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The publication of this volume by Professor S. W. Mintz is a welcome and, indeed, an overdue event. The book brings together, in revised and integrated form, a series of papers previously published over a period of some twenty years. Five of the papers deal with the region as a whole, while the others are concerned with Puerto Rico, Jamaica and Haiti. As an anthropologist, who has worked in the Caribbean for almost thirty years, who has personal familiarity with the region as a whole and who has carried out intensive field studies in three island societies, Mintz is particularly well equipped to provide in this volume what no one else has attempted to do so far: to deal with the region as a whole, to delineate its special, distinctive features and to set it within the larger framework of the Americas, of Afro-America and of the third world.

Professor Mintz is an anthropologist with a pervading interest in social history. It is this social history which provides the key to an understanding of the forms of society and economy in the Caribbean region today. In historic sequence, Mintz deals with slavery and the plantation as the central institutions of the first post-conquest period, the "reconstituted peasantry" of post-slavery times, the internal marketing system—here illustrated by a Jamaican study—and, finally, with the emerging nations of the Caribbean, giving particular attention to "the case of Haiti."

The book is rich in information, ideas, suggestions and speculations. It deals judiciously with the complexities of the area, resisting the temptation to simplify, to
provide neat solutions or pat or dogmatic answers to complex issues. The comparative perspective, the concern with historic roots of present societies, with the transformation of traditions and institutions in modified socio-cultural contexts, the view of culture as learned and invented and as distinct from the biological phenomena of race, the importance of viewing human behavior not only from the perspective of the observer, but also from that of the participants, themselves: these are some of the hallmarks of this major contribution made by a distinguished anthropologist to our understanding of one significant area of the modern world.

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