

ABSTRACT

This paper contends that the economic contribution of the peasantry in the West Indies has not been fully recognised in the literature and in many instances this contribution has been virtually negated by generalisations on this group. A review of the historical literature will identify such generalisations and show how peasant development was perceived in the general literature.

The focus is then turned to Tobago. First, an overview of its history is undertaken, then an assessment of peasant development in the island with specific reference to the existing literature is provided.

The crisis of subsistence in the Caribbean during the two World Wars is then analysed with special reference to Tobago. The contribution of the peasantry in forestalling disaster is discussed through an examination of the quantities and values of products exported from Tobago to Trinidad during the period. This entails a quantitative approach, using Time Series analyses. It will be noted that, although peasant production was subject to fluctuations, there was a significant overall growth during the years under examination. It will be shown that peasant production was directly linked to the Grow More Food Campaigns conducted in the colony during the two World Wars.

Finally, the study concludes that the generalisations identified in the general literature on the peasantry are not applicable to the Tobago peasantry in the period under study; that, despite great odds, it made a significant contribution to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago; that too much technical proficiency appeared to be expected of the peasants, given their limited resources. Also, the demise of agriculture in Tobago can only be seen as a failure of government's policy to build upon the advances in food production made during World War II. While it cannot be denied that the positive climate provided by the World Wars was beneficial to peasant agriculture, its foundations in Tobago were laid in the decades prior to this event.

## LIST OF MAPS:

MAP I	- Land Utilization in Tobago	42
MAP II	- The Location of Crown Lands in Tobago	43
MAP III	- Tobago Peasant Lands	45

## LIST OF TABLES:

TABLE I	- The Population of Trinidad and Tobago at Census Dates 1864-1961	35
TABLE II	- Population in relation to Cultivable Area in British Caribbean Territories	37
TABLE III	- Tobagonians Resident in Trinidad	38
TABLE IV	- Exports of Livestock from Tobago to Trinidad	32