CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has been concerned with a description of certain aspects of the economic life of a small village in the Scotland District of Barbados. There was particular concentration upon those features which relate to various forms of land use and land exploitation. I have stressed and discussed in turn the kinds of activities, and socio-economic relationships involved in the production of sugar, arrowroot, and food crops, the raising of livestock, and the manufacture of pottery. Each of these production foci involves a unified series of interrelated activities, and for this reason they were discussed as complexes.

Discussion of each complex emphasized the nature of production activities, the kinds of social relationships formed in various phases of production, and the division of labor within these phases. I have tried to delineate the more salient technological and social features associated with each land-based complex while attempting to show the functions that various phases of production perform for the total complex of which they are a part. In addition, I pointed out, through chapter and topical cross-referencing, the ways in which similar patterns, e.g., land tenure and

acquisition of working lands, pecuniary orientations in the formation of work groups, the role of non-paid household labor, etc. cross-cut the various complexes.

Further, I discussed the ways in which goods produced by the people of Chalky Mount are distributed or sold, and the ways in which the various complexes are given over to different marketing media. In discussing marketing procedures I concentrated upon the earliest stages, and did not follow through into the total marketing situation. Emphasis, then, was generally placed upon the procedures that occur up to the point that the product leaves the producer's hands and the kinds of relationships he establishes in order to dispose of that product.

In addition to the points above an attempt has been made to place the various complexes within the context of the insular society and the geographical conditions peculiar to the Scotland District. That is, the Scotland District differs from other areas in Barbados in a number of geographical details which have influenced and affected the kinds of ecological adaptations found in Chalky Mount. The larger society and the island's culture, within this geographical context, have also contributed to orient the villagers in the productive channels with which I was concerned. In other words, the kinds of land-based economic complexes that are found in Chalky Mount, as in so many

other areas of the world, are limited not only by geographical considerations and opportunity, but are dictated by the alternatives available to the culture.

In all, sugar dominates the village's land-based complexes, and consequently a large portion of this paper was devoted to a discussion of the two settings in which sugar is produced. In Chapter III I emphasized sugar production as it is carried out by small farmers, and also used this chapter to explore the nature of small holdings and present data applicable to other economic complexes discussed in Chapter V. Chapter IV was devoted to sugar production in a plantation environment, but here I concentrated mainly upon the roles, tasks, and organization of plantation laborers. In these two chapters an attempt was made to show the similarities and differences between the two sugar complexes and the ways in which they interlock with each other. It was also noted that the complexes of arrowroot and pottery--the latter being an adaptation unique to Chalky Mount--have shown signs of significant decline, and I tried to point out the reasons for this decline. In line with this I discussed the ways in which efforts are made to convert lands into cash-producing items of production and how sugar production by small farmers has increased over the years. The increased emphasis upon cane production and the conversion of small holdings to this production focus have also placed a greater burden upon the community's

labor resources; these in turn have been affected by such factors as emigration and changing work values.

Nearly all cultivable land is planted in cane, and lands of this kind are probably the most important type of capital that a Chalky Mount adult can possess. Although there are risks involved in sugar production, as in any farming enterprise, for the time being the market is a relatively secure one, and comparatively high prices encourage cane production whenever possible and usually wherever minimal conditions will permit. Today sugar cane is the dominant production focus on small holdings; lands that were previously uncultivated are being converted into sugar, and there has been a concomitant decline in the production of subsistence crops with a virtual obliteration of arrowroot which, until recent times, was the villagers' main cash crop.

Patterns of land tenure and transmission seem to be the same regardless of land use. Unused lands which are located in more marginal areas and which are unsuitable for cane cultivation may easily become family lands. In addition, it appears that people are less clear about the ownership of lands which are marginal to the village's ecological system, but which in former years might have been planted in arrowroot, These lands are largely located northeast of Chalky Mount road around the southern and eastern margins of Chalky Mount Peak (see Figure 1) and are

highly eroded and devoid of grass cover. The foundation remnants of stone houses bear witness to the former habitation of these areas, but today, being located at inconvenient distances to the standpipes, on unproductive lands, etc., with their former owners dead or having moved away, the current status of these lands is often unknown, vaguely defined, and little concern appears to be shown over them.

Although ownership of land, especially working land, is a desideratum, greater profits do not necessarily accrue to the owner of cane land than to the person who rents. Despite whatever other values attach to land ownership, cultivable land is economically valuable because of the cash it can ultimately yield. Even persons who own cane lands make efforts, as was seen in Chapter III, to rent lands when they can. But given the extremely small and often fragmented nature of these land holdings, their frequent inaccessibility to roads and poor soil conditions, and the price on sugar cane, the lands cannot yield sufficient income to maintain a household. On the other hand, if the lands were converted to food crop production they still would not provide sufficient food for subsistence needs, and would not begin to supply the ever needed hard cash.

Clearly, production for a cash market and not for subsistence is the primary orientation of the people of

Chalky Mount. The Barbadian rural economy is fully involved in a system of cash exchange, and the overriding emphasis placed upon the acquisition of cash in working relationships, labor orientations, and involvement in cash-producing activities, reflect the villagers' deep immersion in this cash economy. Further, and most importantly, the villagers are almost entirely dependent upon sources external to the village for a multitude of commodities and services which they regard as essential; and the vast majority of these are inextricably woven into the network of the cash economy.

Since most vital goods and services can only be acquired with money, culturally determined standards of consumption make cash a virtual sine qua non of existence. The need for cash extends far beyond the simple acquisition of "basic necessities" such as foodstuffs and clothing. From birth to death, from the mid-wife who delivers to the undertaker who buries, cash is needed for the services provided. In fact, to be "put down," i.e., buried, by the "public" or the almshouse is the dread of most Chalky Mount adults. Although free medical services are provided weekly in the parish almshouse or in the general hospital in Bridgetown, people prefer private doctors. Charity is available to the truly impoverished person, but this ultimately means the parish almhouses. Accepting this kind of charity involves such a loss of prestige that it is usually

done only as a last recourse, as when an indigent person's close kin are unwilling or cannot accept responsibility for his sustenance.

The kinds of things which demand cash are so numerous that to attempt any itemization would be almost as fruitless a task as a similar itemization for American society. In sum, for virtually all of their consumption needs, and especially for those which they consider the most important the villagers need money. This situation has been encouraged in recent years by higher wages and other cash resources, and easier access to the increased outlets for spending money. At the same time the "cost of living" has risen considerably and new needs have been generated by society itself. These latter are continuously being created by a variety of means, e.g., exposure to goods during trips to Bridgetown, letters and visits from family members abroad, travel abroad, newspaper and rediffusion advertisements, movies: people are urged to buy Phensic powders for their headaches, Klim milk for their children, and Tide soap for their wash. One wants to buy presents for children at Christmas time, participate in an excursion on a Bank Holiday, own a two-burner kerosene stove, build a larger house with more and better furnishings, and send his children to a secondary school (for which he must often pay tuition and buy uniforms and books). Today, it is rare for a person to attend a wedding or funeral at the

Belleplaine church without hiring a private car, and it is unthinkable to attend a meeting hall or go into town without shoes. Examples such as these could easily be multiplied.

Dependence upon cash, then, stems from needs which extend far and above those immediately related to "biological survival," and involve a variety of "secondary" or culturally created needs. They are needs towards which the people of Chalky Mount are strongly oriented, and when they speak of their poverty, they are referring to their inability to satisfy, or only partially satisfy, a host of socially-derived needs. Certainly, there is nothing unusual in this situation, but these needs, in relation to the villagers' social position and relatively limited cash resources, contribute to their self images as "poor people." Poverty, then, with respect to Chalky Mount, implies a constant exposure to a larger society, a lack of cash in relation to perception of total needs, and sufficient cash to fulfill some of these needs and keep the consumption spiral going upward. Simply put, the people of Chalky Mount need money, and the ecological adaptations reviewed in the preceding chapters reflect in detail the dependence upon cash and concomitant involvement in the island's market economy.

The land-based complexes which people emphasize are those which ultimately yield cash, and the social

relationships that people form in the pursuance of activities related to these complexes often rest upon pecuniary foundations. Further, people attempt to maximize the number of complexes in which they involve themselves[1] as well as engaging, when they can, in economic pursuits unrelated to the land. This situation is reflected in the "occupational structure" of the village. Some problems relating to this were raised in Chapter II when "occupational plurality" was discussed. There I suggested that many of Chalky Mount's adults can be considered as "occupational pluralists," and as is apparent by now potters are not simply potters, plantation workers are not simply plantation workers, and small farmers are not simply small farmers. Whether those small farmers who sell their labor to plantations are a type of peasantry (Padilla 1957:25; Cumper 1961:398,408) or whether those plantation workers who are as well small farmers constitute a type of

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[1]Simultaneous involvement in these complexes is facilitated by the fact that virtually all lands--plantation and non-plantation--are near the village, near enough, in fact, for lunch to be taken at home. Because of this and the fact that the island is so small and has a very effective transportation system even adult wage-earners (e.g., masons, road-laborers, bus conductors, the shoemaker, writ-server, and almshouse nurse--Table 1) and persons under 21 who work in Bridgetown and other places outside of the village and its immediate environs, need not spend considerable amounts of time away from Chalky Mount. This situation is quite different from such places as British Guiana (R.T. Smith 1956) and Jamaica (Clarke 1957, Comitas 1964) where men, especially, migrate and spend much of their time away from their villages in earning their cash wages.

plantation worker different from a "peasant" type seems to be a moot issue in most cases. One could easily place the emphasis either way, but certainly it would be inadequate to view most regular plantation workers as constituting a landless rural proletariat. And, as we have pointed out before, one rarely hears the people of Chalky Mount make a genuine distinction in these roles. Most people prefer the generic term of laborer when applied to themselves.

However, plantation wage labor appears to be the dominant source of the village's income and the plantations offer the single greatest block of wage employment. The figures I have cited elsewhere (Chapter II) which support this statement would be greater if persons under 21 years and the irregular workers were to have been included. Even women who today claim home duties as their major occupation might still do plantation work during the crop or engage in other cash earning activities as well as take care of their own cane parcels and keep livestock. Hence a housewife (home duties) need not simply be a housewife, or, for that matter, is a retired person always exempt from income-producing activities. Similarly, the basketmaker or shopkeeper or carpenter who divides his time between a number of income-producing activities, though he <u>might</u> state his occupational status in unitary terms, will often spend more time at activities other than those which derive from his self-assessed primary occupation.

When questioned specifically, the occupational categories with which people tend to align themselves are those based upon the individual's understanding of occupational models as presented, for example, on census questionnaires. Identification of one's occupation might also be based upon prestige factors which fit "in with the over-all value system of the society" (R.T. Smith 1956:41). Be this as it may, the issue is that even though people might respond in uni-occupational terms many of them rather think of themselves in a multi-occupational dimension. Consequently, informant statements concerning their occupations and the occupational structure of the village often do not accurately reflect the actual nature of combined economic activities whether one is speaking of individuals or of households.[2]

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[2]The ambiguity of occupational classifications is well reflected in the pottery industry. Here, there is no special term used to designate those males who are dependent upon the cash derived from pottery and actively engage in its production, but who are unable to make wares on the wheel (Chapter V). These people usually consider themselves as laborers, and as I have pointed out, as with the potters, they engage in other income-producing activities as well. The failure of governmental officials to recognize this situation, insisting on perceiving it in uni-occupational terms, and also ignoring occupational status distinctions in the pottery industry (i.e., potters and "non-potters") was a factor in an abortive attempt to institute a cooperative in the pottery industry in 1962.

R.T. Smith is concerned with this problem when he discusses the occupational structure of Guianese villages

> There is some danger of over-simplifying the occupational pattern in trying to present it concisely, and it must be borne in mind that the following list is merely an enumeration of the major economic activities which are open to men and women. Any particular individual may engage in several occupations in as short a time as one week or even one day, so that this is not a list of specializations (1956:43--see Chapter II, section on occupations).

The similarity to Chalky Mount is also apparent in the following:

> Rice growing, provision farming, stock rearing, and estate work are not specialized occupations, but are components in a general pattern of employment followed by male workers...But there is yet another range of occupations which we can most easily call 'trades' which enter into the picture...(R.T. Smith 1956:41, my emphasis).

Smith goes on to suggest that in a trade such as carpenter relatively few of those who claim this occupation devote most of their time to it. Further, "even those who spend most time working at the trade will also probably grow rice, plant provisions, and keep stock, and this applies to all the trades we shall mention" (R.T. Smith 1956:41). In this, as in previous statements, we can conveniently substitute the word sugar cane for rice with reference to Chalky Mount.

It may well be, as suggested before, that what is found in Chalky Mount as well as British Guiana Negro villages is a situation quite comparable to the one Comitas describes in his discussion of"occupational plurality" in

rural Jamaica (1963, 1964). In Chalky Mount there seems to be a lack of occupational specialization by many individuals and there is a distinct emphasis placed upon simultaneous involvement in a number of income-producing activities; and, as we have seen, there is an adaptive advantage in doing this in terms of culturally prescribed standards of consumption and cash needs.

Yet, in spite of the difficulties involved in statistical validation, it is apparent that not all complexes or other wage-earning activities have equal or comparable roles in contributing to the cash income of individuals or households. The point is that people seem to view their income-producing activities, especially those of the land-based complexes, as forming an integrated whole towards each part of which they have a heavy commitment and feel a responsibility. Even if the complexes yield disproportionate amounts of income, e.g., plantation wage labor yields more money than small-scale sugar cane farming for regular plantation workers, both of these complexes are considered to be important aspects of a person's total economic life. Once again, however, this is not necessarily in relation to the proportion of income they contribute. Efforts are made to adjust one's involvement and responsibilities to each so as to avoid conflict in work schedules. This is not always successful; a plantation worker might not report to cut cane for a day or so during crop because

he has to cut cane on his own parcel of land; or he might not turn out for work during hard times because his own land--rented or otherwise--demands cultivation. But usually the pattern is typified by--for example--the potter who takes his stock out to pasture early in the morning, works on his land for an hour or so and then makes pots or does other similar chores for the rest of the day, sometimes even returning to his land when the sun goes down. The postman will work on his own land during the morning and deliver mail during the afternoon, and this general pattern holds for others who have outside, non-agricultural work which does not demand their continual eight-hour presence on the spot. Whenever possible such individuals keep their obligations to the land-based complexes whether in terms of their own labor or the hired labor of others.

In summary, many able-bodied adults in Chalky Mount attempt to engage in a number of income-producing activities as time and opportunity permit. A classification of such villagers in terms of single occupations would be inappropriate and a misleading reflection of their total cash pursuits and the multi-dimensional nature of income-producing activities. This is one reason why, I suppose, it is difficult to identify significant sociocultural correlates with particular kinds of major occupations especially when

one is talking of lower class rural population segments.[3] And similarly, this is why it is difficult to do the same thing with particular land-based complexes because of the overlapping that occurs and the variety of complexes that individuals (and households) combine. Add to this the numerous other occupational and cash-producing activities--non-land based--and it becomes even more difficult to consider Chalky Mount in terms of uni-occupational categories and the typological "plantation" and "peasant" dichotomy that is often presented for Caribbean communities (Cf. Padilla 1957, Horowitz 1960).

Although much of the cash is ultimately funneled into household units for consumption needs, as mentioned in Chapters I and II, it is often difficult to isolate the household as the essential unit of production.

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[3] For instance, Cumper, in a study of Barbadian households, attempts to correlate household forms with the occupations of household heads--household head presumably being defined in terms of house ownership. As one of his conclusions he states that "the groupings of households by broad occupational classes is an effective way of distinguishing variations in the patterns of household composition. In none of the groups is it possible to find a completely consistent system, but no other classification seems capable of attaining greater consistency" (1961:410). It might be that this lack of consistency could be partially due to Cumper's adherence to uni-occupational constructs in his classification, his neglect of economic pursuits of other household members, and his concentration upon the rather vague status of household head--especially as this is correlated with various types of household groupings.

Land is held in relatively small holdings, but household units are not identified with the land as corporate bodies, and land in general is usually held by individuals and not corporate groups. Family lands are held by individuals of different households, but even these persons, whether they form a sibling group or not, work the land as individuals. Either the whole land unit is worked by one individual or it is sub-divided into working units with each individual having complete rights over whatever is produced on his own parcel. Similarly, livestock is owned by individuals and people are clear in stating, for instance, that "two sheep belongs to my husband, another sheep and de goat is mine," etc.

Also in various phases of production in the more important land-based complexes, the household is forced to go outside of itself to find the labor to perform crucial chores. Since exchange labor relationships are poorly developed, and extended kin ties do not necessarily promote obligations of reciprocity in cash-oriented activities, and, in general, have few functions in every day affairs (extended kin groups with corporate functions are non-existent in the village), much of this labor must be paid for on a cash basis and through individual contract. Although people might work for one another and rationalize their relationship along lines of kinship sentiments, their relationship usually rests upon other primary criteria such as physical ability and work capacity which in themselves are derivatives of the pecuniary foundations of the labor relationship.

Both common-law and legal spouses will not demand pay when working on each other's land, adult children living away from their elder parents might work for them--especially a mother--without pay, and younger children will be expected to perform chores without pay for their parents. On the other hand, siblings residing in different households, fathers working for mature sons or daughters of different households, and even older children who live in their parents' household will usually be paid for the chores they perform. In fact, it is only in the relatively rare instances of the pottery-making households that the household can be said to form a cooperative unit of production. But even here, as we have seen, the household is forced to go outside for paid help, and the cooperative nature of the unit--though evident in pottery--would not necessarily be present in other activities in which members of the household might engage, as, for instance, small-scale sugar cane farming. And the fact that the household can rarely provide all the necessary labor in various income producing activities--even "specialists" must be called to slaughter livestock--further undermines the corporate nature of the household in economic affairs and makes it difficult to view, even if in somewhat narrow terms, the household as the unit of production.

Another factor which inhibits the corporate functioning of the household as a unit of production has

already been mentioned. It is not unusual to find adult household members of either sex with their own sources of income whether these sources be one or more of the land-based complexes, other wage-earning pursuits, or even remittances. Women, as we have seen, can be important wage-earners and property holders in their own right. Whatever these sources of income might be, the activities engaged in are, for the most part, undertaken independently by the household members, though it does occur occasionally in some complexes that an adult in the household might lead others in certain activities, e.g., clay collecting for pottery. Cases of this kind, however, are the exception.

For whatever reason the multi-adult household comes into existence and regardless of whatever other primary functions it might perform, e.g., child-rearing, its emergence and perpetuation does not seem to be contingent upon the ability to maintain itself as a unit of production. Once again, R.T. Smith's observations are relevant to Chalky Mount.

> ...it is necessary to stress time and again the fact that the household in a rural Negro village community is not by any means the kind of corporate productive unit encountered in the general run of peasant societies. It is not tied to a farm which is the basis of its existence, and the productive activities of its members do not fall into places as parts of a total pattern of exploitation of a natural environment. For any particular household the overriding consideration is the acquisition of cash income, and cash is in turn the means of acquiring necessary goods and services. Subsistence crops and the unsold portion of products accruing from agricultural activity generally, are regarded as supplementary to the money income of the group (1956:70).

Although all adults or wage-earning persons are supposed to contribute to the household budget, adults with separate sources of income are prone to regulate their own economic affairs. However, the female assumes primary responsibility for household consumption needs and especially the needs of the children. Although the male contributes, or should contribute, to the domestic economy he will usually keep a portion of his income for his own needs. In fact, in the handful of cases for which I could get adequate data on savings, if more than one adult in the household had a savings account neither person knew what the other had in his. Also, individuals usually contract their own debts, although on certain occasions (e.g., major loans on houses from the government) spouses may take out loans jointly. But the more common pattern is exemplified in relations with East Indian itinerant dry goods merchants with whom household members make individual debt arrangements, one spouse often being unaware of the nature of the other's debt.

Household members, then, own property as individuals, and besides this individuals have the right to spend their cash as they see fit. Even though they may be under obligation to contribute cash to the domestic economy, their right to independent disposal of cash and individual ownership of property is not questioned. Further, where both spouses have independent sources of income it becomes difficult to determine the household head, and this

difficulty is further compounded, for example, where one adult owns the house and another the working land. The household head as isolated on a governmental census report is usually the senior adult male (or adult female if a male is lacking), but he may contribute no more than the female to the household's cash resources and furthermore may not have as vital a role to play in the every day functioning of the household. In this regard it might be relevant to again quote R.T. Smith.

> Heads of households have no precisely defined functions nor is there any clear social concept of household headship. The household as such has practically no corporate functions such as working land in common or owning things as a group. The role of household head is much less important than the person's role as husband, father, mother, or grandmother (1956:60).

In sum, aside from whatever other reasons were given above, there are means for the individual to assert himself economically, and this assertion can exist independently of household obligations. It is individuals (as opposed to individuals representing corporate household groups) who participate in income-producing activities. Because these individuals are free to enter into whatever production arrangements they want especially with respect to the land-based complexes, production units tend to be groups formed in various phases of such complexes as sugar farming (e.g., crop-time cutting and heading groups), pottery (e.g., the ware making setting), and arrowroot (e.g., digging and processing the root). Holding the main

item of production--land--as individuals, largely working as individuals or within transitory groups formed to meet particular kinds of production demands, people are not oriented towards collective enterprises especially in activities which are geared towards the acquisition of cash. In effect, ecological conditions in Chalky Mount do not seem to impose a necessity for corporate group life with respect to production activities.

Even when labor groups are formed they are formed on the basis of individual contractual relationships between employer and employee[4] so that with the great emphasis upon cash in working relationships one finds a very low degree of non-pecuniary communal activity in the village. In fact, the only kind of regular collective work group found in Chalky Mount, as I pointed out in Chapter II, is the house-moving group. This group is a fluid one, changing with each particular occasion, and even here one cannot move his house until he has the money both to pay a carpenter who directs this activity, and to provide rum and "biscuits" for the people who do the actual moving. Communal work groups of this kind, in such activities as house-moving or building, are common in many parts of the world (Erasmus 1956:453). This group probably persists in

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[4]The crop-time plantation cutter-header unit and the truck crew have some exceptional but not overly deviant characteristics (Chapter IV).

Barbados because house-moving, if done on a strictly pecuniary basis, would be prohibitively expensive. At any rate, in activities which are part of cash-oriented complexes communal work groups of this order are essentially absent.

The general individualization in economic affairs is reflected in the amorphous nature of the household unit with respect to production activities and as well in the structure of the community itself.[5] No efforts are made here to imply a functional relationship between these two structural forms. Whatever complex of factors, both synchronic and diachronic, are responsible for the "informal structure" of the community, Chalky Mount appears to be but another example of numerous Caribbean communities

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[5]In the Caribbean Chalky Mount offers an interesting contrast, for example, to Edith Clarke's communities of Mocca and Orange Grove which are "integrated societies in which kinship plays an important role....the producing unit is the individual family in the home;..men, women, and their children have their defined tasks and duties and... in both these villages there is constant, intimate co-operation between the members of the family in their performance (1957:182-183). The prevalence of various co exchange labor relationships in these communities also underscores the differences between villages such as Chalky Mount and those "corporate like systems" (Horowitz 1960:183) associated with Caribbean "peasant" communities.

which, in Wagley's words, are characterized by a "weak sense of community cohesion" (1957:8); and the kinds of productive arrangements that occur in Chalky Mount seem to be symptomatic of this kind of organization.