



«*The Uplands of Reunion Island, a fabled and fabulous expanse*» could equally well have been the title of the present work, which has brought together historians and geographers of the University of Reunion in a joint study of this little-known part of Reunion's territory; one which has remained on the margins of development and which interests few people other, perhaps, than those who live there by choice or obligation, far from the comfort and modernity of the cities.

It may seem convenient to define the Uplands by opposition to the developed lowlands of the island, or by orography, but this is a reductive approach which belies their complex nature. This expresses itself through an environment of exceptional richness which in 2010 won over UNESCO's World Heritage Committee, through the courage of men in the face of nature, in an outstanding cultural heritage, and through the intimate relationship between the inhabitants and the land. From the « maroon » slaves who found refuge in the heights of the interior, to today's « diagonale des fous » ultramarathon, the marks of men's excesses as well as their tenacity have been stamped on the territory.

Long seen as inhospitable, mysterious and frightening, the Uplands now constitute an attraction and a source of expectations in terms of identification and development.

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By offering a relatively thorough overview of the different features of the Uplands, beyond their mere physical characteristics, this book seeks to convey the originality of the area through its patient construction, its evolving representation, its landscapes, its identity roots and its utilizations, old and new. The book also addresses the prospects of integrating the Uplands in Reunion's regional development and readjustment strategy. The wealth of approaches will certainly appeal to students, researchers and any person eager to discover the « civilization of the Uplands » in its environment.

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