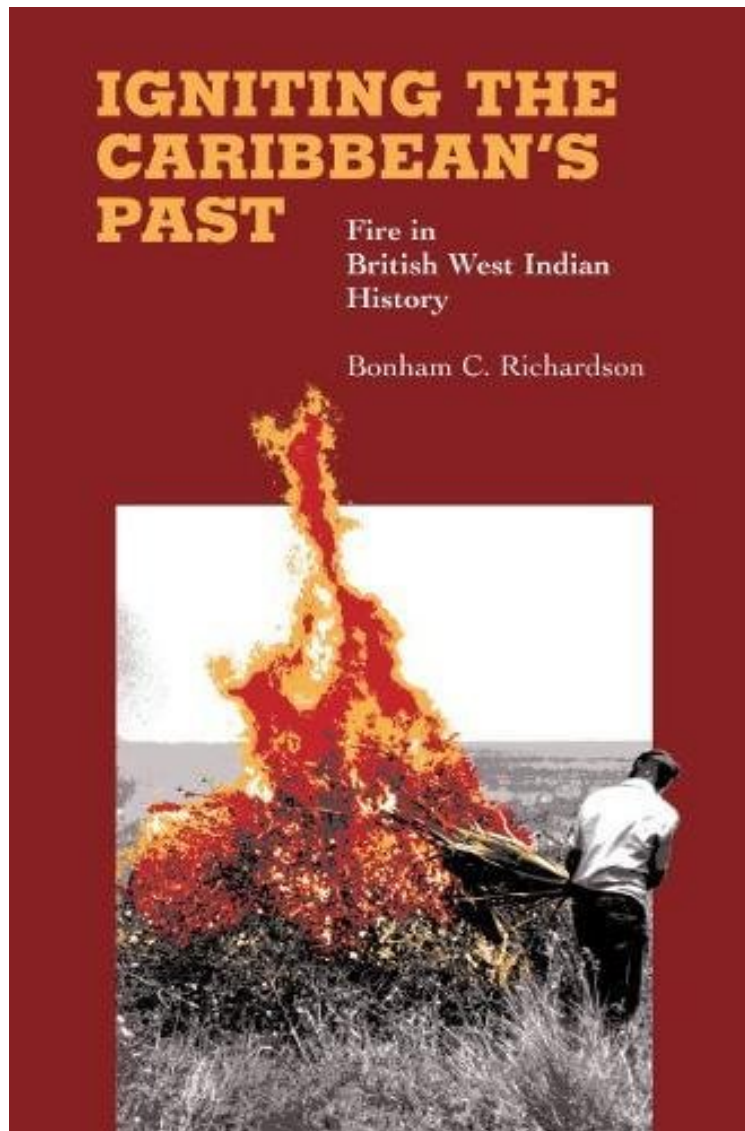


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## Igniting the Caribbean's Past: Fire in British West Indian History

*Bonham C. Richardson*

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**Bonham C. Richardson : Igniting the Caribbean's Past: Fire in British West Indian History** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Igniting the Caribbean's Past: Fire in British West Indian History:

Unlike the earthquakes and hurricanes that have influenced Caribbean history, the region's fires have almost always been caused by humans. Geographer Bonham C. Richardson explores the effects of fire in the social and ecological

history of the British Lesser Antilles, from the British Virgin Islands south to Trinidad. Focusing on the late nineteenth century, leading to the 1905 withdrawal of British military forces from the region, Richardson shows how fire-lit social upheavals served as forerunners of political independence movements. Drawing on Caribbean and London archives as well as years of fieldwork, Richardson examines how villagers used, modified, and contemplated fire in part to vent their frustrations with a savage economic depression and social and political inequities imposed from afar. He examines fire in all its forms, from protest torches to sugarcane fires that threatened the islands' economic staple. Richardson illuminates a neglected period in Caribbean history by showing how local uses of fire have been catalysts and even causes of important changes in the region.

"Provides a missing piece that connects the protest of the independence and post-independence era to the protests of the slavery periods in British West Indies. . . . Provides continuity to the forms of expression chosen by those seemingly without a voice. . . . Very interesting and definitely worth the read. . . . A new way to look at Caribbean history." -- "Latin Americanist" Clearly written. . . so that even though Igniting the Caribbean's Past is primarily an academic study, it is also potentially of use to interested non-academics.--British Bulletin of Publications on Latin America, the Caribbean, Portugal and SpainProvides a missing piece that connects the protest of the independence and post-independence era to the protests of the slavery periods in British West Indies. . . . Provides continuity to the forms of expression chosen by those seemingly without a voice. . . . Very interesting and definitely worth the read. . . . A new way to look at Caribbean history.--Latin AmericanistIn this interesting, briskly written book, Richardson skillfully places fire--almost all of which is human-caused--within the context of social unrest, and that within the larger context of the islands' chronicle of cataclysm. His positioning of fire practices and catastrophes is both clear and compelling.--Stephen J. Pyne, Arizona State UniversityA pioneer for the region. [Richardson] tackles a topic that has been explored on a global and continental scale . . . but provides a fresh perspective by putting fire in a smaller and more domesticated setting.--American Historical Informative and enlightening. . . . Richardson's work is a welcome addition to the literature on the environmental history of the Americas.--Caribbean StudiesRichardson writes standing in the Caribbean at the scene of various fires that spoke volumes about the people there who were involved with them in one way or another. His impressive study demonstrates how the principles and methods of historical geography, in their emphasis on the relations between the physical environment and humans, can illuminate social, political, economic, and cultural history, particularly during periods of sustained stress.--David Barry Gaspar, Duke UniversityAbout the AuthorBonham C. Richardson is professor emeritus of geography at Virginia Tech and now lives in Tucson, Arizona. He is author of several books on the Caribbean, including *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492-1992*.