



Jamaican Song and Story: Annancy Stories, Digging Sings, Ring Tunes, and Dancing Tunes

Walter Jekyll

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The trickster hero is a familiar character in folklore, and Jamaica's national folk hero is Annancy, an animal trickster noted for his unmitigated greed, treachery, and cruelty. A magic spider with a speech defect, Annancy is the perfect picaresque rogue: he is sneaky, lazy, dishonest, and totally without remorse--yet his geniality endears him to friend and foe alike.

Annancy stories are an enduringly popular part of Jamaica's cultural heritage, where the spider's knavery finds expression in dance, theatre, and other creative arts. This delightful, compilation features some of the best-known, most-loved Annancy stories--faithfully reproduced, exactly as told to author Walter Jekyll by islanders. In addition to these tales, drawn largely from African sources but occasionally mixed with European strands and local innovations, the book contains digging sings (work songs used to liven up field labor), ring tunes (informal dances), and dancing tunes (mainly the Valse, Polka, Schottische, and Quadrilles).

The author's notes explain the dialect, and an extensive introduction discusses African folklore and its connections with Jamaican stories. Brief appendices note African and European musical influences on Jamaican tunes, and three essays appraise the importance of Annancy stories and the significance of this collection. The finest source of Annancy stories and other Jamaican folk tales and songs, this volume is an invaluable resource for anthropologists and a treat for anyone interested in Jamaican cultural history.

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