

FOREWORD

This survey of peasant agriculture in the St. Augustine area of Trinidad has, in the past few years, consisted of a complete investigation of the area, its people, its general features and its various forms of agriculture. These surveys carried out by previous students have therefore produced a vast amount of information about the area, but it is all in a general form.

This year, there was the obvious need to narrow down the scope of surveys and thus, students have each chosen some particular aspect of the peasant agriculture, on which to elaborate. This system cuts down repetition and the various papers put together at the end of the year, will give one complete picture made up of detailed component parts; namely, the individual surveys.

The reports of previous students were at our disposal in the library and it was from these, that basic information was obtained for the introduction to the main body of this report. We read all the reports available, weighed information, tested it out in the field, and have tried to present it in a précis form, complete with our own observations. The main object behind this work was to bring in the most important features of the area and to discard detail which, although relevant to a report, was too abundant to fit completely into a resumé.

The time allowed for the survey is shorter than ever this year, due to late arrival of students from England, and by the time we got settled down, it was well into November, when the peasants' cropping season was drawing to a close and many of the crops had already been harvested.

Initial difficulties in the survey work were numerous in that climate, crops, people and practices were strange; but once accustomed to things, the survey work itself ceased to be a task and it became a pleasure to talk to the farmers in the area. Farmers were always keen to talk and to give any information they had, and this constituted the first pitfall, in that not all the information they gave was based on fact. Points had to be checked and re-checked, discarding things proved false but always in the end, there were small cores of truth which helped to build up the complete picture we were after.

For completeness in a report, students should really see the full crop cycle, or at least, the main cropping season i.e. the wet season, lasting from May until December. Unfortunately, students are only here during part of the wet season and most observations have to be made in the dry season, when agricultural activity is modified greatly, according to the vagaries of the weather. This period being usually one of fallow, land preparation and when only a minimum of vegetable crops are grown.

As a "Survey", this paper is probably not quite valid, because we have had neither the time nor the experience to gain the confidence of the people, which is a point so vitally important to the success of a fact-finding survey. In spite of the shortcomings of the report however, I am sure that it has still attained the objects which are defined below.