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978-1-107-02565-3 - The Cultural Politics of Obeah: Religion, Colonialism and Modernity in the Caribbean World

Diana Paton

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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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Newcastle University



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Abbreviations

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BT	Board of Trade, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England
CO	Colonial Office, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England
CUL	Cambridge University Library
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Public Records Office, National Archives, Kew, England
<i>FP</i>	<i>Falmouth Post</i>
JA	Jamaica Archives, Spanish Town
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
<i>POSG</i>	<i>Port of Spain Gazette</i>