

SUMMARY

It appears that tobacco cultivation was begun in the West Indies in the seventeenth century. Many changes have been witnessed since its inception, and former important producers like the Leeward Islands and Barbados have since discontinued production. Small quantities are produced mainly for local consumption in Br. Honduras, Br. Guiana, Trinidad and the Windward Islands. It is in the larger islands of Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico that the industry assumes a major economical role.

Cultural systems in the area are in general of a similar pattern, but while standards in certain parts of the larger producing islands are considered high, in many cases, especially where grown by peasants, the methods employed leave room for a great deal of improvement.

Greatest attention has been paid to the production of cigar tobacco, and Cuban and Jamaican cigars have, attained a high standard and are renowned the world over for their excellent quality. Cuba is the principal producer of shade grown wrapper leaf in the area, the other islands being almost wholly dependent upon imported supplies. Cigarette leaf tobacco is grown in Cuba and Puerto Rico for manufacturing purposes but not to any appreciable extent in the B.W.I., experiments are in progress however to determine whether its production is worthwhile. Results continue to be encouraging.

The U.S.A. is the principal market for the tobacco products of Cuba and Puerto Rico, while the bulk of the Jamaica produce is exported to the U.K. Quite recently however the Jamaican cigars have been receiving severe competition on the U.K. market from Cuban cigars and as a result exports to this market have declined substantially.

Appreciable/

1. Historical Appreciable quantities of cigarettes and unmanufactured leaf are imported into Puerto Rico from the U.S.A., a small quantity of leaf from this source being also utilised in the B.W.I. for the manufacture of cigarettes, most of which are consumed locally, but by far the largest supplies of leaf for this purpose are obtained from Canada. *Introduced into England by Raleigh in 1586 and since then its use has spread mainly through the channels of trade to all parts of the world.* (1)

There is good evidence to believe that cultivation of tobacco in the West Indies dates back to the early seventeenth century, but it is not possible to state with precision the year in which it was begun. Some authorities however state that tobacco was cultivated in the Antilles long before their discovery by the Spaniards. (4)

The name "Cuban Tobacco" is often made mention of, which leads one to think in terms of an indigenous variety. In view of the fact that tobacco is said to have originated in the Americas, it is not unreasonable to assume that tobacco is also indigenous to the islands "off the main". After the ten years war seed of Mexico and the States was introduced into Cuba. These varieties have become mixed to such an extent that the original type cannot now be recognised, although in that which has been evolved, the characteristics of the tobacco of Mexico and the States are predominant. (5)

Tobacco is claimed to be indigenous to the island of Puerto Rico, but its cultivation was not legally permitted until in 1624. (4) Apparently the sale of tobacco to foreigners was strictly prohibited in the early years of its cultivation but production was sufficiently large to permit some exportation in 1836. Since the American occupation in 1898 the industry has expanded considerably and now ranks second in the island. (6)

It appears that the first attempt by the English to cultivate tobacco in the West Indies was made between 1604-1606 when Sir Oleiph Leigh tried planting on a small scale on the banks of the Oyepok River