One afternoon when I was six and in standard 2, sitting quietly while the teacher, Mr. Grant, wrote our assignment on the blackboard, I heard a girl scream as if she were frightened. Mr. Grant must have heard it, too, for he turned as if to see whether that frightened scream had come from one of us, his charges. My classmates looked at me. Which wasn’t strange: I had a reputation for knowing the answer. They must have thought I would know about the scream. As it happened, all I could think about was how strange, just at the time when I needed it, the girl had screamed.

I had been swimming through the clouds, unwillingly connected to a small party of adults who were purposefully going somewhere, a destination I suddenly sensed meant danger for me. Naturally I didn’t want to go any further with them, but I didn’t know how to communicate this to adults and ones intent on doing me harm. At the girl’s scream, they swam away, quickly leaving me to tread the clouds alone but feeling that I had been abandoned and could justifiably do as I wished—and I wished to return to my place on the bench in standard 2, ready to solve the problems that Mr. Grant had written on the board. The feeling of being carried away and then abandoned to tread the clouds by myself is one I can never forget.

Twenty-four years later, suffering from a thyroid problem that brought me strange sensations, I tried to describe for my endocrinologist, a West Indian of East Indian extraction, some of these sensations, recalling for him the feeling of being carried away and treading air, which had returned. I thought this disclosure would help toward a diagnosis, which had been evading my medical team. He looked away from me, muttering that “we would now try psychiatry.” Is not everything good fi eat, good fi talk. No matter how much contact we have had with a world not governed by the five senses, Caribbean university professors like my endocrinologist and I, Indo or Afro, are not supposed to admit to having them. A higgler or a cultivator in rural Jamaica—Indo or Afro—upon
hearing my experience would have either responded with a similar one or offered a translation. I had read my culture wrongly. How stupid of me.

Understand my surprise, then, when Patricia Murray—professor at London Metropolitan University, a native of Great Britain, nonblack, and therefore, I assumed, with little personal experience of being molested by spirits—invited me to participate in a conference on “Religion and Spirituality in a Postcolonial Context: Working the Parallel World.” She must have read my face, for she modified, “It is time that this aspect of African and African Caribbean life be taken seriously.” This conference was aborted, but soon thereafter I was invited to an even more explicit one: “Obeah and Other Powers.”

Funny. The British in 1760, as a result of the African Jamaican Tacky’s rebellion, had outlawed the practice of obeah, and anti-obeah legislation has been on the statute books ever since. In order to read the de Laurence books, some of which are said to be used by obeah workers, I, with an academic interest in this parallel world of mine, had to go to Trinidad, for these books are banned in Jamaica. Yet these academics in British Newcastle were inciting people to meet for nearly a week to meditate on such things!

Perhaps the time has indeed come for these things to be taken seriously, as Patricia said. At the annual pre-Emancipation reasoning in my village, Dr. Adolph Edwards, author of the unpublished Ph.D. thesis “The Development of Criminal Law in Jamaica,” asked to share with us his knowledge of legislation, and particularly obeah laws, designed expressly for handling “our” people in the days of slavery. Some young visiting academics heckled, attacking the messenger. Their behavior was an expression of frustration and anger: anger at the treatment of their ancestors—“ancestral anger,” I call it—but more, frustration at knowing so little about the system of thought that their ancestors had celebrated, frustration at being robbed of the connection with their ancestors that could allow them to make a good defense of them, frustration that now initiates into Akan, Dagara, and Yoruba traditions; they still did not know the points at which their grandparents had connected with these traditions. They were now living with burning candles, wearing full white, keeping their heads covered, and leaving plates of food in their yards for the ancestors, but they still didn’t know if they were connected with the feared obeah man down the road, formerly the butt of jokes in their friendship networks. Their anger was at the knowledge vacuum that made positioning themselves in the stream of spiritual history impossible, and that forced them to wonder if their newfound spiritual rituals would really lessen the sense of wearing the wrong robes that had driven them out of the Euro-American churches and in search of the African spiritual forms.
In our very active post-lecture discussion, the village passed a resolution that we should petition for the removal of the obeah laws from the statute books. Could this be enough? Whatever the answer, it is clear that enough of us in the Caribbean care about obeah and other powers. And didn’t Professor Barry Chevannes of the University of the West Indies, at an international conference in his honor, sprinkle water at the four corners of the platform to acknowledge the presence of and to thank his ancestors for past kindness? We are beginning to see and to respect the alternative world that our grandparents knew to exist. But deleting an entry from a list of laws is not knowledge of a system—especially one so smothered under a bushel by British colonial policy, so bereft of the natural light that growth and development needs, that what is left might be a poor representation of what was. What my young academic friends stepping into the observance of African traditional rites need is knowledge of what exists and knowledge of what had been. Unfortunately, the meaning behind esoteric knowledge such as obeah and other powers is normally handed down from ear to ear. Can the breach fostered by colonial education systems be mended so that conduits can appear? Perhaps not. My young friends will have to design their own techniques for spiritual connection. What they need more than anything else is an environment sympathetic to this kind of creation.

Many of us in the Caribbean feel torn by the experience of living with two systems of thought that are difficult to reconcile. I for one was happier at the Newcastle conference than at any other that I have attended in my many years in academia. I think this is because I sensed not so much an attempt to use field data toward general sociological theory, but more an effort to understand a fact of my Caribbean life. I had company in this exercise of trying to understand; I was comforted. The papers presented and the post-paper discussions made me feel that data were now available to help our college-trained medical practitioners and our spirit-based practitioners make common cause, and to help our seminary-trained ministers of religion and our spirit-based ones find the path toward each other that I know the former have been trying to chart since the 1970s.

There of course have been other gatherings and sets of papers, but the one arranged by Maarit Forde and Diana Paton at Newcastle University has been much more than the usual panels at a conference. It has been for me the first to focus totally on obeah and other powers, bringing as it did the parallel world into full public view—and thus not only providing information about what was and perhaps is, but also helping to create this sympathetic environment that my young friends need for further and more private exploration. This
work, valorizing the thoughts and actions of our ancestors, treating them in a matter-of-fact and therefore humanistic way, will eventuate in their shaking from their bones the epithets “stupid” and “backward,” and we of this generation soon being able to share about our out-of-body experiences without thinking ourselves mentally ill, to leave plates of food outside in our yards for our ancestors without wondering how close we are to breaching the laws governing the practice of obeah.

Finally, reparations: the colonial powers have been “spirit thieves.” Their obeah legislation has stymied the spiritual growth and development of transported Africans. Repairing the breach is about valorizing what they wrongly demonized. It is some kind of justice and a lighting of the way forward that descendants of those who put the bushel over Caribbean expressions of African spirituality, and those whose ancestors were thus bound, are working together—whether in conferences as college-trained intellectuals or in the field as informants—to lift the bushel and retrieve knowledge. One happy, though perhaps unintended, outcome could be the lessening of the quantum of ancestral anger felt by the descendants of Africans enslaved in the New World, as I have discussed in my book The Second Generation of Freemen in Jamaica, 1907–1955 (University Press of Florida, 2004). May it be so indeed for the several young Afro-Caribbean academics who are waiting for this collection—not to teach about African spirituality but rather to strengthen them on their personal journey of finding their ancestors’ hands, and so to link their hearts and souls to the past, allowing them to walk upright into the future, now plugged into the right ancestral source and now free from the burden of frustration and anger.
This book is the result of collaboration between the two editors, as part of a larger project, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, titled “Colonial Rule and Spiritual Power: Obeah, the State, and Caribbean Culture.” It took shape at a conference, “Obeah and Other Powers,” held at Newcastle University in July 2008. We would like to thank all the participants at that conference, and particularly the contributors to this book, whose initial papers made the conference so stimulating and who subsequently worked efficiently to turn their papers into book chapters. We have both learned a great deal from collaborating with them. We owe a special debt to those who generously gave their time and intellectual energy to act as chairs and panel discussants at the conference: Juanita de Barros, Jean Besson, Erna Brodber, Richard Drayton, Michael Jagessar, Projit Mukharji, Patricia Murray, Karen Fog Olwig, Stephan Palmié, James Procter, Kate Ramsey, Terence Ranger, Patrick Taylor, and David Trotman. Robert Hill delivered the keynote address at the conference; it provided a typically rich stimulus to the discussions. Unfortunately, Hill was unable to revise his paper for the book, an absence that we regret. The conference and book have depended on the financial support of the Leverhulme Trust, Newcastle University, and the Northern Centre for the History of Medicine, and the practical support of Colette Barker, Janice Cummin, Geof Ellingham, Pat Harrison, Michelle Houston, Melanie Kidd, Tom Kirk, Helen McKee, Bob Stoate, Sam Turner, and Craig White. Thanks to all of them.

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The onset of health problems forced Karen McCarthy Brown to withdraw from the Newcastle conference. Brown’s work has been an inspiration for many of the contributors to this book; we dedicate it to her.
Obeah and Other Powers
In 1905 the prison authorities at the Antigua jail, which served as the central prison for the Leeward Islands, employed a photographer to take individual and group photographs of at least eleven people who had been convicted of practicing obeah. The group shot (figure I.1) depicts nine men and two women in two rows, all staring with their faces toward the camera. All wear white prison uniforms, identical except for the differences between men and women. Each holds a small board on which is chalked his or her name and the island where she or he was convicted. The individual photographs were pasted onto preprinted documents recording that the photographed individual had been “convicted for practising Obeah under the Leeward Islands Obeah Act No 6 of 1904,” and documenting his or her sentence, place of birth, age, marital status, trade or occupation (“obeahman” in some cases), religion, and a series of physical descriptors, such as skin color, hair color, and height. The images belong to the genre of the police photograph or mug shot, the chalked names providing a means for state authorities to identify these people. These photographs and identifying information were circulated “to all the neighbouring Islands, both British and Foreign,” in the hope that the individuals pictured would be kept under surveillance upon their release, wherever they should travel.1

Someone working in the prison or the colonial civil service must have decided to group together this particular set of prisoners—obeah convicts—to photograph them collectively and individually, suggesting the significance that the colonial authorities gave to this category of crime at this time. In one sense, the photographs allowed for the fixing, classification, and control of the group. They record the fact that these prisoners had been temporarily brought to a point of stasis by confinement in prison, and thus suggest one of the themes of this book: the significance of state power, and more specifically, state hostility,
in shaping the environment within which Caribbean religions were sustained and practiced.

But the photographs do not merely record the disciplining of their subjects. The individuals photographed are not simply controlled by the photographer, but rather, in minor ways, take hold of the presentation of their clothing: in the group shot some wear their prison hats, for instance, while others hold them in their hands. More significant, the posing of the subjects in two rows, one seated, the other standing, resembles a photograph of a school or college graduating class, or a record of a professional convention, even more than it does a photograph of prisoners. And this resemblance is not entirely misleading, for a great deal of communication and exchange of information must have taken place inside the prison among these people from across the Eastern Caribbean. Only half jokingly, we could suggest that this photograph depicts a convention of Eastern Caribbean obeah practitioners, courtesy of the Antigua jail authorities. Like participants in a professional convention, the men and women in this photograph were likely to have been competitors for clients
but also sharers of information and knowledge. The hidden communication
that lies behind the picture evokes a second theme raised in *Obeah and Other
Powers*: the active role of practitioners in reshaping the religious traditions in
which they participated.

As recorded by the chalkboards that the prisoners hold, all these convicts
except for Cornelius Jarvis (back row, third from left) had been convicted
outside Antigua. Other sources reveal that many people convicted of practic-
ing obeah in the Eastern Caribbean in this period, including some of those
photographed, were embedded in regional networks of their own making in
addition to those produced by their conviction. For instance, Thomas Howe,
pictured second from left in the front row, was tried in Dominica but had been
born elsewhere: St. Kitts according to a newspaper report, Montserrat accord-
ing to the information recorded on his prison docket (figure 1.2). Other
convicts had connections to the Francophone and Hispanic Caribbean, as
well as to other British colonies. These connections suggest a third theme
with which the chapters of this book engage: the importance of mobility in
constructing obeah and the other powers in which we are interested, and the
permeability of the borders between colonial empires that frequently confine
Caribbeanist scholarship.

This book deals with religious practice in the Caribbean, primarily within
contexts that have come to be known as obeah, Vodou, and Santería, and their
relationship to power. It includes chapters by historians and anthropologists
that discuss Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, Tobago, Martinique, Suriname,
Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean coast of Central America, as well as connec-
tions between several of these places. The contributors are concerned with
periods ranging from the late eighteenth century to the present, although most
focus on the period after 1890. While they range widely in theme, the chapters
share an interest in thinking through how, and by whom, the fields of religious
beliefs and practices they discuss have been produced and reproduced, rather
than a concern with pinning down what these formations were and are. They
are concerned with the contexts in which the reproduction of Caribbean
religion has taken place, and with what such religions and discourses about
them do. By that, we mean both that the chapters in this book are concerned
with the actions of those who identify with particular religious movements,
and that they seek to understand the cultural and political work done by hos-
tility to, representation of, and attempts to suppress those movements’ beliefs
and practices. In these concerns, this work is connected also to wider develop-
ments in history and anthropology—in particular, to the growing emphasis on
analyses that approach societies and cultures not as bounded entities, but as

Introduction
Tabular information about and photograph of Thomas Howe, convicted in Dominica in August 1904 of practicing obeah. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.
processual formations that are always being made and remade, and to lines of questioning that unveil the historical construction of many institutions, including religion, that have previously been taken for granted.

The title Obeah and Other Powers refers on one hand to the cross-Caribbean nature of the book’s subject matter. Alongside discussions of obeah, we present studies of “other powers”: formations that have occupied similar, although not identical, places to obeah in Caribbean societies. These include the power that animates Cuban regla ocha and palom; the power of the lwa in Haiti; and the power of the spirits accessed by brujos and brujas in Puerto Rico. At the same time, the other powers to which we refer are those that, to speak at the most general level, have dominated the lives of Caribbean people for the past five centuries. Obeah and the other powers analyzed in this book were formed, from the start, in the context of the relationships that produced the Caribbean in its modern, post-1492 form. They were produced by the power of capital and colonialism to transport millions of Africans across oceans against their will, and then set them down as enslaved people who had to rework their existing knowledge to provide some protection in a new, terror-filled setting. In the aftermath of slavery, these powers transformed as hundreds of thousands of people from India, and to a lesser extent China, migrated to the Caribbean under indenture. Asian migrants’ religious experience influenced and was influenced by those who were already there. But the religious practices and knowledge of Caribbean people were also formed by a more mundane and yet highly significant set of everyday powers: the power of states to criminalize some practices and legitimize others; the power of occupying armies to rewrite constitutions and reorient economies; and the power of writers, filmmakers, lawyers, and scholars to represent Caribbean practices, both to those with little knowledge of the region and to those who live there. Such representations of Caribbean religious formations, whether by “insiders” or “outsiders”—however we might define those terms—have been carefully watched and analyzed by those they purport to represent.

Finally, the other powers of the book’s title refer to a third mode of power: the power of millions of people in the Caribbean, whose relationships with one another, and with the forces of capital and the state, have been mediated through and experienced within religious formations and discourses. This power has on many occasions had a critical, combative edge, mobilizing people against colonial and authoritarian rule. It has often been unrecognizable from the point of view of conventional politics, especially the social democratic tradition that has largely dominated Anglophone Caribbean politics. It is not sufficient to conceptualize it in terms of resistance, however, for re-
ligiously mobilized powers in the Caribbean have also worked to divide, to maintain boundaries, and to generate hierarchy among non-elite Caribbean people. While many of the chapters in this book elucidate the creativity and power of Caribbean religious practitioners, they situate agency in the context of structural frameworks set up by political economy and cultural politics in the colonial and postcolonial Caribbean.

THE POLITICS OF NAMING

Examining Caribbean religion raises questions about definitions and categorization that ultimately concern methodology and epistemology. As Talal Asad has argued, the dominant scholarship and discourse in post-medieval Europe defined religion as an entity with a traceable essence, separate from other sectors of social life, such as politics, law, or science. In an enlightened, reformed Europe, religion became a system that could be studied and experienced on its own. Enlightenment thinkers saw “religion” as a private affiliation, actively separated from politics and the public sphere. The claim that religion and politics are separate realms became a mark of modernity.

The chapters in this book reject this separation between religion and the rest of social life. To borrow a set of terms from economic anthropology, we adopt a substantivist rather than formalist perspective. Formalist positions have maintained that the principles of neoclassical economics can apply to all societies, as the pursuit of maximization by rational actors is universal. Substantivist economic approaches, on the other hand, have argued for plural models of economy that differentiate between capitalist and pre- or non-capitalist societies. Instead of an autonomous sector or sphere, substantivists have understood economy as embedded in a variety of religious, kinship, political, and other institutions. Similarly, we argue that religion is better understood as embedded in politics, economy, kinship, and other relevant aspects of social life, and that attempts to define religion based on universally applicable criteria tend to be ethnocentrically biased.

But the problem is not only the intellectual tradition that separates religion from everything else. In addition, that same tradition has produced religion as the dominant term in a series of hierarchically paired oppositions, in which lesser terms include “magic,” “superstition,” “witchcraft,” “the occult,” “the supernatural,” and “barbaric practices.” These categories, like the triad of magic, science, and religion that has structured much anthropological theorizing, have been insurmountably hierarchical, and have produced ethnocentric and conceptually misleading models of religion.

In his important history of the concepts of “religion” and “magic” in West-
ern thought, Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah emphasizes the English Protestant legacy of defining religion as separate from, and morally superior to, magic. While post-Reformation theologians understood religion as a system of beliefs, cosmologically characterized by a sovereign God, they understood magic to connote “coercive rituals ambitiously attempting to manipulate the divine.” This division produced the foundation on which Victorian anthropologists such as Edward B. Tylor and James G. Frazer built their work. Much of the ritual practice of regla ocha, Vodou, Spiritual Baptists, Orisha, and other Caribbean religions aims precisely at “manipulating the divine,” and would therefore fall into the Tylorian category of magic rather than religion; moreover, “working” the human-spirit relationship has attracted the most attention in textual representations of these religions. Further juxtapositions between Christianity (or monotheism) and paganism—and later, world religions and local religions, or book religions and oral religions—have continued to devalue religions that have developed in the Caribbean, as well as the African religions with which they are often associated. As a result, the practices and belief systems discussed in this book have operated on the borders of what has been conceptualized as religion in the Judeo-Christian tradition and in social scientific studies of religion.

A further reason for the marginality of Caribbean religions is that mainstream Christian thinking since the seventeenth century has generally understood religions to be discrete entities, adherence to or conversion into which implies rejection of all others. This claim is empirically false in the Caribbean, as in many other places. As Karen Richman notes, servants of the lwa are also good Catholics. It is far from unusual for family members to claim membership in two or more different denominations, and many attend different churches or shrines at different points of their lives. Across the English-speaking Caribbean, people who consult practitioners whose work is conventionally described as obeah, not to mention the spiritual workers themselves, may belong to any one (or more) of a variety of churches. Thus the “Caribbean religion” with which this book is concerned is a plural, fluid formation, intimately linked with other areas of social life, and always relational. Our goal is to examine the place of religious practice and belief in a wider context of power relations: relations of class, race, gender, and empire, but also the power of colonial and invading states, scholarship, and print and broadcast media, which have contributed to the very establishment and maintenance of these objects of study themselves.

The fact that even the appropriate names for the objects of study in Caribbean religion are contested suggests the importance of analyzing the making
and remaking of these formations. For instance, adherents of what observers and outsiders refer to as “Vodou” (or voodoo, vodun, and vaudoux, among many variant spellings) rarely use that term, instead referring to themselves in relation to action, as servants of the lwa. Yet the issue at stake is not simply that “native” terms for religions such as Vodou frequently differ from those used by outsiders to describe them (although that is the case), but also that even the terms used by practitioners and devotees are enmeshed with debates and definitions taking place outside the community of worshippers. Self-identifications are neither stable over time nor unanimously embraced by clear-cut communities of worshippers. Moreover, they are not distinct from the language of scholarship. The terms used both by scholars and adherents (and, of course, these are sometimes—and increasingly—the same people) contribute to the creation and especially the formalization of the objects they seek to describe.

An example of this can be seen in the response to the Afro-Cuban scholar Rómulo Lachatañeré’s advocacy in the 1930s of the use of what he saw as the neutral term “Santería,” in place of the derogatory “brujería.” With this proposal, Lachatañeré produced a new noun for the religion as a whole, building on the practitioners’ terms “santero/a” and “santo/a,” which focused on specific roles and the objects of devotion. This new term came to be widely adopted, at least for the consumption of outsiders, although the terms “la regla (de) ocha” and “lucumi/lukumi” probably remained more common. By the 1990s, however, many religious leaders who sought to emphasize the African connections of the religion rejected the term “Santería” because of its implication that the religion was primarily about the worship of Catholic saints (santos).

As this example suggests, there is no consensus within Caribbean societies and Caribbean diasporic communities about the boundaries between religions, about “orthodox” practice, or about the place of religion in social life more generally. To take further examples, Spiritual Baptists and Orisha practitioners in Trinidad and Tobago have varying opinions about which practices and beliefs constitute their religions and what differentiates one from the other. Similarly, mainstream Hinduism in contemporary Trinidad and Guyana distances itself from the rituals of sacrifice and spiritual manifestation characteristic of Kali worship, but members of Kali temples do not perceive of their puja as separate from orthodox Hinduism. In the Anglophone Caribbean, the term “obeah” was and is widely used to refer to dangerous power, but it has rarely been adopted as an identity by practitioners of its arts, who have
referred to themselves as scientists, doctors, spiritual mothers, do-good men, lookmen, professors, and a range of other terms.\textsuperscript{16}

In all these cases, terminologies have changed over time, marking the development of struggles over language that are also struggles over power. We see this particularly clearly in the shift from “Shouters” to “Spiritual Baptist religion” in Trinidad and Tobago. The name Shouters was first circulated in local newspapers and generally disapproving discourses about street preachers or religious meetings in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Trinidad. Although reified in legislation by the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance of 1917, Shouters referred to groups of worshippers who were never recorded as identifying themselves by that term. Instead, when allowed to do so in court, they spoke of “their religion” without a specific name, or called themselves Baptists, Independent Baptists, Mount Ararat Baptists, Spiritual Converted Baptists, and Spiritual Baptists.\textsuperscript{17} After the Shouters Prohibition Ordinance was repealed in 1952, most of the newly legalized churches called themselves Spiritual Baptists. The originally derogatory term Shouters has remained in local parlance, however, and some churches have chosen names that retain the moniker. Such current usages have lost the negative connotations, and they may rather be understood as representing resistance and perseverance in the face of state persecutions.\textsuperscript{18}

Names also work within different spatial frames. What we might refer to as “globalized” terms for Afro-Atlantic or Caribbean religions, such as Santería, Vodou, or Yoruba religion, tend to operate at a distance from actual devotees’ lives, especially within the Caribbean itself.\textsuperscript{19} Yet their global reach gives them the power to draw people together and for practitioners to recognize one another internationally, a process that has been deliberately fostered in some cases—as, for example, by the leadership of the World Congresses of Orisha Tradition and Culture that have met regularly since 1981.\textsuperscript{20} At the same time, these dominant terms can exclude other forms of African-Caribbean religion, such as Cuban palo monte, or occlude their differentiation from more widely discussed formations. Moreover, more local terms can be markers of insider knowledge of specific religious communities, both within the Caribbean and within Caribbean communities overseas. Because terms such as “obeah,” “Vodou,” and “Santería” designate a shifting array of practices, attempts to pin down and define the referents they index are fruitless. But as Lara Putnam pointed out at the conference at which much of the work collected in this book was discussed, this problem does not mean that we should abandon all attempts to investigate the meaning of these terms. Rather, such explorations
focus our attention on contingencies and specificities. What practices are given which name, in which circumstances, by whom, and with what effects?

Many of the chapters in this book suggest that distinctions between religion and other categories, or boundaries constructed between differently named religions, stem largely from on-the-ground practices and negotiations of those practices. In this way, the chapters complicate the work of scholars who have focused on the significance of colonial states and Western scholarly practices in shaping such boundaries. For example, low-level state agents like police officers played a central role in elaborating these distinctions. Elizabeth Cooper’s chapter on early twentieth-century Cuba documents discussions within the police force about whether the people they arrested were indeed “true practitioners of authentic ñáñiguismo.” Diana Paton’s chapter suggests that similar discussions took place in Jamaica in relation to obeah, and shows that ordinary people’s choices about who to report to the police for practicing obeah were also significant in constructing official definitions of the crime. Looking at exchange relationships between ritual specialists and their clients in Trinidad and Tobago, Maarit Forde’s chapter points out a correlation between more established, successful practitioners who were arrested mainly by police entrapment, and less convincing entrepreneurs whose clients reported them to the police. On the other hand, Karen Richman’s chapter on Haiti shows that similar processes can be located in higher-level state practices, like the appropriation of Vodou imagery in the self-representations of the Duvalierist state and of President François Duvalier himself (along with a simultaneous embrace of anti-Vodou Protestantism as a bulwark against the power of the Catholic Church). Focus on such actors gives us a nuanced view of how various agents and institutions of colonial and postcolonial states suppressed, engaged with, and categorized religious practice, and how ordinary subjects could affect and manipulate these processes.

The risk involved in noting the inescapably hierarchical nature of distinctions like that between religion and magic is that we leave ourselves unable to make necessary analytic distinctions. There is a difference, after all, between Vodou’s ritual cycle, ritual specialists, and deities, and obeah’s designation of a looser constellation of practices and powers that can be accessed autonomously but are also often consulted in the context of, or as supplements to, differently named religions with their own rituals, specialists, and spirits. No less important, whereas serviteurs des lwa, members of Orisha shrines, Spiritual Baptists, santeros, Hindus, and Roman Catholics speak of “their religions,” there is little evidence of people who practice or talk about obeah in the Anglophone Caribbean or brujería in Puerto Rico conceptualizing it within a
similar category. Bearing these reservations in mind, it may not always prove useful to stretch the analytic category of religion to cover all spiritual practice. But at the same time, if we think of religion not as a bounded category of institutionalized dogma and rituals, but rather as a constantly negotiated, internally heterogeneous field of knowledge and practice whose composition varies according to the perspectives of differently positioned adherents, then analytic boundaries between religious practice, sorcery, and magic seem untenable. While we recognize the usefulness of categories like magic, sorcery, and witchcraft in analyses and cross-cultural comparisons of practices that aim at controlling or coercing “persons, powers, beings, or even events,” we do not want to divorce the rationales and practices of such categories from those of a larger category of religion.

Writing Caribbean Religion Through and Against Empire

As the above discussion suggests, when examining Caribbean religion it is neither possible nor desirable to avoid the long history of prior representations. In this section, we present a brief historical account of writing about these traditions, focusing on the key themes of analysis in history and anthropology and their relationship to politics and historical developments. We group this writing into three major paradigms. The first, inaugurated with colonialism, and becoming fully formed by the late eighteenth century, was dominated by hostility to African-Caribbean religions, understanding them as signs of backwardness and barbarism. From around the late nineteenth century, and gaining force from the 1920s on, a new set of voices, including those of Caribbean intellectuals and anthropologists from outside the region, sought to reclaim Caribbean religions as the region’s “tradition,” often presenting them as an inheritance from Africa. Most recently there has been an effort—of which we see this book as a part—to situate Caribbean religions within histori- cized understandings of Caribbean societies, and to rethink the terms within which we understand religion, in order to present analyses less focused on questions of origins and more concerned with issues of power. Defining these paradigms inevitably simplifies a more complex story, as elements of each have frequently coexisted. Nor can all literature on Caribbean religion be included in one or another of these paradigms. In addition, each paradigm is complex and contradictory in its own right, and has also developed differently in and for different parts of the Caribbean. Nevertheless, dividing the literature in this way can help to orient thinking about the history of writing Caribbean religion.

The earliest European writers about the Caribbean were interested in the
religion of the Taíno people of the region primarily in order to determine whether they could be converted to Catholicism. Columbus concluded that conversion would be easy because, he repeatedly declared, the people he encountered “do not know any religion” or had “no religion or idolatry.” Later, when this proved overly optimistic, the refusal of indigenous people to adopt Christianity, along with the alleged cannibalism of the Caribs (or Eastern Taíno), was used to justify their enslavement. A few Spanish missionaries, notably Ramón Pané and Bartolomé de Las Casas, wrote detailed and knowledgeable accounts of Taíno culture and beliefs that were in some ways sympathetic, despite their overall framework that assumed the desirability of conversion. Nevertheless, the dominant mode of early Spanish reports was to stress the demonic nature of indigenous religion, to the extent that it was recognized as religion at all.

As enslaved Africans began to outnumber indigenes, the focus of proto-ethnographic writing shifted to describing their cultures and lifeways in texts that sought to make sense of the new world that slavery was creating. While many writers discussed these issues, a few in English and French became reference points for future debates. These texts became foundational for later discussions of Caribbean religions (as well as other topics), both describing in general terms the religious practices of enslaved people, and incorporating narratives of specific instances of African “sorcery” or “obeah” that proved highly memorable and repeatable. Spanish writers did not produce equivalent texts in this period. This was partly because of their greater attention to indigenous belief, but also because Spanish concern with African (and, indeed, mestizo, Spanish, and indigenous) sorcery was instead channeled largely through the Inquisition, which engendered enormous quantities of archival material documenting popular belief, but not the same kind of widely circulated printed texts.

One of the oldest such foundational texts is the Dominican missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat’s *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l’Amerique*, published in Paris in 1722 and then in an expanded edition in 1742. Based on Labat’s time in the Eastern Caribbean (primarily Martinique and Guadeloupe) from 1694 to 1705, this multivolume work includes extensive discussion of poisoning and sorcery. Labat’s account of an African woman who used what he calls witchcraft (*sorcellerie*) to prevent the progress of the slave ship on which she was imprisoned is one example; another is his description of his attack on an African healer-diviner who had told an enslaved woman that she would die within four days. Doris Garraway’s recent study of eighteenth-century Francophone writing about the Caribbean emphasizes Labat’s continuing reso-
nance: not only is his work mined as a source of evidence by many historians (about all kinds of issues aside from religion), it is also widely read in contemporary Martinique, where “Pere Labat” has become a kind of bogeyman (or macoute) figure, used to frighten children.\(^{28}\)

In the late eighteenth century, a group of English and French texts were published that proved equally influential: Edward Long’s *History of Jamaica* (1774), Bryan Edwards’s *History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (1793), and Mederic Louis-Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry’s *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l’île Saint-Domingue* (1797).\(^{29}\) These books were written in a more secular vein than Labat’s work, and worked within the developing genres of history and geography rather than memoir. Importantly, all of them were published in a context in which slavery had come under attack by abolitionists and revolutionaries, and were part of the wider defense of slavery. But like Labat’s work, they each included significant sections regarding African understandings of the spirit world, which they conceived of as indicators of African lack of civilization. Long and Edwards both framed their discussions with the term “obeah,” while Long also discussed “myal.” Moreau published the first extended discussion of religious practice by enslaved people in colonial Saint-Domingue, and used the term “vaudoux” to describe aspects of it.\(^{30}\)

Like Labat, these planter historians also included memorable individual stories that were much repeated over time. Bryan Edwards’s *History*, for instance, included a long quotation from a parliamentary inquiry into obeah, which incorporated an episode in which an enslaved woman in Jamaica “from the Popo country” was discovered to be the cause of multiple deaths on her plantation.\(^{31}\) Edwards’s quoted description of the “Popo woman,” or the original parliamentary report, became a classic in colonial literature and then made its way into the scholarship on obeah, appearing, sometimes without attribution, in later works on Africa and the Caribbean by Thomas Winterbottom, Bessie Pullen-Burry, Martha Beckwith, Joseph Williams, and Orlando Patterson, among others.\(^{32}\) Moreau’s description of “vaudoux,” while more abstract than Edwards’s account of obeah, gave a detailed description of ritual and dance, focused around the worship of the snake and the initiation of people into the “sect.”\(^{33}\) His description included a chant beginning “Eh! eh! Bomba hen! hen!”—words that, as Alasdair Pettinger’s chapter in this book shows, were reproduced and discussed in multiple locations, and for multiple purposes. Pettinger traces scholarly trajectories and interpretive efforts concerning the chant, showing how a late eighteenth-century text continues to generate debates and questions relevant to contemporary intellectual climates. He
argues that even the most scholarly of these repetitions have paid too much attention to issues of translation, and too little to the kinesthetic and corporeal meaning and effect that the words, when chanted in a specific ritual context, produced. As Pettinger’s chapter suggests, the repeated citation and reproduction of texts like Moreau’s and Edwards’s has produced a powerful discursive universe within which obeah, Vodou, and their analogues have been understood.

Despite differences between them, Long’s, Moreau’s, and Edwards’s texts all adopted a hierarchical and racist standpoint, in which European Christianity was presented as superior while Africa was marked as savage, backward, and sometimes horrifying. They were written during a period of intense production of knowledge about other parts of the non-European world besides the Caribbean, including Africa, which influenced the development of European understandings and definitions of religion. Writers such as Long, Edwards, and Moreau not only drew on but also reinforced European “knowledge” that Africans (or “Negroes”) had no religion but instead worshipped “fetishes.”

Between them, these texts created a resonant picture of Caribbean religion that focused on manipulation of the spirit world, and stressed the hostile purposes for which such manipulation took place. They characterized enslaved people’s religious practice as magic or witchcraft rather than religion. Nevertheless, they are also ambivalent texts, displaying fascination with the spiritual power that the authors perceived in the enslaved Africans who surrounded them. This fascination has added to their attraction as sources for later historians and anthropologists, who have found in them suggestive information for reconstructing societies from which those in whom we are often most interested left practically no written records. The temptation has been strong to use them as transparent descriptions of practice, rather than to interrogate them as texts.

With few exceptions, this discourse—in which the religious practice of people in the Caribbean was understood as primitive and barbaric—dominated representations of the topic until the late nineteenth century. It fed into later representations of Caribbean religions in travel writing and memoir, such as the work of Froude, St. John, and Kingsley. As part of the larger body of literature engendered by European colonists’ encounters with faraway peoples, early Caribbean historiography and ethnography contributed—at least indirectly—to the body of knowledge on which Galton, Tylor, Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl, and other anthropologists built evolutionary models of race, mentality, and religion.

Depictions of Indian religions in the first decades of indentureship in the
Caribbean were more ambiguous about these religions’ location on the ladder from barbarism to civilization. Observers like John Morton and Louis de Verteuil exoticized indentured Indians’ religious practices in the Orientalist vein, but in contrast to most depictions of African-Caribbean religion, a certain level of sympathy and even respect toward Hindu and Muslim religious knowledge and literature emanates from these writings. Although Morton, a Presbyterian missionary, disapproved of Hindu “idolatry,” he characterized Indians in Trinidad as being “of a philosophical turn of mind” and as “wonderfully acute and metaphysical,” going on to describe a Brahman’s insightful queries about the Christian concept of sin. He also recognized “Mohammedans’” intelligence and reverence for their sacred text, and noted how challenging it was to argue with them about the authority of the New Testament or, even more so, the Qur’an. The local press was not always as cordial when reporting on Indo-Trinidadian rituals, and occasionally the vocabulary and tone of these articles was identical to those denouncing Afro-Trinidadian practices. But the press never launched campaigns against Hindu or Muslim ritual practice, like it did against Shouters or the funerary rituals of working-class Trinidadians, or against alleged brujos in Cuba. Even the reportage of the notorious Hosay massacre in 1884 highlighted the “coolies’” disobedience in the face of law, rather than questioning the legitimacy of their religious practices as such. Indeed, the government defended its position by claiming that the 1882 ordinance prohibiting Hosay or Muharram processions did not apply to the religious aspects of the festival, but merely purged it of non-Hindu and non-Indo-Trinidadian elements. Instead of religious persecution, scholars have read the Hosay riot against the background of deteriorating conditions for the Indo-Trinidadian labor force on the estates. Before and after the Hosay massacre, Hindu and Muslim rituals attracted few state interventions in the form of repressive legislation and policing; freedom of religious worship was indeed part of the indentureship contract, and state persecutions of religious practice in the Caribbean could have jeopardized the recruitment process in India.

Eventually, racist and hostile depictions of Caribbean religions began to face written challenges from within the Caribbean. Across the region (and the African diaspora more generally), intellectuals began defending (or “vindicating,” as they often put it) people of African descent, producing texts like the Haitian scholar Anténor Firmin’s *De l’égalité des races humaines* or the Trinidadian John Jacob Thomas’s *Froudacity*. These works, along with the journalism of writers like Robert Love in Jamaica, argued for the unity of the human race in the face of polygenist positions that had become powerful in the
nineteenth century. Unlike the earlier historiography, travel writing, and memoirs they were writing against, these authors paid little explicit attention to religion. In a sense, their perspective shared in European contempt for African religious traditions, seeking to differentiate the Caribbean from Africa, and their “own” parts of the Caribbean from areas that seemed more closely connected to Africa. Thus John Jacob Thomas, like many non-Haitian Caribbean intellectuals, worked in his response to Froude to emphasize the difference between Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean, leaving unchallenged Froude’s assertion that Vodou was barbaric. Despite this, their work paved the way for the next generation of scholar-activists who did take up questions of religion in a serious, if often contradictory, way, including Jean Price-Mars and Fernando Ortiz. Price-Mars’s work on Haiti, and particularly his 1928 book Ainsi parla l’oncle, brought the search for African “survivals” in the New World to the Caribbean. Importantly, Price-Mars argued that Haitian Vodou should be regarded as a religion in its own right, although a “primitive” one.

But such early defenders of Caribbean religion were swimming against the political tide. This period saw increased attention from states in the Caribbean and beyond to religious practice deemed dangerous and uncivilized, and a series of moral panics that crossed imperial and linguistic boundaries. In the Anglophone Caribbean, obeah law was reconstructed, and there appears to have been a significant increase in prosecutions (see Forde’s and Paton’s chapters on obeah arrests in this period). The Shakers and Shouters Prohibition Ordinances of St. Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago in 1912 and 1917, respectively, brought hundreds of people to court in the subsequent decades. Street preaching as well as funerary rituals were also targeted in media and police campaigns in Trinidad and Tobago in this period. The Brazilian Penal Code of 1890 made both Candomblé and Umbanda illegal. In Cuba, there were a series of arrests of alleged nañigos, and from 1904 onward a panic about brujería. Meanwhile in Haiti, the Catholic Church sponsored a campaign against sorcery in the late nineteenth century. After 1915, the United States occupation of the country both produced a large number of spectacular representations of “voodoo” that strongly influenced international understandings of Haiti and the Caribbean as a whole, and led to major efforts to suppress Vodou practice. As Richman’s chapter in this book shows, the Catholic Church continued these efforts after the occupation by the United States ended, in particular through the “anti-superstition campaign” of the early 1940s. Recent scholarship, including Alejandra Bronfman’s and Lara Putnam’s chapters in this book, has elucidated the interrelationships between this increased legal, police, and media attention to religious practice and the coin-
ciding, voluminous labor migration in the Greater Caribbean, the formation of the Cuban republic, the institutionalization of anthropology, and the augmenting knowledge of African religions gathered in newly acquired frontiers of European empire.53

Yet while Caribbean states treated it as a problem, social scientific study of Caribbean religion began to take a different, relativist view. In Cuba, Fernando Ortiz’s scholarship, although starting from the assumption that Afro-Cuban religion was “atavistic” and criminal, developed into work that valued Cuba’s African “past” as part of a celebration of its “transcultural” present.54 Stephan Palmié has persuasively argued that the shift in Ortiz’s vision was stimulated by his encounter with Fernando Guerra, a santero who corresponded with Ortiz, wrote to many other Cuban intellectuals and politicians, and published broadsides in defense of his religion at the time of the brujería persecutions.55 This process of influence from marginalized to powerful took place on an international scale as well as within nations. The work of both Ortiz and especially Jean Price-Mars substantially influenced Melville Herskovits. Through his position as professor of anthropology at Northwestern University, Herskovits went on to popularize and extend the Haitian scholar’s paradigm, which focused primarily on African cultural continuities.

As well as undertaking important research himself on Suriname, Trinidad, and Haiti, Herskovits also influenced a generation of American anthropologists who studied the Caribbean, including Katherine Dunham, Zora Neale Hurston, and George Eaton Simpson.56 Adopting a Boasian, cultural relativist view, these scholars sought not to measure Caribbean culture on a hierarchical scale, but instead to analyze its content and meaning, and in particular, its origins. Their work was central in asserting the importance of continuities between Africa and the Caribbean. For the first time, African-Caribbean people were seen as bearers of a culture that was equivalent in status to that of European Americans. Although Herskovits and his colleagues (both Caribbean and American) were interested in a wide range of cultural “traits,” including folklore, land tenure, kinship and so on, religion was frequently at the heart of their studies. Along with kinship, religion already occupied a privileged site within evolutionary anthropology. In the Caribbean, which many early anthropologists saw as uninteresting because it appeared insufficiently exotic and because its heterogeneous, mobile societies fit poorly into the structural-functionalist concept of society and culture, ritual practice that involved spirit possession and divining, and beliefs about duppies, jumbies, loup-garous, and other extraordinary beings, produced scope for what was understood as genuinely interesting research.57
While important in valuing African-Caribbean culture and seeing it as a serious object of study, Herskovits’s research method—reflecting the anthropological ideas of society and culture of his time—was divorced from history. When he and Frances Herskovits went to Trinidad to conduct field research in 1939, they looked for a field site as far as possible from areas populated by Trinidadians of Indian descent, from the commercial capital, Port of Spain, and from the oil fields where labor rebellions had taken place only two years before. Writing in his diary about their choice to base themselves in Toco, in northeastern Trinidad, Herskovits noted, “The south should be difficult, if only because of the labor troubles that they have been having there the past two or three years and because of its intense industrialization.” It turned out that this search for a place where “African ways of life . . . would be met in greatest purity” led them away from the “Shango cult” for which they had been searching, whose affiliates generally lived close to the capital. Similarly, anthropological studies of Haiti typically failed to mention the occupation of the country by the United States from 1915 to 1934, despite the fact that many anthropologists conducted research during or very soon after the occupation, and despite the substantial impact of the occupation on the regulation and thus the development of Vodou. In this paradigm, Caribbean religion was most interesting when it took place in rural, isolated, and remote parts of the region—those areas, like Toco, that could be imagined as coming as close as possible to the ideal of a “pure,” precolonial anthropological field site. Scholars chose Haiti over Jamaica, and Jamaica over Barbados. They focused on maroons rather than non-maroons, and rural rather than urban populations.

Concern about the lack of historical specificity in the Herskovitsian project of tracing African cultural retentions and continuities underlay Sidney Mintz and Richard Price’s influential 1976 book *An Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past*, which called for a move toward historicized, context-specific research on African American culture. Their work, which, as we discuss below, has become controversial, initiated what we see as a third paradigm in representations of Caribbean religion, characterized by a renewed attention to historical processes. Mintz and Price argued that the transportation, placement, and disciplining of slaves made it impossible for entire cultures or cultural practices to be transferred intact to the Caribbean; rather, what crossed the Atlantic were cognitive orientations or underlying logics that enabled enslaved people to create new institutions. Slavery, and enslaved people’s limited autonomous activities, then, rather than the African past as such, underpin Mintz and Price’s model for cultural creation. Instead of neglecting the significance of African influences in the New World, as some readings have suggested,
Mintz and Price posited that “Africanisms”—continuums or retentions of African cultures in the Americas—should be studied as products of New World history. In the following sections of this introduction, we examine two central themes in the study of Caribbean religion in recent decades, influenced by the creolization debate initiated by Mintz and Price: the reproduction of culture, and the question of the nature of modernity in the Caribbean.

THE REPRODUCTION OF CULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN

For scholars of Caribbean religions—and Caribbean sociocultural systems more generally—concepts of plurality, syncretism, and creolization seem inescapable, yet little has been agreed on in theories about cultural production in the region. Although some contributions to the ongoing debate on the origins and development of Caribbean cultures prefer to divide the literature into “schools,” distinguishing followers of Sidney Mintz and Richard Price’s “creolization” model from African-centered history and anthropology, there is hardly a unitary theory for these “creolists” to draw on. A potentially powerful tool for interpreting culture and cultural change in the contemporary world, the term “creolization” has attracted authors from way beyond the Caribbean. The concept is useful in theorizing interaction and continuums rather than bounded, isolated cultures and societies, and as a result, many writers—not least those informed by the “postmodern shift” in anthropology—have found it appealing. Creole, however, has a long history in scientific as well as everyday parlance in and of the Caribbean. Printed sources dating back to the sixteenth century mention creole people, plants, or animals—those born in the New rather than the Old World. The signification has, quite predictably, varied in different contexts, so that the connotations of hybridity or mixing, central to most contemporary social scientific usage of “creolization,” have by no means always accompanied the term. In Caribbean media and everyday discussions, creole often highlights division—particularly between sections of populations identifying as African-Caribbean (or “Creole”) and Indo-Caribbean, respectively—rather than inclusion or synthesis.

Cultural change and synthesis as a result of mobility is, of course, not a uniquely Caribbean phenomenon. We recognize, in agreement with Marilyn Strathern and others, that cultural and social reproduction everywhere requires the crafting of novel forms out of old materials. The circumstances in which the cultural reproduction often described as creolization has taken place in the colonial as well as postcolonial Caribbean, however, are particular and deserve to be studied as such. The unprecedented migrations of both enslaved people from Africa and other, more or less coerced laborers from Asia
and Europe; the hierarchical and violent colonial regimes of plantation societies during and after slavery; and the prolonged engagement of the region with the development of global capitalism and Atlantic modernity have produced cultural contact zones marked by specific forms of social stratification and power relations. Universalizing applications of the concept of creolization risk diluting the term’s analytical potency.

Much theorizing on creolization in Caribbean religions focuses on the integration or merging of African- and European-derived models, practices, and beliefs into new forms within strictly hierarchical and oppressive plantation societies. Such analyses have been indebted to Kamau Brathwaite’s creole society model as well as to the Herskovitsian project of locating a “Negro Past” in the New World. Brathwaite, focusing on the plantation regime during slavery, identifies two discrete groups, black and white, as producers of not only a mediating colored population but also acculturation and “interculturation,” which he describes as imitation and mimicry. Analyses of Caribbean religions have largely depended on a similarly selective matrix, and have portrayed syncretism or creolization as a somewhat mechanical process between European powers and African subalterns. Thus what could be called a “camouflage” theory of syncretism—developed, for example, in Roger Bastide’s and George Eaton Simpson’s work—maintains that practitioners of illegal or marginalized African-Caribbean and Brazilian religions covered their actual ritual practice under legitimate Roman Catholic symbolism, like statues and pictures of saints. Syncretism, in this view, was purely pragmatic and the resulting religion a mosaic of separate African and European parts.

We seek to complicate such models by illuminating the internal heterogeneity and hierarchies within what sometimes appear as undifferentiated notions of African or European influences, and by emphasizing Asian contributions to the formation of Caribbean religions. For instance, scholarship has divided the Caribbean into Protestant and Catholic worlds, and attributed the development of formations such as regla ocha to the specific syncretism that could develop in the context of Catholic saints and African deities. While this distinction has important analytic power, it is too binary. It fails to allow for the complex pasts of places like Trinidad, Grenada, and Dominica, where Catholicism flourished among elites although it was no longer the officially dominant religion after the British took over, nor does it describe the effects of the mobility of subaltern people and knowledge within the region, including movement across the boundaries drawn by imperial powers. As a result of these movements, which were especially significant in the Southern and Eastern Caribbean, religions like Spiritual Baptist and Orisha include Protestant-
derived forms of worship alongside Catholic saints and African and Indian deities. Moreover, as Richman’s chapter demonstrates, even in places like Haiti where Protestant Christianity has never had official status, Protestant missionaries have successfully converted large numbers of people. Richman argues that in Haiti this has led to interesting rapprochement between official Catholicism and Vodou leaders, despite the Catholic Church’s historical hostility to Vodou.

Other aspects of Caribbean societies also limit the applicability of a model of creolization based primarily on contrasts between Europe and Africa. Rhoda Reddock and Verene Shepherd, among others, have noted that Brathwaite’s creole society model fits uneasily in analyses of the demographically diverse societies of the Caribbean. An important line of critique in the ongoing debate on Caribbean cultural reproduction addresses the exclusive politics of nationalist or elite applications of creolization, creoleness, and creolité. Aisha Khan, Viranjini Munasinghe, and Deborah Thomas, among others, have shown how nationalism in the postcolonial states of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica has promoted certain features of African-Caribbean culture at the expense of the multiple others—that these nations comprise. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen puts it, anti- and postcolonial ideologies have been models for society rather than reflecting actual social reality. The Asian presence in the Caribbean has had a profound influence on local cosmologies, ritual symbolism, and practice, the plurality of which the shorthand “African-Caribbean” effectively hides.

Colonies like Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad were important nodes in cross-oceanic networks connecting this Atlantic world to the East, and particularly India. The more than half a million indentured Indians who crossed the Kala Pani between 1838 and 1917 made Asian cosmologies and ritual knowledge a part of Caribbean religious landscapes. These indentured laborers were placed on estates mainly in Guyana and Trinidad, but also in smaller numbers in Jamaica, Suriname, and on the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. In Indo-Caribbean identity politics, religion has emerged as a primary marker of ethnic difference. Notions of authenticity and orthodoxy have marked Hindu discourses in Trinidad particularly since the 1950s, as Sanatanist pundits have sought to disassociate orthodox Hinduism from what Arthur and Juanita Niehoff identified as “the folk religion.” Rituals of healing and counseling, called jharaying, as well as rituals of sacrifice to Kali, Dee (or Di) Baba and other marginalized gods and goddesses, were part of Guyanese and Trinidadian Hinduism during indentureship. From the 1950s onward, Shakti practice has been purged from mainstream Hinduism, and Kali’s puja is
spatially confined to particular mandirs or temples. An India remains a source of religious authority to Sanatanist as well as more inclusively oriented Hindus, however, and both Shakti and orthodox ritual specialists travel to the subcontinent in search of “authentic” models for their temples and pujas.

Such marginalized—and yet vibrant—modes of worship are often brought to the fore in discussions of creolization in Indo-Caribbean religions; other examples include the annual Ramleela performances in Trinidad, fusing carnival aesthetics and poignant social and political criticism with more conventional representations of “Indianness,” or Hosay processions in which Hindus and Christians celebrate along with Muslims. In early twentieth-century Trinidad, ritual practitioners’ self-definitions often reflected the heterogeneous milieu in which they worked: charged with practicing obeah, some defendants declared themselves a “Hindoo doctor,” an “Indian doctor,” or a “Hindu.” While it is remarkable that numerous Indo-Caribbean religious practitioners were charged under obeah legislation in Guyana, Trinidad, and Jamaica, even more indicative of the permeability of ethnic and religious boundaries was the fact that one “Hindoo doctor” was reported to be “a man of the bold negro type, answering to the name of Baboo Khandas Sadoo.” Finally, elements of Hinduism have become an integral part of most Orisha practice and shrines in Trinidad, and India is present as part of the spiritual landscape in Winti, Comfa, Spiritual Baptist, brujería, and Revival Zion cosmologies.

The issues at stake here do not relate only to relationships within the Caribbean. Indeed, the variety of participants in cultural reproduction and the nuanced, albeit hierarchical, power relations this reproduction entails become even more complex when we look at the Atlantic as a space of multidirectional movement and influences. Recent important contributions have situated New World history within a larger field of commerce, migrations, and discourse. The sociocultural systems in the Caribbean have not merely been fed by unilinear streams from cultural “sources” flowing from the Old World to the New, but should also be seen as part of a cross-oceanic dialogue, a system of mutual appropriations, re-evaluations, borrowings, and syntheses. J. Lorand Matory traces the development of the transatlantic Jeje and Nagó (Yoruba) nations across different empires, nation-states, and regions, and sheds light on the agency of a mobile class of merchants and travelers sailing between Brazil and the West African coast in the making of these imagined communities. Constructed as part of a cross-oceanic field, the African societies Matory describes differ sharply from the ahistorical, unchanging, or unspecified cultures of origin implied by much of the literature on African cultural continuums in the New World. Bronfman argues in her chapter that while early
twentieth-century American, Cuban, and Brazilian anthropology conceived of the African past as disconnected from the social order of the New World, and therefore produced an atavistic image of Africa, Henri Dumont’s 1876 study of Cuban medicine and healing portrayed Africa as a changing and heterogeneous region with a continuous presence in the lives of Cuban slaves. The twentieth-century project of imagining a distant and static African past correlates both with the aforementioned resurgence of moral anxiety about and new legislations implemented to suppress African-Caribbean religious practice in various parts of the English-speaking Caribbean, Cuba, and Haiti, and with the actual expansion of European colonial rule in Africa.

European contributions to the making of the New World cannot be studied as unaffected by these multidimensional and multidirectional processes of cultural production. While some historians have criticized the presumption of dominance of European influences over subsumed African cultures in the creolization model of cultural change in the Caribbean and in the Americas, we deem it necessary to place European, African, Asian, and American influences under similar scrutiny. Without overemphasizing their importance in Caribbean cosmologies and rituals, we need to look into the multiple, differently valued European-originated belief systems and ritual practices that have been embraced and appropriated by religious specialists and healers in the Caribbean (see Lara Putnam’s and Raquel Romberg’s chapters in this book). Although outside the scope of this book, it is also necessary to investigate the ways in which knowledge produced in and about colonial societies has influenced European definitions and practice of religion. Indeed, it may be the case that further investigation of “European-originated” belief systems would reveal the ways in which they drew on and were crafted in response to evolving religious beliefs and practices elsewhere in the Atlantic world and beyond.

The differently valued range of European influences in Caribbean ritual practice is well exemplified by people convicted of practicing obeah in Trinidad, especially since the late nineteenth century. Ritual specialists were bricoleurs, drawing from belief systems and cultural traditions indigenized in the Caribbean over the course of centuries of coexistence and synthesis between Judeo-Christian and West African religiosity. More recent imports, like the variants of Hinduism and Islam practiced by indentured Indians, Freemasonry, spiritualism, hypnotism, and the occult publications of the Chicago-based De Laurence Company all fed into the field of symbols and knowledge evoked in obeah trials. Putnam in her chapter writes, “Like their contemporaries in Paris, Liverpool, and Long Island, Caribbean folks sought super-

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natural power by means of an eclectic array of elements drawn from Victorian and Edwardian imaginings of otherness.

Although state prosecutors were keen to use the legal category of obeah as a gloss for various types of non-institutionalized ritual practice, many defendants in Jamaican and Trinidadian courtrooms preferred titles such as “palmist,” “hypnotist,” “scientist,” “medical electronic specialist,” “phrenologist,” and “mesmerist,” reflecting the circulation of overlapping religious and scientific knowledge between Europe and the Americas. Local newspapers covered séances in London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, published learned debates on the virtues and dangers of hypnotism or mesmerism, and described witchcraft, fortune-telling, and spiritual encounters in European centers. In Putnam’s analysis, this plurality reflected shared notions of and interests in manipulating spiritual powers and material relations: “The association of the exotic and alien with dangerous and useful power meant that boundaries of perceived race, culture, and origin could encourage bridge building rather than impede it.”

In addition to cross-oceanic connections, regional mobility between Caribbean colonies and between the Caribbean and the United States has been integral to the development of Caribbean religions. The period between 1890 and 1940 was marked by voluminous migrations within the insular and mainland Caribbean driven by United States investment in the plantation industry, especially in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the nascent oil industry in Trinidad and Venezuela, and the massive construction projects of the Panamanian and Costa Rican railways and the Panama Canal. Putnam’s chapter in this book examines the practice of obeah and the circulation of rumors concerning illegitimate ritual practices in the Greater Caribbean migratory sphere. Putnam describes obeah as “magic of and for a mobile modern world,” and argues that “engagement with the contemporaneous North Atlantic and the disparate and contentious technologies of healing and knowledge for sale within it” were a commonality shared by so-called obeah practitioners around the Greater Caribbean. As the stories of the prisoners in the Antigua jail discussed at the beginning of this introduction suggest, many defendants in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century obeah prosecutions had moved at least once between different Caribbean colonies, and some were quite widely travelled. Regional mobility and the resulting networks of social relations, particularly networks of kinship and exchange, have also led to the spreading of religions like the Spiritual Baptist faith to St. Vincent, Trinidad, Tobago, Barbados, Grenada, and Guyana. In recent decades, northbound migration to the metropoles of the United States, Canada, France, the Nether-
lands, and Britain have expanded Caribbean religions to hemispheric proportions, producing intense social fields of spiritual families, ritual practice, and exchange that span the borders of nation-states. Closely linked to this discussion about ethnically and geographically situated agents of creolization are questions of power and agency. Cultural resistance, creativity, and agency in relation to dominating structures have been at the heart of much scholarship on Caribbean religions. But studies of creolization can become ahistorical and decontextualized if, in their desire to empower the marginal and oppressed, they highlight agency and cultural creativity at the expense of analyzing the manifestations of power and inequality shaping such agency. Aisha Khan warns us that models of creolization devoid of concrete events leave us unable to account for political and economic processes and unequal power relations, which are essential to cultural construction. Drawing on Marxist social theory, O. Nigel Bolland’s view of creolization as a dialectical process brings agency to the forefront without reducing it to merely individual practice. Along with race, status differences can be based on ethnicity, gender, class, and age. Resistance emanating from creolization can be subtle to the verge of “infinitesimal,” but nevertheless meaningful. Raquel Romberg’s work on Puerto Rican brujería dwells on the concept of ritual piracy, portraying a dialectic not unlike that described by Bolland. Ritual pirates such as brujos illicitly appropriate and reposition central symbols of oppressors, like Catholic prayers or the cross. Rather than mixing, creolization here is an empowering tactic that challenges the exclusivity of hegemonic symbols, but also one that recognizes their power. Brujos’ ritual practice is highly individual and non-institutional, but, according to Romberg, it works to reproduce rather than subvert the social order of the “modern colony” of Puerto Rico.

In contrast, practices labeled as “ñáñiguismo” in Cuba were an example of politically potent, dissident action: arrests of ñáñigos at the end of the nineteenth century, as analyzed in Cooper’s chapter, reflected the intensifying anti-colonial struggle in Cuba and were brought about by the political, not only religious, nature of the rituals. Katherine Smith’s chapter provides another perspective on the relationship between the state and religious practice. Smith focuses on artistic representations of the Iwa Gede in Haiti in order to investigate the relationship between the Haitian state and this multifaceted guardian of regeneration and death. She shows that representations of Vodou spirits reflect changes in social, political, and economic circumstances. Although the Haitian artists discussed by Smith view Vodou from a perspective that is in many ways completely opposite to the viewpoints of colonial, exoticizing

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onlookers, they nevertheless sculpt their work to be viewed (and possibly purchased) not only by Haitians, but also by foreign tourists and consumers.

While accounts highlighting individual choice and agency in religious practice elucidate important aspects of Caribbean religiosity and power, we need to be wary of representing Caribbean cosmologies as infinitely open and inclusive, or ritual practitioners as purely pragmatic. Although inspirational and lacking centralized organization, there are powerful discursive and ritual mechanisms in Caribbean religions that give structure to individual interpretations and limit practitioners’ agency.

It should also be borne in mind that while analyses of Caribbean religious practices often see them as an arena of positively valued agency and subversion for the practitioners themselves, many people in Caribbean societies perceive these practices as potentially dangerous. Robert Hill, in his address to the conference from which most of this book’s chapters are drawn, emphasized the ambivalence of Jamaican appropriations of religious imageries, particularly around the persona of Marcus Garvey. Rastafarians’ and others’ negative attitudes toward obeah, as depicted in Kenneth Bilby’s chapter, range from ridicule to genuine fear. And it is a sense of danger or awe before lwa’s might and demands that stimulates Haitian conversions to Protestantism, as explored in Richman’s chapter. This ambiguous, even threatening power of religious practice is real to many members of Caribbean societies but not always appreciated in scholarship more inclined to stress the emancipatory potential of religion. As Bilby’s analysis shows, negative perceptions of religious practice do not necessarily align with racial or cultural binaries.

**CARIBBEAN RELIGIONS IN THE “SAVAGE SLOT”: THE QUESTION OF MODERNITY**

Considerations of how Caribbean religions have been defined, named, and represented, as well as the debates on cultural reproduction delineated above, are closely connected to another significant discussion in which many Caribbeanists have recently engaged: that surrounding Caribbean modernity. The most influential accounts of Caribbean modernity have focused largely on both the sugar plantation as a highly rationalized form of production and the central position of the Caribbean in intercontinental chains of commerce.

Caribbean religions have scarcely been drawn on in depictions of the Caribbean in the creation of modernity. On the contrary, as the above discussion of Caribbean ethnography and historiography since Labat and Long shows, religion and ritual practice have largely been understood as antithetical to the modern, at best picturesquely traditional, but often at the very core
of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot has called the “savage slot.”96 According to Trouillot, Western modernity is inherently dual or Janus-faced; it has taken shape against a spatially and temporally differentiated counterpoint, its other. The Caribbean as imagined by the West (along with other spaces, utopian or real) has occupied this savage slot in the heterology of modernity. We would go beyond this, however, to argue that the imagined topographies of modern and non-modern (or differently modern) spaces and times are heterologous in an additional sense. For hierarchies, boundaries, and comparisons along binaries like modern/primitive or civilized/barbarous inhere even within and between places and times positioned outside Western modernity. The presence of other, distanced, and exoticized places and people has been visible in Caribbean media since the nineteenth century, and particularly during the period of high colonialism. Reports of “the hostile savages of the Amazonia,” cannibalism in the Solomon Islands, headshrinking Pygmies in “the Darkest Africa,” or headhunting in Borneo were common in local newspapers like the Trinidadian Port of Spain Gazette, illuminating the planetary scale of European imperialism but also presenting the newly “discovered,” yet-to-be-civilized cultures in contrast to colonies like Trinidad (which were depicted as “modern” and “civilized”).97 A wide array of differently valued peripheries, then—not unlike that in the global hierarchy of value between the nation-states of the contemporary world order98—was presented in public discourse in the colonial Caribbean.

And yet, although Caribbean journalists and writers presented the region as being superior to the savagery of those distant others, ritual practice posed an underlying threat to the modernity and potential sovereignty of Caribbean societies. Mostly religious but also profane rituals like carnival would be deemed as “barbarous relapse into Savagedom,” “Voodooism” or obeah in Demerara was a “relic of African savagery,” wakes a “nuisance” and a “savage practice,” Shouters’ meetings in Trinidad a “combination of African fetish dance and devilish possession,” and Jamaican “obeah and myalism [meant] degradation and a relapse into savagery.”99 The colonial imagination had long held “Voodoo” in Haiti as the very antithesis of modern and civilized social order. Portrayals of Caribbean religions have been most flagrant in both local and foreign media and popular culture, like the song lyrics explored in Bilby’s chapter in this book. Anthropological and historical studies have frequently contributed to understandings of the beliefs and ritual practices of mainly Afro-Caribbean people as the other to what is modern, civilized, and desirable.

Trouillot’s heterologous model adds to recent discussions of modernity as comprising geographical and historical variants.100 Critics of such plural ap-
approaches to modernity have questioned the validity of relativizing the concept, arguing that to do so may conceal relations of power and dominance integral to the making of world capitalism. To such critics, European agency appears to define modernity. But, as Stephan Palmié argues, given that capitalism, as well as other tenets of modernity (such as nation-state, democracy, and Enlightenment philosophy), were formulated in the context of imperialism, massive migrations, and cultural encounters of unprecedented variety, “modernity may well be, not a metropolitan export, but a colonial reimport.” Richard Drayton suggests that we look at European imperialism as “the colonization of Europe by extra-European interests”; as his work on the profound, and continuing, impact of empire on centers as well as peripheries shows, the modern world was produced through the “collaboration of the labour, wit, and learning of all the world.” The cross-oceanic networks of mobility, discourse, and capitalist commerce engendered by sugar production in Caribbean plantations require less unilinear and Eurocentric models for comprehending modernity than mainstream social scientific theory has generally provided.

As noted above, the Caribbean has been a bountiful source of exoticized representations of “primitive” religiosity in European and North American literature and media. Indeed, the influence of such colonial knowledge on the development of apparently autochthonous European fin de siècle belief systems deserves further research. Novel modes of accessing the spiritual world, such as mesmerism or Spiritism, took shape in imperial centers engaged in Atlantic fields of discourse and mobility, and came ashore in the Caribbean as products of the empire, if not part of Atlantic culture itself. Thus the modernity visible in early twentieth-century obeah in Putnam’s chapter may entail various layers of cultural encounters within the empire, rather than autochthonously European religious imports to the Caribbean.

Forde’s and Romberg’s chapters bring new perspectives to the debate on capitalism in Caribbean modernity. Forde argues that although capitalism has shaped Caribbean societies from the dawn of the plantation economy, and although money has been a medium of exchange in Caribbean ritual practice for hundreds of years, the norms and values associated with a ritual sphere of exchange in Trinidad and Tobago do not align with those of capitalism. Whereas related, non-capitalist modes of exchange in most other parts of the colonized world had existed prior to colonialism, and were reshaped by it, transactions between ritual specialists and their clients in the Caribbean follow codes developed within imperial structures. Romberg, on the other hand, looks to Puerto Rico as a modern colony characterized by welfare capitalism.
Puerto Rican brujos adhere to the pursuits and norms of consumer capitalism, but they rationalize it through Spiritist tenets and morality. For these practitioners, accumulation is a sign of blessing.

**CONCLUSION**

As we write, the importance of understanding the historical longevity, complexity, and political work done by representations of Caribbean religions has become especially pressing. In the aftermath of the earthquake that devastated Haiti in January 2010, representations of Vodou became intertwined with debates about the historical and political reasons for Haiti’s poverty, the difficulty of reconstruction, and the question of who controls aid. While Pat Robertson’s claim that Haitians have been “cursed” since the revolution due to their having made a “pact with the devil” quickly became notorious and was widely condemned, some liberal commentators attacked Vodou (or rather, voodoo) as the cause of Haiti’s ills in not entirely dissimilar terms.∞≠∂ Writing in the online edition of the British newspaper the *Guardian*, Caroline Saunders blamed Haiti’s poverty on two things: corruption, and “Haiti’s cultural traditions,” by which she meant “the prevailing belief in voodoo,” which leads to “the village witch doctor” being “for many Haitian parents the first port of call when their child falls ill.”∞≠∑ Her comments suggest the continuing power of negative interpretations of Caribbean religion as backward and superstitious across much of the political spectrum in the Global North.

Such interpretations, widely published in Caribbean media, add to the long history of using culture (and especially religion) to explain social problems and suffering. Effectively silent on political and economic contexts, this discourse has concrete repercussions in our contemporary world. At worst, sedimented ideas of religions like Vodou as backward or demonic can serve to justify continued marginalization and even violence; for example, consider an attack on “Voodooists” by a group of evangelical Christians, who destroyed Vodou altars and offerings and urinated on ritual symbols in Cité Soleil a few weeks after the earthquake.∞≠∏ In addition to influencing public opinion on religious groups and practices, scholarly and media interventions, including more nuanced and less condemnatory understandings of Caribbean religion, reflect but also shape discussions within religious groups. This mutually influential relationship between practitioners and scribes has been visible, for example, in the emergence of ideologies of anti-syncretism in Orisha, Candomblé, and regla ocha, especially since the 1990s. If the recent discourse on Voodoo relies on old, racialized notions of superstition and sovereignty, these
developments reference authenticity and anti-colonialism. By denying substantial or semantic syntheses of African and other, mainly Asian and Christian, elements in creole religions, many educated, middle-class religious leaders with transnational connections to Orisha elders in the United States, Nigeria, and elsewhere in the Caribbean seek to purify their religions of non-African symbols and practices and add elements considered more authentic and African, such as Ifa divination. Such anti-syncretic views sometimes adopt, but also invert, the image of an unchanging and undifferentiated Africa that marks much of the twentieth-century anthropology of African American and Caribbean religion. As this book suggests, moves such as these are part of an ongoing dialogue in which a multitude of actors in and around the Caribbean have debated and redefined the authenticity, validity, and origins of spiritual power. We advocate paying greater attention to that dialogue not because it proves that Caribbean religions are in any way inauthentic, but rather because it demonstrates just how integral Caribbean faiths and practices have been to the political, economic, and social processes that have shaped the world we inhabit today—and the multiple places of Caribbean peoples within it.

This book may offer little to those practitioners, students, or advocates of Caribbean religions who, for motives personal or political, yearn for clear-cut depictions of obeah or other local forms of religious practice that accentuate uniqueness and authenticity by playing down change and interaction in cultural reproduction. But it may prove helpful for those who seek to understand Caribbean religions, or identify with them, in the societies in which they are practiced. Addressing the centuries-long processes of cultural encounters, appropriations, and reproduction that have gone into the making of religion and spiritual work in the Caribbean, the chapters in this book tell us about agency and identity politics, about the need to find common ground, and the need to draw boundaries. No less important, they describe the practices of governing, policing, and representing religion as projects that both affect and are affected by the cultural politics of religious practitioners. Throughout, the chapters emphasize the powerful presence of the spiritual in the lives of Caribbean people past and present, in milieus sacred and mundane. At the most fundamental level, it is the acknowledgment of this power that unifies these chapters and inspires the analyses and debates this book evokes.

NOTES

1. Knollys to Lyttelton, no. 222, May 22, 1905, The National Archives of the UK (hereafter tna): CO 152/287. On police photography, see Mary Warner Marien, Pho-


3. Colonial officials described Lucy Emile Bernard, convicted of practicing obeah in Dominica, as a “French woman from Guadeloupe.” Young to Sweet-Escott, June 20, 1906, enclosed in Sweet-Escott to Bruce, no. 275, July 23, 1906, TNA: CO 152/290. Their Virgin Islands colleagues noted of Isaac Williams that he had been caught and prosecuted after “returning home” to the Virgin Islands “after spending several months in Santo Domingo.” Earl to Lyttelton, May 9, 1905, enclosed in Knollys to Lyttelton, no. 218, May 19, 1905, TNA: CO 152/287.

4. A book such as this might have included chapters on other societies in the Americas, particularly Brazil and the United States. In order to include as much material as possible on the Caribbean, however, we have limited our focus to the Greater Caribbean (including mainland Central America and the Guyanas). Even so, it has not been possible to discuss all parts of the region.


8. A large body of anthropological literature has historicized these categories and challenged their applicability as markers of autonomous entities. See, for example, Asad, Genealogies of Religion; Robin Horton and Ruth H. Finnegan, eds., Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Morton Klass, Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah,


18. Similarly, what used to be referred to as the “Shango cult” in Trinidadian media and scholarship is today called Orisha work or Orisha religion by most practitioners and researchers.


20. For a discussion of the Sixth World Congress, held in Trinidad in 1999, see Frances Henry, Reclaiming African Religions in Trinidad: The Socio-political Legitimation of the Orisha and Spiritual Baptist Faiths (Mona: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 146–56.


22. Klass, Ordered Universes, 89.

23. Christopher Columbus, The Journal of Christopher Columbus (during His First Voyage, 1492–93), and Documents Relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real (1893; edited and translated by Clements R. Markham, New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), 47, 90; see also pp. 38, 65, 73.


26. For studies of the Inquisition that emphasize cases involving Africans and people of African descent, usually in close interaction with mestizos/as, Spaniards, or Indians, see Joan Cameron Bristol, Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico


29. For important discussions of all these texts, and many others, see Lewis, *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought*.


33. Moreau’s description of vaudoux was, for instance, extensively quoted in the notorious Spencer St. John, *Hayti; or, The Black Republic* (London: Smith, Elder, 1884), which popularized the claim that Vodou involved cannibalism.


36. James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies; or, The Bow of Ulysses*

37. In contrast to these early armchair anthropologists, Henri Dumont's work on Cuban slaves in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as examined in Alejandra Bronfman's chapter in this book, is a rare example of nascent anthropology produced in the periphery rather than in the center.


40. For example, the *Port of Spain Gazette* of April 24, 1906, 6, report of an “East Indian” funeral procession in Port of Spain, depicts the bereaved as “indulg[ing] in a sort of glorified crapeau dance, and hootchi kootchi combined, and tom tomming away to their hearts’ content.”

41. The bloodiest repression of religious proceedings in Trinidad was targeted at Indo-Trinidadians, when the colonial police opened fire against the annual Hosay or Muharram procession on its way to San Fernando on October 30, 1884, killing at least fifteen and wounding well over a hundred Muslim and Hindu participants. Indo-Trinididian estate labourers had been prohibited from entering the main towns during the Hosay festival as a precaution against possible riots. Kelvin Singh, *Bloodstained Tombs: The Muharram Massacre, 1884* (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988), 1, 16–17.


43. In the following decades, a relatively small number of Indo-Trinidadians were prosecuted for allowing drumming after 10 p.m. See, for example, “Coolie Drum Beating,” *Port of Spain Gazette*, May 14, 1915, 8.


46. For an analysis of Price-Mars’s work in relation to Firmin, see Gérarde Magloire-


57. See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Caribbean Region: An Open Frontier in
Anthropological Theory,” Annual Review of Anthropology 21, no. 1 (October 1992): 19–42. The increasing number of ethnographic inquiries into Caribbean societies and cultures can be contrasted with the discipline of history’s almost complete lack of concern with the worldviews and culture of Caribbean people at this time. Historians, to the extent that they attended to the Caribbean at all, focused instead on the development of colonial policy and the plantation economy.


65. Palmié, “Creolization and Its Discontents.”


77. Khan, *Callaloo Nation*.


80. McNeal, ‘Ecstasy in Exile,” chap. 5; Tsuji, “‘They don’t do culture.’”

on Biroo alias Sadoo, “an East Indian man describing himself as a worshipper of the Sun,” charged with practicing obeah; or “Obeah Charge,” (Jamaica) Gleaner, December 10, 1909, 3, on Pearial Maragh, an East Indian who claimed to be a professor and saw his clients at Queen’s Hotel. Like at least fifty other practitioners identified as East Indian in Jamaica and Trinidad between 1890 and 1940, Maragh was charged with practicing obeah.


84. Matory, Black Atlantic Religion.


86. Thanks to Lara Putnam for helping us to formulate this point.


94. Kristina Wirtz has argued in *Ritual, Discourse, and Community in Cuban Santería* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) that discursive, reflective practices around Santería produce and integrate a moral community. Discourse, then, is at least as significant as ritual practice in integrating a religious group and religion.


97. For examples of such reports recurring in the Port of Spain Gazette, see “Cannibal Monarch,” February 16, 1913, 2; “Lost in Wilds,” February 1, 1908, 7; “New Guinea,” January 6, 1924, 14.


101. Partly in response to Trouillot’s insistence on the modernity of the colonial Caribbean, Jonathan Friedman defines modernity as “the cultural field of commercial capitalism, its emergent identity space,” but lists its systematically interrelated attributes as follows: “individualism, public/private division, democracy, nation-state, Enlightenment philosophy/critical rationality, capitalism, global economy/imperialism, modernism/developmentalism/evolutionism.” Any alternative modernity must include these invariables. See Friedman, “Modernity and Other Traditions,” in Knauff, Critically Modern, 294, 298.

102. Palmié, Wizards and Scientists, 42.


108. With the opposite effect, but operating on a similar logic, some members of the Spiritual Baptist religion wish to purify their faith from “African forms of worship.” See de Peza, My Faith.

109. Thanks to Lara Putnam for helping us to formulate this point.