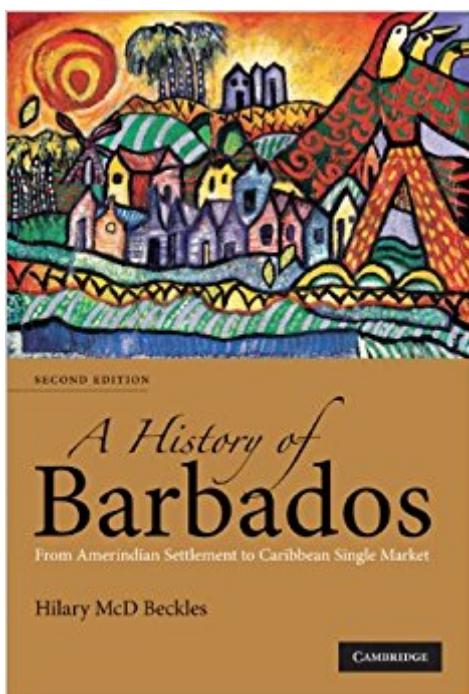


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A History Of Barbados: From Amerindian Settlement To Caribbean Single Market



Synopsis

Highly acclaimed when it first appeared in 1990, this general history of Barbados traces the events and ideas that have shaped the collaborative experience of all the island's inhabitants. In this second edition, Hilary Beckles updates the text to reflect the considerable number of writings recently published on Barbados. He presents new insights and analyses key events in a lucid and provocative style which will appeal to all those who have an interest in the island's past and present. Using a vigorous approach, Hilary Beckles examines how the influences of the Amerindians, European colonisation, the sugar industry, the African slave trade, emancipation, the civil rights movement, independence in 1966 and nationalism have shaped contemporary Barbados.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"...the first comprehensive history of the island ever written by a professional historian...[Beckles] has succeeded admirably in producing a clear, competent, and comprehensive social history of Barbados, incorporating much information into a relatively short book while avoiding facile oversimplification." Hispanic American Historical Review --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this second edition, Hilary Beckles updates the text to reflect the considerable number of writings recently published on Barbados.

I was hoping for more Pirates and lusty maidens. I read this book in preparation for Cropover in Barbados. I was hoping to develop an appreciation for the History of the place before I went down there. I envisioned daily field trips to historical places before feting the night away in willful abandon. I stayed at a hotel not 500 Meters from the George Washington house. Well, the book was OK. The Cropover was Fantastic. If I saw something historic, it was through my Scotch Goggles. I would recommend Cropover. This book not so much. However, it's not a bad book. If you are crazy about Barbados, you should have it on your shelf. If you are simply curious about Barbados, OK, get the book. If you enjoy a good slave uprising, and we all do, spoiler alert...it's in this book. Do not bother to bring this book to Cropover though unless you intend to simply use it as a coaster.

This is the one book I turned to when I decided to put pen to paper for my historic novel. No work of history or even of fiction that is focused on Barbados (or even on the greater Caribbean) can claim authenticity without referring to this book by Sir Hilary Beckles.

This is a careful, thorough history of Barbados. It is a scholarly work in the best sense. It is interesting, thorough, clear and well written. If you are interested in the history of Barbados, as I am, you will be glad you read the book. It covers the entire history of Barbados, with perhaps only recent history being a little short on detail. Beckles writes with a point of view: the history of Barbados is a struggle between the slaves and later freed people against a monolithic "plantocracy." The book is not particularly good at sorting out currents and cross-currents in developments, instead forcing everything to fit into this point of view, whether or not the people or the developments really fit. Beckles has no capability of seeing the history of Barbados from the viewpoint of people who were not slaves, whether they are rich English people or poor Irish people. People from both of these groups were in Barbados for hundreds of years, in fact they were in Barbados before African slavery. He mentions in passing that many of these people left Barbados in the last half of the twentieth century, without discussing either the number who left or the underlying reasons or implications. The observations in the book related to economics are simply dreadful. I am a professional economist, so this probably is a bigger deal to me than you unless you are an economist, but Beckles has no grasp of basic economics. Beckles presents simplistic answers when the results of thoughtful analysis would be informative. The discussion of population and emigration is particularly poor. He sees emigration as all bad. It is hard for those leaving. Still, Beckles does not seem to realize that emigration raised the wages of those remaining in Barbados.

He does seem to realize that small peasant holdings did not come into existence in Barbados precisely because the land was productive in producing cash crops on large farms or plantations. Still, rather than examine whether smallholdings were quite unlikely no matter who owned the land when slavery was abolished and what might have happened instead, Beckles blames the evil plantocracy for getting in the way of the former slaves' aspirations and leaves it at that. This is easily the most careful and thorough history of Barbados available. It is the best place to get the actual developments, even though you will not get a good understanding of why they happened. I highly recommend it.

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