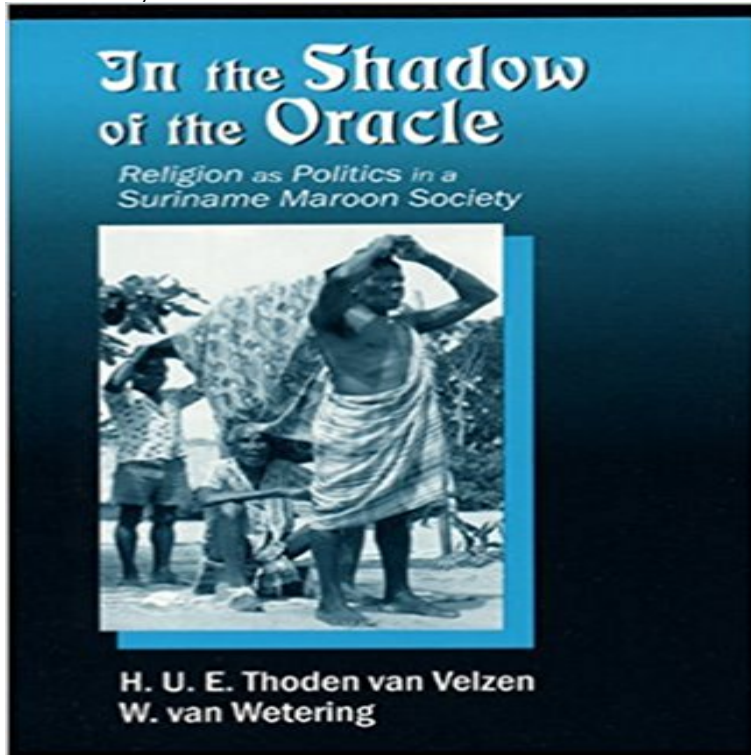


In the Shadow of the Oracle: Religion As Politics in a Suriname Maroon Society



This is a book about witches and possession cults, about polytheistic priests and iconoclastic prophets, about magic as a cottage industry in a modernizing Afro-American society. It relates the world of the Ndyuka, a tribe of 50,000+ descendants of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century runaway African slaves in Suriname. It names the major innovators in the 300-year-long process of evolving and adjusting their belief system. Writing from an ethnohistoric perspective, the authors have enviably unraveled the complexities of a belief system engrained in a community of people living in Suriname, a former Dutch colony in South America. The Ndyuka, one of the six Maroon groups in Suriname, are willing to let their decisions and lives be dominated by priests, shamans, oracles, and spirits. During their extended period of fieldwork, Dutch anthropologists Thoden van Velzen and van Wetering were able to penetrate Ndyuka religiosity a feat not achieved by other researchers, since the Ndyuka do not freely expose themselves to outsiders. Among the sacred and secular activities they witnessed and recorded were a witch eradication movement and Maroon oracles at work. Now, in this vibrant text, they offer readers an intimate, inside-out account of Ndyuka social imagery and ideological principles in-depth revelations neither previously revealed to nor easily understood by others who do not share the same worldview.

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