

Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle. By Brackette F. Williams. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991. xix, 322 pp.

How do oppressed individuals negotiate hegemonic ideology after their oppressor is gone? Do they reconstruct an egalitarian or hierarchical system of power? Who takes over the oppressor's position of power, and how does this change in leadership redefine interpersonal relationships among subordinate groups? These are just a few intriguing questions that Brackette F. Williams addresses in her book, *Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*. In this ethnographic study, Williams investigates how individuals in a small, rural community in post-independence Guyana adjusted to the diminished significance of British hegemony. More specifically, she examines "the social interaction in relation to the past hegemonic homogenization of culture and its implications for contemporary identities and solidarities in nation building" (xv). Williams eloquently shows the ways in which ethnic identity formation, occupational assignment, and the reformation of a national identity are still shaped around hegemonic colonial ideology.

In addition to her ethnographic data from a rural, east coast community in Guyana, Williams uses a wide array of secondary sources to help her contextualize the formation of European nationalism as well as the sociopolitical and historical context of Guyana. Williams justifies her multiple sources to infer that anthropology can use symbols, interpretations, and the meaning of social life without losing sight of the material and political realities in which these social interactions and processes occur (xvii). For Williams, it is essential that her ethnographic work be supplemented by history and context.

Williams divides her book into three sections. The first describes the demographics of her ethnographic community and focuses on how geographical location, ethnicity, occupation, and family name play major roles in structuring how people perceive and interact with one another. The second section goes beyond simply explaining the interactions and stereotypes that individuals have of each other to explore the meaning and ideology attached to these interactions and stereotypes (127). Williams begins this process of decoding meaning by tracing the history of British rule in Guyana. She posits that present-day ethnic divisions of labor and geographical constraints are the products of Anglo-European hegemony during the colonial period. This dominant group manipulated subordinated groups in order to maintain the plantation system and its place in the socioeconomic order (140, 150). Essentially, Anglo-Europeans created a hegemonic hierarchy in which they occupied the top with all other groups arrayed underneath.

Surprisingly, after Guyana's independence, the subordinate groups appropriated the same stereotypes of one other that their former oppressor had constructed to maintain its position in the hegemonic order. However, unlike the hegemony established by Anglo-Europeans, the post-colonial order had to incorporate the egalitarian ideals of the independence movement. The formerly subordinate groups in newly-independent Guyana never reached a consensus on how ranking order should be established. At times, citizens expressed a desire for an egalitarian ranking order where all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, would have the right to participate in any economic or political sector; at other times, they seemed to prefer the hierarchical ranking order established during colonial times, in which individuals were allotted certain benefits and privileges due to their ethnic identity (170-74). The last section of Williams's book examines a

few cases in which European hegemony maintains its presence in Guyana through Christian religious dominance and ritual ceremonies, such as weddings.

Williams reveals the complexity of nation building in the midst of shifting powers. She demonstrates through her ethnographic research how ideology and beliefs in Anglo-European dominance still shape social interactions, occupations, stereotypes, and even geography in post-colonial Guyana. Her book is an excellent read for scholars interested in exploring the complex interplay of colonialism, nationalism, ideology, hegemony, and ethnicity.

Caralee Jones
Indiana University, Bloomington