

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES  
IN A GUYANESE RURAL COMMUNITY

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## PREFACE

This study is concerned with the description of the religious beliefs and practices in a Guyanese rural community called Frenton. The primary objective of this study is to find out what are the various modes of religious behavior in the community of Frenton. This study about the religious beliefs and practices found in Frenton is based on an examination of the religious institutions. Malinowski's scheme for the analysis of organized behavior is used as a guide in describing the religious behavior in Frenton.

To the Government and people of my country, Guyana, to whom I am greatly indebted for the realization of this study, I express my sincere appreciation.

The author wishes to express her appreciation to her major adviser, Dr. Don Brown, for his guidance and assistance throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Jack Bynum and Dr. Richard Dodder, for their assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Community

This study is about a Guyanese rural community with varying models of religious behavior. Guyana is situated on the northeast coast of South America with the Atlantic Ocean on the north, Surinam on the east, Brazil on the south and southwest, and Venezuela on the west.<sup>1</sup> Guyana occupies a total area of 83,000 square miles.

A preliminary count from the population census of Guyana taken on April 7, 1970, revealed that the population of Guyana was 714,233.<sup>2</sup> Guyana was known as British Guiana before achieving its independence in May 1966.

The original inhabitants of Guyana were Amerindians. However, to meet the labor needs of the plantation economy which developed after colonization, slaves were brought from Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth century to work on the cotton and sugar plantations. After the abolition of slavery many of the ex-slaves bought villages and established their own village communities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Guyana Manufacturers Association, Guyana Handbook, 1975, p.14.

<sup>2</sup>The Guyana Manufacturers Association, Guyana Handbook, 1975, p.19.

<sup>3</sup>The Guyana Manufacturers Association, Guyana Handbook, 1975, p. 19.

This change left the planters with a depleted labor force and as a result immigrants were brought from other countries to provide labor for the sugar plantations. The cotton plantations had been abandoned by then and sugar production became the main source of economic activity.

At present, the country's population which is comprised of Amerindians, Europeans, Negroes, Portugese, Chinese and East Indians, reflects its immigrant history. Consequently, a diversity of religious groups has become one of its basic characteristics. In Guyana, there are now three major religious groups comprised of Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The community in which the study was carried out will be called Frenton for the purpose of this paper. Frenton is comprised of Buxton and Friendship, two of the first set of villages bought by ex-slaves after their emancipation in 1838.

In its earliest stages, the community was wholly dependent on peasant agriculture, but over the years, this has changed. There appears to be a growing tendency by villagers to look beyond the community for their upkeep.

The ancestors of the people did have their own religious beliefs and practices in their country of origin, but over the years there have been many changes from their old way of life.

Over a period of time, several religious groups entered the community and along with the spreading of their messages, schools and churches were established. Villagers reported that at first their ancestors had to attend church by force, but they soon found that church attendance was the basic requirement for the upward mobility of

their families.

Along with the establishment of churches, there developed a few religious groups which could be described as sects. These sects have among other distinguishing features, local origins, local membership, as well as local leadership.

A few of the members of these sects perform the function of specialists, locally referred to as "obeah" men and women. Some of these specialists are unrelated to sects or any organized religious groups.

#### Nature and Purpose of the Study

This study is about the religious beliefs and practices found in the community of Frenton, it will be based on an examination of the religious institutions in the community. These institutions will be classified into churches and sects with the use of O'Dea's summary of work done by Troeltsch and later scholars. Further information on the summary could be found later, in the review of literature.

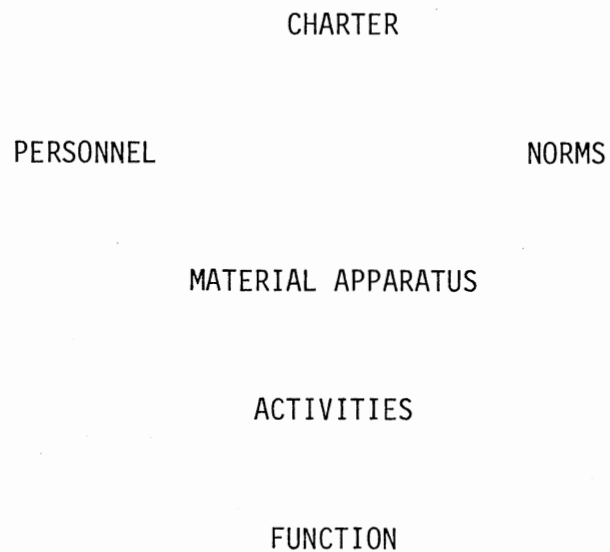
Malinowski has argued that organized behavior can be submitted to a definite analytic scheme. I intend to use this approach to discuss my findings. Malinowski uses the diagram on the following page to illustrate his argument.

Malinowski defines as the charter of an institution the system of values for the pursuit of which human beings organize or enter organizations already existing.<sup>4</sup> He defines the personnel as the group

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<sup>4</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 51.





Source: B. Malinowski, A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 51.

Figure 1. An Analytical Scheme for Organized Behavior

organized on definite principles of authority, division of functions, and distribution of privileges and duties.<sup>5</sup> Also, he views the rules and norms of an institution as the technical acquired skills, habits, legal norms, and ethical commands which are accepted by the members or imposed upon them.<sup>6</sup>

Malinowski contends that institutions have a material substratum, that is, a reserved portion of the environmental outfit in wealth, in instruments, and also a portion of the profits accruing from concerted activities.<sup>7</sup> According to Malinowski, organized on charter, acting through their social and organized cooperation, following the rules of their specific occupation, using the material apparatus at their disposal, the group engages in the activities for which they have been organized.<sup>8</sup> Malinowski also introduced the concept of function which he views as the integral result of organized activities.<sup>9</sup>

In my study I will use Malinowski's approach to discuss my findings. I will first discuss the establishment of the churches, paying attention to some of the early expectations of the four main sectors which then existed in the society. The sectors were the colonial office, the planter, the Negroes and the middle group comprising of Mulattoes.

I will then discuss the personnel of the churches, both their composition and their organizational structure. Their principles of

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<sup>5</sup>Malinowski, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Malinowski, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup>Malinowski, p. 52.

<sup>8</sup>Malinowski, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup>Malinowski, p. 53.

authority, the division of functions and the distribution of privileges and duties will also be discussed.

This will be followed by an outline of some of the main activities of these groups. What is the nature of such activities? How frequent are they held and for what duration? What is the level of participation? These and many other questions will be considered.

A description of the material apparatus at their disposal, what they are and how they were or are acquired, will also be provided.

Finally, the integral effect of organized activities as well as the role of the institution within the total scheme of culture will be discussed.

Following the description of the churches will be a description of the sects, answering questions similar to those answered for the churches.

Earlier mention was made of "obeah" men and women. Obeah is said to be of West African derivation and was used since the days of slavery as a general designation for all kinds of activities varying from sorcery and black magic to something rather like marriage guidance and counselling. Distinction is usually made between obeah as black magic and drumming and spirit possession dances like the "Cumfah" dance.

Although the study does not place a direct focus on specialists and their practice of obeah, there will also be a brief and limited discussion on this subject.

#### Methodology

Data on the activities, personnel, wealth, organization and so

on was obtained from some of their leaders and members and also from informed persons in the community. Much of the information on the establishment of the religious institutions in the community was obtained from their leaders and the village administration as well as from the few documents which could be located.

Having worked in the community as a social worker for four years from 1970 to 1973, and being able to communicate with some of my ancestors, relatives and friends who belong to the community was an asset. The villagers were extremely friendly and willing to give information to me. In many instances they referred me to sources for help. Most of the data for this study was collected during a visit to the community in summer 1976, over a three-month period.

Basically, observation and interviewing techniques were used during the research. During a visit to the community several activities organized by the sects and the churches were attended. While attending some of these activities, discussions were held with some of the participants.

Both participant and non-participant observation was used, depending on the nature of the activity. Personnel from both the sects and the churches encouraged me to participate in activities on many occasions.

Interviews were of an informal nature, and a schedule was used to ensure that no essential data was omitted. All the leaders of the seven churches were interviewed and they very willingly supplied information. Also, some of the senior members holding responsible positions were interviewed. It was found that some of them were more informed than some of the heads of the churches.

The members of the churches and other informed people of the community were also interviewed. The approach here was to find people who were recommended or referred to by other persons.

#### Limitations

There are several limitations to this study, many of them not easily discernible by me. Firstly, the limited time available for research in the community did serve as a setback. I was unable to observe many of the important activities of the groups studied. The fact that many of these activities were bound to specific times did not make my task any easier.

Also, the use of poor records and in some cases the absence of records was another problem. I had to rely greatly on the memories and guesses of some of the persons interviewed. This, therefore, required the double checking of much of the data obtained.

Another problem was the absence of literature related to the subject studied. It was therefore necessary to develop an approach with the specific aim of obtaining the information sought.

Despite the presence of such discernible limitations, efforts were made to make great use of the resources which were available.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Conceptions of Religion

Durkheim defines a religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things uniting into a single moral community all those who adhere to those beliefs and practices.<sup>1</sup>

Religious beliefs could be considered as Durkheim defines them as the representations which express the nature of sacred things and the relations which they sustain, either with each other or with profane things.<sup>2</sup> Religious practices may also be defined as those modes of behavior that are guided by religious rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should behave in the presence of sacred objects.<sup>3</sup>

According to Durkheim, all known religious beliefs and practices tend to divide the world into two domains containing all that is sacred and all that is profane. He believes that the circle of sacred objects cannot be determined once for all since they vary according to the different religions.<sup>4</sup> Sacred things could be considered as those which the interdictions protect and isolate whereas

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<sup>1</sup>Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1915), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Durkheim, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Durkheim, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup>Durkheim, p. 37.

profane things are those to which these interdictions are applied and must remain at a distance from the first.

When something is sacred, Broome and Selznick feel that it is treated with reverence, awe and respect and it is invested with a special meaning or worth, whereas the profane is treated with disdain and considered as the undesirable.<sup>5</sup>

Lessa and Vogt describe religion as "a system of beliefs and practices directed toward the ultimate concern of a society".<sup>6</sup> To them, "ultimate concern" has the two aspects of meaning and power. They see this concept as having "meaning in the sense of ultimate meaning of the central values of a society, and it has power in the sense of ultimate, sacred, or supernatural power which stands behind those values."<sup>7</sup>

Viewing religion in this way, Lessa and Vogt claim that religion is concerned with the explanation and expression of the ultimate values of a society. It works towards maintaining such ultimate values of a society as well as managing tensions in the personalities of individual members of a society.

#### Basic Functions of Religion

While the adherents of some religions believe in a single supreme being, others believe that there is more than one God. Consequently,

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<sup>5</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic Science and Religion and Other Essays (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press), p. 67.

<sup>6</sup>William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion, and Anthropological Approach. 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.) p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Lessa and Vogt, p. 1.

their manifestations are as varied as their beliefs. The religiosity of people may be explained by the origins and the basic functions which religion performs for the individual and for society.

The discussion which follows is based on Broom and Selznick's six foundations of religion which they identified in their text of adapted readings in sociology.<sup>8</sup>

Man's fear of natural forces and his sense of his own weakness compared to the overwhelming power around him may be identified as a basic contributing factor to the formation of religion. Religion is thus seen as an attempt to overcome fear and anxiety.

As man searches for moral meaning in society he seeks an organizing principle that would make his striving valid and explain his suffering. Man's self justification and his quest for ultimate meaning is also considered as a basic foundation for man's belief in a God-given scheme of things.

Religion also accounts for man's search for self-transcendence. Man seeks experiences which would evoke strong emotions and strange meanings. Many religions foster this kind of experience through incantation, dance and similar practices.

Many religious beliefs and activities reflect pride and exultation rather than humility and despair, through victory dances, the divinity of kings, etc. These and many other acts and symbols celebrate man and his group and their relation to the ultimate source of power and meaning. Such celebration of human powers and achievement could thus be considered a basic function of religion.

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<sup>8</sup> Leonard Broom and Philip Selznick, Sociology, A Text of Adapted Readings (New York, Evanston and London: Harper and Row; Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc.), p. 302.



Explanation and interpretation of man's environment also forms one of the basic foundations of religion. Through religion man makes attempts to comprehend the world by trying to explain among other phenomena the origin of the earth and the heavens and also the fruitlessness or barrenness of the land.

By adding divine sanction to human values, religion acknowledges the norms of society and unites its adherents into a moral community whose members feel a deep common bond because they share a belief in what is morally "true". Support of social norms and values is also a major factor relating to the origin of religion.

#### Religion and Magic

Religion is only one of the many social devices which can be used to meet essential personal needs and form the moral foundations of society. Magic as a set of beliefs and practices is, in one form or another, characteristic of human societies.

Magic shares with religion the conception of a beyond - the idea of supraempirical aspects of reality. It also shares with religion the idea that men are capable of establishing some kind of contact with such supraempirical realities.

Malinowski in his discussion on magic and religion saw them both arising and functioning in situations of human stress. According to him both magic and religion open up escape from such situations and such impasses as offer no empirical way out except by ritual and belief into the domain of the supernatural.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Malinowski, p. 67.

Malinowski saw religion and magic based strictly on mythological tradition, both existing in the atmosphere of the miraculous, and both being surrounded by taboos and observances which mark off their acts from those of the profane world.

Malinowski also found differences between magic and religion. Among these differences he saw magic aiming at a practical end while religion is a body of self-contained acts being themselves the fulfillment of their purpose. Magical beliefs are simple, while religion offers a more complex and more varied supernatural sphere. Magic has its limited circumscribed technique; spell, rite. Religion in contrast has complex aspects and purposes; it is more varied and more creative.<sup>10</sup>

According to Malinowski the function of magic is to ritualize man's optimism to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear. He also saw that the function of religion is to contribute to man's morale by enhancing all valuable mental attitudes, such as reverence for tradition, harmony with environment, courage and confidence in the struggle with difficulty and at the prospect of death.<sup>11</sup>

In the community of Frenton both religion and magic are used by the people to help meet their needs.

According to O'Dea, the church has the following significant attributes:

1. Membership in fact upon the basis of birth.
2. Administration of the formalized means of grace and their sociological and theological concomitants-hierarchy and dogma.

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<sup>10</sup>Malinowski, p. 67-68.

<sup>11</sup>Malinowski, p. 70.

3. Inclusiveness of social structure, often coinciding with geographical or ethnic boundaries.
4. Orientation toward the conversion of all.
5. The tendency to adjust to and compromise with the existing society and its values and institutions.<sup>12</sup>

O'Dea also identifies the following characteristics for sects:

1. Separatism from the general society, and withdrawal from or defiance of the world and its institutions and values.
2. Exclusiveness both in attitude and in social structure.
3. Emphasis upon a conversion experience prior to membership.
4. Voluntary joining.
5. A spirit of regeneration.
6. An attitude of ethical austerity, often of an ascetic nature.<sup>13</sup>

Troeltsch views the church as an "institution which has been endowed with grace and salvation as the result of the work of redemption; it is able to receive the masses, and to adjust itself to the world".<sup>14</sup> He also sees the sect as "a voluntary society, composed of strict and definite Christian believers bound to each other by the fact that all have experienced 'the new birth'".<sup>15</sup>

#### Studies on Guyana

There was much difficulty in locating published studies on Guyana which are in any way related to the subject. Those located were based on the family, race, pluralism, politics and a few others.

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<sup>12</sup>Thomas F. O'Dea, The Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>O'Dea, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup>Ernest Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Vol. 1, Trans. by Olive Wyon (New York: MacMillan, 1931), p. 993.

<sup>15</sup>Troeltsch, p. 443.

These studies tend to view situations at a macro level using national perspectives rather than at the micro level where the village community is being examined. R. T. Smith did make an effort when he looked at the Negro family in British Guiana, now called Guyana.<sup>16</sup>

Smith selected three villages which were established by ex-slaves shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century. He dealt with their history, economy and ecology. He then looked at the family organization of these communities and did an intensive analysis.

In the final section of his book he attempted to place the rural Negro family system in the context of Guyanese society as a whole and to show its intimate relationship to the occupational, color-status and class systems of the country. He also discussed other studies of the New World Negro family, and made comparisons with other non-Negro societies where similar structural features are found.

Leo Despres in Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana presented an account of Guyanese society and its development during the closing years of colonial rule.<sup>17</sup> His focus is on the nationalist political movement with special reference to the socio-cultural system in which it developed.

To conduct his study, Despres used interview-schedules and participant observation in what he called a typical sugar estate community, in the major bauxite mining town, in two African villages and

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<sup>16</sup>Raymond Smith, The Negro Family in British Guiana (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., New York: Humanities Press in association with Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College of the West Indies, Jamaica), 1956.

<sup>17</sup>Leo A. Despres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politicism in British Guiana. U.S.A. Rand McNally Studies in Political Change, Myron Weiner ed.

in two East Indian villages. After investigating the Guyanese society as a total unit, Despres analyzed it systematically by combining relevant data from his study of institutions and communities with others from early and recent historical periods.

The works of Despres and Smith have been considered as major contributions to anthropological literature on Guyana. It is hoped that there could be more studies in this field.

## CHAPTER III

### CHURCHES

In the community of Frenton, several religious institutions could be found. In summer 1976, there were seven churches and three sects existing in Frenton. Villagers reported that the number of religious institutions tend to fluctuate. They felt that this fluctuation is due to changing levels of attendance at religious activities and occasional death of elderly leaders. The latter explanation is specially applicable to the sects where there is great dependence on local leadership.

Of the seven churches, three of them were established in the community during the 1840's, shortly after the emancipation of slavery. The establishment of the Methodist Church in 1840 was followed closely by the establishment of the Anglican Church in 1841 and the Congregational Church in 1844. Later the St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church was established in 1915, followed by the Brethren Church in 1925, the Church of God in 1933 and the Seventh Day Adventist in 1939.

The churches established in the nineteenth century were set up in the community by European Missionaries after slavery was abolished. Before the abolition of slavery, missionaries visited the community and organized small groups of slaves for religious pursuits. There was much opposition by planters. According to Perry and Sherlock,

The Methodist and Baptist missionaries were literally opposed by many of the planters on the grounds that the chapels and meeting houses were centers of subversive activity and that religious instruction was a pretence for stirring up the slaves to rebellion!<sup>1</sup>

However, Perry and Sherlock claim that, "In the West Indies, there is evidence that the missionaries labored to give religious instruction without inciting the slaves."<sup>2</sup>

Sherlock and Perry noted that the evangelical movement was "in fact, a restraining influence, and the slave risings of this period were remarkably free from excesses of cruelty and bloodshed."<sup>3</sup>

Following emancipation, the church was seen as an integral part of the society. Sectors had their own expectations which were structured to satisfy their own interests. Those involved were the officials of the colonial office, the planters, the Negroes and also the Mulattoes or coloreds.

#### Expectations of the Church<sup>4</sup>

The officials of the colonial office saw the church as the only institution that could draw together the ex-master and the ex-slave and the colored middle class. They saw the church as having three main advantages which existed separately in other institutions.

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. Perry and P. M. Sherlock, *A Short History of the West Indies* (London: MacMillan and Co. LTD and New York: S. Martin's Press, 1956), p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Perry and Sherlock, p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>Perry and Sherlock, p. 184.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Moore, *The Role of the Churches in the Caribbean* (Guyana: Guyana Institute for Social Research and Action), Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 53-55, 56; Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 34-35, 36.

As a structure, the church was seen as being able to embrace all classes and therefore produce in each the right sense of restraint. As a moral force, it could imbue the Negro masses with the proper respect for authority and the proper will to work. The former being essential to keep the peace and the latter to keep the economy going.

The church as an educational source could wean the Negroes from their "superstitions" of Africa and introduce them to the rational world of the Christian nineteenth century - in other words, the church was expected to unite the classes by "civilizing" the Negro and making a black victorian out of him.

It was not only the colonial office which saw the churches as instruments for the production of the right principles of a free society. Nearly every class in the society looked upon the churches to fulfill their expectations of emancipation.

The planters hoped to use the church as part of their policy of slowing down the effects of emancipation and pushing up their own position. The plantocracy particularly wanted the clergy to impress upon the Negro the virtue of doing plantation work.

The church was then expected to equate plantation work with the moral sense of duty, in order to help the plantation system to preserve a labor force which had been made mobile and selective by freedom.

The Negroes at the other end of the scale had their own purposes which they expected the churches to express. Their desire was to turn emancipation from a legal revolution to a social one and, for some, even into a political revolution.

In the first place the churches provided the education necessary for social mobility and for acquiring that power which during slavery



very few Negroes possessed. They saw education narrowing the gap between ex-master and ex-slave, between white and black.

The churches, therefore, were expected to provide ambitious and talented Negroes with the opportunity to develop their political gifts of rhetoric, leadership and organization.

For the middle group, Mulattoes or coloreds, the churches provided a forum to express their social and political attitudes. On the one hand, culturally, they came closer and felt closer to the plantocracy, though they were rejected socially by the planters. Hence, their cultural affinity did not necessarily produce a political alliance.

On the other hand, their cultural contempt for the blacks did not prevent them from using black support in their campaigns for greater power. The blacks had votes to give, the Mulattoes were prepared to buy them.

The Mulattoes were often divided between allegiance to the established church, the Anglican Church, which gave them a sense of status, satisfaction and membership of the non-conformists churches like the Methodists. These churches gave them a chance to rehearse their political roles.

Each group in post-emancipation society therefore looked upon one or another of the churches to satisfy its social needs. The church was, therefore, given enhanced value and solid support in the early years after 1838. They are reported to have responded with tremendous bursts of enthusiasm and energy.

In The Caribbean Area, edited by Curtis Wilgus, it is reported that,

the church was the real governor of the colony, imposing sentence on viceroys and peons alike, setting moral and social standards for high and low. She was the guardian of art and learning, the promoter of refinement, the source of possessions, fairs and festivals which furnished diversion for people who had little else.<sup>5</sup>

These comments were about the church in the middle nineteenth century.

#### Personnel of the Churches

Most of the adherents of the churches become members through baptism or by being "offered up" early in their infancy. However, a very low percentage of their membership include a few persons who joined as adults. Information obtained supports R. T. Smith's view that "membership of the churches is very closely related to the amenities provided".<sup>6</sup> The bulk of the village churchgoers belong to the churches which have, or once had, affiliation with the schools, and consequently they had greater access to the highly desirable jobs in the community.

Of the total population of 6,607, 1,435 members of the community belonged to the seven churches in August 1976 (see Table I). It was found that 1,165 persons belonged to the four churches which at some time earlier had schools attached to them. These four churches include the first three established churches as well as the St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>5</sup>Curtis Wilgus, The Caribbean Area (Washington: The George Washington Press, 1934), p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, R. T. The Negro Family in British Guiana (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., New York: Humanities Press in association with Institute of Social and Economic Research, University College of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1956).

TABLE I  
CHURCHES IN FRENTON

Church	Date Established	Men	Membership in August 1976		Total
			Women	Children	
Methodist	1840	75	175	200	450
Anglican	1841	95	235	250	580
Congregational	1844	15	45	30	90
Roman Catholic	1915	10	20	15	45
Brethren	1925	10	20	15	45
Church of God	1933	8	20	15	60
Seventh Day Adventist	1939	<u>30</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>165</u>
	Total	223	600	592	1435

Looking at the distribution of the population of these churches, the number of women was greatest, 600. This was followed by 592 children and 223 men, the least.

Attendance at these churches fluctuates with women and children forming a major part of the congregation. Members commented on what they saw as a noticeable decline in attendance by the young members, and various attempts have been made to explain this situation.

Some people blame the decline on the lack of interest by the young people as well as on a decline in parental authority. There were also some people who attribute this phenomena to the failure by the church to adjust to meet the rapidly changing needs of their young members.

It is of interest to note that up until 1966 or even a few years afterwards, priests, ministers and others who perform similar duties and responsibilities and are given different designations were either foreigners or belonged to communities outside of Frenton. This situation has undergone drastic changes and six of the seven churches reported a complete localization of their entire organizational structure.

The heads of the churches who were all males were found to be specially trained men who worked full-time for their respective churches. The most common terms used to identify these heads include "parson", "priest" and "minister".

All the churches have a hierarchical structure comprised of three basic levels. The highest comprised of the heads, followed by a small group of five or seven senior members usually referred to as local elders or stewards. A few churches have what they call deacons and

deaconesses who perform roles similar to the elders. The third level includes the ordinary members of the church.

The group of members who comprise the second level are usually the senior and more respected members. Some of them perform the duties of the appointed head when he is away from the community. Many of these members form a body in the church which is responsible for making major decisions about the welfare of the church.

There are attached to these churches several organizations which are aimed at involving their members in meaningful activities. There are women's guilds, girls' clubs, and a variety of other groups which engage in activities which include fund raising activities, tours, educational programs, handicraft, etc.

Attendance and active participation in church activities was at one time an important factor for the development of the people. Residents in the community said that there was a time when in order to get a job in the Civil Service, the Police Force, and even business places, applicants had to obtain testimonials from their church leaders.

There was also a time when in order to get teaching jobs, preference was given to the members of the churches to which the respective schools were attached. Of course, priority was also given to the more active members.

During the 1960's, management of church schools was taken over by the Government. With this change, church membership and levels of participation are no longer necessary criteria for mobility in the society. This decline in the influence of the church may be a useful way of explaining the decline in interest of young people towards religious involvement.

Interviews with personnel of the churches failed to provide precise information on the occupational activities of their members and their educational background. They all felt that their church enrollment comprised of a wide cross-section of the community.

#### Norms and Activities of the Churches

Most of these churches either have their members "confirmed" or "received" to more or less reinforce their adherence to the beliefs and practices of their respective religious bodies, as these members grow old. The age of being confirmed or received varies from church to church but ranges between 10 and 18 years of age, with those above 18 forming a very small minority.

The confirmation or reception of members is usually done at a special service held once or twice a year. At the service, those to be confirmed or received are dressed alike for the occasion. The girls usually wear white dresses with white veils or roses in their hair while the boys wear white shirts and dark colored pants. At the service special songs are sung and prayers are said. Usually the Bishop or someone who is attached to the national leadership of the churches would give the sermon for the service.

Confirmation and reception is usually a very important occasion for young church members and they look forward to this time in their life. To many of them it means the additional privilege of being allowed to take part in Holy Communion.

In the case of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, baptism takes the place of confirmation or reception. They do not feel that babies should be baptized so they have a custom of "offering the babies up".

This is done at any service being held. The pastor holds the baby in his arms, says a prayer and encourages the parents to ensure that the baby receives the necessary religious training to keep him from committing sin and so on.

All of the churches visit their sick members and pray for them. The names given to such a practice vary and in some cases there are no names. Also all the churches pray for their dead members and hold special services for them before their burial and in some cases services are also held after their burial.

To a great extent Christmas and Easter are important to six of the seven churches, the seventh deviating from this norm is the Seventh Day Adventist. Christmas is a time of merriment for the people, when the birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated. Easter is a time of mixed feelings when the members of these churches reflect on the crucifixion of Christ and his ascendance into heaven.

Christmas is celebrated in December and Easter in April. Throughout this period, special services are held and it is at these occasions that churches record their highest attendance for the year. Members look forward to Christmas and Easter.

The belief that the flying of kite which goes along with Easter may still be considered by some Christians as mockery, but a wide cross-section of the people in the community of Frenton still consider this activity a big and important event, especially in the lives of the children.

Harvest is another occasion that is common to five of the seven churches, the Roman Catholic and the Seventh Day Adventist churches are excluded. The Seventh Day Adventist Church usually has what they

call "Ingathering".

Harvest is celebrated in the month of November. This is a time when members of the churches set aside some of the material blessings, which they have received from God throughout the year, to be used as thanksgiving offerings.

A wide variety of foods including loaves of bread of various shapes, sizes and flavors, fruits, sugar cane and many others are taken to the churches on the Sunday designated Harvest Sunday by each church. Monetary offerings are also made on this special occasion.

On the Monday following Harvest Sunday, people in the community assemble at the church to make monetary contributions in exchange for the food and other articles which are sold to the highest bidder. The money obtained is used by the church.

Six of the seven churches observe Sunday as their sabbath day. In the case of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Saturday is their sabbath day. On sabbath, religious services are attended mainly by adherents of the respective religions. To the village folks, sabbath is the day when they wear their best clothing to go to their places of worship.

To regular churchgoers, sabbath is a day of rest and quiet. After church services are held, the village folks would gather in informal groups and relate to each other the happenings of the past week. This is a social occasion for them.

#### Material Apparatus

While the Seventh Day Adventist Church clearly states that working members are expected to give a tithe comprised of one-tenth



of their earnings as their offering to the church, other churches allow their members to decide on their own, the amount of money that they want to give. This is just another way in which the Seventh Day Adventist Church varies from the others.

At every service "offerings", in the form of monetary contributions, are taken up from the members. Usually they give what they feel they can afford. Even at services for the children, this is done. Parents consider it necessary to give their children at least a penny for Sunday School.

Apart from membership contributions, churches also have fund raising activities, which provide money to help finance their existence. Such activities vary from church to church and included things like dances, fairs, excursions, etc.

All the churches are housed in buildings which stand out in the community. The most elaborate building is owned by the Anglican Church. The Brethren and Church of God Church buildings are the smallest and least attractive, having been neglected for years.

#### Function

Despite the differences among these churches, the members of the community including the adherents of the churches do not display any antagonism towards each other. Very often the view is expressed that one is as good as the other, especially with respect to the long established church like the Methodist, Anglican and Congregational churches and also the Church of God.

The Roman Catholic is not very much thought about, especially since their membership was drawn mainly from the Portugese and few

Indian families which lived in earlier times in the community. Also the Seventh Day Adventist Church has many beliefs and practices which vary from the other churches. This is manifested in some degree of separateness from the rest of the community, although no antagonism could be identified.

People in the community still continue to seek the advice of the religious intermediaries, though to a lesser extent. The older people in the community still talk about the times in the past when the pastors and other intermediaries used to play an important part in their lives. They were often instrumental in legalizing several unions which men and women set up without any legal sanction.

All important functions in the community have always been and still are attended by religious intermediaries representing the churches. Their blessings have been considered important for success and progress.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SECTS

The next category of religious beliefs and practices investigated are those of the unestablished religious bodies. These bodies, being referred to as sects, have missions. "Mission" is the name given to their regular place of meeting. These sects are often referred to as spiritual churches and they have been originated through the instrumentality of individuals who are still their present leaders.

Three of these sects were found in the community. The year prior to the time of investigation there were two other sects existing. However, with the death of their leaders during the earlier part of 1976, these sects also ceased to exist.

In the community, sects are identified by the names of their leaders. The names of the leaders of sects existing at the time of the field work are Mother Ruth, Brother Hill and Brother Jarvis. Brother Milo and Mother Sobers were the leaders of the most recently defunct sects.

#### Distinguishing Factors

Among the distinguishing features of these sects are their adherence to Saturday as their sabbath and their mode of dress. The Seventh Day Adventist was the only church to use Saturday as their sabbath. To them, sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends at

sunset on Saturday. They believe that sabbath must be kept "holy, with praying, singing and studying the bible" being their main activities for the day. No work must be done on this day.

The members of these sects use the Holy Bible to guide them in their mode of dress. They wear long flowing garments with their heads covered with cloth. The color used depends on the occasion, but white seems to be the color most frequently used. They see their mode of dress as a sign of purity.

Usually the missions where members of sects go to worship are located at the homes of the leaders. Members meet at these homes for services and other religious activities. The buildings used have the appearance of rundown, neglected houses. Unlike the churches, none of them are painted, nor are they considered to be attractive in their physical appearance.

The services are structured to include preaching, praying and singing. Although on most occasions the leader plays the main role, membership participation tends to be great. Scripture readings are done by members during the service and sometimes the sermon is given by members.

There are no restrictions to membership of the sects. Most of the members are elderly people and small children, who are in most cases children of the adult members. However, to have full rights, the individual must be baptized at the sea. Baptism is done at various times of the year with the moon being a major determinant.

Many of the members report that they were inspired by dreams and visions to become members of these sects. Although a few young people claim such inspiration, such experiences tend to take place mainly

among adults. Elderly members are known to use their knowledge and experience which they acquire in earlier times as they grow old to help others.

### Brother Hill

Brother Hill was born in 1916 in the community of Frenton. Before he formed his sect in 1946, he was a member of the congregational church in the community. Like the rest of his family, he attended church regularly and was an active member.

As Brother Hill grew up he had several occupations. He once worked in a bakery as an assistant to the baker. He also worked as a fisherman, using small boats to travel out to the sea to catch fish.

According to Brother Hill, at the age of 25 he was "called away". This meant he had to change his way of life to a more religious one. He became a "faithist".

Brother Hill defines faithist as "a believer in Christ Jesus". In 1946, he began to preach the teachings of the Holy Bible in communities located in different parts of Guyana. He became a full-time preacher with gifts from his followers being his main source of income.

As founder of the sect, Brother Hill became head, sometimes referred to as an "elder", while the other members are all of the same level. The brothers and sisters, as they consider themselves to be, tend to have respect for those who have longstanding in the mission.

Brother Hill reported that his membership fluctuates and was at its lowest at the time of the interview. Since no records were being kept, numbers obtained were guesses made by Brother Hill.

He recalled having a following of about 50 to 60 in 1950. There was a fluctuation between 45 to 60 up until about 1965 when there was a noticeable decline. Attendance dropped to as low as 25 in the late 1960's and early 1970's. In 1976 he claimed a regular attendance of eight adults, three males and five females, and about six children. These children attended with their parents.

This sect usually celebrates three feasts. The feast of the Passover is celebrated on the fourteenth of April. Brother Hill said that the main reason for having this feast is because Moses was told to keep this feast.

The Feast of Pentecost commemorates the time when the disciples "received the Holy Spirit". This is held in June while the Feast of Ingathering is held in May or June. The Feast of Ingathering climaxes the annual drive for new members. Brother Hill also celebrates Harvest in October.

#### Mother Ruth

Mother Ruth was born in 1888 in the community of Frenton. She began her religious life as a member of the Anglican Church. She belonged to a religious family which attended church regularly.

She started as an ordinary member during her infancy and as she became older she was appointed a Sunday-school teacher. She performed the duties of a Sunday-school teacher until she was "inspired" to become a "faithist". This change in her religious life also affected other aspects of her life.

Mother Ruth reported that she was offered employment as a school teacher in the community but she did not accept the offer. She felt

that acceptance of the job would prevent her from pursuing her religious beliefs and practices. Mother Ruth was content to exist on gifts and offerings from members of her sect and the community.

On January 4, 1947, Mother Ruth established a sect called the Order of Melschesedec, a name taken from the Holy Bible.

Mother Ruth felt that it was her duty to go out to the people and convert them to her religious way of life. This she did by holding regular services at the market place, street corners, or just any place where she could obtain an audience.

Like other sects, full membership is restricted to those who are baptized, a right which she feels must result from "inspiration". Participation in their activities are not confined to members; non-members are encouraged to participate. During one of the interviews she stated that the membership which formerly ranged from 20 to 25 had decreased to eight regular members.

Mother Ruth's sect has a structure that seems to be common to all the sects. She is the leader and everyone else has ordinary membership. The members who are older, or who have been a part of the sect for a longer period of time tend to be more respected by the others.

Regular services are held by this sect. At such occasions there is full participation by all members. The message for the service is said to be given by "someone who is guided to bring forth the message from the Bible".

The holding of feasts is also very important to this sect. They see this as an opportunity to give thanks to God and to share their possessions with those who are less fortunate.

The three main feasts are the Feast of the Passover, the Feast of

the Tabernacle and the Feast of Ingathering. On these occasions, services are held and people in the community are fed.

Another important feature of Mother Ruth's sect is the celebration of Emancipation Day on the first of August. They call this day Congo Day. This celebration is held to commemorate the day when slaves were emancipated in 1838.

### Brother Jarvis

Brother Jarvis was born in 1903 in the community of Frenton where he lived most of his life. From time to time he left the community for short periods, ranging from six to nine months, mainly to work. He has done many different kinds of jobs which include carpentry, painting, gold digging, diamond seeking and farming.

Like many other families in the community, his family was members of the Congregational Church and they were regular churchgoers. This had no special meaning for Brother Jarvis while he was young. He went with the other children but as he grew up the church became less and less a part of his life.

Brother Jarvis was once married to a woman who bore him two sons. They were said to be a close family even until the death of his wife in 1965. His sons have grown and they no longer live with him, but they are always in constant contact with him.

It was while he lived in the gold field during 1948 that he was inspired by dreams to "become a spiritualist". He said that he was moved by the mystic power of God". Brother Jarvis interprets mysticism as being centered around the belief that there is one creator who makes the world, God. God gives everyone a gift with which they



are born and as such they are expected to use it.

Although Brother Jarvis has been identified earlier as a leader of a sect, there is need to emphasize that he also functions as a obeah man in the community. He does indulge in many of the activities which are later being identified as those of a "good" obeah man.

He believes in what he calls "underworld people", spirits, etc. It is with their help that he is inspired to "read for people" from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening on every day except his sabbath day. Unlike the other sects, his sabbath comes every new moon. He claims that he is usually inspired to heal people and to guard them from evil.

Brother Jarvis did spend some time to discuss Cumfah, a very important ritual of his group. Cumfah is held with the full moon. Usually the spirits tell them when one should be held. At the Cumfah there is beating of drums and dancing. A recent addition has been the talking in cloven tongues by some members.

Cumfah also has its restrictions about what is worn and what can be cooked. No shoes should be worn and no form of leather if the spirits are to be fully entertained at the Cumfah. Also, no meat in any form must be cooked, nor must any salt be used in the food cooked.

Anyone is invited to a Cumfah ceremony but there must be no laughter, since this could offend the spirits. Members of the community hold the fear that criticism of any form, or possession of a weak spirit by anyone could cause them to "catch the spirit" and to join the dancers.

Like the other sects, Brother Jarvis has a mission attached to

his home. He holds services and feasts regularly and he also baptizes new members at the river. Brother Jarvis' sect, however, has a few differences from the other sects which have been mentioned. However, like the others, they all believe fully in the Holy Bible.

## CHAPTER V

### OBEAH SPECIALISTS

Although this study is intended to look at the beliefs and practices of sects and churches a brief look at the specialists could also be useful. Information obtained from specialists and other people in the community did reveal some interesting data.

According to several people of Frenton, and even a few specialists themselves, specialists are people who believe that spirits or the living dead have "called" them in dreams, visions or in walking, to become what they are, a medicine man or woman and a diviner. Some specialists are trustworthy, upright morally, friendly, willing and ready to serve, able to discern people's needs and not be esorbitant in their charges.

#### Performance of Specialists

It is through specialists that human beings are said to be linked with the living dead and the spirits. They receive messages from the other world, or are given knowledge of things that would otherwise be difficult or impossible to know. Through a specialist, a person may be directed to find a lost article or to know who stole his goods.

Performance as a specialist seems to be heavily dependent on a person being possessed by a spirit. Without such possession, specialists are reported to become normal people without special abilities.

When the individual is possessed he loses his own sense of being, and becomes simply an instrument of the spirit in him. He can be led to act or speak without hurting himself.

Possession usually occurs for the first time when the person is attending a public religious ceremony, usually one held by a sect. At the sound of the drums and the movement of the dance and the example of some inspired devotees, the new person falls down in a fit or leaps into the ring and dances in an extravagant fashion.

The person to be possessed will start to look worried and oppressed, then they will begin to tremble and rock about, rolling eyes terribly and perhaps struggling and fighting the air. She or he jiggles and shakes and remains on their feet in constant motion for hours.

The person often performs feats of endurance thought to be impossible in ordinary life. During the possession either one or several personalities could be taken on depending on how many spirits enter at a time since he or she behaves according to the spirits being possessed. Behavior could vary from that of a pregnant woman to that of a warrior. At the end of the possession, the person resumes their former self.

Villagers reported that if a person is "called" to do the "work" to become a specialist, and does not obey the call, the spirit troubles the individual so much that eventually he or she goes "mad", becomes mentally disturbed.

According to John Mbiti, mystical power, that kind of power which specialists claim to possess "manifests itself in the form of magic, divination, witchcraft, and mysterious phenomena that seems to

defy even immediate scientific explanations".<sup>1</sup> Mbiti contends that there is mystical power in words, especially those of a social status or office position.

Mbiti feels that the words of the medicine man work through the medicine he gives, and it is this perhaps more than the actual herb, which is thought to cause the cure or prevent misfortunes.

In Guyana, the word obeah, which is said to be of West African derivation, was used since the days of slavery as a general designation for all kinds of activities which are according to R. T. Smith, "varying from sorcery and black magic to something rather like marriage guidance".<sup>2</sup>

#### Good and Evil Obeah

Obeah in Frenton may generally be considered under "good obeah" and "evil obeah". For many people in Frenton, the use of "good obeah" is accepted and esteemed. It is frequently used in the treatment of diseases, in counteracting misfortunes, and in warding off or diluting or destroying evil "power" or witchcraft.

The practice of obeah involves the use of charms, powder, oils, special incantation in order to protect households, its members and their property. A glass of water could be seen over many doors in Frenton, or bread soaked in wine, or a horn in a garden or a piece of red cloth, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>John S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1969, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Raymond T. Smith, The Negro Family in British Guyana (New York: Humanities Press, 1956, p. 114.

To demonstrate that there is belief in obeah, babies could be seen wearing black moles on their foreheads, black beads around wrist or neck to prevent "bad eye" evil feelings. It is also forbidden to "praise" babies' appearance, even your own. While some measures are viewed as being protective, others are intended to bring good health, fortune or prosperity.

To some people, prosperity or protection comes from these objects which they wear or otherwise use. Others believe and acknowledge that the objects have no inherent power as such, instead they represent and symbolize power which comes from God.

This power may directly be supplied by God or it may be through the spirits, the living dead, or a part of the invisible force of nature in the universe. The objects can also lose their effectiveness and the owner must then get new ones or, if possible, get old objects recharged, like a car battery.

Some people spend a lot of their wealth to get this type of magical protection and means of prosperity. Some specialists are recognized as experts but there are others who supply cheap, false articles for the sake of gain.

Many specialists tell that the mystical power which they tap and use comes ultimately from God. As a matter of fact, part of their activities involve praying to God, directly or through the intermediary of the living dead and spirits, to solicit his help. They claim that spirits have more access to this power than do human beings.

As a rule in the community, younger people will rarely attempt to use this power against older members of the community, unless it is in taking counter measures. It seemed as though the older a person

is, the more he is thought, or expected, to have this mystical power, either in himself or through the possession of the necessary objects in which it may be stored.

Evil obeah involves the belief in and practice of tapping and using special abilities to do harm to human beings on their property. It is here that a great deal of belief is based on or derived from fear, suspicion, jealousies, ignorance or false accusations, which go on in Frenton.

People fear to leave around their hair, fingernails, clothes or other articles with which they are normally in direct contact, in case their enemies will use them and work evil obeah against them. There is fear that the hair might be burned or used in a harmful way, and thus cause infliction on the person from whom they come. The use of mystical power for evil obeah is considered very anti-social by the people in the community.

Specialists who engage in the practice of evil obeah are the most feared and very often hated members of the community. The villagers reported that these specialists send animals, spirits, etc., to attack their enemies or carry disease to them; they are accused of invoking spirits to attack or possess someone and even dig up graves to remove human flesh or bones which they use in their practices. The latter may be rumors passed on from generation to generation but no data could have been obtained to either support or oppose this accusation.

Many villagers still believe and feel that all the various ills, misfortunes, sicknesses, accidents, tragedies, sorrows, dangers and unhappy mysteries which they encounter or experience are caused by

the use of obeah by some evil obeah man or woman.

These specialists of evil obeah also engage in placing evil medicine in the ground where the victim will pass. They even put evil objects in the homes or fields of their victim or indulge in sending "death" from a distance.

The feeling among the few people in the community who use obeah is that since all these things could happen, people need to "protect" themselves. Apparently, the logic at work here is that the good use of this power will counteract the evil use, and thus keep the user relatively safe, so long as his "medicine" is more powerful than that of his enemy. These charms, etc., called "guards", are used to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance.

In addition to supplying the objects of cure and protection, specialists, familiarly called obeahmen and obeahwomen, also perform rituals to cleanse people or homesteads which are allegedly subjected to attacks from mystical power, obeah.

#### The Clients

It is of interest to note who are the people that visit these obeahmen and women. Most of the clients seem to be drawn from outside the community and it is wrong to state that they are drawn from any particular class, or ethnic group, or even mainly from non-christians, as some people think. On the contrary, people of all classes visit with these specialists, both the "evil" and the "good" practitioners, although actual participation in public activities are limited only to people from the lower class.

Specialists are visited by people of both Indian and



African descent. Even ardent church members engage in the practice of obeah, though this is done in very secretive ways. Although the practice of obeah is socially disapproved by many villagers, some of them in acknowledging their belief in it make references to their day-to-day experiences to support their belief. To some people, when a doctor says that he cannot help a patient, it is implied that unnatural forces are at work and they must seek the services of an obeah specialist.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Several groups and individuals were found having their own religious beliefs and practices in the community of Frenton. It was possible to place these beliefs and practices into three categories comprised of those of the churches, the sects and those of the obeah specialists. While the churches were formally organized with leadership of males only, the sects were informally organized with some of the roles of members changing at times, so that women were also allowed to be leaders and play leading roles.

In the inception, there were four different sectors of the society looking towards the church to satisfy their own interests. These various expectations could be viewed as the charter of the churches since they explain why the people of Frenton began to organize and join religious institutions.

The churches had an organizational structure which placed the leaders or heads at the top and some of the senior members on the middle level with the rest of the congregation forming the lowest level. It was found that they all had their own duties and responsibilities distributed among them.

The churches also had their own rules and norms which were used to guide them in their activities. Their activities followed a regular pattern with very little deviation if there was any at all.

It seemed as though these were the things that were done from the early formation of the churches.

Members of churches were expected to make material contributions, both monetary and otherwise, to the church. In most cases the size of the contribution was decided by the giver, though in the case of the Seventh Day Adventist, this was done by the church.

The church was found to be an integral part of the community as well as the lives of the people. When they had problems, the help of the religious intermediaries was sought. When they had successes, it was to the church they went to give their thanks to their God.

Looking at the sects, it was found that their formation was based on inspiration, in dreams, by God. They believe firmly in the Holy Bible, and this was what their rules and norms were based on.

Consequently, their activities were found to be similar to those of biblical times. The members of sects were found wearing long flowing garments covering most of their bodies. Instead of remaining at their missions they "went out to the people", at street corners, market places, and just any place where their voices could be heard.

The members of sects seemed to practice some degree of separateness from the rest of the community although they did draw audiences from all over Frenton. Membership decline was a main observation. Mother Ruth did remark that the people were becoming "too worldly", and that man needs to "renounce the things of the world".

The obeah specialist was found to be a very important person in Frenton. Their performance was dependent on possession of spirits, with possession first taking place at some function held by a sect or another obeah specialist.

Since the emphasis was not on the study of obeah, discussion was brief and limited. However, it was found that many people sought the services of obeah specialists, and that those who did was not restricted to any special class nor ethnic grouping. Also, even some of those people who did not go to the obeah specialists did have some beliefs and practices which was labeled as magical beliefs.

The general finding was that the people of Frenton use religious and magical beliefs and practices to help meet many of their personal and social needs. These beliefs and practices varied from those of the churches to include those of sects and obeah specialists.

It was found that many people utilized more than one category to meet their needs. It was very common to find members of churches and sects seeking the services of obeah specialists. Also many firm believers of obeah were found attending churches, too.

Many people of Frenton used religion and magic to help overcome fear and anxiety. Among other things the fear of what happens to them after death has made many of them look to some supernatural realm.

Religion was also used to give sanction to the goals and make sense of the sufferings of the people. As was noted, some people even depend on magic to satisfy such needs.

There was demonstration of people engaging in self-transcendence, fostered through incantation, dance and similar practices in Frenton. Many of their religious activities and beliefs, also reflect pride and exultation, thus celebrating human powers and achievement.

Like in many other societies, the people of Frenton used religion to help explain and interpret their environment. This helped to make their world more comprehensible, more familiar, and more meaningful.

It was found that religion is only one of the many other social institutions used by the people in Frenton to meet the personal and social needs. There were other social institutions like politics, education, science and the arts which serve many of the same ends. In Frenton, religion supplements these other social devices and in some cases it competes with them, often it fills the breach when they are absent or inadequate.

There were many supporters of religion and even magic who believed that it can meet the most essential personal needs, and that without religion the morale of their society will decline.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEWING SCHEDULE



The Community - Its location; population; history; economic activity of members.

Religious Institutions - Number present; history - when established; original members; distribution among the sects and churches; what is identified as the system of values which explain why the groups are established or why people enter the already existing institutions.

Personnel - Composition - age; sex; sex education; occupation.

Organization - Structure - authority; duties; and responsibilities.

Norms of the group based on their beliefs; regulations; mode of dress, etc.

Material Apparatus at Their Disposal - membership contributions; collection; tithes, etc. facilities available, etc.

Activities - those for which they are organized and those which actually take place - nature; frequency; duration; participation.

Function - effect of activities; the role of the institution within the total scheme of culture, etc.

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Thesis: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN A GUYANESE RURAL COMMUNITY

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