Foreword

Social science in general and anthropology in particular seem today to be caught in healthy growth. It is not only that new places are explored; new phenomena investigated; new techniques elaborated. To bring the East Indians of Trinidad, in the West Indies, into purview, as this book does, is not mere search for a new people to study, a new tribe to add to the ethnographic files, though the company of modern peoples in the modern nations who have been brought under the microscope of cultural anthropology continues to grow year by year. To discover, assert, and point out the significance of the fact that in a brief fifty years immigrants from across the world, once strangers in the plantations of the island, have reconstituted in modernity their own variant of a rich and ancient civilization, India's, and done so as they rose to full citizenship and influence in a complex and rising young nation of the developing excolonial world, is not simply a provoking reiteration of the phoenix-like tenacity of the human spirit. It is to
add, as this book does, to the penetration, the sweep, and the command of social science and cultural anthropology.

Social science in general and anthropology in particular have carried the inductive methods of exploration, discovery, and inference from comparison into the changes and the transformations of human culture and human social experience. The community study method—and the book must stand as a community study as well as an essay at human interpretation and description—has been one of the chief techniques of that carriage of science to the changes in man’s story. That method is, put simply, to explore broad cultural or social problems by sampling them in vivo in particular settings. The samples are the communities, from hamlets to large cities, in which such problems play their parts in the full, real lives and in the full, complex social process and social structure lived through by the men and women of the society and its culture. Connections, functions, embedments, new dimensions of the broad problem emerge clear and offer themselves for realistic analysis.

The community study method has come to yield rich and progressive understanding of the dynamics of culture and society and of individual aspirations in it. Delving as the method does for real connections, faithful details, and counterchecked insights and illuminations, carrying the anthropological fieldworker down to the deepest of the “grass roots” in faithful adherence to his canon that he leave no facet of culture or group of persons however humble or remote unquestioned and unwatched, the method has been no less productive in practical corrections from general and sweeping plans of administration to development, and reform.

In the last few years, Robert Redfield, the recently deceased great pioneer and great summarizer of much of this newly won collective advance of cultural anthropology, wrote and edited works, very much alive at the forefront of social science—the very titles sound the march of this progress: The Little Community, Viewpoints for the Study of a Human Whole (i.e., of Life); Peasant Society and Culture; The Primitive
World and its Transformations; Village India, Studies in the Little Community. All of these were part of a series entitled Comparative Studies of Cultures and Civilizations. The four specific and the one general title reflect well the progress of community study, the growth of anthropology to a genuine command of the human story, and the study of human process in controlled samples serving as microcosms of the great world too large to handle otherwise.

In this growth, anthropology has learned to know the particular better, whether it be the life of a primitive tribe or that of a great comparative civilization, like India's or our own, and it has learned to ground theory of social process, or cultural change, or cultural influence on personality—theory thus for all mankind, in empirically documented world-wide comparisons.

This progress is not Redfield's alone, of course. It is the march of the whole science and the fruit of one of its methods. Methods of cultural and social analysis other than community study have contributed as well. But the company of scholars that Redfield spoke for and the method he and others developed are both of them so signal, so vital, and so continuant that we must take note of them.

What better note of them can we take, indeed, than to welcome a new recruit and a new contribution, of the same vigor and grace, of the same deepening command of detail and the same suggestive power in comparison leading to generalizing theory? The book before us probes a civilization transported to a new place. India, like our own Europe in America, has put living daughter colonies overseas, in Fiji, in East Africa, in Trinidad. A community study of such a colony tells us something new about the motherland and the essentials of its civilization as they survive transportation and show up in reconstitution.

But the telling also illustrates a wider process of human life and culture. Europe and China and Islam likewise have daughters abroad, as did Rome and Muscovy. A community study of such a transportation and reconstitution of culture probes the process of
culture building and culture transformation, too. It does so com-
paratively, which means independently of our identification with one
civilization or the other. It lets us see two examples of a common human process, one indeed shared as here both by many American ethnic minorities and by this little Caribbean one. It lets us confront the two examples, to extract, if we can, what common truth they illustrate.

There is still more promise in a study such as this, particular as it is in its details. There are many “plural societies” in the great One World of today, products of the crosscurrents of migration and minority existence so common since the age of world commerce, world-wide communication, East-West contact which dawned for us all unbeknownst in the colonizations and dominations of the century before ours.

In them, as with Trinidad and its East Indian citizens here explored, new nations today unite, if uneasily, not only peoples of a single civilization, cousins of closely similar heritage, like the European nationalities mingling in our own American national amalgam or the British and “New-Australians” of a rising Australia still White in population, but also or instead races from the ends of the earth and civilizations as diverse as man has ever invented them. The West Indies is such a plural society; Malaya, Kenya, South Africa, in a way even the Latin-American lands called sometimes Mestizo-America, with their American-Indian, Spanish, and African heritages, are such plural societies, as are perhaps even the Soviet Union and the United States. Multiethnicity, multiraciality, with its retention of differences of race, culture, and affiliation by religion or civilization to variant streams of human history, is as much the order of our day as ever was national amalgamation and ethnic and linguistic unification, in the heyday of a nationalism on the European model not yet disappeared.

A community study of a tiny East Indian village in a Caribbean island is a study, too, of the plural societies of our day. It is a glimpse
into the realities of life in them which may help us know, plan, or endure their future fates. It is a glimpse of that grass roots tenacity of historical and religious traditions, the recognition of which may temper our pushes toward collective identity and planned conformity. Strength may lie in wedding the continuities held to with such natural tenacity to a richer more complex national and societal integration. There may be suggestions here both for the now older countries like our own, itself reconciling cultural pluralism and inherent national unity, and for the now newer ones, the emergent new nations struggling for a stable unitary national existence and a balanced federal or otherwise orchestral form. Not only the young West Indian Federation will need to plan its \textit{e pluribus (et diversis) unum}. We shall need to continue to revivify our own at home and to prepare for other larger unities round the world abroad.

But the young author of this firsthand account of the life of a little community of exotics in an exotic setting, this little illustration of grander processes, makes no such claims for wider significance as I have forced upon him in these paragraphs of mine. Let us see what more modest lessons he himself suggests. Let us return with him to the simpler plane of scientific objectivity and careful workmanship his study inhabits for itself.

The data of the reconstitution of Indian culture in the little community called here Amity suggest some interesting priorities among the institutions of Indian civilization, at least at the popular level of the little community, the villages, the life of the peasants of the countryside, where Indian civilization has its longest continuity. What the immigrants to Trinidad retained of India and what they rebuilt into the communal life of Amity may well be a selection of the essentials of their traditional civilization. Students of India's heritage might learn about India here as students of Western civilization have learned from the essential retentions, in a new terrain and a new
technology, of European traditions, particularly British and Hispanic, in the Americas.

Note that the retentions and reconstitutions of Amity, the new little India in the West, have been carried out against many odds. They have been carried out in spite of immigration, in spite of lack of common origin among the immigrants, in spite of their common passage through the alien plantation system, in spite of their common subjection to British law and language and West Indian economic pressures, proletarianization, and indenture. Reconstitution has been possible, as we learn here, through making good an escape from wage labor and economic assimilation to partial self-subsistence, to land-ownership, village residence, and through reestablishing in temple and rite, without great communication back to India, some touch with the mother civilization and its religious lore. The reestablishment has been voluntary, we note, and it has not meant any turning one's back upon Creole and other West Indian neighbors nor, indeed, any lesser articulation with the governing institutions of Trinidad: plantation, courts, monetary system, schools, etc., than might well be expected in homeland Indian villagers' use of the new magistracies, the new ministries, the new commercial and banking institutions and the other tentacles of modernity at home. The superstructure of society—internationalized, Europeanized, transformed in India itself—overarches, perhaps, Indian and Indian, like Telegu and Mahratta living side by side in Hyderabad much as it overarches Hindu, Creole, and West Indian Chinese in Trinidad. It is not the force of economic factors, or any other pressures, that have kept the Amity East Indians of Trinidad Indians within their ancient tradition. They are in fact as modern as any other ex-peasant group, either in India or the West Indies. It is instead the pressures from within, from the heart, from one's fellows and their needs of one another, pressures obviously not from outside except as defence, which have inspired the retention and reconstitution of culture we witness here.
Note, too, that these retentions and reconstitutions include the major and the essential, or "domestic" institutions, to use the phrase of past centuries. These are not general human institutions, to be summed up with empty if evocative general names, like hearth and home and community. These are specifically Indian institutions. Home is the joint family, the personal "army" of one's sons and brothers; the hearth is the kitchen and the paddy field, the "salt and rice" of independence mentioned here; community is not only the village, but also beyond it the circle of villages into which visits are made and from which brides come and the caste, both subsumed in the table of castes and the system of ritual rank and religious value which are all specifically Indian. To reconstitute a communal life, to live on and together as an ethnic group, the immigrants here have rebuilt in exact and revealing terms the key institutions of their native land and its ancestral but ever-changing social order. Culture is a way of life, a way of thinking and feeling, a way grounded in highly specific institutions of distinctive social pattern, articulation, and relationships. To reconstitute one's way is to rebuild, reinvent such specific institutions.

It is of no matter that such institutions have no names or lie concealed in intimate, unreasoned activities. "Fair play" is part of Anglo-Saxon life, at home and in the off-shoot cultures, and it turns up both in habeas corpus and sports-handicapping, formal institutions, and in seemingly unpatterned daily dealings of man and man. By the same token, caste turns up here as "nation." Ritual rank still condemns the poor scrabblers of the waters in Janglī Tolā who take life and still exalts the conservator-husbandman of the fields and the grass.

Most illuminating of all, since our understanding of it from anthropological studies of modern and village India is just now taking focus, is the reconstitution of the circle of villages. That circle of villages is a lattice-work of related villages laced by the fanning out of kinship alliances uniting joint families from their home villages to wider and
wider circles of kinsmen, the network increased in each generation with the search for a new family alliance forced by the prohibition against taking a bride from any related lineage and thus from any village from which living and remembered women of one's family have come. We learn here that a partial reconstitution of such circles of villages so reticulated has happened in Amity. Science has just discovered, in many local studies in India itself, the reality of such village circles. They have been part of Hindu tradition since the laws of Manu, but scholarship thought them disappeared. I have just written elsewhere of the evidence from these studies which proves them still existent and that connects village exogamy, caste endogamy, and the prohibition of marriages into any village from which a relative has come with these village circles. The evidence now seems to show them to be an ancestral and distinctively Indian institution of community form and organization. To find them reconstituted in East Indian Trinidad, again without name or explicit rationale, is to find unexpected proof of their essential and integral part in Indian civilization.

The usefulness of community studies is the usefulness of any scientific tool: to document the real and to help us discover the unexpected. Art and method must conspire if the promise is to be fulfilled. I think they have conspired here.

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