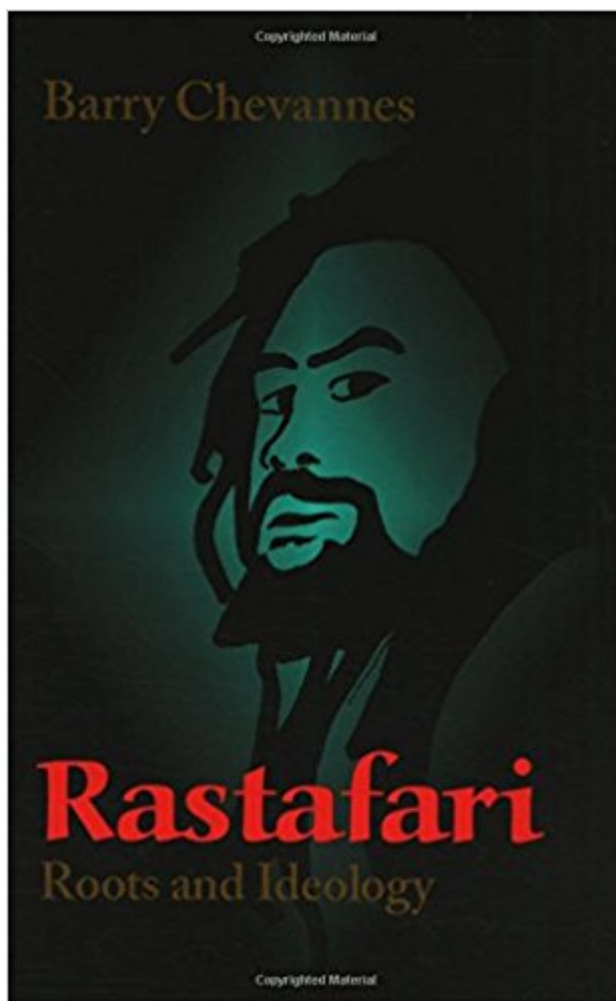


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Rastafari: Roots And Ideology (Utopianism & Communitarianism)



Synopsis

Interviews with 30 converts from the 1930s and 1940s are a component of Barry Chevanne's book, a look into the origins and practices of Rastafarianism. From the direct accounts of these early members, he is able to reconstruct pivotal episodes in Rastafarian history to offer a look into a subgroup of Jamaican society whose beliefs took root in the social unrest of the 1930s.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

According to social anthropologist Chevannes, understanding the Jamaican-born movement that takes its name after the prince, or ras, named Tafari Makonnen who was crowned in 1930 as Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie requires looking not so much at dreadlocks or reggae but at the worldview of the Jamaican peasantry who replaced rural with urban poverty as they migrated to Kingston in the early 1930s. Drawing on his 1974 dissertation fieldwork, Chevannes traces Rastafari to forms of cultural reconstruction, including idealization of Africa, and to the belief system and ethics of what he calls Revivalism. Revivalist beliefs, which helped the peasants cope with oppression, turned on a hope of undoing European colonization and domination. Chevannes's writing style is stilted and his view is not comprehensive, yet there is little literature on the subject that would allow placing his work in context. For collections on Jamaica, the African diaspora, or millenarian movements. Thomas J. Davis, SUNY at Buffalo Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The term Rastafari connotes reggae music and Bob Marley to the masses, but Rastafari is much more than a backdrop of red, yellow, and green banners for music videos. Chevannes examines the religion's history and development in detail, which means his book is also a social history of Jamaica. Chevannes begins by tracing the cultural roots of the Rastafari movement to the slave trade in Jamaica from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century, in reaction to which a foundation was laid for the spirit of resistance that was later a major factor in Rastafari's spread on the island. Chevannes also closely attends to the internal rifts and doctrinal disputes that caused denominational splits within the movement. As Rastafari moved into the larger world, some of its teachings, such as the strict observance of menstrual taboos, were attacked. Chevannes' analysis of that growth and how it is changing present-day Rastafari is fascinating and illuminating. No fanbook for couch-bound "Waspafaris" sitting around the plastic bong, this is a serious look at a living, growing religion. Mike Tribby --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I first got interested in Rastafarianism by way of William Gibson, who had several characters who were Dreadlocks. My ignorance of what that was all about was, well, somewhat shocking for me at the time. So, I started poking around. Quite a few years ago, I found Rastafari: Roots and Ideology by Barry Chevannes. It followed me around, unread, in a box for several years. Well, I finally read it this past week. What a shame I waited so long! This was a very good book about the history and origins of a relatively new religion. Among other things, it was fascinating to track the birth of a new faith from its very start through the modern day. As a sociological look at a small, but growing, religious or spiritual movement, this is a great book. It is, however, a rather scholarly look at this movement and, as such, is somewhat dry at times. Still, it presents not only a well-rounded look at the religion, but also the socio-economic forces that shaped it. One of the main "pillars of faith", for instance, is the concept of "repatriation" to Ethiopia. This would never have come about if not for the practice of black slavery in the New World. I'll not attempt to describe the intricacies of Rastafarianism in a short message, but, if you're interested in knowing more, this book is a great place to start.

This is an excellent scholarly study of the roots of the Rastafari movement and religion. Barry Chevannes was one of the leading scholars who devoted his life's work to studying Rastafari. This book is especially valuable because Chevannes makes extensive use of interviews and other primary source material from early Rastas, so that you can read what they experienced in their own

words.

Professor Barry Chevannes, who passed on in November, 2010, was the pre-eminent scholar about the Rastafari movement and an advocate for Rastafari rights in Jamaica. Other books have been written about Rastafari, but Barry's book contains transcriptions of interviews with Rastafari in the 1970s, which cannot be found elsewhere. Anyone interested in the sociology of this subject should have a copy Professor Chevannes' book.

Very informative; great history book, but hardly anything on the religion!

happy with purchase

Great in detail historical peice of literature but a slow read. It has a lot of historical info on the why of the rasta movement but Its not the best "how to rasta" bookJah bless

Not a compelling read, but scholarly and worthwhile. I'm still slogging through at a slow pace, and learning enough to make it to the end eventually.

Must Read!

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