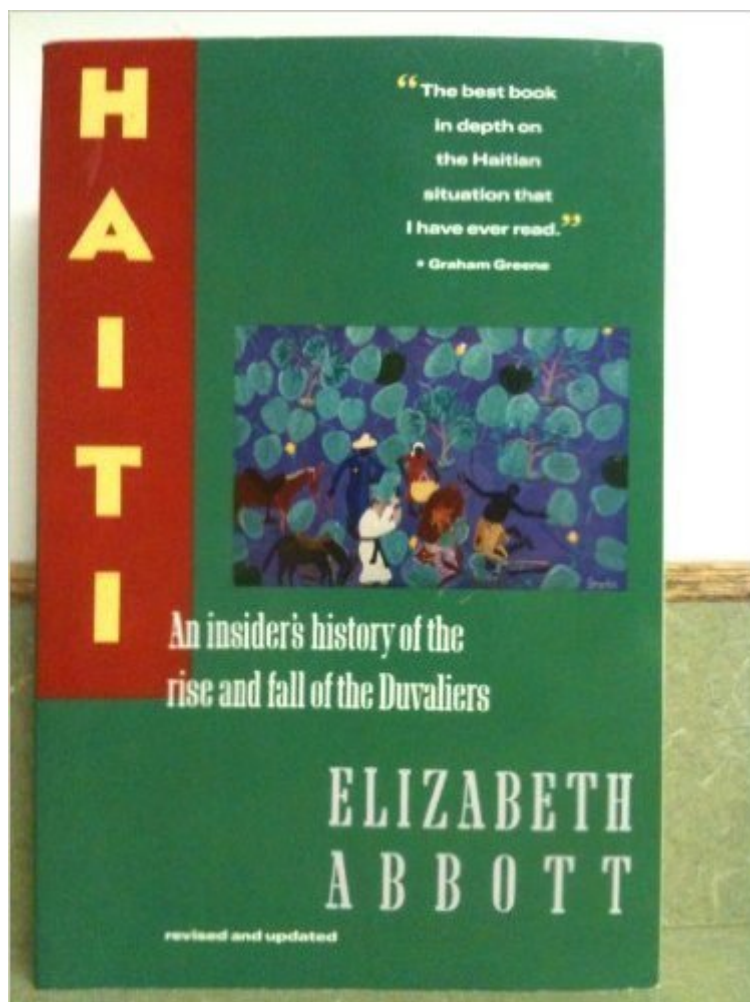


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Haiti: The Duvaliers & Their Legacy



Synopsis

Book by Abbott, Elizabeth

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was reminded while reading this book of listening to an excited acquaintance with an extensive and astonishing tale to tell; my attention was never lost but the temptation to stop at various points for elaboration was overwhelmed by the fast flowing story. This is by no means a bad thing. Having previously read a book on the Duvaliers, and finding it overly sanitized, this book was the right one to cure that sentiment. The skeleton is provided by a framework of Haiti's history from colonization to the exile of its first elected post-Duvalier president; the meat comes from individual tales garnered from interviews, from the horrible tortures of Duvalier victims to the decadent self-absorbed excesses of "Baby Doc" and his family which led to his ouster. The tales are so engaging that I found myself feeling the emotions reflected in the anecdotes, something a history book rarely successfully accomplishes. Even though the ultimate end of the story was already known, the personalized details lead the reader suspensefully along, eagerly wondering exactly HOW events will unfold. The book loses the one star only because the dizzying array of places and names may tend to confuse those unfamiliar with Haitian history or geography. In that vein, I would suggest either prior to (or concurrently) reading this book, consulting another general Haitian history book so as not to slow down digesting the narrative in this one. Also, in the book's bibliography in the back, there is a LONG list of interviewees--most of whom figure prominently--along with a one or two sentence biographical sketch which I would have used extensively in sorting out some of this confusion while I read this book, had I not known it was there until after I was finished! Content-wise,

this book is 5 star.

I am a Haitian man in my late 20's. I was a few days shy from my 8th birthday when Jean-Claude Duvalier (aka BABY DOC) fled the country. I remember in my neighborhood the joy, excitement and happiness on everyone's face that morning and the endless replay of a song called "L'Année Pa Ou" Soléy La" (meaning "WHEN I DON'T SEE THE SUN" in reference to a Haiti based radio station called RADIO SOLEY (SUN RADIO) that was shut down by Duvalier's macoutes.) Back then, I was a kid and couldn't understand very well why so much excitement. Growing up, I've heard so many stories about both Duvalier (PAPA DOC: the father AND BABY DOC: the son). My parents and some older people in my neighborhood used to talk so much about the Duvalier... and some of the accounts were so different (as some portray Papa Doc as a savior, a man with good heart and a vision for Haiti while others only badmouth him or simply say he was a dictator and was responsible for the fate of Haiti today). After reading "FORT-DIMANCHE: DUNGEON OF DEATH" by Patric Lemoine and "DUVALIER & THE TONTON MACOUTES" a few months earlier, my craving to learn more about 2 of the most tyrannic presidents who had ruled my country for 29 years altogether has prompted me to buy this book. I can say this book is more detailed than the book called DUVALIER & THE TONTON MACOUTES... Not only "HAITI: THE DUVALIERS & THEIR LEGACY" gives an accurate and complete account of the 2 dictators, but the author also took time to go back to the Blacks and Mulattoes conflict that existed way before Haiti became independent in 1804 and that still exists. The author also explains the political events and turmoil that took place before PAPA DOC and how those circumstances influenced him before and during his presidency.

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