# STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN A PLURAL SOCIETY: THE CASE OF LIMON, COSTA RICA

by

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Much debate has been generated over the question of whether social stratification in plural societies[1] displays distinctive features which are theoretically significant. The issues raised seem to derive partly from the fact, as Caucian (1976) observed, that there is no generally accepted paradigm in which anthropologists studying stratification may work (1976: 227-28), and partly from the way in which plural societies have been defined and studied. On the one hand, the tendency in the study of stratification in general has been to view systems of inequality in terms of the ascribed-achieved dichotomy in status allocation. Further distinctions are made as to the relative weight of objective determinants, as in stratification in the United States, versus ideological or subjective determinants, as in the caste system. In the final analysis, the crucial questions turn on whether conflict or consensus characterizes the particular system in question. The study of stratification in plural societies, on the other hand, by the very nature of these societies, generates its own, though altogether different, sets of questions: are societies held together by force in the face of conflict, or are they held together by consensus? Are individuals and groups ranked on the basis of colour because of colour and other cultural features, or are other factors determinate while colour and culture become a mystified and mystifying excuse? These and similar perplexing questions have stimulated various conceptualizations and interpretations of social process in the plural society (cf. Kuper, 1971: 596-98). However, for the purpose of this paper it will suffice to mention only the most controversial and persistent view: that put forward by M.G. Smith.

Elaborating on Furnivall's (1948) concept of pluralism developed to describe the sociocultural disunity encountered in Burma and Netherlands India under colonial rule, Smith detached the concept from its capitalist colonial matrix in an effort to give it a more universal relevance. He defines the plural society as that characterized by the practice of different and incompatible forms of cultural institutions by different (racial or ethnic) sections of the total population, resulting in diversity in their internal social organization (1965: 14). In a later work he refers to these plural sections as social corporations and makes the distinction between cultural, social and structural pluralism (1969a: 31; 1969b: 435-45). For him, plural societies are units only in a political sense; they have a single government. In addition, in such societies it is structurally imperative for one cultural group to be superordinate in order to maintain the social order. And further, since the ruling group will utilize all political and social means to maintain power, change in a plural society can occur only through violent means (1969; 55). Those who agree with the proponents of the plural theory would argue that in the light of these very questions

such societies are not amenable to analysis employing paradigms developed for non-plural societies (cf. Cox 1948; Rex 1959; van den Berghe 1964). Others disagree heartily, noting that while plural societies are distinctive in many ways they do not require new and different paradigms (cf. Benedict 1970; Leons and Leons 1977; Berreman 1972; Tuden and Plotnicov 1970; R.T. Smith 1970; Braithwaite 1960).[2]

It is incontrovertible that plural societies do present their peculiar problems, yet when stratification studies based on the plural theory are examined it becomes clear that the arguments for distinctiveness derive from theoretical preference rather than from the empirical nature of these societies. The basic premise – implied rather than explicit – is that stratification in these societies is based on cultural criteria and not on the political economy (cf. Benedict 1970). Part of the problem stems from the well-known fact that while racially plural societies are characterized by both racial and economic cleavages, the boundaries do not precisely coincide (Kuper 1971: 599). Plural society theory, then, chooses to stress the structure and the mode of differential incorporation over and above the economic structure and their historical and processual relatedness. The power derived through political and economic institutions is crucial in shaping the relations among racial groups at all historical points.

The argument in favour of distinctive characteristics is also related to the objective – subjective theoretical polarization so often encountered in studies of social stratification. Ideology and values, viewed as subjective, are given primacy, and this leads to the supposition that the normative principles (ideology and values) reflect the objective. This is clearly not the case: "Ideology . . . is an inverted, truncated, distortion of reality", but it . . . has a starting point and foothold in reality (in praxis), or rather to the extent [it does it is] not altogether false" (Lefebvre, 1977: 256-60). In its generality, this theoretical stance taken with respect to plural society is analogous to that taken by scholars like Fallers (1973) and Dumont (1974) wherein the primacy accorded ideology has led to arguments (in the case of Dumont) that caste is not comparable to class, and (in the case of Fallers) that social stratification in the inter-lascustrine region of Africa is empirically distinct and therefore cannot be viewed in terms of "stratum" or "class". This is not the place, however, for an ample critique of these points of view. These are old questions and the relevant critical literature is available (cf. Berreman 1960, 1962 and 1972; Dunning 1972, Runciman 1972; Bourdieu 1978). The point is that the problems encountered in the study of differentiation in plural societies are not only brought about by what seem to be faulty conceptualizations of social process in such societies but have their roots also in an approach to social stratification which is inclined to overlook the relations of production.

Social stratification should be viewed as a relationship, not as things or categories (Allen and Smith 1974). The relationship is one of power[3] (Dunning 1972: 420), esteem (or prestige) and reward. Stratification, then, has to be defined structurally and not by cultural criteria. As such, it is essential that any explanation gives due consideration to the relation among political, social and economic differentiation in the process of development and reproduction of particular systems. It is also essential to be able to move back and forth from analytical separation and synthesis of variables in order to see how each functions in the overall process. Each case may in some sense be unique; however, what

we are after in the last instance are generalizations about the relation of process to structure.

The essential cultural nature of the phenotypical aspect of "race" makes it one of the many sets of symbols employed in fitting individuals in differential structural positions. "Race" is only one of the many criteria used, and vastly different symbols are at times used in surprisingly similar ways. Thus George Orwell, in **The Road to Wigan Pier**, said that he and his fellow schoolboys, before the First World War, all learned to think that the working class had a biological propensity to stink. He later referred to this "class stigma" as comparable to race stigma. The point is that criteria of classification are at times substitutable; they are distinct, but often overlap, depending on context. This is not to deny the weight and unique character of visible race in the capitalist economic systems. I am simply saying that racial differentiation can and should be studied as an aspect of economic differentiation. To assume, as I do in this paper, that racial pluralism can be studied under social stratification without special accommodation (Vincent 1974: 376; Runciman 1972: 506) is not to assume that race and class are identical phenomena. They are coexisting but clearly distinct, and the interaction between them is complex. The suggestion is, however, that the process of social stratification, while different in its particularities (i.e., depending on the code of classification employed), is similar in its generalities. To focus, therefore, on symbolic system, culture, deterministic ideology, etc., is to lose sight of the concrete institutions which support these symbolic systems.

It is the purpose of this paper to present a historical analysis of stratification in a plural setting (Hispanics, Blacks, and Anglo-Americans) in Limon, Costa Rica. Initially all three groups were drawn to this area for the purpose of railroad construction and later the operation of industrial-scale plantation, the dictates of which effected a particular form of ranking. Subsequent changes in the plantation system brought with them changes in the social hierarchy amounting to reshaping of the prestige structure. In examining the relation between race and social hierarchy, I have focused primarily on the organization and transformation of the productive system as the specific context which conditions and gives meaning to the human ranking within it. Inter-racial relations, perceptions and interpretation of social hierarchy are treated as inseparable from the concrete relations of production in which they are evaluated.

The argument is advanced that, (1) given the nature of the transformation of relations between Hispanics and Blacks, and the form that these relations assumed in the social consciousness under differing conditions, the meaning of "race" as a criterion of social stratification amounts to no more than one among other such symbols[4] directly conditioned by people's position within the productive system; and (2) the relevance of this case to a critique of the plural theory approach to racial differentiation lies in the fact, demonstrated here, that race relations and institutional forms do change in relation to social stratification: a point which counters Smith's (1965: 83) statement that cultural forms and social stratification vary independently. It is further suggested that in order to understand how and why particular symbolic complexes are utilized, and what they mean politically, socially and economically, nothing short of a study of these symbols within their concrete historical context will suffice. The argument for a historical approach is not a new one (cf. Mintz and Price 1976; Plotnicov and Tuden 1970). How-

ever, the particular ethnographic case discussed here forcefully illustrates, once more, that need. Such an approach may, by throwing some light on factors which condition the direction of change in social hierarchy, lead in the direction of an emphasis on the relation of process to structure and away from invidious particularistic distinctions and theoretical polarizations which tend to portray whole systems as different in kind when they are different only in degree.

## The colonization of the Atlantic Coast

Extending the entire length of the Atlantic coast of Costa Rica, the Province of Limón, though one of the last parts of the country to become populated, is one of its most important economic regions. It produces 66 per cent of Costa Rica's banana and 83 per cent of its cacao, both of which constitute the principal agricultural export. The country's main commercial port is located in this area, and handles twice the tonnage of both the Puntarenas and Golfito ports on the Pacific coast. The economic mainstay of the region is agriculture and transportation, though a petroleum processing plant is located there also. The entire province has suffered in the past 30 years from one of the country's most momentous problems, unequal regional development. By comparison with the other provinces, it is still sparsely populated, having approximately 122,400 people comprising Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and Chinese. According to a 1973 estimate, the racial proportions are: 57 per cent Hispanics, 39 per cent Blacks, 3 per cent Native Americans and 2 per cent Chinese, with the proportion of Hispanics to the rest of the population rising at a rapid rate. The population of the urban centre and municipal capital, Puerto Limon, is approximately 41,000. The completion of a highway from San José, the national capital, to Limon in 1975, plus recent government attention to the development of the area, has spurred renewed economic interest in the region. As a consequence of the renewed interest there has been a large influx of Hispanics from the Meseta Central (central plateau) to the region in search of jobs, land and other economic opportunities.

Harsh climatic conditions, combined with pirate and Zambo Mosquito[5] activities along the eastern seaboard, delayed the colonization of the coast until the mid-eighteenth century when the cultivation of cacao was initiated in the Matina Valley. The relatively small plantations were manned by a few slaves[6] while their owners resided in the Meseta Central where the climate is more hospitable. Around the mid-1860s Limon was decreed the principal port of the nation. The intention was that it would handle the exportation of coffee, Costa Rica's main export product. Coffee had been shipped via the Pacific coast since its entrance on the foreign market – Brazil and later Britain – in the early 1930s. It was a clumsy and inefficient operation since coffee was grown in the central highlands and there were no serviceable roads or motorized transportation to facilitate its journey to the Atlantic.

The rationale for an Atlantic port was a sound one but its plan had to include provision for an efficient and reliable means of transportation from the coffee-producing region to the port of exit. After lengthy reflection it was decided that a railroad system should be constructed. An American, Henry Meiggs, was awarded the contract in 1871.

The execution of the contract fell to Minor C Keith, his nephew, who was later to be the architect of the United Fruit Company. Following dire financial and logistical difficulties in the first decade of construction, negotiations between Keith and the national government led to the signing, in 1884, of the famous Soto-Keith contract through which Keith was granted a 99-year lease on the railroad, some 800,000 acres of land and other concessions (Stewart 1964: 53-55; Jones 1935: 86-87). The award of this contract set the basic conditions for the establishment of a colony on the Atlantic seaboard. However, Keith was faced with the problem of labour supply for railroad construction.

Initially, Costa Ricans from the central highlands attempted to brave the disease-ridden Atlantic jungle through which the railroad had to be constructed, but, for the uninitiated, this amounted to suicide. Scores succumbed. The *Gaceta Oficial* of 11 December 1872 gave notice that all Costa Ricans *peones* should be withdrawn for health reasons. Keith was then forced to look elsewhere for labour and this resulted in the importation of West Indians — mainly Jamaicans, Chinese and, for a brief period, Italians. The Italians rebelled against the inhumane working conditions after only a brief period and some 800 of a total of about 1,500 were repatriated in the late 1880s (Stewart 1964: 67). Many West Indians and Chinese survived, but not without considerable hardships; estimates of lives claimed by the construction of the first 20 miles of railroad out of Limón run as high as 5,000. With the completion of the railroad in 1889 the Chinese went into commercial activities while West Indians were to constitute the main labour force on banana plantations which were established when it was discovered that coffee alone could not keep the railway profitable.

Costa Ricans — who are derogatively referred to by Black as *Paña* — ventured into the area for the second time only when health conditions had been greatly improved and when the plantation was approaching its peak, around 1912. It was not until the 1920s, however, that this group featured significantly in the region, their influx triggered by, among other things, the drop in the price of coffee and the growing scarcity of land in the highlands: coffee export had triggered a process whereby peasant farmers were squeezed out of their holdings (Stone 1976: 90-96; Biesanz 1945: *passim)*. That many blacks were shifting by this time from wage labour to peasant farming may have contributed to the influx of Hispanics by creating openings in the plantation sector.

### The Productive System: Industrial-Scale Plantation

Gray (1941) has defined a large-scale plantation of the antebellum American South as ". . . a capitalistic type of agricultural organization in which a considerable number of unfree laborers are employed under unified direction and control in the production of a staple crop" (1941: 444). This type of plantation obviously is the colonial type. Mintz (1959) has modified this definition to achieve applicability to the modern large-scale plantation found in Latin America and the Caribbean. He makes the following qualifications: (1) labour is not unfree, and (2) the modern agro-social form (as the United Fruit Company was) is of a much magnified scale and intensity of capitalistic development. This magnification includes a vast increase in capital investment; the growth of corporate control; the evolution of indirect political influence on a national and international scale; the freeing of capital from investment in owning labour; and

other related changes (1959: 43-44). The nature of the plantation depends on the type and scale of the productive forces and the manner by which they are combined within a particular ecological setting. In this instance, land, labour and capital were the principal productive forces. Land was granted by the state, and the importation of labour was made possible through the relaxation of restrictions on the importation of non-whites (Melendez and Duncan 1977: 87). The historical relationship of the West Indies to the metropolitan centres was also a significant factor in the movement of labour then, as it is today. At the time that labour was being recruited for the middle-American plantations and railroad construction, the West Indian territories in question, and particularly Jamaica, were already experiencing the dismal after-effects of the slave plantation economies created by Britain. There was excess labour ready and willing to explore greener fields abroad (cf. Bryce-Laporte 1962: Chap. 1). In addition, many ex-slaves and their descendants had developed cultural and nationalistic ties with their colonizer, Britain, and this fact was grasped and used by labour recruiters. American labour recruiters operating in Jamaica at the time visited churches and spoke from pulpits explaining to prospective workers that if they went to work for the United Fruit Company they would be serving Her Majesty's cause. The necessary capital for establishing the plantation was provided by foreign interests: the company was incorporated in 1899 with capital stock of $20 million (Kepner 1936: 22). Like industrial-scale plantations in other areas of the Caribbean (Jamaica, Cuba, Puerto Rico) and Central America (Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama — most owned by the United Fruit Company) the enterprise produced a mono-crop destined for the markets of the developed world. Other products such as cacao, hemp and lumber were later introduced but only as a mere stopgap when banana production began to decline.

## The Social Organization of the Plantation

In considering the social organization of the plantation there are three factors of immediate importance to the central theme of inequality and structural transformation. The first is the organization of the productive forces; the second is the relations among racial groups, viewed as a function of the organization of labour; and the third is the role of distinctive cultural symbols in the interaction or non-interaction of racial groups within the context of the plantation, and the type of social hierarchy which developed. It will be seen that cultural distinctions were consciously manipulated by the owners of the means of production to the benefit of the enterprise and to the disadvantage of labour. The plantation, being a capitalistic and labour-intensive enterprise, sought to maximize its surplus through, among other things, "divisive" organization of labour. The utilization of foreign labour, then, though at first an ecological necessity, turned out to be one of the major contradictions in the development of the plantation system and its ultimate decline.

By the turn of the present century, banana plantation spread throughout most of the province. Its marketing required efficient transportation and so a network of rail arteries and secondary tram lines was installed to service the various plantation sections and individual fields. The specific distribution of centres of population corresponded to the layout of the plantation and the transportation system. All routes converged on Puerto Limón, the administrative centre. Distribution of personnel was so organized that those concerned with the day-to-day activities on particular sections lived within

close proximity in what were referred to as "camps". From the standpoint of the daily production process each camp was semi-autonomous; though receiving directives from the administrative centre, labour, equipment and supervisory personnel were always at hand at each section

An Anglo-Saxon (usually American) supervisor headed each camp. His dwelling was easily distinguished from all others by size, quality of structure, general surroundings and appearance. Next in order were the foremen or foreman-timekeeper — usually, though not always, Jamaican Coloured.[7] Their dwellings, though much better than those of the average worker, were not of the size, comfort and appearance of those of the supervisor or overseer. At the bottom of the scale were the labourers. They were housed in "long camps", large structures with bare undifferentiated rooms or compartments, shared by several men at a time. Toilet facilities were rudimentary (at times non-existent), over-crowding was common and health care not easily accessible. In the latter stage of plant-ation, however, dwellings for labourers were improved, in some cases to facilitate family cohabitation.

Hispanic labourers were effectively separated from Blacks, in dwelling as well as in working arrangements. At times, these dwellings were located within earshot of each other, yet their close proximity did not seem to contribute to social mingling, not to mention mixing. Occupational separation was ensured by an arrangement in which Spanish workers were employed directly by another Hispanic who was in turn contracted to the company on a piecework basis. They were, for the most part, confined to brute labour such as digging drains and opening up new rail lines and new roads.

The hierarchical model which describes the organization of individual sections of the plantation settlement may be viewed as a microcosm of the organization of settle-ments in the province as a whole. In the administrative centre, Puerto Limón, the or-ganization of space was an excellent marker of the socioeconomic status and prestige of its inhabitants. Administrative offices were located on the southeast side of town; whites resided in an exclusive well-delineated area bordering the northeast coastline, called "the zone", still a choice residential area today, though few Americans reside there. Non-whites were forbidden to enter the area unless on special errand, or unless they were domestic hands. Other groups, such as Germans, Italians and coloured Ja-maicans — most involved in various commercial activities — occupied areas toward the centre of town.

Most West Indians who lived in the town occupied barrios (geographically deli-neated urban communities) which displayed some amount of national separation; Ja-maicans were separate from those immigrants from the French Creole-speaking island of St Lucia. Each non-white group pursued its own life style with minimal mixing with the others and virtually no mixing with Whites, whether Hispanophone or Anglophone. Although no figures exist, the elderly agree that the ratio of Whites to Blacks in the town was far greater than on any individual section of the plantation settlements.

Besides playing one West Indian national group off against another (cf. Kepner 1936: 157-73), maintaining separate dwelling arrangements for Blacks and Hispanics, having both groups perform separate and different tasks and making no effort to include

Spanish as a second operating language (Kepner), the company seemed to have developed the practice of using one group to spy on another. J L Williams, an overseer in eastern Guatemala, observed that ". . . whites could bank on the support of the American Negroes . . . [who] forewarned the whites of any Jamaican plot" (Kepner 1936: 170). There is no specific evidence of this practice in Costa Rica but the frequent threats of work stoppage no doubt made this practice a necessary tool. More importantly, however: "It was the company's policy to avoid as much as possible putting [Costa Rican] nationals in high positions because of their divided allegiance in disputes with the national government" (1936: 177).

Housing arrangements were by no means simply a matter of convenient accommodation. The "house" was a symbol of power, of one's position within the "empire", to use Kepner's (1935) term. The dynamics of promotions reflect this: an assistant superintendent of agriculture, for example, once promoted to superintendent, had to change residence so as to maintain intact the residential hierarchy. It was part of the incentive and, at the same time, a confirmation of the existing distribution of power.

Social closure was important, and by no means was it confined to residential arrangement. Leisure activities also ensured this, though on occasions there was racial mingling, though not mixing, at the frequent baseball games. Yet the fact that middle-level Coloured employees and dependents established their own club — called variously the Black-White Club or Brownman's Club — and their separate tennis court, suggests that mingling was confined primarily to one sport, baseball. This type of marked racial interaction seems comparable to similar instances in the United States where athletic events become the occasion for a type of mixing which is not carried over beyond that specific contest.

Within the central administrative structure, the colour gradations of employees reflected the hierarchy. Positions such as accountants, clerks and telegraph operators, foremen, and timekeepers were held by Coloured Jamaicans, though not exclusively. But plantation foremen, after the 1930s, were increasingly drawn from among dark-skinned Jamaicans. The increase in the number of dark-skinned foremen appears to have been instrumental; it was attributed to the early decline of production, due partly to the reverberations of the Great Depression. The year 1930 saw severe retrenchment in spite of the promises of the company to expand, contingent on the negotiation of a favourable contract with the government granting it added concessions. A favourable contract was obtained, yet Ezequiel Guitierrez, the treasurer of the municipality of Limón, observed in a complaint about the deteriorating conditions in the province:

> The United Fruit Company is taking in its sails.
> Already it has laid off many employees and it is now
> announcing that effective November 1st [1930]
> many overseers will be laid off and their work handled
> by Negro foremen . . . (Kepner and Soothill 1935:
> 92-93).

Below the white owners, however, the structure was clearly gradational, a fact which in itself conditions relationships in such a manner as to render the inherent contra-

dictions of the plantation system less transparent than would be the case with a strictly dichotomous structure. Workers at the lower levels found some hope in the visibility of men of their own colour or race in higher positions. They no doubt felt that with appropriate preparation their children, if not they themselves, could achieve such heights. It affirmed, at least in their own minds, the possibility of mobility. Workers could, on the surface, develop personalized relationships with immediate supervisors — they being of the same racial stock — and probably engage in social intercourse outside of the occupational structure. Some personalized relationships involved deals between foremen and workers designed to earn extra cash through various arrangements: padding work time; not recording absences; recording more work than was actually accomplished; etc. All such relationships stopped short of including white individuals; and only in rare instances was there mention of personalized relations involving special favours from whites to their black immediate 'inferiors'.

The structure of the system may be conceptualized, at one level, as a two-tiered class hierarchy consisting of White owners and Black and Hispanic workers. At yet another level of conceptualization we have the worker sector displaying a nonclass hierarchy; Hispanics shared a lower-level objective structural position with Blacks, but were collectively evaluated by Blacks as being culturally and racially inferior. Blacks were differentiated too, primarily on the basis of colour gradations and occupational ranking. Light-skinned individuals formed a buffer between Whites and the large mass of dark-skinned workers. The various levels, however, were not as monolithic as they may seem at first glance. There were instances of dark-skinned individuals in positions normally held by Coloureds. It should be pointed out that Coloureds did not fill the positions they did merely because of their light skin. These positions were filled mainly on the basis of educational requirements. As it happened, however, most Jamaicans with the necessary educational skills to fill middle-level positions were, by reason of the particular history of the emergence of class-colour relations in their home society, those of lighter skin colour (cf. Braithwaite 1971; Henriques 1953; R T Smith 1970). Nor was the lower-level dark-skinned sector monolithic outside of the occupational structure; there were those who, in spite of their low position on the job, enjoyed a respectable and influential standing in social as well as religious endeavours.

## Perception and Evaluation of the Social Hierarchy

In spite of the low socioeconomic position of West Indians vis-à-vis Anglo-Americans and other whites, and in spite of the structural equality between them and Hispanics, they, in very explicit terms, regarded themselves as superior to Hispanics. Four sets of factors are of significance in explaining the superior position in which West Indians placed themselves.

( i )  Being largely of Jamaican provenance, most Blacks accepted the British ideology of cultural and national superiority. Their self-definition relied heavily on assimilated British values, and therefore anyone who did not share this identity in any form was inferior.

( ii )  The primitive level of socioeconomic development of the Atlantic coast was used as the measure by which Costa Rican development was judged. Most

had no objective knowledge of life in other areas of the country; from their standpoint the only reference was Jamaica.

(iii) Costa Ricans working in the plantation zone were drawn from the growing group of proletarians and recently disfranchised peasantry. They therefore represented the lowest socioeconomic stratum of Costa Rican society. West Indians, uninformed as they were about the rest of Costa Rica, perceived this stratum as representative of the whole.

( iv) West Indians, unlike Costa Ricans, spoke a common language with their employers. Moreover, as a group, they had seniority on the plantation; it was they, not the Hispanics, who had braved the elements to colonize the area "when the Hispanics were dying like flies".

Taking the question of language, it has been observed that Costa Ricans were at the bottom of the social hierarchy primarily because they could not speak the language of their employers. There is some truth in this. However, it is noteworthy that many Blacks such as drain diggers and unskilled field hands were in identical occupational positions. Also, in the later stage of the plantation history Hispanics assumed positions alongside Blacks at all levels, in some cases even above Blacks, so that while their objective structural position was similar their subjective position was perceived as markedly dissimilar. Language was, nevertheless, probably the single most important factor in the hierarchization, as in the perception, of the structure by Blacks. The importance of English as a criterion of evaluation is illustrated by the way in which an old friend greeted me on my second visit to Limon. He said:

> Lord, Mr. T, I can't tell you how glad I am to see you
> man. You know, it is always a God-given pleasure
> to see someone you can speak the Queen's language
> with . . .

This elderly man had worked for the United Fruit Company for over forty years. To him, and others like him, English was more than just an instrument of communication; it was among the foremost cultural attributes bestowing prestige. In a word, it was the most telling symbol of British culture in a country where nationals spoke only the  contemptible "bird language", as they condescendingly referred to Spanish.

The perceived superiority of English, and hence those who mastered it, was intimately tied to their self-image as British subjects. Quince Duncan, a Costa Rican writer of Jamaican descent, characterized it thus:

> To belong to the British empire means not only to be
> a member of a multinational and "superdeveloped"
> state . . . but that the idea of the imperial is in itself a
> type of religion that developed in the individual
> such a concept of loyalty toward the crown, toward
> English values, that he becomes incapable of identify-
> ing with any other culture. (Melendez and Duncan
> 1977: 101).

But superiority was not expressed only in the attitude toward language and citizenship. Things such as body odour, and cultural practices such as eating patterns, personal and domestic hygiene and attire were all brought into play. Blacks built their houses on stilts, dyed their floors and shined them with brushes of coconut husk, and ate with knife and fork seated at a table. They claimed that, in contrast, Hispanics allowed their domestic animals to enter their houses, spat on the floors, and ate wherever and however they thought convenient. From the point of view of Blacks, the separation was in terms of strict opposites: civilized versus uncivilized, literate versus illiterate. Mrs. Lewin, a field hand who began working for the company as early as 1910, spoke of the Spanish in these terms:

> Dey looks to me laik dey wur barberians, laik dey
> wud kill and iit piiple datz di wey dey looks . . .
> Deze piiple wur iliteret and ignorant[8] an we wuz
> alweys afreid av dem. If yu goin along de strict an uy
> si dem yu waak on di odder sa'id. Dey alweys kiari
> dier kutlas wid dem . . .

Blacks prevented their children from associating with those of the *Paña* — consequently today many of those who were then children complain that if it were not for the prejudice of their parents they would have learned to speak Spanish. The separation was not difficult to maintain since, as mentioned before, the company supported it in the organization of dwelling facilities.

The clear hierarchization of life on the plantation was cognitively congruent to the colonial conception of society so familiar to Blacks. There was, nevertheless, one significant difference between ranking within the colonial plantation and within the modern capitalist plantation society: minimal penetration of the upper hierarchical boundaries was possible in the latter. But this had both positive and negative effects; it was a distinct advantage for those individuals — few and far between — who managed to achieve such penetration while at the same time it served to hinder full awareness of the relations of exploitation. The company must have been aware of the fraility of the colonial mind, for it played one group off against the other with great success, as was evident in the 1934 strike which got almost no support from Blacks. At times, too, Blacks were paid higher than the Hispanics for similar tasks. The extent of aggressiveness with which such a separatist policy was pursued by the company is not known. However, it is worthwhile pointing out that it has been used in instances other than plantation society as a most effective means of subjugating forced labour (cf. Terray 1975: 94-95).

Occupational and spatial separation and questions of citizenship and national status merely heightened the sociocultural biases of each group. Objective distinctions, when seen from a distance, lend themselves, within a competitive milieu, to rather flexible subjective interpretations. Cultural symbols are inherently ambiguous and, therefore, amenable to manipulation in spite of their objectivity. On special occasions Jamaicans dressed in their "Sunday best" — for males this meant a suit, tie and felt hat; for females it meant wearing a specially tailored dress, hat and gloves. The fact that the Hispanics paid no such attention to their attire was testimony to their uncivility. Concerning

drinking habits: it is noted that Blacks got drunk and danced while Hispanics got drunk and shouted. To Blacks, what the Hispanics did was a wild custom. To the Hispanics, however, Blacks were not as civilized as they would like others to think. Carlos Fallas (1975) gives us some indication of what Hispanics thought about this:

> They [the blacks] would argue at each other horrify-
> ingly, gesticulating like devils; you would think that
> they were trying to kill each other . . . On payday
> they would get drunk and make merry with rum . . .
> They sang wild and monotonous songs, formed in a
> circle, clapping their hands and rhythmically stomp-
> ing their feet . . . The fiesta would end with them
> like trunks on the ground, a mountain of sweaty
> flesh snoring noisily (1975: 134).

Referring to themselves he said: "We also became intoxicated once in a while, and almost always we were inclined to be sentimental and romantic with rum . . ." (1975: 136). To Hispanics, Blacks were obstreperous, pungnacious and carefree. To Blacks, Hispanics were wild, savage, ignorant, dangerous and unclean.

The manner in which Blacks viewed Hispanics was in stark contrast to the way Anglo-Americans were perceived. Culturally, their relationship to Anglo-Americans was seen as continuous in contrast to the discontinuous relationship with Creoles. Culturally and socioeconomically, Americans were representative of the British, though not equal to them. The upward path from the common labourer to the White supervisor was one that Blacks felt they could traverse culturally, if not economically, in the next generation — i.e., their offspring — if not in the present.[9] Coloureds who held middle level positions were living symbols of Black hope; and the emulation of Anglo-American values was a statement of ambition, a recognition of possibilities. Sending one's children to be educated in Jamaica was the next and crucial step toward achieving those possibilities. The deference paid to Coloureds and Whites was very marked and there is some indication that there was a display of what has been interpreted as "passive cooperation" and "identifying with the company" (Melendez and Duncan 1977: 66; cf. also Bryce Laporte 1962; Kepner 1936; and Olien 1967 for comments on this theme). There seems no question that there was some degree of loyalty on the part of Blacks, although it is said of Jamaicans in other parts of Central America that they were so "cocky being British" that they didn't care for the Americans (Kepner 1936: 169-71). According to the accounts of informants, this seems not to have been the case in Costa Rica. It is fair to say, then, that both Coloureds in high positions and Anglo-Americans constituted the prestige reference group. Blacks saw themselves as having an ever-present obligation to approximate the values of this group in an effort to improve their own life-chances.

## Structural Transformation of the Productive System

At the end of the first decade of this century when the plantation was approaching its peak, only a few Hispanics were to be found on the Atlantic coast. By the late 1930s, however, they were present in greatly increased numbers and already occupying middle level positions. Their influx occurred at a time when an undetermined number of Blacks

were gradually moving to independent farming. This was encouraged by the fact that the company, on noticing that the production of banana was declining as the cost of production increased, thought it best to lease its farms (or sections thereof) to independent cultivators. The cost of production was to be carried by the primary producer while the company dictated the method of production. This policy opened opportunities for Hispanics from the Meseta Central. They could lease and run farms independently. Moreover, by this time, there were bilingual, clerical company employees who facilitated communication. By 1927, Hispanics numbered over 13,000 strong, constituting approximately 36 per cent of the total population. The early 1930s saw the national government insisting that Costa Rican nationals be given more employment and in higher positions (Kepner 1936: 176-78). By 1942, when the last shipment of banana left the Atlantic coast, Hispanics were prominent in independent farming, plantation, law enforcement, transportation and, of course, they ran — though they may not have controlled — the local government. Their heaviest representation was in railway activities where they constituted 45 per cent of the workforce (Koch 1977: 10). The economy, however, continued to be controlled by Anglo-Americans; they still owned farms, and they ran the railroad and an hemp processing plant which together constituted the main source of employment. Banana cultivation and shipping were gradually transferred to the Pacific coast, and a few years later the railway company was nationalized.

As transformation proceeded, nationals gained more and more ground in the region. They filled positions vacated by Americans in shipping, railway, health care and, to a limited extent, commerce. Blacks were not permitted to accept employment in the new banana plantations on the Pacific; they were forbidden to migrate outside of the Atlantic zone. Many left the country in search of employment. The region was becoming increasingly inhospitable to them for nationals had been strongly protesting, since the early 1930s, the competition they represented. They were respected for their role in making the region habitable, but were disliked for, among other things, the advantageous position they once occupied.

The period 1942 to 1953 may be considered a watershed in the transformation of the region. The decline and ultimate demise of the plantation meant, for Blacks, a period of severe hardship between the last shipment of bananas in 1942 and the first opportunity for political participation in 1953. Political control of the region by Hispanics began to crystallize after 1948, the year in which Jose Figueres seized power. In keeping with certain social reforms designed by his predecessor, Figueres granted Blacks jurisdictional nationality, a move which was calculated to (and which did) secure Black support for his party over a long period beginning in 1953. The move was toward instrumental incorporation, and it meant, in the long run, no more than token participation on the part of.Blacks (cf. Sawyers Royal 1974: 187-89). They came fully under Hispanic control with increasing economic disfranchisement and displacement (cf. Bryce-Laporte and Purcell, n.d.). Unfamiliarity with the laws of the land coupled with increasing need for scarce cash caused scores to lose the land that they had cultivated for years to incoming Hispanics.

Departure of the prestige reference group meant that all services it previously owned or controlled now came under the control of Hispanics. The education system,

for example, which Blacks had established on the basis of the Jamaican model, was replaced over time by the state educational system; Spanish replaced English as the official language.

The transformation of the productive system may be summarised into two basic points:

( i)  Transference of the ownership of the means of production from foreign enterprise to the state. This was accompanied by increased small-scale production by Blacks as well as Hispanics.

(ii)  Transference of de facto political control of the region from foreign enterprise to the state.

The process was accompanied by significant demographic changes and, in effect, Limon which was a "closed community"[10] under the plantation system became incorporated into the wider society.

Reaping the benefits of citizenship meant at least partial cultural incorporation. It became compulsory for Blacks to attend state schools, something they had actively resisted in the past. The government had long been complaining that the reluctance of Blacks to allow their children to attend Spanish schools prevented the state from imparting to them Costa Rican sentiments. We are reminded in this regard of Bourdieu's observation that ". . . the symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality — in particular social reality — is a major dimension of political power" (1977: 165). In this instance, the system of education intervened between the West Indian and his world as the principal transmitter of the Hispanic way of life, ultimately a form of political control. This is not to suggest that acculturation was complete; first-generation and some second-generation Blacks resisted. From the point of view of the young and mobile, however, resistance is nothing but a haunting vestige of the "days of superiority". It creates an unnecessary obstacle to incorporation.

Incorporation, as it is manifested culturally, and as it defines the present position of one racial group vis-à-vis the other, may be categorized under the rubrics of **language, nationality, marriage pattern** and **colour, and ideological incorporation.**

### Language

English, though previously the main symbol of prestige, now has negative prestige value. This is understandable in the sense that the ability to function within the framework of Costa Rican society requires that the national language be spoken. While the advantages of bilingualism are recognized in some quarters, it was not until very recently that it was encouraged in school. As recently as 1976 there were cases of Black teachers charging students small, unofficial fines for speaking English in school. At times, in lieu of the fines, students were pinched on the arm as a reminder that English should not be spoken and as a punishment. It is therefore not uncommon today to find young Afro-Costa Ricans who are reluctant to speak English. Probably more significant is the fact that the influence of Spanish is profoundly conditioning the form and content of the English creole, once identical to that spoken in Jamaica. Today one does not ask, for example, "How old are you?" but "How much years you have?" — a creole translation

of the Spanish? *Cuantos anos tiene?* Or take the ten-year-old pupil asking the English teacher, "Do we have to copy the date?" The child asks. *Tiicha, wi af tu koppiar di fecha?* The relexification of the English creole is probably one of the best indicators (at this historical moment) of the acculturative process.

## Nationality:

Problematic as the question of Afro-Costa Rican identity might be, as evidenced by the fact that it was one of the main themes in a 1978 conference on the situation of Blacks in Costa Rica, the narrower but related question of national identity seems to have reached a facile resolution — at least in the minds of some. In a conversation with a Black male of about 35 years on my first visit to Limon the question of Jamaican heritage was raised. I expressed my understanding that most Afro-Costa Ricans were descendants of Jamaicans. He promptly declared: "I am a Costa Rican." I was to become very familiar with such arguments for the rest of my stay in the country. Responses to questions of Jamaican heritage vary from mild hostility and accommodation to nostalgia. There are those who, after 50 to 60 years living in Costa Rica, still dream of at least visiting Jamaica. On the contrary, there are those who have nothing but contempt for a country their parents once held in such high esteem. For this dissenting group allegiance to Jamaica can only be an obstacle to being Costa Rican.

There is no question as to where loyalties lie today, and while tales about Jamaica may have left a warm and lingering curiosity in the minds of many, defence of their Costa Rican nationality comes easily. During my stay in a small village I had to witness a heated debate between a Jamaican visitor and three Afro-Costa Rican males regarding the relative merits of identifying with Costa Rica against Jamaica. With the aid of a few beers, the debate soon turned into a vigorous disputation during which the Jamaican let slip a few derisive remarks about Costa Rica. The result was a prolonged and bitter fight ultimately involving other Afro-Costa Ricans who had not been a part of the debate. Observers, and even the Black policeman who later attempted to settle the matter, agreed that the Jamaican had it coming to him for mouthing off as often as he had about their country. Obviously, not all Afro-Costa Ricans would physically defend the country against an opinionated Jamaican; however, "This is our country," they say, and "it is the freest country in the world."

## Marriage Pattern and Colour

Separation of Blacks and Hispanics in terms of the civility-uncivility dichotomy prevented social interaction as it certainly did prevent open inter-racial unions. There has now been a partial reversal of this tendency. Of 217 households sampled, 6.5 per cent of all unions were racially mixed, and 45.2 per cent of all respondents expressed a positive predisposition regarding inter-racial alliances. Some Black women expressed the opinion that "Spanish" men are more helpful economically, and more loving, although one woman when asked about her "Spanish" husband said: "Lord he is loving you see, but his nose is cold." Black males favourably disposed to such unions portray "Spanish" females as more understanding and tolerant, and more encouraging. It is noteworthy that the majority of such unions involving Black males occur among the more mobile males, though by no means exclusively so.

Fair skin and European features, traditionally symbols of prestige and status, have now adopted as their immediate referents the Hispanic image. Fair skin is not only beautiful, it is an asset in upward mobility. A few young women even expressed the desire to establish unions with "Spanish" males so that their children will have **piel claro** (clear skin). Young children, too, have learned to value colour and race. The following comment by a young Black woman about her 9-year-old daughter is not unique:

> She don't like Blacks and I don't know where she get
> that idea from. She always asking me in the streets
> why is it that Negroes so **feo** (ugly). The other day
> she told me that she wanted a new father (parents are
> separated) but not a Negro this time . . .

Profound acceptance of Hispanic values does not characterize the entire Black community. Recently there has been talk about taking active measures to stem the process of assimilation, while emphasizing integration as the goal. Yet the advocates of such a move are for the most part those referred to commonly as the **elite Negroes,** who find it difficult to get support at grassroots levels for issues defined in racial and cultural terms.

**Ideological Incorporation:**

Ideologically, Costa Rica is a social democratic polity. As such it is an exponent of the ideology of total incorporation — irrespective of racial background — through equal opportunity for all. This ideological stance is predicated on the **policlasista** concept introduced by Figueres after the 1948 civil war (Ameringer 1978: 102). The idea is that there should be no separation of the polity other than by class (Bryce-Laporte and Purcell: n.d.). It is therefore difficult to have a Costa Rican admit that there is racial discrimination in spite of overwhelming evidence that there is. Many Afro-Costa Ricans subscribe to this ideology, supporting also the notion that there is equal opportunity — at least in employment and education — for all. A successful Black farmer aptly sums it up this way:

> If you carry yourself like a decent person and respect
> the Spanish you can reach anywhere in this country.
> We don't have racial discrimination here, what we have
> is social discrimination. I can't mix with a man who
> carry himself indecent and don't show any ambition.
> The Spanishman feel the same way.

The point of view is borne out by the fact that 69 per cent of the questionnaire respondents, while agreeing that there is social and colour discrimination against Blacks, say there is nevertheless equal opportunity at least in education and employment for those who want to take advantage of it. There is much evidence to support the fact that this ideology, like all other ideologies, is a distortion of the objective situation, a refraction rather than a reflection. Yet its supporters readily point to the fact that there is no racial segregation in residential arrangements, nor is there discrimination against those few Blacks who have attained "high-level" positions such as director of a local high school. Many of the more mobile and aspiring Blacks with whom I spoke showed signs of acceptance of the dominant idea; they felt that there was always room at the top for the **ambitious.** To support this idea they frequently pointed with obvious pride to themselves

and others who have "made it". Acceptance of the ideology bears some similarity to what Srinivas (1952) has referred to as the strengths of the caste system, i.e., that it co-opts the dissident group into using the rhetoric of the system in its demands for mobility, yielding rank to those who support the intricacies of the rank system (Quoted in Caucian 1976: 240.)

There is much to suggest that acceptance corresponds to an "outside" model of behaviour in contrast to an "inside" model which is critical of the system. Yet there is no ignoring such comments from Blacks as: "I have only Spanish friends" or referring to traditional Blacks cuisine, "that is poor people food" or referring to the attitude of first-generation and second-generation migrants: "those old people were stupid". Or take the Black migrant to San José who, when in the company of his Hispanic friends, will turn his head to avoid greeting an old friend from Limón.

Limited possibilities of penetrating the opportunity structure have in recent years moved a few Blacks into skilled and white-collar positions. In conjunction with such individuals, most of those who are permanently employed in transportation, port activities and petroleum processing, etc. – in manual labour – do regard themselves as middle-class. Class alliances, then, have begun to emerge and seem, so far, to take precedence over ethnic alliances. The fact that 82 per cent of Blacks surveyed believe that there is strong discrimination among Blacks themselves is an indication of the absence of ethnic cohesion in the face of intra-group class differentiation.

Much more could be said about the social transformation of the society in the face of the new economic arrangements, but it should be clear already that the changes in the production system have set in motion a process whereby perception of the socio-racial structure characterizing the plantation system has been rearranged in the post-plantation society.

**Conclusion**
A strict synchronic analysis emphasizing dichotomous categories such as ascribed-achieved or subjective-objective or a positivist concern with normative structures, while producing useful insights, has the tendency to grant race per se centrality while slighting the historical relationship between symbolic evaluation and the organization and relations of production. The fact that relations between Whites and Blacks on the Atlantic coast today seem analogous to the White-Black superordinate-subordinate structure found throughout the New World would, without the historical dimension, lead one to conclude that it has always been that way. The present structure of racial cleavages does not, in itself, suggest that there has been a radical rearrangement. I have argued that this re-arrangement is based on the changes in the productive system. I would like to clarify and elaborate on this point.

Had the plantation remained the economic mainstay of the region, the demographic compositon of the workforce and the province in general would, in all likelihood, have continued to change, resulting, as a consequence of government pressure, in a reversal of the relative status position of Blacks and Hispanics similar to what occurred as a result of the relocation. The process would, however, have been much slower. The transformation of the economy can be attributed to four major factors: over exploitation of soil resources;

expansion beyond technological capability, i.e., fields stretching increasingly far from the reach of the transportation network; the spread of disease; and the utilization of migrant versus national labour — while at the same time depending on the goodwill of the state. The last factor seems the most important in explaining the present situation. Local protest against the favoured position granted West Indians prompted the state to pressure the United Fruit Company into granting more and better positions to Hispanics. A local newspaper, **La Tribuna**, of 3 September 1930 carried the following statement-

> In its Costa Rica concession of 1930 the United Fruit Company promises, in filling any position of office worker, operator, or labourer, to employ a Costa Rican when **in its judgement** he possesses equal ability and capacity with one of another nationality (Kepner 1936: 178, emphasis in original).

A growing nationalism in the country, beginning around the latter part of the depression, gave background support to protests directed against United Fruit control of such vast quantities of national resources, as well as their discriminatory hiring practices favouring West Indians. Had United Fruit remained on the Atlantic coast the pressure would have built up, forcing it to pay attention to the demands of national labour at the expense of foreign labour. In effect, the end result would have been similar to what we find today. With respect to changes in the social fibre of the area, the reasonable conclusion seems to be that it was less the ecological and technological factors that were responsible than it was the contradiction of using foreign labour where local labour might have been used. Other factors seem to have been mere precipitators.

That it was plantation activity that conditioned racial group relations and social hierarchy, rather than the other way round, seems quite clear. Yet the role of the prior historical attitudes of all parties concerned cannot be ignored. The stage was set not in the post-emancipation plantation system but in the slave plantations. We can therefore appreciate, in this regard, Engel's statement that materialism opened the way to explain man's consciousness by his being rather than the other way round (1976; 33). The colonial experience of Blacks as well as Hispanics had established codes of evaluation and classification of colour, rank and prestige which were only later to be re-enacted within the modern capitalist plantation system. The perception of race and other cultural features in terms of a hierarchy of values was primarily a function of one's position within the plantation structure. When Blacks were favoured by the owners of the means of production they viewed Hispanics as ignorant and uncivilized, too unclean to merit social intercourse with a superior people. The skin colour of Hispanics being "white" was insufficient to prevent such an evaluation, a large percentage of Blacks being in structurally similar position notwithstanding.

As soon as Blacks lost their position of superiority a re-evaluation of Hispanics followed. Race and other symbols, then, were no more than tools of classification deriving their meanings from the particular contexts in which they were enacted.

The process by which individuals pursue their material and ideal interests involves evaluation, formation of strategies and constant modification, allowing for emphasis and

de-emphasis of different aspects of culture or ideology contingent on the individual's position in relation to the locus of power. Barnett's (1977) analysis of "identity choice and caste ideology in contemporary South India" provides an excellent example of such creative strategies. In discussing mobility strategies of an upper non-Brahmin caste he notes that what is involved is a struggle to be excluded or included in various spheres of symbolic dominance, emphasizing sub-ideologies while making use of indeterminacy in defining one's position in or out of particular groups. If Blacks now emphasize aspects of the dominant ideology through the manipulation of symbols which they formerly despised, it is because their evaluation of the situation suggests its usefulness.

It is through the analysis of the development and reproduction of whole systems in time, however, that we can begin to grasp the practical logic of these processes. As it stands, the relation between ideology and economy still remains mystical. In so far as ideology remains subjective, economy is conceived as an objective process, and the two are not made to communicate in the total historical existence. By examining systems through time we may be able to better understand the relation between the two.

The study of racial differentiation, like the study of social stratification, must take into account the active pressures of the productive system of which it is a part. It is the relation of production and the supporting ideology which permit (or constrain) to a greater or lesser extent the use of particular criteria or symbols, and the way in which they are employed, in the process of creating and maintaining cleavages. The tendency to separate class stratification from racial stratification as distinct areas of study can only prove to be misleading in the short run and counterproductive in the long run. Smith (1960b) himself noted that racial difference has no intrinsic social significance except that elaborated in systems of differential political incorporation, economic stratification and racial segregation (1960b: 774–5; cf. also Kupner 1971: *passim*). In plural societies, class and racial stratification are mutually influenced. It can be assumed, then, that the manner and context in which racial and cultural denotations are used by each group will be affected by their respective socio-economic strata. In addition since, as this paper suggests, race relations and institutional forms change in relation to social stratification, we may find that the degree of change in cultural institutions and race relations is a function of the rate and distance of social mobility. Further, instead of violent change characterizing plural systems it may be that the very desire of the ruling group to maintain power will force it to bring about peaceful change through incorporation, thereby pacifying dissident cultural groups while keeping its own position of power and the overall structure intact.

## NOTES

1.  By "plural society" I mean simply a society constituted by distinct racial groups. The use of the term should not be taken to be an acceptance of the definition offered by M.G. Smith. Throughout the paper I use the phrase "racial group", recognizing the important distinction made between, on the one hand, race and ethnicity, and on the other hand, ethnic group and minority group. For an explication of these distinctions see Vincent (1974), and for critiques of the plural society theory, see Leon and Leon (1977), Braithwaite (1960), Bryce-Laporte (1967), Despres, (1968), van den Berghe (1973), R T Smith (1970), Berreman (1972), Tuden and Plotnicov (1970).

2.  For some works which give explicit support to the argument that racial ranking or ethnic stratification cannot or should not be studied under the rubric of stratification in general, see M.G. Smith (1965a & b; 1969); Cox (1948); Dumont (1974); Fallers (1973). For some works which argue that racial and ethnic ranking can be properly studied as social stratification see Berreman (1960, 1962, 1972); Vincent (1974); Dunning (1972) and Runciman (1972).

3.  The concept of power employed is opposed to the static institutional concept employed by functionalists and elaborated and explained by Parsons (1963). Parsons views power as a thing, "a circulating medium, analogous to money within what is called the political system . . ." (236). It is the "generalized capacity to secure performance of binding obligations by units in the system of collective organization when the obligations are legitimized . . ." (237). With Parsons, as with other functionalists (Fried 1967; M G Smith 1960a and others, deriving their notion of power from Max Weber), power rests on legitimacy. These writers do not discuss power in relational terms, i.e., as a function of position within social and economic hierarchy, and taking into consideration the dynamics of power acquisition and maintenance by utilization of indeterminacy and ambiguity within ideology, itself an essential element of legitimation. The point is that in my view power is not static and institutional and does not rest on legitimacy only.

4.  Cohen (1976) has discussed in some detail the use of symbols in the structure of power relations. Symbols, he argues, tend to be grouped together with dynamic ideologies that are developed and carried by specific groupings. They objectify relations and roles and give form and content to a constantly changing social life. As Berger and Luckman (1967) observed:

    > . . . societies are constructions in this face of chaos. The
    > constant possibility of anomic terror is actualized whenever
    > the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threat-
    > ened . . . (121).

    Probably one of the most vivid examples of the role of symbols in the classification of social life is given by Godelier (1975), where he shows the homologous relationship between the kinship classification and principle in the function of symbols for the classification of human groups is similar to the function of symbols in the demarcation of strata. Sets of symbols objectify, identify and legitimize the differential strata. Levi-Strauss notes that totemic symbols are, like all ritual symbols, the points of ideological reference that each individual uses as a guide (1971: 111).The use of symbols in stratification conform to the same general principles; they separate and classify, objectifying cleavages that might otherwise be difficult or impossible to perceive collectively.

5.  The Zambo Mosquitos are a group consisting of interbred Amerindians and escaped slaves who occupied the Atlantic coast of Central America during the colonial period. For further information on this group see Floyd (1967).

6.  It has been said that there may have never been more than about 200 slaves in Costa Rica at any one time. Following on the emancipation decree promulgated into law in 1824, only 89 persons were freed. The reason for the small number of slaves lies in the fact that Costa Rica lacked mines and large scale agriculture during the colonial period. It was only in the later part of the 17th century that slaves for other than personal chores were used. They were employed in cacao plantations in Matina. Another reason is that slaves frequently escaped to join the

Zambo Mosquitos who occupied the Atlantic coast (cf. Bryce-Laporte (1967); Melendez and Duncan (1977); Floyd (1967); and Melendez, (1977); M. Olien (1967).

7.  The colour categorizations employed in Jamaica in classifying individuals and in the allocation of honour and prestige were transplanted in Costa Rica during the plantation epoch. The term "Coloured" as used here refers to fair-skinned Jamaicans variously called "brown-man", "red-man", "high coloured", or even "red niega". For more on this and its role in stratification, see Edward Braithwaite (1971); Henriques (1953); M G Smith (1965a).

8.  The terms "illiterate" and "ignorant", as used by Jamaicans in Costa Rica, require explanation. The meaning of "illiterate" is not confined to the dictionary definition, i.e. ignorant; uneduca-ted; unable to write. The term's denotative meaning corresponds to the dictionary definition, but the connotative meaning takes us wide afield. The connotation of illiteracy is to be "uncul-tured", uncouth and even lacking cartain moral qualities, such as honesty and human decency. There is a logical fit between the importance given education and the meaning of illiteracy. Education is highly valued and besides being perceived as the main means of social mobility, it is also that which renders the individual a complete social and moral being. The person who publicly violates social decorum may be brushed off with "you no see him illiterate" meaning, he knows no better. This is quite besides whether the individual is able to read or not. An un-friendly person may be regarded as "illiterate" or "uncivilized". The term "ignorant" carried all the above connotation; however, its specific difference lies in its use to refer to someone who is boisterous, does not control his temper and is publicly disrespectful. In psychological terms, the ignorant loses superego control to opt for immediate gratification of unrestrained urges; he behaves "like an animal". Full human qualities, then, depends on being literate and knowledge-able. As one prominent elderly man said, "I have to agree with Shakespeare; ignorance is a curse of God. Knowledge is the wings on which we fly to heaven."

9.  Although most blacks felt that through education they (or rather their children) could achieve positions similar to those held by Coloureds or Whites, there were those who felt that certain positions were a given for Whites and not for Blacks. A Black conductor on the train realizing that the young man with whom he was speaking was a student at a seminary said, "Boy a weh yaa faam, a weh yaa play, a pries' yu waan tun? Pries' no fe yu bway pries' a fe white man." One is reminded of the maidservant in the film **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?** saying to John's newly found white girlfriend (whom she has served all her life), "I jus' doun' like to see nobody belonging to my face getting above demself".

10. I use the phrase "closed community" to refer to the plantation primarily for two fundamental reasons: First, the opportunity structure permitted limited movement and was constituted only on plantation activities, i.e., there was no alternative to the plantation. Further, all amenities and services such as utilities, transportation, health care, etc., were controlled by the plantation owners; Secondly, Blacks were prohibited from travelling to or seeking employment in other areas of the country. The term as used is therefore not in keeping specifically with the popular distinction drawn between "open" and "closed" communities by Wolf (1957) which holds that closed communities are the product of the dualization of society into a dominant entrepreneurial sector and a dominated sector of native peasants (P.B.).

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