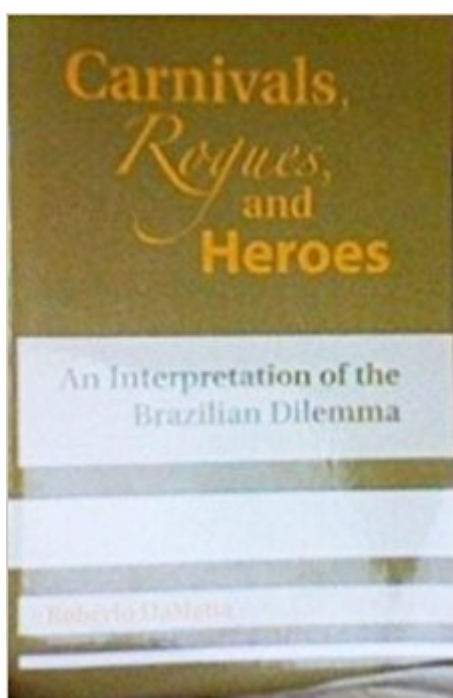


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Carnivals, Rogues, And Heroes: An Interpretation Of The Brazilian Dilemma (ND Kellogg Inst Int'l Studies)



Synopsis

Encompassing half the continent of South America, Brazil is one of the most modern, complex, and misunderstood nations. Renowned Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta takes the misconceptions and offers a fresh, provocative interpretation of the complexity of social structure in Brazil. Using the tools of comparative social anthropology, DaMatta seeks to understand his native country by examining the values, attitudes, and systems that shape the identity of Brazil and its people. He probes the dilemma between the highly authoritarian, hierarchal aspects of Brazilian society and the concurrent desire for equality, democracy, and harmony in that same society. DaMatta leads us on a fascinating exploration into the world of Brazilian carnivals, rogues, and heroes, and in so doing uncovers a deeper meaning of the rituals, symbols, and dramatizations unique to Brazil and its multifaceted society.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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Robert DaMatta is professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Notre Dame. He has published several books, including A Divided World: Apinaye Social Structure.

Great book. Very insightful.

This is probably the best book about Brazilian culture, from an anthropological perspective. DaMatta is at his best here.

I'm Brazilian leaving abroad since I was 27 years old. For many years I struggled to understand my own people, their glories and tragedies. I tried history books, tried politics, social-studies and other non-fiction books. Roberto DaMatta was the only author to make sense of such a complex society to me. There are many 'Brazils' and DaMatta is clear about it; but he is also a master of breaking down these complexities, via the analysis of its rituals. DaMatta offers provoking insights into the rituals of carnival, street gambling, soccer, African religions and more. He also ties these rituals together in a superb and dramatic fashion. What an exciting author DaMatta is. I recommend this book to anyone *truly* interested in learning about Brazilians, especially to my fellow citizens that live in Brazil and struggle to make sense of so many paradoxes.

I've never seen Brazil's Carnival, nor have I attended Mardi Gras in New Orleans. The last time I checked, though, they both were extremely colorful and exciting. People seemed to be having a lot of fun. If you're looking for even a faint echo of that, give this book a wide berth. DaMatta shuns almost any sort of description at all. He is SERIOUS! This is a most academic book, meant not for general anthropologists, but for specialists in the study of ritual. For them, I would say this is a five star book---intelligent, imaginative, and interesting. If you plan to do studies of major rituals in any society---from the Balinese cockfight to the Spanish bullfight, from North Korean mass pictures in stadiums to the Ram Lila in north India---you will find this rock-hard analysis most useful and thought-provoking. You will be able to break off flints that will light fires in your research to come or make you re-analyze the research you have already completed. DaMatta not only delves into the meanings of all aspects of Carnival and how they reflect Brazilian society at large, but he ties his work to many of the past greats---Van Gennep, Durkheim, Leach, Turner, Geertz---and other, less known Brazilian social scientists' work as well. He calls the Carnival "a multidimensional festival", with meaning on a number of levels. He contrasts the Brazilian one with the New Orleans Mardi Gras in one very erudite chapter and points out that if we examine both closely, we see that they are almost opposite in meaning. In Brazil, he compares Carnival with a military parade on Independence Day and with the religious processions that occur frequently during each year. Location or social space, dress, behavior---everything is grist for the mill. He stresses many times that 'inversion' is the most salient aspect of Carnival. He has chapters on hierarchy in Brazilian

society and on those who slip through the cracks--rogues, who might be heroes in fact. Without a great knowledge of Brazilian society (though I have read a number of books on it, and avidly consumed Amado, Machado de Assis, da Cunha, and other Brazilian writers over the years), I cannot say if I agree or disagree with the author's analysis. It is impressive, but extremely hard going. I found the discussion of ritual very valuable. DaMatta tried and succeeded in writing a theoretical book to rival those of earlier masters. His location in Brazil and writing in Portuguese probably precludes him being widely-known. His style reminds one of many French social-theorists. Yes, I mean only the most determined reader will make it to the end of CARNIVALS, ROGUES, AND HEROES. That's the sole reason why I have awarded an otherwise good book only three stars.

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