

RIOTS IN POST COLONIAL JAMAICA

ABSTRACT

Established theories purporting to explain collective violence are based on epistemological premises that prohibit the effective analysis of such events as intrinsically significant social phenomena. The thesis proposes a modified Weberian epistemology; one which unifies objectivity and subjectivity, human action and social structures with historical process in a case study framework. Seven cases of violent collective protest in post colonial Jamaica are described using this method, along with a focus on the interaction of the state, social elites and the masses. Analysis and comparison of the cases suggest a transformation in the culture of collective protest: the form of collective violence and the official reaction to such actions. Both continuity and change is manifested in this transformation, although it is argued that there was a distinction between the culture of collective protest in the 1960s and that in the 1970s and 1980s. A tentative explanation is offered for this, one which emphasizes the recursive relation between partisan politics, state actions, the career of mass social movements and events of collective protest in post colonial Jamaica.