
Citation: COMITAS, LAMBROS COMITAS / Teachers College, Columbia University and Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies, Columbia University. **ETHNOLOGY: West Indies.**

Subjects:

[ETHNOLOGY: WEST INDIES.](#)

HLAS Volume: 41

Essay: GIVEN THE DIVERSITY OF THE CARIBBEAN and the uneven distribution of research activities in the area, it has been sometimes difficult to maintain a reasonable geographic balance or coverage in this section. This does not appear to be a problem in this issue. For the current review period, annotations of publications by social and cultural anthropologists or by others on anthropologically pertinent themes are provided for 26 discrete territories (Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Carriacou, Cayman Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Surinam and Trinidad), for a number of publications dealing with Commonwealth or general Caribbean themes as well as for a limited few on WestIndians abroad. In this issue, the single territory claiming by far the largest number of annotated publications is Jamaica, a fact which has several possible explanations but which nonetheless lends credence to a perhaps apocryphal statement attributed to the present Prime Minister of Jamaica that his country is the most studied but least understood in the Caribbean, if not the world. Whatever the reason, other territories are well represented in this issue, particularly Guyana, Surinam, Barbados, Haiti, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. As indicated in volumes 35, 37 and 39 of the HLAS, Caribbean sociocultural anthropology continues to be eclectic in its theoretical and methodological approaches, certainly no single "school" or position appear to be dominant. The problem orientation of researchers seems to be increasingly, although in no way completely, focused on socially relevant and practical concerns. In HLAS 39, I stated that there was good reason to suspect that the near future would see an acceleration of research on problems of physical and mental health, local level politics, urban life, and the middle class and elites. This has come to pass. And moreover, this review period is noteworthy for the number of publications by scholars from the region itself, a trend which argues well for the future of anthropology and social science in the Caribbean. Of particular interest in this regard are two publications: La antropología en la República Dominicana: una evaluación (item [998](#)) and Lindsay's collection Methodology and change: problems of applied social science research techniques in the Commonwealth Caribbean (item [1056](#)). Although the publications cited in this issue cover a very wide range of topics, nearly half can be placed into five gross categories or fields of interest. I. Mating, marriage, household and family For publications on this general theme, see Angrosino on sexual politics in the Trinidadian East Indian family (item [997](#)); Gardner and Podolefsky on conjugal patterns in Dominica (item [1026](#)); Goldberg on household in Grand Cayman (item [1030](#)); Jones on Barbadian family planning (item [1042](#)); Marks and

Römer's collection on family and kinship (item [1088](#)); Otterbein and Otterbein on the developmental cycle in Andros (item [1075](#)); Pierce on Nengre kinship and residence (item [1076](#)); Roberts and Sinclair on women in Jamaica (item [1082](#)); Rubenstein on diachronic inference and lower-class Afro-Caribbean marriage (item [1085](#)) and on incest and effigy hanging in St. Vincent (item [1086](#)); Stoffle on Barbadian mate selection and family formation (items [1093-1094](#)); Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow on social inequality and sexual status in Barbados (item [1095](#)); Vazquez-Geffroy on preferred consanguineal marriage in the Dominican Republic (item [1099](#)); and, of Voydanoff and Rodman on marital careers in Trinidad (item 1101).

II. Religion and magic For publications on Haitian vodun see Acquaviva (item [993](#)); Bebel-Gisler and Hurbon (item [1004](#)); Dorsainvil (item [1018](#)); Kerboull (item [1044](#)); Lescot (item [1054](#)); and Lowenthal (item [1057](#)). For religious practices of black people in the New World, see Simpson (item [1091](#)) and for Jamaican practices refer to Barrett (item [1002](#)). Puerto Rican spiritism is covered by Koss (items [1047-1048](#)). Massé deals with the Seventh Day Adventist movement in Martinique (item [1063](#)); and, Thoden van Velzen focuses on the Gaan Gadu movement in Surinam (item [1097](#)). Related to this general category are five publications on various aspects of life among the Jamaica Rastafarians by: Barrett (item [1001](#)); Davis and Simon (item [1017](#)); Dreher and Rogers (item [1019](#)); Nicholas (item [1072](#)); and, Reckford (item [1080](#)).

III. Immigration and Emigration The theme of migration is important in the following publications: Bowen on social change in the British Virgin Islands (item [1010](#)); Bryce-Laporte and Mortimer on Caribbean immigration to the US (item [1011a](#)); Clarke's collection on Caribbean social relations (item [1012](#)); Foner on Jamaicans in London (item [1024](#)); Hendrick's Spanish-language version of the Dominican Diaspora (item [1039](#)); Hill's account of the impact of migration on Carriacou (item [1040](#)); Koch on Jamaicans in Costa Rica (item [1045](#)); and, Lamur and Speckmann's collection on the adaptation of Caribbean migrants in the metropolises (item [1052](#)).

IV. Middle-Class and Elites Studies Alexander deals with the culture of race among the Jamaican middle class (item [995](#)); Bell appraises elite performance of Jamaican elites with regard to egalitarian values (item [1006](#)); Bell and Gibson survey Jamaican elites' attitudes toward global alignments (item [1007](#)); Gilloire and others study social class structure in the French Antilles with particular emphasis on the white upper class (item [1028](#)); Holzberg discusses political economy, ethnicity and the Jewish segment in Jamaica (item [1041](#)); Manning deals with Bermudian politics (item [1059](#)) and the impact of Canadian cultural symbolism on Bermudian political thought (item [1060](#)); and Robinson and Bell assess Jamaican elites' attitudes towards political independence (item 1083).

V. Health and Medicine Aho and Minott focus on the relation of folk and western medicine in Trinidad (item [994](#)); Beet and Sterman deal with male absenteeism and nutrition among the Matawai Bush Negroes (item [1005](#)); Bordes and Couture give a lively account of public health and community development in Haiti (item [1009](#)); Colson examines the treatment of sickness among the Akawaio (item [1013](#)); and, Lieberman and Dressler analyze bilingualism and cognition of disease terms in St. Lucia (item [1055](#)).

In closing, I should make special mention of the recent books of two of the most respected and prolific scholars of Caribbean culture, George Eaton Simpson's *Black religions in the New World* (item [1091](#)) and Douglas Taylor's *Languages of the West Indies* (item [1096](#)). Simpson and Taylor, between the two of them, have devoted more than 80 years to Caribbean research. Their two books, which combine careful thought with unparalleled

experience, will be valued by colleagues and students. I am indebted to Georganne Chapin for her valuable contribution to the preparation of this section.