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Compilation of Folk Tales Shares Guyanese Culture to the World
Ambassador Gathers and Puts into Writing the Myths and Legends of His People

BOSTON – *Guyana Legends: Folk Tales of the Indigenous Amerindians* is a collection of 50 folktales of the first people to inhabit Guyana and the contiguous regions of the north coast of the South American continent. It is compiled and written by author Dr. Odeen Ishmael.

Very little is known of Amerindian history in Guyana before the arrival of European settlers in the early 17th century and, actually, no written form of their languages existed until about 70 years ago. Indeed, much of the history of the Amerindian people is based on oral traditions which are not quite clear because the periods when important events occurred are difficult to place. Still, native oral traditions are very rich in folk stories of the ancestral heroes and heroines of these indigenous people.

These stories which interweave in the realms of mystery, romance, humor, superstition, magic and fantasy, are part of the rich oral traditions of these people. Above all, they tell of their closeness to their natural environment and this is reflected in the roles of the forest animals in many of the stories in this collection. Undoubtedly, these folktales, and the lessons they impart, add to the rich cultural blend of the people of Guyana and the wider Caribbean region.

This present collection of Amerindian legends was compiled over a lengthy period of many years during which the author listened to and collected versions of these tales from elderly Amerindians in various regions of Guyana, and more recently from Amerindian residents of the Delta Amacuro region of Venezuela, on the frontier with Guyana.

Readers will find these legends of the original inhabitants of Guyana informative in the anthropological sense, in addition to being interesting and entertaining at the same time.

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About the Author

Dr. Odeen Ishmael, a veteran Guyanese diplomat, is currently the ambassador of Guyana to the State of Kuwait. He previously served as ambassador to Venezuela (2003-2011) and to the United States (1993-2003) where, simultaneously, he was his country's Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States. Since the 1970s, he has been a premier writer on the problems and perspectives of education in Guyana and the wider Caribbean region. He has also written extensively on Guyanese history and culture as well as political developments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Guyana Legends * by Odeen Ishmael

Folk Tales of the Indigenous Amerindians

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