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Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean

Richard D. E. Burton

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Richard D. E. Burton : Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An essential book in Caribbean history By Customer This is a really key book if you want to understand the culture and history of the Caribbean. Burton successfully takes us beyond the question of African Survivals and European impositions, and gives us a key for thinking in new ways about the Caribbean as a place in itself. Burton writes clearly and there is little jargon to get in the way of his innovative thoughts on how culture really worked under slavery and then emancipation. Anyone working in the Caribbean or the Atlantic margins of Central America needs to read this book. And if you are thinking about ex-colonial countries anywhere in the world (the USA for example), you will find a lot of innovative and helpful ideas here.

This wide-ranging book explores the origins, development, and character of Afro-Caribbean cultures from the slave period to the present day. Richard D. E. Burton focuses on ways in which African traditions--including those in religion, music, food, dress, and family structure--were transformed by interaction with European and indigenous forces to create the particular cultures of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Haiti. He demonstrates how the resulting Afro-Creole cultures have both challenged and reinforced the social, political, and economic status quo in these countries. Jamaican slaves opposed slavery in many ways and one of the most important, Burton suggests, was the development of Afro-Christianity. He pays particular attention to the African-derived Christmas celebration of Jonkonnu as an expression of

opposition and then documents religion in the post-slavery period, with an emphasis on Rastafarianism in Jamaica and Vodou in Haiti. The element of play has always figured importantly in Afro-Caribbean life. Burton examines the evolution of carnival and calypso in Trinidad and describes the significance of cricket in defining Caribbean national identity. Based on ten years of research, *Afro-Creole* draws on historical, anthropological, sociological, and literary sources. Burton characterizes the emergence of Caribbean identity with three different national flavors and demonstrates how culture both reflects and impacts people's changing sense of their own political power.

"Burton's work is perhaps the best researched, most thoughtful, intellectually provocative study of the complex relationship between history, religion, poetics, culture, and social change especially, but not exclusively, in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is powerfully written, humorous, and meticulously examines the psychology and paradoxically religious anthropology of Jamaican and Trinidadian politics. . . . The essence of the argument is that popular protests, regardless of the practical forms like cricket, dance, or carnival in Trinidad and revivalist religions like Myal and Rastafari in Jamaica, simultaneously challenge and reinforce the status quo and are accepted substitutes for overt power confrontations. . . . Burton's conclusion suggests that the order and conservatism of most Caribbean societies may be explained by the important role of cultural activities as a historical medium for diffusing and controlling the masses."Choice "I recommend this book for its attention to historical detail and its breadth on the subject of the Caribbean."John W. Nunley, *American Anthropologist*"A bold and cogent study."Sada Niang, University of Victoria, *African Studies* "A fine and comprehensive history. . . It is perhaps the most useful survey yet on the formation of distinctively Afro-Creole forms of public expression in the Anglophonic West Indies."New West Indian Guide "This is a stimulating, wide-ranging and theoretically well-informed anthropological and historical exploration of Afro-Caribbean popular culture."British Bulletin of Publications, No. 102, April 2000."Afro-Creole admirably captures the essence of what it means to be Caribbean. By daring to 'run against orthodox thinking' on the matter of the culture of resistance, the author has provided a provocative and thoroughly enjoyable reexamination of the entire question of African survival in the Caribbean. He will not end debate on the matter, but he has certainly greatly enriched it."Keith Q. Warner, *Research in African Literatures*, Vol, 32, No. 4 (2001)"Burton's book is bold and almost unique in its pan-Caribbean scope. He has an admirable skill at relating eclectic and seemingly disparate materials and topics, and he writes clearly on complex matters. This book has much to offer specialists as well as those who have a general interest in sociological subjects and the Caribbean."Michael Craton, author of *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*