable Dutch West India Company. By the early seventeenth century, Spain not only had its attention diverted from North American expansion, but the balance of European power had so shifted that Spain could no longer resist all the territorial claims of the French, British and Dutch, particularly all their claims in the West Indies. The Dutch West India Company, being the most forceful claimant during the early seventeenth century, cornered the West Indian trade routes, attacked the Portuguese colony in Brazil, opened the fringes of the Caribbean to settlement, and helped the English and French to establish thriving West Indian colonies.

Meanwhile, the French, English and, to a lesser extent, the Dutch had also developed a lively interest in eastern North America and, after several decades of activity, they had a vivid sense of its potential wealth. Before 1600, the French and English even had established several short-lived settlements along the coast. When the English finally gained an adequate foothold in the early seventeenth century, they attempted to duplicate the Spanish production of mineral wealth; but they failed miserably. Captain John Smith, for example, reported with dismay that Englishmen in early Virginia, for all the enthusiasm with which they searched for gold and silver, were rewarded only with shiploads of "so much gilded dirt" (quoted in Nash 1974: 49).

If the promise of mineral wealth in North America ultimately was not fulfilled, the French, English and Dutch had become well aware that New World gold could take other forms. French fishermen who had been working the fertile waters off the coast of Newfoundland visited the Saint Lawrence River as early as 1535 and found Indians willing to trade

the skins of fur-bearing animals for European goods. Stimulated by the prospect of enhancing their wealth in furs, Europeans anxiously explored the North American coast and learned much about the native inhabitants.<sup>16</sup>

In general, they found that "the Indians lived according to a well-ordered and impressively complex system of government. They dwelled in secure villages, had substantial houses and extensive gardens, and had a notable assemblage of artifacts for utilitarian, religious and decorative purposes" (Lurie 1959: 44). But explorers and traders also noted how markedly different North American social organization was from that of the high civilizations of Mesoamerica and South America. Native North Americans had not drawn rigid class lines nor as subjects to government were they "accustomed to supporting the luxury of a theocratic state apparatus" (Leacock 1971: 7). The scale of social organization was much smaller, making for less dense settlements than those found in Spanish America and having the consequence that, as a whole, native North American were not so easily subjugated. There were, of course, pockets of settlements with dense population under powerful, sometimes shifting, political alliances. The interior tribes of the eastern Great Lakes region, such as the Huron and the Iroquois, represented one locus of power at the time of European colonization, and another could be found in the Chesapeake region where Powhatan had warded off the inland tribes of the Piedmont and had consolidated his hold on a confederacy of coastal tribes. But by contrast, in what was to become New England, pressures from the Eastern Iroquois and internal

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Hunt (1940: 16-17), Brassler (1971: 66-68; 1978: 79-80) and Nash (1974: 34).

rivalries sharply divided and systematically weakened the political organization of the local peoples.<sup>17</sup>

It is doubtful whether any European nation, other than Spain, could have mustered either the manpower or the state financing for a major military effort of conquest in the New World during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But once traders and explorers became aware of the general characteristics of North American Indian societies and had satisfied themselves, and those in their mother countries, that native North Americans were not organized to yield the wealth either of the Aztecs or of the Incas, they adopted strategies more suited to the nature of local tribal circumstances and to the expected scale of return. At various junctures in the colonial period, settlers did use force, incorporate some tribes, and appropriate wealth as tribute. But, for the most part, especially in the northeast part of the continent, the French, English and Dutch each tried to cultivate Indian interest in trade. And, up and down the coast, they all learned, though some of course better than others, to make use of Indian alliances and rivalries in order to channel the trade to their own advantage or to obtain land for settlement. Similarly, many Indians learned the nature and extent of the rivalries among Europeans and, by manipulating these relationships, they sought advantages over other Indians in obtaining desired trade goods and in diking the flood of European colonization.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Hunt (1940: 32-33), Leach (1958: 23-24), Lurie (1959: 39-43), Washburn (1959: 23-24), Vaughan (1965: 27-63), Brassler (1971: 68-70, 73; 1978: 84-85), Nash (1974: 15-25, 49, 76-78), Morgan (1975: 48-58), Sheehan (1980: 90-93, 155-157), and Wright (1981: 16, 60).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Brassler (1971: 74-77; 1978: 82-85) and Nash (1974: 49, 66-67), Sheehan (1980: 153-155), and Wright (1981: 68-70, 94-96, 106-116, 135-144).

Relations with native Americans thus counted among the prime factors in the early history of North American colonial politics and diplomacy, and considerations based on trade relations were particularly important. In the northeast, the French settled colonists at their Canadian outposts between 1598 and 1604, to solidify their claims on the Indian trade against the Dutch and the English. The Dutch, in turn, after opening the Hudson River to trade in 1610, planted settlers in New Amsterdam at the mouth of the river in 1624. It was the English, however, who made the most vigorous attempts at settlement in the northeast, in Massachusetts, starting in 1620.

#### 5.2.1 From Trading Posts to Farm Colonies in New England

In general, New England settlement followed the fur trade. As traders opened the river courses, the fringes of settlement spread. For a time, New England traders accepted the support of other kinds of colonists. But it became increasingly evident that encroachments by settlers endangered the habitat of the beaver and threatened to upset the precarious balance the traders had struck with local Indians. When colonists began moving into the Connecticut River Valley during the 1630s, for example, the Pequot Indians attacked to defend their rights to the land. The settlers won, however, and, as they pressed their claims from the south and the east, the New England fur traders and Indians were also being squeezed on the north and west by French and Dutch inroads. Not until 1664, when the English wrested control of New York from the Dutch, did the fur traders finally discover a satisfactory outlet for their energies. Unfortunately, the New England Indians

eventually found none. They mustered a major effort in a series of battles begun in 1675, known as King Philip's War; but they were soundly and decisively crushed. The fur trade subsequently dissipated in New England and "those Indians who survived the struggle of 1675-1676 were forced to recognize the stark fact of English supremacy" (Leach 1958: 245).<sup>19</sup>

Although the use of military force thus occasionally became necessary, merchants not military men had originally sponsored New England settlement. English merchants sought the returns of the fur trade and aimed to lower costs and increase profits by encouraging self-subsistent residents in the New World to process the goods on a large scale. In the first decade of settlement, however, the expected profits did not materialize. Early settlers often had to relocate their original settlements and seek the assistance of local Indians before they could set up agricultural production. Conflicts arose and, growing quickly impatient, the merchants withdrew their original support and "either ceased to concern themselves with the settlers or restricted their interest in them to sending over English goods at exorbitant prices." But the people at Plymouth eventually discovered the value of wampum to the Maine Indians, and when they did, "their trade balances rose significantly." By the end of the 1620s, colonial products included fish and timber, and the added value "offered English merchants

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<sup>19</sup> For the colonial expansion that closely followed the fur trade, and for some of the conflicts, both internal and external, that it generated in the English settlements, see, for example, Buffinton (1916), Bailyn (1955: 23-30, 49-60), Lurie (1959: 53), and Craven (1968: 115-116). For the story of the Pequot War, see Vaughan (1965: 122-154). Leach (1958) has provided a detailed account of King Philip's War.

new inducements to invest in voyages to New England" (Bailyn 1955: 11, 13, 15).

The steady influx of new arrivals bearing ready cash and needing to purchase food, among other necessities, stimulated the production of an agricultural surplus in the 1630s, as well as a network of local artisans and merchants to process and to distribute the goods. By 1639, however, the rate of arrivals slowed and the market created by the newcomers consequently began to contract. Cultivators found it harder to dispose of their products, the prices for which fell, while the demand for manufactured imports continued to rise. To reduce the level of imports, New England leaders began adopting austerity measures, and to preserve a favorable balance of trade, they offered financial inducements for the local production of cloth and iron. Despite these measures, however, the proposed industries failed to attract much interest. Instead, as Edward Johnson wrote, the settlers "deem it better for their profit to put away their cattle and corn for clothing, than to set upon the making of cloth" (quoted in Bailyn 1955: 74). They did so, in part, because enterprising merchants from the Bay colony, probably through contacts in the English trading centers, became acquainted with the agricultural needs of Spaniards and islanders across the Atlantic and endeavored to satisfy those needs.<sup>20</sup>

The diverse overseas markets were not especially large, nor was their expansion certain. But during the 1640s, especially in the Caribbean Sea, planters of such staple crops as cotton and sugar began to demand the grains that glutted the Bay area so they could feed their

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<sup>20</sup> Bailyn (1955: 46-49, 61-74) and Rutman (1963: 397-401). For more detail on the ironworks project, see Dunn (1962: 87-96).

laborers, and they wanted New England wood products to construct their estates. They thus afforded enterprising merchants a potentially lucrative opportunity, and the New Englanders moved quickly to enter the widely-flung Atlantic trade networks that arose. They "sought relations with the English houses and their agents, selling their produce through them in order to build up credits in England against the purchase of goods for importation into the Commonwealth [of Massachusetts]" (Rutman 1963: 405). In this way, the merchants created new markets to sustain New England agricultural production. Seeking even greater profits, the merchants tried to expand their investments upon this agricultural basis, and many themselves took up ownership of the land. By 1650, the fur trade, the prime attraction of early colonial settlement in New England, had become "only one of the forms of investment, perhaps the most speculative form, open to enterprising men" (Buffinton 1916: 177 n.1).<sup>21</sup>

Evidently, New England settlers were not indifferent to profit-seeking and, when they could, they promptly took advantage of profitable economic opportunities. But many of the settlers had come to America seeking not only profit but also relief from the pressures of religious persecution in England. When they arrived in New England, they incorporated villages with the aim of preserving their religious identities. To establish their versions of the religious "city upon a hill," the corporate villagers obtained a grant of land for settlement

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<sup>21</sup> On the growing importance of New England trade in the Caribbean during this period, particularly in Barbados, see Harlow (1926: 268-291). See also Barnes (1923: 137) and Bidwell and Falconer (1925: 42-45, 133-137). Bailyn (1955: 76-91, 98-105) and Rutman (1963: 401-407, 413-414) have focused on the techniques used by the New England merchants to expand their trade.

from the General Court of the colony. Then, to obtain legitimate title, they had to effect a transfer from the local Indians. The practice of purchasing Indian land progressed very slowly, however, if it progressed at all, and many communities justified their claims to land solely on the basis of their effective occupation following a colonial grant. Those villages that did obtain title almost always did so "in order to obtain a favorable settlement in a situation where the same tract of land was coveted by both English and Dutch settlers or by rival English groups" (Nash 1974: 82). Later on, these various and sometimes inconsistent justifications for rightful access to land in New England gave rise to much administrative confusion, and prompted officials of the short-lived Dominion of New England to demand that all property be repatented.<sup>22</sup>

But based upon their claims of rightful access, however sound these ultimately proved to be, towns nevertheless allocated land rights to individuals identified as members of the community. In general, the towns strove to distribute the land equitably; all members received a house lot, cultivation land, and rights to common pasture. Of course, there were customary allowances made in some places for so-called "rank and quality" among community members (Lockridge 1970: 11-12), for

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<sup>22</sup> The religious foundations of New England are well known, but for one historical account that links the religious motives of the New England settlers to the political isolation of their communities, see Dunn (1962: 6-56). Lockridge (1970: 16-19) took this theme one step further and, drawing on the peasant studies of anthropologist Eric Wolf, described one early New England town as a "Christian Utopian Closed Corporate Community." On the settlers' various methods for obtaining legitimate access to land, see, for example, Barnes (1923: 43-44, 176-192), Akagi (1924: 5-13, 15-49), Bidwell and Falconer (1925: 49-50), Vaughan (1965: 104-121), Bushman (1967: 41-47), and Craven (1968: 110-111).

differing family sizes, and for the uneven qualities of the soil. In addition, some people with recognized abilities as cultivators received special consideration in the allotment of farm land. For the most part, however, the market for agricultural produce was so small during the early years of settlement that few New Englanders had sufficient economic grounds for actively seeking more than their fair share of land and for thereby risking disruption of the closely-knit foundations of the new communities. Early New England thus comprised colonies of Puritans who, among other things cultivated equivalent portions of land for narrow local markets, and did so largely by themselves, with their own two hands and perhaps with the help of their families.<sup>23</sup>

As the New England merchants broadened their networks and found more diverse markets, however, farm production among the Puritans gradually gave rise to specialists in other forms of economic activity, and this development soon soon helped to alter the subtle blend of forces in the New England towns. By the late 1640s, under the influence of locally-based merchants the locus of agricultural production began to shift from Massachusetts to more fertile land along the Connecticut River where towns had become, according to one observer, "exceedingly abounding in corne . . . the fruitfullest places in all New England" (quoted in Rutman 1963: 409). The produce from these towns was collected at various points on the river for transshipment to the port of

<sup>23</sup> On this last point, see, for example, Bushman (1967: 30), who observed that "most men could afford to hire extra hands only at harvest or when constructing a building. Lacking help, they contented themselves with supplying their families and perhaps slaughtering an animal or two to send to market along with a few bushels of grain." For the principles of distributing land to town members, see Akagi (1924: 103-114), Bidwell and Falconer (1925: 49-58), Labaree (1933: 4-14), and Lockridge (1970: 8-10, 70-74).

Boston, where it was then exported across the Atlantic, or used to outfit and provision the ships themselves. But rooted in farm production, all this trade clearly entailed still further needs: for shipwrights and carpenters to build and repair the ships, for butchers to slaughter cattle and salt the beef, for millers and bakers to process grain and make bread and biscuits, and for coopers to build casks to hold these and other products. Moreover, the broad base of increasingly prosperous agricultural communities offered an additional market for which these and other artisans could generalize the knowledge and experience that they gained in the export trade. Coopers could widen their market for containers by making cabinets; carpenters apprenticed to build ships could use their skills to build homes; and butchers and bakers producing for export presumably operated on a scale sufficiently large that they could offer their products cheaply enough to attract a home market as well.<sup>24</sup>

With the growth and diversification of economic activity in the 1640s and 1650s, then, artisans, merchants and even laborers became more noticeable in the New England towns, though of course not always to the same degree. The particular features of the developments varied considerably but, in general, given the growing number of people, who had increasingly little use for the agricultural qualities of the soil, the distinction between resident members of the community and the farmers who had proprietary rights to arable land became more and more

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<sup>24</sup> For an overview of agricultural activity in colonial Connecticut, see Daniels (1980: 429-434). On the internal trade within early colonial New England, and for the rise of craft manufactures, see Barnes (1923: 137-149), Labaree (1933: 14-16), Rutman (1963: 407, 410-415) and, again, Daniels (1980: 438-443).

important. In some places, the principle of land distribution shifted from a principle of equal allocations for all residents to one of proportional allocations based on previous holdings and use. In almost all cases, the agricultural proprietors formed a privileged subcorporation within the town to tend to the administration of arable land, while the town council formed another to treat the expanded affairs of the residents in general. The group of proprietors acted especially to protect the interests of landholding farmers against those, including town residents, who sought to narrow or infringe their rights or who sought to tax them.<sup>25</sup>

Proprietors of New England farms thus responded to land-use pressures at the local level in their towns and at the level of the respective colony-wide governments. But of the challenges they confronted, none threatened their existence more seriously than those tendered by the British Crown. New England merchants, farmers and artisans had allied to corner some lucrative overseas markets for local agricultural produce at a time when England suffered the turmoil of the Civil War and Cromwell's Protectorate. This alliance had jelled in the creation of the fiercely independent, almost impudent, colonies of New England. Following the Stuart Restoration in 1660, however, the Crown mounted a concerted effort to establish firmer control over all its subject colonies, and especially those in New England.

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<sup>25</sup> Akagi (1924: 4-5, 55-80), Bidwell and Falconer (1925: 56-58), Labaree (1933: 6-11, 18-23), Bushman (1967: 43-53), and Lockridge (1970: 80-82). Greene (1974: 173-180) has provided a helpful review that indicates how widespread these internal divisions and conflicts actually were in New England.

The Crown did not always formulate its colonial policies clearly and when it did, the policies often met with various kinds of opposition that prevented their full realization. But, in general, the Stuarts consistently sought two principal goals: they aimed to realize maximum revenue through customs by regulating trade within the Empire, and they also sought to incorporate individual colonial governments into a single administrative framework. After some experimentation, the Crown eventually began to create a bureaucratic structure with low-level agents to monitor affairs in the colonies. Customs officials were among the earliest of these agents posted to the colonies. Where royal intervention met with opposition, as it did in New England, the Crown challenged the very basis of the opposition by questioning the original colonial charters. These challenges culminated in New England with the formation during 1685 of the Dominion of New England, an administrative structure that eventually spanned the colonies from Maine to New Jersey.<sup>26</sup>

Some in New England saw potential advantages in the closer ties to England that were implied by Dominion rule. Among these were merchants who hoped to expand their businesses and perhaps even to participate in the trade of plantation products, such as cotton and sugar, that were becoming staples of emergent British industry. Representatives of such people were originally included in the governing Council of the newly-formed Dominion. But Sir Edmund Andros, the new Governor-General, frequently ignored the Council and, to the further

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<sup>26</sup> Barnes (1923: 11-33), Bailyn (1955: 112-114, 143, 154-170), Craven (1968: 165-171), and Lovejoy (1972: 126-132). For an account focusing on one of the more famous Crown agents in the in the colonies, see Hall (1960).

chagrin of the merchants, he insisted upon the strict enforcement of the navigation acts. Because these acts favored plantation products at customs, not local farm produce, the merchants were disabled in the international market and, "temporarily, at least, trade was completely ruined" in New England (Barnes 1923: 169). Some merchants began accomodating their economic interests to fit the new conditions, and they sought to spare the colonies from complete disaster by organizing the increased production of such staples as copper and naval stores.<sup>27</sup>

Given proper administrative direction and support, perhaps they could have redirected New England production away from its farm basis and oriented it more towards plantation production. Andros, however, succesfully managed to isolate himself from all possible elements of support for such a policy. Without a representative assembly and ignoring the advice of his Council, Andros implemented a tax structure that fell heavily on agricultural communities and on petty merchants. He restricted the number of town meetings residents could hold. Particularly galling to staunch Puritans, he denied the towns the right to collect the church rate for the support of ministers, and he sponsored the Anglican Church. Finally, and most disturbing of all, Andros attempted to correct the widespread defects in the land titles of the New Englanders. He aimed to repatent the colonists' property, charging a fee for the service, and he brought the matter to issue with a test case in court citing five of the largest landholders in the Dominion.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See especially Barnes (1923: 8-10, 73-76, 170-172). Also see Bailyn (1955: 169-170, 175-176, 180-182), Craven (1968: 218), and Dunn (1970: 63-64).

These concerted actions had the effect of uniting the various parties in New England on only one thing: their utter opposition to Andros and the Dominion. When word arrived in Boston of the Glorious Revolution in England, the militia mutinied, armed citizens roamed the streets, and the gentlemen of the city directed the arrest of Andros. The Dominion government fell, but the economic effects of its overthrow were largely conservative.<sup>29</sup> Although the political future of the New England colonies subsequently remained in doubt for some time, "trade immediately sought its old channels" (Barnes 1923: 172). The Glorious Revolution in New England thus restored local commerce to its former basis in widely diverse markets, each of relatively small size, and it reversed the inclination towards large-scale staple production. But as English colonists thereby secured the place of farm production and of related crafts in New England colonies, where original settlers had meant to cultivate the Indian trade, English colonists further to the South in Virginia struggled to develop the plantations that had served to provide a staple crop for a large foreign market almost from the inception of the colony.

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<sup>28</sup> Barnes (1923: 80-100, 113-134, 169-171, 188-211), Akagi (1924: 115-124), Bailyn (1955: 169-170, 190-192), Craven (1968: 218-222), Dunn (1969: 65, 67-69), and Lovejoy (1972: 180-219).

<sup>29</sup> Barnes (1923: 231-261), Craven (1968: 223-227), and Lovejoy (1972: 235-250).

### 5.2.2 The English in Virginia: The Development of a Plantation Colony

Spaniards and New Englanders came to the New World and, one way or another, returned wealth to their respective mother countries. If, as settlers, they could not agree among themselves how best to produce the wealth, they were at least united on other narrow purposes. Early Spanish colonists dedicated themselves to a policy of military conquest, while New Englanders expressed a religious fervor in which they saw their actions justified before God. When the Englishmen who came to settle Virginia landed at Jamestown in 1607, they came prepared to court and, if necessary, to browbeat and bully Powhatan's Indians for assistance and corn. However, they were not prepared to exert the military belligerence of the New World conquistadors from Spain. And if the Virginians were not united on a mission of conquest neither did they agree that they bore a mission of salvation. Indeed, the Englishmen who came to Virginia could agree on almost nothing except that they hoped vaguely with Richard Hakluyt "that thereupon we may devise what means may be thought of to rayse trades" (quoted in Craven 1949: 35).

The Virginia Company was experimental and speculative in its program to produce goods for trade with England, and the great London merchants who invested in the Company understood that it might take some time for them to see a return on their capital. Lesser merchants who invested in the venture, however, wanted to see quicker action because they could not so easily afford to have their capital tied up for very long. Unfortunately for the smaller investors, indiscipline and other problems of communal organization among the settlers blocked any quick realization of company goals; and none of these problems proved more

detrimental than those that derived, at least in part, from the very nature of the Company's program. Because of its speculative nature, the Company accepted a disproportionate number of English gentlemen who supplied needed funds but who, with their attendants, also wished to accompany their investment to the new colony. In addition, because of its experimental nature, the Company recruited a great variety of craftsmen to process the many different riches that the sponsors hoped to find.<sup>30</sup>

The Company thus included as colonists an oversupply of people who were distinctly unsuited to carving a settlement from the New World wilderness. Artisans, gentlemen and attendants simply did not have the stamina nor the will to endure the backbreaking toil of clearing land, raising fortifications and tilling the soil. For such tasks, the Company sought cheap laborers and made attractive offers of indenture to lure England's poor and wayward to the New World. But then, even after this motley assortment of settlers had endured several years of bickering hardship and had finally established a foothold on the land, they were dismayed to find so little wealth. The settling of Virginia was not intended as a gold hunt, but the colonists fully expected to find gold, and they were disappointed and became even more quarrelsome when they did not. The timber and sassafras that counted among the early exports of the colony largely proved unprofitable and, by 1619, the "principall wealth" of which discouraged settlers like John Pory could boast "consisteth in servants," that is, in other settlers (quoted

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Craven (1949: 46-47, 60-61, 82-88), Bailyn (1959: 92-93) and Morgan (1975: 44-45, 71-86, 92-93).

in Smith 1947: 13).<sup>31</sup>

Theoretically, the Virginia Company aimed to support a wide and balanced program of colonial production. But at a very early stage, the demand of many investors for a quick return of capital caused the Company to emphasize the extractive industries. And the impatience of these investors was hardly lessened by the apparently dissolute character of the Company's settlers. The Virginia colonists were unwilling, or unable, to produce enough food to feed themselves, and they grew desperate for a means of exchange to obtain needed subsistence goods. Experiments with Virginia tobacco in the London market in 1614 seemed promising and, despite the opinion of King James I, who detested the weed as an "abomination to the devil" and who sought to tax it out of existence, the trade soon expanded (Williams 1957: 404). By 1615, merchants imported nearly 13,000 pounds sterling worth of tobacco from Virginia and, by 1621, they imported over 55,000 pounds sterling worth. The duty on the leaf began to fill the King's treasury and to soften his objections. Meanwhile, the success of the tobacco trade encouraged Virginians like Edwin Sandys to believe that his fellow settlers would eventually be able to produce other, more "staple and solide commodities" (quoted in Morgan 1975: 95).<sup>32</sup>

As the tobacco trade expanded, however, the settlers only planted more of the weed. They thus made wider territorial claims on Virginia's soil and this, of course, was not lost on the local Indians. In 1622,

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<sup>31</sup> See further Smith (1947: 8-16). Also see Craven (1949: 67-71, 88-90, 108-109) and Morgan (1975: 45, 86-89, 94-98, 106-107).

<sup>32</sup> Craven (1949: 47-48, 115, 123-124, 139-146), Williams (1957: 404-405), Morgan (1975: 102-105, 108-113), and Menard (1980: 123, 126-129).

powhatan's son launched an attack on the colony and massacred several hundred settlers. The remaining colonists retaliated swiftly and brutally. But their prompt reaction could not hide the underlying decay of the original Virginia Company. Now nearly bankrupt, the Company had tried to implement goals that were too broad for the financial resources that it had available, and too demeaning for its leading personnel. Servants continued to arrive in the colony without the supplies to sustain them and, if the settlers did not perish from disease and starvation, they were left vulnerable to Indian attack. Moreover, weak and ineffectual, the Company could not prevent private traders from plying Virginia's waterways and stimulating increased production of tobacco. Operating what one scholar has characterized as "moving taverns," these traders exchanged spirit for smoke, quenching the tobacco planters' thirsts and taking as payment the weed that would otherwise have benefited the Company (Morgan 1975: 113). Some of the big planters got to the merchants first, engrossed needed commodities and came to dominate the local trade by forcing smaller planters to sell their tobacco crop to them at reduced prices in order to obtain necessary items.<sup>33</sup>

While the tobacco market thus boomed virtually unchecked, crudely ambitious tobacco planters sought to consolidate their control by seizing what little power was left in the council offices of the Company. The Company still imported laborers and "by no coincidence, the council consisted almost entirely of the men holding large numbers

<sup>33</sup> Craven (1949: 146-147) and Morgan (1975: 98-99, 104, 113-116). See Vaughan (1978) for an account of events leading up to the Indian attacks on the English settlers in Virginia during 1622. See also Sheehan (1980: 144-176) and Wright (1981: 73-76).

of servants" (Morgan 1975: 123-124). Following a royal inquiry, James finally dissolved the Virginia Company and placed the colony under his personal control. Charles I, James' son and successor in 1625, shared his father's distaste for the course Virginia was following and, with the carrot of representative government, he tried to lure the owners of tobacco plantations toward more diversified economic practices. By 1627, however, he had to recognize the strength of their addiction to the weed, and he aptly exclaimed that the colony was "wholly built upon smoke" (quoted in Beer 1908: 91). By 1630, the planters had claimed the privilege of representative government as their right and, in 1635, they used it to advantage by successfully having a quarrelsome royal governor recalled to England.<sup>34</sup>

By the late 1640s, the merchants trading for Virginia tobacco hailed not only from London, but also from Bristol, New England, and the Netherlands. The planters welcomed the merchants whose very diversity of origin indicated that tobacco had come to hold a market that, if it was not booming as it had in the 1620s, was at least large and broadly-centered. New England and Bristol merchants, however, brought only a limited range of goods in return for transporting tobacco. The Dutch were more experienced traders, offering goods that satisfied most of the settlers' needs, occasionally making credit available and bringing slaves to the very few who could afford them. But it was the London merchants who could best service the Virginia's needs for capital, for cheap indentured laborers, and for consumer goods. And

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<sup>34</sup> Craven (1949: 147-164), Bailyn (1959: 93-98), and Morgan (1975: 117-130, 143-145):

there the tobacco trade concentrated.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, it was through London that a new infusion of wealth and talent began entering Virginia at mid-century. The immigrants included refugees of the English Civil War, but the most important among them were "the younger sons of substantial families well connected in London business and governmental circles" (Bailyn 1959: 98). They came to Virginia, made substantial investments in tobacco production, commanded indentured laborers, parlayed small properties into larger ones, expanded the fringe of settlement, and sought to express their power through the local county jurisdictions.<sup>36</sup> The arrival of this new elite, however, marked the beginning of profound changes in the character of the colony. The actions of new and wealthy planters tended to exacerbate some of the persistent difficulties in the organization of Virginia's staple economy at a time when new problems began to mount to crisis proportions.

Mortality had been high in the early years of the colony, particularly among the indentured servants who labored for the tobacco planters. Few laborers had lived much beyond the end of their terms of service, which averaged about five years. But once plantation owners began to accumulate some wealth, they established well-managed orchards, improved their cattle stock, cultivated corn, and in other ways developed a local food supply. As a result, mortality began to decline. Servants survived their periods of indenture in reasonably good health, and moved to enter tobacco production on their own. Some even received

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<sup>35</sup> Craven (1949: 239-242).

<sup>36</sup> See further Bailyn (1959: 98-102) and Rainbolt (1970: 412-414).

a grant of land as part of their freedom dues. As death thus loosened its grip on the colony, Virginia's tobacco planters soon discovered that their system of labor organization had a built-in mechanism for creating each year a new wave of producers who could only serve to stiffen competition in an already tight market. An ever-increasing number of planters added to the total tobacco supply and thereby put an increasingly downward pressure on the price of the leaf.<sup>37</sup>

A secular rise in production and a long-term fall in price, however, did not necessarily mean that competing producers suffered a corresponding squeeze in profits. Low prices stimulated a steady growth in sales until the 1680s when the European tobacco market became virtually saturated. Moreover, the costs of storing and transporting tobacco fell in the seventeenth century. So growing sales volume and savings in the costs of production both tended to offset declining returns. Diligent freed men thus could and did find room in the competitive world market to become tobacco producers in Virginia at mid-century. But they did not always find it easy to realize their economic ambitions.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Morgan (1975: 101, 158-163, 175-177, 180-185, 215-216). See also Wertenbaker (1922: 39-41), Carr and Menard (1979: 208-209) and Walsh (1977: 115-116).

<sup>38</sup> For conditions in the tobacco market, see Menard (1980: 113-116, 134-135, 143-149, 153). The opportunities available for newly freed men to enter tobacco production at this time have been better studied for the neighboring colony of Maryland. But indications are that the general conclusions apply equally to colonial Virginia. So see, for example, Walsh (1977) and Carr and Menard (1979). See also Kulikoff (1979: 516, 519-531).

During the third quarter of the seventeenth century, not only did newly freed men in Virginia have to contend with established tobacco planters and have to brace themselves against future competition from present servants, they also had to respond to the aggressive new group of planters from England. With their wealth and political connections, these immigrants quickly circumscribed available opportunities and made the position of others less and less secure. The new elite engrossed choice tracts of land, for example, and ex-servants found themselves pushed in search of soil to the frontier, where their dreams of proprietorship and productive gain could only materialize under the constant threat of Indian attack. Many refused to submit to the dangers of frontier life, and resolved to rent unoccupied land for tobacco production from other proprietors in settled areas. Still others turned shiftless and idle.<sup>39</sup>

But even if those ex-servants who did manage to enter tobacco production were not completely discouraged by their lack of security, either on the frontier or on rented land, then surely the welter of expenses, including the taxes levied by local representatives and the export duties collected by the Crown, continually threatened to drag them into insolvency. In addition, following the Stuart Restoration in 1660, the Crown's determined enforcement of the Navigation Acts contributed even more to the woes of the poorer tobacco planters. Under the provisions of the Acts, Dutch merchants were prohibited from trading

<sup>39</sup> Bailyn (1959: 104), Breen (1973: 5-6), Morgan (1975: 218-238), and Walsh (1977: 113) A great cause for worry about land security actually originated with the King himself, who granted land in the Northern Neck of Virginia to his cronies without regard for patents that other settlers had already obtained. See Morgan (1975: 244-246), Craven (1968: 11) and Leonard (1967: 67-70).

in British territory. The tobacco market in Virginia thus became tighter and more competitive as tobacco producers lost an important outlet for disposal of their product. And war with the Dutch and French in the 1660s and 1670s did little to assure them that the economically protected English market was militarily a safe one. With these matters all pressing, idlers in the colony soon became a nuisance. They were expensive to control and, if nothing else, they represented a waste of much-needed cheap labor. So county courts returned those they could catch to servitude. The assembly lengthened the terms of service for new arrivals, and the county courts did likewise for residents found guilty of transgressions. The promise of freedom thus gradually diminished in Virginia. Hopes gave way to anger. And discontent brewed.<sup>40</sup>

For years, particularly when the tobacco market was depressed, Crown authorities, planters and assorted prophets called attention to the ills of a narrow dependence on a single crop, and they urged Virginians to diversify their economy. Indeed, early leaders had originally intended to found a colony that produced a wide variety of useful products. But the original intentions had failed, and later suggestions largely went unheeded.<sup>41</sup> By the 1660s and 1670s, as conditions proceeded to deteriorate, renewed calls sounded to remedy Virginia's tobacco addiction. Governor Berkeley promoted peaceful

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<sup>40</sup> Craven (1949: 375-379; 1968: 39-40, 129-130, 138), Bailyn (1959: 100-102, 105), Breen (1973: 6), and Morgan (1975: 196-211, 216-218, 239-244). For a different view, see Carr and Menard (1979: 235-238) and Menard (1980: 134-135).

<sup>41</sup> Beer (1908: 91, 94-97, 99, 243-249), Craven (1949: 140-142, 147, 162-163, 244-245, 251-253) and Morgan (1975: 95-96, 109, 134-135, 186).

change through more diversified production and through the development of towns. Others, however, thought violence a better elixir: for nearly two decades, uprising racked the colony, and the largest and most serious of these was known as Bacon's Rebellion.

Sir William Berkeley, who belonged to an old royalist family, governed Virginia for nearly three decades during the period 1640-1680. He was also a successful tobacco planter. Talented and imaginative, he identified with Virginia and its problems. He experimented with products other than tobacco and, shortly after the Stuart Restoration, he sought support for a broad effort to diversify Virginia's economy. Berkeley was convinced that, with the help of the Crown, Virginians could produce a varied number of important commodities. The King and his advisors listened attentively to his proposals, but they offered little more than words of encouragement. England's monarch was much more concerned with his need for immediate revenue. He was not willing to sacrifice current funds in support of new production that might not bring a return for years, if it brought one at all. The King therefore agreed only to authorize a further increase in taxes so that the Virginians themselves could raise enough capital to finance diversification into the lines of production that Berkeley had suggested. The Virginia Assembly accordingly voted to use the additional levy to pay a bounty, for example, on every ship built locally in the colony, on every yard of cloth woven, and on every pound of silk made.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Leonard (1967). See also Craven (1968: 12, 39-42) and Morgan (1975: 186-195).

Incentives like these were not enough, however. For the Governor's program fully to succeed, he had to induce plantation owners simply to stop planting tobacco. But they had no intention of doing so voluntarily as long as merchants expressed their reluctance to trade in anything other than the leaf. Berkeley thus invoked more drastic measures, calling for a temporary halt in all tobacco planting in Virginia. So that competing producers in Maryland would not obtain an unfair advantage by such an action, Berkeley obtained assurance from the Crown that Lord Baltimore would work for a corresponding cessation in Maryland. By 1667, successful tobacco planters finally agreed to halt production for a year, although not because they suddenly realized the merits of diversification.<sup>43</sup>

At the time, largely because of war between England and Holland, the tobacco market had slumped badly and merchants had difficulty selling the leaf. Well-to-do plantation owners, who could afford to store their stock for a year or so, thus saw in Berkeley's plan a way to secure a quick and easy, if somewhat delayed, profit. A temporary halt in production would eventually mean a diminished supply of tobacco and, by the time production was allowed to resume, a greatly inflated price at which they could sell off their accumulated store. By contrast, poorer plantation owners would have clearly been at a disadvantage. Indebted and at the edge of bankruptcy, they would have had to sell off their tobacco at a meager price rather than hold it in anticipation of a better return later. In addition, they would have faced the loss of all sales, however low, for more than a year as they experimented with

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<sup>43</sup> Craven (1949: 312; 1968: 40), Leonard (1967: 55, 58) and Morgan (1975: 192-193).

relatively unknown crops in virtually untested markets. Such planters began grumbling and Lord Baltimore, fearing the possibly disastrous consequences of a widespread planter revolt, quickly withdrew his support for this aspect of Berkeley's plan. Having no guarantee that Maryland planters would limit their tobacco production, Virginia planters also withdrew their support, and hopes for diversification sagged.<sup>44</sup>

The prospect of more varied production then all but dissipated when efforts to establish urban areas crumbled. From the colony's inception, Virginia was notoriously devoid of compact settlements. Those who may have populated towns--those, for example, who administered the tobacco trade and processed the staple crop--found it more economical to concentrate their activities in the receiving ports of Europe. Thus, the absence of towns in the colony reflected in part the structure of the world tobacco market. But many in Virginia believed that the failure of urbanization was not only a symptom, but also a direct cause of the ills of a poorly diversified local economy that was focused so narrowly on the production of a single staple crop. According to one contemporary observer, as long as people lived in widely scattered homes and remained "solitary and unsociable," trade in everything but tobacco tended to be "confused and dispersed" (quoted in Rainbolt 1969: 344). In 1697, several colonists writing for the British Board of Trade stated this view of the problem even more explicitly: "For want of Towns, Markets, and Money, there is but little Encouragement for Tradesmen and Artificers, and therefore little Choice

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<sup>44</sup> Menard (1980: 134-136) and Morgan (1975: 192-195).

of them, and their Labor is very dear in the Country (Hartwell et al. 1697: 9). Presumably, if more Virginians lived in towns, they would concentrate the market for trade in other goods, and thereby stimulate the industry of a variety of producers, such as artisans. In his efforts to diversify Virginia's economy, Governor Berkeley did not overlook the possibility of achieving his goal through the development of urban settlements, and he managed to achieve some equivocal support. But into the 1680s and 1690s, long after Berkeley left office, the matter was still openly debated and far from settled.<sup>45</sup>

Some tobacco merchants and large planters supported the establishment of a limited number of port towns which, they hoped, would serve as central places for shipping tobacco in bulk, and would thereby make smuggling more noticeable and easier to control. Crown advisers went along with the notion of a few shipping centers because they saw the opportunity for better control of customs and the more efficient collection of duties. The burgesses in the Virginia assembly, however, represented the power of Virginia's county seats, and none of them wanted to see the tobacco trade of his own county centered elsewhere. So they approved a plan calling for the development of a town in each of Virginia's twenty counties. As might have been expected, the Crown, supported by the merchants and the large tobacco planters, nullified the action as too costly. Stalemated, the opposing parties made little progress before the end of the century toward a

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<sup>45</sup> See especially Rainbolt (1969). But see also Craven (1949: 242-243, 312-313, 399-400; 1968: 17, 42), Leonard (1967: 55, 60), Carr (1974: 139-145), and Morgan (1975: 188-191, 283-285, 287-288). On the economic conditions of world trade in tobacco, which contributed to the absence of towns in Virginia, see Price (1974: 163-174) and Earle and Hoffman (1976: 11-14, 19-68).

policy of urban growth that might have promoted more diversified production. And the work of reaching an eventual compromise was repeatedly interrupted by the need of all parties to deal with a brewing violence in the colony that finally boiled over in 1676 with the outbreak of Bacon's Rebellion.<sup>46</sup>

Between 1663 and 1682, according to one colonial historian, "there were no fewer than ten popular and servile revolts and revolt plots in Virginia" (Allen 1975: 44). But the uprising in 1676 amounted to virtual civil war. It followed a series of Indian incidents on the fringes of settlement, in response to which the Virginia Assembly, under Governor Berkeley's guidance, approved a proposal to build forts on the frontier and to man them with colonists from settled areas. The costs of implementing the proposal would have been enormous, requiring an added levy on an already tax-burdened populace. Moreover, manned forts would hardly have provided an effective defense against Indian woodsmen who struck plantations scattered on the frontier and then quickly vanished into the bush. Convinced that the Assembly's action would be a boondoggle of expense and ineffectiveness, Virginia frontiersmen decided to take matters into their own hands and, led by some of the new London-born tobacco planters, including Nathaniel Bacon, they launched a vicious and indiscriminate crusade against the Indians. When Governor Berkeley refused to support their effort and instead branded them as rebels, Bacon and his followers turned their fury against members of the colonial government, and against the large, established owners of plantations. Bacon died suddenly, however, the rebels disbanded, and

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<sup>46</sup> Rainbolt (1969: 349-360) and Carr (1974: 139-145). See also Leonard (1967: 71).

the crisis subsided, but not before Jamestown, the capital, had burned to the ground and many large estates had been looted of their wealth.<sup>47</sup>

Given their accumulated grievances--the poor return on tobacco, the squeeze on land, mounting insecurity, and the high cost of government--the so-called rebels in Virginia did not find it difficult to vent their frustration against the established powers. Insurrections continued into the next decade, and included the crop-cutting riots of 1682. Unfortunately, as Edmund Morgan recently observed, Bacon's rebellion was one "with abundant causes but without a cause. It produced no real program of reform, no revolutionary manifesto, not even any revolutionary slogans" (1975: 269).<sup>48</sup> And so the rebellion, and violence like it, did little to shift the colony from its narrow emphasis on tobacco production. Indeed, as tobacco planters moved to recover what they had lost in the violence, the focus became in many ways even more concentrated and malign.

After a brief upturn at mid-decade, the tobacco market again slipped. There was another temporary boom at the turn of the century but, by the late 1680s, the market had stagnated and it would show almost no substantial growth for almost thirty years.<sup>49</sup> As it became apparent that the economy would not soon improve, the owners of tobacco

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<sup>47</sup> For brief accounts of Bacon's Rebellion from varying perspectives, and for references to the more detailed studies, see Craven (1949: 360-393; 1968: 126-153), Bailyn (1959: 102-106), Breen (1973: 8-12), and Morgan (1975: 250-270).

<sup>48</sup> For a similar evaluation of the effects of Bacon's Rebellion, see Craven (1968: 145-146). On the continuing violence, see, for example, Craven (1949: 398-399), Breen (1973: 12-13), Allan (1975: 46), and Morgan (1975: 286-287).

<sup>49</sup> Menard (1980: 113, 136-142, 150-154).

plantations struggled to economize their costs of production and thereby to maintain, if not improve, their position. They had relatively minor technical expenses: even in the closing decades of the seventeenth century, according to Morgan, Virginians "required no more than a piece of land, a hoe, an axe, a few barrels of corn, and a strong back to set up a tobacco plantation" (1975: 223). So planters still had to economize on the costs of acquiring the strong backs they needed, and this at a time when laborers were now becoming more difficult to find and more expensive to hire.

Tobacco planters, merchants and Crown representatives continued to propose and reject plans for diversifying the economy and for creating towns. Even widespread violence failed to produce changes that would make the colony a more attractive place for laborers who wanted to improve themselves. With few opportunities for advancement, Virginians able to leave the local labor market did so, and potential laborers in England increasingly stayed put.<sup>50</sup> Wages climbed in the colony and, in the absence of people immigrating under terms of indenture, the use of slaves became more and more attractive.

African slaves first appeared in Virginia in 1619, and thus were in the colony almost from the beginning. Moreover, colonists had long established the necessary legislation to distinguish among the various categories of unfree persons. In the early years, however, settlers willingly came to the colony as servants and they proved a better investment for the planters. To purchase slaves on the world market,

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<sup>50</sup> Breen (1973: 15-16), Clemens (1977: 158-159), Main (1977: 139-140), Carr and Menard (1977: 230-231, 233-235, 238-239), Kulikoff (1979: 531-532), and Menard (1980: 121, 138).

planters had to advance a larger initial expense than they did to obtain a servant. Unfortunately, because adult mortality was so high, slaves rarely lived longer than the term of a servant's indenture. Thus only when mortality in the colony declined, did slaves truly provide the long-run advantage of lifetime service. But even then the cost of purchasing a slave was too high.<sup>51</sup>

During the latter half of the century, the ability of Virginia tobacco planters to pay for slaves gradually improved in relation to Caribbean sugar planters, and such bondsmen accordingly became more available in the colony. By the 1680s and 1690s, the owners of Virginia plantations increasingly realized the economy of purchasing slaves. To save the costs of continually replacing indentured laborers, many of them obtained the bondsmen for a lifetime of service, and expanded the scale of their production to compensate for the prevailing low price of tobacco. Then, when Africa was opened to free trade in 1698, the price of slaves finally fell and, by the end of the century, fully "half of the labor force was already enslaved" (Morgan 1975: 307).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> On the early use of slaves and on the legal distinctions among the varying degrees of unfreedom in Virginia, see, for example, Craven (1949: 215-218; 1968: 295-298) and Handlin and Handlin (1950: 1950: 200-210). Wertenbaker (1922: 124-127) and Smith (1947: 29-30) discussed some of the advantages of slavery over servitude, and Morgan (1975: 297-300, 308-310) argued forcefully that most planters did not even bother to seek those advantages until mortality in the colony declined.

<sup>52</sup> On the influx of slaves to Virginia beginning in the last two decades of the seventeenth century, see Wertenbaker (1922: 130-132), Handlin and Handlin (1950: 214), Allen (1975: 49-50), Clemens (1977: 159-160), Main (1977: 139-141), and Menard (1980: 121-122). See Morgan (1975: 300-307) for consideration of the Virginia planters' increasing ability to afford slaves despite a falling tobacco price. For general discussions of the shift from indentured to slave labor, see Bean and Thomas (1979).

As owners of Virginia tobacco plantations quickly discovered, however, slaves did have their disadvantages. Such bondsmen had no prospect of a better life and so they had little incentive to perform the labor required of them. To make slaves work, planters had to be prepared to apply a great deal of force.<sup>53</sup> Of course, brutality only increased the chances that disaffected bondsmen would flee the plantations, or would find common cause to join in revolt with others, particularly malcontent white laborers who often were treated little better than slaves, and who had previously contributed to widespread violence in the colony. Although the owners of Virginia plantations did not hesitate to use force on their laborers, they thus were eager to take advantage of any device to minimize the potentially dangerous consequences. By their inaction on plans for diversification and urbanization, for example, they had already blocked the local development of alternative employment options in the fields and in the crafts and trades, all of which may have provided laborers the spark of hope inducing them to flee or to ignite acts of rebellion. Then, as the seventeenth century came to a close, the tobacco planters found in the rapidly shifting political alliances of the colony still another opportunity to ease the threat of slave revolt.

From 1680 on, the Crown had begun to pursue a more energetic colonial policy. It sought, in part, to insure permanent revenues based on trade. The new assertions of royal prerogative brought welcome support for legislation that authorized the coercive measures needed by

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<sup>53</sup> This was one of the arguments that Adam Smith (1937: 365), among many others, advanced against slavery. In this context, see Morgan (1975: 310-313).

plantation owners to force laborers to produce more tobacco. But otherwise, the Crown moved to take greater shares of the colony's wealth and to diminish the local power of the largest tobacco planters. The royal governors and the powerful owners of local plantations thus squared off, and turned for support from lesser men in the colony. The house of burgesses, for example, acquired greater leverage as the conflict developed, and its members found it relatively easy to enact legislation that served to isolate blacks from whites. Miscegenation was severely penalized and certain legal rights and duties were accorded by race. Whites, including even servants, were allowed to hold property, to sue and to give evidence in court, and to serve in the militia. But blacks, free and slave alike, were denied these privileges. The racial differences thereby established virtually insured that blacks could find no common cause with whites of any class. In Virginia, by 1700, the trickle of slaves into the colony had become a flood, and the freedom of whites rested securely on the enforced slavery of blacks.<sup>54</sup>

Like West Indian and Guianese producers who tried to create new accumulations of capital and endeavored to secure themselves economically in colonial situations of great social complexity, would-be producers in Mexico, New England and Virginia initially could not afford large investments in tools, equipment and other labor-saving devices. And because the technical expenses were so low, entry into production in

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<sup>54</sup> Handlin and Handlin (1950: 210-222), Bailyn (1959: 102, 111-114), Rainbolt (1970: 418-434), Breen (1973: 11, 16-18), Allen (1975: 50-58), Morgan (1975: 313-362).

all these places was easy, competition was stiff, and the pressures were great to cut costs especially in the expenses required to hire laborers. Spanish producers in Mexico, however, differed from the owners of West Indian plantations (and from producers in New England and Virginia) because they had to contend with the vagaries of product markets that, for various reasons, sometimes grew very large and, at other times, disappeared altogether. In response to such a market, Spanish producers set up haciendas and relied on the spread of indebtedness to keep laborers readily available in times of need, yet independent of them in times of trouble. Given market conditions and political circumstances that differed fundamentally from those which spawned plantations, Mexican hacenderos thus tolerated such independent activities as artisanry that could help occupy members of the local laboring population, especially in bad years, outside the domains of their estates.

In other places, particularly in the English and Dutch colonies of the New World, the markets for colonial products remained relatively steady, despite the occasional gluts, the periodic disruptions by war and weather, and the cyclic rise and fall of prices. Over the long term, some markets grew steadily large and became concentrated in European ports, while others remained small and decentralized. In New England, for example, unlike the Caribbean area colonies and the colony of Virginia, the colonists pursued the small decentralized markets for farm products, such as wheat and corn. They politically resisted attempts to channel local production to the large and concentrated markets for staple crops. Moreover, New Englanders cut labor costs in

the period of accumulation, not by forcing others to work for them, but by defending the right to labor for themselves on individual farms.

Under these specific political and economic conditions, there arose in New England a rich and flourishing array of artisan crafts and trades to service both the local farms and the vigorous trade in farm products.

Virginia, by contrast, most resembled the colonies in Barbados, Jamaica, and Guiana. In the Old Dominion, as in the West Indies, small technical investments, stiff competition, large product demand, and a secure market provided some of the essential conditions for colonists to accumulate capital on plantations. Plantation owners in all these places, however, could only keep up with the great demand for their products by forcing others to work for them. And in Virginia, as in the West Indies, planters could realize the economic advantages of putting laborers to work by force only if they had put still further conditions in place. They required a cheap and plentiful supply of bondsmen, and they needed the political sanctions to make their subjects obedient. In addition, because the use of force represented a significant investment in time and money, planters wanted to be sure in the broader political arena, that the capital they tied up in labor would be reasonably safe. Above all, they did not want their bondsmen, be they indentured or enslaved, to find comfort in flight or rebellion.

Early on, the owners of Virginia plantations had engrossed local access to land and thereby frustrated the dreams of free proprietorship that any plantation laborer may have harbored. Later, to isolate their African bondsmen from potential allies in the rest of the populace, they manipulated racial differences among the lower social classes.

Furthermore, in the context of these broader actions to safeguard their agricultural investments, Virginia planters also discovered a strategy enabling them to extend their control from the internal economy of their own individual plantations directly to the wider local economy: they politically stalemated the struggle for more diversified kinds of production, such as farming in the fields and artisanry in the proposed new towns, and so they struck at the promise of local economic freedom that might have spurred bondsmen to escape the plantation or to rise up in revolt.

Once they had obtained the necessary power to force people to work for them, and as they began to find increasing supplies of bondsmen, planters thus strode the political ground of Virginia in search of ways to insure that they would not easily lose their power and, with it, their economic stake in the developing system of plantation agriculture. The control that Virginia planters managed to impose on the wider economy played an important role in providing this insurance, at least during the early stages of capital accumulation on their plantations. Whether or not it played an essential role, it is still impossible to say without much more, careful and comparative research. Nevertheless, the results of the present study, tentative though they may be, do seem to warrant a general conclusion: that, by contrast to the development of haciendas in Mexico and the advance of farming in New England, and much like the early rise of plantations in Virginia, the process of capital accumulation on plantations in Barbados, Jamaica and Guiana led the owners and managers of these agricultural institutions to seek and to establish by various means the

political controls to limit the development of such alternative activities in the wider local economy as the practice of artisan manufacturing.

## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION: TOWARD FURTHER STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLANTATION AGRICULTURE AND ARTISAN MANUFACTURE

They will maintain the state of the world,  
And all their desire is in the work of their craft.  
-- Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus: 38 (34)

Artisans contribute to the wealth of nations by combining capital invested in skilled labor, including particularly the skilled labor of their own two hands, with capital invested in relatively small amounts of the technical means needed for the production of manufactured goods. In their production processes, artisans help lay the economic foundations for the concentration of capital, under favorable conditions, in technically more advanced forms of manufacture--in factories, for example. But the struggle initially to accumulate wealth from any form of production, be it manufacture or agriculture, is always arduous. Quite often, it is simply overwhelming.

To sell their products, artisans must interact with merchants, or act as merchants themselves. The institutional arrangements that arise from such activity may serve to extend the markets for artisan products, and to encourage the expansion of manufacture. But the roles of artisan and merchant may easily conflict and prevent such expansion. Moreover, institutions that develop to advance the production and sale of goods in other economic sectors such as agriculture, may actually serve to inhibit artisans from ever interacting in a market. Thus, the

arrangements made to sell staple crops produced on plantations in the British West Indies and elsewhere in the New World favored the rise of processing crafts in the metropolitan countries, but not in the plantation colonies. Indeed, within the colonies, producers who struggled to accumulate capital in plantation agriculture worked vigorously to protect their investments in forced labor by stifling the crafts in the wider local economy outside their domains, and by subordinating artisanry on their estates to the production of the staple crop.

As a result, the plantation colonies of the West Indies and elsewhere provided "only minimal opportunity for the local growth of artisan groups or intermediate classes of skilled workers, and little or no opportunity for the in-migration of craftsmen, doctors, ministers, storekeepers, teachers and all those other specialists and service-renderers associated with the growth of differentiated and articulated rural communities." The plantation system, at least in its early stages, thus was nothing less than "a species of sociological blight" (Mintz 1967: 145-146). But although the malady was serious and perduring, it was not always permanently damaging.

The prosperous development of garment-making on the frontlands of the largest sugar estate in Guyana is one striking case in which independent artisans eventually helped arrest and reverse the general tendency for plantation owners and managers to inhibit the growth of healthily diversified economies in the West Indies. But even within the present study, which has focused on the origins of that debilitating tendency during the long period of capital accumulation on West Indian

plantations, there is evidence to show that, from about 1620 to 1880, plantation development afforded artisans and other petty producers some local room for maneuver, and did so in as many as three respects.

Artisans and others could insinuate themselves into the interstices of early West Indian plantation colonies depending (a) on the differing lengths to which plantation owners and managers were prepared to go in different places to suppress alternative activities outside their estates; (b) on the degree to which planters relied on coerced laborers, within their domains, to supply all or part of those manufactured and other goods needed to operate the plantation, or to sustain the estate population; and (c) on the differing political and economic abilities of the planters to respond to changing market pressures and to assaults on their supplies of laborers, and thereby simply to remain in business.

Compared to planters in Barbados and Jamaica, those in the Guiana colonies apparently exercised much more sweeping control over the economy outside their estates. Thus, in the context of West Indian plantation economies, and given the three possible sources of early craft development, the antecedents of Rose Hall artisanry seem to repose primarily in the so-called "breaches" of plantation slavery, and in the special ability of Guianese plantation owners and managers to shift their emphasis from the accumulation of capital to its concentration. This general assertion is tentative, of course, pending further research. Nevertheless, it will comprise the starting point for a subsequent study, which will examine the progressive concentration of capital on plantations in Guyana since 1881, outline how this process helped give rise to the development of peasant agriculture on the

Courantyne Coast, and show how Rose Hall area merchants and artisans eventually combined successfully to exploit the expanding consumers' market for cloth and clothing in a predominantly agricultural region.

By way of concluding the present study, then, and to prepare the way for further work, including my own, on the problems of manufacturing in Caribbean political economy, I want to shift from the primary focus of this volume on the ways that plantation agriculture has limited artisan manufacture. Instead, I want briefly to consider some dimensions of the reciprocal relationship. Thus, I concentrate, first, on the early forms of artisanry that emerged on West Indian estates during the period of accumulation, and did so in spite of the various adverse pressures arrayed against independent economic activities. I suggest that, with more careful investigation, it will eventually be possible to show how different types of artisans, weakly developed though they generally were in their own internal economic organization, still were able, in turn, to affect and to help circumscribe the course of plantation development. I then shift to a more general consideration of the significance of artisanry within West Indian political economy, particularly in the face of increasing capital concentration on local plantations.

#### 6.1 THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF ARTISANRY ON WEST INDIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY DURING THE PERIOD OF CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

It is, of course, an exaggeration to claim that any single social institution is, or can be, entirely self-sufficient or all-encompassing in its effects. But several noted Caribbean scholars have found the hyperbole useful to describe Caribbean plantations. George Beckford,

for example, has asserted that the plantation is always and everywhere "all-embracing in its effects on the lives of those within its territory and community" (1972: 12). Similarly, Lloyd Best has regarded the plantation as an "ideal framework" that served "to encompass the entire existence of the work force" (1968: 287). And Raymond Smith has compared the plantation to a "total institution," in which the "staff" is totally responsible for allocating economic and other roles to "inmates" (1967: 229-232).<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Beckford, however, both Best and Smith meant their comparisons to apply only within rather specific temporal limits, and primarily within the time frame that I have referred to as the period of capital accumulation, during which plantation owners and managers first responded to rapidly expanding markets for staple products and coupled small investments in stagnant technology to large investments in forced labor. Thus, Best argued that the need for West Indian planters to be all-encompassing arose during the early colonial period when a "shift to mercantile production" occurred (1968: 289). He then warned that it is difficult to make "generalizations concerning the response of the various economies to the ending of the mercantile era" (ibid.: 295). Still, despite the difficulties, he outlined several types of such response in the West Indies and one, which he designated as the "mixed plantation economy," consisted of developments that made the plantation no longer so all-embracing. Similarly, Raymond Smith cautioned that if his own comparison of the plantation to a total institution was at all

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion of the importance of the "total institution" metaphor in recent theories of Caribbean plantation economy, see the lucid and very helpful article by Benn (1974: 253, 256-257).

credible, it applied only to the stage of "the plantation employing unfree labor" (1967: 228). Like Best, he argued that beyond this early stage, West Indian society became "much more differentiated economically" (ibid.: 237).

Because Beckford ignored the temporal limits to which Best and Smith confined their arguments, he sacrificed historical accuracy for a forceful, unqualified assertion that plantations always dominate laborers in an all-embracing sense. But neither Beckford nor Best also acknowledged that the very idea that a single social institution is all-encompassing is itself hyperbolic. Only Raymond Smith carefully noted that he was stretching the truth about the self-sufficient nature of social institutions when he argued that in the early stages of colonial development "each plantation was an effective unit of society, as well as being a unit of production" (ibid.: 229).

Smith presumably drew attention to this source of exaggeration in order to emphasize that his comparison of the slave plantation to a total institution could not account fully for the early forms of this unit of agricultural production. But exaggerated as it may be, in Smith's hands the analogy does serve usefully to highlight the broad outlines of life on early West Indian estates. To follow the metaphor: staff members (the owners and managers) of a total institution, such as the plantation, can leave freely, and so they have identities and roles to fulfill outside its limits. Inmates (the slaves), however, have no freedom to leave; their social life is effectively determined, within the boundaries of the social unit, by the staff members who allocate economic and other roles to them. The inmates "live out all aspects of

their lives within the institution and all activities are tightly scheduled in terms of a single rational plan designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution" (ibid.: 230).

In addition to these internal features of estate life, the exaggerated comparison of the slave plantation to the total institution also illumines some of the wider features of plantation economy. For example, according to Smith, the dependence of plantation "inmates" on "staff members" for allocation of their roles "helps explain the peculiar impoverishment of local culture with its almost complete absence of arts, crafts and literature" (ibid.: 231).<sup>2</sup> Leaving aside the question of literature, the arts and crafts withered in local West Indian culture because planters limited the needs of "inmates" and thereby smothered the local market for many of the products of artisans. Moreover, they withered in local culture because planters provisioned the remaining needs of the "inmates" by importing goods from an external market, or by allocating arts and crafts to certain "inmates" and so fostering them within the sphere of the plantation.

Thus, by regarding the slave plantation as a total institution, one can even specify, at least in part, the nature of the barriers raised by the plantation against artisan production in the wider economy. But to the extent that planters singled out some of their slaves for special roles, such as that of artisan, within their estates,

<sup>2</sup> I recognize, of course, that the analogy of the "total institution" has very many other implications for the study of plantation slavery, and that these implications have been widely exploited in defense of various positions on aspects of slave life ranging from language to kinship and family relations, and to religion and psychological habits. For some of the discussion, see especially the essays by Thorpe, Fredrickson and Lasch, Bryce-Laporte, and Elkins in Lane (1971).

the usefulness of the "total institution" metaphor ends, and the exaggeration becomes explicit. As Smith recognized, the "staff" of an institution can never totally determine the roles that they allocate to "inmates" as long as it tolerates, if not actually promotes, "various segmental distinctions," such as those observed among the "inmates" of various plantations (ibid.: 232). Quite apart from their relations to the staff, different segments of inmates stand in relation to each other, and thus manage to determine at least some aspects of their social life independently of the staff. In some cases, the level of self-determination among segments of inmates, including those filling artisan roles, could have quite serious implications for the very existence of the "total institution." Although much more detailed studies of artisan on early West Indian plantations are needed to say precisely what kinds of artisans achieved what levels of self-determination and with what effects on plantation political economy, the results of the present investigation can help indicate in which directions such research can usefully proceed.

As we have seen, the owners and managers of many West Indian plantations, "for reasons of economy, convenience, and an assumed labor supply, encouraged the training of slaves in a variety of skilled occupations" (Handler 1974: 123). First, under certain conditions, it was economical for planters to train slave artisans. Planters needed some manufactured goods, such as wheels and barrels simply to prosecute their business. They and their slaves also needed consumers' goods, such as garments and baskets, to clothe themselves and to prepare and store food. Still other goods--those manufactured by carpenters, for

example--had considerable value in both the business and domestic sides of plantation life. Planters ultimately had to provide such items, and if they directly trained slaves to manufacture all or some of them, or if they no more than encouraged knowledgeable slaves to produce them on their own time, then the economic survival of the plantation was less closely staked to the availability of funds needed otherwise to acquire the goods on the open market.

Besides being economical, it was also highly convenient for planters to educate their slaves as artisans. If they did so, they would not have to depend for the importation of manufactured goods on distant markets that were so frequently subject to disruption by war, weather and depression. Finally, if plantation owners and managers fostered slave artisanry, they would not have to worry about hiring workers to manufacture goods. Because slavery is a lifetime status, they would always have ready at hand an assured labor supply and, if their slaves were highly skilled, they might even be able to turn a profit by hiring them out. For all these reasons, West Indian planters came to foster artisanry, at least to some extent, on their estates.

The special skills held by bondsmen made them extremely valuable for the development of early West Indian plantations, and this did not go unrecognized by their masters. For the economies and convenience that artisans afforded them, plantation owners and managers paid top prices for skilled slaves.<sup>3</sup> But then neither did the members of West Indian slave communities fail to recognize the value of the artisans. West Indian slaves appear to have held the craftsmen among them in high

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Braithwaite (1971: 155) and Goveia (1965: 140).

esteem, and the bases for such estimations, when they are better understood, will undoubtedly prove to have afforded at least some kinds of slave artisans positions of leadership, through which certain groups of slaves could apply leverage and significantly alter the course of local political and economic developments in individual plantation colonies, or parts of such colonies.

In Jamaica, for example, slaves generally held that craft skills marked their fellows as people of special accomplishment and, "if they were unable to acquire such skills themselves, they avidly sought them for their children" (Patterson 1967: 62). It is doubtful, however, that slaves counted among the accomplishments of artisans the relatively high prices that they brought for their masters. More likely, West Indian slaves, like their counterparts in the American South, considered the achievements of artisans to include the acquisition of a number of qualities, all of them desired because they each helped enhance the ability of the slave to determine his own life, independently of the will of his master. Those qualities included: "(1) mobility, which allowed the slave to leave the plantation frequently, (2) freedom from constant supervision by whites, (3) opportunity to earn money, and (4) provision of a direct service to other blacks" (Blassingame 1976: 141-142). Once he achieved such qualities, "the sense of 'superiority' and 'recognition' remained with a slave artisan throughout his life," and it was not something he readily relinquished (Stavisky 1958: 41).

The qualities valued in artisans by their fellows, however, undoubtedly differed for different types of artisans. West Indian slaves simply could not expect to develop expertise in any craft on all

plantations in every colony, and only some trades practiced by slaves directly filled the consumer needs of other slaves. Thus, to understand the possible effects of artisanry on the slave community, and on the wider political economy of West Indian plantation colonies, one must grasp not only the features that slaves particularly valued among artisans. One must also determine the kinds of artisans who best embodied those features, and this requires a much more thorough analysis than is presently available of the various types of artisans that comprised the internal segments of West Indian slave communities. The distinction between crafts used for the prosecution of plantation business and those employed for the satisfaction of various consumer needs on the estates is obviously important. But one must also note that, in some cases, plantation owners and managers could afford only a few specialists on their estates: a carpenter, a blacksmith, and perhaps one or two others. All other crafts were practiced only sporadically and not at all by specialists, but by jacks-of-all-trades, who could often be found, when necessary, working shoulder-by-shoulder in the fields with the other slaves. In other cases, though, artisan organization seems to have emerged in sufficiently varied forms to require an analysis as complex as Marcus Jernegan's fivefold typology of slave craftsmen in the American South.

Jernegan differentiated types of manufacturing primarily according to the type and extent of the market that a slave artisan served, and the types included: (1) individual manufacture for home consumption; (2) individual manufacture for the purpose of disposing a surplus within the colony; (3) individual manufacture for the purpose of

exploiting a surplus; (4) cooperative manufacture by an artisan and owned or hired slaves for the purpose of reaping a profit; (5) factory manufacture by slaves for the purpose of making a profit.<sup>4</sup> The evidence at this stage is little more than fragmentary, but most of these types, or ones closely parallel to them, seem to be mirrored also in the Caribbean. Thus, Jerome Handler has provided an account of slave artisans in Barbados who produced goods both for home consumption and for circulation within the colony; Sidney Mintz and Douglas Hall have suggested that some of the craft goods that circulated in Jamaica's internal market were also exported. And both Hall and Barry Higman have indicated that master craftsmen in Jamaican towns and on local plantations had handicraft gangs under their direction.<sup>5</sup>

Given a more adequate typology along these lines of artisan organization during the period of capital accumulation in West Indian plantation economies, it may eventually be possible to identify precisely which kinds of artisans the slaves most valued, and which were able thereby as leaders to help shape the internal forces of plantation change, however modestly, in the slaves' favor. Whatever the actual effects turn out to have been, though, those in power in the West Indian plantation colonies certainly believed that artisan slaves were perhaps uniquely placed to apply pressure in several highly sensitive arenas of the fragile social order on which the plantations and their systems of labor coercion had been carefully founded. Of course, on those West Indian plantations, mainly the smaller ones, where certain kinds of

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<sup>4</sup> Jernegan (1920: 239). See also Stavisky (1958: 44-45).

<sup>5</sup> Handler (1963a), Mintz and Hall (1960: 17), Hall (1959: 215), and Higman (1976: 37-39)

artisans frequently had to set down their craft tools and work beside the field hands, the internal differentiation among slaves was rather too fluid for the role of craftsmen to have exerted much effect. But the situation was potentially much different on other plantations, where specialist craftsmen had the opportunity steadily to practice their trades. Some of these kinds of slave artisans aroused the ire of white and colored freemen in the colonies, who resented the competition. In these cases, occupational similarities between blacks, coloreds, and whites did not help bridge, but rather served only to widen the already yawning racial gap of power and privilege in the West Indies. <sup>6</sup> Moreover, although many planters tried to isolate the most respected of their slaves, such as certain classes of artisans, for special elite privileges, and so to use these potential leaders to help control the slave population in a dangerously unbalanced social structure, these tactics did not always work according to plan.

Orlando Patterson has reported, for example, that on some plantations in Jamaica, an elite corps of slave drivers and tradesmen "often formed themselves into courts and settled issues among the generality of field slaves, even to the extent of imposing fines and other penalties" (1967: 63). Such cases of success give support to the notion advanced in respect of the West Indies, the American South and elsewhere, that craftsmen, drivers and domestic slaves, composed an identifiable plantation elite or aristocracy that stood over and against

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<sup>6</sup> See Goveia (1965: 164, 229), Hall (1972: 202), Handler (1974: 122-125), and compare Jernegan (1920: 239), Pinchbeck (1926: 15, 36, 66-67), Spero and Harris (1931), Berlin (1974: 236-241), and Genovese (1974: 389).

the body of field slaves.<sup>7</sup> But given their education and the varied contacts they made during the practice of their trades, many slave artisans could grow quickly resentful of their bonded status and, with access to manufacturing tools, they could easily fashion weapons to arm their rebelliousness. Thus, as those in the colonies who opposed the proliferation of skilled slaves had often warned they would, slave artisans seemed to figure prominently in slave rebellions, and they frequently were listed in the published notices of slave runaways.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination that slave artisans evidently inspired among their fellows, and that some appeared to encourage more than others, almost certainly explains why planters, who sought primarily to economize production, found support for their use of artisans among the abolitionists, of all people, who otherwise opposed the planters every move.<sup>9</sup>

There is, then, much room to build on the present study, and on the earlier work on which it is in part based. The various types of artisans that emerged in the West Indies not only depended on the attempts of early plantation owners and managers to make their estates more self-sufficient, slave craftsmen also appear themselves to have had

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Goveia (1965: 131-140), Patterson 1967: 58-59), Schuler (1970: 380, 384-385), Craton and Walvin (1970: 141-142, 147), and Brathwaite (1971: 235), and compare Moore and Williams (1942: 350), Phillips (1929: 206-207), and Stamp (1956: 151, 333).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the suggestive assertions in the following sources: Beckford (1968b: 119), Schuler (1970: 375, 380, 382), Brathwaite (1971: 205-206), Price (1973: 20, 24-25), Craton (1974: 231; 1979: 104, 112, 116-118, 123; 1980: 5-7, 9), Sheridan (1976b: 293, 303), Gaspar (1978: 317-320), and Genovese (1979: 27-28, 35); and compare the detailed analysis for parts of the U. S. South in Mullin (1972: 82-98, 141, 147-148, 160-161).

<sup>9</sup> Stavisky (1958: 203).

potentially consequential effects on the early colonial social order, on its racial and political structure, for example. More precise knowledge of which artisans had such effects, and why, is absolutely essential for a proper understanding of the dynamics of plantation life during the period when plantation owners and managers depended so thoroughly on the use of force to accumulate their capital. Indeed, "this category of slave was perhaps most important," as Edward Brathwaite has written of artisans in early nineteenth century Jamaica, "from the point of view of the future development of society" (1971: 160-161). But given this perspective, the problem then is to trace the progress of artisanry--or the lack of it--in the West Indian colonies as plantation owners and managers began to concentrate their accumulated capital.

#### 6.2 THE ROLE OF ARTISAN MANUFACTURING IN WEST INDIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY DURING THE PERIOD OF CAPITAL CONCENTRATION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

As the owners and managers of sugar plantations in the British West Indies lost the power of enslavement at Emancipation, and as market pressures gradually pushed planters to consolidate their capital by investing in changing technical stock and in wage labor, one of the most striking developments in the economies of the region was the emergence of various kinds of peasant farmers. With respect to this development, George Beckford has maintained that it is sufficient to describe West Indian economies in terms of a "two-sector" model of economic rivalry (1972: 48). Beckford did not distinguish an agricultural sector from manufacturing or some other kind of economic activity; rather, he divided his model into two distinct branches of agriculture, one comprising plantations, the other peasants.

In general, the organization of peasant agriculture is sharply opposed to the structure of plantations. For example, by definition, peasants always (though not exclusively) produce some of their own food, while plantations always (though not exclusively) produce crops for export. Moreover, although peasants and plantations must both employ capital to produce crops for contrasting markets, specifically capital invested in suitable land, peasants characteristically cultivate small parcels of land, use cheap, relatively unsophisticated tools, and invest in their own labor, or that of their families.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, planters typically work large tracts of land, invest in expensive, up-to-date technical equipment, and employ the labor of others. There is thus "a structural deficiency of land and labor in the peasant sector" (*ibid.*: 181). But in West Indian economies, according to Beckford, there is also a dynamic interaction which tends thoroughly to subordinate various forms of peasant agriculture to the various forms of organization within the plantation sector.

Referring to the question of suitable land, Beckford argued that "everywhere in the plantation world at present, plantations have forced peasants on to the most marginal land available in every country" (*ibid.*: 179).<sup>11</sup> Because they have access at least to some land, peasants

<sup>10</sup> The focus on economic criteria in this definition of peasants is not meant to be exhaustive, although it follows the emphasis in definitions advanced by, among others, Firth (1951: 87), Wolf (1955: 453-454; 1966: 12-59), and, more recently, Bernstein (1979). For differing interpretations of the significance of such emphasis, however, compare Ennew, et al. (1977) and Silverman (1979). See also Beckford's comments (1972: 18-19).

<sup>11</sup> Compare Wolf (1959b: 136), who asserted that the plantation "tended to push rival social groups toward the periphery of its sphere of influence to eke out a marginal existence." See also Mintz (1967: 145).

can generally produce some of their food and so they may not need regularly to seek employment on the plantation. However, because the plantation largely "controls the land on which labor services can be applied," peasants often find that "the demand for labor resides largely with the planter class" (ibid.). Thus, although they may have sufficient access to their own land, some peasants simply cannot afford to cultivate it. Laborers may be scarce and expensive, and the market for their potential crop may be weak. To earn an adequate livelihood, such people may have no recourse but to sell their labor-power to the plantation. And if the demand for labor there is not sufficiently strong, peasants may then find it necessary to enter, on a small-scale basis, production of the plantation crop itself. In such cases, they will usually have to purchase planting and cultivation materials from nearby plantations, and to sell the harvested crop back at a price dictated by those plantations. Despite the emergence of peasant agriculture, then, by controlling much of the land, by preempting much of the labor, by dispensing capital supplies, and by monopolizing the local market for the crop, "the plantation still dominates the economic life of the region" (ibid.: 48). Indeed, according to Beckford, plantations are always and so completely in control that the West Indies consist of "'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 to growth elsewhere," usually in the metropolitan countries of Europe (ibid.).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For further elaboration of some of these assertions, see Beckford (1979: 347-357).

Although Beckford's argument on these points is generally convincing, there are several important details that require qualification, especially if we are eventually to understand the role of artisan manufacturing in the context of the development of plantation agriculture during the period of capital concentration from the 1880s to the early 1970s, and in the context of the related emergence of peasant farming. First, plantations during the period did not simply "bottle up" peasants. Second, plantation owners and managers did not direct their institutions with unlimited autonomy, but had their range of choices effectively limited by the actions of peasants. Finally, the varied control that plantations have maintained in the political economies of the region was not confined solely to the branches of agriculture, but extended to cover, and in turn was limited by, actions in other economic sectors as well.

Beckford admitted that "the extent to which peasant production is constrained by plantations varies from place to place according to circumstances" (ibid.: 48-49). He did not elaborate this statement to suggest either the range or circumstances of variation. He merely insisted that plantations constrain peasants and that this is a "general occurrence in most plantation economies" (ibid.: 49). It is a general phenomenon, Beckford argued, because the need of planters for a "stranglehold" on peasants rests on the conflictful relation between the two types of productive organization, on their direct and "stiff competition" for "very scarce resources" (ibid.: 23). Plantations either deprive peasants of needed resources, or they suffer themselves. And according to Beckford, this has always been the case.

To support his position on the supposedly eternal conflict between plantations and peasants, Beckford relied, in part, on a particularly forceful assertion by Sidney Mintz. As Mintz described the process, the emergence of Caribbean peasantries "represented a reaction to the plantation economy, a negative reflex to enslavement, mass production, monocrop dependence, and metropolitan control. Though these peasants often continued to work part-time on plantations for wages, to eke out their cash needs, their orientation was in fact antagonistic to the plantation rationale" (1964: xx-xxi; quoted in Beckford 1972: 22).

Despite the reaction, the negative reflex, and the antagonism of peasants toward plantations, however, the two modes of agricultural organization often have supplemented each other in important ways, and have been mutually interdependent. Peasants in the West Indies, for example, have often emerged as producers of many of the agricultural products needed by plantation laborers and others on the home market, and this has often meant, as Mintz himself has asserted, that peasants and plantations "typically occupied different ecological zones, participated in different market relationships and, for the most part, did not interdigitate socially" (Mintz 1967: 145). When the market for one or another of their crops weakened or collapsed, it is true that West Indian peasants have sought added income by working, however reluctantly, on the plantation. But then, so too, plantation workers have frequently sought more stable incomes in peasant modes of agriculture.<sup>13</sup> Thus, as Mintz has emphasized, "it would be misleading to

<sup>13</sup> Wolf described these two-way movements between peasant and plantation forms of adaptation as a kind of "cultural-straddling." They are "ways of maintaining two alternative sets of ties which can be played against the middle for the important end of improving the balance of

suppose that the coexistence of plantations and peasantries is always marked by open conflict between these two very different modes of agricultural adaptation" (1974a: 133).

The owners and managers of West Indian plantations certainly have acted to constrain local peasants in ways that have been antagonistic and full of struggle for scarce resources, but some have also acted to support and even nurture the growth of a peasantry, and they have done so in such a way that peasants have provided plantations with needed agricultural products and a source of needed laborers. In both cases, plantation owners and managers have dominated peasants and determined the limits of their development. But this has not meant that the balance of the relationship has leaned totally in favor of the plantations. Although they have suffered economic subordination, peasants have weighed heavily against the plantation forms of organization, especially in instances where they have gained independent access to the world market for some of their products, such as rice, tobacco and coffee. And even when such independence has not been possible, peasants still have limited and defined the courses of action open to plantation owners and managers simply by their existence in the economy, and thus they have limited and defined the institution of the plantation itself.

The particular relationships of economic conflict and interdependence that have emerged historically between West Indian plantations and peasants have made it necessary for plantation owners and managers to maintain their control over the local political economy

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life" (1959b: 143).

by adopting one strategy rather than another, by following this course and not that one. What planters have done at a particular stage of plantation development has depended, of course, on the character of the world-wide product market in which they have competed. But how plantations have accommodated particular market conditions has depended in turn on the character of the relations of particular planters with other organizations in opposing branches of agricultural production: on whether it has been convenient to encourage peasants to produce needed goods, on whether peasants have competed for needed land and labor, and on whether peasants have become strong enough in their own markets, and in the local political arena, to withstand measures designed to impede their expanded use of scarce technology and labor.

In short, plantations that have tried to consolidate and maintain their capital, just as those that tried desperately to accumulate it, have stood in a special relationship by which they have controlled and limited productive organizations in other branches of agriculture, but by which they themselves have also been defined and limited. Being in a dominant position with regard to the command of technology, labor and the home market for certain goods, plantation owners and managers may have been free to act, but not in an unlimited number of ways. One can see the planters' freedom and independence by viewing all the variants of plantation organization in isolation. But to grasp the limits of the plantation and the historical fragility of its dominant position in any particular case, one must view the institution in specific relationships with, for example, the peasants it has supposedly dominated.

Ultimately, by turning to the various links between plantations and peasants, "we turn wholly away from the plantation as sociological 'revelation'--that is, as a unitary explanation of Caribbean societies . . ." (Mintz 1974a: 41). Instead, we open to systematic scrutiny the variable impact that peasants have had on plantation organization, and thus we allow for more careful evaluation of the nature of economic independence that particular forms of plantation organization have enjoyed with respect to local political economies. Above all, we are forced to challenge people like George Beckford, who have boldly and erroneously insisted that "where a peasantry emerges, its existence depends in large measure on the plantation and there are in fact no social forces leading to the disintegration of the system" (1972: 44).

But just as the analysis of the plantation cannot totally explain Caribbean societies (or, for that matter, the economy or the plantation itself), neither can an analysis of two branches of agriculture. An economy is composed not only of an agricultural sector, but of manufacturing and other sectors as well, and each branch of each sector is, in turn, entwined in a network of markets and institutional arrangements that spin out into the political economy of the wider world. To control and manipulate a local economy and its wealth, plantations thus have had to command much more than various types of peasants. Conversely, to define and limit the extent of plantation dominance, peasants have not stood alone before the institution in ways both conflictful and expressive of need. At various points in the history of the region, they have been joined by persons bearing "all kinds of skills," including "craftsmanship, fishing, trade, veterinary science, hunting, and much else" (Mintz 1974a: 155).

During slavery, plantations dominated many types of non-agricultural production because planters controlled the allocation of economic roles among slaves. Planters used artisan skills, for example, to provide for their manufacturing needs, while they found ways to counteract the inevitable conflicts with artisans who grew independent, and sometimes openly rebellious, of aspects of the plantation regime. When plantation owners and managers completely lost the power of forcing laborers to work for them, and in some cases even before, some forms of non-agricultural production moved outside the plantation boundaries. As it did so, however, the diversity of non-agricultural occupations in rural areas of the West Indies often became "concealed" (Mintz 1974c: 305-306). The activities that individuals of an area held in common, such as peasant farming or plantation work tended to overshadow alternative economic activities both in terms of money earned and time spent. The alternatives to peasant and plantation employment occupied individuals only on a part-time basis, and sometimes individuals engaged "in several occupations in as short a time as one week or even one day" (R. T. Smith 1956: 43).

Although the alternatives to agricultural employment in the West Indies sometimes engaged little time, and this made them hardly noticeable, it is nevertheless clear from many reports that agriculture has rarely been the sole activity of individuals in rural areas of the region. In rural Barbados, for example, Jerome Handler has estimated that "80 per cent of the plantation males . . . and 35 per cent of the households with regular plantation workers combine at least three

income-producing activities . . ." (Handler 1965: 17). In some areas of Barbados, these activities have included employment in the pottery industry originally developed during slavery. Elsewhere in the West Indies, and in the wider Caribbean area--on Trinidad, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Cuba, and in erstwhile British Guiana--many people engaged in agriculture have found employment in subsidiary, non-agricultural occupations as gamblers, peddlers, musicians, prostitutes, and as highly skilled tradesmen including, besides potters, technicians, cobblers, electricians, masons, carpenters, butchers and bakers, and tailors and seamstresses.<sup>14</sup>

A review of the mixed vocational pattern so common in the Caribbean region, and particularly in the West Indies, thus reveals a range of employment opportunities in a variety of sectors outside of agriculture, and so it calls into question the neat typology dividing local employment between the peasantry and the plantation. Analysis of the pattern, however, does not totally reveal the role of any one of these sectors in relation to any others, including the agricultural sector. Individuals may have harmonized employment in various types of occupations so that their life employment history formed an "integrated economic complex" (Comitas 1964: 41).<sup>15</sup> And, in that complex, a particular economic sector may have contributed more or less than other

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Comitas (1964: 44-45), Handler (1963b: 314), Hicks (1972: 75-79), Horowitz (1967: 22), Johnson (1972: 75-79), Mintz (1956: 353-360), Padilla (1956: 284), Richardson (1973: 366), M. G. Smith (1956: 82-83), Smith and Kruijer (1957: 76-80), R. T. Smith (1956: 26-47), and Wolf (1956: 257-258).

<sup>15</sup> See also Richardson (1970: 233-234), Johnson (1972) and D. B. Smith (1966), and compare Frucht (1967), Mintz (1959: 43; 1973: 95, n.3; 1974c: 300-301, n.4) and Wolf (1959b: 43).

sectors to the total livelihood of a particular individual. But, of course, such a role has differed for each sector in the case of each individual. As a result, "the distribution of the population among occupations of different types, or in terms of different employment statuses, does not itself tell how the economic activities are arranged, or how they affect one another or the population as a whole" (Smith and Kruijer 1957: 77).

But if the role of, say, artisan employment in the mixed vocational pattern of a particular individual does not totally reveal the role of that type of employment in local West Indian economies, it does so at least partially. The various economic sectors evidently have been integrated in such a way that particular individuals could (or had to) find employment in several sectors. Certain features of particular employment patterns suggest the nature of that integration and, in many rural areas of the region, the evidence certainly seems to indicate that the plantation has controlled the order of relationships.

Throughout the region, for example, diverse non-agricultural occupations have been especially important to people as sources of income, but only during certain seasons of the year, particularly during "dead time," the slack period between major harvests when plantation demand for labor is weakest.<sup>16</sup> People have taken employment when they could as artisans and peasants to "widen the base of their opportunities" (Wolf 1959b: 147). But, having divided their alternative occupations in this way with work on the plantation, they have remained

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<sup>16</sup> For discussion of dead-time employment, see, for example, Handler (1963b: 324-325), and compare Hicks (1972), Mintz (1956: 253; 1964: xxxiv, xliii), and Padilla (1956: 284).

permanently at no job. Their lives thus have been governed largely by plantation rhythms, and the failure of non-agricultural sectors of local economies in the West Indies to expand enough to occupy people fully is undoubtedly the result, at least in part, of the continuing ability of local plantations to corner such capital resources as labor, technology and credit.

But, it must be remembered, over the long term and especially during the period of capital concentration, the owners and managers of West Indian plantations have generally striven to rationalize their production processes, to dismiss part-time, supposedly "unreliable," workers with allegiances to more than one occupation, and to employ, on a full-time basis, a corps of disciplined and relatively well-paid laborers. In Guyana and elsewhere, the gradual development of such a work force has been a necessary, though not sufficient, ingredient for the growth of a home market for manufactured goods. But whether those bearing craft skills in the local populations of the region have found this market large enough and profitable enough to justify full-time investment of their skills and tools in local production has depended on a variety of other factors: on whether the home market for manufactured goods has grown with demands arising in other branches of agriculture, and in other sectors of the local economy; on whether foreign trade policies foster competition from cheap foreign manufactures; and on whether the symbolic structure of local taste leads people to favor foreign or domestic goods for reasons other than simple evaluations of relative price and quality of construction. And these various elements, to the extent that they have raised or lowered the level of employment

available in local economies outside the plantation have, in turn, affected the freedom of estate owners and managers to lay off workers as they have endeavored to keep pace with advancing technology.<sup>17</sup>

The complex nature of these and other relationships between artisan manufacture and plantation agriculture during periods of capital concentration deserve much more careful and rigorous analysis. But, for purposes of this discussion, the point should be clear that the owners and managers of West Indian plantations have dominated non-agricultural producers in ways similar to the control they have exerted over peasants. They have enforced economic constraints in their own interest, yet they have tempered these with occasional opportunities for other forms of production to expand when it is convenient. They have been open to action, but constantly defined in their range of options. The limitations suffered by artisans and others in their subordinate roles have shaped and limited the choices that planters have had available and have had to exercise if they were to conserve plantation capital, and keep it from turning permanently away and into something else.<sup>18</sup>

Assuming, then, that plantation owners and managers have controlled labor, technology, including the technical features of the soil, and the local market for certain crops, then their command has extended in the West Indies over rural economies composed of a diversity

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of some of these problems with reference to plantations in British Guiana, see Reubens and Reubens (1962).

<sup>18</sup> Compare Mintz (1973: 101): "In sum, the activities in which poorer peasants or landless laborers engage within a 'peasant society' in order to survive . . . are linked both to the perpetuation of the peasant sector and to its potential transformation into something else."

of comparatively undeveloped productive sectors. Given the relative completeness of such control during the period of capital accumulation on plantations of the region, artisans, peasants and producers in other branches and sectors of the economies have subsequently faced a slow, painstaking process of wresting control from the planters, of taking advantage of the freedom to expand when convenient, and of resisting the constraints when possible. Ultimately at stake in the process has been the diversification of West Indian economies: the ability to produce wealth on an expanded basis; the ability, that is, of particular organizations outside the plantation to find the wherewithal to concentrate fully on their particular form of production.<sup>19</sup>

Although, in general, the plantation has maintained a dominant role, the process has been highly variable, being subject to the variable process of capital accumulation on plantations and to variations in the subsequent ability of plantation owners and managers to concentrate their capital. Because of the wide variation, much careful consideration is needed of the roles of particular branches and sectors of production in specific cases. But it must be recognized, at least as a point of departure for any such investigation, if not ultimately as a point of conclusion, that those branches and sectors have historically played a role subordinate to that of the plantation. In respect of the manufacturing sector, one must recognize that the role of artisan organization has been cast on various West Indian stages opposite the leading character of the plantation, a character moved on

<sup>19</sup> See Smith and Kruijer (1957: 77): "The number and quality of these non-agricultural specialists in any rural area is an important indicator of the wealth of the district, or its dependence on other activities besides farming."

each stage by various shifting conveniences and conflicts, and against whose motives in each case the role of artisans must be carefully and specifically drawn.

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