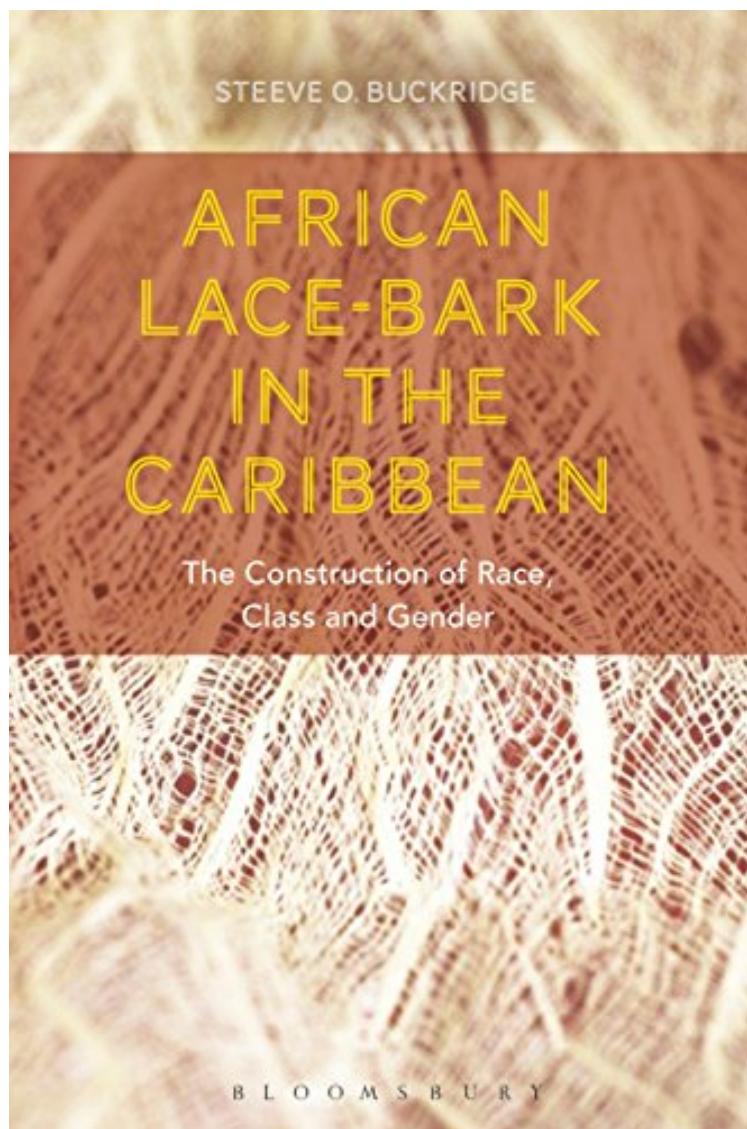


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African Lace-bark in the Caribbean: The Construction of Race, Class and Gender

Steeve O. Buckridge

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Steeve O. Buckridge : African Lace-bark in the Caribbean: The Construction of Race, Class and Gender

before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised African Lace-bark in the Caribbean: The Construction of Race, Class and Gender:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommendedmdash;the intersection of craft, race, gender, botany, and moreBy Aimee LeeThis is an excellent and meticulously-researched book written in prose that makes it easy for the general reader to follow. It gives a fascinating history of the migration of lace-bark from Africa to the

Caribbean, focusing mainly on Jamaica but noting its presence in Cuba in Haiti, and the uses and meanings of lace-bark in a slave culture and beyond emancipation. Anyone interested in global textile traditions, paper prototypes, human inventions using botanical materials, and the cultural implications of dress, race, and women's work will find this book rewarding. A final plea at the end of the book asks us to consider the near extinction of these special trees (*Lagetta lagetto*) and to keep them in mind when designating protected areas or before clearing native habitats for development.

In Caribbean history, the European colonial plantocracy created a cultural diaspora in which African slaves were torn from their ancestral homeland. In order to maintain vital links to their traditions and culture, slaves retained certain customs and nurtured them in the Caribbean. The creation of lace-bark cloth from the *lagetta* tree was a practice that enabled slave women to fashion their own clothing, an exercise that was both a necessity, as clothing provisions for slaves were poor, and empowering, as it allowed women who participated in the industry to achieve some financial independence. This is the first book on the subject and, through close collaboration with experts in the field including Maroon descendants, scientists and conservationists, it offers a pioneering perspective on the material culture of Caribbean slaves, bringing into focus the dynamics of race, class and gender. Focussing on the time period from the 1660s to the 1920s, it examines how the industry developed, the types of clothes made, and the people who wore them. The study asks crucial questions about the social roles that bark cloth production played in the plantation economy and colonial society, and in particular explores the relationship between bark cloth production and identity amongst slave women.

Lace-bark is truly an extraordinary natural material, and one bound intimately to the history of the Caribbean. This book is the first to reveal the hidden lives of the men and women who created the complex chain from living plant to clothing, giving agency to those overlooked by botanists and historians. Buckridge makes a compelling case for regarding lace-bark in an African context, while also demonstrating its centrality in Jamaican culture. * Mark Nesbitt, Research Leader in Economic Botany at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK * This book highlights a virtually forgotten textile, but also contributes significant insight into the lived experiences of enslaved and newly-freed Africans in the Caribbean. It celebrates the knowledge and talents that enslaved women brought from West Africa, while contemplating what the future might hold for this distinctive bark cloth. * Heather Akou, Indiana University, USA * About the Author Steeve O. Buckridge is Director of Area Studies programs and Professor of African and Caribbean History at Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA.