ABSTRACT

The period 1890 to 1945 saw increased activity in the agricultural sector of Trinidad and Tobago. This activity included dealing with the stresses which faced the main plantation crops, the attempts to find additional agricultural resources and the food crises associated with the two World Wars and it resulted in a more visible imperial hand in the colony's agriculture. This thesis examines the nature of and reasons for, the imperial intervention which occurred at this time. The imperial government was directly involved in attempts to foster the production of a range of new crops in the colony. Though the existence of problems in the colony's agricultural sector warranted such intervention, an analysis of the policies applied to land, labour and food production suggests that the actions of the imperial government were not stimulated by primary concern for the overall welfare of the colony itself. British imperial involvement in the colony's agriculture is seen as an index of imperial interest in the colony. The thesis argues therefore, that there was no decline of imperial interest in the colony over the period. It shows that there was a shift from preoccupation with the older plantation crops to interest in the new resources involved in the diversification thrust which might revive the sagging British economy. It argues that there was heightened imperial interest in the colony in the period. The thesis then utilises the centre / periphery theory to explain the relationship between Britain and its colony, Trinidad and Tobago. It concludes that it was imperial self interest rather than altruism that governed the formulation of policies for agriculture in the colony in the period and that the relationship between Britain and this colony between 1890 and 1945 is aptly described as that of a centre and a periphery.