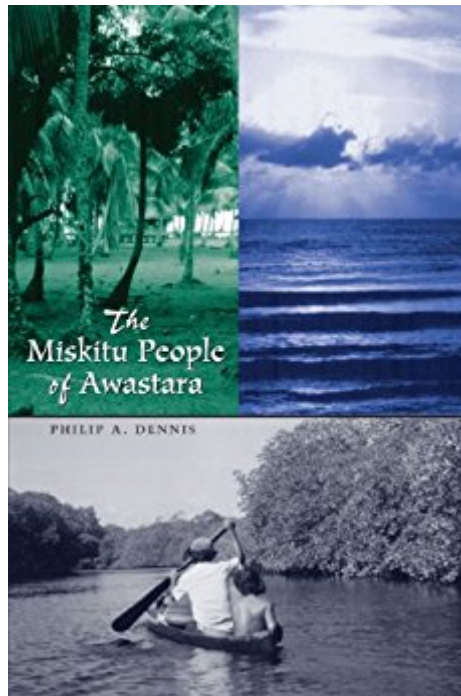


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The Miskitu People Of Awastara (Llilas New Interpretations Of Latin America Series)



Synopsis

"Most anthropologists who have lived among other people . . . feel a periodic need to go back," writes Philip A. Dennis in the introduction to this book. "Fieldwork gives you a stake in the people themselves, a set of relationships that last the rest of your life . . . and when the time is right, it is important to go back." Dennis first journeyed to Awastara, a village on the northeastern coast of Nicaragua, during 1978-1979 as a postdoctoral student. He had come to study a culture-bound syndrome in which young women are possessed by devils. In the process, he became fascinated by other aspects of Miskitu culture—turtle fishing, Miskitu Christianity, community development efforts—the whole pattern of Miskitu community life. He also formed deep friendships to carry into the future. Twenty years later he was able to return and continue his ethnographic work. Utilizing ideas from recent interpretive anthropology and a vivid writing style, Dennis describes food habits, language, health practices, religious beliefs, and storytelling, inviting the reader to experience life in Awastara along with him. Building upon earlier work by Mary Helms, Bernard Nietschmann, Edmund Gordon, and Charles Hale, *The Miskitu People of Awastara* makes its own original contribution. It is the first full-length study of a coastal Miskitu community north of Puerto Cabezas, contrasting life before and after the war years of the 1980s. It will be a valuable addition to the literature on this indigenous group and should appeal to anthropologists and other social scientists, as well as all readers interested in peoples of the Caribbean coast.

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Customer Reviews

This is easily one of my favorite books. The book is an ethnography about anthropologist Philip Dennis' two years in Awastara. He documents the customs and beliefs of the Miskitu, an indigenous group that lives on the North Atlantic coast of Nicaragua and southern Atlantic coast of Honduras. He talks about the friends he has made and illuminates some of the differences between Miskitu culture and American culture. Dennis writes in such a way that easily allows you to get caught up in the book and feel as if you are right there experiences the adventures with him.

There are so few books out there on life in a Miskito village that it is hard to be critical of any of them. However, this one was right on. The author has such a unique persepective as he was able to contrast a year spent in a village just before the 1980 civil war and a year spent there after the war. It was sad to see a people that seem to work so hard never get a chance to get ahead. The author explains well the systemic challenges the people face, from lack of hope in education, to the high cost of transport, to inadequate capital to improve their lot in life. I highly recommend this book.

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