



Rastafari: Roots and Ideology

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

Rastafari: Roots and Ideology Details

Date : Published December 1st 1994 by Syracuse University Press

ISBN : 9780815602965

Author : Barry Chevannes

Format : Paperback 298 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Religion, Anthropology, Music

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From Reader Review Rastafari: Roots and Ideology for online ebook

Rhonnell says

A great unbiased insight in the world of Rastafari.

Elsie says

I learned a lot.

Michael says

I have read 2 books on Rastafarians. This book is good, but dwells too much in to the political elements of it and less time on the actual rastafarians. If you are more into the political end of the movement... this is probably the better book. If your interest are more towards the actual rastas and their lifestyle and culture, you may want to try a different book. It's a good book, educational as far as Jamaican politics is concerned. Not exactly what I was looking for... but a well written and researched book.

Chelsea Ursaner says

As interested as I am in Rastafari religion and culture, this book was just not enjoyable. It came about from a doctoral dissertation and reads like one. First sentence - "This study first traces the cultural roots of the Rastafari movement in Jamaica where it originated and then provides an ethnographic description of the movement in the city of Kingston." I'm only giving it two stars instead of one because it basically does what it promises.

Worst of all, Chevannes devotes almost no time to Ras Tafari the man. And mentions Bob Marley only as an afterthought in the last chapter. Ras Tafari at least should be integral to the book. Instead he spends his time on Myal and Revivalism and the Bedwardites and the Bobo and the Youth Black Movement and others I didn't care about and does it in such a dry way that I had no hope of retaining anything.

I will share some cool things though - Rastafari culture involves a lot of word play and manipulation. Examples:

- "Oppression" -> "downpression" because you're pushed down
- "Holy" -> "hola" because "anything holey runs a leak" and hola suggests whole
- The word "man" as opposed to "men" is not singular vs plural.. "man" implies moral integrity and "men" is its opposite. So words like "judgment" become "judgmant," referring to Michael Manley as "Menlow" indicates disdain for his politics
- The personal pronoun "I" is considered the same as the roman numeral I following Selassie so the Rastafi substitute words and letters with it all the time as a way of calling upon Jah's holiness. For example, "I" can

mean either "me" or "you." "We" or "you" plural is "I and I." You have to just know from context what is going on. Brethren (pronounced bredrin) is "idrin," "eternal" is "iternal," "hour" is "iowa," etc.

Owen Scott Verde says

Part of my "Books Read" list I found while moving/unpacking.

Doug says

I read this book while traveling in Jamaica which I think may have helped my understand it, or at least helped immerse me in the Jamaican culture from which Rastafarianism emerged. It can seem a bit directionless as the interviews don't necessarily lead smoothly into a thread of a narrative, but I think this lack of narrative thread or easily drawn conclusions helped prevent the forming of stereotypes about Rastas and encouraged a more sophisticated and accurate picture of the Rastafarian movement. I appreciated Chevannes' dedication to painstaking in-the-field research rather than lecturing or claiming to have already have all the answers. It was a challenging but rewarding read that helped correct some of my misconceptions and blindspots with regards to the Rastafarian movement. I especially like the last chapter.
