



Sugar Cane Capitalism and Environmental Transformation: An Archaeology of Colonial Nevis, West Indies (Caribbean Archaeology and Ethnohistory)

Marco G. Meniketti

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In this deeply researched and multifaceted study, Marco G. Meniketti demonstrates how the landscape of the small Caribbean island of Nevis preserves and reveals artifacts and evidence of the highly complex and interrelated seventeenth- to nineteenth-century “Atlantic Economy,” comprising early capitalist sugar production, the African slave trade, and European settlement.

Sugar Cane Capitalism and Environmental Transformation is based on twelve seasons of meticulous archaeological field work and documentary research. Although Nevis was once a bustling hub of the British colonial project, the emigration of emancipated slaves and abandonment by European planters left large swathes of Nevis vacant. Reclaimed by forests and undisturbed by later waves of economic development, the island—dotted with fascinating ruins, debris from the sugar industry, windmills, chimneys, and multistoried great house—provided Meniketti with an ideal subject for archaeological inquiry.

Through intensive archaeological and landscape surveys of multiple key plantation sites, Meniketti traces the development of Nevis from its initial European settlement in 1627 to its central role as a British mercantile hub and a laboratory and prototype of capitalist sugar cultivation. His nuanced analysis explains the backdrop of European political and economic rivalries, of which the colonial agro-industrial enterprises were the physical manifestations, and makes telling comparisons with Dutch and French archaeological sites. The work also compares and contrasts the adoption of capitalist modes of sugar production and socialization at wealthy and middling plantation sites.

Supported with a wealth of photos, tables, and maps, *Sugar Cane Capitalism and Environmental Transformation* offers a vital case study of one island whose environment and archaeological record illuminates the complex webs of Atlantic history.

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