ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE LAY SCHOLAR
IN THE CARIBBEAN

BY

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The founding of a University College in the British West Indies has given rise to serious thinking about the characteristic role of a University in societies such as these, whether in the training of professionals, the development of research, or in its less definite role in the crystallisation, criticism and transmission of current methods in the presentation, discussion, criticism and advocacy of these ideas and values. The Extra Mural Department's programmes of lectures and classes in the different Caribbean territories have been arranged to make the influence of the University felt in this latter sense. Recently the Extra Mural Department, in pursuit of these aims, started a programme of Local Research, the aim of which is the documentation and study by "lay-scholars" of significant aspects of the cultures and social histories of its diverse parts. In particular attention is being directed to folk culture. We feel justified in using the term folk culture since, although it has been shaped and given its functions by the total system of relations between the various sections of our societies, there is a sharp cleavage between the patterns of folk life and the standards emanating from super-structural (i.e. Colonial) institutions.

The Caribbean societies consist of a collection of island and littoral territories between North and South America, which in no sense constitute a socio-economic system. They have similar yet separate and individual relationships to different mother countries, on which they depend socially, economically, politically and culturally.

Nevertheless, on account of the similarity of economic and other relationships to the mother countries, and the interrelated historical development of the latter, they have been subject to the same or to similar historical forces, e.g. they have been colonial societies which developed after