

ABSTRACT

LAW AND SOCIETY IN
MODERN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
1870-1995

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One cannot attempt an in-depth study of the history of a region, country or a people without delving into the law having jurisdiction over them. While there is a wide-ranging body of literature examining the large-scale watershed events of Trinidad and Tobago's recent past there is as yet no in-depth scrutiny of the role of the law, the legal system and the lawmakers in shaping the country's development. Also how have the demands of the population for recognition of its own place in the society in turn shaped and validated the direction which the law has taken. While the ruler functions to establish the legal framework of the society, our purpose is to explore how that role has been altered by the demands of a diverse population in concert with the impact of external developments on the local society.

The thesis examines the changes taking place over the period 1870 to 1995, in the jurisprudence imposed on colonial Trinidad [and Tobago] from metropolitan England. We meet a society where the authorities used the law to foster the continued domination of planter interests. The focus changes to one of constant legal adjustment by both the ruler and the ruled, one attempting to

maintain the *status quo*, the other by turns attempting to ensure changes in the law and its administration to meet their growing demands for legal space and recognition both as groups and individuals.

The focus is centred on the Afro-Asian grouping comprising the majority of the working-class population presided over by a minority élite group. This thesis analyses lawmaking and adjudication through the administration of justice, the interaction of the law and family and religious life, the impact of the law on the development of education and the socio-economic life of the general population. It aims to link the development of the law and the ongoing creation of a West Indian jurisprudence with the carving out of a new society.

Keywords: Elizabeth Ramjeawan, jurisprudence, judiciary, law, legal system, lower order, élite, resistance, the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago