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A Historical Ecology of Slavery in the Danish West Indies

The transatlantic slave trade era – marked by chattel slavery, racial capitalism, and exploitative plantation economies – radically transformed societies and environments in the Americas. In this talk, I attempt to craft a historical ecology of the African Diaspora through an analysis of slavery in the Danish West Indies. Drawing from an array of archaeological, historical and environmental data, I argue that the development of plantation slavery elicited lasting ecological changes as colonial planters developed exploitative monocrop agricultural systems and enslaved Africans made a life in the Caribbean. Theoretically, I use a Black Geographic lens to interrogate the relationship between African diasporic communities and their Atlantic environments. Finally, I posit the need to engage questions of sustainability as a form of redress in contemporary archaeological praxis.