

# Cricket, Social Formation and Cultural Continuity in Barbados: A Preliminary Ethnohistory\*

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Just 166 miles square and the most windward of the Caribbean islands, Barbados has long possessed a reputation for being culturally and economically dominated by the production of sugar, and for being a "Little England."<sup>1</sup> The two circumstances are inextricably connected. Barbados was a British colony from 1627 until the coming of political independence in 1966, and for all that time its level of prosperity was determined by fluctuations in the sugar industry. To some extent it still is, despite the encouragement of mass tourism since the 1960s. During the long colonial period the social organisation geared to produce the sugar wealth was based upon British concepts of economic ordering, political power and social distancing between elaborately defined caste categories. This social order was founded in the period from the 1650s until 1838, during which time Barbados derived its wealth from a slave-based economy organised in a plantation system. The owners were either British-based absentees or descended from British stock; the labour force was African or of African descent. Middle level management was largely white, as was the commercial trading sector, although in both a small mulatto element had appeared by the late eighteenth century. After the final emancipation of the slaves in 1838, the legal relationship between these groups might have altered but the social one did not—British law, British custom, British social conventions and British culture continued to direct the island's development. The results are intriguing. On an island with a population now exceeding 250,000 and a per square mile density of over 1,200, the 97 per cent of the community descended from African slaves are located in a cultural construct established by

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1. For the Barbados story: R. H. Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados* (London: Longman, 1847); Otis P. Starkey, *The Economic Geography of Barbados: a Study of the Relationships Between Environmental Variations and Economic Development* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939); George Hunte, *Barbados* (London: Batsford, 1974); F. A. Hoyos, *Barbados: a History from the Amerindians to Independence* (London: Heinemann, 1978); Claude Levy, *Emancipation. Sugar and Federalism: Barbados and the West Indies, 1833-1886* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1980); Hilary Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery, 1627-1838* (Bridgetown: Antilles, 1984).

white arbiters whose descendants now comprise less than 3 per cent of the population.

The present legislative system, political parties, educational structure, Anglican religion and the English language itself (or, at least, a distinctive form of it) are all tangible products of this long British heritage as they are in a number of other non-white majority, post-colonial settings. But unlike those other settings, in Barbados it is cricket, that most English of games, which is the most striking and influential benchmark and cultural monument to the British social influence.<sup>2</sup> Barbados is renowned as the most prolific per capita producer of top flight players in the world and Bajans, wherever found, are persistently and passionately devoted to the playing of and talking about cricket. This is quite unlike the situation elsewhere as in, say, India where only a tiny percentage of the population based in relatively few centres and concentrated in a restricted number of social communities displays a passionate devotion to cricket.<sup>3</sup> In Barbados cricket is not so much a game which inspires enthusiasm as a cultural institution, a way of life in itself.

This deep social reach may be illustrated briefly in a number of ways. From the late nineteenth century until well into the twentieth, and even now on special occasions, shops, offices and schools were closed while important matches were in progress. From at least the turn of the twentieth century, citizens would identify themselves by their playing or supporting connections with a cricket club, as in "Spartan man," for example. When responsible government came to Barbados in 1954, the swearing-in ceremony had to be rescheduled so as to avoid a clash with an important match. Independence itself, in 1966, was celebrated with a special cricket game. Cricket is still a constant subject of conversation in rumshops, the workplace, the streets, homes, parties and on buses, while a match anywhere on the island will draw spectators from those passing by. Even visitors from other cricketing cultures, let alone those from non-playing areas such as North America, are overwhelmed at the extent of Barbadians' devotion to the game. Because of that deep attachment, then, an analysis of cricket's social dimensions and history necessarily becomes an investigation into the inner workings of Barbadian society as a whole.

This preliminary sketch of the relationship between cricket and its Barbadian social setting is based upon 1985 fieldwork which employed two main research strategies.<sup>4</sup> The first involved social history methods in investigating archival, institutional and private materials, surveying primary and secondary sources in both empirical and theoretical areas, as well as conducting extensive oral history sessions. The second strategy was ethnographic, principally through

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2. Bruce Hamilton, *Cricket in Barbados* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1947) describes the growth of cricket on the island. For an analysis of the early period, see Brian Stoddart, "Cricket and Colonialism in the English-Speaking Caribbean Before 1914: Towards a Cultural Analysis," in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Pleasure, Profit and Proselytism. British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad. 1750-1914* (London: Cass, 1987).

3. Richard Cashman, *Patrons, Players and the Crowd: the Phenomenon of Indian Cricket* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1980).

4. The method here attempts to meet some of the points made by Bernard S. Cohn, "History and Anthropology: the State of Play," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (April 1980): 198-221. Also Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres" in his *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic, 1983).

playing membership in a club participating in the major Barbadian domestic cricket competition. That membership (which according to one former Barbadian and West Indian cricketer meant “living” rather than “studying” the game) facilitated access to players, administrators, clubs and club life, cricket supporters, sports journalists, cricket folklore and the social practices of cricket in many different Barbadian contexts. The essay, then, analyses the centrality of cricket in Barbadian life in light of the game’s history on the island, but begins with some necessary and fundamental observations about the cultural context in which the game developed there.

Debate concerning the precise nature of Barbadian social structure and “culture” has swung largely upon whether or not its evolution has been influenced most by British, African or Creole emphases.<sup>5</sup> It is not an abstract debate because any positions adopted have a strong bearing upon prevailing attitudes towards class, colour and politics. One conventional wisdom, for example, has it that since at least 1966 blacks have dominated political life in the island and whites the economy.<sup>6</sup> While this economic pattern and associated social patterns have begun to change recently, they still retain some validity. Such retentions have reinforced popular beliefs in the existence of separate, carefully delineated and vigorously defended social circles defined by colour, economic standing and status. Supporters of the Creolisation theory, however, have emphasised the steady emergence of a hybrid culture created jointly by blacks, whites and mulattos, thereby softening the idea of separate cultural circles. Important and interesting though these analyses are, they oversimplify or even ignore a more complex cultural condition in which cricket figures prominently.

It may be argued that two general and competing cultures have co-existed in Barbados until well into the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> One was British-originated and identified historically with that white ruling class which dominated plantation ownership and commercial activity. From at least the beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, these ruling whites gained considerable support from better-off, free blacks and mulattos who sought advancement, limited though it was, in the island’s white-dominated social and economic hierarchy. As early as 1837, for example, many elementary schoolteachers were blacks who not only taught an English classical curriculum but also strongly upheld its attendant cultural values and behavioural attitudes.<sup>8</sup> Despite the small and

5. Richard Allsopp, *The Question of Barbadian Culture* (Bridgetown: Bajan, 1972); *Advocate*. 16 September 1985.

6. For an example, see the pamphlet *The High Cost of Living* (Bridgetown: National United Movement, 1981). A long-term view is in B. M. Taylor. “Black Labor and White Power in Post-Emancipation Barbados: A Study of Changing Relationships.” *Current Bibliography on African Affairs* 6 (Spring 1973): 183-197.

7. For some general insights into the analytical possibilities here, see Peter J. Wilson. *Crab Antics: the Social Anthropology of English-Speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973); Paget Henry and Carl Stone (eds.). *The Newer Caribbean: Decolonisation, Democracy and Development* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Institutions, 1983); Audrey E. Burrowes, “African Survivals: Aspects of African Continuity in Barbadian Culture” (Cave Hill. Caribbean Studies Papers, 1979). One very interesting view is that in Jack Berthelot and Martin Gaume, *Caribbean Popular Dwelling* (Guadeloup: Editions Perspectives Creoles. 1982), pp. 9-10.

8. Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey. *The West Indies in 1837* (London: Cass, 1968 ed.). pp. 130-1.

steadily declining numbers of whites, then, their cultural practices from an early point gained considerable credibility as a result of its support by sections of the non-white community seeking an accommodation with the ruling order.

In distinction, and essentially in opposition to this, a folk culture persisted strongly within the black majority descended from African slaves. This folk culture was maintained through such practices as bush medicine, obeah (known more popularly and inaccurately as black magic), tuk band music (employing distinctly African rhythms and African-descended instruments such as drums and whistles), community dances and festivals.<sup>9</sup> These practices were essentially both a rejection of white culture and the defence of a black one, thereby establishing a considerable tension between the two.

The strengths of this folk culture, and the potential depth of the tension, were best revealed in the attacks made upon it by the ruling white order and its non-white supporters. For a considerable period after emancipation the police, the judiciary, the church and the educational system attempted to wipe out obeah and folk music in an effort to incorporate the black majority within the ruling culture.<sup>10</sup> These enforcing agencies were themselves part of a system of social coercion established by the plantocracy-controlled legislative bodies in order to replace the forms of authority held previously in the little political worlds of the individual plantations. A most important strand here was the 1840 master and servant legislation which turned chattel slaves into estate-tied wage slaves. But there also arose the police force, the militia and a range of incarceratory institutions (such as jails and asylums) designed to bring former slaves under direct state jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup> "Undesirable" social elements became defined as vagrants, petty thieves, the insane and the poor, and were consequently subjected to an increasing range of thoroughgoing state controls. The creation of central markets for meat and vegetables, for example, was not simply about "modernising" commodity supplies.<sup>12</sup> It also enhanced respect for property because by licensing dealers, state authorities sought to minimise praedial larceny (the stealing of food crops) which was directed largely against the major landholders, the former slave masters.

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9. Specifically see J. E. Reece and G. G. Clark-Hunt (eds.), *Barbados Diocesan History: in Commemoration of the First Centenary of the Diocese. 1825-1925* (London: West India Committee, 1925), ch. XIX; Jerome S. Handler and Arnold Sio, "Barbados," in David W. Cohen and Jack P. Greene (eds.), *Neither Slave Nor Free: the Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 253; Sir Harry Johnston, *The Negro in The New World* (1910: rep., New York: Johnson, 1969), p. 225. For the wider story, Hecketh J. Bell, *Obeah-Witchcraft in the West Indies* (1899; rep., Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1970). For an indication of the persistence of obeah, *Advocate*, 9 July 1935, p. 10.

10. For example, "An Act for the Suppression and Punishment of Vagrancy," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 129, 7 January 1840.

11. For example, "An Act to Establish a Police in Bridge-Town and the Parish of St. Michael," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 78, 24 July 1834; "An Act to Provide for the Building of Houses of Correction, and Police Establishments," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 87, 14 September 1835; "An Act to Increase the Number and Efficiency of the Mounted Militia of This Island," *Laws of Barbados*, No. 105, 25 October 1837; "An Act for the Better Care and Protection of Lunatics," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 522, 24 August 1872.

12. For example, "An Act to Regulate the Trade and Business of Butchers, and to Check and Prevent As Much As Possible the Stealing of Stock," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 96, 23 November 1836; "An Act Consolidate and Amend the Several Laws of This Island Relating to the Market of Bridgetown," *Laws of Barbados*. No. 199, 20 November 1848. "An Act to Provide a Summary Remedy for the Prevention of Persons Holding Markets in the City of Bridgetown," *Laws of Barbados*, No. 395, 11 September 1863.

While coercion certainly made substantial inroads into the folk culture, on its own it proved incapable of generating servility and acquiescence among the freed black majority. In the 1860s, food riots revealed possibilities for the rejection of constituted authority. The greatest challenge to that authority came during the so-called Federation Riots in 1876 when large crowds turned out against landholders, marching on plantations in support of an English governor who was apparently seeking to break planter power.<sup>13</sup> In 1895 rebellious bands again marched on food crop fields, invoking in song the memories and spirit of 1876.<sup>14</sup> Occasions such as these created fears within the elite about potential social dislocation and a breakdown in the dependent status of the black masses. It became clear, then, that the former slavemasters now required a new form of moral authority to augment, perhaps even to replace the coercive powers which in some senses had simply replaced one form of slavery with another.

As a result, such non-coercive and largely voluntary institutions as the education system and the church were utilised to instill in the population a set of values which produced the behaviour patterns desired by the powerbrokers whose traditional social, economic and political advantages would thus go untrammelled. This was achieved by such means as a careful construction of the school curriculum and by the teachings of the numerically powerful Church of England. This created the illusion of popular access to cultural agencies, yet, in reality, maintained the structural bases of discrimination and inequality. During the second half of the nineteenth century, for example, basic educational instruction was provided for most children, but the prominent education development lay in elite secondary schools such as Harrison College and The Lodge.<sup>15</sup> By 1900 there were 25,000 students under instruction, but only 205 of these were in the two elite colleges which serviced the plantation and commercial elite, grooming those who would inherit the relatively few positions available in the civil service and the professions.<sup>16</sup> The church, too, displayed internal divisions.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the island's eleven parishes, which were also local government bases controlled by rectors and churchwardens, pew rents yielded positions of prestige and symbolic power to the local elites. From St. Michael's Cathedral down, churches set aside specified areas for whites and blacks with the latter relegated to back rows or galleries.

Strong though these cultural institutions were in preserving the dominance of the white tradition over that of the folk while at the same time apparently accommodating a new, post-slavery social order, none were individually as

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13. Charles Pitcher Clarke, *The Constitutional Crisis of 1876 in Barbados* (Bridgetown: Herald, 1896); Bruce Hamilton, *Barbados and the Confederation Question, 1871-1885* (London: HMSO, 1956); George A V. Belle, "The Abortive Revolution of 1876 in Barbados," *Journal of Caribbean History* 18 (1984): 1-34.

14. *Barbados Herald*, 4 and 11 April 1895; *Barbados Agricultural Reporter*, 12 April 1895, 9 and 16 July 1895.

15. The role of cricket in this area may be followed in Keith Sandiford and Brian Stoddart, "Cricket and the Elite Schools in Barbados: a Case Study in Colonial Continuity," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 4 (December 1987).

16. *Barbados Blue Book, 1900* (Bridgetown: Government of Barbados, 1900), educational statistics.

17. The best guide here is Kortright Davis, *Cross and Crown in Barbados: Caribbean Political Religion in the Law Nineteenth Century* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1983). For a specific example, *Barbados Times*, 25 June 1870

powerful as cricket in creating *virtually without protest* a consensual Barbadian society. While the education system and the church might from time to time encounter criticisms for the reality of their discriminations as opposed to the illusion of their equality, cricket rarely if ever did, even though its practices were essentially more restrictive than those of the other agencies. While cricket apparently allowed the two cultures to meet in social unity, its organisational and participatory forms preserved the exclusiveness of those cultures more effectively and for longer than other institutions, and also maintained traditional hierarchies within the cultures. The consensual as opposed to the coercive manner in which this was achieved must be underlined because, as Ashis Nandy argues:

Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through its military and technological prowess as through its ability to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order. These hierarchies opened up new vistas for many, particularly for those exploited or cornered within the traditional order. To them the new order looked like-and here lay its psychological pull-the first step towards a more just and equal world.<sup>18</sup>

In Barbados, cricket constituted such a secular hierarchy as confirmed in two particular ways.

The first involves important theoretical literature which supports the significance of cricket as a Barbadian and Anglophone Caribbean cultural institution. In 1963 C. L. R. James emphasised the role of cricket and English literature in his personal development, arguing that the cultural code which they instilled made him quite different from his mainstream Marxist colleagues. Orlando Patterson later suggested that because of its connotations of a white colonial plantocracy and commercial domination, Caribbean people would never be "free" until they rejected cricket. Subsequent commentators such as W. K. Marshall, St. Pierre, T. Marshall and Thompson have developed aspects of this debate to explain the role of Caribbean cricket in the construction of colour relations, colonial class and postcolonial political evolution.<sup>19</sup> Throughout this writing runs the largely unstated themes of cultural domination, resistance and consensus. For that reason such analysis is further supported by the literature on social reproduction, cultural studies and social history derived largely from Gramsci. Briefly, work from analysts such as Gramsci, Bourdieu, Hall and Williams has confirmed the importance of cultural institutions in creating social consensus which often overrides the interests of the bulk of the community involved.<sup>20</sup> Cricket in Barbados was one such institution.

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18. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: the Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. ix

19. C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Hutchinson, 1963). For some thoughts, see Helen Tiffen, "Cricket, Literature and the Politics of De-Colonisation: The Case of C L. R. James" in R Cashman and M. McKernan (eds.), *Sport: Money, Morality and the Media* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 1981); Orlando Patterson, "The Ritual of Cricket," *Jamaica Journal* 3 (March 1969): 23-25; W. K. Marshall, "Gary Sobers and the Brisbane Revolution," *New World Quarterly* 2 (1965): 35-42; Maurice St. Pierre, "West Indian Cricket," Parts I and II, *Caribbean Quarterly* 19 (June and September, 1973), 7-27 and 20-35; T. Marshall, "Race, Class and Cricket in Barbadian Society, 1800-1970," *Manjak*, 11 November 1973; L.O.B. Thompson, "How Cricket is West Indian Cricket? Class, Racial and Colour Conflict," *Caribbean Review* 12 (1983): 22-29.

20. Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, trans. Louis Marks (New York: International.

The second importance of cricket as a major influence in Barbadian cultural evolution centres upon the game's emergence in its modern form coinciding with the Barbadian ruling order's search for a moral authority. While the first recorded match occurred on the island early in the nineteenth century, regular games were being staged by the 1840s and Barbados played its first representative match, against British Guiana, in 1865. Given the particular needs of their political culture, the Barbadian ruling order then took up with enthusiasm that "games revolution" which occurred in and was transported from Britain during the later nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Cricket gained a reputation as a game through which young people (men, mostly) might be trained for their social and occupational missions in life. Through games the middle and upper ruling classes learned respect for authority, loyalty, honesty, courage, persistence, teamwork and humility. The language of sport became a code, so that to "play the game" meant not so much to be involved in simple physical activity as to subscribe to the social conventions and beliefs which sport symbolised. Manuals on all games were replete with advice on social etiquette and behaviour. Socialising institutions such as the public schools, universities and the established church embraced this sporting philosophy whose power underlay the life of Britain and its colonial empire by the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

It was this cultural modelling through cricket, specifically, which served as an important bridge between the two major Barbadian cultures where other institutions were not nearly so effective. Through cricket most Barbadians pledged their faith in a social system predicated upon British cultural values, British concepts of social progress, British morality codes, British behavioural standards and British attitudes towards social rankings. In so doing, Barbadians at large accepted the framework of social power elaborated by the dominant culture to replace that lost in 1838.<sup>22</sup> The transformation from slave-master to contract-master was acquiesced to by the former slaves become labour servants as were the social systems, cricket chief among them, which reproduced the patterns of inequality. For that reason, the structure of Barbadian cricket provides an important analytical starting point.

Given its small size and population, the island possesses an unusually elaborate cricket organisation strongly defined by its social heritage. The Barbados Cricket Association is the senior body, incorporated by a 1933 Act of

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1975); Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: OUP, 1981); Pierre Bourdieu, "Sport and Social Class," *Social Science Information* 17 (1978): 819-840; Stuart Hall, "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms," *Media, Culture and Society* 2 (January 1980): 52-72; Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: New Left Books, 1980). For some considerations, T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *American Historical Review* 90 (June 1985): 567-593; and M. Gottdiener, "Hegemony and Mass Culture: a Semiotic Approach," *American Journal of Sociology* 90 (March 1985): 979-1001. A stimulating view on sport is S. J. Parry, "Hegemony and Sport," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 10 (1984): 71-83.

21. On this general point see J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of An Education Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and also his *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London: Viking, 1986).

22. For the period, see Levy, *Emancipation. Sugar and Federalism*. For an interesting analysis of developments during that time, see Governor Robinson to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Confidential, 27 September 1881. COL 2/1/26, Barbados Archives.

Parliament as successor to the Barbados Cricket Committee which had been established in the early 1890s to organise local competition as well as control visiting teams.<sup>23</sup> Then there is the Barbados Cricket League, formed in 1936 to cater for the needs of the lower and working class black majority. Between them, these two associations now supervise in excess of 140 teams. In addition, however, there are modified cricket forms administered by such bodies as the Barbados National Softball Cricket Association and the Barbados Tapeball Cricket Association. Beyond these groups sectional bodies such as business houses, trade unions, local communities and groups of friends also organise matches on a regular competitive basis. At any given point in a competition season, there are probably in excess of 1,000 teams playing cricket on an island of 166 square miles where land is a scarce resource, a sure pointer to both the popularity and cultural importance of the game.

That popularity and importance is further revealed in the largely but not exclusively juvenile world of unstructured cricket found on beaches, waste lands, public parks and even on streets. This unstructured cricket has long provided the breeding ground for the island game and one interviewee recalled substantial sums of money resting upon the results of street matches played in one working class village during the 1930s. That points to the necessity of qualifying the word "unstructured" because such cricket, too, has had organised elements since the later nineteenth century as revealed in the persistence of "firms" and "marble" cricket.<sup>24</sup> In firms, a number of boys band together to control bat and ball at the expense of other players, thereby enhancing their opportunities to develop superior skills. Marble cricket is a miniature game designed to accommodate small playing areas with participants kneeling to bat, bowl and field. Beneath this elaborate, strong and deeply respected cricket structure lie the central concerns of a dominant culture which sought the widespread acceptance of its practices and objectives as a detailed analysis of that structure suggests.

The Barbados Cricket Committee was a self-appointed, self-constituted, self-selected and self-perpetuated group drawn from the most eminent sections of the late nineteenth century Barbadian elite. It was a cricketing extension of the economic and political oligarchy, and dominated particularly by wealthy merchants. As the plantations fell more and more into their hands from 1900 onwards, these merchants inherited the social mores of the plantocracy which had controlled the quest for moral authority and consensual cohesion to replace political coercion. The merchants on the Committee were joined in their beliefs by others of the elite whose fortunes, directly or indirectly, depended upon sugar: business executives, lawyers, accountants, medical practitioners, senior civil servants and elite school headmasters. A significant number of members

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23. This section based on J. Wynfred Gibbons (ed.), *Barbados Cricketers' Annual* (Bridgetown: Globe). issues from 1894-95 to 1913-14. *Advocate*, 27 October 1925, p. 5 and 28 November 1931, p. 12; Act of Barbados. No. 12 of 1933. 22 December 1933.

24. For one account of 'firms' about the turn of the century see Frank Collymore's piece in *Combermerian*. 1973-4, p. 15.

remained with the BCC from its creation to its demise, a fact which emphasises the continuity of its cultural philosophy. Its colour remained as constant as its class—one or two mulattos appeared but it was otherwise overwhelmingly white.

By the early 1930s, however, the worldwide economic crisis had hit these sugar barons hard and many of them were unable to continue supporting cricket financially.\*<sup>25</sup> That led to the creation of a new administrative body, the Barbados Cricket Association, but not to new social attitudes because it has continued many Barbados Cricket Committee practices and traditions. Its Board of Management continues to be made up largely of business directors, company executives and managerial officers connected with trading conglomerates spawned from sugar industry concerns.<sup>26</sup> Service industry personnel such as lawyers and accountants are still prominent. There is still a high degree of personal continuity. In the more than 50 years since its foundation there have been just five Presidents, and one Secretary held his post from 1946 until well into the 1980s. Similarly, there have been just five Treasurers, and numerous examples of long committee service on the Board of Management. Besides their occupational backgrounds, the majority share an elite school and often post-secondary education, and high social status. This last point is complicated by being bound up in the changing colour structure of the Association.

Until at least 1966 the management was predominantly white, and only in recent years have blacks become numerous. In 1985, of the thirteen executive officers four were white including the President, Junior Vice-President and Secretary. This is a high proportion given the population balance between blacks and whites, emphasising both the continuity factor and the power of cricket as an agency of minority cultural dominance. While in the past the whites and non-whites would not have mixed outside Board circles, that is no longer entirely the case because non-white members are being drawn increasingly into the wider business managerial structure where they work along with and share many cultural values held by whites.<sup>27</sup> The colour composition of the Board might have changed, that is, but the inherent cultural attitudes continue to reflect those of the old Barbados Cricket Committee because the non-white members have consistently shared with the whites an occupational, educational and social background which has preserved many of the demarcations established between different social groups during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Association management, then, is a high status, homogeneous and largely static body in terms of its composition, even though it is theoretically subject to democratic processes within a general membership which now exceeds 1,100.

The Barbados Cricket League was founded in 1936, just after the Associa-

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25. For BCC economic difficulties. *Advocate*. 5 February 1929, p. 8 and 7 July 1932, p. 8

26. Based on interview material.

27. See BCA. *Report and Statement of Accounts. 1 April 1984-31 March 1985* (Bridgetown: Letchworth, 1985) for the recent membership analysis based on interview material.

tion, but enjoyed a far sketchier heritage than that provided by the old Barbados Cricket Committee. Some short-lived bodies organised cricket outside Committee auspices at various times beginning from 1902, but there was no continuous leadership or organisational structure.<sup>28</sup> The League's guiding principle was to provide regular competitive cricket for poor blacks whose colour and status ruled them socially ineligible for Association teams. As a result, the League is still perceived as the "mass" cricket organisation in comparison with that of the "elite" Association. That view is reinforced by most League teams (which far outnumber the 47 competing in the Association) having a strong country-village base unlike the Association whose teams are largely drawn from the Bridgetown city and suburban area. League administrators have come from more humble origins than their Association counterparts. J. M. (Mitchie) Hewitt, the founder, was a journalist come up from the ranks; a journalist colleague of similar background served as President, and artisans were prominent in management positions<sup>29</sup> A recent change has seen the President come from a senior civil service position and a higher status educational background. The League shares continuity with the Association, however. Hewitt was Secretary from 1936 until his death in 1969, while his journalist colleague served a similarly long term. On the evidence of their management composition, then, the Association and the League have occupied quite different positions in the local status system and those differences have started to soften only recently.

From the cultural viewpoint, however, there has been a distinct similarity of objective between the two bodies: to have an increasing number of players accept the cricket code of behaviour and social ethics derived from Victorian England, first laid down by the Committee and later protected by the Association. Clearly, this acceptance involves the League not initiating its own code but inculcating its members into that promoted by the senior body. From its inception, the League has demonstrated a strong concern to match the playing and non-playing standards apparently reached in the Association. Individuals and teams have been consistently punished for breaches of discipline, violations of agreed ethical codes or "unsportsmanlike" behaviour with the yardstick standards taken over from the Association.<sup>30</sup> The objective has been to graduate players of lower status and caste ranking into the practices of a higher social order.

That point underlines the strong social ranking system which has dominated the evolution of Barbadian cricket, and emphasises that equality of participa-

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28. See the foundation committee for the Frame Food Challenge Cup Series in *Barbados Cricketers' Annual* 1902-03 (Bridgetown: Globe, 1903). p. 186. For the extent of later Bank Holiday cricket, *Advocate*, 2 August 1932, p. 20. J. M. Hewitt. *The Annual Barbados League Cricketer* (Bridgetown: Cole's, 1952) indicates some of the early BCL activity. Louis Lynch, *The Barbados Book* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1972 edn.), pp. 166-174 conveys the Ravour of a "country" match.

29. For Hewitt, see *Advocate*, 3 March 1969, p. 1; interview material.

30. In 1955, for example, one player was suspended for five years after removing the stumps in protest at an umpiring decision. *Advocate*, 12 November 1955, p. 10. Earlier, in 1946, the League had attempted to head off such behaviour by initiating a series of educational talks entitled, "What the BCL Expects of You." *Advocate*, 26 July 1946, p. 4.

tion has been based upon social recognition rather than playing attainments. League successes, such as having players selected for Barbados representative teams or having a League side accepted into the Association competition, have all been interpreted as evidence of social “improvement” or acceptance rather than as recognition of simple playing ability.<sup>31</sup> But perhaps the strongest evidence for this social ranking and dominant cultural power within Barbadian cricket comes from the histories of its clubs.

Until 1939 there were four major long-term teams in the dominant Association competition: Wanderers, Pickwick, Spartan and Empire. Wanderers was founded in 1877 and until independence its members, playing and general, were drawn from plantation owners, major business house proprietors, very senior civil servants and people of otherwise high social status and independent wealth.<sup>32</sup> Until the late 1960s its playing membership was exclusively white, and it is still considerably white. Its general membership is still noticeably white leavened by mulattos and high status blacks, and it is now the main venue for the few white players seeking to play high class cricket. Pickwick was formed in 1882 and its membership has constantly differed from that of Wanderers, with the exception of its whiteness.<sup>33</sup> Business house wage staff, plantation and factory managerial or supervisory personnel, commercial house employees such as insurance salesmen, and lower level civil servants have traditionally characterised the Pickwick membership. It was the mid-1970s before non-whites became a significant element in that membership, and the general perception of Pickwick still focusses upon its fiercely defended white heritage. One rival club supporter remarked acridly that a former Pickwick stalwart must be “spinning in his grave” now that the first division side is largely made up of blacks.<sup>34</sup> Wanderers and Pickwick, then, were rival clubs within a numerically small white minority with the rivalry based on finely wrought class and status considerations. For example, one excellent Pickwick player of the interwar period, a sugar factory manager, was once kept at work beyond the normal Saturday time by the owner of the factory who was a Wanderers supporter—the two normally had a good working relationship, but this was the occasion of a Wanderers versus Pickwick fixture.<sup>35</sup>

Spartan was formed in the early 1890s as the first non-white club and consisted mostly of lawyers, medical practitioners, elite schoolmasters, higher level civil servants and the few non-whites to have penetrated the managerial levels of the business, commercial and plantation worlds. Although not exclusively so, there was a significant mulatto element in Spartan.<sup>36</sup> Symbolically, its foundation President was a mulatto who became Barbados’ first and only

31. See, for example, comments which followed the selection of Gary Sobers in the 1953 West Indian touring team to India, *Advocate*, 27 January 1953, p. 10.

32. *Wanderers Cricket Club Centenary, 1877-1977* (Bridgetown: WCC, 1977). For a brief comparison of Wanderers and Pickwick, see David Lowenthal, *West Indian Societies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 82-3.

33. See Hamilton, *Cricket in Barbados*; interview material drawn from Pickwick personnel.

34. Interview material.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.* Also, *Barbados Cricketers Annual* series.

non-white Chief Justice until the second half of the twentieth century. Many Spartan members were involved in pre-1937 political life, and almost without exception were found in conservative rather than radical camps. Sir Grantley Adams, as he became, was a most interesting example.<sup>37</sup> Like C. L. R. James, Adams imbibed English cricket and culture from his schoolmaster father. He attended Harrison College and Oxford University, then became a lawyer, as well as a good enough cricketer to represent Barbados in 1924. During the 1920s he was a public critic of the fledgling radical movement, opposing its socialist tendencies. It was well into the 1930s before he moved towards a more mass-based political position, symbolised by the lending of his name to the low status Barbados Cricket League at its formation.<sup>38</sup> Adams became the first Chief Minister of Barbados, then Prime Minister of the short lived West Indies Federation. He never lost his admiration for English cricket or English culture, or for Spartan and its membership which became increasingly influential in political, economic and social spheres.<sup>39</sup> Spartan maintained a jealous watch over that membership, a concern which led directly to the creation of Empire in 1914.

Herman Griffith, a lower middle class black player of outstanding ability was consistently denied membership in Spartan, some of whose members with minimum status (they included a minor businessman and a professional musician) subsequently seceded to form Empire in protest.<sup>40</sup> Griffith established an excellent intercolonial and international career, and built around him at Empire a tightly knit group of similarly lower middle class players. It was said that Empire men were either sanitary inspectors or elementary schoolmasters, but self-employed businessmen, minor civil servants and shop clerks were also prevalent. Like Spartan, Empire has never had a white player and few if any amongst its general membership. While the lines of social demarcation between the two clubs have blurred somewhat, members of both date that from the mid-1970s at the earliest and even now there is a sense of Spartan being drawn more from the black managerial than from lower status groups.

Several points are worth making about the social ranking of these clubs and on their relationship with ruling cultural practices. Their strong and lengthy maintenance of exclusiveness is striking. The community at large was theoretically moving towards more open social interaction from the 1890s to the 1970s through the creation of popular political parties, a widening franchise, an extension of the education system, legislation against racial discrimination and reform in landholding patterns to name just some. But these cricket clubs have been instrumental in preserving conservative and dominant patterns of caste relationships consolidated during the second half of the nineteenth century until well into the second half of the twentieth century. This was achieved largely by a

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37. F. A. Hoyos. *Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution* (London: Macmillan. 1974).

38. *Advocate*. 22 October 1936, p. 12—he was appointed Vice President.

39. Interviewees invariably pointed to the fact that all post-independence Governors-General and Prime Ministers have been Spartan men, not to mention a preponderance of politicians and senior civil servants.

40. For an interesting outline, John Wickham, "Herman," *West Indies Cricket Annual*, 1980: interview material.

high continuity of membership type, as five-yearly profiles drawn up for the dubs suggest—by 1965 they retained essentially the same types of people as they had in the 1890s.<sup>41</sup> That continuity was itself maintained through an oversupply of players being constantly available for a restricted number of places. Even where they fielded teams in all three Association competitive levels following World War Two, these clubs catered for a very small percentage of the cricket-playing male population so that admission policies could maintain strict social criteria as well as playing ability. The most notable relaxation has been in the colour coding, not the least because of substantial alterations to white demographics since 1966—total numbers have fallen steadily while the cricket-playing age brackets have been undermined further by either permanent or long-term temporary emigration for educational and/or occupational reasons.

Another important element in this exclusiveness was its self-imposed or, at least, non-contested nature. None of the clubs had any rules or constitutional provisions which specified the socially acceptable dimensions of their membership.<sup>42</sup> Former players recall that they “knew” which club to join; it was a tacitly accepted conventional wisdom based upon rigid social categorisation.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, there was a recognised feeder system for these clubs. Whites and blacks might play together while at Harrison College, but upon leaving school they would “find” themselves at Wanderers and Spartan respectively. Whites from The Lodge went to Pickwick more frequently than Wanderers, while blacks and whites from Combermere (with its commercial educational orientation) gravitated to Empire and Pickwick. Exceptions generally proved the rule. One player recalled that in the early 1930s he was among the first Harrison College products to join Empire, largely because he was a “poor black boy” whose education resulted from a scholarship rather than from established family wealth or status. And the first black to join Wanderers in modern times (in the late 1960s) was an ex-Lodge man with an outstanding academic and athletic record as well as a respectable social background, and who went on to hold very high civil service positions. Clearly, the sociology of popular knowledge combined with careful club selection policies to maintain traditions of social differentiation until well into the post-independence period.

This rigid and persistent classification extended into all other clubs which joined the Barbados Cricket Association after 1914, and especially to the Barbados Cricket League whose membership from the outset ranged from agricultural labourers to skilled artisans and all the occupational categories between. The most obvious evidence of the low status accorded to these players concerns those who attempted to shift from League teams into the Association. Almost the only possible team available for such transfer was Empire and it

41. These profiles were based upon *Voters' Lisa* from the 1880s until the 1960s, supplemented by these biographical sources: S. J. Fraser, *The Barbados Diamond Jubilee Directory and General West Indian Advertiser* (Bridgetown: King, 1898); P. S. Leverick, *Leverick's Directory of Barbados* (Bridgetown: King, 1921); *Barbados Year Book and Who's Who* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1934, 1951, 1964).

42. See, for example, *Rules of the Pickwick Cricket Club* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1947).

43. Remainder of this paragraph and the next based upon interview material.

guarded its ranks jealously. It might have been a black club with an underprivileged reputation but it was by no means “poor black,” so the working classes faced considerable difficulties in trying to enter Empire. One story has an Empire official altering an applicant’s stated occupation from “Ice Company employee” to “ice vendor”-the status connotations in the change are both obvious and important. A League fast bowling star of the World War Two period recalls that he attempted to join Empire in order to improve his cricket prospects, and was shattered to have his request denied on the grounds that he was a lowly “messenger” for a small business and therefore socially unsuitable for the club.

Some very successful players did move from the League into the Association as early as the 1940s but they had to be exceptionally successful, show potential for adopting dominant cultural standards and be fortunate enough to strike the right circumstances. But it was really into the 1970s before such players began to move in numbers and with relative ease. That change coincided with the admission of whole League teams into the Association competition with one, St. Catherine, now in First Division, and a number of others dominating lower grades. This is probably the beginning of a real change in the traditionally rigid status divisions but, even so, incoming clubs are vetted carefully for their off-field behaviour and their initial performances in that regard are monitored closely. Such clubs are still socially “on trial” because they are perceived to differ substantially from those which have traditionally appeared in the Association. This attitude is firmly grounded in both a belief and an acceptance that quite complex social differences and venues exist within Barbados, facilitated by cultural institutions such as cricket clubs.

It is important to remember that from the immediate post-emancipation period onwards, these infinitely graded social divisions continued to be preserved in Barbados not so much by law as by social practice, as in the cricket case. From Schomburgk onwards, visitors to Barbados inevitably referred to the existence there of a greater degree of colour consciousness and discrimination than found elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean. Complex and closely defined social levels were codified and accepted upon the twin, intersecting indicators of class and colour. Trollope reported that non-whites were never met in Barbadian “society.” Chester thought Barbadian whites still maintained a “strong feeling in favour of slavery.” McLellan confirmed the existence of numerous divisions based upon colour and class. Macmillan considered Barbados the most socially exclusive and conscious of the Caribbean territories. Fermor reported the existence of considerable colour prejudice. Swanton and Blackburne remarked similarly on the noticeable social distances observed in Barbados.<sup>44</sup> Local writers were not so prolific on the theme; many of them were

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44. Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1860, p. 215; Greville John Chester, *Transatlantic Sketches in the West Indies, South America, Canada and the United States* (London: Smith Elder, 1860), p. 99; George H. H. McLellan, *Some Phases of Barbados Life* (Demarara: Argosy, 1909), pp. 45-6, 54; W. M. Macmillan, *Warning from the West Indies: a Tract for the Empire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938), p. 49; Patrick Leigh Fervor, *The Traveller’s Tree: a Journey through the Caribbean Islands*

more keen to accommodate the cultural elite, But the few who did comment were extremely critical as revealed in Bernard, Wickham and Harewood. The consistency of these reports indicates the deep implantation in Barbadian life of ideas about social relations based upon the cultural precepts of the minority cultural elite, and mediated by institutions such as cricket.

In the century from 1870 these deepseated and rigid views were consolidated by the intersection of economic pressure and political conservatism through which the minority elite attempted to maintain its dominant position. The sugar industry experienced some “highs” as in the World War One boom when European beet supplies were disrupted, in the early 1930s when British imperial preference systems boosted prices, and during the 1960s when world prices reached high levels.<sup>46</sup> For the most part, however, the industry faced depression as in the 1890s when a British Royal Commission was necessitated, during the 1920s when a world glut forced prices very low, and the 1970s when began a steady decline after a promising beginning.<sup>47</sup> In response to this pattern the Barbadian sugar aristocracy, from 1900 a coalition of the most successful and surviving members of the plantocracy together with the new businessmen planters, was moved reluctantly into changes in production systems, financing arrangements, labour relations and so-called peasant landholding patterns.<sup>48</sup> One major result was that living conditions for the black majority declined to such a point that by the outbreak of labour and political disturbances in 1937 they were among the worst in the region if not the Empire.<sup>49</sup> The long-term ruling elite held the ring through its control over the Legislative Assembly and the Executive Council, bodies whose power was untouched until the introduction of limited popular government in 1944, followed by the introduction of ministerial government in 1954, then independence in 1966.<sup>50</sup>

During this long period of economic and political change, cultural institutions such as formalised cricket vigorously maintained those patterns of social

(London: Murray, 1950), p. 151; E. W. Swanton in *Advocate*, 27 July, 1960, p. 11; Kenneth Blackburne, *Lasting Legacy: a Story of British Colonialism* (London: Johnson, 1976), pp. 85-6.

45. George Bernard [Gordon Belle], *Wayside Sketches: Pen-Pictures of Barbadian Life* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1934); Clennell W. Wickham, *Colour Question—Some Reflections on Barbados* (no publishing details listed); Leroy Harewood, *Black Power Lessness in Barbados* (Bridgetown: Black Star, 1968)

46. See Starkey, *Economic Geography of Barbados*. Ch. IV and Dawn I. Marshall, “The Population/Environment System of Barbados in the 1930s” (Cave Hill: Institute of Social and Economic Research Paper, 1978); *Barbados Sugar Industry Review* 15 (March 1973).

47. *Report of the West India Royal Commission* (London: HMSO, 1897); *Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission* (London: HMSO, 1930); *Sugar Confidential: a Visit to Jamaica and Barbados* (London: Cocoa, Chocolate and Confectionary Alliance, 1970); *The Economic and Social Development of Barbados: Characteristics, Policies and Perspectives* (Washington: OAS, 1976); *Nation*, 18 September 1985, p. 12.

48. Two accounts of this process may be seen in Ronald Paris, “Race, Inequality and Underdevelopment in Barbados, 1627-1973” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974) and Cecilia Ann Karch “The Transformation and Consolidation of the Corporate Plantation Economy in Barbados, 1860-1977” (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1979).

49. For some indications: *Housing in Barbados: Report of a Committee* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1943); *Report on a Preliminary Housing Survey of Two Blocks of Chapman’s Lane Tenantry, Bridgetown* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1944); *Report on a Housing Survey of Eight Slum Tenancies in Bridgetown* (Bridgetown: Advocate, 1945). Later nineteenth century conditions may be gauged from *Report of the Commission on Poor Relief: 1875-1877* (Bridgetown: Government of Barbados, 1878) For the outline of political events. F. A. Hoyos. *Grantley Adams*.

50. For comments on the process of democratisation, J. M. Hewitt, *Ten Years of Constitutional Development in Barbados. 1944-1954* (Bridgetown. Cole’s 1954)—this was the same Mitchie Hewitt who founded the BCL.

relationships, based upon class and colour considerations, which had been elaborated during the post-emancipation moral authority quest in order to maintain the social power of a cultural minority. As the cricket case demonstrates, cultural organisations maintained until well into the post-independence period quite elaborate systems of social discrimination which would have been unacceptable in government, civil service and commercial sectors. In 1900, for example, the Trinidad-born and Harrison-educated English cricket boss Pelham Warner argued that Caribbean cricket standards would not improve until non-whites participated without restriction. Yet as late as 1970 the Barbadian international player Charlie Griffith could still point to a high degree of colour and class prejudice in the organisation of Barbadian cricket.<sup>51</sup> During the intervening 70 years players and spectators alike had accepted the social parameters of cricket and few challenged them. It may be argued, then, that the process of social change generally was modified by the conservative construction of voluntary institutions such as cricket. As Herman Griffith is alleged to have remarked, "if it had not been for cricket we would have been at each others' throats."<sup>52</sup>

While the sharpness of the divisions has now been blunted, the underlying attitudes are still extant. Wanderers members suggest that it took a long time to introduce non-whites to the club because of the need to preserve an atmosphere where "talk" might be free and "families" could be brought, so newcomers had to be vetted carefully.<sup>53</sup> At Kensington Oval in 1985 a match between two non-white teams, one representing Pickwick, saw players drift away quickly at the close of play so that in the bar just one or two non-whites mixed with perhaps thirty whites who were mostly Pickwick Club members. Changes have occurred but will take time to consolidate and some perceptions of the changes are guarded—one former international player believes that non-white players admitted to formerly all-white clubs have no voting rights.<sup>54</sup> There is some substance to his claim. Permeating this exclusivity and its modern residual remains is the widespread belief in all quarters that the other parties prefer it that way, whites with whites and blacks with blacks, itself a firm pointer to the power of the dual culture and of cricket as the carefully controlled bridge.

One guide to this fundamental but masked conflict lies in the history of traditional club rivalries. At first the highlight of any season was always Wanderers versus Pickwick, especially up until 1914 when Committee officials organising fixtures would pit those teams against each other on public holidays in order to give as many people as possible a chance to observe the great clash.<sup>55</sup> Early crowd data are unreliable but 8-10,000 spectators were not unusual, and many who attended wore appropriate colours to identify the team of their

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51. P. F. Warner. *Cricket In Many Climes* (London: Heinemann, 1900), West Indian section; Charlie Griffith. *Chucked Around* (London: Pelham, 1970). Pp. 117-8.

52. Interview material: for a similar version. John Wickham, "The First Hundred Years: a Salute to Wanderers Cricket Club," *Bajan* (July 1977). p. 45.

53. Interview material.

54. *Ibid.*

55. This practice began during the 1890s

allegiance.<sup>56</sup> From these matches, Pickwick particularly gained a reputation for being relentless, determined opponents, and there was always a class-based edge to the clashes, the comfortable versus the non-quite-so-comfortable. Allegiance to a team was invariably for the entirety of a player's career because of that class consideration. Just before World War One it was reckoned a sensational moment when a former Wanderers player turned out for Pickwick against his old club.<sup>57</sup> It was not so much a desertion of a team as of a caste group. Although the championship significance of Wanderers versus Pickwick matches declined after 1920 and public interest declined as well, teams themselves still approached the fixtures as of old. During one match in the 1960s, for example, Pickwick players changed in their cars, refusing to enter the Wanderers' pavilion alleging that a female Wanderers supporter had spat upon a Pickwick player during the first day of the match.<sup>58</sup> With the increasing non-white composition of both teams the hard edge is disappearing rapidly but the spirit is remembered.

From 1915 onwards the great clash was always between Spartan and Empire, partly because of the controversial origins of Empire, partly because of the subtle colour shadings, partly because of perceived class differences and partly because of the marvellous players involved (at any point between the 1920s and the 1960s one of these matches might have seen two, three or even more international players on each of the teams). One Empire player of the early 1930s recalls the roar from his team's supporters when he went out to bat, and his silent prayer: "Lord, let me not disappoint these people today." Another Empire player who began early in the 1940s remembers being stopped in the streets weeks before a match against Spartan and being "advised" by groups of well-wishers. Players of both clubs remember this spirit existing into the 1970s and even now, although club distinctions have blurred, there is still an "atmosphere" to an Empire-Spartan match.<sup>59</sup>

Two points are important about this rivalry in relation to the creation of a shared culture via cricket which, in turn, had considerable significance for social relations on the island. First, the meeting of these clubs in the annual rituals of their matches helped create a general belief in the essential openness of the society; cricket, that is, provided an apparent avenue for the meeting of different colour and class groups. Pickwick, for example, had a tradition that visiting players always had their after-match drinks paid for by the club. Empire players of the interwar years recall that at Wanderers they were always assigned to a home player after the match and looked after, even to the point of being driven home by the wealthier white players<sup>60</sup> All this, of course, was a momentary suspension of the island's normal caste conditions, but one which was widely subscribed to as an indication of what people considered might be

56. For example, *Barbados Cricketers' Annual 1895-6*. pp. 71-4

57. *Barbados Cricketers' Annual 1909-10*, p. 47.

58. Interview material

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

the normal Barbadian position. Second, the crowds at all these matches were overwhelmingly black, and blacks were the most avid supporters of Wanderers and Pickwick. By supporting these quite different class and colour groups, Bajans again were demonstrating support for the ideals of cricket and culture as established during the nineteenth century by the creators of the moral authority system.

This pattern has continued since the late 1960s in the form of a representative team from the Barbados Cricket League playing in the Barbados Cricket Association competition. The arrangement replaced an annual match instituted in the late 1940s between representative teams of the two competitions. Given the League's history it is not surprising that matches between its teams and those from the Association have had a fierce competitive spirit. One longtime League member recalls Mitchie Hewitt being criticised by a black Association member for attempting to give regular cricket to "ill-behaved, ignorant working men."<sup>61</sup> Matches against white teams were strongly contested, but those against the socially exclusive Spartan club were highpoints for the League and to a degree remain so. The rivalry, as with that between other major clubs is rooted very strongly in the evolution of the island's specific social relations system. League teams have a highly developed social image as having "come from the people," and an equally developed sense of other teams having been drawn from more privileged sections of the society. It is from the history of such social rankings that emerge two other important aspects of Barbadian cricket.

One concerns the cricketer as popular hero, with the patterns of adulation charting the slow changes in Barbadian cricket. In early days the heroes were drawn from the elite white culture with the bulk of their support coming from the black majority. During the 1890s the Pickwick giant, Clifford Goodman, was idolised whether helping his club beat Wanderers or Barbados defeat visiting teams.<sup>62</sup> From before World War One until the 1930s George Challenor of Wanderers, Barbados and West Indies was feted as one of the best batsmen in the world.<sup>63</sup> Both Goodman and Challenor symbolised the power of the dominant cultural elite. Goodman came from a plantation managerial background and, of his famous cricketing brothers, P. A. Goodman became a secondary school headmaster renowned for discipline, and G. A. Goodman became Chief Justice in the Straits Settlement following a local political career. George Challenor came from a leading merchant family and, with his brother and fellow Barbados player, became a leading businessman planter. Challenor demonstrated this social position in classic English cricket cultural style. At practice he would place money on one of the three stumps and challenge net bowlers to claim it by bowling him. On the occasions when five dollars were put up, bowlers came from everywhere in the vicinity of the Wanderers ground.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Ibid.

62. See the reception accorded Goodman for his outstanding performances against an English touring team in 1897, *Bulletin*, 15 January 1897, pp. 8-10.

63. After the 1923 West Indies tour of England, he was ranked among the top six batsman in the world. *Wisden 1924*, pp. 422-3.

64. Interview material.

It is worth recalling that the very grounds themselves, such as Wanderers, reinforced the social hierarchies elaborated among the players, their spectators and the public at large. Playing areas were invariably donated by plantation owners and, in the League especially, this established a strong patron-client relationship between those owners and the cricketers, many of whom were often employed on the estates from which the grounds were carved. Even now, many of the smaller country grounds are overlooked by plantation houses. The strength of the subsequently created loyalties to team, plantation and patron were demonstrated graphically at Wanderers and Pickwick. Their strongest black supporters came from the tenancies of the old Bay and Kensington estates, respectively, and well into the 1940s those tenancies were among the worst slums in Barbados, underlining the ability of shared cultural values to override patently obvious social and economic inequalities.

Black cricket heroes began to emerge from the time of Herman Griffith whose Empire connections provided opportunities for a caste affiliation to parallel the loyalties to localities developed within the ranks of common supporters. What the black heroes did in an important sense, however, was to justify the underlying social philosophy of cricket. By following its precepts they were thought to have “improved” and “succeeded,” to have “risen” from the mass. That is, they not so much symbolised a challenge to the dominant cultural elite as constituted a justification for that elite’s ideology—many of the new stars were seen, significantly, not just as “good” players but as “good” blacks who had learned their social lessons. Many potential black stars failed to make the grade because of social rather than playing misdemeanours.<sup>65</sup> In this “success” story pattern two of the most significant players have been Everton Weekes and Gary Sobers whose representative careers began in the early 1940s and early 1950s respectively.<sup>66</sup> Both came from poor, underprivileged backgrounds, Weekes from the New Orleans tenancy near Kensington Oval and Sobers from the Bay land adjoining the Wanderers ground. Both acquired their skills in “gully,” school and knockabout cricket, both frequented local Association club grounds where their talents were recognised by influential members. Both played for League clubs when very young, and both were ‘drafted’ into socially appropriate Association teams where places were made available: Weekes was helped to join the army which had an Association team for a short while; Sobers joined the Police as a band recruit. Only their exceptional talents made this Association entry possible, and both had patronage from influential Association men. Their very rise indicates just how rigidly prescribed the system was. By their cricket talents they then made their ways in the world as professional players, and cricket has continued to ensure their upward mobility.

It is difficult to convey adequately the awe in which these men have been held by the Barbadian public. Weekes retired in the mid-1960s, Sobers in the early

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65. Most cricket fans in Barbados have a list of players who, though good enough, were never selected for Barbados because they could not get a ‘break’ given their low social status. Interview material.

66. Based on interview material; see also Gary Sobers. *Cricket Crusader* (London: Pelham, 1966) and Trevor Bailey, *Sir Gary: a Biography* (London: Collins, 1976).

1970s, yet their stature grows rather than diminishes. Sobers received a knighthood from the Queen in 1975, an achievement interpreted as the ultimate sign of ability making all things possible in an "open" society. Men in rumshops, at cricket grounds and other gathering places refer to 'Everton' and 'Gary' as if they were personal friends which, in one sense, they are. The Sobers story was thinly veiled in a mid-1970s festival play, and he has been mentioned as a Barbadian cultural icon in a number of popular calypsos, a sure sign of social significance.<sup>67</sup> These men remain mass heroes even though the lifestyle and status of both is vastly removed from their humble origins. But despite the fierce pride in their achievements, their stories are considered not so much a comment on the exclusivity barriers which they had to overcome, as an indication that through cricket in Barbados anything is possible provided the right lessons are learned. While they might recall how difficult things were, Weekes and Sobers are generally philosophical and harbour few if any grudges against a social structure which determined that, in the opinion of one of them, they had to be three times better than the average white player in order to be selected.

The widespread acceptance of this cultural consensus shows up best in the cases of players who did not conform, perhaps the best example being the late Sir Frank Worrell.<sup>68</sup> Born in Barbados he was a cricket prodigy playing for Combermere in senior competition at the age of twelve and attracting big crowds. Before he was twenty he had established world records and later became an international star; he was the first regular black captain of West Indies, and won a knighthood before his tragically premature death from leukemia. Although hailed, Worrell was never loved uncritically by Barbadians, largely because of his outspokenness about his dissatisfaction with cricket's social structuring and its relationship with the wider cultural pattern. He made no secret of his irritation with Barbadian exclusivity and prejudice and, after a stint in Trinidad, ended up in Jamaica. Shortly before his death he criticised Barbados for trying to demonstrate its regional superiority by organising the match against the Rest of the World XI, and his burial on the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies in Barbados was not without controversy.<sup>69</sup> During 1985 one interviewee, a white woman, remarked acutely that Worrell should not have been buried on the island because he did not love it or accept its ways.<sup>70</sup> Hero status was, and to some extent still is accorded only to those who accept without question the internal ranking scale which from the outset has marked Barbadian cricket and its consensus cultural context.

The second aspect, in addition to the role of heroes, which highlights the social depth and complexity of Barbadian cricket concerns crowd behaviour

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67. Flora Spencer and Geoffrey King, *Lost Ball—Six Runs* (Bridgetown: Barbados Festival Choir, 1973). Calypso examples are "Hit It" and "Miss Barbados," both by Gabby.

68. For an illuminating account of the Worrell experience, Ernest Eytel, *Frank Worrell* (London: Sportsman's Book Club, 1965) in which Worrell comments on each chapter.

69. Worrell thought the match displayed "bigotry, vanity and insularity," *Advocate*, 2 October 1966, p. 14.

70. Interview material.

which is most instructively examined through its prominent personalities of whom three are especially important here: Britannia Bill, Flannigan and King Dyal. The three cover the history of organised cricket in the island. Britannia Bill became famous late in the nineteenth century as a black supporter of English touring teams who followed their players everywhere, carrying a Union Jack to pronounce his great loyalty.<sup>71</sup> His message was that England carried all before it, and that its cricket players were the epitome of civilized, gentlemanly demeanour and to whose monarch, Queen Victoria, he had pledged undying loyalty. Right up until World War One, visiting teams were astonished by the warmth of the welcome extended by the black majority, often to the point of being embarrassed by it.<sup>72</sup> While this loyalty was in line with a widespread allegiance to the monarchy and especially to Queen Victoria, in cricket it found its most popular expression. In particular, such allegiance sprang from a perceived shared bond with the Barbadian elite of the nineteenth century which established loyalty to both the monarchy and cricket after emancipation in 1838 (which symbolically, of course, matched Victoria's accession). The black Barbadian majority genuinely believed that obedience to the British cultural model, of which cricket was such a focal feature, was the means by which they would progress.

Fred Flannigan dominated the interwar period and epitomised the idolising of white stars by black men.<sup>73</sup> Flannigan himself was a player of ability who earned a living, as did many lower class players, by providing practice to members of the Association clubs. In Flannigan's case it was Wanderers for whom he became an ardent supporter, and his idol was George Challenor. One of Flannigan's most famous remarks came during an intercolonial match when a black fielder kneeled to tie a shoelace for Challenor who was batting. "That's right," shouted Flannigan to the fielder, "on your knees before the Lord thy God, George Challenor!"<sup>74</sup> It was a graphic and symbolic representation of Barbadian social relations. Challenor, in fact, paid a retainer to Flannigan who became a mascot for the Barbados team when it travelled, and Challenor was always hailed as the living symbol of what cricket and Barbados stood for. There was no equality in that cricket system, rather there was a very carefully defined sense of social ranking and distance recognised by all those who were part of it, both carried over from and reinforcing relationships in the community at large.

Dundonald Redvers Dyal, better known as the self-proclaimed "King" Dyal, came of age in the Flannigan era and is a strong pointer to the role of cricket in linking the folk and dominant cultures.<sup>75</sup> The son of a master tailor, Dyal is a

71. See Warner *Cricket in Many Climes*, pp. 42-6; *Bulletin*, 31 December 1897, pp.4-5.

72. See the account by the 1895 touring English captain in C. P. Bowen. *English Cricketers in the West Indies* (Bridgetown: Herald, 1895), p. 13.

73. For one account of Flannigan's style, see *Intercolonial Cricket Tournament, 1925* (Port-of-Spain: Chronicle, 1925), pp. 8, 35.

74. Interview material.

75. Following section based largely upon interview material. See also *Advocate*, 14 May 1966, p. 14; Alan Ross. *Through the Caribbean: England in the West Indies, 1960* (London: Pavilion, 1985 reprint), pp. 27-8.

flamboyant character who dresses extravagantly in a society where clothing is generally conservative. During a 1985 test match he appeared in two suits within two hours, one bright lime green and the other bright red, both with matching accessories including appropriately coloured pipes and walking sticks. King Dyal's "subjects," especially during major matches, are the patrons in the public stands drawn from the masses. But his decrees proceed from a dedication to English cricket culture and tradition, to the precepts laid down by the organisers of the Committee and their Association successors and drawn up upon the needs of the minority elite culture. King Dyal is fiercely loyal to the illusion of cricket as an apolitical social agency, thereby demonstrating its very power to mask the inequalities and prejudices which would be criticised if they appeared in any other social venue.

Brittania Bill, Flannigan and King Dyal represent more than just a passionate devotion to cricket as a game. Their allegiance is based upon an acceptance of the cultural context in which the Barbadian game evolved. Following the Victorian games model cricket was "emblematic," as older references have it, of life and social relations.<sup>76</sup> Any recognisable decline in cricket standards, therefore, has ramifications for wider social concerns. This concern is particularly noticeable in the contemporary "hailers," the major supporters and constant followers of the important clubs. An excellent example occurred during 1985 after a team in a match-winning position failed to enforce victory. A younger player had batted for a long time, unable to adapt to the match circumstances. "If you had known something about life," advised the chief hailer in the clubhouse later, "if you had some experience, you would have known what to do. Understand what I mean? You have to learn experience." A few weeks earlier the same hailer observed that men who appeared in court with such folk culture nicknames as "Tall Boy" and "Roughhouse" were never found in cricket because cricketers knew how to behave.<sup>77</sup> This, too, is the direct cultural heritage of that public school cricket code adumbrated in late nineteenth century Britain and transplanted so successfully in Barbados where its moral principles are shared by two quite different cultural traditions.

One logical extension to this ethical and behavioural code concerns discipline both on and off the field. During 1985 there was considerable public debate about the origins of a perceived decline in Barbadian cricket standards, and many critics returned to some central points: younger players were not learning discipline, especially in the schools, and club life had degenerated as a consequence.<sup>78</sup> Cricket clubs in Barbados are important male social centres (a further reminder of the social centrality of cricket) where at most times of the week may be found members playing cards, dominos, darts, backgammon or table tennis, discussing cricket, other sport or current affairs, drinking or organising social activities. This process has a long history and there is a

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76. For example, *Bulletin* 3 July 1899; *Advocate*. 12 January 1926, p. 9 and 4 January 1930, p. 12.

77. These points drawn from observation.

78. See the "Cricket Crisis" series in *Sunday Sun*. 13, 20, 27 October and 3, 10, 17 November 1985

concern in many quarters for a continued high standard of social conduct. Following one relatively insignificant after-match skirmish, two senior players of one club were suspended for the bulk of the 1985 season. They were allowed into the clubhouse but their suspension from playing was deliberately severe, according to some officials, in order to curb a decline in discipline: "Fellows have to learn how to behave in public."<sup>79</sup> Earlier in the season a promising young player was criticised severely for an open display of anger after being given out in a dubious umpiring decision. The decision might have been poor, said his critics, but as in life he must learn to take the hard knocks as well as to accept decisions made by those in authority.<sup>80</sup>

This deep, symbolic strain permeates Barbadian cricket crowds which are recognised as amongst the most knowledgeable in the world. That helps explain two of their most noticeable characteristics. The first is a pronounced social conservatism which has given the island a far better record of crowd behaviour than most of its Caribbean counterparts. This conservatism was displayed during a 1985 test match incident in which a New Zealand player on the field lowered his trousers to treat a leg injury. A now acceptable practice elsewhere in the cricket world, this act created an air of shock in Barbados. An off-duty police inspector in the members' stand seriously suggested that the player be charged with an indictable offence. The touring team's management was required to issue a public apology for what in Barbados was widely considered as a breach of the cricket/life morality code.<sup>81</sup>

The second important characteristic is the utter seriousness with which spectators approach the game, almost sharing in the action itself as they urge, encourage and almost will the players to better performances. At the heart of this activity is a desire to have observed and see performed the tacitly accepted conventions and traditions of play. Those players who do so are treated with respect, those who do not receive contempt. During the 1985 test match, for example, one spectator kept repeating to the New Zealand captain, "Howarth, you can't bowl to Vivvy [Vivian Richards] without a sweeper." When Richards proved the point by hitting yet another boundary the spectator held out his hands as if to say "what more can I do?" and his neighbours all agreed.<sup>82</sup> The New Zealand captain had ignored a basic cricket concept and so was deemed unworthy of further assistance. In club matches it is not uncommon to see fielding captains adjusting their positionings in accordance with spectator advice such as "give me a square leg." When such adjustments are made, batsmen are then told to "watch that man at square leg." Spectators and players alike are involved in a joint process through which cricket and its attendant social symbolism proceed by way of a shared set of behavioural and moral principles which themselves have deep social significance more widely.

Cricket, then, has deeply influenced the shape and character of Barbadian life

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79. Interview material.

80. Point drawn from observation

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Far from being a mirror image of community development, the game has been a major determinant of the unique cultural relationships established in Barbados between the descendants of a minority, dominant group and a mass, subordinate community whose potential for conflict has been considerable.<sup>83</sup> It is not simply that cricket has provided a "safety valve." Rather, in Barbados the game has provided on-going connections between two quite different cultural traditions through carefully regulated social meeting points, helping to reduce areas of potential conflict. At the same time, cricket has preserved well into the twentieth century a set of social relationships established during the mid-nineteenth century and which in other arenas of social life would be considered inappropriate. In cricket Barbados has one of its most conservative social and political institutions, a perfect example of the power of culture in the face of general social, economic and political change.

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83. For the "reflective" approach, see Jack W. Berryman, "Sport History as Social History," *Quest* 30 (June 1973): 65-73; for a guide to a more structural and insightful approach, Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 101 (Winter 1972): 1-37.