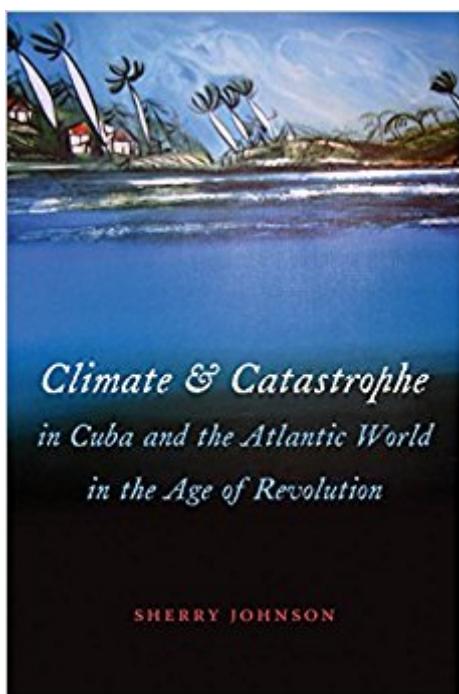


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Climate And Catastrophe In Cuba And The Atlantic World In The Age Of Revolution (Envisioning Cuba)



Synopsis

From 1750 to 1800, a critical period that saw the American Revolution, French Revolution, and Haitian Revolution, the Atlantic world experienced a series of environmental crises, including more frequent and severe hurricanes and extended drought. Drawing on historical climatology, environmental history, and Cuban and American colonial history, Sherry Johnson innovatively integrates the region's experience with extreme weather events and patterns into the history of the Spanish Caribbean and the Atlantic world. By superimposing this history of natural disasters over the conventional timeline of sociopolitical and economic events in Caribbean colonial history, Johnson presents an alternative analysis in which some of the signal events of the Age of Revolution are seen as consequences of ecological crisis and of the resulting measures for disaster relief. For example, Johnson finds that the general adoption in 1778 of free trade in the Americas was catalyzed by recognition of the harsh realities of food scarcity and the needs of local colonists reeling from a series of natural disasters. Weather-induced environmental crises and slow responses from imperial authorities, Johnson argues, played an inextricable and, until now, largely unacknowledged role in the rise of revolutionary sentiments in the eighteenth-century Caribbean.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lucid and highly readable, Climate and Catastrophe is an impressive contribution to environmental and Atlantic history.... An engaging and provocative read.--H-Net ReviewsA provocative argument. Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above.--Choice

Sherry Johnson provides a novel, sophisticated, and powerfully persuasive argument that many of the significant political changes in the Atlantic world during the Age of Revolution cannot be fully understood without reference to the environmental history. This highly original book is elegantly written and full of excellent and prodigious research.--Franklin W. Knight, The Johns Hopkins UniversityWith up-to-date, thorough scholarship and a fully original argument, Sherry Johnson offers a major intervention on questions of trade policy of the Spanish Caribbean Empire. No one has ever introduced notions of environmental crisis into these discussions of the Spanish colonial period. Ever.--J. R. McNeill, author of *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914*

This is an academic study. It is a more interesting read than many such works are. Johnson has a fascinating topic here, but she has a theory she is trying to advance, and that gets in the way of her history. She's attempting to make the point that environmental factors have been extremely important in some significant historical events in Cuba. Cuba is the case studied for her assertion, which has wider implications. The catastrophe is essentially, the consequence of being hit by a major hurricane. Her argument is that damage to crops and infrastructure sometimes had very important political consequences (she does not mention this, but imagine something like the political damage that Hurricane Katrina inflicted on some US political figures). The book covers the "long" century that includes the 1750-1800 "Age of Revolutions." The book addresses Cuba but asserts that environmental impact was an important factor in causing political disturbance. She establishes clear connections between disaster and politics, but her full theory is not supported by her material, and the case is not convincing.

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