The Cultural Politics of Obeah

An innovative history of the politics and practice of the Caribbean spiritual healing techniques known as obeah, and their place in everyday life in the region. Spanning two centuries, the book results from extensive research on the development and implementation of anti-obeah legislation. It includes analysis of hundreds of prosecutions for obeah, and an account of the complex and multiple political meanings of obeah in Caribbean societies. Diana Paton moves beyond attempts to define and describe what obeah was, instead showing the political imperatives that often drove interpretations and discussions of it. She shows that representations of obeah were entangled with key moments in Caribbean history, from eighteenth-century slave rebellions to the formation of new nations after independence. Obeah was at the same time a crucial symbol of the Caribbean’s alleged lack of modernity, a site of fear and anxiety, and a thoroughly modern and transnational practice of healing itself.

DIANA PATON is Reader in Caribbean History at Newcastle University. She is the author of No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870 and co-editor of Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World and Obeah and Other Powers: The Politics of Caribbean Religion and Healing.
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For Kate
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### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>Add Ms</td>
<td>Additional Manuscripts, British Library, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Board of Trade, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUL</td>
<td>Cambridge University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td><em>Falmouth Post</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLS</td>
<td>National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSG</td>
<td><em>Port of Spain Gazette</em></td>
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