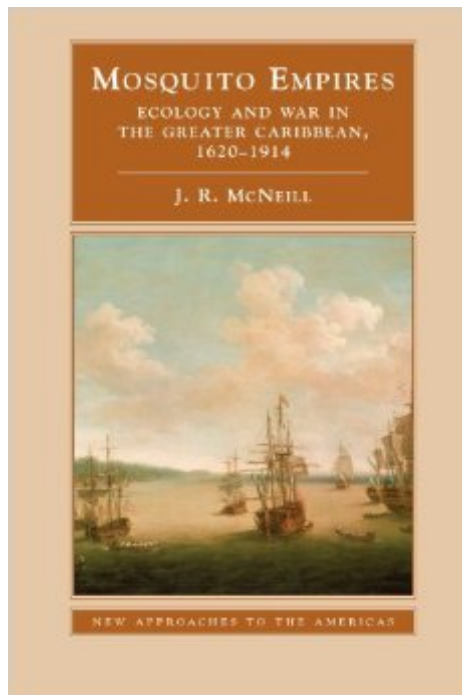


The book was found

Mosquito Empires: Ecology And War In The Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914 (New Approaches To The Americas)



Synopsis

This book explores the links among ecology, disease, and international politics in the context of the Greater Caribbean - the landscapes lying between Surinam and the Chesapeake - in the seventeenth through early twentieth centuries. Ecological changes made these landscapes especially suitable for the vector mosquitoes of yellow fever and malaria, and these diseases wrought systematic havoc among armies and would-be settlers. Because yellow fever confers immunity on survivors of the disease, and because malaria confers resistance, these diseases played partisan roles in the struggles for empire and revolution, attacking some populations more severely than others. In particular, yellow fever and malaria attacked newcomers to the region, which helped keep the Spanish Empire Spanish in the face of predatory rivals in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In the late eighteenth and through the nineteenth century, these diseases helped revolutions to succeed by decimating forces sent out from Europe to prevent them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a very interesting book on the interaction between infectious disease and the history of European empires in what McNeill terms the Greater Caribbean, the region from the Carolina coast, the Caribbean proper, and the littoral of Central America and Northern South America. Some of the general and specific phenomena discussed by McNeill are known well. Examples are the transmission of important infectious diseases to the western hemisphere from Europe and Africa

and the importance of Yellow fever in securing the success of the Haitian Revolution. McNeill provides an unusually thoughtful and thorough analysis of the influence of epidemic disease on the dynamics of empire formation and persistence. McNeill focuses particularly on Yellow fever and Malaria, though dengue is mentioned as well. In an interesting combination of epidemiology and social history, McNeill discusses not only that contact with the Old World transmit these diseases to the Greater Caribbean but also how specific features of colonization, including plantation development and the introduction of Old World domesticated species, favored the spread and persistence of these diseases. As the initial colonizers, the Spanish were able to establish their empire prior to the emergence of these diseases in the Greater Caribbean. Yellow Fever appears to make its first major appearance in the mid-17th century. The populations of the established Spanish colonies usually enjoyed some protections from Yellow Fever and Malaria and this was a huge advantage in fending off the efforts of other European powers, notably the British, to conquer the Spanish American empire. By the 18th century, Spanish military planners were aware of this fact and incorporated it into defense plans.

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