

## A B S T R A C T

OBEAH:  
West African Medicine in the British West Indies  
(1645 – 1838)  
Deryck Shelston Murray

Tukontology is a new approach to understanding the process commonly known as creolisation in the British West Indies. It is described and deployed in this thesis to understand the dynamics of pre-emancipation British West Indian society. Grounded in Actor-Network-Theory and using the visualisation potency of music, tukontology explores how different ways of knowing and making build plural ontologies. To do this, it treats existence as a continuum between the real and unreal; effects as always surprising; subjects and objects as single hybrid actors; and truth as arising from a form of reference that circulates. Tukontology makes the world available to all, not just western Science, while providing a single framework for studying creolisation as orchestral performance. In this thesis, Obeah's historicity is used as an empirical example.

By treating Obeah as a science for making potent war medicine, as opposed to a religion, Kuhnian paradigm shifts in the pattern of revolts by Blacks on British

West Indian plantations are shown to result from the success or failure of Obeah for war. These shifts are in turn traced to a loss of confidence in old African forms of Obeah, followed by periods of uncertainty, and culminating in a period of renewed confidence in creole forms of Obeah. A tukontological description of the 200 years war waged by enslaved Blacks in the British West Indies therefore provides new insights into the anatomy of power, the existential experience of enslaved Blacks and their participation in building a real world while resisting white hegemony.

Keywords: Deryck Shelston Murray; Tukontology; Actor-Network-Theory; Obeah; British West Indies; creolization; Kuhnian paradigm; Science studies; slave resistance; West African medicine; ways of knowing.