

A B S T R A C T.

With the re-emergence of the plantation as the prime socio-economic institution in British Guiana after 1850, white social supremacy was boldly reasserted. This was positively bolstered by their control of the armed forces, and their monopoly of political power. The Blacks and Coloureds, who by means of establishing an alternative socio-economic institution, the peasant village, had threatened the primacy of the plantation during the forties, were after 1850 re-subjugated by means of a subtle system of discriminatory legislation and taxation, governmental control, and political disfranchisement and armed intimidation and coercion.

Immigrants were brought into the colony to supply labour to the plantation. But the Portuguese, on account of their race were facilitated to quit estate labour at the earliest moment and establish themselves as a middle-class social buffer group between white and black by means of a semi-independent but lucrative base in the extractive enterprises such as the retail trade and foresting industries. On the other hand, the Indians and Chinese were subjugated by means of the indentureship system in order to retain their labour permanently on the estates.

Hence after 1850, race became the dominant force in determining social and occupational status and the society became highly segmented along racial lines, each group retreating behind racial boundaries as was reflected in residential and occupational segregation. Each group had some form of culture which distinguished them from the others. Thus the British whites had a British-derived culture pattern; the Portuguese, a Madeiran-derived one; the Creoles, from their extended period of contact with the whites, a curious mixture of African and British derived culture; while the Indian and Chinese immigrants had purer though modified retentions of their respective parent cultures. All these different and diverse brands of cul-

ture were modified to suit the local social environment and so served as adaptive mechanisms for the groups identified with them. They also served to integrate the respective racial categories into distinctive ethnic groupings in the racist society. Such efforts to anglicize the subordinate population by means of missionary proselytization and English oriented schooling were at best incomplete and in some instances failed altogether. The essence of social differentiation, however, remained the element of race, while culture played a secondary role in this process.