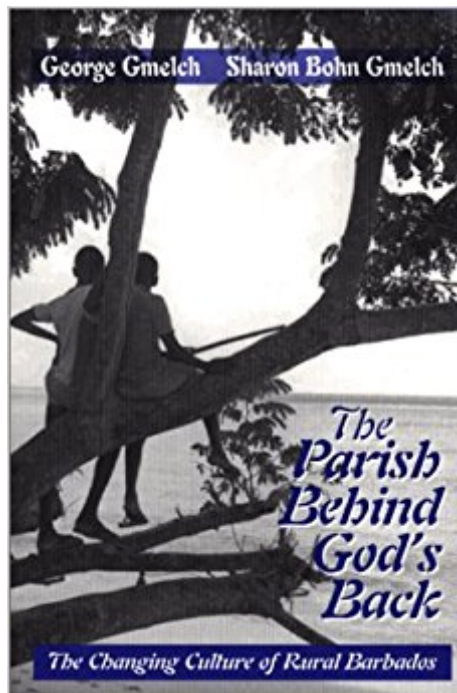




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The Parish Behind God's Back: The Changing Of Rural Barbados



Synopsis

In the eastern Caribbean the expression "behind God's back" refers to a place that is remote or far away. In this book, the authors look at the changing face of village life in St. Lucy, Barbados' northern and most rural parish. What they find are people whose lives are fully connected to the outside world. One of the first things any visitor to the island notices are youths in baseball caps and T-shirts sporting the names and logos of American teams. Switching on the television, it is easier to find an American sitcom than a Caribbean program. In conversation, it soon becomes apparent that nearly every villager has a relative living overseas and that many have themselves traveled to New York, Toronto, and London. And all Barbadians are aware that the health of their economy depends on decisions made beyond their shores. The Parish Behind God's Back is informed by the authors' research and experiences directing an anthropology field school in Barbados since 1983. The book begins with an introduction to the island and parish, followed by history and macrolevel description of the island economy, before turning to the local scene--patterns of work, gender relations, lifecycle, community, and religion. The perspective then widens to look at the global forces that most directly affect local people's lives--television, tourism, and travel. An appendix describes how North American college students were changed by living in St. Lucy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Parish behind God's Back is a live tableau of a complete island society, throbbing often with its frustrated hopes and always with a total awareness of its position in time and space. -- John Wickham, former Barbadian senator and columnist for The Nation --This text refers to an out of print

or unavailable edition of this title.

"Beautifully written, this book deals with all the big issues of our time--slavery, colonialism, migration, tourism, and globalization." -- Robin Isserles (City University of New York) "A sensitively written account of modern rural Barbados . . . that places the local community within historical as well as national and international contexts." -- Jerome S. Handler (Virginia Foundation for the Humanities) "Besides being lively and well-rounded, The Parish makes strategic use of comparisons to U.S. culture so that students are also learning about themselves. . . . It presents an excellent frame of reference for considering the costs as well as the benefits of modernization, U.S. style." -- Katherine Browne (Colorado State University) "Provocative. A path-breaking study of a rural parish in which the authors have expertly distilled the essence of Barbadian life." -- Trevor Marshall (University of the West Indies) " . . . a live tableau of a complete island society, throbbing often with its frustrated hopes and always with a total awareness of its position in time and space." -- John Wickham, former Barbadian senator and columnist for The Nation

This book is terribly boring, and many of the characters have similar names, making it hard to keep track of people. I get that it's not actually a story, and is based on real life events and blahblahblah, but that doesn't make it any more interesting.

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive ethnographic account of one rural community in the small island nation of Barbados. The intended audience is undergraduate students studying anthropology, therefore it is primarily descriptive, atheoretical, and written in a simple, straight-forward manner. The author begins with a historical overview, one theme being change over time. The second chapter, for example, discusses the demise of the sugar industry, the *raison d'être* of the colony, and its recent replacement by tourism. The book very effectively personalizes life in the community by including portraits of individuals, particularly in chapter four. The next chapter is quite appropriately devoted to gender and the life cycle, the relationship between men and women being a key interest of scholars in the Caribbean in recent years. The remainder of the book (almost half) is devoted to a discussion of changes in the community, including the introduction of piped water and its effects, indoor plumbing, kerosene and later propane stoves, ovens, electricity, television, telephones, tourism, and emigration. The book is also effective in placing Barbados within the content of 'the world system'. I found it to be a very easy, pleasant and informative read, suitable for most any reader with an interest in anthropology, social

change, globalization, ethnography, or, of course, Barbados and the English-speaking Caribbean. I assigned it for a class on the Caribbean and would use it again, although some students found it dull.

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