

[PDF] The Religious Dancing of American Slaves, 1820-1865: Spiritual Ecstasy at Baptisms, Funerals, and Sunday Meetings

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Kenneth Thomas

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Kenneth Thomas : The Religious Dancing of American Slaves, 1820-1865: Spiritual Ecstasy at Baptisms, Funerals, and Sunday Meetings before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Religious Dancing of American Slaves, 1820-1865: Spiritual Ecstasy at Baptisms, Funerals, and Sunday Meetings:

In contrast to recent historiography, this work reasserts the argument that slaves were not merely the victims of a brutal regime, but lived largely separate lives within a distinct sphere. This work, set mainly in the South Carolina Lowcountry and on the Georgia Sea Islands, examines the significance of the communal, sacred, ecstatic dances of African-American slaves in the antebellum era. Religious beliefs of the slaves, from Christianity through to shamanism, are analyzed, as are the importance of music, ceremony, and the spiritual world. This book suggests that religious dance ceremonies were central to the lives of the slaves, and acted as a sacrament through which they made contact with their ancestors, the spirit world, and God himself. Communal dancing, under a Christian banner, was a key element in the formation of an autonomous slave culture. Where recent historiography has tended to undermine

the role of the African-American slave culture, preferring instead to examine the darker features of slaves in the United States, this study reasserts the argument that slaves were not merely the victims of a brutal regime, but lived largely separate lives within a distinct sphere.

"... an immensely well-written book that is a pleasure to read. - Prof. Philip Richter Sarum College "... makes sophisticated use of the latest sociological and anthropological literature on the centrality of dance to the formation of..." - Prof. David Brown University of Manchester"